SHAKESPEARE’S A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM 
AS INTERPRETED BY 
THE TEMPLE OF FINE ARTS INTERNATIONAL: 
A ‘PERSONAL’ DEVOTIONAL POETICS.

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Muralitharan Pillai 
son of 
D. M. Doraisamy Pillai and Saroja Nagalingam

BA (Drama) Queensland University of Technology, 2000

Faculty of Arts and Education, School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Murdoch University, 2011
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main focus work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

………………………………………………

Muralitharan Pillai D. M. Doraisamy Pillai
Acknowledgements

With deepest and sincerest gratitude, I would like to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck, for her unflinching support and guidance throughout the entire duration of this thesis. She has become a close and true friend to whom I am deeply and gratefully indebted too.

I would like to express my thanks to the kind and wonderful staff of Higher Degrees Research Team for their tremendous support during the candidature process. My thanks, too, must go to Professor Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe for a copy of his manuscript on Consciousness and the Actor and Mr Radha Krishnan for his generous support during the process. I would also like to thank my late Father, Mother, Brothers, Sister, Mrs Aehma Rajendran and Brother In-Law, Mr Rajendran Rangaraju. My heartfelt thanks, also, to all my close friends who stood by me during this lonely and challenging journey, in particularly my dear friends TT Dhavamanni, S Krishna Kumar, Darren Bilston, Melissa Merchant, Andrew Kocsis and Salmiyah Fiedorowicz.

With deepest gratitude, I am grateful to the Temple of Fine Arts International, its loving teachers and Shiva Family International for their love, guidance and support without whom this thesis would not have begun its journey. A very special thanks to Perth Shiva Family members, in particular, Annalakshmi, the Management and the lovely Aunties of Annalakshmi who have been a constant source of inspiration and support throughout my trying times in Perth. With all my heart, I would like to thank the late Mr Udhaya Sagar, Ms Swaroopini Udhaya and Mrs Hamalatha Udhaya, together with the late Mr Vijaye Kumar Santhiran, Ms Bhumika Vijaye Santhiran, Master Himagiri Vijaye Santhiran, Mrs Anusooya Vijaye Kumar, Ms Santhini Chandrapal, Mr S Loganathan, Mrs Usha Ramakrishnan and Mr Vaidyanathan Appathurai for their unconditional love, support and encouragement in realising this thesis and my personal self.

Finally and most importantly, offering my total pranams and salutations, I prostrate in complete obeisance to my true friend, mentor, and Guru, His Holiness Swami Shantanand Saraswathi (Swamiji), founder and inspiration of Shiva Family International and the Temple of Fine Arts International. Without Swamiji’s continuous unconditional love, compassion, guidance and support, this thesis would not have been conceived, inspired or realised. Although, Swamiji, my Father, Udhaya, and Vijaye are not physically present to share my joy, I revel in the knowledge that they are sharing my joy from the Spirit realm, ever-present. Hari Om.
Abstract

From the time of Alexander the Great, to the colonising agendas of the Portuguese, Spanish and the English and, more recently, the pursuits of Western theatre practitioners, many have sought for ontological significance from India. What were they looking for? Swami Ramdas once remarked that all who sought him, wanted ‘trinkets’ but none sought him for the greatest treasure of all, *brahma gnanam* (knowledge of the Self or the Absolute Spirit-Brahman). Drawing inspiration from India, twentieth century theatre practitioners as diverse as Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Strasberg, Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, Brook, Mnouchkine, Schechner and Zarrilli have embarked on attempts to search for and develop methodologies that aim to free the actor from the ‘tyranny’ of the Western theatrical idea; that is, the cognitively orientated training that develops in actors a capacity to perform from the ‘neck up’. Various actor-training methodologies, from varying cultural perspectives, have been developed only to find their unsatisfactory conclusion in merely scratching the surface of possible frameworks for an enriched theatrical training program as intercultural theatre reached a theoretical deadlock.

In their search for a solution to this Aristotelian-Cartesian body-mind dualism, theorists such as Mancing and Haney have surfaced the dire need to reassess Western theories of cognitive science that engage literary theory, cultural studies and criticism. The authors have suggested the alternative approach of defining and accessing the idea of pure consciousness as a methodology unique to the performing arts, one which is drawn from their understanding of the insights of Indian philosophy. A new generation of theorists and theatre practitioners, such as Malekin, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgrafe have further argued that the actor’s emotions in theatre practice can be successfully mediated and subsequently communicated on the platform of Indian theatre aesthetics taking as their informing paradigm, the *Natyasastra*. Their research has led them to the door, but I believe they are unable to gain entry because they lack the crucial ‘key’, or “pratyahara” (ethical preparations) that would allow them access. The ‘key’, as I argue in this research as practice/practice-led research project, lies in the practice of Swami Sivananda’s “Spiritual Ladder” elucidated by Swami Shantanand.

This thesis, which comprises an exegesis and the documentation of the unique training schedule developed through my personal theatre practice, aims at bridging that gap in
creating a clear pathway for the attainment of the ‘greatest treasure’ in theatre practice: pure consciousness or Absolute Spirit-Brahman. I propose a model of acting-theatre praxis whose theoretical coordinates are located in the paradigm of Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime, the Vedic sciences of the Natyasattra as they relate to the state of pure consciousness and contemporary theories of Interculturalism. In order to fully locate the project, I have used the insights of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism, which offer useful frameworks for the interrogation of both collaborative and vertical traditional, theatre making. The insights that derive from the theoretical interrogation, here, of my theatre practice which include the presentation and analysis of the devised production of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream adapted by the Temple of Fine Arts International suggest the possibility for the devotee of an acting-theatre praxis based on the pure consciousness of devotion and worship in adoration of the divine. The model developed here as part of the creative component of this thesis transpires in a devotional acting-theatre praxis, informed by my personal creative work at Murdoch University which provides an empirical (experiential) base from which to renegotiate the competing – often conflicting - demands of intercultural theatre practice.
Table of Contents

Declaration ................................................................. i
Acknowledgements .......................................................... ii
Abstract .................................................................. iii
Prologue ....................................................................... 1
  Hermeneutic Circle ..................................................... 1
  Vision taking me to A Midsummer Night’s Dream ................. 4
  Providence or Coincidence ............................................. 9
  A prayer to Lord Ganesha .............................................. 11
  A prayer to Guru ........................................................ 11
  A prayer to the Goddess Saraswathi - Goddess of Knowledge .. 13
  Conclusion ................................................................ 15

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Literature Review ....................... 16
  Introduction ................................................................ 16
  Vedic Philosophy and Consciousness ............................... 16
  Interculturalism .......................................................... 19
  Cultural Materialism and New Historicism ......................... 20
  The Arguments ............................................................ 21
  Primary Case Study - The Temple of Fine Arts ..................... 23
  Secondary Case Studies – Creative Works at Murdoch University ... 25
  Hegelian Circle of Hermeneutics ....................................... 26
  Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime ......................... 27
  Conclusion ................................................................ 36

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Fore-structures .................................. 37
  Introduction ................................................................ 37
  Vedic Philosophy and Consciousness ................................ 38
  Interculturalism .......................................................... 45
  Language ................................................................ 58
  Space ........................................................................ 60
  Body (race and gender) ................................................. 61
  Reinvention ................................................................ 66
  The Vedas ................................................................. 67
  Conclusion ................................................................ 75
  Chapter 2 Appendix: AMND Program Brochure Cover page .......... 77

Chapter 3 - The Temple Of Fine Arts ...................................... 80
  Introduction ................................................................ 80
  The Temple of Fine Arts ................................................. 82
  Shiva Family as Yagna .................................................. 97
  The Temple of Fine Arts as Yagna ...................................... 98
  Annalakshmi as Yagna .................................................. 104
  Conclusion ................................................................ 108
  Chapter 3 Appendix: Swami Shantanand – The Sage behind TFA .... 111

Chapter 4 - AMND: Interpretation .......................................... 127
  Introduction ................................................................ 127
  Shakespeare ................................................................. 129
  Swami Shantanand Saraswathi ........................................ 131
  Katharine Lee Bates ..................................................... 136
  The Sri Chakra Yantra .................................................. 137
  Arnie Lade ................................................................. 143
  Dr Hans Jenny and Cymatics .......................................... 145
Chapter 5 - Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis ............................... 175

Introduction .................................................................................. 175
Ghostly Spectres ........................................................................... 181
Western Academic Prestige .......................................................... 182
The Timeline of the Natyasastra ..................................................... 183
Critique of Schechner and the Natyasastra ..................................... 189
Indian Philosophy: a reorientation ................................................ 199

Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis ..................................................... 207
The Natyasastra .............................................................................. 237
Abhinaya ...................................................................................... 238
Rasa .............................................................................................. 238
Gurukula: guru-sisya parampara .................................................... 241
Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis-Led Research: Suggested Solution ......................................................... 243

Creative Work ............................................................................... 247
Lord of Misrule .............................................................................. 254
Symbolism of Lord Nataraja .......................................................... 257
The Natyasastra and Stanislavsky’s System ...................................... 274

Conclusion ..................................................................................... 279

Chapter 5 Appendices .................................................................. 282
Appendix 5.1: The Captive Carousel .............................................. 282
Appendix 5.2: Infinite Variety - Othello ......................................... 284
Appendix 5.3: Lit by Limelight ....................................................... 288
Appendix 5.4: Master of the Revels ................................................. 292
Appendix 5.5: The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province ................................................................. 294
Appendix 5.6: Macbeth (Japanese adaptation reinvention) .......... 300

Epilogue ......................................................................................... 308

Bibliography .................................................................................. 311
Prologue

Indian culture, […] is built around a sublime poetics-and the culture’s dominant literary form, the devotional, as well as its dominant literary hermeneutic, rasa theory […]. (Mishra 1998: 202)

The overarching qualitative methodology used in this thesis is that of the hermeneutical circle. It is based on “interest”, interpretation and reinterpretation on my part of that “interest” deriving from Vedic philosophy. As I unpack the layered interpretations of the Temple of Fine Arts (TFA) reinvention of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (AMND) against the backdrop of Shakespeare’s AMND, through the theorisation of the Indian Sublime, Vedic sciences of the Natyasastra and Higher Consciousness, Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism, I aim to formulate a holistic universal acting-theatre paradigm with the goal of suggesting a way forward in diffusing or resolving the “theatrical and cultural minefield” prevalent in Interculturalism (Holledge and Tompkins 2000: 10). Hence, to establish my overarching methodology in qualitative inquiry, I begin my interpretation with the “practical understanding” of the hermeneutic circle (Packer and Addison 1989: 23).

Hermeneutic Circle

Celebrated for his deeds, the term “Hermeneutic” was derived from Hermes, messenger to the Greek gods (Packer and Addison 1989: 1). The traditional view on Hermeneutics, is based on “interest” interpretation, but from the viewpoint of qualitative research inquiry it has grown to include interpretations based on “interviews and observed actions”. In qualitative analysis, in relation to the hermeneutic circle process, the emphasis is based on “increasing the understanding” in relating to segments of the

1 The Indian sublime is elucidated in Chapter One based on Vijay Mishra’s Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime.
2 I understand that ‘the Vedas’ are a genre of Sanskrit literature; Rig, Atharva, Sama and Yajur are the major four genres of Vedic literature, each covering different content, further to the qualification of sub-genres classified on temporal production (samhita, aranyakas, brahmanas, Upanishads).
3 Founded in 1980, the Temple of Fine Arts International is the leading Indian cultural organisation dedicated to promoting the fine arts in Malaysia (Penang, Malacca and Johor Bahru), Singapore, Perth (Australia), and India (Chennai and Coimbatore) (Willford 2009: 169, 172). Under the adage of “Art just for the love it”, and keeping in theme with the institution’s spiritual underpinnings, the annual productions offered by TFA to the public are complimentary.
whole and the whole to the segments (Patton 2002: 497). It is aimed at construing an understanding of the whole, which would shed clarity on the segments and, in turn, understanding the segments would lead to understanding the whole. Though in its nature, the clarity of the hermeneutic circle is only temporary, in time the approximation of the interpreter to secure a total and acceptable understanding of the observed actions, text, interest or interview of the whole in relation to its segments would eventually merge into a confluence of “perfect harmony” (Schwandt 2001: 112).

The hermeneutic circle’s universality is likened to an onion; each interpretation is layered and interdependent on the other. This, then, gives rise to a problem of not knowing where to begin in the circle for the qualitative researcher (Patton 2002: 497). As such, according to Packer and Addison, the psychological adaptation of the hermeneutic circle should then begin with “practical understanding”. The authors are of the opinion that:

Practical understanding in not an origin for knowledge in the sense of a foundation; it is, instead, the starting place for interpretation. Interpretive inquiry begins not from an absolute origin of unquestionable data or totally consistent logic, but at a place delineated by our everyday participatory understanding of people and events. We begin there in full awareness that this understanding is corrigible, and that it is partial in the twin senses of being incomplete and perspectival. Understanding is always moving forward. Practical activity projects itself forward into the world from its starting place, and shows us the entities we are home among. This means that neither commonsense nor scientific knowledge can be traced back to an origin, a foundation. (Packer and Addison 1989: 23)

Packer and Addison are further of the opinion that:

The circulatory of understanding, then, is that we understand in terms of what we already know. But the circularity is not, Heidegger argues, a “vicious” one where we simply confirm our prejudices, it is an “essential” one without which there would be no understanding at all. And the circle is complete; there is accommodation as well as assimilation. If we are persevering and open, our attention will be drawn to the projective character of our understanding and-in the backward arc, the movements of return-we gain an increased appreciation of what the fore-structure involves, and where it might best be changed. (Packer and Addison 1989: 34)

The authors move to conclude that:

Hermeneutic inquiry is not oriented toward a grand design. Any final construction that would be a resting point for scientific inquiry represents an illusion that must be
resisted. If all knowledge were to be at last collected in some gigantic encyclopedia this would mark not the triumph of science so much as the loss of our human ability to encounter new concerns and uncover fresh puzzles. So although hermeneutic inquiry proceeds from a starting place, a self-consciously interpretive approach to scientific investigation does not come to an end at some final resting place, but works instead to keep discussion open and alive, to keep inquiry under way. (Packer and Addison 1989: 35)

Patton postulates that the hermeneutic circle resembles the interpretative core of qualitative research, emphasising the importance of context and dynamism in the whole-segment interdependency for a “holistic perspective” and in essence offers a platform of formal engagement in interpretation (Patton 2002: 498). In the application of the theory of hermeneutics in theatre, Hunt and Bedford are of the opinion that dramaturgy can offer a sociologically reflexive method in creating meaning and purpose. The authors argue that dramaturgy uses theatrical metaphors to analyse social interactions, by way of using acting as a central concept in creating meaning and purpose through “specific social and temporal context” (Hunt and Benford 1997: 106). Their methodology is threefold: the first, in researching a production, the authors utilise a conceptualised framework; the second, in using theatrical metaphors, the dramaturgical methodology avoids common pitfalls when working in social sciences, and finally; for social scientists, it provides a basis for examining their research critically. Therefore, Hunt and Benford postulate that by weaving “research with drama”, the authors were able to confine the seemingly widespread pretentiousness in social science research. Hunt and Benford conclude by arguing that rather than “presenting a window to “reality,” a dramaturgical method serves as a constant reminder that researchers are in the business of “reality construction” (Hunt and Benford 1997: 116-117).

As per the postulations of Patton, Packer, Addison, Schwandt, Hunt and Benford, by relating to the segments of the whole and the whole to the segments, I in turn relate to the increased understanding of the whole (Patton 2002: 497), to gain a union of “perfect harmony” (Schwandt 2001: 112) in the interpretation of this thesis. I begin my interpretation based on my everyday understanding of life moving forward (Packer and Addison 1989: 23) in the terms of what I already know. In persevering to be open to the “projective character” of my understanding, while gaining increased appreciation of the involved “fore-structures”, allowing for change and keeping the inquiry ongoing, I intend to keep my discussions “open and alive” (Packer and Addison 1989: 34-35).
Aiming at a “holistic perspective” (Patton 2002: 498), weaving my research through the hermeneutics of drama’s theatrical metaphors in analysing the social interactions to create meaning and purpose, I aim to present a “reality construction” (Hunt and Benford 1997: 106, 116-117), from the position of my “cultural imperatives” as postulated by Mishra (Mishra 1998: 20). Thus, I begin the interpretation of my journey to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

“Pack your bags, go to Perth and finish your PhD”, so the guru spoke in 2002, and so the interpretation began.

**Vision taking me to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream***

After submitting a basic thesis proposal for a Master of Philosophy to Murdoch University, Western Australia, I arrived in Perth on the 20th of Jan 2004 and began to compile information on how to begin the thesis journey. I met with several postgraduate students and attended a few discussions.

At this first stage of evaluation, I became overwhelmingly concerned, as I had been away from the mode of study for an extended period. Every postgraduate whom I spoke to, regarding embarking on a research program, was either stressed out or lost in translation. No lectures, no notes, no course outline, no beginning, no end, nothing except meeting your supervisor fortnightly, an insanely lonely journey. What have I gotten myself into?

Hence, my perception of a postgraduate research program is likened to a party being hosted, where the candidate is welcomed to the candidature celebration. After the pomp and merriment, the candidate is taken to a ‘room’ (a metaphor I use for the postgraduate research program) and ushered in, with the reassurance that all is fine. As the candidate enters this ‘room’, the candidate notices that the room is totally dark, confused, the candidate turns around to ask for some clarification, but before the question is put forth for any clarity, the door is closed, leaving the candidate feeling helpless, lonely and lost in this dark environment.

*I panicked!*
Therefore, I decided to opt for a coursework Masters program: at least in this program one could see the light at the end of the tunnel. But before submitting to this course of action, I decided to run my decision by Mr. Radha Krishnan a Murdoch academic and fellow member of TFA. He patiently listened and at the end of it said, “I don’t know what you are worried about? Swami Shantanand (Swamiji4) has staged many dance drama ballet production at TFA. Furthermore, you have mentioned that you planned to work on a project fusing East and West techniques. Why don’t you write your thesis on Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream by TFA?”

It is strange, that of all the productions by TFA, Mr. Radha Krishnan just happened to mention, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”.

Nevertheless, to this suggestion, I thought, “It can’t be as easy as that”, and walked away bewildered. The next few days passed in thoughts of confusion. I volunteer some of my spare time at Annalakshmi Restaurant on the Swan, Perth City. On a routine evening, I was washing dishes at Annalakshmi, with thoughts of this dilemma written all over my face. It was at this juncture that a member of the volunteer team at the restaurant noticed my expression and approached me. I address him as Uncle Murrie Jupp. Just to cheer me up he said, “Murali, I have a surprise for you. It will cheer you up. Just meet me at Annalakshmi on this day (a day I can’t recall) and we will go out”.

As I met him on the said day, to my surprise he took me to a stage production at Burswood Theatre entitled, “The Shoalin Monks”, which I enjoyed immensely. While having dinner, I must add that Uncle Murrie tactfully inquired about my worried state at Annalakshmi and I begin to unfold my dilemma to him. In my conversation about the fusion of East and West techniques, he asked me who the author of the book entitled the “Natyasastra” was, and I mentioned, “Sage Bharatha”. Pondering for awhile, he then interjected by saying, “Why don’t you visualise Swamiji as Sage Bharatha and pray for guidance”. I agreed, and put it into practice that very same night, earnestly praying, asking Swami for guidance as Sage Bharatha.

4 The term “Swami” hails from an “ancient order of monks” (Yogananda 1993: 590), and according to Swami Yogananda, the Sanskrit root for the word “Swami” carries the meaning of “he who is one with the Self” (Yogananda 1993: 18). As such, within the context of Indian culture and customs, “ji” is a suffix that is used to address an individual in a respectful manner, “Swamiji”, “Guruji” (Yogananda 1993: 102) or Sivanandaji. Hence, Swami Shantanand is affectionately addressed as Swamiji by the group members of the Temple of Fine Arts known as ‘Shiva Family’. In this thesis I will be referring to Swamiji in the present tense. Although he has passed, a guru remains ever-present for a disciple or devotee.
Days passed.

Meanwhile, while awaiting my allocated place of study at Murdoch University, I used the common postgraduate room to do some research. Usually this room would be filled with students but on this “fortunate” day, I found myself to be the only person in the room.

As a rule of thumb, I try my utmost best to avoid having conversations with anyone, as it would only distract and delay my research. After a short foray into using the computer terminal, I noticed someone walking in followed by a soft flash of light: a Caucasian lady in her 60s or 70s walked in. There were twelve free computer terminals; I immediately began praying for the lady not to sit beside me, as I did not wish to be disturbed by idle conversation.

To my disappointment, my prayer was not answered; the lady walked toward me and sat on the seat next to me preparing to use the computer terminal. Once again, I prayed, for her not to begin a conversation with me but alas once again, my prayer fell upon deaf ears. Noticing that she was struggling with her computer mouse, I could not help but give into my conscience as it was saying, “Don’t be rude. Offer to help the lady”. Thus, giving into my conscience, I offered my help, which she graciously accepted. I swapped the mouse with another that was lying around and soon the computer terminal was operational.

Here, I must draw the significance of the computer “mouse” to the Hindu God, Lord Ganesha. According to Hindu culture and ritual, Lord Ganesha, the quintessence of acumen and harmony is known as the “remover of obstacles”, bestowing worldly and spiritual success. He is the first to be worshipped at the beginning of any undertaking for its successful completion. According to Swami Sivananda, Ganesha’s elephant head represents the monosyllable “Om”, and the “mouse” as his vehicle represents the triumph over egoism (Sivananda 1997: 74-75), while Martin is of the opinion that

---

5 According to Martin, Lord Ganesha is the elder son of Lord Shiva (Martin 1972: 192). Lord Shiva is one of the trinity gods of the Hindu pantheon (Brahma-Creator, Vishnu-Preserver and Shiva-Destroyer) (Martin 1972: xii).

6 The monosyllable “Om” is discussed in the analysis of TFA’s AMND in Chapter Four and is further extended in Chapter Five as part of my creative process where I play the character Lord of Misrule in Jenny de Reuck’s Master of Revels: an accompaniment to Twelfth Night.
Ganesha’s elephant head symbolises “wisdom and prudence” and the mouse symbolises perseverance (Martin 1972: 193).

Therefore, I believe that the computer “mouse” represented Lord Ganesha’s vehicle, to aid me in removing my ignorance (not wanting to be distracted) and clearing the path to receiving instructions from the spiritual masters.

I noticed that she was dressed all in white, a white straw hat, a white frilled dress with matching white socks and shoes, she was radiantly beautifully. I couldn’t place my finger on it but something was odd about this entire scenario. Nevertheless, as I finished with the mouse, she gently but directly inquired about my research and once again my thoughts went, “Oh! My God! Here we go again, another two hour distraction”.

And we began talking and strangely enough for the third time I repeated myself on wanting to do fusion work with East and West techniques, topics on the Natyasastra and TFA’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. At this juncture she quickly interrupted my train of thought and said, “Sorry to interrupt, but may I say something”. I said, “Yes, sure”, she continued by saying, “All you have to do is write on A Midsummer Night’s Dream and you have your PhD”.

The moment she mentioned this, I saw the flash once more but this time it saturated my consciousness, I was blinded by this flash for a few seconds. As my vision was slowly returning, in a daze, I saw the lady just get up and walk away. She didn’t wait to say

---

7 In July 2011, when this event was narrated in detail to Mrs Usha Ramakrishnan, the current secretary of TFA, Kuala Lumpur and senior member to the prayer groups, she spontaneously informed me that the Caucasian lady who visited me was none other than the late disciple of Swami Yogananda and third president of Self Realization Fellowship, Sri Daya Mata (31-1-1914 to 30-11-2010), http://www.yogananda-srf.org/tmp/about.aspx?id=2980&terms=DayaMatapassing, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/us/03mata.html.

8 According to Forman, W.T. Stace classifies these events as “Pure Consciousness Events” (PCE) of “extrovertive mysticism” and “introvertive mysticism”, where the subject perceives a sense of blessedness, unity or reality between the physical world and the true self, while the latter, experiences the self without the awareness of the physical world. From Forman’s reviewed position, he classifies all PCEs as “constructivism”, arguing that mystical experiences are predominantly “shaped and formed by the subject’s beliefs, concepts and expectations”. He further maintains that mystical experiences are represented by “an immediate, direct contact with a (variously defined) absolute principle. Only after that immediate contact with the ‘something more’, […] is such a direct contact interpreted according to the tradition’s language and beliefs”, Forman, K.C. Robert., The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 3, 8. My interpretation of the “variously defined absolute principle” as argued by Forman, was the direct contact with Sri Daya Mata via or as the Caucasian Lady. Furthermore, Vedic Science postulates that “pure consciousness is self-referral”, while Orme-Johnson argues that all structure and occurrences from the Universe arise from the self-referral manifestation “of the field of pure consciousness”, Orme-Johnson, D.W. The Cosmic Psyche as the Unified Source of Creation. Modern Science and Vedic Science 2:2, 1988, pp. 168-169.
anything else, she just got up and left. Stunned by this experience, I felt as if I was in a trance⁹ and turned to face the computer terminal and started typing away. Astonishingly, within an hour, I had churned out the entire thesis proposal Chapter by Chapter on how to document the creative work of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream by TFA.

Upon completion, I actually began to weep, feeling a sense of transcendental joy at the mysterious journey to the end of my dilemma. Questions began to bombard my mind. Who was this mysterious lady? Was she there to pass me this message? Could this be a divine intervention? Could it have been a vision? A blessing by Goddess Saraswathi¹⁰, herself.

In a state of ecstasy, I wrote an email to Swamiji, narrating all that had happened over the past couple of weeks which led to the Lady in White and the outpouring of the thesis proposal. I kept Mr. Radha Krishnan in the loop of my fascinating leap into the thesis proposal and also informed Uncle Murrie and thanked them for their aid in my time of need.

Two weeks later, Swamiji arrived in Perth. Excited, Uncle Murrie spoke to Swamiji about the whole incident. Later that evening, when I came to Annalakshmi Restaurant, Uncle Murrie happened to be there, he pulled me aside immediately and mentioned that he had spoken to Swamiji about the incident and remarked that Swamiji was silent

⁹ Relating the state of experiencing temporary states of pure consciousness in Vedic science as a form of artistic inspiration to artists, Meyer-Dinkgrafe whose work is elaborated in the rest of this thesis identifies eight inspirational pure consciousness qualities: the first, “loss of self while consciousness is nevertheless maintained”; the second, “experience of the multiplicity of objects of perception as […] ‘One’”; the third, “perception of an inner subjectivity to all things”; the fourth, “the temporal spatial parameters of the experience”; the fifth, “the experience is one of valid knowledge”; the sixth, “the impossibility of expressing the experience in conventional language”; the seventh, “positive affect quality of the experience”; and the seventh, “the intrinsic sacredness of the experience” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 29-30).

¹⁰ In Hindu philosophy, Goddess Saraswathi symbolises the absolute embodiment of knowledge, according to Swami Sivananda any aspirant persevering on the path of acquiring knowledge pays obeisance to Goddess Saraswathi (Sivananda 1997: 19-20). Martin and Kinsley are of the opinion that Goddess Saraswathi as the embodiment of “mind, intellect and thought” is the patron of the fine arts, “science and literature”. She is also known as the “Mother of the Vedas” and the “goddess of speech” (Martin 1972: 90-91). In describing Goddess Saraswathi’s “pure, spiritual thread” of nature (prakriti), Kinsley equates her purity of transcendence to her gleaming snow white complexion, brilliantly radiating like the moon adorned in white garments, Kinsley, David R. Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition, Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1986, pp. 59-62. Kinsley’s description of Goddess Saraswathi is staggeringly close to a description of the Caucasian lady who visited me. Not only was she Caucasian, she was also dressed in all white apparel. The spiritual theme of white, coupled with Usha Ramakrishnan’s input is what drew me to the notion that Goddess Saraswathi in the form of Sri Daya Mata came to guide me on my journey to A Midsummer Night’s Dream.
during the entire narration and at the end Swamiji uttered, “This boy is guided by a rishi\(^{11}\)”. The moment I heard this, I knew that this rishi was none other than Swamiji himself, silently guiding me through the various levels of consciousness\(^{12}\).

And in discussion with my supervisor Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck, we arrived at the thesis title, “Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as interpreted by the Temple of Fine Arts: A ‘Personal’ Devotional Poetics”, divinely guided as I believe it to be.

**Providence or Coincidence**

In reconnecting with the hermeneutic circle, as argued by Patton, Packer, Addison, Schwandt, Hunt and Benford, from the segments of the whole and the whole to the segments, my “projected character” interpretation of everyday life, superimposed upon the “fore-structures” of the inquiry has directed the “perfect harmony” reasoning to a “holistic perspective” of “reality construction” centered within my “cultural imperatives”.

Therefore, in being true to my interpretation I have drawn upon Stanislavsky’s “through line of action”\(^{13}\). In doing so I have also utilised the sociological reflexive methodology of hermeneutics in theatre to create meaning and purpose (Hunt and Benford 1997: 106) in unifying the overarching action in a play. In this case, I have used the experiences that led me on the journey to AMND, related them to every moment, kept the performer (the researcher) focused during the performance (my interpretation of the experiences) (Carnicke 2009: 226) and, in my dual role, directed myself to one singular question: was this journey a co-incidence or providence?

---

\(^{11}\) According to Swami Yogananda, the word “rishi” carries the literal meaning of “seers” or “illumined sage”. The *Vedas* were authored by the ancient *rishis* of India (Yogananda 1993: 57, 587).

\(^{12}\) According to the Vedic sciences of the *Natyasastra*, as postulated by Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Nair, the aesthetic experience in theatre and performance co-exists in the field of pure consciousness, and repeated exposure will enable the actor-spectator to access this state of consciousness from temporary levels of experiences to longer durations culminating in a permanent state of pure consciousness, liberation or enlightenment, which can be extended in daily life (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 163-164) (Nair 2007: 186-187).

\(^{13}\) According to Carnicke, the “through line of action” (tier nine) is part of Stanislavsky’s fifteen tier Acting System. The “through line of action” unifies the overall “moment-to-moment” related actions in a production. According to Stanislavsky, Carnicke postulates that this tier holds the actor’s focus in a performance (Carnicke 2009: 123, 226). Hence, as mentioned above, I have utilised Stanislavsky’s tier nine to maintain my focus in my interpretation of this thesis.
Was the defective computer mouse a co-incidence? Was the mysterious Caucasian lady a co-incidence?

Before Kuppusamy became Dr Kuppusamy and before Dr Kuppusamy became Swami Sivananda, in 1905, while in Trichinopoly S.P.G. College, in a college play, Swami Sivananda played the role of Helena in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Sivananda 2000: 8) (Sivananda and Divine Life 1987: 11).

Eighty nine years after Swami Sivananda’s performance in AMND, Swami Shantanand staged AMND in 1994 (coincidentally the numeric 89 just so happens to match Swami Sivananda birth date 8th September 1887 [8-9-1887]). Ninety nine years later, a devotee of Swami Sivananda’s disciple Swami Shantanand embarked on a postgraduate program on the topic of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. And today, one hundred and six years later, in 2011 the journey begins with the submission (coincidentally 106 adds up to 7 and 2011 adds up to 4, which also happens to coincide with Swami Shantanand’s birth date, 7th April 1934 [7-4-1934]).

The guru uttered, “Pack your bags, go to Perth and finish your PhD”. Little did I know that these segments of the whole and the whole to the segments as postulated by Patton (Patton 2002: 497) and Schwandt (Schwandt 2001: 112) would create a ripple effect that would lead me to the beginning of this interpretation, a starting point as observed by Packer and Addison (Packer and Addison 1989: 23).

Therefore, I questioned once more; was this journey a co-incidence or providence? As the hermeneutic circle unfolds itself, augmented by the arguments of Stace, Forman and Meyer-Dinkgrafe, I am left with but one interpretation: that this coincidence or vision was indeed providence.

As such, based on my “cultural imperatives” as postulated by Mishra (Mishra 1998: 20), I am offering my obeisance in prayer and in seeking the blessings from Lord Ganesha, my guru; Swami Shantanand and Goddess Saraswathi on the commencement of this journey.
A prayer to Lord Ganesha

As stated above, it is customary in all Hindu religious ceremonies, rites and occasions to first seek the blessing of Lord Ganesha, for he is known as the remover of obstacles. This is more so in writing books, for the journey of writing is considered a serious endeavour, an undertaking that could be susceptible to obstructions from unpleasantness and envious spirits, casting their evil gaze upon the enterprise (Martin 1972: 190-191). Thus I pay homage to Lord Ganesha in these words of Reverend E. Osborn Martin:

Reverence to the Holy Ganesa! Obstacle-cleaving, most famous, elephant-faced, resplendent, grant the boon that much advanced (by this book) may be pure speech and intellectual delight. (Martin 1972: 191)

*Mushikavaahana modaka hasta, Chaamara karma vilambitha sutra, Vaamana rupa maheshwara putra, Vighna vinaayaka paada namasthe,*

This translates as:

O Lord Vinayaka! The remover of all obstacles, the son of Lord Shiva, with a form which is very short, with mouse as Thy vehicle, with sweet pudding in hand, with wide ears and long hanging trunk, I prostrate at Thy lotus-like feet! (Sivananda 1997: 72)

A prayer to Guru

Smith is of the opinion that according to brahmanic Hinduism, the Laws of Manu hold the traditional position of guru as such:

That brahman who performs in accordance with the rules of the Veda the rites, conception rite and so forth, and gives food to the child is called guru … That man who truthfully fills both his ears with the Veda, the pupil shall consider as his

---

14 According to Georg Buhler and F. Max Muller, Manu is the descendent of Brahman (Absolute Spirit), upon the request of the great sages, he instituted the Sacred Laws received from the Creator (Brahman), which came to be known as Manu-smriti or the Laws of Manu, Manu, Buhler, Georg., Muller, F. Max., The Laws of Manu: Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 25, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1975, pp. xii-xiii.

15 According to Swami Vivekananda, the aspirant or devotee should be wary of pseudo gurus, transmitters who immerse themselves in ignorance, in the thought of knowing everything. The Katha Upanishad (1.ii.5), describes the pseudo guru as, “Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed
father and mother; he must never offend him … Let him consider that he received a
[mere animal] existence when his parents begat him through mutual affection, and
when he was born from the womb. But that birth which a teacher acquainted with the
whole Veda, in accordance with the law, procures from him through the Gayatri,
mantra initiation, is real, exempt from age and death. That brahman who is the giver
of birth for the sake of the Veda and the teacher of the prescribed duties, becomes by
law the father of an aged man, even though he himself be childless\textsuperscript{16}. (Smith 2003: 170)

Swami Yogananda observes that the word guru, etymologically carries a two fold
meaning: while “\textit{gu}” carries the meaning “darkness”, “\textit{ru}”, carries the meaning “that
which dispels”. Hence, guru is known as the “dispeller of darkness” (Yogananda 1993: 3).
Smith quotes a verse which is often used to encapsulate the benefits of having a
guru, the verse reads as:

The guru is father, the guru is mother, the guru is God, the guru is the refuge. If
[God] is angry with you, the guru will come to your rescue. But if the guru is angry,
there is no one to help you. (Smith 2003: 170)

Therefore, as ordained by \textit{Brahman} (Absolute Spirit-Principle), instituted by Manu and
further argued by Smith, Buhler and Muller, by law of the Vedas, when guru is father,
mother and only refuge, it is only customary that homage is offered to guru, for his
guidance in this thesis. A prayer in worship of Guru:

\begin{center}
\textit{Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu} \\
\textit{Gurur Devo Maheshwaraha} \\
\textit{Gurur Saakshaat Para Brahma} \\
\textit{Tasmai Shree Gurave Namaha}
\end{center}

(TFA 2001: 15)

This translates as:

Guru is the Creator (Brahma); Guru is the Preserver (Vishnu); Guru is the Destroyer
(Mahesvara); Guru is verily the Supreme Absolute. Prostrations to That Guru.
(Sivananda 2003: viii)

\textsuperscript{16}Excerpt from the Laws of Manu, (2.145-150), Manu, Buhler, Georg., Muller, F. Max., \textit{The Laws of
Meaning:

I bow down to Guru as Brahma, the creator, as Vishnu the protector, and as Lord Maheshwara the one who resolves. Such Guru is truly the Supreme Brahma to whom I surrender myself unto. (TFA 2001: 15)

In their book entitled *A dictionary of theatre anthropology: the secret art of the performer*, both Barba and Savarese describe the guru from verses seventeen and eighteen of the *Adavayataraka Upanishad* as such:

Only the guru is transcendent Brahman  
Only the guru is the supreme path  
Only the guru is highest knowledge  
Only the guru is the last refuge  
Only the guru is the ultimate limit  
Only the guru is the greatest riches.

Because he teaches that,

The guru is the highest of all.

(Barba and Savarese 1991: 30-31)

**A prayer to the Goddess Saraswathi - Goddess of Knowledge**

The *Saraswathi Sloka* or hymn is a Hindu prayer recited either at the start of one’s performing arts class or at the commencement of one’s studies. It is a hymn recited for the pursuit of learning, resolving its goal solely in acquiring knowledge. This *sloka* pays obeisance to Goddess *Saraswathi*; the one who symbolises the totality of all knowledge. Providing nourishment for the intellect, knowledge becomes the fundamental pursuit in human life, and as such; study is considered as ones duty in the Vedic culture.

---

17 According to Radhakrishnan and Moore, forming the ending segments of the Vedas, the *Upanishads* form the foundation of Vedanta philosophy, Radhakrishnan and Moore, *A Source Book In Indian Philosophy*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 37.

18 The *sloka*, meaning and translation has also been extracted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraswathi_Shloka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saraswathi_Shloka), access date 23-6-2011.
Sloka (verse):

\[
\begin{align*}
Om & \text{ Aim Kleem Sau} \\
Sau & \text{ Kleem Aim Om} \\
\text{Saraswathi Namastubhyam} & \\
\text{Varade Kamarupini} & \\
\text{Vidyarambam Karishyami} & \\
\text{Siddhir Bhavatu Me Sada} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Shiva_Family_Colombo 2006: 77)

Meaning:

Swamiji explains that “\text{Om}” represents the primordial sound vibration of the universe (Shantanand 2007: 8). Apart from the observations of Swami Sivananda, Martin and Kinsley, Frawley\(^\text{19}\) is of the opinion that Goddess \text{Saraswathi} is the patron for the fine arts in promoting artistic skills, he further clarifies that “[e]very vocation has its patron deities, mantras and sacred sounds” (Frawley 2010: 35). Expanding this thought process, N. S. Subrahmaniam elucidates that Goddess \text{Saraswathi} is represented in her \text{bij}a or seed mantras as follows:

\text{Aim} – the goddess who represents speech \\
\text{Klim or Kleem} - the goddess who represents desire \\
\text{Sau} – the power she bestows, may it inspire us (Subrahmaniam 1985: 287)

It must be observed that \text{Om Aim Kleem Sau} are the activating \text{bij}a or seed mantras of the \text{Saraswathi Sloka}, without which the full efficacies of the mantra will not be realised.

\text{Saraswathi} – O Saraswathi Goddess of Knowledge \\
\text{Namstubhyam} - salutations onto you \\
\text{varade} – the one who bestows boons \\
\text{kamarupini} – the fulfiller of desires \\
\text{vidyarambam} – on commencement of my studies \\
\text{karishyami} - I am proceeding \\
\text{siddhirbhavatu} - may there be accomplishment \\
\text{me} - in favour of me (for me) \\
\text{sada} - at all times (always).

\(^{19}\)There is some discussion regarding the political alignments of scholars in South East Asian studies. Analysis of their varying positions as either ‘fringe’ or ‘central’, right- or left-wing is not germane to my central argument. The bibliography indicates the range and inclusivity of the theorists and analyst I have drawn on in this thesis.
This translates as:

O Saraswathi Goddess of Knowledge, greetings to thee, the benefactor of boons, the fulfiller of desires. In commencing my studies, may I, at all times receive your blessings for accomplishments.

Conclusion

Hence, as stated above, according to Patton, Packer, Addison, Schwandt, Hunt and Benford’s hermeneutic circle, by relating the “interest, interviews and observed actions [(creative work)]” to the parts of the whole and the whole to the parts (TFA’s AMND), “increasing the understanding” (Patton 2002: 497) toward a “perfect harmony” (Schwandt 2001: 112) is achieved. This draws our attention to the “projective character [(creative methodology)]”, as we gain an increased appreciation of the theoretical “fore-structures” underpinning the ‘praxis-led research’20 (drawn from Indian philosophy and the Vedic sciences, the Indian Sublime, the Natyasastra, Pure Consciousness, Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism). This keeps the discussions “open and alive” (Packer and Addison 1989: 23, 34-35), emphasising the segment-whole-segment interdependency for a “holistic perspective [(proposed acting-theatre praxis-led research methodology)]” (Patton 2002: 498), through sociological reflexivity, creating meaning and purpose for “reality construction [(intercultural theatre practice resolution)]” (Hunt and Benford 1997: 106, 116-117), anchored in Mishra’s “cultural imperative” (Mishra 1998: 20). Thus, this thesis unfolds.

---

20 There are competing terms for this form of research (Smith and Dean 2009). However, for the purpose of this thesis I shall be referring to my creative research practice as ‘praxis-led research’ as postulated by de Reuck (de Reuck 2011: 3).
Chapter 1 - Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

I will briefly discuss the prevailing debates in Chapter Two centered on Vedic sciences’ Higher Consciousness and Interculturalism as they form the main catalyst in synthesising my remedy for the volatile nature of Intercultural theatre practice. I will then move to briefly discuss theories of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism and the reinvention of Temple of Fine Arts’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. A brief outline of the arguments in Chapters Three, Four and Five will follow. I will then move to introduce my case study, the Temple of Fine International (TFA), and its production of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (AMND).

From the analysis and theorisation of TFA’s AMND, I aim to synthesise a theorised working model and apply it to my personal creative works at Murdoch University, with the aim of developing a methodology – praxis-led – that can be used to mitigate what I perceive as volatile issues in intercultural theatre practice.

In conclusion, revisiting Chapter Two, I will percolate the theories of Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism through the foundation of *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* and higher consciousness from the Vedic sciences’ of the *Natyasastra* in order to create a platform of understanding from which to engage the argument of this thesis. This has its base in the worship of and devotion to as well as the adoration of the divine, which I construe as a devotional acting-theatre praxis.

Vedic Philosophy and Consciousness

It is argued by Mancing and Haney that in the twenty-first century, if the theory of consciousness is ignored from “literary and cultural studies”, it would be at the expense of “our great peril”, foregoing enormous potential benefits in the vast interdisciplinary boom in cognitive science (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney 2002: 7, 15). Thus, Haney postulates that the relevance of consciousness in Western research for humanities lay in the poststructuralist postmodernism opposition to reconstructive postmodernism, as

If ideas of self can be established to acquire valid empirical grounds, then the claims on consciousness by postmodernism must be reconsidered and the biased nature of arguments against humanism re-evaluated. According to Haney, there is already a rising powerful alternative toward the postmodernist view, that the self is no more than a social construct or “the product of material forces” (Haney 2002: 16).


The authors argue further that the transcendental formulation of Brahman (Absolute Spirit-Atman-Soul), ascertained through the Indian theatre aesthetics of the Natyasastra, can be used as a higher consciousness platform in theatre (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 18-20) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 107-116) (Haney 2002: 89-104). Therefore based on the platform of higher or pure consciousness from Vedic science, Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe suggest a reassessment of contemporary theatre practice. The authors argue further that the Natyasastra’s purpose is to raise the actor and spectator’s ordinary states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, sleeping) to a level of pure consciousness-turiya (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 111, 117), where the state of samadhi (enlightenment) can be realised (Haney 2002: 49, 79-80) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 159-162) to effectively mediate and address issues in intercultural practice (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 165-167) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 2) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 165). Meyer-Dinkgrafe is further of the opinion that if theatre practice in general “follows the aesthetic principles of the Natyasastra” it will then serve as “yagna” (sacrifice).
Through repeated exposure, the “yagna” will then enable the actor-spectator to experience higher states of pure consciousness, with temporary experiences moving on to more frequent experiences, culminating in the permanent experience of enlightenment, which can then be carried outside the practice of theatre into daily life (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 120-122) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 163-164) (Nair 2007: 186-187).

To achieve this state of higher consciousness Malekin and Yarrow have developed a project, which they call the “pashyanti project”. Derived from Indian linguistics, the project is aimed at accessing the neutral state of consciousness in the actor-spectator from physiological and psychological levels, preparing the individual to eventually access the state of pure consciousness-turiya. The authors have suggested various mechanisms for achieving this state of higher consciousness, of which the practice of Yoga is highlighted as the fastest way to access “pashyanti” (Madhavan 2010: 35-38). While Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s research on the higher states of consciousness is carried out between groups with Western and Eastern training to test the effectiveness between non-systematic (various Western actor training formulation) approaches against systematic (Naytasastra from Vedic science) approaches, with the better results deriving from the Eastern orientation (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 181-182).

The authors Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe have suggested pure consciousness from Vedic science as a reassessment tool with which to address theatre in general as well as the ongoing volatile issues in intercultural performance. Nevertheless, the questions remain; How is this restoration achieved? How does this aesthetic transformation take place? Most importantly, What are the possible ‘building blocks’ in realising this reassessment? These are the questions that I aim to address and resolve in this thesis.

1 Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s ten day research workshop was funded by the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Board. In testing the achievement levels of higher consciousness, the workshop was closely monitored by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, India’s enlightened spiritual master (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 181).
**Interculturalism**

As a politically loaded site, interculturalism hinges on power structures, and notions of cultural exchange become complex (Chin 1989: 174). Due to its volatile nature, theorists such as Bharucha (1993) (1997) (2000), Chin (1989), Trivedi (2010), Minami (2010), Holledge (2000), Tompkins (2000), Lo (2002), Gilbert (2002), Grehan (2000), Knowles (2010), Brown (1998) and others, find it a cultural minefield (Holledge and Tompkins 2000: 10), exploding into what was termed as the “intercultural wars” (Knowles 2010: 21) in 80s and 90s. As such, a few critics, in the hope of solving this volatile nature of interculturalism, constructed theoretical models on interculturalism, among whom were Lo and Gilbert, Pavis, Carlson and Fischer-Lichte. The only practical workable model is that of Lo and Gilbert’s *Proposed Model for Interculturalism* foregrounded on postcolonial theory (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 43) and hybridity (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45-46).

Unfortunately, even with the suggested “sustained dialogue” by Bharucha (Bharucha 1984: 18) and Lo and Gilbert’s “sustained and systematic engagement” with the politics of intercultural theatre practice (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49), the very unstable characteristics of interculturalism continue to plague intercultural practice, with ongoing exploitations cloaked under the guise of cultural exchange for economical gain (Pavis 1996: 5). The exploitation is so rampant that intercultural practice is likened to a cultural minefield as argued by Holledge and Tompkins, extending the practice of appropriation to this very day in the works of Peter Brook and Tim Supple as argued by Trivedi and Minami (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 55, 60, 72). As Yarrow questions, Why have Brook and Mnouchkine, in postmodernity, made it their theoretical business to reinvent Orientalism which Edward Said spent a lifetime problematising? (Yarrow 2001: 207). After twenty years of ongoing debates (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 4), intercultural theatre practice is still unable to sustain a workable theoretical model: Why are appropriations rampant in intercultural practices? What is the practitioner’s ‘true intent’? Will it suffice merely to label a practitioner, collaborative or imperialistic? Will there ever come a time when a suitable theorised model for interculturalism becomes effective? The search for a resolution continues.
Cultural Materialism and New Historicism

As the interpretation of TFA’s AMND production and my creative work encompasses the literary works of Shakespeare, and the thesis is dealing with canonical texts, the theoretical frames through which both creative pieces are viewed, derive from Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. Both theories interpret the cultural and historical issues against Shakespeare’s literary moment, re-enforcing the idea that the author and the work are in turn influenced by the historical and political backdrop of their time (Hopkins 2005: 63-64, 89). Hence, my cultural, historical and political influences received from my Hindu upbringing, and at TFA based on Vedic philosophy and the Natyasasstra have shaped my creative perception and way of life.

As Cultural Materialists owe their influences to a Marxist approach and New Historicists to Foucault, I owe mine to Swami Shantanand, the founder of TFA.

The inspiration for TFA’s AMND began when Swamiji’s gaze fell upon the reference to an “Indian boy” in AMND as he glanced through a pocket book of Shakespeare’s plays. What immediately struck Swamiji’s mind was: What is an Indian boy doing in a Shakespearean play? Why did Shakespeare bring an Indian boy into his play? Was Shakespeare trying to hint at the fact that he was trying to bring Indian Hindu concepts into his play? So, Swami Shantanand thought, and thus began the reinvention of Shakespeare’s AMND as interpreted by TFA.

Utilising Greenblatts’s “enabling presumptions” D.G. Myers argues that historians or critics cannot escape their own historicity by rising above their own social and ideological backgrounds in understanding the past. Myers further argues that a present reader can never experience a text as its generation experienced it (Myers Winter 1988-89). Therefore, at best, Belsey postulates that all a current historicist approach to literature can hope to accomplish is “to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology” (Belsey 1980: 144).

---

The traditional approach of Historicism was to uncover the original meaning of the literature but that approach is impossible and naïve in its attempt following the premise of New Historicism. Rather, the major concern for new practitioners is the recovery of the “original ideology” used to create the text. Therefore, ideology comes first for New Historicists and not history, an argument which brings to the surface a central question: How would a critic know what the original ideological orientation in the literary work was? How can the critic be sure that the original ideology is not just his own political empathy, cleverly relocated as evidence in the play? By citing Howard, Myers answers the question arguing that the entire premise of New Historicism is based on grasping the provisions inherent in the meaning structures of the language of the historical text making it possible to uncover evidence in the present time, so as to reveal as ‘fact’ an event that can only be recovered (Myers Winter 1988-89) (McDonald 2004: 466).

Before introducing the primary and secondary case studies, I will briefly describe the arguments in Chapters Three, Four and Five. They combine to form a triple thread woven across the thesis linking the Indian Sublime, Higher Consciousness-turiya (enlightenment) and the Sacred.

**The Arguments**

Chapter Three examines the historical and philosophical underpinnings of the Temple of Fine Arts International from a dual platform of secular and transcendental analysis. In its analysis, the Chapter will explore the founder’s reasoning in establishing the core group members known as “Shiva Family” and the sister organisations of the institution. The analysis is aimed at uncovering the “yagna” or sacrificial element in its Vedic reasoning for the institution’s establishment and simultaneously drawing its parallel significance to the Vedic sciences’ theatre practice of the *Natyasastra*. The Chapter concludes with the uncovering of the Temple of Fine Arts as a modern day Vedic mechanism, similarly sharing the primary aim of the *Natyasastra*, which is to aid individuals in regaining their once lost state of enlightenment (pure consciousness-turiya).

Chapter Four explores the differences in the narrative interpretations of TFA’s version of Shakespeare’s AMND with a focus on character, in particularly Oberon and *Ananga*, Puck and *Deepak* and Theseus and *Dharmendra*. While exploring the reinvention of
Shakespeare’s AMND, the Chapter will aim to map the transformation process of the lovers when in contact with the fairies based on the aesthetic and esoteric principles of Vedic science exploring the “Indian boy” as the source of divine-universal love, a state of pure consciousness (*turiya*). As a representation of divine love-pure consciousness, could the Indian boy be Krishna? This Vedic aesthetic and esoteric process leads to the creation of TFA’s AMND ‘radar field’ (to be discussed in Chapter Four), exploring the theoretical transformation process to attaining the state of higher consciousness. The Chapter then concludes with the TFA production interpreting Shakespeare as the divine bard, in confluence with the states of pure consciousness.

Based on the creative methodology derived from TFA, Chapter Five will map the working paradigm of the Sacred and the Sublime in the practice of the *Natyasastra* taught at TFA in engaging *Brahman* (Absolute Spirit). The core engagement in the creative works is formed from this distillation of the creative methodology. The developed researched methodology is also analysed against the works of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold to establish its independent development and its holistic nature. As indicated above, the Chapter will then move to formulate the working theoretical framework of the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis-led research methodology’ to engage and remedy the volatile issues in intercultural theatre practice. The Chapter concludes with testing the practicality of the devotional acting-theatre praxis. Its methodology is applied to the creative works undertaken at Murdoch University, paving a way forward in intercultural practice as evidence of the success of its application. This theoretical and practical research framework, the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ is articulated conceptually as: ‘Quantum Theatre: I AM-*Brahman*-Absolute, the theatre of Swami Shantanand’.

Returning to the prevailing limitations of theoretical paradigms in intercultural theatre practice over the past twenty years, from TFA’s AMND case study and my creative works at Murdoch University, and in addressing the questions above by formalising a theoretical framework for the ‘building blocks’ in higher consciousness, I aim to formalise my methodology in my research. This will be done by synthesising and developing the praxis which involves the theoretical application of pure consciousness in theatre with the aim of achieving an amicable solution for intercultural theatre practice and theatre in general as argued by Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe.
Primary Case Study - The Temple of Fine Arts

The phenomenon of the Temple of Fine Arts International with its intercultural theatre productions affords opportunity for the interrogation of theatrical and cultural knowledge sources in explaining the place of intercultural experience in theatre practice.

The thesis attempts to define the origin of the ‘empowerment-experience’ of new sources of knowledge such as that revealed through the works of His Holiness Swami Shantanand Saraswathi, inspiration and founder of TFA. Theatre productions by the group are intended to be emancipatory projects that reflect the enabling practices of ‘pure consciousness’ thinking, which is linked to the Absolute Principle (Brahman) in the Vedic sciences. Swami Shantanand encourages his apprentices, students and devotees to reflect on the social conditions of the theatre practice in order to experience the forging of ‘cultural communities’ through which intercultural understanding is promoted.

Intercultural performance provides a space in which creative exchange can occur between practitioners and the audience. This exchange attempts to celebrate the cultural diversity rather than to homogenise.

Shakespeare’s plays are generally explorations of the human state-spirit and owe their arguably timeless, universal appeal to this fact. Shakespeare deals with what is common to all human beings and this transcends cultural boundaries.

The Temple of Fine Arts International (TFA) is an institution that has staged over thirty major intercultural theatre productions over the past thirty one years. TFA productions are notable in two ways:

a) They promote cultural diversity and celebrate its richness. Each production uses elements from a range of cultures and remains respectful of these traditions.

b) They adopt a perspective that acknowledges both humanistic and universal spiritual elements (Vedic sciences of higher consciousness).
The external content has been ‘Indianised’ and the interpretation has been given a deeper impression of spirituality (higher consciousness). It therefore affords the performer and spectator a unique opportunity for the exploration of theatrical and cultural knowledge from an intercultural perspective.

The Vedic sciences with their higher consciousness of the spiritual dimension in humankind have not often been the focus of Shakespearean theatrical exploration or experience. This thesis will analyse how Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (AMND) has been re-interpreted from the unique Vedic-Indian intercultural viewpoint of TFA and in that process created a deeper understanding of the metaphorical construction and analytical potential of the play, which can then serve as a template for re-examining conventional concepts in order to understand the development of Intercultural theatre productions.

This case study will create an excellent forum for exploring and understanding a possible answer to a question that confronts theatre practitioners in having to adapt, present and justify a production from its indigenous platform to a foreign cultural platform for actors and spectators alike. As the traditional theorisation of the fields of Art, Performance, Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism assume a linear structural process, and are located in an Aristotelian-Cartesian body-mind dualism, I aim to analyse this case study and the contrasting and competing Vedic-Indian intercultural approaches.

“I am the inspiration and they are my perspiration”, a regular statement uttered by Swamiji at the close of TFA productions. Indeed true to its saying, we are the canvas: as Artistic Director, he envisions and creates, and we perform. As one of those ‘perspirations’, I intend to draw upon my personal collaborative working paradigm with TFA on the production of AMND from the dual platform of being onstage (acting and dancing) and as a member of the backstage crew while the production toured Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur and Penang), Singapore, Australia (Perth) and India (Chennai).

This case study was chosen because of its thematic links between Indian philosophy and Shakespeare’s narrative in AMND, woven between the fairy and mortal kingdom. In addition the contrasting qualities of spirituality (higher consciousness) and the secular underpinnings, order and disorder, the universal and the individual are negotiated. In
exploring Shakespeare’s AMND, a secular text located within a spiritual (higher consciousness) platform, this thesis analyses the spiritual themes and metaphorical elements that TFA has brought to Shakespeare’s AMND. Since theatre has always been intercultural, according to Ric Knowles (Knowles 2010: 6-13), both Shakespeare’s and TFA’s works on ensemble and intercultural experimentations share a desire to understand the human spirit.

**Secondary Case Studies – Creative Works at Murdoch University**

Utilising the research findings from the TFA AMND case study, as stated above, I intend to experiment at synthesising a working theoretical model based on devotion and worship and test its application on the resulting outcomes of my creative works at Murdoch University productions under the supervision of Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck.

I have worked on six productions entitled, *The Captive Carousel, Her Infinite Variety: Othello, Lit by Limelight, Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night, The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province* and *The Scottish Play: An adaptation of Shakespeare’s mature tragedy, Macbeth*. I will deconstruct *Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night* in the analysis of my working model.

This synthesised theoretical model, which I call, the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’, will be located in the paradigms of *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime*, Vedic sciences’ *Natyaasastra*, Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. The model developed here accounts for both collaborative and traditional theatre making.

As vital as it is to apply the works of Malekin, Yarrow, Haney, Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Nair and Madhavan to this creative thesis in establishing the relation of the transcendental pure consciousness-*turiya* (Absolute-Brahman) to the specifics of Western theatre aligned to the Vedic sciences’ *Natyaasastra*, I feel that it is equally crucial to pay attention to Vijay Mishra’s *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* in order to grasp the fundamental conceptualisation of the Indian Sublime and the Sacred against a Western backdrop. This provides the reader with the opportunity for a critical engagement with Indian thought, philosophy and its metanarratives, located within the framework of the Sublime formalising a much needed representation for Indian culture.
Mishra’s theory provides the thesis with an anchor and creates a platform for the essential reasoning that underpins the arguments for reassessing Indian Vedic philosophy against Western literary theory and criticism in and around cognitive science in specific relation to theatre practice as argued above.

With an understanding of the working formula of the hermeneutic circle from Patton, Schwandt, Packer and Addison, as stated in the prologue, I now move into Redding’s contrasting philosophical and scientific application of Hegel’s hermeneutics on the “empirical” and the “transcendental” facets of the spirit realm (Redding 1996: 114). Where Redding argues that one way of viewing the two orientations lies in the need for the recognition of non scientific methodologies, and by that acknowledgement, the motivated philosophical aspirations can be dismantled, he also postulates that “Philosophy’s final achievement is its self-annihilation” (Redding 1996: 2-3).

**Hegelian Circle of Hermeneutics**

From Hegel’s application of the empirical and the transcendental, the derived visual image or understanding would be that of an intersubjective circular structure mediating the role between the “two self-consciousnesses” recognising contrasting identities, the “we-ness” and the “I-ness”, or the universal and the individual or the scientific and the transcendental as mentioned in my thesis abstract. Redding observes that Hegel is of the view that the “I” and the “We” and the “We” and the “I” in the hermeneutic circle can be contained in an abstract manner rather than atomistically or holistically (Redding 1996: 114).

Redding argues otherwise as the “We” is a result of independent combined “I”s, or in the case of the “I”s merely derivatives of a self-existing “We”. Redding further observes that in a similar manner life as the “spirit” itself, is a “whole”, and not an individual conscious object with an independent view. He argues that “the system of nature is not itself a living individual, neither is the system of spirit itself a spiritual individual”. As a result, the “two self-consciousnesses” must not be viewed in abstraction, but rather in relation to their systems of origin, as Redding is further of the opinion that “There are no “spiritual” […] beings apart from their relation to one another within a spiritual system, that is, within spirit” (Redding 1996: 114-115).
This fundamental argument on self-annihilation by Redding (Redding 1996: 2-3) or self-extinction as Mishra terms it, will in turn, according to Mishra, direct the individual in engaging with the Absolute Spirit (*Brahman*) in Hinduism (Mishra 1998: 201-202).

**Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime**

Sieving through the works of Madeleine Biardeau and David Shulman, Mishra begins to unpack the dominant despotic and quasifeudal “decenteredness” visions of Indian culture set against the readings of Western ideology, particularly those of Ronald Inden and S.H. Butcher (Mishra 1998: 2). According to Mishra, metanarratives from Indian culture maintain their meaning regardless of the subject’s participation within society or the self. Even when questioning ideology in Hindu texts, whether from the canonical or vernacular the human agent always affirms the importance of tradition (Mishra 1998: ix). The author argues the importance of capturing the aesthetic invention, its thoughts and the meanings of the original design compared to banal interpretations. Sighting George Steiner’s “upward betrayal” (Steiner 1992: 423), Mishra further argues that the great poetic works of Tulsidas become impenetrable in literal translation, for “‘The translator invades, extracts and brings home’” (Steiner 1992: 314). In translation, the translator inevitably distorts the literal meaning of the original metanarrative to communicate the translator’s banal “emotional and aesthetic” understanding. Therefore all translators must acknowledge the fact that they are indeed “*traduttore traditore*” (Aranda 2007: 27); traitors (Mishra 1998: x).

In understanding the sublime against the Indian backdrop Mishra discovered that there was no representation of critical discourse of the *sublime* within Indian culture. If there was any religion to be termed truly sublime, and its culture “unpresentable” by its sheer complexities, it would be Hinduism. And so the connection between aesthetics and belief began, with a rethinking of the framework of the prevailing theories of the Sublime in its critical engagement with devotional\(^3\) aesthetics. Mishra discovered that

---

\(^3\) Mishra postulates that any textual interpretation cannot be divorced from its rooted literary system, expressive construction, formal principles that administrate its creation (poetic composition), or from the existing social, historical and ideological constructs from which it was created. In rephrasing the definition of John Guillory’s “canonicity”, Mishra argues that the interpretation of meaning “is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission, its relation to other works in a collocation of works”, Guillory, John., *Cultural Capitals*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993, p.55. Mishra further argues that the devotional poetry genre has all the relevant literary text characteristics. Written for the decoding of communal speakers, it conveys messages, it presupposes a carrier for the message, the social meaning is embodied, its dialogue is connected to the general principles of poetry, and “it cannot be
Indian *bhakti* (devotion) can be theorised using the category of the Sublime (Mishra 1998: xi). While German idealism reads India in the context of romanticism (Oldmeadow 2004: 20-24), the British empirical paradigm read India in the context of an enigma (Trautmann 2004: 3).

It is interesting to note that the subject of mysticism absent from Western narratives finds its definition in Hindu texts, and ironically in Schopenhauer’s contamination of the European self (Blackham 1952: 28), Hinduism is written in English, mainly for non-Indian reception (Mishra 1998: 4). This purports that the Western “I” is constructed through discourses with Orientalists (Mishra 1998: 3). Therefore, according to Mishra, to legitimise Indian thought, two Orientalist paradigms must be avoided; “the empirical and the romantic”, as well as being cautious of the “easy” postmodern option (Mishra 1998: 2). In general, Indian thought should never be examined in isolation; rather it must be discussed in terms of hermeneutic literary interpretations and philosophical interrelatedness and “not exclusiveness”. Thus the debate on Indian culture needs to be from the “comparative and interdisciplinary” to the ideological and transcendental viewpoints, as contact with the “Other” inadvertently influences “the source culture and the receptor culture” (Mishra 1998: 3) (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 19-40).

In the aesthetics of the sublime Paul de Man states that “[w]hereas the beautiful is a metaphysical and ideological principle[,] the sublime aspires to being a transcendental one”, it is solely an inner “experience of consciousness”. Derrida observes that the beautiful can be discovered in art, for it can be “framed or bound” (Marstine 2006: 213), unlike the sublime where it has to be discovered in the formless aspects of nature as wrench from its prior intertexts”. Thus, possessing the vital elements of speech-act, “sender, message, receiver and a sociosemantic context”, the sender as the “poetic self” in devotional poetry wishes to communicate with God as the desired object, which the reader or interpreter of the text and God are already aware of the message (communication). In this case, the sender ingratiates “himself in the eyes” of God as being the only source. Since devotional poetry, as Mishra postulates “cannot exist without this *a priori presupposition*, thus, for the well-versed reader, the devotional aspect becomes the transcendental argument. Therefore, as questions on phenomenology become urgent, Mishra is of the opinion that the conceptualisation of the reader must be kept in mind when engaging “theories of devotional verse” (Mishra 1998: 82-83). Similar to Mishra’s argument, Mancing highlights the perilous concerns addressing literary and cultural studies, if the vast interdisciplinary boom in the field of consciousness is ignored (Mancing 1999: 167). In addressing this concern, Haney suggests the theory and praxis of Eastern consciousness as a model for deliberation “between phenomenology and cognitive science” (Haney 2006: 7).

*Corroborating the argument of Mishra, Mancing and Haney argue for the reassessment of the approaches to current theory and criticism in cultural studies. The authors argue that the vast interdisciplinary movement positioned around cognitive science has enormous potential. Haney as noted in footnote 3, is further of the opinion that the theory and praxis of Eastern consciousness and its application to intersubjectivity in the reading of literary works can create a bridge between “phenomenology and cognitive science” (Haney 2006: 7, 15).*
observed by Kant. Therefore, the sublime as de Man observes, “is ultimately a matter of transcendental principle”, which represents “the difference between the beautiful and the sublime” (Mishra 1998: 5-7) (Gasché 1998: 72) (Silverman, Aylesworth et al. 1990: 90).

The key to unpacking and understanding the paradigm of this thesis is embedded in its approach to the dual springboards of the transcendental principle and the absolute, as in identifying the self with the transcendental absolute, Brahma, the Hindu signifier of the Spirit Absolute. This is the very argument that Haney advances in his notion of reconstructive postmodernism (Haney 2002: 16-17).

