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THE EIGHT HEROINES AND THE ARCHETYPAL PSYCHE: A JUNGIAN ANALYSIS OF THE AṢṬA-VIDHA NĀYIKĀ IN INDIAN AESTHETIC TRADITION

G.Aishwarya
Independent Researcher
Kovilpatti,Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

The Aṣṭa-Nāyikā, or the eight types of heroines, has an important place in Indian aesthetic and performing traditions. The eight types represent different emotional states of women in relation to their longing for the Nāyaka. These emotional states are expressed through Śṛṅgāra Rasa and Abhinaya. Based on their situations, these eight types of women experience different emotional states such as anticipation, longing, waiting, and others. These emotional states also reveal psychological dimensions. This study analyses the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā through the lens of Carl Gustav Jung's concepts of archetypes, Persona, Shadow, Self, and individuation. Adopting a qualitative interdisciplinary approach, this study brings together Indian aesthetic theory and Carl Jung's theory of archetypes. This research does not establish a direct equivalence between Jungian archetypes and the Aṣṭa Nāyikā; rather, it provides a psychological interpretation of the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā using Jungian archetypal theory.Jungian concepts are employed as an interpretive framework for understanding the deeper psychological dimensions of these aesthetic representations. Particular attention is given to the ways in which longing, jealousy, anger, vulnerability, emotional conflict, and self-directed action may reveal recurring patterns of human psychological experience. The study argues that the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā can be understood not merely as a classification of romantic situations but as a complex representation of emotional consciousness, thereby offering a broader interdisciplinary understanding of Indian aesthetics and its continuing significance in performance traditions such as Bharatanatyam.

KEYWORDS: Archetypes, Psychological dimension, Self, Individuation, Emotional Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Indian aesthetic theory focuses on triggering the inner emotions of people and creating a spiritual experience of rasa in the audience**.** The Rasa theory, articulated by Bharata Muni in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, explains how dramatic and artistic performances evoke an aesthetic experience in the spectator.Rasa, meaning "essence" or "flavour," suggests that just as the thought of food can make a person's mouth water, artistic expression can evoke inspiration and admiration in the audience through the dancer's expressive performance.This Rasa theory explains how artistic performance evokes inner feelings in the audience. This concept is discussed in Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which serves as an important theoretical guide for dancers and artists.

Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā is a collective term referring to eight types of heroines, each representing distinct emotional states in relation to the Nāyaka within the context of love. These eight types embody different psychological and emotional experiences, which are expressed by dancers through Abhinaya and the aesthetic framework of Śṛṅgāra Rasa described by Bharata Muni in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It has been used in the Indian paintings, literature, sculptures as well as in Indian classical dance, as the most common states

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of the romantic heroine.The classification is further detailed in various other treatise as *Sahitadarpaṇa (14th Century) and Dasarupaka (10th Century).*

The concept of the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā is also elaborated in various works of Indian poetics and erotic literature, including texts such as the *Kāmaśāstra*, *Kuṭṭanīmata* (8th–9th century), which is associated with the world of courtesans, as well as the *Pañcaśāyaka*, *Anaṅgaraṅga*, and *Smaradīpikā*. In the sixteenth century, the concept received further poetic elaboration in Keshavdas's *Rasikapriya*, a significant work of Hindi literature. The text presents detailed descriptions of the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā, with Rādhā frequently represented through the different nāyikā types and Kṛishna portrayed as her Nāyaka.The relationship between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa has been extensively represented through poetry, music, and performance traditions. In Hindustani classical and semi-classical music, particularly the genre of ṭhumrī, the emotional experiences of Rādhā are expressed through lyrical and musical representations. The Aṣṭa-Nāyikā framework provides a means of portraying the varied moods and emotional states associated with Rādhā's passionate love for Kṛishna.

Carl Jung introduced Jungian archetypes as fundamental universal symbols and motifs that represent essential human behaviors and emotions.The term "archetype" comes from the Greek *archētypos*, meaning roughly "original pattern" or "original model." The concept had been used in earlier philosophical and religious thought, including discussions associated with Plato and later Christian thinkers. These archetypes, emerging from the collective unconscious, include the Persona, Shadow, Anima/Animus, and Self.Archetypes are used to analyse human psychology and are understood as innate patterns within the human psyche. Jungian theory identifies four major archetypal patterns, which can be further understood through twelve sub-archetypes representing different psychological and emotional dimensions of human experience.Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," published in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. His theory subsequently became an important framework for interpreting recurring psychological patterns in literature, mythology, art, and cultural expression.

