

Can animal characters be ‘receptacles of *rasa*’?

An overview of the positions held on this issue in classical Indian treatises on poetics

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In classical Indian aesthetics, the ultimate goal of *kāvya* (dramatic and literary art) is the arousal of aesthetic experience, called *rasa* (‘juice’) in Sanskrit. A fundamental role in this process is played by the characters in the works, as some theorists place in them the locus of manifestation of *rasa*, while others consider them the necessary medium through which *rasa* is aroused in the spectator/reader. As a rule, Indian theory admits only human characters to this process, sometimes also semi-divine or divine characters; however, there are cases in which it seems clear that the role of receptacle of *rasa* is played by characters in animal form. This article presents an overview of the views of leading pre-modern Indian theorists on the admissibility of an animal character being the locus of *rasa*.

Keywords: Indian poetics, Indian aesthetics, animal studies, *kāvya*, Sanskrit literature.

1. Introduction¹

Already from the earliest treatise that has come down to us, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* attributed to Bharata, Indian aesthetics ascribes to *rasa* ‘juice,’ an essential role in the definition of the work of art (at first theatrical, later also literary) and its enjoyment by the users. Over the centuries, Indian aesthetics confirmed and emphasised the crucial role of *rasa*, which was eventually interpreted as the very essence and, at the same time, the goal of art. A key role in the theory of *rasa* is played by the characters in the work, because, according to some theorists, *rasa* itself is placed in them, or because, according to others, the characters (or their representation) are attributed the fundamental role of arousing *rasa* in the viewer. According to some theorists, the characters that can act as locus of the *rasa* are gods, demigods or men; according to others, however, since the arousal of *rasa* requires the representation

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of a human-like emotional experience that the audience can relate to and appreciate, *rasa* can only manifest itself in human characters, usually the noblest ones, *i.e.* the protagonists. However, there are cases in which it seems clear that this role is performed by animal characters instead. By way of illustration, let us look at the following two stanzas from *Kumārasambhava* (Kum). Short contextualisation: Indra has just assigned Kāma the task of diverting Śiva from the yogic meditation in which he is immersed, in order to make him fall in love with Pārvatī. Kāma recklessly accepts the assignment and sets off towards Himālaya, accompanied by his bride Rati and his trusted friend and assistant Vasanta ‘Spring.’ The latter, advancing through the forests covering the mountain slopes, takes on his manifest form, *i.e.* causes the advent (out of time) of the spring season. This, in turn, spreads amorous passion in the forest, inducing voluptuous behaviour in all its inhabitants: animals, semi-divine beings, and even plants. The two stanzas that follow feature animals (bees, antelopes, elephants, birds) and are taken from a series of fourteen stanzas (Kum 3.26-39), in which Kālidāsa assigns non-human inhabitants of the forest roles that are usually played by human characters in the depiction of conventional love-poetry motifs, in a highly erotic or eroticised context.

*madhu dvirephaḥ kusumaikapātre
papau priyāṃ svām anuvartamānaḥ |
śṛṅgeṇa ca sparśanimīlitākṣīm
mṛgīm akaṇḍūyata kṛṣṇasāraḥ || Kum 3.36 ||
dadau rasāt paṅkajareṇugandhi
gajāya gaṇḍūśajalaṃ kareṇuḥ |
ardhopabhuktena bisena jāyāṃ
saṃbhāvayām āsa rathāṅganāmā || Kum 3.37 || (Smith 2005: 106)*

Keeping close to his beloved,
the bee drank honey
from the same flower cup,
and the black antelope
scratched his doe with his horn,
she closing her eyes at his touch.
The cow elephant lovingly gave
her mate a trunkful of water
fragrant with lily pollen;
the cakravāka bird favored his mate
with a half-eaten lotus stem (Smith 2005: 107).

In the light of the enormous prestige Kālidāsa has always enjoyed among Indian theorists, a reading of these stanzas leads one to conclude that characters in animal form can also serve as receptacles of *rasa*: but is this really the case?² The purpose of this article is to investigate how Indian theorists of poetics have interpreted the use of characters in animal form to represent conventional *kāvya* motifs and, more generally, to represent emotions normally attributed to human beings: is it considered as a mere ornament, a virtuosic *alaṃkāra*, as a metaphor (*rūpaka*), an allegory (*anyāpadeśa* or *anyokti*) or a double entendre (*śleṣa*)? Or is it more than a rhetorical embellishment, an instance in which animals can replace humans in the role of receptacles of *rasa*?

This research was inspired by a passage from *A Rasa Reader* (Pollock 2016: 248-249), in which the author summarises, in a few lines and in broad strokes, the general terms of the problem and the attitude towards it on the part of some Indian theorists. That short passage provided not only the starting idea for this research, but also an initial outline for its realisation: this initial outline was later expanded and enriched and took the form of the present article.

The following pages present, in chronological order, the positions held by some of the leading pre-modern Indian scholars on poetics on the admissibility of animal characters as loci of *rasa* elicitation. The survey makes no claim to exhaustiveness and has been carried out within the boundaries drawn by the following three limitations. The first concerns the literary typology of the works considered: in this regard, only works of aesthetic theory that are generally subsumed under the categories called *alaṃkārasāstra* and *kāvyaśāstra* were examined. Texts of other types, although potentially useful, such as, for instance, commentaries on the aforementioned treatises and commentaries on *kāvya* works (theatrical or literary), have been excluded from this study (the only exception being Kuntaka's autocommentary on his *Vakroktijīvitā*), as research on these texts would require time that would far exceed the duration of the project wherein this paper is framed. Secondly, only those theorists who, in their works, have dealt with this topic explicitly have been taken into account. Consequently, thinkers whose position on the relationship between animal characters and *rasa* can only be deduced from the general framework of their theoretical attitudes have been left out—with the sole exception of Abhinavagupta. Although he does not explicitly address the problem, Abhinavagupta was included in the study for two reasons: on the one hand because, as is well known, the theory he elaborated played a crucial role in the development of Indian aesthetics, representing a turning point; on the other, because, at the beginning of the exposition of his new theoretical edifice,

² One could ask the same question about plants, since creepers and trees are the protagonists of the scene, also in an erotic vein, described in Kum 3.39. But this topic is beyond the scope of this research.

Abhinavagupta quotes a famous stanza in which *rasa* is aroused by the fear felt by an animal character, in this case a deer terrified by King Duṣyanta who is chasing it, described in the opening of the *Abhijñānaśākuntala*. Finally, the third limitation is purely chronological: reasons also related to the present writer's specific expertise have suggested considering only works composed up to the end of the 14th century.

2. Theorists' opinions

2.1. Kuntaka: *Vakroktijīvita* (second half of the 10th century)

To the best of my knowledge, the first theorist to specifically deal with the topic of the relationship between animal characters and *rasa* is Kuntaka, active in Kashmir presumably in the second half of the 10th century (Pollock 2016: 98), author of the *Vakroktijīvita* (VJ) as well as the (auto)commentary on it (VJ comm; references to it are given by stanza number or, where in prose, by page and line number). Before presenting the passages in which Kuntaka addresses the topic of the present research, it is necessary to make some general remarks.

