
Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa (generalization) in *Rasa* aesthetics

Abhinavagupta's centrality to Hindu self-understanding

- Thank BORI, Prof. Bahulkar & Chetana Gosavi for invitation. Felicitations on “Millennium of Abhinavagupta: His Contribution to World Thought”
- “Abhinava-Bhairava: Toward a Unitive Understanding of Indic Traditions” (original conference title). Bhairava deciphered at Mumbai University Jan 06.
- Serious interest in, even commitment to, Kashmir Shaivism & Pratyabhijñā, being countered by ‘authoritative’ Western scholars (Pollock, Shulman)
- Debunk validity, coherence, universal promise of *rasa*-aesthetics by pitting Hindu theorists against each other (Nāyaka & Ānanda against Abhinava)
- Section of 70-page article on “Abhinava’s *Rasa*-aesthetics & Bharata’s sacrificial theater: humor & its semblance in the *Mṛcchakaṭikā*” (IGNCA)
- ***Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa***: basic yet misunderstood concept; implications beyond (secularized) aesthetics to embrace theater as sacrifice (*yajña*)

Sheldon Pollock & Politics of American Indology

- *Rasa-dhvani* deliberately misconstrued as residing in audience (not text)
- *Abhinavabhāratī* (NŚ commentary) abandons *dhvani* of *Locana*
- **Abstraction** (of *Sītā*) to universal (womanhood) is contrary to experience
- Ungrateful **plagiarist** of Nāyaka's *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* & his Vedic analogy
- **Parochial: response** theory rightly rejected in West, *rasa* in Shakespeare?
- **Secular** tradition of *rasa*-aesthetics compromised by mystical leanings
- **Rāmāyaṇa** oppressive (despotic, patriarchal, apartheid) text (*puruṣārtha*?)
- Convoluted, **obscure** (Pollock), boring, pedantic, overrated (Shulman)

Do you agree with each of these assertions?

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Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa (generalization) in *Rasa* aesthetics

- **Rasa**: shared enjoyment long before adequate theoretical conceptualization
- **Bharata**: for Abhinava, notion already implicit in NŚ term ‘*sāmānya-guṇa*’
- **Udbhaṭa**: (vain) attempts to force-fit *rasa* into rhetorical figures of poetics
- **Ānandavardhana**: *dhvani* as 3rd linguistic power, solely responsible for *rasa*
- **Bhaṭṭanāyaka**: models ‘generalized’ *rasa*-evocation on Vedic injunction
- **Tanmayībhavana**: aesthetic identification indispensable (for love, pathos)
- **De-individualization** of spectators: not of onstage character (Rāma / Sītā)
- **Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa**: our shared unifying participation in play through ‘hero’

***Rasa* not ‘subjective’ response but **meaning** of dramatic configuration**

- (Pollock’s Harvard mentor) Ingall’s enjoyed *rasa* so much that he wanted share with other anglophone readers by re-rendering (rather than translating). I learned to appreciate such poetry thus, before being able to do so directly in Sanskrit. Ānanda’s examples are drawn from pre-*dhvani* literature (Kalidāsa, etc.)

==== Udbhata ====

- *Rasa*-discourse assumed a new dimension with [...] Udbhaṭa (c. 800), a predecessor of Ānandavardhana and Bhaṭṭanāyaka, and **first known NŚ commentator**. This was a **period of incoherence and confusion arising from the attempt to force-fit the primacy of theatrical *rasa* onto the separate preexisting discipline of poetics (*kāvya*) defined analytically through the enumeration and differentiation of rhetorical figures of speech (*alaṅkāra*)**, so much so that modalities of *rasa* were inconsistently counted among them. [...] The linguistic problem posed by *rasa* in poetry (*kāvya*) had already been resolved through the *dhvani*-hierarchy, introduced by Ānandavardhana, that culminates in the suggestion of *rasa*. Abhinava is now redefining its ‘semblance’ on firmer cognitive, emotional and ethical foundations **while fulfilling Udbhaṭa’s project of harmonizing poetry and theater within a single analytical schema**. This is the interdisciplinary and historical significance of Abhinava reproducing this *rasābhāsa* passage in

both his commentaries.

