

## *The Creative Launcher*

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### **Exploring Some Facets of Rasa Theory**

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#### **Abstract**

The present paper is an exercise in humility to explore some of the facets of Rasa theory. Rasa as the name suggests means milk, wine or gist of a thing. The ancient theorists regard Rasa as the soul of poetry. Creation has evolved from the heterogeneity of Sattva, Raja and Tama. Pleasure is the most sought after thing starting from an insect to Brahma. This aesthetic pleasure or constant consciousness in Supreme Happiness is technically or poetically designated by the name of Rasa. The earliest treatise in which the Rasa theory finds an expression is the *Natyashastra* of Bharat who in turn claimed to have seen its first expression in Atharvveda. Rasa according to Bharat is a thought feeling synthesis. Rasa like the recipe of a drink is made up of many bhavas (feelings). As we delve deeper into the paper the explanation of Bharat about the origin of Rasa is given. Finally deities of this Rasas are shown in a tabular form.

**Keywords-** Rasa, Bharat Muni, Bhavas, Anubhavas

The word Rasa, or aesthetic emotions has a general and a technical meaning. In the first sense it means taste, while in the second sense it means the well – known primary emotions such as sringar (the amorous), Karuna (the pathetic), hasya (the ludicrous), Ronda (the passionate), Oira (the heroic), advuta (the wonder producing), bhayanaka (the fearful) and bibhatsa (the repugnant) and shant (optional).

By going through the vast world of oriental and occidental drama it is clear, nay, definite to say that Rasa has the most powerful place in it. The ancient theorists regard Rasa or the aesthetic emotion as the very soul of poetry. Rasa is an emotion excited by the artistic circumstances or situation. It only means that no emotion is raised to the status of Rasa,

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unless it is aesthetically excited. The grief expressed by the death of a child does not endow a person with Karuna rasa. It becomes Karuna Rasa only when a talented poet describes it through artistic skill. Bharat states that he has taken to the concept of Rasas from ‘Athrarvveda “Rasanatharvanadapi”’ (*Natyashastra*, 56). The creation of this takes place from Sattva, Raja and Tama as these three qualities or “gunas” are Shristi. From the metaphysical point of view, creation has evolved from the heterogeneity of these their qualities. When they remain separate there is quisant; the three elements create commotion and creation. “Samyam pralayo baishamyam Shrtish.”

Madhusudam Shastri in his commentary on *Natyashastra* says and goes to the extent of saying that actually this ‘Rasa’ is the only element to which this Shristi originated from the three qualities. It is necessary to quote Kalidasa here when he says that the behavior or character of mankind originated from Sattva, Raja and Tama and contains many Rasas. “Traigunyod Bhavatatra lokcharitam nanarasam wartate”.

Aristotle’s saying goes, “Art is an imitation of an action”. It is the same with the occidental scholars as they say, “A poet depicts the human behavior (Lokcharit) in his Kavya.” Bharat’s explanation of Natya is “Lokvrittanu karnam natyama tanmaya krttam” (*Natyashastra*, 132). Thus it is obvious if the actions contain many Rasas, imitations to have it.

Oriental mythology says, “Sukharthah sarvbhutanam pravrttih” meaning pleasure is the only sought after thing right from birth to death, even by insects and Brahma himself. It is narrated in the *Gita* that this soul or atmah after death assimilates itself into God, Which is considered as the chief source of joy. Madhusudan Shastri says that this joy of pleasure is synonymous with Rasa and hence most sought after. Vedic meaning of Rasa is milk, water, wine or the gist of thing. In Tattariyopanishad, Rasa is used for the Real Truth, and that Almighty and Superpower whose experience once in life gives permanent happiness is Mokchha. “Raso wai sah, rasam hi eva ayam labdhwa anandi bhabati”.

Abhinava Gupta, the celebrated aesthete, holds that poetry and drama both are identical. As far as the rasa experience is concerned. It the state of realisation through the processes of perception reviving all the potentialities of instinct or dormant feelings, like love, pathos, anger, wonder etc. This is blissful of our feelings by way of generalization (sadharaikaran) is specially termed as Rasa or aesthetic experience. The constant

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consciousness in Supreme Happiness is technically or poetically designated by the name of Rasa.

The earliest treatise in which the Rasa theory found expression is the *Natyashastra* of Bharat. In his famous 'Rasa-sutra', Bharat had described the various physio-emotional stages of Rasa. The fact that 'poetry is an art: and its ultimate purpose is to give delight' was no longer a point of dispute. Thus Rasa became equated with aesthetic pleasure. That this pleasure contained an element of entertainment was hinted by Bharat in his statement, "Binodjanamam loke Natyametadbhavi syati" (*Natya Shastra*, 151)

Later the pleasurable experience (*vinod*), enjoyment of an aesthetic work was given the technical name of Rasa, though pure entertainment or simple passing of time was excluded from it. Discussing the appeal and potency of Rasa, Bharat went on as far as even to say that the "pratipadya rasa" of a "drskarya" (drama) was powerful enough to provide relief to people stricken in those who were simply fired physically.

