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Rasa: A soul of Sanskrit Dramaturgy

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Abstract: “What is Rasa?”- is a debatable question since the word “Rasa” emerged in the *Rig Veda*. Rasa has different twenty meanings. Rasa is a soul of Sanskrit Dramaturgy. Different scholars from Bhatt Lollata to Jagannatha have given different definitions of Rasa. There are eight main Rasas and the ninth Rasa was added later on to the list. Rasa has a lot many definitions, and still expecting more new definitions. The reason behind this is, Rasa arises from the interpretation of different elements, it is a feeling (Anubhava). Rasa does not exist in Rama, Nata (actor), Kavya or Nataka. It exists in our hearts. According to scholars, it exists in our hearts in the form of Sthayi Bhavas.

Keywords: Rasa, Vinhava, Anubhava, Satvik Bhava, Vyabhichari Bhava.

Introduction

It is said for Rasa – “रस्यतेअस्वाद्यतेवाइतिरसः”. Rasa has come from dhatu – रसअस्वादने in the form of आस्वादन. On one hand, Rasa word delights us and fills our heart with lots of happiness; on the other hand it has been a subject of huge controversy in the poetics. The controversy is not regarding the supremacy of Rasa in the poetics. Scholars of all disciplines believe that Rasa is mandatory element of Kavya (Literature), and mostly of them consider Rasa as the chief element of Kavya (Literature). “What is Rasa?” is a matter of controversy. Scholars have shown their different views regarding this.

There are so many meanings of Rasa in Indian Sanskrit Literature as it is said in



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Vishvakosha –

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रसोगन्धः रसेस्वादेतिक्तादौविषरागयोः।
श्रुंगारादौद्रवेवीर्येदेहघात्वम्बुपारदे।
रसातुशल्लकीपाठाजिह्वाधरणिकङ्गषु।

It has its roots in रस + अच्. Rasa means water and love and at the same time Rasa means alcohol and poison. Aapte Dictionary gives twenty meanings of Rasa. Let's look at some prominent meanings of Rasa.

Rasa is a kind of lifesaver according to Ayurveda. In Cookery, मधुराम्ललवणकटुकषायतिक्त (sweet, sorrow, salty, bitter, astringency, spicy) are six types of Rasa.

In Nature Science, the quintessence of the trees is also known as Rasa. Even Rasa is commonly used for beautiful things. Apart from this, the sensation of pleasure is also known as Rasa. In *Vaishashik Darshan*, Rasa has been considered as one of the 24 attributes. Thus, Rasa which has so many meanings has been interpreted in the Kavyas (Literature) as Shringar Rasa. At the same time the supreme poet, Vishvnatha has presented Rasa as “वाक्यंरसात्मकंकाव्यं”. (The sentence with Rasa is poetry.) Thus, Rasa word has been used in very large context. As Dr. Rajendra Krishna Agrawal writes in his research thesis - “Rasa is the apex point of the Indian literature. Indian poetics, Rasa is the source of knowledge, which has gifted intellectual scholars in each and every century. Rasa is the light house of literature, which has enlightened the intellect of so many writers. Rasa is invisible; still it is an important element of DrashayaKavya. It is inexpressible, still creates ingenuity in the words.”

Rasa and interpretation of Rasa have been the matter of controversy since the primitive period of time in the Indian Sanskrit literature. It is said for Rasa in

TaitariyaUpanishada– “रसोवैसःरसंहोवायंलब्धानन्दीभवति”. (Being means of eminence pleasure, Rasa and soul are equal)In *Agnipurana*, Vyasa says –



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“वाग्वैदग्धप्रधानेऽपिरसएवात्रजीवितम्” (Though the Kavya is full of beauty of language, but Rasa is the reason behind aliveness of Kavya) for Rasa. Karuna Rasa has been considered as the base of Ramayan, even the credit of writing this kind of epic goes to the following verse which is full of Karuna Rasa by Valmiki –

मानिषादप्रतिष्ठास्त्वमगमः शाश्वतीसमाः ।

यत्क्रौञ्चमिथुनादेकमवधीः काममोहितम् ॥

“Who is the main promoter of Rasa?” –is still a matter of controversy. It has been proven through different pieces of evidence that this was the matter of discussion even before the *Natyashastra* of Bharatmuni. It has been mentioned by Bharatmuni and Shardatanaya– अत्रानुवंश्यौश्लोकोभवत्. At the same time Rajshekara has considered Nandikeshavara as the primitive promoter of Rasa. If we ignore the past, at present *Natyashastra* of Bharatmuni is the only available treatise which can be considered as the resource of Rasa.

