

MODES OF ADDRESS AND REFERENCE IN SANSKRIT DRAMA AND DRAMATURGY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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After Malinowski, (1923), Roman Jakobson (1960) and Dell Hymes (1960) it has been increasingly recognized that language is, apart from an abstract system of symbols, a communicative process also, based on what is described as 'communicative competence'. For generative linguists like Noam Chomsky, linguistic theory is essentially concerned with linguistic competence, which posits an ideal native speaker, in a completely homogenous linguistic community, totally oblivious about performance conditions like memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention, and interest and errors.¹To use a Saussurian term, generative linguists are more interested in *langue* than *parole*, and understandably so, as they have to focus attention on deep structures and the transformative rules which manifest them as language usage. But real life situations do not furnish laboratory conditions for a speaker, to use language homogeneously, without any reference to the addressee or context. Language use is attested to be extremely varying on the basis of several adventitious factors like the context and more importantly the social background of the addresser and the addressee. The language of an educated person of an urban background will be very much different from that of a person who has had no formal education and who lives in a remote village, even when they are supposed to use the same language. The language used by the same person in a classroom or advertisement or in an intimate

¹ S.K Verma et al, *Modern Linguistics-An Introduction*, p.319

conversation will be different so much so that any lack of judgment in the selection of the 'code' will result in extremely unpleasant or comic results. As pointed out by Dell Hymes, no normal person and no normal community is limited to a single variety of code to an unchanging monotony which precludes the possibility of indicating respect, insolence, humor, mock seriousness, distance etc, by switching from one code to another². It is necessary for us to supplement our understanding of language based on linguistic competence with communicative competence to understand the full dynamics of the language in its actual use. Lobov, in his *Socio-linguistic patterns*, has pointed out that linguistic and social structures are not co-extensive since most of the linguistic rules are far removed from any social value. They are a part of the machinery which a person has to translate his intentions into linear form. Socio-linguistic rules are very complex and comprehended by an intelligent speaker who has to use language with propriety in a given situation. It goes without saying that the modes of address and references in conversation and other interpersonal communication constitute an important aspect of communicative competence. The decision an individual makes to address another individual or to refer to an individual in a communication to another individual involves several considerations like the occasion, the status and interrelationship of the addresser and the addressee. According to Ronald Wardhaugh,

When we speak, we must constantly make choices of many different kinds: what we have to say, how we want to say it, and the specific sentence types, words, and sounds that best unite the *what* with the *how*. How we say something is at least as important as what we say; in fact, the content and the form are quite inseparable, being two facets of the same object.³

² Ibid.

³ *Sociolinguistics*, (1986)p.251

Thus the choice between *tu* and *vous*, singular and plural forms of second person in French, the naming and address terms, and the employment of 'polite markers' are all instances of linguistic choices a speaker makes which indicate the social relationship 'that a speaker perceives to exist between him or her or the listener or listeners'⁴.

Reviewing the importance of the socio-linguistic factors behind linguistic performance, Edward Sapir says:

Correctness of speech or what may be called 'social style' in speech is far more than aesthetic or grammatical interest. Peculiar modes of pronunciation, characteristic turns of phrase, slangy forms of speech, occupational terminologies of all sorts, -these are so many symbols of the manifested ways in which society arranges itself and are of crucial importance for the understanding of the development of the individual and social attitude.⁵

Linguistic history reveals that language of social hierarchy is a fascinating area in socio-linguistic studies where we get interesting sidelights as to how a given social set up is manifested in the linguistic usage of a particular society. The prevalent social set up permeates into language usage as social codes mainly in modes of address and reference wherein the relationship between the speaker and the referent is crucial in the choice of words. Ancient languages, which belonged to a time when social set up was more hierarchised than in the modern democratized world, furnish valuable data as to the variations in the use of language in comparison with the more homogenous modern linguistic usage. It is the socio-cultural stature of the individual which determines how he or she is being addressed and the violation of the code would seem to be extremely strange. Socio cultural attitudes are attested in Sanskrit usage by earlier grammarians

⁴ Ibid

⁵ E.Sapir, "Status of linguistics as a Science", *Language*, Vol.5. p.210. Quoted by K.Kunjunni Raja, 'Language of Social Hierarchy' *Rajasudha*, Madras, 1982, p.242.

like Panini and Patanjali also. The grammarians, for example, refer to the mode of greeting to be resorted to by a student when addressing people of upper castes on his return after studies. Only a person capable of giving back the proper greeting need be formally greeted and an uneducated individual need not be greeted in a formal manner. Such elaborate protocols give us a clue to the subtle norms of the society at work, where the socio-economic stature, profession, level of education, gender and a host of other yardsticks determine the individual's personal stature.

