

PURUṢĀRTHAS IN AESTHETICS

*Dharmārtha kāmamokṣesu vaicakṣaṇyam kalāsu ca/
karoti kīrtim prītim ca sādhu-kāvyaṇi sevnam // **

Sāhitya Darpaṇa 1.6

I

The concept of *puruṣārtha*, especially *mokṣa*, plays a significant role in Indian theories of aesthetics. In modern context, where 'specialisation' is the key word, aesthetics and the issues regarding human values seem to belong to two separate worlds. But ancient Indian aestheticians found no incongruity in encompassing the idea of human values and goals (*puruṣārthas*) within the fold of aesthetics. The purpose of this paper is to examine how and why the Indian aestheticians incorporate the idea of *puruṣārthas* within the purview of art.

Nāṭya śāstra, the first extant work on Indian aesthetics, presupposes *trivarga* (threefold *puruṣārthas* - *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*) as the basic purposes of drama, music, poetry, etc. It says: "sometime it (drama, etc.) shows *dharma*, sometimes play, sometimes material gain and sometimes peace" (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.104 and 1.108 to 1.111). This claim is supported by *Agnipurāṇa* which states: *Trivarga Sādhanam nāṭyam* ' i.e. art-forms are meant for the realisation of threefold values of human life. The later aestheticians added one more values, i.e. *mokṣa* to the list following its acceptance in general philosophical treatises. But the vital question that bothers modern mind is how can one achieve the wisdom about values through art forms? Apparently there seems to be no valid justification behind this claim. Bharata, (believed to be the author of the *Nāṭya Śāstra*) talks about *puruṣārthas* like *dharma*, etc., but without much elucidation. Most of the later writers go on repeating the claim that the primary purpose of drama, poetry, etc. is attainment of *puruṣārthas*. But the claim is not immediately followed by any explanatory notes. It is no

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* " A study of good poetry leads to the knowledge of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* as well as excellence in arts along with fame and happiness."

wonder, then, that some of the modern critics like De¹ and Chari² dismiss the importance of *puruṣārthas* in ancient aesthetical analysis. According to them, these writers talked about *puruṣārthas* to prove the respectability of aesthetics as a *śāstra*. So, it has more or less an ornamental significance. But it will be too hasty on our part to accept the verdict without a proper examination. Did these great scholars of ancient India make this claim just as a matter of formality? An analysis of their treatises convinces us sufficiently of their analytical and logical acumen. Then, why did they prefer to be dogmatic in such an important matter? To find an answer to this question we must explicate their viewpoints from the general as well as specific aesthetical perspective.

Bharata claims that *Nāṭya Śāstra* is the fifth *veda*. He justifies this by showing that a treatise on aesthetics could serve as a means of enlightenment for the illiterate mass and men belonging to the lower strata of the society. These people, by custom, had no access to the four accredited *vedas*, (*Nāṭya Śāstra* 1.12. *na vedavyavahāryaḥ saṁśrayayaḥ sūdrajātiṣu tasmāt śrījaparam vedam pancamam sārva vārṇikam*). So, Bharata claims, has composed this *veda* on aesthetics to offer wisdom about dharma etc. to all classes of people. Visvanatha Kaviraja, the 14th century aesthetician, advances some interesting logic about the importance of aesthetics as a form of wisdom. He reasons out that if the same disease can be cured by a bitter pill and also by a sweet pill, people in general will opt for a pleasanter way of getting rid of disease. The vedic methods of knowledge being tough and rigorous the easier method of obtaining wisdom through drama, epic, poetry, etc. is therefore, preferable (*Sāhitya Darpaṇa* I.10). The idea of aesthetic experience as a form of wisdom gets more fortified when the commentators on *Nāṭya Śāstra* like Bhattanayaka, Abhinavagupta and others include *mokṣa* within the fold of aesthetics studies. This proves that the ancient Indian aestheticians viewed art not only as a form of entertainment but also as a form of wisdom. So, the knowledge about values can also be derived from aesthetics.

