CHAPTER 1

THE UNIVERSAL VALIDITY OF THE THEORY OF RASA

In this fragmented parochial world compartmentalized into thousands of languages, creeds, and cultures literature is the sole conjunctive force. Literature has only one language, the language of human emotions, which remains the same through centuries and cultures. It has only one goal to enable the humanity to experience the rich ennobling power of aesthetic pleasure. This potency of the written words has attuned the readers of the present with their diverse cultures and climes to take delight in the heroic spirit of Ulysses, the inexhaustible charm of Cleopatra, the intense agony of King Lear, the pranks of Tom Sawyer, the dilemma of Hamlet, and the pathetic subservience of Desdemona.

A successful critical theory should always ascribe the prime importance to human emotions and aesthetic pleasure, and herein reside the authenticity and validity of the rasa theory advocated by Bharata. The modern tendency is to condemn the ancient and medieval oriental theories as blinkered, polemical, mythical, and lacking in objectivity, but a close perusal of Bharata’s Nātyasāstra and the treatises of the ancient and medieval Indian aestheticians has established with certitude the stamp of critical objectivity in them. The theory of rasa has a vast and varied development and cannot be treated exhaustively in a brief work like this, but an attempt has been made to introduce its spirit so as to grasp the core idea.

Through his Nātyasāstra Bharata has touched the entire gamut of human emotions, right from the basic emotions to the transient ones. Though the stress is on emotions, Bharata has not neglected the formal poetical elements of a work like style, metre, figures of speech, and rhythm. The rasa theory, which is basically a reader-oriented one makes no
dichotomy between the meaning of the text and the aesthetic pleasure created in the reader.

The origin of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is steeped in the rich and splendid mythical traditions of India, but it is impossible for this aspect of its origination to deny its validity and authenticity as a sound critical theory. It is believed that Brahma, the God of creation, created the Nāṭya as the fifth Veda to save the world from the disintegration of the moral and ethical values. The divine origin of the NāṭyaVEDa is evident from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* sloka quoted below:

Akhyapito viditva ham
Nāṭyavedam pitamahat
Putran adhyapayam yogyan
Prayogam cassias tatratāh

"Thus commanded I studied the NāṭyaVEDa from pitamha and taught it to my worthy sons along with its proper application."

But unlike the other four Vedas, the NāṭyaVEDa is not delimited to the elitist section of the society but accessible to the entire humanity. Though prime importance is given to aesthetic relish, Bharata has not neglected the ennobling effect of the Nāṭya in removing the veil of ignorance from a person and in inculcating in him the noble human values.

The theory of rasa is the sturdy foundation upon which, the mighty edifice of Indian aesthetics is erected, and the early centuries have reverberated with analytical discussions on the varied aspects of this theory. Since the main objective of this chapter is to assess the competence of the rasa theory in evaluating modern Western literature, it would be proper
to analyze the salient points and the varied interpretations of this theory.

Rasa is regarded as the essence, sap or vital quality of a substance, and its beginnings can be traced far back indeed to the *Atharvaveda* and the *Taittiriya Upamssad*. According to the Indian aestheticians the objective of all art forms like music, literature, and architecture is to provide ānanda or pleasure sans *pareil* to the humanity, and this ānanda is equated to the supreme relish or Brahman.

In a reply to the query of the Rishis about how rasa is manifested, Bharata has given his all-encompassing dictum: “Vibhānubhāva vyabhicāri bhāva samyoga rasanispattih,” in other words “the combination of vibhāvas (Determinants) and anubhāvas (Consequents) together with vyabhicāri Bhāvas (Transitory states) produce rasa.” To elucidate his dictum, Bharata equates the concept of rasa with gastronomic delight “Just as the people conversant with foodstuffs and consuming articles of food consisting of various things and many spices enjoy their state, so also the learned men enjoy the Sthāyi Bhāvas in combination with the gesticulation of Bhāvas, mentally. Hence they are remembered as Nātya Rasas.”

The objects and situations, which stir the emotions in real life, assume the status of vibhāvas or the determinants of an emotion when expressed through drama. Vibhāvas are divided into two- primary or essential excitants called ālambana vibhāvas and secondary or stimulating excitants called uddipana vibhāvas. The former is the cause of the emotion, whereas the emotion is projected and brought to the surface by the latter, which provide the necessary background for the development of rasa. Its effects perceive each and every experience in real life, and these when presented through literature assume the status of
anubhāvas. These are the voluntary changes that occur in a person as a result of an emotion to make the feelings perceptible.

Bharata has also given a detailed account of the “sthāyi bhāvas” in his Nāṭyaśāstra. As the sthāyi bhāvas are the permanent emotions inherent in man, they can be converted into the corresponding rasas by means of proper histrionic representations like, āngika (gestures), vācika (verbal utterances), āhārya (proper embellishments), and sāttvika (temperamental qualities). As they are the basic emotions that permeate the entire human nature, they are also called cittavṛttis.

The “vyabhicāri bhāvas” or transient feelings are cultivated, not inherited so they are regarded as incapable of independent existence. The vyabhicāri bhāvas are thirty-three in number, and Bharata has described them in detail through his Nāṭyaśāstra. The emotions are also manifested by the involuntary states called sāttvika bhāvas. The sāttvika bhāvas are the physical, involuntary, and spontaneous changes arising from the sattva or sincerity. The bhāvas and rasas are inextricably intertwined in a literary work and it is impossible for the one to exist without the other. The four primary sentiments mentioned by Bharata are the śṛngāra, the raudra, the vīra, and the bibhatsa, and the other four arise out of these basic sentiments.

