

## The Use of Sringara Rasa in Abhijnana Sakuntalam by Mahakavi Kalidas.

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### **Abstract**

Famous writer of Natyasastra, Bharata says in a sloka “Vibhavanubhava vyabhichariya sanyogat rasa nishpattih” which best explains how rasa is relished in a drama. The term Rasa is related to the sentiments that are aroused in the minds. The sentiments may be Sringara (erotic), veera (heroic), karuna (pathos), and likewise. The meaning of the term is easily conceivable. But it is very difficult to express the notion properly in western critical terminology. In western concept it is something close to aesthetic pleasure. The aphorism by Bharata, “Vibhavanubhava vyabhichariya sanyogat rasa nishpattih” conveys that rasa is relished when a permanent mood or sthayibhava is brought to a relishable condition through the three elements i.e. the vibhava, the anubhava and the vyabhicharibhava. According to him, “no meaning can proceed (from speech) without (any kind of) rasa (i.e. sentiment).” Kalidas’s works show his belief in the doctrine of Bharata’s rasasutra. The vibhavas, anubhavas and vyabhicharibhavas are all dealt with so minutely in his works that their union with sthayibhavas produces rasa, which is relished till today.

**(Key words:** Rasa, Sringara, union, separation)

**Introduction-** Rasa has its existence in the Vedas and Upanishads but with a different meaning. In the Rigveda, ‘Rasa’ means somrasa or the juice of some plant and sometimes it also denotes water, milk and flavour in the earlier Mandalas. In Atharvaveda, it is the sap of grain. During the Upanisadic period rasa meant ‘essence’, meaning per excellence. Rasa is the total transference of the personal emotions of the spectator to the emotions created by art. Thus the earliest traces of rasa shift from soma rosa, the Aryan’s drink, to the Brahman, the Yogi’s communion with the metaphysical absolute. Kosala, Sandilya, Vatsya and many other scholars gave their own meaning of Rasa. But Bharata is the earliest propounder of Rasa school. For Bharata, the aesthetic principle of a work of art was nothing beyond Rasa—“na hi rasadrte kaschidarthah pravartte (No meaning proceeds from speech without any kind of sentiment).” When asked to explain rasa, he described it as, “that which is relished is rasa.” Rasa maintains a perfect harmony between the performers and the spectators. It is not simply the physical or metaphysical sense of the term that matters. Rasa is the depth of delightful experience springing out of a work of art. The followers of rasa school call rasa the atma (soul) of poetry.

The aphorism by Bharata, “Vibhavanubhava vyabhichariya sanyogat rasa nishpattih” conveys that rasa is relished when a permanent mood or sthayibhava is brought to a relishable condition through the

three elements i.e. the vibhava, the anubhava and the vyabhicharibhava. Sthayibhava is the permanent mood or the durable psychological state. In Bharata's definition of rasa the word 'sthai' does not occur. But the doctrine of rasa demands its explanation. In the opinion of Bharata the sthayibhava is like the king and the other bhavas are like its subjects. Sthayibhava always retains a dominant position when compared with other bhavas. Bharata has identified eight sthayibhavas. They are: (i) Love (rati), (ii) gaiety (hasya) (iii) sorrow (soka), (iv) anger (Krodh), (v) energy (utsaha), (vi) fear (bhaya), (vii) disgust (jugupsa) and (viii) astonishment (vismaya). There is a ninth sthayibhava recognized by Anandavardhana and Avinavagupta as passiveness (nirveda). The nine sthayibhavas are connected respectively with the nine sentiments (rasas), i.e. srngara, hasya, karuna, raudra, veera, bhayanaka, vibhatsa, adbhuta and santa. Samyoga means connection with the sthayibhava.

Different scholars have defined rasa differently. Bhattanayaka of the ninth century A.D. discarded all the prevalent theories of rasa. He explained his theory by pointing out that a work of art has three functions, namely abhidha, bhavakatva and bhojakatvu. Abhinavagupta, a major critic of the tenth century A.D., revised the meaning of rasa as the meaning of kavya. This meaning gets strength by Bharata's explanation of the term bhava as "kavya rhan bhavayanti bhavah." According to Bharata these bhavas, sthayibhava, anubhava etc combine to form rasa. So one of the meaning of Kavya is rasa.

**Objective-** Through this research paper an attempt has been made to examine the following issues:

- To discuss the theory of Rasa as illustrated by Bharata and many other classical Indian scholar.
- Kalidas' views on drama and rasa.
- How Kalidasa implemented various elements of rasa in his immortal play, Abhijnana Sakuntalam.
- What kind of effect these rasas have played in Abhijnana Sakuntalam.

