The Cultural Psychology of the Emotions

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Great, deep, wide and unbounded, the ocean is nevertheless drunk by underwater fires; in the same way, Sorrow is drunk by Anger.

(Translation of an unidentified Sanskrit stanza from India in the early Middle Ages; Goon, 1956, p. 35)

In recent years there have been several major reviews of contemporary research on similarities and differences in emotional meanings across cultural groups (Good & Kleinman, 1985; Kleinman & Good, 1985; Lutz & White, 1986; Marsella, 1986; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Russell, 1991; Scherer, Wallbott, & Summerville, 1986; Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Shweder, 1991; White & Kirkpatrick, 1985). There have also been several books and essays defining the character of a new or renewed interdisciplinary field for cross-cultural research on the emotions, which is coming to be known as "cultural psychology" (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1988, 1990; Howard, 1985; LeVine, 1990; Lutz, 1985a; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1992; Peacock, 1984; Shweder, 1990, 1991; Shweder & Sullivan, 1990, 1993; Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990). For a discussion of the historical antecedents of cultural psychology, see Jahoda (1993). In anthropology, the two most notable forums for research on the cultural psychology of the emotions are the journals Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, and Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry.

The major goals of cultural psychology are to spell out the implicit meanings that give shape to psychological processes, to examine the distribution of those meanings across ethnic groups and temporal–spatial regions of the world, and to identify the manner of their social acquisition. Related goals are to reassess the principle of psychic unity or uniformity, and to develop a credible theory of psychological diversity or pluralism.

One hallmark of cultural psychology is the idea that a "culture" consists of meanings, conceptions, and interpretive schemes that are activated, constructed, or brought "on-line" through participation in normative social institutions and practices (including linguistic practices) (see, e.g., D'Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973; LeVine, 1984; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990; Shweder, 1991; Shweder & Much, 1987). According to this view, a culture is the subset of possible or available meanings that, by virtue of (informal or formal, implicit or explicit, unintended or intended) enculturation, has become active in giving shape to the psychological processes of individuals in a society.

A second hallmark of cultural psychology is the idea that interpretation, conceptualization, and other "acts of meaning" can take place rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously.
Indeed, it is assumed that “acts of meaning” (e.g., the judgment that the human body may become polluted or desanctified because it is a temple for the soul; or that illness is a means of empowerment because it unburdens a person of accumulated spiritual debts; or that shyness, shame, modesty, and embarrassment are good emotions because they are forms of civility) can take place so rapidly, automatically, and un-self-consciously that from the point of view of an individual person they are indistinguishable from “raw” experience or “naked” consciousness itself (see, e.g., Geertz, 1984, on “experience-near” concepts; Kirsh, 1991, on “thought in action”; and Nisbett & Wilson, 1977, on the unconscious “knowing more than we can tell”; see also Fish, 1980). According to this view, many rapid, automatic, and un-self-conscious psychological processes are best understood not as “pure,” “fundamental,” or “intrinsic” processes, but rather as content-laden processes, which are contingent on the implicit meanings, conceptual schemes, and interpretations that give them life (Shweder, 1990; Stigler, 1984; Stigler, Chalip, & Miller, 1986; Stigler, Nusbaum, & Chalip, 1988).

In the context of the study of the emotions, the intellectual agenda of cultural psychology can be defined by four questions:

1. What is the generic shape of the meaning system that defines an experience as an emotional experience (e.g., anger, sadness, or shame) rather than as an experience of some other kind (e.g., muscle tension, fatigue, or emptiness)? (See, e.g., Harré, 1986a, 1986b; Lakoff, 1987; Levy, 1984a, 1984b; Shweder, in press; Smedslund, 1991; Solomon, 1976, 1984; Stein & Levine, 1987; Wierzbicka, 1986, 1982).


3. To what extent is the experience of various states of the world (e.g., “loss,” “goal blockage,” “status degradation,” “taboo violation”) “emotionalized” (e.g., as sadness, anger, fear, or guilt) rather than “somatized” (e.g., as tiredness, chest pain, or appetite loss) in different ethnic groups and in different temporal–spatial regions of the world? (See, e.g., Angel & Guarnaccia, 1981; Angel & Idler, 1992; Angel & Theoits, 1987; Kleinman, 1986; Levy, 1984a, 1984b; Shweder, 1988.)

4. Precisely how are emotionalized and somatized meanings brought “on-line,” socialized, enculturated, or otherwise acquired? More specifically, what is the role of everyday discourse and social interpretation in the activation of emotionalized and somatized meanings? (See, e.g., Bruner, 1990; Carvey, 1992; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Miller et al., 1990; Miller, Mintz, Hoogstra, Fang, & Potts, 1992; Miller & Hoogstra, 1992; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Shweder & Much, 1987).

Any comprehensive review of answers to these questions would have to address hundreds of years of theoretical arguments, empirical sightings, and philosophical reflections in the literatures of several different civilizations (see Dimock, 1974; Harré, 1986a, 1986b; Kakar, 1982; Kleinman, 1986; Rorty, 1980; Shüde, 1989; Solomon, 1976; Veith, 1978). In this chapter my aim is simply to formulate the first two of those questions in ways that seem promising, provocative, and stimulating of future interdisciplinary research.

