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Abhinavagupta: *Abhinavabharati*

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What is this module about?

In this module we will learn about the eleventh century Kashmiri philosopher Abhinavagupta and his remarkable commentary on Bharata's *Natyashastra* called *Abhinavabharati*. We will discuss how Abhinavagupta through this commentary contributed to Indian poetics. We will also discuss how his work *Abhinavabharati* has helped the subsequent generations of philosophers and critics of Indian poetics to understand and comprehend Bharata's *Natyashastra* better. The module will talk about how he expanded upon Bharata's concept of *rasa* and included the ninth *rasa*, the *Shanta Rasa* in the list. We will talk about the concept of *Sthayibhava* and its relation to the experience of *rasa*. We will also discuss how the *dhvanikaras* regarded the concept of *Guna* and *Riti*. Last but not the least we will discuss how Abhinavagupta places the spectator or the reader at the centre of the aesthetic experience and shows that an artistic expression finds its fulfilment at the heart of the recipient.

I. Introduction: Who is Abhinavagupta?

Abhinavagupta was a philosopher, intellectual and a spiritual leader of Kashmir Saivism from ca. 950-1020. He has largely contributed to Indian poetics through his two remarkable commentaries on Bharata called *Abhinava-bharati* and on Anandavardhana called *Kavyalokalochana*. P.V. Kane remarks about Abhinavagupta that he was one of the most remarkable personalities of medieval India. He was a man of acute intellect and was an encyclopaedic scholar. "In his eager search for knowledge, Abhinavagupta states that he resorted to teachers of *tarka* (*nyaya* and *Vaisesika* systems), and of Buddha, Arhata and Vaisnava doctrines. Abhinava was proficient in yogic practices, he believed that he had realized the Highest Reality (Siva)" (Devy, 61) His work *Abhinava-bharati*, as is mentioned in the fourth introductory verse, has been inspired by his teacher Bhatta Tauta about whom nothing is known except for the fact that he was Abhinava's teacher of dramaturgy. Abhinavagupta has mentioned clearly that he follows the tradition that has been handed down to him by his guru Tota. His work is an elaborate commentary on *Natyashastra* which has influenced almost all the subsequent scholars on this subject. Abhinavagupta introduces a new style of writing combining the qualities necessary for a commentary-writing with a high degree of originality expected of a theoretical treatise. The variety of works written and commented upon by Abhinavagupta proves his erudition, mastery of language, skill of

interpretation and the encyclopaedic knowledge that he possessed both as a critic and a gifted writer himself.

J. Tilakasiri in his article titled “Abhinavagupta- The literary critic and Commentator (An assessment)” states that, “Abhinavagupta occupies a unique position in the history of poetics for besides furnishing a very illuminating commentary to the *Natyashastra* called *Abhinavabharati*, where he attempts to define the aesthetic experience, he has helped us to understand the scope and significance of the dhvani theory by his systematic elucidation of the concepts that formed the basis for its formulation.” (Tilakasiri, 1-2)

Thus his work can also be treated as an independent treatise on Indian poetry, aesthetics and art. Abhinavagupta attempts an interpretation of Bharata’s texts at multiple levels: conceptual, structural and technical. He has commented on almost all the aspects of Bharata’s text.ⁱ

Natyashastra spread to different regions of the country as a result of which it accumulated regional variations and a number of manuscripts of *Natyashastra* are available which are only an approximation of the original, but not an exact communication of Bharata’s text.ⁱⁱ However Abhinavagupta’s commentary predates all the known manuscripts of *Natyashastra* and therefore the text he followed and commented upon gained a sort of benchmark status. *Abhinavabharati* is the oldest available commentary on Bharata’s *Natyashastra* since all other commentaries preceding him do not exist. In fact that commentaries existed prior to Abhinavagupta’s work has been known from *Abhinavabharati* itself since the author referred to those works and discussed the views expressed by those commentators. *Abhinavabharati* tells us that before Abhinava wrote his work there were commentaries on *Natyashastra* by Bhatta Lollata, Sri Sankuka, Bhatta Nayaka and his own guru Bhatta Tauta. Abhinavagupta presented the views of his predecessors and then went on to improve upon them as well as Bharata’s concept in the light of his own school—Kashmiri Shaivism.

