GENESIS OF RASA THEORY

Indian thinkers from Bharata Muni to Jagan Nath (17th Century A.D.) laid down standards of literary taste and formulated an accurate theory of poetic expression. Most of their findings, which reached their apex in the works of scholars like Anandavardhan, Kuntaka and Abhinavagupta are still held valid. The field of poetics has developed in the course of many centuries, during which ideas issued forth and controversies raged in an attempt to find out the criterion of good poetry and the nature of aesthetic delight. This quest took the form of an attempt to find answers to some major problems - what is poetry? What constitutes its body (Sarira) and what its soul (atman)? What is its purpose and what is the nature of the delight it imparts to the sympathetic reader? In what respect does poetry transcend the matter of fact speech and ordinary conversational speech? What are the essential qualities that a poet should possess? In trying to arrive at a satisfactory solution to these problems, almost every critic was pre-occupied with the notion that 'words and meanings (Sabdartha) form the body of the poetry. In other words the equation of poetry to a human being (Kavyapurusa) 'with a body and soul' was in the mind of almost every critic. As a result to it, some literary

theories were built up out of which 'rasa', 'alamkara', 'dhvani', 'vakrokti' and 'aucitya' find a prominent place. These different theories should not be considered as isolated instances of thinking, put forth independently of one and other. When viewed in broad perspective, a thread of continuity is seen running through all of them, and the ideas of one school pave the way for, and merge into the ideas of a successive school. The exponents of a later school were aware of and tried to improve upon the ideas of earlier schools, and in some instances a later school was developed with the idea of an earlier school as its central theme. Primarily the shifting of emphasis marked the division into different schools of thoughts. Hence it was as a result of process of evolution that different theories came into being, defining the soul or the 'rasa' content in poetry.

The primary concern of Sanskrit poetics is the way the internal constituents of a literary work function. It examines among other things, the forms and methods of figuration (alamkaras) varieties of literary discourse (ritu), modes of deviation from standard language (vakrokti), suggestion of meaning (dhvani), and the working of the principle of decorum (aucitya). The 'Rasa-dhvani' theory in particular studies how the objective elements (vibhavadi) - the sensuous representational contents such as situation, character, imagery, language - have a subject correlative i.e., the reader's effective response and how this target
states of mind is evoked by its objective equivalents in the inscribed or the performed text by what is essentially a process of suggestions. The primary concern of the 'Rasa-dhvani' project is to investigate the activity of these formal elements in the work.¹

Bharata is the earliest exponent of the 'Rasa' theory, and 'Rasa School' as the earliest theory expounded in Sanskrit poetics. As Bharata conceived it, 'rasa' was a concept relating to drama and dramatic appreciation.² It was the work of comparatively later theorists to apply this concept to poetry. According to Bharata, poetry forms the 'vacikabhinya' in drama. In the sixteenth chapter of the Natyasastra he gives some ideas which may undoubtedly be called the earliest specimens of writing on poetics. Here he gives as requisites of 'Kavya', 'ten gunas, ten dosas, four Alamkaras and thirty six lakasans'.³ According to S.K. De, 'these apparently constituted the principal contents of the discipline as it existed at a very early period'.⁴

An examination of these requisites of 'Kavya' that Bharata has stipulated, reveals that he is dealing with some factors pertaining to the beauty of the formal aspect

2. Natyasastra of Bharata (Gaekwad Oriental Series), Ch.VII & VII.
3. Natyasastra (GOS) Ch. XVI.
of Kavya; just like Bhamaha around eight hundred years after Bharata who endeavoured to judge the worth of poetry by the elements which embellished its formal aspect, i.e. the 'alamkaras'. The 'kavya alamkara' of Bhamaha, the earliest exponent of the 'Alamkara school' of literary criticism in Sanskrit. The ensuing seven centuries witnessed the writing of significant Sanskrit works, when the poetic and the dramatic theory appear to have attracted the attention of the scholars and literary speculation reached its zenith.

Dandin followed Bhamaha to win credit for his more systematic presentation of the 'Alamkara theory'. He drew attention to the fact that poetic figures were not the only worthwhile aesthetic entity in poetry. His aim was to present a critique of Poetry incorporating 'Gities, Gunas (styles), Alamkars and Dosas'. His successor Vamana built up a theory based on 'Guna-Riti' concept.