I start the discussion, however, in the 3rd century A.D. in India, with a relatively detailed examination of a Sanskrit text (the “RasAdhyaya” of the Nātyādāstra) that was written relatively close to the beginning of the historical record of systematic human self-consciousness about the emotions. It is through an analysis of this venerable text that I address some contemporary concerns. The “RasAdhyaya” is a useful intellectual pole star on which to concentrate a discussion of the cultural psychology of the emotions, for three reasons: (1) The text, although ancient, compares favorably with any contemporary treatise on the subject of the symbolic character of emotional experience; (2) the text, although famous among Sanskritists and scholars of South Asian civilization, is hardly known at all by emotion researchers in anthropology and psychology; and (3) the text provides the opportunity for an object lesson about the universally appealing yet culturally revealing character of all accounts about what is “basic” to the emotional nature of human beings.
THE BASIC EMOTIONS
OF THE "RASĀDHĪYĀYA"

In Sanskrit the word for "existence" and the
word for "mental state" (bhāva) are the same,
and mental states are said to "bring into exis-
tence the essence of poetry" (Gnoli, 1956, p. 63). So one should not be surprised to dis-
cover that between the 3rd and 11th centuries A.D., Hindu philosophers of poetics and drama,
interested in human emotions as objects of
aesthetic pleasure, posited the existence of
eight (or nine) basic emotions (sthāṇī-bhāvas)—
four of which they viewed as primary—and de-
veloped a relatively detailed account of the
symbolic structures that give them shape and
meaning.

There is no standard English translation
of the Sanskrit terms for the eight (or nine)
postulated basic emotions. Indeed, there is
no agreement about whether they should be
translated as "emotions," as "mental states," or
as "feelings," or about whether they should be
translated as "basic," "dominant," "permanent,"
"universal," "natural," or "principal" emotions
(or mental states or feelings). The eight basic
(or dominant) emotions (or mental states or feelings) are variously translated as follows:
(1) sexual passion, love, or delight (rati); (2)
amusement, laughter, humor, or mirth (hāsa);
(3) sorrow (soka); (4) anger (krodha); (5) fear
or terror (bhaya); (6) perseverance, energy,
dynamic energy, or heroism (utsāha); (7) dis-
gust or disillusion (jugupsā); and (8) amuse-
ment, wonder, astonishment, or amazement
(vismaya). Some early medieval commentators
mention an additional basic (or dominant)
emotion (or mental state or feeling), (9) seren-
ity or calm (sama). To simplify my exegesis, I
refer to the eight (or nine) as "basic emotions,"
and I label them "sexual passion," "amuse-
ment," "sorrow," "anger," "fear," "persever-
ance," "disgust," "wonder," and "serenity." Of
the eight (or nine) basic emotions, four are
privileged as primary basic emotions: sexual
passion, anger, perseverance, and disgust (with
serenity sometimes substituted or linked to
disgust as a primary basic emotion).

The canonical Sanskrit text on the emotions,
attributed to Bharata, is the sixth chapter, the
"Rasādhīyāya," of the Nātyaśāstra, a book about
drama. Ancient and medieval Hindu thought
specialized in "psychological" topics concerned
with the nature of consciousness. Much of
Sanskrit philosophy elevated the human mind
and body to the status of sacramental objects,
and was disinclined to draw sharp oppositions
among the material, the sensate, the conscious,
the poetic, and the divine. In Sanskrit drama
the primary aim of the aesthetic experience
was psychological as well: indeed, it was the
symbolic representation of emotional states per-
sue that set the stage for aesthetic and revela-
tory experience (see Dimock, 1974). The fa-
mous sixth chapter of the Nātyaśāstra is about
the narrative structure (the causes, conse-
quences, and concomitants) of eight basic
dramatic emotions and the most effective means
(via facial expression, voice, posture, setting,
character, action, and physiological response)
of their representation in the theatre.

The Nātyaśāstra was probably written some
time between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D.
The most famous explication and commentary
on the text—its own critique of earlier expli-
cations and commentaries, and the source of
our knowledge of the earlier commentaries—
comes from the 10th- and 11th-century Kash-
miri Brahman philosopher, Abhinavagupta
(partial translations and contemporary com-
mentaries can be found in Masson & Patward-
han, 1970, and Gnoli, 1956; see also Dimock,

One major concern of the text and commen-
taries is to define the nature and significance
(both aesthetic and theological) of a certain
evasive metaemotion called rasa. Rasa means
"to taste," "to savor," or "to sample," but when
the term is used to refer to the grand meta-
emotion of Hindu aesthetic experience it
is usually translated as aesthetic "pleasure,"
"enjoyment," or "rapture." It is a pleasure that
lasts only as long as the dramatic illusion that
makes rasa a reality. Because it is possible for
members of the audience who witness a drama
(the rasiki) to experience enjoyment or plea-
sure (rasa) even from the apprehension of
negative emotional states (disgust, fear, anger,
sorrow), which in other circumstances one
might want to avoid or repress, Abhinava-
gupta and others reasoned that rasa must be an
autonomous metaemotion, a sui generis form
of consciousness.

A second major concern of the text and
commentaries is to differentiate eight (or nine)
varieties, colors, or flavors of rasa, each related
to one of the eight (or nine) basic emotions.
There is no standard English translation of the
Sanskrit terms for the eight (or nine) rasa.
They are variously translated as (1) the erotic
or love (śringāra) (the rasa of sexual passion); (2) the comic (hāsyā) (the rasa of amusement); (3) the compassionate or pathetic (karuṇā) (the rasa of sorrow); (4) the furious or fury (raudra) (the rasa of anger); (5) the heroic (vīra) (the rasa of perseverance); (6) the terrifying or terror (bhayaṇaka) (the rasa of fear); (7) horror, the loathsome, the odious, or the disgusting (bibhatsa) (the rasa of disgust); (8) the marvelous, the awesome, admiration, or wonder (adbhuta) (the rasa of wonder); and (9) the quietistic or calm (śanta) (the rasa of serenity). When viewed from the perspective of their relationship to the eight (or nine) basic emotions of everyday life, the eight (or nine) flavors of rasa (the pleasure of the terrifying, the delight of horror, etc.) are sometimes translated as the eight (or nine) "sentiments" or "moods" of the theatre.

