

## Original Research Article

# Analysing Rasa theory in English literature

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of rasa is unique to Indian poetics and dramatics and is essentially a creation of the Indian genius— Bharata, which can be considered as an important contribution in the field of performing arts. He presented rasa formula in context to natya in his Natyasastra. Later on the rasa-sutra became the touchstone for all the poetics. The aim of a dramatic performance is to evoke sentiment or rasa in the mind of the sahrdaya or the learned audience. According to the Natyashastra, the major purpose of dance, drama, ritual and poetry is catalytic in that aesthetic performance should provoke an emotion that is already present in members of the audience. The present paper sincerely endeavours to study the Bhavas and Rasas as put forth by Bharata Muni.

## 1. Introduction

The Natyaśāstra, the oldest surviving Indian compendium on the knowledge of performing arts, is considered to be a fifth Veda. It primarily deals with theatre, dance & musical performance. The text, which now contains 6000 slokas, is believed to have been written during the period between 200 BCE and 200 CE by Sage Bharata. The Natyaśāstra is based upon the much older Gandharva Veda (appendix to Sama Veda) which contained 36000 slokas [1]. The Natyasastra of Bharata Muni consists of thirty-six chapters in all. The first three chapters respectively deal with the origin of drama, the erection of theatre and the worship of the stage. Chapter 4 deals with the varieties of dance. Chapter 5 is devoted to the conduct of purvaranga or preliminary rites. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> chapters relate to rasas (sentiments) and bhavas (emotions) known as the Rasadyaya and Bhavaadyaya respectively and together bring out the concept of the Bhava-Rasa theory of Bharata. The concept of rasa is unique to Indian poetics and dramatics and is essentially a creation of the Indian genius— Bharata. He presented rasa formula in context to natya in his Natyasastra. Later on the rasa-sutra became the touchstone for all the poetics. The aim of a dramatic performance is to evoke sentiment or rasa in the mind of the sahrdaya or the learned audience. According to the Natyashastra, the major purpose of dance, drama, ritual and poetry is catalytic in that aesthetic performance should provoke an emotion that is already present in members of the audience. Nothing proceeds on the stage without reference to 'rasa' is Bharata's most important pronouncement. The word Rasa is derived from the root 'rasah' meaning juice, 'taste' or 'flavour' or 'savour' or 'relish'. The extract of a fruit is referred to as 'rasa,' which itself is the essence of it, the ultimate flavour of it. In a metaphorical sense it refers to —the emotional experience of beauty in poetry and drama. The ultimate goal, purpose of writing, presenting and viewing a play is to experience rasa realization. Rasa is associated with palate, it is delight afforded by all forms of art;

and the pleasure that people derive from their art experience. It is literally the activity of savoring an emotion in its full flavor.

According to the Natyashastra, the goals of theatre are to empower aesthetic experience, deliver emotional rasa. The text states that the aim of art is manifold. In many cases, it aims to produce repose and relief for those exhausted with labor, or distraught with grief, or laden with misery. The primary goal is to create rasa so as to lift and transport the spectators. This Rasa experience will entertain and enlighten the spectator who hence becomes the 'Rasika'. The theory of Rasa-Bhava establishes a relationship between the performer and the spectator. The model spectator is a 'Sahrdaya', someone who empathizes with the author. Since the success of a performance is measured by whether or not the audience has a specific experience (rasa), the spectator becomes a vital participant in the play. Bharata calls human soul as Bhava-Jagat (the world of emotions). Bharata and later authors explain how the Art universalizes emotions making them an instrument of appeal to the spectators. They say that the actor acts as bearer, media and connector of emotions of the character. By conveying emotions the actor step by step opens inner Bhava-Jagat of the character, creates special emotional atmosphere, which can be felt and relished. A member of the audience who has cultivated his or her own aesthetic response may experience a transformation of their own emotion into a purely aesthetic, transcendental feeling – an experience of divine bliss. This is the transformation of Bhava (mood) into its essence – Rasa. According to Bharata, rasa or sentiment is the mental condition of delectation produced in the spectator of a play or in the hearer or the reader of poem, as the inevitable reaction of the bhavas or emotions manifested by the characters [2]. He gives a detailed account of the eight different rasas, or sentiments, namely- sringara (the erotic), vira (the heroic), karuna (the pathetic), hasya (the comic), raudra (the furious), bhayanaka (the terrible), bibhatsa (the odious) and adbhuta (the



