

Hamlet: A Rasa-Dhvani Approach*

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I

Hamlet and the Rasa Theory

Indian dramatic tradition lays prime emphasis on the emotions aroused in the audience. It is not the motivation of the protagonist but the emotions of the audience that is taken into consideration. There is however a link between the two. The entire atmosphere of the theatrical presentation including the emotions expressed by the actor or actress creates a specific mental state in the mind of the viewer. This mental state or feeling could gradually intensify leading to a longer lasting emotion or it could vanish immediately and become quickly replaced by another. In this manner, the whole dramatic presentation produces a series of emotions either durable or momentary, so that for the spectator the play basically becomes a journey through a wide spectrum of emotions.

In case of *Hamlet*, the protagonist occupies a central position in the generation of emotions. As it can be seen later, with a few exceptions, the whole emotional process of the viewer revolves around Hamlet. One reason is that unlike other Shakespearean characters like Macbeth or Othello, Hamlet is an upright man and his suffering as a hero enjoys a much higher degree of empathy from the audience. Moreover there is not a single scene in the entire play where Hamlet doesn't figure and his powerful soliloquies touch the audience at a higher mental plane. Keeping this in mind, I proceed to make a detailed analysis of the entire play taking the theory of *rasa* with all its intricacies into account, in order to study the development of the individual *rasas*.

ACT I

The opening scene of the play arouses a feeling of wonder (*adbhuta rasa*) and then strikes fear (*bhayānaka rasa*) in the audience at the mention of the apparition:

Marcellus: ... Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.

Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night,
That if again this apparition come....

(I. i: 23-26)

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The feelings of fear and wonder are intensified at the appearance of the Ghost:

Horatio: ...It harrows me with fear and wonder.

(I. i: 42)

But since wonder and fear cannot co-exist, being opposing emotions, it is fear or *bhayānaka rasa*, which supersedes wonder.

Running parallel to wonder, there is a trace of valour or heroism (*vīra rasa*) at the sight of the Ghost, which had appeared in the form of the deceased king, in all his knightly armour:

Marcellus: Is it not like the King?

Horatio: ... Such was the very armour he had on
When he th' ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once when, in an angry parley
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange.

(I. i: 57-63)

Vyabhicārībhāvas or secondary feelings of doubt, suspicion and apprehension appear simultaneously to aid and intensify the basic emotion of fear or *bhayānaka rasa*:

Horatio: ...This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

(I. i: 68)

Barnardo: ...How now, Horatio! You tremble and look pale.

(I. i: 51)

The transitory feeling of doubt is reflected in line 63 ('Tis strange), whereas suspicion is reflected in lines 106.2 to 106.4:

Barnardo: ... Well may it sort that this portentous figure
Comes armèd through our watch so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.

We notice feelings of apprehension in the following lines:

Horatio: ...And even the like precurse of feared events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates,
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climature and countrymen.

(I. i: 106.14-106.18)

Vīra rasa or heroism reiterates in several places like:

Horatio: Such was the very armour he had on
When he th' ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once when, in an angry parley
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice

(I. i: 59-62)

Horatio: ...our last king,
 Whose image even but now appeared to us,
 Was as you know by Fortinbras of Norway,
 Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,
 Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet—
 For so this side of our known world esteemed him—
 Did slay this Fortinbras...

(I. i: 79-85)

And:

Horatio: ... In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell....

(I. i: 106.6-106.7)

These momentary emotions again give way to wonder and amazement at the reappearance of the Ghost, re-instilling the fear (*bhayānaka rasa*) in the audience. The strange phenomenon initially evoking wonder, eventually leads to fear or *bhayānaka rasa*. So wonder and fear alternate in quick succession until wonder succumbs to fear. Both opposing emotions appear to be equally powerful, but it is the negative emotion of fear, which suppresses its opponent wonder, and takes precedence. The transitory feelings (*vyabhicāribhāvas*) arising out of these emotions are doubt, suspicion and apprehension. *Vīra rasa* introduced at an early stage, though inherently a basic or durable emotion, becomes overpowered by fear and is reduced to the status of a secondary emotion like its counterpart, wonder. Thus fear manifests itself as the dominant *rasa*.

