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Looking at Indian ways of thinking (darsana) and acting (nāţya) in the context of current discussions on 'consciousness'

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By and large, if we follow the current discussions on consciousness in the West we get two impressions. First, one gets to think that the understanding of consciousness is dependent on the understanding of, if not the brain, at least the physical processes guided by some mechanism and having the capabilities for replicating the phenomenon in *vitro* with the help of controlled experiments. Second, there is no consensual definition of the problem, method and the major goals of enquiry itself; and third there is insufficient recognition of the very complexity and subjective nature of the phenomenon. All the three features have jointly contributed towards generating vast literature, dialogues and discussions about a variety of issues relating to consciousness, the primary one being empirical research and on medical possibilities, especially in the area of 'abnormalities'.

1. Introduction

Binding experiences has been the singlemost issue in the center of focus in the last decade of discussions on 'consciousness'

crossing disciplines: neurobiological, quantum mechanical, computational, theoretical, psychological etc. Though the details of what constitutes 'experience' differ by method and perspective, a consensus has emerged that (i) to explain 'consciousness' is to explain 'experience'; (ii) to explain experience is to explain its unity and binding nature. Following this preliminary consensus, however implicit it is, many discussions took place/are taking place from the first, second and third-person perspectives, though main stream discussion is still dominated to a greater extent by third-person approaches.

Given the complexity of 'experience' as a phenomenon for investigation, or as involved in our understanding, it is helpful to look at alternative views about what constitutes an 'experience'. I hope to do this with the help of instances from Indian epistemology and Indian dramaturgy. I will be looking at two different traditions of thinking and experiencing: Indian epistemology in the classical systems of Indian thought and Indian dramaturgy as dealt with in the classical text Nātya Śāstra. By doing this I hope to emphasize the importance of 'experience' as lying in its nuances and juxtapose it with as it is conceptualized now in the 'consciousness' discussions (which is reduced to third-person physical data, deprived of first-person intimacy, and also the depth and breadth of meaning). The attempt is to present the thesis that if consciousness cannot be understood without looking at 'experience', experience certainly cannot be reduced for

convenient reductive (physical, psychoanalytic and cultural) methods of understanding but will have to be open for a variety of meanings validated from first-person perspectives. This will definitely take away the reductive scientific monopoly of explaining consciousness in a singular way, but will encourage scientific methods to reexamine the normative criteria for 'truth' and 'reality'.

2. The One Puzzle

I think there is an interesting and serious change taking place in the current discussions on consciousness. This turn is based on and compelled by the intractable relationship of 'consciousness' with 'experience'. The nearest empirical idea for the unity and subjective nature of consciousness is 'experience'. Hence the scientific focus on 'experience'. The interesting part of discussions is that though there is a recognition of experience as vital in the study of consciousness, the attempt itself is to strip 'experience' of the qualities which would make it of experiential nature (unitary and subjective) and study it on the basis of empirical standards such as causal connections, neural influences, neural locations etc. I am not suggesting that brain research is not needed or even that it is of small importance. Certainly, it is very significant in its own right. Buf if our guidelines and methods are not based on our basic premise to study consciousness (experience, which is unitary and subjective) then we certainly cannot make a claim

that brain studies, apart from giving new knowledge about brain functions, would also lead to a complete theory of consciousness. The puzzle in the current discussions on consciousness is that of the persistent conflict between epistemology and phenomenology.

If we look at the major semantic trends in the current discussions, views that are discussed and debated do not any more fall into the classical division of reductionistic and nonreductionistic, or empirical and non-empirical approaches. However third-person the approach is, when it comes to the descriptive definition of consciousness, the ideas are based on qualitative features of consciousness. The discussions on empathy¹, meaning², meme³, and mirror neurons⁴ are some instances. On the other side, the growing amount of discussions on meditation⁵ and altered states of consciousness⁶ give thirdperson references, however subjective the discussed experience is. A possible reason for this trend to interrelate and bridge first-person experience and third-person definition is the recognition of a distinct characteristic of 'consciousness', namely, that it is not completely defined by empirical standards or completely understood by first-person experience⁷.

3. Self and Meaning

The extent of the meanings imputed to 'consciousness' most often crosses empirical limits and sometimes even diffuses with

qualitative experiential descriptions. The one major problem in consciousness studies is the semantics of 'consciousness'. Unfortunately this prominent meta-analysis of the discussions is dismissed in recent discussions⁸. It is very important that there be not only a well-laid out definition for the problem but also a methodological consistency. This does not mean that even before the enquiry a complete theory of consciousness is postulated. To have the semantics of consciousness given importance at the start itself means that the theory will not be drawn based on the limitations of the methods, but on the original contention about 'consciousness'.

What exactly are we trying to understand by the study of consciousness? The answers could range from neural functions to subjective experience. It is again interesting to see that the meanings we give to 'consciousness' are wider conceptually than the strict semantic (in current discussions) definition of consciousness. This is even clear at the starting point of discussion when the immediate reference is to 'experience'.

It is in this context, that I wish to juxtapose the idea of 'self' as an alternative to the discussions on 'consciousness'. The word 'self' is more comprehensive than the word 'consciousness' since it includes connotations at different levels of experience and also of the subjective identity which is important to understand the unity of experience.

The discussion about consciousness is discussion about experience. The discussion about experience is discussion about the 'self'. 'Experience' and 'self' certainly relate to something which is more than what is happening in the brain, more than abnormal conditions, more than ordinary conditions, more than transcendental states.⁹

4. Indian Thinking

There are two key ideas in classical Indian philosophical thinking which strike the attention of any student. These are 'atma' and 'darsana'. These words perform a major double function, which is also the distinctive feature of the whole of Indian thinking, of combining epistemology and phenomenology. For this reason, 'atma' could mean either the 'self' that is engaged in a particular act, or the self which is untouched by any act; 'darsana' could mean either realistic perception or intuitive thinking. The basic reason for such a foundational trend in the whole of Indian philosophical thinking goes beyond the felicity of a strict structural language (Sanskrit). It is an attempt not to break, and define, the 'self' into identities based on the context; experience into ordinary and extraordinary; at the same time give thinking and understanding a depth which is inclusive and open-ended but not divisive and hierarchical

What constitutes darsana and what does not

Before I get to the details of the epistemology of *darśana*, I will briefly look at what constitutes *darśana*, and what does not. The word *'darśana'* connotes the philosophical enterprise to think and to delve with ideas so as to:

(i) ascertain what is true knowledge,

- (ii) to understand new ideas, and,
- (iii) to understand the nature of the enquirer himself.

