

भक्तिरसविमर्शः  
श्री रूपगोस्वामिमतानुसारेण

Sacred Rapture:

A Study of the Religious Aesthetic of Śrī  
Rūpa Gosvāmin

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by  
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# Introduction

In the first half of the 16th century a few hundred miles up from where India's sacred Ganges meets the Bay of Bengal an enthusiastic religious revival was taking place in the ancient tradition of Vaiṣṇavism, the worship of the old Vedic god Viṣṇu and his many descents or "incarnations." The leader and center of this revival was a charismatic and intensely emotional devotee of Kṛṣṇa whose renunciation name was Śrī Kṛṣṇacaitanya.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1486 C.E. as Viśvambhara Miśra, son of Jagannātha Miśra, into a family of *brāhmaṇa* in the town of Navadvīpa, Caitanya sparked off a religious movement that swept through Bengal and spread to other parts of India within a century of his lifetime. That movement of enthusiastic, emotionally-charged devotion to Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (Kṛṣṇa's feminine consort/lover/power [*śakti*]), still continues today, most noticeably in Bengal, in Orissa, and in the area around the ancient town of Mathurā in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Over the last forty years the tradition has spread outside of India in various forms to all parts of the world as a result of the work of several zealous and charismatic gurus.<sup>2</sup> Although Caitanya was well educated and worked as a teacher in India's traditional Sanskrit school system for a while, he never wrote much himself. Instead he attracted some of the leading talents of his time to become his followers, and asked them to write the philosophical, theological, and ritual works that became the foundations of the religious tradition.

There is a popular verse that presents a commonly held view of the main teachings of Caitanya. It is found at the beginning of a commentary on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* called the *Śrī-Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā* (Treasure Chest of the

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<sup>1</sup>By renunciation name, I mean the name that he took when he entered the renunciant's stage of Hindu life called *sannyāsa*. A translation of the greatest of the biographies of the saint Caitanya, *The Immortal Acts of Caitanya (Caitanya-caritāmṛta)* written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja (16th cent.), has recently been published by Harvard University Press. The translation from the Bengali is by Edward C. Dimock with the assistance and editing of Tony K. Stewart.

<sup>2</sup>There are a number of representatives of this religious tradition who spread the faith in the West these days. The group with the highest profile, but, unfortunately, also of questionable authenticity, is the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known also as the Hare Krishna Movement, which was founded by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami in 1965.

Opinions of Śrī Caitanya) by Śrī Nātha Cakravartin (16th cent.). It is as follows:

”The Lord who is the son of the king of Vraja is to be worshiped and his abode is Vṛndāvana. The form of worship devised by the wives of Vraja is the most pleasing. The *Bhāgavata* is the purest source of knowledge. Selfless love (*preman*) is the highest goal of human life. This is the opinion of the great master Śrī Caitanya. To that we give our greatest respect.”<sup>3</sup>

The son of the king of Vraja is another name for Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya recognized the deity Kṛṣṇa as the highest deity and thus reversed the ancient Vaiṣṇava tradition that regarded Kṛṣṇa as but one of many descents into the world of Viṣṇu. For Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa was the fullest and highest self-revelation of deity. As Kṛṣṇa is holy so is the land in which he is believed to have spent his early days holy, Vṛndāvana. Among all of the exemplary worshipers of Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya thought that the way the cowherd women (called *gopī*) of Vraja worshiped him was the best. Theirs was the way of selfless giving of themselves for the sake of Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. This selfless giving is called *preman* or divine or sacred love. The most pure of all scriptures is, in Caitanya’s view, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the Tenth Canto of which tells the story of the life of Kṛṣṇa with special reference to his days in Vṛndāvana (the first forty-five chapters of that Canto). The highest goal of life is not one of the usual goals recognized in the Hindu tradition: wealth (*artha*), sensual enjoyment (*kāma*), religious duty (*dharma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). For Caitanya it was that selfless love called *preman* for Kṛṣṇa, a condition of emotional life he felt was most fully manifested in the love the cowherd women of Vraja felt for Kṛṣṇa.

Among the many learned men who became followers of Caitanya were the two brothers, Sanātana and Rūpa, and their nephew Jīva. These three men formed the hub of a small group of followers of Caitanya who at his request settled in Vṛndāvana near the city of Mathurā in the state of Uttar Pradesh, not far from the Moghul seat of power in Agra. There they wrote books, “rediscovered” the sites of Kṛṣṇa’s activities, and developed the methods of worship and meditation that became the standard practices for the later tradition. The tradition gave them the title of respect, *gosvāmin*, “master of cows” (Kṛṣṇa was after all a cowherd boy in his youth), and looked to their writings and examples for edification and inspiration. Sanātana Gosvāmin focused on theology, ritual, and hermeneutics; Rūpa Gosvāmin on religious aesthetics, poetry and

drama; and Jīva Gosvāmin, working with the South Indian follower of Caitanya, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, concentrated on philosophy, hermeneutics, and poetry. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmin provided the ritual foundations for the worship and practices of the tradition. The group, with the addition of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmin and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmin, is referred to as the Six Gosvāmin of Vṛndāvana.

I began this study with the intention of focusing on Rūpa Gosvāmin's (approx. 1470-1557 C.E.) *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* (Blazing Sapphire), the second of his two texts on what I call his religious aesthetic (*bhakti-rasa-śāstra*). This was envisioned as a complement to the work of others on Rūpa, especially to the work of those who have concentrated on his first and basic work on religious aesthetic, the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (Ocean of the Ambrosia of Sacred Rapture).<sup>4</sup> The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* contains Rūpa's discussion of sacred rapture (*bhakti-rasa*) in general, his theory of how it is experienced and his descriptions, along with examples, of its varieties. As such it serves as a general introduction to the subject as a whole. Rūpa's *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is a detailed treatment, with numerous examples, of the specific variety of sacred rapture that is most characteristic of Rūpa's own religious tradition, the Vaiṣṇava community inspired by the life and teachings Śrī Caitanya (1486-1533). The subject of the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* is sacred erotic rapture (*madhura-bhakti-rasa*, lit. the sweet sacred rapture), which is treated in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* but briefly and as only one of many varieties of sacred rapture. In the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, however, it is described as the "king of sacred rapture (*bhakti-rasa-rāj*)."<sup>5</sup> I wanted to explore this "king of sacred raptures" as a way of understanding the distinctive religious orientation of the Caitanya tradition that makes it unique in the religious history of India. Moreover, it seemed an excellent way of exploring and reflecting on the relationship of erotic and aesthetic experience to religious experience in the thought of one of India's foremost saint-poets.

As I set about this work, I discovered to my great surprise a problem that needed attention before any meaningful study could be made of Rūpa's notion of sacred erotic rapture. This was the problem of determining what Rūpa meant by the word *rasa* (rapture). Rūpa did not coin the word or create the concept; he borrowed it from the pre-existing discipline of Sanskrit aesthetics. What set of characteristics and ideas came with the notion as Rūpa adapted and incorporated it into his religious aesthetic? Most scholars have associated the notion of *rasa* found in Rūpa's works with the theoretical position that has come

<sup>4</sup>I am referring primarily to David Haberman's work, but also to that of Donna Wulff. See the bibliography for more information on their works.

<sup>5</sup>Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, (Vṛndāvana, India: Haridāsa Śarman, 1954), 1.2. I say "for the most part" because Rūpa does suggest in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* that sacred erotic rapture is superior to the others because it reveals the savor of sacred rapture most completely. See Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 3rd ed. (Navadvpa: Haribola Kuṭīra, G. 495 [1982]), 2.5.38.

to be recognized as the "classic" or mainstream formulation of *rasa*. This is the formulation associated with Abhinavagupta (10th cent.) in his commentaries on the fundamental works of Sanskrit dramaturgy and poetics, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and the *Dhvanyāloka*. I noticed, however, as I read Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* a significant number of points on which he differed from Abhinava's concept of *rasa* and began to wonder if Rūpa was not operating with some other understanding of *rasa*. As I searched the Sanskrit aesthetic traditions for other views of *rasa* that might be closer to Rūpa's, I came across one in the more or less neglected aesthetic of Bhoja (11th cent.), the polymath king of Dhārā in Rajasthan. The similarities in their modes of thought on several points were striking to me and I began to wonder about the influence of this extraordinary Rajasthani king on later Sanskrit aesthetic theory. The usual theory is that Abhinavagupta's treatment of the *rasa* aesthetic was so brilliant that with a little help from his later systematizer, Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa (12th cent.), it overshadowed all opposing views and reached, within a century or two, a pan-Indian currency.

How is it then that Rūpa, who wrote in the 16th cent., produced an aesthetic so different from that of Abhinava's tradition and so similar to that of Bhoja. A little more digging has revealed that a healthy variety of viewpoints on *rasa* existed throughout the period between Abhinavagupta and Rūpa and among those viewpoints Bhoja's was an important contender. Bhoja's work inspired and influenced a number of later writers, mostly in South India, and was incorporated into parts of a Purāṇa (the *Agni Purāṇa*), the area of the dissemination of which was centered in eastern India (Bengal and Orissa). It is suggestive to note that, although Abhinavagupta's notion of *rasa* eventually became the dominant one among literati throughout India, Bhoja's view bears a fairly strong resemblance to more popular views of aesthetics still extant in India. In the essay that follows I argue that unless Rūpa is understood in the context of Bhoja's aesthetic influence and not that of Abhinavagupta he is bound to be misunderstood. In supporting this argument, I have gone quite deeply into the aesthetics of both Abhinavagupta and Bhoja and have tried to characterize the ways in which they differ from each other in their views on *rasa*. Having considered their viewpoints, I have presented Rūpa's notion of sacred rapture and compared it to their notions of rapture. In addition, I have sketched a textual history of the development of the idea of sacred rapture (*bhakti-rasa*) before Rūpa. Finally, I have suggested some possible reasons for Rūpa's falling under the influence of Bhoja rather than of Abhinavagupta, apart from the likelihood that he simply preferred Bhoja's tradition to Abhinavagupta's.

In Chapter 1, I formulate the problem. I draw attention to the fact that scholarly attention has been focused mostly on Abhinavagupta in the field of Sanskrit aesthetics and suggest that this has led to the opinion that outside



of his thought there is nothing else worth considering in the field. On the basis of this understanding, other scholars in commenting on Rūpa's ideas have naturally attempted, with one or two exceptions, to interpret him on the basis of Abhinavagupta's thought. I have demonstrated the kinds of difficulties such an approaches create for these scholars. Finally, I have suggested that there were a number of other interesting things happening in the field besides Abhinava's work and have called attention to the single *rasa* theories in general and to Bhoja's single *rasa* aesthetic, based on erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*), in particular.

Chapters 2 through 4 form Part I of the book, which is devoted to the discussion of aesthetic rapture. Chapter Two starts with a brief overview of the history of *rasa* aesthetics in order to set the stage for a discussion of the earliest and most fundamental of its texts, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (4th or 5th cent. A.D.). As an apparatus for clarifying the distinct positions represented by the different lines of thought on *rasa*, I raise four questions: what is *rasa*, how is it aroused or evoked, what is the relationship between *rasa* and *bhāva* and who experiences *rasa*. The answers to these questions that each writer gives serve as points on which each can be compared with the others. I then present the process of *rasa* creation described in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, which has been the basis for all later discussions and interpretations. In that presentation the basic terminology of *rasa* aesthetics is defined and an attempt is made to present the view of that text in its own terms as much as possible. I note that the composite nature of the text and its vagueness in certain areas have engendered the wide variety of later readings.

In Chapter 3 I focus on the aesthetic of Abhinavagupta and discuss the tradition that has arisen around it. In laying out the main elements of his theory of *rasa*, certain new insights arise with respect to his relationship with his predecessor Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka on the question of generalization (*sādhāraṇikaraṇa*). Once Abhinava's aesthetic is laid out it is seen that for him *rasa* arises out of the mutual cancellation of the contexts of the play and the audience resulting in a temporary relaxation or suspension of the individualized limitations of consciousness. The pure consciousness of the spectator colored by the faint surviving impressions left from his or her worldly emotional experience constitutes *rasa* and, thus, it is similar to release from worldly existence. It can be claimed, therefore, that the rapture of tranquility (*śānta-rasa*) which arises through representation in drama or poetry of such release holds a special place in Abhinava's aesthetic, either as the bedrock of all the *rasas* or as a metaphor for the *rasa* process itself (i.e. as a metaphor for the relaxation of individual identity).

In Chapter 4, Bhoja's aesthetic is discussed. His aesthetic is laid out and the answers to the four questions are elicited. Bhoja claims that all forms of rapture are really forms of erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*) since they originate out of

the quality of self that makes possible the experiences love (*preman*). *Rasa* is the experience of love and the *rasas* are experiences of love for different objects or activities, presenting a potentially unlimited realm of possibilities. In the experience of *rasa* the personal identity, instead of becoming relaxed, as with Abhinavagupta, becomes intensified and one's self-valuation is increased. Moreover, *rasa* is the "peak-experience" of lovers (*śṛṅgārins*) in the world and is experienced only indirectly by the same through drama and poetry.<sup>6</sup>

Chapters 5 and 6 form Part Two of the book which deals with sacred rapture. Chapter Five contains a textual history of the notion of sacred rapture before the time of Rūpa. Sacred rapture has a fairly long history in which it gradually changed from an experience associated with quietistic meditation to the more erotically charged kind of experience it became with Jayadeva and Bilvamaṅgala. Even though the aesthetic tradition indebted to Abhinavagupta argued repeatedly that *bhakti* should not be considered a *rasa*, early religious writers such as Vopadeva and Hemādri insisted on its recognition as *rasa* and later writers have followed suit. Rūpa's thinking on sacred rapture builds on and expands the work of these predecessors.

In Chapter 6 Rūpa's religious aesthetic is discussed in detail and Rūpa's answers to the four questions are arrived at. Rūpa establishes sacred rapture on the basis of a *sthāyin* or permanent emotion he calls *kṛṣṇa-rati* (attraction to or desire for Kṛṣṇa). All forms of sacred rapture are forms of this permanent emotion either in its expanded, self-promoting form or in its diminished other-promoting form. *Kṛṣṇa-rati* has two phases of development which Rūpa calls *bhāva* and *preman* respectively. *Bhāva* is first stage of its appearance and *preman* is its mature form. Rūpa's identification of sacred rapture with *preman* (love) points to his indebtedness to Bhoja's aesthetic tradition.

In Chapter 7, the aesthetics of both Abhinavagupta and Bhoja are reiterated and Rūpa's religious aesthetic is compared with each of them. Rūpa's aesthetic is found to have more in common with that of Bhoja, in spite of the existence of several important differences. At this point, some suggestions are made that may account for Bhoja's playing a more central role in Rūpa's thought than Abhinavagupta.

In the Conclusion several issues are raised. The first is an assessment of what is gained by looking at Rūpa's aesthetic on the backdrop of Bhoja's aesthetic. For one thing, a number of difficulties that were encountered when Rūpa's writings were connected with Abhinavagupta are resolved. More importantly, Rūpa becomes aligned with an orientation to the world, closer to Bhoja's than to Abhinavagupta's, that is different from the one that he is usually assigned. The richness of Rūpa's conception of love, which owes much to

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<sup>6</sup>The idea of "peak-experience" as a possible Western counterpart to *rasa* as Bhoja understood it was suggested to me by Wendy Doniger.

Bhoja's tradition, and the importance of affirmation of individuality, which is not weakened, but strengthened in the experience of rapture, become emphasized. In short, the whole nature of our understanding of Rūpa's idea of sacred rapture is changed. Finally, the interesting dichotomy in Sanskrit aesthetics between the orientation of Bhoja and that of Abhinavagupta is discussed and a suggestion is made as to why Abhinavagupta has been the focus of so much more attention than Bhoja.



**Part I**

**Aesthetic Rapture**



# The Problem

Any attempt to understand a text from another culture and age faces the problem of placing that text in its proper framework, of locating the intellectual climate within which it came into being and was understood. In the case of the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* (The Blazing Sapphire), a 16th century North Indian text that unites a tradition of Sanskrit aesthetic theory with one of religious devotion towards the deity, Kṛṣṇa, the problem is particularly crucial. The *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* was written by a Bengali (East India) poet-dramatist-saint, Rūpa Gosvāmin, whose forefathers and family traditions came from South India (Karnatak or, perhaps, Andhra) and who, at the end of his life, lived and wrote in or around Vṛndāvana (in modern Uttar Pradesh, North India). Only when one successfully identifies the various threads, drawn from several previous schools of thought, that have been woven into the fabric of Rūpa's religious aesthetics do meaningful and coherent patterns emerge capable of unifying and illuminating his way of thinking about art and religion. Moreover, only when these patterns are correctly identified can one understand and evaluate the culmination of Rūpa's thought in sacred erotic rapture (madhura-bhakti-rasa), which finds its highest expression, in Rūpa's and his followers' work, as extra-marital (parakīya) erotic love.

Sorting out all the lines of influence in order to find the right perspective from which to interpret Rūpa's texts is no small challenge. Consequently, we shall see that though several earlier efforts have been made, certain limitations of knowledge and a fascination with and preference for some writers in and schools of the Sanskrit aesthetic tradition have shaped the ways scholars have understood the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and Rūpa's earlier, more general work on his sacred aesthetic, the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (Ocean of the Nectar of Sacred Rapture). The resulting interpretations have had to strain, twist and, in some cases, break Rūpa's texts in order to make them fit their perspectives. To be more specific, I shall argue that the interpretation of Rūpa's sacred aesthetic by Western and westernized scholars in terms of the aesthetics of Abhinavagupta (10th century, Kashmir) has been the result more of a set of scholarly biases than a

careful study and reflection on his writings and that a more fertile vantage point for understanding Rūpa's thought can be found in the aesthetic of King Bhoja of Dhārā (11th century, Rajasthan).<sup>1</sup> Though the ultimate aim of this study is the exploration of Rūpa's discussion of sacred erotic rapture (*madhura-bhakti-rasa*), no progress in that direction can be made until the shortcomings of the application of those scholarly preferences to his aesthetic have been pointed out and a more fitting perspective explored.

One of the problems of trying to situate the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* in the tradition of Sanskrit aesthetic theory arises from the way in which that tradition has been viewed and studied by scholars, both native and foreign, of Indian culture. Certain aspects of the tradition have attracted a great deal of attention, while other aspects have been practically ignored. Though the tradition of Sanskrit aesthetic speculation has had many, diverse currents, only one of them has received any significant attention, and that tradition has been recognized early on as *the* tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics. The current I have in mind is called the *rasa-dhvani* (rapture-suggestion) theory of aesthetics, which found its finest expression in Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* (Light on Suggestion) (9th century A.D.) and in Abhinavagupta's commentaries on that text and on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (Treatise on Drama) (4th-5th centuries A.D.). For example, two eminent scholars in the field, Masson and Patwardhan, have written:

There can be little doubt that Abhinava is the greatest name in Sanskrit literary criticism, along with Ānandavardhana, ... <sup>2</sup>

and

For later writers on Sanskrit aesthetics, there is no more important name than Abhinava.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem natural, therefore, when looking for the sources of Rūpa Gosvāmin's sacred aesthetic, to locate him among the numerous later writers of aesthetic treatises who were under Abhinava's influence. In fact, Masson and Patwardhan draw that conclusion:

It seems to us that the whole of the Bengal Vaiṣṇava school of poetics (and not only poetics, but philosophy as well) was heavily

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<sup>1</sup>The preference among western and western-trained scholars for the aesthetics of Abhinavagupta probably has two sources. The first source is naturally enough the pre-existing preference in favor of Abhinava held by most of the native *paṇḍitas* who first taught western scholars about Sanskrit aesthetics. Their primary text was either the *Kāvya-prakāśa* (12th century CE) or the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, both of which show Abhinava's influence. The second is the recognition of the fact that, among the various aesthetic theories in India, Abhinava's is most similar to the Aristotelian, contemplative aesthetics that has long dominated in the Western aesthetics.

<sup>2</sup>Masson and Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture* (Poona: Deccan College, 1970), 1:3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



influenced by the teachings of Abhinavagupta and the tradition he follows, though nobody writing on the Bengal school has noticed this fact or tried to follow its lead. It is true that the Gosvāmins do not quote Abhinava directly, but we think his influence is quite clear.<sup>4</sup>

This rather strong statement sums up the thinking of most of the scholars who have worked on Sanskrit aesthetic theory. The fact that, as Masson and Patwardhan have observed, nobody has noticed the influence of Abhinava on Rūpa Gosvāmin previously can be easily understood if we recognize that other writers, as we shall see, have thought it a foregone conclusion and too obvious to dwell on. There appear to be two main opinions operating here: (1) that the tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics is synonymous with the aesthetic of Abhinavagupta and (2) that Abhinavagupta's tradition became dominant throughout India quite early because of the popularity of texts which markedly bear its influence, texts such as the *Kāvya-prakāśa* (Manifestation of Poetry) by Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa (12th cent.) and the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* (Mirror of Literature) by Viśvanātha (14th cent.). From these two ideas it is a short and easy step to the claim that Rūpa, writing in the 16th century and being a well educated man, must have known of and been influenced by the tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics that originated in the vale of Kāśmīra.

