CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION
The present study is an attempt to understand the concept of aesthetic enjoyment. For this purpose two theories, the theory of Catharsis in tragedy, propounded by Aristotle in his treatise, the 'Poetics' and the theory of Rasa propounded in the 'Nātyaśāstra' of Dharata Duni are analytically studied and critically compared in this work.

Both these theories, which occupy a prominent place in the classical literature of the world by virtue of their great antiquity, are evaluated with special reference to the modern concept of aesthetic enjoyment. The theory of Catharsis is a major, moral or therapeutic concept, which looms large in the field of aesthetics and criticism. As Prof. Elsa describes it, it is "the St. Everest or Kilimanjaro that looms on all literary horizons." The theory of Rasa is an attempt to indicate the character of the emotional effect of drama, Nātya, i.e. the nature of enjoyment experienced by the spectator in witnessing a play. Later on it gained

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Aristotle, who took the whole world of knowledge as his field, is one of the first exponents of dramatic criticism. In his treatise, the 'Poetics', he has laid out his concept of tragedy, its parts and its canons of construction and the nature of its effect vis. Catharsis. In the fourth Century B.C. when Aristotle was born, art and literature flourished in Greece. All the great Greek tragedies had been written and performed when Aristotle's attention was drawn to the literary forms prevalent at that time. Aristotle formed his conception of tragedy, from the historical evidence before him.

This conception of tragedy is laid out in his treatise the 'Poetics'. The 'Poetics' is in the form of lecture notes of Aristotle. At present, we have only the first part, the second, being lost. It is generally believed that Aristotle fully explained his concept of Catharsis in the now lost second part. But it being lost, it is customary to explain this concept with the help of his other work, the 'Politics'.

Aristotle tries to analyse tragedy with the biological model of the organic connection of the parts to the whole. He describes tragedy also as a mode of mimesis or imitation.
It differs from the other species of the same genre, Poetry (Poiesis) by the differences of kind, object and manner of imitation. Tragedy is an imitation in language with pleasurable accessories like rhythm and harmony. The object imitated by tragedy is an action or a piece of life, of serious interest, complete in itself and having magnitude. It imitates action of men who are better than ourselves. The manner, in which a tragedy imitates is dramatic. The six parts of tragedy—plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle and melody arise from this kind, object and manner of imitation. Aristotle is concerned to point out and explain the rules for the construction of these six parts of tragedy in the major part of the 'Poetics'.

The excitement or arousal of emotions of pity and fear is the end of tragedy, though Aristotle emphasizes, it is in truth only a means to its ultimate end—its Catharsis of such emotions. This end alone determines the structure of Plot, action and thought and the structure is always subservient to the function.

The theory of Catharsis, which describes the purpose of tragedy is put forth in the last clause of the famous definition of tragedy—"with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its Catharsis of such emotions."  

2 Post., 6, 1949b 27.
Aristotle has not explained the term Catharsis, anywhere in the extant 'Poetics'. This led to many imaginative interpretations and there is a great mass of speculative writing on the possible meaning of the theory of Catharsis.

After the study of the passage in the 'Politics' which describes Catharsis with reference to music in the sense of purgation, with reference to the term in the prevalent medical, social and religious concepts and its reference in Plato and other older writers, and bearing in mind the fact that Aristotle was the son of a physician and hence very familiar with medical terms— it is evident that Aristotle used the term Catharsis in its medical or pathological sense of purgation. That means, he used this term with reference to tragedy in its pathological meaning—that is the disquieting elements of pity and fear, the kindred emotions in the breast of all human beings are purged by the arousal of these emotions in tragedy and by this very act of arousal, affords a pleasurable relief. It is the phenomenon of curing an emotion by means of another emotion, like in kind. Thus tragedy is good and useful because it purges what is foul in human emotions and is thus ultimately helpful in the moral improvement of men.

3 Politics, 8, 7, 1342a 4-5.
Thus Aristotle seems to describe the dramatic -
or aesthetic, (in a modern term) - experience in the terms
of good. We enjoy tragedy because it does some good. The
bad that is in our emotions is purged by the act of arousal
of emotions, and as there is a relief, it is accompanied by
pleasure. This pleasure is not the pure delight or joy in
the beauty of Art or in the sheer expressiveness of Art but
it is of a different nature, being associated with a purpose.
This pleasure is of the nature of the effect of cures or
remedies which remove the disquietude, and which restore one
to a normal condition of body or mind. This particular nature
of pleasure, by its association with a purpose, invests
tragedy with a moral meaning.