Jnana is a complex concept in classical Indian thinking. It not only refers to logical and epistemological methods and answers but also to states of mind which are important in the discussion about the primal nature of self. Hence, the discussions on jnana and *pramana* are always interrelated to understanding ethical, axiological, aesthetic and spiritual issues. There is a constant attempt to reconcile and integrate different experiences, and the existence of contradictions so as to generate worldviews based on an understanding of life with answers for fundamental questions about self-identity, nature of world, creation, purpose of life, value systems etc. There is widespread criticism that darsana does not have teleological value and does not extend its scope for change and modification. This perception might have been influenced by the complex method used by the schools using a variety of epistemological tools such as metaphors, imageries and stories, as equally valid, along with logical analysis, anticipating counterpositions and affiliation to definite theories of what constitutes right knowledge. Not

strictly adhering to a definite pattern of enquiry could lead to the thinking that what is offered is a closed philosophical position to save the proponent and the follower of that particular tradition. What the *darśanakārā*-s are interested in is to give a new place for emerging ideas in the worldview and allow a new understanding, crossing structural rigidity in thinking. Clearly, what is not the feature of *darśana* is an empirical haste to explain away things.

4.1 Epistemology of *Darśana Epistemological openness*

Indian epistemology is constituted by complexes more than singular concepts. I will list a few such complexes, without going into the technical details, to demonstrate that Indian epistemology is an open-ended and integral enterprise.

Guidelines for discourse

Concepts and categories are vital to any kind of discourse. The school that perfected the art of discourse in Indian thinking was *Nyāya*. *Tarkasamgraha* which is the foundational text of logic and discourse, is also the text followed, for that reason, by later schools in developing their own theories. What makes *Tarkasamgraha* so very interesting and foundational is the way in which it defines and elucidates the necessary components for a discourse from both the epistemological and subjective points of view. Both definition (*lakṣana*) of an entity or idea, and the guidelines for discourse (*anubandha catuṣṭaya*) are

discussed with equal importance in the text. The meaning of the world *tarka* is also specific, in that it does not imply a pure logical analysis but a complex activity of discourse guided by strict definitions and goals so as to have "....a compendious elucidation of the nature of substance, qualities and such other ontological categories..."¹⁰

There are sixteen $pad\bar{a}rth\bar{a}$ -s which one studies in order to master $Ny\bar{a}ya$ dialectics. A $pad\bar{a}rtha$ is defined as a "...knowable thing ($j\bar{n}eya$) or as a validly cognizable thing ($pram\bar{e}ya$) or as a nameable or denotable thing which corresponds to a word (abhidheya).¹¹ These categories are means of knowledge ($pram\bar{a}na$), objects of valid knowledge (prameya), doubt (samsaya), purpose (prayojana), instances (drstanta), established conclusions ($siddh\bar{a}nta$), members of syllogism (avayava), analysis (tarka), decisive knowledge (nirnaya), arguing for truth ($v\bar{a}da$), arguing contructively as well as destructively for victory (jalpa), destructive argument (vitanda), fallacious reasons ($h\bar{e}tv\bar{a}bh\bar{a}sa$), quibbling (cala), specious and unavailing objections ($j\bar{a}ti$), and vulnerable standpoints ($nighrahasth\bar{a}na$).¹² The discussion on $pad\bar{a}rtha$ is an elaborate one in classical thinking.

The concept of 'definition' *(lakṣaṇa)* is another complex, which according to $Ny\bar{a}ya$ tells what an entity 'is' by saying what it 'is not'. Definition is ''....not merely an explication of the connotation of a term; but it is a proposition specifying the

differentia or the differentiating feature of the species or the thing defined".¹³ Lakṣaṇa is defined as a specific feature (asādhāraṇa dharma) which is free from the three faults of a definition such as over-applicability (ativyāpti), partial inapplicability (avyāpti) and total inapplicability (asaṃbhava). A definition is faulty by ativyāpti when it refers to certain qualities which are characteristic of the entity defined as well as of something not intended to be defined. A definition is faulty by avyāpti when the definition does not refer to some of the characteristic features of the entity defined. A definition is faulty by asaṃbhava when the definition refers to qualities which are totally non-characteristic of the entity defined.

Guidelines for teleology

Another important complex which is considered in almost all schools of Indian thinking is the notion of *anubandha catuştaya* (four-fold preliminaries) though this is well-specified as a part of dialectics in *Tarkasamgraha*. The four-fold preliminaries for any discourse are *vişaya* (theme of discourse), *prayojana* (major goal), *sambandha* (relation between the theme of discourse is designed).¹⁴ The trend of specifying the objective and subjective guidelines of a discourse is also found in the foundational texts of *Vēdānta* and *Mimāmsa*. The starting verse of the text specifies the nature of enquiry such as for *brahman, dharma* etc.¹⁵ The defining characteristic of a discourse about what the

discourse is guided by. The thematic specification of the discourse also helps the student to have a clear picture about what the discourse will not talk about or to what theme it will be restricted to. Even if the theme of the discourse is given prior to entering the discourse the discussion could at some point raise the question of teleology in the mind of student. Hence the theme as well as the purpose of a discussion on such a theme is specified initially. Though it could be a metaquestion outside the scope of the discourse it is essential also to anticipate at least to some extent the relation between the discourse and the theme of the discourse itself which would enable the understanding of how far the treatise or discourse is representative of the theme. The final and the most important preliminary factor for any discourse is to specify who is qualified to enter into such a discourse. This is a major rule for meta-discourse, which I think, is almost forgotten in the current discussions on a complex theme like 'consciousness'. The recognition of the aptitude of the person as playing a vital role in the success of discourse and understanding implies the subjective factor involved in epistemological enterprises. It also implies that understanding is always finally related to the basic aptitude of the student, which once again anticipates the essential relation between epistemology and phenomenology, knowledge of something and experience. One instance of expounding the nature of *adhikāri* could be seen in the primal text of Advaita 'Tattvabodha' where Sankarācārya talks about 'sādhana catustaya'.¹⁶