The second scene reveals Hamlet's instinctive distrust towards Claudius and his utter disgust (*jugupsā bhāva*) for the queen for her hasty marriage with her brother-in-law, a union he calls "incest." The intensity of his disgust is artfully exhibited throughout the scene as in the following lines:

Hamlet: ... frailty, thy name is woman—
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old
 With which she followed my poor father's body
 Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she—
 O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
 Would have mourned longer!—married with my uncle,
 My father's brother, but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules; within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing of her galled eyes,
 She married. O most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

(I. ii: 146-157)

Hamlet's bitterness (disgust) can also be seen in lines 175-182:

Horatio: My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Hamlet: I prithee do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Horatio: Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

Hamlet: Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.

Through Hamlet's disgust, *bibhatsa rasa* (aversion) is created in the minds of the audience. Associated with this emotion are other subsidiary feelings or *vyabhicārībhāvas* like Hamlet's mood of dejection at certain periods. When Gertrude expresses her concern that it seems like Hamlet is still mourning the loss of his father, he reaffirms it in the following passage:

Hamlet: Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good-mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected behaviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief
That can denote me truly. These indeed 'seem,'
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show—
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

(I. ii: 76-86)

One also notices signs of dejection in the following lines of *Hamlet*:

Hamlet: O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, O God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

(I. ii: 129-133)

Intertwined with *bibhatsa rasa* or aversion is another subsidiary feeling of suspicion caused by Hamlet's inherent distrust towards Claudius, revealed in line 65 where he describes him as "A little more than kin and less than kind." Also Hamlet's words "I am too much I' th' sun" (line 67) can give rise to variety of meanings. This is a typical example of *dhvani*, which will be discussed in later chapters. The unpleasant feelings of doubt and suspicion are also clearly perceived in Hamlet's remark, "All is not well. I doubt some foul play." (lines 254-255)

In the second part of this scene, wonder or *adbhuta rasa* is again experienced when Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo relate their experience with the Ghost.

Like in the first scene *adbhuta rasa* or wonder fades to the background, and *bībhatsa rasa* or disgust emerges more prominent.

Scene III does not evoke any *rasa*. Both Polonius and Laertes try to give some sound advice to Ophelia warning her not to succumb to Hamlet's advancements and proclamations of love. This scene reflects a temporary feeling of doubt (*vyabhicāribhāva*) regarding Hamlet's fidelity as a lover. The feeling of doubt is an associate of the basic emotion of love or *srīgāra rasa*.

Scene IV again brings forth the emotion of wonder (*adbhuta rasa*) at the reentry of the Ghost. There is a strong feeling of suspicion as to the real identity and intention of the Ghost:

Hamlet: ...Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape...

(I. iv: 21-24)

Adbhuta rasa or wonder is immediately followed by the predominant emotion of fear or *bhayānaka rasa*. This fear gives rise to suspicion of the Ghost's motives:

Hamlet: Why, what should be the fear?...

Horatio: What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness?...

(I. iv: 45-55)

Scene V displays a sense of shock and anger at the Ghost's revelation. Its anger caused by Claudius' heinous crime is transmitted to Hamlet and manifests itself as *raudra rasa*. The Ghost's fury is expressed in the following words:

Ghost: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

(I. v: 25)

Hamlet's fury is expressed in the following lines:

Hamlet: O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart...

(I. v: 92-93)

Side by side this anger is tainted with contempt and disgust towards Claudius and Gertrude:

Ghost: Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts-
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power

So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen...

(I. v: 42-46)

Disgust and anger is also shown in the following words of Hamlet's speech:

Hamlet: O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!

(I. v: 105-106)

One also notices transient feelings (*vyabhicārībhāva*) of sadness or dejection:

Ghost: ... O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!—
From me, whose love was of that dignity
That it went hand-in-hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage, and to decline
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!

(I. v: 47-52)

There is a trace of heroism (*vīra rasa*) when Hamlet swears revenge after the Ghost's revelation. "I have sworn't (line 113). However *vīra rasa* is only a minor emotion. *Raudra rasa* (anger) and disgust (*bibhatsa rasa*) are the two major rasas of equal prominence.

ACT II

In the first scene of the second act, we are confronted with the emotion of sorrow or *śoka bhāva* expressed by Hamlet and interpreted by Polonius as "the ecstasy of love" (line 104). The *anubhāvas* or physical gestures expressing Hamlet's sorrow or madness have been described in the following lines:

Ophelia: He took me by the wrist, and held me hard,
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As a would draw it. Long stayed he so.
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes,
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

(II. i: 88-101)

The reason of Hamlet's sorrow or apparent madness is left unexplained and therefore fails to arise any specific *rasa* in the audience. At the most Hamlet's outward behaviour could lead to a temporary feeling of pity (*vyabhicārībhāva*).

