

INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SANSKRIT STUDIES

VOLUME XXXIX

2013

EDIZIONI AIT

Publisher: Comitato AIT, corso Trento 13 – 10129 Torino (Italy)
Email: irmapiovano@cesmeo.it; info@cesmeo.it
Printer: Edizioni ETS, Pisa (Italy)
Annual Subscription (1 issue): € 30,00
Electronic version: www.indologica.com
Sole Agents: Comitato AIT

Copyright © 2013 Comitato AIT per la promozione degli Studi sull'India e sul Sud-Est Asiatico
Irma Piovano (President) - Saverio Sani (Vice President) - Victor Agostini (Secretary).
corso Trento 13 - 10129 Torino (Italy)
C.F. 97651370013 – R.E.A. Torino, n. 1048465 – R..O .C., n. 14802

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Torino N. 4703 del 21/7/1994
I.S.N.N. 1023-3881

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

GIACOMO BENEDETTI <i>The figure of the Ṛṣi in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa</i>	p.	9
KAPIL KUMAR BHATTACHARYYA <i>Science communication in the Indian perspective: insights from the Indian experience</i>	p.	67
HORST BRINKHAUS <i>Sūryavaṃśa - Somavaṃśa - Harivaṃśa</i>	p.	83
KLAUS KARTTUNEN <i>India as a mirror of otherness in the classical and medieval West (The establishment and development of an idea of India, of a myth called India)</i>	p.	95
TAKAHIRO KATO <i>Bhāskara's concept of jñānakarmasamuccaya</i>	p.	137
FRANK KÖHLER <i>RV 3.26: poetry and the multifarious nature of Agni</i>	p.	155
NATALIA R. LIDOVA <i>Rasa in the Nāṭyaśāstra – Aesthetic and Ritual</i>	p.	187
GIANNI PELLEGRINI <i>Dream and Khyativāda: a Survey on analogies and differences</i>	p.	213
ALEXANDRA R. ZINOVYEVA <i>Heteroglossia and Code-switching in Śūdraka's Mṛcchakaṭika</i> ”: Why does the theatre director speak different languages?	p.	237
<i>List of contributors</i>	p.	257

REVIEWS

- HARI DUTT SHARMA, *Glimpses of Sanskrit Poetics and Poetry*. Raka Prakashan, Allahabad, 2008 (Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat) p. 263
- VASUGUPTA, *Gli aforismi di Śiva con il commento di Kṣemarāja (Śivasūtravimarśinī)*, a cura di Raffaele Torella, Milano, Adelphi (Piccola Biblioteca 641), 2013 (Bettina Baumer) p. 267

NATALIA R. LIDOVA

RASA IN THE *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA*
AESTHETIC AND RITUAL

The beginning of attention to *rasa* in Western scholarship may be brought back to the end of the 19th century and above all to the famous *Le Théâtre Indien* by French scholar Sylvain Levi, who one of the first gave a high assessment of this category. In the following century many Western scholars and among them Russian Indologists¹ have shown increasing interest in the *rasa* theory. Their research brought to life many valuable publications on the notion of *rasa*, determining its importance as the supreme ancient Indian aesthetic category. Without shrugging off this latter view, we feel bound, however, to stress that the ancient Indian concept of *rasa* contains numerous aspects not to be explained from the point of aesthetic ideas. The present work concerns these aspects, which, will be shown, arose in a ritual context and testify to the ritual roots of this category.

As is known, the oldest description of *rasa* is found in the

¹ One of the first generalizing contributions on the *rasa* in the Russian scholarship was done by academician F.I. Sherbatskoy: "The Theory of Poetry in India". *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education*, June 1902, pp. 308-320. Later on, P. A. Grintser wrote about this category: "The Theory of Aesthetic Perception (*rasa*) in the Ancient Indian Theory of Poetry". *Voprosy Literaturny*, No. 2, 1966, pp. 134-150; see also: Y. M. Alikhanova. "On the Sources of the Ancient Indian Concept of *Rasa*". *The Archaic Ritual in Folk and Early Literary Monuments*. Moscow, 1988, pp. 161-183; N.R. Lidova. "Rasa in the System of the Aesthetic Categories of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*". *Oriental Monuments on the Theory of Verse: Artistic Imagery, Style and Genre*. Moscow, 2010, pp. 48-82; *The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata*. Chs. 6-7. Transl. from the Sanskrit and Notes by N.R. Lidova. *Ibidem*, pp. 83-152.

Nāṭyaśāstra, a treatise dated approximately to the 2nd cent. BC – 2nd cent. AD. The concept proper emerged earlier, as demonstrated by the author repeatedly alluding to his forerunners, with numerous citations which confirm many of their premises. No doubt, by the time when the *Nāṭyaśāstra* acquired its modern form, the doctrine of *rasa* already possessed a renown befitting its antiquity, authority and the age-old tradition sanctifying it.

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides detailed characteristics of eight *rasa* varieties: *Śṛṅgāra*, desirable², *Hāsyā*³, risorial, *Karuṇā*⁴, sorrowful, *Raudra*⁵, violent, *Vīra*⁶, heroism,

² *Śṛṅgāra* – adjective derived from *śṛṅga*, which means “animal horn”, “elephant tusk”, “mountain peak”, “zenith”, “acme”, “limit”. The literal meaning of *Śṛṅgāra* – “the utmost” or “the highest” might be interpreted in two ways: 1) the more earthly one pertains to carnal passion and sexual desire. In this instance, *Śṛṅgāra* transparently hints at the hard and erect animal horn as visually symbolizing potency; 2) the more abstract and general as the highest limit or the peak. It possibly pointed at the special status of *Śṛṅgāra*, which was regarded as the highest and most important of the *rasas*. The translation “desirable” is situational, based on semantic, and expresses the principal characteristic of *Śṛṅgāra* as an emotion connected with the utmost, passionate desire to attain something. It was desire *par excellence*, which originally concerned everything, including the religious spheres of life and later was reduced to erotic desire and carnal love. (Telling in this respect is one of the epithets applied to Kama the love god – *Śṛṅgāra-janman*, “born of desire”). For the theory of Indian culture as “anthropology of desire”, see: M. Biarreau, L'hindouisme: *Anthropologie d'une Civilization*. Paris: Flammarion, 1981 (the Index under *kama*, desire, etc.). See also: Ch. Chapple. *Karma and Creativity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1986, who treats the desire as one of the fundamental ideas of Hinduism. G.C.O. Haas, in his translation of the *Daśarūpa* (see: *The Daśarūpa. A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy by Dhanamjaya*. First Transl. from the Sanskrit with the Text and Introd. and Notes by G.C.O. Haas. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912, p. 145 (Rpt.: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962) (further – DR) interpreted *Śṛṅgāra* in the later and narrower sense as erotic sentiment. M. Ghosh, who followed him in translating many terms, interpreted *Śṛṅgāra* similarly (See: *The Nāṭyaśāstra*. Completely transl. for the first time from the Original Sanskrit with an Introduction, Various Notes and Index by M. Ghosh. Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, vol. 1, 1967, p. 102) (further – MGT).

³ *Hāsyā* – adjective derived from *hāsa*, which means “laughter”, “joy”, “jubilation”, “entertainment”. Haas (DR, p. 142) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *Hāsyā* as “comic” sentiment.

⁴ *Karuṇā* – verbal adjective from *kṛ*, or *kṝ*, meaning “despondent”, “gloomy”, “melancholy”, “grim”, “pathetic”, as well as “compassionate”, “merciful”, “condolent”. To all appearances, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* context *Karuṇā* mostly described the mournful mental state after the battle. Haas (DR, p. 146) and subsequently Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *Karuṇā* as ‘pathetic’.

⁵ *Raudra* – adjective derived from *rudra*, lit. “*Rudric*”, i.e. endowed with the nature of Rudra (Śiva) or his *rudra* companion demons, and possessing their qualities. In other words, it is a strong, powerful, fierce creature, who also brings, forbodes or symbolises misfortune, and ill-starred. Haas (DR, p. 142) as well as Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *Raudra* as ‘furious’.

⁶ *Vīra* – verbal adjective from *vīr* (vi-īr), which means “split”, “divide”, “pierce”, and “wound”. The idea of suppression and armed combat underlying these words determined the meaning of the noun *Vīra* – it designates a hero or leader, which may apply to a god, mostly

*Bhayānaka*⁷, terrifying, *Bībhatsa*⁸, disgust and *Adbhuta*⁹, wondrous¹⁰.