As an example of how these opinions have operated in determining Rūpa's relationship to the earlier aesthetic tradition, let us look at a passage from S.K. De's classic treatment of the early history of the Caitanya sect, the sect to which Rūpa belonged, in his *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal*:

For the working out of this novel idea [thinking of bhakti as rasa] the whole apparatus of orthodox Sanskrit Poetics was ingeniously utilized, although the orthodox rhetorician himself would not regard Bhakti as Rasa, but as Bhāva. Our poet rhetorician [Rūpa], who was also an ardent devotee, follows very closely (even though his peculiar theme makes him depart in detail) the general outlines of the orthodox scheme of Poetics, adopting its main ideas and technicalities, but making them applicable to the conception of emotional Bhakti.<sup>5</sup>

By "orthodox Sanskrit Poetics," De means essentially the Kashmiri school of aesthetics as embodied in the writings of Abhinavagupta and Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa. Thus, De portrays Rūpa as an adapter of the orthodox aesthetic tradition which,

<sup>4</sup>ibid., 1:4.

<sup>5</sup>S.K. De, *Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1962), pp. 167-68.

as a result of the two opinions mentioned above, is synonymous with Abhinava's aesthetics and was dominant throughout India in Rūpa's time.

Masson and Patwardhan notice a glaring problem with their claim that Rūpa was heavily influenced by Abhinavagupta, however, when they remark that the Gosvāmins, particularly Rūpa Gosvāmin, never quote Abhinava. Though they attempt to downplay this problem by opposing it with the evidence of their own examination of the texts, in a writer like Rūpa, who faithfully quotes his sources by name whenever he can, the fact that he has never quoted Abhinava cannot be taken so lightly. On the other hand, it is certain that Rūpa knew the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, because he mentions it in the beginning of his work on dramaturgy, the *Nāṭaka-candrikā* (Moonbeam of Drama).<sup>6</sup> Since the influence of Abhinavagupta is evident in the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, Rūpa must have been exposed to some aspects of his thought. Unfortunately, however, Rūpa disapproves of method of the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, and though certain elements of its aesthetic theory have found their way into Rūpa's system, it cannot be said that he followed it very closely in the formulation of his sacred aesthetics.<sup>7</sup> The relationship of the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* to the "orthodox" tradition of Abhinavagupta is somewhat problematic, however, since it incorporates ideas contrary to those of that tradition and often openly criticizes that tradition.

Rūpa's failure to mention the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, which has been one of the main vehicles of the tradition of Abhinavagupta, is rather puzzling, though, and one is tempted, as a result, to speculate about the chronology of the spread of this important text to Bengal. As it turns out, the manuscript remains and commentarial tradition of the *Kāvya-prakāśa* in Bengal appear to be fairly late. The earliest surviving and dated manuscript of the text in Bengali script comes at the end of the 15th century and the earliest identifiable Bengali commentator on the text is Paramānanda Cakravartin, a scholar of Nyāya who was a contemporary of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, Bengal's first great neo-logician, and who therefore lived towards the end of the 15th century, too. Moreover, he may have been the Paramānanda whom Sanātana recognizes as his teacher, in which case Rūpa may have studied with him as well.<sup>8</sup> It is possible, however, that the *Kāvya-prakāśa* entered the intellectual horizon of the Bengal after Rūpa's education was complete which, if our chronology of Rūpa's life is correct, took place in the last two decades of the 15th century. It was about this time that Raghunātha śiromaṇi, traditionally recognized as a student of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, succeeded in establishing the independence of the Bengali school of Navya-nyāya (Neo-logic) from that of the Mithilā school and gained with that independence the right to make copies of the important texts of the

<sup>6</sup>Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Nāṭaka-candrikā* (Vārāṇasī: Chowkhambha Sanskrit Series Office, 1964), verse 2, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>See the Appendix for a discussion of R-upa's life.

school, write commentaries on them and grant titles.

One is tempted to conjecture that among the texts that came with the Navya-nyāya school into Bengal was the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, which had enjoyed a long commentarial tradition in Mithilā and Orissa since the time of Śrīdhara (13th century). The profusion of commentaries on the *Kāvya-prakāśa* by Bengali logicians after Paramānanda and the complete absence of any before him lend added support to the conjecture that the text came late to Bengal and thus Rūpa may not have studied it. More will be said on these points later, however. For now, suffice it to say that there appear to be grounds for doubting the validity of the opinion that the Kāśmīrī school of Sanskrit aesthetics was known and accepted throughout India well before the 15th and 16th centuries. To put this in another way, there seems to be no reason to believe that Rūpa had anything more than an cursory or indirect knowledge of Abhinavagupta's system of aesthetics. He certainly had access to Abhinavagupta in the discussion of rasa in the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*. In addition, there is one section of the discussion of rasa in another work which Rūpa knew and prized called the *Rasārṇava-sudhākara* by Si.mhabhūpāla, in which a theory is given that appears to be Abhinavagupta's. Si.mhabhūpāla, expresses his indifference towards this theory, however, and closes his discussion of rasa with a statement of his own characterization of rasa which, he says, agrees with that of the followers of Bharata, the author of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*.<sup>9</sup> This is the only other instance one can cite with certainty of Rūpa's coming into contact with the thought of Abhinavagupta and one senses that Rūpa seconded Si.mhabhūpāla's indifference towards Abhinavagupta's position.

Before challenging the first opinion mentioned above, which identifies the whole of Sanskrit aesthetics with that of Abhinavagupta, and exploring some of the other currents in the Sanskrit aesthetic tradition that may have exerted greater influence on Rūpa, let us see how the preference for the aesthetic of Abhinavagupta has affected the way scholars have interpreted Rūpa's idea of rasa. First of all, what is Abhinava's idea of rasa according to the scholars who hold these opinions? S.K. De gives us a simplified and concise description of rasa in his *History of Sanskrit Poetics*:

To state it briefly and without any technicality, there is in the mind a latent impression of feelings which we once went through (or which we acquired from previous births), and this is aroused when we read a poem which describes similar things. By universal sympathy or community of feeling we become part and parcel of the same feeling and imagine ourselves in that condition. Thus the feeling is raised to a state of relish, called rasa, in which lies the essence of

<sup>9</sup>Si.mhabhūpāla, *Rasārṇava-sudhākara* (Sāgarām: Saṃskṛtapariṣad, 1969), p. 104.

poetic enjoyment.<sup>10</sup>

The words "universal sympathy" and "community of feeling" provide only a glimpse of the impersonal or depersonalized nature of Abhinavagupta's notion of the *rasa* experience. Hiriyantha brings out this aspect of Abhinava's *rasa* much better in the following passage:

This transcendence of the egoistic self in the contemplation of art profoundly alters the nature of the pleasure derived from it. Being altogether divorced from reference to personal interests, one's own or that of others', art experience is free from all the limitations of common pleasure, due to the prejudices of everyday life such as narrow attachment and envy. In a word, the contemplation being disinterested, the pleasure which it yields will be absolutely pure. This is the significance of its description by Indian writers as "higher pleasure" (*para-nirvṛti*).<sup>11</sup>

According to this view, the *rasa* experience involves becoming free of one's mundane identity and temporality which in Indian non-dualism are considered impermanent adjuncts to or limitations of the eternal self (*ātman*). In the experience of art, these adjuncts are loosened and the self briefly becomes unfettered and capable of experiencing its own inherent joy, tinged only by one of a handful of elemental emotional states. As Gerow says:

The play becomes a unique medium for the statement, or clarification, of pure emotional consciousness where the *ātman* [the self] is not perceived in and of itself, but is colored by shadings of its most persistent emotional oppositions: love/hate, and so on.<sup>12</sup>

This temporary relaxation of personal identity along with its location in space and time is the essential element of Abhinavagupta's idea of *rasa*, and consequently when he discusses the impediments to the *rasa* experience, one notes that they all involve some form of barrier to this relaxation.<sup>13</sup> The special value of poetry and drama for the *rasa* experience is that they provide the only context in which such a relaxation can occur.<sup>14</sup> This is so because of the

<sup>10</sup>S.K. De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, reprint of 2nd. ed. (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd., 1976), 2:134.

<sup>11</sup>M. Hiriyantha, *Art Experience* (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1954), p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>Edwin Gerow, "Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism," in *Sanskrit Drama in Performance*, edited by Rachel Van M. Baumer and James R. Brandon (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981), p. 237.

<sup>13</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinavabhāratī* in *Nāṭya-śāstram*, ed. by M. Ramakrishna Kavi, 2nd. edition (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1956), 1:280.

<sup>14</sup>Strictly speaking this is not true for Abhinavagupta. He believed that religious ritual also provided a context within which this relaxation of personal identity could occur.

manner in which these forms of art “generalize” (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) their content, creating an imaginative world in which the members of an audience may forget their quotidian identities. Those familiar with Western aesthetics will readily recognize the affinities of this aesthetic view with Kant’s “disinterested delight” or Aristotle’s notion of universal (as distinct from historical) truth in poetry.

What happens when this conception of aesthetic experience is applied to the sacred aesthetic of Rūpa, an exponent of one of the most radically personal forms of religious devotion to have developed on Indian soil? The following passage is from David Kinsley’s *The Divine Player*:

Because *bhakti* is considered a *rasa*, it is also considered impersonal, as in aesthetic theory. This requires of the devotee, therefore, a certain impersonalization. He is required, as is the aesthetic connoisseur, to lose himself in the mood of the drama, to resist involving his own personal desires and emotions. Before he can soar to the heights of all-consuming love for Kṛṣṇa he must forget himself, disassociate himself from those particular circumstances and feelings that make him unique. *Bhakti*, like *rasa* with which it is identified, is not understood to be a feeling or emotion that belongs to the realm of the sensual, that can be “felt,” that can ever belong to particular individuals. *Bhakti*, like *rasa*, seems to be a thing in itself, an essence that exists apart from any individual but that can be experienced by individuals once they have divested themselves of individuality.<sup>15</sup>

Does the application of this aesthetic make any sense in the context of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava tradition which places the personal god, Kṛṣṇa, above the impersonal absolute, Brahman, and which seeks to establish a relationship with that deity that consists of some form of passionate love? Can there be a personal devotion that requires “impersonalization,” or a love that is devoid of all elements that makes the lover unique or special? Can there be such a thing as a “disinterested” love? Does it make sense to talk of emotions that cannot be felt by individuals or individuals that can only experience certain forms of emotion when they have lost their individuality? That the characteristic experience of *bhakti*, as it was understood in the Caitanya tradition, should be impersonal, seems, at the very least, unlikely. For Kinsley, however, the only difference between the aesthetic *rasa* and devotional rapture (*bhakti-rasa*) is that the latter is permanent and “transforms the devotee into a heavenly being.”<sup>16</sup> This, unfortunately, only makes things worse. Now we are faced with

<sup>15</sup>David R. Kinsley, *The Divine Player: a Study of Kṛṣṇa Līlā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1979), pp. 154-55.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 153-54.

individuals ("heavenly beings") who are permanently divested of individuality. Surely this an odd state of affairs that should have raised some doubt. Kinsley, faced with this troublesome concept *rasa*, has merely plugged in a formula easily available in discussions on Sanskrit aesthetic theory and did the best he could to pretend it made sense.

Another important study of the work of Rūpa Gosvāmin has fallen into a somewhat different difficulty because of attempting to understand Rūpa's aesthetics from the point of view of Abhinavagupta's aesthetics. This is the work of Donna Wulff entitled *Drama as a Mode of Religious Realization: The Vidagdhamādhava of Rūpa Gosvāmin*. In one place, she describes the effect of dramatic portrayal of the *līlās* (sports) of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa on an audience:

It is such an experience of total absorption in the eternal *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa, of complete self-forgetfulness through communal participation in intense emotions toward the Lord like those expressed on the stage, that is the cherished goal of this form of Kṛṣṇa devotion; and this, at least for a few brief hours, the *līlās* make possible.<sup>17</sup>

We see here the characteristics of Abhinava's conception of *rasa* in the "self-forgetfulness" and "communal participation." These correspond to the relaxation of individual identity and the generalization described by De and the others. Wulff also points out the importance of dramatic representation in bringing about the experience that is the "cherished goal" of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. She remarks in another place:

We have already observed that Rūpa's exposition of *bhakti-rasa* in the final three divisions of his *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* is based squarely on the dramatic theory of the classical Sanskrit theater.<sup>18</sup>

It is evident from other sections of her work that by "classical Sanskrit theater" Wulff has in mind some notion of the aesthetics of Abhinavagupta. By maintaining this direction in her approach, however, Wulff directly collides with Rūpa's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, as she herself notices. She writes:

In view of the fundamentally dramatic structure of Rūpa's theory of *bhakti-rasa*, one would expect him to give great importance to dramas representing the eternal *līlā*. It is therefore startling to discover his only explicit statement about the devotional value of drama and poetry:

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<sup>17</sup>Donna Wulff, *Drama as a Mode of Religious Realization* (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1977), pp. 44-45.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

When love (*rati*) has newly dawned in a devotee of Hari, poetry and drama are efficacious in making [Kṛṣṇa and all associated with him] the *vibhāvas* [and other dramatic elements that combine to produce *rasa*]. Good devotees, [however,] taste *rasa* at the slightest mention of Hari; for this, the power of their love (*rati*) alone is sufficient cause.

Taken at face value, this statement seems to minimize or even deny the devotional value of drama and poetry for all but the beginner on the path of *bhakti*.<sup>19</sup>

Wulff at this point might have realized that something was wrong with the assumptions she had brought to Rūpa's theory. Instead she says: "Yet such an interpretation is contradicted by the sheer weight of the evidence for Rūpa's valuing of both poetry and drama,"<sup>20</sup> and proceeds to attempt to support her position throughout the rest of her second chapter. She concludes:

In the light of the material that we have just surveyed, which demonstrates unequivocally that drama lies at the very heart of Gauḍiṇya Vaiṣṇava devotion, especially as that devotion has been interpreted and shaped by Rūpa's theory, it seems utterly inconceivable that Rūpa would limit the significance of drama to mere beginners.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Rūpa does say, and not just once, that drama and poetry are not the sole causes of the experience of sacred rapture (*bhakti-rasa*).<sup>22</sup> Such a statement would be unthinkable in a follower of Abhinavagupta because, though drama and poetry are not causes of *rasa*, in Abhinavagupta's view, they are still the necessary and only contexts in which aesthetic rapture can arise.<sup>23</sup>

If Abhinavagupta's aesthetic has failed to show kinship with Rūpa's sacred aesthetic, what other possible sources are there? Is it true that Sanskrit aesthetics is synonymous with the aesthetics of Abhinavagupta and his followers? These are the questions that must be asked if one wants to find a perspective that does justice to Rūpa's theory. Abhinava's commentary on the *rasa-sūtra*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>22</sup>Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* at 2.5.90-91 and again at 2.5.96-97.

<sup>23</sup>On the causality of the play with respect to *rasa* see Gerow's discussion in "Rasa as a Category of Literary Criticism," pp. 237-238.

<sup>24</sup>The *rasa-sūtra*, or aphorism on *rasa*, is the defining statement on the nature of *rasa*. Naturally, it is suitably obscure and so has provoked centuries of debate on its exact scope and meaning. The *rasa-sūtra* will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* makes it clear that, before him, there were a number of writers who had different theories on *rasa*. Did any of these theorists establish traditions that survived Abhinava's critique and partial absorption of their views? The predominating view among many scholars is that Abhinavagupta's discussion of *rasa* in his commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, which pointed out the shortcomings in his predecessor's characterizations of *rasa*, eclipsed those theories and brought an end to those lines of thought. After Abhinava, a writer named Mahimabhaṭṭa wrote the *Vyakti-viveka* (Analysis of Suggestion), in which he leveled an attack on the concept of *dhvani* (suggestion) so essential to Abhinava's understanding of *rasa*. Mahimabhaṭṭa sought to replace *dhvani* as the vehicle for the expression of *rasa* with *anumāna* (inference), and thus represented a divergent current. In addition, there is Dhanañjaya, whose work on dramaturgy, called the *Daśa-rūpaka* (Ten Forms of Drama) views *rasa* in a way different from Abhinava. Furthermore, Rūpa cites this text on at least one occasion and, as we shall see, appears to have taken some aspects of his system from it. Did any of these writers, however, exert a major influence on Rūpa's thinking? None of them appears to have established strong traditions in the sense of a corpus of texts and writers that have accepted and further developed their ideas.

Gerow has suggested another possibility: "What we find is almost a literal return to the form of Bharata's original dramatic criticism."<sup>25</sup> He, thus, regards Rūpa's thought as a revival of the aesthetic in Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*. It is true that Rūpa quotes Bharata a number of times in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī* and expresses his ideas on *rasa* in a way that is more in agreement with Bharata's perhaps more simple and straightforward aesthetic. Rūpa also sees an opposition between Bharata, whom he calls the *muni* (sage), and Viśvanātha, the author of the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, and claims sympathy with the view of the former.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, most of the verses that he attributes to Bharata cannot now be found in the extant versions of Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*. What is more, some doctrines are ascribed to Bharata that are patently anachronistic, such as doctrines of generalization (*sādhāraṇīkṛti*) and of the excellence of extra-marital love.<sup>27</sup>

Some other scholars have offered the interesting suggestion that Rūpa and the other Vaiṣṇava writers on aesthetics were more directly influenced by the *rasa* theory of Bhoja, king of Dhārā in Malwar (Rājasthāna). Bhoja (11th century) was a younger contemporary of Abhinavagupta and independently developed a theory of the nature of *rasa* that is quite different, one might even say radically different, from Abhinava's. His influence seems to have been felt

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>26</sup>Rūpa, *Nāṭya-candrikā*, verses 1 and 2.

<sup>27</sup>See Rūpa Gosvāmin *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 2.5.103 and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, 1.20.



mostly in South India, and one can even discern what might be loosely called a tradition of works and thinkers who have developed his ideas. Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya in his ground-breaking essay on the topic, concluded:

Whatever be the importance of Bhoja as an authority on Sanskrit poetics, he has thus been cited or referred to by East Indian writers on this subject continuously from the 12 century onwards as late as the sixteenth century. ... Indeed it is a fact that Bengal writers paid less heed to very many of the accepted views of the early Kasmir poeticists on the poetic of *rasa* than to the contribution of Bhoja.<sup>28</sup>

Here again, however, we are faced with the puzzling fact that Rūpa does not quote Bhoja even once. As mentioned earlier, Rūpa was fond of a work that shows some of Bhoja's influence, the *Rasārṇava-sudhākara* by Siṃhabhūpāla, a 14th century South Indian king of Karnatak. Rūpa's remarks about this work reveal that he knew it well and was fond of it.<sup>29</sup> Another work which was strongly influenced by Bhoja and which was popular in Bengal since the 12th century is the encyclopedic Agni Purāṇa. Rūpa quotes verses from the section of this Purāṇa that deals with aesthetics and literary criticism (chapters 337 to 348) at least once as well.<sup>30</sup>

Another scholar, S. N. Ghosal Sastri, has developed the idea that there were two separate *rasa* traditions in India, which he calls the mono-*rasa* and the multi-*rasa* streams, or alternately the Neo-*rasa* and the Scholastic-*rasa* schools. He places Rūpa in the mono-*rasa* stream and relates him to a tradition of earlier writers which features Bhoja as its most prominent member. He says:

In Rūpa Gosvāmin's Rhetorics, the direct influence of Bharata, Dhanañjaya, Śāradātanaya, Śiṅgabhūpāla etc. [is] marked clearly; but his indebtedness to Bhojadeva's *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa* is more prominent.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, a distinction is made between those who claim that there are many *rasas* and those who say that there is only one *rasa* which appears in different forms. The aesthetics of Abhinavagupta and his followers fall into the first group, and those of Bhoja, Śāradātanaya (13th century), and Rūpa fall into the second. Though both Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya and S. N. Ghosal Sastri tend to dissolve the differences between the various theories that postulate a single *rasa*, it is important to keep in mind that, according to some writers, the only

<sup>28</sup>Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya, "Bhoja's *Rasa*-ideology and its Influence on Bengal *Rasa*-sastra," *Journal of the Oriental Institute* (University of Baroda) 13, no. 2 (December, 1963): 106-19.

<sup>29</sup>Rūpa, *Nāṭaka-candrikā*, verse 1.

<sup>30</sup>Rūpa, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 2.1.15.