The second scene introduces an element of humour and brings out *hāsya rasa* (comic) in the audience. The source of this *hāsya* or laughter is Polonius' buffoonery, who is convinced of Hamlet's love-sickness and vehemently believes that to be the cause of his madness. Polonius' exaggerated speech only evokes ridicule and exasperates Gertrude for its redundancy and poor wit. Not coming straight to the point, he goes on beating around the bush, trying to arouse suspense with a ludicrous jumble of words:

Polonius: ... My liege and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
What day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time,
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad—
'Mad' call I it, for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

Queen Gertrude: More matter with less art.

Polonius: Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis 'tis true a foolish figure,
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him, then, and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect—
Or rather say the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus
Perpend.
I have a daughter—have whilst she is mine—
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this...

(II. ii: 87-109)

Later Hamlet's dialogue with Polonius also brings out *hāsya rasa* (comic) by force of its wit and humour. Hamlet's madness seems to be a pretended madness and there is much truth and irony in his seemingly senseless words:

Hamlet: Slanders, sir; for the satirical slave says here that old men have grey beards...

Polonius: [aside] Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.
—Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Hamlet: Into my grave?

Polonius: Indeed, that's out o'th' air. [Aside] How pregnant sometimes his replies are!

A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of...

(II. ii: 196-209)

In the next few lines Hamlet expresses his disgust or *jugupsā bhāva* at the turn of events in an implicit manner:

Hamlet: In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true, she is a strumpet.

(II ii: 230-231)

His disgust becomes more explicit when he calls Denmark a prison:

Hamlet: ... What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guildenstern: Prison, my lord?

Hamlet: Denmark's a prison.

Rosencrantz: Then is the world one.

Hamlet: A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst.

Rosencrantz: We think not so, my lord.

Hamlet: Why then'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

(II ii: 235-245)

Hamlet's *jugupsā bhāva* leads to *bībhatsa rasa* (disgust) in the audience. The feelings (*vyabhicārībhāvas*) of dejection and world-weariness expressed by Hamlet in the following lines intensify the *bībhatsa rasa*:

Hamlet: ... I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. This most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'er-hanging, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire—why it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving, how express and admirable, in action, how like an angel, in apprehension, how like a god—the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!

And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me—nor woman neither....

(II ii: 287-299)

His disgust comes to the surface at his referral to the king and queen as his “uncle-father” and “aunt-mother” (line 358).

Though the mood changes to the comic at Polonius’ entry, it remains tainted with disgust. Due to his foolish assumptions and unwanted intrusion, Polonius seems to have become an object of ridicule and aversion for Hamlet:

Hamlet: ... That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swathing clouts.

(II ii: 365-366)

Hamlet seems to find pleasure in encouraging Polonius’ absurd notions of his behaviour and love-sickness for Ophelia:

Hamlet: For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion-have you a daughter?

Polonius: I have, my lord.

Hamlet: Let her not walk I’ th’sun. Conception is a blessing, but not as your daughter may conceive-friend, look to’t.

Polonius: [aside] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. Yet he knew me not at first... and truly, in my youth I suffered much extremity for love. Very near this.

(II ii: 182-190)

Hamlet: O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

Polonius: What a treasure had he, my lord?

Hamlet: Why,
‘One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well.’

Polonius: [aside] Still on my daughter

(II ii: 385-391)

Next follows the emotion of fear. The players arrive. Hamlet and one of the players recite a few lines of the play, *Aeneas’ tale* to Dido, referring to Priam’s slaughter by Pyrrhus. The gory details of the slaughter combined with the anticipation of Claudius’ death in a similar manner, lend it an emotion of fear producing *bhayānaka rasa* in the audience.

This is again replaced by Hamlet’s disgust; this time directed at his own self, at his inability to take action. Apparently in a confused state of mind, he calls himself a coward:

Hamlet: ... Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing;... Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
Tweaks me by th’ nose, gives me the lie I’ th’ throat

As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
 Ha, 'swounds, I should take it; for it cannot be
 But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall... Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
 O, vengeance!-
 Why, what an ass am I! Ay, sure, This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words.....

