
Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and the Concept of Rasa

Vinita SharmaAssociate Professor (Dept. of English), Dronacharya Government College, Gurugram

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Abstract

In a recent interview, the celebrated historian -William Dalrymple talked about his latest book- 'The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World'. While delving about the rich heritage of ancient India on a recent episode of a weekly podcast naming Grand Tamasha, the veteran author deliberated and lamented how the Indosphere and its multiple legacies have been forgotten that Indians are not aware of, while the rest of the world is. He emphatically spoke that between the period from 250 BC to the 12th century, a period of about 1400 years, India was exporting to the world not only religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, and academic ideas like mathematics, but also art, architecture, mythology, theology, and numerous Sanskrit Classical stories.

IKS, Indian Knowledge Systems, is an initiative on the part of Indian government to acknowledge and revive the same old wisdom and knowledge entrenched in the ancient Indian ancestries. One such field that may brag of being a vast repository of the rich Indian legacy is the study of Indian Classical Theories or Indian Aesthetics. These theories must not only be kept alive and shielded from extinction, but they must also be shared globally in order to be judged and evaluated for their enduring value and profound research. Not only are some schools of thought, such as Rasa, Dhvani, Vakrokti, and Alamkāra, the prized treasures of the School of Indian Aesthetics, but they have also intriguingly caught the interest of western intellectuals. These Indian philosophies remain significant and applicable today. They are not limited to Indian writings; they may also be used for this purpose with western texts or literature in any other language.

Keywords: IKS, Aesthetics, Artistic, Rasa, NEP 2020, HEIs, Preservation.

Objective:

The aim of this study is to get an insight into the deep-seated knowledge embedded in the Indian roots and the initiatives to disseminate this ancient wisdom into the world. This ensures not only the utilization of an available resource, seated on the verge of oblivion, but also the preservation of these pearls of wisdom for the future generations which they can readily make use of in the times of crisis. While maintaining that literary criticism and literature are the two sides of the same coin, this study serves as a reminder to the literary community that one of the most common humanistic approaches in literary criticism is Rasa theory, which examines human emotions. The core concept of rasa and its delightful experience has not ebbed even after spanning centuries. Nowadays, the idea of rasa has been used by a variety of disciplines to examine various viewpoints within their own domains. Therefore, the essence of this theory should be kept conserved in literature; the area where it originally belongs to, for readers in the future. IKS- The Indian Knowledge Systems is a sincere enterprise in this direction undertaken by the Indian Government, keeping the same thought in the objective of its establishment.

Introduction:

‘The Indian Knowledge Systems’ (IKS) which can be translated in hindi as Bhāratiya Jñāna Paramparā Vibhāga, is a branch created under the Ministry of Education, by the Government of India with the purpose of disseminating the treasured erudition contained in the ancient knowledge systems. This division of Education Ministry was established in October, 2020.

The term ‘Indian knowledge systems’ (IKS) refers to the vast amount of information, customs, and inventions that have been accumulated throughout the centuries in india in a variety of fields, such as astronomy, mathematics, medicine, literature, philosophy, and ecology. Despite their significant potential to advance modern science, these knowledge systems have frequently been overlooked in the Indian educational system.

For millennia, Indians have been acquiring knowledge about sustainable farming methods, herbal remedies, ecosystem management, and other issues by watching closely nature and the environment. We may uncover the fundamental ideas of IKS and related techniques, show their effectiveness, and look into how they might be used to solve current issues by incorporating scientific approaches to study IKS. IKS analysis can also help inspire innovative thinking in a variety of fields.

IKS also provides frameworks that illustrate how humans, nature, and the universe are interconnected. We can create more sustainable technology, cutting-edge medical treatments, and urban planning strategies that make the growth of mankind and environmental balance to be the most important goal to achieve by fusing IKS with contemporary scientific knowledge.

Initiatives can support cultural preservation, build community resilience, and resolve intellectual property rights concerns by acknowledging the importance of IKS and incorporating local communities in processes related to research and development.

Some would argue that IKS is irrelevant to today's problems and that solving them requires more use of current scientific understanding than the ancient knowledge systems. This perspective, however, ignores the useful insights and contributions that IKS can provide in addressing contemporary problems. Even though science has come a long way in the last few centuries, it would be unwise to ignore the wealth of knowledge embedded in IKS.

IKS's holistic approach, which incorporates various aspects of knowledge such as theoretical frameworks, empirical data, experiential wisdom, and spiritual insights, is one of its strong points. Furthermore, scientific investigation and empirical research have confirmed a number of IKS components. For instance, several scientific researches have been conducted on the ancient Indian medical system known as Ayurveda. Ayurveda provides comprehensive methods of treatment that prioritise individualized healthcare, preventative measures, and lifestyle changes. An increasing amount of evidence-based research has shown the benefits of yoga, emphasizing its many benefits for mental and physical health as well as quality of life.

