

Rasāsvāda: A Comparative Approach to Emotion and the Self

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Abstract

This paper explores the philosophy of emotion in classical India. Although some scholars have endeavored to develop a systematic philosophy of emotion based on *rasa* theory, no serious effort has been made to read the relationship between emotion and the self in light of *rasa* theory. This exclusion, I argue, is an outcome of a broader presupposition that the 'self' in classical Indian philosophies is outside the scope of emotion. A fresh reading of classical Sanskrit texts finds this premise baseless. With an underlying assumption that emotion and self are inherently linked, this paper explores similarities between the Indian and Chinese approaches.

Situating the Discourse

The project of studying *rasa* in light of emotion theories is not a new one, as scholars such as Chaudhury (1965), Patankar (1980), Schechner (2001), Gerow (2002), Higgins (2007), or Bilimoria and Wenta (2015) have already ventured in this direction. Some scholars, such as Frijda and Sundararajan, have also attempted to extend this discourse and involve classical Chinese theories. Unfortunately these efforts have not developed further. In particular, the relationship of emotion and the self in light of the

rasa theory has never been explored. Accordingly, scholars in the area studies of India or China are not as enthusiastic about engaging these two cultures as they are in relating their field to the West. The main objective of this paper is to explore this very relation, while also making a broader appeal for a global discourse on emotion theories. Some of the contemporary debates regarding the scope and nature of emotion and its relation to self, particularly between cognitive and psychological theories, mirror the classical debates on *rasa*. My own exposure to Chinese literature is limited and I am only referring to select nuances for a future scholarship in this direction.

It is well known that contemporary scholarship on India and China has not been able to free itself from colonial scaffoldings. Studies on emotion are no exception, and we can start this conversation with Tuske (2011). The Cartesian development of Western philosophy, and the Cartesian frame adopted by scholars in the West attempting to read the non-West has, for the last hundred years or so, produced a vast amount of literature in diaspora “philosophy” that broadly resembles Western parameters. Following this reading, an enlightened being, a sage, does not have emotions (*bhāva*, *wuqing*).¹ However, if we engage the aesthetic traditions from these cultures and their relation to self-cultivation, emotions appear crucial in refining self-awareness and cultivating the self, parallel to ‘savoring’ the refined emotions, expressed in terms of *rasa* in India and *he/ho* (translated as ‘harmony’) in China.² Engaging aesthetic traditions from these cultures not only brings emotions to the center of discourse, it also allows us to make broader arguments relevant to contemporary studies on emotions by giving alternative perspectives on issues such as the relation of emotion with feelings, emotion and intentionality, emotion and the cultivation of personality, and so on. Reading these traditions in light of contemporary theories on emotion is not to reduce the observations grounded on these cultures to contemporary psychology or cognitive science. On the contrary,

this is to demonstrate how the contemporary understanding of emotion and its relation to the self are limited, and how the insights gleaned from these cultures can broaden our horizon.

This paper focuses on the Indian classical perspectives on emotion and the self. Just so that we can initiate a broader dialogue involving the Chinese counterparts, I would like to include a few more examples. Arguing from the Chinese cultural perspective, *Shih-p'in* consists of *Shih* or poetry and '*p'in*' which can be used either as a noun, referring to category, or as a verb, referring to the act of savoring. When used as a noun, this refers to "emotional response categorization" that involves emotion embedded with meaning that in turn relies on the reader's response. These categories are understood as "constructed" and not innate, and refer to nuanced moods and emotions that are recognizable only by astute subjects. When understood as a verb, it involves an emotional response to encountering something aesthetically pleasing, developing the ability to expand the duration of such an experience along with reflexivity so that the experience is identified as aesthetically pleasing. In addition to the pervasion of experience over a period of time, '*p'in*' also consists of retrieving memory. An experience, after all, is considered 'aesthetic' when it is retrieved and evaluated as pleasing. This makes reflexivity essential to experience, as no verification of such experience would otherwise be possible.