Guidelines for validation

The issue of validation (prāmāŋya) is a very important complex extensively dealt with by the schools of Indian thinking. The discussion on validating knowledge ranges from theories of knowledge to theories of reality. The word 'pramana' etymologically means 'means of measurement' or 'that which produces knowledge'.¹⁷ The concept of pramana though initially interpreted as a theory of knowledge, of ascertaining knowledge, its function is not completely understood without taking into consideration two of the characteristic features of pramana as perceived by most of the classical schools of Indian thinking. These two characteristics 'abhadhitatva', of noncontradiction, and 'anadhigatatva', of novelty, lays down the condition for validating knowledge.¹⁸ It is not possible to validate a statement to be true or false if there is another knowledge statement which contradicts the claim of the previous statement. Being non-contradicted by another statement alone does not perform the role for validation. The characteristic of non-contradiction is also to be followed by the feature of novelty. Discovery of new knowledge is as important as ascertaining of it. Validation also has to look into the possibility of newness whether it is epistemological or ontological. The feature of 'novelty' implies once again the epistemological openness evident in Indian thought.

A major distinction in the Indian theories of knowledge is regarding the position on the origin *(utpatti)* and ascertainment

of validity *(jnapti)*. The validity of a cognition is decided, in some schools, by the presence of certain characteristics intrinsic to knowledge, and in some other schools, by the presence of certain characteristics extrinsic to knowledge. Following the same lines of thinking, the two positions about invalidity of knowledge are that it is decided by extrinsic characteristics or intrinsic characteristics. Validity itself is ascertained in some schools by its very intrinsic nature *(svatapramāṇah)*, and in others by its extrinsic nature *(paratapramāṇah)*.

Two paradigms

There are two paradigms in the classical schools, inspite of the differences in their metaphysical and epistemological positions. These are (i) what we see and experience, which is constituted by the given and the immanent, (ii) what we can see and experience which is constituted by the possibilities and the transcendent. It is within these two paradigms that the elaborate and detailed discussion on fundamental experiences such as pain and pleasure, sorrow and happiness, selfishness and selflessness, freedom and bondage, the given and the possible etc. takes place. *Darśana* is an attempt to bridge the seemingly two contradictory paradigms through an exploration of the self based on systematic discussions on (i) theoretical, (ii) experiential, and (iii) transcendental issues.

What falls under theoretical issues

Theoretical problems are envisaged by the building of tools for thinking such as abstraction, generalization and conceptualization guided by the question of meaning, certainty and new knowledge. The factorization of 'new knowledge' in epistemology gives importance to intuitive thinking all through the discussion. A general division can be made of the theories the *darśanakārā*-s debate on, such as:

- (i) theory of what is given: which relates to ontological questions about the nature of the world, the nature of the self, the nature of life and death,
- (ii) theory of the what and how of knowledge which relates to epistemological questions about meaning and validity,
- (iii) theory of what is beyond the given (if any) which relates to metaphysical and teleological questions about the nature of God, the nature of ultimate causes, the nature of self and the nature of reality,
- (iv) theory of spiritual, mental and physical disciplines which relates to questions about ethical issues, value systems, duty, responsibility, selfishness, transcendences and new perceptions about self-identity.

4.2 Experience of Darśana

Metaphysical openness

If we examine the classical schools of Indian thought, we find that though each scchool allows elaborate discussion on the epistemology of its philosophy, the foundational thought is metaphysical. But the metaphysical foundation is not to be mistaken for dogmatic and closed ideas. The metaphysical openness of ideas is evident from the fact that they are based on certain teleological assumptions. Discussions on the nature of (self) is juxtaposed with physical (as in Carvaka system), ethical or spiritual guidelines as in almost all schools. To understand the given nature of self and its transcendent possibilities the understanding of self is important. The key feature of such an understanding is that it is not an epistemological exegesis but a first-person phenomenological examination. The concept of jnana is a complex concept and is not to be merely translated as 'knowledge' as we understand it in popular fashion. The discussion on the familiar/given and the transcendent self (jiva and ātma) is guided by the continuous and rigorous distinguishing of the one from each other at every instance of experiencing. The conflict between the near and familiar/given nature or self, and the distant and transcendent nature of self forms the focus of attention for the darsana. The attempt of darsana is to solve the conflict in such a manner that the duals involved in it are integrated rather than segregated. The idea of liberation hence is not a singular event in time but a constant understanding and experiencing of the complexity of the contradiction of the given and the transcendental. The distinguishing of the *ātma* and *anātma* (the real nature and the given nature of self), *ātma anātma vyāpārah*, is the singlemost exposition for which the rest of the epistemological, ethical and phenomenological theories are expounded. It is the metaphysical openness which is the hallmark of Indian thinking.

Spiritual and ontological openness

In recent discussions the word 'spiritual' has gained new meanings, many of which emphasize the role of personal growth, ecological awareness, empathy, intersubjective transactions, emotional well-being, efficiency in expressions, creative living. The distinct feature of the philosophical traditions of Indian thinking is its spiritual openness, by which I mean, not just a liberal philosophy, but the facility to integrate new experience and new understanding into an evolving scheme of ideas, all leading and pointing to self-exploration. The ideal of spiritual living is given foremost importance rather than moral and epistemological theories. It is not to say that the ethical guidelines and practices are less important in these traditions but to suggest that all such theories and discussions are addressed from a spiritual platform which discuss the nature of self and the world of experience and the relationship between them. Liberation is the key concept however radically different the guidelines suggested for it by different schools are. Identity and self are the key problems addressed to with

the help of metaphysical positions, epistemological theories and ethical guidelines. The breadth and length of discussions in *darśana* is interestingly just not different discussions on what exactly the nature of self is, but mutually reinforcing dialogues on the consensus view that all discussions are to be guided by the coordinating concept of 'self'. Invariably the discussions in *darśana* are those leading from the recognition of 'self' and 'identity' as larger categories for thinking. It could be for this reason that epistemology *(tarka)* does not have the supremacy in deciding the course of events and validation, but only with equal participation of reflective thinking *(vicāra)* in discourse. Analytical thinking can deliver its goods only if it is accompained by reflective *(vicāra)* and intuitive *(nidhidhyāsana)* thinking.