Traditional Indian farming methods are sustainable and provide important insights for tackling modern issues like soil erosion, climate change, and food insecurity, according to evidence-based study. For instance, in order to maintain soil health, improve biodiversity, and lessen the effects of climate change, traditional Indian farming methods including crop rotation, mixed cropping, rainwater gathering, and organic farming closely resemble contemporary sustainable agriculture approaches. There is enormous potential for creating novel and comprehensive agricultural practices that support food security, environmental sustainability, and rural wealth by fusing IKS with contemporary scientific knowledge.

Numerous facets of Indian astronomy have been tested and been confirmed by empirical data and contemporary scientific techniques, such as mathematical computations, celestial observations, and forecasting models. There are plenty such cases like this. Therefore, we should investigate IKS's capability for fostering a more varied, inclusive, and innovative scientific atmosphere rather than seeing it as incompatible with contemporary scientific procedures.

This could be one of the reasons why the National Education Policy 2020 placed a strong emphasis on incorporating IKS into many subject areas in both higher education and the school classrooms. Students who get education that incorporates the IKS approach can develop a comprehensive worldview that takes into account many aspects of life. The focus on sustainable living habits that is engrained in IKS is one such instance. In addition to

emphasizing social endurance and peaceful cohabitation with the natural world, these practices concentrate on safeguarding the environment.

With NEP 2020 in place, students can understand how human actions and their effects on the environment and society are interrelated when IKS principles are integrated into the classroom. Students learn the value of embracing sustainable lifestyles by exploring the knowledge of IKS and placing it in the backdrop of contemporary living.

Additionally, IKS's teachings inspire students to look for answers to the problems that human civilizations are currently facing. IKS's comprehensive approach gives students a greater knowledge of these complicated challenges, whether they are addressing social inequity, exhaustion of resources, or the impact of global warming. It motivates them to act proactively to bring about constructive change. Students who thoroughly study IKS can become knowledgeable, and accomplished people who are well-prepared to face the odds of the modern era with fortitude and innovation.

An ongoing effort is being made by Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) to integrate IKS into higher education. Careful preparation, extensive teacher training programs, and the acquisition of reliable study materials in multiple Indian languages are all necessary in this venture. More than 50 universities and 500 colleges in India have presently introduced IKS courses, demonstrating the popularity and usefulness of the programme.

“Integrating IKS within the existing educational framework will aid in preserving and disseminating Indian Knowledge Systems for further research and societal applications. The Universities / Institutions may prepare courses and programme as per guidelines accordingly. This will help preserve India’s ancient heritage by including it in academic courses and curricula,” UGC stated. (Indian Express)

The UGC rules itself cover all aspects of IKS, including material on "upapattis," or explanations in Indian mathematics, Sanskrit texts, and an emphasis on Ayurveda. Among other things, the guidelines offer a fundamental course on IKS that covers topics such as Indian education, literature, economics, textiles, metallurgy, fine arts, architecture, and civilization. In the meantime, Indian astronomy and mathematics have also received attention.

With its wide range of Indian languages and dialects, IKS is extensive and varied. Oral traditions that are available in all Indian languages contain a significant amount of IKS knowledge. Therefore, in order to enhance the educational experience of learners, faculty members are urged to integrate pertinent knowledge from their different languages and areas into their teaching techniques. It is crucial to understand that there are ways to include IKS into education that encourage variation, comprehensiveness, and cultural awareness.

The study of Indian Classical Theories or Indian Aesthetics is also one area which

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boast of itself as a huge reservoir of the rich Indian heritage. These theories not only need to be preserved and protected from being pushed into oblivion, but also need to be disseminated in the world to be assessed and evaluated for their timeless worth and deep scholarship that they carry unto themselves. It would be enlightening and overwhelming for the Indian scholars to know that their own history bears testimony to some profound thinkers who propounded some erudite literary theories which are immortal due to their immense knowledge essence. There are certain schools of thought like Rasa, Dhvani, Vakrokti and Alamkāra which are not only the proud possessions of the School of Indian Aesthetics but also have intriguingly attracted the attention of western thinkers too. These Indian theories are still relevant and meaningful. They can not only be applied to Indian texts, but are also equally suitable for this purpose to the western texts or literature of any language for that matter.