The śṛngāra rasa has rati or love as its sthāyi bhāva. It has two forms, love in union or sambhoga and love in separation or vipralambha. The vibhāvas of love in union are the pleasant seasons, fragrant garlands, beautiful ornaments, pleasant objects, beautiful locations, and people, who are young and charming. The anubhāvas of love in union are the
clever movement of the eyes, rising of the eyebrows, sidelong glances, and the sensuous movement of the limbs. Its vyabhicāri bhāvas encompass all the other transient states, excluding death, fear, indolence, cruelty, and disgust. Vipralaṁbha śṛṅgāra is presented through appropriate anubhāvas like indifference, languor, fatigue, fear, jealousy, yearning, drowsiness, sleep, insanity, fainting, and death.

Mirth is the sthāyi bhāva of hāsya. The vibhāvas of this sentiment are unseemly attire, misplaced ornaments, quarrel, defective limbs, and irrelevant words. The anubhāvas of this state are the throbbing of the nose, widening of the eyes, biting the lips, perspiration, colour of the face, and holding the sides. The vyabhicāri bhāvas associated with hāsya are indolence, dissimulation, drowsiness, sleep, envy, and dreaming.

The karuṇa rasa has sorrow as its sthāyi bhāva. The determinants of this sentiment are curse, distress, downfall, calamity, separation from the dear ones, death, murder, and captivity. The anubhāvas of this state are shedding of tears, lamentation, change of colour, drooping of limbs, and suffocation. The vyabhicāri bhāvas of this rasa are indifference, languor, illusion, sadness, lethargy, fear, death, paralysis, weeping, dejection, epilepsy, and trembling.

The sthāyi bhāva of the raudra rasa is krodha. The vibhāvas associated with this sentiment are anger, rape, abuse, insult, jealousy, and threat. The anubhāvas of this state are red eyes, knotted eyebrows, biting of lips, and the vigorous rubbing of hands. The vyabhicāri bhāvas associated with this rasa are wrath, energy, enthusiasm, fury, perspiration, trembling, and restlessness.

The vīra rasa associated with energy and enthusiasm, is always approximated with
men of high rank. The vibhāvas of this state are presence of mind, diplomacy, perseverance, discipline, valour, aggressiveness, power, and humility. It is depicted through the anubhāvas like firmness, patience, heroism, charity, and diplomacy. The vyabhicārī bhāvas of this sentiment are contentment, sound judgment, pride, energy, ferocity, indignation, and remembrance.

The bhayānaka rasa has its origin in the dominant state of fear. The vibhāvas of this state are hideous noises, sights of ghosts, panic, anxiety, staying in an empty house, sight of death, and the captivity of dear ones. The anubhāvas of this state are the trembling of the hands and feet, change of colour, and the loss of voice. Its vyabhicārī bhāvas are paralysis, perspiration, fear, stupefaction, dejection, agitation, restlessness, inactivity, epilepsy, and death.

Jugupsa is the sthāyi bhāva of bibhatsa rasa. It is stimulated by determinants like the report of unpleasant things, discussion of offensive matters, and vulgar sights. It is represented by the consequents like immobility, spitting, drooping mouth, and contracting the limbs in disgust. The transient states associated with this sentiment are, epilepsy, delusion, agitation, fainting, sickness, and death.

The adbhuta rasa has wonder as its sthāyi bhāva. The vibhāvas associated with this sentiment are the sight of heavenly beings, fulfillment of the cherished desire, and vision of supernatural things. Its anubhāvas are wide eyes, tears, perspiration, pleasant cries, and pleasant movements. The vyabhicārī bhāvas of adbhuta rasa are shedding of tears, paralysis, choked voice, horripilation, excitement, and fainting.

Bharata has mentioned only the eight sthāyi bhāvas and their corresponding rasas,
but his stand is not very rigid as he has admitted that it is impossible to decipher the entire bhavas as they are unlimited. Bharata had defined Nātya as ‘trailokyanuvaraṇa’ or the imitation of the three worlds and as such it is impossible for him to negate the existence of sānta rasa.

The critics of sānta rasa have given a narrow, restricted meaning to it as the arresting of all the senses. Their main charge against sānta rasa is that it is impossible to present the cessation of all bodily activities on the stage, but V. Raghavan is of the view, that sānta is only the ‘Paryantabhiro’ or culmination of many other stages, and these earlier stages can be successfully depicted by a writer. The state of serenity is the ultimate aim of all mankind and by negating the state of sānta its critics are actually challenging one of the basic instincts of humanity. Disinterested action can lead to mental equanimity, and this idea is stressed even in the Mundakopanishad “a Brahmana should become disinterested, the eternal can be attained only through disinterested work. He can gain this truth from a guru who is devoted to Brahman.”

To reach the ultimate state of sānta, a man should shed his ego, and the steps taken by him to do so can be easily depicted on the stage. The mood of serenity is inherent in man, but his obsessive preoccupation with worldly life is a stumbling block in the path of quietism, and this might have prompted the early aestheticians to ignore sānta rasa.

Since Bharata had not mentioned the sānta rasa or its sthāyi bhāva, almost all the later Sanskrit aestheticians have come out with their own interpretations as to its sthāyin. Udbhata, the first writer on sānta is silent on this point, but some critics, who are particular to restrict the number of bhāvas to forty-nine, the auspicious number fixed by Bharata,
consider nirveda as its sthāyin. But it is only a transient bhāva, and as such it can never develop into a rasa. After much deliberations on this subject extending through centuries, the Indian aestheticians have made sama the sthāyin of sānta. Sama has a very wide and comprehensive meaning, and it should never be cramped down by its narrow and restricted meaning, i.e. the cessation of all activities as total detachment from karma in word, thought or deed is a psychological impossibility. Karma yoga in the vedāntic concept consists not in abandoning the deed but in the doer’s consciousness and sama is not complete renunciation but a state of absolute self-realization.