(II ii: 543-563)

There is also anger and disgust for the king combined with disgust for his own self. However what he calls inaction doesn't seem to be so when viewed in the correct light. It is his sensitivity and self-restraint, which does not allow him to take any rash decision, let passion overpower his reasoning or prompt him to action without proper evidence. Not following blindly the Ghost's command, Hamlet seeks to verify the truth and appeal to his own better judgement before taking any decision. Despite his instinctive distrust for Claudius, he doesn't get carried away by the Ghost's words and wants to give the accused a fair chance. He couldn't condemn a non-guilty person however much he despised him. His calculated reasoning and fair judgement, even during periods of turbulence show true heroism in his nature.

As we can see, the predominating emotion in this scene is disgust which grips Hamlet almost constantly, mainly directed at his mother and her newly-wed husband and partly at Polonius for his unwanted intervention. The *rasa* derived is thus, *bibhatsa rasa*.

ACT III

In the first scene of the third act the king and queen discuss the cause of Hamlet's lunacy with Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Polonius. Claudius views Hamlet's madness with suspicion. Guildenstern echoes this feeling, which is evident from the following lines:

King Claudius: And can you by no drift of circumstance,
 Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
 Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
 With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

(III i: 1-4)

Guildenstern: ...But with a crafty madness keeps aloof
 When we would bring him on to some confession
 Of his true state.

(III i: 8-10)

The king's suspicion stems from his guilt that builds up a sense of insecurity from the fear of his crime being found out. The first clear indication of his guilt is seen in the passage below:

King Claudius: [aside] O, 'tis too true.

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience.
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden!

(III i.52-56)

Next we come to those famous lines in the play:

Hamlet: To be, or not to be; that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them.....

(III i: 58-62)

Hamlet is in a state of inner conflict and deep contemplation. He does not allow his passion to cloud his reasoning. What is crucial to him is that he takes the nobler decision—whether to suffer the “slings of fortune” or to fight and oppose it. At the same time he condemns himself for not taking immediate action and blames his own conscience for being the cause of his cowardice:

Hamlet: Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action...

(III i: 85-90)

Another cause of his utter dejection is unfulfilled love. Ophelia's rejection of his sincere love intensifies his grief, what he calls the “pangs of disprized love” (line 74). Hamlet's mental confusion and sorrow triggers *karuṇa rasa* (sorrow) in the audience.

Complementing Hamlet's dejection and sorrow is his total disgust. The disgust for his mother has developed into an aversion for womankind in general. He is disappointed with Ophelia for not responding to him and for being a puppet to her father's manipulation. His apparent harshness towards Ophelia actually discloses his contempt for the whole women race:

Hamlet: Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty
from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate
beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but
now the time gives it proof....
You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate
our old stock but we shall relish of it.

Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder
Of sinners?...

(III i: 113-123)

He also derides Polonius when he says that “he may play the fool nowhere but in’s own house” (lines 132-133).

Hidden behind all this confusion and outpour of emotion, there lies however a firmness in decision contradicting his previous soliloquy about his lack of decision (to be or not to be...).

Hamlet says in lines 147-148—“Those that are married already—all but one—shall live.” This is an emphatic statement that Claudius is going to die at his hands.

Claudius who has overheard Hamlet’s conversation with Ophelia is shrewd in detecting some melancholy in his countenance. For Claudius, this is a clear signal of a forthcoming danger. A guilty man, constantly aware of the crime he has committed, his fear gets rekindled and he plans to dispatch Hamlet off to England. His final words of caution are, “Madness in great ones must not unwatched go” (line 188).

So, in this scene, we notice the transitory feelings of suspicion and dejection. There is the major emotion of fear, which becomes overpowered and hence doesn’t rise to the status of the main *rasa*. Hamlet, the character has become dominated by aversion and sorrow and as a whole produces *karuṇā rasa* (sorrow) in the audience.

In scene II the play is staged before the royal couple and other courtiers. Before the play begins, Hamlet gives instructions to Horatio to observe Claudius’ reaction to the murder scene. Behind Hamlet’s apparent inaction and confusion lies a rational thinking mind. He wants to set a trap for Claudius to test his guilt. He doesn’t take the Ghost’s words to be true without evidence. And he couldn’t kill anyone without proper justification. Once Claudius’ guilt is out in the open, Hamlet wouldn’t hesitate to slay him and avenge his father’s death. This is a truly heroic trait in his character.

Before the opening of the play, he behaves in a somewhat rude manner with Ophelia, even indulging in ribaldry:

Hamlet: ...here’s mettle more attractive.

