"Evaluation of Eugene O'Neill's Play"Desire under the Elms" in the Light of Nine Rasas of Bharat Muni

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INTRODUCTION OF THE PAPER -

This study indicates that how Nine Rasas of Bharat Muni can be applicable to the drama of any language of the world. Nine Rasas literally means 'essence', it is used as the sense of emotional state. These Nine Rasas are the backbone of the Natyasatra (Dramatics), In simple words Nine Rasas are complete nine emotions of the human being.

The play Desire Under The Elms carries all the Nine Rasas with ups and down. The plays divided into three parts and each part having several scenes. All the Rasas in the form of emotional state lifts the play at the certain height. The intense emotions of the play are greed, lust and pride. All the Rasas are included in these intense emotions. The play opens with the light mood i.e. love, laughter anger etc. The second part carries the prominent mood of hatred and anger. The third part carries disgust, pity, fear and the calmness with the tragic note. The play opens with the question mark and the same question mark closes the wings of the play.

INTRODUCTION OF THE RASAS –

Bharat Muni wrote Natya Sastra (Dramatics) between 200 and 300 B. C. It contains the science and technique of Indian Drama, dance and music. Rasa theories described in Natya Sastra. Bharat Muni mentioned only eight Rasas the ninth Rasa was added later by the critic.

1) Shringara Rasa (Love, affection)

(Page No. 124 to 158 – Shlokas No. 41 to 49, Volume No. – II Natya Shastra (Hindi) Dr. Parasnath Dwiwedi)

2) Hasya Rasa (Mirth, humour)

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( Page No. 159 to 169 – Shlokas No. 50 to 62)
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3) Karuna Rasa (compassion, pity)

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( Page No. 170 to 174 – Shlokas No. 63 to 64)
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4) Raudra Rasa (anger, wrath)

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( Page No. 175 to 186 – Shlokas No. 65 to 67)
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5) Vira Rasa (Heroic)

6) Bhayanaka Rasa (horror, terror)

7) Bibhatsa Rasa (disgust, aversion)

(Page No. 196 to 199 – Shlokas No. 74 to 75)

8) Adbhuta Rasa (wonder, amazement)

(Page No. 199 to 201 – Shlokas No. 76 to 77)

9) Shanta Rasa (peace, calmness)

(Page No. 207 to 208 – Shlokas No. 84 to 89)

The Ninth Rasa is suggested by Abhinav Gupta (A philosopher, mystics and aesthetician 950 - 1020 AD)

All the Nine Rasas are the emotions which control the human being physically and psychology.

EVALUATION OF THE PLAY –

The play is divided into Three Parts not in Acts & every Part is divided into four scenes.

The first scene of the First Part introduces the three brothers in revolt against their father. The tools of Bharat Muni starts along with the opening scene. Raudra Rasa (Anger) and Bibhatsa Rasa (Disgust) are strongly working in the mind of the three characters (brothers). The nature of the three brother is different. Simeon and Peter are clumsy louts who hate their father because he had made them over-work on his stony-farm. In the opening scene they are shown determined to leave the farm and go over to California in search of gold. Their decision shows their hate which carries Raudra Rasa and Bibhatsa Rasa. Raudra Rasa i. e. intense anger and Bibhatsa Rasa i. e. disgust, all these emotions arouse in them due to the rude behaviour of their father. The third son Eben carries both the Rasas are in different context. His father over – worked his mother and killed her by inches and stole the farm from her. In his view the farm rightfully belongs to him, and he is sure that his mother's spirit would be at rest only when he gets the farm and take, revenge for the wrong done by his father old Ephraim.

We find in this scene the two Rasas Raudra and Bibhatsa are dominant. Under these two Rasas Karuna Rasa (compassion) is intensely working.

The second scene opens with the same Rasas which are working intensely. Old Ephraim is away from home and farm for long time, and there is no news about his whereabouts which never happened before so they thought that he must be dead -

SIMEON--Ay-eh. (a pause) Mebbe--he'll die soon.

PETER--(doubtfully) Mebbe.

SIMEON--Mebbe--fur all we knows--he's dead now.

PETER--Ye'd need proof.

SIMEON--He's been gone two months--with no word.

