CHAPTER 5

RENDERING THE TEXT IN EPIC AND CLASSICAL INDIAN THEATRE

5.1.0 THE EPIC THEATRE

The playwright's script furnishes the dialogues and the stage directions for producing and acting the play. But the script or the text is not the complete play. The way it is communicated to the audience, decides the point of focus or the purpose of its manifestation. The exposition of the story and its communication by suitable means of alienation, constitutes the main business of the Epic theatre. As discussed earlier, the thrust of the Epic theatre was to develop the new methods of rendering the text which would on one hand restrict the possibility of empathy between the spectator and the character, and secondly, to help the actor present the character while simultaneously adopting an attitude towards the behaviour of the character. As a method to draw this invisible line between the character—actor and create social gest, Brecht has suggested certain reading methods to be observed during the rehearsal sessions. The example from CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE given in chapter 4, is sufficient to exemplify this point.
In the chapter on Epic theater and Alienation Effect (Chapter 3), this investigator has made certain notes regarding the special methods used for the rendering of the Epic text. Here, the same points will be further elaborated and clarified by giving examples from the three selected plays of Brecht, namely MOTHER, MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN and CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE.

5.1.1 During the rehearsal, prose can be alienated by translating into the actor's native dilect. The actor paraphrases the content into vulgar prose using the same gesture designed to be enacted at the time of the performance. Brecht had strong reservations for the speech technique generally used in Realistic plays of contemporary German theatre. He often mocked at the parsonical 'sing-song' of the realistic actor. He compelled his actors to work on the script slowly, thereby gradually understanding the character rather than mechanically fixing the speech pattern in the very beginning. By translating the script into his native dilect, the Epic actor could understand the script better and could find novel ways of communicating it. After few rehearsals, he would switch back to the actual standard German text yet, could retain the accents and intonations he

1. Angelica Hurwicz. (Article) BRECHT AS THEY KNEW HIM p. 133.
discovered while speaking the text in his native dialect in tact, in his final presentation. This process could obliterate the artistic barrier while listening to the text, and the spectator could understand the text in a new light.

5.1.2 Speaking out the stage directions loud during rehearsals in the third person and transforming the dialogues into a story-telling formula, result in a clash between the two tones of voice, alienating the text proper.

This practice was followed in the early sessions of the rehearsals (example already given in Chapter four, 'Preparation of the Epic Actor').

5.1.3 The delivery of various verbal patterns such as heightened prose, rhymeless verse with irregular rhythm and metered poetry alienate prose from the other patterns.\(^2\)

The language of Brecht's text had varied influences as well as many original elements, which made it appear unfamiliar. Brecht himself a poet, tried at rhymeless verses with irregular rhythm (blank verse) as well as regular metered poetry. His rhymed poems had irregular rhythms, regular rhyme poems had irregular, rhymeless had regular rhythm and all of them could be easily sung. Brecht needed elevated language against the oily smoothness of the usual five-foot iambic meter.

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He needed rhythm but not the usual jingle. It was basically a protest against the smoothness and harmony of the conventional poetry. Also such dramatic change in the composition offered him the possibility of ‘gest’. Following example from the play CHALK CIRCLE will clarify the meaning of the term rhymless verse with irregular rhythm.³

Scene 5

THE STORY OF THE JUDGE

The Singer: Listen now to the story of Judge:

How he turned Judge, how he passed judgment, what Kind of judge he is.

On the Easter sunday of the great revolt, when the Grand Duke was overthrown
And his Governor Abashvili, father of our child, lost his head

The village clerk Azdak found a fugitive in the woods and hid him in his hut.

On the other hand the 10th scene of Mother Courage which consists of only one song has a regular verse.⁴

SCENE 10

High Road

Mother Courage and Kattrin are pulling the cart. They pass a peasant's house. In side a voice singing:

The Voice: The roses in our arbour
    Delight us with their show:
    They have such lovely flowers
    Repaying all our labour
    After the summer showers.
    Happy are those with gardens now:
    They have such lovely flowers.
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(Mother Courage and Kattrin pause to listen, then continue pulling.)

