



A Comprehensive Analysis of Core Principles in Marathi Poetry: beauty (saundarya), rasa (sentiment), and bhava (emotion)

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Abstract:

This research paper provides a detailed analysis of the interrelationship among beauty (saundarya), rasa (sentiment), and bhava (emotion) in Marathi poetry, elucidating how they collectively create poetic experience. The core of poetry transcends mere verbal structure, manifesting through the unity of content, experience, emotional sensitivity, and rasa appreciation, which this paper underscores as its central thesis. It delineates the fundamental principles of poetic creation and the conceptual foundation of 'poetic beauty' (kavyasaundarya), while exploring the functions of rasa theory—including vibhava (determinants), anubhava (consequents), and vyabhicaribhava (transitory emotions)—in poetic expression. Elements such as figures of speech (alamkaara), imagery, symbols, sound, rhythm, meter, word selection, and linguistic elegance are examined for their contributions to the formation of beauty, and their harmonious integration in generating rasa is clarified. Centering the reader, the paper explicates the emotional experience process and highlights how varying intensities of emotions modulate levels of rasa appreciation. It posits that comprehension of these poetic principle's renders reading more refined, rasa-infused, and meaningful, advocating a scholarly approach framed by principles, rasa, emotion, and beauty to broaden Marathi poetic understanding.

Keywords: Marathi poetry, poetic beauty, beauty, rasa theory, emotion theory.



Introduction:

In Marathi poetics, beauty, rasa, and bhava are regarded as three fundamental principles akin to the vital essence of poetry. Drawing inspiration from the Sanskrit poetic tradition, these principles have evolved within Marathi criticism, necessitating their holistic consideration for comprehensive poetic evaluation, as no single element suffices for poetic perfection.

The Marathi poetic tradition extends beyond word arrangement or metrical composition, embodying a rich artistic system that subtly manifests human experience, culture, and life's philosophy. The 'beauty' that captivates, the emotion that stirs the mind, and the resonance that penetrates the soul during poetic reading are perpetually orchestrated by these three core elements—beauty, rasa, and bhava—which are interlinked, imbuing poetry with aesthetic elevation, emotional immediacy, and conceptual depth. Thus, studying Marathi poetry demands familiarity with these principles and their interrelations.

Poetic beauty is not mere external ornamentation or melodious diction; it emerges as an organic unity of language, imagery, rhythm, symbols, sound, and content. Selected words, vivid imagery, sonic resonance in lines, and semantic nuances collectively reveal this beauty. Whether it is the naturalness in saintly poetry, the classical rigor in pandit poetry, the symbolic abstraction in modern verse, or the freedom in free verse, the essence of beauty varies yet uniformly delivers artistic delight and meaningful experiential form to the reader.

Rasa is deemed the pinnacle of poetic experience: the matured delight arising from emotional consummation. Marathi poetry exhibits manifestations of diverse rasas such as pathos (karuna), erotic (sṛṅgara), heroic (vira), comic (hasya), marvelous (adbhuta), and peaceful (santa). However, rasa depends not solely on theme but on composition, imagery, suggestion, and the reader's sensitive participation; thus, a single poem may evoke rasa of varying intensity across readers, transcending narrow 'entertainment' toward experiential enrichment.

Bhava serves as the seed of rasa. The poet's inner experiences crystallize into forms like sorrow, joy, wonder, love, anger, compassion, devotion, or rebellion, expressed through language. Authentic, subtle, and precise bhava renders poetry profoundly resonant. Marathi verse spans from devotional rasa to social awareness, rural realities to urban stresses, forming a vast emotional landscape. When these bhavas transform into artistic beauty and manifest as rasa in the reader, poetry achieves its true impact; hence, beauty, rasa, and bhava constitute the sturdy tripod of Marathi poetics. Analyzing poetry through these lenses reveals not just 'what' it conveys but 'how' and 'why' it resonates, unlocking the splendor of the Marathi tradition more meaningfully.

Literature Review:

In Marathi poetics, beauty, rasa, and bhava are primary principles that conjointly facilitate poetic appreciation. Sanskrit texts establish rasa theory in Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, suggest implied meaning's beauty in Anandavardhana's *Dhvanyaloka*, and expound word-meaning beauty in Bhamaha and Mammata. In Marathi, Abhinavagupta links rasa to delight, Paṭankar views beauty as experiential, and Mardhekar integrates personal-social emotions. From beauty as form, bhava as seed, to rasa as fruition, these principles underpin Marathi literature from saints to Namdev Dhasal.

Methodology:

This qualitative research is based on textual analysis of Marathi literary works, employing descriptive-analytical methods, comparative perspectives, and historical contexts where necessary.

