

In Defence of an Indian Approach to the Psychology of Emotion

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The indigenous Indian approach to the psychology of emotions, which originated in Bharata's ancient classical work called the Nāṭyaśāstra, is articulated and its conceptual structure is situated in the contemporary psychological scholarship and the discourse on emotion. In particular an analysis of Bhakti Rasa is presented to illustrate how life gets transformed and lifted to higher levels of spirituality. The issues pertaining to theory and method in appreciating psychological reality are examined. It is concluded that emotions are complex phenomena that need different "paradigms" appropriate for understanding the different aspects.

Keywords: Bhāva, Bhakti, Emotion, Metatheory, Paradigm, Psychophysiological, *Rasa*

In this essay I wish to defend an indigenous Indian approach to the psychology of emotions, which originated in Bharata's ancient classical work called the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It has been explained in the language and idiom of contemporary psychology in a few publications within the past decade (Paranjpe & Bhatt, 1997; Paranjpe, 1998; Shweder & Haidt, 2000; Jain, 2002). Shweder and Haidt in fact recognize Bharata's approach as a "cultural psychology," and point out how in Menon and Shweder's (1994) research in Orissa the experience of emotion in contemporary Indian society is shaped by traditional religious myths. In discussions that followed my recent presentations on the theory of emotion that developed in Bharata's tradition, it was clear that this traditional view did not often strike to many as a legitimate *psychology* of emotion. In this paper I wish to explain why the *rasa-śāstra* approach may be legitimately called psychology, and indicate where it may stand in the spectrum of contemporary Western approaches.

Before I begin such a discussion, it is necessary to first sketch the core concepts and insights from the *rasa śāstra*

tradition. This should provide readers unfamiliar with these a minimum necessary background. Those familiar with the tradition may simply skip this sketch and go on to the discussion that follows.

Brief Overview of Indigenous Concepts and Insights about Emotion

While mainly interested in developing guidelines for actors and directors of plays, Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* identified eight major and thirty three minor emotions. In his view, the major emotions are erotic feeling (*rati*), mirth (*hāsa*), sorrow (*śoka*), anger (*krodha*), energy (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*), and astonishment (*viśmaya*). He thought of these as major or basic emotions (*sthāyī bhāva*) for two main reasons: because they are more sustaining in experience than the relatively short lived minor emotions, and also because they are common to humans as well as animals. Bharata's list of major emotions overlaps, but does not coincide, with the list of basic emotions suggested by contemporary psychologists like Ekman and Plutchik. Like modern psychologists, many scholars who followed in Bharata's tradition traced the roots of emotions in drives (*vāsanās*) common to man and beast. They also tried to identify the environmental factors that tend to trigger the arousal of various emotions. Their writings exhibit keen analytical skills and detailed descriptions of an exhaustive

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range of behaviors and experience. The main purpose of Bharata's detailed studies was primarily to provide guidelines for actors and directors of drama. We need not concern here with details of Bharata's account of emotions, but focus instead on the psychological insights contained in his tradition.

The concept of *rasa*, meaning aesthetic mood, is the most prominent among the contributions of scholars in Bharata's tradition. The word *rasa* literally means essence or relish, and it is used to describe the aesthetic experience that follows from watching the expression of emotions in various forms of art, especially drama. The main idea is that spectators of drama vicariously experience fear, anger, sorrow or other such emotions, but with a difference. The difference is that such "secondary" or vicarious experience of emotions, while manifesting some essential features of the emotions portrayed in drama, often lacks the negative aspects of emotions like sorrow or disgust that usually accompany their primary or direct experience in life. Lacking the "sting" experienced in real life, their artistic portrayal becomes "enjoyable." Why should such transformation of emotion be possible? It is suggested that spectators can temporarily leave their pressing mundane concerns at home, as it were, and the theatrical experience enables the aesthetes (*rasikas*) to rise above normal and pressing concerns of the ego.

An important development in understanding the nature of emotional experience came about when scholars in Bharata's tradition recognized that spectators of a drama collectively share a specific aesthetic mood grounded in a basic emotion, and raised a simple but important question: Whose emotions are they that are aroused (and transformed) while witnessing a drama? The answers were that they could not belong to either the character (who could simply be imaginary), the playwright (who may have never been separated from his lover whose pangs of separation he portrayed), the actor (who may be laughing before as well as after convincingly crying on stage), or the spectator (think of a honeymooning couple feeling sad while viewing Rāma bemoaning his separation from Sītā). Having ruled out all the major contributors to a drama as legitimate "owners" in whom to "locate" the shared emotions, the *rasa* theorists proposed the concept of the "generalization" (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) of emotions. This apparently simple idea has profound implications for recognizing the nature of emotions as a phenomenon not restricted to individuals, let alone lodged in bodily tissues, but as belonging to a trans-individual domain of reality.

As the tradition initiated by Bharata continued to grow over the centuries, new insights were added. While Bharata

had argued that there are only eight aesthetic moods, after much argument, many scholars agreed to add quietude (*śānta*) as the ninth *rasa*. In late medieval times, Jīva Gosvāmi and Rūpa Gosvāmi systematically applied the insights of the various theories of *rasa* (*rasa-siddhānta*) in understanding the nature of religious devotion (*bhakti*). Their main point is that love is the most basic of all emotions, and that reflects an all-encompassing Celestial Love, or *bhakti-rasa*. In their view, prayer, chanting, praise of the Divine, and other common expressions account for lower levels of devotion (*gauṇī bhakti*). These are but means (*sādhana*) to reach higher forms of devotion (*parā bhakti*), which manifest in increasingly intimate forms of role play vis-à-vis the Divine. According to the Gosvāmis, the story of Kṛṣṇa narrated in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* provides an illustration of how Divine appearing in a human form was intensely loved by various persons in Kṛṣṇa's life - as a son, brother, friend, master, lover, and even hated as an enemy. They demonstrate how the life of each person was transformed and was lifted to higher levels of spirituality. It is not uncommon in India to find ordinary persons who choose to be guided by characters of epics or mythological texts in being a good son, brother, or follower and so on.

Inspired by several examples of the past, and guided by the stories in the epics and numerous "myths," some rare individuals take on very seriously the role of a child, brother, servant, or friend vis-à-vis a personalized deity of their choice - Kṛṣṇa, Rāma or Kālī. In such cases, love usually experienced in common human relationships gets transformed into the highest possible form of love. According to the Gosvāmis, what is experienced by ardent and genuine devotees as a result of genuine and intense devotion is *bhakti rasa*, which is all pervasive, all-encompassing, and supremely joyous. For them, that is what the Divine is all about: Celestial Love. A perfect devotee is said to experience a total self-transformation; a narrow ego is transcended, and her/his behavior manifests extreme selflessness, unlimited compassion and supreme joy.

Devotion in the form of role play implies the deliberate cultivation of a serious, intense, and long term relationship with a specific image of the Divine. This type of practice is qualitatively different from prayer, worship and other common forms of devotion, and yields different outcomes. The Gosvāmis not only rank role play higher than prayer, worship and other common forms of devotion, they further suggest a gradation of the different forms of role play in terms of degrees of intimacy. Thus, trying to be a servant to the Divine implies less intimacy, than say becoming a son, or friend, or lover, each implying greater intimacy. Greater intimacy implies deeper love. Indeed, following the

Bhāgavatam (7.1.29), the Gosvāmis insist that even trying to become a sworn enemy of the Divine helps in bringing about a highest level of self-transformation. What matters is the intensity and one-pointedness of emotions directed towards the Divine. It is implied here that emotion can be intentionally intensified and directed toward a single target. Individuals who successfully practice role play so as to reach the greatest level of self-transformation are admittedly rare. However, over the past several centuries, India has witnessed life histories of great saints who attained self-realization through the cultivation of intense love for the Divine as friend (*Nāmdēv*, *Tukārām*), servant (*Janābār*), child (*Rāmākṣṇa* *Paramahansa*), or lover (*Meerā*). Such instances serve as “case histories” that provide a kind of empirical support for the validation of the Gosvāmis’ theory of *bhakti* as a comprehensive *rasa* with capacity for profound self-transformation.

Here we may ask: how is such self-transformation brought about? The *rasa* theory suggests an answer. As noted, the vicarious experience of emotions while witnessing its artistic presentation allows a person to temporarily set aside the mundane concerns of the ego, thereby overcoming the hurt of negative emotions and turning them joyous. The actor, too, temporarily distances oneself from one’s real-life identification with various roles, and becomes part of the process of sharing of emotions. Both the actor and the spectator transcend their respective ego-involvements for a while. The genuine, intense, and long term role play of a great devotee takes this process of self-transcendence to a much higher level; her/his ego dissolves in the most intimate encounter with the Divine, which is the all-encompassing Supreme Self (*paramātman*). By placing dramatic role play in the league of devotional role play *rasa* theory does not indicate that the joy of the aesthete is on par with that of a great devotee. The joyous experience of the aesthete is similar, they say, but not the same as, the supreme joy (*paramānanda*) of a great devotee or a successful yogi.

