

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTING ACROSS REGIONS: FORMS, TRADITIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Tushar Verma¹, Mr. Mayank Arora²

¹Students, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Tecnia Institute of Advanced Studies, (Affiliated to GGSIP University, Delhi)

²Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Tecnia Institute of Advanced Studies, (Affiliated to GGSIP University, Delhi)

Abstract - Acting is a cornerstone of dramatic art in theatre, film, and other performance media, yet the ways in which actors approach their craft vary significantly across cultural and regional traditions.

This paper explores how different regions of the world deploy distinct acting types and techniques, shaped by historical, cultural, and aesthetic traditions; societally embedded performance conventions; media (theater vs film vs television); and the evolving global interchange of ideas. In particular, the paper investigates classical and contemporary traditions in Western, South Asian

(especially Indian) and African/West African contexts showing how each region has developed unique forms of actor training, performance style, audience expectation, and narrative structure. Drawing from key theoretical frameworks (for instance, the *Natya Sastra* of ancient India), the research outlines how acting is conceived not merely as imitation or representation but as a creative process involving mind, body, and cultural signifiers. The study identifies major forms of acting.

(e.g., realist, stylized, presentational) and traces how they manifest regionally: for example, in Indian classical theatre the modes of *Angika* (gesture), *Vachika* (voice), *Aharya* (costume), and *Sattvika* (inner emotion) are formalized; in Western modern film acting the legacy of the Konstantin Stanislavski “system” / method acting emphasizes psychological realism; and in African film and theatre particular linguistic, gestural, and communal performance traditions persist while adapting to modern media. The paper argues that understanding region-specific acting types enhances our appreciation of the actor’s craft and deepens cross-cultural insights into performance. Furthermore, in the globalized era there is a blending of techniques Indian film actors adopting American-style method acting, for example but the regional roots remain influential. The paper concludes with reflections on how acting training and performance will continue to diversify in the 21st century as digital media, global

audiences, and hybrid performance forms further transform what it means to act.

Keywords - Acting; Actor Training; Regional Performance Traditions; Method Acting; Indian Classical Theatre; Realism; Stylisation; Gesture; Cultural Performance.

Introduction

Acting, in the broad sense, is the art by which an individual (the actor) embodies a character, enacts a narrative, and communicates to an audience via voice, body, gesture, emotion, and presence. Yet, despite the ubiquity of the actor in theater, film, television, and digital media, the forms and styles of acting differ widely across regions and cultural traditions. These differences are not merely superficial (costume, language, set) but penetrate deep into training methods, aesthetic values, audience expectations, and performance conventions. The purpose of this paper is to map and analyze these regional differences: to identify various types of acting and to examine how they manifest in different parts of the world, their underlying theoretical bases, their historical evolution, and their contemporary relevance.

Defining Terms: Acting, Style, Technique

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, acting is not simply imitation or representative movement; rather, it is a creative art demanding that the actor master not only gestures and vocal expression but also the “living organism of a human being in all of its manifestations mental, physical, and emotional.” In performance theory, one frequently distinguishes between “external” (technique, physical & vocal control) and “internal” (emotional life, psychological motivation) approaches to acting. Style is often described as the “angle from which reality is observed” in performance thus stylized acting is not necessarily opposed to realism but may represent a different relationship to “real” or “naturalistic” behavior. In addition, “technique” refers to the actor’s trained skill set (voice, movement, improvisation, character work), and

“method” refers to a holistic system of actor preparation (such as the Stanislavski system or method acting).

Historical Overview and Emergence of Regional Traditions

Theatre originates in many regions with indigenous performance practices long before the modern “actor” as we conceive of them in film/TV. For instance, in India, the text known as the *Nāṭya Śāstra* (traditionally attributed to sage Bharata Muni) codifies performance arts including acting, dance, and music, with classification of acting into modes such as Angika (physical), Vachika (verbal), Aharya (costume/ornament), and Sattvika (inner emotion), for example. In contrast, Western classical theatre

(Greek, Roman, and Elizabethan) emphasized declamatory delivery, masks, chorus, and large gestures due to architectural and societal conditions, gradually moving in the 19th–20th centuries toward naturalism, psychological realism, and film acting. In many African and West African performance traditions, communal ritual, dance-theatre, song, and audience participation influenced actor-audience dynamics, and later modern cinema adapted those traditions in film industries such as Nigeria’s Nollywood. With the advent of film and television, global cross-fertilization of techniques (method acting, improvisation, and hybrid forms) accelerated, yet the regional roots remain significant.

