

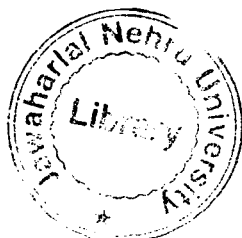
**POETRY OF LOVE AND DEVOTION: A READING OF  
SOME METAPHYSICAL POETS IN THE FRAMEWORK  
OF THE RASA THEORY**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**NAMRATA CHATURVEDI**



CENTRE FOR ENGLISH STUDIES,  
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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067  
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Centre for English Studies  
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**CERTIFICATE**

July 20, 2007

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **Poetry of Love and Devotion: A Reading of some Metaphysical Poets in the framework of the Rasa Theory**, submitted by **Namrata Chaturvedi**, of the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, under my supervision for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is the candidate's original work and has not been previously submitted in part or full, for any other degree of this or any other university.

This dissertation may be placed before the Examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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**DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE**

This dissertation entitled **“POETRY OF LOVE AND DEVOTION: A READING OF SOME METAPHYSICALS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RASA THEORY”** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university or institution.



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## INTRODUCTION

The question of “What is beautiful in art?” is one of the primary concerns of aesthetics. There are many answers to this question that depend on cultural, religious and ethnic contexts. In Western aesthetics, from Plato to T.S.Eliot, writers and critics have tried to provide satisfactory answers to this question. While Plato dismissed poets for being “purveyors of lies”, Aristotle defended poetry by giving it the ability to reach closest to “truth”. Aristotle’s explanation of “mimesis” as the power of art was developed, amongst others, by Dr. Johnson in the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Johnson, in the Neo Classical fashion placed emphasis upon imitation but differed in a major way from the neo classicists in rejecting the validity of imitating the classics. For him, imitation of nature was important. Before him Pope had elaborated on this essential relationship between nature and art:

First follow Nature, and your judgment frame  
By her just standard, which is still the same:  
Unerring Nature.. .  
Life, Force, and beauty must to all import,  
At once the source, and end, and test of Art

For Johnson, Shakespeare was a great playwright because “His [Shakespeare's] characters are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated.. .In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a specie.”<sup>2</sup> While Shakespeare had the genius to observe and represent the general characteristics of a species rather than the particulars, the metaphysicals were at fault for being unable to do this.

“If the father of criticism [Aristotle] has rightly demonstrated poetry.. .an imitative art, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets for they cannot be said to have imitated anything; they



neither copied nature nor life, neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect....Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. . . .Their attempts were always analytick: they broke every image into fragments, and could no more represent by their slender conceits and laboured particularities the prospects of nature or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.”<sup>3</sup>

Johnson’s aesthetics is also ethical in that he recognizes the improvement of human nature as the goal of art.

“It is justly considered as the greatest excellency of art, to imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation: greater care is still required in representing life, which is so often discoloured by passion or deformed by wickedness.. . .Vice, for vice is necessary to be shewn, should always disgust, nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united to it, as to reconcile it to the mind.”<sup>4</sup>

The understanding of beauty in the seventeenth century incorporated both divine and physical attributes of it. When courtly love poetry was being written in England, it followed in the Petrarchan tradition where the woman’s beauty was idealized in terms of its physical perfection. Also, courtly love poetry presented the lady as a cunning and unyielding mistress thereby adding wit to charm. In a poem describing his mistress, Crashaw talks about his beloved in terms of her ideal beauty that is independent of worldly accessories like blush, jewellery, fancy garments etc. Metaphysical poetry explores beauty in its different forms and appeal as enchanting, unyielding, mysterious, divine and perfect.

The seventeenth century was a period when poetry that is now characterized as “metaphysical” was being written on the Continent, flourishing under various names as “Concettismo”, “Marinissimo” and “Gongorismo”. Mazzeo argues that the art of juxtaposing incongruities originated from the philosophical belief in the “theory of correspondences”. Giordano Bruno, the first critic to present a conceptual framework for the poetics of the “concettismo”, the Italian equivalent of the “metaphysical”, argued against the Petrarchan notion of amorous love directed towards personal beauty and substituted for it the idea of “heroic love” directed toward the universe. He explained this as the gift the poet and the philosopher have for perceiving the unity of dissimilars, or for making heterogeneous analogies. The theorists of the conceit in the seventeenth century like Baltasar Gracian in Spain and Emmanuele Tesauro in Italy developed this model for the poet as one who sees and expresses universal correspondences in his poetry in their poetics of “concettismo”. Mazzeo points out:

“One of the cardinal tenets of the critics of the conceit is that the conceit itself is the expression of a correspondence which actually obtains between objects and that, since the universe is a network of universal correspondences or analogies which unite all the apparently heterogeneous elements of experience, the most heterogeneous of metaphors are justifiable. Thus the theorists of the conceit justify the predilection of the “school of wit” for recondite and apparently strange analogies by maintaining that even the more violent couplings of dissimilars were simply expressions of the underlying unity of all things.”<sup>5</sup>

Mazzeo has analysed many popular modern theories of Metaphysical poetry and concludes that Bruno’s understanding is most convincing. One modern theory traces the origins of metaphysical poetry to the Petrarchan and troubadour conventions. Another theory makes connections between the metaphysical style and Ramistic logic. Another group of scholars relate the metaphysical style to the baroque. Amongst the modern theories the most widespread theory is the one called the “emblem theory” that traces the

similarities between the emblem and the conceit, concluding the latter to be a result of the emblem movement.

Amongst the western theorists there are disagreements and arguments relating to the style of metaphysical poetry. The Indian aesthetic framework provides scope for understanding and analyzing both the theme and style of seventeenth century poetry. The 'unified sensibility' of metaphysical poetry can be lucidly understood in the framework of the *rasa* theory. The concept of *rasa* takes into account both emotion and intellect.

It is described thus by Abhinavagupta: "*vibhavanubhava vyabhichari samyogada rasanispattih*"<sup>6</sup>. That is, "from a combination of determinants, consequents and transitory mental states, *rasa* is experienced". In this, *rasa* is different from Aristotle's definition of catharsis. *Rasa* is not evoked and then expunged from the system, but is only realized or experienced. The *sthayibhavas* (permanent mental states) in the reader/spectator are not external emotions but are stored as *vrittis* (impressions) in his/her mind (*chitt*). When a spectator sees a performance, depending on the *bhavas* being enacted on stage, certain *vrittis* are disturbed and accordingly, through a combination of the other factors, the corresponding *rasa* is realized. Bharata in *Natyasastra* has broadly categorized *bhavas* into primarily nine types and correspondingly there are nine *rasas*. These are as follows:

1. Karuna Rasa
2. Hasya Rasa
3. Shringara Rasa
4. Vira Rasa
5. Adbhuta Rasa
6. Bhayanak Rasa
7. Bibhatsa Rasa
8. Shant Rasa

The spectator or reader is understood as *sahrdaya* or one, who possesses heart. It means the individual should have the capability of aesthetic appreciation so that when a poem is read, the suggestive aspect of language is grasped by the reader who is then temporarily raised from his limited ego and his consciousness is heightened to the level of *ananda* (pleasure). The concept of pleasure here is in the sense of the pleasure of self-realization. When a *sahrdaya* is engaged in relishing *rasa*, he/she is closest to self realization as consciousness is free from all worldly attachments and is involved in the contemplation of the moment itself. In this state, the individual is more than his/her limited self and closest to self realization.

In this understanding of the aesthetic process, the *rasa* theory takes into account the individual subjectivities of the readers. Every individual has certain *samskaras* stored in his/her mind (*chitt*). These *samskaras* are past impressions that have accumulated over the course of successive births. According to the dominant *samskaras*, the *bhavas* will be stirred and accordingly, the *rasa*. For instance, a reader may be moved by erotic verse, while another may have a dominance of *soka* (grief) and therefore have a liking for sorrowful poetry. Unlike western criticism, there is no disjunction in *rasa* theory between thought and emotion, mind and heart and therefore, none between male readers and those of the *fair sex*<sup>7</sup>.

Metaphysical poetry is suggestive in its use of poetic figures and conceits. Modern poetry in its suggestiveness comes close to this kind of poetry. Different periods in literature have expressed different understandings of poetry as well as the figure of the poet. The Neo Classics held up the ancients as exemplars of perfection and for them they were the models to be emulated. An essential quality in poets was wit, that accompanied with a sound knowledge of the ancients would reach the standards of poetry. In the Romantic period, imagination replaced reason as epistemology and emotion was given an important place in poetry. Wordsworth gave the often quoted definition of poetry as a “spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions”. In the Indian framework, however, poetry is full of emotion but is not just a spontaneous overflow, but a meditated and practiced form. The

faculty of *abhyasa* (practice) is recognized as one of the attributes of a poet. Pravas Chaudhury says:

“Poetry is an expression of emotions with this important qualification: that it is not self-expression of the poet nor a blind process, and, so, poetry is not so pure and spontaneous a thing as some English romantics would have it. The poet can depict a human emotion, e.g. love, by describing certain human characteristics acting in certain situations. These objective correlates of the particular kind of emotions are generalized objects in the sense that they are not actual things in time and place but ideal contents that are brought before the mind by skillful description, and, so, they do not represent any actual emotion in the poet’s mind nor do they arouse these in the reader’s heart, both of whom contemplate the imaginary objects and the associated generic emotion. Such an active contemplation and enjoyment of an emotion in poetry, instead of a blind and passive suffering of it in actuality, is called *rasa* in Sanskrit. It implies neither an activity of its own kind that is neither ordinary feeling nor ordinary cognition of a feeling but a synthesis of both on a different plane where we have a contemplative enjoyment of an emotion.”<sup>8</sup>

The aesthetic experience is explained in Indian poetics as being special, being accompanied by *alaukika ananda* (transcendent charm). The emotions evoked in poetry are special and are not dependent on real life emotions. During the course of enjoying a work of art, the individual’s consciousness is raised and he is in the midst of a special experience. Thampi argues against the precepts of naturalism that try to equate real life emotions with those expressed in art.

“[Further], it is because of the awareness of the demarcation between art and life that discussion on the paradox of tragic delight did not assume prominence in India. The question of why tragedy delights arises from certain fallacious assumptions about the nature and function of poetry. It

plagues all those who are victims of what may be called the naturalistic fallacy, ie., the belief that the function of poetry is to incite real life emotions in the reader. In the West it began with Plato with his notion of poetry feeding and watering the passions. Among the Indian theorists also there were some who considered that *rasas* like *karuna*, the pathetic, evokes sorrow in the mind of the reader. The Central Tradition, however, considers that such a view is untenable; our experience contradicts it. These theorists start from the premise that the feelings evoked in poetic experience are *alaukika*, non-ordinary, and therefore there is no question of sorrow. 'Rasa is so called because it is relished'. 'Drama always gives delight to the spectator, never sorrow.'”<sup>9</sup>

The poets I have taken up for detailed study are: John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughn and Richard Crashaw. Amongst the canonical metaphysical poets, I have deliberately left out Andrew Marvell for two reasons. One, I wanted to focus upon distinct styles and therefore choosing one out of Donne and Marvell seemed reasonable. This is not to say that their styles are the same, but in love poetry, Donne's style is representative of a kind of poetry. And in religious poetry, Herbert, Vaughn and Crashaw have distinct styles of their own. Secondly, while dealing with love poetry, the fabric would have become too wide with the inclusion of Marvell.

In Chapter 1, I have briefly examined the most popular Western approaches to Metaphysical poetry starting with Dryden's criticism up to T.S. Eliot's views regarding it. Through this the split in western criticism between reason and imagination is analysed. I have concluded the chapter with an assessment of the *rasa* theory and its suitability as a valid framework for analyzing seventeenth century poetry.

In Chapter 2, I have dealt with the concept of *rasa dhvani* as elaborated by Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. The special quality of poetic language is explained in the context of metaphysical poetry for its suggestiveness and use of conceits. In the context of the treatment of the language of metaphysical poetry, the concept of *dhvani* in

Sanskrit aesthetics explains the power of suggestion of poetic language that makes it unique and different. Anandavardhana in *Dhvanayaloka* expounded on the concept of *dhvani* in poetry and how, therefore poetic language is special.

Chapter 3 briefly elaborates on the nature of *rasa* with reference to different positions taken in its exegesis by Indian poetics.

Chapters 4 and 5 are case studies of different metaphysical poems divided into religious poetry and love poetry respectively. Religious poems are analysed for evoking *rasas* like *karuna* and *shanta*. Love poetry of seventeenth century is discussed in the framework of the *shrinagra rasa*.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I refer specifically to Dr. Johnson for the reason that his indictment of metaphysical poetry has been considered as a formidable definition of the 'conceit' as well has been taken as a point of departure for the criticism of this body of poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Kallich, Martin. 'Samuel Johnson's principles of Criticism and Imlac's "Dissertation upon Poetry"', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.25, No.1. (Autumn,1966).p.74

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp.73-74.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.75.

<sup>5</sup> Mazzeo, Joseph Anthony. 'A Critique of Some Modern Theories of Metaphysical Poetry', *Modern Philology*, Vol.50, No.2. (Nov.,1952). pp.88-89

<sup>6</sup> Gnoli, Raniero. *Aesthetic Experience According To Abhinavagupta*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1985.p.25.

<sup>7</sup> This points to Dryden's indictment of Metaphysical poets where he says their wit perplexes the minds of women rather than pleasing them.