==== Bharata ====

- For Abhinava, ‘universalization’ is already presupposed, though not yet clarified, by Bharata’s description of our shared *rasa* experience. {“Curiously, Abhinava seems not even to think of some of these ideas as Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s; in AB 1.275.6, for example, he attributes the idea of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* to Bharata” (Pollock, Nāyaka 171 n.70). The pivotal term *sāmānya* (‘common’), used in NŚ to refer to the ‘quality’ (*guṇa*) that distinguishes *rasa* from *bhāva*, could only refer to ‘universalization’—without explaining how—of ordinary personal emotion. “Last but not least, we see the following definition as pivotal in the understanding of the essence of *rasa*: “Thus, these forty-nine *bhāvas*, [which make] the basis for the manifestation of poetic *rasas*, should ascend [to them]. *Rasas* emerge out of them as they merge with the quality of universality’ (*evam ete kāvya-rasa-abhivyakti-hetava ekonapañcāśad-bhāvāḥ pratyavagantavyāḥ | ebhyaś ca sāmānya-guṇa-yogena rasā niṣpadyante* NŚ, p. 93). As follows from this, the *rasa* appears precisely at the instant when the *bhāva* acquires a certain supplementary quality named *sāmānya*. The author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* makes this concise thesis, without getting back to it later in order to give it any explanation. Neither does he explain the concept of *sāmānya*, which characterizes a vital difference between the *rasa* and the *bhāva*” (N. R. Lidova, *Rasa* 198-199).}

==== Ānandavardhana ====

Sheldon Pollock & Politics of American Indology

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Abhinavagupta = indispensable foundation for Swadeshi Indology

==== Rasa-Dhvani ====

- It is through *tanmayībhavana* with the *āśraya* that the *vibhāva* loses its 'particularity' to become—unlike the psychological cause of the corresponding emotion in our real-life interactions— 'universal' (*sādhāraṇa*) to all the spectators. Due to such shared aesthetic identification with the (feelings depicted of the) character onstage (or projected by a poem), it is perfectly legitimate and even preferable to speak of the *rasa* as (if it were) 'located' in the *āśraya*. By appealing to those rare occasions when Ānandavardhana resorts to such shorthand, Pollock insists that this pioneering theoretician of *rasa-dhvani* (implicitly) denied its evocation (solely) within the listener. "To all appearances, *rasa* for Ānanda is something that exists in the texts and indeed, in the main character (or in the author, insofar as he becomes a character when the narrative voice of a lyrical poem is his own). It is something to be 'revealed' by the text and so presumably is located in it; the writer 'composes' it and the narrative elements 'possess' it. When discussing the relationship of linguistic 'texture' to the suggestion of *rasa*, Ānanda observes that the *rasa* must be 'appropriate to the speaker and to what he is saying.' "The "speaker" he adds. 'can be either the authorial voice or someone presented by the poet, and the latter can be either endowed with *rasa* and the stable emotions or devoid of them.' The one time that Ānanda actually mentions the locus of *rasa*, he identifies it as the character, either the protagonist or the antagonist; it is 'the hero's erotic *rasa*,' for example, that 'has reached the highest pitch of enhancement.' Clearly, as Ānanda's most recent translators point out, he is using *rasa* 'in its old sense of a particularly vivid emotion' rather than in its emergent sense of 'aesthetic delight'. All that he is concerned to explain is the mechanism by which the

text produces *rasa*, and here the idea of ‘implicature’ takes on critical importance” (Rasa 88). The “highest pitch” of *rasa* enjoyed by the *sahṛdaya* through *tanmayibhavana* is naturally perceived as indistinguishable from the feeling “vividly” experienced by the *āśraya* (see note 153 below).}

