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### Vamana and Indian Poetics

#### **Introduction:**

It is extremely difficult to give an accurate definition of poetry and try to distinguish from other forms of literature. But it can be distinguished by some certain qualities like diction, theme, subject matter, rhyme scheme, pattern, so on and so forth. Indian poetry started to develop on all those above mentioned aspects by some of the exponents and grammarians like Bharata, Bhamaha, Mammata Anandavardhana, Dandin, Vamana, Udbhata, Rudrata, Rajsekhara, Abhinavagupta Ksemendra, Mahimbhatta and many more. Though there is no written record of the early history of the Indian poetic, it is largely believed that Bharata's *Natyasastra* is the oldest existing work *Alamkarasastra* dated back early 1st century B.C. Primarily written as a grammar book on classical dance and classical theatre this is comprising of thirty seven chapters and deals with all the aesthetics technicalities of dance and drama and dramaturgy. The composition and staging of a play as well as dramatic appreciation are dealt with in great detail; and as accessories of drama, such subjects as music, dancing and others are amply discussed. Apart from drama and dramatic theory, the importance of Bharata in the history of Sanskrit Poetics lies in his *Rasa* theory of Poetics.

The Indian poetics effectively takes off from *Kavya-alamkara* of Bhamaha (6th century) and *Kavyadasha* of Dandin (7th century). There seems to be no trace of *Kavya-s* during the long centuries between Bharata and Bhamaha. There are also no texts available on *Kavya-shastra* belonging to the period between the *Natyashastra* of Bharata and Bhamaha (6th century). Perhaps they were lost even as early as 6th century. The early phase of Indian Poetics, the *Kavya-shastra*, is represented by three Scholars Bhamaha, Dandin and Vamana.

By about the sixth or the Seventh century the principles of Poetics that Bharata talked about in his *Natyashastra* (first or second century BCE) had changed a great deal. Bharata had

introduced the concept of Rasa in the context of Drama He described Rasa in terms of taste or relish, as that which is relished (*Rasayatiti Rasah*) ; and , regarded it as an essential aspect of a Dramatic performance. He said that no sense proceeds without Rasa (*Na hi rasadrte kaschid- arthah pravartate*).He did not, however, put forward any theories about the Rasa concept. He did not also elaborate much on Alamkaras, the figures of speech which he mentioned as four: Upama, Dipaka, Rupaka and Yamaka. Later writers increased it vastly. Rajanaka Ruyyaka named as many as 82 Alamkaras.



As the concepts of Rasa and Alamkara were transferred to the region of Kavya, several questions were raised: why do we read any poetry? Why do we love to witness a Drama? What is it that we truly enjoy in them? What makes poetry distinctive as a form and what distinguishes good poetry from the bad? And so on. Ultimately, the answer could be that we love to read or listen to a poem, or see a Drama because doing so gives us pleasure; and, that pleasure is par excellence, unique in it and cannot be explicitly defined or expressed in words.

But, unfolding of the Indian poetics or the study of the aesthetics of poetry came about in stages. Generally speaking, the development of Sanskrit literary theory is remarkably tardy.

### **Vamana and his contribution to Indian Poetics:**

Vamana was one of the most brilliant Rhetoricians who roughly belong to the late 8th and the mid-9th century. He can be conventionally located after Bharata and Bhamaha, yet surely not after Abhinav Gupta, Ananda-Vardhanam or Mammata. His expertise of examination into the discipline of a Kavya is known as the theory of *Riti*. Bhamaha is known as his predecessor as far as his views on *riti* and *alamkar* are concerned. The precursor of *Riti* School may be called Dandin.

Vamana systematised Dandin's concept of *Riti* in his work viz. *Kavyalankarasutrani*. Vamana was a contemporary of Udbhata; therefore his date is about 800 A.D. He is the great exponent of the *Riti* school of Poetics. He boldly declares that *Riti* or some special arrangement of words is the soul of Poetry. (*Ritiratma kivyasya*). It may be mentioned here that Vamana shows a partiality for drama and considered that as the literary form par excellence.

Though it is largely understood that he was influenced by Bhamaha, there are certain precise elements which differ between them and allow Vamana to stand out. One of them can be his understanding of Alamkara. Vaman stated that poetry is acceptable from embellishment (*Alarnkara*) but he is careful to explain embellishment not in the narrow sense of poetic figures but in the broad sense of beauty.