(Part – I, Scene – I Desire Under The Elms, Eugene O'neill (1888-1953) Revised Second Edition, As Published By Boni & Liveright, 1925)

Here the slight shade of Hasya Rasa (Happiness) arouse in at the three brothers. Eben accuses Peter and Simeon that they did not protect his mother (She was step mother of Peter and Simeon) Peter & Simeon were surprised at their accusation. Eben goes to a prostitute for relief. The first scene carries Raudra Rasa and Bibhatsa Rasa with Hasya Rasa.

The third scene opens with the information of the new marriage of Ephraim with Abbie (35) which gives the shock to Peter, Simeon and Eben.

EBEN--The cussed old miser! Wake up!

PETER--(angrily) What in hell's-fire . . . ?

EBEN--I got news fur ye! Ha!

SIMEON--(angrily) Couldn't ye hold it 'til we'd got our sleep?

EBEN--It's nigh sunup. (then explosively) He's gone an' married agen!

(Part – I, Scene – III)

This shock in Indian Dramatics is called as Adbhuta Rasa (wonder) but it carries Raudra Rasa (disgust). Anger for the disgusting act of Old Cabot. Instead of thinking about the young sons Cabot (Ephraim) is serious about his own marriage. This creates disgust and anguish.

Another angle of this scene creates Hasya Rasa which gives some comfort to Peter and Simeon. They are tempted by Eben's offer for selling their share to him. But they decided to wait and see if the news of the marriage of Ephraim is true or not. Eben's diplomatic work is going on and closes the scene.

Third scene carries dominantly Raudra Rasa and Bhibhtsa Rasa. The thin line of Hasya Rasa (happiness, joy) is underneath.

The IVth scene begins with calamity Ephraim brings Abbie as his third wife. She is full of vitality. Her face is full with the strength and determination. She is very happy to think that the farm will be of her only. Hasya Rasa is with her. Peter and Simon drink, dance because they are leaving and they will get freedom and gold, here Hasya Rasa is prominent. On the contrary Eben and Abbie confront each other. Eben curses her but Abbie is attracted by his youth and handsome appearance. Bibhatsa Rasa begins to flow in the scene. Abbie is strong and vital she has a complete hold over old Cabot. She married old Cabot because she has no home and on the other side she has a physical attraction about Eben. Desire of her two wills is strengthen here.

EBEN-- An' bought yew--like a harlot! An' the price he's payin' ye--this farm--was my Maw's, damn ye!--an' mine now!

ABBIE-- Yewr'n? We'll see 'bout that! (then strongly) Waal--what if I did need a hum? What else'd I marry an old man like him fur?

EBEN--(maliciously) I'll tell him ye said that!

ABBIE--(*smiling*) I'll say ye're lyin' a-purpose--an' he'll drive ye off the place!

EBEN--Ye devil!

ABBIE--(defying him) This be my farm--this be my hum--this be my kitchen!

EBEN-- Shut up, damn ye!

(Part – I, Scene – IV)

The Bhayanaka Rasa (Fear) is introduced in this play first time. But this Rasa is arouse in the mind of the spectators not in the characters. The spectator first time involves through the Bhayanaka Rasa (fear) in this play. O'Neill is very much successful to make involve the spectator very earlier in the play. Bhayanaka Rasa is the ladder of involvement.

The first part covers four Rasas, Raudra Rasa, Bibhatsa Rasa, Hasya Rasa and Bhayanaka Rasa.

The first scene of the second part begins with Bibhatsa Rasa which is the prominent one in the second part throughout the scenes. Abbie tries to reduce Eben. Despite of all her charm. Eben hates her and remain adamant. Eben tells Abbie he will go to Min the prostitute. Further he says that she is alike Min because she has sold herself for the farm.

ABBIE-- Whar air ye goin'?

EBEN-- Oh--up the road a spell.

ABBIE--T' the village?

EBEN--(airily) Mebbe.

ABBIE--(excitedly) T' see that Min, I s'pose?

EBEN--Mebbe.

ABBIE--(bursting out) An ugly old hake!

EBEN-- She's purtier'n yew be!

ABBIE--(furiously) Don't ye dare compare. . . .