This interdisciplinary research examines the psychological patterns represented by the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā through the lens of Carl Jung's theory of archetypes. Rather than establishing a direct equivalence between the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā and Jungian archetypes, the study uses Jungian theory as an interpretive framework to explore the psychological dimensions underlying the eight heroine types.

Most scholars and research articles have examined the portrayal of the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā in Bharatanatyam padams, javalis, and other dance forms. Similarly, studies based on Carl Jung's archetypal theory have focused on psychological interpretations of mythology, literary works, novels, and selected case studies. However, the present study brings these two areas together by interpreting the eight types of Nāyikā within the framework of Indian aesthetic theory and Jung's theory of the unconscious, with particular attention to their psychological dimensions.

While existing scholarship has examined the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā primarily through Indian aesthetic, literary, and performative perspectives, and Jungian studies have explored archetypal psychology across mythology and literature, there remains scope for bringing these two theoretical frameworks into dialogue. The present study therefore moves beyond a purely aesthetic classification of the eight heroines and investigates the psychological patterns embedded within their emotional states. This

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interdisciplinary perspective leads to the following central research question: How can the eight nayika types of Indian aesthetic Tradition be interpreted as manifestations of archetypal psychological pattern through a jungian framework?

The study hypothesizes that the emotional states represented through the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā reveal underlying psychological patterns that can be meaningfully interpreted through Jungian concepts such as the Persona, Shadow, Anima, Self, and individuation, without establishing a direct equivalence between the two theoretical systems.

The primary motive of this study is to explore the psychological dimensions underlying the eight types of Aṣṭa-Nāyikā within the framework of Indian aesthetic tradition. Although the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā has been widely discussed in relation to literary, aesthetic, and performative representations, the emotional states embodied by these heroines also provide scope for psychological interpretation. By bringing Indian aesthetic theory into dialogue with Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology, this study seeks to examine the recurring psychological patterns represented through the emotional experiences of the eight nāyikās. The study aims to offer an additional interpretive perspective rather than equating the traditional Aṣṭa-Nāyikā categories directly with Jungian archetypes.

The present study provides scope for further interdisciplinary research on the relationship between Indian aesthetic theory and psychological interpretation. Future studies may extend this framework to examine the representation of the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā across different Indian classical dance traditions, including Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, and Mohiniyattam, with particular attention to variations in abhinaya and emotional interpretation. Further research could also investigate the representation of female desire, agency, identity, and social expectations through the perspectives of gender and feminist studies. Another significant direction would be to examine audience responses to different representations of the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā, thereby connecting Jungian psychological interpretation with rasa and spectatorship. Comparative studies may further explore parallels between the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā and female figures in other literary and mythological traditions. Such investigations could contribute to a broader understanding of how traditional aesthetic categories continue to generate new psychological, cultural, and performance-based interpretations in contemporary contexts.

FROM CHARACTER CLASSIFICATION TO PSYCHOLOGICAL PATTERN

The Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā refers to the classical eightfold classification of the heroine based on her emotional condition, relationship with the beloved, and responses to different situations of love.

1. **Vāsakasajjā** is the heroine who prepares herself and her surroundings in anticipation of the beloved's arrival, representing expectation and desire.

2. **Virahotkaṇṭhitā** is the heroine who experiences intense longing because of separation from her beloved and anxiously awaits reunion.

3. **Svādhīnabhartṛkā** is the heroine whose beloved remains devoted to her and acts according to her wishes, reflecting confidence, intimacy, and relational fulfilment.

4. **Kalahāntaritā** is the heroine who, after a quarrel with her beloved, becomes separated from him and experiences regret, emotional conflict, and distress.

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5. **Khaṇḍitā** is the heroine who becomes angry and emotionally hurt when her beloved returns after spending time with another woman, expressing jealousy, wounded trust, and resentment.

6. **Vipralabdhā** is the heroine who, after waiting for a promised meeting, realizes that she has been deceived or abandoned by her beloved, resulting in disappointment and emotional pain.

7. **Proṣitabhartṛkā** is the heroine whose beloved is away for an extended period, causing her to experience loneliness, separation, and prolonged longing.

8. **Abhisārikā** is the heroine who takes the initiative to go towards her beloved, often

overcoming social restrictions, fear, or obstacles in order to fulfil her desire for union. Collectively, these eight Nāyikā types represent a wide range of emotional and behavioural states associated with love, separation, desire, conflict, disappointment, and agency, making them significant not only within Indian aesthetic theory but also as a potential framework for examining recurring psychological patterns.

