International Research Journal of Education and Technology

Peer Reviewed Journal

ISSN 2581-7795



Indian English Drama and the Essential Essence of Rasa in Evoking Enriched Emotional and Aesthetic Experience

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Abstract: Rasa theory is the distinct and innovative concept of Indian Drama and performing arts. Bharata Muni is the propounder of this profound concept in the *Natyashastra* (c. 200 BC–200 AD). This is the fundamental and ancient scholarly book on Indian Drama. Rasa refers to the *essence, flavor* and *taste* of artistic work. When an artistic subject is presented in front of the reader or spectator it invokes emotions in the receiver's mind while perceiving the grave theme of this art. This artistic flavor is called Rasa and the impact it creates in the mind of the receiver is called *Bhava* or emotion. Therefore Rasa is the spell which is cast on the recipient and produces powerful *Bhava* in him. Rasa is the aesthetic and emotional outcome of an artistic or literary creation. It has grave and long lasting effect on the mind of the reader or on the audience. It can be translated as *juice, taste, essence* or *flavor*. Literature and performing arts are essential to enlighten the human beings with sublimity of thought, heighten the spirit and to illuminate the inner most core morally and emotionally. The performance of such an aesthetic subject engages, develops and elevates all the domains of person-cognitive, affectionate and psycho-motor domains. The audience feels the emotional depth, and can perfectly connect with the thematic essence, and empathize and justify the topic and its effect, is termed Sahardya. The word Sahrdaya refers to the same heart or there is a genuine connection and cordial bond between the art and the art enthusiast. Here lies the acceptance of art and literature across the globe as it creates an invisible and universal connection amidst the empathetic people leading them to feel and enjoy the artistic aesthetic and its core essence and heightening the degree of their existence. Rasa is the 'soul' of drama, it plays the crucial role in drama by arousing sentiments and emotions; it provides life to the piece of art. It is Rasa which makes the drama lively, entertaining and transformative rather than a monotonous narrative. Through Rasa the session of drama becomes a lifelong and permanent lesson.

Key Words: Natyashastra, Bhava , juice, taste, essence, flavor, Vibhava , Anubhava , Vyabhichari Bhava , Indian Philosophy, drama etc.

- **The Navarasas-** There are typically eight Rasas in the Natyashastra. Abhinavagupta has included another one Shantarasa. The rasa combines three major components to evoke sentiments in the enthusiasts. These are the dominant factor or cause- *Vibhava*, the

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physical and facial expressions *Anubhava* and ultimately the transitory emotions *Vyabhichari Bhava.*

1. **Sringara Rasa (Love-Sensual and Spiritual) -** This is the king of Rasas. Sringara Rasa means the *erotic, love, aesthetic beauty*. The sentiment is regarded as the Rasaraja. This is the highest form of love. Not only human romantic love but also the love between the human and the divine come in the inclusive sphere of Sringara Rasa. The soulful yearning in the passionate human love and the human's devotional urge to be united with the Divinity include in the Sringatra Rasa. The soulful individual urge to mix and merge with the Universal soul is considered as the highest form of love and devotion. This rasa is both the passionate *physical* longing between two romantic partners and the also the *metaphysical* soulful yearning for the Divine. This Rasaraja can also be divided in two types-
   a. *Sambhoga* -the passionate erotic love
   b. *Vipralambha*- the love and longing in absence.

Sringara is a Sthayibhava and it includes Rati a delightful emotion. Sringara also means the aesthetic beauty, beautification, decoration and ornamentation. The art of beautifying oneself to attain the permanent, passionate and affectionate love be it humane or divine. Love that not only attracts outer physical beauty but it also demands the enhancement of the inner beauty.

2. **Hasya Rasa – The sentiment of Comedy-** This essential sentiment which arouses in the enthusiast after perceiving the art deeply is the sentiment of *mirth and comedy*. This is a Sthayibhava. The clothing, attires, improper speech, awkward actions, and the follies arouse laughter amidst the readers or the audiences. The presentations of the characters, their irrelevant speech and weird actions are the causes or Vivhava and its direct effect of the sentiment is the anubhava or expressions are smiles, and genuine laughter. This Hasya Rasa is classified in two primary divisons-

a. Atamstha- This is subjective and the comedy triggers for one's own folly.
b. Parastha- This is objective and laughter comes from the follies of others.