EBEN--She don't go sneakin' an' stealin'--what's mine.

(Part – II, Scene – I)

Here Raudra Rasa arouse in the mind of Abbie. She becomes furious and it is sign of Raudra Rasa. She is helpless here and she screams over the comment of Eben. Here the Raudra Rasa is at the peak.

After the departure of Eben Ephraim enters and tells Abbie that his two sons left him and Eben is only remained alone. In this age it is not possible for the new heir. Without son you will have no right on the farm. On this Abbie is terrified and Bhayanaka Rasa (fear) dominates the situation and shakes the heart of Abbie. She complaints that Eben tried to seduce her. Cabot becomes furious and decides to kill him by shotgun. Again she is terrified by the idea of death of Eben. Abbie controls Cabot and handles the situation. She assures Cabot for getting a heir and God will help them for that.

CABOT--Ye're on'y a woman.

ABBIE--I'm yewr wife.

CABOT--That hain't me. A son is me--my blood--mine. Mine ought t' git mine. An' then it's still mine--even though I be six foot under. D'ye see?

ABBIE-- Ay-eh. I see.

CABOT--I'm gittin' old--ripe on the bough. (*then with a sudden forced reassurance*) Not but what I hain't a hard nut t' crack even yet--an' fur many a year t' come! By the Etarnal, I kin break most o' the young fellers's backs at any kind o' work any day o' the year!

ABBIE--(suddenly) Mebbe the Lord'll give us a son.

CABOT--(turns and stares at her eagerly) Ye mean--a son--t' me 'n' yew?

ABBIE--(with a cajoling smile) Ye're a strong man yet, hain't ye? 'Tain't noways impossible, be it? We know that. Why d'ye stare so? Hain't ye never thought o' that afore? I been thinkin' o' it all along. Ay-eh--an' I been prayin' it'd happen, too.

(Part – II, Scene – I)

Cabot becomes very happy and Hasya Rasa takes the charge of the concluding part of the first scene.

The second scene in this part is fully charged with Karuna Rasa (compassion). Cabot tells his story when he arrived he was fifty but was strong than the young son Eben.

CABOT--Listen, Abbie. When I come here fifty odd year ago--I was jest twenty an' the strongest an' hardest ye ever seen--ten times as strong an' fifty times as hard as Eben. Waal--this place was nothin' but fields o' stones. Folks laughed when I tuk it. They couldn't know what I knowed. When ye kin make corn sprout out o' stones, God's livin' in yew! They wa'n't strong enuf fur that! They reckoned God was easy. They laughed. They don't laugh no more. Some died hereabouts. Some went West an' died. They're all under ground--fur follerin' arter an easy God. God hain't easy. An' I growed hard. Folks kept allus sayin' he's a hard man like 'twas sinful t' be hard, so's at last I said back at 'em: Waal then, by thunder, ye'll git me hard an' see how ye like it!

(Part – II, Scene – II)

He explained that he worked hard on the stony farm. All the people laughed at him but they were surprised when Cabot converted stony land into fertile land. He married and got two sons Peter and Simeon. After the death of the first wife he married again, Eben was her son. She also died again he was alone. Eben misunderstood that Cabot possessed her mother's farm. Fortunately he get Abbie and married her. Now he expects heir for the farm from her. His principle of life is to work hard and get fruit of hardship. Very simple and stranger philosophy of life he followed. He confession carries Karuna Rasa (compassion) Hasya Rasa (happiness).

As a part of stage craft the symbolic wall between Abbie and Eben is suggestive. O'Neill used it very significantly. Through the walls they can see and experience each other. The first time Shringara Rasa (Love) enters in the play with soft steps. Abbie rushes into Eben's room kisses him passionately. Unknowingly Eben returns with kiss but as he becomes conscious he throws her back. Shringara Rasa and Raudra Rasa both are at parallel level. Shringara Rasa due to the physical attraction and Raudra Rasa for the mother's tragic death. On this reaction Abbie retaliates by saying that Eben loves her it proves through his eyes. She decides to tempt him in the same room where his mother breathed last. She seduced Eben as follows -

ABBIE-- I'll sing fur ye! I'll die fur ye! Don't cry, Eben! I'll take yer Maw's place! I'll be everythin' she was t' ye! Let me kiss ye, Eben! Don't be afeered! I'll kiss ye pure, Eben--same 's if I was a Maw t' ye--an' ye kin kiss me back 's if yew was my son--my boy--sayin' good-night t' me! Kiss me, Eben. Don't ye leave me, Eben! Can't ye see it hain't enuf--lovin' ye like a Maw--can't ye see it's got t' be that an' more--much more-a hundred times more--fur me t' be happy--fur yew t' be happy?