**Methodology-** From the ancient time, an important function of literature is to pleased the audience by appealing their emotions. Through the different scenes and actions, the writer creates different emotional state in the minds of readers/ audiences. In India, it was Bharata, for the first time, who tried to theorized the different state of mind of mind which a writer creates on the audience through his actions. He termed them as Rasa in his Natyasastra (different emotional state of a person) and divided them into nine different types as Srngara Rasa, Karuna Rasa, Hasya Rasa, Veer Rasa etc. Throughout the ages many other scholars like Bhattanayaka of the ninth century A.D., Abhinavagupta, a major critic of the tenth century A.D., etc. tried to reshape the concept of Rasa and the process of addition and subtraction occurred with Bharata's theory of Rasa. Abhijnana Sakuntalam of Kalidasa mainly deal with the Srngara Rasa as it based mainly on the love story of Duhsanta and Sakuntala. But we also cannot ignore the appearance of other Rasas as they prove their existence in the drama from time to time.

**Subject/Discussion-** Kalidas' drama Abhijnana Sakuntalam is celebrated most for its expression of the Rasas. The Mahakavi's famous dictum on drama "Nanarasam drsyate (various Rasas seen at play)" is fully explored in this work. The predominant Rasa in Abhijnana Sakuntalam is Srngara which is divided into two aspects and both of these are depicted in the play. The intoxicating joys of Sanyoga Srngara (union of lover and beloved) and the heartrending pangs of Viyoga or Vipralambha Srngara (separation) have been portrayed with supreme artistry. The receptive (sahrdaya) spectator or reader never tires of being immersed in the depths of these emotions portrayed by the poet.

## The Use of Sringara Rasa in Abhijnana Sakuntalam by Mahakavi Kalidas.

According to A Practical Hindi English Dictionary, Sringara Rasa is “one of the nine rasas-according to Indian poetics, this is one of the most comprehensive and extensive and is known as Rasaraja (the king of Rasas).” The principal or dominant emotion (sthayibhava) of Sringara Rasa is love (rati). Rudrata’s definition of Sringara Rasa is most appropriate to the Sringara portrayed in Abhijnana Sakuntalam. According to Rudrata the passionate conduct of a mutually attracted man and woman constitutes Sringara:-

Vyavaharah punnaryoranyonyam raktayo ratiprakrith,  
Sringarah sa dvedha sambhogo vipralambha.

The passionate conduct of two people mutually enraptured with each other constitutes sringara whose two aspects are sambhoga (union) and vipralambha (separation). (Kavyalankara: 12-5.)

Sanyoga (conjunction or union) and sambhoga (enjoyment or union) describe Sringara when the lover and the beloved are together. Sringara Rasa being predominant in Abhijnana Sakuntalam, appears early in the drama when there is love at first sight between Duhsanta and Sakuntala. In Act 1 Duhsanta beholds Sakuntala as she waters the plants and converse with her friends. He is struck by love for Sakuntala and says:-

“aho! Madhurasam darsanam,  
Suddhantadurlabhanudam vapurasramavasino yadi janasya,  
Durikrtah khalu gunairudyanalata vanalatabhiih.”

(How lovely they look! If such is the beauty of maids, who dwell in woodland retreats, the like of which is not easily to be found in the recesses of a palace, then indeed are the garden plants well surpassed in merit by the woodland creepers.) (Abhijnana Sakuntalam. 1-17)

In classical terms, this is “Darsananuraga” (love at first sight) which is defined thus in Natyasastra:-

“Sravanad darsanad rupad angalilavicestitaih,  
Madhurasca samalapaih kamah samupajayate.”

(Passion is aroused through hearing of the beloved, by beholding her form or by her gestures, as well her sweet speech.) (Natyasastra III : 22-158)

Dushanta is stricken with love for Sakuntala the moment he sets eyes on her. He mentally contemplates on her wonderful beauty: -

Idam kilavyajamanoharam vapu-  
Stapakhaaman sadhyaitum ya icchati.  
Dhruvam sa nilotpalapatradharaya  
Samilatam chettumrsirvyavasati.

(The sage who would make this artlessly- charming form capable of enduring penance would attempt, I suppose, to cleave the Sami tree with the edge of the blue lotus leaf.) (Abhijnana Sakuntalam. 1-18)

Idamupahitasuksmagranthina skandhadese,

Stanayugapannahacchadina valkalena.

Vapurabhinavamasyah pusyati svam na sobham

Kusumamiva pinaddham pandupatrodarena.