Brecht at one place also mentions about Arthur Rimbaud's heightened prose. These methods of using the prose, deliberately makes the spoken word non-realistic and forces the listener to pay attention to the text in a spacial way.

In the case of Mother Courage, the language of the original German is modern, earthy, popular speech; in Courage's case, it is strongly coloured by the Bavarian dialect. Pithy sayings, folk adages, proverbs and biblical allusions are abound in the text, though they are frequently used ironically.
The mixing of prose and poetry, mixing of regular rhythmic poetry with irregular rhythm, the regular prose with heightened prose, standard German with native dialects, were the methods Brecht tried out in his text to bring an effect in the verbal rendering.

5.1.4 Addressing the audience directly breaks the illusion of empathy and unwanted hypnotic tension. It provides a good opportunity to the actor to establish direct communication with the audience and share his views on the character, he is playing for them.

This device Brecht uses amply in the play MOTHER, which is one of his earlier plays. Here, one finds not so much the technique of Chinese theatre but more of Agit-prop theater where the characters at times, during the prose sequence would talk directly to the audience. Following is the text of the first scene of MOTHER.

Vlasova: I am almost ashamed to offer my son this soup. But I can't put anymore fat in it, not even half a spoonful. Because only last week, they took a Kopek per hour off his wages.

(She carries the tray with soup on it over to her son. When she gets back, she watches as the son, without looking up from his book, lifts the lid from the bowl, sniffs at the soup, then replaces the lid and pushes the bowl away.)

Vlasova: Now he is turning his nose at the soup again. I can't provide him with any better...

Similarly in the 7th scene of the same play, when Vlasova goes to see her son in the prison.

Vlasova: The warden will be keeping a close watch...

Here the visual is described in words also. This device destroys the illusion of Realism and works as a storytelling method where the actor while narrating the incident as a character, becomes a part of the scene and comes back to the audience from time to time, to comment on the action.

5.1.5 The separation of the emotion and the text.

In an extremely innovative manner, Brecht conveys the emotional strain on Grusha (in the play CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE) which is pulling her in two opposite directions. She does not express her feelings herself, instead the dilemma on her mind is communicated to the audience.

The time lapse in the action of the Epic play is suggested through various methods. Some times the titles of the scene are hung above the stage clarifying the time passed in between the two scenes.

In case of verbal references, Brecht uses songs to communicate the time lapse. Again, in the play CHALK CIRCLE with great sensitivity, the Singer describes the passing of

7. Brecht. CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE. p. 35
the autumn and coming of the spring which is not going to bring happiness for Grusha, but the fear of recognition as an unmarried mother of a young child.

The Singer: The autumn passed, the winter came.

The winter was long.
The winter was short.
The people mustn’t know.
The rats mustn’t bite
The spring mustn’t come.

In the fifth scene of the same play, the time lapse indicates the rein of Azdak as judge for two years.

The Singer: Now Azdak was made a judge by the ironshirts
Now Azdak remained a judge for two years.

These devices helped to maintain the continuity of the narrative and on the other hand re-defined the ‘dramatic’. It is clear that Brecht used different devices to create Alienation effect according to the nature of the play. The verbal devices and the special ways of rendering text in the play MOTHER are, as said earlier, more of less influenced by Agit-prop theater techniques, whereas in CHALK CIRCLE (The story of which originally comes from a

Chinese folk tale, the technique is based on the continuous presence of the Singer/narrator on the stage. In MOTHER COURAGE, the information about the time lapse is indicated through the abundant use of mechanical devices which is clear from the statements of the technicians and the actors worked in the productions of Berliner Ensemble.