EBEN-- Maw! Maw! What d'ye want? What air ye tellin' me?

ABBIE--She's tellin' ye t' love me. She knows I love ye an' I'll be good t' ye. Can't ye feel it? Don't ye know? She's tellin' ye t' love me, Eben!

EBEN--Ay-eh. I feel--mebbe she--but--I can't figger out--why--when ye've stole her place--here in her hum--in the parlor whar she was--

ABBIE--(fiercely) She knows I love ye!

EBEN-- I see it! I sees why. It's her vengeance on him--so's she kin rest quiet in her grave!

(Part – II, Scene – III)

The scene ends with the concerned cry of Eben for his mother. He cries 'Mother where are you'. Here the Karuna Rasa is at the peak.

Total scene is charged with Karuna Rasa (compassion) and concludes with same.

The third scene of second part is the key scene where the spectator is flown away with Bhayanaka Rasa (fear) and Karuna Rasa(compassion). Abbie is waiting Eben in the parlour. She assures him she would love him as he loved his mother. Only the difference is that she will his mother as well as his mistress. Eben is confused. His body was attracted towards Abbie but heart is weeping for his mother. Suddenly he feels that he can have revenge for the wrongs of his mother by making love to Abbie. Thus the spirit of his mother would be satisfied and she would be henceforth rest in

peace in her grave. Then they declares their love for each other and go to sleep in a close embrace. All that produces Karuna Rasa (compassion) Assumption of Eben for his mother's salvation is really a disgusting act. So Bibhatsa Rasa and Karuna Rasa but are dominating the scene. The same Rasas makes eneazy the heart by the spectator. With the intensity of Karuna Rasa is at the peak of the situation. Now we find that situation is not under the control of characters but the characters are in the control of situation.

The fourth scene begins with the light mood. The insobriety of the night is lingering in the mind of Eben and Abbie. Eben feels that his mother is now satisfied. She has returned to the grave, and as they can make her room their room. Abbie is confident that she can always befool her husband so that he would never have any suspicious. Here Karuna Rasa is at the peak. The spectator is terrified with Bhayanaka Rasa(fear). The tragic flaw of all the characters starts with the steady steps.

Eben encounters his father. His father is surprised with the strange and bold behavior of the son. Adbhuta Rasa(wonder) arouse here in old Cabot.

The scene ends with Adbhuta Rasa(wonder).

The first scene of third part takes place a year later the second part. A child has been born to Abbie. Cabot gets the heir. The birth of the baby is being celebrated with due mirth and gaiety. Here Hasya Rasa(joy, mirth) fills the atmosphere. The happiness on the very face of Cabot releases the tension of the previous part. Neightbours and friends have gathered for celebration. The guest have inkling of the truth, and know that the baby is Eben's and not of Cabot who is now 76 years of age, too old to beget child

CABOT--What're ye all bleatin' about--like a flock o' goats? Why don't ye dance, damn ye? I axed ye here t' dance--t' eat, drink an' be merry--an' thar ye set cacklin' like a lot o' wet hens with the pip! Ye've swilled my likker an' guzzled my vittles like hogs, hain't ye? Then dance fur me, can't ye? That's fa'r an' squar', hain't it?

FIDDLER--(*slyly*) We're waitin' fur Eben. (*a suppressed laugh*)

CABOT--(with a fierce exultation) T' hell with Eben! Eben's done fur now! I got a new son! But ye needn't t' laugh at Eben, none o' ye! He's my blood, if he be a dumb fool. He's better nor any o' yew! He kin do a day's work a'most up t' what I kin--an' that'd put any o' yew pore critters t' shame!

