

Expressionology (अभिव्यक्तिविद्या)

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There is no English word as 'expressionology'. I have coined it to express what I feel and think as well as what I am. It means all that I do or do not do as well as the way I conduct myself and what I am or I am not.

All living beings express themselves. A seed expresses its desire to grow as soon as it is in the soil and in contact with water. A plant grows and finds fulfilment in expressing as a flower. May there not be any beholder, its vivid colours and sweet smell make the surrounding pleasant, inviting and attractive for any bystander.

Expression generates beauty and safety. Birds sing and call each other. The sound is a calling for mutual support. They express their happiness or fear by sounds they produce or when they hide for protection when they mimic the surroundings. All this is done beautifully.

Beauty is always for some purpose. For the humans, plants and other creatures, it reflects interdependence. For plants, it may be cross-pollination. Sometimes their expression of beauty is just as a service to the Mother Nature. Why otherwise the honey-bees toil all day and collect minute drops of nectar and make and store honey?

The Sun, the Moon, the Sky, the stars, the cool nights and bright and burning days, the showering or randomly floating and wandering clouds, the flowing and still water, the quiet and tranquil ocean or its roaring and rising seashore, the cool breeze and the sunshine and shadows, deserts and forests, lonely outskirts of a busy city - all these non-living things in the Nature do express themselves.

What is the purpose? Just to make the world we live in heavenly? Not only the beautiful, but not so beautiful or less agreeable things and living beings in the world also express themselves. Our criteria for beauty, prettiness and loveliness has very little bearing on their expression of beauty as they see it best for them, be it a cockroach or a lizard.

In Shrimad Bhagavad Geeta (2/28) it is said that

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत।
अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना॥

It means all life is not manifested in the beginning and in the end. They are manifested in the middle when we call them existing. What is true for the living being is also true for the non-living world. All started with a big bang or the desire of the Supreme to be manifested and become manifold. What is manifested is called व्यक्त. Hence, the person is व्यक्ति and his manifestation is व्यक्तित्व. When he/she expresses it and directs towards others, it is called अभिव्यक्ति.

Thus, expression is the manifestation or evidence of existence. It may be an action or a reaction. Genes express. Eyes and face express, hands and feet express, posture expresses, spoken words and silence express, movements and stillness express.

Human expression is defined as making known one's thoughts and emotions. But in a wider sense it is also an evidence of existence and activity. Human expressions take many forms - utterance, voicing, pronouncement, declaration, articulation, verbalization, statement, proclamation, assertion, announcement, setting forth, venting, mouthing, dissemination, broadcast, circulation, communication, spreading, promulgation, publicizing, publication, assertion, indication, intimation, demonstration, show, exhibition, manifestation, token, conveyance, illustration, revelation, disclosure, embodiment etc. Facial expressions, gestures, posture, and tone of voice are powerful communication tools.

One of the most effective means of expression is non-verbal - body posture, gestures, eye contact and the space maintained during the process of communication. Touch, timings and place add a great deal to the force and effectiveness of the expressions and communications. It repeats and often strengthens the message, it can contradict the message, it can substitute for a verbal message and make it a far more vivid message than words ever can, it may add to or complement and it may accent or emphasize the message.

Hearing and listening to the spoken and non-spoken words is important. Quiet and complete listening to understand is essential but should be sensitive enough to hear the unspoken emotions.

Emotions are best expressed non-verbally. It is especially important when the expressions are taking place in or by a group of people. Self-control and stress-control keep the senses in order.

Expression is also what is created. A substance, a situation, an innovation, a formation, a drama, a dance, a song, a picture or a movie, a poem, an essay, a story, an article, a research product or method etc. An architect builds a house is his expression of generating space that accommodates, comforts as well as tells a story. So is a dancer or an actor who enlivens a character. Expression takes many forms.

Earliest narration that touches the subject is found in the treatise by Bharata Muni who wrote Natya Shastra. He coined two important words - Ras and Bhaav. Ras is the pleasure one derives when something is expressed. Bhaav is the process of expression. There is a Gujarati word Haav (HaavBhaav). Haav are the gestures. He has described various types of Bhaav - stable or constant Bhav is

called Sthaayee Bhaav; props or surroundings (stage, situation etc.) constitute the ViBhaav; Mental, Physical or Spirit-related Bhaav are called Anu Bhaav and those that undulate emotions in the mind and heart of the audience is called the Sancharee Bhaav or Vyabhichaaree Bhaav.

There are 9 types of Ras (pleasures) that one derives from these expressions - decoration (attraction), unhappiness, laughter (happiness), valour, fear, anger, astonishment, peace and tranquility as well as extremely unpleasant. Devotion, Motherly Love and Pure Love are three more recently added Ras.

Bharata Muni has described, in detail, various gestures that express Bhaav. He has called them Bhed. Gestures of head, eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth and lips, face, neck, shoulder, waist, legs etc. are described in great details.

Thus expressions (Bhaav) give meaning to and pleasure (Ras) of existence. Let us all master the skill of expression and derive and distribute pleasure.