Proceeding from the inevitably conventional translations of *rasa* names, expressed by different parts of speech, one may assume that they are mere emotions felt by the theatre audience. This interpretation is true only in part, and does not fully exhaust the whole range of meanings connected with *rasas*, especially because the *Nāṭyaśāstra* treats *rasa* as the basic – if not the only goal of the drama¹¹. To be properly understood, the

Indra or Viṣṇu, or a valiant warrior. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Vīra* is the protagonist in a drama or one of the terms for performers. Haas (DR, p. 141) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) interpret the name of this *rasa* as “heroic”.

⁷ *Bhayānaka* – adjective derived from *bhaya*, meaning “panic”, “fear”, “horror”, “trepidation” or something fearsome. Haas (DR, p. 130) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *Bhayānaka* as ‘terrible’.

⁸ *Bībhatsa* – desiderative of *bādh* or possibly *bhī*, with the wrong duplication and suffix, meaning “repulsive” or “nauseating”. Haas (DR, p. 141) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *Bībhatsa* as ‘odious’.

⁹ *Adbhuta* – participle meaning “wondrous”, “miraculous” and “supernatural”. Haas (DR, p. 145) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translate *Adbhuta* as ‘marvellous’.

¹⁰ It is generally considered that Rudraṭa added two more *rasas* to the list of eight – *Preyas* (agreeable) and *Śānta* (quietestic). Later authors, particularly Udbhaṭa (8th-9th cent.) discarded *Preyas* as *rasa*, but retained *Śānta*. Though Dhanañjaya was critical of that *rasa*: “Some also speak of appeasement [but] the plays do not develop that [feeling]” (śamam api ke cit prāhuḥ puṣṭir nāṭyeṣu naitasya) (DR VI. 44), *Śānta rasa* was recognized by the most of theoreticians after Abhinavagupta. Ghosh’s publication does not describe this *rasa*, and the Baroda edition describes it in a later supplement. A number of noteworthy studies treat the ninth *rasa*. V. Raghavan was one of the first to study it. He supposed that *śānta rasa* emerged in the Buddhist context. See: V. Raghavan. “The Number of Rasas”. *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, 1940, p. 50 (Rpt.: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1975); S.P. Bhattacharya. *Śānta Rasa and Its Scope in Literature*. Calcutta: Sanskrit College, 1976 generalizes related ideas; J.L. Masson and M.V. Patwardhan. *Śāntarasa and Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Aesthetics*. Poona: Bhandakar Oriental Research Institute, 1969 propose well-grounded and convinced study of the Abhinavagupta’s theoretical approach to *Śānta rasa* and its position in Indian Aesthetics; E. Gerow, A. Aklujkar. “On Śānta Rasa in Sanskrit Poetics”. *Journal of American Oriental Society*, vol. 92/1, 1972, pp. 80-87 define more precisely the place of *Śānta rasa* in the philosophical exposition in the Abhinavagupta’s works; E. Gerow. “Abhinavagupta’s Aesthetics as a Speculative Paradigm”. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114. 2, April-June, 1994, pp. 186-208 provides a new translation of the *Śānta rasa* section of the *Abhinavabhāratī* with the intention to improve Masson, Patwardhan 1969 translation; G. Tubb. “Śāntarasa in the Mahābhārata”. *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. XX, n. 1, Winter-Spring, 1985, pp. 140-168 (Rpt.: *Essays on the Mahābhārata*. Ed. by A. Sharma. Brill’s Indological Library, 1. Leiden: Brill, 1991) investigates the possible contexts of the manifestations of this *rasa*.

¹¹ The author of the treatise provides a direct indication to it, pointing out that: “no meaning [of the drama] has any development unrelated to *rasa*” (na hi rasād-ṛte kaścid-arthaḥ pravartate) (NŚ, p. 82). The majority of the quotations are from Calcutta edition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*: M. Ghosh, ed. *The Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed to Bharata-Muni*. The Original

content of this category demands an analysis, even if concise, of the whole system of related categories, which together make up a kind of *rasa* concept within the general theory of the drama¹².

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* presents the concept of *rasa* as a three-level hierarchy. The first level, initial in a sense, materializes in the *vibhāvas* (causes) and *anubhāvas* (manifestations)¹³, which condition the choice of scenic representational means, termed *abhinayas* by the author. Man's actions and responses, and a surrounding best suited to his feelings are represented on stage with the help of a range of devices, which help to disclose the message and content of the drama. In this, the *vibhāvas* concern the scenic props, make-up, costumes and *mise-en-scènes* while the *anubhāvas* determine the choice of acting devices.

“So, why [is it called] *vibhāva*? It is said that the *vibhāva* is an instrument of knowledge. *Vibhāva* is [the same as] ‘cause’, ‘motiv’, ‘impulse’ – [all these words are] synonyms. It determines [such] means of representation [as] speech, [movements] of the body [and manifestations] of the nature. That is why it is [called] *vibhāva*. Just as ‘defined’ [and] ‘comprehended’ are words close in their meaning” (atha vibhāva iti kasmāt | ucyate vibhavo vijñānārthaḥ | vibhāvah kāraṇam nimittam hetur-iti paryāyāḥ | vibhāvvyate' nena vāg-aṅga-sattva-abhinayā ity-ato vibhāvah | yathā vibhāvitaṁ vijñātam-ity-anartha-antaram NŚ, p. 92). Also: “It is called *vibhāva* because it defines many meanings [of the drama] resting on [such] means of

Sanskrit Text edited with Introduction and Various Readings. 2 vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society; Manisha Granthalaya, 1956-1967 (passim NŚ). Several citations and variant readings are taken from the Baroda edition: M.Ramakrishna Kavi, ed. 1926-1964. *Nāṭyaśāstra with the Commentary of Abhinavagupta with a Preface, Appendix and Index*. 4 vols. Baroda: Central Library; Oriental Institute (Gaekwad's Oriental Series, vols. 36; 68; 124; 154) (further GOS).

¹² A reliable survey of the existing approaches and the interpretation of term *rasa* in the recent research literature, see: H. Tieken. “On the use of *Rasa* in studies of Sanskrit Drama”. *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 43, 2000, pp. 115-138.

¹³ Haas (DR, p. 106) and Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) translated *vibhāva* as “determinant” and *anubhāva* as “consequent”.

representation [as] speech [and movements] of the body”¹⁴
(bahavo'rthā vibhāvvyante vāg-aṅga-abhinaya-āśritāḥ | anena
yasmāt-tena-ayam vibhāva iti samjñitaḥ NŚ 7.4)¹⁵.

As for the *anubhāva*, “the means of representation produced by speech, [movements of the] body [and manifestations of] nature is perceived with this” (anubhāvvyate'nena vāg-aṅga-sattvaiḥ-kṛto'bhinaya iti NŚ, p. 92). The same idea is expressed in verse a bit later in greater detail: “As the message [of the drama] is perceived with the help of [such] means of representation [as] speech [and movements of] the body, when combined with speech [and the movements of the principal and] auxiliary parts of the body, [it] is known [as] *anubhāva*” (vāg-aṅga-abhinayena- iha yatas-tv-artho'nubhāvvyate | vāg-aṅga-upāṅga-saṁyuktas-tv-anubhāvas-tataḥ smṛtaḥ NŚ 7.5).

The treatise demands the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* be related to natural human conduct in particular practical situations and there are so many that define all of them is simply impossible: “*vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* are well known in the world. For the reason of their closeness to the nature of the world, their traits are not specified in order to prevent excessive liking [for specification]” (vibhāva-anubhāvau loka-prasiddhāv-eva | loka-svabhāva-upagatatvāc-ca-eṣāṁ lakṣaṇam na-ucyate | ati-prasaṅga-nivṛty-arthañ-ca NŚ, p. 92). And further on: “The wise know the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, [as well as] the means of representation that fully reflect the essence of the world and follow the ways of the world” (loka-sva-bhāva-samsiddhā lokayātrā-anugāminaḥ | anubhāva-vibhāvās-ca jñeyās-tv-abhinayair budhaiḥ NŚ 7.6).

¹⁴ About the interpretation of the *anubhāva* in Indian tradition, see: R.B. Patankar. “Rasānubhava and Brahmānubhava”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bombay, 1989-91, vols. 64-66, pp. 168-178, and also: I. Aiyar. “Rasanubhava and Iconography”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bombay, 1995, vol. 70, pp. 1-7;

¹⁵ As follows from the context, *vibhāva* is a condition that evokes or develops a particular mental or physical state. In the drama, it determines the outward characteristics or results of emotion. For an attempt to interpret *vibhāva* in the Western psychological context, see: H.D. Sharma. “A Psychological Analysis of *vibhāva*”. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, vol. LXIII, 1982, pp. 253-254.