A third major concern of the text and commentaries is to give an account of the precise relationship between the eight (or nine) rasa and the eight (or nine) basic emotions (śāyānā or bhāvā) to which they are said to correspond. Is the relationship one of identity, such that, for example, the audience's experience of the rasa of fear is itself a real everyday experience of fear? Or is the experience of the rasa of fear a mere simulation, imitation, or pretense of everyday fear? Or is it perhaps an intensification or amplification of the basic emotion? Ultimately, the idea is advanced that the experience of the rasa of a basic emotion is something entirely different from the experience of the basic emotion itself.

Instead, the relationship of the eight (or nine) rasa to the eight (or nine) basic emotions is akin to the relationship of an intentional state to its intentional object. To experience rasa is to experience the pleasure or enjoyment (an intentional state) that results from the dramatically induced perception of the hidden or unconscious generic symbolic structures (the intentional objects) that lend shape and meaning to the basic emotions in everyday life. To paraphrase Bharata, in drama the basic emotions are brought to a state of rasa. This happens to the very extent that their implicit symbolic codes are revealed and savored (or tasted) as objects of pleasure and as a means of self-consciousness and transcendence.

According to this line of reasoning, then, what "flavors" or "colors" the eight or nine rasa and distinguishes them from one another is that each has a different intentional object, one of the eight (or nine) basic emotions, which are thought to be possessed by all human beings at birth. Nevertheless, there is still something common to all the flavors of rasa. It is the pleasure, enjoyment, delight, or rapture that comes from being artfully transported out of time, place, and the immediacies of personal emotional experiences—beyond "the thick pall of mental stupor which cloaks one's own consciousness" (Gnoli, 1956, p. 53)—into the hidden depths of the soul, where one perceives, tastes, and savors the transcendental or impersonal narrative forms that are immanent or implicit in the most deeply rooted modes of human experience.

Thus, viewed generically, all rasa possess that quality of pleasure or enjoyment that comes from the tasting of a transcendent form that had previously been hidden from the consciousness it had organized. It is this sui generis experience of delight, viewed as an intentional state aimed at the basic emotions as its intentional object, that explains how even disgust, anger, fear, and sorrow can be objects of pleasure when they present themselves as objects of aesthetic encounter. Thus viewed, what is common to the rasa is a metaemotion, the feeling of delight that comes from the clear apprehension of the symbolic forms implicit in ordinary emotional experience. This line of reasoning is suggestive of a parallel type of analysis of "empathy." Empathy may be viewed as a metaemotion motivated by its own characteristic source of enjoyment or pleasure, which makes it possible to be responsive to another person's negative emotional states such as sorrow or guilt. By this analysis, empathic sorrow or guilt is not the same as the direct or secondary experience of sorrow or guilt. Instead, it is a dignifying experience precisely because, as a witness to someone else's emotional experience, one is transported out of oneself. It is as if empathy is also a metaemotion, but of a middle scale. It is less detached than the experience of rasa, which comes from witnessing the generic symbolic structure that lends shape and meaning to a basic emotion; yet it is more detached than the experience of a basic emotion itself, which is the unwitnessed and all too immediate experience of everyday personal life. (For an account of the psychology of empathy, see Hoffman, 1990.)

Having summarized, however hazardedly and incompletely, a few key elements of the "Rāṣṭhāyā" and subsequent commentaries, I would now like to ask two questions about
text. What does the “Rasadhyāya” reveal about the symbolic structure of emotional experience? And what does it reveal about itself as a cultural account of what is “basic” to human emotional experience? I treat the last question first.

THE WONDER OF THE SANSKRIT EMOTIONS:
A CULTURAL ACCOUNT

Contemporary emotion researchers are likely to find the account of the basic emotions in the “Rasadhyāya” both familiar and strange. If we compare the Sanskrit list of nine (eight plus one) basic emotions (sexual passion, amusement, sorrow, anger, fear, perseverance, disgust, wonder, and serenity) with Paul Ekman’s well-known contemporary list of nine (six plus three) basic emotions (anger, fear, sadness, happiness, surprise, disgust, interest, shame, and contempt), which he derives from the analysis of everyday facial expressions (Ekman, 1980, 1984), the two lists are not closely coordinated, although they are not totally disjunctive either.

Richard Schechner (1988, pp. 267–289), in his book Performance Theory, actually presents a series of photographs of facial expressions that he claims are iconic representations of the nine rasa of the Nāṭyāśāstra. This, of course, is a rather risky thing to do. The Nāṭyāśāstra never abstracts out facial expressions as the key markers of the basic emotions, but rather treats them as one element in an array of constituents; and there is every reason to believe that in Hindu drama facial expressions unfold dynamically in a sequence of movements, which are not easily frozen into a single frame. Nevertheless, Schechner posits direct analogies between six of his facial expressions for the rasa and the six facial expressions from Ekman’s primary scheme—equating, for example, Ekman’s representation of the face of surprise with the face for the rasa of wonder (adbhuta) and Ekman’s representation of the face of happiness with the face for the rasa of sexual passion (srīgara). Schechner thinks he sees a universal pattern reflected in the two schemes. He states, “Humankind has countless gods, but I would be very surprised if there were not some agreement concerning the basic emotions” (1988, p. 266).