II. What is *Rasa* in Indian Poetics?: A Brief Understanding

In his “Foreword” to P.Pancapagesa Sastri’s book *The Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure*, S. Kuppusvami Sastri, writes an apt description of what *Rasa* is and how it is discovered as the ‘essence of poetic art in Sanskrit literary criticism. He writes, “In the post-vedic age, as a result of a very careful and elaborate investigation of the various types of literary form and

literary content in the works of Sanskrit poets, the Indian *Alamkarikas* finally discovered *Rasa* as the essence of poetics art, elucidated its nature to be a close analogue to the blissful aspect of the *Reality* called *Brahman* and clearly enunciated the principle of suggestion as the only process which leads to the realisation of *Rasa*. The aesthetic experience called *Rasavada* is unique in its character and involves a state of perfect equanimity or absence of restlessness. This way of understanding the nature of *Rasavada* has enabled the Indian *Alamkarikas* to solve the problems connected with the emotional elements of sorrow, fear and even disgust, when they are used and felt in literature as sources of powerful artistic attraction and appeal.”

(P.Pancapagesa Sastri, XI)

Bharata's *Natyashastra* is a seminal work on Indian aesthetics which talks about the experience and pleasure one derives from a work of art by tasting the *Rasa*. *Rasa*, loosely translated as the juice or the flavour is tasted by a spectator and it is this experience of tasting that pervades and enchants him so much so that he gets immersed in it, excluded from all others. P.Pancapagesa Sastri writes, “By *Rasas* are meant the pleasurable instincts evoked in the spectator of the drama or the reader of poetry and then realised by him as emotions that thrill him with delectation.” (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 18) Bharata talks about this essence of *Rasa* in all traditional literature, theatre and other art forms of India. *Rasa* is the mood, sentiment or emotional tone that needs to be relished by the spectator. It is an act of savouring or tasting an experience of art. It is associated with *Asvadayatva*. For Bharata, *rasa* is the origin and ultimate aim of the work of art. *Rasa* is a state which is evoked by the combined effects of *Vibhava* (literally translated as ‘determinants’), *Anubhava* (translated as ensuants) and *Vyabhicharibhava* (translated as transitory moods) which determines the functioning of the mind of the recipient. The emotions that exist in human society in an unmanifested state are excited while reading/watching a work of art by a combined effect of *Vibhavas*, *Anubhavas* and *Vyabhicharibhavas* and this is known as *rasa*. Bharata, in his work mentions eight *rasas*, namely: *Bhayanak Rasa* (emotion is fear), *Hasya Rasa* (emotion is joy or laughter), *Rudra Rasa* (emotion is anger), *Adbhuta Rasa* (emotion is wonder), *Bibhatsa Rasa* (emotion is disgust), *Shringar Rasa* (emotion is love or eroticism), *Veera Rasa* (emotion is heroism), *Karuna Rasa* (emotion is compassion or sadness).

III. Abhinavagupta's Contribution to the *Rasa* theory: The Ninth *Rasa*

Abhinavagupta, who champions the *Dhvanipaddhati* elaborates the system of *Rasa* and traced *Rasa* to its very roots and analysed the psychological process of it. (P. Pancapagesa Sastri, 11) Abhinavagupta's synthesis of *Rasa* and *Dhvani* theory attempts an answer to

Bharata's concept of *Rasanispatti*. Abhinava's reply is that what is said to be produced is not just *rasa* but the *rasana* (i.e., relish) which issues out of the realisation. (Sharma, 172)