(Part – III, Scene – I)

Cabot is very happy, he surprises by dancing energetically. He puts all young men to shame by his energetic dance. All are amazed at his energy Adbhuta Rasa(wonder) flows throughout this scene. Abbie and Eben kiss and embrace each other. Baby looks exactly like Eben. Cabot goes to barn to sleep with his caws. The house doesn't give him rest and peace of mind. The silver line of Karuna Rasa (compassion) creates atmosphere gloomy.

The second scene of the third part carries the previous mood. Cabot says Eben he should have dance with the young girl having farm.

CABOT--They's a hull passel o' purty gals.

EBEN--T' hell with 'em!

CABOT--Ye'd ought t' be marryin' one o' 'em soon.

EBEN--I hain't marryin' no one.

CABOT--Ye might 'arn a share o' a farm that way.

EBEN--(with a sneer) Like yew did, ye mean? I hain't that kind.

CABOT--(stung) Ye lie! 'Twas yer Maw's folks aimed t' steal my farm from me.

EBEN--Other folks don't say so. (after a pause--defiantly) An' I got a farm, anyways!

CABOT--(derisively) Whar?

EBEN--(stamps a foot on the ground) Har!

Yewr farm! God A'mighty! If ye wa'n't a born donkey ye'd know ye'll never own stick nor stone on it, specially now arter him bein' born. It's his'n, I tell ye--his'n arter I die--

(Part – III, Scene – II)

Eben replies no other farm he needed as he has his own. On this Cabot laughs loudly and tells him he would never have even stone of the farm, because the heir of the farm is just born. Further he tells Eben that she handled him as simply a mad fool. Abbie had assured Cabot that they would have a son to inherit the farm. Adbhuta Rasa (wonder, surprise) turns the total table of the scene and stimulates the situation for Raudra Rasa (anger, wrath). Eben is enraged for the tricks of Abbie. Here Karuna Rasa (compassion) also charges the situation that Cabot is happy because he got a baby as his heir but he is blind about the fathership. Hasya Rasa (joy) is at fuller length. On the other hand Eben is angry that Abbie made fool of him by getting baby from him Raudra Rasa(anger, wrath) is at fuller length. Under Hasya Rasa and Raudra Rasa there is a silver line of Karuna Rasa. Which making the spectator uneasy.

With same anger Eben goes to Abbie, accuses her for treachery.

ABBIE--(fearfully) Eben--what's happened t' ye--why did ye look at me 's if ye hated me?

EBEN--(violently, between sobs and gasps) I do hate ye! Ye're a whore--a damn trickin' whore!

ABBIE--(shrinking back horrified) Eben! Ye don't know what ye're sayin'!

EBEN--(scrambling to his feet and following her--accusingly) Ye're nothin' but a stinkin' passel o' lies! Ye've been lyin' t' me every word ye spoke, day an' night, since we fust--done it. Ye've kept sayin' ye loved me. . . .

ABBIE--(frantically) I do love ye! (She takes his hand, but he flings hers away.)

EBEN--(*unheeding*) Ye've made a fool o' me--a sick, dumb fool--a-purpose! Ye've been on'y playin' yer sneakin', stealin' game all along--gittin' me t' lie with ye so's ye'd hev a son he'd think was his'n, an' makin' him promise he'd give ye the farm and let

me eat dust, if ye did git him a son! (*staring at her with anguished, bewildered eyes*) They must be a devil livin' in ye! T'ain't human t' be as bad as that be!

ABBIE--(calls after him intensely) I'll prove t' ye! I'll prove I love ye better'n. . .

(Part – III, Scene – II)

Now no words of her explanation would remove his doubts. Further he says the only solution is the death of a baby to clear his doubts. He would love her again in case the baby were dead. Abbies protests that she will prove she loves him more that the baby and the farm and more than the anything else in the world. This part of the scene is loaded with Karuna Rasa(compassion).

The third scene in the turning point of the play. Total play turns at the strange and dreadful corner. Abbie tells Eben that she prove her love that she loves him above everything.

ABBIE--(*hysterically*) I done it, Eben! I told ye I'd do it! I've proved I love yebetter'n everythin'--so's ye can't never doubt me no more!

EBEN--Ye look mad, Abbie. What did ye do?

