

# Intrepreting Contemporary Paintings Based on 'Navarasa'

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**Abstract**—In today's modern world, unlike the traditional paintings, the subject matter is relevant in contemporary context. Along with personal expression, reflection of today's art is abstract, experimental, and process-based. Even if using modern techniques and ideation, the paintings still tend to echo around the ancient conception of Navarasa: Sringara (erotic), Hasya (comic), Karuna (pathetic), Raudra (furious), Vira (heroic), Bhayanaka (terrible), Bibhatsa (odious) and Adbhuta (marvellous). Hence research to prove that the contemporary paintings which create spaces are based on notion of Navarasa.

This paper is an attempt to understand and redirect history of art in the modern form possible. Which gave me the liberty to analyse the replications of emotions through various colour combinations. Paintings were made in different permutations and combinations, to study and understand the essence of Navarasa. In various forms of exhibiting paintings, the responses and opinions of viewers led to enchantment, the strength of colours in evoking the 9 emotions called Navarasa. Various colours depict numerous emotions, and various combinations lead to a mixture or innumerable emotions. This study shall help one and many to indulge in abstract paintings with an understanding of emotions coming through that particular painting.

Research will be helpful to understand creating spaces with paintings based on Navarasa in public places such as hospitals, schools, and offices etc. where emotions play a vital role to create the essence of that particular place.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The earliest work on Rasa theory is Bharata's *Natyashastra*. The concept of Rasa in poetry or drama is a distinctive product of Indian rhetoric and dramaturgy. Since "Rasa" is a pleasure or experience in the minds of the empathetic reader or audience, translating it is likewise quite challenging. It is a personal experience.

Brought about by Bhava's expression. The expression of the Bhava creates or promotes the Rasa in the viewer's psyche. Rasa and Bhava are interdependent because Rasa cannot exist without Bhava, and Bhava cannot exist without Rasa. Rasa is the body's soul, and Bhava is the body's physical form. In the absence of Rasa, Bhavas, emotions are meaningless. Bhavas, the performance's emotions are transformed into an emotional condition of experience in the audience's head, known as

Rasika, which makes the presentation incredibly entertaining.

Rasa and Bhava are the primary aesthetic performances that elicit the necessary emotion that opens the spectator's heart and mind to comprehend the poet's message and idea, out of the eleven aspects that Bharata describes as the essence of *Natyashastra*. Bhava and Rasa receive a lot of attention in Bharata.

"Etatchaturvidhopetam natanam thrividham smritam  
Natyam nruttam nrithyam ithi munibhihi bharathadibhihi  
Natyam thannatakam chaiva poojyam poorva  
kathaayutham  
Bhavaabhinaya hinam tu nruttam ithi abhidheeyathe  
Rasa bhava vyanjanadhi yuktam nrithyam itheeryathe"

Dance that only involves body motions will not be very appealing, and if it is, it won't be for very long. *Natyam* (dramatic element), *nruttam* (pure dance), and *nrithyam* (dancing and expression combination) should all be incorporated into dance.

## NAVARASA

Human communication is fundamentally based on emotions. The *Atharvaveda*, which dates from the late Vedic period (200–100 BC), is where Rasa Theory first emerged. However, because he made a significant claim in his work *Natyashastra*, an Indian treatise on performing arts that covers theater, dance, and music, written in the first century AD, Bharata Muni is recognized as the founder of Indian Rasa Theory. According to Bharata, rasa is something that can be enjoyed, such as the flavor of food: "Rasyate anena iti rasaha (asvadayatva)."

One distinctive element of Indian classical dance traditions is Navarasa. The distinct categorization of Navarasas and the use of facial expressions and mudras to convey them are characteristics of Bharatnatyam, a traditional dance style. Nava means "Nine" and Rasa is often translated as "mood", "emotion", "expression" or "sentiment". The Navarasa, in the scriptures refer to the nine expressions that humans often show. According to Indian Classical dance forms there are altogether nine important Rasas mentioned.