The vedāntic notion of sānta rasa is manifested in the following remark of Abhinavagupta: “Sānta rasa is to be known as that which arises from a desire to serve the liberation of the self, which leads to a knowledge of the Truth and it is connected with the property of the highest happiness.” If a person has arrived at a state of mind, where the mind doesn’t pose a problem, or when one ceases to be overwhelmed by an emotion, he has arrived at the state of sama. It is not a state of total detachment but a state of calm that results from right knowledge and right awareness and nirveda (despondency), vairagya (reulsion), and dhṛti (fortitude) are accepted as its vyābhičāri bhāvas.

Abhinavagupta has also given a detailed account of the vibhāvas and anubhāvas of sānta rasa:

Now that which has sama for its sthāyibhāva and which leads to Mokṣa, arises from the vibhāvas such as knowledge of the truth, detachment and purity of mind. It should be acted out by means of the anubhāvas, such as yama and niyama, meditation of the self, concentration of the mind in the
self (dhārana), devotion (upāsana) compassion towards all creatures and the wearing of religious paraphernalia (lingagraha)."

An interesting theory put forward by V. Raghavan states that since sama is the ultimate state, all other sthāyi bhāvas can become the vyabhicārins of sānta. "One may pass to sama from rati or sōka, as a result of broken love, or the death of a beloved person, one may seek solace in sama. Asoka fought the Kalingas and passed from vīra to sānta."

The demarcation between art emotions and life emotions has always puzzled the Western critics, and the monumental achievement of the rasa theory lies in its ability to give a convincing and logical explanation for this dichotomy. The Indian notion of sādhāranikarana or universalization is able to explain in a convincing, and satisfactory manner the dichotomy between art emotions and life emotions. By the power of universalization, a literary work can create more or less the same impact on all the sahādayas or people with aesthetic sensibility. Somesvara holds the view: "All the accessories in drama like music, gesture, dance, theatrical arrangement, and all the accessories in poetry like qualities of diction and figures of speech serve only one aesthetic purpose which is sādhāranikarana or raising the emotional complex to the aesthetic level of common enjoyability."

The Indian attitude to aesthetic relish is a kind of liberation and elevation of the self from the bondage of egoistical elements. Ananda Coomaraswamy considers it as a super sensuous, hyper physical experience and testifies that only a sahādaya can vouchsafe the proof of its existence. He is of the view that religious experience and aesthetic experience are one and the same, and argues that the theory of rasa set forth by the Indian aestheticians
belongs to totalistic monism due to its close links with the vedanta. Through the power of sadhāranikarana all the vibhāvas, anubhāvas, and the accessories are universalized and this enables the sahrdaya to transcend the limitations of his personality. Sri Aurobindo is of the view that beauty created through art is the product of disinterested and impersonal contemplation of life and even pain and terror can result in pleasure once they are conveyed through art. He links aesthetic pleasure to spiritual pleasure, as rasa "awakes a vital enjoyment of taste, Bhoga, and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit’s delight of existence. Ananda."  

Aesthetic emotion is not divorced from life. It is based on life, but the power of sadhāranikarana depersonalizes and universalizes it, and as a result all the distinctions between, the work, and the general humanity melt away to create a disinterested frame of mind in the sahrdaya. It is in this state of heightened sensibility that a sahrdaya experiences the ultimate rasānubhava. Abhinavagupta stresses the ennobling power of aesthetic experience through his statement: “The drama performed or the poem recited has the power to raise the spectator, for the moment above his limited ego, his practical interests, which in everyday life, like ‘a thick layer of mental stupor’ limit and dim his consciousness.”

Bhattanayaka has coined two terms, bhāvakatva and bhojakatva to convey the unique nature of this pleasure. He is of the view that the poet with the help of certain functional quality called, bhāvakatva, which is very much akin to imagination or idealization lends poetic enchantment to the word and the meaning, and presents the painful emotions like sorrow and anger also along with their subjects in a universalized form. The process of
relishing this universalized emotion by a sahṛdaya is called bhogikaraṇa or bhọjakatva.  

Though the art emotions are relishable, in certain cases, a sahṛdaya sheds tears, but this doesn’t nullify the notion of impersonality as shedding of tears is not a sign of grief but of sensitiveness or ādrata. Viśvanātha has succeeded in giving a convincing explanation for this phenomenon: “In the like manner tear-sheddings, & C. are held to come from the mind’s being MELTED-not pained.”

The Indian critics acknowledge the fact that the reason for pleasure and pain in real life is due to the total or partial involvement of a person’s ego in everything around him, but this feeling, which is narrow, limited and selfish is elevated to a universalized feeling by the power of bhavakatva. This process of universalization is explained by K. Krishnamoorthy in a convincing manner: “When the darkness of the ego is removed, the light of the inner spirit in its purity (sattva) shines and it knows no ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ it becomes one with any and every sentiment portrayed with all its nucleus, stimulus and consequent feelings.”