(This her youthful body, by reason of the bark garment tied with delicate knots upon the shoulder, and covering the expanse of her twin breasts, does not exhibit its own charms, like a flower enfolded by a pale leaf.) ((Abhijnana Sakuntalam. 1-19)

Following upon the birth of love (Srngara) as a result of sight (of the beloved) the next stage of love is meeting face to face. For this event Kalidasa has skillfully woven the scene of the Bhramara Vrttanta yojana (scheme of the bee episode). It is contrary to maryada (decorum) for an unknown young man to approach a maiden without sound reason. This Bhramara Vrttanta affords Duhsanta the excuse to approach Sakuntala. Duhsanta sees Sakuntala terrified by the bee, and sometimes longs for her, and sometimes treating the bee as a rival, compares himself with the bee and expresses envy for it. On the other hand, Sakuntala is an inexperienced, pious heroine who does not have the knowledge of worldly ways. She thus expresses the first kindling of love in her heart in a furtive manner. These are the ways in which Ratibhava is evoked to produce Srngara Rasa. By the end of the First Act, Duhsanta's passion for Sakuntala becomes so fierce that he is incapable of separating himself from the hermitage. He feels no desire to return to his capital city:-

“Mandautsukyo'smi nagaragamanam prati, na klialu saknomi

Sakuntalavyaparadatmanam nivartayitum.

Gacchati purah sariram dhavati pascadasanstutam cetah

Cinansukamiva ketoh prativatam niyamanasya.”

(I am not very eager to return to the city. I cannot, in truth, divert my mind from occupying itself with (thoughts about) Sakuntala for, ...my body moves onward, but my heart, (as if) unrelated (with the former) runs back, like the silken cloth of a banner borne against the wind.

(Abhijnana Sakuntalam. 1-34)

In Act III when Duhsanta, overcome with pangs of separation, enters the bower (latamandapa) for mental digression, he sees Sakuntala submerged in the pangs of separation and hears her words: -

“Yatah prabhrti mama darsanapathamagatah

Sa tapovanaraksita rajarsih.” (From the very instant the pious king who guards our hallowed forest met my eye...)

She continues after being urged by her friends: -

“Tatah arabhya tadgatenabhilasenaitada vastbasmi samvrtta” (from that instant, my love has reduced me to this plight.)  
(Abhijnana Sakuntalam. Act-III)

It is indeed a fortuitous turn of events that Duhsanta should arrive on the scene when the love letter indited by Sakuntala, with her nails, is being read aloud. He overhears Priyamvada’s proposal to protect her friend Sakuntala’s life and he stamps the words of acceptance—“Sadharano’yam Pranayah Sarvatha ‘nugrihito ‘smi”- our passion is reciprocal. Duhsanta again and again pledges his total dedication (ananyaparanayata) and service of every kind, to the extent of caressing her feet. Sringara Rasa oozes from these lines: -

“Kim sitalaih klamavinodibhirardravatam

Sancarayami nalinidalatala vrantaih

Anke nidhaya yathasukham te

Samvahayami caranavuta padmatamrau.”

(shall I set in motion moist breezes by means of fans of cool lotus leaves to dissipate your languor, or shall I, O round- thighed (maiden), lay those feet red as lotuses in my lap and press them so as to relieve your pain?)  
(Abhijnana Sakuntalam. III-20)

Duhsanta enlists the aid of tradition in proposing to marry Sakuntala according to the rites of Gandharva Vivaha (secret marriage following love at first sight). Duhsanta is indeed eager to seal his proposal to Sakuntala with a kiss.

In this vein Sambhoga/Sanyoga Sringara flows unimpeded into the Third Act. The other Rasas that are evoked in the flow of the story serve to heighten the predominant Rasa, Sringara.

Sringara in its wide sense includes all feelings and emotions evoked towards a person to whom one is attracted or attached. Sakuntala is a prime example of a pure and innocent maiden undergoing the natural process of the human mind and body. Duhsanta is the catalyst which brings this about. Hence Sringara or Ratibhava is not something secretive, shameful, prurient or offensive. Kalidasa therefore depicts this Sringara without reserve, and it must be comprehended in its context of life- affirmation. The Sringara of Siva and Parvati in Kumarsambhavam must accordingly also be appreciated in its context. The Rasas are subservient to the larger purpose or goal of the poet or his characters; and their ultimate effect is transcendental bliss, not preoccupation with physical matters.

The Seventh Act also sees the expression of this Sambhoga Sringara, when Duhsanta and Sakuntala are reunited after prolonged separation. Seeing Sakuntala enwrapped in untidy garments, Duhsanta deeply regrets his earlier cruelty. Duhsanta’s reunification with his beloved, after his transformation into tenderness and love through the redeeming power of penance, immerse the audience in a deep experience of Sanyoga Sringara (union of lovers). The following outpouring of Duhsanta is noteworthy:

“Priye, krauryamapi me tvayi prayuktamanukulaparinamam

Samvrttam. Yadahamidanim tvaya pratyabhijnatamatmanam

Pasyami.”