The eight Nāyikā types can be understood not only as aesthetic classifications but also as representations of distinct emotional and psychological patterns. **Vāsakasajjā**, who eagerly awaits the arrival of her beloved and prepares herself for the anticipated union, reflects a psychological pattern of anticipation, expectation, and desire. **Virahotkaṇṭhitā**, separated from her beloved, experiences intense longing and sadness, revealing a pattern of attachment in which physical absence produces continued emotional and psychological preoccupation. In contrast, **Svādhīnabhartṛkā**, whose beloved remains devoted to her, represents emotional fulfilment, confidence, and relational agency, suggesting a psychological pattern in which security within the relationship strengthens the sense of self. **Kalahāntaritā**, who becomes separated from her beloved following a quarrel, embodies regret, distress, and emotional contradiction; her state can therefore be interpreted as a pattern of inner conflict in which anger, love, pride, and the desire for reconciliation coexist. **Khaṇḍitā**, confronted with the betrayal of her beloved, expresses anger, jealousy, and wounded trust. Her emotional response can be examined through the Jungian concept of the Shadow, particularly in relation to emotions that may be suppressed, rejected, or considered socially undesirable. **Vipralabdhā**, who experiences disappointment after a promised meeting fails to take place, represents the psychological movement from expectation to disillusionment, revealing the emotional consequences of the collapse of trust and anticipated fulfilment. **Proṣitabhartṛkā**, whose beloved remains away for an extended period, embodies loneliness, prolonged longing, and emotional endurance, demonstrating the psychological capacity to sustain attachment in the face of continued separation. Finally, **Abhisārikā**, who actively goes in search of her beloved despite possible obstacles or social restrictions, represents determination, desire, and self-assertion. Her actions can be interpreted as an expression of psychological agency, in which personal desire becomes strong enough to motivate independent action. Viewed collectively, these eight Nāyikās represent a spectrum of emotional experiences anticipation, attachment, fulfilment, conflict, jealousy, disillusionment, endurance, and self-assertion. Thus, the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā can be approached not merely as a classification of female characters but as a culturally situated representation of recurring emotional and psychological patterns, providing a meaningful basis for further interpretation through a Jungian framework.

JUNGIAN ARCHETYPAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ASTHA VIDHA NAYIKA

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The Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā can be examined through Jungian analytical psychology by moving beyond the classification of heroines as literary or aesthetic figures and considering them as symbolic representations of different dimensions of the psyche. Jung's theory of archetypes proposes that recurring patterns of human experience can emerge through symbolic figures and images associated with the collective unconscious. Within this framework, concepts such as the Anima, Animus, Shadow, and Self provide useful interpretive categories for examining the emotional and behavioural dimensions represented by the Nāyikās. The present study does not suggest that Jung directly identified the eight Nāyikā types with these archetypes. Rather, it proposes a comparative interpretation in which the emotional situations and behavioural patterns of the Nāyikās are read through selected Jungian concepts. Such an approach makes it possible to examine the Nāyikā not merely as an aesthetic representation of romantic experience but as a symbolic figure through which desire, attachment, conflict, repression, agency, and psychological integration may be explored.

The Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā can be further interpreted through selected Jungian archetypal concepts, particularly the Anima, Animus, Shadow, and Self. Vāsakasajjā may be read through the concept of the Anima, as her anticipation of the beloved and preparation for union reflect an idealized inner image of love, intimacy, and emotional fulfilment. Similarly, Virahotkaṇṭhitā can be associated with the Anima through her intense longing for the absent beloved, in which physical separation may be understood as giving greater psychological significance to the internal image of the beloved. Svādhīnabhartṛkā can be interpreted in relation to the Self, as her emotional security, confidence, and sense of relational fulfilment suggest a greater degree of psychological integration and wholeness. In contrast, Kalahāntaritā can be examined through the Shadow, as her emotional state is characterized by opposing feelings such as love, anger, pride, regret, and the desire for reconciliation, revealing aspects of the psyche that remain in conflict. Khaṇḍitā provides another significant representation of the Shadow, particularly through her anger, jealousy, resentment, and wounded trust following the perceived betrayal of the beloved. These emotions can be understood as dimensions of the psyche that are often difficult to acknowledge or integrate. Vipralabdhā may be interpreted through the combined dimensions of the Persona and Shadow, as the failure of the anticipated relationship disrupts the identity and expectations that she has constructed around her emotional experience, forcing her to confront disappointment and aspects of reality that contradict her idealized expectations. Proṣitabhartṛkā can again be related to the Anima, as the prolonged absence of the beloved intensifies the internal emotional image of the absent figure and demonstrates the persistence of attachment within the psyche despite physical separation. Finally, Abhisārikā may be examined through the Jungian concept of the Animus, particularly in relation to determination, independent action, judgement, and self-assertion. Unlike the Nāyikā who primarily waits for the beloved, the Abhisārikā actively pursues her desire and takes initiative, allowing her to be interpreted as a symbolic expression of assertive psychic energy. Thus, the eight Nāyikās can be read through different Jungian archetypal dimensions, not as fixed equivalents of Jungian archetypes, but as culturally situated symbolic expressions of recurring psychic experiences involving desire, attachment, conflict, shadow emotions, agency, and the movement toward psychological integration.

