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Single hand gestures in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*: A comparative study

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Abstract:

Indian classical Dances contain different elements through which a Dance form can be presented gracefully. The gestures and postures of Indian classical dances are very particular as in every classical dance form; the views of ancient scriptures on Dance seem to be followed. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is regarded as the most authentic work on Dance and Drama. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* as well as the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* also seem to follow the path of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as both of these works talk about different elements of Indian classical Dances. But in some context, different point of views of these two works also can be noticed as both have their own perspectives and practices. *Asaṃyuktahastas* i.e. single hand gestures are the most integral element of Indian classical Dances, through which the dancers can project a concept in front of the audience with the help of hand gestures. So, in this present paper an attempt has been made to highlight a comparative study between the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* regarding the context of *Asaṃyuktahastas* i.e. single hand gestures.

Keyword: Dance, single hand gesture, *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*

Introduction

Dance is a variety of performing art which is exercised in a graceful way through bodily movements, gestures, expressions, sentiments, rhythm and songs. It is the beautiful way to express the inner feelings of a person. It is also a mode to conceptualise any idea before the viewers. It can be termed as a mediator between an artist and the spectator. It is important to note here that, in this mode of expression, the gestures and postures are the only way to convey the meaning. So, the exact and flawless projection of each gestures and postures in Dance is very important. The hand gestures and postures possess great important in this context. In Dance, the hands are used as the communicative medium to convey the story. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, Nandīkesvara states that the hands are used to express the meaning^[1]. Moreover, it expresses the imagination and the creative power of the performer. So, it can be said that the proper execution of hand gestures and hand postures are very important in any kind of Dance form.

The discussion about different kind of hand gestures and postures are found in different ancient treatises viz., the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the *Śrīhastamuktāvalī* etc. Moreover, the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* is also seen to have a detail discussion in this context. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, the hastamudrās i.e. hand gestures are divided into three groups. These are: *asaṃyuktahasta*, *saṃyuktahasta* and *nṛttahasta*. In this context the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* seems to follow the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as the *Nāṭyaśāstra* also admits these three varieties of hand gestures^[2]. But the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* mainly accepts two groups of hand gestures viz. *asaṃyuktahasta* and *saṃyuktahasta*^[3]. The reference of the variety called *nṛttahasta* is not found in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. Not only in the context of groups of hand gestures but also in the perspective of numbers of hand gestures, their formations, implementations etc.

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¹ hastenārthan pradarśayet/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 36

² *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9. 4-10

³ *asaṃyuktāḥ saṃyuktāśca hastadvedhā nirūpitā/ Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 88

the view points of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* shows a number of differences from the narration and guideline found in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*. On the other hand, in some context, these two works are seen to keep their views in a similar manner. So, a comparative study between these two works regarding the context of single hand gestures shows its demand. Thus the concept of present paper has been conceived. The aim of this paper is to analyse the materials available in both these sources and then to bring out a comparative note as the topic of discussion.

A comparative study between the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* regarding the single hand gestures and postures:

The term *Asaṃyukta* denotes that which is not connected [4]. *Asaṃyuktahastas* are the dancing postures made only by single hand. So, it may be called single hand gestures. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, twenty two kinds of *asaṃyuktahastas* are mentioned. These are- *patāka*, *tripatāka*, *kartarīmukha*, *ardhacandra*, *arāla*, *śukatunḍa*, *muṣṭi*, *śikhara*, *kapittha*, *khaṭakāmukha*, *sūcīmukha*, *padmakōśa*, *ahiśīrṣa*, *mṛgaśīrṣa*, *kāṅgūla*, *kola-padma*, *catura*, *bhramara*, *hamsavaktra*, *hamsapakṣa*, *sandamśa* and *mukula* [5]. But in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* twenty eight kinds of hand gestures are accepted [6]. The *hastamudrās viz. ardhapatāka*, *mayūra*, *candrakālā*, *simhamukha*, *tāmracūḍa* and *triśula* are absent in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* where as the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* accepts these varieties. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* accepts twenty four kinds of single hand gestures [7]. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, these twenty two types of single hand gestures and their applications in Dance are elaborately explained. The study of these will give a clear picture on the present idea.

