

## Aesthetic Expressions in *Deudā* Song Lyrics: An Analysis of *Shreeṅār* and *Karuṇa Rasas*

Narendra Bahadur Air<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*In recent years, many authors have shed light on the hidden world of folklore, particularly on folk songs seeking to re-envision the practices of the traditional society. This research on a folk song of Far Western Nepal i.e. Deudā holds special promise for analyzing it in the light of Rasa theory; a theory about aesthetic flavor in arts that evokes emotions and feelings of the readers. The study reflects upon the theory of rasa and attempts to make an assessment of it in relation to the Deudā song that adopts qualitative research method, using observations and interviews as data collections tools. The main intention of this study is to see how the song lets out the common emotions (rasas) of the people dwelling in Far Western Nepal. It examines how different forms of rasa function in various Deudā songs. A particular emphasis is placed on analyzing the songs in terms of Shreeṅār and Karuṇa rasas. The findings of the study reveal that the Deudā song is loaded with the feeling of the throbbing hearts of the people of the region with their emotions of pain, pathos, suffering, misery, hardships, compassion, mercy, love and romance.*

**Keywords:** Deudā, Rasa Theory, folk song, Far Western Nepal, Shreeṅār, Karuṇa

### Introduction

*Deudā* is a folk song with poetic resonance popular among the people of Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces. People sing it orally in solitude and perform it as a dance in the public arena as well. They recite *Deudā* privately at any time and perform publicly at various public, religious, secular, and festive events such as festivals, fairs, feasts, weddings, and other similar festive gatherings. It is sung and performed for various purposes, including religious, cultural, and recreational activities, sharing thoughts, sentiments, knowledge, and experiences, and making statements about society.

*Deudā* has a simple, short, and sweet form and structure. It is composed in a couplet form with an end rhyme and folk rhythm. Each line contains fourteen to sixteen letters, and the two lines of the couplet may not always have a semantic relationship; as Dharma Raj Upadhyay mentions, "The two lines of a couplet may not match in the sense of semantic meaning but they occur for the purpose of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Durgalaxmi Multiple Campus, Attariya, Kailali, Nepal.  
email: narendra.psair@gmail.com

Generally, the first line of a couplet seems to be semantically out of meaning but syntactically harmonious and obligatory" (40). The first line of *Deudā* has been used for rhyme and rhythmic flow, but it may be semantically irrelevant. However, some genius *Deudā* poets compose the verse to match the meaning and weave the couplet to impart a unified message. Regarding *Deudā*, Amma Raj Joshi states, "*Deudā* is originally the evaporation of human feeling in its most crude and uncontaminated form expressed without any careful artistic embellishment . . . But it does not mean that *Deudā* is devoid of artistic beauty" (2). The felt experiences of life and the basic instincts and emotions of folk people get expressed through *Deudā* in its varied forms and structures. The taste of nine *rasas*, as categorized in the world literature, is depicted, inferred, and transmitted by means of *Deudā* songs. The Sanskrit term 'rasa' refers to the sentiments aroused in human minds. The use of the concept *rasa* began in the Post-Vedic period and continued up to the twenty-first century in Indian Aesthetics. In the Rigveda, *rasa* suggests several things such as juice, water, cow's milk, and flavor. The Atharvaveda defines *rasa* as taste, which implies relishing or savoring the flavor. Ultimately, *rasa* implies many things, such as essence, flavor, taste, juice, relish, or savor. Hence, whether it is in the Rigveda, the Atharvaveda, or the Upanishad, in all of them, as Priyadarshi Patnaik states, "The quintessential quality of *rasa* became essence" (18). In different contexts, *rasa* could mean either the concrete or the abstract. Acknowledging the ideas from the quotes, *rasa* in *Deudā* refers to the essence of all experience, which can be perceived in its abstraction and cannot be captured directly by the senses.

The term 'rasa' has an important space in literature, especially poetry. It denotes the intricate emotions of the composer loaded in the verse form; as Ranajit Guha says, "*Rasa* is the soul of poetry, and generally the essence of aesthetic response" (63). To perceive in the abstract means experiencing the real not in tangible terms but in conceptual terms. "*Rasa* is the soul of poetry....the aesthetic sense" (Barlingay 64). In this sense, *Deudā* evokes *rasa* as an essence or the aesthetic sense. Both the literal and abstract meanings can be exploited in unison to analyze *Deudā* poetry.

