

## The Aesthetic aspects in Tennyson's Ulysses

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### **Abstract:**

*Rasa* theory is one of the earliest theories in Indian dramaturgy. It is believed that Bharat was one of the first person to talk of *Rasa*. He has discussed it in the sixth and seventh chapters of his famous treatise *Natyasastra*. It was actually meant for drama which a composite art is meant to be performed. But in the course of time, it was realized that any literary work can have *Rasa* in it. In fact, it is *Rasa* which makes a work literary. Thus, it is a universally applicable to any piece of performing arts such as dance and music which provide aesthetic pleasure to the *Sahrdayi* who watches or listens to it. In this paper, my attempt would be to see the applicability of *Rasa* theory to a poem. The work taken for analysis is the poem 'Ulysses' by Alfred Lord Tennyson. The objective of this paper is to explore the validity of *Rasa* theory and to prove that it is applicable even to the Western works and to any form other than drama.

**Key Words:** *Drama, literary, performing, applicable, objective, analysis*

### **Introduction:**

*Rasa* variously translated into English as aesthetic pleasure, sentiment, aesthetic, enjoyment, aesthetic bliss, poetic pleasure, poetic, relish, and poetic delight, poetic delectation etc. is the soul of any work that is 'literary'. *Rasa* is the chiefly responsible element for the 'literariness' of any work of literature or the artfulness or beauty of any work of art. It is this Indian concept of drama though applicable to any work of an art that differentiates Indian poetics from the

Western poetics. *Rasa* is also called 'taste' which is to be relished, the taste means the taste that we get to enjoy from listening, watching or reading any work of an art. No Western poetician has ever given a thought on this particular aspect in literature, the soul of literature or the essence. It is a more comprehensive aspect than any concept of Western poetics.

The way Bharat's *Natyasastra* is considered to be the most comprehensive treatise on Indian dramaturgy, Aristotle's *Poetic* holds the same significance in the field of Western dramaturgy. Both are believed to be the pioneering works on drama in Indian and Western dramatics respectively. It's important to find the similarities and differences in the thinking of Bharat and Aristotle because will lead to the answer of how much valid the *Rasa* theory is when applied to a Western work. Can an Indian theory be applied to a Western work? What's the need of such application? We can get all the answers once we know the concept of Aristotle and Bharat on drama.

M.S. Kushwaha sees the resemblance and difference in Indian and Western concepts of drama. As he says, Aristotle's contribution to Western drama is his concept of tragedy. This Greek concept of tragedy is as follows:

"Necessity is blind and man's encounter with him shall  
Rob him of his eyes"

When the tragic hero has a desire or urge or thirst to achieve something and while trying to attain it, he falls or fails, this results in tragedy. It's in Western drama only that we find the distinction of tragedy and comedy. Such division is the product of Western thinking. This classification has as its base a dialectical view of nature.

Indian concept of drama differs from Western concept in that the classification of drama in Indian dramaturgy is not based on the naturalist aspect of drama. Bharat classifies drama into ten types but his classification is based on the style (*vritti*) of composition. According to the Bharat drama is the representation of human nature "with its joys and sorrows" (1.121). Happiness and sadness, tears and laughter play an integral role in his conception of drama. If at all it resembles the Western concept, it is the concept of tragic comedy given by Shakespeare in his plays like *Merchant of Venice*.

In Bharat's scheme of dramatic plot, there is no scope for tragedy. The dramatic action shows the efforts of the hero to reach a certain goal and he successfully attains the goal and there is a happy ending. All Sanskrit plays, with some exception, follow this scheme of drama. [There are plays like Bhasa's *Urubhangam* that end with the death of the hero. But it is the

theory of *karma* that applies. It is the evil deed of the hero that results in his tragic drama. There is no element of *Karuna* or Sympathy for him. He deserves it and his bad deed has been justified with punishment.

There is one more vital difference between Aristotle's and Bharat's concepts. It is the difference in their theory of "imitation". Both Aristotle and Bharat agree that drama is an "imitation" and for both "imitation", means "imaginative reconstruction of life". But the objects of imitation are different for both. For Aristotle drama is the "imitation" of "action" while for Bharat, it is the imitation of emotional states (*Bhava*). According to Aristotle drama is born of human instinct for imitation but Bharat strongly believes that drama was deliberately created as "an object of diversion". As he tells us in *Natyasastra*, drama was the product of the Silver Age, the time when people indulged in uncivilized ways, they were ruled by lust and greed and became infatuated with anger and jealousy. Thus, as Bharat maintains, drama's sole purpose was to provide people with amusement and instrument.

