

Saṃskṛta-sādhutā

Goodness of Sanskrit

Studies in Honour of
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Rasa after Abhinava

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Both the history of modern scholarship about *rasa* as well as the history of much premodern discourse on *rasa* combine to suggest that Abhinavagupta’s radical revision of the received doctrines regarding the emotional dimension of literary art constituted an epistemic rupture in India. Hereby it is assumed that, in a kind of Copernican or Newtonian moment, all earlier ideas lost their explanatory power and were consigned to the dustbin of history.

The rupture consisted, as I understand the matter, in a half-dozen key moves: 1) a decisive shift in analytical focus from a concern with literary creation—with how poetry “fixes” the emotions of the characters, “making them more permanently perceptible”¹—toward the psychological process of literary reception; 2) a new attention to the onto-epistemological problem arising from this shift, *rasa* being characterised neither as a thing that is produced (*utpattivāda*) nor as an object of conceptual knowledge (*jñāptivāda*), but rather as a purely experiential, quasi-physical phenomenon of tasting (*carvaṇā*), and one that is analogous to the submersion of the self in religious ecstasy (*brahmā-nandāsvādam iva*); 3) the new idea of generalisation (*sādharaṇīkaraṇa*), whereby a character’s dominant emotional state comes to be shared by the reader or viewer in a de-individualised, even de-“historicalised,” fashion, coupled with an identification (*tanmayībhāva*) with that character; 4) the withering critique of the explanatory force of imitation (*anukāra*), which had long dominated Indian aesthetics; 5) the very possibility of an aesthetic emotion of emotionlessness, embodied in the concept of *sāntarasa*. All these ideas—whether they were originally Abhinava’s or adapted from predecessors such as Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka or even Udbhata makes finally little difference, since it was Abhinava’s name that became attached to them—really did mark an advance, of an order of magnitude, over earlier thinking about aesthetic experience. What is less certain to my mind is whether historians of Indian thought are correct to assume that intellectual superiority translated automatically into historical effectivity, and are therefore justified in believing, as Daniel Ingalls believed—to say nothing of generalists,

1 Or so I tried once to characterise the long tradition from Bharata to Bhoja with help from the American New Critics Wimsatt and Beardsley in their well-known 1949 essay, “The Affective Fallacy.”

for whom hypotheses quickly become facts—that Abhinava’s new concept did indeed become “the leading view of *rasa* in Indian criticism.”²

Much depends, to be sure, on how we measure “leading views” in old India, or whether in fact we even can measure them, there or anywhere. Now, modern students of Indology are often introduced to *rasa* theory through the fourth chapter of Mammaṭa’s *Kāvya prakāśa*, which summarises Abhinava’s critique of earlier theories and sketches out his own general doctrine, to which Mammaṭa gives a ringing endorsement.³ And modern Sanskrit pedagogy does sometimes reflect the syllabi of the past, the *Kāvya prakāśa* being a case in point. In stark contrast to Abhinava’s own works, especially his *Abhinavabhāratī* (AB), which circulated nowhere outside of Kashmir, Nepal, and a very few particular places in peninsular India,⁴ the *Kāvya prakāśa* became the foremost textbook of literary theory in early modern India. It was vastly more popular than even the four hundred manuscripts listed in the *New Catalogus Catalogorum* suggest, and was dispersed across the entire subcontinent. What is equally important, Mammaṭa’s work attracted commentators by the score and from every corner of India, and none of these, to my knowledge (though I know only a dozen of the more than one hundred that exist), seriously sought to undermine Abhinava’s ideas.⁵ To be sure, attacks were eventually mounted, and on some of his core epistemological components. For example, Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (c. 1650) reports that “New Scholars” (we do not know who) regarded the *rasa* experience not, with Abhinava, as a higher form of knowledge (the “removal of a veil”), but to the con-

2 Ingalls 1991: 38. Ashok Aklujkar, my *gurubhai*, will I trust appreciate the affectionate spirit of my critical engagement with Daniel Ingalls.

3 It is worth observing, however, in view of later developments touched on in what follows, that while Mammaṭa does discuss the specific innovation, or rather popularisation, of *śāntarasa*, *śānta* is not included in the *kārikā* defining *rasa* (4.29), or illustrated in the examples that follow, or mentioned in the discussion of the *sthāyibhāvas* (4.30); it is discussed only after the *vyabhicāribhāvas*, prompted by the use of *nirveda*, the *sthāyi* of *śānta*, as the first item in the list of transitory emotions (4.35 ab).

4 It is extant in only two sets of manuscripts (and various transcripts) from Kerala, incomplete and often corrupt, and two poor Nepali manuscripts. The transmission of the text is so bad as to suggest ubiquitous incomprehension. A second source is of course the *Dhvanyālokalocana*, for which three times as many manuscripts exist as for the AB (some 60), though the almost absolute absence of a subcommentarial tradition might lead one to doubt whether the text exerted any *direct* influence.