<sup>8</sup> Chaudhury, Pravas Jivan. 'The Expressive Theory of Poetry in the Light of Indian Poetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.24, No.1, Supplement to the Oriental Issue: The Aesthetic Attitude in Indian Aesthetics. (Autumn,1965). p.206.

<sup>9</sup> Thampi, G.B. Mohan. "'Rasa" as Aesthetic Experience', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.24, No.1, Oriental Aesthetics. (Autumn, 1965). p.77. Thampi includes Bharata, Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta in the Central Tradition. The primary texts of which are: i) *Natyasastra* by Bharata ii) *Dhvanayaloka* by Anandavardhana iii) *Abhinavabharati* by Abhinavagupta iv) *Locana*, commentary on *Dhvanayaloka* by Abhinavagupta.



## METAPHYSICAL POETRY-ENGLISH CRITICISM

The poetry of seventeenth-century English poets has been named 'Metaphysical poetry', an epithet given by Dr. Johnson based on Dryden's analysis of John Donne's poetry. Samuel Johnson in his *Life of Cowley* points out:

"About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets"<sup>1</sup>

This observation is based on Dryden's remarks on Donne, in the 1693 essay on the 'Original and Progress of Satire':

"He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love. In this... Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault."<sup>2</sup>

Pope, who chronologically comes between Dryden and Johnson, is reported by Spence to have said that "Cowley, as well as Davenant, borrowed his metaphysical style from Donne". Helen Gardner points out that Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649) is the only writer known before Dryden to have spoken of a "metaphysical school" in a letter to Arthur Johnston (written some time before 1637) wherein he speaks of poets who make use of 'Metaphysical *Ideas* and *Scholastical Quiddities*'(emphasis in the original)

"In vain have some men of late, transformers of everything, consulted upon her [poetry's] reformation, and endeavoured to abstract her to metaphysical ideas and scholastic quiddities, denuding her of her own habits and those ornaments with which she hath amused the world some thousand years. Neither do I think that a good piece of poesy which Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Petrarch, Ronsard, Boscan, Garcillaso, if they were

alive and had that language, could not understand, and reach the sense of the writer.”

In these comments on seventeenth century poetry, it is distinguished from other kinds of poetry for its emphasis on “metaphysical ideas”, “speculations of philosophy” and “scholastic quiddities”. In their style of verse, most seventeenth century poets used conceits and unique imagery to convey their thoughts in a complex structure. This can be marked in both the religious as well as the secular poetry of poets like John Donne, Richard Crashaw, George Herbert, Thomas Traherne. Johnson, after disagreeing with Pope’s definition of wit as “what oft was thought but never so well expressed” critiques the use of conceits by the metaphysical poets thus:

“If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit which is at once natural and new, that which though not obvious is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. But Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. **The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.**” (emphasis added)<sup>3</sup>

Hazzlitt commented thus on Donne, Davies, Crashaw and others:

“[they] not merely mistook learning for poetry-but they thought anything was poetry that differed from ordinary prose and the natural expression of things, by being intricate, far-fetched, and improbable. Their style was not so properly learned as metaphysical; that is to say, whenever, by any violence done to their ideas they could make out an abstract likeness or possible ground of comparison, they forced the image, whether learned or vulgar, into the service of the Muses.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus from Dryden to Johnson, English critics have raised objections to the style of Metaphysical poetry. The objections range from that of the disparate ideas being “yoked together by violence” and obscure conceits that “perplexe[s] the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when [they]he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love”. The latter statement, besides being an unfair and incomplete assessment of seventeenth century love poetry is problematic in another way. The presumption of the writer here is that women are basically incapable of any speculation and only simple and direct amorous verses are suitable for them. The satirist here is convinced of the inability of women readers in the field of appreciating the suggestive quality of metaphysical poetry because love poetry should ideally engage the heart and heart and mind are clearly binary oppositions. This statement is also representative of an aspect of Western philosophy that recognizes oppositions in epistemology: heart/mind, intellect/emotion. This is a feature of Western philosophy that was reflected in Western criticism too. The “dissociation of sensibility” that had set in English poetry was resolved by the metaphysical poets when they were engaged in finding “verbal equivalents for states of mind and feeling.”

Further, in this rather strong indictment of metaphysical poets, Johnson criticizes their use of conceits for being unnatural and their learning as merely instructive, having no place in poetry. However, in this indictment, an important aspect of their poetry is

misinterpreted. Most of the seventeenth century poets were scholars of divinity, they were not mere poets writing to please or entertain, but in their religious verse especially, they were expressing their ecstasies of religious experience.

George Herbert (1593-1633): studied at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, made Reader in Rhetoric in 1618, Public Orator to the University (1620-27), April 1630 was presented the rectorship of Bemerton and was ordained a priest in September 1630. he completed *The Temple* while at Bemerton and sent the poems to his friend Nicholas Ferrar, the founder of the religious community at Little Gidding, in Huntingdonshire. *The Temple* published at Cambridge a few months after Herbert died on March 1, 1633.

Henry Vaughan (1621/22-1695): educated at Jesus College, Oxford, practiced medicine at Newton on the river Usk for most of his life, and wrote and translated medical and medical- alchemical works; composed and translated various prose works, including essays from Plutarch, a life of Paulinus of Nola, and religious meditations. Wrote two volumes of religious poetry (besides secular verse) *Silex Scintillans* , in whose preface he owes his religious feelings to the influence of Herbert, “blessed man, Mr. George Herbert, whose holy *life* and *verse* gained so many pious *Converts* ( of whom I am the least)”.

Richard Crashaw (1612/13-1649): educated at Charterhouse, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 1635 was elected to a fellowship at Peterhouse, Cambridge ( like Pembroke, a High- Church college). In 1634, published *Epigrammatum sacrorum liber*, a book of Latin epigrams on scriptural subjects. Following years taught and pursued poetry, music, and painting, and served in some official capacity at Little Saint Mary’s, Cambridge, perhaps as priest; was also a friend of Nicholas Ferrar and a frequent visitor to the Little Gidding religious community.

Thomas Traherne (1637/38-1674): educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, was ordained an Anglican priest in October 1660 and in 1661 was presented to the rectorship at

Credenhill in Herefordshire. 1667 onwards, was in London as chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Keeper of the Great Seal, and later as vicar at Teddington in Middlesex.<sup>5</sup>

Keeping these biographical details in mind, it is not difficult to understand why structures of thought and corresponding imagery were not simplistic but slightly complex. In the context of Indian poetry, there is a body of verse known as Bhakti and Sufi literature that follows complex structures of thought and expressions. For instance, in the poetry of Kabir, there are inverse images used, his linguistic style is known as “*ulat bamsi*” (inverted flute). These structures of thought are not employed to confuse or baffle the readers (even if they be of the *fair sex*, in the context of secular verse as pointed out by Dryden), but are consequences of philosophical meditations of the poets. These expressions are to be understood through the threefold process of *abhidha*, *bhavakatva* and *bhajakatva*. For instance, in the following lines from Kabir, there is a complex layer of meaning that can be understood by unraveling the conceit.

*Kabir, when the Sabda has entered the body,  
The lute resounds without strings.  
Inside and outside, it pervades all  
And all wanderings are over.*<sup>6</sup>

In the poetry of Raidas, Andal or John Donne, there are images of love used to express the poets-lovers’ love for god as beloved. In the Bhakti tradition, there is a body of love poetry called *Madhurya Bhakti* where God is represented as beloved and the poet as lover.<sup>7</sup>

Or John Donne in **Holy Sonnet ( Batter My Heart)**:

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you  
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee, ‘and bend

Your force, to break, blowe, burn and make me new.  
I, like an usurpt towne, to 'another due,  
Labour to 'amit you, but Oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,  
Yet dearely' I love you, and would be lov'd faine,  
**But am betroth'd unto your enemy,**  
**Divorce mee,** 'untie, or breake that knot againe,  
**Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I**  
Except you 'enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
**Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.**  
( emphasis added)

Henry Vaughan in '**The Night**' makes use of conceits:

...  
Most blest believer he!  
Who in that land of darkness and blind eyes  
Thy long expected healing wings could see,  
When thou didst rise,  
**And what can never more be done,**  
**Did at midnight speak with the Sun!**  
(emphasis added)

Dr. Johnson's critique, almost dismissal, of the whole body of seventeenth-century poetry is based on his understanding of "natural wit" that he finds missing in metaphysical poetry. However, the body of seventeenth century verse stands out for the same virtue that Johnson, and before him, Dryden considered a demerit. In this kind of poetry, "the most heterogeneous ideas are not yoked together by violence", but a refined structure of thought is created and expressed through a complex structure of imagery. In Vaughan's poem, there is a certain degree of knowledge expected from the reader in being able to

understand the pun on “Sun” in the couplet. In Matthew 4: 2, it is said: “ But unto you that fear my Name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” As a reader, this prior knowledge, or familiarity with the depiction of Christ as Son/Sun will enable the reader to appreciate the ecstasy conveyed by the poet. Similarly, in Donne’s sonnet, it is not forced imagery that he has employed, but a unique way (as far as English poetry is concerned) of conveying the dual aspect of divine as well as sensuous love. In the context of Indian Bhakti and Sufi poetry, these structures are not uncommon. Mira’s expression of love for her beloved is in terms of secular love:

“ *Aisi lagi lagan, Mira ho gayi magan,  
Wo to gali gali Hari gun gaane lagi,  
Mahlon mein pali, ban ke jogan chali,  
Mira rani diwani kahane lagi*”

Such is the flame of love, that Mira has lost her senses  
She now wanders the streets singing the praises of her Lord,  
Raised in palaces she has now become a hermit  
Mira the queen is now called Mira the obsessed lover.<sup>8</sup>

The conscious use of language in seventeenth century poetry can be traced to the last decade of the sixteenth century where the cry was for ‘More matter and less words’. In prose, the Silver Latin writers, Seneca and Tacitus replaced Cicero as a model. In recommending Sir Henry Savile’s translation of Tacitus in 1591, Anthony Bacon commends Tacitus because he “hath written the most matter with the best conceit in the fewest words of any Historiographer... But he is hard. *Difficilia quae pulchra*; the second reading will please thee more than the first, and the third than the second.” Chapman in his preface to *Ovid’s Banquet of the Sense* (1595) considers difficulty a merit in poetry and says: “That poetry should be as perval as oratory and plainness her special ornament, were the plain way to barbarism.” Helen Gardner further points out<sup>9</sup>: “What came to be called by its denigrators the ‘strong-lined’ style had its origins in this general desire at the close of Elizabeth’s reign for concise expression, achieved by an elliptical syntax, and

accompanied by a staccato rhythm in prose and a certain deliberate roughness in versification in poetry. Along with this went admiration for difficulty in the thought... Jasper Mayne, in his elegy on Donne, put his finger on one of the delights of reading “strong-lined” verse when he said:

“Wee are thought wits, when ‘tis understood.”

Referring to the often coterie audience of seventeenth century poets, Gardner points out:

“It makes demands upon the reader and challenges him to make it out. It does not attempt to attract the lazy and its lovers have always a certain sense of being a privileged class, able to enjoy what is beyond the reach of vulgar wits... [Their] poems passed from hand to hand in manuscript. This is a source of both weakness and strength. At times the writing had the smell of a coterie, the writer performing with a self-conscious eye on his clever readers. But at its best it has the ease and artistic sincerity which comes from being able to take for granted the understanding of the audience for whom one writes.”<sup>10</sup>

T.S Eliot in ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ (1921) defends the poetic style of seventeenth century poets as also reexamines the epithet “metaphysical poets” attributed to them by Johnson. Quoting the following quatrains from Herbert’s ‘Ode’:

So when from hence we shall be gone,  
And be no more, nor you, nor I,  
As one another’s mystery,  
Each shall be both, yet both but one.

This said, in her up-lifted face,  
Her eyes, which did that beauty crown,  
Were like two starrs, that having faln down,



Look up again to find their place:

While such a moveless silent peace  
Did seize on their becalmed sense,  
One would have thought some influence  
Their ravished spirits did possess

Eliot goes on to say:

“There is nothing in these lines (with the possible exception of the stars, a simile not at once grasped, but lovely and justified ) which fits Johnson’s general observations on the metaphysical poets in his essay on Cowley. A good deal resides in the richness of association which is at the same time borrowed from and given to the word ‘becalmed’; but the meaning is clear, the language simple and elegant. It is to be observed that the language of these poets is as a rule simple and pure; in the verse of George Herbert this simplicity is carried as far as it can go- a simplicity emulated without success by numerous modern poets. The *structure* of the sentences, on the other hand, is sometimes far from simple, but this is not a vice; it is a fidelity to thought and feeling... If so shrewd and sensitive (though so limited) a critic as Johnson failed to define metaphysical poetry by its faults, it is worth while to inquire whether we may not have more success by adopting the opposite method: by assuming that the poets of the seventeenth century ( up to the Revolution ) were the direct and normal development of the precedent age; and, without prejudicing their case by the adjective ‘metaphysical’, consider whether their virtue was not something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared.... Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect,

in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. Hence we get something that looks very much like the conceit- we get, in fact, a method curiously similar to that of the 'metaphysical poets', similar also in its use of obscure words and of simple phrasing."