Speaking comparatively, the Sanskrit term *rasa* is derived from the root *vras*, to savor, and the suffix in *bhāva* affirms action, the verbal meaning.³ Accordingly, the term is similar to '*p'in*' or '*p'in-wei*' in the Chinese context, as it describes both the emotional response categorization and the very act of savoring. Just like '*p'in*,' *rasa* experience relies on *sahṛdaya*, or the empathic person who can transcend subjectivity and enter the heart of the poet. Additionally, *rasa* experience is reflexive, has the recollective property, and can be extended in its duration, particularly when *rasa* experience parallels yogic absorption. In order to reformulate the classical conversation on emotion in

classical Hindu philosophical traditions, the project here is to analyze *rasa* and similar categories. Broader comparisons are made in order not just to explain categories across culture but also to demarcate the boundaries for future analysis of the constructive roles cultures play in accessing emotions. What are emotions? Are emotions like feelings? Do they have an intentional object? Are emotions propositional? Can they be distinguished from each other based on somatic symptoms? What is the relation between emotion and the self? These are some of those questions that are addressed by the classical aesthetes, particularly in India, although in different cultural and philosophical contexts. While coming in a particular culture in a particular historical context, philosophers such as Abhinava address universal issues, and it is not appropriate to constrain their philosophies in a narrow socio-historical context. While the examples that they give may be unique and the framework in which their contemplations emerge different, their arguments deserve the same attention as do those of the contemporary writers. Reading classical philosophers in today's context does not mean that their original concepts are dislocated. On the contrary, this approach only buttresses the case for the expanded study of their philosophies.⁴

The Mechanism of Experiencing *Rasa*

As an introduction, the term *rasa*, used primarily in an aesthetic sense, identifies a synthetic experience derived of the commixture of different emotions wherein one is dominant, (*sthāyī bhāva*) and the others at play are secondary (*vyabhicārin*). The four main *rasa* experiences (*śṛṅgāra*, *vīra*, *bībhatsa*, and *bhayānaka*) are derived from four emotions, eroticism, heroism, disgust, and horror, where the mind has four different functions of blossoming (*vikāsa*), expansion (*vistāra*), agitation (*vikṣobha*), and scattered (*vikṣepa*). The comic (*hāsya*) is derived from the erotic sentiment, tragic (*karuṇa*) and fearsome (*bhayānaka*) are derived from the horrific, and

wondrous is derived of the heroic emotional state. In essence, there are eight central emotions considered dormant that correlate with the experience of the eight different *rasas*. *Rasa* experience, however, is not the surge of pure emotion. Indian aesthetes argue that the very dormant emotion when manifest with the aid of *vibhāva* and so on transforms into *rasa* experience.⁵ When one of these emotions is accompanied with secondary emotions (*vyabhicārin*), and if the stage of experience is accompanied with subjective state and objective conditions identified in terms of *ālambana* and *uddīpana*, that experience of emotion transforms into *rasa*. There are multiple theories to describe this transformation of pure emotion to aesthetic relish. *Rasa* doctrine also analyzes 33 secondary emotions such as distress, envy, sorrow, or doubt that accompany the central emotion. In addition to this, Abhinava expands upon a seminal concept, considering 'tranquil' (*śānta*) as a distinct *rasa* that has the very experience of the self (*svātmarūpa*) or the absence of all other emotions (*nirveda*) as the dormant emotion.⁶ The question, whether this absence of emotions can itself be an emotional state, is at the center in later classical debates on aesthetics. Many of the arguments found in this discussion are pertinent to the broader discourse on emotion and its modalities.

One of the controversial issues in classical India is the causal relation between emotion and *rasa*: the issue is, how can *rasa* that is transcendent and also identical to the self be also equated with somatic emotions? There are some instances where *rasa* has been equated with the self. The application of the philosophy of recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) is cited in the post-Abhinavaguptian description of the transformation of emotion into *rasa*. In this depiction, *rasa* is itself the very dormant emotion, the perfuming (*vāsanā*) inherent with the self, manifest (*abhivyakta*) when accompanied with *vibhāva* and so on. In this depiction, there is no distinction between *rasa* and

the self, giving further clues that describe the emotional aspect of the self.⁷

Experiencing Emotions

In order to ground the relation of the self and emotions in Indian aesthetic traditions, it is essential that we explore the texts that address the mechanism of emotion, particularly the causes attributed to the emergence of emotions. What is noteworthy in the above description of the dormant mood (*sthāyī bhāva*) is that the central emotions are dormant in the self, or are situated there. These dormant moods are considered by some to be innate properties of the self. The self, in this depiction, is not dissociated from emotions. Accordingly, emotions that did not exist before are not produced at the moment of experience. In contrast to Śāṅkuka's theory that *rasa* is inferred, the Abhivyaktivādins — those who maintained that *rasa* is an expression or manifestation of something dormant, or that nothing non-existent comes into being when one experiences *rasa* — maintain that emotions are dormant to the self. In this non-dual paradigm, the self and *rasa* are not two opposites, as the very consciousness is manifest when experiencing *rasa*, through the commixture of different stimulants and secondary emotions with the primary or dormant emotion.⁸ What is meant by 'experience' when addressing *rasa* can be gleaned from a paragraph from Caṇḍīdāsa's KP commentary:

Due to the subduing of *rajas* and *tamas* and the surge of *sattva* or its manifestation, when the illuminating [aspect of consciousness] is vivid and resting in self-awareness, that is of the character of bliss alone. There is an absence of association with the external entities of cognition where the connection is made between what has been cognized in the past and what is being cognized at the present moment.⁹

In order to relate the self with emotions, the other pertinent issue is the mechanism of experiencing emotions. When the classical texts are engaged upon this issue, further insights can be gleaned upon the status of emotion within the aesthetic traditions being examined. One stanza from the masterpiece of Mammaṭa directly addresses this issue:

Rasa is the [experience of aesthetic] beauty etc., that gives rise to transcendent relish while generating the experience similar to that of experiencing the Brahman, as if everything else has been covered [from the spotlight of experience], touching [or embracing] the entire body as if entering the heart, throbbing [or manifesting] as if immediate [to the senses], being experienced similar to a cocktail drink, sustained by [the experience of] *vibhāva* etc., of the character of being experienced [as the self] alone. Although it is identical to one's [self] nature but is nonetheless experienced through the senses by the subject of experience in the universal form by establishing the link with the entire heart, [when the self is] unbound, having no contact with any other entities of cognition. This is manifest due to the sudden dissolution of the finite subjective experience instigated by the force of universalization, although localized in experiencing subjects, [by giving expression to] the permanent moods such as sexual bliss that are abiding in the heart of the ordinary people as instinct or habit pattern (*vāsanā*).¹⁰

This is not all that Mammaṭa has to offer upon this issue. While confirming the transcendental nature of *rasa* experience, he compares and contrasts this experience with yogic absorption, and while doing so, invokes Abhinava for this affirmation:

This [*rasa*] is experienced by the transcendent means of self-awareness distinct from the experience of the other yogins whose experience is limited [due to its isolation from objects]. This is the experience that does not touch anything other and that results in the self alone, and this can be known by means of yogic cognition, being that such cognition is distinct from those arising from the sensory modalities, and so on. This *rasa* experience is not grasped by the transcendent awareness that is devoid of mental constructs (*nirvikalpaka*), as it has the primacy of the cognition of *vibhāva* etc. It is not conceptual cognition (*savikalpaka*) either, because the transcendent bliss that is being experienced is established by self-awareness alone. That which is neither is of the character of both, and this only establishes the transcendent nature of *rasa* experience and there is no contradiction. Abhinavagupta maintains this.¹¹

This is the time we make some observations. Aesthetic savoring, whether explained in the Chinese context with the term of '*p'in*' or as *rasa* following Sanskrit terminology, has a constructed element and is different from emotions that are directly experienced. This refinement of emotion, in the Chinese context, is grounded on 'harmony' (in Chinese, '*he*' or '*ho*'), which rests on holistic perception and is intuitive. The fusion of emotions is also central to *rasa* experience, as in absence of this fusion (*saṃyoga*) of the pertinent emotions and moods described in terms of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, and the *sañcārī bhāvas*, there is no exalted experience of *rasa*. Furthermore, harmony among emotions is essential to both aesthetic traditions. This is why savoring and the *rasa* experience are both compared with the flavor that arises with the combination of different ingredients. The relation of both '*p'in*' and *rasa* with the culinary practice and the link of these concepts with the

cultivation of the self also help us ground the embodied nature of self-experience.

The parallels between Chinese and Indian aesthetic traditions suggest further comparison. Ssu-K'ung T'u (837-903) is credited for saying that aesthetic experience comes from "flavor beyond flavor" and "image beyond image." Kashmiri aesthetes describe the *rasa* experience as *lokottara*, or transcendent to commonsense experience. This experience of aesthetic savoring builds over time and does not necessarily occur in a single flash. Chinese aesthetes call this savoring *pai-huai*, which means "slowly packing back and forth." In India, aesthetic savoring is described by the term "*carvaṇa*" or chewing. These metaphors help us ground the embodied nature of *rasa* experience, as the aesthetic bliss is compared in these examples to the corporeal experience of relishing flavor or taste. What is intriguing here is, while the *rasa* itself is identified as transcendent, the mechanism in which this is experienced is identified as embodied. This categorization fits well in the philosophical platform of Trika where the absolute is described in terms both of transcendent and immanent. This, however, is problematic to other traditions where the self-experience is dissociated from blissful mode of experience and transcendentality of self-experience is maintained. Corporeality is at the center of describing this savoring which can involve even the negative experiences such as cringing in fear or disgust, spitting and vomiting, or the burning sensation felt in the skin. Inching closer to the discourse on *rasa*, 'savoring' in the Chinese context does not preclude negative emotions, such as pain, sorrow, or loss. What transforms negative emotions into *rasa* or savoring is the meaning embedded within coarse experiences. Being aroused is not experiencing *śṛṅgāra*, nor is trembling with fear the experience of *bhayānaka*. It is due to meaning that even horror or disgust become aesthetically pleasing and this meaning aspect is associated with the refinement of emotion.