i) **Patāka:** The word *patāka* denotes *dhvajam* in Sanskrit which means flag or banner [8]. But in the *Śabdakalpadruma*, the term *patākā* is found, which denotes the similar meaning with *patāka* i.e. *dhvajam* [9]. According to Abhinavagupta this hand posture looks like a flag and that is why it is named as *patāka* [10]. In *patākahasta*, all the fingers are straightened and the thumb is bent [11]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, to show the blowing of wind and raining, the *patākahasta* is used in Dance [12]. Moreover, the dancer uses the *patākahasta* to show the acting to take and obstruct *prahāra* i.e. stike or beat [13] in a Dance performance [14]. So, it can be assumed that this posture denotes an obstruction in a dance performance. But the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* does not suggest to use the *patākahasta* in obstruction. Instead of it, the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* says that the *patākahasta* is used to denote the beginning of a drama [15]. Moreover, this hand

posture is used to symbolise some natural phenomenon like cloud, forest, bosom, river, wind etc [16].

- ii) **Tripatāka:** The word *tripatāka* itself identifies the importance of the number three. This hand posture is known as *tripatāka* because in this posture, three fingers should be straightened in a *patākahasta* where the ring finger is bent [17]. Abhinavagupta also keeps his view point in the same way [18]. This posture is used to denote some activities like calling a person, putting crown on head, showing small birds, wiping off tears, giving auspicious touch by putting on head, covering ears, lying on ground, movements of serpent and bees etc. [19] Instead of it, the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* suggests that- the *tripatāka* hand is used to denote some objects like crown, tree, the *ketakī* flower, lamp etc. [20] Indra along with his weapon i.e. *vajra* is also established with this hand posture in Dance. This hand posture shows the action of writing letters [21].
- iii) **Kartarīmukha:** The word *kartarī* means scissor [22] and along with the word *mukha*, it means mouth of the scissor. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* suggests that in the *kartarīmukhahasta*, the hand should be in *tripatākahasta* posture and the fore-finger is kept in the back of the middle finger. In this posture, the fore-finger should not touch the middle finger [23]. When the fore-finger is kept in the back of the middle finger and when it does not touch the middle finger, it looks like the mouth of a scissor. But the view point of the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* is totally different from the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* in this regard. According to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, only two fingers i.e. fore-finger and the ring finger should be spread and straightened in *kartarīmukhahasta* [24] and rest of the fingers should be bent. So, it can be said that, according to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the middle finger is bent in *kartarīmukhahasta* where as in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, it is completely straightened. Some activities like travelling, cutting and falling are executed with this hand gesture [25].
- iv) **Ardhacandra:** The derivation of the word *ardhacandra* is found in the *Śabdakalpadruma* as- *ardham candrasya*, *candrakhaṇḍam* [26] which means half of moon. *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* suggests that in *ardhacandrahasta*, the ring finger touches the thumb [27]. From the name it appears that the form of the hand

[16] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 95-100

[17] *asyaikānāmikā vakrā tripatākā tathā bhavet/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.17

[18] *anāmikā vakrā kaṇīyasītarjanīmadyamānām tishṇām patākavadvasthānāt tripatākāh tritvasyābhineyādvā/ Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed.), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.346

[19] *āvāhane prayuñjīta mukuṭābhīnaye'pyuta/ laghupakṣinirūpaṇe/ tayānāsikayā kāryam tathāivāśrupramārjanam / maṅgalasparśanam kāryam śirasasā niveśanam/*

śrotasamvaranam caiva kāryam bhūmimukhena tu/ bhujāṅgānāmbhinayam bhramarānām tathāiva ca/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.18-20

[20] *tripatākāh... makuṭe vṛkṣabhāveṣu...ketakikusume dīpe.../ Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 101

[21] *tripatākāh vajre taddharavāsave/ patralekhāyām...Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 101-102

[22] V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.136

[23] *tripatākā yadā haste bhavetprṣṭhāvalokinī/ tarjanī tu tadā jñeyah kartarīmukhasamjñakāh/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.21

[24] *hastasya tarjanī ca kaṇīṣṭhikā/bahih prasārite dve ca sa karah kartarīmukhaḥ/ Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 105

[25] *kāryo'yam parivahaneṣu bhinnasā pataneṣu ca/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.22

[26] *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.106

[27] *anāmikā tu sāṅgusthā ardhacandre kare bhavet/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.22

[4] *asaṃyutā natvete saṃyutā eva/ Abhinavabhāratī* commentary, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), p.363

