

# Voice Culture and Dramatic Speech

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## Introduction

In recent times the art-world has become as exacting and competitive as any other profession or commercial venture. Today an aspiring musician, dancer or actor has to be a considerably equipped individual even before he enters the professional world - where the extenuating circumstances conceded to amateur status are no longer available. Hence the keen awareness in respect of rigorous training-programmes, that are today reasonably and efficiently standardized. These tend to be scientific and try to bring the trainees up to a fairly high level of competence. Such programmes do not and cannot claim to produce complete artistes. But they seek to impart to trainees, certain skills as well as definite methods that make them self-sufficient and resourceful. In addition, they provide an insight into the total perspective governing the area of specialization. In the sphere of dramatics, it is direction, lighting, acting and such other departments which form the main beneficiaries of such systematic approaches. But for various reasons not enough attention has been given to the aspect of speech. Clarity of speech, projection of voice, quality of the voices used, are items that have till now received only cursory examination.

## The Dramatic in Speech

The scope of our discussion here is limited to speech in drama proper, and does not extend to other varieties of speech, such as elocution or pulpit oration. Granted that the latter do (or can) have the quality of being 'dramatic', but the very act of naming the quality 'dramatic' indicates that these are merely cases of a wider and detailed application of a singular, and yet common characteristic. If we confine ourselves to drama proper, we may be able to reach the very basis of all such applications.

Secondly, we must bear in mind that the 'dramatic' can also be detected in other performing and fine arts. This is because it is an aesthetic principle in addition to being a fundamental tenet in dramatics. But here we do not intend to discuss the

occurrence of the dramatic in other arts and will also exclude from our consideration the relationship between the dramatic and the aesthetic, leaving that question to the aestheticians. For us, the question is twofold: What is the nature of speech occurring in dramatic representations in drama proper? And consequently, what constitutes the quality of being dramatic in such a speech?

### **The Context of Marathi Theatre**

Most of the evidence is drawn from the Marathi theatre (and allied fields), partly due to a closer personal touch with this area and also because it is useful to narrow down the catchment area of basic evidence. Firstly, the modern Marathi dramatic tradition is at least 125 years old. Secondly, Maharashtra has a strong base in the oral traditions of both the classical and folk varieties in music and theatre. K. Narayan Kale has aptly pointed out that in Maharashtra the theatre is much older than drama. This means that there was and there still is a speech tradition - to accept or to reject. The traditions of Kirtana, Purana, Pravachana and later Tamasha etc., have all contributed to the shaping of Marathi dramatic speech. Thirdly, at least since the advent of what are known as 'Bookish Plays', (this term came to be applied to plays available in printed versions), the friendly or hostile response to all innovations has been provoked by the language used and the speech delivered. In short, the speech aspect of dramatics enjoys a tradition of performance in Maharashtra and has served as a point of reference. This explains the Marathi slant in the data used in the exposition.

### **Drama: a composite art-form**

Admittedly, dramatics is a composite art and the resultant art form is drama. It is formed by various artistic endeavours that are, in their own right, separate and independent aesthetic entities. Drama has all the advantages and disadvantages of a composite form. When a number of arts join forces, the available expressive channels increase considerably, resulting in an enlargement of artistic appeal, though balancing the various art-forces that come together is somewhat of a challenge.

This composite nature has been acknowledged both by Western and Indian traditions. Bharata and Aristotle have enumerated the constituents that make up the composite character of drama. Bharata performs an act of apotheosis by calling dramatics 'The Fifth Veda' and further states that it has borrowed the textual aspect

from the Rigveda, the song-aspect from the Samaveda, the acting-aspect from the Yajurveda, and the Rasabhava (roughly to be translated as "communication of art-experience") from the Atharvaveda. On the other hand, Aristotle specifies that drama, and especially tragedy, is a type of poetry, with three internal and six external qualitative constituents. Plot, characterization and thought are named as the internal constituents while song and language are included among the external components. It is interesting to note that Bharata makes a categorical statement about the composite character of dramatic art while Aristotle merely mentions tragedy and comedy as arts employing one or many means from rhythm, tune and metre. There seems to be a clear difference of emphasis in respect of the positions taken regarding the basic nature of the dramatic art and the place of the speech-language syndrome in the arsenal of dramatics. One suspects that speech-language and song are more peripheral in Aristotle than Bharata -and this offers an important clue to our subsequent discussion. In this context, it is significant that modern dramatic reformers in the West (like Appia, Craig, Artaud, Meyerhold) have insistently argued in favour of more speech (and not text), and of song oriented theatre. What Aristotle regarded as external became for them the very core of dramatic art. It is also known that they were considerably inspired by Asian theatre in this respect.

Incidentally, Craig quarrels with the concept of an art being composite and yet succeeding in remaining an art. He argues that any art must be the flower of one unified 'genius'. The theatre that is concurrently ruled by author, actor, painter, scene-designer etc. cannot have its own language and, till it develops such a language, it cannot become an art. Hence Craig advocates the supremacy of the director, the dispensability of the author the approximation of actors to the status of masks or marionettes and the preponderance of mime and intonation. Obviously, Craig was influenced by the concept of organic unity of a kind and perhaps reacting against the dramaturgy of his time. K. Narayan Kale has indirectly answered some of Craig's objections. He argues that there are two types of internal contradictions or conflicts in dramatics: the first, between various elements like acting, movements, composition etc.; and the other, between the quality of effectiveness of the text as distinct from that of a performance. He argues that due to a more valid theoretical exposition by theatre practitioners like Stanislavsky, these contradictions have been or are in the process of being resolved and the composite nature of dramatic representations has reached the level of 'art'. It could be that Craig was confusing truly 'composite' nature for a mixture of components.

## **Speech: an important dramatic component**

Though the variation of emphasis in explaining the composite character of drama in Bharata and Aristotle is significant, and also symptomatic of a characteristic dramatic vision, (and despite Craig's dissenting note), its compositeness is an established fact. But here our concern is with only one among the many elements that combine in drama: speech as used in it. Whether one refers to the recited text (Pathya), song, or vocalised acting (Vachika) as propounded by Bharata, or the language and song usages as described and analysed by Aristotle, all these are clearly expressions through or of voice. Thus, the main dramatic uses of Vak or voice are known as dramatic speech.

What is speech? It is voice plus language. Is it possible to use voice without language? Are such uses meaningful? Yes. Crying, laughing, yawning loudly, grunting, groaning, howling and sighing are obvious instances of non-linguistic use of voice - and all of them are meaningful. Keshavrao Date's sigh in K. P. Khadilkar's *Bhaubandki* was considered an extremely expressive use of voice. In fact, language often proves to be inadequate at moments of emotional intensity and recourse to these non-linguistic uses of voice becomes inevitable. During extremely tense moments it is the Vak (and not language) and the human voice (and not speech) which come to our rescue. This conclusion suggests the manifest inadequacy of language and speech as expressive channels and is one of the reasons why modern drama tends to use the non-linguistic features quite frequently.

## **Speech-types in drama**

The next step now would be to consider the various types of speech in drama, which means an acquaintance with the varying proportion of the dramatic element. This would lead to some viable conclusions about the basic question that we have to answer: What is dramatic? It is hoped that when voice culture is linked with this data, one can adduce an immediate and practical connection between the discipline of voice culture and dramatic performance proper.

After all, our subject is not purely theoretical in scope. Though our main concern is the speech-types used in actual dramatic activity, abstract theoretical considerations and their embodiment in performance cannot be isolated from the study. The bane of our dramatic thought (whether a piece of dramatic criticism or a more theoretical elaboration) is that it ignores performance. In the absence of any inter-action

between the two, the artist tends to shun theory when, in fact, he can contribute actively and concretely to it on the strength of his first-hand experience. Since it is essential to bridge this chasm one could start with the speech-types used in drama and then relate them to theoretical observations or practical insights made available to us by voice culture. This procedure will save us a pedantic discussion of style, one which can tell us nothing about the actual, realized entity that dramatic speech is.

