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A study of the rasa quotient in Bhansali's film Saawariya

Kavita Khurana
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A STUDY OF THE RASA QUOTIENT IN BHANSALI'S FILM *SAAWARIYA*

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre Arts

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Kavita Khurana

December 2008

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A STUDY OF THE RASA QUOTIENT IN BHANSALI'S FILM *SAAWARIYA*

by
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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE RASA QUOTIENT IN BHANSALI'S FILM *SAAWARIYA*

By Kavita Khurana

This thesis addresses the possible connection between the ancient Indian theory of dramaturgy and Hindi cinema. Taking Hindi cinema as a separate genre (as opposed to other Hollywood-based genres), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film *Saawariya* (Beloved) is analyzed using the symbolic meaning of colors to find out to what extent, if at all, the use of set designs, colors, costumes, including accessories and props, taken collectively, prove true to the Indian aesthetic theory of the *rasas* expounded by the Indian philosopher Bharata in the *Natyashastra*.

The study shows that Hindi cinema does have its roots in the ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy. The deconstruction of the sets of the selected film—*Saawariya*, according to the color symbolism of the *rasas*, also revealed that the *Rasa Theory* is a feasible analytical model of deconstruction, thus opening another avenue for enquiry into the study of not just Indian cinema, but world cinema as well.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN FILMS (HINDI CINEMA).....	1
Bollywood.....	1
Significance.....	3
Literature Review.....	7
Cultural Perception.....	13
Narrative Structure.....	16
The Natyashastra Rasas.....	20
2. CHAPTER II: DEFENSE OF HINDI CINEMA.....	29
What Is Hindi Cinema?.....	29
Hindi Film Analysis and Psychoanalytical Theory.....	32
Comparative Study of the Formulaic Content in Hindi Cinema and Hollywood Films.....	34
Hindi Cinema Adapting Hollywood Films.....	37
Hindi Cinema as Fantasy.....	39
Emotions (<i>Rasas</i>) and Indian Culture.....	40
Emotions in Hindi Cinema.....	42
Song and Dance Content in Hindi Cinema.....	43
Hindi Film Spectator	44
3. CHAPTER III: RASA THEORY.....	48
The Natyashastra.....	48
Comparative Study of Bharata's Natyashastra and Aristotle's Poetics.....	49

What Is Rasa?	51
What Is Bhava?	53
Creative Process in the Natyashastra.....	54
Rasa in Performance.....	56
Comparative Study of Primary Emotions in Eastern and Western Philosophy.....	60
Colors and Emotions.....	61
Importance of the Spectator in the Natyashastra.....	66
Impact of Movies on the Spectator.....	67
4. CHAPTER IV: APPLICATION OF THE RASA THEORY TO THE FILM (<i>SAAWARIYA</i>).....	69
Biographical Background of the Director.....	69
Bhansali's Saawariya.....	72
Story of Saawariya.....	73
Sets of Saawariya.....	75
Problems of Visual Analysis.....	77
Director as "Artist".....	78
"Set as Artifice".....	79
Methodology.....	80
5. CHAPTER V: RESULTS OF THE ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI'S SAAWRIYA.....	83
6. CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION.....	102

WORKS CITED.....	106
APPENDIX A: Characteristics of Performance.....	114
APPENDIX B: The Bhavas.....	115

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Set 1. Dominant Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	83
Table 2. Set 2. Dominant Set Colors, Props Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	85
Table 3. Set 3. Dominant Set Colors, Props Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	87
Table 4. Set 4. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	89
Table 5. Set 5. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors, Props/Accessories Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	91
Table 6. Set 6 A. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors, Props/Accessories Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	93
Table 7. Set 6 B. Dominant Set Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors, Props Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	94
Table 8 Set 7. Dominant Set Colors, Costumes Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	96
Table 9. Set 8. Dominant Set and Costume Colors and <i>Bhava</i>	98

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1. Sonam and Ranbir Kapoor <i>Saawariya</i> (2007).....	14
Fig. 2. Nargis and Raj Kapoor <i>Shri 420</i> (1955).....	14
Fig. 3. Pleasure.....	57
Fig. 4. Laughter.....	57
Fig. 5. Sorrow.....	57
Fig. 6. Anger.....	58
Fig. 7. Enthusiasm.....	58
Fig. 8. Fear.....	58
Fig. 9. Disgust.....	58
Fig. 10. Wonder.....	58
Fig. 11. Tranquility.....	58
Fig. 12. A Cross-Section of the Emotion-Solid.....	60
Fig. 13. A Multi-Dimensional Model of the Emotions.....	61
Fig. 14. Plutchik's Nature of Emotions.....	62
Fig. 15. Primary Colors.....	63
Fig. 16. Secondary Colors.....	63
Fig. 17. Tertiary Colors.....	63
Fig. 18. Nine <i>Rasas</i> , their corresponding <i>Bhavas</i> , and an approximate rendering of the <i>Rasa</i> Colors.....	64
Fig. 19. Establishing shot (digital rendering)— <i>Saawariya</i>	73

Fig. 20. Rani Mukerjee as Gulab the narrator, sitting in the RK Bar.....	75
Fig. 21. Set 1. RK Bar, Exterior.....	82
Fig. 22. Set 2. RK Bar, Interior.....	83
Fig. 23. Set 2, RK Bar, Song Sequence1.....	83
Fig. 24. Set 2. R.K. Bar, Song Sequence 1.....	83
Fig. 25. Set 2. R.K. Bar, Song Sequence 1.....	83
Fig. 26. Nataraja, Lord of Dance.....	84
Fig. 27. Set 3, Raj in Lillian's House/Room.....	85
Fig. 28. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	85
Fig. 29. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	85
Fig. 30. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	85
Fig. 31. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	85
Fig. 32. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	85
Fig. 33. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	86
Fig. 34. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.....	86
Fig. 35. Set 4.....	87
Fig. 36. Set 4.....	87
Fig. 37. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.....	87
Fig. 38. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.....	87
Fig. 39. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.....	87
Fig. 40. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.....	87
Fig. 41. Set 5.....	88

Fig. 42. Set 5 A, Song Sequence 4.....	88
Fig. 43. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 44. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 45. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 46. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 47. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 48. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.....	89
Fig. 49. Set 6 A, Lake to Old Town, Song Sequence 4.....	90
Fig. 50. Set 6 A, Lake to Old Town, Song Sequence 4.....	90
Fig. 51. Set 6 A, Lakeside, Old Town, Song Sequence 4.....	91
Fig. 52. Set 6 A, Clock Tower by the Lake, Song Sequence 4.....	91
Fig. 53. Set 6 A, Clock Tower by the Lake, Song Sequence 4.....	91
Fig. 54. Set 6 A, Bridge by the Clock Tower, Song Sequence 4.....	91
Fig. 55. Set 6 B, Alley leading to Sakina's House.....	92
Fig. 56. Set 6 B, Raj and Sakina meet in the Alley.....	92
Fig. 57. Set 7, Old Town Arch in front of Sakina's house.....	93
Fig. 58. Set 7, Sakina outside her house.....	93
Fig. 59. Set 7, Close up of Sakina's House.....	94
Fig. 60. Set 7, Sakina's house, Exterior.....	94
Fig. 61. Set 7, Central courtyard stairs leading up to Sakina's room.....	94
Fig. 62. Set 7, Sakina descends to greet her lover.....	94
Fig. 63. Carpets adorn the walls of Sakina's house.....	94

Fig. 64. Set 8, Song Sequence 5, Eid [a Muslim festival] celebrations.....	95
Fig. 65. Set 8, Song Sequence 5, Sakina looks out for the moon.....	95
Fig. 66. Set 8, Song Sequence 5, Sakina, continued vigil.....	96
Fig. 67. Set 8, Song Sequence 5, Raj points out at the rising moon to Sakina.....	96
Fig. 68. A jubilant Sakina.....	96
Fig. 69. Celebrations.....	96

Chapter I

Introduction to Indian Films (Hindi Cinema)

This chapter traces the roots of Hindi cinema to the *Natyashastra*, and explicates, not just what Hindi cinema is, but also the lesser known (in the West) *Rasa Theory*, by correlating it with similar Western parameters of analysis, to further augment the understanding of Hindi Cinema. This research will be an attempt to elucidate the formulaic content of Hindi films *vis-à-vis* the *Rasa Theory* expounded in the *Natyashastra*, the ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy, using as example Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film *Saawariya*.

Bollywood

Indian Cinema is not just what is popularly identified as "Bollywood." Bollywood is the moniker for the popular Hindi [national language] film Industry based in Mumbai [Bombay], Maharashtra (Dudrah 30, 34). Rajinder Kumar Dudrah surmises in Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies, that the word "Bollywood" not only indicates "an obvious reworking of the appellation of Hollywood" (35), but more significantly that "Bollywood is able to serve alternative cultural and social representations away from dominant white ethnocentric audio-visual possibilities" (35).

Indian cinema comprises, not just Hindi films, but also the other language films made in India. These other language cinemas are often collectively called Regional cinema primarily due to their language and the location in which they are based (Dwyer and Patel 8), but Hindi cinema continues to be "the most prominent presence figure heading the global 'Indian' culture Industry" (Rajadhyaksha 31).

Hindi cinema, also variously called “Indian popular cinema, *masala* film, formula film” (Pendakur 1), with its blend of what is colloquially called *masala* [mixed spices] (Jaikumar, “Bombay Spectaculars;” Prasad 31), is a *mélange* of genres—melodrama, action, romance, comedy, with song and dance sequences ranging from four to twelve, with the mandatory happy ending, all rolled into an over three hour long extravaganza (Shedde; Dudrah 49; Prasad 31). In fact, it is often identified as a genre in itself. Its stories may be derived from history, mythology, or socially relevant subjects, but the basic elements (which I will discuss below), have remained much the same since the emergence of the “Talkies” in India in 1931 with the film *Alam Ara* (Gulzar, et al 44). It is not as if Indian filmmakers have not tried to break the mold with positive results at the box-office, but these films have generally been dubbed as “art,” “offbeat,” “new wave,” “experimental” or “parallel cinema” (Film Encyclopedia), as opposed to “popular Indian cinema” (Ganti 3; Pendakur 1).

The chief proponent of parallel cinema was Satyajit Ray, who, in his first film *Pather Panchali* (1955), pioneered a new genre of films inspired by the French New Wave cinema (Indianparallelcinema). Other filmmakers like Shyam Benegal (*Manthan/The Churning*, 1976, *Bhoomika/The Role*, 1977), Govind Nihalani (*Aakrosh/Cry of the Wounded*, 1980, *Ardh Satya/Half Truth*, 1983) Mrinal Sen (*Raat Bhore/ The Dawn*, 1956), *Bhuvan Shome /Mr. Shome*, 1969), and Ketan Mehta (*Bhavni Bhavai/ A Folk Tale*, 1980, *Mirch Masala/ A Touch of Spice*, 1985, *The Rising*, 2005), soon followed suit (Indianparallelcinema). Even today, younger directors like Nagesh Kukunoor (*Iqbal*, 2005, *Dor*, 2006), Manish Jha (*Anwar*, 2007), Homi Adajania (*Being*

Cyrus, 2005), Madhur Bhandarkar (*Page 3*, 2004, *Traffic Signal*, 2007, *Fashion*, 2008), and Aparna Sen, the noted Bengali actor, director and writer (*Mr. and Mrs. Iyer* 2002, *15 Park Avenue*, 2006) (IMDb), have veered off “mainstream” cinema (Aiyappan), but these instances, however, are few and far between, for the mainstay of the Hindi cinema is still “*masala*” or “formula films” (Aiyappan).

The style of presentation, and the themes have all changed in keeping with the times (for example, newer Hindi films now tend to exhibit more contemporary, more urbane and/or exotic locales, lavish sets, glamorous costumes, including accessories, and more contemporary song and dance sequences), but the key ingredients—romance, comedy, melodrama, star-crossed lovers, and the de rigueur happy end—persist. The reason behind this continuing trend in popular Hindi cinema, according to the renowned film critic Maithili Rao, in her article “Heart of the Movies,” is that what the audiences eagerly look for in Hindi cinema is the “improvisation within the formula,” and the pleasure which is brought about by “recognition—of convention and departures from them—without having to invent genres” as is the norm [in film studies] (Rao in Joshi 140-141). Apart from this, popular Hindi films also “bring relief” from “art” cinema “replete with visuals of abject poverty, conflict and misery that Satyajit Ray was often accused of producing for the sake of Western audiences” (Kaur 207).

Significance

The Mumbai based film industry has become a household name globally (Kaur and Sinha 17). Bollywood films, actors, and filmmakers are recognized as a major force to contend with, not only by the general public, but also by filmmakers worldwide (Bose

26; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 141; Kamdar 14). Today, filmmakers and others, including stage stalwarts like Andrew Lloyd Webber,¹ from across continents are beating an eager path to India in order to collaborate with Indian artists and filmmakers. The following examples demonstrate that investing in Hindi cinema is now being globally looked upon as an extremely lucrative proposition (Gulzar, et al vii).

According to Nicole Laporte in her October 19, 2005 article in *Variety*, Hollywood studios had once hesitated to make investments in Indian cinema, “[b]ut with ticket sales in India reaching \$57 million in 2004, attitudes are changing” (Laporte 1). For example, in 2005, “Sony [was] betting big on Bollywood” (Laporte 1) because it recognized the importance of the Indian market (Laporte 1). According to Anand Giridhardas in his August 8, 2007 article that appeared in the *New York Times*, Bhansali’s *Saawariya*,² was “the first in a wave of American studios to produce their own kaleidoscopic Bollywood musicals” but with the intent “to join Bollywood, not conquer it with their American-made fare” (Giridhardas 1). This “unique collaboration with one of India’s well-known and acclaimed directors, Sanjay Leela Bhansali,” who would “co-produce Sony’s first Indian film, *Saawariya* (Beloved), in Hindi language,” according to Michael Lynton and Amy Pascal of Sony Pictures Entertainment, and Uday Singh,

¹ Webber, Andrew Lloyd. made a musical, *Bombay Dreams* (2002), based on the stereotypical Hindi film formula [romance, melodrama, comedy, and song and dance sequences], “with music by phenomenal Indian composer A R Rahman,” while the choreography, according to Barry Humphries, by award winning Hindi cinema choreographer and director, Farah Khan and Anthony Van Laast, is “The best and most exciting choreography in London” (Webber).

² *Saawariya* was made at a cost of Rs. 40 crore (approx. \$ 2. 5 million at the exchange rate taken as \$1 x Rs. 40 in 2007). The production budget for *Saawariya* was reported to be \$10 million, which is “an astounding 80% less than what’s typically spent for US releases and that doesn’t include marketing,” said Vin Bhat, general manager of Saavn, a New York based company that does digital distribution of Bollywood movies and music in the US market (Livemint).

general manager of Sony Pictures Releasing of India Ltd., “is a defining moment for us as a company and for film-makers, artists and audiences in India as well” (ExpressIndia). Paramount soon followed Sony’s footsteps (Giridhardas 1), with “Viacom [becoming] the latest Hollywood major to beat a path to India to tap into the country’s potentially lucrative film production industry,” according to Shilpa Iyer and Bryan Pearson, with Bobbie Whiteman in Hollywood contributing to their article in *Variety* (Iyer, Pearson, Whiteman 1).

Speaking at the three-day “*Frames* showbiz confab in Mumbai,” in March 2006, Tom Freston, CEO of Viacom said that Paramount would not just be co-producing movies with Indian filmmakers, but were planning on “buying one of their studios and laying off some employees to really explore the potential of the Indian market” (Iyer, Pearson, Whiteman 1). This decision was taken only “after Disney finally made the leap into Indian production, hiring Mumbai-based producer Shyam P.S. (*Rang de Basanti*/Spring Colors, 2006) as its film topper to spearhead creation and acquisition of original Indian films” (Iyer, Pearson, Whiteman 1).

The list does not end here. According to a June 12, 2007, press release by Walt Disney Studios, Disney is teaming up with the Mumbai based film company Yash Raj Films Studios to co-produce animated films in the Hindi language using Indian talent. The first animation film [which was released recently], is *Roadside Romeo* (2008) “with romance, song, dance, comedy, everything” (BBC News; Hindustan Times). Mark Zoradi, the Disney Studios president of motion picture marketing and distribution, said on the occasion, “This will help us strengthen local understanding of culture, art and

music in India. We, on our own, cannot make a good Indian film” (Hindustan Times). And an August 21, 2007 press release in *Variety* stated that Warner Bros. Pictures, along with veteran Hindi film maker Ramesh Sippy, will produce their first Hindi feature film, an action comedy, called *Made in China* [renamed “*Chandini Chowk to China*” (Businessofcinema)], “shooting on location in China will mark a first for an Indian production” (TimeWarner). With this venture, “Warner joins Viacom, Sony and Disney in the accelerating Hollywood race to make movies in India” (VColumvist).

In the same August 8, 2007 article by Anand Giridhardas that appeared in the *New York Time*, Richard Fox, a Warner vice president and the head of its international division said in a telephone interview that the studio sought to “earn a majority of its Indian sales from Bollywood productions” and were planning to produce three to six movies annually “all with Indian talent.” He added that they [Warner] were not “coming to change anything” (Giridhardas 1), a mantra being followed, no doubt, by other Hollywood producers as well, an astute decision, according to movie mogul Yash Chopra: “They’re doing the right thing. To come to a country to make a film is either to understand the culture or break the culture” (Giridhardas 1).

Not far behind, and understanding the importance of Hindi cinema’s potential as a profitable industry, the United Kingdom, too, jumped onto the Bollywood bandwagon when in 2006, the “Yorkshire [Tourist Board] wins bid for Bollywood” (Allison 1). After beating global competition, including New York, “Bollywood comes to Yorkshire-bringing global economic boost” (Yorkshire Forward) in order to host Bollywood’s International Indian Film Awards [IIFA], and in 2007, according to an article by J.

Simpson in the North-West Evening Mail, “Manchester played host to its first Bollywood production” (Simpson 1), hoping that *Goal* [the film being made], would be the first of many more productions for “North West Vision (NWV), the film, TV and digital media development agency for the Northwest” (Simpson 1). This is because, as film officer Alan Saywell said, “we want to strengthen our relationship with the Indian market and get production companies to film here [...] it boosts our visitor economy and there’s an increase in local spend, which benefits the surrounding community (Simpson 1).