That the word, Alankara used in the first and second aphorism does not denote 'figure of speech' becomes clear from the third one. There he again uses the word

'Alankara' but now it signifies the traditional meaning. It is a means for the attainment of beauty. He used the pronoun 'Sa' for denoting Alankara which is identical with beauty. Thus two uses of the Alankara are obvious in aphorism. The sense in which it is synonymous with beauty is the end. Vamana writes: this beauty can be attained through avoiding poetic faults and through the introduction of gunas and 'figure of speech'. The figure of speech is not an essential characteristic of poetry; nevertheless it adds to the beauty of poetry. The gunas, on the other hand, are essential characteristic of poetry because through them that the beauty in poetry becomes manifest. Vamanas clearly writes that the beauty that gunas are absolutely necessary; for, without them the beauty in poetry cannot emerge. On the other hand, though 'figure of speech' adds to the beauty, there can be a beautiful poetry without a figure of speech. Therefore, in the philosophy of poetry a discussion of beauty and quality becomes necessary. Vamana writes; just as a beautiful lady looks beautiful even if she is without ornaments so also pure poetry becomes agreeable to the appreciators.

It ought to be clearly understood that for Vamana, poetry or literature is a kind of a whole made up of parts. The two parts of this kind of a whole again are in their own viz. a whole made up of words and a whole made of meanings. The whole thus formed out of these two, so to say, is the body of the poetry. Just as a substance or a thing has got qualities has so also the whole have got gunas like Ojas, Prasada, Madhurya etc. Thus though the poetry seems to be formed out of the whole, the whole of words and the whole of meaning, a more critical analysis will reveal that it is composed of four parts; words, the qualities of the words, the meaning and the qualities of meaning. When a whole is formed out of these four parts, it becomes a poetic whole and poetic beauty or value emerges out of it as its effect, quality or fifth part.

### **Different Schools of Indian Poetics:**

The principal Indian Poetic Schools are as follows:

1. *Rasa* (aesthetic pleasure) school
2. *Alamkara* (poetic figures) school
3. *Riti* (style) school
4. *Guna* (attribute) school
5. *Dhvani* (suggestion) school

6. *Vakrokti* (obliquity) school
7. *Anumana* (inference) school
8. *Aucitya* (propriety) school

### **1. Rasa School of Poetry:**

Of the various poetic Schools, chronologically, Rasa is taken as the oldest because it is discussed in *Natyashastra*, where, Rasa meant more as the emotional element of the theme or the plot than as the experience of the spectator. Bharata also talked about Gunas and Dosha that one must bear in mind while scripting and enacting the play. Bharata, at times, also talks about Rasa leading to aesthetic relish. But, his concept of Rasa was mainly in the context of the Drama. That concept was later enlarged and adopted into Kavya as well.

In the context of the Kavya, though Rasa is all pervasive, it has been enumerated separately, because Rasa, which came to be understood as the ultimate aesthetic delight experienced by the reader/listener/spectator, is regarded as the touch-stone of any creative art. Rasa has, therefore, been discussed in several layers independently as also in relation to other aspects of poetic beauty : the number of Rasa, each type of Rasa, nature of aesthetic pleasure of each of type Rasa, importance of Rasa, its association with other Kavya-agamas and so on. Some accepted Rasa as Alamkara (*Rasavath*), while others regarded it as the soul or spirit of any literary work.

Both in Drama and in Kavya, Rasa is not a mere means but is the desired end or objective that is enjoyed by the *Sahrudaya*, the cultured spectator or the reader. In the later texts, the process of appreciation of Rasa became far more significant than the creation of Rasa. The poet-scholars like Bhamaha and his follower took to Rasa very enthusiastically. Later, Anandavardhana entwined the concept of Dhvani (suggestion) with Rasa.

Indian Aesthetics considers that among the various poetic theories (*Kavya-agama*), Rasa is of prime importance in Kavya. And, very involved discussions go into ways and processes of producing Rasa, the ultimate aesthetic experience that delights the *Sahrudya*, the connoisseurs of Kavya.

All the supporters of rasa-doctrine considered rasa as the essence of poetry, soul of poetry, an element of poetry. The exponents of rasa school discussed nine important rasas which are relevant for poetry. These are given below;

1. **Shringara** (Love), Attractiveness. Presiding deity: Vishnu. Colour: green.
2. **Hasya** (laughter), Mirth, Comedy. Presiding deity: Ganesha. Colour: white.
3. **Rudra** (Fury). Presiding deity: Rudra. Colour: red.
4. **Karuna** (Compassion), Tragedy. Presiding deity: Yama. Colour: dove coloured.
5. **Bibhatsa** (Disgust), Aversion. Presiding deity: Shiva. Colour: blue
6. **Bhayānak** (Horror), Terror. Presiding deity: Kala. Colour: black
7. **Vīra** (Heroic mood). Presiding deity: Indra. Colour: wheatish brown
8. **Adbhuta** (Wonder), Amazement. Presiding deity: Brahma. Colour: yellow
9. **Śhant** (Peace or tranquility). deity: Vishnu. Colour: white

## 2. Alamkara school of poetry:

The term *Alankara* (meaning ornament) in Sanskrit stands for the principal of poetic beauty itself. Alankara in a restricted sense also means any trope or figure of speech that adorns a literary composition. There is a detailed treatment of such figures of speech from Bharata to Mammata regarding their definition, classification and numbers; difference between the excellence (gunas) that are so extensive with poetic beauty and figures of speech, as also the position of figures in the theories of rasa and Dhvani.

