

Performative Gender And Religions In South Asia

Prof. Sarbani Banerjee

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

Lecture 07

Sanskrit Dramaturgy and Rasa Theory III

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Performative Gender and Religions in South Asia. So, we are discussing Sanskrit, dramaturgy and Rasa theory. Today we are going to start with a new topic of Nayak and Nayaka as have been described in Bharat Muni's Natyasastra. The word Nayak in rhetoric or dramaturgy means the hero of a poetic composition, which means the hero of a play or drama. In the Natyasastra, Nayak has been defined as the one who relieves himself from any contingency and triumphs over all hurdles and appears to be the protagonist amongst all the other male characters of the play. Now Bharat mentions in his work that there are four types of Nayak, primarily four types of Nayak.

All four Nayak types have been identified among the qualities of Uttam and Madhyama, the superlative and the qualities that just come beneath or after the superlative. Uttam is the superlative and the qualities just beneath or after the superlative refer to the Madhyama varieties. So the Nayak has been categorized or divided into the following. So Dhirodhata referring to brave and haughty, Dhiralalita referring to brave and sportive, Dhirodhata referring to brave and magnanimous, and finally Dhiraprashaanta referring to brave and calm.

So Dhir, the root word Dhir could mean brave, courageous, resolute and so on. So Bharat Muni here is laying down four primal positions in the order of social rankings. This is to say that Bharata lays down that the gods are basically Dhirodhata, kings are Dhiralalita, ministers are Dhirodhata and brahmins and men from the business community are Dhiraprashaanta. Bharata and Abhinavagupta do not talk about the attributes of these Nayaks. Rather, what they are doing is they are talking about the nature of the characters in accordance with their status.

So they are not directly describing Dhirodhata, Dhiraprashaanta, Dhiralalita or Dhirodhata. Rather, they are talking about the qualities, the ideal qualities that a king should have, the army leader should have, the chaplain, the minister, the secretaries, the judges, wardens of princes and courtiers should have. This is also to remind that Sanskrit tradition and Sanskrit literature artforms has this preoccupation with royal linkages, royal backgrounds. So most of the characters are royal personages. These qualities ascribed to the different positions seem to be in relation with, like I said, the status of a person, the socio-economic status that a particular person enjoys and correspondingly certain duties are expected or required to be performed for that particular post.

So, a king has a certain dharma or certain duties to be fulfilled in a society. Similarly for the minister, for the warden, for the prince, for the courtiers and so on. So, like I said already, neither Bharat Muni nor Abhinavagupta are describing the four types of Nayak. They are rather talking about some ideal features or characteristics for each of the social ranks or positions. From there, we are going to move on to the Nayika or the heroine. The Ashta Nayika is the collective term for Bharat's eight types of Nayikas or heroines.

The eight Nayikas represent eight different states or avastha in relation to the hero or the Nayak. So, the Natya Shastra describes the Nayikas in the following order or against these different situations. First is the Vasaka Sajja. So Vasaka Sajja is the heroine dressed up for the union, consummation. She is waiting for her lover to return from a long journey.

She is shown in her bedchamber, which is adorned with lotus leaves and garlands. Next we have Virahotkanthita. Virahotkanthita or Utka (and these are the terms described by Keshavdas).. So, Virahotkanthita is the Nayika that is distressed by separation from her lover. Virah and Utkantha, anxiety due to separation. She is the upset heroine that is pining for her lover who because of some preoccupation fails to return home. She is shown as waiting for him either seated on the bed or standing outside in the pavilion.

The next type of Nayika is Svadhinabhartruka or Svadhinapatika. Svadhinabhartruka or Svadhinapatika, this is also a name by Keshavdas. So Svadhinabhartruka is the type of woman who has her husband in subjection.

She is the woman who is loved by her husband and she controls him. Her passionate affection, love and her attractive charms completely subdue the Nayak or her male counterpart. Next, we are talking about Kalahantarita. Kalahantarita or Abhisandhita, another type that has been named by Keshavdas. So, Kalahantarita refers to the one that is separated by a quarrel with her Nayak.

