

*Pañcānanam*

( CHAPTER FIVE)

**ABHINAVAGUPTA'S AESTHETICS AND POETICS**

**Some common issues in *Rasa* and *Dhvani*:** The common element in both the literary theories is that both of them transcend of what they originate from. As *rasa* is somehow different from its components and in a way transcends them similarly *dhvani*, too, goes beyond its primary and secondary levels of from where it has its roots. In a way, it is something like the essential condition, which has to be fulfilled by a discourse if it is included under literature. Literature encompasses or goes beyond every barrier. Literature liberates us from our narrow self and synthesizes and binds the truth of all times and space. And this liberty operates at the level of language and of its contents, which are abstract and idealized. Great works of art and literature sustain the test of time and space. Impersonalisation is another form universalisation.

There is an inherent unity, we may say, unity of themes between *Abh.* and *DLL*. In other words, *rasa* and *dhvani* merge into each other at the every level of content and form to bring about the soul of poetry –*rasa-dhvani*.

The two schools of philosophy- the school of Grammarians and the Śaiva systems source theory of *dhvani*. *Sphoṭa* and *vāk* as conceived by the Śaiva philosophers constitute the philosophical background of these two literary theories. In a way this section of the thesis is closely related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter that is on Concept of Vāk.

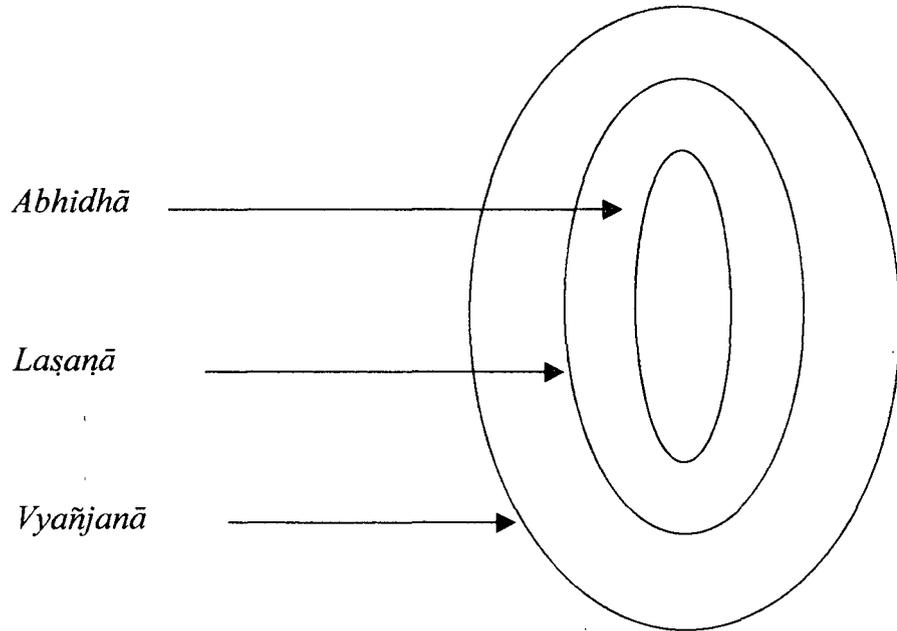
Universal and unique – these are the two major characteristics of a literary works. [Abh. 7.2]. Pratyabhijñā is also a method of realization of these two basic principles of art and aesthetics. Art is yoga (borrowing the term from A.K. Coomaraswamy) is pertinent for both –one who create and one who experience. There is no other 'utility of art' involved. The goal of art and literature is no other than to achieve the wider domains of world and reality and get liberated from the narrow self. This is the essence of considering art as yoga. Only at the level of universal *rasa niṣpatti* would be possible and this is communicated by means of suggestion or *rasa dhvani*, where *pratibhā* is the prime factor in creation and appreciation of a work of art.

By using make-up, specific costume and gesture and also language the actor loses his /her individuality and tends to attains universality. Dr. Wagish Shukla: In the theatre a series of death awaits the audience. There is no context, no space and time. A theatre is a cosmos in itself, governed by its rule and regulations. To evoke this kind of ambience, rituals are deeply associated with dramaturgy.

