

UNDERSTANDING THE RASA THEORY

Dr A. P.Pandey

Associate prof. & Head,

Dept. of English

Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala College,

Ghatkopar, Mumbai.

The Indian Poetics is substantially rich in various literary disciplines practiced by the scholars of antiquity to enhance the beauty of literary works. These devices include Alankaar (Figures of speech) Rasa, Chhanda (Prosody), Vakrokti and Dhvani, which were commonly used by the practitioners of literature to make their poetic expressions aesthetically satisfying and emotionally appealing to the readers. It is very difficult to ascertain as to which discipline is superior to other for the growth and development of literary genres. It is understood that as different raw materials are unified to make food items more delicious and tasty, and an organic unity is required for a beautiful and attractive physique; similarly the proper blend of all these disciplines is necessitated to generate fine literary taste and aesthetic beauty of an art and literature. None of these disciplines can singularly generate an artistic creation of high literary merit.

However, the main focus of this study is to explore and establish the origin of Rasa which needs to be elaborated in the light of various views put forth by the galaxy of scholars of the past. The discipline of Rasa theory enjoys significant place among other literary disciplines perpetuated by the *acharyas* of Indian aesthetics. Bharat-Muni is the first *Aacharya* who is accredited to have institutionalized Rasa theory, and gave the essential elements to facilitate the full realization of Rasa in an artistic presentation. Although Rasa theory was known to people before Bharat-Muni, it was not so properly codified and explained as to become an established means to aesthetically evaluate any piece of art.

That Rasa-doctrine was older than Bharat is apparent from Bharat's own citation of several verses in the Arya and Anustubha metres in support of or in supplement to his own statement; and in the place, he appears to quote two Arya verses from an unknown work on Rasa. The idea of Rasa, apart from any

theory theon, was naturally not unknown to old writers, and Bharat's treatment would indicate that some system of rasa, however undeveloped or even Rasa School, particularly in connection with drama must have been in existence in his time.1

Bharat-Muni has properly defined and given the constituents of Rasa popularly known as Rasa **Sutra (Rasa Maxim)** in the 6th and 7th Chapters of his treatise called *Bharatnatyam* ; “**Vibhaavaanubhaav Vyabhichaari sanyogaadrasarnishapattih.**”

In simple words, the unification of Vibhaava, Anubhaava and Sanchaaribhaava with Sthaaibhaavaas activates a unique kind of pleasure called Rasa. Sanchaaribhaava is also known Sanchaaribhaava. Abhinava Gupta, an outstanding commentator on Bharatha's rasa theory has further orientated our understanding by means of domestic metaphor through a shlok being summarily presented as below;

As Rasa (taste) in food items is generated by the concoction of various delicacies and medicinal herbs, similarly the Rasa in literature is activated by mingling of multiple emotions with permanent emotions present in the consciousness of one who experiences it.2

Achaarya Vishwanath in his book *Sahitya Darpan* states that permanent emotions (sthaaibhaavaas) emerge as a Rasa when exposed to other constituents such as Vibhaav, Anubhaav and Sanchaaribhaav. As a healthy man appreciates the taste of food items and enjoys them, similarly a person with regal and joyous temperament can relish the pleasures of Rasa served by an art. For Instance, when one is fully engrossed in looking at the performance on the stage or reading poetry, he is led to ecstatic pleasure or transcendental experience which is the realization of Rasa. At such stage his Rajo and Tamo gunas are reduced to minuscule and Sato guna becomes the master of the mental state. The person who relishes the inexplicable joy of Rasa out of artistic creation feels as if he in full Samadhi or meditation which is rightly equated with **Brahmanand Sahodarh.**