5 A very good sampling of the commentarial tradition is provided in the recent edition of Mohan.

trary, as a new temporary form of self-ignorance (the “imposition of a veil”).⁶ But generally speaking, if historical bibliometrics, geographical distribution, and doctrinal longevity within the major lineage of *alaṅkāraśāstra* provide some gauge of a “leading view,” then it would appear that *rasa* after Abhinava—if only as filtered through Mammaṭa⁷—was indeed Abhinava’s *rasa*.

The intellectual history of *rasa*, however, cannot be reconstructed simply by following that dominant lineage, certainly not if we are talking about “Indian” criticism. *Rasa* discourse spills over into major domains of culture far beyond the high tradition of orthodox *alaṅkāraśāstra*. Two major examples come immediately to mind, which I will review briskly.

The first concerns the idea of *rasa* in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, where I will restrict myself only to Rūpa Gosvāmin, the sixteenth-century innovator in theological aesthetics, and, more generally viewed, the leading theoretician of one of the most dramatic religious movements of early modern India. To be sure, Rūpa had many important innovations to offer, but the key point to be made here about his analysis of *rasa* concerns its ontology and where Rūpa is situated in the thousand year discussion of this problem. Those familiar with the discourse will recognise his affiliation immediately from his definition:

*athāsyāḥ keśavarater lakṣitāyā nigadyate// sāmagrīparipoṣeṇa
paramā rasarūpatā/ vibhāvair anubhāvaiś ca sātṭvikair vyabhi-
cāribhiḥ// svādyatvaṁ hṛdi bhaktānām ānītā śravaṇādibhiḥ/ eṣā
kṛṣṇaratih sthāyī bhāvo bhaktiraso bhavet//*⁸

[Now we discuss how the stable emotion desire, which pertains to Krishna as defined [e.g. in 2.5.2?], becomes itself the supreme state of *rasa* through the full development of the complete apparatus [of aesthetic elements]. The [stories of Krishna and the like] that we hear make use of the underlying and stimulant causes, the voluntary and involuntary reactions, and transitory emotions to enable this *rasa* to be tasted in the hearts of devotees. This stable emotion, desire for Krishna, *becomes* the *rasa* of devotion.]

6 Bronner and Tubb 2008.

7 The summaries of Abhinava found in Hemacandra’s *Kāvyaṅuśāsana* or the anonymous twelfth-century *Kalpalatāviveka* had not a fraction of Mammaṭa’s circulation.

8 *Haribhaktirasāmṛtasindhu dakṣiṇavibhāge* 4cd–6 (78).

Although the language of tasting may faintly recall Abhinava (though it is of course part of the foundational metaphor of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* discourse), Rūpa's assessment is decidedly nothing like Abhinava's definition of *rasa*, "emotion that is grasped [by the spectator] when he is in a state completely unencumbered by the impediments of phenomenal existence (and that remains in essence a process of tasting)."⁹ To the contrary, to argue that *rasa* is nothing other than a stable emotion in a state of full development through the work of the various aesthetic elements is virtually identical to Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa's views that we will examine in detail below, and that reverts to the oldest stratum of historical reflection on the matter.

Equally important, implicit in Rūpa Gosvāmin's definition (and fully explicit in Lollaṭa's) is the fact that the analytical focus of *rasa* remains the character, inasmuch as the Gauḍīya devotee in fact becomes a character in the *līlā* of Krishna. He takes on the role of servant or friend or lover, even entering onto the scene, so to speak, by visiting Mathurā; indeed, as one scholar puts it, for the devotee "the entire world becomes a divine stage."¹⁰ And indeed, as the history of Bengali Vaishnavism abundantly demonstrates—and the lives of its greatest exponents corroborate, above all Caitanya, whose multiple role-playing is fully on display in such biographies as the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*—a true devotee is no spectator at all, but rather becomes an actual participant in the drama of Krishna. As was the case for Lollaṭa, or better Bhoja and the long tradition that his great *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* aimed to summarise, the actual *rasikas* are not the viewers but the characters.¹¹ Despite the analogies Abhinava draws between *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda* (appropriating Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's description, *parabrahmāsvāda-savidha*, AB 271.5), these are analogies only; Abhinava forcefully and repeat-

9 *rasanātmakavītavighnapratītirāhyo bhāva eva rasaḥ* (AB 274.7) is one example of many of his definition. The seven impediments, with their focus on the depersonalisation of the experience, are discussed loc. cit.

10 Haberman 2003: lxvii. The question "whether one is an original character, an actor, or a member of the audience" (lxv) would therefore indeed seem not to be irrelevant. The relationship of Rūpa's aesthetics to Bhoja's is too complicated to address here. But note that while Bhoja did hold that all *rasas* ultimately resolve into *śṛṅgāra* and that *rasa* pertained to the character, he took from Ānandavardhana the view of its onto-epistemological mechanism as *vyāñjanā*, not *paripoṣa* or *upacaya* (see Pollock 1998: 129 and passim).