Abhinavagupta states clearly that there should be a complete identity of the aesthetic experience between the hero (*nayaka*), poet (*kavi*) and the reader or audience (*srotr*). This is the central thesis of Abhinavagupta that he uses to interpret the *rasa* theory and substantiate his argument. He also stresses on the harmonious agreement between the feelings and emotions of the poet on the one hand and the reader on the other. The process of appreciation is based on the concept of sympathetic identification with the character and situations described in literary works. It is only when there is an overflow of emotions in the mind of the poet that it flows to the mind of the reader. J. Tilakasiri points out that Abhinavagupta "attempts to explain the manner in which the series of emotions and feelings experienced by the poet are inferred in other and by the operation of the latent impressions reach a state of attunement. He also emphatically states that the aesthetic experience is not in the nature or recollection brought about by the *vibhavas* just as the recollection of firewood arises from the knowledge of smoke and that it is not something neutral, but a sensibility arising from the harmony of feelings produced in the heart. Therefore *rasa* is something revealed or brought out by a process of realisation." (Tilakasiri, 9-10)

Abhinavagupta opened up a whole new debate on Bharata's theory of *Rasa* with his commentary. According to Bharata, the principal human feelings are eight: delight, laughter, sorrow, anger, energy, fear, disgust, heroism and astonishment. These correspond to eight *rasas*: erotic, comic, pathetic, furious, heroic, terrible, odious and marvellous. One of the most significant contributions made by Abhinavagupta to the concept of *Rasa* is that he extended the eight *rasas* categorized by Bharata, by adding one more to the list, the *Santa Rasa*. He argues: 'the eight *rasas* are like eight gods, and the *santa* is like their highest centre Siva.' Abhinava regarded *santa rasa* (peace and tranquillity) as not merely an additional *rasa* but that one attribute that permeates all else and in to which everything else moves to reside. He explained that *Shanta rasa* underlies all the other mundane *rasas* as their common denominator. All the other *rasas* emanate from the *Shanta rasa* and resolve into it. *Shanta rasa* is a state where the mind is at rest, in a state of tranquillity. The other *rasas* are more transitory in character than the *Shanta rasa*. It is after Abhinavagupta that all other critics have spoken about nine *rasas*.

IV. The Realisation of the *Rasa* and the Concept of *Sahrdaya*

Abhinavagupta points out that all minds, especially those that are trained to be poets and critics are endowed with certain subtle and latent impressions that are implanted in their mind since birth. They are called *sthayibhavas*. In a work of poetry or a play the *vibhavas* and the *anubhavas* first indicate to the readers or spectators the mental conditions of the characters which are then understood by the readers and spectators in a general way. These *vibhavas* and *anubhavas* then call the *sthayibhavas* in the minds of the readers to play. The minds that are already concentrating on the work of art because of the skill of the poet gets more concentrated on the awakened *sthayibhavas* and derive extreme pleasure. It is then that the reader becomes the *sahrdaya* of the poet. Abhinavagupta explains this in a much uncomplicated way. He suggests that in every human mind there are some *sthayibhavas* or dormant emotions, namely *rati* (love for good things), *hasya* (laughter), *shoka* (grief), *krodh* (anger), *bhay* (fear), *utsaha* (energetic enthusiasm), *jugupsa* (disgust), *sham* (renunciation). Some of these are dominant in some people, while in others they are less powerful. It is when men and women in actual life find themselves in situations capable of rousing these latent instincts in them, the instincts are roused and then developed and manifested by the proper circumstances. When such circumstances are withdrawn the instincts get back to their dormant conditions, fit, of course, to be rekindled again. These latent instincts are impressions that aesthetic pleasure or *rasa*-realisation takes its origin. (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 168-170)

