The *Rasa* Theory: An Essay in Understanding

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Rasa is the best known concept in our traditional reflection on drama and poetry. It is, however, by no means confined to the literary arts, but relates to our music and dance as well. A *navarasamālika* is an important expressional number in our classical dances; and in the field of our classical music every *rāga* is believed to be uniquely suited to the evocation of a particular *rasa*. There are *dhruvapada* songs which say that *rasa* is the locus of Brahma.

Now, to speak quite generally, *rasa* is our word for aesthetic experience of the arts. The reality or possible occurrence of such experience is commonly admitted, though it may be difficult to *define* it. Further, it is also fairly easy to mark it off from other major forms of human experience, such as moral and intellectual, or our everyday experience of dealing with persons and practical problems. The way in which aesthetic experience arises is also quite distinct. To struggle to secure an article and to find it agreeable as it caters to a pressing need is one thing; to contemplate an object of art or beauty in peace, and to let it delight our senses and quicken our thought and imagination, is quite another. Both aspects of the matter—that is, the nature and the genesis of aesthetic experience—receive due emphasis in the Indian theory of *rasa*. The theory also fixes the right and essential relation between those who create and those who contemplate works of art. Further, it accounts for the deeply satisfying character of aesthetic experience at its best; and, what is more, brings out how such experience is related to life, both private and communal, and to reality in general. To help our understanding, the approaches hinted at here may be distinguished as genetic, phenomenological, and metaphysical. The first would require us to outline how *rasa* arises from a configuration of objective factors and their interplay with some subjective ones; the second, to so bring out the main features of *rasa*-experience—as it truly feels to a *rasika*—that they may not appear isolated from each other; and the third, to explain how aesthetic experience is related to the basic reality of life and existence, and how it differs from the other major forms of human experience. But, of course, what we have to open with is a brief

indication of what *rasa* is. As for later exposition, we may follow, by and large, the commentary of Abhinavagupta on the famous *rasa-sūtra* of Bharata and the writings of Viśvanātha who seeks to establish *rasa* as the 'soul' of poetry.

Now, to turn to the question, what is *rasa*, we have first to attend to the various meanings of the word. It is commonly translated as *taste*, not in the sense of cultivated or poor taste, but in that of relish of what we eat or drink. Even in this everyday sense, however, the word 'taste' may be taken as a noun *or* as a verb: that is, as what is tasted (*rasyate iti rasaḥ*)—or, the specific gustatory character, say, of an article of food—or as the act of taking the taste of the edible in question (*rasānām rasaḥ*). As that which is tasted, *rasa* may well be the juice of a fruit. 'Juice' is, in fact, also a direct meaning of the word *rasa*. Taken in this sense, the word *rasa*, as an aesthetic concept, would suggest that just as its juice is the very essence of the value of a fruit, so *rasa* is the secret of the charm of a work of art as contemplated. The analogy, however, should not be pressed too far. For, whereas the pulp of a fruit is commonly thrown away after its juice has been extracted, a work of art—say, a good poem—remains a whole object of relish even after repeated tastings[1]. Generally, however, taste is regarded as a quality of *whatever* is edible. But though the individual taste of a simple article of food may be easily registered, a dish in the making of which various spices have been used must be tasted by a connoisseur if its distinctive taste is to be rightly perceived. *Rasa* too is no simple property of any given object. It is a kind of elevated delight which arises from the interplay of various factors, roughly like the sadness one may experience on being given a farewell where the feeling must be traced to the variety of sentiments expressed, or qualities of character emphasized, in speeches made on the occasion, and is therefore very different from the direct impact of a single unfortunate news. Therefore, as an object of relish, *rasa*, like the taste of a cleverly prepared dish, is accessible only to those who are capable of discriminating attention.

Here, however, a question may be put. If, as our aestheticians insist, in the 'tasting' of *rasa* the various factors which have gone into its evocation are not *quite* distinguished, how are training and discrimination necessary for those who expect to experience *rasa*? The answer is, however, easy. What is demanded and exercised here is *intuitive* discrimination, and no explicit analysis; and the former, though it works instantly, is the product of a long course of discipline of our apprehending powers. It would be wrong to doubt if discrimination can ever be *intuitive*, for differences can certainly be felt as such without being blown up into clear distinctions. It is in fact an everyday experience for a gourmet to sense the various condiments that

have gone into the making of a dish without letting his overall relish suffer for a moment because of abidance of attention on a particular condiment.

We may now give a little more thought to *rasa* in the sense of tasting just touched upon. As sensitiveness to a relish, *tasting* is not mere *eating*. The latter can be done absent-mindedly; the former, never[2]. Again, the experience of tasting is so immediate that the truth of what is tasted, along with that of the experience itself, is quietly admitted in the very act. In the same way, *rasa*, as a kind of tasting, is itself a witness to its truth[3]. *This* tasting, however, is no mere isolated act of momentary relish (or चखना). It is the *course* of enjoying a relish (स्वाद लेना) . In spite of the charm that may be there in the aesthetic presentation itself, the person involved here has to put in some effort *to hold on* to the act. This is why the dual ability to concentrate on, and to adopt an impartial attitude towards, the aesthetic object is regarded as an essential pre-condition for the experience of *rasa*. This kind of effort, we may note, when *rasa has* come into being as experience of a relish, operates as a gentle impulse to keep oneself open or available to the bliss (*bhoga*). It is because of this effort of attention and *self-surrender* (so to say) that, when the experience is over, the *rasika* is often able to recall it all as *his*, not with any self-conscious sense of ownership or agency, but with a feeling of wonder and gratitude at the depth and gratifying quality of the experience provided to him, a fact which explains why we fail to absorb the moral message of a play if it is not able to evoke *rasa*[4].

Two points may be made here by way of bringing out what has just been suggested.

First, the metaphor of taste serves to suggest not only that, like the relish of food, *rasa* is a matter of *āsvāda* (being tasted), and therefore a personal, self-certifying experience which needs no (further) proof, and which can only be had, not described adequately, but also that, just as a man is able to recall the relish of a delicacy precisely because he gave himself up to it unreservedly when he partook of it, so a *rasika* may feel quickened by the memory of his experience of *rasa* simply because he had immersed his ego-sense in contemplating the art-work. In either case, we may note, the ego is only submerged, *not utterly undone* as in mystical experience. It would be wrong to look askance at this suggestion. For, if the *object* can be perceived with varying degrees of clarity, why should we find it difficult to believe that in having an experience the *ego* can be more or less self-conscious? The truth indeed is that in the experience of *rasa* one's own self is neither in a state of complete occultation (*tiraśr* or hiding) nor of emergence as a particular ego (*ullikh*). Were the self here wholly eclipsed, the cognition would be not merely aesthetic, but mystical or utterly free

from discursive thought and distinct apprehensions (*vikalpa*); and if it made itself felt as a distinct ego, the cognition would be discursive like most of our everyday ones[5].

Second, the uncommon character of the experience of *rasa*, though its overtopping feel is one of admitted bliss or beatitude, may in part be brought out by distinguishing its features which make it so rich on the inside. The task will be attempted later, when we turn to the phenomenology of *rasa*. Here, because our present concern is (in the main) terminological, a glimpse of the inner richness of *rasa* may be given by considering, in brief, the other terms which have been used for it: *rasanā* (relish), *camatkāranirveśa:* (awakening of wondrous charm), *bhoga* (enjoyment), *laya* (fusion) and *viśrānti* (repose). All these terms, we may note, stand only for the various aspects, and not for the wholeness of *rasa* which may be indicated by interrelating them, say, as follows:

All actual taste is a tast*ing*, the direct experience of a relish by someone. So *rasa* is the active and immediate experience of (the emotive essence of) an art-work—say, of drama or poetry—by a discerning onlooker or reader. But, it is not (we have seen) a mere moment of relish, but a *bhoga*, that is, a *process* of enjoyment. At the same time, *rasa* is no everyday indulgence. It appears wondrous, for it sets us free (for a while) from limitations of space-time and you-and-I, and is untroubled by the pressures of life, and by apprehension or desire. Further, we feel here that we are at one with, and not merely opposed to or looking at, the aesthetic object; and so the experience is, on the whole, one of undivided repose and tranquillity, not of any felt gap between subject and object, or between effort and attainment. Even as a kind of tasting, we may note, Bharata does not want *rasa* to be regarded as mere sense-indulgence. For, just as a good dish, prepared by mixing some spices judiciously, is duly relished only by a discriminating eater who thereby gains in satisfaction and health, similarly *rasa*, which emerges from a configuration of diverse factors, is experienced in a state of *tādātmya* by the *rasika* who thereby improves his sense of aesthetic value and acquires knowledge of the helpful ideals of life projected in works like dramatic plays[6].