- Ānanda claimed that—unlike other forms of poetic ‘meaning’ (*artha*)—*rasa* can only be ‘suggested’ (*vyaṅgya*). Because the pioneering rhetorician was entirely focused on dissecting the linguistic form into its constitutive elements to reconstitute its suggestive power—a formidable all-consuming enterprise by itself—he sidestepped the question of how this ‘objective’ meaning could ‘come to rest’ (*viśrānti*) in the listener’s heart. {Pollock presents the same conceptual progression outlined here but then attempts to lay the ground for driving a theoretical wedge between Ānanda and his authoritative commentator: “All that being said, however, *rasa* itself has an undertheorized presence in Ānanda’s treatise, astonishingly so given its conceptual primacy. He never tells us what *rasa* actually is or why it should be central to the literary work; he never comments on, or even cites, the celebrated *Sūtra on Rasa*. More important, he never addresses the question of how the reader knows or experiences it. We are justified in inferring from this loud silence that for Ānanda, none of these questions mattered, and that the phenomenon of *rasa* was basically unproblematic. He conceived of it as his predecessors had; the great insights that would transform aesthetic theory were a generation away. For all his remarkable insight into how literary meaning is engendered, Ānanda plainly had no interest in how it was experienced, and in this he conformed to the formalistic analysis that he inherited. What was important for this analysis was not so much where *rasa* is or who knows or experiences it—these questions were to be made central only later—but how it comes to be where it is. [...] What Ānanda wants to understand are thus the *textual processes* by which *rasa* is made manifest. *Rasa* holds no interest as a theoretical problem or as subjective phenomenon—the question of aesthetic reception—however much it is the reader/viewer who makes the judgements about the successful or unsuccessful manifestation of *rasa*, and to whom in the final analysis *rasa* is ‘manifested’ or ‘implied’ or ‘suggested.’ [...] Implicature is the ‘soul’ of poetry, and *rasa* is the ‘soul’ of implicature. [...] What is critical to register for the intellectual history of *rasa* discourse is that Ānanda is positing a new linguistic modality (*śabdavṛtti*) for generating *rasa* in the text. And the most startling development in the coming centuries will see this turned into a psychological modality (*cittavṛtti*) for producing *rasa* in the viewer/reader, something that, given the actual arguments of the *Light of Implicature*, would likely have left the author mystified. If the idea of implicature transforms the entire future history of *rasa* discourse, the future history will, in turn, transform the idea itself” (Pollock, Rasa 87-89).}

- The *dhvani*-theorist could continue to analyze the emotional content of a poem as if it were ‘located’ in the imaginatively projected ‘person’ (*āśraya*), without methodological detriment, because *rasa* was above all and remains a shared undisputed direct experience for unbroken circles of connoisseurs (*sahr̥daya*) long before its satisfactory formulation as a theoretical construct. {This would-be ‘debunker’ (*vidūṣaka*) has still not understood the first thing about aesthetic emotion that he ought to have learned from his Harvard teacher, Daniel Ingalls. Nowhere does Ānanda argue that *rasa*, though evoked by precise and discernible linguistic mechanisms, is “located” in the text as opposed to the listener. Even where he occasionally describes the feeling as ‘belonging’ to a ‘character’ (*pātra*), this is perfectly legitimate (as shorthand) for we partake of the *rasa* through identification with the latter (rather than through another; see note 140 above). The “author” of *A Rasa Reader* has projected his own mystification on the *dhvani*-theorist.}
- This ‘subjectivity’ of the aesthetic experience—especially when the debate is displaced from the frozen page of poetry onto theatrical action onstage—gave Nāyaka the opening to deconstruct *dhvani* where it was left untheorized and hence most vulnerable. Integrating the latter’s psycholinguistic insights into his own defense and extension of Ānanda’s formal analyses, Abhinava shows that *rasa*—as ‘universalized’ emotion—is not an arbitrary subjective response but the shared meaning of the objective configuration. {This is the ‘critical’ misconstruing that allows our American ‘debunker’ (see note 153 above) to drive home the wedge between Ānanda and his staunch commentator: “Although Ānanda consecrated *rasa* as the very goal of literature in a way no thinker before him (save Bharata) had done, *rasa* remained for him what it was for his predecessors, a phenomenon related to the formal organization of the literary text. [...] Ānanda’s only consideration was how to make sense of the linguistic mechanism by which this feeling is created: it can never be directly expressed, he decided, or figuratively communicated; it can only be implied. [...] Living as much as a century and a half after Ānanda, [...] Abhinava aimed [...] to rescue Ānanda from his own obsolescence. He sought to do this by transforming Ānanda’s linguistic modality (*śabdavṛtti*), whereby *rasa* was cognized, into a psychological modality (*cittavṛtti*), whereby *rasa* was experienced. *Rasa* now became something ‘manifested’ not in the text by means of the aesthetic elements but by the activation of the ‘predispositions’ associated with the stable emotions that preexist in the heart of the sensitive reader [DhAL p.51]. This is undoubtedly a more subtle and interesting theory but one that Ānanda would almost certainly have been perplexed to see presented as his own” (Pollock, *Rasa* 188-189). [complete this citation]. Nowhere does Ānanda, who was dealing only with poetic speech, not dramatic

