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Subject: Indian Knowledge System (IKS)

Course Name: Introduction to Indian Poetics

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B. A. II Semester – III -Indian Knowledge System (IKS)
Course Name: -Introduction to Indian Poetics
Syllabus

Module No.	Title of the Module	Subtitles of the Module
I	**Introduction to the Rasa Theory**	Introduction to the Rasa Theory
II	**Selections from the Ramayana and the Mahabharat**	A. Rukmini Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Shringara) B. Shabari (The Ramayana—Karuna) C. Draupadi Vastraharan (The Mahabharat--Bibhatsa) D. Lanka Dahan (The Ramayana—Adbhuta) E. Draupadi Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Veera) F. Seeta Apaharan (The Ramayana—Bhayanaka) G. Krishna-Sudama (The Mahabharat—Shanta) H. Shishupal Vadha (The Mahabharat—Raudra) I. Krishna's Childhood at Vrindavan (The Mahabharata – Hasaya)

Nature of Question Paper (40 Marks)

Q. 1 Multiple choice questions (To be set on Module I and II) [10]

Q.2 Long answer question (Module I) 1/2 [10]

Q.3 Long answer question (Module II) 1/2 [10]

Q. 4. Write short notes (Module I and II) 2/4 [10]

Theory Exam: 40 Marks **Internal Evaluation: 10 Marks**

Module I - Introduction to the Rasa Theory

The Rasa Theory is a cornerstone of Indian aesthetics. It is a sophisticated framework for understanding the emotional and aesthetic experiences evoked by art, particularly in drama, dance, music, poetry and other performative and literary forms. It was originated in ancient India. It was first systematically articulated by Bharata Muni in his seminal work *Natya Shastra* (circa 200 BCE–200 CE), and later elaborated by philosophers like Abhinavagupta (c. 950–1020 CE). The theory explores how art creates a profound emotional resonance or R*asa* (literally 'juice,' 'essence,' or 'tast') in the audience, transforming ordinary emotions into a transcendent aesthetic experience. Below is a detailed introduction to the Rasa Theory, covering its origins, components, types of Rasas and its significance in Indian arts.

1. Origins and Context of Rasa Theory

The Rasa Theory finds its roots in the *Natya Shastra*, an ancient Sanskrit treatise on the performing arts attributed to Bharata Muni. This text, often considered the 'fifth Veda' is a comprehensive guide to drama, dance, music and theater production, encompassing everything from stagecraft to the psychology of aesthetics. The Rasa Theory is primarily discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 of the *Natya Shastra*, where Bharata outlines how emotions are evoked and experienced in performance.

The term *rasa* in Vedic literature originally meant 'juice,' 'extract,' or 'taste' (e.g., the sap of a plant or the flavor of food). In the aesthetic context, it evolved to signify the emotional 'essenc' or 'flavor' that an audience savors when experiencing art. The theory was further developed by later scholars, notably Abhinavagupta, a Kashmiri Shaivite philosopher, whose commentary *Abhinavabharati* on the *Natya Shastra* provides a philosophical and spiritual depth to the concept, linking it to consciousness and transcendence.

The Rasa Theory is unique in its focus on the audience's emotional experience rather than the artist's intention alone. It posits that art's primary purpose is to evoke *rasa* in the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator), a person with a refined heart capable of empathizing with the emotions conveyed. Unlike Western aesthetics, which often emphasize intellectual analysis or beauty, Indian aesthetics prioritize the emotional and spiritual impact of art, aiming to transport the audience to a state of bliss and self-reflection.

2. Concept of Rasa

At its core, the Rasa Theory suggests that art is a medium for evoking specific emotional states or *rasas*, in the audience. These emotions are not mere replications of real-life feelings but are aesthetically transformed, creating a universalized experience that transcends personal context. Bharata describes *rasa* as a synthetic phenomenon, a 'relish' of human emotions that is distinct from everyday feelings. According to Wallace Dace, rasa is 'the original emotion transfigured by aesthetic delight,' experienced as a heightened state of consciousness.

The *Natya Shastra* emphasizes that the primary goal of art is not mere entertainment but to transport the audience into a parallel reality of wonder and bliss, enabling them to reflect on spiritual and moral questions. This transformative experience is achieved through the interplay of various emotional and performative elements, collectively producing *rasa*.

The famous *Rasa Sutra* in the *Natya Shastra* compresses this process: *Vibhavanubhava-vyabhicari-samyogad rasa nishpattih.* ("Rasa is produced from the combination of Determinants [vibhava], Consequents [anubhava], and Transitory States [vyabhicaribhava].") This sutra outlines the mechanism by which *rasa* is created, involving a dynamic interplay of emotional triggers, expressions and fleeting states, all rooted in the performer's ability to convey *bhava* (emotion or mental state).

3. Important Components of Rasa Theory

The Rasa Theory is built on several interconnected elements that work together to evoke the aesthetic experience. These are:

a. **Bhava (Emotional State) -** *Bhava* refers to the emotions or mental states that form the foundation of *rasa*. Bharata categorizes *bhavas* into three types:

Sthayi Bhava: Permanent or dominant emotions, which are innate and enduring in human nature. These are the core emotions that give rise to the corresponding *rasas*.

Vyabhichari Bhava: Transitory or fleeting emotions that accompany the dominant emotion, adding depth and complexity (e.g., anxiety, joy, or confusion).

Sattvika Bhava: Involuntary physical expressions of emotion, such as trembling, sweating, or blushing, that arise naturally from intense emotional states.

Bhavas are the internal states of the performer or character, which are externalized through performance to evoke *rasa* in the audience.

b. **Vibhava (Determinants) -** *Vibhavas* are the causes or stimuli that trigger the *sthayi bhava*. They are divided into:

Alambana Vibhava: The primary cause, such as the characters or objects involved (e.g., a lover in a romantic scene).

Uddipana Vibhava: The environmental or contextual factors that enhance the emotion (e.g., a moonlit night for a romantic mood).

For example, in a scene depicting love, the presence of a beloved (alambana) and a romantic setting like a garden (uddipana) evoke the *sthayi bhava* of love (*rati*).

c. **Anubhava (Consequents) -** *Anubhavas* are the visible manifestations of the *bhava*, expressed through the performer's actions, gestures, facial expressions, or vocal modulations. These are the physical or behavioral signs that convey the emotion to the audience, such as smiling, weeping, or trembling. For instance, in *Karuna Rasa* (compassion), an actor might shed tears or display a dejected posture.

d. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions) -** These are temporary emotions that accompany the dominant *sthayi bhava*, adding nuance and dynamism to the performance. For example, in a love scene (*Shringara Rasa*), transitory emotions like joy, anxiety, or jealousy may arise, enriching the emotional texture. The *Natya Shastra* lists 33 *vyabhichari bhavas*, such as excitement, fear, or shame.

e. **Sahrdaya (Sensitive Spectator) -** The *sahrdaya* is the ideal audience member, described as one who has a "heart" attuned to the emotions of the performance. This spectator empathizes with the artist and is capable of relishing the *rasa* due to their aesthetic sensitivity and prior exposure to art. Abhinavagupta emphasizes that the *sahrdaya*'s receptivity is crucial for the full realization of *rasa*.

4. The Nine Rasas (Navarasa)

Bharata Muni originally outlined eight *rasas* in the *Natya Shastra*, each corresponding to a specific *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion). A ninth *rasa*, *Shanta* (peace), was later added by

Abhinavagupta and other scholars. Each *rasa* is associated with a presiding deity, a specific color, and a unique emotional flavor. Below is a detailed list of the nine *rasas* (*Navarasa*):

1. **Shringara (Love, Beauty)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Rati (love or attraction)

   Description: Evokes feelings of romance, desire, and beauty, often portrayed in romantic or devotional contexts. It is considered the 'mother of all rasas' due to its emotional richness.

   Color: Green or dark blue

   Deity: Vishnu

   Example: A dance depicting the love between Radha and Krishna in Bharatanatyam.

2. **Hasya (Humor, Laughter)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Hasa (joy or amusement)

   Description: Evokes laughter and light-heartedness, often arising from *Shringara* through comic situations or characters.

   Color: White

   Deity: Pramatha (Shiva)

   Example: A comedic scene in a drama with humorous gestures or dialogue.

3. **Karuna (Compassion, Sorrow)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Shoka (grief)

   Description: Evokes empathy, sadness, or pity, often triggered by loss or suffering.

   Color: Grey

   Deity: Yama

   Example: A scene of mourning in a play, with tears and dejected expressions.

4. **Raudra (Anger, Fury)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Krodha (anger)

   Description: Conveys rage, violence, or intense emotion, often associated with conflict or injustice.

   Color: Red

   Deity: Rudra

Example: A depiction of a warrior's fury in a Kathakali performance.

5. **Veera (Heroism, Courage)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Utsaha (enthusiasm or courage)

   Description: Evokes bravery, determination, and strength, often seen in heroic or triumphant moments.

   Color: Yellow or saffron

   Deity: Indra

   Example: A dance portraying a warrior's valor in battle.

6. **Bhayanaka (Fear, Terror)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Bhaya (fear)

   Description: Creates suspense, dread, or panic, often in response to danger.

   Color: Black

   Deity: Kala (God of Time)

   Example: A scene of impending doom in a theatrical performance.

7. **Bibhatsa (Disgust, Revulsion)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Jugupsa (disgust)

   Description: Evokes repulsion or horror, often through depictions of impurity or grotesque events.

   Color: Blue

   Deity: Mahakala

   Example: A performance showing revulsion at a gruesome act.

8. **Adbhuta (Wonder, Amazement)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Vismaya (surprise or wonder)

   Description: Evokes awe, curiosity, or marvel, often inspired by extraordinary or divine events.

   Color: Gold or yellow

   Deity: Gandharva

   Example: A dance depicting the divine vision of a deity.

9. **Shanta (Peace, Tranquility)**:

   Sthayi Bhava: Shama (calmness or serenity)

Description*:* Evokes peace, spiritual bliss, and self-realization, often associated with detachment and introspection. Added by Abhinavagupta, it is considered the ultimate *rasa*.

Color*:* White

Deity: Narayana

Example*:* A meditative scene in a performance symbolizing inner peace.

These *rasas* are not merely emotions but aesthetic experiences that elevate the audience beyond mundane feelings, offering a taste of the divine or universal consciousness.

5. Mechanism of Rasa Creation

The creation of *rasa* is a collaborative process involving the artist, the performance, and the audience. Bharata's *Rasa Sutra* explains that *rasa* emerges from the combination of *vibhava* (causes), *anubhava* (expressions), and *vyabhichari bhava* (transitory emotions), centered around a *sthayi bhava*. For example:

> In a performance depicting *Shringara Rasa*, a dancer portrays a lover (*alambana vibhava*) in a moonlit garden (*uddipana vibhava*). The dancer's gestures, such as sidelong glances or gentle smiles (*anubhava*), convey love, while fleeting emotions like longing or joy (*vyabhichari bhava*) enhance the mood. The *sahrdaya* audience, attuned to these cues, experiences the *rasa* of love, transcending their personal emotions to connect with the universal sentiment.

Abhinavagupta emphasized that *rasa* is not just the emotion itself but a relishable state (*aasvaadya*), akin to tasting a flavorful dish. The audience does not feel the character's personal emotions but savors a generalized, aesthetic version of them, free from personal bias or pain. This process is often described as a spiritual or mystical experience, aligning with Indian philosophical ideas of consciousness and unity.

6. Significance in Indian Arts

The Rasa Theory is the backbone of Indian classical arts, including dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, and Kathakali, as well as music, theater, and literature. It influences how artists craft performances to evoke specific emotions and how audiences interpret them.

In Dance: Dancers use *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) involving facial expressions, gestures (*mudras*), and body movements to convey *rasas*. For example, in Bharatanatyam, *Shringara Rasa* is expressed through delicate movements and expressive eyes, while *Raudra Rasa* uses sharp, intense gestures.

In Music: Indian classical music associates specific *ragas* (melodic frameworks) with particular *rasas*. For instance, Raga Yaman evokes *Shringara* (love), while Raga Bhairavi evokes *Karuna* (compassion). The musician aims to create an emotional atmosphere that resonates with the listener.

In Literature: Indian poetics, as developed by scholars like Anandavardhana and Bhartrhari, integrate *rasa* with *dhvani* (suggested meaning) to emphasize the emotional impact of words, rhythm, and imagery. The *Bhagavata Purana*, for example, uses *rasa* to depict Krishna's divine love (*bhakti*), evoking spiritual devotion in readers.

In Theater: Classical Indian theater, such as Kutiyattam, relies on *rasa* to create an immersive emotional experience, with actors trained to evoke specific *rasas* through precise techniques.

The theory also extends to visual arts like painting and sculpture, where forms, colors, and compositions are designed to evoke *rasas*. For instance, temple sculptures often aim to inspire *Adbhuta* (wonder) or *Shanta* (peace).