Before we examine this perspective it is necessary to take a quick look at the broader context and world view in which it developed. The *rasa* theory is embedded in a holistic view of the human condition in which emotional experience is viewed in relation to the human condition, and coping with its problems. The individual (*jīva*) is thought of as an experiencer (*bhoktā*), whose positive as well as negative affect (*bhoga*) is taken as a whole -- a universe in itself (*bhāva-viśva*). The main reason for this conclusion is that all the pleasures that success, wealth and power can provide are ultimately insufficient to match the ever-increasing expectations for more of everything. Yet, it is

claimed, that a state of bliss that transcends pleasure and pain is indeed attainable. *Bhakti*, or religious devotion, is developed as but one of the many technologies for self-transformation (*yogas*) that promise to help attain a lasting and exceptionally high state of inner peace and bliss.

Contemporary Views of Emotion

To help appreciate the place of the *rasa* theory approach in the context of contemporary psychology, it is necessary to see how emotions are viewed in contemporary psychology. In the third edition of his textbook titled *The Psychology of Emotion* Strongman (1987) counted and explained over thirty different theories of emotion. But in the fourth edition published barely nine years later, he counted over 150 of them. It is neither possible nor necessary to summarize, or even list, such a vast array. To keep it simple, Strongman clustered them into about a dozen categories with illustrative explanations of a few prominent theories in each category. In a similar fashion, let me suggest a select few categories of emotion theories in contemporary psychology.

1. *psychophysiological*
2. *evolutionary*
3. *cognitive science*
4. *cognitive appraisal*
5. *social constructionist*
6. *phenomenological/existential*
7. *rasa theory*

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but only a selective one suggested for the specific purpose of comparison. The ordering of the categories is not arbitrary; it is based on my understanding of metathoretical foundations on which the diverse theories rest. This understanding is based on issues that may be characterized by a set of pairs of bipolar dimensions (see Table 1) that, in my opinion, account for major differences among the diverse theories. The placement of the *rasa* theory approach at one end of a continuum is deliberate, and is intended to help make sense of where this indigenous Indian approach might fit in a larger metatheoretical framework.

These bipolar dimensions are not thought of as dichotomous categories that force an either/or choice, but continua along which one can fashion a specific position on a particular contentious issue. They are matters of implicit or explicit *preference* reflected in ways of theorizing. The choice of these particular dimensions as well as the ordering of perspectives on them is simply a heuristic device designed for the current purpose of comparison.

Table 1 Metatheoretical Dimensions Used in Conceptualizing Emotions

Bipolar dimensions	Issues concerned mainly with
Matter vs. mind/consciousness Natural science vs. human science	Nature of reality (ontology) -do-
Objectivism vs. subjectivism Fact vs. interpretation Molecularism vs. holism Reduction vs. construction	How knowledge is obtained and validated (epistemology) -do-
Control vs. emancipation	Overarching goals and values guiding the search for knowledge (axiology)
Knowledge vs. wisdom	
Science vs. religion Controlling nature vs. self-control	Dominant themes of culture: praxis, modus operandi

Discussion

To help gain a perspective on the vast array of differing perspectives on emotion, it would be useful to take a dip into philosophical issues that provide the conceptual foundations of various theories. It would also help to take a historical view, so that we understand the differences among theories in terms of changing intellectual climate which tends to bring in new trends in theorizing. On the philosophical side, we may first consider assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) that provide an inescapable foundation for theories, then views about the nature of knowledge and criteria for validation of knowledge claims (epistemology), and values that sustain overarching goals for the pursuit of knowledge (axiology). Finally, it will be useful to identify certain features of the Western and Indian cultural traditions that have nurtured the growth of knowledge in different directions.

Assumptions about the nature of reality: Ever since Descartes conceptually cleaved reality into two radically different domains of mind and matter, a polarization began between advocates of physicalism on the one hand, and those who believed in the irreducibility of consciousness on the other. In keeping with this division, by about the third decade of the twentieth century, modern (Western) psychology began to polarize between behaviorism and phenomenology. However, phenomenology and existentialism remained a mainly European phenomenon, and after WWII psychology began to be dominated by America, where behaviorism flourished. Behaviorism developed in close alliance with

logical positivism (Smith, 1986). In the wake of this development, typical existential approach to emotion such as Sartre's (1939/1984) became marginalized, and the psychophysiological approach to emotion dominated the mainstream of psychology. Such dominance is illustrated in Woodworth and Schlosberg's (1954) influential textbook, which marks activation of physico-chemical phenomena in the parasympathetic system as the hallmark of emotions.

During the first half of the twentieth century, physics was the leading science with great strides taken in quantum theory, relativity, and major applications such as the creation of the atom bomb. Against this background, logical positivism took physics as the ideal for the pursuit of knowledge, and with the advent of behaviorism, psychology tended to develop "physics envy" (Leahey, 1987). Skinner turned the term "mentalism" into a matter of obloquy, and referring to the subjective aspects of emotion became a sign of bad manners. Psychophysiological studies, with the emphasis on observable manifestations of emotion, flourished. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the discovery by Watson and Crick in the early fifties of the structure of the DNA, microbiology became the leading science. The world view it advanced was molecularistic as reflected in Francis Crick's (1966) tome: *"Of molecules and men."* The message was: there is nothing to human beings than a bunch of molecules in motion. In keeping with this entrenching world view, the root of emotions was to be located in chemicals such as the adrenalin and dopamine. Emotion research became dominated by focus on neurology; the amygdala region of the brain was thought to be seat of emotions.

With the publication in 1975 of E.O. Wilson's *Sociobiology*, evolutionary psychology began to locate roots of emotion in parts of the neural system that were ostensibly "hard wired" in the course of evolution. Evolutionary perspective is currently thriving in emotion research. Like the psychophysiological approach, this one also tends to ignore the experiential or subjective side of emotions. Cognitive psychology, which began in the mid twentieth century as a reaction against the behaviorists' expulsion of the mind from psychology, became eventually dominated by "cognitive science." The general trend in cognitive science is to view the computer, rather than an organism, as the model for explaining human nature. When applied to the study of emotions, knowledge is reduced to information, cognitive appraisal to information processing in "emotion programs" functioning like computer programs embedded in neural circuitry. Once again, the natural science approach dominates, and subjective aspect of emotions is ignored.

According to Tangney and Fischer (1995), an “affect revolution” began some time in the seventies to correct the error of ignoring the experiential aspect of emotions. They note that, while the psychophysiological approach focused on emotions like anger and fear typical of fight or flight reactions in of animals, typically human emotions such as embarrassment, shame, guilt and pride were ignored. In their view, this latter group of typically human emotions are grounded in social reality, and are “self-conscious” in nature. Indeed, even in psychoanalytic approaches to emotion, the emphasis had been on the unconscious bases or emotion, and not on the conscious aspects. Attention to the conscious aspects of emotion is recently increasing with continuing research on the social emotions (Tangney & Fischer, 1995) and with the advent of the social constructionist approaches.

Turning now to the Indian side, it may be noted that for Bharata both physical and experiential aspects of emotion seemed equally important. In the history of Indian thought, there is no clear parallel of the “mind-body problem” resulting from the dichotomous views of mind and matter. Indeed, the mind is often viewed as material in nature, and a zone of consciousness beyond mental processes is widely recognized. There is of course a fully materialist school of thought; the Lokāyata school of Cārvāka and others. It views humans as mere collocation of atoms of matter in a way similar to the modern materialists. There are monists and there are dualists in Indian thought, but the dualist Sāṅkhya system conceives of a sentient principle, called Puruṣa, which is not reducible to the principle of materiality called Prakṛti – of which the mind (*citta*) is integral part. The dominant school of Advaita Vedānta lies on the opposite side of the materialist Lokāyata; it views consciousness (*cit*) as a central feature of the single principle called Brahman, which is said to pervade and entirely constitute reality. The Gosvāmīs generally tend to shy away from ontological issues, and they disapprove the strict monism of the Advaita since monism is antithetical to the basic duality of deity and devotee. And yet, the Gosvāmīs think of the ultimate reality as Brahman, just as the Advaitins do. Although Brahman is thought to be without qualities and essentially indescribable, for convenience it is characterized as Truth (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), and Bliss (*ānanda*). For the Gosvāmīs, the ultimate goal of devotion (*bhakti*) is to become completely absorbed in the Bliss (*ānanda*), which is the essence (*rasa*) of Brahman, the ultimate principle of reality.

Thus, in the *rasa* theory approach to emotion, consciousness is clearly most fundamental. At first blush, such emphasis on consciousness would appear to

involve some kind of mental monism. It should be clear, however, that *rasa* theory cannot slide into solipsism as did Berkeleyan mental monism, for the experience of *rasa* is collectively shared. The primacy of consciousness in the world view of *rasa* theory brings it closer to the existential perspective. However, there is a fundamental difference between the existential and *rasa* theory views of consciousness; while the former equates consciousness with mental processes and emphasizes intentionality as its fundamental feature, the *rasa* theorists recognize “Pure Consciousness”, a state that is devoid of mental content or processes and is non-intentional in nature. Space does not permit a discussion of the nature of Pure Consciousness here; it is explained recently by Forman (1990). Given this distinctive view of consciousness, the *rasa* theory approach is not placed in the same category as the existential approach, but is placed on a farther position on the spectrum beyond the existential approach.

