

Rasa-tattva-vijnana

(by Radhakunda Mahanta Sri Srimat Ananta das Babaji)

What is 'Rasa'?

'Rasa' is something unearthly and beyond the Laws of Nature. Like Brahman, Rasa is inconceivable and inexpressible. We can only realize Rasa and cannot arrive at it with logic. Rasa transcends all thought-processes and gives us relish when our chitta has attained the state of pure goodness and shines brilliantly. Those who do not have the desire to relish Rasa can never realize Rasa. The author of Sahitya-Darpan says – "Rasa is beyond the material world and it can be realized only by a Rasika."

Alankar-Koustubh says –

"Rasa creates magic" and "A feeling of 'WOW!!' is the soul of Rasa; if, after relishing something, we do not say 'WOW!!' then it is not Rasa." Suppose we see something so gorgeous that we have never seen before or we hear something so beautiful that we have never heard before, then we feel a kind of joy and our heart somersaults. Consequently, unknown to us, our eyes too bulge out. This is 'wonderment'. We call this thrilling experience as 'Rasa'.

Alankar-Koustubh also states –

"If some favorable objects (or incidents) come together to create such a joyful thrill in the heart, that stupefies our external as well as internal senses – then we can call such a delightful experience as 'Rasa'."

Srila Rupa Goswamipad too has written –

"A magical inexpressible relish that shoots across a heart blazing with goodness and is beyond all human perceptions, it is 'Rasa'."

– (B.R.S.2.5.132)

Rasa is commonly of two types –

1. material Rasa – we can feel this Rasa with our heart
2. transcendental Rasa – realized by the soul

When talented writers compose literature about worldly characters then the reader relishes some Rasa. We call this as 'material Rasa'. The rhetoricians call this as 'close to relishing Brahman'. However the authors of transcendental Rasa-literature flatly denounce this and state – "The Rasa in material literature target the heart of material people, hence it is full of Maya (illusion) and contains the three gunas (modes of nature). Naturally it is short-living. There is no way we can gain complete bliss from this Rasa."

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has clearly written in Priti-Sandarbha (110) –

"Worldly passion can give only slight pleasure, since if we analyze deeply, material emotions ultimately result in sorrow. Therefore we cannot respect material literature that gives rise to worldly Rasa."

Srila Kabi Karnapur's opinion is – "Rasa is of three types –

1. prakrita (material) e.g. the Rasa found in the novel 'Malati and Madhav1'

2. aprakrita (transcendental) e.g. the Rasa reposing in Sri Radha-Krishna
'3. abhas (shadow of Rasa) e.g. Rasa existing in an inappropriate place or situation" Srila Vishwanath Chakravartipad has explained this statement as follows –

“We classify Rasa into three types and say that material Rasa is a type of Rasa just to satisfy the fans of material literature. Actually there is no relish in material novels. It is a misake to think that worldly events can arouse Rasa. It is certain that mundane heroes and heroines will ultimately transform into ash, worms or stool – then how can we get Rasa in them? Also when we analyze the truth we see that the worldly poets are so ignorant that they present their heroes and heroines as ‘beautiful like flowers, youthful and fragrant’. Such falsehoods only fuel our hatred all the more than arousing Rasa. This is the reason why the author (Srila Kabi Karnapur) who is a Rasika has not cited a single poem composed by material poets as examples; rather everywhere he has only described transcendental Rasa and has given likewise examples. Those who have had the good fortune to relish blissful transcendental divine Rasa, find material Rasa as worthless and horrible. But of course, material literature offers more happiness than the pleasures of the flesh. We do not doubt this fact.

Who relishes Rasa?

In this context the rhetoricians are divided into 4 groups. The first group opines that the real heroes and heroines of an event are the ones who mainly relish the Rasa. The actors who represent them (in a drama) get the taste of Rasa little bit. If they do a lot of rehearsal and their hearts are clear, they may relish Rasa.

The second group says – the real life characters are limited. They face troubles and tribulations in life – so how can they relish any Rasa? Rather the actors who play their parts relish the Rasa.

The third group states – the real characters do not relish Rasa at all, and neither do the actors representing them. The actors are but imitators. They only practice and become experts at displaying emotions (which are not real). So they do not enjoy Rasa. Then who gets the pleasure of Rasa? The Rasika audience. After all, the public sees and hears with absorption.

The fourth group says that if the actors have a clear heart, they will feel the emotions of the real characters and hence they too will relish Rasa, and of course, the public too will certainly enjoy Rasa.

Most of the rhetoricians agree on the point that the audience relishes Rasa.

However one point is clear from the above discussion that in transcendental Rasa – all can relish Rasa

– the real characters, the actors playing their role as well as the audience.

The real characters (e.g. the Divine Couple) do not suffer from the problems faced by the original characters of material literature – that is – they are not mortals, are not limited and do not endure troubles and tribulations. Therefore Their associates too relish Rasa. Divine passion is naturally immortal and unlimited. The main subject of transcendental Rasa (Sri Krishna) is the Supreme Brahman Himself and all His activities too are divine. Sri Hari’s excellences are innumerable, His beauty is immeasurable and He is the unlimited turbulent ocean of Leela-Rasa! Also, Sri Bhagavan’s names, beauty, qualities and pastimes are not mere agglomeration of words. They are non-different from each other.

“Sri Krishna’s names, Sri Krishna’s excellences, Sri Krishna’s divine pastimes are all equal to His swarup and hence they are eternal and blissful.”

– (C.C.)

Therefore nothing can stop or diminish the Rasa-relish of Sri Krishna’s names, excellences,

pastimes etc. We can realize transcendental Rasa even when confronted with anarthas such as fear (e.g.

Prahlad Maharaj) and intermission caused due to rebirth (Jada-Bharat). Not even Brahman-realization can obstruct one from relishing divine Rasa! Shukadev is a brilliant evidence for this. Hence we'd better accept that Rasa exists only in divine passion.

Who is qualified to relish devotional Rasa?

“Those who have past and present desire for devotional Rasa, they alone can relish bhakti-Rasa.”
– (B.R.S. 2.1.6.)

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has explained the above verse –

“Past desire refers to the yearning for bhakti in the past life, while present desire means the desire for bhakti in this life. When a devotee has a passion for Sri Krishna in this life, it is clear that he has present desire; however to realize Rasa, he also has to have had a desire for Rasa in the past life. Both are necessary to relish Rasa.”

Srila Vishwanath Chakravartipad has clarified further –

“When we are offense less and if we practice bhajan under the shelter of Sri Gurudev's lotus feet, we can reach the state of passion; even then, we will relish Rasa only in the next birth.”

Now we have to see what we mean by ‘the desire for Rasa’ ? How does it arise in the heart? When? In whose heart does it arise? When we delve deep into tattva, we learn that Sri Krishna is Rasaa-swarup (Rasa personified). He and the living being are related to each other since infinity and the living being longs for Rasaa-swarup Sri Krishna since then – and not for anybody else. However the living being has turned away from Sri Krishna and so he does not understand this. The longing drives him to enjoy Krishnetar objects (things other than Sri Krishna). Of course, he does not really enjoy. The innate desire of his original self is to relish Rasaa-swarup Sri Krishna. In stead of doing this, he simply wallows in sense-gratification. However, the soul is transcendental. He is against material pleasure. He is not happy to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh. After all, the soul has only one goal – to relish seva-Rasa of the Rasaa-swarup Sri Krishna. This means, the soul enjoys when he serves Rasaanaj. This is why, in spite of rolling in material enjoyments since infinity, the living being remains ever dissatisfied. He can gain satisfaction and become blessed only by relishing divine Rasa. The Shrutis are very merciful. They clearly tell the living being, who has floundered from his goal (Rasa-relish) that Sri Krishna is Rasa personified. They proclaim –

“Rasao vai sah” – He alone is Rasa.

