CHAPTER 2

INDIAN AESTHETICS IN SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITICISM

The origin of Indian culture and Philosophy marks the beginning of literary criticism in India. Indian Poetic theory bears evidence to the impact of our rich, cultural philosophical and religious heritage on Sanskrit literature.

Indian poetics broadly developed into eight schools and the basic theories are those of rasa, alamkara, riti, guna/dosa, vakrokti, svabhavokti, aucitya and dhvani. But it should be noted, however, that while rasa or pleasure is concerned with the effect of poetry other theories are concerned with the linguistic means by which this effect is produced.

The ancient Indian critical texts had concentrated more on theory; and philosophy was not dissociated from literary criticism. The Vedas are one of the earliest pieces of recorded literature. As these were considered sacrosanct, the sudras were denied access to them and a fifth Veda Panjama Veda – Natyaveda was created for their enjoyment with elements taken from Rigveda, songs from Samaveda, acting from Yajurveda and rasa from Atharvaveda.
Tradition considers *Natyaśastra* as an additional Veda, so important has it been in the history of Indian Literary thought. A version of the *Natyaśastra* had been in existence before the third century; but by the third century, it had taken definite shape. The authorship of *Natyaśastra* is ascribed to Bharatamuni. Our knowledge of him is so little that it is not even certain whether or not, the author of this great work ever existed.

The earliest distinct speculations on the nature of art and its purpose are clearly set forth by Bharata in the *Natyaśastra* in connection with art and dance. The *Natyaśastra* is a compendium of performed arts: drama, music, dance. It presents in a great wealth of detail descriptions of the prevalent modes of these art performances; and the extraordinary precision with which the multiple facets of these arts have been defined and analysed is indicative of the sophistication of the art practices as well as art-criticism of Bharata’s age. According to Mohit. K. Ray, “Etymologically the word ‘Nat’ is associated with dance and the relation between dance and drama is so close that to perform a play is to dance a drama. It is this integration that makes the Indian drama so different from the Aristotelian conception.”

The *Natyaśastra* was used through the fifteen hundred years of Sanskrit Literary thought as the bedrock of literary theory. Whether it was Abhinavagupta, Mammata, or Viswanatha discussing poetry and literature
during the subsequent centuries, they inevitably turned to Bharata’s formulations as the polar star of Indian aesthetics. To many revivalistic Indian critics during the last two hundred years, Bharata had been the maker of the rasa theory. While there is no denying that his fascinating insight in the psychology of aesthetic reception was a phenomenal triumph of intellect, that the Natyasastra is not devoted solely to the exposition of rasa theory but a fragment of the entire compendium. The intervening centuries have altered both the concept of rasa as well as the philosophic context within which it was originally couched. According to Mohit K. Ray, “The theory of rasa constitutes one of the most difficult theories in the entire arena of aesthetics, and since rasa is regarded as the centre of gravity of poetic art, no one can avoid examining the merits and demerits of different theories trying to explain the process of aesthetic realisation.”

Bharata, the oldest known exponent of the dramaturgic Rasa School accorded supreme importance to rasa in the 2nd century B.C. He synthesized the concept of poetry and the concept of drama by combining theology, philosophy and criticism. Rasa is said to be the quintessence and life-breath of every element in a play; whether representation, plot, style, costume or dance. Rasa signifies the aesthetic pleasure or the thrill invariably accompanied by joy that the audience experiences while witnessing the
skilful enactment of a play rendered highly appealing through excellent poetry music and action. According to P.K. Rajan and Swapna Daniel, “The theory of rasa as explained in Bharata’s Natyasastra maintains that the soul of poetry lies in the rasa it embodies which applies equally to the text and performance of drama.”

In Indian aesthetics, the general aim of all drama is to provide entertainment to people at large weighed down by their trials and tribulations in life. Bharata’s Natyasastra depicts that drama or natya which presents gods, demons, kings and other people enhances one’s knowledge; that natya which brings together whatever is not elucidated by the Vedas, the Dharmasastras and Ethics will give entertainment.

Bharata further depicted in his Natyasastra that kind of natya will also relate to actions of men – good, bad and indifferent and impart hitopadesajnanam (instruction of beneficial council) Visrantijivanam (entertainment) to all those who are afflicted with grief, sorrow and over exertion:

“Uttamadha mamadhyamam

Naranam Karmasamsrayam

Hitopadesajnanam
The problem of Sanskrit drama or any classical drama in Asia is essentially a problem of enacting poetry. If the poetry in a Sanskrit drama retards the action it is done on purpose to induce a static mood. Kantak rightly remarks, "It is actually drama's strength than weakness because the surplus time thus released is needed to enlarge and draw out a movement, a gesture – allow it time to register – so as to bring the dominant sentiment to a ripe fullness."

In Western criticism tragedy has always held the highest rank whereas in Indian aesthetics there is neither tragedy nor comedy as death is seen only as a passage to another form of existence. Aristotle's famous
theory of tragedy arouses pity and fear and affects a psychic purgation of these kindred emotions with the result that the painful element is extracted and the mental equilibrium is restored whereas the experience envisaged in Indian poetics has a positive character. It is not just relief from pain but veritable enjoyment which emphasizes the supreme truth in life and this realization ultimately results in a happy experience. According to Mohit K. Ray, "Western drama excels in tragedy, possibly on account of its tragic view of life while the Indian Philosophy of life is essentially one of acceptance where everything is supposed to be predestined. It is this acceptance of life arising mainly out of a belief in the doctrine of karma and the concept of rebirth, that precedes the possibility of existential anguish or the tragic trauma."6

The oldest known exponent of the Dramaturgic Rasa School, Bharata used the term 'anukaranam', in his treatise Natyasastra which convey a specialized idea as the Western critic, Aristotle's 'imitation' or 'mimesis' has. According to K. Ayyappa Paniker, "In not delimiting the scope of imitation Aristotle seems to be closer to Bharata than Plato, who insists that objects which are beautiful in themselves should be imitated."7

Bharata's idea of anukaranam in terms of Sanskrit dramaturgy is basically different concept from Aristotelian theory of imitation. According
to Mohit K. Ray, “In the Indian concept the likeness of something to its artistic representation should never be a copy but analogical or exemplary. What is needed is the total apprehension and as the word sadrisya is further qualified by pramana it implies that there must be the right proportion and design. The design must evolve out of highly conventionalized and often stylized forms and symbols.”