Each Rasa is associated with a colour that describes the emotion/ mood of human life. The nine emotions included in Navarasa are

**1. RASA: RAUDRA**

Colour: Red

Meaning: Fury / Anger

Property: It means roaring and has a sense of rage. Anger can lead to irritation, hatred and violence. So, let go of the anger from you than getting stuck.

**2. RASA: BHAYAANAKA**

Colour: Black

Meaning: Horror

Property: It is associated to fear, worry, insecurity, self-doubts; these factors engulf us completely and shuts us down. One can overcome this emotion by love, inner strength and truth.

**3. RASA: BIBHATSA**

Colour: Blue

Meaning: Disgust

Property: It means to detest or aversion. It characterizes judgemental mind and self-pity.

**4. RASA: HAASYA**

Colour: White

Meaning: Laughter &amp; Joy

Property: It connects us to joy, laughter and our sense of humour. Happiness makes you forget everything and relieves you of stress.

**5. RASA: SHRINGAARA**

Colour: Pale Light Green

Meaning: Romance

Property: It is the crown emotion that has the capability to heal anything. It helps us get rid of ego.

**6. RASA: SHAANT**

Colour: White

Meaning: Peace

Property: It reflects deep calmness and relaxation. When we sit quietly or meditate, we are at peace. It means to be peaceful, tranquil or contented.

**7. RASA: VEERA**

Colour: Pale Orange

Meaning: Heroism / Courage

Property: It reflects a heroic or manly attitude. Everyone has a warrior inside him/her, it's just that you need to awaken it from dormancy.

**8. RASA: KARUNA**

Colour: Grey

Meaning: Compassion

Property: It means pity or compassion that is invoked by anguish or pain or sorrow. Compassion is a bridge that connects us all through which we can relate to each other's sadness deeply and honestly.

**9. RASA: ADBHUTA**

Colour: Yellow

Meaning: Wonder/ Surprise

Property: This means wonder, amazement & surprise. We get fascinated and become an adventurer of life. Navarasa is accepted worldwide and has been used in all art forms.

My artistic journey is deeply rooted in the exploration of Navarasa—the nine fundamental human emotions—and the intricate layers of colour psychology. Through this dual lens, I create paintings that serve as a dialogue between my inner world and the external universe, a visual conversation that transcends language and form.

Each painting is conceived in an abstract aesthetic, allowing emotion and intuition to take precedence over realism. I engage in a meticulous study of colour—its moods, its meanings, its silent power—and translate that understanding into emotive visual experiences. Every hue becomes a vessel, every canvas a mirror reflecting the subtle interplay between colour and consciousness.

My work delves into the psychological impact of colour and emotion on the human mind, seeking to evoke a deep, instinctual response in the viewer. Rather than depicting what is seen, I strive to express what is felt—the unseen rhythms of thought, feeling, and memory.

All of my paintings are rendered in a cohesive, singular style, creating a continuous visual language that connects one piece to the next, much like movements in a symphony. Through this consistency, I aim to build a body of work that is both introspective and universally resonant.

In essence, my art is an emotional landscape—one where the language of colour speaks the truths of the soul.

**RASA: RAUDRA**

Through an intense study of the color red, I have created an abstract painting that explores the theme of inner and outer worlds. In the composition, I depict myself enclosed within a defined space — a symbol of introspection and self-containment. Surrounding this inner space lies the vastness of the outside world, mysterious and undefined. The painting captures a deep yearning, a restless search for meaning, connection, or perhaps freedom beyond the boundaries of the self.

The use of red conveys powerful emotions — passion, struggle, courage, and desire — amplifying the sense of a journey that is both personal and universal.



Fig 1: Raudra 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: BHAYAANAKA

Through an intense study of the color black and the process of creating abstract paintings, I navigate two distinct spaces: an inner space of solitude and reflection, and an outer space characterized by the chaos and fragmentation of the external world.