[5] *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.1-3

[6] *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 81-92

[7] *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9.4-7

[8] M. Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, p. 848

[9] *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.22

[10] *patākākāratvātpatākāh/ ataeva patākāpyanenaivābhineyā/ Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.343

[11] *prasāritāgrā sahītā yasyāṅgulyo bhavanti hi/*

kuñcītasā tathāṅgusthāh sa patāka iti smṛtaḥ/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.14

[12] *patāka...vāyuvṛṣṭinirūpaṇe/ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.15

[13] V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.373

[14] *patāka... eṣa prahāragrahaṇe rodhane.../ Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.15

[15] *patākakarāh... nāṭyārambhe/ Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 94

should look like a part of the moon. But according to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, if the bent thumb of *patāka* hand is stretched out, it is called *ardhacandrahastā* [28]. The point to be noted here is that, *patāka* hand with strengthened thumb looks like a half moon which justifies the *hastamudrā* called *ardhacandra*. But *ardhacandra* hand as narrated in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* does not identify the hand posture which denotes half moon. In spite of it the posture of *ardhacandrahastā*, as stated in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* is similar with the *mayurahastā* as found in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* [29]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* the *ardhacandrahastā* is used to show growing moon [30]. Moreover, it also identifies a child, the waist part of a person etc. The acting of putting ear-rings is also showed with this *hastamudrā* [31].

v) **Arāla:** The word *arāla* means which is bent or crooked [32]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, the fore-finger is slightly bent like a bow. The thumb is bent in this hand posture and the remaining fingers are strengthened and slightly curved [33]. This posture shows some concepts like deepness, entity, heroism etc. With the help of this posture, the dancer can do the acting of assembling hair and wiping of sweat [34]. But, in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the *arāla* posture is said to be used in the acting of drinking poison, nectar etc. Moreover, to show the heavy storm, this posture is suggested to be used in Dance [35].

vi) **Śukatunḍa:** The word *śukatunḍa* is the amalgamation of two words viz., *śuka* and *tunḍa*. *Śuka* means parrot [36] and *tunḍa* means mouth [37]. So, the word *śukatunḍa* denotes the mouth or a beak of a parrot. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, it is stated that the ring finger is bent in the position of *arālahastā* to make the *śukatunḍahastā* [38]. When the fore-finger and the ring finger are curved in *arālahastā*, the two bending fingers make a shape of a curve which looks like the beak of a parrot. Thus it justifies the name of this hand posture. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, with this posture, one can deliver the speech as “I am not you” [39]. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* also gives its viewpoint in the same spirit [40]. But in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this hand posture is said to be used in shooting of an arrow or a spear. Moreover, it is used to do the acting of recollecting home or the violent mood [41].

²⁸ ardhacandrakaraḥ so'yam patāke'nguṣṭhāprasāraṇāt/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 111.

²⁹ asminanāmikānguṣṭhau śliṣṭau cānyāḥ prasāritāḥ/mayūrahastāḥ kathitāḥ...// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 108.

³⁰ ardhacandre kare...bālacandrābhinayane/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.23

³¹ ardhacandre kare...bālasayātaravastathā/ mekhalāṁ jaghanam caiva

kuryāccānena kuṇḍalāṁ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.23

³² *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.84

³³ khaṇḍapradeśinī kāryā aṅgulyā kuñcitāstathā/ śeṣā bhinnordhvalitā mrarāleṅgulyāḥ kare// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.24

³⁴ gāmbhīryasatvaśaunḍīryakeśasamgrahaṇādiṣu/ svedasya cāpanayane śeṣe caṣa karo bhavet// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.25

³⁵arālakāḥ/ viśādyamītapāneṣu pracāṇḍapavane'pi ca// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 114

³⁶ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.558

³⁷ tunḍam mukham/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.632

³⁸ arālah śukatunḍaśca vakritānāmikānguḷiḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.26

³⁹ nāhantvāmityathaitena nityam cābhinayed budhaḥ//

Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.26

⁴⁰ nāham na tvaṁ n kṛtyamīti cārthe/ *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9.53

