



## Understanding Rasa Aesthetic as a Literary Theory

**Dr. Parag C. Athavale**

Asst. Professor

Dept. of English

Ahmednagar College

Ahmednagar

[Paragathavale1@gmail.com](mailto:Paragathavale1@gmail.com)

### **Abstract:**

*The word 'theory' is generally used in the various disciplines of knowledge. It is always read with certain assumption such as, theory as a set of rules, a set of principles or a philosophical foundation of any practical work. Literary theory is the process of understanding the nature of literature, the function of literature, the relation among the language, author, text, reader, history and society. Basically, literary theory is the principles of the interpretation of*

*literature and literary criticism. Literary criticism is a practice of judging a work of art to interpret, analyze and evaluate it. The chief objective of criticism is to provide a particular judgment. The relationship between literary theory and literary criticism can be defined as; the Literary Theory is bedrock of Literary Criticism. A standard literary theory always incorporates some parameters such as; it is valid,*

*universal, objective, impartial, practical applicable, double*

*potential, general applicability, and flexible enough to interpretation and newer needs. Rasa aesthetic begins to identify the reader as a creator of meaning. An ancient Indian Rhetorician Bharata explained different aspects of audience in his notable work, Natyashastra. In which he explained the aesthetic of Rasa. According to him the word Rasa means 'essence' or 'sap'.*

*Further he explained how this aesthetic pleasure takes place and how rasa develops from the blending of 'vibhav', 'anubhav' and vyabhicharyi. The present research paper is an attempt to understand rasa aesthetic as a literary theory.*

**Key Words:** Theory, Literary Theory, Rasa Aesthetic.

## Understanding Rasa Aesthetic as a Literary Theory

Relevance of Literary Theory:

The significance of a literary theory depends upon its relevance. The relevance of the literary theory is defined by some parameters as:

1. A literary theory should be valid and must cover up all the elements of the text which it is going to evaluate. It should not be limited to any period, particular moment, region, genre, society culture etc. A literary theory must include all these categories of literature and must reach beyond all these categories.
2. A literary theory must be objective and impartial one. It should lead to the valid and objective judgment of the literary work. It must eradicate the subjectivity and partiality from the process of evaluation. A literary theory always has some methods and principles for valid, objective and impartial judgments.
3. It is clear that the literary theory is about literature. It has always practical applications unless it can be applied; it has very little relevance or it usually stagnates or dies.
4. In most of the causes a good literary theory has a double potential. It can lead further theories, to newer philosophical speculation. At the same time it can also applied to literary text. (Patnaik, 1)
5. A literary theory must have general applicability. A theory must cover a wide enough area and should also be made of something that is not matter of vogue.
6. A literary theory must be flexible enough to take the wear of time, to be flexible to reader, history and society. Basically, literary theory is the principles of the interpretation of literature and literary criticism. Literary criticism is a practice of judging a work of art to interpret, analyze and evaluate it. The chief objective of criticism is to provide a particular judgment. The relationship between literary theory and literary criticism can be defined as; the Literary Theory is bedrock of Literary Criticism. A standard literary theory always incorporates some parameters such as; it is valid, universal, objective, impartial, practical applicable, double potential, general applicability, and flexible enough to interpretation and newer needs.

A good literary theory incorporates these parameters. The relevance of the judgment brought by any literary theory can be tested on these points and at the same time it determines the relevance of the literary theory.

Rasa theory is originated in India, during the ancient period. Bharata, an Indian rhetorician is considered as the founder of the rasa theory. He has written a text called Natyashastra which is considered as fifth Veda of Vedic tradition. Bharata has explained the theory of rasa in the sixth chapter of the Natyashastra. It is said that Bharata was asked to write a text which would be

considered as fifth Veda for to direct the playwright to write a good play and make its successful representation.

**Rasa** is roughly translated as aesthetic rapture, pleasure, or relish. It is derived by perceiver from a work of art. According to Bharata aesthetic pleasure rises from the combination of bhava (in the work).

Vibhavanubhav-vyabhicharibhav-samyogadrasanisattih

**Bhava** is translated as psycho-physiological states of human mind. These bhavas are of three kinds- Sthayibhav, Sancharibhav (Vyabhichyaribhav) and Sattivikbhav. Sthayibhav are permanent or stable states and are those which dominate or persist throughout a literary work.

They set the mood of literary work such as; anger, sad, terrifying, etc. Sancharibhav are short lived mental states which are generated along with them (sthayibhav) for example; panic, fear, anger, trembling, paralysis etc. Sattivikbhav are similar to sancharibhav, they are difficult to imitate in dramatic representation. There must be a cause or stimulus to generate these emotions which give rise to an effect in the character or the subject. These causes or stimulus are known as Vibhav; for instance; a tiger in the forest can be the cause of fear in a lonely traveller. In this

case, the tiger and the man's aloneness can be considered the vibhav which generate fear. And the consequences manifestation or effects of fear will be many like trembling, panic, horripilation, paralysis etc. these are known as anubhav. These states of mind may or may not be perceivable to our senses directly, for example anger in one subject cannot be communicated

direct to another but it can be suggested through various manifestations. Patnaik says (8), thus whereas vibhav and anubhav can be seen or observed directly, the states or bhava need not states.

