



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Media and Rasa Aesthetics**Dr. Milon Franz**

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The paper tries to relate the Indian aesthetic theory of Rasa with mass media. Rasa is an affective theory which was introduced by the ancient aesthetician, Bharata. It speaks about the emotional and aesthetic response created by art and literature in the mind of the spectator/reader. It raises reader/spectator to the level of the writer/actor. This is made possible by the union of stayibhavas, vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhichari bhavas. The resultant emotional experience will culminate in a transcendental experience. The paper enquires how the media employs the arousal of emotions especially in advertisements. Its functions and operations are based on influencing or affecting the emotions of spectators.

*Copy Right, IJAR, 2015,. All rights reserved***INTRODUCTION**

Theories of literature and literary appreciation take their origin in connection with contemporary social thought, initiatives and activities. So naturally the significance and the role of such theories and movements vary according to the changing social contexts. Still, some theories survive and stand relevant irrespective of changes in the milieu. Indian aesthetic theory of Rasa belongs to that lot. Usually literary theories do not transcend the domain of literature; even if it does, its ramifications are limited. But Rasa theory is capable of transcending the bounds of art/literature and it extends even to the experiential levels in our life. It is capable of becoming a core component of popular/mass media.

Mass Media and Emotions

Mass media aims simultaneously information and entertainment. Among them entertainment is purely emotive and affective. Therefore, they aim the arousal of emotions in the mind of the audience through the artistic or aesthetic presentation of various emotions. The human interest stories, advertisements, war spectacles, calamities, sports events and the like ultimately aim at the aesthetic arousal of different emotions. Two of the supreme functions of mass media, namely, social change and creation of public opinion can be achieved only through the awakening of feelings in the minds of spectators/readers.

Theory of Rasa

Rasa theory is a pivotal aesthetic theory that originated in India which has acquired universal acceptance. The content of art according to the western thought was the meaning which it expressed. Indian thought, though it held the same view for a long time, took a decisive turn during the time of the aesthetician, Bharata and it started to consider the emotional character of the situation depicted by the artist as the true content of art. The aesthetic emotion which art arouses in the spectator is called 'rasa'. In this view, the expressed meaning can have no excellence of its own, but it can be achieved only in relation to the emotion which it arouses.

The artistic creation is the direct or unconventional expression of a feeling or passion. It is the inner force or creativity of the poet that makes this expression possible. This inner force or creative intuition is called prathibha.

Rasa, which is an aesthetic state of generalized consciousness in the poet, is translated spontaneously into poetic expression which in turn creates the emotional response in the mind of reader/spectator culminating in aesthetic pleasure. "Words in poetry are charged with meanings which unfold in the minds of the reader as emotional states" (Thampi, 1992, 320). The joy or 'ananda' experienced through rasa is universal.

Bharata, the much celebrated Indian aesthetician and the author of *Natyasasthra* is credited to have originated the affective theory of Rasa and it was taken up by later aestheticians like Dandin, Bhatta Lollata, Sankuka, Bhatta Nayaka, Anandavardhana and Abhinava Guptha. Among them, Abhinava Gupta's explanations are considered the most authentic ones and they are still valid today and are even relatively novel to western thought. By his famous maxim, 'Vibhavanubhava Vyabhichari Samyogad Rasa Nishpatti', Bharatha means that Rasa is realised by the union of vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhicharibhavas. But it does not merely mean a union among these three. It implies the fusion of these elements with the sthayibhava, the permanent emotion. "A poem is not a direct outpouring of the poet; it is an arrangement of words evoking sensuous images and through them ideas of certain characters and their states of mind" (Thampi, 1992, 320). According to Indian poetics, it is the mental state rendered in a poem which manifests its essence and the characters and their actions are only vehicles of the mental states. According to this theory, mental states or bhavas are of three types: 8 Sthayibhavas, 33 Vyabhichari bhavas and 8 Sattvikbhavas.

Components of Rasa Experience

Psychology holds the view that our personality is constituted of a few primary emotions which lie deep in the subconscious or unconscious strata of our being. These emotions are running through all natures in a permanent manner and therefore they are called sthayibhavas (dominant/basic emotions). It is these permanent emotions which give structural unity to the whole composition by recurring again and again and by binding the other elements as an organic whole. As this emotion pervades, dominates and unifies the entire work, it is called permanent. The eight sthayibhavas are rati, hasa, shoka, krodha, utsaha, bhaya, juguptsa and vismaya. In an aesthetic situation, these sthayibhavas give rise to corresponding rasas. The eight rasas are sringara, hasya, karuna, vira, bhayanaka, bibhatsa and adbhuta. To these eight rasas, santa rasa was added by later aestheticians. But it should be noted that no emotion is called rasa unless it is aesthetically excited. Rasa is an emotion excited by artistic circumstances or situations.

Vyabicharibhavas are transient bhavas that spring from or sthayibhavas(basic emotions). These innumerable transient moods and mental states accompany the sthayibhavas and feed them. They do not have any independent status and they do not last long. These are concomitant moods which arise with the well-defined emotions and subside with them. But the permanent emotions cannot be expressed in poetry without depicting these moods. For example, a woman in love anxiously waiting at the rendezvous to meet her lover, may feel disappointed that he is not coming, may be anxious that something might have happened to him, may be jealous that he might have been courted by another woman, or may feel delighted in remembering the coaxing words that he had whispered into her ears and so on. These are all vyabhichari bhavas accompanying the stayibhava of rati.