Fridja and Sundararajan (2007, 230-31) argue that this savoring in the Chinese literary context is identified as self-reflexive, analyzed in terms of a second-order consciousness that objectifies the first-order consciousness. The concept of *pratibhā* or intuitive awareness in Indian aesthetics identifies the same phenomenon. Another crucial aspect of savoring is the appraisal of emotions. Appraisal does not simply mean a consciousness of experience in this context. When applied in the discourse on emotions, it relates to the emotional response triggered by the conscious experience. Pleasure and pain are two of the basic processes that lead to the appraisal of emotions. And due to this review process and the ways emotions are handled, even negative emotions can elicit aesthetic pleasure.

Experience is multi-layered and its appraisal involves both basic sensations and the meaning embedded within such experiences. In reliving our experiences, each response varies, and our ability to transcend the basic sensation and find a higher purpose and meaning can transform even a painful experience to bliss as an outcome of the aesthetic experience, and this processing requires reflexivity. Both Indian and Chinese aesthetic theories presuppose this cognitive approach. The distinction, following Fridja and Sundararajan (2007, 278), is that the *rasa* experience has a different structure for the detachment of emotion from the initial experience, where the fusion of the subject with the transcendent reality is stressed. In *samadhi*, a subject is lost in the Brahman, and in aesthetic savoring, in *rasa* experience. One needs to keep in mind here that the way *samādhi* is understood here is Advaitic, while the Patañjalian interpretation of *samādhi* or the Buddhist interpretation of *samāpatti* may differ. Nevertheless, in all accounts the distinguishing factor of subjectivity disappears and something is directly encountered in the collapse of the dichotomy of subject and object in the *samādhi* state. Aesthetes, when making parallels with *samādhi* experience, have identified the

refinement of experience in the yogic practice with the refinement of emotion in aesthetic experience. The mechanism of detachment distinguishes coarse emotions from refined aesthetic emotions. Subjects, while experiencing aesthetic pleasure, are capable of dissociating the sensation, its appraisal, and the savoring that arises due to aesthetic judgment.

Is *rasa* experience intentional? If contemporary feeling theories are followed, all emotions are non-intentional, in the sense that intentionality maintains an external object separate from the cognizing self and the cognitive process. However, if reflexivity and a second-order consciousness occur in the emergence of *rasa* experience, intentionality is presupposed. A closer analysis of *rasa* experience in the Indian domain and 'emotion refinement' in the Chinese tradition helps us to create a hierarchy of emotions, from coarse emotions to the refined ones. Accordingly, some emotions are intentional, as well as some pre-reflective feelings. From the *rasa* perspective, the enduring emotions are not identical to the sensation of pain and pleasure, although there is an underpinning of pain or pleasure in all emotions. *Rasa* is the much higher and exalted state of experience that rests on a complex cognitive process that includes the transcendence of primary sensation, second-order consciousness that gives reflexivity, and a dissociation of the emotional experience from the subject so that the self can turn even the painful sensations to blissful *rasa* states. These attributes suggest that the *rasa* experience is complex and cannot be captured in the simple terms of emotions. The Chinese perspective of emotion refinement reinforces the same argument.

Both the experience of *rasa* and the refinement of emotion are linked with cultivation of the self. In relishing *rasa*, Abhinava maintains that there is no distinction among what is being experienced, the dormant emotion that stimulates the experience of *rasa*, and the self or the subject of experience. Experiencing *rasa*, along these lines, is allowing the self to rest

in itself. *Praśama* or 'peace,' the consequence of *rasa* experience, is an absence of any other emotion. When the texts describe this as a state not having emotions, they only meant the absence of karmically binding emotions. This argument supports the conclusion that, for Abhinava and the aesthete that accepts nine *rasas*, the self is not removed from emotion, but rather, what we consider as the self is *the* very emotion in its most exalted state. In the Chinese context, it is imperative that the creative energy of artists is channeled to cultivate the self. Creativity that lacks self-cultivation, along these lines, also lacks aesthetic value (Sundararajan 2004, 204-14).