As the theatre merely imitates reality, the combination of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* causes the emergence of a purely theatrical image, the *bhāva*, which imitates natural human conduct and, at the same time, essentially differs from it. Unlike the number of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, which is practically unlimited, as is the number of actual situations in real life and spontaneous human reactions to them, the *bhāvas* are limited in number. The treatise indicates it as 49: “eight stable *bhāvas*, thirty three transitory and eight essential ones – such are the [three] varieties” (aṣṭau bhāvāḥ sthāyinaḥ | trayas-trimśad-vyabhicāriṇaḥ | aṣṭau sātvikā iti bhedāḥ NŚ, p. 92).

As follows from the last definition the *bhāvas* differ among themselves. Thirty three of these, known as the *vyabhicāri bhāva*, could be interpreted as transitory, passing or unsteady psychological states. Eight more, the *sāttvika bhāva*, or essential ones, serve to enact outward manifestations of the hero’s nature or essence (like tears or a blush) and to reveal his emotional state. The remaining eight, the *sthāyi bhāva*, are regarded as stable, steady or permanent psychological states¹⁶, closely connected with *rasas* and evolving into them under certain conditions.

All *bhāvas* characterize various aspects of the scenic practice¹⁷. This is what the *Nāṭyaśāstra* has to say about them: “why are they *bhāvas*? What do *bhāvas* manifest? It is said: the

¹⁶ *Bhāva* (whose name derives from the Sanskrit root ‘bhū’, “to become”, “to be”, “arise”, “come into being”, “exist”) literally means “state” and “that which takes place or manifests itself”. Haas (DR, pp. 106-129) interpreted it literally as “state”, while Ghosh (MGT, p. 102) defined it more precisely as “psychological state” as he pointed that such meanings as “emotion” and “feeling” were also characteristic of the treatise. For the *sthāyi* Haas proposed translation “permanent”, for the *vyabhicāri* “transitory” and for *sāttvika* “involuntary”. Ghosh interpreted them slightly differently and translated *sthāyi* as “durable” and *vyabhicāri* as “complimentary”. The term *sāttvika* he preferred to leave without translation, because in his opinion it “cannot be properly translated into English”. He did not accept the interpretation of Haas, because it is “very misleading for the NŚ takes *sattva* to be connected with *manas*” or mind (MGT, p. 103, note 22).

¹⁷ The *Nāṭyaśāstra* uses *bhāva* as a polysemantic term that supposes several semantic layers: apart from the emotional psychological sphere that affects the playwright, the performers and the audience, it also determines a number of specific purely scenic means of the drama production.

bhāvas reveal the meanings of the drama endowed with words, gestures [and manifestations of] nature. *Bhāva* designates the device that leads to the [desired] result. Of the same meaning [are the words]: “created”, “caused to dwell”, and “made”. It is known in the world: Oh, everything is produced by this smell or taste [that create] each other. There is also the meaning [*bhāva*] – “dissemination”. There are *ślokaś* here: The meaning brought by *vibhāvas* and disseminated by *anubhāvas* [and] means of representation: speech, [movements of] the body and [manifestations of] nature is called *bhāva*. The *bhāvas* are known to the producers of the *nāṭya* because they manifest the *rasas* related to the various means of representation” (bhāvā iti kasmāt kiṃ bhāvayanti-iti bhāvā | ucyaṭe vāg-aṅga-sattva-upetān-kāvya-arthān-bhāvayanti-iti bhāvāḥ | bhāva iti karaṇa-sādhanam tathā bhāvitaḥ vāsitaḥ kṛta ity-an-artha-antaram | loke'pi ca siddham aho hy-anyonya-gandhena rasena vā sarvam-eva bhāvitam | api ca vyāpty-artham ślokaś-ca-atra bhavanti | vibhāvair-āḥṛto yo'rthas-tv-anubhāvena gamyate | vāg-aṅga-sattva-abhinayaiḥ sa bhāva iti samjñitaḥ || nāna-abhinaya-sambaddhān-bhāvayanti rasān-imān | yasmāt-tasmād-amī bhāvā vijñeyā nāṭya-yokṭṛbhiḥ NŚ, p. 92; 7.1, 3).

An essential issue is related to the status and character of the *bhāva* category in the theoretical system of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. According to the cited definitions, the *bhāva* is a specific creative power to which the drama owes its existence. A generic element like smell or taste, the *bhāva* creates, in a way, the illusory matter of the *nāṭya* as it spreads in the drama and imbues it. This is what makes the *bhāva* the means of bringing forth the content on the drama to lead to the desired result – *rasa*. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the *bhāva* appears on the basis of the sum total of the interrelated *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* as the logical result of their joint impact, and materializes through such means of representation (*abhinayas*) as speech, movement and manifestations of nature (*sāttva*). However, unlike the latter, the *bhāva* cannot be perceived visually – we cannot say it is “seen” or “heard”. It can be only suggested and instilled in a specific way in the audience’s heart

and mind. However closely connected through the *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas* with the basic means of representation – even though it is direct fruit of expert acting, it is an *ideal* fruit, which impacts first of all the viewer's heart and supposes his emotional response.

Contemporary research regards the *bhāva* as spontaneous human emotion, a man's actual psychological state, which arises in everyday life and describes his genuine emotional world. According to the scholarly literature, the scenic action merely bases itself on these feelings and interplaying with them to bring forth an aesthetic feeling – *rasa*. However, neither the general definition of *bhāva* nor the descriptions of its forty nine varieties gives grounds for a conclusion about its verisimilitude. On the contrary, all *bhāvas* directly result from acting and emerge only in the scenic action thanks to carefully selected *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*.

The conclusion that the *bhāva* is not a genuine emotion, characterizing humans in actuality but its artistic image, pure and unadulterated – one that arises and seizes the audience only in the theatre – makes us review current concepts of the *rasa* theory presented by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. These concepts were based on the assumption that *rasa* alone can be regarded as an aesthetic emotion. As things really are, the *bhāva*, as a unique theatrical emotional experience closely linked to all stages of plot development, shall rather be defined as an aesthetic category. Formed on the basis of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, all *bhāvas* possess theatrical illusionary qualities and belong to the specific artistic reality of the stage.

As the eight *sthāyi bhāvas* closely correspond to the eight *rasas*¹⁸, we see the introduction of these latter as artificial – even redundant. The system is complete due to the interdependence and interaction of the various *bhāvas*. Nevertheless, the author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* follows his

¹⁸ The desirable *rasa* (*Śṛṅgāra*) corresponds to the *sthāyi bhāva* of delight (*Rati*); risorial *rasa* (*Hāsyā*) to laughter (*Hāsa*); sorrowful (*Karūṇa*) to grief (*Śoka*); violent (*Raudra*) to irritation (*Krodha*); heroism (*Vīra*) to courage (*Utsāha*); terrifying (*Bhayānaka*) to fear (*Bhaya*); disgust (*Bībhatsa*) to aversion (*Jugupsā*); and wondrous (*Adbhuta*) to astonishment (*Vismaya*).

predecessors in arguing that *rasas*, rather than *bhāvas* shall be the goal of the drama¹⁹.

Late theoreticians made numerous attempts to give a logical resolution of this contradiction, evident to them. In these attempts, they proceeded from the contemporaneous stage practice and the ideas of *rasa* as a pure aesthetic phenomenon. As none other than *rasa* took the place of the basic aesthetic category, they tried to impose a new meaning on the entire hierarchy and reinterpret the status of *bhāvas* in it. Probably, this was how the *bhāva* grew to be interpreted as the genuine feeling, man's actual psychological state in everyday life. The performance influenced these very feelings. Thus, *rasas* emerged as aesthetic equivalents of *bhāvas*. With mediaeval theoreticians, the correlation of *rasas* and *bhāvas* roughly imitated that of actual events and those represented on stage. The former are reality, and the latter illusions suggested and received.

Be this as it may, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* disproves the allegation of the verisimilitude of the *bhāva*. Evidently, the content of *rasa*, as presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, also vitally differs from its late interpretations and the resultant views of present-day researchers.

The treatise offers two types of *rasa* description. The first sees *rasa* as a dramatic structural link and presents the technicalities of its achievement. In this, *rasa* emerges as natural result of the various production elements interacting, and really does come close to *bhāva*. The second kind of description characterizes the impact of *rasa* on the audience and defines the essential features of this phenomenon. To the definitions of the essence of *rasa* which, as I see it, the author of the treatise borrowed from the older tradition, belong all that concern the interpretation of the term *rasa*, based on its comparison with the

¹⁹ It is also indicative that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes the *rasas* in much greater detail than the *sthāyi bhāvas* corresponding to them. It would be more natural to see the reverse, with the greatest possible attention to particulars in the analysis of *sthāyi bhāvas* and reference to the presented material for each corresponding *rasa*. More than that, the *rasas* are characterized before all the other categories, and so the description of the eight *rasas* virtually substitutes for the more concise definitions of the correspondent permanent *bhāvas*, making them redundant, in a way.

pleasure experienced by the eater of an excellently cooked dish. I ought to see in this context the number of protecting gods and colour associations, the emergence of *rasa* from *sthāyi bhāva*, and its impact on the audience, i.e., the description of *rasa* in its receptive aspect – as a kind of savouring.