Before concluding this section on assumptions about the nature of reality, it may be noted that the prevailing view today is that life somehow arose from a soup of chemicals in the primordial matter, and that consciousness arose in the course of evolution as a means to adaptation of organisms to the environment. This product of evolution, it is often surmised, is a causally impotent epiphenomenon. The assumption of the causal impotency of consciousness implies that emotions cannot be agentic; they must be enjoyed or suffered even as a patient receives afflictions whether he likes it or not. It should be noted, however, that the basic idea that matter came first is a mere hypothesis incapable of either empirical or rational proof, or refutation for that matter. The question as to which came first, matter or consciousness, is unanswerable just like the question “which came first, the egg or the chicken?” There is a strong trend in the Indian tradition, which believes that consciousness came first; matter later on. The Vedas suggest this idea as a matter of speculation, not as defensible truth or an unchallengeable dogma. Sri Aurobindo presents a complex worldview suggesting how consciousness is gradually progressing through increasing levels of consciousness in the course of cosmic and organic evolution. The contrasting cosmologies, when entrenched over long periods of time, are bound to result in differing visions, including differing perspectives on the nature of consciousness and emotion.

Assumptions about how knowledge is obtained, and how knowledge claims are to be validated: When Wundt launched the project of modern psychology, he adopted the method of experiment fashioned after the natural science model. However, he limited its scope to what was

experienced upon the immediate impact of the appearance of a stimulus in the perception of the stimulus. However, in the area of social psychology (*Volkerpsychologie*), where the life is deeply affected by culture and higher cognitive functions such as thinking, he thought that the methods of the human sciences were essential. The roots of Dilthey's division between the natural and human sciences (*Naturwissenschaften and Geisteswissenschaften*) can be traced back to the distinction in late medieval times between knowing God either through study of His works (nature) or His words (the Bible). At the dawn of modern science Bacon preferred the former, rejecting the latter as having to rely on interpretations, which tend to lapse into endless iterations of new interpretations of old ones. By the time Wundt came on the scene, the observational methods of natural science had already provided significant dividends, thereby establishing their prestige. And when Wundt's followers in Würzburg and Cornell failed to arrive at a consensus about what was revealed through introspection, Watson not only declared the method of introspection null and void, but also exclusively turned to the natural sciences for inspiration with gusto. While this much is well known, less well known is the fact that his views about the importance of observation of behavior over looking into the mind impressed the logical positivists in Vienna. With the development in tandem of behaviorism and logical positivism, American psychology became deeply influenced by the logical positivist view of knowledge.

Logical positivism follows its precursor British empiricism in viewing experience as the primary source for all knowledge, but tends to limit the definition of experience to sensory experience of objects that is publicly accessible. Verification through experience thus defined is the *only* source it accepts as the way for validation for knowledge claims. The obvious implication of this for emotion research is simply that experiential verification of how one feels under even well defined conditions is out of the question. Knowledge of anything that happens in the "private" domain of experience is not open to *public* verification, and is therefore treated as if it does not exist. That takes major part of emotions beyond the range of the knowable as far as logical positivism is concerned. Aside from this, there are implications from the view that physics is the ideal form of knowing. It brings in some implicit assumptions borrowed from physics: that everything is made of atoms, and that the whole can be (completely) known from the understanding of parts – key ideas that were great help in physics. Logical positivists derived the principle of reduction from the extension of this assumption: the experience of pain is completely reducible to its physical substrate: pain in the

tooth is nothing but decay of the underlying tissues. If the status of particles of the body is the only way to understand humans, the experience of pain or pleasure, happiness or disgust, means nothing unless it is equated with some concomitant observable condition of some bodily tissues. Further, the causal chain was thought to begin with movement of subatomic particles; explaining anything involves going from concrete to abstract, simple to complex, or "bottom up." The methodology of the psychophysiological approach in its essence follows these views derived from logical positivism.

Definitive critiques of the positivist views of knowledge began in the early nineteen fifties with the work of philosophers such as Quine, Popper and numerous others. This is not the place to examine the logical positivist epistemology. Although Passmore (1967) declared the death of positivism long back, it continues to provide the foundational underpinnings of popular methodologies in psychology today. Operational definitions, for instance, are part of the surviving influence of the early inroads of positivism into psychology. Social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology, recognized the problems with positivist epistemology and took an "interpretive turn" (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979). In psychology of emotion, although the importance of interpretation was recognized in the early days of cognitive appraisal theories, the full impact of the need for an interpretive turn came when the social constructionist approaches were introduced in emotion research.

The very word "construction" stands in sharp opposition to the positivist principle of reduction. Whereas psychophysiological and evolutionist approaches viewed emotions as strictly "natural" phenomena, the anthropologist Lutz (1988) flatly talked about "unnatural emotions." According to the cultural psychologist Ratner (1989), "although biology provides the potentiating substratum for emotions" (p. 227), "nothing in our nature tells us *that* we will, *when* we will, or *how* we will experience these emotions" (p. 226; emphasis added). In other words, how one feels depends not on the biochemical activation in the body, but on how one construes and interprets the situation in the immediate socio-cultural context. The social constructionist view takes emotions out of their putative location within bodily tissues, and places them right in the middle of social reality.

We may now see why, with its thesis of the "generalization" of emotions in the communal space of an audience, the *rasa* theory can be placed closer to the social constructionist approach and far away from the psychophysiological approach in the spectrum of theories.

Given the roots of *rasa* theory in dramaturgy and aesthetics, it strikes a chord with Ed Tan's work titled "Emotion, art and the humanities" (2000).

Values, overarching goals, and dominant themes of culture: When Francis Bacon initiated the science project, the goal for the pursuit of knowledge was to control nature for the benefit of humans: for the "improvement of the estate of man" as he called it. Watson followed this model in declaring "prediction and control" as the primary goal for the pursuit of psychological knowledge. Like Bacon, it was assumed that knowledge was to be used for benign and benevolent purposes. Skinner, who followed Watson's foot steps realized that following the natural science model involved "looking out" toward objects out in the world, which means that psychology was to be the science of the "other one," not of oneself. Science, it may be noted, silently places the scientist outside of the domain that she or he studies, a domain which is looked *at*.

The difference between focusing on controlling someone or something in the outer world, and focusing instead on controlling something in or about oneself, must manifest in the kind of application of knowledge that follows from such difference. Two contrasting examples can illustrate this point in regard to applied work following from differing theories of emotion. In an interesting application of psychophysiological theory of emotion, Jose Delgado (1969, 1973) located the center for rage in the brain of a bull in the rink, and stopped the bull right in the middle of a raging attack on the matador. This was done by sending an electric current through an electrode planted in the exact region that controls emotions in the bull. Delgado expected to use such a technique for remote control of emotions in humans to help create a "psychocivilized society." This approach clearly fits the utopian ideological mould of science from Bacon to Skinner. In sharp contrast, the Gosvāmis suggest a method for self-control of emotions such that one deliberately *intensifies* an emotion typical of a self-chosen role relationship toward a deity. Indeed, emotion research has recently advanced in examining how emotions can be regulated (Gross, 2007), but its thrust tends to remain within the Baconian mould that focuses on changing something or someone other than oneself. Under differing conditions, we need self control as well as control of others; indeed, traditional spiritual disciplines like *yoga* and *bhakti* nicely complement modern science.

Bringing things like spiritual disciplines and devotion for the Divine into a discourse on science may be irksome, indeed offensive, to many a modern psychologist. This is understandable in light of the development of science in the teeth of opposition by the Church. Many psychologists,

especially those who see themselves as scientists, seem to nurse Galileo's wounds at the hands of the infamous Inquisition. However, the very concept of God is radically different in the Christian and Hindu traditions. In Hinduism, God did not make man in His own image; rather, a devotee, for her or his own convenience, views the formless and infinite Brahman in a finite form of her or his choice. The particular shape of an idol is happily left to the imagination of an artist, and the idol's accoutrements are a matter of a devotee's or priest's fancy. The idea is to go from a concrete symbol, such as an idol, to an abstract God, so that love of a particular image transforms into Love for all creatures. Having left the form of worship entirely to individual choice, rather than a matter to be controlled by an ecclesiastical authority, and having focused on experience rather than belief systems, the Hindu tradition did not witness a conflict with a "Church" whose beliefs would be undermined by discoveries of science. There may as well be some commonality in devotion to the Divine across religions, but specific forms of devotion are highly diverse and shaped differently in long and well entrenched traditions. Viewing one tradition in the image of another can be as disastrous as thinking that emotional experience must be universal, and not distinctively shaped by cultures.