Now we approach the philosophical engagement of G. W. F. Hegel with Hindu India. Mishra states, though astute, Hegel’s philosophy on the Orient is laced with an air of “futility and arrogance” (Toews 1985: 79). Despite Hegel’s orientalist outlook into the racist readings of Hindu India, Mishra employs his misreadings as a platform to readdress the sublime in its association with India (Mishra 1998: 9). Mishra postulates:

> Misreadings, after all, can be much more exciting than readings that have room for no alternative entry points, readings so defensive or derisive that one cannot engage with them productively, let alone critically. (Mishra 1998: 3)

The return to Hegelian philosophy is based on “art belonging to the order of the symbolic” (Magnus 2001: 53). Hence the three key Hegelian notions to be noted are: the first, Hebraic poetry on its own is sublime as the notion of divine representationalism is rejected; the second, the sublime is the absolute beautiful; and the third is divisions in the orders of language and the sacred (Mishra 1998: 9) (De Man and Warminski 1997: 110-111). Solely based on German and English source texts, Hegel formed his construct on Hindu India’s Absolute Spirit (Brahma) as a “sign” (Redpath 1998: 143) of complete amalgamation between the Self and the Other removing “the principle of understanding and morality” within the varied meanings of the Hindu universe (Redpath 1998: 193 & 219). According to Westphal, Hegel grounds the “understanding” of the individual and consciousness in an external sense transforming “the Absolute (as pure thought) into a sensuous object” (Westphal 1992: 142). While Redpath is of the opinion that Hegel’s true intention was to degrade “to vulgarity and senselessness” (Redpath 1998: 192) the reincarnation principle leading to Brahma,
Mishra argues that “[t]he sensory world is not the world of the sublime, which is always a matter for the spirit” (Mishra 1998: 10).

Hegel’s comparison of the Hindu God is set against the God of the Hebrews where for Hegel the Hebrew God forms the only sublime. This setting, Mishra argues, plays the subtextual notion of prioritising Western history in Hegel’s formula of “system and history” (Hegel and Brown 2009: 1-6) measurements against the backdrop of Hindu India into a mathematical and quantitative equation (Taylor 2006: 247); the one Hebrew god against the many Hindu Gods. Astonishingly enough, when Hegel’s aesthetics is removed “from its grand European narrative of history”, it is discovered that the notion of the Sublime revered by Hegel’s Hebrew God is in fact the Brahman. This representation of Brahman is clearly evident in Hegel’s argument that the Hebrew God can have no image or symbolism other than his manifested glory in the world and is based on “no signifieds”. On the contrary, Mishra argues that the “semantic overcoding” is cloaked within the constructs of the Hebrew God and represents among others “the just, the wrathful, the avenger”, and as a lawgiver, the Hebrew God speaks to and mediates for his people, a contradiction in relation to Hegel’s romantic notion of the Hebrew God. Hegel has only set the Hindu God against his notion of many Gods and a grotesque man-animal reincarnation, but fails to apply the treatment of his own argument of no images or signifiers against “the pure abstract form” known as Brahman (neuter), for in its purest abstraction, the neuter, “it never speaks, is never spoken to, is without quality, and cannot be represented in any form whatsoever” (Mishra 1998: 14-15), thus by default Hegel validates Mishra argument (Westphal 1992: 139). Here to clearly distinguish Hegel’s trivialisation of the Sublime empowerment of the Hindu subject to mere “objects of sensuality” (Mishra 1998: 13), Mishra draws attention to the fact that:

Whenever the Absolute is presented or given visual form in Hindu thought, the reference is to Brahma the Creator (a personalised isvara5) and not to Brahma(n) the Absolute (a non-relational Parabrahman)[.] (Mishra 1998: 15)

For the Hindu, the religious is a subject of aesthetics; as such, we need to renegotiate Hegel’s construct of pantheistic symbolism on the platform of structural principle (plurality-with-unity) as it formulates the core engagement with Indian Culture. The object of the sublime in devotional (bhakti) poetry is Brahman. Seeking an unattainable

5 Deity.
principle represented “through a plethora of Gods and Goddesses”, Mishra claims that the sublime narrative has devotional poetry superimposed upon it. This ideal principle (Absolute Brahman) being unattainable as it is, symbolised “through the image or the icon”, still “remains the sublime object”, which ultimately defies time-space representation of any kind (Mishra 1998: 16). To collate the various strands of his arguments, Mishra introduces three quotes beginning with Schopenhauer: “‘I owe what is best in my development to the impressions made by Kant’s works, the sacred writings of the Hindus, and Plato’”; from the Bhagavadgita⁶: “‘I am the discourse of speakers’ (10.32)”; ending with Kabir: “‘By crushing the self and adoring Hari, man obtains the Vision’”. Schopenhauer’s heightened level of comparativeness moves beyond Western viewpoints providing clarity to the correlation “between the intellect (or the Will) and phenomenon”. Stressing Schopenhauer’s “loyalty” toward Kant, the Hindus and Plato, Mishra connects the correlation between Schopenhauer’s examination of the will (thing-in-itself) and representation or thought (phenomenon) within the broader spectrum of Kant’s forceful persistence that the thing-in-itself and phenomenon cannot be effectively theorised devoid of the intellect. Mishra further includes Hegel’s examination of the thing-in-itself, “which remains beyond representation” (Westphal 1992: 139-142), yet remains pivotal to the comprehension of the limits of imagination (Mishra 1998: 199).

The sublime is used as the object to resist phenomenalisation to recommend Schopenhauer’s oceanic emotion (Glasgow 2009: 169), Kant’s brief decline “of the law of reason” paving the way for an uncontainable path (Fenves and Ebooks Corporation. 2003: 157-158). Hegel’s introduction of the “Absolute as the unpresentable” (Slade 2006: 28-30), and the Brahman negation of the Hindus can be effectively represented by way of the Sublime, which coincides with Lyotard’s “breach” in assessing the “aesthetic faculty of judgement” (Lyotard 1995: 51). This breach referred to by Lyotard in Hindu philosophy is processed through the platform of Maya, which represents the phenomenal world which can be completely differentiated from the transcendental thing-in-itself, validating Kant’s claim of the sublime as transcendental principle (Mishra 1994: 41) (Goodreau 1998: 90).

⁶ The Bhagavadgita, meaning “Song of the Spirit”, is likened to the Bible; the Holy Testament of the Hindus. It represents the sacred yogic dialogues between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna of the Pandavas in The Mahabharata. The thematic thread throughout the Gita is that of the renouncer. The causes of separation between the ego and Spirit and the reunion through samadhi (enlightenment) the abandonment of the senses perpetuating the deceptive duality of “the Self and the Spirit” (Yogananda 2002: xvii & xix).
Based on the classic theory of Sankhya\(^7\) philosophy and the *Bhagavadgita* “this thing-in-itself or the ‘real’” makes its connection with the *Purusa*\(^8\), which is the self surpassing *Prakrti*\(^9\) (Maya or phenomenon) making “the nature of the real” comprehensible (Mishra 1998: 199-200). Will and Representation are framed on aesthetics in Schopenhauer’s reading of the Kantian viewpoint in regards to the sublime (Hussain and Wilkinson 2006: 39-41). This endorses Kant’s argument that intellect is always between things and us, not merely a faculty from without, but one which demonstrates figural (metaphor); the capacity to make an analogy playing the vital role of the intellect (Mishra 1998: 200) (Watson 1997: 102-103).

Kant sees imagination in the sublime as an act of violence, overpowering the self and threatening it with annihilation, to subjugate this threat, the transcendental theory of reason, which controls the independent call for the divine beyond the senses, keeps the imminent possibilities of disaster under control, simultaneously allowing the intellect a brief release in entertaining the option of immersion within the Sublime. While Kant made some suggestions of the “objects” of the Sublime referring to God as an image beyond representation (Rickert 2007: 74-76), Hegel was the one who synthesised Kant’s philosophy by way of two means; the first, linking the sublime with the Absolute (Hammer 2006: 138-139), and the second, arguing that “sublime meditations were not possible for races without a historical destiny”, making the sublime cross-cultural and to a point drawing attention to the similarity to the Hindu *Brahman*. By failing to address Hegel’s Absolute in the Sublime, Schopenhauer also failed to make the connection between the Hegelian Absolute and the Hindu *Brahman* (Mishra 1998: 200).

In establishing an argument for the Indian Sublime Mishra poses a question:”‘What can be said about the Indian sublime, if *Brahman* is rethought as the thing-in-itself, beyond presentation and yet always integral to the Hindu narrative?’” (Mishra 1998: 200). This, then, leads to the quotation from the *Bhagavadgita*: “‘I am the discourse of speakers’”,

---

\(^7\) Sankhya meaning “number”, represents the philosophy of composed numbers of things (*tattvas*) evolving out of each other possessing mutual literal and numerological meaning. Only a Singular *tattva* remains, real and changeless forever; known as the *Purusha* (Supreme Singularity or Transcendental Consciousness), it surpasses time, space and causality, when the cosmos ceases, *Purusha* is all that remains. When desire arises from the *Purusha* to identify Itself; creation begins, the separation arising out of that desire is identified as *Prakriti* (nature), and this formulates the source of the cosmos, the macrocosm, Defouw, Hart and Svoboda, Robert, *Light on Life: An Introduction to the Astrology of India*, 2003, pp. 22-23. *Purusa* is also identified as the divine agent (Mishra 1998: 22). This transcendental consciousness of *Purusha* is represented as *Shiva* and *Sakthi* in Chapter Four as the TFA AMND radar field.

\(^8\) Explained in Footnote 7. Spelt as *Parusa* or *Purasha*.

\(^9\) Explained in Footnote 7. Spelt as *Prakriti* or *Prakriti*.
where Krishna represents himself as the Self in the world of phenomena. The discourse between Krishna and Arjuna is extremely figurative and the symbolic identification of Krishna as the divine self, stretches our reasoning and imagination to the farthest; therefore we ask ourselves what is the true meaning of this quotation. We shall begin with connecting the origin of language (Logos) with the principle of God reading the narrative with to the words and Gods being alike and the world meaningful. A second reading of the quotation brings us to the devotional aspect of the discourse underpinned by Krishna’s representation of language. To this Mishra argues that:

 [...] the very concept of God as the Absolute Signified cannot be disputed in a devotional discourse: the fundamental equation of language and God, and by extension the idea of speaking through a language that exists only insofar as God wills it to be, must remain unchallenged. (Mishra 1998: 201)

The devotional poetics based on the Indian Sublime from this narrative would necessitate the assembly of a virtual modelled reader, coined as “the infra reader” by Mishra, and to hypostasise the devotional sublime, “the object of the devotion” and the reader must be kept in mind. Referring to the world of phenomena as diverse against the singularity of Brahmam, we arrive at the final quotation by Kabir. Here again it is essential to note the importance of Maya and the “supersensible being” (Goodreau 1998: 90); the being beyond the senses, which brings us to the question: At which point and in what way is the self positioned? Kabir refers to two methods; by annihilating the self and in worship of God who is Hari (Mishra 1998: 201).

The first, following Kabir’s discourse nirguna bhakti comes into play, where the concept of nirvana extends itself into an instant of self-extinction. With the second; in adoration of Hari as God, what is suggested is an alternative option in opposition to sublime nonpresentation, resulting in the excessive presentation of the saguna element

---

10 From Sudhir Kakar’s handbook on devotionalism comes a trancelike state termed Samadhi; where reference is made to Nirguna bhakti known as monistic devotionalism. It is an “easy” state of enlightenment referred to as sahaja; where an individual is immersed in full contemplation (Mishra 1998: 22).

11 Nirvana literally meaning “extinction” (Mishra 1998: 228), or a complete state of ego extinguishment, signifying the final extinction; where the soul retains its individuality expanding into the Spirit (Yogananda 1995: 620-621).

within the dominant srngara (the erotic) rasa (sentiment) referred to by Bhoja\textsuperscript{13}. Both the elements of nirguna (absoluteness) and saguna (emotionalism) propel the subject “human” into experiencing the “‘Vision’”\textsuperscript{14} sublime; a mystical state corresponding to both theological and philosophical encounter with the “eternal being”. This model of self-extinction formulates the very essence of engaging with Brahman in Hinduism\textsuperscript{15}; creating violence within the viewer, the sublime drives the individual “toward an experience that is too large for the mind to grasp” (Mishra 1998: 201-202). Mishra firmly argues that:

Indian culture, then, is built around a sublime poetics-and the culture’s dominant literary form, the devotional, as well as its dominant literary hermeneutic, rasa\textsuperscript{16}, understand this very well. (Mishra 1998: 202)

\textsuperscript{13} Bhoja or Bhojadeva is the author of the world’s “largest known work on Sanskrit poetics”, Gerow, Edwin and Gonda, Jan., \textit{Indian Poetics, Volume 5, Part 2}, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1977, pp. 269-270; the \textit{Srngara Prakasa} (Mishra 1998: 116).

\textsuperscript{14} My vision of AMND as elucidated in the Prologue.

\textsuperscript{15} Ensnared within the constructs of a Western intellectual mind-set, and in addressing the perilous state of literary concerns, Haney, Malekin and Meyer-Dinkgarfe recommend the alternative research methodology of pure consciousness on the platform of Vedanta from Indian philosophy as a solution (Haney and Malekin 2001: 67) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 157) (Meyer-Dinkgarfe 2005: 165). Mancing, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe argue that all interdisciplinary concerns in cognitive science can be deliberated by a nonreductive theory of pure consciousness (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney 2002: 15) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 176). Similarly to experiencing the states of rasa, nirguna and saguna in Mishra’s argument of the Sublime (Brahman-Absolute Spirit), utilising the platform of Vedanta, the authors, Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgarfe observe the formulation on the transcendent Brahman as Absolute Spirit-Atman-Soul (nondualistic pure consciousness experience) also known as the pure transcendental consciousness state of turiya. According to Haney, while Western epistemological knowledge is language based, the Mundaka Upanishad identifies two forms of knowledge; (nirguna-higher knowledge-absoluteness) and (saguna-lower knowledge-emotionalism), both nirguna and saguna form the dual aspect of Brahman (Absolute Spirit-Atman-Soul) (Haney 2002: 39, 78-79) (Yarrow 2001: 120) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 22-24). Therefore, in engaging the transcendental pure consciousness of turiya, the authors Haney, Malekin and Meyer-Dinkgrafe suggest that all literary concerns in theatre practice engaging the emotions of the actor-spectator be reassessed on the platform of Indian theatre aesthetics of the Vedic sciences’ Natyasastra (Haney 2002: 89-104) (Meyer-Dinkgarfe 1996: 18-20) (haney and Malekin 2001: 107-116).

\textsuperscript{16} According to Marasinghe, that aesthetics and spontaneous mood or feeling arising from the spectator’s experiences through the actor’s performance is rasa (Marasinghe 1989: 185), while social psychologist and psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar, postulates that rasa is the counterpart of liberation (Kakar 1981: 30). As Moksha (liberation) or enlightenment is a central thread woven throughout this thesis, Mishra’s Indian Sublime positions its self as a central anchor in the interpretation of this thesis. From a psychoanalytic perspective, rasa is explained in Chapter Three and from the aesthetics departure of the Natyasastra, the ancient text on Indian dramaturgy, rasa is further explained in Chapter Five.

\textsuperscript{17} Predating Rezeptionsasthetik’s version from the School of Konstanz and Edmund Burke’s “the sublime and the beautiful”, rasa or sentiment, according to Mishra, is based on a precognitive abstract reading practice, which is also metalinguistic and as the dominant hermeneutic reading of Indian culture, rasa collapses both the aspects of “hermeneutics and poetics”. Mishra postulates that the reception behind this practice is governed by an audience who perceive themselves as a “community of believers”, rather than an audience. European theory of reception advocates the notion that the world is constructed based upon the individual’s acts of consciousness, while rasa theory is an organised structure of aesthetic experiences superimposed upon a framework of emotional, (Mishra 1998: 18-19) psychophysiological or behavioural states (Yarrow 2001: 115). Apart from the minor association with intersubjectivity dynamism in Western reception theory, rasa does not account for the outer limit of expectation movements which “could lead to a more socially complex and ideologically self-aware literary response”. However, this gap is remedied
But then participating in this life would be an impractical task with the renouncer being the ideal in Sublime poetics. Therefore, the alternative of the “man-in-the-world” was chosen by Hindu culture in taming the renouncer, creating many Gods, taming Brahman, decentering its grasp on thinking. The Hindu successfully exclaimed that whilst “the sublime and union of Atman in Brahman must be its grand narrative” for living in the world, it was not practised, and in its grand narrative platform of ascetic intellectualism, it decentered history, validated the many gods, and created a platform for the Hindus to coexist as the renouncer and as the capitalist (Mishra 1998: 202).

This is the precise balance in the creation of the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ based on devotion and worship; coexisting as “the renouncer and as the capitalist”. And with this balance I believe that the volatile issues of Interculturalism can be stabilised.

Mishra’s argument regarding the Indian Sublime is centered on creating a valid representational platform for Indian Hindu culture informed by the transcendental Brahman (Absolute Spirit) with specific reference to Hegel’s realm of the spirit and Kantian idealism. The works of Malekin, Yarrow, Haney, Meyer-Dinkgräfe, Nair and Madhavan are centered on the Indian philosophy of Vedanta or Vedic sciences’ transcendental state of pure consciousness or turiya (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 39) (Yarrow 2001: 3, 120, 126) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 67) (Haney 2002: 15, 17, 39, 78-79) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 19) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100, 157) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 6, 22-24, 165, 176, 215-216) with Western theatre aligning itself to the working formula of the Natyasastra in Indian Sanskrit theatre (Yarrow 2001: 3) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 107-116) (Haney 2002: 89-104) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 18-20) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 178) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 5). Based on this platform, the authors draw attention to the field of consciousness studies “ranging from philosophy by the “ideal spectator” or “sahridaya”, a “connoisseur of the art” (explained further in Chapter Five), where the spectator’s heart becomes “one with the author’s” (Mishra 1998: 19) (Yarrow 2001: 115) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 105-106). Mishra further argues that arising out of the transcendental laws of Hinduism, the Hindu imaginative is grounded upon the self-evident philosophy of viewing literary texts as a “connoisseur of the arts” through a myriad of rasas overriding structural priority, rather than through inner dynamism. Closing off literary texts to the principles which lead to actual historical identification, rasa theory, then, reinforces the imaginary identifications, implying “in effect a radical incommensurability between emotion and text”. Therefore, Mishra is of the opinion that rasa theory in texts should be addressed in relation to cultural imperatives, rather than objective harmonies. Thus, in general, rasa is equated as a condition of ananda (bliss-liberation) in the merging with Brahman (Absolute Spirit) (Mishra 1998: 19-20) (Kakar 1981: 30).

18 The Self.
19 The Absolute Spirit.

I believe then that my synthesised creative theoretical working paradigm, the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ developed from TFA and reinvented on the platform of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism, anchored as it is in the theories of Mishra’s *Indian Sublime* and Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s Vedic sciences’ higher-pure consciousness from the Indian theatre aesthetics of the *Natyasastra*, will create a working model with which to stabilise the volatile issues in intercultural theatre practice noted by Lo and Gilbert.

**Conclusion**

This thesis aims to create a deeper understanding of the metaphorical construction and analysis of plays, which then can serve as a template for re-examining conventional concepts for the understanding and development of productions that take a secular text into the realm of the Sacred. It will, moreover, offer a general theorisation of the fields of performance informed by Interculturalism, New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, and as a way of moving forward, suggest a solution to the problems of the “Intercultural Wars”. It will supply a historical documentation of AMND produced by the Temple of Fine Arts International, something which has not to date been attempted.
Chapter 2 – Theoretical Fore-structures

Intercultural theatre has existed throughout the history of theatre. Theorists of theatre try to describe this phenomenon and the relation between its components with prefixes such as inter-, intra-, trans-, cross-, neo-, de-, multicultural, etc. theatre. Intercultural theatre is limited by neither time nor by space. It is always, and everywhere, defined by an encounter between at least two components of theatre, initiating a process from which a new component of theatre springs. Local and foreign, familiar and unfamiliar are brought together; unintentionally or deliberately, consciously or unconsciously. The intercultural encounter becomes intracultural. (Pfeiffer 1999)

Introduction

Based on Lo and Gilbert’s model of intercultural practice, I aim to extrapolate that TFA’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s AMND effectively demonstrates transcultural, intracultural and extracultural dimensions. Furthermore, other ideologies and theories such as New Historicism and Cultural Materialism together with Higher Consciousness from the Vedic sciences, devotion and worship from the Indian Sublime underpin the research study to demonstrate that interpretation of a text, in this case TFA AMND, is shaped by different worldviews.

While the macro aspects of this thesis utilise theories drawn from Interculturalism, New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, the micro aspects that address the questions of Higher Consciousness and the Indian Sublime engage the reader by eliciting a response that engages with my point of departure as a subject immersed in Indian Hindu philosophy.

This Chapter will be divided into three segments: the first will address the theoretical concepts of Vedic Philosophy and Consciousness creating a springboard into the second; this deals with the broad theory of Interculturalism, while the concluding segment will briefly introduce the Indian Sublime as the structural adhesive merging Higher Consciousness and Interculturalism, for the reinvention of TFA’s AMND, in the

---

1 Gabriele Pfeiffer’s electronic article entitled *From affirmations of interculturality in theatre to a transcultural form of theatre*, published by the Research Institute for Austrian and International Literature and Cultural Studies, [http://www.inst.at/studies/s_0603_e.htm](http://www.inst.at/studies/s_0603_e.htm), access date 27-6-2011.

light of Cultural Materialist and New Historicist approaches to the canonical Shakespearean text.

**Vedic Philosophy and Consciousness**

In reiterating the words of Howard Mancing with regards to cognitive science, William S. Haney II is of the opinion that:

**CULTURE AND CONSCIOUSNESS ARGUES THAT THE VAST INTERDISCIPLINARY boom in consciousness research has enormous implications for literary and cultural studies, and that the potential benefits of this research in the twenty-first century are momentous and “will be ignored at our great peril” (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney 2002: 7)**

Expanding the notion of this “great peril”, Mancing and Haney highlight that the editors of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* stress the need for “systematic investigative methods” in replacing the naïve “commonsensical Aristotelian-Cartesian” methodology with eastern approaches, which have already been the corner stone of discussions in scientific literatures arguing that if scientists themselves perceive human beings as a cluster of neurons then “the transformative claims of meditation procedures associated with these [Eastern] traditions will have to be taken seriously” (Haney 2002: 16). According to *Advaita* Vedanta (nondualistic doctrine) formulated by Shankara\(^3\) (Yogananda 1995: 42), postmodern culture induces a state of mind deconditioning which leads to the depletion of higher consciousness. Hence, Haney argues that the research into the theoretical praxis of Eastern consciousness identifies that the Western body-mind dualism is truly monism, in comparison to the distinction of matter-consciousness (*purusha* or *Atman*-soul) (Haney 2002: 7). In evaluating the reductive-nonreductive Western and Eastern theories of consciousness in relation to the Western body-mind dualism with the Eastern matter-consciousness dualism (Haney 2002: 17), the authors Mancing, Haney, Malekin, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgrafe suggest that the solution to all interdisciplinary activity positioned around cognitive science relating to literary theory and criticism can be successfully deliberated with a nonreductive theory

---

\(^3\) In the Hindu tradition of spiritual teachers, Adi Shankaracharya was the first teacher who founded the monk or swami order. *Adi*; meaning “the first” and *acharya* meaning religious teacher. Thus Shankara the great Indian philosopher-theologian came to be known as Adi Shankaracharya. He unified the monk or swami order under ten names and setup four *maths* (monasteries) to disseminate his teachings (Yogananda 1993: 258-259), Bhatt, Chetan., *Hindu nationalism: origins, ideologies and modern myths*, 2001, p. 184.
of higher or pure consciousness (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney 2002: 15) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 176). Thus, given the current state of theoretical limitations in the field of intercultural theatre that have persisted for the last twenty years (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 4), more so, toward the late twentieth century, no consensus has been gained as argued by Holledge and Tompkins, where, as indicated in the Chapter One, interculturalism is likened to a “theatrical and cultural minefield” (Holledge and Tompkins 2000: 10). Trapped within the constructs of the “current Western, intellect-dominated mind-set”, the authors suggest an alternative research methodology which transcends intellect, emotions, and ego into the universal domain of pure consciousness as expounded by Indian philosophy (Haney and Malekin 2001: 67) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 157) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 165).

Utilising the platform of Vedanta, drawing from the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 39) (Yarrow 2001: 126) (Haney 2002: 78) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 19) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 6, 215-216), the authors observe that the indeterminate, transcendent formulation of Brahman as the Absolute-Atman (nondualistic experience of pure consciousness) representing the attributes of “sat (infinite being), chit (consciousness), ananda (bliss)”, encompassing the “truth of the universe”, identifying the atman as the eternal truth of the Self; is in itself Brahman. This Self as Brahman, according to Haney is represented in four states of consciousness; the waking state, the sleep state, the dream state and the fourth state, turiya, which is the state of superconsciousness or pure consciousness. In turiya, the atman as the “ever-present witness” underlies all manifested mental phenomena within the three ordinary functions of consciousness (waking, sleep and dream states). While Western epistemological knowledge is language based, the Mundaka Upanishad identifies two kinds of knowledge: para vidya (higher knowledge-nirguna) and apara vidya (lower knowledge-saguna); both Nirguna and Saguna form the dual aspects of Brahman. The waking, sleep and dream state consciousness correspond with the lower knowledge of “sensory and mental empiricism”, while the higher knowledge corresponds with the transcendental pure consciousness state of turiya (Haney 2002: 39, 78-79) (Yarrow 2001: 120) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 22-24). Described by Haney, Lloyd Pflueger explains that according to Samkhya Yoga, a branch of the Indian Vedanta philosophy, there are two independent irreducible, innate realities within the realm of our experiences: the first, purusha or atman (pure consciousness) “without which even mental processes know nothing”: and the second, prakriti (nature or matter),
which comprises all psychological functions, such as “intellect, ego, mind, sense capacities, and action capacities”, including “subtle elements, gross elements, and material objects”. Haney then moves to emphasise that “[i]t is important to remember, […], that Eastern thought distinguishes between consciousness and mind, whereas Western thought identifies the two” (Haney 2002: 41-44). According to Sreenath Nair the perception distinction of space and time is the state of pure consciousness (turiya) explained in Yoga texts. Malekin and Yarrow present similar paradigms such as “silence co-exists with activity” and “timeless infinitude”, explaining the similar “spaceless” and “timeless” activity when the shifted experience of time and space occurs within the individual creating the experience of turiya (Nair 2007: 163).

Therefore, in identifying the perilous state of literary concerns as argued by Mancing, the authors recommend a reassessment of Western based theories in the field of literary theory, cultural studies and criticism in theatre practice involving the actor’s emotions from the perspective of Vedic science. This is based on the platform of the Indian theatre aesthetics of the Natyasasatra, the Indian treatise on dramaturgy (Haney 2002: 89-104) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 18-20) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 107-116). They present the argument that theatre in the realms of consciousness according to the Natyasasatra establishes the primary aspect of raising the consciousness levels of the performers and spectators to the higher states of development with the goal of achieving Samadhi (enlightenment) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 159-162) (Haney 2002: 49, 70-80) (Nair 2007: 163). Stanislavsky’s development of emotional involvement in the actor which stimulated the spectator’s emotions directly influenced the works of Meyerhold, Strasberg and Brecht, who in turn influenced major twentieth century theatre practitioners and theorists, such as Artaud, Grotowski, Barba, Brook, Mnouchkine, Schechner and Zarrilli (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 11-12) (Yarrow 2001: 14). Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Haney, Malekin and Yarrow cite that these practitioners have been influenced by non-Western theatre concepts, practices, philosophy and psychology arguing that a major part of that influence is derived from India. Artaud’s “language beyond speech” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 79) and “sublime or metaphysical embodiment”, Grotowski’s “translumination”, Brook’s “total theatre or holy theatre”, Barba’s “transcendent theatre”, and Worthen’s “surrogation” were all based on states of higher consciousness transcending the Aristotelian-Cartesian mind-body dualism (Haney 2002: 16, 98-104).
Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe have suggested the Vedic sciences as an alternative methodology in reassessing theatre practice and its application as a possible tool in addressing the volatile issues of interculturalism. But how is this restoration achieved? How does this aesthetic transformation take place? Most importantly; What are the possible ‘building blocks’ in realising this reassessment? I share the suggested Vedic platform in reassessment, but how do we get from this current “mine field”/quagmire to the level of higher consciousness, experiencing the state of transcendental superconsciousness or turiya or Samadhi in theatre practice leading to performances?

According to Madhavan, to achieve this state of reassessment or restoration, Malekin and Yarrow have suggested a practice of what they call the “pashyanti project”, where theatre practitioners, actors, directors and backstage personnel are all trained to access pashyanti\(^4\) to achieve a state of “holistic rhythm”\(^5\) through the “understandings of physiological and mental functioning at generative levels”. At the initial stage the participants are taught to establish a level of “neutrality” dispensing with familiar and habitual patterns, where the everyday activity of the individual is cast aside, developing an expectation-less state, creating a sense of “readiness” to engage the fourth level of consciousness; turiya. Yarrow describes this state of consciousness “neutrality” or “witnessing” as “silence and activity co-exist[ing]” leading to various levels of perception eventually directing the actor to the state of turiya. Malekin and Yarrow suggest various methods, such as working with neutral masks, Hatha Yoga, rhythmic movements or shamanistic practices in achieving this state of consciousness. Nonetheless, Malekin and Yarrow identify that prolonged exposure to Yoga will enable the actor to rapidly train the mind to access the state of pashyanti (Madhavan 2010: 37-38).

\(^4\) According to Madhavan, Indian linguistics is distinguished into four levels of language: “para, pashyanti, madhyama and vaikhari”. Vaikhari is identified as audible speech, while para is categorised as the unmanifested level in language. The inner mental state of thoughts is represented as madhyama (inner speech), it resides between para and vaikhari. Manifesting within the mind of the speaker at the finest cognitive level, devoid of space and time, representing “meaning in its fullness”, is the pre-verbal level known as pashyanti. “It is a liminal state of between-ness, between the unmanifested and the beginning of any manifestation”. It is the subtle cognitive creative space before the “formation of its expression” (Madhavan 2010: 35).

\(^5\) This term, “holistic rhythm”, is used and elaborated in Chapter Five as part of a complete ‘holistic acting system’ in which I draw upon the similarities of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold’s acting systems in developing my devotional acting praxis model. It is a creative methodology based on the teachings of Swamiji at TFA. It should be noted that this devotional acting praxis has been created independently of Malekin, Yarrow, Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Haney, Nair and Madhavan’s writings.
As the authors Malekin et al. have drawn their reassessments on theatre practice from the Vedic teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of the Transcendental Meditation technique and the Maharishi University of Management in the United States, where methodological discourses in gaining higher consciousness leading to the state of achieving enlightenment are researched by scientists (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 39) (Yarrow 2001: 126) (Haney 2002: 78) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 19) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 215-216), I too draw upon the similar Vedic sciences taught by my guru; Swami Shantanand Saraswathi (1934-2005) founder of the Temple of Fine Arts International, a close disciple of his late guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswathi (1887-1963) founder of Divine Life Society. Meyer-Dinkgrafe highlights the importance of the Vedic lineage of the teachings received by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1914-2008) from his late guru:

Swami Brahmananda Saraswati (1869-1953), who held the position of Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math for 13 years of his life. He was the head of one of the four monasteries in India founded by the sage and philosopher Shankara to safeguard the tradition of his Advaita Vedanta philosophy. [...] As Brahmananda Saraswati’s disciple, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is in the direct line of Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta philosophy. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1996: 19)

I share a similar Saraswathi lineage as that of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. I too have spent eighteen years as a devotee, dancer and theatre practitioner under the tutelage of Swami Shantanand Saraswathi in the Vedic science of the Natyasastra before his passing. Along with the insights of Vedic sciences recommended by Malekin et al., for the reassessment of a theatre practice that will transcend empiricism and attain the Vedanta philosophy of higher consciousness, I would add that the conduct of theatre practitioners be reassessed in the areas of respect, responsibility and representation, as suggested by Lo, Gilbert and Grehan. Swami Sivananda’s injunction to “Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise; Be Good; Do Good”, is crucial to an understanding of this praxis as, I will argue, the Vedanta practice will formulate the ‘building blocks’ in achieving the state of higher consciousness for theatre practitioners and performers. These building blocks suggested by Swami Sivananda, as explained by Swami Shantanand, describe the gradual process of evolution in the performer’s practice. Swami Shantananda clarifies Swami Sivananda’s position as follows:
If one tries to “Be Good” and to “Do Good”, he has to “Serve all” and “Love all”, which naturally purifies his heart and makes him fit for meditation which leads to realisation. ([I believe that it is only at this juncture that Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s Transcendental Meditation technique would yield its effectiveness and not otherwise.)] “Be Good, Do Good, Serve, Love, Purify, Concentrate, Reflect, Meditate, Realise.” (Shantanand 2007: 34)

According to Swami Shantanand, these building blocks known as Sivananda’s “Spiritual Ladder” formulate the basic ‘activating principles’ and will lead the candidate to the level of higher consciousness (Shantanand 2007: 34). In practising these activating principles the practitioner’s heart will become purified, freeing him/her from the bondage of egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy, granting the practitioner an ‘understanding heart’. And as the practitioners progress through the waking, dreaming, and deep-sleep states they will, in stages, develop “equal vision”, paving the way to a “balanced mind”, then acquiring “faith” leading to “devotion” and finally being endowed with the state of ‘wisdom’ as turiya-higher consciousness (Shantanand 1982: 97). According to Swamiji, achieving the state of turiya is not about possessing but giving up the possessor (possessiveness) (Shantanand 1995: 23-24). Only if the candidate-actor progresses through these stages of activating principles can he or she achieve the state of higher consciousness thereby becoming the ‘Universal Consciousness Actor’ or the “enlightened actor” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 120) as suggested by Malekin et al.

Haney explains that according to the Bhagavad-Gita, as elaborated by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the fourth state of highest consciousness turiya is free from duality, hence free from prakriti (nature) and in turn free from its governing principles (gunas) of satva, rajas and tamas (Haney 2002: 78) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 96-97). The governing principles of satva, tamas and rajas are further expounded by Swami Yogananda’s elucidation in the Bhagavad-Gita where tamas (ignorance-obstruction) is identified with individuals misusing free will for nefarious purposes, thereby becoming evil in nature and quality. If free will is guided by righteous deeds resisting the evil elements in nature then that individual is governed by satva (expansion-enlightenment) qualities, manifesting goodness, while rajas (energy-activity) acts as the activating quality or as a rudder under the influences of the use and misuse of free will (Yogananda 1995: 716-717). Therefore, based on the activity (rajas) of the individual in the use or misuse of free will, the classification of satva and tamas is determined. If the
individual in his activating quality (rajas) uses his free will for good deeds, then his true nature is satva. If the individual misuses his free will for nefarious deeds then his true nature is tamas. According to Swami Yogananda these three gunas then correspond with the Vedic four caste system and, contrary to popular belief, Swami Yogananda explains that this four caste system is not based on birth, but rather on the classification of the individual’s natural capacity in achieving the elected life goals: kama (desire-sudra) stage, artha (gain-while keeping desire under control-vaisya) stage, dharma (self-discipline-responsible life with right action-kshatriya) stage, and moksha (liberation-spiritual life and higher consciousness-brahmin) stage (Yogananda 1993: 451). Drawing inspiration then from the Vedic sciences’ higher consciousness theatre practice as suggested by Malekin et al, I will suggest a reinvention of Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum of Intercultural Modes along a Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice.

![Figure 1 Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum of Intercultural Modes](image)

Using Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum of Intercultural Modes we can deduce the intent of the working methodologies employed by theatre practitioners. At one end of the continuum the working paradigm is characterised as collaborative while at the other end it’s categorised as imperialistic. Collaborative theatre-making emphasises exchange of cultures that serves community needs rather than commercial needs, while imperialistic production focuses on the revitalisation of western culture by introducing non-Western theatre practices ensuring that the dominant culture benefits from all aspects of its production (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 38-39). By fusing the application of higher consciousness, the three gunas and the Vedic classification system with Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum, the reinvention now reads as follows:

![Figure 2 Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice](image)

The Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice captures the ‘true’ intent of intercultural theatre practitioners based on the governing principles (gunas) of prakriti
(nature); it will deduce whether their intent (activating principle-rajās) is of tamas-
sudra or satva-brahmin rather than merely making a comparison between
“collaborative” and “imperialistic”. In the light of the West’s continued appropriation
articulated by Supple (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 60 & 72), Lo and Gilbert’s critical
position can be seen still to obtain: Western theatre practitioners are comfortable with or
perhaps even elated by the term imperialist. The reinvention of the continuum that I
propose will reveal whether or not theatre practitioners will be satisfied with being
termed Sudra-tamas-imperialistic in practising intercultural theatre or whether they
would prefer a description of their practice as being Brahmin-satva-collaborative. That
is, until such a time when all practitioners are free from the need for governing
principles as discussed by Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Haney 2002: 78) (Meyer-

**Interculturalism**

As argued by Daryl Chin “Interculturalism hinges on the questions of autonomy and
empowerment” (Chin 1989: 174) and as such it becomes a politically loaded site for
critique in questioning ideas of cultural exchange in translation, representation,
borrowing, exoticism, responsibility and power relations (Grehan 2000: 1) under the
umbrella of intercultural practice. These volatile complexities erupted into what
Knowles describes as the “intercultural wars”, largely provoked by Brook’s
ethnocentric (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 10) version of *The Mahabharata* (Knowles
2010: 21). In this Chapter Interculturalism is explored using Lo and Gilbert’s *Proposed
Model for Interculturalism* as applied to the transcultural, intracultural and extracultural
dimensions of TFA’s AMND.

If we exploit more than we need, or if we demand what is not there, or if we envision
“masterpieces” which are of no use to anybody, or if we attempt to rejuvenate
ourselves through nourishing sources from “other cultures” without caring for the
context or realities of these cultures, then we could be perpetuating the violence
around us by contributing at infinitesimal levels to the imbalances of our cultural
ecology. (Bharucha 1997: 37)

In constructing the backdrop to TFA’s AMND against a notion of intercultural
exchange, questions raised by theorists in the arena of interculturalism have to be
addressed. The complexities can be seen in the varied responses of theatre practitioners.
Richard Schechner in the mid ‘70s stated:
People didn’t question too much whether or not this interculturalism [...] was a continuation of colonialism, a further exploitation of other cultures. There was something simply celebratory about discovering how diverse the world was, how many performance genre there were and how we could enrich our own experience by borrowing, stealing, exchanging. (Schechner 1982: 19)

Lo and Gilbert note that Schechner’s view had shifted from the idealising of cross cultural exchanges to being aware of its power relations. A later position of his is articulated below as

 […] misunderstandings, broken language, and failed transactions that occur when and where cultures collide, overlap, or pull away from each other. These are seen not as obstacles to be overcome but as fertile rifts or eruptions full of creative potential. (Schechner 1991: 3) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 40)

Contrary to Schechner’s claim, other theorists argue the ethical concerns of the adverse impact of globalisation. Darly Chin states that:

Interculturalism hinges on the questions of autonomy and empowerment. To deploy elements from the symbol system of another culture is a very delicate enterprise. In its crudest terms, the question is: when does that usage act as cultural imperialism? Forcing elements from disparate cultures together does not seem to be a solution that makes much sense, aesthetically, ethically, or philosophically. What does that prove: that the knowledge of other cultures exists? That information about other cultures now is readily available? (Chin 1989: 174)

Following Darly Chin’s train of thought, Rustom Bharucha argues that interculturalism cannot be devoid “of colonialism and orientalism”. Bharucha argues that by its very nature, interculturalism is an ethnocentric vehicle seeking to create rifts rather than respect for individual cultural histories. Bharucha asserts that:

The problem arises [...] when the preoccupation with the “self” overpowers the representation of ‘other” cultures […and] when the Other is not another but the projection of one’s ego. Then all one has is a glorification of the self and a co-option of other cultures in the name of representation. (Bharucha 1993: 28)

---

6 Although Lo and Gilbert have noted Schechner’s view in power relations, it should be observed that according to Bharucha, Gilbert, Tompkins and Singh, Schechner’s power relations are embedded in ethnocentrism (Bharucha 1993: 3) (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 10) ( Singh 1996: 123) as argued by Bharucha in his seminal 1984 essay “A Collusion of Cultures: Some Western Interpretations of Indian Theatre”, Asian Theatre Journal, 1 (1), pp. 1-20. Schechner’s ethnocentric viewpoint is discussed against the Natyasastra in Chapter Five.
Brown, J. R. further argues that:

Exchange, borrowing, trade or looting across major frontiers diminishes any theatre because it transgresses its inherited reliance on the society from which the drama takes its life and for which it was intended to be performed. […] However worthily it is intended, intercultural theatrical exchange is, in fact, a form of pillage, and the result is fancy-dress pretence, or at best, the creation of a small zoo in which no creature has its full life. (Brown 1998: 14)

Given the above mentioned complexities, Ezzy, Denzin and Lincoln argue that major concerns regarding whether or not the voice of the “other” can be heard must be addressed. Moreover exchanges through collaboration, inclusion or articulation must be based on existing negotiated considerations in interpreting the experiences of the other (Ezzy 2002: xiii). Denzin and Lincoln are of the opinion that the research results can be articulated through personal narratives, lived experiences, poetic representation and autohistories. They further argue that the researcher becomes the vital link between the field text, the research text and the community (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 1050-1051).

Departing from the argument of Denzin and Lincoln’s lived experiences, I aim to represent those experiences in a balanced expression of negotiation and mediation through hybridity rather than authenticity to either the West or East, addressing the concerns using the *Proposed Model of Interculturalism* by Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert.

According to Lo and Gilbert interculturalism in theatre refers to a deliberate engagement with or amalgamation of cultures and performing traditions between the West and “the rest” derived from Western-based traditions in theatre. In particular, the authors believe that intercultural exchanges in non-Western regions are mediated through Western cultures and economies (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 32, 36-37). Lo and Gilbert suggest that Intercultural theatre can be divided into three categories; transcultural, intracultural and extracultural. The authors discuss transcultural theatre, which transcends culture to more universal appeal using common aspects of traditions, while intracultural theatre, a term coined by modernist playwright, Rustom Bharucha, deals with a mixture of cultures of different communities within a nation (Bharucha 2000: 9). Extracultural theatre, a different category, deals with the merging of cultures from across nations (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 32, 37-38). In relation to my research study, the primary focus will be on the extracultural theatre forms of intercultural theatre since the interpretation of Shakespeare’s play by the TFA mainly falls into this form of
practice. However, it also includes plays that have national and universal appeal encompassing transcultural theatre as well.

Lo and Gilbert argue further that the current framework of Interculturalism does not mediate the balance between West and non-West power-authenticity and politics (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 31-36). According to them issues such as race, gender, body, costume, hybridity, space, language and audience-relationship (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 46-48) can be addressed “through the lens of postcolonial theory” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 43). Their proposed model for intercultural exchange, symbolises a two-way flow, making it ideal for my project, as TFA’s AMND encompasses transcultural, extracultural and intracultural theatres. It accounts for the combination of styles in intercultural exchanges, creating a balanced working platform between the parties of exchange, taking into account the effects of globalisation on the absorption of cultures through cultural political filters, addressing site-specificity of either intercessions or confrontations. By deconstructing the production of TFA’s AMND through Lo and Gilbert’s proposed model for Interculturalism\(^8\), I will validate the authors’ insights regarding interculturalism mediated through postcolonial theory. As I believe that Lo and Gilbert’s organic and intentional postcolonial theory addresses the complications of intercultural exchange by formulating an ideal point of departure in traversing between cultures mastering hybrid forms (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45). I will now move to elucidate the theoretical working process of Lo and Gilbert’s *Proposed Model for Interculturalism*.

---

\(^8\) Although many critics have tried to present a theoretical framework on intercultural exchanges, Patrice Pavis’s “hourglass” has been the only model thus far that can be construed as a sustainable working model (Pavis 1992: 4), compared to Marvin Carlson’s scale of seven categories of cross-cultural influence based on probable interaction involving the “culturally familiar and the culturally foreign” (Carlson 1996: 82) and Erika Fischer-Lichte’s process of adaptation, where she follows a production reception model in comparison to translation (Fischer-Lichte and Riley 1997: 154-155). Highlighted by Niranjana, the major setback in this model arises from assuming a one-way cultural flow in power relations, running the danger of recreating approaches of suppression, thereby reducing international exchanges to a visceral process (Niranjana 1992: 3-6). Unable to account for negotiations at places of either intercession or confrontation, based on aesthetics rather than politics, the end result of using the hourglass to map out intercultural exchanges, will direct the cultural differences to being reduced, distilled and subsumed by the target culture (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 43).
Figure 3 Lo and Gilbert’s Proposed Model for Interculturalism

Intercultural exchange according to Lo and Gilbert is defined by benefit and failure, attraction and repulsion, hence, by aptly positioning the target culture in the middle the source cultures, they aim to locate intercultural movement amid a recognisable sociopolitical framework. This will serve to centre the solidarity of creative activities from sociopolitical associations, as well as to emphasise that theoretical and interpretative approaches themselves overlap immensely in histories and politics. Located along the continuum, their dual flow model between the West and the Other creates a level partnership in its cultural source exchange as depicted between Cultural Source A and B. Accounting for the power relations and dialogic nature of the partnership in the intercultural exchange, the target culture (audience) moves along the continuum remaining fluid. For example, when the production is staged in the West, shifting along the continuum the target culture (audience) moves closer to the West and the reverse when staged in the domain of the Other.

Lo and Gilbert explain that the sociocultural milieu and apparatuses from both sources (filters 1 and 2), will pass through a series of challenging transformations during the process of exchange (filters 3 through 9), taking into account the source culture’s partnership and the anticipated target culture (audience). Anticipating the complication of the intercultural exchange underpinned by social, political, cultural, historical, and economic dynamics, the authors strengthen their model with the application of
postcolonial differentiated hybridity formulated by Robert Young. Serving as a stabilising function in resolving cultural differences in the fusion of the creative aspects of the intercultural work, organic hybridity ferries between both cultures in mastering the created hybrid form. Intentional hybridity is characterised by being self-reflexive, focusing on negotiating the different approaches in practices elucidating potential problematic areas, resisting cultural dilution and/or the possibility of co-option (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 44-46).

Before, proceeding to deconstruct TFA’s AMND against Lo and Gilbert’s proposed intercultural model, I will begin to discuss the workings of the authors’ proposed model against the two concerns highlighted by Knowles: the first, that Lo and Gilbert’s model is only set for a two-way flow; and the second, that the authors’ model does not cater for the audience (Knowles 2010: 41).

In his 2010 book, theatre & interculturalism, Knowles argues that the West’s notion of interculturalism is cradled in fraught terrain, cloaked under utopian ideology where cultural differences and racial identity do not matter, raising questions about “cultural imperialism, appropriation and colonisation”. Knowles argues the view that this cloaked notion is based on the domination of literary criticism in the study of interculturalism by Western academics (Knowles 2010: 1-2). Knowles’ intercultural concerns find their representation in the cultural exchanges of Lo and Gilbert’s proposed model (Knowles 2010: 3), but nevertheless, he emphasises that their model is set for only two cultures (Knowles 2010: 26). I believe that Lo and Gilbert’s model is a workable template toward a much needed release in the intercultural wars (Knowles 2010: 21) and based on their treatment of postcolonial hybridity, their model can be modified to add more cultures, if necessary. More importantly, I believe, their model is set for two primary cultures; the West and the “Other”, and therefore in my opinion their model is functional. The second concern that was highlighted by Knowles was the argument that Lo and Gilbert’s model does not cater for the audience (Knowles 2010: 41). Here again, I believe that the perception or the response of the audience should not be tampered

---

9 Author of Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race (1995), Young argues that both organic and intentional hybridity can function at the same time, coalesced, antagonistic and in antithetical directions, offering a dialogical model addressing the contestatory movement and politicised environment (Young 1995: 22).

10 As shared by Gabriele Pfeiffer from the opening quote in this Chapter, “Intercultural theatre is limited by neither time nor by space. It is always, and everywhere, defined by an encounter between at least two components of theatre, initiating a process from which a new component of theatre springs”. 
with: the audience is always central to a performance, but most importantly, one should not massage the production or the audience for a desired outcome; that act is nefarious (Sivananda 1999: 125), and commercially motivated under the guise of interculturalism (Pavis 1996: 5). Respectful representation would be that which values the borrowed culture, without decontextualising it out of its social, political, historical and cultural encoding. As Knowles puts it aptly, “cannibalising” the borrowed culture (Knowles 2010: 12):

It was in this cannibalisation of forms **without respect for cultures** [(bold emphasis added)] that produced them that early interculturalism most directly participated in the West’s colonisation of the world’s cultures and peoples. (Knowles 2010: 12)

What is not in discussion is authenticity in performances, as it is a “fraught activity” which runs the risk of spectators or critics “becoming the verifiers of authenticity” (Dharwadker 2005: 156) (Grehan 2000: 1, 5-6). In my opinion from my years of theatre practice, it is next to impossible for anyone to represent the authentic representation of another’s lived culture, no matter what the circumstances, other than, if one is endowed with the upbringing of the lived culture of the “Other”. Rather, what we can do, is, when a culture is borrowed, aim not to remove it from its “social contexts, histories, and belief systems, othering them” (Knowles 2010: 12) massaging them into exotic productions for mass economic consumption (Pavis 1996: 5), but rather shape it by addressing the politics of the culture (Bharucha 1993: 240).

At TFA, rather than re-telling the story in its Shakespearean context as Tim Supple did in his overtly sexual Indian version of AMND (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 63), TFA chose to infuse Shakespeare’s AMND with Vedic philosophy and sociological concepts within the “textual body” of the performance (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 55) while maintaining Shakespeare’s thematic storyline with its structural constructs, location and its socio-politics throughout the production and showcasing the “transformation and transportation” dimensions (Schechner 1985: 125 & 131) of everyday life into the states of higher consciousness as argued by Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 93, 159-160).

The key to addressing intercultural issues I believe is the three “Rs” “respect, responsibility and representation”, highlighted by Gilbert and Lo as “an autochthonous [Indigenous] form of cosmopolitanism” in *Performance and Cosmopolitics: cross-
cultural transactions in Australasia. Challenging John Howard’s restriction on asylum seekers Wadjularbinna, a Gungalidda elder, argues that Howard and all non-Indigenous people are descendents from “boat people”, who remain in Australia under “the (violated) generosity of Aboriginal kinship system”, which believes that all people are welcome “if they respect our land [(emphasis added)], and treat our land as it should be treated […] and if they respect our differences [(emphasis added)] (Gilbert and Lo 2007: 207-208) (Knowles 2010: 7).

In his book, Masked Performance: the play of self and other in ritual and theatre, Emigh outlines the relationship between the mask and the wearer in relation to theatrical processes. His research was focused on Asian performing traditions, in particular that of Balinese tradition (Emigh 1996: xvii). In summing up the process of theatre between the mask and the wearer, between the performer and the audience in creating an organic integrity of the mask moving, speaking, breathing and perceiving, Emigh highlights one single core component:

The process begins with a respect [(emphasis added)] for the mask’s potential life as a separate entity and proceeds by narrowing the gap between the self and other […]. (Emigh 1996: 275)

In deconstructing Brook’s version of the Mahabharata, Emigh and Yarrow highlight the “preposterous” claim of Brook being the first to stage the epic production in its entirety (Emigh 1996: 282) (Yarrow 2001: 34). Rather, they argue, a truncated version was rendered (Dasgupta 1987: 11) (Hiltebeitel 1992: 153) (Yarrow 2001: 34). In concluding the deconstruction of Brook’s Mahabharata project, Emigh cites Walter Benjamin’s observation, “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably”11. And thus he argues:

Artistic and ethical problems arise, though, when respect [(emphasis added)] for the “other” – the first step in forgoing a new life with an old mask-is violated, and when transcultural appropriation is presented as a universal “poetical history of mankind”. (Emigh 1996: 283)

---

Therefore, given Wadjularbinna, Emigh and Yarrow’s\textsuperscript{12} emphasis on “respect”, I believe, if we addressed the fundamental core elements of the three Rs, when engaging a borrowed culture, then; “language, space, the body, costume, and spectatorship” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 46) will resolve themselves.

I aim to address Knowles’ concern about the audience as the “problematically uncharacterised ‘target culture’”, by arguing against a notion of audience manipulation by theatre practitioners-producers (Grehan 2000: 4). The audience in my view should be allowed the respect of experiencing the performance for themselves, based on the context and presentation of the material itself. It should not be coerced into a receptive position predetermined by the practitioner-producer as was the case with Peter Brook’s version of the \textit{Mahabharata} and Tim Supple’s version of Shakespeare’s \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream}.

In Brook’s publicity leading to his version of the \textit{Mahabharata}, Carlson provides an insightful engagement into the \textit{modus operandi} of influence on the audience who came to view the production; he informs us that through extensive media coverage, Brook had prepared the audience members to “focus upon the perverse, or perhaps post-structural or late capitalistic spectacle of a theatre decorated to suggest advanced decay”. In addition to this, Carlson further establishes the fact that the advance publicity in the dynamics of the event veered towards the profile and status of Brook and Mnouchkine, with its primary focus on the magnitude of the production (Carlson 1996: 87), plagued by ongoing hoary deaths leading to an apocalyptical destructive end (Wirth 1989: 183), its sheer size, ambition, length, production title and multitude of the international cast, over the Indian text itself. All of this worked toward inducing the audiences to expect an iconical cultural event showcased by leading forerunners in Western experimentation, rather than an attempt to make contact with and explore foreign cultural material (Carlson 1996: 87) (Pfeiffer 1999). Furthermore this mode of audience manipulation by producers and artists was utilised by Tim Supple in his Indianised version of Shakespeare’s AMND, where Trivedi brings to light the fact that the production pitched in the United Kingdom was built around the hyped spectacle of the “Indian Summer of Heat and Lust”, focusing on the scale of Indian performers, numerous Indian languages, and its universally acclaimed epic-reinterpretation (overtly sexual). As Supple stated in his original take on it, love is depicted with savagery, strength and passion. Reviewers

\textsuperscript{12} Yarrow on “respect” (Yarrow 2001: 3).
in their turn sensationalised the production as a Kama Sutra version (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 57 & 63). While in India Supple professed to “speak with India for India”. Trivedi concludes by citing Supple’s eschewed high-handed methodology in “Western exoticization and expropriation” as an ongoing displaced legacy of Brook (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 72). With Lo and Gilbert’s two-way flow hybridity model working to stabilise the power relation factors sociologically, politically and economically, where does Knowles’ concern stand, positioned amidst the audience, if not for the respectful and rightful representation of producers and artists? Knowles’ claim of the “target culture” being problematic and uncharacterised therefore in this instance is not valid: the active manipulators are in fact the producers and the artists. The audience as the target culture are independent receivers and should not be characterised as being problematic; rather what becomes problematic is the deceitful intent of the producers and artists.

Against this I place TFA’s AMND, where TFA investigated their strengths and weaknesses\(^{13}\), engaging Shakespeare’s text responsibly with respect\(^{14}\) and without any notion of audience manipulation for economic gain or politicised settings addressing the intercultural aspects of audience, language, body, space, costume, race and gender as identified by Lo and Gilbert in their model (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 46-48). As founder, inspiration and late artistic director of TFA, Swamiji viewed the running of TFA from a Vedic perspective. So in addressing the issues of “egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy” (Shantanand 1982: 97), the root cause of inflaming the individual ego, attaching itself to name and fame, Swamiji set in motion certain ‘activating principles’. According to Sudhir Kakar, based on Freud’s triple substructure psychic principals, the “individual ego” is in constant state of flux between the primitive *id* and the restricting superego: this exchange then, within the consciousness of the subject, is mediated amid “inner and outer, past and present, unconscious and self-conscious, self and society, between the instinctual and the institutional in human life”.

\(^{13}\) According to Sarah Palmer’s *Dance weaves across cultures* review on 30-8-1994 in The West Australian, TFA was identified with one weakness, “the recorded dialogue, which sounded a little too mechanical and lacked expression”. Nevertheless, Palmer went on to mention that “it was necessary to keep reminding oneself” that the entire production was run by volunteers as TFA “certainly had the look of a professional production” company.

\(^{14}\) Ron Banks in his *The Bard’s fantasy crosses cultures* review on 17-8-1994 in The West Australian validates TFA, in living the ideology of being respectful, responsible; taking ownership and representing Shakespeare’s text truthfully, he writes that TFA “[i]n keeping with its Indian context, the familiar characters are renamed and imbued with the mythological qualities of Indian tales, while keeping to the spirit of Shakespeare’s original”.

54
Therefore, Freud’s formulation of the unconscious ego becoming aware of “its work but not of it” is significant for an understanding of the interplay between Western psychological theories and those of the Vedic sciences. According to the latter, explained by Kakar, in line with Erikson’s formulation, the Self is preconscious, becoming aware of the “I” as it reflects upon it and other selves (body, personality and social roles), making up the composite self or the whole self (Erikson 1971: 220-224). This then leaves the “I” with a metapsychological rationale rather than a psychological one, and according to Vedic science the “I” is pure consciousness (atman) whose counter player is Brahman (Kakar 1981: 19). This observation is similar to that of Haney in distinguishing and identifying Eastern and Western thought between consciousness and mind. Thus, as a sanyasa-yogi\(^{15}\) being aware of the difference between the metapsychological and the psychological, the consciousness and mind, between the “I” and the it, Swamiji introduced the ‘activating principles’ of anonymity in TFA productions; the identity of the performers and crew is not revealed in program brochures\(^{16}\), invitations or tickets to the productions carry no price tag and all work is rendered on a voluntary basis, to combat and eradicate the “other selves-body, personality and social roles” (egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy) eventually directing the “I” (atman) to realise its counterpart; Brahman.

Hence, by filtering theatre practice through Vedic science, the “I” is addressed, and when the “I” is addressed, the “other selves” are addressed, and in directing the atman (pure consciousness) towards Brahman as suggested by Malekin\(^{17}\) et al, the politics of interculturalism would eventually be diffused (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 165) (Madhavan 2010: 37). The diffusing of the politics of interculturalism is wholly based on whether the activating principles are practised according to Swami Sivananda’s suggested “Spiritual Ladder”. As Kakar explains; it constitutes the ethical preparation of the individual in developing the state of higher consciousness by practising “nonviolence,

\(^{15}\) A yoga practitioner; practising the ancient science of uniting the self with Brahman “the ancient science of meditation on God” (Yogananda 1993: 3). According to Swami Yogananda, a sanyasa seeks god principally through spiritual activities, while the yogi seeks god through meditation, both seekers cast away all worldly desires. A devotee who seeks god simultaneously through meditation and work activity realises god quicker. In Chapter Six Verse One, the Bhagavad Gita describes a true sanyasa-yogi as “He is the true renunciant and also the true yogi who performs dutiful and spiritual actions (karyam and karma) without merit desiring their fruits-not he who performs no fire ceremony (sacrifice) nor he who abandons actions” (Yogananda 1995: 585-586).

\(^{16}\) According to V. Kanagasivam, the current president of TFAKL, who elucidates that there are no principle performers within the constructs of the organisation. In a current season, an individual may play the lead role in a production, and in the following season, that same individual would be cast as an extra in an ensemble role.

truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, cleanliness, austerity, study and so forth” toward the onward journey to realising the state of Samadhi or Brahman (Kakar 1981: 21). Hence, as a result of Swamiji’s activating principles in the practice of theatre productions at TFA, the politics of interculturalism does not arise, as there is no economic gain, name or fame assigned to the individual ego; rather the practice is directed to the collective representation in which the Indian psyche is fixed on the Universal rather than the individual (Nakamura 1964: 44).

In the context TFA’s version of AMND, according to Lo and Gilbert’s model of highlighted theatre factors, the target culture was the audience in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia, Singapore, Perth-Australia and Chennai-India. Source culture A was Shakespeare’s AMND in its original Shakespearean text and context forming filters 1 to 9. Source culture B was the transcribing of Shakespeare’s text into Romanised English, as all volunteer cast participants at that time had no training with Shakespearean text as in filters 1 and 2. Founded in 1980 by Swami Shantanand Saraswati, TFA, as indicated in the Prologue, is primarily an Indian dance institution dealing with Indian Classical dance, of Bharata Natyam, Odissi, Kathak, Kuchipudi and folk dances of Indian, Malay and Chinese origin. The productions have grown to include dance forms such as Kathakali, Mohini Attam and Manipuri. At TFA, the bodies of the dancers are grounded in Indian Classical dance forms and the language of gestures derives from the central teaching mode of dissemination based on the Indian treatise of dramaturgy, the Natyasastra. The pivotal and primary goal of Indian theatre according to TFA is not for the pursuit of external acquisition of knowledge but rather is aimed at achieving a higher state of consciousness or goal; it resides in “the attainment of an inner beatitude or bhaava18 samadhi19, that which surpasses all ephemeral experiences”20 21. It is the soul’s ongoing quest for perfection. This theme aligns itself with the transcultural form of theatre. All TFA productions carry a universal spiritual theme22. In its philosophy of learning, sharing, integrating and fusing, TFA began its intercultural experiments within

---

18 Psychological states.
19 Enlightenment.
20 TFA’s AMND His Majesty’s Theatre Perth, WA program brochure, August 1994.
21 Arya Madhavan in his book Kudiyattam Theatre and the Actor’s Consciousness mentions that it was Yarrow and Malekin who were the pioneers in researching consciousness within the constructs of theatre. This was followed by Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Demastes, Haney, McCutcheon, Nair (Restoration of Breath: Consciousness and Performance) and others from a Western Contemporary perspective, practitioners in a relatively new field since the early 1990’s, with Yarrow’s “Pashyanti” consciousness model appearing in 1986 (Madhavan 2010: 34-35). It should be noted that TFA has been engaged in the practice of higher consciousness from a Vedic perspective since its inception in 1980.
22 Interview with Ganesh Arulampalam; a former Bharata Natyam dancer, he is currently the theory teacher on the Natyasastra at TFA Perth.
the context of the intracultural in Malaysia by embarking on a production of the famed Chinese ballet, *Lady White Snake*, combining Indian and Chinese movements. This was followed by a production of the Malay legend, *Mahsuri*, using a combination of Malay and Indian theatrical concepts, and finally the legendary epic production of the *Ramayana* in an Asian Cultural Confluence with thirty one scenes, combining dance styles derived from *Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Odissi, Mohini Attam*, Indian Folk, Indian Contemporary, Siamese, Balinese, Classical Malay, Malay *Zapin*, Malay Folk and Western Contemporary. Imbibing extracultural theatre forms, TFA then moved on to East-West intercultural theatre experiments in its production of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* in 1985, Tchaikovsky’s famed *Swan Lake* in 1987 and in 1994, embarked on Shakespeare’s AMND touring Malaysia, Singapore, Perth and India.

Filters 3 through 9 carried the remodelling of the Shakespeare’ AMND within TFA’s strengths and weaknesses. With a cast of one hundred and twenty international dancers from Malaysia, Singapore, Perth and India TFA centres, the production blends an interweaving of Indian and Western dance techniques interpreted in a Western storyline. Set against the backdrop of the Indian state, Rajasthan, the dance drama weaves itself through the region’s princely heritage of the Rajput Maharajahs era, representing such historical and geographic locales as forts, palaces, forests and desert plains. There are four main threads to the plot: the wedding preparation of Dharmendra-Theseus and Jeya Bharani-Hippolyta; the love tale between the Surej-Lysander and Chandini-Hermia and of Prabha-Demetrius and Nishi-Helena; the rustics or villagers in their play preparation; and the quarrel in the celestial abode between Ananga-Oberon and Bhogawathi-Titania. The four main threads of the story are propelled by Universal love, the spiritual theme woven and fused in TFA’s AMND, where the universal powers of higher consciousness are seen shaping and moulding the destinies of the mortals. Shakespeare’s AMND at TFA was Indianised to draw on the strengths of the institution. The institution decided on experimenting with

---

25 Article by R. Kesava Mallia, Singapore.
28 TFA’s AMND character and play analysis is elaborated in Chapter Four.
contemporary dance forms: for clear lines, *Bharata Natyam*; for strong expression and powerful movements, *Kathakali*; for subtle nuances, *Kathak*; for depicting innocence, soft and gentle movements, *Odissi* and *Manipuri* dance styles were used. Western dance styles were mainly used in choreographing the celestial dances and, with the most vigorous and challenging dance ever attempted by TFA for AMND, the Journey dance, incorporated in the production as a Summer Festival celebration. The Journey and Celestial dance choreography used a combination of all the Indian dance styles mentioned together with Classical ballet, Modern and Contemporary dance, Jazz, Waltz, Flamenco and Irish River Dance. The music utilised in the production was a blend between Indian and Western classical and semi-classical compositions. TFA began experimenting enthusiastically with Western dance techniques when one of TFA’s choreographers was enrolled at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts. This platform of conscientious encouragement in constantly experimenting with new styles and paradigms is one of the corner-stone methodologies in Swamiji’s practice of encouraging the next generation of student-teachers.

Against the politicised aspects of Interculturalism, having addressed the audience as target culture, as discussed earlier, the following segment will be confined to the constructs of language, space, and the body (race and gender) applying the remedy of higher consciousness within the constructs of interculturalism against Lo and Gilbert’s suggested remedy:

**Language**

In addressing the language constructs of interculturalism, it was simple at TFA; for Swamiji always adhered to a basic principle of not depriving anyone of viewing a TFA production. TFA could easily have rendered the production in Tamil, the predominant language spoken by the Indian community in Malaysia, but Swamiji did not want to make TFA productions exclusively for Indian viewing. TFA productions which are a

---

32 Article by R. Kesava Mallia, Singapore.
33 Article by Rupa Damodaran, Kuala Lumpur.
35 Article by Rupa Damodaran, Kuala Lumpur.
love offering\textsuperscript{36} according to Swamiji must be made available to one and all. According to Swamiji anyone from any culture, any religion, any philosophical background, regardless of affordability from anywhere in the world is welcome to request an invitation and view the productions; and that is why Swamiji chose the universally accepted lingua franca of English. This was done for practical reasons and not for some politicised notion of an ‘insidious violent form of linguistic imposition on non-Western people’, in devaluing their cultural language as suggested by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1995: 283) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 46). Imagine having to perform AMND in Malay, Tamil and English in Malaysia, Singapore, India and Perth, Australia. The constructs of interculturalism applied to TFA’s AMND would then be farcical as evident in the spectacle of Supple’s production of AMND in eight Indian languages where the audience grew tired of missing the sense of the play and wholly relied on the physicality of the production for its meaning. According to Trivedi among all the interviews in India only Jacob Cherian stood out as being tough as he inquired,

Why did you do it in so many languages … almost gimmicky … you did not do justice to any one part of the audience, even if the audience spoke two and half of the languages?.

