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Abhinavagupta's Exposition Extends Bharata's *Rasa Theory* in Several Ways

Astha, M.A., B.Ed., Ph.D. Scholar

Focus of *Natyasastra*

The *Natyasastra* is an ancient Indian treaty on the performing arts, encompassing theatre, dance and music written in 2 century BC. It is traditionally attributed to Bharat Muni. The work is incredible in its details regarding stage craft, rasa, bhava, abhinay, etc. The text contains 6000 *sutras*, incorporated in to a frame where a number of *munis* approach Bharat asking him about *Natyaveda* and *Rasa, Bhava, Sutra, Karika, Nirukta, Abhinaya* etc. Bharat quenches their thirst by explaining every thing minutely. In the 6th chapter we read that Bharat Muni enunciated eight *Rasas*. Each *Rasa* according to *Natyasastra* has a presiding deity and specific colors.

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What is *Rasa*?

Rasa is an emotional response that is inspired in an audience by a performer. *Rasa* is a developed relishable and enhanced state of a permanent mood which is called *sthai bhava*. *Rasa* literally means the quintessential essence of a work of art. It is a two-way process, the artist strives for *rasa* in his work and the *rasika* or connoisseur intuitively detects it. He says *Rasa* is bestowed on the spectator or audience.

Rasa is like a perfume which comes from matter but cannot be easily described or comprehended but only enjoyed. *Rasa* denotes taste and flavor as when various condiments, herbs and sauces and other materials are mixed, a taste different from the individual taste of the component is felt. *Rasa* is enjoyably tasted. *Rasa* is a state of heightened delight or *ananda*, the kind of bliss that can be experienced only by the spirit. *Rasa* experience is emotional the artist creates a world for the viewer and he reaches to a state of emphatic bliss.

How is this *Rasa* created?

As Bharat Muni explained in *Natyasastra*, *Rasa* is created by the combination of *vibhav*, *anubhava*, and *vyabhicari bhava*. Each *rasa* experienced by the audience is associated with a specific *bhava* portrayed on the stage.

Bhava, etc. Explained

Now what is *bhava* (mood), *vibhava* (stimulant) and *anubhava* (consequent manifestation, enactment).

Bhava is the imitation of emotions. *Bhava* conveys the meaning intended by the poet through gestures facial expressions. (*Vibhav* and *anubhav* together make *bhavas*)

Vibhava is the stimuli, cause.

Anubhava is the enactment of *bhavas*.

To *vibhavas* human reacts in different ways. These reaction expressions are called *Anubhava*. *Anubhav* is voluntary.

A Total of 49 Bhavas

Sthai bhava- A *rasa* is the developed, relishable state of a permanent mood which is called *sthai bhava*. These are eight in number.

- 1) *Rati*
- 2) *Hasya*
- 3) *Soka*
- 4) *Krodha*
- 5) *Utsaha*
- 6) *Bhaya*
- 7) *Jugupsa*
- 8) *Vismaya*

Sancari bhava (vyabhicari bhava) The temporary effects or feelings which are not stable (*sthai*) are called *sancari bhava*. These emanate during the creation of *sthai bhava*. These are thirty-three in number. These are involuntary.

- 1) *Nirveda*
- 2) *Glani*
- 3) *Sanka*
- 4) *Asuya*
- 5) *Mada*
- 6) *Srama*
- 7) *Alasya*
- 8) *Dainya*
- 9) *Chinta*

- 10) *Moha*
- 11) *Smriti*
- 12) *Dhriti*
- 13) *Vridha*
- 14) *Chapalta*
- 15) *Harsa*
- 16) *Avega*
- 17) *Jadta*
- 18) *Garv*
- 19) *Vishad*
- 20) *Autsukya*
- 21) *Nidra*
- 22) *Apasmara*
- 23) *Supta*
- 24) *Vibodha*
- 25) *Amarsa*
- 26) *Avihittahm*
- 27) *Ugrata*
- 28) *Mati*
- 29) *Vyadhi*
- 30) *Unmade*
- 31) *Marnam*
- 32) *Trasa*
- 33) *Vitarka*

Satvik bhava

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These are eight in number. These have also been called as *Anubhhava*.

