

# Some Notes on the Dhvanyāloka

Bruce M. Perry

Updated by Justin K. Lowe

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## Introduction

One of the principal achievements of Indian aesthetics (*alanikāra*) is its analysis of the nature of the poetic experience. According to its two foremost theorists, poetry consists in the power of suggestion (*dhvani*), and, conversely, produces in the audience an experience of relishing (*rasa*) that is not emotional but transcendental (*alaukika*). The crucial texts of these theorists, however, do not lend themselves to a straightforward study. Anandavardhana wrote verses (*kārikā*), upon which he composed a commentary (*vṛtti*), the *Dhvanyāloka*. Abhinavagupta subsequently composed a commentary on both the verses and commentary of Ānandavardhana, called the *Locana*. Given the length, complexity, and seeming randomness of topics taken up in these works, a simplifying approach seems in order. To provide a roadmap, as it were, of the *rasa*-theory, a chapter from A. B. Keith's *The Sanskrit Drama*, "The Sentiments", is first provided. Select passages from Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, from the excellent translation of Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan, are then presented; these selections contain the most direct, if not exhaustive, formulations or discussions of *dhvani* and *rasa*.

Please note that the scholarly footnotes to the selections are supplied for completeness' sake only: they are not crucial to understanding the texts. The complete translation will be on reserve in the library.

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## Terms

Some helpful items from Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan's translation. For additional explanation, see the following text's Introduction, photocopied from original text pages 15–17.

<b>anubhāva</b> consequent	<b>vyabhicārin/vyabhicāribhāva</b>
<b>bhāva</b> emotion	temporary/transient state of
<b>vibhāva</b> determinant	mind
<b>ālambanavibhāva</b> objective determinant	<b>sthāyibhāva</b> abiding emotion
<b>uddīpanavibhāva</b> stimulative determinant	<b>rasa</b> flavor/sentiment – based on the sthāyibhāvas respectively, as shown in following table.

	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>English Term</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>English Term</i>
	<b>sthāyibhāva</b>	<b>abiding emotion</b>	<b>rasa</b>	<b>flavor, sentiment</b>
1	rati	sexual desire	śṛṅgāra	erotic
2	hāsa	laughter	hāsyā	comic
3	śoka	grief	karuṇa	tragic
4	krodha	anger	raudra	furious, cruel
5	utsāha	heroic energy	vīra	heroic
6	bhaya	fear	bhayānaka	fearsome, timorous
7	jugupsā	disgust	bībhatsā	gruesome, loathsome
8	vismaya	wonder, amazement	adbhuta	wondrous
9			śānta	peace ( <i>this term added later</i> )

## Abbreviations Used

- K** *Kārikā* (verse) and...  
**A** *Dhvanyāloka* (commentary: vṛtti) 'Light on Suggestion', by Rājānaka Ānandavardhana, Kashmiri [9th AD]  
**L** *Locana* 'The Eye' by Abhinavagupta, Kashmiri [10th AD]

## Some Authors Mentioned

- Bhāmaha** author of works on literary criticism, largely concerned with the figures of speech [8th AD]  
**Bharata** (legendary) author of the Nāṭyaśāstra (*BhNS*), an ancient manual on dramaturgy, source of first eight sthāyibhāva and rasa  
**Bhattanayaka** critic of Ānandavardhana, apparently a Mīmāṃsaka, answered by Abhinavagupta