But all individuals do not enjoy a piece of poetry or a dramatic piece equally although each one of them has the latent instinctive capacity of enjoying it. According to Abhinavagupta, all instincts are not of similar strength in an individual. Moreover every reader or spectator requires some special qualifications to bring into play her/his latent capacity to enjoy aesthetic pleasure. It is then that s/he becomes a regular *Adhikari*, i. e., “accustomed in the world to observing phenomena evoking love, or anger, or valour that is, having an appreciative experience of life he is able to appreciate life ideally represented in literature and on the boards. He is called by Abhinavagupta a *Sahrdaya*.” (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 173) This *sahrdaya* must have a poetic heart which is attuned to appreciate work of art and this attunement is the result of certain kind of discipline involving constant study and appreciation of literature. Because of his intellectual power and because of the excellence of the actors and the work of art, the *sahrdaya* comes to see the persons before him not as any particular individual or their relation not as relationship between two individuals but as men and women capable of giving rise to particular emotion in the abstract with which they can now relate. To enjoy the exclusive aesthetic pleasure, the *sahrdaya* will also have to exclude

his own individuality otherwise his personal relations and predicament can become obstacles thus preventing him from deriving ultimate pleasure. (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 175-76)

Abhinavagupta calls the function of the *vibhavas* “*Vibhavna*”, *anubhavas* “*anubhavna*” and *vyabhicaribhavas* “*samuparanjana*”. *Vibhavana*’s role is to bring the germ to the status of a sprout, *anubhavana* initiates the process of making a thing fit to be experienced and enjoy and *Samuparanjana* is said to mean the process of making a thing fully visible. It is through this gradual process that the dormant mental conditions are roused and made fully visible and finally are enjoyed as *Rasas*. But the *sahrdaya* does not realize this evoked mental condition as his own mental condition. This perception of things in abstract is extremely necessary for Abhinavagupta otherwise the dormant mental conditions will never be evoked. The emotions depicted in the piece of art becomes generalised to the extent that it becomes an universal aspect free from all the barriers of time, space and individuality and realise the highest stage of emotion which is always pleasurable. In case the *Sahrdaya* understands them to be someone else’s emotions then he will immediately become indifferent towards it and will not enjoy it at all.ⁱⁱⁱ

V. The significant features of Abhinavagupta’s theory of *Rasa*-realisation

1. Every *sahrdaya* possess some latent impressions in his mind fit to be roused and realised as *Rasas* under proper conditions.
2. The suggestion of the *bhavas* of the characters in a poem or drama is provided by the *vibhavas* and *anubhavas*.
3. Understanding things in poetry and drama in a universal or generalized way.
4. Thereby the corresponding dormant *sthayibhavas* of the *sahrdaya* are awakened.
5. The *abhinaya* and such other devices are useful in weaning the *sahrdaya*’s mind from distractions and of the *vibhavas* and the rest are useful in the awakening of the *sahrdaya*’s *sthayibhavas*.
6. The *sahrdaya* relishes the awakened *sthayibhavas* as *Rasas*.
7. The relish or enjoyment is a peculiar mental perception.

VI. Obstacles to the realisation of *Rasa*^{iv}

1. The first obstacle recognised by Abhinavagupta is the absence of propriety or lack of reasonableness of things presented, or what can be called the want of realism. If a spectator or a reader question the probability of the occurrence of events in the work

of art then his concentration is disturbed and the awakening of *sthayibhavas* are interfered and realisation of *Rasa* is hindered. Abhinavagupta suggests that a would-be poet should take theme from the established epics so that even when he depicts the extraordinary, the scenes are not doubted on the grounds of probability.