The 9th Century A.D. was an outstanding period in Sanskrit Poetics, for, it saw the birth of memorable theoretical works. Out of them the place of eminence easily goes to Dhvanya-loke of the famous aesthetician Anandaverdhana. Dhvenyaloka along with its commentary Locana written by Abhinavagupta in the 10th Century A.D. revolutionized the entire trend of this 'Sastra' and placed it in an entirely new perspective. These two treatises reflect a sound understanding of the aesthetic element in Poetry. Emphasis
shifted hereby from the formal to the content aspect of poetry. It was the achievement of the 'dhvani' theorists to recognize the significance of 'rasa' in Poetic appreciation, to expound how rasa is to be realized in Poetry, and to declare that the highest goal of Poetic endeavour was 'rasa' evocation. It was they who expounded the application of 'Rasa' theory to Poetry in conjunction with the function of 'dhvani'. So, it was a fine synthesis of the theories of 'rasa' and 'dhvani', as 'rasa' could be realized in poetry through 'dhvani' alone, so Rasa dhvani is the acme of poetic perfection. Though the antiquity of the 'rasa' theory could be traced back to Bharata, it was not till the time of 'dhvani' theorists that it played an important role in poetic appreciation. The 'dhvani' theory arose "incorporating within itself all its good features".¹

The 11th Century witnessed the birth of an outstanding work named as Vakroktijivita of Kuntaka. This treatise postulates the 'Vakrokti school' of Sanskrit poetics. This theory was an attempt to explain poetry by an extended concept of 'Vakrokti' borrowed from the theorists of old, to channel the flow of poetic theory on conservative lines. Mahim bhāttā emphasised on the value of 'logical inference' in poetic process. Another noted writer of this century was Ksemendra whose concept of 'aucitya' (appropriateness)

¹ Dr. A. Sankaran, Theories of Rasas and Dhvani, Madras, 1929, P.1.
is well known in the history of Sanskrit poetics. Henceforth the writers only synthesised these theories, and consequently the centuries following Kṣemendra are called the period of Synthesis in Sanskrit poetic theory.

From its first appearance in the dramatic theory of Bharata down to its establishment as the soul of poetry in the work of Visvanatha there has been a steady working out of the idea into a fundamental aesthetic concept.

Natyasastra is an encyclopaedic manual on theatre arts. Almost every aspect of drama and dramatic representation are discussed herein. Composition and enactment of a play as well as dramatic appreciation are dealt with great detail, and as accessories to drama, such subjects as music, dancing, and so forth are amply discussed. The same way, the book deals with poetry and poetic theory too. Poetry comes in the scope of 'vacikabhinaya' in drama and hence finds a place in his treatise. In addition to being the oldest extant work on literary theory, Bharata's treatise is well known for its concept of 'rasa'. Bharata deals with 'rasa' as an attempt to explain the aesthetic objective of dramatic representation.

Doctrine of 'rasa' as originally formulated by Bharata in the VI and VII chapters of his Natyasastra rests on the following assumption: (1) Emotions are manifested in 'Kavya', as in the life by a combination of situational factors.

(2) There are a specific numbers of emotions (3) Some of them are permanent, irreducible mental states while others are fugitive and dependent (4) The permanent ones alone can be developed into aesthetic moods or rasas. (5) A literary composition is an organisation of various feelings and tones but it invariably subordinates the weaker tones to a dominant impression. (6) Feeling tones are brought together in a composition not indiscriminately but according to a logic of congruity and propriety.

In his 'Rasa-sutra' Bharata explains how the emotions are expressed in poetry: Emotions in poetry come to be expressed through the conjunction of their causes and symptoms and their feelings which accompany the emotions. Here Bharata stipulates three necessary conditions which must be present together for emotion to become manifested (1) that which generates the emotion, called 'Vibhava', which includes (a) the object to which the emotion is directed i.e. the determinant object (alambana vibhava), e.g. Juliet; (b) the causes and circumstances which excite the emotion (Uddipana Vibhava) e.g. youth, moon light, privacy, the overt expressions, consequences, actions and gestures which exhibit the emotion called 'anubhava'; e.g. tears, perspiration, laughter etc., other ancillary feelings such as depression, agitation which normally accompany that emotion. The Sloka runs thus: "Vibhavanubhava vyabhicarA-samyo 'd rasanispattih".1

1. Natyasastra, Ch. VI. After verse 31.
Bharata lists as many as forty nine emotional states or 'bhavas,' of which eight are primary or durable states, (Sthayins) with their corresponding rasas or aesthetic moods, thirty nine transitory states (Vyabhicarins) and eight involuntary expressions like tears trembling etc. which are also thought to be mental states although they appear as physical conditions. The eight basic emotions are: Erotic, Comic, Pathetic, Fury, Heroic, Fear, Revulsion or Disgust and Wonder. Bharata's list of basic emotions was subjected to centuries of controversy and one more emotion was added to them with Serenity as the ninth emotion by Anandavardhan and Abhinavagupta.

