

Indian Literary Criticism

Major Personalities

The major personalities associated with Indian Aesthetics are Bharatamuni and his master piece text *Natyasasthra*; Tholkappiyar and the text *Tholkappiyam*; Dandin know for the text *Kavyadarsa* (concept of 'Sargabandha'); Anandavardhana and his critical treatise *Dhvanyaloka* (concept of 'Dhvani'); Dhananjaya and his text *Dasarupa* (on drama); Kuntaka (concept of 'Vakrokti'); Abhinavagupta and his popular treatise *Abhinavabharati* (acknowledged for adding the 9th Rasa, that is 'Santarasa'); and Jnanesvara and his text *Bhavarthadipika*.

A **Rasa** (means 'juice' or 'essence') denotes an essential mental state and is the dominant emotional theme of a work of art or the primary feeling that is evoked in the person that views, reads or hears such a work. The concept of rasa is fundamental to many forms of Indian art including dance, music, musical theatre, cinema and literature.

Elements of 'Rasa'

Bharata Muni enunciated the eight Rasas in the *Nāṭyasāstra*, an ancient work of dramatic theory, written during the period between 200 BC and 200 AD. Each rasa, according to *Nāṭyasāstra*, has a presiding deity and a specific colour. *Natyasastra* is regarded as an additional Veda and it is a very important text in the history of Indian thought. 'Natya' is basically the depiction and communication of the emotions to the external world. The eight 'Rasas' are the following;

Śringāram – Erotica or Love, Attractiveness. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: green.

Hāsya – Comic or Laughter, Mirth, Comedy. Presiding deity: Ganesha. Colour: white.

Raudram - Furious or Fury. Presiding deity: Rudra. Colour: red.

Kāruṇyam – Pathetic or Compassion, Tragedy. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: dove coloured.

Bībhatsam – Terrible or Disgust, Aversion. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: blue

Bhayānakam – Odious or Horror, Terror. Presiding deity: Kala. Colour: black

Vīram - Heroic mood. Presiding deity: Indra. Colour: wheatish brown

Adbhutam – Marvellous or Wonder, Amazement. Presiding deity: Brahma. Colour: yellow

Navarasa or the 9th Rasa

Abhinavagupta added the ninth 'Rasa' later.

Śāntam - Peace or tranquility. deity: Vishnu. Colour: white

In addition to the nine Rasas, two more appeared later (esp. in literature). The additional rasas are: Vātsalya - Parental Love and Bhakti - Spiritual Devotion.

A Rasa is the developed relishable state of a permanent mood, which is called Sthayi Bhava.

Four Kinds of Abhinaya

Natya – Physical gestures, expressions and movements (‘angika’)

Vachika – voice modulation in dramatic speeches

Aharya – costumes, make-up, props and drapery

Sattvika – physical reactions of inner emotional states

Dharmi-mode

There were two types of Hindu productions: the *lokadharmi*, or realistic theatre, with natural presentation of human behaviour and properties catering to the popular taste, and the *natyadharmi*, or stylized drama, which, using gesture language and symbols, was considered more artistic.

Bhavas

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

Experience of Rasa (Rasanubhava)

A rasa is the developed relishable state of a permanent mood, which is called Sthayibhava. 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.

‘The Theory of Rasa’ – S.N. Das Gupta

(pages 191 – 196)

Rasa is generally regarded as the corner stone of Indian Aesthetics. Rasa implies aesthetic emotion. The earliest work of Indian aesthetics is Bharatha’s ‘Natya Sastra’. It consists of a few instructions to the actors about present plays. In the course of discussion, Bharatha remarks that the aim of presenting a play is to evoke Rasa. Rasa, according to him, is the product of the combination of the Vibhavas, Anubhavas and the Vyabhicharibhavas. (Vibhavanubhava, Vyabhichari Samyogat Rasa Nispatti).

