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**Executive Summary of Ph.D. Thesis**

**PSYCHOLOGY OF *RASA*, EMOTIONS AND EXPERIENCE IN THE  
STAGE PLAYS OF MAHESH DATTANI**

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## Research Methodology

This study constitutes a qualitative, exploratory, and comparative research endeavour that examines the *Rasa* theory and Indian/Sanskrit dramaturgy within the context of Dattani's plays. The research adapted comparative methodology in comparing Indian and Western theories of emotions, experience and psychology to not only seek a common ground of interpretation but also to explore whether there is any possibility of commonalities and parallel theoretical precepts that may serve as the framework to analyse the selected plays of Mahesh Dattani. The primary focus of this research is closed reading, content analysis, and textual analysis, employing an interdisciplinary and evaluative approach. Specifically, it examines the plays of Mahesh Dattani in relation to the *Rasa* theory of Sanskrit dramaturgy- *Dasharupakam*. The broad theoretical framework employed is based on the theory of *Rasa*, emotions and experience.

The narrow critical framework used is of the *Natyashastra*, *Dasharupakam*, Theory of Performativity and Affect Theory. The theoretical concepts of *Rasa* as expounded in the *Natyashastra* and *Dasharupakam* have significantly laid the foundation of the analysis.. The theory of plot as elucidated by Dhananjaya in his work *Dasharupakam* has contributed to the comprehension of the significance and inherent connection between plot and the concept of *Rasa*. *Dasharupakam*, authored by Dhananjaya in the 10th century, contributed significantly to the comprehension of the interplay among plot, character, and *Rasa* within the realm of the genre in question. Both Indian and Western theories of emotions and experience have contributed to the analysis of Mahesh Dattani's plays. The term 'Psychology of *Rasa*' is grounded on the exploring of psychological components within the framework of *Rasa* theory drawing clear lines that the research does not intend to take up the psychological analysis of the characters or the themes using the relevant theories. The systematic analysis and interpretation of text, in this case the stage performances of the plays, the audiovisual content (Mahesh Dattani's interviews) are undertaken to unfold themes, meanings, perspectives, contexts and other patterns.

## Findings and Conclusion

This study examined the developmental paths of the *Rasa* theory, the western as well as Indian conceptions of emotions and experience, and narrowed the critical framework to Affect theory of Tomkins and Theory of Performativity by Richard Schechner. Additionally, it analysed the plays of Mahesh Dattani as a representative sample of Modern Indian English Plays.

The research yielded the following findings that have lead to the conclusion:

*Rasayanshastra*, which is commonly referred to as *Chemistry*, *Pakshastra* popularly known as cookery and *Ayurveda* have the term '*Rasa*' denoting 'Juice', 'Flavour', 'Taste', 'Sap' or '*Rasayana*'. "Emotion" and 'Sentiment' are widely recognized interpretations of the term "*Rasa*" in Western contexts by the western scholars and Indian scholars. (Britannica Dictionary) However, it is imperative to recognize that *Rasa*, fundamentally, preserves its uniqueness and independence from these varied interpretations. The concept of *Rasa* is widely acknowledged as being untranslatable, primarily owing to analogous translation. The term '*Shringara Rasa*' has been inaccurately translated as 'erotic,' (a quality that causes sexual feelings) (Britannica Dictionary) which is a fundamentally flawed interpretation. *Shringara* is actually associated with the concept of love, rather than eroticism. The research findings led to disheartening observations that both Indian and Western scholars have made such erroneous translations, and it is concerning that these translations have not been challenged. In the current era of technological advancements, where information is readily accessible with a simple click, disseminating such misleading meanings of *Shringara* or *Rasa* on the internet perpetuates a false understanding of this significant theory. *Shringara Rasa* holds immense importance in Indian dramaturgy and is regarded as one of the most esteemed Sanskrit theories. The word '*Rasa*' retains its plural form as '*Rasa*' and should not be rendered as '*Rasas*,' as doing so would be semantically incorrect.

The discipline of psychology has witnessed a comparatively recent emergence in the past several years. However, it is crucial to recognize that the *Rasa* hypothesis, originating in the 2nd century, is predominantly based on psychological principles. The *Natyashastra* is widely regarded as a scholarly literature that presents notions in a

scientific manner, with enduring relevance in contemporary times. Contemporary playwrights and film makers continue to see the *Natyashastra* as a significant treatise encompassing dramaturgy, theatre and cinema. It is commonly asserted that cinema and drama serve as reflections of society. It is argued that the creation of characters for theatrical productions or films requires a certain comprehension of psychology, a concept that is effectively elucidated in the *Natyashastra* by Bharata Muni. An illustrative instance can be found in the sixth chapter of the treatise, when Bharata Muni expounded the *Rasa* theory by presenting the *Rasa Sutra*.