She is a heroine separated from her lover either due to a fight or because of jealousy or due to her own arrogance. So Kalahantarita is frequently seen as leaving her apartment dejected while she herself grows more and more heartbroken and remorseful without her hero. Next we have the Khandita. Khandita is the enraged heroine. She is angry, she is furious with her lover.

The lover had promised to spend the night with her, but instead he comes to her house in the next morning after spending the night, an amorous, you know, night or venture with another woman. He spends the night with another woman and comes back next morning. So, Khandita is the enraged woman who is shown as irritated and she is very sharply rebuking her partner for his infidelity. Next we have the Vipralabdha. Vipralabdha refers to the heroine that is deceived by her lover.

She is a betrayed heroine who waits for her lover for the entire night. She is shown as throwing away her jewellery and she is distressed and completely broken since her lover has failed to honour his vow, he has failed to keep his word, his promise and come back to her. This occurs, the state of Vipralabdha occurs when a lover meets a Khandita, the enraged woman and offers a tryst; however, he fails to keep his word. Next, we have the Proshitabhartruka. Proshitabhartruka or Proshitapatika, another name by Keshavadasa.

So, Proshitabhartruka is the woman whose husband has gone away from her on a sojourn, on a journey for some business and does not return on the appointed day. She is seen as sitting in a state of sadness, usually surrounded by her retinue, her servants or followers, but she refuses to be consoled. Next we have the Nayika, the type of Nayika which is Abhisarika, going on an Abhisar. She is a heroine who sets aside or who quits her modesty and moves out of her home to secretly meet her lover. She is represented at her front door, she is usually found at the front of her door just leaving the precincts of, you

know, domesticity and modesty behind her, and on her route to the tryst, she needs to overcome many obstacles.

These obstacles come on the way of the Abhisarika in the form of storm, snakes and woodland perils. The most famous, the most popular figure of Abhisarika is Radha or Radharani going, you know, in the dead of the night to meet her lover who is not her husband, Krishna. So in art forms, Abhisarika is commonly portrayed often in a state of hurry towards her destination. So the Nayikas are broadly classified into two varieties of the Sringara rasa, the rasa related to love. So Sringara rasa or the rasa related to love is associated with each of this Nayika, but then two different types of Sringar.

One type is Sambhoga or love in meeting or union or consummation, the other is the Sringar existing in Vipralambha, love in separation. So Vasakasajja, Svadhinabhartruka and Abhisarika are associated with Sambhoga or love in union. All other types of Nayika are associated with Vipralambha or love in separation. Next, we are going to talk about the figure of the Vidushaka. Vidushaka is a court jester or a clown.

In any Sanskrit drama, he is commonly seen and Vidushaka is usually an old member of a dramatic troupe. Bharat mentions Vidushaka along with the hero, the heroine and other actors as receiving divine protection in a stage performance. So the value of the Vidushaka as a source of entertainment is very obvious, it is apparent. Sanskrit drama in the process of development had adopted two major themes, two principal themes of dramatic compositions. One is love, the other is heroism.

So Bharat Muni considers that laughter or pleasure, which is the essential contribution of the court jester or Vidushak is closely connected with the concept of love. Love and laughter, love and pleasure cannot be decoupled, cannot be divorced. So the Vidushak naturally has a place or a position as a companion of the hero in the comedy of love. Love and comedy are two genres that are interspersed and go parallelly, almost kind of wedded to each other and developing each other, developing the plot through speaking to each other and you know, drawing on one another. So Bharat mentions four types of Vidushaka, Lingi or Tapasa, who is associated with the celestial hero.

So depending on the status or the social position of the hero, the Vidushaka's type also changes. If the hero is a celestial one, then the Vidushaka will be Lingi or Tapasa. Next, we have the royal hero who is accompanied by the Dvija or Brahmin Vidushaka. Next, we have a hero who is a minister or a merchant. If the hero or the male protagonist, the Nayak, hails from the merchant class, then his companion Vidushaka will be a Rajajivi or a royal employee.