11 See, for example, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 676: "Someone like Rāma [i.e., as a literary character] has *rasa*, and his speech, since its source lies in [his very] *rasa*, may itself be said to 'have *rasa*'" (*rasavato rāmāder yad vacanaṁ tadrasamūlatvād rasavad*).

edly denies that the two experiences could ever be identical. This important and complex topic cannot be addressed in detail here; consider only his description of *carvaṇā*: the experience of *rasa* is entirely different from the highest yoga experience (here Abhinava becomes difficult and counterintuitive) “because of the absence of beauty in the latter, given the fact that the yogin is completely absorbed by reason of being possessed by the object [of meditation]. In the *rasa* experience, by contrast, it is impossible [for the viewer to think] that the events necessarily concern only himself, and as a result, there is no ‘absorption by reason of being possessed by the object.’”¹² As Abhinava puts it, *tena nāṭya eva rasā na loke* (*rasas* accordingly exist only in drama, not in the actual world). Rūpa inhabits a thought world profoundly different from Abhinava’s, one in which the very idea of aesthetic distance has been obliterated.¹³

In some ways far more striking evidence of the limit of Abhinava’s influence in aesthetic theory is found in Brajhasha (Old Hindi) *sāhityaśāstra*.¹⁴ This offers the richest archive of vernacular literary theory in pre-modern India, consisting as it largely does of a major reworking of the Sanskrit tradition over three centuries ending in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The principal interests of the Brajhasha literati were rhetorical and characterological, as we can see from the *lakṣaṅgranth*s they composed in such profusion, which are concerned with *alaṅkāra* and *nāyikābheda* (and, as perfunctorily as Sanskrit, with *nāyakabheda*). Some theorists did attempt comprehensive studies of literary art, though independent works devoted exclusively to the analysis of *rasa* are strikingly rare. Although it is generally true that early modern Hindi authors like many of their Sanskrit peers were averse to historical citation, it is remarkable nonetheless that Abhinava’s name seems to be completely absent from the

12 Translating as literally as possible AB 279.2–7: [*carvaṇā . . . sakalaviṣayikoparāga-sūnyaśuddhaparayogigatasvānandaikaghanānubhavād ca viśiṣyate*] . . . *viṣayāveśa-vaivaśyena ca saundāryavirahāt. atra tu svāmaikagatatvaniyamāsambhavāt na viṣayāveśavaivaśyam*. In his theological writings Abhinava appears to distinguish between *āveśa* and *samāveśa*. Somdev Vasudeva has drawn my attention to Abhinava’s definition of *bhakti* in *Gūṭārthasaṅgraha* 12.2: *māheśvaryaviṣayo yeṣāṃ samāveśaḥ akṛtrimas tanmayībhāvaḥ*, and he remarks, “Bhakti is a non-artificial-immersion-based identification with God as an object (of contemplation), and, by implication, the aesthetic experience (*rasāsvāda*) is an identification based on an artificial immersion (*āveśa*).”

13 See also Gerow 1994: 188. The basis for Masson and Patwardhan’s contrasting view seems to me in fact to be thin (1970: 4). Abhinava’s restriction of *rasa* to the theatre is found in AB 285.17.

14 I am grateful to Allison Busch for her guidance through this (to me, dark) terrain.

record of *rīti* literature.¹⁵ Consider just the works of Bhikhārīdās, probably the greatest Hindi scholar of his age (fl. 1750, near Lucknow).¹⁶ In his *Rasasārāmś* (Epitome of Rasa), one of the few independent texts on *rasa*, the only trace of Abhinava—and it is a very faint trace—is that *rasa* is defined as nine-fold (though *śānta* is nowhere discussed), whereas in his major exposition in the *Kāvyanirṇay*, the author follows Mammaṭa, adverting to *śānta* only after the *vy-abhicāribhāvas* and excluding it from drama, and completely ignoring the major questions of *rasa*'s ontology or epistemology.¹⁷ Outside of this nothing in Bhikhārī's oeuvre would have been different had Abhinava never written. And the same appears to hold true for Brajhasha literary theory at large; indeed, there is not a single work that engages with any of the philosophical and psychological questions Abhinava raises, which would be astonishing if those questions were known in any depth (beyond the précis in Mammaṭa). The true source of inspiration for *rīti*-era intellectuals must in fact have lain elsewhere.