Hasya rasa is used by the dramatist to enlighten the seriousness of the plot of the drama. After the intense emotions Hasya Rasa is presented deliberately to act as a *breather*. The occurrence of comedy after a serious action in the drama actually merges gravity with levity. The Vidushaka or the clown is the essential element or entity to provide the plot or the audience with genuine laughter. This is very much alike the Comic Relief of English drama where the clown is the chief representative to feel the audience with mirth and enjoyment after the grave and serious action. The combination of the seriousness with laughter actually elevates and enhances the standard of the drama and cast a long lasting impact in the perceiver's psyche.

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Hasya Rasa is categorized in six prominent divisions.

(i) Smita Hasya – it is a gentle, subtle and restrained smiling expression.
(ii) Hasita Hasya- this is a soft, delicate but open laughter.
(iii) Vihasita Hasya- This a broader and wider tender smile.
(iv) Upahasita Hasya- This is a smile due to sarcasm. Satirical laugh.
(v) Apahasita Hasya- This is the loud and guttural laughter.
(vi) Atihasita Hasya- This is the heartfelt, excessive and deepest from of laughter

3. **Karuna Rasa (Pathetic/ Compassion/Sorrow) -** Generally pathetic means the strong emotion which arouses sorrow and pity. Karuna also refers to compassion, mercy and pity in spiritual context to have fellow-feeling and compassion for others. This sentiment evokes pathos and sorrow usually for the loss, suffering and separation of something very closer to the heart. The God Yama is associated with this sentiment. In Ramayana, Valmiki's pathos is considered as the original source of this precious and unique sentiment.
4. **Rudra (Fury/Wrath/ Anger) -** It is the sentiment of anger and fury. This is also a Sthayi Bhaava. It is associated with Rudra or Shiva. This destructive emotion emerges due to some injustice, violence or to protest and restrain some immoral things. This sentiment creates chaos to restore order, peace and sustainability. This is a crucial emotion in drama.
5. **Veera (Valor/Heroism/ Courage) –** This is the sentiment of indomitable courage, fearlessness, valor, bravery and heroic attitude. It is demonstrated in the superior characters that are the spirited, enthusiastic and a source of enormous optimistic energy to protest against the evils of the society. This is a Sthayibhava and associated with the Indra, king of Gods. The prominent expressions or vibhava of this sentiment are sharp wit, analytical and diplomatic skill, patience, leadership quality and enormous courage and the anubhava or consequence is heroic action to establish justice and truthfulness in the world. This essential Rasa can be classified in three major types
   a. Dhana Veera- one who gives a lot even in the cost of his own life, they do not hesitate to provide his most precious thing. Example- Karna.
   b. Daya Veera- The characters who is empathetic and compassionate. Example- Yuddhistira.
   c. Yuddha Veera- who are expert in the battlefield. They are virtuous and full of valor like Rama.
6. **Bhayankara (Fearful/Terrible) -** This sentiment evokes fear, anxiety, trauma as a consequence of some horrific incident, and threatening situations. The determinant factors or vibhava of this sentiment is horrible noises, death of someone, haunted

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places, appearance of ghostly or supernatural entities, lonely and deserted existence in a desolate situation. This sentiment involves a frightening situation which causes anxiety and fear.

7. **Bibhatsa (Odious/Disgust) -** This Sthayibhava is caused due to the perception or sight of something jugupsa means disgusting and repulsive object. It is associated with Mahakaal Shiva. It is divided by Dhananjaya into 3 primary types-
   (a) Kshobana –appalling or ghastly
   (b) Udvegi – foul, disgusting and repulsive
   (c) Ghrna- suddha- means deep distaste and revulsion
8. **Adbhuta Rasa (Astonishment/ Marvelous) - This** sentiment involves surprise, amazement wonder along with the Stayibhava Vismaya or astonishment. This sentiment invokes child like curiosity with widely opened eyes. The presiding deity of this rasa is the divine Gandharvas.

