



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

=====

Background Reading:

SENSE AND NONSENSE

In an introduction to **The Tenth Rasa: An Anthology of Indian Nonsense** Michael Heyman says,

“Nonsense is a kind of play, one that is not pure exuberance, not unrestrained joy and, above all, not gibberish (though all of these are often elements of it). Rather, it is an art form rooted in sophisticated aesthetics, and play with logic, and it is the art of nonsense that is one of its most appealing aspects”

Encompassing a repertoire of non- sense in its shroud, a nonsense text abounds in sense, for in a nonsense text, there must be a “balance between ‘sense’ and ‘non- sense’” (Heyman). Such balance is necessary if the text is not to become either plain sense, as in a best-selling crime novel, or utter gibberish, as in a baby’s babbling. The former is unremarkable, the latter, unintelligible and uninteresting. Good nonsense engages the reader; it must “invite interpretation” (Wim Tigges), implying that sense can be made, but at the same time it must foil attempts to make sense in many of the traditional ways. Edward Strachey in “Nonsense as a Fine Art” declares, “In contradiction to the relations and harmonies of life, Nonsense sets itself to discover and bring forward the incongruities of all things within and without us. [...] For while Sense is, and must remain, essentially prosaic and commonplace, Nonsense has proved not to be an equally prosaic and commonplace negative of Sense, not a mere putting forward of incongruities and absurdities, but a bringing out a new and deeper harmony of life in and through its contradictions. Nonsense in fact, in this use of the word, has shown itself to be a true work of the imagination, a child of genius, and its writing one of the Fine Arts”

=====

Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE

=====



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

=====

In order to keep the balance, the “sense” side of the scale must weigh heavily. Nonsense thus tends to be written in tight structures, that is, with strict poetic form or within the bounds of formal prose. It also usually follows meticulously the rules of language, like grammar, syntax, and phonetics. The nonsense scale defies sense, “primarily on the logical and semantic level . . . nonsense operates not by ignoring the rules of sense but by subversively playing with them- stretching, squeezing, flipping upside down, yet, in the end still depending on their existence” (Heyman). Nonsense stories are about identifiable characters, and the usually simple plots are understandable. In short, there is much that actually makes sense in quite an ordinary way. Indeed, nonsense usually emerges from an excess of sense rather than a lack of it, or as Tiggles states, through a “multiplicity of meaning [balanced] with a simultaneous absence of meaning”.

Nonsense, thus becomes a genre that is at least as creative as it is destructive (as meaningful as it is meaningless), a reflection of the god Shiva, in his iconic manifestation as Nataraja, performing ananda tandava, literally the “dance of bliss.” In this dance, Shiva executes the eternal, cyclical destruction and creation of the world. Nonsense also engages in a joyful dance of destruction, although how much is destroyed, how much is subverted, and how much is untouched, are debatable. From the wreckage of such destruction, though, comes the creation of new kinds of sense and new ways of making it.

To use one more metaphor, nonsense leads us down a path of sense, only at the last moment to turn aside from the expected destination; in the end, we find we keep walking in circles—or beautiful, infinite fractals—and that the joy, and the meaning, is in the journey, not the destination. “Meaning” in nonsense thus has less to do with our interpretation of conventions like plot, theme, and character, and more to do with how these are subverted, with how the text clashes with various kinds of sense. What we gather from the struggle reflects both ourselves and the world. The genre, as T.S. Eliot in “The Music of Poetry” puts it, “is a careful parody of sense”, and as such it questions logic and language, our usually unquestioned, fundamental ways of making meaning of the world. We not only laugh at the absurd creations within the text, but also at our own imaginations’ courageous attempts to grapple with them, and, most significantly,

=====

Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE

=====



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

=====
at our inability to escape our fundamental nature as meaning-making machines. These self-reflexive doubts can lead, in turn, to the questioning of the world we have created, including, particularly, social and political power structures fabricated under the untrustworthy aegis of “sense.” In such a wider context, nonsense can be seen as a force for social change, linguistic exploration, political satire, religious expression, and philosophical inquiry, to name only a few. Yet, nonsense is the opposite of some dreary, didactic tome. Despite the tension, the frustration of expectation, and transgression of the sacred, it is funny, somehow. In such laughter, such meta-awareness, we briefly stand outside of our habitual selves, question everything—ourselves included—and in doing so face any potentially frightening consequences through the dance of nonsense, our own ananda tandava