In view of this changing scenario, more and more people across continents are being exposed to Hindi film culture, but most people are still unaware of the basis of the stereotypical formula of romance, tragedy, melodrama, comedy with the mandatory song and dance sequences in Indian cinema. This then, does seem to be an apt time to explain the connotation of Hindi cinema that would enable the global audience to better understand India’s aesthetics, traditions, culture, and the people.

Literature Review

Generally, Hindi movies are looked upon and instantaneously dismissed as “kitschy, exploitative fare unworthy of serious analysis” (Gulzar, et al vii). This viewpoint, however, has remained unchanged despite repeated efforts to the contrary by various scholars of mass culture³ (Lutgendorf 1), to look at Hindi films as the cultural “mosaic” of India (Gulzar, et al vii). It is also the reason why Popular Hindi cinema continues to receive a lot of censure because “it appears terribly flawed by the canons of

³ For strong points of view on different aspects of the issue, see Lal and Nandy; Gerow; Rao in Joshi; Tyrrell in Lechner; Roberge; Gopalan; Shedde; Virdi; Willi in Stringer; Guneratne and Dissanayake; Mishra.

global film theory” (Lal and Nandy xiv), as it is opposed to the prevalent global theory of aesthetics, and what is considered “good cinema,” due to the “carnavalesque atmosphere” in all its films (Lal and Nandy xiv).

After World War II, “interdisciplinary ‘area studies’ gave rise to a sporadic effort within the Euro-American academy” to “understand other cultures in their own terms, and to acknowledge the assumptions rooted in Western intellectual tradition that had unconsciously biased previous enquires,” primarily because of the “colonial-era collaboration of British and Indian elites” (Lutgendorf 1). Due to the dominant British influence in this collaboration, the information and feedback given by the latter was greatly based on the expectations of the former, which, in turn, fashioned the explicatory narratives they generated, and then fed back to their native subjects (Lutgendorf 1; Virdi 3). In fact, the much revered Bengali parallel film director Satyajit Ray himself added to the criticism when he said, that “commercial cinema has a penchant for convolutions of plot and counter-plot rather than the strong, simple unidirectional narrative” (Ray 23), a style that he himself had crafted in his own cinema. It is not that popular filmmakers are unaware of this “strong and simple narrative structure,” it is just that they willfully prefer not to follow it (Lutgendorf 11).

According to Edwin Gerow in “Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism,” there are three types of Indian film—socials, mythologicals, and the films made by Satyajit Ray, which, barring Ray’s films, have been considered inferior to those that were developed in the West. The “socials,” especially, are looked upon as “an Indian version of social realism” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 247), that deal with contemporary problems

related to caste or community, while the “mythologicals” are looked upon as “escapist musical-comedy fare,” that “exploit the rich Puranic [ancient Indian scriptures] mythology still so vivid to the Indian masses” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 247). On the other hand, the films by Satyajit Ray are “terribly well received in the West” as they do not appear to “respond to any Indian need,” and because these films “conform recognizably to our notion of direct personal statement of the human condition” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 247).

Jyotika Viridi in The Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History says that these cultural theories that are used to study western texts are inadequate [for the study of Indian cinema] because they fail to address “the complexities of decolonization, a process that marks the form and content of Indian cultural texts” (Viridi 3). For Hindi cinema’s narrative structure and stories do not adhere to the “Western models of realism” (Willis in Stringer 258; Tyrrell in Lechner 312). “Mainline Indian cinema presents us with a different order of diegesis that can best be comprehended in terms of the narrative discontinuities found in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*” [the two Indian epics] (Dissanayake and Sahai 10-11).

Philip Lutgendorf in his article “Is there an Indian Way of Filmmaking?” says that in film studies, “the Copernican discourse has been of ‘cinema’ in general (i.e., American), with sub-specializations in ‘national cinemas’ orbiting around its sun, each represented by a few key auteur-names.” Lutgendorf reiterates what Gerow states in “Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism,” that Indian cinema has always been represented by Satyajit Ray, and ““all those musicals”—in embarrassing fact, some

30,000 of them and counting,” suggesting that with the upsurge of scholarly interest in “this enormous and influential body of popular art, ignored for decades” (Lutgendorf 1), there is a need for

systematic realignment (as when a new planet swims into our ken); a more audacious suggestion is that its “different universe” might make possible an Einsteinian paradigm-shift by introducing new ways of thinking about the space-time of cinematic narrative (Lutgendorf 1).

Much has been written about “Indian ‘musicals’” and its song and dance sequences in the “Anglo-Saxon world” by those who “associate musicals as song-and-dance routines,” and view every Hindi film from the perspective that Hollywood is the “ultimate litmus test” of success” (Lal and Nandy xi; Prasad vii). However, although cinema arrived in India during the days of British colonization, it became typically Indian with Indian narratives and images, and has a “distinctive form, recognizable symbols/visuals and musical style of narrative” (Kaur 203), wherein these “song and dance routines” are used as “natural expressions of emotions and situations emerging from everyday life” (Chatterjee in Gulzar, et al 180; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 23). In order to augment the elements of fantasy, Hindi cinema uses music and spectacle to emphasize that “songs and dances are the natural and logical extension of an Indian’s day to day life” (Chatterjee in Gulzar, et al 180), because to the Indians, “music contributes a vital ingredient in the cultural construct of emotion” (Chatterjee in Gulzar, et al 180). It is a totally different world designed primarily to nurture profound fantasies consisting of a varied group of individuals from illiterates to urbanites (Mishra 4). It is a world that

goes beyond India, but is an integral part of the country. It is peopled with its own gods—heroes, buffoons, vamps, and villains—and has its own traditions and symbols, an imaginary world which bears more resemblance to the opera than it does to Hollywood films, a world wherein everybody sings and dances. The Western concept of reality is not needed here because Hindi movies aspire for another kind of truth—human sentiments of love, pathos and heroism (Anderson 1).

Taking this argument even further is film scholar Father Gaston Roberge, who says that this is because “popular [Hindi] films” are viewed “in the framework of a western theory of film as expressed by Aristotle two thousand years ago based on the great dramas of his time” (*Forum*). In order to understand Indian cinema, Roberge adds, one needs “to look at it from the point of view of the Indian subcontinent” primarily because “two thousand years ago [India’s] popular drama was not separate from high drama in the light of Indian art theory which is certainly not inferior to that of Aristotle” (*Forum*).

Furthering his argument, Father Gaston Roberge in his book *Chitrabani* (1973), compares Indian cinema with that of the West. He says that films from the West are more “narrative” oriented. It is the narrative structure that “dictate[s] the pace and influence[s] the emotions, whereas, Indian films are rooted in Indian traditions as expounded by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*. It is “the creation of mood or *rasa*” that is important, and the narrative is used to “support” the mood. He adds that when the narrative fails “to intensify the emotions further [...], another form of expression is used to reach a higher emotional level.” Roberge commends and advocates the *Natyashastra*

saying that “the audience is so familiar with the suspension of the narrative in the course of an unfolding drama that it knows when to expect it” (Chattopadhyay).

Lalitha Gopalan in Cinema of Interruptions: Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema says that in contrast to “the internally coherent narrative form” of Hollywood films, genres in Indian popular cinema display characteristics that are similar to “pre-classical cinema, especially several extra-diegetic sequences or sequences of attraction.” Gopalan suggests that instead of surmising that popular Indian films stage “the underdeveloped aspects of capitalism in the Indian economy,” one should realize that different issues dictate these narrative structures (17). Gopalan adds that “the fragmentary narrative” alluded as a “unique” feature of “New Hollywood” (Staiger and Thompson, Classical Hollywood Cinema), has been a part of Indian popular cinema “which invented the ‘multi-starrer,’” that Justin Wyatt (in High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood) calls “‘the high concept’ of the post studio-era in America.” In fact, Gopalan suggests that Indian popular cinema should be studied not with the intent of locating “faithful or deviant versions of Hollywood as a nostalgic desire for a refurbished cinema” emerging out of another location, but as “an opportunity to explore a global exchange of narrative styles” (Gopalan 27- 28).

Vijay Mishra in Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire analyzes selected texts of Hindi cinema as an interconnected, heterogeneous genre, and suggests that Hindi cinema is “a continuous and thoroughly systematic cultural practice” in which all the films taken collectively become a part of a “grand intertextual system,” and should be read as

“syntagm that defines Bombay [Hindi] Cinema as a totality,” as each film can, in a way, be considered a “segment of a much larger semiotic continuum” (Mishra 159).

Cultural Perception

Wimal Dissanayake, author and editor of works on Indian and Asian cinemas and media, in his article “Rethinking Indian Popular Cinema” says that in order to understand the character and significance of Indian popular cinema, one needs to study its genealogy. He adds that it is by focusing on the “structure of the narrativity in Indian popular cinema that we can begin to understand its uniqueness as a cinematic discourse” (Guneratne and Dissanayake 207). Thus, in order to understand Hindi cinema better, this thesis will be taking a genealogical approach to study the narrative structure of Hindi films *vis-à-vis* *Saawariya*, based on the characteristics of performance—set designs, costumes and accessories (*aharya*), as elucidated in the *Natyashastra*.

Joseph M. Boggs in The Art of Watching Films reiterates Dissanayake’s idea that in order to understand the cinema of any given country, one needs to primarily have some knowledge about its civilization and cultural mores, when he says that “cultural differences might cause us to misunderstand a movie because of its foreignness” (378). Boggs adds that by failing to understand “important customs, moral attitudes, or codes of behavior common to the culture producing the film, we certainly lose something” (378). Boggs accepts that one of the biggest problems in analyzing “foreign-language films” is primarily the language barrier. Although this may be overcome by the current trend of subtitles and voice dubbing, Boggs admits that subtitles detract from the “overall aesthetic experience of the film” (375), while dubbing results in “separating the actors

from their voices: The acting often seems stiff and wooden” (373). Another deterrent in the understanding and appreciation of foreign films, according to Boggs, is cultural differences that could have a “profound effect on how a film is received” (376). Boggs elucidates his point by citing as example *The Grapes of Wrath*, and how the Russians used it as a propaganda tool against the United States as “an example of the exploitation of migrant workers by the capitalistic ranch owners” (376).

In order to reiterate Boggs’ idea about how “foreign movies” can be misunderstood due to lack of knowledge about a country’s culture, and the significance of certain elements and their related connotation in cinema, a shot from the selected film *Saawariya* is given as example. Chances are that this scene (Fig.1.) would probably not signify much more than the obvious—the apparent meeting of the young lovers on a rainy night, the RK logo in the background signifying nothing much to those who may not be familiar with the connotation of the logo. Since media coverage in India is exhaustive (Dudrah 31; Pendakur 9), the signification would not be lost on the masses in India who are familiar with Hindi cinema, and the people associated with the Hindi film industry, especially when the film’s director Sanjay Leela Bhansali himself has said in many an interview that in *Saawariya* “I wanted my impressions and influences of Raj Kapoor to be prominent when his grandson was being launched [...] *Saawariya* has a lot of RK’s *Awara*, *Barsaat* and *Shri 420*” (Chute; Hindustan Times).

In view of this, then, it would be quite apparent to most Hindi movie enthusiasts in India, that the RK logo and the couple in the foreground are Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s tribute to the first family [the Kapoors] of Hindi cinema, and actor filmmaker Raj

Kapoor, for the very scene is reminiscent of a scene from Raj Kapoor's 1955 film, *Shri 420/ The Gentleman Cheat* (Fig. 2.).

Fig.1. Sonam and Ranbir Kapoor,

Fig.2. Nargis and Raj Kapoor, *Shri 420* (1955).

Saawariya (2007). (Fig.1. Saawariyafilm; Fig.2. Hindu).

Also, Hindi film aficionados would not fail to connect the RK logo with the Kapoor *khandaan* [clan], especially in the light that the actor Ranbir Kapoor (the hero of *Saawariya*), is the latest entrant from the Kapoor clan to follow in the footsteps of his great grandfather Prithviraj Kapoor, his grandfather, Ranbir Raj Kapoor, popularly known as Raj Kapoor, his father Rishi Kapoor, and paternal uncles Randhir and Rajeev Kapoor. Also, not only is Ranbir Kapoor named after his grandfather, the veteran actor and filmmaker who launched his production house RK Films and Studios in 1951, but he is called Ranbir Raj in the film as well (Saawariyafilm).

Since cinema combines visual and aural perception, it takes its connotative power from other arts, and uses neologism to add new dimensions to the already existing signs and symbols which the spectators seek to identify and interpret (Bhugra 7), symbols that

are mostly influenced by cultures (Bhugra 10). As perception is nothing but another facet of human behavior, it is impacted by most of the same influences that form the other characteristics of human behavior. Every person's experiences coalesce in a complex way in order to ascertain his or her response to a particular stimulus, therefore, some types of experiences may occur in certain cultures than they do in others. There are "differences in behavior across cultures, including differences in perceptual tendencies" which can even exceed "the ever-present individual differences with cultural groupings" (Segall, et al 213).

Whatever the culture or experience may be, perception is the same for every individual, but the difference lies in the contents, and "these differ only because they reflect different perceptual inference habits" (Segall, et al 214). As for cultural perception *vis-à-vis* cinema, "there is a correlation between themes and the intellectual capacity for vicarious pleasure" (A. Khurana via email to author). While *Star Wars* (1977) would have "galactic appeal, a film like Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) would probably be incomprehensible to Hindi film audiences" (A. Khurana via email to author).

Narrative Structure

Genres have seldom been vital to Hindi films, especially not in the Hollywood context, for the "90 year old Mumbai film industry thrives on music—and emotion-led narrative idiom that freely mixes disparate elements from various story telling forms to serve as an inimitable cinematic cocktail" (Chatterjee in Gulzar, et al 267). Thus, the narrative structure of Hindi films is not only formulaic and repetitive, but audience reaction, too, is totally different (as opposed to the Western audiences), for Indian

audiences usually interact with the events on the screen by whistling, clapping, booing, singing, even dancing in the aisles (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 123).

Ashish Rajadhyaksha in his article “The ‘Bollywoodization’ of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena,” describes the characteristics of the Indian audience as the “‘active’ and vocal Indian film spectator” who “throw money at the screen, going into trances during devotional films,” and as “spectators identifying themselves through identifying the film’s address.” Rajadhyaksha adds that this “identification” is in keeping with Christian Metz’s definition when Metz replied to the question,

‘who does the film spectator ‘identify’ with?’ that “the spectator identifies with himself...as a pure act of perception” (Metz 46-49), a common aspect of film theory which developed a distinctly political meaning in the India of the 1940s and early 1950s (Rajadhyaksha 35).

As a continuation of this discussion about Hindi cinema audiences, Lal and Nandy say that in popular Hindi cinema, genres are inconsequential, citing Feroz Rangoonwala, a veteran film critic, who says

Commercial cinema, which is purely ‘box-office oriented’... cannot really make a strong impact with their themes, or work up a frenzy of feeling in the audience. More so in Asian countries, where viewers start with the basic premise that such films are pure fiction or ‘fictionalized’ from reality, and therefore do not take the subject too seriously (qtd. in Lal and Nandy xvii).

Therefore, the narrative structure of Hindi cinema is not “universal” as it does not fit into the definition of “‘classical’ Hollywood cinema—or studio feature film-making from Hollywood after 1920” which laid out the “basic model” for narrative styles, but the “‘rules’ of [Hindi] filmic storytelling” is “actually culture specific” (Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 32).

Javed Akhtar, Hindi cinema’s renowned film writer, lyricist and Urdu [language] poet in “Taking Songs,” says that the root of Hindi cinema can be found in *Nautanki*⁴ and the Sanskrit-Parsi Theater.⁵ Akhtar explains that film songs, which are an integral part of the drama and narrative of Hindi cinema, were part of a practice that is “thousands of years old. This is the way we narrate stories; this is the way we tell our tales” (Akhtar), be they Sanskrit plays, *Nautanki* [Folk Theatre] or any other form of theatre. “Before the emergence of the Talkies you had Urdu-Parsi theatre,⁶ which was urban theatre. All forms of drama invariably had songs. This is the way India has been telling and hearing its stories and tales, with songs” (Akhtar; Arif in Gulzar, et al 229). For Hindi films, like all Indian art forms, rely on mimesis, a tradition that dates back to the

⁴ The decline of the Sanskrit theatre saw the emergence of *Nautanki* or Folk theatre that developed in various regional languages from the 14th through the 19th century. Folk theatre “employs music, dance, drumming, exaggerated makeup, masks, and a singing chorus,” but has retained some of the “conventions and stock characters of classical drama (stage preliminaries, the opening prayer song, the *sutra-dhara* [narrator] and the *vidusaka*)” [the clown]. Like Sanskrit drama, Folk theatre also deals with mythological heroes, romances and social and political events. “It is a ‘total theatre,’ invading all the senses of the spectator” (Britannica 753).

⁵ “Classical Sanskrit theatre flourished during the first nine centuries of the Christian era [...] but the classical structure, form and style of acting and production with aesthetic rules were consolidated [...] in the *Natyashastra*” (Britannica 753). “Parsi Theatre was an amalgam of European techniques and local classical forms, folk drama, farces and pageants” (755).

⁶ “The latter half of the 19th century saw the emergence of theatre in Western and Northern India. The Bombay based Parsi theatre companies produced Urdu-Hindi [language] drama (Britannica 755).

theory of drama expounded in the *Natyashastra* by Bharata. In fact, Hindi cinema's narrative structure with its multiple "songs, dances and sub-plots and the crucial, if generally cursory concept of comic relief" (Arif in Gulzar, et al 229), are prime ingredients that have been used "down the decades as embellishments for the main storyline" (Arif in Gulzar, et al 229).

Although Hindi films have been "much maligned" for their song and dance content, these sequences are precisely what makes Indian cinema unique, for songs and dance form an integral part of Hindi cinema, and reflect the emotional content of the film (Willis in Stringer 259). They are in the nature of sung soliloquies that reveal the characters' emotional state, and thus carry the story forward. As Manjunath Pendakur says in Indian Popular Cinema: Industry, Ideology and Consciousness, these song and dance sequences are a "narrative device" used to "enhance the plot line, exposition of character, discussion of a moral dilemma, and in effect, the story" (107). Although they have been "erroneously dubbed 'musicals'" (Lal and Nandy 10) in the Hollywood tradition, the genre conventions generally associated with musicals are conspicuous by their absence in Hindi films, as these films follow the age old practice that has its roots deeply embedded in ancient Indian traditions laid down in the *Natyashastra* (Lal and Nandy 10).