Let us consider the genetic approach. How is the experience of *rasa* evoked? To be sure, it does not arise on its own. The experience that is *rasa* is very different from our everyday emotions. *They* need neither the active interweaving of any elements, nor that disciplined interplay of subjective and objective factors without which *rasa* cannot arise. The famous *rasa sūtra* of Bharata says:

Vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisamyogādrasaniṣpattiḥ[7]

Rasa is elicited, we are told, by integrating three factors: *vibhāva, anubhāva*, and *vyabhicāribhāva. Sthāyibhāva* does not figure in this list, though it is undoubtedly the basis of the whole aesthetic configuration. Bharata relates the individual emotive character of every *rasa* to a specific *sthāyibhāva*, and not to any particular *vibhāva* or detail of *anubhāva*. However various be the factors that go into the genesis of, say, *śṛngāra rasa,* it must have the feel of *rati* (or amorous delight); and, similarly, the *rasa* known as *karuṇa*, though it is of course not our immediate response to a tragic news or happening, must tend to induce a serious and sympathetic mood as a sad situation in real life does. Further, the three elements listed are all mere means to evoke, manifest, or help the recognition of, a particular *sthāyibhāva* in a regulated way, and thereby to lend an underrunning unity to the aesthetic presentation. This at once gives us a clue to see why the *sūtra* in question does not mention *sthāyibhāva*. It is the matrix within which—or a basic constituent of our nature as human beings with an eye to which—the whole process of aesthetic arrangement proceeds. It is not a mere element to be put together with others; it rather determines, as a basic and regulative if unobtrusive power, the whole work of configuration itself. So, because the *sūtra* indicates only the content, not the regulative principle, of the integrative process, the *sthāyibhāva* is left out. To take a rough parallel, where we seek to indicate what goes into the making of a poem, we may speak only of words, word-bound images, metre, rhyme, etc. and omit the creative role of imagination which determines the appropriate choice of all these elements. Here the underrunning, yet overtopping working of creative imagination, as that of *sthāyibhāva* in the genesis of *rasa*, is quietly accepted, and is not chosen for mention, because it is not a mere element of art. But in actual aesthetic experience, Bharata would insist, the *sthāyibhāva* is always at work. For abstract understanding it may suffice to indicate *rasa* by listing its *general* attributes, such as its tranquillity or repose and freedom from desire or from thoughts of reality and utility; but when we experience *rasa*, it is always a *specific rasa,* and its distinctness arises from, and retains or evokes, the unique feel of the particular *sthāyibhāva* it builds upon. This is a vital part of Bharata's meaning when he bases, as follows, every *rasa* on a particular *sthāyibhāva* (s.b.): *rati* (amorous pleasure: s.b.); *śṛngāra* (or erotic); *hāsa* (love of mirth)—*hāsya* (comic); *śoka* (sorrow)—*karuṇa*— (pathetic); *krodha* (anger)—*raudra* (furious); *utsāha* (zeal)—*vīra* (heroic); *bhaya* (fear)—*bhayānaka* (terrible); *jugupsā* (disgust)—*vībhatsa* (odious); and *vismaya* (wonder)—*adbhuta* (marvellous).

But what exactly is a *sthāyibhāva*? How are we to translate this word—as permanent feeling or mood, or as sentiment or instinct? It is obvious that

whatever English equivalent we choose, it should go well with the literal meaning of the word. Now, the word *sthayi* means 'permanent' or 'abiding'; and *bhāva* has two acknowledged meanings in Sanskrit: first, that which causes something to be (as in the word *bhavana*) and, second, that which affects or pervades. Putting the two together, a *sthāyibhāva* may be said to be a permanent something which brings about states of experience—say, some feeling or emotion—which colour our whole being when they occur. 'Feeling' (or *bhāva*, in one sense of the word) is here to be taken, we may note, as emotion, not as organic feeling, such as the feeling of bodily welfare, nor even as intuitive appreciation and understanding, a meaning which we intend when, for example, we compliment a man on his having a feeling for colour or tone. This is borne out by a mere look at Bharata's list of *sthayibhavas* which includes *śoka, krodha, bhaya* and *vismaya*, all commonly acknowledged as emotions. At the same time, *sthāyibhāva* cannot be straightaway translated as *permanent* emotion or feeling. For an actual emotion (or feeling) is but a passing—and more or less conscious—state of the mind. One cannot feel angry or disgusted for long and without a break[8].

It is also difficult to accept the suggestion that a *sthayibhava* is a permanent mood[9]. A mood is always felt, however dimly. A *sthayibhava*, on the other hand, is said to abide in our hearts as a latent impression. Further, whereas a mood, like that of sadness, tends to affix itself to any little object, and to thereby re-arise as its parent emotion, say, grief, as when a bereaved parent re-starts crying at the unexpected sight of a dress that the child used to wear, a *sthāyibhāva* makes for the evocation of the uncommon experience of a specific *rasa*. Finally, a mood is the gradual way in which an emotion is seen to ebb. Thus, the irritable mood which follows in the wake of anger, or the sadness in which grief tapers, are both merely passing states, and by no means *sthayi*.

But, on the other hand, we can neither equate a *sthayibhava* with *sentiment*. There is no doubt that a sentiment, like friendship or love of one's country, works as a fairly stable determinant of our attitudes and behaviour. But it cannot be said to be a part of the *original* equipment of our mind. We *develop* sentiments. Two men become friends by experiencing, say, joy, sorrow, or anxiety with regard to each other in different situations. Nor can anyone be said to be born with the patriotic sentiment. A *sthāyibhāva*, on the other hand, is believed to be a part of our mental make-up from the very beginning. That Bharata so believes is borne out by the way in which he posits the reality of *sthayibhavas*. All human beings, he argues, desire the company of the beloved, enjoy mocking others, and are saddened when their loved ones depart. So it would only be proper to

believe in the universal, if uneven[10], presence of *sthāyibhāvas* like *rati, hāsa* and *śoka* and in that of the remaining ones, following the same line of argument. *We* could here argue that the deeply satisfying character of *rasa* when it occurs—say, the sense that the experience is very intimately ours—is better explained on the assumption that *sthāyibhāvas* are inborn. So, because of their being original, they may not be regarded as being identical with sentiments.

May we then equate *sthāyibhāva* with *instinct*? No; it would be wrong to do so. For whereas, as a native capacity *to deal with* a situation in terms of some overt and relatively determinate action, an instinct is (in the main) conative in character[11], a *sthayibhava* is essentially an original tendency *to feel*. Yet, there is much that makes an instinct very similar to a *sthayibhava*. Both impel us to give ready attention to objects of a particular kind. This is aesthetically relevant; for every work or presentation of art is meant to be attended to, and this end would be easily attained if the aesthetic object appeals to a *sthayibhava*, exactly as, because of quiet impulsion by the sex instinct, one may readily attend to members of the opposite sex. Again, both are alike taken to be (by and large) original and universal. Above all, whereas instincts are commonly regarded as original sources of psychic energy, *rasānubhūti* which results from an aesthetic treatment of *sthayibhava* is also believed to provide an impetus to pursuance of the four principal ends of life or the *purushārthas*. Yet, I may reiterate, because it is (in the main) a determinant of our life of feeling, a *sthāyibhāva* cannot be identified with instinct which determines *action*. I would prefer to interpret *sthāyibhāva* as 'original affective tendency'. But I must explain. The word 'original' must be taken here in its total meaning, that is, as 'existing at *and from* the beginning'; for only then would it convey the idea that a *sthāyibhāva* abides. By 'affective' I would mean: influencing, *not* arising from, emotion. 'Tendency' may be taken simply as 'proneness'. Considered in its wholeness, *sthayibhava* would therefore mean an original (or natural) tendency to feel or to experience some emotion in a specific situation, that is, in a situation the character of which is clearly perceived. Recognition of the cognitive element, we may note, is implicit in the very way in which Bharata infers the reality of *sthāyibhāvas*. The tendency to feel sad, he suggests, may be regarded as an original part of the human mind because we all feel or tend to feel sad when someone who is (*known to be*) an object of our love is *seen to depart*. The *aesthetic* transmutation of such a tendency into *rasa* would mean that it is activated in its (cognitive and) affective aspects *without overt dealing with any real situation*; and the thought that the tendency in question is original would provide for the truth that *rasa*-experience is a gratification which caters for the basic demands of our