The present paper is an attempt to explore some aspects of the modes of address and reference in Classical Sanskrit as is preserved in dramas and dramaturgy. It is really surprising that very little work has been done in the socio-linguistic aspect of Classical Sanskrit since it was the study of Sanskrit which had triggered off a linguistic revolution of sorts in the 18th century by showing the prospects of comparative linguistics in the Indo-European context. However, of late, there have been some serious attempts to probe into the social dimensions of the Sanskrit language. K.Kunjunni Raja, in his 'Language of Social hierarchy', one of the pioneer studies related to the socio-linguistic aspects of languages including Sanskrit and Malayalam, discusses at length the reflections of class distinctions of society as reflected in the linguistic usage of people at different social levels. Raja mentions the deliberate choice of singular and plural forms of second person , forms of address , honorific titles, the usage of first person plural to denote royalty , language and gender and different dialectical usage in Sanskrit drama⁶ .Madhav M.Deshpande has done substantial work on sociolinguistic issues related to Sanskrit and Prakrit in his important work, *Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues*(1993).Here he has focused on grammatical treatises of Panini, Katyayana, Patanjali, Jains, Buddhists, authors like Rajasekhara, the features of vernacular Sanskrit, perception of historical change in traditional theistic grammar, Socio-linguistic

⁶ Kunjunni Raja, Ibid, pp238-264.

perceptions in Maharashtra and the sociological dimensions in the genesis of *Rgvedic* retroflex. Deshpande explodes the myth related to the stereotyped perception of Sanskrit as a monolith which ignores several interesting strands in the language. According to him, dialectical and sociological variations of the Sanskrit language are hinted by even by rule framing grammarians like Panini and Patanjali and there is no reason to doubt that Sanskrit, like any other language has had a fascinating history closely allied with socio-cultural factors. Another very versatile author is Sheldon Pollock, who through his monumental work, *The language of Gods in the World of Men* has made really outstanding contribution to the reconstruction of the evolution of Sanskrit through two millennia. But still much work remains to be done in the reconstruction of the socio linguistic perceptions of ancient India as gleaned through classical Sanskrit literature, one of the few remaining sources of data of the period.

As indicated, it is generally argued, not without reason, that linguistic peculiarities based on social hierarchy are fast disappearing everywhere, with the development of democratic ideals of a classless society.⁷ However, the fact remains that even in the modern democratic society, formal ways of addressing and referencing are very much in vogue as a random sampling from *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* will amply demonstrate. According to New Collegiate Dictionary, if John R. Smith is the Ambassador of United States of America, he is to be referred to as 'The Honourable John R. Smith , American Ambassador', or, if in Canada or Latin America, as 'The Honourable John R. Smith , The Ambassador of United States of America'. If he is the Secretary General , U.N , he should be addressed as 'His Excellency John R. Smith, Secretary –General of the United States of America'. If he is the attorney general, he should be addressed as 'The Honorable John R. Smith, The Attorney General'. If he is a judge, he is to be referred to as 'The Honorable John R. Smith, Judge of the United States District Court'.⁸ Similarly, His Excellency, His Majesty , His royal Highness, etc

⁷ Kunjunni Raja, op.cit, p.243.

⁸ *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, p. 1559-61*

are some of the modes of references used on formal occasions to refer to dignitaries, based on their rank and position. The formal language cannot be dispensed with in various organizations like the military, Legal courts, Government offices, Universities, and spiritual /religious organizations even in the present times . The study of this interesting area will give us deep insight into the working of social norms in the interpersonal communications of any society.