Eliot points to "dissociation of sensibility" as a feature of English poetry following that of the seventeenth century poets. By this term he means a split in the sensibility between reason and imagination or thought and emotion. The seventeenth century poets showed a 'unified sensibility when they were "[at best] engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling." <sup>11</sup>

The *rasa* theory provides ample scope for both explaining and understanding this unified sensibility. The enjoyment of *rasa* in art is both an emotional as well as intellectual process. In the system of explaining aesthetic appreciation, the *rasa* theory points to the *sahradaya*, an ideal reader/viewer. The meaning of *sahradaya* as "[one] being possessed of heart" refers to the aesthetic capability of an individual. As pointed out by Professor Gnoli: "individuals possessed of aesthetic sensibility are called possessed of heart, those who have the consent of the heart ( *sahradaya*, *hrdayasamvadabhak* )<sup>12</sup>. Bharata says:

*Yo 'rtho hrdayasamvadi tasya bhavo rasodbhavah I*  
*Sariram vyapyate tena suskam kastham ivagnina II*  
[N.S, VII, v.10]<sup>13</sup>

"The faculty of self- identification with the events represented [the Determinants etc.] demands that the mirror of the mind should be made completely clear, by means of repeated acquaintance with and practice of poetry. The possessed of heart, those who possess the consent of their own hearts, are they who have this faculty. For it has been said: 'the tasting of that which finds the consent of the heart arouses the Rasa. The body is pervaded by it, as dry wood by fire'" The process of aesthetic appreciation is also known as 'sadhanikarana' or generalization. In this state, the

reader's sensibility is unified with that of the poet which in turn is unified with the imagined situation or emotion in the poem. In this state, the consciousness of the reader is independent from his/her individuality and one with the emotion of the poem. Therefore, reading a poem is not merely a case of reading it emotionally or intellectually, but spiritually which is a combination of both. This process of 'sadharaṅikarāna' applies not just to the reader but to the poet as well. Gnoli says: "Rasa belongs, in reality, to the poet alone; it is nothing but his "generalized" consciousness." Comparing the poet with *prajāpati*, the Creator, Abhinavagupta points out in *Abhinavabhāratī*, 1, 4: "Like the Creator the poet creates for himself a world according to his wish. Indeed, he is amply endowed with the power of creating manifold, extraordinary things, originating thanks to the favour of the Deity, the Supreme Vocality, called *pratibha*, and continually shining within his heart."<sup>14</sup>

T.S Eliot in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' describes the unified sensibility of the metaphysical poets thus:

"The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality...

There remains to define this process of depersonalization.... It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I therefore invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulfur dioxide....When the two gases...are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulfurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present ; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of the platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man

himself; but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.”<sup>15</sup>

Applying this understanding of aesthetic experience (and also poetic creation) to seventeenth-century poetry resolves the disjunction between reason and emotion, and also explains the unified sensibility that this body of poetry represents. Also, the objections to the use of conceits can be rendered uncalled for when one analyses the choice of words as “verbal equivalent(s) for states of mind and feeling”.

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The “dissociation of sensibility” that set in post seventeenth century can be analyzed in the background of the Platonic and Aristotelian response to poetry. Plato’s objections against poetry were based on his imputing the responsibility of arousing emotions to poetry. Emotions, according to him, were weakening and hence not suitable for citizens of the Republic. Plato’s dismissal was refuted by Aristotle’s defense of poetry wherein he explained the “catharsis” of pity and fear as ideal remedies for an individual’s consciousness [akin to the concept of *chikitsa* in Indian thought]. He further upheld “imitation” as a virtue that brings one closer to Reality, defending poetry on the same grounds on which Plato criticized it. The difference of opinion between Plato and Aristotle is related to the disjunction of the “unified sensibility”, that is between thought and emotion. Following Metaphysical poetry appeared the body of Neo Classical poetry that clearly showed a bias for reason in thought and literature. The Augustan Age was the period of thinkers like Locke, Hobbes and Newton and science was guiding the thought of “wits”. The next period belonged to Romantic poetry where the bias was for emotion. Wordsworth defined poetry as “a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions.” The disjunction seems clear and etched further with the progress of poetry down the ages. The difference in Platonic and Aristotelian thought as regards poetry is reflected in this “dissociation of sensibility” as pointed out by T.S. Eliot.



According to Aristotle, poets are endowed with the faculty of “imagination” that enables them to come closer to “truth”. In the Indian tradition, poets are recognized to have an innate “*pratibha*”, “a sort of unborn genius, imagination or quick-wittedness, etc. conceived as the primary cause of excellence in literary art, as the very seed of poetry”<sup>16</sup>. Before Acharya Abhinavagupta used the term, it had been in use in Indian poetics by other scholars viz. Bhamaha (7<sup>th</sup> century), Dandin (7<sup>th</sup> century) and Vamana (8<sup>th</sup> century). Rajasekhara in *Kavyamimamsa* describes two attributes of *pratibha*: *karyatri pratibha* that has the sense of creative imagination, genius, inspiration and *bhavayatri pratibha* that refers to aesthetic sensibility which brings about the manifestation of *rasa*. The master of Abhinavagupta, Bhatta Tota defined *pratibha* thus:

*Prajna navanavollekhasalini pratibha mata I*  
*Tadanuprananajivadvarnananipunah kavih II*  
 ( *Kavyakautuka* )

“Intuition is a form of intuitive consciousness, *prajna*, which is an inexhaustible source of new forms. It is by virtue of this intuition alone that one deserves the title of ‘poet’, of one, that is, who is skilful to express.”<sup>17</sup>

Abhinavagupta, in *Tantraloka*, XI defines *pratibha* thus:

*Yatha yatha cakrtakam tadrupam atiricyate I*  
*Tatha tatha camatkarataratamyam vibhavyate II*  
*Adyamayiyavarnantarnimagne cottarottare I*  
*Samkete purvapurvamsamajjane pratibhabhidah II*  
*Adyodrekamahattve 'pi pratibhatmani nisthitah I*  
*Dhruvam kavivavaktrivasalitam yanti sarvatah II*  
*Yavad dhamani samketanikarakalanojjhiteI*  
*Visrantas cinmaye kim kim na veti na karoti cai II*

“In the majority of men it does not succeed in liberating itself from the chain of relationships and practical interests which condition and constrict it, but, in the poet, it burns with a purified light- to shine out finally in all its fullness in the intuition of the saints.”<sup>18</sup>

The model of a poet in Indian thought is that of a learned man, one conversant with *sastras* and possessing the ability to make his knowledge accessible, lest this knowledge as Bhamaha says ( in *Kavyalamkara* 1.3) [be] “like the pauper’s charitableness”<sup>19</sup>. The seventeenth century poets were, as observed earlier, men of learning. In writing their verses they were bringing to the readers expressions of their spiritual yearning and crises (eg. Donne’s ‘Batter my Heart’). George Herbert, a few weeks before his death sent the following message to Nicholas Ferrar along with his manuscript of *The Temple*:

“Sir, I pray deliver this little book to my dear brother Ferrar, and tell him he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master; in whose service I have now found perfect freedom; desire him to read it: and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor soul, let it be made public; if not let him burn it; for I and it are less than the least of God’s mercies.”<sup>20</sup>

The Indian literary framework, it can be argued can accommodate the special status of the poet as well as his poetry. The *rasa* theory accounts for the nature of metaphysical poetry from the point of view of the poet (*pratibha*) as well as the reader (*sahrdaya*).

The language of Metaphysical poetry is not deliberately obscure as some critics have pointed out, by special and unique. Its distinctiveness lies not merely in the use of startling conceits, but in being suggestive and symbolic. In Indian poetics, not only does the poet have an innate *pratibha* but the poetic language also has an innate suitability to the theme and is highly suggestive. Three levels of poetic language have been marked: *ibhidha*, *laksana* and *vyanjana*. In reading a body of symbolic verse like the

metaphysical poetry, the reader/critic has to take these aspects of language into consideration and thereby analyse the conceits for their appropriateness or otherwise.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Gardner, Helen (ed.). *The Metaphysical Poets*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957. p.15
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.15.
- <sup>3</sup> Kapoor, Kapil and Kapoor, Ranga. *Canonical Texts of English Literary Criticism*.
- <sup>4</sup> Warren, Austin. 'Crashaw's Reputation in the Nineteenth Century', *PMLA*, Vol. 51, No.3. (Sep.,1963), p.769.
- <sup>5</sup> As pointed out in brief biographical details of these poets by Gardner, Helen in op.cit.
- <sup>6</sup> Saraswati, Baidyanath. 'Orality and its Complexity' in Kaushal, Molly(ed.). *Chanted Narratives*. New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2001. p.21
- <sup>7</sup> Chaturvedi, Namrata. 'Bhakti Literature as a Cohesive Force in Indian Literature', *Pratibha India*, Vol. XXIII, No.2, p.41
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.40. Translated by the writer herself.
- <sup>9</sup> Gardner, Helen. Op.cit.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.17
- <sup>11</sup> Eliot, T.S.
- <sup>12</sup> Gnoli, Raneiro. *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1985. p.XLIII
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. p.XLIII
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. XLVIII
- <sup>15</sup> Malloch, A.E. 'The Unified Sensibility and Metaphysical Poetry', *College English*, Vol.15, No.2. (Nov.,1953). p.95
- <sup>16</sup> Gnoli. op.cit. p.L
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.LI
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.LI
- <sup>19</sup> Kapoor, Kapil. *Literary Theory*. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press Private Limited, 1998. p. 65
- <sup>20</sup> Cesare, Mario A Di. Op.cit. pp.242-243.



## THE LANGUAGE OF METAPHYSICAL POETRY-RASA DHVANI

Aesthetic experience is not just a simple emotional response that involves only categorization into the corresponding *rasas*, but is a process that involves both the play of emotion and intellection. At the time of savouring the *rasa* of a poetic/dramatic work, the reader/viewer's consciousness is lifted from its state of stupor (the layer of *maya* covering his soul that in turn leads to *avidya* (ignorance)) and taken to the plane of generalization (*sadharanikarana*) where it merges with the soul of poetry/drama and attains knowledge.

In analysing poetry, one has to look at *kavyajnana*, that is, knowledge of the world being established through words (*abda*) which is known as *abdikajnana*. In poetry, the aural (*sravya*) senses are evoked and meaning is established through a play of words. Bhartrhari argued that the world is a linguistic construct (*vikalpa*). Words can lead to the knowledge of objects not physically present, for example, an image like "rabbit horns" leads to a certain kind of knowledge, wherein imagination comes into force. One can argue that in reality "rabbit horns" do not exist, but literary language is not dependent upon physical corroboration, and this image, when used in a poem, leads to certain knowledge depending on the context. For instance, in Donne's "Elegie to His Mistress Going to Bed", the comparison of the lady to "America, my new-found-land" is a conceit. In a conceit, dissimilar objects are compared, so that the subject is compared to a quality of an object that it does not conventionally share, but through this process certain qualities of both are revealed.

O my America! My new-found-land,  
My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,  
My myne of precious stones, my Emperie,  
How blest am I in this discovering thee!

When the mistress is compared to America, two aspects related to America are simultaneously evoked. One, it is a newly discovered land (at the time of the composition

of the poem) and, the attitudes related to colonisation (refer to the second line). In the context of the poem, this linguistic construct leads to an external knowledge of America's colonisation as well as to an internal knowledge of the working of the lover's mind (he wants to possess his lady) and his passion and desires.

While reading metaphysical poetry, the reader has to exercise his mind in understanding the meaning of the conceit. Bhattanayaka has pointed out that in *sravya* compositions, objects are cognized through the three-fold power of words:

1. *abhidha* (denotation)
2. *bhavana* (generalization, *sadharanikarana*)
3. *bhogatva* (empathy, *samvedana*)<sup>1</sup>

In *rasanubhuti*, the words of the poetic composition lead to a re-cognition of *bhavana* through the process of generalization and in turn, the corresponding *rasa* is evoked. For instance, in the above example, when the reader comes across these four lines, a process of generalization begins that leads eventually to the savouring of the *shrngara* (erotic) *rasa* of the poem. When the first line is read, "O my America, My new found land!" in the reader's mind, the image of America as the new found land is evoked. The second stage is of understanding the denotation of the image as isolated from the context of the poem; the image can mean many things, or even nothing. The denotation is of discovery and colonisation and in the context of the poem this translates into the discovery of the mistress' sexuality as well as her personality, and later, his possession of it. At the level of *bhavana*, the accompanying emotion has to be identified. With the use of the exclamation mark in the first line and the ensuing tone of the poem, it is not difficult to identify the *sthayibhava* of *rati* (love) and the accompanying *vyabhicharins* of joy, impatience etc. The poet is delighted at the prospect of discovering his beloved and is at the same time apprehensive of her objections. When the reader's consciousness is able to empathize with that of the poet, the *rasa* is savoured. At the time of empathy, the reader's consciousness is divorced from all mundane realities and from the specific image in the poem, it performs an emotional leap into the generalized state of the poet's

consciousness. At this stage of aesthetic experience, the soul of the reader is elevated and detached from its personal attachments and gross desires and is able to enter a level of *bhava* that the poem evokes. This transportation of the consciousness of the reader is possible through the use of poetic language. Literary language, it is said, has the power to lift the consciousness to another level, and through the three-fold process described above, it is able to do so. If the same emotion was to be expressed in non-literary language, the *rasanubhuti* would not take place. For instance, if the poet were to use direct language like: “my beloved, you are like America, the new found land in the Western hemisphere, and the way the English have been able to conquer it, I desire to discover and possess you,” what would the response to such an expression be? When the image is direct and prosaic like this, there is no effect upon the reader’s soul. When a particular *rasa* is evoked, there is the evocation of the corresponding *sthayibhava* that is the result of the stirring of certain *chittvrittis* in the soul of the reader that are stored as *samskaras* in his/her *chitt* (mind). Literary language is capable of stirring these *vrittis* because it is indirect and brings into play the faculty of imagination. The faculty of imagination makes this transport possible, so that the logic or feasibility of a poetic image is measured not against external reality, but against the ability to “create a world more real than the real”. Abhinavagupta has pointed out the faculty of *pratibha* that makes the cognizance of *bhavas* in a poem possible. The geographical America was not actually a new found land (as the expression has been problematised in the wake of post-colonial theory), it had many racial and ethnic problems etc. However, at the time of reading the poem, it is not the actual America that we are concerned with, but what America denotes and stands for in the poem. For the reader of the elegy, this America is more real than the America situated only in geographical coordinates. Similarly, the image of Cleopatra that Shakespeare has created, the Cleopatra promenading on the barge, has become more real than the real Cleopatra herself.