being, and is no ordinary titillation *(bhogīkaraṇa)* of the senses. Yet, I may repeat here, we cannot roundly equate *sthāyibhāva* with instinct. To speak of *sthāyibhāva* as being original to human nature is simply to mean that we have an inborn tendency to, or can easily *feel*, say, sad, angry or happy in appropriate situations. On the other hand, where we act out of (what have been regarded as) the instincts of sex, pugnacity or self-preservation, and do not meet with any obstruction, the resulting feeling is one of having been able *to do* what we wanted to do. The proper evocation of a *sthāyibhāva* in terms of a *rasa* just gives one the *feeling* of emotional exaltation, as Hiriyanna rightly puts it[12]; and so long as it is not evoked, it may be said to remain in a state of latent abidance, or as *vāsāna*.

The word *tendency*, I may add, goes well with *'bhāva'*, regarded as that which causes something to be; for, a tendency is nothing self-complete, but is rather a propensity to produce something or to assume a form or character. Nor can we replace 'tendency' with 'capacity' here, for whereas a capacity is exercised, a tendency is appealed to, evoked, or built upon. Such linkages in practice indeed favour 'tendency' as a good word for *sthāyibhāva*; for, in the field of dramatic art to which the theory of *rasa* is pre-eminently relevant, the dramatist and the actors alike treat the *sthāyibhāva* as a basic determinant of emotional behaviour which the other constituents of the aesthetic configuration—say, *vibhāva* and *anubhāva* — seek only to feed, manifest, or objectify; and what the *rasika* comes to experience in contemplating a good dramatic performance is simply the artistically contrived evocation of a *sthāyibhāva*, that is, as stripped of those factors which keep it confined to individual persons in real life[13]. In any case, whatever be the way in which we translate the word, a *sthāyibhāva* is a part of our essential mental make-up. But the way in which *sthāyibhāvas* are made to conduce to evocation of *rasa* is different from their working in real life. In the everyday world a person often feels angry or sad in accordance with his *uniquely* developed attitudes. To illustrate, whereas a person who has meticulously trained himself to put everything in its proper place may at once grow a little angry or sad at the sight of even a slight displacement of books from their proper positions on his study table, his friend who believes, let us say, that some disorder serves only to lend an informal or lived-in appearance to the place of work would remain quite unaffected by the displacement in question. Further, when we experience an emotion in daily life, which always happens in a specific situation, our emphasis is (as a rule) on behaving in a particular way, so as to deal with the situation properly, not on contemplating how the emotion itself feels. Thus, if I feel afraid at the sight of a snake, I will either run away from the place or try to kill the reptile somehow. Here the urgent need for personal safety

demands quick action, and just does not give me time *to attend to* this feeling of fear. In other words, the loves, joys and sorrows of actual life remain tied to individual persons; and though they are certainly felt, perhaps even intensely at times, our awareness of their own inner character is only incidental to, and so is bedimmed by, the demands of practical adjustment.

Therefore, if *many* people are to be made to pay *unconstrained, close and continued attention* to an aesthetic presentation like a play, it is essential that it should seek to project an emotion[14] towards which we all already have a built-in propensity, *and* in a way which not only lifts us above our merely individual attitudes or ways of looking at things, but frees us, for the time being, from the pressures of real life which recalcitrate *contemplation* of the common affective bases of our nature as human beings. The first of these requirements, it is obvious, highlights the value of *sthāyibhāva*; and the second, of the artistic device known as *sādhāraṇikaraṇa*. The practical *saṁyoga* or integration of the three factors, of which Bharata's *rasa-sūtra* also speaks, is an endeavour to meet the two requirements by paying due attention to *sthāyibhāva*[15] and *sādhāraṇikaraṇa*.

What a *sthāyibhāva* is has been already brought out. But we must also see clearly how it relates to a work of art. A play, for example, is to be written—that is, the plot is to be chosen and developed, and the interplay of character, dialogue and incident achieved—in such a way that a steady appeal may be easily made, not to any high-browed penchant of some people who may choose to affect a cultural stance superior to the common man's attitudes, but to some *sthāyibhāva* which is present in us all. Such an orientation of the very writing of a play, we may note, is at once some *sādhāraṇikaraṇa*.

But, then, let us first see what this term means in the context of (dramatic) art. The word *sādhāraṇa* means the simple, ordinary or the normal, as opposed to what is uniquely relevant to any one case or individual; and *karaṇa* means 'making', 'affecting'. So, *sādhāraṇikaraṇa* simply means the act of effecting a severance of the content of an aesthetic presentation from exclusive relatedness to this or that real person. It is necessary to point out here that, according to Abhinavagupta, the aesthetic concept of *sādhāraṇya* is quite different from, and independent of, the logical concept of generality *(sāmānya)*[16]. The logically general is that which is *understood or thought of* as being applicable to all or most members of a class or category. The aesthetically *sādhāraṇa*, on the other hand, is that which is not the private experience of any one individual but is accessible, *as a presentation,* to all those who are suitably equipped to

attend to it; which is why the senses that provide, to a whole gathering, simultaneous access to the same object—that is, the ear and the eye—are said to be pre-eminently 'aesthetic'. To take a rough analogy, whereas the *concept* of 'a public park' *subsumes* all parks which are open to the public, an *actual* public park *serves* as such simply because it is not any one individual's personal property. In the same way, if some content is to be experienced aesthetically, it has to be presented in such a manner that it may not be judged as belonging to any one real person alone, though its details may well be identified on the basis of our *general* experience of life and reality. As Mammata puts it, an aesthetic situation is independent of the following specifications:

'This concerns me'; 'This does not concern me';
'This concerns my enemy'; 'This does not concern my enemy'.[17]

It is precisely because of this absence of explicit reference to self that in aesthetic experience a person is able to give all his attention to the 'object' without being disturbed by any such *purely individual* reactions on his part as could arise were he faced with a similar situation in real life. To illustrate, if I see a friend making love to a lady in our common neighbourhood, I may feel happy because my friend is, after all, able to shake off his shyness; envious because he seems to have scored over me; or angry because the affair is likely to disturb the peace in our neighbourhood. But if the same friend impersonates an ardent lover in a dramatic performance, I will care only for the truth and subtlety of *abhinaya,* and my contemplation of the aesthetic object will be utterly *nirvighna* or uninhibited by reactions that I evince to similar situations in real life. The 'unselfish' quality of aesthetic experience is indeed noteworthy. It is *not* a state of indifference (or *tāṭasthya*). It is, in fact, "an active participation *(anupraveśa)* of the cognizing subject in the event represented"[18]. Yet it does not arise in the way of reactions to everyday life. Nor is it later remembered as a part of one's personal history in the way one's birth, marriage and details of educational career are.

Bhatta Nayak insists that the essence of *rasa* is "a pleasure which has no relationship with any real individual"[19]. He adds:

The images contemplated on the stage or read in poetry are seen by the spectator independently of any relationship with his ordinary life or with the life of the actor or of the hero of the play or poem and appear, therefore, in a generalized [*sādhāraṇikṛta*[20], *sādhārana*] way, that is to say, universally and freed of individuality.[21]

Abhinavagupta goes further and says that in aesthetic experience the

individual raises himself, for a while, above time, space and causality, and therefore above the manner of practical life (or *saṁsāra*). Aesthetic experience, he believes, "opens like a flower born of magic, without relationship, in time or space, with the practical life which precedes it and which, after it, renews itself and returns to its normal course"[22].