Bharata’s dictum that only the sthāyi bhāvas can be converted to the corresponding rasas has been the subject of much critical controversy. The sthāyi bhāvas pervade the entire human nature, whereas the vyabhicārinis are the fleeting feelings. Bharata has convincingly illustrated the supremacy of the sthāyi bhāvas:

There are men having, hands, feet, bellies etc and having similar conceptions, notions etc., yet only a very few of noble birth, dignity, habits, learning and cleverness in arts and state crafts attain the royal states and others of meagre intellect become the servants. So also the Vībhāvas,
Anubhāvas and Vyabhicāri Bhāvas depend on Sthāyi Bhāva and in view of the Sthāyi Bhāva become the lords. 19

Any study of the theory of rasa would be incomplete without a reference to angi-rasas and aiga-rasas. An ideal literary work merits the presence of a number of sthāyi bhāvas, but insists on the presence of one dominant sthāyi bhāva that towers over the rest like a lord, and the corresponding art emotion is labelled as angi- rasa, whereas the other subordinate rasas are regarded as aiga- rasas. If a work has more than one dominant sentiment each having equal importance the sahādaya would be left in a divided frame of mind at the end of artistic contemplation, and instead of mental equilibrium and repose there would be agitation and confusion in his mind.

There is also much confusion regarding the dissimilitude between life emotions or bhāvas and art emotions or rasas. The bhāvas in real life are intricately embedded in the self, and in all the prejudices and associations connected with it while art emotions are universal, impersonal, disinterested and a source of unique perennial pleasure. Even the cause and effect of emotions in real life are different from art. In actual life the effect lingers in the mind even after the cause has vanished, whereas in art the rasa exists only during the time of artistic contemplation. Another distinction between art emotions and life emotions arises from the fact that life emotions inevitably end up in action, whereas the art emotions are only tasted, contemplated and enjoyed.

Since the main objective of this chapter is to discuss the universal validity of the theory of rasa, it would be appropriate to analyze the attitude of the Western writers to the notion of aesthetic pleasure. The word aesthetics has originated from the Greek word
'estesis' meaning, 'feeling'. Plato, the first Western critic to analyze in a detailed manner the role and function of poetry regards absolute beauty as a super-sensuous spiritual essence that is created, when the mind is in ecstasy, and his dictum throws light on the unique nature of aesthetic creation and aesthetic pleasure. Plato’s concept of the phantasmal nature of poetry though considered by him as a defect has close affinity to the Indian idea of depersonalization and universalization.

Most of Aristotle’s critical theories centre round his Poetics, but it is interesting to observe that it is through his Rhetoric that he has discussed the question of emotions in detail. Aristotle has made a distinction between life emotions and art emotions through his remark that poetry offers a kind of refined pleasure: “The glow of feeling which accompanies the contemplation of what is perfect in art is an elevated delight similar in quality to the glow of speculative thought. Each is a moment of joy complete in itself, and belongs to the ideal sphere of supreme happiness.”

His idea of catharsis does not imply a mere purging of unhealthy emotions, but the disinterested contemplation of a universalized emotion, and this brings his ideas nearer to the Indian idea of depersonalization.

Longinus consider the sublime effect created by poetry on the reader as a feeling, which lifts him out of himself. This sublime feeling regarded by him as a gratifying integration of impulses in the reader is akin to the Indian idea of rasa. He has conveyed the inexplicable nature of aesthetic pleasure by his statement: “The presence of lofty emotions is the mysterious quintessence which turns earthly works to spiritual gold.”

Though the Romantic poets have given importance to emotions and aesthetic pleasure, their theories lack the rich comprehensive outlook of the Indian theoreticians. Poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge have acknowledged the importance of aesthetic
pleasure, but they have not discussed this aspect in detail as they were more preoccupied with the question of an ideal poetic medium. Coleridge has advocated the principle of impersonality in literature, but his stress is on impersonality in the creative process of the poet.

The Continental philosophers have made a clear-cut distinction between art emotions and life emotions. They consider art emotion as a heightened, clarified and coordinated kind of experience, something that is really different from the life experience. This clarified experience gained through art is closely related to rasa. Schopenhauer believes that the aesthetic emotion “provided an interlude in the transition from the empire of Maya to the temple of Nirvana.” Kant believes in the pure and disinterested satisfaction and restful contemplation provided by art. The first requisite for aesthetic relish to him is the negation of the ego as “every interest vitiates the judgment of taste and robs of its impartiality.”

The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce is of the view that the art emotions do not affect us as passionately like emotions of real life as they are objectified and calmed and therefore resolved and transcended. He feels that in artistic contemplation every duality between the poet, the reader, and the common humanity is obliterated. The unique nature of the art emotion as depicted by him is reminiscent of the Indian idea of rasa. Croce’s insistence on the need of physical stimulants to create art emotion is equivalent to the importance of vibhāvas in rasa realization.

Baudelaire’s attitude to art, art emotions, and aesthetic relish has close affinity to Bharata’s rasāṃśpatī. His view that “an artist’s sensuous experience rooted in human passions but emptied of its direct personal elements and clothed in formal beauty, will find an echo in a reader’s recollected experience and call forth a powerful response” stresses the
importance of disinterestedness in aesthetic contemplation. When a feeling is thus emptied of all its personal elements, it becomes a universalized feeling, and the powerful response that is totally different from the day-to-day response is rasa.

Tolstoy has accepted the dichotomy between life emotions and art emotions, and his reference to the aesthetically transferred emotion is synonymous with rasa. He judges the merit of art by its infectious power on the beholders: “If a man without exercising effort and without altering his standpoint in reading, hearing or seeing another man’s work, experiences a mental condition which unites him with that man and with others who are also affected by that work, then the object evoking that condition is a work of art.” He is emphatic that every person, who contemplates literature receives the same artistic impression experienced by the other readers.