Of the many meanings of the word *rasa*, the traditional theoretical evaluation of the theatre selected only one, **taste**. The word had grown to be used as a technical term by the time the *Nāṭyaśāstra* appeared. The treatise never gives a direct explanation of *rasa* as taste. It has no precise definitions for the essence of *rasa*, offering intuitive analogies instead: “What is an example [one may ask]? It is said: as taste emerges from the various seasonings, herbs and other components, so does *rasa* emerge from a combination of the various *bhāvas*. As six tastes²⁰ are produced with treacle and other components, seasonings and herbs, so do *sthāyi bhāvas* combined with various *bhāvas* attain [the characteristics] of *rasa*” (ko dr̥ṣṭāntaḥ | atra-aha yathā hi | nānā-vyañjana-oṣadhi-dravya-samyogād-rasa-niṣpattiḥ tathā nā-nā-bhāva-upagamād-rasa-niṣpattiḥ | yathā hi guḍa-adibhir-dravyair-vyañjanair-auṣadhibhiś-ca śāḍ rasā nirvartyante tathā nānā-bhāva-upagatā api sthāyino bhāvā rasatvama-apnuvanti-iti NŚ, p. 82).

Through this comparison with taste – a quality of food defied of verbal description and emerging out of a combination of components, which do not possess this quality when taken separately – the author stressed the ability of *rasa* to emerge out of *sthāyi bhāvas* being combined with other *bhāvas* in a special way. This idea is continued by the following analogy: as the taste of food cannot be felt unless you taste it, so you cannot perceive *rasa* through your eyes or ears alone – only in the specific way of partaking or savouring it.

“It is said here: what is the meaning of the word *rasa*? It is said: [it emerged] due to savouring. [One might ask:] how to savour *rasa*? As wise men savour well-cooked food with

²⁰ The six tastes are sweet (madhura), sour (amla), salty (lavāṇa), acrid (kaṭuka), bitter (tikta) and pungent (kaśhāya).

diverse seasoning to enjoy diverse tastes and attain joy and other [pleasant feelings] so do wise spectators enjoy *sthāyi bhāvas*, ornate with diverse [other] *bhāvas* and means of representations, and endowed with speech, gestures and [manifestations of] nature, and attain joy and other [pleasant feelings]. That is why they are known as the *rasas* of *nāṭya*” (atra-aha rasa iti kaḥ pada-arthaḥ | ucyate āsvādyatvāt | katham-āsvādyate rasaḥ | yathā hi nānā-vyañjana-saṃskṛtam-annam bhuñjāna rasān-āsvādayanti sumanasaḥ puruṣa harṣādīms-ca-adhigacchanti tathā nānā-bhāva-abhinaya-vyañjitān vāg-aṅga-sattva-upetān sthāyi-bhāvān-āsvādayanti sumanasaḥ prekṣakāḥ harṣa-adīms-ca-adhigacchanti | tasmān-nāṭya-rasā ity-abhivyaḥyātāḥ NS, p. 82).

An analysis of this definition leads us to a number of conclusions. First, the partaking or savouring of *rasa* gives pleasure. Second, *rasa* is savouring not directly but through the mediation of *sthāyi bhāvas* which, as natural results of the *abhinaya*-based acting, influence the audience’s senses and can be actually perceived. This idea is developed further in the quotation from earlier authors: “As gourmets savour of food, coupled with a number of components and diverse seasoning enjoy, so the wise [spectators] enjoy in mind (*manas*) the *sthāyi bhāvas*, coupled with [other] *bhāvas* and means of representation. Therefore, they are known as the *rasas* of *nāṭya*” (yathā bahu-dravya-yutair-vyañjanair-bahubhir-yutam | āsvādayanti bhuñjānā bhaktam bhaktavido janāḥ || bhāva-abhinaya-sambaddhān-sthāyi-bhāva-amś-tathā budhāḥ | āsvā-dayanti manasā tasmān-nāṭya-rasāḥ smṛtāḥ NS 6.32-33).

As follows from this latter definition, the *sthāyi bhāvas* can directly penetrate the viewer’s *manas*, which, according to the Indian understanding embodies the indissoluble unity of heart, soul and mind, and thus is an emotionally coloured, rather than logically austere reason. This point is borne out by another quotation from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*: “The meaning

consonant with the heart²¹, [precisely] its [*sthāyi*] *bhāva* brings forth the *rasa*, [and] the body [is] penetrated by it as dry wood is devoured by flame” (yo'rtho hr̥daya-saṁvādī tasya bhāvo rasa-udbhavaḥ | śarīraṁ vyāpyate tena śuṣkaṁ kāṣṭham-iva-agninā NŚ 7.7).

Thus, to put it in a modern idiom, the *sthāyi bhāvas* appeal both to the rational and emotional elements in man, and are capable of deeply touching the entire human self. Hence an important conclusion which can be drawn from this statement: the emergence of *rasa* is preceded by a certain goal-oriented intellectual activity, a unique reflection based on an interested perception of the scenic action.

Last but not least, we see the following definition as pivotal in the understanding of the essence of *rasa*: “Thus, these forty-nine *bhāvas*, [which make] the basis for the manifestation of poetic *rasas*, should ascend [to them]. *Rasas* emerge out of them as they merge with the quality of universality” (evam-ete kāvya-rasa-abhivyakti-hetava eko-na-pañcāśad-bhāvāḥ pratyavagantavyāḥ | ebhyaś-ca sāmānya-guṇa-yogena rasā niṣpadyante NŚ, p. 93).

As follows from this, the *rasa* appears precisely at the instant when the *bhāva* acquires a certain supplementary quality named *sāmānya*²². The author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* makes this concise thesis, without getting back to it later in order to give it any

²¹ *Hr̥daya-saṁvādī* means literally “talks to the heart”, which forestalls a later interpretation of the spectator or listener as one “of the consonant heart” (*sahr̥daya*) – a concept that attracted many scholars. A.R. Hardikar examined it in two articles: “Prekṣaka: A Spectator”. *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, vol. LXIV, 1983, pp. 191-196 and “The Aesthetic Appreciator or Sahr̥daya”. *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol. LXXV, pts. 1-4, 1994, pp. 265-272; V.M. Kulkarni touched upon this theme in: *Outline of Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics*. Saraswati Oriental Research Sanskrit Series. Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1998, pp. 95-105; V.N. Jha. “The Philosophy of Creation and Appreciation of a Literary Art-form”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bombay, vol. 73, 1998, pp. 50-60 analyzes the philosophical basis of the concept. R.N. Dandekar. “Hr̥d in the Veda”. *Exercises in Indology*. Select Writings III. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1981, pp. 253-261 and H.D. Velankar. “Mind and Heart in the R̥gveda (Manas and Hr̥d)”. *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference*. 22 Session. Gauhati, Assam, 1966, pp. 1-5 search for possible background of this concept in the Vedic texts.

²² About *sāmānya* as universality and the “generality of the Universal” according to the ideas of Buddhists, Jains, Vedantins and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, see: N.N. Bhattacharyya. *A Glossary of Indian Religious Terms and Concepts*. Columbia: South Asia Publications, 1990, pp. 138-139 (Rpt.: New Delhi: Manohar, 1990; 1999).

explanation. Neither does he explain the concept of *sāmānya*, which characterizes a vital difference between the *rasa* and the *bhāva*. Nevertheless, certain statements in the text help us to clarify what is supposed to happen at this crucial moment of conversion of *bhāva* into *rasa*, as the text has it: “The colours of [the divine world in the theatre should be] fully manifested²³, though colourfulness is difficult to achieve in the [real] world; [drama] which is acted out with diligence results in the breakthrough (*vimarda*)” (*citrāṇi na virājante loke citraṁ hi durlabham | vimardor-āgamāyāti prayukto hi prayatnataḥ* NŚ 7. 123). The literal meaning of the word *vimarda* is “break”, “crush”, “rapid qualitative change” or “the advent of a principally new state”. In other words, this moment marks a qualitative change in the course of the performance and a shift to a completely new emotional state.