Emotional and Cognitive Domains of *Rasa*

As addressed above, *rasas* are not primary emotions and all of them are not independent but are derived from other *rasas*. It has also been mentioned that there are four central emotions considered irreducible by the classical Indian philosophers. The discourse on *rasa* reveals that the *ālambana* or the substrate that supports emotions, can be equated with the 'formal object' of emotion in contemporary discourse.¹² The *uddīpanas* or stimulants in the rise of particular emotions allow us to explore the intentionality of emotions, as the classical aesthetes maintain that these are required for having a *rasa* experience.

Mammaṭa, however, does not stop there. He further elaborates that this *rasa* is experienced by the transcendent means of self-awareness when the experience does not touch anything but the very self. Also noteworthy is the use of the terminology of touch to describe this experience, as 'touch' is the most basic of all sensations. Mammaṭa clarifies that this is not the yogic experience of the self nor is it the construct-free experience (*nirvikalpaka*). In his stated opinion, it is therefore distinct in category to both the transcendent and immanent experience and not in degree alone. He further states that the real transcendence of *rasa* experience is distinct from both these types. This state describes the subject seized by a

particular emotion, so immersed within it that he does not find himself distinct from the euphoric sensation that he is undergoing.

If emotions were dormant to the self, and not extrinsic so that it can be objectively analyzed as the concept of *sthāyībhāva* seems to suggest, they would be similar to ‘hallucinations’ rather than ‘perception’ (Solomon 1984). However, if this were the understanding of Bharata and other classical aesthetes, there would be no point to drama, as the blissful experience of the viewer would be independent of what the perceiver is viewing. While classical drama theories offer a negotiated platform where the subject has the dormant emotions and is free to experience particular emotions of his liking, this experience is nevertheless ‘revealed’ (*abhivyakta*) through external means.

Another question pertinent to this discussion is, what is the most basic of all emotions? *Rasa* experience, although a product of the cocktail of emotions, is in itself the most basic structure for structuring experience. Since this is equated with the self, of the character of bliss (*ānanda*), it is fundamental to all experience. *Rasa*, therefore, is not a product. It is just revealed when the perfect somatic and psychological conditions present themselves. The *abhivyakti* theory of *rasa* relies on the same argument that *rasa* is foundational and that they are only expressed out when the required conditions are met. That a particular emotion can be related to specific somatic conditions is universally accepted by the Indian aesthetes, and this discussion is explicit in the discourse on the *sāttvika bhāvas*.

For a broader cross-cultural study of emotions, five emotions — sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust (the last two of which, however, some researchers consider too simple to be called emotions) (Panksepp 1998) — are translatable across cultures (Ekman and Friesen 1989). Other emotions are not so easily recognizable cross-culturally. Classical Indian aesthetes considered erotism (*rati*), laughter (*hāsya*), heroism, and disgust

as the most basic of all emotions, although not identical to *rasa*. These and other dormant or habitual emotions, nevertheless, become the *rasas* when in commixture with other emotions. Of the listed five emotions, grief and sadness can be linked, based on these being the emotions experienced in reaction to sensing something undesirable (*pratikūlavedanīya*). Fear, anger, and wonder constitute three additional dormant emotions in the *rasa* paradigm. The list of emotions discussed in classical aesthetics also provides us with materials for a cross-cultural study of emotions, as not all emotions can be translated across cultures.

As addressed above, *rasa* experience is transcendent (*lokottara*), or extra-sensory. While *rasa* is experienced, sense organs are not the instruments for the emergence of this experience. While *bhāvas* or emotions are considered intentional, *rasa* is similar to euphoria, lacking an intentional object. This is where the experiencing self is immersed within its own blissful nature. The stimulants do not shine as intentional objects any more, since this experience is removed from the outside world. Mind, in this experience, is as if frozen, and the only medium to grasp this experience is the very body. Due to its transcendence to conceptuality, this experience is equated with yogic absorption where there is no duality of subject and object, and only the distilled experience exists relishing itself.