Moreover, the Indian aestheticians considered art as a form of life, though not exactly the imitation of life. *Nāṭya* is *lokadharmī* (based on social and worldly realities) in certain respects. Hence, the issues cannot be totally detached from the science of art-forms. Besides, aesthetics as a branch of study basically deals with man's psychic and emotional dimensions. Unlike the ancient western theories, emotion and intuition as a source of knowledge are never looked with suspicion in Indian tradition. Along with sense - experience and intellect, emotive experience too finds a place in the scheme of

wisdom. In the philosophical tradition (especially the *upaniṣadic* tradition), the ultimate Reality, i.e. Brahman has been described as *sat* (existence) *cit* (consciousness) and *ānanda* (bliss). Bliss is no doubt a matter of emotive experience. It is also believed, when a man transcends the narrow confines of ego and selfishness, and identifies himself with the universal and ultimate reality (*Brahman*) his experience is the experience of pure happiness. This is the state of *mokṣa* or release from the bondage and sufferings of the worldly life. Aesthetics as a form of wisdom also aims at self-realisation. But its path is the path of emotive experience. At the same time, *mokṣa* is not considered to be other-worldly. It is a quest rooted in human life. In Indian tradition, human life is understood as a totality of varied dimensions. Man has physical, psychic, moral as well as spiritual needs. These needs are represented through the four-fold-values, i.e. *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*. Therefore, aesthetics, while dealing with the aspect of human emotions cannot do away with the cherished values of human life and the quest for realisation of the ultimate truth.

II

We have examined some of the general grounds for inclusion of *puruṣārthas* within the scope of aesthetics. Let us now direct our attention to some of the basic concepts of aesthetics to see how such concepts are connected with the idea of *puruṣārthas*.

One of the fundamental concepts of Indian aesthetics is *rasa*. It is a complex concept and volumes are written on it. For our present purpose we shall discuss it in a straight forward manner without entering into the logical and conceptual complications associated with the term. *Rasa*, in a very broad sense means "flavour". But in aesthetic context it signifies the 'aesthetic relish' or 'aesthetic rapture'. Fundamentally the concept has been viewed from two standpoints. *Rasa* means the relishable quality inherent in a work of art, like drama, poetry, etc. In this sense, *rasa* stands for the emotive content projected by the artiste/writer/poet. Again, *rasa* has been understood in the sense of 'the relishable experience' evoked by a work of art, in the spectator/reader. In other words, *rasa* can be understood as the object of relish as well as the relish itself. Some aestheticians like Bharata seem to emphasise the former implication of the term, whereas Srisankuka and others put emphasis on the latter meaning. But Abhinavagupta and others insist that *rasa* is achievable when the barrier between the object of relish and the subject that experiences relish is withdrawn. But it will be entirely wrong on our part to say that Bharata, the first profounder of *rasa* theory, did not take into account

the idea of spectator/reader's aesthetic experience. For, he explains the concept of *rasa* with the analogy of gourmet who alone can savour the real taste of a food cooked with good spices. However, it was Abhinava who brought out the full implications of the intimacy between the emotive content and spectator/reader's relish by showing that "the experience of the hero, of the poet and of the spectator are one and the same"³. Whatever may be their perspective of analysis, all the later aestheticians unanimously accept Bharata's definition of *rasa* - otherwise known as *rasa sūtra*. According to this *sūtra*, *rasa* emerges out of the combination of three basic components, i.e., *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhicārī* or *sancārībhāva*. These three are also considered to be the determinants (*kāraṇa*), consequents (*kārya*) and ancillary conditions (*sahakāri*) of *rasa*. All three taken together is sometimes called *bhāva* which is directly responsible for the production of the *rasa*. Bharata also refers to another element known as *sthāyībhāva*, i.e. the enduring emotional states. There are controversies about the status of *sthāyībhāva* i.e. whether it is the same as *bhāva* or just a component like *vibhāva*, etc. But again without entering into the controversy I shall briefly state how Bharata defines each of these concepts. *Vibhāva* refers to the particular emotive situation present in a work of art like drama, poetry etc. This is mainly responsible for the evocation of response in the spectator/reader. *Anubhāva* refers to the manifestations or effects that are presentable through physical gestures, or expressions of such physical conditions through words. These effects of a particular emotive situation are meant for communicating the emotions to the reader/audience. *Vyabhicārībhāva* stands for the ancillary feelings associated with a dominant emotive mood. The dominant emotive mood or state is otherwise known as the *sthāyībhāva*. All these factors taken together present the emotive object, which evokes the experience of relish in the reader/spectator.