It is gratifying to note that the dramatic literature can be analysed to get gleanings of social set up in ancient India, despite that fact that occasionally supernatural elements also make their presence in some of them. It is true that as in any classical literature of ancient times, Sanskrit literature also has divine and semi- divine characters and not much socio-linguistic data can be distilled from the analysis of their manner of speech. However, they also are valuable source of much reliable linguistic data regarding social hierarchy, the sources of information of which are extremely meager for us. There are Sanskrit plays which are based on actual historical events like the *Mudraraksasa* and plays which faithfully depict aspects of contemporary society like the *Mrcchakatika*. Authors like Kalidasa who are greatly interested in mythical plots sometimes depict aspects of the contemporary society through plays like *Malavikagnimitra* and even the mythical characters are projections from contemporary images to the world of the supernatural, more so in the use of language. There are very realistic scenes even in plays which treat mythological stories like *Abhijnanasakuntala* like the scene in which two constables beat up a hapless fisherman. The language used in conversation in such scenes is strongly suggestive of contemporary anchoring. In this connection, it will be interesting to note that to Bharata the ideal *Natya*, is always an imitation (*anukarana*) of the ways of the world (*lokavrtta*).⁹

It is because of this realistic orientation that both *Natyasastra* and the Sanskrit plays themselves furnish us with a spectrum of speeches ranging from very refined Sanskrit to dialects of Prakrit. V.Raghavan singles out the 'realistic use of literary Sanskrit and vernacular Prakrit dialects simultaneously', as one of the patent features

⁹ *Natyasastra*, I.111

concerning the text of the Sanskrit drama.¹⁰According to him

..the use of Prakrit in Sanskrit drama is a real pointer to its antiquity, as it refers to the age during which servants, and others who spoke Sanskrit, easily followed the Sanskrit of higher characters with whom they directly conversed. The situation is only somewhat more pronounced than in a play in English in which, along with the standard idiom, colloquial and slang may also be used, according to the social status of the characters¹¹

It also retains the colloquial form of the language as contrasted with the more formal usage we find in other discourses. Consequently, there are elaborately worked out social codes in language communication consisting of unique modes of address as well as modes of reference.

It is proposed here to examine in detail the communicative competence displayed by playwrights and theoreticians as reflected in Sanskrit plays and dramaturgical texts like *Natyasastra* in the light of sociolinguistics. Also important is, from the socio-linguistic point of view, that the social hierarchy and power structure are reflected in the elaborate protocols and modes of address prescribed in the *Natyasastra* to various characters like kings and priests. Both the language spoken by a character, and the way in which he is addressed are the parameters by means of which his social stature can be gauged. We have an elaborately worked out social hierarchy in the Sanskrit drama with kings, Brahmins and the like at one end and characters like candalas and other outcastes at the other. The language used by the diverse elements of this vast social hierarchy gives us an idea of their social identity in a general manner.

¹⁰ 'Sanskrit Drama in Performance' in *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, Ed. Raechel Van M Baumer et .al, p.25.

¹¹ Ibid, p.25

The modes of address and reference of various types of people is given utmost importance in the *Natyasastra* and Sanskrit drama as such. In chapter XIX, entitled *Vakyavidhana and Kakusvaravidhana*, Bharata gives an elaborate protocol in the modes of address of different male characters:

The sages, being the gods of gods themselves, are to be addressed as *Bhagavan* and their women also are to be addressed as *Bhagavati*. Gods, leaders of cults, and people of diverse learning are to be addressed as *Bhagavan* both by men and women. The Brahmin is to be addressed as *Arya*, the king as *Maharaja*, the preceptor as *Upadhyaya* and elderly persons as *Tata*. Brahmins can address the kings by their name, or as *Rajan*. This has to be tolerated by the kings since the Brahmins are to be always venerated. Brahmins should address the ministers as *Amatya* or *Saciva*. But all the other inferior people should address them as *Arya*. Equals are to be addressed by equals by their name. Inferior persons should address superior ones by avoidance of name with a reference to the lineage¹². All employees whether men or women, servants, artisans, and craftsmen also should be addressed so (?). A venerable person is to be addressed as *Bhava*. A person somewhat inferior is to be addressed as *Marisa*, an equal person as *Vayasya*, and an inferior person as *Ham ho*. Charioteer should always address the travelling person like the King as *Ayusman*. An ascetic and a serene person should be addressed as *Tapasvin*. The heir-apparent is to be addressed as *Svamin*. An inferior person is to be addressed as *Saumya* or *Bhadramukha*. In *Natakas* and the like, a person should be addressed by the term denoting his profession, craft or learning. The father or teacher should address the son or pupil as *Vatsa*, *Putraka* or *Tata* or