This reality that literary language can create is “more real” because of the suggestive power of poetic language. Anandavardhana<sup>2</sup> in *Dhvanayaloka* has elaborated upon the power of poetic expressions in terms of suggestive meaning. There are three kinds of expression poetic language has: *abhidha* (direct meaning), *laksana* (denotative meaning) and *vyanjana* (suggestive meaning). Of these three, in poetry, it is the third that is the

most important. In analyzing suggestive (or symbolic) poetry, the reader (*sahrdaya*) is able to move from the direct to the denotative to the suggestive meaning of words. This movement is made possible firstly by the appropriateness of the words and secondly by the aesthetic sensibility of the reader(s).

Abhinavagupta elaborated on Anandavardhana's concept of *dhvani* and explained the process of aesthetic realization in poetry as *rasa-dhvani*. Prabhakara and some other Mimansakas had argued for a theory of *anavitabhidhana*, which says that meaning resides in words alone and that the relation between the words in a sentence is the basis of verbal judgement. Kumarila and other Mimansakas had argued for the theory of *abhihitavaya* saying that verbal meanings are more important than the words themselves and that in a sentence, meaning is brought about by *laksana* or secondary denotation. Many Naiyayikas combined these two positions and added a third category of *tatparyasakti* or "extra denotative function" that provides the "motive power" of the verbal judgement. Anandavardhana added yet another category of *vyanjana* or suggestion that goes beyond the second level of extra denotation or metaphor and called it *dhvani*. According to Abhinavagupta, *dhvani* is essentially linked to the aesthetic experience in poetry i.e., the realization of *rasa*. Larson explains this process of tasting *rasa* thus:

"Rasa, [rather] is a sui generis realization of 'tasting', evoked by *dhvani* (or *vyanjana*) in the cultivated spectator or reader (*sahrdaya*), sparked by *pratibha* or *bhavana*, correlated with the spectator's or reader's deepest impulses (*samskaras* or *vasanas*), and accompanied by (a) a sense of distance from one's ordinary awareness in terms of time, space, inference, ordinary emotional involvements, and so forth (that is, it is *alaukika*), and, hence, an experience of 'generalization' (*sadharani-karana*) as if one has been lifted out of one's particular condition; (b) a sense of elevated joy or bliss (*ananda*); (c) a sense of surprise or charm or wonder (*camatkara*); (d) a sense of profound harmony or appropriateness (*aucitya*); and (e) a sense of relaxed tranquility (*visranti*)".<sup>3</sup>

Abhinavagupta defines suggestion thus:

“A further (unsaid) meaning, relationship to the secondary meaning, and inadequacy of the conventional meaning-these are the regulative principles of the suggestive function.”<sup>4</sup>

In a sentence there are three levels of meaning: primary, secondary denotative and tertiary suggestive. The second meaning is characteristic of poetry where, even in the absence of syntactic congruity, meaning is established. V.K.Chari gives the example of the metaphor “Stratford-upon-Avon” to explain this. Syntactically, Stratford-upon-Avon is incongruous because it is not possible for a town to stand upon a river. Therefore the secondary function of language comes in and meaning is understood to be of the town Stratford, which is situated on the banks of Avon. The suggestive meaning is both because of and in spite of the secondary denotative meaning. For words to convey emotion, *dhvani* is essential. For instance, as V.K.Chari has pointed out that the word “pity” alone cannot evoke pity; it may at best denote pity but will not be able to evoke it. To continue the same argument, in “Elegie: Going to Bed”, when the lover says : “O my America, My new-found-land”, the denotative function may help transfer the semantic sense of America on to the lady and convey the expectation and joy of the lover, but the emotion of *rati* (love) and the accompanying *vyabhicharis* of joy, impatience, dreaming and resolve are evoked only through the power of suggestion. In this instance, the words “love”, “joy”, “anxiety”, “impatience” etc. have not been used but the sense is conveyed and the *rasa* savoured.

In Indian poetics, poetry is defined (by Bhamaha) as *sabdartha sahito kavyam*<sup>5</sup>, that is, words and their meaning when in unison is poetry. The virtue of poetry depends on the suitability of the word to its (suggestive) meaning, where words and meanings do not share an arbitrary relationship. This explanation precludes any ambiguity vis-à-vis multiple meanings in poetry. In reading symbolic poetry in the framework of the *rasa* theory, for an ideal reader/critic (*sahridaya*), there is no ambiguity with reference to the *rasa* evoked. For example, in the extract from Donne’s elegie cited above, the dominant *rasa* is the erotic (*shringara*), and irrespective of the background of the reader, the same

*rasa* will be evoked. Donne's love poetry has often been criticised by feminists for being representative of patriarchal values (of possession, domination, subordination etc.). It is possible to read the above four lines from a feminist or post colonial point of view and charge Donne for upholding sexist and colonising ethos. However, if we closely look at the conceit, the above-mentioned readings have focused only on the conventional and denotative meanings of the expression. The conventional meaning of America is of an erstwhile colony and the denotative meaning is of colonialism working in tandem with patriarchy. But the third stage of meaning has been grossly overlooked thereby making the reading incomplete. At the level of suggestion, the reader has to move beyond the conventional and the denotative, in order to gain the suggested sense of the poem. As I have mentioned earlier, the suggested meaning of these lines is to do with the poet/lover's desire and passion. The conceit is appropriate in evoking that suggested sense. The tone and the rising rhythm of the lines is indicative of rising passion and hence impatience on the part of the poet/lover. In writing "O my America! My new-found-land", the poet is conveying the immediacy of the passion of the lover and the joy of discovering his beloved's body. The emotion of *rati* (love) is evoked through the vivid image of inexorable physical passion. If the expression were not appropriate, such a poem would never have been celebrated as a love poem and the *vyanjaka* would have failed.

At the second level, the aesthetic sensibility of the reader comes into play. The reader is not merely passive in receiving and reflecting the *bhavas* of the poem/poet but he/she has to undergo a process of de-personalization or generalization that involves both intellect and emotions. When the reader reads these lines, the first step is to move towards the suggested meaning of the poem. This is possible only for a competent reader who is able to look beyond the first two kinds of meaning (conventional and denotative). Once the suggested meaning is grasped, through the use of imagination, the reader is able to generalize the emotion so that the passion re-created in the poem is understood as the passion of a lover for his beloved, of a man for a woman. At the next level is empathising with the *bhava* of the poem, wherein the reader's consciousness is rid of all practical associations and moves to a spiritual plane of identification with the emotion in the poem.

At this stage, the *rajas* and *tamas gunas* of the *sahrdaya* are suppressed and *sattva* comes forth. Hence the pleasure (*ananda*) of aesthetic experience. The pleasure here is the result of the realisation of knowledge (*kavyajnana*) and the removal of ignorance (*avidya*).

In *Dhvani*, the external reality denoted by symbols is not an impediment in realizing the poetic meaning, but is only a stage in the process of realization. The movement is from the denoted to the suggested. The conceit, in this sense, is not merely an ingenious poetic device but contributes to the suggested meaning in the poem. Understanding the conceit makes demands upon the reader too. While reading a conceit, the direct meaning is to be unravelled first. For instance, in the following lines from “The Agony” by George Herbert, there is a layer of meaning:

“Love is that liquor sweet and most divine,  
Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine.”

At the first level, love is described as sweet liquor that is shared by both the poet and god. The second line reveals the meaning of the first, where the blood of Christ and wine is the same; wine becomes symbolic in the ritual. The secondary meaning is that love is the thread that binds the poet and god together. The blood of Christ which was spilt out of love for humanity enters the body of the poet as wine in the Church. At the second stage is generalization when the emotion in the poem is idealized by the reader through the use of imagination. In this case, the reader need not be Christian to be able to savour the *rasa* of the poem. The idea of the symbolic significance of the wine as the blood of Christ and the meaning of the ritual of partaking it is generalized by the *sahradaya* through his imagination. At the third level is intensification of the emotion when the reader completely empathises with the emotion of the poet and the poem and they become one. This is the stage of experiencing the *rasa* of the poem.

The conceit as a poetic device has long been a point of debate amongst Western critics. While Dryden and Johnson dismissed it on grounds of its excesses of wit, T.S. Eliot found in the metaphysicals’ use of conceit, an attempt to find “verbal equivalents for

states of mind and feeling". In the twentieth century, many modern poets found the conceit a suitable form for expressing their feelings. In Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", for instance, the conceit becomes a medium of showing the discordance of modern sensibility.

"Let us go then,  
You and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky.  
Like a patient etherized upon the table"

Where does suggestion lie in a conceit? The conceit is different from symbol and metaphor. It is a simile, but of a different kind. The two objects being compared do not have anything in common by convention, but the poet brings them together in such a way that the unsuitability of the comparison reveals more. Also, when a conceit is used, it makes demands upon the reader to follow the structure of the comparison and notice the dissimilarity and gain meaning thereafter.

Let us look at the structure of the conceit in John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning":

As virtuous men passé mildly away,  
And whisper to their soules, to goe,  
Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,  
The breath goes now, and some say, no:

So let us melt, and make no noise,  
No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,  
T'were prophanation of our joyes  
To tell the layetie our love.

Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,



Men reckon what it did and meant,  
But trepidation of the spheres,  
Though greater farre, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers love  
(Whose soule is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refin'd,  
That our selves know not what it is,  
Inter-assured of the mind,  
Care lesse, eyes, lips and hands to misse.

Our two soules therefore, which are one,  
Though I must goe, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.

If they be two, they are two so  
As stiffe twin compasses are two,  
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show  
To move, but doth, if the other doe.

And though it in the center sit,  
Yet when the other far doth come  
It leanes, and hearkens after it,  
And growes erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to mee, who must  
Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;

Thy firmnes makes my circle just,  
And makes me end, where I begunne.

The tone of the poem is of parting, where the lover is assuring his beloved of the oneness of their souls and therefore, the needlessness of mourning. The poet begins by evoking the sense of the departed souls of virtuous men. He then moves on to the souls of lovers in general and themselves in particular. He says that even while he goes away, she should look at it not as a breach but as an expansion of the soul; the way gold expands to thin layers when beaten. In the next stanza, their souls are compared to the two legs of a compass, where one stays fixed and the other revolves. Their love is the fulcrum around which their souls are joined. The structure is such that the two are not just inseparable, but the movement or otherwise of one determines the fate of the other. The comparison of the lovers' souls to the two legs of a mathematical compass may sound like violent yoking of heterogeneous ideas (Johnson), but nowhere in the reading does it strike as absurd or unconvincing. This is because the movement from the direct to the suggested meaning is smooth, like the beating of gold. If the conceit is viewed in isolation from the poem, it may appear forced or ingenuous, but in the context of the poem it is a powerful poetic device. The tone of the poem adds suggestion to the denoted meaning of the figure. The poem begins with the theme of the parting of souls and then moves on to the souls of lovers and how they are inseparable. Towards the end of the poem, the tone intensifies and in its backdrop the conceit reinforces the emotion of the poem. When the reader reads it, the *sthyayibhava* of *rati* (love) is evoked and consequently the erotic rasa (*shringara*). In the poem, the evocation of rasa is possible through the power of suggestion (*dhvani*).

In Richard Crashaw's "Saint Mary Magdalene or the Weeper", the poem begins with describing Mary Magdalene's tears in oxymoronic terms:

"Lo where a Wounded Heart with bleeding Eyes conspire,  
Is she a Flaming fountain, or a weeping fire?"

In the description of Mary Magdalene's tears, the poet brings about a juxtaposition of improbable figures: "flaming-fountain" and "weeping fire". Just like "rabbit's horns", "flaming fountain" and "weeping fire" do not exist, but as pointed out earlier, poetic language is not dependent on convention and is different from ordinary language. In a figure such as "flaming fountain", meaning is revealed through suggestion. There is no direct meaning possible because of the inconsistency in the sentence. According to *akanksha* (expectation), the adjective "flaming" cannot expect the noun "fountain". How is the *rasa-dhvani* realized then? In poetry, incongruity is not an impediment to the realization of meaning. From the direct (*abhidha*), there is a move towards the secondary indirect (*laksana*) and then to the suggested (*vyanjana*). In Dhvani, the primary meaning contributes to the secondary that in turn contributes to revealing the suggested sense. In a structure like "flaming fountain", the reader immediately tries to grasp the primary meaning of the image. In the absence of a primary meaning in poetry, the move is towards the secondary or indirect meaning. In this case, the figure of a "flaming fountain" reveals the intensity of Mary Magdalene's grief and the passion in her heart. The suggestion comes in after the secondary meaning where the tone of the poet reveals the intensity of both Mary Magdalene's as well as his own emotions at recounting her grief thereby evoking the emotions in the reader's heart.