⁴¹ bānaprayoge kumārthe vā''layasya smṛitīkrame/

ugrahāveṣu śukatunḍo niyujyate// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 115-116

vii) **Muṣṭi:** The word *muṣṭi* denotes the clenched hand [42]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, in *muṣṭi* posture, the fingers bent towards the palm and the thumb is set on them [43]. This hand posture is used in activities like striking, practicing exercise, hardly pressing the breast, holding sword, stick and spear etc. [44]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* also, the *muṣṭi* posture is said to be used in holding things. To do the fight with hand this posture is adopted [45]. In the *Śabdakalpadruma* also, we find the meaning of the word *muṣṭi* as a technique of *prahāra* [46].

viii) **Śikhara:** The word *śikhara* means the peak of a mountain [47]. This posture with this name tries to resemble the peak of a mountain. In *śikharahastā*, the thumb is lifted in the position of a fist [48]. This posture is used to hold rein, goad and bow [49]. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, apart from holding rein, goad and bow, this posture is used to represent the acting of painting of the lips and feet. Moreover, to show the raising up of hairs, this posture is adopted in performance [50]. But according to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture is used for offering oblations, questioning, saying 'no', recollection, pulling at the girdle, the act of embrace and sounding a bell [51].

ix) **Kapittha:** In the *Śabdakalpadruma*, the word *kapittha* is explained as a kind of tree where *kapi* i.e. monkeys stay due to the greed of fruit [52]. Moreover, the word *kapittha* denotes the fruit viz., wood apple [53]. According to Abhinavagupta, as the posture brings the shape of a wood apple, it is named as *kapittha* [54]. In *kapitthahastā*, the thumb is inside the fist [55]. The *Abhinayadarpaṇa* defines this posture as when the fore-finger is bent over the top of the thumb in the *śikharahastā*, the posture is called *kapitthahastā* [56]. This posture is used to hold a disc or an arrow [57].

x) **Khaṭakāmukha:** The word *khaṭakāmukha* is an amalgamation of two words *khaṭaka* and *mukha*. The word *khaṭaka* denotes a half closed hand [58] and *mukha* means mouth [59]. The term *mukha* also denotes beginning as it is used in the usage of *mukhasandhi*. According to

⁴² V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.443

⁴³ aṅgulyo yasya hastasya talamadhye'grasamsthitāḥ/ tāsāmaparitānguṣṭhāḥ sa muṣṭiriti samjñitāḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.27

⁴⁴ eṣa prahāre vyāyāme nirdayastanapīḍane / sandhāraṇe'siyastyośca grahaṇe kuntadaṇḍayoḥ// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.28

⁴⁵ vastvādīnām ca dhāraṇe/ mallānām yudhabhāve'pi muṣṭihasto'yamiṣyate// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 117.

⁴⁶ muṣṭi prahāravīṣeṣaḥ/ p.753

⁴⁷ śikhara, parvatāgrām, śṛṅgam/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.71

⁴⁸ urdhvānguṣṭho'yameva syātkaṛaḥ śikharasamjñitāḥ/

Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.29

⁴⁹ eṣa raśmigrāhe kāryāścāpāṅkuśadhanurgrāhe// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.29

⁵⁰ adharoṣṭapādarañjanamalakasyotkṣepaṇam caiva/ *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9.57

⁵¹ śikharāḥ karaḥ...pitṛkarmanī praśnabhāvane/ nāstīti vacane/

ghaṇṭānīnāde śikharo yujyate./ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 119-120

⁵² kapitthāḥ kapiḥ tiṣṭhati phalapriyatvāt lobhāt vā yatra/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.23

⁵³ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.132

⁵⁴ kapitthākāre'smin aṅguṣṭhatarjanyāvaṅgulī/ *Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuni, Vol 1, p.352

⁵⁵ muṣṭimadhyagatoṅguṣṭhāḥ kapittha iti kīrtitāḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.30

⁵⁶ aṅguṣṭhamūrdhniśikhare vakritā yadi tarjanī / kapitthākhyāḥ karaḥ...// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 121

⁵⁷ anenābhinayāḥ kāryo madhye cakre śare tathā/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.30

⁵⁸ khaṭakāḥ kuñcitapāṇiḥ/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.271