Moreover, the supreme importance in the theory of imitation as propounded by Bharata is the creation of the right kind of rasa. Dance, music, dialogues and gestures must be presented in such a fashion that it creates desired rasa. According to Mohit K. Ray, “It is this functional aspect of imitation that has a direct relevance to poetry. The idea of imitation, then, involves all the aspects of poetry in which all the elements must act in unison to produce the right kind of rasa which is as much the desired goal of drama as it is of poetry.”

Bharata’s Natyasstra states that Lord Brahma, who made Natyaveda declares that the dramatic art he has created, is an imitation of the course of the world which consist of many emotions and several states of existence:

“Nana Bhavopasampannam
Emotions are defined by Indians as mental states (citta Vṛtti) which are of three types – primary or permanent (sthayi) transitory or secondary (vyabhicari) and psycho – physical (sattvika) bhavas. The permanent emotions are nine in number – rati (love), Hasa (laughter), Soka (sorrow), Krodha (anger), Utsaha (high spiritedness, Bhaya (fear), Jugupsa (disgust), Vismaya (astonishment), Nirveda (serenity). Permanent emotions are the qualities and activities of both sense and intellect and they form whole of one’s experience inherited or rather evolved biologically from the lives and are on constant modification and purification until their final extinction when one achieves liberation sacrificing all his desires sensual or intellectual.

Apart from these clearly organized dominant emotions there are innumerable transient moods and mental states which accompany them. There are as many as thirty three transitory states: discouragement, weakness, apprehension, envy, intoxication, weariness, indolence, depression, anxiety, distraction, recollection, contentment, shame,
inconsistency, joy, agitation, stupor, arrogance, despair, impatience, sleep, epilepsy, dreaming, awakening, indignation, dissimulation, cruelty, assurance, sickness, insanity, death, fright, and deliberation. The transitory emotions are weak, mild, temporary and dependent without independent status and are concomitant moods which rise with the well-defined emotions and subside with them.

It appears that the transitory emotions may be roughly identified with the feelings of western psychology though the permanent emotions are something different from the emotions. Permanent emotions are defined as the emotions which are not swallowed up by other emotions whether friendly with it or unfriendly which dissolves the other into its own conditions like the salt-sea and which endures continuously in the mind.

There are further separate group of eight psycho-physical states (sattvika) : Paralysis (stambha), perspiration, horripilation, voice-breaking, tremor, change of colour (vaivarnya), tears, complete loss of consciousness or fainting (pralaya). According to Bharatamuni, “Sattva is something that originates in mind. It is so called on account of the equipoised state of mind when the mind attains perfect concentration sattva is produced. And sattva is desired for natya as the latter imitates human nature.”
For instance the emotional states produced by the experience of happiness and misery are set in accordance with the theatrical convention which should be rendered with pure sattva as to be identical with emotional states in real-life experience. The forty nine emotional states are recognized as the casual factors for the artistic revelation (abhivyakti) of the poetic content (kriya-rasa; its charm and relish) and from these arise the rasas by (i.e. when presentation acquires the quality of universality).

Bharata in his Natyaasastra depicted eight sthayins and these eight lasting emotions in conjunction with their associated transitory moods evoke eight different forms of rasa. The emotion of love and transitory feelings longing, anxiety, raving, insanity, fever, stupor and death are bound up with sringara rasa; high-spiritedness and the incidental feelings assurance, contentment, arrogance and joy are the signs of vira or heroic rasa, anger and attendant feelings indignation, intoxication, recollection, inconstancy, envy; cruelty, agitation occur with the raudra rasa; mirth with its accompanying states, indolence, weariness, weakness, stupor might evoke hasya rasa; the emotion of sorrow is conducive to the production of karuna rasa; disgust and ephemeral feelings agitation, sickness may provoke the bhibhatsa rasa; astonishment and the feelings of joy, agitation, distraction, fright may arouse adbhuta rasa or rasa of wonder.
With Bharatamuni and Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta the great Indian critic and philosopher of 10-11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D of medieval India is among the very greatest in Indian aesthetics. He has a further distinction, which the two others do not have, namely, he is also one of the most important of the Kashmir Shaivite philosophers who posited the concept of ‘Santa Rasa’ and defended with an extraordinary logical rigour reflecting his visionary poetics.

Bharata’s achievement in literary aesthetics is mainly of two types. At first he synthesized the concept of poetry and concept of drama, which were treated separately by his predecessors, and formed a common concept of literature. Secondly, he combined theology, philosophy and criticism, which his predecessors has kept distinct. But the insistence on transcendence as the highest value in literary aesthetics reflects Abhinavagupta’s realization of the need to modify Bharata’s formulation to suit the changing cultural ethos. The concept of Santa rasa posited and defended by Abhinavagupta with extraordinary logical rigour reflects his visionary poetics. According to Abhinavagupta, “The eight rasa are like eight gods, and the Santa is like their highest centre, Siva.”\textsuperscript{12}

In Indian aesthetics Santa is the basic rasa and all other rasa are only different forms which Santa assumes. Various feelings because of
their particular respective causes arise from Santa (a state of mental when these causes disappear they meet back into Santa).

