

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**‘Rasa Theory’ and its application to Soyinka’s**  
***Death and the King’s Horseman* and Girish Karnad’s *Tale Danda***

### **3. Introduction**

This chapter will begin with an explanation of ‘Rasa aesthetics’ as outlined by the Natya Shastra. This will be followed by an endeavor to read Wole Soyinka’s, *Death and The King’s Horseman* (1987) through the lens of Rasa aesthetics. In the final section, an attempt is also made to apply Rasa aesthetics to Girish Karnad’s *Tale Danda* (1993).

#### **3.1 An understanding of Rasa aesthetics**

Concepts relating to Rasa apply equally to all forms of art and literature, but have been particularly refined with regard to poetry and drama. According to ancient tradition the world over, drama was accepted as the most complete art form, bringing together the other different forms like music, dance and poetry. Bharat Muni, in his treatise on the Natya Shastra formulated the theory of ‘rasa’, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Natya Shastra, which is considered the Fifth Veda, envisioned the gods as the audience of theatre. An article in *The Week*, (Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 2009), explains that “as per the rasa theory, all genuine aesthetic experience is essentially transcendental in nature, stemming from the one and only source of ananda, the divine. For the artiste, it lies in the act of creation and for the spectator it is inherent in the act of observance. And depending on the extent to which a work is imbued with this divine expression, it is deemed to be rich or poor in its degree of aesthetic fulfillment” (2009:46).

Academician and curator, Dr. Alka Pande describes Rasa as sap or juice of a plant, which means flavour and taste. It also means feeling. According to her “It also signifies the non-material essence of something or

the ‘best or finest part of it’, like perfume, which comes from matter but is not so easy to describe or comprehend. And when Rasa is applied to art and aesthetic experiences, the word signifies a heightened delight or ananda, the kind of bliss that can be experienced only by the spirit” (2002:2).

Central concepts of the rasa theory used in this chapter are mainly derived from Priyadarshi Pathak’s *Rasa in Aesthetics* (1997). Pathak explains how Bharata classifies dramatic content on the basis of emotions. He says that all the rasas coming under one group must have something in common. The point of commonality is that they all have some emotional content. But they must also have their points of difference to keep their identity. These differences are the ways in which the various emotions are manifested.

Emotional modes (Sthayibhavas) are expressed as the nine rasas,- the rasa for delight is the erotic (Sringara). It ultimately leads to a physical union between a man and a woman. It also suggests a union that transcends the physical. Abhinavgupta had repeatedly stressed that lust should not be considered Sringara. Sringara in the context of bhakti, is always posing a possibility of a union with the Divine. This possibility is called Bhakti Sringara. The second rasa or the rasa for laughter is the comic (Hasya). The comic aesthetic experience comes from the erotic. But the nature of the rasa is determined by the nature of response and its consequence. If the consequence is harmless, it leads to Hasya. So Hasya is the second rasa.

The third rasa, rasa for sorrow is the pathetic (Karuna). The Karuna is the consequence of raudra rasa. Raudra or furious rasa leads to destruction. It holds the possibility of being close to Bhayanaka in manifestation and in consequence sorrow.

The fourth rasa, for anger is (Raudra) or the furious rasa. The furious rasa is generally an accompaniment of vira or the heroic. In this regard, Raudra and Karuna are very similar as both can be the consequence of some

deprivation. The consequence of deprivation in Karuna is loss of hope and resignation and in Raudra it is fury.

The fifth rasa is the energetic or zestful (Vira). Adbhuta is the consequence of Vira or heroic as heroic actions lead to admiration for them. Adbhuta indicates that which surprises in a pleasant way. It is a positive rasa. Bhayanaka and Bibhatsa where fear and disgust are central cannot lead to adbhuta. Nevertheless all three rasas have an element of surprise in them. Therefore the sixth rasa, for the terrible is (Bhayanaka). The seventh rasa for disgust is Bibhatsa. For wonder or *vismaya* is Adbuta the eighth rasa. And the ninth rasa developed by the seventeenth century's aesthetician, Abhinavgupta, is for serenity or Sama (Shanta) rasa. Abhinavgupta indicates that all the eight *sthayibhavas* or permanent states hold the possibility of the "perception of truth" (about the real nature of the world) and thus, the possibility of a transcendence. In other words, they lead to the *sthayibhava* of Shanta-Sama (a state of calm) which is the result of the perception of truth (1997:67).

Priyadarshi Pathak explains that in the Indian tradition there are two possibilities which participate intensely in the lives of the common man: transmigration of the soul, and the consequences of one's *karma* or good and bad deeds. Thus evil can never be rewarded. If not in this life, in the next life, one will reap the consequences of one's evil acts. Similarly, good, if not now, will certainly be rewarded in the next life. It is thus that the very possibility of tragedy cannot be conceived here, for in a tragedy, along with bad, good is also destroyed. Therefore Rasa Utpatti is always a state of enjoyment, which is generally regarded as specific to aesthetic experience.

Ben Johnson, the Sixteenth century Elizabethan dramatist had similarly satirized human eccentricities which occurred due to an excess of one of the four 'humors' or natural fluids of the body, blood, phlegm, cholera

and melancholy or black bile. The Indian Rasa theory enumerates nine permanent emotional states which are stated above and which inspire particular emotions in the audience depending upon the particular image portrayed on the stage.

According to Bharat Gupt in *Dramatic Concepts Greek and India, A Study Of Poetics and Natyasastra*, “Thoughts or intellectual concepts may vary or differ with time but emotional states are an unchanging part of human nature. Bhavas, though freshly felt in new’ situations and ideas, remain the same in terms of emotional content” (1994: 253). Bharat Muni had classified these emotional states in three categories, *Sthayi* (dominant) *Vyabhichar* (Transient) and *Sattvika* (Psychosomatic). The sthayis or permanent emotional modes are stated above as the “nav-rasa”. Dramatic Art suggests emotion. Emotion suggests meaning and this is portrayed as images.

Aestheticians like Anandavardhan explain ‘dramatic art’ as thus, “Vyabhicharbhas, the transient emotion of the individual is to be first generalized into a sentiment of universal human import and then it must be presented by suggestion (dhavni)”. Anandavardhan continues, “In appreciation, the observer does not experience in himself the real life emotion which underlies the suggested sentiment, but tastes or savors it in act of intuition which is compared with the metaphysical or mystical intuition in enlightenment. This tasting or savouring is called rasa” (1985:156).