The color black, with its profound emotional resonance, forms a direct connection to human emotions — evoking fear, uncertainty, introspection, and the unknown. In my work, I attempt to express this relationship, using black not merely as a color but as a medium through which internal and external realities collide, converse, and blur.

The painting becomes a site where personal stillness and external turbulence coexist, mediated through the deep psychological and aesthetic weight of black



Fig 2: Bhayaanaka 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: BIBHATSYA

Blue, the colour of endless skies and silent oceans, becomes in this painting a vessel of quiet horror. Not through violence, but through a slow, aching decay — a beauty eroded from within. The abstract strokes bleed into each other like wounds that never close, carrying the stench of forgotten sorrows. In the stillness of blue, disgust breathes — soft, unseen, inevitable — as if the universe itself is quietly rotting beneath its serene surface.



Fig 3: Bibhatsya 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: HASYA

In the stillness of white, laughter is not loud but quiet, a soft ripple in the soul. It is not a reaction, but a state — the pure joy of simply being. The canvas breathes with this subtle lightness, where joy is not sought, but felt in the silence, eternal and free. White, unbroken, becomes the essence of happiness — gentle, infinite, and unspoken.



Fig 4: Hasya 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: SHRINGAARA

In the dance of colour, desire takes its soft form. This painting is not an expression of passion's force, but its delicate embrace — a moment where beauty and longing intertwine, creating a soft tension, a quiet allure. The brushstrokes are tender, like a lover's touch, tracing the contours of emotion, capturing the slow rhythm of connection that blooms silently, deeply, and eternally. Sringar Rasa, here, is not just the pursuit of pleasure, but the recognition of beauty in every moment — a celebration of desire, of love, and of the stillness within the heart that allows it to bloom.



Fig 5: Shringaara 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: SHAANT

This painting does not portray emptiness, but a fullness so complete it ceases to desire. Through delicate textures and shifting shades of white, the mind's quiet surrender unfolds. Here, solitude is not the absence of company, but the presence of pure being — vast, weightless, serene. Each brushstroke melts the boundary between thought and no-thought, between the self and the infinite. The canvas breathes — a space where stillness murmurs, and existence simply is — untouched, undivided, eternal.



Fig 6: Shaant 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: VEERA

This orange abstract painting is a meditation on becoming. The brushstrokes, neither confined nor chaotic, reflect the fluidity of existence—how identity, like color, shifts across moments yet remains tethered to an unseen center. Orange, the hue between passion (red) and wisdom (yellow), speaks of life's constant tension: the hunger to create versus the need to understand.

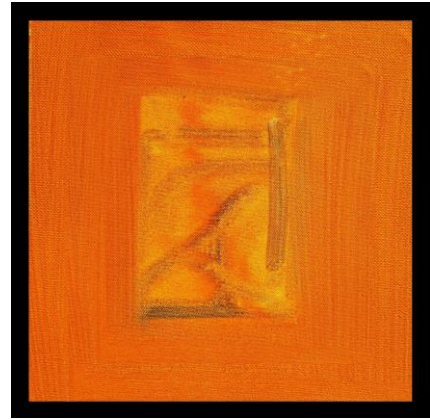


Fig 7: Veera 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA: KARUNA

This grey-toned abstract painting is a fusion of stillness and ambiguity.

Different shades of grey — some deep and shadowy, others soft and silvery — melt into one another, much like emotions expressed without words.

In places, the brushstrokes are heavy and deliberate; elsewhere, they dissolve into a gentle haze, capturing the tension between clarity and uncertainty that runs through life. The artwork feels like a journey between decision and doubt, where forms are suggested but never fully revealed.

It does not insist on what is — instead, it invites the viewer to ponder what could be. A quiet, introspective reflection emerges from the canvas, a meditation on the spaces between knowing and not knowing.