We have seen from the later interpretations of the
theory of Catharsis that the two major interpretations of the
term are (1) purgation and (2) purification. Whatever meaning
may be the uppermost in Aristotle's mind, it is clear that
Aristotle ascribes a moral purpose to tragedy and thus
describes the aesthetic enjoyment of tragedy not in terms
of beauty, but in terms of good. We have seen that he has
ascribed a hygienic, pathological or moral purpose to tragedy,
influenced by the Greek view of life in general and in the
context of his teacher, Plato's Polemic against tragedy.
Aristotle provides the justification for tragedy by the theory of Catharsis. This ascription of an ulterior purpose to tragedy is away from the modern concept of aesthetic experience in terms of pleasure in itself or 'disinterested pleasure'. The very word aesthetic means that this experience has no other purpose than being itself and pleasure-in-itself, that is, pleasure in Art or Beauty is its own value.

The theory of Rasa, which explains the dramatic experience in terms of Rasa, taste, relish, or savouring, is embodied in the Rasasastra, given in the sixth Adhyaya of the 'Natyasastra' ascribed to Bharata Muni. The NS is an encyclopaedic work, treating all relevant subjects connected with Natya-drama, and theatre, in general. The form of the NS is the form of a dialogue between the sage Bharata and his disciples. Some features of the text, such as sthala like statements, Šnūpāśya ślokas, ślokas cited to confirm a point, lead to the fact that the NS is a sort of compendium which has achieved unity because of its systematic treatment of the different topics relevant to dramaturgy.

I have tried to draw attention to this new relation of the facts that the Śnūpāśya verses cited in the NS are not the composition of him who composed the NS. These verses had been traditionally handed down from teachers to pupils in relation to dramaturgy and were included in the NS. Such
verses occur mostly in the Sanaa chapters (6th and 7th of the NS). This leads to the hypothesis that the theory of Rasas and Nāyās is older than Bharata's NS.

Such a nature of the text makes us believe that perhaps the NS is not the work of a single author, though the tradition accepts it as the composition of an individual, Bharata Muni. The problem before us is whether Bharata was an individual, a historical person, a particular sage who taught and composed Nāyā, the Ānāyā, the sacred learning and practice of Nātas, actors, or it is an eponymous name for Bharatās, actors in general. There are many references to Bharata, in the NS, as the individual sage, who was taught Nāyā by Brahmans and who presented his first dramatic performance to an assembly of Devas and Asuras. The Nātya-patti story makes of Bharata a semi-divine personage. But if we remove the crust over the myth, we see that whatever is described is also historically and socially possible.

The alternative theory that Bharatās are synonymous with Nātas and Bharata is merely an eponymous creation is also plausible, if Bharatās are connected with the tribe of Bharatās or Rāvijas, the performers of sacrificial rituals in the Vedic Nighantus. Though there is no documentary evidence of this
connection, Pāṇini's reference to Nātya as the āsāmya, sacred tradition of learning, and practice of Nātas (actors) appears to support the association of Bharata Ṛtvijas with Bharatās as Nātas. Thus we cannot easily regard the whole text of the NS in its extant form, as the work of a single author.

It is most likely that it is a product of a tradition of the school of Bharata and his followers. We have a parallel to this in the references to Nātasūtras in Pāṇini. The 'Amarakosa' gives the synonyms of Bharatās, and Kairavimasha explains the word Bharatā as 'Bharataśyāpatyā'. The word 'upatyā' is to be taken in a wider sense which includes the son, the student or the followers. This supports the assumption that Bharata was also an individual sage, who taught and composed this āsāmya of Nātas.

There is a divergence of opinion regarding the date of the NS, which is so wide that it spreads over the period from the Sixth Century B.C. to the Sixth Century A.D. I have pointed out that in the light of the reference to play-performers and the example "rasikonatah" in Patañjali, and the satra "rasūdbhyāsca", and the mention of two Nātasūtras and of Nātya as the āsāmya of Nātas in Pāṇini, it would not be wrong to say that the original nucleus of the NS, of which Nātasūtra is a part, might have been as old as the fifth
The concept of Rasa, in its specific sense of mental experience is as old as Panini or even older. If we trace the history of the term Rasa from the Upanisads to the Post-Vedic literature, we see how the physical sense of the word Rasa, such as liquid, taste, extract, etc., gets transmuted into a term describing aesthetic experience. In Panini’s Sūtra “rasādibhyāsca”, as pointed out before, the word Rasa is used not in its usual meaning of physical qualities, but as a mental experience or perception of beauty. Panini’s familiarity with some aspects of dramaturgy makes this aesthetic meaning quite probable, logical and consistent. The mention of Nātacūtrās, and of Nātya as the ārmēya of Nātac in Panini makes it possible for us to imagine the existence of Rasasūtra in one of these Nātacūtrās and traditional learning. Thus the concept of Rasa in its aesthetic connotation was well-known and associated with Nātya in an age when Aristotle formulated his theory of Catharsis.