Do you think I meant country matters?

That’s a fair thought to lie between maid’s legs

(III ii: 99,105 &107)

These words actually reflect Hamlet’s disgust but may not be strong enough to create *bībhatsa rasa* (disgust) as they are targeted towards Ophelia who remains an innocent victim of circumstances in the whole play. Rather they may arouse the transitory feeling of pity for her amongst the audience. Hamlet expresses his derision for Gertrude quite explicitly when he says:

Hamlet: ...For look how cheerfully my mother looks,
and my father died within’s two hours.

(III ii: 114-115)

The play opens with the king and queen expressing their love for each other. The queen's exaggerated promises and vows of love and fidelity becomes only a mockery and generates *bībhatsa rasa* or disgust.

But the critical moment comes in the murder scene when the king suddenly arises giving clear evidence of his guilt. This is the moment Hamlet has been waiting for. The trap is successful and his purpose accomplished. Both Hamlet and Horatio are convinced of the Ghost's words. The situation is not powerful enough to generate any specific *rasa* but induces a strong feeling of excitement (*vyabhicārībhāva*).

Then enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for a private word with Hamlet. He is totally aware of the two men's intention, which is to extract the truth from him and convey it to the king. From the very beginning Hamlet views them with suspicion and contempt. In the midst of their conversation Polonius enters and passes him the queen's message that she wished to see him in her private chamber. Hamlet sets out on his second purpose of explaining to Gertrude of her infidelity to her first husband. He wants to prick her conscience by making her aware of her unfaithfulness and lack of virtue.

As it can be seen, there are transitory feelings of suspicion, pity and excitement reinforcing the main emotions in this scene. However there are two major emotions overlapping each other, i.e., disgust and heroism. The sources of disgust are the king and the queen as well as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. But Hamlet's attitude displays one of heroism. However, being opposing emotions they repel each other and cannot occur simultaneously. In this case, following the *rasa* theorists, disgust (*bībhatsa*) gets the upper hand and becomes the principal emotion.

In the third scene, the king plans to send away Hamlet immediately to England, becoming aware that his dangerous secret is out. He asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Hamlet in this "speedy voyage." Claudius acts purely out of fear from Hamlet's wrath. His fear has turned into panic when he says to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

King Claudius: Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

(III iii: 24-26)

Claudius is assayed by a strong sense of guilt. He calls his murder as that which has "the primal eldest curse upon't" (line 37). Though he wishes his sins to be washed away, he is unable to repent for his deeds. He knows atonement is not possible unless he rids himself of his ambition and other worldly desires which led him to fratricide:

King Claudius: ...My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens

To wash it white as snow.....
 but O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder—
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

(III iii: 40-55)

When the king kneels in prayer, Hamlet enters and finds a golden opportunity to slay him. But his over analytical mind steps in between. He doesn't believe his father's death will be avenged if he kills his murderer at prayer, for to take a man in the purging of his soul would only send him to heaven. By slaying Claudius now, he would undoubtedly follow the Ghost's command but its purpose would be lost.

So, here we find the subsidiary feeling of guilt (*vyabhicārībhāva*) arising out of Claudius' fear, the primary emotion in this scene.

In the final scene (scene iv) of this act Polonius is slain by Hamlet. The purpose of killing Polonius is however, not clear. It could be that he mistakes Polonius for the king and slays him. Or it could be that Hamlet considers Polonius to be a prying nuisance and a danger to his motives and takes the opportunity to do away with him.

After getting rid of Polonius, Hamlet proceeds to goad his mother's conscience, to make her realize her gross mistake in forgetting her first husband and remarrying so hastily. In a rhapsody of words he praises his father and condemns the evil Claudius. It is his aim to prick his mother's conscience and make her see her own folly. Despite his contempt for Gertrude, he doesn't see her beyond atonement. He wants his mother to be cleared of all sins. In true repentance would her sin be atoned which is Hamlet's goal at the moment. Hamlet succeeds in his efforts when Gertrude begins to see her folly. Consumed by guilt she utters the following words:

Queen Gertrude: O Hamlet, speak no more!
 Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul,
 And there I see such black and grained spots
 As will not leave their tinct.

Hamlet: Nay, but to live
 In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
 Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love
 Over the nasty sty—

Queen Gertrude: O, speak to me no more!
 These words like daggers enter my ears.
 No more, sweet Hamlet.

