

Imagination and Non-verbal Theatre

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The imaginative capacity of the audience depends on their intellectuality, emotional situation and the quality in a cultural experience. Accordingly, some theatre forms have focused on imagination and non-verbal based body movements. As long as the spectator is consciously watching the performance, his/her imaginative engagement too will remain intact and if not, consequently, the meaning of the play too will be lost for him/her. This is one of the significant aspects of a nonverbal theatre. This paper explores the philosophy of imagination of nonverbal theatre and how the emotional/intellectual engagement of the audience can be enhanced.

The nonverbal theatre, also called physical theatre, evolved in the West about twenty five years before and dates back to 2nd Century BCE in Greece and in India. Meaning of the play is derived from actors through their facial expressions, posture, gesture, touch, intensity, timing and space. When an actor moves in a play, his/her face conveys emotionalexpressions filled with different kinds of feelings according to the situation of a play. It communicates meanings. The touch makes sense of what actor feels for another actor according to the situation in a nonverbal play. The position of the body and sense of shape of the spine creates the character. Performance area makes the space for the play while tempo and rhythm of the movements constitute the time frame. These elements and the shape of the spine of the actor together make the nonverbal theatre distinct from other text-based theatre forms. The non-verbal theater concept is important as it heralds a new theater form for Sri Lanka. For instance, the recently performed nonverbal play directed by Jayampathi Guruge, titled *Walking Path* belongs to this genre. Yet, people are still unaware of the existence of this non-text based theatre form.

Methodology of the study was based on readings, the concept of nonverbal theatre and performances of Jayampathi Guruge's play, *Walking Path*. The discussion will show the significance of this particular theatre concept for the contemporary Sri Lankan audience.

Key words: *Imagination, Nonverbal Theatre, Spectator, Walking Path*