In my view, several of Schechner’s equations are dubious. For example, in Ekman’s photo of the face of surprise, the mouth is wide open; it is not similar to the mouth of the rasa of wonder, which is closed and faintly suggestive of a smile. (The mouth is closed in all of the facial expressions of the rasa, which may be related to a cultural evaluation concerning the vulgarity of an open mouth.) And in Ekman’s photo of the face of happiness, the eyes are directly frontal; they are not similar to the eyes of the rasa of sexual passion, where the gaze is conspicuously averted to one side, perhaps suggestive of secrecy or conspiracy. More importantly, because Schechner’s equation of American “happiness” with Sanskrit “sexual passion” seems peculiar from the start, it should also be noted that Ekman’s photo of the face of happiness bears no resemblance to the face of the rasa of amusement (hāṣya), which is the rasa one might have intuitively expected to be connected to the Western conception of “happiness.”

I strongly doubt that most Anglo-Americans could spontaneously generate accurate descriptions for the majority of the nine facial icons of the rasa displayed in Schechner’s book. (Curiously, one of the faces that my U.S. graduate students seem to identify without much difficulty is the Sanskrit face of serenity, which as far as I know is not a basic emotion on any Western list. In informal experiments conducted in class, they also converge in their responses to faces of fear, disgust, and sorrow, but not in their responses to the others.) Indeed, I believe one can plausibly argue that happiness, surprise, and most of the basic emotions on Ekman’s list do not have close analogues among the basic emotions of the “Rasadhyāya,” and any sense of easy familiarity with the Sanskrit list is more apparent than real.

As I read the “Rasadhyāya” and commentaries, three of the nine basic emotions (anger, fear, and sorrow) are genuinely familiar, in the sense of possessing an equivalent shape and meaning for medieval Hindus and contemporary Anglo-Americans. Of course, to acknowledge those three points of dense similarity is not to suggest that those three emotional meanings must be cross-cultural universals. Wierzbicka (1992; see also 1990), for example, an anthropological linguist and polyglot who specializes in the study of semantic universals and the language of the emotions, has brought to a halt facile claims about translation equivalence by arguing quite cogently that “sadness,” as understood in European and Anglo-Ameri-
can conceptions of the emotions, is not an empirical universal and is neither lexicalized, important, nor salient in most of the languages of the world. She claims that from the point of view of the study of the linguistic semantics of emotion terms around the world, there are no basic or universal emotions.

Nevertheless, anger, fear, and sorrow are easy to recognize in the "Rasadhyaya." Sorrow, for example, is said to arise from misfortune, calamity, and destruction, and from "separation from those who are dear, [their] downfall, loss of wealth, death and imprisonment."

"It should be acted out by tears, laments, drying up of the mouth, change of color, languor in the limbs, sighs, loss of memory, etc." (Masson & Patwardhan, 1970). Sorrow is said to be accompanied by other mental states, including world-weariness, physical weariness, lifelessness, tears, confusion, dejection, and worry.

Anger and fear are also easy to recognize in the text. Anger, for example, is said to arise from provocative actions, insult, lies, assault, harsh words, oppression, and envy. The actions accompanying it include beating, splitting open, crushing, breaking, hitting, and drawing blood. "It should be acted out by red eyes, furrowing of the brows, biting one's lips and grinding one's teeth, puffing the cheeks, wringing the hands, and similar gestures." It is accompanied by other mental states, including an increase in determination or energy, rashness, violence, sweat, trembling, pride, panic, resentment, and stuttering (see Masson & Patwardhan, 1970, pp. 52-53).

For three of the nine basic emotions described in the "Rasadhyaya," it is easy to recognize the underlying script, to see the self in the other, and to arrive at a cross-cultural and transhistorical agreement about what is basic in emotional functioning (at least for them and us). Yet as one moves beyond sorrow, anger, and fear to disgust, amusement, wonder, perseverance, sexual passion, and serenity, the way in which consciousness is partitioned or hierarchically structured into basic and non-basic states in the "Rasadhyaya" seems less and less familiar, despite any initial appearances to the contrary.

Thus it becomes clear upon examination of translations of the relevant Sanskrit texts and the commentaries that medieval Hindu "disgust" partitions its domain somewhat differently than we do. Hindu disgust includes aspects of horror and disillusionment (and world-weariness associated with the quest for detachment, transcendence, and salvation) that are not easily reducible to contemporary Anglo-American nausea, although nausea is mentioned as one of the two major subtypes of disgust. Horror at the sight of blood is the other major subtype of the domain. Medieval Hindu disgust is, as my colleague McKim Marriott has suggested, more like a domain of the loathsome; it gathers together within its territory a broad range of human responses to the ugly, the nasty, and the odious, and is thereby far more inclusive than our domain of disgust.

It becomes clear that medieval Hindu "wonder" is not contemporary Anglo-American "surprise," but rather a state of mind closer to admiration than to startle or shock. For Hindu wonder has less to do with a sudden violation of expectations and more to do with one's reactions to the opportunity to witness divine, heavenly, or exalted feats, events, or beings (including, e.g., the feats of a juggler). It is even possible to do such witnessing with one's mouth closed, as long as the eyes are wideopen!