<sup>31</sup>S.N. Ghosal Sastri, *Rasacandrikā & Studies in Divine Aesthetics* (Santiniketan: Visva-bharati, 1974), p. 42.

rasa is the rapture of pathos (karuṇa); according to some, it is the rapture of astonishment (*adbhuta* or *camatkāra*); according to others, it is the rapture of peace (*śānta*) and, finally, according to some, it is rapture of eros (*śṛṅgāra*). These represent different views of what is essential in the aesthetic experience and cannot be unreflectively collapsed into each other. In other words, there is not one viewpoint that advocates a single rasa aesthetic, but several of them. Among these various views, Bhoja's view takes erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*) as the essential rasa and identifies all the other rasas as variations or manifestations of it.<sup>32</sup> Considering the centrality of erotic rapture for Rūpa's sacred aesthetic, the suggestion that Bhoja has been a major influence on his thought becomes more plausible.

Thus, it appears that both of the opinions that have informed studies of Sanskrit aesthetics are questionable. Perhaps alongside the tradition that eventually became dominant there were other vibrant aesthetic traditions that exerted much more influence on Indian aesthetics for much longer than previously has been thought, one of the chief among which was that of Bhojarāja. Moreover, perhaps Abhinavagupta's tradition was not as widely and evenly spread as early as has been thought.

In spite of the dissenting opinions of the two scholars, Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya and S. N. Ghosal Sastri, the general outlook of scholars in the field has remained unchanged. De, giving full voice to the bias that first drew scholarly attention to Abhinavagupta and his tradition, categorically dismisses Bhojarāja and those whose theories resemble his from the realm of aesthetics altogether. He says, referring to Bhoja, the Agni Purāṇa, Bhoja's followers, and Rūpa:

With the exception of the *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*, which attempts to bring erotico-religious ideas to bear upon the general theme of Rasa, these specialized treatises have, however, very little importance from the speculative point of view; and as they belong properly to the province of Erotics rather than Poetics, treatment of them should be sought elsewhere.<sup>33</sup>

In the concluding chapter of this study I will attempt to characterize the peculiar orientation of Western aesthetics that is behind such an exclusion.

Another important study of Rūpa's sacred aesthetic is David Haberman's *Acting as a Way of Salvation: Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana*. Noting the suggestions of Bhattacharyya and Ghosal Sastri, he writes:

Abhinava's influence should not, however, be overestimated; other influences were equally strong (e.g., Bhoja and Viśvanātha). Fur-

<sup>32</sup>Bhoja, *Sarasvatī-kanthābharana*, ed. by Anundoram Barooah (Gauhati: Publication Board, Repr. 1969), 5.33, p. 240.

<sup>33</sup>De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 2:268.

thermore, in comparing the religio-aesthetic theories of Rūpa and Abhinava, there are fundamental differences which must be accounted for.<sup>34</sup>

Haberman, then, sees the influences of Abhinava and Bhoja on Rūpa as equally important. He never mentions what exactly Bhoja contributed to the aesthetics of Rūpa, however, nor does he give us any hint as to what are the fundamental differences between Rūpa and Abhinavagupta that must be accounted for. Haberman, presumably, wants to say that Rūpa received from Bhoja the ideas of the centrality of erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*) and of the possibility that an actor may experience *rasa* in a drama, this latter idea being essential to Haberman's thesis. The former idea has already been suggested and seems quite plausible. The suggestion that an actor in Bhoja's aesthetic can experience *rasa* is misleading, however, and perhaps even incorrect. Bhoja, while not denying the possibility, never affirms the point. For him, the primary locus of the experience of *rasa* are the original models for the play, the hero and heroine themselves, and not the actors.

Unfortunately, Haberman does not specify how Abhinavagupta has influenced Rūpa either, except in suggesting that some of the terminology Rūpa uses such as *camatkāra* (astonishment), etc. was derived from him. These terms, however, were part of the common language of aesthetics and of poetry itself and need not be taken, contrary to Gnoli, as the technical or specialized terms found in Abhinava's thought.

From these preliminary reflections, it is evident that the problem of placing Rūpa in his proper context is far from resolved. I shall argue that Rūpa was more influenced by Bhoja and his South Indian followers than by Abhinavagupta, in spite of Masson and Patwardhan's "but we think his [Abhinavagupta's] influence is quite clear." The footnote they provide for that statement merely leads us to a verse in which Rūpa claims that Kṛṣṇa is established as the highest divinity by means of *rasa*.<sup>35</sup> Nothing about the verse indicates whether this is *rasa* as Abhinava understood it or *rasa* as Bhoja understood it. In order to gain, therefore, a better understanding of Rūpa's sacred aesthetic and its culmination in sacred erotic rapture (*madhura-bhakti-rasa*), we must take a deeper look into its roots via a more detailed study of the aesthetic theories of Abhinavagupta and Bhoja and their respective traditions.

<sup>34</sup>David Haberman, *Acting as a Way of Salvation: Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1984), p. 135. A revision of this work has been published by Oxford University Press (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>35</sup>Rūpa, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, 1.2.59, p.53.



## **Part II**

# **Aesthetic Rapture (*Rasa*)**



# The Beginnings of Rasa Theory

The development of the concept of *rasa* (aesthetic rapture) forms a long and fascinating chapter in the intellectual history of ancient and medieval India. *Rasa* has roots extending far back into the early religious, philosophical and scientific speculations and explorations of ancient India, back at least to the earliest *Upaniṣads* (8th-2nd cents. B.C.E.) and to the early medical texts (3rd cent. B.C.E. to 1st cent. C.E.). The word *rasa*, which has among its numerous meanings “sap,” “juice” and “liquid,” and, by extension, “flavor,” “pleasure” and “essence,” is used extensively in both the *Chāndogya* and *Taittirīya Upaniṣads*. In the *Chāndogya* (1.1, for instance) *rasa* primarily means “essence,”<sup>1</sup> while in the *Taittirīya* it means, in some cases, “essence” and, in others, “flavor” (at 2.7.2, for instance) and is closely associated with delight (*ānanda*).<sup>2</sup> Even though the *rasa* mentioned in the *Upaniṣads* is not aesthetic rapture in its later, technical sense, such a close relationship exists between these usages that later writers on aesthetics were able without much difficulty to read into the *Upaniṣadic* texts the later *rasa* of aesthetics.<sup>3</sup>

After *rasa* emerges as an aesthetic concept, it evolves in very complex ways.

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<sup>1</sup>*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 1.1.2, for instance: एषा भूतानां पृथिवी रसः पृथिव्या आपो रसः। अपामोषधयो रस ओषधीनां पुरुषो रसः पुरुषस्य वायसो वाच ऋग्रस ऋचः साम रसः साम्न उद्गीथो रसः॥ २॥ स एष रसानां रसतमः परमः परार्थ्यो ऽष्टमो यदुद्गीथः॥ ३॥

<sup>2</sup>*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2.7.2:

असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत्।  
ततो वै सदजायत॥  
तदात्मानं स्वयमकुरुत।  
तस्मात्तत् सुकृतमुच्यते॥ इति॥

यद्वै तत् सुकृतम्। रसो वै सः। रसम् ह्येवमयम् लब्ध्वन्ननन्दइ भवति॥

<sup>3</sup>The often quoted passage from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.7): *raso vai saḥ rasaṁ hyevāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati*, “He is indeed *rasa*. Having obtained *rasa*, this one becomes joyful,” was first quoted by the 14th century writer on poetics, Viśveśvara in his *Camatkāra-candrikā*, (Delhi: Meharchand Lachhmandas, 1972), p. 107.

The earliest discussion of *rasa* as an aesthetic term is in the dramaturgical text, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (Treatise on Drama) attributed to a sage named Bharata, which, in the form we have it today, dates from the 4th or 5th centuries C.E.<sup>4</sup> *Rasa*, then, first emerged as an aesthetic principle in connection with drama. Within drama, however, it is most closely connected with the poetic aspects of drama.<sup>5</sup> As we find it in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, the *rasa* aesthetic already possesses a high degree of sophistication and complexity, replete with a technical terminology and an established canon of moods and emotions. This points to perhaps centuries of prior development of the idea of *rasa* before the composition of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*.

The *Nāṭya-śāstra* apparently had a number of early commentaries, all of which unfortunately have been lost with the exception of parts of the commentary of Abhinavagupta (10th cent. C.E.).<sup>6</sup> Fortunately, we know something about the earlier commentators' views from references to them in his commentary. The section of Abhinava's commentary on the *rasa-sūtra* ("aphorism on *rasa*") of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, for instance, contains, in addition to his own interpretation of the nature and process of *rasa* realization, a record of the attempts of some of his predecessors to clarify the concept of *rasa* found in the text.<sup>7</sup> Abhinavagupta's commentary, therefore, is an invaluable document for reconstructing the middle period (4th cent. to the 10th cent. C.E.) of the development of the conception of *rasa*, although it does not throw much light on the earliest period of the *rasa* aesthetic.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from its development as a defining characteristic of drama, *rasa* also entered the realm of poetics at an early period. The first writer on poetics whose works have survived is Bhāmaha (7th-8th cents. C.E.).<sup>9</sup> He treated *rasa* as a variety of figure of speech (*rasavad-alaṅkāra*). The next major writer on poetics, Daṇḍin (8th cent. C.E.), followed Bhāmaha in his treatment of *rasa*.<sup>10</sup> Hence, they did not regard *rasa* as an essential component of the beauty or desirability of poetry. For them *rasa* was simply an ornament of good poetry,

<sup>4</sup>The *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata has been published in numerous editions and translations. See the bibliography for the most important of these. All references in the following footnotes will be to the second edition of the text published in the Gaekwad's Oriental Series, number 36 edited by K. S. Ramaswami (Baroda, India: Oriental Institute, 1927-1956).

<sup>5</sup>*ibid.*, p. 345. The *rasas* are often referred to as *kāvyaārtha*, "poetic content or import."

<sup>6</sup>Included in the Gaekwad's Oriental Series edition of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*.

<sup>7</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī* on *Nāṭya-śāstra*, 6.32, pp. 272-287.

<sup>8</sup>An attempt has been made to trace the development of *rasa* from early Buddhist philosophy and Ayurvedic medical theory in a book called *Aesthetic Enjoyment* by R. K. Sen (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1966). Unfortunately, the book is poorly written and very difficult to gain any solid understanding from.

<sup>9</sup>Bhāmaha, *Kāvyaālaṅkāra*, edited and translated by P. V. Naganatha Sastry, 2nd. ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970), 3.6, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup>Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaadarśa*, edited by K. R. Potdar, 2nd ed. (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1970), 2.5, p. 115.



one of many such ornaments. Rudraṭa (9th cent. C.E.), however, placed more emphasis on *rasa*, insisting that it was a part of the central experience of all poetic works.<sup>11</sup>

With Ānandavardhana (9th cent. C.E.) *rasa* gained a new and central place in poetic theory, however. In his *Dhvanyāloka* (Light on Suggestion) he forged a relationship between *rasa* and another concept that had gained favor among theorists of poetics, the concept of *dhvani*, or the suggestive power of language. Ānandavardhana put forward *dhvani* as a semantic power of language, distinct from denotation (*abhidhā*), that predominates in fine poetry.<sup>12</sup> *Dhvani*, therefore, became recognized as the essence of poetry and *rasa*, as *dhvani*'s primary variety, became the highest criterion of fine poetry.<sup>13</sup> Hence, *rasa* became an aesthetic determinant of both drama and poetry. The appearance of the *rasa-dhvani* school, as it has been called, marked an important new development (and a departure from the older traditions) in the history of the idea of *rasa*, especially when, a century later, it found its most powerful formulation in the commentaries of Abhinavagupta on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Abhinavagupta's works are valuable not only for understanding the history of *rasa* as an aesthetic concept, but also because of the particular interpretation of the concept of *rasa* that they contain.

A rich tradition of *rasa* aesthetics, which drew its inspiration largely from Abhinavagupta's works, developed over the succeeding centuries. The primary vehicle of this tradition was the *Kāvya-prakāśa* of Maṃmaṭa Bhaṭṭa (12th cent. C.E.) and its long and voluminous commentarial tradition.<sup>15</sup> This tradition eventually became recognized as the central (or classical) tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics throughout India and survived as a creative intellectual force, at least among the learned, until long after its last great reformulation by Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (17th cent. C.E.).<sup>16</sup> Though this tradition of aesthetic

<sup>11</sup>Rudraṭa, *Kāvya-lankāra* (Delhi: Motilāl Banārasidāsa, 1983), 12.1-2, pp. 149-150:

ननु काव्येन क्रियते सरसानामवगमश्चतुर्वर्गे।  
लघु मृदु नीरसेभ्यस्ते हि त्रस्यन्ते शास्त्रेभ्यः॥ १॥  
तस्मात्तत्कर्तव्यं यत्नेन महीयसा रसैर्युक्तम्।  
उद्वेजनमेतेषां शास्त्रवदेव न्यथा हि स्यात्॥ २॥

He makes *rasa* the characteristic of poetry that distinguishes it from other kinds of treatises (*śāstra*). For him, it is primarily a sugar coating for the more serious matters of learning, however.

<sup>12</sup>Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* has been published in several editions with the commentary of Abhinavagupta, the *Dhvanyāloka-locana*, and one or two sub-commentaries. See the bibliography for the most important editions. The references in this study are to the edition with Bengali translation of Subodhacandra Senagupta and Kālipada Bhaṭṭācārya in Bengali script, 2nd ed. (Kalakāṭa: E. Mukhārjī ayā.n.dā Koṃ Prāṇ Lih, 1986) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., 1.4, pp. 14-24.

<sup>14</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhārati* and *Dhvanyāloka-locana*.

<sup>15</sup>See S. K. De's discussion of the commentarial tradition in his *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 1:156-177. For the major editions of the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, see the bibliography.

<sup>16</sup>Jagannātha's work is called the *Rasa-gaṅgādhara*, which was never completed. For the major

thought underwent a number of changes and developments, a recognizably unitary manner of understanding the aesthetic experience as *rasa* has persisted within it. Characteristically, this tradition emphasized, as we shall see in more detail later, contemplation (*bhāvanā*), the non-affective awareness of emotion in the process of aesthetic enjoyment.<sup>17</sup>

Of the several writers outside the influence of the *rasa-dhvani* school, challenging or teaching views other than those of Abhinavagupta, one of the most important and innovative thinkers among them was King Bhoja of Dhārā.<sup>18</sup> He lived and ruled in what is now called Rajasthan at approximately the same time as Abhinavagupta (10th-11th cents.).<sup>19</sup> Though he claimed originality for his *rasa* theory, Bhoja, nevertheless, cited the earlier *Kāvyaadarśa* of Daṇḍin as the source of his *rasa* aesthetic and set forth the key points of his theory on the basis of an interpretation of a single verse of Daṇḍin's work.<sup>20</sup>

The main vehicles of Bhoja's aesthetic were his *Sarasvati-kaṇṭhābharana* and *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa*. The *Sarasvati-kaṇṭhābharana* is the shorter and earlier of these works and seems to have enjoyed a high degree of popularity while the second, much larger work has barely survived. These works exerted a great influence on the section of the *Agni Purāṇa* on poetics (chapters 337-347) and on the *Bhāva-prakāśana* of Śāradātana (13th cent.), both of which in turn, especially the *Agni Purāṇa*, played a major role in spreading Bhoja's influence to other parts of India.<sup>21</sup>

The *Agni Purāṇa* may have been given its final form in Bengal in the 12th

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editions of this important work, see the bibliography.

<sup>17</sup>Jagannātha's statement: तदवच्छिन्ने भावनाविषेः, *tadavacchinne bhāvanāviṣeṣaḥ*, "a particular sort of contemplation characterized by that (i.e., a peculiar quality of astonishment belonging to joy which is attested by experience)," is an excellent characterization of the position of the tradition coming from Abhinavagupta. See the *Rasa-gaṅgādhara*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, Repr. 1983), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Other writers who occupy this category are Dhanañjaya (9th cent., *Daśarūpaka*), Kuntaka (9th-10th cents., *Vakrokti-jīvita*) and Mahima Bhaṭṭa (11th cent., *Vyakti-viveka*).

<sup>19</sup>De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, 1:136-140. He was apparently a younger contemporary of Abhinavagupta, but never refers to his works.

<sup>20</sup>Daṇḍin, *Kāvyaadarśa*, 2.275, p. 257. Abhinavagupta suggests in his commentary on the *rasa-sūtra* (*Abhinava-bhārati*, p. 272) that the views of an earlier commentator on the *Nś* named Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa should be associated with those of Daṇḍin and refers to their viewpoint as that of the ancients (*cirantana*). Bhoja's thought, in which their line of thinking is developed, might, therefore, be associated with an ancient tradition, the writings of the earliest representatives of which (besides Daṇḍin and Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa) are now lost to us. Bhoja's role, like Abhinavagupta's in the *rasa-dhvani* school, was to give this understanding of *rasa* a more sophisticated and cohesive shape. V. Raghavan, however, disagrees with the idea of a separate and ancient tradition and argues for Bhoja's originality in formulating his aesthetics. See his *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa* (Madras: Punarvasu, 1963), p. 713.

<sup>21</sup>Raghavan believes that the author of the section on poetics in the *Agni Purāṇa* borrowed from Bhoja and not the other way around. See his *Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra Prakāśa*, p. 713.

century,<sup>22</sup> and its section on poetics had its greatest influence in Bengal, eastern Bihar and Orissa. Being part of a *Purāṇa*, it gained an aura of authority that superceded even that of its sources, the works of Bhoja, Mammaṭa and many of the other writers on literary criticism. Its authority even came to equal, in those parts of India, that of Bharata, the writer of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* who was considered by almost all traditions to be a divinely inspired sage (*muni*). Consequently, Bhoja's influence, through the *Purāṇa*, became strong in Bengal and its contiguous regions. His influence also seems to have been strong in central regions of South India such as Andhra and Kārṇāṭaka (Śāradātanaya, who develops Bhoja's idea of *rasa*, was either from Madras or Andhra). The writers of the 13th and 14th centuries from those areas, Vidyādhara (Orissa) and Vidyānātha (Andhra), were conversant with his views, though they tended to favor the ideas of the *Kāvya-prakāśa*. Viśveśvara (14th cent., Andhra) was influenced by Bhoja as was, though to a lesser degree, his royal patron, Siṃha-hūpāla. Consequently, a tradition, though weaker and less well defined than that of the followers of Abhinavagupta, developed around Bhoja's thought that lasted into the 16th century.<sup>23</sup> This tradition, in contrast to Abhinavagupta's tradition, emphasized the aesthetic experience as feeling, in reaching which the contemplative, non-affective awareness of emotion must be transcended.<sup>24</sup>

This, then, is a brief overview of the two most important currents of *rasa* aesthetics for this study: those of Abhinavagupta and of Bhoja.<sup>25</sup> In order to demonstrate that Bhoja's tradition more profoundly influenced Rūpa's aesthetics, it is necessary to probe more deeply into both and compare them in more

<sup>22</sup>See S. M. Bhattacharyya, *The Alaṃkāra-section of the Agni-purāṇa*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1976), p. 135. Bhattacharyya suggests, on the basis of the fact that most of the surviving mss. of the text are found in the Bengali script, that the *Purāṇa* was written in Bengal.

<sup>23</sup>Bhoja's influence among commentators, however, has not yet been fully determined. Important commentators on works of poetry and drama such as Mallinātha and his son, Kumārasvāmin, both from Andhra, were conversant with Bhoja's works.

<sup>24</sup>One of Bhoja's verses in his *Śṛṅgāra-prakāś* typifies this understanding:

यो भावनापथमतीत्य विवर्तमानः।  
स्वाहङ्कृतौ हृदि परं स्वदते रसो ऽसौ॥

"That is *rasa* which, rising beyond the path of contemplation, is only tasted in the identifying heart."

The important point here is the shift of emphasis from the "head" and its understanding to the "heart" and its feeling. Bhoja, *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa* (Mysore: G Sreenivasa Josyer, 1963), 2:436.

<sup>25</sup>The important 14th century text by Viśvanātha (Orissa), called the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, does not fit well into either of these two traditions. It shows instead some characteristics of both, though the influences of Abhinavagupta and the *Kāvya-prakāśa* are certainly more pronounced. This text may represent the outcome of a period of Bhoja's influence on Abhinavagupta's tradition, perhaps by means of the *Agni Purāṇa* and some of the other texts mentioned above. As a result, it occupies a place of special interest in the history of Sanskrit aesthetics and, along with Viśvanātha's commentary on the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, deserves special consideration. I will look more closely at it in discussing Rūpa's aesthetics and its relationship to Viśvanātha's thought in the next chapter.

detail with Rūpa's. Since it would be pointless, if not impossible, to discuss here all of the aspects of *rasa* aesthetics in these writers, my intention, instead, is to focus on a few central issues. After giving a general account of the theories of each of the three thinkers, four questions will be posed and a comparison of the answers to these questions will highlight the similarities and differences among the three conceptions of *rasa*. The four questions are: what is *rasa*, how is *rasa* aroused, what is the relationship between *rasa* and *bhāva* (quotidian emotion) and finally who experiences *rasa*? As a final component of this study, some of the important implications of each aesthetic position will be discussed. Before we can begin an examination of the thought of Abhinavagupta, Bhoja, or Rūpa, however, we must start at the beginning, with the *rasa* theory of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, since it forms the common foundation upon which, or in opposition to which, all later ideas of *rasa* were constructed.