The word 'sthayibhava' has been variously interpreted as a permanent state ¹, Durable Psychological State ², Mental effection ³, Sentiments ⁴, Permanent mood ⁵ and Emotion ⁶. Taking all these interpretations and considerations as also the intention of Bharata, we may say that the 'sthayibhavas' are the innate abiding impulses or emotions or instinctive dispositions. These impulses are the mental forces that maintain and shape all the life of individuals and societies and in them we are confronted with the central mystery of life, and mind and will. ⁷ The permanent or durable emotion

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1. Natyasastra VI following verse 31.
6. P.V. Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics (Delhi 1961) P.301.
is so called because it persists unchanged like the salt in sea, which quickly dissolves the others into its own condition and attains to its fullest expression as 'rasa', that is the durable emotion. The durable emotions alone are capable of being developed into aesthetic moods. The transitory states are those that accompany the durable state, emerging from it and being again submerged in it, and that cannot endure for any length of time without attaching themselves to one of durable states. Feelings like agitation, depression and mental exultation have no independent existence and cannot arouse any particular mood independently. The feeling of agitation can appear in love, laughter, anger, revulsion or wonder. As such it cannot find a resting point in its own nature or establish an independent context for itself. It can only be explained by reference to one of the permanent emotions. For example, when it is said that some one is agitated, the question is at once asked, 'why is he agitated'. But when it is said that Romeo loves Juliet, no questions are asked. So the transitory feelings can exist only as accessories to one of the primary emotions, serving the purpose of intensification or contrast. The only way of establishing a primary emotion in poetry is to exhibit it again and again through its attendant conditions and accessories. Thus when a primary emotion is nourished as a principal theme through a whole composition long or short, but long enough to display
character and situational context, it becomes a dominant emotion - a 'rasa'.

Any given emotion does not go with all other emotions in a promiscuous way, but follows a certain logic, a code of behaviour, not imposed by extraneous factors intrinsic to its nature. It can sometimes consort with other emotions which are discordant to its own nature, but only under certain conditions, i.e. if two contrary emotions are brought together in a single composition they must either appear in different substrata, e.g. heroism in the protagonist goes well with terror in the antagonist, or if they should appear in the same substratum one of them should be subordinated to the other, the subordinate emotion serving to reinforce the dominant emotion. Take for example, Othello's expression of love, pity and anger in the murder scene, where at least momentarily love and pity are subordinated to anger, although the dominant emotion of the play as a whole is tragic pathos, to which all other emotions act as accessories.

One must be clear in mind that 'rasa' is a 'contemplative, creative experience'¹ It has a content and quality that momentary uncontrolled activities does not have. It has an element of 'undergoing' or suffering in broadest sense. The transformation of Valmiki's 'soka' (grief) into sloka (poetry) was not just the outburst of emotion but a

¹ cf. Wordsworth's observation - "Emotions recollected in tranquility".
heart curdling experience which must have involved wistful contemplation. Eloquently the concept of 'rasa', the noted English critic Allardyce Nicoll writes:

This concept is one that has wide application and perhaps in the west we have only lately been gropingly moving towards an appreciation of its significance. Modern aesthetic theory, within its emphasis on 'disinterested aesthetic contemplation' comes very close to the Sanskrit attitude while the failure on the part of so much renaissance and neo-classical criticism to find justification for divergent elements within such creative forms as the Elizabethan drama is sharply illuminated by the scope of this Hindu interpretation of literary endeavour 1.