A correct appreciation of the position of early theorists in regard to alankara is necessary to understand their idea of Shabda and Artha, which forms the starting point for all semantic investigation. Their outspoken emphasis on Vakrakti, or departure from the everyday use of language, as the underlying principle of all alankaras point to their realization of the fact that poetic language is fundamentally distinct from everyday speech (varta) on the one hand and the language of science (shastra) on the other and they happened to give this distinct feature the name of alankara whose field was theoretically as wide as to embrace all shades of felt beauty in poetry.

Alankara-Sara-Sangraha is a celebrated Sanskrit work on poetics by Udbhata of 10th century. It is also called Kavyalankara-Sara-Sangraha or Kavyalankara-Sangraha. It defines 41 Alankaras in about 79 verses and illustrates them in about a hundred stanzas, taken from his own Kumarasambhava. Divided into six chapters, the work was commented upon by Pratiharenduraja about the middle of the 10th century. The work, though closely follows Bhamaha in the treatment of Alankaras, expresses certain independent views.

Vaman stated that, poetry is acceptable from embellishment (*alamkara*) but he is careful to explain embellishment not in the narrow sense of poetic figures but in the broad sense of beauty.

### **3. Riti School of Poetry :**

*Riti* or style (not necessarily in the modern sense) is first discussed implicitly in *Natya Sastra* when different kinds of *vacikabhinay* are discussed and can be linked to the theory of *dosa-guna*. It depends on the way different *gunas* are combined in a composition. Different aesthetic emotions require different treatments – some soothing, while some bold or harsh. While elaborated in the context of poetry by Vamana, it logically extends itself to use in all forms of arts. For instance, the very enactment of *nava-rasas* in dance would require different styles of presentation for each *rasa*. Appropriateness of style to theme is its essential point, (its relative nature recognized by Dandin), and thus it pervades all art forms, consciously or unconsciously.

The doctrine of *riti* as the essence of poetry was further developed by Vamana. He wrote *Kavyalamkar-sutra*. In five chapters of his book, he strongly supported the doctrine of *riti*. He regarded *riti* as the soul of Poetry. Vaman lays down in clear terms: *ritir-atma kavyasya*. He defines the *riti* as ‘*visista -pada-rachana* or particular arrangement of words. For Rudrata *riti* means a definite usage of compound words. Bhoja adds two more types of *riti*, viz, *Magadhi* and *Avantika*. The former being an intermediate style between *Vaidarbhi* and *Panchali* and the latter forming only a *Khanda-riti* i.e. a defective or incomplete type. Rajasekhara in his book, „*Kavya-mimamsa* gives the same three *ritis* as Vamana does, but in his another book he speaks of three *ritis* namely *vacchomi* (from *vatsagutma*), *maahi* (*Magadhi*) and *Panchalia*" (*Panchali*).

### **4. Guna School of Poetry:**

In literary *gunas* (qualities of good writing) figures since the time of Bharata. Later aestheticians also discuss it. What is significant here is that *gunas* is relative to contexts and different ages and are rephrased differently by different theorists. While primarily discussed in the context of literature, it stands on solid foundations for applicability of all art forms. A work of art, in order to be successful must avoid certain defects and display certain positive qualities. This applies to fine arts as well as to the other art forms.

The *gunas* according to Bharat are as follows:

1. Slesa (coalescence of words)
2. Prasad (clearness)
3. Samta (evenness)
4. Samadhi (superimposition)
5. Madhiirya (sweetness)
6. Ojas (strength)
7. SaukianiTrya (smoothness)
8. Arthavyakti (explicitness)
9. Udara (exaltedness)
10. Kanti (loveliness)

Vamana developed the doctrine of guna and classified guna into two types: sabda gunas and artha gunas. Although Bharat's gunas are mostly of the nature of artha - gunas and some of them can be interpreted as by Abhinavagupta as Sabda gunas, Sabda gunas means the qualities pertaining to word form and artha guna means qualities pertaining to word meaning. Dandin apparently holds that it is not the poetic figures only but the several literary excellences the gunas, that constitute the essence of poetry.

