



# National Journal of Hindi & Sanskrit Research

ISSN: 2454-9177

NJHSR 2026; 1(65): 01-03

© 2026 NJHSR

www.sanskritarticle.com

**Dr. Amlan Acharya**

Guest Faculty,

Hyderabad Central University

## A Psychological Study of Hasya Rsasa

**Dr. Amlan Acharya**

### Abstract:

This study explores the psychological dimension of *Hasya Rasa* (the aesthetic sentiment of laughter) as described in the *Natyashastra* of Bharata Muni. It examines how laughter, when artistically structured through dramatic elements, transforms into an aesthetic experience that offers emotional relief and balances intense sentiments in theatrical performance. The paper further correlates classical *Rasa* theory with contemporary psychological research, particularly studies on laughter therapy and mental health. Drawing insights from traditional Indian texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Ayurvedic* philosophy, the study argues that *Hasya Rasa* functions not merely as a dramatic ornament but as a significant contributor to psychological harmony and holistic well-being.

Keywords: *Rasa*, *Hasya*, Psychology, *Bhava*, Mental Health, Aesthetics

### Introduction

The *Natyashastra*, attributed to Bharata Muni, is one of the foundational texts of Indian performing arts, encompassing theatre, dance, and music. Beyond technical instruction, it presents a subtle psychological framework explaining how dramatic art influences the human mind. Central to this framework is the theory of *Rasa*, which describes the aesthetic experience relished by the audience.

**Rasa Theory:** The famous *Rasa Sutra* —

“तत्र विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगाद्रसनिष्पत्तिः”—

explains that *rasa* emerges from the harmonious interaction of determinants (*vibhava*), consequents (*anubhava*), and transitory emotions (*vyabhicari bhava*). These elements activate the dominant stable emotion (*sthayi bhava*), elevating it into a refined aesthetic experience. Importantly, *rasa* is not the personal emotion of the performer but a universalized emotional essence savored by the sensitive spectator.

The text traditionally identifies eight primary *rasas*:

- **Sringara** (love)
- **Hasya** (laughter)
- **Karuna** (compassion/sorrow)
- **Raudra** (anger)
- **Veera** (heroism)
- **Bhayanaka** (fear)
- **Bibhatsa** (disgust)
- **Adbhuta** (wonder)

These *rasas* collectively represent fundamental human emotions structured into aesthetic experience.

**Bhavas:** The *Natyashastra* also elaborates on the *Bhavas*, which are the psychological states or emotions expressed by the performers. These *Bhavas* are the foundation upon which the *Rasas* are built. Through precise techniques of expression and characterization, performers aim to evoke specific *Bhavas* within themselves and transmit them to the audience.

**Correspondence:**

**Dr. Amlan Acharya**

Guest Faculty,

Hyderabad Central University

## Hasya Rasa (laughter)

Hasya Rasa arises from the *sthaiyi bhava* of laughter (*hasa*). Unlike ordinary laughter, aesthetic laughter is refined and depersonalized. It may be generated through incongruity, exaggerated behavior, faulty speech, or unusual appearance, as suggested in the verse:

विकृताचारैर्विकृतैश्च विकृतवेषैश्च  
हासयति जनं यस्मात्तस्माज्जेयो रसो हास्यः॥<sup>1</sup>

Hasya is traditionally classified into:

- **Atmasta** (self-directed laughter)
- **Parasta** (laughter directed at others)

Six gradations are described: *smita*, *hasita*, *vhasita*, *upahasita*, *apahasita*, and *atihhasita*, ranging from gentle smiles to excessive laughter. Classical dramaturgy associates refined laughter with noble characters, while exaggerated forms are attributed to inferior characters.

### Importance of Hasya Rasa in drama

According to Bharata Muni:

दुःखार्तानां श्रमार्तानां शोकार्तानां तपस्विनाम्  
विश्रान्तिजननं काले नाट्यमेतद्भविष्यति॥<sup>2</sup>

Drama provides rest and emotional relief to those burdened by sorrow, fatigue, or distress. Within this framework, Hasya Rasa plays a crucial balancing role. It prevents emotional heaviness in serious narratives and revitalizes audience engagement. Comic figures such as the *Vidushaka* in classical Sanskrit drama—especially in the works of Kalidasa—serve both dramatic and psychological purposes by lightening tension and subtly critiquing social behavior.

### The contribution of Hasya Rasa in the cure of mental illness

Laughter plays an important role in curing or reducing mental stress and emotional problems. It has a natural healing effect on the mind and body. When a person laughs, the body releases “feel-good” chemicals called endorphins, which reduce stress, anxiety, and sadness. Laughter relaxes the muscles, improves blood circulation, and refreshes the mind. It helps people forget their worries for a while and brings positive thinking.