In real life, some stimuli are necessary to cause the emotions to rise in our hearts. These stimuli may be material, existing in the environment or existing in the mind itself. These human and environmental stimuli when described in a poem are called vibhavas. Instead of considering vibhava as a cause, it is better to regard it as a determinant because it determines the emotions and moods to be aroused in the reader. They are of two kinds- alambana and uddipana. Alambana vibhava means a person or persons with reference to whom the emotion is manifested. Uddipana vibhava means the circumstances that have excited the emotion. It is easier for a man to be attracted towards a woman of young age, if they are thrown alone and if there is beautiful scenery before them like the moon peeping through the clouds, the fragrant breeze blowing etc. Any of such circumstances may be regarded as uddipana vibhavas whereas both the man and the woman are alambana vibhavas to each other. Anubhava means bodily expressions by which the emotion is expressed. They are those effects which are found in the character consequent upon their emotional agitations. They are so called because what is represented is made to be felt and experienced by us. Thus the arch glances of a lady and her inviting smile may be regarded as anubhavas.

According to Indian poetics, a proper aesthetic creation has the peculiar function of generating in us a new spiritual experience and we can enjoy it with a special capacity which we have in us. Abhinava Guptha holds that in the case of a truly poetic composition, after we have grasped the full significance of the words and their meanings, the actual temporal and spatial character of the situation is withdrawn from the mental field. Thus the emotion suggested therein loses its individual character and becomes dissociated from such conditions. The emotion is

experienced in a purely universal character. As a result, the ordinary pathological symptoms of emotion lose their significance and we have our experience of perfect joy. In other words, *rasa* is the experience of a pure sentiment bereft of all its local characters.

Relevance of Rasa

The greatness of this theory is its attempt to place both writer and reader on the same plane. This attempt is alien to western theory and practice. The emotional effect in art can be traced in Aristotle's theories especially where he speaks about *catharsis*. But he doesn't equate reader with writer. It took centuries for the westerners to come up with a similar theory like 'reader response theory'. But even that theory did not equate reader with writer.

Rasa Theory in Mass Media

It is necessary to develop new theories based on mass media as tremendous changes are taking place in its practice and application. So it will be interesting to enquire into the application of *rasa* theory in mass media. "The entire mansion of *rasa* is founded on the broad assumption that poetry is not self-communication but mass communication" (Prasad, 1994, 138). In the case of hard news stories appearing in the print media, there is not much scope for the application of emotive experience. But in the case of human interest stories and advertisements it plays a vital role. Among the various *sthayibhavas*, it is *sokabhava* that is applied mostly in such cases. In the presentation of wars, natural calamities and accidents this is applied amply. In the case of news stories and pictures, the *bhavas* of *bhaya*, *juguptsa* and *vismaya* are found to be employed. Here a difference is to be noted that while this emotional experience rises to an aesthetic plane in literature/art, it doesn't happen so in the media. Since news is mainly stark and hard presentation of reality, it can never be termed, aesthetic. What happens here is only excitement of emotions; *bhavas* do not get transformed into *rasas*.

The most popular maxim about news is that "When dog bites man, it is not news, but when man bites dog, it is news" (Kamath, 2000, 83). Queerness and difference are the basics of news. That is why strange happenings, inventions etc. become news and people with extraordinary talents create news. In such situations, it is the *vismaya bhava* that functions supreme. In descriptions of wars, murders, accidents etc. *bhavas* of *juguptsa* and *bhaya* reigns supreme. In the presentation of humorous events and incidents, *hasa bhava* is utilized.

Rasa in the Visual Media

More than in the newspapers, it is in the visual media, that *bhavas* are used. Presentation of news is quite different in television. Along with presentation of news, it also utilizes visual images that foreground the importance of *bhavas*. It is essential in order to influence the emotions of the spectators. As in the case of newspaper stories, they arouse emotions of *bhaya*, *juguptsa* and *vismaya*. Even though *bhavas* do not attain the status of *rasa* in such situations, they get transformed into *rasas* in the realm of advertisements. Ads attempt to entice the consumers into products by stimulating their desires and urges. "The basic purpose of advertising is to create a desire for the product or service being advertised. Appeals are used for the motivation of people.... The copy of the advertisement must kindle these motives.... We have to convince them by giving evidences, testimonials, endorsements, facts and figures. On arousal, people become prone to buy the product" (Chunawala et al, 2004, 12). Ads employ the marketing strategy of affecting the emotions of the consumer in order to attract him to a product. The producers as well as ad agencies try to stimulate the *bhavas*, especially *rati* and *utsaha*.

Ads related to jewelry, clothes, costumes, home appliances etc. are mostly focused on the aesthetic presentation of *rati bhava*. Such ads start from the point of the greatness and warmth of man-woman relationship and then lead the spectators towards these products presenting them as the consummation of this relationship. Through their marketing strategy that posits diamond or pressure cooker as the symbol of fulfilment and love in marital love, they carry the consumers along with them. In such ads we can even easily distinguish *vibhavas*, *vyabicharibhavas* and *anubhavas*. Then there are other ads like those of suiting, perfumes, cars etc. in which *utsaha bhava* is developed into *veera rasa*.

Conclusion

Thus the stimulation of emotions takes place in different areas of mass communication. But at the same time it can be seen that it doesn't ascend to the level of the aesthetic intensity envisaged in literary appreciation. It

doesn't also culminate in 'ananda' and doesn't lead up to universalization of experience. It is not intended by the makers too. This artistic strategy is employed very wisely by them to serve their ends. But this analysis shows the permanent value of rasa which is validated by its use in mass media.

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