At the emotional or non-*rasa* level, all experiences are intentional. The process wherein grief can translate into *karuṇa rasa* that gives rise to a blissful experience in feeling compassion, as long as it is in the *bhāva* state, is not described as transcendental. While the studies of Kraut (1986) and Rorty (1988) have highlighted both the intentional and non-intentional domains of emotion, this categorization is not acceptable to the Indian aesthetes because it has overlooked the *vibhāvas* that stimulate these emotions. It is not necessary that the stimulants have to be physically present at the moment of experiencing such emotions though. This calls into question,

is depression or love intentional then? A better question to ask from Indian perspective would be, are they emotions as such?

While *rasa* experience cannot by definition be propositional, even the emotions listed as dormant and subsidiary do not depend upon language for their experience. Similar to perception where there are propositional contents that still cannot be assimilated into belief, so is the case with emotions, even when emotions are found to be propositional. Language cannot be a necessary factor for experiencing emotions. On the other hand, a subtle language, or the bio-syntax of analyzing a particular emotion as pleasant or painful, is present at the very basis of emotional experience.

Can there be the self devoid of emotions? This question is crucial to understanding Abhinava's *śānta rasa*. The dormant emotion for experiencing *śānta*, in Abhinava's opinion, is the very self. The absence of emotions that drive the self outside, in Abhinava's depiction, is in itself an emotional state, albeit a transitory one. *Rasa* experience and yogic experience are distinguished from each other only in the sense that *rasa* is transitory while yogic experience can be permanent.

The concept of *śānta rasa* brings a number of other issues regarding emotion to the fore. In relishing this *rasa*, Abhinava maintains that there is no distinction among what is being experienced; the dormant emotion that stimulates the various experiences of *rasa*, and the self or the subject of experience, all are identical. This is when the self rests within itself. *Prasāma* or 'peace' is an absence of any other emotion. To not have an emotion, accordingly, is to have the self-manifest in its true form, unhindered by the emotions that move it out to the domain of the perfuming (*vāsanā*) of emotions.

In the Abhinavaguptian paradigm, *śānta* is the *mahārasa*, supreme among the *rasas*, as all feelings of aesthetic experience emerge from *śānta rasa* and eventually return to it.¹³ The *rasa* experience manifests due to the dissolution of the ego and the extroverted tendency of the mind. When experiencing *rasa*, all

emotions and concepts submerge into pure consciousness (*samvidviśranti*), and thus do not strive for an outlet. While one chews on *rasa* as if it were betel leaves (*paan*), it is also described as the state of resting in the self. Rather than dissociating self-experience from the sensory experience, this approach makes a case for a non-dual experience that binds self-experience with common-sense experience. The description of *rasa*-experience, often in contradictory terms, helps us understand why *rasa* is not a simple emotion felt in everyday experience, how *rasa* experience does not constitute binding *saṃskāras*, how it can be equated with the enlightening experience of *samādhi*, and how *rasa* is transcendent to other emotions or cognitions. This also explains how the basic tendency of appraisal is overcome in *rasa* experience, as the bodily response is transformed into the *sāttvika bhāvas* when the experience turns into *rasa*. In congruence with the Chinese concept of refinement, not all the mixtures of emotion turn to *rasa*, as they do not necessarily lead to the required transcendence, nor does the dissolution of the corporeal emotions inevitably lead to the all-tranquil self-awareness.

We can have different readings of *rasa*, and even besides *rasa*, there are different models for addressing emotions. It will be wrong to equate the Nyāya philosophical understanding of emotion with that of Abhinavagupta. It will be equally misplaced to grasp the Advaita understanding of emotion and universalize it to make broader cultural claims. Nevertheless, as far as Abhinavagupta's works and the works of the aesthetes under his inspiration are concerned, they make no attempts to separate the self from emotions. Actually, Abhinavagupta's analysis of *śānta rasa* goes one step further and affirms the very self as emotion, because for him, the essential self-nature is the very ground, the dormant emotion in the manifestation of *śānta rasa*. Even though several other aesthetes reject Abhinavagupta's theory with regard to *śānta rasa*, the very notion of enduring or dormant emotions (*sthāyī bhāva*) evokes

the idea that the self is intrinsically emotional, or even better, that emotion is one of the constituents of the self. When *rasa* is manifest, Caṅḍīdāsa makes it explicit that the illuminating aspect (*sattva*) is dominant. Aesthetic relish has been identified with the revelation of the very self of the character of bliss. From Mammaṭa's presentation, we learn that experiencing *rasa* parallels experiencing the Brahman. To the question how this self qua *rasa* is experienced, Mammata explains that this is known by the body, as it is transcendent to the mind. The language of 'touching the entire body, as if entering the heart, throbbing as if immediate to the senses' describes the state of the self experiencing itself in the non-dual mode of bliss and awareness. The scope of self-reflexivity in the process of savoring, found in Chinese aesthetics, helps us come to the same conclusion that the exalted experience, cultivated through poetry for instance, results in self-cultivation and so the refined self is not devoid of emotions.