The *Dhvani* theory blends poetic language and aesthetic experience in a structured way so that suggestion becomes a means of relishing the *rasa* while at the same time giving poetic language its special character. In Indian poetics, there were other schools too that tried to define poetic language, viz. *alankara* and *riti*. The former believed in metaphor or figurative language being the essence of poetry, while the latter was a stylistic theory that believed in a special arrangement of words, of syntactical and phonetic features which constituted the essence of poetry. The school of *dhvani* went beyond the commonly accepted features of poetic language and gave a special characteristic to poetic language as well as the tasting (*asvadana*) of poetic meaning.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Kapoor, Kapil. Op.cit. p.23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Larson, Gerald James, "The Aesthetic (Rasasvad) and the Religious (Brahamasvad) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Shaivism", Philosophy East and West, Vol.26, No.4. (Oct.,1976): 377-378.

<sup>4</sup> Chari, V.K, "The Indian Theory of Suggestion (dhvani)", Philosophy East and West Vo.27, No.4. (Oct.,1977): 394.

<sup>5</sup> Kapoor, Kapil. Op.cit. p.73.

## THE NATURE OF RASA

In the Indian tradition, *kavya* (literature) is considered the fifth *veda*, which means that literature is also a source of knowledge. In literature, meaning is constituted in a way that it is accompanied by the enjoyment of *rasa*. Therefore, *kavyajnana* is accompanied by pleasure (*ananda*). This pleasure results from the experience of *rasa* (*rasanubhuti*) and is felt by the spectator/reader (*sahradaya*). The nature of this pleasure is not gross or material but spiritual. When the reader/spectator is immersed in the aesthetic experience to the point of savouring the *rasa*, his consciousness is elevated in being separated from all gross attachments that normally bind our soul and keep it in a state of ignorance (*avidya*). Irrespective of the kind of *rasa*, this *ananda* always accompanies the spectator/reader. For instance, in reading Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the reader enjoys the text even though it is a tragedy. How does a tragedy move us? When one reads *Oedipus Rex*, the pain felt by Oedipus at the realization of his sin is too strong to afford any pleasure. However, Oedipus' tragedy has been enjoyed by readers and continues to be. This ambiguity is resolved when the nature of aesthetic pleasure is understood. The experience of *rasa* brings along with it, *ananda* of knowledge. The knowledge gained is not empirical or external, but emotional. In Indian aesthetics, emotion and intellect do not lie in straitjackets. When an individual experiences a particular *rasa*, it is not merely an instinctive emotional response but a systematic process of the involvement of intellect and emotion. Describing the experience of *rasa* as merely an emotional response would make it arbitrary and too simplistic. The experience of *rasa* is much more than a subjective emotional response, for it passes through the stage of *sadharanikarana* or generalization where subjectivity and objectivity both come into effect.

In Indian tradition, the poet is designated a special place as he is believed to possess knowledge and has special abilities that enable him to see and describe things in a way that is different from other individuals. In Western tradition, starting with Plato's objections to poetry, Aristotle and others raised the stature of the poet in equating him to

a seer (Shelley), in upholding the ability of the poet to see reality and describe things “not as they are, but as they ought to be”. According to different Indian theorists, there are three abilities attributed to a poet<sup>1</sup>:

1. *vyutpatti*: learning or knowledge
2. *pratibha*: innate ability
3. *abhyasa*: practice

There are three positions taken in this context:

1. *Pratibha* is the only source of composition. This view is supported by Vamana and Pt. Jagannatha who argue that it is an innate ability that poets have and that alone is the source of their creativity.

2. *Vyutpatti* and *abhyasa* are the source of creativity. Dandin in *Kavyadarsa* comments thus:

“An inborn genius, learning quite free from defects , and no light application, these constitute one cause of this excellence in poetry. Even though there be not that extraordinary gains which depend upon the [specific] nature of the earlier latent impressions, yet Speech, cultivated with study and effort, certainly grants her own rare favour.”<sup>2</sup>

3. *Pratibha*, *vyutpatti* and *abhyasa*, all three are sources of composition (*kavyakarana*). Mammata in *Kavya Prakasa* comments on this:

“Poetic genius, knowledge born of a study of the world, of sciences and of poems, and the practice of the teachings of those versed in writing poetry- these three together constitute the source of poetry.”<sup>3</sup>

There are other categories also added to sources of creativity: *sakti* and *Samadhi*. *Pratibha* is further divided into: *karayitri* (creative faculty) and *bhavayitri* (experiencing faculty).

The Neo Classics were the ones to level serious charges against metaphysical poets, criticizing them for their lack of “wit”. According to Dryden, “wit” was the faculty a poet must possess so that his language has as special a character as his ideas. When thought and expression work together, wit is a virtue in poetry and is not forced as he points out is in the case of the metaphysicals. Now these charges are unfair and vague if we keep the Indian poetic framework in mind. There is more to poetry than being able to express “what oft was thought but n’er so well expressed”. A poet is first of all a learned man, and has, as pointed out by Abhinavagupta, a special perception of things. Anandavardhana says the poet has individual will with which he can create a world as it pleases him, and in his hands, a ruin is transformed into a palace and a palace into a ruin. The metaphysical poets were creating worlds of their own where they were expressing their ecstasies of love in their own ways. Moreover, they were all learned men as has been pointed out in the first chapter. Their language has been a point of contention but it has to be admitted that it had a special character and as analysed in the previous chapter, it was suggestive as must good poetry be according to the Indian tradition.

The special language of metaphysical poetry leads to the savouring of *rasa*. The concept of *rasa* has been analysed and critiqued by both ancient and modern scholars. Amongst the ancient scholars, there are different views regarding the nature of *rasa*-where does it originate from, how is it relished etc.

In this respect, there have been four schools of thought viz. *Mimamsa*, *Nyaya*, *Samkhya* and *Saiva*<sup>4</sup>.

The Mimamsa school has as its major thinker, Lollata Bhatta who argues that *rasa* resides in the character personated on stage (*anukarya*) and through the character comes to reside in the actor (*anukarta*) playing the character. Therefore when we see a performance of *Hamlet* for instance, the *karuna rasa* resides in the character of Hamlet but through imposition (*aropa*) comes to reside in the actor himself. The spectator enjoys a performance of the play when the *sthayibhava* of *soka* (grief) is evoked in his mind and the corresponding *karuna rasa* is evoked in his heart.

The Nyaya school led by Sankuka believes that *rasa* resides in the character personated but it is relished by the *samajika* (spectator) by inference and therefore resides in him too. The Samkhya school has Bhattanayaka as its leading thinker and proposes that *rasa* resides in the spectator himself, and though the three fold process of *abhidha*, *bhavana* and *bhogakatva*, it is relished.

Abhinavagupta belongs to the *Saiva* school and argues that *rasa* resides in *samajika's chittavrittis* that is, predispositions in the spectator's heart and is evoked through the power of *sabda* which is also a form of perception. The ability of *sabda* to evoke *rasa* has been discussed in the previous chapter. According to this theory, an individual has certain *chittavrittis* that are the result of *samskaras* that is, latent impressions that he has accumulated in this or previous births. A certain poem may move some and not move others. This is easily understood through this theory that accounts for difference in tastes. The reader response theory claims that no text is read in isolation and that the reader's background influences the response to the text. When a reader with a predisposition towards love reads Donne's love poems, *shringara rasa* is evoked. Another reader with a predisposition towards enthusiasm will be moved more by war poetry that stirs the *sthayibahva* of *utsaha* and evokes *vir rasa*. The predisposition is the result of impressions acquired over a lifetime and in the modern sense, can be understood as individual experiences and his background. Abhinavagupta's theory helps to resolve the questions that other theories raise like "If *rasa* resides in the character and secondarily in the actor, then how is it experienced by the spectator?" etc.

The savouring of *rasa* is accompanied by *alaukika ananda* (transcendent charm). However, the nature of this *ananda* is *laukika* (worldly) as the epistemology is *sabda* and that is worldly. On this basis, Abhinavagupta distinguishes between aesthetic experience (*rasasvad*) and religious experience (*brahmasvad*). However, it is different from other worldly pleasures where the cognitive mechanism, including the senses, is directly involved. In literary experience, *citta* (consciousness) itself is transformed into *ananda* (pleasure/bliss). The aesthetic experience is where the consciousness is modified by



awareness of the *bhava* and this brings about bliss. Every *bhava*, because of its inherent capability of bringing about this awareness of Self has *sukh* (joy). Even *krodh* (anger) and *soka* (grief) have joy. I have pointed out elsewhere how watching a performance of *Hamlet*, the spectator is moved to tears but also experiences *ananda* or bliss as a result of reaching an awareness of the self. Abhinavagupta says:

“All these [*bhavas*] being self-manifesting and relished cognitions, being permeated with *ananda* are predominantly sources of *sukha*.”<sup>5</sup>

The theory of *rasa* is a structured way of analysing poetic and dramatic texts and explaining the response of readers/spectators to them. The aesthetic experience in the relishing of *rasa* is supra worldly and has been analysed at length by ancient Indian scholars, and I have focused upon Abhinavagupta’s exegesis.

In the following chapter, I have discussed religious poetry of seventeenth century in the framework of the nine *rasas* listed in the *Natyasastra*.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Kapoor, Kapil. Op. cit. p.66

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.66

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.113.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.116.

## DEVOTIONAL POETRY: *RASANUBHUTI*

In this chapter, I propose to read some of the seventeenth-century devotional poems and examine the process of composition of the verse and its aesthetic appeal vis-à-vis the *rasa* evoked together with its constituents (permanent emotions, determinants, consequents, transitory mental states).

The third *rasa* in the order of the *rasas* stated in the *Natyasastra* is *karuna* (compassionate). It is described thus:

*Ath karuno naam shokasthayiprabhava I:*

*Sa cha shaapklesh-vinipatiteshtajanaviprayoga-vibhavanash-vadh-vandh-  
vidrava-upaghat-vyasanasanyogadibhi-vibhave samupjayate I*

The *rasa* that originates from the sentiment (*sthayibhava*) of sorrow (*shoka*) is called *karuna rasa*. Its determinants are: separation from loved ones, *vibahvanash*, murder, captivity, banishment, death by fire, *vyasana* etc.

*Tasya ahrupat-paridevan-mukhshoshan-vaivarnya-srastgratrata-  
nishshavas-smritilopadibhiranubhavairbhinaya: prayuktavya: I*

It should be depicted through the following consequents (*anubhava*): shedding tears, crying, drying of mouth, change of colour, paralysis of limbs, heavy breathing, forgetfulness etc.

*Vyabhicharinshachasya nirveda-glani-chinta-autsukya-avega-brahma-  
moha-shram-bhaya-vishad-dainya-vyadhi-jadta-unmad-apasmar-tras-  
alasya-maran-stambha-vepathu-vaivarnya-ashru-svarbhedadaya: I*

Its transitory mental states (*vyabhicharibhava*) are the following: renunciation, guilt, anxiety, impatience, agitation, illusion, attachment, fear, despondency, self

pity/depression, sickness, stupefaction, madness, epilepsy, alarm/terror, lethargy, suicidal feeling, paralysis, trembling, change of colour, tears, loss of clarity in speech etc.<sup>1</sup>

The *karuna rasa* thus originates from the permanent mental state of sorrow (*shoka*). In the context of seventeenth-century religious poetry, one can observe the sentiment of sorrow being felt and expressed by the poets. The determinants of the sentiment can range from separation from loved ones, in this case god being the beloved, to captivity, in this instance, captivity of the soul. Many verses of Donne, Vaughn and Herbert express this sentiment. Along with the permanent mental state, the transitory mental states of guilt, illusion, anxiety, attachment, fear and others can also be marked.

**John Donne: Holy Sonnet (Batter My Heart):** In this sonnet the poet fervently expresses his grief at being separated from god and in a flow of rising passion requests god to “ravish” him in order to make him chaste. As one reads the poem, there is a sway of the poet’s passion that possesses the reader too. There is a range of emotions in the poem, with the central being grief. The dominant *rasa* in this poem is the *karuna*, while through the progression of the poem there are accompanying transitory mental states of anxiety, fear, despondency, agitation and others.

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you  
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, 'and bend  
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.  
I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,  
Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weeke or untrue,  
Yet dearely' I love you, and would be lov'd faine,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemye,  
Divorce mee, 'untie, or breake that knot againe,  
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I

Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.<sup>2</sup>

The *sthayibhava* (permanent mental state) here is grief, which is the state of the poet's mind/heart at the time of composing the poem and also of the reader's mind/heart as he reads the poem. While reading the poem, the reader's consciousness undergoes a process of generalisation or depersonalisation. As a *sahradaya* (one with heart) the reader's consciousness is able to dissociate itself from mundane attachments and rise to a higher spiritual level, the plane of generalisation where the poet's consciousness also resides. While reading these lines, the reader's consciousness is detached from the immediate context of the poem (the biographical details of the poet, circumstances of the poem's composition, co-ordinates of his own space and time etc.) and reaches the level of the poem's consciousness which is the same as the poet's consciousness. As pointed out by Professor Gnoli:

“The aesthetic state of consciousness-whether its material be anger, love, pain,etc.- does not insert itself into the texture of everyday life but is seen and lived in complete independence of any individual interest. The images contemplated on the stage or read in poetry are seen by the man of aesthetic sensibility independently of any relationship with his ordinary life or with the life of the actor or of the hero of the play or poem, and appear, therefore, in a generalised (*sadharanikrta, sadharan*) way, that is to say, universally and released from individuality. The drama performed or the poem recited has the power to raise the spectator, for the moment, above his limited ego, his practical interests, which in everyday life, like “a thick layer of mental stupor”, limit and dim his consciousness.