2. The second obstacle consists in understanding what goes on before the spectator and whether the *bhavas* suggested and revealed by the *abhinaya* or poetry is relating either to himself or to another or both. In this case the realisation of the *Rasa* is interfered with. If the spectator refers what he sees to himself he becomes a party to transactions, but if he refers to others then he becomes indifferent. This obstacle can be removed by use of devices which idealise things like costumes, music, or devices that Bharata calls *Natyadharmi*.
3. Another obstacle that Abhinavagupta talks about is that of the presence of private grief or joy which he calls *Hridayasgranthi*. These private emotions will not allow the spectator or reader to concentrate on the work of art, thereby hindering the realisation of *Rasa*. The mind needs to be cleared and that can be affected by music and other theatrical arrangements.
4. The fourth obstacle is the absence of adequate means for a clear and immediate realisation of the *bhavas* by the spectator.
5. The fifth obstacle is the lack of clearness of perception. The only way in which the fourth and the fifth obstacles can be dealt with is immediate realisation of *bhava* through visualising things like actions, gesticulations.
6. Abhinavagupta then lays stress on the proper adjustment of emphasis by poets and dramatists. Let the poet or the dramatist not mistake the means for the end. He should realise that the awakening of the spectator's native mental impressions is the end of his endeavours and that his causes (*vaibhavas*) and circumstances (*anubhavas* and *vyabhicaribhavas*) are the means he employs to that end. Their function begins and ends with suggesting of the *sthayibhavas*; by themselves they are nothing. Realising that let him not bring what are mere means into prominence and keep the end the *sthayibhavas* in the background. If he did, his work would suffer from the defect of *Apradhanta* and his spectators will not be able to enjoy *Rasa*.
7. Lastly, the poet or the dramatist should not mislead the reader or the spectator. He should let his readers know what is the emotion that a (suggested) *anubhava*, (presented) *vibhava* or a (suggested) *vyabhicaribhava* is supposed to evoke in his mind.

VII. The Concept of *Guna* and *Riti* in Abhinavagupta

All the writers who preceded the *Dhvani* theorists, including the *Alamkara* school theorists regarded *guna* and *riti* as an external embellishment of poetry attained by means of certain standard excellence. Bharata also dealt with the concept of *guna* and recognized it so far as it constituted the *anubhava* which helps the realisation of *Rasa* in drama. The *dhvani* theorists looked at poetry from a different point of vision. They considered *Rasadhvani* to be the most important feature in poetry and all other poetic elements are considered subordinate by them. The *gunas*, *alamkaras* or *dosas* “is judged by them not on their own account but in terms of the part they play towards the realisation of *Rasa*.” (Lahiri, 198-99) According to the *Dhvani* school, *Rasa* is a process that cannot be clearly discerned because it is realised simultaneously with the *vacyartha* or the denoted sense. When *Rasa* occupies the central position rendering the *vacyartha* subordinate to itself, it is a case of *dhvani* but when the *vacyartha* occupies the principal position and the *Rasa*, *Bhava*, etc stand subordinate to it, then *Rasa*, *Bhava* do not constitute a case of *dhvani* but of *alamkaras*. Therefore *Dhvani* is that class of poetry where the expressed sense is subordinate to the suggested sense. *Guna* for the scholars of the *dhvani* school concerns directly to the inner nature of poetry whereas the *alamkaras* constitute the external factors. *Gunas* belong to and are the properties of *Rasa*, the *alamkaras* are related to *sabda* and *artha*. But *alamkaras* are also recognised by the *Dhvanikaras* to the extent to which they play a part towards the ultimate realisation of *Rasadhvani*.

Alamkaras are undoubtedly the external ornaments which constitute the words and the sense, but they have a direct relationship with the underlying sentiment of a poem which is explained by Abhinavagupta. He says that, “the real cause is the *dhvanyatma* (i.e., *Rasadhvani*) which the poetic figure ultimately decorate.” (Lahiri, 202) What he means to say is that although the ornaments are worn by an individual on the body, yet it is the soul of that individual that gets glorified. It is because of this that a dead body with ornaments do not shine because there the soul is non-existent.