The theory of 'rasa' is considered to be audience oriented - as 'rasa' is a two fold experience - experience of the creator as also that of the reader or the audience. The playwright will transmit rasa into his creation only if he himself is soaked in rasa. The refined or the sympathetic reader relishes the same emotion as felt and expressed by the playwright in his composition. So 'rasa' connotes the creation and the re-creation - artistic and the aesthetic. John Dewey regrets the absence of such a word in the English language as can convey the impact of both 'artistic' and 'aesthetic'. Whereas the word 'artistic' refers to the act of creation the word 'aesthetic' indicates perception and enjoyment.2 The word 'rasa' conveys this all in its single self. The word 'rasa' is the simplest and at the same time

most bewildering expression in the Sanskrit language. It is the simplest in the sense that its meaning can be comprehended instantly even by a common man. It is the most bewildering in the sense that the word may convey different meanings in different contexts, but its essential core remains unaltered. It literally means juice, essence or elixir. It also means, taste, relish or flavour. Whether the relish is of the Aryan's drinking of the 'Soma' juice, or the Yogi's communion with the cosmic soul or the reader's delightful experience of an artistic piece of literary composition, it is 'rasa'. Bharata himself says, "that which is relished, is 'rasa'". Whenever the word is associated with the palate, or the mystic experience of the Yogi, or the delight afforded by art, the word 'rasa' indicates the pleasure that each class of people receive from their experience. It is bewildering in the sense that it defies all attempts at translation. P.S.R. Appa Rao substantiates the point in the following words:

It has been found that no comprehensive word or phrase is adequate to convey the full import of rasa. Rasa is actually the impression created on the mind of the sympathetic audience by the expression of 'Bhavas' and is an experience the individual is subject to, on account of this expression. The idea of 'rasa' is unique to Indian poetics and dramatics and is essentially a creation of Indian genius. So however much one may try to translate the word 'rasa', such a translation has always been found to be yet wanting.

The followers of 'Rasa school' advocated that 'rasa' is the most essential and indispensable element in a literary composition. They call it the soul of poetry. Bharata observes, "na hi rasadrate kascidarthah Parvarttate", no meaning proceeds from speech without any kind of sentiment.¹ How is 'rasa' tasted? In reply he says that just as well disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices enjoy its taste (rasa) and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so the cultured people taste the dominant states (sthayibhava) while they see them represented by an expression of the various states with Words, Gestures and the Temperament, and derive pleasure and satisfaction.² Bharata's reference to words, gestures and temperament or moods are the medium which suggest or help in the evocation of 'rasa' only, further explicitly elaborated by later scholars of 'dhvani theory'.

The founder of 'dhvani school' is Anandavardhana the author of 'Dhvanyaloka'. The most important factor in the 'dhvani theory' is the 'Vynjana' function of the words and meanings of poetry. Bharata called the phenomenon of the suggestion of the 'sthayibhava' developing into a 'rasa' 'vyanjana' since he used the expression 'vyanjitan' (suggested), 'Vyanjana' for Anand, precisely means 'revelation'. The analogy of the lamp and the jar is drawn between the suggestor

¹. Natyasastra VI, S. 31
². Natyasastra, S. 105.
and the suggested sense of Dwanya-loka (111, 421). The analogy implies that the suggestor exhibits its own self while revealing the suggested elements. Such a definite meaning of 'vyanjaka' or 'vyanjana' seems to have been derived from Bharata's own explanation of the sutra, "Vibhavanbhava - vyabhicari/sancari samyogad rasanispatih."¹ According to Abhinavabharti, 'Rasa' is a suggested sense and manifests itself through a process of suggestion - instruments of the suggestion being 'vibhavas, anubhavas, vyabhicari/sancari bhavas,' objective correlative of 'rasa.' The term 'nispatih' in Bharata is interpreted as 'abhivyakti' - suggestion. Thus the relation between the 'rasas' and the 'vibhavas' etc. is that of 'vyangya - vyanjaka-bhava.' The critic Sankuka's belief was that 'rasa' is a process of logical inference where the spectator infers 'rasa' when the 'vibhavas' etc. are placed before him. The actor by his histrionics imitates the character of the hero and the spectator identifies the actor with the hero, which leads to his inference of 'rasa.' The emotions of the hero in ordinary life are manifested by causes, bodily effects and accompanying mental states and these when imitated by the actor become 'vibhavas.' The emotion that the audience gets is, 'but a reflex of a real emotional mood - 'sthayibhava' of the characters, and - it is called by a different name, viz. 'rasa.'²

1. Natyasastra, Ch. VI §31
2. Dr. A. Sankaran, The theories of Rasa and Dhvani, P.100.
The word 'dhvani' was borrowed from the grammarians, because they implied the word dhāvani that manifested the Sphota. As in a poem words manifest the suggested sense, 'so' Sphota' is the all-pervading eternal and indistructible word principle. Dhvani (sounds and words) manifest it.¹

