

APPLICATION OF RASA AND DHVANI ON FILM MUSIC

Dr. Hemant Kapil

Assistant Professor

S. A. Jain (pg) College Ambala City

History

The word *rasa* appears in ancient [Vedic](#) literature. In [Rigveda](#), it connotes a liquid, an extract and flavor. In [Atharvaveda](#), *rasa* in many contexts means "taste", and also the sense of "the sap of grain". According to Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe – a professor of Drama, *rasa* in the [Upanishads](#) refers to the "essence, self-luminous consciousness, quintessence" but also "taste" in some contexts. In post-Vedic literature, the word generally connotes "extract, essence, juice or tasty liquid".

A **rasa** ([Sanskrit](#): रस) literally means "juice, essence or taste". It connotes a concept in Indian arts about the aesthetic flavor of any visual, literary or musical work that evokes an emotion or feeling in the reader or audience but cannot be described. It refers to the emotional flavors/essence crafted into the work by the writer and relished by a 'sensitive spectator' or *sahṛdaya*, literally one who "has heart", and can connect to the work with emotion, without dryness.

Rasas are created by *bhavas*: the state of mind.

The *rasa* theory has a dedicated section (Chapter 6) in the [Sanskrit](#) text [Natyashastra](#), an ancient scripture from the 1st millennium BCE attributed to [Bharata Muni](#). However, its most complete exposition in drama, songs and other performance arts is found in the works of the Kashmiri [Shaivite](#) philosopher [Abhinavagupta](#) (c. 1000 CE), demonstrating the persistence of a long-standing aesthetic tradition of ancient India. According to the *Rasa* theory of the *Natyashastra*, entertainment is a desired effect of performance arts but not the primary goal, and the primary goal is to transport the individual in the audience into another parallel reality, full of wonder and bliss, where he experiences the essence of his own consciousness, and reflects on spiritual and moral questions.

Although the concept of *rasa* is fundamental to many forms of [Indian arts](#) including [dance](#), [music](#), theatre, painting, sculpture, and [literature](#), the interpretation and implementation of a particular *rasa* differs between different styles and schools. The Indian theory of *rasa* is also found in the Hindu arts and [Ramayana](#) musical productions in [Bali](#) and [Java](#) (Indonesia), but with regional creative evolution.

Rasa in an aesthetic sense is suggested in the Vedic literature, but the oldest surviving manuscripts, with the *rasa* theory of [Hinduism](#), are of *Natya Shastra*. The Aitareya [Brahmana](#) in chapter 6, for example, states:

Now (he) glorifies the arts, the arts are refinement of the self ([atma-samskrti](#)).

With these the worshipper recreates his self, that is made of rhythms, meters.

— *Aitareya Brahmana* 6.27 (~1000 BCE), Translator: Arindam Chakrabarti

The Sanskrit text *Natya shastra* presents the *rasa* theory in Chapter 6, a text attributed to Bharata Muni. The text begins its discussion with a [sutra](#) called in Indian aesthetics as the *rasa sutra*:

Rasa is produced from a combination of Determinants (*vibhava*), Consequents (*anubhava*) and Transitory States (*vyabhicaribhava*).

— *Natyashastra* 6.109 (~200 BCE–200 CE), Translator: Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe

According to the *Natya shastra*, the goals of theatre are to empower aesthetic experience and deliver emotional *rasa*. The text states that the aim of art is manifold. In many cases, it aims to produce repose and relief for those exhausted with labor, or distraught with grief, or laden with misery, or struck by austere times. Yet entertainment is an effect, but not the primary goal of arts according to *Natya shastra*. The primary goal is to create *rasa* so as to lift and transport the spectators, unto the expression of ultimate reality and transcendent values.

The [Abhinavabhārati](#) is the most studied commentary on *Natyasastra*, written by [Abhinavagupta](#) (950–1020 CE), who referred to *Natyasastra* also as the *Natyaveda*. Abhinavagupta's analysis of *Natyasastra* is notable for its extensive discussion of aesthetic and ontological questions. According to Abhinavagupta, the success of an artistic performance is measured not by the reviews, awards or recognition the production receives, but only when it is performed with skilled precision, devoted faith and pure

concentration such that the artist gets the audience emotionally absorbed into the art and immerses the spectator with pure joy of *rasa* experience.

The concept of *rasa* is fundamental to many forms of [Indian art](#), including [dance](#), [music](#), musical theatre, [cinema](#) and [literature](#), the treatment, interpretation, usage and actual performance of a particular *rasa* differs greatly between different styles and schools of [abhinaya](#), and the huge regional differences even within one style.

Experience of *rasa* (ras-anubhava)

A *rasa* is the developed relishable state of a permanent mood, which is called *sthayi bhava*. This development towards a relishable state results by the interplay on it of attendant emotional conditions which are called *Vibhavas*, *anubhavas* and *sanchari/ vyabhichari bhavas*. The production of aesthetic *rasa* from *bhavas* is analogous to the production of tastes/juices of kinds from food with condiments, curries, pastes and spices. This is explained by the quote below:

'*Vibhavas*' means *karana* or cause. It is of two kinds: *Alambana*, the personal or human object and substratum, and *Uddipana*, the excitants. *Anubhava*, as the name signifies, means the ensuants or effects following the rise of the emotion.

