

M.A (English)  
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## Rasa Theory

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↳ Bharat muni

'Natyashastra' is the oldest extant poetic work of Sanskrit poetics written by Bharata. The Sanskrit word 'Bharata' is quite confusing as it stands not only for an authority on dramatics but also for an actor or director of a dramatic performance. Moreover, 'Bharata' is a word repeatedly used to name characters in epics and plays written in Sanskrit e.g. Dasharatha's son Bharata in The Ramayana and Dushyanta's son Bharata in Abhigyanam Shakuntalam. Bharata, the author of Natyashastra, claims himself to be a mythological figure who learned all about drama from gods like Brahma and Shiva before coming to stage plays on the earth, but his claim is indicative of his devotion to the gods and not of his life-story. Some editors of Bharata's work believe that he might have been an inhabitant of Kashmir, not only because he says in Natyashastra that he staged his first play, Tripuradha, in a Himalayan location resembling a place in Kashmir, but also because such leading interpreters of his work as Bhattalollata, Shrishankuka, Bhattamayaka and Abhinavagupta belong to Kashmir. They also believe that Bharata might have written Natyashastra a few centuries before the beginning of the Christian era, say in a time between 500 B.C and 200 B.C, because its aphoristic style and the impact of its ideas on the plays of Kalidasa and Bhasa indicate such a time of its writing.

The existing text of Bharata's Natyashastra consists of thirty six or thirty seven chapters having six thousand verses or shlokas. Sharadatanaya, Ramkrishna Kavi and Bhoja believe that this text is a shorter version of a larger text which consisted of twelve thousand verses and was lost in the course of time. In the very first chapter Bharata tells Atreya and other sages that god Brahma created drama as the fifth veda by borrowing dialogue from Rigveda, songs from Samveda, acting from Yajurveda and rasa or ecstasy from Atharveda, that it was meant to represent the emotional concerns of gods, demons and humans in an ecstatic way, and that it employed all forms of knowledge, arts and crafts to help all of its viewers in achieving their religious, economic and redemptive goals.

In the sixth chapter Bharata deals with the nature of rasa or ecstasy and its eight types. In doing so, he also shows how rasa is generated, how its various types are related to one another and to the emotions on which they are based and what are the presiding gods or goddesses of the various types of rasas.

According to Bharata, drama generates eight rasas or ecstasies namely -

- The erotic ecstasy (Shringara-rasa)
- The Comic ecstasy (Hasya-rasa)
- The Pathetic ecstasy (Karuna-rasa)
- The Furious ecstasy (Rudra-rasa)

- The Heroic ecstasy (Virarasa)
- The terrible ecstasy (Bhayamaka rasa)
- The Odious ecstasy (Bibhatsa rasa)
- The Marvellous ecstasy

In his view, the erotic, the furious, the heroic and the Odious ecstasies are the principal ecstasies, while the comic, the pathetic, the marvellous and the terrible ecstasies are their respective offshoots. What he means is that the imitation of the erotic ecstasy produces the comic ecstasy, the destructing activity associated with the furious ecstasy results in the pathetic ecstasy, the glorious deeds of the brave connected with the heroic ecstasy generate the marvellous ecstasy and the sight of the very unpleasant things linked with the Odious ecstasy gives birth to the terrible ecstasy.

1. The Erotic Ecstasy (Shringara rasa) is the most important ecstasy because the erotic passion is naturally present in all living beings and its dramatic expression delights everyone. The permanent emotion of this ecstasy is love, while the supporting determinants of this love are young men and women of a superior nature and its exciting determinants are beautiful surroundings, attractive make up, meeting with the loved ones and walks in the gardens. The resultants of this love are pleasing movements of eyes and eyebrows, endearing words and intimate meetings, while its accompaniment include only fear, indolence and disgust.

2. The Comic Ecstasy (Hasya rasa) is also an important ecstasy because the comic sense is nature's unique gift to humankind and its dramatic expression is very popular with viewers. Its permanent emotion is mirth or humour. The supporting determinants of this mirth are distortions of the body, shabby dress, nonsensical statements and funny gestures, the exciting determinants are mischievous activities, vulgar manners and impudence, the resultants are enlarged or contracted facial features, peals of laughter and swearing and the accompaniments are deception, pride, joy, lassitude etc. The presiding deity of this ecstasy is Pramatha and the colour connected with it is white.

3. The Pathetic Ecstasy (Karunarasa) is an effective ecstasy as it provokes sympathy in everybody's heart. Its permanent emotion is sorrow. The supporting determinants of this sorrow are the death of a near or dear one, the loss of property and accidental wounds, the exciting determinants are bad news and grievous stories, the resultants are weeping, fainting, blaming one's fate, and lamentation and the accompaniments are fear, anxiety, disgust, insanity etc. The presiding deity of this ecstasy is Yama and the colour associated with it is grey.

(4) The Furious Ecstasy (Raudra rasa) has anger as its permanent emotion. The supporting determinants of this anger are encounters with enemies and demons, the

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exciting determinants are insults and abuses, the resultants are fights and battles, and the accompaniments are arrogance, indignation, agitation and ferocity. The presiding deity of this ecstasy is Rudradeva and the colour linked with it is red.

(5) The Heroic Ecstasy (Virarasa) is based on the permanent emotion of enthusiasm. The supporting determinants of this enthusiasm are adventures, crusades, power, property, name and fame, the exciting determinants are challenges and aims, the resultants are deeds demonstrating bravery, sensibility and leadership, and the accompaniments are pride, indignation, patience, resolution and discrimination. The presiding deity of the heroic ecstasy is Mahendra and the colour assigned to it is white.

(6) The Terrible Ecstasy (Bhayanak rasa) has fear as its permanent emotion. The supporting determinants of this fear are violent animals, ferocious men, wars, calamities, deserted houses and misdeeds of people, the exciting determinants are terrifying noises and violent incidents; the resultants are trembling hands and feet, pitiful cries, agitation, anxiety, terror and paralysis. The presiding deity of the terrible ecstasy is Kala and the colour connected with it is black.

- (7) The Odious Ecstasy (Bibhatsarasa) is based on the permanent emotion of disgust. The presiding deity of the odious ecstasy is Mahakala and the colour assigned to it is blue.
- (8) The marvellous ~~or~~ Ecstasy (Adbhutarasa) has astonishment as its permanent emotion. The support determinants of this astonishment are superhuman characters, unexpected achievements, magical shows and uncommon scenes. The exciting determinants are talks about wonderful things, the resultants are expressions of wonderment, and the accompaniments are agitation, joy, curiosity, madness etc. The presiding deity of the marvellous ecstasy is Brahma and the colour associated with it is yellow.