The problem of acceptable evidence

To the extent that emotions are a matter of individual experience, the problem of ascertaining their nature stumbles over what philosophers have termed the "the problem of other minds." The private nature of emotional experience would forever keep them out of the range of public verification. Experiencing a *rasa*, however, is a different matter since it is supposed to be a generalized form manifesting in the public domain. Any spectator with aesthetic sensibilities witnessing a play can share an aesthetic mood such as mirth or pathos and experientially verify its nature. The *rasa* theorists clarify, however, that such verification is limited to aesthetes (*rasikas*) who are not wrapped up in their own egoic concerns. Insofar as the devotional mood (*bhakti rasa*) is concerned, one could set up a program of presentation of such a mood in powerful singing of poems composed by highly acclaimed devotees (*bhakti sangeet*). Shared experience of the putative creation of the devotional mood in such a situation can be an experiential demonstration. Such a demonstration would be similar to a Gestalt psychologist setting up the demonstration of a jumping shadow experiment to help validate the claim that perception involves filling in the gaps in what is given in experience.

In a recent attempt to set up an experiential verification

of the nature of *bhakti rasa* through the presentation of some of the best devotional poems sung by world class singers, psychologist colleagues seemed to be unable understand, let alone be convinced, about its purpose. The same is true about the argument that the life histories of great devotees constituted at least partial evidence of the efficacy in bringing about in them a self-transformation leading to selflessness and compassion. My response to this reaction was that, the failure to convince the listeners was a case of what the sociologist of knowledge Mannherim called “talking past one another.” In other words, scientists deeply involved in differing paradigms often fail to meaningfully communicate with each other because words do not mean the same thing when understood within the differing conceptual frameworks founded on different assumptions and guided by differing values.

The difficulties in communication in such instances arise from differences in the kind of evidence that differing paradigms demand. Trained in modern Western models, for a majority of psychologists today, doing psychology has come to mean, most commonly, either of two types of approach: either (1) “running subjects” in an experimental paradigm, and test the results by analysis of variance, or (2) use “instruments,” mostly meaning paper-and-pencil tests to collect data, and interpret these through multivariate statistics. Anything other than this does not seem to qualify as psychology; it lacks the kind of evidence one is accustomed to accept.

Globalization will fail to benefit from the possible enrichment through a worldwide exchange of differing paradigms even within, let alone across, national boundaries. This reminds me of the anthropologist Malinowski’s suggestion for the need to understand an alien culture from the “native’s point of view.” It will be useful if we recognize that emotions are complex phenomena that need different “paradigms” appropriate for understanding the different aspects, and that those accustomed to one paradigm should be able to try understand the positions of others from the others’ viewpoint.

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COMMENTS

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Brain studies in the last decade or so along with spectacular discoveries of the yet unmapped neural spaces and processes brought forth with it a renewed but humanistic approach to the study of emotions. The interest in emotions has a history that commences from the Greeks, Romans and the Asians. If we look at the major philosophical polemics in the ancient past and medieval period, we cannot miss the ‘passion’ with which rationality is defended over the ‘frivolous’ or more ‘feminine’ emotions. For Stoics emotions (apatheia) were mistaken judgments and are to be avoided, with the parallel process of cultivating reason. Plato and Aristotle considered emotions to be natural potencies and hence cannot be avoided. Inspired by the inferior status of emotions the schools of behaviorism and the present cognitive sciences are somewhat based on the idea that emotion is not something causal, or essential but a response that could be measured with the help of changes in physiological parameters. In the contemporary world, the birth of new disciplines such as neuropsychiatry and neurophilosophy add further nuances to this theory with the introduction of intersubjective features like ‘empathy’, ‘mirror neurons’, and how they abet the understanding of the neurocognitive aspects of emotion.

Now, there is a major challenge to the reductionist as well as romanticist views about emotion in the Indian culture. The challenge is primarily introduced by presenting emotion not as an antithetical concept (to reason), and not even a pure affect entity. The concept of emotion (not an apt translation, though, for the Sanskrit terms) is discussed in a systemic manner. The Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali-yogasutra and *Nāṭyaśāstra* present emotion as a complex entity that includes physical, affective, creative, ethical and spiritual components. The presentation of *vishada* experienced by Arjuna is the inaugural emotion presented in the Gita that invites the reader to the philosophical discussion upon depression and self-catharsis followed by self-realisation. *Vishada* is a unique ‘emotion’, so to say, that it has its doors opened to three ways – the moral, affective and spiritual. It is on this account that *vishada* is very much connected with yoga.

The model that is presented by Patanjali to understand

emotions is a spatial one. His Yoga psychology is woven around the discussion of five mental planes (*citta bhumi*), five cognitive modes (*citta vrtti*), nine mental afflictions (*antaraya*) and five causes of pain (*citta klesa*). The concept of *citta klesa*, in particular, is rooted in whole experience. *Klesa* is the mental affliction and causes mind-modifications that are pleasurable (*klisha vrtti*) and unpleasant (*aklisha-vrtti*). Patanjali enumerates five causes of pain - *avidya*, *asmita*, *raga*, *dvesa*, *abhinivesa* – Self-ignorance, I-sense, likes and dislikes and attachment to body and life. What is interesting here is that the nature of these five causes is not wholly mental but also share attributes that concerns the person as an individual. It relates to existential and ontological pains. Afflictions arise from the person as a whole. What is pivotal in this model is that the centre of discussion is not emotion as a discrete affect entity. The complex states of mind are given focus, from the context of which cognition, conation and affect are discussed.

A major debate about emotion is its relation to (facial) expression. Charles Darwin brought this issue into the light of scientific discussion in his “The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals”, first published in 1872. He asked why this particular expression for a particular emotion, and his answer formed part of his demonstration of the continuity of the species and was thus crucial to his evolutionary theory. A major critique to the coinage of ‘emotional expression’ and the antecedent place of emotion was given by a French physician named Israel Waynbaum (1907) who argued that subjective experience of emotions follow the expression (muscular movement) of it. The crux of Waynbaum’s theory is that behavior, i.e. facial movements, precedes the experience of emotions that involve vascular changes. He postulated that stimuli trigger muscular movements that result in cerebral blood flow associated with facial emotional expressions.

Whether the expression of emotion leads to the subsequent experience of it or does the emotion cause movements of the eighty odd muscles of the face is a topic that has encouraged psychologists, philosophers as well as physicians over the last century. A similar discussion

has happened in the Indian scenario but spanning over a thousand years. The debate is about the origin of *rasa* and the role of *bhāva*. How an (aesthetic) emotion is produced and communicated to another (spectator) person. The *rasa* theory advanced by Bharata Muni perhaps did not anticipate such a debate to follow his times, mainly because he was interested in developing a model of body, mind and spirit jointly evoking the aesthetic experience. However the empirical details of the facial features (eyelids, movement of pupil, corner of the eye and so on) and different body movements that communicate specific emotions are described with intricate precision in his magnum opus, *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

In this article the author presents his central thesis of a humanistic model of emotions with particular instances from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Bhakti* literature. With his signature style of simple but insightful analysis the author demonstrates that the *rasa* theory is a good example for an indigenous approach to the psychology of emotions.

The paper begins with an overview of the indigenous concepts of emotion. Bharata enlists eight major and thirty-three minor emotions in his work *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The basic emotions arise from the primary mental states (*sthayi bhāva*). The author chooses to translate *bhāva* too as an emotion. Perhaps a causal connection is easier to be worked out if we consider *bhāva* as a primary mental state. When compared to the studies of Ekman (2004), Plutchik et.al. the *bhāva* of Bharatamuni lean towards a positive affect than a negative one. Bharatamuni too considered the basic (and universal nature) of emotions and that they are common to humans as well as animals – “The difference is that such secondary or vicarious experience of emotions, while manifesting some essential features of the emotions portrayed in drama, often lacks the negative aspects of emotions like sorrow or disgust...”. (Paranjpe, p. 4).

The positive aspect of emotions is further exemplified in the *rasa*-siddhanta of the *Bhakti* tradition in the medieval times. Jiva Gosvāmi and Rupa Gosvāmi systematically applied the insights of the various theories of *rasa* in understanding the nature of religious devotion (*bhakti*). The key idea of the Gosvāmis is that love is the most basic of all emotions and it reflects an all-encompassing celestial love. The author emphasizes a significant aspect of the Indian approach to the psychology of emotions when he writes that “what matters is the intensity and one-pointedness of emotions directed towards the divine – “the Gosvāmis insist that even trying to become a sworn enemy of the divine helps in bringing about a highest level of self-transformation” (Paranjpe, p. 5). Gosvāmi’s theory of

bhakti is a “comprehensive *rasa*” with capacity for profound self-transformation.

How is such a self-transformation brought about? It is brought about because the actor and spectator transcend their respective involvements for a while. The transcendence experienced by the actor is both transphysical and transmental since there is the combined use of body and mind. The transcendence experienced by the spectator is transmental (Menon, 2003).