### **Classification of dramatic speech**

A variety of criteria can be used to classify dramatic speech. But keeping in view the applied angle of our subject - the performance aspect of dramatic speech - a threefold classification, using the criteria of: (a) the addressee; (b) the intra-lingual organization and (c) the voice production, seems to be the most viable.

In a way, these three categories present a definite logical sequence. The first category is based on "who has directed the speech to whom". This category comes into real existence even before the text does, -and at the author's initiative. As the content is yet to be verbalized, the category based on the intra-lingual organization comes into being next. These linguistic versions, or embodiments of the abstract, author-initiated content, form the basis for speech which is actualized through the actors. Hence, the type of voice used, and the method of voice-production involved assume significance and the third category is formulated. It is plain that all this activity is a purposeful act directed at achieving a definite impact on the audience. In fact, this particular sequence reflects the entire process of creation and communication in a performing art, with all the stages from conception to actual realization.

Let us consider these categories of dramatic speech in some detail.

The first category: the addressee

Dramatic speech can never be non-directional speech. It originates in one or more characters and moves to reach one or more persons or characters: To ensure that this passage does not get weakened into articulated meanderings, the playwright has to take adequate care to provide sufficient indications regarding the speech targets. The chief types of these intended speech-movements are:

(1) **Conversation:** It is the common speech that links two individuals. In conversation, the participant's responses are not necessarily of a specified quality. Often, conversation is talking past one another. Sometimes, it consists of attempts at

airing ideas in isolation. It involves the originator but not necessarily the other participant. Frequently it is indicated by the stage-direction: "Two persons enter in conversation". In spite of its apparently negative communicative capacity, conversation is the basis for the other types of dramatic speech.

(2) **Dialogue:** Dialogue is speech between two characters and has a definite content and direction. Obviously, it is more purposeful than conversation. Drama and dramatic thought have been so closely associated with dialogue that non-dramatic literary forms using more of dialogue have on that count often been referred to as 'dramatic'. The predetermined direction of the dialogue gives it a certain pressure and insistence. It binds the characters, unlike a conversation which might merely stop at linking them up. It has been validly argued that the chief pleasure of dramatic dialogue resides in that quality of total articulation which is almost absent in our daily life.

(3) **Multilogue:** Basically, it is a speech, occurring in a situation similar to that of a dialogue, but with a more blurred picture of communication lines because many characters are active simultaneously, though with varying degrees of dramatic and expressive efficacy. This speech-type demands a more thoughtful orchestration of the vocal as well as language-lines and an extremely well-rehearsed coordination of the participants. Locations such as railway stations, markets, meetings, are obvious choices for an effective use of multilogues. The famous 'Arya-Madira-Mandal' scene in R. G. Gadkari's *Ekach Pyala* offers a good instance. A noteworthy example has been documented by Christine Edwards while describing the impact of Stanislavskian ensemble acting in America. The New York Times reviewer commented on the "eloquent vocal colouring of the kaleidoscopic crowd" in a performance of *Tsar Fyodor* and went on to add, "Our traditional device of 'another general shout' is put to shame". It should be pointed out here that spatial composition is easier to achieve and perceive since no two bodies can occupy the same physical space simultaneously. But aural space is and can be simultaneously occupied by many acoustic expressions. That there is an increasing tendency to use crowd-scenes in recent times should prompt us to recognize the significance of multilogue. Solo contributions are perhaps considered a negation of the drive towards the democratization of drama, and the multilogue may reflect a desire to bring the theatre back to the ritualistic stage where the spirit of participation traverses a wider range. In any case there is today a pronounced inclination to keep a number of dialogue sources in operation in a synchronous manner. The increasing importance of the multilogue offers a challenge to directorial ability and the actor's control over vocal resources.

(4) **Soliloquy:** Soliloquy is a speech by the character to his own self. It is regarded as a very potent channel of dramatic expression. In addition to an established 'quotation' value for students of dramatics, language, and literature, actors themselves feel that it gives them unparalleled scope for a demonstration of their histrionic abilities. It is on record that during the heyday of Marathi musical plays, prose actors used to regard soliloquies as equivalent to the 'song-situations' available to singer-actors like the legendary Balgandharva. The absence of such soliloquies was, therefore, resented.

(5) **Monologue:** Like the soliloquy, the monologue, too, originates in one character but it contains the built-in responses of characters not present on the stage. In a soliloquy, there are uninhibited outpourings of a single soul engaged solely in self-expression; in a monologue, one character is articulate in a concrete way while the other's presence is felt, though not actually heard. The typical telephone conversation, where only one character is heard and/ or seen, can be taken as an instance of the monologue. What is worth noting is that this speech-type has been borrowed and used by writers of non-dramatic genres. Diwakar (in Maharashtra) wrote in this genre (following Browning) and their writings suggest that this speech-type can only accommodate a limited range of dramatic quality. The monologue is a two-way, unidirectional process while the soliloquy is circular. The latter is more introspective, while the former contains more of dramatic catechism (without its educational bias). This inevitably conditions the voice-production techniques involved, and the voice quality used.

(6) **Aside:** The aside is a dramatic speech-type where a character appears to enjoy temporary dramatic seclusion, and articulates for the benefit of the audience, but not for the other characters present on the stage.

(7) **Character-directed:** In this speech-type, too, there is a temporary suspension of general and all-inclusive communication and only one particular character, of the many present, receives the speech-signals from the originating character. This type has obvious conspirational possibilities which have been used thus in various dramatic traditions. Obviously, like an aside, this speech-type seems to be a minor one insofar as its dramatic potential is concerned.

(8) **Audience-directed:** This is a speech-type that is coming into vogue once again. Here the concerned character talks directly to the audience, communicating with it.

Clearly, the aim is to liberate the dramatic experience, "cribbed, cabined and confined" in a three-sided box. There is also the desire to facilitate audience-participation in dramatic action (and involve it to a greater extent). Various other theoretical convictions also play a part in the increasing reliance on the device. For example, it is now argued that the theatric universe is not an illusion and everything that tends to perpetuate this myth should be countered. This is one of the reasons prompting the inclusion of audience-directed speeches into the playwright's idiom.

### **Bharata's additional speech-types**

A brief reference to Bharata's supplement to the speech-types discussed above is now indicated. Sky-speech (Akashbhashit), whisper (Karne), dream-speech (Swapnayit) and 'death-bed-speech' appear to be new types. Sky-speech is defined as a character's speech to another, invisible character. Akashvani (gods speaking to humans) is perhaps not included in this category because divine expression is beyond the classifiable. "To whisper in the ears of a character that is present" is specified as Karne. To speak in a dream and from the death-bed are self-explanatory types. Apart from these, Bharata also mentions others like Asanpathya and Sthitapathya (speaking while remaining seated and speaking in a standing position). But since these are related to certain situations and more firmly linked with other extra-speech channels like movement and music, they fall outside the purview of our discussion which is concerned with more general speech-types. Speech in senility and the speech of children are points also dealt with by Bharata. But except for Akashbhashit and Karne, his other speech-types do not fall within the present classification based on the criterion: who is the addressee? At the same time, his types reveal a close observation of life-situations insofar as the actual use of voice and its quality is concerned, and, therefore, deserve mention.

### **Speech-types and dramatic potential**

Can it be argued that certain general criteria might help us to estimate the dramatic potential of speech-types? Three considerations may be put forward as useful in this respect.

Firstly, the duration of a speech-type will certainly have a bearing on its dramatic potential. The actual temporal duration of a speech will condition the total



dramatic impact felt by the audience. It is in this context that speech-types like aside or soliloquy or dialogue as major. Of course, much will depend on the context, which might bestow dramatic potential on a mere exclamation, totally incommensurate with its actual duration. But then the exclamation would obviously be a culmination of a whole process of dramatic building-up. The fact remains that, all other factors remaining equal, some optimum duration is essential for any speech-type to be dramatically effective. Perhaps the repetition involved in one-word sentences like "Words, words, words" (in *Hamlet*) or in the agonizing "Howl, howl, howl" (in *King Lear*) are instances of an application of this principle. The speech-practice of lengthening the word-ends or prolonging the vowels are other instances of deliberately increasing the duration of a word for dramatic impact. In cinematic experience, the projected image must remain on the screen for a certain definite duration in order to be perceived. In aural perception, a similar phenomenon may be at work and writers of fragmentary dialogue will have to take cognizance of the fact.