It also becomes clear that medieval Hindu "amusement" (which includes contemptuous, indignant, or derisive laughter at the faults and inferior status of others) is not contemporary Anglo-American "happiness," which has celebratory implications. Indeed, happiness, shame, indignation, arrogance, and some contempt-like emotions are explicitly mentioned in the "Rasadhyaya" for inclusion among 33 nonbasic ("accompanying") mental states. Thus it seems reasonable to assert that the basic emotion designated by medieval Hindu philosophers as "amusement" is not adequately translated as "happiness" or as "contempt." (It should be noted that although the text provides little basis for determining equivalence of meaning for the terms used to translate the 33 nonbasic mental states, there is good reason to doubt that "shame" and "happiness" have the same implications and associations or play the same psychological role in India as they do in the contemporary United States. See Menon & Shweder, in press, and Shweder, in press, on the positive qualities of shame in India, where it is a virtue associated with civility, modesty, and an ability to rein in one's destructive powers in support of the social order rather than with the diminishment of the ego; see also Parish, 1991, and below.)
It also becomes clear upon examination of the text that medieval Hindu "perseverance" is not contemporary Anglo-American "interest"; rather, it is deeply connected to heroic determination and a willingness to engage in acts requiring endurance and self-sacrifice. In the context of the early medieval Hindu scriptures, when the Hindu goddess Durga (or Kali) endured trials and tribulations yet persisted in a seemingly hopeless battle against uncountable demons in an effort to save the world, her efforts are said to have displayed the heroic rasa of perseverance. Mere interest had very little to do with it; she would probably rather have been doing something else (see below).

In sum, the two lists of nine basic human emotions truly overlap at only three points. All the other apparent points of similarity (amusement as happiness, Hindu disgust as Anglo-American disgust, wonder as surprise, perseverance as interest) turn out to be mere apparent; and for several of the emotions (sexual passion, serenity, shame, contempt) there is not even an illusion of transcultural equivalence. In the end, most of the items can not be easily mapped across the two lists.

There are other ways in which the "Rasadhyāya" presents us with a somewhat unfamiliar portrait of the way consciousness is organized. One has to do with the way the text divides the basic emotions into primary basic emotions and secondary basic emotions. According to the text and commentaries, the four primary basic emotions are sexual passion, anger, perseverance, and disgust. The four secondary basic emotions are amusement, sorrow, wonder, and fear. The ninth basic emotion, serenity, is sometimes viewed as a primary basic emotion and either substituted for disgust or associated with disgust (through a causal sequence which begins with horror and revulsion over attachments in the world, and ends with the serenity of ego alienation, detachment, and salvation).

In commenting on this scheme, it is perhaps worth noting in passing that Sigmund Freud might find much of value in a conception that treats sexual passion and anger (and perseverance and disgust) as the deepest aspects of human experience. One wonders whether Freud would have interpreted perseverance and disgust as analogues to the life and death instincts. More notable, however, is the fact that the primary basic emotions are primary primarily because they are the emotions associated in classical and folk Hindu thought with the four worthy ends or goals of life. One of those goals of life—pleasure (kāma)—is linked to sexual passion. A second goal—control, autonomy, and power (artha)—is linked to anger. A third goal—social duty and moral virtue (dharma)—is linked to perseverance. The fourth and perhaps highest goal—salvation or the attainment of divinity (moksha)—is linked to disgust and/or serenity. In other words, presupposed by this famous formulation about the organization of human emotions are a special theory of morality and human motivation, and a specific way of life. Thus it is hardly surprising that this particular medieval South Asian conception of the hierarchical structuring of consciousness into basic versus nonbasic emotions and primary basic versus secondary basic emotions should seem somewhat strange to emotion researchers in North America.

There is yet another way in which the "Rasadhyāya" presents us with an unfamiliar portrait of the organization of consciousness. For the eight or nine items on the Sanskrit list are bound to seem like a disparate and anomalous collection, at least from the point of view of Anglo-American folk and academic conceptions about how to partition consciousness into kinds of mental states (see D'Andrade, 1987). Indeed, one might expect Anglo-American emotion researchers to recoil at the very suggestion that the Sanskrit list is really a list of "basic emotions" at all. Anglo-American folk and academic psychology do not really classify serenity, wonder, sexual passion, amusement, or perseverance as definitive or clear examples of "emotions" (see Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). Sexual passion would probably be classified as a motive or, alternatively, as a nonemotional feeling. Serenity might be classified as a nonemotional feeling or a state of mind, although not as a motive. Perseverance would probably be classified as a quality of will or agency, or perhaps a formal property of motivation. Amusement and wonder seem to be none of the above. Indeed after reading the text and commentaries and the various nonequivalent translations of bhāva and rasa (are they mental states, emotions, feelings, moods, sentiments, or what?), one might begin to suspect that in the "Rasadhyāya" one is faced with a somewhat different conception of how to partition a person into
parts and how to divide consciousness into kinds. Here, however, I would suggest that one must proceed with caution.

It is of course possible (indeed, likely) that in some ways the “Rasādhyāya” presupposes a partitioning of the person into parts that is not coordinate with our own conception of the person, and that this is why it is so hard to settle on any singular translation equivalent for the Sanskrit bhāva and rasa. This is a familiar kind of translation problem, and it is encountered even across European languages and subcultures. Wierzbicka (1989), for example, has analyzed in detail the many distortions of meaning that occur when the Russian word duša is translated into English. Duša is a lexical item signifying a key Russian cultural concept that has to do with the partitioning of a person into parts. It is typically translated into English as “soul,” or alternatively as “mind” or “heart” or “spirit.” None of those lexical mappings is adequate, because none of those English words signifies the full and equivalent set of meanings associated with duša—for example, as Wierzbicka notes (1989, p. 52), that it is one of two parts of the person; that one cannot see it; that because of this part, things can happen in a person that cannot happen in anything other than a person; that these things can be good or bad; that because of this part, a person can feel things that nothing other than a person can feel; that other people can’t know what these things are if the person doesn’t say it; that a person would want someone to know what these things are; and that because of this part a person can be a good person and feel something good toward other people.