“Rasaam hyevayam labdhanandi bhavati” – Sri Bhagavan is Rasa personified and only by obtaining Him the Rasa-thirsty living being can gain bliss.

The words ‘alone’ and ‘only’ indicate that we can never gain happiness from anything (or anyone) other than Sri Bhagavan. Thus when we search for our root desire, we discover that it is the ‘desire to serve Sri Krishna’ or simply put, ‘bhakti-desire’. When we have faith and reverence, we should take the shelter of the saints and Spiritual Master. We should associate with them and gain their kripa. By their mercy, the desire for bhakti arises in our heart. It is the same as the desire to perform bhajan. After this we embark on the path of bhajan. When we perform bhajan enthusiastically, gradually we are rid of anarthas. Then we gain nishtha, interest, asakti and finally we are promoted to the stage of rati. Rati (passion) is a devotee's permanent bhav. This ‘permanent bhav’ mingles with vibhav, anubhav² etc. and gets converted into bhakti-Rasa. Thus we see that only a passionate devotee is one worthy of relishing bhakti-Rasa.

Which sadhana arouses Rasa, what causes Rasa to arise and what is the way through which Rasa

arises?

Srila Rupa Goswamipad has written – “Rasa arises when –

1. Bhakti has uprooted all our faults and at last we are happy. And so we are ready to receive pure goodness. Our heart is sparkling with the knowledge required to receive pure goodness,
2. We are deeply attached to Srimad-Bhagavatam,
3. The only pleasure in our life is – the constant company of Rasika devotees,
4. We consider the joy arising out of serving the lotus feet of Lord Govinda as the sole purpose of living,
5. We are incessantly engaged in hearing about the confidential pastimes, glorifying them and meditating on them since these are the very necessity to gain prem.

When the heart is radiant with the Rasa-desire handed down from the past life and the desire for Rasa in the present life, Rasa arises in it. Worldly people relish material Rasa when a good author composes an interesting piece of literature. Transcendental Rasa is not like that. It does not depend on the merits of the author or the composition. The passion in a devotee’s heart takes the form of joy and he realizes Rasa whenever he comes across anything pertaining to Sri Krishna. The passion in the devotee’s own heart makes Sri Krishna extremely relishing to him and he attains dizzy heights of tremendous bliss!”

– (B.R.S.2.1.7-10)

These statements prove that Rasa is like Brahman – simultaneously gross and subtle, beyond all reasoning, and something unearthly. We can only realize Rasa; we cannot ascertain it by using logic; we cannot debate on it. If we do not have a sanskar for Rasa, or a ‘Rasa-desire’, we can never ever digest Rasa.

Who is unworthy of relishing Rasa?

Srila Rupa Goswamipad replies –

“When the heart is burnt up with dry renunciation and one is disinterested in bhakti, he is not qualified to relish Rasa.

The ones practicing dry renunciation are uncouth and the remaining are plain ignorant. You know how a householder hides his most valuable items out of fear that the thieves may steal them? Similarly, Sri Krishna- bhakti-Rasa is a precious treasure. The devotee Rasika too should hide this gem from the uncouth and ignorant. We should not discuss bhakti-Rasa with the above-mentioned people. Be especially careful of those dry mimansaks (logicians and analysts), since they harbor a distaste for bhakti-Rasa and are ever-ready to jump on bhakti-Rasa to annihilate it with worldly arguments.

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has said –

“We see five types of people in this world –

- a) Ignorant (agya) – They may be learned in the other scriptures, but have no experience of Rasa-literature (transcendental Rasa, naturally). We still call them ‘ignorant’.
- b) Uncouth (gramya) – They are addicted to material enjoyment. They are like animals indulging in the pleasure of the flesh.
- c) Wise (pragya) – They are learned in Rasa-literature; they even accept that Rasa is the topmost,

yet they are so unfortunate that they are not capable of relishing Rasa. All three (ignorant, uncouth and wise) are unworthy of Rasa-realization.

d) Bhavak - They are devotees who are learned in Rasa-literature and are able to relish Rasa.

e) Bhavya – They are also devotees. They have attained success (siddhi) in Rasa-sadhana.

They are accomplished relishers of Rasa. We call them Rasika devotees.” We surely understand from this discussion that bhakti-Rasa is a permanent riddle for the non- devotees.

“The devotees who possess nothing but the lotus feet of Sri Hari can only relish Rasa.”

– (B.R.S. 2.5.131)

How does Rasa form?

Before we go into the study of Rasa-formation, we need to become familiar with certain terms such as vibhav, anubhav, satvik bhav, vyabhichari, sthaya bhav etc. Let us learn these terms and understand their definitions properly.

Vibhav – Alankar-Koustubh has defined it as – “It is the cause of Rasa. It arouses Rasa in us”.

Vibhav is classified into two types –

1. alamban vibhav (=what supports Rasa) – Sri Krishna arouses Rasa in the devotee’s heart.

Also, the devotee’s passion for Sri Krishna causes Rasa to arise in the sadhak’s heart. Here we call Sri Krishna as the ‘subject’ and the devotee as the ‘shelter’ of Rasa. Thus alamban vibhav is divided into two – subject (Sri Krishna) and shelter (the devotee).

2. uddipan vibhav (=what excites Rasa) – Sri Krishna’s sweet qualities, activities, decorations, laughter, fragrance, flute, anklets, conch-shell, footprints, home, cattle- grazing pasture, Tulsi, devotees, feasts – all excite Rasa in us. So they are ‘uddipan vibhav’.

Anubhav – Alankar-Koustubh states –

“‘anu’ means ‘later’ or ‘what follows’. After Rasa arises in our heart, we express some symptoms externally. These are ‘anubhav’. We also call them as ‘Rasa-action’.”

Example – The subject (Sri Krishna) and the devotee (shelter) express some external characters due to their passion for each other, such as – loving glances, smiles etc.

Some expressions are loud and are easily visible – such as – dancing in joy, singing, yelling, stretching, roaring, yawning, sighing heavily, not caring how others react to our love, salivating, loud laughter, hiccupping, smiling etc. These reveal our heartfelt passion. We call these anubhavs as ‘udbhaswar anubhav’ (openly visible).

“When the anubhavs (symptoms of Rasa-relish) are not so visible, we call them as ‘satvik anubhav’ or simply ‘satvik-bhav’.” – (B.R.S.)

Srila Rupa Goswamipad has listed eight satvik anubhavs in B.R.S. –

1. stupefaction
2. perspiration

3. goose bumps
4. faltering voice
5. shivering
6. paleness
7. tears
8. doom

Vyabhichari bhav – Alankar-Koustubh explains –

“This bhav is not constant; it lends color to the permanent bhav.”

B.R.S. says – “it is a ‘passing’ bhav – so we also call it ‘sanchari’ or passing bhav.”

Let us understand it better. Just as waves rise and fall in the sea, thus making it more beautiful, some small bhavs appear and disappear while we continue to remain in our own permanent bhav. These waves of bhav lend color to the permanent bhav. There are 33 passing bhavs in total –

1. complete indifference
2. grief
3. humility
4. glani (Exhaustion, fatigue of the body, lassitude, languor, depression of the mind, debility, sickness)
5. fatigue
6. arrogance
7. pride
8. doubt
9. stress
10. aveg (Frenzy, passionate absorption)
11. lunacy
12. amnesia
13. sickness
14. illusion
15. death
16. lethargy
17. stupidity
18. vreedha (bashfulness)
19. avahittha (Pretending to be disinterested)
20. remembrance
21. debate
22. worry
23. intelligence
24. patience
25. joy
26. curiosity
27. ougra (Tremendous anger)
28. amarsha (Intolerance resulting out of criticism, insult etc)
29. jealousy
30. mischievousness (or playfulness)
31. sleep
32. drowsiness
33. understanding

Permanent bhav or Sthayi bhav -

Alankar-Koustubh says –

“When our heart is without a tinge of rajah (mode of passion) and tamah (mode of ignorance) and it is full of only pure goodness, then an indescribable passion can fill the heart; it is the source of Rasa-relish, and the wise call it the ‘permanent’ or sthayi-bhav.”