Now, what both these thinkers essentially mean is that in aesthetic experience the object or content of contemplation is not taken as related to the real life of any individual; that, if only for the time being, the contemplator too ceases to regard himself as a part of the actual, everyday world; and that, therefore, his total (aesthetic) experience at the moment does not seem to be a part of his everyday experience. We cannot take the two thinkers to suggest, categorically, that the object of aesthetic contemplation has nothing to do with life as such. For, after all, the recognition of an actor appearing as a king or as a messenger, or of some gestures as expressing a determinate feeling, is possible only in the light of our everyday experience. What is emphasized here is only the severance of the content and wholeness of the experience from what happens or belongs to persons *uniquely in real life.*

The *sthāyibhāvas* which the dramatist has to bear in mind are of course an actual part of the mental make-up of individuals. But they belong to *all* men, and so only help, instead of impeding, *sādhāraṇikaraṇa.* How similar help may be provided by the three constituents that make for the evocation of *rasa* may now be brought out.

What is *aesthetically* accessible to all—and in this sense *sādhāraṇa*—is, it is clear, no mere meeting-place, but a work or presentation which we can all appreciate in terms of a sympathetic response. This, in turn, implies that the object is open to, or can elicit, public attention; and that it can find favour with the generality of people by appealing to something that they share. Hence, I repeat, the play has to be written (and presented) with an eye to affecting a specific *sthāyibhāva.* But, be it noted, the creative handling of a *sthāyibhāva* is quite different from its direct excitation in real life. When a man's sex instinct is aroused his impulse is to appropriate the other to his fleshly need. In case the other is presently inaccesssible, the individual in question may well have to go without overt behaviour and to content himself with mere lascivious imaginings; but the impulse to make the other somehow *minister to one's own needs* will yet remain active, and to that extent inhibit his contemplation of how love-making feels. The other here does not so engross the individual's attention that it may be wholly taken and kept away from concern with self. The three factors of *vibhāva, anubhāva* and *vyabhicāribhāva* not only serve to minimize the possibility of this self-concern of those who may contemplate an emotional situation—

say, as presented in a play—but prevent them from relating the dramatic presentation to lives of real, contemporary individuals by packing the presentation itself with charm, striking qualities and elaborate, yet identifiable, and convincing details[23]. *Vibhāva* means a situation which is lifelike by virtue of having an identifiable emotive character, though not in that of representing a real, living individual. It is lifelike also in the sense that it comprises a human focus (*ālambana*) and a context which is commonly known as *uddīpana* because it is favourable for self-revelation of (a particular *sthāyibhāva* in terms of) an emotion. To illustrate, where (a semblance of) the *sthāyibhāva* of *rati* is to be evoked, the togetherness of the *nāyak* and the *nāyikā* will be the focus (or *ālambana)* of the situation, and details like a moonlit night and a bower in the garden may serve as *uddīpana* or stimulus to love-making. However, as a mere situation, *vibhāva* is simply the arrangement of what there *is* to be seen or contemplated. It is *anubhāva* which makes it, the *vibhāva*, *come alive*, by projecting some movements, gestures and speeches that are seen *to occur*, and also by employing some superadded factors like music and dance. To put it more clearly, *anubhāva* comprises characters, and acting (*abhinaya*) of different kinds, say, the following: *āngika* (or bodily, as movement and posturing); *vācika* (relating to utterance); *sāttvika* (or involuntary, comprising such changes in the bodily state as serve as unerring signs of some specific emotion); and *āhārya* or those means of projection which are not really a part of the psychophysical being of the actors, such as costumes and *sangeet*. The *sāttvikabhāvas* are: stupefaction, loss of consciousness, horripilation, sweating, loss of lustre or colour, tremor, tears, and changes of tone. *Abhinaya* is made to carry conviction also by means of *vyabhicaribhāvas* (33 in all) which are so called because, as opposed to *sthāyibhavas* that form an abiding part of our mental equipment, they appear but momentarily in the course of an emotional experience. They include the following: self-disparagement, apprehension of encountering what is (nonetheless) desired, depression due to poverty and pain, perplexity, shrinking from censure, agitation caused by pleasant happenings, and drowsiness.

We may now indicate the individual value of these three factors, and also the way they are made to help each other in the process of *rasa*-evocation, both with the purpose of realizing how *sādhāraṇikaraṇa* is brought about. Now, the value of *vibhāva*—or the emotive situation as projected in a poem or on the stage—is obvious. It is, of course, not the efficient cause of the evocation of *rasa*; for whereas, as in the case of a speaker producing a speech, the effect of such a cause—that is, the speech—cannot outlive the operation of the cause itself, *rasa*-experience can easily continue even after

the (isolated) perception of *vibhāvas*. Yet, on the other hand, *vibhāva* is a prime requisite, both as a specific objective situation in which alone a *sthāyibhāva* can manifest itself, and also as a kind of matrix or ground within or upon which the other two factors of *anubhāva* and *vyabhicāribhāva* may operate. The reality of *sthāyibhāvas*, we have seen, is inferred from their expression in everyday life. But in life they always occur as responses to specific situations. So, if the projection of a *sthāyibhāva* is to appear lifelike—and so convincing—it must be done in an appropriate situation. But a situation which is appropriate, in respect of evoking a basic emotion, to a mere individual, may not be so in relation to the generality of *sāmājiks*. To illustrate, whereas in a man's personal life even a passing thought of love may excite the *ratibhāva*, on the stage the *vibhāva*—or a setting which is expected to be evocative—must be typical of lovers in general, for otherwise it may utterly fail to engage the attention of the majority of spectators. The value of familiar *uddīpanas* like a moonlit night or shady nook is therefore obvious in *vibhāvas* that are meant to appeal to the *sthāyibhāva* of *rati*. But, be it noted, the charming quality of *vibhāva* also serves to objectify our attention, helping *sādhāraṇikaraṇa* as suspension of preoccupation with self. What is more, we cannot obviously contemplate a situation as one of *rati* in particular unless the *vibhāva* presented to us also shows the requisite and identifiable marks or expressions of the emotion in question; hence the importance of *anubhāva*, that is, acting, dialogue, etc. *Rati*, as felt in our personal lives, does not take time to be recognized; it only prompts us *to behave* in a particular way. But when we gather to witness a play we have to make a little effort to concentrate on, and to follow, what is presented to us.

Consider, in this context, a presentation of the loves of Radha and Krishna in our classical dances. The number may comprise *abhinaya* done on a song being sung by a vocal accompanist; and the text of the song may project such traditional details of figural beauty and embellishment as नयनबान and सोलह सिंगार. What is more, costumes and lighting may also be made to heighten the sensuous charm of the whole presentation. In witnessing all this the *rasika* will certainly be interpeting what he sees and hears in the light of his own experience of *ratibhāva*. (This is exactly why no amount of effort to make the *vibhāva* in question meaningful—that is, emblematic of the *ratibhāva*—would succeed where the audience is of young children only). In other words, the perception of *vibhāvas* is not merely objective. It draws upon or awakens the latent traces (*saṁskāras* or *vāsanās*) already present in the spectators. A young person will not perceive the representation of a young woman quite impersonally, or in the way of *tāṭasthya* or *mādhyasthya* which is the exact opposite of *anupraveśa*, that is,