Javed Akhtar explains the concept of Hindi films by comparing them with films made in Europe that generally focus on a single problem or emotion. According to him, such films are the equivalent of short stories, while Indian films are more like novels. "If you would make a film in India called *It Happened One Night*, people would feel

cheated! They want larger-than-life stories. Indian sagas have to have every emotion in the book. In our first talkie from 1933, there were fifty songs! There was never any doubt that we wouldn't use songs" (Mooij 31).

The Natyashastra Rasas

What Javed Akhtar is apparently referring to when he talks about "every emotion in the book," is nothing other than the inclusion of the *rasas*. This is the concept that Rosie Thomas also talks about in "Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity—an Introduction," when she says that Hindi cinema emphasizes "emotion and spectacle rather than tight narrative, on *how* things will happen rather than *what* next." Then citing the *Natyashastra*, Thomas adds that according to the *Rasa* (moods/flavors) *Theory*, the "spectator" is "moved through the text [...] in an ordered succession of *modes of affect* (*rasa*)" (Thomas, *Screen*, qtd. by Cooper 16). Susanne Langer also explains the *rasas* in Feeling and Form as "that comprehension of the directly experienced or 'inward life' that all art conveys" (Langer 323; Cooper 16).

Darius Cooper also elucidates this concept in his study of Satyajit Ray's *The Apu Trilogy* and *Jalsagar* [The Music Room] in The Cinema of Satyajit Ray: Between Tradition and Modernity. Cooper says that in these early Ray films, and in classical Sanskrit drama, what is embodied "is a *dominant state of emotion*," while "the actions performed by the characters is subordinated to this prevalent emotional tone" (Cooper 21). Cooper adds that unlike Aristotelian emphasis on plot, here [in Ray's early films], the importance of the plot is in "consciously organizing all the dramatic factors, which as an ensemble creatively suggests the dominant emotion" (21). The purpose of this is to

present before the spectator the different *rasas* (flavors) that the “dominant emotion is capable of producing” (21), for the plot, action and characters are mere tools. Cooper adds that the spectator just needs to “savor each scene, determine the emotional nuances” therein, and “taste” the quality to enjoy and experience the *rasas* (21).

Meenakshi Shedde, winner of the National [India] Award for Best Film Critic, and an internationally known film journalist for over twenty-four years, furthers Javed Akhtar’s argument when she says that although Hindi Cinema received film technology from the West, its aesthetics are derived from the *Natyashastra*, the sage Bharata’s treatise on theatre. According to Bharata’s *Rasa* (essence/emotion) *Theory*, it was a prerequisite for a performance to include song and dance along with conflict and action leading to the much required happy ending in order to elicit in the spectators, feelings of fulfillment and contentment, and a state of bliss or peace [*ananda/shanta*] that comes when all conflict has been resolved (Shedde).

Film critic Maithili Rao in her article “Heart of the Movies,” in Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema, also mentions that the “art of Bollywood story-telling” and the inherent stereotypical stories are reminiscent of the *Natyashastra*, and the ancient Indian *Navrasa* [nine *rasa*] theory, as well as the *Nautanki* [Folk Theatre]. Rao adds that the style of Bollywood narration “possesses an astonishing degree of elasticity,” and is akin to the performance of “wandering *Kathakars* [traditional story-tellers] and exponents of *Harikatha* [religious lore] who “lace their discourse with songs and impromptu dances” (Rao in Joshi 140-143), leading to alienation and stylization which predates “borrowed Brechtian techniques” (Rao in Joshi 140-143), and “an academically inclined defender of

Hindi cinema's song and dance routine" needs only to look at the "living Indian tradition" (Rao in Joshi 140-143).

B.D. Garga, filmmaker, journalist and historian for over fifty years, in The Art of Cinema, traces the development of Sanskrit Indian drama from Bharata's *Natyashastra* to the present, which he says has changed dramatically due to the influence of numerous invaders over the centuries (195). Garga begins Chapter 32, "Background to Indian Cinema," with this quote from Bharata's *Natyashastra*:

The drama as I have devised is a mimicry of actions and conduct of people, which is rich in various emotions and which depicts different situations. This will relate to actions of men good, bad and indifferent, as well as give courage, amusement and happiness as well as counsel them (Garga 195).

M. K. Raghavendra, literary and film critic and researcher, in his essay "Structure and Form in Indian Popular Film Narrative" says that in "Classical Hollywood cinema," "causality is the backbone of the narrative" (Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 33), a point-of-view that has "its basis in dialectics: the linkage of development to binary conflict" (Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 33), whereas Hindi cinema, on the other hand, "strays" away from this norm, for it "places its emphasis upon the immutable rather than change through conflict" (Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 33). Raghavendra adds that *rasa* (expounded in the *Natyashastra*), is the foundation of Indian theatre arts (Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 33). Raghavendra also cites Eliot Deutsch's concept ("Reflections of Some Aspects of Rasa" in Sanskrit Drama in Performance) that "Art is a kind of

mimesis,” a different kind of imitation, as “*rasa* does not imitate things or actions in their particularity, in their actuality,” instead the imitation is “in their universality, in their potentiality” which is considered to be “more real than any particular real thing” (Deutsch in Baumer and Brandon 217; Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 33). Using this explanation of *rasa* as “the transcendental ‘real’ thing,” Raghavendra reaffirms his concept of the “immutable” which “sees *development* and *change* not receiving the same emphasis in Indian art and dramaturgy as it does in the West” (Lal and Nandy 33), which in turn, “affects popular film narrative,” by using as example the Hindi film *Saudagar* [Trader] (1991) (Lal and Nandy 33).

Edwin Gerow in his article “Plot Structure and the Development of *Rasa* in ‘The *Shakuntala*,’” an epic poem by Kalidas [the renowned Indian poet], reiterates this idea that the roots of Indian cinema is in the *Natyashastra*, and then citing A. B. Keith’s Sanskrit Drama, Gerow reaffirms that although “Sanskrit Drama is studied almost exclusively in its historical or cultural dimensions,” the *Natyashastra* which provides “elaborate analysis of dramatic plot-structure, our modern critics have tended to dismiss [...] either as artificial or self-evident” (Gerow, “Plot Structure and the Development of *Rasa*” 559).

Furthering this idea that Hindi cinema relies on the *Rasa Theory*, Gregory Booth in his 1995 article “Traditional Content and Narrative Structure in Hindi Cinema,” says that an important aspect of “traditional [Indian] epics” is “emotionality and their tendency to portray a wide variety of emotions in sometimes rapid (and, for Western audiences, bewildering or inconsequent) succession” (Booth 175), but which is “appreciated by

Indian audiences as providing the emotional diversity characteristic of traditional Indian narrative, which has been inculcated into the Hindi cinema structure,” [a correlation which Philip Lutgendorf pointed out to Booth (Cf. Note 3 of the article)] (175). Booth then attempts to briefly explain “this traditional diversity of emotion (*bhava*, in terms of the Indian aesthetic theory),” by using just “four longest scenes” from the 1958 lesser known “251-minute narrative” film *Amardeep* (Eternal Flames) (175).

What Booth is talking about when he mentions “*bhavas* in the context of the Indian aesthetic theory” here, is the *Rasa Theory* that Bharata expounded in the *Natyashastra*, (which I will elucidate below). According to this theory, the eight key elements or emotions in performance are love, humor, compassion, fury, heroism, horror, repugnance, and astonishment, and these emotions, in turn, evoke feelings of pleasure, mirth, sorrow, anger, enthusiasm, fear, disgust and wonder, respectively. Thus, taken collectively, the eight emotional states are called the *rasas* (emotions) and their corresponding feelings are called *bhavas* (feelings) in the *Natyashastra* (Rangacharya; Barlingay).

Booth, however, only elucidates two *rasas*—mirth (*hasa*) and sorrow (*shoka*) out of the eight, and identifies the remaining six without delving deeper into the *Rasa Theory*. Booth goes on to give a list of randomly selected Hindi films, and briefly describes “epic story-types and characters” (Booth 176), and “epic and traditional story content” (180), in Hindi films. In the same article, Booth, nonetheless, refers to the length and the duration of the scenes from the film *Amardeep* (Eternal Flames), which he says are about “ten to eleven minutes each,” one of which is comprised of songs “dominated by the emotion of

mirth (*hasa*),” which is “an entirely musical introductory segment,” and the other “dominated by sorrow (*shoka*),” while “the film’s final eleven minutes is fragmented into anger, wonder, fear, love, sorrow” (175).

Booth furthers the argument by citing as example Indian drama, which could also be applied to Hindi cinema, and then cites Edwin Gerow to further explicate his idea.

It is probably our tendency to equate the Indian drama as *plot* with dramatic forms in our tradition that are not *serious* (melodrama, etc.) that has inhibited what would otherwise be a normal interest in plot as such. The inevitable historical bias of modern Indology (Western and Indian) tends to be satisfied with the discovery that plots, as such, are rarely original, but are likely to be borrowed from epical or *Katha* [narrative] literature (Gerow, “Plot Structure and the Development of *Rasa*” 559).

It is probably true that most ideologists would deny this supposition, but there exists “an unspoken agreement” that whatever is “borrowed or adapted from other media” could not serve as the “key element in the drama’s aesthetic achievement” (Gerow, “Plot Structure and the Development of *Rasa*” 559).

Rachel Dwyer, writer and a senior lecturer in Indian Studies, University of London, and Divia Patel, assistant curator in the Asian Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and co-authors of Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film, however, are unconvinced, and refute this claim. According to them, most critics wanting to discover a “native aesthetic” in order to study Hindi films, “import [the] *rasa* theory, the study of emotions [...] the so-called application of the ill-defined *rasa*

theory,” dubbing the claim [that the roots of Hindi cinema are in the *Natyashastra*] as “unconvincing” (Dwyer and Patel 28).

Be that as it may, Priya Jaikumar, author of Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India, in her article “Bollywood Spectaculars” reiterates Javed Akhtar’s idea, that Sanskrit-Parsi theatre, *Nautanki* or Folk theater, and the Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, have greatly influenced Hindi cinema. She says that although directors may not read the *Natyashastra* any more, they still continue to use the age old tradition of drama that was laid down in the *Natyashastra*:

The ritualistic opening of several films with a prayer before the credit roll; the inalienable relationship between drama, music, and dance; an actor’s direct address to audiences with a consequent frontality to staged action; a preponderance of burlesque routines integrated with dramatic, tragic, and action-oriented episodes—may be traced to older texts (Jaikumar, Cinema at the End of Empire 24).

In fact, she further observes that when “viewed from the perspective of American film genres,” Indian films “make little sense,” and can be understood only “through a discernment of the gradations and historical shifts within polyvalent, layered narratives” (Jaikumar, Cinema at the End of Empire 24).

Robyn Anderson in her article “Movie Masala” in the *New Zealand Listener* furthers Jaikumar’s concept when she says that this ancient Indian theory of the *rasas* not only emphasizes, but also answers an inherent yearning in us all that calls for the

fulfillment of our emotional needs—a need that is satisfied by Hindi cinema and classical Indian arts (Anderson 2). Anderson adds that although Hindi cinema comes in “many different guises, the best are moral fables, drawn against a huge cinematic canvas,” but the basic theme has always been “man’s struggle against fate. At their heart lie Indian (some would say, universal) archetypes: the sacrificing mother, the obsessive lover, the avenging hero” (Anderson 2). In the same article, Anderson then observes, “Expect stylization rather than naturalism. Emotions are deliberately heightened by the imagery, poetic lyrics and flights of dialogue. Here, the epic tradition of the *Mahabharata* saga synthesizes with the production values of MTV—and sometimes with cinematic genius” (Anderson 2).

Since Hindi cinema appears to have its roots in the *Natyashastra*, it can be better understood by studying it in the Indian context by looking at it through India’s tradition of cultural ethnicity and history as Boggs and Dissanayake, amongst others cited earlier, so aptly evoked, instead of using Western yardsticks to study Indian cinema. This is not to say that the frequently used and existing Western models are not useful in analyzing Indian cinema. They are, but in order to understand the “much maligned” Bollywood cinema better, it would be more apt to study it primarily from an Indian viewpoint, because Hindi cinema, by connotation, can be looked upon as a symbol of Indian life. More so, since Hindi cinema, by implication, also expresses the emotions of the Indian community at large, and gives an objective interpretation of the socio-cultural values and ideologies of the Indian people.

Therefore, given the perceptions of Hindi cinema, and given that it should be evaluated from a non-western point-of-view, I will investigate the *Rasa* quotient in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2007 release *Saavariya* in order to find out to what extent, if at all, the use of set designs, colors, costumes including accessories, taken collectively, prove true to the Indian aesthetic theory of the *rasas* as expounded by the Indian philosopher Bharata in his treatise on drama, the *Natyashastra*.

Much criticism has already been meted out against the "Indian 'musicals'" and its song and dance sequences in the "Anglo-Saxon world" by those who "associate musicals as song-and-dance routines," and view every Hindi film from the perspective that Hollywood is the "ultimate litmus test" of success" (Lal and Nandy xi; Prasad vii), therefore, the ensuing chapter will attempt a defense of Hindi Cinema.

Chapter II

Defense of Hindi Cinema

Chapter I was an attempt to explain the significance of Hindi Cinema in this age of globalization, and present the scholarly literature on Hindi cinema available today. This is not to say that it is an exhaustive inclusion of the scholarly works, but only that which is, to a great extent, relevant to the present study on Hindi Cinema has been included. In this chapter, an attempt will be made at advancing the understanding of Hindi cinema by explicating its various elements, and focusing primarily on the formulaic, fantasy and emotional content of Hindi cinema. It is also an endeavor to alleviate the “criticism” meted out to Hindi cinema due to misinterpretation.

What Is Hindi Cinema?

Hindi cinema, like world cinemas, uses illusion or socio-cultural symbols, aiming for a union of the reason and imagination of the age, and the society it represents (Kaur 202; Dwyer and Patel 7). Its outward trappings may change over time, but its function remains the same. One just needs to look beyond its latest façade (Gokulsing and Dissanayake 13; Willis in Stringer 258). For Hindi films are perceived today as not just “vehicles of undemanding assembly-line entertainment but also as robustly colorful celebrations of the cultural and musical mosaic that is India” (Gulzar, et al vii).

However, complaints against Hindi cinema from American and Indian film scholars (Kaur 203), particularly those who write in English, may generally range from: “clichéd,” “mindless” (Banaji xiii), “escapist fantasy” (Banaji 1), “an example of the worst escapist excesses of postcolonial capitalism” (Booth 171), “over-inflated and often

formula-ridden,” and “shallow commodities created for an uneducated mass audience” (Roy Armes qtd. in Booth 171; Dudrah 32), “all [Hindi films] look the same,” they are “mind-numbingly long, have incoherent plots and raucous music, belong to no known genre but appear to be a mish-mash of several, and are naive and crude imitations of ‘real’ (Hollywood) movies” (M. K. Raghavendra, Cf. Note1. in Lal and Nandy 47), and that Indian cinema is the “worst,” and “ranks at the bottom” as far as its “quality” is concerned (M. K. Raghavendra, Cf. Note1. in Lal and Nandy 47).

But despite this derision, Hindi cinema critics are often bewildered at its enduring popularity, but these elements—emotions, family values, music, songs and dance, are precisely what sets Indian cinema apart from other world cinemas (Rao in Joshi 140-156). Analysts understand that a multitude, including large numbers who do not live in the subcontinent, love and understand this very “difference” in these films (Lutgendorf 1; M. K. Raghavendra in Lal and Nandy 25). Booth adds that “Hindi films are more than just Western-inspired products of market manipulation” (172), for they are representative of India’s “pre-cinema dramatic forms and stories” (Booth 172).

Furthering this argument, Heather Tyrrell, in “Bollywood versus Hollywood: Battle of the Dream Factories,” say that Popular Hindi cinema culture has been largely misunderstood or misjudged by most critics primarily because it does not quite fit the theoretical definitions or genres of cinema “developed around the dichotomy of First World and Third World cinema” (Tyrrell in Lechner 312). India may not be the only “non-Western” country with its own [China, Hong Kong, Brazil, Mexico, too, have their own] commercial popular cinema, but India’s film industry is fast being recognized as a

major force to be reckoned with [sic]. The name “Bollywood,” more often than not, is used derogatorily ⁷ (Satvinder Rana columnist, Birmingham’s *Spice* magazine and BBC Radio Derby, UK, qtd. by Dudrah 34), to indicate it as a poor imitation of Hollywood, when economic impediments prevented “the import of the original” (Tyrrell in Lechner 312). If that were indeed the case, then, when these obstacles [ban of Hollywood films in India] were removed, the Indian film industry should have collapsed. The current trends clearly indicate that far from being denigrated or obliterated, the Bollywood juggernaut is gaining momentum. It is apparent that the significance or the status of the Indian film industry has been misrepresented or misjudged by most critics, probably because it breaks the mould of film criteria which distinguishes between First World and Third World cinema (Tyrrell in Lechner 312), primarily because most theories use Hollywood films as a yardstick to describe any cinema. Indian cinema’s “song and dance sequences are a form of opposition to Western cultural imperialism,” according to Heather Tyrrell, who adds that India’s cinema has developed its own style and language that has very little in common with its Western counterpart, which is precisely why Hindi cinema has been thus criticized (Tyrrell in Lechner 314; Thomas 116).

Hindi films are not merely “escapist dreams,” because what is widely overlooked is the fact that Hindi cinema, which gratifies mass audiences, has the capacity to imbibe and imitate the ideas and spirit of the times both explicitly and implicitly. Hindi films not only describe age old conflicts and dilemmas, but also mundane every day family related issues. These films mirror paradoxical images of the sublime and the absurd, from

⁷ For strong points of view on different aspects of the issue, see Kaur and Sinha 15; Dudrah 32; Pendakur 5; Kaur 100, 168; Lal and Nandy xiv; Lutgendorf 1.

exquisite aesthetics to calendar kitsch, from intellectual refinement to roadside tripe in equal measure, and out of this potpourri of extremes, the spectators select what they desire, and reject what they find superfluous in the narrative (Rao in Joshi 155; Smith 12). It is a totally different world designed primarily to nurture profound fantasies consisting of a varied group of individuals from illiterates to urbanites (Mishra 4).

The reaction of Indian audiences to puppet shows, street theatre, as well as folk theatre that is based on Indian mythologies, are apparent in cinema audiences as well; the signs and symbols of Indian cinema signify and convey varied meanings to the audiences because these are dependent on culture and social norms. Film producers generally target multicultural audiences, but the audience reactions cannot be predicted as the spectators' level of involvement with, or detachment thereof, is largely dependent on class, gender, age and education (MacDougall 18; Bhurga 3-4). Strangely enough, most Indian viewers thought that *Titanic* (1997) was a "typical" Hindi film made on a grandiose scale albeit with an unhappy ending, a closure which has been forbidden according to the traditions expounded in the *Natyashastra*, and a practice that is still evident in Hindi cinema (Rao in Joshi 155).