⁵⁹ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 441

the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* in *khaṭakāmukhahasta*, the thumb is inside the fist and the ring finger and the small finger are lifted and bent ^[60]. This posture is used to denote sacrifice, holding of an umbrella or a garland or rope, dragging and fanning ^[61]. Apart from holding a garland and necklace, the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* also suggests the use of this posture to show the activities like picking flowers, offering betel leaves, preparing paste, applying perfumes etc. ^[62]

xi) *Sūcīmukha*: The word *sūcī* means a tool which is used for stitching ^[63]. It is nothing but the needle. In *sūcīmukha* posture, the fore-finger is extended in *khaṭakāmukha mudra* ^[64]. When the fore-finger is extended and placed in the present posture, it looks like pointing to something with the fore-finger. Needle is also pointed. Thus to comes the origin of the name. The natural phenomenon like day and night are denoted with this hand posture. It is also used to denote the eyes of Śakra and Maheśa ^[65]. Śakra denotes Indra ^[66] and Maheśa denotes lord Śiva ^[67]. But in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the numbers like one and hundred are shown with this posture. *Paramabrahma* i.e. the Supreme Spirit is also indicated with this hand posture. Moreover, this hand posture also indicates the sun and the world ^[68]. The Point to be noted here is that- the thing or concept, which are indicated with this hand posture are generally distinct and unique in this world.

xii) *Padmakośa*: The word *padmakośa* means the calyx of a lotus ^[69]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, the top of all fingers are brought together in *padmakośahasta* and it looks like the nails of a swan ^[70]. In this regard the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* does not justify the accurate meaning of the word *padmakośa* which denotes the internal portion of a lotus not the nails of a swan. The uses of this posture are not mentioned in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. But according to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture denotes some round shaped objects like breast of woman, ball, round cooking pot, egg and bell and the like. Moreover, this posture is used to show the blooming buds of flowers like marigold, lotus etc. Some kind of fruits like mango and wood apple are also portrayed with this hand posture ^[71].

xiii) *Uraḡaśīrṣa*: The name of this posture itself identifies that the hand posture should look like the head of *uraga* i.e. a serpent ^[72]. In this posture the thumb should be clinching and the middle part should be hollow ^[73]. According to

Abhinavagupta, this posture looks like the head of a snake and that is why this posture is named as *uragaśīrṣa* ^[74]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* as well as the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* this posture is used to show some activities like offering of water, giving information, sprinkling, nourishing and wrestling. Moreover, to establish the picture of a snake, this hand posture is used in Dance ^[75].

xiv) *Mṛḡaśīrṣa*: The word *mṛḡaśīrṣa* is the union of two words viz., *mṛḡa* and *śīrṣa*. The word *mṛḡa* means deer ^[76] and *śīrṣa* means head ^[77]. So, it can be said that the hand posture called *mṛḡaśīrṣa* identifies a posture which looks like the head of a deer. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, in *mṛḡaśīrṣahasta*, all the fingers are bent downwards and only the small finger goes upward ^[78]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the thumb is also suggested to be upward along with the little finger in *sarpaśīrṣahasta* to make the *mṛḡaśīrṣahasta*. At this position the hand looks like a head of a deer with two horns. Abhinavagupta also keeps his view point in the same way and accepts *mṛḡaśīrṣahasta* as a hand gesture which identifies the head of a deer with two horns ^[79]. This posture is used to denote piercing, cutting, and moving upward of the *śakti* weapon ^[80]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture is used to denote various things. This book states that- this posture is used to show woman, cheek, wheel, limit, terror, quarrel, attire, calling someone or the beloved, lute, feet massage, female organ, holding umbrella etc. ^[81]

xv) *Kāṅgūla*: In *kāṅgūlahasta*, the middle finger is set between the fore-finger and thumb while the ring finger is bent and the little finger is quite upward ^[82]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* this posture is used to denote fruits ^[83]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture is said to indicate things like fruits, bell, birds like *cakora* and *cātaka*, coconut etc. ^[84]

xvi) *Kolapadma*: In *kolapadmahasta*, beginning from the little finger other fingers are separately spread ^[85]. This hand posture is termed as *alapadmahasta* in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* ^[86]. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra* also it is known as *alapadma* ^[87]. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, it is said that to say no, to denote void and non existence this

⁶⁰ utkṣiptavakrā tu yadānāmikā sakanīyāsī/ asyaiva tu kapitthasya tataḥ

syātkhaṭakāmukhaḥ// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.31

⁶¹ hotre chatragraha caiva karṣaṇe vyajane tathā/stragḍāmādhārane

kāryohyasaṅkocosaṅgrahaḥ// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.32

