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Gesture in the Fine Arts

Dr. R. Chanana

This universe is painted by the Greatest Artist Almighty-the creator of the universe. This Universe is imitated by different mediums-literature & fine arts. In imaginative painting the gesture is imparted to portraits or figure-skilled, as our knowledge of what we see in people but when we try to express this visual knowledge in words, we fumble and remain unsuccessful in communicating it exactly. This visual knowledge of human nature is best expressed in imaginative painting, and such expression is the gesture in portrait-painting.

Knowledge is like 'Sinking Star'. Every language abounds in style and expression of a particular culture. Language is "intuitive science of experience". (Sapir) Every language has its own psyche. The art of intuition and innate art of expression are synthesized in a way to evolve aesthetic factors which constitutes the psyche of language. Language, we all know is made of words and it is equally well known that gesture is made of motion. The motion may be of hands, of the lips, of the eyes of the facial muscles, or even of the body as a whole. Gestures, made of such motions are highly expressive and often convey much more than mere words can. They stress what words convey, charge them with emotions of the speaker and in semi articulate rustics, they are an important means of communication. They are an important means of communication. Thus the language of gesture is as important, perhaps, much more, than the language of words. When the language of words fail, we use the language of gestures. The language of words is most successful and most expressive when it turns into gesture. Language of words becomes gesture when it conveys emotions and passions which are usually not conveyed by the words used. Such emotional and passionate gestures are more expressive, more meaningful and more powerful than the ordinary language in which words have not acquired the emotional force and vigour of gestures. We all are aware of the sign language which is practiced for the physically challenged persons. Gesture is almost inherent in language. Blackmur writes. "Gesture, in language, is the outward and dramatic play of inward and imagined meaning".

Not only is gesture inherent in language and necessary to impart to it emotional force and vigour it is also inherent in architecture, in sculpture, in painting and in dancing and music. It is of as great an importance structurally in these fine arts, as it is in poetry. The present paper aims to explain the point in detail with reference to the fine arts.

This universe is painted by the Greatest Artist Almighty-the creator of the universe. This Universe is imitated by different mediums-literature & fine arts. In imaginative painting the gesture is imparted to portraits of figure painting by the skilful use of texture and light. No knowledge is so great or so skilled, as our knowledge of what we see in people but when we try to express this visual knowledge in words, we fumble and remain unsuccessful in communicating it exactly. This visual knowledge of human nature is best expressed in imaginative painting, and such expression is the gesture in portrait-painting. An imaginative painter catches such gestures, such meaningful moments, while they are lacking in portraits not so imaginative. Many an excellent portrait, perfect in its fidelity to truth, are caught or imagined by the inspired artist, and it is such gestures that startle the portrait into the maximum of life. Such meaningful gestures impart not only life and vitality to the portrait, but also universality. That is why in great portraits we see ourselves. They have a gesture which conveys one or the other of the universally felt emotions. Paintings of suffering humanity, horror images smiling flowers, running streams, lively forests, buring trees and the stum of the tree, the painting of Monalisa throb with life and spirit lurks in them.

In sculpture the artist carves out human or animal shapes out of stone of wood of some other physical mass, and in this way arrests human or animal movements. But in a good

piece of sculpture, the essential human or animal shapes, though arrested, move within themselves, whether the movement is from outward to inward, or from inward to outward, and in this way they make a timeless gesture. There is an essential difference between gesture and act. In a bad sculpture, there is always a sense of action. We feel that the horse is about to leap or the athlete wants to leap. There is always a sense that some movement or the other has been arrested, and that it wants to go on and complete itself in action. A good sculpture does not create any such sense of some movement arrested, in the moving stillness, there is a gesture completed at the moment of its greatest significance. In this way it creates the effect of fulfillment and perfection. For example caves of Ajanta and Elora, marble rocks of Jabalpur, Temples of Khajuraho. The tourist is spurred mentally and wishes to reach Khajuraho. While observing the stone statue they are spell bound and feel some spiritual satisfaction. Erotic sculpture invites him his soul. The gesture illuminates and enlivens the medium of the artist, be it heavy or light. It is gesture which makes a stone figure a sphinx, and it is gesture again which makes the great sphinx a smile. It is gesture which gives the impression of meaningful movement in repose, of great momentum in great repose. Man has always brooded upon himself and upon the world round him, and good sculpture is the result of such brooding. It is this brooding which imparts meaningful gestures to stone figures. The gesture results from the momentum and the repose of man's brooding upon himself.