It is obvious from Bharata's definition of *rasa* that art is primarily communicative in nature. Its main purpose is to communicate the aesthetic relish through emotive means. For, neither the *rasa*, nor the *sthāyībhāvas* (the dominant emotive mood) are experienced by the reader, etc. by perception. They are not directly presentable. Nor the reader/spectator knows through inference. The emotive mood is graspable through direct experience of feeling. *Rasa* is not something we know but something we feel: *rasyāmanataikaprānā hy assau na prameyādiviṣayaḥ*.⁴ But what is the basis of the relation between the work of art and the spectator? In other words what is the common ground on the basis of which there is the transference of feelings? On the basis of the aestheticians' analysis of *rasa* and concerning such an experience of *rasa* we can say that it is the

sthāyībhāvas or enduring and basic emotional states. The aestheticians believe that human beings have the potentiality to experience as well as understand certain primary emotional states, such as sorrow, happiness, fear, etc. They exist in man as latent impressions (*vāsanā*), which allows man to experience the emotive content of a dramatic situation, or poetic mood, and have corresponding aesthetic enjoyment. Aesthetic enjoyment is not, therefore, a nebulous or vague feeling. It is as varied as human emotions are. But aesthetic emotions should not be confused with real emotive states experienced by man in real life. 'Relish' is the keyword in aesthetic universe. In real life a man avoids the feelings of sorrow, fear, disgust, etc. But when such emotive contents are presented in a work of art, the reader/spectator enjoys them. Otherwise, tragedies would not have been successful as a form of drama. Bharata, therefore, states that the emotive content present in a work of art is not the writer's or artist's utterly private feelings, nor are they projection of reader's or audience's own mental states. Moreover, though man has the potentiality to experience varied emotional states, everybody is not universally capable of experiencing the 'relish' from a work of art projecting these emotive contents. The subtle aesthetic pleasure can be experienced only by a sensitive mind (*sumana*, according to Bharata and *sahṛdaya*, according to the later aestheticians). In spite of such differences between the world of actual experience and the world of aesthetics, without the presumptions of *Sthāyībhāvas* the notion of communication of aesthetic pleasure is inexplicable. This may be one of the reasons for the aestheticians to draw a parallel between the *sthāyībhāvas* and *rasas*. Corresponding to each category of *sthāyībhāva* there is *rasa*.

Bharata enlists eight fundamental *sthāyībhāvas*. They are - delight (*rati*), laughter (*hāsa*), sorrow (*śoka*), anger (*krodha*), heroism (*utsāha*), fear (*bhaya*), disgust (*jugupsā*), and wonder (*vismaya*). When these emotional states are projected in a work of art it evokes in the reader/spectator corresponding *rasas*. Accordingly, there are eight *rasas*, they are - erotic (*śṅgāra*), comic (*hāsyā*), pathetic (*karuṇā*), furious (*rudra*), heroic (*vīra*), terrible (*bhayānaka*), odious (*bibhatsa*) and marvellous (*adbhuta*). Out of these eight *Sthāyībhāvas* and corresponding *rasas* four are considered to be primary. They are - *rati* and *śṅgāra*, *krodha* and *rudra*, *utsāha* and *vīra*, *jugupsā* and *bibhatsa*. Abhinava in his commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* states that these four primary *rasas* and *sthāyībhāvas* are connected with the four *puruṣārthas* - *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*.⁵ But such a connection between *rasas* etc. and *puruṣārthas* seem to be abrupt unless the connection between the *sthāyībhāvas* and *rasas*, on the one hand, and the *puruṣārthas*, on the other, is not indicated. So, let us examine the plausibility of such an explanation.