The credit for adopting the term *rasa* in the arts firstly goes to Bharat-muni, who introduced the term in his monumental treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra* for the first time. He applies the term *rasa* in his theory on dramaturgy in an aesthetic context and purpose. It has also become a vehicle for searching for the essence of poetry. Explicating *rasa* Bharata-muni states that "no (poetic) meaning proceeds (from speech) without (any kind of) sentiment. Now, the sentiment is produced from a combination of determinants (*vibhāva*), consequents (*anubhāva*), and complementary psychological states (*vyabhichāri-bhāva*)" (105). He says that no literary import can ever proceed without rhetorical sentiment or *rasas* or aesthetic relish. The *rasas* arise from a proper combination of the stimulants

(*vibhāva*), the physical consequents (*anubhāva*), and the transient emotional states (*vyabhichārī- bhāva* or *sanchāri-bhāva*).

The harmonious blending of the appropriate *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *vyabhichārī- bhāvas* evokes in the audience an emotional climax accompanied by a sense of joy. This is the aesthetic pleasure or *rasa*. The *sthāyībhāva* encompasses the main human moods. Bharat-muni has ascribed different names to the eight permanent emotions: "Erotic (*Shrīngāra*), Comic (*Hāsya*), Pathetic (*Karūṇa*), Furious (*Raudra*), Heroic (*Vīra*), Terrible (*Bhayānaka*), Odious (*Bibhatsa*) and Marvellous (*Adbhuta*)" (102). They are durable archetypal emotions that are instinctively shared by people worldwide. When expressed in literature, these durable psychological states organically manifest and transform the emotions into a *rasa* experience. Though *Deudā* songs often possess various human sentiments, they notably encompass the expressions of *Shrīngāra* and *Karūṇa rasas* in abundance.

### Methodology

Since this paper reflects on the *rasas* in *Deudā* songs, it is based on the ethnographical approach of research. Commencing with a thorough literature review, the theoretical framework is established by drawing on classical Sanskrit texts, regional folk literature. It follows the principles of qualitative research in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. Following the interpretivist research paradigm, this study collects data related to the cultural referentiality of *Deudā* songs. A purposive sampling strategy is employed to select a representative sample of *Deudā* songs. Criteria for selection include popularity, regional diversity, and thematic relevance to *Shrīngār* and *Karūṇa Rasas*. The participants of the study include ten people, who had knowledge of *Deudā* songs, from different districts of Far Western and Karnali provinces of Nepal. As a data collection tool, telephonic and face-to-face interviews, personal observation, and focus group discussions had been conducted. On the basis of their responses, the data/information have been analyzed, and findings have been drawn and discussed. Lyrical content is analyzed through close reading and thematic coding. The emotions of *Shrīngār* and *Karūṇa rasas* within the lyrics are identified, and metaphorical expressions, cultural symbols, and thematic patterns are examined to understand how these *rasas* manifest in the textual composition of *Deudā* songs. Ethical considerations are integral to the research process, ensuring respect for the cultural context and the rights of participants.

## Results and Discussion

*Deudā* songs are a genre of folk literature deeply rooted in the rural traditions of Sudurpaschim. Characterized by its colloquial language and expressive melodies, *Deudā* songs often serve as a medium for conveying profound emotions embedded in the fabric of rural life. This article explores the nuanced expressions of *Shreeṅgār* and *Karuṇa rasas* within the lyrical and melodic elements of *Deudā* songs.

### *Śṛṅgāra Rasa of Deudā in Rati Sthāyibhāva*

*Śṛṅgāra rasa* in *Deudā* refers to the *rasa* indicating romance and love. *Śṛṅgāra* primarily means love as experienced aesthetically. It can be realized in *Deudā* songs dealing with love and romance. Bharat-muni says, "Erotic sentiment proceeds from the durable psychological state of love (*rati*), and it has as its basis a bright attire; for whatever in this world is white, pure, bright and beautiful is appreciated in terms of the durable psychological state of love" (108). As explained by Bharata-muni, the *sthāyibhāva* of the erotic sentiment in *Deudā* is love, which is associated with the fullness of youth and originates when a relationship is tied up between a man and woman.