7. Philosophical and Spiritual Dimensions

Abhinavagupta's commentary elevates the Rasa Theory beyond aesthetics, linking it to Kashmiri Shaivism and the philosophy of consciousness. He argued that *rasa* is a state of pure awareness (*camatkara*), where the audience transcends dualities of self and other, experiencing a blissful unity with the art. This aligns with the Indian spiritual goal of realizing the self (*atman*) and connecting with the divine.

The *sahrdaya*'s ability to experience *rasa* depends on their aesthetic sensitivity (*sahrdayata*), cultivated through exposure to art and emotional openness. Abhinavagupta contrasts the *sahrdaya* with the *ahrdaya* (heartless or insensitive), who lack the capacity to relish *rasa*. He also connects *rasa* to *bhakti* (devotion), suggesting that aesthetic enjoyment mirrors spiritual ecstasy, particularly in *Shanta Rasa*.

8. Contemporary Relevance

While rooted in ancient traditions, the Rasa Theory remains relevant in modern contexts, influencing contemporary Indian cinema, theater, and literature. Filmmakers like Satyajit Ray or performers in Bollywood often draw on *rasa* principles to evoke emotions like *Karuna* or *Shringara*. The theory's emphasis on universal emotions makes it applicable to global art forms, offering a framework for understanding how narratives and performances resonate across cultures. The theory also challenges Western aesthetic paradigms, which often prioritize form or intellectual analysis, by focusing on emotional and sensory engagement. Scholars have explored its intercultural potential, noting parallels with modern theories of emotional catharsis or audience reception.

9. Conclusion

The Rasa Theory was articulated by Bharata Muni. It was enriched by Abhinavagupta. It is a profound contribution to global aesthetics, offering a nuanced understanding of how art evokes and transforms emotions. By integrating *bhavas*, *vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and the audience's sensitivity. It creates a dynamic framework for aesthetic experience that is both universal and deeply personal. Its influence permeates Indian classical arts and continues to inspire contemporary creativity, underscoring the timeless power of art to connect, uplift and transcend.

Important Questions

Broad Questions

1. Explain the concept of Rasa Theory as articulated in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*.
2. Discuss the nine rasas (*Navarasa*) in the Rasa Theory.

3. Analyze the role of *vibhava*, *anubhava*, *vyabhichari bhava*, and *sattvika bhava* in the evocation of rasa.
4. Evaluate the significance of Shanta Rasa in the Rasa Theory.
5. Explore how the Rasa Theory influences Indian performing arts.

Short Notes

1. What is the *Rasa Sutra* in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*?
2. Who is the *sahrdaya* in the context of Rasa Theory?
3. Name the *sthayi bhava* and presiding deity of Veera Rasa.
4. What is the symbolic color associated with Bhayanaka Rasa, and what does it signify?
5. How does Abhinavagupta describe the ultimate goal of experiencing rasa?

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Who is the primary author associated with the development of the Rasa Theory in Indian aesthetics?
   a) Kalidasa **b) Bharata Muni** c) Abhinavagupta d) Anandavardhana
2. What does the term "Rasa" literally mean in the context of Indian aesthetics?
   a) Emotion **b) Juice or essence** c) Beauty d) Performance
3. How many primary rasas are recognized in the Rasa Theory, including the later addition by Abhinavagupta?
   a) Seven b) Eight **c) Nine** d) Ten
4. Which of the following is the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) associated with Shringara Rasa?
   a) Hasa **b) Rati** c) Shoka d) Krodha
5. What is the presiding deity of Karuna Rasa?
   a) Vishnu b) Rudra **c) Yama** d) Indra
6. Which component of Rasa Theory refers to the visible expressions or physical manifestations of emotions in a performance?
   a) Vibhava **b) Anubhava** c) Vyabhichari Bhava d) Sthayi Bhava
7. What is the role of the ***sahrdaya*** in the Rasa Theory?
   a) The performer who enacts the emotions
   b) **The sensitive spectator who relishes the rasa**

c) The composer of the artistic work

d) The critic who analyzes the performance

8. Which rasa is considered the "mother of all rasas" due to its emotional richness and versatility?

   a) Shringara b) Hasya c) Shanta d) Veera

9. Which of the following is an example of *uddipana vibhava* in the context of Raudra Rasa?

   a) A warrior's heroic speech **b) A battlefield with clashing swords**

   c) A character's trembling hands d) A demon's terrifying appearance

10. What is the symbolic color associated with Adbhuta Rasa?

    a) Red b) White **c) Gold or yellow** d) Black

11. Which transitory emotion (*vyabhichari bhava*) is most likely to accompany Bhayanaka Rasa?

    a) Pride **b) Anxiety** c) Joy d) Contentment

12. Which rasa was added to the original eight by Abhinavagupta to emphasize spiritual tranquility?

    a) Hasya **b) Shanta** c) Bibhatsa d) Veera

13. What is the *sthayi bhava* of Hasya Rasa?

    a) Vismaya **b) Hasa** c) Utsaha d) Jugupsa

14. In the *Rasa Sutra* of the *Natya Shastra*, rasa is said to arise from the combination of which elements?

    a) Vibhava, Anubhava, and Vyabhichari Bhava

    b) Sthayi Bhava, Sattvika Bhava, and Anubhava

    c) Alambana, Uddipana, and Sahrdaya

    d) Bhava, Rasa, and Abhinaya

15. According to Abhinavagupta, what is the ultimate philosophical significance of experiencing rasa?

    a) Entertainment and pleasure b) Moral instruction

    c) Transcendence and spiritual bliss d) Social critique

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Module II- Selections from the Ramayana and the Mahabharat

A. Rukmini Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Shringara)
B. Shabari (The Ramayana—Karuna)
C. Draupadi Vastraharan (The Mahabharat--Bibhatsa)
D. Lanka Dahan (The Ramayana—Adbhuta)
E. Draupadi Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Veera)
F. Seeta Apaharan (The Ramayana—Bhayanaka)
G. Krishna-Sudama (The Mahabharat—Shanta)
H. Shishupal Vadha (The Mahabharat—Raudra)
I. Krishna's Childhood at Vrindavan (The Mahabharata – Hasaya)

A. Rukmini Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Shringara)

Shringara Rasa

Shringara is one of the nine primary rasas (aesthetic flavors or emotional essences) in Indian classical aesthetics, as outlined in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*. It is often translated as erotic love, romantic love, attraction, or beauty, representing the emotional experience of amorous delight, intimacy, and aesthetic pleasure derived from the union or longing between lovers. Shringara is considered the "king" or "mother" of all rasas because it encompasses a wide spectrum of human emotions and serves as the foundation for many artistic expressions in Indian literature, dance, music, theater, and sculpture. Its essence lies in evoking a sense of refined beauty and emotional fulfillment, transforming ordinary desire into a transcendent aesthetic experience.

In the framework of Rasa Theory, Shringara arises from the *sthayi bhava* (permanent emotion) of *rati* (love or attachment), which is the dominant emotional state. This rasa is not limited to physical attraction but extends to spiritual and devotional contexts, where the romantic bond between lovers metaphorically represents the devotee's longing for the divine (e.g., the Nara-Narayana relationship, symbolizing the human soul's union with God). The presiding deity of Shringara is Vishnu, reflecting its association with preservation, harmony, and divine love. Its symbolic color is typically green or dark blue, evoking freshness, vitality, and the allure of nature in spring.

The components that contribute to the evocation of Shringara, as per the *Natya Shastra*, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes or stimuli that trigger the emotion. These are divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as the beloved or hero/heroine) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like a romantic setting, moonlight, flowers, or music). For instance, the physical beauty of the lovers or a serene garden can ignite *rati*.

Anubhava (Consequents): The visible expressions or manifestations of the emotion, such as sidelong glances, smiles, embraces, blushing, or graceful movements. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive acting) involving facial expressions, gestures (*mudras*), and body language.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting states that accompany and enrich the dominant *rati*, such as joy (*harsha*), anxiety (*chinta*), jealousy (*irshya*), or shyness (*lajja*). These add depth, making the rasa more dynamic and relatable.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like perspiration, trembling, or changes in voice, which arise naturally from intense emotion.

Shringara is prominently featured in Indian arts. In dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or Mohiniyattam, it is expressed through subtle and refined movements, often depicting romantic episodes from epics. In literature and poetry, it appears in works like Kalidasa's *Meghaduta* or Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, where separation and reunion amplify the rasa. Importantly, Shringara has strong ties to *bhakti* (devotion), particularly in Vaishnava traditions, where it manifests as *madhurya rasa*—the sweet, intimate love between the devotee and God, as seen in stories of Radha-Krishna. This devotional aspect elevates Shringara from mere sensuality to spiritual bliss, aligning with Abhinavagupta's interpretation of rasa as a state of pure consciousness (*camatkara*).

Shringara Rasa - Rukmini Swayamvara from the Mahabharata

The episode of Rukmini's swayamvara (self-choice ceremony) and her subsequent "abduction" by Krishna, as narrated in the *Mahabharata* (particularly in the *Harivamsa* appendix and referenced in the *Udyoga Parva*), is a quintessential example of Shringara rasa in epic

literature. While the *Mahabharata* briefly outlines the event, fuller details appear in associated texts like the *Bhagavata Purana*, but the core narrative remains rooted in the epic. This story exemplifies how Shringara transcends physical romance to embody devotional love (*bhakti*), with Krishna as the divine hero and Rukmini as the devoted heroine. The rasa is evoked through the interplay of attraction, longing, beauty, and emotional intensity, transforming a dramatic abduction into a romantic and spiritual union.

Summary of the Episode

Rukmini, the beautiful princess of Vidarbha and daughter of King Bhishmaka, hears tales of Krishna's transcendental qualities—His valor, charm, and divine opulence—from visiting sages and falls deeply in love with Him. Despite her desire, her brother Rukmi arranges her marriage to Shishupala, Krishna's rival and an ally of Jarasandha. Distraught, Rukmini sends a confidential message to Krishna via a Brahmin emissary, expressing her unwavering devotion and pleading for Him to rescue her. On the day of the swayamvara, as Rukmini visits the temple of Goddess Durga (or Ambika) to pray, Krishna arrives in His chariot and swiftly abducts her amid the assembled kings. A fierce battle ensues, but Krishna defeats the opponents, spares Rukmi at Rukmini's plea, and marries her in Dwaraka with great pomp, symbolizing the union of the Supreme Lord with the goddess of fortune (Lakshmi, of whom Rukmini is an incarnation).

This "abduction" (known as *Rukmini Haran*) is consensual and romantic, initiated by Rukmini's own request, aligning with ancient customs where a Kshatriya could claim a bride through valor (*rakshasa vivaha*). It highlights themes of love triumphing over obstacles, evoking Shringara through aesthetic and emotional layers.

Evocation of Shringara in the Narrative

The episode masterfully evokes Shringara rasa by centering on *rati* as the *sthayi bhava*, with Krishna and Rukmini as the *alambana vibhava* (primary objects of love). Krishna's divine beauty and heroism—described as "infallible and most beautiful"—and Rukmini's youthful allure serve as key stimuli. Her physical description amplifies the rasa: "She appeared to be just a youth not more than thirteen or fourteen years old. Her body was well constructed, the middle portion being thin. The beauty of her high cheeks and pink lips was enhanced by her scattered hair and different kinds of earrings... her eyes moved restlessly, and when she smiled very innocently, her teeth appeared just like lotus flowers." Such vivid imagery of beauty (*saundarya*) and adornment

(*shringara* literally means "decoration") creates *uddipana vibhava*, enhanced by romantic settings like the temple adorned with flowers and the chariot ride symbolizing elopement.

Anubhava manifestations are evident in Rukmini's actions: her heartfelt letter declares, "My dear Krishna, O infallible and most beautiful one, I have heard of Your transcendental qualities. I may be shameless in expressing myself so directly, but You have captivated me and taken my heart... I dedicate my life and soul unto Your lotus feet." This direct expression of love, combined with her innocent smiles, restless eyes, and grateful glances during the abduction, conveys the rasa through gestures of surrender and intimacy. Krishna's protective reassurances—"My dear Rukmini, don't worry. Please rest assured that the soldiers of the Yadu dynasty will kill all their opponents without delay"—add a layer of tender heroism, blending Shringara with subtle *veera rasa* (heroic).

Transitory emotions (*vyabhichari bhava*) enrich the experience: Rukmini's anxiety and fear during the battle (trembling as arrows rain down), her shyness in confessing love, and joy in reunion create emotional depth. Her plea to spare Rukmi—"Please do not kill my brother just before the auspicious time of our marriage. I am happy to get You as my husband right at the last moment before my marriage to Sisupala, but I do not want our marriage to cost my elder brother's life"—mixes compassion with devotion, highlighting the multifaceted nature of Shringara. Involuntary responses (*sattvika bhava*), like her trembling or perspiration from fear, underscore the intensity.

