CHAPTER 7

RASA TO RASA DHVANI:

THE META CREATION THROUGH IMAGINATION:

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BHARATA: NATYASHASTRA ➔ KULASHEKHARA: VYANGYAVYAKHYA

- Though it corresponds to the 'Aesthetic' precepts envisaged in the Natyashastra, Kutiyattam in performance does not always conform to the "Dramaturgical Rules" of the Natyashastra.

⊗ **REGIONAL INFLUENCE:**

⇒ In the first place Kutiyattam is an 'Indigenous Form of Theatre' native to Kerala and hence a great deal of "Regional Influence" is inevitable.

⊗ **NATYA-DHARMI TECHNIQUE:**

⇒ Secondly this 'Theatric Form' exploits "Natya Dharmi Technique" to a degree far beyond the conception of Bharata.

- The conceptual framework of Kutiyattam broadly follows the aesthetic formulations enunciated by Bharata in the Natyashastra; along rich diversity of regional performance styles, sometimes with distinctive and sometimes with overlapping features. However, the method of enactment in Kutiyattam has its own uniqueness, distinctive characteristic and conventions, which might be called a regional adaptation than a conscious deviation from the Natyashastra practice.

✪ MAJOR DEVIATION FROM NATYASHASTRA:

SPECIFICITY AND CONCRETE CATEGORIZATION

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SYMBOLIC AND ABSTRACT

- The communication of an abstract idea to the mind of the spectator requires transformation through performance codes shared by the actor and the spectator. The Natyasastra seems to emphasize "Specificity and Concrete Categorization" while Kutiyattam tends to be more "Symbolic and Abstract".

NATYAM: PROSAIC

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ATTAM: POETIC - CONCEPT OF BHAVA

- Kutiyattam follows the principles of Natyashastra, yet it is different from it. The most important deviation is in the mode of presentation. Bharata's primary concern was "Natya"; Kutiyattam transforms "Natyam to Attam – Dance". Natya is prose, dance adds poetry to it. To illustrate this Kulashekhara gives a new dimension to the "Concept of Bhava".
- Bharata delighted the spectator using the four types of 'Abhinaya', clear gestures and direct expressions. Kulshekhara used dance which made the Bhava – emotions powerful. He felt the former as prosaic and the latter as poetic. The aesthetic charm rests on the poetic way of acting. Bharata gave the grammar of acting, Kulshekhara added poetry to acting.

ANEKAHARYA: MULTIPLE CHARACTERS

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EKAHARYA: SOLO PERFORMANCE

NIRVAHANAM ➔ MANODHARMA ➔ PAKARNNATTAM

- Bharata conceives a stage with "Multiple Characters – Anekaharya" stage. Kutiyattam prefers "Solo Performance – Ekaharya". Started as retrospective narration in 'Purvasambandha' it developed as "Nirvahanam – Recapitulation" in Kutiyattam. Solo acting provides the most exciting moments to the connoisseurs. This makes Kutiyattam an actor's theatre.
- Imaginative acting – "Manodharma", hinted at by Bharata, is fully developed in Kutiyattam. "Multiple Impersonations – Pakarnnattam" which Bharata does not permit, is accepted in Kutiyattam. "Manodharma and Pakarnnattam" are the two cardinal concepts that Kerala contributed to the national theatre.

ACTOR: AN IMITATOR

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ACTOR: AN IMITATOR – A NARRATOR – AN INTERPRETER

- The actor in Bharata's scheme is an "Imitator". In Kutiyattam, he is an "Imitator, Narrator and Interpreter".

RIGID STRUCTURE FOR DRAMA

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LOOSE STRUCTURE FOR DRAMA – ELASTIC PERFORMANCE

- Bharata prescribes a "Rigid Structure" for drama; Kutiyattam always violates it. It has a "Loose Structure" and the "Performance is Elastic". The dramatic text or the author is more or less irrelevant as the actors follow the stage-scripts prepared by their masters.