¹² This is as per the interpretation of Abhinavagupta NS XVII.VolIII.p1393 *saparivaram namneti uttamo raja hinaih. Svanama parigrhya yadyannama vatsaraja, somavamsamauktikamane ityadi, tena bhasyah saparihasam iti va pathah.parihasah paritosopalaksanam tena catukarabhih paritosavasare hinah api raja namna sambhasyah. Udayane hi mahim sasati vipadam avakasah ityadau.*

by personal name or surname. A Sakya or a Jaina mendicant should be addressed as *Bhadanta*. Other mendicants should be addressed by the terms of their sects. A king should be addressed as *Deva* by his servants and subjects. An emperor should be always addressed by his servants as *Bhatta*. A king should be addressed as *Rajan*, or with the suffix denoting lineage [as *paurava* etc]. Vidusaka should address him as *Vayasya* or *Rajan*. In his youth, husband should be addressed as *Aryaputra* by women. Otherwise he should be addressed as *Arya*. The elder brother should be addressed as *Arya* by the younger brother. The elder brother should address the younger brother as if he were his son.

In the case of female characters, his prescriptions are as follows:

Women sages and goddesses are to be addressed as *Bhagavati*, the wife of the preceptor or a lady of a similar status should be addressed as *Bhavati*. An approachable woman is to be addressed as *Bhadre*, and if she is elderly, as *Amba*. The queen should be addressed as *Bhattini*, *Devi* etc. by all attendants and the king himself. All the other are to be addressed as *Bhattini* and *Svamini*. Young princesses should be addressed by the maid servants as *Bharttrdarika*. The sister is to be addressed as *svasr* and the younger ones as *Vatsa*. A Brahmin lady, a woman in the monastery or observing vows should be addressed as *Arya*. One's own wife can be addressed as *Arya*, or by the name of her father or son. Equals should be addressed as *Hala*. A superior lady should address her maid as *Hanja*. A courtesan should be addressed by her servants as *Ajjuka* and the mother of the courtesan as *Atta*. The wife is to be addressed by

the king or anybody in love scenes as *Priye*. The wives of priests and masters of the caravan should be addressed with the word *Arya*.¹³

An analysis Sanskrit plays themselves indicates that Brahmins, divine beings, very learned people and saints occupy the most respectable stratum and they are generally addressed as *Bhagavan*. In Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntala* we encounter three sages, viz Kanva, Durvasas and Marica, apart from many other ascetic characters of varying social stature and they are treated with great veneration and addressed as *Bhagavan*. It is the lapse in protocol and the indifference, albeit unintended, of Sakuntala which infuriates Durvasas and leads him towards the infamous curse. This incident shows how seriously even an unintended breach of protocol was treated. Even kings treat saints and divinities with great respect and Dusyanta addresses Marica as *Bhagavan* in tune with this. Even though women as a general rule are regarded as somewhat inferior to men in Sanskrit drama and not generally allowed to speak Sanskrit, the elderly saintly lady Panditakausiki, who speaks Sanskrit is addressed as *Bhagavati* by king Agnimitra in *Malavikagnimitra*. This indicates that gender difference did not stand in the way of the veneration of women saints.

