



Development of Poetics in Kashmir during Early Medieval Period

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Abstract: Kashmir was a great centre of learning and knowledge from the very early centuries. Kashmir has always attracted the attention of various scholars worldwide not only for its landscape, but also for its place in history as abode of learning and literary traditions. Bilhana calls Kashmir as Sardadesa i.e., the place of learning. It was believed by people that Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning was residing there. The main reason behind the literary glory of Kashmir might be the enlightened and generous rulers who greatly patronized learning and honored those who dedicated their lives to learning. For example, king Jayapida of Kashmir paid a salary of one lakh gold coins to Udbhata, the president of the royal assembly of poets. It was due to the patronage of these kings that a plethora of Sanskrit works was compiled in this era. The science of poetics also developed in Kashmir and authors like Bhamaha, Vamana, Udbhata, Anandvardhan provided many theories regarding the framework of good poetry and its components like Rasa, Alankara, Riti and Dhvani. In this work we will study how different rhetoricians from Kashmir contributed in the development of poetics.

Keywords: Bharata, Vamana, Kshemendra, Natyashastra, Auchitya, Dhvani, Alamkara etc.

The development of science of poetics can be attributed to Kashmir. Though the fundamentals in the science of poetics can be traced back to *Natyashastra* of Bharata, but all aspects of this science were elaborated and discussed in detail by Kashmirian authors. The writing on poetics prior to Bharata appears to be scanty and vague. Bharata deals with poetics in his *Natyashastra*. He lays great stress on the principle of *rasa* (sentiments). He says that *rasa* is an essential element in *kavya* (poetics). The poetry without *rasa* has no significance. There can be no poetry without *rasa*. But an independent science of poetics began to take shape from the time of Bhamaha. The name of his work on the science of poetics is *Kavyalankarasutra* which commences with some general characteristics of poetry. In the very beginning, Bhamaha defines *kavya* (poetics) as a verbal composition which gives some meaning. In other word, *sabda* (word) and *artha* (sense) constitute *kavya*. He then says that composition of good poetry makes a person able to pursue four values of life such as *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. This also brings fame and joy which never diminishes. The poet lives as long as his fame lasts. Bhamaha then discusses the essential requisites of *kavya*. He says that the poetry must be composed only after acquiring knowledge over grammar, metre, lexicon, myths and legends, worldly wisdom, logic and fine arts. He further says that there is no harm in not writing any poetry but writing bad poetry is tantamount to death for a poet. The element of *alamkara* receives most detailed treatment at the hands of Bhamaha. He uses the term *vakrokti* for *alamkara* and considers it as an essential element of *kavya*.

The next Kashmirian writer on the science of poetics from Kashmir was Udbhata. According to Kashmirian tradition, he adorned the court of king Jayapida (779-813 A.D.) of Kashmir as a scholar and president of the royal assembly of scholars. He was quoted with great respect by later writers like Anandvardhana and others in their respective works. On the basis of these facts, we can assume that he lived earlier than Anandavaradhana, probably in the second half of eighth century A.D. His contribution to the science of poetics is *Kavyalankarasarasangraha*, a short treatise on poetic figures and *Bhamaha-vivarana*, also called *kavyalankara vivrti*, a commentary on Bhamaha's work.

Pratiharenduraja mentions him as the writer of *Kumarsambhava*, a *kavya* which is available only in quotations and references. Sarangdeva mentions him as one of the commentators on the *Natyashastra* of Bharata along with Lollata, Sankuka and Abhinavagupta.

His *Kavyalankarasarangraha* is a short treatise on the poetic figures. In it, he follows very closely Bhamaha in the number and order of the poetic figures. Even Bhamaha's definitions of some of the figures are completely copied by him. Although he follows the footsteps of his predecessor in the enumeration of poetic figures, he also presents some original ideas. For instance, Bhamaha mentions only one kind of *atisayokti* and two types of *anuprasa* whereas Udbhata gives four forms of both. In connection with the variety of *anuprasa*, Udbhata for the first time recognises three different *vrittis* or modes of expression. In treating *alamkaras*, he adds *drstanta* (exemplification) and *kavyalinga* (poetical causation) to the thirty nine poetic figures of Bhamaha, thus increasing their number to forty one. He then divides *upama* (simile, poetic figure) on the basis of grammatical form of expression and starts the investigation into the relations of double meaning to other figures as well as the complex issue of the blending of figures, *samsrti* and *sankara*. He considers *rasa* (sentiment) as an essential element in poetry and adds *santi rasa* (calm) to the eight sentiments of Bharata. He then introduces a new classification, based on sound effects, primarily alliteration, in the shape of a theory of *vrittis*, manners, classed as *upanagarika* (elegant), *gramya* (ordinary) and *parusa* (harsh). All these present advancement over Bhamaha's theory of *alamkara*.