“रसानिश्पत्तिरिविभवाः अनुभवाः व्यभिचारिभवाः  
स्थायिभवाः”

“*Rasa* relishes (*Rasanishpattih*) by a combination of the determinants (*Vibhava*), consequent (*Anubhava*), and transitory states or fleeting emotions (*Vyabhicharibhava*)”.  
(Unni, 2014)

The presented *Rasa Sutra* demonstrates the integration of numerous psychological ideas inside the philosophy. Although the notion of *Rasa*, or similar concepts, is not present in any other psychological theory or discipline, there are other closely related concepts such as *Bhava*, *Vibhava*, *Anubhava*, *Vyabhicharibhava*, and *Sthayibhava* that do hold psychological importance. Within the framework of Indian aesthetics, the term ‘*Bhava*’ is employed to define the realm of emotions, while ‘*Vibhava*’ is utilized to signify causes (*Karana* of *Rasa* relish). Furthermore, ‘*Anubhava*’ is employed to encompass the realm of feelings, ‘*Vyabhicharibhava*’ is utilized to represent transitory states, and ‘*Sthayibhava*’ is employed to signify the dominating state. (Gupta, 1997)

Psychology, as a subject, has emerged relatively recently over the past years. However, it is noteworthy that the *Rasa* theory, which originated in the 2nd century, is fundamentally rooted in psychological principles as comprehended by Bharata Muni. The concept of *Rasa*, or equivalent idea, is not found in any other theory or branch of psychology, other concepts as *Bhava*, *Vibhava*, *Anubhava*, *Vyabhicharibhava*, and *sthayibhava* do possess emotional and psychological significance. In the context of Indian aesthetics, the term ‘*Bhava*’ refers to emotions, ‘*Vibhava*’ denote causes (of *Rasa* relish), ‘*Anubhava*’ pertains to feelings, ‘*Vyabhicharibhava*’ represents transitory states of human

psyche, and '*Sthayibhava*' signifies the dominant state (Gupta, 1997). There exist multiple perspectives regarding the concept of *Rasa* experience, namely *Rasa Utpatti*, *Rasa Nishpatti*, *Rasa Pratiti*, and *Rasa Anubhuti*. It has been determined that *Rasa Nishpatti* means *Rasa* relishes whereas other three perceptions about *Rasa* - *Utpatti*, *Pratiti* and *Anubhuti* of *Rasa* are inappropriate.

On the basis of the application of the critical theories discussed in Chapter IV the singular assertion that emerges is the use of the concept of '*Nishpatti*' to denote the shared experience of *Rasa* as described in the '*Smriti*' where experiences are stored substantiating the association between *Rasa* and experience (the English equivalent of the Hindi word- *Anubhav*). There is a probability, if Bharata Muni were to be born in the contemporary times, it is likely that he would have included these two elements into his theory of *Rasa*.

According to the Fig. 43, a *Sahradya* spectator experiences *Shringara Rasa* through the *Sthayibhava* of *Rati*, while observing the *Alamban Vibhava* of male and female protagonists, the *Uddipan vibhava* of a garden scene, and engaging in *Anubhava* through actions such as looking sideways, coy glances, and sweet words, as well as experiencing *Vyabhicharibha* in the form of affection. The method remains consistent over all nine *Rasa*. Thus, it has been ascertained through this that *Rasa*, in its essence, transcends the need for origination, experientiality, or perceptibility. Consequently, the perspection of *Rasa Nishpatti* emerges as the most definitive standpoint.

When dwelling over *Rasa* relish an observation emerged over its classification into two categories, namely *Laukik* (pertaining to the world) and *Alaukik* (transcending the world) in terms of how it is relished.. The relish of *Rasa* has been considered as *Alaukik* due to its ability to provide immense pleasure that cannot be obtained from worldly possessions. It stands apart from all other sources of joy and holds significant importance. Though *Rasa* relish occurs due to worldly experiences, it is *Alaukik* owing to the occurrence of *Bhramsahodaranand*. Ramchandra and Gunachandra were esteemed academics of the Jain tradition. Jain *Dharma*, a religious philosophy rooted in *Nsatik Darshan*, strongly influenced their beliefs. Notably, they embraced the concept of *Rasa* as *Laukik*, which is indicative of the impact of *Nasatika Darshan* on their worldview. The concept of *Rasa* in Indian theatre draws upon aspects from the ordinary world, which are portrayed in an idealized manner in ancient Indian plays and in a realistic manner in



modern Indian plays. However, the pleasure obtained through *Rasa* is believed to possess a transcendent nature. It is imperative to acknowledge that the experience of delight is not only contingent upon happiness, *Sthayibhava*, or the emotion of *Utsah*. It can also manifest through *Bhaya* or *Karuna*. The experience of *Parakastha*, or heightened emotional state, in relation to any *Rasa*, or aesthetic sentiment, can result in a sense of ecstasy. For example, an individual who possesses an interest in seeing Horror films may undergo the experience of *Bhayanaka Rasa*, or the sentiment of fear, during the duration of the movie. This heightened emotional state, or *Parakastha*, brings about a sense of pleasure for the individual, and this pleasure can be described as *Alaukik*, or transcendent. More precisely, it is denoted as *Bhramasahodaraanand*, indicating a state of bliss that transcends the confines of the physical realm. The assertion suggests that literature serves as a contemplative medium for society, deriving inspiration from its diverse facets and giving an idealized portrayal of reality, which might be referred to as *Laukik*.