He [the spectator] is immersed in the aesthetic experience to the exclusion of everything else; the task of generalisation carried out by the poetic expression breaks the barrier of the limited “I” and eliminates in this way the interests, demands and aims associated with it.<sup>3</sup>

From the beginning of the poem, one can discern the troubled consciousness of the poet, a soul that is driven enough by grief to plead god for union. The imagery connotes apparent physical violence with the use of words like “batter”, “o’erthrow”, “force”, “breake”, “blowe”, “burn”, “imprison”, “ravish”. These images of violence are metaphors for spiritual violence that the poet requests his god for. Spiritual violence means the application of force by the individual on his spirit so as to cleanse it of *moha*: gross desires and worldly attachments that are keeping the poet’s consciousness in captivity (But am betroth’d unto your enemy). The cause of the poet’s suffering is his inability to free himself of these bonds and as a consequence, his separation from his beloved-god.

Throughout the poem, there are a series of transitory mental states that can be identified. The poem expresses the state of anxiety of the poet at being separated from god and being captive to material attachments. The anxiety is revealed through the use of images of violence driven by a passion to unite with god. Another transitory mental state is that of impatience that sets the tone of the poem as fervent and passionate. There is also an agitation of the soul that leads at times to despondency. This comes out in lines like

“I, like an usurpt towne, to’ another due,  
Labour to’ admit you, but Oh, to no end”

There is an earnest plea (to god) to free himself from the “enemy” of god, but his inability to do so is expressed in the second line, and hence his despondency. The agitation is revealed by the use of the conceit “like an usurpt towne”, a town that has been usurped by another has obviously been done after the collapse of the defenses. The defenses have proven weak as can also be seen in the next two lines:

“Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,  
But is captiv’d, and proves weeke or untrue”.

Reason that should have been able to stand the poet against all external threats has failed him. This is to say that reason alone cannot be depended upon to keep his consciousness free and therefore the poet pleads to God to attack him and forcefully usurp the “usurpt towne” that he has become. There is also fear expressed by the poet: the fear of being ever caught up in the world, of not being able to “breake that knot againe”, and towards the end of the poem, the transitory emotions of fear, anxiety and agitation come together to accentuate the violence that is being sought; the violence that alone can bring peace, the violence that can lead from the *karuna* to *shant*.

In another Hymn by Donne, in the earlier part of the poem, the dominant *rasa* is *karuna*, accompanied by the transitory mental states of fear (*bhaya*) and guilt (*glani*). In this poem, there is the fear of death, that itself becomes a cause of remorse.

#### **A Hymn to God the Father**

Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,  
Which is my sin, though it were done before?  
Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,  
And doe them still: though still I doe deplore?  
When though hast done, thou hast not done,  
For, I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne by which I wonne  
Others to sinne? And made my sinne their doore?  
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne  
A yeare, or two: but wallowed in, a score?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For, I have more.

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne  
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;

Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne  
Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;  
And, having done that, Thou hast done,  
I have no more.<sup>4</sup>

The dominant *rasa* is the compassionate, arising out of the permanent mental state of grief. Here, too, the determinant is the same as in the previous poem: separation from beloved. Amongst the *vyabhicharibhavas*, there is guilt that dominates the tone of the poem. The poem begins and continues in the interrogatory mode, wherein the poet is musing on the possibility of forgiveness from god. There is guilt at having sinned in life, and, at the time of the approaching end of life, anxiety and fear. The nature of fear is different here from the previous sonnet. The sin here is of despair that in the Christian tradition is an unforgivable sin. The fear of perishing “on the shore” is driven by anxiety that in a way is the result of guilt. Therefore, guilt here is both the cause and source of fear. In a complex two way relationship, fear and guilt are the two accompanying sentiments in the poem.

However, the poem moves from the *karuna* to *shant*, as by the end of the poem, the poet is able to overcome his despair and his belief in the grace of god changes the tone of the poem. *Shant rasa* is described thus by Bharata:

*Ath shanto naam shamsthayibhavatmako mokshappravartaka: I  
Sa tu tatvagyanyairagyashayashuddhyadibhivibhave: samutpadhyate I  
Tasya yamaniyamadhyatma-dhyan-dharnopasana-sarvabhutadaya-  
lingagrahanadibhiranubhaverbhinaya: prayoktavya: I  
Vyabhicharinshchasya nirveda-smriti-dhriti-shauch-stambh-  
romanchadaya: I*

The *santa rasa* indicates the permanent mental state of sham (serenity/peace) and moksha (salvation). Its determinants are: realisation, asceticism and spiritual cleansing. Its consequents should be: *yama*, prescription, meditation, *dharna*, prayer, compassion etc.



Its transitory mental states are: renunciation, memory, contentment, *stambha*, horripilation etc.<sup>5</sup>

The change in the tone from “For, I have more” to “ I have no more” indicates the transition from grief to serenity. Having overcome his despair by reasserting his belief in god’s compassion, the poet is confident enough to demand grace from god: “swear by thy self”. This self confidence is a result of realisation- of the eternal grace of god. Once the poet has realised the eternal grace of a benevolent god, the dominant emotion becomes that of serenity (*sham*). The transitory mental states here are memory, contentment and renunciation. Memory and realisation go together, and contentment follows. This change of tone is evident in the transition from

“When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For, I have more.”

to

“And, having done that, Thou hast done,  
I have no more.”

With contentment of the spirit, renunciation enters the poet’s consciousness. The progress of the poem is from uncertainty and apprehension of death to contentment and renunciation of the world (and consequently acceptance of death).

In Henry Vaughan’s “The Night”, the dominant *rasa* is the *adbhuta*. Bharata defines the *rasa* thus:

*Athatbhutonam vismayasthayibhavatmaka:I  
Sa cha divyajanasana-ipsitamanorathavapti-upavanadevkuhadigaman-  
sabha-viman-mayendra-jalsambhavanadibhirvibhaverutpadhyate I*

*Tasya nayanvistar-animishprekshana-romanacha-ashru-sved-harsh-  
sadhuvad-dan-prabhandhahahakar-vahu-vadan-  
chelangulibramanadibhiranubhaverabhinaya: prayoktavaya: I  
Bhavashchasya stambha-ashru-sved-gadgada-romanch-avega-  
sambrahmapraharsha-chapalta-unmad-dhriti-jadta-pralayadya: I*

The *rasa* with the *sthayibhava* of astonishment (*vismaya*) is known as *adbhuta rasa* (marvelous). Its Determinants are: realisation of Divinity, visit to temple etc. gathering, flight, possibility of wonderful and fantastical things.

Its consequents should be: staring, horripilation, tears, perspiration, joy, *sadhuvad*, *dana*, exclamation, fidgeting.

Its transitory mental states are: paralysis, tears, perspiration, *gadgad*, horripilation, agitation/flurry, *sambrahma*, joy, unsteadiness, madness, contentment, stupefaction, fainting.<sup>6</sup>

In Vaughan's "The Night", the emotion of astonishment (*vismaya*) is revealed in the sensibility of the poet. The poet has seen a glimpse of God and hence is astonishment. Along with this primary emotion, there are accompanying transitory emotions of joy, agitation and contentment.

### **The Night**

(John, II, 3)

Through that pure *Virgin-shrine*,  
That sacred veil drawn o'r thy glorious noon  
That men might look and live as Glo-worms shine,  
And face the Moon:  
Wise *Nicodemus* saw such light  
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!  
Who in that land of darkness and blinde eyes  
Thy long expected healing wings could see,  
When thou didst rise,  
And what can never more be done,  
Did at mid-night speak with the Sun!

O who will tell me, where  
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!  
What hallow'd solitary ground did bear  
So rare a flower,  
Within whose sacred leafs did lie  
The fullness of the Deity.

No mercy-seat of gold,  
No dead and dusty *Cherub*, nor carv'd stone,  
But his own living works did my Lord hold  
And lodge alone;  
Where *trees* and *herbs* did watch and peep  
And wonder, while the *Jews* did sleep.

Dear night! This worlds defeat;  
The stop to busie fools; cares check and curb;  
The day of Spirits; my souls calm retreat  
Which none disturb!  
*Christs* progress, and his prayer time;  
The hours to which high Heaven doth chime.

Gods silent, searching flight:  
When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all

His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;  
His still, soft call;  
His knocking time; The souls dumb watch,  
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days  
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark Tent,  
Whose peace but by some *Angels* wing or voice  
Is seldom rent;  
Then I in Heaven all the long year  
Would keep, and never wander here.

But living where the Sun  
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tyre  
Themselves and others, I consent and run  
To ev'ry myre  
And by this worlds ill- guiding light,  
Erre more than I can do by night.

There is in God (some say)  
A deep, but dazzling darkness; As men here  
Say it is late and dusky because they  
See not all clear  
O for that night! where I in him  
Might live invisible and dim.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the poem, the dominant tone is that of the pleasure of astonishment at catching a glimpse of Divinity. In the second stanza, this emotion comes out in the tone as well as use of exclamations.

**Most blest believer he!**

Who in that land of darkness and blinde eyes

Thy long expected healing wings could see,  
When thou didst rise,  
**And what can never more be done,**  
**Did at mid-night speak with the Sun!**  
(emphasis added)

The poet is full of astonishment at Nicodemus' glance of Divinity and tries to visualise what the experience would have been like and also muses on his own desire to be a part of that experience. The determinants of the poet's astonishment are realisation of divinity as well as his expectation of it.

The transitory mental states that accompany the poet/reader's sensibility are initially joy which then changes to agitation as the poet begins to long for such an experience himself and regrets his entanglement with sins, and towards the end, the contentment that follows from even the possibility of such an experience.

The poet's joy and astonishment is revealed in the next stanza, where he rhetorically asks where Nicodemus could have found God.

O who will tell me, where  
He found thee at that dead and silent hour!  
What hallow'd solitary ground did bear  
So rare a flower,  
Within whose sacred leafs did lie  
The fullness of the Deity.

The transitory mental state then changes to agitation/flurry as the poet begins to long for such a revelation himself and regrets the earthly attachments he has bound himself up in.

...I consent and run

To ev'ry myre  
And by this worlds ill- guiding light,  
Erre more than I can do by night.

The agitation is spiritual agitation that is the result of the absence of spiritual fulfillment and hence the poet's regrets. At the close of the poem, the poet's spiritual longing stays unfulfilled but the possibility of a spiritual union with God leaves shades of contentment on the poet's soul.

O for that night! where I in him  
Might live invisible and dim.

The conceit in the poem uses a pun: the word "Sun", that conveys the sense of Sun as well as Son/Sun meaning Christ. The tone of astonishment is established in the use of a line as "Did at mid-night speak with the Sun!" The astonishing aspect is not just that Nicodemus could "speak with the Sun/Son" but that he could speak with the Sun at midnight. In the use of this conceit, the sense of astonishment is conveyed in two ways.

In the poem titled "Man" by Herbert, the dominant *rasa* is the *adbhuta*, though the tone is much subdued than the above poem.

### Man

My God, I heard this day,  
That none doth build a stately habitation,  
But he that means to dwell therein.  
What house more stately hath there been,  
Or can be, than is Man? To whose creation  
All things are in decay,

For Man is ev'rything,  
And more: He is a tree, yet bears more fruit;

A beast, yet is, or should be more:  
Reason and speech we onely bring.  
Parrats may thank us, if they are not mute,  
They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetric,  
Full of proportions, one limbe to another,  
And all to all the world besides:  
Each part may call the furthest, brother:  
For head with foot hath private amitie,  
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so farre,  
But Man hath caught and kept it, as his prey.  
His eyes dismount the highest starre:  
He is in little all the sphere.  
Herbs gladly cure our flesh; because that they  
Finde their acquaintance there.

For us the windes do blow,  
The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow.  
Nothing we see, but means our good,  
As our *delight*, or as our *treasure*:  
The whole is, either our cupboard of *food*,  
Or cabinet of *pleasure*.

The starres have us to bed;  
Night draws the curtain, which the sunne withdraws;  
Musick and light attend our head.  
All things unto our *flesh* are kinde  
In their *descent* and *being*; to our *minde*

In their *ascent* and *cause*.

Each thing is full of dutie:

Waters united are our navigation;

Distinguished, our habitation;

Below, our drink; above, our meat;

Both are our cleanlinesse. Hath one such beautie?

Then how are all things neat?

More servants wait on Man.\,

Than he'll take notice of: in ev'ry path

He treads down that which doth befriend him,

When sicknesse makes him pale and wan.

Oh mightie love! Man is one world, and hath

Another to attend him.

Since then, my God, thou hast

So brave a palace built; O dwell in it,

That it may dwell with thee at last!

Till then, afford us so much wit;

That, as the world serves us, we may serve thee,

And both thy servants be. <sup>8</sup>

The theme of the poem is a celebration of God's existence that is revealed in his perfect creation, that is, Man. The poet is possessed of a sense of wonder at this perfect of God's creation and the dominant *rasa* therefore is the marvelous. The transitory mental states are those of joy and contentment.