The framework within which Kuntaka elaborates his theory is eminently analytical, so his focus is primarily on the literary fabric of the work. According to him, the distinctive feature that characterises artistic language and distinguishes it from ordinary—or, at any rate, non-artistic—language is (as suggested by the very title of his treatise) *vakrokti*, ‘crooked utterance,’ understood, however, not with its common meaning of indirect or evasive expression, but as ‘unexpected/startling’ use of the language—or ‘striking usage,’ as Pollock (2016: 98) puts it. In this context, what, then, is the role of the *rasa*? As is clear from the following excerpt, Kuntaka rejects the idea that *rasa* is an ornament of the text, as had been argued by his predecessors, notably Udbhaṭa. On the other hand, the analytical approach of his theoretical edifice prevents him from identifying *rasa* with the essence of the poetic work (let alone its end): although it is ‘the very thing we are apprehending in a poem,’ *rasa* is nothing but the result of the enhancement (*pariṣoṣa*) of stable emotions.³

*idānīm rasātmanah pradhānacetanāparispandavarṇyamānavṛtter alaṃkāarakārāntarābhimatām
alaṃkāratām nirākaroti –
alaṃkāro na rasavat parasyāpratibhāsanāt |
[...] || VJ Comm 3.11 || (VJ Comm p. 143 ll. 23-24 and VJ 3.11ab)*

³ In his autocommentary to VJ 3.7, Kuntaka states that ‘*rasa* is nothing but the stable emotion’ (*sthāyy eva tu raso bhaved*, VJ Comm, p. 138 l. 17); see below.

The author now refutes the view of other poeticsians who hold that when the subject of the narrative is the activity of the primarily sentient beings, which consists essentially in their *rasa*, the subject can indeed function as an ornament.

The ‘*rasa*-laden’ cannot be an ornament, first because it constitutes the very thing we are apprehending in a poem [...] (Pollock 2016: 102)

mṛteti pretya saṅgantum yayā me maraṇam smṛtam |

[...] || VJ Comm 3.36 ||

atra ratiparipoṣalakṣaṇavarṇanīyaśarīrabhūtāyāś cittavṛtter atiriktam anyad vibhaktaṁ vastu na kiṃcid vibhāvyaṭe | (VJ Comm p. 146 ll. 3-4)

For in the poem adduced, “The woman I thought was dead and hoped / to rejoin by taking my own life [...],” there is no separate thing to be apprehended beyond the mental state itself that constitutes the narrative content, which is nothing other than the enhancement of the stable emotion of desire (Pollock 2016: 102).

In this passage, Kuntaka takes a stance on a crucial aspect in assessing the possibility of an animal character eliciting *rasa*: the identification of the locus of *rasa*, *i.e.* its placement within the work (that is, in the characters) or, instead, in its recipients (that is, in the audience). Asserting that in a poem ‘there is no separate thing to be apprehended beyond the mental state itself that constitutes the narrative content, which is nothing other than the enhancement of the stable emotion of desire,’ Kuntaka makes it clear that, with regard to the location of the locus of *rasa*, his theoretical framework aligns with that of the tradition that preceded him, according to whom *rasa* is ‘a phenomenon internal to the literary work, whether textual or performative’ (Pollock 2010: 145, 170 n. 8), it is in the work of art, be it a poem or a play: therefore, the receptacle of *rasa*, *i.e.* the place where *rasa* manifests itself, is the character in the work. According to him, *rasa* is experienced by the audience secondarily, actualising the feeling experienced by the literary character through a process that can be cognitive, inferential or based on memories: therefore, the evaluation of the authenticity of the experience of *rasa* on the part of the audience depends on the capacity of the character in the work to experience *rasa*. Since in our case the character in question—the receptacle—is an animal, the final judgement depends on the evaluation of the emotional potential of animals (Pollock 2010: 145; Pollock 2016: 98-99, 248-249). Thus, within this framework, the question can be rephrased in these terms: can an animal experience *rasa*, thus enabling the audience to actualise it in themselves and experience *rasa* in turn? As one might expect, Kuntaka’s answer is negative.

In the *Vakroktijīvita*, the passage devoted to this topic consists of four stanzas (VJ 3.5-3.8), accompanied by the corresponding autocommentary by Kuntaka himself.

First (VJ 3.5), in line with the formalist approach of his theoretical framework, Kuntaka categorises entities into two groups: sentient beings and inanimate entities. Then (VJ 3.6), among the sentient beings that make up the first group, he identifies two distinct types or classes (*prakāra*): the primary type is represented by gods, demigods and men, the secondary type by animals.

bhāvānām aparimlānasvabhāvaucityasundaram |
cetanānām jaḍānām ca svarūpaṃ dvidiḥam smṛtam || VJ 3.5 ||
tatra pūrvaṃ prakārābhyāṃ dvābhyāṃ eva vibhidate |
surādisiṃhaprabhṛtiprādhānyetarayogataḥ || VJ 3.6 ||

It is said that the nature of entities (*bhāva*),⁴ whose beauty derives from their full-blown intrinsic appropriateness, is of two kinds: that of sentient beings and that of inanimate entities.

In this regard, the first [kind of entities] is divided into two classes: that of gods etc. and that of lions and so forth [i.e. animals], which are [respectively] the main class and the other [i.e. the subordinate]⁵ class, in accordance with the order of enunciation.⁶

In his autocommentary, Kuntaka makes it clear that the main class consists of gods, anti-gods, various semi-divine beings, men and so forth (*surādayaḥ tridaśaprabhṛtayo ye cetanāḥ surāsurasiddhavidyādharaḥ gāṇḍharvanaraprabhṛtayaḥ*, VJ Comm, p. 138 ll. 4-5).⁷

Next (VJ 3.7) Kuntaka argues that beings of the higher category can, by their very nature, experience emotions such as passion, whereas animals can only experience instincts or urges.

mukhyam akliṣṭaratyādiparipoṣamanoharam |
svajātyucitahevākāsamullekhojjvalaṃ param || VJ 3.7 ||

The “primary” category is made beautiful by the enhancement of their unaffected desire and the like; the other becomes adorned when reference is made to the impulses appropriate to their particular species (Pollock 2016: 99).

⁴ As explained in the opening of the autocommentary to VJ 3.5 (*bhāvānām varṇyamānavṛttinām*), the term *bhāva*, ‘entity’, is here to be understood with the meaning of *varṇyamānavṛtti*, ‘object of the poem’ (lit. ‘whose acting/being is described [in the poem]’). The *Vakroktijīvitā* is a work of literary aesthetics, indeed ‘the only work in Sanskrit tradition that can be likened to what today we would regard as literary criticism’ (Pollock 2016: 98): consistently, here Kuntaka does not intend to categorise the entities of the world, but rather those that can appear as characters in a *kāvya* work.