*Rasa* encompasses a vast area including of nine *Rasa*, nine *Sthayibhava*, *Alamban Vibhava*, *Uddipan Vibhava*, eight *Anubhava*, and thirty-three *Vyabhicharibhava*, along with several linked terminology like as *Nishpatti*, *Sahradya*, and *Sadharanikarana*. In addition to this there are other related terminologies and subsidiary hypotheses that are intricately associated with *Rasa*, like *Rasa Bhasa*, *Rasa Bhava*, *Rasa Bhanga*, and *Rasa Dosha*. Ancient Indian intellectuals and playwrights espoused particular concepts in their literary creations, although these perspectives failed to attain broad acceptance. In the realm of modern literature, contemporary playwrights demonstrate a departure from conventional norms in their works. This is evident in the plays written by Mahesh Dattani, where the analysis as discussed in Chapter Four brings forth their existence. The term '*Rasa Bhasa*' refers to the portrayal of a semblance of *Rasa*, while '*Rasa Bhava*' denotes the experience of savoring a *Rasa* through a literary scene that incorporates divine or godly elements. The concept of '*Rasa Bhanga*' refers to the abrupt emergence of a different emotional flavour when an individual is still in the midst of experiencing a certain emotional flavour. Finally, the concept of '*Rasa Dosha*' refers to the inclusion of colloquial language or incorrect linguistic expressions in literature, which serves as a hindrance to the full appreciation and enjoyment of *Rasa*. (Nagendra, 1974) In the play, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, the depiction of the intimate relationship between the two gay characters, Sharad and Kamlesh, together with their affectionate exchanges, serves as a means of evoking emotional responses, known as *Rasa Bhasa*, from the heterosexual

audience observing the performance. The act of Ramliklal's wife engaging in the adoration of God and performing *Aarti* in the context of *Final Solutions* is the manifestation of *Rasa Bhava*. In the theatrical production entitled *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, a significant shift in the *Rasa* occurs during the enactment of the play within the play, specifically while the characters are performing *Abhigyanshakuntalam*. This transformation transpires abruptly due to the introduction of a gunshot, altering the *Rasa* from *Shringara* to *Bhayanaka*. Furthermore, another shift in the *Rasa* takes place when Nazia, displaying compassion and solicitude for Suhel, takes the life of an individual in order to preserve Suhel's well-being is a source of *Shringara Rasa* again which is an example of *Rasa Bhanaga*. Dattani's frequent scene changes and temporal shifts serve as a catalyst for the experience of *Rasa Bhanga*. Dattani has employed the use of the *Mumbaiya* Language (Sridhar, 2020) in his plays to enhance the relatability element, a quality he has consistently sought to achieve, hence necessitating the incorporation of slang language. In the works *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, and *Tara*, the characters Sharad, Anarkali, and Rupa are identified as sources of *Rasa Dosh*.

This research posits that *Rasa* is as universal, as it is believed to possess inherent and enduring existence. Regardless of whether a dramatist, poet, novelist, filmmaker, or storyteller possesses knowledge of the *Rasa* theory, it is indisputable that every artistic creation receives pleasure from the experience of *Rasa*. A substantial amount of scholarly literature is available on the subject, including a detailed work by Priyadarshi Patnaik that explores the concept of *Rasa* in literature. *Rasa* has been recognized as a prominent element in several types of literary expression, encompassing Chinese and Japanese poetry, the literary works of Tennyson, the novels authored by R.K. Narayana, and the poetic compositions of Shakespeare, among other notable examples (Patnaik, 1997).

The manifestation of an artist's dedication and immersion in their craft is evident in their artistic endeavors. This can be observed particularly in the creation of characters and the development of narratives. For instance, when a playwright aims to portray the *Shringara Rasa*, they may devote extensive pages to evoke this *Rasa*, drawing upon their personal experiences and emotions of love. As Sahir Ludhianvi, a movie director, once expressed in an interview, the ability to craft an exceptional love story often necessitates the repeated experience of falling in love. However, the presence of *Parakastha*, a

concept related to the essence of *Rasa*, is not apparent in any of Mahesh Dattani's theatrical works. The reason is the inclusion of numerous aspects, in Mahesh Dattani's play, *The Big Fat City*, as discussed in Chapter IV, exemplifies his intention as a commercial playwright to engage the audience by providing a greater sense of relatability by serving multiple cuisines on a platter where two completely different themes and topics are put together for a wider reach and professional success. However, even Dattani's plays consistently evoke *Rasa*. The mechanical works of literature or plays created by commercial writers and playwrights may not achieve *Parakashtha*, but they nevertheless possess the ability to embody *Rasa*. Though *Rasa* is Universal, yet in various cultures it can be relished through a multitude of elements integrated and inherent in prevailing societal practices, tradition, environment, background, values, and morals.

Like *Rasa*, emotions exhibit a universal quality (Darwin, 2017; Ekman, 2012) as individuals across different regions undergo emotional encounters that are influenced by cognitive processes, moulded by their personal histories, surroundings, societal norms, language and cultural customs. There is a well held fallacy that mistakenly equates *Rasa* and emotions as interchangeable concepts. Nevertheless, empirical research has provided evidence that *Bhavas* contain a range of emotions. (Nagendra, 1974; Gupta, 1997) It is worth noting that *Rasa* does not have a direct equivalent name in any known language across the globe. The phenomenon of *Rasa* is cultivated by the active engagement with diverse literary and creative mediums, resulting in the evocation of emotional reactions that are shaped by an individual's cognitive processes within their everyday life.