Rasa in *Natyashastra*:

The Acharya who has given us the definition of Rasa is Bharatmuni. Bharatmuni has focused on Rasa and Rasa theory in the sixth chapter of *Natyashastra*. The next chapter is based on the interpretation of Bhavas, in which he discusses Bhava, Vibhava, Anubhava, Vyabhichari Bhava, Satvik Bhava along with Sthayi Bhava in detail.

According to Bharat, Rasa and Bhava are interdependent. Rasa does not exist without Bhava and Bhava does not exist without Rasa. Rasa and Bhava together can raise Rasa in the abhinaya (acting) –

नभावहीनोऽस्तिरसोनभावोरसवर्जितः ।

परस्परंकृतासिद्धिस्तयोरभिनयेभवेत् ॥

Bharatmuni has given a solution to all doubts in the interpretation of Rasa. Bharatmuni has done this in the appropriate format of question – answer. For example, sage asks – “What is Rasa?” Bharatmuni replies – what can be tasted (Aasvadyate) is

Rasa – रसइतिकः पदार्थः? उच्यते आस्वाद्यत्वात् ।



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How to taste it? Bharatmuni replies – with the abhinaya which has to be full of bhavas. In short, the person can feel Sthayi Bhavas through the combination of Vibhava, Anubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava in the abhinaya –

भावाभिनयसंबद्धस्थापिभावांस्तथाबुधाः ।

अस्वादयन्तिमनसातस्मान्नाट्यरसाः स्मृताः ॥

This is known as Rasa in Natya.

Bharatmuni has accepted 8 Rasa and 8 Sthayibhavas in his *Natyashastra*. He has not given space to Shanta Rasa in Rasa and Nirved in SthayiBhavas.

Bharatmuni has considered Rasa as a thing which can be tasted in his *Natyashastra*. He has given Rasa Sutra (formula) – “विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगात्रसनिष्पत्तिः” (The aesthetic relish is produced (rasanishpattih) by a combination of the determinants (vibhava), consequents (anubhava), and transitory states or fleeting emotions (vyabhicharibhava))

After Bharatmuni, the author of *Agnipurana* considered Rasa as the main element of the Kavya as we humans have ParamBraham as an important element of our body. After that, Bhamah and Dandi have presented Rasa in the form of Alankara. Vaman has presented Rasa in the form of Attributes (Guna). After that Anandvardhana had established Dhavani as the soul of the Kavya and according to him Rasa is vyangya (irony). By this, he started a new chapter in the process of growth of Rasa with which the new process of interpretation of Rasa had started. Bhattlollat, Shree Shankuk, Bhattnayak and Abhinavgupt padacharya have gained name and fame as the

commentators of Rasa. The author of *Kavyaprakash* has interpreted this topic deeply in his chapter on Rasa Interpretation. Any treatise regarding Bhattlollat is not available, but we have his interpretation of the AbhinavguptPadacharya's commentary named *AbhinavTeeka*. Let's have *Kvyaprakash* as our base and think of these four Acharyas before than Mammat.

Views of Scholars on “Rasa”:



Bhatt Lollata

He has been considered as the UttpttivadiAacharya. He was in favor of Mimansa and Vedantiks. He has defined निष्पत्ति word of Bharatmuni as उत्पत्ति. He has given the process of combination (Sanyogat). According to that, Rasa comes to you through AlambanVibhav like Lalna (actress/ characters) and UddipanVibhav like Garden (appropriate situations and conditions for particular Rasa). Then it nurtured by Vyabhichari Bhavas like Nirveda. Primarily the Rasa exists in the characters like Rama and secondarily in the actor who acts in Preatiyaman (Seeming) Rasa.

According to Bhatt Lollat Rasa can exist in any form but cannot have any kind of relation with the society. This is the most unacceptable thing in the view of Bhatt Loallat. Rasa is having very esteemed kind of relation with the society. According to this Rasa exist in Nata (Actor) which is a matter to think upon.

Shree Shankuk

According to Attorney Aacharya Shankuk, Rasa is permissible and Vibhavas are there to measure them. This view of Shankuk is based on the view of Bhatt Lollat. The difference is that Shankuk considers Rasa as permissible. The Sthhyayi Bhavas like Rati which are permanent in the characters like Rama, they are known as Rasa through Vibhava. Rasa mostly lies in the characters like Rama and also in the actor who acts through the Vasana.

Shree Shankuk's view is totally based on the view of Bhatt Lollat and if we look chronologically, he is one step ahead of Bhatt Lollat. Rasa exists in the society

but through his Anumitivad. Due to Anumitivad, the characters like Rama are propounded through Chitraturagnyaya. Through this, the Rasa could be felt.

