

THE IMPORTANCE OF RASA IN HINDUSTANI MUSIC

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Indian classical music is as old as human civilization. Primarily the art of Music was co-related to worship of God with the passage of time music found popularity among folklo common stage and art of music changed with time.

India classical music is principally based on melody and rhythm. Music is a spiritual discipline on the path of self-realisation, for we follow the traditional teaching that sound is God-Nada Brahma: By this process individual consciousness can be elevated to a realm of awareness where the revelation of the true meaning of the universe-its eternal and unchanging essence can be joyfully experience. Indian classical music and its Ragas are the vehicles by which this essence can be perceived.

In ancient India, the philosophy of fine arts has been studied mainly in the context of Dramatic presentation. Bharata has made a special study of Nathya (drama or play) in his Natya Shastra. He considers Natya Kala to be the greatest of all Arts, because all the kalas come under Rasa. According to him, Rasa is a state of feeling or emotion which is aroused by Natya among people seeing it. The person seeing the Drama is so overwhelmed that he completely forgets himself and identifies his personality with that of the hero. This state, which is called Tadatmaya creates that delight in the spectator, which is called by Bharata as Rasa.

In this paper, "Rasa" shall be understood in two parts-

1. The concept of Rasa

2. The Significance of Rasa in Indian Music

Now, let us understand the concept of Rasa, as has been explained in the ancient time.

The concept of Rasa

The concept of Rasa has been dealt with in a major way by Bharata Muni more than fifteen centuries ago. He describes Rasa in the context of Natya. According to him, the primary aim of Dramatic presentation is to create aesthetic experience which he calls Rasa; He says that the process of Rasa is two fold

1. The creation of Rasa in Natya
2. The experience of this Natya Rasa by the spectator

There are two features of Rasa as described by Bharata–

1. Rasa is an essential ingredient and sar (summary) of Natya
2. The Natya Rasa concept is similar to the Pak Rasa (related to food), though unlike the latter, Natya Rasa involves an emotional transaction between men and finer tastes.

In describing Rasa, Bharata deals with two questions–

1. Rasa iti kaha Padartha i.e. Rasa, what is this thing? He answers this by saying that just as the combination of various food products and materials lead to nishpatti (completion) of Rasa (producing shadav/shatt of six rasa related to food), Similarly the Sanyog (combination) of various Bhava (emotions) with the sthayi Bhava (permanent sentiments) based in our hearts, lead to the creation of Rasa. In the above concept, Sanyog combination is a very important term. In ancient times, halwa was a oft-repeated example used to highlight its importance. Just having the ingredients for halwa is not enough. One must know its correct ratio, the correct timing as to when to add what, and overall experience and expertise in cooking it, similarly, the creation of Rasa is an elaborate and delicate affair.

Kasma svadyate rasaha i.e How can Rasa be tasted? He answer this by saying that just as one experience delight on tasting the Sanskrit anna (refined/cooked form) of various cooked products, similarly, a sooman as prekshak (an emotionally stable spectator) experience ananad (pleasure) due to the Sthayi Bhava consisting of various

emotions; and abhinaya (acting)

In other words, what he means is that the raw materials in the form of refinement to produce a ready product that can be enjoyed by a spectator, who is tuned to experience Rasa

Bharata has followed the tradition of Druhin, according to which the 8 rasas are-

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|---------------|---------------|------------|
| i) Shrinagar | ii) Hasya | iii) Karun |
| iv) Raudra | v) Bhayanak | vi) Veer |
| vii) Vibhatsa | viii) Adbhuta | |

of these Shrinagar, Raudra, Veer and Vibhatsa are the main rasas, while the rest arise from these four-

Shrinagar – Hasya

Raudra – Karun

Veer – Adbhuta

Vibhatsa – Bhayanak

The ingredients of Rasa

Bharata describes the ingredients of Rasa thus-

"Vibhavanubhav vyabhichari sanyogad rasnisht ttiha³ i.e. Rasa is evoked only by the combination of Vibhav, Anubhav and Vyabhichari."

Although the above shlok does not mention sthayi bhav, Bharata has included and described it as one of the elements of Rasa. Before we elaborate any further, It would be prudent to first understand the concept of Bhav as it is a key element in the creation of Rasa.