⁵ The autocommentary reads *itarad aprādhānyam* (VJ Comm, p. 138 l. 6).

⁶ Translations without attribution are the work of the present writer.

⁷ In one manuscript the word *nara*, ‘men’, is omitted (Krishnamoorthy 1977: 138 note 3).

In his autocommentary to this stanza, Kuntaka explains that beings belonging to both classes, main and subordinate, can become subjects of poets' description, albeit with one important difference: the nature of beings of the main class has the capacity to develop *sthāyibhāva* and, from them, *rasa*, whereas the nature of beings of the subordinate class, *i.e.* animals, only lends itself to the description of the instinctive behaviour of the different species—with the obvious consequence that animal characters cannot develop *rasa*. Although Kuntaka does not state this explicitly, this limitation stems from the fact that animals do not have an emotional apparatus that allows them to experience emotions such as passion.

mukhyaṃ yat pradhānaṃ cetanasurāsuraḍiṣaṃbandhi svarūpaṃ tad evaṃvidhaṃ sat kavīnāṃ varṇanāspadaṃ bhavati svavyāpārāgocaratāṃ pratipadyate | kīdṛśaṃ – akliṣṭaratyāḍiparipoṣamanoharam | akliṣṭaḥ kadhathanāviraḥitaḥ pratyagratāmanoharo yo ratyādiḥ sthāyibhāvas tasya paripoṣaḥ śṛṅgāraprabhṛtirasatvāpādanam, sthāyy eva tu raso bhaved iti nyāyāt | tena manoharam hṛdayahāri | (VJ Comm p. 138 ll. 13-18)

[...]⁸

evaṃ dvitīyaṃ apradhānacetanasīmḥāḍiṣaṃbandhi yat svarūpaṃ tad itthaṃ kavīnāṃ varṇanāspadaṃ sampadyate | kīdṛśaṃ – svajātyucitahevākasaṃmulekhojvalam | svā pratyekam ātmīyā sāmānyalakṣaṇavastusvarūpā yā jātis tasyāḥ samucito yo hevākaḥ svabhāvānusārī parispandas tasya samullekhaḥ samyagullekhanam vāstavena rūpeṇopanibandhas tenojjvalam bhrājiṣṇu, tad vidāhlāḍakārīti yāvat | (VJ Comm p. 140 ll. 20-23, p. 141 ll. 1-2)

The nature of the “primary,” that is, principally sentient, category of beings – gods, antigods, and the like—becomes fit subject matter for poets, or in other words, enters the field of their proper literary creativity, when they are “made beautiful by the enhancement of their unaffected desire and the like.” Desire and so on are the stable emotions, which are “unaffected” when they are free from any constraint, that is, beautiful thanks to their naturalness. They are said to be “enhanced” when they come to exist as the erotic and the other *rasas*, according to the axiom that *rasa* is nothing but the stable emotion. This makes the category of beings “beautiful,” that is, enchanting’ (Pollock 2016: 99-100).

[...]

By contrast, the nature of the second, or secondary, category—those sentient beings that are animals, such as lions and so on—becomes fit subject matter for poets only when reference is made to the urges appropriate to their particular species (Pollock 2016: 101).

In order to exemplify the function that can be played by animal characters in *kāvya*, Kuntaka quotes two stanzas. The first stanza, by an unknown author, is a naturalistic description of a lion sleeping in a

⁸ Here Kuntaka quotes five stanzas from Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaṣīya* to clarify the role played by beings belonging to the main class.

cave; the second example, given below, is the famous opening stanza of the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (AŚ), in which the deer hunted by King Duṣyanta looks back at him in terror.

*grīvābhaṅgābhirāmaṃ muhur anupatati syandane dattadṛṣṭiḥ
paścārdhena praviṣṭaḥ śarapatanabhayād bhūyasā pūrvakāyam |
darbhair ardhāvaliḍhaiḥ śramavivṛtamukhabhramśibhiḥ kīrṇavartmā
paśyodagraplutatvād viyati bahutaraṃ stokam urvyāṃ prayāti || VJ Comm 3.31 || (= AŚ 1.7)*

Repeatedly darts a glance at the pursuing chariot,
gracefully twisting his neck,
with his haunches drawn acutely forward
into his forebody
out of fear of the arrow’s strike,
scattering the path with grass half-chewed,
dropping from his mouth
gaping with exhaustion.
Look! With his lofty leaps he moves
more through the sky
and hardly touches the ground (Vasudeva 2006: 58).⁹

This stanza occupies a central position in the debate on the relationship between animal characters and the arousal of *rasa* that will develop in the centuries following Kuntaka, as will be discussed in the next pages and, more extensively and in depth, in Luigi Singh's article published in this same volume. Finally (VJ 3.8), Kuntaka concedes that animals (and inanimate entities) can at least enhance literary beauty by ‘illuminating the *rasa*’ (*rasoddīpana*):

*rasoddīpanasāmarthyavinibandhanabandhuraṃ |
cetanānām amukhyānām jaḍānām cāpi bhūyasā || VJ 3.8 ||*

As a rule, [the nature] of secondary sentient beings and inanimate entities is beautiful because it is imbued with the ability to illuminate *rasa*.

As for the meaning of *uddīpana*, in the autocommentary the term is glossed with *ullāsana* and *paripoṣa* (*rasāḥ śṛṅgārādayas teṣāṃ uddīpanam ullāsanaṃ paripoṣas tasmin sāmardhyaṃ śaktis [...]*). Furthermore, it

⁹ The differences between the text translated by Vasudeva and that in Kuntaka's autocommentary (reproduced here) are minor: *śaṣpair* in place of *darbhair*, °*vitata*° for °*vivṛta*°, *plutitvād* for *plutatvād*.

should be noted that Kuntaka, in closing the autocommentary to VJ 3.8, illustrates the action of *rasoddīpana* performed by animals¹⁰ by quoting a stanza from the *Kumārasambhava* taken from the sequence mentioned at the opening of this article:

cūtāṅkurāsvādakaṣāyakaṇṭhaḥ
puṁskokilo yan madhuraṁ cukūja |
manasvinīmānavighātadakṣaṁ
tad eva jātaṁ vacanaṁ smarasya || VJ Comm 3.32 || (= Kum 3.32)

His throat tawny from tasting mango shoots,
 the sweet call the male *kokil* made
 became indeed the voice of Kāma
 skilled in breaking proud women's pride (Smith 2005: 105).

In the light of the gloss in the autocommentary and the example brought to illustrate it, the name *uddīpana* seems to convey the meaning 'causing to shine forth,' 'to enhance,' 'to bring to full development.' The action performed by the characters of the secondary category, i.e. secondary sentient beings and inanimate entities, would therefore be ancillary, aimed at emphasising or intensifying the *rasa*, which can only arise in a character of the primary category, as was explained in the previous verse (VJ 3.7).