The *rasa* theory is embedded in a holistic view of the human condition in which emotional experience is viewed in relation to the human condition, and coping with its problems. The author presents an overview of how emotions are approached in contemporary psychology, so as to understand the place of *rasa* theory. He enlists a few but major categories of emotion theories in the contemporary psychology such as (i) psychophysiological, (ii) evolutionary, (iii) cognitive science, (iv) cognitive appraisal, (v) social constructionist, (vi) phenomenological/existential. To further discuss the place of *rasa*, the author goes into the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, polarisation in psychology between physicalism and irreducibility of consciousness, neurochemical correlates, evolutionary perspective and so on.

What is pertinent in the context of the discussion of *rasa* is the “affect revolution”, as described by the author, that came up with the social constructionist approaches. The social groundedness and experiential nature of emotions were stressed by these approaches. In the recent times, the work on empathy (Thompson, 2001) has brought forth the significance of intersubjectivity and spiritual aspects of such mental dispositions.

In the further discussion the author presents significant ideas such as assumptions about nature of reality and knowledge claims, the absence of mind-body problem in the East, and the fundamental nature of consciousness. In the concluding session the author with greater details defends the theory of *rasa* on the basis of aspects of devotion and sadharanikaraṇa – “Shared experience of the putative creation of the devotional mood in such a situation can be an experiential demonstration. Such a demonstration would be similar to a Gestalt psychologist setting up the demonstration of a jumping shadow experiment to help validate the claim that perception involves filling in the gaps in what is given in experience” (Paranjpe, p. 9). Quite poignantly, the author makes a concluding remark that “scientists deeply involved in differing paradigms often fail to meaningfully communicate with each other because words do not mean the same thing when understood

within the differing conceptual frameworks founded on different assumptions and guided by differing values” (Paranjpe, p. 10).

This paper is a mind-opener for our times where too many specialisations and lack of interest for inclusive approaches rule the roost. The author makes tongue-in-cheek critique about the nature the common practises in psychology such as “running subjects in an experimental paradigm” or “paper-and-pencil” tests to collect data. What is needed is the recognition that “emotions are complex phenomena that need different paradigms for understanding different aspects”.

Currently, exciting discussions on emotion, its relation with brain (body) and mind, and how it influences healing and neural progress, are happening around the world. The insightful and pertinent discussion the author engages in this paper encourages scholars and students to look at alternate ways of understanding emotion – its basic nature as well as its expressions in physical and mental movement. *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the Bhakti literature in India is a storehouse that would facilitate a systemic

understanding of emotions and its relation with our body, mind and spirit.

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COMMENTS

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Paranjpe’s article exemplifies the recent concerns of the indigenous psychology movement voiced in various recent publications (e.g. Misra & Mohanty, 2002). He has successfully placed the Indian theory of emotion with its own identity in a larger matrix of theories propounded in the West. The impression of the author “that theory of emotion that developed in Bharat’s tradition did not often strike to many as legitimate psychology of emotions”- perhaps, a modest way of presenting the case for its validity. Also meta-theoretical writings involving spiritual matters, at times give an impression of solipsism. Notwithstanding this the appreciation of Indian thought has increased in recent years. In one of my earlier publications (Jain, 1994) I

had examined Bharat’s *Rasa* theory as developed by Abhinavagupta who asserted that *Rasa* is successfully realized through the work of art. The total environment in which *Rasa* is realized provides sufficient ground for understanding emotions as socio-cultural constructions. In the present paper Paranjpe has put the *Rasa* theory in a broader context including Bhakti (religious emotion of devotion). The inclusion of Bhakti as *Rasa* has some unresolved issues, as I have noted below.

In recent years psychologists and anthropologists have started taking note of *Rasa* theory to understand emotional life of Indians (e.g. Gerow, 1974; Gnoli, 1956; Lynch, 1990; Masson & Patwardhan, 1970; Menon & Shweder, 1994).

To my limited information I have not found any article on refuting *Rasa* theory, hence question of defending it does not arise. *Rasa* theory is a valid Indian theory of emotion and has been fruitfully applied for staging drama and classical dance. For example authors (Chandra & Pandey, 1951) wrote a volume on how the nine *Rasas* are presented in *Kathkali* dance by different gestures, eye movements, facial expressions and other mudras. This is true for all other classical music, dance and poetry (see also Mathur, 2002). Whenever emotions (*bhāvas*) are presented through dance by known gestures *Rasas* are produced in the spectators.

Paranjpe has cited examples of many devotional poets who realized *Rasa* through *Bhakti* and could produce creative poetry, and songs, which continue to be popular even today. *Bharat's* theory was reinterpreted in the discourses of the medieval devotional movements in which aesthetic experiences become the mode of religious experiences itself. *Bhakti* was conceived and meant to be an experience of emotion and the devotee experiences bliss. This needs further explorations as to how a theory which was originated in a particular domain of aesthetic experience can be generalized to other domains like *Bhakti*. How far such inclusions can be extended? For example, those who practice meditation also claim that at a particular stage, bliss is attained. In other words, can we treat all the methods of obtaining bliss encompassing *Rasa* theory? Such exploration is warranted in the light of most authentic presentation of *Rasa* theory by Abhinavagupta, who claimed that *Rasa* is successfully realized through the work of art and cannot be, realized any where else. One has to make a difference or sameness between *Brahmaasvada* and *Rasasvada*.

The present article has placed theories on a continuum and puts *Rasa* theory at the end of the continuum. I fail to grasp this continuum. Perhaps, it needs more explication. I would like to place social constructionist just below the phenomenological, as it is the outgrowth of phenomenology (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). An issue regarding the central role of consciousness in realizing *Rasa* needs to be attended to. Abhinavagupta accepted that *Rasa* prefigures the immortal consciousness but it is transitory as its duration remains only as long as play (Gnoli, 1956). I am not much familiar with the views of Gosvāmis regarding the role of *Rasa* but I consider that the *Rasa* theory cannot be placed at par with other theories of emotion.

Paranjpe has certainly initiated a line of inquiry for further exploration. For example, if Western theories are based on different meta-theoretical framework, can we compare them? What such comparison will lead to? Does

such a comparison is meant to establish superiority of one theory over the other? In its present form can we use *Rasa* theory to study the emotional life of *Bhaktas* and *Rasikas*, and other artists through some sort of ethnographic studies? Some ethnographers (see Lynch, 1990) captured the emotion of *Mast* in *Chaubey's* of Mathura. The emotion of *masti* as reflected in day- to- day activities: Physical exercise, *Bhakti* of *Balkrishna*, drinking marijuana, eating rich food, and carefree life style in accord with *dharmā*, *artha* and *moksa*. Such implications are important for understanding the cultural roots of emotions and critiquing the Western theories of emotions claiming universality.

The author has been seriously engaged in exploring potentials of dialogue between East and West psychological insights and this article is another attempt in the same direction. With this article he has ventured to draw attention toward understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying aesthetic and spiritual experiences which incidentally coincides with the new wave of research in positive psychology.

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COMMENTS

The Hindu Concept of *Rasa* and the Cultural Psychology of the Emotions

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In his essay entitled “In defence of an Indian approach to the psychology of emotions”, Anand Paranjpe attempts to expand the theoretical perspectives within contemporary mainstream psychology, as it is practiced and taught in the West, so as to include the indigenous Hindu approach to the study of emotions known as the *rasa* theory. He wants to grant this theory the status of “a legitimate *psychology* of emotions” (p. 3.). *Rasa* theory was first given literary shape sometime between 200 B. C. and 200 A. D. by the sage Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Treatise on Dramaturgy (see de Bary, 1958) and later commented on and interpreted by several scholars—most notably in the 10th–11th century, by Abhinavagupta, the Kashmiri Saivite philosopher (see Gnoli, 1956; Masson and Patwardhan, 1970). While I applaud Paranjpe’s attempt to expand the theoretical foundations of contemporary psychology, and while I am always in favor of drawing attention to the substantial and impressive work done in ancient India on aspects of the human mind and consciousness, I am afraid that he has set himself a very hard task. Paranjpe himself attests to the difficulties he experienced while trying to convince his “psychologist colleagues” that the *rasa* theory can be subjected to “experiential verification” (p. 9–10).

It seems to me that Paranjpe is saying that psychology must expand its intellectual horizons beyond its European and North American heritage if it is to benefit from the unprecedented globalization that is occurring today; that psychology’s future as a robust discipline having relevance and meaning to people from different parts of the world rests on its ability to welcome and integrate all kinds of theoretical perspectives, even those developed outside of Europe and North America. How successful Paranjpe and others who think like him will be remains to be seen but there is an alternative to expanding the theoretical foundations of contemporary psychology, and that alternative is cultural psychology.

