



Research Paper

Contemplations on Bharata's Rasa

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ABSTRACT: *Is rasa abstract or empirical? Why is rasa associated with only listening and seeing? And why was it necessary to develop theories on a subject that deal completely with the performance onstage and literally have no usage otherwise?*

One can contemplate and argue a host of questions surrounding 'rasa'. But undeniably it has been one of the most debated topics in the history of dramaturgy. It is as deep as its content and as prolific as its age (2000 years since Bharata wrote the Natya Shastra, the bible of drama, dance and music). The central notion in the staging of drama is rasa for the Indian theorists as well as performers. Infact, there is a prominent parallel between the poetics of Aristotle and the rasa-sutra of Bharata. While Aristotle emphasised on the impact of drama on human psychology through his theory of catharsis, Bharata through his rasa-sutra underlined the spiritual effect and ethical influences.

This article is an assimilation of questions on chapter 6 of the Natya Shastra that talks about Rasa in detail and tries to provide scope for further research on the questions. On the paths of David Daiches, the researcher believes, "There is no single right method of handling literary problems and no single approach to works of art that will yield all the significant truths about them."

KEYWORDS: *Rasa, Natya Shastra, Bharata Muni's Rasa, emotions, Indian poetics and rasa, Indian dance and Rasa*

Received 08 November, 2020; Accepted 23 November, 2020 © The author(s) 2020.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the relentless pursuit of defining aesthetics and finding its ultimate goal 'bliss', the word rasa has reached out a range of heterogeneous genres. Its usage dates back to the Vedic literature and spans across Ayurveda and modern literature. "Literally the word rasa stands for liquid or that which flows. But it was also used for indicating different things – mercury, a chemical and 'Essence' or the vital principle. Professor Hiriyanna thinks that the word rasa primarily means 'taste' a 'savour' such as sweetness." The different philosophical systems such as – Carvaka and the Samkhya have included rasa as a component. For example, the Samkhya believes that all macro cosmic objects contain the following five tanmatras (prakrti) – sabda, sparsa, rupa, rasa and gandha. The word rasa was borrowed from Atharvaveda for explaining the theory of stage-drama. In the 17th chapter of the Natya Shastra: rasān atharvanād api. The word rasa has been used as the sense of sound by Anandavardhana in his Dhvani Theory.

The word rasa has also been taken by alamkarinis. It was used by Bhamaha, Vamana, Dandin, Rudrata, Udbhatta who believed that it was the capacity of the poetry to portray a visual picture through its alamkaras that generated rasa.

Coming to Bharata, the gestalt of the stage presentation is understood by the audience in a similar fashion as signs in our daily language but they are interpreted with meanings than mere signs. Barlingay says, "According to Bharata, the kavi-antargata-bhava is transformed into a gestalt of vibhava, anubhava and vyabhicari bhava and that in turn get transformed into rasa and settles with the spectators as sthaya bhava.

In the passage of its journey, rasa adopted its highest status 'Brahmāsvādasahodara' or the experience of the Brahman.

However, "The modern tendency is to condemn the ancient and medieval oriental theories as blinkered, polemical, mythical, and lacking in objectivity." And therefore inspite of the multifold intense explanations

through verses and arya's, according to the researcher, Bharata has also been inconsistent and sometimes perhaps biased and still provides ample scope for further inquiries.

II. RASA THEORY – AN OVERVIEW

Rasas have the possibility of manifestation or realisation due to artistic excitation.

The Natya Shastra is not only celebrated for its literary value but also for its ethical and modern charm. The theory of emotions propounded by Bharata is the strong foundation of a complex and rich horizon. And just like any other Indian ideology, it is ruled by splendid mythological back up.

Bharata says, Vibhānubhāva vyabhicāri samyogada rasanispattih i.e. sentiments (Rasa) is produced from a combination of determinants (vibhāva), consequents (anubhāva) and temporary psychological states (vyabhicāri bhāva). The 'vibhāvas' or determinants are the conditions and objects which are responsible for the rise of emotions.

The 'anubhāvas' refers to the communication of the performer using gestures, body language and expressions. The 'vyabhicāri bhāvas' though momentary, in a performance but contribute to build the overall emotion of the play. These may be involuntary such as sweating, shivering and trembling or voluntary such as deliberate actions and gestures.

Then what are Bhavas? Bhavas or sentiments are bhavayanti (pervade). Play is infused due to the mobility of the bhavas. Interestingly Natya Shastra uses the word Bhava in two sense – as mental states and that which causes. The manifestation of experience which makes us ponder that bhavas then need not be mental always. In the line of Barlingay, "Bhava means anything that exists."