THE NAYIKA AND THE ANIMA

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The Nāyikās Vāsakasajjā, Virahotkaṇṭhitā, and Proṣitabhartṛkā can be interpreted through the Jungian concept of the Anima, particularly in relation to the psychological image of the beloved and the inner experience of love. In these three states, the beloved is not significant merely as an external romantic figure; rather, the emotional experience associated with the beloved becomes an important presence within the heroine's inner world. Vāsakasajjā, who eagerly prepares herself for the anticipated arrival of her beloved, represents a psychological condition shaped by expectation and desire. Her preparation demonstrates how the anticipation of union can influence the imagination and emotional experience even before the actual meeting occurs. The beloved therefore becomes psychologically significant through the heroine's expectations and idealized perception. Virahotkaṇṭhitā, in contrast, experiences intense longing because of the physical absence of her beloved. Although the beloved is not physically present, the heroine continues to experience his presence within her emotional and imaginative world. Her state demonstrates how physical separation can intensify attachment and strengthen the internal image of the beloved. The experience of Virahotkaṇṭhitā can therefore be understood as a movement from physical absence toward an increasingly internal emotional presence. Proṣitabhartṛkā represents a prolonged form of this experience, as her beloved remains away for an extended period. Despite the continuing physical separation, her emotional attachment remains active, demonstrating how the image of the absent beloved can continue to occupy an important place within the psyche. Her experience suggests that psychological attachment does not necessarily depend upon physical presence and may instead be sustained through memory, imagination, and emotional identification. Through these three Nāyikās, different dimensions of the inner experience of love can therefore be examined: Vāsakasajjā represents the psychological anticipation of the beloved, Virahotkaṇṭhitā represents the intensification of the inner image through separation, and Proṣitabhartṛkā represents the persistence of that internal attachment during prolonged absence. From a Jungian perspective, these experiences can be interpreted through the concept of the Anima as an inner psychic image, allowing the beloved to be understood not only as an external person but also as a symbolic presence within the heroine's psychological world. This interpretation demonstrates how the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā can provide a culturally situated representation of the relationship between desire, imagination, attachment, and the inner psyche.

THE NAYIKA AND SHADOW

The Nāyikās Kalahāntaritā, Khaṇḍitā, and Vipralabdhā can be examined through the Jungian concept of the Shadow, particularly in relation to emotional conflict, jealousy, anger, disappointment, and other difficult aspects of the psyche. The Shadow broadly represents aspects of the personality that may remain unacknowledged, rejected, or difficult to integrate into conscious awareness. Kalahāntaritā, who experiences separation from her beloved after a quarrel, presents a complex emotional condition in which love, anger, pride, regret, and the desire for reconciliation exist simultaneously. Her emotional conflict can therefore be interpreted as an encounter with contradictory aspects of her own psychological experience. Khaṇḍitā provides an even stronger example of this dimension, as her response to the perceived betrayal of her beloved involves anger, jealousy, resentment, and wounded trust. These emotions may be viewed as difficult or socially uncomfortable aspects of the psyche, yet they form an important part of her emotional identity and cannot simply be separated from her experience of love. Vipralabdhā, who experiences disappointment after the failure of an expected meeting, also encounters a

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painful dimension of the self when her expectations and emotional assumptions are confronted by reality. Her experience can be understood as a movement from emotional expectation towards disillusionment, forcing her to confront feelings of rejection and vulnerability. Through these three Nāyikās, the Shadow can therefore be used as an interpretive framework for understanding emotions that emerge during psychological conflict. Their experiences demonstrate that anger, jealousy, regret, disappointment, and emotional vulnerability are not merely external reactions but may also reveal deeper tensions within the individual psyche. Thus, the Nāyikā provides a symbolic space in which less comfortable emotional dimensions can become visible and can be examined as significant elements of psychological experience.

