

Introduction to “*The Yoga of the Nine Emotions, the Tantric Practice of Rasa Sadhana*”, by Peter Marchand – based on the teachings of Harish Johari.

Rasas are the essences of our emotions that exist in both body and mind. The Indian tradition recognizes nine Rasas as representing our most important and basic emotions: Love, Joy, Wonder, Courage, Calmness, Anger, Sadness, Fear, and Disgust. Some are desirable: the cream of life and the very purpose of creation. Others are unpleasant and most often not desirable.

Rasa Sadhana is the Yoga of Emotion, increasing understanding and exercising control of various flavors of happiness. For example, by temporarily promising ourselves not to be angry in thought, word, and deed, we may come to a better understanding of the Anger Rasa and master it to such extent that we become really free to express Anger or not. Similar vows may be adopted for a lifetime and can provide us with very special powers. Others may be hard to maintain even for one day, but will provide valuable insight and control just the same. Such “Rasa fasts” are of great help in learning to dissolve unpleasant emotions without suppressing them.

Every imaginable desire ultimately aims at some happy feeling that we expect to enjoy when fulfilling that desire. Rasa Sadhana allows us to pursue happiness more directly and durably. Rasa Yoga is especially useful to the householder who tries to live a spiritual life in modern society. It does not ask us to withdraw from the world, nor does it consume time. It does require that we remain emotionally and spiritually disciplined while participating in the lives of others, twenty-four hours a day. It can be smoothly integrated within other yoga paths and is easily taught by advanced yoga teachers.

Part 1 of this book provides an overview of Rasa Sadhana and its relationship to both Indian and Western science. According to Indian philosophy and the medical science of Ayurveda, our moods and emotions are continuously affected by the play of elements, senses, food, and vital energy in our body. Modern Western science also fully supports the body-mind link that influences our emotions. With the continuing discovery of so-called neurotransmitters and related biochemicals, the complexity of the biochemical “soup” that tickles our thoughts and emotions seems to increase by the day. Still, mind governs body and not vice versa, unless we allow it. Indian philosophy further offers a clear insight into the interactions between the Rasas and our mind, intellect, ego, and self.

An in-depth study of each of the nine Rasas is the main subject of Part 2 of this book. Each Rasa has basic expressions found in both ancient and modern times. They correspond to particular psychological and biochemical environments. Some sub-Rasas exist and each Rasa has clear relationships to other Rasas, allowing us to strengthen or weaken one Rasa through another. In addition to describing these attributes and relationships, Part 2 also introduces practical as well as philosophical ways to gain control over each Rasa, specifically in the form of guidelines for the corresponding Rasa Sadhana or emotional fasting exercises.

Part 3 combines all this knowledge into practical advice on working with our emotions in daily life. Rasas of preference are defined depending on personal history, talent, and body type. The conditions for successfully exercising emotional control are established and each of the senses becomes a window through which emotions can be given new directions. As food strongly affects our biochemical receptivity to happy emotions, the basic rules for emotionally healthy cooking are given. Daily routines strengthen and balance physical and emotional well-being. In case of emotional emergencies, a number of clear steps may put us back on the road to happiness.

As the Rasas are strongly related to our relationships to others and to society in general, Part 4 helps us to understand the emotional evolution of humankind. Modern science will bring us many new findings on the subject that may be valuable or not. Yoga and other spiritual sciences are of great help and likewise Rasa Sadhana is very useful for easier advancement along the many yogic paths, allowing for more fruitful meditation and deeper devotion. Traditionally, the Indian arts have provided society with a subtle treat of finer feelings and modern artists have a similar role to play. Advertising has been stirring desire by playing on our emotions for decades. New "mood foods" and other mood related products may further lead to the commercialization of happiness that disturbs our view of reality. Part 4 offers insights about these influences and how to make wholesome choices among them, as well as indicating how the knowledge of Rasas can be successfully applied in therapy, in which the therapist becomes a real teacher.

Sometimes feelings of anger, worry, sadness, or depression fall upon us, even though we dislike them. Sometimes we long for love, joy, courage, wonder, or peace, but seem unable to produce these enjoyable feelings. The ancient Indian knowledge and practical exercises described in this book can help anyone to become a master of his or her emotions.