In a devotional context, this Shringara transcends sensuality, representing *bhakti* as romantic surrender to the divine. Rukmini's love mirrors the soul's yearning for God, with Krishna as the ultimate beloved. This aligns with Vaishnava aesthetics, where Shringara in Krishna's leelas (divine plays) leads to spiritual ecstasy. The episode's resolution in marriage symbolizes eternal union, evoking bliss in the audience (*sahrdaya*), who relish the rasa as a taste of divine love.

Critically, while the *Mahabharata* focuses more on heroic and dharmic aspects, this story infuses Shringara to humanize divine figures, contrasting with tragic rasas elsewhere in the epic (e.g., *karuna* in Karna's tale). In performances like Kathakali or Bharatanatyam, the episode is often depicted with expressive *abhinaya* to evoke Shringara, emphasizing Rukmini's longing and Krishna's charm. However, modern interpretations sometimes critique the "abduction" motif, viewing it through contemporary lenses, yet in classical terms, it exemplifies consensual romance and aesthetic delight.

In conclusion, the Rukmini Swayamvara episode illustrates Shringara as a rasa of profound beauty and love, blending erotic, heroic, and devotional elements to create an enduring aesthetic impact in Indian tradition.

B. Shabari (The Ramayana—Karuna)

Karuna Rasa

Karuna Rasa meaning compassion, pathos, or sorrow, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) in the Indian aesthetic tradition as outlined in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*. It evokes feelings of pity, empathy, and melancholy in the audience, arising from the perception of suffering, loss, or tragedy. Karuna is considered a deeply moving rasa, capable of stirring the heart of the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator) and fostering a sense of universal compassion, often leading to introspection or spiritual awakening. Unlike everyday sorrow, Karuna in art transforms personal grief into a universal, aesthetically relishable experience, free from personal attachment, aligning with the aesthetic goal of transcendence.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Karuna Rasa is rooted in the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *shoka* (grief or sorrow). The rasa is evoked through a combination of:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of sorrow, divided into *alambana vibhava* (the primary object, such as a suffering character) and *uddipana vibhava* (contextual factors, like a desolate setting or tragic events).

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of grief, such as weeping, trembling, sighing, or a dejected posture, conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive acting) in performance arts.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *shoka*, such as despair (*vishada*), anxiety (*chinta*), or fatigue (*glani*), which add emotional complexity.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical manifestations like tears, trembling, or changes in voice, reflecting the intensity of the emotion.

The presiding deity of Karuna is Yama (the god of death), and its associated color is grey, symbolizing the somber mood of loss or compassion. Karuna often arises in response to themes of separation, death, or the suffering of others, and its aesthetic power lies in its ability to evoke

empathy, urging the audience to transcend personal sorrow and connect with universal human experiences. In Indian arts, Karuna is frequently depicted in literature, dance (e.g., Bharatanatyam, Kathakali), and music, where *ragas* like *Desh* or *Bhairavi* may evoke its melancholic tone. Philosophically, Karuna aligns with the Buddhist and Hindu concept of *karuna* (compassion), and in devotional contexts, it can lead to *bhakti* (devotion) by evoking humility and surrender to the divine.

Karuna Rasa - Shabari in the Ramayana

The story of Shabari, a minor but profoundly moving character in Valmiki's *Ramayana* (Aranya Kanda, Canto 74), is a classic example of Karuna Rasa, interwoven with elements of *bhakti* and *shanta rasa* (peace). Shabari's narrative, often depicted in Indian literature, dance, and devotional performances, exemplifies the evocation of compassion and pathos through her life of suffering, devotion, and ultimate fulfillment upon meeting Lord Rama. The episode highlights how Karuna transforms personal sorrow into an aesthetic and spiritual experience, resonating deeply with the audience.

Summary of Shabari's Episode

Shabari is an elderly, low-born woman from the Shabara (Bhil) tribe, living as an ascetic in the forest near Pampa Lake, in the hermitage of Sage Matanga. Abandoned by her family due to her spiritual aspirations, she dedicates her life to serving the sages and awaiting Lord Rama, whom her guru prophesied she would meet before her death. Living in poverty and isolation, Shabari faces societal rejection due to her caste and gender, yet her unwavering devotion sustains her. When Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana, arrives at her hermitage during his exile in search of Sita, Shabari is overwhelmed with joy. She offers him wild berries, tasting each one to ensure they are sweet, an act of pure, selfless love despite its breach of social norms. Rama, moved by her devotion, accepts her offering with affection, praising her purity of heart. He grants her spiritual liberation (*moksha*), and Shabari attains salvation, her life's purpose fulfilled.

This episode is rich with Karuna Rasa, as it centers on Shabari's lifelong suffering, humility, and emotional release, evoking pity and compassion in the audience while culminating in a moment of divine grace.

Evocation of Karuna Rasa in Shabari's Story

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Shabari herself is the primary object of Karuna, a figure of suffering due to her social marginalization, old age, and isolation. Her low caste, abandonment by family, and ascetic lifestyle amplify her vulnerability, making her a poignant figure of pathos. Rama, as the compassionate divine figure who alleviates her suffering, also serves as an *alambana vibhava*, contrasting her sorrow with his benevolence.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The desolate forest setting, Shabari's simple hut, and her meager offerings of wild berries enhance the mood of deprivation and humility. The contrast between her poverty and Rama's divine presence heightens the emotional stakes, evoking pity for her circumstances.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances of this episode (e.g., in Bharatanatyam or Ramlila), Shabari's grief and devotion are conveyed through expressive gestures: drooping shoulders, tearful eyes, or a trembling voice as she recounts her longing for Rama. Her act of tasting the berries before offering them is depicted with tender, hesitant movements, reflecting her fear of rejection and desire to please. Rama's gentle acceptance—shown through a warm smile or outstretched hand—counteracts her sorrow, shifting the rasa toward a bittersweet resolution. For instance, in a dance, Shabari's *abhinaya* might include wiping tears (*netrabhinaya*) or folding hands in reverence (*hastabhinaya*), evoking Karuna through visual storytelling.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: Shabari's narrative is layered with fleeting emotions that enrich Karuna. Her anxiety (*chinta*) about whether Rama will accept her offering, her despair (*vishada*) from years of loneliness, and her overwhelming joy (*harsha*) upon seeing Rama mingle with her sorrow. These emotions create a dynamic emotional arc, making her story relatable and poignant. For example, her hesitation while offering the tasted berries reflects shyness and fear of impropriety, adding depth to the rasa.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: Shabari's intense emotion manifests physically: her trembling hands as she offers the berries, tears streaming down her face, or a quivering voice as she speaks to Rama. These involuntary signs, emphasized in

performance arts, intensify the audience's empathy, drawing them into her emotional world.

5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The *sahrdaya* (sensitive audience) experiences Karuna by empathizing with Shabari's suffering—her low social status, isolation, and lifelong wait. The image of an elderly woman offering tasted berries, defying social norms out of pure love, evokes pity and admiration. Rama's acceptance transforms this pathos into a universal experience of compassion, as the audience reflects on themes of divine grace and human dignity. In devotional contexts, this can lead to *bhakti*, as spectators see Shabari's liberation as a testament to faith overcoming suffering.

Analysis in Context

Shabari's story in the *Ramayana* is a powerful vehicle for Karuna because it juxtaposes her external deprivation with her internal purity, creating a tension that resonates emotionally. Unlike other tragic figures in the *Ramayana* (e.g., Sita's abduction, evoking Karuna through separation), Shabari's pathos is rooted in her lifelong marginalization and quiet endurance. Her offering of tasted berries is a pivotal moment: it risks rejection due to ritual impurity, yet Rama's acceptance underscores his compassion, blending Karuna with *shanta rasa* (peace) as Shabari attains *moksha*. This resolution elevates the rasa from mere sorrow to a cathartic experience, aligning with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a transcendent state (*camatkara*).

In Indian performing arts, Shabari's episode is a staple for evoking Karuna. In Bharatanatyam, dancers use expressive techniques to portray her humility and devotion, with slow, deliberate movements and tearful expressions to convey *shoka*. In Ramlila performances, her dialogue with Rama is often delivered with a quivering voice, amplifying the pathos. Musically, *ragas* like *Bhairavi* or *Shivaranjani* may accompany such scenes, their melancholic tones enhancing the mood. In literature, poets like Tulsidas in the *Ramcharitmanas* elaborate on Shabari's devotion, emphasizing her emotional journey to evoke Karuna in readers.

Critically, Shabari's story also carries social significance, as her low caste challenges hierarchical norms, making her a symbol of universal dignity. The audience's pity for her suffering is tempered by admiration for her faith, creating a complex emotional response. While Karuna dominates, it intertwines with *bhakti* and *shanta*, as her liberation suggests spiritual triumph over worldly sorrow. Modern interpretations, such as in Indian cinema or feminist readings, may

highlight her agency, but in classical aesthetics, her story remains a timeless evocation of compassion.

Conclusion

The episode of Shabari in the *Ramayana* exemplifies Karuna Rasa through her life of suffering, humility, and ultimate redemption. By combining *vibhava* (her marginalized existence, the forest setting), *anubhava* (her tearful offering), and *vyabhichari bhava* (anxiety, joy), the narrative evokes deep empathy in the audience. Rama's compassionate acceptance transforms this pathos into a universal experience of divine grace, making Shabari's story a profound example of how Karuna transcends personal sorrow to inspire aesthetic and spiritual reflection. In Indian arts, her tale continues to move audiences, underscoring the enduring power of compassion in human experience.

C. Draupadi Vastraharan (The Mahabharat--Bibhatsa)

Bibhatsa Rasa

Bibhatsa Rasa often translated as disgust, revulsion, or odiousness, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic essences or emotional flavors) in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes a sense of aversion, horror, or repulsion in the audience, transforming real-life feelings of disgust into an aesthetic experience that is relishable yet detached. Unlike everyday revulsion, which might cause discomfort, Bibhatsa in art allows the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator) to engage with the emotion intellectually and emotionally, often leading to moral reflection or catharsis. It is particularly effective in highlighting themes of impurity, violence, or moral decay, serving as a critique of human baseness.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Bibhatsa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *jugupsa* (disgust or aversion), which is triggered by encounters with the grotesque, unclean, or ethically repugnant. The rasa is not merely about physical horror but encompasses psychological and moral disgust, such as contempt for injustice or depravity. Its presiding deity is Mahakala (a fierce form of Shiva, symbolizing destruction and time), reflecting its association with annihilation of the impure. The symbolic color is blue, evoking a sense of cold detachment or the void left by repulsion.

The important components for evoking Bibhatsa, as per Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The stimuli or causes of disgust. These are divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as repulsive characters or acts) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like foul environments, violence, or degradation). For example, sights of blood, mutilation, or moral violations can serve as triggers.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of revulsion, such as grimacing, turning away, vomiting gestures, or expressions of horror. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like contorted facial expressions (*mukhabhinaya*) or body language indicating aversion.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting states that accompany *jugupsa*, such as fear (*bhaya*), shame (*lajja*), anger (*krodha*), or confusion (*moha*), which add layers to the disgust, making it more intense and multifaceted.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like horripilation (hair standing on end), sweating, or paling of the face, which arise spontaneously from the intensity of the emotion.

Bibhatsa is less commonly the dominant rasa in Indian arts compared to Shringara or Veera, as it deals with negative emotions, but it plays a crucial role in epic narratives, theater, and dance to underscore ethical dilemmas or the consequences of adharma (unrighteousness). In Kathakali or Bharatanatyam, it is depicted through exaggerated expressions to evoke horror at demonic acts. Philosophically, as elaborated by Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabharati*, Bibhatsa serves to purify the audience's mind by confronting the ugly aspects of existence, leading toward spiritual detachment or *shanta rasa* (peace). It aligns with broader Indian thought, where disgust at worldly illusions fosters renunciation.

Bibhatsa Rasa - Draupadi Vastraharan from the Mahabharata

The episode of Draupadi Vastraharan (the disrobing of Draupadi), detailed in the Sabha Parva (Book 2) of the *Mahabharata*, is a pivotal and harrowing scene that powerfully evokes Bibhatsa Rasa. This narrative, attributed to Vyasa, illustrates the depths of human depravity during the infamous game of dice, where moral boundaries are shattered, eliciting disgust and revulsion

in the audience. While the episode also stirs other rasas like Karuna (compassion) for Draupadi's suffering and Raudra (anger) at the injustice, Bibhatsa dominates through the grotesque violation of dignity, making it a stark example of how rasa theory applies to epic storytelling to critique societal and ethical failures.