Any Sthayibhava beginning with rati and hasa and ending with vismaya can be explained as the sthayibhava of Santa, because one attains liberation if he realizes the oddity of everything in the world (hasa); if he sees that the whole world is lamentable (soka); if he perceives the happenings in the world as harmful to his spiritual-being and angry with them desires to conquer them (krodha); if he resorts to extraordinary energy dominated by the absence of delusion in order to overcome worldly temptations (utsaha); if he feels afraid of all the objects of the senses (bhaya) if he feels disgust for young women though they are desirable for all other people (jugupsa); if he feels astonished at his unprecedented realization of his own self (vismaya).

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In Indian aesthetics the nine Sthayibhavas or inherent moods in every Sahradaya are translated into the corresponding rasa at the perception of drama. Rati changes to Sringara, Soka to Karuna, Utsaha to Vira, Krodha to Raudra, Hasa, Bhayam to Bhayanakam, Jugupsa to Bhibhatsa, Vismaya to Adbhuta and Nirveda to Santa.
For instance Adikavi Valmiki's extensive use of karuna rasa in the *Ramayana* makes him the earliest exponent of rasa system. The origin of the *Ramayana* the great Indian epic written by the first Indian poet, Sage Valmiki is the lamentation of a he-crane for the death of its She-bird due to shooting of a hunter at the time of their erotic meet. The sage of the purest heart noted it and was deeply touched by the sorrow of the bird for which he cursed the hunter to remain unhappy forever in his life. The permanent emotion in this sage struck by the lamentation of the bird is sorrow (soka) and when expressed in language this emotion is manifested as poetry (sloka) the central theme of which is the separation of the hero and heroine ending in pathos.

Thus the epic *Ramayana* is the verbal manifestation of this generalized or (impersonalized) emotion which he enjoys finally. The method of impersonalization of emotion in Indian aesthetics is based on logic and common psychology. As Pravas Jivan Chaudhuri in his essay *Aesthetic Metaphysics* pointed out: “Now this Indian theory is more a psychology of artistic experience rather than a philosophy of beauty. At the same time he adds that a psychology of emotion is unified theory valid both in life and art.”¹⁴
The theory of rasa or aesthetic emotion starts with Bharata's maxim Vibhanubhava – Vyabhicari – Samyogad, Rasa – Nispatti. Rasa is accomplished as a result of the combination if vibhava (causes) anubhava (consequents) and vyabhicarins (transitory states). According to Bharata, “Just as various ingredients go by into the making of a fine beverage similarly rasa is brought into being through combination of a number of bhavas.”\textsuperscript{15}

Bharata has coined all the technical terms pertaining to the core term bhava to emphasize the role imagination on the part of spectator. The concept of rasa is so inextricably bound up with that of bhava or emotion that one cannot be understood without the other. In usage rasa-bhava is almost interchangeable single concept. The rasa are in the natya only and not a part of worldly experience and only sahrdaya or rasika – a man of inborn or trained sensibility can realize rasa. Moreover Bharata speaks of three categories of bhavas – Sthayibhava, Vyabhicaribhava and sattvikabhava - all of which go to help the enjoyment of poetry. According to Bharata, “It is sthayibhava alone which leads to poetic relish through combination of vibhava, anubhava and vyabhicaribhavas.”\textsuperscript{16}

Vibhava is the objective condition producing an emotion which may be of two kinds: Alambana and Uddipana. Alambana-Vibhava means a person or persons with reference to whom the emotions are manifested and
Uddipana-Vibhava refers to the circumstances that have excited the emotion. For instance a man may feel attracted to a woman if the circumstances are cooperating with it. It is easier for a man to be attracted towards a woman of young age if they are thrown alone and there is a beautiful scenery before them, the moon peeping through the clouds, the fragrant breeze blowing and the like. Any of such circumstances may be regarded as uddipana-vibhava whereas both the man and woman are alambana-vibhavas to each other.

Anubhava means bodily expression by which the emotion is expressed. They are the signs of emotions in characters. Anubhavas are those effects which are found on the characters consequent upon their emotional agitations. The anubhavas are so called because what is represented made to be felt, experienced and they make it possible for our self to immerse in the emotions evoked. This immersion is called ‘anubhavanam’ and that which causes this process is called anubhava.

Vyabhicari means a series of diverse emotions that feed the dominant emotion. Emotions both lasting and transitory manifest themselves by accompanying particular state of mind or body and appear as the external forms which indicate the existence of a mental state and are involuntarily exhibited by the person who poses them.
These emotions are of the nature of vasanas and samskara. Samskara means the impressions of the objects experienced. All experiences whether cognitive or emotional exist in a subconscious state and may under suitable conditions be reproduced as memory (smriti) whereas vasana generally refers to tendencies of the past lives most of which lie dormant in the mind. Samskaras are the subconscious states which are being constantly generated by experience whereas vasanas are innate samskaras not acquired in this life. These samskaras and vasanas are organized around what we call emotions.

Some Indian scholars have paralleled Eliot's idea of 'Objective Correlative' with the idea of rasa. The emotion here is rasa, the set of objects the vibhavas, situations, their patterned organized presentation and the chain of events include not only the episodic stream but also the stream of emotive reactions of characters to them, the anubhavas and samcaribhava.