The critics of Indian Aesthetics have always followed the great sage Bharatha’s maxim “Vibhavanubhava Vyabhichari Samyogad Rasa Nispattih” while analysing the factors that create ‘Rasa’. It is always formed as the result of the conjunction of ‘Vibhava’, ‘Anubhava’ and ‘Vyabhichari Bhava’. ‘Vibhava’ is the objective condition or state which excites or

produces an emotion. There are two kinds of 'Vibhavas'. They are, 1. 'Alambana' which means the person or the persons with reference to whom the emotion is manifested and 2. 'Uddipana', which means the circumstances that, have excited the emotion. For example, a man feels attracted to a woman (man and woman as 'Alambana') if they are alone in a garden or under the moon (garden and moon as 'Uddipana'). In *Sankuntalam*, for example, Sakuntala is the Vibhava to excite Sringara in Dushyanta and vice versa. The serenity of the atmosphere, the blooming flowers, the fragrant air, the furling Malini etc. are the Uddipana Vibhavas.

'Anubhava' is the bodily expression by which emotion is expressed. For example, the glances, a smile or may be a touch. The Anubhavas are the psycho-physical manifestation which a particular emotion makes upon characters. For example, the emotion of anger urges one to rant and chafe and gnash one's teeth. 'Vyabhicari' is the series of diverse emotions that feed on the dormant emotion. For example, the lover gets disappointed if his/her partner never comes. He/she starts to think about the reasons for the absence like, what happened. These are the diverse thoughts associated with the main thought). Thus the Vyabhicari bhavas (Sancharibhavas) are the various fleeting or temporary emotions, which lie upon the dormant emotion. For example, a woman waiting for her lover may experience a variety of emotions like jealousy, despair, anxiety and over fondness.

The discussion of 'Rasa' started with Abhinavagupta. The discussion was based on two words: Samyoga (conjunction) and Rasa-nispatti (manifestation of Rasa). 'Rasa' is connected with our primary emotions, which lie deep in our subconscious. These primary emotions are the amorous, the ludicrous, the pathetic, the heroic, the passionate, the fearful, the nauseating, and the wondrous. Other aesthetic psychologists have in later times, added to them the peaceful or intellectual, the devotional and the filial. These emotions run through all human natures permanently and become dominant emotions ('Sthayibhava'). The dominant emotions are connected with the emotional states and the emotion becomes 'Rasa' when it is aesthetically excited. Probably, Bharatha means that when certain Sthayibhavas are excited using appropriate Vibhavas, Anubhavas and Vyabhicaribhavas, the Sthayibhava is transmuted to its corresponding Rasa. Abhinavagupta, the 11th century aesthetician wrote an interpretation to Bharatha's "Natya Shastra"- *Abhinava Bharati*. 'Rasa' is excited by artistic circumstances and situations (a man may be fall in love but we cannot say that 'sringagra rasa' is excited until and unless it is aesthetically excited. Similarly, a man may cry on someone's death but we cannot say that 'Karuna rasa' is excited).

This leads to a vital question, that is, how 'Rasa' is created? According to Bharathamuni and Bhatta, 'Rasa' is created out of the combination of Vibhava, Anubhava and Vyabhicari bhava. Mammata, the follower of Abhinavagupta believes that 'Rasa' happens through a 'cause' (effective causes) or 'nimitta karana'. There should something or some cause that can excite a 'Rasa'. Samsuka, another notable philosopher takes the example of a painting, that is the picture of a horse to discuss the relationship between the 'real' and the 'unreal'. The blending of these two worlds can create 'Rasa'. Bhatta Nayaka says that, it is the 'aesthetic psychology', which creates 'Rasa'. For Abhinavagupta, emotion is universal though various pathological symptoms. Abhinavagupta points out that in the actual aesthetic experience; the mind of the spectators is liberated from the obstacles caused by the ego. Thus transported from the realm of the personal and egoistic to that of the general and universal, we are capable of experiencing Nirvana or blissfulness. In the aesthetic process, we are transported

to a trans-personal level. This is a process of de-individualization or universalization. The Indian Aestheticians consider this process as 'Sadharanikarana'.

Bhatta Tauta takes the example of a play to illustrate the concept of 'Rasa'. He says that the audience are in the midway between 'pure actuality' and 'pure identity' when they watch a performance. For example, when they watch Rama on stage surrounded by the settings, scene, music and other things, one feels the impact and thus 'Rasa' is created. The man who is playing the part of Rama does not appear to us in his actual individual character. He appears to us as Rama about whom Vatmiki wrote. He stands somewhere midway between the pure 'actuality' and the pure 'ideality'. This together with all the scenic association and music produces an experience, which vibrates with exhilaration. The past impression, memories, associations, etc. becomes connected with the present experience. As a result, a new experience is created and this provides new types of pleasures and pains. This is technically known as Rasasvadana, Camatkara, Carvana or the spiritual enlightenment.