It is self-evident that the duration required cannot be the sole conditioning factor, or the guiding principle, in the actualizing of various speech-types. A smaller duration will have to be used, or interjections and the like might become the prominent idiom of expression due to the exigencies of a dramatic situation. For example, a dream-speech or a death-bed speech cannot be constructed in units of longer duration. Here the canon of dramatic authenticity will exclude lengthy speech-units. At such a point, the second Criterion - stylization -assumes significance. There is a thumb-rule: the shorter the speech-units, the greater the stylization to which they are subject. Stylization is mannered speech and the convention of such a speech enables the actor to arouse a stock response. The stock response, in turn, activates the individual associational hinterland of each member of the audience. Stylized speech is a compressed content-unit and is a shortcut to audience-response of a specified variety. Stylized speech sets the 'tone': it creates a general attitude of receptivity and the actor has less work to do. It also enables him to conserve his energies for more demanding dramatic situations. It is not without reason that conventions of speech in 'tragic', 'historical' and such other styles have been established in all dramatic traditions. Such stylizations represent solutions to definite problems occurring in the affective side of performance. Though the concept of stylization acquires additional intensity in respect of shorter speech-units, it has a wider applicability. It is valid in case of all the speech-types discussed, though in varying degrees.

Thirdly, stylization may extend to the inter-relationship between speech-units and gestures, movements and such other expressive channels. Quite often the inadequacy of speech-units in conveying content is compensated for by their being definitely associated with gesture-language units accepted in a particular cultural group. The dramatic function of gesture-stylization is similar to that of speech-stylization.

These are the general considerations that govern the dramatic potential of all speech-types to a lesser or greater degree. This background will help us to construe theatrical theories and practices in various dramatic traditions.

The playwright's dramatic idea becomes concrete due to his character-ideas. Now these concrete character-ideas come alive, due to the actors, who embody them and transform them into roles. These presentations, which are roles for actors, become characters for the audience. To bridge the distance from the character-idea to the character, we need (dramatic) speech. Now speech is the combined effect of voice and language. When language expresses itself with the help of voice, we have speech in its various garbs. This forms the background to a consideration of the intra-lingual organization of speech-units.

### Language in speech

Quite clearly the language-based speech classification that we are attempting here has a dramatic bias. Other language-related disciplines might be able to put forward different and elaborate classifications, but here our aim is to understand the dramatic element in itself, and this determines the line of our argument. The following series of equations might help us to outline our perspective:

Dramatic Idea (playwright)	+ Individuation (actor)	= Character Idea
Character Idea	+ Vocal Aspect	= Character Tone
Character Tone	+ Language	= Speech (in a play)
Speech	+ Content-organisation	= Style
Style	+ Delivery	= Diction
Diction	+ Performance	= Dramatic Effect

The whole series tries to plot out various stages in the movement from dramatic idea to dramatic effect through the use of voice and speech. Music and acting can also be treated in a similar manner in order to trace out a conceptual map. In a composite form like drama, a whole network of sense-perceptions is involved and

unless each of the constituents is scrutinized in detail, the resulting dramatic perspective could possibly become a warped version of the original. With this in mind, we propose to examine those intra-lingual organizations that are used in dramatic representations. They are often called styles. The speech styles discussed here are: Prose, Literary, Verse, Poetic, Colloquial and Miscellaneous or Inclusive.

## **Prose**

Prose is the purposeful and temporal organization of meaningful words. The prose style states or narrates but all along tries to convey some information. As the dramatic pressure increases, the prose in a play tends to become either literary, or verse, or poetic, or colloquial or inclusive. In the prose style, even the isolated members have a place in the grammatical structure and are bound together by a certain temporal grouping. The sequence of the units is controlled by a sort of 'temporal gestalt', so as to succeed in conveying meaning. From the dramatic point of view, the prose style is to a great extent neutral. It might be rich in thought-content but is unlikely to be a potent dramatic weapon. That is why there are very few instances of unadulterated prose in a play. A rather straight progression of prose and the undulations of emotional contours can hardly accommodate each other. Yet it will be simplistic to suppose that the prose style has no place in dramatics. No dramatic form can be 'dramatic' throughout its entire fabric. There are portions where it is dramatic. These portions require a foil. It is prose that provides it. One is tempted to remark that prose is only latent poetry. Obviously, prose is much more than the simple definition: "it is language organized in time". This was realized by all major theoreticians and theatrics in the nineteenth century. The battles around naturalistic drama also included a fierce debate on the propriety of routine prose, everyday language and such other variations of the prose style discussed here. The tide has turned in the twentieth century. Deviations from prose are attempted in various ways by different authors for different reasons. The details of these deviations are not as relevant as the fact that the prose style aroused deep-rooted loyalties and hostilities in respect of theoretical positions as well as conclusions reached in a pragmatic manner. It has, in reality, proved to be an 'essentially contested concept'. But, as suggested earlier, its unadulterated use remains only a theoretical or minimal possibility in the drama form, mainly because just the mere employment of the human voice denies it that emotional neutrality which is by definition associated with it.

## K. Narayan Kale's Pathya Kavya

In the light of this discussion Kale's addition of a third category, of 'plays meant to be read' (Pathya Kavya), merits attention. In *Natya Vimarsha*, Kale maintains that the traditional Indian categories of poetry, Drishya (to be seen) and Shravya (to be heard), and the conventional inclusion of drama in the former category, are inadequate: many plays are not successful in performance and yet they are good pieces of dramatic literature. He further argues that, in actual fact, performance is not the only criterion of dramatic quality. By building a tradition, of reading plays, playwrights with a literary bent can be encouraged to contribute to dramatic literature. He maintains that Sanskrit plays outlived a living performance tradition because there is no intrinsic connection between possessing a dramatico-literary quality and being stage-worthy. Insistence on stage-worthiness had led to compromises in respect of a play's literary qualities. Kale actively advocated a movement of play-reading. The connection between Kale's plea in favour of non-performable and 'to be read' plays and the qualities of the prose style (discussed above) is self-evident. Even unemotional and routine prose can be turned to account for its rich thought-content once the quality of being dramatic is dissociated from a play's ability to pass the test of stage-worthiness. Kale makes a subtle distinction between Natyaroop and Natyatma. The latter is applicable to non-performable categories of literature with a dramatic quality, while the former refers to drama that must be performed. Kale's arguments add a new dimension to the debate on the dramaturgical evaluation of the prose style.

## Literary style

Literary style is attained by subjecting the prose style to qualitative redaction through a stress on the written version of words. A written word can be described as one which is rarely and artificially introduced in routine language patterns. Such a word appears mature and dignified in bearing. In the context of Marathi and other Indian languages, it is often a Sanskrit word. From the dramatic point of view, the word appears a trifle artificial. The literary style is emotionally less neutral because the weight of the past invests it with an associational richness. Consequently, a literary word is often more effective dramatically than its prose counterpart. There is thus no contradiction involved in being artificial and yet effectively dramatic.

Since a literary style mainly owes its allegiance to the written tradition, an important criterion of its validity is grammatical correctness. This style resists the influences of linguistic change, ethnic peculiarities, foreign tongues, and alien cultures.

It tries to guard its traditional identity and represents the conservative element in cultural dynamics. Its rather static quality empowers it to demand lexicographical recognition, which adds to its authority or stature.

### **Verse style**

In addition to incorporating to some extent the features of both the prose and literary styles, the verse style has a special identifying characteristic: a temporal pressure resulting in metrical presentation. It is as definite as the prose and literary styles, but essentially more regular. The regularity of the temporal cycle brings it nearer to performance features like voice and its projection. Hence the verse style, unlike the other two, is more dependent for its actualization on performance. Predictably, the verse style owes primary allegiance to the tradition of recitation. It represents to a greater degree, controlled movement and also pattern-prone usage. The tradition of recitation presupposes the existence of 'tunes' - maybe in some cases rudimentary ones. Basically, it means using words in definite tonal modulations. Recitation is always an evidence of established matrices that indicate how and to what extent the written word is to be 'changed' in the process of articulation. Frequently, these stabilized moulds in the recitation tradition are methodically passed on as part of a wider instructional process. One realizes that the styles discussed (prose, literary, verse) represent a progressive moving away from dramatic and emotional neutrality. Due to its minimal or rudimentary tonal cadences and metrical regularity, the verse style also proves to be perceptibly more musical and it is hardly surprising that it has a closer affinity to another temporal art, dance.

