

# An Investigation Into The Efficacy Of Applying Bibhatsa Rasa In Public Service Advertisements In India

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## ABSTRACT

The treatise called the Natya Shastra has been told and retold for centuries. Originally written by the sage Bharatmuni somewhere around the 3rd century BC to the 2nd century AD, this book is considered a pedestal for modern drama and poetry. Bharatmuni in his work mentioned emotions as Rasa which he termed the ultimate reality. The concepts given by the sage have stood the test of time so much so that this ancient theory has now permeated into modern literature, architecture, animation and cinema. In his treatise, Bharata has given eight essential emotions that together bestow upon a spectator an aesthetic pleasure and Bibhatsa Rasa is one among them. The permanent emotion of this Rasa is disgust. This study analyses the application of this particular Rasa in Public Service Advertisements by the Indian government. Anti-tobacco, anti-smoking and traffic awareness campaigns are the major thrust areas. For this purpose, secondary data was collected online on the Youtube platform and detailed content analysis was done and evaluated through Youtube comment scraping. The study concluded that the use of disgust in advertising is highly effective when used for public awareness campaigns. Also to be noted here is that Bibhatsa emotion does not manifest in isolation. Other Rasas always follow it.

**Keywords:** Natya Shastra, Rasa theory, Bibhatsa Rasa, Disgust, Youtube Advertisement.

## INTRODUCTION

Natya Shastra is the first treatise on dramaturgy in Indian philosophical tradition written by the sage Bharata Muni. Although the date of its composition is often debated, it is considered a data bank on various aspects of drama as a form of art and stage performance. Its significance lies in its applied relevance for both creative and critical aspects. It focuses on fundamental aspects of dramaturgy such as Natya, bhav, Vyabhichari bhav, Vaibhav, Anubhav, rasa, Rasa Sutra and Nishpatti. Vibhava are the stimuli that give rise to bhava or emotion. Anubhava is the psychological and physical manifestation of bhavas. Vyabhichari Bhavas are temporary emotions that help the permanent psychological state to mature into aesthetic delight. All three have a cause and effect relationship. When all

these excitant and transitory feelings are correlated, it is manifested and then transformed into pleasure i.e Nishpatti. During the period when Natyashastra was written, drama and poetry were considered similar. Indian poetry focused on drama and poetry existed as an integral part of drama only. It was in the later centuries that dramaturgy and poetry were bifurcated into separate fields of research.

## Rasa and Advertising: An Overview

In the Rigveda, the word Rasa is synonymous with water, Soma juice, cow's milk and flavour. In the Atharvaveda it means to taste and in Taittiriya upanishad, it is stated as the ultimate reality. In literary work, Rasa means aesthetic delight or pleasure. Natyashastra describes Rasa as an indefinable realisation and intense feelings inculcated by the performer to evoke the desired

emotion from the observer. Vishwanath Kaviraja, a 14-15th century scholar, poet and rhetorician who wrote Sahityadarpan, states that "Rasa is invisible, pure, self-manifest, compound equal joy, free of any admixture of any other perceptions". Natyashastra classifies eight Rasas or sentiments, as shown in Table 1, which are: Sringara (erotic), Hasya (comic),

Karuna (pathetic), Raudra (furious), Vira (heroic), Bhayanaka (terrible), Bibhatsa (odious) and Adbhuta (marvellous). There was a later addition of the ninth sentiment or Rasa called Santa (peace) in later Sanskrit poetics by Abhinavagupta who wrote a commentary on the Natya Shastra.

Table1: List of 9 Rasas

Rasa	Bhav	Emotion	Colour
Sringara	Rati	Sensual/Love	Green
Karuna	Shoka	Sorrow	Grey
Rudra	Krodh	Anger	Red
Vir	Utsaha	Heroism	Orange
Hasya	Hasa	Comedic/Laughter	White
Adbhuta	Vismaya	Wonder	Yellow
Bhayanka	Bhaya	Fear	Black
Bibhatsa	Jugupsa	Hate/Disgust	Blue
Shanta	Shanta	Peace	White