Why Regional Differences Matter

Regional differences in acting matter for a number of reasons. First, they reflect cultural values and expectations: what counts as “good acting” in one culture (e.g., heightened expressivity in Indian classical theatre) may differ from another (e.g., subtle naturalism in American independent film). Second, the actor’s training and institutional frameworks vary regionally: schools, practices, performance traditions, industry norms. Third, audience reception differs: for instance, Indian audiences may accept more formalised gesture and song-dance conventions, whereas Western audiences often expect verisimilitude. Fourth, the medium (stage vs film vs digital) interacts with regional form: acting for camera demands different scale and subtlety than stage, and these demands play out differently depending on regional traditions. Finally, for practitioners (actors, directors, content creators), understanding these regional types enhances versatility and global marketability.

Differentiation of Acting Types Across Regions

SOUTH ASIA / INDIAN TRADITIONS

In India, the classical treatise *Nāṭya Śāstra* identifies four broad modes of acting: Angika (gesture/physical movement), Vachika (speech/voice), Aharya (costume/ornamentation), and Sattvika (inner emotional states). These form the backbone of traditional theatre (e.g., Kathakali, Kutiyattam) where the actor’s body, face, voice and ornamentation are codified. For example, in Kathakali the gesture vocabulary is extremely stylized; masks or facial makeup may be used; dance-theatre format prevails. In more modern Indian cinema, actors combine these heritage practices with film-style realism. Notably, Indian cinema has a form of “method acting” influence: actors such as Dilip Kumar are cited as early practitioners of a method-style approach in India. The regional industry expectations shape what counts as good acting: for example, expressive eyes, clear diction, musicality, and dance/gesture integration in many Indian films. Meanwhile, training institutions in India teach classical forms alongside film-oriented acting. In terms of technique types: (a) stylized classical (heritage theatre), (b) commercial film acting (often star-driven, expressive), and (c) emerging method/realist film acting (post-1990s).

Western Traditions (Europe / North America)

In the West, the trajectory of acting moved from declamatory classical stage acting (Greek, Elizabethan) toward the psychological realism of the 19th and 20th centuries. The system developed by Konstantin Stanislavski emphasised emotional truth, “experiencing the role” rather than merely representing it. From there emerged the American “method acting” tradition (Lee Strasberg, etc.) which encourages the actor to draw from personal emotional experience and sense-memory. Western film and television acting often prioritise subtlety, naturalism and internal motivation. According to research-starters, acting styles shift historically: from external technique (movement, voice) to internal psychological realism. In addition, improvisational and ensemble forms (e.g., the Sanford Meisner technique) focus on moment-to-moment interaction rather than pre-designed expression. Western regional industries also develop genre-specific norms (Hollywood style, British realism, and arthouse minimalism). Thus, major acting types in the West include

- (a) classical theatrical
- (b) method/realist film - TV - TV acting
- (c) experimental/improvisational acting.

African/West African & Global South Traditions

In African contexts, acting traditions often emerge from communal rituals, dance-theatre and oral storytelling rather than institutional actor training systems as found in the West. In Yoruba films (Nigeria) for instance, studies note how acting style and linguistic aesthetic matter in the performance: the actor must be fluent in local language and gesture, else audience disorientation happens. The interplay of gesture, song, movement, audience participation is stronger and actor/audience boundary may be more permeable. With the growth of African film industries (e.g., Nollywood), there is also adaptation of global techniques (naturalism, camera-acting) but still rooted in local cultural idioms. For example, in folk drama (in Indian context) or African drama, masked characters may rely more on non-verbal physical acting than dialogue. So acting types here might be:

- (a) traditional ritual/folk-theatre acting (highly stylised, communal)
- (b) regional commercial film acting (hybrid local + global)
- (c) transnational film-tv acting (globalised technique).