### **Colloquial style**

It is a style which is realized when a language is actually used by a particular cultural group. The written version of a word often gets changed in this style due to several reasons. That varied strata of society find such a word easy to pronounce seems to be the main influence in shaping the style's ultimate identity. It is a style which is 'realized' to the maximum extent in performance; it is also functional. It is tied down to an action or a process that takes place in the act of living. Hence if this action or process changes, the corresponding verbal forms are also naturally transformed and at its initiative.

But the most important characteristic of this style is the proportion of words that can be called (following Pirandello) 'spoken action' words. Words differ in their action-proneness. All words are not pregnant with action to the same extent. In every society there is an accepted and established language of gestures, movements etc. For example, if one wants to utter the word 'come', the direction and the extent of the hand movements, the placement of the feet, the accompanying eye and facial expressions correspond to a certain type. An intrinsic relationship is established between such words and the various ways of exploiting other expressive channels. Such words are assignations. These are, in my opinion, action-prone words and the colloquial style abounds in them.

Such words would seem incongruous if they were to be merely articulated. They are compact units of Abhinaya. Naturalistic acting involves acting presented in accordance with the content of these words. The action-pregnant word has another important distinctive quality. It tries to express the experience in its totality and its capacity to evoke all the senses is unparalleled. It is inherently linked with the day-to-day world. When 'functional', it also tries to facilitate the physical action involved. It embodies a responsive and concerted approach to life. Regard for the mundane world and its concrete acts can, therefore, hardly be taboo to the colloquial style since it consists of action-prone words.

Quite logically, folk arts and folk expression have these action-pregnant words in abundance. Hence their reliance on the colloquial style. Folk expression is not always activated by artistic motivation and folk arts are functional to a large extent. They are vitally related to the life forms of the populace. Their vigour is the result of a 'naturalness', which in this context is a consonance between the manifestation of the word (or language) and the package of assignations embodied in it. The earthiness of folk expression is akin to the connotation of naturalness discussed here.

### **Poetic style**

To be poetic is to be eclectic. Like the prose style, the poetic style is meaningful and temporal but also far more suggestive. Like the verse style, it has all the ingredients of the 'metrical', but even here it more often suggests the metre, without getting fixed in its mould. Metrical expression has a cyclical progression and hence the possibility of tala is always present. The poetic style is not cyclical in this sense. We can have a poetic style in prose drama. Occasionally certain features of the literary style are also exploited. But the poetic style has a greater attraction for the colloquial. The poetic

style, like the colloquial, is performance-oriented but follows a different trail insofar as the functional element enters the picture. The functional quality of the colloquial style suggests the assigned events in real life. The poetic style tends to suggest them. It relies on stances, unlike the colloquial which bases itself on gestures. We have seen that gesture is the grouping of accompanying and accessory expressive channels around the main or relevant one. Stances in the poetic style are gestures with a high colouring. Stylization is also an abstraction and abstraction is distancing. Hence all art-or rather classical art -is highly stylized. The poetic style does the same in the speech aspect and presents a stage farthest removed from the prose style. It uses rhetorical devices with tantalizing subtlety and is perhaps the most difficult style to handle as its very richness might prove a temptation which, unless resisted, makes for literary inflation.

### **Inclusive style**

Admittedly, this could be a superfluous category. But what is suggested here is the use of all the speech styles (discussed till now) to ensure a perfect balance and flexibility. The requirements for the actualization of this style are: a play comprehensive in theme and content; an author equally at home and competent in all the styles; an actor with a sure touch in all aspects of Abhinaya; and an initiated spectator sensitive to all the nuances of speech and performance. This is an ideal placed on record as a theoretical possibility. Here one can only follow Bharata by describing an ideal situation, though it is analysing the actual which forms our main concern.

Our next step would be to deal with the dramatic potentialities of these various styles and then examine their effects on the audience. The classification of speech-types, based on the voice-production techniques used in them, also calls for a similar treatment. Secondly, I believe that there is a definite correspondence between the intra-lingual moulds that speech-styles are and voice-production techniques. And finally, the impact on the audience is the result of a cumulative process to which all aspects of speech contribute, voice-production being one of them. For these reasons we will slightly deviate from the sequence of speech-classifications mentioned earlier and consider the speech-category based on the voice-production techniques involved. Discussion of the dramatic potential of these styles will follow and the last section will seek to explain what it is that makes a speech dramatic.

## Voice-production techniques

In actual fact, there are innumerable voice-production techniques. The possible coordinating movements of the voice-producing mechanism number thousands. In addition, there is the shaping influence of lips, tongue etc. Thus, discernible voice types or voice qualities could be, technically speaking, infinite. But here our direct concern is with those voice qualities that are used in dramatic speech. For the sake of convenience, they will be presented with the corresponding speech-styles already discussed at some length. This section of the argument really needs to be supplemented by some laboratory tested data. But, as a starting point, a conceptual mapping is attempted here to serve as the necessary hypothetical foundation for experimental investigation.

Voice Quality	Speech-Style
Monotonous + minimal accentuation + even pace	Prose
Perceptible pitch variation + definite accentuation + controlled pace	Verse
Limited pitch variation + irregular accentuation + irregular pace	Literary
Modulation + accentuation + abundance of prolonged utterances	Colloquial
Maximum pitch - variation + accentuation + multiplicity of timbre	Poetic
All these qualities with a remarkable degree of flexibility	Inclusive

In addition, we may consider the three acoustic parameters of the human voice as manipulated in dramatic speech. Pitch, volume and timbre can be thus used for a presentation similar to the following:

Pitch	High Medium Bass	Colloquial, Poetic Prose, Verse Literary
Volume	Maximum Medium Minimum	Prose, Literary, Colloquial Verse, Poetic Poetic
Timbre	Whisper Throaty Nasal Tremolo	Complex overlapping of styles involved in respect to this parameter



Since dramatics and voice-production are both realized in performance, no exhaustive verbalization can be attempted at this stage. The branch of acoustics involved here is the emerging discipline of psycho-acoustics. Voice is no more regarded as a mere physiological phenomenon. We are now aware that voice qualities are ultimately determined and received by a culturally conditioned mind.

There is another reason for dealing with voice parameters at this point. In the history of Marathi dramatics, various parameters seem to have assumed importance mainly for acoustical reasons. For example, P. R. Lele notes that till the first decade of the twentieth century having a sonorous, booming voice was synonymous with being a good actor-even in the case of a singer-actor. It is clear that no speech could have made any impact unless it reached the audience. Without the microphone and the public address system, volume as a voice-parameter was extremely important.

To continue with voice-parameters - in the case of physiological acoustics, after a certain stage is reached, any increase in volume automatically involves an increase in the pitch level. Thus, even without any conscious Intention and effort on the part of actors, the pitch (of voice) must have developed into a major affective device and the use of a high pitch in speech became a common practice. Edmund Kean - the famous Shakespearean actor - was criticised for his failure to 'fill' the theatre: his voice was poor in the upper register. From this simple predilection for a high pitch it was only an easy step towards the recognition of the importance of manipulation of the whole available pitch-range. The total gamut of the human voice-from bass to treble-was thus intentionally exploited. Nanasahab Phatak, who was an experimenter with voice, has unequivocally suggested a link between progressive gradation of pitch levels and a speech that depicts a succession of logical thought processes. Interestingly enough, he refers to this 'correspondence' with reference to *Hamlet's* soliloquy. His son mentions that when Nanasahab Phatak enunciated certain sentences in a high pitch, he was inevitably applauded. But later when he started using a bass for the same sentences, only the discerning seemed to appreciate the dramatic propriety of such an application.