Wheeler defines advertising as, "any form of paid presentation of ideas, goods and services for the purpose of inducing people to buy", whereas Philip Kotler describes advertising as a non-personal form of communication conducted through paid media under clear sponsorship. One thing common among all is communication. In prehistoric times, nomadic life took a back seat when the agricultural revolution struck. Surplus materials were now available and self-sustainability took a back seat. Commerce expanded and hence it gave birth to advertising. Early forms of advertising were verbal only where sellers shouted to sell their products. Egyptians used papyrus to make sales. The Middle Ages saw the advent of calligraphic signboards and inked papers, which eventually culminated in newspapers conveying

messages to the masses. Towards the 20th century, wireless radios were commonplace and had a far greater footprint than newspapers. Harry Von Zell called radio the most intimate and socially personal medium in the world. The late 1980s saw the emergence of cable networks and television. The start of the 21st century witnessed the tsunami of social media. Today, advertisements are synonyms with entertainment. Social media platforms provide the data bank to companies so that

personalised commercials suited to a particular individual can be made. From advertising for the masses to advertising for an individual, the process of advertising has travelled a long way.

Modern day advertising are of two types Rational and Emotional. The former persuades the audience to purchase something or act on something by appealing to their sense of logic or reason whereas the latter uses emotions to make the audience notice, remember and share and ultimately purchase. This study will primarily focus on one particular emotion that is disgust in advertising and its efficacy of the same.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Advertising is to get consumers to buy something. Tugging on emotions is a strong way to get consumers to pay attention. In India, advertisers sometimes have to bypass certain laws in order to sell their products. For example, Indian companies have developed ways to circumvent the tobacco advertising ban with clever use of emotions and background stories Donovan. et.al. (2006). These sensations end up encouraging people to make certain decisions when it comes to purchases. Ciochetto, L. (2004) revealed the profile of contemporary advertising in India in the wider context of trends in international advertising, the recent changes in the Indian economy and society and the cultural impact of foreign advertising in India. Holbrook, M. B et al (1982). address the re-emergence of attention to the role of emotion in advertising. Conceptual clarity requires that emotions be distinguished from other motivational and affective constructs.

Negative emotions often push towards hedonic products. Fear, anxiety and sadness are emotional states where the individual is likely to consume a hedonic product. E Kemp, Glenn Leshner et al (2014). show how the presence of fear appeal and disgusting images, both uniquely and interactively, stimulate cognitive and emotional processing of message content. The study revealed that the presence of disgust

images in ads with a threat appeal led to a significant pattern of cardiac acceleration leading to strong emotional stimuli. Similarly, Russell B. Clayton et al (2017) examine the effect of smoking cues and disgust images commonly found in

anti-tobacco advertisements on tobacco smokers. The study concluded that smoking cues and disgust images appear to lead to distinct and opposing patterns of motivation among smokers. Glenn Leshner et al (2010) studied two types of message attributes commonly used in anti-tobacco television ads i.e content that focuses on a health threat about tobacco use (fear), and content that contains disgust-related images (disgust) and how they impact viewers' cognitive processing of the message and concludes that trying to increase message fear by including a negative graphic image to an already fearful message may backfire. Pokharel, R et al. (2021) state that YouTube is the largest video streaming platform in the world and its comment section data, likes and dislikes and subsequent sharing of video provide an authentic data set for further.

## OBJECTIVES

- To observe the nature of the use of Bibhatsa rasa in Indian Public Service Television Commercial Advertisements in the late 20th century.
- To identify the practical implication of the use of bibhatsa in Indian Public Service Television Commercial Advertisements on the Youtube platform.
- To evaluate the use of Bibhatsa Rasa in Public Social Awareness Advertisements.

## METHODOLOGY

## Method

The Public Service Advertisements were identified on youtube under three categories namely: Anti Tobacco, Anti-Smoking and Road Safety. Around 50 advertisements were identified. Out of the 50, 10 were taken as sample advertisements. Every advertisement was analysed on the basis of the number of likes, views and comments, and upload date. A total of 3182 comments were analysed and observations were made. Similar to ethnography, in the real world, the study method used is netnography and various comment scraping tools.

## Data Collection and Research

As above mentioned objectives of this study are verified by analysing the successful campaign and their association to human emotions that are persistent to persuasive strongly. Social media campaigns were taken into account by the Government of India, Non-profit organisations and by public companies under their corporate social responsibility criteria. Data was collected through online platforms like Youtube. The literature review was done on how other researchers have related Bibhatsa Rasa to literature, cinema, advertisements, architecture and other fields of science, arts and literature.