THE NAYIKA AND THE SELF

The concept of the Self provides another significant framework for interpreting the psychological dimensions of the Nāyikā, particularly in relation to emotional integration, self-awareness, confidence, and psychological wholeness. Among the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikās, Svādhīnabhartṛkā can be examined most closely through this concept because her relationship with the beloved is characterized by emotional security, mutual attachment, and a strong sense of relational confidence. Her position within the relationship suggests a state in which her emotional needs and sense of identity are not dominated by uncertainty or separation. From a Jungian perspective, the Self represents a broader principle of psychological wholeness and the integration of different aspects of the personality. In this context, Svādhīnabhartṛkā can be interpreted as representing a comparatively integrated emotional condition in which confidence, intimacy, and relational fulfilment coexist. However, the Self need not be understood as belonging exclusively to one Nāyikā. The emotional journeys represented by the other Nāyikās can also be viewed as different experiences through which the psyche encounters desire, attachment, conflict, loss, and agency. The movement between these emotional states suggests that psychological experience is dynamic rather than fixed. Svādhīnabhartṛkā therefore provides a useful point of reference for considering the possibility of emotional balance and integration within the wider Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā framework. Through this interpretation, the Nāyikā becomes more than a representation of romantic fulfilment; she can also be examined as a symbolic figure through whom questions of identity, emotional security, relational balance, and psychological wholeness are explored.

CONCLUSION

The present study has examined these emotional patterns through the framework of Carl Jung's analytical psychology. Rather than establishing a direct equivalence between the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā and Jungian archetypes, the study has used concepts such as the Anima, Animus, Shadow, Persona, and Self as interpretive tools. Through this approach, Vāsakasajjā, Virahotkaṇṭhitā, and Proṣitabhartṛkā have been considered in relation to the Anima and the internal emotional image of the beloved; Kalahāntaritā and Khaṇḍitā have been examined through the Shadow in relation to conflict, jealousy, anger, and other difficult emotional dimensions; Abhisārikā has been interpreted through the Animus in relation to determination, action, and self-assertion; and Svādhīnabhartṛkā has been considered in relation to the Self through ideas of confidence, relational fulfilment, and psychological integration. Vipralabdhā,

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through her movement from expectation to disappointment, further demonstrates the tension between an idealized emotional identity and confrontation with an unexpected reality.

The analysis suggests that the eight Nāyikās can be viewed as interconnected psychological states rather than as completely isolated categories. Their experiences demonstrate different movements within the emotional life of the individual: desire leads to anticipation, attachment may lead to longing, conflict may reveal hidden emotions, betrayal may bring the Shadow into awareness, separation may demand endurance, and desire may result in self-assertive action. Viewed collectively, these states form a broad spectrum through which the human psyche encounters attachment, loss, emotional contradiction, vulnerability, agency, and the search for fulfilment. The Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā can therefore be understood as a culturally situated symbolic system capable of generating psychological interpretations beyond its original aesthetic classification.

The study also demonstrates the possibilities and limitations of bringing Indian aesthetic theory into dialogue with Jungian analytical psychology. The two traditions emerge from different intellectual and cultural contexts and should not be treated as identical theoretical systems. The Jungian framework is therefore employed here not to replace the Indian aesthetic understanding of the Nāyikā, but to provide an additional interpretive perspective. This distinction is particularly important because the meanings of the Nāyikās are rooted in the concepts of rasa, bhāva, abhinaya, and Indian aesthetic thought. A Jungian interpretation can complement these concepts by drawing attention to psychological dimensions without reducing the Nāyikā tradition to Western psychological categories.

The findings of this study consequently support the hypothesis that the emotional states represented through the Aṣṭa-Nāyikā can be meaningfully interpreted as recurring psychological patterns through selected Jungian concepts. Such an interpretation provides a new interdisciplinary perspective on the eight heroines by connecting aesthetic representation with the symbolic dimensions of the psyche. It also demonstrates that traditional Indian aesthetic categories can continue to generate new interpretations when examined through contemporary interdisciplinary approaches. In the context of Bharatanatyam and other Indian classical dance traditions, this perspective may further contribute to the understanding of abhinaya by encouraging performers and researchers to consider the Nāyikā not only as a prescribed character type but also as a complex psychological presence whose emotional world is embodied through performance.

Ultimately, the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā represents more than a taxonomy of heroines. It offers a rich framework for exploring the relationship between emotion, behaviour, symbolic representation, and the human psyche. A Jungian reading reveals how the experiences of the eight Nāyikās can be interpreted through broader psychological concepts while preserving their grounding in Indian aesthetic tradition. The dialogue between these two frameworks opens possibilities for further research into Nāyikā representation in Bharatanatyam, other Indian classical dance forms, literature, visual culture, gender studies, and audience reception. The study therefore concludes that the continuing significance of the Aṣṭa-Vidha Nāyikā lies not only in its historical aesthetic value but also in its capacity to illuminate the complex and recurring patterns of human emotional experience.

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