The concept of Bhav

They are the mental states of the human being and are called so for two reasons-

1. as they bring Rasa into being and make Rasa an accomplished fact by means of 3 types of acting-Angika, Vachika and Satvika (to be explained later)
2. as they pervade, intensely affect the minds of the spectators, who then experience the Rasa produced by the above process and feel the anand.

Now we shall understand how the ingredients mentioned above, combine to create Rasa.

The Creation of Rasa

The four factors creating Rasa may be elaborate thus-

1. Sthayi Bhav - The word "Sthayi" means permanen; as an original sentiment that is permanently based in our hearts. There are 8 Sthayi Bhav-

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|----------|------------|-------------|------------|
| i) Rati | ii) Hasya | iii) Shok | iv) Krodh |
| v) Bhaya | vi) Utsaha | iv) Jugupsa | v) Vismaya |

The features of Sthayi Bhav may be enumerated thus

- i) Only these give to rasa.
- ii) All the other emotions are dependent on these basic sentiments only, these being dominant
- iii) They are an intimate part of our psychological constitution , right from out birth.
- iv) They compe a man to feel and behave in a particular manner when he is faced with a particular situation.

In a dramatic play, it is employment of Sthayi Bhav, Which makes for a detailed plat developing in terms of 5 distinct stages -

- i) Prarambh - choice of objective
- ii) Yatna - Consequent effort
- iii) Praptyasha - Setback
- iv) Niyatapti - overcoming of opposition
- v) Phalayama - Attainment of objective

The eight Sthayi Bhav give rise to the eight rasas-

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|-------------------------|------------------------|
| i) Rati – Shrinagar | ii) Hasya - Hasya |
| iii) Shok - Karun | iv) Krodh - Raudra |
| v) Bhaya - Bhayanak | vi) Utsan - Veer |
| vii) Jugupsa - Vibhatsa | viii) Vismaya - Adbuta |

2. Vyabhichari Bhav - Also known as Sanchari Bhav, these are the transient emotions through which the actor must pass in order to

strengthen the Sthayi Bhav. For e.g. a lover must show both impatience and apprehension, For in normal life, these characterize the conduct of a person in love. The function of Vyabhichari bhav is dual-

- i) They feed the Sthayi Bhav
- ii) They enable the spectators to identify it correctly.

Bharata mentions 33 Sanchari Bhav, Such as mon vishad etc.

3. Vibhav - It stands for an emotive situation as shown in the drama, arises has two aspects-

- i) Alamban - The object/character which is permanently responsible for the arousal of the emotion and on which the emotion depends for its very being.
- ii) Uddipana - The environment or the surrounding which enhances the emotive effect of the focal. For an emotion to be aroused in one's heart, proper circumstances are necessary. They are the favourable conditions which enable the development of the emotion.
- iii) Ashraya - The character who experiences the emotion. For e.g. in Abhigyan Shakuntalam, Dushyant falls in love with Shakuntala, who along with her two friends is watering the plants of the hermitage garden in pleasant breeze and gentle sunshine. As a result, Dushyant experiences the emotion of love for Shakuntala.

In the above example, Shakuntala is the object of love of Dushyant and is alamban vibhav. The entire forest scene, with the beautiful hermitage garden at the center pleasant breeze gentle sunshine etc, which enhances her beauty and makes it more bewitching, is uddipana vibhav. Dushyant thus becomes Ashraya Vibhav, who has the Sthayi Bhav of Rati in his heart and which gives rise to shrinagar rasa.

4. Anubhav - These are the physical (bodily) change that occur due to the arousal of an emotion and in actual life, are looked upon as effects of emotion, and are called anubhav. They communicate the basic emotion to the character on stage, or make known the nature of the emotion in the hero, as also because they make the spectator experience an identical emotion (Anubhavayati). The bodily changes may be voluntary e.g. movement of the eyes and eyebrows, or involuntary, e.g.

eyes becoming red due to anger involuntary, changes are called sattvikabhav.