5.2.0 Vāchikābhīnaya in Classical Indian theatre.

Verbal representation or Vāchikābhīnaya as termed in Natyashastra, relates to the voice registers (Śtāṇa), pitch of the vowel (Varna), intonation (Kāku), speech tempo (laya) and proper musical notes (Swara) to be used in reciting or declaiming a passage for the purpose of evoking different sentiments in the spectator. E.g. To call forth the Comic or Erotic sentiment, the text should be recited with the Madhyama or Panchama note, and for the Heroic or Marvellous sentiment, the Shadja or Rishabha; for the Pathetic Gāndhāra and Nishāda would be suitable.⁹

To communicate the distance between the characters on the stage. Bharata prescribes different voice-registers; Shiras or head-register should be used to call a person standing

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⁹ Ghosh, op. cit. p. 345.
for away; Uras or the chest-register to be used to call a person standing at a short distance; and Kanthaṣṭha or the throat-register should be used to call a person standing near by. Another variety of speech Bharata mentions falls in the realm of tone i.e. Udāṭta (acute), Swarita (circumflex) and Kampita (trembling). Above information is useful to imagine the speech patterns created by the Masters in Classical Indian theatre. It should be noted that physical distance between two characters was suggested and not 'actual', as is the practice in western realistic theatre. Now, it would be interesting to find out how the two kinds of the classical Indian and the Epic maintained the element of actor-character duality.

5.2.1 In the Epic Theatre practice during the rehearsals, the original text would be translated by the actor in his native dialect to find out new ways of intonations and accents for the high German text to be used eventually during the performance.

In the Classical Indian theatre on the other hand 'Prakrit' or the regional dialects were spoken by the characters during the performance according to their regional background. Prākrit was part of the text and not just one but many dialects were used in one play along with sanskrit

10. Ghosh, op. cit. p. 345
which would be spoken by select characters such as the
king, the sages, the royal courtesan and sometimes the
members of the royal family. Thus class differences were
brought out and the regional identities were respected but
not so much for political purpose as in Brecht.

For example, In Mrichhakatikam, Sutradhāra, Chārudatta,
Sharvilak, Vit (friend of Shakar), Vit (the teacher of
Vasantasena), Āryak and Adhikaranik - the Chif Justice,
speak Sanskrit whereas other characters speak different
Prākrit languages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prakrit dialect</th>
<th>Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shauraseni ......</td>
<td>Sutradhāra, Nati, Ratanikā, Madanikā, Vasantasenā, Karna - pooraka, Dhutā, Shodhanak and Shreshthis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avantijā ........</td>
<td>Veerak and Chandanak.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prachyā ..........</td>
<td>Maitreya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māgadhi ..........</td>
<td>Samvahak, Shakār, Rohasena and all Chets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shākāri (Vibhāshā) ....</td>
<td>Shakār.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhakki ......</td>
<td>Dyutakar and Mathur (gamblers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chāndāli (Vibhāshā) ...</td>
<td>Chāndāls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 Brecht tried various technical means to discourage the
actor’s natural tendency to create empathy with the
character.

In the classical Indian theatre, on the other hand the actor never actually had the illusion of ‘becoming’ Rāma or Chārudatta or Udayana since the over all style of acting was extremely heightened. The movement and verbal patterns were developed to the highest levels of abstraction. Thus, somewhat like the Brechtian German, the total theatrical language was lifted.

5.2.3 In Epic theatre, the delivery of various verbal patterns such as heightened prose, rhymeless verse with irregular rhythm and metered poetry alienate prose from the other patterns.

The Classical Indian theatre is predominantly considered to be a Drishya-kāvya, an audio-visual spectacle. The drama performed has the power to raise the spectator, for the moment, above his limited ego, his practical interests. Things and events in practical life which are associated with ‘I’ or ‘my’ or ‘mine’ repel and grieve human beings. But in theatre, they are felt as a source of pleasure, when they are generalized and acquire universality. The task of generalization carried out by the ‘poetic’, breaks the barrier of the limited ‘I’ and eliminates in this way the interests, demands and aims associated with it.12

12. Gnoli, op. cit. (introduction) p. XXII
the view of Bhattanayaka, a 9th century philosopher/critic who explained the Rasa concept through his doctrine of Generalization (Sādhāranikarana). The use of poetry in Classical theatre does not create alination for a social purpose but has much deeper and great function to be fulfilled.