Bharata’s Natya Shastra defines Rasa thus: “The sentiment or aesthetic pleasure (Rasa) arises as a result of the harmonious blending of the appropriate vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhicharibhava” (1998:164) The Rasas evoke in the audience an emotional climax accompanied by a sense of joy. This is the aesthetic pleasure of Rasa. The Vyabhicharbhas are

temporary or transitory moods that tend only to develop the sthayibhava or dominant mood. The dominant mood could be love, anger or pathos.

Since the freedom of knowing the whole gamut of possible responses (the known), situates the experience of pure awareness or the self (the knower), rasa (the process of knowing) produces the experience of the three-fold unity of the knower, the known, and the process of knowing. This is process can be stated to be analogous to the experience of the fourth stage of Soyinka's ritual drama. The emotional response to a particular situation on stage or a particular predicament of the protagonist uplifts the reader/audience out of the mundane of life and gives aesthetic bliss.

Even the individual experience of reading a dramatic text has a transcendental effect. It may not have the social impact and power of a collective experience, but it is no less valid for its greater subjectivity, which in Vedic poetics is called "aesthetic rapture".

Rasa-siddanta, the aesthetic theory, may lead the audience to a state of unbounded bliss but it cannot lead to moksha or the ideal state. The art experience is the previous experience and the spiritual experience is the latter respectively. The two experiences are of the same order but not identical, for the former has certain limitations which are not found in the latter. To begin with, the art experience is transient. It does not endure for long but wanes away sooner or later, for it depends for its continuance upon the presence of the external stimulus which has evoked it.

The ideal state, when attained, necessarily becomes a permanent feature of life. Its attainment consequently means the rising once and for all, above the narrow interests of routine life and the mental strain which these interests involve. It is not suggested by this that art experience will not leave its good influence behind, all that is meant is that, whatever may be the

nature and the extent of that influence the experience itself with the features that make it comparable to the ideal state, disappears after a time. The impersonal joy of art experience is induced artificially from outside, while that of the ideal state, springs naturally from within. Art experience is characterized by a unique kind of delight and therefore, it is superior to common experience. According to Krishna Ryan:

Art does not require as a necessary condition of its attainment either philosophic knowledge or moral worth. It can be brought into being, even in their absence, by the power which all true works of art possess. And this power of the work of art is its capability to evoke certain kind of emotions i.e. Rasas. Rasa thus is a sophisticated concept of the response to art. (1987:112-119)

Krishna Rayan explains that rasa has all the features of the aesthetic experience familiar to western philosophy, rasa is emotion objectified, universalized: and raised to a state where it becomes the object of lucid disinterested contemplation and is transfigured into serene joy. Krishna Rayan further writes that a Sthayin or the permanent emotional mode lies latent and inert within a man except when stimulus activates it for a while. Sthayins are a universal human equipment and all humans are potentially capable of the realization of rasa. The nine categories are mutually exclusive and together complete, so that whichever emotion the play expresses or arouses, whichever emotion arises in the poet or the spectator or reader, comes under one Sthayin or the other.

In terms of comparison to ‘Western’ criticism, one can say that the idea of unity of impression ‘emotional unity,’ ‘total response’ and several other formulations are similar if not identical with that of the dominant rasa. The closest is perhaps the Greek concept of “pity and fear”. According to

Aristotle in a tragedy a hero's suffering on stage makes the audience undergo catharsis of such emotions i.e. pity and fear. Pity and fear should be aroused in the audience on seeing the protagonist's trials and tribulations in the tragedy. It is tempting to equate pity and fear with the karuna and bhayanaka rasas, but what Aristotle meant by emotions is clearly different from what the Indian critic Anandavardhana meant by rasas.

Pity and fear are not emotions present in the play. They are, emotions which should be evoked in the reader or audience by what the play presents, these emotions are the audience's reaction to the play. Whereas according to rasa theory, the emotion which the reader experiences is the same as the emotion presented in the play or poem – a heightened version, but essentially the same emotion. For example, in Kalidas's *Sakuntala* love is the master motif i.e. Sringar rasa, though sorrow, tenderness, serenity and laughter are also there. Thus the principal rasa, itself, rich diversified and complex, is fed by a multiplicity of minor incidental feelings.

One can cite an example from Shakespeare to understand the use of rasa theory. According to Bharat Gupt, "Envy, indeed, overpowered *Othello*, yet, it was caused by anger and frustrated sex. According to the Indian system, the sthayi in *Othello* are krodha and rati" (1994:253). The transient emotions (vyabhicaris) are moha and cinta. Bharat Gupt lists the transient or vyabhicari emotional states as thirty six. Some of them are nirveda(dejection), glani(guilt), sankha(doubt), asuya(eny), moha (fondness) and cinta(worry). According to Bharat Gupt:

There has always been a debate in Sanskrit literary theory about who experiences meaning, is it the spectator, the actor or both? The actor must become the character giving up his own self like a soul reborn. He is, therefore, supposed to experience the meaning himself, the effect of the emotion to be enacted should

be complete on him and it should show on his body and voice. This effect on the body is ‘experience’ or *anubhava*” (1994:255).

The audience too experiences the meaning depending on his capacity to lose himself and identify with the actor. *Anubhavas* are a direct result of the strong emotional arousal.

According to Bharat Gupta the doctrine of *rasa* “focuses attention on the final state of unmixed delight. By its very definition, *rasa* is purely “that which is capable of being tasted”. Even though Bharata Muni has not said so in his *rasa* sutras, “the classical commentators have explicitly postulated that the process of *rasa* emergence (*rasanipatti*) requires removal of obstructions. Lollata emphasized the removal of ordinary consciousness by the creative power (*anusandhanabala*) of the actor.”(1994:271-272). Bhattanayaka, comes closest to catharsis when he upholds that *sadharanikarana* eliminates grosser and vital passions (*tamas* and *rajas*) and creates a condition of emotional refinement (*sattvodreka*) in which *rasa* becomes possible. Bharat Gupta continues, “*rasa* is meant to purge the spectator’s emotions of all personal obstructions such as individual attachment, likes and dislikes which may stand in the way of feeling the represented emotion in an unbiased manner....this purged emotion is *rasa* ....an emotion divested of all personal attachment is a ‘purged’ or a universalized one” (1994.271-272).

Bharat Gupt explains that it has been customary to say that catharsis and *rasa* are worlds apart. Most arguments on the topic boil down to saying; “Catharsis is a restorative process; it frees the spectator of emotional imbalance; it is a negative achievement as it merely provides relief from emotional stress. *Rasa*, on the other hand is a positive achievement a sense of enjoyment to yogic bliss in rapture and intensity. Such a comparison is a

simplification. The purgational aspect or aesthetic enjoyment is covered not only by catharsis but by rasa as well. Similarly the area of pure enjoyment, the declared aim, of rasa, is inter linked with the concept of catharsis” (1994:271). Whatever the world view, catharsis and rasa both begin with purification and end in delight.