## Rasa in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*

The task of isolating a consistent conception of *rasa* from the statements of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* is not an easy one, because it appears to be a composite text, an amalgamation of, perhaps, several earlier texts that do not necessarily agree with each other. Consequently, it is full of conflict and confusion. Abhinavagupta's commentary provides us with invaluable assistance in understanding the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, and yet its strong stance in favor of one of the traditions of interpretation tends, in some cases, to obscure other ways of understanding the text. Furthermore, Abhinava's commentary does not seem to have played an important role in the history of the interpretation of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* itself, because it was nearly lost, surviving only in a couple of manuscripts and then in a fragmentary and most corrupt form.<sup>26</sup> The *Nāṭya-śāstra*, however, has survived in numerous manuscripts. Thus, in certain areas, many if not most of those who studied the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, including Rūpa Gosvāmin, did so without the help of his commentary. On the other hand, there appear to have been other interpretive traditions, perhaps only oral ones, which, unfortunately, are not available to us today in their entirety.<sup>27</sup> In view of these considerations and limitations, the discussion of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* that follows will depend primarily on a close reading of the text itself, using Abhinava's commentary sparingly

<sup>26</sup> Abhinavagupta's commentaries probably did not survive well because of the popularity of Mammaṭa's *Kāvyā-prakāśa*, which systematized and made easily available the most salient points of his thought.

<sup>27</sup> Siṃhabhūpāla's use of the word *bhāratiya* (coming from or belonging to Bharata) to name a mode of interpretation of the *rasa* process different from Abhinavagupta's indicates the existence of at least one tradition of interpretation of Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra* that was separate from that of Abhinava and also suggests that Abhinava's view was not consonant with that of Bharata. See Siṃhabhūpāla's *Rasāṃśa-sudhākara*, p. 104.

and appealing to surviving characterizations of other interpretations whenever they are available.

The topic of *rasa* appears in the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and is followed by a discussion of *bhāva*, or enacted emotion, in the seventh chapter. The first five chapters of the text contain mythological accounts of the origin of drama, descriptions of the various kinds of theater halls and of the ceremonies and performances to be carried out before a dramatic presentation. The exposition of drama per se actually begins with the discussion of *rasa* in sixth chapter.

After providing a digest of all the topics comprising dramaturgy, the discussion of *rasa* begins with an important introduction which conveys its central importance in drama:

*na hi rasād ṛte kaścid arthaḥ pravartate*

Apart from the *rasa*, nothing [no meaning or purpose; *artha*], indeed, exists [proceeds, commences, functions; *pravartate*].<sup>28</sup>

The multivalent nature of the word *artha* in this statement, which may mean “thing, meaning, goal, object or wealth,” allows this statement a wide and rich variety of interpretation.<sup>29</sup> Allowing for such a variety, this statement means that the communication or arousal of *rasa* is the primary purpose of drama, provides drama as a whole with its value, and regulates all of the other aspects of a dramatic production. *Rasa* is the “meaning” of drama in these senses. The generality of this statement implies, however, a relevance beyond just the topic of drama. It suggests the broader view that nothing in the world can exist or proceed without *rasa*, in the wider sense of “delight” which we saw in its Upaniṣadic usage, and that the same is true in the case of drama. Moreover, the importance of drama with respect to other fields of human endeavor and knowledge is located in its ability to supply mankind with one important form of *rasa*, aesthetic *rasa*, which nourishes the mind and heart as the *rasa* of food nourishes the body.<sup>30</sup> No doubt, the semantic breadth and richness of the

<sup>28</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 271.

<sup>29</sup>*Artha* is a word which encompasses many of the meanings of the English word “meaning” (i.e., semantic meaning, value and intention) as well as a few more such as the “thing or object” to which a word or sentence refers. To add to the ambiguity of the statement, the use of *artha* may mean that *rasa* is itself either the only *artha* (in any of its senses) of drama or is essential to and guides the operation of the other *arthas* that make up drama, depending on whether one takes the verb *pravartate* in its static sense of “exists” or its active sense of “commences” or “functions” or “sets in motion.”

<sup>30</sup>With *rasa* afforded such an important and basic place in human existence, it is a small wonder that *rasa* assumed sacred or semi-sacred dimensions of value in the later traditions. Abhinavagupta’s understanding of *rasa* as a partial revelation of self (*ātman*), Bhoja’s idea of *rasa* as a quality of self and Rūpa’s notion of *rasa* as the primary experience of God seem to resonate with this statement.

statement was intentional and, when taken in its broader sense, it assumes the role of the auspicious invocation (*maṅgala-vākya*) with which most traditional Sanskrit treatises must begin.<sup>31</sup> In its present location in the text, it plays the more practical role of introducing the topic of *rasa* and justifying its being taken up first among all of the other topics of dramaturgy.

Immediately following the introductory statement is the *rasa-sūtra* itself, a brief, aphoristic statement encapsulating the in one sentence the whole theory. The *rasa-sūtra* is:

*vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhicāri-saṃyogād rasa-niṣpattiḥ.*

From the union of the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *vyabhicārins*, there is the production of *rasa*.<sup>32</sup>

The meaning of this statement has been debated for centuries: the purpose and meaning of the word “production” (*niṣpatti*), the exact nature of “union” and the curious absence of one of the main ingredients of *rasa*, the *sthāyi-bhāva* or primary emotion, for instance. Since none of the *rasa* theories we want to compare can be understood unless these technical terms, *vibhāvas*, etc. are first explained, a discussion of them now in the context of their earliest appearance in the history of the theory of *rasa* would be useful.

The technical terms, *vibhāva*, etc., which are discussed in the seventh chapter of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, are best understood by means of an example that resembles a standard one found in poetic texts. When, in a play or poem, a young man and a young woman are depicted in a romantic setting such as a moonlit garden, when they cast furtive glances at and tremble on touching each other and when other fleeting emotions such as shyness, euphoria or jealousy are portrayed in them, sensitive members of the audience “taste” the emotion connected with all of these characteristics. Their enjoyment or “tasting” of that emotion is called *rasa* in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. In this example, the emotion tasted is amorous love (*rati*) and the name given to its tasting is *śṛṅgāra*, which I translate as “erotic rapture.”

In this example, the young man and woman as well as the moonlit garden are technically called *vibhāvas*. *Vibhāvas* (translated as “determinants” by

<sup>31</sup> It is a longstanding practice among writers of works in Sanskrit to begin with an auspicious invocation (*maṅgala-vākya*). It was believed that such beginnings remove any obstacles that might be standing in the way of the completion of the work. Often times these auspicious invocations also set forth the topic of the work. In a case where there does not seem to be an explicit auspicious invocation for a work, the statement of topic was often interpreted, by the work’s scholiasts, as one. A classic example of this is found in the *Brahma-sūtra*, which begins with the words *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*, “now, therefore, inquiry into Brahman.” Some commentators have gone to great lengths to interpret the word “now” as the auspicious invocation.

<sup>32</sup> Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 272.

some)<sup>33</sup> are the characters, objects or settings that determine the minds of members of the audience in favor of a particular emotion. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* says:

Now from where does the term *vibhāva* come? It is said that *vibhāvas* are objects of cognition. Its synonyms are “cause” (*kāraṇa*), “instrumental cause” (*nimitta*) and “logical cause” (*hetu*). Since verbal, physical, and mental enactments are caused or made known (*vibhāvyaṅte*) by this, it is called a *vibhāva*, for “to be caused” (*vibhāvita*) has no other meaning than “to be cognized” (*viññāta*). On this point there is a verse: ‘Since many objects, whose support is verbal or physical enactment, are made known by this, it is called *vibhāva*.’<sup>34</sup>

The idea emerges here that the *vibhāvas* provide the matter or content of a particular drama: the time, place and characters on which the acting rests and thus delimits what sort of *rasa* will developed. This part of a dramatic production is primarily the realm of the playwright.

The enacting of physical, mental, or verbal actions either of a premeditated or spontaneous sort (the spontaneous being the *sāttvika-bhāvas*, which will be discussed later), such as might arise, in the example above, out of a couple’s feelings for each other in the real world, like the furtive glances, trembling, stuttering, are called *anubhāvas* (translated as “consequents”).<sup>35</sup> The *Nāṭya-śāstra* says about these:

Where does the name *anubhāva* come from? It is said that by means of it, representation (*abhinaya*), performed verbally, physically, or mentally, becomes perceptible (*anubhāvyaṅte*). On this point there is a verse: ‘Because the meaning is made perceptible by verbal and physical enactment, it (the enactment), combined with the branches, limbs and sub-limbs, is remembered as *anubhāva*.’<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>G. K. Bhat, *Rasa Theory* (Baroda: M.S. University of Baroda, 1984), p. 8 and R. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*, 2nd ed. (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1968), p. 25.

<sup>34</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, pp. 346-7, 7.4: अथ विभाव इत् कस्मात्। उच्यते विभावो विज्ञानार्थः। विभावः कारणं निमित्तं हेतुरिति पर्यायाः। विभाव्यते ऽनेन वागङ्गसत्त्वाभिनया इत्यतो विभावः। यथा विभावितं विज्ञातमित्यर्थान्तरम्। अत्र श्लोकः ---

बहवो ऽर्थाः विभाव्यन्ते वागङ्गाभिनयाश्रयाः।  
अनेन यस्मात्तेनायं विभाव इति संज्ञितः॥

<sup>35</sup>G. K. Bhat, *Rasa Theory*, p. 8 and R. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*, p. 25.

<sup>36</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 347, 7.5: अधानुभाव इति कस्मात्। उच्यते अनुभाव्यते ऽनेन वागङ्गसत्त्वकृतो

The *anubhāvas*, being apparently the same as the acting of the actors through dialogue, physical action and involuntary reactions (*sattva*), add the dimension of direct perception (*anubhavana*) to the audience's experience of the primary emotion (called the *sthāyin*), creating the impression of the emotion's presence in the actors. This is a realm shared by the playwright, the director and the actor. Here the involvement of the audience goes beyond simply knowing or cognizing (*viñāna*) the context of a primary emotion, which is the result of the operation of the *vibhāvas*, to perceiving directly (*anubhavana*) it through the acting of the actors.

Other transitory emotions, such as the shyness, euphoria or jealousy in this example act to enhance or adorn the primary emotions and are called *vyabhicārins* ("transients").<sup>37</sup> Again the *Nāṭya-śāstra*:

Now we shall explain the *vyabhicārins*. Here it is asked: where does the name *vyabhicārīn* come from? It is said that these two: *vi* and *abhi* are the prefixes and *car*, in the sense of motion, is the verbal root. Since they move towards the rasas in a variety of ways, they are *vyabhicārins*. In a dramatic performance the *vyabhicārins*, endowed with speech, physical action and mental concentration, lead the rasas. Here it is asked: how do they lead? It is replied that this is a conclusion from the world: as the sun leads this day or asterism. Nor does it (the sun) lead by the arms or shoulders. Rather, this is well known in the world: as this sun leads [or brings on] the asterism or the day, in the same way are these *vyabhicārins* to be understood.<sup>38</sup>

The idea here is that the *vyabhicārins* introduce or bring on the rasas as the sun brings on the day or a new asterism (constellation). In practical terms they lend strength, variety, beauty and authenticity to the impressions of the primary emotions created by the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* in drama. When all of these are presented together in a play or a poem, the audience has an opportunity to enjoy a primary emotion, technically called the *sthāyin* or *sthāyibhāva*, and its enjoyment of that emotion is called *rasa*, aesthetic rapture. Surprisingly, however, the *sthāyin* is not mentioned in the *rasa-sūtra*, as we have seen. This fact becomes more problematic when the *Nāṭya-śāstra* suggests in another place that the *sthāyins* are part of the process:

ऽभिनय इति। अत्र श्लोकः—

वागङ्गाभिनयेनेह यतस्त्वर्थो ऽनुभाव्यते।  
शाखाङ्गोपाङ्गसंयुक्तस्त्वनुभावस्ततः स्मृतः॥

<sup>37</sup> My own translation following Gnoli and Bhat.

<sup>38</sup> Bharata, *ibid.*, pp. 355-56. Put text.



As flavors in sweetmeats, etc. are achieved by means of molasses, substances, extracts and herbs, so too, endowed with various *bhāvas* (the *vibhāvas*, etc.), the *sthāyibhāvas* achieve the state of rasa-hood.<sup>39</sup>

The *Nāṭya-śāstra* recognizes eight *sthāyibhāvas*: amorous love (*rati*), laughter (*hāsa*), sadness (*śoka*), anger (*krodha*), courage (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*) and wonder (*vismaya*).<sup>40</sup> These correspond to the eight rasas: eros (*śṛṅgāra*), comedy (*hāsyā*), compassion (*karuṇa*), fury (*raudra*), heroism (*vīra*), horror (*bhayānaka*), revulsion (*bībhatsa*) and astonishment (*adbhuta*). Some recensions of the text and Abhinavagupta in his commentary<sup>41</sup> add a ninth rasa called tranquility (*śānti*) which correlates with a *sthāyīn* called equanimity (*śama*) or, according to some, to the *vyabhicārīn* indifference (*nirveda*) produced by knowledge of the Truth which is then promoted to the status of a *sthāyīn*.<sup>42</sup>

The text lists thirty-three *vyabhicārīns* (also called *sañcārīns*) such as indifference (*nirveda*), torpor (*glāni*), suspicion (*śaṅkā*), etc. Each of these has a number of sub-varieties depending on the circumstances in which they arise.<sup>43</sup> To the eight *sthāyīns* and thirty-three *vyabhicārīns*, which are what would be considered passions or affects in the West, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* adds eight more *bhāvas* called *sāttvika-bhāvas*. These are not actually feelings, but involuntary physical reactions that accompany some feelings, like tears, perspiration, horripilation, etc. These are closely associated with *anubhāvas* because they, like other *anubhāvas*, are external expressions of internal feelings.<sup>44</sup> This brings the total number of *bhāvas* to forty-nine (excluding *śama*, the emotion thought to be the *sthāyīn* of *śānti*). The *Nāṭya-śāstra* neither enumerates nor discusses at any length the *vibhāvas* or the other *anubhāvas* because these are felt to be part of everyone's common knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

These concepts constitute the basic elements of the rasa theory. Now that

<sup>39</sup>ibid., pp. 288. Put text.

<sup>40</sup>ibid., 6.17, p.267. Put text.

<sup>41</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 332.

<sup>42</sup>*Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 333-35. See also Mammaṭa, *Kāvya-prakāśa*, edited with the commentary of Paramānada Cakravartin by Gaurinātha Śāstrī (Vārāṇasi: Sampūrṇānandasamskṛtaviśvavidyālaya, 1976), 4.35, 1:129-30.

<sup>43</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 268 and pp. 356-374. For a translation of the complete list of *vyabhicārīns* see Masson and Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, 1:44-45.

<sup>44</sup>Their inclusion in the enumeration of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (the other *anubhāvas* are not specifically noted or listed) and their name (*sāttvika-bhāvas*) are problematic. Perhaps their inseparability from emotions, which lends the impression of genuineness to dramatic emotions, accounts for their emphasis in the text. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* derives the name *sāttvika* from *sattva* which it defines as "the concentrated mind." The *sāttvika-bhāvas* are so named because they arise in the actors when their minds are concentrated on the roles they are playing (pp. 374-75).

<sup>45</sup>ibid., p. 348.

they have been introduced separately and briefly explained they can be put together into a unified expression of the *rasa* theory of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. The text does this and provides an example, too:

On this subject it is asked: what sort of thing is *rasa*? It is said that because it is capable of being tasted [it is called *rasa*]. How is *rasa* tasted? Just as clever men taste flavors while eating grain that is seasoned with various spices and experience joy and the rest, so do well-disposed spectators taste the *sthāyins* adorned (or manifested, *vyāñjita*) by the enactment of various *bhāvas*, endowed with speech, body, and mind, and experience joy, etc. Therefore, the dramatic *rasas* are explained. Here there are two traditional verses: ‘Just as people who know about foods find pleasure while eating food that is seasoned with many substances and extracts, so do the wise find mental pleasure in the *sthāyins* connected with the enactment of *bhāvas*. Therefore, the dramatic *rasas* are known.’<sup>46</sup>

The *bhāvas*, or more specifically, the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*, are enacted in dramatic performances and the *sthāyins* or quotidian emotions related to those *bhāvas* are enjoyed by intelligent spectators. The process is analogous with the enjoyment of fine flavors in food.

An excellent way to enter into a deeper discussion of the theory of the text is to ask why such an important thing as the *sthāyin* was left out of the *rasa-sūtra*. It should be evident by now, however, that the *sthāyibhāvas* are radically different from the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*. The *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* are objects or actions that are parts of the expression of a play or a poem, the hero and heroine, for instance, along with their meetings and conversations, and, therefore, are directly presented to the audience. They form the elements of plot, description, imagery and dialogue and of the acting of the actors that make up the audible or visible body of a poem or a play. *Sthāyins*, however, are internal states of mind (*citta-vṛttis*) and, unlike things, words or actions, cannot be part of the expression itself, but must always remain beyond or behind the various modes of expression.<sup>47</sup> They may be portrayed through the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* appropriate to them, but cannot have a place alongside them. The words

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288-90. Put text.

<sup>47</sup> An argument can be made that the *Nāṭya-śāstra*’s use of the term *sthāyibhāva* is meant to distinguish the major or primary emotion presented in a work of art not only from the transitory *vyabhicāribhāvas*, but also from quotidian emotions. This is implied by the way the text relates its use of the term *bhāva* to meanings that the Sanskrit verbal root,  $\sqrt{bhū}$  (to be, to exist), has in its causative mode. *Bhāva*, understood as a causative, means that which produces an effect in something or someone else or that which pervades something. *Bhāvas* in plays or poetry primarily function to affect the audience. This would distinguish dramatic emotions (*bhāva*) from quotidian emotions, which are states or conditions of mind (also referred to as *bhāvas*, but in a non-causative sense) that primarily occur in and affect individual persons and only secondarily and coincidently.

love (*rati*), laughter (*hāsa*), etc. cannot themselves create impressions of love or laughter, etc., for example. Consequently, in the *rasa-sūtra*, which is concerned with indicating the aspects of drama as expression that lead to the *rasa* experience, the *sthāyins* are not mentioned and appropriately so. The *sthāyins* are present in the formula indirectly, however, through their proper *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*. In its seventh chapter, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* provides a representative list of the sorts of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* that are suitable for each of the *sthāyins*. When these are present as part of a work of art, then the *sthāyins* are in some sense present, too. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* appropriately describes them as pervading or perfuming the work.<sup>48</sup>

The *vyabhicārins*, being transient emotions which enhance and variegate the primary emotions, are also different in nature from the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*. They, like the *sthāyins*, are mental states (*citta-vṛttis*), not things or actions. In the real world, the experience of love and other emotions is often accompanied by a number of subsidiary, passing emotions such as doubt, jealousy, euphoria, etc. The clever portrayal of these in drama enhances and strengthens the impression of the primary emotion created by the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*. The playwright, therefore, must carefully choose *vyabhicārins* that are compatible with the particular primary emotion whose *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* he has incorporated into his work and avoid those that are inconsistent with it. Since they represent emotions, however, they, too, cannot be expressed directly in art and must be portrayed through their own *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, in much the same way as the primary emotions. Hence, each of the *vyabhicārins* is given its own set of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* in the seventh chapter of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. Unlike the *sthāyins*, however, the *vyabhicārins* are not intended as the primary impact of a play or poem, but only as enhancements of the primary emotions. Thus, they may be included in the actual expression of a play or a poem either by means of their names or by means of their *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, like the primary emotions. In either case, they still successfully enhance and strengthen the primary emotion. Because the *vyabhicārins* can be part of the expression of

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tally others. Yet, dramatic emotion and quotidian emotion are still closely related to each other, because the dramatic emotion creates the impression of the presence of the quotidian emotion. Abhinavagupta contradicts this implication by taking the *sthāyins* as *citta-vṛttis*, experienced emotions. The *sthāyīn* for him is the quotidian emotion and this appears to be the most consistent way to interpret the text. Consequently, the causative understanding of *bhāva* as something which produces an effect in something or someone else must apply only to the *vibhāvas*, etc. The sense of *bhāva* as pervasion must refer to the *sthāyins*, however, because it is they that, through their appropriate *vibhāvas*, etc., pervade a play (or a poem) like perfumes or flavors which linger on in the absence of their sources. Like the fragrance of a rose in perfume or in water, dramatic *bhāvas* create the impressions of the presence of quotidian emotions that are actually absent. Therefore, *sthāyibhāvas*, as quotidian emotions are not included in the *rasa-sūtra*, but through their *vibhāvas*, etc. both pervade and fragrance a play, like aromas or flavors.

