

Bhuktivāda: The Threefold Process of Aesthetic Enjoyment

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Submitted: 13.06.2021.

Revised: 29.06.2021.

Accepted: 01.07.2021.

Abstract: *Traditionalist schools mostly focus on the literary text for the emergence of aesthetic pleasure. However, if literature were only based upon words and their meaning, it would be impossible to differentiate literature either from the Vedas, where word itself has primacy, or from historical discourse, where meaning has primacy. The former interpreters stated that the locus of rasa is the dramatic characters. However, the question of how the aesthetes perceive someone else's rasānubhuti is not answered in a satisfactory way by them. Bhaṭṭanāyaka shifted the discussion; focusing not on the text itself so much as the experience through the particular three-fold process. Bhaṭṭanāyaka holds that the enjoyment of rasa is a threefold process and by the first function named abhidhā, the connoisseur gets the general idea of the kāvya and nāṭya. Bhāvakatva is described something which elevates the power of generalization or sādharanikaraṇa. At this juncture of enjoyment all the barriers and limitations of place and time of the characters acting on the stage are removed and it forms a unique uniformity, which is called generalization. Once this rasa exists, savouring or bhojakatva is described as a third function. Bhaṭṭanāyaka calls this function bhogikaraṇa, transformation into enjoyment, marked by repose in one's own consciousness, which is comprised of light and bliss and is similar to the relishing of 'Para-Brahman'. Enjoyments of rasa totally belong to the onlookers or the audience. So, the path should be narrated through their psychological analysis. Hence, the locus (position) of rasa crucially shifted from the characters, to the aesthetes. In this respect all the successors follow Bhaṭṭanāyaka faithfully.*

Keywords: *Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Three-fold process, Abhidhā, Bhāvakatva, Bhojakatva.*

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There is no difficulty on the part of the aesthetics in accepting consciousness as an ontological entity. Indian tradition always provides the deeper and higher mode of experience to cognition, with reference to the reality and consciousness, acquired by the philosophers. The aesthetic experience is analysed and thus understood that it is not a physical thing but a matter of internal experience. Although the stimulus may come from the outer world, the pleasure comes from within the self or consciousness. It is the matter of experience that the pleasure does not belong to those stimulants but springs from the consciousness of the connoisseur. In terms of aesthetic pleasure, the *rasa* is the manifestation of the self and it is only proved by experience.

It seems that the theory of *rasa* has been formulated, understood and interpreted somewhat differently by different scholars over the ages. But they all somehow accepted that spirituality is the prime point in the discussion of *rasa*. At the outset we would like to mention Bharata's famous *rasasūtra*, "*vibhāvānubhāva-vyābhicāri-samyogādrasaniṣpattiḥ*". Four great exponents named Bhaṭṭalollaṭa, Bhaṭṭaśaṁkuka, Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Abhinavagupta and their respective theories named '*Utpattivāda*', '*Anumitivāda*', '*Bhuktivāda*' and '*Abhivyaktivāda*' on Bharata's *rasasūtra* have marked a unique field of academic interest by their valued expositions flavoured with different perspectives.

The literary theorist Bhaṭṭanāyaka was an innovative and important figure in the history of Sanskrit literary theory. Rhetoricians credit Bhaṭṭanāyaka with developing much of the terminology and ideas that became important to their analysis of aesthetic experience.

The theory of *dhvani* (poetic suggestion) which was advocated by Ānandavardhana was refuted by Bhaṭṭanāyaka. Thus, it may be inferred that he inhabited between the time period of Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. According to this logic he lived and worked during the period of 900AD approximately.

Bhaṭṭanāyaka's theory regarding the interpretation of Bharata-Muni's *Nāṭyassāstra* marks some revolutionary dimensions ignored or overlooked by the former interpreters. Bharata's *rasasūtra* was interpreted as figuratively and not literally by Bhaṭṭanāyaka. He is the first phenomenon who shifted the purpose of aesthetic experience to transcendental truth rather than only entertainment.

