

Natya Shaastra

Chapter VI

Sentiments [RASAA]

Theory

Natya Shaastra

Bharata is considered the father of Indian theatrical art forms **dated between 200 BCE and 200 CE.**

The Nāṭya Śāstra : an ancient encyclopedic treatise on the arts, which has influenced dance, music and literary traditions in India.

Major source of evidence for Sanskrit theatre is [*A Treatise on Theatre*](#) (*Nāṭyaśāstra*), (estimates range from 200 BCE to 200 CE) and whose authorship is attributed to [Bharata Muni](#).

The *Treatise* is the most complete work of dramaturgy in the ancient world. It addresses [acting](#), [dance](#), [music](#), [dramatic construction](#), [architecture](#), [costuming](#), [make-up](#), [props](#), the organisation of companies, the audience, competitions, and offers a [mythological](#) account of the origin of theatre.

Sanskrit theatre was performed on sacred ground by priests who had been trained in the necessary skills (dance, music, and recitation) in a hereditary process. Its aim was both to educate and to entertain. **Bhāsa** (born 3rd century AD, India), the earliest known Sanskrit dramatist.

Under the patronage of royal courts, performers belonged to professional companies that were directed by a stage manager (*sutradhara*), a [puppeteer](#)—the literal meaning of "*sutradhara*" is "holder of the strings or threads".

There were no prohibitions against female performers; companies were all-male, all-female, and of mixed gender. Certain sentiments were considered inappropriate for men to enact, and were thought better suited to women.

Of all the elements of theatre, the *Treatise* gives most attention to acting (*abhinaya*), which consists of two styles: realistic (*lokadharmi*) and conventional (*natyadharmi*), though the major focus is on the latter.

Information: However, its most complete exposition in drama, songs and other performance arts is found in the works of the Kashmiri [Shaivite](#) philosopher [Abhinavagupta](#) (c. 1000 CE), demonstrating the persistence of a long-standing aesthetic tradition of ancient India. The [Abhinavabhāratī](#) is the most studied commentary on *Natyasastra*, written by [Abhinavagupta](#) (950–1020 CE), who referred to *Natyasastra* also as the *Natyaveda*.

Chapter VI of Natyashaastra “Sentiments”[Bhava → Rasa]

In [Indian aesthetics](#), **rasa** ([Sanskrit](#): रस) literally means "juice, essence or taste".

It connotes a concept in Indian arts about the aesthetic flavour of any visual, literary or musical work that evokes an emotion or feeling in the reader or audience but cannot be described.

Rasas are created by **bhavas** (the state of mind.)

It refers to the emotional flavors/essence poured into the work by the writer and relished by a '**sensitive spectator**' or **sahṛdaya**, literally one who "has heart", and can connect to the work with emotion, without dryness.

According to the *Rasa* theory of the *Natya Shastra*, the primary goal, apart from providing sheer entertainment, is to transport the audience into another parallel world, full of wonder and bliss, where they experience the essence of their own consciousness, and reflect on spiritual and moral questions.

The word *rasa* appears in ancient [Vedic](#) literature. *Rasa* in an aesthetic sense is suggested in the Vedic literature.

- In [Rigveda](#) {The Knowledge of Verses} [**Rig = hymns for praying to the Vedic Gods such as Agni (Fire God), Indra (The lord of Heavens), Mitra, Varuna (Water God), Surya (Sun God) etc**] it connotes/ implies a liquid, an extract and flavor.
- In [Atharvaveda](#) [The Atharva Veda is a Vedic-era collection of spells, prayers, charms, and hymns. There are prayers to protect crops from lightning and drought, charms against venomous serpents, love spells, healing spells, hundreds of verses, some derived from the Rig Veda, all very ancient], *rasa* in many contexts means "taste", and also the sense of "the sap of grain".
- In the [Upanishads](#) according to Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe – a professor of Drama, *rasa* refers to the "essence, self-luminous consciousness, quintessence [purest essence/ether]" but also "taste" in some contexts.