From the evidence of Gauḍīya and Brajhasha aesthetics, then, two of the major tributaries to the ocean of post-Abhinava Indian literary thought—and I am convinced the same conclusion would force itself upon us from a review of any of the south Indian vernacular *sāhityaśāstra* traditions, or the Islamic understanding of *rasa* such as we find it in the Sufi *premākhyāns*¹⁸—Abhinava seems to be rather like Pierre in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*: we enter into later Indian intellectual history looking for the great philosopher of aesthetics, like Pierre in the café, and in much of it he is simply not there; his absence, as Sartre would say, haunts this history. We will be somewhat less surprised by Abhinava's "present absence," however, once we begin to examine the other forces that were at work in early modern thinking about aesthetics, and to recognise

15 The phenomenally well-read Ramchandra Shukla could locate only one reference, in a text from 1801 (Sukla 1994: 176). Similarly Bhagirath Misra found only one possible allusion before the nineteenth century (and not to Abhinava but to *rasavyaṅgyatva*, which derives not from Abhinava but from Ānandavardhana; Misra 1965: 107).

16 McGregor: 2003: 941–42.

17 *Rasasārāmś* 1.9 (*Bhikhārīdāsgranthāvalī* vol. 1, p. 4) and *Kāvyanirṇay* 4.40 (*Bhikhārīdāsgranthāvalī* vol. 2, p. 35).

18 I know of nothing in the Kannada tradition of literary thought that shows the impact of Abhinava, and this seems to be the case with Telugu and Tamil (a rare possible exception is Ṭampūraṇar in his (twelfth-century) commentary on the *Tolkāppiyam*, according to Whitney Cox [personal communication]). The sources of the Sufi tradition are more obscure, but nothing in, say, the *Madhumālātī* (see Behl and Weightman 2000) suggests awareness of the Kashmiri tradition.

that they were derived not from the Kashmiri tradition but from an altogether separate and far older strand. One such force is embodied above all in the work of a writer on whom I wish to concentrate for the rest of this essay, Bhānudatta of Videha.¹⁹

Bhānudatta is today perhaps the most famous Sanskrit poet—certainly the most famous Sanskrit poet of early modern India—whom no one has heard of. Although he is accorded little more than a footnote in standard Indian literary histories, his *Rasamañjarī* (RM, a text on *nāyikābheda*) and *Rasataranṅinī* (RT, a full-scale analysis of *rasa*)²⁰ attracted an extraordinary amount of attention from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, including commentaries from a dozen of the period's most celebrated scholar-exegetes.²¹ No literary work, at least of the non-religious, lyrical sort, made a bigger impact than the RM on the new art of miniature painting that burst onto the Indian scene in the late sixteenth century.²² When Abu al-Fazl, the leading intellectual at the court of Akbar, presented a review of the arts and sciences of the Hindus to the Mughal emperor in the 1590s, he turned in part to the work of Bhānudatta to describe the

19 What follows builds on my recent edition and translation (Pollock 2008).

20 Bhānu produced at least one other treatise on rhetoric, the *Alaṅkāratilaka*; the *Gūṭā-gaurīpatikāvya*, a short poem on Śiva and Gauri modelled on the *Gūṭāgovinda*; a mixed prose-verse work, the *Kumārabhārgavīyacampū*, narrating the story of the deity Kartikeya; and an anthology of his own and his father's poetry called the *Rasapārijāta*. Several other attributed works have not survived.

21 A sampling of this extraordinary group, in (relatively reliable) chronological order: Śeṣa Cintāmaṇi, younger brother of Śeṣa Kṛṣṇa, the most celebrated grammarian of the late sixteenth century (Kanpur/Varanasi, 1553—this is within a generation or two of Bhānu); Gopāla Bhaṭṭa (son of Harivaṁśa Bhaṭṭa), a direct disciple of Caitanya and teacher of the renowned Bangla poet Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja (place unknown, 1572); Anantapaṇḍita, grandfather of the logician Mahādeva, and commentator on the *Āryāsaptasatī* and *Mudrārākṣasa* (Ahmadnagar/Varanasi, 1636); Veṇīdatta Bhaṭṭācārya, author of the *Alaṅkāracandrodaya* (Bareilly, c. 1700); Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, the most remarkable polymath of the early eighteenth century (Varanasi, 1713); Gaṅgārāma Jaḍe, pupil of the *Mahābhārata* commentator Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, and a scholar learned in both *alaṅkāraśāstra* and logic (Varanasi, 1742); and Viśveśvara, author of the *Alaṅkārakaustubha*, the last of the important independent works on *alaṅkāraśāstra* (Almora, d. 1750).

22 The poem was illustrated in Mewar perhaps as early as the 1630s, in the Deccan in the 1650s, in Basohli between 1660 and 1690, in Chamba about 1690, in Nurpur in the 1710s, and elsewhere. The earliest album, from Udaipur, strongly suggests the atelier if not the hand of the celebrated Sahibdin.

nature of *sāhitya*.²³ And for the development of the Brajhasha literary tradition that we just examined, no other Sanskrit poet exercised anything remotely approaching Bhānu's influence. The list of works that owe a debt to him is long and their authors distinguished. Highlights include Kṛpārām's *Hitataraṅgiṇī* (1541, based on the RT), Nanddās' *Rasamañjarī* (no later than 1585, based on the RM); Rahim's *Barvai Nāyikābheda* (1600? based on the RM); Sundar's *Sundar Śṛṅgār* (1631, based on the RM); Mahākavi Dev's *Bhāv Vilās* (1689, based on the RT). Bhānu's impact was felt well into the eighteenth century.