Data were collected by two approaches:

### a) Content Analysis

Content Analysis of each advertisement was conducted. Observation of each advertisement on the basis of Context, theme, word meaning and relationship with visuals was done and this data was saved in word format.

### b) Extraction and Analysis of Youtube Comment Scrapping

Extraction of Youtube Comment Scrapping of the 10 videos were done. A total of 3182 comments were collected and analysed. Observations were made and written down on

each advertisement pertaining to the number of views, likes, comments, date of upload, counter comments, and emoticons used. With the help of various Youtube Comment scraping tools available in the market which helped gather comments and study them organically and for a longer period of time. This data was saved in excel sheets in order to comprehend and compare easily.

## Observations and Analysis

After observing around 50 product advertisements and social media campaigns, they were anchored to a timeline. These advertisements were observed on the basis of content, language, expression, colour, gestures, sound, and dialogue delivery which together evoked Bibhatsa Rasa.

An analysis was done regarding when and where these advertisements were aired. They were then categorised into subheadings and analysed on the elements of Bibhatsa Rasa.

## RESULTS

After collecting data and analysing them from two approaches, observations, content analysis, and comment extraction data extracted is presented in tabular format in Table 2. Data from Content analysis and observation which is qualitative is discussed as under:-

### Anti-Tobacco

Nearly 267 million adults i.e. 29% of the adult population are users of tobacco in India according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey India. It is one of the biggest public health threats. It leads not only to the loss of lives but also has a heavy social and economic impact. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the National Tobacco Control Programme during the 11th five-year plan. Public awareness through advertising was a major thrust area. The advertisement portrays a young boy named Mukesh who died due to mouth cancer attributed to excessive consumption of Tobacco. The advertisement is a mix and match of graphic images showing him on a hospital bed recalling his whole ordeal. Video has garnered almost 687000 views to date with 4300 likes and almost 450 comments. Another advertisement shows a woman named Sunita who had it all before Tobacco ruined it all. This advertisement is even more gory in nature since it shows graphic pictures of her oral cavity after the removal of cancer. This video has almost 46500 views and 190 likes. Some observations which were made after comment scraping anti tobacco videos were:

- The content of the video seems to be disturbing and more impactful in an unexpected situation like watching a movie or some entertainment show.
- One of the comments pointed out that this video can cause cancer phobia which is even more disturbing than

cancer itself.

- Some of the advertisements are in multilingual presence across India like the anti-tobacco Mukesh advertisement which is in languages like English, Hindi, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada.
- The comments point to a trend where the viewers are advocating quitting Tobacco.

### Anti-Smoking

There is approximately 120 million smokers in India. According to the World Health Organisation, India is home to 12% of total smokers in the world. The death toll is around 1 million per year. Under the aegis of the National Tobacco Control Programme, the Indian government released a number of TVCs in the interest of public safety. One television commercial shows lungs in the form of a sponge. The advertisement then turns grisly when it shows the sheer amount of tar that is deposited in our lungs due to excessive smoking which in turn can have harmful effects. The advertisement shows a clever use of lights and deep voice of the anchor to make the advertisement more noticeable and disgusting. This video has 80683 views and has garnered a total of 954 likes. Another advertisement shows how smoking is related to Emphysema. It is an animated commercial showing how smoke gets converted into tar and blocks the airflow. Here too, background music is prominent. The video has almost 24923000 views with 253000 likes with 2420 comments. One advertisement shows a famous Bollywood actor explaining to a man how he could have saved his wife from hospitalisation from menturastional problems if he had invested in menturastional pads instead of cigarettes. It has a very creative use of humour and disgust emotions. It has almost 134292 views with 4300 likes. Passive smoking too is an issue which has some serious consequences. The TVC shows a man sitting on a railway platform smoking when a mother and her two kids sit behind him. The advertisement turns odious when the smoke released by him gets inhaled by the kids showing the formation of tar in their lungs in a graphic manner. The video has over 6000 views. Some

observations which were made after comment scraping anti-smoking videos were:

- The viewers recall and narrate their experience of watching the advertisement suddenly in the middle while watching a movie with the family.
- The viewers are requesting others to quit smoking and recognizing the fact that smoking is dangerous.
- The videos are being shared across various platforms indicating a trend where the viewers are actively involved in inculcating others to quit smoking.
- The viewers are seen sharing their quitting experience and journey. They are helping each other by sharing videos and links to other platforms available to help each other quit.
- Few comments are also related to the effectiveness and impactfulness of the animation and the content of the video advertisement.