In the rasa theory Bharata defines the bhāvas as kāvya-rasa-abhivyakti-hetavah, (factors for the creation of rasa) and enumerates 49 of them that includes – sthayi bhavas (8 predominant emotions), vyabhicari bhavas (33 fleeting emotions) and sattvika bhavas (8 involuntary emotions) as the main constituents.

Do we consider this list as complete and comprehensive? Are they actually scientific?

2.1 Sthayi Bhava

Sthayi Bhava can occur in real life experience whereas rasas are artificially made to occur in the world of drama or art. The latter occurs only when the poet's mental thoughts or imagination is encoded by the actor through gestures and expressions and decoded by the spectator. These sthayi bhavas are common to an ordinary man as well as an actor. While an actor hones the skill of imitation of the emotions, in an ordinary man it occurs quite promptly. Sthayi bhavas are dormant and exist in multiple layers and never exists singularly.

But where does Bharata define Sthayi Bhavas? After defining the concepts (chapter 7, NS), he defines vibhavas, anubhavas and goes on to mentioning sthayi bhavas are already told. "that we shall now define sthayi bhavas", laksanam khalu pūrvam abhihitam (Ch 7, NS), but where is the definition? (one keeps pondering). What is clearly understood in his sthayi bhava is that they precede rasa, are somewhat static in the mind compared to the vyabhicari bhavas which are dynamic and fleeting.

During a stage performance, it is intriguing that sthayi bhava (the central emotion of the play) is conveyed to the spectator using a variety of symbols and layers. For example, to show soka or grief of a nayika, it is not only the nayika in tears, but withering leaves, gloomy clouds, a bee searching for the flower and so many metaphors are depicted to arouse the sthayi bhava which are already present in the spectator's mind. And if at all, there is a misinterpretation, then the entire creation of the rasa may collapse. At the same time, a single situation for example, a road accident. While some may rush to help (veera) in empathy, some may be in (soka) with the mishap; for a few the visual might be scary and result in (bhayanaka) fear or the bloodshed due to the accident might also lead to (vibhatsa) or a terrific feeling. Thus it can lead to the creation of different rasas by triggering different sthayi bhavas embedded in their minds.

Why only these sthayi bhavas? Is it because they might have the maximum potential of being able to be relished by the audience. Can we think of other sthayi bhavas? While it is overwhelming to read how he has classified - haso (laughter) in three varieties – smile, laughter and excessive laughter, krodha (anger) is of five types – anger caused by enemies, superior persons, lovers, servants, and feigned anger, soka (grief) is of three kinds - weeping out of joy, affliction and jealousy, there is no mention of types of such in the other sthayi bhavas, fear and vibhatsa. Further, for utsaha or enthusiasm, the vibhavas mentioned are all qualities in turn rather than situations. Bharata mentions - power, courage, readiness to sacrifice. Did he miss war, natural calamity that can trigger utsaha?

If sthayi bhavas are dormant in everyone, why does he specify sorrow related to women and of inferior type? Didn't Dasaratha weep when Rama leaves him to go to the forest? Utsaha related to superior persons alone. Will not a faithful servant display valour when his master is attacked? And finally, is the sthayi bhava equal to the kavi-antargata bhāva?

2.2 Vyabhicari Bhavas

Vyabhicari bhavas or fleeting emotions are like carrying agents of the sthaya. Then why is it such temporary emotions play a major role in something that's equated to the 'eternal bliss'? It is its character of expediting and directing the spectator towards intensifying the savouring of the rasa (which may or may not happen) that it has been treated in a detailed significant manner by Bharata.

Bharata is specific in coining separate vibhavas in women in bhavas like – nirveda (discouragement), sankha (doubt). Mado seem to have the maximum number of anubhavas while avega has been explained in great detail with 8 types of situations that could arouse agitation - cyclone, rain, unpleasant talks, happy thing, sadness and beating, fire and elephant. Besides he also mentions the entry and exit of the actor in this case particularly. How can Autsukhyam or eagerness or impatience have an anubhava of slow work (tandri), sayana (lying down), nidra (sleep). These are more traits of fatigue and sickness. Apsmara (obsession) doesn't include consumption of drugs or alcohol as a vibhava. Mati (intellect) happens only by reading the sastras but what about experience?

Infact many do not seem to be emotions for example srama (exhaustion), or smrti (recollection) and even more questionable is marana (death). Inspecting on the exhaustive nature one finds that he has missed out hunger, greed, friendship, foolishness or even hatred which often form important elements in a drama and contribute towards rasa nispattih.