Cultural psychology is a field that has re-emerged in the last couple of decades at the interface between anthropology, psychology and linguistics (see Cole, 1990; Markus and Kitayama, 1992; Shweder 1990, 1991; Stigler, Shweder and Herdt, 1990). One of its basic premises is that “culture and psyche make each other up” (Shweder, 1990); neither one can be thought of as prior to nor independent of the other and both are necessary for a more complete understanding of behavior, motivation, and social relations among different peoples across the globe. Thus, cultural psychology assumes that no cultural world exists apart from the involvement of its members and, simultaneously, the members of these cultural worlds would cease to exist, in some fundamental sense, if set apart from their worlds. They exist as human beings—with agency, identity, subjectivity, and a sense of self—because they interpret and make sense of the events and experiences of their lives in terms of the meanings and resources they obtain from their worlds—worlds that themselves come into being because of the thoughts and actions of the members.

The Study of Emotions in Cultural Psychology

When it comes to the study of the emotions, the research agenda in cultural psychology revolves around four basic questions (Shweder, 1993). The first has to do with trying to understand why a particular culture identifies an experience as an emotional one rather than as some thing else. The second documents the various emotions that are salient in a particular culture and examines the cultural meanings attached to each of these emotions. The third assesses the degree to which people in different cultures experience events in their lives emotionally rather than somatically. And the fourth and final question explores the ways whereby a people learn, both consciously and unconsciously,

the emotional meanings that are salient and significant in their culture.

Cultural psychologists tend to view emotions as ‘scripts’ or narratives that are composed of several elements (see Shweder, 1991, 1993). Given this theoretical perspective, emotion-scripts are said to be appraisals or evaluations of particular events or situations. Based on cultural values and beliefs, these appraisals are made in terms of their implications for the self and its relationships with social others, things and events—they are, therefore, constitutive of the person and involve the self deeply. They also involve particular kinds of future action with an eye to protecting the experiencing self’s self-esteem as well as with satisfying social norms and expectations.

In terms of doing cross-cultural research into emotional functioning, it is very useful, as Shweder (1993) suggests, to decompose an emotion-script into its ‘constituent narrative slots’ because then one can compare the ways in which people are similar or different in terms of each of these slots. How do people in different cultures appraise a particular event or situation—for instance, the death of a child? What are the similarities and differences in their appraisals? Following Shweder’s terminology, this would be ‘the environmental determinants question.’ Given a particular appraisal, what are the similarities and differences in their somatic experiences—do they experience their insides being torn out, perhaps, or breathlessness, or heaviness in the pit of their stomachs? This would be ‘the somatic phenomenology question.’ What affective experiences do or do not accompany these somatic experiences—panic, acute anxiety, extreme agitation? Are they the same or different? This is ‘the affective phenomenology question.’ Then come the questions about the implications, in terms of maintaining self-esteem and social norms, for the experiencing self. These are ‘the self-appraisal and the social appraisal questions’. And, finally, what are the actions that are demanded of and performed by the experiencing self? What are the socially appropriate ways to express the emotion in acts, words, gestures and facial expressions—maintaining a stiff upper lip, beating one’s breast, railing against fate? These are, in Shweder’s scheme, ‘the self-management and the communication questions.’ As is obvious, the advantage of these narrative slots is that they enable the researcher to achieve some kind of translational equivalence across linguistic and cultural boundaries and allow for a sensible discussion of the ways in which people are alike or different in terms of emotional functioning. This, in a nutshell, is how cultural psychology seeks to analyze and study the emotions—or at least my understanding of it!

Paranjpe has made *rasa* theory the crux of his case for expanding contemporary psychology’s theoretical foundations and it is instructive to see how cultural psychology relates to it. A fairly detailed examination of *rasa* theory’s place in a cultural psychology of the emotions has already been done by Shweder (1993) and Shweder and Haidt (2000) and my task here is to simply recapitulate their comments in a summary fashion and add some remarks of my own.

The *Rasa* Theory

For cultural psychologists interested in studying the emotions, the *rasa* theory has a particular relevance for several reasons. One of these reasons, and a very significant one, is that the theory with its list of eight or nine enduring emotions (*sthayi bhāva*) and thirty-three transitory emotions (*vyabhicari bhāva*) and its focus on the symbolic structures underlying the emotions clearly answers the first two of the four questions that constitute cultural psychology’s research agenda—and does so in ways that are curiously similar to the way cultural psychologists themselves do their research.

In the *Rasadhyaya*, the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, detailed attention is paid to how setting, character, voice, posture, action, facial expression and physiological response can be used to represent the emotions for the most compelling dramatic effect (Dimock, 1974; Shweder, 1993), for evoking the most potent emotional response from the spectators. Clearly, ancient Hindu philosophers of the emotions thought of emotional experiences holistically, as being composed of different constituent elements, as having causes, consequences and associated features. Today, in cultural psychology, emotional experiences are decomposed into narrative slots for precisely the same reasons. Thus, in its approach to the study of the emotions, the *rasa* theory is surprisingly modern—and, I think, universally applicable. No matter which the culture one is studying, one could examine the meanings attached to an emotion salient in that culture and could uncover its symbolic structure, by adopting the *rasa* theory’s approach.

The Cultural Roots of the *Rasa* Theory

However, the *rasa* theory is also a cultural—a Hindu—account of the emotions. Nothing reveals this aspect of the theory more than its particular selection of the 8 or 9 emotions it regards as enduring and the concept of *rasa* that is central to it.

The eight enduring emotions are sexual passion (*rati*), mirth or amusement (*hāsa*), sorrow (*soka*), anger, (*krodha*), fear (*bhaya*), dynamic energy or perseverance (*utsāha*), disgust (*jugupsā*), wonder or amazement (*vismaya*), and the ninth (added later)—serenity (*sama*). When one compares this list to, say, that of the prominent psychologist and emotion researcher Paul Ekman, there is some overlap—though which emotions are comparable in meaning and to what degree is hard to determine. Part of the reason for this difficulty is that Ekman (1980, 1984) has generated his list of 9 emotions—anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, disgust, interest, shame and contempt—using commonplace facial expressions as the primary data and asking subjects to identify the emotion represented by the expression. In contrast, the *Rasadhyaya* and the commentaries that followed it are conceiving of emotions as cognitive appraisals, as narratives with antecedents, consequences and associated characteristics.

Shweder claims “three of the nine basic emotions (anger, fear and sorrow) are genuinely familiar, in the sense of possessing an equivalent shape and meaning for medieval Hindus and contemporary Anglo-Americans” (1993: 421). But he confesses that the meanings associated with the other emotions listed in the *Rasadhyaya*, most particularly disgust, amazement and mirth escape him. Thus, Hindu disgust with its connotations of disenchantment and world-weariness seems much broader than the American notion in which the primary meaning is one of nausea. And again, Hindu amazement is less being taken aback by a sudden, unexpected development—typical American surprise—and more wondrous awe with a tinge of exaltation. Finally, Hindu mirth is not American happiness: the former has elements of mocking laughter at the flaws and failings of others while the latter connotes joyousness.

Happiness is an interesting emotion—not only because American happiness does not match up with Hindu mirth but also because happiness, in the contemporary American sense of joyous celebration, does find a place in the *Rasadhyaya*’s list of emotions—not, however, as an enduring emotion but rather as a transitory one. Upper-caste Oriya Hindus of the temple town of Bhubaneswar—a group familiar to me because of the extensive fieldwork I have done among them—agree with this ancient Hindu classification. They think of happiness (*sukha*) as an immature emotion; only children, still unaware of life’s travails and responsibilities, are able to experience happiness. When adults experience happiness, it is short-lived, transitory, ending in a mere matter of seconds (*khyaniko*), lost as soon as one recalls the burdens of life. Unlike Americans, Oriya Hindus rarely talk of wanting to be happy; rather, their

this-worldly goal is contentment (*santoshita*) and a sense of wellbeing (*hito*).

Thus, the emotions classified in the *rasa* theory as enduring possess meanings that have a particular resonance within the Hindu, and perhaps, only the Hindu, world. But, apart from this list, there is another aspect of the *rasa* theory that is uniquely Hindu and that is the concept of *rasa* itself. *Rasa* is a Sanskrit term that is translated, most often, as “juice, extract, flavor, essence”. Bharata, and the commentators and interpreters of his text who followed him, sought to understand the relationship between the eight or nine enduring emotions they postulated and the *rasa* associated with each of them. How was the flavor of sorrow, when witnessed as part of a dramatic performance, different from the direct experience of sorrow?

As Paranjpe points out, in the Hindu tradition, the main purpose of dance, drama, music, and poetry is to enable the spectators in the audience to cultivate an aesthetic sensibility in order to transcend the mundane concerns of the workaday world and taste the flavor—the *rasa*—of the different emotions. Through dramatic performances, the symbolic structure of the emotion or *bhāva*, something not easily or routinely apprehended by most people, is exposed in elaborate detail: the features associated with the emotion, the context in which it emerges, and the consequences that flow from its experience. And apprehending the emotions in this indirect, non-attached way enables the audience to marvel at them and savor them as objects of pleasure. By their virtuosity, the performers allow the audience to step beyond the limiting contingencies of the mundane world and taste the transcendental. Tasting the flavor of emotions in this way was, and is, thought of as an opportunity to apprehend the essence of ultimate reality. Such tasting is a glimpse of or, rather, an experience of the divine bliss immanent in all humans.