Summary of the Episode

In the royal assembly of Hastinapura, Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava, loses everything—including his kingdom, brothers, and himself—in a rigged dice game against Shakuni, manipulated by Duryodhana. Desperate, Yudhishthira stakes Draupadi, his wife and the shared queen of the Pandavas, and loses her too. Duryodhana orders Dushasana to drag Draupadi into the court by her hair, despite her being in her menstrual period (considered impure and a time of seclusion). In the assembly filled with kings and elders like Bhishma, Drona, and Vidura, Dushasana attempts to disrobe her publicly as a symbol of her enslavement. Draupadi, humiliated and desperate, appeals to the elders for justice, questioning dharma, but receives silence or weak justifications. She prays fervently to Krishna, who miraculously extends her sari infinitely, preventing her disrobing. The act fails, but the horror of the attempt exposes the moral rot in the Kuru court, foreshadowing the epic's central conflict.

This scene is not just a plot device but a profound aesthetic moment, evoking Bibhatsa through the repulsion at the Kauravas' actions, the violation of a woman's honor, and the complicity of the silent onlookers.

Evocation of Bibhatsa Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: The primary objects of disgust are Dushasana and Duryodhana, whose actions embody moral grotesqueness. Dushasana's brutal dragging of Draupadi by her hair—described as "seizing her by her long black locks"—and his attempt to strip her evoke physical and ethical revulsion. Draupadi's disheveled state during her menses adds to the impurity, amplifying jugupsa. The silent elders, like Bhishma, represent a secondary alambana, their inaction stirring disgust at hypocrisy and cowardice.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The opulent yet corrupted assembly hall, filled with kings who laugh or remain passive, enhances the horror. Descriptions of Draupadi's blood-

stained garments and the "foul" laughter of the Kauravas create a repulsive atmosphere, contrasting with the expected sanctity of a royal court.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In theatrical or dance adaptations (e.g., in Mahabharata-based Kathakali performances), Bibhatsa is expressed through Dushasana's savage gestures—pulling at the sari with contorted faces and aggressive movements—while Draupadi's horrified expressions, such as wide-eyed terror or shielding herself, convey aversion. The audience visualizes or witnesses the act of disrobing as grotesque, with performers using exaggerated *abhinaya* to show grimacing or recoiling. Draupadi's rhetorical questions—"Is there no one here who will protect a woman in distress?"—voice the moral outrage, manifesting as verbal expressions of disgust.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The episode layers jugupsa with fleeting emotions like fear (Draupadi's terror), shame (her public humiliation), and anger (her curses on the Kauravas). These intensify the rasa: for instance, the initial shock at her being dragged evolves into deeper revulsion as the disrobing begins. Vidura's futile protests add indignation, while the elders' internal conflict (e.g., Bhishma's dilemma) creates a sense of moral confusion, enriching the disgust at societal failure.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: Physical signs of revulsion are evident in the narrative: Draupadi's trembling body, tears, and disheveled hair; the audience (or characters like the Pandavas) might feel horripilation or nausea at the sight. In performances, actors portray sweating or paling to heighten the involuntary horror, making the rasa palpable.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Bibhatsa by recoiling at the violation of dharma—Draupadi, a symbol of purity and strength, reduced to an object of lust and power. This evokes not just pity but profound disgust at the Kauravas' adharma, the objectification of women, and the breakdown of societal norms. Krishna's intervention shifts the rasa toward Adbhuta (wonder) and Veera (heroism), but the core revulsion lingers, prompting reflection on justice and morality. In devotional readings, the episode disgusts one with worldly attachments, leading to bhakti.

Analysis in Context

The Draupadi Vastraharan is a masterstroke of Vyasa's narrative, using Bibhatsa to expose the ugliness of unchecked ambition and patriarchal oppression, themes central to the *Mahabharata*. It critiques the Kuru dynasty's moral decay, evoking revulsion to justify the impending war. In Indian arts, this scene is depicted in paintings (e.g., Raja Ravi Varma's works showing Draupadi's horror) or dances like Bharatanatyam, where the rasa is evoked through intense expressions to stir ethical awakening. Philosophically, it aligns with Abhinavagupta's idea of rasa as purification: the disgust at the grotesque act leads to detachment from material illusions. Critically, modern interpretations often amplify Bibhatsa through feminist lenses, viewing the episode as a commentary on gender violence, evoking contemporary revulsion at systemic injustice. While Karuna dominates in Draupadi's suffering, Bibhatsa underscores the perpetrators' baseness, making the scene a multifaceted rasa experience. In adaptations like Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata* or Indian TV serials, the horror is heightened with dramatic music and visuals, ensuring the audience savors the aesthetic repulsion.

Conclusion

Bibhatsa Rasa, through its focus on disgust and aversion, provides a lens to confront the darker aspects of human nature, as vividly illustrated in the Draupadi Vastraharan episode. By integrating vibhava (the violative acts), anubhava (expressions of horror), and vyabhichari bhava (accompanying emotions), the narrative evokes a profound sense of revulsion that critiques adharma and inspires moral introspection. This episode remains a timeless example of how rasa theory enriches epic storytelling, transforming tragedy into aesthetic depth in Indian tradition.

D. Lanka Dahan (The Ramayana—Adbhuta)

Adbhuta Rasa

Adbhuta Rasa meaning wonder, amazement, or marvel, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) in Bharata Muni’s *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes a sense of awe, astonishment, and curiosity in the audience, arising from encounters with the extraordinary, miraculous, or sublime. Adbhuta transforms everyday surprise into a relishable aesthetic experience, allowing the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator) to transcend mundane reality and connect with the divine or the incomprehensible. It is often associated with spectacles of grandeur,

supernatural events, or divine interventions, making it a key rasa in mythological and epic narratives.

According to the *Natya Shastra,* Adbhuta Rasa stems from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *vismaya* (wonder or astonishment), which is triggered by witnessing something beyond ordinary human experience. Its presiding deity is Gandharva (or Brahma in some interpretations), symbolizing creativity and the celestial, and its associated color is gold or yellow, evoking radiance and brilliance. Adbhuta is unique in its ability to suspend disbelief, immersing the audience in a state of marvel that can lead to spiritual reflection or joy.

The components for evoking Adbhuta, as per Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of wonder, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as a divine figure or miraculous event) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like celestial phenomena, grand settings, or supernatural occurrences). For example, a divine vision or an impossible feat can trigger *vismaya*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of astonishment, such as wide-open eyes, raised eyebrows, exclamations, or a frozen stance. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like dramatic gestures (*hastabhinaya*) or facial expressions (*mukhabhinaya*).

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *vismaya*, such as joy (*harsha*), fear (*bhaya*), curiosity (*kautuka*), or agitation (*vega*), which add depth and dynamism to the rasa.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like horripilation (goosebumps), trembling, tears of joy, or a quivering voice, reflecting the overwhelming nature of the experience.

Adbhuta is frequently depicted in Indian arts, especially in epic-based performances like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, or Ramlila, where divine or heroic feats are portrayed to evoke awe. In music, *ragas* like *Kalyani* or *Hamsadhvani* may enhance its radiant mood. Philosophically, as per Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*, Adbhuta elevates the audience toward a state of transcendence (*camatkara*), akin to spiritual ecstasy, by revealing the limitless possibilities of existence. It often intertwines with *bhakti* (devotion), as divine acts inspire both wonder and reverence.

Adbhuta Rasa - Lanka Dahan from the Ramayana

The episode of *Lanka Dahan* (the burning of Lanka), found in the *Sundara Kanda* (Canto 54–55) of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, is a spectacular moment that vividly evokes Adbhuta Rasa. This event centers on Hanuman, the devoted follower of Lord Rama, setting fire to Ravana's golden city of Lanka, an act of divine power and strategic brilliance that astonishes both characters within the narrative and the audience. The scene combines elements of heroism, divine intervention, and supernatural spectacle, making it a quintessential example of Adbhuta Rasa, while also touching on *veera* (heroic) and *raudra* (furious) rasas.

Summary of the Episode

In the *Sundara Kanda*, Hanuman, after locating Sita in Ravana's Ashoka grove and reassuring her of Rama's mission, is captured by Ravana's forces. To punish him for infiltrating Lanka and causing chaos, Ravana orders his tail to be set on fire, mocking Hanuman's monkey form. However, Hanuman, empowered by his devotion to Rama and his divine strength as the son of Vayu (the wind god), transforms this punishment into a display of power. Using his yogic abilities, he shrinks and escapes his bonds, then enlarges himself, leaping across Lanka with his burning tail, setting ablaze Ravana's palaces, towers, and gardens. The golden city, described as a marvel of opulence, is reduced to ashes, except for Sita's abode, which Hanuman protects. The demons panic, and the citizens of Lanka are struck with awe and terror at the sight of a monkey wreaking such destruction. Hanuman then extinguishes his tail in the ocean and returns to Rama, his mission a success.

This episode is a tour de force of divine spectacle, evoking Adbhuta through Hanuman's miraculous feats, the grandeur of Lanka's destruction, and the overwhelming sense of divine agency.

Evocation of Adbhuta Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Hanuman is the primary object of wonder, embodying superhuman strength, agilityoccan intelligence, and divine favor. His ability to transform a punishment into an act of destruction—leaping across a city with a

flaming tail—is inherently miraculous. Sita, witnessing the event, and the demons of Lanka serve as secondary *alambana*, their astonishment amplifying the rasa.

Uddipana Vibhava: The golden city of Lanka, with its towering palaces and celestial architecture, sets a grandiose stage, making its fiery destruction all the more awe-inspiring. The flames, the chaos, and the contrast between Hanuman's small form and the massive devastation enhance the sense of the extraordinary. Descriptions like "the city blazed like a sacrificial fire" evoke a cosmic spectacle.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances (e.g., Ramlila or Kathakali), Hanuman's actions are depicted with dynamic *abhinaya*: wide-eyed expressions, vigorous leaps, and gestures mimicking flames convey astonishment. The demons' reactions—running in panic, shouting in disbelief—are portrayed with open mouths and frantic movements, reflecting collective awe. Sita's serene gaze, trusting Hanuman's divine mission, adds a layer of calm wonder, contrasting the chaos. The audience visualizes Hanuman's fiery tail sweeping through Lanka, evoking gasps of marvel.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: joy (*harsha*) in Hanuman's triumph, fear (*bhaya*) among the demons, and curiosity (*kautuka*) about the outcome of his mission. The initial shock of Hanuman's escape from his bonds evolves into awe as he sets Lanka ablaze, creating a dynamic emotional arc. Sita's quiet wonder at Hanuman's devotion blends Adbhuta with *bhakti*, deepening the audience's experience.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: The intensity of the event elicits involuntary responses: goosebumps (*romancha*) from the audience at the sheer scale of destruction, trembling or widened eyes among the demons, and Hanuman's own exultant energy as he leaps unscathed. In dance or theater, these are portrayed through quivering movements or radiant expressions, intensifying the rasa.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Adbhuta by marveling at Hanuman's divine prowess and the surreal destruction of an impregnable city. The miraculous nature of his survival—unharmed by the fire—and the visual of a lone monkey devastating Ravana's fortress evoke a sense of the impossible made real. This wonder transcends mere spectacle, aligning with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a taste of divine

consciousness, as the audience connects Hanuman's feat to Rama's cosmic power. The devotional context elevates the rasa, inspiring awe at divine justice.

Analysis in Context

Lanka Dahan is a quintessential Adbhuta moment in the *Ramayana*, showcasing the rasa's ability to captivate through the extraordinary. Hanuman's transformation of a humiliating punishment into a triumphant act of destruction subverts expectations, creating a sense of marvel that resonates across Indian art forms. In Bharatanatyam or Kathakali, the scene is choreographed with vibrant movements—Hanuman's leaps, the swirling flames, and the collapsing city—using bright red and gold lighting to evoke the fiery spectacle. In Ramlila performances, fireworks or dramatic props enhance the visual awe, while *ragas* like *Yaman* amplify the radiant mood.

The episode also intertwines Adbhuta with *veera rasa* (heroism), as Hanuman's courage is central, and *raudra rasa* (fury), as the destruction reflects divine wrath against Ravana's adharma. Unlike the Karuna-heavy disrobing of Draupadi or the Shringara-laden Rukmini story, *Lanka Dahan* prioritizes spectacle, making Adbhuta dominant. Critically, the scene serves a moral purpose: the burning of Lanka foreshadows Ravana's downfall, evoking wonder at the inevitability of divine justice. Modern adaptations, such as animated films or TV serials like *Ramayan* (1987), emphasize the visual grandeur with special effects, reinforcing Adbhuta's appeal.

From a philosophical perspective, *Lanka Dahan* illustrates Abhinavagupta's idea of rasa as a bridge to transcendence. The audience's awe at Hanuman's feat reflects the limitless potential of devotion, aligning with *bhakti* and *shanta rasa* (peace) in its spiritual resolution. Feminist or postcolonial readings might critique the destruction as aggressive, but in classical aesthetics, it symbolizes the triumph of dharma, evoking wonder at cosmic order.