<sup>48</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, pp. 344-5.

a play or poem, they, therefore, are included in the *rasa-sūtra*.<sup>49</sup>

There is, however, a more important reason why the *sthāyins* are not mentioned in the *rasa-sūtra* and this leads us to the crucial question concerning the relationship between the *sthāyins* and the *rasas*. The *sthāyin* is, as we have learned earlier, an emotion. In dramatic performances such emotions are depicted, but not actually experienced. When the causes, effects and accompanying emotions of a quotidian emotion are portrayed in a play or a poem, the awareness or the impression of that emotion is created, but not the emotion itself. If the emotion itself were to arise in either the actors or the audience, the distinction between the world of drama and the quotidian world would be lost. The *Nāṭya-śāstra*, however, says that the connoisseur "tastes" or "relishes" the emotions presented in drama, implying by this expression that he experiences them differently than one experiences emotions in ordinary life. For one thing, the emotions as they are presented in drama are always enjoyable, whereas quotidian emotions, because of the personal claims they make on one, might be disturbing or painful. The underlying assumption of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* is that the emotions presented in drama are not actually experienced.<sup>50</sup> It instructs the actors to "act" in such and such ways to produce the impression of the presence of the primary emotion and tells them to concentrate on their roles in order to produce convincing physical symptoms of the emotion (the *sāttvika-bhāvas*). It informs them, in addition, of which accompanying or transitory emotions (*vyabhicārins*) go well with which primary emotions. None of this would be necessary if the emotions themselves were experienced in the play. Thus, it seems likely that since the primary emotion is not experienced in a play, the *sthāyin* or quotidian emotion has been left out of the *rasa* formula.

According to the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, then, the human emotions attain a special

<sup>49</sup>Since both *sthāyins* and *vyabhicārins* represent emotions, it might be asked why only *sthāyins* are said to become *rasas*. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* provides an interesting analogy to distinguish the *sthāyins* from the *vyabhicārins* and other *bhāvas*. It compares the *sthāyins* with kings and the *vyabhicārins* with their attendants. Among men, the text says, though all have some features in common, some men have finer qualities, characters and educations and as a result become kings while others become their attendants and followers. In the same way, the emotions called *sthāyins* are more excellent and become the masters of the other *bhāvas*. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* concludes that the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* are like the qualities of kings and the *vyabhicārins* like their associates and attendants. Consequently, only *sthāyins* are capable of being called *rasas* (pp. 349-350). Bhoja, however, criticizes this assertion of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* when, as we shall see later, he argues that all forty-nine *bhāvas*, and a few others besides, can become *rasas*.

<sup>50</sup>The leading actor and the leading lady in a play, therefore, need not actually possess amorous love for each other. In fact, the presence of such love could be detrimental to the functioning of the play by possibly causing the actors to forget lines, cues and so forth. Nor would the presence of amorous love in the audience be conducive to their enjoyment of dramatic rapture, for that would possibly create between the members of the audience and the actors an emotional involvement outside the scope of the drama itself. A member of the audience who falls in love with the leading actress or with the character she plays would possibly experience jealousy towards the leading man or his character. Such jealousy would certainly interfere with the *rasa* experience.

sort of existence in drama; they are something like phantoms "haunting" the play, or, in the words of the text itself, they "pervade" or "perfume" the play, making themselves felt while not actually being experienced.<sup>51</sup> It is precisely their absence and the awareness, on some level, of their absence that allows the members of the audience to taste or enjoy them. The qualification of the successful spectator that allows him to find pleasure in these phantom emotions is his awareness of the fictional nature of what is presented before him. Therefore, he is described as *sumanas*, well-disposed or benevolent, benevolent in the sense of being charitable towards what is patently false, but also in the sense of not being threatened by the scenes in front of him.<sup>52</sup>

Though the *sthāyin* and the *rasa* are, therefore, different, the former being a quotidian emotion and the latter the new and enjoyable experience that the members of an audience undergo, the *Nāṭya-śāstra* sometimes appears to blur this distinction by describing the *sthāyins* as "attaining the state of *rasa*-hood"<sup>53</sup> or as "gaining the name *rasa*."<sup>54</sup> The first of these characterizations implies a transformation of the *sthāyin* into *rasa*, while the second implies their identity, their difference being only nominal. There remains a sense in the text, however, according to which the *sthāyin* is viewed as "transformed" into *rasa* by attaining, through drama, a capacity for being enjoyed (*āsvādyatva*) that is alien to it as a quotidian emotion. Indeed, this is what the *Nāṭya-śāstra* suggests by comparing the *rasa* experience with the joy connoisseurs experience while eating well prepared food. As ordinarily bland or even bad tasting substances can be made tasty through combining it with spices and other flavorful substances, quotidian emotions are made enjoyable in dramatic (or artistic) presentations by means of the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicārins*. It is primarily the non-ordinary atmosphere (*alaukikatva*) of drama which effects this transformation. For this reason, every effort is made in the drama of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* to demarcate clearly the realm of drama and to separate it from the ordinary world. The *sthāyins*, then, when they appear through their *vibhāvas*, etc. in the non-ordinary world of drama become enjoyable and their enjoyment by generous (i.e., willing) members of an audience is called *rasa*.

Our discussion of the *rasa* theory of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* would not be complete without mentioning one more of its concepts. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* adds an impor-

<sup>51</sup>The later traditions of Sanskrit aesthetics, especially those influenced by Abhinavagupta, say that what the audience experiences in place of the actual emotions are the dormant impressions, called *vāsanās* or *saṃskāras*, left over from their previous emotional experiences. For a more detailed discussion of these concepts see Chapter 3 on Abhinavagupta's aesthetic. The concepts also play a role in Bhoja's aesthetic, but a different one. See Chapter 4 for more information on his use of the ideas.

<sup>52</sup>Bharata, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 289.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p. 288: स्थायिनो भावा रसत्वमाप्नुवन्ति

<sup>54</sup>ibid., p. 349. In this passage the difference between *sthāyins* and *rasas* appears to be only one in the name: तथा विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिपरिवृत्तः स्थायी भावो रसनाम लभते See also p. 355.

tant dimension to the question of how rasa is aroused in an audience through its idea of the quality of "generality" (*sāmānya*). In the seventh chapter one finds:

Therefore, these are to be known as the forty-nine *bhāvas*, the causes of the manifestation of the poetic rasas. From these, in union with the quality of generality (*sāmānya-guṇa*), the rasas are produced.<sup>55</sup>

This quality of generality is further described in a following verse:

The *bhāva* of that which communicates to one's heart is the source of rasa. One's body is pervaded by it like dry wood is pervaded by fire.<sup>56</sup>

Here the quality of generality appears to be a characteristic of the material out of which a successful drama can be created. If some story or event is general enough, it has an appeal for or communicates with the hearts of the spectators. One may suppose that a set of events or a story is general enough if it accords in a general way with the past experiences of a large segment of the audience. It then becomes capable of touching their hearts and becomes a source of rasa for them. This notion of generality is an important one and we shall see it undergo a variety of changes in the theories of each of our thinkers.

It is now possible for us to answer, in the case of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, the four questions concerning rasa which were raised earlier. These questions are: how does the *Nāṭya-śāstra* characterize rasa, how is rasa aroused, what is the relationship between rasa and *sthāyibhāva* and who experiences rasa?

The *Nāṭya-śāstra* characterizes rasa as the spectator's "tasting" (*āsvāda*) of the primary emotion (*sthāyīn*) related to a set of *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas*, which are parts of a dramatic or poetic presentation. Furthermore, as a "tasting," the experience is a pleasurable experience. Secondly, it arises because the emotions represented in drama or poetry are both familiar and fictitious. Drama or poetry is, therefore, essential to the arousal of rasa, that is to say, rasa is not a quotidian experience. Thirdly, rasa is an experience, related to, but different from, the experience of quotidian emotion (*bhāva*), and finally, it occurs in a spectator who is well disposed (*sumanas*).

So far I have focused on the fundamental text of Sanskrit aesthetics, the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. Let us turn, in the next two chapters, to the two most important traditions of interpretation of this text and see how they have answered the same questions. This, in turn, will allow us, in the following section, to connect Rūpa's answers to the same questions with one of those traditions. Let us begin with Abhinavagupta's rasa aesthetic.

<sup>55</sup>ibid., p. 348. Put in text.

<sup>56</sup>ibid. text

# Rasa According to Abhinavagupta

Abhinavagupta's life, such as we know of it, and philosophy have already been treated by numerous scholars in various important studies. I, therefore, shall mention only a few details of his life and quote a few relevant sections of his works here. The other studies may be consulted for more detailed information about him and his thought.<sup>1</sup>

Abhinavagupta is commonly regarded as one of India's greatest literary critics and philosophers.<sup>2</sup> The exact date of his birth is unknown, but it is likely that he was born in approximately 950 A.D. in Kashmir, the son of Narasiṃhagupta and Vimalakalā. His ancestors were *brāhmaṇas* from Kanauj (Kānyakubja) who moved to Kashmir during the reign of King Lalitāditya (725-761 A.D.). There was a strong tradition of study of the Śaivite Tantric scriptures in his family and, consequently, it is not surprising to find in Abhinava one of the foremost commentators on the seminal works of Kashmiri Śaivism. Though he studied Śaivism from his father, he was apparently devoted to all fields of learning and studied a great many subjects with the finest teachers in Kāśmīra during his time.<sup>3</sup> He was a prolific writer and some forty-four works are attributed to him, the period of his literary activity, as it appears from his dated works, being between 990 and 1015 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, the major study of Abhinavagupta by K. C. Pandey called *Abhinavagupta: an Historical and Philosophical Study*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed., (Varanasi: The Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1963). On his aesthetic thought the works of V. Raghavan, R. Gnoli, J. L. Masson and Patwardhan, and Walimbe may be consulted. The details of their works are in the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup>Masson and Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1969), p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>See K. C. Pandey, pp. 11-13, for a list, compiled from his works, of his teachers and the subjects he studied with them.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, p. 9 and pp. 27-29. V. Raghavan in his *Abhinavagupta and His Works* (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1980), pp. 17-32, lists 36 and announces two newly discovered works besides mentioning a few others that are known only from references.

Abhinavagupta's surviving writings on aesthetics consist primarily of his commentaries on Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* and on Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*. He apparently also wrote a commentary on the *Kāvya-kautuka*, a work on poetics by one of his teachers, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, neither of which has survived. A work on drama called the *Nāṭya-locana*, which may have been only a versified summary of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, is also ascribed to him.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the loss of the last two works, we must depend on the first two works for an understanding of his aesthetic. His writings on Śaivite Tantra and the writings of his commentators, however, provide additional sources of help in comprehending his complex and difficult ideas on aesthetics.<sup>6</sup>

A comparison of Abhinava's views on aesthetics in his works indicates a continuing process of development in his thought. Those differences and their ramifications shall be noted whenever they are thought necessary for the argument. Abhinava's commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* is earlier than the one on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and has also survived in better condition. Although Abhinavagupta is notoriously difficult to read, the *Dhvanyāloka-locana* is, for a variety of reasons, much less difficult than the *Abhinava-bhāratī*.<sup>7</sup> The latter work has survived in only two manuscripts which appear to have been copied from a single manuscript now lost.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the difficulty of Abhinava's style in that work is complicated by the poor and fragmentary condition of its manuscripts. Nevertheless, a number of scholars have attempted to restore important portions of the text and on the bases of their efforts one can construct a fairly good picture of Abhinava's later aesthetic.<sup>9</sup> With these limitations in mind, we can now turn to a discussion of Abhinavagupta's notion of *rasa*.

Abhinava characterizes *rasa* in several passages of the *Locana*. On *Dhvanyāloka* 1.4, for instance, he says:

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>R. Gnoli, in his *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, and Masson and Patwardhan, in their *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta's Philosophy of Aesthetics*, try to relate Abhinavagupta's aesthetics to certain of his notions in Śaiva Tantra. See Gnoli's introduction on pp. xxxviii-xxxix and the footnotes to the same on pp. xl-xli. See Masson and Patwardhan, pp. 38-58.

<sup>7</sup>See J.L. Masson and M.V. Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, 1:2-3, for their discussion of why this may be so.

<sup>8</sup>See K.S. Ramaswami Sastri's preface to the 2nd rev. edition of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1956), 1:20-21.

<sup>9</sup>The first effort was that of S. K. De, published as part of his essay "The Theory of *Rasa* in Sanskrit Aesthetics," in *Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes*, vol. 3, *Orientalia* (Calcutta: The University of Calcutta, 1925), 2:207-254.

For a complete account of the restoration effort see Masson and Patwardhan, *Aesthetic Rapture*, 2:4-5, fn. 25. The most suspicious part of this effort is the emendation that the text underwent in M. Ramakrishna Kavi's edition of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* in which changes were made to the text that are not supported by either of the extant mss. The editor of the second edition appears to have left them in place or placed them in parentheses without noting their source. This makes it difficult to distinguish what is actually represented in the mss. from what the first editor thought should be there. See the preface of the 2nd rev. ed., 1:21-22.



Rasa is the enjoyed form of the operation of relishing the joy of one's own delicate (soft, fresh) consciousness colored by the impressions (*vāsanās*) of love (*ratī*), etc., which were previously instilled, that are appropriate to (aroused by, according to the Nirṇaya Sāgara ed.) the beautiful *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* conveyed in sound (*śabda*), that appeal to the heart. And it, falling only within the ken of the operation of poetry, is rasa-suggestion (*rasa-dhvani*). It, indeed, is suggestion itself, and being primary, it is the essence (self, *ātmā*) of poetry.<sup>10</sup>

Here we have the bare essentials of Abhinava's earliest conception of rasa. It is the experience of one's own consciousness (*saṃvit*), from which joy is inseparable, that constitutes the essence of the rasa experience. This consciousness, however, is not entirely pure. Rather, it is colored by the latent impressions (*vāsanā*) of *sthāyīns*, such as love, etc., left by previous experiences of those emotions. These impressions are continuing, residual desires which are ingrained in the mind and might be compared with the instincts of Western psycho-philosophy, except that in India their sources are considered to be the experiences of the past life or lives of the individual. S. N. Dasgupta, who is quoted in Gnoli, states that though *vāsanās* and *saṃskāras* are often not distinguished, *vāsanās* are generally considered to be from previous lives while *saṃskāras* are acquired in this life.<sup>11</sup> These impressions whatever their sources are aroused or brought to the surface by the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* that are part of a play or a poem and the experience of the joy of consciousness colored by one of those impressions is the rasa experience.

A final point of importance in the passage is the notion of "response of the heart" (*hṛdaya-samvāda*, lit. conversation with the heart). This was an idea already presented in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* in connection with the concept of the quality of "generality" (*sāmānya-guṇa*). Abhinavagupta's use of the concept here seems to be the same as in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. There, it was a prior condition for the rasa experience. If something had "appeal to the heart," then its presentation in drama through its *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* was thought capable of producing rasa:

<sup>10</sup>Ānandavardhana, *Dhvany-āloka* 2nd ed. (Calcutta: A. Mukherjee and Co., 1986), p. 14 and in the reprint of the Nirṇaya Sāgara edition (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), p. 18. In this passage Abhinavagupta is commenting on a verse of the *Dhvanyāloka* that is concerned with establishing the predominance of suggestion (*dhvani*) in fine poetry and therefore, is speaking primarily of poetry. He, therefore, argues in the last section of the passage that rasa is not only a suggested sense of poetry, but that it is *the primary type* of suggested sense, and since suggestion (*dhvani*) is the essence of poetry, rasa is the essence of poetry.

<sup>11</sup>See Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, p. 26, fn. 1, for a discussion of the idea of *vāsanā* and its related concept, *saṃskāra*.

A *bhāva* of a thing that communicates with the heart is the source of *rasa*. It pervades the body like fire does dry wood.<sup>12</sup>

Translating this into Abhinavagupta's terms, if a person has, ingrained in his mind, the latent impression of the *sthāyin* presented in a drama or a poem, then a communication of heart is established and the *rasa* experience becomes a possibility for that person. This appeal to or communication of heart establishes the relationship between the work of art and the spectator that is necessary for the *rasa* experience as Abhinavagupta understands it.

Abhinava expands on this idea of appeal to heart in another passage in which he describes *rasa*:

Nor is *rasa* a thing like the joy aroused when one hears, 'your son is born.' Nor [is it aroused by] by indirect meaning (*lak.śaṇā*). But rather, being tasted, when the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* are perceived, by means of an identification with that [the mental state represented, i.e. the *sthāyin*] [occurring] from the strength of its appeal to heart, it, having no other essence than being tasted, flashes forth, distinct from familiar forms of happiness, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Here the notion of identification (*tanmayibhāva*) is added to that of appeal to heart. As a result of the strength of the appeal, an identification with the represented emotion arises and the experience is brought home to the spectator, who tastes his own consciousness flavored with latent impressions left from his past life. Thus, the relationship that is established between the spectator and the drama or the poem is a kind of identification. The idea of identification in this early form of Abhinava's aesthetic is problematic, however. With what or whom does the spectator identify and how does it take place? This is a problem that will be resolved in his later formulation.

The major elements of Abhinava's early theory are, therefore, the latent impressions (*vāsanās*) which lead to appeal to heart (*hrdaya-saṁvāda*) from which arises identification (*tanmayibhāvanā*). The consciousness in this identification is colored by the past impressions and the experience of its joy in that state is called *rasa*. It is interesting to note that the idea of generalization (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) is not yet a part of Abhinava's early thought, though he does say once that the contraction of the experiencer due to dense illusion and blindness must cease, an idea later associated with the process of generalization, for *rasa* to be tasted.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Bharata Muni, *Nāṭya-śāstra*, p. 348. Here, *bhāva*, means apparently the dramatic representation of a thing or event through *vibhāvas*, etc.

<sup>13</sup>Ānandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka* (Calcutta), p. 23; (New Delhi), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup>ibid. (Calcutta), p. 67; (New Delhi) p. 85.

In his *Abhinava-bhāratī*, Abhinavagupta also discusses rasa in a number of places, each time in slightly different terms that bring out different aspects of his complex conception of it. Furthermore, he often joins his characterizations of rasa with lengthy and involved descriptions of the conditions under which rasa may arise. Since we are for the moment only concerned with what rasa is, the conditions of its appearance will be left for a later discussion.

In Abhinava's long commentary on *Nāṭya-śāstra*, 1.107, where drama is defined as the "representation of the acts of the three worlds," he says:

An apperception (*anuvyavasāya*) is produced with the help of the latent impressions, left over from previously experienced perceptions, inferences and so forth, in cooperation with an identification arising from appeal to heart, which accompanies the culture of the connoisseur, by an actor while being watched and consists of the appearance of the joy of one's own consciousness adorned by the forms of the various mental states such as happiness, distress, etc. Therefore, it is variegated and known by the terms "tasting, relishing, astonishment, chewing, delight (*nirveśa*), enjoyment (*bhoga*) etc. That which appears in it [i.e., in the apperception] is drama.<sup>15</sup>

This characterization of the rasa experience is quite similar to those found in Abhinava's commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*, except that here it is not the impressions of past quotidian emotions that color the consciousness of the spectator, but the emotions themselves. The impressions aid the production of the apperception that is rasa.

In another place he says:

That singular mental state ... is freed from identifications such as "one's own or another's." Therefore, having become generalized, it enters the spectators, too, as being present in them and, because of their identification with it, it is distinct from the ordinary mental states belonging to others that are the objects of knowledge of neutral knowers and that are known through inference, received knowledge, the perception of yogins, etc. Because of appearing without having one's own or another's limited self as its basis, it is incapable of producing other mental states like a sense of loss, etc. as arises with one's ordinary sexual love (*rati*) or sorrow (*śoka*) caused by women, etc. Thus, because it is grasped by a process also known as "tasting" which is characterized by a repose (*viśrānti*) whose nature is unobstructed consciousness, it is conveyed by the word rasa.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., pp. 266-67.

Here we have all of the major characteristics of Abhinava's later conception of *rasa*. It is a mental state that, because of its portrayal in drama or poetry, becomes generalized, making it possible for the spectators to identify with and enjoy it. It is different from the mental states that arise in knowing the mental states of other people in ordinary life and from our own quotidian emotions. Consciousness (*saṃvedana*) is still seminal, though here consciousness is described as being free of obstacles. An interesting aspect of this description is the use of the word repose (*viśrānti*), an idea associated with the peace that follows the reaching of a goal or objective.<sup>17</sup>

One more brief passage makes the relationship of these various elements more clear:

Therefore, generalized sexual love (*rati*) brought within the ken of a single, continuous consciousness becomes erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*).<sup>18</sup>

Here Abhinava's characterization is brief if not simple. *Rasa* is a generalized, and therefore not quotidian, emotion that comes within the ken of consciousness. Though not specifically stated in this passage, the joy of unencumbered consciousness makes *rasa* pleasurable.<sup>19</sup> Generalization has assumed, therefore, a major role in this later stage of Abhinava's thought, practically overshadowing all the other elements mentioned earlier, such as the latent impressions, response of the heart and identification with the represented emotion. *Rasa*, which was consciousness colored by impressions of past emotional experiences, is now also described as generalized emotion cognized by a single, continuous [unbroken] span of consciousness. Thus, understanding generalization is essential for understanding Abhinava's mature conception of *rasa* and it so happens that the question of what generalization is leads us directly into the question of how *rasa* occurs.