Hindi Film Analysis and Psychoanalytical Theory

Greg Smith in Film Structure and the Emotion System says that Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory has been consistently used to analyze films, but although Freud delved deep into the realm of "instincts and sexuality," he, however, failed to offer a comprehensive theory about "emotions," thus creating a vacuum which Jerome Wakefield referred to as "the Achilles heel of theoretical psychoanalysis" (Smith 178).

Since Freud was a neurologist, he tried to explain behavior in neuro-physiological terms, thus the study of “emotions” became a subsidiary aspect in his explanation of human behavior, because he felt that “emotions were a symptom of the more important instinctual system” (Smith 175-178). By doing this, Freud precluded “emotion” from becoming the focus of psychoanalytical studies (Smith 175-178). Thus, when Christian Metz pioneered his debate on “cinematic pleasure,” Freud’s understanding of emotions was incorporated into film theory. Although Metz was not a psychoanalyst, he felt that Freudian psychology was “compatible with semiotics,” as “linguistics and psychoanalysis are both sciences of the symbolic” and “the only two sciences whose immediate and sole object is the fact of signification as such” (Metz 18; Smith 176). According to Metz, “the pleasure principle in the cinematic spectator, ‘always seeks to liquidate stases’” (Metz 118; Smith 188). In keeping with Freud’s hypothesis, Metz, and the existing psychoanalytical film theory believe that pleasure is “a release of a quota of affect.” For them, emotion is an important “phenomenon” because “it disperses instinctual energy,” and “not because it is “*emotional*” (Smith 88).

In psychoanalytical film studies, with its focus on “identification and ideology,” scholars are generally taciturn about delving into “the nuances of the film’s emotional appeal” (Smith 193). According to E. Ann Kaplan, this has its roots in “our anti-realism theory that made it difficult to use the word ‘emotional’ in recent feminist film theory” because of the complacency and comfort “with the ‘cool’ theoretical sound of ‘desire’” (Kaplan qtd. in Smith 193).

But identificatory processes involve emotional needs for symbiosis, wholeness, becoming one with the Other. In arguing that such processes in realist text inevitably enmeshed the spectator in oppressive ideologies, we were led to advocate a cerebral, non-emotional kind of text and corresponding spectator response (Kaplan qtd. in Smith 193).

Thus, Smith says, the complexity of a theory about “cinematic emotions” that has its roots in “instincts and drives,” is that “it lacks specificity” (Smith 194). This theory is repetitive, “regardless of differences between particular examples” (Smith 194). According to this theory, “either a quota of affect is discharged (pleasure) or it is increased (unpleasures)” (Smith 194). Since “psychoanalytical film theory fails to encourage specific explanation of filmic emotion,” one needs to, therefore, Smith adds, first understand what “cinematic pleasures” are instead of “why we gain pleasure from the cinema,” as Metz’s The Imaginary Signifier suggests (Smith 194). Therein lies the problem in analyzing Hindi cinema according to the prevalent Western models of analysis.

Comparative Study of the Formulaic Content in Hindi Cinema and Hollywood Films

Since cinema is born out of the culture it represents, the diegesis conveys things that go beyond the film. It is not just in the way the plot and the scenes unfold, or in the way the characters are developed, but in the way the story progresses with the aid of music, songs and identifiable cultural symbols; elements that the Indian viewers can easily recognize, just as the Hollywood formula was based on elements the American

public could easily identify with (Bhugra 4; Roffman and Purdy 3). For Hollywood “formula,” like Hindi cinema “formula,” involves “wish fulfillment” for a mass audience, the main ingredient being the presence of a star “who acted as an ideal for audience identification” because “stars were projections of the public’s own fantasies,” and “familiar movie experiences [...] made movie going a kind of ritual,” for “repetition meant a relatively effortless participation by the audience in the familiar screen experience” (Roffman and Purdy 3; Gulzar, et al 13).

In the Introduction to The Hollywood Social Problem Film, Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy explain the inherent characteristics of Hollywood movies. Roffman and Purdy say that in order to analyze any given genre of films, one needs to understand the “nature” of the cinema, an approach that is sound when studying other cinemas as well, here Hindi cinema, for just as Hollywood films mean “more than a film made in Southern California,” because it “implies a whole style of film, a particular approach to film narrative, a peculiar set of cultural and social values” (Roffman and Purdy 1), “Bollywood” films with their formula ridden narratives are more than just films made in Bombay, and have their own individual and distinctive array of “cultural and social values” (Roffman and Purdy 1).

Similarly, just as “the character of the Hollywood movie is a given in terms of the social problem film,” because “the genre inherits the core qualities of the Hollywood film as well as its place in the cultural structure of America” (Roffman and Purdy 1), Hindi cinema, too, as a separate genre of films made in India, can be identified as “social problem films” that not only “inherits the core qualities” of Indian cinema, but also has

“its place in the cultural structure” of India. Therefore, just as one needs to “summarize the basic nature of the Hollywood movies in general before analyzing the social problem film specifically” (Roffman and Purdy 1), one needs to first look at Hindi films “generally” in order to understand “the basic nature” of Hindi films before going on to analyze it as a separate genre. In order to do so, one needs to fathom “How a movie is made and how it is consumed,” because that is precisely how “the shape of the final product and its impact on the public” is determined (Roffman and Purdy1).

Commencing from 1930 down to the fifties, Hollywood was dominated by the monopoly of the “Big Eight”—“MGM, Warner Brothers, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, Universal, RKO, Columbia and United Artists” (Roffman and Purdy 1), that saw the emergence of the Studio System and resulted in a set “Formula.” Films were churned out “on an assembly-line basis” though not necessarily being “mass produced.” The Formula was “broad enough to be widely applied in a wide variety of ways, and flexible enough to shift with changing times and tastes, yet fixed enough to serve as a pattern for production and marketing” (Roffman and Purdy 2).

As a “mandatory starting point,” the plot and character were formulated according to nineteenth century melodrama, and the “dramatic conflict was always structured around two opposing roles definitely representing good and evil, with a readily identifiable hero and villain.” While “conflict and emotion were generally expressed in terms of violent actions,” “the good-evil morality called for a clear-cut, gratifying plot resolution—Happy Ending, in which evil was destroyed and good rewarded. The ending left no doubt in the audience’s mind that virtue was a positive force and their fantasies

could come true” (Roffman and Purdy 4-5). And this is precisely what Hindi cinema formula has been since its inception—the victory of good over evil resulting in the mandatory happy end.

What Om Prakash Makhija (played by Hindi cinema super star Shahrukh Khan), says in the film *Om Shanti Om* [names of protagonists], (2007), sums it up best:

*Haamari filmo ki tarhaa [pause] haamari zindagi may bhi end thak
[pause] sab kuch theek he hojata hai [pause] Happys ending [pause] Aur
agar theek na ho [pause] tho woh the end nahi [pause] picture abhi baaki
hai mere dost [pause] picture abhi baaki hai. (Om Shanti Om)*

Translation:

Like our [Hindi] films, everything in life, too, resolves itself perfectly in the end. Happy ending. And if it does not get resolved, then it is not “The End.” There is still much left of the film, my friend. The movie is not over yet.

Hindi Cinema Adapting Hollywood Films

Although Hindi cinema has also been hugely criticized for its “brazen” aping of Hollywood films by film scholars, the most important influence on Hindi film aesthetics, especially towards the end of India’s colonial days, however, was its “allusive commentary on the nationalistic project and on British imperialism through visualizations of a new civil society” (Jaikumar, Cinema at the End of Empire 195). Its beginnings in ancient and modern Indian art forms has given it an inside edge over Hollywood and other cinemas by “borrowing and localizing” its appeal (Jaikumar, Cinema at the End of

Empire 195; Prasad vii; Panjwani in Tuli 32). This process of “borrowing and localizing” has been prevalent in India since recorded history, for every time an alien culture has “invaded” India, she has imbibed and altered the “foreignness,” and brought forth a typically Indian amalgam, a process that has been adopted by the Hindi film industry as well. As a result of this, Hindi cinema is hybrid cinema, adapting and adopting much from Hollywood, including its star and studio systems, cinematic techniques and plot structures, yet maintaining its individuality even in the face of stiff competition, considering that 80% films screened in India during the first half of the twentieth century were from Hollywood (Gulzar, et al 13; Panjwani in Tuli, 32; Prasad vii).

Speaking about Hindi cinema’s penchant for adapting Hollywood films, award winning screenplay writer, theatre director, filmmaker, actor Akash Khurana says that his “personal rationale for adapting from a foreign film is less for reasons of convenience in using a tried and tested model for success, and more a question of creative orientation” (A. Khurana in Gulzar, et al 440). Citing as example his award winning screenplay for the film *Baazigar* (1993) [adapted from *A Kiss before Dying*, 1991], Khurana adds that “the process of adaptation involved infusing Indian emotions and values; simplifying the narration of a complex plot of intrigue; and an ending that had the ‘feel’ of a conventional one that the viewers could relate with” (A. Khurana in Gulzar, et al 440). Elucidating further on how “hybrid” screenplays are scripted, Khurana adds that according to the ancient Hindu scripture *Yoga Vasistha*,

“the World is as you see it,” meaning that what is inside your mind—

your thoughts, feelings, emotions, memories—are reflected outside, in your everyday experience. It is our mind, how we see the world that determines our experiences (A. Khurana via email to author; Gulzar, et al 440).

Therefore, the key questions that need to be asked while writing the screenplay [for Hindi films] are to decide how a given character views the world [the new adapted world]. One needs to take into consideration what determines his or her actions, and the beliefs and ethical codes that could determine the action or behavior of the character, based on his cultural background. The “motivations” need to be “contextual and ‘native’ in terms of traditions and culture, beliefs and values, sensibility and morality. And it is this difference that determines the acceptance of a film by audiences” (A. Khurana via email to author; Gulzar, et al 440).

Hindi Cinema as Fantasy

To be sure, Hindi cinema does project a world that is pure fantasy (Virdi 1), but then so does world cinema. As J. P. Mayer explains in Sociology of Film, Cinema,

with its power to facilitate the identification of the spectator with actor by technical devices such as close-up, its freedom from the limitations of time and space, and above all its extremely vivid presentation of life, can be a more potent inspirer of fantasy than any other variety of art or entertainment yet created (Mayer 151).

But if one was to single out Hindi cinema for being pure “escapist fantasy,” then that nomenclature is willingly embraced by Indian filmmakers. As Yash Chopra, the

legendary filmmaker stated in an interview, “We need hope and joy to lead a happy life. There is enough sorrow and a tear in everyone’s life and my job is to make my audience forget all their worries and be happy” (Chopra). This sentiment, it seems, most Indians and some non-Indians understand and appreciate, and is a concept which Carl Jung expounded when he said that:

Our life is spent in struggles for the realization of our wishes: all our actions proceed from the wish that something should or should not come to pass. It is for this reason we work, for this we think. If we cannot fulfill a wish in reality, we realize it at least in fantasy” (Jung 5).

Hindi Cinema then, is fantasy at its best, a wish fulfillment dream factory for millions of Indians world wide, for it caters to a deep rooted inherent need in all. In fact, Hindi cinema presents a totally different diegesis which can best be understood in relation to the narratives to be found in India’s epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (Lutgendorf 2; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 19), for structurally, Hindi films incorporate romance and the rudiments found in both these epics, focusing more on complicated plots than on characterization (Virdi 32).

Emotions (Rasas) and Indian Culture

Both Philip Spratt and Owen Lynch attempt to interpret and understand “Hindu culture” using psychoanalytical concepts, focusing on how the emotional system in India depicts the individual psyche of the “Hindu individual.” Citing Prof. P.S Naidu’s views, Spratt admits that the difference between Indians and their western counterparts lies in the way emotions are expressed. In India, people are wont to give full vent to their

sorrow, joy and pain, whereas people in the West tend to camouflage their emotions (Naidu, Mysteries of the Mind 40, qtd. in Spratt 7). Owen Lynch seconds not only Naidu's views, but also reiterates those of E. Ann Kaplan. Lynch suggests that as "the conception of emotions and of the capacity to lead emotional lives in India is different from that in the West," the essays [in Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India], "raise problems for the West's understanding of emotion, particularly when it is universalized into a theory and projected onto the Other" (Lynch 3). Lynch adds that these essays, all by anthropologists, have been written not only "with an eye on India" but also for "the development of a critical theory and understanding of emotion in the West" (3).

Both Spratt and Lynch elucidate the *Natyashastra's Rasa Theory*, with Lynch summing up that in order to understand the "social construction of India," anthropologists "need to consider the ethno-psychological literature existing in Indian philosophy" (Lynch 29). Lynch adds that the interpretation of the Indian *Rasa Theory* reveals that "Indians understand emotions in terms of *vibhava* or *bhavana*," which is the "catalysts of internal experience," recommending that "we need many more culturally sensitive field studies of Indian emotional categories as they appear in actual situations or cases and as described by Indians themselves" (29). Lynch recommends "further studies on the implications of the highly developed Indian metaphor of taste and nourishment" in order to understand "emotions rather than simply relying on the hydraulic metaphor. Science and understanding of the human condition often advance when they are able to see things from a new perspective" (29).

Emotions in Hindi Cinema

The above sentiment by Lynch that there is need to study the “Indian metaphor of taste and nourishment,” to better understand “emotions” in order to get a “new perspective” of the “human condition,” is well suited for the study of not just the Indian people, but also Hindi cinema as well. Edwin Gerow supplements this moot point when he says that film “from an Indian point of view, is a natural for the explanation and illustration of *rasa*” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246). This is because, film, an art form, has much in common with drama, as both arts are an amalgam of music, song, dance and language. But film, to a great extent, is more complex, since the art of the painter or sculptor is not “superadded in the selection and determination of sequence.” Not only this, but also “in the ability [of film] to multiply points of view and in the abrogation of distance in the actual witnessing of the film” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246). Gerow adds that the magnitude of the popularity (in India) of social and mythological films “attests to the reality of aesthetic forms which are Indian,” since they “represent the rebirth of drama” which are similar to the form and style of the “classical period as far as the basics of action and character, generalization and integration are concerned” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246). These, Gerow says, are “unlike our own classical ideal which postulates a fruitful relation of character and action” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246), for, according to the Indian aesthetic theory, the *rasa*, in order to be realized, significantly bifurcates action and character in such a way that “character does not change and action is conceived as external circumstances” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246). But be they “socially relevant” or “mythological” films, *rasa*

continues to be “the principle of organization” as long as the “audience’s consciousness does not overpower the message” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 246), for *rasa* is the vital constituent in this message about life, “about people in whom all Indians, however humble, recognize national problems and issues—caste or creed, poverty or wealth” (Gerow in Baumer and Brandon 247-8).

Most Hindi films overtly communicate to the senses, while some, however, “do manage to strike deep emotional chords even though very few actually appeal at the strictly cerebral level” (Gulzar, et al 11). Film scholars may find the formula ridden Hindi films a bit difficult to comprehend and assimilate, but they cannot ignore Hindi films, nor reject them as “mere kitsch, not worthy of [...] serious study. These highly melodramatic, mushily romantic and action packed films” (Gulzar, et al 11), are so hugely popular that “by virtue of their mass acceptance alone, they qualify as a legitimate form of communication that has democratized entertainment in a way that now seems irreversible” (Gulzar, et al 11). The stories that successful Hindi films tell, “become part of folklore, much like the mythological tales about heroes like Lord Rama in the *Ramayana* and Arjuna in *The Mahabharata*” (Gulzar, et al 11).

Song and Dance Content in Hindi Cinema

Hindi Cinema, a “masala omnibus” with its *mélange* of action, melodrama, tragedy, comedy, social comments, and a handful of song and dance sequences thrown in for good measure, aesthetically, has more in common with India’s ancient traditions of

Sanskrit theatre⁸ than Hollywood musicals (Tyrrell in Lechner 314; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 25), because the *Natyashastra* clearly recommends the use of songs, but dance, though necessary, had to be used with discretion.

As the story goes [in the *Natyashastra*], the sage Bharata was questioned by other sages about the inclusion of dance (*nrtta*) in performance (*abhinaya*). “*Abhinaya* was thought out by these experts to convey a (definite) meaning” (Rangacharya 36) and they believed that since dance, in performance, did not serve much purpose considering that it was neither “related to the meaning of a song,” nor did it “convey the meanings of the words,” its inclusion made little sense (Rangacharya 36). Bharata replied that although it did not convey any meaning, dance (*nrtta*) was necessary because “it creates beauty (attraction),” in the performance, “generally people like dance,” it is “considered auspicious,” and “it is a diversion” (Rangacharya 36). Bharata then cautioned against the excessive use of dance, music and songs, as the performers, as well as the spectators, “would feel the strain” (Rangacharya 42). Consequently, if the performers felt stressed, their performance would suffer, and hence would fail to enthrall the audience (Rangacharya 42).

Hindi Film Spectators

Ever since the Lumiere brothers first exhibited their film in India in 1895, films have been an integral part of the Indian psyche, fascinating and entertaining the Indian public for over a hundred years (Virdi 1). The escapist fantasy world of Hindi cinema

⁸ In the *Natyashastra*, Bharata classified drama into ten categories. The two most prominent types are *nataka* (“heroic”) that deals with themes of Gods and kings and is inspired from history or mythology. The other type is *prakarana* (“social”), the plot of which is usually invented by the dramatist, and revolves around a courtesan or vamp (Britannica 753). For more details, see Rangacharya.

gives its spectators a much needed psychological reprieve from their daily troubles of trying to eke out a living (A. Nandy, The Secret Politics of our Desire 7 qtd. in Bhugra 2).

As Baz Luhrmann, director of *Moulin Rouge* (2001) said, that watching a “Bollywood film” in India was a significant moment in his understanding of Indian cinema and her audience.

The audience was singing aloud the songs in the film, chatting, answering mobile phones—the viewers’ interaction with the film onscreen was utterly amazing. Respectful silence is not at all integral to the way Indians express their appreciation of cinema (Shedde).

And it is this very essence of Hindi cinema that Luhrmann had tried to incorporate in *Moulin Rouge* (Shedde). This interaction with the events on screen is probably due to the element of familiarity and repetition. This is not the repetitive quality of film genres in the Hollywood sense, but the way Indian films “translate a sense of our selfhoods as refracted on the screen” (Dudrah 43), both socially and aesthetically, and an identification that is both a physical as well as a social and cultural one (Dudrah 43).

