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## EXPLORATIONS OF THE PERLOCUTIONARY

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**Abstract:** Perlocutionary Force... Performative Aspects... Ritual Language... There has been an immense amount of research done upon language of religion but a distinct take on perlocutionary force akin to specific ritual utterances in a particular religion has been sparsely looked into. Two texts were chosen from subsets of two different religions having a similar origin template (utterances of gurus that became guidelines to living life for many) and analysis is centered on their perlocutionary effects. This paper apart from portraying intriguing findings, also gives a functional basis for more in-depth study and variation in this particular genre.

**Keywords:** Perlocutionary Force, Pragmatics and Ritual Language, Utterances in Religion,

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**Introduction - The Beans of the matter:** The goal of this paper is twofold: to delve upon the performative aspect of ritual language i.e mainly focused on the fact of perlocutionary force in its discourse, and, to show the differences of the same in two different religions. There has been an immense amount of research done upon language of religion but a distinct take on perlocutionary force akin to specific ritual utterances in a particular religion has been sparsely looked into.

A concise summation of "ritual language," would be that set of utterances which is intimately and essentially connected with the action context of a ritual. Ritual language is not just an instrument for conveying ideas, but is directly used in accomplishing the ends of the ritual operation. This straightforward fact gives ritual language a set of characteristics that distinguishes it from the discourses of mythology or theology. First of all, and most notable on the surface, is the choppy nature of liturgical texts in comparison with most other religious writings. From the ritual handbooks of the Vedic high cult to prayer books of the Jewish and Christian liturgies, what is immediately apparent is the multitude of short editorial divisions, quite unambiguously set off in the more contemporary printed editions by a variety of type sizes and conventions. Even ethnographic accounts of preliterate societies often choose to devote separate chapters to, the verbal and manual components of a ritual because of the complexity involved in discussing their intricate interaction.

The fundamental structure is the constant oscillation between citing the words to be spoken in the ritual and giving the directions for the actions to be performed. And in terms of content, liturgies seem by and large to lack the simple cohesiveness of treatises, with their logical movement through a topic, or of narratives, where settings, characters, and plot-progression both structure and unify the discourse. No liturgy that I have come across could be adequately described either in terms of a coherent argument on a topic or of a presentation of a connected story (though elements of both,

particularly the latter, may figure prominently at some point). The type of thing or things said in a ritual appear to be much less neatly organized and thus harder to describe than the tightly knit set of utterances in the narrative or treatise. Or one is dealing

with a different style of organization and internal coherence.

The most basic reason why language in ritual has such an apparently fractured character is its intimate connection with the context of ritual activity in which it is uttered. One of the first things that strikes one about liturgical utterances is the heavy usage of pronouns, adverbs, ellipses and the like that make reference to the immediate environment of the speaker and depend upon that context for their meaning. For example, the first-person pronouns "I" or "we" and the second-person pronoun "you" are commonly used in ritual discourse without introduction or explanation of their referents, since those would be the ritual participants themselves, who are sharing the same immediate situation as the speaker making the utterance. Such a cross-referencing to the contemporary context is in marked contrast to the way narrative discourse predominantly relies on the third person and the past tense to present a situation removed in time and place from the speaker's and audience's shared present. To find the referent of a pronoun in a narrative, one looks for its antecedent in the text itself. The ritual utterance, as has been suggested, is more likely to make a coincident reference to something in the context.

Complicating the picture even more is the fact that the context to which ritual language frequently alludes is not just a set of meaningless acts and objects, but usually includes nonverbal symbol systems, such as gesture, movement, and the physical symbolism of ritual objects and their arrangement, which are also involved in expressing some message. This interaction with parallel symbol systems marks off ritual language as particularly distinct from other types of religious language. In ritual, the words

spoken are not the only meaning bearing elements. What this implies is that an examination of the words of the liturgy in isolation will reveal only part of the ritual's message. And this helps explain the lack of obvious coherence among the utterances of a ritual. The meaningful connecting link is often to be found only by looking to the "statement" being made in one of the nonverbal media. Simply to read and make sense, for example, of the Yajur Veda, the compendium of utterances spoken by one of the priests in a Vedic ritual, is virtually impossible without recourse to a set of notes supplied by an editor that explains the concurrent ritual activity and identifies the symbolic connotations of the objects being manipulated.

