CHAPTER IV
ELEMENT OR TRACES OF RASA IN GURU NANAK BANI

Guru Nanak was a great poet and master-musician. A careful study of his entire bani indicates that there is a uniformity between the meaning of his hymns and the nature and rasa of the rasa used for composing the hymn.

It is proof of his proficiency in the art of music. Before something is said about the use of rasa in Guru Nanak Dev's bani, it is necessary to define rasa and its kinds. There are different definitions of rasa. According to grammar of Sanskrit, rasa is that which can be tasted.171

According to Bharat's Natya Shastra, the base book of Indian music, rasa is a converted or changed form of Sat Blair Shava which comprised Bhava, Anubhava and Samskari-Bhava.172

The word rasa is generally translated as emotion, relish etc. The Indian theory of emotions has usually been associated with art (specially literary) appreciation in the well-known theory of rasa, mainly based on what is termed, sometimes, as the Hindu psychology.

172. Bharat Nani, Natya Shaster (Ed. by Devinder Nath Sharms), Patna-1962, Chapter 6, p. 15.
The following form the constituents of emotional action in Indian psychology:

**Vibhavas** (the determinants). They are the causes of emotional responses. In modern terminology we may call them the stimuli or releasers. **Vibhavas** themselves are of two categories—

1. **Ajambana**— the person or object (or the idea of these) which acts as the stimulus.
2. **Udeccana**— the situation which is the context for such behaviour. 173

**Anubhavas** (the consequents). These form the responsive reactions. Obviously, with the Indian theory of emotion being closely linked to dramaturgy, this usually refers to overt expression.

**Sattvabhavas** (involuntary responses). They are also the bodily signs of emotion, in which are included both external and internal responses to vibhavas.

**Bhavas**. By this is meant the states of mind which are usually referred to as emotions. **Bhavas** are considered to be of two kinds—

1. **Sthavy Bhavas** are the permanent emotions and
2. **Sanchari Bhavas** are the transient emotions.

The essential difference between the **sthavy** and the **sanchari bhavas** seems to be that the former are more lasting

and common to all human beings, and the latter more fleeting
and characterized by the personal idiosyncrasy of the individual.

In simple words, in our daily life we pass through
different states of mind and experience various types of
feelings. These feelings remain in our conscious mind for
some time and then disappear. These feelings are temporary
in nature and called sancharibhavas. The reasons of these
feelings are called vibhavas. When a feeling comes to our
mind, as a result of that, there comes certain changes in
our body; for example with the feeling of horror, we start
trembling. This is called amubhaya. When these feelings
remain in our unconscious mind for a long time, these are
converted into permanent feelings athavā bhavas which further
result in the evolution of rāsa. 174

Though rāsa itself is identified with emotion, in
most of the current literature, it is both emotional behaviour
and more; it is an awareness of the totality of the emotional
situation. It is a detached observance of such a condition
of mind and body. The experience of rāsa is absolute and is
known only by empathy . . . that is to say, by entering into
and by feeling the permanent motif. While finally, rāsa is
a contemplative state of mind; a bliss produced in the minds
of the listeners by hearing poetry, vocal music or playing of

174. Paranjape, P.S., Bharat Ke Ras Kalpāna (Sangeet)
musical instruments which takes them away from the worldly worries. There are said to be nine rasa corresponding to nine emotional conditions: Shringara (erotic), Hasya (Humorous), Karuna (Pathetic), Roudra (furious), Veer (valorous), Bhayanaka (fearful), Bhathata (obious), Adbhuta (wonderous) and Shant (peaceful).

From ancient days, attempts have been made to relate these specific rasas to music. Bharata said, for instance, that the ethos of a jati depended on the dominant note in it: Madhyam - humorous, Panchama - erotic, Shadja - valorous, 173 Rishabha - furious and so on. Sharangadeva (13th century) says that Shadja and Rishabha should be used for Veer (valorous), Dhaivat for Bhathata (obious) and Bhayanak (fearful), Gandhar and Nishad for Karuna (pathetic) Panchama and Madhyam for Hasya (humorous). 176

But the modern musicians are of the view that rasa cannot be produced by a single note only but with a combination of some swaras, tale and rhythm used for that rasa.