Talking about the Indian film audiences, Aditya Chopra [*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*/ The Brave Heart Will Take the Bride, 1995; *Jab Ne Bana Di Jodi*/ It’s a Match Made by God, 2008], son of veteran filmmaker Yash Chopra, and an award winning filmmaker himself, reiterates the fact that Indian audiences need a total “*masala*” experience, summing up thus:

We are dealing [with] a country which feeds on Hindi films, which breathes Hindi films, which does take its Hindi films very seriously [...]

Hindi films are a part of their culture [...] Here, the common man, his ultimate dream, is escapism, is to watch films. He goes for three hours: he sees a world which he will never get, or he'll see women [...] he'll never meet or he'll see stuff which he's never [going to], and for him that's it. That's his ultimate, because you're dealing to a country of have-nots [...] they feel cheated when you don't give them a good film [...] because there are people here who work throughout the day, earn daily wages, and probably skip a meal to see a film! So he has the right to take his films very seriously, so that's why you need to take it seriously (Ganti 193-4).

It is no wonder then, that filmmakers in India continue to make formula ridden fantasy fare for the audiences, a practice that has persisted since Dhundraj Govind (Dadasahib) Phalke flagged off Indian cinema with *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), the first silent film to be made by an all Indian crew (Gulzar, et al 26-27).

According to Greg Smith, "Films do not 'make' people feel," but films do "extend an invitation" to the spectators to "feel" emotional. Spectators may accept the "invitation" or they may "reject" it. In order to "accept the invitation" the spectator should be an "educated viewer" who has the necessary ability to "read" the "emotion cues" (Smith 12). This concept is similar to what Bharata says about the spectators in the *Natyashastra*:

One who is attentive, honest, able to argue and reason, who can detect a fault and (yet) be sympathetic [...] One who is glad when the character is

glad or feels miserable when the character feels miserable and sorry when the character is sorry is qualified to be a spectator (Rangacharya 215).

Hindi cinema is unique and has no parallels anywhere else in the world. Its importance is based on two fundamental characteristics: Hindi films are the sole means of mass entertainment accessible in India, and they cross over regional boundaries connecting the entire country, and her people into a unified single entity irrespective of whichever part of the world they may live in, because Hindi cinema, with its grandiose sagas, extremely popular songs and marathon storylines, successfully weaves its magic on the Indian populace (Gulzar, et al viii; Gokulsing and Dissanayake 25; Rao in Joshi 161).

As Hindi cinema appears to have its roots in the *Natyashastra*, the following chapter will attempt an explication of this ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy using similar Western paradigms to augment better understanding.

Chapter III

Rasa Theory

The previous chapters were an attempt at explaining not just the significance of studying Hindi cinema today, but also to explain Hindi cinema from an Indian viewpoint, using similar Western examples to further elucidate the fantasy, formulaic and emotional content of Hindi cinema. As was apparent from the Literature Review presented in Chapter I, the roots of Hindi cinema are deeply embedded in the ancient treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyashastra*. Since this paper is an attempt at analyzing Hindi cinema using the *Rasa Theory* expounded by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*, this chapter will attempt an elucidation of this ancient theory by using similar Western theories on Drama and Acting, and Psychological studies of Human Emotions, in order to compare and better explicate this ancient India theory, before attempting an analysis of the selected film, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Saawariya*.

The *Natyashastra*

The *Natyashastra* is the earliest treatise on drama and poetics in India (1st century BC to 1st century AD), written in the Sanskrit language, and is attributed to the sage Bharata, because presumably, he was the first to have put these guidelines into writing.⁹ Just as Aristotle is the father of Greek Poetics, Bharata is considered the father of the Indian Poetics, the *Natyashastra*. But while Aristotle's Poetics is about a hundred pages,

⁹ Indian aesthetic theory predates the *Natyashastra*, but this text is the earliest existing treatise available, primarily because of the ancient Indian tradition of instruction (*guru-shishya parampara*) wherein the learning and teaching was more kinesthetic, aural as well as oral, than written; a tradition where the teacher (*guru*) "shows, rather than tells" (Schwartz 5), for knowledge was verbally imparted to the student (*shishya*), who in turn had to first understand, simulate and replicate to the teacher's was satisfaction, and only then would the next portion of the lesson be imparted (Schwartz 5).

the *Natyashastra* is “an encyclopedic work on dramatic theory and poetics”¹⁰ (Sen 2), with detailed instructions not only on acting and stagecraft, including make up techniques, costumes, accessories and props, but also detailed specifications about the construction of the performing area, as well (Barlingay 51-54; Jhanji 15).

Comparative Study of Bharata’s *Natyashastra* and Aristotle’s Poetics

In A Comparative Study of Greek and Indian Poetics and Aesthetics, Ramendra Kumar Sen while comparing the two Poetics says that many of the apparent differences between the two are merely superficial, for there is “a deep conformity, a similar approach to the problems of art in Greek and Indian Poetics”¹¹ (Sen 2). According to Sen, Aristotle’s “doctrine of katharsis has been [...] misinterpreted and misunderstood” primarily because “the discussion of Katharsis promised to be made in the Aristotelian discussion of Comedy, is now lost to us” (3). Sen further elucidates the similarities by studying the “the concept of *Rasa* in Indian Poetics and the parallel concept of Katharsis in Greek Poetics and their purification background” in the “Indian and Greek philosophical, physiological, pathological, and medicinal concepts” (5). Finding similarities between the *rasas* in *Ayurveda* [Ancient Hindu medical science] and “humors” in ancient Greek medicine of Hippocrates, Sen reaches the conclusion that *rasa* and katharsis are similar as both are based on the concept of “purification” of the emotions that are evoked in the audience (“fear and pity” in a tragic performance, as only

¹⁰ For further details, see Rangacharya, Adya. trans. The *Natyashastra*.

¹¹ For strong points of view on different aspects of the issue, see Pandit 36; Lynch 17-18; Chaudhary “Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics 219; Barlingay 86; Schwartz 8.

Aristotle's concept of Tragedy is available; while Bharata in the *Natyashastra* mentions eight basic emotions) during a performance (Sen 10).

Edwin Gerow reiterates Sen's idea in his article "Rasa and Katharsis: A Comparative Study, Aided by Several Films," when he says that "our notion of Aristotle's poetics has been afflicted by the accident that his treatment of that one genre [tragedy] survives: it is indeed more general, as even his marginal comments on comedy make clear" (Gerow, "Rasa and Katharsis" 267). Gerow adds that the commonality between both Greek and Indian poetics is in the idea of "emotion as meaning and message," and that both their poetic works are drawn from myths. The major difference, however, is that while "the Indian play presents itself as a [...] way of realizing the emotional component of experience," Aristotle is not interested so much in

abstracting emotion from the experience in which it is embedded and determines the principles of his poetics in elements which form our experience—character, action, language, etc.—which insofar as they exhibit a dynamic structural integration, and in no other wise affect us (Gerow, "Rasa and Katharsis" 267).

This difference could probably be due to the fact that Aristotle's aim was more in keeping with that of a "literary critic," interested more on the "appreciation of drama," while Bharata's main objective was "creation," with the spectators' response the necessary source of "feed back"¹² (Jhanji 16).

¹² Sanskrit drama differs from the Greek theatre "in temperament and method of production" with its "subsidiary plots and wide variety of moods," emphasizing "four types of acting and visual demonstration," while the Greeks emphasized "plot and speech." The "three unities rigidly followed by the Greeks were totally unknown to Sanskrit dramatists" (Britannica 753).

What Is Rasa?

The Indian aesthetic theory, no doubt, is very complex, but in order to understand it, it is “crucial to remember that in this tradition, the distinction between religion and philosophy that has permeated western culture as well as the western academy is not useful”¹³ (Schwartz 3; Goswamy 21). Also, the most important aspect of this theory is *Rasa*, a word which has no equivalent in the English language, and without fully understanding this key concept, it is extremely difficult to understand this Sanskrit dramatic theory. Thus, scholars generally use the original term that has been transliterated from Sanskrit, for the word *rasa* is essential to differentiate between emotions experienced in everyday life and those that are experienced in the theatre.

It is apparent that the emotions that are experienced in the theatre are “subtly different from the emotions which go by the same name in real life. We experience pity and fear in the theatre, and enjoy the experience; but pity in real life is annoying and irritating ultimately” (Dace 249; Rangacharya 55; Barlingay 33-34). Therefore, in order to differentiate these dual emotions, Bharata, and other aestheticians who followed, found a solution to this problem by explaining that when an actor “imitates” the emotions, the spectator “tastes” these emotions while watching the performance. It is this very

¹³ In Indian theatre tradition, acting is looked upon as *yoga*, for rigorous training is an integral part of the performance (*abhinaya*) that can evoke *rasa* (Miller 19; Schwartz 24). The divine in the Hindu context is “divine play” (*lila*), for the world as we know it, according to Hindu philosophy, is unreal, an illusion (*maya*), and is both tragedy and comedy at the same time (Schwartz 11).

In drama, “the actor searches for a character’s motivation in order to produce it on stage or film; the actor then ‘plays’ a role” (Schwartz 10). The “motivation,” according to Indian philosophy, is “to realize *lila*, divine play” (10), since it is through divine play (*lila*) that illusion (*maya*) operates. Thus, performing arts in India are a way for artists and their audiences to participate in this “divine creation,” thereby enabling them to “understand” true reality as it actually is, and not as we perceive it (Schwartz 11).

difference between the “*tasting*” of the emotions, and experiencing them in real life that the term *rasa* elucidates (Dace 249; Rangacharya 55; Barlingay 33-34).

In order to describe *rasa*, the essence of an aesthetic experience, Bharata uses an analogy from Indian cooking wherein different spices and varied ingredients are mixed together to make just one dish. Thus, the most apparent meaning of *rasa* in the physical sense, however, is juice (*ras*); in the secondary sense, it is “essence” like perfume, which, though a part of the matter, is difficult to describe or comprehend. However, it is the tertiary meaning of “tasting the flavor,” taste, or the enjoyment related to consumption, that it is generally associated with, hence, the “taster” is called *rasika* (connoisseur), but in its most subtle form, the meaning is closely akin to an aesthetic experience. The *rasa*, thus, signifies the emotional state of heightened delight or satisfaction (*ananda*), an almost sublime bliss (Barlingay 169; Rangacharya 55; Coomaraswamy 47; Goswamy 23; Schwartz 7-9). Therefore,

Rasa is at once an inner and outer quality as the object of taste, the taste of the object, the capacity of the taster to taste that taste and enjoy it, the enjoyment, the tasting of the taste. The psychophysiological experience of tasting provided a basis for a theory of aesthetic experience which in turn provided a basis for a systemization of a religious experience (Lee Siegel, qtd. in Schwartz 9).

Since *rasa* is the “essence” in food that caters to the senses, the aesthetic experience projected via the body, then, becomes the means of attaining the spiritual goal of sublime bliss or *ananda* (Goswamy 19).

What Is Bhava?

The *Natyashastra* stresses the importance of *bhavas* (durable emotional state) and *rasas* (feelings) in the creative process in drama for, as the sage Bharata says, there can be no *natya* (dance, drama and music) without *rasa* (feeling). Emotions (*bhavas*) are conveyed through performance (*abhinaya*), while feelings (*rasas*) are experienced. When the actors' performance is impeccable [according to the *Rasa Theory*], the emotions are then communicated (via acting) to the spectators, who in turn, experience similar feelings. The *Natyashastra* identifies eight durable emotional states that a performer experiences, and then conveys to the spectator through words, feelings and gestures¹⁴ (Rangacharya 53-55). This is similar to Stanislavsky's model for acting wherein "one plays an emotion," in "given circumstances," "the objectives," "the through-line of acting," and if this is done in the "right" manner, then "real" feelings will be expressed and "natural" emotions shown (Schechner 33).

In *natya* (dance, drama and music) "a meaning conveyed by a stimulus (*vaibhava*)" that is "made intelligible by words, physical gestures and emotions (*anubhavas*)" (Rangacharya 64), and "which conveys the meaning intended by the poet [dramatist] through words, physical gestures and facial changes" (Rangacharya 64), is called *bhavas*. They are called *bhavas* because "they convey all the *rasas* through performance (*abhinaya*)" (Rangacharya 64).

¹⁴ For further details on this issue, see Barlingay 33-37; Dace 251; Chaudhary "Indian Poetics" 290; Chaudhary "Catharsis in the Light of Indian Aesthetics" 220; Chari 289; Jhanji 19; Thampi 76; Lutgendorf 8; Pandit 32-33; Goswamy 17-21; Coomaraswamy 47-48.

The *Natyashastra* stresses the significance of this process of *bhava* and *rasa* in the creative process in drama. The artist tries to generate *rasa* in creation, which the receiver (*rasika*/connoisseur) savors intuitively in a two-way process. In order to reach its desired goal, i.e., the appreciation of the spectator, and thereby, fulfillment (*siddhi*), which marks the completion of the presentation (*ranga*) in totality, *rasa* should arise at the end of stage one, and stage two should begin with the tasting (appreciation) of the *rasa*. Thus, *rasa* is the object of both—the process of creation and appreciation, which, in turn, is manifested in the form of performance (*natya*) (Rangacharya 358-361).

Creative Process in the Natyashastra

In *natya* (dance, drama and music), the process of creation is threefold. The concept or idea which is identified as *beej* (seed), germinates in the mind of the poet/dramatist (*kavi*). Then drawing from personal experience (*anubhava*), the narrative structure takes shape mentally. This process involves thought, feelings, and intent that manifest a whole gamut of emotions (*sthayi bhavas*) culminating in a sense of fulfillment or satisfaction (*siddhi*) when that which he [poet/dramatist] has created is completed. This sense of satisfaction (*siddhi*) is of two kinds—ordinary reactions (*manusi siddhi*) of the spectator depending on personal likes and dislikes, and bliss in the spiritual sense (*daiviki siddhi*), a kind of deep involvement in a work of art which exhibits itself in an exuberance of emotions and/or a state of calm generated as rapt, almost trance-like concentration. The poet/dramatist conveys (either orally, as was the original tradition, or in written form), his intent or meaning (*kavayarth*) to the director (*sutradhara*), who in turn savors or tastes the objective medium, in this case, the script. The director

(*sutradhara*) then drawing from his personal experience (*anubhava*) visualizes the performance (*abhinaya*) which in turn involves the manifestation of emotions, thought, feelings, and intent (*sthayi bhavas*) resulting in satisfaction or fulfillment (*siddhi*). The director then conveys his interpretation of the poet/dramatist's intent to the actor who, too, first appreciates and savors the director's concept, and then drawing from personal experience (*anubhava*), conveys his interpretation of character by stimulating outward expressions—physical and organic sensations, and movement, to bring about the desired effect in the minds of the spectators. The spectators, in turn, then, after drawing from their own personal experience, understand and appreciate the performance which culminates in their (spectators) sense of satisfaction and fulfillment (*siddhi*). When the spectators appreciate the performance (*abhinaya*), their appreciation in turn, gives the actor(s) a personal sense of satisfaction or fulfillment (*siddhi*). This presentation, the *Natyashastra* emphasizes, is a kind of symbolic representation of the entire creative process since its conception in the artist's mind, and is not just the performance by the actors per se (Rangacharya 358-361).

Thus, simplistically, the *Rasa* Theory can be understood as:

Actor's intent → performance → spectators' personal experience → satisfaction.

Therefore, for a dramatic work to be successful, the sum total of stages a, b, and c collectively, should culminate in a heightened aesthetic experience in the spectator.

Rasa in Performance

As already mentioned, natural causes or situations in real life give rise to certain emotion, but in a work of art, these emotions, since they are artificially rendered, are called determinants (*vaibhavas*) in order to differentiate them from the natural causes.

The consequents (*anubhavas*), on the other hand, are the physical reactions to a given determinant (*vaibhavas*), and the transitory mental states (*vyabhicharins*) are those that are the result of these responses and causes. Taken collectively, all three action-reactions, since they are artificially evoked, give rise to artificially evoked feelings.

These artificially evoked feelings are called *rasas*, while the spontaneously evoked, every day emotions are known as *bhavas*. Thus, *rasa* is the essence or quality of a work of art, here dramatic art, which arises collectively from dramatic characters, costumes, props and scenery, movement and action, and the subjective reactions which these elements evoke in the spectator, for “out of the determinants (*vaibhavas*), consequents (*anubhavas*), and transitory mental states (*vyabhicharins*), the birth of *rasa* takes place” (Rangacharya 358-361).

In other words, *rasas* and *bhavas* are two sides of the same coin as they are basically made up of the same components. The *rasas* are not feelings in the general sense of the word as they are artificially generated. The *rasa* is evoked when everyday feelings (*bhavas*) are purified through the medium of art and the imagination of the

spectator. The *rasa*, as opposed to the *bhavas*, is a product of the imagination; pleasurable feelings that are born out of an aesthetic experience, and not from real life causes, thus the person experiencing the *rasa* is free from the “adverse effects” that one normally associates with everyday emotions and feelings. *Rasa*, then, is the result of “purification” (Goswamy 25).

This is similar to the concept of aesthetics expounded by Kant in his Critique of Aesthetic Judgment when he says that of the three types of “delight,” “the *agreeable* is what GRATIFIES a man; the *beautiful* what simply PLEASES him; the *good* what is ESTEEMED (approved), i.e., that on which he sets an objective worth,” of these, the “beautiful” is the only one that is “disinterested and *free* delight;” because in it, there is “no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval” (Kant 49), “disinterested and free” in the sense of not in anyway being an object of personal gratification or desire (Meredith 49).

According to the *Natyashastra*, there are eight *rasas*, the ninth *rasa* was probably added to the treatise at a later date, but love (*shringara*) is the most significant (Coomaraswamy 48). The original eight *rasas* and their corresponding *sthayi bhavas* (durable emotional state) as well as the ninth *bhava*, Tranquility (*shanta*) (Fig.11.), are listed below. Apart from these nine *sthayi bhavas* (durable emotional state) that are listed below, there are thirty-three associated complementary emotional states (*vyabhichari bhavas*). In all, there are a total of fifty *bhavas*—nine *sthayi bhavas*, (durable emotional state), thirty-three *vyabhichari bhava* (complementary emotional states) and eight *sattvika bhavas* (either involuntary bodily responses in states of emotions, or emotional

content produced by the skill of the actor during performance) (Appendix B), listed in the *Natyashastra*. These feelings and sentiments often overlap one and other during the creative process, as do the colors in a spectrum, but their roots are that of the original eight *rasas* (Barlingay 34-37; Rangacharya 53-77; Goswamy 271; Schechner 32).