Comparative Observations & Key Differences

- **Gesture & Body-movement:** In South Asian classical forms, gesture (Angika) is codified; in Western realist film acting the body may be more “invisible” aiming for naturalism.
- **Voice & Language:** Indian and African regional acting often emphasise vocal clarity, song, rhythm; Western acting may emphasise subtle speech, off-camera realism.
- **Training & Technique:** The West has formal schools of acting, technique systems (Stanislavski, Meisner, Chekhov); in many non-Western regions training may be more apprenticeship or tradition-based, though film acting schools are now global.
- **Audience Expectation:** Indian audiences may expect heightened expression, dance/gesture integration, musical sequences; Western audiences may lean toward psychological believability and subtle emotion.

- **Media Adaptation:** Stage acting (common historically in all regions) demands projection and gesture; film acting (especially globally) demands subtlety, minimalism, camera awareness. The transition differs regionally.
- **Hybridisation & Globalisation:** At present, actors in India, Africa and other regions are increasingly adopting global techniques (e.g., method acting) while preserving local idioms. This leads to hybrid forms commercial cinema may combine star-based stylised acting with realist methods. For example, Indian film actors like Rajkumar Rao or Vicky Kaushal are sometimes cited as “method” style actors in India.

Implications for Practice and Teaching

For an actor, especially one working globally (such as a content-creator or influencer branching into films, commercials, or cross-region collaborations) awareness of these regional types is crucial. If a Delhi-based actor engages in a western production, understanding the shift toward subtlety, internal motivation, minimal gesture is important. Conversely, when working in local Indian or regional productions, an actor may need to re-engage with codified gesture, tradition, spectacle. Training curricula may need to integrate multiple techniques: classical gesture, realist method, improvisation, camera-acting. For event creators (such as you, producing influencer galas or red-carpet experiences), insight into what counts as “acting presence” in different cultural contexts can help talent selection, communication, direction and brand collaborations.

References

1. Britannica, “Acting | Definition, Art, Styles, History, & Facts.” [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)
2. Britannica, “The actor’s approach to his role.” [Encyclopedia Britannica](#)

3. Southside Performance Studio & Films, "Exploring the dynamic spectrum: The 5 different types of acting techniques." [SPS Academy & Films](#)
4. NFI.edu, "Method Acting – Everything You Need to Know." [NFI](#)
5. Academic.oup.com, Wu W., "Movements of the Mind: A Theory of Attention, Intention and Action." [OUP Academic](#)
6. KUEY.net, "According to Sanskrit Nāṭya Śāstra, there are four types of acting: physical acting, verbal acting, Aharya acting and Sattvic acting." [kuey.net](#)
7. IJCRT (2021), "Bharata's classification of acting into four types..." [IJCRT](#)
8. Research Starters (EBSCO), "Acting Styles." [EBSCO](#)
9. EyeCushion.eu, "10 Types of Acting Techniques: A Guide for Film Professionals." [eyecushion.eu](#)
10. MyActingAgent.com, "4 Types of Acting: From Classics to Modern Techniques." [My Acting Agent](#)
11. FilmConnection.com, "The Main Types of Acting Explained." [Film Connection](#)
12. Curriculum PDF (CRM College, India), "Theory of Acting: Indian classical acting and Bharata (Nāṭya-Śāstra)." [crmcollegeindia.s3.amazonaws.com](#)
13. Fadirepo & Oresanya, "Acting Styles, Nuances and Linguistic Aesthetics: A Case Study of Ibrahim Chattah in Yoruba Films." [journals.flvc.org](#)
14. (Reddit posts as supplementary anecdotal evidence) — while informal, they show actor perceptions of "type" and technique. [Reddit+1](#)
15. Additional academic texts on actor training and psychophysical technique (e.g., Chekhov, Meisner) — from general acting technique resources.
16. 11. Shivendu Kumar Rai. Globalization and digital violence against women in new media. Int J Appl Res 2017;3(6):961-966.
17. 12. Harshita Gupta, Shivendu Kumar Rai. (2025). Visual Politics: The Semiotics of Political Imagery in Indian News. International Journal of Journalism and Media Studies (IJJMS), 3(2), 8-19. doi: https://doi.org/10.34218/IJJMS_03_02_002
- 13. Shivendu Kumar Rai, Kumari Pallavi and Navya Singh. Implications of NEP 2020 for value-based education. International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism. 2025; 6(1): 57-63. DOI: 10.22271/27084450.2025.v6.i1a.99.