

# Change and Growth of Rasa Theory

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# Overview

- Pollock's perspective of rasa
  - Changes - revolutionary, not evolutionary
- Science and history of rasa
  - Pollock's attempts at constructing a narrative
  - Modern scientific notions
- Closing Thoughts

Change: Types of literature	
Lit. Seen	Lit. Heard
Simple Depiction	Can convey subtlety
Limited narrative power	Complex narratives
<b><i>Accepted fundamental differences =&gt; Rasa change</i></b>	

Change: Rasa theorist clarifies	
Before Udbhata	After Udbhata
Confusion	Udbhata gives clarity
Contradiction	Udbhata gives rasa its importance

# Fundamental Difference in Literature

## Claim

1. Sanskrit texts recognize difference between the literary forms
2. The two forms are fundamentally different
  - a. So rasa analysis in the two forms must also be fundamentally different

## Evidence

- Pollock quotes Bhoja (SP) ... poets and kavya more praiseworthy than actors and acting ...
  - But leaves out subsequent lines where Bhoja praises sahitya over word and meaning
  - Emphasis seems to be on the difference between visible and beyond-visible
- Anonymous verse that prizes narrative power in literature-heard
- Abhinavagupta praises actors over poets ...
  - ... in a commentary on Natyashastra

# Five Steps: Literature-Seen and Literature-Heard

1. Sanskrit texts recognize difference between the literary forms
2. The two forms are fundamentally different
  - a. So rasa analysis in the two forms must also be fundamentally different
3. Rasa analysis began with literature-seen
4. Analytical evolution must have occurred to extend rasa to literature-heard
5. Literature-heard >> Literature-seen. So...

*...Rasa expanded in scope*

# Expanded Scope of Rasa Theory

- Number of rasas changed
- Framework changed
  - Mimamsa
  - Vedanta
  - Bhakti movement
- Role of Buddhism
  - Karuna
  - Samuel Johnson: “Pity is not natural to man...”
    - “...children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel.” (This part is not quoted)

# Emphasizing Changes: All Hail Udbhata!

- **Pollock's Claim:** Before Udbhata, rasa theory was riddled with contradictions
- **Evidence:** Treatment of rasa in Bharata, Bhaamaha, Dandin
- *Bharata:* “Rasa arises from the conjunction of factors, reactions and transitory emotions.... Stable emotions become the master, ...”
- *Bhaamaha:* “Does not even treat rasa as a separate topic...”
- *Dandin:* No special treatment of rasa. (But recognizes Bharata's rasas).
- Ergo, contradiction (?)

# Role of Udbhata

- Why is Udbhata considered path-breaking?
- What contradictions existed before him?
- What did he resolve?

# Change in Rasa Localization

- Shankuka argues from spectators' point of view
- Bhatta Nayaka's contribution
- Factors not discussed
  - Natyashastra's audience classification; level of comfort of audience with material
  - Shankuka's painted horse example - rasa in poetry and painting (mentioned, but not discussed)
- Consequence of change in rasa localization
  - Audience reaction
  - Actors' experience
  - Connection to modern scientific notions
    - Not in Pollock's work, but worth exploring



# Science of Rasa: Pollock Raises Some Questions

- Why are some “stable” emotions included and not others?
  - E.g., anger (basis of raudra) is listed. But hatred is not.
  - Rati (basis of shringara) is listed. But not sneha (basis of vaatsalya)
- Pollock mentions two possible explanations (and dismisses them)
  - Dhananjaya’s uninterreptedness theory
  - Abhinavagupta’s essenstiality theory
- List of emotions does not seem to change substantially over time
  - Unlike in Western notions of aestheticism

# Related Theories in Modern Science

- Cognitive science and perceptual psychophysics
- Multiple memory systems
- Gestalt laws of perception
- Mirror neurons
  - Empathy is being understood to a greater extent
  - Pollock sticks to Johnson's notion of "pity is not natural to man"
    - Difficult to reconcile with modern notions
- What aspects of rasa theory can be described in contemporary framework?
  - Just as it was described with Mimamsa, Vedanta, etc.

# Missing Elements

- Larger context within which rasa theory is discussed in SP
  - Reductionism
- Form and content of rasa
- Auchitya

# Summary of Pollock's Thoughts on Rasa

- Praises the notions of rasa developed
  - But history and concepts are very hazy. Needs modern scholarship to clean up the field.
- Repeatedly attempts to identify discontinuous changes
- Udbhata, Bhatta Nayaka and Abhinavagupta given special emphasis
- Alludes to science of rasa
  - Ideas seem formative
- Attempts at studying rasa theory in isolation
  - Devoid of allied notions of auchitya and pada-shaastra context
  - Less emphasis on experiential aspects