In Vṛ tti on NS 7.2, Bharata states that *vibhāva* is synonymous with *kāraṇa*, *nimitta*, and *hetu* (*paryāyah* ). Abhinava does seem to agree with this view. He explicates this in the framework of the theory of image and counter-image. If *vibhāva* and *kāraṇa* are same, then there is no point of refuting *anumitivāda* as the explication of *rasa* theory. What is the reason of introducing a whole set of

terminology in the context of dramaturgy? Does this not prove (a) literary experience/cognition is unique? (b) It deserves the status of *śāstra* and the claim to be included in the taxonomy of the Indian Verbal discourses under the *apauruṣya* (5<sup>th</sup> *upaveda*) category? (vide Rājasekhara's *Kāvyaṃī māmsā*).

### ***Dhvani Theory***



Difference between vivakṣā and tātāparya should be maintained.

Indian literary and linguistic theories stand for multiplicity of meaning but not in the favour of anarchy. One may see the development of the philosophical systems along these lines. The theory of multiplicity of the Jaina, apohavāda of the

Buddhists, *śphoṭ avāda* of the Grammarians, intentional meaning advocated by the Nyāya school and the two theories of meaning of the Mīmāṃsā school- all are built around this meta-assumption. This assumption is sourced by many scriptural texts- *eka sadviprā bahudhā vadanti*. Yāska also advocates polysemy of the verbal roots. Verbal roots may have more than one semantic structure. The same idea seems working in case of the literary meaning as well.

Meaning can best be understood as "constitution of mental state" (*cittavṛttinirmāṇa*). This meaning can best be manifested by means of suggestion. Poetic meaning is not only a matter of intellection only. The ultimate experience is that of *ānanda*.

**Literary meaning** – *dhvani*, its genesis and classification according to Ānandavardhana, Abhinava, Maṃmaṭa and others, its debates in the works Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāīkas and rejoinder by Abhinava and Maṃmaṭa, a synthesis of *dhvani* and *rasa* as *rasa-dhvani*, importance of *dhvani* in the Indian poetics and its competence to analyze any literary text.

In Ānanda and Abhinava, both *dhvani* and *rasa* are the twined concepts; hence there is a term *rasa-dhvani*. Both are suggested, received by the true/ideal viewer/reader, soul of any literary work, appear as different from what they constituted of, result in aesthetic pleasure, involve a sound philosophical background

(as in *sphoṭa/nāda* and *upaniṣadic* concept of *rasa*), exemplified by the great poets like Vālmiki, Kālidasa, Bhvabhūti and others.

*Dhvani* as a theory of constitution and expression of meaning.

*Dhvani* as the soul of poetry.

*Dhvani* and *sphoṭa*. *Dhvani* as sound, meaningful sound (phoneme), as a type of meaning and its implication in philosophy, poetics and linguistics. Is it possible to correlate this second aspect of *dhvani* with the *pratyabhijñā* philosophy? We quite often come across the terms like *dhvani-darśana* and *dhvani-pratyabhijñāna*.

Opponents of *dhvani* theory-It could either be included under inference or postulation or *lakṣaṇā* or *tātparya*. Abhinava's and Maṃmaṭa's rejoinders to these objections.

A detailed account on word in the view of the grammarians and the poetics to be given in this chapter. Bharata, Daṇḍī and the text of Agnipurāṇa are the main sources.

**Gloss on *dhvani*:** (Source: Prof. K.C. Pandey's Comparative Aesthetics, Vol.1 pp. 258-319). Expression and meaning both are common to poetics and linguistics. It was only about the 8<sup>th</sup> C. the poetic meaning was studied systematically (?). Poetics is an embodiment of the discoveries of the ways and means of the linguistic expression of the ideal content of a poetic vision. The progress of this

science began with the discussion of the figures of speech which emanated from the *Kāvya lakṣaṇa* and four *alamkāras* of Bharata' *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Ch1.206.).

