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Exposition of Rasa Theory in Shakespeare's Hamlet

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Abstract: Drama has the purpose of entertainment and instruction, as well as aesthetic value and social value. The expression of emotion is the power of drama that entralls readers; readers enjoy texts experiencing rasa. Rasa is accomplished by the conjunction of Vibhava (determinants or the objective condition), Anubhava (physical gestures), and Vyabharibhava (transitory mental states) and essentially deals with various kinds of emotions and is directly communicated to the mind of readers or Saharadaya through the work of art. This paper aims to analyze Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and expose the rasa theory. The dramatist exploits rudra rasa to disseminate and propagate the experience of the character. The expression and realization of rasa constitute the aesthetic value and power of the drama. Rasa is a theory of Indian poetics that deals with the entire literary process, beginning from the conception in the mind of the artist to the final perception in the heart of the perceiver.

Keywords: Rasa, rudra, bhava, hasya rasa, sthayibhava, vibhava, anubhava, vyabharibhava.

I. INTRODUCTION

The dramatic tradition of India lays prime emphasis on the emotions aroused in the audience or reader. Spectators take various experiences in the theater because of the connection between the representation of characters and viewers. The objective correlative helps to evoke the emotions in the audience's mind that are taken into consideration. The entire atmosphere of the theatrical presentation, including the emotions expressed by the actor or actress, creates a specific mental state in the mind of the viewer. This mental state or feeling could gradually intensify, leading to a longer-lasting emotion, or it could vanish immediately and be quickly replaced by another. In this way, the whole dramatic presentation produces a series of emotions, either durable or momentary, so that for the spectator, the play basically becomes a journey through a wide spectrum of emotions.

Rasa is feeling which is transferred to the spectator by the stage setting drama all. Rasa is not a mere arousal of emotion or feeling reaction to a situation. Spectator has an eye to see and ear for music, and above all, can respond to and reverberate in sympathy with what he sees and listens. To be (bhava) is to feel as a human being, truly and fully. This feeling is evoked by the drama i.e., by dramatization and the stage setting (vibhava). The aim of the research paper is to illustrate rasa theory in *Hamlet*.

In the play of *Hamlet*, the protagonist plays a central position in the generation of emotions. As it can be seen later, with a few exceptions, the whole emotional process of the spectator revolves around Hamlet. One reason may be found that unlike other Shakespearean characters like Macbeth or Othello, Hamlet is an honest man, and his suffering and struggle as a hero enjoy a much higher 'degree of empathy from the audience. And due to the objective correlative, it is more successful to connect viewers with it. Moreover, powerful soliloquies appeal to and touch the audience at a higher mental plane. Keeping this in mind, I proceed to make a detailed analysis of the entire play, taking the theory of *rasa* with all its intricacies into account in order to study the development of the individual *rasas*. This play evokes all types of *rasa* in various contexts and situations.

II. SOME SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF RASAS

The perspective of *sthayi bhavas* Shakespeare's Hamlet is judged, it becomes clear crystal that 'soka' (sorrow) is major *rasa* found in the play. The death of Hamlet's father played a significant role in deciding the next courses of action by Hamlet. It is from 'soka' a form of 'sancharibhava' originates in Hamlet's psyche in the form of 'dainya' (depression) which is evident from the following soliloquy in Act-1, Scene 2 –

O that this too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! (P. 158)

The above cited soliloquy clearly showed that Hamlet was deep grief and went into depression. Realization of Hamlet the frail nature of physical existence, made him sadden. This sudden depressive feeling compelled him to think of committing suicide but restrained this thought by his religious bent of mind. He appeared like ordinary man. It seemed to be common people under sudden trauma of losing father. It evoked *soka rasa*.

Another *bhava* evokes through this event. On a dark winter night outside Elsinore Castle in Denmark, an officer named Bernardo comes to relieve the watchman Francisco. In the heavy darkness, the men cannot see each other. Bernardo hears a footstep near him and cries, "Who's there?" After both men ensure that the other is also a watchman, they relax. Cold, tired, and apprehensive from his many hours of guarding the castle, Francisco thanks Bernardo and prepares to go home and go to bed. The opening scene of the play arouses a feeling of wonder (*adbhuta rasa*) and then strikes fear (*bhaytinaka rasa*) in the audience at the mention of the apparition:

Marcellus: ... Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.

Therefore I have entreated him along With us to watch the minutes of this night,

That if again this apparition comes.... (I.i:23-26)

Hamlet swears the revenge after the Ghost's revelation. It shows his anger (*Raudra rasa*) and heroism (*Vira rasa*) is only a minor emotion. *Raudra rasa* (anger) and disgust (*bibhatsa rasa*) are the two major *rasas* of equal prominence.