✪ RASA AND DHVANI:

- 'Natyashastra Tradition' gives stress on 'Rasa'. It is the end product of a situation. Kulashekhara is concerned more with 'Internalization of Emotions', the mental process leading to that situation.
- In India, "Drshya and Shravya" passed through separate streams. Bharata expounded 'Rasa' and provided a medium for its expression – 'Abhinaya'. Poetry could not accommodate 'Rasa', though it aspired much, in its scheme for want of an appropriate medium.
- Anandavardhana provided the much awaited medium for 'Rasa' in poetry – "Dhvani". It was left to Kulashekhara to apply 'Dhvani' to theatre. Kulashekhara uses the word 'Nrtta' to denote both 'Nrtta' and 'Natya'. This inter relation of the 'Principal' and 'Subsidiaries' - Corresponds to the 'Primary Meaning – Suggested Senses' in poetry expounded by Anandavardhana in Dhvanyaloka.
- Theatre already had one medium – 'Abhinaya'. By making it the touchstone, Kulashekhara made 'Dhvani' sharp and subtle too. That is the importance of "Netrbhinaya" and the "Vyangyavyakhya" mode of performance.

✪ CONCLUSION:

- The most important development in the field of 'Aesthetics' after Natyashastra was the application of Rasa to poetry through the medium of 'Dhvani'. Dhvani had been accepted as pivotal in Indian Aesthetic thought, since Abhinavagupta set up a strong foundation in his 'Locana'. Ever since Dhvani attained a pivotal role in Indian Aesthetic thought. Kulashekhara applied the principle of Dhvani to theatre in the 'Vyangyavyakhya' and paved the way for the survival of Natyashastra's Prayogamarga.
- Kutiyattam makes Abhinaya sharp and subtle while unfolding, confidentially, the inner-heart of the character through ocular movements, transports acting to the 'Trance Dramatic' levels in multiple impersonation and provides challenging situations to the actor to exhibit his creative genius disregarding the constraints of text, time and space.

AESTHETICS OF THE THEATRE OF PANIKKAR:

NATYASHASTRA: RASA + DHVANYALOKA: DHVANI

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RASA – DHVANI

(VYANGYAVYAKHYA – ABHINAVABHARATI)

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RASADHVANI + SPHOTA: VAKYAPADIYAM

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AESTHETICS OF THE THEATRE OF PANIKKAR

- Panikkar wanted to find out why people came to watch plays when they already know the story. The sequences of the events were well known to them. For those who know the story nothing is there to hold on till the end. The progression is on expected lines as described in the source text. They have no anxiety regarding the 'What' in the story. What they want to know is the 'How' of it. How this particular event is presented? Conventional methods are not sufficient to satisfy the spectator if their concern is with the 'How' of it. It was in this predicament that –

⊗ Bharata's Natyashastra,
⊗ Anandavardhana's Dhvanyaloka,
⊗ Kulashekhara's Vyangyavyakhya,
⊗ Abhinavagupta's Abhinavabharati,
⊗ Bharthruhari's Theory on "Sphota" in relation to art in his Vakyapadiyam.

- Panikkar concentrate on this "Total Effect". Productions of Panikkar translate all the 'Concepts in Theatre into Reality', which is a great contribution to the evolution of "Theatre Traditions of Panikkar".

✪ NARRATOLOGY OF THE THEATRE OF PANIKKAR:

WHAT ⊗ ➔ HOW √

INTERPRETATIONS ➔ IMAGINATIVE ACTING

- The Aesthetics of 'Vyangyavyakhya' mode of presentation mainly rest on two pillars –

⊗ Unending possibilities of interpretations to the directors.
⊗ Scope for Imaginative Acting to the practitioners.

MACRO LEVEL ➔ MICRO LEVEL

- In Kutiyattam correspondingly two levels of 'Abhinaya' are prescribed –

⊗ The 'Macro Level' / 'Four Fold Abhinaya' for the 'Nanaloka – Ordinary People'.
⊗ The 'Micro Level' / 'Ocular Gestures' for the 'Prekshaka – Elite'.