Guru Nanak Dev has very successfully used the Bhava and Raga-Rasa in his compositions. There is complete harmony and co-ordination between his poetry and nature and rasa of the

176. Quoted by Chaitanya Deva, Indian Music, op. cit., p. 73.
Rasa, used for his poetry. Guru Jee composed his hymns at different places and under different situations of life. He met and talked to different people in different moods and temperaments. Due to this very reason, all the nine rasas are present in his poetry. As already stated, the scholars have considered nine rasas and there are nine sthavii bhaves related to them.

Rasa | Sthavii Bhava | Sanskrit version
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1. Shant Rasa | Calmness. | निश्चिन्त, क्ष
2. Karuna Rasa | Grief. | कारुण्य
3. Shimar Rasa | Romance | शिरम
4. Raudra Rasa | Anger | रूढ्रा
5. Bhitotsa Rasa | Repulsion | भितोृत्स
6. Shisnak Rasa | Horror | शिष्नक
7. Vir Rasa | Encouragement | वीर
8. Abhut Rasa | Wonder | अभूत
9. Haa Rasa | Laughter | हात

1. Shant Rasa: According to the musicologists, komal (flat) awaras are generally used for producing bhakti and Karuna rasa and natural and sharp awaras for Vir rasa. According to the time theory of Indian music, the rasas sung in the early morning are of Bhakti and Shant rasa. For example, raga Bheirav.\textsuperscript{177} Sandhi - Parshesh rasas in which flat Re and

\textsuperscript{177} Pyere Lal, \textit{Sangeet Ke Parshesh Sangeet}, op. cit., p. 17.
Dha are practised, supposed to be capable of producing
swa n r a g a according to the Indian music granthes. Here is
an illustrative couplet in r a g a Bhairav which is a part
of Guru Nanak Dev's b a n i-
"without Thee, 0 Lord, nothing can be done creating the
creatures. Thou seest and understandest them all. What
should I say? I can say not even bit. Whosoever is
all that is in Thine will." 178

Another hymn of the Guru expresses the same:
"Says the Lord, "whosoever day and night abides with
the Guru, whose tongue is imbued with my love, who
knows not another but recognises only my Name and who
within himself realises me." 179

2. **Kurun Raga**

According to the Indian classics of music
the r a g a s in which flat Re and Dha are used and which are
sung in the evening are the r a g a s in which Kurun r a g a is
the major essence. The tinge of sharp Madhyam in these r a g a s
marks the presence of seriousness and grief element. These
r a g a s are sung in the evening.

Siri r a g a is a r a g a of serious nature, in which
flat Re and Dha and sharp Madhyam is used. Its apt time for

179. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., r a g a Bhairav, p. 1126.
singing is evening. Here is a composition of Guru Nanak Dev ji in Siri raga, the inner meaning of which stands completely in harmony with the raga of the raga used: "The virtuous wife repeats the virtues of her Spouse and the virtueless one repents". 180

A similar composition of Guru Nanak in raga Tukhari is Paras Naha, in which the departed soul of a woman stands aloof from her husband (God) and seeks His company. The swaras of this raga have a serious tinge:

"In Assu, come O my Beloved. Thy wife is repaining to death". 181

3. Shingar raga

Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande was a great musician of the century who gave to the Northern tradition of Indian music its present shape. In his book, Hindustani Sangost Padhity, he considers these raga of Shingar raga in which sharp forms of Re and Dha are used, while classifying the raga under different raga. 182 According to this, the raga Suha or Suhli falls under this category. According to Dr. Taran Singh, Suhi is a regn of happiness. 183 Here is a hymn of Guru Nanak Dev expressing the feelings of joy and happiness composed in raga Suhi:

"Friends have come into my home. The True Lord has made me meet their union". 184

183. Taran Singh, Dr., Chintan Ta Kala, op. cit., p. 262.
Raga Bilawal also falls under this category. This shabed in Bilawal is also of the same rasa.