Thus, the concept of *rasa* initially could manifest the borderline state of transition from real earthly values to transcendental ones, when the impact of the drama made the audience’s subjective consciousness discard its definite personal quality to dissolve in the supreme spiritual reality. Possibly, as they felt *rasa*, the spectators went through superhuman, superpersonal experiences, and knew delight, laughter, grief, irritation, courage, fear, aversion or astonishment as such.

How, then, was this superpersonal feeling achieved in practice? What kind of efforts made the audience go through a superhumanly strong emotion all together as the drama reached its peak? Evidently, this question vitally concerned the author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have asked it in the treatise: “It is said here: if *rasas* emerge through confluence with the quality of universality and [on the basis of] the 49 *bhāvas*, enriched of *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*, and interrelated

²³ *na virājante* means literally “are not discoloured”, i.e., they do not lose colourfulness as their quality. In GOS this *śloka* (7. 186) is read a bit differently: “The poetic work is not born of one *rasa*, one *bhāva* or one *vṛtti* but, when performed with diligence, [all this taken together] leads to a breakthrough” (*na hy-eka-rasajam kāvyam naikabhāvaikavṛttikam vimarde rāgamāyāti prayuktam hi prayatnataḥ* GOS I, p. 385).

by meaning, how then the *sthāyi bhāvas* attain the quality of *rasa*?" (atra-aha yad anyonya-artha-saṁśritair-vibhāva-anubhāva-vyañjitair-eko-na-pañcāśad-bhā-vaiḥ sāmānya-guṇa-yogena-abhiniṣpadyante rasās-tat-katham sthāyina eva bhāvā rasatvam-āpnuvanti NŚ, p. 93).

One had every reason to ask this question – but, in fact, it remained unanswered. The essence of *rasa* as a specific *sthāyi bhāva*, that acquired the universal quality (*sāmānya*) achieved through the breakthrough (*vimarda*), is void of practical expression and shall be cognized intuitively, by an insight or through revelation. Evidently, a *rasa* arises as a thoroughly new quality – something entirely different from what has given it birth. Strictly speaking, *rasa* can't be created – only evoked and anticipated through a correct combination of diverse *bhāvas*, as a gourmet anticipates and produces the taste of a dish by seasoning it with particular spices. This is why the attempt to specify the appearance of *rasa* leads the author only to one more analogy. The *sthāyi bhāva* is likened to a king surrounded by other *bhāvas* as retainers²⁴ – a comparison mainly aimed to bring out the exceptionally elevated status of the *rasa*.

As we see it, the very description of *rasa*, made of hints and half-spoken statements, testifies to the esoteric nature of the doctrine exposed, which is wholly opened solely to an adept's understanding. More than that, this description shows that the scenic impact on man produced a supernatural quality defying direct and outspoken expression. Indicative in this connection is the testimony of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* specifying the patron deity of every *rasa*, but never linking the other categories to anything

²⁴ The *Nāṭyaśāstra* says on this: "Of humans possessing the same properties, similar bodies with a stomach and limbs, and similar convictions, [some] reach majesty due to their ancestry, character, knowledge, works, mastery [and] wisdom, while the others, of inferior intelligence, follow them. Likewise, *vibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* [and] the transitory [*bhāvas*] base on the *sthāyi bhāvas*, which dominate due to [their] fundamental essence, the other *bhāvas*, [even present] as *sthāyi*, being subordinate to them and based [on them] due to their extraordinary qualities. [In this] the *vyaścihari bhāvas* make the retinue" (NŚ, p. 93).

superpersonal²⁵. More than that, all *rasas* had a divine origin and, according to tradition, we owe the initial knowledge of them to none other than Brahmā (NŚ, p. 81; 6.16). It will be appropriate to mention here the correlation of every *rasa* to a particular colour: “*Śṛṅgāra* is dark²⁶, *Hāsya* is announced to be white²⁷, *Karūṇa* grey²⁸, and *Raudra* red²⁹, while *Vīra* should be known as pale yellow³⁰, *Bhayānaka* black and *Bībhatsa* blue³¹, while *Adbhuta* is known [as] bright yellow” (śyāmo bhavati

²⁵ Viṣṇu protects the *Śṛṅgāra* rasa, Pramatha *Hāsya*, Rudra *Raudra*, Yama *Karūṇa*, Mahākāla *Bībhatsa*, Kāla *Bhayānaka*, Mahendra *Vīra* and Brahmā *Adbhuta* (NŚ 6.44-45).

²⁶ The *Śṛṅgāra* possibly associates with dark colours due to Viṣṇu, the heavenly patron of this *rasa*. On the one hand, he is of dark complexion; on the other hand, he personifies the female basis of the Universe. The author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was well acquainted with this symbolism, as testified by the *pūrvaraṅga* ritual, which worships Brahmā as the bearer of the neuter element, Śiva of the male and Viṣṇu the female (NŚ 5. 98-101). When there were no actresses in the early ritual theatre and only male Brāhmaṇas performed, it was none other than Viṣṇu, who transformed on the stage into a beautiful woman (*mohini*). This scenic device was used even in one of the oldest dramas, the *Amṛtamanthana*. For details, see: N.R. Lidova. *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, pp. 59-79. Curiously, Viṣṇu’s bow, mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (NŚ 22.12), made of horn or resembling a horn in shape, is named śārng (or śṛṅga). Possibly, it is also related to the name of this *rasa*. It is all the more probable as the motif of desire awakened with an arrow shoot was well known in the Indian tradition and played a prominent part in the mythology of Kāma, the divine personification of desire, who was often regarded as son of Viṣṇu.

²⁷ Also “bright”, “light”, “pure”. The positive element symbolized in Indian culture by white – the colour of Brahmā the supreme god and of the Brāhmaṇas caste, the basic colour of sacrifices, and the natural colour of *pūjā* sacrificial flowers – allows assume that, in this instance, laughter is synonymous with divine rejoicing and is interpreted as its most graphic expression.

²⁸ In other words, dove-grey. The symbolism of this colour is analyzed in: H.C. Patyal. “Pigeon in the Vedic Mythology and Ritual”. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, vol. LXXI, 1990, pp. 310-317. The connection of the sorrowful *rasa* with this colour may be naturally explained by the colour of ashes on the site of a funeral pyre. This assumption is borne out by Yama the underworld god being the divine patron of this *rasa*.

²⁹ The connection of the red colour with wrath is more or less evident – suffice to recall human eyes bloodshot in violent anger. We should also mention the predominance of red in the makeup of demons opposed to the protagonist in the modern *kūṭiyāṭṭam* theatre. Despite all the differences, it is fairly close to the Sanskrit drama tradition and the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

³⁰ Also creamy reddish and red shot by yellow, with their additional meanings of “glowing”, “bright”, “clean”, “pretty”. Possibly, this colour, which resembles natural complexion, was emphasized by many shades of red in the makeup as the dominant colour of heroic characters. Sharing the basis with the colour of the *Raudra* *rasa*, the “heroic” colour came as its mollified and ennobled version.

³¹ Possibly, the link between this colour and revulsion ascends to the episode in the myth of the churning of the *amṛta* in which Śiva drinks *kālakūṭa* poison appearing out of the water, which forever dyes his neck blue. This assumption is all the more probable because Śiva as Mahākāla is the patron of this *rasa*.

śrīṅgāraḥ sito hāsyah prakīrtitaḥ | kapotaḥ karuṇāś-ca-eva rakto
 raudraḥ prakīrtitaḥ || gauro vīras-tu vijñeyah kṛṣṇāś-ca-eva
 bhayānakaḥ | nīla-varṇas-tu bībhatsaḥ pītaś-ca-eva-adbhutaḥ
 smṛtaḥ NŚ 6.42-43).

The author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* postulates colour correlations for the *rasa* alone, not for other categories – a fact probably to be seen as one more proof of its sacral status, as the tradition of esoteric knowledge regarded colour among the vital properties of the divine world and visual manifestations of cosmic energies emanated by the highest spiritual spheres³². This included colours in the arrangement of mystical correlations meant to demonstrate the most secret of the pillars of being. Barely discernible today, the link with gods and colours must have meant much to adepts in its time, with its clear indication of the place of *rasa* in the network of sacral symbolism.

