

# Some Notes on the Dhvanyāloka

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## Introduction

One of the principal achievements of Indian aesthetics (*alaṅkāra*) 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 (IMP) (see further xerox pages 15–17):

**anubhāva** consequent

**bhāva** emotion

**rasa** ‘flavor’ / ‘sentiment’ – based on the sthāyibhāvas respectively. 1) erotic (śṛṅgāra), 2) comic (hāsyā), 3) tragic (karuṇa), 4) furious/cruel (raudra), 5) heroic (vīra), 6) fearsome/timorous (bhayānaka), 7) gruesome/loathsome (bībhatsā), 8) wondrous (adbhuta), 9) peace (śānta) [later addition]

**vibhāva** ‘determinant’: a) ‘objective determinant’ (ālambanavibhāva); b) ‘stimulative determinant’ (uddīpanavibhāva)

**vyabhicārin/vyabhicāribhāva** temporary/transient state of mind

**sthāyibhāva** ‘abiding emotion’: 1) sexual desire (rati), 2) laughter (hāsa), 3) grief (śoka), 4) anger (krodha), 5) heroic energy (utsāha), 6) fear (bhaya), 7) disgust (jugupsā), 8) wonder/amazement (vismaya)

## 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