The erotic sentiment is usually associated with bright, pure, beautiful, and elegant attire. *Rati sthāyibhāva* implies that love is always good as opposed to evil because the associations are pure and beautiful. In all traditions, true love is always identified with purity. *Rati* or love is a feeling of pleasure produced on the achievement of the desire to act sweetly and gracefully. Bharata-muni has divided this sentiment into two broad categories: *Sambhoga* and *Vipralambha*. *Sambhoga* is the *rasa* of union, and *Vipralambha* is that of separation.

*Sambhoga Śṛṅgāra* in *Deudā* refers to "love-in-union" (Patnaik 71), and it is associated with optimism and leads to happiness since love is considered mutual. Love is supposed to be bright, beautiful, pure, and true. Regarding *Sambhoga Śṛṅgāra*, Bharat-muni explains that the erotic sentiment in union arises from determinants like

the pleasures of the season, the enjoyment of garlands, unguents, ornaments, the company of beloved persons, objects, splendid mansions, going to a garden, and enjoying there, seeing [the beloved one], hearing [his or her words], playing and dallying [with him or her]. It should be represented on the stage by consequents such as clever movement of eyes, eyebrows, glances, soft and delicate movement of limbs, and sweet words and similar other things. (109)

*Sambhoga Śṛṅgāra* is stimulated by the blooming seasons like spring, full bloom flowers, garlands, scent (anointment), rich ornaments, and experience or by listening to

or seeing the desired company of intimate fellows, beautiful surroundings, delightful music, beautiful parks, and so forth. Consequents of the erotic sentiment which is to be represented on the stage are the skillful use of the eyes and eyebrows, side-glances, flirtatious movements, the soft and delicate movements of the limbs, sweet and pleasant words, and others. Based on *Sambhoga Śṛṅgāra*, *DeuḌā* songs can be analyzed as follows:

*Man: ko gayo ra naula ban, kanle kātyo pālā?*

*dudh miṭhoki joi piyāri, bhanta ye goṭhālā?*

(Who has visited the new forest? Who has mowed the grass? Oh, Shepherd, could you share whether you prefer the flavor of milk or the companionship of your affectionate wife?)

Shepherd: *jaumati ghās kāṭna gaira, kyāari kyāari*

*khāntaka bhaisali pyāri, sintaka joipyāri*

(Jaumati went to collect fodder, and I'm unaware of what she did there that caused her to be delayed. Enjoying the delicious buffalo milk and the company of one's spouse is truly a source of joy.)

In the *DeuḌā* discourse, the first singer asks whether the milk of buffalo is delicious or the love of his wife is sweet in comparison. The second singer replies that milk is delicious during a meal and the company of his wife is a pleasant moment. For him, the union of husband and wife and food are equally important. The songs contain the ideas of mutual enjoyment and complete happiness in union. The *sthāyibhāva* of the songs is *rati* or mutual love. The *ālambana vibhāvas* or initiating causes are husband and wife whom the singer describes. The *uddīpana vibhāvas* or accompanying causes are beautiful wood, grass, delicious milk, buffalo, and the company of a loving wife at night. In the same way, holding hands, kissing, embracing, and hugging are *anubhāvas*. Agility, joy, and so forth are the *vyabhichārī-bhāvas*. The mutual love of the couple culminates in the desire for sexual enjoyment. Moreover, the following *DeuḌā* songs shed light on love-in-union:

*maṅsira bhayāki bhīṭa, kākhami basijā*

*samrāile lāyāko dāko, musukka hāsijā*

(We crossed paths in the month of Mansir, after a long time, so now, please kindly take a seat on my lap. It would bring me great joy if you could respond with a warm smile, as I've summoned you out of affection.)

*manmilekā piratimā, jiugayālai jānde*

*kokha basi bājkalikā, galāmi māmkhānde*

(I am prepared to sacrifice my life in the name of the love I long for. Allow me to rest in your warm embrace and caress your cheeks, my dearest.)