The grammarians hold that the syllables that we hear suggest an eternal and complete word within the heart of the hearer, which is called Sphota and which alone is associated with the meaning. What the succeeding sounds do is that they reveal the eternal undivided word bit by bit so that by the time the last sound of the word is heard the entire word gets revealed to convey the idea. The grammarians view is that individual sounds in a word are not competent to convey any meaning. The sound manifests an "external and imperceptible element" (Sphota) which really 'conveys the idea that strikes the mind of listener'.² The sounds that manifest Sphota are termed as 'dhvani'. The 'dhvani' theory is analogous to this theory of Sphota as it postulates that different constituent elements of poetic composition, when taken together, reveal a deeper meaning, unexpressed by any of the individual part - a meaning that flashes upon the 'sahrdya' instantaneously.

The 'dhvani' school took up the moods and feelings as an element of the unexpressed and tried to harmonise the

1. P.V. Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics, Delhi, 1971. P.393.
2. Dr. Sankaran, op. cit. PP. 63
idea of 'rasa' with the theory of dhvani. It was realized that poetry was not mere clothing of agreeable ideas in agreeable language. Feelings and moods play an important role in it. We can give a name to them, but naming a mood or feeling is not equivalent to expressing or developing it. At best, therefore, we can suggest it: ¹ What the poet can directly express or describe are the 'vibhavas' etc. but with the help of these expressed elements, which must be generalised and conceived not as they appear in the mundane world but as they may be imagined in poetic world, the poet can awaken through the power of suggestion inherent in words or ideas a particular 'alaukika' condition of the soul in which the relish of the feeling is possible. ²

On the basis of suggested idea, 'dhvani' is divided into three varieties, viz. 'rasa dhvani', (II) 'alamkara dhvani', and (III) 'vastu dhvani', meaning thereby that when the expressed sense consists in the portrayal of appropriate 'vibhavas', 'anubhavas' and 'vyabhicari bhaves' and consequently suggested contents evoke rasa, it is rasa-dhvani. The evocation of 'bhava' too has to be included in this. When the suggested sense is of the nature of a poetic figure, it is 'alamkara dhvani', when the suggested sense is of the nature of a mere appealing poetic idea it is 'vastu dhvani' - 'vastu' being mere matter or idea. Of these varieties 'rasa-

¹ S.K. De P. 49-50
² Ibid P. 49-50.
dhvani' occupies first and foremost position.\(^1\) The pre-eminence of 'rasa-dhvani' is never questioned.

They all agree that emotions are inner psychic states, but known by their criteria. Bharata assumed that the emotions expressed in poetry are the emotions felt by the poet and shared by the audience. And speaking of mimetic action he says that one acts with one's mind, for how can 'sorrow be convincingly portrayed even through gestures by some one who has never experienced so'.\(^2\) Abhinavagupta asserts that the spectator is able to recognise the emotive situation through the 'direct knowledge of his own emotion as much as by observing the behaviour of others'.\(^3\) Sankuka had stated that the knowledge of the emotive is made possible only by their objects and expressions which are logical signs. The emotions, he maintains, are inferred from their signs, and poetic representation is only of these external signs not of the intra-psychic states themselves. When the conditions for an emotional attitude are present the words preventing these conditions naturally deliver a 'charged' meaning. The rasa theorists do not neglect the study of the linguistic elements like metaphor, diction and style. They show through elaborate analysis of poetic specimen how the phonological, grammatical, and lexical

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1. Dr. A. Sankaran op. cit. P.68.
2. Natyasastra, Ch. VII following verse 93.
items are factors in emotional evocations - cases, terminations, affixes, compound construction, 'even single letters sound qualities and sound collocations.' But they say that these by themselves do not become expressive. As Abhinava points out, 'their power is due to association with the causes and circumstances of the emotion.'

Emotions are expressed by their contexts, 'when these contexts are expressed by a suitable language the power of these emotions is transferred to the words.' But the logic of 'rasa theory' forced even the proponents of 'dhvani' to admit that 'rasa' is the first concern of poetic meaning as well as its final resting point, and that in fact, 'dhvani' is no other than the power of words to evoke 'rasa.' But then this power, they say, does not inhere in the language but in the context.