The concept of *Rasa* holds significance within the context of reality, nevertheless, it is recommended that individuals with '*Aham*' (Jagad Guru Shankaracharya Swami Shree, 2020) exercise caution and avoid engaging in direct or indirect participation in such affairs therefore, presence of *Aham* does not relish *Rasa*, but, the spectator or the actor experiences shared emotions. For *Rasa* relish, one needs to be a spectator of a play or an event of life keeping *Aham* aside. Essentially, individuals have the opportunity to partake in the experience of *Rasa* by assuming the position of spectators or audience members, both within the context of theatrical performances and in their everyday lives. According to Richard Schechner's theory of Performativity (Chapter III), individuals are observed to adopt many roles within their everyday existence, when individuals embody these roles, they evoke emotional responses akin to the nature of theatrical performances.

This notion can be juxtaposed with the Indian concepts of *Lokadharmi* and *Natyadharmi*. *Lokdharmi* refers to a mode of existence characterized by the mundane aspects of daily life, devoid of idealistic notions and primarily grounded in realism. While one's personal life experiences may elicit many emotions, they may not necessarily inspire the *Rasa relish*. It is important to note that a physical separation from individuals in one's actual life cannot be joyful. However, Examining male and female protagonists in the same situation in the play, one can experience *Karuna Rasa* which elicits pleasure for the spectator. *Lokdharmi* refers to the portrayal of things in their true form, which must be appropriately changed in order to gain widespread acceptance and transform into *Natyadharmi*. An illustrative instance of *Natyadharmi* and *Lokdharmi* can be observed in Kalidasa's *Abhigyanshakuntalam*. The narrative of this play draws inspiration from the *Mahabharata* and revolves around the character of Dushyanta, an ancient monarch consumed by lust, who possesses numerous queens. Dushyanta falls in love with Shakuntala, an eighteen-year-old girl, and subsequently forgets about her after impregnating her. While this tale is based on historical events, its plausibility may not resonate with the audience. The *Natyadharmi* rendition of *Abhigyanshakuntalam* is a variant that is deemed acceptable and well-received by the spectators which has achieved the status of a timeless masterpiece. Therefore, it may be reiterated that emotions are elicited by the many circumstances encountered in our daily lives, and the experience of *Rasa* can only be savored when one assumes the role of a spectator.

The inherent interdependence among *Rasa*, emotions, and experience constitutes a crucial element that leads to the cultivation of appreciation and enjoyment in the context of *Rasa*. The field of psychology plays a significant role in the development of character within a certain thematic context, taking into account the particular background and intended audience, with the aim of enhancing the audience's enjoyment of the desired emotional experience. Within the realm of drama, it is imperative for performers to possess a comprehensive comprehension of the emotions, experiences, and psychological intricacies inherent to the character they are portraying. The actor is required to engage in both verbal and non-verbal forms of expression, use the body and its various manifestations, which occur within the human psyche. The process of comprehending and interpreting written dialogues involves cognitive engagement with the emotions conveyed. However, when these same emotions are effectively conveyed to the audience through *Abhinaya*, evoke the experience of *Rasa* derived from *Sthayibhava*, this process

cannot be considered purely cognitive in nature. Instead of being a result of decognition, the experience of *Rasa* is derived from the *Hridaya* of *Sahradya* rather than *Buddhi*. According to Bharata Muni, only the *Sahradya* spectator is capable of experiencing *Rasa*. Those individuals who attempt to rely solely on their intellect or engage excessively in the process of cognition will be unable to experience *Rasa*. For such individuals, everything will be reduced to a subject for analysis and discussion. In this context, it is important to note that the absence of intellectual engagement in the enjoyment of *Rasa* does not imply a complete disregard for cognitive involvement. Rather, it refers to the comprehensive nature of the entire process. The act of thoroughly confirming one's experiences is achieved by a purposeful and systematic approach, as demonstrated by the case of *Manas*. Likewise, the process of engaging in a thoughtful and deliberate decision-making process, exemplified by *Buddhi*, leads to the preservation of pertinent information within *Chitta* in the form of *Smriti*, which represents accumulated experiential knowledge (Jagad Guru Shankaracharya Swami Shree, 2020). The retention of knowledge facilitates the cognitive comprehension of a particular situation, hence eliciting later emotional reactions. The actor assumes the role of the charioteer of *Rasa* when participating in a theatrical performance or practising the art of *Abhinaya*. In doing so, the actor demonstrates a profound understanding of diverse emotions, which are subsequently communicated to the audience through the medium of *Abhinaya*.

The works of Mahesh Dattani serve as prime examples of contemporary Indian English plays, which display significant differences in comparison to the historical Sanskrit plays authored by Kalidasa. Contemporary theatrical productions exhibit a mechanistic approach, when commercial playwrights conscientiously deliberate about a multitude of concerns and technical aspects throughout the composition phase. The dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani explore and address current societal issues, utilizing a variety of characters and settings to encompass complex themes within a single or occasionally two to three acts. Though the plays in question attain their utmost artistic capacity and professional success yet, all are not instrumental in *Rasa Parakashtha*. Additionally, the playwright's proclivity for achieving financial success occasionally leads to the production of works that exhibit temporal significance.