The two *Deudā* songs reflect the erotic sense of love belonging to *rati sthāyibhāva*. The first song emanates the heartfelt reminiscences of the lover over the separation of his beloved. The second song connotes the feeling of love in the absence of the singer's beloved and expresses the yearning for kissing by sitting on her cozy lap. The *ālabana vibhāvas* are lovers and beloved in the songs. The *uddīpana vibhāvas* are the month of Mansir, the lover's lap, and the beloved's company in isolation. The *āṅgika anubhāvas* in the songs are the lover's steadfast gaze on the beloved's charms, physical movement showing love, lust full of eyes, smiling face, holding hands, kissing, embracing, hugging, and others. The *vāṣika anubhāvas* are the expressions of a desire to kiss her cheek, sweet words, speech, and language. *Vyabhichārī-bhava*, or transitory emotions, comprise anxiety, agitation, eagerness, and joy arising in the lover's heart. With the proper conjunction of various determinants, the *sthāyibhāva* of *rati* or mutual love is converted into the aesthetic experience of *Śṛṅgāra rasa*.

*Vipralambha* is the *rasa* of separation in *Deudā*. Love can also, for instance, be felt in the absence of the lover when one realizes how incomplete life is. This is followed by anguish at the separation, which leads to a yearning for union. In this connection, Patnaik writes, "If one's love is pure (in one-sided love) it will lead to sacrifice which has a chance of manifesting sorrow (at least in the reader). This will naturally lead to *Karuṇa rasa* rather than *Śṛṅgāra*" (73). The consequents of *Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra rasa* are "indifference, languor, fear, jealousy, fatigue, anxiety, yearning, drowsiness, dreaming, awakening, illness, insanity, epilepsy, inactivity, fainting, death, and other conditions" (Bharat-muni, 109). Taking Bharat-muni's ideas into consideration, *Deudā* songs comprising *Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra* deal with the pathetic sentiments related to a condition of despair owing to separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death, and others. *Deudā* songs evoke *Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra rasa* as in the following instances:

*āmākana gunyu cholo, bainikana sādī*

*ājholi birāno bhaigai, merā phulkā bhāḍi*

(For my mother, there is a blouse and a sari for my sister. Nowadays, you have been a stranger, oh! My flowery garden.)

*udijāne putalile, nabai dāḍā kāṭyo*

*tamro mero māyā pirti, bādal jani phāṭyo*

(The flying butterfly journeyed across numerous hills. Our affection has dispersed akin to drifting clouds.)

*merā swāmi ghara lāide, bidā dihāl seṭa*

*kaila bhagvān bāṭo dinnā, kaila holi bheṭa?*

(Oh, Lord, I beseech you to grant my husband a leave so he may return to his home. When will God illuminate the correct path for us? When will our reunion occur?)

*byā areko bhannu mātraī, sāimerā saṅanāī*

*phurkā bāṭi ma kyā aru, raṅṅūnyā raṅanāī?*

(It is just to say we are married, but my husband is not present in my company. What is the point of creating a palate of hair when there is no color to adorn it?)

The first verse metaphorically compares the beloved with the flowery garden and complains to her that she has become a stranger to her ex-lover. It may be because she got married to somebody or she tried to break her relationship with him. A person with intense feelings of unrequited love is *ālambana vibhāva* in the first song. The *uddīpana vibhāvas* are the blouse, sari, flower garden, and the like. The composer in the second song implies the agonizing pain of separation posed by death. The lovelorn lady who is separated from her lover is *ālambana vibhāva* in the second song. The *uddīpana vibhāvas* are the fleeting butterfly, crossing many hills, and scattered cloud. The third and fourth songs evoke the feelings of separation and the unfulfilled desires of the wife. They uncover the heartfelt love of the singer, who has been enduring the suffocation of the pain owing to separation in the lack of her loved one. She expects his quick return. The *ālambana vibhāvas* is a married woman absent from her husband in the last two songs. The *uddīpana vibhāvas* are the company owner who does not permit a leave to his employees, God, the separation of the married couple, no meaning in making a palate of hair, and lack of color to paint. The *anubhāvas* of all four songs are indifference, fear, jealousy, fatigue, drowsiness, dreaming, awakening, illness, insanity, epilepsy, inactivity, fainting, death, and other conditions. The *sanchāri-bhāvas* are pain, sorrow, depression, anxiety, despair, indignation, compassion, yearning, intoxication and others.