(III iv: 78-86)

Hamlet: ...Confess yourself to heaven;
 Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,

And do not spread the compost o'er the weeds
To make them ranker....

Queen Gertrude: O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!

(III iv: 140-147)

In justly turning away Gertrude from Claudius, Hamlet secures his first triumph over the murderer. Also in killing Polonius, he removes one thorn from his path. This success of the hero generates *vīra rasa* (heroism) and remains the principal emotion in this scene.

There are several transient feelings or *vyabhicāribhāvas* in this scene as well. There is surprise when Hamlet physically forces Gertrude to sit down; taken aback she shouts for help. There is visible shock at the unexpected killing of Polonius. There is the strong feeling of guilt already mentioned before. There is amazement at the appearance of the Ghost. The Ghost, which remains invisible to the queen causes great amazement to her when Hamlet talks to it. She believes him to be mad and calls it "the very coinage of his brain" (line 127). Then the transient feeling of contempt appears when Hamlet talks of his two "friends" who are to accompany him on his voyage to England:

Hamlet: There's letters sealed, and my two school-fellows—
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged....

(III iv: 185.1-185.2)

And lastly disappointment is expressed when Gertrude remembers of Hamlet's impending journey to England:

Hamlet: I must of England.
You know that?

Queen Gertrude: Alack, I had forgot.
'Tis so concluded on.

(III iv: 182-185)

ACT IV

The first scene of Act IV looks like a stage of confusion caused by Polonius' death. The queen is in a state of shock at the turn of events. Still shaken by her son's behaviour she blurts out before Claudius:

Queen Gertrude: Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips his rapier out and cries 'A rat, a rat!,'
And in his brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

(IV i: 6-10)

It is now the king's turn to be shocked. His fear is rekindled and he dreads of what is to come. Completely aware now of Hamlet's wrath, he realizes he might well have been

the victim instead of Polonius. The transient feeling arising out of his fear is deception when he talks of his love for Hamlet. This is deception at its worst as in reality he is designing the murder of Hamlet, whom he considers his arch enemy at the moment. Losing no time he plans to ship off Hamlet the very next morning along with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Shaken to the roots, Claudius exclaims that his “soul is full of discord and dismay” (line 40).

The main emotion or *rasa* in this scene is undoubtedly fear or *bhayānaka rasa* intensified by the subsidiary feelings or *vyabhicāribhāvas* of shock and deception.

The second scene emits pure *bibhatsa rasa* or aversion. The king, his courtiers—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Polonius are all objects of Hamlet’s aversion. He overtly expresses his contempt for the villainy of Claudius and the sycophancy of Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Polonius. His contempt is matched by his wit when he replies to Rosencrantz’s query:

Rosencrantz: Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

Hamlet: Ay, sir, that soaks up the king’s countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. He keeps them like an apple in the corner of his jaw, corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you and, sponge you shall be dry again.

(IV ii: 13-19)

Hamlet’s witty sarcasm continues into the next scene when he calls the king a food for worms and addresses him as his mother. The comic interrupts Hamlet’s contempt at this stage:

King Claudius: Now, Hamlet where’s Polonius?

Hamlet: At supper.

King Claudius: At supper? Where?

Hamlet: Not where he eats, but where a is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table. That’s the end...

Hamlet: ...Farewell, dear mother.

King Claudius: Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Hamlet: My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother....

(IV iii: 17-54)

These dialogues break the gravity of the whole atmosphere and can only erupt laughter (*hāsa*) in the audience.

In this scene the king reveals his wicked designs of getting Hamlet executed in England. He is shrewd enough to realize that killing or imprisoning Hamlet in Denmark would only bring about his own downfall as the prince is “loved of the distracted multitude” (line 4). This action of an evildoer, who doesn’t flinch from committing one crime after the other, simply draws anger or *raudra rasa* from the audience.

So here both the emotions of *raudra rasa* (anger) and *hāsya rasa* (comic) run almost parallel to each other. Being friendly emotions, not opposed to the other, neither of them blocks the other and is free to take its own course. However, it may be concluded that *raudra rasa* ultimately prevails over *hāsya rasa* as it appears at the end of the scene, creating a more lasting impression.

The fourth scene generates *karuṇa rasa* or sorrow at Hamlet’s pitiable condition. He believes himself to be a coward compared to Fortinbras who can march with pride with his vast army and has no compunction in laying down twenty thousand lives for the sake of a piece of land. In truth it is Hamlet’s higher sensitivity and compassion and his regard for human life that stands in his way. But Hamlet calls this conflict within his heart and mind as cowardice. His dejection is the source of *karuṇa rasa* in the audience.