On the basis of the categories of plays outlined by Dhananjaya in *Dasharupakam* the plays authored by Mahesh Dattani are categorized into different categories based on

the plot, characters, and *Rasa* evoked by the play. These genres include *Prakarani*, *Natika*, *Nataka*, *Vyayoga*, *Goshthi*, *Vikrut Prahāsana*, *Prahāsana*, and *Samvakara* (Discussed in detail in Chapter III, IV). Plays featuring a predominantly female cast are commonly referred to as *Natika*. Plays centred around comedic themes are known as *Prahāsana*. Plays characterised by internal conflicts are categorised as *Vyayoga*. Lastly, a comprehensive play that includes both male and female characters, with a well-defined beginning, middle, and end, encompassing all aspects of *Sandhi*, is classified as *Nataka*.

The concept of change is inherent in the world, as the world itself undergoes transformations through time. It is imperative for individuals to adapt and modify themselves in accordance with the changing circumstances. Failure to do so can hinder personal growth and prevent progress. The *Rasa* theory, which originated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, is subject to the same principle. As depicted in the fig.44, Bharata Muni puts forward four primary *Rasa* for *Natya*, namely *Shringara*, *Raudra*, *Veera*, and *Bibhatsa*. Additionally, Bharata Muni introduced four other *Rasa*, namely *Hasya* derived from *Shringara*, *Karuna* derived from *Raudra*, *Adbhuta* derived from *Veera*, and *Bhayanaka* derived from *Bibhatsa*. In the latter part of the 11th century, Abhinavagupta Padacharya made a significant contribution to the field of *Natya* by introducing the concept of *Shanta Rasa*. According to the picture, during the 16th century, scholars of Hindi Literature introduced *Vatsalaya Rasa*, drawing inspiration from the poems of Surdasā. Similarly, they derived *Bhakti Rasa* from the *bhajans* of Meera Bai. This observation indicates that significant modifications have been made in the narrative of *Rasa*, which was initially proposed by considering the wide range of literary works during that specific period. Over the course of 23 centuries, a mere three new *Rasa* have been introduced, life, literature and drama itself has undergone a sea change adapting to emergent socio-cultural, economic, literary, scientific, psychological, and other paradigms positing a rationalized argument for extension and reinterpretation of *Rasa* to accommodate the evolving landscape of theatrical productions in the 21st century. In line with this rationale the ‘*Neo Rasa Theory*’ has been formulated. This theory proposes its reach not only to the daily lives but also to the Performances. As the plays of Mahesh Dattani fathom layered complexities of human existence shedding light on the intricate social, cultural and psychological dimensions by delving into subjects, themes, characters that hold significant relevance in the context of the present-day society, raising questions of identity, conflicts, trauma, and family dynamics revealing the complexities of power

struggles, generation gaps and hidden secrets, social and personal prejudices and moralities, necessitates the need of a theory that not only addresses these layered complexities within the framework of *Rasa* theory but also the complex relationship between the playwright, actor and audience. In one of the plays authored by the playwright, the character of Tara is depicted as grappling with the obstacles posed by a physical impairment and a range of health ailments. The depiction in question elicits the *Neo Veera Rasa*, a variant closely resembling the conventional *Veera Rasa*, albeit devoid of physical confrontation or violence, while effectively encapsulating the spirit of courage and heroism. The current global context encompasses a wide range of complex challenges, which are marked by contemporary phenomena, persons, and solutions that embody a *Neo Rasa*, transitioning towards contemporary paradigms.

The nine *Neo Rasa* draw inspiration from the *Nava Rasa*, as elucidated by Bharata Muni in the *Natyashastra*. The *Neo Rasa* theory examines the various layers of the human mind, as evidenced by the numerous examples found in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. Particularly noteworthy are the female characters in Dattani's works, such as Lolly from *The Big Fat City*, Nazia from *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?*, and Ratna from *Dance Like a Man*, who exhibit multiple layers of complexity. In order to examine the female characters that hold significant roles in contemporary plays, the introduction of *Neo Rasa* is pertinent. Bharata Muni emphasizes the importance of the interplay between narrative, character, and *Rasa* in determining the essence of any *Rasa*. It is the plot and character that assume pivotal roles in this determination. In this analysis, we have endeavored to examine the narrative structure and character development of the play in order to ascertain the concept of *Rasa*. Furthermore, akin to Bharata Muni's theory of *Rasa*, colours and deities are also interconnected in the context of the plays. Given that all *Neo Rasa* refer to *Rasa* found in contemporary plays featuring modern people from the modern age, it is seen that vibrant colours are consistently linked to these performances.

This theory aims to present a paradigmatic change in ideology, cognition, and perception by proposing an alternative narrative to challenge the prevailing discourse that associates masculine deities with the concept of *Rasa*. The concept of interconnection is reinforced by the establishment of a binary system. The Ardhnarineshwara form in Indian culture represents the union of Shiva and Gauri, as well as Radha and Krishna, symbolising the complementary nature of these divine entities. This concept serves as an

additional source of inspiration for the portrayal of these deities as a unified whole. Following *Shakti Shloka* served as a source of inspiration as well.

“ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥-ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥  
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥”

“To that Devi who in all beings is abiding in the form of *Rasa*,  
salutations to her, salutations to her, salutations to her,  
salutations again and again.”

### 1. **Neo *Shringara Rasa***

*Shringara* has consistently had significant popularity as a *Rasa* since its inception. Playwrights, novelists, poets, and film directors have consistently shown a preference for this particular *Rasa* above others, often referring to it as the ‘King of *Rasa*.’ The absence of *Shringara Rasa*, akin to the works of Kalidasa, has been noted in Dattani's plays, which serve as examples of Modern Indian Plays.

In the dynamic context of our evolving world, all aspects of existence are subject to change, including the domain of *Shringara Rasa*. Contemporary theatrical productions also explore the representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals, commonly referred to as homosexuals. Initially, these works were classified under the category of scholarly examination. However, further research has revealed a substantial body of plays, novels, and films that shed light on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals. The portrayal of homosexuals is evident in the characters of Kamlesh and Prakash and Kamlesh and Sharad in the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*. Additionally, the character of Subu and the *hijra* Kamla also exhibit a similar dynamic in *Seven Steps Around the Fire*. Consequently, the affection between homosexuals or LGBTQIA+ individuals has been identified as a source of Neo *Shringara Rasa*, with the associated *sthayibhava* being *Rati*. The colour symbolically associated with this form of love is Neon Green, and the deity associated with it is Laxmi. The neon green colouring draws inspiration from the light green hue associated with the *Shringara Rasa*. Laxmi has been designated as a divine figure due to her role as the consort of Vishnu, with both deities residing in a secluded abode within the *Kshir Sagar*. Whenever a devotee endeavors to approach Lord Vishnu, Laxmi intervenes by presenting the illusion of *Maya*, the pair symbolizes an enduring and timeless affection.



## 2. Neo *Hasya Rasa*

In the context of traditional ancient plays, it was common for *Hasya Rasa* to be juxtaposed with *Shringara Rasa*. Bharata Muni, an influential figure in Sanskrit literature, advocated for the use of *Hasya Rasa* either after or in between scenes of *Shringara Rasa*. This was exemplified by the inclusion of *Vidushaka*'s characters in prominent Sanskrit literary works, serving to enhance the enjoyment of *Hasya Rasa*. Bharata Muni, an esteemed scholar, has expounded upon a form of comedy known as *Att Hasya*. This comedic genre involves deriving amusement from inappropriate behaviour exhibited in specific circumstances, as well as the delayed or limited comprehension of concepts and the act of cross-dressing or altering one's appearance.

In the context of contemporary theatrical productions, *Hasya* is appreciated as a form of entertainment that falls under the genres of black humour, satire, sarcasm, or the portrayal of others' suffering. It serves as a means of bringing joy to the audience and can be classified as a popular variant of *Hasya*, specifically belonging to the category of Neo *Hasya Rasa*. In the context of Modern Plays, the absence of a character like *Vidushaka* is notable. Instead, the protagonists or supporting characters exhibit traits that evoke *Hasya*, however it should be noted that this *Hasya* is distinct from *Nirmal* or *Att Hasya*. In the play *The Big Fat City*, the portrayal of Anu and Puneet's romantic relationship, as well as the use of sarcasm by Sailesh and Niharika, contribute to the overall genre of black humour and evoke a sense of enjoyment through the utilization of Neo *Hasya Rasa*. The portrayal of heterosexual individuals by Sharad, a homosexual character, in the play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* might also be seen as a manifestation of Neo *Hasya Rasa*. The theatrical expression known as *Sthayibhava* is exemplified by the character *Hasa*, whose cream-colored appearance draws inspiration from the white hue advocated by Bharata Muni. Additionally, the goddess associated with this expression is Shachi, who serves as the consort of Indra and holds the esteemed position of Queen within the realm of *Indraloka*. The individual consistently exhibits a contented disposition, characterized by a perpetual smile, which reflects their state of affluence and satisfaction. This perpetual state of happiness renders them akin to the embodiment of the Neo *Hasya Rasa*, symbolizing joy and mirth.

## 3. Neo *Raudra Rasa*

*Raudra Rasa* was employed as a secondary or transient *Rasa* in the Ancient plays, never assuming the role of the principal *Rasa* in *Natya*. In the context of theatrical performances, the emotion of rage was commonly conveyed through the utilization of facial expressions or bodily gestures. In contemporary theatrical productions, the manifestation of *Raudra* in the form of an undesirable course of action, whereby an individual, driven by Anger, feels compelled to engage in wrongful behaviour towards another character, regardless of the consequences. The character's gestures and facial expressions typically do not reveal anger, reflecting the societal shift towards individuals with complex personalities who conceal their emotions. The *Sthayibhva* associated with the *Raudra Rasa* is *Krodha*, the hue symbolically representing this *Rasa* is Neon Red, and the deity associated with it is Swaha. In Hindu mythology, Swaha is recognized as the spouse of *Agni Dev*, the god of fire. During the ritualistic practise of the *Yagna*, an offering known as *Ahuti* is made by uttering the word 'Swaha'. *Swaha* possesses the ability to incinerate any object or substance through its manifestation as *Raudra Swarupa*, thereby establishing its association with the deity embodying the *Raudra Rasa*.

