



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

The Place of Anandavardhana in Indian Poetics

Mr. Chetan R. Sakariya

Ph.D. Researcher,
Department of English & CLS,
Saurashtra University,
Rajkot, Gujarat.



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ABSTRACT

Indian Poetics has been flourished and contributed by many eminent scholars since its beginning. There are scholars like Bharata, Bhamaha, Vamana, Dandi, Anandavardhana, Kuntaka, Kshemendra, Mammata, Jagannatha and others who have their own place of importance in Indian Poetics. These scholars gave theories like Rasa, Alamkara, Riti, Dhvani, Vakrokti and Aucitya. Each scholar created a work which made Indian Poetics flourish very well. The present paper discusses the place of Anandavardhana in Indian Poetics. How Anandavardhana gave new direction to this field by giving the theory of *Dhwani* and how he deserves the special attention in Indian Poetics through his work *Dhwanyaloka* is amply discussed in this paper.

Introduction:

The 9th C. A.D. was an outstanding period in *Sanskrit* Poetics, for; it saw the birth of many important theoretical works. Out of them the place of eminence easily goes to *Dhwanyaloka* of the famous aesthetician Anandavardhana. This can be reckoned as the most important work in the entire history of *Sanskrit* Poetic theory. *Dhwanyaloka* revolutionized the entire trend of the Indian Poetics and placed it in an entirely new perspective. It reflected a sound understanding of the aesthetic element in poetry. Emphasis shifted hereby from the formal to the content aspect of poetry. Anandavardhana was the first to recognize and emphasize the importance of the function of suggestion in poetic language. On the basis of this concept he founded the well-known theory of *Dhwani*. Even though the presence of suggestion in poetry had been noted by earlier theorists too, it was the achievement of the *Dhwani* theorist Anandavardhana to grasp its real aesthetic significance; and to build a critique of poetry based on this premise. Moreover, Anandavardhana deserves further credit for his success in satisfactorily incorporating the concept of *Rasa* and *Dhwani*. Hence his was the crowning achievement in *Sanskrit* aesthetic thought.



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Rajanaka Anandavardhana was a reputed Kashmiri poet, rhetorician and philosopher. He was patronized by king Avantivarman of Kashmir (A.D. 884-85). As regards his date there is very little room for controversy. Kalhana, the celebrated author of Rajatarangini, the most authoritative chronicle of Kashmir, mentions him as 'One of the ornaments adorning the court of the king Avantivarman.' Thus, on the evidence of the Rajatarangini, Anandavardhana attained fame during the reign of Avantivarman in the 9th C.A.D. Anandavardhana is the author of the works which are both literary and philosophical. His theory of *Dhwani* which came into limelight in the 9th C.A.D. dominated Indian Poetics from the 9th to 12th C.A.D. It receded into the background in the decadent days of Indian Culture.

The *Dhwanyaloka* or Light of Suggestion consists of four chapters called *Uddyotas* or Flashes. In writing the *Dhwanyaloka* he had two main purposes in mind. The first purpose is that he wanted to demonstrate the inadequacy of the ancient principles of criticism in a proper estimate of literature. In the second purpose he aimed at refuting all the charges brought against the new concept of *Dhwani* and establishes its truth on a sound and solid basis.

'To serve as a corrective to the oldest one-sided emphasis on figures and style, he urged the need for subjective and aesthetic elements that enter into the process of composition as well as appreciation.' (K. Krishnamoorthy, *The Dhwanyaloka and Its Critics*, Page 103.)

Anandavardhana's theory of *Dhwani* changed Indian Poetics in its essence. Aestheticians were compelled to revive their notions about the older concepts like *Alamkaras*, *Guna*, *Riti*, etc., in the light of the theory of *Dhwani*. Anandavardhana made a great discovery by stating that every part of speech and small factors like case endings and particles can at the touch of imagination become pregnant with poetic



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meaning.

Anandavardhana and his follower clearly mention that they have derived inspiration for the Dhwanyaloka from the *Sphotavada* of the grammarians. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the *Sphotavada* of the *Vaiyakaranis* and their concept of *Sphota* and *Dhwani*. Anandavardhana in his *Dhwanyaloka* hails the *Vaiyakaranis* with great respect. He states:

‘The expression is designated by the learned; the foremost among the learned are grammarians because grammar lies at the root of all studies.’ (V.S. Seturaman, *Indian Aesthetics, an Introduction*, 83.)

The central thesis of the theory of *Dhwani* is that words in their capacity of conveying sense, possess a threefold function, and consequently express a threefold sense. The three functions are known as *Abhidha* (Denotation), *Laksana* (Indication) and *Vyanjana*(Suggestion), and correspondingly the three senses conveyed are *Abhidheya* or *Vacya*(Dentoed, Primary), *Laksya*(Indicated) and *Vyangya*(Suggested) respectively. Similarly, the three kinds of words that give rise to them are termed *Vacaka*(Denotative), *Laksanika*(Indicative) and *Vyanjanika*(suggestive) respectively.

The Primary (*Vacya*) meaning of the word is that which is ascribed to it by convention through the accepted usage of the word. In a given context it is the meaning directly conveyed to the listener. The word ‘cow’ denotes the sense of a particular domesticated animal, familiar to the listener. It is also the dictionary meaning of the particular word. The power or the function which operates to convey this meaning is *Abhidha* (Denotation). The type of word that conveys such conventional meaning is called *Vacaka* (Denotative). In other word *Vacakatva* is that state of the word which conveys this sense. In a given context, denoted sense or *Vacyartha* is confined to one.