As to the king, in *Abhijnanasakuntala*, he is addressed as *Svamin*, as in *jayatu jayatu svamin*, and *yathajnapayati svami* by the commander. The aged chamberlain addresses him as '*jayatu jayatu devah*;' while the court bard refers to him as '*vijayatam devah*;' However, sages of Kanva's hermitage address him only as *Rajan*, as '*bho rajan, asramamrgo' yam na hantavyo na hantavyah*', and as *vijayasva rajan*, though the polite form of passive voices is also resorted to like '*pratigrhyatam atithisatkarah*'. Matali, the charioteer of Indra understandably addresses King Dusyanta with the more plain *ayusman* as is wont with a charioteer, but Dusyanta's friendly mode of address to him is suggestive of equal stature. The Vidusaka usually addresses him as *Vayasya*, which

¹³ *Natyasastra*, Eng. translation, Sri Satguru publications, Delhi p 265-266

is also less hierarchical in spirit. On the other hand, in *Vikramorvasiya* the semi-divine apsarases [water nymphs] address King Pururavas as *Maharaja* as in *snotu maharaja*. In, the more down to earth *Malavikagnimitra*, also, Haradatta and Ganadasa, the dance teachers address the king as *Deva*.

An interesting feature seen in Sanskrit drama in general is that when a king is addressed, there is no direct reference to him in second person. Kunjunni Raja points out that in Sanskrit, the second person singular *tvam* is usually avoided in speech, and honorific terms like *bhavan*, *bhagavan*, and *atrabhavan* are substituted instead. In poetry, it is not completely prohibited.¹⁴ According to Manu and Yajnavalkya, *tvamkara* sounds disrespectful. Yajnavalkya maintains that if one uses words like *tvam* and *hum*, when addressing the preceptor, and defeat a Brahmin in argument or tie up him with clothes, one should try to pacify him and fast for one day.¹⁵ This may be the reason why the second person pronoun is generally avoided by people when they address the king or superior persons. Kunjunni Raja refers to the prescription, without naming the source that 'the use of the proper name and the singular term *tvam* are prohibited while addressing one's superiors (*tvamkaram namadheyam ca jyesthanam parivarjayet*). He quotes an interesting incident from the *Mahabharata*:

Yudhisthira is wounded in the battle with Karna and is taken to the camp. On hearing about this incident, Arjuna comes there to enquire about his brother's condition. Yudhisthira thinks that Arjuna too has fled from Karna and taunts him and asks him to lay down the gandiva. Arjuna flares up and wants to kill his brother, especially since he has taken a vow to kill anyone who has asked him to lay down his bow gandiva. Krishna intervenes and pacifies him and tells him that he can consider his vow fulfilled by calling his brother by the disrespectful

¹⁴ Kunjunni Raja, op.cit, p.248

¹⁵ *Yajnavalkyasmrti*, III.294.

singular term *tvam*; for being called *tvam* by an inferior is equivalent to being killed by him:

Tvam ityatrabhavantam tvam bruhi partha yudhishthiram/

*Tvam ityukto hi nihato gururbhavati bhārata! //*¹⁶

[O Arjuna, address the respectable Yudhishthira as *tvam*. An elderly person, if addressed as *tvam* is equivalent to be actually killed]

It is not surprising therefore that people like the Chamberlain and Commander meticulously avoid '*tvam*' and '*yuyam*' when addressing the king and stick to third person forms like '*jayatujayatu svami*', and '*jayatu jayatu devah*'. Various devices like third person formation as in '*nanu prabhureva nidarsanam*' and '*yat prabhavisnave rocate*' are used by the Commander in *Abhijñanasakuntala* to avoid any direct reference to the king in second person. The more honorific third person form '*Bhavan*' is preferred by the court jester and ministers in lieu of the direct second person '*tvam*'. However, the ascetic characters in Kalidasa's *Abhijñanasakuntala*, who also do not use second person singular form, do not altogether eschew second person formations like '*vijayasva rajan*', though generally they also prefer the word '*bhavan*' as in '*tena bhavantam prarthayante*' and '*bhavantam anamayaprasnapurvakam idam aha*'. Interestingly, Mahimabhatta, in his *Vyaktiviveka*, dealing with the defect consisting of the breach of order (*prakramabheda*) maintains that avoidance of first person and second person is sometimes more aesthetically appealing. He cites the passage, addressed by somebody to Rama in his court as example. Here, the speaker, instead of saying "as mentioned by you" uses the expression "as the seventh incarnation of Visnu says"¹⁷

¹⁶ *Mahabharata*, VIII.49.67. quoted by Kunjunni Raja, op.cit.p249

¹⁷ *Vyaktiviveka*, p321.