Trivedi explains further that the performers were consciously allowed to speak in their native tongues so as not to mock the English accents, and astonishingly the multilingualism was swallowed wholesale by the West (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 57-58), except for Andrew Hayden who reviewed Tim Supple as having “lost sight of the play”\textsuperscript{37} and further wrote:

Tim Supple’s multilingual Indian production of \textit{A Midsimmer Night’s Dream} turns out to be in need of some serious de-bunking … India currently has 22 official languages, text performed in 7, original fifty percent is spoken … Numerous critics in the national Press have claimed that this production makes an iron-clad case for Shakespeare’s universality. In fact it does quite the reverse; if all the most successful elements of the show are wholly extrinsic and more than half the play is missing-in what way is Shakespeare’s universality being asserted?” (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 59)

\textsuperscript{36} As a love offering, TFA productions are equated to a “yagna” (a religious ritual performance offering), sharing the opinion of Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s description of Vedic practices in the constructs of the \textit{Natyasastra} (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 160 & 194). The practice of “yagna” will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Space

The meeting of different cultures in theatre spatial semantics whether physical (actual theatre venue) or imaginative (mise-en-scene representation), according to Lo and Gilbert demands analysis, where the authors argue that:

Space is neither neutral nor homogenous; it inevitably colors those relationships within its limits, especially on stage where configurations of space take on symbolic meaning. (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47)

In addressing the concerns of Lo and Gilbert, as mentioned above TFA interrogated its strengths and weaknesses, and drew upon its strength, in this case, the Indianised theme of Shakespeare’s AMND. Drawing upon its Indian cultural heritage TFA set its mise-en-scene in the Rajput era in the Princely state of Rajasthan. TFA’s Rajasthan Rajput era backdrops were painted voluntarily by Krishnamoorthy Mama, a seventy five year old devotee of Swamiji from India, while the life-like camel, elephant and horses were carved out of styrofoam by Rajamanikam, another devotee of Swamiji from India. The performance spaces were actual theatre spaces; PJ Civic Centre in Kuala Lumpur-Malaysia, Victoria Theatre in Singapore, His Majesty’s Theatre in Perth-Australia, and Kamaraj Auditorium in Chennai-India. Why mention Krishnamoorthy Mama and Rajamanikam? Their labour of love for Swamiji became a love offering to the “yagna” of the production, invoking a higher consciousness in theatre within the practice of the Vedic sciences, as the “space” then becomes sacred; a hallowed ground in offering the production as prayer to the Vedic gods as explained by Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Yarrow in the practice of the Natyasastra (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 163) (Yarrow 2001: 115).

According to Lo and Gilbert, rather than being solely classified as ontological, this spatial offering to the Vedic Gods as postulated by Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Yarrow, culminates in the postcolonial theory of intercultural spatial analysis of cultural power structure construction of spatial history, cartography and geography. This then brings to attention the disjunctive gaps between actual physical space and its “fictional referent”, creating an open and fertile mode of representation which in turn acquires resistance against “imperialist forms of closure” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47).

38 Meaning Uncle. In Indian culture, all older individuals and siblings are addressed as Unna (Elder Brother), Akka (Elder Sister), Mama (Uncle), Mami (Auntie) and so on.
39 He was seventy five in 1994. Krishnamoorthy Mama is still alive and well.
40 In India, only with Swamiji’s grace, TFA was sanctioned by the various authorities to utilise live horses and an elephant. As the production in India was staged only in Chennai, due to time line constraints, TFA was unable to procure a live camel.
Body (race and gender)

According to Lo and Gilbert, rather than producing a totalised identity, the intercultural body is subjected to layers of inscriptions, and is prone to unstable signifiers with converging and contesting discourses, even though inscribed with distinctive cultural codes from a particular culture. These inscriptions are even more visibly prominent in race and gender foregrounding problems of essentialist constructs while trying to account for the “irreducible specificity” of particular bodies and its body behaviour (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47). As in Supple’s production of AMND, Trivedi is of the opinion that underpinning his production flowed a strong, invidious, subtly racial under-current, colouring the bodies according to class hierarchy identifiable in Indian society. In the publicity brochure, Titania was embleatised as a “dark voodoo doll” confirming the spectacle of exoticism and racialised imaging of “Othellophilia”. Thus, Trivedi argues that this imaging promotes:

[...] the raced body to provoke the very stereotyped response that radical art is meant to counteract. The conscious and exploitative use of dark skin colour and its mysterious, sexy semiotics to sell is an old Western capitalistic and orientalist ploy. (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 65)

The layered inscriptions of converging and contesting cultural codes as argued by Lo and Gilbert are further presented by Trivedi in establishing that Supple capitalised by overtly sexualising the production with exhibitionist references to the Kama Sutra in the West, admitting in an interview that he found it immensely difficult to locate Indian women performers “who were capable and willing to perform this kind of ‘in your face’ sexuality”, thus labelling the Indian as continuing to exist as the ‘ precolonial body’-savage, unreconstituted, and of unbridled sexuality” within the constructs of Western imagery (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 63-64). Without any overtly sexual “orgasmic intensity” (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 70), TFA in its production of Sakuntala too engaged in a scene of seduction incorporating the visual display of the Kama Sutra love acts, but with tasteful respect in handling the narrative as a dance sequence within the activating principles implemented by Swamiji. Other than from an artistically bankrupt point of departure (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 39) as a ploy for economic gain (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 65), Supple’s overtly sexual *modus operandi* has no grounds: as Andrew
Hayden states, “the most successful elements of [Supple’s] show were wholly extrinsic” (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 59).

Analysing the difference between the physical body and the creative material that is actually presented, paying close attention to the body’s movements and appearance, Pavis identifies that “actors simultaneously reveal the culture of the community where they have trained and where they live, and the bodily technique they have acquired” (Pavis 1996: 3). This is the case in TFA, where the bodies of the core performers of the international cast are primarily grounded in the practice of Indian classical dance forms and the language of gestures aligned with the constructs of the *Natyasastra*, augmented with the exposure to other cultural forms of practice including Western forms, make the bodies readily adaptable to multiple forms of engagement. TFA’s intent in cross-intercultural experiments is never to homogenise, but rather to celebrate the diversity of the borrowed culture; as such the institution’s higher consciousness (*bhava samadhi*) practice resists the distilling and stripping of readable signs of the borrowed culture (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47). When engaging with the culture of the “Other” TFA’s primary principle of contact, is respect for and ownership of (responsibility) its representation (Grehan 2000: 4) and in doing so, TFA germinates engagement in the audience to analyse the tension between the participating cultures as suggested by Lo and Gilbert (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47). As such Lo and Gilbert further suggest that compared to working from the principle of abstraction, intercultural practice acquainted with postcolonial theory will bring to the surface cultural differences without denying the outcome of economical politics. For the authors are of the opinion that the counter-energies in the hybrid process will result in contestation between the culturally inscribed body and its symbolic space producing, as Young suggests “a radically heterogeneity, discontinuity, [and] the perpetual revolution of form” (Young 1995: 25) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 48), as inscribed by the cultural bodies at TFA.

The vast majority of cast members from TFA Malaysia, Singapore, India and Australia are Indians. Given the effects of Globalisation (Western popular culture) as argued by Latrell (Latrell 2000: 44), Westernisation becomes part of their cultural upbringing as well, and as such, in addressing the politics of interculturalism, Lo and Gilbert’s organic and intentional postcolonial theory formulates an ideal point of departure for TFA productions. TFA dancers as postcolonial hybrids have the edge in ferrying between cultures mastering “their hybrid forms” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45) because of their
exposure to multiple performing art forms. These in turn make intercultural theatre practice functional through the lenses of postcolonial theory aligned but not replicating Gomez-Pena’s “border arts” where performers “trespass, bridge, interconnect, reinterpret, remap, and redefine” the boundaries of cultures (Gómez-Peña 1996: 12). Furthermore, Lo and Gilbert are of the opinion that postcolonial hybridity suggested by Homi Bhabha located in an agonistic relationship offers a practical model in engaging cross-cultural ethics and aesthetics as compared to a seamless fusion:

Hybrid hyphenations emphasise the incommensurable elements […] as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulating and negotiating of those spaces that are continually, contingently, “opening out,” remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender, or race. Such assignations of social differences—where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between—find their agency in […] an interstitial future, that emerges in between the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (Bhabha 2004: 313) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49)

Thus, based on “an interstitial future”, learning from the past in addressing the needs of the future, TFA as an Indian Hindu performing arts institution, transported Shakespeare’s Western theme to the backdrop of Vedic philosophy. Setting the stage in Rajasthan, addressing the aspects of language, space, body, race, gender, costume and audience engaging the production at the levels of postcolonial hybridity posed by Lo and Gilbert and higher consciousness as practised by TFA and postulated by Yarrow, Malekin, Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Haney, Nair and Madhavan, TFA neutralised notions of power relations within space, cultural collaboration, architecture, ideology, scenography, and cultural travesty (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 47). The practice of Swamiji’s ideal of performer anonymity and zero economic gain functioned to realise his activating principles.

Hence, in perceiving the immense complexities of interculturalism, one would at least come to a platform of understanding that some kind of workable arrangement should have been conceived, developed and adhered to resulting from the fiery debates during and after the “Intercultural Wars”, but what is prevalent, argues Trivedi, is that the West with the pretext of resonating a note of illumined exchange, professing to represent and speak for (not “with” as stated by Supple (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 60)) contemporary India (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 57), yet again follows through with Supple’s
appropriation of India perpetuating the lineage of Brook in its dynamic form of appropriation (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 72).

Although intercultural theorists argue that prevailing post-colonial theories are present to sustain a well negotiated dialogue between the West and the Other (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49), I believe that in this *Kali Yuga*-Iron age of globalisation propelled by economic gain, a sustained platform of dialogue will ‘never’ materialise as argued by Carlson, where “[t]he quest for such a truly intercultural theatre may be an impossible one” (Carlson 1996: 90). This is demonstrated by Supple’s recent appropriation of India for his version of AMND. This state of constant appropriation and re-appropriation, I believe, supported by Knowles, is monopolised, dominated and governed by the materialistic, marginalised and colonised differences between the West and the Others; the lack of access to funding and resources preventing new crucial intercultural theatre works from taking its place on the “main stages of world cities” (Carlson 1996: 90) (Knowles 2010: 80). Knowles further moves to explain that this domination not only governs the economic channels but also privileges the West’s dominance on theoretical frameworks governing intercultural practices extending to “scholarly texts, their distribution and use in classroom, rehearsal halls, and elsewhere” (Knowles 2010: 80).

Running counter to this prevailing view, Roger Long, an expert in Asian theatre (Carlson 1996: 83), concludes that *The Uncle Vanya Show* a collaborative work between New York’s Irondonale and Leningrad’s St Petersburg Theatre Salon was considerably closer to an intercultural production than the work of Brook’s version of the *Mahabharata* and Mnouchkine’s *L’Indiade* (Carlson 1996: 90).

Returning to my earlier discussion, I therefore earnestly believe that all theatre practitioners, producers, critics and spectators alike should first and foremost practise respect for the borrowed culture rather than fetishising its authenticity as argued by Lo and Gilbert, Grehan and Knowles (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 46) (Grehan 2000: 4) (Knowles 2010: 42). If theatre practitioners have these three ‘Rs’ instilled into them, then the outcome of the production should be left to the audience to determine. Look into the ‘intent’ of production and process, which is representation, responsibility and respect, rather than raping, pillaging and plundering (Williams 1991: 24) (Brown 1998: 14) (Knowles 2010: 2), and all else will fall into place respectfully. As Lo and Gilbert emphasise, it is crucial that:
[...] intercultural theatre’s potential to cross cultures is not co-opted and neutralized by the “weaker” forms of postmodernism, which tend to result in an abstract, depoliticized, and ahistorical notion of “difference,” or, in effect, a masked “indifference.” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49)

In my opinion, then, until the platform of an understanding heart as suggested by Swamiji or higher consciousness as argued by Malekin et al, becomes a reality, the only viable solution, would be the active participation of governmental policies strictly governing the (mis)usage of indigenous performing arts culture as outlined in the policies set forth by the Australia Council. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board (Australia Council. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board. 2008: 53-57) and/or, as Knowles postulates, until a time when a shift in the power structures takes place, through diasporic migrants and Indigenous individuals gaining more control over funding, spaces and production processes. Only then, Knowles believes, can there be a rich, fertile and evolving ecology of intercultural productions and in the hope that the emerging critical discourses may produce “a body of work that might, in the words of Montreal’s intercultural Teesri Duniya Theatre ‘change the world, one play at a time’” (Knowles 2010: 80).

As previously stated at the beginning of this Chapter, I have directed the thesis through the micro aspects of Higher Consciousness in engaging the macro aspect of Interculturalism, with the aim of creating a framing of practical consensus and possible remedy to the practice of theatre without the engagement of intercultural wars. With this in mind the next section, explores the reinvention of TFA’s AMND in the light of the macro aspects of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. This is done by viewing the production through the micro aspect (filter) of the Indian Sublime, using it as a cultural and structural adhesive in engaging the sublime levels of my reading of TFA’s AMND. The thesis will in turn provide a platform of understanding derived from the perspective of Vedic Philosophy.
New Historicism and Cultural Materialism look into the interpretation of socio-economic-cultural-historical issues against the historical developments relating to the literary canon, in this case Shakespeare’s literature (Hopkins 2005: 63-64). Both ideologies enforce the notion that the author and the work are influenced by the historical and political backdrop at the time of its emergence. New Historicism leans towards containment while Cultural Materialism veers towards subversive elements (Hopkins 2005: 89).

In line with the notion that the historical and political backdrop influences the author, thereby influencing the work, I will now introduce my historical and political ideology, philosophical paradigm and worldview in interpreting Shakespeare’s AMND from a new perspective. I will also argue that although the view of Cultural Materialism is subversive in nature, the historical and political influence of the teachings at TFA, on the working platform of devotion and worship within the Hindu principle and Indian aesthetics as argued by Mishra (Mishra 1998: 4), where art is encapsulated as divine (Mishra 1998: x) extending into the realisation of Brahman (Mishra 1998: 201-202), cannot allow me to envision Shakespeare’s AMND other than with reference to its implications for and relations to Indian society, its philosophy and spirituality (Mishra 1998: 55 & 74).

As the reinvention of TFA’s AMND is centrally situated within the constructs of Vedic philosophy and is further based on the Natyasashtra’s training formulation central to the aesthetics theory of rasa41 (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 95), devotion and worship come into being. This reinvention is framed by devotion and worship and according to Vijay Mishra’s Devotional Poetics and the Indian sublime the primary function of the Indian psyche is set to the adoration of the divine. This fundamental observation of the Indian Sublime and its devotional aesthetics is exemplified on the unreadable literal translations (Mishra 1998: x) into the metanarrative subject context of the Indian in its society and the self (atman) (Mishra 1998: 55 & 74). Mishra argues that devotional theism formulates the core principle of Hinduism with its working definition of puja

---

41 Based on Indian aesthetics, rasa is the psychological sentiment that an actor uses to stir the aesthetic experience in the spectator. In the context of aesthetics, rasa is interpreted as sentiment (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 103). Although its origin is related to the context of drama from Bharata’s Natyasashtra it is more commonly associated with poetry (Rangacharya 1998: 75). A brief description of rasa is given in Chapter Five.
(worship) and bhakti (devotion). Its discussion and development will present us with essential narratives and thoughts with which to consider queries on Indian aesthetics, explored further in Chapter Five. According to Mishra, devotional verses, epic narratives and the theory of rasa (sentiment) from drama formulate the history of Indian literary (Mishra 1998: 4). Thus, in expanding this formulation of practice where the idea of self-extinction (realisation) is extended from nirguna bhakti to the establishment of becoming one with the character and extending into the concept of Nirvana-Brahman (realisation) (Mishra 1998: 201-202) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 102 & 120), and alignment is achieved similar to the state of higher consciousness (turiya) as argued by Malekin, et al, (Haney 2002: 39, 78-79) (Yarrow 2001: 120) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 22-24). This underpins the theoretical constructs of TFA’s reinvention of AMND.

Therefore, as Cultural Materialists owe their influences to a Marxist approach and New Historicists to Foucault, I owe mine to Swami Shantanand, the founder of TFA.

At TFA art is taught as the divine. The main literature used at this institution to disseminate this ideology, as indicated above, is the Natyasastra, which finds its origin in the ancient Vedic literature known as the Vedas.

The Vedas

In Indian Philosophy, all arts and sciences are related to Vedic literature (Marasinghe 1989: 3-4) and are known as revealed knowledge (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 618). This Vedic literature consisting of Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda is known as the Vedas. (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: xviii)

The Vedas are the basis of knowledge in the Natyasastra43 (Bharata 2000: 2). It is said that Brahma44 took the essence of the four Vedas and encapsulated them into a fifth Veda called the Natya Veda or commonly known as the Natyasastra. Taking speech from Rig-Veda, song from Sama-Veda, mime from Yajur-Veda and sentiments from Atharva –Veda the Indian Treatise on Dramaturgy was formulated (Bharata 2000: 2)

---

42 From the root word “vid”; meaning “to know”, the Vedas; the ancient Hindu scriptures of India “are the only text to which no author is ascribed”, assigned through divinely origin, revealed through the ages to “seers” known as rishis, “the Vedas are said to possess nityatva ‘timeless finality’” (Yogananda 1993: 86).

43 Treatise on Indian dramaturgy.

44 Hindu God of Creation (one of the Hindu trinity).
(Vatsyayan 1972: 11). Brahma then handed down the treatise to Sage Bharata for the dissemination of the Natyasastra to the mortals (Rangacharya 1998: 5).

In the Natyasastra, Bharata expresses his conception of theatre in the following verse:

\[
na \text{ tajjnanam na } taccilpam na sa vidya na sa kala \\
nasau yogo na tatkarma natye 'smin yanna drsyate
\]

This translates as:

Be it a branch of knowledge or a science, or an art or a craft, or a practice or an occupation-if it is not seen in the natya it is indeed not worthy of the name.

Thus all arts and sciences find their repose in Natya (Marasinghe 1989 : 3-4).

Zarrilli, in his article, “Where the Hand [Is]…”, quotes a famous sloka (dictum) from Nandikeshvara’s Abhinayadarpanam, it reads (Zarrilli 1987 : 206):

\[
yato hasta tato drishtir \\
yato drishtistato manah \\
yato mana tato bhavo \\
yato bhavastato rasah
\]

This translates as:

[…] where the hand goes eyes follow: where the eye goes, there the mood (bhava) follows, and where the mind goes there arises the sentiment (rasa). (Vatsyayan 1967 : 236).

To further elaborate my ideology, I am introducing a flow chart model of the working of the ideology between Swami Shantanand, TFA and the researcher.

45 A profoundly wise person.
46 Author of the Natyasastra.
Figure 4  Ideology between researcher / TFA / Swami Shantanand
The multi-dimensional genres of the physical and heavenly plane are what attracted Swami Shantanand to this play. In TFA’s interpretation of AMND, spirituality becomes the main focus and all micro aspects fall into the sub plot. A higher power comes into play by performing conjuring tricks upon the mortals, leading them through the maze of life, until the appropriate realisation of the Self-Brahman itself occurs, and, progressively, all is revealed at the end. Having gone through this maze, this forest, helter-skelter, blind and mad, that is life. And who is making us go mad? It is the same spiritual power, that clouds our vision and finally it is that very same power that unveils our eyes, removing the ignorance and making us see with clarity.

The cathartic moment that led to the inspiration for the production as indicated in the Prologue was as follows: Swamiji, in one of his visits to Perth, while in a book store, picked up a pocket abridged version of Shakespeare’s complete collection of plays and began to flip through its pages. Randomly when Swamiji stopped flipping the pages, his gaze fell upon the section presenting AMND, and specifically on the page where reference was made to an “Indian boy”. What came to Swamiji’s mind was, What is an Indian boy doing in a Shakespearean play set in Athens? Why did Shakespeare bring an Indian boy into his play? Then it came to Swamiji, perhaps Shakespeare was trying to hint at the fact that he was trying to bring Indian Hindu concepts into his play. Thus began the reinvention of Shakespeare’s AMND from the perspective of interpretation by TFA.47

D.G. Myers emphasises, using Stephen Greenblatt’s, “enabling presumptions”, that the historian or critic cannot escape his or her own historicity. Myers further goes on to emphasise that, no one can rise above their own social and ideological background in understanding the past or its conditions. A present reader can never experience a text as its generation experienced it. Therefore, at most all a current historicist approach to literature can hope to achieve, aptly put in the words of Catherine Belsey, is “to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology.” (Myers Winter 1988-89)48 (Belsey 1980: 144)

Perhaps it was Shakespeare’s way of acknowledging the source of the story that led to the creation of AMND. Perhaps, Shakespeare got wind of Indian folk stories and fables

---

47 This reinvention according to Vedanta philosophy is analysed in Chapter Four.
from the gypsies’ migration and integration from India into Europe (Zilliah) and conjured up A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and perhaps Shakespeare was unable to acknowledge his source, perhaps not wanting to be known as a conjurer of tales of spirits\(^{49}\) drawing accusations of heresy upon him. Extraordinary events, such as, the rivalry of religious leaders, political unrest, war and epidemic were associated with the migration of the gypsies and set the stage for laws to be passed against them. Anti-gypsy laws were passed in Germany in 1439, Switzerland in 1471, Spain in 1492 and further stringent measures included banishment and amputation. They were further exiled from France by Louis XII in 1504, in England by 1530, which included fines on anyone who was responsible for associating with Gypsies; soon thereafter, Scotland followed suit in 1541. (Crowe 2007: 11, 31-32, 71-72 & 151-152) (Fraser 1995: 51, 68) (Marushiakova and Popov 2001: 12, 14, 19, 26-34 & 45) (Singhal 1982: 36 & 37).

Perhaps, Shakespeare could not have written about the inspiration coming from Hindu philosophy, as the historical, religious and political governance at that period did not allow for the freedom of creative expression. The time of the late Renaissance gave birth to the repression of creative thinking and divine inspiration: among such great thinkers was Bruno, Newton, Galileo and Shakespeare himself. The Christian Church held orthodox viewpoints against reincarnation, fate, spiritual experience, and mastery of the human state. Any other viewpoint other than salvation by the Church would draw down severe repercussions. Let us examine some of chronological events that took place during this dark period of Europe. Both Shakespeare and Galileo were born in 1564, Galileo was imprisoned for heresy. When Shakespeare was in his prime, Giordano Bruno who travelled and taught in England was burnt at the stake for heresy. Cervantes was imprisoned by the Church, the same year Shakespeare died, 1616. During the era of Protestant dominance, Oliver Cromwell, in 1642 silenced all theatres

---

\(^{49}\) Perhaps, the accusation of heresy could have come about as a result of Shakespeare’s characters in his plays. Most notably, Prospero, the Conjuror in Shakespeare’s The Tempest, where he is characterised as a magician-conjuror in exile on an Island. Greenblatt describes Prospero as a character with “godlike powers” (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 3050). Prospero’s “potent art” (5.1.50), according to Greenblatt, renders him the power over Caliban (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 3049), “a savage and deformed native” of the Island, and Ariel, Prospero’s “airy spirit” attendant (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 3055). Prospero states, “I have bedimmed / The noontide sun […] at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let’em forth / By my so potent art” (5.1.41-50). This very declaration his art, identified as “rough magic” (5.1.50), finds its extension in the black arts of “Necromancy”, the art of “communing with the spirits of the dead” (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 3048), thereby formulating the possibility of heresy during the Dark Ages of creative thinking. According to B.J and Mary Sokol, in England during the middle ages, the acts of heresy and witchcraft were punishable by “being burned alive at the stake”. Similar heretical accusations and sentences were dealt out to Catholics and Protestants during the religious conflicts of “the early and mid sixteenth century” (Sokol, Sokol et al. 2004: 131).
in England; that same year Galileo died. During his natural life, the Church of England accused Shakespeare of being a Roman Catholic – considered a capital offence in his era (Titchenell 2007).

Whether through the association of the gypsies, or divine interventions or through the socio-economic-political-historical setting of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, or perhaps not wanting to forgo a good story, or perhaps not even wanting to be associated with the accusations of heresy, we may never know. Shakespeare set his *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Athens, Greece. It was a much more accessible location as Greek myths and legends are associated with the Gods and Demi-Gods interacting with the Greek mortals. In his book, *India: What it can teach us?* Max Muller validates these similarities of the Indian pantheon with the Greek pantheon through the transfer of culture from India to Greece (Muller 2000: 157-180). These similarities could have been passed on by Alexander the Great’s yogi teacher Swami Sphines known as Kalyana by his contemporaries and Kalanos by the Greeks as recorded by the geographers Arrian, Q. Curtius, Diodorus, Plutarch and Justin as argued by J. W. McCrindle (McCrindle 1896: 351) (Yogananda 1993: 448), during Alexander’s expedition to India. Perhaps, Shakespeare was using the Greek philosophy as a vehicle to bring about these concepts of a higher power, working behind the scenes, guiding us until all is resolved.

According to D. G. Myers, the traditional approach of Historicism was to recover the original meaning of the literature but on the premise of New Historicism, that approach is impossible and naïve in its attempt. On the other hand, the new practitioners are more concerned with the recovery of the “original ideology”, which was used to create the text. What comes first for New Historicist, argues D.G. Myers, is ideology and not history. The reliance upon this premise brings us to a principle question: How would a critic know that the original ideology in the literature actually belongs in the time of its creation? How can the critic be sure that the original ideology is not just his own political empathy, cleverly placed as evidence in the play? In answering this question D. G. Myers quotes Jean E. Howard:

---


51 State of *turiya* (higher consciousness) as argued by Malekin, et al.
"The whole point" of the New Historicist enterprise, Jean E. Howard says, "is to
grasp the terms of the discourse which made it possible [for contemporaries] to see
the 'facts' [of their own time] in a particular way—indeed, made it possible to see
certain phenomena as facts at all." (Myers Winter 1988-89) (McDonald 2004: 466)

This establishes the central ideology of spirituality underpinning the reconstruction of
TFA’s AMND aligned to Vedic philosophy.

The play of subversiveness is also apparent in TFA’s AMND but the ideology of
Cultural Materialism in subversion is played as a sub-plot, while emphasising
spirituality (higher consciousness) as the central tenet of the play.

In the opinion of Heywood, life in general is a play of politics and power (Heywood
1992: 1-8); as in the play by Shakespeare from its time (Hopkins 2005: 63-110), so too
in the interpretation of TFA’s AMND. Between Theseus and Hippolyta, there is already
a political and sexual interplay, Theseus having politically conquered Hippolyta and at
the same time wanting to marry her and thereby conquer her sexually. The interplay of
power and politics flows on to all in the play: the father and daughter power play
between Egeus and Hermia, the father and prospective son in-law (Demetrius) relation
and the riches in dowry coming into the family with the union and the sexual power
play between the couples. Of course Oberon and Titania are not excluded for they too
are clouded in mind; in their sexual power play and the power play for the boy between
them.

![Figure 5 The Triadic Model of Freedom by Ball and Dagger](image-url)
Ball and Dagger argue that all ideology recognises three fundamental aspects, which are; the agent, the goal and the obstacle. The authors further give examples that persons from different ideological backgrounds view the Triadic model differently (Ball and Dagger 1999: 1-2). Thus in using the Ideology of Vedic science of higher consciousness within the constructs of *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* in relation to the *Natyasastra*, I have reconstructed Ball and Dagger’s Triadic Model into a vertical outline to explain this sub plot/subversive ploy in the ideology of TFA’s AMND.

![Figure 6 TFA’s AMND Main and sub-plot Ideology](image)

The individual, clouded by ignorance, caught up in the web of subversive power (depicted by the obstacle)\(^{52}\) runs helter-skelter back and forth, until divine intervention

\(^{52}\) As explained above by Malekin, et al, through the lens of Vedanta Philosophy (Vedic science); the individual formulates the obstacle denoting the ignorance (*avidya*) of *purusha* (pure consciousness) *atman-Brahman* and is represented by *prakriti* (nature or matter); comprising of “intellect, ego, mind,
comes into play at the appropriate time (depicted by Midsummer/Aadi Masam)\textsuperscript{53}. By
divine intervention (fairies), spirituality (pure consciousness) comes in and intervenes
and clarifies the thinking\textsuperscript{54}, overcoming and resolving all conflicts and advancing to
clarity of thought (depicted by Spirituality-Realising the Self-Brahman-Absolute Spirit-
Atman/Soul/Purusha). And in resolve, all’s well that ends well.

The great Indologist, Max Muller too understood the wisdom of the Vedas and in doing
so, he exclaimed:

\begin{quote}
We shall have to return to this subject again, for this knowledge of the self is really
the Vedanta, that is, the end, the highest goal of the Veda. The highest wisdom of
Greece ‘was to know ourselves;’ the highest wisdom of India is ‘to know our Self.
(Muller 2000: 95)
\end{quote}

Conclusion

As seen from TFA’s viewpoint, Shakespeare’s AMND reveals more than meets the eye;
rather than subversiveness and containment, a divine play is rendered by the bard. When
Swamiji mentioned that Shakespeare was an inspired poet, he was talking about
Shakespeare being inspired by divinity. His works would not have survived through
many centuries with worldwide recognition, if not for that kind of inspiration; the
inspiration of knowing the self. In making a comparison between Indian Sanskrit
literature and Greek literature, Max Muller, makes this statement:

\begin{quote}
I shall not attempt to prove that Sanskrit literature is as good as Greek literature.
Why should we always compare? A study of Greek literature has its own purpose,
and a study of Sanskrit literature has its own purpose; but what I feel convinced of,
and hope to convince you of, is that Sanskrit literature, if studied only in a right
spirit, is full of human interests, full of lessons which even Greek could never teach
us […] (Muller 2000: 5)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Aadi Masam} also known as Midsummer in the Indian calendar. It denotes the time where the window
opens between the astral and causal planes, creating a high traffic of interaction between spirits and
mortals.

\textsuperscript{54} This is the shift of perception that occurs within the lovers in AMND, with the aid of the fairies, the
modified experiences of their individual’s time and space occurs, thereby altering and directing their
consciousness to the state of \textit{turiya} (pure consciousness), creating clarity of thought and resolving
when the lovers give up the state of “possessiveness” (the possessor) in wanting to possess, then the state
In this respect, Pierre Macherey validates the literary reinterpretation of TFA’s AMND based on works as seen anew:

In fact, a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said; analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object – not that compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery, but that condition which makes the work possible, which precedes the work so absolutely that it cannot be found in the work. (Macherey 2006: 168)

Until now.
Due to the time lapse from 1994 till present, AMND Chennai Program Brochure is not available.
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE’S

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM

6 TO 9 AUGUST 1994
THE VICTORIA THEATRE

Kala Mandhir

Figure 8 AMND Program Brochure Singapore
THE TEMPLE OF FINE ARTS

presents...

a midsummer night's dream

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE

Figure 9 AMND Program Brochure Perth
Chapter 3 - The Temple Of Fine Arts

The artist’s life is a horrible one, you know. Where there is an institution, money is required. But money doesn’t come easily to the artist, unless and until he reconciles himself to public whims and fancies. Somewhere, the connection between the two parties (i.e. the public and the artist) clicks, everybody applauds, and a Ravi Shanker is born. – Swami Shantanand (Jit 1988: 63-64)

An artist puts his heart and soul, his day and night, into his art. You can’t just come to him and say-“How much?” This is the tragedy of the modern world. But it doesn’t mean money is not important. There is a Hindu saying that goes: ‘make money your servant and it will be a wonderful servant. Make money your mistress, and she will suck your blood and finish you off’. – Swami Shantanand (Jit 1988: 64)

The man that hath no music in himself, Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, Is fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night, And his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted. – Shakespeare (The Merchant of Venice, 5.1.82-87) (Sivananda 1956: 23-24) (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 1140)

Introduction

This Chapter will introduce the philosophy and history of the Temple of Fine Arts International. It is aimed at mapping the Vedic reasoning underpinning the founding of the institution.

As TFA is founded on dual principles both secular and transcendental, I will begin with the secular reasoning of the philosophical and historical founding of the institution. I will then move into the Vedic science of “Yagna” (sacrifice), to establish the parallel significance of the Natyasastra’s emergence with the founding of the Temple of Fine Arts, leading into the significance of Shiva Family and the sister organisations of the institution, underpinning the institution’s activities in relation to Vedic rituals and practices. In conclusion I aim to validate that the Temple of Fine Arts operates at a dual function capacity; while providing a platform for the dissemination of the performing arts, the institution’s primary purpose is to function as a modern day Vedic scientific mechanism to aid individuals to regain their state of enlightenment, parallel to the formation reasoning of the Natyasastra.
In the practice of Vedanta, according to Swamiji, merely being present in the midst of a god-realised Yogi or Swami, becomes a blessing. Constant exposure to that elevated enlightened orbit causes the individual, devotee or spectator to be transported to a higher level of consciousness, thus beginning the evolving journey of the soul to attaining Self-Realisation. According to Swamiji the effect on the devotee, individual or spectator carries a two-fold meaning as explained by Meyer-Dinkgrafe in emitting similar effects to those of the actor-audience relations within the practice of the Vedic constructs in the Natyasastra. Meyer-Dinkgrafe explains that “The nature of the aesthetics experience, rasa, is thus the experience of pure consciousness together with performance-specific theatrical contents of the mind”. And secondly,

Through repeated exposure to the experience of pure consciousness, brought about by the author’s art, the spectator’s consciousness is trained to uphold pure consciousness for longer periods of time, ultimately indefinite, not only in subsequent theatrical performances but also in daily life outside the theatre. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 120).

Elaborating further upon the aesthetic experience of rasa in relation to the state of pure or higher consciousness, Kakar is of the opinion that the counterpart of rasa is moksha (liberation-enlightenment). Kakar sustains his counterpart hypothesis on a three fold platform by arguing that firstly, rasa is responsible for the creation of the eight sentiments, “love, laughter, sorrow, anger, high spirits, fear, disgust and astonishment”; secondly, it necessitates the evocation of identical emotional states in the “spectator, listener or reader”. Thirdly, rasa summons the absolute reciprocated absorption of the performer and the spectator in the created emotional state (Kakar 1981: 30). Thus, according to Kakar:

Rasa in art, as pratyahara\(^1\) [gathering toward] in yoga, is a sojourn in the inner world, an exploration of the unconscious; it is the aesthetic mode of transcendence-of

\(^1\) Kakar observes that at the heart of the Indian imagery lies a cluster of coherent governing ideas establishing the existence of human goals and ways of achieving them, avoiding erroneous paths, and overcoming obstacles along the path in achieving these human goals. These goals, values and beliefs give everyday life its “form and meaning”. Hence, its imagery is innately ingrained within its society superimposing it upon the outer world and through inner experiences, aiding the individual in making “sense of their own lives” (Kakar 1981: 15). The human goals are dharma (right action), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (liberation) (Defouw and Svoboda 2003: 116-119). These human goals according to Kakar are percolated through the stages of life, brahmacharya (apprenticeship), garhasthya (householder), vanaprastha (withdrawal) and sannyasa (renunciation) (Kakar 1981:43). Each stage has its life task, and is dependent on the individual’s dharma (right action), desa (lived culture), kala (existence within a time period), srama (personal effort required in each stage of life), and gunas (satva, rajas and tamas-psychobiological traits) (Kakar 1981: 36-37). Kakar elaborates that posited by Hindu culture, the ultimate aim in life is moksha; liberation or Self-realisation (Kakar 1981: 16), and to achieve this goal in
quieting the turmoil of chitta² and bringing it nearer to its perfect state of pure calm³.
(Kakar 1981: 31)

As such, artistic creation as explained by Kakar is “traditionally viewed as a product of the artist’s sadhana⁴ [practice], similar to the yogi’s meditation” (Kakar 1981: 31), hence the reasoning of Swamiji’s vision on artist integrity⁵ in the founding of TFA.

The Temple of Fine Arts

Receiving his initial tutelage from spiritual giants such as “[Swami] Gnanananda Giri, […] of South India, [and Swami] Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai” (Shantanand 1980: i), Swamiji was nurtured to be received by the legendary Swami Sivananda (Willford 2007: 169) in formalising his training into the order of Sannyasa⁶ (renunciation) (Shantanand 1980: i). Thus his journey began, as he “left his hermitage in the Himalayas” (Shiva_Family_Kuala_Lumpur 1994: 10).

To people of different layers of understanding he speaks at their appropriate levels. The philosophers he addresses in metaphysical style; the intellectuals […], he satisfies by ascending to their intellectual heights […]; to the modern rational-minded youth he provides answers supported by scientific explanations; to those the final stage of life (sannyasa), the Hindu technique of Raja Yoga is utilised. In Kakar’s psycho-analysis of Raja Yoga, he has divided the eight limbs of Raja Yoga (yama-moral injunctions, niyama-observances, asana- postures, pranayama- breath regulation, pratyahara- stilling the mind by sense withdrawal, dharana-concentration, dhyana-meditation and samadhi-superconsciousness) (Lidell, Rabinovitch, et al: 1983: 19) into three phases; preparation (ethical-yama and niyama and physiological-asana and pranayama), integration (pratyahara-the transformation of chitta) and meditation (samayama-dharana, dhyana and samadhi) (Kakar 1981: 21). According to Kakar the action proper of Yoga begins in phase two (intergration-pratyahara) (Kakar 1981: 22), at this stage Kakar stresses the need for a guru in guiding the individual through the calming of chitta, in the gradual merging of the ego and id. The presence of the guru is necessitated by the “danger of psychotic breakdown”. In contrast to the applied Western methodologies of cautioning and supporting the patient through conversation, the guru’s guidance is rendered through chitta; the language of “look, touch and silence” (Kakar 1981: 25). It is in this process of transformation that the individual moves on to phase three; meditation, in achieving the final goal of moksha. The techniques of dharana and dhyana are incorporated in the acting systems of Stanislavski and Meyerhold as elaborated in Chapter Five. This process of achieving the state of turiya (superconsciousness) is the goal of Malekin, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgraf’s theatre research.

² According to Kakar, chitta is identified as being similar to the state of id in the model of psycho-analysis. From a dynamic perspective, the Hindu texts characterises chitta as “all unconscious mental processes”, and can be similarly evoked under the imagery of Freud’s description of id as “a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations” (Kakar 1981: 22).
³ Pure calm is the state of pure consciousness or higher consciousness as postulated by Swamiji, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Malekin, et al.
⁴ In the Bhagavad Gita as explained by Swami Yogananda sadhana carries the meaning of “the path of spiritual discipline and yoga technique of meditation” (Yogananda 1995: 292).
⁵ Explained in the elucidation of the TFA Story between Swamiji and Krishen Jit.
⁶ In verse seventy one of the Bhagavad Gita, a sannyasa is described as “That person realizes peace who, relinquishing all desires, exists without craving and is unidentified with the mortal ego and its sense of “mine-ness” (Yogananda 1995: 321).
critical of religious rites and ceremonies he gives the esoteric meanings of rituals; while speaking to children he comes down to their innocent level and talks of God and Spiritual values through little stories and parables. (Shantanand 1980: i)

Alighting from the plane on to the Malaysian soil for the first time, Swamiji mentally visualised his Guru Swami Sivananda and uttered a prayer:

I don’t know what it is that has brought me here. I don’t know what it is that you expect me to do here. But this I will pray: Let me be worthy of your grace and love, that have brought me here. (Jit 1988: 63)

Synonymous with the word “theatre” in Malaysia; is the name Krishen Jit, and according to Manavalan “he is this country's most successful theatre historian”. This Malaysian personage accorded his time to record the history of TFA with an exclusive interview with Swami Shantanand in 1988.

Figure 1 Swami Shantanand Saraswathi
The Late Founder, Inspiration and Artistic Director of the Temple of Fine Arts International

According to Jit, from its inception in 1980, TFA has phenomenally progressed to becoming “one of the largest and most successful private institutions of the performing

---

arts in Malaysia” (Jit 1988: 63), while Willford is of the opinion that TFA has become the leading Indian Cultural Association in Malaysia (Willford 2007: 169), and as such a need developed in seeking answers to questions about TFA’s history, philosophy and performance methodology as “much of it remains unrecorded and unwritten”. Among some of the central questions that Jit posed to Swamiji were:

- Why the insistence on the ensemble system of performance, for example? Does it not deny the solo performer and along with him, excellence in theatre and dance?
- Why does TFA perform free of charge – is it afraid of putting up its performances on the open and paying theatre market?
- How indeed does TFA acquire its monies, and how does it dispense them? (Jit 1988: 63)

From the questions of Krishen Jit in discussion with Swamiji, the first of the primary historical recorded data of TFA emerged.

As a disciple of Swami Sivananda from Rishikesh (Willford 2007: 169), the roots of Swamiji’s satsangs from India, began in Sri Lanka in March 1971 and at the invitation of a devotee, Swamiji arrived in Kuala Lumpur in September 1971 (Shanmuganayagam 2005: 2). According to Willford, with the gathering of well wishers, Swamiji began to conduct satsangs, and as devotees grew, regular prayer meetings were held. “Shiva Family” as they were dubbed by Swamiji, grew from the initial forty families in Kuala Lumpur, expanding from India and Sri Lanka to Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca and Johor Bahru), Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom (Willford 2007: 169-170) (Shanmuganayagam 2005: 3).

Amidst this gathering, two prominent Indian classical dance talents were present, the late Guruji Master Sivadas and Vatsala together with the late Guruji Master Gopal Shetty and Radha. Harboring a deep passion for the arts, Swamiji mooted an idea to both couples, “Hey, why don’t you start some institution where money is not the reason for joining?” (Jit 1988: 64) and thus, as Willford words it, “The Temple of Fine Arts was born out of Shiva Family” (Willford 2007: 170-171).

---

8 According to Osha, Ananda and Yoga, satsang carries the meaning of “in close proximity to the truth”, it also carries the meaning of being “near a master who has become one with the truth”, Osho, P.Ananda, et al., *The cessation of mind: [commentaries of Yoga sutras of Patanjali]*, New Delhi, Diamond Pocket Books, 2005, p. 25.
The catalyst for the founding of TFA was the sensing of a “cultural vacuum” by Swamiji within the children of Shiva Family, as the vast majority of children were brought up in a Westernised tradition. According to Swamiji, ninety-per cent of them had English-medium education and with that, the ideology of science and technology, and so, Swamiji sensed a conflict among the youngsters: the children were not aware of the basic cultural tenets in Hinduism. If Swamiji were to ask the children; “Who is Savitri?”\(^9\) they had no idea. And if Swamiji were to enquire on the characters of the \textit{Ramayana}\(^10\), they would be uncertain. This information then led Swamiji to the crystallisation of an urgent need for an arts institution, where children could learn about Indian culture and its values through the performing arts. When the group members enquired as to the name of the arts institution, Swamiji replied, “Temple of Fine Arts” (Jit 1988: 64) (Willford 2007: 170). Equipped with the name of the institution, “space” now became a dilemma, and as luck would have it, a couple from Shiva Family offered their leased out property for occupancy: thus was laid the foundation for the Temple of Fine Arts with renovations under way by volunteer members of the group (Jit 1988: 64).


\(^{10}\) Complied by Sage Valmiki, “The \textit{Ramayana} is one of the two great epics of India”, while “the other being the \textit{Mahabharata}”, Buck and Valmiki, \textit{Ramayana}, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1976, p. xiii.
Figure 4 The Beginning of the Beginning – On concluding the prayer, the inauguration of TFA was marked by smashing a pumpkin – April, 1980.
From left, Guruji Master V.K. Sivadas, Centre (about to smash the pumpkin\(^{11}\)) S. Loganathan and right Guruji Master Gopal Shetty\(^ {12} \).

\(^{11}\) Pattanaik is of the opinion that the ritual or act of smashing a pumpkin in accordance with Hindu practise is "seen as a symbolic breaking of the ego so that the individual can realize the divine", Pattanaik, *Indian mythology: tales, symbols, and rituals from the heart of the Subcontinent*, Rochester, Vt., Inner traditions, 2003, p. 116. Introducing the ritual of pumpkin smashing into the inauguration of TFA symbolises a new beginning, it is an act carried out before the construction of a new building or renovation. This ritual, regarded as divine, finds its repose in the theatre building aspect of the *Natyasatra* as Meyer-Dinkgrafé explains that the date and time of the construction calculated according to *Jyotish*, a branch of the Vedic astrology measures its auspiciousness, aligning its construction to the planets to seek their blessings. Meyer-Dinkgrafé further explains that each phase of the construction is accompanied by offerings and fasting. The foundation laying involves making offerings to various gods guarding the ten directions. This then, is followed by an offering of precious gems, stones and gold buried in the centre of the site (Meyer-Dinkgrafé 2005:162). Under Swamiji's guidance, the TFA building is erected upon this divine construct of the *Natyasastra*. The aspect of *Jyothis* is further discussed in reference to the *Natyasastra*’s timeline in Chapter Five. While the homage to the guardians of the ten directions in seeking their blessings (*astadig deva paalakaas* and *astadig devo vandana*) are further replicated on to the performance space by actors and dancers (TFA 2001: 49), this ritual is explained in Chapter Five.

How it all began

Figure 4.1 The structure and space before the renovation

The renovation begins

Figures 5 and 6

Figures 7 and 8

What was once dilapidated, was rejuvenated by the love for the arts by Swamiji and his *gurukula* (Guru’s Family – Shiva Family)

![Temple of Fine Arts](image1.jpg)

*Figures 9 and 10*

![Interior photographs](image2.jpg)

*Figures 11 and 12*

The institution was incorporated as a “non-profit, voluntary, non-sectarian organization”\(^{14}\) (Willford 2007: 172). A nominal fee of twenty five Malaysian ringgit was instituted for two subjects, making it affordable in reaching out to every sector of the Malaysian community. Scholarships were incorporated as well for promising students who were less fortunate, and with between twenty to thirty students TFA opened its doors in 1980 (Jit 1988: 64) (Willford 2007: 171). By the end of the first year, Swamiji had decided to stage a dance repertoire. As the group members made preparations, Swamiji dropped a bombshell, saying that:

> [Shiva Family] must make a vow that for three years we will not ask for public donations. If someone came forward with a donation, we will say to him: “Sorry after three years, we will take up your offer”. (Jit 1988: 65)

\(^{14}\) Shiva Family International group email correspondence from the current TFAKL President, V. Kanagasivam dated 28-6-2011.
According to Jit, “This resolution left the dance professionals nonplussed”. Swamiji then elucidated his unusual stratagem by saying that:

We want to tell the public that TFA is not just another institution in which the famous but so-called “unfortunate artist”, needs money. (Jit 1988: 65)

On the contrary, the artists at TFA needed some kind of remuneration to facilitate their family responsibilities. This created a dilemma for one of the dance directors, as Master Sivadas was educating his children abroad, one in Chennai and the other in Melbourne. Master Sivadas managed his finances working with the Ministry of Culture’s Kompleks Budaya Negara (KBN)\(^{15}\) and with running his private dance lessons. Swamiji insisted that Master Sivadas leave the Ministry and his private dance lessons, saying that one cannot serve two masters, as Swamiji was confident that in time Master Sivadas would be at an enhanced financial situation with TFA. To appease Master Sivadas’s concerns Swamiji gave him a surety that:

I’ll put up M$12,000 in your name as salary for six months. If by some chance, TFA is a flop, at least for six months you can go on with your life and start your private classes again. (Jit 1988: 65)

The notion of TFA performances carrying no price tag is forged into Swamiji’s vision of artistic integrity in public opinion. Jit cites that in Swamiji’s opinion, “Once an artist is priced, he would lose something of himself”. And so, from a practical point of departure, the volunteer force from TFA diminished the production cost to about thirty thousand Malaysian ringgit, and the development of the dance repertoire went on. Swamiji remarked:

I am not finding fault with other organizations that charge money for their shows. They have their own problems. But this is what I believe, and I wanted to make an experiment. I trust that human beings are essentially beautiful. You must march on with that trust and incentive. It requires guts, to be sure. But one day you will reach the fountain and the water will flow. (Jit 1988: 65)

---

\(^{15}\) Now known as Akademi Seni Budaya Dan Warisan Kebangsaan (ASWARA), Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi Dan Kedudayaan, and in English as the National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage under the patronage of the Ministry of Information Communication And Culture, [http://www.aswara.edu.my/home](http://www.aswara.edu.my/home), accessed 13-7-2011.
Swamiji began his bold experiment, convinced that this experiment would stir someone somewhere to the workings at TFA. And that someone happened to approach Master Sivadas in the pursuit to understanding the working paradigm of TFA. The question that was posed by that individual was, “How is it TFA managed to put on their annual performances without ever eliciting donations?” At the end of the conversation, the Samaritan said that he would make an offer, writing it down, and that Master Sivadas should do the same. The Samaritan then said that he would donate the higher of the two amounts and wrote down twenty five thousand Malaysian ringgit, while Master Sivadas penned zero. Subsequently, contributions and people flowed in to TFA: as Swamiji remarked, “If you look at the donation list, you’ll find many people we don’t even know. Yet they send a cheque every month” (Jit 1988: 65).

As to TFA’s adherence to non-solo performances, it stemmed from the deterioration of the original concept of arangetram¹⁶, as Swamiji explains:

It was originally understood, an arangetram occurs when in the opinion of her guru, a dancer is ready for her first stage performance. In the past, one went to the temple, and did archana¹⁷—the cost would be one coconut, two bananas, two beetle nuts, maximum about Rs5. You called the local elders and others in the community knowledgeable about the dance, and you performed the dance in the temple itself. But the original concept has deteriorated. So I decided to say goodbye to this arangetram business. It is unfortunate that the Hindu society in this part of the world clings to the view that dance is a way of acquiring a good bride […]. (Jit 1988: 76)

And in its view of ensemble performance, Swamiji is of the opinion that “[a] child is a blossoming human being”, and as such, they should not be set aside due to stagnation in the dance stages. According to Swamiji, on the one hand, by preventing the student from performing on stage, one extinguishes the self esteem of the student, which may result in completely derailing their dance progress, and they would end up feeling like miserable failures. On the other hand, Swamiji mentions that:

We don’t want to put up a third rate performance either. Yet if we take out one of the poorer dancers, we will give [the student] an inferiority complex. So we let [the student] go on stage, but in [a] less prominent position. Later we could point out [the student’s] mistakes, and hopefully she will make the grade. (Jit 1988: 76)

¹⁶ Literally carrying the meaning “ascending the stage”, the Bharatha Natyam dance repertoire simultaneously marks the conclusion of basic training and the performer’s maiden public recital. Herzig, South Asians in Kenya gender, generation and changing identities in diaspora, Munster, Lit., 2006, p. 103.

¹⁷ As part of a prayer ritual, it is performed as an offering to the gods.
Compassion is not the only criterion attributed to TFA’s ensemble performance; according to Jit, Swamiji is further of the opinion that dance repertoires staged in a large theatre auditorium better serve ensemble performances. Solo performances for a smaller audience would be acceptable, but in an auditorium seating a thousand, the audience would miss out on the detailed facial expressions. Educating the audience in classical performance also aids them in appreciating the natyadharmi (theatrical representation) aspects of performance, as a well informed audience can better read into a pure classical repertoire, while a combination of natyadharmi together with lokadharmi (realistic representation) would be ideal for the modern audience. Hence, Swamiji observes in an ensemble production the overall effects in the grandeur of the choreography together with the sets and music creates rasya; the experience of enjoyment (Jit 1988: 76).

In concluding the interview with Jit, Swamiji expresses his dream of creating a space that will nurture all the creative activities of the Temple of Fine Arts:

We hope to put up a complex that will serve all the needs of the institution. We require space for the medical clinics, dance studios and all the other facilities that sustain an area of creativity. (Jit 1988: 76)
In the 1988 interview with Krishen Jit, Swamiji envisioned a complex that would serve the needs of the group activities of Shiva Family. Significantly Krishen Jit offered his opinion about Swamiji's grand vision, then, in saying that:

After witnessing the remarkable progress of The Temple over almost a decade, we will be the last to say that Swamiji is merely fantasizing. (Jit 1988: 76)

And today twenty three years later, with the official opening ceremony officiated by the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato’ Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak on the 4\textsuperscript{th} of July 2011\textsuperscript{18} remarked:

Over the years of having the pleasure of watching many performances, I have come to appreciate the Temple of Fine Arts as an organization dedicated to the development, propagation and enrichment of the performing arts […]. It would be fair to say that TFA is an icon of the Malaysian arts scene\textsuperscript{19}.

Swamiji’s dream as envisioned becomes a reality, in the new Temple of Fine Arts building.

\textsuperscript{18} Information on the official opening ceremony of the TFA Building in Kuala Lumpur derived from TFA President, V. Kanagasivam, Shiva Family International email group communication, dated 28-6-2011.

\textsuperscript{19} Online news article by BERNAMA.COM, Najib Seeks Indian Community’s Trust, Hope, dated 4-7-2011, http://www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v5/newsindex.php?id=598950, access date 8-7-2011.
Figure 13 Frontal view of TFA Kuala Lumpur

Figure 14 The Portrait of Swamiji adorns the main foyer of the new building
Figure 15 Left angle view of TFA Kuala Lumpur

Figure 16 Right view of TFA Kuala Lumpur
Figure 17 The main entrance to the TFA Kuala Lumpur building

Figure 18 TFA Kuala Lumpur Logo and signage
As stated above, TFA is founded on a dual principle formulation: the secular\(^{20}\) and the transcendental\(^{21}\). The secular aspects are represented by:

- Its dedication to the performing arts in its “development, propagation and enrichment”.
- The provision of a favorable and healthy milieu for the continuous “mental, intellectual, artistic/aesthetic, psychological, and physical” progress of the youths.

The transcendental aim is to heighten the creative consciousness of the group members by service, through the various projects and the students enrolled at TFA in the performing arts, to a higher state of consciousness, where the seeker, in the grandeur of their individual spiritual journey, ultimately realises the Self; *Brahman*. From this description of the secular underpinning of the organisation, I now move into a discussion of the second principle of founding Shiva family, TFA and its group activities according to the prescribed activities in the *Natyasastra*, as it formulates the central text in the dissemination of performing arts at TFA.

In Indian philosophy, according to Vedic science, which is expanded upon in Chapter Five, Meyer-Dinkgrafe presents the argument\(^{22}\) that theatre in the realms of consciousness according to the *Natyasastra* establishes the primary aspect of raising the consciousness levels of the performers and spectators to the higher states of development in achieving *Samadhi* (enlightenment). This process of transformation in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s view as explained by Meyer-Dinkgrafe is a Vedic ritual or concept called *yagna*; a sacrificial rite carried out in Hindu religious practices. It encompasses the ideal human state of spiritual development progressing from the grossest level to a subtler level advancing into *moksha* or enlightenment. Hence, since the practice of *yagna* is for the attainment of enlightenment, similar to that of the *Natyasastra*, Meyer-Dinkgrafe argues that all theatre functions in the *Natyasastra* equated as a sacrificial religious offering, ceremony or performance becomes a *yagna* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 159-162). As a result, Meyer-Dinkgrafe is of the opinion that according to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, *yagna*:

---

\(^{20}\) Shiva Family International group email correspondence from the TFAKL President, V. Kanagasivam dated 28-6-2011.


[...] comprises all kinds of means, or practical tools, for an individual to achieve the ideal state of human development, moksha, or enlightenment. This aim, enlightenment, is also the states aim of theatre, according to the [Natyasastra]. The function of the art of theatre, described in the [Natyasastra] is to restore full human potential, life in enlightenment. This function gives all actions described or prescribed in the [Natyasastra] the status of [yagna]. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 160)

As prescribed by Vedic science, relating to the theories of the mind, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Meyer-Dingrafe are of the view that theatre as yagna encompasses a much wider scope leading its practice to becoming “a way of life’ which furthers spiritual development towards unity consciousness” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 160-161). As such, this similarity establishes the parallel significance of the Natyasasra’s dissemination with the founding of the Temple of Fine Arts, leading into the significance of Shiva Family and the sister organisations of the institution, underpinning the institution’s activities to Vedic rituals and practices.

**Shiva Family as Yagna**

For any aim to be realised, as explained by Kanagasivam and Natarajan, human resources are required, hence in this spiritual activity or “yagna” as in the setting up of Shiva Family, performed by Swamiji, certain individuals or souls were attracted to this “yagna” given their samskaras and vasanas from previous births, while Frawley

---

23 Information derived from an interview with V. Kanagasivam, the current President of TFAKL. His experience comes from a two-fold position: while being one of the founding members of the institution, Kangasivam also hails from the background of a dancer belonging to the first generation of TFA dancers.

24 Interview with Arun Natarajan, Manager of Annalakshmi on Swan, Perth-Australia. In his earlier years Natarajan also practiced Bharatha Natyam and Odissi participating in the Indian leg of TFA’S dance drama ballets. He also played a key role in the setting-up and running of Annalakshmi in Chennai, India.

25 According to Meyer-Dinkgräfe yagna carries the meaning of an offering, a sacrifice or a religious activity (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 160). Capra defines this religious ritual as an act of sacrifice, as in making the act sacred (Capra 1985: 87).

26 Samskaras are accumulated impressions and material residue left over from past lifetimes residing on the subtle body creating an intense inner urge to continue thoughts or actions influenced by behaviour and habit (Yogananda 1995: 49) (Armstrong 2011: 207).

27 Vasanas are seed desires or dormant stored-up desires that are embedded within the consciousness of an individual propagating the cycle of birth and death (Yogananda 1995: 89, 927-928).

28 According to Jeffrey Armstrong, the similar concept of atma (the true Self), karma and reincarnation was practised by nearly all ancient cultures, until the ignorance of the modern world’s resistance toward karma. It began in the 5th Century, with The Nicene Council when the Western Catholic Church passed the decree that “the soul did not pre-exist before the body”, and with the prevailing view of the Roman Catholic Church, the theory of rebirth was declared as “Eastern Heresy” and banned (Pullen 2010: 82) (Hanegraaff 1996: 321) (Skillas 2004: 141). Armstrong further suggests that Christians before the resolution of The Nicene Council “believed that reincarnation was the actual true understanding of Jesus’ teachings”. Further to this Armstrong sustains his notion that the “departure from viewing the soul as eternal” created considerable philosophical dilemmas for Catholic theologians in answering complicated
uses the term attraction by “karmic patterns” (Frawley 2010: 33). Kanagasivam and Natarajan further explain that no different from any other public member on this planet, Shiva Family members are a group of souls which based on their karmic patterns work as a battalion to perform and continue Swamiji’s “yagna” or in this case, his idealism globally. As the members perform this “yagna” through the various activities of the organisation29 for the purification of others, so too they get purified in that act of selfless service30, both the public and the group members slowly but surely evolving to the states of higher consciousness. Further to this, Natarajan observes that Swamiji is likened to a PhD supervisor specialising in a particular field based on that field of interest to whom certain individuals are drawn (Shiva Family); in this case the field happened to be the realising of Brahman through the activities of the fine arts; through the performing arts.

The Temple of Fine Arts as Yagna

Meyer-Dinkgrafe explains that the Natyasastra espouses the purpose of regaining the state of lost enlightenment, eventually working to reinstate the Satya Yuga (golden age) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5, 101, 120). Hence, Swamiji, Kanagasivam and Natarajan, elucidate that the audience, by merely being present at a TFA production, partakes in the “yagna” and receives the blessings from the Vedic gods. Meyer-Dinkgrafe relates this act of blessing to Karma Kanda, the Chapter of Action in Vedic literature. Its focus is attuned to the human body dealing with gross facets of yagna. According to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Meyer-Dinkgrafe, it establishes the evolution of humans as not to “act against the laws of nature” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 161), assisting them in

questions such as: Why remove sin during baptism, “if the soul did not exist before the body”? Hence, in the 6th century, Augustine a Catholic theologian invented “Original Sin”, explaining that the “sin” was passed on to all by the indiscretions of Adam and Eve. Thus, the theory of reincarnation was circumvented momentarily. Therefore, Armstrong is of the opinion that some people believe that The Nicene Council constructed this heresy theory to seize “power over common people by telling them they only have one lifetime” leaving salvation open only to the Church (Pullen 2010: 83). However, according to the Vedic precepts, salvation remains the individual’s responsibility; Armstrong observes that “Reincarnation also removes the rush to judge the soul and send it to hell or heaven after only one lifetime” (Armstrong 2007: 50-52).

29 Shiva Family International globally runs the Temple of Fine Arts International (performing arts institution), Annalakshmi (vegetarian fine dining cuisine, where dining becomes a cultural experience), Lavanya Arts (fashion and visual arts boutique on Indian art), Sankhya Systems (Information Technology software development and implementation), Hamsa-Vahini (travel and tour agency), Hansa Design (the communication arm) and the Temple of Service (charitable medical services). Information extracted from TFA Corporate brochure.

30 The activating principles of Swami Sivananda’s “Spiritual Ladder” mentioned by Swamiji in Chapter Two (Shantanand 2007: 34).
their spiritual development and further gaining “support and blessings from higher powers of nature, Vedic gods” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 163).

In establishing its ideals, TFA aims to inculcate in the youth, faith and love for the arts in their individual and artistic growth. TFA aspires to be more formative than informative without ending in mere attainment of knowledge. The institution seeks to develop the inherent talents in expressing their cultural values in attaining the highest goal possible ultimately aiming at merging with the “creative consciousness of the Universe”. The methodology is as follows:

- Adopting the guru-sishya parampara (teacher-disciple lineage), the guru in the mode of inspiring and encouragement.
- Adopting the sishya in the mode of respect, enquiry and service.

![Figure 19 The Temple of Fine Arts Logo](image)

The meaning and significance of the Temple of Fine Arts logo:

- The Triangle – Symbolising the triple aspects of the fine arts; music, dance and literature.
- The Lamp – Symbolising the illuminated state of the consciousness in attaining wisdom.
- The Lotus – Symbolising the awakening of consciousness.
- The Theme of the Temple of Fine Arts – “The practice of The Fine Arts leads to the blossoming of the consciousness and ultimately to Spiritual Illumination”.

---

Kanagasivam and Natarajan explain that as alluded to earlier in the Chapter according to Swamiji art is divine and priceless, questioning: how can one place a price tag on art that has been bestowed by Lord Nataraja and Goddess Sakthi? Art does not belong to anyone, other than the cosmic creators, and as such, Natarajan asks; who are we to place a price tag on art? Art, whether it is dance, drama or music is yoga by itself. It is also a means to an end, as the ultimate aim of establishing TFA is the attainment of divine realisation through the arts, so too all of Shiva Family projects. Hence, it reinforces Swamiji’s notion of artist integrity in the eye of the public as explained by Jit.

In ancient India, when an artist performed, he or she undertook and became the character as a means to reach the divine; to realise the Self. According to Swamiji, Kanagasivam and Natarajan further explain that human birth is a rare gift; therefore its sole purpose should be in realising Brahman. In respect to this, when a dancer performs with the right bhava (psychological state), the dance, the dancer, the audience and the stage become one, creating rasanubhava (imaginative or aesthetic experience) and in that spur of the moment god realisation takes place, hence formulating the ultimate aim of art which is at TFA to realise god (Brahman) as mentioned in the ideals listed

33 Lord Nataraja is also known as Lord Shiva; one of the trinity of Godheads of the Hindu pantheon, and Goddess Sakthi his consort. The concept of Shiva-Sakthi as Oberon and Titania is explored in Chapter Four, while the concept of Shiva-Nataraja is based in Chapter Five as the inspiration to the creative process in constructing and deconstructing the character of Lord of Misrule in Jenny de Reuck’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night.

34 Armstrong explains that the Vedic scriptures expound eight million four hundred thousand various life forms scattered throughout the material plane, of which eight million are categorised as sub-human, while the other four hundred thousand take up “varieties of human beings”. The word Atomic is derived from the word atma. Once “atomic particles of eternal consciousness” enter into matter, the body takes form beginning at the bottom of the evolutionary chain. The Vedas share Darwin’s theory to the extent that evolution, according to Armstrong, begins from within matter and not from matter; it begins as an “evolution of consciousness” (Armstrong 2007: 16). This theory is similarly suggested by Hagelin in his Unified Field theory, where he is of the opinion that all humans are connected by wave frequencies of pure consciousness (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2006) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 181), while Meyer-Dinkgrafe cites that “[p]ure consciousness has been shown to be a field that connects all individuals” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120). Likewise, Mancing, Malekin, et al, introduce consciousness into the field of “literary and cultural studies” positioned around cognitive science as discussed in Chapter Two (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney 2002: 15) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 176). Combining Hagelin’s quantum theory of wave consciousness together with Mancing, Malekin et al’s higher consciousness theory in literary and cultural studies in theatre practice, a possible theoretical solution is addressed in Chapter Five regarding the application of interculturalism. Returning to our discussion of human evolution, Armstrong further explains that as a process of learning, the external soul ascends the ladder of life experiencing every species, “[f]rom the smallest microbe up to insects, plants, birds, and mammals” and that this learning experience will continue to unfold until we “finally reach the lowest rung of human consciousness”, and hence the reason for the gift of human birth according to Swamiji (Armstrong 2007: 16-17).

35 According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe “What affects the spectator are the actor’s means of histrionic representation: gestures, words, representation of temperament and costume and make-up. For the enlightened actor, gestures and words, […], will proceed spontaneously from his pure consciousness, transforming themselves without time-lapse into objective expression, which is then subjectively experienced by the spectator, affecting his senses, intellect, emotions and, through those, his pure consciousness” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120).
above. According to Natarajan, Swamiji says that the moment money comes into play, selfishness is activated driven by the need for economic gain losing its fundamental purpose for attaining the state of higher consciousness as exemplified in the rationale for the conception of the Natyasastra.

One of the most important features of higher consciousness in a soul’s evolution carried out by TFA in all their dance drama ballet productions, according to Swamiji and further elaborated by Kanagasivam and Natarajan, is that regardless whether the person is experienced or inexperienced, young or old, artist or non-artist, dancer or non-dancer, anyone from any group activity including visitors to the production was given a role to perform, no matter how small that role. As Swamiji stated so often “there are no small roles, only small actors” quoting Shchepkin, Stanislavsky and Bharucha (Bharucha 1993: 187) (Brestoff 1995: 22). The reason Swamiji carried out this activity is that he wished all to partake in the cosmic “maha-yagna” conducted in the form of TFA productions. According to Shanmuganayagam, Swamiji was of the opinion that all who partake in the “maha-yagna” regardless of their measure of involvement are transported to a level of higher consciousness known as Anandamaya Kosha or blissful state: no one was to perceive the productions as a mere form of cultural entertainment, as they may outwardly appear to be (Shanmuganayagam 2005: 11).