The ninth Rasa or the Shanta Rasa is the sentiment of peace or calm. It is not propounded by Bharata Muni. It is first mentioned by the renowned Kashmiri Pandit Udbhata and later illaborately expanded by Abhinavagupta.

9. **Shanta Rasa (Peace/Serene) -** This is the sentiment which emerges in the ultimate stage of spiritual enlightenment. It involves Vairagya or detachment with it. It evokes the emotion of calmness, tranquility and serenity. The Sthayivaba is *Sama* or inner peace and quietness. The meditative face of Lord Buddha is the perfect expression of Shanta Rasa. The sentiment is associated with white color which represents detachment. Vishnu or Narayan is the main God of this Rasa. This sentiment represents the ultimate salvation or *Moksha/ Nirvana* which refers to the culmination and complete liberation from the cycle of life and duty and rebirth. This is the mellow of neutrality or Shanta rasa in conventional Vaishnava custom.

- **Some Major Indian English Drama With Predominant Rasa:**

1. **The Post Office (1912): Rabindranath Tagore-** This Indian English drama is written in Bengali as Dak Ghar by the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and subsequently translated into English as The Post Office by Devabrata Mukherjee. The predominant rasa here is Karun Rasa or sorrow and compassion and Adbhuta rasa or the sentiment of astonishment. Then in the ending emerges the Shanta Rasa. This is a story of an ailing orphan child Amal who is bed ridden in his room and communicates with the world only through a small window of the room. He remains under the custody of his adoptive uncle Madhav. The ill child when interacts with the outsiders like the curd seller, villagers, children, Gaffer et.al he feels amazed. The Letter from

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the king is symbolizing the divine connection, the tie between the individual with the supreme entity, divine grace. Shanta Rasa exists in utter despair when death is accepted not as violence, frustration but a way to attain peace, freedom. The confined room can be symbolized as the caged body where the spirit is in anxiety and pray for liberation from the sickly, feeble physique of the poor boy and awaiting eagerly to unite with the divine and to get perfect bliss and peace. The room can be seen as the mundane world itself and the ailing body of the child symbolizes adversity, sorrow and suffering and his extremely desolate and isolated existence which are compelling him to yearn for salvation and the union with the omnipotent and the savior to get rid of this worldly affairs and to attain the ultimate spiritual enlightenment. The story and the theme evoke Karuna Rasa and pathos for the fragile state of the boy. The acceptance of death as a savior pervaded the psyche with utmost peace, contentment and the Shanta Rasa. W. B. Yeats delivered the English version of the play with an adequate preface. The drama gets worldwide acceptance and audience and readers across the globe. It was performed in the Abbey Theatre in English in the year 1913.There were 105 successful performances of the play in Germany. During the backdrop of the World War II, its unique theme of liberation and the celebration of life and death and the continuous presence of divine grace enlightened the soldiers of the concentration camps. The drama was accepted, performed, celebrated and translated in multiple foreign languages like Spanish, Polish. German, French and English etc.

2. **Silence! The Court Is in Session Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (1963) -** is the Marathi novel of Vijay Tendulkar. The drama is a mock trial. Miss Benare is a spinster school teacher but is impregnated by Professor Damle. The play and other characters of the room are accusing and humiliating her brutally. The room becomes claustrophobic for her. So, the Rasas of fear and disgust prevalentin the play. The patriarchal society does not accuse the man for his illegal actions as a married person. The male characters are trying to suppress, marginalize and silence Miss. Benare. The whole situation of Miss Benare evokes Karuna or compassion. The representatives of patriarchal society Kashikar, and Sukhatme represent Rudra Rasa. They become furious and express their violent wrath to the unmarried pregnant lady. While pregnancy is a blissful journey for a mother and society use to glorify it. On the contrary the same situation brings utter humiliation to Miss Benare as she has not followed the societal rules. Here the professor who is responsible for her condition is not in the scene and is not accused by the dominant people of patriarchal society. The lady is silenced, her voice is chocked. The titular silence stands for silencing the women victims ironically and it is a satire to the legal procedure which establishes injustice rather than providing truthful verdict and proper judgment. The patriarchal

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society exercises the tyrannical power on women by objectifying, marginalizing and silencing them mercilessly.