Performance notions to the understanding of rituals emphasize approach, belief, and uniqueness. When performance in ritual is taken into consideration ideally, it's the action based performance that is in the most presence, rather than the utterance based performative actions of rituals in a religious belief system (atleast in the two religions that I have worked in this paper). One reason the metaphor of 'performance' has been popular in the analysis of ritual is the concern that textual approaches insufficiently appreciate the importance of a ritual's occasion.

Metaphors of text have a tendency to interpret ritual as anearlyinvoluntary acting out of rules based on afundamental cultural sensibleness. This ushers ritual action into a symbolic realm, and exploration becomes the revealing of the meaning rooted in the symbols. In-spite this, performance theorists say that rituals involve a broader horizon. Officiants and participants continuously bring their own adeptness, statuses, interests and a certain sense of regard to a ceremony, so that the ritual becomes a precise 'endemic' performance rather than a routinized echo. Accordingly, textual metaphors, with their prominence on meaning, displace the doing, the performative dimension of the action. Ritual action thustraverses not only on the extent of meaning but also emotionally and socially, the events of any specific occasion being conditioned by many elements other than the *prescribed rules*.

Although much anthropological discussion of ritual has engrossed on symbolic objects and actions, definitive concern with the linguistic dimension of ritual can be traced back at least as far as Malinowski's (1935) *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*. Lienhardt's (1961) work on Dinka religion reinvigorated this concern by presenting separate chapters on ritual action and religious language. Subsequently, a diverse range of integrative analyses has appeared. These studies can be summarized under the following wide-ranging directions: *specialized religious vocabularies* (Fabian 1971,

Wheelock 1981, Zaretsky 1972); *genres of religious language* (Bauman 1974, Fabian 1974, Gossen 1974, McDowell 1983); *religious speaking as illocutionary act* (Ahern 1979, 1982, Austin 1962, Finnegan 1969, Gardner 1983, Gill 1977, Ray 1973, Tambiah 1968, 1973, 1979, Wheelock 1982); *religious language as discourse* (Fabian 1979, Jules-Rosette 1978, Samarin 1976); *religious language as power or authority* (Andelson 1980, Bloch 1974, Fields 1982, McGuire 1983); *ecstatic language and glossalalia* (Eliade 1964, Goodman 1972, Jennings 1968, May 1956, Motley 1981, Pattison 1968, Samarin 1972).

Over the years anthropologists have posed and answered theoretical questions about ritual in relation to religion, myth, political organization, identity formation, and other dimensions of social life. But as objects of ethnographic study, rituals at times stubbornly pose their own questions, however they might be positioned by theory. Typically these are fundamental questions about how and for whom rituals have meaning. For example, the ethnographer with a perfectly good theory of ritual in relation to social organization or religion may be confounded in the field by "meaningless" ritual (Holy 1989). That is, participants sometimes may not be able to say what a ritual means; to them it may often be just "what we do." And yet surely ritual must have meaning not only for the analyst but also for the participants themselves. Recognizing the limits of language in ritual (Rappaport 1999), anthropologists have explored non-referential, affective meaning as well as the kinds of meaning that are embodied in activity itself. This paper has taken clues from these two theoretical backgrounds to understand the meaning of performative force for two sets of people (as we shall see subsequently), per-se two different generations.

The primary theoretical framework on which thispaper is based upon is The Speech Act Theory (J.L.Austin 1962, Searle 1968) and its stemming notion of religious language being performative akin to language of rituals. I have tried to look into the utterance part of it rather than the other linguistic domains it comprises.