The Greek word 'aisthetikos', which pertains to the sense of perception, is the source of the origin of the word 'aesthetics'. It is a subfield of philosophy that studies art, taste and beauty. The sense of perception, by no means, should be confined to the sense of sight solely. It should be inclusive of all the five senses or even the sixth sense which is considered to be working only through perception and not having a corresponding body organ. The theory of beauty and the arts belong to the domain of Aesthetics. In 1735, Alexander Baumgarten was the first academic in Europe to use the word "aesthetics." According to him, aesthetics is a delectable way of thinking. In literature, a piece of writing is considered beautiful if it delights the reader and engages their senses. Cultural interaction brought about by modernization and internationalization has resulted in the blending of eastern and western ideas. While we readily embrace and adjust to western concepts and values, let's not forget to take a moment to consider our aesthetics—our "Indian Aesthetics." Despite the overwhelming influence of symmetry, volume, and depth in western aesthetics, the Indian art, or "rasavikalpa," should not be obliterated. It cannot be evaluated according to western standards. As we embrace and adjust to the influences from around the world, let's stimulate our Indian sensitivities and become proficient in our preferred field.

Many Sanskrit concepts are difficult to translate into English, and we frequently feel constrained in our ability to articulate our exact ideas and meanings. Similar to this, the Indian concept of "rasa," which is the goal of all art, cannot be translated into its English counterpart, even though it is sometimes confused with aesthetics. A vast array of human experiences, thoughts, enduring traits, beliefs, and delights have been attributed to Indian aesthetics.

The definition of "rasa" varies depending on the subject and language. But according to its origins, the term has several meanings and situations in the ancient Vedic literature. In the Rigveda, it refers to a "liquid," "an extract," and "flavour." In the Atharvaveda, "rasa"

means both "taste" and "grain sap." It denotes "essence, self-luminous consciousness, quintessence" in the Upanishads. In post-Vedic literature, rasa means "extract, essence, juice, or tasty liquid." In Indian arts, it refers to the aesthetic flavour of any literary, musical, or visual composition that evokes in the reader or audience a sensation or emotion that is indescribable. A "sensitive spectator," or Sahṛdaya, may understand and relate to the work without being detached owing to the writer's deliberate use of emotional flavours and substance.

Rasa theory basically examines various emotions, and the reasons for their arousal in a perceptive reader, or how they are shown, suggested and conveyed in a piece of writing. A poet's primary goal is to portray emotions and supporting sentiments that influence a person's actions. Rasa, then, refers to poetic pleasure, or an aesthetic experience that follows the reading of any poem or piece of literature. One of Bharata's sutras, " Vibhāvanubhāva-Vyabhicāri-samyogād-rasanīṣpattih'," explains the notion of Rasa (Natyashastra Ch 6). It indicates that rasa is produced as a result of the blending of Vibhāva, Anubhāva, and Vyabhicāribhāva. The enduring emotions or feelings are called Sthāyibhāvas, whereas, the transient (fleeting) emotions are called vyabhicāribhāvas. The excitatory or stimulating variables are called vibhāvas, and the subsequent or following reaction is called anubhāvas.

Bharata claims that the rasas are produced by Sthāyibhāvas or the permanent emotions. These include the following: Bhaya (fear), Jugupsa (disgust), Vismaya (astonishment), Nirveda (indifference/renunciation), Rati (love), Hāsa (laughing), Śoka (grief), Krodha (rage), and Utsāha (enthusiasm).

Śṛṅgāra (erotic), Hāsyā (comic), Karuna (compassionate), Raudra (wrathful), Veer (heroic), Bhayānak (terrifying), Bibhatsa (odious), Adbhut (marvelous), and Śānta (tranquil) are the rasas that are elicited by their corresponding Sthāyibhāvas. All of these rasas may be found in the several genres of English literature or literature of any language for that matter. One can get a great deal of pleasure from these rasas when enjoying not only literature but also any other kind of art.

The ancient Indian philosopher Bharata Muni developed Rasa Theory, which is included in his well-known Sanskrit book on performing arts, - Natyashastra. It was estimated that the entire Natyashastra was composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE. It has 6000 shlokas spread throughout 36 chapters. In Natyashastra, "Rasa" is covered in the sixth chapter, whereas "Bhavas" is covered in the seventh. The emotional sensations evoked by creative representations may be explored and understood with the aid of rasa theory. It recognises several rasas, such as fear (Bhayānak), disgust (Bibhatsa), compassion (Karuna), wrath (Raudra), heroism (Veer), love (Śṛṅgāra), humour (Hāsyā), and wonder (Adbhut). The book is still being developed today in the form of several manuscripts, each with a unique chapter header and content. According to the Rasa Theory, the purpose of performing arts is

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entertain the audience. Its main goal, nevertheless, ought to be to immerse viewers in a new, parallel realm of joy where they may explore the innermost thoughts of their own minds and consider spiritual and moral dilemmas, while remaining connected to the performance- the original cause of this stimulation, at the same time.