Similar issues concerning variations in the organization of consciousness arise in connection with the research of Steven Parish (1991) on conceptions of the mental life among the South Asian Hindu Newars of Nepal (see also Appadurai, 1990; Brenneis, 1990). For the Newars, mental states such as memory, desire, feeling, thought, and emotion, which we would typically render as “feeling,” “mood,” “sentiment,” “mental state,” or “consciousness.” I look forward to the day when Sanskritists do for the concept signified by the term bhāva what Wierzbicka has done for the concept signified by the Russian word duša.

For the time being, however, I am not going to try to solve the very deepest of questions about the partitioning of the person into parts and the division of consciousness into kinds. Instead, I am going to argue that it is helpful enough to know what the text tells us. What the “Rasādhyāya” tells us is that in drama the sthāyi-bhāva (I continue calling them “basic emotions”) are brought to a state of rasa. More importantly, however, what the text tells us is that the rasa are nothing more than the union of three script-like or narrative components:

1. The determinants, causes, or eliciting conditions (vi-bhāva), which include all the background information, settings, events, and conditions that might make manifest some state of the world and one’s relationship to it (e.g., forced separation from something one cherishes; finding oneself powerless in the face of danger).

2. The consequences (anu-bhāva), which include eight types of involuntary somatic responses (sweating, fainting, weeping, etc.), and various action tendencies (abusing the body, brandishing weapons) and expressive modes (bodily movement, voice tone, facial expression)—for example, wailing and tears.

3. The “accompanying” mental states (ayabhācari-bhāva), which are something like a 33-item symptom list of secondary side effects, including emotions, feelings, and cognitive states; some of these effects are weariness, reminiscence, panic, envy, dreaming, confusion, sickness, shame, and even death.

In other words, in the “Rasādhyāya” one finds a relatively elaborate account of the symbolic structures that give shape and meaning to a selected subset of mental experiences, which because they have been privileged for symbolic elaboration have become transformed into “basic” mental experiences for that culturally constituted world.
THE SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE OF THE EMOTIONS

The strategy adopted in the “Rasadhyāya” is to define a basic emotion by the implicit symbolic structure that gives shape and meaning to that emotion (its rasa—the intentional object of aesthetic pleasure in the theatre) and then to define that symbolic structure by resolving it into its determinants, consequences, and accompanying side effects. This strategy is directly parallel to various contemporary approaches to the cultural psychology of the emotions.

One aspect of this symbolic (or, as some would call it, “cognitive,” “interpretive,” or “intentional”) approach is the view that kinds of emotions do not exist independently of our implicit representations of them and thus are not kinds of things like plants or animals. Instead, they are (rasa-like) interpretive schemes of a particular script-like, story-like, or narrative kind, which give shape and meaning to the human experience of those conditions of the world that have a bearing on the self. The elements that are proposed as slots in the story may vary slightly from scholar to scholar, although most of the slots in use today can be found in the “Rasadhyāya.”

Mesquita and Frijda (1992; see also Ellsworth, 1991; Frijda, 1986; Lewis, Wolan-Sullivan, & Michalson, 1982; Lewis, 1989; Stein & Levine, 1987), for example, parse each emotion script into a series of slots including “antecedent events,” “event coding” (type of condition of the world), “appraisal” (judged implications for the self and well-being), “physiological reaction patterns,” “action readiness,” “emotional behavior,” and “regulation.” Elsewhere (Shweder, in press), I have suggested a parsing of emotion scripts into slots such as “self-involving conditions of the world” (e.g., loss and gain, protection and threat), “somatic feelings” (e.g., muscle tension, pain, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, breathlessness), “affective feelings” (e.g., agitation, emptiness, expansiveness), “expressive modes” (e.g., face, posture, voice), and “plans for self-management” (e.g., to flee, to retaliate, to celebrate, to invest).

(See also Shweder, 1991, where a slot is provided in the emotion narrative for variations in “social regulation” or the normative appropriateness of certain emotions’ being experienced or expressed.)

The primary assumption of the symbolic approach is the same as the approach of the “Rasadhyāya”—namely, that the “emotion” (e.g., sadness, fear, or love) is not something independent of or separable from the conditions that justify it, from the somatic and affective events that are ways of feeling or being touched by it, from the actions it demands, or the like. The “emotion” is the whole story: a kind of somatic event (fatigue, chest pain, goose flesh) and/or affective event (panic, emptiness, expansiveness) experienced as a perception of some antecedent conditions (death of a friend, acceptance of a book manuscript for publication, a proposition to go out to dinner) and their implications for the self (e.g., as loss, gain, threat, possibility), and experienced as well as a social judgment (e.g., of vice or virtue, sickness or health) and as a kind of plan for action to preserve one’s self-esteem (attack, withdraw, confess, hide, explore). The “emotion,” one is tempted to argue, is the entire script. It is the simultaneous experience of all the components, or, perhaps more accurately, the unitary experience of the whole package deal.