#### **4. Neo Karuna Rasa**

*Karuna* has been identified as a prominent *Rasa* within the literary tradition. In the context of Indian dramatic traditions, it is noteworthy that the genre of tragedy did not have a strong historical presence. Consequently, the prominence of *Karuna Rasa* as a fundamental emotional sentiment was relatively limited. Instead, a closely related category known as *Vipralambha Shringara* held greater significance. During a period when *Shringara*, or the sentiment of love, was the primary emotional focus in the majority of plays, the experience of longing and separation was primarily associated with the appreciation of *Vipralambha Shringara*, rather than *Karuna Rasa*. When examining the character of Duryodhana, it becomes evident that Bhasa's *Urubhangam* can be classified as a tragedy, being the sole extant tragedy among Ancient Sanskrit Plays.

Within the realm of contemporary theatrical productions, Neo *Karuna Rasa* assumes a central position as the fundamental emotional essence that permeates a multitude of occurrences throughout the play. The sources of Neo *Karuna Rasa* encompass several societal issues that have historically been overlooked or neglected in conventional plays. These issues include the anguish experienced by individuals who identify as homosexuals, *Hijras*, victims of child abuse, and those affected by honour

killings, among others. The *Sthayibhava* connected with Neo *Karuna Rasa* is *Soka*, which is traditionally represented by the hue Steel Grey. The deity linked with this *Rasa* is Gauri, who is recognized as the consort of Shiva. Gauri is revered as Annapurna Devi, a deity who is believed to possess the ability to empathise with devotees. Additionally, she is known as *Karuna Murti*, denoting her compassionate nature. In the divine abode of Kailash, where Shiva and Gauri reside, Shiva is regarded as *Vairagi*, indicating his disinterest in worldly matters. Consequently, any possessions they possess are considered offerings to the world. Gauri, therefore, assumes the role of *Tyag Murti*, symbolizing her inclination towards renunciation. Furthermore, she holds the distinction of being the foremost deity who attentively listens to the desires of her devotees so is *Devi* of Neo *Karuna Rasa*.

## 5. Neo *Veera Rasa*

In the context of traditional Sanskrit plays, the portrayal of war scenes served as a means to evoke *Veera Rasa*, which pertains to the appreciation and enjoyment of heroic conduct exhibited on the battlefield. This was also one of the predominant trends in *Rasa*. Modern plays often depict protagonists that have a strong inclination to confront and combat many elements such as the external world, challenging circumstances, personal dilemmas, and even their own partners. These characters exemplify survival instincts, which serve as the primary catalyst for the emergence of the Neo *Veera Rasa*. The characters depicted in various narratives are engaged in personal struggles within the realm of reality, deriving a sense of aesthetic enjoyment known as Neo *Veera Rasa*. For instance, the character of Tara in the narrative *Tara* confronts her disability and numerous health challenges, preventing her from leading a typical childhood. Her endeavour to navigate a harsh society that perceives her as an anomaly exemplifies the embodiment of Neo *Veera Rasa*. The *Sthayibhava* of Neo *Veera Rasa* is *Utsaha*. The choice of colour influenced by the *Natyashastra* is Neon Orange. The deity associated with this *Rasa* is Durga, as she exemplifies unusual heroism by successfully defeating Mahishasura when the *Devas* were unable to do so. This portrayal of feminine strength and valour resonates with the contemporary world. A woman who fulfills the roles of mother, sister, and daughter, while also engaging in employment, might be seen as a very capable individual. Whenever there arises a difficulty or a requirement, it is evident that a female possessing two hands is capable of doing tasks that would typically necessitate the assistance of eight

hands. This remarkable ability can be likened to the embodiment of the Hindu goddess Durga within each household, as she is renowned for resolving various predicaments. Thus, such a female can be considered a manifestation of the divine feminine energy, specifically the *Devi* of Neo *Veera Rasa*, who possesses the power to alleviate difficulties and bring about favourable outcomes.

## **6. Neo *Adbhuta Rasa***

In the realm of traditional theatrical performances, the *Adbhuta Rasa* was much appreciated and enjoyed by supernatural entities such as Hanumana, Apsaras, and Devtas. Bharata Muni's assertion regarding the utilization of *Adbhuta Rasa* in *Nirvahana Sandhi*, denoting the concluding phase of a play leading to a joyful denouement, is no longer universally applicable in the realm of contemporary Indian plays. It has been observed that despite the incorporation of *Adbhuta Rasa*, the denouement of such plays often culminates in *Karuna Rasa*. In contemporary theatrical productions, Neo *Adbhuta Rasa* is not solely derived from the presence of positive and surprising elements. Rather, it can also emerge from unexpected occurrences such as a gunshot on stage or the introduction of unfortunate or unacceptable elements. This phenomenon can be attributed to the inclination of modern audiences to embrace a wide range of experiences under the guise of entertainment, thus giving rise to the manifestation of Neo *Adbhuta Rasa*. The *sthayibhava* associated with the aforementioned concept is *Vismaya*. The corresponding colour attributed to this concept is Neon Yellow. The deity associated with this concept is Siddhi, who is recognised as one of the consorts of Ganesha. Siddhi holds the esteemed position of *Samragini* of *Asht Siddhi*, possessing the ability to manifest extraordinary occurrences in an individual's life. Those who receive a blessing from Siddhi are believed to possess the capability to accomplish any task or objective within the world. Consequently, Siddhi is revered as the *Devi* of Neo *Adbhuta Rasa*.

