CHAPTER XVIII. - 'RASA' IN B H A R A T A (N.A. SÆ.CIR. A.D. )

The earliest technical discussion of rasa is to be found in the N.A. SÆ., attributed to, Bharata (CIR. A.D. 200 B.C.). In fact N.A. SÆ. is also our earliest authority on such topics of Sanskrit poetics as alamkāra, guṇa, doṣa, etc. I now, therefore, present here a discussion on rasa as found in this work. The textual criticism of this work on dramatics is not fully carried out. This much, however, is clear that it contains several strata belonging probably to different ages and probably also to different schools of thought. The major part of this work is in verse. There are, however, a few prose passages is. It is likely that the prose portion containing the famous rasa-sūtra may be an early discussion on the subject. However that may be, I take the whole portion, prose and verse, as one unit for the discussion here. The ānuvāma's āryās and s'lokas quoted in support of the main text in prose and verse, clarify what is said in the body of the text.

Having described in the first five adhāya of the N.A. SÆ. the mythical origin of the science of dramatics, its first production, the construction of the different types of theatre buildings, the ceremonial worship of the theatre, the different aspects of pūrvarāṅga, the difference between abhinaya, nṛtta and the different varities of nṛtta etc., Bharata comes to some of the main themes relevant to the art of dramatics.

In the sixth adhāya, the sages ask Bharata five questions of these the first and the foremost are-

- ye rasa iti pāthyante nātye nātyavicaśamānāḥ.
rasatvam kena vai teṣāṁ etadākhyātumārhasi..!
(VI.2.)

and,

bhāvās'caiva kathāṁ proktāṁ kim vā te bhāvavantyapi.
(VI.3 ab)

Thus, the understanding of the rasas and the four bhāvas occupy prominent place in the N.A. SÆ. The eight rasas and the sthāyin, saṅcārin, and sāttvikabhāvās are enumerated in verses 16-23 of the VI the Chapter. Lateron, after having enumerated abhinayayn, vṛttis, pravṛttis, siddhis, four types of musical tones, four
Here comes the famous types of musical instruments, five types of singing and three types of theatre building, the author proceeds to explain the subject of rasa in prose.

Here comes the famous rasa-sūtra viz. "Vibhāvānumbhāvāvyabhicārasa-
myogādrasaniśpattih"-. In this sūtra, the meaning of the word 'nispattih' derived from the root nispad has caused a great controversy. It may be expressed in English, following Monier Williams, as something which comes about, or arises out of, or results from something else. This sūtra is translated by Raneiro Gnoli as follows:—"Out of the union of determinants (vibhāva), the consequents (anubhāva), and the transitory mental states (vyabhicārin), the birth of rasa takes place". He translates, 'nispattih' by 'birth', which may be regarded as a colourless word not tending to any particular view regarding the psychological progress of this birth. This sūtra is followed by an explanation in prose supported by traditional verses.

Here, an attempt is made to explain three points; (i) how rasa comes about? (ii) What is rasa? and (iii) what feeling accompanies it?. The first point is explained on the analogy of a beverage. In a beverage there is one principal ingredient which combined with other tasteful ingredients becomes in an integrated form a rasa like Sādava and others. Similarly, when the permanent mental states like rati or love, bhaya or fear, etc., are combined with various bhāvas, specified in the sūtra as vibhāvas, anubhāvas and vyabhicārin, becomes rasas. The second point, as to why these are called rasas is also explained on the same analogy viz. that these also, like the material beverages, are capable of being tasted. The third point, viz. the feeling which accompanies the taste, is that of pleasure. Thus, all the three points involved in the sūtra are explained on the analogy of material rasas.

This analogy is made clearer in the traditional verses quoted after this. Just as experts in taste, while eating the cooked things combined with many dravyas and vyāñjanas enjoy it, similarly the wise or the connesseurs enjoy with mind-menasa—the permanent mental states which are combined with the abhinayas.
of bhāvas. It is for this reason that these are called nāṭyarasas. In these verses, two more points are added by way of clarification. One is that it requires an expert or a connoisseur to be able to discern and enjoy the taste properly, both in matters of food and drink as well as in the enjoyment of the taste in poetry and art. The second point is that it is with the mind that taste in poetry and art is perceived and enjoyed, as distinct from the physical sense of taste in the mouth.

As to why the sthāyibhāvas alone attain the state of rasa is explained in the VIIth Chapter. Here also, the explanation proceeds by way of analogy. Even though men have similar characteristics, have similar bodies, yet, there are some who by their noble family, character, learning, artistic proficiency, attain to the state of kinghood, while other persons of inferior talent become their followers. Similarly, vibhāvas, anubhāvas, and vyabhicārins become subordinate to sthāyibhāvas. This means that in the psychological theories of the ancients, the eight or nine permanent moods, sthāyibhāvas viz. rati or love, hāsa or laughter, s'oka or grief, etc., were taken to be perpetual moods of living creatures in contrast to the fleeting moods such as nirveda, glāni, etc.