spectacle, argue that *rasa* exists only in the text and not in its hearer. As he simply sidesteps this issue, there is no reason to believe he would not have wholeheartedly endorsed Abhinava’s extension and completion of his own thought, had he lived to see the attacks leveled against his dhvani-theory precisely from such reader-response theorists à la Nāyaka.}

==== **Abhinavabhāratī vs. Locana ?**====

- Because Abhinava hardly discusses *dhvani* in his NŚ commentary, Pollock speculates that he had quietly outgrown the now problematic notion that he had earlier stoutly defended. “It is therefore at once surprising and unsurprising to realize how rarely Abhinava refers to ‘manifestation’ or its synonym ‘implicature’ in his later *New Dramatic Art*. He only mentions the idea in passing, and nowhere offers anything remotely approaching a full exposition, certainly nothing on the scale found in the synopsis of his theory that Ruyyaka, writing a century later and a half later (and almost certainly in ignorance of *The New Dramatic Art*), provides [...]. This silence is surprising not only because manifestation/implicature is core to his view in *The Eye* but also because that would be the terminology adopted by all later Sanskrit thinkers for the new reader-centered aesthetics. At the same time, it is unsurprising if we hypothesize, perfectly reasonably, not only that Abhinava found his earlier notions to be of diminished importance for a commentary on the *Treatise on Drama* but also that his own theory had matured, unrecognized though this possibility may be in the secondary literature—and even in the Sanskrit intellectual tradition. [...]” (Rasa 189). Such silent passing over of abandoned theories without due amends is rather the intellectually dishonest modus operandi of the Western Indologist (Malhotra, Sanskrit) rather than of the Hindu commentator whom they now aim to (mis-)interpret.

===== **Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa** =====

- The *vibhāvas* of (reciprocal) love—such as Rāma-Sītā, Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā, Cārudatta-Vasantasenā, Romeo and Juliette—remain richly individualized and impossible to confound, such that our relish of the *śṛṅgāra* evoked by each of these couples is uniquely textured and distinctly flavored. Hence ‘universalization’ (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) does not reduce the *vibhāva* to a generic lover or beloved stripped of all particulars—corresponding to the opposition between ‘particular’ (*viśéṣa*) and ‘universal’ (*sāmānya*) in Nyāya epistemology—that could only succeed, if at all, in invoking a tasteless ‘abstraction’ or ghost of *śṛṅgāra*. {“[...] here we come back to *bhāvanā* or *bhāvakatva*—the basic move that makes this ‘pleasuring’ possible is, according

Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s highly original insight, a ‘universalization’ (*sādhāraṇī-karaṇa*) that does away with the particularity of the characters on the stage, at the same time completely removing any egoistic investment on the part of the spectator in the emotions they are triggering. In other words, the Rāma we see on the stage is not the historical figure and epic hero but a stylized abstraction that is meant solely to provide a basis for a transient internal reorganization of the spectator’s emotional reality. The stable emotion (*sthāyi-bhāva*) that the character should be feeling actually overtakes the spectator from within through a mode of empathic identification that lacks all personal, egoistic features; the happy result is an oddly depersonalized pleasure defined as savoring the *rasa*. [...] There is no denying the tremendous explanatory power of this theory, which utterly transformed the terms of discourse within the tradition of Indian poetics; but at the same time, we cannot help but notice how odd it is. We’ll come back to the question of the spectator’s mental state in just a moment, but notice first how “universalization” does away, in a single, sweeping movement, with everything that makes any given character in a drama distinct from others of his or her type. It almost makes no difference whether we are looking at Rāma or Udayana, at Śakuntalā or Sītā or Vāsavadattā; the particularities of plot, too, become quite secondary to the business of *rasa* production by means of typologized abstraction. So radical is this way of understanding artistic endeavor that it cannot possibly be true for any classical Sanskrit play, although it took the discursive-theoretical tradition several centuries to recover from the rampant universalizing impulse.” (Shulman 66-67). Whereas particularities of place and time are indeed done away with (even in the case of the *tad-ātmaka rasas*)—we do not experience the *āśraya* as being “there and then” or “here and now”—Rāma otherwise does not lose the rich individuality that the drama (or poem) remains intent on bestowing upon him.