Srila Rupa Goswamipad says –

“Laughter is a positive feeling while anger is a negative feeling. A bhav that subjugates all other bhavs whether positive or negative and looms high above them – we call such a bhav as ‘permanent’. The Bhakti-literatures call the passion for Sri Krishna as ‘sthayi-bhav’.” – (B.R.S.)

Our sthayi-bhav intermingles with the bhavs such as vibhav etc. and is transformed into Rasa. On its own, vibhav cannot make us realize Rasa. It just causes us to express anubhavs. The Vyabhichari (passing) bhavs only help anubhav. None of these bhavs can create Rasa in us if we do not have ‘sthayi-bhav’. When our sthayi-bhav mingles with three other bhavs, then it is the sthayi-bhav that turns into Rasa. We have to be very clear about this.

Sthayi-bhav is permanent, whereas the other bhavs such as vibhav etc. change. Hence although the other bhavs do make us express Rasa, they are not the source of Rasa. Sthayi-bhav is a form of the great power called Hladini Shakti. It is inconceivable. Therefore Sthayi-bhav is permanent and so is Rasa. We repeat – when sthayi-bhav matures, we realize Rasa. Sthayi-bhav has only one function – to please Sri Bhagavan.

Here, we may question –

You said – “sthayi-bhav transforms into Rasa.” In the same breath you are saying – sthayi-bhav and Rasa are both permanent. Are you not contradicting yourself? When one thing changes into another, it does not remain. This means, when sthayi-bhav will turn into Rasa, the sthayi-bhav will not exist any more, since now it is Rasa! Then how can you call sthayi-bhav permanent? Also how can you call Rasa as permanent? Since it has taken birth from sthayi-bhav – which means, earlier it did not exist. Does this not mean that both sthayi-bhav and Rasa are temporary?

The answer to this question is –

All the divine pastimes of Sri Krishna are eternal. His various ages such as childhood, adolescence, youth – are also timeless. His behavior in these ages is eternal as well. However the devotees have a tremendous desire to behold these pastimes or to see Him in a particular form. Then He uses this as an opportunity to save the world and He manifests these pastimes. When the work is over, that leela unmanifests. The leela continues to exist, but shrouded from material eye. Similarly Rasa expresses itself in a devotee’s heart and when the vibhav etc. disappear, Rasa too conceals itself.

When material reactants transform into products, the reactant disappears. For example, when sugarcane juice turns into molasses, the juice is no more. Later when it forms sugar, we do not see the jaggery. However transcendental objects are different from material things. They have an inconceivable potency. They get transformed without losing their separate identity. Example – Sri Krishna is eternally a kishor. Yet, His kishor-body becomes a child, adolescent and the adolescent-body becomes all the more beautiful as a kishor. Every stage is eternal. All the bodies – child, adolescent, youthful – are eternal. Similarly, our permanent bhav (sthayi-bhav) is eternal, yet it transforms into Rasa. Both – sthayi-bhav and Rasa continue to exist separately.

About the formation of Rasa, Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has written in his Priti-Sandarbha – “The bhavs that are worthy of becoming Rasa, become Rasa.”

Let us understand this statement better. Material vibhavs – yes, even the vibhavs pertaining to devatas are material – are temporary and are lacking in ingredients of Rasa. So they do not form Rasa. Transcendental vibhavs have all the ingredients to form Rasa. These ingredients have 3 qualifications –

1. The right swarup
2. The right associate
3. The right recipient

1. The right swarup – The eternal associates have the right swarup, hence they possess sthayi-bhav and are always situated in bliss. They reveal Sri Bhagavan to us and constantly please Him with their seva. They even criticize the joy of liberation. Such is the sthayi-bhav of the dear associates of Sri Krishna. Although we are worldly beings, by the blessing of Sri Krishna and His devotees, this bhav can arise in our hearts also.

2. The right associate - The vibhavs of material Rasa are mundane. Therefore they are naturally disqualified to arouse Rasa. On the other hand, the eternal loving confidantes of Sri Bhagavan love Him so much that their bhav spontaneously create Rasa. Their love is self-manifesting. It also reveals Sri Krishna and everything pertaining to Him. This love appears in the heart of earthly devotees and gives them similar bhav. So we should hear and meditate constantly on those eternal associates, who are in a mood akin to ours. We should be choosy about the association we keep. We should keep the company of only Rasika and sajatiya devotees who can inculcate Rasa in us.

3. The right recipient – The devotee (sadhak) too should have a desire to obtain bhakti for Sri Bhagavan. Then only he is qualified to relish bhakti-Rasa.

Alankar-Koustubh has explained these points in detail –

Sri Bhagavan's eternal associates and the devotees who follow them relish transcendental Rasa. Thus we see that two types of people relish Rasa –

1. the eternal associates of Sri Bhagavan Who participate in His divine Leelas
2. the devotees who perform sadhana according those leelas.

Rasa forms spontaneously in the eternal associates and they constantly relish Rasa. On the other hand, the devotees who follow them undergo two types of experiences –

- 1) They meditate on the eternal associates according to their liking (bhav) and on their pastimes with Sri Bhagavan, and in this manner Rasa arises in their heart.
- 2) They only hear and glorify the sweet Leelas of Sri Bhagavan, thus they relish Rasa.

When someone sings or enacts such leelas, or some great soul speaks Hari-katha very sweetly, then the devotees who hear or see this can relish Rasa. On top of this if all the people involved in these activities are in the same bhav and harbor the same desire, then the devotee can equalize his feelings with the associates depicted in the drama (or Hari-katha). This enables him to relish greater Rasa.

So we can understand that although the eternal associates are present in transcendental realm, and we reside in the material world, we too can relish transcendental Rasa like they. The only difference is that eternal associates have natural bhav. They do not need any instruction nor do they need to hear any divine discourse. However we live in the material world, so we need the right sanskar and it is necessary for us to perform sadhana. These will intensify our desire to relish Rasa and our passion will blaze forth. We need all these, because we cannot relish Rasa without a desire for Rasa

and if we are devoid of Rasa-sanskar.

Equalization of Bhav

What is bhav? How can we get the bhav of the eternal associates?

‘Bhav’ is an experience of Sri Krishna’s sweetness. Although we live in the material world, all of us can get this bhav by the mercy of Sri Krishna and His devotees. But how? The bhav of the dear eternal associates get equalized with the feelings of the sadhak. What is equalization? It means when two things become non- different from each other, yet maintain individuality. Let’s put it like this – our bhav remains independent, yet becomes equal to the bhav of a sajatiya devotee. We call this bhav-equalization. By the effect of bhav-equalization, we – the mundane devotees, too can react in the same extraordinary manner as that of the eternal devotees – and very easily, at that. Srila Rupa Goswamipad states –

“Formation of Rasa is beyond this material world. Hence, it is true that, it is very difficult to comprehend. We find that the vibhavs and ratis manifest themselves easily and in an excellent manner in the senior and junior devotees. Bhav-equalization means ‘unable to decide the difference between each other’s bhav’. Bhav-equalization has such an impact that even the new devotees can have the same feelings or perform the activities that the experienced devotees can.”
– (B.R.S. 2.5.101-102)

Srila Vishwanath Chakravartipad has elucidated the above statement as follows –

“During a sat-sang, someone was reciting Ramayan. He came to the part when Hanuman was about to take a leap to cross the Indian Ocean. From the audience an emotional devotee jumped up without any embarRasament or hesitation. He was so much absorbed in the same bhav as that of Hanuman that he wanted to cross the ocean there in the assembly itself!

Another example –

An emotional devotee was performing the role of King Dasharath in a drama. When he heard that – ‘Ram has gone to the forest’ – he really and truly died on the stage. This happened since he was extremely absorbed in the bhav of Dasharath.”