As usual with Sanskrit poets we know very little about Bhānu. He tells us he was a Maithili Brahman and son of a poet, whom he often quotes in his works:

His father was Ganeśvara,
brightest jewel in the crown of poetry,
his land, Videha country, where waves
of the holy river ripple.
With verse of his own making Śrī Bhānu
the poet arranged this *Bouquet*
to rival the flower of the coral tree
at the ear of the Goddess of Language. (RM v. 138)

But determining precisely where and when he wrote has proven difficult. In a poem in the RM illustrating the different involuntary physical reactions, Bhānu offers the single historical allusion, so far as I can tell, in his entire oeuvre (aside from a brief genealogy at the beginning of his *Kumārabhārgavīyam*):

Her voice breaks, tears well up in her eyes,
her breast is beaded with sweat,
her lips tremble, her smooth cheeks grow pale,
goosebumps cover her body,
her mind absorbed, the light in her eyes dying,
her legs paralysed—
did she, too, chance to glance at the royal highway
and see King Nijāma? (RM v. 121)

23 RM v. 3 (missed by the translator), v. 13, and v. 22 are cited in the *Ain-i Akbari* (trans. Jarrett, vol. 3, pp. 256–56; Bhānudatta is not named but the verses are unmistakably his).

The manuscript and commentarial traditions are almost unanimous in their reading of the last line of this poem, and thus in connecting Bhānu to this King Nijāma. But to whom could the name refer? The well-known commentator Anantapaṇḍita, who lived in the early seventeenth century and hailed from Puṇyastambha (Puntambem, near Ahmadnagar) in Maharashtra, persuasively identifies Nijāma as the “king of Devagiri.” This is the city (not far from Ahmadnagar), once the celebrated Yādava stronghold, that was captured in 1499 by Ahmad Nizam Shah, founder of the Nizam Shahi dynasty of Ahmadnagar in 1490. Bhānu cannot have written much after this date, since his RM was as just noted adapted in the *Hitatarāṅgiṇī* of 1541, and thus an early sixteenth century date is virtually certain.²⁴ As for his location in the Deccan, there is of course no reason why a Maithili Brahman should not have sought patronage in the south, in a new and ascendant political formation, especially given that other Sanskrit intellectuals enjoyed royal support of the Nizam Shahis—whether Ahmad Nizam Shah (r. 1490–1508) or Burhan Nizam Shah (r. 1508–53)—such as Dalapatirāja, author of an important *dharmasāstra* (the *Nṛsimhaprasāda*, c. 1500), who describes himself as “minister and record-keeper of Nijāma Sāha, overlord of all Yavanas and overlord of Devagiri.”²⁵ Moreover, a Deccani provenance for at least the RM would go some way in explaining the impact of the work on poets at other southern sultanates, such as Golconda in the mid-seventeenth century, where the work was deeply studied and famously critiqued in the *Śṛṅgāramañjarī* of Akbar Shah, a fact also reflected in the large number of manuscripts of the work in Telugu script.

Given the influence Bhānudatta exercised on later Indian poets and literary theorists and the kind of attention he drew from many of the leading scholars of the age, understanding his view of *rasa*, it seems fair to say, is going to bring us reasonably close to grasping at least one of the more consequential aesthetic theories of the early modern period.

24 An argument for a *terminus ante quem* of 1314 is based on the false attribution to Bhānudatta of a lawbook called *Pārijāta* cited in another text dated 1315 (Bhānu’s literary anthology *Rasapārijāta* is confused with the *dharmasāstra Pārijāta* in Gode 1953: 444–51; the verses he cites are actually from the former; he is also unaware of the verse on Nijāma). An argument for a *terminus ante quem* of 1428 is based on a false dating of a commentary on the RM (Dasgupta and De 1962: 561; the *Rasamañjarīprakāśa*, which exists in a single ms., seems in fact to be the *Rasikarañjanī* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa, whose date of composition is likewise 1572).