marvelous). It has been found that no one word or phrase is adequate to convey the total meaning of *rasa*. *Rasa* is actually 'the impression created on the mind of the sympathetic audience by the expression of *bhavas* or emotions' and is an experience the individual is subjected to on account of this expression. *Bhava* is the emotion that creates a sense of enjoyment or experience which in itself is an entity and that enjoyment or experience is *rasa*.

*Bhāva*, literally, means 'existence and mental state'. In aesthetic contexts, it has been translated as 'feelings, psychological states and emotions'. In the context of the drama, *bhavas* are 'the emotions represented in the performance'. Bharata explains that there are three types of *bhavas* (emotions): *sthaiyī-bhavas* (static emotions), *sancari-bhavas* or also called *vyabhicari-bhavas* (transitory emotions) and the third one is *sattvika-bhavas* (responsive emotions). The *sthaiyī-bhavas* are eight in number and they correspond to the eight sentiments and they are: *rati* (love), *hasa* (mirth), *soka* (grief), *krodha* (anger), *utsaha* (enthusiasm), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsa* (aversion), and *vismaya* (wonder). The *vyabhicari-bhavas* or the *sancari-bhavas* are thirty-three in number. They are: *nirveda* (dejection), *glani* (depression), *sanka* (suspicion), *asuya* (jealousy), *mada* (intoxiation), *srama* (weariness), *alasya* (laziness), *dainya* (helplessness), *cinta* (anxiety), *moha* (passion), *smṛiti* (recollection), *dhṛti* (boldness), *vrida* (shame), *capalata* (fickleness), *harsya* (joy), *avega* (agitation), *jadata* (stupor), *garv* (arrogance), *visada* (despair), *autsukya* (inquisitiveness), *nidra* (sleep), *apasmara* (epilepsy), *supta* (dream), *vibodha* (awakening), *amarsa* (intolerance), *avahittham* (concealment), *ugrata* (ferocity), *mati* (knowledge), *vyadhi* (sickness), *unmad* (insanity), *maranam* (death), *trasa* (fright) and *vitarka* (doubt). The *sattvika-bhavas* are also eight. They are *stambha* (stunned), *sveda* (sweating), *romanca* (thrill), *svarabheda* (break in voice), *vepathu* (trembling), *vaivarnya* (pallor), *asru* (tears) and *pralaya* (swoon). The realisation of *Rasa* is said to result from the union of three interrelated elements – Determinants (*vibhava*), Consequents (*anubhava*) and Transitory States Complementary Psychological States (*vyabhicari-bhava*). The root-cause or the excitant that creates the emotion is called *vibhava* or the determinant. So, *vibhava* is the cause and *bhava* is the effect. The voluntary expression following the emotion caused by the determinant is called *anubhava* or the consequent. Although the words *vibhava* and *anubhava* incorporate the word *bhava* it may be noted that they are not *bhavas*. *Vibhava*, *anubhava* and *bhava* are thus intimately connected with one another. *Vibhava* (determinants or catalysts) means (the conditions and objects) by which an emotion is activated is termed *Vibhava* or Determinants. For example, in *Hamlet*, the determinants of the emotions within the play are *Hamlet's* mother's hasty remarriage to *Claudius*, the brother of her murdered husband and the visit paid to *Hamlet* by the ghost of his murdered father, among others. These factors arouse *Hamlet's* suspicion against his uncle and mother.