It is relevant to point out according to Bharat Gupt the meaning of the term catharsis and rasa has also been considerably influenced by the nature of the dramatic genres with which these terms have been associated. Because of its connection with tragedy, catharsis has stood for restoration or piecing together, of the spirit torn apart. It has come to stand for temporary relief in an otherwise hopeless world. Because of its association with natakas and plays with happy endings rasa has been equated with undisturbed pleasure available in a world where all in well.

After understanding the substance of rasa theory it is very important to understand its relevance. As Priyadarshi Patnaik states in the introduction, to *Rasa in Aesthetics* (1997) that a literary theory is one that has practical applications. Firstly, a literary theory is about literature, secondly if it cannot be applied it has very little practical relevance and sooner or later it stagnates and dies. In most cases a good literary theory has double potential. It can lead to further theories, to newer philosophical speculations. At the same time it can also be applied to literary texts.

The theory must have the potential for a general application to texts. It should be substantial and flexible enough to stand the wear of time. It should not be just a fashionable theory which is not malleable to interpretations and newer needs.

The rasa theory, one of the oldest theories in Indian tradition fulfils most of these conditions. Rasa theory takes in consideration the entire

literary process from its very conception in the mind of the artist to its final perception in the heart of the perceiver or reader. No one is left out. Priyadarshi Patnaik states, “the artist is of prime importance. It is his genius (Pratibha) only that leads to an excellent text which has the capacity to transport the essence of aesthetic enjoyment- rasa. The text is of great importance for here it is that we see how emotions are suggested through words or actions. Finally, without the reader who perceives, savours (asvada) and enjoys, the text is useless. In the rasa theory, each of these factors is acknowledged for its indispensability. It is this total world view that makes up this lucid theory” (1997:2).

Rasa theory has tremendous linguistic potential, for the emotion can only be shown or communicated through suggestions (dhvani) i.e. through words or gestures or symbols. Rasa theory as states Priyadarshi Patnaik is one of our oldest and most influential theories which has grown over the centuries subjected to a rich tradition of dialectics and interpretations over a period nearly more than thousand years, it has become richer and more complete.

### **3.2 Analysis of the play *Death and the King's Horseman* (1987) applying the Rasa theory.**

The Rasa theory has been applied to a number of Shakespearean texts. This thesis attempts to apply this theory to Wole Soyinka's text *Death and the King's Horseman* (1987) and also to Girish Karnad's *Tale Danda*.(1993).

This play is based on events which actually took place in Oyo, ancient Yoruba city of Nigeria in 1946. As Wole Soyinka mentions in the author's note at the beginning of the play, that year the lives of Elesin (Olori Elesin),

his son, Olunde and the Colonial District Officer intertwined with the disastrous results set out in the play.

Elesin, the King's Horseman has to undergo a ceremonial ritualistic death, as it is the custom of his land for the Horseman to accompany his master in death. His sacrificial death, appears as suicide to the eyes of the British colonial officer, Pilkings. Pilkings intervenes in the ritual suicide of Elesin, causing him to fail in his duty to follow his master, the Alafin into the world of the ancestors. During the course of the play, Elesin does manage to kill himself while in British custody. But his death is preceded by the death of his son Olunde. Olunde, has returned from his medical studies in Britain. On hearing of the crisis, Olunde sacrifices himself in his father's place to try to ensure the continued spiritual well-being of his community. Whether Olunde's act is enough to redeem his committing death, first by his own desires and later by external interference and the burden of fulfilling his task falls on his eldest son, Olunde. But in dramatic terms these issues acquire a metaphysical dimension, while the colonial issue and the historicity of the father's failure is uncertain. The Praise Singer tells Elesin before his death, 'our world is tumbling in the void of strangers,' (1987:75) and there is no guarantee of what the end will be. Elesin is rejected by the world of the play because he allowed the diversions of the flesh to delay his death, and this delay caused all the uncalled for consequences in the play.

According to Ipshita Chanda, "Thus the encounter with the other and the other's attempt to belittle all that does not conform to his standards, seems to be the true instrument of the colonized subject's self – actualization. It would appear that this contradicts the very remark that Soyinka wishes to use to explicate the incidental nature of the colonizing other. Even if this is rejected as an argument that is too closely wrapped in the logic of the binary, even if it is seen as a rejection of the agency of the

colonized self, and an overt dependence upon the agency of the colonizing other, the inescapable fact is that it is almost impossible to conceptualize the dynamics of either colonizing or colonized subject without reference to the other”(2004:134). Chanda continues : “The self-realization that Olunde experiences would not have been possible, and consequently, neither would his acceptance of a spiritual legacy that he seemed to have rejected earlier, had he not encountered the overpowering culture of the other” (2004:134).

Brian Crow and Chris Banfield in *An Introduction to post-colonial theatre* (1996) state that “Elesin’s action is presented as being deeply rooted in an organic culture that knows the meaning and values of its rituals. The colonialists, on the other hand, while being horrified at what they can only understand as native barbarism, fail to recognize that they are ritualists too(the Prince’s visit) and are themselves embroiled in actions, that others might find senseless and barbaric”(1996:82). They continue further that, “Against it is Olunde who functions as the play’s *raison neur*, making the point about the massive disaster that is the white peoples’ war, and commenting on Jane’s story(about the captain who blew himself up with his ship in the local harbour rather than risk harm to others)by pointing to its ‘affirmative’ quality, analogous with his father’s action.”(1996:83).

As Brian Crow points out, “crucial as Pilking’s intervention is, it is not what most concerns Soyinka. What does is the capacity of colonialism to undermine psychologically those charged with ensuring the well being and continuity of the culture. The necessary ritual action is finally performed; but whether it can now be effective is uncertain”(1996:84).

We are in Postcolonial times, we have discovered ourselves once again. We have learned to decolonize our minds from the British hegemony, and we have realized our strengths and weaknesses. And we can apply our

indigenous theory like the Rasa theory to understand the culture of the “other”, which in this context is another colonized nation Nigeria.