Vedic concept

The [Rishi Praskanva](#) insists ([Rig Veda](#) I.46.6) that the sources of knowledge, some of which are open and some hidden, they are to be sought and found by the seekers after Truth, these sources are not available everywhere, anywhere and at all times. In this context Rishi [Agastya](#) ([Rig Veda](#) I.187.4) stating thus –

तवत्ये पितो रसा रजांस्यनु विष्टिताः ।

दिवि वाता इव श्रिताः ॥

Reminds the ardent seekers about the six kinds of *Rasa* or taste which food has but which all tastes cannot be found in one place or item, for these tastes are variously distributed throughout space. Food, in this context, means matter or objects or thoughts, which are all produced effects; effects that are produced owing to various causes. The *Rasas* are the unique qualities which bring about variety in things created whose source is one and one only.

[Bharata Muni](#) enunciated the eight *Rasas* in the [Nāṭyaśāstra](#), an ancient Sanskrit text of [dramatic theory](#) and other performance arts, written between 200 BC and 200 AD. In the [Indian](#) performing arts, a *rasa* is a sentiment or emotion evoked in each member of the

audience by the art. The *Natya Shastra* mentions six *rasa* in one section, but in the dedicated section on *rasa* it states and discusses eight primary *rasa*. Each *rasa*, according to Nāṭyasāstra, has a presiding deity and a specific colour. There are 4 pairs of *rasas*. For instance, [Hāsyā](#) arises out of [Sringara](#). The [Aura](#) of a frightened person is black, and the aura of an angry person is red. [Bharata Muni](#) established the following:

Śṛṅgārah

- (शृङ्गारः): Romance, Love, attractiveness. Presiding deity: [Vishnu](#). Colour: light green

Hāsyam

- (हास्यः): Laughter, mirth, comedy. Presiding deity: [Shiva](#). Colour: white
- **Raudram** (रौद्रः): Fury. Presiding deity: [Shiva](#). Colour: red
- **Kāruṇyam** (कारुण्यं): Compassion, mercy. Presiding deity: [Yama](#). Colour: grey
- **Bībhatsam** (बीभत्सः): Disgust, aversion. Presiding deity: [Shiva](#). Colour: blue

Bhayānakam

- (भयानकं): Horror, terror. Presiding deity: [Yama](#). Colour: black
- **Veeram** (वीरः): Heroism. Presiding deity: [Indra](#). Colour: [saffron](#)
- **Adbhutam** (अद्भुतं): Wonder, amazement. Presiding deity: [Brahma](#). Colour: yellow

Śāntam rasa

A ninth *rasa* was added by later authors. This addition had to undergo a good deal of struggle between the sixth and the tenth centuries, before it could be accepted by the majority of the Alankarikas, and the expression "*Navarasa*" (the nine *rasas*), could come into vogue.

- **Śāntam**: Peace or tranquility. Deity: [Vishnu](#). Colour: perpetual white

Shānta-rasa functions as an equal member of the set of *rasas*, but it is simultaneously distinct as being the clearest form of aesthetic bliss. Abhinavagupta likens it to the string of a jeweled necklace; while it may not be the most appealing for most people, it is the string that gives form to the necklace, allowing the jewels of the

other eight rasas to be relished. Relishing the rasas and particularly shānta-rasa is hinted as being as-good-as but never-equal-to the bliss of Self-realization experienced by [yogis](#).

List of bhavas

According to the *Natyashastra*, bhavas are of three types: sthayi, sanchari, sattvika based on how they are developed or enacted during the aesthetic experience. This is seen in the following passage:

पुनश्च भावान्वक्ष्यामि स्थायिसञ्चारिसत्त्वजान्॥६.१६॥

Some bhavas are also described as being anubhava if they arise from some other bhava.

Sthayee

The *Natyashastra* lists eight *bhavas* with eight corresponding *rasas*:

- *Rati* (Love)
- *Hasya* (Mirth)
- *Soka* (Sorrow)
- *Krodha* (Anger)
- *Utsaha* (Energy)
- *Bhaya* (Terror)
- *Jugupsa* (Disgust)
- *Vismaya* (Astonishment)

This list is from the following passage:

रतिहासश्च शोकश्च क्रोधोत्साहौ भयं तथा।

जुगुप्सा विस्मयश्चेति स्थायिभावाः प्रकीर्तिताः॥६.१७॥

Sanchari

Sanchari Bhavas are those crossing feelings which are ancillary to a permanent mood. A list of 33 bhavas is identified therein.