25 Kane 1997: 862.

Bhānu's RT provides a complete analysis of *rasa* in eight chapters, dealing with *sthāyibhāvas* (1), *vibhāvas* (2), *anubhāvas* (3), *sāttvikānubhāvas* (4), *vyabhicāribhāvas* (5), *rasas* (6–7), and miscellaneous matters (dominant and subordinate *rasas*, faulty *rasas*, and the like). All *lakṣaṇas* are illustrated by verses, often very beautiful verses, of his own making, a genre of *śāstrakāvya* that, though not an invention of Bhānu's, became because of his artistry a model for *bhāṣā* intellectuals. (Contrast for example the *Rasārṇavasudhākara* of Śiṅga-bhūpāla [c. 1330], who shares Bhānu's expository frame-work but who took all his *udāharaṇas* from the canonical poets.) It is in the sixth chapter of the RT that he provides his definition of *rasa*:

atha rasā nirūpyante. vibhāvānubhāvasāttvikabhāvavyabhicāribhāvair upanīyamānaḥ²⁶ paripūrṇaḥ sthāyī bhāvo rasyamāno rasaḥ. bhāvavibhāvānubhāvavyabhicāribhāvair manoviśramo yatra kriyate sa vā rasaḥ. prabuddhasthāyibhāvavāsana vā rasaḥ. prabodhakā vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicāribhāvāḥ. na ca yūnoḥ prathamānurāge 'vyāptiḥ pūrvānubhāvābhāvād iti vācyam. tatrāpi janmāntariyānubhavasattvād iti.²⁷

[The *rasas* will now be described. When a stable emotion is represented by the causes, the voluntary and involuntary physical reactions, and the transitory feelings, and thereby becomes fully matured, it is “tasted” and thus becomes a *rasa*. Another definition: *rasa* is that upon which the mind is brought to focus by the emotions, the causes, the physical reactions, and the transitory emotions. Yet another definition: a *rasa* is the trace memory of a stable emotion when this trace has been awakened, and what awakens it are the causes, the physical reactions, and the transitory emotions. This last definition is not so narrow as to exclude the love at first sight of two young people, on the grounds that they have no previous experience (and hence no memory). For even in their case there exists an earlier experience—namely, in a former birth.]

The only one among these three definitions that has any real traction for Bhānu is the first—and it is the oldest definition in the tradition. For he describes every

26 In view of Bhānu's use of the technical term *upanayika* (see below) this is almost certainly not an error for *upacīyamānaḥ* (which is however read by two commentators).

27 RT 6.1 (all references to the RT are to the paragraphs in the CSL edition).

rasa as the “fully matured” (*paripūrṇa*) stable emotion, or its “full development” (*paripoṣa*): “The fully matured mutual pleasure of a young couple, or the properly matured feeling of desire, is the erotic” (*yūnoḥ parasparam paripūrṇaḥ pramodaḥ samyakparipūrṇaratibhāvo vā śṛṅgāraḥ*, 6.10); “fully matured anger—or a state of intensification of all the senses—is the violent *rasa* (*paripūrṇaḥ krodho raudraḥ sarvendriyāṅām auddhatyam vā*, 7. 21); “the full development of the humorous stable emotion is called the comic *rasa*” (*hāsasya paripoṣo hāsyaḥ*, 7.1); “the full development of the stable emotion grief is called the tragic *rasa*” (*śokasya paripoṣaḥ karuṇaḥ*, 7.16), and so on. In fact, for Bhānu, the stable emotion is nothing but a *rasa* in an undeveloped or “limited” (*parimita*) state: “desire is a mental transformation not fully matured, produced by longing for some wished-for object” (*iṣṭavastusamīhājanītanamanovikārākr̥tir aparipūrṇā ratih*, 1.8); “humor is an incomplete mental transformation produced by an incongruity of speech or dress that is meant for amusement” (*kutūhalakṛtavacanaveṣavaisādr̥śyakṛto manovikāraḥ parimito hāsaḥ*, 1.11). Such a definition is of course virtually identical to the most archaic view of all—the *cirantana* position, as Abhinava calls it—as epitomised in Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa, or indeed Daṇḍin:

*pūrvāvasthāyām yaḥ sthāyī sa eva vyabhicārisampātādinā
prāptaparipoṣo . . . rasaḥ.*²⁸

[That which in its original state is a stable emotion itself becomes, through the cooperation of the transitory emotions and the rest, *rasa*.]

*sthāyy eva vibhāvānubhāvādibhir upacito rasaḥ, sthāyī tv
anupacitaḥ. . . . cirantanānām cāyam eva pakṣaḥ. tathā hi
daṇḍinā sva[kāvya]lāṅkāralakṣaṇe vyadhāyī ratih śṛṅgāratām
gatā/ rūpabāhulyayogena iti; adhiruhyā parām koṭim kopo
raudrātmātām gataḥ ityādi ca.*²⁹

[It is the stable emotion alone that, once intensified by the causes, reactions, and the rest, becomes *rasa*. When unintensified it remains the stable emotion. . . . This is the view of the most ancient authorities. Thus Daṇḍin declared in his *Definition of Lit-*

28 *Dhvanyālokalocana* 184 (citing Lollaṭa).