## **7. Neo *Bibhatsa Rasa***

Similar to *Raudra* and *Bhayanaka*, *Bibhatsa* is a *Rasa* that finds little use in traditional theatrical productions. *Venisamhara* stands as the sole exception, whereby *Bibhatsa* assumes the role of the principal *Rasa*. Otherwise, it is rarely employed as a transient *Rasa* within theatrical performances. The portrayal of ghost or *Rakshasha* scenes in traditional Indian literature represents the expression of *Bibhatsa Rasa*. Similarly, in

contemporary Indian plays, the depiction of characters engaging in scheming and plotting against others, making morally questionable decisions, and displaying offensive behaviour can also evoke *Bibhatsa Rasa*. Additionally, scenes involving vomiting or other inappropriate content, which are sometimes included in stage performances or movies, can serve as sources of The portrayal of Nazia's rape scene in the play *Where Did I Leave My Purdah?* is executed with artistic finesse, effectively evoking the emotions of disgust, fear, and compassion. The incorporation of *Bibhatsa Rasa*, *Bhayanaka Rasa*, and *Karuna Rasa* simultaneously enhances the overall impact of the scene on the audience. The decision on the appointment of director and the incorporation of modern, well-equipped theatre facilities represents a significant progression in the field. *Sthayibhava* associated with Neo *Bibhatsa Rasa* is *Jugupsa*, the hue commonly associated with this *Rasa* is neon blue, and the god often associated with it is Bhairavi. The *Bhairav Nrutya* is performed subsequent to the act of destruction carried out by Bhairav Shiva. The *Mahabharata* narrative includes an account wherein Bhairavi, despite witnessing extensive bloodshed, remained unsatisfied. It is mentioned that on the final day of the *Mahabharata* war, Bhairavi manifested as Drishtadyumna, as well as the five sons of the Pandava, along with numerous other valiant and significant characters. These stories have contributed to Bhairavi's association with the *Devi* of Neo *Bibhatsa Rasa*.

#### **8. Neo Bhayanaka Rasa**

In old Sanskrit plays, the utilization of *Bhayanaka Rasa* was minimal, with the portrayal of *Rakshasha* as an antagonist being the primary source of this aesthetic sentiment. In contrast, contemporary plays exhibit a distinct approach, drawing inspiration from Western influences to elevate conflict through stagecraft and stylistic choices, exemplifying the emergence of Neo *Bhayanaka Rasa*. The modern theatre often incorporates various banned scenarios, such as depictions of death, gun violence, rape, or physical altercations, which elicit the experience of Neo *Bhayanaka Rasa* for the audience. The *Sthayibhava* of Neo *Bhayanaka Rasa* is *Bhaya*. The associated colour is charcoal black, and the deity associated with this *Rasa* is Chamunda. Chamunda earned her position by slaying the demon Raktbij *Rakshasha* and adorning a necklace fashioned from his severed heads. Additionally, she wields a *Khappar*, which solidifies her role as the goddess of Neo *Bhayanaka Rasa*.

#### **9. Neo Shanta Rasa**

In the context of traditional Sanskrit plays, it is noteworthy that the character of *Shanta* did not assume the role of a *Rasa* within the realm of *Natya* performances. In the 11th century, Abhinavagupta introduced the concept of incorporating *Shanta Rasa* into theatrical performances. However, only a limited number of plays embraced the utilization of *Shanta Rasa*, wherein a temporary state of tranquility in the plot served as a catalyst for evoking the same emotional essence. In contemporary theatrical productions, the portrayal of adverse circumstances in an individual's life and the subsequent moral lessons imparted by these experiences consistently evoke the emergence of the Neo *Shanta Rasa*, a prevalent emotional sentiment observed across numerous plays of this century. The *sthayibhava*, or dominant emotional state, associated with it is either *Sama* or *Nirveda*. The colour attributed to it is silver white, while the god associated with it is Bhramani, who possesses aspects of both Saraswati and Gayatri. The consort of Bhrahama, the deity associated with wisdom and the attainment of all *Vidhya*, is revered as the Devi of Neo *Shanta Rasa* because of her embodiment of tranquility.

Therefore, the nine Neo *Rasa* can be considered as an extension of Bharata Muni's *Rasa* Theory, resulting in a total of twenty distinct *Rasa*. This hypothesis is formulated based on a meticulous examination of the dramatic works of Mahesh Dattani, a playwright renowned for his diverse repertoire of plays including a wide range of characters who are charioteer of *Rasa*. The hypothesis is subject to further scrutiny and debate within the academic and theoretical spheres.

## **Recommendations and Suggestions**

The research introduces the Neo *Rasa* theory as a subject of scholarly discourse and examination within the realms of academia and theatre.

It can also be determined whether these theories can be applied to the textual versions of Mahesh Dattani's plays.

Further research can be conducted to explore the use of Neo *Rasa* Theory in analyzing further screenplays by Mahesh Dattani and plays by other contemporary Indian English playwrights.

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