S.N. Das Gupta finally talks about the universalization of 'poetic art'. He says that this happens through two ways. 1. Aesthetic composition creates an aesthetic situation leading to an emotion. 2. Artistic enlightenment is universal and therefore 'transcendental' ('Camatkara') and it provides aesthetic pleasure universally.

The Highways of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit – S. Kuppuswami Sastri

(pages 173 – 190)

S. Kuppuswami Sastri was a Sanskrit scholar, well versed in the 'Sastras' and 'Kavyas'. His chief works are *Sri Bhagavatpada Sankaracharya* and a commentary on Dhvanyaloka. In his essay titled "Highways of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit" Kuppuswami Sastri writes about the synthesis between literary law and literary freedom, which is mainly achieved through Vyanjana (suggestion).

The essay deals with the relationship between 'Literary Law' and 'Literary Freedom' and its synthesis. According to Rabindranath Tagore, "Literature conforms to the rules of grammar but still it is joy and freedom. A poem is of course law bound but it transcends. Law is the wings. Form is in law but spirit is in beauty".

The question is how is this synthesis between law and liberty achieved? Through Literary Criticism, advocates believe that this happens through recognition and acceptance of the principle of 'Vyanjana' (suggestiveness or suggestion or suggestive quality) – that is the extraordinary signification power which all works of art possess.

"All art is expression" is changed to "all expression is art", that means, even an ordinary sentence by an ordinary speaker has some artistic element. Otto Jespersen in his essay 'The Philosophy of Grammar' says that there are three distinct things in all speech. They are: Expression, Suppression and Impression and impression happens through suppression. Nobody can express everything and some things are suppressed.

'Vyanjana' or suggestion in poetry is its core. If everything is expressed it creates boredom. 'Samsarga' or relation/association; 'Vakyartha' or the meaning of the sentence (juxtaposition and relation between words – meaning conveyed through suppression) and 'Vyanjana', the principle important to philosophy, logic and language.

Superiority of Poetic art is the result of the synthesis between law and liberty; connection between expression and impression and connection between speaker and the hearer. He presents the 'trio', that is, the artist's mind, aesthetic sense of expression and of course the Reader or the 'Sahridaya' (sensitive viewer or reader). Poetic expression becomes the bridge which carries art from the 'kavi' (poet) to the 'Sahridaya' and that bridge is composed of 'suggestion'.

Liberty means the free play of the artist's genius. 'Vyanjana' harmonises the attitude of the poet and the critic. The connection between two important factors of life, that is 'Speech' and 'Thought' forms the core of poetry. It is the sound and the sense – 'Sabda' (word) and 'Artha' (meaning), the inseparable pair of Indian culture, the father and mother. One can never create a genuine work of art without this synthesis. Genuine poetry comes as a spontaneous emanation from a 'Rasa-filled' heart (beautiful thought in beautiful clothes). A beautiful thought is covered by a beautiful dress without any conscious effort on the part of the poet. There is complete harmony in sound and sense in the poem through skilful suppression. It means a beautiful thought is skilfully suppressed by the poet with artistic ornamented lines leading to suggestion (Vyanjana) which gives the reader wonderful impression. This is the highest test of true poetry.

Two Aspects of Literary Art - Form and Content.

Form is the 'vakyartha' - 'guna', the quality or merit of the collocation, alamkaras or the decorative devices, 'Riti; or 'Rudhi', the usage and these factors constitute the literary form.

Dhvani

Content is actually the synthesis of various forms along with the doctrine of 'Dhvani'.

Three important schools of thought in Sanskrit Literary Criticism – Dhvani, Rasa and Anumana/Unnaya (result or the inference). Dhvani is Vyanjana, Rasa, the highway of criticism and Auchithya (adaptation or the synthesis of Rasa, Dhvani and Anumana).

Vakrokti

Eccentric expression or deviation in expression from the common place. Deviation can happen due to various causes. To put it in simple words, effective deviation is 'Vakrokti'. Vakrokti is a special speech or expression where an idea is expressed with a view to attain strikingness. Vakrokti is also called 'Vaicitrya' is the essence of poetic speech.