3. **Hayavadana (1971) - Girish Karnad-** This play is enriched with multiple Rasas. There are several Rasas. The character and the appearance of Hayavadana itself arouse Adbhuta Rasa or wonder and amazement. The act of exchanging, transposing and displacing Kapila and Devdutta's body and head also arouses the sentiment of surprise and astonishment. A man with horse's mouth who can speak is perfect example of Adbhuta sentiment. Sringara Rasa is pervaded in the form of erotic love (between Pamini and Devdutta) and lust (between Padmini and Kapila) among the three people. Karuna rasa or compassion is present in the real fact that perfect perfection cannot be attained by either Devdutta or Kapila. There is certain limitation of every human being. The incompleteness arouses the sentiment of Karuna or pathos and sorrow. Hasya Rasa is evoked in Padmini's light hearted demeanors. Rudra Rasa is demonstrated in the fury, anger and envy of the two best friends Devdautta and Kapila who have turned completely into rivals to each other for their common longing for Padmini.
4. **Tara: A Play in Two Acts (1990): Mahesh Dattani:** Tara exposes the poignant reality of the unethical practices of the society. Tara and Chandan are identical twins born with a third leg. Despite the fact that Tara has more claims to this leg as it is joined directly with her body, their parents especially their mother, Bharati and the family and unfortunately the Doctor Thakkar also decide to provide this leg to Chandan as he is the male heir of their family. This incident gives Tara a life of lifelong dependency and life-in-death situation. The striking incident of gender discrimination provide no one happiness of the family Tara is pathetically physically disable for the rest of the life, Chandan is psychologically tormented and guilt-ridden for his entire life due to this heinous act of his parents. His parents were also guilt consciousness. The play is pervaded with Karuna rasa or compassion for the physical and psychological states of the people and the suffering of Tara and Chandan both. The parents have betrayed both the children. They have deprived Tara from her rightful limb –physically; and Chandan from his mental peace and providing him with trauma and guilt-consciousness for the rest of his life. His angst and psychological agony aggravate after the premature death of his beloved sister. Adbhuta Rasa or Surprise is emerged due to the unnatural act of their mother who destroys the lives of both the children. She is not a protective and nurturing mother rather one who has ruthlessly parted the inseparable twin and instead of love and affection she gives them traumatic and painful existences from their infancy to death and makes their lives veritable hell. Her husband Mr. Patel retains his cold indifference throughout the journey.

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- **Comparison Between Indian Rasa Aesthetics and Aristotle's Catharsis**

Rasa Theory	Aristotle's Catharsis
1. Mainly 9 Rasas	1. Mainly 2 emotions
2. For aesthetic, transformative and spiritual enlightenment	2.For purgation of serious emotions
3. Propounder- Bharata Muni the eight rasas and the navarasa is expanded by Abhinavagupta	3.Aristotle
4. Book- Natyasastra and Abhinavabharati	4.Book- poetics
5.Indian Philosophy	5.Greek Theory
6.Nine Rasas are- Sringara, Hasya, Karuna, Rudra, Veera, Bhayankar, Bibhatsya, Adbhut, and Shanta	6. Two powerful emotions-Pity and fear
7. Emotionally enriched enthusiasts	7. Emotionally relaxed audience and readers

- **Theoretical Approaches:**
- **Reader- response theory-** Rasa evokes emotions and sentiments in the art enthusiasts.
- **Rasa and Feminism-** The marginalization, objectification and silencing of women create Karuna rasa for women and Rudra rasa for the oppressive patriarchal practices.
- **Postcolonial Trauma—**Karuna rasa is evoked for suffering of partition and consequent trauma emerges.

Conclusion: The invention of Rasas in Indian Drama by Bharata Muni has heightened the standard and enriched Indian drama in the global perspective. The Navarasas are the assets of Indian drama. Through the advent of these unique emotions and sentiments while perceiving the literary text whether in the form of a text or performing art it makes an invisible and permanent connection between the art and the enthusiasts and making the limited time session a veritable life lesson. The crucial Rasas make the literary piece a lively narration, a depiction of the truth which through evoking emotions put life to the very narrative and castes a permanent impact on the perceivers' psyches. The Indian drama and its Rasas connect with the audience making it a educational, lively and fulfilling experience.

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