There are four constituents of Rasa- Sthaibhaava, Vibhaava, Anubhaava and Sanchaaribhaava or Sanchaaribhaav-which need to be properly elaborated to continue further discussion of Rasa.Sthaibhaavas(permanent emotions), though not mentioned categorically in the Rasa Sutra, they are always present in the consciousness of the readers, as indicated by

the nomenclature of Sthaaibhaava itself. They bloom to completion when they are excited by other supplementary emotions which are external manifestations. Sthaaibaavas are of nine types –Rati or Shringaar(Amorous),Hasya(Ludicrous), Karun (Pathetic), Veer (Heroic), Bhayanak (Fearful), Jugupsa(Nauseating), Adbhut (Wonerous), Raudra (Compassionate), Shant(Peaceful). Aesthetic psychologists have included two more names to sthaibhav i.e. Vaatsaya (Filial) and Bhakti (Devotional).

Vibhaava: It is the very object which promotes or activates the permanent emotion which are deeply ingrained the sub conscious or unconscious of the person. It can further be divided into two Alamban and Uddipan.

(A) Alamban Vibhaava:

The object which activates the Sthaibhaavas in the concerned person by its various manifestations is called Aalamban Vibhav. For instance, in Mahabharata, the beauty of Shakuntala boosts the Sthaibahava (amorous) in Dushyanta. In this illustration, thus, Shakuntala is Alamban and Dushyanta is Ashraya.

(B) Uddipan Vibhav:

The word Uddipan means to kindle or to stimulate something that is lying inactive. They are the felicitators and followers of the Aalamban. In Uddipan come two elements- expression through body language of Aalamban and external elements such as, moonlit night, solitude, bank of river, garden etc.

Anubhaava: Those which conspicuously bring out the reaction of Aashraya and Aalamban are called Anubhava.They can be better understood in terms of their types:Kayik(Physical) , Vaachik(Speech), Aaharya(reflected in costumes and decoration) and Satwik: expressions are automatic and one has no control over them and can be seen in sweat, shiver, thrill, shock tears etc.

Sancharibhavas also known as Vyabhicharibhavaas are those constituents which strengthen and confirm/enhance the Sthaaibhaavas. They are dynamic and keep on moving from one Rasa to another and hence are justifiably named as Sanchaaribhaavas.

In due course of time, a number of commentators discussed, deliberated and expressed their own views on the Rasa theory of Bharat-Mni. The major commentators who significantly contributed to the growth and sinterpretation of his theory of Rasa can be sequentially presented as follows:

Bhatta Lollat:

He is the first commentator on the Rasa theory who accepted the theory with some modifications and interpretations, though no treatise of Acharya Lollat is available. His views incorporated by Abhinava Gupta in his Abhinavbharti and Dhwnyaloklochan expound how Sthaibhavaas are related to other emotions in three different ways:

1)Sthaaibhavaas are generated in association with Vibhaavaas and thus they respectively related as produce and producer.

2)Sthaaibhaavas are experienced in association with Aalamban and relation between them is as signified and signifier

3)Sthaibhaavas are nourished by Sanchaaribhavaas and the relation between them is that of nourished and nourisher.

Acharya Lollat believes that Rasas are neither activated nor boosted but are generated and hence his theory called utpattivaad. According to him Rasa essentially lies in(Anukaarya) historical or mythical character but(Anukarta) the actor on the stage imitates the role of the mythical character so well that the spectator takes the actor to be the true character as delineated in the original drama or play. The actor imitates the Vibhaava on the basis of the plot; imitates the Alamban on the basis of his creative skill of acting, and Sancharibhaav is imitated by the artificial aalamban.

The second commentator on the rasa theory of Bharatmuni was Acharya Shankuk who was a great logician and known for having promoted his own dictum” Chitra Turag Nyaay”, which means that one assumes the real horse simply by looking at the picture of a horse. He states that the views of Lollat are quite misleading as he believes that the emotions of the historical character are imitated or imposed on the actor. According to Shankuk the emotions of the historical character are not imposed on the actor on the stage but they are inferred and anticipated or postulated. This unique anticipation is different from the ordinary one in the sense that it percolates outstandingly pleasure from the artistic presentation of the actor on the stage.