Though writer John Hoskyns is credited with invention of English nonsense verse in 1611, its (Nonsense) origin is difficult to pin down. Moreover, in **The Tenth Rasa**, English translations of nonsense verses written in Indian vernaculars are available. Some of these are older than Hoskyns’s work. The opening section contains English translations of Hindi *Sabda 62*, *Sabda 2*, and *Sabda 52* from *Bejak* of Kabir. Kabir was a 15th Century Indian Mystic poet and saint. Similarly, translations of Nonsense works of Tenali Ramalinga- jester and poet of court of Krishandeva Raya- date back to sixteenth century. In Europe, John Taylor was more prolific in its use in later years of seventeenth century but it is in mid nineteenth century, with the works of authors such as Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll, that the revival of English nonsense verse took place (Kwoka n.p.). The Tenth Rasatraces “spirit of whimsy” (Heyman) convoluted with nonsense, in Indian history. In the introductory essay “An Indian Nonsense Naissance,” Mychael Heyman states that ‘modern or literary nonsense’ in India is not only influenced by, but is an extension and a hybrid of colonial contact. Bengali literature was pioneer in imbibing “the foreign brand of Nonsense”. It (Bengali literature) alloyed this “foreign brand of Nonsense” with ‘spirit of whimsy’ and ‘nonsense thread is woven in Indian literary culture’. Spirit of whimsy manifested in India is as quaint and peculiar as ‘*Om hring cling*’ of tantra Shastra or Ulti Language (inverted language) of mystification. In Spirit of whimsy, a undercurrent of spiritual is found. For instance, verses on infant Krishna’s antics written by Surdas, Meera Bai and many more are devotional in nature.

=====
Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE
=====



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

From Bengali, the influence has been sporadic to other Indian Vernaculars or in other words to 'the literature of the United Indian Union.' Some luminaries as well as pioneers of Bengali nonsense genre (or Indian nonsense genre as Indian literary Renaissance in nineteenth century started with Bengali Renaissance) are Sukumar Ray, Rabindranath Tagore, Trailokyanath Mukhopadaya etc.

Genealogy of Nonsense is threefold- sophisticated Aesthetics, Linguistics and play with logic. Aesthetics is mainly a branch of philosophy which critically studies art, nature and culture as manifested in perceived texts. While engaged in critical reflections, there are always devised underlying principles that form the basis of existence as well as evaluation of that perceived text. Both Western Philosophy and Indian Philosophy has delved and explored into it.

According to Indian Aesthetic theory of Natyasastra by Bharata Muni, there are eight rasas in any art form and that each rasa, correspondingly evoke one emotional effect. These rasas are-

RASA	BHABA	MEANING
<i>Shringar</i> (Erotic)	Rati	Delight
<i>Hasya</i> (Humorous)	Hasa	Laughter
<i>Karuna</i> (Pathetic)	Shoka	Sorrow
<i>Raudra</i> (Terrible)	Krodh	Anger
<i>Veera</i> (Heroic)	Utsaha	Heroism
<i>Bhayanaka</i> (Fearful)	Bhaya	Fear
<i>Bibhatsa</i> (Odious)	Jugupsa	Disgust
<i>Adbhuta</i> (Wonderous)	Vismaya	Wonder

Abhinav Gupta added one more rasa- Shanta Rasa (evokes bhava of calmness) and total number of Rasas became nine. Rabindernath Tagore called Nonsense "chodda" or

Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

=====

“balarasa” (chodda or bala mean child in English) as he first discovered it in folk rhymes and stories composed for children. Sukumar Ray called it “Khayal Rasa.” Bhava or emotion produced by a rasa is critical in studying the respective Rasa. According to Tagore, emotion produced by nonsense hasn't been given any name but it is pure, innocent, beautiful, neither thick, nor pungent. (Heyman xli) Mychael Hryman, in tradition of Bharata Muni and Abhinavgupta, called it the tenth Rasa. The main shoot of aesthetics in a nonsense text can be mainly divided into following two subshoots- Linguistic and Logistic. Linguistic techniques found in a Nonsense text are Neologisms, Portmanteau, Reduplication and Sound- over- sense; and Logistic ones are Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning, nonsense tautology, non sequitur and arbitrariness, absurd precision and imprecision, faulty cause and effect, and the use of infinity. As name indicates, linguistic techniques are based on play of language and are as follows:

- Neologisms- Neologisms are words invented by the author.
- Portmanteau- portmanteau are words that are formed by joining together of existing words.
- Reduplication- in reduplication, words are repeated. For instance good-good, go- go etc.
- Sound- over- sense- in this type, sound is more important than word as mitti- Hindi word for soil evokes more poignant connection with homeland than bhoomi and jamin. Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning- Paradoxical simultaneity of meaning “... generally refers to the simultaneous existence of two or more, usually contradictory, meanings” (Heyman)
- Nonsense tautology- “it occurs when two different words or phrases are used side by side, implying a different meaning but actually having the same meaning” (Heyman)
- Non sequitur and arbitrariness- non sequitur and arbitrariness refer to a conclusion or reply that doesn't follow logically from the previous statement. There are three further types of Non sequitur and arbitrariness-

=====

Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE

=====



**Compiled and Circulated by: Mr. Manas Barik, Guest Lecturer
Dept. of English, Narajole Raj College**

=====

- Absurd precision and imprecision- “A particular Kind of arbitrariness, absurd precision, is the inclusion of detail, often numbers, which are so precise as to imply some significance in that precision”(Heyman xxix)
- Faulty cause and effect- when there is no apparent relation between causes and its effect, the result created is called faulty cause and effect.
- The use of infinity- it is a kind of accretion and go on and on. For instance ‘A Never Ending Tale’ or ‘What happened next?’

=====

Sem. – IV :: Paper C10T :: POPULAR LITERATURE

=====