We have noted earlier that Indian aestheticians show that art in certain respects represents the *lokadharmā* - the realities of life and society. *Loka* or society, in the Indian tradition, is generally considered to be an order based on human nature and habit. Therefore, man's psychic and moral constraints reflect the nature and form of society, not the *vice-versa*. In other words individual's psychic and emotional pattern is not determined by the society. Besides, it is also presumed that basic qualities of human nature are more or less universal. These two presuppositions lead to the belief that the *Sthāyībhāvas* of a work of art reflect man's social ambitions, goals and values. These values and goals are cherished by man and they are the integral part of human nature. These values are in no way imposed by the society. A work of art aims to reflect man's need for the realisation of values (*puruṣārthas*) through the display of fundamental emotive and psychic qualities. Therefore, Indian aestheticians find a link between the *sthāyībhāvas* and *puruṣārthas*. It is claimed that the four *sthāyībhāvas*, *rati*, *rudra*, *utsāha* and *jugupsā* refer to *kāma*, *artha*, *dharma* and *mokṣa*, respectively. These four fundamental emotional states are primary and no human being can exist without the inherent capacity to feel them. Therefore, they are considered to be conducive to the four major values of life.

Kāma in broad sense means desire but in narrow sense it signifies love between a man and a woman. Similarly, *rati* and its corresponding *rasas* *śṛṅgāra* may have a broader as well as a narrower implication. Ordinarily, they stand for erotic love and delight, but they can also lead to the knowledge of *artha* and *dharma*. It is evident from Bharata's identification of three kinds of *śṛṅgāra* - *Kāma śṛṅgāra*, *dharma śṛṅgāra* and *artha śṛṅgāra* (*Nāṭyaśāstra*, XVIII. V.27). Here, *śṛṅgār* means love and our love may be extended to material gain as well as righteousness and morality. Here an attempt is made to show that *śṛṅgāra* is conducive to *kāma* even in its broadest sense, i.e. desire. Anger (*krodha*) and the corresponding *rasa*, *rudra* is conducive to *artha*. This particular emotive state of *rudra* is associated with energy, greed, heartlessness, selfishness, cruelty, etc. In Indian tradition *artha* broadly refers to the material well-being. But it always insisted that too much materialism is bad for the individual as well as the society. So, in its artistic projection the negative elements of *artha* are highlighted. This may lead the spectator/reader to realise the ill-effects of materialism when *artha* as a value is represented through cruelty; selfishness, etc. *Utsāha* and its corresponding *rasa*, *Vīra*, on the other hand, is connected with *dharma*. It is projected in drama, poetry, etc. through the qualities of enthusiasm, righteousness, nobility, tendency for self-sacrifice, etc.

These are the characteristics of a hero or a noble person. The hero is taken as a symbol of morality and righteousness. Therefore *dharma* is represented through *vīra rasa*. The emotional state of *jugupsā* (disgust) and *nirveda* (indifference) is connected in *mokṣa*. The feeling of indifference and disgust arise out of man's disillusionment with the worldly things. The realisation that all worldly attachments are temporary and all the happiness is but momentary leads a man to seek for liberation (*mokṣa*) from the worldly bondage. Buddha's realisation about the suffering and temporariness of the worldly things at the sight of sick man, old man and dead man can be cited to prove this point. So, *jugupsā* and the corresponding *rasa bibhatsa* can be associated with *mokṣa*. According to Abhinava, Bharata had conceived the representation of these four fundamental *sthāyībhāvas* and *rasas* as the right subject for teaching, for they are connected with *puruṣārthatas*.⁶ The object of a work of art is to make a man aware of these four-fold goals and values of life. Of course, one should not infer from this that all works of art should represent these four fundamental *rasas*. One or the other emotive mood and *rasa* may be predominant in a drama or poem. But as the four-fold goals of human life are not entirely unrelated so also are these four primary *rasas*.