Rasa theory has its foundations in Indian philosophical practices, namely in the notion of transcending the ordinary via artistic experience and the notion of aesthetic delight i.e., rasavāda. Although rasa theory was first developed in the setting of ancient Indian dance and theatre as well as Sanskrit literature, its ideas have been incorporated into several, distinct kinds of art around the world. In addition to Indian traditional arts, it has impacted modern literature, drama, cinema, and even some facets of neuroscience and psychology.

Rasa Theory has a far-reaching range of influences adding to its multidisciplinary import. Rasa theory's ramifications extend beyond aesthetics and the arts. In order to better understand how artistic experiences, influence human emotions, mental activity, and awareness, scholars have investigated its links to various disciplines such as psychology, cognitive science, and philosophy of mind, comparing and contrasting rasa theory with modern theories of cognition and emotion.

In a word, rasa is the feeling of fulfilment and completeness one gets after generalizing oneself to encompass all of an actor's situations and feelings. A genuine actor harbours the same intensity of joy when he performs, aligning himself with the poet in his artistic experience. A poet enjoys poetry with the same level of pleasure that a genuine actor does when he was first performing, because of the rasa generalization. This rasa brings the poet's pleasure to the same situation, motivation, and environment where the aesthetic enthusiast had experienced those feelings for the first time while watching or reading, due to the Rasa generalization, bringing the whole experience to a full circle.

Conclusion:

Rasa theory, which reflects the timeless significance of aesthetic experience in our culture and knowledge base, has therefore developed from its ancient foundations into an influential framework that still fascinates artists, academics, and thinkers from a wide range of fields and nationalities. Several Western artists and critics came to the conclusion that Western art might benefit greatly from Eastern techniques after discovering important insights into Indian aesthetics that are applicable to art and artistic experience worldwide.

There are plenty of books written in Sanskrit to educate readers on the nature of poetic enjoyment, its features, and its range, which can be traced dating back to the early days of the Bharata and the Bhamah. Sanskrit literature is renowned for its profusion of philosophical and speculative works. The evolution of rasa theory is regarded as the apex of Sanskrit poetics, and among those who examine the substance of poetry, the rasa school is, without a doubt, the most influential school of thought. Comparable to this, the dhvani-theory

of Sanskrit poetry is well recognised and significant too.

All things considered, rasa theory has a broad reach, covering both theoretical investigation and pragmatic application in the production and reception of art in many fields and cultures. Rasa theory's impact was expanded outside the performing arts to include literature, architecture, sculpture, and painting. It gave artists a framework for comprehending and evaluating different kinds of artistic expression, assisting them in expressing feelings and arousing aesthetic enjoyment. In view of current aesthetics and cross-cultural interactions, academics and artists have re-examined rasa theory in the modern day. They have fine-tuned its ideas to new situations and artistic endeavour while investigating its applicability to Western art forms including literature, drama, and films.

IKS and Sustainability of Rasa Dhvani

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) offers a vital foundation for comprehending and sustaining the traditional Indian aesthetic philosophy of Rasa Dhvani. This literary theory highlights the subtle hint of emotional content beyond literal representation, and as far back as the 9th century, Ānandavardhana was the first to enunciate this literary theory, (Ingalls et al., 1990). Deep interaction with the ancient epistemic frameworks ingrained in Indian philosophical heritage is necessary for Rasa Dhvani to remain sustainable in modern scenarios.

By guru-shishya parampara along with experiential learning, IKS provides comprehensive approaches for maintaining and passing on the subtle knowledge about dhvani (suggestion) as well as rasa (aesthetic feeling). Indigenous systems preserve the connection between sound, meaning, and sentimental resonance, in contrast to Western analytical methods that frequently break up poetic components (Lath, 1978). In addition to textual information, the oral tradition also maintains experiential knowledge of how particular emotional states are evoked by miniscule language subtleties. Rapid cultural homogenisation and the prevalence of digital communication channels that value explicit meaning more than implicit meaning are two current threats to Rasa Dhvani's sustainability.

Nonetheless, continuity may be guaranteed by fusing contemporary pedagogical techniques with IKS concepts. In order to do this, indigenous modes of knowing must be acknowledged as legitimate epistemological frameworks as opposed to merely cultural artefacts (Kapoor, 2007).

Thus, preserving live linkages to old knowledge systems while modifying their modes of transmission for modern settings is an essential component to Rasa Dhvani's sustainability.

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