Bhatt Nayaka

After that, we have an interpretation of Rasa by Bhatt Nayak. He is known as (सांख्यमतानुयायी) devotional Aacharya. He did not believe in Dhavani but he had his belief in तात्पर्यवृत्तिः. Thus, he has his important view on Rasa representation. Thus,

definition and views of Shree Shankuk are really important in the structure of Rasa. According to Shree Shankuk the person understands Vakyarth by Abhidha. Bhavas could be felt through Bhavakatvavyapar and Chinamaya Rasa could be relished by Bhojakatvavyapar.

According to Bhatta Nayaka, Rasa does not exist in Neutral like Rama, it can be felt by the society and at the same time, Nata or the actors can feel it. Rasa is not something to express. The expression is possible for the things which exist in the background. But cannot be felt before or after, so Rasa is not a thing to express but it is a thing to feel.

Abhinavgupt Padacharya

He was a believer of Dhvani. His belief has been known as **अभिव्यक्तिवाद**. His main works are - commentary on *Natyashastra* named *Abhinavbharti* and *Dhvanyavlok* named *Alok*. Abhinavgupt has given an interpretation of Rasa just like Bhatt Nayaka which has its special place in Sanskrit Literature. According to Gupt Padacharya, Rasa is expressible. According to that in the society, Sthayi Bhavas like Rati gets attached with Vihavanubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava, after that the process of **साधारणीकरण** takes place and gets expressed in the heart of social person like Rama. Abhinavgupt Padacharya does not believe into this. According to him, Rasa exist before and after and for all time and situation in the hearts of social person. The Sthayibhavas pass through the process of **साधारणीकरण** and through Vibhava it

comes to know as Rasa like Shringara.

In Sanskrit Literature, the scholars of Alankara have considered Rasa as self-enlightening and something very heavenly. According to the interpretation of Rasa which has been given by Mammat, the author of *Kavyaprakasha*, Sthayi Bhavas are passing through Vibhavas and come to know as Rasa –

व्यक्तः सतैर्विभावाद्यैः स्थायीभावोरसः स्मृतः ।

Special Interpretation of Rasa:



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Up till now, we have seen the interpretation of Rasa in very common form. If we go to the roots of the interpretation of Rasa, it was started from the *Natyashastra*. Acharya Bharatmuni has presented the form of Rasa. According to him, there are 4 main Rasas and along with this, he has given them a special sequence. The 4 Rasas are – Shringar, Raudra, Veer, and Bibhatsa –

तेषामुत्पत्तिहेतवश्चत्वारोरसाः ।

श्रृंगारो, रौद्रोवीरोबीभत्सइति ॥

Thus, according to *Natyashastra*, these 4 Rasas are the dominating Rasas and other 4 Rasas have been generated from each of these 4 Rasas.

The other 4 Rasas have been produced from the following Rasas. Hasya from Shringar, Karuna from Raudra, Adbhut from Veer and Bhayanaka from Bibhatsa –

श्रृंगारद्धिभवेद्धास्योरौद्रोच्छरुणोरसः ।

वीराच्चैवद्भुतोत्पत्तिर्विभत्साच्चभयानकः ॥

Abhinaya (Acting) does not exist in the *Natyashastra*, so Shant Rasa has no place in that.

Dr. Brajvallabh Mishra is a modern critic and wonderful thinker. He has written his work named – *Bharat AurUnkaNatyashastra (Bharat and his Natyashastra)*, in which he has given the reason behind the sequence of Rasas. His whole work is a

masterpiece but the portion of Rasa in his book is outstanding. His thoughts regarding Rasa are quite modern, relevant and scientific.

All religions – Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc believe that the the world was established with a couple of a man and a woman. Their names in Hindu religious treatise are Manu and Satrupa, in Muslim religious treatise are Aadam and Hauva, in Christian religious treatise are Adam and Eve.

The Bhavas which have developed with the world are known as Sthayi Bhavas, Shringara and other Rasas are theresults of them. When there were no objects in the world or the objects were there but they did not have the knowledge of those objects.



In this situation, when they had looked at each other, they were attracted towards each other because of the natural attraction of a man and a woman. At that time of attraction, the Rati Bhava had been aroused in their heart and as result of that Shriangara Rasa had been aroused. When they would have separated because of a problem at that time the Krodha had been aroused. Thus, Raudra Rasa has come on the second place. After that when they had tried to be free from the circumstances, the Utsah had been aroused. The Utsah would have turned into Veer Rasa. When they would have looked at or noticed the disastrous side of nature or fallen leaves and flowers, the bhava of Jugupsa would have aroused which is the base of Bibhatsa Rasa. Thus, this can be considered as the sequence of the evolution of the 4 Rasas.