Regarding the question of aesthetic experience, it has been argued that aesthetic experience is possible from the work of art and not from the nature or world (*nāṭya eva rasaḥ na loke*). The original experience of an artistic genius is from the fact of life and nature, which the genius transforms into an artistic fact. Abhinava makes it clear by his use of expressions “*vibhāva*” and “*anubhāva*” for the directly perceived (*Dh.L, 27 sa eva tadābhūta-vibhāvāt...*). The Indian aestheticians hold that the experiences of the poet, the actor and the aesthete are identical.

Aesthetic experience involves universalisation. The individuality of the focus of situation also disappears. The inspired poetry is an expression of a basic mental state, aroused because of identification with the focus of the situation. In the utterance the basic mental is not directly expressed but is simply suggested. Vālmiki's first verse suggests the deep grief without the use of the word grief or any of its synonymous, on part of the female bird. Hence is an example of *dhvani* poetry.

The exponents of this theory maintain that the basic mental state has been the most important factor in poetry and it could always be conveyed through suggestion. Rasa in poetry is always suggested and not a subject of expressed sense. This is the rationale of combining the two powerful traditions in the Indian poetics.

Ānanda himself indicate the presence of the concept of *dhvani* in the tradition and in the works of great poetics. We do not have any answer to the query as to who was the first exponent of this theory. But, of course, the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century evidences the power of poetic visualization i.e. *pratibhā*.

Abhinava's exposition of *dhvani* theory is based on the acute analysis of the different types of mental images, which the poetic language arouses. Abhinava's contribution to the *dhvani* theory consists in the psycho-philosophical analysis. In other words he has approached the problems of aesthetics from the psychological and philosophical points of view.

Concerning the *dhvani* theory, writers can be divided into *three* categories:

1. The supporters of this theory: traditions of great poets and theorists (Dh.1.1), Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Mammaṭ a,
2. Its opponents: Bhaṭ ṭ anāyaka, Mahimabhaṭ ṭ a
3. Those who do not consider it as a separate significative power of word: Bhaṭ ṭ a Udbhaṭ a, Vāmana.

In the very first verse of *DL*, Ānanda indicates that though he is undertaking the task of systematic exposition of *dhvani* the concept was conceived by the great poets and critics of literature way back in the first poetic composition.

Before the *dhvani* theory was finally established by Ānanda and Ābhinava, three significative powers of language were admitted: *Abhidhā* (Mīmāṃsakas), Tātparya (Naiyāyikas & Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas) and *Lakṣaṇā* (acceptable to the poetics and Naiyāyikas).

The critics of this meaning could be classified into three: those who deny it, those who include it within the secondary meaning and those who maintain that it is not communicable.

The Naiyāyikas do not acknowledge the suggested meaning as a separate significative power of word and include it under inference or *lakṣaṇā*. Nāgārjuna, in his *PLM* p. 79 refutes the Nyāya position.

A point for speculation: Can the suggested sense be taken as the *viśvottīrṇa* aspect of Śva and other two meanings (*abhidhā* and *lakṣaṇā*) as His aspects of *viśvamaya*?

Various parameters applied in the classification of Dhvani:

What is linguistic denotation according to the poetics—class, quality, action, intention, individual qualified by class, difference. Quality is more explicit in

the works of poeticians. Intonation, Aucitya, dhvani and vakrokti etc. are closer to this notion of quality.

### ***Rasa Theory***

***Rasa***- a complex theory of literary/ aesthetic experience, its relevance today- the difference between thought and experience concept of *nāṭya*, *anubhāvana*, *anukīrtana*, *sajātīya*, *sādrśya* (*Abh.* on NS 1.107).

Rasa is not a matter of origination and decay. So it cannot be explained in those philosophical systems that based on the basic assumption of origination or cause and effect relationship. Rasa is a matter of expression and suggestion (*abhivyaṅgya*). Bharata seems to suggesting this fact in the 6<sup>th</sup> –7<sup>th</sup> chapters of the NS. There the crucial term *niṣpatti* seems to suggest *siddha*, *vyāṅgya* and *prakāśana*. All such concepts are to be understood in the framework of the Śaiva philosophy.

Rasa is not a *kārya* (effect). So, it cannot be explicate in terms of the causal relationship. TA Ch. III comes here with the theory of image and counter-image, which explains this phenomenon in a better way- where image and counter-image does not enter the causal relationship. Exposition of *rasa* by Abhinava in KP pp.79-81.