Swamiji said that each time he made an individual or performer take up a role or several roles, change a costume or several costumes, he eradicated that number of birth cycles (karmatic cycles) corresponding to the number of roles played or costumes changed.

---

36 The need for economic gain by producers and artists is highlighted by Pavis under the “practiced banner of interculturalism”, where Pavis cites that “often for simple economic reasons: […] [utilising the banner of interculturalism] artists and producers stand a much greater chance of making profit” (Pavis 1996: 5).

37 Maha meaning ‘great’ and yagna meaning ‘offering, sacrifice or religious activity’ (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 160), hence in combination it carries the meaning ‘great sacrifice’; maha-yagna. Swamiji further elaborates that it becomes a maha-yagna by the presence of unseen great masters blessing the yagna. According to the Vedic scriptures Armstrong elaborates that they are three categories of beings present in the Universe; the non-humans, the humans and the forgotten divine beings. The word divine originates from the root word Deva; meaning “playing in the light”, handed down from various indigenous cultures, these divine beings of light carry varied names, such as elves, “angels, spirits, faeries, gnomes, and the wee people”. In the Vedic culture, they are known as the Devas (male) or Devis (female); the Divine Helpers” (Armstrong 2007: 32) (Armstrong 2010: 15). In Chapter Four, these divine beings as fairies become the springboard to the analysis of the celestial plain in TFA’s AMND.

38 Please refer to devotional acting praxis in Chapter Five for elaboration.

39 Kakar is of the opinion that Karma is based on a dual platform, where the individual’s soul’s (jiva), encompassing the cycle of “birth, growth and death” either progresses or regresses through the various stages of existence. The second involves the balance of right action (dharma) and wrong action (adharma) which impacts directly on the progression and regression of the individual soul (Kakar 2008: 45). While according to Armstrong, our thoughts, speech and actions are governed by karma, which in
In all of TFA’s productions, every member must go through some kind of personal sacrifice, some kind of personal constraint; it is only when this occurs that it becomes a *yagna* (Shantanand 1995: 17). Hence, in essence Kanagasivam and Natarajan clarify that Swamiji quickens the evolutionary birth cycle process of each individual’s soul in ascending the ladder of higher consciousness to realising *Brahman*. This is the reason why TFA productions do not carry a price tag; as a *maha-yagna* is carried out for the benefit of humanity and not for any one single person. This is also the reason for TFA’s adage, “Art just for the love of it”, for the members perform the *maha-yagna* selflessly, without question bound by Swamiji’s unconditional love for all humanity.
Expanding on the principle of anonymity as an activating principle mentioned in Chapter Two, Swamiji says, as Kanagasivam and Natarajan explain, that in one production, an individual may be assigned a lead role and in another production that very same individual will be merely playing the role of an umbrella bearer. Today, principle performer, tomorrow ensemble role, no importance is given to any one individual. Every member of the organisation multitasks between their individual day to day life tasks of employment, whether with the sister organisation of Shiva Family activities or elsewhere, to enacting a role onstage or backstage, helping prepare a meal or shuttling performers, members or guests to the performance space. All these activities are performed without any materialistic gain, no motive other than the sheer joy of selfless service for the arts.

Kanagasivam and Natarajan are further of the opinion that this is what Swamiji silently created in us, without us even knowing that we were gaining spiritual benefits, the service was selfless, and we just performed it without question\textsuperscript{44} (Sivananda 1998: 87). Swamiji even mentioned that blessings also go to contractors and suppliers, directly or indirectly, knowing or unknowingly; they would all derive blessings as their contribution no matter how minuscule aids in the execution of the \textit{maha-yagna} of a TFA production. At the end of every production Swamiji would honour all, right from the lavatory cleaner to the performers backstage, onstage, to the honoured guest and audience; for Swamiji always practised \textit{athiti devo bhava}, meaning ‘guest is god’. Swamiji had immense admiration for those artistes and practitioners who unstintingly and voluntarily involved themselves in the arts and service. His view was that “They were the caretakers of art forms that sustain and refine humanity”\textsuperscript{45}.

Even the material gain, then, of spiritual benefits was nullified by this act of selflessness; this informs what Shiva Family does and this is what Swamiji sought for his spiritual community, as Kanagasivam and Natarajan explain. Viewed from an external perspective, TFA is an institution formulated to create dancers, dramatists and musicians but, on a deeper level of higher consciousness, TFA is a Vedic entity that...

\textsuperscript{44} The single most important criteria in a \textit{guru-sishya}-master-disciple relationship as expounded by Swami Sivananda and Swamiji is “obedience is better than reverence” (Sivananda 1998: 87).

\textsuperscript{45} Information derived from a memorial magazine entitled \textit{Guru Smaranam – an aradhana in memory of our guru, founder & patron}, 27-8-2005.
transforms an individual into a beautiful human being. By using the platform of performing arts, TFA aids in the evolution of the human consciousness to a higher level.

In the words of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, quoted in Meyer-Dinkgräfe:

> In the state of higher consciousness, all human activity becomes an offering to the gods, and thus a \([yagna]\), maintaining the state that has been achieved, and allowing for further progress. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 161)

In this respect, as stated above, Shiva Family International globally runs the Temple of Fine Arts International (performing arts institution), Annalakshmi (vegetarian fine dining cuisine, where dining becomes a cultural experience), Lavanya Arts (fashion and visual arts boutique on Indian art), Sankhya Systems (Information Technology software development and implementation), Hamsa-Vahini (travel and tour agency), Hansa Design (the communication arm) and the Temple of Service (charitable medical services).

Besides the transcendental aspects of the group activities, the sister organisations also collaborate in their efforts to subsidise the performance activities of TFA (Willford 2007: 172-173), as all sister organisations carry similar ideals of higher consciousness in realising Brahman. For reasons of brevity, I will draw attention only to Annalakshmi in its transcendental attributes as they apply to the group members and guests who dine there and in doing so elevate themselves to the gradual state of higher consciousness.

**Annalakshmi as Yagna**

Natarajan is of the opinion that Annalakshmi is run on a unique concept: that of “eat to your heart’s content and pay what your heart feels”, formulated by Swamiji. Food, according to Natarajan forms the basic element which sustains the soul; food is the element that nourishes the body, as the entire human form evolved from matter (Armstrong 2007: 15-16). So too, an extension of that matter takes the form of food in this material world as unconscious energy (Armstrong 2007: 15). Hence, food which is meant for the sustenance of life should and must be made available to all. Swamiji says that no one should be deprived of this fundamental element.
At Annalakshmi, the goddess of sustenance feeds her children unconditionally. What happens in this concept, as observed by Natarajan, is that someone who has relished a meal at Annalakshmi, simultaneously enjoying the cultural aesthetics of the establishment together with dance and music, nestled on the banks of the Swan River, pays whatever that person can afford and feels comfortable enough to pay. In this process what happens is someone who has, gives, indirectly feeding others who are unable to enjoy a fine dining meal. Annalakshmi does not deny someone’s practice of giving. Therefore using this concept of “eat to your heart’s content and pay what your heart feels”, one human being learns to feed another human being through Annalakshmi as the intermediary. Hence, Annalakshmi is karmically providing opportunities to individuals to perform dharma (right action); to perform meritorious deeds. As a result, dining at Annalakshmi becomes punyam; a blessing.

Natarajan here clearly suggests that Annalakshmi should not be misread as a charitable establishment which feeds poor people; rather, it is an establishment that feeds the soul. Swamiji insisted that the food from Annalakshmi be prepared by mothers and grandmothers which in turn augments and extends that unconditional love to whomever partakes in a meal at Annalakshmi. When food is prepared and served with unconditional love, it becomes sattvic (pure), thereby nourishing the soul, aiding it to transcend onto a level of higher consciousness, to acquire good samskaras and vasanas. Through the partaking of a meal, the patron is given the opportunity to serve other souls and in this manner, spontaneously, the soul evolves. Apart from promoting

46 In her book entitled Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women, Julia Leslie states that traditionally all women hold the view that “by their very nature, [they] share in the power of the goddess [Sakthi]”, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992, pp. 136-137. Through Annalakshmi, the goddess of sustenance, one of the many aspects of Goddess Sakthi is represented by all the mothers and grandmothers who volunteer their goodwill to partake in the activity of Goddess Sakthi serving her children. Hence, the reason for Swamiji’s insistence. In Chapter Four, the role of the Goddess Sakthi is alluded to in my analysis of the character Titania-Bhogawathi-Sakthi.

47 Sattvic or sattva carries the meaning of pure enlightenment; it is one of the three governing principles of prakriti (nature).

48 This level of higher consciousness is similar to the higher consciousness mentioned by Malekin, et al, Chapter Two.

49 According to Natarajan, the mind is dependant on the body and the body is dependent on food, and as such, the intake of food has an influence on the mind. When food is prepared by mothers and grandmothers for their families, it is prepared with love and for the wellbeing of their families. When food is prepared with this thought in mind it becomes an offering to the Gods, Ghosh, The Natyashastra: A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Calcutta, The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1950, pp. 90-91 and (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 163); this love then becomes divine nectar; when consumed by guests, that divine energy is transferred, healing physiological and psychological ailments. This love (divine energy) is transmuted into the food creating a field of higher consciousness transforming the prepared food into sattvic meals creating good samskaras and vasanas, thereby creating a vibratory field accessing the state of higher consciousness creating a conduit to the state of turiya or enlightenment. The energy in this field of consciousness emitted by the food prepared at Annalakshmi affects the
the cultural aesthetics of India through dance, drama and music, according to Natarajan, Swamiji says that the modern materialistic person overly indulges themselves in the process of enjoying their fruits of labour unaware of the infringement on nature and the living creatures of mother earth this normally implies; thereby acquiring bad *samskaras* and *vasanas* through their *avidya* (delusion or ignorance). For this reason Annalakshmi only serves vegetarian cuisine.

Therefore, when a patron visits Annalakshmi, unknown to them, the meal prepared by volunteers, mothers and grandmothers with unconditional love creates a field of higher consciousness nourishing their souls. This counteracts the bad and creates good *samskaras* and *vasanas* for the patrons. In turn, these good *samskaras* and *vasanas* aid the *atman’s* or soul’s journey toward achieving a progressively higher birth or reincarnation (Armstrong 2007: 50-52) (Pullen 2010: 82) (Hanegraaff 1996: 321) (Skillas 2004: 141). As a result of this activity, Annalakshmi acts as a catalyst in the soul’s journey towards Self-realisation (enlightenment); towards becoming one with the Absolute Spirit; *Brahman*. From a macro perspective, the patrons enjoy the ambience and aesthetics of Annalakshmi unknowingly immersing themselves in the field of higher consciousness generated by the volunteer members of the organisation. Natarajan says that no guest is judged by the size of their wallet, the guests pay what their heart feels. According to Swamiji, Natarajan highlights that the karmic activity performed by Annalakshmi is far greater than *annadhanam*50 (feeding the poor).

The volunteers at Annalakshmi in turn are given the opportunity to perform *Karma Yoga*; known as the yoga of action, it purifies the heart in selfless service (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 18-19). The ultimate purpose of all Shiva Family activities51 is to attain a state of higher consciousness aimed at spiritual progression towards the realisation of *Brahman*. Natarajan affirms that all Shiva Family activities are a means to an end and not the end in itself. It is a platform where individuals from various backgrounds are united, working together with the aim of creating beautiful aesthetics

---


51 The practice of *karma* yoga by the volunteers of Shiva Family has its similar extension into the recommended remedies of achieving the state of *turiya* in Malekin and Yarrow’s *pashyantti* theatre project as mentioned in Chapter Two (Madhavan 2010: 37-38).
without expecting anything in return: such are the activating principles in any form of yoga. Perhaps, this is why Annie Besant made this statement about India:

When the nations of the earth were sent forth one after the other, a special word was given by God to each, the word which each was to say to the world, the peculiar word from the Eternal which each one was to speak. As we glance over the history of the nations, we can hear resounding from the collective mouth of the people this word, spoken out in action, the contribution of that nation to the ideal and perfect humanity. To Egypt in old days, the word was Religion; to Persia the word was Purity; to Chaldea the word was science; to Greece the word was Beauty; to Rome the Word was Law; and to India, the eldest-born of His children, to India He gave a word that summed up the whole in one, the word DHARMA. That is the word of India to the world. (Besant 1998: 1)

In accordance with an individual’s characteristic traits, each devotee finds their repose within one of the group activities, and in time, stage by stage advances toward the state of *turiya* mentioned by Malekin (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 17, 38-39, 129, 133, 136), Yarrow (Yarrow 2001: 120), Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 108-111) and Haney (Haney 2002: 39, 79-80, 94). These are the stages according to Vedic sciences, the goals of human life (*dharma*-right action, *artha*-wealth, *kama*-desire and *moksha*-liberation), elaborated by Defouw and Svoboda (Defouw and Svoboda 2003: 116-119), the stages of life (Kakar 1981: 15, 36-37, 43) and their process of liberation by *Raja* Yoga (Kakar 1981: 21-22, 25) elaborated by Kakar, coupled with the karmatic cycle explanation of Kakar (Kakar 1981: 45) and Armstrong (Armstrong 2007: 7, 15, 55, 58) will eventually shape and mould the individual into advancing to the state of *moksha* in one lifetime or the other.

Using the Hindu techniques of liberation (Kakar 1981: 21), coupled with choice and free will (Armstrong 2010: 9-11) the aspirant, based on their temperament, can choose one of the four paths of yoga (*Karma* Yoga, *Bakti* Yoga, *Gnana* Yoga and *Raja* Yoga) (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 18)\(^{52}\) to attain the liberated state of *turiya*. For Shiva Family, removing “the hermeneutic elements from religious activity and re-establish[ing] the vital links between Art, Life and the Spirit”\(^{53}\), allowed Swamiji to simplify the process of attaining liberation for householders (*garhasthya*) in this age of

---

\(^{52}\) The four paths of Yoga are elaborated in Chapter Five.

kali (iron) into three stages: *Bakthi*[^54], *Bukthi*[^55] and *Mukti*[^57]. This places their act of volunteerism upon the path of “spiritual discipline in Self-inquiry and observation of one’s reactions” (Shanmuganayagam 2005: 10). Swamiji once remarked:

I have not come in your life to help you do business, but to help you evolve into beautiful human beings through the path of Bakthi – love for God, Bukthi – Material enjoyment and other creature comforts of life through honest self-effort, and finally to Mukti – The release of the soul from the transmigration of life and death. To Love God, To Love Oneself, To Love and Serve Fellow Beings – That is the Aim and Ideals of Shiva Family. That is My Mission. I would like to do it not as Guru, not as an Acharya[^58], but as a True Friend. (Muthiya 2004: 9)

**Conclusion**

According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, then, a vital component of achieving the “transformation in daily life” to higher states of consciousness “is associated with the concept of *[yagna]*, sacrifice, religious performances, or holy ritual”[^59] in Indian philosophy. This ritual according to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Meyer-Dinkgrafe runs parallel to the *Natyasastra’s* aim in theatre, where its conceptualised purpose is for the establishing of the “ideal state of human spiritual development, *moksha* or enlightenment”; thus giving the “*Natyasastra* the status of *[yagna]*” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 160). While Capra further explains that “sacrifice” is a recurring theme in Hindu philosophy, and in its original context it carries the meaning of “making sacred” (Capra 1983: 87).

[^54]: Spelling varies from author to author and from publication to publication. For the purpose of this dissertation, *Bhakthi* is standardised as *Bakthi*.

[^55]: According to Swami Sivananda, “The path of devotion is the easiest and surest of all the ways for attaining emancipation”, from *Dhussera Blossom, Annalakshmi Aradhana: A Temple of Fine Arts International Publication*, October 2002, excerpts from Swami Sivananda’s *Music As Yoga*, 1956.


[^57]: *Moksha* or liberation.


[^59]: According to Malekin and Yarrow the state of *pashyanti* consciousness (*samadhi* or liberation) can be accessed through various methodologies: one of the ways they mention is shamanistic chanting (Madhavan 2010: 36-37). TFA is founded on the formula of Vedic chanting as postulated by Malekin and Yarrow. Apart from the ongoing performances and annual productions at TFA, Shiva Family with its daily *trikala puja* (“*tri*” meaning three, “*kala*” meaning time and “*puja*” worship, hence, worship three times in a day) and weekly prayer session, conducts an additional seventy six prayers, offerings for various Hindu festivals and religious ceremonies in a year. This creates a *pashyanti* cognition platform free from “egoic and category-bound experience” allowing the performer to spontaneously access the state of pure consciousness (*samadhi*) (Madhavan 2010: 36). Information derived from personal email correspondence with Vaidyanathan Appathurai Mama and Mrs Usha Ramakrishnan, members from the Kuala Lumpur Shiva Family prayer group, dated 30-5-2011 and 1-6-2011.
This establishes the alignment of TFA with the Natyasastra’s precepts of promoting the progression to the state of enlightenment, in creating beautiful individuals as explained by Swamiji. Hence, TFA’s conceptualisation, founding and ongoing administration is born out of “sacrifice”, making TFA a sacred entity. In short, TFA is a Vedic Higher Consciousness mechanism that places an individual through the activating principle process initiated by Swamiji. The research indicates that the Vedic traditions and rituals practiced at TFA are similar to the platforms that Yarrow, Malekin, and Meyer-Dinkgrafe are working at formulating, both in Malekin and Yarrow’s Pashyanti Project (Madhavan 2010: 35-40) and Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s higher states of consciousness research in the Natyasastra supervised by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 181). While the authors are still working on piecing the ‘building blocks’ together, TFA has initiated this function of higher consciousness since its inception.

When asked; why does TFA do what it does? The answer would be simply; “Art just for the love of it”.

![Swami Shantanand Saraswathi](image)

*Figure 19.1 His Holiness Swami Shantanand Saraswathi.
07-04-1934 - 27-07-2005*

When asked; who is this man with such philosophies and methodologies, uncommon to the individual of the modern world? The answer would be simply:
He mirrors the minds of those around him. Infinitely sensitive to every phenomenon and for whom every phenomenon is a stimulus capable of provoking an infinite series of thoughts, he is a man whom admirable texts cannot exhaust, do not even define. He says little, yet moves the young and old to action. An Indian by Birth, a Swami by choice, a Sadhu by temperament, his ideas are nurtured by the simple, universal truths repeated endlessly in all cultures – serve, love, give – selflessly. Homeless in the literal sense of the word, yet firmly entrenched in the hearts of all those who seek the answers to the eternal mysteries, he guides by the light of the Masters. He creates outside the realm of reason, real yet symbolic worlds. His words confound and enlighten simultaneously. They are open to a multitude of meanings. Together they form a myriad of tiny mirrors that reflect the minds of his listeners. Perhaps the most striking quality of his words is the way they dismantle beliefs and notions foisted by years of schooled wisdom. And at the end of it all, to glimpse in a strange intangible way, the quintessence of things as they always were and always will be. Such insights, though rare and precious, are sufficient to inspire, to motivate action, to take that one extra step toward realizing a dream.

(Shiva_Family_Kuala_Lumpur 1994: 8)

Figure 19.2 Swamiji offering flowers to the feet of his Guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswathi

---

60 According to Swami Yogananda a sadhu is an anchorite; an individual dedicated to spiritual discipline and ascetic life (Yogananda 1993: 20).

61 Photograph courtesy from Shiva Family International group email, dated 8-9-2011.
Chapter 3 Appendix: Swami Shantanand – The Sage behind TFA

Figure 20 Swamiji with Swami Gnanananda Giri

Figure 21 Swamiji (circled) with his Guru Swami Sivananda Saraswathi

---

62 Unless stated, all photographs on Swamiji are courtesy from S. Loganathan, creative director of idotdesign and from Muthiya’s commemorative book entitled A tribute to our Guiding Light, Utopia Press Pte Ltd, 2004.
In his book entitled *May I answer that?* Swami Sivananda answers a question regarding the performing arts put forth by a seeker. The question and the answer are both vital in the understanding of the arts from the perspective of the divine, as it formulates the very foundation of the ideals fortified at TFA, as exemplified by Swami Sivananda.

The seeker questions:

In an Ashram where you have gathered together young spiritual aspirants, promising to guide them in their rapid march to the Goal of life, viz., Self-realisation, why do you encourage dance, drama and music? (Sivananda 1999: 124)

Swami Sivananda answers:

The question betrays an ignorance of the fundamental principles of music and dance. They are divine. I should request you to remember that Lord Krishna with His inseparable flute and Mother Sarasvati with Her Veena remind you that music is divine. Lord Nataraja reminds you that dance had its origin in Him. The wickedness of man would misuse anything. Because pickpockets are found in abundance in a temple on a festival day, should we deny ourselves the blessings of His Darshan?

It is a pity that these two divine arts—music and dance—have been brought down to the level of sensual entertainment. It is the sacred duty of every lover of God and of the fine arts to raise them to their original standards of purity and divinity.

Music is Nada Yoga. It at once enables you to attain union with Nada Brahman, the sacred Pranava. Nritya or dance enables you to enter into Bhava Samadhi.

Drama is a very powerful instrument for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. What you cannot teach through hundreds of books and hours of lecture, you can

---

63 To corroborate the gravity and importance of music as divine, Swami Sivananda in his book entitled *Music As Yoga*, quotes Shakespeare as saying, “The man that hath no music in himself, Nor is moved with concord of sweet sounds[,] Is fit for treasons, stratagems[,] and spoils.[.] The motions of his spirit are dull as night, And his affections, dark as Er[e]bus: Let no such man be trusted.”. *Music As Yoga*, Divine Life Society Publication, 2007, pp 23-24, *The Merchant of Venice* (5.1.82-87). A keen admirer of the dramatic art form, Kuppuswamy (before he took up the order of Sanyasa and became Swami Sivananda) in 1905, during his College days, enacted the role of Helena in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Autobiography of Swami Sivananda*, Divine Life Society Publication, 2000, pp 7-8. Like Guru, like disciple, both Swami Sivananda and Swamiji encouraged the active dissemination of the arts as divine.


65 *Nada* meaning sound.

66 *Pranava* is also identified as the sacred monosyllable Om (Shantanand 2007: 8).

67 *Bhava Samadhi* meaning “inner beatitude”, that which “surpasses all ephemeral experiences” from TFA’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Program Brochure at His Majesty’s Theatre, Perth, 1994.
bring home to the audience easily and effectively through a single play. Drama is an art-form that touches the heart.

The very fact that the worldly man has taken such an interest in these three and misused them to fulfill his nefarious purposes, shows what a tremendous power they have over the heart and soul of man. What a blessing they will be if they are used for spiritual ends! (Sivananda 1999: 124-125)

Swami Sivananda demonstrating some dance movements

![Swami Sivananda demonstrating some dance movements](image)

*Figure 21.1 Swami Sivananda encouraging the blossoming artistes*

---

Swamiji with his Gurukula (family of the Guru) Shiva Family:
The Sheppard and his sheep

Figure 22 Playtime with the children in Penang 1975

---

69 According to Dave Stringer, *Kirtan* carries the Sanskrit meaning to “sing”, it evolved with the *Bhakti* (devotional) movement in the fifteenth century. It is folk form sung in adoration of the divine, [http://davestringer.com/pdfs/philosophy_of_kirtan.pdf](http://davestringer.com/pdfs/philosophy_of_kirtan.pdf), accessed 13-7-2011. This formula of *bhakti* is further extended in Vijay Mishra’s *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime*, where *bhakti* (devotion) and *puja* (worship) form the working definition of devotional theism; the core principles in Hinduism, which enable the understanding of Indian aesthetics (Mishra 1998: 4). The *Indian Sublime* is explained in Chapter One.

70 *Nritya* or *Nrtya* is also known as *abhinaya* (Vatsyayan 1967: 235); the art of communication from the *Natyasastra*. Abhinaya is further explained in Chapter Five.
Figure 23 Swamiji explaining the significance of Temple worship on pilgrimage at the Devi Temple in Belur, India. Muralitharan holding the microphone for Swamiji.

Figures 24.1 and 24.2 Swamiji demonstrating his culinary skills
Figure 25 Swamiji demonstrating the art of preparing fine cuisine at TFA Penang’s “Dance India Taste India” Festival. Muralitharan is seen in the background, right corner.

Swamiji’s love for music is evident as he attempts to plays various musical instruments.

Figures 26 Swamiji with a flute recorder
Figure 27 Swamiji playing the Veena

Figure 28 Swamiji with the Saxophone
Figure 29 Swamiji singing devotional hymns and songs

Swamiji in the midst of directing TFA productions

Figure 30 Swamiji rendering choreographic directions to Guruji Master Sivadas
Figure 30.1 Swamiji rendering choreographic directions to Guruji Master Gopal

Figure 31 Swamiji giving directions during the rehearsal of *Odissi Odyssey* – Singapore, 1994

---

71 Photograph courtesy of Arun Natarajan, Manager, Annalakshmi on Swan, Perth, Australia.
Figure 32 Swamiji giving the go ahead in sound editing for a production; a man and master of all traits

Figure 33 Swamiji in one of his inspired moods seen with a serene smile

72 Photography Figure 33 and 44 courtesy of Anand Supramaniomkuru from Shiva Family Johor Bharu, Malaysia.
Swamiji’s passion for acting is made visible by his cameo appearances in productions.

Figure 34 TFA’s *The Ramayana*; the Guhan scene
Swamiji as Guhan.

Figure 35 Swamiji in TFA’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Figure 36 Swamiji in TFA’s *Mahsuri*
Swamiji attending to Official duties at various TFA Centres

Figure 37 In 1986 at the National Day Carnival in Singapore
Swamiji blesses an elephant by applying *kumkumam*

Figure 38 During the dance drama production of *Mahsuri* in Kuala Lumpur
Swamiji garlands the late Tunku Abdul Rahman (Father of Malaysian Independence)
Figure 39 Swamiji with the former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir

Figure 40 1986 Singapore National Carnival Day
Swamiji with Deputy Prime Minister – Mr Goh Chok Tong
Figure 41 During the staging of TFA’s Legend of Lady White Snake in Singapore
Swamiji with the Minister of Home Affairs – Mr Wong Kan Seng

Figure 42 1987 Kolam Festival in Singapore
Swamiji with former Foreign Minister – Mr Dhanabalan
1991 During the staging of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*
Swamiji with Prof Tommy Koh – Ambassador-at-Large and Chairman, Singapore Arts Council
Swamiji – First to appear and the last to leave

*Figure 44* Swamiji silently inspiring the performers from behind the scene with his Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient guiding influence
Chapter 4 - AMND: Interpretation

Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same,
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine in vain the sacred Seven;
But thou, meek lover of the good!
Find me, and turn thy back on heaven.

(Emerson 1857: 48)

Introduction

This Chapter will dialectically explore the interpretation of the narrative, text and context of the Temple of Fine Arts’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (TFA/AMND) comparing the interpretation of the characters in this production with the characters that appear in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The focus here will be on selected characters from the Shakespearean text: Oberon, Puck and Theseus will be...

---

1 According to Radhakrishnan and Moore, in *A Source book in Indian Philosophy*, to avoid misinterpretation, *Brahma* should be technically in context referred to as *Brahman*; meaning absolutely reality or absolute spirit or pure consciousness (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 39). Brahma in the Hindu pantheon is referred to as one of the triad Gods; Brahma (Creator-evolve creation), Vishnu (Preserver-revolve creation) and Shiva (Destroyer-resolve creation) (Shantanand 2001: 17). It was apt to begin with the poem from Emerson on ‘Brahman’, as this Chapter examines the metaphysical aspects of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the light of Hindu philosophy and interpretation.

2 A large part of the information gathered in this Chapter is from printed leaflets, brochures, materials, interviews and impromptu talks with the senior and elder members of the Temple of Fine Arts International; where available referencing will be cited. Information is also derived from memory from impromptu talks by Swamiji to the creative production team in the process of making AMND from its inception till the end of its tour in 1999 Chennai, India.
compared with TFA’s Ananga, Deepak and Dharmendra, after addressing the philosophy underpinning the reinvention paradigm.

A basic character template is provided to facilitate the comparison of the characters in Shakespeare’s AMND and TFA’s AMND\(^3\). For a more detailed character comparison, please refer to Chapter Five.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shakespeare’s Characters</th>
<th>Temple of Fine Arts Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King of the fairies</td>
<td>Oberon (\text{Ananga}) Celestial King of Priyaloka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen of the Fairies</td>
<td>Titania (\text{Bhogawathi}) Ananga’s Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Indian Boy</td>
<td>Indian Boy (\text{Prem}) The God-child of Love and Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mischievous Fairy</td>
<td>Puck (\text{Deepak}) A mischievous Gandharva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke of Athens</td>
<td>Theseus (\text{Dharmendra}) King of Bharatpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen of the Amazons</td>
<td>Hippolyta (\text{Jeya Bharani}) Queen of a Hill Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father of Hermia</td>
<td>Egeus (\text{Samudra}) A Nobleman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter of Egeus</td>
<td>Hermia (\text{Chandini}) His daughter, in love with Surej</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Love with Lysander</td>
<td>Lysander (\text{Surej}) A youth, in Love with Chandini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Love with Hermia</td>
<td>Demetrius (\text{Prabha}) Also in Love with Chandini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Love with Demetrius</td>
<td>Helena (\text{Nishi}) A Maiden, in Love with Prabha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Revels</td>
<td>Philostrate (\text{Hiranyavani}) Master of Revels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In analysing the text, this Chapter will also revisit Chapter Two, as it will foreground the practical application of the theoretical paradigms of the Indian Sublime, Higher Consciousness, Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism. The extracultural, national and universal appeal of theatre forms will be underpinned by Interculturalism, while the subversion application in Cultural Materialism will be used to treat the Shakespearean text; the containment application inherent in New Historicism will be used to treat the text from TFA underpinning the central ideology of spirituality established in Chapter Two.

---

\(^3\) For script comparison the Shakespearean text will read as follows: (1.1.line number), and the text from the Temple of Fine Arts will read as TFA followed by act and scene (TFA 1.1).
Shakespeare

Ben Jonson, Shakespeare’s contemporary, a poet and dramatist himself, in 1623 exclaimed that Shakespeare was “not of an age, but for all time”. Little did he know that his words would set forth a cosmic vibration which manifested his declaration into the hearts and minds of all humankind for all ages (Williams 2006: xxvii) (Kastan 1999: 11).

Celebrated worldwide by humankind from various backgrounds, from every known part of the world, irrespective of social hierarchy, race, age, colour, politics, religion, language and education, Shakespeare has become the most celebrated author off all time (Williams 2006: xxvii). Hailed as the greatest iconic author in the modern world (Trivedi and Minami 2010: 2), one can hardly fathom, that one man’s literary work could have withstood the decay of time. Alexander Dumas, most aptly sums up Shakespeare in this statement:

Shakespeare contains the whole of humanity. Anybody that studied Shakespeare, studies as once Corneille and Moliere, Racine and Regnard-plus Shakespeare. Shakespeare is as much a writer of comedy as Moliere and Regnard: look at Falstaff and Mercutio. He is as tragic as Corneille and Racine: see Othello and Richard III. Moreover, he’s as much a dreamer as Goethe: see Hamlet; as dramatic as Schiller-think of Macbeth. As poetic…as ever poet has been: remember Romeo and Juliet. It results that, when an actor or actress has studied Shakespeare they have studied everything…Shakespeare has divined everything… (Williams 2006: xxvii)

Shakespeare’s plays written between the late 16th and early 17th century for repertory theatre, have withstood the acid test of time for over four hundred years since their maiden performances, transcending national barriers (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997:1-2) (Donaldson and Australian National University. Humanities Research Centre. 1983: 74), where no writer, past or present, can be compared to that of the Bard’s resonance (Williams 2006: xxviii). Indeed, such a man deserves the accolade, to be hailed as: the man who knew the minds of men.

With the gift of the quill, with imaginative creative visions of pathos and mirth, whether it be on paper or on the stage, his work would strike a chord in one’s mind, leaving an

---

4 Kala Mandhir (The Temple of Fine Arts) Singapore’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, programme brochure, 6-9 August 1994 at The Victoria Theatre, p. 34.
imprinted resonance lingering ever after. With the fall of the curtain or at the close of a manuscript, it would surely be audacious to try to define such stature. And yet little is known of this great playwright; William was born to John and Mary Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, on the 23rd of April 1564. A wealthy businessman and mayor of Stratford, John sent William to grammar school at the King’s New School, where he studied Latin and Greek (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 42-45). This gave Shakespeare the platform to delve into French, Italian, Roman history and mythology source materials, fuelling his imagination and creativity in transcending historical boundaries, oceans, weaving legends and myths into the palates of his audience in lands distant from his own time.

His grasp over the minds of men, could have possibly refined and honed his psyche to a level such that he himself became a conduit of Cosmic Consciousness in revealing the universal truths to humankind. This he did with great skill, setting him apart from his contemporaries. What others see as trifles, Shakespeare transforms into veins of dramatic gems. For, in his writings, the immense ritual of passage is revealed; Kastan writes that Shakespeare’s greatest artistic themes include “love, friendship, personal ambition, jealousy, loyalty, desertion, betrayal, revenge, fear of abandonment, anxiety about aging, concern about immortality, pride and humility” reflecting the bliss of being human in all its frailty (Kastan 1999: 16). For, in examining the folly of man, does not Shakespeare speak to us the many truths that reveal the nature and intentions of ourselves through his players? He does this by travelling deep into the abyss of the human consciousness and uncovering the universal threads that unite humankind.

While Francis Mere locates the maiden performance of AMND in the year 1598, many scholars believe that its origin lay between 1594 and 1596. The exact date of the play being put to paper and its maiden performance remain unknown (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 805). Shakespeare in his legacy of immortal works has left us with 36 plays, one of which, dealing with mortals, fairies and demigods, addressed in this Chapter, will be explored from the perspective of the Indian Sublime as interpreted by the founder and eternal artistic director of the Temple of Fine Arts International; Swami Shantanand Saraswathi.
Swami Shantanand Saraswathi

From K. Bharatha Iyer’s *Art and Thought*, C. G. Jung states “On the Psychology of Eastern Meditation”:

> It is not the world of the senses, the body, colour and sound, or human passions, which are born anew in transfigured form through the creative power of the Indian soul; but it seems as if there were an “underworld” or an “overworld” of a metaphysical nature, out of which strange forms emerge into the familiar earthly world. (Kinsley 1979: 148-149)

By some providence Swamiji⁵ was invited to Perth in 1975. Raised in the Vedic tradition, a monk by choice, rivers always fascinated him. He loved taking walks along the banks of the Swan River. He was particularly intrigued by the confluence of the Swan and Canning Rivers at Pelican point. This confluence signifies a spiritually charged environment, making it immensely auspicious; it is considered a holy site in Hindu tradition. It is a vortex throbbing with the vibrations of absolute peace and tranquillity. Anyone keeping an open heart at this place, will be fortunate to experience the extinguishing of the stresses and strains of the mundane world we live in. It is at this juncture that a thought came upon Swamiji and he uttered a prayer: Lord, bless me so that I may be of service, “to this beautiful City and [its] beautiful people” in having brought me to this absolutely serene confluence of spirituality.

And as providence willed it, in early 1994 as Swamiji casually strolled into the Myer book store in Perth, picked up a paperback pocket edition of Shakespeare’s plays. Till that moment in time Swamiji had not read any Shakespearean literature. Reading Shakespeare’s AMND for the first time, Swamiji was awe-struck to discover that, through this comedy of errors, Shakespeare was informing humankind of something profound encapsulated, he believed, symbolically and literally in the Indian boy.

Ideas bombarded Swamiji’s psyche and he begin his own research in wanting to find out, Why an Indian boy? He poured through various books and articles from English literature scholars, yet he could not find a satisfactory answer to his question. Then it came to him: symbolically, in Indian culture, the Indian boy is a representation of the

---

⁵ Information derived from Swamiji’s talk on AMND at His Majesty’s Theatre, Perth, Western Australia 26th and 27th of August 1994, Video recording of the play.
quintessence of love absolute; wisdom absolute. In Vedic philosophy God is identified as absolute love and wisdom; the universal spirit which is “Shiva and Shakti harmonised into one”; and that is the Indian boy in AMND. It is none other than the cosmos being represented in aspects of love, wisdom, knowledge, light and harmony; all beautiful and all conducive. Thus Swamiji began to reinvent Shakespeare’s AMND into a dance drama ballet, from an Indian perspective, informed by insights from Vedic philosophy.

Priyaloka\(^6\); the celestial abode is a plane that sustains all perfect beings in an expression of all love, wisdom, light, and knowledge. In its manifestation, it is infinite, timeless, spaceless, immortal, it “pervades, permeates, interpenetrates every cosmos, every atom in the universe.” Therefore Swamiji says that the manifested universe must consist of the similar aspects of harmony, beauty, love and wisdom. All creatures understand this harmony, except the only discordant note, known as the “biologically grown-up baby” in this universe; the human being:

He has his own nightmares, his own images about himself, he has his preconceived notions and ideas, values and views which goes on changing from time to time, place to place, culture to culture, country to country, and he creates a world of his own and interprets it, thereby brings his own fantasies, nightmares and dreams; the heat of the midsummer within creates all these fantasies.\(^7\)

According to Vedic thought, there are seven gradational dimensions expressed in images; “Sapta Loka – seven planes, sapta bindu – seven centres, sapta sindu – seven oceans, sapta vana – seven forests, sapta puri – seven cities and sapta dweepa – seven islands”. The fairy King and Queen hail from one of those planes known as Ghandarva Loka; the celestial plane (Wilson and Hall 1864: 98) (Kinsley 1979: 46-47). Artists from any region of the planet, from any century having dropped their mortal frame, at a spiritual level, in a disembodied manner, are dwellers of this celestial plane. Here the celestials, using their thought force, offer a guiding hand in aiding the mortals. This gains a special intensity during the months of June and July. This twilight period, also known as midsummer, is celebrated in India, as Hindu practitioners throng river banks, lakes and seashores to propitiate the departed. The celestial plane, for Hindu practitioners, is home to the God and Goddess of Love, in Shakespeare’s AMND known as Oberon and Titania, the King and Queen of fairy land.

\(^6\) Armstrong refers to Priyaloka as Vaikuntha Loka; the planet of love eternal, the transcendental abode of Brahman (Armstrong 2010: 114).

\(^7\) Swamiji’s talk on AMND at His Majesty’s Theatre, Perth, Western Australia 26\(^{th}\) and 27\(^{th}\) of August 1994. Video recording of the play.
During midsummer, these celestials, our elder brothers and sisters, descend to interact with the thoughts, and emotions of mortals, creating a play within a play. Both Shakespeare’s play and the TFA production achieve harmony in their resolutions.

As in the blossoming of spring, the cosmos being symbolic of spring eternal becomes a representation of “light, knowledge, wisdom, colour, beauty, tranquillity, harmony and peace”. So too, the play by TFA begins in spring and ends in spring. According to Swamiji, Shakespeare, the divine bard, through AMND, is trying to pass on a message to humanity and it reads as follows: Man, awake from your silly dreams and nightmares which you have created for yourselves, develop some love, smile, open up your heart, be a little receptive, and allow our brothers and sisters of the divine plane to lovingly guide and teach us; thus developing wisdom and unclawking the veil of ignorance, beholding the entire cosmos as beauty divine.

Thus the awakening begins, leading to:

\[
\text{* Om Thyou Santhi} \\
\text{Anhariksham Santhi} \\
\text{Prithvi Santhi} \\
\text{Apa Santhi} \\
\text{Oshathaya Santhi} \\
\text{Vanaspathaya Santhi} \\
\text{Viswe Deva Santhi} \\
\text{Brahma Santhi} \\
\text{Sarvam Santhi} \\
\text{Sathireva Santhi} \\
\text{Om Santhi Santhi Santhi.}
\]

This translates as:

Om the Heavens be at peace
The Sky be at peace
The Earth be at peace
The Waters be at peace
The Medicinal herbs be at peace
The Plant kingdom be at peace
The Gods be at peace
The Creator (Brahma) be at peace
All be at peace
All be really at peace
Om Peace Peace Peace

From a book, on talks and mantras by Swami Shantananda compiled by the Shiva Family devotees of Colombo in Sri Lanka on the 7th of April 2006, pp. 85-86.
O God may there be peace in the sky and in the space
    May there be peace on land and in the waters
May medicinal herbs and vegetation bring us peace
    May all personification of God bring us peace
    May God bring us peace
May God bring us peace throughout the world
    May the peace be peaceful
    May God bring me such peace also

As a song, this is the Santhi mantra played at the end of the production\textsuperscript{11}. Swamiji reads it as: May there be harmony in the ionosphere, stratosphere, atmosphere, waters, land, mineral kingdom, animal kingdom, human kingdom, may harmony personify everywhere, peace, peace, peace; that is how the play comes to a harmonies end. This Vedic hymn then leads me to the following question: could this hymn be a prayer to the physical visualisation of the Great Chain of Being introduced in 1579\textsuperscript{12}. The image has been re-introduced with some description for basic rationalisation of the Vedic hymn.

\textsuperscript{9} Pandit Sri Subramanya Bhat is a Vedic and Sanskrit scholar. He is currently the chief priest at the Vedic Training Centre of Western Australia.

\textsuperscript{10} Translation rendered by Mrs Leela Sreedharan, a senior member of Shiva Family Singapore.

\textsuperscript{11} This same \textit{santhi} mantra formula was incorporated at the end of the Matrix: Revolutions trilogy movie by the Wachowski brothers. Hinduism was one of the main threads in the philosophy of the movie, Lawrence, M., \textit{Like a splinter in your mind: the philosophy behind the matrix trilogy}, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004, pp. 210, 204-205, De Tora, L., \textit{Heroes of film, comics and American Culture: essays on real and fictional defenders of home}, Jefferson, N.C., McFarland and Company, 2009, p. 270.

\textsuperscript{12} Image retrieved from Wikepedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_chain_of_being> accessed 7-9-2010. Purgatory according to Vedic description, is part of the astral plain, and is likened to a spheric zone, where souls are sent to work out its individual karma (Yogananda 1993 : 478-480).
As previously mentioned in Chapter Three (see footnote 34 and 39), the Great Chain of Being parallels the description of the soul’s karmatic life cycle in its progression and regressions through the various stages of evolvement as postulated by Kakar, Armstrong and Svoboda. Hence, my reading into Swamiji’s description of the Santhi mantra in relation to the Great Chain of Being signifying the various stages of evolution as argued by Armstrong:

From the smallest microbe up to insects, plants, birds, and mammals, we ascend the ladder of the species until we finally reach the lowest rung of human consciousness. (Armstrong 2007: 17)

In exploring these various stages of evolution in consciousness, the play ferries between the realms of the awakened state, daylight; between certainty and uncertainty and the dream state, twilight; between spells and apparitions, moonlight. The worlds lie apart, but on midsummer’s night the window\(^ {13} \) opens and they collide to a playwright’s delight (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 227). As previously discussed in Chapter Two

---

\(^{13}\) The window according to the Hindu calendar is referred to the month of \textit{Adī} or midsummer as mentioned in Chapter Two.
Meyer-Dinkgrafe explains that according to Vedic Science, consciousness is divided into three states: “waking, dreaming and sleeping”, which is subsequently sustained by a fourth state of consciousness known as Turiya (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 22-23). Further to this, Forman postulates that turiya or samadhi is referred to as pure consciousness in Vedic Science (Forman 1990: 7, 27-28), while W.T. Stace refers to it as pure unitary consciousness in Christian mysticism (Stace 1960: 110, 132 & 231). This is what Katharine Lee Bates refers to as the states of waking and dreaming in her edited version of AMND in 1895, consciously or unconsciously drawing the possible relevance to the various states of consciousness in Shakespeare’s AMND.

**Katharine Lee Bates**

Professor Katharine Lee Bates was a scholar and poet who practised her art at Wellesley College. Among her many works, she established and edited three of Shakespeare’s Comedies under *The Student’s Series of English Classic. A Midsummer Night’s Dream* published in 1895 was one among them (Kennedy and Kennedy 1999: 321) (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 225). Her vivid use of terms such as the waking world and the dream world in her work on a AMND together with the diagram she created sparked my research journey to the concept of what I call TFA’s AMND ‘radar field’.  

![Figure 7: AMND Diagram by Katharine Lee Bates](image)

Besides creating the diagram to reveal the interaction between the mortals and the fairies, Bates’ work foregrounded the exploration of deeper meanings other than drawing a temporal unison between “the waking world and the dream world”. Besides Forman, Stace, Malekin, et al, who as discussed earlier have researched the four states of consciousness in Vedic science, Bates is the only scholar who held the paradigm of “the world of daylight” and “the world of moonshine”, exploring the themes of charms and illusions set against the backdrop of demigods and Indian Kings. Questioning the “artistic harmony” in the play’s resolution of the prevailing notion of chaos, Bates introduced a central question; “What, in this that looks so helter-skelter, is the unifying truth?”; What brought about this harmonious resolution? (Shakespeare and Bates 1895: 10-11) (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 226-227).

This central question exploring the “unifying truth” (Rama and Dayton 1978: 94-120) together with Bates’ diagram sparked an awareness of the correlation between the Sri Chakra (V.K. 2008: 1) (Khanna 1979: 45), the research of Dr. Hans Jenny in wave phenomena as postulated by Arnie Lade (Lade 1998: 50), and the research into the states of normal consciousness (waking, sleeping, and dreaming) and higher consciousness (pure consciousness-turiya) on the platform of Vedic science by Malekin, et al. These combined correlations, then, underpin the creation of what I term TFA’s AMND radar field. Vedic science allows us to conclude that the fairy kingdom emits turiya (pure consciousness). The following segments will explore the co-related insights into the Sri Chakra, Hans Jenny and Arnie Lade’s experiments into wave phenomena and consciousness15.

The Sri Chakra Yantra

As we have seen the Indian boy represents the universal spirit of Shiva and Sakthi harmonised as one. What follows is a brief exploration of the esoteric worship of the Sri Chakra and its correlation to Swamiji’s thought process, which resulted in the creation of TFA’s AMND radar field.

---

15 The states of consciousness as argued by Malekin, et al, leading to the state of turiya (pure consciousness) or the state of realising the Absolute Brahman.
The practice of the *Sri Chakra*, consists of a fifteen seed vibratory syllabus, with the sixteenth held in secrecy only to be revealed by a true Guru. The deserving aspirant, when all sixteen syllabuses have been correctly uttered, can achieve pure consciousness revealing the esoteric elements of the *Sri Chakra* (Khanna 1979: 43) (V.K. 2008: 21). In one of the stages of the *Sri Chakra*’s worship sixteen names represent the sixteen phases of the moon (Khanna 1979: 66) (V.K. 2008: 7), which from this perspective relates directly to the crucial movement of the fairies by moonlight, but is looked upon as a mere conjuring of Shakespeare’s whimsical imagination by some scholars (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 811).

In order to grasp the rationale that underpins the correlation of the concept in both Bates’ and TFA’s radar energy field generated by the fairy kingdom having contact with the mortals, the principle of energy will be explored using the tantric doctrine of Goddess *Sakthi*, explaining the metaphysical practice through the energy. According to the doctrine, *Sakthi* represents the activating power of the universe: as such the feminine principle is seen as the activating force in matter. On the human mind it pulsates as an external stimulus, and on the spirit it is supreme in balance, conferring illumination. In their very nature, displaying their power, matter, energy and sound are the primary characteristics of the physical sciences and, in nature, as a living entity they possess the ability to transform, become, be and expand. All these activities are seen as the
immutable, transcendent and inherent force of Sakthi as the “Supreme Energy Principle”. Therefore Sakthi is seen as creation, preservation and absorption. Thus as a reservoir of kinetic energy Sakthi is united with the absolute opposite and complementary principle: it is Purusha, the “Supreme Male Principle” known as Shiva, the force of static principle, the foundation to all activity. As the silent observer, he is the subjective self of the cosmic spirit and Sakthi the kinetic self is phenomena- Prakriti (matter or nature). Although both energies are diametrically opposed to each other, they are in essence identical. Their union is supremely interrelated and so dependent on each other that the Hindu scriptures state “there can be no [Shiva] without [Sakthi] and no [Sakthi] without [Shiva]” (Khanna 1979: 43-67) (Shantanand 2001: 68) (Paul 2004: 178) (Alper 1989: 264).

And as one, they collectively form the Bindu (the dot in the centre of the Sri Chakra), it is “a geometric symbol of the Supreme, having no dimensions, yet having the potentialities of all manifestations” (Shantanand 2001: 18) (Lade 1998: 50-51). It is also the most intricate abstract shape of all symbols the bindu; in essence it is a mathematically extension-less dot. The triangle that sustains the bindu is known as the root triangle or cosmic womb; it represents the triad functions of the cosmos. These are the changeless Shiva as anti-matter and the activating power Sakthi as matter, both in unison, expand into “sound and material force” (Khanna 1979: 31, 55-56 & 71-73).

Bates’ exploration of the waking world and the dream world, viewed in this light, are by no means a coincidence. In the worship of the Sri Chakra, the root triangle is governed by eight guardians explained in the table below16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. TRIPURESI</td>
<td>The Controller of these three states/worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. TRIPURASUNDARI</td>
<td>The most beautiful One in all these three states/worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TRIPURAVAASANI</td>
<td>The One who lives in all these three states/worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. TRIPURASRISRI</td>
<td>The riches of all these three states/worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. TRIPURAMALINI</td>
<td>The sequences of all these states experienced by all people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. TRIPURASIDDHA</td>
<td>The achievements possible in all these three states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. TRIPURAMAMBA</td>
<td>The experience of the Cosmos in Her three states, unifying all the experiences of all Life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. TRIPURASUNDARI</td>
<td>The most beautiful One, the presiding Devi of the Bindu.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Bates makes no mention of the third state the “Pure Transcendent Consciousness” as Tripura, elaborated briefly in the practice of the Sri Chakra, her description of the waking and dream realm, in her 1895 publication is uncannily accurate (Rama and Dayton 1978: 95-96). Bates writes:

The contrasted features here are the waking world, the world of daylight, scepticism, reality, and the dream-world, the world of moonshine, charm, illusion. (Shakespeare and Bates 1895: 13)

In 1994 from one of his talks during the ongoing tour of AMND Swamiji, in passing, mentioned that the Sri Chakra can be used as time machine. Twelve years later in 2007, this concept of the Sri Chakra being used as a time machine was incorporated in the Hollywood movie entitled The Last Mimzy which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2007 (Phillips, Hart et al. 2007).

Figure 9: Sri Chakra image from the movie The Last Mimzy
On the 5th of August 1994 at the Victoria Theatre, during the staging of TFA’s AMND in Singapore, Swamiji explained that AMND is nothing but the play of *Sakthi* contained
in the worship of the *Sri Chakra*. Swamiji’s statement combined with the constructs of the mentioned authors in the field of higher consciousness led to the construction of TFA’s AMND radar field in *Figure 14*. 

Both Arnie Lade’s research into the psychoenergetic core in humans and Hans Jenny’s research on wave phenomena, lead to the signature of consciousness by way of sound or vibration. Their research finds its extension in the *Sri Chakra’s* representation of *Shiva* and *Sakthi*, as anti-matter and matter formulating in unison “sound and material force” as the Absolute Spirit or Absolute *Brahman*. Furthermore, Armstrong is of the opinion that human evolution originated from matter as a genesis from “atomic particles of eternal consciousness” (See Chapter Three, footnote 34). In that extension, *Shiva* and *Sakthi* represent the primordial sound vibration of the universe as the mantra “*Om*”, which is further elucidated and expanded in Chapter Five as preparation for the characterisation of the Lord of Misrule.

According to Meyer-Dinkgraf, as argued by Hartmann, the Vedic *Gandharvaveda* theory of music postulates that “*nada*”, the primordial sound, formulates the “basis of all creation, including consciousness”. Meyer-Dinkgraf and Hartmann argue that the dancer-actor-performer’s body begins to move with nature’s “rhythms and movements” when his or her body starts to reverberate “with that primordial sound”. As a result of this correlation, he observes that “sound is directly transformed into movement of the body”. Therefore, given this premise, Meyer-Dinkgraf is further of the opinion that a working hypothesis can be instituted on the grounds that all creative activity, created and performed in the state of higher consciousness

[… will be fuelled by impulses emanating directly from the universal level of pure consciousness, […]. Such impulses will then reach the spectator and enable his mind to reach the same underlying, universal level of consciousness from which the aesthetic impulses originated. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 158-159)

As in this case, from the field of *Brahman*, as Coward argues that *Brahman* is the Vedas and *Brahman* is the mantra “*Om*” (Coward 1997: 7), while Meyer-Dinkgraf further argues that the “human physiology […] is […] an expression of *Brahman*”, and thus, he

---

17 Information derived from recorded talks of Swamiji at the Victoria Theatre and at Kala Mandhir-TFA, 5-8-1994 in Singapore.
postulates that the “human physiology and all other objects within and beyond the range of human perception are manifestations of Brahman” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 99). Based on these arguments, Meyer-Dinkgrafe concludes that “All aspects of theatre, too, have their origin in this field of Brahman” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95). As already stated, it is this field of Brahman that underpins my working hypothesis of TFA’s AMND radar field.

Using the scientific research of sound and consciousness by Lade and Jenny, together with the works of Malekin, et al, in the field of Brahman (pure consciousness-turiya) as a platform in deconstructing the Sri Chakra, I have superimposed that deconstruction upon Bates’ AMND diagram, reconstructing and reinventing it to formulate TFA’s AMND radar field.

Therefore, before I move into Hans Jenny’s research on wave phenomena, the work of Arnie Lade in his book entitled Energetic Healing, Embracing the Life Force will be explored setting the platform for Jenny’s work and the significance of TFA’s AMND radar field.

**Arnie Lade**

Lade in his research to explore the psychoenergetic core of humans formulates his arguments by using Indian, Chinese and Tibetan philosophy. Using the Indian Sushumna\(^{19}\) seven chakra system, the Tibetan Three zone division and the Chinese Heaven-Earth-Humanity (Ying-Yang) system, Lade argues that the human consciousness and the psychoenergetic core are interrelated and do not hold any physical form; each chakra in the Sushumna system emits a nucleus psychoenergy which has a corresponding energy field. This nucleus and energy field work on the same premise as that of the Ying-Yang concept; perfect balance between the two. Lade is further of the opinion that consciousness and psychoenergy appear when a soul incarnates, and its vibration frequencies began to vary when the spirit settles into the human frame. In Eastern thought the soul occupies the physical body via the soft fontanel atop the infant’s head representing the communion between the spirit and the divine realm. This soft fontanel is known as “the Gate of Brahma, the creator”, and in

\(^{19}\) The Sushumna system is discussed in Chapter Five in relation to Stanislavsky’s Acting System and its formulation to the development my devotional acting-theatre praxis.
Chinese philosophy it is known as “the Heavenly gate” (Lade 1998-48) (Capra 1983: 106-107) (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 70-71) (Khanna 1979: 121). It is similar to the rite of passage known as “Garbhadanam and Valaikaapu or Seemanta” in Indian Hindu practice.

Lade’s research further goes on to assert that light and sound are essential elements of pure consciousness and energy within the causal world, and they can act as a pathway

---

20 As mentioned in Chapter Three, described by Defouw, Svoboda and Kakar, there are four stages of Vedic life for a Hindu; the first- brahmachari (celibate student), the second- grihasta (householder amid worldly responsibilities), the third- vanaprastha (retired person; the hermit), and the fourth- sannyasi (ascetic; the forest dweller or wanderer; devoid of all earthly matters). In specifically relating the correlation between the Vedic and Chinese philosophies of “the gate of Brahma, the creator” and “the Heavenly gate” to “Garbhadanam and Valaikaapu or Seemanta”, and the recitation of mantras playing a crucial role in Hindu society, I draw focus on the life of a Grihastha (householder). Hindu marriages are conducted via Vedic ceremony. The couples are visualised on the day of the marriage as “sacred rites of passage”, before conception, during conception and until their children begin their own earthly life.

21 In the iconographic representation of Lord Shiva, the cosmic principles of light and sound are depicted by the Damaru (Drum-representing Sound) and Agni (Fire-representing Light). In the Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night directed by Jenny de Reuck, I played the character Lord of Misrule, striking a contemporary post-modernism posture to denote Lord Shiva signifying the elements of
toward the realm of the unseen and unheard as in the dream world mentioned by Katharine Lee Bates and in the worship of the Sri Chakra. The primordial vibration referred to in the Vedic and Hindu philosophy as Shabdam\textsuperscript{22} or Gong in Chinese philosophy, creates the backdrop “noise” of the universe and can be traced back to the “cosmic Big Bang” theory, resonating “throughout the universe”. He further states that “audible sound is an extension of the sacred sound” which has its related association with the “psychoenergetic core” in humans. Therefore in its fundamental principles sound is made up of “pulse, wave and form” (Lade 1998: 49-50) (Capra 1983: 198-199) (Khanna 1979: 37).

Dr Hans Jenny and Cymatics

Mantra is an exact science. It is a science of phonetics, science of sound, science of cymatics. It is ultra rational and not mere blind faith. “Man naath traayate iti mantra” says the rishi meaning “that which by recitation, saves” (Shantanand 2001: 4)\textsuperscript{23}.

Matter and wave-form relation studies\textsuperscript{24} was pioneered by Dr Hans Jenny and coined as Cymatics, using an instrument Jenny invented called the Tonoscope in Figure 12; where images of sound can be captured.

---

\textsuperscript{22} Also referred to as Om or Brahman (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 55-56).
\textsuperscript{23} Although published in 2001, this talk was given by Swamiji on 9-2-1981 at the residence of Chellamah Mami (Auntie) in Bangsar Park, Kuala Lumpur.
\textsuperscript{24} The works of Arnie Lade and Hans Jenny’s “wave phenomena” as an extension of the sacred sound, Om (Lade 1998: 49-50) (Khanna 1979: 44), draw a parallel to the introduction to the states of consciousness (waking, dreaming and sleeping) and of higher consciousness (pure consciousness\textsuperscript{turiya}) in the academic fields of Social Sciences and Humanities as applied in theatre practice by the authors, Malekin, et al, discussed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, Yarrow, Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Nair argue that pure consciousness is linked to the insights of quantum physics (Nair 2007: 161) researched by John Hagelin as the foundation of the Unified Field Theory (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 180-182). According to Hagelin, the Unified Field Theory or Universal Consciousness connects all human beings at a level of wave frequencies from the Planck scale (Arntz, Chasse et al., What the Bleep – Down the Rabbit Hole, Hopscotch and Roadshow Entertainment, 2006). Quantum theory, according to Capra, has radically altered the classically held concepts of solid matter bound by Newtonian views on the laws of nature; this solid mass dissolves into wave –like patterns creating, “probabilities of interconnections”, revealing that the Universe is oneness in its essence (Capra 1983: 55-68). Nair argues that quantum theory identifies that “particles manifest themselves as distinct quanta of energy at different frequencies and there are non-localized waves, which themselves can be derived from the “plenum” or vacuum state, which contains potential energy” (Nair 2007: 161). On the basis of Capra and Nair’s argument, this potential energy, than draws a parallel to the kinetic and static energies of Shiva and Sakthi presented above. Yarrow, similarly to Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Malekin, relates the wave frequencies of quantum theory to the already known states of consciousness; waking, dreaming and sleeping (Nair 2007: 161-164). The combined research by Malekin, et al, proposing Vedic Science’s pure consciousness in theatre, strikes a parallel unity with the research of John Hagelin (Is Consciousness the Unified Field? A Field Theorist’s Perspective, Journal of Modern Science and Vedic Science, Vol. 1, no. 1, 1987, pp. 29-87) in the field of pure consciousness.
Jenny discovered that the images take the shape of geometric forms and resemble those of *Yantras* or *Mandalas*\(^\text{25}\) in Eastern teachings, thus proving that sound “when visually translated will produce a geometric form”. Coincidently, Einstein also visualized matter as a state of “dynamic geometry”. In his research, Jenny claims that when the monosyllable word of the Vedic mantra *Om* was recited through the Tonoscope, the image of the *Sri Chakra*, known as Yantra or Mandala was generated as in *Figure 13*.\(^\text{26}\) (Shantanand 2001: 10-13) (Lade 1998: 50) (Khanna 1979: 44).

![Figure 12: Dr. Hans Jenny with his Tonoscope\(^\text{27}\)](image1)

![Figure 13: The Mantra *Om* generating the *Sri Chakra*](image2)

The mystical primordial sound vibration of the universe is represented by the sacred monosyllabic chant or mantra, “*Om*”. According to the Yoga Sutras the word “*Om*” represents the universe or God: it is written as follows, “His name is Om”, and thus his name and form are inseparable. And thus Saint John spoke “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1,3 [Bible]). The Word symbolises the triadic functions of creation-evolving, sustenance-revolving and destruction-resolving; representing the Triad Godhead of the Hindu Pantheon; *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*. Hence the Vedic word *Om* became “Hum of the Tibetans; Amin of relating to the Unified Field Theory in quantum physics. This then brings to the surface the possibility of a potentially new form of theatre as discussed by David George (George 1989: 171-179). Sustained by Mishra’s Indian Sublime, in formulating my devotional acting-theatre praxis, through the Absolute Spirit-*Brahman* in relation to the *Natyasastra*, this new form of potential theatre will be discussed in Chapter Five.

\(\text{25 A Yantra or Mandala is a scientifically proven mathematical instrument used in the ritual of meditation and worship to unite the individual spirit with the primordial spirit of the cosmos (Khanna 1979: Foreword).}

\(\text{26 According to Khanna, this image was produced in an experiment by Ronald Nameth (Khanna 1979: 116).}


According to the ancient forefathers of Bharatmata, the Sri Chakra is the manifested form of that primordial sound vibration of the universe, the monosyllable word; Om. What was once unexplainable can now be explained and replicated through modern scientific methodology (Lade 1998: 51) (Khanna 1979: 53-60) (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 55-56) (Flood 2003: 556). No other word in the English dictionary has ever come so closely to embodying the complete meaning and understanding of term Mantra other than the word Cymatics. Swamiji states:

[Ernst Chladni’s] work inspired Dr Hans Jenny of Zurich. It was [Hans Jenny] who coined a near perfect modern name for mantra. He called it Cymatics, that is, the study of the interrelationship of wave forms with matter. (Shantanand 2001: 9)

The mantra or presiding deity thus denotes the sacred centre or an anthropomorphic form. Hence for the reinvention of AMND, the bindu which represents Shiva and Sakthi (Khanna 1979: 31) is substituted with Oberon and Titania, creating the conception of TFA’s AMND radar field. Based on the energy signature that is transmitted to the mortals through the portal of Midsummer from the dream world, that which creates the chaos and resolves it, is the energy field; Om. As Titania-Bhogawathi says:

Invoke what was before. Conjure up before us the dream of midsummer, when the sun, at its northern solstice, gave us the power to mingle with men and charge their affairs with the guiding light of love. Conjure up, for our pleasure, our play in the mortal world, when we, too, were caught in that dream (TFA – Prologue).

According to Stace, Malekin, et al, the state of turiya or pure consciousness is the Absolute state of realisation or “Brahman or the Universal Self” (Stace 1960: 34)

28 In the modern world Bharatmata is known as India.
29 Experimenting with a thin metal plate and a violin, Chladni discovered geometric forms. Thus his discovery paved the way for Jenny. See Paul Newham’s 1998 Therapeutic voicework: principles and practice for the use of singing as a therapy, p. 284. Also see Joachim-Ernst Berendt’s The third ear: on listening to the world, 1992 and Nada Brahma: the world is sound: music and the landscape of consciousness, 1991.
30 It is dubbed as lila; the divine play of the Gods, “and the world is seen as the stage of the divine play”. It is the play of Brahman known as Maya (illusion), formulated as the “magic creative power”, signifying “the psychological state of anybody under the spell of the magic play” (Capra 1985: 87-88).
(Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 23) (Yarrow 2001: 120-121) (Malekin and Yarrow 1997: 133 & 136). As already stated, Meyer-Dinkgrafe cites Coward in describing the entirety of Brahman as the Vedas and the monosyllable “Om”. It represents


[...] the three levels of ordinary consciousness – waking, dreaming, and deep sleep – yet also reaches out beyond to the transcendent where the sound itself comes to an end. Brahman which is said to be beyond, is also said to be AUM\(^{31}\). (Coward 1997: 7)

Meyer-Dinkgrafe postulates that according to Vedic Science, “the basis of all creation is a field of the Absolute” or Brahman (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95). In the light of the above insights which combined crucial aspects including the notion of Sakthi as the “Supreme Energy Principle” (kinesis) and Shiva as the “Supreme Male Principle” (stasis) with Arnie Lade’s psychoenergetic core energy field I have postulated the creation of an energy field which brings into realisation TFA AMND radar field. This occupies the human (performer’s) body as waves of pure consciousness, drawing its parallel to quantum theory, set against Hans Jenny’s Cymatics geometric pattern of “Om”.

**TFA’s AMND radar field Diagram**

Does love act deliberately? Yes and No. Life is love and love is life. What keeps the body together but love? What is desire but love of the self? What is fear but the urge to protect? And what is knowledge but the love of truth? The means and forms may be wrong, but the motive behind is always love-love of the me and the mine. The me and the mine may be small, or may explode and embrace the universe, but love remains. (Nisargadatta, Frydman et al. 1988: 71-72)

\(^{31}\) AUM is also represented as Om.
Utilising Bates’ diagram as a working template, I have reconstructed its insights by incorporating the Vedic Ideology of the Sri Chakra and have thus come up with TFA’s AMND radar field.

Para Vidya or higher knowledge, as postulated by Haney, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgrafe in Chapter Two, corresponds with the transcendental pure consciousness state of turiya, which formulates Brahman as the Absolute-Atman. As such, according to Swami Sivananda:

There is no virtue higher than love; there is no treasure higher than love; there is no knowledge higher than love, there is no Dharma higher than love; there is no religion higher than love; because love is truth; love is God. God is an embodiment of love. (Sivananda 1997: 260)

Therefore, I start from the premise that God is the absolute embodiment of love and wisdom, which is represented as the universal spirit of Shiva and Shakti harmonised as one, encapsulating the celestial plane to formulate the abode of the God and Goddess of Love, the monarchs of fairy land; Titania-Bhogawathi and Oberon-Ananga. The exposure of the shaded area shown in the radar is the field of exposure of the “wave phenomena” of the Sri Chakra generated by the fairy realm encompassing the exposure to the characters. Reversing Bates’ numeric ascending ideology, the radar indicates a descending sequential order from 7 to 1 indicating the reduction or eradication of the
human ego to the state of sublimation, resolution or illumination; foregrounding clarity of thought so that the lovers become resolute.