What falls under experiential and transcendental issues

An interesting characteristic in the classical systems of Indian thinking is the overriding issue above all issues to connect and catapult from what would be considered the given to what is possible. The concept about experience is not strictly about what is caused by an extraneous factor/s but what is possible by the distinctive and unique nature of the individual. Therefore, experience is not merely a theme for understanding based on its immediate context such as cause, or results, but a tool for further exploration of the self. The ordinariness and extra-ordinariness of an experience is understood from the standpoint of the self rather than from the standpoint of its causes. This trend also impels the understanding of the self

along with the understanding of the object of experience. The object of experience, the result of experience and the experiencer constitute the triad of the complex phenomenon of experience, each of which is significant in the understanding of the other.

The major experiential issues which are discussed in the classical schools are also interconnected with the major transcendental issues. Thus the experience and understanding of pain and pleasure are connected with guidelines for transcending pleasure and pain; experience and understanding of freedom and bondage are connected with the guidelines for transcending self-identities and rigid perceptions about the context; and, experience and understanding of different states of mind are connected with the guidelines for transcending words, verbal structres and attributed meanings.

Junctions and meeting points

Junctions and meeting points between the discussions on theoretical, experiential and transcendental issues are quite unique to *darśana*. For instance, ethical and spiritual discipline is necessary for new experiences and knowing self differently; knowledge of self could change the way the nature of the given is understood; knowledge of self could reorient experience; knowledge of self could allow for new responses to the situation/context. What distinguishes the Indian way of thinking from what we call today the Western way of thinking, is the

curious connection present in *darśana* between theoretical, experiential and transcendental issues. It is also this distinguishing feature of Indian thinking which is often misrepresented as 'mystic' and 'other-worldly'. The important point missed here is that we fail to recognize the fact that what interested Indian thinking was not the linearity and immediate availability of rigid structures of knowledge but an open-endedness where experience and reflection could together bring about the re-orientation of how we construe our self-identities and how we respond to the given.

The foundational issues, crossing the rigidity of being theoretical, experiential or transcendental, which are embedded in the *darsana* are (i) about the human mind, consciousness and experience, and (ii) about self-identity. The guidelines for the exploration of these embedded issues are (i) abstraction: to identify the unitary in the discrete, (ii) placeability: to have an ontological meaning for any experience, its object and its experiencer, (iii) practise: to have values and discipline as essential guidelines for self-exploration.

5. Indian Dramaturgy

The foundational text of Indian dramaturgy is ' $N\bar{a}tya$ Śāstra' authored by Bharatamuni. The available form of the text comprises 5600 verses coupled with prose, though the original version is said to have had more than 30,000 verses. It is a

complete treatise on Indian dance, drama and music. The text has an exhaustive thematic structure since it deals with a complex conception of drama (natya) constituted by what could be described as objective and subjective features. There is elaborate discussion, on the one hand, on the characteristics of playhouses, different kinds of plays, different and complex gestures and movements, rules of prosody, metres and music, uses of language, styles of characters, costumes and ornaments. On the other hand, there are discussions on emotions and mental states which are their causes, mutuality of emotions and mental states, rapport between actor and spectator, mental and physical nature of actors and spectators, preliminary mystic rituals for effective representation and final goals of drama. At the same time there is a structural rigidity as to the epistemological structure, and openness about the subjective expression, relationship between the actor and the spectator, goals of drama etc.

The complexity of the text can be seen at three levels:

- (i) in addressing the representation of different kinds of characters (mostly mythical) with different states of minds through a joint participation of physical gesture and movements, mental states and emotions, ritualistic preliminaries, costumes, music and space configuration,
- (ii) in addressing the unique relationship between the actor and the spectator, of the actor invoking a specific state of emotion in the spectator's mind, and

(iii) in making possible a spontaneous and self-evolving nature of enjoyment for the audience in spite of the structured and specified composition.

The rigorous and specified rules of *nātya* together with the integral approach to emotions, first-person experience of the actor and the spectator make *Nātya Śāstra* an insightful treatise as well as what can be conceived of as belonging to a higher order of cognition and experience, namely a wholesome representation of human emotions through a complex act of the external body (physical body gestures, costumes, music and plot) and the spiritual body (emotions, states of mind and unique relationship between the one who is presenting the re-representation and the one who is enjoying it).

5.1 Epistemology of Natya

The word ' $n\bar{a}_{t}ya$ ' does not have a one-word English equivalent. Before we get to the meaning of ' $n\bar{a}_{t}ya$ ' it is important to keep in mind the distinction between ' $n\bar{a}_{t}ya$ ', *nrtta* and *nrtya* (*nātya nrtya nrtta vivēkah*)¹⁹ which is the introductory theme discussed in Nātya Šāstra. Nātya is a combination of *nrtya* (acting) and *nrtta* (dance). Nrtya is the visual and pantomimic representation of emotions and ideas. Nrtta refers to movements of the body with gestures which are regulated by tāļa (musical and interval). Though the text continues to give a complex definition of what constitutes

nāţya the categorical statement made about it is that *nāţya* has primarily to do with *rasa*.²⁰ Later *nāţya* is explained using two key ideas which are *abhinaya* and *bhāva*. *Nāţya* means visual representation (*abhinaya*) in its fourfold forms such as using parts of the physical body (*āngika*), verbal utterances (*vācika*), costumes and ornaments (*āhārya*) and physical signs of mental states (*sātvika*).²¹

Poise of expression

Abhinaya is defined as the expression, through the actor, of the meaning of the words of a literary (poetical) work with the help of *vibhāva* (emotions and states of mind physically represented) so as to invoke an uninterrupted flow of *rasa* (enjoyment) for the audience. The scope of *abhinaya* is extended beyond the rigidity of planned gestures and emotions by differentiating it to be of two distinct types: *lokadharmi* and *nātyadharmi*. *Lokadharmi* represents the objects and characters as they are portrayed in the mythical literature, and *natyadharmi* represents the objects and characters through suggestive movements from the setting of stage. An example of *nātyadharmi* is a suggestive movement of the eye or suggestive gesture by the hands to indicate something else through the imagination of the spectator.²²

The fulfillment of $n\bar{a}tya$ is achieved through the effective and joint perfomance of differnt kinds of *abhinaya* and *mudra* (representation of objects, emotions and ideas through single

hand and combined hand gestures), the theme of the play, music and involvement of the spectators. The role of spectators is considered to be an active event that mutually influences the performance of the actor in terms of the representation of feelings.