personal or active participation. The truth rather is that the very description of a beautiful woman easily arouses the pre-existing state of delight in male readers. But, on the other hand, the (knowledgeable) *rasika* is expected not to *behave* erotically here, as he might in his personal life, but only *to comprehend and follow the growth of a specific kind of emotive situation,* so that, instead of experiencing *rati* in the everyday manner, he may be drawn out to contemplate how *rati* feels. Indeed, because it interests us as a clear manifestation of some *sthāyibhāva*, and also because its character is made unmistakable by appropriate *anubhāva*, *vibhāva* easily serves to take our attention away from preoccupation with self, and objectifies it, so as to make the experience of contemplating an emotive situation (in part, imaginatively) very different from personal involvement in a similar real-life situation. The change is, however, also vitally helped by two of the many qualifications regarded by Bharata as being essential for a *rasika*: the spectator's willingness *and* ability to focus on the aesthetic object. But, on the other hand, *anubhāva* too must appear to be a convincing manifestion of *sthāyibhāva*. This, in turn, demands that *anubhāva* (or acting) be punctuated with some *sāttvikabhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas*. A *sāttvikabhāva* is the unmistakable sign of the real presence of an emotion; and a *vyabhicāribāva*—though it is but a glimpse, so to say, of a fleeting feeling—is yet an actual detail in the filling of an emotion as it runs its course in real life, like momentary apprehension as one approaches the beloved, in spite of the fact that the meeting may be, on the whole, earnestly desired. Both serve to make the acting look authentic and help the spectator in identifying the *sthāyibhāva*. They are therefore alike necessary. However, when the projection of a *sthāyibhāva* is thus made to look lifelike, it convinces the spectator not in the way of a merely imitative representation of some outer happening, but as striking a sympathetic chord in his heart, for what is here projected is an original affective tendency of his own being. The projection in question is therefore not merely identified by the spectators, but happily felt and admitted as echoing a part of their inner nature, radiating their being with the delight of felt kinship, and so transfiguring, of course with the help of other factors, the process of mere objectification of attention into a feeling of *tādātmya* or imaginative self-identification with the aesthetic object.

It is essential that we pause here for a while and reflect as to how the various objective factors, and the basic subjective condition, of *rasa*-evocation are related to one another. *Vibhāva*, we have seen, provides a situation which is relevant to the evocation, and so reminds us, of a particular *sthāyibhāva*. *Anubhāva* infuses life into *vibhāva*, and so enables us to comprehend the latter a little better. At the same time, *vibhāva* too is

essential for the effectiveness of *anubhāva*. A mere classroom lecture on *abhinaya* (which comes under *anubhāva*) relating to *śṛngāra* may be accompanied by the most accurate 'illustrations' in terms of real acting; but because the only figure present here is that of the speaker himself, and further because what surrounds the speaker is not at all suggestive of *ratibhāva*, the impact of the 'illustrations' will be much less than that of similar *abhinaya*, say, in a dance recital involving a 'couple' of performers, and supported by appropriate singing. *Sattvikabhavas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas* lend a semblance of truth to *anubhava* itself, and so give us further help in identifying the *sthayibhava* which the *vibhāva* seeks to project. So, if *vibhāva* be duly regarded as the objective matrix of all that happens on the stage, the various factors may be said to relate to one another in the way of concentric circles with the *sthāyibhāva* as their common centre. To put it differently, *vibhāva* both provides the ground for, and depends for its own enlivenment on, the play of *anubhava* which is similarly related to *sāttvikabhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas*; and they all alike draw their aesthetic meaning from the way they serve to project the *sthāyibhāva* not merely as such, but (in the end) as a superpersonal, disinterested, and blissful experience.

It is, I insist, this mutual relatedness of the various factors and their common concern with *sthāyibhāva* which accounts for the *ekaghanatā* of *rasa*. The word, derived from the root *'ghan'* meaning 'to strike', simply means unity of impact. Some scholars, like Coomaraswamy and Gnoli, ignore this derivative meaning and prefer to translate *ghana* as "a condensation of multiple factors without extension in space"[24]; and *ekaghana* as "dense, compact, uniform", or as the character of "a state of consciousness which does not allow the interference of obstacles"[25] (or *vighnas*). But the prefix *eka* makes better sense when related to *ghan* in the sense of impact than as conjoined with *ghana* taken as condensation. Moreover, whereas the negative remark that, as an experience, *rasa* is not discursive or analytical (*nirvichinna*)—or not disturbed by obstacles—seems perfectly warranted, the positive insistence that the experience in question is utterly dense or compact would tend to make *rasa* appear as a static something, and to merely ignore the flow, along with the quickening and illuminative character of *rasa*.

Such *felt* features, I may add, distinguish *rasa* very clearly from a mere *sthāyibhāva*. Indeed, the two differ sharply. A *sthāyibhāva* is a part of what we already are at birth, and is coextensive with life, though it is of course not always manifest. *Rasa*, on the other hand, arises from an aesthetic configuration of diverse factors and lasts only a little longer than the *rasika*'s discriminating and sympathetic attention does. Yet, it should not be

forgotten, every *rasa* is grounded in a specific *sthāyibhāva*. This means that, however otherworldly the experience of *rasa* may seem to be, it yet strikes us as affecting the very roots of our being, or as very basically human, and not merely personal.

Its evocation, however, is not (we have seen) a simple matter. The different *bhavas* must all be made to work in accord before *rasa* can arise. *Saṁyoga* is essential. For, if it is taken by itself, an individual constituent may easily fail to serve as a clear pointer to a specific *sthayibhava*. Take tears, for instance, which make a *sāttvikabhāva*. The cognition that they betoken sorrow, not joy or gratitude, would arise only if the overall look of *vibhāva* is a sad one. The union which *saṁyoga* signifies is, however, no loose putting together. It is such a blending of elements that the whole comes to acquire a quality which cannot be traced to their individual natures or to their mere aggregation. This is suggested by the instance which Bharata takes to illustrate a general feature of aesthetic configuration: that is, the example of a dish emitting a new flavour which is not seen to belong to any of the condiments used[26]. Further, a *sāttvikabhava* like horripilation cannot be produced unless the actor (doing *abhinaya*, which is covered by '*anubhava*') allows himself to be suffused with the distinctive feel of the *vibhāva* as related to a particular *sthāyibhāva*. What is however important to mark here, because it is likely to be missed, is that *saṁyoga* is not an accord of the merely objective. *Vibhāva*, we have seen, is not any situation, but a situation having a distinct emotive character. This character will not be registered—and *vibhāva* will therefore remain a mere indeterminate situation—unless the *rasika*'s mind is united with it. This is why it has been suggested[27] that "*saṁyoga* . . . implies both that the determinants, etc., unite with each other to form a single whole and that the mind of the spectator is identified with them or participates actively [*anupraveśa*] in the situation which they determine"[28]. But, essential though it is, *saṁyoga* does not follow any definite rule. It is certainly not a blending of the various constituents in *equal* measure; for, with an eye to evoking *rasa*, any one of them may be emphasized. Consider, for instance, the following:

O lovely damsel! your body is the locus of the honey that love-making exudes; the shapely arch of your eye-brows is the bow of the love-god, Kamadeva, with its striking bend; and the wine that oozes from your lotus-face quickens desire by its very aroma—that is, without being drunk. In all the three worlds indeed you remain unmatched as a specially beautiful creation of Brahma.

Here, it is clear, the word-bound images and the overall meaning both

alike heighten the charm of the *nāyikā* who is the *ālambana of the vibhāva. Vyabhicāribhāvas* may be projected as follows:

This lady, possessed of liquid eyes, is repeatedly impelled to throw away the water cupped in her hands; for, though she is impatient to bedew her lover with it, she is disturbed by the presence of fish in the water as it mirrors the shape of her own eyes.

Here, it is clear, the emphasis is on *vyabhicāribhāvas.* Liquidity of eyes at the passing thought of a mischief, impatience, and agitation are obviously all transitory states. So, *saṁyoga* admits of uneven emphasis on the factors that make for the evocation of *rasa.*

The word that Bharata uses for this evocation—*niṣpatti*—is also significant. It is not *utpatti*; and this avoidance suggests, first, that the union of objective factors does not directly produce *rasa*, for our *tādātmya* with the presentation must be established before *rasa* can emerge; and, second, that in spite of its admittedly wondrous quality, *rasa* is not quite a new origination in the sense of being wholly unrelated to our given nature, for it is grounded in *sthāyibhāvas* that are already there in us. It is in fact precisely this consideration which prompts one to take the word *niṣpatti* in the sense of elicitation or bringing out. However great be the value of objective factors for generating *rasa* when it arises, it is felt as inwardly affirmed, and not as a mere imposition from the outside.