No matter what the enduring emotion whose implicit, symbolic structure is being revealed—whether disgust or fear or amusement—intense delight permeates the experience of the *rasa* associated with each. Thus, an enduring emotion and its *rasa* are not the same because the latter is experienced detachedly in an aesthetic context and has the quality of bliss. For these reasons, Hindu philosophers of the emotions have concluded that the experience of *rasa* and the experience of the emotion itself have very little in common: *rasa* is a “metaemotion” (Shweder, 1993: 420), not an emotion.

For Hindus, this “metaemotion” has at least two important implications. The first is the idea that only as a spectator can one enjoy *rasa*—that is, only through non-

attachment from the direct experience of the emotion, is it possible to relish *rasa*. And one relishes *rasa* not only by being once removed from the direct experience but also by actively cultivating one's aesthetic sensibility, thereby refining oneself. Self-refinement emerging from self-discipline is an extraordinarily important Hindu value, part of Hindu morality. As Paranjpe himself so ably describes (p. 4–5), the concept of *rasa* is, therefore, intimately tied to ideas of self-transformation, transcendence, enlightenment and finally, liberation. Second, Hindus interpret the intense bliss that one experiences when enjoying *rasa* as evidence of the existence of a sphere of transcendence beyond the mundane world with its messy, emotional and other entanglements. Thus, *rasa* underscores the Hindu idea that the world around us is ultimately illusory and that the really real lies beyond it. Clearly, then, together with a universally applicable approach to the study of the emotions, the *rasa* theory possesses elements that are unique to the Hindu world and the Hindu worldview.

The everyday discourse and actions of the Oriya Hindus I mentioned earlier in this essay exemplify in a variety of ways the *rasa* theory's influence. As part of the socio-cultural environment in which they are enculturated, it provides Oriya Hindus with the meanings necessary to create their emotional reality and lead emotionally meaningful lives. These people live in the temple town of Bhubaneswar, my research site for the past several years. The neighborhood, a pilgrimage site of some note, has been a traditional center of Hinduism for more than a millennium (see Mahapatra, 1981; Shweder, 1991; Menon and Shweder, 1998; Seymour, 1999).

In keeping with the basic premises of the *rasa* theory, Oriya Hindus neither separate emotion from reason nor think that it is inferior—unlike in the West where such a separation does occur and reason is privileged over emotion (Lutz, 1988). For them, the mind (*mana*) is an organ that both reasons and feels. They also do not think of emotions as residing in the innermost recesses of the self—hardly anyone, therefore, suggests that introspection will help one to recognize one's emotions or know oneself better. Given this particular orientation to emotions, people here rarely claim that strong passions excuse a person's behavior—because however strong the passion, they assume that emotion involves cognition. Further, men and women are thought to differ in their emotional functioning: men find it easier to experience and express uncivilizing emotions (*abhadra bhāva*) like rage (*krodha*) and mirth (*hasa*), while women, having a natural affinity for refining

emotions (*bhadra bhāva*) like reticence, modesty and deference (*lajja*) (Menon & Shweder, 1994), are encouraged to cultivate and experience them. Again, this understanding that distinguishes between uncivilizing, coarse emotions and those that are thought of as refining and civilizing is distinctively Hindu and emerges from a worldview that identifies self-refinement as the paramount goal of every human life. This is an extremely brief description of how emotions are conceived of and experienced in the temple town but it serves to emphasize the ways in which the meanings attached to emotions and emotional experiences seamlessly blend in with broader cultural meanings and values.

Conclusion

My attempt in this essay has been to suggest that, although cultural psychology has re-emerged as a discipline relatively recently, it nevertheless possesses the conceptual framework and the theoretical tools necessary for investigating and increasing our understanding of not just the emotional aspects of people's lives—but all aspects. Cultural psychologists recognize that human behavior is complex and messy, that actions are often over-determined, that disentangling the dense, intricate connections between cultural meanings and individual thought and action is not easy but they believe that it is only through painstaking, detailed study of psyche and culture, done in tandem, that our understanding of ourselves is likely to grow.

Finally, I would like to conclude with an observation. Toward the end of his essay, Paranjpe writes of his lack of success in trying to get his colleagues (presumably all non-Hindu) to experience *bhakti rasa* through exposing them to devotional music of the highest quality. He explains his failure in terms of scientists being unable to communicate meaningfully with each other because they are stuck in their own “differing paradigms” (Paranjpe, p. 10). While this may certainly be the case, I think there is something else that is happening. To me it appears that this experiment validates one of cultural psychology's central premises—that culture and psyche make each other up. If one is to be able to experience *rasa*, then one needs to have been raised in a cultural world in which the *rasa* theory provides the meanings and idiom for emotional experiencing; otherwise, even with the sincerest of efforts, the experience of *rasa* will be outside one's emotional resources and capabilities—from the perspective of cultural psychology, this is perhaps the more satisfying explanation.

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REJOINDER

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In writing this rejoinder, I must begin by expressing my gratitude first, to Prof. Girishwar Misra for inviting me to write, and next, to the commentators, who have raised some interesting questions. I particularly appreciate the commentators since, in addition to their thoughtful critique, they have nicely complemented my exposition and interpretation of the *rasa*-theory approach to emotions. I find Prof. Sangeetha Menon's comments to be most complementary (and I do not mean just complimentary) to what I have tried to say. But at the outset, it is some aspects of Prof. Usha Menon's comments that I would like to respond to.

I wholeheartedly agree with Prof. Usha Menon that I have set myself a hard task in trying to bring traditional

Indian and modern insights together. Whether I am successful in doing that, and if so to what degree, is of course for my readers to judge. According to Prof. Usha Menon, "there is an alternative to expanding the theoretical foundations of contemporary psychology, and that alternative is cultural psychology" (U. Menon, ms., p. 15). I agree that cultural psychology helps in expanding the theoretical foundations by venturing out of the Western mode of thinking that dominates psychology today. But in my view, the basic strength of cultural psychology lies in its syncretic strategy. Note for instance that it has grown broader in scope by blending various trends in the social sciences: cognitive appraisal (Averill, 1980) and role theory (Sarbin, 1986) approaches from respectively cognitive and

social psychology, symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) and social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) from sociology, ethnographic methods and participant observation from anthropology, and so on. What I find particularly laudable in the work on emotion by Shweder, Menon and their colleagues is that they have broken out of the shackles of Eurocentrism that plagues a major part of psychology and social sciences today. It is also creditable to cultural psychologists that, unlike many colleagues in the field of cross-cultural psychology, they try to look at the world from the “natives’ point of view,” which helps expand their horizons.

Psychology is in a unique position of being located in the middle of natural sciences, social sciences as well as the humanities. Even as neuro-psychology and evolutionary psychology are expanding boundaries on psychology’s frontiers with biology, cultural psychology is expanding on the side of the social sciences. My own preference is to work on the interface of psychology with the humanities, especially the history of ideas and philosophy, to help expand my horizons.

There has been in existence for quite some time a branch of psychology called the “philosophical psychology,” which tries to benefit from the examination of the fundamental philosophical concepts that provide the conceptual foundations of theories and methods of psychology. Over the past few decades another branch called “theoretical psychology” has emerged. It adds to philosophical psychology insights from the systematic study of the history of ideas and the sociology of knowledge, thus extending the depth and scope of analysis. A journal called *Theory and Psychology* has emerged as a key international outlet for research in this field. Let me quote a few lines from the description of this journal’s mandate, which succinctly describes the essential features of theoretical psychology. I will then explain its relevance to the topic on hand.

*Theory & Psychology is . . . devoted to scholarship with a broad meta-theoretical intent. It examines such issues as the conceptual frameworks and foundations of psychology, its historical underpinnings, its relation to other human sciences, its methodological commitments, its ideological assumptions and its political and institutional contexts. It fosters dialogue among psychologists and other social scientists interested in psychological analyses. (Quote from the webpage of the *Theory and Psychology* journal).*

My foray into meta-theoretical analysis follows this approach. The meta-theoretical roots of psychological

theories, like theories in any field, have at their basis ontological, epistemological and axiological presuppositions. While in philosophy of science one deals with issues of science in general, in theoretical psychology insights from the history of ideas (as in Kuhn’s work) or philosophy (e.g., in the work of Popper) are brought in to examine issues in psychology. Given my bicultural background (born trained as a psychologist in India, and settled in Canada over a greater part of my life), I have tried to extend the scope of philosophy to include both Western and Indian philosophy.

I adopt this rather unusual extension of the scope of psychology because I agree with Prof. Usha Menon’s view that human behavior is complex and messy” (U. Menon, p. 8); it demands a careful and in-depth analysis with all insights that we can muster from any discipline and from anywhere in the world. While cultural psychology may well help in “disentangling the dense, intricate connections between cultural meanings and individual thought and action,” as Prof. Usha Menon puts it (p. 8), meta-theoretical analysis may help in disentangling the truth claims made by specialists in the vast patch work of highly diverse perspectives and countless studies which populate the literature. The use of meta-theoretical framework in this context has a bearing on some points raised by Prof. Uday Jain, so let me make a transition here to my responses to his comments.