- Pollock’s understanding of Nāyaka is likewise clearly erroneous, especially for a pretentious Western scholar intent on pitting his contribution against that of Abhinava: “When a word like Sītā is used in a poem, it no longer refers to the particular historical personage who was Rāma’s wife—if it continued to do so, she could never become a licit ‘foundational factor’ for the viewer or reader’s desire, and hence *rasa* could never arise; in poetry ‘Sītā’ instead signifies woman as such. This is part of what Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka named the process of ‘commonization,’ which enables the reader to make the character’s emotional experience his own in such a way that he ‘actualizes,’ or reproduces, it. The reader of poetry of poetry comes to feel what Rāma once felt, just as the reader of scripture is prompted to do what Janamejaya once did” (*Rasa* 18).
- This elementary misunderstanding—in the introductory overview to *A Rasa*

Reader (2016) so widely acclaimed, even in India, as authoritative—becomes even more inexcusable in that *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* is succinctly but accurately outlined in my own introduction to *Abhinavagupta: Reconsiderations* (2004): “This ‘identification’ (*tanmayībhavana*) is so complete that we seem to be experiencing the same emotion without any distinction of self and other. This is precisely why our whole-hearted enjoyment of Sītā’s beauty through the eyes of Lord Rāma is no stigma to Indian aesthetics. [...] Through aesthetic identification, an emotional stimulus that was originally unique (*asādhāraṇa*) to a particular *āśraya* becomes in this way ‘generalized’ (*sādhāraṇī-karaṇa*) into an object of relish for the spectators at large, who experience the corresponding *rasa* (e.g., *śṛṅgāra* = love) in an ‘impersonal’ mode in the sense of its being not conditioned by an ascertainment of the form ‘I am in love’ (which would result in a purposive attitude) or ‘he/she is in love’ (which would leave one indifferent). Worldly (*laukika*) emotion immediately engenders a stream of cogitation, impelled by a purposive attitude towards the external stimulus, which sustains the feeling of self as distinct from other” (Visuvalingam, Abhinavagupta 11-12). Pollock contributed to this volume that I co-edited and my overview essay includes several substantive critical notes on his work. Are we to assume that he has not bothered to read them or that relevant studies by lesser known, especially Indian, scholars can be safely ignored or at least passed over in silence? A carbon copy of my typewritten PhD thesis, which offers a much more detailed treatment of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* based on the Sanskrit source passages, was hand-delivered by my sister-in-law to Shulman at the University of Jerusalem when we were corresponding around 1985 about his *King and the Clown* that I had received for review.}

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- Abhinava acknowledges all three facets of theatrical experience identified and insisted upon by Nāyaka. His own exposition of Bharata’s *rasa*-axiom begins by invoking the peculiar linguistic efficacy of narrative and descriptive passages in Vedic scripture that impels qualified listeners to undertake the *yajña*. Letting his Kashmiri Śaiva predecessor argue out the inadequacy of all preceding cross-disciplinary attempts to account for our aesthetic enjoyment, he seems to be restating Nāyaka’s valuable insights more cogently to bring out their full significance for posterity. {Even while seeming to acknowledge this, Sheldon Pollock—speaking through both sides of his mouth as is frequently the case—gleefully accuses “ungrateful” Abhinava of plagiarizing: “But to end with this analytical formalism would be a mistake, for it is only the surface manifestation of far deeper conceptual affiliations with Mīmāṃsā. Until we understand these, key questions of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s systems will remain unanswered. What, for example, is the exact relationship between the