DECODING: PRE – TEXT ➔ ENCODING: SUB – TEXT

ARTH ➔ ARTHKRIYA

- 'Vyangyavyakhya' anticipate the 'Stage Devices / Artifices' and 'Theatre Practices' as tools for bringing out the interpretation of 'Dhvani'. It propose employing techniques of –

⊗ Decoding the Pre – Text: Making the Commentary.
⊗ Encoding it into Sub – Text: Explaining the Context and Meaning of the Text.

- It is gain saying that bringing out the meaning 'Arth' involves 'Arthkriya', transforming meaning into action also.

OUTER REALITY ➔ DEEPER INTERIOR LEVEL

KAVYARTHA ➔ BHAVA ➔ RASA

- Abhinvavagupta explains the word 'Kavyartha' as 'Rasa', the making of which can be attributed to none other than the actor. The main function of the actor is the creation of 'Arthakriya' for which 'Rasa' has to be expressed in a holistic manner through 'Bhava – Emotion'. The "Vachika", "Satvika" and "Angika" all work in unison for cumulative output. Also the "Vibhava", "Anubhava" work on a supportive level for the sprouting of the "Sthayi Bhava" into "Rasa". Proper combination is essential for this evolution. The evolution which is contemplated in the Sanskrit Theatre is based on journey from "Kriya" to "Rasa", from the outer reality in the text to the deeper interior level.

SIGNIFICANT ➔ SIGNIFIED

FLAME OF FIRE ➔ LIGHT OF THE FLAME

- Bharthruhari's Theory on "Sphota" explains the word 'Sphota' as 'Meaning is expressed'. The 'Sphota' is the central sound and may be compared to the 'Flame of Fire'. The 'Dhvani' is like the 'Light of the Flame' which spreads in different directions. Sometimes we see the 'Light without seeing the Flame', similarly we listen 'Dhvani' without knowing the 'Sphota'. As the 'Flame and Light' produced simultaneously, so is the production of the 'Sphota' and 'Dhvani'.
- Bharthruhari's concept of "Sphota" can be compared with the linguistic sign, which has two facets –

⊗ The Significant: That which 'Means'.

⊗ The Signified: That which is 'Meant'.

THEORY OF TRANSFORMATION

STHAYI BHAVA ➔ VYABHICHARI BHAVA

- The technique of 'Transformation' goes beyond one level, i.e. from actor to character and reaches out to multiple levels of 'Sancharibhavas / Vyabhicharibhavas'. Such 'Transformation' is not the creation of many levels of illusion; rather it would work as 'Transitory Emotions' strengthening the 'Sthayi Bhava'.

✪ CONCLUSION:

- The Theatre of Panikkar visualized the immense potential of suggestion "Dhvani" and created many 'Sub – Texts' within the 'Dramatic Text'. To present the 'Explicit' is not a great thing; what is great is to interpret the 'Implicit' in the 'Drashya and Shravya'. Interpretative expansion of the scope of textual lines is noteworthy phenomenon of the 'Theatre of Panikkar'.
- Panikkar is successful in reassessing his own creative work with a critical perspective and recreating the 'Dhvani-Patha: Sub-Text' by supplementing the non – sound areas of the text with interpretative action which could provide the springboard for the 'Para-Textual' areas of interpretations. What is stated in the text is attractive through the story point of view; but its eloquence works as the sprouting of a seed into a full-fledged tree with branches, foliages etc.
- Panikkar had directed several Plays mainly Sanskrit Plays pregnant with inner meaning and substantiated his stand on the magical efficacy of 'Dhvani' and experienced himself how the mindscape of each character would reflect to detail the respective "Bhava" in enactment.

- The Elements, Principles, Conventions and Aesthetic of Traditional Indian Theatre are studded, examined and employed in the performances, keeping in mind the Modern Sensibilities of today's spectator. Through training in Traditional Art Forms, Dance, Music and Body Dynamics has been a part of theatre training of the actors, which has enabled them to interpret any 'Content'.