What Bhaṭṭanāyaka actually thought, however, has remained something of a mystery, as nothing he wrote has survived intact. The main text of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's named '*Hṛdayadarpaṇa*' could not found till date, but his theory is introduced through the reconstructed form depicted by *Abhinavabhārati* and *Locana*, the famous commentary of Abhinavagupta; *Kāvya prakāśa* of Mammata and *Rasagangādhara* of Jagannātha. Other rhetoricians such as Dhanika, Rujyaka, Hemachandra etc. also included these conclusions briefly in their part of poetic discussion.

Abhidhā:

Bhaṭṭanāyaka holds that the enjoyment of *rasa* is a three-fold process and by the first function named *abhidhā*, the connoisseur gets the general idea of the *kāvya* and *nāṭya*. According to Bhaṭṭanāyaka *abhidhā* indicates only the external or outer meaning of the word. In the field of *kāvya* and *nāṭya*, *abhidhā* shows literary or primary meaning of the words. This primary meaning means the spectator is acquainted with *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyābhicāribhāva*. The basic words and their meanings together build of the body of the *kāvya* and *nāṭya*. But the word itself cannot express the meaning directly. Each and every word expresses its meaning with the help of its power of expression i.e., śakti. The power that helps to reveal the principal meaning of *vācya* is called *abhidhā*. The force that helps to bring out the *lakṣyārtha* of the word is known as *lakṣaṇā* and the word power that shows the suggested meaning of the word is called *vyanjanā*. From the above discussion it may be said that the power which shows the *abhidheya* meaning of *kāvya* and *nāṭya* is known as *abhidhā*.

Bhaṭṭanāyaka holds that at the sight of the acting on the stage the spectator first gets the *abhidhā* meaning by virtue of the *abhidhā* power. This is the first step of his appreciation. When he comes in contact with *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyābhicāribhāva*, the spectator gets the general idea of the *nāṭya* first by virtue of the influence of *abhidhā*.

When the causes of the permanent moods are expressed in *kāvya* and *nāṭya*, they assume the status of *vibhāva* by giving up their formal senses. In our daily life, we may undergo various feelings like love, grief etc. These are basically common human feelings. When these feelings are conveyed to us through a *kāvya* or *nāṭya* it is a surprisingly different element. Witnessing a tragic scene in a *nāṭya*, spectators may be overwhelmed with grief. The art of the poet or the dramatist expresses the common worldly situation in an extraordinarily artistic way. Thus, common worldly things are turned into *alaukika-vibhāva*.

In the practical world *vibhāva* comes into being as a person, or a thing. Similarly, in a theatrical performance, *vibhāva* is brought into existence by the four types of *abhinaya*. They are *vācika*, *āṅgika*, *āhārya* and *sāttvika*. At the time of witnessing a drama, the spectators mind is filled with a number of emotions. In the drama Śakuntalā the central point of Duṣyanta's erotic feeling was the girl named Śakuntalā, who was a hermitage girl. Duṣyanta was charmed by the loveliness of her youth. The feelings that existed in the mind of king Duṣyanta were absolutely personal. But at the time of witnessing the scene on the stage, the spectator's mind is filled with aesthetic *sṛṅgāra-rasa*. Here, the spectator is not only moved by the loveliness of Śakuntalā, he is greatly moved at the sight of her extraordinarily aesthetic beauty created by the great dramatist. So in reference to the hero Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā is the *ālambana-vibhāva*. King Duṣyanta was charmed by seeing the unworldly beauty of Śakuntalā on the bank of the river Mālinī against the background of the calm and natural surroundings of the hermitage. Both the hero and the spectators of the drama are influenced by the environmental beauty

and surroundings. Such subjects, which evoke emotion in the mind of both the hero and the spectators, are regarded as *uddīpana-vibhāva*.