The concept of generalization adds an important dimension to Abhinava's previous aesthetic. Though he borrowed the idea, as we shall see, from another writer, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, he gave it a radically new interpretation. The ideas of the latent impressions and conversation with the heart provide the conditions necessary for the aesthetic experience in the spectator. The idea

<sup>17</sup>This term *viśrānti* is an important one in Abhinava's philosophical writings. It is also used to describe the *rasa* experience in his earlier commentary. In some contexts this term has the meaning of orgasm as a sudden release of built up tensions and a surrender to pleasure. See Abhinava's *Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārikāvimarśinī* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārikā* of Utpaladeva edited by K. A. Subrahmanya Iyer and K. C. Pandey (Allahabad: Sarasvati Bhavan, 1950), 3.1.33, 2:241: *tatprakṣobhaprasāntiā viśrāntikriyopayogī upasthaḥ*.

<sup>18</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhārati*, pp. 285-86.

<sup>19</sup>Abhinava says this explicitly in another section of his commentary: "In our opinion, consciousness itself, which is intense bliss, is tasted. The function of the impressions, love, sadness and so forth, is to give it variety and the function of acting, etc. is to awaken it." *ibid.*, p. 292.

of identification explains how dramatically depicted emotions lay claim to the spectator in a way that the directly witnessed emotions of other people in ordinary life do not. The notions of consciousness and repose, that Abhinavagupta received from his religious tradition, capture the cognitive, blissful and satisfying characteristics of the experience. The driving force of the process, that which sets all these elements in motion and unites them, was absent, however. The idea of generalization filled that void by tying all of the other elements together into a single process that rested on the sharp distinction of the world of art from ordinary life and that, in turn, differentiated the aesthetic experience from ordinary emotional experiences. Generalization is what happens to ordinary emotions when they are portrayed in drama or poetry through *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas*, which are images of the characteristic causes, effects and accompanying feelings of those emotions. Thus, in dramatic depiction, the shared characteristics of separate occurrences of an emotion are retained and the distinctions between them are lost, producing the cognition of a non-specific or generalized emotion. On the other hand, the spectator undergoes a process of generalization as well, under the influence of the generalized emotions conveyed in drama and poetry, and is moved beyond his ordinary and limited identity that is located at a particular time and place and endowed with peculiar characteristics.

Unfortunately, Abhinava does not discuss in detail the process of how *rasa* occurs anywhere in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*. There is an interesting passage in his commentary on *Dhvanyāloka* 2.4, which appears to be a precursor to his extended discussion of *rasa* in his commentary on the *rasa-sūtra* in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, in which he briefly characterizes and criticizes several opposing theories of *rasa* and in the process puts forward several important aspects of his own theory of how *rasa* arises. In that passage he gives the greatest amount of attention to the opinion of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, with whom he in some respects agrees. Since it already has been translated twice I will only summarize the major points of the passage.<sup>20</sup>

It appears from Abhinavagupta's characterization that Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's main concern was to explain how it is possible for members of an audience to experience *rasa*. He attempted to achieve this by first claiming that *rasa* is not perceived, produced nor manifested. If it were perceived as belonging to another then one would be indifferent to it. On the other hand, saying that it is perceived as one's own is the same as saying that it is produced in one. That cannot be so because in a poem about the love of Rāma and Sītā, Sītā cannot be the *vibhāva* (i.e., the beloved) for a member of the audience, but only for Rāma. Nor can one claim that it is not Sītā, but the general quality of

<sup>20</sup>It is translated in full by Masson and Patwardhan in their *Śāntarasa*, pp. 63-78, and in Gnoli's *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, pp. 107-114.

“beloved-ness” that operates as the *vibhāva* that arouses one’s latent impressions (*vāsanā*), because that would not work in the case of poetic and dramatic descriptions of the gods, who have nothing in common with human spectators. Nor does one remember one’s own beloved. In simply hearing about others, *rasa* is no more produced than it would be in witnessing the sexual act of a man and a woman. Moreover, if one thinks that *rasa* is produced (*utpatti*), then on becoming saddened because of the production of a *rasa* like compassion (*karuṇa*), the spectators would not want to repeat the experience. Therefore, *rasa* is not produced (as other emotions are). Nor is it manifested (*abhivyakta*), because then if a *rasa* like erotic rapture were like a potency it would vary in the degree of its manifestation according to its various objects and degrees of accumulation. Therefore, *rasa* is not perceived, produced or manifested by poetry.

The use of language in poetry is different from other uses of language, however. It has three actions: it expresses (*abhidhā*) the meaning to be conveyed, it effects (*bhāvanā*) *rasa* and causes enjoyment (*bhoga*) for the spectator.<sup>21</sup> If only the expressive function were present in poetry then it would be no different from technical treatises. Therefore, there is a second function called efficacy. This dimension of poetry encompasses the ability of the *vibhāvas*, etc. to generalize the *rasa* and when the *rasa* is generalized, its enjoyment, which is different from its perception, memory and cognition and which is characterized by flowing, spreading, and bursting, occurs. The enjoyment has the character of a repose (*viśrānti*) in the joy of one’s own conscious nature, a repose that is characterized as “being” (*sattva*) uninfected with the variations wrought by passion (*rajas*) and darkness (*tamas*).<sup>22</sup> It is like the experience of the highest Brahman and is the predominant part of poetic expression. The educative function of poetry is less important.

This characterization of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s position is interesting for several reasons. It begins with a set of assumptions that have puzzled some scholars.<sup>23</sup> Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka refers to *Sītā* as a *vibhāva* only for *Rāma*. This implies that it is original models for a poem or play who experience *rasa* and that *rasa* is an experience that occurs to people in the world.<sup>24</sup> He argues that only when *rasa* is generalized by means of the effective action of poetic language can a member of the audience enjoy *rasa*. This implies that *rasa* is an experience that be-

<sup>21</sup>I am following Gerow and Aklujkar in translating *bhāvanā* as production, which is its basic meaning. See their “On Śānta Rasa in Sanskrit Poetics” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 92:80-87.

<sup>22</sup>These are the three qualities that characterize the mundane world in S-a.nkhyā philosophy. Bha.t.ta N-ayaka requires the predominance of *sattva* over the other two as a condition for *rasa*.

<sup>23</sup>Masson and Patwardhan, *Śānta-rasa*, p. 63.

<sup>24</sup>Another way of looking at this would be to think that Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka has confused *rasas* and *sthāyins*, as Masson and Patwardhan suggest. *ibid.*, fn. 2.

longs originally to Rāma or Sītā, but one that can be enjoyed by others through the special potencies of poetic language. Therefore, for Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, there appears to be a *rasa* that occurs in the world that can be spread to or shared with or effected in others through poetry or drama,<sup>25</sup> and consequently, his notion of generalization is more a matter of spreading to or causing something to pervade, an idea of generalization that is different from Abhinavagupta's. In Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's view, the *rasa* of the characters is made to pervade the members of the audience. In this way, they are able to share in the experience of the original models.

Abhinavagupta is dissatisfied with this characterization of *rasa* and, though sharing Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's basic concern, offers a number of criticisms of his predecessor. He first of all suggests, in a kind of rhetorical flourish, that Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka is wrong on all counts when he claims that *rasa* is not perceived, produced or manifested. All opinions on *rasa* agree that it is perceived, he argues, because the unperceived would be uninvestigable like a ghost (*piśāca*). He cautions, however, that while sharing something with other kinds of perceptions it is different from them because it is arrived at differently and because its foundation is the *vibhāvas*, etc. which, being parts of poems and plays, are outside of ordinary existence. To say that "rasas are perceived" is like saying: "food (*odana*) is cooking." *Odana*, in this example, is a word that refers to something, usually a grain like rice, that is already cooked. Thus, the *odana* comes into existence along with the cooking. Similarly, *rasa* refers to an experience that comes into existence or becomes what it is along with the event of its perception and is not strictly speaking a previously or separately existing object brought to experience by perception. That "being perceived" is itself *rasa* and the specialized perception is itself the tasting (*rasanā*).

Here, Abhinavagupta's reversal of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's position becomes apparent. Instead of understanding *rasa* as an experience of the original person whom the actor is representing (that is the *anukārya*) which has to be communicated to the audience by the special, generalizing power of poetry, he understands it as a special kind of perception, based on the non-worldly elements (the *vibhāvas*, etc.) in poems and drama, that occurs *only* in a member of the audience. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka argued that *rasa*, understood as merely an object of the audience's perception, cannot be enjoyed by them; therefore, he says that *rasa* is not perceived. Abhinavagupta actually agrees, but argues that the problem is solved by shifting the locus of *rasa* from the character to the audience. Their perception itself is the *rasa*. The original characters and the actors experience quotidian emotion, not *rasa*.

Moreover, the effective action of poetry in Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's theory is re-

<sup>25</sup>Perhaps this is the intention of the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, too, when it uses the term *nāṭya-rasas*, dramatic rasas, implying the existence of other rasas, *loka-rasas*, from which they are distinct.

placed in Abhinava's by the function called suggestion (*dhvani*). The *vibhāvas*, etc., through the instrumental aspect of the function of suggestion, produce the perception that is *rasa*. Therefore, *rasa*, as a perception, is produced in listening to poetry or in viewing a play, contrary to Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's second claim.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the enjoyment of *rasa* is brought about by a cessation of masses of dense illusion and blindness in the spectator allowing a flowing, spreading and bursting to take place in his consciousness. Consequently, a manifestation of something innate to the spectator, his purified consciousness, occurs in the *rasa* experience, and it can thus be said that *rasa* is manifested, contra Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's final claim. As for Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's claims that *rasa* is "being" (or transparency, *sattva*) and that *rasa* is akin to the tasting of brahman, Abhinava says that those "may be so (*astu*)."<sup>27</sup> For Abhinava, *rasas* are most appropriately understood as manifested perceptions that involve tasting. In the final analysis, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's claims have all been reversed.

Although this characterization may seem long and complex, it reveals the important shift in perspective that distinguishes Abhinavagupta's *rasa* theory from those of all of his predecessors. *Rasa* now becomes an experience that occurs exclusively in connection with poetry and drama and not in quotidian life. Thus, for Abhinava, the question of how *rasa* can be transferred from the characters of a poem or a drama to the members of an audience, which is the problem Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka was concerned with, becomes superfluous. Abhinava's problem becomes that of explaining the origin of the *rasa* experience in the audience. To accomplish this, he shifts the meaning of generalization (*sādhāraṇībhāva*). Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka regards it as a function of poetry and drama by means of which the *rasa* of the character can be transferred to a member of the audience. It is, therefore, better characterized for him as a spreading or pervading. With Abhinavagupta, however, generalization takes on a much more metaphysical meaning, perhaps better communicated by depersonalization.<sup>27</sup> The depersonalization of an emotion or emotional complex involves its detachment from any particular event and requires an experiencer who is also detached from his or her own limited self-awareness. This way of talking about the *rasa* experience, however, is troubled by a duality of subject and object. What actually occurs, according to Abhinava, is the depersonalization of the member of the audience, in other words, the relaxation of his mundane identity along with a simultaneous stimulation of the impressions left from previous emotional experiences. Thus, the self-experience of the unconstricted ego (*ahaṅkāra*) colored by these impressions is what constitutes the event of

<sup>26</sup> *Vyajanā* (suggestion) is usually associated with the process of *abhivyakti* (manifestation), as is indicated by the close relationship of the words. According to Abhinavagupta, the *vibhāvas*, etc. manifest *rasa*. Nevertheless, since *rasa* is a perception that arises in the process of manifestation, it can be said that, as a perception, the *vibhāvas* produce it.

<sup>27</sup> One might also think of generalization as a movement from the particular to the universal.



consciousness called rasa.

Several passages from the *Abhinava-bhāratī* provide characterizations of the process by which rasa occurs.<sup>28</sup> Here is one of the most important ones:

In ordinary circumstances, when the causes, effects, and accompanying affects that are its signs are encountered, one infers the presence of a mental state in another person of the nature of a primary emotion (*sthāyin*) because of expertise that accrues from that practice. Now [in the context of a dramatic performance] something is brought within the ken of tasting which consists of a consciousness freed of worldly obstacles by those same gardens, sidelong glances and gazes, etc. that, having passed beyond the worldly status of causes, etc., are now referred to by the trans-mundane terms, *vibhāvas*, etc because their only purpose is to effect a knowing (*vibhāvanā*) and an experiencing (*anubhāvanā*). They are called *vibhāvas*, etc. in order to convey that they subsist on the residual impressions of causes and so forth from previous lives and their nature and varieties shall be discussed in the *bhāva* chapter. They reach a complete union, or connection or single-pointedness in the mind of the spectator, in accordance with their relative emphases, bringing about something that has as its sole essence being tasted but is not a self-existent (self-contained ?, *siddha-svabhāva*) thing of that moment nor something that extends beyond the time of tasting. Therefore, [that thing called] rasa is different from a primary emotion.<sup>29</sup>

From this passage, one learns that, though the *sthāyin* or ordinary emotion and rasa are completely distinct, the processes by which each occurs are parallel. When one sees the signs of an emotion in another person in ordinary life, one infers its presence in his or her mind and immediately responds to that emotion according to one's relationship with that person. A common response, for instance, which is felt toward a person that one has no relationship with, is one of indifference, although fear, sympathy, or some other appropriate emotional response might arise when a relationship with that person exists. In any case, if any emotion at all arises, it will be one of the *sthāyins*.

In viewing the same scene in a dramatic performance, however, an entirely different reaction occurs. The outward signs of emotions presented in drama are known to be non-ordinary (*alaukika*) or unauthentic, if you will, and thus they lose their powers as causes, effects, etc. Instead, they nourish deep-seated

<sup>28</sup>Since, unfortunately, Abhinava does not develop his theory systematically in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*, one has to turn to his commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* for a more complete albeit somewhat different view of it.

<sup>29</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 284.

impressions created by past experiences, reach a synthetic unity in the minds of the spectators and bring about an experience that consists of nothing more than tasting (*carvanā*).

Abhinava says:

What ‘tasting’ can there be in inferring the presence of ordinary emotions [in others]? Therefore, the *rasa* experience, which is an extra-ordinary astonishment (*camatkāra*, also explained as a response to tasting or delectation), is different from ordinary forms of awareness like memory or inference.<sup>30</sup>

And he adds:

One who has been prepared (*saṃskṛta*) by worldly inference by means of [signs like] women, etc. does not cognize [a dramatic performance] with indifference. Rather, [he grasps it] as the essence of tasting, worthy of his identification with it, that, by becoming the sprout of the incipient experience of *rasa* because of the power of his sensitivity, which consists of a communication of heart, bypasses the stages of inference and memory and so forth.<sup>31</sup>

Here, Abhinava describes how the spectator, instead of being indifferent, is drawn into the dramatic situation. When one sees the signs of emotions in strangers, one is usually indifferent to them. In a dramatic performance, however, one sees those signs in strangers, but is deeply affected by them, because of the powerful appeal they possess for one whose sense of personal identity has become temporarily relaxed and who previously, in some distant and unremembered past, has been through such experiences. By the strength of that appeal (appeal to heart), which is the foundation of aesthetic sensitivity for Abhinava, one is able to identify with the represented emotion.

These passages help us to understand the sharp distinction that Abhinava draws between quotidian emotional experiences and aesthetic experiences, but they don’t provide much insight into how this unusual process of aesthetic “tasting” occurs. The process that culminates in aesthetic tasting is, as it turns out, essentially the same as generalization. Thus, in order to understand how *rasa* occurs we shall have to study the process of generalization. As stated earlier generalization is what happens to emotional experiences when they are represented in drama or poetry. They lose the specificity of their occurrences

<sup>30</sup>ibid. *Camatkāra* literally means “the ‘camat’ sound.” *Camat* is described as the sound of the lips smacking as a result of tasting something delicious.

<sup>31</sup>ibid.

in individuals and become the stuff with which all people can identify on some level.<sup>32</sup> Here is what Abhinavagupta says about it:

In dramatic performance, when, because of the force of the mutual obstruction of limiting factors such as place, time and witness, etc. of the real situation and of the story, those factors disappear, generalization becomes greatly strengthened. Thus, the unitary cognition of all the spectators [acts] to strengthen the *rasa* greatly, because of the conversation of latent impressions in all their minds, which are variegated by such beginningless impressions. And that unobstructed consciousness is astonishment (*camatkāra*) and the changes that arise from it (*camatkāra*), the shivering, the horripilation, the springing up, etc. are also astonishment.<sup>33</sup>

Here, generalization is seen as occurring when the time and place and individual knower of the play (the character) negates the time, place and individual knower of the theatre hall (the spectator), leaving only the experience of the emotion itself unassociated with any individual identities. As proof of this phenomenon, Abhinavagupta points to the way in which an audience as a whole seems to undergo the experience in unison, an occurrence that would be impossible were it not for two factors: generalization and the conversation (*saṃvāda*) of latent impressions in their hearts. Were it otherwise, each member of the audience would feel something different. The different spectators experience such a unitary cognition as a result of sharing a latent impression from among the beginningless fund of impressions in their hearts accumulated from countless previous experiences in previous lives and in this life.<sup>34</sup>

Abhinavagupta gives the following useful and brief summary of the process as a whole:

This is a brief exposition on this topic. To start with, the spectator's awareness of the actor is covered over by the crown and so forth [the actor's costume]. And because of [presence of] deeply rooted

<sup>32</sup>Compare this notion of generalization in artistic expression with Nietzsche's idea of the idealizing function of rapture in the artist. He says: "Artists should see nothing as it is, but more fully, simply, strongly: for that, a kind of youth and spring, a kind of habitual rapture, must be proper to their lives," and further: "From this feeling, one bestows upon things, one compels them to take from us, one violates them—this process is called idealization." More specifically, idealization is a "sweeping emphasis upon the main features." See Heidegger's discussion of this concept in *Nietzsche*, 4 vols. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979-1984), 1:116-17.

<sup>33</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 279.

<sup>34</sup>Impressions are different from memories. No spectator has a memory of the events of the play he is seeing, but he does have a fund of impressions left from similar kinds of events in his own past experience. Generalization allows these impressions which resulted from entirely different occurrences to be aroused by the events portrayed in drama or poetry.

latent impressions from before in his [the spectator's] consciousness, the awareness of Rāma, too, even though it is brought out by the power of the poetry, does not rest on him [the actor]. Therefore, both times and places are left aside. Goose-flesh and other physical reactions, which are seen for the most part as indicating amorous love (*rati*), are also noticed there [on the actor], and thus, they make amorous love known without limitation by place and time. Into that [awareness of amorous love], the self of the spectator also enters because of possessing latent impressions of it. Therefore, he does not cognize the amorous love with indifference nor as a limited cause through which there is a possibility of acquisition and possession. Nor is it cognized as belonging to another individual self so that unhappiness or envy would arise. Consequently, generalized amorous love brought within the ken of a single, continuous consciousness is erotic rapture (*śṛṅgāra*).<sup>35</sup>

Abhinavagupta provides here an important insight into the process by which generalization takes place. In the almost magical, atemporal time of the play, the times, places and personalities of the present and of the story cancel each other releasing the emotional content of the play from the limitations to which emotional events are ordinarily confined. The love of Rāma for Sitā, through the special power of drama, becomes perceptible as erotic love in general. It consequently becomes possible for the audience to enter into it or experience it in a new way apart from any knowledge of or relationship to Rāma and Sitā. They experience it not as they have experienced love in ordinary life, as love for a specific person felt by another specific person, but as love without a specific object or subject. When this sort of generalized emotion occupies a single and continuous span of consciousness, it is an event of perception called *rasa*.

It is important not to forget, at this point, the source of the pleasure associated with *rasa*. In this loosening of the tight bonds of individual and temporal limitations, which are identified, as in most of the non-dualistic systems of Indian philosophy, with the causes of unhappiness, the self experiences its own innate joy. That joy is the joy that characterizes aesthetic rapture (*rasa*) for Abhinavagupta.<sup>36</sup> He says:

<sup>35</sup>ibid., pp. 285-86.