In post-Vedic literature, the word generally connotes "extract, essence, juice or tasty liquid".

The *rasa* theory in Chapter 6 of Natya Shaastra begins its discussion with a [sutra](#) called in Indian aesthetics as the ***rasa sutra***:

Rasa is produced from a combination of the following states:

Determinants [Cause/ Reason/ Kaaran)

Consequents [Anubhava]

Transitory [Vyavicharibhava]

Determinants (*vibhava*) [cause/ karana]

Vibhava is of two types: **Alambana Vibhava** and **Uddipana Vibhava**.

Alambana Vibhava refers to the main stimulating cause.

Eg. The emotional experience Sita felt at the sight of Shri Rama is an example of **Alambana Vibhava**.

Uddipana Vibhava refers to excitants that support the main stimulating factors in evoking an emotion]

Eg. When Sita was left alone after seeing Rama, the feeling she had can be compared to **Uddipana Vibhava**.

Consequents (*anubhava*) means the ensuants or effects following the rise of the emotion.

Eg. Narrative or ritual experience, enjoyment, relish or delight resulting, for the devotee or the seeker after truth, in the ecstatic experience of the divine.

Transitory States (*vyabhicaribhava*) [short-lived, ephemereal/ momentary]

According to the *Natya shastra*, the goals of theatre are as follows:

- to empower aesthetic experience and deliver emotional *rasa*.
- to provide relief to those exhausted with labour, or agitated with grief, or loaded with misery, or struck by difficult times.

Elements:

Bharata Muni stated the eight Rasas in the *Nātyasāstra*.

In the Indian performing arts, a *rasa* is a sentiment or emotion evoked in each member of the audience by the art.

The *Natya Shastra* mentions **six rasas in one section**, but in the dedicated section on *rasa* it states and discusses eight primary *rasas*.

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

- Śṛṅgārah (शृङ्गारः): Romance, Love, attractiveness. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: **light green**
- Hāsyam (हास्यं): Laughter, mirth, comedy. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: **white**
- Raudram (रौद्रं): Fury. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: **red**
- Kārunyam (कारुण्यं): Compassion, mercy. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: **grey**
- Bībhatsam (बीभत्सं): Disgust, aversion. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: **blue**
- Bhayānakam (भयानकं): Horror, terror. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: **black**
- Veeram (वीरं): Heroism. Presiding deity: Indra. Colour: **Saffron**
- Adbhutam (अद्भुतं): Wonder, amazement. Presiding deity: Brahma. Colour: **yellow**

The Ninth Rasa

Śāntam rasa

A ninth rasa was added by later authors. This addition had to undergo a good deal of struggle between the sixth and the tenth centuries, before it could be accepted by the majority of the Alankarikas, and the expression "*Navarasa*" (the nine rasas), could come into vogue.

- Śāntam: Peace or tranquility.^[24] deity: Vishnu. Colour: perpetual white.

- ❖ Shānta-rasa functions as an equal member of the set of **rasas**.

- ❖ It is simultaneously distinct as being the most clear form of aesthetic bliss.

Abhinavagupta compares it to the string of a jewelled necklace. Though it may not be the most appealing rasa for most people, it is the string that gives form to the necklace, allowing the jewels of the other eight rasas to be relished.

Information: Relishing the rasas and particularly shānta-rasa is hinted as being as-good-as but never-equal-to the bliss of Self-realization experienced by **yogis**.

List of bhavas

According to the *Natyashastra*, **Bhavas** are of three types:

Sthayi, Sanchari, Sattvika based on how they are developed or enacted during the aesthetic [beautiful/pleasing] experience.

