

# Review of: "Power of musical sound and its impact on the psyche: an Indic perspective"

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## Power of musical sound and its impact on the psyche: an Indic perspective

Abirlal Gangopadhyay, J. S. R. Prasad

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Review by Rajeev S. Patke (December 22, 2022)

Analysis of the power exercised by music over listeners is extensive in all music cultures, but no other culture has produced anything as systematic and influential as the *rasa* theory articulated in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, nor as detailed and suggestive an approach to music as the contributions of Abhinavagupta. Therefore, the article by Gangopadhyay and Prasad is to be welcomed. However, I wish it had been written in a more fluent, colloquial and idiomatic English. Also, I wish the difficulty business of providing equivalents for Sanskrit terms had been managed less awkwardly: for example, a term such as "polished hearts" is simply not apt or accurate enough for conveying in English what is contained as import in the Sanskrit. Such awkwardness becomes an impediment to making the basic tenets of Indic music theory readily comprehensible to listeners and readers not familiar with Indian music (or its ancient theory), and therefore makes it even more difficult to make any sort of claim about how analytical modes developed with reference to ancient Indian music theory could transpose (or be relevant) to other music cultures. Even within the Indic context, how *rasa* relates to *sattva* needed to be clarified in more idiomatic terms. The entire set of claims concerning the therapeutic value of music, and how that might have links with the theory of ayurveda, needed terms such as *taṃas* and *rajas* to be provided a much more detailed context than is supplied here. Likewise, how *Ānanda-śakti* and *Mādhurya-śakti* relate to one another but differ from one another detailed clarification. How much of what is in Abhinavagupta derives from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and what is original in his own approach needs to be made clear. In short, the article feels like a rough draft of a prolegomena for a future study that will address all the issues that are noted above as current shortcomings.