2.2. Abhinavagupta: *Abhinavabhāratī* (10th-11th century)

A few decades after Kuntaka, in the late 10th and early 11th century, the great Kashmiri thinker Abhinavagupta synthesises and systematises earlier theories of poetics, particularly the *rasa* theory introduced by Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*: by marrying *rasa* with *dhvani* and philosophy, he provided a unified framework that influenced both theory and artistic practice profoundly and enduringly. There are two aspects of his theoretical framework that are most relevant to the object of this research. Firstly, with Abhinavagupta, *rasa* becomes the central principle of Indian aesthetics, the distinctive element of *kāvya*, its very essence: therefore, its elicitation is the goal of any work that aspires to be artistic. Secondly, regarding the locus of the *rasa*, Abhinavagupta makes very different assumptions from those of his predecessors, and comes to opposite conclusions to those of Kuntaka. In fact, for him

¹⁰ The other quoted stanza, taken from the *Vikramorvaśīya* (II.6), illustrates the *rasoddīpana* performed by plants.

the locus of *rasa* is no longer internal to the poem (or the play), but is the audience.¹¹ In this perspective, the emotional faculties of the characters are no longer of crucial importance, and—with regard to the role of characters in animal form in arousing *rasa*—it is entirely reasonable for the audience to experience *rasa* by enjoying the depiction of a scene in which the protagonist is an animal.

As has already been mentioned, Abhinavagupta does not express himself explicitly about the permissibility of characters in animal form being receptacles for *rasa*: but his position on this point is nevertheless very clear. In fact, at the very opening of the *Abhinavabhāratī* (ABh), his magnificent and revolutionary commentary on Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Abhinavagupta quotes, as an exemplification of the theory he is about to illustrate, the opening stanza of the *Abhijñānaśākuntala* in which a deer flees in terror from King Duṣyanta who is hunting it. This same stanza had already been quoted by Kuntaka in the *Vakroktijīvitā*, but with opposite intentions to those of Abhinavagupta. Kuntaka wanted to show that an animal can only have instinctive reactions and that, consequently, the fear of the deer described in the stanza cannot give rise to a stable emotion and, therefore, arouse *rasa*; at most, it can have the function of enhancing (*uddīpana*) the *rasa* aroused by a character belonging to the primary category (gods, anti-gods, semi-divine beings, men). According to Abhinavagupta, on the contrary, the stanza arouses the fearful *rasa* (*bhayānaka*) through the *sthāyibhāva* of fear (*bhaya*) felt by the deer.

tarhy ucyatām pariśuddhatattvam | [...] adhikārī cātra vimalapratibhānaśāliḥṛdayaḥ | tasya ca “grīvābhaṅgābhirāmam” iti “umāpi nilālaka” iti “haras tu kiṃcit” ityādivākyebhyo vākyārthapratipatter anantaram mānasī sākṣātkārātmikā apahastitatattadvākyopāttakālādivibhāgā tāvat pratītir upajāyate | tasyām ca yo mṛgapotakādir bhāti tasya viśeṣarūpatvābhāvād bhīta iti trāsakasyāpāramārthikatvād bhayam eva param deśakālādyanālīngitam, tata eva bhīto 'haṃ bhīto 'yam śatrur vayasyo madhyastho vetyādipratyayebhyo duḥkhasukhādikṛtāhānādibuddhyantarodayaniamavattayā vighnabāhulebhyo vilakṣaṇaṃ nirvighnapratītigrahyam sākṣād iva hṛdaye niviśamānaṃ cakṣuṣor iva viparivartamānaṃ bhayānako rasaḥ | tathāvidhe hi bhaye nātmātyantatiraskṛto na viśeṣata ullikhitāḥ | evaṃ paro 'pi | tata eva na parimitam eva sādharāṇyam api tu vitatam, [...] sa eva sādharāṇibhāvaḥ sutarām puṣyati | ata eva sarvasāmājīkānām ekaghanatayaiva pratipatteḥ sutarām rasaparipoṣāya sarveṣām anādivāsanāvicitrikṛtacetasaṃ vāsanāsaṃvādāt | (ABh p. 12 l. 20, p. 13 ll. 4-17, 21-22, p. 14 ll. 1-2)

Let us then state what is the true nature of *Rasa* purified of previous mistakes. [...] The qualified person is in this case any person whose heart possesses a spotless power of intuition (*pratibhāna*). In such a person hearing the following phrases, “There he (scil., the deer) is now, gracefully by the bending of his neck ...,” “Even Umā, dropping the golden *kaṇṭikāra* ...,” “The firmness of Hara ...,”¹²

¹¹ For this, as for other aspects of his thought, Abhinavagupta is most likely indebted to Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, who first proposed this revolutionary paradigm shift in his *Hṛdayadarpaṇa*, a work that was lost a couple of centuries after its composition (Pollock 2010: 143-146).

¹² The first *pratīka* is that of the initial stanza of *Abhijñānaśākuntala* (AŚ 1.7); the following ones refer to Kum. 3.62 and 3.67.

there appears, immediately after the perception of their literal sense, a perception of a different order, (an inner [*mānasi*] perception, consisting in a direct experience [*sāksātkāra*]) which completely eliminates the temporal distinction, etc., assumed by these sentences. The young deer, etc., which appears in this perception is devoid of its particularity (*viśeṣa*), and at the same time, the actor, who [playing the role of the deer], frightens [the spectators] (*trāsaka*) showing to be afraid, is unreal (*apāramāṛthika*). As a result, what there appears is simply and solely fear—fear in itself, uncircumscribed by time, space, etc. [...] This perception of fear is of a different order from the ordinary perceptions (“I am afraid, he—my enemy, my friend, anybody—is afraid”); for these are necessarily affected by the appearance of fresh mental movements (of shunning, etc.), consisting of pleasure, pain, etc., and just for this reason are full of obstacles (*vighna*). The sensation of the fear above mentioned, may be said to enter directly into our hearts, to dance before our eyes: this is the terrible *Rasa*. In such a fear, one’s own self is neither completely immersed (*tiraskṛ*) nor in a state of particular emergence (*ullikh*), and the same thing happens with the other selves. As a result of this, the state of generality involved is not limited (*parimita*), but extended (*vitata*) [...]. The afore-mentioned state of generality is readily nourished; so that by virtue of the very uniformity (*ekaghanatā*) of the spectator’s perception, it [i.e. the state of generality, *sādhāraṇya*] being so nourished, readily nourishes the *Rasa* in all of them: and this occurs, because the latent impressions of their minds concord with each other, the minds being varied by beginningless latent impressions (Gnoli 1968: 52-58).