The finest example of gesture in architecture is a church-spire. A good church-spire gives a sense of life and movement. So is the architecture of the temple and mosque. It is like an arrow aimed at the Almighty. In it the form has become identical with the subject, and so is expressive of the religious aspirations of which the church or temple or mosque is a symbol. It creates a sense of movement as a tree or a shrub gives the sense of a process of growth, or as a beautiful room gives the effect of extending space rather than enclosing it. This very gesture is there when we feel. That pillars are mighty. That a bridge spans or leaps, and that a dome covers us. "This sense of movement is 'actually' inert mass and empty space is what we all gesture in architecture. 'Lotus temple of Delhi. Iskon of Banglore, Bombay, Delhi & European Countries white house in America, many bridges multistoried buildings five and seven Star Hotels in all the great capitals of India gate, Rashtrapati Bhawan, Rock Gardens of Chandigarh and many memberable buildings speak for themselves.

In dancing gesture is of supreme importance, for when the gesture breaks down or does not communicate, the dance does not speak at all. Gesture must be built and infused into the movements of the dancer, otherwise they remain merely meaningless movements. Gesture makes dancing buoyant, and makes it possible for it to come to a middle or end to a dance. Gesture is the means through which the movements of the dance complete themselves. The movements of the dance become gestures with the help of either ritual, as in the Mass (a Christian ceremony) or music, as in the ballet. In ritual gesture is important. It is gesture which transforms mere movements into ritual. Gesture is the stable and moving element in ritual, it is born out of native feelings, and it controls and stresses the meaning of the ritual. To quote Blackmur, "Dancing delivers gestures otherwise conceived. It is the natural, wayward play of the body, controlled." Mirabai will go dancing in love of lord Krishna and she is accepted as a symbol of bhakti for all Indians thus religion and philosophy cannot be separated from life in the Indian context. It is a cultural cohesion and identify. In Bharat Natyam, the performer expresses the whole story, through his 'bhav-bhangima' The 'Tandav Nritya' or Natraj represents the whole scheme of destruction of this universe. In Kathak-Nritya, the dancer represents Radha and Krishna through the movements at the same time on the stage and the audience feel and enjoy the spirit of Prakati and Purush. Here lies the significance of gesture in dancing.

Acting is the purposive, control of the body's movements which produces meaningful gestures. Such control is necessary for transforming the movements of dancer, in

into gesture, and such control is equally important in acting. It is the reduction, condensation, and telescoping of free movements that transforms them into gesture both in dancing and acting. Historically considered play-acting grew out of dumb-show which is essentially mimicry or mummery. Mummery is an extraordinarily resourceful and complex art, using the full personality of the actor, and it receives life and vitality through his gestures. It is by his gesture that a good actor enlivens even a badly written play. It is because of the power of gestures of a good actor that even a play, written in a language we do not know, moves us and hold us spellbound. The author himself once enjoyed such a play, and was enthralled by the supreme control of the actor over his movements. His gestures rose from beauty to more lucid beauty, and the gestures impressed and moved the author. Though he could not at all understand the spoken word. It was a delightful experience, even though he was not familiar with the language. The experience clearly brings out the importance of gesture in acting. "Great acting bodies forth the gestures of great words; no more." Vasu's very first appearance in R.K.Narayan's *Man Eater of Malgudi*, marks him out from the rest. His movements-quick, energetic violent as they are-appear to be in tune with his gigantic appearance-a tanned face, large powerful eyes under thick eyebrows, a large forehead and a shock of unkempt hair, like a black halo." I would be worth quoting the action performed by Shakuntla suffering from high-love-fever on the flower bed fanned by her friends Priyamvada and Ansuva.