The acting by means of words, gestures and temperament is experienced by the spectators. Bharata defines the *anubhāva* as a factor which indicates a permanent mood. It is imitated through words, gestures and organic changes. It is a matter of our ordinary experience that, when things such as love, hatred and anger appear in the mind, they manifest themselves through certain bodily or organic changes or actions. These actions or changes which are regarded as ordinary effects in the common world, when presented in poetry or on stage are regarded as *anubhāva*. The secret of this transformation of a general relation into an unworldly reaction is a touch of the poet's imaginative faculty and presentation with the help of the actors acting. Thus in the drama Śakuntalā, such factors as Duṣyanta aversion to hunting or sleeplessness or paleness etc. represent *anubhāva*. There are mainly nine *sthāyibhāva* who exist permanently in every human mind. They are evoked in the mind and developed by adequate causes and in proper circumstances. When these causes and circumstances are withdrawn, they get back their *sthāyibhāva* and bring variety. The *sthāyibhāva* and the *vyābhicāribhāva*s of a theatrical performance are exhibited because of *vibhāva*.

Concerned all the rhetoricians have said that there are certain arenas which are involved in the process of *rasasvāda*, the taste of *rasa*. It is clear that the four arenas of poetic technique inevitably come up. They are-the mundane world, the world of the poet, the world of poetry, the world of the connoisseurs. The *sthāyibhāva* and *vyābhicāribhāvas* are specially brought into being by dint of *vibhāva*, whereas, *anubhāva* helps to the rise of *bhāva* after the action of *vibhāva*. Again, the *vibhāvas* of a theatrical performance are exhibited because of *abhidhā*. Thus, *abhidhā* is important in this process.

Bhāvakatva:

Bhaṭṭanāyaka now passes on to the significance of the power of *bhāvakatva*. The poet and the dramatist by virtue of a number of devices influence the mind of the spectator considerably. The acting with music, dance and other effective theatrical devices cast a spell on the mind of the perceiver free from his worldly prepositions. During the performance of literary phenomenon, he does not think of anything else of the outer world. He forgets for the time being his narrow mundane existence. His individual emotion passes away. Hence *bhāvakatva* is described something which elevates the power of generalization or *sādhāranikaraṇa*. At this juncture of enjoyment all the barriers and limitations of place and time of the characters acting on the stage are removed and it forms a unique uniformity, which is called generalization. Having influenced by *bhāvakatva*, *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *vyābhicāribhāva* and *sthāyibhāva*, make the spectator free from all personal relationships with the characters of *nāṭya* and help him consider them as general. But these cannot make him think to be associated with his own self.

Again, in the aspect of *bhāvakatva* it can be said that, as an effect of the *bhāvakatva* the actors, actresses and everything related to the literary characters give up their personal entity. In the mind of the spectator their universal form appears and they assume the status of universal hero and heroine. At the same time, a striking change in the mind of the spectator. His individual self disappears completely and it transcendent into greater self-
*‘tasmāt kāvyē doṣābhāvaguṇālamkāramayatvalakṣaṇena, nāṭyē caturvidhābhīnayarūpeṇa
niviḍanijamohasamkaṭatānivāraṇakāriṇā vibhāvādisādhāraṇīkaraṇātmanābhīdhāto
dvitīyenāṃśena bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa bhāvīyamāno raso ...’*²

The logical ideas drawn from the tradition of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy had a strong influence on the interpretation named ‘*Bhaktivāda*’ of Bhaṭṭanāyaka. To understand the exposition of Bhaṭṭanāyaka is needed to focus on the theory of *guṇa* explained by *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* philosophy. According to *Sāṃkhya* philosophy the fundamental elements that constitute life in general consist of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These three elements cause pleasure, pain and illusion or fascination in the human mind respectively. Therefore, according to doctrine of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy each and every object of the world is associated with the feeling of the pleasure, which may be pain, illusion or fascination.

The philosophers belonging to *Sāṃkhya* School describe human mind having three different characteristics. They are basically different from each other. These three aspects of the human mind are known as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The elements of *sattva* stand for sobriety and softness, the element of *rajas* distracts the human mind and the element of *tamas* makes the mind hard and devoid of responsiveness. Three *guṇas* are predominantly described by Īsvaraḥṛṣṇa in his *Sāṃkhyakārikā* within two verses.