Regarding the ability of characters in animal form to arouse *rasa*, the last sentence of the quoted passage is particularly relevant. By resorting to the argument of the eternity of *saṃsāra*, of the infinity of the life forms assumed by each being and of the latent impressions impressed in the consciousness (*vāsanā*), Abhinavagupta justifies the emotional attunement between animal (characters) and human (spectators) and justifies the possibility that, in the work of art, the emotions felt by the former can arouse *rasa* in the latter. With reference to these points made by Abhinavagupta, Gnoli adds:

Abhinavagupta replies with this argument to the objection of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, according to whom the spectator can identify himself only with a person similar to himself but not with a being of a non-ordinary nature, as Rāma, deity, etc. The identification and therefore the state of generality required for the aesthetic experience postulates an affinity of nature (latent impressions, tendencies, instincts, etc.) between the spectator and the person represented. Abhinavagupta replies to this objection saying that no being (animal or deity) exists with which man has no affinity of nature. The *saṃsāra* is beginningless and every man, before being that which he actually is, has been all the other beings as well. The consciousness of the spectator thus possesses (in other words, is varied by ...) the latent impressions of all the possible beings and he is therefore susceptible of identifying himself with each of them (Gnoli 1986: 58 n. 2).

Abhinavagupta is, therefore, the first theorist to recognise the possibility that animal characters may constitute the receptacle of *rasa*. Yet, as will be shown in the following pages, despite the unquestionable influence that Abhinavagupta’s thought exerted on later Indian aesthetics, in the following four centuries the main theorists who directly addressed the question at hand ignored or

rejected the perspective he proposed, remaining anchored to the traditional positions of the formalist theorists of the previous era.

2.3. Bhoja: *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharaṇa* and *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (first half of the 11th century)

A few decades after Abhinavagupta, in the first half of the 11th century, the topic of the relationship between animal characters and the arousal of *rasa* was addressed by Bhoja, the learned ruler of the Paramāra dynasty of Malwa, in both of his works: the *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharaṇa* (SKĀ) and the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (ŚP).

For Bhoja, *rasa* is one of the four basic principles of the ‘unity’ (*sāhitya*) of aspects of language and its use that are necessary for literature of art (*kāvya*) to exist: ‘it is the presence of *rasa* that makes literature beautiful’ (Pollock 2016: 115; *rasa* [...] *yo ’rthas tasyānvayāt kāvyam kamanīyatvam āsṇute*, SKĀ 5.1). On the other hand, for him, as it was also for Kuntaka, *rasa* is in the character: ‘*Rasa* is located in the character who is the subject of the work, Rama for example.’ (Pollock 2016: 115, quoting Bhaṭṭa Narasiṃha’s commentary to SKĀ 5.1). Given this assumption, it is not surprising that Bhoja rejects the idea that animal characters can arouse *rasa*. In the *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharaṇa*, the first of his two works of poetics, in one of his typically ‘ubiquitous and seemingly arbitrary lists’ (Pollock 2016: 111), Bhoja asserts that only a ‘semblance of *rasa*’ (*rasābhāsa*) can be engendered in animal characters, thereby tacitly excluding that *rasa* can fully develop in them. The category of *rasābhāsa* dates back to Udbhaṭa (8th-9th century; Pollock 2016: 66, 72-73, 315), but Bhoja is the first theorist to use it to define the kind of *rasa* that can arise from characters in animal form (Pollock 2016: 354 n. 297); his example will be followed by other thinkers in later centuries (see below).

hīnapātreṣu tiryakṣu nāyakaṇṭhābharaṇa |
gauṇeṣv eva padārtheṣu tam ābhāsaṃ vijānate || SKĀ 5.30 ||

We understand “semblance” to be the presence of *rasa* in characters of low status, animals, antagonists, or entities referenced in a merely metaphorical manner (Pollock 2016: 117).

Later in the same work, Bhoja quotes the following stanza from Hāla’s *Sattasāi* as an illustrative example of the *rasābhāsa* that can be present in animal characters:

pāḍāḍaṃ sohaḡgaṃ taṃvāe uaha goṭṭhamajjhammi |
duṭṭhavasahassa siṅge acchiuḍaṃ kaṇḍuantīe || SKĀ 5.138.12 || (= Sattasāi 460)¹³

See how the young cow makes plain her favored position:

In the middle of the pen

She rubs her eyelid

Against the horn of the vicious bull (Khoroché and Tieken 2009: 93).

Bhoja does not elaborate on the concept of *rasābhāsa* applied to animal characters, but since he ascribes it not only to animal characters but also to anti-gods, abject beings and inanimate entities described metaphorically as if they were conscious, it is obvious that he intended to define an inferior, imperfect and not fully developed form of *rasa* in this way. This hypothesis is confirmed in a passage from the *Śṛṅgārāprakāśa*, Bhoja's second (and main) poetic work. First, in a long and interesting premise, Bhoja argues that *rasa* does not manifest itself in all characters, regardless of their emotional faculties: in fact, only characters with a sufficiently developed emotional apparatus are able to savour *rasa*.

tatra kecin āhuḥ – nāyaṃ rasaḥ śṛṅgārākhyo ratyādibhir abhivyajyate apitvāmbanavibhāvād utpanno
ratyādir evoddīpanavibhāvādbhiḥ paraṃ prakarṣaṃ āropyamāṇo rasibhavan śṛṅgārādisaṃjñāṃ labhata iti
| ta evaṃ praṣṭavyāḥ – kim ete ratyādayaḥ svebhyāḥ ālambanebhyāḥ utpadyamānāḥ sarvasyāpy utpadyante
uta kasyacid eveti | yady tāvat sarvasya tadā sarvaṃ jagad rasikaṃ syāt | na caitad asti | yataḥ kaścīd rasikaḥ
kaścīd tu nīraso drśyate | na ca drṣṭaviparītaṃ śakyam anujñātum | ato na sarvasya ratyādayo jāyante | [...]
 (ŚP p. 616 ll. 4-11)

With respect to this point, some have argued that the *rasa* called the erotic is not something brought to manifestation by desire and the other emotions; they claim instead that desire (and this would hold true for the other stable emotions), having first arisen through the foundational factor and reached intensification through the physical setting and other auxiliary causes, itself turns into *rasa* and so acquires the name “the erotic.” But those who hold this view may be asked the following: Do these stable emotions, each of them arising by reason of its specific foundational factor, arise the same for everyone, or only for some? If for everyone, then the whole world¹⁴ would be *rasikas*—able to experience *rasa*—which is patently not the case, since we can see for ourselves that some individuals are able to experience *rasa* and some are not. And no postulate that is contradicted by perception is admissible. So desire and the other stable emotions do not come into play for everyone, but only for some (Pollock 2016: 126).

¹³ Weber's critical edition of the *Sattasāi* (1882: 196) reads *duṭṭhavasahassa* and records *duṭṭhava*^o among the variant readings collected in the critical apparatus.

¹⁴ Since in the following section Bhoja argues that stable emotions are aroused by an aesthetic factor, and not by an actual person, the ‘whole world’ mentioned here is most likely the world of the narrative, not that of the audience (Pollock 2016: 361 n. 114).