The central principle of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit is 'Vjanjana' – suggestion or impression through suggestion. 'Vyanjana' is the 'charm' of poetry, that is to create interest in the readers. It enhances the value. The concept of 'Vjanjana' was discovered by Anandavardhana and elaborated by Abhinavagupta.

'Vyanjana' is a quest which leads to conquest and this journey creates interest. It becomes a search for the concealed or hidden which adds to beauty to the whole context. Thus, 'Vjanjana' becomes part of an artistic process. How is this 'Vjanjana' achieved? Here lies the significance of 'Alamkara Sastra', that is the use of words or expressions in connection with meanings. This leads numerous interpretations which results in multiple readings. For example, the expression "hamlet on the Ganges" can be interpreted as a holy place or hut on the bank of Ganga. This is 'Vjanjana' which creates an extraordinary feel or the 'Lokottara'.

Significance of 'Vjanjana'

1. It is artistic because it involves suppression
2. It gives an impression because it provides artistic thrill
3. It can remind the readers about 'Alamkara Sasthra' and the various genres.

Significance of the contributions of Anandavardhana

1. The concept of 'Dhvani' which means the suggestive power of language
2. Classification of poetic expression – As 'Uttama' (the best or the first rate); 'Madhyama' (second rate) and 'Adhama' (inferior). Poetry is regarded as 'Uttama', the supreme quality writing. Something which is not raised to the superior is 'Madhyama'. Writings which is lifeless or which gives importance to stylistic features burying the suggested element are regarded as 'Adhama'. Anandavardhana thus provided a scheme for the readers to analyse 'Rasa'.

Use and Abuse of Alamkara – V. Raghavan

(pages 235 – 244)

Poetry is not mere thought. Facts and emotions are part of different subjects like Science, Psychology, etc. but when poets try to present these things, the readers find a charm in it. Plain fact or reality gets embellished in some manner which catches the attention of the readers. Hence, poetry should be attractive, beautiful and out of the way. This deviation, striking use of words and ideas, which constitute the poetic form, is known as 'Alamkara'.

'Alamkara' is the 'beautiful' in poetry or the poetic form. It is something to be used by a poet in a sensible manner. Anandavardhana says, "Though Alamkaras are the 'sarira' (outer body), they can be made the 'sariri' (the soul)". Abhinavagupta believes that, "Alamkaras are external ornaments but can be like the 'kumkuma' (saffron) smeared for the beauty of the body, when they are organic and structural".

Bhoja classified Alamkaras into 'Sabda' (word), 'Bahya' (external), 'Artha' (meaning), 'Abhyantara' (internal) and 'Bahyabhyantara' (external – internal), that is like doing make-up. One should not give over-importance to 'Alamkaras'. Here lies the significance of 'Aucitya' (appropriateness, harmony and proportion to create ultimate beauty in poetry). If 'Aucitya' is practised, 'Rasa' becomes the soul of poetry. Ksemendra, a writer of 'Poetics' in the latter half of the 11th century believes that, "Aucitya is the life of the Rasa-ensouled Kavya.....Alamkaras should be kept to their places". The readers' attention shall never fall on the figures or 'Alamkaras'. It should excite 'Bhava' and 'Rasa', that is, Alamkara must be Rasabhava-para (devoted to Rasa and Bhava).

'Alamkaras' embellishes the speech and gives a fresh appeal to things. It was Anandavardhana who formulated rules for the proper employment of 'Alamkara'. They are:

1. Alamkara should be subordinated to Rasa (intended to suggest Rasa)
2. It should suit the Bhava
3. It should be natural

Eg: Portions from *Ramayana* – connection between emotion and figure (Ayodhya lamenting on Bharata's return; Sita's condemnation of Ravana; Rama weeping for Sita's loss, etc). Portions from Kalidasa.

Anandavardhana's principles for the use of Alamkaras

1. Alamkaras must be ancillary (Angabhuta)
2. They must never become main (Pradhana or Angin)
3. The main theme should get the significance supported by the Alamkaras
4. They must not be too much elaborated or overworked
5. Even if they are elaborate, the poet must restrict them to Anga (an ancillary)

To conclude, poetry is a beautiful idea presented with the support of beautiful expressions. The function of Alamkara is to heighten the effect and it should go along with the main theme. Alamkaras should be irremovable, structural, organic, create Rasa and effortless. Nature is 'God' Leela' and 'Poetry is Poet's Leela' (through words, expressions, images, colours, etc).

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