After that, the other 4 Rasas in the order are Hasya, Karuna, Adbhuta, and Bhayanaka. Hasa directly comes from the Shringar. Thus, Hasya Rasa arises from Shringar Rasa. When someone would have behaved in fury but after that when he/she would have thought about the situation with a cool mind, would have trapped into the situation of shoka (mourning) which is SthayiBhava of Karuna Rasa. Someone would have completed a work with Utsah. The completion of work would have given him/her the feeling of wonder which creates Adbhuta Rasa. The person would have felt fear by looking at the disastrous side of nature. This fear (Bhaya) is the SthayiBhava of Bhayanaka Rasa. Thus, the evolution of these 8 Rasas has a Scientific base.

We have seen an interpretation of Rasa and got an idea about 8 Rasas by Bharatmuni. To understand the real form of Rasa, it is necessary to look at the relationship of Bhavas and Vibhavas.

Bhava

Bharatmuni has considered feeling of the soul as Bhava - **आत्मानुभवंभावः**. Feeling is not something physical but it is something to be felt. When these bhavas were used in the context of interpretation of *Natyashastra* and *Poetics* with society, they were considered as Sthayi Bhava, Vibhava, Sanchari or Vyabhichari Bhava and Satvik Bhava by Bharatmuni. Bharatmuni has connected these Bhavas as a



sign with the activities. In the same context, Mammat has clearly stated in *Rasabhivyakti*–

कारणान्यथकार्याणिसहकारीणियानिच ।
रत्यादेः स्थायिनींलोकेतानिचेत्नाट्यकाव्ययोः ॥
विभावाअनुभावास्तत्कथ्यन्तेव्यभिचारिणः ।

Those Bhavas which help Rati and all other such Sthayi Bhavas in real life are known as Vibhavanubhav and Vyabhichatri Bhava in the terms of Natya and Kavya. by following यथागुणस्तथानाम.

Vibhava

विभावोविज्ञानार्थः which means through which we can get an idea about language, body language and Abhinaya. So this is known as Vibhava –

बहवो^sर्थाः विभाव्यन्तेवागङ्गाभिनयाश्रयाः ।
अनेनयस्मात्तेनायंविभावइतिसंज्ञितः ॥

To make it more clear, we can say that those which can be the reason behind Anubhava and Vyabhichari Bhava or which give us the knowledge of other Bhavas are known as Vibhava. There are two types of Vibhava, AalambanVibhava, and

UddipanVibhava.

1 AalambanVibhava

The bhava which is Reason behind arising all bhavas are known as AalambanVibhava. For example, in context of Shringar Rasa, Nayak and Nayika (Hero and Heroine) are AalambanVibhava.

2 UddipanVibhava

Which work as a stimulus for bhavas are known as UddipanVibhava. For example, in context of Shringar Rasa, an isolated place, wonderful atmosphere, beautiful river bank, green garden, etc. are UddipanVibhava.

Anubhava

By adding prefix “Anu” with bhava, we have Anubhava. Those which can be felt
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just after Aalamban and UddipanVibhava are known as Anubhava. According to Bharatmuni, which can be felt through language, body language, and abhinaya is known as Anubhava. Along with that yelling, sweat;etc acts are known as Anubhava. According to Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupak*) whatever disorders take place in Sthayi Bhavas because of Vibhava and effects body language are Anubhavas. Anubhava occurs just after Vibhava and can be considered as the reason behind Vibhava –

अनुभावोविकारस्तुभावसंसूचनात्मकः ।

Satvik Bhava

Satvik Bhava is to be known as a form of Anubhava. According to DhanikDhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*), this is one part of Anubhava but they should be counted separately because they rely on Satva –

पृथग्भावाभवन्त्यन्येऽनुभावत्वेऽपिसात्विकाः ।

सत्त्वादेवसमुत्पत्तेस्तच्चतद्भावभावनम् ॥

Whenever the vibhavas get into a person, they could be appeared as a tear, etc.

Anubhava can be considered as physical activity and Satvik Bhava as mental activity. According to Dhanik Dhananjaya, there are 8 Satvik Bhavas - **स्तम्भ** (Paralysis), **प्रलय** (चेतनाविहीन) (Fainting), **रोमाञ्च** (Horripilation), **स्वेद** (Sweating), **वैवर्ण्य** (Change of Color), **वेपथु** (कम्प) (Trembling), **अश्रु** (Weeping) and **वैस्वर्य** (Change of Voice).