- 1) *Stambha*
- 2) *Sveda*
- 3) *Romanca*
- 4) *Vepathu*
- 5) *Vaivarnya*
- 6) *Swarbhada*
- 7) *Asru*
- 8) *Pralaya*

Relation between *Rasa* and *Bhava*

Rasa is produced from *bhava*. *Bhava* leads to (*bhu*) a *Rasa* arising out of various kinds of acting. The flavor (*rasa*) is produced by the *bhava* through acting. No *rasa* without *bhava*, no *bhava* without *rasa*; mutually they lead to a distinct result. Each *rasa* experienced by the audience is associated with a specific *bhava* portrayed on stage. For example, in order for the audience to experience *sringar* (the erotic *rasa*), the playwright, actors and musicians work together to portray the *bhav* called *rati* (love).

Rasa

<i>Sringarm</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
Attraction, Love	<i>Vishnu</i>	Greenish blue	<i>Rati</i>

This represents the universal creative force and embodies romantic and erotic feelings of love between man and woman, the longing for the absent lover and sensitivity to the beauty of nature revealed by gorgeous costumes, luxurious dress and ornaments. In our daily life whatever is pure, holy, resplendent is referred to as *sringaram*. It is of two kinds *Sambhog* (fulfillment) and *Vipralambha* (separation).

<i>Hasyam</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
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Laughter, Mirth	<i>Pramatha</i>	White	<i>Hasya</i>
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Hasya is evoked through expanded lips, cheeks, wide staring and contracted eyes etc. Laughter is stimulated by disfigurement of dress, impudence, incoherent speech, deformed appearance, queer behaviour, strange costumes. It is of six varieties:

- 1) *smita*
- 2) *hasita*
- 3) *vihasita*
- 4) *upahasita*
- 5) *apahasita*
- 6) *atihāsita*

<i>Karuna</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
Compassion	<i>yama</i>	pigeon	<i>soka</i>

Karuna is sad pathetic, tragic and expresses loneliness, longing and yearning for the absent lover or God. It is stimulated by curse, pain, calamity, separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, killing, injury, etc.

<i>Raudra Rasa</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
Fury	<i>rudra</i>	red	<i>krodha</i>

This *rasa* is naturally connected with the evil spirits, the devils and the persons of violent nature. The stimulus is anger, boldness, insults, cruelty. Its cause is fight.

<i>Vir Rasa</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
Heroic mood	<i>Indra</i>	Silverish White	<i>Utsaha</i>

Vir rasa concerns noble and brave individuals. It is stimulated by cold blooded (courage) determination, justice, chivalry etc. *Vir rasa* is produced by an energetic, determined, unrelenting nature.

<i>Bhayanak rasa</i> -- Depicts	Presiding deity	Colour	<i>Sthai bhava</i>
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Horror terror *kala* black *bhya*

This *rasa* represents the sensation of fear, fright and awe. It is stimulated by seeing or hearing words, sounds and objects or by fear of jackals and owls, empty houses, forests. This may also be produced by fear of seeing or hearing weird persons or sounds of getting into fights, forests and uninhabited dwelling of having wronged the elders or the King.

Bibhatsa rasa-- Depicts Presiding deity Colour *Sthai bhava*
Aversion *shiva* blue disgust

This conveys the sentiment of hate, hostility, and disgust which is usually made explicit in dramas. It is stimulated by hearing whatever undesirable, ugly, evil is. *Bibhatsa rasa* is produced by things which disturb the mind like seeing something unpleasant, wrong smell, touch, taste, sound etc.