<sup>36</sup>Compare this idea of aesthetic experience with Schopenhauer's idea of the experience of beauty: "My solution to this problem has been that in the beautiful we always perceive the intrinsic and primary forms of animate and inanimate nature, that is to say Plato's Ideas thereof, and that this perception stipulates the existence of its essential correlative, the will-less subject of knowledge, i.e. a pure intelligence without aims and intentions. Through this, when an aesthetic perception occurs the will completely vanishes from consciousness. But will is the sole source of all our troubles and sufferings. This is the origin of the feeling of pleasure which accompanies the perception of the beautiful." Schopenhauer, Arthur, *Essays and Aphorisms* (Harmondsworth,

In our opinion, consciousness (*saṃvedana*) itself, which is replete with bliss, is tasted. How can one suspect [the presence of] any misery in it? The action of the impressions of love, sadness and other emotions is only in variegating it [consciousness]. And the role of acting, etc. is in awakening it.<sup>37</sup>

He also calls the experience *camatkāra*, translated as astonishment:

And that consciousness without obstruction is astonishment (*ca-matkāra*). The reactions such as shivering, goose-flesh, springing up, etc., which are produced from it, are astonishment, too.<sup>38</sup>

As we shall see later, among the obstacles to consciousness are confinement to the limitations of time, place and individual identity. Astonishment is, in Abhinava's terms, "unbroken absorption in enjoyment (*bhoga*) without the feeling of not being satiated."<sup>39</sup>

What, then, is the relationship between *rasa* and quotidian emotion (*bhāva*)? We have seen already that Abhinava sharply distinguishes between them. Therefore, we know that he regarded them as different, though parallel phenomena. Yet, in the statement just quoted he described *rasa* as a generalized emotion and this implies that the two are not unrelated. Abhinavagupta characterizes, both in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* and in the one on the *Nāṭya-sāstra*, the relationship between *rasa* and *bhāva* as one of 'suitability,' 'appropriateness,' or 'propriety' (*aucityā*). He says in the *Dhvanyāloka-locana*:

The *sthāyin* is said to become *rasa* by means of propriety, because of the arising of a beautiful tasting of a latent impression of the mental state appropriate to the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*.<sup>40</sup>

When there is an absence of propriety, one experiences only a semblance of *rasa* (*rasābhāsa*) instead.<sup>41</sup>

In the *Abhinava-bhārati* he says:

Only through propriety does a *sthāyin* become *rasa*. Propriety is the assumption of the nature of *vibhāvas*, etc. of the things known as causes, effects, etc. with respect to the *sthāyins*, because of their conduciveness to tasting.<sup>42</sup>

Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 155.

<sup>37</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhārati*, p. 292.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyāloka-locana* (Kalakātā: E. Mukhārjī ayāṇḍa Koṃ Prāḥ Liḥ, 1986), p. 55.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhārati*, p. 284.

Abhinava indicates here that the *sthāyins* or quotidian emotions do not themselves become *rasa*. When the things that are ordinarily thought of as the causes, effects and accompanying emotions of a *sthāyin* are portrayed in drama or in poetry an experience known as *rasa* occurs. The relationship between them is this appropriateness; that is, if the causes, effects and accompanying feelings presented in drama are appropriate to the *sthāyin*, then it may be enjoyed by sensitive members of an audience. If the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, and *vyabhicārins* of one *sthāyin* are mixed with those of another, a case of inappropriateness (*anaucityā*) would arise and the *rasa* experience would either be falsified (*rasābhāsa*) or would fail altogether. Therefore, *rasas* and *bhāvas* are not the same, nor are they strictly speaking similar or analogous, nor are they transformations of one another. They are distinct experiences that are related only by this idea of appropriateness.

One final question needs an answer before we can put Abhinava's ideas together into a coherent theoretical statement; that is the question of who experiences *rasa*. From the statements already presented, we know that Abhinava ascribes the *rasa* experience to the spectator ("they reach a complete union, or connection or single-pointedness in the mind of the spectator"<sup>43</sup> and "Thus, the unitary cognition of all the spectators ..."<sup>44</sup>). Not all spectators are capable of having the experience, however, and Abhinava, following the tradition before him, calls a person capable of the experience a *sahrdaya*. The word literally means "having heart" or "sharing heart" and probably grows out of the notion of communication of heart (*hrdaya-saṁvāda*) that we saw earlier in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. A *sahrdaya* is a person who has the culture and sensitivity necessary for the *rasa* experience. As Abhinava says in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*:

Those in the mirrors of whose minds, which are clarified by the cultivation and practice of poetry, there is a capability of identification with the subject of description are *sahrdayas*, participating in communication of heart.<sup>45</sup>

He expands this slightly in his commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra*:

The fully developed object of poetry (*rasa*) appears as if it were directly experienced to those who by virtue of their practice of poetry and of their piety accrued previously are *sahrdayas*, even when specific *vibhāvas*, etc. are unfolded.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup>See the translation on p. ?

<sup>44</sup>See the translation on p. ?

<sup>45</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyālokalocana*, p. 11.

<sup>46</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhārati*, p. 287.

Here the cultivation of poetry is considered an important aspect of the development of aesthetic sensibility. Abhinava understands that cultivation as a cleansing of the mirror of the mind that allows the spectator to reflect clearly and without distortion the content of a poetic or dramatic piece. The second statement adds previous piety which may be understood either as the source of innate talent or, perhaps, as a reference to the important latent impressions discussed earlier.

The characteristics Abhinava attributes to the *sahṛdaya*, however, could occur in any of the possible candidates for rasa, the original character, the poet or playwright, actor and the spectator. The question then is: does he deny the rasa experience to any of them? As we saw earlier, one of Abhinava's disagreements with Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka concerned who experiences rasa. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka believed that the original characters and the audience experience rasa and his problem was bridging the gap between them with his three functions of poetic language. The idea animating Abhinava's opposing arguments was that rasa is the experience of the spectator alone and not the original characters. He argued that rasa is a perception that consists of tasting, is produced by poetry and drama and is manifested, too, because it arises on the removal of obstacles such as illusion, etc. from the self (i.e. it is a manifestation of consciousness itself, cleansed of its limitations). Consequently, for Abhinavagupta, rasa occurs only through poetry or drama (i.e. through art) and, therefore, cannot be experienced by the original characters. This conclusion may sound strange to some. Abhinava's essential idea is that the original characters of a literary work of art do not experience rasa, they experience ordinary emotion as they live their lives. When their story is presented in an appropriate way in art, new experiences occur called rasas that only spectators can experience.<sup>47</sup>

Abhinava says in his commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra*:

From drama (*nāṭya*), which is a composite, [come] the rasas. Or, if one says drama itself is the rasas, the collection of rasas, too, is drama. Nor do rasas only occur in drama. They occur in poetry

<sup>47</sup> Thus, art is not meant to imitate life, but rather change it into a different kind of reality. One of the consequences of this position is that the world of art must be clearly separated from ordinary life. Realism, therefore, is not heavily emphasized and elements such as music and dance are utilized to create an unworldly atmosphere for drama. Moreover, the subject matter of Sanskrit drama or poetry should belong to the mythic or distant past and not the present.

The opposing position of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and others is that the original characters do experience rasa in their lives and a good poet is able to capture and enhance those extraordinary experiences and present them in art. Spectators are then able, by various means, to participate in them, too.

Two aesthetics are in confrontation here: one that says that art changes an essentially painful and unappealing reality into an appealing one by dissociating the spectator and another that finds that art captures and enhances life's appealing moments and makes it possible for other people to experience them at other times and in other places. Art is thought either to refine life or to intensify it.

which approaches drama. Rasa arises in the arising of a consciousness, like a direct perception, whose object is the meaning of the poetry.<sup>48</sup>

He becomes more emphatic a little later in the same passage:

Therefore, in drama alone are there rasas not in the world (loka).  
And poetry is drama itself.<sup>49</sup>

The original characters on whose stories drama and poetry are based, according to Abhinavagupta, do not experience rasa (unless, perhaps, they themselves become spectators of the dramas containing their stories). The rasa experience is thus limited to the context of the reading of poetry or the presentation of drama. How about the actors (or reciters), then? They are involved in the presentation of drama. Do they experience rasa? Abhinava says:

Therefore, too, rasa does not occur in an actor. Why is that? To such a forgetful person [as you] it [the answer] would not be known. It has been said [already] that rasa is not limited by differences in space, time or person. Therefore, why this doubt? What then is in the actor? He is the means of [the spectator's] tasting. Consequently, he is called a vessel. The vessel does not taste the wine, but rather is its vehicle. Therefore, only at the start is the actor useful.<sup>50</sup>

The point here is that the actor, being involved in the execution of his art, is unable to allow himself to be absorbed in the subject of the play and, thus, cannot undergo a relaxation of awareness of time, place and identity as a spectator does. The actor has to worry about cues and lines and changes of costume, etc. and, therefore, cannot lose sight of who he is and what he is doing.<sup>51</sup>

The original character and the actor having been eliminated, only the poet/-playwright remains. Abhinavagupta's viewpoint on this question seems somewhat puzzling. In his commentary on the well known verse in Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* (1.5), in which the origin of poetry is ascribed to Vālmiki's experience of the sadness of a heron on the killing of his mate by a hunter and the poet's transformation of that experience into verse, Abhinavagupta says:

<sup>48</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, p. 290.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>This appears to be the exact opposite of the Stanislovski method of acting. There is a sense here that the actor should not try to be too realistic. Such realism would go against the idea, which rules Abhinava's aesthetic, that there should be a clear distinction maintained between the theatre and real life. Were this distinction blurred, the time of the play and that of its presentation in the theatre would not be able to cancel each other in the consciousness of the spectator.



The dominant emotion (*sthāyin*) sadness, which arose from the separation of the heron couple caused by the killing of the mate and the destruction of their companionship, was different from the dominant emotion of love which is suitable for erotic rapture-in-separation (*vipralambha*) because it contained no hope [of future reunion]. It reached a state of being relished by means of the tasting of those *vibhāvas* and the *anubhāva* of the crying that arose from that [killing], passing through communication of heart to identification. It took the form of the rapture of compassion (*karuṇa*), which is distinct from ordinary sadness and whose essence is the tasting of the melting of one's mind. Like the overflowing of a pot with liquid or like verbal lamentation and so forth that consists of a gushing forth of mental states and that reveal those states without any concern for convention, it, from one's spontaneous absorption, became a verse composed of suitable words, meters and styles, etc.:

You shall never, O Hunter, attain glory, since you have  
killed one of a pair of herons who were overwhelmed by  
love.<sup>52</sup>

But it should be understood that the muni (Vālmiki) did not feel sadness. If that were so then he, too, would have been grieved by the distress of that (heron), and there would be no opportunity for *rasa*'s predominance (in the above verse). Nor does one troubled by grief have such a state [as *rasa*]. Thus, the *rasa* compassion that consists of the dominant emotion sadness (*śoka*), made suitable for tasting, because of being of the nature of an overflowing, is the self (*ātman*) of this poem, that is to say its essence, and distinguishes [poetry] from other linguistic forms of expression.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup>*Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.2.15 quoted in the *Dhvanyālokalocana on Dhvanyāloka*, 1.5, p. 26.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26. Abhinavagupta, following Ānandavardhana, seems on shaky ground, here. What advantage, after all, does the poet have over the actor? Both are faced with the burden of executing the techniques of their crafts, the poet with meter, alliteration, sense and figure and the actor with costume, cues, expression and tone. To claim that the poet can transcend them and that the actor cannot seems strange. Yet, this passage proclaims an effortless, spontaneous expression for *rasa*, in which everything falls into its proper place. There is another problem here, however. In this example, Vālmiki witnessed the killing of the heron by the hunter directly and thus was directly related to the action just as an original character would have been. In his case, too, there were no two times and places to cancel each other as in the case of a spectator of a drama. Yet, Abhinavagupta says that Vālmiki did not feel the quotidian emotion sadness with respect to the event, but rather the rapture of compassion (*karuṇa*). This appears to violate Abhinava's basic principle that *rasa* is possible only through art. Perhaps, the solution to this problem should be sought in Abhinava's use of the term *muni* (sage) to describe Vālmiki in this passage. The implication is that, being a sage, Vālmiki was detached enough from the event to have maintained

Thus, it appears that the poet is capable of *rasa* without being a spectator of a play or hearer of a poem. He does not depend upon drama or poetry for the generalization that is required for the *rasa* experience. Abhinava says in his commentary on *Nāṭya-śāstra*, 6.38:

Just as the seed is the source (*mūla*) of a tree, so too are the *rasas*, and their source should be explained as cultivation (*vyutpatti*) with affection. The generalized consciousness in the poet is the source and the function of the actor depends upon the poetry. That very consciousness is, in the highest sense, *rasa*. And for the spectator, who is overwhelmed by perception of it (*rasa*), there later arises, by means of partial or selective cognition, perception of the *vibhāvas*, etc. in the performance, in the play, in the poem and in the mind of the spectator. Therefore, the source, which is like a seed, is the *rasa* within the poet. The poet, then, is equivalent to the spectator. Therefore, it is said, "if the poet possesses erotic rapture ... [*Dhvanyāloka*, 3.42]" by Ānandavardhana. Next, the poetry is like the tree. The acting of the actor is like the flowers in it and the fruit is the tasting of *rasa* by the spectator. In that way the world is made of *rasa*.<sup>54</sup>

The poet, therefore, experiences *rasa* outside of drama and poetry and his experience is, in an ultimate sense, the source of *rasa* in them.

It might be useful at this point, after having discussed so many separate aspects of Abhinava's conception of *rasa*, to present a simplified formulation of his theory as a whole. It will then be an easy matter to turn to the discussion of his answers to the four questions we formulated earlier as an aid in distinguishing the positions of our writers.

According to Abhinavagupta, when the causes, effects and accompanying emotions of the nine dominant emotions (*sthāyins*) are presented in drama or in poetry, they no longer behave as causes, effects and accompaniers. Rather, they act in conjunction with each other to manifest a new experience called *rasa*. This change in function of the causes, etc. means that the ordinary processes (inference founded on perception and, perhaps, memory) that usually operate to produce some emotional effect or experience in the persons who witness an event are bypassed when that event is presented in drama and in poetry. Instead, a different process occurs in which the events of the drama counteract the time, place and identities of the spectators, simultaneously arousing their latent impressions of past emotional experiences (*vāsanās*) and putting aside

the requisite distance, but yet sensitive enough to be sympathetic. Nevertheless, it is clear that Abhinavagupta included the poet or playwright among those capable of the *rasa* experience.

<sup>54</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Abhinavabhāratī*, p. 294.

their awareness of their personal circumstances and daily concerns. Then, the spectator's unconstrained consciousness, which by nature consists of joy, colored by his own deeply rooted past impression of the emotion presented in the play, is experienced (as Abhinava says in the *Dhvanyāloka-locana*). Or, that same unencumbered consciousness becomes focused on the emotion presented in the drama, which, because of the cancellation of the limitations of time, place and person, assumes a generalized form (as he says in the *Abhinava-bhāratī*). Rasa is, then, this manifestation of consciousness, freed from its mundane limitations of time, place and identity, in connection with non-specific emotions, either as generalized emotions or as past impressions (which, being composites of all one's past emotions of a particular type and not memories, are also non-specific). The spectator is the locus of the experience and drama or poetry are necessary conditions for its manifestation (except in the case of the poet). Rasa is a radically different experience from quotidian emotion, which may be pleasurable or painful, because it, in its essence, is always pleasurable. Abhinava identifies the pleasure of rasa with the pleasure of the self when it is freed from the constricting adjuncts that limit it to a temporal identity. This in a nutshell is Abhinava's aesthetic.

It is now possible to suggest the answers Abhinavagupta provides to the four questions on rasa: what is rasa, how is it aroused, what is the relationship between rasa and *bhāva* and who experiences rasa. For Abhinavagupta, rasa is the spectator's experience of the self (*ātman*), which consists of consciousness (*saṃvit*) and joy (*ānanda*), when, as the result of viewing drama or listening to poetry, it is colored by or focused on a generalized emotion. Secondly, since the main constituents of this experience (the self and the latent impression) exist previous to the experience and are merely brought out by the influence of drama and of poetry, its arousal is most appropriately thought of as a manifestation (*abhivyakti*) rather than a perception (*pratīti*) or a production (*utpatti*). Nevertheless, since it requires the special dynamic that occurs in the presentation of drama or the reading of poetry as the condition of its manifestation and since it is a unique and new experience of consciousness, it can be thought of, with some justification, as both a production and a perception. Thirdly, being a non-ordinary (*alaukika*) experience it is completely distinct from quotidian emotions, but parallels them through the relationship of appropriateness (*aucityā*). Appropriateness requires, among other things, that the dramatic or poetic presentation of a quotidian emotion be composed of the *vibhāvas*, etc. that correspond to the causes, etc. of that emotion.<sup>55</sup> Finally, rasa is first and foremost the experience of the spectator, not of the character or of the actor. The poet/dramatist, however, through his special mode of cognition called

<sup>55</sup>The notion of appropriateness also involves a consideration of the suitability of the depiction of certain emotions in drama, too.

*pratibhāna*, also experiences *rasa*.

Before closing this discussion of the aesthetic of Abhinavagupta, it will be edifying to reflect on some of the presuppositions and implications of his thinking. As noted earlier Abhinava was one of the leading figures in the religious and philosophical tradition known as Kashmiri Śaivism. It is only natural to expect that when he set out to describe the aesthetic process he drew extensively from his philosophical and religious outlook, and, indeed, scholars such as Gnoli, Masson and Patwardhan have noted the similarity of terminology and concept in his aesthetic and philosophical writings. One need not conjure up the rather comical picture of him as a religious man agonizing over his enjoyment of literature, as do Masson and Patwardhan. Literature and drama are things of experience and any philosophical or religious system that claims to be thorough would have to offer some explanation of them. As it turns out Kashmiri Śaivism has little problem with things that other traditions would turn away from. Kashmiri Śaivism is a monistic, or rather non-dualistic, religious system based on a class of religious texts called tantras. With respect to its non-dualism it is unlike many other philosophical/religious systems in India, Advaita Vedānta, for instance. Its distinctive character is found in its recognition of the ultimate as the supreme lord who is the pure "I" of consciousness. This supreme being is omniscient, omnipotent and eternal and all beings are one with him. The tradition's analysis of the condition of quotidian existence involves the claim that, though all conscious beings are one with the lord, they are divided from him and each other by the power of *māyā*, illusion, and thus, the main thrust of the tradition's teaching and practice is to bring about the conscious being's recognition (*pratyabhijā*) of its oneness with the supreme lord.

When Abhinavagupta turns to an analysis of the aesthetic experience with its distinctive pleasure quite different from that of ordinary emotional experience, he has at his disposal the Kashmiri Śaivite belief in the possible escape of the individual conscious being from its limiting conditions which are five in number: time (*kāla*), knowledge (*vidyā*), act (*kalā*), attachment (*rāga*) and destiny (*niyati*).<sup>56</sup> As conscious beings become free from these limitations, they, too, come to rest (*viśrānti*) in their own consciousness (*saṃvit*), which they share with each other and the lord, and experience the joy inherent in it. The aesthetic experience consequently becomes a special instance of the general idea of the escape of the individual from its limiting conditions.<sup>57</sup> The escape

<sup>56</sup>See Abhinava's *Īśvarapratyabhijñānavimarśinī*, 3.1.9, 2:235-239.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. Abhinava says: "And since these appear to be connected with the experiencer, they are different for each experiencer as its energies (*śakti*). But sometimes, by the desire of the lord, in watching actors and wrestlers, they become one." The implication of such coincidences of the limiting factors in plays and spectacles is that beneath these differentiating and limiting factors exists the same consciousness.

is effected by the special stresses to which the limitations of individual self-awareness are subjected by drama and poetry. In fact, the shared experience that is observed among the members of an audience at a dramatic performance can be taken as one more piece of evidence for the claim of Kashmiri Śaivites that all knowers are really parts of the primary knower, Śiva, the subjective substratum (the pure "I") of all experiencing subjects.<sup>58</sup>

Along with the grounding of Abhinava's aesthetic in Kashmiri Śaivism comes the question of the role that the rasa of tranquility (*śānta*) plays in it. The rasa of tranquility is the debated ninth rasa which is the experience arising from the portrayal in literature of religious practices, experiences or states. Considering the close relationship of Abhinava's metaphysical/theological position to his understanding of the aesthetic experience, it would seem reasonable to think that he held *śānta* in some sort of special regard. Though several scholars (Masson, Patwardhan, Raghavan, etc.) have argued that Abhinavagupta accepted *śānta* as the primary rasa,<sup>59</sup> others (Gerow and Aklujkar) have argued the opposite, insisting that Abhinavagupta kept his aesthetic and theology separate. It is important for this study to come to a decision on this question because it is there that the distinction between the aesthetics of Abhinava and Bhoja (and, as I shall argue, between Abhinavagupta and Rūpa also) becomes most clearly evident.

Gerow and Aklujkar criticize Masson and Patwardhan for overemphasizing translation of the major texts dealing with *śānta-rasa* in their book and not providing satisfactory discussion of the important theoretical issues raised by the passages translated. Indeed it appears that Masson and Patwardhan were so sure of the validity of their major point, that Abhinavagupta created a unified theory of rasa on the foundation of the rasa of tranquility (*śānta*), that they felt they merely had to isolate the relevant passages and translate them as evidence. On the face of it, they were right; Abhinava does speak in several places as if *śānta* were the primary rasa. In a passage from the commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* he says:

And since it situated in the highest goal of mankind because of being the result of liberation, it (*śānta-rasa*) is the foremost of all rasas. And this is the conclusion [arrived at] after consideration of many more opposing views by my teacher, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, in his *Kāvyaakau-*

<sup>58</sup>Utpaladeva gives a lengthy argument in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā*, on which Abhinava commented twice, for the necessity of positing, contra the Buddhists, a subjective consciousness in order to explain the phenomenon of memory. A similar argument could be made supporting the idea that there is a "super" ego, underlying each individual ego, that creates the possibility of shared or generalized experience.