All the above improves our understanding of the interrelation

³² The distinction and symbolism of colour in the Indian tradition is comparatively little studied, though it is of tremendous interest. Several noteworthy publications concern it: T.Y. Elizarenkova. "Notes on Names of Colours in the Rgveda". *The Bulletin of the Deccan College Research and Postgraduate Institute*, Poona, vols. 54/55, 1994-95, pp. 81-86 analyzes the names and perception of the colours in the Vedic time; L.P. Srivatsa. "Theory of Colours according to Ancient Indians". *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of History of Medicine*, vol. XXV, № 1-2, January-July 1995 treats the theoretical foundations of the distinguishing colours; V.V. Vertogradova. "Problems of Interpretation of Ancient Indian and Ancient Greek Theory of Colour". *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*, vol. XXXVII, pts. III-IV, March-June 1988, pp. 321-328 compares the ancient Indian and Greek systems of the interpretation of colours; U.N. Dhal. "The Colour Concept of a Deity". *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, Hoshiarpur (Panjab Univ.), 1983, vol. XXI. Pts. I-II, pp. 228-232 and N.S. Mate, U. Ranade. "Raga Brahman or Colour in Cakra Iconography". *Reflection on Indian Art and Culture*. Ed. by Kalākusumāñjali, S.K.Bhowmik. Museum Bulletin, vol. XXVIII, 1978-79. Special Issue dedicated to H. Goetz. Baroda, 1983, pp. 171-204 analyze the primary colours of Indian iconography; S.S. Gupta. "More about Seven Colour Energy Rays of Sūrya". *Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha*, vol. LVI, 2003, pp. 197-204; Sivapriyananda. "Colour Symbolism and the Trigūṇa Concept". *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*, Baroda, vol. XXXVIII, pts. I-II, September-December, 1988; V.M. Bedekar. "The Doctrine of the Colours of Soul in the Mahābhārata: Its Characteristics and Implications". *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, Golden Jubilee Volume, vols. XLVIII-XLIX, 1968, pp. 329-338 treat different aspects of colour symbolism. The only article directly devoted to the study of colour's system of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was written by T.Kintaert: "The use of Primary Colours in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*". S. Das, E. Fūrlinger (eds.). *Sāmarasya: Studies in Indian Arts, Philosophy and Interreligious Dialogue – in Honour of Bettina Bäumer*. New Delhi 2005: D.K. Printworld, pp. 245-273.

between *bhāvas* and *rasas*. We may presume that initially the *rasa* was a sacred, religious category, while *bhāva* reflected far more practical, even profane phenomena – rather than considering the two of them as one reflecting a real-life emotion, and the other – its aesthetic equivalent. Both belonged to a world conventional and fictitious, which but imitated reality. The *bhāvas*, however, were, in a way, natural and spontaneous fruit of acting and the scenic representation of real life (in this sense, they were much closer to the present-day idea of the aesthetic effect), while *rasas* arose as the result of transition by *bhāvas* to another quality; as a phenomenon of the supersensual world – rather mystical, to be “savoured” than illusory, to be suggested.

The roots of this concept of *rasa* most probably belong to the earliest formative period of the drama, when it was a ritual performance, a unique liturgical frame for an offering and part of the religious ceremony³³. As supreme goal of such ritualistic drama, the *rasa* was outside the everyday emotion. Thus, supernatural qualities and protection by patron gods were bestowed on it. Intrinsic to the *rasa*, its sacral and supernatural qualities were inseparable from its symbolic content. The analysis of the latter is crucial for the substantiation of the ritualistic origin of this category and would help to explain why *rasa* as taste was chosen to express a mystical experience.

Due to the limitation of short paper, this analysis, based on a great number of texts, starting from Vedic sources, could not be presented here at length. Thus I will limit myself to several most important statements and conclusions, arguing the hypothesis that the initial concept of *rasa* re-interpreted the ancient ritual *soma* complex.

The word *rasa* occurs as early as the *Rgveda*, where it stands for the elan vital or juice of a plant, for potions and liquids in general, and milk and water in particular. A magic potion, not unlike an elixir or nectar, was also known as *rasa* (here it was equivalent to *amṛta*). Last but not least, the word designated the

³³ For further details, see: N.R. Lidova. *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

pivotal and best part of a thing; the quintessence or essence of a phenomenon; taste, mentality, an emotional state and later the religious feeling.

It presents no difficulty to single out two basic groups of meanings – first is quite concrete and related to plant juice, liquid, potion and sacred elixir; second is more abstract, and reflecting such notions as the quintessence, essence, vital force³⁴ and taste. The *saṃhitās* and, above all, the *Ṛgveda*, included *rasa* in the semantic circle of *soma* and steadily used them together, so that the word combination “the *rasa* of *soma*”³⁵ was well known in the Vedic ritual culture. Most often, what is meant by *rasa* is the inebriating *soma* juice, which produces hallucinations and grants supernatural strength (*RV* IX.6.6; 14.3; 16.1; 24.5; 38.5). In this, frequently in a specific practical ritual context, the dilution of pure *soma* juice with milk and water was part of the preparation of the immortality elixir (*RV* VIII.72.13; IX.64. 28). Each of these liquids could be referred to as *rasa*. The potion usually consisting of the components mixed was usually known as *amṛta*, but also could be termed *rasa*. To all appearances, this name stressed that the elixir not merely gave eternal life but was the essence and quintessence of *soma*³⁶.

The initial semantics of *rasa* as taste were also emerged in the Vedic period and related to the *soma* cult. One of the most graphic examples is found in the following *Ṛgvedic* hymn, which says: “This bull reared by Parjanya, was supported by the daughter of Sūrya, [then] it was taken by the Gandharvās, who put this **taste** into *soma*”³⁷. It is important that in the Vedic

³⁴ *Rasa* frequently indicates juice or the élan of Indra and other gods. See: *RV* IX.23.5; 47.3; 97.1; 57.

³⁵ According to Grassmann’s dictionary, over a half of the *Ṛgvedic* references to *rasa* are connected with *soma*. See: H.Grassmann. *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda*. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1873-1875 (Rpt.: Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1976). See also: A.A. Lubotsky. *Ṛgvedic Word Concordance*, Pt. II: P-H. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997, pp. 1188-1189.

³⁶ The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* more than once referred to *rasa* as “the juice of juices and essence of essences”, meaning its notional relation to *soma*.

³⁷ *parjanya-vṛddham mahiṣam taṃ sūryasya duhitābharat / taṃ gandharvāḥ pratya-grbhan taṃ some rasam-ādadhur* (*RV* IX.113. 3). Another instance is provided by the hymn *RV* IX.63.13: “Pressed out by stones, Soma, like the god Sūrya, is purified, acquiring taste in the jug” (*somo devo na sūryo adribhiḥ pavate sutah dadhānah kalaśe rasam*).

period the word *rasa* meant not taste in general but the unique taste of *soma* as an actual potion. The word *rasa* meaning “taste” also occurs in the *Atharvaveda*³⁸, from where according to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the category of *rasa* was borrowed (NŚ 1.17-18). Last but not least, it is essentially important that *rasa* repeatedly occurs in the poetic context as early as the *Rgveda* to be described as the property of *soma* that nourishes and inspires poets³⁹.

Rasa retains its meaning of “taste” in the *Upaniṣads* (see: BrU II.4.11; III.2.4; III.8.8; VI.3.25; VI.3.31; VI.4.2; VI.5.12-13) and also begins to be used as a philosophical term for the “best part”, “essence” or “quintessence” of something (BrU I.3.8; I.3.19; VI.4.1; ChU I.1.2-3; I.1.9; III.2.3; III.3.2), including those of the Vedas (ChU III.5.4). These texts also begin to associate *rasa* with Brahman (BrU II. 3. 2-5) as it describes a number of his properties from taste⁴⁰ to the most sublime form of pleasure – the pleasure of knowledge (TaiU II.7.1).

Importantly, even the *Brāhmaṇas* use *rasa* in a context precisely coinciding with the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, that is, as taste imbuing the ritual thanks to music and recitation. Characteristic in this sense is one of the chapters of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, where the theme of *rasa* emerges in the description of *soma* as ritual food. Here, *rasa* is portrayed as unique taste born of canticles and recited scripture: “*Udgātār* (singer) [by singing] *mahāvrata* creates the *rasa*. All that are these tunes [of *Sāmaveda*] is *mahāvrata*, in it [*soma*] the *rasa* is produced by all tunes [of *Sāmaveda*]. In it [*soma*] the *hotār* produces *rasa* by

³⁸ See, e.g., *Atharvaveda* III.13.5: “May the pungent supporting taste of [waters] mixed with honey come to me with the breath and the brilliance” (tīvro raso madhuprçām aramgama ā mā prāneṇa saha varcasā gamet). Evidently, here, too, *rasa* denotes the taste of *soma*, whose pure juice was considered too pungent and so was to be diluted with milk and water in the rite of *amṛta* preparation.

³⁹ It is exemplified by a quatrain from the hymn ṚV IX.67.32, which says: “He who memorizes Pāvamānī’s [verses], the juice collected by the ṛṣi...” (pāvamānīryo adhyety ṛṣibhiḥ sambhṛtaṃ rasam). See also: RV IX.74. 9; IX.84. 5.