In the first scene of the second act, we are provoked with the emotion of sorrow (*sokabhiiva*) expressed by Hamlet and interpreted by Polonius as "the ecstasy of love" (line 104). The physical gestures (*anubhiivas*) expressing Hamlet's sorrow or madness have been described in the following lines:

Ophelia: He took me by the wrist, and held me hard,

Then goes he to the length of all his arm,

And with his other hand thus o'er his brow, He falls to such perusal of my face

As a would draw it. Long stayed he so. (II. i:88-101)

We also observe love (rati bhava) in Act 3 Scene 1 ‘rati’ (love) as ‘bhava’ gets reflected from the side of Ophelia when she comments – O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown! The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, Tongue, sword... (p.236). She applauds Hamlet in the above cited way. This line shows that Ophelia seems infatuated towards Hamlet. But Hamlet is fully gripped by the situation: ‘bhavas’ like ‘soka’, ‘krodha’ & ‘dainya’. Hamlet does not find proper to love (‘rati’) Ophelia. Thus ‘love’ as a feeling gets arose in the darkness of emotions in the play ‘Hamlet’.

Shringara Rasa (Love and Beauty): Hamlet, despite its tragic and procrastinated nature, is not devoid of elements that evokes the Shringara rasa. The relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia shows their love though marred by tragedy, initially embodies the beauty of young romance. The gentle and tender moments shared between two love birds resonate with the Shringara rasa, creating a poignant contrast against the impending darkness.

Karuna Rasa (Compassion and Sorrow): Karuna rasa is a major emotion finding easily in the play. The pervasive theme of sorrow and loss in Hamlet associates with the Karuna rasa. Hamlet father's death, his mother's hasty remarriage and Hamlet's deep grief and anger over both events evoke profound empathy from the audience. The soliloquies, particularly Hamlet's universal “To be or not to be,” resonate with a sense of existential sorrow, contributing to the overarching emotional landscape of the play.

Raudra Rasa (Anger and Fury): Hamlet's quest for revenge against his uncle, Claudius, pictures the Raudra rasa. The intense anger and fury simmering within Hamlet drive the plot's momentum. The famous play-within-a-play scene, where Hamlet successfully traps Claudius's guilt, serves as a dramatic expression of this emotion, heightening the overall intensity of the narrative.

Bhayanaka Rasa (Fear and Anxiety): The supernatural presence of the ghost adds a layer of mystery and foreboding to the play, creating an atmosphere that keeps the audience on edge. The ghost of King Hamlet, appearing as an ominous figure, introduces an element of fear and anxiety, aligning with the Bhayanaka rasa.

Hasya Rasa (Laughter and Comedy): Though Hamlet is predominantly a tragedy, there are moments of dark humor that align with the Hasya rasa. The gravedigger scene, for instance, infuses a morbid sense of comedy into the play, providing brief respite from the overall somber tone.

Veera Rasa (Heroic Valor): Hamlet's internal conflict and eventual pursuit of justice align with the Veera rasa, emphasizing the heroic aspect of the protagonist. Despite his flaws and internal conflicts, Hamlet's determination to right the wrongs committed against his father showcases a form of valor that resonates with audiences.

In observing the Theory of Rasa in Hamlet, it becomes evident that Shakespeare masterfully crafted a narrative that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries. Human being always deals with various emotions. The universality of human emotions has been explored in the play. Though the audience comes from diverse backgrounds, it allows audiences to connect with its characters and themes. Interpretation of Rasa provides a lens through which we can appreciate the nuanced emotional tapestry woven into Hamlet, showcasing the timelessness and depth of Shakespeare's genius.

III. CONCLUSION

Hamlet is a tragic character but his ‘bhavas’ are nothing but more humane. ‘Hamlet’ as a character shows various aspects of ‘bhavas’ which in turn arise various forms of ‘rasa’ in the spectator’s heart. His feelings reflect humanity above everything. It seems obscure and tough situations as he experienced. Hamlet’s errors are nothing but the outcome of his ‘Sthayibhavas’ which are in continuous conflict with ‘sancharibhava’. As a result of this conflict, he finds in mental agony. As his deeds are not beastly like Claudius who murdered his father or like Fortinbras who is ready for bloodshed in the name of honor. One of the

features of Hamlet character is to represents commonly human feelings. It makes a psychic connection through his 'sthayibhavas' with all the readers and audiences. Satya D. Chaudhury mentions 'sthayobhavas' in the following way – 'Permanent emotions (sthayibhav) always in here, in dormant stage in all the human minds are basic instincts, and are fed by a number of minor feelings.' (p. 68)

To sum up, even in the context of diverse cultural traditions, the Theory of Rasa offers a valuable insight for understanding the emotional impact of art. Exposition rasa in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' highlights the play's ability to evoke a range of emotions, creating a powerful and enduring experience and making universal appeal for audiences around the world. One finds aesthetic beauty and explores the richness of global artistic traditions; one must study the intersection of theories like Rasa with iconic works like Hamlet. It reminds one of the shared human experiences that transcend borders and centuries.

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