There are two kinds of *Vibhava* – the *Alambhana-Vibhava* – the person or the object in respect of whom the emotion is experienced and whose appearance is directly responsible for the bringing forth of the emotion; and the *Uddipana-Vibhava* – the situation in the environment in which that person or object is placed and which is helpful in intensifying the emotional

experience. *Vibhava* is the cause (*karana*), the main stimulating cause being termed as *alambanavibhava* (the determinant), and, the environmental factors that are additional causes termed as *uddipanavibhava* (excitant). *Anubhava* is the consequent physical reaction through action, word and facial expression that follows (*anu*), as the impact of the *vibhava*. The thirty-three *vyabhicari-bhava* (also referred to as *sancaribhava* in some editions), are transitory, fleeting emotions based on psychological states of the mind. Several such emotions follow one after the other, one replacing the other, strengthening the *sthaiyibhava* at each stage, till finally the *sthaiyibhava* is established and there is '*Rasanubhava*'. For instance, in the play *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, *Kalidasa* uses *King Dushyanta's* coming to the hermitage to pay respects to the sage, as the *alambanavibhava*. The girls' talk, the bee, their attire, the flower garden and such others become the *uddipanavibhava*. On *Dushyanta's* entry, fleeting emotions like confusion, wonder, fear, curiosity, bashfulness and such others seem to fill the minds of all the characters present. The blossoming of love between *Shakuntala* and *Dushyanta* is gradually established through the reactions of both of them to the conversation of the *sakhis* with the *King*.

*Anubhava* (consequences) the outward manifestations brought forth as a result of the *Vibhavas* are known as the *Anubhavas*. The *anubhāvas* 'include the performer's gestures and other means to express the emotional states'. These may be involuntary such as sweating, shivering and trembling or voluntary such as deliberate actions and gestures. So these are divisible into *Vacika* – those which can be expressed by words (*Vac* – speech) and the *Angika* which are expressed by bodily expressions. In Indian drama, for example, the *Anubhavas* communicate to the audience, the emotions being felt by the characters onstage. There are also – involuntary emotions known as *Sattvikabhavas*: *Stambha* (paralysis), *Sveta* (sweating), *Romanca* (hair standing on end), *Svarabheta* (changes in one's tone of voice), *Vepathu* (trembling), *Vaivarnya* (changes in the colour of one's face), *Asru* (becoming tearful) and *Pralaya* (fainting). (Example: *Hamlet's* madness, pale countenance, unexpected behaviour, irrelevant remarks in conversation, his accusation of his mother and killing of *Polonius* are the consequents of the emotional state caused in him by the suspicions he harbours about the murder of his father).

*Vyabhicari-bhavas* (complementary states): The *vyabhicāribhāvas* are the Complementary Psychological States which exist temporarily in a performance but contribute to the overall emotional tone of the play. In *Hamlet*, *Hamlet's* fear of his father's ghost, angry outburst at his mother, sarcastic attitude towards the king, his feigned insanity, despair at the death of *Ophelia* are some of the fleeting emotions which contribute to the major theme of the play. The *Vyabhicāri-Bhāvas* are 33 in number. *Nirveda* (disinterest), *Glani* (tiredness), *Sanka* (apprehension), *Asuya* (insecurity), *Mada* (intoxication), *Srama* (exhaustion), *Alasya* (lethargy), *Dainya* (pity), *Cinta* (anxiety), *Moha* (delusion), *Smṛiti* (recollection), *Dhṛti* (steadfastness), *Vrida* (shame), *Capalata* (impulsiveness), *Harsa* (sudden delight), *Avega* (excitement), *Jadata* (stupor), *Garva* (arrogance), *Visada* (depression), *Autuka* (longing), *Nidra* (sleep), *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Supta* (dreaming), *Vibodha* (awakening), *Amarsa* (restrained anger),