The *Dhvanikaras* mentions and characterises only three *Gunas*, namely *Ojas* (energy), *Prasada* (lucidity) and *Madhurya* (sweetness) instead of the usual ten of Bharata, Dandin and Vamana. These three *Gunas* have been classified on the basis of the particular mental conditions involved in the perception of *Rasa*. Abhinavagupta’s teachings tell us that the mental condition itself is primarily the *Guna*. Thus the *Gunas*, *Ojas*, *Prasada* and *Madhurya* exist respectively in the form of the three mental conditions *dipti* (expansion), *vyapakatva*

(pervasion) and *ardrata* or *druti* (melting) which are evoked only in the process of the realization of *Rasa* and so the *Guna* has an inseparable association with that element. The question of *Guna* does not arise when there is no *Rasa*. Hence, *rasa* is the ultimate cause of which the *Guna* is produced as an effect. (Lahiri, 206)

There is a mutual relationship between *Guna* and *Rasa*: if it is true that *Guna* comes into existence on account of the *Rasa*, it is equally true that the *Guna* constitutes a part and parcel in the actual realization of *Rasa*. In that case the theorists deal with the question from two different points of view: a) a single *Guna* belongs to different *Rasas*, b) different *Gunas* belong to a single *Rasa*. Thus, *Madhurya* or sweetness is present generally in the *Sringara Rasa* but is also present in *Vipralambha Sringara* and the *Karuna*. Similarly *Ojas* or energy which involves an expansion of the mind resides generally in the *Rudra Rasa*, but Abhinavagupta remarks that it may also be present in the *Vira* and *Adbhuta Rasas*. *Prasada* is a *Guna* which is common to all the *Rasas*. *Hasya*, *Bhayanaka*, *Bibhatsa* and *Santa Rasas* contain more than one *Guna*. (Lahiri, 209-10)

Dhvanikaras remark that *ritis* were introduced by the theorists who only dimly understood the true significance of poetry. This means that when *Rasadhvani* is accepted as the all important element of poetry, there is no need of conceiving a separate poetic element as *Riti*, which produces no more than a sensuous delight. Abhinavagupta distinctly remarks that the *Ritis* are made to resolve into the *Gunas*: and since the *Gunas* are subordinate to *Rasa*, the *Ritis* merge their identities in *Gunas* and ultimately in *Rasa*. (Lahiri, 212)

VIII. The Difference between Abhinavagupta and other Critics of Indian Poetics

Abhinavagupta varies from the other commentators in a number of explanations that he provides of *Natyashastra*. Abhinavagupta's commentary was one of the best of his time because he removed the defects that had entered into the discussion due to Bhattanayaka's exposition of Bharata where he a) needlessly imported two additional powers into poetical language, the *Bhavakatva* and the *Bhogakrttva* and b) that after all, he did not convincingly explain that the pleasure enjoyed by the spectator was his own emotional pleasure, due to the rousing of pleasurable instincts. (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 167)

1. Bhattanayaka was of the opinion that the emotional pleasure spoken of as enjoyed by the *Sahrdaya* was due to the mental conditions of the person or persons described in the poetic or dramatic piece, presented and understood in a generalised form. But Abhinavagupta differed

from him and stated that the pleasure is due to the *sahrdaya*'s native pleasurable instincts aroused in his bosom.

Again according to Bhattanayak the enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure is a separate function following the perception of generalised *bhavas* of the character. But according to Abhinavagupta the very perception of the awakened native *sthayibhava* is itself the enjoyment.

Both Bhattanayaka and Abhinavagupta agreed on the exemption of the mind of the *sahrdaya* from distraction and the impersonal perception of things presented. But while Bhattanayaka traces these two functions of the mind to a power called *Bhavakatva*, Abhinavagupta rightly says that the very causes which, according to Bhattanayaka, bring about *Bhavakatva*, effect this exemption of the mind from distraction and this impersonal perception of things without *Bhavakatva*.