The Rasasūtra describes the process of Rasa-Rasa-realization in Nātya, drama. Rasa is realised by the union of the Vibhāvas, Anubhāvas and Vyabhicāribhāvas. It is made clear by the exegetes of Bharata that Vibhāvas (Determinants) and Anubhāvas (consequent or physical

4 See Chap. 7, pp. of this study.
manifestations) are understood with reference to Bhāvas, the mental states of a human being. Bharata has described forty-nine mental states, divided into three categories.

1. Sthāyibhāvas - Permanent mental states, (2) Vyabhicāribhāvas - Transitory or fleeting mental states and (3) Sāttvikabhāvas - Psycho-somatic or Involuntary states. The Sthāyibhāvas, Permanent mental states, emotions and feelings, nourished by other mental states, develop into state of Rasa. Rasa is a unique product, resulting from the combination of many elements. Thus Rasa is tasting, relishing or cognition or contemplation of the emotions and feelings, portrayed in drama. These emotions and feelings, Bhāvas, are concretised in drama by Vibhāvas and Anubhāvas, the cause and the physical manifestations of mental states, in short the whole dramatic material presented before the spectator. The taste or relish of such cognised or contemplated emotions in drama is Rasa. Rasa is nothing but aesthetic experience or enjoyment. It is the cognition or contemplation of mental states without the barriers of time, space and individuality. Rasa experience is not a static but a dynamic process. It is caruṇā, tasting of the dramatic material presented before the spectators. It is the soul or the main purpose of drama. This Rasa experience is always joyful, irrespective of its subject-matter. In real life, the emotions and feelings give pleasure or pain according to the nature of their causes; we reject or receive them in view of the resulting pain or pleasure, but in drama,
the emotions and feelings are brought into clear consciousness, i.e. cognised or contemplated by the operation of Vibhāvas, Anubhāvas and Vyabhicāribhāvas, that is artistically and are transmuted in Rasa; so are they always joyful.

Later on, this basic concept of Rasa was raised to the highest philosophical plane by the commentators of Bharata. The Abhivyaktivāda of Abhinavagupta develops the theory of Rasa in the most comprehensive, philosophic way. He describes Rasa as 'alaukika', transcending the bounds of worldly experience, a unique cognition, different from all other cognitions, and by its joyful nature akin to the highest bliss or ecstasy of the realisation of Brahman, the ultimate reality.

When we critically compare these two theories, we are amazed at their similarities. There is a great parallel between the two theories, which emerge out of the same nature of inquiry, the inquiry into the nature of dramatic experience. I have tried to show that both theories belong almost to the same time. Both have the spectator at the centre. The theory of Catharsis points out that the spectator is purged of the disturbing elements of the feelings of pity and fear and gains the pleasure of relief.
The theory of Rasa shows that the spectator is full of pure joy, when he cognises, contemplates or relishes the Bhāvas, mental states presented in their concrete form of Vibhāvas, Anubhāvas and Vyabhicāribhāvas in Nātya-drama. The theory of Catharsis is with reference only to the tragic feelings of pity and fear, while the theory of Rasa takes into account 49 different mental states. Both recognise the importance of Plot in drama for the arousal of emotions and feelings. Both associate pleasure, though of a different nature, with dramatic experience. Both recognise the generalisation or universalisation of emotions in the dramatic experience.