It is not directly relevant to this paper to describe the technical details of the themes of various chapters of the text. But it is necessary to keep in mind during the ensuing discussion that the elaborate description in the text mainly follows two patterns:

- (i) discussion and detailed description of the different kinds of gestures of different parts of the body and their nuances, different kinds and features of plays and poetry, kinds of metres, characteristics of the actors, judges and spectators, use of languages, costumes and ornaments, and different kinds of musical instruments,
- (ii) discussion and description of rasa (emotions) and bhāva (mental states which produce emotions), the mental rapport between the actor and the spectator, the types of characters and mental and physical temperaments suitable for their portrayal, the goals of drama and how they are fulfilled; and preliminary rituals and settings to invoke a conducive environment before the start of nāţya.

The concept of $n\bar{a}tya$ evolves in the text through the development of both the above patterns which I would like to

describe as third-person and first-person approaches. The prescribed set of rules for abhinaya exists along with the spontaneity of the actor in representing the structured, and in evoking the rasa in the spectator. The visual and the characteroriented together with the subjective and self-oriented produces an aesthetic experience which could be further described as a spiritual experience. The act of representation, the preliminary settings and rituals etc. are connected with the cosmogony that the physical world is the *āngika abhinaya* of Śiva, the world of language is his vacika abhinava, the universe consists of his *āhārya abhinaya* and ultimate happiness itself is his sātvika abhinaya.²³ The complexity of representing human emotions and at the same time invoking empathy in the spectator is brought out through *nātya* in a comprehensive manner using a rigorous epistemology and first-person experience for both the actor and the spectator.

5.2 Experience of Nāţya

Nāţya, though presented following a structured design about it through the portrayal of characters, in its primary nature is experiential and first-person-oriented. This is evidenced by the detailed discussion on *rasa*, *bhāva* and *prēkşakatva*. The word *nāţya* has its origin from the root '*naţ*' which means 'to act'. *Naţa* is one who performs the act through different styles of *abhinaya*. *Nāţya* is the art of '*naţa*'.²⁴ The importance given to *nāţya* as a dramatic art has its origins in the 'act' itself of the actor. It is the *naţa* who is responsible for *nāţya* and not vice versa. This is a significant feature since it emphasises the first-person-oriented approach to a complex event such as $n\bar{a}tya$.

Tasting the flavour

Rasa is a complex concept which is the central idea on which the experience of *nātya* is founded. The word *rasa* is variously translated as 'relish', 'enjoyment'25 and related to mean the object of relish or the feeling of relish itself. According to Bharatamuni rasa emerges out of the combining of three basic components such as vibhāva, anubhāva and vyabhicāri. They are also (kārana, kārya and sahakāri) the determinant, consequent and auxiliary conditions of rasa. All three taken together comprise the sthayibhava which is directly responsible for the production of rasa. Bhava is that which makes something happen.²⁶ In Nātya Śāstra bhāva is used as a technical word to relate to the mental states as responsible for producing rasa for the spectator through a combination of kinds of (abhinaya) gestures. Whether rasa is produced through bhāva or vice versa or whether they are mutually influenced is a debate which is prominent in the literature on Nātya Śāstra by various commentators. For the discussion in this paper, I will deal only with the detailed presentation of kinds of rasa and *bhāva*, one instance of *abhinaya* which is that of eyes (dhrsti), and nature of effectiveness of natya (natya siddhi nirupana), to show the importance given to the nuances and details of mental states, basic nature of experience and their

physical representations, with an attempt to give a third-person account of first-person experience.

Bharata enlists eight *rasa-s* as the primary *rasa*-s²⁷ and a total of forty-nine *bhāvā*-s which are classified as *sthāyibhāva* (eight in number), *vyabhicāribhāva* (thirty-three in number) and *sātvikabhāva* (eitht in number). This classification refers to an evolution of mental states from its intense and pure states (*sthāyi*), to manifestation of the pure states in feelings and leading them to *rasa (vyabhicāri)*, and to their physical signs (*sātvika*). Another classification is of the cause and effect of *bhāva* such as *vibhāva* and *anubhāva* respectively. The *sthāyibhāva* of *śoka* is produced by the *vibhāva* such as seperation from the beloved, loss of dear ones and assets etc. *Śoka* is represented by the *anubhāva* such as tears, deep sighs etc. It is the *sthāyibhāva* which plays the key role in creating the rapport between the actor and spectator through the production of *rasa*.

Bharata enlists eight fundamental *sthāyibhāva*, thirty-three *vyabhicāribhāva*, eight *sātvikabhāva* and eight *rasa*²⁸ according to the *sthāyibhāva*²⁹ (See Appendix 1 and Note 30.)

Through the corner of the eye

Expression through the physical body, *āngika abhinaya*, is further classified into that falling under three types such as (i) *sariraja* (bodily), (ii) *mukhaja* (facial), and (iii) *cestakrta*

(through movements). There is another division of *anga* and *upānga*. Anga constitutes the *abhinaya* through head, hand, chest, sides, hips and feet. Upānga constitute *abhinaya* through eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, cheeks and chin. The one instance of *abhinaya* through *upānga* that I will list here in detail is that of *dhṛṣti* (glances) since these are considered to be more visually representative of the *rasa*.

What I wish to imply through this listing is, the analysis and observation given to the detailed study of empirical features of the inner mental states and feelings belonging to another person as represented by the actor. The two levels of third-person reporting and first-person experience are interesting to note at this point. Through the *bhāvābhinaya* the actor represents the feelings of a person in a particular state of mind through the larger setting of stage, space, costumes and gesture (first instance of third-person reporting), and all the while undergoes the same state of mind so that the corresponding *rasa* is conveyed to the spectator (second level of third-person reporting). The enactment of the feelings is based on an understanding of the *bhāva* (pure states of mind) and identifying with them (second level of first-person experience) which was earlier experienced by another person (first level of first-person experience).

The glances which total thiry-six in number are of two kinds: (i) *rasadhrsti*, representative of the kind of *rasa* (relish), and (ii) *bhāvadhrsti*, representative of the kind of *bhāva* (pure state of mind). Apart from the *dhṛṣti* there is a detailed description of the kinds of movements of the pupils, eyelids, and also eyebrows.³¹ Eight kinds of *rasadhṛṣti* are described³² (See Appendix 2 and Notes 33-72.)