How *rasa* feels, however, calls for some analysis in the phenomenological vein. Happily, a fair amount of it has been done by our ancient aestheticians; and the more important features of *rasa* revealed by such analysis have been ably summed up by Viśvanātha in the following well-known utterance:

सत्वोदेकादखण्ड स्वप्रकाशानन्द चिन्मयः।
वेद्यान्तरस्पर्शशून्यो ब्रह्मस्वाद सहोदरः॥
लोकोत्तरचमत्कार प्राणः कैश्चित प्रमातृभिः।
स्वाकारतदभिन्नत्वेनायमास्वाद्यते रसः॥

But what is here implicit must be brought out at some length:

a. To begin with, when one experiences *rasa* the mind is swayed by the *guṇa* known as *sattva*, not by *rajas* or *tamas. Tamas* is the principle of sloth and darkness. In experiencing *rasa*, on the other hand, one feels quickened and lit up with understanding and delight (see प्रकाशानन्दचिन्मयः). The *guṇa* known as *rajas* too is subservient here. *Rajas*, as we know, is the cause not merely of goal-directed activity, but of haste, impatience and

agitation. It is the last of these, or *aviśrānti* which, according to Sāṁkhya, is the immediate cause of *dukha*. Subservience of *rajas* therefore accounts for the presence of tranquillity and (therefore) *ānanda*, as also for the absence of willed overt action in the experience of *rasa*. Some reflex bodily changes, such as bated breath or quickened heart-beat, may of course take place during the course of such experience; but we do not here *seek to do* anything; we only contemplate what is presented to us. Positively, the experience of *rasa* is marked by an ascendancy of *sattva*. This is why the more important felt features here are serenity and poise, and disinterested delight or joy without craving (स्वप्रकाशानन्द). *Sattva* is commonly taken to make for purity, light and beatitude. In the present context, however, 'purity' cannot be regarded as a quality of what motivates us *to act*; for action is here neither present nor aimed at. It can only be taken to mean relative freedom from what genuine aesthetic experience is not, or from discursive thought, desire, and the impulse to act. (Kant emphasizes the tranquillity of aesthetic experience by saying that when we experience beauty, the working of our two faculties, imagination and understanding, is mutually accordant[29].) It is in this sense that awareness here is pure or *chinmaya*, roughly in the same way as music is said to be 'pure' where it is free from admixture with language and beat-measured rhythm. One who tastes *rasa* rests, so to say, on his own consciousness (*saṁvit*) instead of craving for ends beyond the present; and this *viśrānti* (tranquillity and repose) is beatitude (*ānanda*) and light (*prakāśa*). The latter, in the present context, is of course not physical light, but is rather "the inner radiation of being which accompanies delighted understanding, a joyous state of heightened awareness"[30]; and it would therefore be perhaps better to translate Bharata's characterization of *rasa*—*ujjvalaveśātmakaḥ*—as 'whose essence is an appearance of *glowing*' (rather than of "*burning*"[31]).

b. As for the phrase *vedyāntarasparśaśunyo*, I think its distinctive meaning will be better brought out if it is taken along with another similar, but not quite identical, characterization of *rasa*, that is, as *vigalitavedyāntara*. The latter phrase cannot be taken to mean that, during the experience, nothing but *rasa* is at all perceived, but only that whatever else is perceived—say, the details of the dramatic presentation, quite a few of which may be correctly recalled after the experience—is softened by or made subservient or permeable to (विगलित or melted in) the overall pleasurable and undivided (अखण्ड) quality of the relish. And, if it be borne in mind that *sparśa* or touch is (as a rule) contact from the outside, the former characterization, which is our direct concern here, would mean that *rasa* is the experience of a relish which is not felt as related to anything

outside of it, in the way a meeting of two lovers may be related to, or rather disturbed by, vague apprehensions about the effective pursuance of their love in spite of possible opposition from their parents. In other words, the experience of *rasa* is internally undivided—not empty of clearly perceived content—and free from relation to, or disturbance by, anything outside of it. Or, it is *nirvichinna* and *svātmaparāmarśa, svātmaviśrānti.*

Attributes such as these are in fact implicit in the thought that *rasa* is free from contact from all that is external to it. For the contact referred to here is no mere contiguity of things in space. It is rather a felt looking beyond the bounds of what is presently given, as is a feature of desire for some distant goal, or of wistful remembrance of something that has ceased to be. Freedom from touch *so regarded* therefore at once makes *rasa* an experience of self-repose and unbrokenness. It is therefore quite different from the mere recall of a happy experience which may be ruffled by some subdued longing; and in so far as we do not think of any unrealized end here, our attitude in *rasānubhūti* is also not utilitarian at all.

c. Yet, it is not *merely* because of all this—that is, its tranquillity, freedom from the sense of want or felt self-completeness, and blissful quality—that *rasa* is said to be 'the younger brother' (सहोदर) of, or a close approximation to, the experience of 'tasting' Brahman. We must also mark the sameness that just as *brahmānubhava* is a very deeply satisfying experience because it answers a basic need of the *ātman*, so is *rasa*, because of its grounding in *sthāyibhāvas* which are a part of our native equipment. In neither case does the blissful experience appear to be the attainment of a merely objective end.

d. Yet, as a kind of experience, *rasa* is quite out of the ordinary (लोकोत्तर), not merely because in an aesthetic presentation familiar objects may be seen as put together very differently from the way they are found in daily life, but because the determinants of everyday experience and behaviour—like the concepts of reality-unreality, space-time, cause-effect, and the thought of practical efficiency (*arthakriyākāritva*)—cease to matter here. We look at what is presented in the way of *anuvyavasāya*, that is, without associating the 'object' with the concepts of reality and unreality, or with the limited 'I'[32]. For instance, the garden that may be shown on the stage is not taken as any real individual's property. Nor do we regard it as a fit place for our evening walk. Further, even when historical characters like Rama and Sita are presented in a play, they are not perceived in their own setting of reality, say, as belonging to a bygone age, but as present before us, as objects of immediate apprehension, not of mere memory. Nor, on the

other hand, are they taken mainly as related to how we, in fact, look at them in real life; for, were they so regarded, everybody would be seeing his own Rama or Sita on the stage, whereas the truth is that the characters impersonated appear generalized (*sādhāraṇikṛta*) or essentially the same for all spectators.

The truth that generalization *can* take place in spite of the (aesthetic) individuality of the characters represented—say, Rama and Ravana—is borne out by the fact that after seeing the play the following general affirmation plays freely on our lips: "Such-and-such happens to people who do so-and-so". A personality intrudes into our practical life—and resists generalization—only when it is contemporaneous with us, that is, when it is a part of the present, and can therefore be relevant to our practical interests.

e. Yet, the remoteness of the aesthetic presentation from the manner of our everyday existence should not be allowed to make us doubt the reality of *rasa*. Its very relish by a man of aesthetic sensibility—that is, the *rasika* or *sahṛdaya*—is a proof of its reality as experience. The self-evidence here, we may note, is not that of a mathematical truth, which is merely objective, but the subjective one of a personal experience. Yet it may be said to be objective in the sense that it *can* be realized by all, though again only in terms of personal experience.

f. The fact that one is personally involved here, and enjoys the experience, at once distinguishes *rasa* from inferential reasoning. *Rasa* arises out of *tanmayatā*—or from imaginative self-identification with the aesthetic object—not through reasoning; and its basic subjective condition is not the ability to reason, but *hṛdayasaṁvādātmaka sahṛdayatā*. The conclusion of a piece of inferential reasoning, on the other hand, is accepted quite impersonally, or without feeling involved in it, that is, in a state of तटस्थ भाव. The difference between the two kinds of experience may be brought out by taking an example. The doctor's reasoning that because his patient has fever on every alternate day, marked by a chilly feeling, the patient must be suffering from malaria, is one thing; but a mother's attendance on her child—similarly suffering—and sympathetic visualization, in part on the basis of her own past experience, of how sick, even nauseous, the patient's feeling probably is, is quite another.

At this point, however, two questions may be put:

First, does the alleged 'involvement' of the *rasika* in the experience of *rasa* mean that his self is totally effaced here; and if yes, how is he later able to recall the experience?