By virtue of Chitra Turag Nyaay, an audience while witnessing the stage performance speculates the historical character whose role is presented by the professional actor. This exceptional speculation makes the audience involve in what is going on the stage and derives an inexplicable pleasure (Rasa) out of it. This unique pleasure can be experienced in artistic presentation of drama and poetry but not at all in real life situations. For instance, if in scorching heat one assumes that he is in the cool shade of banyan, he will not get relief from the heat. But in the play, the wonderful performance of the actor on the stage makes one realize that one might undergo the phases of happiness and sorrow in one's real life. Prof. S, N, Dasgupta has given another illustration to make point clear that Rasa is an emotion excited by artistic circumstances or situations:

When a young man falls in love with a young woman and his whole frame is shaken, we cannot speak of him as being the subject of Shringar Rasa, or when his son is dead and he is crying in tears, we cannot speak of him that he is in the Karuna Rasa.³

Bhatt Nayak, the third commentator on the Rasa theory, has established different perception called Bhuktivaad. He neither considers Rasa as an activation nor creation nor estimation but he believes that Rasa is directly consumed and tasted through Sthaaibhaavas. To make his points clear, he propounded a theory called Sadharanikaran Siddhaant or *Generalization Theory*. According to him, when the subject of poetry and drama appears to be general and the uniqueness and extraordinariness gets diluted to general level, it is called generalization. In other words, generalization takes place when Vibhaav and other associated emotions are no longer special but simple and common. For instance, when Sita is no longer as epical and historical character, but a simple woman, it is called the stage of generalization.

There are three operations which need to be taken care of as they facilitate in the realization and completion of Rasa. They are-Abhidha (Denotation), Bhaavakatva (Emotion) and Bhojakatva (Consumption). Denotation simplifies the figurative language and enhances the understanding of the content, whereas emotion promotes the process of Generalization of the episode. These two give rise to the Rasa, a unique pleasure which is experienced and relished by the one who is blessed with stronger feelings and emotions. Acharya Vishwanath also believes that liberation of Vibhaavaas from the feelings of self and others completes the process of Generalization. All the constituents of the rasa become generalized and they even generalize the consciousness of audience.

Abhinavgupta:

Abhinava Gupta is the fourth commentator of Rasa Theory, who has not ruled out the views, expressed by his predecessors but offered his own modifications based on his own perception and critical insights. According to him permanent emotions are always present in the consciousness of one and when they come in contact with other emotion such as Vibhaavaas etc, they are expressed rather than generated or activated or imitated. This is the reason that his interpretation of Rasa Theory is called expressionism. He states that unification of the constituents promotes Rasa- a kind of expression- happiness, sorrow, anger etc- called the true realization of Rasa which transcends the earthly happiness or sorrow defined by mankind. The succeeding thinkers and scholars have accepted the view of Abhinava Gupta, which is known as Expressionism. Though some less established Scholars like Dhananjay and others have not willingly accepted his views but they are neither accepted nor approved by the established scholars. To conclude, the Rasa theory was originally contributed by Bharat-Muni. It was further substantiated by the scholars of the succeeding generations with their own interpretations and fresh insights to extend the spectrum and scope of Rasa as essential discipline of Indian discipline..

References:

1. S.K.De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta (Second Edition, 1960), Pp17-18
2. Abhinava Gupta, *Abhinava Bharati*, pp. 494-495 Quoted by Sundarlal Kathuria in *Rasa Siddhant: Aakshap and Samadhan*, AdarshSahitya prakashan Delhi, 1972, p.16.
3. (Eds) V. Raghavan& Nagendra; *An Introduction to Indian Poetics*, Macmillan and Company Limited, Bombay, Calcutta, Madrs, London, 1970, p.37

Other Works Consulted:

Bharat-Muni, *The Natyasastra*, Manmohan Ghosh, Manisha Granthalay, Calcutta (Second Edition, 19670

P.V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Motilal Banarasidas, Banaras, 1950