A second aspect of the symbolic approach is the view that for the sake of comparison and translation, any “emotion” is decomposable into its narrative slots. From this point of view, to ask whether people are alike or different in their emotional functioning (or whether emotion words in different languages are alike or different in their significations) is really to ask several more specific questions:

1. Are they alike or different in their somatic experiences (e.g., muscle tension, headaches, etc.)? (the somatic phenomenology question)
2. Are they alike or different in their affective experiences (e.g., emptiness, calm)? (the affective phenomenology question)
3. Are they alike or different in the antecedent conditions of those somatic and affective experiences (e.g., infertility, job loss, winning the lottery)? (the environmental determinants question)
4. Are they alike or different in the perceived implications of those antecedent conditions for the self (e.g., irreversible loss, fame and recognition)? (the self-appraisal question)
5. Are they alike or different in the extent to which showing or displaying that state of consciousness has been socially baptized as a vice or virtue or as a sign of sickness or health? (the social appraisal question)
6. Are they alike or different in the plans for the self-management of self-esteem that get
activated as part of the emotion script (e.g.,
celebration, withdrawal from social contacts)?
(the self-management question)

7. Are they alike or different in the iconic
and symbolic vehicles used for giving expres-
sion to the whole package deal (e.g.,
facial expressions, voice, posture, and action)?
(the communication question)

Given this type of decomposition of the
definition of an emotion to its constituent nar-
rative slots, the issue of translation equivalence
becomes a matter of pattern matching, as one
tries to determine whether the variables in
each of those slots are linked in similar ways
across cultures.

“BITE YOUR TONGUE”:
THE CASE OF HINDU LAJYA

For example, the contemporary Hindu con-
ception of lajya has recently been explicated
for two communities in South Asia—the
Newars of Bhaktapur in Nepal (Parish, 1991)
and the Oriyas of Bhubaneswar in Orissa,
India (Menon & Shweder, in press; Shweder,
in press)—and, as spelled out below, there is
even more to be said about lajya than can be
found in these two accounts. Lajya is often
translated by bilingual informants and dictio-
naries as “shame,” “embarrassment,” “shy-
ness,” or “modesty”; yet, as should become
obvious from the following
bit
of cultural ex-
egesis, every one of these translations is prob-
lematic or fatally flawed.

For starters, lajya is something one deliber-
ately shows or puts on display the way
Anglo-Americans might show “gratitude,” “loy-
alty,” or “respect.” It is a state of conscious-
ness that has been baptized in South Asia as a
supreme virtue, especially for women, and it
is routinely exhibited in everyday life (e.g.,
every time a married woman covers her face
or ducks out of a room to avoid direct affilia-
tion with those members of her family she is
supposed to avoid). Parish (1991, p. 324) de-
scribes it as both an emotion and a moral state.
It is by means of their lajya that those who are
civilized uphold the social order—by showing
perseverance in the pursuit of their own so-

prerogatives of others; by covering one’s face,
remaining silent, or lowering one’s eyes in the
presence of superiors. Like gratitude, loyalty,
or respect, lajya, which is a way of showing
one’s civility and commitment to the mainte-
nance of social harmony, is judged in South
Asia to be a very good thing.

Although lajya may be experienced by both
men and women, it is an emotion and a virtue
associated with a certain feminine ideal. It is
talked about as a lovely ornament worn by
women. Lajya is the linguistic stem for the
name of a local creeper plant (a “touch-me-
not”), which is so coy that upon the slightest
contact it closes its petals and withdraws into
itself. To say of a woman that she is full of lajya
is a very positive recommendation. Here is one
reason why.

Perhaps the most important collective rep-
resentation of lajya in various regions of eastern
India is the tantric icon portraying the
mother goddess Kali, brandishing weapons
and a decapitated head in her 10 arms, eyes
bulging and tongue out, with her foot stepping
on the chest of her husband, the god Siva, who
is lying on the ground beneath her. On the
basis of interviews with 92 informants, Usha
Menon and I have been examining the mean-
ing of this icon and its significance for our
understanding of lajya (Menon & Shweder, in
press).

The gist of the story, as it is narrated by local
experts, is that once upon a time the male gods
gave a boon to a minor demon, Mahisasura,
to the effect that he could only be killed at the
hands of a naked female. They thereby turned
Mahisasura into a major demon who was able
unimpeded to terrorize all the male gods. In
order to destroy the demon, the male gods
poled all their energy and powers and cre-
ated the goddess Durga, and armed her with
their own weapons. On their behalf they sent
Durga into battle against Mahisasura, but
they neglected to tell her about the boon. She
fought bravely but could not kill the demon;
he was too strong and clever. In desperation
Durga appealed for guidance from an auspi-
cious goddess, who let her in on the secret. As
one informant narrated the story:

So Durga did as she was advised to [she stripped],
and within seconds after Mahisasura saw her
[naked], his strength waned and he died under
her sword. After killing him a terrible rage
entered Durga's mind, and she asked herself, "What kinds of gods are these that give to demons such boons, and apart from that what kind of gods are these that they do not have the honesty to tell me the truth before sending me into battle?"

Durga felt humiliated by her nakedness and the deceit. She decided that such a world with such gods did not deserve to survive; she therefore took on the form of Kali and went on a mad rampage, devouring every living creature that came in her way. The gods then called on Siva, Kali's husband, to do something to save the world from destruction at the hands of the mother goddess. Siva lay in her path as she came tramping along, enraged. Absorbed in her wild dance of destruction, Kali accidentally stepped on Siva and placed her foot on her husband's chest, an unspeakable act of disrespect. When she looked down and saw what she had done, she came back to her senses—in particular to her sense of *lajya*, which she expressed by biting her tongue between her teeth. She reined in her anger and became calm and still. To this day in Orissa, India, "Bite your tongue" is an idiomatic expression for *lajya*; it is the facial expression used by women as an iconic apology when they realize, or are confronted with the fact, that they have failed to uphold social norms.