III

It was, however, Abhinavagupta and his predecessors who undertook the task of writing commentaries on *Nāṭyaśāstra* offered a totally new dimension to the concept of aesthetics. Bharata's analysis was closer to life and was empirical. But for these later aestheticians art was no more considered simply to be a form of enjoyment on the empirical level. It was viewed as a means of passing from the empirical level of mundane joy to the transcendental level of pure bliss or *ānanda*. The statement of *Taittiriya Upaniṣad - Raso vai saḥ, Rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandi bhavati*.⁷ (He (Brahman) truly is the *rasa*, surely by grasping this *rasa* individual soul obtains bliss) - finds its fullest explication in Abhinava's analysis of aesthetics. In his works, aesthetic relish is interpreted more in terms of *mokṣa* than any other *puruṣārthatas*. Like all other specialised branches of study, such as religion, epistemology, grammar, etc. aesthetics also claims to culminate in self-realisation or *mokṣa*. Prior to Abhinava the writers like Vamāha, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, etc. had included *mokṣa* within the fold of aesthetics. But Abhinava's contribution consists in carefully chalking out a path of aesthetic experience from the empirical level to the transcendental level. It starts from the level of simple sensual pleasure at the experience of a pleasant object through sight and sound. This preliminary level of empirical enjoy-

ment stimulates the imaginative faculty of man. In the third stage one tries to identify himself with the object of enjoyment, i.e. the emotions presented in a work of art. Then comes the stage of deindividualisation, otherwise known as *sādhāraṇikaraṇa*. The concept plays a crucial role in later aesthetic analysis. In case of real aesthetic experience a man forgets all the factors that constitute the limitedness of his 'ego' or individuality, such as space, time, surrounding objects, even the feeling of 'I'ness. All barriers between the experimenter and experienced, I and thou are resolved. In short such factors which contribute to our idea of individual is pushed back. Any work of art which fails to raise man to this emotive height is not a true work of art. However, according to Abhinava, there is a still higher level of aesthetic experience. At the highest level of aesthetic experience it is the experience of the self itself as pure and unmixed bliss. This is the state of *maharasa*. On this level of experience all the discriminations and objectivities merge into the subconscious and the self rests in pure bliss. It is also identified as the state of *tattvijñāna*, the realisation of the highest principle. Therefore, in the highest form of aesthetic experience the *rasa* itself becomes the object of relish. (*rasānām rasah*). So the aesthetic experience passes through five levels (1) sense-level (2) imaginative level (3) emotive level (4) cathartic level (5) transcendental level. Interestingly enough Abhinava identifies the ultimate emotive and aesthetic experience with *Sānta rasa*. So, the name of this new *rasa* is added to Bharata's list of eight *rasa*. Abhinava by no means was the first aesthetician to talk of this ninth *rasa*. But he definitely offers the ultimate status to *Sānta rasa*. Abhinava insists that *Santa* is not a new addition to Bharata's list of *rasas* (which we usually know to be eight in number). He claims to know two recessions of *Nāṭya Śāstra* and one of them mentions about *sānta rasa*. Whether Bharata included *sānta* or not cannot be substantiated. But it can be claimed without doubt that Abhinava, while raising the aesthetic analysis from the empirical and emotive level to the transcendental level transforms *sānta rasa* into the emotive symbol of *Mokṣa*. It is regarded as the highest value, the *parama puruṣārtha*. So, Abhinava identifies the ultimate emotive experience with the ultimate state of bliss - an emotive state identical with the aesthetic relish of *Sānta*. Following the pattern of correspondence between *sthāyībhāva* and *rasa* Abhinava conceives that the *sthāyī* of *sānta* is same (tranquillity). Such an emotional state arises when one achieves *tattvijñāna* - the knowledge of the ultimate truth. It is nothing but realisation of one's own self and obliteration of discriminations that surround us in real life. Therefore, *Sānta rasa* is conceived by Abhinava as the primary *rasa*. It is the state of ultimate delight (*ānandaghana*.) So, according to him the aesthetic experience of *sānta* consists in the experience of self as free from entire set of

painful experiences which are due to worldly expectations and therefore a state of identifying with the universal self. Such state of self, when experienced through the work of art, is *Sānta* and it leads to *Ānanda*. "In the world of aesthetic experience there is neither pleasure nor the pain of the ordinary world. It arises from the bliss, it manifests in bliss and merges in the bliss from end to end."⁸