The third voice-parameter of timbre received due recognition only recently, or at least subsequent to the emphasis on pitch and volume. Obviously, change in timbre is a matter of nuances and prevailing acoustic conditions play an effective role. Added to this, is the factor of the lessening of the timbre differentiation with the increase in pitch in the areas of upper pitch levels. All this has contributed to the rather late arrival of timbre on the scene. But there is evidence of the perception of

effective timbre manipulation. For instance, P. R. Lele mentions Nanasaheb Phatak's more appropriate use of a supplicating tone of voice in K. P. Khadilkar's *Bhaubandki*.

Perhaps the rather tardy awareness of timbre (as a voice-dimension) is also reflected in the paucity of terms referring to the distinction of quality in voice. This is evident in the comments on voice (and its allied aspects) in the field of music criticism. Timbre registration and timbre manipulation are matters that depend a great deal on the facilities of sound-projection and sound-reception. Timbre-related problems are problems of psychoacoustics and as such need a more detailed examination. But for our purpose the awareness that voice parameters are actually exploited by actors to make their speeches 'felt' as significant dramatic expressions by the audience suffices. Voice training methods must take note of these three parameters as well as the shift of emphasis in their relative importance as agents that actualize the dramatic intentions of the actor and transform them into dramatic experiences for the audience. Whatever the style used by the actor, timbre is going to assume greater importance and particularly today, with the extension of the traditional theatre into broadcasting, television and film. Unfortunately, our training programmes have yet to reflect this awareness. The four specific timbres listed above are only illustrative and comparatively easy to describe as physiological operations. For example, the whisper is the result of air-escape between the laryngeal folds. The nasal tone results from a predominant use of the sinuses as resonators. Apart from the very obvious and stylized use of such a tone for comic roles and comic situations, playwright Mohan Rakesh has argued that dialogues with Anuswara and Anunasika features have a special significance. They superimpose an additional rhythm on the internal rhythm of the words involved and this gives an extra dimension to the meaningfulness of the dialogue. An interesting allusion to another easily identifiable voice timbre is the reported effectiveness of Kean's 'choked' speeches in his famed Shakespearean roles. Choking is a result of the constriction of the pharynx and the building up of air-pressure below the larynx during speech-delivery. The whisper is an established timbre for intrigue-situations, while the tremor is habitually associated with senility, emotional stress etc. The list of possible timbres and instances of their dramatic use can, of course, be elaborated in greater detail but the point really needs no reiteration.

Having classified dramatic speech on the basis of addressee characters and intra-lingual organization, we have tried to establish their interconnection with performance by going on to discuss actual voice qualities. Our next step will be to consider the five speech-styles in respect of their dramatic potential.

### **Dramatic potential of the prose style**

The prose style performs the dramatic functions of providing information that is not actually stageable and of providing a suitable foil for the more important dramatic passages or portions. Yeats put it picturesquely when he defined prose as an unmemoried flower.

Two additional and, interestingly enough, contradictory uses of the prose speech-style (monotone) have been noted. Keshavrao Date records that in his role of the Fool in *Vichitraveela* (by S. P. Joshi), he gained a better control over the audience's responses by a cold, monotonous delivery and a matching facial expression. On the other hand, throughout the entire play *Keechakavadha* (by K. P. Khadilkar), the legendary Bhagwat employed a straight, unbending tone for his portrayal of the stern Keechaka. Such instances indicate that the prose style can be dramatically fruitful.

### **Dramatic potential of the literary style**

As mentioned earlier, in the literary style the written version is preeminent; Sanskrit words are used even at the risk of their appearing pedantic; grammatical correctness is regarded as a criterion of validity; limited pitch-variation, irregular accentuation and pace are the rule. The literary style achieves dramatic impact through dazzling our ears. The language of daily life is loose, an approximation of the original expressive intent. Things are left half-said. Literary style, being more precise, tends to overpower us because of a continuous performance of expressive forces which are otherwise at our command only on rare occasions.

Secondly, the style is word-centered and 'word' as an entity assumes a stature of its own. The style abounds in rhetorical devices like similes, puns and metaphors. 'Word' as an image of sound also receives due attention. Rhymes, assonances are so copiously used that they tire the audience and blunt listening acuity. Frequently dramatic potential suffers on account of this ear-filling verbal bombardment. The drama waits; it is stalled and the language continues interminably, numbing our critical faculties and the theatre which Brecht would have called 'naive' comes into existence. Acting becomes stereotyped; movements acquire a mechanical quality and speeches are used as to earn applause. Keshavrao Date, commenting on R. G. Gadkari's plays, remarked that the extreme potency of the playwright's language could ensure appreciation for even a commonplace actor. But a perceptive actor could gain little satisfaction from performing in these plays.

Perhaps a basically adverse effect of the style is that it creates misgivings about the very necessity of a dramatic performance. Date points out that it is enough to read plays that rely on this style. They need reciters and not actors! Since the literary style suffers from a noticeable lack of 'spoken-action' or action-prone words, it is logically impossible to associate natural acting with it. A mature actor wearies of such plays. Date records that after acting in Diwakar's sensitive and refined one-act tragedy (*Karkun*), with its surprisingly 'modern-sounding' naturalistic dialogue and undercurrent of poetic pathos, he could no longer bring himself to like *Bebandshahi*, a play marked by literary bombast. His experience of acting in *Karkun* led him to conclude that the fewer the words, the more conducive the situation for good acting. Annasaheb Karkhanis, a pioneer of the modern Marathi drama, makes a statement which is almost a sensibility-echo. He is reported to have said, "The better the actor, the less does he compel the playwright to write!" Faced with this kind of spare style, the actor can either surrender to it or change it since the alternative of minor modification is not available to him.

Of course, this is not to suggest that the literary style has no place in dramatics for there is a positive side to its achievements. A certain amount of artificiality has a place in dramatics and no other style can give it to us with such facility and adequacy. There are instances of the successful generation of the comic spirit (in its various species) through the clothing of comparatively trivial content in 'profound' and high-sounding language. It is the easiest approach to the creation of the comic—perhaps a type of mechanical juxtaposition rather than any imaginative conception. Whatever its genesis, the literary style does have dramatic potential in this regard.

Another facet of dramatic potential that receives some brilliance due to the literary style is the element of conflict. More often than not the conflict is resolved through one or the other adversary gaining the upper hand. Till this phase of definite ascendancy is reached, many a dramatic presentation will not be realized at all. One among the many unfailing methods of accomplishing this state of dramatic eminence for a particular dramaturgical agent is to use literary style in its favour. This is because the literary style denotes authority. It is not without reason that kings, judges, employers, wealthy individuals, propertied men (and husbands in the good old days!) were depicted articulating this style.

Assertion of authority through this style exploits by implication our regard for and submission to tradition. The literary style is after all based on the written version of words and the tradition of written works has a long standing. This tradition is frequently invoked in the literary style by quotations, allusions etc. The archaic

element in language, the pedantic touch all reinforce the authority of a particular participant in a dramatic conflict.

A corollary should be added here. One need not assume that the 'literary' is the sole prerogative of Sanskrit. The use of English in a Marathi play, or recourse to urbanized Marathi in an otherwise 'colloquial' play follow the same logic. Not surprisingly, this practice is similar to what we experience in daily life. Employing non-native words is an attempt to invoke an additional authority, perhaps that of a historically superior-rather a conqueror's-culture. The manner in which the literary style is resorted to and the degree to which it is employed are both quite symptomatic and might reveal much more than matters pertaining to stylistics.

### **Dramatic potential of the verse style**

In discussing the dramatic potential of various speech-styles, we have reversed the order of the literary and the verse styles followed in the discussion of the categories based on intra-lingual moulding. This is because the literary style stands midway in the movement towards metrical regularity on the temporal plane. It is said that rhetorics is distortion added to metre, exaggeration superimposed on prose. In certain ways the literary style makes a tentative and accidental approach towards the verse style but it stops short of the verse style while the poetic tends to go beyond the latter.

The main features of the verse style include: greater temporal pressure; regularity of the temporal cycle; strong reliance on performance for realization of its identity; allegiance to the tradition of recitation; perceptible pitch-variation; definite accentuation; controlled pace; and proneness to patterns.