⁶² kusumāvacaye muktāstragḍāmnām dhārane tathā/śaramadhāyākarṣaṇe ca

nāgallīpradānake/kasturikāivastūnām peṣaṇe gandhavāne//

Abhinayadarpaṇa, 125-126

⁶³ sūcī śivanadravyam/, p.361

⁶⁴ prasrītā tarjanī cātra yadā sūcīmukhastadā / *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*,

3.26.33

⁶⁵ nisṭpādane cābhinayennetraśakramaheśayoh/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*,

3.26.33

⁶⁶ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.544

⁶⁷ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.680

⁶⁸ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 128-131

⁶⁹ padmasyeva kośo'bhyantaram vinatam yasyeti tathā/ *Abhinavabhāratī*,

Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.356

⁷⁰ asyāṅgulyastu vipulāḥ sahāṅguṣṭhena kuñcitāḥ/ urdhvāhamāsanakhasyaiva

sa bhavetpadmakośakah/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.34

⁷¹ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 135-136

⁷² *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.231

⁷³ śliṣṭoṅguṣṭho nimnamadhyah patākohiśiro bhavet/

Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.35.

⁷⁴ nimnām talaṁ madhyasyābhimukhasya, sarpaśīrastulyatvāt vāsyedaṁ nāma/ *Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.356

⁷⁵ salilasya pradāne tu kāryā tena ca sūcanam/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*,

3.26.35

candane bhujage mandre prokṣaṇe poṣaṇādiṣu/ devasyodakadāneṣu āsphāle

gajakumbhayoh/ bhujasthāne mallānām tu yujyate sarpaśīrṣakah/

Abhinayadarpaṇa, 138-139

⁷⁶ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.445

⁷⁷ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.557

⁷⁸ kaniṣṭhāṅguṣṭhakā cordhvā tadā syānmṛḡaśīrṣakah/

Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, 3.26.36

⁷⁹ mṛḡaśīrṣakamāha mṛḡasyeva śīrasthe śrṅge yasya/ *Abhinavabhāratī*,

Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.357

⁸⁰ sūcite cchedite kāryam śaktyā svocālane tathā/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*,

3.26.37

⁸¹ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 140-141

⁸² tretāgnisamsthitā madhyā tarjanyaṅguṣṭhayoryadā/ kāṅgule nāmikā vakrā

cordhvā kanīyāsī/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.37-38

⁸³ anena khalu kartavyam phalānām tu nirūpaṇam/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*,

3.26.38

⁸⁴ lakucasya phale ghaṅṭikārthake / cakore cātaka nārikele ca kāṅgulo yujyate

karah/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 144-145

⁸⁵ āvartyante karatale yasyānulaḥ karasya vai/ pārśvāgatavikīrṇāśca

kolapadma iti smṛtaḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.39

⁸⁶ kaniṣṭhādya vakritāśca viralāścāpadmakah/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 146.

⁸⁷ *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9.6

hand posture is used. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, this posture is suggestive of indicating prevention, sense of the sentences like “of whom are you” and “It is not”. Moreover, in case of a women’s reference of herself, this hand gesture has been used^[88].

xvii) Catura: In *catura*, the middle finger remains vertical, the thumb should be kept in the middle and the rest of the fingers are stretched out^[89]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, some colours are pointed with this hand gesture. When the hand is raised in *catura* posture, it denotes white colour. When the hand moves circular and semi-circular motion in *caturahasta*, it denotes yellow and red colour respectively. In compacted form it shows blue colour. When the hand is kept in normal position with *caturahasta* it denotes black and the other remaining colours^[90]. Instead of showing colours, in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* this posture denotes some metals like gold, copper and iron. This posture also shows the application of some greasy substances like oil, ghee etc on the face^[91].

xviii) Bhramara: The name of the posture *bhramara* itself identifies the shape of a *bhramara* i.e. black bee^[92]. Abhinavagupta also admits it^[93]. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, in the *bhramarahasta*, the tip of the fore-finger and the thumb should be joined together. Then middle finger is curved and the rest of the fingers are separately raised^[94]. This posture is used to show the position of holding of a lotus. The acting of putting ear-rings is also done with this hand gesture^[95]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture is said to denote bee, parrot, wing, crane, cuckoo etc.^[96]