Soyinka’s plays elicit the experience of rasa or aesthetic bliss by means of images and suggestions intended to produce the loss of individuation and the resulting flavour of unboundedness or bliss. His themes of individual quest and self-discovery, which on stage are portrayed in suggested word pictures or images, elicit rasas. For example, in the play *Death And The King’s Horseman* (1987), the image of the Not-I bird, created by Elesin strikes a grave chord in the reader’s heart, it invokes karuna rasa. The Not-I bird is the symbol of death knocking at Elesin’s door.

The Praise-Singer: The cockerel must not be seen without his feathers.\Elesin: Nor will the Not –I bird be much longer without his nest.\Praise-Singer(stopped in his lyric stride):The Not-I bird, Elesin?\Elesin: I said ,the Not-I bird. \ Praise-Singer: All respect to our elders but, is there really such a bird? \ Elesin: What; could it be that he failed to knock on your door?”(1987:11)

Elesin is celebrating life but knows that he has to die for the well- being of his community. Death comes calling to many people in the story of the Not –I bird which Elesin chants in the market –place but no one hears it. “Death came calling .\Who does not know his rasp of reeds?\ A twilight whisper in the leaves before\The great araba falls? Did you hear it? \ Not-I; swears the farmer. (1987: 11)

It is only Elesin who hears the knock of death because he is destined to die with the King, as he is his horseman. And the rituals in Elesin’s land bade him to die immediately after his king’s death, so as to accompany him

in his next life. This destiny of Elesin makes him and the audience sad, invoking 'karuna rasa'. Elesin, the Horseman is pulsating with life, but he has to die, this destiny brings in pathos and the reader suffers with the protagonist.

The Horseman Elesin is full of life, He celebrates life, and he wants to get married again to a young girl. This is 'Sringara rasa', where the love for life is tremendous. But Elesin is supposed to die, as the king has died, and it is a ritual that the king's horseman should accompany him in death. This willingly undertaking death for the community, and abnegating one's desire for life, calls for 'Karuna rasa.' One feels a lot of compassion for Elesin. Right from the beginning of the play, the reader starts feeling sorry for Elesin.

Elesin: Come then. This market is my roost. When I come among the women I am a chicken with a hundred mothers. I become a monarch whose palace is built with tenderness and beauty.

Praise Singer: They love to spoil you but beware. The hands of women also weaken the unwary. (1987:10)

Elesin tells the Praise singer that he loves the smell of the women's flesh, their sweat, their smell of indigo on their cloth, this is the last air that he wished to breathe before going to meet his great forebears.

Here 'Sringara rasa' spells Elesin's love for life, his love for all earthly things. It is acted out by such anubhavas or bodily movement as in a dance. But this happy rasa or 'Sringara' is accompanied by pathos or 'Karuna' as Elesin has to give all this up and embrace death.

Elesin: Death came calling/who does not know his rasp of reeds?/A twilight whisper in the leaves before/ The great araba falls? Did you hear it? Not I! swears the farmer.\ .....

‘Not I’, shouts the fearless hunter, ‘but/it’s getting dark and this night lamp/has leaked out all its oil. I think/It’s best to go home and resume my hunt/Another day ?.....

And take my good kinsman I fawomi./His hands were like a carver’s, strong/And true. I saw them /Tremble like wet wings of a fowl/One day he cast his time- smoothed opele/Across the divination board. And all because/The suppliant looked him in the eye and asked,/ ‘Did you hear that whisper in the leaves?’ ‘Not I’, was his reply, ‘perhaps I’m growing deaf/good day.(1987: 12-13)

Elesin is talking of a number of people who refuse to see death lingering in the future. They just move away from the Bhayanaka or fearful thought of death. The fear of death is so strong in human beings that they just avoid talking about it or noticing it. Elesin is brave to confront death and embrace it. He is ready to meet this Bhayanaka reality of life, the fearful reality of life and die honourably and bravely. The thought of death scares everyone so Bhayanak rasa, is evoked. Also seeing Elesin’s brave demeanor in the face of death vir rasa is evoked. Priyadarshi Pathak states, “Raudra or the furious *rasa* is in most cases an accompaniment of *vira*. This is so since *vira rasa* is usually generated against some injustice, where there is the possibility of anger” (1997:59). Here Elesin is going to be deprived of his life. He is being brave and trying to be honourable in his ritualistic death, but it is painful both for him, and to the audience who perceive it as unjust.

Elesin: There was fear in the forest too. / Not – I was lately heard even in the lair/ Of beasts. The hyena cackled loud Not I, /The civet twitched his fiery tail and glared: Not I. Not – I became the answering-name.\Of the restless bird, that little one\Whom Death found nesting in the leaves\When whisper of his coming ran \Not-I\ Has long abandoned home. This same dawn/ I heard him twitter in the god's abode. / Ah, companions of this living world/ What a thing this is that even those/ We call immortal\ Should fear to die. (1987:13)

The last sentence relieves the pain of Elesin, the chosen one to die. It immediately communicates the sadness in his heart to the audience and the rasa of karuna is evoked. Elesin is vir or brave to take this ritual death.

Elesin: I, when that Not – I bird perched/ Upon my roof, bade him seek his nest again,/ Safe, without care or fear. I unrolled/My welcome mat for him to see. Not I/ Flew happily away, you'll hear his voice/No more in this lifetime- You all know/What I am (1987:14).

There is vira rasa too evoked because Elesin is keeping a brave front and is telling everyone in the market that he is ready to die.

While desires are present, there also is a readiness to give them up and embrace death. This man, energetic and full with life, has to enter ritual death and the thought is painful. He is remembering everything that they had fame, friendship etc. and is ready to give them up.

Elesin: Life has an end. A life that will outlive/Fame and friendship begs another name./What elder takes his tongue to his plate, /Licks it clean of every crumb? He will encounter. Silence when he calls on children to fulfill/ The smallest

errand!/ Life is honour/ It ends when honour  
ends.(1987:15)

This sentiment of dying in the name of honour is definitely a portender of ‘vira rasa’. The concept of honour is bigger than an individual’s will. Soyinka, somehow in this play is trying to ask the audience, is it right to die in the name of honour, even when life seems more worthwhile! Is this old African custom of the Horseman accompanying his king in death not slavery?

Soyinka’s plays are social plays, they hint at the injustices prevalent in the African society. This sacrificial death which Elesin is to take as part of his fate seems like suicide to the English eye. Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings cannot understand the purpose of this death. The double edged job of writers like Wole Soyinka is to make known to the West, significant rituals like the horseman accompanying his king in death, and at the same time question about their relevance in modern times.