In elucidating this process of ‘sublimation, resolution or illumination’ in an individual-actor-spectator, as previously mentioned in Chapter Two, Malekin and Yarrow have suggested a project-practice-process they call “pashyanti”, where individuals are trained to access the state of pure consciousness, turiya. Identifying Yoga and shamanistic chanting as two of various methods, the authors are of the opinion that prolonged exposure to Yoga will enable the actor to rapidly train the mind to access the state of pashyanti (Madhavan 2010: 37-38).

While according to Robert E. Svoboda’s guru, Aghori Vimalananda postulates that to achieve this state of ‘sublimation, resolution or illumination’, the practice of Mantra (sound-energy), Yantra (vehicle-body) and Tantra (roadmap) are essential. The Mantra or sound-energy directs the Yantra or vehicle-body in accordance to the Tantra or roadmap (Svoboda 1998: 11), in arriving at a destination or realising a goal. Similar to the experiments on “wave form”, geometric patterns of the mantra “Om”, and consciousness, Aghori Vimalanana and Svoboda are further of the opinion that when uttered the mantra’s vibration energises the Yantra (vehicle-body), this energy can then be directed by the ritualistic practices of Tantra (directional road mapping).

According to the authors, there are three categories of mantras: the first is descriptive, describing the process and the desired object-goal; the second is meaninglessness, a

---

32 See Chapter Two, footnote 4.
33 Explained in Chapter Three, at TFA augmented with Yoga, Vedic chanting is performed regularly. See Chapter Three, footnote 59.
34 According to Svoboda, “Aghoris” are a band of Tantric (fixed ritualistic processes) Yogis who have surpassed all ritualistic practices. These ritualistic practices are performed to obtain extra-ordinary powers called “siddhis”, with the ultimate aim of embodying “the entire cosmos”. Although the practice of Tantra begets siddhis, the authors caution that even a minor error in the ritualistic practice can “result in insanity, death, or worse” (Svoboda 1998: 9-11). Swami Sivananda stresses that siddhis are not a gauge in proving whether a sage has attained liberation or Self-realisation of Brahman-Absolute. In general, a true illumined Guru will not exhibit siddhis in public. However, between the Guru and disciple some form of super-physical existances may be revealed to guide the aspirant along the path to liberation (Sivananda 1997: 155). Acquiring siddhis without liberating oneself from “lust, anger, attachment, greed and vanity” will result in the downfall of the aspirant succumbing to various impure desires lurking in the mind. Swami Sivananda observes that there are eight major siddhis and twenty six minor siddhis (Sivananda 1995: 271-273). As such, Svoboda strongly stresses that the guru must be tested thoroughly for the true signs of liberation and when the right Guru is realised, stick to the one (Svoboda 1998: 153-154). If this advice is not strictly adhered to, drawing a parallel between medical practitioners and Gurus, Swami Sivananda postulates that “with one doctor there is prescription, with two there is consultation, with three there is cremation”. Adhering to one Guru, the aspirant will receive illumination in time, with two Gurus, the aspirant will become bewildered from contradicting advise, and with three, the aspirant will become totally lost (Shantanand 2007: 69).
collection of sounds which carries no meaning; and the third is bijas (seed-sounds or seed-mantra) in which each individual syllable is nasalised. When the bijas or seed-mantras are repeated frequently

[...] a sort of standing wave, permanently energizing either an external Yantra [(vehicle-body)] or some area of the aspirant’s [(actor-spectator)] brain\textsuperscript{35}, resulting in the continuous production of a specific effect [pure consciousness-turiya], one which is coherent with the personality invoked. (Svoboda 1998: 11)

Aghori Vimalananda and Svoboda further elucidate that the subtler the speech, the stronger the effects on “both the individual and the surrounding environment”. The mantra recitation can be performed in four categories of speech, similar to that mentioned by Malekin and Yarrow\textsuperscript{36}: Vaikhari, vocalisation of speech; Madhyama, speech through nasalisation; Pashyanti, mental recitation; and Para, speech through telepathy where the intention is communicated rather than the sound (Svoboda 1998: 11).

This ‘sublimation, resolution or illumination’ process as elucidated by Aghori Vimalananda and Svoboda together with the combined research of Lade, Jenny, Malekin, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgrafe constitutes the scientific working process of TFA’s AMND radar field. Through the Tantra’s (roadmap-ritualistic process) constant repetition and exposure to the Mantra-sound-energy “Om” or the field of Brahman or TFA’s AMND radar field represented by Shiva-Oberon, Shakti-Titania, Deepak-Puck and the fairies energising the “surrounding environment” (the forest), the lovers-individual-aspirant-actor-spectator (Yantra-vehicle-body) will eventually encounter a shift of wave pattern in the brain reinventing themselves in the state of “sublimation, resolution or illumination”.

Amit Goswami explains that in focused concentration of one’s state of mind, the subject (mind experience) – object (physical entity) split (differentiation) will cease to exist giving way to a state of pure consciousness (enlightenment). This shift or perspective in

\textsuperscript{35} The effects of mantra recitation or exposure imprinting on the brain are to form an extension of the brain cell embryonic impression as postulated by Swami Sivananda, Agarwal and Sastry mentioned above in footnote 20.

\textsuperscript{36} Malekin and Yarrow explain the four levels of Indian linguistics from the platform of cognition and consciousness. See Chapter Two, footnote 4. Aghori Vimalananda and Svoboda explain the levels in specific connection to Mantra (sound-energy) recitation and its effects upon Yantra (vehicle-body) and Tantra (ritual-roadmap).
the mind is called *Samadhi*\(^{37}\) in eastern Indian, *Satori*\(^{38}\) in Zen Buddhism and in Christianity it is termed as experiencing the *Holy Spirit*\(^{39}\) (Vicente, Chasse et al. 2005) (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2006)\(^{40}\), which he argues, “are nothing but possible movements of consciousness”. Goswami further argues that:

> What these physicists and new physics in general are spelling out is the death of dualism\(^{41}\). It’s not mind over matter; it’s mind=matter. Not consciousness creates reality, but consciousness=reality. (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2007: 116)

Thus, the exposure to the TFA AMND radar field “*Om*” (Fairy Land or Fairies), in Frawley’s view, would be the direct restructuring of the individual’s “karmic patterns”, and from these sound vibrations, individuals can realign themselves to higher karmic energies, enabling them to elevate themselves above their “personal and collective limitations” to unlimited higher potentials (Frawley 2010: 33). This is supported by Malekin, et al’s, theory regarding states of higher pure consciousness. Exposure to the fairies, as we have seen, allows the lovers to awake in a state of higher-pure consciousness: the resolution to TFA’s AMND.

As sovereigns of the human realm, Theseus-Dharmendra and Hippolyta-Jeya Bharani are unexposed at the moment until their expedition into the forest where they stumble upon the lovers. The sovereigns are in the outer realm for they are more evolved and are in a higher state of consciousness or pure consciousness (*turiya*); they are more receptive to the change that is enveloping them, in this case the results of the “wave phenomena” exposure to the lovers\(^{42}\). The result of the exposure is evident when

---

\(^{37}\) A superconscious state where individualised identity merges with the Cosmic Spirit experienced by a yogi (Yogananda 1993: 126).

\(^{38}\) The practice of realising one’s true nature resulting in liberation or enlightenment (Fromm 1960: 114).

\(^{39}\) Experiencing a level of awareness in knowing that the body’s life force (energies) vibrates as part of creation (Yogananda 1993: 422).

\(^{40}\) Information is derived from the DVD series entitled *What the Bleep do we know*? Authored by William Arntz, Betsy Chasse and Mark Vicente, The DVD explores the relations between quantum mechanics, neurobiology, human consciousness, the everyday situation, and the realisation that all human beings connected to each other with the Universe (Vicente, Chasse et al 2005) (Arntz, Chasse et al 2006). Malekin et al and Hagelin all share the similar research in consciousness. See footnote 24.

\(^{41}\) Goswami’s argument is further sustained by Mancing and Haney’s Vedic reassessment mentioned in Chapter Two, where the authors highlight dire implications for literary concerns and argue for a reassessment of research methodology based on Vedic science rather than the Western body-mind dualism (Mancing 1999: 167) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 67) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 157) (Haney 2002: 7, 15-17) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 165).

\(^{42}\) This “wave phenomena” or energy field created by the TFA’s AMND radar field or “*Om*”, as argued by Coward as the “entirety of *Brahman*” (Coward 1997: 7) and by Meyer-Dinkgrafe as the “field of *Brahman*” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 95), sustains the state of *turiya* or pure consciousness as “wave phenomena” (Lade 1998: 49-50) (Capra 1983: 198-199) (Khanna 1979: 37, 44). According to Meyer-
Demetrius-Prabha remarks that by an unexplainable power his infatuation for Hermia-Chandini has been chastised and his love for Helena-Nishi redeemed. Using the metaphor of healing from sickness, he further goes on to explain his return to his natural self, as do the others (4.1.61-195).

Unlike the lovers who were in turmoil, the artisans are simple-minded individuals and, in an attempt to make known Oberon-Ananga’s folly, Puck-Krishna as the adolescent ingeniously uses Bottom-Vimada and the lovers to unveil Oberon-Ananga’s jealousy in reconciling the rift between the shadow King and Titania-Bhogawathi.

The inner circle (3a and 2a) represents the separation of equilibrium; the separation of Oberon-Ananga-Shiva and Titania-Bhogawathi-Sakthi thus creating friction in the fairy kingdom. Further, utilising the treatment of the Sri Chakra, 3a represents Oberon-Ananga; masculine or static energy (the colour white) denoting Lord Shiva smeared in ash, while 2a represents Titania-Bhogawathi; feminine or kinetic energy (the colour red) denoting Goddess Sakthi (Khanna 1979: 66). When these antagonistic, separated energies are present, chaos prevails.

The triangle pointing downward represents creation (V.K. 2008: 3) and the Bhindu; the central dot represents the geometrical “symbol of the Supreme having no dimensions, yet having the potentialities of all manifestations” (Shantanand 2001: 18). This represents the unison of the two forces/energies (Oberon-Shiva and Titania-Sakthi), creating fission: a third element becomes present creating harmony or perfect equilibrium, signifying pure consciousness; pure love or love absolute, which is the representation of the changeling, the Indian boy; Krishna as the child. It is this field of energy that becomes apparent during the time of Midsummer known as Aadi Masam in the Hindu Calendar during the months of June and July opening a portal for the fairies to move freely among mortals, and it is this very same energy field that removes
the veil of ignorance from the lovers, as argued by Arnie Lade’s psychoenergetic core, setting them on their rightful path. Katharine Lee Bates aptly words it as:

[...] sweeping away the impurities of life’s toilsome hours, and purging man’s mortal grossness yet once more with the mysteries of moonlight, dreams and love. (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 227)

The central theme of Shakespeare’s AMND is love, making its transition from courtship to marriage (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 805) (McDonald 2004: 481) (Lau 1978: 2). But how is love transmuted and into what form does love morph? These were some of the questions that confronted the creative process of TFA’s AMND central theme of divine love as it explored and weaved through the gradational levels of mortals, fairies and the demigods (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 226). The point of departure from TFA’s AMND began as indicated above in Chapter Two with the central question of; what is an Indian boy doing in Shakespeare’s AMND? Who is this Indian boy? And why is he an object of possession? Thus the reconstruction of the narrative began with questions such as; could the Indian boy be a representation of love; divine love? If so, in the trappings of possession, what distortions would love morph into?

What seems, is not what is. And out of this chaos could a unifying truth (Shakespeare and Bates 1895: 11) (Roberts and Thompson 1997: 226), a universal truth emerge? (Howard 2004: 472) In the heat of midsummer the lovers in turmoil, and upon contact with the celestial world all is set right. Upon hearing the words of the Indian boy, Oberon feels appropriately chastised; he realises the folly of his actions in creating the seeming chaos that has consumed the dream world in the figure of the illumined one, Robin Goodfellow.

As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, according to Swamiji, perhaps Shakespeare was hinting at the possibility of the influence of Hindu concepts45 on his drama. The cause of the conflict between Oberon-Ananga and Titania-Bhogawathi, the confusion inflicted by Puck-Deepak upon the lovers, therefore the cause of all disorder, is assigned to the Indian boy-Prem. Who, we may ask, is this Indian boy? And why does he hold so much importance? For it is said that the boy was spirited away from an Indian King and that King is none other than Oberon-Ananga, who hails “from the farthest step of India”

45 From the corroborative works of Desai, Prasad and Wright, it can be surmised that according to Wright, Shakespeare did draw vastly upon Fitch’s accounts of India. From the accounts of these authors it can be ascertained that Swamiji’s notion of Shakespeare being inspired by Hindu concepts can be sustained. See footnote 47 and 48.
Bates argues that fairyland is a kingdom in India, with scented aromatic flowers “where mortals live in a half dreamy state”, referred to as the Indies⁴⁶ (Shakespeare and Bates 1895: 162). Recounting her friendship with the Indian boy’s mother, Titania says:

His mother was a vot’ress of my order,
And, in the spiced Indian air by night
Full often hath she gossiped by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune’s yellow sands,
Marking th’ embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind,
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following, her womb then rich with my young squire,
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
And for her sake I will not part with him. (2.1.123-137)

For Desai Shakespeare was referring to the Malabar Coast of India extending from “Goa to Cochin”, where “Ralph Fitch, one of the earliest English explorers to travel in India” began his journey in 1583 travelling through (Desai 2005: 143-144):

Golconda, Agra (the court of Akbar, to whom he presented a letter of greeting from the queen), Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Hugli, Chittagong, and then by sea to Pegu (Burma), the Rangoon region, Siam, and Malacca. In the autumn of 1588 Fitch began his return journey via Bengal, then took ship and sailed around the Indian Peninsula to Cochin and Goa, arriving back in London on 20 April 1591. (Sykes 1975: 153) (Desai 2005: 145)

In a three volume enlarged edition, Fitch’s travel account⁴⁷ was published between 1598 and 1600 by Hakluyt (Desai 2005: 145), and according to Greenblatt scholars are in general agreement that AMND was written between 1594 and 1596 (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 805), with the first edition of the First Quarto published in 1600 (Desai 2005: 145). From this timeline, Desai asserts that during the four years prior to AMND being written there was sufficient time for the accounts of Fitch’s travel to spread by word of mouth and even for the possibility that Shakespeare and Fitch might

---

⁴⁷ Apart from AMND, according to Trivedi and Desai, it is interesting to note that Fitch’s published account of India resonates much in the works of Shakespeare, notably in Macbeth, Hamlet, Richard II and Henry VIII (Trivedi, P and Bartholomeusz, D. India’s Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation, and Performance, 2005, p. 13) and (Desai 2005: 146).
have met (Desai 2005: 145). However, Prasad postulates that it is arduous to determine whether Shakespeare was acquainted with Fitch or otherwise, but nevertheless Prasad argues that evidence from his dramatic works clearly indicates that Shakespeare drew vast inspiration from Fitch’s published travel accounts of India (Prasad 1980: 35): it is an account corroborated by Arnold Wright (Wright 2000: 32). According to Prasad:

Some of these, to be sure, might have been conveyed by Fitch orally to his contemporaries over their cups of sack or Gascony. Those who were wont to discuss the latest news in their taverns could not have failed to discover Fitch and listen amazedly to his romantic adventures. This may sound impossible today, but in those days London was a small place and expeditions to the Orient were not so frequent, though many attempts were made to discover a north-east or north-west passage to the far Cathay and India. The very fact that these efforts had hitherto failed must have drawn the attention of patriotic Elizabethans to Fitch’s successful overland journey and his subsequent return. That Fitch was a popular figure and his expeditions to the East had created a stir is evident from some allusions to him in the literary works of the period. (Prasad 1980: 34)

Desai maintains that there has been no significant commentary of Fitch’s accounts of India with regards to Oberon and Titania’s struggle for the Indian boy. He even asserts that the East India Company valued and specifically consulted Fitch on matters relating to India. “She never had so sweet a changeling” (2.1.23), as Titania graphically and vividly describes her friendship to the Indian boy’s mother, giving the impression of drawing upon Fitch’s narrative (Desai 2005: 145).

Therefore in following this train of thought regarding the struggle for the changeling boy and in line with the formulation of the state of pure consciousness, the Absolute

---

48 Shakespeare, always in search of new material, according to Arnold Wright, was “ever on the lookout for local colour, would have quickly discovered Fitch and drawn upon his vast store of out of the way knowledge for those studies of human nature which still hold a unique place in the world’s literature” Wright, A. Early English Adventurers in the East, London, 1917, p. 32. Prasad further validates that the line from Act 1 Scene 3 Line 7 of Macbeth “Her husband’s to Aleppo gone, master o’th’ Tiger” (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et all 1997: 2567), resonates Fitch’s narrative as he and John Newberie in 1583 sailed in the Tiger from London to Tripoli landing at Aleppo (Prasad 1980: 35-36) (Desai 2005: 144).

49 Contracted as a textual advisor for the Shakespeare Santa Cruz theatre company, Margo Hendricks was of the opinion that the Indian boy, cast as an adult, six feet tall, almost naked with a lame piece of gold loincloth in Danny Scheie’s 1991 direction of AMND (Hendricks 1996: 37-38) is a signifier of racial stereotyping (Hendricks 1996: 41). Hendricks brands the production as “unmistakably racist” in denotations and representations (Hendricks 1996: 38), “Obscured by Dreams: Race, Empire and Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, Shakespeare Quarterly 47:1, 1996, pp. 38, 41. And in Chetan Datar’s 2004 interpretation of AMND entitled Jungal Mein Mangal (Love in the Jungle), depicting a postcolonial parody as “‘Bush baal [Bush-baby],’ from today’s land of riches, America” (Trivedi 2010: 71), the Indian boy, who happened to be cast as an adult as well, plays an “overgrown spoilt brat” in need of instant indulgence by Titania, but is pacified with the threats of Osama as Oberon (Trivedi 2010: 61). While from the perspective of Imperialism and politics, Desai argues the possibility of Oberon as a representation of England and Titania as a representation of Portugal-Spain and the Indian boy, representing India. From this Desai then outlines the race for supremacy over India between Portugal
Brahman as argued by Malekin, et al; could the Indian boy-Prem be a representation of Lord Krishna\(^{50}\) in Shakespeare’s AMND? In both representations of Krishna - as the Indian child-Prem and an adolescent-young man Puck-Deepak - the characters seem mischievous. As the child, he is seemingly the cause of disruption between Titania-Bhogawathi and Oberon-Ananga, and as Puck-Deepak, he is seemingly the cause of disruption with the anointment of the love juice. On the contrary, however, the Indian boy in this production represents divine love. He creates an illumination for Oberon-Ananga when he recognises the illusory nature of possession (a realisation generated and controlled by Puck-Deepak). The seeming blunders are wilfully (3.2.346-347) executed (Shakespeare and Griffiths 1996: 168) to lift the veil of ignorance from the lover’s sight, setting aright once again love’s true course. The TFA production gave the Indian boy-Prem central importance – as the catalyst in both the world of reality and the world of moonlight. TFA gave the Indian boy-Prem a voice (TFA Act 4.1).

Michael Hoffman’s 2003 film reinforces the reading of AMND that TFA – much earlier - had demonstrated in its production, featuring the Indian Boy-Prem as Krishna (Pfeiffer, Hoffman et al. 2003). The blue child god (Halio 2003: 161) is explicitly identified in Hoffman’s film as Krishna. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the mischievousness of Puck-Deepak is an additional facet of Krishna, here manifest as adolescent.

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
Call’d Robin Goodfellow: are not you he  
That frights the maidens of the villagery;  
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern  
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;  
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;  
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?  
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,

You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he? (2.1.32-42)

In the words of Immanuel Kant; “thinking in pictures precedes thinking in words”\textsuperscript{51}, as such the images provided of Krishna in elaborating the rationale behind the lines are as follows, and speak for themselves:

\textit{Figure 2: Titania and the blue child god - Krishna}\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} Image from Michael Hoffman’s 2003 Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream Film.
Notice the close resemblance in imagery between Figure 2 and Figure 3. Notice how Titania and Yasoda hold on to the Indian boy. Both Titania and Yasoda are foster mothers to the Indian boy, and no matter what the given circumstances, neither will ever part with the boy.

---


It is interesting to note that the birth of Krishna begins with a foretelling of the end of an evil King’s reign. This foretelling runs parallel with and shapes similar ideologies in the birth of Jesus and King Herod. Krishna is the eighth child born to Vasudev and Devaki, who are imprisoned in the dungeons of Kans, the evil King. After Krishna’s miraculous birth, under the cloak of midnight, Krishna is taken to safety in Gokul, a neighbouring cow herding district at a forest across the river. Thus Krishna grows up - unaware of his royal origins - with his foster parents, Nanda and Yasoda, as a simple cow herd boy (Hawley and Goswami 1981: 52-56).

The divine lila or play of Krishna’s maturity is divided into three aspects: the first, the unstructured unpredictable movements of an infant at play; the second, his trickery and thievery associated with his fondness for the butter milk at play with his mother and the neighbouring women of Brindavan; and the third, as an adolescent, his playfulness becomes more diverse, gallivanting with his friends, teasing the maidens, gambolling about the forest and imitating characteristics of animals. As an infant, he is deeply

---

57 In elaborating the transaction of safety, the infant Krishna was exchanged with the infant baby girl of Yasoda. For information read Chapter Two, The Birth of Krishna, Hawley, John Stratton and Goswami, Shrivatsa., At Play with Krishna: pilgrimage dramas from Brindavan, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 52-56.
59 Formerly known as the settlement of Gokul (Hawley and Goswami 1981: 55-56).
absorbed in his playground of laughter, crawling around the home and courtyard as his own world of play. As a child, Krishna exhibits a deep desire for butter milk and is often found raiding mother Yasoda’s butter milk pots, and around the neighbouring homes, creating a ruckus, hence the affectionate name; the butter thief, assigned to him by poets. He is endlessly disobedient and garners the reputation of a notorious prankster in Brindavan. Moving into adolescence, Krishna leads a band of merry mischief-making cowherd boys, aimlessly frolicking about, expressing their boisterousness and creating mischief wherever they wander; the maidens run helter-skelter upon setting eyes on them (Kinsley 1979: 62-70) (Hawley 1983: 4-9).

These characteristics are exemplified in the characters of Krishna as the Indian boy-Prem and Krishna as Puck-Deepak. Drawing parallels between the characters brings to the surface a question: Can an individual simultaneously be in two places at the same time? Can he do so while contrastingly playing a child and an adolescent? The answer is: Yes, Krishna can, for he is the purna avatar of Lord Vishnu, embodying by omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. Krishna “transcends time, space and causation” (Sivananda 1997: 37 & 238).

Written with the purpose of entertaining Elizabethan audiences, Shakespeare’s AMND plays to the many facets of love from romantic to true, tragic to lustful. The lovers Hermia-Chandini, Lysander-Surej, Helena-Nishi and Demetrius-Prabha, are caught in these trappings where references to love are drawn to our attention through the ‘gaze’ of the characters (Lau 1978: 2):

For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia’s eyne
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine,
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt. (1.2.242-245)

Dr. Giuseppe Calligaris, a neuro-psychology professor from the Royal University of Rome on 26-11-1934 conducted experiments on subjects with “astral radio and television ability”. He is of the opinion that when certain areas of the subject’s skin is agitated, the subject is able to gain “super-sensorial impressions” enabling the subject to see objects that cannot be otherwise seen, according to Dr. Calligaris this “super-sensorial impressions” penetrates walls and any given distances (Yogananda 1993: 30). Based on Dr. Calligaris’s experiments, Swami Yogananda elucidates his encounter with Swami Pranabananda, the Saint with two bodies, simultaneously present in two places at once. See Swami Yogananda’s Autobiography of a Yogi, Chapter Three (Yogananda 1993: 26-33).

Total or full blossoming of a reincarnation for “Lord Krishna was the highest incarnation of the great Vishnu” (Sivananda 1997: 238).
The imagery that Shakespeare creates does indeed propel the tale through the vehicle of sight, for it is Hermia-Chandini’s sight that swayed Demetrius-Prabha away from Helena-Nishi, and as such she wishes that her eyes are blessed as Hermia-Chandini’s:

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears- (2.2.97-98)
Made me compare with Hermia’s sphery eyne! (2.2.105)

And this imagery of course is encapsulated in the play in yet another vehicle; the potent love juice, used on the lovers and Titania-Bhogawathi’s eyes by Puck-Deepak on the instructions of Oberon-Ananga impelled as it is by jealousy:

And with the juice of this I’ll streak her eyes, (2.2.257)
With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes; (2.2.261)
And laid the love juice on some true love’s sight. (3.2.89)

The references to eyes conjuring the senses are laced throughout the entire play. Such is the potency of love at first sight, bewitching all through the window of the eyes, running amok, creating chaos. It is the very same play of Kan63 dhristhi64; the power of sight, that the maidens of Brindavan encountered when they too were bewitched by the eyes of Krishna (Hawley 1983: 143 & 150-151).

In the waking world as the narrative begins, Hermia-Chandini and Lysander-Surej are in love; so too are Demetrius-Prabha and Helena-Nishi. And as the plot unfolds, Helena-Nishi continues to dote on Demetrius-Prabha despite the fact that he catches Hermia-Chandini’s sight and becomes infatuated with her. Now under the shine of moonlight, come the fairies, with Puck-Deepak as the messenger armed with the love juice to set right what went wrong, but a seeming folly creates unbridled chaos. Spell bound by the potent love juice, Demetrius-Prabha rediscovers his love for his former lover, Helena-Nishi and Lysander-Surej in error falls in love with her too. In a reversal of pursuits, Hermia-Chandini is now unaccompanied while both men pursue Helena-Nishi. Oberon-Ananga, realising Puck-Deepak’s blunder, charges him to set love right,

62 AMND Kala Mandhir-TFA Singapore’s Programme Brochure, 6-9 August 1994 at The Victoria Theatre, p. 35.
63 Meaning; eye.
64 Meaning; glance.
once again, using the love juice. Thus Lysander-Surej awakes to Hermia-Chandini and Demetrius-Prabha to Helena-Nishi and the lovers regain their perception, realising the nature of true love, and harmony is once again restored.

From a Cultural Materialist/New Historicist perspective, TFA’s AMND employs Hindu ideology as the dominant construct in the treatment of the narrative (Howard 2004: 472) reinventing Shakespeare through the eyes of Swamiji. The table below provides an indication of the Sanskrit meanings that underpin the character traits of the players’ names in TFA’s AMND. In the final sections of this Chapter, I will be offering a comparison and interpretation of the characters both from Shakespeare and the TFA’s negotiation of the Hindu ideology of their version of the play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Meaning in Sanskrit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ananga</td>
<td>The Lord of Love. The one without limbs; formless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhogawathi</td>
<td>The Queen divine – blissfully intoxicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prem</td>
<td>Love, affection and wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepak</td>
<td>Light, inflaming, exciting – the stirrer of illumination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmendra Chakravathi</td>
<td>King of Righteousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeya Bharani</td>
<td>Victorious Queen of the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandini</td>
<td>Moonlight. Also means fierce, hot, passionate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nishi</td>
<td>Night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prabha</td>
<td>Light.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Oberon-Ananga and Titania-Bhogawathi**

The ideology or conceptualisation leading to the character name Ananga and Bhogawathi is based on the Vedic representation of the God and Goddess of Love: Kamadeva and Rati, which is similarly represented in Western mythology by the Greek God of Love, Eros and the Roman God of Love, Cupid, deriving its meaning from the Latin word *cupido*, signifying “desire”. *Kama* armed with his bow and arrow afflicts his victims with desire, while *Rati*, his consort represents passion: spring is set as their platform for revelry. As the story unfolds, in this truncated version, Lord Shiva is rooted in meditation, and Kama decides to let loose his arrow of desire on Shiva, interrupting his deep meditation. Enraged Shiva reduces Kama to ashes with the opening of his third eye. With the demise of Kama the worlds became barren and devoid of desire and love.
Hearing Rati’s pleas, Parvati\(^{65}\), Shiva’s consort beseeches Shiva to resurrect Kama. Shiva agrees, but does so in such a way that Kama remains bodiless forever residing as desire in all human beings, and thus, he came to be known as Ananga; the bodiless one (Thomas 1980: 72) (Mittal and Thursby 2004: 281-284) (Littleton and Marshall Cavendish 2005: 340).

This is how Swamiji constructed the working paradigm for the characters’ names to correlate with the character traits in TFA’s reinvention of AMND. As the harmonised universal spirit of absolute love and wisdom, Shiva and Sakthi are transcribed as Kama-Ananga and Rati-Bhogawathi, the God and Goddess of Love, in turn being reinvented as Oberon-Ananga and Titania-Bhogawathi.

**Indian Boy-Prem**

As mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter, the symbolism of the Indian boy is theoretically explained through the platforms of Arnie Lade, Hans Jenny, the Sri Chakra, and Malekin, et al’s state of pure consciousness leading onto the invention of TFA’s radar field. The Indian boy represents the fused identity of love and wisdom (Shiva and Sakthi) harmonised into one, and this identity is streamlined through Shakespeare’s Act 2.1.32-42 to formulate the foundation of the Indian boy taking the identity of Krishna the infant-boy which, as we have seen, was evident in Michael Hoffman’s Hollywood version of AMND.

In identifying love and wisdom as the state of pure consciousness or universal love (Shiva and Sakthi-Brahman), which know no bounds, beyond the state of narrowness, achieving the highest ideal of Absolute Love (Brahman) Swami Vivekananda puts forth a question (Vivekananda 1971: 91):

What is the ideal of the lover who has quite passed beyond the idea of selfishness, of bartering and bargaining, and who knows no fear?\(^{66}\) (Vivekananda 1971: 91)

According to Swami Vivekananda when an individual gains the appropriate level and intensity of conviction, only then will

---

\(^{65}\) Parvati is also known or referred to as Sakthi.

\(^{66}\) According to Vedic science, this is the expansion of Demetrius’s Self as he awakes to a state of higher consciousness, declaring his love for Helena, as postulated by Cardena and Winkelman (Cardena and Winkelman 2011: 144).
Only then, it is said that the individual has realised the highest ideal of universal love, of love absolute (Vivekananda 1971: 91). And that love according to Swamiji is the representation of the Indian boy—Prem in TFA’s AMND. According to Robert Elias Najemy “Pure Consciousness” is the Real Self. It reveals the capacity to evolve into love and wisdom, and finally move to the state of unconditional love and wisdom (Najemy 1990: 249). In Cardena and Winkelman’s terms, in support of this claim, universal love is the “expansion of the self” into the higher states of consciousness or pure consciousness, refining the individual’s “perception, bliss […] and unity with […] nature” (Cardena and Winkelman 2011: 144).

**Puck—Deepak**

Elaborating the process further through the identity of 2.1.32-42: Puck in essence is Krishna the adolescent, hence he is Krishna—Deepak—Puck, “the patron saint of skylarking” in Cowden-Clarke’s words (Shakespeare and Bates 1895: 153). In TFA’s version of AMND, Puck is Deepak which in Sanskrit carries a three stage meaning: kindling (stage 1); inflaming (stage 2); illuminating (stage 3).

---

67 *Brahman* or God.

68 It is said that there is a curse placed on Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth* for rendering true incantations against the wishes of the weird sisters, and since then, staged productions of *Macbeth* have been constantly struck with misfortune and at times even the death of the players. This has forever cast the play into the pits of darkness, Opie, I. and Tatem, M., *A dictionary of superstitions*. Oxford [England], 1989, p. 396. There are some famous anecdotes about this curse but attention will be drawn to the anecdote that plays with “light”; drawing its inspiration from the Vedic origins to the formulation of the meaning behind Deepak. In an ABC interview conducted by Parkinson with Patrick Stewart, Stewart said that uttering the title: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or lines from the play would neutralise the curse of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare, W. and Braunmuller, A.R., *Macbeth*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 1. Therefore if the Scottish play is of “darkness”, then AMND is the quintessential play of light. Information derived from an interview with Dr. Chandra Sekhar, a senior member-elder of Shiva Family International from discussions with Swamiji on the topic of TFA’s AMND.
The Lovers: Hermia-Chandini, Lysander-Surej, Helena-Nishi and Demetrius-Prabha.

The character traits of the TFA’s AMND lovers are based on Sanskrit. The meanings of their names suggest binary oppositions but are essentially complementary. They are co-dependent for their existence, in the same way in which Shakespeare’s characters complement each other. Hermia-Chandini and Lysander-Surej are the moon and the sun, while Helena-Nishi and Demetrius-Prabha are night and day (light). Hermia-Chandini is vivacious in her personality, and does not hesitate to exhibit her anger and fierceness outwardly, at times even lashing out altogether: she is variously described in Shakespeare’s play “as a ‘gipsy’, an ‘Ethiope’, a ‘raven’, a ‘tawny tartar’”. Helena-Nishi, on the other hand, is less impulsive, quieter and humble. Lysander-Surej plays a virtuous and steadfast true lover to Hermia-Chandini; he only falters when subjected to the spell of the love juice. His inventiveness is highlighted in the planning and execution of their plans to elope. Further his kind and noble nature flowers when put to the test, as seen when he relents, refusing to harm Hermia-Chandini, which contrasts with Demetrius-Prabha’s intent to harm Helena-Nishi (Lau 1978: 11-12). They all in turn embody their Vedic character name traits.

A few lines from a selection of scenes will further elaborate the comparison of TFA’s AMND paradigm.

Oberon-Ananga accuses Puck-Deepak of being negligent when he blunders once again after the King of Shadows (3.2.348) has given Puck-Deepak instructions to set affairs right with the lovers. Oberon-Ananga also feels that Puck-Deepak’s act of being seemingly negligent could in fact have been a wilful act committed with intention behind the action. It is at this juncture upon witnessing the plight of the lovers that it dawns upon Oberon-Ananga how wrong he has been in his plot against Titania-Bhogawathi, as his mind was tainted by jealousy (2.1.24) and vengeance (2.1.147). This was the realisation that Puck-Deepak brought about in Oberon-Ananga by the seeming act of blundering. Oberon-Ananga’s transformation becomes complete upon realising the significance of the words of wisdom from the Indian boy-Prem:

[…] why need you keep me for yourself when you know I belong to both of you? I was a blessing to Bhogawathi for her intense and loving devotion, yet I was already yours if you had looked into your heart.” (TFA 4.1)
Realising his shameful act of bewitching Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi}, Oberon-\textit{Ananga} instructs Puck-\textit{Deepak} to transform Bottom-\textit{Vimada} to his former self, and returns to his Queen to un-charm her eyes. Realising the perniciousness of his deliberate act of delusion, Oberon-\textit{Ananga} is released from the veil of jealousy and revenge as wisdom descends upon him. This act of removing the veil of jealousy is brought about by Puck-\textit{Deepak}, as from the onset Puck-\textit{Deepak} was aware of his master’s folly, but at the same time he knew his place. Thus using the platform of the lovers, Puck-\textit{Deepak} placed into construction his very own play within a play to unveil the cloak of jealousy and quell the pride of Oberon-\textit{Ananga}, bringing a return to his true self. Reminiscing upon what has gone before, when they were entangled in the delusion of the dream, Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi} requests Oberon-\textit{Ananga} to once again invoke their “timeless magic”:

\begin{quote}
Ananga, use your timeless magic...invoke what was before. Conjure up before us the dream of midsummer when the sun, at its northern solstice, gave us the power to mingle with men and charge their affairs with the guiding light of love. Conjure up, for our pleasure, our play in the mortal world, when we, too, were caught in that dream. \textit{(TFA Prologue)}
\end{quote}

Shakespeare’s resolution of this line in the action of his play stops short of a ‘higher consciousness’ realisation on Oberon’s part:

\begin{quote}
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her  
And she in mild terms begg’d my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child;  
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent  
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes. \textit{(4.1.53-58)}
\end{quote}

In TFA’s AMND Oberon-\textit{Ananga} finds merriment at Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi’s} expense, deflecting her attention from the Indian boy-\textit{Prem} to Bottom-\textit{Vimada} by the use of the potent juice of the jasmine flower (TFA Act 2.1). However, he finds no cause to disgrace or humiliate her, for Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi} is \textit{Sakthi}, the venerable other half of Oberon-\textit{Shiva}. Therefore, how can there be cause for anything else? In this act of deflection\footnote{It should be noted that in TFA’s AMND Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi} does not give up the boy, but rather the boy is taken from her.}, Oberon-\textit{Ananga} takes the Indian boy from Titania-\textit{Bhogawathi}, and in doing so, realises his folly:
Deepak, look at this comical scene. I have laughed at her expense so much that now I begin to feel sorry for her. She was so filled with fancy for the fool, she cared not that I took the elfin boy. But my wickedness was gently chastised; from the boy’s sweet lips, words of wisdom flowed like amrita, pure, golden honey that removed the dark veil of delusion. He said, “Why need you keep me for yourself when you know I belong to both of you? I was a blessing to Bhogawathi for her intense and loving devotion, yet I was already yours if you had looked into your heart.” Such words have put me to shame, and now I should release her eyes from the spell so once more they will gaze as well. Give you this village fool his former self so when he wakes, he’ll think he danced in a dream. Now, Bhogawathi, my most lovely queen. (TFA Act 4.1)

In addressing the qualities of Theseus in Shakespeare’s text, what would impel an individual to overrule the stringent Athenian law? Would that person be a true gentleman? More importantly; can that person pass true judgement? And, what is true judgement? Ordained by god or by humans? Or by the guidance in balance of one’s heart and mind? Being a vessel of higher nature, could Theseus have drawn upon the inspirations of the dream world?

Edward Dowden argues that, “There is no figure in the early drama of Shakespeare so magnificent” as that of the personage of Theseus, gracious in all, and never would he make an unmannered remark to offend a labour of love offered to him (Dowden 1967: 51). We see this when Theseus overrules Philostrate’s reluctance in presenting the play by the artisans:

I will hear that play;
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it. (5.1.82-84)

According to Rolfe, Theseus’ admirable qualities are further triumphant, when Hippolyta comments on the silliness of the play and he gently explains, “The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amends them”. To this Hippolyta responds with, “It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs” (5.1.207-210). In explaining Theseus’ reasoning, Rolfe argues that, if an actor is unable to use his imagination to realise and become his character, then it is the audience that should partake in completing that inadequacy, making that rendition complete which personifies the actor-audience relationship, and hence the very reasoning on what Theseus meant by pronouncing “…imagination amends them”. So too, when Hippolyta becomes weary of the play, Theseus responds by saying courtesy begets that they
should remain until the end of the play. As a result of these noble character traits, Theseus finds himself unique among Shakespeare’s characters. In drawing the parallels between Shakespeare’s Theseus and TFA’s Dharmendra, both characters truly signify the Sanskrit meaning of the name: King of Righteousness. Rolfe further argues for an equivalence between Shakespeare’s character and that of Theseus, asking these questions: Could the playwright have created a noble gentleman had he not believed that the protagonist was truly one? And could ever such a heroic character be conceived by an individual other than him being one himself? For only an individual of such character traits could ever conceive a heroic character as such. No matter how the means of exertion, a playwright can never fully conceal his personality traits from his plays. For William J. Rolfe asserts (Shakespeare and Rolfe 1903):

From what they are we know in a measure what he must have been. The "meanest of mankind," though he had been "the wisest, brightest" withal, could never have produced the Shakespearean Theseus, or Brutus, or Portia, or Imogen. Grapes are not to be gathered of thorns at St. Alban's or anywhere else. They do grow on various sorts of vines; but the Stratford grapes have an exquisite flavour that could come only from a plant of the finest strain. (Shakespeare and Rolfe 1903: 220-221)

Rolfe’s point of departure in establishing the noble character traits of Shakespeare validates Swamiji’s argument that Shakespeare was a divinely inspired poet. Thus Shakespeare and Swamiji’s character Theseus-Dharmendra parallel each other, then, in being of man’s highest nature, receptive as the characters are: they become a channel for the inspirations of the dream world, deciphering the hidden message behind the words of Demetrius:

But, my good lord, I wot not by what power-
But by some power it is-my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud (4.1.161-164)

And further on these lines:

But like in sickness did I loathe this food;
But, as in health come to my natural taste, (4.1.170-171)

Far more than being a Duke of Athens and merely ruling his subjects, it is even wiser and more meaningful to discharge his duties as a just sovereign, and be loved by his people having their respect enshrined in his heart, realising Demetrius-Prabha’s return to his natural self by some power not of the waking world. And so Theseus-Dharmendra delivers his verdict:

The gods have showered their blessings upon you for it is their compassion for mortal souls that finds you waking to this joyous state. Samudra [-Egeus], I will overrule you: for in the temple, by and by, with us these couples shall eternally be joined. Let us now to our fair city, and feast in great revelry. Come, Jeya [-Hippolyta]. (TFA Act 4.1)

Moving on to Puck, this next line showcases the hidden awareness of the illumined one, Puck-Deepak, as he sees through the follies of humans, “Lord, what fools these mortals be!” (3.2.115). In igniting the chase between the lovers Puck-Deepak creates a void-vortex to tire the lovers into becoming relaxed. When thought is relaxed, the ego relaxes and in turn transforms itself to become a channel, and when this occurs, the Universal Spirit works through the lovers to set right what went wrong (Shantanand 2001: 53-54). Perhaps, this is the “unifying truth” which Katharine Lee Bates was in search off.

In Shakespeare’s AMND, Puck’s monologue or soliloquy is delivered as the epilogue, while TFA’s Puck-Deepak delivers his monologue-soliloquy at the end of Act 4. Soliloquy is a device or technique used in shedding light upon the characters’ intentions and viewpoints, thus revealing a glimpse into the characters’ real nature and function in the play. In this soliloquy Puck-Deepak, the triad functioning ghandarva (celestial), kindler, inflamer and illuminator, reveals himself to the audience:

Friends, now wake you from this dream of a midsummer night to witness love and harmony in morning’s mellow light. So, thus, you say all’s well that ends well, though not what was in between. But come you mortals out of it with a sigh of relief that ‘twas a dream. In our divine kingdom, it has always begun well and will always end as well. What you saw was just a play that my queen had bid to while the day away. For is not the world a stage, and we the players on it? Thus enter we to do our part, and thus we do exit. But as we play our part, we live it in our hearts, and act we our part so well, we think the part to be our self. This life is but a dream, with its shades of tragedy and comedy. And truth, if truth needs be told, is love, wisdom and serenity. For nothing is good or bad, only thinking makes it so...yet you mortals caught in this dream find this hard to know. Our Divine Mother, the Golden Gauri, bids me tell you this...that her divine blessings are ever upon you...all you need do is to wake up, and open your hearts to see. Her blessings come in all guises and forms...see beyond this seeming reality and you perceive her golden luminosity...you
see, her other name is Mangala, the auspicious one, who ever resides in peace, joy and harmony. So, friends, come you now to share the joy of a truly auspicious occasion...the wedding feast of Dharmendra and his queen Jeya Bharani, and the lovers, Surej, Chandini, Prabha and Nishi... (TFA Act 4.1)

Shakespeare’s AMND covers many facets of human nature in which by moonlight, we observe tensions brewing in the fairy kingdom. Oberon and Titania sit opposed on either side while the mortals experience emotional hostility, betrayal, desire, pride, sexual politics and masochism (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 810). These are some of the discordant notes of the play, which run parallel to TFA’s AMND as well. Rather than focus on the above themes, however TFA’s production has chosen to explore the thread of Love and Union on the platform of Vedic philosophy’s notion of divine love (pure consciousness – *turiya*), unconditional, represented in the Hindu pantheon as the God *Shiva* and Goddess *Sakthi* at the celestial plane (*priyaloka*) and its key functioning in the resolution of the chaos in the mortal plane (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 810).

Titania and Oberon are seen as characters with an overwhelming urge to explore erotic sexual pleasures (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 811), and thus the love juice is seen as an erotic polytropic object by scholars of Shakespeare: Greenblatt writes “the love juice is the distilled essence of erotic mobility”, but at TFA it is analysed as a catalyst toward acquiring a state of harmonious equilibrium in resolution (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 810), as opposed to eroticism and whimsical imagination is the main thread of the play (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 811). At TFA the interlocking thread of the love juice and the mortals is read as: fairies – divine love – resolution. Perhaps that is why Shakespeare referred to the fairies as “the favourite children of his romantic fancy” (Shakespeare and Rolfe 1903: 221).

The easy resolution of the play - whether or not seen as absurd as it is by some scholars - should not be the grounds for watering down the contact of the fairies with the mortals as merely a whim of the poet’s conjuring. Rather what is irrefutably apparent in the play is the contact of the fairy realm with the mortals and furthermore the manner of contact and its application takes the play to its harmonious ending (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 809). Nathan Drake reinforces the creative genius of Shakespeare’s fairies in arguing:
[...] in no part of his works has he exhibited a more creative and visionary pencil, or a finer tone of enthusiasm, than in bodying forth “these airy nothings,” and in giving them, in brighter and ever-durable tints, once more “a local habitation and a name.”
(Drake 1838: 502)

TFA too shares this view but embarked on its production from a platform of “a local habitation and a name”⁷¹. Leaving the greatest of impressions on his mind, Campbell writes on Shakespeare’s state of mind in composing AMND:

The play is so purely delicious, so little intermixed with the painful passions from which poetry distils her sterner sweets, so fragrant with hilarity, so bland and yet so bold, that I cannot imagine Shakespeare's mind to have been in any other frame than that of healthful ecstasy when the sparks of inspiration thrilled through his brain in composing it. [...] I should only thank Shakespeare the more that he wrote here as a poet and not as a playwright. And as a birth of his imagination, whether it was to suit the stage or not, can we suppose the Poet himself to have been insensible of its worth? Is a mother blind to the beauty of her own child? No! nor could Shakespeare be unconscious that posterity would doat [sic] on this, one of his loveliest children.

How he must have chuckled and laughed in the act of placing the ass's head on Bottom's shoulders! He must have foretasted the mirth of generations unborn at Titania's doating [sic] on the metamorphosed weaver, and on his calling for a repast of sweet peas. His animal spirits must have bounded with the hunter's joy while he wrote Theseus's description of his well-tuned dogs and of the glory of the chase. He must have been happy as Puck himself while he was describing the merry Fairy, and all this time he must have been self-assured that his genius was 'to put a girdle round the earth' and that souls, not yet in being, were to enjoy the revelry of his fancy.
(Kennedy and Kennedy 1999: 118-119)

TFA’s AMND has ideally⁷² represented both sources cultures. They maintained the socio-political aspects of the source culture (Lo and Gilbert 2002) in this case Shakespeare’s AMND canonical narrative, and inserted into the production the New Historicist/Cultural Materialist ideology against the framework of Hindu–Vedic spiritual formulation. Lo and Gilbert’s modified hybridity, both organic (an agency common to the world platform, the universal common theme of love, in TFA’s case, divine origins) and intentional (an agency focusing on the cultural forms without diminishing or appropriating the source culture and remaining true to the theme and characters of the Shakespearean source culture), works on blending and opposing simultaneously, creating a dialogical platform (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 44-49). This takes

⁷¹ According to Vedic Science as postulated by Meyer-Dinkgrafe, turiya or pure consciousness is the fourth state of consciousness (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 22-23), it co-exists as the basis with the states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, a state described as cosmic consciousness transforming to becoming the “enlightened actor” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 119-120). Campbell’s description of Shakespeare’s state of mind runs parallel to the state of pure consciousness.

⁷² For detailed information on the theoretical workings of Lo and Gilbert’s Intercultural model, please refer to Chapter Two.
Shakespeare’s works to a higher, ethereal state of pure consciousness, where a representation like this has never been engaged before, envisioning in the words of Pierre Macherey as follows:

In fact, a true analysis does not remain within its object, paraphrasing what has already been said; analysis confronts the silences, the denials and the resistance in the object - not that compliant implied discourse which offers itself to discovery, but that condition which makes the work possible, which precedes the work so absolutely that it cannot be found in the work. (Macherey 1978: 150)

**Conclusion**

The production’s triadic blessings and grace go to the Swan River, the Canning River; converging at Pelican point, and finally merging into the ocean losing its individuality and becoming whole with the one infinite blue, which set the platform for the dialogue by the Duke at the end of TFA’s production when he says:

[…] know that we are as brooks, streams, and rivers, making our journey over rock and mountains, flowing over and around the hurdles of life, to reach the great infinite ocean. The deep infinite blue where all merge as one. And whether we are the blue Ganga, or the blue Yamuna, or the blue Danube, our reaching the deep, infinite blue is sure. (TFA 5.1)

As we flow from various directions, we begin our journey from various points, as brooks and streams, flowing, mingling, separating, and mixing. Whatever names and forms we acquire, be it the Blue Mississippi, or the Blue Nile, or the Blue Volga, or the Blue Thames, or the Blue Ganga, or the Blue Danube, at the end of it all we are rivers on a journey losing the names and forms, finally merging into the deep infinite blue.

This is how Swamiji saw Shakespeare’s AMND unfold itself before him, and how it is understood at TFA. Therefore, the blessings that were received by partaking either as an audience member or as cast and crew in the production, that grace belongs entirely to that beautiful presiding deity, known to TFA as the living spirit; the Goddess of the River Swan. Thus Swamiji concludes his message to the audience by saying:

This is what I understood as Midsummer Night’s Dream. If you enjoyed it, it’s our blessings. The credit goes to all the love, all the blessings, all the inspirations; this very stage, so many wonderful artists have come and performed. We are just babies,
[if] whatever […] you have seen, is beautiful, it is their grace\textsuperscript{73}, and your good wishes, what more, thank you very much.

\textsuperscript{73} All the previous artists that have performed at His Majesty’s Theatre before the production of TFA’s AMND.
Chapter 5 - Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis

The Law which operates intelligently in a tiny particle of dust is the same Law that operates in a mighty star…and the same Law operates in the very heart of man who tries to understand this Law. This Universal Law is beyond any name. Therefore different names were given apparently to this one Law – God.

(Shantanand 1994: 7)

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower - but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should Know what GOD and man is

(Tennyson 2004: 274)

Introduction

This Chapter will address the creative methodology derived from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as interpreted by the Temple of Fine Arts.

The performance, choreographic elements and tenets of the creative process from the Temple of Fine Arts, are formulated on the sacred and the sublime in engaging the Absolute Spirit (*Brahman*) which, as discussed above, derives its extension from the *Natyasastra* as taught by Swamiji. It forms the core of my research methodology, in its application to my creative works. In this Chapter, I will draw comparisons between my creative methodology and those of Stanislavsky and Meyerhold in order to demonstrate the independent development of my technique (construed for the practitioner as both an internal and external process). This research-as-praxis methodology is conceived as holistic. Drawing on this methodology, then, I will address the performance analysis and choreography incorporated into the productions at Murdoch University supervised by Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck, focusing on Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, where I portrayed the Lord of Misrule.

This Chapter aims to recreate the process from conceptualisation to documentation of the creative ideas and the transfer of specific skills from the *Natyasastra* methodology as detailed above and which were realised in a selection of productions (specifically
productions for Children’s Theatre and Shakespeare) at Murdoch University from 2008 - 2010. In deconstructing my creative research methodology, I began to explore the central question that underpinned this Chapter: How do I convey the body of knowledge discovered through my praxis-led-research, essentially describing the process of creativity? In *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean address key components in creative work confronting arts practitioners; its function and meaning within the constructs of academia (Smith and Dean 2009: 1). In conventional undertakings the body of knowledge is generally considered “verbal or numerical”. Smith and Dean argue that:

> [...] any definition of knowledge needs to acknowledge [the] non-verbal forms of transmission. It also must include the idea that knowledge is itself often unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional, can be emotionally or affectively charged, and cannot necessarily be conveyed with the precision of a mathematical proof.

As a result, research need not be gauged from a monolithic perspective but rather “as an activity” which can result from a kaleidoscope of varied perspectives in the spectrum of academia. The authors believe that both methodologies of “practice-led research” and “research-led practice” are interlinked, and can greatly impact the modernisation of academic research (Smith and Dean 2009: 2-3). Therefore, Smith and Dean are of the opinion that while “qualitative, quantitative and conceptual research” broadens the engagement possibilities in the creative field, the authors simultaneously argue that a marriage between research and the creative process can result in the discovery of unique methodologies and approaches within the works of art (Smith and Dean 2009: 5).
Based on this marriage Smith and Dean have developed an “iterative cyclic web” model which envelopes the dual methodology of process-oriented (beginning and end not conceived) and goal-driven (beginning and end conceived) practice in creative and research processes. In their model both methodologies constantly interact with each other where the emergence of an idea from a process-oriented formula without a start or an end can lead to goal-driven formula and the reverse, with the transformation process being flexible. Besides paving the way for collaborative possibilities between scientists-artists-humanities researchers, their model can be used by “musicians, writers and visual artists” to develop and enhance intermedia hybridity productivity, inducing motivation and synergy in the creative industries for “arts, film, TV, digital media and the Internet” (Smith and Dean 2009: 23-24).

As my creative interpretation oscillates from a process-orientated approach to goal-driven formulation, Smith and Dean’s “iterative cyclic web” model creates an ideal research formulation for my creative work where at any point in the process a shift can

---

1 For a detailed working explanation of the Iterative Cyclic Web, refer to Chapter 1 of Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts by Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean.
be made via practice-led research or research-led practice moving clockwise or anti-clockwise within the model to counterbalance academic research (Smith and Dean 2009: 21). Knowing that I am very physical in my approach, I adapted the Western term of physical theatre, and developed a unique technique of imparting dance, music and drama by using a synthesis of Eastern and Western formulations. I specialised in exploring subjects with universal appeal through a blend of intercultural Asian perspectives where a holistic (EQ – Emotional Quotient, MQ – Motor Quotient and IQ – Intellectual Quotient)\(^2\) methodology is encompassed to provide results for projects that I work on. Based on the ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyasastra* of Bharata Muni, my methodology carries influences of Western practice. It does not originate in nor is it based on Western practice. While clearly there are similarities between some of my practice and those of Western practitioners I have arrived at my methodology from a very different starting point. Interestingly, my research has reinforced the insight that the core of the Western acting system evolving from Stanislavski is based on the Vedic-Hindu *Hatha* Yoga and *Raja* Yoga Yogic system. In this respect, I am supported by Knowles who argues that all Western theatre cultural practices, elements and techniques of modernist theatre are derived from non-Western cultures (Knowles 2010: 12).

My creative working practice carries the influences of a number of Western practitioners, among them Artaud, Brecht and Grotowski. Artaud’s theatre of cruelty developed from his impressions of the “violent collective” trancelike encounter with the Balinese dance troupe in the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition (Savarese and Fowler 2001: 52) and was central to his understanding of the eruptive passion of the “primordial”\(^3\) (Knowles 2010: 14). Artaud’s failing stems from not being able to recognise the training accuracy, techniques and specific signification of the gestural vocabulary (Knowles 2010: 17) of Balinese dance. Brecht’s use of Chinese theatre in developing his Alienating effect (Knowles 2010: 12) may similarly be critiqued for its ‘outsider’ perspective. Grotowski in contrast studied Eastern practices including the Indian Yoga System and Chinese philosophy. He focused particularly on Indian *Kathakali* and the classical forms of Chinese theatre. Grotowski’s search was for the essence and not the sociological; man preceding the difference (Marranca and Dasgupta

---

\(^2\)This EQ, MQ and IQ methodology is discussed in the expanding of the devotional praxis later in this Chapter.

\(^3\)I have connected Artaud’s “primordial” experience to the primordial sound vibration of the universe; *Om*, as explored in Chapter Four.
Grotowski’s downfall is due to his ahistorical paradigm, husking performative elements from their social, cultural, theatrical and ritual environment which had created them and their meanings (Knowles 2010: 19). My working praxis addresses the shortcomings of these theatre practitioners.

My model is based on a combination of Eastern formulations and Western influences. From the East I have drawn on the acting traditions of the Natyasastra; I studied Bharatha Natyam, Oddisi, Semi-Indian Classical, Indian Contemporary and folk dances of Indian, Malaysian and Chinese origin and have also been exposed to Kathak, Kathakali, Mohini Attam, and Kuchipudi. My vocal exposure extends to cover both South and North Indian Classical training. I have studied Martial Arts, and received training in both the Indian and Korean traditions; together with the practice of Hatta Yoga and Raja Yoga it is clear that my creative work draws on a rich and varied Asian heritage. I have also studied classical ballet, modern and contemporary dance, mime (commedia dell’arte), break-dancing, hip-hop, acting, and received vocal training in Western forms of theatre and drama, as well as theatrical stage combat.

An important point to note here is that I was only exposed to Western acting, mime and stage combat at acting school. It is at this juncture that I realised that whatever I had been learning in acting school was already deeply ingrained in me by the training exposure at TFA and my lived culture. Anchored in the Natyasastra, this training methodology received from Swamiji at TFA gave me the exposure, which set me apart from other theatre practitioners; clearly validating the advancement of the Natyasastra as a complete scientific sastra (holy text) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 6) and (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 1 & 217) rather than the “how-to-do-it manual” that Schechner dismissively described it as (Schechner 1985: 136). In my years of performance and experimentation throughout Malaysia, Singapore, India, Indonesia, Denmark, the United States, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, I discovered that the base formulation that I received at TFA had all the necessary elements of performance and that the West borrowed these techniques and affixed different names and terms to the process. I realise, as I arise from the East, that I am reclaiming what was appropriated and husked from my contact with the West, to re-establish and return to the origin of theatre practice; and that is Eastern practice. That is why I stand apart from the Western
paradigm of Interculturalism and choose to be immersed in the Quantum-Self\(^4\) of theatre practice; remaining aware but not influenced, remaining in diversity rather than being homogenised, being intercultural rather than becoming monocultural. Thus, from this rich universal background, I draw my working methodology.

As the central creative and choreography process stems from the training of the Naytasastra, where a large part of that training is culturally influenced by the Indian lived culture, Hinduism (Mishra 1998: 25), I will begin by setting the frame for an understanding of my creative and choreographic process. The framing of this Chapter is set on devotion, since the primary function of the Indian psyche is toward the adoration of the divine. Vijay Mishra’s *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* will form the core of this framing\(^5\). This fundamental observation of the Indian Sublime and its devotional aesthetics is exemplified in Chapter Two in the voice of the “Other” and by the notion of a “lived culture” discussed there. In framing my creative process against the Indian sublime, I aim to validate the various arguments from theatre practitioners in using eastern training methodologies to break new grounds, experiment, manoeuvre, and enhance actor training methodologies. This in turn will lead to the synthesis of my working acting-theatre praxis-led methodology in theatre.

Through the teachings of Swamiji at TFA we are made aware of the sublime in performance and the sublime’s relationship with the audience\(^6\). Swamiji mentions that a day will come when the performer realises that he or she is no longer performing but rather becoming a channel or conduit for the divine to perform and that will be the day when one’s character is realised; self-extinction–nirguna-saguna-nirvana (Mishra 1998: 201). In the sublime interactions between the performer-sublime-audience-sublime-performer, Swamiji further mentions that this interaction takes place in every performance offered by TFA to the public as a love offering without a “price tag”; by this act, the production-performance becomes a *yagna* (Vedic ritual); a sacrificial offering. It becomes a *yagna* by the willing sacrifice of the participants, crew and the members’ efforts, by means of time and donations at TFA in staging a production.

---

\(^4\) Also identified as the Absolute Spirit-Brahman.

\(^5\) The framing of Mishra’s *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* provided in Chapter One allows a distilled access into this Chapter, providing the reader with a glimpse into the understanding of the Indian sublime.

\(^6\) According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, the audience experiences the histrionic representation of the “enlightened actor” spontaneously affecting the spectator’s levels of pure consciousness as outlined in the *Naytasastra* (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120).
These combinations become the key factors in the *yagna*; what we do not physically see, Swamiji informs us, is that on the spiritual plain many visitors gather to witness and bless the performance. Supporting this view, Yarrow argues in line with the *Natyasastra* that:

 [...] drama is the highest form of offering to the ‘gods’: the person or persons who present a good performance as an offering will be blessed and attain to the highest bliss. (Yarrow 2001: 115)

Sharing this opinion, Meyer-Dinkgrafe describes Swamiji’s offering-practice as a branch of Vedic science relating to the aesthetics of theatre practice in the *Natyasatra* as a form of Vedic ritual: a *yagna* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 194). Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe in his research on the *Natyasastra* and theatre suggests that the *Natyasastra* form of theatre based on the Indian paradigm of consciousness creates an ideal platform for the experimentation of consciousness in theatre as a means of reassessing the approaches to acting. He argues that this departure is due to the constructs of Indian philosophy in its ability to engage and converse with Western theatre constructs based on Eastern influences. Among such Western practices are theatre constructs, such as, Grotowski’s “translumination”, Barba’s “the third organ and presence”, Brook’s “total theatre, holy theatre” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 178), Mnouchkine’s “state”, Artaud’s “language of nature” and the existence of a theatrical “universal language” expressed through the pure consciousness of Vedic science (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 193-194) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 107-108). It is important to note that at TFA the practice of consciousness in theatre grounded in the *Natyasastra* formulated by Swamiji has been in practice since its inception in 1980.

**Ghostly Spectres**

Hence, in the words of Vijay Mishra, before I begin the framing of my devotional acting-theatre praxis, I must “put to rest a few ghostly spectres that continue to haunt us”, ones with “perverse Orientalist positions” (Mishra 1998: 2). The first of these is Western academic prestige; the second, the antiquity of the *Natyasastra*; the third, Richard Schechner’s claim that the *Natyasastra* is “nothing other than a how-to-do-it manual” (Schechner 1985: 136); and the fourth, Indian thought practice foregrounded

---

7 For detailed information on the Indian paradigm of Consciousness, refer to Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present* pp. 111-123 (2001).
against Western philosophy. Addressing these ghostly spectres will elevate the Orientalistic notions of the devised devotional acting-theatre praxis. In my academic readings, I have discovered a common thread of idealistic, romantic and racist interpretation of India (Mishra 1998: x, 9 & 11) by Western dominated individuals exerting their unsound scholarship in academia (Rajaram 2001: 2) pitched at a racist framework of Orientalist, Imperialist and Colonialist thought practice, expanding to demeanour and degrading the cultures of the “Other” (Hitchcock and Ebooks Corporation. 2008: 192-193) (Mishra 1998: x, 9 & 11).

Western Academic Prestige

In this train of thought there is a dire need to reassess the authenticity of such scholarship, in particular as applied to the analysis of India. In his article *Caste Science: Hot Air and Cold fusion*, N.S. Rajaram argues that in the light of discrediting Indian culture, a belief system is founded upon the notion that “academic prestige can overcome unsound scholarship” (Rajaram 2001: 2). Predominantly from the West, some of these academics are not present to make valid scientific findings, but rather to “bluff and bulldoze Indians”, into thinking that none will dare challenge their assertions. Thus Western scholars are rarely questioned by the Indian media, to the point that they believe that any assertions made by the West are deemed to be the truth, and therefore no Indian can question the West. This includes Indian scholars of the *Natyasastra* such as Dr. Manmohan Ghosh who have undertaken research placing its antiquity at a much earlier date but who give in to Western influence and dates the text at 500BC (Subrahmanyam 1997: 53) (Schechner 1985: 136) (Richmond, Swann et al. 1993) (Tiwari 2007: 2). Rajaram argues, “As a former US academic I have the unhappy duty to shatter this illusion”, annihilating this Western belief system by challenging Bamshad’s claim that Europeans are genetically linked to upper class Indians rather than the lower class Indians (Bamshad, Kivisild et al. 2001: 2), further proving that Bamshad’s study is cloaked under the guise of attempting to re-establish the failed Aryan Invasion theory (Da Costa 2008: 211 & 217) (Rajaram 2001: 1-2) (Huxley 1939: 20-32).

---

8 In my printed copy, I have numbered the pages in N.S. Rajaram’s article “*Caste and Science: Hot Air and Cold Fusion*”. [http://hinduwisdom.info/articles_aryan_invasion_theory/35.htm](http://hinduwisdom.info/articles_aryan_invasion_theory/35.htm), accessed 28-3-2008.
The *Natyasastra's* timeline is pivotal in dismantling the claim that Vedic literature is primitive (Trautmann 2004: 193) and mythological (Gupta and Ramachandran 1976: xiii). This dismantling will further serve as a platform from which to interrogate Schechner’s demeaning of the antiquity (Schechner 1993: 182) and importance (Schechner 1985: 136) of the *Natyasastra* to theatre.

**The Timeline of the *Natyasastra***

According to Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam the Western timeline of the *Natyasastra* between 200BC and 200 AD is not valid. In the many readings by Western theorists and practitioners relating to the *Natyasastra*, I have yet to come across the mention of Subrahmanyam’s work on the antiquity of the *Natyasastra*. Her findings are based on a scientifically sound methodology in her book entitled *Natyasastra and National Unity* where she placed the *Natyasastra* before 4433BC (Subrahmanyam 1997: 51), but sadly there is no mention of this even by Indian scholars: they seem to take a back seat on this subject matter. It seems that these scholars depend on being accepted, on a kind of subliminal need for approval from the West (Subrahmanyam 1997: 53). It seems that the majority do not wish to kick up dust as the saying goes, but rather comply with the accepted view of the West which places the antiquity of the *Natyasastra* between 200BC and 200AD. Indian and Western scholars often hedge their bets by qualifying the claim for antiquity indicating that the *Natyasastra* is probably much older.

If scholars always comply and avoid courageous insights, can we ever hope to make new discoveries? Why do scholars give in to this game of Western peer pressure? For fear of academic ridicule? Following N.S. Rajaram’s train of thought, I no longer wish to be bluffed and bulldozed into literally thinking that all information by Western scholars should be deemed to be the truth, since scholars such as, Meyer-Dinkgrafe, McIntosh, Lidova, Kulasrestha and Satyendra have mentioned that the *Natyasastra* is likely to be much older (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5) (McIntosh 2005: 76) (Lidova 1994: 109) (Kulasrestha 2006: 235) (Satyendra 2000: 129). In all my writings on the *Natyasastra* I will utilise the date for its origins provided by India’s renowned Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam: 4433BC.