The view of the Continental philosophers that the subjective emotion of man acquires a kind of objective validity, when it is depicted through art and literature brings it closer to the idea of sādhāraṇikarana. They regard aesthetic experience as a unique category of experience that is totally divorced from the determinant laws of nature and morality. They also hold the view that it is impossible to separate the aesthetic object from the emotion it evokes. These views of the continental critics have close affinity to the Indian theory of rasa, where the stress is always on the appropriate vibhāvas to kindle the emotions.

A C. Bradley believes in the sublime power of art emotions and sublimity in poetry is regarded by him as a quality that does not soothe or delight but uplifts the readers. He feels that poetry is capable of giving pleasure, which is not restricted to the imagination but to the whole being, is an end in itself, and it is impossible to relate it to any experience in this
world. This pleasure, which is totally different from the pleasures in real life is related to rasa.

Edgar Allan Poe equates aesthetic pleasure to an elevation of the soul, and he labels this lofty feeling as 'poetic sentiment'. He holds the bold view: "In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation or excitement, of the soul, which we recognize as the poetic sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of Reason or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart."

Ezra pound, the Messiah of the imagist movement did not deliberate much on the subtle distinctions between life emotions and art emotions, as the mathematical precision and restraint advocated by him prevented him from going into raptures over the question of aesthetic relish. He regards poetry as a kind of "inspired mathematics " which "gives us equations not for abstract figures, triangles, spheres and the like, but equations for the human emotions." These equations for human emotions are related to the vibhāvas mentioned by Bharata.

Eliot’s views on the unique nature of poetic experience have close links with the Indian concepts of aesthetic relish. According to him "the effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result." This remark of Eliot stresses his adherence to Bharata’s theory regarding the different categories of emotions, and the pleasurable experience created in the beholder by art is synonymous with rasa.
Though Eliot has given importance to aesthetic pleasure, he has not neglected the ennobling power of art in enriching human sensibilities. His indebtedness to the ancient Indian critical theories has been the topic of many a critical discussion in modern times. The entire critical outlook of Eliot can be summed up in one word - impersonality. He is well aware of the impasse that will result if emotions are presented in their raw form in poetry and the conversion of raw emotion into an impersonal emotion, is the only solution offered by him. He is of the view that in poetry the writer should always transcend his personality. He is all praise for the Metaphysical poets because they have succeeded in presenting suitable verbal equivalents to convey their feelings.

This idea of impersonality and disinterested contemplation extends through all the theories of Eliot: “The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all.” The dichotomy between the raw emotion and the impersonal emotion advocated by Eliot has close affinity to the distinction between sthāyi bhāvas and rasas.

What has endeared T. S. Eliot to the Indians is the prime importance given by him to the Indian notion of disinterestedness and universality of aesthetic relish. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar considers Eliot’s idea of disinterestedness as a means to nirvana: “Poetry should aim at an escape from the prison house of personality achieving thereby, a kind of nirvana, that ‘brings us into a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation’ taking us almost if not quite to the threshold of religion.” The impact of Indian aesthetics on Eliot’s dramatic canons will be discussed at length in the third chapter of this thesis and as such only a passing reference is made about it in this context.
I. A. Richards has given a psychological interpretation of aesthetic pleasure. He deems aesthetic experience as unique because at the height of poetic experience there is the systematization of impulses that instill mental equilibrium and harmony in the readers and he labels this feeling as "Coenesthesia." Relinquishment of the ego is the first requisite to arrive at this state marked by qualities like detachment, distance, impersonality and universality. As aesthetic experience can be attained only by the total surrender of the individual to the work, he advocates a complete self-abnegation on the part of the readers and viewers. This disinterested contemplation of art to gain aesthetic pleasure is the first requisite of an ideal sahydaya.

Susan Langer has acknowledged the supremacy of the Indian critics in their systematic presentation of the various aspects of the human emotions. Her attitude to the various shades of emotions establishes beyond doubt her acceptance of the role of the permanent emotions in creating aesthetic relish.

The feelings experienced by the actor, those experienced by the spectators, those presented as undergone, by characters in the play and finally the feelings that shine through the play itself-the vital feelings of the piece. This last they call rasa; it is a state of emotional knowledge, which comes only to those who have long studied and contemplated poetry.

The Formalists and the New Critics consider a literary text as an autonomous entity, and this form of evaluation has some affinity to the theory of rasa, which regards a literary work as an intrinsic whole. Though these critics have fostered the objective analysis of a work, the question of aesthetic pleasure, which forms the foundation of Indian aesthetics is lacking in their theories. The Structuralists and the Deconstructualists by advocating a
synchronic concept of language have negated the entire concept of rasa. Their stress is not on the poet or the reader, but on the critic, and by concentrating on the different meanings of the same work they have denied the unified sensibility of a work. These theories, which dismantle the text have total disregard for a sahṛdaya who contemplates a work for the ennobling aesthetic relish gained from its perusal. The Reader-response criticism insists on a close affinity between the reader and the text. But the consensus among the readers is not taken into consideration by the subjective attitude of this theory as it invalidates the very idea of objectivity that forms the basis of rasa theory.

Though the Russian critics consider evocation or propaganda as the ultimate aim of literature the idea of aesthetic pleasure is not completely negated by them. Their propagandist zeal has not prevented them from advocating the concept of aesthetic pleasure and they regard it as important to stir the interest of the people. As the socialist consciousness stimulates the imaginative faculty of the people, these Marxist critics connect literature with the policy of the party defending the ideals of communism. These critics are aware of the fact that aesthetic pleasure is different from the pleasure gained from life, and the words used by them to describe aesthetic beauty are velikolepnoye (the magnificent), krasota (the beautiful), chudesnoye (the wonderful), divnoye (the divine), and izumitelnoye (the amazing). 