The relation between the actor and the spectator is not like the experiencer and the witness. {ref. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* III.i.1}. *Rasa* cannot be manifested in this manner, as this is the *nivṛtti* way of life. In the process of aesthetic experience, both the actor and the spectator are bound together. Unity of both is the essential condition for the *niṣpatti* of *rasa*. Moreover, this unity cannot be achieved unless both of them get rid of their "individuality" closely tied around them. In fact, the theatre is something like a parallel universe in which there is timelessness and a space created by its own. At this sphere, we are completely free from our narrow self. We give up our petty identities before entering into the theatre. Indian aesthetic theories demand this kind of complete submergence –a total sacrifice on the part of both the artist and the viewer. At this level, there is no question either of "projection of personality" or "escape" from it. The essence of true art lies in the fact that it helps bring about this cordial bond existing between the two. This cordial bond is brought about by means of universalization (*sādhāraṇikarāṇa*). Śaiva philosophy, being a philosophy of *pravṛtti* and *ānanda* explains the structure of aesthetic experience with much sophistication.

Abhinava's conception of the nature realization of aesthetic experience (*rasa*) as both pleasant and unpleasant, inclusion of *śānta rasa* and acceptance of this as the sole substratum of all aesthetic experiences, his defence of *dhvani* theory- all this marks a departure in the literary traditions of India and this 'departure' should be analyzed against the backdrop of this Śaiva world view.

We propose to examine as to why only the two out of sixteen philosophical systems –Śaiva and Vedānta could produce work in art and aesthetics. More specifically, why aesthetics is only possible in the *āgamika* traditions. Only such traditions are in a position to explain the locus, structure and realization of aesthetic experience (*Abh.* on the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of *NS*).

Abhinava has accepted *kāvya-rasa* and *nāṭya-rasa* as the same on the basis of the analogous experience (*Abhi.* Ch1.).

Whether *rasa* dwells in the characters, actors or in the viewers- *viśyagata* or *viśayī gata*. It is *viśayī gata*, according to Abhinavagupta. This influence of Abhinava can also be seen on the later poeticians.

In the reception of literary experiences a viewer/ reader must be a qualified one. He/she must be endowed with the purity, sensibility and with the ability to come out of the narrow self. Literature is a powerful discourse because it liberates us from our narrow self (*yo vai bhīmā tatsukham, nālpe sukhamsti*).

Changing interpretations of the viewer as- *darśaka*, *prekṣaka*, *sāmājika*, *rasika*, *sahṛdaya*.

Knowledge and action- these are the two points of views from which the aesthetic experience has been analyzed. Abhinava's emphasis is on knowledge. He analyzes the aesthetics experience on the basis of knowledge (*āmnāyasiddha* etc.). His predecessors have taken the other position.

Aesthetic experience as unique and different from the other ten types of worldly experiences. In this sense it is called *alaukika*. The experience of the ultimate reality is also not compatible with worldly experience. This cannot be grouped together with any of the types, hence *alaukika*. This may be rationale of equating literary experience with Brahmanada.

The concept of *nāṭya*, *anukarāṇa* and *abhinaya*. *Nāṭya bhāvāvānukī rtaṇam* .

Changing interpretations of viewers in the Indian poetics: *darśaka*, *sāmājika*, *rasika*, *sahrdaya*.

Indian poetics deal at length the reception of aesthetic experience from the readers/viewers standpoints and this could be an influence of Abhinava on the later poetics. Abhinava maintains that *rasika/sahrdaya* is the locus of *rasa* and on this basis he expounds his theory of *abhivyaktivāda*.