### Road Safety

India ranks first in the sheer number of road accidents in the world and accounts for almost 11% of total accidents around the world in a year. India recorded more than 449000 accidents in the year 2019 registering almost 1200 accidents per day with approximately 150000 deaths a year. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has thus released a number of public safety advertisements in this regard. The ministry in collaboration with Samsung has released a TVC which shows a person remembering his life with his family as he is about to die from a road accident. The message is clear, don't use mobile phones while driving. The use of blood stains, sad music and cracked mobile screens creates an aura of disgust followed by fear. The video has almost 4637 views. Another advertisement portrays a mother who is worried sick all day as her son went out without wearing a helmet. She slaps him when he finally reaches home asking him to wear a helmet in the future. She is visibly upset at this

point. Here too, clever use of background music prevails. The facial expressions of the mother during the entire duration of the advertisement inculcate fear into the minds of the viewer. The video has over 69500 views and over 500 likes. In the next advertisement, the viewer is shown a set of coconuts, where one is covered with a helmet while the other one is not. A hammer is thrown at them simultaneously.

The one without the helmet cracks open while the one with the helmet stays safe. The intelligent use of lighting and slow-motion pictorials are prominent. The video has collected over 13700 views with 85 likes. Some observations which were made after comment scraping road safety videos were:

- A lot of comments are centred around the sheer weight of the message and this way it might be acted upon by the stakeholders.
- Some of the viewers are confirming the fact that watching the video has a meaningful impact on their lives and that they are now wearing helmets.
- People are moved by the music and want to know where the sound is taken from, which tells us that music or Dwani is an integral part of evoking a Rasa.
- A lot of viewers also said that the video advertisements were very heart touching.

Table 2: Results from Observation

SrNo	Name of the Ad	No. of Likes	No. of Views April 2022	No. of Comments	Date of upload	Category
1	India - Mukesh: Smokeless Tobacco Campaign (Hindi) - Testimonial	4.3K	688,902 views	424	3/3/2011	Anti Tobacco
2	India - Sunita (Hindi) - Testimonial	190	46,599 views	15	Aug 7, 2014	
3	India - Anti-tobacco campaign - Sickening	138	14,701 views	7	Apr 9, 2019	
4	India - Anti-tobacco campaign: Shadow	64	6,671 views	0	Apr 9, 2019	
5	Anti-smoking Ad: Smoking Causes Emphysema, Lung Cancer	253K	24,923,749 views	2420	Jan 25, 2008	Anti-Smoking
6	India - Sponge (Hindi)	954	80,683 views	55	Feb 17, 2015	

7	Disclaimer    Akshay Kumar    New 2018    smoking Is Injured To Health    Video 2018    Free Video	4.3k	134,292 views	214	Sep 17, 2018	
8	Samsung New Ad 2017 Road Safety Heart Touching Advertisement Selfie Accident Nitin Gadkari India	54	4,356 views	16	Jul 30, 2017	Road Safety

9	Maa helmet ad	532	69,528 views	17	Dec 10, 2012	
10	Old Helmet Commercial	85	13,797 views	8	Jun 7, 2012	

## CONCLUSION

With the help of the data collected - quantitative through YouTube archives and qualitative through observation, few factors emerge automatically. The content posted on YouTube, audience reactions to the content, further engagement by tagging other subscribers, and increase in likes or dislikes determine the failure or success of a public safety advertisement. The Rasa theory given by the sage BharatMuni has stood its ground against time. This theory which was originally written for the purpose of dramaturgy slowly impregnated into the fields of architecture, literature, cinema and modern-day advertisement as well. All of the eight Rasas have some emotional content and they are all anchored together through their universality. One Rasa is incomplete without the other. The only difference between them is how they are manifested. This paper studied in detail the use of Bibhatsa in public safety advertisements and concluded that one Rasa is followed by the other and Bibhatsa rasa does not manifest in isolation. In most of the advertisements surveyed, Bibhatsa rasa is followed by Bhayanak (fear) whereas in some it is followed by Karuna (furious) which eventually culminates into Veer Rasa. The strength of this theory lies in that it deals with what is common to all human beings at all times i.e emotions.

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