From the dramatic point of view, this style has multiple virtues. Firstly, it performs the invaluable task of compressing matter which, if narrated in prose, would diffuse the dramatic tension. In the Kirloskar and Deval eras of Marathi dramaturgy the saki, dindi, katav and other verse-moulds were used quite effectively for this purpose. Every performing art aims at the primary target of arresting the attention of the spectator. That verse succeeds in doing this is a clear gain. Apart from the feature of almost regular accentuation, most metres have certain cadences. These in some cases have definite pitch values. Consequently, the verse-moulds denote the gradual and almost surreptitious entrance of music into the dramatic fabric. This, too, helps in arresting the attention of the spectators. In musicals, such usages serve as a foil to the

specialized use of art music for the songs etc. One must have levels of musicality if music is to be felt intensely. Versification, whether metrical or non-metrical, fulfils this purpose almost unerringly.

Another quality of the verse style, and one not so easy to perceive, is its capacity to communicate the emphasis to a deeper memory-level. We know that our memory is of two types: a short-span memory and a long-span memory. The former is easily and quickly affected by the devices of assonance, rhyme etc. Verses that consist of such features act as mnemonic devices. A dramatic conclusion or a point of dramatic significance lingers in the memory when conveyed in such verses. A protagonist's declaration, a hero's oath, a villain's resolve, are among the statements traditionally conveyed through (short or long) verses. The scene-ending couplets in Shakespeare are a case in point. One of the chief objectives of a dramatist is to create imprints of various intensities in the spectator's minds. This aim is ably aided by versification.

A very important point is made in favour of verse by Raymond Williams and J. B. Styan who submit that verse is not just a manner of speaking, but that it also provides a pattern of movement. Williams affirms that in addition to giving clear indications of physical movements, verse also serves as a guide to the tempo of a scene. He explains how Shakespeare does not use verse to identify characters, that he does not use it so to speak as a prosodic leit-motif but to mark the contours of feelings in a particular scene. In an enlightening address to opera-actors, Stanislavsky, too, remarked that they were more fortunate than prose-actors because music provided them with a readymade and easily felt framework for action and movements. This obviously applies to the verse style. As Styan points out this factor assumes greater importance in non-representational drama where there are no 'material' guidelines for action and movements.

In another context Gielgud remarks that speech and silence are both 'the most powerful factors in a living theatre'. That pauses represent the principle or element of silence is self-evident. It logically follows that since pauses of various values and occurring at various speech positions are structurally in-built in verse, the verse style also assumes considerable importance on this count. Pauses are accompanied by pace-control and thus the very dynamics of a performance is linked with this seemingly external linguistic feature. Such pauses are silent equivalences of dialogues. The value of pauses is understood even in primitive theatres. P. G. Kanekar vividly describes the early Dashavtari performances and those of the Vishnudas Bhave era where demon-characters used to mark the pauses by stamping their feet. Obviously, this was an act of supplying stress-clues to the audience. Admittedly, this was more of a 'physical' device;

it was 'a boisterous gesture' designed to arrest the spectators' attention. But perhaps it was also a naturalistic piece of acting since the characters involved were demons!

The above discussion is not confined to metrical verse alone. It applies to free verse as well. As T. S. Eliot has pointed out, free verse always suggests metre. One might say that it has a concealed metrical frame. Besides, broken lines and other such features often give a flexibility to metrical verse which then appears to be 'free'. Devices such as the running line or the broken line mark a definite increase in the malleability of the verse-structure and add to the dramatic potential- the best of the prose and verse worlds being thus available. That verse is not resistant to experimentation and can in performance bring into it more effective transformations was successfully demonstrated by persons like William Poel, whose 'tuned tones' sought to devise a delicate medium, free from the feeling-killer metronomic regularity of metre and the drabness of naturalistic prose.

The only handicap of the verse style is that the reception and consequent impact of its latent music depends to a very great extent on the nondramatic verse available in a particular society. Allardyce Nicoll rightly credited Elizabethan non-dramatic verse with helping the audience of the time to appreciate (in a better and subtler fashion) Shakespeare's orchestrated verse. In a way, it was a trained, initiated audience that heard and saw Shakespeare. It could instinctively respond to him and the verse style became the predominant one in the dramaturgy of the time. Perhaps the situation is an instance of a 'stylistic gestalt' in dramaturgy where non-dramatic verse served as the background for an appreciation of the contours of dramatic verse.

In my opinion, verse-plays, as a genre, are likely to become more and more important for Marathi dramaturgy, which is now stylistically at an impasse. Marathi dramatists cannot persist with the Deval-Khadilkar-Gadkari styles and yet hope to give new content to Marathi theatre. At the same time, they cannot hope to reach the audience if they continue to rely on the 'absurd' tone and content or follow the high poetic style.

### **Dramatic potential of the colloquial style**

The colloquial style is characterized by the topicality or 'currency' of language as the chief criterion. The 'currency' is determined by whether the language can be easily pronounced by a majority of the cultural group; by its tendency to change, if required, irrespective of the written version of the expression in question; by the fact of

it being saturated with 'action-prone' or 'spoken action' words; by a large degree of modulation and accentuation; and by an abundance of prolonged utterances.

Here the discussion of dramatic potential, of the term 'colloquial' is not confined to dialects or language variations of backward regions. Urban areas are also subject to various influences: whether words are easy to pronounce, the impact of non-native languages, the current usages made fashionable by the mass-media. These influences affect the standard and written language to create another 'language', the colloquial one.

The 'spoken action' words of this style are, in reality, units-package units of Abhinaya. No tutoring is necessary to 'act' out these words which have built-in ways of articulation, facial, eye and body-expression, movements etc.

From the point of view of dramatic potential, 'spoken-action' words (and hence the colloquial style) express life experience more comprehensively. Members of a cultural group inherit such a style, and its words, when 'acted' out differently, provoke a kind of irritation. This is because recourse to such words creates certain expectations and only their proper usage helps to resolve tensions. Then the dramatic experience and the expression become more 'natural', through the prominence of the colloquial. This creates a sense of belonging and increases the possibility of a greater rapport with the audience.

### **Dramatic potential of the poetic style**

The poetic style is noted for being suggestive and eclectic; meaningful and temporal but significant and flexible in its time-bound framework; near to the performance but avoiding functionality; highly stylized; capable of maximum pitch variation, accentuation and multiplicity of timbre.

As has been pointed out, this style is allusive and suggestive of meaning and metre respectively and tends to assume a stance rather than indicate a gesture. Hence the organization of linguistic factors, selection of ideas and images and vocabulary used- all seem to be dissociated from any concrete situation, character, period and other such components of total expression. It is inclined towards abstraction. It seeks to connote but shies away from denoting.

From the viewpoint of dramatic potential, the style moves the whole expression to a tone of emotionality (which is not to be confused with sentimentality). It



does not state and is reluctant to draw conclusions. It tries to evoke a steady emotive state, a mood. Rather than eliciting the response of a particular, definable emotion it aims at raising the entire experience to a higher plane, where the event described is only an excuse for a realization of the style which goes beyond 'utility' objectives. The drive is towards permanent values and abstract excellence.

A heightened emotional state facilitates the abstraction which, in turn, enlarges the span of associations that are roused. The spectator is thus encouraged to become introspective: those individual associations which are in consonance with the general tone of the experience projected are stirred. This compels us to recognise the narrowness of a vision which posits only two sides to a problem. It rejects the notion of choice between good and bad, true and false, beautiful and ugly. No thought, feeling or action is believed to belong to any one of these camps. The style is ambiguous and suggests that life itself is essentially ambiguous. It is interesting to note that many of the well-known soliloquies begin in the prose style but imperceptibly slide into the poetic.

Dramatically speaking, the poetic style has always been an alluring, yet devastating factor, depending on the ability of the playwright. He has to execute a tight-rope dance, trying to ward off the twin curses of narrow esotericism and diluted inclusiveness.