My reasoning in using Subrahmanyam’s date begins with Edgar Thorpe’s book *The Pearson General Knowledge Manual 2011*, he dates the *Natyasastra* at around 4000BC.
(Thorpe and Thorpe 2011: 108), the closest thus far to Subrahmanyanam. If the *Natyasastra* dated at 4000BC is general knowledge as cited by Thorpe, then; why are scholars quoting various dates between 500BC to 200AD? To this question Subrahmanyanam argues “obviously due to the influence of [W]estern view of the diminished antiquity of Indian Civilisation” (Subrahmanyan 1997: 53). This then led me to a general comparison between the Western Gregorian-Julian calendar and the Hindu calendar to investigate the claim by Orientalists that the ancient Sanskrit Vedic literature is ‘primitive’ as argued by Trautmann (Trautmann 2004: 193) and based on ‘myth’ as argued by Niharranjan Ray, Gupta and Ramachandran (Gupta and Ramachandran 1976: xiii). The timeline comparison also aims to investigate Schechner’s Orientalistic view which diminishes the antiquity – and therefore the influence - of the *Natyasastra* (Schechner 1993: 182). It is a simple outline but nonetheless brings to the surface inconsistencies of the current Western timeline.

The possibility of this inconsistency could be due to the fact that according to Trautmann, during the renaissance of Orientalism in India, the Indian chororonallogical time “after a period of experimentation”, was originally suggested to be implemented but was rejected

\[\ldots\] in favour of Biblical time, but in every other respect drawing upon Indian antiquities as independent evidence of the truth of the Biblical narrative. (Trautmann 2004: 193)

---

9 According to Perez, the numeral system developed by the Hindus appeared in Europe in 976 A.D., Perez, R., *Time*, USA, Xlibris Corporation, 2010, p. 104, and with the discovery of zero by Hindus it made calculations more plausible to an infinite degree as postulated by Mishra (Mishra 1998: 133). Perez argues that Zero took its place in Babylonian writings approximately in the year 500 B.C. The Babylonians did not view the importance of zero as it had no value in the numeration system; hence it was used as a placeholder. Therefore, no evidence indicates that zero was used in the preparation of the timeline. Now, the question arises; in 532 A.D. was zero used in the calculation by Dionysius Exiguus to establish the timeline of Christ’s birth? Perez further argues, if only we could find the answer to this question, we would be able to establish the existence of the year zero in the calendar timeline. Nevertheless from historical documentation it appears that Exiguus made several errors in the numbering of the years; first the exclusion of the year zero, second the calculation error in the birth of Christ (Perez 2010: 104-105). Hence, according to Armstrong, as scholars were unable to specify Christ’s year or date of birth, the dates were made up (Armstrong 2001: 39). To complicate matters even further, Perez is of the opinion that B.C. (before Christ) was fashioned into use around 673-735 by the English historian Venerable Bede, uprooting another issue along with the Y2K computer scare; the millennium; when does it begin and when does it end? And with the advent of the Gregorian calendar, a corrected version of the Julian calendar, further complicated with the ambiguity of the year zero and the birth of Christ; years were unaccounted for (Perez 2010: 104-105). To highlight the complexity and encumbrances in setting the timeline, according to Perez, it took six Popes to implement the current calendar used today (Perez 2010: 110). To remedy the inconsistent Gregorian calendar, Perez then moves on to recommend two calendar options (Perez 2010: 113). What does this reveal? A still inconsistent timeline.
Trautmann is further of the opinion that the act of rejecting the vast Indian timeframe was to label the “ancient Sanskrit literature”, primarily reducing the Vedas, the oldest known source to human life, as primitive (Trautmann 2004: 193).

In the current era of post-colonialism, according to Frawley, “Eurocentric and materialistic” views of humanity are now being challenged. The once highly regarded expansion of European civilisation, is now being viewed as

[…] a genocide of native peoples and destruction of their ancient cultures. Non-European cultures are no longer accepting the European interpretation of their histories, which not surprisingly makes their cultures inferior to that of Europe. (Frawley 2005: 1-2)

On this basis, I draw the parallel with Schechner’s representation of the Natyasastra.

Frawley argues that evidence of India perhaps being the oldest nation in the world is found in The Mahabharata (Frawley 1995: 150). While the purpose of the Aryan Invasion theory was to divide and conquer, by discrediting the Vedas and the Puranas\textsuperscript{10}; the genealogy of the Vedic literature becomes questionable and therefore branded as myth (Frawley 2001: 6). B.B. Visnu argues that the early Indologists intentionally discredited the Vedas infused by racist bias (Visnu 2008)\textsuperscript{11}. The main approach of certain Western scholars in the past, having grown up with the Aryan Invasion Theory as valid, therefore was to frame their premise from the perspective that the ancient literature of India was a myth.

I aim to argue otherwise, as it is imperative to separate fact from fiction based on scholarly view points as The Mahabharata, argued by Frawley, is the most important text in Indian literature (Frawley 1995: 149).

With regards to categorising The Mahabharata as myth, Niharranjan Ray argues that:

\textsuperscript{10} Purana, means belonging to ancient times. Primarily post-Vedic texts containing narratives of the history of the universe, from creation to destruction, lineage of the kings, heroes and demigods, and accounts of Hindu cosmology, philosophy and geography. (Chandrasekharendra, 1995 : 434-437)
Myth is not mithya, not fictional or illusory; a myth is not a legend or a fable, or a mere tale. In actuality it is a “true story” of the life of any society, the essence extracted out of the very process of human life of a given time and space. A myth is an extremely complex cultural reality the foremost function of which is to reveal the exemplary models of all significant human activities in a given society, from birth to death. (Gupta and Ramachandran 1976: xiii)

Ray further states that among the discoveries of early “pre-industrial revolution societies”, myths are the most valuable assets of all, as they are rooted in tradition providing “living” bodies of “human behaviour”, giving meaning and value to the course of life in a particular societal condition. Therefore, he argues that as long as myth is valued as real, as historical fact, historians would probably be less entangled with irrational and unrelated arguments to do with being right or wrong (Gupta and Ramachandran 1976: xii).

The British in attempting to discredit the Vedas introduced the Aryan Invasion Theory, which eventually turned out to be a myth as argued by David Frawley (Frawley 2005)12. Frawley argued that the main purpose of the Aryan invasion was four-fold: first, to divide and keep north and south apart by creating hostility; second, the British used this as a prime excuse to invade India, maintaining that they were only reclaiming what belonged to them; third, it served to side-step the Vedic culture highlighting Western religion and civilisation; and finally, it created an avenue to pass off Indian sciences as stemming from the Greeks, dismissing Vedic culture as primitive (Frawley 2001: 6-7).

This plan of action, according to Frawley, not only discredited the Vedas but also the Puranas stripping away the historical basis of Kings and Gods of India. The Mahabharata which documented a civil war in which all kings of India participated was reduced to a local skirmish between petty princes, and later branded as merely the exaggerated creations of poets. This acted as a tool of domination, serving the social and political cravings of the British enforcing the dominance of Western culture and religion over the Hindus shattering their belief that their culture held no historical or scientific basis (Frawley 2001: 6-7).

The renowned natural scientist, Sir Julian Huxley argues that:

In England and America the phrase ‘Aryan race’ has quite ceased to be used by writers with scientific knowledge, though it appears occasionally in political and propagandist literature. [...] In Germany, the idea of the ‘Aryan’ race received no more scientific support than in England. Nevertheless, it found able and very persistent literary advocates who made it appear very flattering to local vanity. It therefore steadily spread, fostered by special conditions.” (Huxley 1939: 21) (Rajaram 2001)

From the crumbling of The Aryan Invasion theory, Eurocentric colonialist shifted their claim to linguistics; from linguistics it moved on to horse culture; failing this genetics came to be the new claim, where the bubble burst. To all these supposed claims Frawley argues:

Human populations in India show a genetic signature of great antiquity, with the persistence of the same main population groups back to the pre-Harappan period and before. There is no evidence of an intrusion of new population from West Asia that altered the genetics of humans in India at the time of the proposed Aryan Invasion. Not only is there no trace of the invading Aryans, their horses, cattle and genetic imprint on the population have also disappeared. (Frawley 2001: xv-xxv)

Moreover according to the Muslim scholar Alberuni’s (973-1048) account of India, Mishra argues the difference between Alberuni’s view and that of “European Orientalists who, centuries later, interpreted the same data very differently”. Trautmann argues similarly, as he writes that early Islamic writers recorded Indians as a source for “wisdom and science” (Trautmann 2004: 3). According to Mishra, Alberuni observes that the Hindus were brilliant in philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, he was awestruck by three prevailing Hindu Indian features: their wisdom of inwardness socially and geographically, believing that no country, nation, kings and science could match that of their own; the second, the pantheistic belief in the doctrine of God unity, which Alberuni equated to Sufism and the Greeks’ belief in soul transmigration; and finally, Alberuni pays close attention to the “Hindu science [...] of numerology and astrology” (Mishra 1998: 130-131). Mishra further explains that using these sciences the Hindus accurately measured everything from “the depths of the oceans to the diameters of the seven planets” (Mishra 1998: 133).

---


14 Currently the demise of the Aryan Invasion Theory is finding its way into the textbooks and the first University to introduce such a textbook rejecting the theory is authored by Professor Klaus Klostermaier entitled *Survey of Hinduism* from Suny, State University of New York Press in his 1994 edition (Frawley 1995: 153-154).
Thus given these sciences, according to Chandra, the Hindu calendar evolved from a division of the Vedas called Jyotish Vedanga. If the oceans and the planets could be measured carefully, imagine how accurate the Hindu calendar could be? In India, the Hindu calendar is opted for in all daily civilian spiritual activities while for secular administrative functioning the Gregorian calendar is used (Chandra 2007: 161). In further strengthening the Indian Vedic sciences, Jeffrey Armstrong in his thirty years pursuit of Vedic knowledge (Armstrong 2001: 13) argues that “Astrology Was the First Science” [sic], and that this science was branded unscientific and side-lined. It is only recently, that it has become an undeniable fact as postulated by Mancing and Haney. The present horoscope, planets and constellation groupings in the West are off by 23 degrees and “almost 2000 years out of date”. Hence, he places the Rig Veda at 8,500 years old (Armstrong 2001: 32-33), and the Vedic culture at “ten thousand years old” (Armstrong 2001: 23-24) (Frawley 2005: vi), and concludes that the “Vedic Astrology of India, is the missing link” (Armstrong 2001: 16). David Frawley argues that India is the only bastion which has housed a complete and advanced practice of astrology since ancient times. And till this very day, based upon astronomy, India continues to practice her ritualistic calendar, worshipping the planets as Gods (Frawley 2000: 25).

In the light of these inconsistencies, and following the arguments put forth by Frawley, Rajaram, Trautmann and other scholars, regarding the tampering with the timeline, freezing Vedic culture at 1500 B.C rather than earlier (Frawley 1991: 249) (Frawley 2005: 3), together with Swami Yukteswar’s yugas (ages) calculations (Yukteswar 1990: 8-24)15 there is overwhelming evidence that the Western calendar is problematic when measured against that of the Hindu calendar. Subrahmanyam argues that:

The International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilisations has done yeoman service to the field of Indian history, by fixing the dates of Rama, Buddha and Sankara […]. According to N. Narasinga Rao, in his book[,] “Date of Rama”, his accurate astronomical calculations have led him to conclude the actual day and date of Rama’s birth as Sunday, February 11, 4433 B.C. Krishna’s demise has been an accepted date, as 3102 B.C., with which the Kaliyuga is said to be calculated, according to the Hindu Calendar. Taking Bharata to have written the Natya Sastra before Rama’s birth, we can surmise that it was before 4433 B.C, perhaps just within a difference of a few decades, in the same century. (Subrahmanyam 1997: 50-51) (Narasinga Rao and International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilization 1990: i & 302) (Music 1930: 111)

15 For information on the calculation of the yugas (ages), see Swami Sri Yukteswar’s The Holy Science: Kaivalya Darsanam, Los Angeles, California, Self-Realization Fellowship, 1990, pp.8-24.
The city of Dwaraka was discovered by the renowned archaeologist Professor S.R. Rao in 1982 in Gujarat, validating the claim that the city of Krishna is not a myth but reality. The above outline together with the irrefutable evidence of the discovery of Lord Krishna’s *Dwaraka* (Frawley 1991: 253) (Frawley 2005: 11) (Abbas 2002: 23) (Pramodkumar 2008: 78), clearly disproves the claim that Vedic literature is primitive (Trautmann 2004: 193), based on myth (Gupta and Ramachandran 1976: xiii) and that the antiquity of the *Natyasastra* should be frozen between 200BC and 200AD as claimed by Schechner (Schechner 1985: 136). Hence, Subrahmanyam’s date of the *Natyasastra* at 4433 B.C.

**Critique of Schechner and the *Natyasastra***

In order to sustain a just dialogue between the West and East on the *Natyasastra*, there is a compelling need to address the Orientalistic outlook of Schechner in labelling the *Natyasatra* as nothing more “than a how-to-do-it manual” (Schechner 1985: 136). The *Natyasastra* is not a manual: according to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Kale, Richmond, Swann, Darius, Zarrilli and Rangacharya it is a *sastra* (holy text), revealed to Sage Bharata by *Lord Brahma*16 (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 102) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 1) (Kale 1974: 3) (Richmond, Swann et al. 1993: 36) (Rangacharya 1998: 5). It is Schechner who is responsible for the reductive view of the *Natyasastra* and which has led to its being derrogated by Western practitioners who share his paradigm. Daniel Charles Gerould in his book *Theatre, theory, theatre: The major critical texts from Aristotle and Zeami to Soyinka and Havel*, argues that the *Naytasastra* is a celestial text, a holy book on dramaturgy

> […] brought from heaven to earth for benefit of people as the fifth Veda or sacred text. The author of the *Natyasastra* was divinely inspired by Brahma, the god of creation. (Gerould 2000: 84)

Let us examine Schechner’s perspective on the *Natyasastra*. He argues that the *Natyasastra’s*

Aesthetics need not be built from competition, as it is clear when you look at theatre according to the *Natyasastra*. This book, called the “Fifth Veda”, was complied between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. It is almost certainly not the work of a single person. […] Unlike Aristotle, who wrote after the heyday of

---

16 One of the trinity Gods of the Hindu pantheon.
Attic tragedy, and whose *Poetics* is so laconic as to be possibly no more than notes toward a text, the *Natyasastra* is so full of details, of exact description and specification, that it can be nothing other than a how-to-do-it manual, collectively authored (complied) over four or five centuries. (Schechner 1985: 136)

Subrahmanyam in contrast argues that it must be understood that the “Vedas are not a product of human intellect”. She states further that the Vedic *Rishis* should not be read as composers of the Vedas, but rather as seers who were chosen for the revelation of Vedic knowledge. Akin to a radio, the *rishis* were literally receivers of the revealed knowledge (Subrahmanyam 1997: 55). Similarly, Sinha argues by quoting Burckhardt, that the Vedas were received “by inspiration, visual and auditory, and transmitted it just as they had seen and heard it without any mental discrimination on their part” (Sinha 2008: 35) (Burckhardt 2008: 34) (Hudson 2000: 197) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95) (Coward 1997: 7). To further elucidate the origin of the Vedas Swami Vivekananda expounds:

The claim of the Hindus is that the Vedas do not owe their authority to anybody, they are themselves the authority, being eternal – the knowledge of God. They were never written, never created, they have existed throughout time; just as creation is infinite and eternal, without beginning and without end, so is the knowledge of God without beginning and without end. And this is what is meant by the Vedas (‘Vid’ to know). The mass of knowledge called the Vedanta was discovered by personages called Rishis, and the Rishis is defined as a *Mantra-drashta*, a seer of thought; not that the thought was his own. Whenever you hear that a certain passage of the Vedas came from a certain Rishi, never think that he wrote it or created it out of his mind; he was the seer of the thought which already existed; it existed in the universe eternally. The sage was the discoverer; the Rishis were spiritual discoverers. (Muthiya 2004: 11) (Chattopadhyaya 1999: 200)

Contrary to popular belief, according to Paul and Tagore knowledge is not considered power: rather, knowledge put into practice becomes power; only when true understanding has dawned, can there be actualisation of power. By this is meant: studying how to ride a bicycle will not mean that one can ride the bicycle until that knowledge is put into physical practice; it is only then that “true understanding” is realised. Hence, “knowledge placed into practice” becomes synonymous with “true understanding”. Theory put into practice and theory from practice, working hand in hand become true knowledge (Paul and Tagore 2006: 348). To this rationality Swamiji adds:

---

17 Meaning “seer”, one who can perceive beyond the physical realm of sight.
Are we happy? Do we have a little more peace than whatever we had before? Or, were all these things, whatever we have learnt, are only words? What you learnt in schools and colleges, are they knowledge or are they words? Many times they are only words. Only few things which you have learnt in the colleges and universities become meaningful in your lives, whereas all other things are only some silly sound. Whether it is history or physics or chemistry or botany, zoology, sociology, home science, whatever you have learnt: hundreds and thousands of words, are words and words and words are nothing but words. They are not having the corresponding meaning or their wisdom in your lives. But yet you have to pass through it, there is no other go. As the Upanishad seer put it “Ve vidyae vedi tritye iti asma brahmavitovantti pararachaiva aparache”. Two types of knowledge every man has to go through, every man has to obtain Ve vidyae vedi tatwe brahmavitovantti. That’s how the seers of truth speak: [two] types of knowledge, one is the lower - another is the higher: pararachaiva aparache. In that, the apar vaidy, the knowledge pertaining to the manifested universe all that whatever we learnt that’s the lower science. It is to be learnt but it is not the ALL, there is something else which is called the Para Vidya or the science by which aksharam digamyate; it is the science by which the truth is obtained, the imperishable is obtained, that which is permanent is obtained; and that science is the Para Vidya [sic].

Hence, the Natyasastra is divinely revealed (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 102) and as such it is Para Vidya. Therefore, in reassessing the foregrounding of Indian thought processes against Western philosophy, what needs to be addressed is the way knowledge is derived. The Upanishads differentiate between two forms of Vidya (knowledge): Para Vidya and Apara Vidya; para vidya is higher knowledge or revealed knowledge (Daniélou 1991: 39) through austere penance abstaining from indulging the senses. It is the knowledge of the Absolute Brahman which is obtained with the cessation of empirical thought processes, while apar vaidy is the lower knowledge known as empirical or secular knowledge, derived from discursive reasoning, the senses and intellect. The Upanishads also provides the means to end lower knowledge and to attain the higher through the practice of Yoga realising the union of the Self and the Absolute Brahman. Consisting of two parts, this practice that leads to attaining para vidya occurs

---
18 Information derived from personal email correspondence dated 27-12-2010 from Rema Kurup to Shiva Family International group email on a talk given by Swamiji.
19 The Upanishads form the ending segments of the Vedas and they are the very foundation of Vedanta philosophy. Max Muller noted that Vedanta is a system whereby human thought had reached its zenith. The word Upanishad originates from “upa” meaning ‘near’, “ni” meaning ‘down’ and “sad” meaning ‘to sit’. Students sat close to the Guru to study the truth by which ignorance is vanquished, (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 37). The word Upanishad carries the meaning of the destroyer of inborn ignorance otherwise known as rahasyam (secret), Deussen, Paul., The Philosophy of the Upanishads, New York, Cosimo Inc, 2010, p. 10.
20 In identifying the perilous state of literary concerns as discussed in Chapter Two, the authors, Malekin, et al, recommend the Vedic science of the Natyasastra’s Indian theatre aesthetics as a reassessment platform for Western based theories in the field of literary theory. The authors draw upon para vidya (higher knowledge) and apar vaidy (lower knowledge) to explain the lower states of waking, sleeping and dreaming against that of the transcendentally pure consciousness or turiya (para vaidy-higher knowledge), identified as Brahman-Absolute-Atman-Soul (nondualistic experience of pure consciousness).
through the control of one’s breath known as Pranayama and through the process of psychological discipline. By constructing physical activities (dharana) and through meditation (dhyana) the subject is led to an understanding of the Real Self. This two-fold practice will eventually lead the practitioner to the “absorption of thought into Reality, of subject into object, to realisation of the oneness of the individual soul and the universal soul” leading into Samadhi (enlightenment) (Mohammad 2007: 151-153) (Davis 2000: 33-35) (Mehta 1990: 121-123).

In an article contributed to the editors Hertel and Humes in their book entitled Living Banaras: Hindu religion in cultural context, Schechner writes, “The first and most important Sanskrit text on performance is Bharata’s Natyashastra?”. He deliberately adds a question mark, questioning the validity of the Natyasastra being the first and foremost authoritative Sanskrit text on performance. Is there an Orientalist agenda within the framing of Schechner’s reading of Indian culture? According to Kale, the Natyasastra is in Sanskrit and it is a primary “source of information on the art of theatre in ancient India” (Kale 1974: ). He further demeans the holy text by insinuating that there is an ulterior motive for referring to the Natyasastra as

[…] a post-Vedic text a “fifth Veda” is a common way of saying how important a text is. The Natyasastra is far from alone in being so represented. (Schechner 1993: 182)

According to Knowles, Schechner’s theatrical methodology is to decontextualise “versions of non-western ritual in productions” (Knowles 2010: 43), giving tainted perspectives of Eastern culture to the West. Haney argues that the Natyasastra serves a dual purpose: the first, is to expand the awareness of the actor, and the second, to describe how an actor with realised awareness can expand that state instinctively on stage to produce the expanding awareness effecting the audience (Haney 2002: 103) (Yarrow 2001: 114-115). Contrary to Schechner’s opinion Richmond, Swann and Zarrilli collectively argue that the Natyasastra is the single most important text on dramaturgy that has ever been produced from ancient India, with its title literally meaning “the science of drama” (Richmond, Swann et al. 1993: 34) (Tiwari 2007: 1). They move to argue that it is

[…] more than a science of drama; it is a veritable encyclopedia of knowledge concerning Sanskrit drama theatre, the most comprehensive work of its kind to survive anywhere from ancient times. (Richmond, Swann et al. 1993: 34)
Further Margolis and Renaud argue that the *Natyasastra* is a “complete manual” on “The Science of Performance”, covering every aspect of performing arts, and the authors are further of the opinion that the *Natyasastra* is “arranged with scientific clarify”. Codified by Sage Bharata, the *Natyasastra* (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 54), thirty seven chapters in its entirety (Kale 1974: 5-6)

[...] classifies and elucidates all the dramatic elements comprehensively: the dramatic structure, dramatic language, poetry, poetic composition, language and grammar, music, aesthetics, dance, movement and choreography, costuming, makeup, properties, audiences, rituals, theatre architecture, and-not least-actor training, along with the styles, modes and functions of acting. The sections on actor training are detailed, even exhaustive. (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 54)

Schechner in a derogatory comparison regards Aristotle’s *Poetics* as laconic when compared to the *Natyasastra*’s effusiveness (Schechner 1985: 136). In contrast respectable theorists view Aristotle’s style as wanting. Else argues of Aristotle’s Poetics that for “[w]hatever the reason, the text […] is abrupt, elliptical, sometimes incoherent, to a degree unexampled among Aristotle’s other acroamatic works” (Aristotle and Else 1970: 10). Richard E. Kramer in his comparison between the *Natyasastra* and Stanislavsky’s Acting System further argues that, “Unlike Aristotle’s *Poetics*, The *Natysastra* was written for theatre practitioners; a complete handbook of theatre production” (Kramer 1991: 47). Where does Schechner’s finding stand amidst Margolis and Renuad’s argument on the scientific clarity of the *Natyasastra*? Where do Schechner’s reading and argument stand in the light of the mentioned evidence? And Peggy Phelan in her book entitled *The Ends of Performance* hails Richard Schechner as one of two men who gave birth to the genre of performance studies (Phelan and Lane 1998: 3) (Knowles 2010: 43). I think in the case of his anthropological studies regarding Indian material engagement, it should read more like a miscarriage rather than a birth. I make this statement in regards to his hypocritical conversion into Hinduism just to raid, pillage and plunder Indian cultural knowledge from a temple in Kerala, India turning it into an insulting farce by cloaking the incident as an admittedly self-aware/self-reflexive performance (Schechner 1993: 3-5). Schechner writes:

As I, a 58-year-old man, write these words, I wonder at the secret spectacle of my Keralan incarnation: a New York man of 42, dressed Indian-style, fretting as only an atheist Jew can over his hypocritical conversion, moving through a crowded temple courtyard – what was this Jayaganesh doing if not performing himself performing his Hinduism? (Schechner 1993: 4-5) (Brown 1998: 12)
In his book *The Art of the Actor* Benedetti argues that every possible technique in acting has been discovered by the West (Benedetti 2007: 233). To respond to his statement Margolis and Renaud argue on the contrary that every possible actor training technique has already been described in the *Natyasastra*. It is so detailed that it is exhaustive in its description (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 54). Hence, in the *Natyasastra* Bharata declares:

> Be it a branch of knowledge or a science, or an art or a craft, or a practice or an occupation—if it is not seen in the natya it is indeed not worthy of the name.

Thus all arts and sciences find their repose in natya (Marasinghe 1989: 3-4). As a scholar and theatre practitioner, Benedetti should know that the West borrowed performance techniques from the East and reassigned the Eastern techniques with Western encoding, such as “Artaud’s sublime or metaphysical embodiment”, Worthen’s “surrogation,” Grotowski’s “translumination,” Brook’s “holy theatre,” and Barba’s “transcendent’ theatre” (Haney 2002: 103). Therefore, how can a self-confessed hypocritical individual like Schechner (Schechner 1993: 4) render a non-biased finding on Vedic culture which is wholly based on divine origins; *para vidya*? He should recuse himself from studying a culture that will not receive his impartial view. I make this point out of grave concern for the welfare of current and future students or anyone for that matter in the pursuit of Indian cultural knowledge: they deserve not to be led astray by researchers who present themselves as anthropologist-theatre practitioners, but who are in actual fact Orientalist, Imperialist and Colonialist in their orientation. Corroborating this, Saurabh Dube writes:

> Across the past decade, there has been acute interrogation not only of the formative procedures of academic history writing but of the aggrandizing attributes of historical thought itself. The criticism has addressed how such endeavors and ideas actively ignore, and often anxiously obscure, their pervasive limitations in explaining social worlds and historical subjects only to assiduously frame, even shape, these subjects and their worlds in routine and ready ways. Unsurprisingly, such considerations have emerged linked to a wider questioning of the collusions of historical scholarship with authoritative, normally exclusive, visions of the state and nation, the West and modernity, and the colony and post-colony. (Trautmann 2004: ix-x)

Departing from the similar thought process of Rustom Bharucha, I emphasise that I am not attempting to present an in-depth historical Western view on Indian theatre. Like
him, I am of the view that as theorists and researchers we should be attuned to all instances of appropriation\textsuperscript{21}. As he puts it:

Nor do I offer any synoptic view of how the Indian theatre has been interpreted (and misinterpreted), used (and misused), mythologized, (and demystified) in the West. I do not believe that there is an overriding Western view of the Indian theatre that can be summarily categorized. Certainly, I do not discern any pervasive “orientalism” (as defined by Edward Said) in the attitudes of Western theatre practitioners and theorist toward the Indian theatre, no systematized cultural imperialism that undermines the philosophical premises of the Indian culture. At the same time, it would be disingenuous on my part to deny that instances of cultural imperialism do not exist. (Bharucha 1984: 2)

I am aware that many of the translations and constructs of \textit{Rig Veda} that we have today are based on the work of nineteenth century European scholars. But as Frawley argues:

Their work often reflects the bias of their times: the imperialism, materialism and Christian missionary spirit, the tendency to look down upon Asia and its culture as inferior, to even blame the spiritual traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism for the political decline of these cultures. (Frawley 2001: 25)

Schechner’s decontextualisation, then, “of non-western rituals” (Knowles 2010: 43) does not address the ethical representations nor does it confront their meaning (Bharucha 1984: 14), and so Schechner is directed “to view the distortions or disappearance of a particular ritual with a certain “moral neutrality’’” (Bharucha 1984: 16), leading to “misinterpretations and distortions” (Bharucha 1984: 3). In a reply to Bharucha, Schechner writes that he is aware of the “sinister forces [that] are present in interculturalism” and further argues that he is not “Pollyanna” about the subject matter, and that he is not turning a blind eye towards the exploitative riptides of Western cultures. Schechner puts up the defence that in order to perform the culture of another in intercultural exchange, a teacher who understands the borrowed body of knowledge is required, not as a simple agent, but more like an intermediary translator, whom Schechner terms a cultural bearer (Schechner 1984: 246-247). Is Schechner presenting an argument that he is that teacher, that translator, that cultural bearer?

Let us examine the facts from Bharucha’s reply to Schechner. Bharucha argues that all of Schechner’s productions are theorised in spite of their “quality and efficacy”, creating a falsified notion of importance, giving power to “theory over practice”. Bharucha cites that Schechner’s production of *Cherry ka Baghicha*, an Indian version of *The Cherry Orchard*, “drew considerably more ‘fire’ than ‘praise’”, which Schechner claims was tight in its direction and well received by audiences (Schechner 1984: 248) in New Delhi. Bharucha is of the opinion that the assumption of interculturalism as an overruling agent for globalisation transcending the “differences of class, race and history” is a naïve one. He believes that interculturalism has to be examined within the culture’s historical context (Bharucha 1984: 254-255). In redressing Schechner’s claim of the difference in performing the culture of another and performing one’s own culture, Bharucha makes a clear distinction: even if it were possible, there would be varied intentions revealing an unbalanced degree of interest, knowledge and devotion (Bharucha 1984: 256).

I have personally encountered this degree of unbalance in my creative intercultural process working with Western and Eastern students, it is an immensely complicated task when dealing with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Bharucha further argues against Schechner’s ritual transportation that no ritual can be transported and performed with any integrity in theatre without an acknowledgement of the embedded faith (Bharucha 1984: 256). In his essay on ethics representation (Bharucha 1984: 14), Bharucha argues that if

[…] structure/process patterns can be “translated” from one culture to another, or can simply be merged with those of another culture, then there is a danger of cultures being homogenized.

For this very reason I believe that no person can faithfully and honestly represent the culture of the “Other”. Schechner presenting himself as a cultural bearer in itself, by default, becomes *traduttore traditore*; the translator becomes a traitor in translating (Aranda 2007: 27) (Mishra 1998: x). In *the task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin argues that “to some degree all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings” (Lopez 2008: 141). Benjamin further argues that any transfer can never be achieved in its totality; rather what comes across is an element in translation which travels beyond the transmission of the subject matter and thus this element which is transmitted “does not lend itself to translation”
Venuti 2004: 84). I argue that only a representative of the borrowed lived culture-experiences (Mishra 1998: 134) should be the cultural bearer to ensure a balanced negotiated cultural transfer. Therefore, the danger of sacred rituals in translation presented by Bharucha is of great concern in addressing the working paradigm of Schechner. Bharucha further argues that the principles and viewpoints underpinning Schechner’s theoretical engagements are “ naïve and unexamined ethnocentricity which undermines [his] status as a serious and responsible interculturalist” (Bharucha 1984: 254). Schechner, as indicated above, employs a methodology where he isolates a particular ritual from its social context applying it to some other disparate context. He neutralises the content of a ritualistic meaning and only performs the physical actions, ignoring the meaning of the ritual. In justifying his personal agenda in his actions and methodology he faults the “lack of differences between cultures” (Bharucha 1984: 12-14). This statement from Bharucha sums up the thought process and methodology used by Schechner:

Since Schechner’s writings conspicuously reveal his state of fragmentation, it is often difficult to know where one can begin to discuss his work. His texts and productions can be viewed as networks of interlocking structures, passages, and spaces which frequently do not connect or cohere. This seeming randomness conceals a very alert and fundamentally skeptical mode of inquiry. In fact, if there is one quality that characterizes Schechner’s writings on theatre, it is skepticism. (Bharucha 1984: 11)

While Margolis and Renaud comprehend the premise of Schechner’s devised work for all performances, in actual fact,

[…] such a theory entails simplification and approximations that are fatal to the universality it pursues. Culture is specific to people, time, and place, and the ethos of pragmatic rituals and performances cannot be relived organically through a modern “civilised” occidental body. Performance theory is valid in parts and for certain situations; but it cannot be all encompassing and universal. The theory and the practice diverge. (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 53)

Therefore, in creating his performance theories from Indian theatre practice there was no ground for Schechner to demean and degrade the Natyasastra. Equally spending much time in India, Ralph Yarrow respectfully states that his “perspective is still limited” even with all the experiences and participation in Indian performances (Yarrow 2001: 2). Furthermore, according to Bharucha, more than any other theorist, Schechner “has demystified the Indian theatre, divesting it of its sacred and metaphysical
associations” (Bharucha 1984: 11), devaluing and diminishing the Natyasatra’s antiquity, as he outlandishly declares that the Natyasatra is “certainly not the work of a single person” (Schechner 1985). In repudiating this claim, Kapila Vatsyayan investigated the historical discussions of authors, such as, Hillebrandt (1897), Konow (1920), P.V. Kane (1923), Keith (1924), Ramakrishna Kavi (1926), S.K. De (1947), M. Manomohan Ghosh (1950), K.C. Pandey (1950), Macdonnel (1958) and F.B.J. Kuiper (1979) relating to the Natyasatra, comparing their claims meticulously against sub-themes and chapters of the Natyasatra and concluded that from its “coherent and organically well-knit structure”,

[...] it [is] clear that the work reflects a unity of purpose and that it was the product of a single integrated vision, [...] It could not have been the work of several authors over a long period of time. (Vatsyayan and Bharata 2003: 6-7)

I am of the opinion that Schechner’s work relating to Indian theatre’s aesthetics of the Natyasatra is a follow on from the renaissance of Orientalism as argued by Trautmann mentioned above (Trautmann 2004: 193). As stated previously in Chapter Two, we can deduce the intent of the working methodologies employed by the practitioners using Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum of Intercultural Modes (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 38-39). By introducing the application of higher consciousness, I have reinvented Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum into the Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice, addressing the true intent of intercultural theatre practitioners based on the governing principles (gunas) of prakriti (nature); it will deduce whether their intent (activating principle-rajas) is of nefarious-tamas-sudra-imperialistic or pure-satva-brahmin-collaborative rather than merely making a comparison between “collaborative” and “imperialistic” practice.

![Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice](image)

Based on the research above and the nature of his work according to Lo and Gilbert’s Continuum of Intercultural Modes and the Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre

---

22 Yarrow is of the opinion that the Indian practice of meditation relating to the states of consciousness operating within the human body has been given less credence by conventional Western sciences (Yarrow 2001: 3).
Practice, Schechner is a ‘Sudra’, a cultural imperialist. His findings have no meaning other than to serve his personal agenda as argued by Bharucha (Bharucha 1984: 14). Hence in the light of the above evidence his dismissive description of the Natyasastra as a “how-to-do-it manual” must be challenged.

According to Margolis and Renaud, the Orient was an arena where Western theatre practitioners, such as, “Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, Brook, Schechner, and Barba all turned to the East”, and so, Margolis and Renaud ask, “[...] why shouldn’t we do the same?” (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 52). In their concluding argument from their book The politics of American actor training Margolis and Renaud argue that, “We have to reinforce that Indian theatre’s own traditions are strong enough to address our times effectively with real contemporaneity and vigor” (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 59). In fact, according to Margolis and Renaud, “the theatre of the West needed energy from the East to revitalize itself” (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 52).

In the light of the above then, I regarded it as crucial to contest Orientalist views of Indian antiquity, before framing my acting-theatre praxis, as the concerns raised and addressed here, underpins the working methodology of my devotional acting-theatre praxis where Indian thought is foregrounded against a backgrounded Western philosophy. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, I aim to validate my claim that as I arise from the East, I am reclaiming what was appropriated and husked from my contact with the West, to re-establish and return to the origin of theatre practice: for me as a practitioner this practice is essentially Eastern. In the next section I move to reorientate the prevailing Western view of Indian philosophical thinking by critiquing the limitations that such a perspective necessarily entails.

**Indian Philosophy: a reorientation**

Before we begin to reassess Indian thought against its conventional Western reading, I must flag at the outset that much of the influential Western writings on Indian culture from the past, clearly depart from the platforms of Orientalism, Imperialism, and Colonialism. In fact some of them are explicitly racist in their readings of India and Indian thinking. Authors such as S. H. Butcher (Mishra 1998: 2) and G. W. F. Hegel (Mishra 1998: 11) present such perspectives and, as Mishra argues, we have to shift away to “uncover and retheorize what [‘]two hundred years of Western Indology[’] had
not provided us with” (Mishra 1998: 35). Thus, the attention of the reader is drawn to this subject matter, in order to manoeuvre around the “idealistic, romantic and even racist European” (Mishra 1998: x) tainted imagery inscribed upon India. Whether we like it or not, it has to be addressed and “nipped in the bud” as argued by Mishra (Mishra 1998: 2). Therefore, while German idealism read India in the context of romanticism (Oldmeadow 2004: 20-24), the British empirical paradigm read India in the context of an enigma (Trautmann 2004: 3). It is interesting to note that the subject of mysticism, absent from Western narratives, finds its definition in Hindu texts, and ironically in Schopenhauer’s contamination of the European self (Blackham 1952: 28), Hinduism is written in English, mainly for non-Indian reception (Mishra 1998: 4). This purports that the Western “I” is constructed through discourses with Orientalists (Mishra 1998: 3). To legitimise Indian thought, we must begin to avoid two Orientalist paradigms; “the empirical and the romantic”, as well as being cautious of the “easy” postmodern option (Mishra 1998: 2). In general, Indian thought should never be examined in isolation; rather it must be discussed in terms of literary interpretations and philosophical interrelatedness and “not exclusiveness”. Thus the debate on Indian culture needs to be from the “comparative and interdisciplinary” to the ideological and transcendental viewpoints, as contact with the “Other” inadvertently influences “the source culture and the receptor culture” (Mishra 1998: 3) (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 19-40).

The key to unpacking and understanding the paradigm of this devotional thesis is embedded in its approach to the dual springboards of the transcendental principle and the absolute; as in identifying the self with the transcendental absolute, the Brahman, the Hindu signifier of the Spirit Absolute (Mishra 1998: 5-7) (Gasché 1998: 72) (Silverman, Aylesworth et al. 1990: 90). For the Hindu, the religious is a subject of aesthetics: the object of the sublime in devotional (bhakti) poetry is Brahman. This ideal principle (Absolute Brahman) being unattainable, symbolised “through the image or the icon”, still “remains the sublime object”, which ultimately defies time-space representation of any kind (Mishra 1998: 16).

Within the integral constructs of the Hindu narrative, in rethinking Brahman as the thing-in-itself, beyond representation, Mishra argues that:
Therefore, both the elements of nirguna (absoluteness) and saguna (emotionalism) propel the subject “human” into experiencing the “‘Vision’” sublime; a mystical state corresponding to both theological and philosophical encounters with Brahman in Hinduism; creating violence within the viewer, the sublime drives the individual “toward an experience that is too large for the mind to grasp” (Mishra 1998: 201-202). In summing up his argument on the Indian sublime Mishra firmly argues that:

Indian culture, then, is built around a sublime poetics-and the culture’s dominant literary form, the devotional, as well as its dominant literary hermeneutic, rasa theory, understand this very well. (Mishra 1998: 202)

Thus the four mentioned spectres addressed above will provide an open platform with which to engage constructively the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

Mishra’s Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime has created a tremendous framing foundation in anchoring the methodology imparted to me by Swamiji at TFA, where art is taught as the divine through worship and devotion. The human agent always affirming the importance of tradition (Mishra 1998: ix), in this context becomes the researcher who has undergone the training of Guru-sisya parampara (Guru-pupil lineage) at TFA in Bharatha Natyam and Oddissi; the classical dance forms in Indian culture. It is important to note that the Guru-sisya relationship is central to the dissemination of knowledge, hence tradition. This worship and devotion taught by Swamiji at TFA is directed towards Lord Shiva also known as Nataraja, Lord of Dance, one of the trinity of the Hindu Pantheon. Lord Nataraja becoming “the object of devotion” (Mishra 1998: 201) formulates the central iconic symbolism in the training methodology imparted at TFA leading into the sublime. The central text used in this training methodology is based on Sage Bharata’s Natyasastra, it is a comprehensive Indian treatise on dance and drama, where the aesthetics theory of rasa is housed (Mishra 1998: 202). These combinations of training elements at TFA create the ideal framework for the Indian sublime. As Mishra argues devotional theism formulates the

---

23 This being the very subject of the mystical encounter between the mortal and the fairies discussed in Chapter Four.
core principle of Hinduism with its working definition of puja (worship) and bhakti (devotion): its discussion and development will present us with essential narratives and thoughts to unpack queries on Indian aesthetics. Devotional verses, epic narratives and the theory of rasa (sentiment) from drama formulate the history of Indian literary (Mishra 1998: 4). Hypothesising the devotional sublime, clears the way for the reader to transform into “the infra reader” (Mishra 1998: 201). This allows the reader to follow my narration on my devotion (bhakti) to my Guru (Swamiji) and the Temple of Fine Arts, where art is thought as the divine. In Indian dance, the dancer after years of training should exhibit the state where in performance he/she forgets him/her self bringing the performer closer to the self (Kramer 1991: 49). It is a practice where the idea of self-extinction is extended from nirguna bhakti to the establishment of becoming one with the character extending into the concept of Nirvana (Mishra 1998: 201-202) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 102 & 120).

In relation to the Natyasastra and the conceptualisation of Indian thought on time, Meyer-Dinkgrafe poses an excellent question in reference to the Natyasastra as an Indian text. He asks whether it is appropriate to formalise data on a culture where time and history “are conceptualized quite differently” against the concepts of Western time and history (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100-101). The conceptualisation of Indian time is rather intriguing and has been summarised as follows:

The length of a year of Brahma, […], is 3,110,400,000,000 years or 360 kalpas, each one of which (a day of Brahma) 8,640,000,000 years long. But the life of Brahman, we are told, is only 72,000 kalpas (1:363) while one day of Shiva, for reasons known only to the gods themselves, is presented as an incredible lengthy 37,264,147,126,589,458,187,550,720,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 kalpas which is probably another way of saying that it is infinite. (Mishra 1998: 133)

Given the complexity of the Indian concept of time, it would be unproductive to even make an attempt at chronology; even so, one may ridicule the very conceptualisation mentioned above. Nevertheless in its defence, Carl Sagan the astronomer at Cornell University argues that:

The Hindu religion is the only one of the world’s great faiths dedicated to the idea that the cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of births and deaths. It is the only religion in which the time scales correspond […] to those of

---

24 In the context of aesthetics, rasa is interpreted as sentiment (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 103). Although its origin is related to the context of drama from Bharata’s Natyasastra it is more commonly associated with poetry (Rangacharya 1998: 75).

25 As discussed in Chapter One.
modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day
and night of Brahma, 8.64 billions years, longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun
and about half the time since the Big Bang. […] The most elegant and sublime of
these is a representation of the creation of the universe at the beginning of each
cosmic cycle, a motif known as the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. The god, called in
this manifestation Nataraja, the Dance King. In the upper right hand is a drum whose
sound is the sound of creation. In the upper left hand is a tongue of flame, a reminder
that the universe, now newly created, will billions of years from now be utterly
14)

Following this line of argument, Fritjof Capra in his book The Tao of Physics states that
the ancient Hindu sages conceptualised a time-scale that was so staggering that it took
over two thousand years for the human mind to replicate a similar theory. He argues
that:

The Hindu sages were not afraid to identify this rhythmic divine play with the
evolution of the cosmos as a whole. They pictured the universe as periodically
expanding and contracting and gave the name kalpa to the unimaginable time span
between the beginning and the end of one creation. (Capra 1983: 199)

To further elucidate the departure of Swami Vivekananda on the rishis not being the
composers of the Vedic literature but rather seers (Muthiya 2004: 11) (Chattopadhyaya
1999: 200) “of an eternal impersonal truth” (Coward 1997: 7), Coward argues that:

The [rishi’s] initial vision is said to be of the Veda as one, as a whole, the entirety of
Brahman. This is represented in the Mandukya Upanisad by the mantra AUM[26],
which includes within itself the three levels of ordinary consciousness[27]-waking,
dreaming, and deep sleep-yet also reaches out beyond to the transcendent where the
sound itself comes to an end. Brahman which is said to be beyond, is also said to be
AUM. (Coward 1997: 7)

Expanding on Coward and Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s finding of the Brahman as Om (AUM),
and citing the Mandukya Upanishad Swamiji further elaborates that there are four
stages to Om, split into three letters of the alphabet: A, U and M. A fourth stage
identified as Anaahatha is also present and this transcends verbal pronunciation.
According to Swamiji all sounds and language begin with the letter ‘A’, representing
the beginning: ‘A’ symbolises creation. The ending of all sound concludes with
‘Mmm’; hence ‘M’ represents resolution. In between the letters ‘A’ and ‘M’, the
continued sound of ‘Ooo’ is sustained, signifying preservation. Thus, in combination

---

26 Details of the mantra’s workings are described in Chapter Four.
27 The consciousness levels of the waking, dreaming and deep-sleep states are indicated in Chapter Four
and elaborated into the workings of the devotional acting-theatre praxis.
the letters A, U and M represent creation, preservation and culmination. Swamiji moves on to elaborate that “all other sounds are contained” within A-U-M, as it is the source from where all other sounds emanate. This explains its reference as a seed alphabet (akshara). Representing God in its fullest form it carries within itself the capacity to create, therefore everything begins with Om and ends with Om. After the ending of the audible sound, a vibration or humming sound is still sustained: this is known as the fourth stage, the Pranava or the Anaahatha, the unspoken sound, the “Primordial sound vibration of the Spirit Supreme” (Shantanand 2007: 6-8). In Indian philosophy, following Coward’s argument, this primal sound according to Meyer-Dinkgrafe is associated to “Brahman, Atman or Purusha”, as the foundation of all creation formulating the field of the Absolute, a field without qualities, yet possesses the qualities of all manifestation, infinite and “beyond space and time”. Hence, he argues that “All aspects of theatre, too, have their origin in this field of Brahman”28 (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95). For the Hindu, according to Mishra, the religious is a subject of aesthetics; the object of the sublime in devotional (bhakti) poetry is Brahman (Mishra 1998: 16). Mishra’s Indian sublime as the transcendent principle of the Absolute, identified as Brahman, the Hindu signifier of the Spirit Absolute (Mishra 1998: 5-7) corroborates the arguments of Swamiji, Coward and Meyer-Dinkgrafe on Brahman.

Figure 3 Om as Shivalingam29

---

28 This field of Brahman as Om is also explained in Chapter Four as TFA’s AMND radar field representing Shiva and Sakthi as the foundation of all activity, similarly to Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s description of the Absolute field. As previously mentioned, this field also draws its parallels to Arnie Lade and Hans Jenny’s “wave phenomena” as an extention of the sacred sound, Om (Lade 1998: 49-50) (Khanna 1979: 44). See Chapter Four, footnote 24.

29 Image retrieved from Swami Shantanand’s What is Manthra (Shantanand 2007: 7).
Figure 3 is introduced to elucidate the workings of *Om* in the form of *Shivalingam*; the iconic representation of *Lord Shiva*: creation-evolve, preservation-revolve and resolve-culmination. *Lord Shiva* also known as *Lord Nataraaja* formulates the working definition of devotion and worship at TFA and as argued by Mishra the iconography representing the “object of devotion” (Mishra 1998: 201), “remains the sublime object” defying representation of time and space (Mishra 1998: 16). This Hindu signifier as the Indian Sublime; the Absolute Spirit-Brahman, with its working definition of *puja* (worship) and *bhakti* (devotion) in relation to the *Natyasasatra* taught at TFA by Swamiji, will formulate the essential narratives in developing my devotional practice in acting. Later in this Chapter the symbolism of *Shiva-Shivalingam-Nataraja* will be introduced in the creative segment to elaborate my performance as Lord of Misrule.

For these very reasons, similarly to Mishra, Meyer-Dinkgrafe argues that since the *Natyasasatra* is of Indian origin based on Indian thought practice, it must not be foregrounded against Western philosophy (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100). It is essential to understand that the very concept of Indian philosophy is constructed around the Absolute *Brahman* (Mishra 1998: 10-15) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95). The *Natyasasatra* also known as the *Ghandarva Veda* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 99), which is the fifth *Veda* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 1), deals with every aspect of theatre, and as such, it finds its repose in this “field of *Brahman*”30 (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95) which is *Om* (Shantanand 2007: 6) (Coward 1997: 7). “There are”, to quote Shakespeare, “more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in our philosophy” (Act1.5.168-169) (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 1687) (Armstrong 2001: 18).

As dancers at TFA, we paid attention to the many discourses that Swamiji had delivered to us, one of which is as follows: the reason for the creation of the *Natyasasatra* was to re-establish the state of enlightenment lost by humans. He further added that in the course of practice (years of practice, or/and perhaps not achieving it in one lifetime) one day the dancer would move on to a state that, while in performance, his or her consciousness would become so saturated that he or she would become one with *Om*, the primordial sound vibration of the universe, and all will be silent. That is the day which, Swamiji says, every dancer should strive to attain. This is one of the reasons Swamiji founded TFA as a house for the performing arts, which provides a platform for individuals to

---

30 This is the very same “field of *Brahman*” elaborated in TFA ’s AMND radar field in Chapter Four where the energy from the “field of *Brahman*” (fairies) affects the psychoenergetic core of the mortals, releasing them from their chaos to realising their true selves.
return to their natural and original state with *Brahman* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5 & 101-102) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 104-105). Thus with Swamiji’s guidance, dancers are given a platform to experiment with Bharata’s *Sastra* through the many related fields of the performing arts, slowly moving to that one blessed moment in time when all will become, in Vijay Mishra’s reading of Indian sublime, the moment of self-extinction (realisation) (Mishra 1998). In sharing Swamiji’s opinion Meyer-Dinkgrafe similarly argues that the *Natyasastra*’s purpose is to facilitate humans to reconnect with the lost truths of the *Vedas* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100) by providing a training platform to achieve enlightenment (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 166). This training platform will spark the *nadam* (primordial sound or *Om*) to resonate within every atom of the human body increasing in strength, causing it to dance and finally ending in perceiving the truth (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 100). As mentioned earlier, the *Natyasastra* has a dualistic function of raising the levels of consciousness both in the performer and the audience, meaning that when the performer is at a higher level of aesthetic consciousness, the audience thus experiencing that state of expansion from the performer, will then be transported to the same level of aesthetic consciousness in achieving the goal of *moksha* (liberation). This fulfills the purpose of the *Natyasastra* in restoring the golden age (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5-6). Owing to this dualistic principle Meyer-Dinkgrafe expresses his concern that:

There is a tendency in Western theatre scholarship to water down (or preferably annihilate) the implications of this claim for the function of theatre by arguing that its inclusion in the text of the *Natyasastra* is merely a trick used by the author [(Bharata)] to justify the book to his readers. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 6)

According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, there is a further argument that Bharata’s claim should not be taken lightly, as theatre according to the *Natyasastra* is yet to achieve the golden age of restoration, the very purpose of its creation, and according to Indian philosophy, we are presently in the reign of *Kali Yuga* the darkest age of the four cycles. It appears that theatre practitioners and contemporary Indian dance/drama (*Natyasastra* roots) theatre practitioners who take this claim seriously acknowledge their links to the *Natyasastra* in doing their part to return theatre to the origins. This is the argument similarly put forth by Swami Sivananda and Swamiji in playing their part to restore theatre to its divine origins by founding TFA. To this end Swami Sivananda exhorted:

---

31 For detailed information on the primordial sound, see Chapter Four TFA’s AMND radar field *Figure.*
32 Swami Sivananda’s question and expanded answer is expanded in Chapter Three.
It is the sacred duty of every lover of God and of the fine arts to raise them to their original standards of purity and divinity. (Sivananda 1999: 124)

For the reason that:

Drama is a very powerful instrument for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge. What you cannot teach through hundreds of books and hours of lecture, you can bring home to the audience easily and effectively through a single play. Drama is an art-form that touches the heart. (Sivananda 1999: 125)

The worldly person who takes a keen interest in this art form and misuses it for nefarious purposes (Sivananda 1999: 125), transforms what was once divine so that now it becomes “dominated by commercialism” (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5). Hence there is a pressing need to reassess and realign the Natyasastra through Indian thought processes rather than the Western mind, as argued by Meyer-Dinkgrafe. His point of departure is based on the fact that once the realignment is done through the understanding of the normal states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep-sleep) mentioned in the Vedas (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95 & 111) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 35-38), it will create an appropriate backdrop for a clearer and more pristine understanding of Indian theatre aesthetics. The realignment will then allow the individual-actor-spectator to expand their consciousness to experience the state of higher consciousness (pure consciousness or pure unitary consciousness)\textsuperscript{33,34} levels (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 111-122) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 193-194), and with repeated exposure, eventually to realise the Spirit Absolute-Brahman (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95, 120) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 163-164) (Nair 2007: 186-187).

Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis

With this realignment, I will now move to apply the sublime in engaging the Absolute Spirit-Brahman, in relation to the Natyasastra taught at TFA by Swamiji. In developing my devotional theatre praxis-led-research methodology in acting, I move to formulate through Swami Rama Tirtha that all of humanity can be classified into three categories: the first, Tassyaiwaham meaning “I am His!”; the second, Tavaiwaham meaning “I am

\textsuperscript{33} Illustrated by W.T. Stace as similar to Indian Philosophy as argued by Paul Gelderloos and Zaid Beto cited in Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s Approaches to Acting: Past and Present (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 114).

\textsuperscript{34} This formula of pure consciousness is also researched by Arnie Lade in reference to light and sound as its essential elements, mentioned in Chapter Four in relation the Lord of Misrule character enacted in Jenny de Reuck’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night (Lade 1998: 49-50).
thine!; and the third, *Twamevaham* meaning “I am Thou”. Concerning these forms Swami Rama says the highest form is the third, “I am Thou”, followed by “I am Thine” and “I am His”, and the true spirit of religion can be infused into any one of these forms (Rama and Dayton 1978: 63-71).

Swami Rama postulates that the Hindus believe that striving to achieve true religious spiritual practice will evolve rising from one stage to the other until the highest stage is achieved, and when the supreme state of *Samadhi* or enlightenment is reached “I am He” and “I am Thou”, there are no more births (Rama and Dayton 1978: 71). Following this train of thought, I draw the parallel to formulate my ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’, whereby the actor moves from one stage to the other until the character is realised, when nothing is left but the divine energy of the *atman* or soul flowing through the actor coinciding with what we know as the Stanislavsky Acting System (Whyman 2008: 78) (Rayner 1985: 340). This same evolutionary process is linked to the three governing qualities (*gunas*) of *Prakriti* (nature); *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in progressive stages of development (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 96-97). This table is introduced to elucidate the working platform:
**Evolution and Development in the Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consciousness States</th>
<th>State of Gunas</th>
<th>Physical States/Quotients/Yoga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am His</td>
<td>Tamas</td>
<td>Grotesque(^{35}) – Motor – Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am Thine</td>
<td>Ṛajas</td>
<td>Heightened – Emotional – Mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am Thou</td>
<td>Sattva</td>
<td>Naturalistic(^{36}) – Intelligence – Spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Five Layers of Human Covers according to Vedic Philosophy

1. **Annamayee Kosh**
   - The Physical Layer
   - Gross Body Waking State (Conscious)
   - Jagrat Avastha or Visva State – Waking State

2. **Pranmayee Kosh**
   - The Vital Layer
   - Subtle Body Dream State (Unconscious)
   - Swapna Avastha or Thajasa State – Dream State

3. **Manomayee kosh**
   - The Mental Layer
   - The Layer of Knowledge
   - Causal Body Deep Sleep State (Subconscious)
   - Sushupthi Avastha or Prajnasya State – Deep Sleep State

4. **Vigyanmayee Kosh**
   - The Layer of Knowledge
   - Causal Body Deep Sleep State (Subconscious)
   - Sushupthi Avastha or Prajnasya State – Deep Sleep State

5. **Anandmayee Kosh**
   - The Layer of Blissfulness
   - Causal Body Deep Sleep State (Subconscious)
   - Sushupthi Avastha or Prajnasya State – Deep Sleep State

### The Fourth Dimension – Transcendental State (State of Samadhi) – *Turiya Avastha*

Superconscious State (Realising the Absolute Character of the actor)

---

**Figure 4 Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis Paradigm**

In character and conduct, Shakespeare’s Hamlet shares his thoughts with Rosencrantz in a conversation which leads to Hamlet saying, “Why, then ‘tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” (2.2.245) (Shakespeare, Greenblatt et al. 1997: 1696). And true enough “thinking makes it so”: the ancient Vedic four caste system was originally dependent on the character and conduct of an individual’s personal development. This depended on the individual’s inherent capacity to achieve the desired stage of goals\(^{37}\) in life, which is; 1. *kama* (desire) – fulfilling the senses - body - the *Sudhra* stage, 2. *artha* (wealth) achieving this stage while keeping the senses under control - mind - *Vaishya* stage, 3. *dharma* (duty or self-control) being responsible

---

\(^{35}\) A note for the reader: although the term Grotesque is used by Meyerhold in his style of acting, it is a term that came to me through my experiments from TFA and at acting school. At the time of developing the devotional acting-theatre praxis, I had not come into contact with Meyerhold’s notion of the Grotesque.

\(^{36}\) The term Naturalistic used here is in line with my experiments from training techniques at TFA and from acting school, where once again I had had no exposure to the term Naturalism and the methods of Stanislavsky when developing the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

\(^{37}\) The four Stages of life have been discussed in Chapter Three.
and treading the path of righteousness - will power - Sathriya stage, and 4. moksha (liberation) a life of renunciation and spiritual teachings - spirit - Brahmin stage. These four stages correspond with the three gunas of nature: tamas – obstacle/mass; rajas – motion/energy; and sattva/intellect – expansion, and in turn these gunas correspond with the castes; 1. tamas (ignorance), 2. tamas-rajas (combination of ignorance and activity), 3. rajas-sattva (combination of true activity and liberation), 4. sattva (liberation). Based on these proportions a man’s caste and evolutionary process are determined by the Guru (Yogananda 1993: 451) (Yogananda 1995: 245-248) (Defouw and Svoboda 2003: 116-119).

My training process here takes the actors through the very processes of nature exploring the levels of the gunas and the stages of life through physical and psychological exercises, through body and mind exploring their inter-relationships which Zarrilli terms “psycho-physical” acting (Zarrilli and Hulton 2009: 1). These gunas (obstacle-motion-intellect) and stages of life (desire-wealth-duty-liberation), together with the awareness of the ten indriyas (senses), the five gyanendriyas (senses of perception or knowledge) seeing, touching, hearing, tasting, smelling; and the five karmendriyas (organs of action or execution) procreating, excreting, talking, walking and performing manual skill (Yogananda 1995: 11,18, 268, 880, 882 & 1028) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 97-98), then find their correlation with the naturalistic state of the spirit. At this juncture the actors experience the following: heightened mental state together with a sense of the grotesqueness of the body. What is required from this point on is that the actors experience a transformation, filtered through the five layers of the human covers in order to rid their bodies of all inhibitions or as Stanislavsky terms it “superfluous tension” (Whyman 2008: 98). Swamiji would say “The death of the ego is the birth of the Spirit” (Shantanand 2006: 13).

While my focus is mainly on the Hatha and Raja Yogic segment of Stanislavsky’s Acting System, I will briefly mention Meyerhold’s Biomechanics to illustrate a comparison between the dhyana (meditative) internal process and dharana (concentration) external process. Stanislavsky practised internal techniques, working out, while Meyerhold practised external techniques, working in; and this invariably was a matter of choice (Whyman 2008: 236) for both practitioners. The reason for my comparison of both Stanislavsky’s work and Meyerhold’s is to demonstrate that the devotional acting-theatre praxis developed independently from my contact with TFA,
and further incorporates both internal and external techniques. The devotional acting-theatre praxis is aimed at being a complete holistic acting system based on Vedic science (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 175) practised through the *gurukula* system of master-disciple training formula. In cross-referencing my work with Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, I aim to validate that the devotional acting-theatre system is based on a practised working methodology. I wish to further state that the development of the devotional acting-theatre praxis is independent of Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s research, reassessing theatre against the backdrop of Vedic science, and has been in practice in-depth since my graduation from acting school in the year 2000.

Now in order to release these “superfluous tensions”, the practice of yoga is essential, as it incorporates engaging the body, mind and spirit in reuniting the individual with the Absolute spirit - *Brahman*. Yoga is a perfect scientific system of bringing into union the body, mind and spirit (Kirk and Boon 2006: 5). It is a yogic system revealed to the Indian *rishis* of yore (Sivananda and Divine Life Society (W.A.). Fremantle Branch. 1985: 93). The fundamental aim of all the different practices of Yoga is the reuniting of the individual self with the Absolute *Brahman*. Therefore Yoga carries the literal meaning of “joining” (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 15). The practice of Yoga is divided into four main branches or paths. *Karma* Yoga – the path of action – is primarily for those who are outgoing in nature. Without the intention of personal gain, this practice purifies the heart and teaches selflessness. While engaging in service the recitation of *mantra* is used to keep the mind focused. *Bhakti* Yoga - the pathway of devotion – appeals to those who are emotional in nature; the aspirant is primarily motivated by the “power of love” and perceives God as an embodiment of that love. Through the practice of “prayer, worship and ritual” the aspirant transforms into becoming unconditional love itself. *Jnana* Yoga - the path of knowledge – the most difficult to pursue, requires immense perseverance in “will and intellect”. In this most rigorous journey the aspirant experiences union with the Absolute *Brahman*. *Raja* Yoga - the yoga of mental and physical control – known as the royal path, is a form whose mastery converts physical vigour into spiritual vigour (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 18-19) (Whyman 2008: 82).

---

38 I must also add that I am much relieved to find someone such as Meyer-Dinkgrafe who shares my paradigm; as such his research acts as a validating platform for the devotional acting-theatre praxis, legitimising it within academia.
The practice of *Hatha* Yoga in the devotional acting-theatre praxis falls within the eight limbs of *Raja* Yoga dealing with *pranayama* (control of prana - subtle life currents by way of breath regulation), *asanas* (postures), *bhandas* (body locks or binds) and *mudras* (symbolic gestures or seals) as it is exhaustive in its elaboration, I will limit the discussion just to *pranayama* as it correlates to a similar practice in Stanislavsky’s Acting System. I will move on to demonstrate the crucial importance of the practice of *pranayama* which is known as the life-force that sustains the body within the devotional acting-theatre praxis paradigm. Sharing my own thought process Stanislavsky writes:

a.) Prana-vital energy-is taken from breath, food, the sun, water, and human auras.  
b.) When a person dies, prana goes into the earth through maggots, into microorganisms.  
c.) “The Self”-“I am”-is not prana, but that which brings all prana together into one. […]  
d.) Pay attention to the movement of prana.  
f.) Prana moves, and is experienced like mercury, like a snakeootnote{In making reference to the snake, Stanislavsky is speaking of the awakening of the *Kundalini*; the dormant or static cosmic energy.}, from your hands to your fingertips, from your thighs to your toes. […]  
g.) The movement of prana creates, in my opinion, inner rhythm. (Carnicke 2009: 178)

*Prana*ootnote{Life force or Vital force.} movement is central to the practice of Yoga; it is not matter, but it is in it. Not oxygen but in the air. Subtle in its energy form “carried in air, food, water, and sunlight”, it gives life to “all forms of matter”. Through the practice of *pranayama* and *asanas*, the *prana* level can be increased and stored within the body to increase strength and vitality. Of the three bodies: gross (physical), astral (mental and emotional characteristics) and causal (ideation) (Yogananda 1993: 477), *prana* becomes the vital link between the astral and the gross body. The main path of *prana* flow is within the “*nadis*”ootnote{Nerve channels.} of the astral body” as shown in Figure 6 (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 70).
Prana travels through the *nadis* in the astral body: of the seventy two thousand *nadis*, *Sushumna* (spinal cord) is the most crucial of them all. As shown in *Figure 5*, the *Pingala* and *Ida nadi* are on both sides of the *Sushumna* which corresponds with the sympathetic ganglia of the spinal cord. Utilising the technique of *pranayama*, the *Kundalini*\(^{43}\) energy can be activated. The meaning of the word “Ha-tha” signifies the unification of the sun (*pingala*) and moon (*adi nadi*) (nerve channels – shown in *Figure 6*) which represents the oppositional functions of *prana* (vital energy – positive energy – moving upwards) and *apana* (eliminating energy – negative energy – moving downwards) moving like a serpent rising through the *sushumna nadi* (spinal cord) and up the six chakras culminating at the seventh chakra, the thousand-petalled lotus, realising the Self. Thus when these oppositional functions moving through the *nadis* unite at the base *muladhara chakra* (sacral plexus)\(^{44}\), the *Kundalini* energy is awakened (Sivananda and Divine Life Society (W.A.). Fremantle Branch. 1985: 94-95) (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 70-71) (Rosen 2007: 12) and the awakening begins moving upward through the *Sushumna*.

---

\(^{42}\) *Figure* is obtained from Lucy Lidell, Narayani and Giris Rabinovitch’s *The Sivananda Companion to Yoga*, New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc, 1983, p. 70.

\(^{43}\) Repeatedly referred to as a coiled snake, the *Kundalini* represents the dormant or static cosmic energy.

\(^{44}\) Refer to *Figure 4* The *Sushumna Seven Chakra* diagram.
The chakras form the energy centres within the astral body. There are seven in total, six positioned along the Sushumna nadi with the seventh chakra seated at the crown; the Sahasrara chakra. They are represented by the number of petals, which corresponds with the nadi radiating from them. A certain sound vibration is produced when the Kundalini passes through each chakra. Except for the Sahasrara chakra, all other chakras carry their own colour, element and seed (bij) mantra. The six chakras of the astral body coincide in the “physical body to the nerve plexuses along the spine”. Lying dormant, the Kundalini is situated at the “base of the Sushumna”; the Muladhara chakra (sacral plexus). When the Kundalini is awakened and rises through the Sushumna, at each chakra, a different state of consciousness is experienced and when the Kundalini reaches the crown of the head, the yogi achieves Samadhi (superconsciousness) (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 71). Hence, to create their acting methodologies, Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov and Chekhov immersed themselves in the study of Yoga to infuse body-mind and energy control into their system (Whyman 2008: 78-87)

---

45 Figure obtained from Lucy Lidell, Narayani and Giris Rabinovitch’s 1983 The Sivananda Companion to Yoga, New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc, 1983, pp. 70-71.
46 Refer to Figure 4 for visual reading.
(Chekhov, Chekhov et al. 1991: xvii & xxxiv) (Wegner 1976: 89). This is why the practice of pranayama became vital to Stanislavsky as he realised that its mastery would in turn create a realisation process in his actors allowing then to discover the “true” self (Whyman 2008: 78 & 80) (Carnicke 2009: 178 & 181).

