

Core 303 :Literary Criticism 2

UNIT 3

'02. THE THEORY OF RASA'

*** 1. Introduction :***

Rasa Theory asserts that entertainment (in the drama/performance) is expected to evoke Rasa or joy (artistic) but that is not the primary goal. The primary goal is instead to create parallel life in front of the audience to experience a sense of one's own (i.e. Consciousness, spiritual and moral question).

Bharata muni believes that the dramatic form of aesthetic experience is the most perfect fruition of aesthetic activity because drama is the synthesis of all arts.

According to Abhinav Gupta (one of the famous critics of Natyashastra), Rasa is the simplest and most bewildering expression in the Sanskrit language. Anyone can experience it but cannot define it precisely.

(G).

Rasa, the cardinal concept of Indian aesthetics, was first expounded in the sixth chapter of Bharata's Natyashashtra. It has influenced the entire discussion of dramaturgy. It is, in fact, considered the soul of literature. Bharata says that without rasa there cannot be drama. The theory of rasa essentially deals with the various kinds of emotions, and how they are depicted, inferred and transmitted through a work of art.

*"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 high appealing through excellent

Poetry, music and action", says Dr P. K. Rajan.*

*** t 2. Concept of Rasa: ***

The earliest use of the word rasa is found in the Vedas and the Upanishadas to mean 'water', 'soma juice', 'flavour', 'sap of the grain' or 'taste'. It is used to refer to the experience of the Supreme Reality which leads to delight. Adikavi Valmiki's extensive use of karuna rasa in the Ramayana makes him the earliest exponent of the rasa system. In Sanskrit aesthetics, the term was employed initially in the context

Of drama and later to poetry. From Bharata onwards the term signifies aesthetic pleasure that the spectator or reader experiences while witnessing or reading a drama or a poem.

Whichever way rasa is seen - as flavour or as essence - it implies to something that cannot be captured directly by the senses. The use of rasa in the Natyashashtra has retained all these meanings, since in the Natyashashtra, rasa is used in a concrete culinary and an abstract aesthetic sense. Bharata believed that the main purpose of dramatic performance is to create or enact the rasas. Drama cannot have any appeal to the spectator without rasa. He calls it the soul of poetry.

Bharata's famous rasa sutra is:

"Vibhavanubhava vyabhichari samyogat rasa nishpattihi".

*** t 3. Realization of Rasa(Bhava): ***

According to Bharatmuni, the realization of Rasa results from the Union of Vibhavas, Anubhavas, and Vyabhikaribhavas. When Sthaibhavas unites with others, the three Bhavas, one attains the quality of Rasa.

(G) This means that rasa emanates from a combination of vibhava (Causes), anubhava (effects) and vyabhicharibhava (transitory mental states). Vibhava is the objective condition producing an emotion. It acts as a stimulus, responsible for the awakening of sthayi or permanent emotion. Anubhavas or consequents are the physical changes due to the rise of an emotion. Anubhavas are called so because they are accompanied by words, gestures and facial expressions. Vyabhicharibhavas also known as sancharibhavas are transitory or temporary mental states. There are thirty three vyabhicharibhavas.

(1) Vhibhavas:

They are the situations which are responsible to bring out Sthaibhavas.

Vhibhavas have two aspects- Alambana and Uddipana.

The person in whose mind Sthaibhavas run is known as Allambana Vibhavas.

The moonlit, spring, soft breeze, fragrance of flowers are Uddipanana Vhibahavas.

In other words, they are stimuli.

(2) Anubhavas:

They are their effect seen upon the character after the emotions arise in the actor(s).

They make spectators feel or experience Abhinaya by words and gestures.

(3) Vyabhikaribhavas:

They are the transitory and temporary mental states.

They strike the mind and become the cause of experiencing a permanent mood.

They are 33 in numbers.

Some of them are a weakness, depression, anxiety, despair, etc. They spring out of principal emotion and ultimately merge into it.

They are like waves and bubbles that appear and disappear as the mighty stream of dominant emotion flows on, smiling and replying and dancing.

*** t 4. Features of Rasa Theory: ***

- (1) Rasa means aesthetics, juice, essence, taste in performance.
- (2) Rasa is an undefinable realization and intense feelings with detachment.
- (3) It is the flavor (general) or aesthetic emotion (metaphorical).
- (4) It is the soul of poetry.
- (5) Rasa is an emotion and cannot be described in opposition to Aristotle.
- (6) Originally, Rasa means juice, essence or elixir.
- (7) It is the pleasure experienced by each class of people.
- (8) No other word can define Rasa completely.

(9) It is the impression created on the mind of the sympathetic audience by the expressions of Bhavas(emotions) and it's experienced by it.

(10) Rasa is not experienced in common situations but only in the art form.

*** f 5. Sthayibhavas & their corresponding Rasas: ***

Bharata clarifies his point by using an analogy: just as people relish the rasa (flavours) of food

Prepared using various spices or condiments, so sensitive spectators relish the dominant or permanent emotions suggested by the acting out of the bhavas. Bharata coined the term rasa for aesthetic relish because it can be tasted. For him bhava and rasa are inseparable. There cannot be bhava without rasa and vice versa. The eight permanent instincts whom he calls sthayibhava and which are inborn in every human being, produce eight emotions.

>>> *Sthayibhavas & Rasas are given below as:*

Δ _Sthayibhavas & Rasas:_

1. Rati (love) > Shringara (erotic)

2. Hasa (laughter) > Hasya (comic)

3. Shoka (sorrow) > Karuna (pathetic/compassionate)

4. Krodha (anger) > Raudra (furious)

5. Utsaha (enthusiasm) > Vira (heroic)

6. Bhaya (fear) > Bhayanaka (terrifying)

7. Jugupsa (disgust) > Bibhatsa (disgusting)

8. Vismaya (wonderous) > Adbhuta (wonderful/awesome)

These rasas are aided by poetry, music and other histrionic devices called natyadharmi and are included under abhinaya. They are presented through the three kinds of dramatic representation or abhinaya: that

Which uses the body (angik), which uses speech (vachik), that which is involuntary (sattvik). Therefore, they are called natya rasas. Bharata coined the term rasa for aesthetic relish because it can be tasted: 'rasa aswadan'.

*** t 6. Sanskrit Scholars' Opinions: ***

Four Sanskrit scholars have given their opinions on the theory of rasa.

(1) *The first critic is Bhatt Lollata who has given his theory of 'uttpatti-upchiti vaad'.* He believed that rasa is produced due to vibhava. It brings the sthayibhava out which is underlying in the mind.

(2) *The 2nd critic is Sri Shankuka who presented his theory called 'anukruti-anumiti vaad'.*

He considers the effect of rasa on the spectator through his/her

Involvement in the action. He uses the analogy of a painted horse. He said that just as a painted horse is

Neither real nor unreal so an aesthetic experience is both real and unreal. His logic is called 'chitraturag nyay'.

(3) *The 3rd Sanskrit critic Bhatt Nayak believed that rasa is neither produced nor created.* It cannot be measured but it can only be enjoyed. *His theory is called "Bhukti vaad".*

(4) *The 4th is Abhinavagupta, the author of

"Abhinavabharati", propounded the theory of "Abhivyakti vaad".*

He is of the opinion that the rasa is experienced first by the writer and then it is transmitted to the audience. The nature of natya rasa is 'alaukik' or transcendental.

*** t 7. Conclusion: ***

Rasa theory is one of the leading schools of thought so far as the aesthetic enjoyment offered by drama is concerned. There is no aesthetician in India who does not believe in rasa.

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