*Karuna Rasa of Deuḍā in Śoka Sthāyibhāva*

The sorrow that is experienced in ordinary life is usually imprisoned in *Deuḍā* songs evoking *Karuna rasa*. Normally, the sorrow realized in everyday life differs from the

pathos expressed in a work of art. The first is painful, while the second is a pleasurable experience. Referring *Karuṇ rāsa*, Anupam Nagar states that 'tragic feeling' is "an experience of sadness but also as a realization of one of the solemn truths of life. . . . in Sanskrit poetics almost everybody has looked upon *Karuṇ rāsa* (tragic feeling) as an experience of joy or beatitude" (93). In this line, *Deudā* songs that tell of the saddest thoughts become a substitute for reality and provide happiness to the audience in an aesthetic sense. The songs express both a happy and a sad amalgam of experiences. The evocation of bitter experience in the form of *Deudā* song arouses cathartic feelings in the spectators, and the poetic experience leads to a state of bliss. R. B. Patankar states: "*Rāsa* is by definition pleasurable; *karuṇ* is a *rāsa*; *karuṇ* is therefore pleasurable" (120). Abhinavagupta calls this bliss or happiness "an experience of a state of consciousness" (qtd. in Nagar 98). The cause of happiness arises out of *Karuṇ rāsa* or tragic feelings. The term *Karuṇa* denotes compassion and mercy, and the *sthāyibhāva*, or durable psychological state of the pathetic sentiment, is sorrow or pathos. It emanates from tragic events and disasters of different kinds and generates the mood or the emotion of unhappiness. Regarding determinants, consequents, and complementary psychological states of *Karuṇa rāsa*, Bharat-muni opines:

It grows from determinants such as affliction under a curse, separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death, captivity, flight accidents or any other misfortune. This is to be represented on the stage by means of consequents such as, shedding tears, lamentation, dryness of the mouth, change of color, drooping limbs, being out of breath, loss of memory and the like. The complementary psychological states connected with it are indifference, languor, anxiety, yearning, excitement, delusion, fainting, sadness, dejection, illness, inactivity, insanity, epilepsy, fear, indolence, death, paralysis, tremor, change of color, weeping, loss of voice and the like. (112-13)

Taking the ideas of Bharat-muni into consideration, *Deudā* evokes the pathetic sentiment that arises from its determinants, consequents, and complementary psychological states. *Deudā* songs that evoke the sentiments of *Karuṇa rāsa* have been presented below:

*nepāla hanumān dhokā, tasbir ṭāsyākai chhan*

*hridayaūdo hilo bagdo, danta hāṣeikā chhan*

(Various images adorn the walls of the Hanuman Dhoka palace in Nepal. Despite the turbid emotions within me, I make an effort to smile and find happiness.)



*āphu gai arkālai laigai, pirati ḍoligai*

*ghās kāṭna gaeki māisa, pānikā kholi gai*

(Her demise led to others' passing, as she betrayed my affection. She ventured to the mountainside to harvest grass for the livestock, where an unfortunate slip caused her to tumble into the river, ultimately resulting in her drowning.)

*anuhāra bisarijāūlā, bisaddaina dāta*

*gharbār chhuṭyā kei māneina, bayasaki khāta*

(I might lose the memory of her countenance, but her smile, I can never forget. I didn't really have a strong objection to living by myself in this world, but it's unbearable that she passed away in the bloom of her youth.)

*leka bāsnyā mainā chaḍi, rana banai ruwāyo*

*āsuile tirsanā metnyā, āsuile rujhāyo*

(The melodious songs of the mynah bird resounding on the mountainside brought tears to everyone's eyes. Those tears not only satisfied my thirst but also left me drenched in their poignant touch.)