However, the differences between these two theories are also as striking as their similarities. The fundamental difference between the two views is that the theory of Catharsis ascribes a moral purpose, an ulterior motive to dramatic experience, while for the theory of Rasa, drama has no purpose other than Rasa, i.e. the tasting or relishing of emotions. For Aristotle, it is the purgation or purification of the feelings which results into a pleasure of relief. For Bharata, it is essentially the tasting, relishing or savouring of these emotions and feelings and this relishing in itself is joyful. In the theory of Catharsis, the effect
is mainly pathological getting rid of undesirable element of emotions, while in the theory of Rasa, it is a cognition or contemplation of emotions and feelings. Aristotle and Bharata, both say that the aim of drama is to arouse (those) emotions and feelings or Bhāvās, but Aristotle does not explain the nature of these feelings. There is no clear distinction made by him, between the feelings of every day life and the feelings experienced in drama. Aristotle judges Art with the same criteria and standards with which he would judge reality and so, the tragic experience affects the spectator in the same manner as reality would. The theory of Rasa draws a clear distinction between the experience of emotions in real life and the experience of emotions in drama. In every day life we react and respond to the feelings, receive or reject them in view of the pain or pleasure caused by them, while in drama, we cognize and contemplate them. Thus cognised they become a different reality and not a mere reproduction of reality.

Both theories accept that in the dramatic experience, even the painful is transformed into positive pleasure giving experience, but they explain it differently. Aristotle explains this in terms of 'mimesis' and 'catharsis' while Bharata explains it in terms of Rasa-relish, cognition or contemplation without any reference to utility. Both the
Theories describe dramatic experience in terms of pleasure, but the nature and cause of pleasure in each case seems to be different. Pleasure, accompanied by Catharsis is the pleasure of relief, while the other is the pleasure of relish or cognition. Rasā itself is aesthetic enjoyment, a sort of ecstasy, the highest bliss or joy akin to the joy of the realisation of Brahman.

When we have evaluated both these theories with the special reference to the modern concept of aesthetic or the aesthetic enjoyment, we find that the theory of Rasā has a greater affinity to the modern aesthetic concept. It is essentially aesthetic or in itself constitutes the aesthetic enjoyment. From the historical and philosophical aspects of the modern aesthetic concept, from the world thought current, we have gathered that the essence of the aesthetic concept lies in the fact that aesthetic experience gives immediate pleasure and its value lies in itself. The aesthetic experience proper, has no other purpose, no ulterior, or practical motive than that of pleasure-in-itself. This pleasure arises from the intuition of the form or from the vision of the essence of things or from the suprasensuous embodied in the sensuous. The aesthetic experience is identified with this pleasure only. Pleasure is equated with a positive value.
The aesthetic value is distinguished from other values such as the ethical. The pleasure is 'disinterested', free from the domination of utilitarian motivation. The object of Art is free from all utilitarian relations and properties and similarly the subject or 'perceptible' is also free of all his categorical relations, due to the 'psychic distance' between him and the dramatic material or the characters portrayed in drama.

The work of Art is an expression of the human emotions. The activity of Art is to arouse and communicate emotions, embodied in works of Art. The artist embodies or symbolizes in a work of Art an emotion or feeling in such a way that the observer savours and enjoys it without experiencing it in the literal sense. Thus it is a mode of emotional cognition. Thus the aesthetic value is essentially cognitive or it is as described by Schopenhauer, "will less contemplation" and it has a universal significance. The configuration of the aesthetic situation, free from any personal or practical context evokes a generalized emotive experience.

When we assess the theory of Catharsis in comparison with the above concept of aesthetic value or aesthetic enjoyment, we find that the theory of Catharsis is far from the "accepted modern doctrine that aesthetic interest in
the beauty of a presentation is distinct from the real or selfish interest in its actual existence." Even when Aristotle recognises the pleasure of dramatic experience, the pleasure that we take in imitation, rhythm, and learning, he bestows the status of 'final cause' of tragedy on Catharsis.

When we examine the theory of Rasa with the help of the modern aesthetic concept we see that Rasa is aesthetic enjoyment itself. It is pure cognition or contemplation of the mental states concretised in drama or in Art in general. It has no other purpose, than the purpose of being itself. It is the experience of highest ecstasy—manda—blissful joy and it is the only purpose of dramatic experience. It is not that the theory of Rasa does not take into account the effect of drama for moral improvement, but it keeps in centre, the aesthetic enjoyment for its own sake.

Thus we see that the theory of Catharsis and the theory of Rasa emerge out of the same sort of inquiry about the nature of the dramatic experience. They both provide the justification for drama, but in different lights. Since Aristotle seems to be answering Plato's polemic against poetry, his theory has in view a moral or the pathological health, and

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the relief which accompanies pleasure. The theory of Rasa, on the other hand, has in view the total experience of aesthetic enjoyment full of Ananda or bliss. Rasa is nothing but relishing or savouring of human emotions portrayed in drama or in Art in general. In the one the beautiful is identified with the good and ultimately with the useful, while in the other the beautiful is aesthetic enjoyment, the art experience, with its pure joy and ecstasy.