Ipshita Chanda in her essay “The Nation and its Discontents: Soyinka’s Dramatization of ‘Post’-Colonial Realities” states that, “The Ogun hero who died to redeem the community, who destroyed himself so a path could be forged through the swamp of human frailties was an individual in every sense. Like Olunde who came to fulfill the responsibilities of the son of the Horseman of the Alafin of Oyo, he was a man who could have survived without the community. Indeed, in Olunde’s case he had gone against the wishes of his father the Oba to pursue his studies in the West. The community’s spiritual survival, rather than its material existence, is inevitably the issue in this play that Soyinka seems to have written”(2004:133).

As Soyinka states further in his note that the confrontation in the play is largely metaphysical, contained in the human vehicle which is Elesin and

the universe of the Yoruba mind, the world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and the numinous passages which links all: transition. *Death and the Kings Horseman* (1987), can be fully realized only through an evocation of music from the abyss of transition.

Iyaloja (dancing round him. Sings)

He forgives us. He forgives us/What a fearful thing it is when /  
The Voyager sets forth/But a curse remains behind.(1987:16)

This fear in the actors arouses the same fear in the audience because ‘curse’ is such a common denomination of fear even in Indians. One wants to lead a life where one has no curses on oneself. There are family curses handed down from generation to generation. Therefore the rasa of Karuna as an inference of raudra is evoked because of the thought of fear.

Apart from meaning ‘result’ it has also a string of other connotation like ‘deed’ ‘consequence’ etc. what this implies in raudra is the cause which results in or leads to ‘Karuna’. It is part of Elesin’s karma to die but his thirst for life and its enjoyment holds him back. Karuna creeps in our hearts to see him struggle against his zest for life and accept death.

This struggle of the individual will to live and the community’s behest to die is a crisis which Elesin is undergoing. His cry is the cry of every individual who struggles to free oneself from the community’s fold and live for oneself. But the family, the society and the community is so important in the Indian and the Nigerian contexts that individuality is often sacrificed at the altar of the community’s and family’s well being. In play *Yayati* (2008) Girish Karnad similarly shows Puru’s struggle for his happiness against his father’s desires and ambitions, and how for his father’s sake he undertakes old age on his shoulders. For his father’s enjoyment of life Puru takes the curse of old age meted on King Yayati. Similarly in this play *Death and The*

*King's Horseman*(1987), it is Elesin's son who undertakes the ritual death, when he sees the natural order being disturbed. Though Elesin also dies in the end but it is the son who has actually shown the way of sacrifice to the father. Elesin himself refers to the pull of roots at the beginning of the play.

No man beholds his mother's womb-/ Yet who denies its there?  
Coiled/To the navel of the world is that/Endless cord that links  
us all / To the great origin. If I love my way/ The trailing cord  
will bring me to the roots. (1987: 18).

Ritual deaths were for society's renewal and they were so much a part of the primitive mind that the elect for this could not backtrack as that would bring bad luck to the entire community. Therefore the individual's death was a minor affair compared to the community's well being and the grip of ritual was so strong on the Yoruba mind as it would be on the rural Indian mind that to be freed from it would require a Herculean task of mass awakening on the part of social workers and writers like Soyinka. Therefore Soyinka lays so much stress on the human will because only this will has the capacity to bring about change.

The play *Death and the King's Horseman* (1987) is also a transition from the old to the new. Life has to renew itself and rid itself of all redundant and irrelevant customs and rituals. As Lord Tennyson had very fittingly said in his poem "From the passing of Arthur" (Part 1),

"The Old order changeth, yielding place to new, and god fulfills himself in many ways, lest one good custom should corrupt the world" (line407). This custom of the Horseman accompanying the King in his death is outdated in today's world view and should be changed.

All the quotations from the play attest the building up of 'Karuna rasa' as Elesin is again and again reminded of the death he has to undertake.

Elesin's lust for women does not die even when he is at the threshold of the other world. This evokes the feeling of disgust or 'bibhatsa' in actors around him just as it does in the audience but no one wants to invite the curse of the one who is leaving this world and so his wishes are being fulfilled, however wrong it may be. 'Bibhatsa' is the Rasa aroused on seeing something unpleasant and undesired.

Here Elesin's desire for the young betrothed bride to Iyaloja's son is something not to be desired, so it arouses 'bibhatsya' or disgust. But the emotion of 'Raudra' on not meeting the desires of the one departing this world is more prominent than any rasa. The fear of inviting curses is strong that it overrides all senses.

Iyaloja (smiling broadly, completely reconciled): Elesin, even at the narrow end of the passage I know you will look back and sigh a last regret for the flesh that flashed past your spirit in flight .You always had a restless eye. Your choice has my blessing.

Elesin: Your eyes were clouded at first.

Iyaloja: Not for long It is those who stand at the gateway of the great change to whose cry we must pay heed. And then, think of this - it makes the mind tremble. The fruit of such a union is rare. It will be neither of this world nor of the next. Nor of the one behind us. As if the timelessness of the ancestor world and the unborn have joined spirit to wring an issue of the elusive being of passage....Elesin! (1987:22).

The concept of human sacrifice is dealt with in another of Soyinka's play *The Strong Breed*(1964). Writers like T.S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad feel that human sacrifices profoundly reject the basic principle of western

ideology, the sanctity of the individual. James Booth finds human sacrifice to be the most imaginatively powerful assertion of the subordination of the individual to a primitive community. The gods, powerful kings or the ancestors require sacrifice of humans for the well-being of the community. The welfare of the community is always of primary importance, the victim's death is neither a tragedy nor is it considered a punishment by the victim. It is something through which the elected has to pass. In some communities the victim became the carrier of the community's sins. Being a scapegoat was his calling. The function of people like Elesin is to just act like a bridge to the supernatural world in which their individual personality is lost to the role they have to play.

The Yoruba historian, Rev. Samuel Johnson evokes an alien world of late 19<sup>th</sup> century for a modern reader when he writes about the royal funeral, and coronations of his people governed by a magical hierarchy of nature, where human life is given no sanctity, and where the awesomeness of death is routinely employed to add solemnity to public occasions. He further writes that the name "King's Horseman", for instance, highlights a man whose function in life is to accompany the Alafin or King of Oyo into the next world when he dies. That is his reason of living. He has no other option. It is this total denial of "Western individualism" which makes human sacrifice fascinating to the western writer, "either as symbol of the abyss which lies beneath civilization (Conrad) or as expression of an alternative communalism"(1992:10-12).

