

Module No: 1

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Topic: "Rasa" (202/C-4, Unit-iii)

Introduction: The "Rasa" in Indian Aesthetics was first discussed by the great ancient Indian sage Bharat Muni in his epoch-making book *Natya Shastra*. "Rasa" is very important in any kind of poetical composition, drama or any art. In *Natya Shastra* Bharata asserts that "Rasa" is the essence of any kind of performance. Rasa is the aesthetic flavour that the audience or the reader experiences in his heart. In Chapter six of his seminal book Bharata discussed the theory of Rasa. *Natya Shastra* is believed to be written between 200 BCE to 200 CE. This book is a notable treatise on Indian dramaturgy and the theory and practice of performance arts. It has 36 chapters and almost 6000 shlokas(poetic verses) discussing different topics such as dramatic composition, structure of a play, construction of a stage, acting, body movements, make-up, costume, role of a director, musical scales and instruments, dance etc.

Composition of *Natya Shastra*:

According to Natyashastra all the Gods requested Lord Brahma to produce something to play (Kirdaniyakam) (N.S.I 2) which could be seen, heard, enjoyable, instructive, a fifth Veda for the benefit of all the people. Brahma in his meditation extracted the essence from all four Vedas (NS I,17) created this Natya Veda to meet the demand of a plaything, a source of pleasure to minds weary of strife, wants and miseries of daily existence. The Nāṭyaśāstra was created by the combined effort of Brahma, who gave Natya (Drama), Vishnu, who gave Abhinaya (Acting) and Mahesh, who gave Nritya (Dance). Moreover, Brahma compiled together different aspects of each of the four Vedas in the Nāṭyaśāstra:

Jagrahpathyam rigvedata, Sambhyo geetameva cha,

Yajurvedadbhinayan, Rasanatharvanadapi.

(Recitation from Rigveda, music and song from Samveda, histrionics from Yajurveda and sentiments from Atharvaveda)

with full of stories from epics, and legends that led people towards the righteous path. He then asked Bharata to make this art known to mankind. The Natya represents the life of Gods, Demons, Kings, Householders and Great sages alike (NS I 107).

Rasa Theory :

The meaning of Rasa in Hindi or Sanskrit language is Ras which means juice or taste or essence of something. Primarily Rasa was used in dramas, later on it was used in poetry also. As you know Rasa basically has more of practical implementation than description; it is very difficult to describe or give an absolute definition to Rasa but, essentially Writer uses Rasa to convey his feelings and emotions to the reader.

The primary aim of "Rasa" during a drama, performance or while reading poetry is to make the audience or reader happy and to entertain them. It evokes the emotional response from the receiver's side. But, there is a slight change in Rasa concept of Indian Aesthetics. Its

supreme aim is to portray the reality to audience. When we say reality it is that reality that the author wants to show the audience or make them feel by the medium of drama or performance. To make them feel that joy or wonder and to answer that questions that the reader gets while reading the work.

In *Natyashastra*, Rasa meant aesthetic appreciation or joy that the spectator experiences . As Bharata says , Rasa should be relished as an emotional or intellectual experience : **Na rasanāvyāpāra āsvādanam,api tu mānasa eva (NS.6,31)** . The Nāṭyashāstra states that the goal of any art form is to invoke such Rasa.

Bharat's Nāṭyaśāstra contains a detailed theory of drama comparable to the Poetics of Aristotle. Any work of art is read or viewed with the motive of experiencing aesthetic pleasure. Bharat in Nāṭyaśāstra describes this experience of aesthetic pleasure as 'rasa'. Etymologically rasa means 'flavour', 'relish', 'gustation', 'taste', 'geschmack', 'saveur'. Rasa is the simplest as well as the most complicated word so far its meaning is concerned. It is very easy to comprehend its meaning but the most difficult to define it exactly. In Sanskrit poetics is often compared to the body or the vesture and it's sentiment to the soul within. Bharat believes that the theme is the body of the drama and the rasas are the soul that makes it alive. Rasa is the corner stone of Indian Aesthetics. There is no critic in Sanskrit poetics, who does not mention rasa or does not recognize its importance in some way or another. As Pro. P. Ramachandrudu says,

"The Indian literary criticism has given the highest place to Rasa. Everything else like Alankara, Guna, Riti, Vrtti and Parvrtti etc finds its place in a kavya so far as it is useful for Rasa. That is the reason why only those poets who attained perfection in depicting Rasa are given a very high place in India. Valmiki, Vyasa, Kalidasa and Bhāva bhuti are the standing examples for such perfection. It is said in praise of such poets –

Jayanti te sukrutino rasasiddhaha kavisvaraha Nasty yesham yashakaye jaramarnajam bhayam.

(Long live those poets who have attained fame through the use of Rasa, they fear not old age and death to injure their fame)

Definitions of Rasa:

According to Bharata, every piece of art should arouse rasa in the heart of the audience. But Rasa is not easy to define. There are different views about rasa. Etymologically, the word 'Rasa' is composed of two letters 'Ra' which means 'to give' and 'Sa' which means 'motion'. V.S. Apte has given various meanings of rasa. These are: 'to flow', 'to make wet all over', 'to taste', 'to relish', 'to soak', 'to saturate in liquid', 'water', 'potion', 'flavor', 'fluid', 'liquid', 'sauce', 'condiment', 'pleasure', 'delight', 'happiness', 'charm', 'interest', 'elegance', 'beauty', etc. As a noun rasa means juice of plants', 'fruit', 'any liquid or fluid', 'the best /the finest/ prime part of any thing'.

The use of Rasa is as old as the Vedas. Even in all the four Vedas the meaning of Rasa is interpreted in different ways. In Rg-Veda Rasa means 'water', 'juice of plant', 'liquor', 'drink', 'sap'. In Yajur-Veda it means 'joy'. In Sama-Veda it means 'liquor'. In Arthva-Veda it means 'sap of herbs', 'sap of grain'. In Satapatta Brahama the meaning of rasa is interpreted as 'honey', 'syrup', 'elixir', 'mixture', 'juice'. Mention of rasa in Brhadaranyakopanishad is found and it means 'water', 'essential element', 'vital part'. The use of the word rasa is traced back to the ages of the epics. In Ramayan it means 'any mixture', 'elixir' or 'portion'. There is a

mention of all the important rasas in Ramayan. In Mahabharat rasa means 'milk', 'liquor', 'drink', and 'melted butter'.

According to Bharat, "Rasa is an organic unity. It is like (i) Multi-taste spice (condiment) (ii) Herbs (iii) Sweet substance (iv) Basic food. It is said by scholars that 'itivratham tu natyasya shariram parikirtitam. Rasaha punaratma shariravibharvaka' (The drama is the body and rasa is its soul). The literary meaning of Rasa is given as 'rasyate aswadyate iti rasaha' (That by which we relish or enjoy is rasa). It is even said that 'vakyam rasatmakam kavyam' (The essence of poetic form is Rasa). Bharat also gives much importance to Rasa. According to Bharat, "Rasa is the emotional element in the theme or plot of drama which creates organized pattern". The importance of Rasa as is mentioned by Bharat in the line "Nahi rasat rute kaschita artha pravartate" (Nothing proceeds without Rasa).