### **Application of Rasa Theory to Tennyson's 'Ulysses':**

#### **Discussion:**

It is important to justify that *Rasa* is applicable to any form of literature as it is an aesthetic experience which can be attained from any literary work. When *Rasa* is applied to a literary work other than drama, there are some liberties to be taken with the theory. And *Rasa* concept is flexible enough to maintain its own quality even when applied to a poem or a novel. The only difference is that the visually representational aspects are not to be found in a poem or novel, it is obvious.

'Ulysses' is a dramatic monologue. The poetic personae, i.e., the speaker. Ulysses, represents the Renaissance temper, the spirit of discovery and passion for new knowledge. In this poem, Ulysses is imagined to have returned to his kingdom Ithaca after a voyage of discovery. But his soul which is ever craving for adventure and new knowledge, becomes restless finding the life of his kingdom dull profitless particularly because the people of the kingdom are barbarous and wild. Ulysses soon decides to leave his kingdom and continue his journey of adventure. His longing for discovery is still as strong as it has always been. His son Telemachus is, as he thinks, matured enough to take the responsibility of the kingdom and

perform his duty properly. He invites his people who are willing to accompany him on his new voyage and adventure. The poems end with his determining words ‘to strive, to seek, to find, not to yield’

If we think of *Rasa* and its application to this poem, we should first talk about how an application can be done. Bharat, in his *Natyasastra*, gives a formula or definition of *Rasanispatti*

*VibhavanubhavavyabharisamyogadRsasanipatti (7, Natyasastra)*

It means that *Rasa* emerges out of the harmonious combination of *Sthayi bhava* with *Vibhava*, *Anubhava*, and *Vyabharibhava*. *Sthayibhava* or Dominant states are the states which ultimately become *Rasa*. *Sthayi-bhava* is called *sthayi* because they are the states of mind which are permanent. *Vyabharibhava* or Transitory states are the states which are momentary or for time being. They change with the situation *Vibhava* are of two kinds: *Alamban Vibhava* and *Uddipan Vibhava*. *Alamban Vibhava* is normally protagonist. It is he who is the chief reason for the dominant *Sthayi bhava*. He is the cause of *Rsasanipatti*, *Uddipan Vibhava* is that which stimulates the already dominant *Sthayi bhava*. It adds to the effect of the predominant *Rasa* experience. *Vibhava* determine the *Rasa* and so they are called Determinants. *Anubhava* means what comes after *bhava* is generated in the mind. It is a physical representation of the *bhava*. It includes gestures, costumes, words in a text etc.

In *Ulysses*, it is *Vira Rasa* which prevails. The dominant state of *Vira Rasa* or Heroic sentiment is *Utsaha* or Energy. It is very obvious from the character of Ulysses. He is full of energy. It is his energy which doesn't let this soul rest and which keeps his eagerness, aspiration and longing for adventure and knowledge alive. In this poem, he is shown in his old age. He doesn't have physical strength that he has is the strength of mind. This mental strength keeps him energetic all the time. It is clear from the following lines:

“ I cannot rest from travel; I will drink\  
Life to this lees; All times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly....”

If we try to study *Vibhava* Ulysses himself is the *alamban vibhava* who causes *Vira Rasanipatti* It is his heroism which builds up the poem. His heroic qualities are ostensible throughout the poem. The last words of the poem confirm him as a hero;

“To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

*Alamban Vibhava* are the people of Ithaca whose barbarous nature makes Ulysses make Ulysses leave the place and prove his energy and heroism. The mention of the port, the sail, the dark seas, and the mariners who will accompany Ulysses on his new voyage – all [ of these are the stimulants of *Vira Rasa* i.e, *Uddipan Vibhava*. Regarding *Anubhava* it can be said that this is a poem which meant to be read. So, the representational aspects like gestures or costumes can't be found. Words are one of the way of histrionic representation. In this poem, there are lines which show or indicate obvious energy and heroism.

“Little remains; but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more.  
A bringer of new things; .....  
And that gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thoughts.” (26-30, Ulysses’)

The *Vyabharibhava* that contribute to *Rasa* emergence in this poem are joy, pride (positive sense), understanding, contentment, judgement, and situation. Ulysses is agitated to see the condition of people of Ithaca. His soul can't rest in peace in such a place and he decides to carry on his journey with joy. He is proud of himself for always having grappled with every difficulty and succeeded in his every act of adventure. He is contented with his past life and curious for an equally satisfying future. He wants to know more and more about life and discover newer and deeper meanings of life. We can't apply Temperamental States as it's a poem. But rest of the states when combined with *sthayi-bhava*, lead the reader to *Vira Rasanipatti*.

### **Conclusion:**

The aim of any literary work or piece of art is to attain *Rasa* experience and to gain aesthetic pleasure. At the end, it is well justified that Ulysses has *Vira Rasa* as the predominant and prevailing sentiment. It emerges out of a proper combination of all States with Dominant State of Energy. As it is the aim of any literary work, this poem also gives aesthetic pleasure to the *Sahridayi*.

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