Dukhartanam, Shramartanam, shokartanam, tapaswinam.

Visrntijanan kale Natyametadbhavisyati. (*Natyashastra* 134)

Elaborating the idea further Abhinav Gupta remarked 'Rasasamadayo hi natyam' – Drama is a congregation of pleasurable experiences, and it was Rasa which gave unity to a literary composition. P. V. Kane in his study of *Sanskrit Poetics* (1910) observed that Rasa is both a physical and psychological experience.

Poetry is the use of intellectual, conscious use of its power to think and reflect. Beauty or Rasa as purification could be experienced by an unlettered person also but it could not be transformed into an artistic creation without the touch of intellect. The mind may conceive of a certain situation, the intellect gives it voice. Bharat had stated this when he says:

na bhavahinosti raso na bhavorasavarjitah,

parasarkrta sidhhistayoribhinaye bhavet. (*Natyashastra*, 689)

The various components of Rasa Vibhav, Anubhav and Byavichari are psychophysical in nature. A certain state of mind produces certain changes in the body and mannerisms (anubhava) at the sight of bibhav (excitements external) which lead to further mental and emotional experiences which are fleeting in nature. The total absorption of the heart and mind in the mood of the moment, total self-forgetfulness is Rasa or aesthetic experience. As the recipe of a drink consists of many ingredients, so 'rasa' is the by product

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of many bhavas (feeling). Bharat is further questioned about the meaning of Rasa and why the by product of bibhavs etc. is called so.

Bharat's answer is in this sloka where he says:

Yataha bahudravayatairvyanjanairbahubhiryutam I  
aswadyanti bhunjanan bhaktam bhaktvido janah. (*Natyashastra*, 681)

Bhavavinay sambadhansthajibhavanstatha budhah I  
aswadayanti manasa tasmannatyarasah smrtah II (*Natyashastra*, 683)

Further Bharat is asked to explain bhavas and their place of origin, whether bhavas come out of Rasa or Rasa is the effect of bhava. Bharat cites a shloka in favour of Rasa's origin from bhava:

Nanabhinaysambadhhanbhavayati rasaniman I  
Yasmattmadami bhava bigyeya antyorktrivih II (*Natyashastra*, 688)

nanadravyairbahubidhairvyanjanam bhavyate yatha I  
evam bhava bhavayanti Rasanvinayaih sah II (*Natyashastra*, 689)

Further Bharat asserts that Bhava cannot be without Rasa and Rasa cannot happen without bhava. Thus success of a Natya depends upon their mutual effect.

na raso bhavahinosti, na bhavo rasvarjitah I  
parasparkrta sidhistayorbhinaye bhavet II (*Natyashastra*, 689)

Further Bharat explains about the origin of Rasa. There are four primary rasas for the origin of subsequent layer of Rasa:

teshamutpattihetavascataro rasah tadyatha  
sringaro, roudro, biro vibatsa eti. (*Natyashastra*, 693)

Hasya emerges from Sringar, Karuna from Roudra, Advuta from Vir and Bhayanak from bibhatsa. Imitation of sringar is Hasya, object of Roudra is Karuna object of Vir is understood as advuta and the philosophy of bibhatsa is bhayanaka. The colour of sringar is Shyam (mazarine), bluish green (off white) it is the colour of hasya. The colour of Karun is like a plgeon and red signifies Roudra. Veer is to be understood by Gour, Bhayanak by Krishna and Advuta by yellow. Shant rasa is like transparent bluish water of Mansarovar.

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The deities of these Rasas are as follows:

- (a) Vishnu god of Sringar.
- (b) Pramath is the god of Hasya.
- (c) Rrdra is the god of Roudra.
- (d) Yama is the god of Karuna.
- (e) Mahakal is the god of Bibhatsa.
- (f) Kal himself is the god of Bhayanak.
- (g) Mahendra is the god of Veera.
- (h) Brahma is the god of Advuta.
- (i) Budha is the god of Shanta.

The emotion or sthayi bhava of amor (rati) develops into the erotic sentiment, Srinagar or Adyarasa. The indirect causes (alamban) of this sentiment (rasa) are a man and a woman, who love each other in pursuit of conjugal pleasures. It is mainly two types. Love in separation or vipralambha Sringar and the other, love in union or sambhoga sringar. Vriplamba is also called purva-raja of love in longing. Once there is an attraction by which every means it may be, the court of courtship runs in three ways: Vehement, balanced or responsive, respectively known as praudha, Samanjas and Sadharaba. Separation is equally possible even after love is accomplished and union is once affected. This is called viprayoga. In the opinion of some Canonists, vipralambha caused by sojourn (prarasa) is classified into three heads.