The fifth scene of this act is a prolific exhibition of Ophelia’s anguish in the form of madness. Plunged in sorrow at Hamlet’s rejection of her and her father’s sudden death, she has gone mad. Her songs are clearly expressive of her longing for Hamlet (*vipralambha śṛṅgāra* or love-in-separation) and her grief at her father’s death. Ophelia’s mournful distraction fills the heart with tenderness and evokes pure *karuṇa rasa*.

Laertes brings in the emotion of anger or *raudra rasa*. Believing Claudius to be the cause of his father’s death, he bravely confronts him swearing for vengeance. Seething with rage he challenges Claudius with the following words:

Laertes: How came he dead? I’ll not be juggled with.
To hell allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil,
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes. Only I’ll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

(IV v: 126-132)

Laertes’ uncontrolled rage and fearless challenge are also signs of bravery. Here, *raudra rasa* (anger) unfolds heroism and gives rise to *vīra rasa* as well. The two friendly emotions support each other and run parallel.

Laertes is in for a second shock (*transient feeling* or *vyabhicārībhāva*) at the re-entry of Ophelia. His sister’s loss of sanity doubles his grief resulting in *karuṇa rasa* in the audience. So the total effect in this scene is one of *karuṇa rasa*, *raudra rasa* and *vīra rasa* remaining only secondary.

In Scene VI, the sailors deliver Hamlet's letter to Horatio, where he expresses his wish to meet him as soon as possible. Hamlet's urgency stirs up some excitement (*vyabhicārībhāva*) in the audience of what is to follow. The scene is short and does not produce any *rasa*.

In the seventh and final scene of this act, Claudius is back in his own element, cunning and sly, contriving Hamlet's death at the hands of Laertes. Very tactfully, he tries to instigate Laertes against Hamlet, goading his conscience towards performing his filial duty of avenging his father's death:

King Claudius: Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

(IV vii: 89-91)

King Claudius: ... What would you undertake
To show yourself in deed your father's son in deed
More than in words?

(IV vii: 96-98)

Laertes' countenance is one of grief and rage:

Laertes: And so have I a noble father lost,
A sister driven into desp'rate terms,
Who has, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger, on mount, of all the age
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

(IV vii: 25-29)

A master of deception, Claudius plans a scheme with Laertes, to murder Hamlet:

King Claudius: Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape... Therefore this project
Should have a back or second that might hold
If this should blast in proof...
When in your motion you are hot and dry—
As make your bouts more violent to that end—
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escaped your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there—

(IV vii: 120-133)

Claudius' amorality and wickedness can only bring out anger or *raudra rasa* in the audience. This *raudra rasa* is interrupted by sorrow or *karuṇa rasa* at the news of Ophelia's death. Her death while deepening Laertes' grief, adds fuel to the fire, intensifying his rage:

Laertes: Alas, then she is drowned?

Queen Gertrude: Drowned, drowned.

Laertes: Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia
And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet
it is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will. When these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord.
I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.

(IV vii: 155-163)

So, the two major *rasas* of sorrow (*karuṇa*) and anger (*raudra*) appear simultaneously in equal intensity or alternate in quick succession. According to the *rasa* theory both these emotions are opposing and do not go with each other. However the opposition between two emotions can be removed by directing the opposite emotions on different objects, which is the case here. Claudius' vile scheming combined with Laertes' rage is the source of *raudra rasa* whereas Ophelia's madness and her subsequent death is the cause of *karuṇa rasa*.

ACT V

In the first scene, Ophelia's death can bring out no other emotion other than sadness or *karuṇa rasa*. The grim humour might provide some mental relief but may not draw laughter, as Ophelia's tragedy lies too heavily on the minds of the spectators.

Then follows the entry of the king, the queen and other royal attendants with Ophelia's corpse. A funeral scene particularly that of the innocent Ophelia, naturally culminates in *karuṇa rasa*. Hamlet is aghast at the mention of Ophelia's death; never for a moment having imagined the coffin to be carrying his beloved's body. From shock (transient feeling or *vyabhicārībhāva*) follows intense grief. The queens parting words pour salt to his wounds:

Hamlet: What, the fair Ophelia!

Queen Gertrude: [scattering flowers] Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.

I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
I thought, thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not t' have strewed thy grave.