‘reproductive capacity’ (*bhāvakatva*) and the overall process, *bhāvanā*? How precisely does ‘commonalization’ (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) enable the reproductive capacity to arise in the experience of a literary text? And why should the entire literary process be designated as ‘reproduction’?}

- The answers to these questions, and thereby the true hermeneutical force of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s insights, are contained in none of the surviving fragments of his work. But I believe we can see them emerging from the restatement of his views by his most ardent if most reluctant if not ungrateful disciple, Abhinavagupta” (150-151). Immediately, after charging that “Abhinava tries, quite shamelessly, to reappropriate this triad for his own view” (169 n.51), Pollock admits tangentially in another inconspicuous note that it would be more accurate to say that Abhinava brings out the true hermeneutical significance of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s thought (unless he is actually still borrowing from him)” (169 n.53). Our American ‘Maharishi’ is clearly ungrateful to Abhinava to whom we all owe our understanding of the context and significance of Nāyaka’s contribution to the aesthetics of *rasa*.
- I emailed (Dec. 9, 2009) Pollock my critique of his thesis on the secularization of the ‘aesthetics of power’ (Visuvalingam, *Hinduism* 329-330, 337, 344, 246 n.31); he immediately sent this paper awaiting publication. Pointing out its errors of interpretation and taking to task its ‘political’ agenda of pitting Nāyaka against Abhinava, I urged not to publish as it stood, for it would come back to haunt him. When I accosted him regarding this earlier exchange—after his pretentious keynote address (April 29, 2016) on ‘liberation philology’ at University of Chicago to celebrate its achievements in South Asia Studies—he showed little indication of having read it (see note 141). The email with related forum postings is available as a blog titled “Sheldon Pollock - What was Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka saying?” at <http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/Sunthar-LapakJhapak/WhatBhattanayakaReallySaid-frame.php>.

• ===== Reader Response =====

- “Reading with emotion in the modern West was until recently viewed as a fallacy—indeed, it was called the ‘Affective Fallacy.’ Even before W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley coined the phrase in their well-known essay, René Welleck sought to proscribe the ‘emotive’ criticism of literature, reducing it to ‘the labeling of works of art by emotional terms like “joyful,” “gay,” “melancholy,” and so forth,’ and denying that ‘even if we define these emotions as closely as we can, we are still quite removed from the specific object which induced them.’ Emotion ‘has nothing to do with the actual object’ of literary study [...]. For Wimsatt and Beardsley, attempting to understand what a poem

is from what a poem does, far from being a route to overcome the obstacles to objective criticism, actually leads ‘away from criticism and from poetry’ towards impressionism and relativism. What counts is referential meaning, not emotion: ‘It may well be that the contemplation of this object, or pattern of emotive knowledge, which is the poem, is the ground for some ultimate emotional state which may be termed aesthetic...But it is no concern of criticism, no part of criteria.’” (Pollock, *Rasa* 44-45).

- *The Little Clay Cart*—despite being a cultural artifact shaped through and through by a *rasa*-sensitivity—is probably the most translated, adapted, performed and appreciated classical ‘Sanskrit’ play outside of the subcontinent, precisely because of the universal appeal of its profane characters, themes and intrigue. Other than for eros (*śṛṅgāra*) and pathos (*karuṇa*), its wide emotional spectrum could be enjoyed, already within its traditional Indian context, without being overly constrained by the strictures of *rasa*-genesis that in principle requires complete identification (*tanmayībhavana*) with the dramatis personae (see note 139 above). Except perhaps for the extended lyrical outburst (Act V) ushering in the love union, there is little here of the delicacy of erotic sentiment to be squeezed out from Amaru’s verses. Cārudatta’s plight (X) could just as well evoke (shared Aristotelian) ‘pity’ alongside the intended pathos. Humor and laughter, above all, would have been least constricted by cultural boundaries, especially in a judicious foreign adaptation, for the distinction between *hāsya* and *hāsa* is relatively blurred already within the *rasa*-aesthetic. Is this an admission that its Western audiences have been simply ‘responding’ individually in watered-down simulacra of the ‘original’ more authentic Indian *rasa*-experience? Modern literary criticism has rightly depreciated attempts to evaluate (Western) works of art in terms of the varied, arbitrary, subjective feelings evoked.
- “There is a proclivity in a certain strain of postcolonial thought to assert claims in conceptual priority: the precolony is always supposed to have preempted colonialism in its theoretical understanding of the world. This is demonstrated for classical Indian aesthetics by awarding it a kind of superior insight and universal applicability (“Rasa in Shakespeare” is the genre of study I have in mind). To understand *rasa* as a historical form of thought, however, as I try to enable the reader of this *Reader* to do, is to confront a theory clearly contingent on a nonmodern worldview and understanding of literary art. Its full conceptualization is intimately tied to a number of primary, uncontested, and largely nontransferable Indian presuppositions [...] That said, *rasa* theory does offer an account of widely shared mental processes and an analytical procedure that enables us here and now to think through more clearly and