- (i) Karyaja- which is voluntary and may be on purpose.
- (ii) Sapaja- which is due to the malediction of some one more powerful; and may prevail by retaining the accursed in the same form or by transferring him to some other state of existence.
- (iii) Sambhramaja- which is due to some calamity proceeding from human or supernatural forces. The second important cause of separation is mana or disagreement between the loving couple. (*Natyashastra*, 271)

In fine, Vipralambha is of three types; one due to Ayoga, pre-union separation, and the other two are the forms of Viprayoga or post-union separation. Since the tragic end is conventionally averted, the state Vipralambha cannot prolong to an unreasonable length, and it is to be got over at length.

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Sambhoga Sringar - love untouched by Vipralambha in any shape whatsoever, and in course of which the spouse enjoy complete harmony of mind, is the substratum of the Sambhoga sringar. With the variety of amorous sports and sensual pleasures that the couple can invent for enjoying the mutual company, sambhoga sringar can be of countless design and presents no scope for generalization and classification.

**Karuna** – Grief (Soka) arising from the loss of a kindred of huge of the pathetic sentiment when manifested by means of its Vibahvas, Anubhavas and the sancri bhavas. The alambana (sabstratam) of the pathetic sentiment are the deceased kinsman, the post object or the worst calamity on the one hand, and the sufferer on the other. It is aroused by some reference to the lost person's merits, some talks about him, the occasion where his presence is missed. These are some of the facts which serve as the excitants (uddipana) of pathos. The squalor of the sufferer, his shedding of tears, shouting, dullness, and choking of throat are the consequence (anubhavas). Disgust, swoon, sadness, anxiety uneasiness, moroseness and stupor are the ancillary (Vyabhichari bhava) feeling that prevail in the Karuna rasa. Paleness, shiver, change of voice and stupefaction are the self existence that become visible on the person of the aggrieved.

**Roudra**- the emotion of wrath (Krodha) assumes the form Roudrarasa when suggested by its relative factors which are as follows:-

- (i) The alambana of the Roudra is the person who has done the wrong.
- (ii) His offensive deed, arrogant appearance, insolent behaviour awaken the sentiment and acts as exciting (uddipana) agents.
- (iii) Reddened eyes, smattering teeth, heated talk, handling of weapons, offering a dual fight are ensuant features.
- (iv) Anger (amarsha), agitation (kshobha), acrimony (ugrata) and inconstancy (capalta) are the auxiliary feelings which promote the sentiment.
- (v) Change of voice, perspiration are the sattvika-bhavas.

**Veer Rasa**– The pre dominant emotional of zeal or utsaha develops into vee rasa when manifested by means of the suggestive factors in a dramatic composition.

The zeal may be in respect of giving gifts (dana), in a showing compassion (daya), in combating the enemy (yuddha) and observance of duty (dharma). Thus the varied heroism may produce.

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These types of heroes and accordingly four type of heroic sentiments as well

- (a) Munificent heroism (Deah-vira).
- (b) Sympathetic heroism (Daya-vira).
- (c) Bellicose heroism (Yudda-vira).
- (d) Righteous heroism (Dharma-vira). (*Natya Shastra*, 280)

**Hasya-** Humorousness develops into a comic sentiment. The object of ridicule is alambana of this sentiment. The untoward laughter. Contempt and disturbance (Udvega) are the auxiliary feelings.

Bharat classifies Hasya rasa into two kinds (a) Subjective (atmasta) – when one laughs himself and (b) objective (Parasta) – when one makes another laugh. He opines that generally the comic sentiment is found among the low character and women. Yet humorous character may be a high personage at times, a middling or a base person. Humour can be expressed in six ways- Smile and gentle laugh (Smita and hasita) are the two ways of expressing humour of upper class character. Laugh and loud laugh (vihasita and uphasita) are two modes in which the middling characters express their humour. Peals of laughter and combination (apahasita and atihāsita) are the two modes in which the mirth of the low character is said to burst out. (*Natyashastra*, 283)

We can easily find that the creation of the emotion has certain behavioural and physical aspects and the inducements of the Rasa was highly stylized and formalized in terms of gestures, actions, colour of the dress etc. To make them clear and specific even when there are different shades of a particular emotion or Rasa. Both from the point of view of generation and communication of emotions or the shades thereof, there are clearly spelt out formulas. We may here cite the famous and controversial pronouncement of T.S Eliot on *Hamlet* as an artist failure because it lacked the objective correlative which has been defined as set of words, colours, sounds etc. Which may become the exact formula of an emotion.

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