James Booth suggests that Wole Soyinka is unique among African writers in the historical imaginative commitment which he gives to the motif of human sacrifice in his work. "In the *Strong Breed* (1964), *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), he challenges European images of barbarism, and averts through the ritual of human

sacrifice a communal interrelationship between the individual and society different from that of the individualistic “west”.(1992:14)

Soyinka describes the play, *Death and the King's Horseman* as the metaphysical “universe of the Yoruba mind”. A ritualistic death, where the individual will is not of any importance is barbaric. The chosen one to die, wants to live, he is so keen to leave behind his ‘seed’ in the womb of the young bride he has set his eye on. He wants to propagate his life. The thought of death of a living being pulsating with life is saddening. James Booth in his essay “Human Sacrifice In Literature; the case of Wole Soyinka”, writes that Soyinka’s first essay on the topic of ‘human sacrifice,’ shows the playwright struggling to find a structure of sacrificial custom which will allow his victim – protagonist to develop tragic stature. This problem remains a fundamental difficulty. James Booth further writes, “A human sacrifice which truly asserts the communal unity of society must involve a willing victim harmoniously subordinated to the will of the people” (1992:14).

And the death of the Horseman to accompany his master in the next world is inhuman, it renews society in no way. It is just slavery and the pampering of the ego of the king.

The king wants to maintain the same decorum in the next world as he did on earth, therefore he wants his horseman and other servicemen to accompany him in death. This demand is totally unjust. The people like the horseman, have no say and their deaths are given a ritualistic garb and made to sound grand, so that their death becomes less painful for them. The term ‘honour’ is brought in as the noble cause for death.

Soyinka tries to give it a new meaning by calling it metaphysical progression of the human being. In fact it is Elesin’s son whose death hits

you in the eye and makes you ponder why the abnegation of a young life in the name of a ritual. The son still has a cause, to show to the European eye that they do not understand them and their sensibilities. They stopped Olunde's father from dying, so Olunde will die. The pull of the community is stronger than the individual life, is what Elesin's son wanted to show the English. For Soyinka too the African concept of the community holding sway on the individual is important.

What Olunde is doing is making the British couple Mr. and Mrs. Pilkings understand his rituals and life style. Just like in Act 2 we have Amusa, the great police officer who is in service of His Majesty's Government, trying to explain the significance of the "egungun" mask which the couple is wearing for a masquerade ball. Egungun is sacred to the African, the Yoruba. The spirits of the dead ancestors are supposed to enter the wearer of the mask. This is again a very Yoruban belief that the mask and its wearer are one because the spirit of the mask enters the wearer. But this is not so in Western thought, there the mask and the wearer are two different people. Thus the British couple cannot understand the sacredness and significance of the egungun masquerade.

Amusa (without looking down): Madam, I arrest the ring leaders who make trouble but me I no touch egungun. That egungun itself, I no touch. And I no abuse' am. I arrest ring leader but I treat egungun with respect.

Pilkings: It's hopeless. We'll merely end up missing the best part of the ball. When they get this way there is nothing you can do. It is simply hammering against a brick wall.....  
We only upset his delicate sensibilities by remaining here.  
(1987:25)

News comes to Jane and Simon Pilkings of Elesin, the king's Chief Horseman's ritualistic death to take place. If Elesin had died before the king's death then his eldest son Olunde would have had to die to accompany the king in heaven. This was the nature of the custom. Olunde is a very sensitive boy, whom the Pilkings have helped to study abroad against his father's wishes. He is going to be a first class doctor.

'Karuna' rasa heighten as things move towards Elesin's death. Elesin's wish of mating with the young bride is fulfilled. He is ready to die.

Elesin..... My vital flow, the last from this flesh is intermingled with the future life. All is prepared. Listen! (A steady drum beat from the distance.) Yes. it is nearly time. The King's dog has been killed. The King's favorite horse is about to follow his master. My brother chief knows their task and perform it well. (1987:40)

Elesin's preparedness for death is 'Karuna maya', dance and music seem to build the frenzy, so that like an honourable soldier he undertakes death and does not get caught into living once more. There are drummers building the crescendo to his ceremonial death.

Yet somehow one cannot help feeling that the act of this ritualistic death is unjust. A human life is at par with a dog's or horse's life because all are being killed to accompany the soul of the master. This sense of injustice makes the audience suffer and hence karuna rasa is evoked. Here the death is a furious or violent proposition however ritualistic it may be. Now the rasa known as karuna arises from the permanent emotion of sorrow. It proceeds from vibhavas such as curse, affliction (klesa or affliction of curse), separation from those who are dear,(their)

downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment, or from contact with misfortune (vyasana), destruction (upaghata), and calamity (vidrava). (1997:122)

Praise –Singer: And yet this fear will not depart from me/ The darkness of this new abode is deep/Will your human eyes suffice?

Elesin: In a night which falls before our eyes/However deep, we do not miss our way. (Elesin trance appears to be deepening, his steps heavier)(1995:43). “It is this transcending of self- consciousness –this migrating from our narrow self ,to put it otherwise ,that constitutes the secret of aesthetic delight.....that is termed rasa in Sanskrit” (2004.51-52). Elesin is entering the metaphysical realm before giving up his body completely.

Iyaloja: ... It takes an Elesin to die the death of death. .../Only Elesin ... dies the unknowable death of death ... / Gracefully, gracefully does the horseman regain/The stables at the end of day, gracefully... (1995: 43).

The Praise-Singer feels sad and wants the Elesin to stay back, if only things were in his hands....

Have they eyes to gauge your worth, have they heart to love you, ... If they do not Elesin, if any there cuts your yam with a small knife, or pours you wine in a small calabash, turn back and return to welcoming hands. If the world were not greater than the wishes of Olohun-iyo, I would not let you go ...”. (1995: 45)

But the Praise-Singer knows that he cannot call him back .The destiny of the individual is stronger than his wish to live. He paints a beautiful word picture in support of the ceremonial death of the Horseman,

I would call you back but when the elephant heads for the jungle, the tail is too small a handhold for the hunter that would pull him back./ The sun that heads for the sea no longer heeds the prayers of the farmer./...No arrow flies back to the string, the child does not return through the same passage that gave it birth” (1995:44).

As the Praise –Singer speaks the Elesin’s praises, Elesin goes in a trance and becomes unaware of his surroundings. The individual will is subsumed in the Universal will of the community. The last sentence sums up the largeness of the community compared to the punishment or ritualistic death of the individual.

The scene shifts in the play to Elesin’s eldest son Olunde and the British couple Mr. and Mrs. Pilking.

Olunde: What cause Mrs. Pilking?

Jane: All this. The ball. And His highness being here in person and all that.

Olunde (mildly): And that is the good cause for which you desecrate an ancestral mask?