xix) Haṃsavaktra: The word *haṃsavaktra* is the union of two words viz. *haṃsa* and *vaktra*. *Haṃsa* means swan^[97] and *vaktra* means mouth^[98]. So, the word *haṃsavaktra* denotes the mouth or beak of a swan. It is worth mentioning that. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* the term *haṃsavaktra* is used where as in the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* the term *haṃsasya* is used to denote this hand gesture. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* in *haṃsavaktrahasta*, except the ring and little fingers, all the three fingers of the hand are placed together without any interspace. In this posture, the ring finger and the little finger are kept spread^[99]. But According to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the tip of the thumb and the fore-finger are placed together and rest fingers should be

spread in this hand posture^[100]. This posture is used to show some qualities like slimness, lightness, weakness and softness^[101].

xx) Haṃsapakṣa: The word *haṃsapakṣa* consists of two words viz. *haṃsa* and *pakṣa*. The word *haṃsa* is already explained in the context of *haṃsavaktrahasta*. It means swan. The word *pakṣa* means wings^[102]. So the word *haṃsapakṣa* denotes the wings of a swan. In the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, this hand posture is described as one where the little finger is lifted crookedly and the thumb is bent^[103]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, when the *haṃsapakṣahasta* is done, the hand is instructed to keep in *sarpaśīrṣamudrā*^[104]. The remaining instructions are same with the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* some activities like touching, anointing and shampooing are denoted through this *hastamudrā*. According to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, the number six is denoted by this posture. Some activities like building of a bridge, putting nail marks and covering something are also indicated through this hand posture^[105].

xxi) Sandamśa: The word *sandamśa* means *kaṅkamukhaḥ*^[106] i.e. a pair of tong^[107]. Tong is a kind of tool which is used to hold something. According to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, when the tip of the fore-finger and the thumb are pressed together like the mouth of a tong and the middle portion of the palm is curved in *arālahasta*, this posture is called *sandamśahasta*^[108]. This hand posture involves the closing and opening of fingers. It is of three kinds viz., *agraja*, *mukhaja* and *pārśvakṛta*^[109]. The *agraja sandamśahasta* is used for holding and extraction of thorns or splinters. The *mukhaja* is used to show the activity of plucking flowers. There are many uses of *pārśvakṛta* type of *sandamśahasta*. These are- colouring of picture, pressing of breast, showing of head etc.^[110] According to the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, *sandamśahasta* is used to show the action of the offering something to gods. The belly portion is also indicated with this hand posture. Besides, this posture is used to indicate something like injury, worm, terror, and number five^[111].

xxii) Mukula: The term *mukula* has been defined clearly in the *Śabdakalpadruma*. It is said that when the state of bud is discarded i.e. when the blooming starts, it refers

⁸⁸ pratīśedhakṛte yo jyaḥ kasya tvannāsti śūnyavacaneṣu/ punarātmapanyāśah strīnāmetena kartavyaḥ/ *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 9.91

⁸⁹ tisraḥ prasāritāṅgulyastathā cordhvā kanīyasī/ tasyā madhyāsritōṅguṣṭhaḥ karaḥ sa caturah smṛtaḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.40-41

⁹⁰ ūrdhvasthe ca nave śvetaṁ rakte syārdhamaṅḍalam/ maṅḍalam na bhavetpīṭam nīlam ca mṛditaṁ bhavet/ svabhāvasthena kṛtsnam ca śeṣā varṇāstathaiva ca// *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.42-43

⁹¹ kastūryāṁ kiñcidarthe ca svarṇe tāmre ca lohake/ ānane ghṛtatailādau yujyate caturah karaḥ/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 150-152

⁹² V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.414

⁹³ tadākṛtītvādbhramaro hastaḥ/ *Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuni, Vol 1, p.359

⁹⁴ madhyamāṅguṣṭhasandēso vakrā caiva pradeśinī/ ūrdhvamanyāḥ prakīrṇāśca bhramaraśca tadā bhavet/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.44

⁹⁵ padmādigrahaṇe kāryaṁ karnapūre tathāpyayaṁ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.45

⁹⁶ bhramare ca śuke pakṣe sāse kokilādiṣu/bhramarākhyāśca hasto'yaṁ....// *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 153

⁹⁷ haṃsaḥ...pakṣiśeṣaḥ/ hāsa iti bhāṣā/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.466

⁹⁸ vaktraṁ mukhaṁ/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, Part 3, p.242