These four factors, however, lead only to the utpatti (creation) of Rasa. This Rasa created must be felt and experienced by the spectator in order to complete the cycle of Rasa experience or nishpatti. This is done through Tadatmaya, i.e. self-forgetfulness and complete identification with the hero. Tadatmaya is caused by the following

1. Angika - acting
2. Vachika - speech
3. Satvika - action of the mind
4. Aharya - get-up of the character, e.g. costumes paints, ornaments etc.

Bharata also says that a dramatic play should not be too long, for if it is so, the actor will get tired and thus, shall not be able to present Rasa clearly. Similarly, the spectator, being bored by the inordinate length, shall not be able to relish Rasa. He also recommends a mid-sized theater 32 hasta in length and 62 hasta in breadth, for his one concern is Rasa, i.e. if the theater is too long, it shall make the Rasa, that is presented in terms of speech and various facial expressions of internal states, indistinct to the spectator.

The significance of rasa in Hindustani Music

The quality of Rasa, aesthetic delight or aesthtic pleasure has been mentioned very often in our musical treatises. All music in India emanats from "swara", i.e. the musical note, which must have the quality to give aesthetic deligh to the listener. Raga is the soul of our music, and according to Matang, It is so called because of its origin from ranjana, i.e. delight.

Yo so dhvanivisheshastu svarvarna vibhushitaha Ranjako Janchittanam sa cha ragha kathito budhaiha i.e. A particular arrangement of sound adorned with svara and varna, and having the quality to delight the hearts of the listeners is called Raga.

With regard to Raga and Rasa, many ancient author including Sharanghev have mentioned one or more rasas for a particular raga. However, it has been mentioned, are Grama ragas, which in their early stage, has relevance to the music of the drama. Sometimes, a group of contrasting rasas have been prescribed, e.g. Hasya, Adbhuta and Karun

for the raga Gandhar Pancham. It is very likely that if and when rasas were prescribed to ragas by the early author, it was out of sheer regard for the age-old practice. How the practice was gradually abandoned by the later medieval like Ahobal.

Today, Rasa has an important role to play in hindustani Music. It is evoked by the following factors-

1. Nature of the Raga - In a raga, where there may be 5, 6 or 7 svaras, the notes combine each other to evoke a certain sentiment from within the listener, Which then comes to be associates with the particular raga. Every Raga, when sung and played, evokes a certain mood in a listened depending on the svaras that are used. Such sentiments evoke specific rasas within that person in different situations of life. When a raga with a specific set of svaras is heard by the person, it creates a feeling of joy, sadness, longing etc. depending on the svaras that have been employed. This in turn leads to the evoking of the corresponding rasa from within the heart of the listener.

In Hindustani music, Shringar, Karu, Veer and Shant rasas play an important role in reinforcing the corresponding mood of the Hindustani raga, depending on the svaras being used in that ragas based on the svaras they employ-

i) Ragas which have all Shuddha svaras, along within the use of Shuddha or tivra Ma evoke Shringar rasa: They include ragas of Bilaval and Kalyana thatas such as Althaiya Bilaval, Yamani Bilaval, Yaman, Maru bihag etc.

ii) Ragas with komal Ni as an addition to the set of Shuddha svaras mentioned above, also evoke Shringar rasa and include ragas of Khamajthata, e.g Khamaj, Rageshvari etc.

iii) Ragas with both Ga and Ni being Komal can evoke both Shringar and veer rasa. Such ragas belong to the Kafi thata and can be categorized in to two groups-

a) The first group comprises ragas like Kafi, Jog, Bageshvari etc. and evokes Shringar rasa.

b) The second group comprising the Malharanga ragas, evoke veer rasa, e.g., Miyan Ki Malhar, Soor Malhar etc.

iv) Ragas with only Fomal Ga (and no other Komal Svara) such as

Patdeep, Shivaranjani, Madhuvanti etc, do not belong to any specific that as such, and evoke Kafi rasa.

v) Ragas with Re and Dha being Komal generally evoke either Shant or Karun rasa and include ragas of Bhairav, Bhairavi, Purvi, Marva, Todi and Asavari that is e.g., the ashraya ragas of these thatas and other like Anir Bhairava, Malkauns, Puria, Jaunpur etc.

Thus we see that a raga plays a very important role in imparting a positive impact on the mind of the listener, which then absorbs the psychological effect of the therapeutic power of ragas through the rasa evoked by the svaras of that raga.