talk more precisely about features of our own aesthetic experience for which we have no ready-to-hand concepts or language. Even more fundamentally, it allows us to admit that we have such experiences in the first place” (Pollock, Rasa 44).

==== Obscure? ====

- “Two important cautions need to be offered to anyone confronting Abhinava’s aesthetics for the first time. His thinking is subtle, sometimes counterintuitive, and he expresses his thoughts in a style virtually unique among Sanskrit authors for its Hegelian syntactical complexity and Heideggerian semantic idiosyncrasy. Frequently this style is refreshing; sometimes it is turbid as well as turgid; occasionally it is maddening. Added to this (and possibly as a result of it), his major work on aesthetics suffered terribly in the course of transmission. In a real sense, it is far too early in the history of Abhinavagupta studies for anyone to presume to describe his theory with any precision, let alone completeness. What follows is an attempt merely to capture in as an intelligible manner as I can some important themes, drawn from Abhinava’s principal exposition of his aesthetic doctrine and from more peripheral but still illuminating discussions. I have sometimes left material standing that I do not always fully grasp myself, in the hope of contributing to a better understanding in the fullness of time” (Pollock, Rasa 193). Pollock’s own keynote address (April 29, 2016) on ‘liberation philology’ was an exercise in pompous obfuscation, peppered with imprecations against Rajiv Malhotra; a fellow American scholar seated beside me wryly observed that the meaning of ‘philology’ had been so over-extended as to mean nothing at all. Of course, no questions were allowed from the floor after such a momentous quasi-Mosaic ‘Revelation’ (see note 145 above). David Shulman, the second occupant of the prestigious Vivekananda Chair at University of Chicago, cited the ‘authority’ of Alexis Sanderson to up the ante publicly on 06 Nov. 2017 before an audience primarily composed of UC Indologists to the effect that Abhinava was pedantic, boring, uninteresting and hence overrated (my voice recorder unfortunately ran out of battery power or I’d have the exact words). I asked him privately after the official exchanges (since he studiously avoided allowing me to intervene again) what else to expect from a Western scholar who, already early in his career, has ‘joked’ that had he met Abhinava in Kashmir the latter would be trying to sell him a carpet.