⁹⁹ tarjanīmādhyaṅguṣṭhā tretāgnīṣṭhā nirantaraṁ bhaveturhamavaktrasya śeṣā hyanyaḥ prasāritāḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.45-46

¹⁰⁰ madhyamāyāstrayōṅgulyaḥ prasṛtā viralā yadi/ tarjanyaṅguṣṭhasamśleṣāḥ karo haṃsāsyako bhavet/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 154

¹⁰¹ ślakṣṇalāghavaniḥ sāmārdaveṣu prayojayet/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.46

¹⁰² pakṣiṇāmavayavaviṣeṣaḥ/ pākḥā iti bhāṣa, *Śabdakalpadruma*, Part 3, p.2

¹⁰³ tiryak piṅḍīkṛtā yasminunnatā ca kaniṣṭhikā/āṅguṣṭhaḥ kuñcīstastvevaṁ haṃsapakṣa iti smṛtaḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.47

¹⁰⁴ sarpaśīrṣakare samyak kaniṣṭhā prasṛtā yadi/ haṃsapakṣaḥ karaḥ so'yaṁ tannirūpaṇamucyate/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 157

¹⁰⁵ śatsamīkhyāyām setubandhe nakharekḥāṅkaṇe tathā/pidhāne haṃsapakṣo'yaṁ kathito bhāratāgame/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 158

¹⁰⁶ sandamśaḥ kaṅkamukhaḥ/ *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.236

¹⁰⁷ V.S Apte, *The student's Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p.127

¹⁰⁸ tarjanyaṅguṣṭhasamśastvarālasya yadā bhavet/ nirbhugnatalamadhyāśca sasandamśa iti smṛtaḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.49

¹⁰⁹ sandamśastrividho jñeyastvagrajo mukhajastathā/ tathā pārśvakṛtaścaiva tasya karmāṇi me śṛṇu/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.50

¹¹⁰ sandamśagrahaṇe kāryaḥ śalyoddhāre tathāgrajaḥ/ ālekhāraṅjane caiva tarjanīpīḍane tathā/ pārśvasthaḥ śīraḥ samdarśane tathā/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 26.41-42

¹¹¹ udare validhāne ca vṛṇe kṛte mahābhaye/ arcane pañcasamīkhyāyām sandamśākhyo niyujyate/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 160

to *mukula* ^[112]. Thus when the bud starts to bloom, it is termed as *mukula*. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* suggests that the tips of all fingers should be joined together to make this posture ^[113]. When the tips of all fingers are joined together, it makes a shape of a booming bud. Thus, it justifies the name of this posture. Abhinavagupta also gives his view in the same way ^[114]. This posture is formed to show the activities like worshipping of deities and offering oblations. Moreover, to show the lotus flower this hand posture is suggested in dance performance in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* ^[115]. In the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, this posture is suggested to be used to denote flowers like water lily and the flower of *kadalī* i.e. Banana ^[116]. The holding of five arrows by *kāmadeva* and signet or seal are also identified through this hand posture. The action of eating is also shown with this hand posture ^[117].

Conclusion

Thus it appears that single hand postures play a great role in performing arts. They not only suggest some objects, but also denote some specific actions in performance. Thus these postures can convey the message of the writer to the spectators through the performers. It is also important to note that the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* and the *Abhinayadarpaṇa* have given specific views about these forms and gestures used in performing arts. In most cases the two sources convey similar ideas although they bear differences in some points. The differences may be due to amalgamation of new ideas or adaptations from other sources. Even in modern time, most of these *asāṃyuktahastas* are used in classical dance forms to convey the traditional ideas.

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¹¹² mukulaḥ muñcati kalikātvam / īśad vikasitakalikā, *Śabdakalpadruma*, p.726

¹¹³ samāgatāgrāṅguliko muktalaḥ padmakośakaḥ/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.52

¹¹⁴ mukulākāratvānmukulalaḥ/ *Abhinavabhāratī*, Pushpendra Kumar (ed), *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatmuṇi, Vol 1, p.362

¹¹⁵ devārcākaraṇe kāryo balo padmanirūpaṇe/ *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, 3.26.53

¹¹⁶ M. Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, p.248

¹¹⁷ bhojane pañcabāṇe mudrādīdhāraṇe/ nābhau ca kadalīpuṣpe yujyate mukulaḥ karaḥ/ *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 162-163

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