Both the authors agree that enjoyment follows the *sahrdaya*'s impersonal perception of things, but Bhattanayaka needlessly resort to a function of poetry called *Bhogakrittva*. Abhinavagupta convincingly tells that the very power of Suggestion explains the *sahrdaya*'s enjoyment of bliss. The power of suggestion now presents the object of enjoyment in the shape of the evoked *sthayibhavas* and enjoyment sets in without the office of *Bhogakrittva*. (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 182-85)

2. Sri Sankuka also concluded that *sthayibhavas* were *rasas* but there are some difference between his thoughts and the thoughts of Abhinavagupta. Firstly Sri Sankuka says that the *sthayibhava* spoken of is an inferred *sthayibhava*; Abhinavagupta speaks only of the *sthayibhava* native to and present always in the mind of the spectator albeit in a dormant state.

Sri Sankuka says that the inferred *sthayibhava* is inferred in the actor considered as the original character, whereas for Abhinavagupta the *sthayibhava* is, first and last, of the spectator.

Sri Sankuka's *sthayibhava* in the actor is in reality, non-existent but Abhinavagupta's *sthayibhava* evoked in the spectator is a reality.

Again Sri Sankuka says that some *sthayibhava* inferred to exist in a third person (the actor) gives pleasure to the spectator, whereas Abhinavagupta rightly points out that the spectator's own innate *sthayibhava* is responsible for his enjoyment.

Moreover Sri Sankuka never talks about the development of the *sthayibhava* since to him *Rasa* is nothing more than the mere *sthayibhava* inferred to exist in the actor. But to

Abhinavagupta the *sthayibhava* itself is not *Rasa*. In order to attain the state of *Rasa*, it should come out of its dormant state and should be developed and nourished. (P.Pancapagesa Sastri, 194-95)

Edwin Gerow points out that Sri Sankuka replaces *karyakaranabhava* (relation of cause and effect) with the familiar notion of imitation (*anukarana*) according to which one may infer the *rasa* from the wholly fictive portrayal on the stage. *Rasa* is, in fact, this inference (a state of knowing) based on imitation. This notion, though clear enough to have dominated Western aesthetics for 2300 years, is unsound, according to Abhinava's teacher Bhatta Tauta (which Abhinava also himself supports) because it too is overtly realistic, and also psychologically untenable. In no true sense can it be said that any of those involved in the drama- the spectator, the actor or even the *critics*- are imitating anything. Imitation involves an awareness that one is not something else (which one imitates), and this kind of awareness according to Tauta and implicitly approved by Abhinava is wholly incompatible with the kind of awareness that proceeds from the drama- an awareness that proceeds from the drama- an awareness characterized by a thorough immersion in the events of the play, so thorough that the audience, the players even the *critics* lose all sense of their separate psychological identities. Imitation explains what is unsuccessful in the play rather than what is successful. (Gerow, 265)

IX. Conclusion

Abhinavagupta's place among the commentators of Bharata is really high. Abhinavagupta removed the flaws from the previous expositions and also provided an explanation of Bharata which was unquestionably accepted and followed by all the later writers. He was of the opinion that the true nature of the *Rasa* was already correctly pointed out by Bharata and therefore his work is only to expound the sage's explanation clearly. He was the first one to explain the spectator's pleasure in a play or a reader's in a poem as a phenomenon going on within him and resulting out of elements present within him. He took a stand firmly on the rock of suggestion and employed it as a powerful means to a supreme end which is the enjoyment of aesthetic pleasure. He is the one who gives immense importance to the figure of the reader or spectator, his *sahridaya*.

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ⁱ See <https://sreenivasaraos.com/category/abhinavagupta/>

ⁱⁱ See <https://sreenivasaraos.com/category/abhinavagupta/> for further details.

ⁱⁱⁱ See P.Pancapagesa Sastri, *The Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure*, pp- 176-181 for a detailed discussion with suitable examples.

^{iv} This entire section is a summary from P.Pancapagesa Sastri, *The Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure*, pp- 185-192. For detailed discussion with examples consult the book.