*aila hoina naū sāla vayo, baḍāla bāglāgi*

*jovana bāigyo jhalko raigyo, ke hirā dāg lāgi*

(Not at this moment; it was nine years in the past when a tiger attacked someone in a location called Baḍāla. Youth has passed away, leaving behind only its reminiscence; the pristine diamond has lost its luster.)

The first song evokes the undercurrents of the pathos of a person who has to pretend to be happy in front of the world by concealing heartfelt sorrow and pain. A poor and helpless person is the *ālambana vibhāva*, and Hanuman Dhoka palace, different pictures, muddy water, heart, and so forth are the *uddīpana vibhāvas* of the song. The other two songs above pathetically try to express the pain of the death of a near and dear person. The untimely demise of a person makes their friends and relatives feel living dead and deserted. The death of a person in prime youth is a subject of extreme sadness. The *ālambana vibhāva* in the songs is a person who has lost a loved one. The reference to the dead person's merits, such as her beautiful countenance, teeth, and youth, are *uddīpana vibhāvas*.

In addition, a daughter at her husband's house has to suffer much pain and suffering in a new environment, and she remembers her idyllic parental home and pines for the

unachievable place as portrayed in the fourth couplet. She is now away from her parents and compares herself with a mynah bird that sings pathetic songs in the alpine forest on the mountain slope. It reminds her of her parental land and shatters her heart. She consoles herself by shedding tears in isolation. A married daughter who suffers in the patriarchal society is *ālambana vibhāva* in the fourth song. The mountain slope, mynah bird, tears, and thirst are *uddīpana vibhāvas*. Likewise, the pathetic condition of old age has been depicted in the last verse. At this age, the old man is not cared for by anybody, including his family members, so he is compared with the rusty diamond. An old man is *ālambana vibhāva* in the last song. The tiger, youth that has passed, reminiscence, and diamond that has been stained are *uddīpana vibhāvas*. In the five songs, the *anubhāvas* are shedding tears, weeping bitterly, loss of memory, and lamentation. Anxiety, yearning, sadness, inactivity, fear, death, illusion, and the like are the *sanchāri-bhāvas*.

### Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, this research sheds light on the aesthetic dimensions of *Deudā* songs, with a specific focus on the expressions of Shreengār and Karuṇa Rasas. By dissecting the lyrical and poetic elements, this article highlighted the emotional landscape of rural life as portrayed in the traditional folk songs. This exploration not only contributes to the understanding of *Deudā* songs but also provides a broader perspective on the universality of human emotions as conveyed through the arts.

By navigating the lyrical poetry and melodic intricacies of *Deudā* songs, this article recognized the profound impact of Shreengār and Karuṇa Rasas on the cultural and emotional tapestry of the Sudurpaschim. The interdisciplinary approach adopted in this study, integrating insights from literature, and cultural studies, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the rich artistic tradition encapsulated in *Deudā* songs. Further research could delve into the socio-cultural implications of these aesthetics, exploring how *Deudā* songs contribute to the preservation of rural narratives and emotions in the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary Nepal.

### Works Cited

- Barlingay, Surendra Sheodas. *A Modern Introduction to Indian Aesthetic Theory*. D. K. Printworld, 2016.
- Bharata-muni. *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Edited and translated by Manomohan Ghosh, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, vol. 1, chs I–XXVII, 2018.
- Guha, Ranajit. *History at the Limit of World-History*. Columbia UP, 2002.
- Joshi, Amma Raj. *Deuda Songs: Poetry and Performance*. Molung Foundation, 2011.

- Nagar, Anupam. "The Two Sides of a Single Coin: Karun Rasa and Tragic Feeling". *A Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 26, 2002, pp. 91-100.
- Patankar, R. B. "Does the Rasa theory have any modern relevance?" *Some Aspects of the Rasa Theory*. Bhogilal Leherchand Institute of Indology, 1986, pp. 110-20.
- Patnaik, Priyadarshi. *Rasa in Aesthetics. An Application of Rasa Theory to Modern Western Literature*. D. K. Printworld, 1997.
- Upadhayay, Dharma Raj. *Pragmatics of Oral Poetry: A Case of ढुडुडु*. 1996. Tribhuvan U, MA dissertation.