

THE *RASA* THEORY

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BHARATA'S EXPOSITION OF RASA

Bharata devotes the sixth chapter of his classical work *Nāṭyaśāstra*, to an in depth analysis of the concept of *rasa*. It is in this chapter that we find the famous '*Rasa Sutra*.' Later taken from the context of *drśya-kavya* or *natya*, it was applied to *śravya-kavya* and accepted as a theory of poetry in general.

The *Rasa Sutra* (VI. 31) offers the methodology of the production of *rasa* on the stage. Bharata succinctly encapsulates the theory of Rasa in his most famous formula *Rasa sutra*:

Vibhava-anubhava-vyabhichari-samyogad rasa nispatih.

(*Rasa* is brought about by the conjunction of *vibhava*, *anubhava* and *vyabhichari bhavas*. *Rasa nispatih* literally means 'production or consummation of *rasa*'.)

VIBHAVA

Vibhavas are the stimuli that cause or give rise to a *bhava* or emotion.

What are cause of emotions in actual life are called *vibhavas* in the realm of literature

TWO TYPES

(They are primary causes without which no emotion can exist)

Alamban
(determinant)

Uddipan
(excitants)

They are auxiliary causes of emotions .

'*Anu*' is that which follows; and, *Anubhava* is the **manifestation** or giving expression the internal state caused by the *Vibhava*. It is *Anubhava* because it makes the **spectators feel** (*anubhavyate*) or **experience the effect** of the **acting** (*Abhinaya*) or by means of words, gestures and the *sattva*. Thus, the psychological states (*Bhavas*) combined with *Vibhavas* (cause) and *Anubhavas* (portrayal or manifestations) have been stated.

They refer to situational (specially, environmental) factors which **excite, inflames and enhances** a particular emotion **caused by that stimulant**, and thus indirectly contribute to the possibility of its emergence.

ANUBHAVAS

(Ensuant responses) are the psycho-physical manifestations which a particular emotion makes upon characters.

They are the physical or bodily expressions of *Bhavas* or emotions. Since they are after effects of *bhavas*, they are called *anubhavas*.

IMPORTANT: While *vibhavas* are the cause of an emotion, a *anubhavas* are the effects or manifestations of emotions.

Example- Trembling is the *anubhava* of th emotion fear.

Anubhava of one character, however, may sometimes serve as a *vibhava* for the emotion of another character. A maiden's smile, for example, may enkindle love in a young man.

VYABHICHARI BHAVAS

(*Sanchari* bhavas or transitory feelings)

They are the various fleeting or temporary emotions which lie upon the dormant emotion. These transitory states help the permanent psychological states to mature into *Rasa* or the aesthetic delight in the spectator.

Bharat mentions 33 *Vyabhichari bhavas* together with 8 *sattvika bhavas*.

Opposite to *Sthayi bhava*

Not confined to particular emotion

Subordinate in *rasa*

Like the wave of ocean

Strengthens Sthayi bhavas

Thus, *vibhava* and *anubhava* have a cause and effect relationship. *Vyabhichari* or the transitory state of mind is again an impact due to some specific cause. The difference between *anubhava* and *vyabhichari bhava* is that the former is a physical reaction whereas the latter is a mental reaction or a psychological state. Well, when all these- excitant, ensuant response and transitory feelings – are correlated with any permanent emotion of a *sahridaya* (an aesthete), it is manifested, transformed, or say, converted into poetic pleasure. **A step further comes the result i.e. the awareness of the emotion in the minds of the spectator which Bharata calls Rasa Nispattih.**

The ***Sattvika Bhavas*** are reflex actions or involuntary bodily reactions to strong feelings or agitations that take place in ones mind. Sattvas are of eight kinds : *Stambha* (stunned and immobile); *Svedah* sweating); *Romanchaka* (thrilled, hair-standing-on-end); *Svara bedha* (change in voice); *Vipathuh* (trembling); *Vivarnyam* (pale or colorless); *Asru* (breaking into tears); and, *Pralaya* (fainting). These do help to enhance the effect of the intended expression or state of mind (*Bhava*).

The ***Sthayi Bhavas*** , the dominant *Bhavas*, which are most commonly found in all humans are said eight : *Rati* (love); *Hasya* (mirth); *Sokha* (sorrow); *Krodha* (anger); *Utsahah* (energy); *Bhayam* (fear); *Jigupsa* (disgust); and *Vismaya* (wonder).

Thus, the eight *Sthāyi bhavās*, thirty-three *Vyabhicāri bhāvās* together with eight *Sātvika bhāvas*, amount to forty-nine psychological states, excluding *Vibhava* and *Anubhava*.