Abhinavagupta of 11th century A.D was a true aesthetician who approaches the problem of aesthetics from the historical, analytical, psychological, logical, philosophical and scientific points of view and discusses the ends of art and the theory of meaning. His treatment of aesthetical problems is confined to those which arise in the context of drama and poetry. Looking upon a product of dramatic art as a living human body,
Abhinavagupta like an anatomist, analyses it, following Bharata, into its constituents, the stages of action and means of dramatization. Analysing rasa as an object presented on the stage he points out the situation with a focal point (vibhava), the mimetic changes (anubhava), the transient emotions (vyabhicaribhava) and the basic persistent emotion (sthayibhava) are its constituents. According to Abhinavagupta, "Vibhava do not constitute a set of logical reasons for influence of sthayin but constitute a medium for the realization of the basic emotion through contemplation and that rasa is not basic emotion alone in isolation from situation but a harmonious union of the said constituents, similar to that of various ingredients of a juice, known in Kashmir as panaka rasa different from basic emotion."17

Abhinavagupta further analyses aesthetic experience into different levels of sense, imagination, emotion, catharsis and transcendency – each of which leads to what follows and allocates each of the various conception of aesthetic experience at a separate level. His analysis begins at the sense level admits that aesthetic experience begins with the direct perception of objects of sight and hearing, which pleases.

The second level of aesthetic experience is imaginative. A true aesthetic object does not simply stimulate the aesthetic senses but primarily stimulates imagination through the senses which arouses an emotion and
develops it to a high pitch. At the third level there is an identity of emotion of the former with that of latter. It is however, an undeniable fact that an emotion at a high pitch makes the emotively affected person completely forget himself. It de-individualizes the individual and raises him to the level of universal. The final and the highest level of aesthetic experience is that in which the duality of subject and object completely disappears through intense introversion and utter disregard of the basic emotion.

Abhinavagupta has drawn a distinction between rasa, as experienced at the cathartic level and rasa as synonymous with Paramananda experienced at the transcendental level and has declared that only those can have the experience of the latter type who are capable of rising above even the residual traces of objectivity. According to Abhinavagupta, “Aesthetic experience is not static but is dynamic. It is the experience of itself by the self in its absolute universality. It is the experience of Ananda which is nothing but self-experience of the self.”

The theory of rasa by basing itself on the coalescence of subject with object sums up the whole aesthetic theory. The theory of rasa starts by an analysis of the different kinds of relations that are possible between the subject and object. These range from the cognitive approach to the object which results in the literature of knowledge to the balanced and
comprehensive apprehension of the object and the subject lead the human consciousness through all possible moods to the experience of either divine delight or the peace that passeth understanding.

The rasa-sutra elucidates the process of rasa realization which maybe interpreted both objectively and subjectively. Subjectively interpreted it will refer to the reader's realization of rasa (aesthetic experience). As Druti it melts the frozen current of the reader's soul; As Deepti it kindles his consciousness; as Chitta vikasa it sharpens and widens his understanding as Kshoba, it takes the reader through a harrowing experience to Heaven of calm; as Vikshepa it stabs his consciousness by appealing to his feelings of pity; as Prakash it illuminates his consciousness.

During the Upanishadic times the meaning of rasa developed like most Vedic conceptions from the particular to the universal. The word 'rasa' occurs in the Rig-Veda in the source of juice (of the soma plant) and sometimes it is applied to mean flavour; in the Atharva-Veda it is used or applied to the sap of grain an important notion has become connected with it that of savour of taste; in the Taittiriya or Maityra Upanishads, a great step forward was taken by the fusion of rasa as essence with a new meaning – the highest state of joy, an expression of the nature of the Supreme Being as reflected in the self-luminous consciousness of the Upanishadic seer.
It is at this point that we come to the essentially Indian approach to art and poetry. Rasa the cardinal concept of Indian aesthetics literally means tincture, taste, flavour, relish, sentiment, aesthetic emotion, the response to art. The ancient Indian critics defined the essence of poetry as rasa and by that word they meant a concentrated taste, a spiritual essence of emotion, an essential aesthesis, the soul's pleasure in the pure and perfect sources of feeling. According to Sri Aurobindo, "More generally speaking aesthetics is the theory of rasa, of the response of the mind, the vital feeling and the sense to a certain taste in things or their essence. Passing through mind or sense rasa awakes a vital enjoyment of taste, bhoga in poet's consciousness. The memory of the soul takes in broods over and transmutes the mind's thought, feeling and experience in a larger part of process which comes by this aesthesis but it is not quite the whole thing; it is rather only common way by which we get at something that stand behind the spiritual being in us which has the secret of universal delight and eternal beauty of existence. The memory of the poet's soul takes in this enjoyment – the thought, feeling and experience and turns it into ananda."\(^{19}\)

The theory of rasa became more influential only when the idea was taken up by the Dhvani School and was worked into its system by Anandavardhana. But between Bharata and Anandavardhana there were
many literary critics or aestheticians who were all interested not so much in rasa theory as in the nature of poetic form.

Bhamaha who lived at a period of time closer to Bharata and Anandavardhana took it his task to enthrone ‘alamkara’ in the place of rasa. Bhamaha in particular held that alamkaras are figures of thought and speech mattered most in poetry and brought rasa also under alamkara. Besides he felt that the function of poetry was to inculcate moral principles. According to Mohit K. Ray, “Although the idea of alamkara can be traced back to a period before Bharata, it is Bharata who used these ideas in his theory of dramaturgy. The early history of Sanskrit poetics started with the theory of alamkara and developed into a system with Bhamaha.”

Bhamaha known as the father of Alamkara School in Sanskrit poetics declares his attention of formulating the rules relating to alamkara or beauty in kavya or poetry. He mentions that the good poetry results in proficiency in the values of life as well as in the arts, besides bringing fame and joy. In his opinion erudition in the different branches of learning without poetic gift is of no avail. According to Bhamaha, “Eloquent speech without the poetic gift is as graceless as wealth without good manners, and as night without moonlight.”
He discusses the various aspects of poetry laying great stress in alamkaras which embellish poetry in his treatise *Kavyalamkara*. The whole field of Sanskrit Poetics or *Alamkarasastra* is regarded as one continued attempt to unravel the mystery of beauty in poetic language. Verbal, thematic and emotional elements contribute to the total experience of beauty which are all partakers of alamkara.