Twilight space of the real and the virtual

Bhāva and rasa are the two key concepts according to Bharata. Though he considers *nātya* to be effective as a result of performance, he makes a detailed analysis of how the performance which is not realistic and identical with the world of reality for both the actor and spectator is made real in a virtual manner. The sthāyibhāva enlisted are pure states which can exist and together with vyabhicāribhāva and sātvikabhāva produce the necessary anubhāva, only if the actor can identify with the sthāyibhāva. The performance of the character is dependent on this preliminary identification of the actor with the state of mind of the role which is portrayed. The sthayibhava are made to exist (bhāvayanti iti bhāvah) by the actor so that they will be produced in the mind of the spectator (bhavanti iti bhāvah) to produce the related rasa. The sthāyibhāva together with rasa could be considered as causing selftranscendence for the actor as well as the spectator, and complex cognitive structures for both the actor and the spectator to be in communion in space where both transcend their self-identify. It is an enactment (by the actor through *nātya*) which is spontaneous rather than the simple mimicry of an event or object. It is at one time physical and transcendental.

One of the unique features of *nātya* is that the epistemological and the experiential, the theory and technique are coordinated to form a mutually benefiting factor of the whole. Though the source of the following text is not authentically traced, it is said in both Natya Sastra and later in Natyadarpana, and is also popular as the synoptic definition of nātya, that 'the body should follow the tune, the hands must explain the meaning, eyes must speak the emotion and the feet must beat the time-measure; where the hands go there should go the eye, because where the eye goes the mind goes there with it, where the mind goes follows there the mental state, and where the mental state is there the feeling is.73 These two verses represent the coordinated physical, mental and transcendental nature of *natva*. Equal importance is given to detailed and specific physical and mental factors involved, and each of their transcendences is specified, at the same time, to broaden the scope of experience both for the actor and the spectator.

The metanarrative

That $n\bar{a}_{tya}$ is taken a wholesome event is evident from the fact that apart from the detailed account of the current of $n\bar{a}_{tya}$ Bharata also devotes separate chapters⁷⁴ for examining the effectiveness of $n\bar{a}_{tya}$ ($n\bar{a}_{tya}$ siddhi nirupana), describing in detail the nature of actors, judges and spectators, and explaining the goals of $n\bar{a}_{tya}$. There is even a mention about the seating arrangement to be followed.⁷⁵ It might be keeping

the complex nature of $n\bar{a}tya$ that Bharata enlists for male and female characters: (i) three classes of personality *(uttama, adhama* and *madhyama prakrti)*, and, (ii) the kinds of roles they could play.⁷⁶

The spectator of *nātya* is not a passive recipient, but a *prēksaka*, 'one who views in a unique manner'. It is evident that Bharata included the active and important participation of the spectator for *nātya* to be a successful enterprise. There is a list of physical representations of the responses of the spectator to *nātya* by making certain words⁷⁷, sounds⁷⁸, and physical and facial expressions.⁷⁹ There is also a description about who is a genuine spectator (preksaka). He who "... has unruffled senses, is pure, clever in discussing and weighing pros and cons, devoid of faults and fond of merits. He who attains gladness on seeing another glad, sorrow on seeing another sorry and experiences wretchedness on seeing the wretchedness of another is considered fit to be a spectator..."80 It is also said that all these qualities may not be present in one single individual, but that different individuals as spectators could have them and together experience effective appreciation of the *natya*.

The goals of *nāțya* pertain to both objective and subjective features. Through the composite of external and physical enactment, and subjective states of mind and feelings representative of them, what is achieved for the (i) actor and

(ii) spectator are: For the spectator, at the secondary level an appreciation of the characters and the theme, and at the primary level a temporary detachment from his/her self-identity is experienced. For the actor, at the primary level it is the complex task of representing a character, an idea or a nuance of a particular feeling through *abhinaya* and producing the corresponding *rasa* for the *prekşaka*. At the secondary level, a temporary detachment from his/her self-identity and identity with the particular character's self as a whole and with the various mental states that the character would have in the story narrated. The transcendence experienced by the actor is both transphysical and transmental since there is a combined use of body and mind. The transcendence experienced by the

And finally it is experience and transcendence

For both the actor and the spectator it is a complex experience since there is a co-existence of his/her own dominant and real self-identity with the mental states of the character portrayed. It is this co-existence, of the real self-identities of the actor and the spectator, and the identities with 'anotherself', which determines the effectiveness of $n\bar{a}tya$. The interesting and intriguing feature is the existence of a contradiction. For the effective transference of a particular $bh\bar{a}va$ to the spectator the actor has to have an identity formed with it, transcending the artificiality of enacting it. At the same time, the actor has to be detached from any specific *bhāva* of the character since what he/she is primarily concerned with is the narration of the story. The actor has to play the twin roles of being 'the character portrayed' and also 'the narrator of the story'. It is this twin and contradictory role played by the actor which enables the spectator to have the experience of *rasa* which also involves an interesting contradiction. Unless the spectator can be one with the mental state of the character portrayed he/ she will not be able to appreciate the story and the specific nuance. At the same time unless a continuous detachment is maintained he/she will not be able to integrate the experience of that nuance in relation to his/her self-identity.

6. Re-Placing consciousness (In Indian thought)

By presenting two different instances of epistemology and experience from *darśana* and $n\bar{a}tya$, what I wish to suggest is that:

- (i) contrary to the very popular and published view that Indian philosophy is 'other worldly', there is detailed and careful presentation of what could be considered the two primary signs of consciousness, namely (a) generation of meaning and its validation, and (b) intensity of experience and broadening of its scope through its own transcendence, and
- (ii) the discussion on 'consciousness' in Indian thought is not a word-oriented (namely 'consciousness') but an experienceoriented task which looks at empirical, experiential, epistemological and teleological facets of consciousness.

Though in the present approaches to understanding of consciousness, some degree of importance is given to epistemology and to first-person experience, there is something missing. What is missing is an attempt to resist untimely classification of events and meanings of 'consciousness' under empirical/medical/ ordinary and transcendental/psycho-analytic/mystical groups and their segregated and non-dynamic explanations. To be in the context of particular experiences, and to integrate them to a transcendence which will least look unfamiliar and 'other-worldly', cannot be the result of classificatory understanding or solipsistic transcendental experiences alone.