Before turning to meta-theory, let me respond to Prof. Jain’s point that “One has to make a difference or sameness between *Brahmaasvada* and *Rasasvada*” (Jain, p. 14). I agree with him on this issue, and wish to point out that in my article I have said the same thing in different words as follows: “The joyous experience of the aesthete is similar, they say, but not the same as, the supreme joy (*paramānanda*) of a great devotee or a successful yogi” (Paranjpe, p. 5). Prof. Jain complains that he cannot grasp the continuum along which I have tried to place the theories, and wants me to explain the logic behind this continuum. So let me add a bit to the explanation of the rationale underlying the choice of bipolar dimensions the first column of Table 1. It should be clear that the first bipolar dimension of matter vs. mind belongs to the ontological category of philosophical issues, the next five to epistemological, and the remainder to axiology and praxis. It should be good enough for the present purpose to discuss only the matter-mind continuum.

Matter and mind were famously conceived by Descartes as different substances described in dichotomous terms. However, there are other models that conceive of matter/mind as a continuum. Fechner, for instance, thought of consciousness as a matter of degree, and conceived of the

“absolute threshold” as a point of transition from lack to awareness to minimal awareness of a stimulus. In placing several types of theories of emotion on a continuum I do not mean a Fechner-type continuum. In my scheme, the relative position of a type of theory on the matter-mind continuum indicates the degree to which, in my opinion, theories of certain type emphasise the bodily versus experiential aspects of emotion. It should be clear that, among Western theories of emotion, psychophysiological theories, like Delgado’s for instance, consider emotions only in terms of bodily features. There emotions are reduced to, or equated with, chemical or electromagnetic properties of specific areas of the brain, or with movements of a body such as those of a charging bull in rage. An existential theory lies on the opposite end of the continuum insofar as Sartre, for example, is concerned with only the *experience* of an emotion and cares less of the concomitant conditions of the body.

Prof. Jain disagrees with my placement of social constructionist theories like Berger and Luckman’s. He would “like to place social constructionist just below the phenomenological, as it is the outgrowth of phenomenology” (Jain, p. 14). It seems to me that by “outgrowth” he refers to the historical roots of a social constructionist viewpoint in the phenomenological movement. Assuming that this historical analysis is correct, for me historical origin does not matter in the present context, the degree of emphasis on experience versus physical manifestations of emotion does. From a phenomenological point of view what matters is the subjective experience of an emotion regardless of the bodily conditions or even the social context in which a given experience occurs. Let me note that, for Heidegger, a major phenomenological thinker, awareness (clearly implying consciousness) of the possibilities for one’s future was the very defining feature of the *Dasein*, which is a technical term he coined to replace the concept of a human being. This clarifies the centrality of consciousness in the phenomenological view of emotion presented by Sartre. That justifies, in my view, the placement of this view closest to the mind-pole of the matter-mind dimension.

Turning now to the Indian side, I would admit that there is no exact parallel to the Cartesian matter-mind dualism in Indian thought. Nevertheless, a clear distinction can be made between the materialist Cārvāka at one pole, and place on the opposite pole the Advaita Vedantists who accept consciousness (the “*cit*” in *sat-cit-ananda*) as an integral aspect of ultimate reality. In this context, Prof. Jain has misgiving about my placing *rasa*-theory at the consciousness pole of the continuum. His point is, in his words: “Abhinavagupta accepted that *Rasa* prefigure the

immortal consciousness but it is transitory as its duration remains only as long as play” (Jain, p. 14). I am not entirely sure of what he means here. But let me address the issue of transitory nature of the experience of *rasa* in contrast with what Prof. Jain may mean by “immortal consciousness.”

I agree that for the ordinary aesthetes the experience of *rasa* tends to last only as the play goes on, so to speak, but not beyond. It is well known that Abhinavagupta was an exponent of Kashmir Shaivism, which is a variant of the Advaita Vedanta. It stands to reason, therefore, that he would emphasize the attainment of eternal bliss experienced when the nature of Self is realized as Being (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*) and Bliss (*ananda*). Certainly Abhinavagupta does not equate the transitory joy experienced as *rasa* while witnessing a drama with boundless joy experienced in Self-realization (*atma-sakshatkara*). Indeed, he postulates quietude or *santa rasa* as a *ninth rasa* in addition to the eight identified by Bharata. And this *santa rasa*, he suggests, would be more stable and lasting than the other *rasas*, and have the potential to transmute into the experience of perpetual bliss of Self-realization (see Kangle, 1973, p. 63). Thus, *rasa*, an aesthetic relish, is at best preparatory stage for launching into the highest experience of Self-realization; as noted earlier, the joy of *rasa* is similar to, but not the same as, the highest bliss. When we think of the Gosvāmis, however, they have a different take on this issue. In their view, devotion (*bhakti*) is the highest *rasa*, and a devotee should rather perpetuate her or his life in endless series of rebirths than try to escape the cycle of birth and death as proposed in the Advaita system. The Gosvāmis would thus prefer mortality over immortality!

Now let me turn to Prof. Jain’s questions about my use of meta-theory. His questions, in his own words are as follows: “[I]f Western theories are based on different meta-theoretical framework, can we compare them? What such comparison will lead to? Does such a comparison is [sic] meant to establish superiority of one theory over the other? (Jain, p. 14). In answering the first question, let me affirm that the whole point of *meta*-theory is to try and identify the abstract principles that transcend two or more theories, and thus offer a *common* framework that would serve as a basis for a meaningful comparison of differing theories. For example, regardless of the many differences between them, the assumption of matter as ultimate reality is the common feature shared alike by psychophysiology on the Western side and the Lokayata on the Indian side.

I am not suggesting either that there is some ultimate and absolute meta-theoretical framework that will make total sense of all similarities or differences. I have already pointed out that the framework I have suggested is for

the specific purpose of the particular theories within this specific exercise; it is an ad-hoc device designed for the task on hand. Its purpose is to make comparisons meaningful so that theories are not sequestered into water tight compartments such as “Western” versus “Indian” and accepted or rejected because they are “ours” versus “theirs.” There is absolutely no presumption of superiority or inferiority of perspectives. Placing theories on common dimensions would lead us to clarification as to why, how, and how far theories are similar or different. It would also help explicate the criteria for validation of truth claims that often remain hidden and lead to “talking past one another” in conversations among adherents to differing theories.

This brings me to the last item of my discussion here. It is concerned with the issue raised by Prof. Usha Menon about the difficulties that I experienced in trying to convince my “‘psychologist colleagues’ that the *rasa* theory can be subjected to ‘experiential verification.’” Please allow me to clarify that the psychologist colleagues in my audience were not “all non-Hindu” as she presumes, but all were Hindu. Indeed, most of the psychologists attending my presentation are my old friends and former classmates who were raised in the same cultural world as myself. It is our common culture “in which the *rasa* theory provides the meanings and idiom for emotional experiencing” (U. Menon, ms, last paragraph). Surely culture was not the barrier in communication. Indeed, the Gestalt jumping shadow experiment was also part of our common background in psychology laboratories where we studied the Müller-Lyer illusion and other perceptual phenomena with “experiential” demonstrations. The problem was that none of them seemed to understand, let alone appreciate, that I was trying to make a Gestalt-type experiential demonstration by sharing the putative experience of *bhakti-rasa* invoked while listening to lyrics by great saint poets sung by world class local artists. The gap in communication, I imagine, was in their being locked into a kind of psychology where particular type of “proof” counts. I cannot imagine that they could not experience the *bhakti-rasa* expressed in wonderful music; just that they could not see it as relevant to the business of “psychology” as they understood it. Boundaries of disciplines and of mini paradigms within specific disciplines are implicitly

drawn by virtue of one’s training and professional identity formation. Such boundaries often become obstacles in communication. Let me illustrate the point by giving an example from my experience in the North American continent.

Several years ago I was speaking to a visiting psychologist at the Canadian university where I taught for decades. The visitor was a well known learning theorist with a strongly Skinnerian background. Having figured out that he and I had probably been at Harvard at around the same time, I started small talk about William James Hall and the famous psychologists like Skinner, Bruner, Allport who worked in that building in the mid sixties. The visitor inquired who I was working with at that time. When I mentioned the name of my then advisor Professor Erik H. Erikson, the visitor simply dropped his face. So I asked if there was something wrong. He said Erikson was “not a scientist.” Our conversation virtually ended there. As I understand the reason for the breakdown of communication was as follows: given that I was a student of a psychoanalyst, there could hardly be anything for a “scientist” like him to share with me. In a whole academic year that I studied at the Social Relations department at Harvard, I never once encountered a student or faculty in Skinner’s Department of Psychology which existed in the same building a few stories above. Talk about problems of communication within the same culture, but across competing paradigms within the *same discipline*. I rest my case.

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