A caution to the actor: he or she should note that the individual will not derive the full benefit of Hatha Yoga without the combined practice of pranayama and asanas. It is vital to note that only when practised in its combination can the nadis be purified resulting in the activation of the Kundalini. This is why Stanislavsky emphasised the practice and understanding of prana. Nevertheless basic results will be derived in practising the components independently for health benefits\(^{47}\) (Sivananda and Divine Life Society (W.A.). Fremantle Branch. 1985: 95). Following the train of thought of Western science, energy and matter are the same, but merely take different forms. Einstein’s equation of energy and matter; \(e=mc^2\) equals the speed of light, looked upon from a different perspective, in actual fact would mean that the body is light energy reduced in speed to condense into solid form; thus describing our human body using Einstein’s equation (Rosen 2007: 11) (Frazer 2011: 78) (Jeukendrup and Gleeson 2004: 395). It is essential to learn how to cultivate the energy of the body to enhance the actor. That is why Yoga is a living science (Lidell, Rabinovitch et al. 1983: 20) and it is imperative to learn this science to prepare the body of the actor for performance. The actor who is a practitioner of Yoga will stand apart from any other, for the reason that the body is conditioned on the dual principle of dhyana (meditative) and dharana (physical concentration) principles. A combined practice of dhyana and dharana would make an actor immensely formidable: as Swami Sivananda says, when practised perfectly a raja Yogi will be endowed with siddhis\(^{48}\). Imagine what an actor can do with these siddhis\(^{49}\).

The dual methodology works, then, as follows: while purifying the nerve centres, asanas are aimed at making the body dexterous, responsive, firm and steady: they eliminate lethargy and physical ailments. Pranayama is aimed at regulating and controlling the vital energy or breath. Bhandas (binds or locks) are used in pranayama to manipulate the flow of prana from moving upwards and apana from moving

\(^{47}\) For detailed information on the practice of Hatha Yoga, refer to Swami Sivananda’s 1985 Health and Hatha Yoga and Lucy Lidell, Narayani and Giris Rabinovitch’s 1983 The Sivananda Companion to Yoga.

\(^{48}\) From a Yogic practitioner’s paradigm; mystical powers in relation to Yogis performing austere penance. See Chapter Four, footnote 34.

\(^{49}\) From a householder’s perspective; meaning accomplishment, fulfilment or success.
downwards, in this manipulation the *prana* and *apana* are united and the combined flow is sent up through the *Sushumna nadi*. The *mudras* are the symbolic gestural seals aimed at sealing “the mind with the soul or Atman”. It restricts the mind from wandering to external objects, directing the “externalising mind” towards the *atman* fixing it in the heart region (*Anahata Chakra* – cardiac plexus). In the similar process of realising the Self, the *Hatha* Yoga process can be utilised to realise the character. The practitioner must be aware that *Hatha* Yoga is not the goal, but a pathway to an end (Sivananda and Divine Life Society (W.A.). Fremantle Branch. 1985: 95). This was Stanislavsky’s passion in assisting the actor to harness the “creative state” (Carnicke 2009: 173). Stanislavsky viewed the practice of *Hatha* Yoga as an integral part of his System: highlighting the importance of the solar plexus\(^\text{50}\) within the nervous system, he referred to it as “a form of brain”, a region which acts as the main storage of *prana* (Whyman 2008: 79-80).

In acting school I began to search for an educational paradigm that would understand and further become part of my devotional-spiritual creative process from my training at TFA. Now, for the development of a systematic creative process, I believe a proper educational paradigm must be incorporated and this educational paradigm should, when it comes into contact with the creative process, be absorbed to further enhance it. This educational paradigm should be able to relate, envelope and process the consciousness states, the states of *gunas*, the physical states, quotients and yoga. And I discovered the triple balanced approach of Intellectual, Emotional and Motor Quotients for creating an education platform that will embrace my devotional-spiritual paradigm effectively. For education to be holistic and effective, a well balanced platform between Intellectual Quotient, Emotional Quotient and Motor Quotient should be practised and incorporated into a training process or program (Bentsen 1979: 36-40). Hoy and Margetts argue that it strengthens the competency levels, making individuals competent in managing intellectual, emotional and motor situations (Hoy and Margetts 2010: 34-35 & 84-86). While Howard Gardner argues that all intelligence is shaped by time, environment and culture, his multiple intelligence paradigm encompasses eight areas from “logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal and naturalist” to compose a balanced individual. Thus using this psychology and weaving it into the process of drama, I personally feel that it acts as a springboard in creating an excellent platform to prepare individuals for life skills

\(^{50}\) Refer to *Figure* 4.
This paradigm, then, formulates the thematic schema of the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

Now I move to discuss the second stage of the working dimensions in the devotional acting-theatre praxis. This second stage deals with the five layers of the human body in line with Vedic science (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 5 & 217). The outer physical layer or the gross body of the actor is sustained by the script, director’s input and interactions between other actors. This acts as the material food that nourishes the body, a transaction within our daily lives, as in the Waking State; physical actions begin. In the next stage, breathing (prana) operating in the vital layer produces vitality to maintain our lives; the life of the character. This is the same prana or breathing technique which is mentioned by Stanislavsky in his Acting System (White 2006: 83) (Carnicke 2009: 178-179) (Whyman 2008: 81-82). The mental layer represents the feelings of the actor while the layer of knowledge represents the thinking faculties of the actor. All these layers; the vital layer, the mental layer and the layer of knowledge, in combination form the subtle body or astral body or the dream state; mental and emotional nature processes begin. Moving on to the next stage where the actor processes the layers from 1-4, this coagulation process is identified as the seed process or the causal body stage at the subconscious state, where the actor is beginning to realise the fruition of the goal; the process toward realising the character which forms the Deep Sleep State.

Imagine an overcoat representing the outermost layer of the gross or physical body, the combination of the Vital, Mental and Knowledge layers forming the subtle body or astral body become the undercoat, and the seed process or causal body stage becomes the undergarment; the process of ideation begins. The atman or soul in not attached to any of these layers, but is nevertheless part of the layers and states (Rama and Dayton 1978: 95-95) (Yogananda 1993: 477). In my opinion, the atman being part of all the layers, becomes the “inner line of effort” guiding the actor (Kramer 1991: 58) and can be likened to that of Stanislavsky’s through-line of action (Carnicke 2009: 226-227) and the Natyasastra’s bindu (vital drop), constantly remaining anchored from the beginning of the characterisation until the end of the play (Kramer 1991: 58-59). This is the very same formula expounded by Stanislavsky in his Elements of the Internal Region of the Soul, where he states that the soul lives within the psychic life motivators. Coinciding
with Ribot’s\textsuperscript{51} view Stanislavsky advises acting students on “multilayered attention” (the five layers mentioned above) enabling the actor to further develop their stage sense. From Stanislavsky’s notes on The Psychology of Attention, Theodore Ribot quotes Henry Maudsley\textsuperscript{52} by saying that if anyone is found unable to control their muscles they become “incapable of attention” (Whyman 2008: 96). This is precisely why Stanislavsky focused on Pranayama the breathing exercise from Hatha Yoga for the actors to free their muscles (Whyman 2008: 81-84).

From the Deep Sleep State we now move on to the final stage of realising the character. This is the transcendental stage known as Samadhi or enlightenment or the superconscious state mentioned by Stanislavsky (White 2006: 87) (Carnicke 2009: 178) (Whyman 2008: 78). The entire process of the devotional acting-theatre praxis methodology will lead the performer into using the entire body in performance; Zarrilli shares a similar paradigm when he uses the term “when the body becomes all eyes” (Zarrilli 2000: 174), meaning that when the body is evoked and fully aware in preparation for engagement of the self and the audience it is functioning at a higher consciousness level (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 194). The Stanislavsky Acting system is nothing less than realising the truth of the actor’s character and this approach of realising the spiritual truth runs parallel to the yogic system of realising the self or attaining Samadhi-moksha (enlightenment), similarly argued by Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 1) (White 2006: 87).

Revisiting Katherine Lee Bates’ argument on the waking and the dream world in AMND Chapter Four, and further exploring Meyer-Dinkgrafe’s research into the waking state, dream state and deep-sleep state (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 95 & 111), Swamiji writes that there are, in total, four states or avasthas: the first dimension - the waking state or Jagrat avastha; the second dimension - the dream state or Svapna avastha; the third dimension - the deep sleep state or Sushupti avastha (Shantanand 1982: 56-57); and the fourth dimension - the transcendental state/super-conscious state or Turiya avastha (Shantanand 1982: 66-67) (Paul and Tagore 2006: 348) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 108) (Carnicke 2009: 180). In order to realise oneself (the actor realising the character) one must move beyond the first three states of waking, dreaming and deep-sleep as described in the devotional acting-theatre praxis moving into the

\textsuperscript{51} Theodore Ribot author of The Psychology of Attention.

\textsuperscript{52} Both a psychologist and a psychiatrist, Henry Maudsley authored the books on Philosophy of the Mind and Pathology of the Soul.
transcendental state or *Turiya avastha*. Stanislavsky and Chekov too shared the theory of the transcendental (Whyman 2008: 78) (Carnicke 2009: 169 & 180). In Chekov’s acting theory he writes about the various levels of the ego, distinguishing between the lower and higher egos. The higher he addresses as “I am”, while the lower ego is filtered through three stages of the body (Whyman 2008: 187) (Carlson 1993: 121, 132), paralleling Swamiji’s death of the ego and birth of the Spirit (Shantanand 2006: 13). In realising the “I AM”, Swamiji says “Let your prayer be ‘Thy will be done’ and not ‘I will do Thy will’. This indicates the complete absence of the ego” (Shantanand 2006: 31). This description by Chekov is similar to that mentioned in the devotional acting-theatre praxis and further described in detail by Swamiji below.

In the waking state, we are governed by our mind, intelligence and the five senses. In the dream state, we experience our thoughts, projecting that experience externally and visualising ourselves experiencing those thoughts. In the deep sleep state, the subject (ourselves) is not aware of the object (deep sleep): here awareness of the body, thought, ourselves and dreams do not exist (Paul and Tagore 2006: 348). Thus Swamiji says according to the Vedic scriptures:

> [...] when we can understand; what sleep is? What dreaming is? What waking is? And who it is who is awake? Who it is who dreams? And who it is who is asleep? Then we can understand ourselves, everything about us, the world, and God. (Shantanand 1982: 61)

This was Swamiji’s explanation on the meaning of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem “Flower in the Crannied Wall” cited in the opening of this Chapter. In one of Swamiji’s discourses on *The Four Dimensions* during the 70’s, Swamiji paraphrases Tennyson’s poem:

> Tennyson said something like this – me dear flower, if only I know you, all in you and all in, all in you, I will know God and me and the world too. In anything, if you go to the very root of the matter, you will understand the very substance of the whole universe, for the substance in it, is the substance in all. (Shantanand 1982: 62-63)

This draws the analysis and the creation of AMND TFA radar field based on Bates’ observation of the dream state and waking state in Chapter Four. It further draws attention to a similar practice on Stanislavsky’s part in achieving the spiritual truth for his actors by “first removing what is harmful and then the ground on which it is possible to create the necessary mood will appear” (Whyman 2008: 84).
In drawing the comparison between Figure 6 and Figure 7, it becomes evident that Stanislavsky’s mapping for realising the character is similar to realising the self in yogic practice. The difference in approach is that Stanislavsky approached the East from the Western paradigm and I approached the West from the Eastern paradigm, the result being the same: that the actor realises the spiritual truth of the character.

The description of Stanislavsky’s Acting System by Whyman and Carnicke is intriguing, the former leaning toward the Western scientific application of Stanislavsky’s System (Carnicke 1993: 24) while the latter explains the system based on the research findings and the impact of Yoga on Stanislavsky’s System. Based on the research, I too have to concur with the findings of Carnicke, as from the moment I set

---

*Figure obtained from Rose Whyman’s* The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 40. 

---
eyes on Stanislavsky’s schematic drawing, I immediately knew that his system was based on the Yogic system and what is portrayed is the internal biological workings of a Yogic practitioner. I wish to highlight at this juncture that although my findings are similar to those of Carnicke, I drew my own conclusions when I saw the drawing in Whyman’s book; I instantaneously knew it was based on the Yogic system, as my training in acting is central to that of Yoga practice at TFA by Swamiji based on the Natyasastra (Kramer 1991: 58).54 Returning to the point of comparing the findings between Carnicke and Whyman, I personally find that Whyman waters down the impact of Hindu philosophy and Yoga on Stanislavsky’s System of Acting, while Carnicke merely states her findings. Perhaps that is why Whyman raises the level of influence of Yoga as a doubt in Stanislavsky’s system, and even questions Stanislavsky’s yogic claim (Whyman 2008: 81 & 85), while Carnicke comes in head on and declares that Stanislavsky’s acting system is strongly based on the Yogic system by quoting Stanislavsky himself declaring “My whole system is based on this”. Moreover Tatyana Bachelis, a critic, suggested that Stanislavsky is more of a “mystic than a scientist” as his practice is heavily into Yoga rather than psychology (Carnicke 2009: 181).

Atkinson critiques Western thinkers in particularly Strasberg “who assume a subconscious coextensive with the total unconscious realm”. Atkinson argues that:

The mere mention of the fact [that a superconscious exists] will prove a revelation to those who have not heard it before, and who have become entangled with the several ‘dual-mind’ [conscious/subconscious] theories of recent Western writers. The more one has read on this subject, the more he will appreciate the superiority of the Oriental theory over that of the Western writers. (Carnicke 2009: 179-180)

I will contain my comparison to that of Stanislavsky’s acting system drawing upon descriptions provided by both Whyman and Carnicke. The table55 provided by Whyman has no mention of Yogic similarities in the drawing and its explanation, but rather Whyman draws the attention away in arguing the impact and influence of Greek theatre and scientific definitions on Stanislavsky’s perspective of acting (Whyman 2008: 41-42).

---

54 I was in the process of proving that Stanislavsky’s system was nothing but the Yogic system in practice when I came upon Carnicke’s book validating my claim. I found this out by intuition based on years of practice, while Carnicke did so by research; we nevertheless share the same paradigm and validate each other.

55 The list tabled here was obtained from Rose Whyman’s The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 41-42.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whyman’s description of the Stanislavsky Acting System</th>
<th>Carnicke’s description of the Stanislavsky Acting System&lt;sup&gt;56&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Plan of Experiencing&lt;br&gt;(&lt;i&gt;AWHI&lt;/i&gt; pp. 308—311).&lt;br&gt;The five bases of The System: (1)&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;[In reference to the System’s five bases, Whyman’s footnote merely mentions human spirit in relation to the creation of art drawing attention to Pavlov and von Hartmann (Whyman 2008: 111).]</td>
<td>Carnicke writes that when Stanislavsky talks about the human spirit, he literally means “spirit” in relation to Ramacharaka’s Yoga (Carnicke 2009: 170).&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;1. Activeness: The art of the dramatic actor is the art of internal and external action.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;[Both related to scientific findings and narrations of the working of the above. Drawing attention to Pavlov. (Whyman 2008: 74).]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that Carnicke’s book is a second edition and the first was published in 1998. Whyman has extensively quoted Carnicke.
“incarnation” leading to the body read as a machine and relating its links to science, Greek origins and Pavlov (Whyman 2008: 104-106) with the reference of Yoga as a borrowed term (Whyman 2008: 112).]

reasoning of the usage of “spirit”, where the spirit being the breath of life transmigrates from one body to the other. Stanislavsky reasoned that the physical embodiment is one soul linked to passions and actions (Carnicke 2009: 232). Mishra connects the Hindu belief of soul transmigration to the Greeks (Mishra 1998: 131).

But central to Stanislavsky equating the body as a metaphor to machine and engineering terms is due to the fact of pressure from the Central Communist Party forcing him to change terms such as, “the life of the human spirit”, “the soul”, “magic if”, “intuition”, “subconscious” and “Prana” (Carnicke 2009: 102-103), which Whyman conveniently leaves out.


[Whyman relates the mind, will and feeling to Sechenov and Ribot and mentions Yoga as a by product reading, confirming the works of Sechenov and Ribot to Stanislavsky (Whyman 2008: 91). She further sources Stanislavsky’s psycho-technique of mind, will and feeling to Crohn Schmitt, Sechenoc, Pavlov, James and connections to Freud (Whyman 2008: 91-96).]

Carnicke on the other hand relates mind, will and feeling to Ribot and Ramacharaka as it forms acting’s through line (Carnicke 2009: 226) which links to psychotechnique which in turn formulates the experiential continuum of mind-body-spirit (Carnicke 2009: 223). For Stanislavsky, Carnicke argues that the psychotechnique is rooted in major Yoga tenets of pranayama (breath control) and asanas (physical postures) and the practice of dharana (physical concentration) (Carnicke 2009: 180-181). Furthermore in Carnicke’s opinion the only valid point at which one can equate Freud’s concept of “oceanic feeling” to Stanislavsky work is due to its religious connections to Stanislavsky’s view, where he rejects Freud’s dark view of the subconscious but embraces its spiritual associations. Stanislavsky embraced Tolstoy’s Eastern spiritual connections with the actor’s desired state of “experiencing”, Tolstoy quotes Yogi Yogananda’s “oceanic joy” (Carnicke 2009: 167).

7. Will.

[As above.]

As above.


[As above.]

As above.

9. The Role: the new play and role permeate the motivators of the psychic life. They scatter seeds in them and evoke creative aspiration. Along the line: Perspective of the Role and Through Action.

[As above.]

As above.

10. The lines of aspiration of the motivators of psychic life, bringing with them the seeds of the play and the roles that have been sown in them. At the beginning these aspirations are scrappy, patchy, disordered and chaotic but through clarification of the basic aim of creativity they become continuous, straight and supple.

[As above.]

As above.

11. ‘abcdefg hijk’ the internal region of the soul, our creative apparatus, with all its qualities, capacities, gifts, natural gifts, artistic

Based on Carnicke’s research she argues that Stanislavsky’s system being based on the links between mind-body and spirit-flesh clashed
skills, psycho-technical methods which we have earlier called ‘elements’. They are necessary for the fulfilment of the process of experiencing.

a. Imagination and its inventions (‘if’, the given circumstances of the role)
b. Bits and tasks
c. Attention and objects
d. Action
e. The feeling of truth and belief
f. Internal tempo-rhythm
g. Emotional memories
h. Communion
i. Adaptation
j. Logic and consistency
k. Internal characterisation
l. Internal stage charm
m. Ethics and discipline
n. Control and finish.

These all live in that region of the soul where the motivators of psychic life ... are buried together with the particles of the soul of the role which are implanted with them. See on the sketch how the lines of aspiration penetrate through this region and how they gradually take on the colour tones of the artist’s ‘elements’. (2)

[Whyman relates this segment to scientific explanations of Ribot, Stebbins, James, Gogol, Dostoevsky’s Brother’s Karamazov, Volkenstein and Pavlov (Whyman 2008: 96-102).]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12. These are the same lines of aspiration, already regenerated, of the motivators of the psychic life of the artist-role. Compare them to 10 and you will see the difference after they have passed through the psychical region. Now, gradually taking into themselves not only the ‘elements’ of the play but also the tones and colours of the ‘elements’ of the artist himself, the lines of aspiration of the mind, will and feeling, become unrecognisable. [As above.]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 13. This is that bundle in which all the lines of aspiration of the motivators of psychic life are entwined; this is that spiritual state which we call the ‘internal sense of the self on stage’.

[Whyman links the sense of the self to Ribot, James and Schmitt (Whyman 2008: 95).] |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnicke links the sense of self (Stanislavsky’s term for the dual consciousness of the actor – made familiar by Denis Diderot) to the stage as an internal concentration to the actor’s external physical presence (Carnicke 2009: 224), where Stanislavsky links it to the “I am” in Ramacharaka’s Yoga (Carnicke 2009: 219-219) as mentioned in segment 3 of Carnicke’s research (Carnicke 2009: 170).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 14. These are the lines of aspiration of the motivators of psychic life interwoven with each other like a plait, striving towards the supertask. Now, after their regeneration and converging with the role, we call them ‘the lines of through action’.

[As above.] |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnicke words it as General, Inner and Outer Senses of Self. As above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15. The as yet ghostly, not fully defined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnicke words it as “Proposed Supertask”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stanislavsky’s actor’s “through line” became the “supertask” (Carnicke 2009: 28-29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>supertask.</th>
<th>Stanislavsky’s actor’s “through line” became the “supertask” (Carnicke 2009: 28-29).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[As above in segment 11.]</td>
<td>The different elements and colours are listed in Figure 6 completely validating Stanislavsky’s incorporation of Yoga into his acting system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Note II, AWHE, p. 87 explains that sometimes there are four bases, the other being: ‘the aim of art is the creation of the life of the human spirit’.
2. Stanislavsky’s intention was for the different elements to be in different colours in the diagram.

| Figure 8 | Whyman and Carnicke’s Comparison of Stanislavsky’s Acting System |

Stanislavsky’s wife Maria Lilina protested against Hapgood’s translating methodology for the West asserting that it “damaged communication with the actor!” Although it was not Hapgood’s intention to alter the theoretical construction of Stanislavsky’s work, she did vehemently object to the publisher’s requests for major omissions (Carnicke 2009: 88). Carnicke had discovered huge gaps deleted from Stanislavsky’s materials between the English and Russian versions and further discovered that the Method differs from the System. These are the four defining concepts that were altered:

Performance itself. The System, at its best, induces a state of mind and being in the actor which Stanislavsky eccentrically calls “experiencing,” and which best defines his personal understanding of theatrical art. (Carnicke 2009: 13)

“Affective Memory,” also called “Emotional Memory,” a much debated technique that speaks directly to America’s adoption of Stanislavsky. Here [Carnicke] examined Stanislavsky’s psychological conception of emotion through the science of psychology. (Carnicke 2009: 13)

Adaptations to acting from Yoga. Eastern practice allows Stanislavsky to move beyond the Western propensity to see mind and body as two separate realms and to establish a mind-body-spirit continuum for actors who seek to communicate the full scope of human experience through their art. (Carnicke 2009: 13)

The concept of action. Stanislavsky explores in depth the ways in which drama speaks through action in his last Opera-Dramatic Studio. His experiments, hidden within his home, branched into two rehearsals techniques: The Method of Physical Actions, as interpreted by Soviet Marxists, was positioned as the end point in his lifelong search for a scientific System based in the material body; the more holistic and open-ended “Active Analysis” turned into practice his deep commitment to the

---

57 As Swamiji would say, “Wisdom cannot be taught. It has to be experienced” (Shantananda 2006: 14).
58 Stanislavsky initially experimented on “Affective Memory” borrowing it from French Psychologist Theodule Ribot. He later discovered its shortcomings in hindering the progress of the actor’s “mental hygiene”. Hapgood, for the English version, translated “Affective Memory” to “emotion memory”, which Strasberg then morphed into “emotional memory”, turning “Affective Memory” into the keystone practice of the Method (Carnicke 2009: 213-214).
improvisatory state of mind necessary to performance, his promotion of acting as a
 discrete art, and his respect for the actor as artist. (Carnicke 2009: 13-14)

Compared to Carnicke’s holistic research, Whyman’s book leans heavily toward
 establishing that Stanislavsky’s acting system is wholly based on Western psychology
 and scientific approaches, while Ramacharaka’s *Hatha* Yoga and *Raja* Yoga appear as
 mere points of reference. On the contrary, White embarked on just the opposite journey:
 working to link with the spiritual rather than the psychological, he argues:

I hope to counteract the common and widespread assumption that Stanislavsky’s
 theories are bound entirely to psychological realism and, consequently, to a Western
 ideology that separates the mind from the body. (White 2006: 74)

Furthermore, in a letter to his son Stanislavsky confesses his illiteracy in “psychology
 and philosophy”; Stanislavsky only incorporated science as a tool to spark his
 imaginative process. Against Gurevich’s continuous appeals, he refused to meet with
 scientists to improve his scientific terminology (Carnicke 1993: 26); his refusal
 exemplifies his creativity, which is “ultimately his most important resource” (Carnicke
 2009: 90). Carnicke introduces the foreword from the Russian edition:

[...] aside from a few commonly psychological terms like “intuition” and
 “subconscious,” [my] words are without “scientific roots,” come from daily
 language, and are not meant to establish a professional jargon. This simplicity is
 important, [...], because acting, which is an art and not a science, must have a
 practical and concrete vocabulary that appeals not to the intellect but to the “heart”.
 (Carnicke 2009: 89)

For this is the very reason why Swamiji coined the phrase “Art just for the love of it”,
 for art resides within the chambers of the ‘heART’.
Carnicke’s model of the Yoga chakras identifies in detail the workings of Stanislavsky’s Acting System in its representation to the human body and the various levels outlined in the development of the actor’s character towards realising the character’s role. She identifies the sushumna nadi (spinal cord), the ida and pingala nerve channels, and outlines its criss-crossing movement directing the prana (vital energy) upward to the main storage house in the Manipura chakra (solar plexus). She even provides the “aura” identification which is emitted when the actor is in communion with the sense of self (Carnicke 2009: 142 & 170) in its activation of the dharana state (Carnicke 2009: 181 & 227). Comparing Carnicke’s model to Figure 6 will provide a complete Vedic understating of what Stanislavsky actually meant in expressing his acting system in pictorial form. Whyman’s censorship mode filters all yogic connections to the diagram, and very briefly describes it shaped as “a pair of lungs, containing all the aspects of experiencing and incarnation, and a spine, which represents the role” and ends the description. In comparing both Carnicke and Whyman’s research and observations, I can only conclude that this is a testament to the fact that Whyman as an editor chose to

---

59 Figure obtained from Sharon Marie Carnicke’s Stanislavsky In Focus: An Acting Master For The Twenty-First Century, New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 124.
erase the connections, influences and the impact of Yoga in the life and works of Stanislavsky (Whyman 2008: 81 & 85). Whyman’s work suggests a parallel to a typical Soviet censor (Carnicke 2009: 182-183) and contributes to the ongoing academic suppression and distortions (Rajaram 2001: 1-2) of Orientalists’, Imperialists’ and Colonialists’ ideology. Refusing Gurevich’s advice on self-censorship, Stanislavsky argues “changing words is one thing, changing concepts and ideas is another” (Carnicke 1993: 24-27).

Figure 10 Stanislavsky’s Acting System and the Yogic Human Body comparison.
In comparing Stanislavsky’s Acting System and the Yogi in meditation one would have come to the conclusion that Stanislavsky’s diagram represents the internal biological workings of the yogic process, drawing a parallel to acting in outlining the process of realising the character. Sharing my experience, Carnicke immediately identifies the diagram with the yogic process citing that the process of communication plays a central role in art and argues how importantly Stanislavsky views “the control of prana” as an essential means to acting. Carnicke provides a description of Stanislavsky’s diagram:

[Stanislavsky] draws a schema of his System in the form of human lungs, visually referring to techniques of Yoga that radiate prana through the body using rhythmic breathing. Even Yoga’s chakras (or wheels of concentrated psychic energy that lie along the length of the spine) find corollaries along the centre line of Stanislavsky’s chart as circles that represent the actor’s “mind,” “will,” and “feelings”. (Carnicke 2009: 179)

Carnicke argues that in examining Ramacharaka’s book against the Stanislavsky System “page after page” it becomes shockingly evident that these sources are not mere abstract ideas and sensible exercises, but rather they form a structured model in realising Stanislavsky’s most passionate aim in assisting the actor to realise the state of creativity. On the whole, Stanislavsky’s System parallels the teaching techniques from Ramacaharaka’s science of Raja Yoga where the principle of controlling the mind is taught (Carnicke 2009: 173) (Ramacharaka 1906: 50). Whyman writes that in Stanislavsky’s notes, he warns against the misconception of Yoga being viewed viewed as a bag of physical tricks or a practice of eastern physical exercise. Stanislavsky writes that the purpose of Hatha Yoga culminates in the mastery of meditation practice; from Raja Yoga, thought and action; from Karma Yoga, love; from Bakthi Yoga, devotion; and wisdom from Gnani Yoga (Whyman 2008: 81-82) in realising the truth of the actor’s character. This approach of realising the spiritual truth runs parallel to the yogic system of realising the self, or attaining samadhi (enlightenment) (White 2006: 87). This is what Stanislavsky was working toward in realising the role of the character; a transcendental state or super-conscious state60 (Carnicke 2009: 180) (White 2006: 87) where all states or dimensions meet to realise the cosmic consciousness, the Universal consciousness or God:

---

60 As mentioned in Chapter Two, the works of Malekin, et al, in pure consciousness or turiya parallel the transcendental or super-conscious state Stanislavsky was working on. The combined research of these authors together with Stanislavsky and Meyerhold’s dhyana (internal-meditative) and dharana (external-concentration) techniques formulate the totality or completeness of the devotional acting-theatre praxis.
BHASHASE signifies the Supreme Light which sustains the Jagrat-waking, Swapna-dream, and Sushupthi-deep sleep, illuminates into Yat Prakashase as the three states merge to form Chatrutham, the fourth consciousness known as Turiyam, reveals the real self (Shantanand 1982: 67) (Carnicke 2009: 178) (White 2006: 85) (Whyman 2008: 76). Hence, drawing the parallel between Stanislavsky’s search for the unconscious, subconscious and the super-conscious through yoga and Swamiji’s explanation of the Four Dimensions we may conclude that the conscious is the Jagrat-waking state, the unconscious is the Swapna-dream state, the subconscious is the Sushupthi-deep sleep state and the super-conscious is the Turiya-transcendental state (Carnicke 2009: 180) (White 2006: 87) (Whyman 2008: 78):

Visva Thajasa Prajnasya
Akanda bodha swarupakam
Akara Ukara Makaraya

(Shantanand 1982: 68)

The ‘operating’ consciousness in the Jagrat-waking state is known as Visva: in Swapna-dream state it is known as Thajasa, and in the Sushupthi-deep sleep state it is known as Prajnasya. This ‘operating’ consciousness which permeates and constitutes the totality of the three states as the undivided link is called Akan bodha swarupakam. The consciousness which appears in the waking state, is not present in the dream state, and the consciousness in the dream state will not be present in the deep sleep state and vice-versa. Waking is not dreaming and dreaming is not deep sleep; communication between the avasthas-states does not exist, but one consciousness is present linking and connecting the three states to form “Visva Thajasa Prajnasya Akanda bodha swarupakam”, and according to Swamiji it is the fourth dimension (Shantanand 1982: 68). The Fourth Dimension is also known as Samadhi or a state of superconsciousness used by Stanislavsky in his acting system (Carnicke 2009: 180) (White 2006: 87) (Whyman 2008: 78).

This state of Samadhi comes into existence when all thoughts become motionless; in this state one is neither asleep nor thinking, but retains “awareness” which formulates the absolute “I AM”, “I EXIST” (Shantanand 1982: 70) (White 2006: 87) (Carnicke
revealing the actor’s ownership (absolute character), where Stanislavsky argues that “the outside of the actor is mere appearance, the truth is within, in his soul”, renouncing the self in order to realise the truth of “the given circumstances” of the character or role (Whyman 2008: 78) (Stanislavsky 1961: 115) (Rayner 1985: 340). A similar process is applied by Chekhov in his acting system in which character is realised through the various levels of the ego and the “I am” as mentioned above (Whyman 2008: 187) (Carlson 1993: 121 & 132).

This entire process is the paradigm of the devotional acting-theatre praxis and this is the very same formulation Stanislavsky and Chekhov incorporated into their acting system. Both men incorporated Yoga into their acting systems (Whyman 2008: 78-87) (Chekhov, Chekhov et al. 1991: xvii & xxxiv) (Carnicke 2009: 169 & 180). Meyerhold too formulated his biomechanics upon this theory of the physical aspects of the dharana discipline (Wegner 1976: 87) (Whyman 2008: 81). While Stanislavsky focused on the internal techniques of realising the character, Meyerhold focused on the external physical techniques of the actors realising the characters (Whyman 2008: 235-236) (Wain 2005: 41 & 54). Stanislavsky studied and discussed the idea of centres in the body, and incorporated the Hatha Yoga of Yogi Ramacharaka into his acting system. Stanislavsky also extensively took notes from Yogi Olga Lobanova’s book entitled Breath Properly (Whyman 2008: 79 & 81). The Hatha Yoga system became the core formulation of Stanislavsky’s acting system in which Stanislavsky himself wrote (Carnicke 2009: 181):

At that time when the so-called system was being brought to life, the fashion for the yogis appeared. Someone brought a book on the yogis to a rehearsal for me. It turns out that a thousand years ago they were seeking the same thing as us, only we extend into creativity and they into their half-detached world…on the boundary of our consciousness. (Whyman 2008: 81)

Stanislavsky’s observation was honed on “freeing the muscles” of the actor, focused on the body centres in particularly the solar plexus nervous system, he refers to it as the “internal region of the soul” (Whyman 2008: 82-83). Delving into the chakra system Stanislavsky believed that the solar plexus chakra played a pivotal role which is likened to a brain and a reservoir of Prana. In trying to commune with the heart and solar plexus chakras, he writes (Whyman 2008: 79-80):
[...] the head centre seemed to me to be the representation of consciousness and the nerve centre of the solar plexus the representative of emotion. So, it felt to me like my mind communicated with my feeling…subject and object”. (Whyman 2008: 80)

On the importance of Prana in his system Stanislavsky states:

[...] ‘artists must sense their movements, will, emotions, thought so that the will makes them do some movements or others (prana) so that they are not meaningless movements’. [...] The prana transforms the movement from a mechanical action to a meaningful one. Prana is the mechanism for linking ‘external movements…with the internal movements of emotion’. (Whyman 2008: 84)

As a member and theatrical “heir” of First Studio founded by Stanislavsky, pursuing the practices of Eastern religion in the US (White 2006: 80) (Carnicke 2009: 171), Michael Chekhov validated that Stanislavsky incorporated the yoga system into his system and the formulation of Chekhov’s work is based on Hindu philosophy (White 2006: 78-80). Chekhov states:

I succeeded in understanding that the keynote of yoga is the creativity of life. The creativity of life! This was the new keynote, which gradually imbued my soul. (Whyman 2008: 82)

In his actor training method Stanislavsky introduces various exercises that would enable the actor to realise the truth of the character, by renouncing the self, thus conveying the spiritual truth. This brought him to visualise the spiritual component in the recesses of the unconscious mind, where he branched it into the subconscious and the superconscious. For Stanislavsky “the outside of the actor is mere appearance, the truth is within, in his soul” (Whyman 2008: 78). In his later years, working with both psychotechnique (mind) and the physical action (body), Stanislavsky achieved a holistic communion of the character for the actor, while his contemporaries focused on one discipline or the other. Largely based on Eastern performing philosophy the approach of the body-mind technique was only adapted to acting at the end of the twentieth century (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 47). Stanislavsky too shared the paradigm that “obedience is better than reverence” (Sivananda 1998: 87) as per the Guru-sisya (Master-Disciple) parampara (lineage) training methodology of the Vedic culture, when he says, “If you seriously do not give your attention to my lessons I shall refuse to work with you” (Whyman 2008: 147). This system of work-oriented discipline laid out by Ramacharaka working on the self from inside out is emphasised in Stanislavsky’s manuals (Carnicke 1993: 22). Both training methodologies focus on conquering the inner self before the
outer self can be addressed and the primary identification of knowledge is of the self. ‘Discipline’ was always emphasised and it “became a hallmark for the system at any of its stages of development!” (Carnicke 2009: 173). Swamiji would mention quite often that spirituality (Stanislavsky) and materialism (Meyerhold) make up both sides of the coin, they should work hand in hand and not against each other. And working hand in hand is the evolution of the devotional acting-theatre praxis, where the works of Malekin, et al, in pure consciousness or turiya parallel the transcendental or super-conscious state Stanislavsky was working on. The combined Vedic science research of these authors together with Stanislavsky and Meyerhold’s dhyana (internal-meditative) and dharana (external-concentration) techniques augmented with Swamiji’s Natyasastra training at TFA formulates the totality or completeness of the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

Before I move on the discussing my creative work, I would like at this juncture to reassure theatre practitioners and theorists in line with R. Andrew White’s paradigm that the works of Ouspenskaya⁶¹ (White 2006: 80) are not lost, and anyone for that matter who practises theatre along the Vedic line will see its fruition in time (White 2006: 88). I must recount my experience in 2004 when I embarked on a journey to publish an article on the Yogic practice and Stanislavsky. I came upon this line of thought solely based on the training received from Swamiji at TFA. After acting school, augmented by the many discourses provided by Swamiji, I was convinced that as a dancer from the Natyasastra tradition, realising the dance performance on stage would run parallel with an acting process (Carnicke 2009: 233). Thus I began my research and constructed a premise that an actor in realising the character, would be involved in a process that ran parallel to that of a Yogi attaining the state of Samadhi or “I AM” (White 2006: 87) (Carnicke 2009: 178) (Wain 2005: 43). Therefore, at my point of departure, there were two facts that I was sure of: one, the training I received from Swamiji at TFA was grounded in the Natyasastra with the practice of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga and the other, that Stanislavsky was the father of acting in the Western world

⁶¹ Michael Chekhov and Maria Ouspenskaya, members of Stanislavsky’s First Studio, both incorporated Eastern religious philosophies into their practice, Chekhov through Steiner’s Anthroposophy and Ouspenskaya through Swami Yogananda’s (SRF) Self-Realization Fellowship (White 2006: 80) (Carnicke 2009: 171) (Wain 2005: 36 & 55). After Ouspenskaya’s death, Swami Yogananda addressed the SRF congregation in a prayer for her soul, addressing her as “one of our very devoted followers” and “beloved student”. To this personal guru-bandha relationship, R. Andrew White expressed his concerns at the loss of Ouspenskaya’s works in the depths of Yoga incorporation into her teachings, as she did not leave behind any written “memoir or book on acting” (White 2006: 80).
(Kramer 1991: 47) which was my impression from acting school. Armed with these two facts, I began sieving through all the books available at Murdoch University written on Stanislavsky. As I was going through the English versions of his books, there was this immense feeling within me that Stanislavsky was describing the techniques of Yoga in realising the actor’s character. I did not come across any direct reference to Yoga or Ramacharaka, but the strong reference to prana, spirit and the soul, kept gnawing away at me. The question that kept constantly hammering away in my head was: Why is a European theatre practitioner in the early nineteen hundreds emphasising the attributes of prana, spirit and the soul in his acting formula? What were his reasons? Why, in comparison to all the other modern and post-modern theatre practitioners where minimal or no references are made to prana, the spirit or the soul directly or as a medium of acting metaphor, did Stanislavsky engage a different paradigm? I could not get rid of these questions, hence at this juncture, I began writing an article along the line of Stanislavsky’s process of realising the actor’s character running similar to that of a Yogi’s process of enlightenment on the platform of Swami Ramana Maharishi’s eternal question; Naan Yaar or “Who am I?” (Ramana and Osborne 1996: 134) (Wain 2005: 39) (Wilber 2002: 308). I began to explore the implications of this theory for the realisation of oneself in relation to acting. Owing to the lack of readily available resource-materials on the subject of Stanislavsky and Yoga at the point of commencing my research the article was abandoned. That is why I am compelled to insert this

62 Queensland University of Technology’s Bachelor in Drama program conducted at Singapore’s LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts.

63 It is interesting to note that William Walker Atkinson (1862-1932), an American lawyer turned metaphysician, under the pen-name of Yogi Ramacharaka was the person responsible for publishing books on Hinduism and Yoga. Based on this information, clarity is shed on Burnet Hobgood’s comment on Stanislavsky’s Yogic ideas being “curiously watered-down as if second or third hand” (Wegner 1976: 89). Nevertheless Carnicke, Wain and White argue that even if Stanislavsky’s information on Yoga was incomplete from Atkinson-Ramacharaka, Stanislavsky still drew immensely from various sources on Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga for his System (Wain 2005: 39-40) (White 2006: 82-83) (Carnicke 2009: 172-174).

64 Also known as Bhagawan Sri Ramana, the founder of Sri Ramanasramam in South India; a self-realised Vedic Yogi, expounding the Vedic scriptures to the modern world. One of his teachings is the enquiry into the self entitled; Naan Yaar? Or Who am I?

65 I was working on template of Swami Ramana Maharishi’s Naan Yaar (who am I)? Along the premise of realising the self in acting.

66 One possible reason could be due to the ongoing academic suppression, distortions and censorship of Stanislavsky’s Acting System by Soviet censors, academics, and theatre practitioners alike as argued by Wegner, Carnicke, White and Wain. According to Carnicke, “during the height of Stalin’s bloody purges throughout the arts’ community”, Stalin eliminated independent political artists such as Meyerhold who was tortured and executed in 1940 (Carnicke 2009: 82), and in the final four years of Stanislavsky’s life, Stalin sentenced him to internal exile; house arrest, “never returning to his theatre” (Carnicke 1996: 366). Stanislavsky's Acting System was already based on Interculturalism with the contact of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga, and many Western practitioners spend their academic efforts in attempting to connect, scientifically, his methodology to other Western scientific explanations rendering Stanislavsky’s prana methodology mediocre (Wegner 1976: 89). His acting system criticised, the usage of the term “spirit” was viewed with contempt (Whyman 2008: 75) and over time owing to peer pressure (Soviet Communist
segment on reading White’s article in reference to Ouspenskaya (White 2006: 80), as the argument for me to write this thesis from the perspective of Yogic practice has become more compelling the further the research has taken me.

Some may differ in opinion, but I am set on the path. It is only now that I understand after coming in contact with writings of Whyman, Carnicke, Wain and White, the immense omissions and injustice done to Stanislavsky’s Yogic acting system (Carnicke 2009: 13 & 88). Until this contact with the writers mentioned above all of Stanislavsky’s associations with Yoga had been either omitted from or embedded in the subtext of his published works (Carnicke 1993: 22). But nevertheless I am truly grateful that some references survived (Carnicke 2009: 182-183) waiting for those few to revive Stanislavsky’s true teachings in the new millennium (White 2006: 88). Belonging to the same order of guru-bandha (master bond) relationship, and in addressing R. Andrew White’s concerns on the loss of Ouspenskaya’s work, perhaps this thesis will serve as a reflection of Ouspenskaya’s lost “memoir or book on acting” (White 2006: 80). I believe that all Yogis, although in different forms, radiate and emanate the identical universal message, whether it is from Yogi Ramacharaka, Swami Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Yogananda (White 2006: 76 & 80) (Carnicke 2009: 171) (Wain 2005: 197), Swami Ramana Maharishi, Swami Sivananda or Swami Shantanand. I too possess the teachings of Swami Shantanand and his teachings formulate the devotional acting-theatre praxis. Therefore, Ouspenskaya is not lost to us, but is with us, in our journey, as mentioned by White “unified with the divine” (White 2006: 87). To this Party) Stanislavsky replaced the term prana with the term “energy” (Carnicke 1993: 24-27) (Whyman 2008: 84). The fact remains that editors of his legacy begin expunging notes to Eastern methodology during (Carnicke 1993: 23) and after his passing (Whyman 2008: 83, 89). Carnicke argues that had it not been for some Yoga traces left intact in Stanislavsky’s notes by atheist Soviet censors, all references to Yoga in his acting system would have disappeared completely. Even Strasberg aided in erasing Hindu philosophy from Stanislavsky’s system, while Whyman suggests a parallel to a typical Soviet censor. (Carnicke 2009: 182-183). Wain argues that much of these erroneous evaluations were from the contribution of scholars that favoured Meyerhold or Brecht associating Stanislavsky’s system to “kitchen-sink realism”, giving it Freudian, patriarchal and naturalistic origins, pitching the system against the apparently accepted and digestible ideas of Meyerhold or Brecht. In the Soviet Union, Stanislavsky’s spiritual dimensions were eradicated making way for materialistic biases, giving physical movements emphasis to such an extent that a “method of physical actions”, used by Stanislavsky at the end of his time was sold as his final legacy. While in the United States it was glossed over to cater for the “therapeutically-oriented” culture, coined as the Method by Strasberg, Stanislavsky received a more psychoanalytic angle with an emphasis on “personal emotional memories”. The West by attempting to minimize or eradicate the spiritual dimensions of his system, in fact, acknowledged that Stanislavsky’s Acting System was formulated on the primary scientific spiritual branch of Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga; which is central to his acting system (Wain 2005: 54-55) (Carnicke 2009: 172, 227) (White 2006: 83). Burnet Hobgood a Stanislavskian scholar argues that the Yogic influence on Stanislavsky was so profound that he “refashioned these ideas so sharply that one must regard them as his own” (Wegner 1976: 89).
Swamiji says, “Whenever you do an act of goodness, you are disturbing the negative forces in the Cosmos” (Shantanand 2006: 9). Swamiji has also mentioned that the eternal masters are with us and when there are sincere seekers, the truth will surface, all in good time:

Truth is permanent, unchanging, without beginning or end and infinite. Truth transcends Space and Time and does not depend on anything, requires no proof to establish its existence: it is its own proof. (Shantanand 1994: 9)

Having provided the working template on the devotional acting-theatre praxis, I will now move to provide a brief narration to the creation of the Natyasastra, and the concepts of abhinaya and rasa, as this information will provide an overall understanding of the devotional acting-theatre praxis’s grounding in the Natyasastra.

According to Mishra, for the Hindu, religion is a subject of aesthetics on the structural principle of “plurality-with-unity”, as it formulates the core engagement in Indian Culture. He argues that:

Indian culture, then, is built around a sublime poetics-and the culture’s dominant literary form, the devotional, as well as its dominant literary hermeneutic, rasa theory, understand this very well. (Mishra 1998: 202)

The Vedas, as argued briefly in Chapter Two above, are the basis of knowledge in the Natyasastra (Bharata 2000: 2). The description of how theatre began is given in the opening passages of the Natyasastra text; during Satya Yuga (Golden Age), humans were endowed with an enlightened state of consciousness and benefitted from the joys of health and fulfilment. This came to an end with the beginning of Treta Yuga (Silver Age) where the affliction of suffering began due to sensual pleasures, giving in to uncivilised behaviour of jealousy and anger swayed by desire and greed. Their joy was embroiled in sorrow. To remedy this state of negativity and to regain their enlightened

---

67 Swami has informed Shiva Family International (SFI) that twenty eight masters have given their word in guiding the souls at SFI-TFA, and one of them is Swami Yogananda; therefore, I believe, Ouspenskaya’s voice will radiate through this thesis (White 2006: 80).  
68 Mishra is of the opinion that the object of the sublime in devotional (bhakti) poetry is Brahman. Seeking an unattainable principle represented “through a plethora of Gods and Goddesses”, Mishra claims that the sublime narrative has devotional poetry superimposed upon it. This ideal principle (Absolute Brahman) being unattainable as it is, symbolised “through the image or the icon”, still “remains the sublime object”, which ultimately defies time-space representation of any kind (Mishra 1998: 16). Thus, the representation of the Indian, the Sacred, the Sublime and Absolute-Brahman formulates my acting methodology and hence, the devotional acting-theatre praxis.  
69 According to Hindu philosophy, there are four yugas or ages; Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. These yugas find their corresponding ideology within Greek constructs as the Golden Age, Silver Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age (Yogananda 1993: 193).
state, Indra\textsuperscript{70} together with the demigods sought Brahma\textsuperscript{71} for a solution to this predicament; an audible and visible distraction accessible to all (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 5 & 99-101) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 1). To remedy this ailment Brahma culled the four Vedas and created the fifth Veda (Yarrow 2001: 114); the Gandharva Veda also known as the Natyasatra; the divine text on theatre. Taking speech from Rig-Veda, song from Sama-Veda, mime from Yajur-Veda and sentiments from Atharva-Veda formulating the Indian text on dramaturgy (Bharata 2000: 2) (Vatsyayan 1972: 11). Brahma then handed down the text to Sage Bharata for the dissemination of the Natyasatra to the mortals (Rangacharya 1998: 5). As the Natyasatra is exhaustive in its entirety, I shall surmarise the theoretical concepts of abhinaya and rasa to provide a basic understanding of the development of the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

**The Natyasatra**

The Natyasatra Shloka from the Temple of Fine Arts:

\[
\begin{align*}
Pranamya Shirasaa Devau \\
Pitaamaha Maheshwarau \\
Naatay Shastraam Pravakshyaami \\
Brahmanaa Yadudaahritam
\end{align*}
\]

This translates as:

At the beginning of his [Natyasatra], Bharata thus offered reverent obeisance to Lord Brahma, the creator of natya and to Lord Shiva, the creator of dance and proceeded to narrate the Science of drama ie. [Natyasatra] as composed by Lord Brahma. (TFA 2001: 17)

The authorship of the oldest sastra (holy text) on Indian dramaturgy known as the Natyasatra is ascribed to Sage Bharata. Subrahmanyam places it around 4433 B.C (Subrahmanyam 1997 : 51). The term “Natya” envelopes in itself all the artistic elements of theatrical art. In its complete form, Natya consists of music, dance and communication through expression (Subrahmanyam 1979 : 3). The aim of any Natya is to invoke Rasa, it is an aesthetic bliss derived through a sense of enjoyment of either seeing or reading a play. The feeling (bhava) which is encapsulated in a situation and

\textsuperscript{70} Leader of the Demigods.

\textsuperscript{71} Brahma the God of Creation from the Hindu God pantheon.
the character involved have to be expressed by the actor or playwright in such a way that it can be understood by the spectator or reader. Unless these feelings and ideas are communicated, the spectators will be unable to share those feelings, which ultimately is responsible for evoking *rasa*. This art of communication is called *Abhinaya* (Subrahmanym 1979: 4).

**Abhinaya**

*Abhinaya*, the art of communication from the *Natyasastra*, is the key form of communication in *Bharatanatyam*. Etymologically the word “*abhinaya*” is derived from the root origin “*ni*” meaning “to convey” with the prefix “*abhi*” which means “towards”, hence giving the meaning “to carry forward”, literally meaning to carry the performance to the spectator. In Indian art form and performance, it represents the skills of communicating a story, a character or an emotion (Marasinghe 1989: 198) (Rangacharya 1998: 30) (Singh 2003: 11).

**Rasa**

*Rasa* is that aesthetic and spontaneous mood or feeling that the spectator experiences through the performance of an actor (Marasinghe 1989: 185). The word “*rasa*” is derived from the root “*ras*”, which means to relish or be enjoyed. In the art of drama this experience of “*rasa*” can only be possible through psychological perception. The experience of rasa is different from psychological experiences such as memory, inference and emotions, as it is an impersonal transcendental joy. (Marasinghe 1989: 186) and according to Yarrow *rasa* is a psychophysiological state in which transformation takes place between the actor and the spectator (Yarrow 2001: 114-115). Meyer-Dinkgrafe is of the opinion that in the context of aesthetic experience, *rasa* not only translates as “sentiment” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 102-103), but also co-exists in a state of pure consciousness within the content of theatre-performance specifics affecting sensory impressions stimulating both the actor-spectator in thought, intellect and emotions (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 122). The *Natyasastra* postulates that there are eight

---

72 The current conceptualisation of *rasa* is based upon the Western mind, Meyer-Dinkgrafe argues that it must be viewed from the perspectives of Indian thought. For a non-Western approach towards the understanding of *rasa*, see *Approaches to Acting: Past and Present*, London, New York, Continuum, 2001, pp. 109-110.
basic sentiments with the ninth being added on later: “love, humour, compassion, horror, heroic, fear”, disgust, wonderment and peace (Rangacharya 1998: 79-80). Rasa is produced as a result of combining “determinants, consequents and transitory states”, there are thirty three transitory states listed in the Natyasastra:

[... ] discouragement, weakness, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, anxiety, distraction, recollection, contentment, shame, inconstancy, joy, agitation, stupor, arrogance, despair, impatience, sleep, epilepsy, dreaming, awakening, indignation, dissimulation, cruelty, assurance, sickness, insanity, death, fright and deliberation. (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 103)

The nine rasas and the thirty three transitory states placed through action, driven by thought, and thought driven by intention, and intention driven by the conscious mind, and the conscious mind driven by the subconscious mind, and the subconscious mind driven by super-conscious mind (Whyman 2008: 78) and the super-conscious mind driven by the Unified Field Theory or the Zero Point Field (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2006), becomes the “through-line of action” (Carnicke 2009: 226) described by Stanislavsky (Carnicke 2009: 198). This encompasses the formula I will be using when I engage with my creative works, filtering them through action-thought-intention-conscious-subconscious-superconscious-Zero Point Field preparation. This runs parallel with Stanislavsky’s external (dharana) “life of the human body in role” and internal (dhyana) “life of the human spirit of the role” (Carnicke 2009: 186 & 220). In preparing myself to engage my creative work I visualise myself becoming a vessel (according to the Natyasastra, the actor is an instrument) (Kramer 1991: 53), a veritable patra (pot). As Abhinavagupta describes it, the purpose of the actor is to convey rasa to the audience. According to Yarrow, the actor stands apart from the emotional characterisation enacted, but the moment the actor begins to partake in the emotion of the enactment, his acting ends; and he becomes sahridaya (Yarrow 2001: 115); a “connoisseur of the art”. According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Abhinavagupta explains the Sanskrit term of patra (actor) as “pot-carrier”- relating to a pot and “character” – relating to acting (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 105-106). There is a verse which ascribes the ten essential qualities of an actor-dancer (patra) in the Natyasastra, the verse reads as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Javaha}^{74} & \quad \text{Sthiratvam}^{75} & \quad \text{Rekhaa Ca}^{76} \\
\text{Bhramarii}^{77} & \quad \text{Drshtir}^{78} & \quad \text{Aashramaha}^{79}
\end{align*}
\]

---

73. The main traditional commentator on the Natyasastra of Sage Bharata.
74. Swiftness.
75. Steadiness.
76. Symmetry/Form.
These ten qualities are part of the training process in the devotional acting-theatre praxis. This totality formulates the creative point of departure for my practice. Only when one becomes a fine tuned instrument can one receive the divine (White 2006: 87) knowledge and, in return, give by creating. Kramer has discovered that looking upon the actor as an instrument is also a shared paradigm in Western theories; both the Natyasastra and Stanislavsky have their respective regimen (Carnicke 1993: 22) (Carnicke 2009: 173) for the actor’s instrument. On the subject of health and exercise, the Natyasastra affirms that:

[...] vitality is dependant on one’s nourishment, and the exercise is dependant on vitality. Hence one should be careful about one’s nourishment …. One should perform exercise … and should have beforehand one’s body massaged …. Graceful in form and rich in dance postures, physical exercise should be taken …. Through physical exercise great effort should be made in maintaining a graceful form. (Kramer 1991: 53)

Stanislavsky’s instructions for his actors closely resemble those of Bharata’s:

[An actor] must have a healthy body in good working order, capable of extraordinary control.

The habit of relaxing the muscles must be acquired by daily systematic exercises an and off the stage.

The exercises contribute toward making your physical apparatus more mobile, flexible, expressive and even more sensitive. (Kramer 1991: 53)

77 Versatility.
78 Glances.
79 Ease.
80 Intelligence.
81 Dedication/Faith/Persistence.
82 Speech.
83 Music.
84 Container or Character.
85 Life force. Hence Paatra Praana means the life of an actor-dancer. Antar Praana, which means inner form and Bahir Praana, which means the external form, e.g. instruments.
86 These are the ten attributes of an actor-dancer.
87 As long as it understood that these are the ten attributes of an actor-dancer. Rekhaa (symmetry or form), in aligning the limbs in performance synchronisation of lines are required or as “the body should outlined elegantly”, Brahmari – there should be diverse styles of movements, turns and leaps in performance; the Natyasastra cites 7.
My process in establishing the character background is similar to the theoretical structures of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism in ascertaining the subversive and containment elements; it grounds the Cultural Materialist aspects of the character from its external characterisation and from the New Historicist aspects the dominant ideologies are underpinned in its internal formulation. Thus the realising of the character parallels the external stimulus of dharana which formulates the Cultural Materialistic aspects of the character stemming from its geography, society, politics, religious and cultural background. From a New Historicist point of view, the internal stimulus of dhyana is reinvented on the platform of the devotional acting-theatre praxis. It is a complete internal and external holistic program specifically designed for the performing candidate. The process is intense; it is not for the ‘weak willed’, only with ‘will’ can a candidate endure this program as it requires ‘discipline’, a similar requirement in the Stanislavsky System (Carnicke 1993: 22) (Carnicke 2009: 173).

**Gurukula: guru-sisya parampara**

In qualifying my departure in the use of the phrase ‘weak-willed’, I draw attention to the platform of guru-sisya parampara (master-disciple lineage) as this lineage formulates the keystone of the “learning system” (Barba and Savarese 1991: 31) encompassing a crucial and binding bond of service and love between master and disciple as stated above in this Chapter. Swamiji has also made known to us that the key ingredient in a guru-sisya relationship is to practise the golden rule of ‘obedience [which is] better than reverence’ (Sivananda 1998: 87), this practice will pave the way for the student to completely surrender to the guru (Barba and Savarese 1991: 30). Within this framework, whatever one may choose to call it (follower, devotee, student, aspirant or disciple), the bond is never broken. Once fused it is for eternity and Guru is revered as God in the Vedic tradition (Barba and Savarese 1991: 30-31). In qualifying the references to Swamiji in the present tense, as stated in the Prologue, this derives from the devotee’s awareness of the omnipresent consciousness of the guru. Sri Mrinalini Mata\(^8\) postulates that:

\(^8\)Sri Mrinalini Mata succeeded Sri Daya Mata as the current President of Self-Realization Fellowship founded by Swami Paramahansa Yogananda, [http://www.yogananda-srf.org/Self-Realization_Fellowship_News_Feed/SRF_Announces_New_President.aspx](http://www.yogananda-srf.org/Self-Realization_Fellowship_News_Feed/SRF_Announces_New_President.aspx), access date 13-10-2011.
The consciousness of the true guru is eternal: ever-wakeful, ever-attuned, uninterrupted by the opening and closing doors of life and death. His awareness of the disciple and his link with him are constant. (Mrinalini 2000: 42)

Chatterjea elucidates the ancient Vedic guru-sisya parampara as such:

The traditional mode of learning in ancient India, from Vedic times, for all disciplines was the guru-[sisya] parampara (the tradition of the guru and his disciple) whereby the disciples came at an early age to study with the guru and live with him as part of his household. Implied in this tradition, therefore, is the concept of the gurukul, the home or family of the guru, which extends to include the disciples training under the guru. Each student became an integral part of the guru’s family and it was believed that such proximity was essential for imparting true and total education. (Chatterjea 1996: 69)

The exchange of knowledge between teacher (giver) and student (receiver) is predicated in the Natyasastra. Emphasising the need for ‘rigorous training’ to be supervised by a competent teacher or director to create an appropriate amalgamation of theory and practice in the science of performance and tradition (Appa Rao 1967: 103), Appa Rao explains that Bharata prequalifies the teacher as possessing

[…] an intrinsic knowledge of vocal and instrumental music, dance, rhythm and movement. [The teacher] should further have the imagination, intelligence, creative faculty, memory, sharpness and capacity to shape the [student]. [While the students], on the other hand should be intelligent, retentive, appreciative, devoted, enthusiastic and must have an innate desire to excel. (Appa Rao 1967: 41)

Therefore, Chatterjea postulates that the subtext which marks a skilled performer

[…] through [the] subtle negotiations in the body, can only be taught by someone who has mastered much more than technique: a guru, whose knowledge includes a sociocultural dimension, a philosophical dimension, as well as a kinaesthetic dimension. (Chatterjea 1996: 70)

Based upon the theoretical constructs of Cultural Materialism and New Historicism, as discussed above, in the founding of Shiva Family, TFA and its group activities, Swamiji has reinvented the ancient Vedic learning mode of guru-sisya parampara for the common man or women. The devotional acting-theatre praxis is forged on this premise of the guru-sisya parampara system practised at TFA as propagated by Swamiji. As such, I reiterate my claim, it is not for the ‘weak-willed’; theatre producers or
practitioners who harbour nefarious (solely economic gain and demeaning) intentions (Sivananda 1999: 125) (Pavis 1996: 5).

**Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis–Led Research: Suggested Solution**

In reconstructing Ball and Dagger’s Triadic Model and following through with the insights that all ideology fundamentally recognises three aspects: the agent, the goal and the obstacle, with individuals from different ideological backgrounds viewing their Triadic Model differently, I have restructured their model (see the flowchart below) and set it against the backdrop of Smith and Dean’s combined platform of academia and creative arts (Smith and Dean 2009: 5). At this point I will briefly recapitulate the argument for my own version of devotional acting-theatre praxis which I have developed over this thesis.

Chapter One, as we have seen, addressed Vijay Mishra’s *Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime* which formulates the core engagement with Indian Culture, where “worship (*puja*) and devotion (*bhakti*)” become the primary working definition in attaining the Absolute-*Brahman*. In Chapter Two, my negotiation of Interculturalism, Cultural Materialism, New Historicism, Higher Consciousness, and TFA’s central ideology of the Natyasastra’s divine origins allowed me to begin formulating a specific poetics of performance. An understanding of the nature of this praxis as well as a way forward were supported by the research of Malekin, et al, in the field of higher consciousness

89 As mentioned in Chapter Two, apart from identifying the need for a shift in paradigm in the field of Social Science and Humanities based on Vedic science, Malekin, et al, have directed their research of higher consciousness (pure consciousness –*turiya*) toward a possible remedy in the Humanities. What is of most interest to me are the works of Malekin, Yarrow and Meyer-Dinkgrafe, as the authors who, based on their research, have proposed remedies directed to theatre by exploring the constructs of the Natyasastra. While Malekin and Yarrow proposed their “Pashyanti” project as a platform of departure, Meyer-Dinkgrafe has defined the constructs of the Natyasastra in his experiments as a viable working approach to theatre. He is of the opinion, “if theatre follows the aesthetic principles of the Natyasastra, it serves as [*yagna*], because it enables the actors and spectators to experience pure consciousness (together with the performance-specific contents). This kind of theatre is a means, a tool, of developing higher states of consciousness, while being entertaining at the same time. The amount of pure consciousness that each actor and each spectator will be able to experience during any one performance depends on how far they have developed towards liberation, *moksha*, enlightenment: the further advanced that development, the more frequent, and the longer in duration, those theatre-induced experiences of higher states of consciousness” (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 163-164). As previously mentioned in Chapter Two and Three, what is not present in their remedy for the state of higher consciousness, is the need to address the ‘activating principles’ or ‘ethical preparation’ toward achieving the state of higher consciousness. From a psycho-analytical starting point, according to Sudhir Kakar, “*chitta*” or the “*id*” (similarly identified in Freudian constructs) this needs to be addressed or calmed in a gradual process. And for the calming of “*chitta*” to take place, phase two (*pratyahara*) of the integration stage in the practice of *Raja Yoga* needs
yagna (a process of making an event sacred), shedding light on the effects of karma (cause and effect), in its relation to the soul progression of members involved at TFA and their group projects in their ongoing journey to attain the state of higher consciousness (pure consciousness-Absolute Brahman). In expanding that ideology, Chapter Four, investigated the ideology of universal love in the context of the Indian boy in AMND. This allowed me to formulate the ideology of universal divine love in its representation of the Indian Sublime, the Sacred and Absolute-Brahman as the central guiding ideology to devise my devotional acting-theatre praxis-led research methodology. In this final Chapter the research undertaken to this point allows me an interpretative schema, theoretical informed, for a negotiation of the creative works I have both devised and performed in. I believe that the limitations of intercultural practice I analysed in Chapter Two can be fruitfully addressed through the theoretical notion of higher consciousness as suggested by Malekin, et al: this brings me to my practice-led-research insight regarding the Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis–Led Research Methodology.

to commence (see Chapter Three, footnote 1 and 2). Otherwise, I believe that the state of higher consciousness will either remain momentarily, or even perhaps, completely eluding the actor-spectator-candidate. Therefore, it is important to note that the devotional acting-theatre praxis addresses the need for ethical preparation in achieving the state of higher consciousness in a gradual progression from temporary experiences of higher consciousness to a more sustainable level, as argued by Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Nair (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 163-164) (Nair 2007: 186-187).
Based on the multiple ideologies and theories mentioned above and incorporated into my Devotional Acting-Theatre Praxis–Led Research Methodology, I believe that, when we as active participants (practitioners and theorists) in the field of intercultural theatre practice, looking within ourselves, into our “intentionality”\(^{90}\) (sattva, rajas, tamas), and then approach a foreign culture with “respect, responsibility and rightful representation on the platform of higher consciousness (turiya)”, the “minefield” in intercultural theatre practice, as mentioned by Holledge, Tompkins, Trivedi and Minami can be safely traversed, especially if we set aside the “individual ego”\(^{91}\) for the benefit of “collective representation”.

William Tiller argues that developing intentionality and learning how to become effective creators are the purpose for human beings (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2007: 204). Logically then, in theatre practice this reasoning brings forth the notion that theatre practitioners should question their very intent and purpose before embarking on a project; to question the very fundamental reason for the process of being “effective creators” or ‘effective directors’; bearing the responsibility for being effective, sincere, truthful, honest, trustworthy and having integrity that runs parallel with theatre productions. Goswami further elaborates, “And then what is happening is loving. There is no I, there is no it. It’s just loving. See the beauty of that transition?” (Arntz, Chasse et al. 2007: 280), aligning oneself with the Universal consciousness or the quantum-self (Goswami 2006: 53). When this paradigm shift takes place, only then can there be a platform of understanding and negotiation free from “egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy” (Sivananda 2003: ix) and the acts of nefarious use of theatre by the worldly individual (Sivananda 1999: 125) paving a way to a true Universal language of theatre; a Universal language of love and understanding, the devotional acting-theatre praxis.