Conclusions

Contemporary studies of emotion have two central tendencies: the 'cognitive theory' maintains that some kind of evaluative judgment or appraisal is required for emotion, while the 'perceptual theory' views emotion as not requiring judgment, thus relating emotion to feeling. The aesthetic theories of *rasa* and the refinement of emotion offer an intermediate paradigm. Following these theories, although basic emotions are not judgmental, refined aesthetic emotions rest on judgment. Otherwise, no negative emotion could generate an experience that is aesthetically pleasing. Identifying bodily response with emotions becomes problematic at the *rasa* level, because all the painful gestures do not end with the experience of pain. It would also be inaccurate to identify *rasa* with a pleasant sensation, because it is by definition transcendent to commonsense experience (*lokottara*). While pain and pleasure are foundational to experiencing the enduring emotion

(*sthāyībhāva*), they are not about experiencing *rasa*. Furthermore, not all emotions arise with the same intensity and not even the same emotion always has the same intensity.

I have mentioned above that *rasa* experience is karmically neutral, as it does not constitute a karmic complex. This is not the case with emotions and feelings, as they constitute *saṃskāras*. This thesis is possible only when the *rasa* experience is viewed as identical to the exposure to the self, and that being in *rasa* experience is equated with being within the self. Following Abhinava, there are no cognitive activities that accompany the *rasa* state, as it is *lokottara*, of the state of *praśama*, and identical to consciousness or the self. For Abhinava, *rasa* is based on *śānta* or tranquility, and tranquility is in itself an emotive state. To feel peace is not to have an absence of all other emotions, but instead is itself a positive experience of being in peace. This, to Abhinava, is when the self returns to the self and when all conflicts end and the self is not fragmented into pieces of emotions. And since *rasa* experience is karmically neutral, all experiences, when they evoke *rasa*, transcend their intentional and emotive nature and manifest in their true self-nature, and are therefore the experiences of empathy, compassion, or other altruistic experiences that are ingrained with emotion. However, this does not mean that these experiences are karmically binding.

The above discussion on *rasa* and relishing from Indian and Chinese cultures is meant only for provoking discussion. Degrees of emotion, the relation of emotion and feeling, intentionality of emotion, emotion and the self, higher-order consciousness, the appraisal of emotions, and the scope of empathy or mirror emotions, are some of the issues explicit even in this basic reading. Whether there are there some emotions that are ontologically negative is another issue of broader interest. A highly nuanced theory of emotion can be developed if we allow a dialogue among three partners: the Daoist philosophers, Indian aesthetes, and contemporary psychologists and cognitive

scientists. This is a project that is possible to carry out in our generation.

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NOTES

1. Although I have borrowed some concepts from the Chinese aesthetic traditions, my primary focus in this paper is the Indian concept of *rasa* and its application for the studies of emotions. These two cultures not only apply similar metaphors for addressing the aesthetic savoring, their approach to cultivate aesthetic emotion is also similar. The brief parallel is only to invite further scholarship in this area. I am mainly focused upon reading some aspects of *rasa* in light of theories on emotion, and so this paper does not engage all aspects of *rasa*, neither does it reduce *rasa* theory to the contemporary cognitive theories.

In this essay, I restrict myself to the analysis of *Kāvya prakāśa* of Mammaṭa, although I briefly utilize Abhinava's analysis of 'tranquility' (*śānta*) for making some metaphysical claims. This reading nonetheless rests on the contribution of Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta for their works, *Dhvanyāloka* and *Locana*. For the contribution of Abhinava on *śānta*, see Ingalls, Massion, Patwardhan 1990, and the Gerow and Aklujkar (1972) review of this text. I have also borrowed some concepts from the *Kāvya darśa* of Daṇḍin, and *Kāvya mīmāṃsā* of Rājasekhara. For the basic *rasas* and emotions, Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* is the source. On some occasions, I have also read *Sāhityadarpaṇa* of Viśvanātha. Noteworthy in the late medieval India is the development of *bhakti* as *rasa*, and the *Bhagavadbhaktirasāyana* of Madhusūdana is exemplary for that.