At the end of this premise, Bhoja defines three different forms of *rasa*, orders them hierarchically according to the emotional fullness of the character in which they occur (and, consequently, their degree of development), assigning the *rasābhāsa* the lowest position on the scale.

[...] *śṛṅgāriṇām eva svadata iti | tad upādhiś cāyam upajāyamāno rasas tridhā vikhyāyate | prakṛṣṭo bhāvarūpa ābhāsaś ca | tatra – yaḥ kathāśārīravypina uttamanāyakasya tathāvidha eva viṣaye jāyate sa prakṛṣṭaḥ | madhyamasya ya upajāto (jāyate) na prakarṣam āsādayati sa bhāvarūpaḥ | yaś ca tiraścām pratināyakādīnām copajāyate sa śṛṅgārābhāsaḥ |* (ŚP p. 616 ll. 18-23)

And it is only those persons endowed with passion who can savor this *rasa* when it comes to be manifested by the fully developed stable emotions. [...] *Rasa*, which arises through such conditioning factors, is of three sorts: “developed,” “in the form of an emotion,” and “semblance of *rasa*.” A developed *rasa* is what the leading character, the protagonist who dominates the narrative, experiences in reference to a commensurate object of affect. *Rasa* that remains in the form of an emotion is what a supporting character experiences and is not fully developed. Semblance of *rasa* is what the antagonist experiences, or what is ascribed to an animal (Pollock 2016: 126-127).

2.4. Vidyādhara: *Ekāvalī* (13th-14th century)

After Bhoja, the question of the admissibility of animal characters as the locus of *rasa* is addressed again by Vidyādhara in his *Ekāvalī* (EV), composed in Kalinga, at the court of King Narasiṃha, between the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century.¹⁵

Regarding *rasa*, Vidyādhara aligns himself with the theoretical framework elaborated by Abhinavagupta. More specifically, with regard to the place of its arousal, Vidyādhara, referring to the dramatic art, explicitly states that *rasa* cannot come into being in the character nor in the actor who performs it, but only in the spectator of the work:

tatra rasasvarūpam eva prathamam nirūpyate || vibhāvair lalanādibhir ālambanakāraṇair ankuritaḥ [...] uddīpanakāraṇaiḥ kandalito ’nubhāvair [...] pratītipaddhatimadhyāropito vyabhicāribhiś [...] pallavitaḥ [...] dhvananābhidhānābhinavavyāpārāparirambhanirbharatayānukāryānukartṛgatatvaparihāreṇa sāmājikānām vāsanātmatayā sthitaḥ sthāyī ratyādiko bhāva eva [...] śṛṅgārādiko raso ’bhidhīyate (EV, p. 86 ll. 6-10, p. 87 ll. 1, 5-7, p. 88 l. 3)

First we shall describe the essential nature of *rasa*. When a stable emotion like desire and so on starts to sprout thanks to the foundational factors [...]; branches out owing to the stimulant factors

¹⁵ A century after its composition, the famous Mallinātha composed a commentary on the *Ekāvalī* entitled *Taralāṭikā*, which is included in the edition consulted for this article (Krishnamoorthy 1903). Although important, Mallinātha's commentary does not add anything significant to the passages of Vidyādhara's text given here and has, therefore, been ignored.

[...]; becomes apprehensible because of the reactions [...]; begins to blossom with the transitory emotions [...]; existing in the tight embrace of a unique function called impicature, as a predisposition in the audience, having nothing to do with character or actor: when the stable emotion achieves this state, it is termed the erotic or other *rasa* (Pollock 2016: 249-250).

Vidyādhara's considerations regarding the possibility of *rasa* being aroused through the representation of an animal character contain two points of considerable interest. Firstly, after defining semblance of *rasa* (*rasābhāsa*) as the form of *rasa* that arises from a stable emotion operating through impropriety (*anaucityena*), Vidyādhara excludes the possibility that an animal character can only engender such a *rasābhāsa*, with an obvious critical reference to Bhoja's earlier thesis. Secondly, Vidyādhara goes so far as to assert that 'even animals have *rasa*' (*tiraścām apy asty eva rasaḥ*), a statement so bold that it seems to go beyond the assumptions he himself made earlier, according to which *rasa* can only exist in spectators, not in characters. As shown below, this position will attract him the caustic criticism of another theorist, Siṃhabhūpāla.

[...] *sthāyino 'naucityena pravṛttatvāt tad ābhāsa eva | apare tu rasābhāsaṃ tiryakṣu pracakṣate tan na parīkṣākṣamam | teṣv api vibhāvādisaṃbhavāt | vibhāvādijñānāsūnyas tiryāṅco na bhājanaṃ bhavitum arhanti rasasyeti cen na | manuṣyeṣv api keṣucit tathābhūteṣu rasaviṣayabhāvābhāvaprasaṅgāt | vibhāvādisaṃbhavo hi rasaṃ prati prayojako na vibhāvādijñānam | tataś ca tiraścām apy asty eva rasaḥ |* (EV p. 106 ll. 4-9)

[...] where the stable emotion is operating through impropriety, we have semblance of *rasa*. Some assert that in the case of animals there can only be semblance of *rasa*, but that position cannot withstand scrutiny, since the aesthetic elements can function in the case of animals too. It is wrong to argue that since animals are devoid of awareness of the foundational factor and other aesthetic elements they are not an appropriate receptacle of *rasa*. For some human beings can be equally unaware, and we would then be forced to deny that they too can be loci of *rasa*. Here again, it is the sheer presence of the aesthetic elements that actuates the *rasa*, not awareness of them as aesthetic elements. So animals can indeed have *rasa* (Pollock 2016: 254-255).

As an illustration of this, Vidyādhara concludes the passage by once again giving as an example a stanza from *Kumārasambhava*, precisely one of the two stanzas quoted at the opening of this article (Kum 3.37, see above),¹⁶ commenting on it as follows:

¹⁶ The text quoted in the *Ekāvalī* (Krishnamoorthy 1903: 106) differs from that presented at the beginning of this article (Smith 2005: 106) only in a minor detail, where it reads *saraḥpaṇkajareṇugandhi* instead of *sarāt paṇkaja*°.

*atra gajenāmbanavibhāvena janitā vasantādibhir uddīpanavibhāvair uddīpitā surabhigaṇḍūṣajala-
dānānubhāvaprakāśitā irṣādibhir vyabhicāribhir upacitā kareṇoh saṃbhogaśṛṅgāritam pratipannaiva ratih*
| (EV p. 107 ll. 1-3)

Here the bull elephant is the foundational factor that engenders the stable emotion desire; the springtime and so on are the stimulant factors that stimulate it; the giving of the fragrant water from the cow elephant’s trunk is the reaction that manifests it; the joy and so on are the transitory emotions that enhance it. Thereby the desire achieves the state of the erotic *rasa* enjoyed (Pollock 2016, 254-255).