Thus we see that when we develop passion, although we may be newbies in devotion, we can equalize our bhav with that of the mature devotees and Rasa will arise in us. Rhetoric says – bhav-equalization has an inconceivable impact. It can make an immature devotee feel non-different from Hanuman and he leapt up in an assembly to cross the ocean. Although he was an ordinary man, bhav-equalization lent him an extraordinary enthusiasm to cross the ocean, which is an astonishing feat. Sahitya-Darpan states –

“There are such bhavs with which we feel non-different; we can equalize with those bhavs.”
However for this we have to have passion (rati). Then even newcomers (in devotional practice) can experience bhav-equalization with siddha devotees. This forms Rasa.

The Sage Bharat has said –

“Bhav-equalization has an inexpressible power. It makes the audience/reader feel non-different from a certain character or situation.”

During bhav-equalization sometimes we feel different and at other times non-different from the siddha-devotees. When we relish Rasa, we feel completely non-different. E.g. the devotee relished the same Rasa as did Sri Hanuman. When we feel entirely non-different, this stage is called ‘tanmayi-bhavan’.

We should remember that the literature or drama has a very minor role in creating bhav-equalization; the main thing is our own rati. If we do not possess rati, the narrator/actor cannot

arouse bhav-equalization in us. Rati makes Sri Krishna appear sweet, and therefore it reveals all that is pertaining to Sri Krishna. Rati makes Sri Krishna's sweetness relishing to us, and this in turn, enhances rati. Thus we find that the vibhavs and rati help each other to make us relish Rasa. Srila Rupa Goswamipad has written –

“There are pandits who strongly vote that divine literatures and dramas are completely responsible in arousing bhav-equalization, and hence, they instruct us to read/hear divine literature and dramas to the greatest degree. However we state that rati for Sri Bhagavan is remarkably powerful and precious. We can never ever doubt its sweetness. We ascertain rati as the topmost reason for bhav-equalization.”

– (B.R.S. 2.5.90-91)

It is also true that although a devotee may be emotional, and equalize his bhav, he will not relish Rasa if he does not have the sanskar or Rasa-desire in past life. Rasa-relish is directly proportional to our Rasa-desire. If our desire for Rasa is less, when the cause of Rasa is removed, our relish too will disappear¹. On the other hand, a Rasika-devotee continues to relish Rasa even when the cause of Rasa is no more. Rasa keeps on expressing itself right in front of him; it enters his heart and caresses every pore of his body. Even though the cause of Rasa has vanished, a Rasika-devotee continues to relish Rasa. He forgets everything else – after all, Rasa is magic!!

Primary and secondary bhakti-Rasa

Sriman-Mahaprabhu has thus instructed Srila Rupa Goswamipad –

“We can classify rati into five types² depending on the class of the devotees –

1. shanta rati – for shanta devotees
2. dasya rati – for devotees in servitude
3. sakhya rati – for the devotees in friendly mood
4. vatsalya rati – for the devotees in the parental mood
5. madhur rati – for the devotees in conjugal mood

Hence there are five types of Rasa – shanta, dasya, sakhya, vatsalya and madhur. These five Rasa are the chief amongst all the Rasa present in Sri Krishna-bhakti.”

– (C.C. Madhya.19.157-159)

There are some more Rasa other than these five Rasa. They are hasya - laughter (humor), adbhut - extraordinary, veer – valour, karun – sad, roudra – anger, veebhatsa – horror, bhaya – terror. These seven Rasa are secondary .The devotee can be situated in any of the five primary Rasa – that is – he may be in the mood of a servant, parent etc. Then, due to some reason, these seven Rasa may enter his heart like a stranger and when the cause is removed, these Rasa too disappear. Shanta etc. are permanent Rasa. They remain always in the particular devotee's heart. For example, there is a sad situation. Then a devotee feels karun Rasa. When the sorrowful situation disappears, the karun Rasa too vanishes. Same is the case with hasya Rasa (laughter) etc. We should remember that the five principal Rasa never leave a devotee situated in that Rasa.

“The five primary Rasa are permanent in a devotee. The seven other Rasa are secondary. They come and go like strangers.” – (C.C.Madhya.19.161)

The seven secondary Rasa appear and disappear in the dear associates of Sri Bhagavan. They are the ‘sanchari’ or passing moods. Hence we shall not discuss them here. Rather, let us learn in detail about the primary Rasa. Those devotees, who wish to study the seven secondary Rasa in detail, are requested to read the ‘Uttar-part’ of Bhakti-Rasaamrita-Sindhu.

Shanta bhakti-Rasa

Definition of the shanta-devotee

“Sri Bhagavan has stated with His Holy lips that, the shanta-devotee only knows His swarup and is firmly attached to Sri Krishna.” (C.C.Madhya.19.173)

“A shanta-devotee does not feel Sri Bhagavan belongs to him. He knows only one fact – that He is Parabrahman and Paramatma. The shanta-devotee is only aware of the original form of Sri Bhagavan.”

– (C.C.Madhya.19.177-178)

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has written in his Priti-Sandarbha –

“The shanta-devotee is living on the borderline and his bhakti too is sitting on the margin. This means that a shanta-devotee is not exactly a devotee. His devotion does not fall inside the boundary of bhakti.” – (P.S.84.)

Sri Narad-Pancharatra describes –

“ananya mamata vishnou mamata premasangata, bhaktirityuchyate bhishmaprahladoddhavanaradaih.”

Meaning – “Mahajans such as Bhishma, Prahlad, Uddhav and Narad have called it ‘bhakti’ only when we do not feel anything or anyone else to be ‘mine’ – we know that Sri Vishnu alone is our sole possession and we love Him dearly.”

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has stated –

“The shanta-devotees do not consider Sri Bhagavan as someone Whom they can call their ‘own’. A relation with Sri Bhagavan is not inspired in their heart. Therefore it is logical that they do not feel a sense of belonging with respect to Him.”

– (P.S.96)

The servants and friends have a relation with Sri Bhagavan; hence they feel He belongs to them. The shanta-devotees feel that Sri Bhagavan is atmaram and self-satisfied, hence He cannot feel hungry or thirsty. He is absolute in all respects, so how can He need any seva? Srila Rupa Goswamipad has mentioned in Bhakti-Rasaamrita-Sindhu that the shanta-devotees are close to the dasya-devotees. In fact the dasya-devotees are the best friends of the shanta-devotees. He has quoted a shanta-devotee as saying –

“The supreme Brahman is a mass of fire while the living entity is its spark. He is intensely ‘conscious’ effulgence. When will I massage His feet?”

– (B.R.S. 4.8.20)

Srimat Jiva Goswamipad has explained this statement as follows –

“Here ‘intense’ implies the form of Sri Bhagavan, otherwise how can he mention ‘feet’?

‘Conscious’ refers to ‘sach-chidananda’ (eternal, conscious¹ and blissful). Thus we see that the shanta-devotee’s mind is firmly established in the Supreme Brahman Who is sachchidananda.

Here we see that the shanta-devotee wants to massage Sri Bhagavan’s feet – it is not because he wishes to please the Lord with his seva. Rather, he hopes to gratify his own senses by His touch. He wants to become happy by touching the beautiful form of Sri Bhagavan. On the other hand, the devotees who are in the mood of servants wish to serve the Lord to give Him pleasure. Hence they

are 'bhaktas' in the true sense.”

“When a yogi heard the Panchajanya, he was so overjoyed that the end of his robe fell to the ground. He shook his head and shed copious tears. He was full of goose bumps. All the vows he had undertaken broke. His regulative principles were lost. When the brilliant dark blue mascara-complexioned Lord appeared before him, he was so extremely happy and behaved in such a manner that displayed utter contempt for his own position (as that of a yogi).”

