

Aspects of Aesthetics in Dance: A Viewer's Approach

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Gestures and moods are the universal language. Human beings always learn from nature and try to depict the same through their gesticulation. This language of gestures is called 'Dance'.

These movements/gestures could either be informal as in the unconscious, joyous movements of a merry making child in moments of intense emotion, or be a formalized system of a 'dance', as in the codified movements of primitive dances (tribal dances, folk dances, classical dances etc.) through the post-modern, contemporary dances (such as the amalgamation of different dance forms).

One of the most basic motives of dance is the expression and communication of emotion. People—and even certain higher animals—dance as a way of releasing powerful feelings, happiness, joy, sadness, impatience and anger. Here the dance helps to generate and release emotions. When we allow ourselves to be stimulated, carried away by something beautiful and aesthetically appealing—not only with respect to its extrinsic value but also with respect to its intrinsic worth—whatever thoughts, feelings or emotions arise in our minds, evokes the 'Rasas'. In Indian performing arts, a *rasa* is an emotion inspired in an audience by a performer. Rasas are created by bhavas: the gestures and facial expressions of the dancers.

The audience can experience the rasas only if they allow themselves to become a part and parcel of the performance; when s/he is nonjudgmental, unbiased and allows herself to move with the flow and rhythm of the performance. *Bharata Muni* enunciated the eight *Rasas* in the *Nāṭyasāstra*, which enlighten the aesthetical approaches. In any dance performance the following are necessary for the audience to understand and enjoy the 'rasa of dance':

Dance recital, Choreography, Songs, Accompanying instruments, Stage craft, Dress/Jewellery and Makeup, Lighting and Sound system, Ambience.

In this way the viewer enjoys the art of artiste.