2.5. Vidyānātha: *Pratāparudrīya* (first half of the 14th century)

In the first half of the 14th century, Vidyānātha composed his *Pratāparudrayaśobhūṣaṇa*, more commonly known as *Pratāparudrīya* (PR), in honour of Pratāpa, king of Warangal (Andhra Pradesh), at whose court he worked. Vidyānātha's speculation on the *rasa* is not particularly fruitful: reconnecting with the viewpoints that had been expressed by Kuntaka and Bhoja centuries earlier, he (again) unhesitatingly locates the locus of the *rasa* in the character:

*atra raso nāyakāśraya eva | yadiparam nipuṇanaṭaceṣṭayā tathāvidhakāvyāśravaṇabalena ca sāmājikaiḥ
sākṣād bhāvyate tadā paragatasyāpi rasasya samyagbhāvanayā paratra niratīsayānandajananam
aviruddham* | (PR p. 205 ll. 1-3)

Here we would note that the substratum of *rasa* is the character and the character alone. There is nothing contradictory, however, about the fact that *rasa* should be visibly “actualized” for the audience by the actions of a talented actor or from listening to a great work of poetry; and that accordingly *rasa*, albeit located in one person (the character), might generate pure bliss in another (the viewer/reader) through proper “actualization” (Pollock 2016: 257).

Vidyānātha's contribution to the debate on the role of animals in the arousal of *rasa* is also modest. In the section devoted to *rasa* (*rasaprakaraṇa*), Vidyānātha retrieves the concept of *rasābhāsa* from Bhoja, distinguishes three types, and assigns that which arises from animal characters (and lowly human beings, *mleccha*) to the third type:

*śṛṅgāravīraraudrādbhutānām lokottaranāyakāśrayatvena paripoṣātīśayaḥ | ata eva śṛṅgārasya mlecchādi-
viśayatve tv ābhāsatvam | tathā coktam –
ekatraivānurāgaś cet tiryāṇmlecchagato 'pi vā |
yoṣito bahusaktiś ced rasābhāsas tridhā mataḥ ||* (PR p. 160 ll. 7-10)

In the case of the sentiments like love, heroic, terrific and marvellous etc., there will be the full development (of sentiment or *rasa*) as they are connected with the heroes (heroines also) of

exceptional merit. That is (the reason) why in the case of the sentiment love it is called semblance (*ābhāsa*) if love is depicted with regard to an outcaste. This is said:

“The *rasābhāsa* is said to be of three types 1) if love is only one sided, 2) if it is depicted in connection with animals and lowcaste people and 3) if a woman loves many men” (Ramamurthi, Matha 1993: 131-132).

Further on, as an illustrative example of *rasābhāsa* originating in animal characters, Vidyānātha quotes the following stanza, by an unknown author:

prasādagarbhavalabhīṣu kapotapālyām
pārāvatiṃ ramaṇacumbitacañcukoṭim |
āvirbhavatsuratakūjitaraktakaṇṭhīm
ālōkya kākativibhuḥ smitam ātanoti || 129 || (PR p. 200 ll. 11-14)

The lord of the Kakati, having noticed the female pigeon whose beak was kissed by its beloved and who possessed a pleasant throat due to warblings of the rising dalliances, is smiling (Ramamurthi, Matha 1993: 169).

2.6. Siṃhabhūpāla: *Rasārṇavasudhākara* (second half of the 14th century)

The review of theorists presented in this article ends with the work of another ruler, Siṃhabhūpāla, who, in the second half of the 14th century, reigned over a small principality in today's Andhra Pradesh. Siṃhabhūpāla is the author of a treatise entitled *Rasārṇavasudhākara* (RAS), in which the issue of the relationship between animal characters and *rasa* is addressed directly and in some detail. Like Bhoja before him, Siṃhabhūpāla assigns the *rasa* aroused by animal characters to the category of *rasābhāsa* ‘semblance of *rasa*.’

atra śṛṅgārarasasya arāgāt anekarāgāt tiryagrāgāt mleccharāgāc ceti caturvidham ābhāsabhūyastvam |
 (RAS p. 293 ll. 8-9)

The erotic *rasa*, to take that case, becomes predominantly a semblance in four different ways: from unrequited passion; from passion for more than one person; from passion being represented between animals; or from its being represented between the uncultured (Pollock 2016: 271).

tiryagrāgād yathā –
madhu dvirephaḥ kusumaikapātre papau priyām svām anuvartamānaḥ |
śṛṅgeṇa saṃsparśanimilitākṣīm mṛgīm akaṇḍūyata kṛṣṇasāraḥ || (RAS p. 297 ll. 4-6 [= Kum 3.36])

Here is an example of semblance of the erotic *rasa* when passion is represented between animals:

A bee drank honey from a flower cup, after his beloved had drunk, and with his horn a black buck scratched his mate, who closed her eyes at his touch (Pollock 2016: 273).

To exemplify the *rasābhāsa* that arises from animal characters, *Siṃhabhūpāla* quotes stanza 3.36 of the *Kumārasambhava*: in Kālidāsa's poem, this stanza immediately precedes the one that was quoted by Vidyādhara in the *Ekāvalī* (Kum 3.37) to demonstrate that, through the representation of animal characters, ‘the desire achieves the state of the erotic *rasa* enjoyed’ (see above). This contiguity is not accidental: in fact, in the following passages of the *Rasārṇavasudhākara*, *Siṃhabhūpāla* proceeds to emphatically reject Vidyādhara's viewpoint, lashing out at him and his theories with direct attacks, sometimes aimed at ridiculing him.

*nanu tiryāṇmlecchagatayor ābhāsatvaṃ na yuyjate | tayor vibhāvādīsaṃbhavāt | āsvādayogyatāpratīter iti
cet na | bho mleccharasavādin utkalādhipateḥ śṛṅgārarasābhīmānino naraśiṃhadevasya cittam
anuvartamānena vidyādhareṇa kavinā bādham abhyantarīkṛto 'si | evaṃ khalu samarthitam ekāvalyām
anena – [...]*¹⁷ (RAS p. 297 ll. 17-19, p. 298 ll. 1-2)

The proponent of the view that *rasa* does indeed exist in the uncultured might here object: passion in animals or the uncultured should not be classified as semblance, “since the aesthetic elements can function in the case of animals too,” and we apprehend their capacity for savoring *rasa*. Poor fellow, I can see you are an intimate of the poet Vidyādhara, that obsequious attendant of Narasimhadeva, King of Utkala, self-styled master of the literary erotic. Here is how Vidyādhara has justified his view in the *Single Strand*: [...] (Pollock 2016: 273).