Ānanda –an important concept in poetics is mentioned implicitly by Bharata (Ch. 1 and 6 of the *NS* where he discusses the purpose of drama and *śānta rasa*

respectively) and explicitly by Bhāmaha, Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Mammaṭ a [KP I.1, p.2]

### Issues in *rasas*

- Who/what is the substratum of *rasa*? Is it the viewer, actor or the character, who is the abode of the *rasas*.
- Number of *rasas*- 8+ *śānta*, *bhakti*, *vātsalya*.
- The question of four primary and four secondary *rasas*; as  
Primary *rasas*: *śṛṅgāra*, *raudra*, *vīra*, *vibhatsa*.  
Secondary *rasas*: *hāsya*, *karuṇa*, *adbhuta*, *bhayanaka*.
- Issue of one *rasa*: *karuṇa* (Bhuvabhuṭi's *Uttararāmacaritam*), *śṛṅgāra* (Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*), *adbhuta* (Nārayaṇa Paṇḍita, teacher of Viśwanātha, quoted by him in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*), or *śānta* (*Abhinavabhāratī*).
- Nature of *rasas*: pleasant, unpleasant, both or none.
- Significance of the sequence/ordering of *rasa* in the *rasasutra*: beginning with *śṛṅgāra*, the most pervasive sentiment.
- Uniqueness of the literary experience: neither *kārya* nor *jñyāpya* and nor of any other types of worldly experience; hence has been designated as *alaukika*.
- Four theories regarding the experience/ manifestation of *rasa*.

- *Raso vai saḥ /rasam hyeyvāyam labdhvā 'nandi bhavati*: Do we have the common ground to argue that literary experience is similar to the experience of the Ultimate Reality? Both of them cannot be included under any of the categories of worldly cognition and both are inexplicable. Do these commonalities suffice to hold that *rasa* in philosophy and literature belongs to the same genre/common stock?
- *Rasa* and its relationship with *dhvani* and *alamkāra* in one hand and *rasa* and other schools of poetics on the other. *Rasābhāsa, bhāvābhāsa* (KP 4.36; *sutra* 49); *rasavadālamkāra*.
- *Rasa* as the soul of poetry- *rasadhvani*; an attempt to combined both *rasa* and *dhvani* schools, form and content. (Dh. P.49; *muktāphaleṣu...; prīti yamānani...ibid p.I.4, p.47*).
- Universalization: an important aspect of *rasa* structure, which involves the actor, the action/*abhinaya* itself and the audience. This is something like the *tripuṭi* of art and aesthetics. It is almost like a precondition in the process of aesthetic experience. The dissolution of these three components to evolve an integral and new entity is always essential. *Sādhāraṇī kara = tanmayī bhavana*.

**Rasakalikā** of Rudrabhaṭṭa: Contents- enumeration of 9 *rasas*; controversy over the *śānta rasa* recorded; exposition of *bhāva*, definition of *sthāyī bhāva*; definition of *rasa* according to *Rasakalikā*; the process of the development of *rasa* compared to the growth of a tree (an organic view of poetry acceptable to the

classicists and romantics alike against the mechanical view of T. S. Eliot); the 12 stages in the development of *rasa* and the process in the development of the *rasa* is explained with respect to these 12 stages nine *rasas* and definition and illustrations; definition of *śānta rasa* and its four types defined (p.96); substratum of *rasa*-discussion of views and conclusion; substratum of *rasa*

***Kāvya-lamkāra*** of Rudraṭa, enumerates 10 *rasa*- *śānta* and *preya*, including 8 enumerated by Bharata (Ch.12.3). It is also important to note his definition of *pratibhā*, *vyutpatti* and *abhyāsa* and other general issues in poetics along with the commentary thereupon by Namisādhu).

**Competing views on the *śānta rasa*:** Udbhaṭa is the first to introduce *śānta* as the ninth *rasa* and as a *rasa* capable of being developed in drama. He quotes verse from Bharata with the number eight changed to nine and he speaks of them with reference to *nāṭya* (*Ud. Alam.IV.4*). *Rasakalikā* quotes the same verse saying that the ancient authorities that recognized nine *rasas* declare the nine *rasas*. Rudraṭa was the first to declare that *rasas* could also be developed not only in drama but also in poetry (*Kā.Al.XII.1*) The verse in the NS enumerating 8 *rasas* contains the word *nāṭye*, which implies that Bharata did not refute the existence and application of *śānta rasa* in the literary genres other than drama. There are following points involved in the *śānta rasa*:

- Where does the authority of this *rasa* come? From Bharata or even the scholars earlier to Bharata, or from some other recessions of the *NS*?
- To what extent the *sānta rasa* is permissible in drama? In other words, is it possible to make a histrionic representation of this *rasa*? If so what are its *sthāyī ns*, *sañcārins* and other elements? Is it *śama* or *nirveda* (its two types as distinguished by Abhinava as produced by the worldly sufferings and by ontological knowledge)? How far *sānta rasa* is pertinent in poetry and drama? What is the philosophy of this *rasa*? As Abhinava puts forth his argument- this sentiment is the source and culmination of all the *rasas* and it is only this *rasa*, which could be designated as completely pleasurable. Number of *rasas* as enumerated by the Sage himself along with the *sañcārins* and *sathāyī ns*- if we accept this *rasa* then how do we accommodate them in the complete framework of *rasa* theory? It is important to note that Bharata has enumerated only 49 ancillary *rasas* and this must not exceed when *sānta* is inducted in the framework of *rasas*. However, Abhinava this *rasa* in accordance with the view of Bharata. Application of this *rasa* in other forms of artistic creations such as painting, sculpture etc. Classification of this sentiment only by Rudrabhaṭ ṭ a in his *RS* but the later poeticians do not seem enthusiastic regarding his four-fold classification of this sentiment? How far the classification of this sentiment and what could be the possible reasons for indifference regarding this classification by the later poeticians? To what extent the Śaiva philosophy is capable of solving the problems relating to this

*rasa* or what would be the Śiva response to this *rasa*? Related to this is the question of using the terminology of Śiva philosophy by Abhinavagupta in his Abh.

- The concepts of *Ṛta*, *sāmyāvasthā* of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa/ śiva* and *śakti* and *cittavṛttinirodha* and influence of Buddhism- are they all in the root of the reception of the *śānta rasa*?
- *Śānta rasa* – “the imaginative experience of tranquility”. *Śānta rasa* is Abhinava’s is major contribution to Sanskrit aesthetics. A theatrical experience could be external (perceptual- on the stage) as well as internal (drawn from memory, recognition in which the self becomes the witness to the reeled experiences). In Abhinava’s terminology, it is *tanmayī bhavana*, a process of being the same or all engrossing. This process serves the basic purpose of literature, which is the freedom of the narrow self or the to grow an encompassing self, which is also one of the etymological meanings of the term *tantra*.
- Kalhaṇ a on the *śānta rasa* (Mass. & Pat.p. xiii.). Abhinava does not quote from the Upaniṣ ads or from any other religious texts while explicating the *śānta rasa*. *Śānta rasa* has been at the core of a Buddhist text- *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, the great departure of the Buddha.
- The notion of *camatkāra* – the poetic excellence (M&P p.xiv). Literary experience is like *ātmānanda*; later critics like Mammaṭ a, Viśwanātha and

Jagannātha accept this notion of poetic/literary experience. The work of art is like that of a catalyst.

- Abhinava's exposition of *śānta rasa* may have a support from the Buddhist literary texts but it primarily emerges from his own philosophical background. Moreover, if poetry is concerned with all the four goals of life, and if *mokṣa* is the ultimate, then there is a sound logic for acceptance of the *śānta rasa* in poetry as well. Abhinava holds that it is the knowledge emerging ontological abstinence (*nirveda*), which is to be accepted as the source of /the *sthāyī n* of this *rasa*. This again supports our hypothesis that literary theory possesses a sound philosophical background.
- Nature of literary experience: *ātmananda*- pleasure experienced by the self; later literary critics like Maṃmaṭ a, Viśwanātha and Jagannātha also subscribe to this view. The work of art is like a catalyst- it arouses or helps evoke the experience of pleasure, which is lying dormant in the self. This is what Abhinava theories as *abhivyaktivāda* or the theory of manifestation /expression.

*Śānta rasa* could also be studied in relation of Buddhist thought. The image of Buddha is the key source and proof of this assumption. Kashmir as the important center also support the view that both Śaivism and Buddhism might have impinged upon each other in the *tāntrika* philosophy and also in their philosophy of art and literature.