The pioneering work in this area was done by the British philosopher J. L. Austin in his book *How To Do Things With Words*. His key insight was to recognize that utterances could be not only statements of fact but also the doing of something. Originally this was a distinction between utterances that acted to represent a situation ("constatives," e.g., statements, assertions) and those that acted to effect a situation by the mere fact of their being said ("performatives," e.g., promises, bets, such official pronouncements as a priest declaring a couple "husband and wife" or a judge rendering a person "guilty"). However, Austin came to the realization

that all utterances have a performative aspect. To make any utterance is to accomplish an act. "Asserting" is an activity accomplished by language just as much as is "promising" (52, 91-93). Austin discriminated a number of components and conditions involved in the performance of a speech act. Every speech act is seen as consisting of: (1) a "locutionary act"-the simple production of an utterance having certain phonetic, syntactic, and semantic characteristics; (2) an "illocutionary act"-the effect the speaker intends to produce in the hearer; and (3) a "perlocutionary act"-the actual effect the sentence has on a hearer (94-102). *As an example, if someone were to yell, "Watch out!", the locutionary act is just the yelling of those words; the illocutionary act is that of "warning"; and the perlocutionary act might be that a man ducked and looked around.* The key concept here is that of the illocutionary act. It draws attention to the fact that the speaking of a sentence is, above all, an act, committed by the speaker with the purpose of producing a certain effect upon the hearer.

With this highlighting on an utterance as a purposeful act comes the necessity of looking beyond the mere words comprising it (the locutionary act) to the social setting and conditions under which it is spoken. Austin began an investigation of the set of conditions that must hold in order for there to be a successful (or, as he calls it, "felicitous" or "happy") performance of a particular speech act (15-19). An example will provide the readiest explanation. A successful performance of the command "Go to school!" requires (among other conditions): (a) the proposal of some future act of the hearer (he is not presently at school); (b) the speaker believes that the hearer has a school and is capable of going there; (c) the speaker is in some position of authority over the hearer; (d) the speaker wants the hearer to go to school. A defilement of one of these conditions produces something other than a command, a "jest" being one possibility. The vital implication is that one can advance a set of rules for a proper speech act, just as the study of syntax and semantics have attempted to do for *wellformedness of sentences* in terms of grammaticality and truth-value, respectively.

Some of the most sophisticated developments of Austin's original discussion have come in the recent work of John Searle. He begins by underscoring the absolute centrality of the concept of the speech act in the analysis of language. In unambiguous terms he proclaims, *"The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence,... but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act"* (1968:16). And he reiterates that it is the illocutionary force (the intended effect) of an utterance that is the most important concept for

analyzing speech acts. It is the majorelement of the kind of speech act an utterance represents and can be discussed independently of the utterance's "propositional content" (roughly equivalent to Austin's locutionary act) (1968:16, 23, 30). To cite one example, the sentences "Andy doesn't swim" and "Andy, don't swim!" have the same propositional content but different illocutionary forces (namely, that of a statement and that of a command, respectively). Finally, he develops a more systematic account of the set of conditions required for successfully accomplishing any particular speech act, the most important of these being rules governing (1) the propositional content of the utterance (as condition "a" in the example given above), (2) preparatory conditions, i.e., contextual features of the situation (as "b" and "c" above), and (3) the sincerity of the speaker's intention ("d" in the example) (1968:57-63).

To summarize, the purpose for turning to the theory of speech acts is twofold. First, it is at the very least an essential, if not the most basic, perspective for understanding linguistic communication. Second, it gives emphatic and sophisticated consideration to the action context in which an utterance is involved.

**Methodology and Aim:** This paper is meant to be a comparing and contrasting style venture. My parameter to gain a leeway into this realm was working on two different texts (but similar origin background – origin purely in the sense of the way it was given to the masses) in context to a) Each of the two text must belong to two Different Religions, b) Different Language in the Utterances and in the chosen texts, and c) A similar social structure development in the two chosen communities. By 'similar origin background', I mean the workings of the two concerned communities should have a common type of origin.

My search based on the aforementioned parameters lead me to look into the machinery of the belief systems of the *Ramakrishna Mission (branch of New Delhi, India)*, and that of the Bothra Sect (Originally Rajasthanis, but my participants were a small section of the sect based in New Delhi, namely just a few families in a handful).