Poetic Beauty: Poetic beauty encompasses the artistic synthesis of structure, form, meter, rhythm, sound, and language that evokes aesthetic experience in the reader. Far from superficial decoration, it is an intrinsic principle arising from internal composition, including verbal form, sonority, and arrangement. Poetic beauty



manifests through meter, alankara, guna (qualities), riti (styles), and aucitya (appropriateness), categorized as verbal beauty, semantic beauty, emotional beauty, intellectual beauty, and structural beauty.

Form beauty, deemed external, amplifies through harmonious, sonorous words, pure meter, and apt alankara, yielding melodious, pleasurable, rasa-laden reading. For instance, Sant Jñanesvara's *ovi* verses exemplify this, as do Keshavsut's poems via precise diction, tempo, and rhythm.

Verbal Beauty: Verbal beauty involves word selection, arrangement, alliteration, rhythm, and tonal sweetness. Precision, clarity, and contextual fitness mark poetic skill. Sonic alankaras like anuprasa (alliteration), yamaka, and sleṣa create auditory rhythm. Sanskrit/tatsama words impart gravity, tadbhava/desi infuse naturalness—their balance tests verbal beauty.

Semantic Beauty: Semantic beauty fuses word meanings, profundity, metaphorical senses, suggestion, and implications artistically. Beyond literal denotation, it embraces suggestive, multilayered senses: target meaning, irony, and dhvanyartha. For example, 'puṣpa umalun gele' (the flower has bloomed and gone) connotes not just floral wilting but youth's end, dashed hopes, or time's passage. Per Bhamaha and Anandavardhana, each word enriches experience; in saint poetry, 'Ram' symbolizes devotion, self-knowledge, truth.

Emotional Beauty: Emotional beauty harmonizes poetic emotion's artistic expression and audible manifestation. Bhava is not verbal adornment but the poet's authentic experience comprehensively embodied in language, penetrating the reader's heart. When emotional experiences channel through diction, imagery, rhythm, and sound, emotional beauty emerges. Sant Tukaram's abhangas, blending devotional bhava with simple Marathi, exemplify this; profound sorrow, joy, love, rebellion, or compassion, woven into elegant words and subtle alankara, become heart-touching. Emotional beauty elevates poetry beyond 'entertainment' to experiential enrichment.

Intellectual Beauty: Intellectual beauty arises from ideas' coherence, depth, and impactful presentation in writing or poetry. Unlike linguistic beauty from meter/alankara, it operates at semantic levels. Precision, logic, life-relevance, and value-orientation measure it. It introspects readers, prompting inquiry, perspective shifts, and action via expansive ideas in simple words, suggestive imagery, and nuanced insights on truth-falsity, ethics, relations, and society. Thus, it unites intellect, sensibility, and values.

Structural Beauty, Meter, and Rhythm: Structural beauty entails the poem's organization, division, flow, and sequence. Metered or free verse requires rhythmic coherence. Matravyṛtta, varnavṛtta, or prose meters enable effective content presentation; specific forms like *ovi*, abhanga, ghazal have signature structures.

Imagery and Symbols: Imagery vitalizes poetry via visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory evocations; alankaras like rupaka, upama, utprekṣa empower them. Symbols concretize abstracts, expanding meaning. Natural (sun, moon, river, mountain) or cultural (lamp, flag, deity) symbols enrich poetry.

Rasa Theory and Rasa Genesis

Concept of Rasa: Originating in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, rasa is poetics' core: mature, depersonalized aesthetic relish via poetic experience. 'Raso vai saḥ' equates it to Brahmanic bliss. Vibhava, anubhava, and saṃcaribhava synthesize to elevate sthāyibhava to rasa.

Nature of Nine Rasas: sṛṅgāra (rati), hasya (hasya), karuṇa (soka), raudra (krodha), vīra (utsaha), bhayanaka (bhaya), bibhatsa (jugupsa), adbhuta (vismaya), śānta (nirveda). Marathi poetry employs them aptly.



Elements of Rasa Genesis: alambanavibhava/uddipanavibhava (causes), anubhava (externalized emotions via gestures, actions, words), samcaribhava (ephemeral: joy, sorrow, curiosity) nourish sthayibhava.

Levels of Rasa Experience: reader immersion transcends personal identity, yielding transcendent, pure delight beyond daily joys/sorrows. Rasabhasa and bhavasandhi explain success/failure.

Aesthetics and Types of Bhavas

Fundamental Concept of Bhavas: Bhava refers to emotions in the mind, pulsations in the inner self, and the mental response to life experiences. In poetry, bhava is the soul of the content. When emotions originating from the poet's heart are expressed through words, they touch the reader's heart. Poetry devoid of bhava feels lifeless and mechanical, while poetry rich in bhava feels alive.