Abhinavagupta asserts that the spectator is able to recognize the emotive situation through the direct knowledge of his own emotion as much as by observing the behaviour of others. Sankuka had stated that knowledge of emotion is

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1. S.K. De, Sanskrit Poetics as a study of Aesthetic, Bombay, 1963 P.48. (The dhvani school in its analysis of poetry found that the contents of a good poem may generally be distinguished as either that which is expressed and includes what is given in so many words or that which is not expressed, but must be added by the imagination of the reader; the listener. The unexpressed or suggested part, which is distinctly linked up with the express and which is developed by a peculiar process of suggestion (vyanjana) is taken to be the soul or essence of poetry).

2. 'Locana' Dhvanyaloka, Ill Ch. 3-4: Any language becomes evocative in an evocative context, but the quality of context itself is not a verbal quality, much less a verbal function.

3. 'Locana, Dhvanyaloka, Ill, 3-4.


5. Ibid, P.54.
made possible only by their objects and expressions, which are their logical signs. The poetic representation is only of these external signs, not of the intra-psychic states themselves. From this Sankuka concluded that emotion could be imitated in theatrical representation through their objective signs.

Emotional or natural feelings constitute the material or stimuli of poetry, but they are not identical with the 'rasa' or sentiment. Just as one cannot talk of cause and effect in the unity of spirit, so in the unity of 'rasa' the natural feelings (e.g. grief, horror) may form its constituents. The whole appears as a single and indivisible aesthetic sentiment from which every trace of the constituents empirical pleasure or pain is obliterated. This fact is borne out by the common experience that when grief is experienced on the stage the spectator says, "I have enjoyed it". Visvanatha explains clearly that tears constitute no proof that pain is felt, for the tears that are shed by the spectator are not those of pain but those of sentiment due to the nature of the particular aesthetic enjoyment. The intuitive bliss arising from idealized artistic creation should, therefore, be distinguished from the experience of natural feeling and from all natural experiences of life.\(^1\)

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The Sanskrit critics had a great concern for setting up the aesthetic object as a source not so much of knowledge as of delight. It is not enough that the emotive meanings are understood in the way statements are understood; they must also be found delectable. Otherwise there would be little incentive to contemplate a work of art, much less to see a repetition of that experience. So Abhinavagupta states that 'rasa' experience is in the ultimate analysis, some thing private and that poetic emotions are at once the property of the poet and his public, inter-subjectively, that is they can arise only from the public contexts of the poem. The locus of rasa is at once the poet, the character and the spectator.

The importance of the power of communication in work of art is amply emphasized by L. Abercrombie as "No communication, no literature". The concept of 'dhvani' likewise concerns itself with the mode of expression. The 'dhvani' theorists accept that mere suggested sense did not constitute poetry but that blissful delight called as 'Cāmatkara' was essential. The criterion of good poetry was the content conveyed through suggestion. The discovery that suggestion was not an end in itself, led Abhinavagupta and Visvanatha to conclude that rasa was the essence of poetry. So poetic appeal is essential in the suggested content. Mere suggested sense for its own sake is of no consequence. Almost any

1. Locana, Dhvanya Loka 1, 6.
word or expression can convey a suggested idea. But all of them do not come within the scope of poetry. The suggested sense too, must possess that peculiar quality whereby the 'heart of the appreciative reader opens up in a mood of wonder'. Thus sundry expression possessing some suggested meaning is not to be confused with the 'dhvani Kavya'.

'Rasa' theorists emphasize that 'Kavya' must primarily be an art, appealing not to the intellect but to the emotional side of the human being. The playwright, therefore, must delineate the basic human feelings. Bharata has stressed that art must be instructive along with being artistic, because the instructive purpose can be best served only when the creation is more appealing and more artistic. According to him 'Kavya' is taken to be imparting some lesson, the lesson must lead to 'dharma' and 'moksha'. Abhinava observes that the ultimate result of all four goals of life viz. 'dharma, artha, kama and moksha' is 'Ananda', or pleasure. 'Hence pleasure is the ultimate aim even of the instructive kavya'.