Second, if *rasa* is essentially a state of emotional exaltation, and not an

impulse to action or process of thinking, will not clarity of perception be adversely affected here, because of the very fuzziness of feeling?

Now, the first of these questions may be answered thus:

In experiencing *rasa* the self is only deeply merged, *not quite lost or effaced.* This may be understood by considering a simple possibility. If a *rasika* has just finished listening to some absorbing music, he may yet continue to 'hear' the music in his mind even though, in fact, it has ceased to be. This continued 'inner' listening, without any present objective cause, proves that the self was not quite obliterated when it appeared lost in the actual contemplation of music; and that it was somehow active during the process, however subduedly. On the other hand, such attention to a work of art as is able to generate *rasa* must be said to be a kind of *immersion*, and not mere attendance. This is demanded by the fact that when, after the experience, the *rasika* recollects it, the emphasis is more on the *experience* that seemed to possess him than on his own self as the bearer of the experience. To take a parallel instance from life, when we refer to a series of little happenings that has made us happy in the past as "quite an experience", we can of course think of it, in the way of Dewey, as a distinct wholeness jutting out of the run of our everyday life, but we can also re-live in idea the powerful impact of the experience, regarding ourselves as having only undergone the experience. The reality of *rasa*-experience when it occurs is not the self-conscious awareness of making something happen or of dealing with a situation, but of merely being a happy bearer, or the willing course, of the experience.

The second protest, that because of the dominance of feeling in it *rasa* is likely to be deficient in clearness of perception, may be met thus:

To raise such a doubt is only to confuse *rasa* with a mere everyday experience of emotion. When a man is gripped by violent anger he is likely to misjudge the physical tolerance of his own child he might be punishing even as one tends to exaggerate the demand of one's appetite while eating in a state of happy excitement immediately on the successful completion of an arduous task. But *rasa*, on the other hand, issues from, and is all along dependant on, close and patient attention to the details of acting, speech and stage-setting (in watching a play); and the experience may be easily disturbed by the slightest lapse in the presentation, such as an unintended remark by a raw actor in the manner of his casual, everyday way of talking, as distinguished from the idiom of impersonation demanded by his role in the play. The percipience of a *rasika*, be it noted, is not the mere notice of what the aesthetic object presents but is at once some assessment, if implicit, of the aesthetic or technical propriety or character of its details and structure. In listening to music, for instance, even a slightly exaggerated

dwelling on a particular *svara*—say, on *komal riṣabh* in a Puriyā recital—may ruffle the *rasika's* joyous experience. Such immediate disapproval is obviously possible only where listening is keen all along. *Rasa* not only does not inhibit, but demands watchful perception. Nor would it be proper here to *protest* that what is essential for aesthetic experience is our ability to contemplate and identify the expression of emotion, and not our getting infected with the emotion in the art-work; for *rasa* is not the direct feeling-impact of an everyday object on the onlooker attending to or dealing with it; it is rather the elaborate evocation of an experience which is both trans-subjective and trans-objective, and to which one is in fact elevated by an aesthetically induced fusion of the two sides which only oppose each other in daily life: that is, the subject and the object. A man's being struck with fear by the sight of a snake is one thing; a *rasika's* experience of *bhayānaka rasa* is quite another. The former is disturbed by fear, and the disturbance determines his behaviour. The latter only restfully contemplates what it is to feel afraid; and the contemplation is without the sting of real fear because, for the time being, the individual in question has risen above the sense of being a particular person in real life, and because his attention is too fully held here by the aesthetic object, and a bit too independently of the question of reality, to admit of any thought of personal insecurity. Yet, be it noted, the experience here is no mere detached or abstract thinking of the details of feeling afraid; it is contemplation of fear as all along attested to by aesthetic appeals to the *sthāyibhāva* of *bhaya* in the *rasika's* own being and as embodied in the aesthetic object, say, in the acting and utterances of actors.

Protests of the kind we have just dealt with may, however, seem to have special force in respect of *vīra* and *karuṇa rasa* in so far as the presentation of exciting deeds of valour and pathetic situations seems clearly opposed to the *tranquillity* and *blissful* feeling which are regarded as essential features of *rasa*. But a general answer may be readily given here. First, just as bites and scratches, which are generally painful or unpleasant in themselves, not only become bearable in, but even add to the pleasure of, amorous dalliance, so it may be possible for the aesthetic presentation of a play to evoke an experience the overall satisfactoriness of which—provided, we may say, by sonorous music, convincing acting, interesting happenings and the interplay of expressive, racy dialogue—is able to absorb the seemingly discordant elements, and to so transform them that they come to serve as a leaven, by adding a little pungency, to the felt charm of the art-work. Second, the presentation in question may so help us rise above the determinants of our everyday experience that we may be able to contemplate exciting and sad events without getting too excited or

depressed ourselves, with the result that our tranquillity is in no way disturbed. It would be of help here to mark that a measure of excitement may well be an element in *feeling elevated*, which is a quite different experience from *getting agitated*; and that concern for the sorrows of others can be real yet serene. Indeed, a person who is dedicated to service is freely seen to be both tender and meticulous in ministering to the needs of the distressed, without looking upset at all, nay, even with some visible relish of his mission of mercy.

We may now give some individual attention to the two *rasas*. Where a *vîra rasa* presentation projects some killings by a brave warrior, what we react to is not merely the exciting spectacle of, say, swordsmanship, but the suggestion of the righteous cause he may be fighting for, and of the endurance he shows in quietly suffering a good deal of pain and bodily injury himself; and in so far as sensitiveness to qualities like righteousness and fortitude is at once an exercise of the *sattva* in us, our overall response to a spectacle of valour may be fairly unruffled, without failing to be sensitive. As for the case of *karuṇa rasa*, it may well involve projection of moving *vibhāvas* like the banishment of Sita to a forest, but in so far as the spectator is not dealing here with real life, but is only attending to, and following (in part imaginatively) what he sees—and has come to see, as an intentional change from his practical concerns—on the stage, even his minutely sympathetic reaction to a sorrowful *vibhāva* does not upset him, as it would have in real life. Further, if the difference between our everyday experiences and our aesthetic ones is duly borne in mind here, it would be easy to see that whereas in real life one may find it a little painful to refrain from openly crying in a moment of intense grief, in watching tragic happenings in a film or play, on the other hand—primarily because we all along look for charm, expressiveness or truth in what we see here—the restraint in question is induced by the very way we are disposed towards the object, and so it is no effort to keep oneself composed. Finally, is it not an indisputable fact that after seeing a good tragic play we often feel deeply satisfied though, during the process of contemplation, we might have been occasionally moved?

In the end, we may turn to a question which has been the subject of some debate. Is the theory of *rasa* applicable to our music and dance? My answer here is: it can be applied to *some* forms or presentations of these arts, but it also appears unrelated, in practice, to a considerable part of our *sangeet*. I must, however, explain why I say so, by giving some individual attention to the two sides of my answer:

To begin with, the question I have posed may seem unnecessary to those who are interested only in music, not in our dances. They could put forth the following argument:

> Every presentation of our classical music is a *raga*; each *raga* is believed to be uniquely capable of evoking a particular *rasa;* therefore, it does not make sense to question the relevance of the *rasa* theory to our music.

I would, however, disagree with the conclusion by appealing to some forms and actual features of our musical practice today:

a. True, every *rāga* is *believed* to be related to a *rasa*. But, if we turn from mere theory to our actual practice of classical music, what do we find? *Rāga*, I agree, but without any definite *rasa* in many cases. Consider, for instance, the various forms of our music, every one of which must of course conform to the (grammatical) character of a *rāga*. Where it is properly done, *ālāpa* in the *dhruvapada* manner teems with isolated effects of depth, spaciousness, fineness, leisurely or vigorous movement, and incandescence. It may even be able to create an *atmosphere* of peace or repose and an elevating fineness. Nowadays, indeed, what we look for in *ālāpa* is these effects, not any identifiable *rasa*, though the grammatical requirements of the *rāga* are of course expected to be met in every case.