(V i: 226-230)

Both Hamlet and Laertes, in their mourning lose their composure, which is but natural in the face of grief, and end up in a tussle. Laertes attacks Hamlet believing him to be the cause of his sister and father's death. So the emotion of sorrow is momentarily interrupted by *raudra* or anger, breaking the continuity of *karuṇa rasa*, but only for a short period.

Hamlet's bereavement is genuine:

Hamlet: [Coming forward] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. [Hamlet leaps in after Laertes]

(Vi: 238-242)

Hamlet: I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

(Vi: 254-256)

These words speak of the depth of his love. He had loved Ophelia all along despite the fact that he had previously claimed not to have loved her anymore and perhaps broken her heart. *Śṛīgāra rasa* (love) arises but subsides immediately in this tragic moment.

So the whole scene reverberates with *karuṇa rasa* only being shortly intermitted by *raudra rasa* (rage) and *śṛīgāra rasa* (love). The introduction of these opposing emotions does not aid *karuṇa rasa* but only succeeds in breaking its continuity and becomes subordinate to it.

The second scene introduces more intrigue into the play. Hamlet, constantly suspicious of Claudius' motives accidentally discovers the latter's evil designs of doing away with him. Very cleverly, Hamlet foils his plans and sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to the gallows instead. Hamlet, thoroughly fed up with their sycophancy feels they deserve no better end:

Hamlet: Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
Doth by their own insinuation grow.

(V ii: 58-60)

Any friend of the king, who is now Hamlet's sworn enemy, becomes an enemy too. From this viewpoint Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who are Claudius' friends are Hamlet's enemies and have been disposed off one after the other. It is unfortunate that Polonius happened to be the father of his beloved, but his constant interference and contriving had made him a formidable enemy. So he had to die. Gradually removing from his path, one thorn after the other, Hamlet seeks to reach his ultimate enemy, his final target.

On going through the play, the general impression could be that Hamlet has been procrastinating in his duty of avenging his father. But in retrospect, one can perceive fairly reasonable grounds for his supposed delay in action. First, he wanted clear evidence of Claudius' guilt. This is undisputedly an admirable strength of character. After his test, he is convinced of the latter's guilt by acquiring the evidence he has been looking for. But what evidence could he give to the people of Denmark? Who would believe his tale of a Ghost commanding him to action? Wouldn't his tale be misinterpreted as a guise for his thwarted ambition? In reality, it probably isn't that easy to slay Claudius as it appears in the play, and Hamlet has to look for a proper opportunity for it.

The final scene of the play is mainly a mixture of *vīra rasa* (heroism) and *karuṇa rasa* (sorrow) with a trace of sarcasm (*vyabhicārībhāva* or subsidiary feeling). The latest victim of this sarcasm is the courtier Osric, whom Hamlet calls a water-fly (line 84). This secondary feeling is too mild and fails to create the stronger emotion of disgust or *bībhatsa*.

Hamlet clearly displays his bravery in this scene. Not enraged by Laertes' violent attack on him in the cemetery, Hamlet acknowledges the injustice he has done to Laertes and fully understands the tumult in his mind:

Hamlet: ... But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his. I'll court his favours.
But sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a tow'ring passion.

(V ii: 76-81)

Without any compunction or a moment's hesitation, Hamlet accepts Laertes' challenge for a duel, in spite of being aware of the latter's ingenuity in sword fighting. As befits a hero, with true humility, he asks for Laertes' pardon and accepts his hand of friendship:

Hamlet: [to Laertes]. Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong;
But pardon't as you are a gentleman....
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother.

(V ii: 163-181)

Hamlet's triumph lies in Laertes' forgiveness and acceptance of his hand of friendship. But Laertes' forgiveness doesn't make him flinch from a battle, notably a sign of bravery:

Laertes: ... I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it.

Hamlet: I do embrace it freely,
And will this brothers' wager frankly play.
[To attendants] Give us the foils.

(V ii: 188-192)

Throughout the combat Hamlet shows his skill and courage. He commits his final act of heroism in slaying the king, fulfilling the task of the Ghost and his duty towards his father.

Karuṇa or sorrow is obviously generated at the death of the hero. Before dying Hamlet is cleared of the burden of his guilt, when Laertes realizes his falling into the trap of the king's plotting. His words serve to intensify the depth of the sorrow:

Laertes: He is justly served.
It is a poison tempered by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me.

(V ii: 269-273)