TABLE I

***Vyabhichari (Sanchari) Bhavas* along with their *Anubhavas* (physical signs)**

Sr.	Vyabhichari bhavas	Anubhava
1	<i>Āasya</i> (Indolence)	Moroseness, sleeplessness, lack of interest in work etc.
2	<i>Amarsa</i> (Indignation)	Shaking of the head, sweating, etc.
3	<i>Apsmāra</i> (Epilepsy/forgetfulness)	Tremor, Perspiration, Fits, Throbbing, etc
4	<i>Asūyā</i> (Envy)	Decrying other's merits, knitting eyebrows in disparagement etc.
5	<i>Autsukya</i> (Eagerness)	Sighs, Drowsiness, thinking, etc.
6	<i>Avahittha</i> (Dissimulation)	Feigned patience, break in speech etc.
7	<i>Āvega</i> (Agitation)	Uneasiness, pallor, accelerated walking etc.
8	<i>Capalatā</i> (Rashness; fickleness)	Harsh words, scolding, beating, etc.
9	<i>Cintā</i> (Anxiety)	Deep breathing, brooding, sighs, etc.
10	<i>Dainya</i> (Wretchedness)	Dullness, absent-mindedness, negligence of bodily cleanliness etc.
11	<i>Dhriti</i>	Showing no fear or fear, etc.

12	<i>Garva</i> (Arrogance/Pride)	Irresponsiveness
13	<i>Glāni</i> (Internal weakness)	Weak voice; lusterless eyes; sleeplessness; slow gait, etc.
14	<i>Harṣa</i> (Joy)	Brightness of looks, feeling thrilled, etc.
15	<i>Jaḍata</i> (Stupor/sluggishness)	Loss of movement and energy, blank gaze, etc.
16	<i>Mada</i> (Intoxication)	Laughing and singing, unsteady movement, sneezes, hiccup, etc.
17	<i>Maranā</i> (Death)	Closed eyes, looseness of the body, etc.
18	<i>Mati</i> (Rationality)	Coolness of behaviour, giving of instruction, ascertainment of meanings, etc.
19	<i>Moha</i> (Delusion)	Giddiness, staggering looks, etc.
20	<i>Nidrā</i> (Sleep)	Rolling of eyes, deep breathing
21	<i>Nirveda</i> (Indifference to worldly objects)	Tears; sighs; pensiveness, etc.
22	<i>Śaṅkā</i> (Appreciation)	Unsteady looks; hesitating movement, etc.

23	<i>Smṛti</i> (Recollection)	Knitting of eyebrows, nodding of head, etc.
24	<i>Śrama</i> (Exhaustion/weariness)	Heavy breaths, twisting of limbs etc.
25	<i>Supta</i> (Dreaming)	Dullness of body, dreaming etc.
26	<i>Trāsa</i> (fright/terror)	Frightened speech, horripilation, tremor, etc.
27	<i>Ugratā</i> (Vehemence)	Scolding, threatening, acrimony, etc.
28.	<i>Unmāda</i> (Madness)	Loss of mental equilibrium, inopportune weeping, shouting or laughing, random talk, incoherent gestures, etc.
29	<i>Vibidha</i> (wakefulness/awakening)	Yawning, rubbing of the eyes, etc.
30	<i>Viṣāda</i> (Dejection)	Loss of energy; deep breathing, etc.
31	<i>Vitarka</i> (Reasoning/Deliberation)	Looking down, searching looks, lolling of head
32	<i>Vrīdā</i> (Bashfulness)	Looking down, scratching of nails, writing (with the toe) on the ground
33	<i>Vyādhi</i> (Sickness)	Feeling of cold or heat, deep breathing, languishing, etc.

TABLE-II
SATTVIKA BHAVAS ALONG WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR THEIR ACTING

Sr.	<i>Sattvika bhavas</i>	Instructions for actors
1	<i>Aśru</i> (Tears)	To be acted by wiping the eyes and shedding tears
2	<i>Pralay</i> (Fainting, death)	To be acted by repeated thrills, hair standing on the end, and touching the limbs.
3	<i>Romānce</i> (horripilation)	To be acted by repeated thrills, hair standing on the end, and touching the limbs.
4	<i>Stambha</i> (Stupeftion)	To be acted by standing still, body unmoving, eyes unseeing, and the limbs lifelss
5	<i>Svara-bheda</i> (break in voice)	To be acted by means of broken and choked voice
6	<i>Sveda</i> (Perspiration)	To be acted by using a fan, wiping perspiration, and exhibiting the desire for fresh air.
7	<i>Vaivarnya</i> (Pallor)	To be acted by pressurizing the pulse and changing the colour of the face.
8	<i>Vepathu</i> (Trembling)	To be acted by means of trembling, throbbing and shaking.

