

Performative Gender And Religions In South Asia

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Lecture 06

Sanskrit Dramaturgy and Rasa Theory II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Performative Gender and Religions in South Asia. So we are discussing Sanskrit dramaturgy and the Rasa theory in the context of Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra. So we see that Rasa is necessarily evoked in the audience or it makes its presence felt successfully when the audience can perceive it in a piece of art. The function of Rasa is to make a work appealing and this is the same as saying that only Rasa can make a work successful. So coming to the various components or constituents that lead to the evocation or arising of Rasa, we already stated the different bhavs. We have.. in our previous lecture we have talked about Sthayi bhavs, the Sanchari bhavs or Vyabhichari bhavs and the Sattvik bhavs.

As well, we have talked about bibhavs and anubhavs. Now we have to understand what is the relationship among all these. So Bharat Muni says the following in Natya Shastra, “Vibhaavaanubhaav vyabhichaari samyogat ras nishpatti,” which means that out of the combination or blending/ samyog of the determinants or cause referring to bibhav, the consequence or effects referring to anubhav and the transitory mental states or mental status referring to vyabhichari, the birth of emotion or rasa takes place. So rasa comes from a combination of bibhav, anubhav and vyabhichari bhavs.

A little later in this same verse, Bharat Muni would say that the permanent emotions or Sthayi bhavs attain the status of rasas when they are accompanied or upagata by the various bhavs. So, there is a certain relation between the vyabhichari bhavs and the Sanchari bhavs with the Sthayi bhavs, and Bharat Muni elaborates this relationship with the following words. So he says the permanent emotions are like kings because many depend on them. So also the other bhavs, being like servants that are subordinate to the person occupying the position of the king resort to the Sthayi bhavs as being subordinate

to them or depending on them. Now Abhinavagupta discusses rasa elaborately in his work Abhinavabharati.

He also gives the views of other critics who preceded him. The view of another, yet another critic called Bhatta Lollata is that (I quote Bhatta here), "... the birth of rasa takes place out of the combination of the permanent emotional states. More precisely, the determinants (vibhāvas) are the cause of the birth of feeling, which constitutes the permanent state of mind" (Aesthetic Experience 25-26).

Thus, according to Lollata, feelings are generated by the bhavas and these feelings, when they persist in a text, become the Sthayi bhavas. Therefore rasa can be understood as a permanent state.

According to the thesis or the proposition made by Lollata, rasa is a permanent state intensified by determinants, consequence and so on. A critic called Sankuka would not agree with what Lollata has to say. According to Sankuka, rasa is simply a permanent state of mind and more precisely, it is the reproduction of the permanent state of mind proper to the person, the individual who experiences it. So this reproduced mental state in the actor or the stage is perceived by the audience through or in the form of bhavas, anubhavas and sancharibhavas. So ras or rasas are made up of permanent feelings.

They are emotions that are as long-staying or long-lasting as human memory. Bharat in Natya Shastra classifies dramatic content on the basis of emotions, and he lists eight rasas here. Let us take a look at the different rasas that are evoked through the different bhavas. There are eight rasas corresponding with or concomitant with the eight bhavas. The bhavas referring to affect and the rasas referring to emotion or rapture.

First bhava or affect is pleasure or rati which arouses the emotion of erotic or shringar. Then we have the affect(bhava) of laugh/ hasa which arouses the emotion of comic or laughter/ hasya. Next, we have the affect of anger or krodha, whose concomitant emotion is rage/ raudra. Next, we have the affect of soka, sorrow whose concomitant emotion is compassion or karuna. Next, we have the affect of jugupsa.

Jugupsa referring to disgust and its concomitant emotion is disgusting or bibhasa. Following that, we have the affect of fear or bhaya whose concomitant emotion is

terrifying, bhayanak. Then we have perseverance, utsaha, whose concomitant emotion aroused is heroic, valor, vira; and then we have amazement, vishmaya whose concomitant emotion or rasa is adbhut or wonder. The last one, the ninth rasa whose concomitant bhava were added, were appended by Avinavagupta later on is the santirasa. The santirasa which you know emerges from the affect of santa.

So all these rasas coming under a common class have a point of commonality. They all have some emotional content and yet they also have their points of departures or differences, on the basis of which they establish their own identities. These differences are actually the ways in which these various emotions or rasas are manifested. The actors and dancers, the performers are taught the various facial characteristics of the nine emotions, in order to be able to create an exaggerated hyperbolic expression and invoke emotion in the audience. Natya Shastra emphasizes that the object and objective of art is pleasure.