Adbhuta rasa -- Depicts Presiding deity Colour *Sthai bhava*
Amazement *Brahma* Yellow *Vismaya*

Adabhut is expressive of wonderment, amazement, surprise, exhilaration and also mixed feelings of anticipation. It is stimulated by the sight of divine persons, by the sudden achievement of whatever desired, by the tricks and magic. Any achievement or deed or sight which is out of the ordinary should be considered as the stimulus of *Adbhuta rasa*.

Although Bharat Muni has confined the number of *Rasa* to eight only, he, in the last few *karikas* of the chapter six, after talking about all other *Rasas*, talks about *Shanta Rasa*. He says that it is *sthai bhava* - *shama* which brings salvation. Its *Vibhavas* are knowledge, renunciation, purification of heart, etc. Enactment is done by displaying spiritual knowledge, meditation, kindness, etc. Its *sthai bhavas* are *smriti*, *dhriti*, *stambha*, *romanca*, etc. *Shant Rasa* is there when there is no sorrow, no pleasure, and no envy.

Clarification by Abhinavgupta

In *Abhinavbharti*, Abhinavgupta clarifies Bharat's *Rasa sidhanta*. *Muni Bharat* states that the basic emotions become *Rasa* through the action of three elements. Abhinavgupta clarifies that what is really experienced is only the *Rasa*. This is ultimately not even an emotional object presented to consciousness, but rather a specific non-mundane mode of knowledge that is indistinguishable from an active relishing. Abhinavgupta equates *Rasa* with a more fundamental and universal 'aesthetic rapture' that shows itself in different circumstances that are not artistic. *Rasa* is ultimately an inalienable property of consciousness itself.

Muni Bharat states that the whole process of *Rasa* evolves in the consciousness of the auditor, and finally one dominant *Rasa*, one unified aesthetic experience, results from innumerable casual factors. Abhinavgupta compares this primary *Rasa* with Bhartrihari's *Sphota*. Abhinavgupta enjoins that these primary emotions should be depicted on stage so as to inculcate the proper pursuits of their life goals.

Abhinavgupta states that the addition of the ninth *Rasa* is necessary. For him, the fundamental *Rasa* is that of tranquility (*Shanta*) from which all the other *Rasas* emerge and disappear into. This *Rasa* would represent the path of freedom from involvement with the world, the path that promotes the fourth end of life, salvation, an end of life that no other *Rasa* promotes. This *Rasa* can be experienced when one is stabilized in life. Through this *Rasa* a person stretches the transcendental possibilities of aesthetic experience.

Abhinavgupta gives *Shanta* the supreme place. His defense of *Shanta* consists largely of demonstrating the possibility of its practical implementation on the stage in terms of motivation, etc. Abhinavgupta considers this *Rasa* to underlie the other eight *Rasa*. Abhinavgupta's poetics reduces literary experience to a single *Rasa*, *Shanta Rasa*

Abhinavgupta considered the number of *Rasas* as nine. He considered three more *Rasa* but while explaining out these three he has not considered these as three separate entities. These

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are: *Snaeh*, *Laulya*, and *Bhakti Rasa*. He rejects *Bhakti* as a separate *Rasa* for the same reason that he refuses other propositions such as ‘affection for a child’ *Vatsalya Rasa*.

Abhinavgupta, in his commentary on *Rasa Sutra*, recalls the explanation of other scholars in the tradition like *Bhatta Lolatta*, *Sankuka*, and *Bhattatauta*, etc. Abhinavgupta gives reiterates that the *sthai bhava* is not acted but is the object of enactment. While stating what is *Rasa* he simply says he has nothing new. He will only paraphrase what *muni Bharat* has stated. But we see he has been emphatic about the nature of *Rasa* as unobstructed experience. Not everyone is able to have this experience. Defining primary *Rasa* experiences he names those that are related to the four ends of life.

Abhinavgupta says that *Rasa* is present not only in *natya* (visual) only but in *kavya* (*shravya*, aural) narratives also. He tells *Rasa* can be experienced if the narrative style is perfect and mature.

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