2.3 Sattvika Bhavas

Mental states that can be seen on the body and happens with an intense involvement of the mind. To explain it simply, imitation of anger is possible to encode by an actor through anubhavas but imitation of vaivarnya (change of colour) redness due to anger is only possible by a very experienced actor. And hence Bharata has categorised a separate set of emotions sattvika bhavas. They seem to have a dual nature – they are transitory and they are external. A question arises thus – Is sattvika bhava – a bhava or an anubhava?

III. CONCLUSION

Vibhavas (Sthayi, vyabhicari and sattvika) are mental reactions while Anubhavas are physical reactions. But there is hardly any difference between anubhava and abhinaya that are both understood as effects. It is perhaps the 'abhineyatva' or the potential capacity which acts as incentive and produces certain physical symptoms or states known as anubhavas. Can we then say, from the point of view of the writer it is anubhava and from the point of view of the actor it is abhinaya? So, can we say Rasa is external but bhava is internal?

In a typically simpler manner, we can understand that art therefore is an entity that is connected to the spectator and the artist. As Barlingay says, "This may be roughly represented as (1) the states of artist's mind (2) the objectified expression (of the artist), and (3) states of the mind of the spectator. The first can be termed as rasanirmitikriya—prakriya and the second one as rasāsvāda prakriyā." Post Bharata, there have been scholarly work who have defined rasa in various ways. From Bhatta Lollata (Utpattivada), Sri Sankuku (Anumitivada), Bhattanayaka (Bhuktivada), Abhinavagupta (Abhivyaktivada) to Jagannatha Pandita of the 17th century, a host of scholars were enthusiastic to contribute to rasas.

Sl no	Sthayi Bhava	Vibhava	Anubhava
1	Rati (love)	seasons, garlands, unguent, ornaments, dear ones, enjoyment of a superior residential house, essence of opposition	smiling face, sweet words, knitting of eyebrows and glances
2.	Hasya (laughter)	imitating others, behaving like a clown, making fun, idiotic speech or actions	Smile, laughter, excessive laughter
3.	Soka (sorrow)	separation from beloved, destruction of wealth, death, restrictions, undergoing pain due to happiness agony jealousy (women)	tears, lament, wailing, change of colour in face, change of voice, falling on the ground, trembling, loud crying, long sigh, stupor, maddened, high passion, fainting puffed cheeks, tears from the corner of eye, horripilation in the body incessant tears, broken voice, falling on to the ground, hue and cry throb of lips and cheek, head moving, long sigh and eyebrows knotted
4.	Krodha (anger)	insult, torture, scolding, fight, enmity enemy anger on elders towards beloved towards subordinates false anger	open nose, wide open eyes, biting upper and lower lip, throbbing cheek with knotted eyebrows, terrible face, bitten lip, rubbing hands, looking at ones own shoulder eyes to be turned away, wiping tears with pale face, disturbed body language less body language, shedding tears, looking with corner of eye, knotted eyebrows, throbbing lips threatening, scolding, rolling with widen eyes, lowered look reflecting some tiredness, expressing both spirit and anger
5.	Utsaha (energy)	Worry-less, prowess, valour (only for superior people)	courage, generous, intelligence
6.	Bhaya (fear)	mistake or wrong done to elders or kings, sighting dangerous animals, lonely house, forest, mountain, deep places, seeing elephant, snake, getting severe scoldings, dense jungles, dark place without sunlight, hearing eerie sounds like that of owl, rakshasa ghost, animal or scary sounds	shaking, trembling of hand-leg-heart, dry face, dry lips made wet by tongue, sweat, tremble, scared, looking around for protection and help, attempting to run or jump sagging body, fluttering eyelids
7.	Jugupsa/ disgust	hearing and seeing unpleasant things	shrinking body, face, spitting, turning away
8.	Vismaya / astonishment	Illusion, magic, extraordinary feats of men, painting, handicraft, sculpture, intelligence	wide eyes, still eyes, moving eyebrows, horripilation, nodding head, uttering words of expression like 'excellent!'
Sl no	Vyabichari Bhavas	Vibhavas	Anubhavas
1.	Nirveda/ Discouragement (women and lower characters) (women and crooked minded people)	becoming poor, sick, being insulted, put to shame, wrong words, angered words, beating, separation from fond people, understanding falseness of worldly life	Crying, breathing, indecisiveness
2.	Glani (weakness)	vomit, decency, long term disease, penance, oath, mental worry/stress, mind wondering on its magnitude, love sickness, drinking, excessive exercises, long travel, hunger&thirst, not slept for long	becoming thin, tired speech, eyes, cheek, stomach, faltering walk, tremble, disinterested, let down body, paleness, broken voice
3.	Sanka (doubt) (Women and Lower characters)	stealing –thinking of being caught, doing wrong to king, improper actions	constantly looking here and there, hesitating movement, dryness of the mouth, licking the lips, change of facial colour, tremor, drylips, loss of voice
4.	Asuya (envy)	having committed wrong actions, anger on others, their riches, luck, intelligence, education, luxury	In a public space, talking ill about them, not giving them enough credit for their merits, look filled with jealousy, facing down, knotting eyebrows, insulting them
5.	Mada (intoxication)	Light, Medium and Excessive	sing, cry, another might laugh, one another might speak hard words and another, might just sleep
6.	Srama (exhaustion)	travelling a long way, exercising of the limbs	gentle rubbing of the body, breathing, contraction of the mouth, Belching, Massaging of the limbs, very slow gait, contraction of the eyes