2. For discussion, see Sundararajan 2004 and Fridja and Sundararajan 2007.
3. For an introduction to *rasa* and emotions, see Pandey 1959 and 1963; Chari 1976; Chaudhuri 1965a and 1965b; Gerow 2002; Gerow and Reed 1994; and Higgins 2007.
4. In this essay, I will restrict myself to the analysis of *Kāvya darśa* of Mammaṭa, although I will briefly utilize Abhinava's analysis of 'tranquility' (*śānta*) for making some metaphysical claims. For

contributing Abhinava on Śānta, see Ingalls, Massion, Patwardhan 1990.

5. *vyaktaḥ sa tair vibhāvādyaiḥ sthāyībhāvo rasaḥ smrtaḥ || Kāvya prakāśa*, verse 28 cd. The commentary of Caṇḍīdāsa upon this passage is noteworthy.
6. For discussion on śānta rasa, see Masson and Patwardhan 1969; and Raghavan 1940.
7. *taiḥ karaṇādibhir vibhāvādyair vibhāvādivyapadeśānugunām avasthām āpannair vyaktaḥ prāduṣkṛtaḥ sthāyī pratyabhijñāyamānapūrvarūpānugamo ratyādir bhāvo bhāvayate vāsyata iti vāsanātmatayā saḥdayaḥḥdayalīno rasaḥ smrto dhvanikāramatābhisāribhir āmnātaḥ | vyakto vyaktīkṛta eva raso na tu rasaḥ san vyajyata iti vadatā rasasya vyaktirūpatvābhimatapratiśarīrānanyatvaṃ sūcitam |* Caṇḍīdāsa's commentary upon verse 28.
tad uktaṃ śrīmallokanakāraiḥ rasāḥ pratīyanta iti tv odanaṃ pacatītivad vyavahāraḥ | Caṇḍīdāsa's commentary upon the verse 28.
Śāṅkukamete 'pi ratyādī rasaḥ (p. 101, in the commentary of Caṇḍīdāsa.)
8. For cognitive and emotional aspects of the *rasa* theory, see Hogan 1996; Larson 1976; Olivelle 1997; Patankar 1980; Schechner 2001; Thampi 1965; Timalina 2007; and Timm 1991.
9. *ko 'yaṃ bhoga ity āha sattveti | sattvasyodreko rajastamasī abhibhūyāvīrbhāvas tasmāt prakāśaḥ spaṣṭataro ya ānandamayī tadekarūpā yā saṃvit tatra viśrāntiḥ pūrvāparānusandhānādibāhya-prameyavyāsaṅgābhāvaḥ |* Kāvya prakāśa, the commentary of Caṇḍīdāsa, page 104.
10. . . . *sādhāraṇyena pratītaḥ abhivyaktaḥ sāmājīkānāṃ vāsanātmatayā sthitaḥ sthāyī ratyādiko niyatapramātrgatatvena sthito 'pi sādhāraṇopāyabalāt tatkālavigalita-parimitapramātrbhāvavaśonmiṣitavedyāntarasamparkaśūnyāpa rimitabhāvena pramātrā sakalasaḥḥdayasaṃvādabhājā sādhāraṇyena svākāra ivābhinno 'pi gocarīkṛtaś carvyamāṇataikaprāṇo vibhāvādijīvitāvadhīḥ*

*pānakarasanyāyena carvyamāṇaḥ pura iva parisphuran hṛdayam
iva praviśan sarvāṅgīṇam ivāliṅgan anyat sarvam iva tirodadhat
brahmāsvādam ivānubhāvayan alaukikacamatkārakārī
śṛṅgārādiko rasaḥ | Kāvya prakāśa, pages 107- 112.*

11. *laukikapratyakṣādipramāṇatāṭasthyāvabodhaśāliparimitayogi-
jñānavedyātasam-
sparśarahitasvātmamātraparyavasitaparimitetarayogivedanavil
akṣaṇalokottarasvasam-vedanagocara iti pratyeyo 'py
abhidhīyatām| tadgrāhakaṃ ca na nirvikalpakaṃ
vibhāvādīparāmarśanapradhānatvāt | nāpi savikalpakaṃ
carvyamāṇasyālaukikā-nandamayasya
svasamvedanamātrasiddhatvāt|ubhayābhāvasvarūpasya
cobhayātmakatvam api pūrvavallokottaratām eva gamayati na
tu virodham iti śrīmad ācāryābhīnavaguptapādāḥ | Mammaṭa
114-116.*
12. See De Sousa 2007, Kolnai 2008, and Mulligan in Goldie 2010.
13. *Nāṭyaśāstra*, pp. 334-35. See also Thampi 1965.