From a psychological point of view, laughter reduces tension, depression, and mental pressure. It improves mood, increases social bonding, and gives emotional strength to face difficulties. There are so many experiments done in medical science. Here are some –

- “The Efficacy of Laughter Therapy on Psychological Symptoms in People with Cancer: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Studies.”<sup>3</sup>
- “A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials of laughter and humor interventions on depression, anxiety, and sleep quality in adults.”<sup>4</sup>

- “The effect of laughter therapy on nursing students' anxiety, satisfaction with life, and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: Randomized controlled study.”<sup>5</sup>

- “Humor and Laughter May Influence Health IV. Humor and Immune Function.”<sup>6</sup>

### Impact of Hasya Rasa on mental and physical health

Laughing has numerous benefits for both mental and physical health:

- **Reduces Stress:** Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, which are the body's natural feel-good chemicals. This can help reduce stress hormones, such as cortisol, leading to a more relaxed state.
- **Boosts Immune System:** Laughter can increase immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your disease resistance.
- **Promotes Relaxation:** The physical act of laughing can relieve physical tension and relax muscles, which can remain relaxed for up to 45 minutes after laughing.
- **Enhances Mood:** Laughing promotes an overall sense of well-being and can temporarily alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Improves Cardiovascular Health:** Laughter can improve blood flow and increase vascular function, which can help protect against heart disease.
- **Increases Pain Tolerance:** Studies have shown that laughter increases pain tolerance and can reduce the perception of pain.
- **Improves Cognitive Function:** Laughter stimulates both sides of the brain, enhancing creativity and problem-solving abilities.

Overall, incorporating laughter into your daily life can have profound positive effects on your health and well-being. Also in Ayurveda, there is a sloka that represents the importance of a cheerful mind.

समदोषः समाग्निश्च समधातुमलक्रियः ।

प्रसन्नात्मेन्द्रियमनाः स्वस्थ इत्यभिधीयते ॥<sup>7</sup>

This verse defines true health in Ayurveda. It says that a person is considered healthy not just when the physical body functions well, but when all levels of balance are maintained. Physically, the doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) must be in equilibrium, the digestive fire (*Agni*) should function properly, and the tissues and waste elimination (*Dhatu*s and *Malas*) must work smoothly. Mentally and emotionally, the mind, senses, and soul should be cheerful and content (*prasanna*). In other words, good health is a combination of physical balance and mental-emotional well-being. This is why Ayurveda emphasizes practices like Hasya (laughter) and mental cheerfulness—they directly contribute to maintaining *prasanna manas*, which is essential for overall health. Like this Bhagabat Gita also says that –

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।

प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥<sup>8</sup>

It means that for a person whose mind is cheerful and calm, the intellect quickly becomes steady and firmly established.

### Conclusion

The concept of Hasya Rasa, as explained in the *Natyashastra*, reveals a profound psychological understanding of human emotions in ancient Indian aesthetics. Bharata Muni did not consider laughter merely as entertainment, but as a refined emotional experience capable of transforming the inner state of the spectator. Through the harmonious combination of vibhava, anubhava, and vyabhicari bhavas, the stable emotion of laughter is elevated into an aesthetic relish that brings delight, balance, and emotional purification.

Hasya Rasa plays a vital role in dramatic art by relieving mental strain, preventing monotony, and harmonizing serious sentiments such as sorrow and anger. Beyond the stage, its relevance extends deeply into psychological and medical dimensions. Modern scientific studies on laughter therapy strongly support what ancient Indian thinkers intuitively understood—that laughter reduces stress, strengthens the immune system, improves mood, and enhances overall well-being. Thus, the classical theory of rasa aligns remarkably with contemporary psychological research.

Furthermore, traditional Indian knowledge systems, such as Ayurveda and the *Bhagavad Gita*, emphasize the importance of a cheerful and balanced mind for true health and a stable intellect. This reinforces the idea that Hasya is not superficial amusement but a therapeutic and spiritual necessity.

Therefore, Hasya Rasa stands as a bridge between art and psychology, tradition and modern science, aesthetic pleasure, and mental health. It demonstrates that laughter is not only a dramatic device but also a powerful tool for emotional healing and holistic well-being.

### Bibliography

- Shastri, Madhusudan, trans. *Natyasastra and Abhinavabharati Commentary with Hindi Translation*. Vol. 1, Music Research Library, 1917.
- Atrideva. *Suśrutasaṃhitā: Sampūrṇa Sanskritō-Hindi Tīkā*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1960.
- *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita: Sanskrit Text with Hindi Translation*. Gorakhpur: Gita Press.
- “The Efficacy of Laughter Therapy on Psychological Symptoms in People with Cancer: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Studies.” *Psycho-Oncology*, vol. 33, no. 11, 2024, article e70010. Wiley Online Library, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.70010>.
- Zhao, Jinping, Huiru Yin, Guangwei Zhang, Guichen Li, Binghan Shang, Chunyan Wang, and Li Chen. “A Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials of Laughter and

Humour Interventions on Depression, Anxiety, and Sleep Quality in Adults.” *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 75, no. 11, Nov. 2019, pp. 2435–2448. Wiley Online Library, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14000>

- Eraydın, Canan, and Sule Ecevit Alpar. “The Effect of Laughter Therapy on Nursing Students’ Anxiety, Satisfaction with Life, and Psychological Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Randomized Controlled Study.” *Advances in Integrative Medicine*, vol. 9, no. 3, Sept. 2022, pp. 173–179, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aimed.2022.06.006>

- Bennett, Mary Payne, and Cecile Lengacher. “Humor and Laughter May Influence Health IV. Humor and Immune Function.” *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, vol. 6, no. 2, June 2009, pp. 159–164, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ecam/nem149>

### Reference

- <sup>1</sup> *Natyasastra*, 6.51
- <sup>2</sup> *Natyasastra*, 6.53
- <sup>3</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.70010>.
- <sup>4</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14000>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aimed.2022.06.006>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1093/ecam/nem149>
- <sup>7</sup> *Susrutasamhita*, Sutrasthan, 15.41
- <sup>8</sup> *Srimadbhagbat Gita*, 2.65