7.	Dainya (depression)	poverty, mental agony	Want of self-command, Dullness of the body. Absent mindedness giving up of cleansing [the body]
8.	Cinta/Anxiety	Loss of wealth theft of a favourite object, poverty	Breathing, sighing, agony, meditation thinking with a downcast face, thinness
9.	Moha	Accidental injury Adversity, sickness Fear, Agitation remembering past enmity	Want of movement, (excessive) Movement of a particular limb, Falling down. Feeling, Not seeing properly
10.	Smrti/ Recollection	impairment of health disturbed nightly sleep, seeing and speaking with a l, thinking, constant practice	Nodding of the head. Looking down, raising the eyebrows,
11.	Dhrti/contentment	Heroism, spiritual knowledge, learning wealth, purity good conduct, devotion to one's superior, getting excessive amount of money, enjoying sports	Enjoyment of objects gained, and not grumbling over the objects unattained, past, partially enjoyed
13	Vrida/shame	Humiliation, repentance on account of transgressing words of superiors or disregarding them, nonfulfilment of vows and the like.	covered face, thinking with downcast face, drawing lines on the ground, Touching clothes and rings, biting the nails
14.	Capalata/ impatience	Love, hatred, malice, impatience jealousy, opposition	Harsh words, rebuke, beating Killing, taking to prison, Goading
15.	Harsa (delight)	attaining a wish, in company of loved people, when the mind is happy for a reason, blessings from deva, guru, raja and/or husband, getting good food or clothes and the pleasure out of these	eye and face with happiness, lovable talk, embrace, horripilation, tears of joy and perspiration
16.	Avega (agitation)	lightening, meteor etc falling from heaven, falling of an asteroid cyclone rain fire elephant happy speech hearing unhappy things Sadness and beaten up	body shaken, mind bothered, face getting pale, and showing sorrow as well as ascharya covering oneself with cloth, rubbing eyes, covering properly with clothes, walking fast body getting wet – wiping it, running, searching and taking shelter crushing eyes to show reaction to smoke, shrinking body, quickly moving away, jumping over or escape actions of quickly moving away, distorted/stumbling walk, becoming still with fear, trembling, turning and looking back and also showing surprise quickly getting up, embrace, giving clothes or jewels, tears, horripilation falling down, rolling terribly, running, lamenting, weeping running away from that place, taking up a weapon, taking a leather or armour and wearing it, alighting up on elephant, horse or chariot and facing it
17.	Jadata/ stupor	disinterested of things happening around, seeing or hearing either interested or disinterested things	not telling anything, answering, keeping silence, no connection or knowledge about things happening around, looking without batting eyelid, being spellbound
18.	Garva (pride)	wealth, clan, form, youth, knowledge, prowess, wealth	being jealous, insult, push out, not answering, not talking, looking with pride, moving body proudly, laugh at others, speaking rude words, talking back at elders, talk in a way that others feel tortured, holding an arrogant nature
19.	Visada (despair)	one is not able to complete a taken work and by act of danger due to destiny	Uttama & madhyama: looking for help, thinking if there is any way out, broken enthusiasm, upset mind, long sigh adhama: running fast, looking scared, dried mouth, trying to make it wet, sleep, long sigh, long thinking
20.	Autsukya (Impatience)	separation from fond people, thinking of them, seeing garden	long sigh, facing down, submerged in thoughts, sleep, work in slow pace, lying down, wishing
21.	Nidra (sleeping)	less strength, tiredness, feeling dried up, drunk, laziness, worry, too much food, by nature	heavy face, looking down at body, gloomy eyes, stretching body, sluggishness, long breath, going thin, half closed eyes
22.	Apasmara (epilepsy)	possessed by god, yaksha, bhuta, naga, brahma rakshasa, bhuta, ghost, dead, or on	flutter, long sigh, tremble, running, fall down, perspire, still, froth from face(mouth), dried tongue wetted.