Jane: Oh, so you are shocked after all. How disappointing.

Olunde: No I am not shocked Mrs. Pilkings. You forget that I have now spent four years among your people. I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand. (1995:50).

Olunde tries to explain to Jane Pilking’s the significance of his father’s death.

Olunde: How can I make you understand? He has protection. No one can undertake what he does tonight without the deepest protection the mind can conceive. What can you offer him in place of his peace of mind, in place of honour and veneration of his own people ? ... (1987:53)

Here is the difference between western and the honour and veneration of his own people is important that even undertaking death seems peaceful. A very important point Olunde makes to Jane here is :

Olunde: Yet another error into which your people fall. You believe that everything which appears to make sense was learnt from you. (1987:53)

One can feel *bibhatsa rasa* or the feeling of disgust, when one sees colonialists behaving like all knowing gods and dubbing as barbaric what they do not understand.

Mrs. Pilkings is being understanding and trying to grasp the meaning of Elesin's death.

Olunde ... Ever since I learnt of the King's death. I've lived with my bereavement so long now that I cannot think of him alive. On that journey on the boat, I kept my mind on my duties as the one who must perform the rites over his body. I went through it all again and again in my mind as he himself had taught me. I didn't want to do anything wrong, something which might jeopardize the welfare of my people. (1987: 57).

Olunde's thought of his own people and their welfare is noble. Even when he went away to England to study medicine, he does not forget his duties towards his father and his people.

Elesin has been stopped from his ritualistic death by Pilkings. He is saddened and this sadness communicates to the audience too, the play is rife with Karuna rasa. The bhava is pain, Elesin tells Simon Pilking.

Elesin: I no longer blame you. You stole from me my first born, sent him to your country so you could turn him into something in your own image. Did you plan it all before hand? There are moments when it seems part of a larger plan. He who must follow my footsteps is taken from me, sent across the ocean. Then, in my turn, I am stopped from fulfilling my destiny. Did you think it all out before, this plan to push our world from its course and sever the cord that links us to the great origin. (1987:63)

These lines echo the pain of every colonized country. The British did not understand the sensibilities of the Indian or Nigerian native, they just did what they thought was right. Wole Soyinka's drive is to condemn this 'holier than thou art' attitude of the British. This pain only calls for 'karuna rasa'.

"Elesin: ... This world is set adrift and its inhabitants are lost. Around them, there is nothing but emptiness" (1987:63). The severance from one's roots because of the British colonization has to a large extent brought in only emptiness and confusion to the colonized people.

Another feeling noticed in Olunde's eye by his father Elesin, when he did not die was that of disgust, for which Elesin felt very shameful. So shades of bhibhatsa rasa also come in. But that look and the words Olunde uttered to his father was sure to make him believe that his son was not under the British influence, his spirit was very much African and he told Pilkings that Olunde would avenge Elesin's shame. And Olunde's spirit would destroy Pilkings and his people.

One valid question Pilkings asks Elesin was:

Pilking: ... You were surrounded by those who egged you on with song and praises. I thought, are these not the same people who say: the elder grimly approaches heaven and you ask him to bear your greetings yonder; do you really think he makes the journey willingly? After that, I did not hesitate. (A pause. Elesin sighs. Before he can speak a sound or running feet is heard). (1995: 64)

Elesin's sigh could signify the lack of understanding of the British of this Yoruba ritual or it could be acquiesces with what Pilkings is saying, that it is not willingly but because of the strong hold of community rituals, on an individual's psyche that one undertakes such a death. Nothing is clarified.

The pain of one culture being not understood by another, i.e. The British not understanding the Yoruba, becomes the main theme of this play.

Elesin: You have my honour already. It is locked up in that desk in which you will put away your report of this night's events. Even the honour of my people you have taken already, it is tied together with those papers of treachery which make you masters in this land. (1995: 67)

The bhava of pain on Elesin's part heightens Karuna rasa. But Elesin's helplessness still harbours hope that his son will rectify the wrong that has taken place.

Tragedy happens due to a man's mistakes, as these mistakes can take one to disaster any moment. It is the flaw in the character, which is the source of raudra and which leads to the disaster. Here Elesin's flaw was his love for women and their bodies. The flaw only led to his undoing. Because

he wanted to mate with the young bride, he delayed his death and this delay led to chaos in the natural order of things in the society.

Elesin: I need neither your pity nor the pity of the world. I need understanding. Even I need to understand. You were present at my defeat. You were part of the beginnings. You brought about the renewal of my tie to earth, you helped in the binding of the cord (1987: 69).

Elesin is regretting his folly. His lust led to his undoing. He is himself progressing or evolving and his release was stopped because he had not evolved fully. Elesin is himself struggling to free himself of his lust for women His desires are pulling him away or delaying his release. His conversation with Iyaloja should purge him of his last bit of desires for the flesh and may be then he could be relieved. The play is rife with pain and compassion therefore *karuna rasa*.

Elesin's being saved from death by the British was shameful for him, but if he had willed his ceremonial death really strongly, this may not have happened. Basically his will to live had not died, therefore he was denied the ceremonial death. Now he is feeling dishonoured and pitiable and trying to recover the wrong he has done.

Elesin: ..... My will was squelched in the spittle of an alien race and all because I committed this blasphemy of thought - that there might be the hand of the god's in a stranger's intervention.

Iyaloja: Explain it how you will, I hope to bring you peace of mind. The bush rat fled his rightful cause, reached the market and set up a lamentation. 'Please save me' – are these fitting words to hear from an ancestral mask....

Elesin: May the world forgive me (1995:69).

Iyaloja definitely feels Elesin has betrayed the tribe and all their hopes on him. The state of Elesin is indeed tragic.

Iyaloja: This is the man whose weakened understanding holds us in bondage to you. But ask him if you wish. He knows the meaning of a king's passage, he was not born yesterday. He knows the peril to the race when our dead father, who goes as intermediary, waits and waits and knows he is betrayed. He knows when the narrow gate was opened and he knows it will not stay for laggards who drag their feet in dung and vomit, whose lips are reeking of the left-over of lesser men. He knows he has condemned our king to wander in the word of evil with beings who enemies of life.(1987:71)

Iyaloja's harsh words only evoke *bibhatsa rasa* or disgust at what Elesin has led the entire race to. The pronoun 'you' in the above speech of Iyaloja is with reference to the British officer Pilkings, who is trying to reason out with her as to why the Chief horseman has to die with the king.

Pilking's prevented the ritualistic death of Elesin because he understood it as suicide, and in turn caused the untimely death of his son Olunde, who felt responsible towards his community and undertakes the ceremonial death, when he sees his father delaying his own death.