Although Pollock informs us that the passage may be less derisive in tone than his translation would lead one to think (2016: 406 n. 192), *Siṃhabhūpāla*'s open disapproval of Vidyādhara's thinking on this point remains unaffected. Generally speaking, one of the most interesting and innovative aspects of the *Rasārṇavasudhākara* is precisely the treatment of the concept of *rasābhāsa*, on which *Siṃhabhūpāla* reflects at length and of which he proposes a new and more articulate definition than that which had been provided by Bhoja. At least in those cases in which *rasābhāsa* arises from unrequited love (the first of the four ways in which it can be aroused, see above), *Siṃhabhūpāla*'s reflection does not seem to imply a judgement of value on the work that contains it: after all, the narrative core of *Rāmāyaṇa* itself revolves around the description of Rāvaṇa's unrequited love for Sītā, but it would be unthinkable to question the poetic greatness of Vālmiki's poem (Pollock 2016: 269-270). Confining the present

¹⁷ Here *Siṃhabhūpāla* quotes the passage from the *Ekāvalī* quoted above, from *apare tu* to *tiraścām apy asty eva rasaḥ* (RAS, p. 298 ll. 3-7 = EV, p. 106 ll. 4-9).

considerations to the *rasābhāsa* arising from animal characters, it is interesting to follow the thread of the arguments through which *Siṃhabhūpāla* challenges *Vidyādhara*'s viewpoint:

na tāvat tiraścāṃ vibhāvatvam upapadyate | śṛṅgāre hi samujjvalasya śucino darśanīyasyaiva vastuno muninā vibhāvatvenāmnānāt | tiraścāṃ udvartanamajjanākāparacanādyabhāvāt ujvalaśucidarśanīyatvānām asaṃbhāvanā prasiddhaiva | atha svajātiyogyair dharmaiḥ kariṇāṃ kariṇīm prati vibhāvatvam iti cet na | tasyāṃ kaksyāyāṃ kariṇāṃ kariṇīrāgaṃ prati kāraṇatvaṃ na punar vibhāvatvam | kiṃ ca jātiyogyair dharmair vastuno na vibhāvatvam | api tu bhāvakacittollāsahetubhiḥ rativiśiṣṭair eva | [...] kiṃ ca vibhāvādīsaṃbhavo hi rasaṃ prati prayojako na vibhāvādijñānam¹⁸ ity etad na yujyate | (RAS p. 298 ll. 9-16, p. 299 ll. 2-3)

In response [to *Vidyādhara*],¹⁹ first of all, it makes no sense that animals can be foundational factors. The sage has decreed that, in the case of the erotic *rasa*, a foundational factor can only be something brilliant, pure, and beautiful, and it is, as everyone knows, completely inconceivable for animals to be thus, since they engage in none of the requisite practices: lathering their bodies with fragrant unguents, performing ablutions, decorating themselves with ornaments, and so on. And it is mistaken to argue that a bull elephant can be a foundational factor for a cow elephant by virtue of properties innate to the species, because on that argument the bull would be functioning as an actual *cause* of the cow's passion, not as a foundational *factor*.²⁰ Moreover, something becomes a foundational factor thanks not to the properties specific to its species, but to things that expand the mind of the viewer/reader who "actualizes" the experience, properties that have something desirable about them. [...] Furthermore, it is false to claim that "it is the sheer presence of the aesthetic elements that actuates the *rasa*, not awareness of them as aesthetic elements" (Pollock 2016: 273-274).

According to *Siṃhabhūpāla*, the erotic passion of an animal character can at most be the cause (*kāraṇa*) of a response from its animal counterpart (in the work of art), but it cannot constitute the foundational factor (*vibhāva*) necessary for the arousal of the *rasa* in the audience, since the reader (or spectator) cannot actualise that passion in himself. Looking at things from *Siṃhabhūpāla*'s point of view, then, *Vidyādhara*'s opinion is (the erroneous) consequence of a reflection confined to the world of the characters, whereas *Siṃhabhūpāla*'s arises from shifting the focus of enquiry to the experience of the recipient.

¹⁸ *kiṃ ca [...] vibhāvādijñānam* is a direct quotation from the *Ekāvalī* (EV p. 106 ll. 8-9).

¹⁹ *Siṃhabhūpāla* replies here to *Vidyādhara*, who, in turn, is refuting the *rasābhāsa* theory elaborated by *Bhoja* (see above): *apare tu rasābhāsaṃ tiryakṣu pracakṣate tan na parīkṣākṣamam [...] (EV p. 106 ll. 4-9), 'Some assert that in the case of animals there can only be semblance of *rasa* [...]' (Pollock 2016: 254-255).*

²⁰ *Siṃhabhūpāla* refers here to Kum 3.37, cited by *Vidyādhara* in support of his hypothesis.

3. Conclusions

This paper provides an overview of the views of leading Indian theorists active between 10th and 14th century on the question of whether animal characters can represent the locus of *rasa*. From the analysis of the data collected in the preceding pages, four interesting aspects emerge.

Firstly, this survey provides us with confirmation that a debate among pre-modern Indian theorists concerning the relationship between animal characters and *rasa* arousal did indeed take place, and that this debate gave rise to a dense web of mutual quotations, cross-references, reciprocal approvals and refutations – both allusive and overt.

The second aspect that emerges is that this debate lasted for the entire span of the four centuries examined here, from the second half of the 10th century to the end of the 14th century – but we know that it continued even later, at least until Bhīmasena Dīkṣita (first half of the 18th century; Pollock 2001: 226 no. 33, Pollock 2016: 395 no. 318).

The third element brought out by this article is the fact that this long debate did not polarise into the opposition between two parties entrenched in crystallised positions, but instead gave rise to a variety of opinions and views. In this regard, it seems to me particularly significant that, in order to define the *rasa* aroused by animal characters, several thinkers have agreed on the category of ‘semblance of *rasa*,’ but have at the same time felt the need to re-signify this concept, providing different interpretations of it.

Finally, the fourth and last consideration concerns the figure of Abhinavagupta. On the one hand, this study confirms the revolutionary scope and crucial importance of the theoretical framework he elaborated for the subsequent development of Indian thought on literary art, even in relation to such a rather peripheral aspect as the one dealt with here. His thought is a watershed: there is a before and an after. Indeed, this is also what may be gathered from the present study: he is the first to concede that *rasa* can be fully aroused also by characters in animal form—in opposition to Kuntaka's negative judgement, which, presumably, was the dominant belief until then. After Abhinavagupta, his viewpoint will be taken up by other thinkers, who follow in his footsteps (e.g. Vidyādhara). At the same time, however, the overview presented in this article shows how Abhinavagupta's thought on the role played by animal characters in the arousal of *rasa* never became exclusively dominant; on the contrary, most of the theorists presented in the preceding pages expressed divergent, sometimes antithetical, opinions to his inclusivist standpoint.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this article will be the starting point for more comprehensive future studies. The first steps in this direction could be taken simply by transcending the limits that were imposed on the present study: the chronological ones, in order to allow the investigation of treatises

composed after the end of the 14th century, and the typological ones, which would open up the investigation to other literary genres besides treatises on poetics, starting with commentaries on the very treatises examined here and commentaries on *kāvya* works.

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