Sthayee

The *Natyashastra* lists **eight Sthayibhavas** with **eight corresponding rasas**:

- *Rati* (Love)
- *Hasya* (Mirth)
- *Soka* (शोक) (Sorrow)
- *Krodha* (Anger)
- *Utsaha* (Energy)
- *Bhaya* (Terror)
- *Jugupsa* (Disgust)
- *Vismaya* (Astonishment)

Sanchari bhavas

Also referred to as **Vyabichari bhavas**, are **light, fleeting emotions that appear and disappear in quick succession** and serve to strengthen the **sthayi bhava**.

These are transitory emotional feelings that differ from person to person. They will not have a constant nature.

Sancharibhavas are of 32 varieties- Nirveda (disgust), Glani (torment), Samshaya (doubt), Shrama (toil), Dainya (feebleness), Jadatva (dullness), Asuya (jealousy), Chinta (anxiety), Vyadhi (sickness), Avega (pride), Garva (agitation), Dhriti (firmness), Smrithi (recollection), Chapalya (inconsideration), Ugrata (ferocity), Trasa (fear), Avahita (attention), Vishada (dejection), Mada (arrogance), Autsukya (eagerness), Mati (determination), Nidra (sleepiness), Moha (perplexity), Prabodha (enlightenment), Harsh (joy), Vreeda (sense of shame), Vitarka (argument), Supta (slumber), Amarsha (anger), Alasya (indolence), Unmeda (madness), Apasmara (forgetfulness), and Marana (death).

Saatvik bhava

It evokes the sympathy by responding to the sorrow of others. The person gets worried over the problems of others. For a person who being depressed or troubled feels happy and relieved when he is consoled by another. Sattvika bhavas are of six kinds- stambha, sveda, romancha, vaivarnya, svarabhedas and ashru.

Asht Sattvik Bhav

There are 8 signs of love which can appear in a divine body.

Stambh (स्तम्भ): Body turns stiff like an pillar

Swed (स्वेद): Sweating Profusely

Romanch (रोमांच): Goosebumps (Hair all over the body stand erect) out of ecstasy or extreme joy

Swar bhed (स्वर भेद): Voice quivers and changes

Vaipathu (वैपथु): Body shivers in extreme love

Vaivarna (वैवर्ण): Complexion turns pale as if drained of all blood

Ashru (अश्रु): Incessantly shedding tears

Pralaya (प्रलय): Swooning and falling unconscious

Role in art

Rasas are created through a wide range of means. For example, one way is through the use of gestures and facial expressions of the actors. Expressing *Rasa* in classical Indian dance form is referred to as **Rasa-abhinaya**.

- **Dance forms:** The theory of rasas forms the [aesthetic](#) underpinning of all Indian classical dance and theatre, such as [Bharatanatyam](#), [Kathakali](#), [Kathak](#), [Kuchipudi](#), [Odissi](#), [Manipuri](#), [Kudiyattam](#), and many others.
- **Music:** In [Indian classical music](#), each [raga](#) is an inspired creation for a specific mood, where the musician or ensemble creates the *rasa* in the listener. However, predominantly all *ragas* and musical performances in Hindu traditions aim at one of six *rasa*, wherein music is a form of painting "love, compassion, peace, heroism, comic or the feeling of wonder" within the listener. Anger, disgust, fear and such emotions are not the subject of *raga*, but they are part of Indian theories on dramatic arts. Of the six *rasa* that are aimed at in Indian music, each has sub-categories. For example, love *rasa* in Hindu imagination has many musical flavours, such as **erotic love (*sringar*)** and **spiritual devotional love (*bhakti*)**.

- **Literature:** In the theories of Indian poetics, ancient scholars state that the effectiveness of a literary composition depends both on what is stated and how it is stated (words, grammar, rhythm), that is the suggested meaning and the experience of *rasa*.
- **Sculpture and Architecture:** In the Indian theories on sculpture and architecture ([*Shilpa Shastras*](#)), the *rasa* theories, in part, drive the forms, shapes, arrangements and expressions in images and structures. Some Indian texts on *Shilpa* on image carving and making, suggest nine *rasas*.

References and Acknowledgement: Various Online Open Access Sources