The choice between second person singular and plural is a topic of great sociolinguistic interest in many other languages also. While modern English, from 18th century has done away with the use of second person singular *thee* and *thou*, in languages like the French, Russian, Italian, German, Swedish, and Greek, their choice is of great importance and a laxity in the choice is fraught with great social implications. According to Brown and Gilman,

In the Latin of antiquity, there was only *tu* in the singular. The plural *vos* as a form of address to one person was first directed to the emperor, and there are several theories.about how this may have come about. The use of the plural to the emperor began in the fourth century. By that time, there were two emperors; the ruler of the eastern empire had his seat in Constantinople, and the ruler of the west sat in Rome. Because of Diocletian's reforms the imperial office, although vested in two men, was administratively unified. Words addressed to one man were, by implication, addressed to both. The choice of *vos* as a form of address may have been in response to this implicit plurality. An emperor is also plural in another sense; he is the summation of his people, and can speak as their representative. Royal persons sometimes say 'we' where an ordinary man would say 'I'. The Roman emperor sometimes spoke of himself as *nos*, and the reverential *vos* is the simple reciprocal of this.¹⁸

In Sanskrit plays also, the kings, when they refer to themselves, usually use first person plural to indicate their position. Thus, in *Abhijnasakuntala*, King Dusyanta uses expressions like "we have become wretched due to the enquiry of the truth. O bee, you are the lucky one" , "We also want to ask you both about your friend" and "Where are

¹⁸ Brown.R and A.Gilman, The Pronouns and Power of Solidarity,in T.A. Sebeok, (ed.)*Style in Language*, New York, p.25

we and here are people who have grown long with little dears, beyond the range of Cupid”

Wardhough makes a distinction between ‘reciprocal T/V usage and non-reciprocal T/V usage’ .By medieval times, the upper classes began to use *vos* forms with each other to show mutual respect and politeness. But the *tu* form also survived and consequently, the upper classes used mutual *vos*, the lower classes mutual *tu* and the upper classes addressed the lower classes as *tu*, but were addressed by the lower classes as *vos*. It is thus the non-reciprocal usage of T/V came to symbolize power relationship.¹⁹.While reciprocal *vos* was regarded as polite usage, the reciprocal *tu* came to symbolize certain intimacy in due course. In Sanskrit drama , we can see the plural second person used to show respect in instances like the following, when Lava addresses Rama, in *Uttararamacarita*, as a King, before recognizing him as his father :

Baspavarsena nitam vo jaganmangalamananam/

Avasyavyavasiktasya pundarikasya carutam//²⁰

[Your face ,auspicious to the world has been led to the charm of a white lotus necessarily wet with water]

With regard to the formal communication involving kings, we get glimpses of the elaborate protocol in the letter addressed by Vahataka, the king of Vidarbha to King Agnimitra where he is referred to as the venerable one(*pujya*) as in “I have been ordered by the venerable one”:The letter shows the protocol in into interpersonal communication of two kings:

I have been directed by the venerable one, ‘Your paternal cousin Madhavasena, while coming to my place with a promised matrimonial alliance was attacked and

¹⁹ *Sociolinguistics*, p.252

²⁰ *Uttararamacarita*.VI.29

captured by your frontier guard .He should be freed with his wife and sister for my sake.’ The conduct of kings to those of equal status is known to you. Therefore the venerable one deserves to be uninvolved in this .His sister has been missing in the commotion ensuing his capture. I shall strive to enquire about her. Or if indeed it is imperative that Madhavasena is to be released by me for the sake of the venerable one, the condition may please be heard:

If the venerable one releases the minister of Maurya, my brother-in-law, who has been captured (by yourself), Madhavasena is going to be immediately released by me from captivity.