Vyabhichari or Sanchari Bhava

Sthayi Bhavas which were agitated by Vibhavas are reflected in the social people in the form of disorder through Anubhava. At that time whatever disturbances of different Bhavas take place in a person's mind are known as Sthayi Bhavas. In that situation, a person finds resolutions and transmits in the mind very frequently, so it is known as Sanchari or Vyabhichari Bhava. According to Bharatmuni, there are 33 Vyabhichari or Sanchari Bhavas - **निर्वेद** (Discouragement), **ग्लानि** (Weakness), **शङ्का**



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(Apprehension), श्रम (Weariness), धृति (Contentment), जडता (Stupor), हर्ष (Joy), दैन्य (Depression), उग्रता (Cruelty), चिन्ता (Anxiety), त्रास (Fright), असूया (Envy), अमर्ष (Indignation), गर्व (Arrogance), स्मृति (Recollection), मरण (Death), मद (Intoxication), सुप्त (Dreaming), निद्रा (Sleeping), विबोध (Awakening), व्रीडा (Shame), अपस्मार (Epilepsy), मोह (Distraction), मति (Assurance), आलस्य (Indolence), आवेग (Agitation), वितर्क (Deliberation), अवहित्या (Dissimulation), व्याधि (Sickness), उन्माद (Insanity), विषाद (Despair), औत्सुक्य (Impatience), चपलता (Inconstancy).

Sthayi Bhava

The way we have a king in human beings and a teacher in pupils, in the same manner, we do have Sthayi Bhava as part of Bhavas –

यथानराणां नृपतिः शिष्याणां च यथागुरुः ।

एवं हि सर्वभावानां भावः स्थायी महानिधिः ॥

If we look at the interpretation of Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*) regarding this, he has presented the same thing in more clear form. Sthayi Bhavas cannot be disturbed by any other Bhavas. It can merge all Bhavas in it just like the Sea merges all rivers into it –

विरुद्धैरविरुद्धैर्वाभावैर्विच्छिद्यते नयः ।

आत्मभावं नयत्यन्यान्संस्थायिलवणाकरः ॥

If a person is deeply rooted in one Sthayi Bhava, the person will merge all kind of thoughts into that particular Bhava. For example – “सावनके अन्धे कोहरा हीहरादिखाई देता है” (To the jaundiced all things seem yellow). If a person is happy, one can tell a matter to him/her at that time which can raise anger. At that time a person will not get angry, he/she will laugh on that. But if that will violate laughter, that is a violation of Rasa and the situation would be considered as a faulty one.

According to Bharatmuni, there are 8 Sthayi Bhavas and even Dhanik Dhananjaya (the author of *Dashrupaka*) believes that. If we focus completely on



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Abhinaya and do not consider Shant as Rasa, we can say that there are 8 SthayiBhavas because abhinaya of Shant Rasa is not possible. In Kavya, Mammata has considered Shanta as Rasa and Nirveda as its ShayiBhava, so that we have to accept Shanta as ninth Rasa. As we have seen the evolution of 8 Rasas in the form of 4 × 2 along with 8 Sthayi Bhavas. Let's look at the sequence of DhanikaDhananjaya –रति, उत्साह, जुगुप्सा, क्रोधो, हासःस्मयोभयंशोकः. Some of them are considering, शम as ninth Sthayi Bhava but it is not accepted in Natya –

रत्युत्साहजुगुप्साः क्रोधोहासः स्मयोभयंशोकः ।

शममपिकेचित्प्राहः पुष्टिर्नाट्येषुनैतस्य ॥

Conclusion:

Thus, we have looked at different interpretations of Rasa but at last, we come to know that among all these the interpretation of Rasa in the *Natyashastra* is the best one. It has so many definitions still expecting more new definitions. The reason behind this is, Rasa arises from the interpretation of different elements, it is a feeling (Anubhava). It does not exist in Rama, Nata (actor), Kavya or Nataka. It does exist in our hearts. According to scholars, it exists in our hearts in the form of Sthayi Bhavas.

With the passing time, human beings have developed mentally; in the same manner, Rasas have developed. As basically there were 4 Rasas according to Bharatmuni after that other 4 Rasas were added to that. In addition to that, as part of Kavya tradition, Shanta Rasa was added to the list of 8 Rasas. With the passing time, when Rasas were used in Hindi, the language had added two more Rasas to the list. The Rasas were – Bhakti and Vatsalya. If we consider these two as part of Rati, at last, we have to accept Shanta Rasa as the ninth Rasa. As abhinaya (acting) of Shanta Rasa is not possible, so it's better to accept 8 Rasas.

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