2. Nature of the voice - A heavy voice (masculine) is ideal to evoke shant and veer rasas e.g Darbari rasas for e.g Rajeshri, Sham Kalyan etc.

3. Form of Singing - In Dhrupad, the alap and jod of the svar-vistar process evokes shant rasa, while the Jhala can be evoking veer rasa, due to the bandish of a Dhrupad, with its various laykari, primarily evokes veer rasa due to its robust and forceful manner of singing. Khyal shows flexibility and is capable of evoking all rasas depending on the raga. Thumri, Tappa and Dadra on the other hand primarily evoke shringar rasa due to the element of chanchalta or frivolity in the way of their rendition.

4. Nature of composition - The wordings of the bandish (composition) aid in the evoking of the rasa of the concerned raga in a performance, such as payaliya jhankar mori..... in raga puriyadhasri. However, this role is often limited in cases where the wordings may convey a sentiment different from the rasa of the raga, such as the composition- dheeth langar manat nahi, bar bar karat. thithuri.... in rag Malkauns, sung by Ustad Rash Khan. Now, while the wording of the composition suggests frivolity between a pair of lovers, Raga Malkauns itself is Karun rasa oriented.

5. Nature of Tala - The Tala used in a raga too can play a pivotal role in evoking a particular rasa. For e.g. the bols-din, ta, tita, kata, gadi, gana etc. have a lot of depth thus conveying veer rasa. They are used in chahtal, sultala, Tivra etc. chahtala is used in dhrupad, which veer rasa with respect to the bandi Deepchandi and Dadra talas evoke Shringar

rasa on are therefore used in the semi classical forms of Thumri, Tappa, Dadra etc. Tilwads and Thumra evoke Shant rasa and are used in accompaniment in vilambit Khyal, while Teental primarily evokes shringar rasa and it used more in drut khan.

6. Nature of Embellishments- The use of meend creates calm feelings and so help to evoke karun (e.g. Malkauns), Shant (e.g. Darbari) and Bhakti (e.g. Bhairav) rasas. Zamzama and murki showcase agility in a raga and thus aid in expressings shringar rasa (e.g. Maru Bihag). Gamak and andolan express seriously and hence veer (e.g. Miya Ki Malhar) and Shant rasas (e.g Darbari) are evoked.

7. Nature of Laya - In bandishes, Vilambit laya expresses Shant and Karun rasas, while drut laya expresses Shrinagar and veer rasas. In certain gambhini ragas like Darbari, Todi, Puria etc. the used of vilambit larya helps in the manifestation of the serious mood and helps in the evoking of karun rasa. Similarly, the used of drut laya in Kamo Hamir etc helps to invigorate the listener with Shringar rasa.

8. Nature of Instruments - The Hindustani Instrument on a larger canvas, evoke the following rasa

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| i) Sitar - Shringar rasa | ii) Veena - veer rasa |
| iii) Tabla - Shringar rasa | iv) Maridang - veer rasa |
| v) Pakhawaj - veer rasa | vi) Dhalak - Shringar rasa |
| vii) Flute - Shringar rasa | viii) Santoor - Shringar rasa |

9. Individuality of the the performance - Rasa utpatti is also determined by the knowledge of a performer in the application of the correct rules pertaining to in alap of a raga, his creativity in the use of svaras, his imagination in tonal phrases, his dexterity and taiyyari in tans and sargams, and his overall experience.

10. Quality of the audience - Last, but not the least rasa nishpatti cannot be complete without the active involvement of the audience in the entire process. A member of the audience, whose mind is distracted for any particular reason, and is not focused on the happenings on the stage, where the rasa of the raga being performed is being evoked, cannot be expected to receive the benefits of the Rasa that has been created. Similarly, a listener, who is inherently not interested in the

genre of Hindustani Classical Music and has been forcefully brought along to a cancer is likely to be oblivious to the process of rasa creation. Conversely, a passionate lover of Hindustani classical music shall not only identify himself, through tadatmaya, with the mood that the aritis is creating through the raga that he is performing but shall also be able to fully enjoy the fruits of Rasa nishpatti.

References:

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