In conclusion, the dramatic potential of the various speech styles should be noted with these qualifying clauses: (1) No hierarchical implication is intended and styles are relevant or irrelevant, depending on dramatic needs which are of all types; (2) Speech-styles always overlap but one of these seems always to be predominant and the classification is to be viewed in this light; (3) Imagery, rhetorical features are not considered here merely from the point of view of projection and performance. The basic organization of the language material and the corresponding voice quality variations are the ruling factors in the phenomenon of speech; (4) Each of these styles incorporates features of the others and can still maintain a fair degree of stylistic homogeneity. Certain features are shared not by virtue of their basic material, language, but because the mental content in humans tends to be channelized in various expressive modes with mercurial swiftness. Sheer linguistic overlapping could perhaps have been demarcated but the sharing by the human mind of modes of expression is an altogether different phenomenon.

## Bharata and dramatic speech

Bharata is important because the basic principles that he enunciated still apply to speech as used in the Marathi theatre. The tradition seems to have been maintained, perhaps unconsciously, and without sufficient documentary backing or supportive action. This is also true in the case of music, since both are performing arts with an oral tradition.

Bharata's connotation of the term Abhinaya is very wide-ranging and to equate his Vachika Abhinaya with speech is a semantic sin. In his *The Theatric Universe*, Pramod Kale has rightly pointed out that, as conceived in the *Natyashastra*, Abhinaya embraces the same wide connotation which the term 'communication media' has today. Speech has, therefore, to be understood as one important part of Vachika Abhinaya.

Describing Vachika Abhinaya as the body of drama, Bharata maintains that the physical acting, costumes and make-up and the psycho-physical representation convey merely the meaning of (the playwright's) words. Keshavrao Date, discussing the nature of Abhinaya, declared that it was only a linking-up of the spaces between words.

Apart from a detailed account of metres, literary devices, the demerits of poetry, Bharata enunciates the nature of vowels, and consonants, the stress in pronunciation as well as the pitch levels that should be used while uttering them. Swarakaku (the subtle and meaningful modulations of voice) is also discussed. Pramod Kale has argued (and rightly) that the phonetic bias in Bharata is due to the fact that India has many major languages and because Sanskrit drama itself used more than one language. I would suggest that though this is true, it was basically a rudimentary type of tonal symbolism like in recitation. Bharata names Ati-Bhasha, Arya-Bhasha (both used the Sanskrit language) for gods and royalty respectively; Jatibhasha (mother-tongues of various ethnic groups) and Jatyantari (Prakrit) for regional characters and birds and beasts respectively. This indicates that in the particular context he meant by Bhasha a general 'tone' to symbolize a certain content in theatrical situations. Bharata further refers to the pitch-levels to be used while addressing persons far away, at a medium distance and close by. Obviously, pitch was the most important vocal parameter. As mentioned earlier on, the same dimension is predominant in the Marathi theatre and the acoustic conditions of the place of performance do not offer the sole explanation for this situation.

Bharata mentions four types of voice-production: high, low, resonant and tremulous. These he associates with definite mental states and emotions. For speech projection he lays down five which I interpret thus.

Viccheda	: with pauses
Arpana	: with the intense emotion of dedication
Visarga	: in a staccato style, abruptly
Deepana	: with vigour
Prashaman	: with a falling pitch-level

Even here pitch and secondly volume seem to be the important vocal parameters. In addition, there is the important role allocated to pauses, to be expected in the case of a language like Sanskrit which depends a great deal on the place and extent of pauses for changes in meanings.

Certain general conclusions seem to be warranted by Bharata's dramatic vision in respect of speech:

(i) Bharata's drama was a Nritya-Natya (dance-drama) and speech in it was couched in the verse style. Certain traditional 'tunes' are customarily associated with verses. Bharata's prescription for a definite association between particular vowels etc. and certain pitch-levels needs to be understood in this light. It was natural for him to assume such correspondence since they were probably based on the popular practice of the time (the Lokdharmi aspect).

(ii) Though Bharata defines prose as 'syllables joined together solely for expression of meaning', his treatment of this style is in a much lower key. But one cannot rule out a declamatory tone for projecting prose. Since declamation has pitch-range as its main dimension, Bharata logically concludes that certain vowels can retain their identity at certain pitch-ranges and lose it at others. Here the 'manual' aspect of the Natyashastra is in evidence.

(iii) In the absence of the public address system and owing to the characteristic 'cave' type architecture of the auditorium, pitch and loudness were the most effectively manipulated dimensions. Only the easily discernible timbres, and those not-so-subtly produced (like nasal, whispered, tremulous) were in use. Dancing (or at least rhythmically moving) bodies cannot be expected to handle the timbre dimension with much variety. The psycho-physiological and psycho-acoustical aspect of sound, namely timbre, is, therefore, not treated with so much emphasis.

(iv) Compared to the Angika and Aharya Abhinaya-s (the body-movements and costumes etc.), Vachika Abhinaya is less symbolical and more natural.

(v) As stated earlier, Bharata's Vachika Abhinaya mainly consisted of recitation. One cannot associate with it the highly unpredictable, irregular temporality, the ambiguous status (pitch-wise) or the independence (timbre wise) of prose.

The Natyashastra was simultaneously a treatise, a compilation and an actor's manual. Bharata never lost sight of the audience. He leaves instructions for judging the audience-response. Thus, his dramatic insight was never merely theoretical. In other words, whatever theoretical conclusions he presented can be safely assumed to have a vital connection with the performing tradition. Hence it would be pertinent to note his answer to our main question: What is dramatic speech?

Briefly, Bharata's position on this question is:

Natya is imitation of emotional states; of actions and behaviour of people as presented through the process of histrionic representation (Abhinaya).

His detailed exposition of the four-fold nature of Abhinaya leads us to the following conclusions: (a) Imitation is not confined to physical or overt acts; (b) Imitation must be communicated to an initiated audience. Thus performance is inevitable in Natya; (c) Abhinaya is a principle of total acting. No single aspect like movement, words etc. should be allowed a 'solo' in a dramatic performance. Even if one of these aspects is more relevant and, therefore, more prominent, the expression units in that particular medium must be accompanied by other correlated media units. Hence speech is inevitably accompanied by definite body-movements, eye and facial expressions. For Bharata stylization was a substitute, a compensation for dramatic expression which would have been otherwise a matter of one-sided presentation. He was for total representation. As mentioned earlier, Bharata advocates symbolization for other categories of Abhinaya, but confines the process of abstraction to the stage of stylization where Vachika is concerned. Perhaps speech is too involved with the immediate to be symbolized.

### **What is dramatic?**

At this point the nature of dramatic quality, and especially its speech-manifestation can be considered on a theoretical plane. Here the distinction between

'dramatic' and 'aesthetic' should not be overlooked. The problem of deciding the aesthetic status of dramatic expression is to be left to the aestheticians. A dramatic representation may or may not be an aesthetic realization. On the other hand, the 'dramatique' being an art-principle at the meta-aesthetic level will have a place in all art activity. This is what enables us to refer to other art forms and styles as dramatic. The 'dramatique' is a core-concept in all dramatic representations or histrionic expressions, while it becomes a peripheral concept in other arts. This core to periphery shift is not merely analogical but is the result of a process which can be described as artistic transliteration i.e. finding out corresponding basic expressive units in two or more arts and utilizing them as such. One or more of the following elements of the 'dramatique', when transliterated in other art forms, endow them with the dramatic quality. Borrowing from T. S. Eliot, we can describe the whole activity as an attempt to find out medium-based artistic correlatives to elements of the 'dramatique'.

Very predictably, performance-orientation comes to the fore. The 'dramatique' needs a performance to realize itself. Here the identity depends on the act of actualizing. In the absence of a performance the 'dramatique' remains an idea - an abstract entity. Performance-orientation also means that the text or the written play and its performance differ to a great extent. K. Narayan Kale has argued that performance is, in reality, a transformation based on the act of 'changing' the art. Others have referred to the text as a skeleton or a notation that becomes respectively a figure and a score in a performance. It is this performance-orientation that seriously endangers the critical validity of the work of critics and theoreticians who rely more on the text of a play than on the performance. Kale has noted the discomfiture of 'literary' critics who evaluated Madhavrao Joshi's farcical plays just by reading them. As Lucas has remarked, 'mid-night oil gives a very different illumination than the footlights'. Date perceptively pointed out that a performance is important because it shows us the alternative interpretations of any character. Performance thus not only brings a play into dynamic existence, but it adds considerably to it. As maintained by Bharata, it is the performance that makes or mars a play.