IV

It is obvious from the above account that Abhinavagupta gives a metaphysical twist to aesthetic analysis. The theory of *rasa* originally propounded by Bharata concentrates mostly on empirical and psychological explanation of emotive experience. But Bharata's commentators, especially Abhinava gradually takes it to metaphysical heights. Such an interpretation of aesthetic experience culminates in *Rasa Brahman Vāda*, i.e. *rasa* identified with the *Brahman* in its *ānanda* aspect.

But in the context of recent development in the area of aesthetics (especially poetics and literary criticism) and philosophy, the Indian aesthetic theory may seem out of place. Some modern critics feel that Abhinava's metaphysical overtone can be detrimental to the critical analysis of aesthetics. Moreover, it is argued that such a metaphysical explanation may provide support to the Westerner's dogma about the mystical overtone of the Indian way of thinking. Both the criticisms are valid to a certain extent. But they seem to stem from the typical way of looking at the scheme and methods of knowledge.

With the triumph of science and positivism in the West any subject dealing with non-empirical or rather supra-empirical is looked with suspicion. The popularity of linguistic analysis in philosophy had provided further strength to anti-metaphysical stance. Moreover, in every field of knowledge holism is replaced by intellectual sectarianism. In the background of such radical developments in the second half of this century a strict line of demarcation is being drawn between the critical analysis, on the one hand, and the metaphysical understanding of concepts, on the other. So, the tag "Critical" is reserved for the logical or else the empirical analysis of concepts. Anything falling short of this standard is branded as "mystical". But can we keep the interest and curiosity of a normal human being confined within the limits of empirical and logical? Is it unwise on our part to discuss and deliberate upon man's quest for the ultimate truth? Is it not paradoxical that science, which has served as a role-model for the modern

craze about critical and analytical thinking, in its ultimate quest often ends in the level of supra-empirical and transcendental? So, it seems that the modern intellectuals have shut their eyes to the fact that in ultimate level of analysis every branch of wisdom points to the direction of the "transcendental" or "supra-empirical.". We notice that this realisation is fully manifested in ancient Indian thinking.

Moreover, *mokṣa* as a concept does not imply moving away from the life; rather it is a part of life. It signifies an attempt to understand the true purpose of life. Therefore, alongwith *kāma*, *artha* and *dharma*, *mokṣa* has been included within the scheme of human values, ends or goals. Man is just not satisfied with material wellbeing, desire for love and righteousness. He wants to realise the true purpose and meaning of his life. If "mysticism" means cutting off from the normal quests of life, then the search for true purpose of life and existence cannot be and should not be branded as "mystical". *Mokṣa*, in this sense, is a part of man's life.

Coming down to the specific context of aesthetics we note that in recent times the idea "critic" has assumed a greater status. In view of this new development the factor of 'aesthetic enjoyment' and 'delight' is pushed to the background. A work of art is not primarily means for communicating the emotive content. It is considered to be an object of dissection and unemotional objective analysis. A work of art is de-subjectivised and to certain extent 'de-humanised'. In Indian aesthetics, on the contrary, we find that the role of a sensitive reader/spectator (*sumana* or *sahṛdaya*) occupies a very important place. He, too, is a critic. The success or failure of a creative work depends on his judgement. But the *sahṛdaya* is seen more or less as participant in the artiste's intention to communicate the emotive content. So, the *sahṛdaya* does not look at the object of art in a dispassionate and unemotive manner. He approaches it with the sensibilities that he is capable of. In Indian aesthetics the key work is 'delight - a concept which includes within its fold the creator, the work of art and the respondent. So, it is not a relationship of "critic versus the creator;" rather it is a relationship of "creator and critic". In this context, Abhinava's remark about 'critic' is very pertinent. He says: poetry is not philosophy. *Sahṛdaya*'s heart is said to melt (*dravati*), whereas the heart of the scholar (in modern terminology, 'critic') has become hardened and encrusted by readings of dry texts of metaphysics".⁹ This remark is very crucial. It shows that though the ancient Indian aestheticians were aware of the role of 'critic'. But the 'critic' does not in any way contribute to the aesthetic process. The work of art - be it a drama, piece of music or poetry - its main purpose is to evoke aesthetic delight. Aesthetic experience involves emotion and the

