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 *Natya Shastra*, 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 *Natya Shastra*, 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-samskriti).

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 Abhinavabhāratī 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 –

तव॒ये पत॑ ो॒ रसा॒ रजां॒यन विठ॑ताः
द॒व इव ताः

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 *Nātyasāstra*, 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 Nātyasāstra, has a presiding deity and a specific colour. There are 4 pairs of rasas. For instance, *Hāsya* 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**

**Hāsyam**


**Bhayānakam**


**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

Śānta-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:

पुनःश्च भावावयेक्ष्यामि स्थायिसचारिसत्ववजानि॥६.१६॥

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

**Sthayee**

The *Natyasastra* 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:

रतिहासच शोकश्च क्रोधोत्साहोऽथ अथ तथा।

जुगुप्सा विसमयश्चेति स्थायिभवाः 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.

निर्वेदगलानिशिलकान्तात्माकः समावृत्तत्तथासूया मद: श्रमः।

अतस्यं चैव देवन्यं च विन्तमोहः स्मृतिप्रतिड्वृत्तिः॥१८॥

गर्वं विषादं औत्सव्यं निन्दाप्रस्मारं एव च॥१९॥

सुप्तं विपषोरमेर्षश्रोपिविन्दश्चापि अवहित्यं अवहितम्॥

मतिवर्धितस्तथा उननन्दस्तथा मरणमेव च॥२०॥

त्रासशैव विभक्तश्च विजेयः व्यभिचारिणः।

त्रयस्त्रिंशदमी भावः समाख्यातास्तु नामत:॥२१॥
Satvika

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

स्तम्भः स्वप्नास्थ रोमाज्ञः स्वरूपास्थ वेपथः।
वैवर्ण्य अश्रु-प्रलय इत्यष्टि सात्विकः स्मृतः॥२२॥

These are explained by Bharata and Dhanika as below:

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

"एतदेवाय सत्त्वं यत् दुःखितेन प्रहरितेन वा अश्रु-रोमाज्ञादयो निवर्त्यन्ते।
तेन सत्त्वेन निर्भरता भावः। सात्विकः भावः। तद्वावभावनं च भावः।" इति धनिकः।

"पुष्पः भावारणिज्ञेनाभावज्ञेषु परसात्विकः। सत्त्वादेव समुपप्ततेस्तर्थच तद्वावभावंम्॥" 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 Āndandavardhana's classic on poetics, the Dhvanyāloka which introduces the ninth rasa, shānta-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 Nātyashāstra, 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 Aacharya Abhinavagupta mentions Bhakti in his commentary on the Natya Shastra, 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.

Sources and References


Glimpses of Indian Poetics by Satya Deva Caudharī

Indian Poetics (Bharathiya Kavya Mimamse) by Dr. T N Sreekantaiyya

Sahityashastra, the Indian Poetics by Dr. Ganesh Tryambak Deshpande

History of Indian Literature by Maurice Winternitz, Moriz Winternitz

A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit by Siegfried Lienhard

Literary Cultures in History by Sheldon Pollock

The Philosophy of the Grammarians, Volume 5 By Harold G. Coward