Leonid Stolovich, has distinguished aesthetic pleasure from psychological pleasure, and his view echoes the distinction made by Bharata between the sthāyi bhāvas like rati, śoka, and hāsa and their corresponding rasas śṛngāra, karuṇa, and hāsyā:
Aesthetics can now distinguish the aesthetic categories of the beautiful, the tragic, and the comic from the psychological concepts of the pleasant, the awful and the laughable. An aesthetic quality is a quality of a special kind; aesthetic perception is not perception in the ordinary psychological sense of the term. Artistic cognition is a cognition of a special type.16

Yuri Borev’s attitude to art experience has close affinity to sadhāraṇīkaraṇa and rasa. He regards art experience as an “aesthetically organized, selected, generalized and thought-out experience; it is experience ‘processed’ by the artist, and it enables the individual to work out his own principles and approaches to typical life situations, it is condensed crystallized experience.”17

A contemplation of the various Western theories dealing with the notion of aesthetic relish has underlined the fact that almost all the Western critics have accepted the dichotomy between life emotions and art emotions, though they are not able to ensconce the exact rationale behind this difference. They label art emotion variously as clarified emotions, spectator emotions, sublime emotions and a specialized version of life emotions, but barring T. S. Eliot and I.A. Richards, none of them was able to give a perfectly rational and convincing explanation as to this dichotomy, and even their theories lack the rich comprehensive outlook of the theory of rasa. The inability of the Western critics in giving a true interpretation of aesthetic pleasure has prompted them to condemn the domain of feeling as ephemeral, whereas the Indian critics headed by Bharata have touched upon all the aspects of artistic representation right from its execution by a creative writer to its acceptance and appreciation by a sahārdaya.
The self-evident claims about the supremacy of the theory of rasa are legion, and since the main objective of this thesis is to apply the theories of rasa and aucitya in evaluating Western literature, it would be quite relevant to analyze the reasons for the perennial charm of this theory. There are critics, who regard rasa theory as an antediluvian prejudice of the past and they condemn it for its non-empirical nature. But the developments in the fields of psychology and physiology have established beyond doubt the supremacy of this theory as grounded on solid facts. Bharata has analyzed with clinical precision the entire range of human emotions right from the basic to the transient, and his notion of the sthāyi bhāvas is the same as the theory of the basic instincts of man put forward by the modern psychologists.

Emotions constitute the quintessence of the most complex patterns that govern the behaviour of men. The psychologists are able to distinguish between emotions that are inborn and those cultivated in the course of social living, and they monitor people's emotions by observing their bodily and facial expressions. According to the psychologists, what distinguishes the inherent emotions from the other psychological states are the physiological aspects of the emotion. The Psychologist Ernest R. Hilgard is of the view: "Understanding the bodily processes is important in the understanding of motives and emotions." The great emphasis given by Bharata to anubhāvas and sāttvika bhāvas illustrate the fact that he was well aware of the physiological manifestations of emotions.

The physiological response to the basic emotions is almost universal and transcends cultures. The researches conducted by Ekman and Friesen have substantiated beyond doubt that people living in widely separated geographic areas seem to demonstrate similar facial expressions in similar emotion provoking situations. They are uniform in their verdict that
cultural influences cannot alter these basic facial expressions as these occur even in the neonates and in the blind. Ekman and Friesan have given a systematic account of the facial changes that occur as a result of an emotion: "The facial muscles pull the skin, temporarily distorting the shape of the eyes, brows, and lips, and the appearance of folds, furrows and bulges in different patches of skin. These changes in facial muscular activity are brief, lasting a few seconds; rarely do they endure more than five seconds or less than 250 ms." W. E. Rinn, who has conducted exhaustive studies in the neuro-anatomy of facial expressions has arrived at the assumption: "Facial expressions are the result of the movements of the facial skin and the connective tissues - fascia caused by the contraction of one or more out of the forty- four bilaterally symmetrical facial muscles and muscle activation is necessary for these facial configurations."41

Norman L. Munn has also given a scientific explanation for the physiological changes occurring in a person as a result of an emotional change:

An emotionally aroused individual's heart pounds, his gastric secretions are checked, and his secretion of adrenalin is accelerated all because his sympathetic nervous system has assumed control. Also the sympathetic decision causes the blood vessels of the intestines and stomach to constrict, permitting more blood to flow to the arms and legs in anticipation of fight or flight.41

Floyd L. Rich holds the opinion that any strong emotion such as fear or rage is accompanied by a vast complex of internal changes involving muscular, chemical, glandular, and neural activities throughout the body, and this involves changes in facial expression and in overt behaviour. He is of the view that anger is caused by the excessive secretion of
adrenalin in the blood, and travelling through blood it reaches the various parts of the body, and is responsible for many physical characteristics of strong emotional experience:

Under its influence the liver releases stored sugar into the blood, and chemical changes occur which causes blood to clot more quickly. Blood pressure rise; the pulse beats more rapidly and more vigorously; the air passages into the lungs enlarge to admit more air. The pupils of the eye enlarge so that more light may enter. Sweat breaks out all over the body, particularly on the palm of the hands. The temperature of the skin may rise or fall several degrees.42

His description of the visible changes occurring in a person as a result of anger is akin to the anubhāvas, and sāttvika states mentioned by Bharata for krodha. The anubhāvas mentioned by Bharata are red eyes, profuse perspiring, biting of lips, knotting of eyebrows, dilation of the eyes, blushing, and trembling. This clear-cut evidence has established beyond doubt that rasa theory is a valid and vital theory having a strong psychological basis.