Conclusion

Adbhuta Rasa, through its focus on wonder and astonishment, finds a powerful expression in the *Lanka Dahan* episode of the *Ramayana*. Hanuman's miraculous burning of Lanka, facilitated by *vibhava* (his divine power, the golden city), *anubhava* (expressive gestures of awe), and *vyabhichari bhava* (joy, fear, curiosity), creates a spectacle that captivates the audience. This scene exemplifies the rasa's ability to elevate the extraordinary into an aesthetic and spiritual experience, resonating across Indian arts and inspiring reflection on divine agency and moral triumph.

E. Draupadi Swayamwara (The Mahabharat—Veera)

Veera Rasa

Veera Rasa meaning heroism, valor, or courage, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes feelings of bravery, determination, and triumph in the audience, stirring admiration for acts of heroism, strength, or noble resolve. Veera transforms everyday courage into an aesthetic experience, allowing the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator) to relish the grandeur of human (or divine) fortitude. It is often associated with epic battles, righteous defiance, or extraordinary feats, making it a central rasa in heroic narratives and performances.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Veera Rasa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *utsaha* (enthusiasm, energy, or courage), which is the inner drive that fuels heroic actions. Its presiding deity is Indra, the Vedic god of war and valor, and its symbolic color is yellow or saffron, evoking energy, brilliance, and determination. Veera is distinct from *raudra rasa* (anger), as it focuses on controlled, purposeful bravery rather than destructive fury, and it often inspires the audience toward moral or spiritual upliftment.

The components for evoking Veera, as outlined by Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of heroism, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as a heroic figure or opponent) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like a battlefield, challenge, or call to duty). For instance, a formidable foe or a noble cause can ignite *utsaha*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of heroism, such as bold gestures, confident speech, steady gazes, or powerful movements. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like expansive gestures (*hastabhinaya*), upright posture, or commanding voice.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *utsaha*, such as pride (*garva*), determination (*dhriti*), excitement (*vega*), or righteous anger (*krodha*), which add depth and intensity to the rasa.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like a flushed face, steady breathing, or an energized demeanor, reflecting the intensity of heroic resolve.

Veera Rasa is prominent in Indian performing arts like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and Ramlila, where heroic characters like warriors or gods are portrayed with dynamic movements and bold expressions. In music, *ragas* like *Bhairav* or *Megh* may evoke its powerful mood. Philosophically, as per Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*, Veera elevates the audience toward a state of inspiration and moral clarity, often aligning with *dharma* (righteousness) or *bhakti* (devotion) in divine contexts. It celebrates the triumph of good over evil, making it a staple in epic narratives like the *Mahabharata*.

Veera Rasa - Draupadi Swayamwara from the Mahabharata

The episode of Draupadi Swayamwara, found in the *Adi Parva* (Book 1, Chapters 184–190) of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, is a vivid illustration of Veera Rasa, centered on Arjuna's heroic feat in winning Draupadi's hand through an extraordinary display of archery prowess. This narrative showcases courage, skill, and determination, evoking awe and admiration in the audience while highlighting the Pandavas' rightful claim to honor. While the episode also incorporates *shringara rasa* (romance) due to Draupadi's beauty and the context of marriage, Veera dominates through Arjuna's heroic act and the Pandavas' defiance of adversity.

Summary of the Episode

After escaping the burning house of lac, the Pandavas live in disguise as Brahmins in Ekachakra. Hearing of the grand swayamvara (self-choice ceremony) of Draupadi, the beautiful princess of Panchala and daughter of King Drupada, they attend the event in the capital, Kampilya. Drupada, seeking an alliance with Arjuna (believed dead), devises a challenging task: suitors must string a massive bow and hit a revolving fish-shaped target by looking at its reflection in a pool of oil. Many renowned kings and warriors, including Duryodhana, Karna, and Shishupala, fail to even string the bow. Arjuna, disguised as a Brahmin, steps forward, effortlessly strings the bow, and strikes the target with five arrows, winning Draupadi's hand. This act provokes outrage among the assembled Kshatriyas, who attack the "Brahmin" for daring to compete. Arjuna and Bhima valiantly defend themselves, showcasing their martial prowess, while Krishna, present in the assembly, recognizes the Pandavas and ensures their safety. Draupadi accepts Arjuna as her husband, and later, through divine and familial consent, becomes the wife of all five Pandavas.

This episode is a masterclass in Veera Rasa, as Arjuna's unparalleled skill and courage, coupled with the Pandavas' defiance of social norms and opposition, evoke admiration for their heroic spirit.

Evocation of Veera Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Arjuna is the primary object of Veera, embodying *utsaha* through his unmatched archery skills and calm confidence. The formidable bow and the near-impossible target serve as secondary *alambana*, representing the challenge that tests his heroism. The rival kings, such as Karna and Duryodhana, whose failures highlight Arjuna's superiority, also contribute to the rasa.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The grand swayamvara arena, adorned with opulent decorations and filled with illustrious warriors, creates a high-stakes setting. The revolving fish target, the massive bow, and the expectant crowd amplify the challenge, evoking a sense of awe at the task's difficulty. The social tension—Brahmins competing in a Kshatriya contest—adds to the dramatic stakes.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances like Kathakali or Bharatanatyam adaptations of the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna's heroism is depicted through bold *abhinaya*: a steady gaze fixed on the target's reflection, precise hand movements mimicking the stringing of the bow, and dynamic postures as he shoots the arrows. His calm demeanor contrasts with the rival kings' frustration, portrayed through exaggerated failures (e.g., dropping the bow or stumbling). The Pandavas' defense against the attacking kings is shown with vigorous movements, such as Bhima's powerful gestures, evoking the rasa through visual strength. Draupadi's admiring glance at Arjuna subtly blends Veera with *shringara*, enhancing the emotional texture.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: pride (*garva*) in Arjuna's confidence, determination (*dhriti*) as he faces the challenge, and excitement (*vega*) during the combat with the rival kings. The initial hesitation of the Pandavas, disguised and unrecognized, adds a layer of tension, while their triumph evokes joy (*harsha*). The Kshatriyas' outrage (*krodha*) at a "Brahmin's" success intensifies the heroic conflict, making Arjuna's victory more admirable.

4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: The intensity of Arjuna's focus manifests physically: a steady hand, a flushed face, or controlled breathing as he aims. In the audience or onlookers (like Krishna), reactions like horripilation (*romancha*) or exclamations of awe reflect the involuntary thrill of witnessing his feat. In performance, dancers or actors emphasize these through subtle tremors or radiant expressions, heightening the rasa.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Veera by marveling at Arjuna's skill and courage, especially under the pressure of disguise and social opposition. His ability to outperform renowned warriors as an unrecognized Brahmin evokes admiration for his *utsaha* and challenges caste-based assumptions, aligning with dharma. Krishna's recognition of the Pandavas adds a divine endorsement, deepening the rasa's impact. In devotional contexts, the audience sees Arjuna's heroism as an extension of divine will, inspiring *bhakti*. The scene's resolution—Draupadi's acceptance and the Pandavas' triumph—culminates in a sense of heroic fulfillment.

Analysis in Context

The Draupadi Swayamwara is a pivotal moment in the *Mahabharata*, establishing Arjuna as the epitome of heroic excellence and setting the stage for the Pandavas' claim to dharma. Veera Rasa dominates through Arjuna's extraordinary skill and the Pandavas' fearless defense, contrasting with the failures of the Kauravas and their allies. The episode's blend of technical prowess (archery) and martial valor (combat) makes it a perfect vehicle for Veera, distinguishing it from the *bibhatsa-heavy* disrobing of Draupadi or the *shringara-laden* Rukmini Swayamvara. In Indian arts, the scene is a favorite in Bharatanatyam or Ramlila, where Arjuna's archery is choreographed with precision—slow, and deliberate movements for stringing the bow, followed by swift arrow shots— evoking awe. Musically, *ragas* like *Bhairav* may accompany the scene, their robust tones enhancing the heroic mood.

Philosophically, the episode aligns with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a transcendent experience. Arjuna's heroism inspires the audience to reflect on courage, righteousness, and destiny, while Krishna's presence hints at divine orchestration, blending Veera with *bhakti*. Modern interpretations, such as in TV serials like *B.R. Chopra's Mahabharat*, emphasize Arjuna's valor with dramatic visuals and music, amplifying the rasa for contemporary audiences. Feminist

readings might highlight Draupadi's agency in choosing Arjuna, but in classical aesthetics, the focus remains on Arjuna's heroic triumph as the catalyst for the rasa.

Critically, the episode also critiques societal norms: Arjuna's disguise as a Brahmin subverts Kshatriya exclusivity, evoking Veera through his defiance of convention. The failure of Karna, a skilled archer but socially marginalized, adds a layer of irony, blending Veera with subtle *karuna* (compassion) in some interpretations. The narrative thus serves as both a celebration of heroism and a commentary on justice, making it resonate across time.

Conclusion

Veera Rasa, through its focus on courage and triumph, finds a powerful expression in the Draupadi Swayamwara episode of the *Mahabharata*. Arjuna's extraordinary archery feat and the Pandavas' bold defense, facilitated by *vibhava* (the challenge, rival kings), *anubhava* (bold gestures), and *vyabhichari bhava* (pride, determination), evoke admiration and inspiration. This scene exemplifies how Veera elevates heroic acts into an aesthetic experience, resonating in Indian arts and inspiring reflection on dharma, courage, and divine favor. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to celebrate human potential while foreshadowing the epic's larger conflicts.

F. Seeta Apaharan (The Ramayana—Bhayanaka)

Bhayanaka Rasa

Bhayanaka Rasa (Sanskrit: □□□□□, bhayānaka), meaning fear, terror, or dread, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) delineated in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes a sense of fearfulness or apprehension in the audience, transforming real-world fear into an aesthetically relishable experience that captivates the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator). Bhayanaka is distinct from everyday fear as it is experienced vicariously through art, allowing the audience to engage with the emotion without personal danger, often leading to reflection on vulnerability, mortality, or divine protection. It is frequently associated with suspenseful or menacing situations, such as threats from demons, natural calamities, or impending doom.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Bhayanaka Rasa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *bhaya* (fear), triggered by stimuli that evoke terror or anxiety. Its presiding deity is Kala (the god of time, associated with death and destruction), and its symbolic color is black,

reflecting the dark, ominous mood of dread. Bhayanaka serves to heighten dramatic tension and can pave the way for other rasas, such as *karuna* (compassion) or *adbhuta* (wonder), when fear is resolved.

The components for evoking Bhayanaka, as outlined by Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of fear, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as a terrifying character or threat) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like a dark forest, eerie sounds, or dangerous situations). For example, a demon or a life-threatening event can trigger *bhaya*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of fear, such as trembling, wide-eyed panic, shrieking, or fleeing gestures. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like quivering movements (*hastabhinaya*), horrified facial expressions (*mukhabhinaya*), or a tense posture.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *bhaya*, such as anxiety (*chinta*), confusion (*moha*), agitation (*vega*), or despair (*vishada*), which intensify the sense of dread.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like sweating, trembling, goosebumps (*romancha*), or a faltering voice, reflecting the overwhelming nature of fear.

Bhayanaka Rasa is prominent in Indian performing arts like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and Ramlila, where terrifying characters (e.g., demons) or suspenseful moments are portrayed with exaggerated expressions and dynamic movements. In music, *ragas* like *Todi* or *Bhairavi* may evoke its eerie mood. Philosophically, as per Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*, Bhayanaka can lead to spiritual insight by confronting the audience with the impermanence of life, often culminating in *bhakti* (devotion) or *shanta rasa* (peace) when divine intervention resolves fear. In epics like the *Ramayana*, Bhayanaka underscores the threat of adharma (unrighteousness), amplifying the stakes of the narrative.

Bhayanaka Rasa - Seeta Apaharan from the Ramayana

The episode of *Seeta Apaharan* (the abduction of Sita), found in the *Aranya Kanda* (Cantos 49–54) of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, is a dramatic and suspenseful moment that powerfully evokes

Bhayanaka Rasa. This narrative centers on Ravana's deceitful abduction of Sita, Rama's wife, creating a palpable sense of fear and dread that grips both the characters and the audience. While the episode also evokes *karuna rasa* (compassion) for Sita's plight and *raudra rasa* (anger) at Ravana's villainy, Bhayanaka dominates through the terror of Sita's vulnerability and the menacing presence of Ravana, highlighting the threat of adharma in the epic.