"Sublime and bedeved with glee becomest the night and beauteous the day when her Bridgroom render's wakeful the bridge, asleep in her own home". 165

According to the aesthetics of Indian music ragas as Bhairavi, Rahar, Ravanant, Kafi, Tilang, Suhi etc. should be used to produce shingar rasa. Dr. Paine Lal says while selecting the words for his compositions, the Guru kept in mind the nature of the raga also. For example, raga Tilang is used for nuptial compositions generally. We find imagery and alankara of marriage ceremonies in the Guru Joe's compositions in raga Tilang as:

"Bringing the marriage party of sin, Baber has hastened from Kabul and demands perforce the gift of wealth etc. O Lala". 167

Guru Joe's another composition of shingar raga in raga Tilang: "Put the salve needles of God's fear into thine eyes and make the decoration of the Lord's love". 168

4. Raudra rasa: As stated earlier, certain combinations of swaras can be used for producing a particular rasa. Komal (flat) swaras are generally used for expressing delicate feelings.

168. Ibid., raga Tilang, p. 722.
and natural _awaraa_ for the _ragaa_ of _Veer_ and _Raudar raaan_.
Raga Shankra, Shudh Nat and Durga fall under this category.
Shudh (Natural) _awaraa_ are used in these _ragaa_ whereas _Madhyam_ and _Panchar_ _awaraa_ are of ut-most importance in
these _ragaa_. 189 Raga Aae is also a this type of _raga_. It
is based upon a folk tune of the Punjab and remained very
popular in the area. 190 The Punjab is a land of brave and
courageous people. Many a battle has been fought on this
land. This _raga_ is in tune with the atmosphere of the Punjab
and is fit for the expression of _Veer_ and _Raudar_ _rasas_. Here
is a composition in _raga_ Aae expressing _Raudar raaan:
"If a mighty man smites another might man, then the
mind feels not anger. Pause. If a powerful tiger falling
on a herd, kill it, then its Master should show manliness". 191

5. _Bhaktivinod Rasa:_

_Bhaktivinod rasa_ produces in our mind the feeling of
repulsion. According to a famous scholar of music, Prof.
Pierce Lal, there is no particular set _raaga_ for the evolution
of this _raaga_, as the aim of music is confined only to the
aim of the praise of the Almighty and re-creation of the
society. This _raaga_ can only be produced by using some
combinations of certain _awaraas_. 192

Some shlokas of Guru Nanak producing this _raaga_ have

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189. Pierce Lal, Sirmal, Shastri, _Sangeet Wes Paruakh Shailion_
190. Tara Singh Prof., _Guru Aar Dasa Raa Raa Patawal_,
Chandigarh-1978, p. 46.
192. Pierce Lal, Prof., _Shastri Sangeet-Raa Sanshar_, op.
been composed in Raga Majh. Raga Majh is based upon a folk tune of the land called Majha between the bas and the Sutlej Rivers. We find the reflection of some ragas as Desi, Sarang, Kafi and Tilak Kamod in this Raga. Following is the couplet expressing the feeling of beebhates rasa in raga Majh-

"They have their heads plucked, dring dirty water and repeatedly beg and eat other's leavings. They spread out ordure, with their mouths, suck its odours and dread to look at water".193

Similarly, there is another couplet expressing similar feelings:

"If clothes be stained with blood, the garment gets polluted. Who suck the blood of human beings; how can their mind be pure?"194

6. Bhavanak Rasa:

Like beebhates rasa, there is no particular raga for producing this Rasa, yet combination of some ragas like Malari, Meenav and Gauri are supposed to be suitable for the fulfilment of this purpose. Some music saints have identified flat Dhaiwat as symbolic of this Rasa. Bharat says in Natya Shastra.195