Finally, if the hero is a Brahmin preceptor or Brahmin teacher, then the Vidushaka is generally a shishya or pupil who accompanies this preceptor. Now in the existing Sanskrit dramatic literature, out of these four types of Vidushakas, only the Brahmin and the pupil, these two types of Vidushakas have survived. The first type survives in the Nataka, Natika and Prakarana types of plays, which are comedies of love and the second type survives in the Prahasanas. So the Vidushaka attached to a merchant hero is supposed to be a rogue. He is depicted as ugly in appearance and his speech and gesture are usually uncouth.

This type is no longer found in the surviving dramatic texts. The hero of Shudraka's Mrichchhakatika, Shudraka's play Mrichchhakatika is about a Brahmin merchant named Charudatta. But his companion or the Vidushaka Maitreya does not necessarily embody the qualities of the Rajajivi. There are just some similarities, where he does have a deformed head and sometimes he recurses to coarse expressions in his speech as is akin to the Vidushaka, the stock type of Vidushaka, the Rajajivi who is associated with a merchant hero. The Vidushaka of a minister is supposed to touch the weak spots of others and comment, ludicrously comment on those weak spots.

He is also expected to speak wittily, use, you know, commonly use some obscene expressions and language and he is also expected to arrange for entertainment for the pleasure-seeking women. The most common type in existing Sanskrit drama texts is the Brahmin Vidushaka, who figures as the companion of the royal hero. The Brahmin Vidushaka or jester's speech and wit are comparatively a little more refined, not very coarse. He is not shown as a roguish character. He has a somewhat.. linguistically speaking he has a higher level and he is supposed to have the capacity or the ability to make even the cultured or the elite audience laugh.

He can elicit laughter even from a cultured audience. So, Sanskrit dramatists have used the Brahmin Vidushaka's pretentious character, his ignorance about ved and shastras, his gluttony, his cowardice as a source for evoking laughter. So, in the course of time all these traits, however, the different stock types and their characteristics, respective characteristics of these different stock types of Vidushakas have lost their freshness, their spontaneity. In the later dramas we see that the figure of the Vidushaka tends to become more stereotypical, more mechanical and almost predictable. Bharat says that laughter or hasya arises out of Sringar or love.

So, this combination of love and laughter is possible only when an improper or a ridiculous element is introduced in the demonstration of love. In the saga of love there has to be a jester figure who in turn, you know, has very important roles in the twists and turns of the plot. All kinds of confusions or errors, ludicrous errors happen due to the presence of this Vidushaka, right? And it enables the plot to move forward. Bharat's statement that laughter is derivable from love and it is available through the friendly mode of address also known as Vayasva...the Vayasva or friendly communication established between the royal hero and his companion the Vidushak within the convention of drama defines this Vidushaka's position as the hero's friend, in the course of the romantic comedy, right? So, he will always accompany the hero and evoke some laughter through dialogue.

The function and role of the Vidushaka have also been firmly established in the later romantic theory, so that the Vidushaka is often described as Kama Sachiva or Nirmala Sachiva, a minister of love or pleasantry of the royal hero. They are, you know, entertaining, constantly entertaining the protagonists. The Vidushaka performs a twofold function as the hero's companion within the frame of the plot, within the story of love. He assists the hero to fulfil his love for the heroine or the Nayika and in the moments of unfulfilled love, in the moments of distress, sorrow, separation or Viraha, this jester figure, the Vidushaka provides necessary comic diversion or relief for the Nayak through words of hope, words of encouragement and he also amuses the Nayak with his speech and behaviour. The most important function of the Vidushaka is therefore to evoke laughter, to provide entertainment, to provide some form of comic diversion or comic relief.

According to Bharat, the Vidushaka can evoke laughter principally in three ways, through his body or bodily gestures, through his costume or the props, the way he dresses up and finally through his speech, the dialogue that the Vidushaka delivers. With this, we come

to the end of our lecture today and let us meet again with another round of discussions in another lecture. Thank you. Thank you.