(Oh, my beloved, even the cruelty I showed to you has come to have a happy conclusion, since I find that you have recognized me.) (Abhijnana Sakuntalam. VII)

This union has been compared with the re- union of the moon and Rohini after an eclipse:-

“Smrtibhinnamohatamaso distya pramukhe sthitasi me sumukhi,

Uparagante sasinah samupagata rihini yogam”

(By the kindness of heaven, o lovely faced one, thou stands again before me, the darkness of whose delusion has been dispelled by recollection. The star Rohini at the end of an eclipse rejoins her (beloved) moon. ((Abhijnana Sakuntalam. VII-22)

The reunion is seen in its completeness or grande finale when Sakuntala, Duhsanta and prince Sarvadamana appear together. Kalidasa has introduced the character of Maricamuni to express the poignancy and tenderness of this moment, through and imagery of piety (sraddha), wealth (vitta) and law or destiny (vidhi).

Distya sakuntala Sadvhi sadapatyamidam bhavan,

Sraddha vittam vidhisceti tritayam tatsamagatam. (Abhijnana Sakuntalam. VII-29)

This couplet reveals much about Mahakavi Kalidasa’s attitude towards Sambhoga Srngara. The accomplishment of Srngara Rasa in the foregoing excerpts, through the morally tempered depiction of Duhsanta’s and Sakuntala’s love, is largely within the bounds of decorum (maryada).

The Sixth Act presents a golden example of the poet’s approach to the portrayal of Srngara- passion of the opposite sexes. Here we see Duhsanta, overcome with pain from being separated from Sakuntala, indulging in picture painting to divert himself. He is intent on painting the banks of Malini River in order to portray a pair of swans cavorting happily; and a black deer (Krsna mrga) with the doe (mrgi) trying to rub her eyes for relief on the horn of the male: -

“Karya saikatalinahansamithuna srotovaha malini

Padastamabhito nisannaharina gauriguroh pavanah,

Sakhalambitavalkalasya ca tarornirmatumicchamyadhah

Srnge krsnamrgasya vamanayanam kanduyamanam mrgim “

(the stream of Malini ought to be drawn with a pair of swans resting on its sands: and both on its sides must appear the sacred hills at the base of the Himalayan ranges, where the deer are squatting; and I wish to draw, underneath a tree that bears some bark- garments suspended from its boughs, a doe that rubs her left eye on the horn of a black antelope.)

(Abhijnana Sakuntalam. VI-17)

The underlying sentiment of Mahakavi Kalidasa in his portrayal of Sanyoga Srngara is the joyousness and sweetness (madhurya) and mutual trust of conjugal life. This leads to strong relationship which

withstand all internal as well as external assaults, making for a happy family and stable society. Hence Kalidasa, even in his Sringara description, is ever mindful of social cohesion and mutual trust.

It becomes apparent that in Abhijnana sakuntalam, vipralambha Sringara has been portrayed to a far greater extent than Sambhoga (Sanyoga). While the purpose of this is the reinforcement of Sambhoga sringara thus giving a supra- physical dimension even to Sambhoga- the approach of poetics to this question developed on the basis that Sambhoga Sringara cannot be pusta (complete) without Vipralambha (pangs of separation –(na vina vipralambhena sambhogah pustimarhati.)

**Conclusion-** The repudiation of Sakuntala is no doubt vipralamba sringara. But it also arouses the pathetic sentiment i.e., karuna rasa. The curse of Durvasa, loss of Duhsanta's memory is the cause of the lovers' suffering. These determinants have led to the shedding of tears, sorrow and grief for both Sakuntala and Duhsanta. Such consequents combine with the vyabhicharibhavas like the king's fainting to produce karuna rasa. Another example of sorrow in the drama is Sakuntala's departure from Kanva's ashrama, the scene is full of sorrow. There is tear in everyone's eyes. Even the deer (sarangarava), the trees shed tears while she is leaving for her husband's house. Though Kanva and other hermits were happy that Sakuntala was going to her husband's house but the very realization that their separation was permanent one could not stop Kanva also sighing in grief

The examples of the various rasas in Sakuntala show Kalidasa's deep insight into the Bharata's rasasutra. Rasa as we know is the sthayibhava produced by the union of vibhava, anubhava and vyabhicharibhava. It is not just the mixture of these bhavas that is the cause of rasa. A poetic genius alone can conceive such a configuration. It is genius of Kalidasa that he could write such a wonderful play Sakuntala, where its aesthetic configuration is so perfect that it has outshone all other plays for centuries.

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