Bhamaha considers epic poetry, mahakavya as the best of all genres. In form as well as style mahakavya is great. Its characters are lofty and its style beautiful. It reflects the truth of human nature and has scope for each of the several rasas or the recognized aesthetic emotions in poetry. In his time rasas were understood only as emotional elements in the theme and that is the reason why he is not vexed by the problems raised later by Anandavardhana and others as to how rasa or aesthetic delight could ever be a figure of speech.

Bhamaha valued two types of beauty – natural beauty and the beauty endowed by the poet's art. Use of figures of speech results in external embellishment, while intrinsic beauty lies in the correct usage of the different parts of speech. According to Bhamaha, "All poems – from a small poem to a mahakavya must be endowed with the vital principle of beauty i.e.
vakrokti or ‘artful expression.’ Nothing else by itself can make good poetry in the absence of vakrokti."\(^{22}\)

In Bhamaha’s treatment of figures of speech, the distinction of sabdalamkara and arthalamkara is implicit. Bhamaha sees no beauty in mere word-jingles. For him the two-fold beauty in poetry is the artistic word (vakra sabda) and meaning (artha) and to win general acceptance it must have three gunas namely ojas, prasada and madhurya. Bhamaha further admits that if a subject becomes vibhava or promoter of aesthetic emotion, it is entirely due to the power of vakrokti which provides a guiding principle in determining what deserved to be classed as alamkara. According to Bhamaha, “The two important factors that go to make up the body of poetry are sabda and artha and the alamkaras or the poetic figures of speech that decorate these words and meanings are believed to be the essential signs of poetry.”\(^{23}\)

Bhamaha gives a status to vakrokti, a tradition which found a champion in Kuntaka later. The next important critic was Dandin who showed greater originality than Bhamaha, but like Bhamaha he values vakrokti, pointed speech. Dandin is the first known writer who is able to give a cogent definition of kavya. Recognizing the two aspects of kavya as sabda and artha, he proceeded to define kavyasarira as a series of words characterized by agreeable or desired meaning in his Kavyadarsha. This
string of words or speech manifests itself in various poetic styles or dictions and is embellished with certain alamkaras or figures of speech. According to Dandin, “All figures of speech arise form the desire to describe something extraordinary and the limit is reached in atisayokti (hyperbole) when this desire would transcend physical limitations. Figures of speech are those attributes of kavya which impart beauty to it and sentiment (rasa) imparts sweetness to poetry.”

Further Dandin emerges as the foremost supporter of the theory of poetry laying great stress on diction which was later described as style (riti) by his successors. Dandin was later followed by Vamana who upheld the prime importance of the poetic diction or style.

The next noteworthy critic is Vamana who made substantial contribution to the Alamkarasastra in Sanskrit and has covered 317 sutras. Amongst authors who dealt exclusively with poetics, Vamana was the first to adopt the sutra style. He was the first to speak saundarya or beauty as chief factor in poetry. Vamana calls riti the very soul or essence of poetry and figuratively describes that the word (sabda) and its sense (artha) constitute the body of which the soul is the riti and defines it as visistapadarachana or particular arrangement of words. This particularity of arrangement again rests upon certain definite combinations of the different gunas or fixed
excellences of composition of the three kinds of riti proposed by Vamana namely ‘vaidarbhi riti’ is replete with ten excellences – sweetness, clarity, etc, the ‘Gaudi riti’ abounds in ojas and kanti, the ‘Pancali’ is endowed with sweetness and softness. According to Vamana, “Poetry rests on one or the other of these three styles just as a painting on the lines drawn on the canvas.”

Having described the nature and constituents of poetry Vamana further deals with the factors that forms the requisites of ‘excellent poetry’. Poetry (which comprehends all literary genres like prose, verse and drama) is appreciated because it is endowed with alamkara, embellishment. This embellishment is obtained by the avoidance of poetic flaws, adoption of the poetic excellences and the addition of poetic figures which brings about perceptible and imperceptible results to the poet in the form of fame and delight.

It should be observed that the term riti is hardly equivalent to the English word style by which it is often rendered but in which there is always a distinct subjective valuation. Although artha (sense or idea) is admitted as an element by Sanskrit writers, the riti consists essentially of the objective beauty of representation of the intended idea, arising from a proper unification of certain clearly defined excellences, or from an adjustment of
sound and sense i.e. the outward expression should be suitable to the inward sense. But at the same time, the riti is not, like the style, the expression of poetic individuality, as it is generally understood by western criticism, but it is merely the outward presentation of its beauty called forth by a harmonious combination of more or less fixed literary excellences.

Before Anandavardhana’s time there were no systematic philosophical works analyzing or explaining poetic beauty in general; nor was there any practical or applied criticism analyzing even the great Sanskrit epics or plays and lyric poems. Anandavardhana’s magnum opus Dhvanyaloka provides for the first time an insight into the secret of poetic beauty at once scholarly and illuminating and his aesthetics becomes the great dividing range between old criticism and new criticism.