<sup>59</sup>See Masson & Patwardhan, *S-antarasa*, p. 1 and V. Raghavan, *The Number of Rasa-s* (Madras, India: The Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1975), pp. 197-98.

*tuka* and by me in my commentary on that.<sup>60</sup>

Abhinava's reference to the discussions in the work of his teacher, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, and in his own commentary thereon, which appear to have been extensive, indicates that this was an important point of debate during his time.

Being the chief among several rasas and being the foundation of the others are two different things, however. In another passage from his commentary on the *śānta* portion of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* he establishes a relationship of derivation between *śānta* and the other rasas, i.e. the other rasas are viewed as derivatives (*vikāras*) of *śānta* which is their source or natural state (*prakṛti*). He says:

Therefore, there is *śānta-rasa*. In addition, in old manuscripts immediately after the statement "We shall bring the *sthāyins* to rasa-hood" [i.e. immediately after the end of the general discussion of the rasas and before the rasas are discussed individually] the definition of *śānta-rasa*, "*śānta*, indeed, consisting of the *sthāyin śama* (quietude) ..." is read. The reason being that the tasting of all rasas consists for the most part of that of *śānta*, because there is a turning away from the objects of the senses. Their [the other rasas'] attainment of prominence is only a mixture with other latent impressions. In this case, in order to convey the idea that *śānta* is the natural or original state of all the others, it is discussed before them. Since ordinarily a universal is not considered separately, the *sthāyin* for this rasa is not mentioned separately. But even a universal is to be counted as separate by a critical investigator, however. Thus, it has become separated out as the object of the cognition characteristic of the tasting of the aesthete as determined by the investigator. And, in the *itihāsas*, *purāṇas* and dictionaries, one hears of nine rasas, as also in the authoritative treatises. As it is said:

One should show the *śṛṅgāra*, etc. forms of the eight deities and in the middle the *śānta* form of the lord of lords.

Its *vibhāvas* are renunciation, fearfulness of worldly existence, etc.. It is to be known by the literary employment of those. Thinking about the statements of treatises on liberation and so forth are its *anubhāvas*. Dispassion, determination, remembrance and contentment are [its] *vyabhicārins*. Therefore, *bhakti* and *śraddhā*, directed towards contemplation on God and assisted by remembrance, determination, contentment and enthusiasm, are subsumed [in it]. Thus, they are not counted as separate rasas. Here the summary verse is:

<sup>60</sup>Masson and Patwardhan, *Śāntarasa*, p. 97. The translation is my own.

That is to be known as *śānta-rasa* whose cause is liberation of self, which is joined with the cause of knowledge of the Truth and which possesses the characteristic of ultimate bliss.

The union of *vibhāva*, *sthāyin* and *anubhāva* is shown in that order by the three qualifiers [in the verse]. By means of the verse:

Receiving its own respective cause, rasa is produced out of *śānta*. But, on the passing away of the cause, [it, the rasa] dissolves again into *śānta*,

it is concluded that *śānta* is the natural state of the other rasas.<sup>61</sup>

Once again the thesis put forward by Masson and Patwardhan seems *prima facie* to be supported by Abhinavagupta's statements. He does appear to be saying that the rasa of tranquility is the foundation of the other rasas. Masson and Patwardhan imply that *śānta* was the link, for Abhinavagupta, between the aesthetic experience characterized as *rasāsvāda* (tasting rasa) and the religious experience called *brahmāsvāda* (tasting brahman). Because all rasas are based on *śānta*, the rasa experience can be related to the experience of *brahman*.

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Gerow and Aklujkar, however, reflecting differently on the texts, present some valid criticisms of Masson and Patwardhan's thesis and raise some valid questions concerning Abhinava's position. Focusing on the peculiarity of *śānta* as a *rasa*, the fact that it is related not to any ordinary emotion but to the absence of all emotion, they question Abhinava's treatment of it. Instead of finding him embracing it as the basis of his aesthetic, they suggest that he was uneasy about it and had difficulty in fitting it in with the other *rasas* and with the process of *rasa*-realization in general. They conclude that Abhinava's real contribution was to resolve the problem that *śānta* creates for his aesthetic by turning it into an analogy for the *rasa* process itself. Therefore, they take *śānta* to be peripheral to Abhinava's central theory, an analogy meant for elucidation of the theory, but not as a metaphysical foundation for it.

Although the position of Gerow and Aklujkar is the more compelling of the two and provides a deeper insight into Abhinava's aesthetic, both parties are guilty of attributing to Abhinavagupta ideas that are not really his. While recognizing it as a position that Abhinavagupta attributes to his predecessor, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, both pairs make a great deal of Abhinavagupta's comparison of *rasāsvāda* to *brahmāsvāda*. Abhinava, however, seems almost indifferent to the idea. He says of it once, "it may be so (*astu*)," and to my knowledge

<sup>61</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Abhinava-bhāratī*, pp. 339-340.

never mentions it again.<sup>62</sup> This is hardly an enthusiastic affirmation, not too surprising if one remembers that Abhinavagupta was not a Vedāntin, but a Śaivite. His brand of non-dualism is characteristically not conceived of in terms of *brahman*, being quite different from the forms of non-dualism of the Vedānta systems.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, both parties lay stress on a doctrine that may not have been very important to him.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, Gerow and Aklujkar say that Abhinava's contribution to the *śānta* question was his reinterpretation of *śānta* as an analogy for *rasa*, his transference of it to a different plane.<sup>65</sup> While it is not clear what specific texts they have in mind (they don't give any references) as the basis of this interpretation, it seems likely that the passage just quoted and another associated passage were intended. If so, they seem not to realize that Abhinava is commenting in those passages on the text of the section dealing with *śānta* that was added to the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. The reinterpretation of *śānta*, therefore, was really the work of the unknown author of the *śānta* section of the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and not of Abhinavagupta. He simply expanded the ideas inherent in the text. Consequently, it is unclear what Abhinava's distinctive contribution to the understanding of the status and role of *śānta* in the aesthetic was.

There is one compelling reason for accepting in general the position of Gerow and Aklujkar over that of Masson and Patwardhan, however. If one attempts to determine what Abhinavagupta's actual contribution to Indian aesthetics was, one is confronted with one astonishing idea that is not found in any of his predecessors that we know of today: the idea that *rasa* is not an experience of either the character or the actor, but belongs to the spectator. This amounts to something like a Copernican revolution in Indian aesthetics. Of course, we cannot say with certainty what Abhinava's teacher, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, thought on this problem because we do not have anything from him but stray quotes. Indications are, however, that he, too, may not have shared Abhinava's new perspective.<sup>66</sup> It is in this notion that a sharp distinction appears between

<sup>62</sup>Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyālokalocana*, p. 67.

<sup>63</sup>As will be argued later, it appears that Maṃmaṭa Bhaṭṭa is the one who lays stress on the similarity between *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda*. He, unlike Abhinavagupta, may have been a Vedāntin.

<sup>64</sup>The recent work on Kashmiri Śaivism, *The Doctrine of Vibration*, by Dyczkowski distinguishes the type of nondualism of Kashmiri Śaivism from that of Advaita nondualism by calling it integral monism, a monism in which the "one reality is manifest both as unity and diversity." See his discussion of the relationship of Advaita Vedānta to Śaiva monism in chapter one of his book. See Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 41.

<sup>65</sup>Gerow and Aklujkar, "On Śānta Rasa in Sanskrit Poetics," p. 83, fn. 11.

<sup>66</sup>See for instance the verse that Abhinava attributes to his teacher (in Abhinava's commentary on *Dhvanyāloka*, 1.5) in which the experience of the poet, the character, the actor and the spectator are all said to be the same. Abhinava cites it as a reference to imagination (*pratibhā*), but there is nothing in the verse itself to suggest such an interpretation. Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyālokalocana*, p. 28.



*bhāva* and *rasa*. Since in *śānta* that distinction becomes blurred, it is not unlikely that Abhinava had difficulty in fitting it into his general aesthetic and, as a result, was content to view it as an analogy for the *rasa* process rather than simply as a *rasa* or as “the” *rasa*. For our purposes, however, it is unimportant which view Abhinava held provided it is understood that *śānta* had a special significance for his aesthetic and the tradition he influenced.

What is really called for at this point is a detailed study of the works of the tradition that followed Abhinava up to the time of Rūpa Gosvāmin. Unfortunately, such a study, though having an important bearing on questions concerning Rūpa’s possible contact with that tradition and the form that tradition had assumed by his time, could fill another monograph or two. Nevertheless, as a pitifully inadequate compromise, a few quotes from and observations on the main vehicle of Abhinava’s tradition, Mammaṭa’s *Kāvya-prakāśa*, will bring this section to a close. It was this text that would have had been the most important in bringing Rūpa into the influence of Abhinavagupta’s aesthetic.

Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa lived in Kashmir around the end of the 11th cent. and wrote about 75 to 100 years after Abhinavagupta. His *Kāvya-prakāśa* systematizes and summarizes the views of several of the previous writers on poetics and aesthetics, the primary sources of theoretical parts of his work being ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.<sup>67</sup> The wording of the *vṛtti* portion (the prose portion that expands upon the ideas contained in the verses) of his text shows that he was well-versed in Abhinava’s commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra*.<sup>68</sup>

The *Kāvya-prakāśa* may have the most voluminous commentarial tradition of any technical treatise in Sanskrit, boasting well over a hundred commentators from different times and parts of India. The earliest commentary is that of Rucaka of Kāśmīra, called the shorter *Śaṅketa*, which is dated 1140. The next is the longer *Śaṅketa* by the Jaina author of Gujarat, Māṇikyacandra, and is dated 1160. There seems to be some uncertainty as to who the third oldest commentator was. Some suggest that Sarasvatīrtha (known as Narahari before his renunciation) should occupy that position.<sup>69</sup> He was a native of Āṇḍhra, before retiring to Benares where he wrote his commentary and his date of birth is given as 1242. Another possibility is Someśvara who was either from Kāśmīra or Kanyākubja (Kanauj) and whose commentary is called the *Kāvyaḍarśa* or also the *Śaṅketa*. Since he does not cite any other commentators in his commentary, he appears to be quite early, although no one has

<sup>67</sup> Mammaṭa is sometimes criticized for being too eclectic in his views.

<sup>68</sup> See for instance the *vṛtti* on *kārikās* 27 and 28 which reflects in some sections not only the content, but also the wording of Abhinava’s comm. on the *rasasūtra* of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the *Abhinavabhāratī*. There are, however, important and interesting differences as we shall see. Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa, *Kāvya-prakāśa* (Mysore: Oriental Research Institute, 1974), 1:240.

<sup>69</sup> Badarīnātha Jhā, introd. to his edition of the *Kāvya-prakāśa* with Gokulanātha’s comm., *Sarasvatī-bhavanagranthamālā* no. 89 (Varanasi: Varanaseya Visvavidyalaya, 1961), p. 4.

yet established a date for him. Another early author whose date is unknown and whose commentary has been lost except for a few citations from later commentators, is Vācaspati Miśra. Since he is referred to as "ancient" (prācīna) by Caṇḍidāsa, who wrote at the beginning of the 14th century, he must have written his commentary in the preceding century. Sivaprasad Bhattacharya thinks he lived in Mithilā at around 1200 A.D.<sup>70</sup> The next datable commentator was Śrīdhara, who also lived in Mithilā and, as he quotes Vācaspati Miśra and is quoted by Caṇḍidāsa, is assigned to the first quarter of the 13th century.<sup>71</sup> Two more early commentators should be mentioned; the first, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, author of the *Kāvya-prakāśa-dīpikā*, wrote in Gujarat in 1293 and the second is Caṇḍidāsa, author of another *Kāvya-prakāśa-dīpikā*, who wrote in Orissa and, being the younger brother of Viśvanātha's (1350 A.D.) grandfather, probably lived around the beginning of the 14th century as well. From the geographical locations of these commentators, we can see that within two centuries the *Kāvya-prakāśa* had spread through much of North India. We see it spreading from Kāśmīra to Gujarat, Kanyākubja, Vārāṇasī and Mithilā. From Mithilā it reached Orissa before the end of the 13th century. It appears to have been studied in Āndhra, the home of Sarasvatītīrtha, by the last half of the 13th century as well. It is interesting to note, however, that the first commentary written by a Bengali does not appear until the end of the 15th century (Paramānanda Cakravartin), after which time commentaries, especially by writers on Navya-nyāya (the new logic), were written there in profusion.<sup>72</sup> This curious fact will be important to us later when we try to determine whether Rūpa had knowledge of the text.

Abhinavagupta's views undergo an peculiar transformation in Maṃmaṭa's work. Maṃmaṭa discusses the same authorities that Abhinava does in his commentary on the *rasa-sūtra*, but adds elements not found in Abhinava's original treatment, causing them to appear in a different light. This is not the place to discuss all these differences and their implications, however. It is sufficient to point to the way that Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka is represented with respect to Abhinava in Maṃmaṭa's work. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka is given one sentence in which his notion of generalization is mentioned, his comparison of the *rasa* experience to the experience of *brahman* is not mentioned and the major distinction between him and Abhinavagupta, the "copernican" revolution of shifting the primary

<sup>70</sup>De, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, p. 159.

<sup>71</sup>Sivaprasad Bhattacharya, introd. to his edition of the *Kāvya-prakāśa* with Śrīdhara's comm. (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1959), 1:lxii.

<sup>72</sup>S.P. Bhattacharya mentions another Bengali writer named Vidyāsāgara, who wrote a commentary on the *Kāvya-prakāśa*, on the basis of a reference to him in the commentary of Śrīvatsalāchana Bhaṭṭācārya, a 16th cent. Bengali writer. Bhattacharya identifies him with a Puṇḍarikākṣa Vidyāsāgara who lived in the first half of the 15th cent. If this is so, he would be the earliest Bengali commentator. It is odd that Paramānanda Cakravartin, who can be placed in the last half of the 15th cent., does not refer to him, however.

locus of the *rasa* experience from the character to the spectator, is not even hinted at. Instead, the idea of the similarity of the *rasa* experience with the experience of *brahman* is attributed to Abhinavagupta in spite of the fact that, as mentioned before, at the one point in his commentaries where he mentions the analogy, Abhinava seems at best lukewarm to the idea. Here, then, is the way the aesthetic theory of Abhinavagupta became known to the thinkers of the rest of India,<sup>73</sup> who, with the possible exception of Mammaṭa's earliest commentators, had no direct access to Abhinava's works:

To those who are expert, in ordinary life, at the practice of inferring a *sthāyin* because of [the presence of] women, etc.,<sup>74</sup> a *sthāyin* is manifested by those very same things [women, etc. when portrayed] in poetry and drama, [those things then being] referred to as *vibhāvas*, etc., because, losing their roles as causes, etc.,<sup>75</sup> they possess the functions of *vibhāvanā*, etc.<sup>76</sup> and they are cognized in a universal way (*sādhāraṇya*) because of the absence [in the cognizer] of the apprehension of limitation through his nonacceptance of some particular relationship such as: "these are mine, these are an enemy's, these are a stranger's, or these are not mine, these are not an enemy's, these are not a stranger's." That *sthāyin*, erotic love, etc., is situated in the spectator as a dormant impression (*vāsanā*), and, though it is situated in a limited knower and is non-different [from him], like one's own form,<sup>77</sup> it is cognized with a universality, that characterizes the communication of heart of all sensitive aesthetes, by a knower freed of limitations through an absence of connection with other objects of knowledge that has arisen as a result of the temporary slackening of his condition of being a limited knower through the influence of the method of universality. Having its only purpose in being tasted, enduring as long as the *vibhāvas* are active, being tasted like a beverage, appearing as if [it were] in front of one, or as if entering the heart, or as if embracing the whole body, or as if eclipsing everything else, or as if bringing about the experience of Brahman, that non-ordinary astonishment

<sup>73</sup>And, it might be added, to Western scholars interested in Indian aesthetics.

<sup>74</sup>The causes, effects and accompanying feelings of the major emotions: love, humor, fear etc.

<sup>75</sup>Because they occur in the "play" world of drama and are not taken as real events.

<sup>76</sup>*Vibhāvanā*, *anubhāvanā* and *vyabhicārībhāvanā*: the three functions associated with the actions of the *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicārins* in drama and poetry. Difficult to translate, they might be rendered: "setting up the context" for the primary emotion (man, woman and moonlit garden), "making perceptible" the primary emotion (through their actions, speech and involuntary physical reactions) and "surrounding or associating" the primary emotion with its characteristic subemotions (jealousy, joy, longing, pique, etc.).

<sup>77</sup>Though *rasa* is the self, it is nevertheless cognized by the self.

is *rasa*, consisting of *śṛṅgāra*, etc.

It is not an effect, because then its existence would be possible even in the cessation of the *vibhāvas*, etc. Nor is it an object of knowledge because it is not an established [or pre-existing] thing. Rather, it is a thing to be tasted that is manifested by the *vibhāvas*, etc.

If someone asks: “When has something [ever] been seen apart from causers and conveyers,” [the answer is] “it has never been seen,” but that is an aid to the establishment of its non-ordinariness, not a detriment. With the arising of the tasting its arising is effected; thus, in a sense, it can also be called an effect. Since it falls within the ken of a non-ordinary cognition that is, nevertheless, different from the ordinary means of knowledge, different from the limited knowledge of the *yogin* which is endowed with a sense of disinterest and different from the unlimited cognition of the *yogin* which ends in the self alone and which is free of contact with other objects of knowledge, it can be called an object of cognition, too. The means of knowing that grasps it (*rasa*) is neither indeterminate, because of the importance of reflecting on the *vibhāvas*, etc., nor is it determinate, because the non-ordinary bliss that is being tasted is the result of self-cognition. In addition, though it lacks both natures it consists of both, too. Like before, this only conveys its non-ordinariness and not a contradiction. So says the respected Abhinavagupta.<sup>78</sup>

This passage is one of the most important in Sanskrit aesthetics. It has shaped the way most later writers, even those in Bhoja’s tradition, have thought about the aesthetic of Abhinavagupta. Only the earliest commentators on the *Kāvya-prakāśa* display a direct familiarity with the works of Abhinava. These are Rucaka, Māṇikyacandra and Sarasvatī-tīrtha. It appears that Abhinavagupta’s commentary on the *Nāṭya-śāstra* faded quickly and was not widely studied even by the 13th century. His commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* remained influential for a longer period, being commented on by a Kerala writer named Udayottuṅga who lived in the 15th century.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the *Kāvya-prakāśa* supplanted these earlier texts and became the primary authority in the “orthodox” tradition of Sanskrit aesthetics.

The passage gives the impression that Abhinavagupta was a Vedāntin who compared the aesthetic experience to the experience of *brahman*. In actuality, that was a view of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka towards which Abhinavagupta was only lukewarm. The Vedāntic tone of the passage may have prompted a commentator,

<sup>78</sup>Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa, *Kāvya-prakāśa*, edited with the comm. of Śrīdhara by Sivaprasad Bhat-tacharya (Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1959), *vṛtti* on verse 28, pp. 6970.

<sup>79</sup>P.V. Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1961), p. 208.

Śrīdhara in the 13th century, to suggest the highly Vedāntic example of a lamp manifesting a pot in a dark room as a way of understanding the way the *vibhāvas* manifest *rasa* in the spectator.<sup>80</sup> Not all non-dualisms are the same and in understanding Abhinava's aesthetic it is important to distinguish the non-dualism of Vedānta from that of Kāśmīrī Śaivism. Abhinava's major insight, on the other hand, his idea of locating the aesthetic experience in the spectator rather than in the character or actor, is barely emphasized in the passage.

For Abhinavagupta, the aesthetic experience is an event of temporary freedom from the limitations of an otherwise constantly constricted subjectivity that culminated in the experience of itself as a universal subject. The spectator under the influence of drama or poetry becomes temporarily expanded and capable of a universalized or generalized experience. Thus, the main thrust of Abhinava's aesthetic is away from personalized, individual and affective experience towards an impersonal, universalized and non-affective experience involving a kind of self-dispossession.<sup>81</sup> Let us now contrast this viewpoint with that of Bhoja.

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<sup>80</sup> Śrīdhara, *Kāvyaaprakāśa-viveka*, p. 70.

<sup>81</sup> If, that is, we take the "self" to be the individual identity. From Abhinavagupta's view point, however, individual identity is not the true self. The true self is the underlying universal "I," which is the Lord. Therefore, from Abhinavagupta's point of view, the *rasa* experience is a form of self-possession rather than a self-dispossession.