The poet brings out the marvellous in marvelling at Man, his superiority when compared to other creations of God:



What house more stately hath there been,  
Or can be, than is Man? To whose creation  
All things are in decay,

Man is blessed with speech and reason. Herbert is here following in the Elizabethan Great Chain of Being by exalting Man over other creatures. Yet the tone is never of excessive pride but one of humility and service to God. Therefore, towards the end, the transitory mental state of contentment appears when the poet makes this request of God:

Till then, afford us so much wit;  
That, as the world serves us, we may serve thee,  
And both thy servants be.

In the prayer for wit, that in this context means the ability of right judgement, the emotion of contentment follows from the steady belief in God's mercy. Because the poet/devotee is sure of God's grace, his prayer in itself is one of contentment.

**Thomas Traherne: Love**

**Love**

1

O nectar! O delicious stream!  
O ravishing and only pleasure! Where  
Shall such another theme  
Inspire my tongue with joys, or please mine ear!  
Abridgement of delights!  
And queen of sights!  
O mine of rarities! O kingdom wide!  
O more! O cause of all! O glorious bride!  
O God! O Bride of God! O King!  
O soul and crown of ev'ry thing!

2

Did not I covet to behold  
Some endless monarch, that did always live  
In palaces of gold  
Willing all kingdoms realms and crowns to give  
Unto my soul! Whose love  
A spring might prove  
Of endless glories, honors, friendships, pleasures,  
Joys, praises, beauties and celestial treasures!  
Lo, now I see there's such a King,  
The fountain head of ev'ry thing!

3

Did my ambition ever dream  
Of such a Lord, of such a love! Did I  
Expect so sweet a stream  
As this at any time! Could any eye  
Believe it? Why all power  
Is used here  
Joys down from Heaven on my head to shower  
And Jove beyond the fiction doth appear  
Once more in golden rain to come  
To Danae's pleasing fruitful womb.

4

His Ganemede! His life! His joy!  
Or he comes down to me, or takes me up  
That I might be his boy,  
And fill, and taste, and give, and drink the cup.  
But these (though great) are all

Too short and small,  
Too weak and feeble pictures to express  
The true mysterious depths of blessedness.  
I am his image, and his friend.  
His son, bride, glory ,temple, end.<sup>9</sup>

In this poem, the dominant *rasa* is *bhakti*<sup>10</sup> that is closest to *shringara*. The poet is in raptures at his love for god. The *shringara* in this form has to be understood in the sense of devotional love, where the *sthayibahava* is *rati* (love) but not in the sense of carnal love. This poem comes very close to the poems in the *madhurya bhakti*<sup>11</sup> tradition, where devotional poems were composed representing god as beloved and the devotee as lover. This kind of poetry broadens the scope of love (*rati*) in enriching it with more comprehensive meanings.

In the last stanza, the poet encapsulates the different ways in which he approaches his god: as friend, son, bride, glory, end and as his image and his temple. This kind of representation of the relationship of devotee and god is unique in the tradition of English poetry. The poet/lover calls himself god's son and immediately after that he refers to himself as god's bride. Notwithstanding the masculine tenor of Renaissance poetry, the poet/lover here transcends gender to express his love for his god.

In the state of separation (*vipralamba*), the lover here anticipates union (*sambhog*) and is filled with rapture at the possibility of it.

His Ganemede! His life! His joy!  
Or he comes down to me, or takes me up  
That I might be his boy,  
And fill, and taste, and give, and drink the cup.

The transitory mental states in this poem are: joy, stupefaction, pride and contentment. There is joy and stupefaction at realising the love of god as is revealed in the first stanza

itself. The last two lines reveal both contentment as well as pride as the lover realises his special relationship with god. A relationship that does not depend upon gross attachments nor is bound by any conventions- where the poet can be a lover, son, bride and friend at the same time. Such a relationship is liberating and elevating for the poet and hence his rapture at discovering it.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Nagendra (ed.). *Abhinavabharati ke Teen Adhyaya*. New Delhi: University of Delhi, 1973. pp.578-579. The text contains the original as well as Hindi translation, which has been translated into English by the writer herself.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, Helen. Op.cit. pp.85-86.

<sup>3</sup> Gnoli, Raneiro. Op.cit. pp. XXI-XXIII

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, Helen. Op.cit. pp. 90-91

<sup>5</sup> Nagendra. Op.cit. pp.609-610

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp.603-605

<sup>7</sup> Gardner, Helen. Op.cit. pp.280-281

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp.129-131

<sup>9</sup> Cesare,op.cit. pp. 192-193.

<sup>10</sup> *Bhakti rasa* has not been included in the nine *rasas* as enumerated in the *Natyasastra* and elaborated by Abhinavagupta. *Bhakti*, alongwith *vatsalya* is treated as a *rasa* that shares characteristics with other *rasas*. In the case of *Bhakti*, it is close to *shringara* (erotic) with *rati* (love) being the dominant emotion.

<sup>11</sup> In the *Madhurya Bhakti* tradition, love poems were composed for god where the dominant *rasa* is *shringara*. For instance, the poetry of *Mira*, *Anda*, and *Lal-Ded* belongs to this tradition.

## LOVE POETRY: *RASANUBHUTI*

The *rasa* that is evoked on reading the secular poetry of the seventeenth-century poets is *shringara* (erotic). It is described thus:

*Tatr shringaro nam ratisthayibhavaprabhava ujjawalveshatmaka:*

The *rasa* that originates from the *sthayibhava* of *rati* (love) is called *shringara*.

*Tasya dve adhishtane, sambhogo vipralambhashch*

*Shringara* *rasa* has two states: union and separation.

*Tasyanayanchaturi-brhukshep-katakshsanchar-lalitmadhuranghar-vakyadibhiranubhaverbhinaya: prayoktavya:*

Union should be depicted through the following consequents: .....

*Vyabhicharinshchasya alasyogryajugupsavajraya<sup>1</sup>:*

The transitory mental states are the remaining thirty except *alasya*, *ugrata* and *jugupsa*.

They are:

Indifference, debility, apprehension, envy, intoxication of pride, weariness, depression, painful reflection, delusion of mind, recollection, contentment, shame, unsteadiness, joy, agitation, stupefaction, arrogance, despondency, impatience, sleep, dementedness, dreaming, awakening, dissimulation, resolve, sickness, madness, demise, alarm, trepidation.

The two states of *sambhoga* (union) and *vipralamba* (separation) are manifest in love poetry. In the following poem by John Donne, the state of love is that of separation and the tone of the poem reveals it.

**John Donne: 'The Flea'<sup>2</sup>**

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,  
How little that which thou deny'st me is;  
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;  
Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sinne, nor shame, nor losse of maidenhead,  
Yet this enjoyes before it wooe,  
And pampers'd swells with one blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than wee would doe.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where wee almost, yea more than maryed are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, w're met,  
And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.  
Thou use make you apt to kill mee,  
Let not to that, selfe murder added bee,  
And sacrilege, three sinnes in killing three.

Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since  
Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?  
Wherein could this flea guilty bee,  
Except in that drop which it suckt from thee?  
Yet thou triumph'st, and saist that thou  
Find'st not thy selfe, nor mee the weaker now;  
'Tis true, then learne how false, feares bee;  
Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee,

Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee.

In trying to convince his lady to yield to him, the poet uses the conceit of the flea. The poet persuading his virtuous lady to agree to his sexual advances was a popular trope in courtly love poetry. In this poem, the state of the lover is that of *vipralamba* or separation. Through his persuasion, the poet is hoping for *sambhog* or union.

The transitory mental states of *autsukya* (impatience) and *avega* (agitation) are visible. The poet/lover is anxious for union and the extension of separation leads to impatience. Further, the prolonging of separation is due to the modesty of the lady and therefore the cause of the agitation in the poet's mind. The impatience leads the poet to ingenuously attempt to convince his lady that her moral qualms regarding consummation are superfluous. The mental agitation is the result of the lover's inability to persuade his lady.

The last line of stanza one and the beginning of stanza two reveal the tone of impatience in the poem:

And this, alas, is more than wee would doe.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,

By the end of the poem, the lady, notwithstanding the poet's witty reasoning, kills the flea. In the poem, the action of killing the flea is not described directly but the response of the poet to the action reconstructs it for the reader. The tone is built up from the beginning to the end by which the impatience of the poet/lover has increased. The act of squashing the flea is the consequent (*anubhava*) on part of the lady.

As the reader reads the poem, his mind moves from the direct to the secondary to the suggested meaning of the poem. In the figure of the flea sucking the blood of the two, the direct visual image is established. Then the connoted meaning of the commingling of the three-poet, lady and the flea through this act is understood. At the level of suggestion is the desire for union that is expressed by the poet. In describing the killing of the flea as a



triple murder, the poet expresses his extreme desire for union with his beloved wherein single lives cease to exist and the two become a single entity. The reader is able to empathise with the poet's restlessness and impatience in the poem and thereby savours the erotic *rasa*.

In another of Donne's poem discussed earlier, a similar impatience is revealed.

**Elegie: Going to Bed<sup>3</sup>**

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defie,  
Until I labour, I in labour lie.  
The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,  
Is tir'd with standing though they never fight.  
Off with that girdle, like heavens Zone glistening,  
But a far fairer world incompassing.  
Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear  
That th'eyes of busie fooles may be stopt there.  
Unlace your self, for that harmonious chime,  
Tells me from you, that now 'tis your bed time.  
Off with that happy busk, whom I envie,  
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.  
Your gowne's going off, such beauteous state reveals,  
As when from flowry meads th'hills shadow steales.  
Off with your wyerie Coronet and shew  
The hairy Diademe which on you doth grow:  
Off with those shoes, and then safely tread  
In this loves hallow'd temple, this soft bed.  
In such white robes, heaven's Angels us'd to be  
Receav'd by men; Thou Angel bringst with thee  
A heaven like Mahomets Paradise; and though  
Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know,  
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,

They set our hairs, but these the flesh upright.  
 License my roving hands, and let them go,  
 Behind, before, above, between, below.  
 O my America! My new-found-land,  
 My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,  
 My myne of precious stones, my Emperie,  
 How blest am I in this discovering thee!  
 To enter into these bonds, is to be free;  
 Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.  
 Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,  
 As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,  
 To taste whole joyes. Gems which you women use  
 Are as Atlanta's balls, cast in mens views,  
 That when a fools eye lighteth on a Gem,  
 His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.  
 Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made  
 For lay-men, are all women thus array'd;  
 Themselves are mystick books, which onely wee  
 (Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)  
 Must see reveal'd. Then since I may know;  
 As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew  
 Thy self: cast all, yea, this white lynnence hence,  
 Here is no penance, much lesse innocence.  
 To teach thee, I am naked first: why then  
 What needst thou have more covering than a man.

In this amorous poem, the poet/lover is trying to convince his lady to undress as it is her bedtime. While trying to convince her, the poet is also betraying his impatience and expectations from the act of undressing. The poem begins at the stage of separation (*vipralamba*) and moves towards the possibility of union (*sambhoga*) depending on the

lady's wishes. The poet evokes the pleasures that would arise out of the union as he visualises the act of undressing and the 'treasures' that would be revealed to him thereby.

The *vyabhicharis* in this poem are joy, impatience, dreaming and resolve. The lover is impatient with his lady's modesty and as a popular trope in courtly love poetry tries to convince her to give up her qualms regarding undressing in front of her lover. Joy and dreaming go together as the lover tries to visualise her undressing and the beauty of her body thus revealed to him. Towards the end of the poem, the lover is resolved to persuade his lady as he says that to teach her he would undress first.

#### **The Extasie<sup>4</sup>**

Where, like a pillow on a bed,  
A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest  
The violets reclining head,  
Sat we two, one anothers best.

Our hands were firmly cimented  
With a fast balme, which thence did spring,  
Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred  
Our eyes, upon one double string;

So to'entergraft our hands, as yet  
Was all the meanes to make us one,  
And pictures in our eyes to get  
Was all our propagation.

As 'twixt two equall Armies, Fate  
Suspende uncertaine victorie,  
Our soules , (which to advance their state,  
Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee.

And whil'st our soules negotiate there,  
Wee like sepulchral statues lay;  
All day, the same our postures were,  
And wee said nothing, all the day.

If any, so by love refin'd,  
That he soules language understood,  
And by good love were growen all minde,  
Within convenient distance stood,

He (though he knew not which soule spake,  
Because both meant, both spake the same)  
Might thence a new concoction take,  
And part farre purer than he came.

This Extasie doth unperplex  
(We said) and tell us what we love,  
Wee see by this, it was not sexe,  
Wee see, we saw not what did move:

But as all severall soules containe  
Mixture of things, they know not what,  
Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,  
And makes both one, each this and that.

A single violet transplant,  
The strength, the colour, and the size,  
(All which before was poore, and scant,)  
Redoubles still, and multiplies.

When love, with one another so  
Interanimates two soules,  
That abler soule, which thence doth flow,  
Defects of lonelinesse controules.

Wee then, who are this new soule, know,  
Of what we are compos'd, and made,  
For, th'Atomies of which we grow,  
Are soules, whom no change can invade.

But O alas, so long, so farre  
Our bodies why doe wee forbear?  
They are ours, though they are not wee, Wee are  
The intelligences, they the spheare.

We owe them thanks, because they thus,  
Did us, to us, at first conuay,  
Yeelded their forces, sense, to us,  
Nor are drosse to us, but allay.