– (B.R.S. 3.1.42)

Let us examine this case and determine which ingredients have come together to form Rasa. The

vibhavs (causes) are as follows –

vishayalamban – the subject of Rasa – the four-armed form of Parabrahman

ashrayalamban – the shelter of Rasa – the yogi who is in shanta-Rasa uddipan – what excites Rasa – the resounding Panchajanya

What symptoms (anubhav) did he show? The end of his cloth rolled on to the ground, he shook his head etc. He also displayed satvik-bhav (not-so-loud symptoms) such as tears and goose bumps. His sanchari-bhav (passing moods) was joy, great surge of emotion.

What are the symptoms that the shanta-devotee expresses?

These vibhav, anubhav, satvik and sanchari mingle with the permanent (sthayi-bhav) of the yogi and create shanta-bhakti- Rasa. Then the yogi relishes this Rasa.

“They glorify the excellences of Sri Bhagavan, chant names such as Parabrahman, Paramatma, etc. They know that Brahman-realization is a blissful state; hence they show interest in Him. They concentrate on the tip of their nose; try to become avadhuts, practice mudras such as gyan-mudra. They bow and glorify Sri Hari. Their not-so-visible reactions are – tears, gooseflesh.

What arouses Rasa in them? The fact that Parabrahman is almighty, calm, impartial, and He can assume extraordinary forms.

Their passing moods (sanchari bhav) are – indifference, patience, joy, understanding, remembrance, sorrow, argumentative etc.”

– (P.S.203)

“krishna-nishtha trishna-tyag shanter dui gune”

Meaning – “The shanta-devotee has two qualities – he is steadfast in Sri Krishna and has given up the desire for material pleasures.”

– (C.C.)

We should realize that these two qualities are the basis for the other Rasa as well. This means, even though we may be situated in some other mood, it is necessary for us to possess these two qualities.

Dasya-bhakti-Rasa

“The devotees in the dasya-mood have two characteristics – they have the qualities of the shanta-devotee as well as 'seva'.”

– (C.C.Madhya.19.180)

Srila Rupa Goswamidpad has called the sthayi-bhav of the dasya-devotees as 'love mingled with awe'. He has stated –

“When we know someone to be our master, the slight trembling we feel in the heart is called ‘awe’. When love mixes with this feeling we call it as ‘sambhram-priti’ (love mingled with awe). The wise term this sense of ‘love mingled with awe’ as ‘the mood of servitude’ (dasya-bhav).”
– (B.R.S. 3.2.76)

Sri Chaitanya-Charitamrita says –

“In the dasya-bhav the devotee has the complete knowledge that Sri Krishna is God Almighty and considers Him as the Master.”
– (C.C.Madhya.19.178)

“When the devotee has aishwarya-gyan about Sri Krishna his love diminishes.”
– (C.C.Madhya.19.167)

However we find that the servants in Braja have a different mood from those of Dwaraka and Vaikuntha. Priti-Sandarbha (208) says –

“Aishwarya-gyan is pre-dominant in the devotees such as Akhur, who are in dasya-bhav, while although devotees such as Uddhav too have aishwarya-gyan, it is mixed with madhurya-gyan and the madhurya-gyan is more prevalent in them. But we see that in Brajadhama the servants are completely in the sweet mood. They simply respect Sri Krishna because they know Him as the Son of Nanda Maharaj (and not as God Almighty). They are aware that He has excellent qualities and that He is impressive.”

“The Brijwasis do not know that Sri Krishna is Ishwar.’
– (C.C.Madhya.19.128)

Even the servants of Braja do not consider Sri Krishna as God, and therefore they do not hold Him in awe.”
– (C.C.Madhya.19.128)

Srimad-Bhagavatam does not mention the servants such as Raktak and Patrak in Braja-leela. We do not know whether such names exist in the Vedic texts such as the Puran, Samhita or Tantra). The 10th skandha of Srimad-Bhagavatam only describes the moods of sakhya, vatsalya and madhur. Some subjects of Nanda Maharaj may have dasya-bhav for Sri Krishna and one may be eager to practice sadhana under their guidance. However since Srimad-Bhagavatam does not mention the names such as Raktak and Patrak, also it does not describe in detail the sort of seva they perform, it is very difficult to practice Raganuga bhajan in dasya-bhav. This is why Sri Chaitanya-Charitamrita says –

“mor putra, mor sakha, mor pranapati,
eibhabe jei more kore shuddha-bhakti.”

Meaning – “The one thinks of me as ‘my son’, ‘my friend’ or ‘my beloved’ is practicing pure devotion.”

Thus we find that sakhya, vatsalya and madhur Rasa are the main Raganuga bhakti in Braja. When a devotee gets the dust of Sri Krishna’s lotus feet, accepts Mahaprasad, associates with the das-devotees, his

What are the symptoms expressed by a das-devotee?

He performs seva according to what he is capable of, is steadfast in Sri Krishna-bhajan etc. His satvik anubhavs (invisible symptoms) are stupefaction, tears etc. His passing or sanchari bhav are joy, pride, patience, indifference, humility, curiosity, surge of emotion.

“When Daruk (Sri Krishna’s charioteer) saw Sri Krishna in front of the main gate of Dwaraka, he was unable even to fold his palms, and attained a very strange state.”
– (B.R.S. 3.2.135)

What forms Rasa in a das-devotee?

From this verse we ascertain the vibhav as follows –

Sthayi-bhav – love mingled with awe, since he is a servant in Dwaraka

The subject of love – Sri Krishna Who knows He is the protector

The shelter of love – Daruk, who knows he is under Sri Krishna’s protection What excited Rasa in him – the vision of Sri Krishna at the main gate of Dwaraka Symptoms of Rasa – He gazed with reverence and tried to fold his palms

Satvik bhav - He was unable to fold his palms; this indicates he was stupefied

Passing bhavs – He was joyful, immobilized, shivering in thrill, eager to serve.

Thus we find that Daruk was relishing remarkable Rasa when his Master Sri Krishna arrived suddenly after a very long period of absence. This mercy upon him was entirely unexpected and he relished many strange bhavs.

Sakhya-bhakti-Rasa

“The devotees in friendly mood has three characteristics –

1. the qualities of the shanta devotee
2. the seva performed by the servants
3. The mood of non-difference between himself and Krishna is very strong in a sakha and the friend is devoid of awe and reverence.

A sakha climbs on Sri Krishna’s shoulders and also lets Him climb on his; he plays as well as fights with Him. He serves Sri Krishna and takes service from Him². He loves Sri Krishna more than the shanta-devotee and the devotee in the mood of servitude. He considers Sri Krishna as non- different from Himself. In this manner the friend subjugates Sri Krishna. For this reason you can recognize sakhya-Rasa by the three above characteristics.”

– (C.C.Madhya.19.181-184)

Srila Rupa Goswamipad has termed sakhya-bhakti-Rasa as ‘preyo-bhakti-Rasa’ (preyo = dear, loving).

“When two friends are nearly equal, they feel non-different from one another. They are devoid of awe and reverence. We call this relation as ‘sakhya’. They are in the mood of ‘vishrambha’.

‘Vishrambha’ means very deep faith that lacks hesitation of any sort.”

– (B.R.S.)

Srila Rupa Goswamipad has described Sri Krishna Who is the subject of love in sakhya Rasa, as follows –

“Shyamsundar is well-dressed, has all good qualities, He is strong, speaks so many extraordinary

languages and is an expert at well-articulated speech. He is extremely learned, exceptionally talented, highly capable and kind. He is the bravest of all, witty, intelligent and forgiving. Sri Krishna loves all and is loved by everyone. He is upbeat, joyful and great to be around with.”

All these qualities are arousing Rasa in the devotees belonging to the friendly mood.

“The sakhas are the shelter (ashray) of this Rasa and they look handsome like Sri Krishna. They even dress like Him. Unlike the servants, they do not have the slightest inkling of hesitation. They only have very firm faith in Sri Krishna.” – (B.R.S.)