Two specific texts, each from two different religions and belief systems have been taken into account:

- 1) Ramakrishna's 'KothaOmrito' (Hinduism) – The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna
- 2) 'Mantra Sadhana' (Jainism) I have actively surveyed notions of Performative Aspects in lieu of the impacts both these texts have on its respective communities with special emphasis on two generations of people in these communities, through interview method as written survey was not taken in the right spirit in both these 'belief system communities'.

The aim is to verify the threefold hypothesis of:

- a) Perlocutionary Force in ritual language is fixed unlike other forms of discourse which have flexible perlocutionary force.
- b) Two different religions will show difference in the Performative Aspect and Perlocutionary Force due to the difference of language and belief system in the texts concerned.
- c) The older generations are rigid and fixed in their performative notions and beliefs unlike the present younger generation who are more flexible. This also leads us to believe that the present generations are on a stage which might lead to di-ethnic situation in the same ethnic community.

**The Ramakrishna Mission and the Bothra Sect:** Sri Ramakrishna preached the ideals of practical Vedanta and his sayings and parables are textualised in the form of the Gospel of Ramakrishna. His simple sayings in the Bangla tongue became a way of life for the Bengalis in West Bengal during the early quarter of the twentieth century. Now the Ramakrishna Mission is worldwide and I have based this exploration in one of its denominators, namely the New Delhi branch.

The Bothra Sect originally belongs to the Northwestern Region of Rajasthan, India; but again my explorations have taken into account a small handful of the Bothra Sect living in Central New Delhi. They are essentially Jains i.e. they follow the religion of Jainism.

**Evidence:** Personal and group interviews were conducted in lecture halls, or individual homes to gain an understanding of the mechanisms of the concerned texts. For the *KothaOmrito*, I had spoken in length to some of the members of the Ramakrishna Mission in the New Delhi Branch. Two interactive sessions were held. The first one was for senior citizen members and the subsequent was for members below the age of forty. Both times the topic of heated discussion was the usage of Ramakrishna's 'Kathan' (Words / Sayings) in Everyday life and its usage in lieu of just uttering them. The findings were not out of the box but fitted into the overall scheme of things.

Similar in house interactions featured in lieu of the 'Mantra Sadhana' text of the Bothra Sect. Two exclusive interaction sessions couldn't be arranged keeping the age factor in mind but instead the young men were given an opportunity to speak their mind during a cricket match that was organized for this express reason. In house interactions with the young women was done by a female friend, who shall remain unannounced.

Written surveys were not given any signs of encouragement as participants were more comfortable speaking their mind in an informal manner. The Bothra Sect had their reservations

regarding few issues; barring them they were amiable to answer the questions put forth to them.

**Findings:** "His sayings are like pathway to simple ways of leading a complex life, one just needs to think about it and invariably you tend to follow that life path, its not forced on you by peers or by family, its you and you alone", gushed an overenthusiastic retired gentleman when asked his views on the sayings of Ramakrishna. Majority of the older generation and the senior citizen held similar beliefs that the practical Vedanta teachings of Ramakrishna through his sayings were not only peaceful in the continuum of life but equally tranquil in its auditory form too. "/Taka mati, mati taka/" directly translated as 'Money is Earth (Land), Earth (Land) is Money' (the notion is – that money is dust and likewise dust is money: value should be given to Mother Earth and not on the triviality of money); is the most remembered saying that the mission's members quote when prompted to do so. There is quite a lot of difference in the findings related with the effects that the great seer's sayings have on the present members that I interacted with.

Both the senior citizens and the younger generation sets agree on the fact that uttering Ramakrishna's sayings is not a way to live life as the saying says to do, instead the meaning behind the saying is the driving force. It can be incurred that audible voicing is not a perlocutionary force in this context, rather it is a medium that is interlinked behind the saying which has Vedanta origins.