194. Ibid, p. 140.
In rag Gauri, Guru Nanak has provided us with a proper expression of the rag:

"Place God's fear in thy heart, and let thy home be in His dread. Thy fear of Death, then, shall be frightened away". 196

Another composition in Gauri Guerari is not worth mentioning in this rag:

"Lord's fear is very great and very heavy". 197

7. Veer Ragai

Raga Aas is a famous folklore of the Punjab. This is a land which still stands to be a symbol of such a gate through which the Turks, Tamoors, Mughals etc., met with the resistance of the brave Punjabis. In these socio-economic conditions, this land had remained a battle-field for a long time and produced songs of bravery which were known as Vaars. These Vaars were sung by the Dhadis, to arouse and inspire the people to meet the challenges of the invaders. Mostly these Vaars were sung in rag Aas. Guru Nanak also composed a Veer in rag Aas known as Aas-Dh-Vaar. From the point of view of mine, rag Aas comprised of natural swaras and Shadai Madhyam and Panchari swaras in this rag are of great importance. The importance of these swaras in this rag expressed Veer ragai. This couplet of the Guru expresses the feeling of Veer ragai:

197. Ibid., Rag Gauri Guerary, p. 151.
198. Tara Singh, Prof. Guru Ang Desa Rag Rag Patenvali, op. cit., p. 46.
"Having created the air, the Lord supported the whole earth and bound water and fire into system. Ten-headed bling Ravan had his heads cut off what greatness was obtained by slaying him?" 199

Here is another couplet in the same raga expressing same feelings:

"This mind is the King and the hero of battles. By meditating on the Name, through the Guru, this soul becomes fearless."

8. **Abhout Rasa**

According to the most eminent Indian classical musicians, the ragas like Basant, Keunsi Kanha, Sarpara etc., are supposed to be suitable for producing this rasa. Basant raga in Nanak’s Bani well illustrates to this truth.

"The vegetation flowers, though within it is fire and the ocean is bound as if in a bundle."

Another couplet in raga Basant may be quoted in this context:

"Even though man knows Thee not, still he ought to utter Thy Name, O Lord, what can poor Nanak do?"

9. **Hase Rasa**

In Guru Nanak Dev’s Bani covers the Hase raga has also not been left out. He has given expression to it while criticising the given conditions of the society the prevalent law of the land and the barbarous rulers.

201. Ibid., Raga Basant Mundole, p. 1171.
202. Ibid., Raga Basant, p. 1168.
As there is no particular rasa found anywhere in India classical music, only by taking resort to the combination of certain swaras, we can produce this rasa. Guru Nanak has satirized certain rough and age old by-gone rituals of the society. There we find the tinge of critical penetration of the Guru’s insight. We feel ourselves immersed in this rasa while reciting the following compositions:

"The disciples play the music and the preceptors dance, They move their feet and roll their heads. Dust flies, flies end falls on their head’s hair. Beholding them the people laugh and go home".203

The dexterity of Guru Jee’s success lies in the combination of delicate feelings of poetry with the rasa of the rasa in such a skilful manner that it moved the soul of the listeners. The selection of the words in their expression in every raga is quite meticulous. There is complete harmony in the theme of the shabads and the rasa of the rasa used for that shabad. The similies of the imagery used in his compositions also suit the nature of the rasa, as in a shabad in raga Malhar, the theme and imagery of the shabad harmonise perfectly with the raga used for it and the rasa evoked by it. :

Raga Malhar:  

"Without water, the sparrow hawk cries,

O Beloved, O my beloved and weeps and laments.

The roaring cloud rains in ten directions, but without thereindrop its thirst departs not.  

Raga Basant

The season of spring hath come, flower thou, 0 man Yea, they, who are Imbured with God, utter His Name with joy.


205. Ibid., Rag Basant, p. 1168.