ABBIE--I--I killed him, Eben.

EBEN--(amazed) Ye killed him?

ABBIE--(wildly) No! No! Not him! (laughing distractedly) But that's what I ought t' done, hain't it? I oughter killed him instead! Why didn't ye tell me?

EBEN--(appalled) Instead? What d'ye mean?

ABBIE--Not him.

EBEN--(his face grown ghastly) Not--not that baby!

ABBIE--(dully) Ay-eh!

(Part – III, Scene – III)

Eben thinks that she has murdered old Cabot. He is glad of it. But he is horrified by the news that Abbie killed her baby. He is unable to hear it because after all it was his own flesh and blood. With great anguish he hurts abuses and accusations at her. She did it purposely to blame him, and she wants the whole farm for herself by sending him behind bars. Abbie realizes her mistake but untimely. Here Karuna Rasa fills the total atmosphere. Adbhuta Rasa(wonder) adds the fierceness of the situation and Bhayanaka Rasa (fear) clutches all the situation. The triangle of these three Rasas dominates the whole action of the scene. Eben goes out to call sheriff to get her arrested. Thus he would have revenge on her and on his father. Abbie tries to prevent him. She says she will not mind what he intends to do, she will be satisfied if he assures her that he also loves her.

The Karuna Rasa arises the pathetic emotions in the heart of the characters as well as in the heart of the spectators.

The last scene of the plays begins with the Karuna Rasa (compassion) Old Cabot is aquatinted with the reality. He now understands why he had felt so lonely and restless in the house, why he always had a sensation that something unnatural was taking place. Bhayanaka Rasa gave the same anticipation in the previous scene while he went to barn to sleep with cows. He becomes very angry he orders Eben to go out of the farm or he would himself murder him (Eben) and no matters if the Sheriff would come second time to take him(Cabot). Eben is out if senses but he realizes that Abbie did everything for the safe of his love. He assures her that he loves her and would always love her. He wants to get punished along with Abbie because all that happened due to him. So he confessed himself and the dialogue between Eben and Abbie takes the play at the climax of the situation -

ABBIE--(shaking her head) I got t' take my punishment--t' pay fur my sin.

EBEN--Then I want t' share it with ye.

ABBIE--Ye didn't do nothin'.

EBEN--I put it in yer head. I wisht he was dead! I as much as urged ye t' do it!

ABBIE--No. It was me alone!

EBEN--I'm as guilty as yew be! He was the child o' our sin.

ABBIE--(*lifting her head as if defying God*) I don't repent that sin! I hain't askin' God t' fergive that!

(Part – III, Scene – IV)

He admits his guilt before the Sheriff. The first time Veera Rasa (Heroic) takes the charge of the situation. It is his heroic deed that he admitted his guilt. The role of Veera Rasa is in the later part of the play. Eben's confession for the share in the crime is really a heroic deed. Veera Rasa is recognised with heroism. Heroic deed is the prime quality of Veera Rasa. Cabot is alone at the end and the heap of the stones accompanies him. Karuna Rasa is at the peak of the situation. We are not angry with Abbie, Cabot and Eben but we feel pity for them. So create Karuna Rasa (compassion and pity) at the ends of the play O'Neill is fully successful. After all the action of the play Shanta Rasa(peace) is spread over the situation. The spectator becomes calm and quiet due to Shanta Rasa. The Shanta Rasa fills the total situation but the silver time of the Karuna Rasa lingers with severity in the mind of the spectator. O'Neill is very much successful in this play because he makes the spectator to think, over the play off the theater for long time.

CONCLUSION -

Shringara Rasa, Hasya Rasa, Raudra Rasa Bibhatsa Rasa, Adbhuta Rasa, Karuna Rasa, Bhayanaka Rasa, Veera Rasa and at the end Shanta Rasa all makes the play successful.

The Nine Rasas are the permanent emotions of the human being. Only the proportions of these Rasas decides the destiny of the play whether the play turns towards tragedy or towards comedy. We cannot escape from Nine Rasas. Thus we can say that no drama of any language can escape Bharat Muni and Abhinav Gupta. Karuna Rasa is

the prominent of all Rasas because in comedy or in tragedy it is inevitable with silver line