#### **5. Dhvani School of Poetry:**

Strongly influenced by the *sphota* theory of the grammarians, developed systematically by Anandavardhana, it holds that different elements of a composition, in combination, reveal a deeper meaning unexpressed by the original parts. Thus, it has much in common with modern Gestalt. Its central thesis is that words or combination of words perform three functions in conveying senses – the denotative function (*abidhâ*), the indicative function (*laksnâ*) and the suggestive function (*vyanjanâ*). These points are elaborated in Professor Tandra Patnaik's paper, "The Logic of Emotion". Here, I would like to briefly mention that Ananda linked *dhvani* to *rasa* and pointed out that as meaning is suggested, emotions can be suggested (in fact, emotions can only be suggested and cannot be communicated directly, being mental qualities and hence invisible). This was taken further by Abhinava who developed it further in terms of the concept of *rasa-dhvani*. The significance of this theory for all art forms lies in the fact that visual arts (including gestural arts like theatrics and dance) also communicate through suggestion and can suggest both meanings and emotions. Anandvardhana discusses all the factors connected to dhvani doctrine such as alamkara, guna, riti, sagigha.'tana, vakrokti, auchitya etc.



## 6. Vakrokti School of Poetry:

According to Bhāmaha, all poetic speech is marked by round about turn of expression or *vakrokti* as opposed to straightforward expression of everyday language. It seems, these theorists were obsessed with the problem of differentiating poetic language from ordinary language. In the hands of Kuntaka, the term become enlarged and import.

In the whole range of Sanskrit poetics, the term Vakrokti took altogether a new significance and the highest position as the all pervading poetic concept in kunyaka's vakroktijivita. He revived the concept from more verbal poetic figure to the lessons of poetry. Further taking a close look at the views of different theorists on Vakrokti, it exposes in detail Kuntaka's theory of Vakrokti and makes its critical analysis in relation to various literary concepts- alankara, svabhavokti, rasavadalankara, marga and rasa.

Vakrokti, emanating from the creative faculty of the poet endows poetic language with strikingness and causes aesthetic delight to the reader. The word Vakrokti consists of two components – 'Vakra' and 'Ukti'. The first component means 'crooked, indirect or unique' and the second means 'poetic expression speech' Bhamaha stresses the importance of vakrokti for poetry. In his book the concept of vakrokti is regarded identical as atisayokti. Dandin uses the term as a collective term for all poetic figures except svabhavokti.

Dandin's views on Vakrokti are, in general, similar to those of Bhamha. They considered it as the basis of all poetic figures. In Vamana we find vakrokti in the sense of arthalamkara (figure of sense).

## 7. Anumana School of Poetry:

Anumana School of Poetry is associated with the name of Mahima Bhatta. He wrote 'Vyakti-viveka'. His object was to comprehend all ideas of dhvani in the process of anumana (syllogistic reasoning). He discussed two senses of sabda, namely, the actually expressed (vachya) and the inferable (anuroeya). Anumeya includes both the laksya and vyangya senses. The process of inference is very wide in its scope much wider than dhvani. Mahima Bhatta criticizes the Dhvani definition, propounded by its advocates, conforms to his definition of what he calls kavyanumiti as the process through which another sense is revealed by the expressed sense or by a sense inferred from it connectedly.

### **8. Auchitya School of poetry:**

*Auchitya* or appropriateness is another such concept which needs a brief mention here. Bharata recognizes it in the context of performance. Ananda discusses it and so does Kuntaka. But it gets central focus in the hands of Ksemendra who highlights the fit among the elements, the subject, and the contexts and so on. Again, here is a concept that can extend without much modification to the various art forms. In simple words, there must be a fit between theme and form and this is so in all aesthetic fields.

But, many are hesitant to accept *Auchitya* as the Atma of the Kavya. They point out that *Auchitya* by its very nature is something that attempts to bring refinement into to text; but, it is not an independent factor. And, it does not also form the essence of Kavya. *Auchitya* is also not a recognized School of Poetics.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus over the period different theoretician, grammarian, scholars of Indian poetics developed and contributed different method and concepts to early Indian literature. The above mentioned schools of poetry and the stalwarts theoretician like Bharata, Bhamaha, Mammata Anandavardhana, Dadin, Vamana, Udbhata, Rudrata, Rajsekhara, Abhinavagupta Ksemendra, Mahimbhatta contributed immensely in order to solve the logical, philosophical and linguistic problems in literature. The works on the philological developed doe by the pioneer of the early Indian have undoubtedly remained the guidelines for the further progress in flourishing literature in a prolific way.

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