TABLE-III
***STHAYĪ BHAVAS* AND CORRESPONDING RASAS**

Sr.	<i>Sthayi bhavas</i>	Rasas
1	<i>Rati</i> (Love)	<i>Śṛṅgāra</i> (Erotic)
2	<i>Hāsa</i> (Laughter)	<i>Hāsyā</i> (Comic)
3	<i>Śoka</i> (Sorrow)	<i>Karuna</i> (Pathetic)
4	<i>Krodha</i> (Anger)	<i>Raudra</i> (Furious)
5.	<i>Utsāha</i> (Enthusiasm)	<i>Vīra</i> (Heroic)
6	<i>Bhaya</i> (Fear)	<i>Bhayanak</i> (Terrifying)
7	<i>Jugupsā</i> (Disgust)	<i>Bibhatsa</i> (Odious)
8	<i>Vismaya</i> (Wonder)	<i>Adbhuta</i> (Marvelous)
9	<i>Śama</i> (Quietude)	<i>Śānta</i> (Quietistic)
10	<i>Bhagavad-rati</i> (Love towards God)	<i>Bhakti</i> (Devotional)
11	<i>Apatya-rati</i> (Love towards children)	<i>Vātsalya</i> (Filial)

From the forthcoming book “*An Introduction to the Study of Indian Poetics*”, M. S. Kushwaha and Sanjay Kumar Mishra

MAJOR INTERPRETATIONS OF *RASA-SŪTRĀ*

Many philosophers have contributed ideas to the theories in aesthetics including Dandin, Bhatta Lollata, Sanuka, and Bhatta Nayaka. The ideas of all these philosophers have been passed down through the writings of the philosopher Abhinavagupta (Gnoli XXXV).

Anandavardhana discusses the difference between everyday language and poetic language; suggesting the worth in poetic words—they lose their meaning when interchanged with other words (Gnoli XXIX). The Sanskrit word, *dhvani*, synonymous with “resonance” in this context (Gnoli XXIX), is also often referred to as “suggestion” in reference to *rasa* (Higgins 47). In Abhinavagupta’s commentary on the *Dhvanyaloka*, he suggests that “admitting that a sentence can have several meanings is thus a fallacy.” However, he conveys that poetics is in a different realm where once a person has realized the words, they become an “object of aesthetic experience” and it is unnecessary to apply the regular conditions of understanding everyday language (Gnoli XXVIII).

By looking at earlier philosophers like Bhatta Lollata of the 9th century, we see some contradictions to what Bharata describes about *rasa* in the *Natyasastra*. Lollata was most likely a Saivite (worshipper of Siva) mystic, who felt *rasa* was something experienced by both the character and the actor playing the role (Gnoli XVIII). Using the *Ramayana*, he describes that the character of Rama first feels the *rasa* and then subsequently any actor who plays the character of Rama also feels the *rasa* (Arjunwadkar 83). Lollata described that *rasa* is a “permanent mental state” (a *sthayin*) that exists at its most extreme form; used with Determinants, Consequents, and Transitory Mental States (Gnoli XVIII). Following Lollata, the philosopher Sanuka had highly controversial ideas of *rasa* compared to Abhinavagupta. Sanuka proposed an imitation theory: within a performance, *rasa* involved an actor emulating a specific mental emotion. He suggested that the audience did not make a distinction amongst the character being played and the actor; therefore, they always remained naïve to this artificiality (Gnoli XIX).

Another very important theorist in the conception of *rasa* theory is Bhatta Nayaka, who is also Kashmiri, from the 10th century (Gnoli XX). Nayaka is recognized as forming two ideas: *bhavakatva* and *bhojakatva*. *Bhavakatva* is the idea of “generalization” (*sadharanikarana*) that essentially rids the spectator from the consciousness of their individuality and universalizes the experiences of the character in the play or in spoken poetry (Arjunwadkar 87). The *bhojakatva* is the experience of the audience savouring the generalized *rasa* in a mind frame that is entirely separate from the regular cognitive processes and one that leads to pure joy (Arjunwadkar 87). Nayaka describes how certain experiences of everyday life have a way of impacting us that brings us grief and sorrow. However, in the theatre domain the ability to see them in the generalized form allows one to take pleasure in feeling these emotions (Gnoli XXII- XXIII). When Bharata talks about this concept of generalization, he suggests that one experiences a suspension of their ego in the process (Chaudhury 149). Nayaka suggests that a *rasa* is a “fruition” (*bhoga*), where one evades their consciousness and enters the realm of pure bliss that is associated with *Brahman* (Gnoli XXIV). Nayaka makes the correlation between religious schools of thought and *rasa*, suggesting they both come from the same foundation: a person can be released from their thoughts of everyday life (Gnoli XXVI).

It is noted, by Abhinavagupta, that *rasa* is something that exists only in the world of drama, while the permanent emotions (*sthayins*) occur in real life. These emotional states exist instinctually, but become the experience of *rasa* once the permanent emotion undergoes a transformation into the universalized form separate from oneself or their counterparts (Arjunwadkar 90).

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