On man heavens influence workes not so,  
But that it first imprints the ayre,  
Soe soule into the soule may flow,  
Though it to body first repaire.

As our blood labours to beget  
Spirits, as like soules as it can,  
Because such fingers need to knit  
That subtile knot, which makes us man.

So must pure lovers soules descend

T'affections, and to faculties,  
Which sense may reach and apprehend,  
Else a great Prince in prison lies.

To our bodies turne wee then, that so  
Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;  
Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,  
But yet the body is his booke.

And if some lover, such as wee,  
Have heard this dialogue of one,  
Let him still marke us, he shall see  
Small change, when we're to bodies gone.

In this celebration of the union of souls, the poet muses on the relationship between the body and soul (body are spheres, souls are intelligences) and describes the state of union of lovers' souls. The state is of union (*sambhog*) and the poet/lover meditates on the nuances of ecstasy. He compares their souls to Fate in a battle of two equal armies and the way fate hangs uncertainly when the armies are equal the same way their souls (being equal) are suspended between them. This image conveys the sense that in the state of ecstatic union, the souls become one on a third plane where they reach after leaving the bodies.

The *vyabhicharis* are of contentment and recollection. The tone of the poem is that of recollection where the poet muses on the state of union, where on the banks of the river, the lovers sat "[we too] one another's best". The emotion of contentment is evoked in the poem as the lover explores the spiritual dimensions of love. The lover's mind is completely at peace as he recalls the ecstasy between him and his beloved where their souls became one after flowing out of their bodies. The description of ecstasy in this poem is different from the conventional or expected image of ecstasy as sexual union.

Donne has explored the spiritual aspects of ecstasy where the union of souls is how he defines ecstasy and not one that is confined to physical consummation alone.

“This Extasie doth unperplex  
(We said) and tell us what we love,  
Wee see by this, it was not sexe,  
Wee see, we saw not what did move:”

### **The Sunne Rising<sup>5</sup>**

Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?  
Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?  
Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide  
Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices,  
Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,  
Call countrey ants to harvest offices;  
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,  
Nor houres, dayes, months, which are the rags of time.  
Thy beames, so reverend, and strong  
Why shouldst thou thinke?  
I could eclipse and cloud them with a winke,  
But that I would not lose her sight so long:  
If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
Looke, and tomorrow late, tell mee,  
Whether both the 'India's of spice and Myne  
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee.  
Aske for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,  
And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay.

She'is all States, and all Princes, I,

Nothing else is.  
Princes doe but play us; compar'd to this,  
All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie.  
Thou sunne art halfe as happy' as wee,  
In that the world's contracted thus;  
Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee  
To warme the world, that's done in warming us.  
Shine here to us, and thou art every where;  
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare.

In this poem, the state of the lovers is of imminent separation (*vipralamba*). The associated temporary mental states are of agitation, intoxication of pride and contentment.

The *vyabhichari* of agitation is the result of the knowledge of separation that cannot be avoided. In the tradition of Renaissance courtly love poetry, lovers carried on clandestine affairs and hence their separation in the morning, after spending a night of love would be imminent.

Further, another transitory mental state is that of pride and contentment. Intoxication of pride come from the poet/lover's passion for his mistress and his celebration of her beauty and personality. He compares his beloved to the two Indias of spice and mine. Both (East) India and West Indies, being colonies, denoted treasure and wealth in the seventeenth century. The poet also compares himself and her to princes and states respectively. Here, intoxication of pride is an emotion that is evoked, as the poet challenges the sun in claiming to be able to eclipse him with a wink of his eyes, but that he would not do this for he would have to lose the sight of his beloved for that long and that is unacceptable to him. In the second stanza, the emotion of contentment and pride are both evoked. The stanza begins by the poet comparing his beloved to 'all states' and himself to 'all princes', suggesting that she represents all the world and he stands for all the rulers. The two as a unit here symbolises the entire world, in both its aspects, of land



and its possession. At the end, the conceit is developed further and the argument is extended to mean that for the sun, shining on the two of them is equal to shining on the world and therefore, the lovers' bed is the sun's world and the walls of their room his sphere.

**Richard Crashaw: Wishes to His (Supposed) Mistrese<sup>6</sup>**

Who ere shee bee,  
That not impossible shee  
That shall command my heart and mee;

Where ere shee lye,  
Lock't up from mortall Eye,  
In shady leaves of Destiny:

Till that ripe Birth  
Of studied fate stand forth,  
And teach her faire steps to our Earth;

Till that Divine  
*Idaea*, take a shrine  
Of Chrystall flesh, through which to shine:

Meet you her my wishes,  
Bespeake her to my blisses,  
And be yee call'd my absent kisses.

...

More than the spoyle  
Of shop, or silkwormes Toyle  
Or a bought blush, or a set smile.

A face thats best

By its owne beauty drest,  
And can alone command the rest.

A face made up  
Out of no other shop,  
Than what natures white hand sets ope.

...

A Cheeke where growes  
More than a Morning Rose:  
Which to no Boxe his being owes.

Lipps, where all Day  
A lovers kisse may play,  
Yet carry nothing thence away.

Lookes that oppresse  
Their richest Tires but dresse  
And cloath their simplest Nakednesse.

Eyes, that displaces  
The Neighbour Diamond, and out faces  
That Sunshine by their owne sweet Graces.

....

Her that dares bee,  
What these Lines wish to see:  
I seeke no further, it is shee.

'Tis shee, and here  
Lo I uncloth and cleare,  
My wishes cloudy Character.

May shee enjoy it,  
Whose merit dare apply it,  
But Modesty dares still deny it.

Such worth as this is  
Shall fixe my flying wishes,  
And determine them to kisses.

Let her full Glory,  
My fancies, fly before yee,  
Be ye my fictions; But her story.

In this poem, the poet presents a vision of his beloved whom he wishes to see but has not met before. This connects directly to the title of the poem: "Wishes to His (Supposed) Mistrese". The state is of separation (*vipralamba*) with the expectation of union (*sambhog*). However, in this poem, the tone is different from other love poems representing the same state of separation, because here, there is not agitation and impatience, but contentment and dreaming. The poet is not impatient for union nor is he agitated by this separation. Instead, in this separation he dreams of a perfect beloved and how he wishes her to be. The *vyabhicharis* of dreaming and contentment are evoked here in the poet's vision of his beloved. The beloved is described to be divine and therefore perfect. Her beauty is not earthly and does not depend upon artificial make up, clothes or other accessories, but is independent of them all and originally impeccable. The dominant *rasa* is the erotic, with the accompanying sentiments of contentment and relaxed dreaming. The following stanza towards the end of the poem reveals these sentiments:

Her that dares bee,  
What these Lines wish to see:  
I seeke no further, it is shee.

The poet seems to be at peace with himself and his vision of his beloved.

**John Donne: The Dreame<sup>7</sup>**

Deare love, for nothing lesse than thee  
Would I have broke this happy dreame,  
It was a theame  
For reason, much too strong for phantasie,  
Therefore thou wakd'st me wisely; yet  
My Dreame thou brok'st not, but continued'st it,  
Thou art so truth, that thoughts of thee suffice,  
To make dreames truths; and fables histories;  
Enter these armes, for since thou thoughtst it best,  
Not to dreame all my dreame, lets act the rest.

As lightning, or a Tapers light,  
Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd mee;  
Yet I thought thee  
(For thou lovest truth) an Angell, at first sight,  
But when I saw thou sawest my heart,  
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an Angels art,  
When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when  
Excesse of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,  
I must confesse, it could not chuse but bee  
Prophane, to thinke thee any thing but thee.

Coming and staying show'd thee, thee,  
But rising makes me doubt, that now,  
Thou art not thou.  
That love is weake, where feare's as strong as hee;  
'Tis not all spirit, pure, and brave,  
If mixture it of *Feare, Shame, Honor*, have.  
Perchance as torches which must ready bee,

Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with mee,  
Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; Then I  
Will dreame that hope againe, but else would die.

The state of the love in the above poem is that of separation where the poet has been dreaming of his beloved and expresses the absence of any difference between the states of dreaming and awakening because for him he is close to his beloved in his dream and wishes to continue it uninterrupted. Therefore even when his dream is broken by his beloved he is happy because, as he says, in breaking his dream, his beloved is only helping him continue it. The poet also expresses his love in saying that the thought of his beloved is enough to make his dream real and fables histories.

Towards the end of the first stanza, the poet ingenuously points out to his lady, that since she has broken his dream, they might as well live it in order to complete it. The *vyabhicharis* are of dreaming and resolve. The sentiment of dreaming is expressed throughout the poem where the state of dreaming forms the background of the poem. The transitory mental state of resolve is evident in the lover's decision to continue his dream with or without waking up.

The state of *vipralamba* is accompanied with hopes of *sambhog* (union), as at the end of the first stanza the poet says:

Enter these armes, for since thou thoughtst it best,  
Not to dreame all my dreame, lets act the rest.

However, in the next stanza, other *vyabhicharis* are also evoked, that is, painful reflection and agitation. The lover realises the unsteadiness of their relationship, because his love is mixed with fear: "That love is weake, where feare's as strong as hee;". The beloved comes to kindle their love but goes away only to come back to him. The lover recognizes this uncertainty of their relationship and hence the *vyabhicharis* of painful reflection and agitation. At the end of the poem the lover expresses his resolve again when he says

even though he is aware of the unsteadiness of their love yet he will go back to dreaming the hope for union as without it he has no choice but to die.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Nagendra. Op.cit.pp.534-552.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, Helen. Op.cit.p.57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. pp.53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp.74-77.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp.60-61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp.190-194.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp.68-69.

## CONCLUSION

The *rasa* theory provides a suitable framework for analysing both *kavya* (poetry) as well as *natya* (drama). Abhinavagupta propounded *sabda* (word) as epistemology in the Saiva school of thought, and therefore word becomes a means of knowledge in the aesthetic theory. The power of *sabda* had been enumerated by Bhartrihari in *Vakyapadya* where he said:

*Anadinidhanam brahma sabdatatvam yadaksharam*

*Vivartate arthabhaven prakriya jagatoyata<sup>1</sup>:*

The indivisible primordial word is the origin of the world which in its varied forms is but a manifestation of the eternal word.

In Indian aesthetics, words have a special power; the ability to evoke *rasas* in readers. Anandavardhana elaborated on the theory of *dhvani* that explains the special nature of poetic language and also the layers of meanings that poetic language can convey.

In Indian literature, there is a rich body of Sufi and Bhakti poetry that shares its spirit with Metaphysical poetry. In this poetry, the poet/lover expresses his/her devotion to god through tropes often used in love poetry. While the metaphysicals had the Petrarchan tradition to emulate, Bhakti poetry was influenced by Sangam love poetry and Sanskrit love poetry. What is remarkable is the confluence of spiritual and sexual love in a dynamic form that allows the presence of both without subsuming one below another. A holy sonnet like 'Batter My Heart' by Donne conveys the poet's love for his god but in loaded sexual images.

Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I  
Except you' enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.



The presence of sexual images does not take away from the meaning of the poem but only adds to it. The use of sexual images conveys the sense of extreme passion and impatience of the lover. In the classification of *rasas*, *Bhakti Rasa* has not been categorized under the nine primary *rasas* but the *sthayibhavas* of Bhakti are similar to those of *shringara*. The dominant emotion is of *rati* (love) and the *rasa* framework provides scope for incorporating different forms of love. Divine love when expressed in sexual terms does not cease to be divine; instead it appears more convincing and accessible and hence with a greater probability of moving the reader's heart.

English criticism has assessed metaphysical poetry mostly for its poetic figures (conceits) and its religious themes. At times criticism has been too harsh and even unfair. The poets of seventeenth century England had distinct styles and grouping them under the descriptive name of 'metaphysical poetry' sometimes overlooks their distinct styles. Also it makes way for a general criticism that is not entirely correct at all times. In the criticism of seventeenth century poetry, the suggestive quality of the poetic figures has mostly been ignored. Reading them in the framework of the *rasa* theory provides ground for assessing the language of this poetry for its ability to evoke *rasa* through *dhvani*.

The *rasa* theory is an ancient aesthetic formulation of the principles of poetic creation as well as of the response of readers (*sahrdaya*) to poetry/drama. However, because of its inclusion of differences it is not a dated theoretical framework but one that provides scope for reading the most contemporary literature. As in Western criticism, Plato and Aristotle are the principal thinkers whose theories of art have been argued and analysed over different periods in criticism. Similarly, Bharata and Abhinavagupta are formidable theoreticians whose principles of art provide scope for revaluation and discussion.

Aesthetics as theory deals with the responses to art and both Indian and Western theories have provided varied approaches to art. Aesthetics, both Indian and Western, has philosophical foundations, as the different Sanskrit thinkers belonged to various philosophical schools of Mimamsa, Samkhya, Nyaya and Saiva<sup>2</sup>. Plato's objections to art are also grounded in his idealism. However, the eighteenth century English critics' objections to Metaphysical poetry were not so philosophically grounded but the only

category they held up as a touchstone for poetry was true wit that they found lacking in their poetry. According to Indian theotics, however, the potential of poetic language to evoke *rasas* is a virtue against which poetry is measured, and suggestive poetry is considered as the highest form of poetry. In analysing metaphysical poetry I found it comes close to suggestive poetry and the conceit is not merely an ingenuous poetic device but a way of conveying layered meaning.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Bhartrhari. *Vakyapadiyam*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, 1975. p.2.

<sup>2</sup> I have discussed these different schools briefly in Chapter 2.

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