Summary of the Episode

During their exile in the Dandaka forest, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana reside in a hermitage at Panchavati. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, enamored by tales of Sita's beauty, devises a plan to abduct her. He enlists his uncle Maricha, who transforms into a golden deer with mesmerizing beauty to lure Rama away. Sita, captivated by the deer, urges Rama to capture it. Despite Lakshmana's suspicions, Rama pursues the deer, leaving Sita under Lakshmana's protection. Maricha, mortally wounded by Rama, mimics Rama's voice, crying out for help. Hearing this, Sita, gripped by fear for Rama's safety, compels Lakshmana to leave her and assist him. Left alone, Sita is approached by Ravana, disguised as a gentle ascetic. When she refuses his advances, he reveals his true demonic form, seizes her, and abducts her in his aerial chariot (*Pushpaka Vimana*). Sita's cries for help are heard by Jatayu, the vulture king, who attempts to rescue her but is fatally wounded by Ravana. Sita's terror, Ravana's menace, and the forest's eerie atmosphere create a chilling scene of dread, setting the stage for Rama's quest to rescue her.

This episode is a master class in Bhayanaka Rasa, evoking fear through Sita's vulnerability, Ravana's deception, and the suspense of an impending tragedy.

Evocation of Bhayanaka Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Ravana is the primary object of fear, his demonic power and malevolent intent embodying terror. His transformation from a seemingly benign ascetic to a fearsome ten-headed demon amplifies *bhaya*. Sita, as the vulnerable heroine facing abduction, is a secondary *alambana*, her fear resonating with the audience. Jatayu's futile battle adds to the sense of dread, as his defeat underscores Ravana's invincibility.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The desolate Panchavati forest, with its dense foliage and eerie silence, creates a foreboding atmosphere. The golden deer's unnatural beauty,

Maricha's deceptive cry, and the aerial chariot's swift ascent enhance the suspense. Descriptions like "the forest grew dark as Ravana approached" or Sita's "heart trembling with fear" intensify the ominous mood.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances like Kathakali or Ramlila, Bhayanaka is vividly portrayed through *abhinaya*. Sita's fear is shown with wide-eyed panic, trembling hands, and cries of distress as she realizes Ravana's true identity. Her attempts to flee or cling to a tree are depicted with frantic gestures. Ravana's menacing demeanor—towering posture, sinister laughter, or aggressive movements—evokes terror, often exaggerated in Kathakali with grotesque makeup and dynamic leaps. Jatayu's heroic but doomed struggle is portrayed with flailing wings and pained expressions, heightening the sense of impending doom.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: Sita's anxiety (*chinta*) for Rama's safety, confusion (*moha*) at the ascetic's transformation, and despair (*vishada*) as she is lifted into the sky. The initial allure of the golden deer shifts to fear when Maricha's cry is heard, creating a suspenseful arc. Jatayu's courage (*dhriti*) blends with fear as he confronts Ravana, adding complexity. The audience's anticipation of tragedy—knowing Rama is too far to intervene—intensifies the dread.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: Sita's terror manifests physically: trembling limbs, sweating, or a faltering voice as she cries, "Rama! Lakshmana!" Jatayu's wounds and weakening cries evoke similar involuntary responses. In performance, actors emphasize goosebumps (*romancha*) or paling faces to convey the intensity of fear. The audience, too, may feel physical reactions like a racing pulse, drawn into the suspenseful narrative.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Bhayanaka by empathizing with Sita's vulnerability and recoiling at Ravana's malevolence. The suspense of her isolation, the deception of the golden deer, and the horror of her abduction create a visceral sense of dread. This fear is aesthetic, not personal, allowing the audience to savor the tension while reflecting on the fragility of righteousness in the face of evil. The devotional context—Sita's faith in Rama's eventual rescue—hints at *bhakti*, transforming fear into anticipation of divine intervention. The episode's tragic tone also evokes *karuna* for Sita, but Bhayanaka dominates through the immediate terror of the abduction.

Analysis in Context

Seeta Apaharan is a pivotal moment in the *Ramayana*, intensifying the narrative's conflict by showcasing Ravana's adharma and Sita's vulnerability. Bhayanaka Rasa dominates through the suspenseful buildup (the golden deer, Maricha's cry) and the climactic horror of the abduction, distinguishing it from the *adbhuta-heavy* Lanka Dahan or the *veera-laden* Draupadi Swayamwara. In Indian arts, the episode is a staple in Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, and Ramlila, where Ravana's demonic transformation is portrayed with grotesque makeup and booming vocals, while Sita's fear is conveyed through delicate, trembling movements. Musically, *ragas* like *Todi* or *Chandrakauns* enhance the eerie mood with their somber, suspenseful tones.

Philosophically, the episode aligns with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a path to transcendence. The audience's fear at Sita's plight prompts reflection on the impermanence of safety and the power of evil, often leading to *bhakti* as they anticipate Rama's heroic response. Modern adaptations, such as Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* (1987), amplify Bhayanaka with dramatic music and close-up shots of Sita's terrified face, ensuring contemporary resonance. Feminist readings may critique Sita's victimization, but in classical aesthetics, her fear underscores her purity and trust in dharma, making the rasa a vehicle for moral and spiritual insight.

Critically, the episode uses Bhayanaka to highlight the stakes of Rama's quest, portraying Ravana as a formidable threat. The failure of Jatayu, a symbol of loyalty, intensifies the dread, while Sita's cries foreshadow hope, blending Bhayanaka with *karuna* and *shanta*. The narrative thus serves as both a suspenseful plot point and an aesthetic exploration of fear's transformative power.

Conclusion

Bhayanaka Rasa, through its focus on fear and dread, finds a compelling expression in the *Seeta Apaharan* episode of the *Ramayana*. Sita's vulnerability, Ravana's menacing deception, and the suspenseful forest setting, facilitated by *vibhava* (Ravana, the forest), *anubhava* (terrified gestures), and *vyabhichari bhava* (anxiety, despair), evoke a gripping sense of terror. This scene exemplifies how Bhayanaka transforms fear into an aesthetic experience, resonating in Indian arts and inspiring reflection on vulnerability, divine protection, and the triumph of dharma. Its enduring power lies in its ability to captivate the audience with suspense while foreshadowing the epic's redemptive arc.

G. Krishna-Sudama (The Mahabharat—Shanta)

Shanta Rasa

Shanta Rasa meaning peace, tranquility, or serenity, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) in Indian aesthetics, as elaborated in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra* and further developed by philosophers like Abhinavagupta. Unlike the original eight rasas outlined by Bharata, Shanta was later included as the ninth rasa, particularly emphasized by Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabharati*, where it is considered the ultimate rasa, representing a state of inner calm and spiritual liberation. Shanta evokes a sense of detachment, equanimity, and spiritual fulfillment in the audience, transcending worldly desires and emotions to offer a taste of divine peace. It is often associated with contemplation, renunciation, and the realization of the self (*atman*) or unity with the divine.

According to the *Natya Shastra* and later commentaries, Shanta Rasa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *shama* (calmness or tranquility), which is rooted in detachment from material concerns and the pursuit of spiritual wisdom. Its presiding deity is Narayana (Vishnu), symbolizing divine harmony, and its symbolic color is white, reflecting purity and serenity. Shanta is unique in that it does not rely on intense emotional conflict but rather on a resolution of all emotions, leading to a state of blissful repose.

The components for evoking Shanta, as per aesthetic theory, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of tranquility, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as a wise sage, divine figure, or serene character) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like a peaceful setting, such as an ashram, or spiritual practices like meditation). For example, a divine encounter or a moment of self-realization can trigger *shama*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of peace, such as a calm demeanor, gentle smiles, closed or half-closed eyes, or meditative postures. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like slow, graceful movements (*hastabhinaya*) or serene facial expressions (*mukhabhinaya*).

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *shama*, such as contentment (*harsha*), introspection (*vitaraga*), or humility (*dainya*), which deepen the sense of tranquility.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Subtle physical signs like a relaxed body, soft breathing, or a faint glow of contentment, reflecting the inner peace experienced.

Shanta Rasa is prominent in Indian arts, particularly in devotional contexts, where it is evoked through scenes of spiritual surrender, divine grace, or ascetic renunciation. In dance forms like Bharatanatyam or Odissi, it is portrayed with minimalist movements and serene expressions, while in music, *ragas* like *Yaman* or *Shuddha Kalyan* may enhance its calm mood. Philosophically, Abhinavagupta views Shanta as the culmination of all rasas, as it aligns with the Indian spiritual goal of *moksha* (liberation), where the audience experiences a state of pure consciousness (*camatkara*) free from worldly attachments. In epics, Shanta often emerges in moments of divine communion or resolution, making it a powerful vehicle for *bhakti* (devotion).

Shanta Rasa - Krishna-Sudama Episode from the Mahabharata

The Krishna-Sudama episode, primarily detailed in the *Bhagavata Purana* (Canto 10, Chapters 80–81) but referenced in the broader *Mahabharata* tradition (e.g., as part of Krishna's divine leelas), is a poignant example of Shanta Rasa. This narrative, while not explicitly detailed in the core *Mahabharata* text by Vyasa, is part of the Vaishnava tradition closely associated with Krishna's life, often included in Mahabharata-related retellings and performances. The story of Sudama, a poor Brahmin and childhood friend of Krishna, visiting the opulent court of Dwaraka and receiving divine grace, evokes a profound sense of peace, humility, and spiritual fulfillment. While the episode also touches on *shringara* (love) and *karuna* (compassion), Shanta Rasa dominates through the serene resolution of Sudama's devotion and Krishna's unconditional love, leading to spiritual tranquility.

Summary of the Episode

Sudama, a poor Brahmin and Krishna's childhood friend from their days at Guru Sandipani's ashram, lives in abject poverty with his wife and children. Despite his destitution, Sudama's devotion to Krishna remains unwavering. Urged by his wife to seek help, Sudama

reluctantly visits Krishna in Dwaraka, carrying a humble offering of flattened rice (*poha*), wrapped in a tattered cloth. Overwhelmed by Dwaraka's grandeur and Krishna's divine kingship, Sudama feels ashamed of his meager gift but is warmly welcomed by Krishna, who reminisces about their childhood with affection. Krishna playfully snatches the rice and eats it with relish, moved by Sudama's selfless devotion. Without Sudama asking for anything, Krishna, knowing his friend's plight, bestows immense wealth upon him, transforming his hut into a mansion upon his return. Sudama, however, remains detached, his heart filled with serene devotion, content in Krishna's love rather than material riches. This encounter exemplifies divine grace, humility, and the peace of spiritual surrender.

The episode is a masterclass in Shanta Rasa, evoking tranquility through Sudama's renunciation, Krishna's divine compassion, and the resolution of worldly suffering into spiritual bliss.

Evocation of Shanta Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Sudama, the humble, poverty-stricken devotee, is the primary object of Shanta, embodying *shama* through his detachment and devotion. Krishna, as the divine figure radiating love and grace, serves as a secondary *alambana*, his presence inspiring peace. The contrast between Sudama's poverty and Krishna's opulence highlights the transcendence of material concerns.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The serene setting of Dwaraka, despite its grandeur, is imbued with a divine calm due to Krishna's presence. The simplicity of Sudama's offering—flattened rice—and Krishna's joyful acceptance create a peaceful atmosphere. The spiritual context of their reunion, rooted in childhood friendship and *bhakti*, enhances the sense of tranquility.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances like Bharatanatyam or Ramlila adaptations, Shanta is portrayed through *abhinaya*. Sudama's humility is shown with downcast eyes, folded hands, and slow, hesitant movements as he approaches Krishna, reflecting inner peace despite his shame. Krishna's warm embrace and gentle smile—depicted with soft gestures and radiant expressions—convey divine serenity. The act of Krishna eating the rice is portrayed with delicate, reverent movements, evoking a sense of calm fulfillment.

In theatrical retellings, the dialogue emphasizes Sudama's contentment and Krishna's affection, reinforcing the rasa.

3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: Sudama's humility (*dainya*) as he hesitates to offer his gift, contentment (*harsha*) upon Krishna's acceptance, and introspection (*vitaraga*) as he remains detached from wealth. Krishna's joy (*ananda*) in their reunion and compassion (*karuna*) for Sudama's plight deepen the serene mood. The narrative's arc—from Sudama's initial anxiety to his peaceful acceptance of Krishna's grace—creates a dynamic yet tranquil emotional journey.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: Subtle physical signs enhance Shanta: Sudama's soft breathing or faint tears of devotion, Krishna's glowing demeanor, or the audience's sense of calm awe. In performance, dancers or actors use relaxed postures, gentle smiles, or closed eyes to convey inner peace, evoking a meditative response in the *sahrdaya*.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Shanta by empathizing with Sudama's humility and marveling at Krishna's divine grace. The contrast between Sudama's poverty and Krishna's acceptance evokes a sense of peace, as material disparities dissolve in spiritual unity. The audience savors the tranquility of Sudama's detachment, reinforced by Krishna's selfless love, which transcends worldly concerns. In devotional contexts, this inspires *bhakti*, as the audience sees Sudama's surrender as a model for spiritual liberation, aligning with Abhinavagupta's view of Shanta as the rasa closest to *moksha*.