I may here buttress my contention with a simple argument grounded, again, in the evidence of fact. Whatever be the *rāga* that he may choose to project, the singer's manner of singing generally remains, by and large, similar in his various performances. This will be borne out, I believe, by a critical look at the recitals of any of our leading vocalists over the last ten years. And except for minor differences—as, for instance, a relatively freer use of vigorous *gamaks* in Adānā, and an intentional softening of voice on the higher notes during expositions of *rāgas* like Jogiyā and Sohini—the way they deal with the various *rāgas* is largely the same. How, then, can different *rasas* be evoked by the different *rāgas* as they are in fact sung? After all, there is hardly any *rasa* or hint of expressiveness in the mere *āroha-avaroha* of a *rāga*. Besides, of course, the meaning of the words of the song, it is essentially the vocalist's *gāyaki* or way of singing—comprising the manner in which the vocalist applies his voice to *svaras* (or *lagāo*); regulation of vocal volume which can easily work up the suggestion of a rise and fall of feeling, specially pathetic; the various formal graces such as *gamak*, *lahak* and *meend*; adroit interspersion of pauses in the flow of singing; varying management of aesthetic pace (or *laya*); the extent, order and designs of melodic patterns of *tāns;* and of course, the very structure of the basic *bandish* or the *sthāyi-antarā* twosome—which can generate a semblance of feeling or *rasa*. And if the singer's employment of the elements just listed, *and* his way of integrating them in a recital, do *not*

show marked variations in the treatment of diffrent *rāgas*, how can the nine *rasas* be made to emerge in their *individual* characters?

b. Be it noted that neither language nor the visible compass of a *bandish* is available to the *ālāpiyā*; and that the *khyāl* form, which is of course free to build upon language in *sthāyī-antarā*, employs no words in most of its *tāns* which can vary infinitely in respect of content, pace, and design, and which are, as we know, distinctive of *khyāl* as a form of our vocal music. How, then, can *ālāpa* and *khyāl* be expected to evoke the semblance of a *rasa*? *Rasa*, we may remind ourselves, is the experience of a state of unbroken (*nirvichinna*) emotional exaltation. In *khyāl*-singing, on the other hand, a torrent of *tāns* is often seen to disrupt the suggestion of feeling that may be created by the *bols* of *sthāyī-antarā*. True, language, which is a powerful means of evoking *rasa*, is available here to the artiste; but the fact that *he* can generate some *rasa* by using words does not prove that a *rāga* is itself the potential vehicle of a particular *rasa*; for, as is clearly borne out by the evidence of instrumental music, what is integral to a *rāga* is a particular arrangement of some select *svaras*, not any specific complex of words.

c. Further, I ask, who looks for *rasa* while listening to a *tarānā*, *triwat* or *tappā*? Hardly anyone; yet these are all forms of Hindustani vocal music.

d. And what shall we say of a good solo tablā recital? Here, we never expect the artiste to evoke any *rasa*; we only look for some individual excellences of rhythmic play, say, the following: steadfast keeping of *laya*; fluent, yet undimmed cutting of *bols*; the beauty of the designs or patterns; and the subtlety and variety of their relation to the basic *laya*. And yet, as is well known, a recital of rhythm can be an important part of a whole session of Hindustani music.

e. To speak now of our dances, the whole *nritta* aspect is quite free from the requirement of generating *rasa*. However, in the region of *nritya*, *rasa* is not only expected to be, but is often, in fact, produced. Even the different shades of the same *rasa*, such as *viyoga* and *saṁyoga śṛngāra*, may be effectively evoked. But let me explain:

Suppose the danseuse sets out to create a semblance of *viyogaśṛngāra* by dancing to a vocal rendering (say, in *raga* Pūriyā) of this Meera *bhajan* which opens thus: 'होरी पिया बिन लागे खारी'. Here *rāga* Puriyā will obviously be an apt choice; for it is commonly believed to be the right vehicle of the *rasa* in question. Further the text of the *sthāyi*—along with words of a like nature, such as सूनी सेज, which follow the basic line—may make a ready

appeal to the *sthāyībhāva* of *rati* in the *rasika*. *Vibhāva* and *anubhāva* will be duly provided here jointly be some subsequent images in the song, which develops thus—

सूनो गाँव, देस सब सूनो, सूनी सेज, अटारी
गिणता गिणता घिस गईं रेखा, आंगुरिया की सारी।

—*and* the purposely accordant *abhinaya* by the danseuse herself. But the integration (or *saṁyoga)* of *vibhāva* and *anubhāva* is, in such cases, also helped by the underrunning *thekā* to which both dance and music have, in general, to conform. As for *tādātmya*, it is brought about here by the percipience of the *rasika* and the charm of the dance itself; and the imaginative fusion, of course, also makes for *sādhāraṇikaraṇa*, or the focussing of the *rasika's* interest on the aesthetic object, in place of preoccupation with self.

The relation of *rasa* to *navarasamālikā* cannot, however, be so easily established. It may seem surprising to say so about a number the very literal meaning of which is 'a garland of the nine *rasas*'. But my argument here is definite. When this number is actually danced, the projection of one *rasa* is followed pretty quickly by that of another; and what the *rasika* does here is simply to identify (and confirm) the expression of individual emotions like grief, wonder and disgust. He certainly does not lose the sense of being a distinct individual in the continuing relish of a *rasa* as contemplated. If it be remembered that *rasānubhūti* is (regarded as) a close approximation of *brahmānanda*, no one would commit the mistake of identifying *rasa*-experience—generated by a complex and regulated interplay of subjective and objective factors over an adequate passage of time—with the simple act of readily recognizing the individual, momentary look of what is but a mere expression, however lifelike, of the various *emotions as experienced in daily life*.

To conclude, the *rasa* theory is applicable only to some aspects of our music and dance, not to the whole extent of these arts. To believe that expressiveness, or the seeming projection of some feeling, is a necessary mark of good music and dance is merely a dogma. Do we not often admire a *gat* simply because it is tightly structured or lively and sparkling? And if we consider the various *forms* of our music, as distinguished from their *elements*, we find that they are not at all so closely related to feeling as some forms of literary art. I oppose, as I so speak, *khyāl*, *dhruvapada* and *dhamār* to lyric, elegy and tragedy. □

NOTES

1. R. Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, Rome, 1956, p. 60, f. (footnote)
2. Ibid, p. 60, 4th f.
3. Ibid, p. 38, 2nd f.
4. Babu Lal Sukla: *Nātya Śāstra of Bharata Muni*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1972, pp. 228–29 2nd f.
5. R. Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, pp. 67, 68; also 2nd f. on p. 68.
6. Sukla: *Nātya Sāstra*, pp. 285–86, also footnotes.
7. Ibid, p. 228.
8. So I hesitate to accept Gnoli's translation of *sthāyibhāva* as 'principal feelings of human nature'. See his *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p.29, 2nd f.
9. Cf. S.K. De's *Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic*, Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 53.
10. Śukla: *Nātyasāstra*, pp. 265–66.
11. The accepted meanings of 'instinct', we many note, are: an involuntary prompting to *action*, and the natural impulse by which animals are guided *in their behaviour* apparently independently of reason or experience.
12. In his *Art Experience*, Kavyalaya Publishers, Mysore, p. 38.
13. It is in this liberated form, so to say, that the *sthāyibhāvas* appear as "the material of aesthetic experience", Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p.29, 2nd f.
14. Of course, as appearing embedded in a situation skilfully arranged.
15. Paying attention to, or bearing in mind, the *sthāyibhāva* certainly, but not integrating it by means of physical manipulation as the other constituents are.
16. Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p. 29, 5th f.
17. Ibid, p. 51, f. 1a.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid, pp. XX–XXI.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, pp. XXI–XXII.
23. Sukla: *Nātya Śāstra*, p.261.
24. A.K. Coomaraswamy: *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Harvard, 1934, p. 209.
25. Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p. 71, 2nd f.
26. Ibid, p. 31, 2nd f.
27. Ibid, p. 96, 4th f.
28. Ibid, p. 96, 4th f.

29. Kant: *The Critique of Judgment*, tr. J.C. Meredith, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969, p.58.

30. S.K. Saxena: *Aesthetical Essays*, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1981, p. 159.

31. Cf. De's *Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic*, p.109.

32. Gnoli: *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p. 108.