There is no doubt that art can be didactic or full of philosophical speculations. However, all of it, these messages coming through art or the speculations, philosophical meanings coming out of art must come through a medium that is also pleasurable at once. So, in Natya Shastra Bharat justifies the act of dancing. Why? Because.. simply because it gives, it renders pleasure. In another instance, Natya Shastra tells the story of how a fight follows when the demons are shown in a bad light.

So no one should be hurt, that is at the root or at the.. that forms the basic premises of Bharat Muni's Natya Shastra. The idea of art is to not hurt anyone, it should please all. So tragedy, we have to understand here and we will elaborate more on this concept in our ensuing lectures... the fact that tragedy is an unknown concept in Sanskrit dramaturgy, all Sanskrit artworks always end in happy union. Union is the goal, pleasure is the goal.

Even Aristotle we find is somewhat unwillingly acknowledging this fact. So Aristotle says, I quote, it is also natural for all to delight in works of imitation. So it is natural to be delighted, artwork should evoke delight or pleasure, that is its chief aim. Thus this ability to give pleasure or delight is another feature that brings the various rasas under a common umbrella or a common category. Rasas are primarily experiences that are rewarding.

Though all the rasas are in the end and at their heart pleasurable, the emotive contents behind these pleasures are very many; they are very different from one another. So the end goal is pleasure. However, how we arrive at this goal through different rasas are different. Thus the rasas can be compared to the different roads that lead to the same goal or the same zone of pleasure. Like I have been saying, the response to the various rasas is therefore twofold. The response which is depicted inside of the text, inside of the art form and the response consequently evoked in the audience or the reader.

Now let us take up each of these eight rasas and then the ninth one appended by Abhinav Gupta, one by one. In the case of Srīngar, there is an emphatic response in which the emotion of love is communicated. There is, it is, Srīngar is emphatic, it is very showy. Srīngar means love or attraction, that which beautifies and that which attracts the eye, that which attracts the different senses. It derives from the word Srīnga.

Srīnga which means horn, point or a summit, an apex. It could be the peak of a mountain and it represents a peak experience of consummation. Consummation in terms of romantic love, beauty or creativity. So, Srīngar arises from the bhava of rati which means pleasure, enjoyment and it is often associated with sexual or erotic passion. Next is the case of hasya, laughter, the response to hasa, the bhava of hasa is based on what is being seen.

Now the audience in the case of hasya rasa is able to laugh only because he or she can alienate from the object, which is a source of mirth. At the same time we are not completely alienated also because we are aware of the possibility of ourselves sometimes becoming the object of laughter. We laugh with others, we laugh at others and finally, we laugh at ourselves too. Next, we see karuna. Karuna usually elicits the response of sorrow and compassion in the reader or the perceiver.

The bhava or rasa is correlated to the affect of distress-anguish. So, karuna means compassion or pity, which is invoked by the effect of sorrow, pain or anguish. So, if karuna is rasa, the concomitant bhava is soka. Karuna can lead to anger if the cause of sorrow is identified as something or someone evil. In the spiritual use of the term, it has the connotation of generous sympathy or empathy, and the base word karuna itself means.. karuna refers to miserable, misery, mournfulness, lament, distress.

So, here in the case of karuna rasa, both distancing and identification on the part of the audience or reader are involved. Pity is an emotion which comes when one can distance oneself from the victim. Yet, if there is a feeling of identification with the victim, the sorrow will not only be felt, but will also be shared by the audience or the reader. Next, we are going to talk about adbhut. Adbhut meaning wonder, amazement and surprise.

Adbhut correlates to the effect of surprise, tattle or wishway. So, adbhut is a rasa where amazing or surprisingly delightful events may occur. Here both within the text and without the text in the case of the reader there will be a response of amazement or and sometimes delight. Amazement is also shown when one is incapable of doing something and one is looking or looking at or inspecting an object, an object of amazement, one is looking or inspecting, detecting an object of amazement from a certain distance. This kind of detection or inspection arouses amazement.

Surprise, startle or vismaya creates an immediate redirection of our attention. So, in terms of what it does psychologically to the audience, it clears out the assemblage of all the previous data. So, we have been reading or looking at.. experiencing a work of art, and in the process when we read something, accumulation of data happens in our mind and that is cleared in a one-off case of vismaya. Immediate redirection of our attention happens and it leads to an instant readiness, promptness and awareness in the reader or audience. Next, we are going to talk about vira rasa.