Sthayibhava and Vyabhicharibhava: Sthayibhava means eternal, permanent fundamental human emotions. There are nine sthayibhavas: rati (love), hasa (humor), shoka (sorrow), krodha (anger), utsaha (enthusiasm), bhaya (fear), jugupsa (disgust), vismaya (wonder), and nirveda (disgust or detachment). Each sthayibhava forms the root basis of one rasa. Vyabhichari or sanchari bhavas are transient, unstable, transitional emotions that strengthen the sthayibhava. There are thirty-three sanchari bhavas, such as harsha (joy), avega (excitement), smriti (memory), shanka (doubt), asuya (jealousy), moha (infatuation), and so on.

Authenticity and Validity of Bhavas: The truthfulness of bhavas is a key criterion for poetic quality. Emotions personally experienced, felt, or internalized through subtle observation by the poet prove genuine and effective. Artificial, imitated, or contrived bhavas do not convince the reader. States like bhavadrek (emotional surge), bhavashanti (emotional calm), and bhavasandhi (emotional continuity) must emerge naturally in poetry.

Excess and Restraint: Restraint is essential when expressing bhavas. Overly dramatic or exaggerated displays create emotional distance and alienate the reader from the poem. Conversely, extreme restraint, dryness, or emotionlessness fails to generate impact. Achieving balance between emotional intensity and linguistic restraint is the poet's skill. Bhavas expressed through suggestion, symbols, or indirectly often touch the heart more deeply than those stated directly.

Harmony Between Bhava and Thought: Poetry dominated solely by bhavas gets trapped in sentimentality, while thought-dominated poetry feels dry. A poem with balanced integration of bhava and thought is considered excellent. Emotions appeal to the heart, while thoughts engage the intellect; their harmonious interplay moves the complete human being—the unified personality of heart and mind.

Interrelationships and Integration: Beauty (saundarya), rasa, and bhava are interdependent and complementary principles. Beauty shapes the external and internal form of poetry, revealed through words, structure, rhythm, and meter. Bhava is the soul of the content and inner experience, capturing the pulsations of the poet's heart. Rasa is the outcome of their union, creating relish and aesthetic experience in the reader. When beauty and bhava integrate, rasa is realized, perfecting the poetic experience.

Interdependence of Beauty and Bhava: Emotional beauty (bhavasaundarya) and verbal-structural beauty strengthen each other. Even profound bhavas cannot be expressed without appropriate linguistic form. Conversely, beautiful word arrangements without bhavas feel empty. Thus, it is said, "Shabdarthau sahita kavyam"—poetry arises from the union of word (shabda) and meaning (artha). Bhava is the element of meaning, beauty the element of form—their fusion creates poetry.



Role of Beauty and Bhava in Rasa Realization: Both beauty and bhava are essential for rasa realization. Bhava authenticity awakens sthayibhava, while beautiful presentation conveys it effectively. Elements like rhythm, phonetic harmony, and imagery intensify the rasa experience. Natural flow of bhavas and contextual appropriateness facilitate rasa creation. Deficiency in any leads to rasabhasa (pseudo-rasa).

Determining Poetic Value: Poetic evaluation requires considering all three principles together. Focusing only on verbal virtuosity risks artificiality. Overemphasis on emotion leads to prosaic looseness. Strict adherence to rasa tradition without balance feels rigid and convention-bound. When all three are balanced excellently, poetry becomes superior and memorable.

Method of Bhava Analysis: In analyzing bhavas, consider the poet's mindset, life experiences, and social context. Examine whether the expressed bhavas are personal or social, transient or eternal. Test their authenticity—artificial or copied bhavas are easily detectable. Trace the rise and fall of bhavas, emotional continuity, and peaks. Demonstrate the degree of harmony between bhava and thought, and bhava and beauty.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

In Marathi poetics, beauty, rasa, and bhava are three fundamental principles vital for both creation and criticism. Beauty gives form, bhava gives soul, and rasa gives life—this triveni confluence completes poetry. Poets can create excellent works by deeply understanding these principles and using them naturally and effortlessly. Critics can perform fair, balanced evaluations based on them. Readers can deepen their experience and enjoy more mature appreciation with this awareness. Studying these reveals the richness and diversity of the Marathi poetic tradition.

Poetic value should be judged by the integration of these three principles. Observe which is dominant or weak. If all three are excellent, the poetry is superior; if two are good and one weak, it is average; if all are deficient, it is inferior. However, sometimes exceptional mastery of one can compensate for weaknesses in others.

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