The gap in the understanding of the two cultures is what Olunde wanted to bridge but does not succeed because the British were always closed to the "other". The lack of understanding of the British of the Yoruba cosmology and belief system is tragic and sad. It leads to more chaos in the play.

Iyaloja: No child, it is what you brought to be, you who play with stranger's lives, who even usurp the vestments of our dead, yet believe that the stain of death will not cling to you. The gods demanded only the old expired plantain but you cut down the sap-laden shoot to feed your pride. There is your board, filled to overflowing.... (1987:76)

Olunde's death saddens the actors and audience alike. The heart wells up with tears and *karuna rasa* overflows. Olunde's death is the renewal of hope for the community even though it is grossly unjust. Elesin's delay did his undoing and led to his son's death. On seeing the son's dead body Elesin is overwhelmed with sadness and he to strangulates himself to death.

In spite of the tragic ending, the play focuses on the new life that is to come in the world, the unborn child in the young bride's womb. The *Natya Shastra* suggested that the play should be a celebration of life. Similarly the ending of this focuses on the future and on life and not death. Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, talks of sacrificial death. The pain the audience feels for the scapegoat's destiny, whether he was willingly undertaking death or was being forced because of the strong hold of the community evokes '*karuna rasa*'.

Now forget the dead, forget even the living, turn your mind only to the unborn.(1987:76)

Davis explains how Soyinka sees drama as incorporating ritual in order to develop social consciousness through "the passage from one area of existence to another or one level of awareness to another" (1990:150). William S. Haney II states in his essay that for Soyinka, ritual experience provides a means for the individual to become integrated into the community

and to attain “a renewed mythic awareness” (1990:149). For him “ritual is the language of the masses” (1990:87).

### 3.3

This section will demonstrate how ‘Rasa Theory’ can be applied to a reading of Girish Karnad’s *Tale Danda* (1993), which describes the evil effects of the Indian Caste System. This demarcation of human beings into four ‘varnas’ depending upon the job they did led to the caste system. And gradually the caste system embedded itself into the Indian Psyche. The human being was personified by the job he did, he was a tanner, a cobbler, a fighter, a teacher or a trader. “One’s caste is like the skin on one’s body. You can peel it off top to toe, but when the new skin forms, there you are again a barber – a shepherd - a scavenger!” (1993:14). People of the lower caste, the shudras suffered the maximum. There is a strong feeling of ‘karuna’ for King Bijala in the play, when he tells his queen that, ‘his majesty King Bijala is a barber by caste. For ten generations my forefathers ravaged the land as robber barons. For another five they ruled as the trusted feudatories of the Emperor himself. They married into every royal family in sight. Bribed generations of Brahmins with millions of coins. All this so, they could have the caste of Kshatriyas branded on their foreheads’ (1993:14).

And yet one learns that everyone in the kingdom knew that King Bijala was not a Kshatriya, the warrior class but a barber, the lowly class.

The only people who had tried to do away with the caste-system during King Bijala’s time in twelfth century Karnataka, were the ‘sharanas’, a group of poets, mytics, social revolutionaries and philosophers.

Their leader was Basavana, a shivaite and a poet saint. He tried and wanted to eradicate the caste structure and to do away with the varna system. Apart from the four varnas, in today's India, the caste system also includes the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian divide. And there has been a lot of bloodshed in the name of religion. To date we face social tension and fear, or 'the bhayanaka rasa', because of the caste system. Basvanna in *Tale Danda* (1993), pleads to his people to stop blood shed in the name of religion and caste. "To resort to it because someone else started it first is even worse. And to do so in the name of a structure of brick and mortar is a monument to stupidity" (1993: 29).

Basvanna's words echo the pain every right thinking Indian feels when one witnesses fanaticisms and unreasonableness in the name of caste and religion. The two issues caste and religion are so close that they are nearly synonymous.

Basvanna writes a very beautiful poem on the futility of fighting over the issue of construction of a temple. The beauty of the *play Tale Danda* (1993) reveals its contemporariness:

Basvana: The rich/will make temple for Shiva/ what shall I/a  
poor man /do. /My legs are pillars/the body the shrine/the head  
a cupola/of gold./ Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers, /things  
standing shall fall,/but the moving shall ever stay!. (1993: 29)

But when the 'sharanas' actually take it on themselves to break the caste system, and a shudra, a cobbler, decides to marry a Brahmin, hell lets loose. Basvanna's, initial reaction of 'Hasya' or joy to see the practical fruition of his philosophy is clouded by the fear, Bhayanaka rasa at the consequences of such a marriage. He is worried about the young couple, their safety. Basvanna tells his followers that 'we are not ready for the kind

of revolution this wedding is. We haven't worked long enough or hard enough!' (1993: 44). One sharana asks him that how 'many generations have to roll by before a cobbler marries a Brahmin!' (1993: 44).

The attempt of the two families involved in finalizing this inter-caste marriage evokes the 'Vira rasa'. It indeed was an act of bravery in the twelfth century India.

The marriage does take place but the young couple's parents, have to pay with their life. The groom's father and the bride's father are arrested by the King's soldiers and brought to the city square. There their eyes are plucked out and they are dragged through the streets tied to elephant's legs. 'Torn limbs along the lanes, torn entrails, flesh, bones they died screaming!' (1993: 81).

The sight fills one with Bibhatsa, Karuna and Bhayanaka rasas. There is the fear of death for all those who indulge in inter-caste marriages. Their leap forward, towards the abolishment of the caste-system by Haralayya and Madhuvarasa, the grooms and brides father respectively calls for 'Vira rasa'. They are made to sacrifice their lives but their effort would not go in vain. The young couple, the Brahmin girl and the shudra boy are taken to safety, symbolizing the birth of a casteless society. The city of Kalyan, where Basavanna brought this revolution is full of corpses and firings, killings and gloom but the society has taken a plunge forward.

Basvanna rightly hints that change is a Universal law and every society should renew itself by doing away with the redundant customs. The play *Tale Danda* (1993) is rife with the rasas of fear, compassion, pain and disgust at the caste system i.e. Karuna, and Bhayanaka and Bibhatsa.

The purpose of the study done in this Chapter is to highlight the weaknesses endemic in our society, namely the ritual of the horseman dying

a ritualistic death to accompany his King in the next world as portrayed by Soyinka and the Indian Caste system respectively. This is done for the reader\audience to confront their shortcomings and evolve in better beings leading to a better society. This also shows that Soyinka's plays are social plays with a vision.