<i>Rasa</i>		<i>Sthayi Bhava</i>
1. Love/Erotic (<i>Shringara</i>) = (fulfilled and unfulfilled)		Pleasure (<i>Rati</i>) (Fig. 3.)
2. Humor (<i>Hasya</i>)	=	Laughter (<i>Hasa</i>) (Fig. 4.)
3. Compassion (<i>Karuna</i>)	=	Sorrow (<i>Shoka</i>) (Fig. 5.)
4. Fury (<i>Raudra</i>)	=	Anger (<i>Krodha</i>) (Fig. 6.)
5. Heroic (<i>Vira</i>)	=	Enthusiasm (<i>Utsaha</i>) (Fig. 7.)
6. Terrible (<i>Bhayanak</i>)	=	Fear (<i>Bhaya</i>) (Fig. 8.)
7. Odious (<i>Bibhatsa</i>)	=	Disgust (<i>Jugupsa</i>) (Fig. 9.)
8. Marvelous (<i>Adbhuta</i>)	=	Wonder (<i>Vismaya</i>) (Fig. 10.)
9. Bliss (<i>Shanta</i>)	=	Tranquility (<i>Shama</i>) (Fig. 11.)

(Barlingay 34-37; Rangacharya 53-77; Goswamy 271)

Fig. 3. Pleasure

Fig. 4. Laughter

Fig. 5. Sorrow

Fig. 6. Anger

Fig. 7. Enthusiasm

Fig. 8. Fear

Fig. 9. Disgust

Fig. 10. Wonder

Fig. 11. Tranquility

(© Vikash Khurana, Theatre Director/Actor, Personal Collection, via email to author).

Similarly, in the research on “recognition of emotion through facial expression,” Elly A. Konijn, a former actor in training, and a research psychologist, amongst others,¹⁵ too, found evidence that “facial expression often yields sufficient information for recognition of the intended emotion” (Konijn 96), thereby enabling the people to recognize “the intended emotion,” which she says are similar “for a number of basic emotions like anger, sorrow, joy, fear, surprise, and disgust” (96). This “recognition,” when seen in the context of the “knowledge of the situation and the relevant components in the situation [...] an *interpretation* follow[s]” (97) in the mind of the spectator, something which is not possible when viewing a photograph. Thus, facial expressions

¹⁵ For more details on different aspects of the issue, see Konijn, Elly A. Acting Emotions.

along with voice features are often needed to determine the “authenticity of the emotion” (Konijn 96-97).

Comparative Study of Primary Emotions in Eastern and Western Philosophy

Psychologist Robert Plutchik cites many examples of the idea of primary and secondary emotions in both Eastern and Western Philosophy and Literature. According to Plutchik, Descartes identified six primary emotions—love, hatred, desire, joy, sadness, and admiration, that he called passions, Spinoza thought there were “only three primary affects, ‘joy, sorrow and desire’” (Plutchik 42). Spinoza did, however, attempt an analysis of some of the “common emotions,” but he, too, like Descartes, failed to justify them. Hobbs, and other nineteenth century philosophers, too, identified “seven simple passions” (Plutchik 43), while Sylvan Tomkins “refers to nine primary emotions, each related innately to endowed patterns of neural firings” (Harre 3), but it was only in the early twentieth century that McDougall explicated these primary emotional states and divided them as:

Instincts	Emotions
Flight	Fear
Repulsion	Disgust
Curiosity	Wonder
Pugnacity	Anger
Self-abasement	Subjection
Self-assertion	Elation
Parental	“Tender”

(Plutchik 43).

Colors and Emotions

Robert Plutchik in The Emotions: Facts, Theories and a New Model, however, identifies eight primary emotions and offers a “new” structural model equating emotions and colors based on the theory suggested by William McDougall in his 1921 study, An Introduction to Social Psychology. Plutchik suggests the concept of “primary emotions as hues which may vary in degree of intermixture (saturation) as well as intensity” (109), and arranged around an “emotion-circle similar to a color wheel” (Fig.12.). Plutchik suggests that for such an analogy to be developed, opposing primary emotions “should be thought of as complementary in the sense that their mixture produces the psychic or biological equivalent of gray (which is obtainable by mixing primary colors)” (110).

Fig.12. A Cross-Section of the Emotion-Solid (Plutchik 113).

Plutchik recommends a “kind of gradation of emotions around the circle, so that adjacent emotions are more similar than emotions which are removed, just as adjacent colors are more similar than opposite ones” (110). Plutchik adds that this analogy would

also imply the “mixtures and combinations of these primary emotions which are known and described in life” (110). Based on this analogy, Plutchik also provides an “approximation to a structural model” (Fig. 13.) showing the eight “prototypic dimensions” assembled to represent a cross section of “half an orange,” the shape implying that the emotions “become less distinguishable at lower intensities” (110).

Fig. 13. A Multi-Dimensional Model of the Emotions (Plutchik 111).

Plutchik, however, says that “the emotion-circle is still tentative,” and recommends that further studies could be carried out “from the point of view of facial expressions in emotion, linguistic similarity of connotations of emotion words, and physiological patterns of expression” (Plutchik 111).

While in the “exploded mode” (Fig. 14.), the emotions in the blank spaces are the primary dyads—emotions that are mixtures of two of the primary emotions” (Plutchik, Nature of Emotions).

Fig.14. Plutchik’s Nature of Emotions (Plutchik, Nature of Emotions)

What is suggested here by Plutchik and McDougall is similar to the representation of the emotions and their identifying colors that Bharata had expounded in the *Natyashastra* (Appendix A) wherein the nine sentiments (*rasas*) and their equivalent nine moods (*bhavas*) in performance (*abhinaya*) are distinguished.

As mentioned earlier, there are a total of fifty *bhavas*—nine *sthayi bhavas* (durable emotional state), thirty-three *vyabhichari bhava* (complementary emotional states), and eight *sattvika bhavas* (either involuntary bodily responses in states of emotions or emotional content produced by the skill of the actor during performance), listed in the *Natyashastra* (Appendix B)—feelings and sentiments that often overlap one and other during the creative process, as do colors in a spectrum, but their roots are that of the original nine *rasas* (Barlingay 34-37; Rangachary 53-77; Goswamy 271; Schechner 32). Thus, the suggestions made by Plutchik and McDougall are almost at par with what Bharata expounded the *Natyashastra*.

The *Natyashastra* not only identifies five dominant or primary colors—Black, White, Yellow, Red and Blue (Fig. 15.), with the secondary and tertiary colors being derivations of these five (Fig.16. and 17.), but it also attributes *rasas* (feelings and sentiments) to these colors (Fig. 18.) (Goswamy 272-273; Rangacharya 56; Jhaji 53).

Fig.15. Primary Colors.

Fig.16. Secondary Colors.

Fig.17. Tertiary Colors.

(Fig. 15 and 16, adapted from Goswamy; Fig. 17. Colors).

The eight *rasa* colors are Blue-black (Erotic/*shringara*), Golden (Marvelous/*adbhuta*), White (Mirth/*hasya*), Yellow (Heroic/*vira*), Red (Furious/*krodha*), Blue (Odious/*bibhasta*), Black (Fear/*bhayanaka*), Dove colored (Pathetic/*karuna*). The ninth *rasa* color (probably introduced later), is the Color of Jasmine and the Moon (*shanta*) (Appendix A).

Fig. 18. Nine *Rasas*, their corresponding *Bhavas*, and an approximate rendering of the *Rasa* Colors (Adapted from Goswamy).

The *Natyashastra* not only attributes colors to the different *rasas*, but also identifies representative deities and determinants (*vaibhavas*) for each of the nine *rasas*. Thus, the *rasa* in a work of art, here the selected film, is determined by a dominant *rasa* color. This, however, does not mean a recurrence of a single color in a pictorial work with monotonous effect. The other colors are ancillary to this dominant color in order to provide contrasting hues, for emotions, like colors in a spectrum, show a “kind of gradation of emotions around the circle” (Plutchik 110) in varying degrees. Since no *rasa* can be depicted without developing contrasting emotions, the depiction of *rasas* in colors, too, require contrasting hues for dramatic effect (Jhanji 54).

Importance of the Spectator in the Natyashastra

The *Natyashastra* stresses the importance of the spectator. It specifies the characteristics of a spectator, for not every one can experience *rasa*. Bharata stresses that it is only a *rasika* (connoisseur) who knows what *rasa* is, and whose mind is receptive that can have this aesthetic experience. Therefore, this “tasting” is evoked due to the personal spiritual energy (*utsaha*) of the spectator (Coomaraswamy 50; Goswamy 24). “Just as intuition first arises from the self-identification of the artist with the appointed theme” (Coomaraswamy 51), similarly, the aesthetic experience in the mind of the spectator is evoked due to “self-identification” and reproduction of the “presented matter; the criticism repeats the process of creation” (Coomaraswamy 51). The *Natyashastra*, however, asserts, that the actor “must not be naturally moved by the passions he depicts, though he may attain aesthetic experience from the spectacle of his own performance” (Coomaraswamy 51).

Impact of Movies on the Spectator

Anne Hollander in Moving Pictures says that every film is a print, not a performance [...] Movies speak, not to an audience, but to each single person who sees them go through their immutable sequences [...] Like all reproductions, they invite private fantasy, private memory and association, not public excitement. The demand of the picture is personal and unmediated; the artist, the performer with all his demands is absent (Hollander 5).

Here Hollander is echoing what Bharata says about performance and spectator appreciation, and his concept of the *rasas* in the *Natyashastra*, wherein the imaginative prowess of the spectator is hugely emphasized, for the *rasa* experience or aesthetic pleasure belongs not to the performer or the writer, but “exclusively to the viewer” (Goswamy 24). The actor is likened to a “vessel” who is necessary only as a means of the “tasting” of the emotions, an initiator of the process, but the actual “tasting” belongs to the spectator who experiences the “delight” that the performance yields; an aesthetic experience which is based on individual identification with what is presented to that which preexists in every individual memory, and is based on personal experience (Goswamy 25; Rangacharya 358-359; Barlingay 39-40).

Similar ideas were voiced by Eisenstein who averred that the spectator was drawn into a creative act in which his individuality is not subordinated to the author’s individuality, but is opened up throughout the process of fusion with the author’s intention [...] every spectator [...] creates an

image in accordance with the representational guidance suggested by the author [...], but this image is at the same time created also by the spectator himself (Eisenstein 33).

Therefore, in the view that cinema first “engages our anxiety and empathy” before aesthetic experiences can arise from “the very quality of contingency that informs the images” (Hollander 7), the *Rasa Theory*, then, can well be looked upon as a feasible way of evaluating Hindi cinema, here Bhansali’s *Saawariya*, especially in the light that Hindi cinema has its roots in the ancient dramaturgy expounded in the *Natyashastra*.

The following chapter will attempt at presenting a methodology based on a fraction of the Characteristics of Performance (Appendix A)—Set designs, costumes and Accessories (props) (*aharya*), taken collectively to study the selected film, *Saawariya*. This will be an aesthetic deconstruction of the film using the symbolic meaning of the *rasa* colors to find out to what extent, if at all, the use of set design, costumes including accessories (props) taken collectively adhere to the ancient Indian aesthetic theory expounded by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*.

Chapter IV

Application of the Rasa Theory to the Film (Saawariya)

The previous chapters were an attempt at elucidating not just what Hindi cinema is, but also to explicate the ancient Indian theory on dramaturgy as expounded by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*, correlating it with existing Western parameters of evaluating emotions and performances, before attempting an analysis of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's film *Saawariya*.

This chapter presents an analytical model by which the selected film will be analyzed using a mere fraction of the *Rasa Theory*—the symbolic meaning of colors, and the characteristics of performance (Appendix A), focusing only on the set designs, costumes and accessories including props (*aharya*) elucidated in the *Natyashastra*. This chapter will also include the necessary data about the director Sanjay Leela Bhansali, the selected film—*Saawariya*, and the parameter by which the scenes will be selected for analysis. Apart from this, an attempt will also be made to address the problem of visual analysis of a film as a painting on canvas, considering that this will be an aesthetic deconstruction of the film based on the color symbolism of the sets, costumes and accessories including props taken collectively for analysis, and which is based on the characteristics of performance (Appendix A) expounded in the *Natyashastra*.

Biographical Background of the Director

Sanjay Leela Bhansali is an internationally acclaimed National Award winning Indian film director, who, with each of his films has received much accolade in a career span of ten years. He is a director who has tackled diverse subjects and relationships in

all his films, and is not afraid to experiment. His debut film *Khamoshi/ Silence: The Musical* (1996) is a touching narrative of a daughter's struggle to communicate with her deaf/ mute parents. This was followed by *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam/I Have Given You My Heart* (1999), a simple story about love and relationships, but told with "visual splendor and an aura of celebration" (Bhansali). His next film *Devdas* [name of the protagonist] (2002), another visual extravaganza, was a remake of one of India's better known literary love story about unrequited love, while *Black* (2005), marked a shift away from his musical extravaganzas. It is a bleak, heartrending film without songs, in which he explores the relationship between a Professor and his deaf/blind/mute student. His latest offering *Saawariya/ Beloved* (2007), another visual spectacular, is "an exotic love story about yearning, disappointment and agony" (Bhansali).

In his November 2007 LA Weekly review on *Saawariya*, Film critic David Chute said that

Indian cinema's past meets its present in the lavish *Saawariya*. In a period when hip younger filmmakers are scrambling for American-style cool, discarding the songs and replacing sentiment with cynicism, directors like Bhansali remain determined to move popular Indian Cinema forward while preserving the unique conventions of the "Film Industry that is also a Genre" (Chute).

And apparently, it was this very quality of Sanjay Leela Bhansali that seems to have tilted the scales in his favor when Sony Pictures was scouting the Indian film market for filmmakers with whom they would launch their first Indian production. Explaining in

an interview, Bhansali compared Indian, Japanese, and Italian cinemas, saying that these [Japanese, Italian and India] filmmakers “are far more passionately emotional” because they operate from the heart. I think these are the qualities that Sony saw in my films. The song and dance legacy is what they see as Indian cinema [...] Perhaps they related to my cinema in some instinctive way. [Therefore], “*Saawariya*” was destined to be the first Indian film made in collaboration with Sony” (India-Forums).

Bhansali, it seems, has always been fascinated with unrequited love as a subject for his films, because, as he says, “The best part of love is about being tested. If you get the person you love, it’s all over” (Naachgaana). Like his protagonist in *Saawariya*, Bhansali, too, wishes to be in “a constant state of love, of wanting. You should never fall out of love. It’s the madness of love that fascinates me” (Naachgaana), because Bhansali thinks “happy love cannot make stories” (Naachgaana).

When questioned about the predominance of the color blue in his film *Saawariya*, Bhansali explained, “It’s blue-green, the color of Krishna’s peacock feathers. Blue-green has always symbolized love for me. It’s a cooling, calming color. The whole film is a study in the various shades of blue.” In the same interview Bhansali talks about the nine *rasas*, saying that he has always been fascinated by the *Shringara rasa* [erotic], for along with it “there’s *viraha*, the pain of separation [the other aspect of the *shringara rasa*]. All my films are made of these two elements. That’s why many of my films are ornate. *Shringara* and *viraha* lead to ornateness” (Naachgaana).

Bhansali's *Saawariya*

Any one of Bhansali's films would have been suitable for the purpose of this research as Bhansali's prime focus has always been on emotions and lavish sets, but *Saawariya* was the obvious choice for more reasons than one. *Saawariya* is not only Bhansali's latest offering, but is a film that adheres closely to the ancient Indian "conventions" in its presentation with modern technical skills to further enhance the cinematic experience. Also, as it is shot exclusively on eight extremely opulent indoor sets, it would be easy to deconstruct via color analysis. Furthermore, *Saawariya* is a path breaking Hindi film in many respects. The film breaks all standard norms by shooting the film in almost mono-color to enhance the mood of the film. Bhansali had wanted the images to look more like paintings than mere photographic images, a feat that award-winning cinematographer Ravi K. Chandran successfully managed to achieve by using space lights and CT Blue, and filmed through an almost static camera for the desired effect, hence making it easy to deconstruct, as each set of the film will be analyzed as a painting on canvas. *Saawariya* is also the first Indian film in which Space Lights were used. As for the eight sets, Omung Kumar, Art Director for *Saawariya*, says, "each frame was created to have a feel, style and soul of surrealism" (Saawariyafilm).

Saawariya is a love saga told in flashback by the town's prostitute Gulab [Rose]. It is about the "yearnings, disappointments and agony" (Saawariyafilm) of star-crossed lovers, "an exotic love story" (Saawariyafilm) simply told. But *Saawariya* is more than just an ordinary love story, for according to director Bhansali, "true love is divine" (Saawariyafilm), therefore, *Saawariya* means "beloved" (Saawariyafilm),

but he's not just any beloved. He's the dusky, blue tinged (*savla*) God Krishna who is adored as *Saawariya*. On a more sublime note, *Saawariya* is the beloved who is always in love. But not every lover can qualify as *Saawariya*. Only the lover who stands the test of time...who overcomes all obstacles...who doesn't care whether he gets the girl or not...as long as he's consumed by love...as long as he remains in a perpetual state of 'being in love ...'

That man, that rare lover, is *Saawariya* (Saawariyafilm).

Story of Saawariya

Loosely based on the Russian short story "White Nights" by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Saawariya* is set in an exotic microcosmic world, a fantasy town in a valley surrounded by misty mountains, a world "anybody would love to live in" (Saawariyafilm). Into this dreamy town comes a musician, Ranbir Raj, an endearing Hindu boy who is an idealist and a dreamer. Raj gets a job as a singer at the local bar where he encounters Gulab, a prostitute, a cynical live wire with the proverbial heart of gold. She befriends Raj and helps him find accommodation at the house of the local matriarch, a Christian lady, Lillian, who soon begins to look upon Raj as the son she had lost.

In these mythical surroundings, Raj meets Sakina, a mysterious Muslim girl standing alone on a bridge in the stillness of the night. This chance encounter develops into friendship, but Raj continues to be intrigued by her, for she is rather despondent and shy, though not timid, for she roams the streets alone at night, evading the clutches of

drunken men, as she awaits the return of her secret lover. These two simple, childlike souls, Raj and Sakina, are consumed by their respective passions—Raj for Sakina, and Sakina for her mystery lover, Imaan, whose return she awaits night after night at the bridge over the lake in the town square, their innocence and candor obscuring their inner turmoil, anxiety and a desperate wait for love.