The psychologist Shafer has recorded the experience of some four thousand air men, who flew dangerous planes in hazardous conditions and almost all of them have experienced more or less the same bodily changes like the “pounding of the heart, tenseness of the muscles, dryness of the mouth, cold sweat, need to urinate, and sickness in the stomach.”43 The anubhāvas mentioned by Bharata for bhayānaka rasa, like paralysis, agitation in the limbs, parched lips and throat, dryness of the mouth, stunned sensation in the thighs, and palpitation are akin to the bodily responses of fear mentioned by Shafer.

Charles. F. Levinthal, who has conducted exhaustive researches on the fear pattern of individuals has perceived an almost uniform bodily response for the emotion of fear. All
the bodily responses to this emotion are activated by the increase in blood pressure, fluctuation in the rate of heart beat, and an increase in muscle potential level. He arrived at the conclusion that this fear pattern was influenced by the physiological effects of epinephrine secreted by the adrenal medulla.

Emotions are related to physiological arousal plus cognition about the causes of arousal that result from environmental cues and this purpose is served by the vibhāvas. The psychologists are of the opinion that even in the first hours of life one can see a fixed pattern in the stimuli of each basic emotion. The stimuli mentioned by them for the basic emotion of fear have close affinity to the uddipana vibhāvas of bhayānaka rasa. Psychologists like Clifford, T. Morgan and Richard. A. King are of the view that “sudden stimulations of high intensity like vision, sound or touch, and isolation can cause an acceleration in the activity of the basic emotion of fear.” The uddipana vibhāvas mentioned by Bharata for bhayānaka rasa are vikṛtarava (terrible noises), sattva dārsana (horrible sights), sivoluka trāsodvega (panic and worried state on hearing the cries of strange and wild beasts), and sūnyāgāra (empty houses). The four primary sentiments mentioned by Bharata are also based on a psychological pattern. The Indian aestheticians were able to provide a satisfactory explanation for the mental changes involving the primary emotions like love, heroism, horror, and fury. These are connected to the four mental conditions like vikāsa caused by the unfolding of the mind, vistāra caused by its expansion, kṣobha caused by its agitation, and vikṣepa caused by its oscillating movement.
There is a sound psychological rationale behind Bharata's allotment of a particular colour for a particular emotion. The developments in the field of colourgenics stress the point that the body chemistry is responsive to certain colours. The colours have specific frequencies affecting changes in the physical and mental constitution. Since red is capable of pumping up the nervous system, it is accepted as a stimulant, and Bharata with great psychological insight has allotted it to a fiery emotion like raudra. Yellow capable of stimulating the nerves and the intestines is associated with adbhuta rasa. As black causes both mental and physical depression, he has allotted it to bhayanaka rasa. Green, which balances the body, and stimulates the pituitary gland, is the colour of sāgāra, and white is the colour of mirth.

The main charge levelled against the rasa theory is that by giving equal importance to both pleasant and unpleasant emotions it advocates the flourishing of the unpleasant emotions, whereas in reality they ought to be weeded out. While the Westerners with their stress on utilitarianism believed in the elimination of the undesirable elements, the Indian rasa theory with its close affinity to both vedantic and ethical principles believed in the conversion and transcendence of undesirable emotions. This makes the literary experience a far more ennobling and pleasant pursuit.

The critics also confute the theory of rasa for its negation of all the historical, biographical, sociological, and psychological approaches that help in the comprehension of a work. Rasa theory is an intrinsic theory and rasa is nothing, but the meaning interred in a work. A truly great work, which has a universal appeal is not culture specific. Additional information about the writer, the period and the myth can enrich and augment the
appreciation of a work, but it can in no way alter the rasa, which is stimulated only by the elements contained in a work.

The tasting or carvana starts right from the moment the reader starts a perusal of the text, and it is a kind of continuous tasting or akhandacarvana, which ends in rasaispatrih. Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is still enjoyed by the people who live in the Asian subcontinent not because of their fascination for Roman history but for the powerful emotions depicted in it. Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* has won accolades from the Westerners, who are far removed from the native scenario for its successful depiction of the subtle human emotions.

The concept of extrinsic evaluation is mostly applied to works crammed with allusions and ambiguity and hence in need of external props for comprehension. The greater the number of external aids used in the comprehension of a work the deeper becomes the ensuing chaos, and this makes aesthetic relish an elusive sphinx, who evades the readers’ sensibility. Caught in this intricate Hyrcanian wood of technicalities the Western critics have forgotten the real purpose of a work, i.e. to give sublime pleasure to a sahūdaya. An ideal work offers aesthetic pleasure on its own and if it fails to do so it suffers from rasābhāsa. The avant-garde trends concentrating on abstractions and surrealism can be regarded only as instances of rasābhāsa from the point of view of the theory of rasa.

The critics of this theory also denounce it on the charge that it fosters subjective evaluation by its invalidation of all other literal elements but rasa, which is the ultimate end of a literary work is manifested only if there is propriety in the treatment of all the other poetic elements. In this theory emotions are not contemplated in isolation. Only by blending
the different elements like story, character, plot, diction, words, meaning, and figures of speech in a suitable manner can a writer arrive at a logical pattern for the emotions.