First and foremost we need to recognize 'consciousness' as a complex phenomenon and thereby dissuade ourselves from secluded and segregated analysis. The complexity of consciousness looks more and more like the delicate togetherness of understanding and being. The understanding of 'consciousness' is more an understanding of its ontology, which needs the focus of epistemology to be shifted from normal and ordinary experiences, or even abnormal and transcendental experiences, to the holistic definition of the problem, method, and goals of enquiry. This would facilitate breaking 'habitual' ways of event-oriented or object-oriented analysis by experienceoriented or first-person-oriented understanding. The categories of thinking formed by the analyst and his/her worldview will be specific and there will be potential for widening the scope of understanding.

The two questions which are important, if we are 'really' interested in understanding consciousness are (i) What are we really looking at? and (ii) What do we really want to look at? Our notions about 'real', 'truth' and 'self' have to be continuously questioned, but at the same time, integrated with personal growth, values, spiritual understanding and self-exploration.

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*See http://www.sambodh.org & http://www.sambodh.com/ **See http://www.infinityfoundation.com

Appendix 1

Bharata enlists eight fundamental *sthāyibhāva*, thirty three *vyabhicāribhāva*, eight *sātvikabhāva* and eight *rasa* according to the *sthāyibhāva*:

RASA	STHÁYIBHÁVA
Rati (happiness)	Srngara (charm)
Hasa (laughter)	Hāsya (humour)
Śoka (mental pain)	Karuna (compassion)
Krōdha (anger)	Rudra (fury)
Utsāha (enthusiasm)	Vira (heroic)
Bhaya (fear)	Bhayānaka (terrfying)
Jugupsa (disgust)	Bhibhatsa (despicable)
Vismaya (amazement)	Adbhuta (surprise)

The thirty-three *vyabhicāribhāva* (all these are given their corresponding *vibhāva* and *anubhāva* in the *Nātya Śāstra*) are:

VYABHICĀRIBHĀVA

Nirvēda (disinterest) Gļāni (tiredness) Śaņka (apprehension) Asuya (insecurity) Mada (intoxication)³⁰ Srama (exhaustion) Ālasya (lethargy) Dainya (pity) Cinta (anxiety) Moha (delusion)

Smrti (recollection)

Dhrti (steadfastedness)

Vrida (shame)

Capalata (impulsiveness)

Harsa (sudden delight)

Āvēga (excitement)

Jadata (stupor)

Garva (arrogance)

Visāda (depression)

Autsukya (longingness)

Nidra (sleep)

Apasmāra (epilepsy)

Supta (dreaming)

Vibodha (awakening)

Amarsa (restrained anger)

Avahittha (deception)

Ugrata (ferocious)

Mati (analytic understanding)

Vyādhi (ailment)

Unmāda (temporary loss of sanity)

Marana (death)

Trāsa (panic)

Vitarka (argumentativeness)

The eight satvikabhava are:

SĂTVIKABHĂVA

Stambha (paralysis)

Svēta (perspiration)
Romānīca (horripilation)
Svarabheta (change in the tone of voice)
Vepathu (tremble)
Vaivaŗņya (change in the color of face)
Aśŗu (teaful)
Praļaya (fainting)

Appendix 2

The eight *rasadhrsti* are:

RASADHRȘȚI	RASA	NATURE OF GLANCE
Kānta (loving glance)	Srņgāra	eyebrows moved, glance
		through the sides of the eyes,
		and eyes with an intense
		look, as if drinking in the
		object ³³
Hāsya (humorous glance)	Hāsya	eyelids are contracted one
		after the other, wandering
		pupils ³⁴
Karuna (compassionate glance)	Karuņa	upper eyelid droops down
		with tears, wandering pupils,
		nose-ends intense ³⁵
Raudri (ferocious glance)	Raudra	both eyelids tremble, still
		pupils, red and dry eyes,
		strained eyebrows ³⁶
Vira (heroic glance)	Vira	steady pupils, fully
		opened and glowing eyes,
		ends of the eyes contracted ³⁷
Bhayānaka (terrifying glance)	Bhayānaka	raised and motionless eye-
		lids, restless pupils ³⁸

Bibhatsa (disgusting glance)	Bibhatsa	eyelids come together with restlessness, unsteady pupils, eyeballs at the corners of the
Adbhuta (surprising glance)	Adbhuta	eyes ¹⁹ moist eyes, pupils go in and out alternately, eye lashes slightly contracted, bright corners of the eyes ⁴⁰

The twenty-eight bhavadrsti are: SHTÄYIBHÄVA DHRSTI⁴¹ Nature of Glance Snigdha (tender glance) fully opened eyes, eyebrows held up, pupils in the corners of the eyes42 Hrsta (joyous glance) slightly contracted pupils which are restless, evelids close alternately43 Dina (piteous glance) drooping upper eyelids, restrained movement of pupils, with tears⁴⁴ Kruddha (glance with anger) motionless eyelids, dry eyes, agitated pupils, bent eyebrows45 fully opened eyes and still pupils⁴⁶ Drpta (glance with pride) Bhayanvita (glance with fear) fully opened eyes, eyeballs standing out and agitated⁴⁷ contracted eyelids, look away Jugupsita (glance with disgust) from the object, indefinite look⁴⁸ fully open eyelids, steady look to Vismita (glance with surprise)

38

a distance, pupils held up49

VYABHICĀRIBHĀVADHŖȘŢI ⁵⁰	Nature of Glance
Śunya (vacant look)	steady eyes, but not clear, look
	vacantly without an object ⁵¹
Malina (depressed look)	pupils directed away from the
	object, eyelids slightly closed, clear
	corners of the eyes, throbbing
	eyelashes ⁵²
Śrānta (tired look)	pupils directed to a short distance,
	moist eyes, tired eyeballs, slightly
	contracted corners of the eyes53
Lajjita (glance with shyness)	eyelashes come together, tired
	pupils, drooping upper eyelids ⁵⁴
Sankita (glance with suspicion)	eyes are alternately steady and
	restless, turn towards the sides
	outward and upward, alternate
	intense looks and looking away ^{ss}
Mukula (fully closed look)	united and throbbing eyelashes,
	resting pupils ⁵⁶
Ardhamukula(half-opened look)	half-opened eyes and slightly
	throbbing, half closed eyelids57
Glāna (languid look)	deeply sunk pupils, move very slowly,
	eyelashes, eyebrows and eyelids appear
	like that of a blind person ⁵⁸
Jimha (looking distrustfully)	slightly contracted eyelids, tired and
	concealed pupils, look slowly ⁵⁹
Kuncita (contracted look)	eyelids and eyelashes are slightly
	contracted, pupils are well contracted ⁶⁰ 39