Anandavardhana was an advocate of rasa; he was also the great exponent of dhvani. He uses the term ‘dhvani’ for his theory of poetic suggestion. This term is taken directly from the grammarians; just as the sounds of utterances reveal the integral linguistic sign (sphota) so also a good poem with its sound as well as the literal sense, a charming sense which has great aesthetic value. In all good poetry and art prominence is given to the suggested sense and in fact it is the soul of poetry. According to Anandavardhana, “Poetry which does not contain any suggested sense can
not be considered a good poetry, however charming the expressed sense may be. The quality of poetry depends on the importance given to the element of suggestion."\(^{26}\)

Dhavni is really ‘illumination in a flash’ even as sphota revelation of meaning by meaningful sentence units. What is articulated by the speaker and heard by the listener is dhvani or sound. According to K. Krishnamoorthy, “We have dhvani of Anandavardhana only when the poetic beauty of rasa is illuminatingly revealed in a flash whether in a syllable or a word or a phrase or a sentence or a whole poem itself. Ordinary language as well as ordinary meaning is only the jumping-off ground for the leap of dhvani to reveal rasa.”\(^{27}\)

The theory of dhvani owes its inspiration to the grammarians in general from Bhartrhari in particular and thus has a relation with the theory of sphota. According to Bhartrhari, “The eternal sound is sphota and that alone can convey ideas. It is thus on one hand manifested by letters and the other an entity from which the sense comes out.”\(^{28}\)

The beautiful ideas in poetry are of two kinds – Literal (vacya) and Implied (pratiyamana). The expressed sense is invariably an idea or a figure of speech; but the suggested sense may be of three kinds; an idea, a figure of speech or an emotion. Suggestion by itself is not enough in drama or
poetry; what is suggested must be charming and the charm can come only through rasa or emotion. According to Anandavardhana, “Such poetry in which the words and their literal meanings occupy a subordinate position and suggest some charming sense (an idea, a figure of speech or an emotion) is called dhvani.”

Anadavardhana’s various aspects of his dhvani theory were duly accommodated by Kuntaka in the different varieties in his vakrokti theory. He occupies a place between Anandavardhana of the ninth century and Abhinavagupta of the later tenth century. According to Mohit K. Ray, “It was Kuntaka who discussed vakrokti at a great length, elaborated the concept and carried it to such a length that he was able to develop a unique theory of literary criticism out of it.”

Kuntaka’s work stands unique for its exposition of the vakrokti theory. The term vakrokti literally means a crooked speech. It is a statement, more elevated, more appealing and more ornamented than the speeches of the ordinary day today conversation. Poetic embellishment or alamkara is just another name of this vakrokti or vakrata and hence the name of Kuntaka’s work is Vakroktijivita. According to Kuntaka, “Vakrokti is the jivita or life of poetry and no poetry can occur without vakrokti or alamkara.”
Anadavardhana maintained that when a certain rasa occurs as the principal meaning of a certain composition, it should be recognized as a case of dhvani. For Kuntaka ‘Rasavad alamkaras’ (subordinate rasa) should enjoy a status similar to that of rasa and gives it a status as good as that of any type of vakrata by recognizing it as a kind of Vakrokti in which the rasa supplies the principal charm. According to Mohit K. Ray, “For Kuntaka as for Anandavardhana the feelings inheriting in the words and their resonance in the mind of the reader are most important. All the deviations or all kinds of vakrata only help the feeling of manifestation. Thus the poetic figures play a crucial role in the universalization of the feeling that informs a poem.”

Kuntaka agrees with the dhvani theorists or the rasa theorists in respect of the vital concept that the aesthetic sensibility of the men of taste is the final basis for a proper appreciation of the beauty of poetry. For Kuntaka, word and meaning together, having Sahitya, being set in Vakrokti (elevated speech) should please the men of taste, to become poetry.

Kuntaka has made very valuable observations in respect of the concept of Sahitya. He defines Sahitya as, “The quality of sabda and artha vying with each other in the suggestion of rasa, to put generally in enhancing the beauty of poetry.”
Kuntaka accepts rasa as supreme and recognizes the concept of appropriateness. He further admits that there should be appropriateness in ideas as well as in the use of words. According to Kuntaka, “In presenting description of things and men of ideas introduced must be appropriate to the character, theme and rasa. The poetical statements gain life from propriety.”

Thus Kuntaka acknowledges the supremacy of aucitya and rasa showing that his new theory of vakrokti also duly upholds the vital issues of the Alamkaraśāstra and thus establishes himself as the protagonist of the chief doctrines of Indian aesthetics.

Ksemendra, who came a little later than Kuntaka wrote a full length text on the theme on aucitya and repeated the spirit of Kuntaka that rasa is the soul, the thing whose presence makes kavya; aucitya its life jivita. The concept of aucitya grew as a supplement to rasa and dhvani and was so developed by Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta and Ksemendra. According to Anandavardhana, “The soul of poetry is rasa or rasa dhvani and the most essential thing in rasa is aucitya.”

Sphota and inner intuitive perception are the two most significant aspects of our aesthetics. The Philosopher Poet Bhartrhari’s Sphota theory can be considered under two aspects as sound patterns or as
meaningful bearing symbols. The western language philosophy stops with
sounds or meaningful sounds or words; but Bhartrhari's sphota is a psychical
inner entity which reveals itself through the articulated sounds.

But what is articulated by the speaker and heard by the
listener is dhvani or sounds which is of two kinds namely 'Prakrata' – the
phonological structure – the sound pattern corresponding to langue and
vaikhari – the individual instances of the utterance corresponding to parole is
only the manifesting agent of Sphota. According to V.S. Seturaman, “Indian
aestheticians believed in intuition and they feel that the experience of dhvani
was a special, kind of knowing which is distinct from all other types of
knowing. The perception itself is described in terms of a flash of intuition,
pratibha, sudden revelation.”36

One of the fundamental concepts of Indian aesthetics is creative
imagination or kavi pratibha. Kavi is necessarily a seer who has vision which
is the intuition of the reality underlying manifold objects of the universe and
their qualities. The poet's imagination seizes its individual qualities – the
qualities which give even the meanest object great significance and make the
ugliest appear most charming and represents in fit words such a vision of
reality.
In Western poetics there has been a long drawn quarrel over the question whether poetry is essentially ‘imagination’ or ‘creation’ while in Indian poetics both the modes came to be admitted because both of them could achieve rasa prakasa, the most important aim of poetry. Psychologists have shown that even the most original imagination can only work on the impressions of the world it has received which may produce new modes of combination but no new elements.