The theory of rasa is also condemned from a moralistic and ethical angle. Aesthetic pleasure is a kind of sublime joy that results from the disinterested contemplation of beauty. When there is detachment the perceptions of the beholders are broadened. Though the art emotion that ensues ends with artistic contemplation the sense of detachment and non-egoistic attitude that they have experienced for a short while enrich and ennoble their life. K R Srinivasa lyengar echoes this idea through his remark: “Aesthetic experience is no escape from life, but is rather a seeking after quintessential life and being absorbed in it, deriving a joy from it akin to religious ecstasy or beatitude.”

Another onslaught against the rasa theory is that any incident witnessed in real life will definitely make different impact on different people, and as their reaction varies with culture, nature and education it is impossible for the same work to create the same aesthetic response in all people. But the Indian aestheticians have laid much emphasis on the discriminating reader or sahṛdaya. There are a few critics, who hold the view that the sahṛdaya instinct is inborn, but the majority believe in its cultivation through constant practice and exposure to art and literature.

A sahṛdaya’s mind should be free from all skepticism and cynicism, and he should have the artistic sensibility to establish an identity with the heart of the poet. He should also have the power to identify with the situation depicted in a work but it should be an identification characterized by aesthetic detachment. If the writer possesses kārayatri pratibha or the power of creative imagination, the reader should possess bhāvayatri pratibha or the
power of responsive imagination. Rajasekhara defines a sahādaya as a person endowed with “the imaginative affinity that helps him to understand the creative work of the writer.”

By the power of sādhāranikarana the vibhāvas, anubhāvas and vyabhicāri bhāvas assume a universalized form, and this removes the dichotomy of aesthetic response. The strict observance of auśitya in the treatment of emotions plays a vital role in systematizing the emotions of the sahādayas and in removing all traces of egotism from them as a result the same work is to a great extent capable of evoking the same rasa in all of them.

It would be relevant to evaluate the reason for the perennial charm of the theory of rasa, when hundreds of new theories have disappeared without making any impact on the critical scenario. Rasa theory is not a rigid corpus delicti but a flexible theory capable of adaptation, and this resilience has helped it to survive the onslaughts of time. The fact it is an open theory can be gleaned from Bharata’s question: “It is impossible to reach the entire limit of the art of dance and drama why? Since the lore’s are many and the arts and crafts are infinite. Even one branch of knowledge cannot be completed. Then where is the question of mastering the principles and meanings of all the Bhāvas?”

The later Indian critics have substantiated what was lacking in Bharata’s theorization to make it a vital theory capable of interpreting any literature. His theory was confined to drama, but the later writers like Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta have widened the scope of this theory to encompass the entire literature. Though Bharata has restricted the number of rasas to eight a ninth rasa called sānta is accepted by the later theoreticians as the state of sāma is a psychological reality. Even the notion of discordant emotions advocated by him can be overlooked if the writers exercise propriety in the delineation of emotions. The
rasa theory, which is open and flexible can be compared to a river that has retained its basic inheritance, though replenished by the waters brought in by the diverse streams.

The Western critics, who recognize the vitality of the rasa theory have come out with different equivalents to express this unique Indian concept, but all these terms suffering from analytic precision have failed to capture the real essence of this unique Indian expression. The English term that is widely accepted as the equivalent of rasa is sentiment, but even this expression has failed to do justice to the richness, exuberance and splendour of aesthetic experience.

As the literary texts do not thrive on mere analytical elements alone but also on the reader’s sensibility it is impossible for the modern theories to shake the solid foundation of the rasa theory. The greatest defect of the contemporary theories resides in the fact that they are compartmentalized, so they are not able to do justice to a work in its totality. But the theory of rasa wedded to aucitya has close links with the other formal literary elements, and as such it is capable of analyzing most literary works in their totality right from their execution by the creative writers to their acceptance by the sensitive readers. This has made the rasa theory multî secundus in analyzing almost all literary works that deal with the language of human emotions.
Notes


2 Bharata 73.

3 Bharata 74.

4 Bharata 71.

The eight sthāyī bhāvas mentioned by Bharata, their corresponding rasas, and their English equivalents are given below in the form of a table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sthāyī bhāvas</th>
<th>Rasas</th>
<th>Dominant Emotions</th>
<th>Sentiments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rati</td>
<td>Sṛngāra</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>The Erotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hāsa</td>
<td>Hāsyā</td>
<td>Laughter</td>
<td>The Humorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soka</td>
<td>Karūna</td>
<td>Sorrow</td>
<td>The Pathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krodha</td>
<td>Raudra</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>The Furious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utsāha</td>
<td>Vira</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>The Heroic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaya</td>
<td>Bhayānaka</td>
<td>Terror</td>
<td>The Terrible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jugupsā</td>
<td>Bibhatsa</td>
<td>Disgust</td>
<td>The Odious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vismaya</td>
<td>Adbhuta</td>
<td>Astonishment</td>
<td>The Marvellous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Bharata 72


6 Bharata 72.


7 V. Raghavan, The Number of Rasas (Adyar: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1975) 25.

8 Mundakopaniṣad, 1.ii.12.


10 Masson 92.

Yamas comprise of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (absence of the desire to steal), brāhmacharya (celibacy), and aparigraha (non-possession). The niyamas are sauca (cleanliness), santosa (sense of fulfillment), tapas (meditation), svādhyāya (the pursuit of sacred knowledge), and Isvarapranidhāna (contemplation of the almighty).

11 Raghavan 96.

12 Qtd. in K. Krishnamoorthy, Studies in Indian Aesthetics and Criticism (Mysore: D. V. K. Moorthy, 1979) 226.


19 Bharata 88.


45. Morgan 244-247.

46. Bharata 81.


50. Bharata 70.