To clarify the point, two examples are given from the selected plays. In MRICHHAKATIKAM following poetry meters (Mātrāvrittas) are used:

Vaitāliyam, Shakwāri Jāti, Vasantatilakā, Shārdulvikridit, Upajāti, Pushpitāgrā, Vaishvadevi, Chitrajāti, Āryā, Gāthā, Vipulā, Vidyunmālā, Vanshastha, Pathavaktram, Anushtup, Indravrajrā, Sragdharā and many more.

In SVAPNAVASAVADATTAM Bāsa uses Shālini, Shikharini, Upajāti, Harini, Pushpitāgrā, Shārdulvikridit, Indravarajrā, and Upendravrajrā Mātrāvrittas.

The examples of each of these vittas will be a major discussion. The names are mentioned to show the technical virtuosity the classical Indian play-wright had to acquire to create the necessary effect. The use of the poetry elevates the language from the ordinary day-to-day use. Firstly, poetry offers immense variation in verbal expression (Gana Yojana). Secondly it can be recited in


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suitable rhythmic manner with the accompaniment of suitable percussion or rhythm-oriented musical instrument (Ātodya). The third and the most sensitive way of rendering poetry is to sing it in Rāga (melody) which enhances the emotional feelings described in the song (Dhruvā). Again, the above mentioned prose, rhythmic and melodious recitation can be performed in three suitable speeds (laya). Thus the narrative or the story itself is not emphasized but how it is conveyed to the spectator by the actor who has the training in classical music is the crux.

5.2.4 Addressing the audience directly breaks the illusion of empathy and unwanted hypnotic tension. Brecht feels that this device provides a good deal of opportunity to the actor to establish direct communication with the audience and share his views with them.

Sanskrit dramatic text normally consists of three varieties of spoken word. Sarvarṣa, the text that is heard by the audience as well as all the characters on the stage; Ashrāvya or Ātmagata the text to be heard only by the audience; and Niyatashrāvaya, this convention has two varieties. They are called Janāntika and Apawārita. Basically these are aural conventions for specific dramatic purpose. During the course of the action on the stage, if

one character using a particular hand gesture (Tripatāka) talks to the other person, the device is called Janāntika. The other method of communicating one’s thoughts or feelings to the other one (and the audience) by turning one’s face away. This is called Apawārita.

One more aural convention needs to be mentioned where the character addresses a person (who is not present) by looking up. The character on stage would say, "What are you saying?" Then using the Hamsapaksha gesture he would listen to the invisible person and say, "Oh, you are saying .... Yes, I’ll do accordingly."

In SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM, in the first act, Vāsavadattā mostly uses Ātmagata or Swagata convention since she wants to hide her emotions and thoughts from other characters but lets them know to the audience.

Similarly, in VIKRAMORVASHIYAM, Aparwārita and Svagata are used extensively where Urvashi shares her feelings with the audience as well as Chitrālekha.

Urvashi: (Looking at the king, to herself - svagata) Then have the demon obliged me.

Urvashi: (Aside - Apawārya) How noble his words are or what wonder that nectar should flow from the moon.

That is why my heart is eager to meet them.

It is evident that Sanskrit theatre by its very nature, right from its inception was never realistic. Therefore the devices which appear revolutionary in Epic theatre because it was breaking away from the realism, are almost common place in Sanskrit theatre. For example, Sutradhār in the very beginning, addresses the audience and informs them about the major developments in the play. He starts his dialogues with the audience in present times. Suddenly he switches himself to the time of the story and describes the events in the past. e.g. In VIKRAMORVASHIYAM, Sutradhār is talking to pāripārshvik thereby informing the spectators about the author of the play and little about the main characters, Vikram or Pururavā and Urvashi. In a moment he listens to the cries of heavenly nymphs, calling for help and says¹⁶-

Sutradhār: (Listening) What sounds are these in the air, as of the female of sprays, that break in upon my words. (Reflecting) Ah, I know....