Thus, from these two passages, we gather that rasa is a matter of tasting of permanent moods with mind by men who have proficiency in such tasting. The sthāyibhāvas attain to this mental tastefulness, rasatva, not by themselves but connected with the Vibhāvas, anubhāvas and the vyabhicārins. This connexion is of a generative nature. The knowledge of the relation of feelings, emotions and sentiments with events and circumstances of life becomes so to say transformed in poetry and drama into what are called vibhāvas and anubhāvas. It is this connexion which is the stuff of what becomes rasa.

Now let us see what the Nā.Śā. means by the terms 'Vibhāva', 'anubhāvas', and 'vyabhicāribhāva.'

The meaning of the term 'vibhāva' is given as below:-
-atha vibhāva iti kasmāt. ucyate-vibhāvo vijñāthah. Vibhāvah karaṇam
nimittam heturiti paryāyāḥ. Vibhāvyante'nena vāgaṅgasattvabhīnayā ityato
vibhāvah yathā vibhāvitam vijñātam ity anarthāntaram-(Na.S'a.VII.pp.346), (4.5.2)

Vibhāva is primarily taken in the sense of knowledge(vi jñāna). It
is however, a piece of knowledge which reveals something else also. Therefore,
in relation to that something else which it reveals, it is also called karaṇa,
nimitta, and hetu, i.e., these are other words for vibhāva. It is by means of
vibhāva that vācika, āṅgika, and sāttvika abhinayas are so to say, understood
or grasped specifically. Thus vibhāvitam is said to mean vijñātam. This
rather not quite clear exposition in prose is clarified in the verse quoted as
authority viz.,

bahavo'ṛtha vibhāvyante vāgaṅgābhīnayās'rayāḥ.)
anena yasmāttenaṃ vibhāva iti samjñitah.. || (Na.S'a.VII.4.)

Because, many meanings coming from vācika and āṅgika abhinayas are made
clear or capable of being grasped or understood, it is called vibhāva. Thus
vibhāva is really a type of knowing which is responsible for other meanings
culminating in the perception of mental states.

Anubhāva is explained as follows-

-anubhāva iti kasmāt. ucyate-anubhāvyante'nena vāgaṅgasattvako'bhīnaya iti.

Anubhāva is the expression of these mental states by means of vācika and
āṅgika abhinayas. The anubhāvas may be identified with bodily expressions,
including vocal expressions which show the mental states produced
by the vibhāvas. The S'loka is:-

-vāgaṅgābhīnayeneha yatastvarto'niubhāvyate.
s'ākhāṅgopāṅgasamayuktastvamubhāvastataḥ smṛtaḥ.. || (Na.S'a.VII.5.)

Vyabhicārin or transitory state is explained as,

vi abhi ityetavupasargam, cara iti gatvarto dhātuḥ. vividhamābhimukhayena
raseṣu carantiti vyabhicārīnaḥ vāgaṅgasattvopetāḥ prayoge rasānnyanti
iti vyabhicārīnaḥ.- (Na.S'a.VII.pp.355)
i.e. 'vi' and 'abhi' are prefixes, and the root is 'cara' meaning 'to go', 'to move'. Here the word vyabhicārinah means, 'those mental states, which in a variety of ways move towards the principal sentiments. That is, they are the mental states which play the part of accessories which reinforce the permanent moods.

The rasa theory of Bharatā may be interpreted in the following way. The vibhāvas are statements and ānubhāvas which give rise to emotions and sentiments. The expressions of the sentiments and emotions thus born are ānubhāvas. The fleeting emotions caused and expressed in a similar way are the vyabhicāris. These unite into a unitary whole like the honey gathered from different plants. When this unitary whole becomes tasted by one who can taste it with discernment, it is the state of rasa.

It may be noted that the theory of rasa is based upon the psychological analysis of the human mind in ancient times. The results have been put into a formula which has become traditional. It has eight (or nine) permanent states of mind, i.e. sthāvyabhāvas, thirty-three transitory states i.e. vyabhicāris, and the eight sāttvikābhāvas. This group of forty-nine mental states is the material out of which eight or nine rasas are formed. These are, Śṛngāra (Love), Hāsyā (laughter), Karuṇā, Vīra (Heroic), Raudra (Furious), Bhayānaka (Terrific), Prabhatsa, and Adbhuta (Marvellous), the nāṭyarasas, and to which later on is added the S'anta rasa. The Nā. Sā. being essentially a work on dramaturgy, enumerates, the different vibhāvas, ānubhāvas and saṅcārīras which constitute these rasas, in the Sixth and seventh adhyāyas. All this material in the Nā. Sā. has more or less become traditional in the later works on sanskrit dramaturgy and poetics.

It may also be noted that in the 16th adhyāya of the Nā. Sā., dealing with the concepts of lakṣāna, guṇa, doṣa, and alaṃkāra, it is stated (vs. 113-114) that the guṇas and the alaṃkāras have to be used in poetry, in consonance with the delineation of different rasas. Here, it may be noted, rasa is visualised in connection with poetry i.e. kāvyā in addition to drama or nāṭya.