The Indicated (*Laksya*) is an extended meaning derivable from a word under certain condition. This kind of meaning arises only when the primary sense of a particular word (or expression) is inapplicable, and inoperative. Under such circumstances a second sense connected with the primary sense arises due to popular usage or a special purpose. To take the oft-quoted example, the expression 'the hamlet on the river Ganges' is incongruous because a 'hamlet' is impossible on the stream of the river. The primary sense of the phrase 'on the river Ganges' is inoperative, and the indicated sense 'on the bank of the river', is resorted to. This secondary sense is connected with the primary sense, and there is a purpose in making use of this extended sense, namely, to emphasize the qualities such as coolness existing in the 'hamlet' due to its proximity with the river.

The function of words that conveys this secondary meaning is called Indication (*Laksana*) and three conditions are essential for this function to operate. In the first place, there should be total incongruity of the primary sense in the given context. Secondly, there should be some purpose (*Prayojana*) or some usage (*Rudhi*) to resort to a secondary sense. Thirdly the secondary sense thus obtained ought to have a connection with the primary sense of the word. The function of indication is but an extension of the primary function, and is of a derivative character. *Laksyārtha*, like the *Vacyārtha* is also restricted to one in any given context.

The Suggested sense is that which is obtainable from a word over and beyond its Denoted or Indicated senses and in addition to them. The function of Suggestion operates when the other two functions- Denotation and Indication have exhausted of their capabilities of exhausted for expression. As in the case of indicated sense, there is no necessity for the primary sense to be incongruous or inapplicable. The suggested sense is grasped along with the primary sense and further to it. Its realization is also dependent on the capacity of apprehension inherent in the responsive reader (*Sahrdaya*), and his imaginative experience. And the possible suggested sense from a given usage is not limited to one. *Dhwanyaloka* defines *Dhwani* as



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follows:

‘That kind of poetry, wherein either the (conventional) meaning, or the (conventional) word, renders itself or its meaning secondary (respectively) and suggests the implied meaning, is designated by the learned as *Dhwani* or ‘suggestive poetry’.’ (G. Vijayvardhana, *Outlines of Sanskrit Poetics*, 106-7.)

In this way *Dhwani* is a type of poetry wherein words and sense lose their primary significance in order to suggest other things. It is also necessary that the suggested content is not too obscure. It should be capable of being grasped easily by the cultured sympathetic reader. It should demand no intellectual exercise for its comprehension.

Unlike the ancient writer on *Sanskrit* rhetoric who aimed at nothing more than provisions of elaborate systems and devices, Anandavardhana enunciated the broad general principles of poetry based on an insight into the psychology of human nature instead of viewing literature as a mere verbal artistry, mere meticulous glitter or glamour of expression and imagery. Anandavardhana demonstrated that emotive and suggestive significance which is the very soul of poetry. By thoroughly explaining the linguistic and logical implications of the theory of *Dhwani* he tried to secure for it a high place of honour in the eyes of appreciators and thinkers alike.

‘It marks the termination of the old school of criticism and heralds the birth of a modern school, modern in style, in theory and in approach.’

(K.Krishnamoorthy, *The Dhwanyaloka and Its Critics*, 105.)

In the twentieth century, Anandavardhana’s theory has found a new lease of life, mainly under the impact of western stylistics and structuralism. Critics like Krishna Rayan and C.D.Narasimhaiah have been very enthusiastic about the practical utility of the *Dhwani* theory in the context of Modern Indian Literature.



We have talked too long (and expended much sentiment in talking) on the supremacy of Indian Poetics but invariably in theoretical terms and in isolation, without reference to actual works of art except for stray passages used as touchstones. The practice has persisted in discussion of Poetics in regional languages too..... The time has come for us to make efforts to test the adequacy of these critical concepts in responding to a given work of art. One is embarrassed to see them dismissed as obsolete in knowledgeable circles, while Aristotle, sharing much the same antiquity, still enjoys an enviable status in Indian literary circles and in discussion of Indian literature too, as if to imply 'Other abide our question/Thou art free.' (C.D. Narasimhaiah, ed. *East West Poetics at Work*, ix.)

Conclusion:

To Anandavardhana posterity is heavily indebted for enunciation of the principles of literary evaluation, - principles, that are eternal in character and are applicable even to modern literature. Application of these principles for the purpose of making literary evaluation of contemporary specimens of Poetic Art may yield splendid results by presenting to the academic world the striking fact, that these norms have not lost their relevance in contemporary society.

Although it may fall short of an ideal aesthetic theory, the *Dhwani* theory is undoubtedly the crowning achievement of aesthetic thought in *Sanskrit*. The realization and elucidation of the nature of suggestion and indispensability in poetic expression is a stroke of-genius-a maxim that is upheld even by modern western aesthetic philosophy. The proper adaptation and poetic appreciation was the accomplishment of the *Dhwani* theorists and this step elevated *Sanskrit Poetics* to a sound aesthetic footing. The theory embodies many ideas that would look novel even in the context of modern theories of aesthetics.



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