29 AB 266.11–15 (reading *tv* for *bhavati* with Hemacandra); the citations are from Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* 2.279, 2.281.

erary Ornament, “Desire in conjunction with the many aesthetic form factors becomes the erotic *rasa*,” and “Anger when it reaches the highest stage becomes the furious *rasa*.”]

And of course it needs no detailing here that this position (and one similar to it, Śaṅkuka’s, which however was concerned less with ontology than epistemology, arguing that *rasa* is something inferred) is one that Abhinava spends considerable effort to critique. In a word, as Abhinava puts his own view, *sthāyivī-lakṣaṇa eva rasaḥ*.³⁰

Equally significant is Bhānu’s understanding of the third definition, which emerges clearly in his defense of it: “A *rasa* is the trace memory of a stable emotion when this trace has been awakened.” As we can see, the question importantly implicit here for Bhānu is “Whose memory?” given his rejoinder that the definition can include people who fall in love at first sight (*prathamānuru-rāga*). For Bhānu—and nothing in the RT militates against this—*rasa* is first and foremost a phenomenon that pertains to the *characters*, not the readers or viewers. And this too is the old position, whose representative for Abhinava is again Lollaṭa:

*sa ca [rasaḥ] ubhayor api, mukhyayā vṛtṭyā rāmādāv anukārye, ’nukartary api cānusandhānabalāt.*³¹

[The term *rasa* applies both to the character and the actor: in its primary sense to the character, Rāma and so on, but also [in a secondary sense] to the actor by the force of his absorption [in the character].]

This idea, along with the notion of *rasa* as *prakarṣagata sthāyīn* (as he puts it), are those that inform all of Bhoja’s writings about *rasa* as well, intent as he was on summarising the grand earlier tradition.³² And the position will be main-

30 AB 278.13 (he adds, “That is why the sage did not use the term *sthāyī* in the *rasa sūtra*; it would have been a red herring [?]” (*ata eva sūtre muninā sthāyigrahaṇam na kṛtam. tat pratyuta śalyabhūtam syāt*).

31 AB 266.12–13. That this is the correct way to parse Abhinava’s syntax is shown by Ruyyaka’s gloss: *anukārye sambhavan sthāyibhāvaḥ puṣṭatayā sthito mukhyatayā rasaḥ. [apuṣṭas tu sthāyī.] nartake tūpacāreṇa rasasthitiḥ* (ed. Mohan 2: 534).

32 E.g., *ratyādyaḥ prakarṣagāmino bhāvā eva rasāḥ* (*Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* 684.1), and repeatedly elsewhere in that work.

tained long beyond Bhānu, into the vernacular future, with the great Brajhasha poet-intellectual Dev (fl. 1700, Etawah) fully appropriating the RT here in his *Bhāv Vilās*.³³ To those familiar with Abhinava's thought, of course (though the problem had already been flagged by Dhanika in his *Avaloka* on the *Daśa-rūpaka*), the idea that *rasa* should concern the character was subjected to such withering critique that it would have been viewed as nothing less than a category error.

The second option among Bhānu definitions, *manoviśramo yatra kriyate*, can be found in precisely that wording in no other *ālankārika*, but it may well hearken back to Abhinava's repeated use of *saṁvid-* or *saṁvitti-viśrānti* to describe the *rasa* experience: *sakalaviḡhnavinirmuktā saṁvittir eva camatkāra— . . . –viśrāntyādiśabdair abhidhīyate*.³⁴ But of course this too is likely to have come to Bhānu only through Mammaṭa, and at all events he does nothing further with the idea in his works than to refer to it here.

Bhānu did attempt on occasion to extend the analysis of *rasa* in original ways beyond the doctrines of the *cirantanas*. He introduces what seems to be a new distinction between phenomenal and superphenomenal types of *rasa*, and several carefully distinguished varieties of the latter:

sa ca raso dvividho laukiko 'laukikaś ceti. laukikasannikarṣajanmā raso laukiko 'laukikasannikarṣajanmā raso 'laukikaḥ. laukikaḥ sannikarṣaḥ ṣoḍhā viśayagataḥ. alaukikaḥ sannikarṣo jñānam. teṣu cānubhūteṣu sākṣād etaḡjanmānanubhūteṣv api teṣu prāktanasaṁskāradvārā jñānam eva pratyāsattiḥ. alaukiko rasas tridhā: svāpniko mānorathika aupanayikaś ceti. aupanayikaś ca kāvyapadapadārthacamatkāre nāṭye ca. paraṁ tu dvayor apy ānandarūpatā.³⁵

[*Rasa* is of two sorts, ordinary and extraordinary. The former is produced by ordinary contact, the latter by extraordinary contact. Ordinary contact is of six types and depends on a physical object; extraordinary contact is mental. That is, the mental state itself supplies the contiguity, either directly, when the causes and so on have actu-

33 *Bhāv Vilās* 3.2 (in the definition verse, 3.1, he speaks of *rasa* as a “fully developed *vāsanā*” of the *sthāyi*: *thiti kī pūrana vāsanā sukavi kaha rasa soi*).