Vira rasa, vira literally means heroic or manly attitude. It arises from the bhava of utsaha, inspiration, energy, resolution, perseverance. These are the words for utsaha. In the audience or reader, there can be a dual response of inspired courage and wonder in the case of vira rasa. So, vira rasa can inspire courage as well as wonder.

If the heroic acts are unachievable, they are too far-fetched, they look too tangential, they also lead to a response of wonder. The audience wonders how the hero could do it even. This is a response where a distancing between the happenings inside the artwork and the audience happens. So, we cannot achieve what a god or a great hero, a demigod is performing. We can only wonder at it, we can, it is a spectacle and upon you know witnessing it we can only wonder.

But if the heroism of a common man is depicted, someone with whom the audience can immediately identify, then both sympathy and identity or identification will operate simultaneously. There is an identification and when we can identify you know with the hero, there is a natural sympathy, a natural bonding with the stage, with the ongoing on the stage. Thus, here is the possibility of inspired courage. Next, we are going to talk about raudra. Raudra is a rasa which depicts fury, death and devastation.

It is directly correlated with the affect or bhava of krodha. The bhava of krodha evokes raudra. So, if one is involved in the perception of fury, he will respond with bewilderment. But at the end of fury, the courage to avenge some kind of injustice as well as fear, disgust or sorrow can also arise. What happens at the end of anger? Anger swiftly transitions to fear, it could transition to disgust at the discovery or revelation of some kind of truth or anger could very swiftly transition to sorrow.

So, raudra rasa can be seen from a position of distance. However, if the cause of raudra or fury is some kind of injustice, then a sense of indignation happens within the audience or the reader. Then there is automatically a sympathetic response of anger in the audience. Similar to raudra, in the case of bibhatsa rasa, the disgust generated may be manifested both within the text and outside of the text within the reader, in the mind of the reader. So, the affect or bhava in this case, in the case of bibhatsa is jugupsa.

Jugupsa referring to disgust, aversion, detest related to some kind of gustatory system. So, jugupsa also has got to do with bitterness in our taste inside our mouth, as if something tastes repugnant. And this is how the performers who are doing abhinaya are taught to express jugupsa or the bibhatsa, as if they have something bitter or disgusting in their mouth, the expression will happen likewise. Sometimes disgust comes from some kind of disorder or incomprehension, it can only come from a sense of alienation, a quick and spontaneous distancing of oneself from what one finds as disgusting. In bhayanaka rasa though the perception of the terrifying comes from a sense of alienation, the response need not always be that of bhay or fear.

So, whatever is bhayanak, the first you know reaction is to distance oneself from that. However, you know, the concomitant bhava may always not be bhaya or fear. In the reader, the response can be that of fear or sadness and also that of retribution..so, revenge. This depends on the nature of the bhayanak object, the object that is subjected to fear or

cause fear. If one can alienate oneself from the victim of terror, let us say a villain or a bad man, then the response will not be that of fear or sorrow, but one can still perceive the terrifying element.

If the victim is a man with whom one can sympathize, then the response will be that of sorrow and if one can identify oneself with this victim, then the fear could also be directed onto one's own self. So, the audience might even feel a fear of himself. Next and the last rasa is the shantarasa, the shantarasa. It was a later addition by Abhinavagupta, although Abhinavagupta himself suggests that Bharat Muni was aware of its possibilities.

For instance, he quotes from Natya Shastra where Bharat Muni says people devoid of passion take delight in moksha. The concept of moksha itself has the shantarasa at its heart. Moksha is the state of bliss, ethereal bliss when there is no distinction between joy and sorrow, both are one and the same, where one has transcended the world of binaries and that of worldly desires. So, santra refers to a pacific state.

It means to be peaceful, tranquil and contented. It is associated with the affect of santa, santa bhav, tranquil joy, peaceable joy. This affect is triggered by the reduction in the level of intensity of any stimulus, and it produces a reduction in brain activity. We will talk about Kadambari in our following lecture, and we will see how in the Indian context santarasa is established in a work, where the narrative does not have too many outwardly happening events, but it is dealing mostly with the complexity, the layeredness of human psyche. Since Bharat points out that there are certain people who can take delight in moksha, Bharat himself refers to the concept of moksha, it thereby alludes or insinuates that such peaceable people, such peaceable characters will take delight in the depiction of the santarasa, the santabhava in a work of art. With this I am going to stop today's lecture here and let us meet again with another round of discussions in another lecture. Thank you. Thank you.