		thinking about them, being in unclean and lonely places, falling down or sick	
		possession or thinking of bhutas and ghosts, being in a haunted place	quickly falling down on the floor, trembling, froth from mouth, feeling less, get up quickly
23.	Supta (dreaming)	when completely immersed, when the mind goes behind something and is obsessed with it, when lying down in the floor and spreading out body in a very relaxed manner	long exhale, shrunk body, eyes closed, all sense organs being engulfed, dreams etc – supta can happen with or without dreaming
24.	Vibodha (awakening)	digested food, end of dream, hearing loud noise	yawning, crushing eyes, getting up
25.	Amarsa (indignation)	knowledge, wealth, comforts, increased prowess due to that, if somebody insults, this can happen.	head moving up and down, occurrence of sweat, putting face down, thinking, deep thought, action, searching for remedy or help
26.	Avahitha (dissimulation)	shyness, fear, infame, caught in a wrong place or situation	talking unrelated stories, looking down, stopping in between a talk, showing as if one has high strength
27.	Ugrata (cruelty)	being caught red handed while stealing, doing wrong or talking wrong against royalty	killing, imprisonment, beating up, scolding
28.	Mati (assurance)	thinking about sastras, considering the pros and cons of things.	instructing the pupils, Ascertainment, removal of doubt
29.	Vyadhi (sickness)	fever caused - due to cold Feeling of heat Other types of sickness	shivering, tremor of the entire body, bending [the body], shaking of the jaws, narrowing down the nasal passage, dryness of the mouth horripilation, lamentation throwing out clothes, the hands and the feet, desire to roll on the ground, desire for coolness lamentation, crying narrowing the mouth, dullness of the body, deep breathing, making peculiar sounds, crying, tremor
30.	Unmada (insanity)	Death of beloved persons, loss of wealth,accidental hurt, derangement of the three humours wind (vata) bites (pitta) and phelgm	Laughing, weeping, crying, talking lying down,sitting, running, dancing singing and reciting (something) without any reason, smearing (the body) with ashes and dust, taking grass, nirmalya, soiled cloth, rags, potted earthen tray as decoration many other senseless acts, imitation of others
31.	Marana (death)	weapons, snake bite, poison, wild animals, elephant, horse, chariot, other animals, hit by vehicles weapons sickness poison	immediately falling down, tremble, roll down sickness, an emancipated body, given up, slow movement, half closed eyes, hiccups, long breath, moving eyes, looking for help, unclear speech thin, tremble, burning sensation, hiccups, froth, trembling shoulders, still ness are eight expressions
32.	Trasa (Fright)	lightening, meteor falling, attacked, being hit by weapons, due to wild animals/spirits, animal sounds	shrinking body, rattled, tremble, paralysed, horripilation, broken voice, lament
33.	Vitarka (deliberation)	doubt, giving a thought, thinking of variations	varied thoughts, questioning, decision making, discussions, talking in secrecy
Sl no	Sattvika Bhavas	Vibhavas	Anubhavas
1.	Sveda/ perspiration.	Anger, fear, joy, shame, sorrow, toil, sickness, heat, exercise, fatigue, weariness, affliction, summer heat	taking up a fan, wiping off sweat, exhibiting a desire for fresh breeze
2.	Stambha/ paralysis	joy, fear, sickness, surprise, sadness, intoxication and anger.	being inactive, motionless, sluggish, without a smile, senseless and still body
3.	Vepathu/ trembling	chillness, fear, joy, anger, touch	quivering, throbbing and shaking.
4.	Asru/ weeping	joy, indignation, smoke, collyrium, yawning,fear, sorrow, winkleness, stare, cold and sickness	rubbing the eyes, shedding tears
5.	Vaivarnya/change	chillness, anger, fear, fatigue, sickness, toil and tiredness	alteration of the colour of the face by putting pressure on the blood vessels
6.	Romanca/	touch, fear, chillness, joy, anger, sickness.	Repeated excitement, hairs standing on the skin,

	horripilation.		touching the body.
7.	Svarabheda/ change of voice	fear,delight, anger, fever, sickness, intoxication.	Broken and choking voice
8.	Pralaya/ fainting	toil, fainting, intoxication, sleep, injurious attack	Falling on the ground

Table 1.1 enlists the Sthayi Bhava, Vyabichari Bhava and Sattvika Bhavas along with their respective Anubhavas and Vibhavas.

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Jagyaseni Chatterjee. "Contemplations on Bharata's Rasa." *Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 08(11), 2020, pp. 01-07.