"I am not yet fifty to live life according to sayings of Sri Ramakrishna", laughed one of the younger members that I spoke with. Such a thought was universally acknowledged amongst the younger peers leading me to believe- belief systems undergo radical changes as the person ages atleast in this context. Another interesting finding in the context here is the fact that nothing is imposed in lieu of the fact that one has to do a certain deed or utter a certain ritualistic seeing to incite a certain force of performativeness.

In the Bothra Sect, the ritual utterances are much more strict and stringent. Children as young as 2 months are subjected to day long fasts and weekend long survival on one kind of fruit. The utterances as written in the Mantra Sandhna are supposed to be said allowed at specific times, at specific occasions, and there even exists a mantra which is supposed to be said to a kin of a deceased as a means of consolation. The mantra itself acts as d consoling balm which otherwise would have been with compassionate and supportive words. Such a strong performative inclination is in its own way marvelous where pragmatic and social bond is heightened or believed to be heightened by the utterance of a mantra.

The most important mantra which precedes all other subsequent mantra utterances is the Navkar Mantra. This mantra is supposed to invoke the other proceeding mantras so that the performative force is manifold more times than normal. There is also a belief that if one forgets to chant this mantra the other proceeding mantras lose their performative powers by half. Thus we find both intra text and inter relation of text and belief in unison. **The Navkar Mantra is as follows:**

**Namo Arihantanam:** I bow down to Arihanta,

**Namo Siddhanam:** I bow down to Siddha,

**Namo Ayariyanam:** I bow down to Acharya,

**Namo Uvajjhayanam:** I bow down to Upadhyaya,

**Namo Loe Savva-sahunam:** I bow down to Sadhu and Sadhvi.

**EsoPanchNamokaro:** These five bowings down,

**Savva-pavappanasano:** Destroy all the sins,

**Manglananch Savvesim:** Amongst all that is auspicious,

**Padhamam Havei Mangalam:** This Navkar Mantra is the foremost.

*The Navkar Mantra is the most important mantra in Jainism and can be recited at any time. While reciting the Navkar Mantra, they are bowing down with respect to Arihantas (souls who have reached the state of non-attachment towards worldly process), Siddhas (liberated souls), Ächäryäs (heads of sadhus and sadhvis), Upädhyäyas (those who teach scriptures to sadhus and sadhvis), Sädhus (monks, who have voluntarily given up social, economical and family relationships) and Sädhvis (nuns, who have voluntarily given up social, economical and family relationships). Collectively, they are called PanchParmesthi (five supreme spiritual people). In this mantra the Jains worship their virtues rather than worshipping any one particular person; therefore, this Mantra is not named*

*after Lord Mahavir, Lord Parshvanath or Adinath, etc. When they recite Navkar Mantra it, also reminds them that, they need to be like them (The Tirthankas). This mantra is also called Namaskär or Namokär Mantra because it is form of bowing down.*

For the Bothra Sect (under the subset of the Jains), the text of Mantra Sadhana is a very prominent way of living their life. Unlike the Ramakrishna Mission's flexible members, this Sect has been literally born into the rituals and utterances of the text of the Mantra Sadhana. Going along the same vein of comparison it was evident that the children have no choice in their beliefs, rather their belief systems is like a cyclic system that is reiterating its roots through each subsequent generation.

**Conclusion:** It's been a fascinating journey that has given us insights on two polar opposite belief systems, with their own rarefactions and compressions. On one side we have been privy to a relaxed state of simple statements making people 'more happy and insightful'- of-course subjectivity of individuals remains an impasse. The Polar other proves that a perlocutionary force due to the ritual language overrides pragmatic and social courteous systems and that this way of life is the means of existence by which a set of people swear to.

Amongst the Three fold Hypothesis that we had set out to explore, the first two are vividly seen. Interestingly, age as a means of defining a way of belief that 'can be engrained' and not 'is engrained' keeps us guessing whether even identity or for that matter even ethnicity can be rewritten or redrawn in the mental space of a person's being, as one reaches any particular pinnacle age. The third Hypothesis has shown variants through both the parties that we have explored.

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