reader/spectator approaches it with a feeling of *Camatkāra* (curiosity and wonder). It is not to be approached from the stand-point of scholarship and intellect. For long, modern philosophers have looked down upon 'emotion' as a form of wisdom. The logical positivist's dismissal of aesthetic judgements as 'emotive non-sense' is the culminating point of the modern philosopher's approach to 'emotiveness'. This strong philosophical bias has its ramifications in all the spheres of human activity. Its subtle influence has also permeated to the area of aesthetics. The modern aesthetic analysis drifts more and more towards the 'critic' and his ability for intellectual assessment. Therefore, modern thinkers find Abhinavagupta's theory of aesthetics falling short of the standard. They say that the Indian aestheticians have confused aesthetics with metaphysics and religion. But such remarks seem unfortunate because Abhinava and others were very much aware of the distinction between aesthetics and religion and metaphysics.

As far as the question of bringing of *mokṣa* within the fold of aesthetics is concerned, one finds no incongruity. If we come down from the level of abstract theories to the level of practical experience, then we note that work of art can definitely raise us from the level of mundane to the super-mundane. A piece of good music, poem or drama (also cinema) does enthrall us and often our narrow limits of space, time and ego are pushed back, and we are lost in the world of pure bliss. If this state is *mokṣa*, even if it is temporary, it is definitely obtainable through aesthetic modes of experience.

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THE SPHOṬA DOCTRINE OF BHARTṚHARI

INTRODUCTION

The linguistic theory of *sphoṭa* is chiefly associated with the grammarian Bhartrhari, although he is not the propounder of the doctrine. He gave *sphoṭa* a metaphysical significance and defended it against its critics.

One can trace the use of the word '*sphoṭa*' in the ancient writings, around the time of Pāṇini. It is doubted as to whether Panini himself knew of such a thing as *sphoṭa*, though the words '*sphoṭāyana*' appears once in his work, *Aṣṭādhyayī* (6.1.123). Anyway we don't know the propounder of the doctrine. It was Patanjali who, (in his *Mahābhāṣya*), for the first time, made a distinction between *sphoṭa* and *dhvani*. The sound that is produced when the word is uttered he called *dhvani*. It is ephemeral. The permanent element in the word, which is not affected by the peculiarities of the individual speaker, he called *sphoṭa*. The *sphoṭa*, in Patanjali's system, is an unchanging unit of sound. It may be an isolated letter (*Varnasphoṭa*), having a normal and fixed size or a series of such letters (*Padasphoṭa*).¹ This is quite different from Bhartrhari's concept of *sphoṭa*.

The claim of Bhartrhari is that "a sentence is to be considered not a concatenation made up of different sound-units arranged in a particular order but mainly as a single meaningful symbol."²

LINGUISTIC UNITS

The fundamental linguistic unit is the sentence, says the grammarian. The sentence is indivisible. It cannot be divided into words and letters. But don't we speak of words and letters as constituting the sentence? For Bhartrhari, however, letters and words are not real. They are only abstraction from the fundamental linguistic fact, the sentence. Gaurinath Sastri says that the terms into which the sentence is shown to be divided are merely "shadows of similar forms and never identical with them"³ Bhartrhari claims that they don't have independent existence apart from the sentence. "By