निर्वेदग्लानिशङ्काख्यास्तथासूया मदः श्रमः।

आलस्यं चैव दैन्यं च चिन्तामोहः स्मृतिर्धृतिः॥१८॥

व्रीडा चपलता हर्ष आवेगो जडता तथा।

गर्वो विषाद औत्सुक्यं निद्रापस्मार एव च॥१९॥

सुप्तं विबोधोऽमर्षश्चापि अवहित्थं अथोग्रता।

मतिर्व्याधिस्तथा उन्मादस्तथा मरणमेव च॥२०॥

त्रासश्चैव वितर्कश्च विज्ञेया व्यभिचारिणः।

त्रयस्त्रिंशदमी भावाः समाख्यातास्तु नामतः॥२१॥

Satvika

The Satvika-Bhavas themselves are listed below. There are eight Satvika-Bhavas.

स्तम्भः स्वेदोऽथ रोमाञ्चः स्वरभेदोऽथ वेपथुः।

वैवर्ण्यं अश्रु-प्रलय इत्यष्टौ सात्त्विकाः स्मृताः॥२२॥

These are explained by [Bharata](#) and [Dhanika](#) as below:

"सत्त्वं नाम मनःप्रभवम्। एतदेव समाहितमनस्त्वादुत्पद्यते।" इति भरतः।

"एतदेवास्य सत्त्वं यत् दुःखितेन प्रहर्षितेन वा अश्रु-रोमाञ्चादयो निवर्त्यन्ते।

तेन सत्त्वेन निर्वृत्ता भावाः - सात्त्विकाः भावाः। तद्भावभावनं च भावः।" इति धनिकः।

"पृथग् भावा भवन्त्यन्येऽनुभावत्वेऽपि सात्त्विकाः। सत्त्वादेव समुत्पत्तेस्तच्च तद्भावभावनम्॥" इति धनिकः।

Thus, physical expression of the feelings of the mind is called Sattvika.

Role in art

According to *Natya shastra*, a *rasa* is a synthetic phenomenon and the goal of any creative performance art, oratory, painting or literature. Wallace Dace translates the ancient text's explanation of *rasa* as "a relish that of an elemental human emotion like love, pity, fear, heroism or mystery, which forms the dominant note of a dramatic piece; this dominant emotion, as tasted by the audience, has a different quality from that which is aroused in real life; *rasa* may be said to be the original emotion transfigured by aesthetic delight".

Rasas are created through a wide range of means, and the ancient Indian texts discuss many such means. For example, one way is through the use of gestures and facial expressions of the actors. Expressing *Rasa* in classical Indian dance form is referred to as **Rasa-abhinaya**.

- **Kashmiri aestheticians**
- The theory of the rasas develops significantly with the Kashmiri aesthetician Āṇandavardhana's classic on poetics, the *Dhvanyāloka* which introduces the ninth *rasa*, *śānta-rasa* as a specifically religious feeling of peace (*śānta*) which arises from its *bhāva*, weariness of the pleasures of the world. The primary purpose of this text is to refine the literary concept *dhvani* or poetic suggestion, by

arguing for the existence of *rasa-dhvani*, primarily in forms of Sanskrit including a word, sentence or whole work "suggests" a real-world emotional state or *bhāva*, but thanks to [aesthetic distance](#), the sensitive spectator relishes the *rasa*, the aesthetic flavor of tragedy, heroism or romance.

- The 9th - 10th century master of the religious system known as "the nondual Shaivism of Kashmir" (or "Kashmir Shaivism") and aesthetician, [Abhinavagupta](#) brought *rasa* theory to its pinnacle in his separate commentaries on the *Dhvanyāloka*, the *Dhvanyāloka-locana* (translated by Ingalls, Masson and Patwardhan, 1992) and the *Abhinavabharati*, his commentary on the [Nāṭyashāstra](#), portions of which are translated by Gnoli and Masson and Patwardhan. Abhinavagupta offers for the first time a technical definition of *rasa* which is the universal bliss of the Self or [Atman](#) colored by the emotional tone of a drama.
- **Inclusion of bhakti**
- In the literary compositions, the emotion of Bhakti as a feeling of adoration towards God was long considered only a minor feeling fit only for Stothras, but not capable of being developed into a separate *rasa* as the sole theme of a whole poem or drama. In the tenth century, it was still struggling, and Acharya [Abhinavagupta](#) mentions Bhakti in his commentary on the [Nāṭya Shāstra](#), as an important accessory sentiment of the Shanta *Rasa*, which he strove with great effort to establish. However, just as Shantha slowly attained a state of primacy that it was considered the *Rasa* of *Rasas*, Bhakti also soon began to loom large and despite the lukewarmness of the great run of *Alankarikas*, had the service of some distinguished advocates, including [Tyagaraja](#). It is the [Bhagavata](#) that gave the great impetus to the study of Bhakti from an increasingly aesthetic point of view.
- **Attention to rasas**
- Poets like [Kālidāsa](#) were attentive to *rasa*, which blossomed into a fully developed aesthetic system. Even in contemporary India the term *rasa* denoting "flavor" or "essence" is used colloquially to describe the aesthetic experiences in films.

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