The film begins with a digitally rendered view [not the actual set] of this fantasy town (Fig. 19.) with cupolas and minarets reminiscent of the fairy tale land of the Arabian Nights, but the town, apart from its façade, is far from being the fairytale world it appears to be.

Fig. 19. Establishing shot (digital rendering)—*Saawariya* (India-Forums “Prime Focus”).

It is a place where time seems to have stopped midstream, especially for the women, who are apparently doomed to spend their lives yearning for their loved ones who never return. It is a land of misfits—prostitutes, drunks, old women, and a lovely, lonely young girl pining away for her secret lover, all caught in the web of circumstances from which there is apparently no escape for the denizens. Into this fairytale setting comes Ranbir Raj, the *Saawariya*, like a breath of fresh air and a *joie de vivre*, bringing hope to all, but himself falling prey to the disenchantment that pervades the very town.

Fortunately, however, for the female protagonist, the film ends on a positive note with the return of her secret lover, and their eventual departure from this enchanted world of endless yearnings. The desolate Raj walks off into the night never to return, leaving behind two lonely women, Gulab and Lillian, who can only hope and await the return of their *Saawariya*.

Sets of Saawariya

According to Art Director Omung Kumar, “designing sets for *Saawariya* was like creating visual poetry on film,” carried out in accordance to director Bhansali’s “vision” (Saawariyafilm).

Every frame had [...] a soul, a style and feel of surrealism [...] A certain timeless quality permeates every frame of each set [...] that’s why [...]the] sets [were designed] in the palette of blues and greens. It added a certain style, look and feel of being transported to a world that anybody would love to live in [...] From creating a larger than life Buddha to constructing lakes and specially designed boats to setting up [...] buzzing streets with shops, lights and neon signs [...] We painted the walls and floors with peacock and lotuses transporting us into a world which is essentially very Indian yet not like anyone has ever seen before (Saawariyafilm).

Saawariya then, is a film that is a balladic painting in motion, each set built to enhance the director’s vision of a land that is pure fantasy. As “the script for *Saawariya* demanded a small town with a river running through, with bridges and small dark lanes” (Saawariyafilm), the search took the creative team of *Saawariya* to look “at the paintings

of artists like Frederick Arthur Bridgman, Fred R. Wagner and William Louis Sonntag as references” (Saawariyafilm) in order to bring to life Bhansali’s vision of *Saawariya*. To get the desired effect, “smoke was important to give the misty painterly quality and this could not have been achieved outdoors,” but “the smoke does not appear onscreen because of the use of Space Lights” (Saawariyafilm).

Hence, the decision was taken to shoot the entire film on indoor sets which gave the creative team “complete freedom to create the ambience and mood of the film from scratch” (Saawariyafilm). Even though the narrative unfolds over four nights, the need was for “the different times of the night to look unique and distinct,” which Ravi K. Chandran, Cinematographer, managed to achieve (Saawariyafilm). Thus, the opening shot of the film [a digital rendering and not the actual set] (Fig. 19.), was important in “establishing the fact that this city, in which the entire film is set, is not a real city. The city had to appear surreal almost like in a story book” (India-Forum). The camera then zooms into a close-up shot of the prostitute Gulab as narrator, and the interior of the RK Bar (Fig. 20.) where the protagonist gets a job of lead singer.

Fig. 20. Rani Mukerjee as Gulab the narrator, sitting in the RK Bar (Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Problems of Visual Analysis

According to Raymond Durgant in Films and Feelings, visual analysis offers some problems because one cannot “settle for primitive rules of thumb like ‘diagonals for urgency, visuals for repose, low-key shadows for drama, high-key shine for comedy’” (49), and suggests some “ad hoc points” to serve as examples “to illustrate the wealth and subtlety possible when directors instead of merely ‘illustrating’ a script, *think* in graphic terms” (49-50). Durgant suggests that film critics need to use a visual art vocabulary rather than that of literary criticism in order to analyze films (20), adding that film critics generally focus more on the “tertiary and secondary elements” (35), and forget that it is the director who does most of his creative work in “his *staging*,” by “setting up what the camera sees,” since “it is a matter of the *pictorial* and the *theatrical* element” of cinema (35).

Using the term *mise-en-scène* to “refer to the creative arrangements of things “*within* the screen,” Durgant emphasizes the “strong, eloquent arrangements within the image (or series of images),” saying that in his concept, the *mise-en-scène* has two often related characteristics—the “‘theatrical’ element,” which is the way in which “dramatic scenes are staged (for cinema), the characters arranged in space, with their exits, entrances, movements, gestures,” etc., including “matters like casting and acting” which Durgant says are “‘theatrical’ without being *mise-en-scène*,” that may be defined as being a part of “‘staging for the camera.’” The second element, according to Durgant, is the “‘pictorial’ element” that includes “pictorial composition, ‘painterly’ qualities,” etc.

(35-36). Durgant adds that “a sensitive response to the *mise-en-scène*” is as important as focusing on the costumes, make-up, gestures, lighting, décor, as well as the other “‘technical,’ ‘stylistic’ details of a film as dialogue and plot,” not merely for “their own sakes but for their emotional meaning, their psychological impact,” as well (36-37). And it is these aspects of the *mise-en-scène* that Durgant suggests, and its emotional content in the set design of Bhansali’s *Saawariya*, which will be studied in accordance to the *rasa* colors (Appendix A) expounded in the *Natyashastra*, since there apparently is a complete layer of symbolic meaning perceptible in the set designs and costumes of the film in question.

Director as “Artist”

This view by Durgant that it is the director, who, with his “staging,” gives the film an individuality and style that the camera captures, is reiterated by Baldo Bandini and Glauco Viazzi when they aver that the correlation of painting to film images, and that of film to stage sets is managed not only by the set designer, but by others who are “responsible for framing, angle, lighting, editing: the director and the cinematographer” (qtd. by Affron 34). Durgant suggests that “there can be no ‘grand style’ without emotional intimacy.” Durgant then cites as example paintings on canvas, and how spectators manage to find “a definite centre of focus” *vis à vis* the “hero’s face, the central event,” and “compositional effect” are perceived from the spectator’s “‘centre of focus’ rather than as a whole” (50-51). Durgant then suggests that “screen visuals” generally are “simpler (for the equivalent to the canvas is the sequence, a series of

‘details’))” for “analyzing and reanalyzing the picture into its various patterns of color, chiaroscuro, perspective, mass, balance, symbolism, etc.” (50).

Durgant also says that some directors like Eisenstein and Dreyer tend to think of each screen “‘picture’ as a little composition of its own [...] The pictures are *joined* by their ‘collision,’ which sets a kind of [...] mood, much as brushstrokes set the mood in painting” (Durgant 48), and this is precisely what Bhansali has managed to achieve in *Saawariya*. Bhansali’s “compositions” draw the spectators’ gaze fluidly over the visuals which attain their beauty from the simplicity of the lines on an almost flat plane in predominantly blue mono-color, with touches of depth and contrasts wrought by the play of light and dark colors that are used to reinforce the mood of the film.

“Set as Artifice”

Charles Affron in Sets in Motion identifies Sets on five levels:

1. Set as Denotation in which the “décor carries a low level of narrative weight” (Affron 37).
2. Set as Punctuation in which the “movie sets achieve a degree of opacity when they become specific and legible through staging and photography” (Affron 38).
3. Set as Embellishment in which instead of “locating the narrative in time and space and mood, décor sometimes goes a step further than it does at the punctuative level in supporting and enhancing the narrative” (Affron 38).
4. Set as Narrative wherein “unusual films in which the field of reading is composed of a single locale [...] décors we come to distinguish [...] as essentially and surprisingly unitary” (Affron 39).

5. Set as Artifice are those sets that “privilege their own artificiality” (Affron 39), and it is this level, “Set as Artifice,” that Bhansali aims at in *Saawariya*, where “the set[s] calls attention to itself as a consistently opaque object in pursuit of the ‘fiction effect’” (Affron 39).

The eight “artificial” sets used in *Saawariya* are “predominantly descriptive, intent on defamiliarization” (Affron 39). These sets used in the film in question “create new realities [...] dream worlds conjured out of fantastic, projective visions” (Affron 39), wherein “the décor as artifice” is the focal point of the narrative, “challenging the force of plot and character,” and the “viewer exits the theatre whistling the sets” (Affron 39).

Methodology

Taking Hindi cinema as a separate genre (as opposed to other Hollywood-based genres) with its roots deeply embedded in ancient India’s dramatic style of presentation, an analytical discourse based on the characteristics of performance as expounded by Bharata in the *Natyashastra* will be attempted. Since only eight sets are used in *Saawariya*, each set will be treated as a pictorial space representing a painting on canvas. For the feasibility of the study, only the most elaborate set sequences, especially in the songs, will be focused on, as just one shot would not give the full feel of the emotions, or a proper idea of the sets used. As this study is based on the set designs and costumes, expressions, dialogues or lyrics will not be considered. It will be an aesthetic deconstruction of the narrative structure of the film, and the focus will be only on the

symbolic meaning of the *rasa* colors of the Set Designs, Costumes and Accessories including Props (*aharya*) taken collectively (Appendix A).

While watching Bhansali's *Saawariya*, I have tried to analyze the film as objectively as I possibly could by using the analytical grid I devised based on the characteristics of performance (Appendix A), and the symbolic meaning of colors as expounded in the *Natyashastra*. Using the parameters laid down in the *Natyashastra*, I have devised a grid, dividing it into three categories—dominant set color, dominant costume/prop color and dominant mood (*bhava*) that the scene evokes. As the analysis of the film is based on the symbolic meaning of colors, I will evaluate each song sequence separately. This will be done by using the content analysis model I have devised in order to locate the dominant color of the sets, costumes and accessories and its corresponding dominant mood (*bhava*) taken collectively, in order to determine which *rasa* (feeling) or emotional meaning the given scene could possibly evoke in the minds of the spectator.¹⁶ As this model utilizes only a fraction of the characteristics of performance (Appendix A) expounded in the *Natyashastra*, using only the color as parameter for analysis, this will be more an artistic perception than a study to gauge the reactions or feelings of the spectators, for it is only when the entire sum of the characteristics of performance (*abhinaya*)—Physical (*angika*), Verbal (*vachika*), Emotional (*sattvika*) (Appendix A), are measured in totality, that the *rasa* experience of the spectator can be gauged, this is due, as Konijn says, to the fact that only when the “knowledge of the situation and the relevant components in the situation” are presented, that an “*interpretation*” follows (97) in the

¹⁶ The *Natyashastra* refers to the viewers of the performance as “spectators,” while the Greeks referred to them as “audience” (Britannica 753).

mind of the spectator, something which is not possible when viewing a photograph (Konijn 96-97).

As already mentioned earlier, there are eight *rasa* colors (Appendix A)—Blue-black (Erotic/*shringara*), White (Mirth/*hasya*), Dove colored (Pathetic/*karuna*), Red (Furious/*krodha*), Yellow (Heroic/*vira*), Black (Fear/*bhayanaka*), Blue (Odious/*bibhasta*), Golden (Marvelous/*adbhuta*), and the ninth *rasa* color (probably introduced later), which is the Color of Jasmine and the Moon (*shanta*). These *rasa* colors, according to the *Natyashastra*, are used in combinations of two or more, along with other ancillary colors, to build up contrasting emotions. Therefore, the investigation in the next chapter will be based on the colors used in the set designs, costumes and accessories and props taken collectively to gauge the *rasa* quotient of the film *Saawariya*.

Chapter V

Results of the Analytical Study of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Saawariya

The previous chapter presented an analytical model based on the parameters explicated in the *Natyashastra*. This model was devised so that the dominant color and the corresponding emotional feeling of each scene could be easily identified.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made at analyzing the selected film using this analytical model which is based on a mere fraction of the *Rasa Theory* elucidated in the *Natyashastra*—the symbolic meaning of colors of the sets, costumes and accessories (props) (*aharya*) taken collectively.

Fig. 21. Set 1. RK Bar, Exterior (Saawariyafilm).

Table 1

Set 1. Dominant Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 1 Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Yellow, Brown, Black, Green	Utsaha (Energy) Bhaya (Fear)

The focal point of Set 1 (Fig. 21.) is the RK Bar on the banks of a lake. Here, the protagonist Ranbir Raj performs as a musician to eke out a living. As is apparent, the predominant colors of the set are variable yellow, brown, and black with a touch of green added for contrast. According to the *Natyashastra*, the yellow signifies energy (*utsaha*), while green and brown are derivatives of the primary colors blue, yellow, black and red. The black evokes fear (*bhaya*) (Appendix A) which could indicate the protagonist's state of mind prior to his maiden performance, but the dominant mood (*bhava*) is energy (*utsaha*), which is carried forward when the protagonist gives his performance at the RK Bar.

Fig. 22. Set 2. RK Bar, Interior.

Fig 23. Set 2, RK Bar, Song Sequence1.

Fig. 24. Set 2. R.K. Bar, Song Sequence 1.

Fig. 25. Set 2. R.K. Bar, Song Sequence 1.

(Fig. 22, 23, 24, 25, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DV)

Table 2

Set 2. Dominant Set Colors, Props Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 2 Colors	Dominant Props Colors	Dominant Costume/ Accessories Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue-Black, Brown, Yellow, Purple	Blue Moon, Blue Stairs, Pink/Purple Lotus Buds; Golden Yellow Nataraja backdrop	Blue-Black, White	Rati (Love)

As is apparent from the above pictures and grid, the dominant color of the set, costumes and props, is blue-black evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*). Hence, the dominant color blue-black and purple, including the determinant—the moon and the lotus buds, not only reinforce the mood of love (determinants/*vaibhavas*, Appendix A), but are also evocative of Lord Krishna, symbolized in the figure of the protagonist as *Saawariya*—as the director said in an interview, “he’s not just any beloved. He’s the dusky, blue tinged (*savla*) God Krishna who is adored as *Saawariya*” (Saawariyafilm). The “presence” of Nataraja on the wall behind the protagonist Raj (Fig. 23.) at the very beginning of the film, and at the protagonist’s debut as singer at the RK Bar, is reminiscent of Shiva as Nataraja, the lord of dance (Fig.26.) (Bhalla 46; Goswamy 215), presiding over the performance.

Fig 26. Nataraja, Lord of Dance (LotusSculpture).

According to the *Natyashastra*, Shiva was the deity before whom the first performance (*natya*) was presented by Bharata. It was also Shiva who taught Bharata the nuances of dance that Bharata incorporated into his treatise (Rangacharya 23; Bhalla 45).

Fig. 27. Set 3, Raj in Lillian's House/Room.

Fig. 28. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig.29. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig.30. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig.31. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig.32. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig. 33. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

Fig. 34. Set 3, Song Sequence 2.

(Fig. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 3

Set 3. Dominant Set Colors, Props Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 3 Colors	Dominant Props Colors	Dominant Costume/ Accessories Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue/ Green, Black, Color of Jasmine and the Moon, Brown	Blue, Pink, Green Curtain, Color of Jasmine and the Moon of the Mona Lisa Curtain, Black Piano	White	Rati (Love) Hasya (Comic) Shanta (Tranquility)

The focal point of Set 3 for the protagonist Raj's room, is "a hand painted Mona Lisa curtain" (Saawariyafilm), and as is apparent from the above grid, the dominant color of the set, costumes and props are variables of Blue/Green, the Color of Jasmine and the Moon, White, and Brown, that evoke the moods of love (*rati*), mirth and playfulness (*hasya*), energy (*utsaha*) and tranquility (*shanta*) (Appendix A), a combination of moods that project the mental state of the protagonist in love, playfully serenading his mysterious lady love symbolized by the Mona Lisa.

Fig. 35. Set 4. (Saawariyafilm).

Fig.36. Set 4.

Fig. 37. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.

Fig. 38. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.

Fig. 39. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.

Fig. 40. Set 4, Song Sequence 3.

(Fig. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 4

Set 4. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors and *Bhava*

Set 4 Dominant Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue/Green, Black, Dove Colored, Yellow, Red	Blue, Green, Black, White Red	Rati (Love)

As is apparent from the above pictures and grid, the dominant color of the set and costumes is variables of blue and green evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*), the dove color evokes sorrow (*shoka*), while energy is apparent in the traces of yellow (*utsaha*) seen. The black and white used in combination evoke fear (*bhaya*), and mirth and playfulness (*hasa*) (Appendix A). The red in the costumes of the male protagonist Raj and the prostitute Gulab (Fig. 36.), although not a part of the scene or song sequence, is included to give an idea of the set design, is confrontational, hence signifying anger (*rudra*) (Appendix A). Although an amalgam of fear, mirth and playfulness, sorrow, energy as well as love (*rati*) is discernible from the variables of blue, black and yellow and their derivatives, projecting the mental state of the prostitutes who live there, the

dominant color is blue and green, thus, the dominant mood evoked is love (*rati*), though not the fulfillment of love, but a yearning of unfulfilled love for each of these women.

Fig. 41. Set 5.

Fig. 42. Set 5 A, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 43. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 44. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 45. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 46. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 47. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 48. Set 5, Song Sequence 4.

(Fig. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 5

Set 5. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors, Props/Accessories Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 5 Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Props/Accessories	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue-Black/Green	Blue-Black, Red	Variable Blue/Green	Rati (Love)

As is apparent from the above pictures and grid, the dominant color of the set and costumes is variables of blue-black and green. As the dominant color is blue-black, the mood evoked is love (*rati*)—Ranbir Raj’s love for Sakina, and Sakina’s love for her mystery lover for whom she waits ceaselessly. The flowers in the boat, and resplendent clothes worn by the female protagonist Sakina, too, enhance the mood of love (determinants/*vaibhavas*, Appendix A). However, along with the blue, there are traces of red and black in Sakina’s costume evoking anger (*rudra*) and fear (*bhaya*)—anger at the

absence of her lover, and fear at being out alone at night and being pursued by a drunk through the dark alleys (Fig. 43.).

Fig. 49. Set 6 A, Lake to Old Town,
Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 50. Set 6 A, Lake to Old Town,
Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 51. Set 6 A, Lakeside, Old Town,
Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 52. Set 6 A, Clock Tower by the Lake,
Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 53. Set 6 A, Clock Tower by the Lake,
Song Sequence 4.