Arjun, Bhimsen, the brahmin Sudama are Sri Krishna’s friends in Dwaraka. Amongst them, Arjun is the closest. However, if we take all His friends into account¹, then the sakhas of Braja are the topmost. They are the closest. How are these sakhas?

“They are overcome with extreme grief if they don’t see Shyamsundar for just one moment. They want to play with Him always and Sri Krishna is their life and soul. Such are His Brijwasi-sakhas. They are the greatest of all His friends.” – (B.R.S.)

Sri Krishna’s Braja-sakhas are of four types –

1. suhrit (companions)– These boys are slightly older to Sri Krishna. They hold weapons and are always trying to protect Him from bad men. E.g. – Subhadra, Mandalibhadra, Bhadra- vardhan, Gobhat, Indrabhat, Bhadranga, Veerbhadra, Mahagun, Vijay, Balabhadra etc.
2. sakha (friends)– These friends are younger to Him and like to serve Him. Although they are definitely in the sakhya-mood, they have a whiff of dasya-Rasa about them – They look up to Sri Krishna. Their names are as follows – Vishal, Vrishabh, Ojaswi, DevapRasatha, Varuthapa, Maranda, Kusumapeeda, Manibandha, Karandham etc.
3. priya-sakha (dear friends)– They are equal to Sri Krishna in age and are in pure sakhya- Rasa. E.g. Shridam, Sudam, Dam, Vasudam, Kinkini, Stoka-Krishna, Amshu, Bhadrasen, Vilasi, Pundarik, Vitanka, Kalavinka etc. These sakhas please Sri Krishna by indulging in various friendly sports with Him. They have fisticuff-fights and stick-fights with Him. They joke and play pranks. Thus they give pleasure to Sri Krishna. Shridam is the topmost in this category.
4. priya-narma-sakha (bosom friends)– They are greater than the suhrit, sakha and priya-sakha. They have a special bhav. Their bhav is laced with sakhi-bhav. They help Sri Krishna to unite with the sweethearts. They are engaged in confidential services such as carrying messages between the lovers and helping in secret meetings. Therefore we call them priya-narma-sakhas. E.g. Subal, Arjun³, Gandharva, Vasanta, Ujjwal, Mandhumangal etc. Amongst them, Subal and Ujjwal are the closest to Sri Krishna.

What arouses sakhya-Rasa ?

Sri Krishna’s age, beauty, flute, cow-horn (a type of musical instrument), jokes, witty repartees, talents, the way He mimics kings and the incarnations of God. Visible symptoms or activities of a devotee in sakhya-Rasa are as follows – wrestling, playing throw-ball, dice-game and various other boyish sports. The silent activities (satvik) are – stupefaction, perspiration. The passing bhavs are laughter etc.

Srila Rupa Goswamidada has explained with a concrete example –

“Mukunda looked as handsome as a mass of cloud illuminated by the star ‘Swati’. When He loudly commenced the festival of sports by blowing sweetly, yet forcefully into the enchanting flute, there was a shower of jubilation all around. In this joy, Shridam’s body, that resembled an exquisite pearl-oyster, expressed little droplets of perspiration that gleamed like pearls.”
– (B.R.S.3.3.98)

The vibhavs (cause of Rasa) are as follows –

Sthayi-bhav - the passionate mood called ‘vishrambha’ which exists only in Braja

The subject of love – Sri Krishna

The shelter of love – Shridam

What excites Rasa – the song of the flute

Anubhav – activities expressed by the devotee – boyish-sports

Satvik – perspiration

Passing bhavs – joy, playfulness

The Mahajan has thus described the sakhya–Rasa –

“jamunar tire kanai shridamere loiya, mathamathi ron kore shrama-jukto hoiya. prakhar robir tape shukailo mukh,
dekhi shob sakhagoner mone hoilo dukkh. ar na khelibho bhai cholo jai ghare, sakale jaite ma kohiyachhe shobare.
molin hoilo kanai mukhani tomar, dekhiya bidore hiya ama shobakar.
beli abasan hoilo cholo ghare jai, ithe balaram dur bone gelo gai.”

Meaning – “Kanai locked horns with Shridam on the banks of the Yamuna and both of them fought vigorously – so much so – that they were bathed with perspiration from head to toe. The scorching heat of the sun burnt Sri Krishna’s face. When the sakhas saw this they were overcome with grief. (They love Him so much!!) Out of concern for Him, they stopped the game and said – “We shall not play any more, brothers, come, let’s go home”. In stead of revealing the true reason for wanting to return, they simply said – “Mother Yashomati has told all of us to go home early today. Why, my dear Kanai, Your face has turned so pale!! Our hearts are bleeding, seeing You thus!! Anyway, the sun is about to set, come, let’s go home. Look, Balaram has gone far and the cows too have wandered deep into the forest – if we wait any longer, it will get dark, and then, how will we collect them?” (This implies that – Kamsa’s emissaries may attack us any moment. Then what will we do? Since Balaram, Who can protect us, too has gone far. Once again, this proves the lack of ‘aishwarya-gyan’ in the Braja-sakhas.)

Vatsalya-bhakti-Rasa

“The devotee in vatsalya-Rasa has 4 Rasa-qualities –

1. the qualities of the shanta-devotee
2. the seva of the servant – as a parent the seva comprises of love, care and protection.
3. the qualities of the sakha, namely, no self-consciousness and no awe and reverence,
4. love is much more in this Rasa, hence the devotee scolds and beats Sri Krishna. He considers himself as the protector and thinks he is responsible for Him.

Since the devotee in vatsalya-Rasa has all the above qualities, this Rasa is as delicious as nectar.”
– (C.C.Madhya.19.185-187)

Vatsalya-rati is the permanent (sthayi-bhav) of the devotee in vatsalya-Rasa. Sri Krishna is the subject of this Rasa. How is He?

“He is soft, dark and serene like a garland of fresh blue lotuses. His eyes are shaped like lotus-petals and their corners are playing restlessly. His thick black eyelashes resemble black bees hovering around the lotus (His eyes). When Vrajeshwari Mother Yashoda saw her beautiful son playing in the dust of Braja, she wet her body with milk that flowed involuntarily from her breasts.”
(B.R.S. 3.4.3)

Thus Sri Krishna, Who is dark, handsome, endowed with excellent qualities, soft, sweet-spoken, simple, innocent, well-mannered, respectful and kind, is the subject of this Rasa. The Queen of Braja (Yashoda-mata), Rohini-mata, the Aunties, the Gopis whose sons Brahmaji had stolen, Devaki, her co-wives, Kunti, Vasudev, Sandipani Muni (His teacher) and other elders are the shelter of this Rasa. This list is arranged in descending order of love.

What excites vatsalya-Rasa?

The child-form, childish beauty and attire, babyish pranks, sweet speech, smile and leelas.

What are the reactions of a devotee in this Rasa?

She kisses Sri Krishna’s forehead, caresses Him, blesses Him, and commands Him. She bathes Him, cares for Him and instructs Him about His welfare. A devotee in vatsalya Rasa also displays 9 types of silent reactions – 8 of them being stupefaction etc. and an additional one – milk flowing from the breasts.

The passing moods are – joy, strong emotion, eagerness.

The sthayi-bhav of the devotee mingles with vatsalya-rati and becomes vatsalya-Rasa. An example of this Rasa –

Yashoda and Rohini were so full of love for Gopal that milk would flow spontaneously from their breasts. He would get covered with dirt from head to toe – this was His anga-rag¹ – yet they would pick up both beautiful babies (Krishna and Balaram) onto their laps. Then they would breast-feed Them. When the babies would suckle, the mothers would gaze lovingly at Their enchanting smile that revealed few tiny teeth. This would immerse them in supreme bliss.”
– (B.R.S. 108.23)

In this verse the ingredients of Rasa are as follows –

Sthayi-bhav – the devotee should have a passion called ‘vatsalya’. The subject of Rasa – Sri Krishna and Baladev who are crawling.

The shelter of Rasa – Mothers Yashoda and Rohini.