“*sattvam laghu prakāśakamiṣṭamupaṣṭambhakam calanca rajaḥ /
Guru āvaraṇakameva tamaḥ pradīpabaccārthato vṛtīḥ //*” (SK, 13)³.

So the second is *bhāvakatva* which consists of an apparatus named *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. *Guṇalamkāra* in *kāvya* and four types of acting in *nāṭya* are the determinants of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* as they give rise to that transcendental strength. It dispels the coat of dense bewilderment (*moha*) of intellect which is resultant of *tamogūṇa*-“*niviḍanijamohasamkaṭatānivāraṇakāriṇā
vibhāvādisādhāraṇīkaraṇātmanābhīdhāto dvitīyenāṃśena bhāvakatvavyāpāreṇa bhāvīyamāno
raso...*”⁴.

Tamas is heavy, enveloping and produces delusion and bewilderment. If the ‘intellect (*buddhi*)’ remains connected with the ego, personal thoughts, prejudices and predilections, then it cannot be connected with the subject of the *nāṭya* or the *kāvya*. When individuality subsides, all the elements are transformed as non-individualistic, idealistic and are generalized to the connoisseur with greater ease. This is why *bhāvakatva* can be said to ‘bring the *rasa* into being’. It also uplifts the performances from the limitations and places them in a general paradigm beyond space-time. The effect of *tamogūṇa* and further consequences are interesting

to study.

While watching the theatrical performance of *Abhijñānaśakuntalām*, the spectators feel they are solemnly connected with the characters. Under these circumstances all sorts of pleasure or sadness affect the spectator. Slowly all the happening incidents start a passage of journey through the path of emotion and become unworldly. Gradually, all the thoughts related to the outer world are removed and only the world of the theatrical performance is alive in his mind. So, the audience becomes calm, quiet and peaceful. At this stage of mental condition, the aforementioned factors or elements become generalised. Consequently, the personal feelings of the audience have gone away. Therefore, it may be said that at the time of watching the play *Śakuntalā* the spectator may consider *Śakuntalā* as a general maiden, free from any relationship with *Duṣyanta*. But, it is impossible for him to consider her related to his own self. Likewise, *Duṣyanta* may shake off his kingly stature and may assume the status of the most ordinary hero, but the spectator by no means considers himself to be associated with such a person. Thus, *Śakuntalā* does not appear as a particular lady, belonging to a particular place and particular era. She appears as a woman in general as a lovely maiden. The love of *Duṣyanta* for her also assumes a detached nature. *Bhaṭṭanāyaka* described this as universalization. The spectators began to take *Duṣyanta* and *Śakuntalā* to be the universal loving couple and ultimately experiences *sr̥ṅgāra-rasa* out of their activities.

Bhojakatva:

Bhaṭṭanāyaka now goes on to explain the significance of the third function called *bhojakatva*. Once this *rasa* exists, savouring or *bhojakatva* is described as a third function. *Bhaṭṭanāyaka* calls this function *bhogīkaraṇa*, transformation into enjoyment, marked by repose in one's own consciousness, which is comprised of light and bliss and is similar to the relishing of 'Para-Brahman'.

As soon as the dominance of *tamogūṇa* weakens, *sattva* predominates. When *sattva* comes into authority then *rajas* and *tamas* remain associated with it, although in a mitigated form they produce diversity. *Vācaspati Mīśra* in his '*Sāṃkhyatattvakaumudī* commentary, explained this nature of the *guṇas*—“*Yathā varttitaile analavirodhinī, atha milīte sahānalena rupaparakāsalaksanaṃ kāryaṃ kurutaḥ,... evaṃ sattvarajastamāṃsi mitho virūdhānyapyanuvarttsyanti svakāryaṃ kariṣyanti ca*”.⁵