34 AB 274.8–9, etc. (this term too was borrowed from Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka: *sattvodrekaprakāśānanandamayanijasamvidviśrāntilakṣaṇena . . . bhogena* (AB 271.5); *bhogaḥ . . . rajastamovaicitryānuviddhasattvamayanijacitsvabhāvanirvṛtivismiśrāntilakṣaṇaḥ* (*Locana* 183.4)

35 RT 6.2. This section is adapted by Dev in his *Bhāv Vilās* 3.8.

ally been experienced, or by way of latent memories, when these causes have been experienced but not in the present birth. Extraordinary *rasa* is of three sorts, occurring in a dream, in the imagination, or in a representation. The last is found in the beauty of drama as well as in the beauty of the words and themes of poetry; both these forms consist of bliss that is pure and un-mixed.]

He is aware that introducing a new category into a millennium-old discourse is no simple matter, and he responds to a potential objection as follows:

*nanu mānorathiko raso na prasiddha iti cet, satyam. dhanyānām girikandare ityādau mānorathikaśṛṅgāraśravaṇāt śāstre sukhasya traividhyagaṇanāc ca rasena vinā ca sukhānutpatter iti.*³⁶

[It would be fair to object that the category “*rasa* occurring in the imagination” has no traditional standing. But in a poem such as the following,

Fortunate are those who dwell in mountain caves
and contemplate the highest light
as birds alight in their laps without fear
and drink their flowing tears of joy.
As for my life, it wastes away in endless
pursuit of diversions in pleasure groves
or on the ledges of pools or palaces
imagined only in my dreams [Bhartṛhari [Rāmacandra
Budhendra] 3.14]

we are actually reading about an erotic fantasy; moreover, bliss is reckoned in authoritative texts to be threefold, and bliss cannot come into being without *rasa*.]³⁷

36 RT 6.2–4

37 Bhānu’s reference is unclear. He may have in mind Praśastapāda’s analysis, which includes *ātmamaṇṣaṅgyoga* (see *Nyāyakośa* s.v. *sukha*). If *śāstra* refers to Vedānta, one might point (as one of Bhānu’s editors does) to *Pañcadaśī* 11.87, which lists three types of bliss (*brahmānanda*, *vāsanānanda*, *pratibimbānanda*), and presumably *vāsanānanda* is implicated in *mānorathika rasa*.

Again, here it is significantly the character, or more precisely the literary “I,” that is experiencing the *rasa*—not the reader—which in this case arises not from a sensory perception of a concrete *ālabhanavibhāva*, but from a pure fantasy. And it does indeed seem as if this is a problem that Sanskrit literary theory had so far ignored. Similarly, Bhānu draws another new analytical distinction in attempting to account for the phenomenon of *śāntarasa*:

*cittavṛttir dvedhā pravṛttir nivṛttiś ca. nivṛttau yathā śāntarasas tathā pravṛttau māyārasa iti pratibhāti. ekaṭra rasotpattir aparatra neti vaktum aśakyatvāt.*³⁸

[There are two basic states of mind, engagement and disengagement. In the case of disengagement we have the tranquil *rasa*, and in the same way, in the case of engagement we have what we might call a “*rasa* of phenomenal reality,” for we cannot argue that *rasa* arises in the former case but not in the latter.]

Aside from these few modest attempts at renovation, however, Bhānudatta remains fully representative of the oldest tradition of aesthetic analysis. And it was this analysis that, directly through Bhānu or indirectly, continued to shape the thinking of vast sectors of both the Sanskrit and the vernacular tradition. That even his most learned and sophisticated commentators—such as Veṅīdatta Bhaṭṭācārya—apparently saw no contradiction in this neotraditionalism, and never remark on the conceptual distance that separates Bhānu from Abhinava may be as eloquent as anything I have said so far about the limits of Abhinava’s theory. Whether Abhinava was simply insufficiently known; whether the new theological aestheticians like Rūpa Gosvāmin knew but rejected his doctrines as unassimilable, even irrelevant, to their vision of religious experience; whether it was because Bhānu, like the many Brajhasha writers of *lakṣaṅgranth*s who imitated him, was above all a working poet who therefore continued to focus first and foremost on writerly tasks—how to “fix” the emotions of the characters, and to make them “more permanently perceptible”—rather than readerly appreciation; or, last, whether in fact the acceptance of his views was simply far more restricted than we have been led to believe, Abhinavagupta’s transformative reworking of *rasa* theory seems to have had little effective history before the modern period outside the relatively narrow circle of orthodox Sanskrit *alāṅkāraśāstra*. The “leading view of *rasa* in Indian criticism,” or at least a

38 RT 7.63

leading view, seems to have been the one that Bhānudatta so successfully reproduced.

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