Uddipan – what excites Rasa – the childish age of Sri Krishna and Balaram, sweet smile, childish pranks.

Reactions of Rasa – the devotee caresses, pets, kisses the forehead and wipes the dust off His body

The silent reactions of the devotee – tears, goose bumps, breasts overflowing with milk

The passing moods of the devotee – joy, awe, eagerness.

The Mahajan has described Vrajeshwari Mother Yashoda's vatsalya Rasa so sweetly –
“Her heart burnt in anguish and torrential tears flowed from her eyes, while her heart was shattered in grief – how would He go to the woods (to graze the cattle)? Why, He didn't even know the house and its surroundings well till now! How could a mother bear such sorrow? O my dearest, O the darling of the Yadavs¹, is there no wealth at home that you should step in the woods? Let the other cowherd boys take the cattle. I have no one else to call my own and no support but You. You are my only darling, how can you bear to leave me and let my life be engulfed in darkness? You are only a suckling babe, and you want to go to the forest with the cows? How can I rest in peace at home? O my dear, Your body is as soft as butter – why, the sun will melt You and You will be finished!! The mere thought of this makes my heart tremble! The sun is soaring overhead and the mercury is rising high; it is pouring fire – how will my little one survive? The grasses are so huge – each one is like a spear! They will pierce your soft skin like anything! Your feet are like velvet flowers, how will You run when they enter Your feet?

When the Gem of Gokul (Gokul-mani) heard His mother weep so pathetically, He tried to console her in so many ways – He said – Mother, please do not grieve, I have nothing to fear for after all, I have this Shekhar Roy (poet) to accompany me.”

Madhur-bhakti-Rasa

“A devotee in madhur Rasa five characteristics in all –

1. she is steadfast in her attachment to Sri Krishna (like a shanta-devotee)
2. extreme seva (of the das-devotee)
3. the unhesitating (frank) behavior of the sakha
4. caring and protecting attitude of the vatsalya devotee
5. over and above she serves Sri Krishna by offering her body.

Just as the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) have the qualities of the previous elements, and ultimately the earth has all the five characteristics, similarly the madhur-devotee has a beautiful conglomeration of all the qualities of the devotees in other Rasa. Therefore this Rasa has much more relish and it tastes extraordinarily wonderful!” – (C.C.Madhya.19.189-192)

The ingredients of madhur Rasa –

Vibhavs – the object of Rasa – the unparalleled Sri Krishna Who is the Chief of the vidagdhas.
Example – “Dear sakhi, Sri Hari is gladdening the hearts of all the Gopis by entertaining them with His body that is softer and darker than the blue lotus; thus He is pleasuring them with a Feast of Love. Every part of His body is freely embraced by the Braja- beauties – thus He is looking all the more charming. In this manner He is sporting in this spring season like Eros personified.” – (Geet-Govindam)

“The maidens of Braja appear exquisitely sweet and new each moment; every tendency of their heart is a wave of love and they adore Him as their Beloved – I pay obeisance to such remarkable Braja-kishoris.”
– (B.R.S. 3.5.6)

Although the queens of Dwaraka and women like Kubja (in Mathura) too have kanta-bhav (the mood of a sweetheart), the Braja-beauties are in parakiya-mood, and they are the greatest of all sweethearts.

“Amongst them, Srimati Radharani, Who is the crest-jewel of all Braja-balas, is the topmost.”
– (B.R.S.)

“Sri Krishna is the embodiment of love and so a devotee entirely subjugates Him with his love. Also the gopikas are very mature where pure prem-Rasa is concerned. After all there is no Rasaabhas-dosh¹, in the love of the Gopikas. Hence they are able to satisfy Sri Krishna supremely.

One group of Gopis is ‘vama’ (crooked) while the other group is ‘dakshina’ (generous, straight etc.). They make Sri Krishna relish Rasa in many ways. Amongst all these Gopis, Srimati Radha Thakurani is the topmost, for She is the treasure-mine of crystal pure dazzling love. She is

‘madhyama’ in age and balanced in nature. Her love is immensely intense and so She is constantly ‘vama’. Due to this, She is always going into man, and this creates huge waves in Sri Krishna’s ocean-like bliss.”

– (C.C.Madhya.17.156-157, 159-162)

How is Srimati Radharani’s beauty?

What excites madhur Rasa? (uddipan vibhav)

“Her eyes steal the beauty of an inebriated chakori, Her face stifles the glory of the full moon, Her immensely exquisite beauty makes super- pure gold feel very much ashamed of its brilliance – look, there is Sri Radha – the One Who contains all sweetness of the Nectar.”

– (B.R.S.)

Sri Hari’s and His sweethearts’ qualities, names, characteristics, decoration, associated elements and some marginal objects – all arouse this Rasa.

Qualities – They are divided into three –

1. physical quality – age, looks, lavanya, beauty, sweetness etc.
2. verbal quality – sweet speech that delights the auditory sense is the ‘verbal quality’.
3. mental quality – gratefulness, forgiveness and kindness are the mental qualities.

Names – Sweet sounds such as ‘Radha’ and ‘Krishna’ are the ‘names’ that excite Rasa in a devotee of madhur Rasa.

Characteristics – We can categorize them into two – (1) anubhav (2) leela. We shall discuss the

‘anubhav’ separately, since it is a long topic. Here let us see the leelas that arouse madhur Rasa. Sri Krishna’s characteristics are – playing the flute, Ras-sports, ball-game. Srimati Radharani’s characteristics are – graceful-ness, playing the veena, music, cooking.

Decoration - It is of 4 types –

1. clothes
2. ornaments

3. flower-garlands
4. unguents

Associated elements - We can classify them into two –

1. lagna – Sri Krishna's lagna are – the flute-song, sound of the horn, singing, body- fragrance etc. Srimati Radharani's lagna are – song of the veenas, music and body- fragrance.
2. sannihita – Sri Krishna's sannihita are – flower-garland, gunja-mala, saffron anointments.

Srimati Radharani's sannihita are – flower-garlands, veena, dear friends such as Lalita and Sri Radhakund.

Some marginal objects – moonlight, clouds, lightning, spring season, sharad season, full moon, breeze, peacocks, cuckoo, he-parrot and she-parrot.

What are the reactions of a devotee in madhur Rasa (Anubhav)?

In madhur Rasa we have three types of anubhavs – alankar, udbhaswar, vachik

1. Alankar – The commonly maidens are at the height of youthfulness, and they are always absorbed in their life and soul – that is – Sri Krishna. Their heart is attacked with all sorts of bhavs, called 'alankar'.

We can list twenty alankars –

1. hav,
2. bhav,
3. hela,
4. beauty,
5. splendor,
6. glow,
7. sweetness,
8. pragalbhata (pragalbhya),
9. generosity,
10. patience,
11. leela,
12. love-dalliance,
13. vichchhitti,
14. vibhram,
15. kilakinchit,
16. mottayita,
17. kuttumita,
18. bibbok,
19. lalit
20. vikrita

Stupefaction and surprise are two additional alankars.

1 The literal meaning is 'jewellery'. These are actually bhavs that are so beautiful and loving that they entice Sri Krishna instantly, just like jewellery makes an ordinary girl appear beautiful and attracts a mundane 'lover'.

2. Udbhaswar – loud reactions of a devotee in madhur Rasa – the sweetheart's skirt-string loosens,

her uttariya (dupatta)¹ falls, she stretches the upper body, yawns, flares the nostrils, sighs heavily, rolls on the earth, sings, does not care for the public, spins around and hiccoughs; these are the udbhaswar reactions.

3. Vachik – verbal reactions of a devotee in this Rasa – there are 12 in all – alap, vilap, samlap, pralap, anulap, apalap, sandesh, atidesh, apadesh, upadesh, niradesh and vyapadesh.