==== Rāmāyaṇa – Walter Benjamin ====

==== **Obscure** ====

- Western scholars unable or unwilling to apply themselves wholly toward fathoming its intricacies persist in putting words into his mouth, translating their own incomprehension into his confusion, or simply dismiss his thought and expression as obscure. # This essay is based on the long-held and repeatedly borne out conviction that it is possible and desirable to interrogate, respectfully, the inner architecture of his edifice to tease out the hidden principles for consolidating, extending, adapting and refining his insights for our shared global future. #
- “Two important cautions need to be offered to anyone confronting Abhinava’s aesthetics for the first time. His thinking is subtle, sometimes counterintuitive, and he expresses his thoughts in a style virtually unique among Sanskrit authors for its Hegelian syntactical complexity and Heideggerian semantic idiosyncrasy. Frequently this style is refreshing; sometimes it is turbid as well as turgid; occasionally it is maddening. Added to this (and possibly as a result of it), his major work on aesthetics suffered terribly in the course of transmission. In a real sense, it is far too early in the history of Abhinavagupta studies for anyone to presume to describe his theory with any precision, let alone completeness. What follows is an attempt merely to capture in as an intelligible manner as I can some important themes, drawn from Abhinava’s principal exposition of his aesthetic doctrine and from more peripheral but still illuminating discussions. I have sometimes left material standing that I do not always fully grasp myself, in the hope of contributing to a better understanding in the fullness of time” (Pollock, *Rasa* 193). Pollock’s own keynote address (April 29, 2016) on ‘liberation philology’ was an exercise in pompous obfuscation, peppered with imprecations against Rajiv Malhotra; a fellow American scholar seated beside me wryly observed that the meaning of ‘philology’ had been so over-extended as to mean nothing at all. Of course, no questions were allowed from the floor after such a momentous quasi-Mosaic ‘Revelation’ (see note 145 above). David Shulman, the second occupant of the prestigious Vivekananda Chair at University of Chicago, cited the ‘authority’ of Alexis Sanderson to up the ante publicly on 06 Nov. 2017 before an audience primarily composed of UC Indologists to the effect that Abhinava was pedantic, boring, uninteresting and hence overrated (my voice recorder unfortunately ran out of battery power or I’d have the exact words). I asked him privately after the official exchanges (since he studiously avoided allowing me to intervene again) what else to expect from a Western scholar who, already early in his career, has ‘joked’ that had he met Abhinava in Kashmir the latter would be trying to sell him a carpet.

==== **Swadeshi Indology** ====

- **Rajiv Malhotra:** necessary, timely rebuttal, but needs viable coherent *uttara pakṣa*

Rajiv Malhotra: *pūrvā-pakṣa* → Swadeshi Indology

- Labored insightful exposure, critique, denunciation of Pollock's agenda
- *Battle for Sanskrit*: entire intellectual, cultural tradition under attack
- *Breaking India*: (geo-) political implications of systemic debunking
- Arguing (with Lidova) for intrinsic 'sacredness' of *rasa*-experience
- **Śaṅkara-Advaita**: *māyā* defended as not world-rejecting 'illusion'
- Risks of **deriving** one's own position through critique of *pūrvā-pakṣa*
- Danger of defending (Hindu) tradition as static rather than ongoing process
- Western (in bad faith) *pūrvā-pakṣa*, stimulates rethinking of *uttara-pakṣa*

Constructive critique = think with rather than against Abhinava

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Thesis: Bharata's theater (*nāṭya*) is Vedic sacrifice (*yajña*) in disguise

- Sacrificer (*yajamāna*) redeems 'evil' self through substitute victim (*paśu*)
- Ritual identity of sacrificer and victim who is 'liberated' (*mokṣa*) at *yūpa*
- Officiating *brahmán* priest represents *yajamāna*'s consecrated (*dikṣita*) state
- *Nāyaka*'s *dikṣita* state is split off into *mahā-brāhmaṇa* clown as 'alter ego'
- (Profane) theater (*prakaraṇa*) allows excluded strata to participate in *yajña*
- Cārudatta undergoes *dikṣā* officiated by Maitreya to become scapegoat
- Scheming (royal) villain Samsthānaka is ultimately substituted at stake
- *Tanmayībhavana*: basis of both *rasāsvāda* & participation in *nāṭya-yajña*

Abhinava provides the key: *vidūṣaka*'s 'semblance of humor' (*hāsyābhāsa*)!

Generalization of Vedic injunction to sacrifice unified caste-society

- Kālidāsa (*śāntam kratum cākṣuṣam*) & dramatists understood *nāṭya* as *yajña*
- Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* bridges *rasa*-experience & Vedic injunction
- Abhinava endorses 'generalization' as central to shared impersonal enjoyment
- For Maharishi Sheldon Pollock, our "Genius of Kashmir" is a shameless plagiarist
- Takes sacrificial paradigm for granted while critiquing his Mimāmsaka baggage
- Tripartite mechanism (*bhāvaktva*, *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, *bhojakatva*) overly complex
- *Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* inherent in psycho-linguistic operation of 'suggestion' (*dhvani*)
- Nāyaka, though eclipsed, is known to us only through Abhinava's explicit acclaim

We enjoy the profane play's *rasa* only by participating (unwittingly) in *yajña*