Fig. 54. Set 6 A, Bridge by the Clock
Tower, Song Sequence 4.

(Fig. 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 6

Set 6 A. Dominant Set Colors, Costume Colors, Props/Accessories Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 6 A Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Props/Accessories Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue, Green, Gold	Blue, Black, Red, White	Color of Jasmine and the Moon /Pink Lotus Flowers, Golden Buddha Statue	Rati (Love)

The pictures and the grid (Set 6 A) indicate a predominance of variables of blue-black and green evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*), while the golden variables of the Buddha statue (Fig. 49, 50, 51, 52.), evoke wonder (*vismaya*) (Appendix A). The lotus pond (Fig. 52, 54.), and the monolithic statue of the Buddha enhance the mood of love, peace and harmony, a sanctuary, as it were, for the young lovers, with the benevolent Buddha watching over them. The determinants (*vaibhavas*) that evoke love

are the lotuses and the pond, while those of wonder can be found in the greatness of the Buddha (derminants/*vaibhavs*) (Appendix A). The Buddha is purportedly the ninth incarnation of Vishnu (Bhalla 37), the deity representing love (*rati*) (Appendix A), and just as the lotus is one of the symbols that represent Krishna [the eighth incarnation of Vishnu] (Bhalla 37; LoveKrishna), the lotus is also symbolic of the Buddha (Buddhanet). The presence of black in the costumes worn by the female protagonist Sakina indicates her dread and fear at being out alone at night, fear that her lover may not return, fear that she will be caught sneaking out of her house to keep a lonely vigil at night on the bridge over the lake.

Fig. 55. Set 6 B, Alley leading to Sakina's House.

Fig. 56. Set 6 B, Raj and Sakina meet in the Alley.

(Fig. 55, 56, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 7

Set 6 B. Dominant Set Colors, Costume/Accessories Colors, Props Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 6 B Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Props/Accessories	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue/Green	Blue/Black, Red	White/Blue Lotus Flowers, Dark Blue/Black Umbrella	Rati (Love)

Like Set 6 A, Set 6 B, too, evokes love not only through its colors but in its determinants as well (Appendix A). Yet again, the pictures and the grid indicate a predominance of variables of blue-black and green evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*). The determinants (*vaibhavas*) evoking love are the lotuses, this time not in the pond but on the walls of the alley, with the resplendent clothes that Sakina wears enhancing the mood of love (determinants/*vaibhavas*, Appendix A). But fear (*bhaya*) and anger (*rudra*) are part of the unfulfilled love that Sakina is experiencing, while the traces of white are indicative of mirth and playfulness (*hasa*) that the young pair indulges in occasionally.

Fig. 57. Set 7, Old Town Arch in front of Sakina's house.

Fig. 58. Set 7, Sakina outside her house.

Fig. 59. Set 7, Close up of Sakina's House.

Fig. 60. Set 7, Sakina's house, Exterior.

Fig. 61. Set 7, Central
courtyard stairs leading
up to Sakina's room.

Fig. 62. Set 7, Sakina
descends to greet her
lover.

Fig. 63. Carpets adorn the
walls of Sakina's house.

(Fig. 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 8

Set 7. Dominant Set Colors, Costumes and *Bhava*

Dominant Set7 Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue/Green, White Peacock, Blue/Black, White, Red, Brown, Blue, Green	Blue-Black, Blue, Green Red and Yellow	Rati (Love)

Set 7, too, evokes love not only through its colors but in its determinants (*vaibhavas*) as well (Appendix A). Yet again, the pictures and the grid indicate a predominance of variables of blue-black and green evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*). The determinant (*vaibhavas*) evoking love is the peacock painted on the walls of Sakina's house (Fig. 59.) (determinants/*vaibhavas*; Appendix A), as do the resplendent

clothes worn by the female protagonist, Sakina (Fig. 58, 62, 63.), and the blue-black tones of the ensemble that both, Raj and Sakina wear (Fig.60.) (derminants/*vaibhavas*) (Appendix A). The variable shades of blue, green, yellow and red of Sakina's ensemble (Fig. 62.), project Sakina's mixed emotions—love (*rati*) symbolized in the shades of green and blue, yellow (*utsaha*) indicating her energy and enthusiasm as she rushes down the stairs to open the door for her lover, the red indicating anger (*rudra*) at his prolonged absence and silence since his departure a year ago, while Fig. 63. shows shades of yellow, brown and white indicating not only Sakina's enthusiasm and energy (*utsaha*), but also the mirth and playfulness (*hasa*), as she goes about her chores of cleaning the carpets that adorn the walls of her house. The blue-black tones of the carpets, yet again, repeat the mood of love (*rati*) (Appendix A).

Fig. 64. Set 8, Song Sequence 5,
Eid [a Muslim festival] celebrations.

Fig. 65. Set 8, Song Sequence 5,
Sakina looks out for the moon.

Fig. 66. Set 8, Song Sequence 5,
Sakina, continued vigil.

Fig. 67. Set 8, Song Sequence 5, Raj
points out at the rising moon to Sakina.

Fig. 68. A jubilant Sakina.

Fig. 69. Celebrations.

(Fig. 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, Columbia Pictures, SBL Films, Sony Pictures BMG DVD).

Table 9

Set 8. Dominant Set and Costume Colors and *Bhava*

Dominant Set 8 Colors	Dominant Costume Colors	Dominant Bhava (Mood)
Variable Blue, Green, Purple, White	Variable Blue-Black, Brown, Yellow and Maroon	Rati (Love)

As is apparent from the pictures and grid, Set 8, too, evokes love, not only through its colors but in its determinants (*vaibhavas*) as well (Appendix A). Yet again, the pictures and the grid indicate a predominance of variables of blue-black, green, and purple. All these colors represent Krishna (LoveKrishna), the incarnation of Vishnu, the deity evoking the mood (*bhava*) of love (*rati*). The variable brown and yellow of Sakina's ensemble indicate energy, excitement and enthusiasm (*utsaha*)— it is a day of celebrations, not just because of the Eid [a Muslim festival] festival, but it also marks the end of a year long wait for her lover Imaan, who had promised to return to celebrate Eid with her. While the maroon jacket that Raj wears, is a mixture of red and purple indicating his love for Sakina and his anger (*rudra*) at his destiny, for the girl he loves— Sakina, is in love with another.

As has been observed from the pictures and the analytical model presented, the sets of *Saawariya* evoke one dominant mood—love. These “sets as artifice” intercede in the “narrative relationships between the material and the emotional” (Affron 115), they embody the bond between the interior and the exterior, and the link between “the physical and the psychological universe” (Affron 115). The sets of *Saawariya* are evocative of “the characters’ states of mind, feelings and fantasy” (Affron 115), that is all encompassing in “their narrative activity” (Affron 115).

The sets of *Saawariya* bespeak of a microcosmic world, a part of the macrocosm of the reality that we are all a part of. It has identifiable elements that have been brought together to present an idealized world, a world where all religions come together in harmony, a world with a beautiful lake reminiscent of Lake Windermere in England—

a neon sign saying “Windermere” (Fig. 38.) is boldly posted on one of the buildings on the banks of the lake, and a clock tower reminiscent of the Big Ben (Fig. 53.), gondolas (Fig. 46, 47, 48.) and probably the Bridge of Sighs where Sakina keeps a lonely vigil night after night (Fig. 42.), apparently evocative of Venice, while the minarets (Fig. 19, 57, 64, 66, 67.), a fresco of a Mughal princess (Fig. 44.), and Persian carpets that adorn Sakina’s house (Fig. 63.), add a Middle Eastern touch. A windmill apparently suggestive of Holland (Fig. 36.), a larger than life Mona Lisa on a curtain (Fig. 30, 31, 32, 33, 34.), and the Arc de Triumph evoking Paris (Fig. 39.), with the Leaning Tower of Pisa (Fig. 39.), too, finding a place in this mythic land, and of course, the monolithic Buddha’s head dominating the landscape (Fig. 99, 50, 51, 52.), with the mandatory lotuses and peacocks signifying India. Not only this, but the colors and the sets are evocative of the Hindu God of Love and Peace—not only in the presence of the monolithic head of the Buddha, but also Krishna who is symbolized, not just by the color blue-black (Appendix A) which dominates the sets, but also the lotuses, the peacocks and the male protagonist Raj as *Saawariya*.

As was observed, the *rasa* colors of the “pictorial space” or sets used by Bhansali are indicative of one dominant *rasa* and its corresponding *bhava*—shades of blues and greens with contrasting shades of red, white, yellow and black, all primary colors [according to the *Natyashastra*], and their variable hues. These colors, according to the *Natyashastra* (Appendix A) evoke the Erotic (*Shringara rasa*), both fulfillment and separation which is related to “dark colors—blue, green or the bluish gray of clouds (*shayma*)” (Jhanji 53). These colors, as well as the other elements of the set design,

costumes and accessories (*aharaya*)—the lotuses, peacocks, the moon, lakes, fountains, resplendent clothes and fashion accessories (determinants/*vaibhavas*, Appendix A), are evocative of romance and love (*rati bhava*), and are a symbolic representations of the *Shringara rasa* and the corresponding deity, Krishna, for Krishna is purportedly the eighth incarnation of the reigning deity of the *Shringara rasa*, Vishnu (Bhalla 107).

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi (1917-1984), once said that in order to know India,

you must empty your mind of all preconceived notions of what you have heard or read ... You will not find any of your formula labels useful.

India is many and it is one. It has incredible diversity yet it is bound in a unity that stretches way back to unwritten history (qtd. by Rand Castile in Goswamy 9).

This homily can well be applied to Indian cinema as well, for India's cinema is a symbol of Indian life. It expresses the emotions of the Indian community at large and gives an objective interpretation of the socio-cultural values and ideologies of the Indian people.

The Hindi film industry is not just an Indian film industry, but it is Indian culture at its best, and worst, the very life blood of the nation, for Indians live and breathe Hindi movies. From this perspective, it is not difficult to understand the mass appeal of Hindi films for Indians worldwide. Therefore, in order to understand the cinema of any given country, in this case Hindi cinema, one needs primarily to understand the psyche of the people in general, and to do this, one needs to "read" pre-existing social, cultural, or psychoanalytical symbols of India.

Hindi cinema has been dismissed as "flawed" and has been hugely criticized by film scholars, as it goes against the existing Western conventions of global film theory.

Although Indian popular cinema can be, and is, analyzed according to the existing Hollywood genre conventions, these do not give a clear indication of what Hindi cinema truly is, for unlike Hollywood genres, Hindi cinema is a *mélange* of genres and, thus, not easily categorized. It could well be said that Hindi cinema not only “defends itself and Indian values against the West,” but also projects “Western values” on Indian audiences. The cinematic style of Hindi cinema balances the “cinematic traditions of Classical Hollywood,” but the contents are based on the “ideological heritage of colonization” (Tyrrell in Lechner 313). Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend why Hindi films are structured the way they are and the reason behind their mass appeal for Indians worldwide.

Therefore, in order to understand what Hindi cinema truly is, would it not be more relevant to study Hindi cinema from an Indian viewpoint? Considering that most analytical film studies are conducted from a Western perspective, “the much debated distinctions made in the Western academic literature regarding high and low-brow cinema are not applicable to popular Indian cinema” (Pendakur 102), and because India’s movie making traditions are deeply embedded in the ancient aesthetic traditions of India, it is only feasible to use Indian parameters of analysis to study Hindi cinema.

I have attempted to trace the origins of Hindi cinema to Bharata’s *Natyashastra*, which dates back to the second century A D, correlating his theory of the *rasas* to the “formula” found in most Hindi films. Because Hindi cinema apparently has its roots in the ancient treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyashastra*, as was shown in the literature

review of various Indian and Western film scholars, my attempt has been to propose a new line of enquiry into Hindi cinema.

This research attempts to move away from the existing methods of viewing Hindi cinema by proposing an analytical model based on a fraction of the *Rasa Theory* expounded in the *Natyashastra*. Using this model, I investigated the *Rasa* quotient in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2007 release *Saavariya*. This investigation was conducted in order to find out to what extent, if at all, the use of set designs, colors and costumes including props, prove true to the Indian aesthetic theory of the *rasas* expounded by ancient Indian philosopher Bharata, in the *Natyashastra*.

Bhansali's *Saawariya* was the obvious choice because it offers a potentially rich canvas for the analysis. This is due primarily to Bhansali's vision and his adherence to the Indian traditions in his filmmaking, which greatly aided the aesthetic deconstruction of the film according to the *Rasa Theory*. As was apparent from the results of the analysis presented in the previous chapter, Bhansali's film does seem to adhere to the *Rasa Theory* expounded in the *Natyashastra*, not just in the colors that were used to enhance the mood of the film, but also in the resplendent costumes and accessories (props) used. Thus, when taken collectively, the colors, the resplendent costumes and accessories used in the film, do represent one predominant *rasa*—*shringara* (Erotic) in both its aspects—love fulfilled and unfulfilled, *viraha*, the pain of separation.

This thesis attempts to make Hindi cinema studies more culture specific in order to arrive at a better understanding of India's cinema and its people, but this is by no means a comprehensive study or investigation, as the limitations of this thesis restricted a

more comprehensive and thorough investigation. This investigation used only a fraction of the aesthetic theory expounded in the *Natyashastra*—analyzing the selected film by using only the colors as a parameter to measure the *rasa* quotient in the film. Because the *Rasa Theory* is about emotions, all the characteristics of performance (*abhinaya*)—Physical (*Angika*), Verbal (*Vachika*) and Emotional (*Sattvika*), collectively or individually, could open newer avenues for in depth analysis and study.

This theory could well be applied to any cinema, not just Indian cinema, as these characteristics of performance proffer a commonality to world cinema. Future investigations, however, could focus on an in depth quantitative line of investigation, as this was a purely qualitative analysis. It did, however, help in laying the groundwork for a more detailed and in depth analysis of not just Hindi or Indian cinema, but other cinemas, including Hollywood, as well, since the *Natyashastra* is a veritable treasure trove offering diverse dimensions and scope for future, and more intensive analytical study of cinema, and not just for dance-drama, for which it was initially intended. As a starting point, *Moulin Rouge* (2001), or *Titanic* (1997), the all time worldwide blockbuster, would be worthy of study, primarily because both films have all the *masala*, ingredients of a “typical Hindi film,” albeit with tragic ends, a closure forbidden in the *Natyashastra*.

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Appendix A: Characteristics of Performance

Characteristics of Performance (*Abhinaya*)

Physical (*Angika*) Verbal (*Vachika*) Emotional (*Sattvika*)

Set Designs, Costumes and Accessories (*Aharya*)

Sentiments (<i>Rasas</i>)	Colors	Moods (<i>Bhavas</i>)	Determinants (<i>Vaibhavas</i>)	Deities
1. Erotic (<i>Shringara</i>)	Blue-Black*	Love (<i>Rati</i>)	Seasonal flowers, The moon, Spring [season], Secluded grove/garden/ house, etc. Resplendent clothes, Perfume, Ornaments, Garlands of flowers, Fountains/lakes/river/ ponds, Humming of bees, birds, etc.	Vishnu
2. Comic (<i>Hasya</i>)	White	Mirth/ Playfulness (<i>Hasa</i>)	Ill assorted clothes/ costumes and accessories	Shiva
3. Pathetic (<i>Karuna</i>)	Dove-colored	Sorrow (<i>Shoka</i>)	Hair/clothes/ornaments in disarray.	Yama
4. Furious (<i>Krodha</i>)	Red	Anger (<i>Rudra</i>)	Behavior enhanced by violent actions, rudeness, fights, confusion.	Rudra
5. Heroic (<i>Vira</i>)	Yellow**	Energy (<i>Utsaha</i>)	Enhanced by behavior of the persons conquered; recipients of liberality.	Indra
6. Terrible (<i>Bhayanaka</i>)	Black	Fear (<i>Bhaya</i>)	Fierce gestures.	Kala
7. Odious (<i>Bibhatsa</i>)	Blue	Disgust (<i>Jugupsa</i>)	Stinking flesh/fiber/fat, Decaying bodies, Presence of worms.	Mahakala
8. Marvelous (<i>Adbhuta</i>)	Golden***	Wonder (<i>Vismaya</i>)	Greatness of the qualities of that Supernatural thing or occurrence.	Gandharva
9. Quiescent (<i>Shanta</i>)	Color of Jasmine and the Moon.	Tranquility/ equanimity (<i>Shama</i>)	Sacred places, holy hermitages, places of pilgrimage; the moon, pleasant groves, etc.	Narayana

* identified as **green** in Schwartz. ** identified as **wheat brown** in Schwartz. ***identified as **yellow** in Schwartz (Modified from Rangacharya 56; Goswamy 272- 273; Schwartz 15).

Appendix B: The Bhavas

1. *Sthayi Bhavas* (Durable emotional states)

1. <i>Rati</i> /Love
2. <i>Hasa</i> /Laughter
3. <i>Soka</i> /Grief
4. <i>Rudra</i> /Anger
5. <i>Utsaha</i> /Energy/Vigor
6. <i>Bhaya</i> /Fear
7. <i>Jagupsa</i> /Disgust
8. <i>Vismaya</i> /Wonder
9. <i>Shanta</i> /Tranquility

2. *Sattvika Bhavas* (Involuntary bodily responses or Emotional content in performance)

1. <i>Stambha</i> /Stupefaction
2. <i>Sveda</i> /Sweating
3. <i>Romanca</i> /Feeling thrilled
4. <i>Svarabheda</i> /Break in voice
5. <i>Vepathu</i> /Trembling
6. <i>Vaivarnya</i> /Pallor
7. <i>Asru</i> /Tears
8. <i>Pralaya</i> /Swoon or death

3. *Vyabhichari Bhava* (Complementary emotional states)

1. <i>Nirveda</i> / Depression or complete indifference	6. <i>Srama</i> /Fatigue	11. <i>Smrti</i> /Memory
2. <i>Glani</i> /Langor	7. <i>Alasya</i> /Laziness	12. <i>Dhrti</i> /Fortitude
3. <i>Shanka</i> / Suspicion or hesitation	8. <i>Dainya</i> /Misery	13. <i>Vrida</i> /Shame, bashfulness
4. <i>Asuya</i> /Jealousy/envy or indignation, anger	9. <i>Chinta</i> /Anxiety	14. <i>Capalta</i> /Nervousness or quickness
5. <i>Mada</i> /Intoxication or madness, exhilaration	10. <i>Moha</i> /Fainting	15. <i>Harsa</i> /Joy/Delight or pleasure