'Rasa' theory is unique in the realms of literature. Aristotle's concept of Catharsis is no where near to it and finds no place in Sanskrit poetics. According to Aristotle Catharsis helps to purge the mind of the emotions of pity and fear. It drives away the selfish and baser components

1. V. Raghavan, Some Concepts of the Alamkara Sastra, P.262 quotes Locana of Abhinavgupta on Dhvanyaloka Kashi Ed.,P.59
2. Ibid, P. 59.
of our emotions and makes us more humane, more tolerant and more cosmopolitan. It is an education and training of our sensibilities. It ultimately converts them as lessing maintains, into 'virtuous disposition'. Aristotle's theory of catharsis is linked with the tragic emotions of pity and fear, because it is through these that tragedy performs its function. Explaining their nature, he observes "pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune and fear by that of one like ourselves." 2

The function of fear mentioned by Aristotle with pity as a tragic emotion finds no place in Sanskrit poetics. Fear in Indian Poetics is the 'Sthayibhava' for the evocation of the 'bhayanka rasa', the stimuli being hideous noise, sight of ghost or sight of death etc. etc. Its consequences are paralysis, horripilation, trembling, loss of voice etc. All these have no relevance to the Greek Poetics. W.H. Hudson writes on conflict in a Greek play as:

Every dramatic story arises out of some conflict - some clash of opposed individuals or positions, or interest -. Some kind of a conflict is, however, the very backbone of a dramatic story.

Shakespeare introduced plenty of action born out of conflict in his plays, 'perhaps because of his audience who

2. Ibid.
included normally untutored, unruly and often times uncultured rabble. Action involving conflict and clash, would be a pleasing sight to such an audience. This pleasure of the audience is entirely different from the "enjoyment" which the audience experiences according to the 'rasa' theory. The one excites while the other enraptures.

The idea of 'rasa' explains a drama from two points at the same time, that of the dramatist and that of the audience while the idea of conflict is only audience oriented. Conflict or action does not appear to be so important as to be considered the very essence of drama.

Similarly 'hamartia' or flaw in the character of the hero, the main-stay of Shakespearean creation has no place in the Indian poetics.

Some critics find a parallel in T.S. Eliot's poetic theory to the Indian 'Rasa-dhvani' theory. T.S. Eliot's artistic operation involves three principles - the principles of correspondence of transmutation, coherence, and comprehensiveness. This operation takes place in mind. The diverse feelings and emotions of the poet are identified here (principle of comprehensiveness) and all the parts being integrated into a new thing which is poetry (principle of transformation). Emotion thus transformed is significant, is impersonal, 'and when expressed in the form of a poem, or

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art, has its life in the poem itself, not in the history of the poet."¹ But how to express this transmuted emotion in the form of art, remains to be explained by the critics. T.S. Eliot in his theory "objective correlative" explains that poetry should evoke the emotion in the heart of the reader. The passage from his paper on "Hamlet" is quoted below which embody his poetic theory:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative", in other words a set of objects, a situation a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts terminate sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. The artistic inevitability "lies in the exact equivalence of the external to the emotion."¹

Close similarity between the two theories have led some critics to equate Eliot's 'objective correlatives' with 'rasa'. The emotion here is 'rasa', the set of objects the 'vibhavas', situation as 'Uddipana-vibhavas', organized presentation and chain of events include not only the episodic stream but also the stream of emotive reactions of the characters to them', 'anubhavas' and the 'sancaribhavas'. There is a basic difference between the two: The set of objects or the 'objective correlates' are only the emotive instruments - vehicles or 'sariram' of 'rasa', whereas 'rasa' is the soul or essence of a creation or the emotive

experience felt through the 'objective correlatives'. How
the action takes places to transform the emotion into rasa
is not clear from T.S. Eliot's contention.

A sympathetic audience or 'Sahrdaya' occupies a
prominent place in the Indian poetics. Natyasastra gives
detailed description about the 'Sahrdaya' or a man of taste
who is regarded as the final court of appeal in all artistic
matters. Abhinavagupta lays down clearly that apart from
culture and technical knowledge, the 'sahrdaya' must
possess the capacity of identifying himself with the poetic
reaction. It must be understood that empirically the
critic and the poet are not the same but by the process of
idealized contemplation, his spirit can be one with that
of the poet. That the process is not one of mere understanding,
is made clear by the observation that the 'sahrdaya' is not
a mere intellectual cogniser, but an 'enjoyer of the idealized
Bliss produced in his soul by the poetic creation'. The
person whose heart is like a clear mirror on account of being
free from personal feeling is called a 'sahrdaya'. The
'Sahrdaya' can alone accommodate the sentiment depicted in
the 'kavya' or 'natya' (i.e. drama) in the manner of a clear
mirror capable of holding images. If the heart is preoccupied
with personal pleasures or pains, the sentiment of the
poetical or the dramatic situation will not find any place
in the heart of the reader or the spectator. In case of the

1. C.K. De, Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic Bombay,
1963, P.63.
theatre, devices like the singing and instrumental music are employed to overcome this obstacle by making the person forgetful of his own feelings. That is how the audible act plays its part in the theatre. This role of music may be likened to the part played by the syllables (Sphota) in suggestion of 'rasa'. If the reader or spectator is obsessed with personal pain, the said devices may not be helpful at all. It is also to be noted that 'sahrdyatva' (i.e. capacity to get absorbed in the poetical situation) also varies from man to man and from time to time, in respect of its nature and degree'.