Almost as a corollary to performance-orientation, the 'dramatique' is characterized by an audience: its physical, collective presence; its participation and finally the submission of the collective mind to the performer/performance. Gielgud confesses, "I never feel I have a part under control until I have played it in public for at least six weeks". Obviously, audience-presence helps to shape and stabilize the actor's interpretation in the enactment of the total design. K. P. Khadilkar is known to have regularly watched his own plays sitting in the auditorium. This suggest that audience-

participation by way of responses is a factor that enables the dramatist to experience the real and not the intended identity of a play. Audience-participation can be of a more direct and physical type and all modern dramatic movements have emphasized this factor. The direct addresses to the audience and other similar efforts are aimed at greater involvement of the audience. Audience-presence, participation and involvement are finally expected to result in a surrender or submission of the collective mind or sensibility to the spirit of the performance. Khadilkar compared the audience to recalcitrant horses to be broken by the performers! Obviously, the Brechtian idea of a 'smoker's theatre' allots a different role to the audience, but its presence is not counted as superfluous. Bharata regarded the 'audience' factor as so important that he laid down guide-lines for reading audience reactions through its gestures, movements, exclamations and other behaviour patterns.

The third important feature of the 'dramatique' is its impact-orientation. It is not only an attempt to perform before an audience but also for the audience. Kale maintains that the performer's chief concern is to sustain the attention of the audience. Stanislavsky's advice to actors was: On the stage there must be a 'grip' in everything! Perhaps no other art-form outside the family of the performing arts is so vitally interested in the immediate impact on the recipients. This is because the impact on the audience as reflected in its responses shapes the final expression of the artistes. The impact is a formative influence. Performance is a social activity and theatre-experience has a type of circularity which makes it a unique form of total involvement. The inevitable necessity of the 'impact-response' is reflected in the need expressed for an initiated audience: because an inferior response suggests an indifferent impact and thus a progressive deterioration of performance standards.

The fourth important feature of the 'dramatique' is its ritual quality. The connection between drama and ritual is not only genetic. What is involved is the mode of consciousness. All human activity is an act of bridging the isolated units of a society and the completed cycle is called communication. Communication is verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is related to the non-ritualistic mode of consciousness; the non-verbal to the ritualistic mode. A ritual is an act of value-permeation of the unconscious with the aid of routinized psycho-physical and culture-based gestures. Many instance of stylization on the stage probably owe their origin to the ritual element in the 'dramatique'. Kale at one point mentions the persistence and necessity of conventions in performance. He notes that irrespective of the traditional or the modern approach towards drama, Marathi performers invariably follow the convention of worshipping the stage and the Nataraja before the curtain goes up. Pramod Kale

maintains that theatre in Bharata was a synthesis of the sacred and the profane, and the elaborate Poorvanga ritual, with its invocation to Nataraja, was a bridge between the mundane activity of the world and the sacred ritual that a dramatic performance was considered to be. But what is meant here is a different kind of rituality. In brief, it means that all the participants in the dramatic activity are in a keyed-up mental state. Everyone tries, either actively or passively, to focus energies on a centrally located event. Each of the participants 'prepares' for the event and has a series of expectations. Finally, norms of participation and its extent are traditionally established, and any non-conforming factor or activity is discouraged. Everyone, from Bharata to Stanislavsky, has remarked on almost all the aspects of dramatic conception, representation and reception.

These features of the 'dramatique' have two special methods of expression: Improvisation and the Conflict-Contrast syndrome. Improvisation means a deliberate last-minute deviation by the performer from the original plan of presentation, which is ultimately expected to be the richer in artistic quality due to this deviation. In all the varieties of Abhinaya, performers are known to have used improvised gestures, tones, movements and dramatic training programmes have included improvisation exercises. Theoreticians like Craig, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov have advocated a holiday from the text-thus introducing improvisation in the ground plan stage of dramatic activity. The conflict-contrast syndrome has a wider reach. Playwrights, actors, stage-designers have all depended on the use of 'conflict-contrast' for communicating the 'dramatique'. Conflict is the deliberate placement in opposition of two or more units in any expressive channel used by the artistes; contrast is purposeful juxtaposition of overtly or latently related factors in the expressive channels in use. Obviously, conflict is a grosser variety and contrast, a more subtle one.

These features of the 'dramatique' are manifest in speech.

## **The 'Dramatique' in Speech**

### **Performance-Orientation**

Its occurrence in speech is evident. Speech is an 'act'-a physiological and perceptual fact. There cannot be a silent speech though speech might contain interspersed silences. To realize itself, speech has to be 'sounded'. The idea of a speech is only a shadow of the acoustic reality. Every time a speech is made there is a fresh start

and completion of a set of activities. Hence it has potentially immense variety as well as the accompanying difficulty of maintaining a definite minimum standard.

### **Audience**

The audience might actually take part in a dramatic speech by its vocal responses, but it also controls the dramatic quality in speech in an in-direct manner. The very presence and size of the audience conditions the pace of speech. The larger the audience the more patterned the speech; the pattern enables the listeners to complete what is not clearly heard. The use of recitation with built-in and expected pauses is, in fact, a channel to control the audience as well as get controlled by it. Pauses are not mere punctuation marks. They are junctions of the actor's impact and the audience's response. As Styan puts it, pauses are planned by the author and prepared by the actor for the sake of the audience. Due to the prominence of recitation, and on account of the nature of the Sanskrit language, Bharata gave detailed instructions about the use of pauses. Pitch, volume and timbre dimensions have today become more manageable due to the public-address-system but this is not so with pace. The very presence of an audience compels a deviation from the usual speech-pace-mostly slowing it down and chiselling out its individual components. A very important function in speech delivery - the isolation and framing of speech - is mainly possible through the employment of pauses which, in turn, serve as beacons of audience-attention.

### **Impact-Orientation**

It is the impact-orientation that compels a dramatic speech to deviate in all respects from the routine use of vocal parameters. Even naturalistic speech is no exception. All it does is to use more pauses than varieties like rhetorical speech. Raising or lowering of pitch, increasing or decreasing voice-volume or changes in voice-timbres have all to be extremely pronounced in dramatic speech to make an impact. Apart from these slight but deliberate exaggerations, dramatic speech uses another device of presenting speech along with other accompaniments like gestures, movements, facial expressions etc. Associating one sense-expression with others in a deliberate fashion makes for the 'dramatique'. Association of speech-units with expressive units in other senses make for synaesthetic expression. It is not so in our day-to-day speech-usage. Accentuation of the synaesthetic aspect in speech is a potent impact-making device. We have already discussed the nature of 'spoken action' words or 'action-pregnant' speech-units. The 'dramatique' in speech involves greater use of these.



## **Ritualizing**

Speech-wise, the element of rituality in the 'dramatique' becomes obvious in certain features of voice usage. The incantatory use of voice is the first of these features. Incantation means that pitch-modulations within a limited range are repeated in a languid rhythm which may or may not move towards a climactic, fast tempo. Quite often the syllables used are otherwise meaningless and there is a clear preponderance of nasal consonants and resonant vowels.

Another important speech-feature touched by ritualizing is the accompanying gestures, movements etc. These are not only stylized but symbolic. They are regarded as sacred and not easily alterable. Speech accompanied by these has a power of suggestion that goes far beyond verbal content.

Speech ritualized (whether with or without a religious content) means speech possessing a fervour, a special emotional charge. It does not try to convey any particular meaning but seeks to induce an emotional state. Ritualizing makes the speech more ambiguous and at the same time more suggestive. It triggers off associations, without communicating definite feelings.

Improvisation and the conflict-contrast syndrome are thus the two prominent methods followed by artistes to realize the four features of the 'dramatique' in speech.

The foregoing discussion has, in the main, confined itself to theory. It will have to be linked with the extent, nature and operation of voice culture in dramatic speech. This will also involve a consideration of training in dramatic speech with voice culture as a contributory discipline.