Music is a much purer art than acting. It is purer because it works entirely through the medium of sound, and is entirely independent of all other mediums. All its movement is the movement of sound. It proceeds exclusively according to its own purpose, without any other considerations as is the case with the other arts. That is why Roger Sessions wrote in his work *The Intent of the artist that music*. "Creates gestures of the human spirit". Successful music is the result of most severe discipline. Through this severe discipline the musician secures the freedom of repetition, of development, of variation within, upon or around a theme to an extent which in any other major art would be not only ineffectual but boring, the freedom, in short, to play with the elements of musical meaning until they become gesture. In music the soul of the artist is expressed through gestures of sound, controlled and manipulated by the severe discipline to which the musician has subjected himself. That is why Pater said that all the arts tend to the condition of music, and this conditions is gesture, music is the means for the expression of the gesture of the soul. Music also has a technique, a form and a theme or substance, but for a good musician the technique is everything, and he takes joy in it irrespective of the theme. The technique the whole object of his attention, for it is the means through which the gesture of the soul finds a befitting expression. In moments of highest success and achievement, the form and the substance become one, both in the process of expression and at the end. Both form and substance are united as gesture in moments of inspiration. That is why we are happy when we sing, and sing when we are sad. Music is the expression of the total personality and not of a part of it as is the case with the other arts. It is gesture expressive of the heart and mind of the musician. Music changes the atmosphere, Even the instruments play a great role in changing the moods, Now a day's music is practiced as a remedy for the patients. Dr. should have some knowledge of music so that they may treat the patients in a better way.

Such is the significance of gesture in the six fine arts, of which poetry is the natural child. Poetry shows the influence of the other arts, but it also crates a fiery gesture all its own. Poetry is the gesture of poetic judgment, the judgment of all the gestures, which make up our full being. Poetry is the meaning of all meaning or at least the prophecy of it. There is a fury in poetic words which we understand, though we may not understand the words themselves. This fury is always there in a poem worth the name of poetry and it arises from a poetic gesture which carries the prophetic meaning of poetry, and poetic gesture which carries the prophetic meaning of poetry, and poetic judgment. Through rhythm, cadence and interval, all

the gesture of the spoken word, the look and feel of the man while speaking, can be well expressed. “physical gesture with face and hands and vocal gesture in shifting inflections”. The whole technique of imaginative writing is concerned with the making of words play upon each other, both in small and large groups. Words acquire gesture and become more expressive only when they are delivered within a form and these forms or patterns are as man as there are gestures. Repetition of words or groups of words is one of the simplest devices by which words acquire the force and effectiveness of gestures. Take for example macbeth’s, “tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow”, or Lear’s, Never never never never never”, The words become an obsessive gesture, made out of a single repeated word intensified into a half throttled cry on the heart of the speaker. The words thus acquire a fury which they do not possess in themselves. The titles of great works of art, and also of immortal figures of literature, are transformed into symbols. Thus hamlet has become symbolic of a man trying to resolve his doubts in great spiritual agony, Macbeth, Don Quixote, Dante, Plato, Michelangelo etc are all equally symbolic, in the opinion of blackmur, “A symbol, I take it is what we use to express meaning fullness in a permanent way which cannot be expressed in direct words or formulas of words with any completeness, a symbol is a cumulus of meaning which once established, attracts further meaning to it until, overloaded, it collapses”, Gestures are the first step towards the making of symbols and those symbols which endure are the residuary legates of the meanings earned through gesture. In punning there is an effect to make one word act like another, or several. Rhyme, which is the terminal form of punning, and alliteration,, which is the initial form of punning, are the commonest uses of this form of word-play. Every successful fun is a gesture, the only direct means for the expression of the undifferentiated sense of the poet. It is through pun that the poet joins together the perception of the different senses, heightening them into a single sensation. It produces an undifferentiated gesture of meaning. In other words, “the play upon words is both the most immediate and most final congeries of signs, it is the very gesture which identified the elements of sound with the elements of meaning”. Words transformed into gestures convey what ordinary words fail to convey. Transformed into gestures they marry a load of meaning, a fury which is felt even through the meaning be not understood. Obliteration plays a great role in literature and life. It is the stress and urgency of plot which determine what gestures are wanted and when they are to be put into operation. Plot does this on a larger scale, meter and refrain also do it, but on a smaller scale. Coleridge defined meter as, “the motion of meaning”, but it would be also true to say that, “motion is the meter of meaning”. Meter as motion brings meaning to gesture, and motion as meter ties gesture to meaning. Refrain also serves to impose order on the perceptions of the poet. It is a means of emphatic ordering. But is also does much more that. It modifies meaning by giving to gesture a conventional form. Refrain gives a particular form to gesture particular form to gesture that might otherwise be formless. All these devices stir up us deeply and we feel it as if it were a gesture, thee gesture of our uncreated selves.

Thus gerture plays a great role in convincing the unsaid story. Gesture issues forth from human psyche that never requires any language of its own. It require only a genuine understanding, when lips are broken, sweet tunes are remembered not. In the end of this paper I would like to state that all kinds of animals, birds and creatues of this universe express themselves through gesture which is a universal phenomena.

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