This thesis is the outcome of a study of the Abhinavabhāratā of Abhinavagupta (975-1020 A.D), one of the chief exponents of Kashmir ṣaivism, with the purpose of understanding the foundations of rasa or aesthetic experience in the light of the philosophical postulates of Kashmir ṣaivism. The work is a commentary on the Nāṭya-āstra of Bharata, believed to be the oldest extant text on dramaturgy in the world. An attempt has been made to elucidate the tenets of Pratyabhijñā ṣaivism as put forth by Abhinavagupta, consequent to his synthesis of its different schools, wherein the individual re-cognises his limited self as the omnipotent ṣiva. Simultaneously, the evolution of aesthetic theories in India from Bharata onwards, is discussed to place Abhinavagupta's theory of rasa in perspective. In the process, the aesthetic experience operating in the empirical sphere, backed by the philosophical principles of Pratyabhijñā ṣaivism, evolves into a trans-empirical experience of freedom and happiness, akin to the bliss, i.e., the ultimate reality. This coalescing of philosophy and art in the Abhinavabhāratā, energised by common, fundamental and universal principles as expounded by Abhinavagupta, stands out as a holistic and comprehensive system, relevant to philosophy of beauty for all times.

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(Rajshree Gopalan)

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A TRIBUTE TO ABHINAVAGUPTA:
The Eternal in the Evanescent

The artiste tries,
In a finite moment
To capture the moment-less infinitude
And the similar heart\textsuperscript{1} yearns and tries to be one.
Infinity in the moment.
Some speak of attributes\textsuperscript{2}, some of embellishments\textsuperscript{3},
Some call it poetic power \textsuperscript{4}, some propriety\textsuperscript{5}
Some others, suggestion\textsuperscript{6} and some suggestive deviation \textsuperscript{7}
Some say style\textsuperscript{8}, some soul\textsuperscript{9},
But as I tread the path of Abhinava,
I know it is The One\textsuperscript{10}. The Only Happiness\textsuperscript{11}.

It was and always is ..I knew it not ..and now that I know it is
I am it. I am\textsuperscript{12}. Satyam-\textit{ivam-sundaram}.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{1} Sah\textit{c}daya
\item\textsuperscript{2} Guna
\item\textsuperscript{3} Ala\textit{}k\textit{a}ra
\item\textsuperscript{4} Pratibh\textit{a}
\item\textsuperscript{5} Aucitya
\item\textsuperscript{6} Dhvani
\item\textsuperscript{7} Vakrokti
\item\textsuperscript{8} R\textit{a}\textit{a}
\item\textsuperscript{9} Rasa
\item\textsuperscript{10} Anuttara
\item\textsuperscript{11} \textit{ânanda}
\item\textsuperscript{12} Sat-cit-\textit{ânanda}
\end{itemize}