39

Vitarikta (look of indecision)	raised eyelids, flushed and
	downward pupils ⁶¹
Abhitapta(extreme painful look)	gentle movement of eyeballs,
	upward and downward moving
	eyelids, all the parts of eye indicate
	extreme pain ⁶²
Vișanna (grievous look)	corners of the eye are sunk, eyelids
	wide apart and open and close
	frequently, motionless pupils63
Lalita (charming look)	corners of the eyes contracted,
	eyebrows go up and down, and
	sweet look ⁶⁴
Akekara (half-closed)	eyelids at the corner of the eye are
	slightly contracted, half-closed look,
	pupils are repeatedly turned ⁶⁵
Vikosa (wide open look)	fully open eyelids and never close,
	unsteady pupils ⁶⁶
Vibhränta (distracted look)	occasional disturbed and
	undisturbed look, moist and wide
	open eyes, moving pupils67
Vipluta (floating look)	steady and drooping eyelids in
	succession ⁶⁸
Trașța (fearful look)	extremely unsteady pupils, eyelids
	quickly up and down ⁶⁹

Madira (intoxicated look)	
is classified into three kinds such	
as the early (taruna), middle	
(madhyama) and extreme	
(adhama) stages	
Taruņa	corners of the eye are wide and the
	rest of the eye is contracted, pupil
	move about in a circle ⁷⁰
Madhyama	slightly contracted eyelids, unsteady
	pupils ⁷¹
Adhama	pupils move downward and eyelids
	are almost closed ⁷²

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- 11. Ibid. pp.5-6
- 12. Ibid. p.6
- 13. Ibid. p.12
- 14. Ibid. p.3
- 15. Brahmasutra begins with the sutra 'adhato brahma jijnāsa' and Mimāsasutra begins with the sutra 'adhāto dharma jijnāsa'.
- 16. The introductory theme in *Tattvabodha* is 'sadhanacatustaya' which talks about the fourfold qualifications needed for a student interested in the enquiry of moksa. The fourfold qualifications are: (i) nitya anitya vastu vivēka (discriminatory understanding of the real and the unreal), (ii) iha amutra artha phala bhoga virāga (dispassionate towards the objects of pleasure), (iii) sama ādi satka sampatti (observance of the seven values), (iv) mumukşutvam ca iti (earnest desire for liberation).
- 17. pramā karaņam pramāņam

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- caturtha abhinaya upētam laksanavrttito buddaih nartanam nātyamityuktam sa tvatrābhinayo bhavēt
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- nāţyašabdo rase mukhyo rasa abhivyaktikāraņam Nāţya Śāstra Samgraha: p. 20
- 21. caturthābhinaya tatra āngiko angaidaršito matah / vāca virācitah kavyānaţakādistu vācıkah // āhāryo hārakēyurākiritadivibhuşanam / sātvikah sātvikairbhāvaih bhāvukena vibhāvitah // Nāţya Sāstra Samgraha: p. 20
- 22. In vācika abhinaya speech is lokadharmi and singing is nātyadharmi. In āharya abhinaya wearing of ornaments is lokadharmi and suggesting objects by mere gestures is nātyadharmi. In sātvika abhinaya sheddingtears is lokadharmi and suggesting tears by gesture is nātyadharmi. Nātya Śāstra Samgraha: p. 25
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- 27. srngāra hāsya karuņa raudra vira bhayānakah/ bibhatsa adbuta samjnau cetyastau nāţye rasah smrtāh // Studies in Nāţya Śāstra: p. 56

Bharata talks only about eight *rasa*. It is Abhinavagupta who introduced the ninth *santa rasa*, and also the most important *rasa*, which was essential to portray the unique spiritual nature of Buddha. *Studies in Natya Šastra*. p. 60

- 28. Translations of the terms are by the author.
- 29. Natya Śastra: pp. 86-11
- Three kinds of *mada* are mentioned according to their intensity. See *Nātya Śāstra:* p. 95

- 31. Natya Śastra: pp. 123-126
- Nāţya Šāstra Samgraha: pp. 483-491
 Nāţya Šāstra: pp. 118-119
- 33. See for the Sanskrit verse Natya Śastra Samgraha: p.483
- 34. Ibid: p.484
- 35. Ibid: p.485
- 36. Ibid: p.486
- 37. Ibid: p.487
- 38. Ibid: p.488
- 39. Ibid: p.489
- 40. Ibid: p.490
- Ibid: p.492-499
 Nātya Šāstra: pp.119-120
- 42. *ibid:* p.492
- 43. Ibid: p.494
- 44. Ibid: p.494
- 45. Ibid: p.495
- 46. Ibid: p.496
- 47. Ibid: p.497
- 48. Ibid: p.497
- 49. Ibid: p.498
- 50. Ibid: p.500-524

Natya Śāstra: pp.120-122

- 51. Ibid: p.500
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- 62. Ibid: p.512
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- 66. Ibid: p.516
- 67. Ibid: p.517
- 68. Ibid: p.519
- 69. Ibid: p.520
- 70. Ibid: p.521
- 71. *Ibid:* p.521
- 72. Ibid: p.521
- 73. angēna ālambayet gitam hastena artham pradaršayet / netrābhyām daršayet bhāvam padābhyām tāļamācaret // yato hasta tato drstih yato drstih tato manah / yato manah tato bhāvah yato bhāvah tato rasah // Nātya Śāstra Samgraha: p. 31
- 74. Nātya Śāstra: Chapters.27,34,35
- 75. Ibid: p.381
- 76. *Ibid:* Chapters.34, 35, pp.514-530 for a detailed description of the classes and kinds of role.
- 77. Ibid: p.376

Words like 'Kastam' for the pathetic feelings portrayed.

78. Ibid: p.376

Words like 'aho' for implying 'how wonderful' the portrayal is.

79. Ibid: p.375

Apprciation of humour is implied with smile and laughter; appreciation of joy is expressed through horripilation.

80. Ibid: p. 380

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