### **1. Rati (Love)**

- a. Vibhav (causes): stimulus would be season, flower, ornaments or anything beautiful or desirable.
- b. Anubhav (involuntary reactions): looking sideways, coy glance, sweet words etc.
- e. Sancharibhav or Vyabhichyaribhav (transitory feelings): lassitude, suspicion, jealousy etc.

### **2. Hasya (Humor)**

- a. Vibhav: peculiarity of dress or speech etc.
- b. Anubhav: spouting, mimicking etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: smile, snicker, laughter, guffaw etc.

### **3. Karuna (Compassion)**

- a. Vibhav: loss, death, calamity, leaving up etc.
- b. Anubhav: tears, fainting, lamentation etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: sorrow, trembling, fear etc.

### **4. Rudra (Horror)**

- a. Vibhav: anger, violence, treachery etc.
- b. Anubhav: red eyes, rubbing hands, biting lips etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: sweating, excitement impatience etc.

### 5. Vira (Heroic)

- a. Vibhav: determination, strength, bravery, courage etc.
- b. Anubhav: courageous act, generosity etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: decision, arrogance etc.

### 6. Bhayanak (Fear)

- a. Vibhav: frightful things, lonely sights, darkness etc.
- b. Anubhav: trembling, pallor, loosing voice etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: fainting, hurrying, standing rooted etc.

### 7. Bibhatsa (disgust)

- a. Vibhav: bad news, loud lamentation etc.
- b. Anubhav: repulsion, spitting, turning up nose etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: fainting illness, death, hate etc.

### 8. Adbhuta (awesome or wonder)

- a. Vibhav: seeing unusual things, achieving the desired, magic.
- b. Anubhav: wide or staring eyes, thrill, exclamation etc.
- c. Sancharibhav: standing stunned, over-joy etc.

Bharata explained the rasa theory in the context of drama. But in latter it has been applied to all kinds of literature and particularly to the poetry. Rudrata, Anandvardhan, Abhinavgupta try to explained rasa theory in the context of poetry in a very significant manner. Our teacher said that rasa arises in a poem if we see things as if they were happening before our very eyes. (Patnaik, 8) So, rasa can be applied not only to drama and poetry but also to all the

kinds of literature which completes the above conditions. The principles of rasa theory are very much sustaining; therefore, they are independent from all the boundaries of period, region and culture etc. Rasa is universal and independent in its nature.

The rasa theory is one of the ancient literary theories India. Bharata has expounded it in Natyashastra, it deals with the entire discussion on dramaturgy and the essence of good writing.

As Bharata argues, rasa theory deals with different kinds of emotions, their depiction, inclusion and transmission through a work of art. Rasa theory views literature as it is about life and emotions. The function of playwright is to observe these emotions in a play and represent it successfully. The theory deals with the common element to all mankind at all times i.e. emotion. The validity of rasa theory lies there.

Rasa theory is impartial and objective in its nature. It deals with the bhava and states of mind i.e. common to all human being at all times. The bhava discussed in rasa theory are inborn, permanent and lives in human unconsciousness. Critics don't have scope to put their personal judgment and conclusion. Rasa theory helps to eradicate the subjectivity and partially from the process of criticism.

Rasa theory can be applied to any kind of literature as literary theory is about literature primarily. One can observe the various bhava or can experience them own self. The theory considers the entire process of literary work from its very conception in the mind of an artist to its perception by perceiver or spectator. It leads to an excellent text which has capacity to do the principle of aesthetic pleasure i.e. rasa. Rasa theory allows one to see how emotions as Rested through the actions or words and finally the audience who perceives the pleasure.

The rasa theory acknowledges all the factors for their indispensability. The theory makes up this coherent theory. As P. Patnaik says (2) rasa theory has tremendous linguistic potential, for an emotion cannot be shown or communicated directly. It can only be Suggested (dhvani) through words or their equivalents. Rasa theory has double potential, it provides a background for many other literary theories in later period and to newer philosophical speculation at the same time it can applied to any literary art.

Rasa theory is generally applicable to any literary work of art. The rasa i.e. aesthetic pleasure exists in music, dance, sculpture and painting because all these forms of art capable to suggesting the bhava or psycho-physiological states of mind. Rasa theory is flexible enough in is nature, it has developed over the centuries, more than thousand years and become authentic and

more complete. The rasa such as shanta rasa and bhakti rasa have been contributed by later philosophers.

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