One moral of the story is that men are incapable of running the world by themselves, even though they are socially dominant. They rely on women to make the world go round. Yet in a patriarchal society, men humiliate women by the way they exploit female power, strength, and perseverance. This leads to anger and rage in women, which is highly destructive of everything of value and must be brought under control, for the sake of the social order. *Lajya* is a salient ideal in South Asia because it preserves social harmony by helping women to swallow their rage.

If we decompose *lajya* into its constituent narrative slots, it becomes apparent just how hazardous it can be to assume that one can render the emotional meanings of others with terms from our received English lexicon for mental states. (See Geertz, 1984, p. 130, on the difficulties of translating the Balinese term *lek*. Balinese *lek* seems much like Hindu *lajya*. Geertz notes that "*lek* has been variably translated and mistranslated" and that "*shame* is the most common attempt." He tries to render it as "stage fright.") Hindu *lajya* does not map well onto words such as "shame," "embarrassment," "shyness," "modesty," or "stage fright." An analysis of the constituents of *lajya* helps us see why.

From the perspective of social appraisal and self-appraisal, for example, to be full of *lajya* is to be in possession of the virtue of behaving in a civilized manner and in such a way that the social order and its norms are upheld. It is not a neurosis, and it does not connote a reduction in the strength of the ego. Indeed, *lajya* promotes self-esteem. Of course, to be perceived or labeled as someone without *lajya*—as someone who encroaches on the station of others, or fails to live up to the requirements of his or her own station—is unpleasant and arousing. Parish notes that to feel *lajya* is sometimes associated with blushing, sweating, and altered pulse (1991, p. 324), but I suspect that such a somatic phenomenology is a feature of the anxiety provoked by the social perception of the absence of *lajya* and is not definitive of *lajya* itself. For to experience *lajya* is to experience that sense of virtuous, courteous, well-mannered restraint that led Kali to rein in her rage.

The environmental determinants of *lajya* as a sense of one's own virtue and civility are as varied as the set of actions that are dutiful and responsible, given one's station in life in a world in which all people are highly self-conscious about their social designation (see Geertz, 1984, for a brilliant attempt to capture the dramatic qualities of such a world). They include events that Anglo-Americans would find familiar (not being seen naked by the wrong person in the wrong context), as well as many events that might seem alien or strange (never talking directly to one's husband's elder brother or to one's father-in-law; never being in the same room with both one's husband and another male to whom he must defer).

From the perspective of self-management, South Asian *lajya* may appear at first glance to be similar to Anglo-American "shame" or "embarrassment." It activates a habit or routine that sometimes results in hiding, covering up, and withdrawing from the scene. Yet what is really being activated by *lajya* is a general habit of respect for social hierarchy and a consciousness of one's social and public responsibilities, which in the context of South
Asian norms may call for avoidance, silence, withdrawal, or other deferential, protective, or nonaggressive gestures and actions.

Finally, let us consider the semantic structure of "shame" and *lajji* in the minds of informants. When middle-class Anglo-American college students are presented with the triad of terms "shame—happiness—anger" and asked, "Which is most different from the other two?", they are most likely to respond either that "happiness" or "shame" is most different from the other two, perhaps on the grounds that "shame" and "anger" go together because they are both unpleasant feelings; or that "happiness" and "anger" go together because they are both ego-expanding emotions. Neither response is typical of responses in the South Asian community where I work, where *lajja* (shame?) and *suka* (happiness?) are thought to go together in the triad test, and *raga* (anger?), perceived as destructive of society, is the odd emotion out. Here something seems to be amiss in the translation process. Something may well have been amiss in most past attempts to equate emotions across languages and across local cultural worlds (see Wierzbiacka, 1992).

In sum, as we enter a new era of collaborative research among anthropologists, psychologists and physiologists, concerned with similarities and differences in emotional functioning on a worldwide scale, a major goal for the cultural psychology of the emotions will be to decompose the emotions (and the languages of the emotions) into constituent narrative slots. It is to be hoped that by means of the decomposition of the symbolic structure of the emotions, it will be possible to render the meaning of other people's mental states without assimilating them in misleading ways to an *a priori* set of lexical items available in the language of the researcher (e.g., rendering Hindu *lajja* as English "shame").

It is one of the great marvels of life that across languages, cultures, and history, it is possible, with sufficient knowledge, effort, and insight, to truly understand the meanings of other people's emotions and mental states. Yet one must also marvel at one of the great ironies of life—namely, that the process of understanding the consciousness of others can deceptively appear to be far easier than it really is, thereby making it even more difficult to achieve a genuine understanding of "otherness." Thus, in the end, this discussion of the cultural psychology of the emotions and mediation on the venerable "Rasadhyaya" of the Nātyaśāstra are really pleas for a decomposition of emotional states into their constituent narrative slots (environmental determinants, somatic phenomenology, affective phenomenology, self-appraisal, social appraisal, self-management strategy, and communication codes). Unless we take that step, we will continue to be prone to the bias that the emotional life of human beings is "basically" the same around the world. The truth may well be that when it comes to "basic" emotions, we all (medieval Hindus and contemporary Anglo-Americans, Pintupis and Russians, Eskimos and Balinese, etc.) are not only basically alike in some ways, but can be basically different from one another as well.

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**REFERENCES**


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We can see that the natural text is a compilation of references to various authors and their works. This suggests that the text is a collection of citations or a bibliography, likely from a larger document or study on basic psychological processes in emotion. The references cover a range of topics including emotion theories, cultural psychology, and the categorization of emotions. The authors cited are from various disciplines and institutions, indicating a multidisciplinary approach to the study of emotion. The presence of references to works such as "The passions" by Solomon suggests that this text may be related to a broader study on emotions in literature or a multidisciplinary approach to understanding human emotions.