The quoted passage is interesting on many counts. It is evident that both the kings are hostile to each other, but the letter is couched in a dignified language addressed by one king to another king. It is another matter that Agnimitra sees through the politeness and understands the import of the letter written in diplomatic language and flies into rage. Here he throws protocol to the winds and describes the Vidarbha king as an ignorant fool, using the term *anatmajna* ,obviously convinced e that he is far more superior to the latter in military might .

Sometimes, very intimate people have to be reminded about their protocol. The aged chamberlain addresses the newly coroneted Rama as *Rramabhadra* in *Uttararamacarita* and immediately corrects himself and calls him *Maharaja*. Rama smiles and urges him to continue with what he used to call him as an attendant of his diseased father. But the chamberlain uses the word *Deva* to address him.²¹

Generally speaking, messengers from kings are addressed with much courtesy as is now, but in Bhasa’s *Dutavakya*, there is an interesting incident involving Duryodhana when Srikrna comes to his court as an emissary of the Pandavas. Badarayana, the

²¹ *Uttararamacarita*, p.148

chamberlain announces with elaborate fanfare the entrance of Krsna as 'Narayana, the Supreme being has come from the camp of the Pandavas, as an emissary. (*esa khalu pandavaskandhavarat dautyenagatah purusottamo narayanah*) . This is enough to enrage Duryodhana who blurts out:

Not that much, O Badarayana. What is that slave of Kamsa your supreme being? That cow keeper (gopalaka) your supreme being? That person whose kingdom and fame were stolen by Jarasandha your supreme being? O, what a protocol of a servant close to the King?! His speech is haughty. Get out!

The chamberlain asks him to pardon his lapse made due to haste and announces that Kesava, the messenger has come, to the delight of Duryodhana, who endorses that this is the proper protocol for Krsna.²²

In the case of heroine and other characters, when they have to lead a life of exile many Sanskrit plays abound in several interesting cases of unusual modes of addresses and references. Among them, *Svapnavasavadatta* is unique in that both Vasavadatta and Yaugandharayana appear *incognito* and are addressed in a way to which they are not accustomed. In the opening scene itself, Vasavadatta, the queen of Udayana, disguised as Avantika, finds it difficult to digest the treatment meted to her as a commoner in the hermitage where on the eve of the visit of princess Padmavati, people are warded off as "Move off, gentlemen, Move off!" (*utsarataaryah, utsarata*). Here Yaugandharayana, the minister who accompanies her consoles her that all the splendor of royalty was enjoyed by her in the past. However, when he himself is addressed as a sage (*tapasvin*) he feels uncomfortable. Padmavati mixes freely with Vasavadatta and, instead of treating her as a queen, naturally treats her as an elder friend. In the final scene, when Vasavadatta's identity is proved, she apologises to her for having transgressed etiquette (*samudacara*)

²² *Dutavakya* in Bhasanatakacakra, Ed.Sudhamsu Caturvedi, p.175-76

by treating her as just an ordinary friend.²³ However, we discern no major change in the mode of address to Vasavadatta before and after her recognition. She is always addressed as *Arya*, probably in view of her seniority in age. In *Malavikagnimitra*, there is a similar incident involving Malavika, who is, according to the king, 'fit to be a queen treated as a servant maid even as a silk piece is used as a bath towel'²⁴

The unusual term *Aryaputra* is used in the *Svapnavasavadatta* by the chamberlain while addressing the king, but that does not seem to be the norm. In the same drama, Yaugandharayana, the king's minister, addresses him as '*Rajan*' when disguised as a saint, but comes back to the normal address or '*Svamin*' when he assumes his real form. The Sudra king Candragupta Maurya, on the other hand, is addressed uniformly as *Vrsala* by his preceptor like minister Canakya in *Mudraraksasa*.

Distance is an important factor determining the mode of address in interpersonal communication. The modes of address resorted to by Sakuntala indicates the varying stages in her relationship with the king. Before their bond of love assuming intimacy, she uses the term *Paurava*, but switches over to the word '*Aryaputra*' when they are finally united. When her bona fides are questioned, she retracts '*Aryaputra*' maintaining that it is not proper for her to address him when their relationship is doubted and uses the word '*Paurava*' to address him.