Indian theory offers striking parallels to modern western literary theory. The new aesthetics that began with the impact of western thought culminates in Sri Aurobindo’s Philosophy of art. Sri Aurobindo bases his philosophy on ancient Indian thought and experience revivified, regenerated and reshaped in his own being. He is one of the most significant outstanding thinker who helped in recovering the lost tradition in aesthetics. The western concept of ‘Art’s for Art’s sake’ is true only up to a certain point in Indian aesthetics. Aesthesis is not merely confined to reception of poetry and art but it extends to every thing in the world. In Sri Aurobindo’s aesthetics all the dualities of ugliness, pain and pleasure are sphere of aethesis. It encompasses heaven as well as earth, evil as well as good, spirit as well as matter. There can be an aesthetic respond in truth also- a joy in the beauty, a love created by its charm, a rapture in the finding
an aesthetic joy in its expression. According to Sri Aurobindo, "There is not only physical beauty in the world – there is moral, intellectual and spiritual beauty too. There are not only aesthetic values but life-values, mind-values and soul-values that enter into art. Beyond the Ideals and Idea-forces even there are other presences more inner and inmost realities, a soul behind things and beings, the spirit and its powers, which could be subject matter of an art still more rich and deep and abundant in its interest than any of these could be."37

The Indian approach stressed more on the principle of delight the poet's discovery of beauty and truth in all experiences) that the highest reaction of aesthesis is ecstasy than the Western approach. In Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics the ancient Indian idea is absolutely true that delight, Ananda (ecstasy) is the inmost expressive and creative nature of the spirit. According to Sri Aurobindo, "This Ananda is not the pleasure of a mood or a sentiment or the fine aesthetic indulgence of the sense in the attraction of a form, superficial results and incidents which are often mistaken for that much deeper and greater thing by the minor poetic faculty, the lesser artistic mind but the enduring delight which, as the ancient idea justly perceived, in the essence of spirit and being."38
It is at this point that we essentially come to the Indian approach to art and poetry. Indian art and poetry accepted intuition, inspiration, the unknown modes of being and all art could only be a product of detached contemplation of any experience (life experience or experiences beyond life or rational even Infra-rational ones) that helped the poet to communicate the essence of an experience and the delight is associated with this essence. If poetry is the revelation of an inspired moment, the poet is only a medium of such revelation. A Swiss critic Breitnger affirms that, “The poet through the power of his inspiration creates entirely new things.”

The poet is the medium connecting with the source of all creativity. The poet has a vision and he participates in this vision which may be said to be eternal and infinite one. The intellectual may actually hinder its production. According to Sri Aurobindo, “However it is the pseudo-classical or lower kind of classical art and literature which depends upon the faculty of intellect for achieving perfection for real classical art, works by a large vision and inspiration not by the process of intellect.”

Indian language and philosophy – starting from the word, Sphota comes down to the articulated word which is comprehensive providing for the ascending and descending movements – from the preverbal state which is the source of inspiration of the articulated word back to the
inspiration and the source. Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics clearly reveal that if tone and intonation alone determine the meaning of our day-today utterance, is surely the rhythm that must decide the meaning of a poem. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Rhythm helps us not only to determine the meaning, realize the richness by drawing our attention to the overtones/undertones/association/suggestiveness of the diction but discriminate and fix the source of inspiration."\(^{41}\)

Poetry is not a creation but a revelation of the supreme power. The inspiration plays an important role in the poetic composition. Mere recording of images, vision and dreams could not be sufficient. It is the poetic inspiration that records them with the right use of words and there by bringing out the poetic substance. According to K.D. Sethna, "The choice is not made by the poet, but is made by some mysterious power of inspiration itself, whether it flows through some kind of subluminal upsurge or Supraluminal downpour."\(^{42}\)

Sri Aurobindo's poetry is the incarnation of great spiritual vision. The poet pins his faith in the rhythmic word which holds the highest intensities of rhythm, style and thought for the expression of soul-vision and world-vision. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Poetry is not merely beauty and power. It is merely sweet imagination, but creative vision – it is even the Rix,
the mantra that impels the Gods to manifest upon earth, that fashions divinity in man."\textsuperscript{43}

Poetry to Sri Aurobindo is part of sadhana, a means of contact with the divine through inspiration. His poetry at best is mantric which speaks and reveals for the Real. According to Sri Aurobindo, “Poetry is the mantra of the Real which is incarnation or living infusion of a great spiritual truth or vision in the living word which holds the highest intensities of rhythmic movement, style and thought substance and soul’s vision of truth.”\textsuperscript{44}

Sri Aurobindo has done a wonderful work in believing and exploring the power of inspiration not merely as a theory but a fact of both personal and general creative experience in the field of Indian aesthetics. Sri Aurobindo believed that inspiration is to be inwardly felt and realized rather than merely understood and grasped by pointing different levels of being and planes of consciousness namely the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive mind, and the Over Mind each producing poetry of its own particular intensity.

The Higher Mind is the first plane of spiritual consciousness where one becomes constantly and closely aware of the self, the one everywhere and knows and sees things habitually with that awareness; but it
is still very much on the mind level although highly spiritual in its essential substance. According to Sri Aurobindo, “The Higher Mind is itself a spiritual plane and one who lives in it has naturally and normally the realization of the self, the unity and harmony everywhere and vision and activity of knowledge proceeds from this consciousness which acts as an intermediate state between the truth-light above and the human mind; communicating the higher knowledge in a form that the mind intensified, broadened, made spiritually supple can receive without being blinded or dazzled by a truth beyond it.”45

The Illumined Mind brings a still greater consciousness through a truth sight and truth light and its seeing and seizing power. The outflow of illumined Mind comes in a flood of brilliant with revealing words or light of crowding images, sometimes surcharges with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. The poetry of Illumined Mind is usually full of a play of lights and colours, brilliant and striking in phrase for illumination makes the truth vivid by a luminous rush. According to Sri Aurobindo, “If you could always write direct from the Illumined Mind – finding there not only the substance, but rhythm and language, that indeed would be a poetry exquisite, original and unique.”46
The Intuitive mind stretches from the intuition which is an overhead plane, usually a lightening flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye, which is an overhead power and a mental intelligence power. According to Sri Aurobindo, “The age of intuitive Mind which is dawning upon man’s horizon will impel him to see his inmost in the inmost way which will aim neither materialism nor an intuitive vitalism, nor a remote detached spirituality but a harmonious and luminous totality of man’s being.”

