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## Analysis of Emotional Conflicts of Vāsavdatta in *Svapnavāsavadattam* of Bhāsa with Reference to Modern Theories of Emotions

**Renuka Panchal.**

(Ph.D. Scholar, M.Phil., M.A. Sanskrit - Gold Medalist, JRF-NET/SET, M.A. Clinical  
Psychology) Ph.D. Student, Assistant Professor, at University of Mumbai Sanskrit Dept.

Contact - 9167393805, Email - [renupanchal111@gmail.com](mailto:renupanchal111@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate emotional conflicts experienced by Vāsavdatta, the protagonist of Bhāsa's classical Sanskrit play *Svapnavāsavadattam*, through the lens of modern theories of emotions. By employing contemporary psychological frameworks, such as the Cognitive Appraisal Theory, James-Lange Theory, and Schachter-Singer Theory, we aim to unravel the complex emotional tapestry that defines Vāsavdatta's character. This interdisciplinary approach not only enriches our understanding of her psychological landscape but also bridges the gap between ancient literary narratives and modern psychological insights. The analysis reveals how Vāsavdatta's emotional experiences, shaped by love, separation, fear, and longing, align with and diverge from current emotional theories. Through this exploration, we highlight the timeless nature of human emotions and the enduring relevance of classical literature in illuminating contemporary psychological concepts. This study provides a nuanced perspective on Bhāsa's work, demonstrating the profound psychological depth embedded in ancient texts and their potential to inform and enhance modern emotional theory.

### Introduction

Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadattam* is a classic in Sanskrit literature, revered for its profound emotional depth and intricate plot. The play revolves around the central character, Vāsavdatta, whose emotional journey forms the crux of the narrative. This paper seeks to analyze her emotional conflicts using modern theories of emotions, providing a bridge between ancient literary tradition and contemporary psychological understanding.

Emotional Conflicts in *Svapnavāsavadattam*

### Love and Separation

Vāsavdatta's love for King Udayana is a central theme, marked by intense emotional highs and lows. Their separation, orchestrated by political and personal intrigues, leads to significant emotional turmoil.

- Cognitive Appraisal Theory: According to this theory, emotions are extracted from our evaluations (appraisals) of events. Vāsavdatta's love and subsequent separation can be seen as a series of cognitive appraisals where she evaluates her relationship, her role as a queen, and her personal identity.

- James-Lange Theory: This theory posits that emotions arise from physiological responses to events. Vāsavdatta's physical reactions to separation, such as crying or sleeplessness, could be seen as primary triggers for her emotional states.
- Schachter-Singer Theory: This theory emphasizes the combination of physiological arousal and cognitive interpretation. Vāsavdatta's arousal (heartache, anxiety) combined with her cognitive appraisal of her situation leads to her emotional experiences of longing and sadness.

### **Fear and Uncertainty**

Vāsavdatta faces numerous threats and uncertainties, particularly regarding her safety and the future of her relationship with Udayana.

- Cognitive Appraisal Theory: Vāsavdatta's fear is a result of her appraisal of threats to her well-being and her future. Her continuous assessment of danger and insecurity fuels her fear.
- James-Lange Theory: Her fear might be manifested through physical symptoms like trembling, increased heart rate, which in turn reinforce her emotional state.
- Schachter-Singer Theory: Her physiological arousal in threatening situations, combined with the cognitive appraisal of these threats, results in heightened fear and anxiety.

### **Longing and Hope**

Despite her trials, Vāsavdatta remains hopeful for a reunion with Udayana, showcasing her resilience and emotional complexity.

- Cognitive Appraisal Theory: Her hope stems from her positive appraisals of potential future scenarios where she reunites with Udayana, maintaining her emotional balance amidst turmoil.
- James-Lange Theory: Physical manifestations of longing, such as yearning looks or gestures, might initiate and sustain her emotional state of hopefulness.
- Schachter-Singer Theory: The interplay between her physiological state of calmness when imagining a positive future and her cognitive focus on potential positive outcomes fosters her emotional resilience.