Analysis in Context

The Krishna-Sudama episode is a profound vehicle for Shanta Rasa, emphasizing spiritual peace over material gain. Unlike the *veera-heavy* Draupadi Swayamwara or the *bhayanaka-laden* Seeta Apaharan, this narrative focuses on inner tranquility, achieved through devotion and divine communion. Sudama's refusal to ask for wealth and his contentment with Krishna's love highlight *shama*, distinguishing Shanta from the emotional intensity of other rasas. In Indian arts, the episode is a favorite in Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or devotional music, where performers use minimalist movements—slow hand gestures, serene expressions—to evoke calm. Musically, *ragas* like *Yaman* or *Bhoopali* enhance the peaceful mood with their soothing tones.

Philosophically, the episode embodies Abhinavagupta's concept of Shanta as the culmination of all rasas, reflecting the dissolution of ego and desire. Sudama's detachment mirrors the Upanishadic ideal of renunciation, while Krishna's grace represents divine love, making the narrative a bridge to *bhakti* and *shanta*. Modern adaptations, such as in TV serials like *Shri Krishna* (1993), emphasize the emotional simplicity of the reunion, using soft lighting and music to evoke tranquility. Critically, the episode also subtly critiques materialism, as Sudama's spiritual wealth surpasses Krishna's material gifts, resonating with contemporary audiences seeking inner peace.
The narrative's devotional context elevates Shanta, as Sudama's story inspires the audience to prioritize spiritual fulfillment over worldly success. While *karuna* may arise from Sudama's poverty and *shringara* from Krishna's affection, Shanta dominates through the serene resolution, making it a timeless example of aesthetic and spiritual harmony.

Conclusion

Shanta Rasa, through its focus on peace and detachment, finds a compelling expression in the Krishna-Sudama episode from the *Mahabharata* tradition. Sudama's humility, Krishna's divine grace, and the serene resolution of their reunion, facilitated by *vibhava* (Sudama, Dwaraka), *anubhava* (calm gestures), and *vyabhichari bhava* (contentment, humility), evoke a profound sense of tranquility. This narrative exemplifies how Shanta transcends worldly emotions, resonating in Indian arts and inspiring reflection on spiritual liberation and divine love. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to offer the audience a taste of inner peace, aligning with the ultimate aesthetic and philosophical goals of Indian tradition.

H. Shishupal Vadha (The Mahabharat—Raudra)

Raudra Rasa

Raudra Rasa meaning anger, fury, or wrath, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) outlined in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes a sense of intense rage or indignation in the audience, transforming raw anger into an aesthetically relishable experience that captivates the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator). Raudra is distinct from everyday anger as it is experienced vicariously through art, allowing the audience to engage with the emotion in a controlled, reflective manner, often highlighting themes of justice,

retribution, or moral outrage against adharma (unrighteousness). It is associated with conflict, violence, or righteous wrath, making it a powerful rasa in epic and dramatic narratives.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Raudra Rasa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *krodha* (anger), triggered by situations involving injustice, insult, or aggression. Its presiding deity is Rudra (a fierce form of Shiva, associated with destruction and transformation), and its symbolic color is red, reflecting the fiery intensity of rage. Raudra often serves to underscore the consequences of moral transgression, paving the way for resolution through *veera* (heroism) or *shanta* (peace) rasas.

The components for evoking Raudra, as per Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of anger, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as an antagonist or offender) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing factors, like insults, battles, or provocations). For example, an unjust act or a villain's taunts can ignite *krodha*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of anger, such as clenched fists, glaring eyes, shouting, or aggressive movements. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like intense facial expressions (*mukhabhinaya*), forceful gestures (*hastabhinaya*), or a commanding voice.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *krodha*, such as indignation (*amarsha*), agitation (*vega*), intolerance (*asahana*), or vengeance (*pratishodha*), which add depth and complexity to the rasa.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like trembling, sweating, reddening of the face, or a raised voice, reflecting the overwhelming intensity of anger.

Raudra Rasa is prominent in Indian performing arts like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and Ramlila, where fierce characters or intense confrontations are portrayed with dynamic movements and exaggerated expressions. In music, *ragas* like *Deepak* or *Malkauns* may enhance its fiery mood. Philosophically, as per Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*, Raudra serves as a cathartic force, purging the audience of negative emotions by confronting injustice, often leading to spiritual insight or *bhakti* (devotion) when divine wrath restores dharma. In epics like the *Mahabharata*, Raudra underscores the battle against adharma, amplifying the narrative's moral stakes.

Raudra Rasa - Shishupala Vadha Episode from the Mahabharata

The *Shishupala Vadha* (the slaying of Shishupala), found in the *Sabha Parva* (Book 2, Chapters 33–45) of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*, is a dramatic episode that powerfully evokes Raudra Rasa. This narrative centers on Krishna's righteous wrath and decisive action in slaying Shishupala, the king of Chedi, during Yudhishthira's Rajasuya sacrifice, highlighting divine retribution against persistent adharma. While the episode also evokes *adbhuta rasa* (wonder) due to Krishna's divine act and *veera rasa* (heroism) through his prowess, Raudra dominates through the intense confrontation and the culmination of Shishupala's provocations in his destruction, underscoring the triumph of justice.

Summary of the Episode

During Yudhishthira's Rajasuya sacrifice in Indraprastha, a grand ceremony to establish his sovereignty, the Pandavas honor Krishna as the most exalted guest, offering him the first *arghya* (ritual offering). Shishupala, a cousin and rival of Krishna, objects vehemently, unleashing a torrent of insults against Krishna, accusing him of being a cowherd unworthy of such honor and mocking his divine status. Despite warnings from Bhishma and others, Shishupala persists, recounting Krishna's past actions (e.g., slaying Putana or Kamsa) as crimes. Krishna, calm but resolute, declares that he will forgive Shishupala's insults up to a hundred, as promised to Shishupala's mother (Krishna's aunt). When Shishupala exceeds this limit with his relentless tirade, Krishna summons his divine weapon, the *Sudarshana Chakra* (discus), and beheads Shishupala in the assembly. A divine light emerges from Shishupala's body and merges into Krishna, signifying his liberation (as Shishupala was a reincarnation of Jaya, one of Vishnu's gatekeepers, destined to be slain by him). The assembly is struck with awe and fear, and the sacrifice proceeds, affirming Krishna's divine authority and Yudhishthira's sovereignty.

This episode is a quintessential vehicle for Raudra Rasa, evoking fury through Shishupala's provocations and Krishna's righteous wrath, culminating in a dramatic act of divine justice.

Evocation of Raudra Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Shishupala is the primary object of Raudra, his insolent and blasphemous insults against Krishna igniting *krodha*. His relentless verbal

attacks—calling Krishna a "vile cowherd" and questioning his divinity—provoke outrage in the assembly and the audience. Krishna, as the divine avenger, becomes a secondary *alambana*, his controlled yet fierce response embodying righteous anger.

Uddipana Vibhava: The grand setting of the Rajasuya sacrifice, with its assembly of kings and sages, heightens the tension, as Shishupala's public defiance disrupts the sacred ceremony. His escalating insults, the murmurs of the assembly, and the anticipation of Krishna's response create a charged atmosphere conducive to fury. Descriptions like "Shishupala roared like a lion" amplify the provocative mood.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances like Kathakali or Ramlila adaptations of the *Mahabharata*, Raudra is vividly portrayed through *abhinaya*. Shishupala's anger is shown with glaring eyes, clenched fists, and aggressive gestures, his voice booming with insults. Krishna's response, initially calm, transitions to fierce determination, depicted with a stern gaze, raised hand (mimicking the chakra), and a commanding posture as he beheads Shishupala. The act of slaying is dramatized with swift, forceful movements, evoking the intensity of divine wrath. The assembly's reactions—gasps, recoiling, or stunned silence—further convey the rasa's impact.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: Shishupala's indignation (*amarsha*) at Krishna's honor, intolerance (*asahana*) of the Pandavas' success, and pride (*garva*) in his own status intensify his fury. Krishna's restrained anger is accompanied by patience (*dhriti*) until the hundredth insult, followed by vengeance (*pratishodha*) as he acts decisively. The audience's mix of fear (*bhaya*) and awe (*vismaya*) at the chakra's appearance adds complexity, blending Raudra with *adbhuta*. The narrative's arc—from Shishupala's provocations to Krishna's retribution—creates a dynamic emotional crescendo.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: The intensity of the confrontation manifests physically: Shishupala's trembling with rage, sweating, or reddened face as he insults Krishna; Krishna's steady yet fiery demeanor as he summons the chakra. In performance, actors emphasize these through quivering movements, flushed expressions, or a raised voice. The audience may feel goosebumps (*romancha*) or a racing pulse, drawn into the tension of the divine act.

5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Raudra by recoiling at Shishupala's audacity and admiring Krishna's righteous wrath. Shishupala's blasphemy against a divine figure evokes indignation, while Krishna's controlled fury and decisive action inspire awe at divine justice. The aesthetic experience allows the audience to savor the anger as a moral force, reflecting on the consequences of adharma. In devotional contexts, the episode reinforces *bhakti*, as Krishna's act is seen as protecting dharma, leading to *shanta rasa* when Shishupala's soul merges with him, signifying liberation.

Analysis in Context

The *Shishupala Vadha* is a pivotal moment in the *Mahabharata*, reinforcing Krishna's divine authority and the Pandavas' righteousness while foreshadowing the epic's central conflict. Raudra Rasa dominates through the intense confrontation, distinguishing it from the *veera-heavy* Draupadi Swayamwara or the *bhayanaka-laden* Seeta Apaharan. Shishupala's insults and Krishna's retribution create a moral spectacle, evoking fury at adharma and admiration for divine justice. In Indian arts, the episode is a staple in Kathakali, where Shishupala's rage and Krishna's chakra-wielding are portrayed with vibrant makeup and dynamic movements, or in Bharatanatyam, with precise gestures depicting the chakra's swift strike. Musically, *ragas* like *Malkauns* or *Chandrakauns* enhance the fiery, intense mood.

Philosophically, the episode aligns with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a cathartic force. The audience's indignation at Shishupala's blasphemy is purged through Krishna's act, leading to spiritual reflection on dharma and liberation. The merging of Shishupala's soul into Krishna introduces *adbhuta* and *shanta*, as the audience marvels at divine grace. Modern adaptations, such as in TV serials like *B.R. Chopra's Mahabharat*, amplify Raudra with dramatic dialogues and visual effects, emphasizing Krishna's wrathful yet righteous persona. Critically, the episode critiques hubris and disrespect, resonating with contemporary audiences as a commentary on moral accountability.

The narrative's devotional context elevates Raudra, as Krishna's anger is not personal but a cosmic act to restore order. While *karuna* may arise for Shishupala's ultimate liberation, Raudra dominates through the confrontation, making it a powerful example of how anger, when righteous, serves aesthetic and moral purposes.

Conclusion

Raudra Rasa, through its focus on righteous anger and retribution, finds a compelling expression in the *Shishupala Vadha* episode of the *Mahabharata*. Shishupala's provocations, Krishna's divine wrath, and the dramatic slaying, facilitated by *vibhava* (Shishupala, the Rajasuya), *anubhava* (fierce gestures), and *vyabhichari bhava* (indignation, vengeance), evoke a gripping sense of fury. This scene exemplifies how Raudra transforms anger into an aesthetic experience, resonating in Indian arts and inspiring reflection on justice, dharma, and divine authority. Its enduring power lies in its ability to captivate the audience with moral outrage while affirming the triumph of righteousness.

I. Krishna's Childhood at Vrindavan (The Mahabharata – Hasaya)

Hasya Rasa

Hasya Rasa meaning humor, laughter, or mirth, is one of the nine primary *rasas* (aesthetic flavors) outlined in Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*, the foundational text of Indian aesthetics. This rasa evokes joy, amusement, and light-heartedness in the audience, transforming everyday humor into an aesthetically relishable experience that delights the *sahrdaya* (sensitive spectator). Hasya is unique in its ability to provide emotional relief, often arising from playful, absurd, or comic situations, and it frequently serves as a counterbalance to more intense rasas like *raudra* (anger) or *karuna* (compassion). It can emerge from wit, satire, or innocent mischief, making it a versatile rasa in both secular and devotional contexts.

According to the *Natya Shastra*, Hasya Rasa arises from the *sthayi bhava* (dominant emotion) of *hasa* (laughter or amusement), triggered by situations that provoke mirth, such as humorous actions, misunderstandings, or playful antics. Its presiding deity is Pramatha (a form of Shiva or his attendants, symbolizing playful energy), and its symbolic color is white, reflecting purity and light-heartedness. Hasya is often linked to *shringara rasa* (love), as playful romance can spark laughter, but it stands alone in its focus on joy and comic relief.

The components for evoking Hasya, as per Bharata, include:

Vibhava (Determinants): The causes of laughter, divided into *alambana vibhava* (primary objects, such as a comic character or situation) and *uddipana vibhava* (enhancing

factors, like playful settings, witty dialogue, or absurd events). For example, a mischievous character or a funny misunderstanding can trigger *hasa*.