Over Mind is a superhuman consciousness or a cosmic consciousness which stands behind every particular in the cosmos and is the source of all our mental, vital or physical possibilities and actualities. Over Mind is especially concerned with truth which goes beyond truth of fact and truth of thought. It has at its highest, the truth that comes by the most intimate spiritual touch or identity and the truth itself is highest poetry and has to appear to be utterly beautiful to the vision, the sensibility of the soul.

But ordinarily the Over Mind inspiration does not come out pure in human society – it has to come down to an inferior consciousness and touch it or else to lift it by a seizure and surprise from above into some infinite largeness. According to Sri Aurobindo, “The mantra is a word of
power and light that comes from the Over Mind inspiration. Lines from the highest intuitive Mind – consciousness as well as those from Over Mind can have a mantric rhythm."

Over Mind is a cosmic consciousness with global perception and action tending to carry everything to its extreme possibility; the only thing lacking in its creation might be a complete harmonisation of all possibles, for which the intervention of the highest truth consciousness, the Supermind, would be indispensable. According to Sri Aurobindo, “It can open the poetry to the expression of new ranges of vision, experience and feeling especially the spiritual and the higher mystic, with all their inexhaustible possibilities, which a more mental inspiration could not so fully and powerfully see and express except in moments when something of the Overhead power came to its succour; it can bring in new rhythms and a new intensity of language but so long as it is merely an intervention in mind, we cannot confidently claim more for it.”

Over Mind has a greater aesthesis and when it sees objects, sees in them what the mind cannot see, so that the value it gives to them can be greater than any value that the mind can give. That is true of its perception, it may be true also of its creation, its creation of beauty, its creation of perfection, its expression of the power of the absolute. According
to Sri Aurobindo, “Over Mind is superhuman consciousness and to be able to write always or purely from an Over Mind inspiration would mean the elevation of at least a part of the nature beyond the human level.”

The Overhead planes and their characteristic powers are more or less spiritual in their origin and impulsion engage themselves partly or wholly, in the certain and communication of beauty in verse form the overhead poetry is born. The Overhead poetry is poetry that has been influenced to a greater extent; by the spiritual power of the Over Mind by the other overhead powers – Higher Mind, Illumined mind, and Intuitive Mind. According to Sri Aurobindo, “Overhead poetry particularly at its apex, is supra logical vision embodied without the intellect playing the interpreter. Whatever is seizable by the intellect is an adaptation by the overhead planes of themselves to its mode and not its shaping of them according to its own desire and prodivity.”

Overhead poetry expresses new ranges of vision, experience and feeling especially the spiritual and the higher mystic, with all their inexhaustible possibilities, which brings in new rhythms and a new intensity of language. According to Sri Aurobindo, “The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a plane of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a Super Mind which sees things in their innermost, and largest
truth by a spiritual identity and with a lustrous effulgency and rapture and its native language is a revelatory, inspired, intuitive word limpid or subtly vibrant or densely packed with the glory of this ecstasy and lustre. It is the possession of the mind by the Supramental touch and communicated impulse to seize this sight and word that creates the psychological phenomenon of poetic inspiration."

The voice of the new deeper future Overhead aesthesis can be a powerful aid to the necessary change of seeing and aspiration. The pouring of a new and greater self-vision of man and nature and existence into the idea and the life is the condition of the completeness of coming Overhead aesthesis which can solve a problem new to art of poetic speech, an utterance of the deepest soul of man and of the universal spirit in things, not only with another and a complete vision but in the very inmost language of the self-experience of the soul and the sight of spiritual mind.

Sri Aurobindo composed with universal sympathy and worked for the fulfilment of human race by an inner oneness, devoting himself to raise man out of animal consciousness to the glories of spiritual existence:

"In the symbol pictures drawn by work and thought
It seeks the truth to which all figures point

It looks for the source of light with vision's lamp;

It works to find the door of all works,

The unfelt self within who is the guide,

The unknown self above who is the goal."\(^{53}\)

The ultimate aim of Sri Aurobindo's poetry is to lift the humanity to the level of the Super Mind. According to Rhoda P. Le Cocq, "The poet celebrates his glimpses of something beyond, revealing the holy, the way towards transcendence."\(^{54}\)

One might almost say that ancient India was created by the Vedas and the Upanishads and poetry was a revelation to the race of life of the Gods and man and the meaning of the world and the beauty and power of existence and through its vision and joy and the height and clarity of its purpose it became creative of the life of people. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Ananda, the joy of the spirit in itself carrying in it a revelation of the powers of its conscious being, was to the ancient Indian idea the creative principle, and ancient poetry did thus creatively reveal to the people its soul and its possibilities by forms of beauty and suggestions of power."\(^{55}\)
Indian aesthetics succeeded in expressing the supreme spiritual experiences too difficult to put all into speech in forms and images proper to the simplest physical life and the most external customary mentality converting them into physical symbols of supraphysical and then by a rapid liberation in its own proper voice, so producing the sacred poetry of the Vedas and Upanishads.

Sri Aurobindo is an evolutionary seer whose synthetic vision has not only recovered the salient principles of ancient Indian aesthetics but their potentialities.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid., P. 14.


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