Anandavardhan believes that the readers or spectators generally share the sentiments of the hero. The sentiments of the character usually have similar repercussions in the heart of man of taste (Sumansa) also. For sharing the sentiments with the character, the men of taste should already have impressions of similar sentiments. This idea of Ananda may be gathered from the statement that the 'santa rasa' (conceived as a mental mood in the form of an excess of joy due to loss of desire) cannot be denied on the score that this mental mood is not experienced by all. Again, the 'sringara rasa' is said to be the most appealing and most important as it is invariably within the experience of all persons. This shows that a connoisseur or a sympathetic audience (hrdayasamvada) is a prerequisite for the realisation

of rasa. Rasa cannot be conceived only as the mental mood of the vibhevas.

'Sadharnikaran' an impersonal mental mood is inherent in rasa theory found out by scholars like Bhattanayaka, Bhatta Tauta and Abhinavagupta. The word 'Sadharnikaran' means generalisation or universalisation and impersonalisation of the emotion.

Though Sadharnikaran is implicit in Bharata's aesthetics, but he did not name it and define it. It was Bhattanayaka, a well known commentator on Bharata's formula of rasa, who defined and gave it a technical name, says Prof. G. Hanumantharao.

Universality is a hallmark of aesthetic experience though it proceeds from the object highly individualized by the artist. The presented situation in art becomes aesthetic only when all the elements therein are grasped by the critic in their universal aspects. Personal considerations fade away. Even impossible things in life do not engender disbelief in art. 'We are almost approaching the realm of infinite brahmananda', says K. Krishnamoorthy, 'though only for once.'

The impersonalisation of the emotion can be described through an example about the origin of Ramayana. The origin of the Ramayana written by Valmiki is in the lamentation of

the he-crane for the death of its she-bird due to shooting of a hunter at the time of their erotic meet. The sympathetic sage was deeply touched by the sorrow of the bird. The permanent emotion in the sage struck by the lamentation of the bird is, sorrow (soka), and when expressed in language, this emotion is manifested as poetry, the central theme of which is the separation of the hero and the heroine ending in pathos. Thus the lamentation of the bird stimulated the permanent emotion of sorrow in the sage poet. The artist's observation, Abhinava suggests, is different from others in so far as his is an impersonal or detached but sympathetic one. The artist observes things and events as if he is witnessing a drama. The bird is only an instrument in this situation. Through the bird's sorrow, he identified himself with the emotion in its universal form and it becomes a sublimated, a liberated state of the psyche of the poet. The poet is primarily an asthete who first relishes the events of the world drama and then only expresses this relish in his poetry. In this case the hunter opens the drama by hunting the bird. The bird is the principal character (Vibhava) who expresses its permanent emotion of sorrow by lamentation (its symptom anubhava) and the sage perceives the whole scene as the audience of the drama. The sorrow of the bird touches the sage and being sympathetic (hrdayasamvadi) he indentifies his emotion with that of the bird and thus by this process of generalisation (sadharnikarana) the identified
(or generalized or depersonalized) permanent emotion (sorrow) of the sage is transformed into karuna rasa (or tragic joy) which he relished himself; and when it became abundant it overflowed in the form of poetry, being regulated by the compositional principles of prosody etc.¹ Thus the epic Ramayana is the verbal manifestation of this generalized (or depersonalized) aesthetic emotion of sorrow (Karuna rasa). It is by the same process again, that the readers' permanent emotion of sorrow is evoked and generalized which he enjoyed finally. The artist, thus has a dual role, that of spectator as well as creator, both of which function within the process of creation.

Thus in the final analysis the aesthetic experience according to Indian poetics is the pleasant experience of an imaginative recreation of an emotion, which takes place primarily in the mind of the artist and secondarily in that of the art lover under the stimulus of art. The spectator attains a state of transcendental joy, or a state of self-fulfilment, achieved by means of art through the medium of sublimated emotions.²

¹ Abhinevabharati, VI, 15.