Anubhava (Consequents): Visible expressions of amusement, such as laughter, smiling, chuckling, or playful gestures. In performance arts, these are conveyed through *abhinaya* (expressive techniques) like twinkling eyes (*netrabhinaya*), exaggerated gestures (*hastabhinaya*), or a jovial voice.

Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions): Fleeting emotions that accompany *hasa*, such as joy (*harsha*), excitement (*vega*), or shyness (*lajja*), which add layers to the humor, making it more dynamic.

Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses): Physical signs like uncontrollable laughter, tears of joy, or a flushed face, reflecting the infectious nature of mirth.

Hasya Rasa is prominent in Indian performing arts like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, and folk theater, where comic characters or playful scenes provide relief in serious narratives. In music, *ragas* like *Bhairavi* or *Khamaj* may enhance its light-hearted mood. Philosophically, as per Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*, Hasya serves to release emotional tension, aligning with spiritual joy in devotional contexts, particularly in *bhakti* traditions where divine playfulness (*leela*) evokes laughter and love. In epics, Hasya often humanizes divine or heroic figures, making them relatable and endearing.

Hasya Rasa - Krishna's Childhood at Vrindavan in the Mahabharata

Krishna's childhood exploits in Vrindavan, primarily detailed in the *Bhagavata Purana* (Canto 10) but referenced in the *Mahabharata* tradition (e.g., *Harivamsa* appendix and Krishna's backstory in the epic), are a rich source of Hasya Rasa. These stories, collectively known as Krishna's *bal leelas* (childhood pastimes), depict his playful, mischievous antics as a child in the pastoral setting of Vrindavan, evoking laughter and joy. While the *Mahabharata* focuses more on Krishna's role as a warrior and diplomat, the *Harivamsa* and related Vaishnava texts elaborate on his childhood, including episodes like stealing butter, teasing the gopis (cowherd girls), and outwitting demons with childlike cunning. These narratives are perfect vehicles for Hasya, blending humor with *shringara* (love) and *bhakti* (devotion).

For this discussion, we'll focus on the iconic episode of Krishna stealing butter (*Navanita Chora* or "Butter Thief"), a widely celebrated story that epitomizes Hasya Rasa through Krishna's mischievous antics and the gopis' amused reactions.

Summary of the Episode

In Vrindavan, young Krishna, raised by his foster parents Yashoda and Nanda, is notorious for his love of butter and curd. Despite being a divine incarnation of Vishnu, Krishna behaves like an impish child, sneaking into the homes of gopis to steal freshly churned butter. He climbs shelves, breaks pots, and shares the spoils with his friends and even monkeys, leaving a trail of chaos. When caught by Yashoda or the gopis, Krishna feigns innocence with wide-eyed expressions or charming excuses, often melting their anger into laughter. In one famous incident, Yashoda ties Krishna to a mortar to discipline him (*Damodara Leela*), but he playfully drags the mortar, uprooting two trees and liberating the celestial beings trapped within them (the Yamalarjuna episode). The gopis, torn between frustration and adoration, recount Krishna's antics with amusement, their complaints laced with affection. These episodes highlight Krishna's divine playfulness (*leela*), evoking laughter while affirming his divine charm.

This narrative is a quintessential example of Hasya Rasa, as Krishna's mischievousness and the gopis' fond exasperation create a joyful, light-hearted atmosphere that delights the audience.

Evocation of Hasya Rasa in the Narrative

1. **Vibhava (Determinants)**:

   Alambana Vibhava: Krishna, as the mischievous child, is the primary object of Hasya, his playful antics sparking *hasa*. His childlike charm—described as "a dark-skinned boy with lotus-like eyes"—and impish actions, like stealing butter or dodging punishment, evoke laughter. The gopis and Yashoda, who react with mock anger or amusement, are secondary *alambana*, their responses amplifying the humor.

   Uddipana Vibhava: The pastoral setting of Vrindavan, with its simple huts, churned butter pots, and playful cowherd community, creates a light-hearted backdrop. Krishna's antics—breaking pots, smearing butter on his face, or sharing it with monkeys—add absurd, comic elements. Descriptions like "the gopis chasing Krishna, their anklets jingling" enhance the playful mood.

2. **Anubhava (Consequents)**: In performances like Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or Ramlila, Hasya is vividly portrayed through *abhinaya*. Krishna's mischief is shown with twinkling eyes, sly smiles, and nimble movements as he sneaks into homes or pretends innocence. The gopis' reactions—pointing fingers, shaking heads, or laughing despite their complaints—are depicted with exaggerated gestures, such as hands on hips or mock scolding. Yashoda's attempt to tie Krishna to the mortar, only to find the rope too short, is portrayed with comic frustration, followed by laughter. The audience visualizes Krishna's butter-smeared face or the gopis' fond exasperation, evoking chuckles and delight.
3. **Vyabhichari Bhava (Transitory Emotions)**: The rasa is enriched by fleeting emotions: joy (*harsha*) in Krishna's playful antics, shyness (*lajja*) when he's caught, and mock anger (*krodha*) from the gopis, which quickly turns to amusement. The gopis' affection (*sneha*) for Krishna, despite his mischief, blends Hasya with *shringara*, creating a layered emotional experience. The narrative's arc—from Krishna's stealthy theft to the gopis' amused complaints—keeps the humor dynamic and engaging.
4. **Sattvika Bhava (Involuntary Responses)**: The infectious mirth manifests physically: Krishna's giggles, the gopis' uncontrollable laughter, or tears of joy as they recount his antics. In performance, dancers or actors emphasize these through quivering lips, flushed cheeks, or spontaneous chuckles, drawing the audience into the joyous mood. The *sahrdaya* may feel a lightness of heart or involuntary smiles, reflecting the rasa's impact.
5. **Role of the Sahrdaya**: The sensitive audience experiences Hasya by delighting in Krishna's childlike mischief and the gopis' affectionate reactions. The humor arises from the absurdity of a divine child stealing butter and the gopis' inability to stay angry, evoking laughter that is both playful and devotional. In *bhakti* contexts, this humor deepens the audience's love for Krishna, as his *leela* humanizes his divinity, aligning with Abhinavagupta's view of rasa as a taste of divine joy (*camatkara*). The episode's light-heartedness offers relief from the *Mahabharata*'s heavier themes, making Krishna relatable and endearing.

Analysis in Context

Krishna's childhood antics in Vrindavan, particularly the butter-stealing episode, are a perfect vehicle for Hasya Rasa, contrasting with the *raudra-heavy* Shishupala Vadha or the

bhayanaka-laden Seeta Apaharan. The humor arises from Krishna's innocent mischief and the gopis' fond exasperation, blending Hasya with *shringara* and *bhakti*. In Indian arts, this episode is a favorite in Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or devotional music, where Krishna's playful gestures—mimicking climbing or eating butter—are portrayed with sprightly movements and twinkling expressions. Musically, *ragas* like *Khamaj* or *Bilaval* enhance the joyful mood with their upbeat tones.

Philosophically, the episode reflects Abhinavagupta's idea of rasa as a bridge to spiritual joy. Krishna's *leela* evokes laughter while reinforcing his divine charm, leading the audience toward *bhakti* and *shanta rasa* (peace) as they surrender to his love. Modern adaptations, such as in animated films or TV serials like *Shri Krishna* (1993), amplify Hasya with vibrant visuals and comic dialogues, making Krishna's antics accessible to contemporary audiences. Critically, the episode humanizes Krishna, balancing his later roles as a warrior and philosopher in the *Mahabharata*. Feminist readings may highlight the gopis' agency in playfully engaging with Krishna, but in classical aesthetics, the focus is on the universal joy of divine playfulness.

The narrative's devotional context elevates Hasya, as Krishna's mischief is not mere childishness but a divine act to draw devotees closer. While *shringara* arises from the gopis' affection and *adbhuta* from Krishna's miraculous feats (e.g., liberating the Yamalarjuna trees), Hasya dominates through the light-hearted interplay, making it a timeless source of aesthetic delight.

Conclusion

Hasya Rasa, through its focus on humor and mirth, finds a vibrant expression in Krishna's childhood antics at Vrindavan, particularly the butter-stealing episode from the *Mahabharata* tradition. Krishna's mischief, the gopis' amused reactions, and the playful Vrindavan setting, facilitated by *vibhava* (Krishna, butter pots), *anubhava* (smiles, gestures), and *vyabhichari bhava* (joy, mock anger), evoke infectious laughter. This narrative exemplifies how Hasya transforms playfulness into an aesthetic and devotional experience, resonating in Indian arts and inspiring joy, love, and spiritual reflection. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to humanize the divine, offering the audience a delightful taste of Krishna's eternal *leela*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. In the Rukmini Swayamwara episode from the ***Mahabharata***, which element primarily evokes Shringara Rasa?
   a) Krishna's battle with rival kings **b) Rukmini's heartfelt letter to Krishna**
   c) Rukmi's opposition to the marriage d) The temple setting of the abduction
2. In the Shabari episode from the *Ramayana***,** what action of Shabari most strongly contributes to Karuna Rasa?
   a) Offering tasted berries to Rama b) Waiting patiently for Rama's arrival
   c) Living in poverty and isolation d) Attaining liberation after meeting Rama
3. Which element in the Draupadi Vastraharan episode from the ***Mahabharata*** primarily evokes Bibhatsa Rasa?
   a) Krishna's divine intervention with the sari
   b) Dushasana's attempt to disrobe Draupadi
   c) The Pandavas' anguish in the assembly
   d) Bhishma's silence during the ordeal
4. In the Lanka Dahan episode from the ***Ramayana***, what contributes most to Adbhuta Rasa?
   a) Hanuman's battle with Ravana's forces **b) The burning of Lanka by Hanuman's tail**
   c) Sita's safety during the destruction d) Ravana's anger at Hanuman's actions
5. In the Draupadi Swayamwara episode from the ***Mahabharata***, which action of Arjuna primarily evokes Veera Rasa?
   a) Disguising himself as a Brahmin **b) Stringing the bow and hitting the target**
   c) Defending Draupadi against rival kings d) Accepting Draupadi as his wife
6. In the Seeta Apaharan episode from the ***Ramayana***, which element most strongly evokes Bhayanaka Rasa?
   a) Ravana's disguise as an ascetic **b) Sita's cries for help during the abduction**
   c) Jatayu's attempt to rescue Sita d) Rama's pursuit of the golden deer
7. In the Krishna-Sudama episode from the ***Mahabharata*** tradition, what action best evokes Shanta Rasa?
   a) Sudama offering flattened rice to Krishna b) Krishna granting wealth to Sudama
   c) Sudama's poverty-stricken life d) Krishna reminiscing about their childhood

8. In the Shishupala Vadha episode from the *Mahabharata*, which action primarily evokes Raudra Rasa?

   a) Shishupala's insults against Krishna **b) Krishna's use of the Sudarshana Chakra**

   c) The assembly's reaction to the slaying d) Bhishma's defense of Krishna's honor

9. In Krishna's Childhood at Vrindavan from the ***Mahabharata*** tradition, which episode best evokes Hasya Rasa?

   a) Krishna liberating the Yamalarjuna trees **b) Krishna stealing butter from the gopis**

   c) Krishna defeating the demon Putana d) Krishna playing the flute for the gopis

10. Which transitory emotion (*vyabhichari bhava*) is most likely to accompany Karuna Rasa in the Shabari episode from the *Ramayana***?**

    a) Pride (*garva*) **b) Anxiety (*chinta*)**

    c) Joy (*harsha*) d) Vengeance (*pratishodha*)

Long Answer type Questions

1. Analyze how the Rukmini Swayamwara episode from the *Mahabharata* evokes Shringara Rasa.
2. Discuss the evocation of Karuna Rasa in the Shabari episode from the *Ramayana***.**
3. Examine how the Draupadi Vastraharan episode from the *Mahabharata* serves as a vehicle for Bibhatsa Rasa.
4. Explore the evocation of Adbhuta Rasa in the Lanka Dahan episode from the *Ramayana***.**
5. Evaluate the role of Veera Rasa in the Draupadi Swayamwara episode from the *Mahabharata***.**

Short Answer type Questions

1. What is the primary *sthayi bhava* evoked in the Seeta Apaharan episode from the *Ramayana***?**
2. How does Krishna's acceptance of Sudama's flattened rice in the Krishna-Sudama episode evoke Shanta Rasa?
3. What action of Shishupala in the Shishupala Vadha episode from the *Mahabharata* triggers Raudra Rasa?
4. How does Krishna's butter-stealing in his Childhood at Vrindavan evoke Hasya Rasa?
5. What role does Jatayu play in evoking Bhayanaka Rasa in the Seeta Apaharan episode from the *Ramayana*?