⁴⁰ “He comes to the abode of Sālajya, [and] Brahman’s taste penetrates him” (sa āgacchatī sālajyaṃ samsthānam taṃ brahma-rasaḥ praviṣati KauU I.5).

sublime speech. All that are these hymns [of *Ṛgveda*] is sublime speech, in it [*soma*] the *rasa* is produced by all hymns [of *Ṛgveda*]” (udgātā mahāvratena rasam dadhāti sarvāṇi haitāni sāmāni yan-mahāvratam tad-asmintsarvaiḥ sāmabhī rasam dadhāti tasmin-hotā mahatokthēna rasam dadhāti sarvā haitā ṛco yanmahaduktham tadasmintsarvābhirṛgbhī rasam dadhāti (ŚBr X.4.1.13). The importance of this testimony of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* can hardly be exaggerated because it adds a missing link to the symbolic chain of the sacral drink, food and taste – a chain that is the basis of *rasa* concept in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. This link connects *rasa* with the visual element of the ritual, i.e. the religious paradigm that later was made the foundation of the Ancient Indian theatre.

All this together suggests that that the initial concept of *rasa* re-interpreted the ancient ritual complex of *soma* and inherited from him a number of provisions. The crucial ritual aspect of *soma* was related to the specific hallucinating intoxication into which it had the power to put gods and mortals (Vedic priests drank *soma* in particular rites). *Soma* drinking belonged to esoteric rituals in which the human body, like a vessel, was to be filled with a divine potion. The magic trance caused by *soma* elevated humans above their nature. Ecstasy born of it gave unique, superhuman experiences. It made humans part of the suprapersonal divine world, and gave them a knowledge of it. This was the heart of the *soma* rites.

Perhaps, the early ritual drama had for supreme goal the acquisition of a specific psycho-physical state by all adepts without exception. In its ritualistic setting, they strove to imitate the ecstatic influence of *soma*. The supersensual emotion similar to the mystical experience of communication with gods (also enacted in the mystery play before the pious audience) came as an analogy of the hallucinogenic effect of *soma*, as its essence, quintessence and taste – to put it into one word, as *rasa*.

Evidently, a cathartic response shared by all was among the basic functions of the ritual performance, which brought sensual affections into order – as indicated in Ch. I of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which defined the drama as “restraint for the recalcitrant, humility for the humble, courage for the coward, resolution for

him who thinks himself a hero, reason for the unreasonable, knowledge for the instructed, steadfastness for him agitated by sorrow, and firmness for him whose mind is in a tumult” (NŚ 1.108-109)⁴¹.

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* offers many oblique proofs of the genetic link between the notions of *rasa* and *soma*. As follows from its definitions, *rasa* possesses three basic features: universality (*sāmānya*), being savoured and bringing pleasure.

Let us cursorily regard each of these properties. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the drama reached its culmination when the *sthāyi bhāva* reached universality and the *rasa* appeared as a consequence. This instant finally gave an unreal quality to the aesthetic experience – already cleaned of everyday admixtures and thus not entirely this-worldly to liken it to the religious emotion proper, the mystical moment of divine communion with god. As a real-life, even if refined, aesthetic experience, the *sthāyi bhāva* was always endowed with a more or less clear expression and personal colouring, whereas the *rasa* was uniform and universal. The power of its impact brought it close to the suprapersonal hallucinogenic effect of *soma*. Evidently, the concept of *rasa* initially designated a borderline state of transition from earthly values to transcendental ones of a universal scope. It was not for nothing that the treatise described its appearance as a specific form of breakthrough. Doubtless, the instant of the transformation of *bhāva* into *rasa* was the central moment of the drama. The *bhāva* became universal when the aesthetic feeling, cleaned by that time of everything earthly and, in this sense, not quite of this world, finally lost its earthly properties to become a transcendental feeling akin to the mystical experience of the advent and cognition of God⁴².

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* repeatedly stresses the receptive aspect of *rasa*. It is what it is because it is savoured almost repeating the

⁴¹ R.K. Sen. *Aesthetic Enjoyment: Its background in Philosophy and Medicine*. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1966 proposes very strong conceptual influence on the aesthetic theory of the ancient Indian system of *Āyurveda*. He supposes that through the experience of various *rasas* one could achieve the balance, prescribed by the early medical texts.

⁴² The idea of the connection of *rasa* with the perception of the divine essence was known in the Indian tradition even before the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, as borne out by the known passage in TaiU II.7.1.

way one partakes of *soma* as an actual drink. The very definition of *rasa* rested on its comparison with the partaking of food of different tastes. Though many scholars view this comparison as naively drawn from cooking, we see it as sophisticated and justified by succession to another function of *soma* – as food⁴³. In the late Vedic period food was regarded as the basic substance of the world⁴⁴. Of crucial importance was the contrast between the food (*anna*) and the eater (*annāda*). All essences of being were reduced to this fundamental dualism. The Vedic ritual knew two kinds of food offerings – burned (*pravargya*) and eaten by priests (*brahmodana*). In this, the basic *anna-annāda* dualism was retained in the contrast between the fire and the sacrifice⁴⁵, moreover the Vedic ritual practice viewed *soma* poured onto the sacrificial flame as the embodiment and universal equivalent of food.

The idea of *soma* as special sacral food was widespread enough in the late Vedic period. Already the *Atharvaveda* identified *soma* with food (XI.10.16). We see the same in the *Aitareya* (7.1.5), *Kauṣītaki* (12.5) and *Śatapatha* (I.6.4.5; II.2.5.3) *Brāhmaṇas* which repeatedly refer to King *Soma*, the food of gods, also refer as food to the sacrificial rite as a whole (ŚB VIII.1.2.10). The *Brāhmaṇas*⁴⁶ and the *Upaniṣads* (TaiU

⁴³ For the perception of food in the Indian tradition, see: R.S. Khare. “Annambrahman: Cultural Models, Meanings and Aesthetics of Hindu Food”. *The Eternal Food: Gastronomic Ideas and Experiences of Hindus and Buddhists*. Ed. by R.S.Khare. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992, pp. 201-220 (Rpt.: Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993) A.K.Ramanujan. “Food for Thought: Towards an Anthology of Food Images”. *Ibidem*, pp. 221-250.

⁴⁴ “Men are truly born of food, those who dwell on the earth, then they live on the food and afterwards, at the end, they join it, since the food is the oldest of creatures” (TaiU II.2.1).

⁴⁵ “For all this is so great – the food and the eater. *Soma* is food and *Agni* is eater of food, and both are the supreme creation of *Brahman*” (etāvad vā idaṃ sarvaṃ annaṃ caivānnādaś ca | *soma evānnaṃ agnir annādaḥ* | *saiṣā brahmaṇo 'tisṛṣṭiḥ* BrU I.4.6).

⁴⁶ Of special interest in this context is the passage often repeated in the *Brāhmaṇas*, which describes the perception of the taste *rasa* in eating: “by eating herbs and drinking water, thus this taste appears. For the same reason, due to the universality (or perfection) of taste, it brings forth [the essence of food] by removing [everything redundant]” (oṣadhī-rjagdhva-āpaḥ pītva tata eṣa rasaḥ sambhavati tasmādu rasasyo caiva sarvatvāya tad-udvāsya-ātanakti ŚB I. 7.1.18; cp. I. 3.1.25, III.7.4.4). Indicative is the use of the verb *ā-taṅc*, which means “solidify” or “coagulate”, approximately the way ferment works in milk to coagulate it and obtain more solid substances as cream and butter. Taste (*rasa*) does something similar. Endowed with universality, it removes everything redundant and appears

II.1.1) also repeatedly refer to *rasa* as the taste, juice or quintessence of food. No doubt, the link between *soma* and food was well known in the *Aryan* milieu. The chain of imagery *anna-soma-rasa* and the comparison of *rasa* with the savouring of food – which had always borne another, sacral message allowed, to our mind, not merely an oblique reference to *soma* but an emphasis on the ritual essence of *rasa*.

Last but not least, the ability of *rasa* to cause pleasure can also be regarded as inherited from the ideas of *soma*. The above-quoted *Ṛgvedic* hymn dedicated to *soma* says: “Where the Brahman, oh Pavamāna, reciting metric speech, exalts in Soma with the stone [press] in his hand, causing bliss (*ānanda*) with assistance of Soma” (yatra brahmā pavamāna chandasayāṃ vācam vadan / grāvṇā some mahīyate somena-ānandaṃ janayann ṚV IX.113.6). The unique sacral pleasure of *soma* drinking correlates, in the theoretical description of *rasa*, to the superpersonal bliss of its savouring. Possibly, it reflects the same idea of bliss given by the approach to god – no matter by what way – and the cognition of his essence⁴⁷. The certain irrationality and immateriality of the idea of *rasa* can also be explained by the ritual origin of this category.