Bhaṭṭanāyaka further characterizes this experience as having three different forms—melting, spreading, or radiance, coming from the difference in three basic elements of the universe, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* mingling in the spectator's mind. *Druti* stands for melting, *vistāra* stands for expansion and *vikāsa* stands for radiance. Eclipse-retention-expression in this order the connoisseur enjoys the particular art form—“*rajastamo'nuvedhavaicitryabalād drutivistāravikāsātmanā sattvodrekaprakāśānandamayanijasamvidiśrāntilakṣaṇena*

parabrahmāsvādasavidhena bhogena param bhujyate iti".⁶

Sattva lifts the 'intellect (*buddhi*)' to a clear tranquillity. Through the *gyānavṛtti sattvagūṇa* decoded the objects or the subjective matters just as the light does. *Satsvarūpa*, *cidsvarūpa* and *ānandasvarūpa caitanya* or consciousness that was covered by the influence of *rajogūṇa* and *tamogūṇa* are revealed by *sattvagūṇa*. As long as *sattvagūṇa* manifests itself the blissful nature of the consciousness continues to develop. With the predominance of *sattva*, the connoisseur can experience the self as pure bliss, all-pervading, and devoid of all influences of misery, ego and vanity. As a result, the 'intellect (*buddhi*)' becomes stable and joyful consciousness is manifested. Such a connoisseur is liberated from the mental and physical distractions. This state of consciousness is favourable for the expression and leads to aesthetic enjoyment in the next moment when it is at its ultimate nourished state and then he can experience ultimate bliss.

The *bhojakatva* factor lifts his mind up from the mundane level to the higher level of spiritual tranquillity. At this stage his mind shines in undimmed glory and he enjoys eternal bliss. Now, the mind of the spectator becomes free from *rajas* and *tamas*. The extent of *sattva* is brought into prominence. As a result of the quality of *sattva*, the human mind becomes peaceful and quiet and reaches the stage of tranquillity. The perceiver realizes nothing but one special kind of pleasure. Thus, he enjoys supreme bliss i.e. *Brahmānanda*. When the elements of *sattva* are accompanied by *rajas* then three functions named *druti* or *vigalana* (activation) *vistāra* and *vikāsa* are formed in the mind. The quality of genuine *sattva* makes the mind elevated. Thus, *druti*, *vistāra* and *vikāsa* are the essential conditions of human consciousness. According to Bhaṭṭanāyaka the third function, i.e. *bhojakatva* is attributed to *sattva*. This is brought into prominence in the mind of the spectator by subordinating the elements, like *rajas* and *tamas*. As a result, the mind of the spectator becomes steady and his mind shines in glory, and he enjoys supreme bliss. Enjoyment of pleasure is now inevitable to be perceived as the supreme bliss of his consciousness and he enjoys infinite pleasure.

These terms *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* come originally from *Sāṃkhya* philosophy and are used extensively in *Yoga*, *Vedānta*, and also Śaivism to describe the composition of the universe and of human psychology. Thus, obviously Bhaṭṭanāyaka is indebted to the *Sāṃkhya*-School of philosophy in respect of his explanation of *bhojakatva*.

The concept of '*Para-Brahmāsvāda-savidhena*' as the experience of *rasa* is envisaged by Bhaṭṭanāyaka and then followed by the Indian rhetoricians. *Savidha* means 'similarity'. The term *Brahmānanda* carefully avoided highlighting that though *rasopabhoga* is blissful and the highest of pleasure it is still somehow different from spiritual one. The explanation uplifts *rasa* as transcendental but tries to provide a balance between life and art. Through the spiritual emphasis *bhoga* comes out as the process of experiencing the self-consciousness. *Bhojakatva* rendered accessible to connoisseurs one kind of unique absorptive experience. "*sattvodreka-*

prakāśānandamaya-nijasamvid-viśrāntilakṣaṇena parabrahmāsvādasavidhena...—these complex terms have clear precedents in transcendental bliss.

Bhaṭṭanāyaka's most famous and influential idea is that aesthetic experience is similar to the 'relishing of highest *Brahman*.' Not only are there many other ideas and terms used by Bhaṭṭanāyaka that corroborate this and have clear parallels in contemporaneous literature, but all these fit together to form a coherent vision of aesthetic experience and its relationship to the broader and transcendental vision of the world.

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