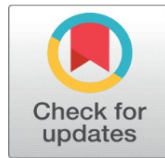
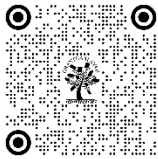


INDIAN METHOD OF ACTING: A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Indian method of acting, deeply rooted in classical treatises such as Natya Shastra and evolving through regional theatre traditions, combines emotional expression (rasa), physical gestures (abhinaya), and spiritual discipline. This paper provides an in-depth study of the Indian method of acting, including historical context, core principles, and modern adaptations. Special attention is given to the contributions of Prasanna Hegdu, whose work synthesizes traditional and contemporary acting techniques to create a uniquely Indian acting methodology relevant for modern theatre and cinema.

Keywords: Acting, Abhinaya, Indian Theatre, Prasanna Hegdu, Rasa

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian acting tradition stands apart in the world of performance arts due to its holistic approach that incorporates mind, body, and spirit. Originating from ancient Sanskrit texts like Natya Shastra (circa 200 BCE–200 CE) by Bharata Muni, Indian acting developed through classical dance-drama forms such as Kathakali, Kuchipudi, and Yakshagana. The essence of Indian acting is the portrayal of rasa — the emotional flavor intended to evoke a response in the audience. The practitioner engages in abhinaya, the expressive art, combining gestures (mudras), facial expressions, and vocal modulation.

Contemporary Indian theatre and cinema have witnessed the synthesis of these classical methods with global acting techniques. Among modern scholars and practitioners, Prasanna Hegdu stands out for his theoretical and practical work emphasizing the Indian method's relevance today.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research draws on a multidisciplinary approach combining:

- 1) Textual analysis of classical works including Natya Shastra and commentaries.
- 2) Examination of Prasanna Hegdu's books and lectures on Indian acting.

- 3) Case studies of prominent Indian actors and theatre practitioners.
- 4) Interviews and secondary sources documenting the evolution of acting in Indian cinema and theatre.
- 5) Comparative study of Western acting methods (Stanislavski, Method Acting) versus Indian traditions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1) Historical and Theoretical Foundations

The Natya Shastra is foundational for Indian performance arts, codifying techniques of abhinaya that include four types: angika (body gestures), vachika (speech), aharya (costume and makeup), and sattvika (mental/emotional states). The central concept of rasa theory involves nine primary emotions (navarasas): love, laughter, anger, compassion, disgust, horror, heroism, wonder, and peace. The actor's responsibility is to evoke these rasas authentically, creating a shared emotional experience with the audience.

2) Prasanna Hegdu and the Indian Acting Method

Prasanna Hegdu, a prominent theatre scholar and practitioner, has revitalized the Indian method of acting by articulating its philosophical and practical framework in books such as "Indian Method in Acting" and "Acting Traditions in Indian Theatre". Hegdu critiques the dominance of Western psychological realism and argues for the primacy of abhinaya as a multidimensional practice combining body, voice, and inner energy (prana).

According to Hegdu, Indian acting is a holistic practice encompassing:

- **Spiritual grounding:** Actors engage in yogic and meditative exercises to center themselves.
- **Physical expressiveness:** Training in classical dance forms enhances the actor's control over facial and bodily expressions.
- **Rasa realization:** Actors aim to internalize and then project emotional states, rather than merely imitating external behaviors.
- **Audience connection:** The actor's awareness extends beyond the self to a dynamic interaction with the audience's reception.

Hegdu also integrates practical exercises derived from traditional training and modern theatre workshops, promoting adaptability of the Indian method for contemporary contexts.

3) Contemporary Application in Theatre and Cinema

Indian cinema actors such as Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi reflect the Indian method's influence through their nuanced performances combining subtle emotion and physical precision. Regional theatre movements also actively preserve classical acting principles, adapting them for modern social narratives.

4) Comparative Perspective

Unlike Western methods like Stanislavski's system or Strasberg's Method Acting, which focus on psychological realism and emotional memory, the Indian method prioritizes rasa and abhinaya as holistic tools that merge body, voice, and mind. This difference reflects broader cultural divergences in the understanding of self, performance, and audience engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

The Indian method of acting is a profound artistic system that transcends mere imitation, aiming to evoke spiritual and emotional resonance. Prasanna Hegdu's scholarly work reaffirms the method's vitality, ensuring its relevance in the modern artistic landscape. This research underscores the importance of preserving and adapting indigenous acting traditions to maintain cultural richness in global performing arts.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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