Fig 8: Karuna 1 (Source: Author)

#### RASA : ADHBHUTA

My painting, rooted in yellow, becomes a visual metaphor for hope — an unstoppable energy that flows through existence, even when unseen. It symbolizes the eternal sunrise — the moment when darkness fades not by force, but by the inevitable arrival of light. Through abstraction, I transcend physical form; the lines, the textures, the strokes are not mere objects, but currents of thought, ripples of becoming. Energy here is not chaotic — it is ordered freedom, the dance of potential unbound by any single shape. Hope, in this work, is not naïve brightness; it is



the courageous insistence that, even amidst uncertainty, life asserts itself with brilliance.

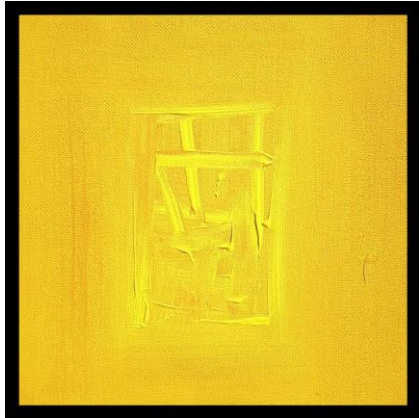


Fig 9: Adbhuta 1 (Source: Author)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOR IN PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Color is essential for setting the mood, affecting feelings, and forming how people see public areas. The appropriate use of color may have a big impact on how people feel, interact, and engage with their surroundings, whether it's in a park, museum, school, or city street. Effective use of color in public space design requires an understanding of color psychology and theory.

### 1. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COLORS

Different colors evoke specific emotions and psychological responses. Here's a breakdown of some common colors and their effects:

#### RED

Red is associated with energy, power, and excitement. It stimulates the senses and increases the heart rate, often used to create a sense of urgency or action.

#### BLUE

Blue is known for its calming and soothing effect. It is also associated with trust and stability.

#### GREEN

Green is the color of nature and symbolizes growth, relaxation, and harmony. It promotes a sense of well-being.

#### YELLOW

Yellow is associated with joy, optimism, and creativity. However, overuse of yellow can be over stimulating.

#### ORANGE

Orange combines the energy of red and the cheerfulness of yellow. It conveys enthusiasm and excitement.

#### WHITE

White symbolizes purity, cleanliness, and simplicity. It can make spaces appear larger and more open.

#### BLACK

Black represents sophistication, authority, and elegance. It is bold and powerful, often used to create a formal or dramatic effect.

## THE INFLUENCE OF COLOR ON BEHAVIOR AND MOOD

Color doesn't just influence visual aesthetics but can also affect social behavior and mood. The use of color in public spaces can:

Encourage social interaction: Warm and welcoming colors like orange and yellow can promote interaction and create a sense of belonging.

Encourage relaxation: Blue and green tones can calm the senses, making people feel more relaxed and peaceful.

Create a sense of energy: Vibrant reds and oranges can stimulate activity and engagement, which is why they're often used in dynamic spaces.

## CONCLUSION

The body of work developed through an in-depth exploration of Navarasa—the nine classical emotions—and colour psychology holds the potential to transcend the canvas and become an integral part of public and architectural spaces. These paintings, rooted in emotional depth and psychological awareness, can be thoughtfully adapted into healing and nurturing environments such as schools, hospitals, and community spaces.

Incorporating such artwork into everyday spaces allows for a harmonious interaction between aesthetics and well-being. The emotional resonance of each piece—crafted with intention and psychological insight—can subtly influence the atmosphere, encouraging calmness, joy, focus, and emotional healing.

In schools, these visual expressions can contribute to a more inspiring and emotionally supportive learning environment for children, nurturing creativity, empathy, and mental clarity. In healthcare settings, such as hospitals or wellness centers, the therapeutic use of colour and emotion can aid in reducing stress, promoting comfort, and uplifting the human spirit.

By merging art, emotion, and spatial design, this work opens up the possibility of creating architectural experiences that speak to the soul, transforming ordinary spaces into environments of reflection, healing, and emotional connection.

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