Avahittha (deception), Ugrata (ferociousness), Mati (analysis), Vyadhi (sickness), Unmada (temporary insanity), Marana (death), Trasa (panic) and Vitarka (argumentiveness). The Natyasastra, however, recognizes that these factors are insufficient for the production of rasa. The emphasis is on the fact that the essential element for producing rasa is the sthayibhava—the dominant emotion, which persists throughout the drama amid the variations of the transitory feelings which come and go. The Sthayibhava (permanent mood) or Durable Psychological State is a major emotion which is developed by a number of minor feelings referred to as Vyabharibhavas. It is the overarching emotional tone of the play is known as the Sthayibhāva. The Natyāśāstra ascribes a kingly position to the Sthayibhāvas as they have a large suit i.e. they have a larger sphere of influence that the bhāvas which come and go (VyabharīBhāvas). For example, the Sthayibhāvain Hamlet is that of Hamlet's avenging anger. For example, the Erotic Rasa arises from the AlambhanaVibhava – presence of the lover & beloved, the UddīpanaVibhavas – the atmosphere of the place where the two meet, the call of night-birds; a gentle breeze, the moon, etc.; it gives rise to the Anubhavas – how the lover & beloved express themselves to each other (i.e. holding hands, kissing, embracing); it produces involuntary bodily responses (the Sattvikabhavas) and may give rise to complementary (or transitory) emotional states – the Vyabharibhavas [3].

If rasa is the purpose of Sanskrit drama then the tool, which is utilized to bring about rasa, is abhinaya. The word abhinaya means that which brings the thing to the spectator. Bharata says in his Natyasastra, that there are four kinds of abhinaya. The four types are angika (physical), vacika (verbal), sattvika (emotional) and aharya (make-up and costumes or material). The eight Sthayibhavas evoke eight corresponding Rasas:

1. Rati evokes Sringara (the Erotic - romance, love)
2. Hasa evokes Hasya (the comic - laugh, humor)
3. Shoka evokes Kāruna (the pathetic - compassion, sadness)
4. Krodha evokes Roudra (the furious - indignation, anger)
5. Utsaha evokes Veera (the heroic - valor)
6. Bhaya evokes Bhayanaka (the terrible - fear, horror)
7. Jugupsa evokes Bibhasa (the odious - disgust, aversion, repugnance)
8. Vismaya evokes Adbhuta (the marvelous - wonder, astonishment, amazement) Bharata Muni enunciated the eight Rasas in the Nātyasāstra, an ancient work of dramatic theory.

Each rasa, according to Nātyasāstra, has a presiding deity and a specific colour.

- Śṛṅgāram (Romance, Love, attractiveness. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: light green)
- Hāsya (Laughter, mirth, comedy. Presiding deity: Pramata. Colour: white)
- Raudram (Fury. Presiding deity: Rudra. Colour: red)
- Kārunyam (Compassion, mercy. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: grey)
- Bībhatsam (Disgust, aversion. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: blue)

- Bhayānakam (Horror, terror. Presiding deity: Kala Ratri. Colour: black)
- Veeram (Heroism. Presiding deity: Indra. Colour: Saffron)
- Adbhutam (Wonder, amazement. Presiding deity: Brahma. Colour: yellow [4].)
- Śāntam rasa: A ninth rasa was added by later authors and later the expression. Navarasa (the nine rasas) came into vogue.
- Śāntam Peace or tranquility. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: white [4].

Bharata Muni very emphatically states in the Rasadhyaya of Natyashastrathat "no meaningful idea is conveyed if the "Rasa" is not evoked." The very core of the Sanskrit Natya theory is the creation of "Rasa". Every dramatic presentation was aimed at evoking in the minds of the audience a particular kind of aesthetic experience, which is described as "Rasa". The concept of "Rasa" is the most important and significant contribution of the Indian mind to aesthetics. The study of aesthetics deals with the realization of beauty in art, its relish or enjoyment, and the awareness of joy/or Ananda that accompanies an experience of beauty. Rasa has no equivalent in word or concept in any other language or art. The closest explanation can be 'aesthetic relish'. According to Natyashastra, state Sally Banes and Andre Lepeck, drama is that art which accepts human beings are in different inner states when they arrive as audience, then through the art performed, it provides enjoyment to those wanting pleasure, solace to those in grief, calmness to those who are worried, energy to those who are brave, courage to those who are cowards, eroticism to those who want company, enjoyment to those who are rich, knowledge to those who are uneducated, wisdom to those who are educated [5].

## 2. Conclusions

Rasa is that internal enjoyment which is relished not only by the audience but also by the actors who perform it. The very fact that Bharata's Natyashastra has stood the test of time through all these ages to the Modern age proves its relevance and validity till date in literature and even in the field of cinema.

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