The Praxis–Led Research Methodology outlines that when an individual attunes their basic state of consciousness (waking, dreaming and sleeping) to a state of higher consciousness (pure consciousness-turiya), creating a state of clear ‘intention’ affecting their ‘attitude’ towards encompassing their higher intention-nature (higher Self), then

\(^{90}\) As explained in Chapter Two and mentioned above, The Vedic Continuum of Intercultural Theatre Practice will deduce the true “intent” of the intercultural theatre practitioner based on their governing principles (gunas) of prakriti (nature); satva-expansion-enlightenment (collaborative-pure intention), rajas-energy-activity and tamas-ignorance-obstruction (imperialistic-nefarious intention).

\(^{91}\) See footnote 101.
any subject matter can be addressed with respect, responsibility and rightful representation. When individuals are aware of the impact of their actions (karma-cause and effect-satva-rajas-tamas) on their soul’s progression to a higher state, it would hopefully entail the individual choosing the path of para vidya (higher knowledge), paving the way for a higher conscious response to serve humanity, through cultural diversity and harmony, while taking ownership and accountability for their actions. This in turn will resolve the ‘deadlock’ in intercultural theatre practice, creating balance as the desired effect towards harmony. To validate the practicality of my devotional acting-theatre praxis, I will now demonstrate its working approach on my experimental creative works under the supervision of Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck at Murdoch University (de Reuck 2011).

**Creative Work**

Being a professional theatre practitioner, actor, director, playwright, Drama Educator-Facilitator-Trainer and having workshopped, performed, choreographed, production managed, stage managed, designed (set, costume, light and sound) and directed productions in Malaysia, Singapore, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Australia, Denmark, the United States and the United Kingdom, I have come to the understanding that an effective director in a globalised professional world would be a combination of an:

[... ] architect, sociologist, draftsperson, sculptor, choreographer, plumber, painter, carpenter, electrician, stress engineer, historian, nurse, drill sergeant, psychiatrist, anthropologist, costumer, musician, dancer, public relations person, actor, knowledge of playwriting, stagecraft and scene design (Grandstaff 1990: 36).

Hence, my point of departure in creating or approaching a piece of performance work, whether through acting, directing, playwriting, design (sound, set, light and costume) or choreography, will always be filtered through action-thought-intention-conscious-subconscious-superconscious-Zero Point Field preparation. Departing from this platform, under the Supervision of Associate Professor Jenny de Reuck at Murdoch University, I have worked on six productions, which are:
Depending on the production and the creative piece that I am working on, I always begin from the script and with the director’s input; from that point of negotiation the creative process begins. Of the six productions that I have worked on I will discuss Jenny de Reuck’s *Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night* by Mr. William Shakespeare.

The input was as follows:

- The exploration of the comedy and chaotic parody of Shakespeare’s world represented by Lord of Misrule, creating brief moments of chaos before abandoning disguises and restoring order to characters in the play.
- Apart from an original rendition of the production’s deception and masked compositions of Illyria, the play’s historical context revolving around Shakespeare and his contemporaries was given a dramatised perspective through key engaging questions which confront theatre companies embarking upon staging his plays. The dramatised perspective was given a voice through the characters of the revellers. The revellers then posed and answered these key questions for the benefit of the audience. Some of these were:
  1. What is an ‘authentic’ production of a play like *Twelfth Night*?
  2. How do we represent issues like Puritanism and oppressive constraints to a largely secular contemporary audience?
  3. More confrontationally, the production asked; How do we dramatise the darker notes that resonate beneath the surface frivolity of the play without losing the lightness of touch that marks this as one of Shakespeare’s most charming comedies?
With specific crafted music, songs, dance (for the Lord of Misrule and Zorba’s finale dance) and fight scenes the production aimed at new possibilities of interpretation of the fantastical world of Shakespeare’s Illyria.

Besides actor preparation-characterisation, another qualifying formula in rendering successful participation in the devotional acting-theatre praxis is the 3As (Adapting, Adjusting, and Accommodating) as taught by Swamiji (Shantanand 1980: ii). After years of practising the 3As, I personally added another: Attitude. Later on in acting school my playwrighting lecturer Desmond Sim suggested that I add on yet another: Assess and so in my personal practice the 3As have become the 5As. Hence, with the right attitude one can always adapt, adjust and accommodate to any given circumstance or situation, thereafter withdrawing to assess oneself from the objective third person perspective. This will aid in the character understanding of one-self as, only upon assessing oneself, can one begin to discover the distinguishing characteristics of the individual self.

As my characterisation of Lord of Misrule and dance choreography were based on the Hindu God Lord Shiva or Lord Nataraja, weaving it through Western and Indian contemporary movements, I realised the need to address intercultural issues between the West and the East. I will briefly address the issues of Interculturalism within the context of Jenny de Reuck’s Twelfth Night as an extension of Chapter Two. Based on the above input on the characterisation of Lord of Misrule and the dance choreography various issues needed to be addressed and filtered through the theoretical paradigm of Interculturalism. The proposed Model of Interculturalism by Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert addresses issues such as site-specific, power relationships, race, gender, language, space, the body, costume and spectatorship through a process of mediation and negotiation to formulate a balance in the voice of the “Other” (Bharucha 1993: 240) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 31 & 46-48). Intracultural theatre coined by Bharucha deals with a mixture of cultures of different communities within a nation (Bharucha 2000: 9). As my character deals with a more universal paradigm in maintaining a balance between chaos and resolution in the play, transcultural theatre comes into play, where the character transcends the Hindu paradigm moving toward a more universal appeal and engaging the common aspects of Western and Eastern traditions, which further escalates into merging cultures from across nations; a kind of postmodern interpretation of the
character and the dance. Hence extracultural theatre comes into this praxis. (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 38). As I begin my characterisation I keep in mind the words of Bharucha:

If we exploit more than we need, or if we demand what is not there, or if we envision “masterpieces” which are of no use to anybody, or if we attempt to rejuvenate ourselves through nourishing sources from “other cultures” without caring for the context or realities of these cultures, then we could be perpetuating the violence around us by contributing at infinitesimal levels to the imbalances of our cultural ecology. (Bharucha 1997: 37)

I personally believe that representation, reception and respect are imperative when dealing with cultures of the “Other”, whether addressing hybridity concerns (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 49), or engaging in or amalgamating cultures and performing traditions between the West and “the rest” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 32-36) and with this attitude, a well negotiated and sustained platform of dialogue (Bharucha 1984: 18) can be achieved. Therefore, in relation to my characterisation, the primary focus was on the extracultural theatre forms of intercultural theatre, as the interpretation of Lord of Misrule mainly fell into this form of practice. However, it also included themes that had national and universal appeal. In negotiating the performance site, the power relationships, race, gender, language, space, body, costume and the audience, I required a model that would have the flexibility in addressing these issues in de Reuck’s *Twelfth Night*. Lo and Gilbert’s Model of Interculturalism provided that solution. I personally faced the issues mentioned above in my creative process and in negotiation with the director they were all resolved. I will highlight four which were addressed in the production:

- The performance site, its audience and my body in choreography and performance. As I knew that I was interpreting the character Lord of Misrule as *Lord Nataraja*-Lord of Dance, I therefore needed to strike a balance between Western and Eastern styles of movement. Addressing the need of performing in the West, I decided on a postmodernist approach toward my character. In one of the primary poses that I identified myself as Lord of Misrule-*Lord Nataraja*, I took the position of *Lord Nataraja* without the traditional Indian classical *Bharata Natyam* dance posture, which would require me to raise and cross my left leg over my right as shown in *Figure 12*. I decided to merge the posture with contemporary ballet movements, by centring my weight on my left foot and extending my right leg with my foot turned out in classical ballet manner *Figure*.
18. I felt that this segment of the cultural choreographic representation was well balanced for audience reception. But if I were performing in Asia, I would have definitely opted for the posture in *Figure 12*.

- My costume as Lord of Misrule, because of my enthusiasm for the role, led me, initially, to bring in various Indian ornaments to adorn myself as *Lord Nataraja*-Lord of Misrule not realising that too many Indian ornaments may appear, once again, jarring. Negotiating the competing claims for coherence through Western and Eastern epistemologies, costume and accessories were resolved amicably with the Director an interpretative balance was achieved as in *Figures 13, 14 and 15*.

This is where the flexibility of Lo and Gilbert’s model comes into play; their model offers me a two-way dual praxis platform flow of intercultural exchange which is mutually sustaining. Both parties, with myself as the source culture and the Western performance site, audience and Shakespearean canonical production as the target culture, were able to move along the continuum with ease (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 44). Here I was able to negotiate my character: performing in the West, I moved more into contemporary movements, while in the East, I would have had the flexibility of moving between traditional, Indian contemporary or Western Indian Contemporary. The continuum allows me to vary the degree of my performance, based on my capacity to access the site and the audience; to address the power relationships, race, gender, language, space, body and costume. Another example is the negotiation process between me and the director. Addressing the power relationships regarding whether the characterisation would be too jarring or more acceptable to a Western audience, we were able to work through a socio-political and intercultural framework addressing such issues as the theatrical approaches, histories and the politics in making the production a success (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 44-45). The success of Lo and Gilbert’s model lies not only in the flexibility of the continuum it proposes but also in its capacity to cater for a performance hybrid like me. By birth, I am a post colonial hybrid, brought up in a homogenous Western culture. I was leaning toward becoming monoculturally Western, when I was inducted into TFA and realised for the first time the value and richness of my Hindu Indian cultural heritage:

*I do not want my home to be walled in on all sides and its window to be stuffed. I want cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.* – Mahatma Gandhi (Bharucha 1993: vi)
Lo and Gilbert’s modified organic and intentional hybridity intercultural model addresses cultural distinctions, mediation processes, and self-reflection in solving problematic areas. The question of authenticity does not arise when I deal with the West, as I deal with hybridity and not authenticity moving along the continuum giving me the flexibility of ferrying between cultures (East and West) (Griffiths 1994: 82) (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45-46). My Western and Eastern training have made me the ideal hybrid in intercultural working paradigms and negotiations. Perhaps this is my space, neither here nor there, but somewhere in-between; in the third space as argued by Bhabha (Bhabha 1994: 56), learning from the past, addressing the needs of the present and working toward a sustained future as described by Bharucha:

[This is...] where difference is neither One nor the Other but something else besides, in-between-find their agency in [...] an interstitial future, that emerges in between the claims of the past and the needs of the present. (Bhabha 1994: 219)

Delighted with the intercultural negotiation process, I now proceeded to take my characterisation through the analysis of the personal material self (geography, religion, economics, politics, spiritual and social surrounding), deconstructing the self via questions such as; Why? Who? What? When? Wherefore? and How? (Stanislavsky, Benedetti et al. 2008: 116). These questions have been synthesised through the theoretical frameworks of the Devotional Theatre Praxis-Led Research. From this juncture, before exploring the elements of drama highlighted by Brad Haseman and John O’Toole (1986), I addressed the primary question in my characterisation: Who am I? (O’Neill 1992: 1). This primary question has always been the fundamental evaluation of realising ‘The Self’; the internal self, as aspects of this spiritual prowess are explored in the production by creating chaos and restoring order. In addressing the question, Who am I? Ramana Maharshi says:

As all living beings desire to be happy always, without misery, as in the case of everyone there is observed supreme love for one’s self, and as happiness alone is the cause for love, in order to gain that happiness which is one’s nature and which is experienced in the state of deep sleep where there is no mind, one should know one’s self. For that, the path of knowledge, the inquiry of the form "Who am I?", is the principal means. (Mahadevan 1982: 3)

Now, this mode of departure for performance would encourage the actor to explore the 5As as a self-reflexive process (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45). This spiritually orientated methodology compares with the realisation of character as depicted in Rosary O’Neill’s
The Actor’s Checklist where, she states: “Who you are affects how you act” (O’Neill 1992: 1). To further understand the creative nature of the “through-line of action” (Carnicke 2009: 226) in de Reuck’s interpretation of the play, time and time again I kept returning to the script to realise my character. To this formula, O’Neill insists that:

Unless you use your text to advantage you cannot act. Preliminary study is seeking to learn the facts about your character. You have to go to your author to get these. [Her] words cannot mean anything unless you get [the subtextual] meaning behind the words. Creating a character is like building a house. You have to accumulate the material with which to build it. (O’Neill 1992: 1)

The golden rule of an actor should be, when in doubt, always return to the script, apart from looking into the primary question of “Who am I?” Within the context of the play, the Natyasstra suggests the ten essential attributes of an actor-dancer, while engaging the primary question. If an actor applies these ten attributes, together with the 5As, it would place the actor on the right track towards the assurance of realising holistically the character in a production. Returning to the application of Haseman and O’Toole’s elements of drama on extending the journey of the actor, the actor would realise that the individual would be embroiled in the effects of action-reaction-cause-effect governed by Karma as mentioned in the devotional acting-theatre praxis. The author’s treatment of “human context” through circumstances of relationships, propelled by “dramatic tension”, energised by “focus”, channelled through “place” and “time” using “language” and “movement” to construct “mood” and “symbols” create a holistic occurrence of “dramatic meaning” (Haseman and O’Toole 1986viii). This is none other than the laws of Karma in play (sattva-expansion-intelligence, rajas-activity-energy and tamas-obstruction-mass) (Yogananda 1993: 451); addressing the “actor’s entire apparatus-mind, body and spirit” (White 2006: 88).

---

92 In further preparing my psychological character analysis, I have superimposed Hall, Grindstaff and Ming’s “conscience, judgement, superego” upon the constructs of Freud’s “three principle psychic substructures” of the ego, id and superego (also discussed in Chapter Two) (Kakar 1981: 19). In doing so, I have reconstructed the author’s triple principles into my psychological character principle substructure preparation of ‘thought, counter-thought and after-thought’ in preparing myself for the Lord of Misrule character. My triple psychological substructure principle is based on the triad significance of the Shivalingam mentioned below in Figure 20 evolve (‘thought’-creation) – revolve (‘counter-thought’-sustenance) – resolve (‘after-thought’-re-absorption). Thus, in combining the primary question, the ten essential attributes of an actor-dancer, the 5As and the triple psychological substructure principle, I believe that the holistic actor or the “enlightened actor” as argued by Meyer-Dinkgrafe (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 120) can be realised.

93 The “Universal law of cause and effect” (Yogananda 1993: 582).
In preparing myself within the mentioned apparatuses of body, mind and spirit for my characterisation, I began exploring the constructs of Lord of Misrule through Mikhail Bakhtin’s view of the power of misrule within the framework of “grotesque realism” celebrated with laughter, drawing the notion of source-repression and forces-sublimation, giving the people a “second voice”. This construct, a temporary escapism from the “official truth”, is what Bakhtin terms as “the great interior sensor” which suspends “conscience, judgment, superego” and the generalised other (Hall, Grindstaff et al. 2010: 204-205). In understanding misrule in this manner, I could then draw upon its parallel tensions to formulate a working backdrop within the constructs of the Hindu pantheon’s God, *Lord Shiva*.

**Lord of Misrule**

As a “misrule” theorist Mikhail Bakhtin reads the cycles of birth, death, nourishment and decay within the context of the material world to suggest or infer a kind of cultural theory of chaos (Wolfreys 2006: 170) (Johnson 2011: 251) (Hall, Grindstaff et al. 2010: 205). He theorises the power of misrule foregrounding it on the grand “Pre-Lenten feast” of Carnival, where the power of misrule creates possibilities of embodying (Makowiecka 2006: 1);

[... transgression, contingency, hyperbole and excess:- it’s how things change – this is not a neat linear world of action and foreseeable consequences, clear beginnings and endings and boundaries – the important places to look at are those spaces where things happen seemingly by chance – where things metamorphose and transmogrify through unexpected meetings and journeys and having changes, never stay still long before they’re off again on another unpredictable trajectory. (Makowiecka 2006: 1)]

For Bakhtin carnival symbolises a sort of folk wisdom which indulges in the lower strata opposing authority, where the lines between the performers and audiences are blurred. Its expression is found in the medieval festival, with participants dressed in costumes masquerading, where the free reign of misrule was practised, mocking the church, crowning and uncrowning the fool, ridiculing established hierarchy, expressing the joyfulness of relativity in all forms of structure and order through bodily pleasures perpetuating the organic cycle of “birth and death, nourishment and decay”.

Nevertheless, in this context of the unruly, Wolfrey draws attention to the viewpoints of many historians, that while Bhaktin constructs the carnival as an oppositional force against authority, in actual fact, this official medieval ritual is tolerated as a simple

Most interestingly, Makowiecka argues that the power of misrule finds its repose in Twelfth Night where its allusion is embedded in the text, exemplifying itself through the play’s dramatic action, dialogues and character portrayals (Makowiecka 2006: 1). While Shakespeare has cast Sir Toby as Lord of Misrule, it is interesting to note that Feste is the one embodying the power of misrule in his unruly and wanton play of words signifying the authority in his words to mean what is said. The power of misrule, upon the deliberate Menippean construct (Logie and Murdoch University. School of Humanities. 1993: 9), highlights Shakespeare’s intention in revealing the truth through “wisely shown wit” as to “uncivil rule” (Makowiecka 2006: 15). Drawing upon the wisdom of Shakespeare’s “wisely wit”, rather than its unruly antithesis in the play, I find my point of departure for the construction of the puppeteer-conjurer-Lord Nataraja. Thus moving away from the unruly, I draw upon the similarities of Bakhtin’s material world cycle of birth, decay, death and nourishment within the context of Lord Shiva-Lord Nataraja’s symbolism in the “cosmic cycles of creation and destruction” and his play of birth and death within the context of the material world (Capra 1983: 242). This symbolism of the King of Dance from Chapter Four is expanded in this Chapter. Makowiecka further argues that appearances in Shakespeare’s plays can not be relied upon, for what seems to be, may not be, so true as in the characters of Twelfth Night (Makowiecka 2006: 13):

[...]

Carnival turns the world upside down, you do what you will, and nothing is but what is not. In this respect carnival is, like all theatre, a matter of disguise and appearances, of impersonation, of the attempt to discriminate what is from what is not by means of what merely appears. (Kermode 2000: 126)

This state of cultural chaotic excess with its transgressions, contingencies and hyperboles as described by Makowiecka formulated the ideal platform for exploring my characterisation of Lord of Misrule-Lord Nataraja, as what might be, may not be as the conjurer conjures his cyclical web of birth, decay, death and rejuvenation upon the mortal characters in the world of his Illyria.

I now move to explain my characterisation of Lord of Misrule against the backdrop of Lord Nataraja. In principle Misrule represents chaos: expanding that chaos into exploring Shakeapeare’s “wisely wit”, formulates the departure for the creation of my
conjuror; Lord Shiva. In chaos he represents the Lord of Destruction (Coomaraswamy 1976: 73). I needed to justify my dance and mime performance as well, and so too the Lord has many faces to him, for Lord Shiva is also known as Lord Nataraja; Lord of Dance, and as the Cosmic dancer he is the King of Actors. In his Cosmic Theatre, his repertoire carries many facets, he is the actor and the audience. In describing Shiva-Nataraja Coomaraswamy writes:

*When the Actor beateth the drum,
Everybody cometh to see the show;
When the Actor Collecteth the stage properties
He abideth alone in His happiness.*

(Coomaraswamy 1976: 66)

As an ideal character representation, my role required me not only to conjure and manipulate the actors in the play but to dance as well. In the iconographic representation of Lord Shiva, the cosmic principles of light and sound are depicted by the Damaru (Drum-representing Sound) and Agni (Fire-representing Light). I struck a contemporary post-modernist posture to denote Lord Shiva signifying the elements of light and sound as a guided representation in the creation of chaos (misrule) and resolution in the play. Based on the ideology of Arnie Lade’s research discussed in Chapter Four that sound and light make up the essential elements of pure consciousness and energy within the causal world, I now move to expand that ideology into my representation of the character, Lord of Misrule-Lord Nataraja.

Lord Nataraja is one of the trinity godheads of the Hindu pantheon; Brahma-The Creator, Vishnu-The Preserver and Shiva-The Destroyer (Hackin 1963: 117). Grotowski in his exploration of Indian theatre displayed a keen interest in Shiva as the Cosmic Dancer, Nataraja; the one who while dancing, creates everything. “I am the pulse, the movement and the rhythm”. By quoting Shiva, Grotowski defines his search for the essence of theatre. He moves on to add that, “If I had to define our theatrical researches in one sentence, one phrase, I would refer to the myth of the dance of Shiva” (Kumiega 1985: 115) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 79) (Bharucha 1993: 23).
Symbolism of Lord Nataraja

1). The Dance Pose – Representing the Universal Energy in a continuous rhythmic throb.
2). Abhaya Hastam (Gesture of not fearing) – (a) Signifying “the total state of being and becoming”. (b) Signifying that in taking sanctuary with the Lord, the devotee is protected.
3). Damaru – Energy is manifested as the sound vibrations of the universe.
4). Fire – Energy is manifested as the light waves of the universe.
5). Demon - Under his feet, demonic forces or characteristics are annihilated.
6). 36 Deepams (lights) - The thirty six tattwas (categories) are manifested as the One Supreme.

---

Swamiji states that the scientific characteristic of the universe is represented in Shiva’s dance pose, and that the entire material universe is in a constant state of vibration, a perfect rhythm, depicted poetically as the Dance of Shiva (Shantanand: 39). According to Capra, modern physics has demonstrated that movement and rhythm make up the characteristics of all matter whether on earth or in outer space. What is observed is a continuous cosmic dance, and so, as a natural thought process phrases like dance and rhythm come into play when describing energy flow. Physicist Kenneth Ford describes energy movement as the “dance of creation and destruction”. And so a similar metaphor is shared between Eastern mysticism and the scientific world in using dance to describe the universe. Alexandra David-Neel in her journey to Tibet, describes how the Lama addressed himself as the “master of sound” and revealed to her his views on matter (Capra 1983: 240-241):

All things...are aggregations of atoms that dance and by their movements produce sounds. When the rhythm of the dance changes, the sound it produces also changes...Each atom perpetually sings its song, and the sound, at every moment, creates dense and subtle forms. (Capra 1983: 242) (Burger and Society for the Study of Native Arts and 1998: 193)

Swamiji further explains that Shiva’s dance represents the Cosmic Activity in which he is the Director and hence he is identified as the King (Raja) of Dance- (Nata) – Nataraja (Shantanand: 39). From this reference, Capra draws the striking reference to modern physics of sound as a wave, emitting proportionate energy as it changes its frequency when sound changes; each particle perpetually singing a song, creating a rhythmic energy dance in “dense and subtle forms”. Capra further states that this beautiful cosmic rhythm finds its fullest form of expression in the Hindu dancing god Shiva as the King of Dancers, his dance symbolising the eternal cycle of creation and destruction, life and death. In framing the cosmic dance of Shiva, Capra explains that the bronze dancing image is excellently balanced with its dynamic gestures expressing “the rhythm and unity of life”. The meaning of the posture is highly complex encased in pictorial allegory (Capra 1983: 242-244).

Swamiji elaborates on the representation of Shiva’s four arms. The upper right arm that holds the damaru-drum signifies SRISHTI (creation-evolution) denoting the vibratory...

---

95 Description of Lord Nataraja’s Symbolism is obtained from Swami Shantanand’s Shiva Worship, Kuala Lumpur, Rajiv printers, p. 38 (year of publication unknown).
96 Alexandra David-Neel became the first Western Woman explorer to enter Lhasa and to be granted an audience with the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Earle Rice’s Alexandra David-Neel: Explorer at the Roof of the World, Philadelphia, Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, p. 43.
source of *naada*-sound, while the upper left arm holding fire represents *SAMHARA* (destruction) as the purifying element, both *damaru* and fire represent light and sound. The lower right arm with the fingers pointing upward and palm facing forward is raised in dispelling fear and providing protection; symbolising *STHITHI* (preservation). The lower left arm pointing toward the raised left foot across the body denotes the soul’s only place of refuge; symbolising *ANUGRAHA* (refuge). The Demon whom *Nataraja* is dancing on, is a representation of the soul in delusion; *maya* (delusion) is thus annihilated under his protection. The flamed ring behind Lord *Nataraja* consists of thirty six flames, representing the thirty six principles from the lowest material consciousness to the highest level of divine consciousness (Shantanand: 39-40). In expanding the sublime motif of the dancing *Nataraja* Carl Sagan writes:

> [It is] a kind of premonition of modern astronomical ideas. Very likely, the universe has been expanding since the Big Bang, [...] a very Indian succession of cycles, expansion followed by contraction, universe upon universe, Cosmos without end”.

Hence, in coalescing the symbolism of the grotesque, chaos, birth, death and rejuvenation around Misrule and the dancing image of *Nataraja*, I justified my character role as Lord of Misrule-*Nataraja* in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. In using the elements of expansion and contraction of the cosmic dancer within the framework of Misrule’s birth, death and rejuvenation cycles, I elaborated the being and becoming of my character preparation. As a ritual, at the Temple of Fine Arts, at the beginning of a class or any performance, we recite the *Dhyaana Shlokam*, the performer’s act of paying obeisance to the Lord of dance:

\begin{verbatim}
Aangikam Bhuvanam Yasya  
Vaacikam Sarva Vaangmayam  
Aahaaryam Candra Taaraadi  
Tan Numah Saat Vikam Shivam
\end{verbatim}

This translates as:

\begin{verbatim}
We bow to the pure Shiva  
Whose body is the world  
Whose speech is the Universal language and  
Whose ornaments are the moon and the stars (TFA 2001: 14)
\end{verbatim}
This verse runs parallel to the Natyasatra’s instructions of actor preparation, mentioned in the introduction of the Natyasatra segment: abhinaya is the art of communication for the actor, it encompasses four dimensions of preparation. These are angika (movement expression through the body), vacika (using the organ of speech in performance), aharya (the use of personal props, ornaments, costume and make-up on the actor) and sattvika (temperaments; emotional expression) (Bharata 2000: 72) (Kramer 1991: 62). All four requirements of the actor dimensions are embedded within the dhyaana slokam and its actor preparation is identified with Lord Shiva.

Figures 13 and 14 Lord of Misrule: close and half view

aharya (the use of personal props, ornaments, costume and make-up)
Besides placing my character through the four dimensions of personal character preparation of angika (movement), vacika (speech), aharya (costume) and sattvika (emotional expression) (Vatsyayan 1967: 230), I also directed my bindu; the vital drop, known as the “through-line of action” in creating my inner line from beginning to end in achieving the objective of the play prescribed in the Natyasastra through the five stages of action: “prarambha (beginning), prayatna (effort), praptisambhava (possibility of attainment), niyata phalaprapti (certainty of attainment), phalayoga” (attainment of the objective) (Bharata 2000: 292). According to Kramer, these five stages of action roughly coincide with Stanislavsky’s three stage division of the through-line; “identification and pursuit of the objective’, ‘encountering obstacles’, and overcoming the obstacles and achieving the objective” (Kramer 1991: 59). In this similarity, the goal leads to the one path of realising the character.
After the application of the four dimensions and the five stages of action, I withdraw into myself and begin the process of having a conversation with my ‘Personal Secretary’. Kramer as indicated above highlights the many similarities between the Natyasastra and Stanislavsky’s System. At this juncture I would like to draw a parallel to the similarity of Swamiji’s technique and Ramacharaka-Stanislavsky’s technique on obtaining answers for the actors when in doubt; moving through the conscious, to the unconscious, to the subconscious in accessing the superconscious for answers (Whyman 2008: 85). This ‘Personal Secretary’ application is a technique taught by Swamiji for character analysis. Swamiji explains that an actor-seeker in evolving need not always seek external emancipation, but rather journey within and ask the divine residing within oneself for guidance. That divine is none other than Devi or Sakthi, being the actor-seeker’s ‘Personal Secretary’, she will resolve your queries. Swamiji says, all that the actor-seeker has to do is inform her of one’s concerns and then to leave it alone. Devi-Sakthi will know what to do and when to answer. All the actor-seeker needs to do is keep up the sadhana-practice and dhayana-meditation-concentration, and she will get back to you with an answer. For my part, I converse with my ‘Personal Secretary’ throughout the nine levels (four dimensions and the five stages of action), I may not get an answer instantly, but I do get a response when the circumstances warrant it. Swamiji’s ‘Personal Secretary’ technique is identical to that of Ramacharaka-

---

97 In Indian philosophy, according to Meyer-Dinkgrafe and Nair, repeated exposure of the actor’s and spectators’ consciousness to the state of turiya in performance develops and enhances the states of higher consciousness, eventually establishing turiya as a permanent state in theatre, as well in daily life (see footnote 89). At a repeated exposed level of higher consciousness, the practitioner, whether during performance or in everyday life, can withdraw spontaneously at any juncture to commune with their ‘Personal Secretary’.

98 Devi or Sakthi is the same representation as discussed in Chapter Four as Shiva-Sakthi.
Stanislavsky’s “subconscious sack” methodology; where the actor bundles given thoughts throwing it into a “subconscious sack”, returning later to enquire about the result (Carnicke 2009: 225) (Whyman 2008: 85) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 43-44). The explanation and application may vary but the result achieved would be the same.

Before getting into our costumes for a TFA performance, we are seen rigorously preparing ourselves, and in passing Swamiji will remark, “it is good that you all are practising hard, now forget the practice and become the performance”. Once the costume is on, we go silent, conversing only with our “Personal Secretaries”, forgetting the technique to become the performance. In the sanctity of the costume ritual Mrinalini Sarabhai, a famous Indian Bharata Natyam dancer states that once the costume and make-up are on, the actor becomes the character. And in Swamiji’s forgetting the technique and becoming the performance, parallel to the “Stanislavskian training, performance philosophy” and “letting go of, or ‘trusting’ technique” Sarabhai further states:

A strange thing about technique is that, after studying it, the dancer must forget all about it! […] Now that you have forgotten your technique, or rather it has become part of you …. Once you have stopped learning and have really mastered the technique, you must put your whole thinking and feeling into the dance. (Kramer 1991: 49)

And after “letting go”, and in “trusting”, fully offering oneself to the divine in devotion and worship, the recitation of the Rangaadhi Devatha Stuthi begins; this prayer for the goddess of the stage, is also one of the preparatory prayers at the Temple of Fine Arts.

**Bharata Kula Bhaagya Kalike**
**Bhaava Rasaamanda Parinataa Kaare**
**Jagad Eka Mohana Kale**
**Jaya Jaya Rangaadi Devate devi**

This translates as:

Victory to thee O Goddess of [the] stage. Thou art the good fortune of the actor/dancer class. Thou art the joy arising from the various feelings portrayed on the stage. Thou art the singular charm and enchantment in the universe. (TFA 2001: 16)
After paying homage to the goddess of the stage, while awaiting the transition before the performance commences, the final ritual of the “Astadik Paalakaas” and “Asthag Devo Vandana” begins. While the Astadik Paalakaas identifies the eight directions and the demigods, the Astha Dig Devo Vandana is the mantra recitation proper carried out to invoke the blessings. According to the Natyasatra, it is a worship (puja) or ritual commenced by the actor-dancer-performer to seek blessings from the demi-gods who guard the eight directions as a precursor to the performance. The actor-dancer-performer commences this ritual facing east, moving clock-wise, with palms together in prayer pose performing a namaskar by bowing to each deity while reciting the mantra.

100 TFA Bharata Darshanam Stage 1 Handbook, 2005, pg. 49.
101 These Vedic rituals of puja in theatre, according to Vatsyayan, are mandatory, as Bharata cautions that “he who [holds] a dramatic spectacle (natya) without offering puja will find his knowledge and skill useless, will be reborn as [an] animal, and will sustain […] loss. Those who offer puja in accordance with all the prescribed rules of the puja […] will attain wealth and go to heaven”, (Chapter One of the Natyasatra, verse 125-128). Vatsyayan is further of the opinion that to consecrate and sacralise the space puja is a necessity, from a micro-model aspect of the cosmos, he argues that each deity has a defined space and cardinal direction with its connection to “the centre of the brahma-mandala”. Therefore, through the ritual offering of puja, the space becomes consecrated “enlivened” and “given presence of life” (Bharata 2000: 10) (Vatsyayan 2003: 16-17). According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, this ritual is performed to seek the blessings of the Vedic gods in allowing “the mind to transcend senses, desire, mind, intellect, emotion, intuition, feeling, and the individual ego” in achieving the state of pure consciousness (turiya) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2005: 161). This ritual is similar to the foundation laying ceremony in constructing a building or theatre house as postulated by Meyer-Dinkgrafe. See Chapter Three, footnote 11. Therefore, in all my performances, irrespective of whether it is a Vedic or Western production, I consecrate and sacralise the space giving it life.
102 Namaskar is a Vedic greeting; it is an act of pay obeisance or respect of bowing “to the universal soul”, to a deity, elder or individual. The five fingers from the right palm represent the gnanaindriyas “senses of perception”, while the fingers from the left palm represent karmaindriyas “organs of action”. By bringing both palms together in contact at the region of the heart (paying respect to all individuals), forehead (paying respect to gurus) or above the head (paying respect to the gods), it signifies the merging of the ten senses, “senses of perception” or knowledge with the “senses of action” or karma. An aspirant performing this act with full fervor of devotion and faith will be able to control their ten senses living a glorious life, R. Venugopalan, Meditation: Any Time Any Where, 2003, India, Health Harmony, pp. 172-173. According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, the cosmic mind finds its connection with the ten senses from a physiological perspective, as an expression of Brahman. He further argues that as the Vedas are expressions of Brahman, so too, the “human physiology and all other objects within and beyond the range of human perception are manifestations of Brahman”. Hence, the important of this ritual in aiding the actor-performer in accessing and progressing to the state of higher consciousness (turiya) (Meyer-Dinkgrafe 2001: 97-99).
**Figure 17.1 Astadik Deva Palakas Directions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Devas (Demi-Gods)</th>
<th>Hasta Mudras (Hand Gestures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| North         | Kubera (Lord of Wealth) | Right hand – *Mushti* (Closed fist)  
Left hand – *Alapadma* (Full blown lotus) |
| North East    | Eeshana or Ishaana (God of Well Being) | Right hand - *Trishuula* (Trident)  
Left hand – *Dola* (Swing) |
| East          | Indra (King of the Devas) | Both hands holding *Tripataaka* (three parts of a flag) crossed above the head. |
| South East    | Agni (Lord of Fire) | Right hand – *Tripataaka* (Three parts of a flag)  
Left hand – *Kaangula* (Bud) |
| South         | Yama (Lord of Death) | Right hand – *Suuchi* (Needle)  
Left hand – *Taamracuuda* (A cock) |
| South West    | Nirati (God Sleep) | Right hand – *Shakatam* (chariot’s wheel/demon’s teeth) gesture held near the eyes.  
Left hand – *Katva* (bed/cot) gesture held at chest level. |
| West          | Varuna (Lord of the Oceans) | Right hand – *Shikhara* (Peak)  
Left hand – *Pataaka* (Flag) |
| North West    | Vaayu (Lord of Wind) | Right hand – *Araala* (Bent)  
Left hand – *Ardhapataaka* (Half flag) |

**Figure 17.2 Astadik Deva Palakas Table**
Astha Dig Devo Vandana

Om Indraaya Namaha,
Om Agniye Namaha,
Om Yamaaya Namaha,
Om Niruddhaye Namaha,
Om Varunaaya Namaha,
Om Vayuve Namaha,
Om Kuberaaya Namaha,
Om Eeshanaaya Namaha,
Om Ashta Dig Devo Devathabhyo Namo Namaha.

This translates as:

Om Salutations to the King of the Devas,
Om Salutations to the Lord of Fire,
Om Salutations to the Lord of Death,
Om Salutations to the God of Sleep,
Om Salutations to the Lord of the Oceans,
Om Salutations to the Lord of the Wind,
Om Salutations to the Lord of Wealth,
Om Salutations to the God of Well-Being.
Om Salutations to all the Great Gods and Lords of the Eight Directions.

Meaning:

O divine ones, it behoves you to take us all under your benign protection during the night. Accompanied by your followers extend to us all help in the dramatic performance. (Bharata 2000: 22)

In using 2 (a) of Lord Nataraja’s symbolism of “the total state of being and becoming”, mentioned above, I move on to the final stage of extrapolating the realising process of my character, where the becoming becomes the being and the being becomes the becoming. Hence, I draw in the parallels of the solar system signifying the symbolism of Shiva-Nataraja into the five stages of action. The planets in our solar system revolve around the Sun, this movement around the Sun is identified as the orbit, and it does not revolve in a circular motion but rather elliptically. The Rishis discovered that in the entire Universe, all planets “revolving around the Sun follow an elliptical orbit”. The solar system and the galaxies in the universe revolve in elliptical orbits. As hypothesised by Einstein, even “Space itself is curved or elliptical” (Parker 1986: 39-40). Hence the ancient Rishis recognised that everything which is manifested is a
creation of the Absolute which is the essence of the unmanifested Supreme, in this state Shiva was identified (Shantanand: 24-26).

**Figure 18** The Lord of Misrule in a postmodernism posture of Lord Shiva the damaru-drum-sound gesture in my right hand and the agni-fire-light gesture in my life hand

**Figure 19** Shivalingam\(^{103}\): as the manifested arising from the unmanifested

\(^{103}\) Image retrieved from Swami Shantanand’s *Shiva Worship*, Kuala Lumpur, Rajiv Printers, p. 27 (year of publication unknown).
Therefore, this elliptical shape became the symbolic Abstract Absolute signifying Shiva. This elliptical shape takes the form of Shivalingam; the elliptical shaped stone. Shiva means supreme and Lingam means symbol; hence Shivalingam. The Shivalingam is “placed in a circular shaped receptacle”. The circle symbolises neither end nor beginning – “every effect is the preceding cause of the following effect and the following cause of the preceding effect”. God, as the Infinite Universal Intelligence, exists at every point in the circle and nowhere. As such, the only mathematical construct which can represent the qualities of the “Universal Spirit, Shiva, Eternal, Universal, Infinite Existence” is the circle and hence the adoption of the symbolic representation. The circular state is Shiva represented as Unmanifested-Being and the elliptical shape is
Shiva represented as Manifested-Becoming; hence from the Unmanifested the Manifested emanates:

[…] the Becoming is getting established in the Being. […] The Becoming evolves out of the Being … the Becoming is sustained by the Being … and once again the Becoming becomes ONE with the Being. (Shantanand: 27)

This is the reason why the elliptical Shivalingam is placed in a circular receptacle (Shantanand: 24-27). Hence, in my personal framing of five stages of action, the constructed set-platform became the receptacle, as the Lord of Misrule manifested from the unmanifested, creating the cycles of evolving-birth, revolving-rejuvenate and resolving-death, through the various levels of the entrances and exits exploring the thirty six categories of consciousness (Shantanand: 40), maintaining the bindu-vital drop (through-line of action) from the beginning till the end of the play (Kramer 1991: 58-59) (Carnicke 2009: 226-227).

Therefore, in enveloping the totality of Lord Nataraja’s symbolism, into my character portrayal, “I” as Lord of Misrule, “I” as Shiva and “I” as Nataraja became “being” and “becoming” realising the character – “The Self”-“I AM”. This state is parallel to Stanislavsky’s emphasis in realising the character, “”The Self” – “I AM”-is not prana, but that which brings all prana together into one” (Carnicke 2009: 178) (White 2006: 88) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 115-120) (Haney and Malekin 2001: 109-110).

As the fifth Veda, the Natyasastra is a religious text handed down from the god Brahma to Bharata in a revealed dialogic manner, and in elaborating the points of contact between spirituality and realism, Kramer is of the view that both points of contact between the Natyasastra’s text and Stanislavsky’s text are dialogical, as he makes the parallel comparison of the master-disciple relationship between Stanislavsky and his disciples to that of the god Brahma and Bharata. Kramer further connects the religious acts of the Natyasastra’s performance to Stanislavsky’s views on acting practiced as secular religion. For Stanislavsky, the actor becomes “the priest of beauty and truth”

and the actor’s body being dependant on the soul is crucial to his “school of art”. At every stage of the actor’s preparation the soul is engaged (Kramer 1991: 51):

An actor…must have some sort of spiritual preparation before the beginning of a performance. Not only his body, but also his spirit must put on new clothes. Before beginning to act, every actor must know how to enter into that spiritual atmosphere in which alone ‘the sacrament of creative art’ was possible. (Kramer 1991: 51)

The Dance of Shiva-Misrule

Figures 22 and 23
In his dance the Lord of Misrule conjures a ferocious storm to cause the shipwreck

Figures 24 and 25
Emanating from the set-platform being into becoming, from the unmanifested to the manifested, the Lord of Misrule evokes a fog of delusion to create chaos and confusion within the characters snaring them in the web of illusion: maya
Figures 26 and 27
Explanation as above

Figures 28 and 29
Explanation as above

Figure 30
The Lord of Misrule’s *Hatta* Yoga head stand signifies the height of chaos within the play, where the emotions of the characters run amok. Turning everything upside down.
Figures 31 and 32
The pause as the unmanifested before the being manifests into the becoming

Figures 33 and 34
The sustained vibration of the fourth stage; the unspoken verbal pronunciation (Anaahatha) represented in Om

Figures 35 and 36
Once again the conjurer conjuring the extensions of his illusion; the in-between of the end of chaos and the beginning of the move into resolution
Figure 37
The unmanifested becomes manifested ending the chaos, removing the veil of ignorance, bestowing clarity to the path of resolution.

Figures 38 and 39
The Lord of Misrule in resolution with the mortal characters in the Greek Zorba’s Finale Dance. From being to becoming, from start to end the Lord of Misrule cast his spell within his cycle of birth, death and rejuvenation.
The Natyasastra and Stanislavsky’s System

In line with my actor preparation technique Richard E. Kramer in his *The Natyasastra and Stanislavsky: Points Of Contact* draws an immensely similar comparison between the two actor training methodologies. Kramer’s comparison highlights the remarkable similarities between spirituality, realism, technique, physicality, mind, senses, emotions, *rasa* (sentiments) – *bhava* (psychological states) experienced by the audience, concentration, objective, (*bindu*-vital drop) through-line, teleology and *abhinaya* (Kramer 1991: 51-61). According to Kramer, Yoga discipline in the Natyasastra becomes one of the vehicles in attaining inward consciousness (Kramer 1991: 58). While Carnicke argues that Stanislavsky adopted relaxation and breathing techniques from *Hatha* Yoga and theoretical concepts from *Raja* Yoga “about the creative state” and “the nature of unconscious” to enhance “concentration, attention and

---

observation” (Carnicke 2009: 176-177). The practice of Yoga, in my opinion became the common denominator in creating the many parallels within both systems. In researching Indian dancer-actors, Kramer discovers that without being exposed to Stanislavskian techniques, these dancer-actors parallel Stanislavsky’s System. In strengthening the parallelisms, Kramer provides some comparison of both systems (Kramer 1991: 50).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corresponding Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stanislavsky’s System</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Achieving the Objective-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditioning Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic “IF”; Sense of Truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stylization/Theatricalization”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through-line of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 41 Table of Similarities between Stanislavsky’s System and The Natyasastra*

From this comparison table we can surmise the immense similarities between both systems. Yet, both systems construct different forms of theatre: Why? Kramer argues that apart from localised customs and taste, any theoretical framework can be interpreted in a variety of ways, but in the constructs of the Natyasastra and Stanislavsky, only two major factors stand out: firstly, on ontology, the nature of worldview from the perspective of its people “encoded in their drama”; and secondly, as Bharucha argues, the site specific cultural historicity (Bharucha 1993: 240) of its “theatrical traditions and local customs”. The main factors of influence in Indian theatre

are based on its ontological and metaphysical empowerment-constructs of the universal. According to Nakamura the Indians view “the individual only as one of the instances belonging to the abstract universal” (Nakamura 1964: 44) while Vatsyayan cites that Indian drama is based on the universal functioning of human conduct as “archetypes or symbols”, battling the nature of good and evil rather within the individual (Vatsyayan 1980: 179-180). Corroborating Nakamura and Vatsyayan’s argument, Henry W. Wells is further of the opinion that:

Indians are by no means greatly concerned with logic or with the individual’s private problems of spiritual unity or harmony, […] their desire is for a religiously conceived and universal goal of spiritual equilibrium. Though highly conscious of the individual mind, the Eastern thinker is reluctant to see each person as a private or clinical case, preferring to view every man in terms of his access to the universal. (Wells 1975: 8)

This is unlike Western theatre, where great emphasis is placed upon the individual’s conflict, set against him or herself or society. Indian Theatre is concerned with the internal essence rather than its external materialisation of the world; hence Nakamura is of the view that “Western drama is one of “becoming”, while Indian drama is one of “being”” (Nakamura 1964: 73) (Kramer 1991: 59-60). Utilising the symbolism of Shivalingam as discussed earlier, against the backdrop of Margolis and Renaud (Margolis and Renaud 2010: 59) and Nakamura’s argument, Western theatre as the “becoming” evolves out of, and is sustained by, to be reabsorbed into, Indian theatre as the “being” (Shantanand: 27). Revisiting the static and active elements of Shiva and Sakthi in Chapter Four, against the “static internal essence” and the “dynamic external manifestation” of worldview in Indian theatre (Kramer 1991: 60), Ramana Maharishi says:

The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their parabdhakarma (destiny to be worked out in this life, resulting from the balance-sheet of actions in past [lives]). Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent. (Osborne 1998: 34)

Kramer is further of the opinion that the reason for the Natyasastra’s success is due to the fact of its ability to influence the numerous cultures within its regional and subcontinental genres (Kramer 1991: 61). Its syncretistic nature co-exists and blends with emerging forms. And according to Vatsyayan Indian performing arts can be divided into three categories; traditional arts forms (folk or high art) which are deeply
rooted in Indian cultural history, classical performances of descriptive nature originating from the *Natyasastra*, where Vatsyayan argues that “not all traditional forms are classical, but all classical forms are traditional”, and the third carry European influences of Western theatre in Indian contemporary theatre. Performing art forms in the West “such as opera, operetta, symphony, ballet, mime and drama” according to Kramer have branched out and become diffracted. The *Natyasastra* and Indian performance traditions were conceived through religious devotion, expressed through a cohesive “abstraction of spirit”, its form concretised in the symbolic (Vatsyayan 1980: 1 & 5-6). Formalising its roots, Indian theatre in its ability to co-exist and blend, connected its ritualistic and symbolic heritage to its traditional performances, whereas in Western theatre, the ritualistic frameworks are subsumed into the background (Kramer 1991: 61). Kramer’s thesis comparison between the *Natyasastra* and Stanislavsky concludes that even with all the seemingly apparent outward differences, both Indian classical and the modern Western playhouse have their fundamental parallels and this must be recognised (Kramer 1991: 61). With reference to *abhinaya*; the art of actor communication, Kramer writes:

> What communicates, when even words do not, is *abhinaya*, the performer’s ability “to convey the meaning of the play to the spectator and to evoke a joyful consciousness in them.” Whether informed by a codified and non-naturalistic style, or one that is psychologically oriented and imitative of daily life, the evocative power of performance still reaches us. Both Stanislavsky and Bharata devoted themselves to the development of systems to enhance and support *abhinaya*; that, in the end, transcends cultural specifics. (Kramer 1991: 61-62)

With an endowment from the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Board, Meyer-Dinkgrafe conducted an experiment on a set of performers dividing them into two groups to test his theory of Indian Vedic science application of the *Natyasastra* set against the Western approach; one focusing on Indian tradition training source of the *Natyasastra* conducted by a *Bharata Natyam* practitioner/dancer, while the other focusing on various Western actor training methodologies selecting and applying what is workable, supervised by a prominent actor trainer of the West. The aim of this project was to derive a practical beneficial methodology toward achieving acting consciousness in their characterisation for theatre practitioners. According to Meyer-Dinkgrafe, the results indicate that the *Natyasastra* training methodology showcased a “significantly higher” achievement (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 181-182). As a *Bharatha Natyam* practitioner coupled with Western actor training, I share similar findings to those of Malekin, et al, in all my results. My engagement and involvement in any creative piece
Malekin, et al,’s findings corroborate the observations of my peers and contemporaries, in my performance and practice, where I receive feedback on them being drawn to my ‘performance presence’ on stage compared to other actors. This same extension was validated by my Supervisor; Associate professor Jenny de Reuck when she mentioned that two theatre unit coordinators were invited as guests and witnessed my performance as Othello, later remarked to her that it was not right of her to utilise a professional actor to showcase the University’s student production. My Supervisor smiled as she replied, that’s Murali on stage. My transformation into Othello was so explicit that many could not distinguish the person from Othello. And as recently as in the launching of Murdoch University’s Children’s Theatre 2011 Summer Program in Kuala Lumpur, where I played Spot the dog (a physical role with no scripted lines), the veteran stage manager of TFA productions addressed me and said, I only saw a dog on stage and not Murali.

This is the testament of the result from the discipline and success of the devotional acting-theatre praxis engendered by Swami Shantanand. Using Swamiji as our yardstick, we work immensely to improve ourselves, both in performing and creating-choreographing-teaching; in this Swamiji says that if, as a teacher one is unable to teach or convey instructions to a student-actor effectively to aid in the progress of that individual, than one has to reassess the teacher and not the student-actor. A wise teacher will always be able to impart knowledge to a student-actor in any given situation or circumstances.
Conclusion

The devotional acting-theatre praxis formulates the holistic extension of Stanislavsky’s Acting System and Meyerhold’s *Biomechanics*, in that, contrary to popular belief, Stanislavsky’s System realises the character by working on the external and internal processes (Carnicke 2009: 173), rather than the American narcissistic “real” emotions approach and the exclusive advocacy of “scientific and realistic” interpretations of Stanislavsky’s theatre, (Kramer 1991: 51-52). Conversely, Meyerhold’s *Biomechanics* works with the external physical movements toward realising the character (Whyman 2008: 235); both are the same, their methods are on opposite sides of the coin but nevertheless they produce the same results.

While at TFA Swamiji catered for the various temperaments of aspirants in the arts, not just internal and external but multiple. As mentioned earlier in this Chapter, there are four paths within the Yoga system; *Karma* Yoga, *Bhakti* Yoga, *Jnana* Yoga and *Raja* Yoga, each path carrying with it a chord that will resonate at the same frequency of the intended aspirant. When the most suitable path is discovered identifying that resonating chord within the discipline of the yoga system, the aspirant can then begin the training. Some aspirants, depending on their temperaments, may find it difficult to endure the journey and at times even change paths, but rest assured that with the same discipline shared by Stanislavsky and Meyerhold (Carnicke 2009: 173) persistence will pave the way to achieving the goal; for whatever the path chosen, the goal remains the same. Hence, in good time, all journeys undertaken within the Yoga system will lead to the same goal of realisation.

A new process of theatre is being investigated at this very moment by Meyer-Dinkgrafe along the platforms of Theatre and Consciousness. He focuses mainly on the *Natyasastra* as a platform to enhance the levels of higher consciousness in both the actor and audience (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 2) (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2005: 5) (Nair 2007: 7-9), as ascribed by Swami Shantanand to practitioners at TFA since 1981.

Springboarding off Benedetti’s “notion of intentionality, […] memory and consciousness” (Benedetti 2007: 233), streaming it through Lo and Gilbert’s intercultural model of “differentiated hybridity” (Lo and Gilbert 2002: 45), and
augmenting it with the already existing theatre consciousness experiments of Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe, Peter Malekin and Ralph Yarrow I aim to reinvent, extend and emphasise the Vedic practice of the *Natyasastra* process for the actor.

The *Natyasastra* is not of the universalist or materialist approach (Knowles 2010: 13) prescribed by Western theatre practitioners, but rather positioned against it, through a new historicist approach of the self, the sacred and the sublime (*atman*-soul)-Absolute-*Brahman* (Mishra 1998: 16 & 21), also known as the quantum-self (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 2001: 115) (Goswami 2006: 53) through the devotional acting-theatre praxis to realise the absolute spirit in character realisation in Quantum Theatre\textsuperscript{107}: I AM-*Brahman*-Absolute; the theatre of Swami Shantanand Saraswathi. Theatre and drama in its practice, take the form of “art just for the love of it” as it’s meant to be in the time honoured continuum of the *guru-sisya parampara*\textsuperscript{108} handed down by my guru, Swami Shantanand Saraswathi, as handed down to him by his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswathi, as handed down to him by his guru, *Paramahamsa*\textsuperscript{109} Viswananda Saraswathi (Sivananda 2000: 20) (Leviton 1990: 53), as handed down to him by his forefathers, the ancient *rishis* of India. As emphasised at the beginning of this Chapter, I personally believe that the constructs of the devotional acting-theatre praxis, will form a working genesis for approaching acting, theatre and intercultural constructs on a holistic platform (White 2006: 88). Therefore, whatever path a practitioner of the arts chooses to

\textsuperscript{107} In his 1989 article entitled *Quantum Theatre – Potential Theatre: a New Paradigm? New Theatre Quarterly* 5 (18): 171-179, David E. R. George researched the possibility of a new form of theatre on the platform of quantum Physics. He is of the opinion that using the platform of quantum mechanics the forces of theatre, “the Spectator, Space/Time, and the Actor”, can be radically redefined into an alternative form of “new ‘potential theatre’”. Besides the mention of an alternative form of theatre, no theoretical or practical working model was developed. Although George utilised the term “Quantum Theatre” in his article, apart from the contact with his article earlier this year (2011), it should be noted that at the time of developing my devotional acting-theatre praxis and my research into the field of quantum theory and higher consciousness by Hagelin, Malekin, et al, I have not come into contact with George’s article. I formulated the term ‘Quantum Theatre’ on my own in 2008 from my contact with Swamiji, TFA, and Sivaneshwar Jeganathan who introduced me to the research on quantum theory and pure consciousness through Hagelin, Goswami, Arntz, Chasse and Vicente.

\textsuperscript{108} As stated above, Adi Shankaracharya was the first teacher who founded the monk or swami order. He unified the monk or swami order under ten names and set-up four *maths* (monasteries) to disseminate his teachings. Swami Shantananda Saraswathi belongs to the lineage of the Sringeri math of the Saraswathi order of swamis or monks (Yogananda 1993: 258-259), Leviton, Richard., *How the Swamis Came to the States: A comprehensive history of yoga in the U.S., from Swami Vevekananda in 1893 to prospects for hatha yoga in the 1990s*, Yoga Journal (91), San Francisco, California, Micheal Gliksohn, 1990, p. 53, and Bhatt, Chetan., *Hindu nationalism: origins, ideologies and modern myths*, Oxford, Berg, 2001, p. 184.

\textsuperscript{109} *Parama*, meaning ‘highest’ and *hamsa*, meaning ‘Swan’. Hence “supreme swan” which means “supremely illumined one”. It is said that the sacred swan has the ability to extract “only milk from a mixture of milk and water [and] is thus a symbol of spiritual discrimination” (Sivananda 2000: 20) (Yogananda 1993: 460), and Morgan, Charles W., *This Dynamic World*, Bloomington, Indiana, AuthorHouse, 2010, p. ix.
take in their journey to realise the character in acting, there is one irrefutable fact which remains constant: all rivers lead to the same ocean, the infinite blue as mentioned by Swamiji. And in the words of Stanislavsky, Swami Sivananda and Swamiji

[…] whether the production and the acting is realistic, conventional, right-wing or left-wing, impressionistic or futuristic so long as it is convincing, that is, truthful and credible, and beautiful, i.e., artistic, and lofty, and represents the genuine life of human spirit [(italic and bold emphasis added)] without which there is no art. (Stanislavsky 1961: 26)

An actor […] must have some sort of spiritual preparation before the beginning of a performance. Not only his body, but also his spirit must put on new clothes. Before beginning to act, every actor must know how to enter into that spiritual atmosphere in which alone ‘the sacrament of the creative art’ was possible [(italic and bold emphasis added)]. (Stanislavsky 1961: 17)

Spiritual progress cannot be measured by an aspirant himself. But [every time] you pray, [every time] you meditate, [every time] you eradicate one negative vasana [(latent desire or seed-desire)], you are marching onward and inward. How much is the progress, and when will be the destination the aspirant cannot know, though one fine morning there will be a “DAM BURST” and when it comes, God-only He-knows what will be the experience, since the individual will not be there to experience. God realises Himself. That is Realisation. (Sivananda and Shantanand 1978: 108)

This is what acting is for me.

What follows is a visual record of the productions referred to in this Chapter.

---

110 In reference to Blue Danube-Blue Ganga in Chapter Four.
Chapter 5 Appendices

Appendix 5.1: The Captive Carousel

Production Documentation

Figure 42 The Captive Carousel – Poster

Finale Fight Scenes

Figures 43 and 44
Appendix 5.2: *Infinite Variety* - *Othello*

Production Documentation

*Figure 50* Infinite Variety – Poster – 1<sup>st</sup> run

*Figure 51* Infinite Variety – Poster – 2<sup>nd</sup> run
Figure 52 Muralitharan as Othello – Close up 2nd Run

Figure 53 Muralitharan as Othello – Half view 2nd Run
Desdemona’s Death

Act 5 Scene 2, Line 1

*It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.*

Figure 54 and 55

Figure 56 and 57

Figure 58 and 59
Appendix 5.3: *Lit by Limelight*

Production Documentation

*Figure 65 Lit by Lime Light – Poster*

*Figure 66 The Musicians dance scene*
Figure 67

Figure 68 The Toy Soldier Captured
Figure 69 The Playhouse Doll at play

Figure 70 Spotlight on the Pierats
Figure 71 Final Fight Scene
Appendix 5.4: Master of the Revels

Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night by Mr. William Shakespeare

Production Documentation

![Poster](image)

*Figure 72 Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night - Poster*
Figure 73 Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night – Program Brochure – Front and Back Cover.

Figure 74 Master of the Revels an accompaniment to Twelfth Night – Program Brochure - Inside
Appendix 5.5: *The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province*

Production Documentation

*Figure 75 The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province*
Figures 76 and 77 The Fighting pandas in training

Figure 78 The Pandas meet the Master trainer – Severe Ti

Figures 79 and 80 Pandas in advanced training
Figure 81

Figure 82

Figure 83 Pandas complete final advanced training with Severe Ti
Figure 84

Figure 85

Figure 86 Pandas Final fight scene
Figure 87

Figure 88

Figure 89 The Choreographer and his Ducklings
Figure 90 The Phoenix

Figure 91 The Phoenix with the sets and lighting effects
Appendix 5.6: *Macbeth* (Japanese adaptation reinvention)

Production Documentation

*Figure 92 Macbeth – The Scottish Play - Poster*
Opening Scenes

Figure 93

Figure 94
The Weird Sisters

Figures 95 and 96

Figures 97 and 98

Figures 99 and 100
Figure 101

The Weird Sisters with Banquo and Macbeth

Figure 102

Figures 103 and 104
Act 2 Scene 1, Line 33-34

*Is this a dagger which I see before me,*

*The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.*

(Figure 106)
Figure 107

Death Dance of the Assassin

Figures 108 and 109

Figures 110 and 111
Figures 112 and 113

Figures 114 and 115

The Murder of Banquo performed in Butho

Figure 116
Act 5 Scene 10

Confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff leading into the final fight scene between Macbeth and Macduff

*Figures 117 and 118*

*Figures 119 and 120*

*Figure 121* The beheading of Macbeth
Epilogue

In reassessing current conventional theatre practice with a view to exploring the possibilities contained within the practice of art as a state of higher or pure consciousness, this research began with the aim of mapping out the creative process, ideas, movements and emotions of performance based on the Vedic sciences of the Natyasastra’s practice of theatre. This proposed realignment was presented as a way forward in the practice of intercultural theatre. In the process of analysing, clarifying and conceptualising a ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ derived from the teachings of Swami Shantanand at TFA against the prevailing practices of interculturalism, it became apparent that ‘intention’ plays a pivotal role in distinguishing ‘respect’ for the ‘Other’. Mancing and Haney, as indicated in the discussion above, are therefore correct in surfacing and reassessing the dire, even perilous state of literary theory, cultural studies and criticism positioned amidst the cognitive sciences. Given the interdisciplinary boom in consciousness studies, the need has risen to re-evaluate Western theories of body-mind dualism from the perspective of Eastern notions of consciousness.

This thesis has indicated that major Western intercultural theoretical frameworks that have sought to address and contain the volatile issues of intercultural theatre practice through Western Aristotelian-Cartesian body-mind dualism are inadequate and have reached a deadlock over the past twenty years. Using Vedic sciences’ construct of a higher or pure consciousness, this research concludes that the volatile state of intercultural practice can be better negotiated, theoretically, by understanding that, with the knowledge of a clear line of ‘intent’, communication between theatre practitioners and producers of intercultural theatre forms can be fruitfully established. When the practice of theatre is construed as an action or process that engages its subjects as a form of higher consciousness, the line of ‘intentional’ communication between theatre practitioners and producers may result in the creation of an expressive medium which can produce a uniquely intense experience, not only for the actor/spectator but for all those involved at every level of theatre production.

Therefore, based on Indian philosophy’s universal field of matter-consciousness dualism, the authors, Mancing, Malekin, Yarrow, Haney and Meyer-Dinkgrafe have
sought to mediate all interdisciplinary activity in relation to literary theory, cultural studies and criticism appertaining to cognitive science through the nonreductive theory of higher or pure consciousness. In the field of literary theory, cultural studies and criticism where the focus is on the actor’s emotions in theatre practice, the authors, Malekin, et al, have recommended a reassessment of Western based theories. As indicated above and, as evidenced in my own theatre practice and training, the platform of Vedic sciences’ Indian theatre aesthetics is contiguous with the Natyasastra’s aim of raising the actor’s ordinary states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, sleeping) to a higher or pure state of consciousness. When the ordinary levels of consciousness are raised to a higher state of consciousness known as turiya or pure consciousness, as observed in the Natyasastra, the actor and spectator alike can achieve the state of Samadhi or Absolute Spirit-Brahman (enlightenment-pure consciousness-turiya).

Malekin and Yarrow, as outlined above, developed the “pashyanti project” which aims at preparing the actor-spectator to access the neutral state of consciousness, eventually moving on to the state of pure consciousness-turiya through physiological and psychological levels. For them – and for me in developing my own creative methodology - the practice of yoga facilitates the attainment of the state of “pashyanti”. Several questions remained unanswered at the start of my research into this field which included: How is this reassessment of Western based theories of drama from the state of higher consciousness achieved? How does the aesthetic transformation take place? Most crucially; What are the possible ‘building blocks’ in realising the restoration of a balance between Western and Eastern theories of drama and/or creative practice methodologies? In addressing and resolving these unanswered questions, I have, through my practice-led research and research led-practice developed the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ which engages both the psychological and physiological emotional levels of the actor. This ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ addresses the vital ‘building blocks’ (pratyahara or ethical preparations) simultaneously mapping out the aesthetic transformation while realising the restoration of the reassessed theories of drama.

Created against the backdrop of Mishra’s Indian Sublime, the Sacred, and the Vedic sciences’ of the Natyasastra’s state of pure consciousness, and tested upon the creative works at Murdoch University listed and discussed above, my ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ offers a framework for a suggested way forward for theatre practice and training.
amidst the competing claims of intercultural theories. It is, I believe, able to mediate, effectively, between the demands of East and West so that it is able to deliver for the devotee or student concerned the creative outcomes that intercultural theatre practice, at its most productive, should be producing.

This thesis has addressed the task of developing a valid methodology incorporating the notions of the Sacred and the Sublime as evidenced in the TFA productions I have interrogated. As indicated above, based on the working paradigm of the Natyasastra as instituted by Swami Shantanand in engaging Brahman (Absolute Spirit) and applied to my creative works at Murdoch University, I was able to both theorise and articulate this practice, independently, as a holistic creation: what I call a ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis-led research methodology’. This is set up in comparison to, and to contrasted with, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold’s acting systems. Aimed at paving a way forward for the volatile issues in intercultural theatre practice, this theorised and practical holistic framework, the ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’, I believe, the first of its kind, is articulated conceptually as ‘Quantum Theatre: I AM-Brahman-Absolute, the theatre of Swami Shantanand.

This study demonstrates that the wide range of this thesis ‘vocabulary’ extends, in what seems obvious, the learning process of the West from the East. This process has been made apparent by such theatre practitioners drawing inspiration from India in a bid to escape “the tyranny of acting from the neck up”. Because of its intrinsic ‘interest’ in enhancing and intensifying the gaze upon the actor-spectator’s physicality, moving into the field of consciousness, this facet of consciousness (Brahman) based upon “an understanding heart, equal vision, balanced mind, faith, devotion and wisdom”, would provide the theatre practitioner-actor-spectator with “inner spiritual strength to resist temptations and to control the mind”, freeing them “from egoism, lust, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy”. It is a process that elevates them to a state of higher or pure consciousness as postulated by Malekin, et al, through Swami Sivananda’s “Spiritual Ladder” as elucidated by Swami Shantanand which can be articulated, practised, and, most importantly, learned by the devotee or, more neutrally construed, the student of theatre and drama. A caveat, in conclusion, is that such a ‘devotional acting-theatre praxis’ makes demands upon the devotee or student that conventional Western forms of theatre and drama training do not: in short, it is not for the weak-willed.
Bibliography


Arntz, W., B. Chasse, et al. (2006). What the bleep!? down the rabbit hole. [Pyrmont, N.S.W.], Hopscotch Entertainment/Roadshow Entertainment [distributor].


New York, Routledge;
In association with the Centre for Performance Research.

London; New York, Routledge.


Drake, N. (1838). Shakspeare and his times: including the biography of the poet, criticisms on his genius and writings, a new chronology of his plays, a disquisition on the object of his sonnets, and a history of the manners, customs, amusements, superstitions, poetry, and elegant literature of his age. Paris, Baudry's European Library.


Study on the principal Upanishads.


A talk on The Guru-Disciple Relationship given by Sri Mrinalini Mata (Mother) at Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles on the 7th of July, 1970.

11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park
New Delhi 110 017
India.

Vols. 2- include the Proceedings of the Music Conference of the Music Academy, 1930-


Ramana Maharshi, 1879-1950, Hindu philosopher and saint from Tamil Nadu, India.


Pfeiffer, G. (1999) From affirmations of interculturality in theatre to a transcultural form of theatre. International Cultural Studies


New York, NY, Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press.


Shiva_Family_Colombo (2006). All That I Ask you...A heart to Love...A heart to Give...A heart to Serve... Colombo, Sri Lanka, UNIE Arts (PVT) Ltd.


Natya Sastra and National Unity is the outcome of lectures delivered at the Sri Ramavarma Govt. Sanskrit College.


Vicente, M., B. Chasse, et al. (2005). What the bleep do we know!? St. Kilda, Vic. [Sydney?], Hopscotch Entertainment ; Roadshow Entertainment [distributor].