The mode of address resorted to by the friends of Sakuntala to king Dusyanta are particularly interesting. When Dusyanta introduces himself elusively as a representative of the king, the intrigued friends, Anasuya and Priyamvada address him formally as '*Arya*'. It is in a very round about manner that Priyamvada asks him simple questions like 'What is your name?' and 'Where do you come from?' To translate,

²³ *Svapnavasavadatta* p.118

²⁴ *Malavikagnimitra*, V.15.

Priyamvada: The confidence generated by the sweet speech of your noble self makes me speak. Which race of royal sages is adorned by your noble self? Which place has been rendered restless by the separation of your noble self? And pray, what is the reason for your noble self, tender by nature subjecting the self to the tedium of coming over to the penance grove?

This formal mode of address is substituted by a direct and personal style later when they accept Dusyanta to their fold, the consort of their companion. Anasuya thereupon ventures to call the king 'Vayasya', and the king also reciprocates with an endearing mode of address as 'Bhadre'.

The power structure prevailing in the law enforcement agencies of ancient India is vividly brought forth by Kalidasa in the interlude already alluded to, where the policeman takes the fisherman to the royal court for his alleged theft of the golden ring belonging to the king. They shower abuses on the hapless victim even before his guilt is proved and address him as 'kumbhilaka' and 'pataccara' meaning a thief. When the fisherman graciously presents half of the royal reward to them, there is a sudden elevation of his rank and they call him 'dear friend' and take him to a liquor shop to celebrate the new friendship. However such realistic descriptions of the laity are seen very rarely in Sanskrit plays which generally are confined to the upper strata of society.

Quarrels are generated quite easily when a person resorts to insulting modes of address in Sanskrit plays. Verbal abuse (*Vakparusya*) is regarded as a criminal offence by law-givers like Manu. In Sudraka's *Mrcchakatika*, the constable Viraka provokes his companions into a quarrel, by alluding to his caste status as a barber in a derogatory manner:

Even you have become a soldier! You, holding a stone in your hand, holding the lock of hairs of others, holding a pair of scissors in your hand.

Again, it is such a derogatory reference to Karma's caste which sparks off a big quarrel between Karna and Asvatthaman in *Venisamhara*, when the latter calls him a 'wretched charioteer' (*sutapasada*). '

Generally, the ascetics and divinities occupy a position higher than that of the king which transcends the power structure of the royal court. All conventions of the royal court are flouted by the young sage Sarngarava when he finds that Dusyanta has cheated Sakuntala. He minces no words in accusing the king of treachery and uses strong words like '*Aisvaryamatta*' and '*Dasyu*' alluding to the king. For that matter, a morally indignant Sakuntala goes to the extent of calling the king '*Anarya*', the greatest possible term of insult one can think of using against a king, but she is perfectly justified in doing so as it is the king who showers insult on her for the first time.

Generally speaking, women and lower caste people are relegated to a subordinate position in Sanskrit plays and they are supposed to use only Prakrit. But the hierarchy existing in such section is also reflected in their modes of address. The subtle distinction between the chief queen and others etc. are thus reflected in the manner in which they are addressed.

The interface between Aryan and non-Aryan languages which took place in South India adds a new dimension to multilingualism in ancient India, especially in the South. While most of the migrant settlers in the South gradually lost touch with their Indo-Aryan speech and switched over to various Dravidian speeches like Malayalam and Tamil, they preserved their Vedic legacy and assiduously cultivated Classical Sanskrit as an academic language. The traditional Sanskrit theatre of Kerala temples reflects the changed scenario, where, apart from Sanskrit and Prakrit, the 'normal' languages of the Sanskrit play, non-Aryan local languages like Tamil and Malayalm also came to be

used. Sanskrit enjoyed the pride of the place even then, and the regional language was used only by Viduaka and some inferior characters

Sanskrit drama, in short, is a miniature world in literature which faithfully reflects the complex social realities of the times. The caste hierarchy, the political organisation and the power structure prevailing in the society are subtly represented by the meticulously perfected modes of address and reference. These norms are inviolable and codified as principles in works like *Natyasastra*.

I