The *rasa* concept in the treatise can not be described as an aesthetic theory in the proper sense of this term because, in its description, *rasa* contains a large cluster of meanings from the earlier stages of its evolution, when it was regarded not as an aesthetic, properly artistic notion from the world of the arts, but a phenomenon from another reality, sacral and defying expression. That is why we cannot find in the treatise even a single direct elucidation of *rasa*, which always receives only a technical definition in connection with the *bhāvas*. Evidently,

only in eating to subjectivize the objective essence that previously existed only in a vague and hidden form.

⁴⁷ The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says: “What is well done is truly *rasa*, because only perceiving the *rasa* [person] is blissful” (yad vai tat sukṛtam raso vai saḥ rasam hy evāyaṃ labdhvā-ānandī bhavati TaiU II.7.1), because «bliss is Brahman» (ānando brahma-iti TaiU III.6.1). See also: R.B.Patankar. “Rasānubhava and Brahmānubhava”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bombay, vols. 64-66, pp. 168-178; S.A. Dange. “Sanskrit Poetics and Semeiotics”. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Bombay, 1996, vol. 71, pp. 47-57; G. Gispert-Sauch. “The Way of Joy”. *Dialogue and Universalism. Toward Synergy of Civilizations*. Guest editors: K.M. Byrski, A.N. Woznicki. vol. VII, n. 11/12, 1997, pp. 143-146.

during its formation the system of relations between the eight *rasas* and the eight *sthāyi bhāvas* corresponding to them was by no means redundant. The permanent *bhāvas*, which almost fully coincided with the *rasas*, were necessary as the initial stage of the sacral feeling. The initial correlation between the *rasas* and the *bhāvas* was most probably that of the mystical experience and the total of specific emotions helping to produce it. It is possible to regard them as aesthetic emotions from the point of present-day ideas of art.

The concept of *rasa* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a conglomeration of information more or less devoid of inner contradictions – information coming from various eras when theoretical substantiation was being sought for the theatre. The treatise retains an echo of the past when the *rasa* emerged as sacral idea and the *bhāva* as an aesthetic emotion that promotes it. At the same time, it contains a concept of the *rasa* as an element of the artistic structure close to the *bhāva* typologically and by the nature of its manifestation. The many layers of which the idea of the *rasa* consists in the treatise account for the heterogeneity of its content and bred the various interpretations that occurred in the mediaeval tradition of the theory of drama. Characteristically, mediaeval theoreticians were concerned about the same several fundamental questions: whether the *rasa* and the *bhāva* belonged to phenomena of the same nature or whether the *rasa* was something entirely different; whether all *rasas* could produce the most sublime form of bliss (*ānanda-rūpa*) or whether some *rasas* produced pleasant sensations (*sukha*) and the others disagreeable ones (*duḥkha*); and, last but not least, whether the *rasa* was transcendental, supernatural and other-worldly (*alaukika*) or it entirely belonged to the earthly world (*laukika*).

Abhinavagupta finally put the matter to rest in some of these questions⁴⁸. His main merit was that he brought back to the *rasa*

⁴⁸ Much has been written about the views of Abhinavagupta (950-1020) and his predecessors Śaṅkuka, Bhaṭṭa-nāyaka, Bhaṭṭa-tauta, Bhaṭṭa-lollaṭa and others. I mention here only a few generalizing works: Y.S. Walimbe. *Abhinavagupta on Indian Aesthetics*. Delhi: Ajanta Publ., 1980; V.M. Kulkarni. *Outline of Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics*. Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1998; G.K. Bhat. *Rasa Theory and allied problems*. Baroda: The MS University of Baroda, 1984.

its original status of the sublime goal⁴⁹, or, to use Indian theoreticians' vocabulary, of "the soul of poetry". It was repeatedly suggested that in the *Abhinavabharatī* Abhinavagupta not so much interpreted the theory of *rasa* presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as brought forth an original aesthetic concept. As it really is, it becomes evident in attentive reading that Abhinavagupta proceeded from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and, possibly, also relied on oral and other traditions to revive the original concept of *rasa*. As he saw it, though the *sthāyī-bhāva* was generating (*siddha*), while the *rasa* generated (*sādhya*), the former was an earthly sensation ordinary and common by nature (*sādhāraṇa*), while the *rasa* was extraordinary (*asādhāraṇa*), unique and transcendental (GOS I, p. 335), while its perception (*rasāsvāda*) brought special pleasure (*camatkāra*) and the utmost bliss (*ānanda-rūpa*), comparable to the yogi's religious ecstasy in the contemplation and cognition of Brahman⁵⁰. In the years that followed, Abhinavagupta's interpretation of *rasa* became dominant and was supported by almost all theoreticians of the 11th-14th centuries CE. It had an impact on the 15th century doctrine of *bhaktī-rasa* in *Gauḍīya Viṣṇavism*⁵¹.

⁴⁹ The theoreticians of the *Alaṅkāra* school for example gave *rasa* a far more obscure place. Particularly, Bhāmaha (6th cent.) and Daṇḍin (7th cent.) regarded it as a property of one of the poetic figures known as *rasavat*, while Udbhata (7th cent.) connected it with four poetic figures, and Vāmana (8th cent.) with *guṇas*, poetic qualities. To all appearances, the doctrine of the dramatic *rasas* began to spread to the theory of poetry with the comments to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, written by Bhaṭṭa-lollaṭa at the turn of the 9th century and Śaṅkuka in the 9th century. None of these commentaries have survived to this day, and we can judge their content only thanks to the writings of Abhinavagupta, who summarized their views in his dispute with them. The *rasa* was finally established as the basic doctrine of the theory of poetry in Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* (9th-10th cents.).

⁵⁰ According to Abhinavagupta, that was "why the *rasa* is all that exists" (*rasamayam eva viśvam*) (GOS I, p. 295). See also: V.M. Kulkarni. "Abhinavagupta on the Alaukika Nature of Rasa". *Some Aspects of the Rasa Theory: a Collection of Papers read at the "Rasa" Seminar*. Delhi: B. L. Institute of Indology, 1986, pp. 28-42; V.M. Kulkarni. "The Alaukika Nature of Rasa". *Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, vol. LXXV, pts. 1-4, 1994, pp. 281-290; V.M. Kulkarni. *Outline of Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics*. Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1998, pp. 46-68.

⁵¹ The concept of *bhaktī-rasa* was elaborated by Chaitanya's disciple Rūpa Gosvāmī (1493-1568), who used the concept of *rasa* to describe the ecstatic feeling of the love of God. On him and the other theoreticians of the *Viṣṇuīte bhakti*, see: D.M. Wulff. "Religion in a New Mode Realization: The Convergence of the Aesthetic and the Religious in Medieval India". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. LIV/4, 1986, pp. 673-689.

Indicatively, the author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* chooses possibly the most earthly and realistic of the concepts of *rasa*, almost fully ignoring its sacral element. This choice finds only partial explanation in the treatise's status of practical manual. Evidently, though the *Nāṭyaśāstra* transmits ritual and other knowledge stored over the centuries, the aesthetic *rasa* matters far more to its concept than the sacral *rasa*. Similarly, the classic literary drama was far more topical than its mystery forerunner at the time the treatise was written.

As I see it, three stages can be singled out in the evolution of the concept of *rasa*: first, its emergence as a symbolic expression of a ritualistic content; second, close in time to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, when *rasa* evolved into a theoretical term and acquired a specific aesthetic content, which gradually ousted its sacral essence; and the third, when the aesthetic aspect became dominant, but the transcendental (*alaukika*) element of *rasa* was also singled out and emphasized in the late philosophical and mystical tradition. As the result, the sacral aspect of the analysed category was the reason for the unique popularity and broad dissemination of the concept of *rasa*.

D.M.Wulff. *Drama as a Mode of Religious Realization. The Vidagdhamādhava of Rūpa Gosvāmī*. Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1984; D.L.Haberman. *Acting as a Way of Salvation: A Study of Rāgānugā Bhakti Sādhana*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; G.Carney. "Rasa Theology: The Drama of Divine Love". *Vaiṣṇavism: Contemporary Scholars Discuss the Gauḍīya Tradition*. Ed. by S.J.Rosen. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994, pp. 295-303; N.Delmonico. "Sacred Rapture: The Bhakti-Rasa Theory of Rūpa Gosvāmin". *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies*, vol. 6. № 1, January 1998, pp. 75-98.