

The Avanti PRE Curriculum

Teacher Resource 7.6.1a: “The 12 Rasas”

Sanskrit Name	English name	Related Terms/Emotions	Characters	Film Genre/Content	Spiritual Example
Shanta Rasa	Neutrality	reverence, admiration, peace, serenity	Fan, admirer, pet, cherished belonging (e.g. car), <u>passive admirer</u>	Rest after successful endeavour	Sukadeva Goswami and many mystics
Dasya Rasa	Servanthood	Loyalty, devotion, dedication	Servant, assistant, student, butler, housemaid, employee, <u>junior</u>	Many period films	Hanuman; Krishna’s sons
Sakhya	Friendship	Trust, reliability, companionship	Buddy, classmate, brother, sister, long-term friend, comrade, <u>peer</u>	Friendship; some war films	The cowherd friends of Krsna; Arjuna; Sudama
Vatsalya	Parental	Concern, care, protection	Father, mother, guru, elder, teacher, employer, <u>senior</u>	Family films	Dasharatha (Rama’s father); Nanda & Yashoda
Madhurya	Conjugal	Love, desire, passion, romance	Beloved, husband, wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, fiancé, <u>intimate partner</u>	Romance, romantic comedy	The Gopis; Krishna’s queens; Sita
Hasya	Humour	Laughter, joking, smiling, wit, teasing	Jokers, people who are teased	Comedy, satire	Krishna jokes with Rukmini
Adbhuta	Wonder	Awe, amazement, curiosity, astonishment, anticipation	Detectives, children, etc.	Mystery, science fiction	Yashoda sees the cosmos in Krishna’s mouth
Karuna	Pity	Compassion, grief, suffering, pathos, lamentation	Unlucky people, victims, relief workers, care givers	Tragedy	Yashoda sees Krishna in the coils of Kaliya serpent
Raudra	Anger	Rage, fury, temper, irritation	Enemies, criminals, victims, soldiers	Violence, revenge, war, gangster	Balarama as Krishna is insulted by Jarasanda
Virya	Heroism	Chivalry, courage, contempt for enemy	Soldiers, warriors, social campaigners	War, adventure, thriller	Bhīshma fighting Krishna (in the Mahabharata).
Bhayanaka	Fear	Anxiety, fright, terror	Victims of crime, accident or calamity of nature	Psychological thriller, horror, suspense, etc.	
Vibhatsa	Ghostliness	Dread, horror, revulsion, self-hate, loathing	Monsters, vampires, violent crime witnesses	Horror	Any devotee regretting his past bad activities

Notes:

1. The first five shown here are the primary rasas (one of which must be present)
2. The lower seven are secondary rasa, which complement the primary rasa. For example, there may be humorous exchange (hasya) in friendship or as a lover (madhurya).

“Locating Each Rasa in the Ramayana”

	Sanskrit Name	English Name	Related Words	Scenes/Characters for each rasa
1	Shanta	Admirer	admiration, reverence	One who appreciates Rama’s beauty, even on the battlefield. Rama’s bow and arrows.
2	Dasya	Servant	loyalty, devotion	Hanuman, Vibhishana
3	Sakhya	Friend	reliable companion	Lakshman, Bharata
4	Vatsalya	Parent	care, protection	Dasharatha
5	Madhurya	Lover	love, romance	Sita
1	Hasya	Humour	laughing, smiling, joking	Rama and Lakshman joking with Shurpanaka
2	Adbhuta	Wonder	awe, amazement, curiosity	The wondrous floating bridge to Lanka
3	Karuna	Pity	grief, suffering, lamentation	Sita’s kidnap; the final book (Sita’s banishment); Rama’s compassion to all
4	Raudra	Anger	rage, fury, temper	Rama furious at the sea when it refused to give way
5	Virya	Heroism	chivalry, courage, determination	Warriors trying to lift Shiva’s bow; Hanuman burning down Lanka
6	Bhayanaka	Fear	fright, terror, anxiety	Sita’s fear of the hideous rakshasas
7	Vibhatsa	Ghastliness	dread, horror, revulsion	Vultures eating corpses on the battlefield; the ugly rakshasas

Further Notes on Rasa

Though this theory may at first appear complex, the teacher might note:

- (a) It becomes accessible by considering its application in this world
- (b) It is central to the Chaitanya Vaishnava tradition, and hence Avanti Schools
- (c) It provides a useful tool for literary and dramatic critique
- (d) Educationally, it is helpful in exploring perhaps the most important human asset (i.e. intimate and supportive loving relationships) and in preparing young people for the opportunities and challenges of adult life.

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1. Rasa-theology was developed by Rupa Goswami. He delineated the 5 primary rasas, embellished by seven secondary rasas. For more details, one can refer to the 'Nectar of Devotion', as translated and explained by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
 2. Rupa Goswami drew on the work of Bharata Muni who described eight rasas, later extended to nine (Nav-rasa). These he developed in relation to the performing arts, such as music, dance and drama (a field often referred to as 'aesthetics').
 3. Another important scholar of aesthetics was Abhinavagupta, a worshipper of Shiva. It is not clear if Rupa Goswami was influenced by him, even of indirectly.
 4. Rasa can be defined as taste, juice, nectar, mellow or sentiment. It is the impetus for life in terms of relationships and loving exchange. It is closely connected to 'bhava', which refers to 'emotion'.
 5. The rasas are displayed in this world as well as the spiritual. Here, they are polluted and the source of much frustration; in the spiritual realm, they bestow spiritual joy and inspiration.
 6. The five primary rasas are nested. Hence, dasya-rasa includes santa-rasa; similarly, the most intimate (i.e. conjugal) includes all others, namely: (1) Respect (2) Service (3) Friendship (4) Parental Care. For this reason, if respect is lost (e.g. through familiarity) the relationship may quickly erode.
 7. Rasas can be mixed. For example, Balarama - Krishna's brother - has a relationship as a friend mixed with that of paternal affection (quite naturally, since he is elder).
 8. Some rasas are considered incompatible (just as certain tastes cannot be palatably mixed during a meal).
 9. The santa-rasa is only marginally a step up from paramatman realisation - the state of 'seeing God within'. It involves passive reverence towards God as a person. In the spiritual world it includes (what we might call) 'innate objects', such as Krishna's throne or royal umbrella.
 10. The madhurya-rasa includes both married and unmarried love. According to Vaishnava scholars, the latter should not be equated with mundane and immoral adulterous relationships.