The devotee expresses all the eight satvik bhavs such as stupefaction, perspiration, gooseflesh etc. A devotee can express any one of the 5 levels in satvik bhav – they are as follows –

1. dhumayita – expressed when the devotee is in the stage of bhav or rati.
2. jwalita – when the devotee is in the stage of prem.
3. deepata – expressed in the stage of sneha, man, pranay, rag and anurag.
4. uddipta – in the stage of rudha-Mahabhav.
5. suddipta – in the last stage, that is Mohanakhya-Mahabhav.

Only Srimati Radharani manifests this bhav called ‘suddipta satvik bhav’. Explanation – “Srimati Radharani heard Sri Krishna’s magical flute and was absorbed in suddipta-satvik-bhav. Sri Vishakha and Vrinda devi are describing Her state at that moment to Govinda as follows –

‘Dear Madhav, A most amazing incident has occurred! When Sri Radha heard the song of Your flute, She has entered such a state that the students have mistaken Her to be an idol of Goddess SaRasawati and have started worshipping Her. (This indicates that Ishwari has become excessively stupefied and pale, since Goddess SaRasawati is white in color). Aho! Sri Radha perspired so much that we felt as if it was the monsoon season¹⁴! She wept so profusely that the cattle quenched their thirst, drinking Her tears! She is so covered with gooseflesh from head to toe, that She looks as if flower-buds have sprouted all over Her body.’ – (U.N.)

What are the vyabhichari bhav or passing moods of a devotee in madhur Rasa? “

A devotee expresses The 33 types of vyabhichari bhav (such as nirved etc.), other than ougra and lethargy.”
– (B.R.S.)

Srimati Radharani manifests all the bhavs to the maximum extent and these bhavs make Her all the more attractive. For instance when Srimati Radharani feels proud of Her good fortune, She reveals it in the following manner –

“Srimati Radharani was feeling proud of Her good fortune. As a result She pretended to be so much engrossed in making a kundal, that, as if She did not notice Govinda at all. Lalita told Her – Dear sakhi, this person, Hari, has forsaken all His sakhas, has disregarded even sweethearts such as Chandravali and He is standing at Your doorstep gazing fixedly at Your face alone ! On the other hand, You are smiling and continuing to be busy arranging a crocodile-shaped earring¹ with jasmine flowers sewn inside a bunch of flowers! You are not glancing at Him even with the corner of Your eyes!” – (U.N.)

Thus we see that how sweetly Ishwari expresses even pride, which is otherwise considered a negative quality.

A devotee’s sthayi-bhav mingles with vibhavs such as these and transform into Madhur-bhakti-Rasa. Again this madhur-Rasa (also called Ujjwal-Rasa or brilliant Rasa) can be classified into two

–
“sa vipralambhah sambhoga iti dwedhojjwalo matah.”

Meaning – “Madhur Rasa or erotic Rasa is categorized into two – vipralambha (separation) and sambhog (union).” – (U.N.)

Vipralambha can be of 4 types –

1. purva-rag (before meeting)
2. man (love-quarrel)
3. prem-vaichittya
4. pravasa

They enhance the Rasa of union and we can relish them separately as ‘Rasa’ also.

Let us relish an example of Purva-rag Rasa. The sakhis saw Srimati Radharani’s extraordinary bhav during purva-rag and said –

“O Radhe! You are coming and going constantly! And You are standing outside the threshold a hundred times! You seem so agitated and Your sighs are heavy – all You do is to glance at the Kadamba-woods. Oh Rai! Why are behaving so? Do You not fear the evil elders? What shall we do if they find out? You are so restless that You cannot even manage Your dupatta. While being seated, You suddenly get a start and Your robe falls off. You are hardly in Your teens and moreover are You not a princess? In addition, You are a girl of prestigious ancestry! What desire do You wish to satisfy that You are stretching out Your hand so greedily? We cannot understand what game You are up to. We feel You are extending Your hand towards the moon. Poet Chandidas says – I guess the ‘Black-snare’ has captured You!”

Now let us study the various ingredients of Rasa (such as vibhav etc.) in the above situation. We remember that vibhav comprises of sthaya-bhav, the subject of Rasa, the shelter of Rasa and what excites Rasa. They are as follows –

sthaya-bhav – Madhur rati called ‘vipralambha’ (separation)

the subject of Rasa – Sri Krishna Who is the dheer-lalit⁵ lover.

The shelter of love – Srimati Radharani Who is in the stage of Purva-rag.

Uddipan (What excites Rasa) – the sight of the Kadamba-trees.

Anubhav (the visible reaction of the devotee in this Rasa) – coming in and out of the house repeatedly.

Satvik (not-so-visible reactions) – tears, turning pale.

Sanchari (passing moods) – aveg, depression, stress.

The Mahajan has drawn a very clear picture of madhur-Rasa during the separation called ‘pravasa’ – “New flowers blossomed in the woods and the flower-groves, while the she-cuckoo sang on the top of her voice, oh my! The sweet chandan-scented breeze is blowing while the frost has receded to the mountain tops; yet my Beloved has not returned home – oh dear! The moon is scorching my chandan-like body more than sun ever does, while the honey bees sing in the garden. The spring has arrived, yet my sweetheart remains far – what can I do if fate has turned against me? I gaze transfixed at Kanu’s face, yet my eyes are not quenched. My poor heart must indeed be like a rock – otherwise how can it continue to suffer like this when the time is so happy? Day by day I am drying

up like a fragile lotus-bud in the snow – I don't know where it all will end. Poet Vidyapati says – shame! Oh shame on such a life! Madhav's conduct is the height of cruelty!"

The vibhavs are as follows –

Sthayi-bhav – madhur-rati called separation due to 'pravas'.

The subject (vishay) of Rasa – Sri Krishna Who has gone to Mathura. The shelter of Rasa – Virahini Srimati Radharani.

Uddipan – the spring season, the song of the cuckoo, sweet-scented breeze, humming of the bees, moonlit night.

Anubhav – crying loudly, not caring what others will think.

Satvik bhav – tears, shivering, paleness, fainting.

Sanchari bhav – indifference, depression, humility, eagerness, lunacy, illusion.

Let us relish sambhog-Rasa in brief:

“He caught her hand, eager to make love. They locked hands, gazing into each other's eyes with passion. He was adamant and wanted to touch Her body – he was so full of desire. But Râi shook Her head in refusal. She said, “No, no.” Râi was displaying a novel mood of passion¹, whereas Shyâm was advancing in the mood of an elephant-at-war. She was hesitating to return the kiss, and closed Her eyes, yet when He drank the nectar of Her lips, She moaned. When His nails dug into Her, my Precious Râi gave a start, and a current ran across Her body just when He bit Her softly. She started prattling in a choked voice. She forgot Herself completely and craziness swept over Her. Just then She controlled Herself and stopped being generous. Says poet Gobinda dâs – this is the limit of ras!”

What are the ingredients of rasa here?

The vibhâvas –

Sthâyi-bhâv – madhur-rati called sambhog (union)

The subject of rasa – Sri Krishna Who is dheer-lalita lover, vidagdha and at the threshold of youth.

The shelter of love – sweet, vidagdha, the crest-jewel of all experts at love-making – Srimati Râdhârâni, Who has come of age.

Uddipan – the love-grove, humming of the bees etc.

Anubhâv – pulling the veil on the face, arching the body.

Sâtvik bhâv – choking of the voice, goose bumps etc.

Sanchâri – bashfulness, surge of emotion, fear (that someone will come to know about the relation).

Thus we see how the vibhâv, anubhâv, sâtvik and sanchâri bhâvs are like fragrant blossoms that have mingled with madhur-rati and formed sambhog-ras, like a sweet bouquet. When we, the

sâdhak-devotees, relish such wonderful poems that contain the ras of a Braja-bâlâ's feelings, this sweetness is transmitted through us. Then we also feel blessed to relish the delectable sambhog-rasa of Sri Sri Râdhâ-Mâdhav.

– Translated by Madhumati Adhikari dd