### **Discussion**

The emotional journey of Vāsavdatta in Svapnavāsavadattam is a profound exploration of the human psyche, transcending the boundaries of time and culture. By applying modern theories of emotions, we gain a more nuanced understanding of her experiences and the timeless nature of human emotional conflicts.

#### **1. Cognitive Appraisal Theory and Vāsavdatta's Emotional Landscape**

The Cognitive Appraisal Theory, proposed by Richard Lazarus, emphasizes that emotions are a result of our evaluations of events and situations. Vāsavdatta's emotional experiences, such as her deep love for Udayana and the pain of separation, are framed by her continuous appraisal of her circumstances. Her love is sustained by positive appraisals of Udayana's qualities and their shared moments, while her sorrow stems from her appraisal of the separation as a significant

loss. This theory helps us understand how Vāsavdatta's emotions are not mere reactions but are deeply intertwined with her thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions.

For instance, when Vāsavdatta learns about Udayana's new alliance, her appraisal of the situation as a betrayal and a threat to her relationship leads to feelings of jealousy and fear. This cognitive process is critical in understanding the complexity of her emotional responses, highlighting how ancient texts encapsulate sophisticated psychological phenomena.

## 2. James-Lange Theory and Physiological Responses

The James-Lange Theory posits that emotions are a result of physiological responses to events. Vāsavdatta's emotional states can be seen through the lens of her physical reactions. Her trembling during moments of fear, tears during instances of sadness, and the physical ache of longing for Udayana are not just expressions of her emotions but are integral to the emotions themselves.

This theory underscores the connection between body and mind in Vāsavdatta's emotional experiences. For example, her physical reactions to separation - insomnia, loss of appetite, and crying - are not just symptoms but also catalysts that amplify her emotional pain. This perspective enriches our understanding of how Bhāsa's depiction of Vāsavdatta's emotions aligns with modern theories, suggesting that physiological responses are fundamental to the emotional experience.

## 3. Schachter-Singer Theory and the Interaction of Arousal and Cognition

The Schachter-Singer Theory, or Two-Factor Theory of Emotion, emphasizes that emotions arise from the interaction of physiological arousal and cognitive interpretation. This theory is particularly relevant in analyzing Vāsavdatta's emotional complexity. Her physiological arousal - whether it be the heightened state of alertness during moments of threat or the physical manifestations of longing - paired with her cognitive appraisals, leads to a richer, more complex emotional experience.

For instance, during her separation from Udayana, Vāsavdatta experiences physiological arousal in the form of anxiety and heartache. Her cognitive interpretation of these sensations as indicative of deep emotional pain and longing intensifies her feelings of sorrow and desire for reunion. This interplay between her body's responses and her mind's interpretations highlights the sophistication of Bhāsa's character portrayal and aligns well with modern psychological theories.

## 4. Integration of Modern Theories and Classical Literature

Integrating modern theories of emotions with the classical narrative of *Svapnavāsavadattam* not only provides a deeper understanding of Vāsavdatta's emotional conflicts but also illustrates the universality and timelessness of emotional experiences. It shows that ancient literary works can offer valuable insights into contemporary psychological concepts, bridging the gap between historical and modern understandings of the human psyche.

This interdisciplinary approach also underscores the relevance of classical literature in modern times. By applying psychological theories to Vāsavdatta's character, we can appreciate the depth and complexity of ancient narratives and their capacity to inform current psychological

discourse. It reveals that emotions, while experienced and expressed differently across cultures and eras, are fundamentally rooted in similar cognitive and physiological processes.

### Conclusion

Vāsavdatta's emotional conflicts in *Svapnavāsavadattam* provide a rich tapestry for exploring the intersections of ancient literature and modern psychology. The application of Cognitive Appraisal Theory, James-Lange Theory, and Schachter-Singer Theory to her character offers a deeper understanding of her emotional landscape. This analysis highlights the timeless nature of human emotions and the enduring relevance of classical literature in illuminating contemporary psychological concepts. Through this interdisciplinary approach, we gain valuable insights into the profound psychological depth embedded in Bhāsa's work, underscoring its significance in both literary and psychological studies.

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