Similarly, in MRICHHAKATIKAKAM, Sutradhār while talking to his wife - Nati - sees Maitreya, the friend of Chārudaṭṭa, and invites him for ritual meals. Maitreya refuses his invitation and asks Sutradhār to look for some other Brahmīn.¹⁷

¹⁶. Deodhar. op. cit. p. 5
¹⁷. Pandey. op. cit. p. 12
Sutradhār: Maitreya, the friend of Chārudatta is coming. Let me ask him. Ārya Maitreya, can you come to have meals at our place?

(Back stage - Nepthaye)

"Please ask someone else. I am busy to-day"

Here Āmukh or the introduction of the play is complete, and the main play starts with the entry of Maitreya.

While talking to Maitreya (backstage), Sutradhār will use head-register to establish the distance between him and the other character thus destroying realistic idea of space.

5.2.5 Separation of emotion and the text.

Normally in classical theatre, the feelings described in the text are shown by the character himself or herself. Yet at times, when a particular Dhruvā song describes the union of the lovers or the beautiful season that enhances the character's emotions, the song would be followed by Nritta or pure dance where the movements based on Angahāras are performed by the couple inloved. Here, the text is in a way, separated and the emotions are shown through intricate body movements. e.g. in the end of act III of Vikramorvashiyam, the end of Naishkramiki Dhruvā, will be followed by a duet dance by the king and Urvashi.

18. Ghosh, op. cit. p. 73.
5.2.6 The time lapse.

Classical theatre uses various methods to communicate to the audience the time lapses between the two acts. The use of Arthopakshepakas primarily fulfills this requirement. As mentioned before, a classical play would continue its performance for 5 to 10 days, maintaining an-act-a-day schedule. Such a varying situation demands certain introduction to start the play in the right frame of mind.

For example, the third act of Vikramorvashiyam starts with Mishravishkambhaka scene, to let the audience know about the incident that took place in heaven. The information of the curse given to Urvashi is conveyed to the audience by two Bharata Putras (the discipies of Bharata).

Similarly in Svapnavasavadattam, Act 4 starts again with Mishravishkambhaka that informs the audience about the marriage of Udayana and Padmāvati. Such devices which are abundant in Sanskrit theatre, would be considered remarkable in the western theatre because of its location in a certain kind of tradition and also because the specific use they were put to, ... by Brecht.

Conclusion

This chapter mainly deals with the Brechtian methods of rendering the text, which are focussed at bringing the A\textsuperscript{ffect} Togther in the performance. Some of them are observed during the rehearsal sessions strictly, such as

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using the native dialect of the actor instead of high German of the text or reading the stage directions etc. by the actor.

The construction of the text itself offers a variety of speech patterns and at times demands a good knowledge of music from Epic actor. To break the effect of empathy, the character (according to the textual requirement) addresses the audience directly and destroys the illusion of realism; on the other hand, the actor presents the character to the audience and simultaneously, critically judges his action.

The separation of the emotion and the text in Epic performance again, presents familiar in the most unfamiliar manner and the social comment made by the actor registers deeply into the minds of the spectators.

In spite of the long time lapse in between the scenes, the continuity is maintained by the appropriate suggestions made in the text by the playwright. The verbal mention of the time lapse not only informs the audience about the time lapse, but also reflects on the socio/political change in the environment.

In Classical Indian theatre, the dialects or prakrits are used as a part of the final text which offer a distinct flavour to the characterisation. Similarly, the various verbal patterns such as prose and metered poetry (Mātrāvrittas) help to elevate the aesthetic experience of the spectator.
The use of various kinds of spoken word (Nātyokti,) such as Sarva Shrāvya, Ashrāvya and Niyata Shrāvya offer interesting ingenuity in convey the story to the audience. Classical theatre specifically mentions the use of Arthopakshepaks (the method to provide the important links in the story which can be verbally communicated to the audience) also informs about the time lapse element.

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