The next name in the history of Sanskrit poetics of Kashmir is Vamana. According to Kashmiri tradition, he was the contemporary of Udbhata and the poet at the court of the king Jayapida who ruled in Kashmir from 779 A.D.-813 A.D. He was probably the rival of Udbhata as neither mentions the other. No information is available about his parentage and ancestry. Kalhana mentions him as the minister in the Royal Cabinet of Kashmir. It is said that later he migrated to the court of the Rashtrakuta king Govinda III (794 A.D. -813 A.D.) and became a member of his council there. All these factors help us to assign him the date in the latter half of eighth century A.D.

He wrote *kavyalankara sutra* with a *vrtti* (commentary) which he named *Kavipriya*. Following the ancient *sutra* writers, he divided *kavyalankarasutra vrtti* into five sections (*adhikaranas*) each of which is further divided into two or three chapters (*adhyayas*). The titles of the *adhikaranas* are in order- *sarira*, *dosa-darshana*, *guna-vivecana*, *alankarika* and *prayogika*. The titles of the *adhikaranas* suggest their content. Like his predecessors, he also hold the view that *kavya* is constituted by word and sense. It is in the conception of soul of *kavya* that Vamana expresses an independent view. He says that *riti* is the soul of poetry. *Riti*, according to him is a particular arrangement of words. He mentions three kinds of *ritis* namely *Vaidharbi*, *Gaudi* and *Panchali* which were named after the regions where they originated and became popular. Of these three *ritis*, he gives importance to *Vaidarbhi riti* as it contains all the ten *gunas*. He says that *Gaudi* style is bombastic as it contains only two *gunas* namely *ojas* (strength) and *kanti* (grace). *Panchali* also contains only two *gunas* namely, *madhurya* (sweetness) and *saukumarya* (softness) and ends in prolixity.

Next Kashmirian poet of note is Rudrata. His commentator Namisadhu mentions that Rudrata was also known by the name Satananda. He was the son of Vamuka. He also says that he was the student of *Samaveda*. The author of *Sangitaratnakara* mentions Rudrata as a master of music. Later writers of tenth century such as Locana, Utpala and many others frequently quoted him in their respective works. On this basis, we can say that Rudrata probably lived in the ninth century A.D. The name of his work is *Kavyalankara* which is divided into sixteen chapters. It is composed mostly in *Arya* metre. It contains seven hundred thirty-six verses besides which fourteen verses are in fourteenth chapter, dealing with the eight forms of *Nayika* and their sub-varieties. The shortest chapter of the work is thirteenth containing only seventeen verses while the longest are seventh and eighth chapters containing one hundred eleven and hundred ten verses respectively. The main theme of *Kavyalankara* is the principle of *alamkara* i.e. poetic figures. Rudrata is probably the earliest who made scientific and systematic classification of poetic figures based on certain definite principles such as *vastava* (factual), *aupamyia* (similarity or likeness), *atisaya* (hyperbole or exaggeration) and *shlesha* (pun or double-meaning). He also refers to the principles of *rasa* and *riti*. For him, *rasa* is still an extrinsic element but

riti is of some importance. He adds *Lati riti* to the existing three *ritis* namely *Vaidarbhi*, *Panchali* and *Gaudiya*. Of these four *ritis*, he considers *Vaidarbhi riti* as best because it is simple and does not contain long compounds. His work has been commented upon by Vallabhadeva, Namisadhu, Asadhara and Gopalabhatta whose commentary is known as *Rasatarangini*.

Rudrabhatta was another author who wrote on the science of poetics. He was probably the contemporary of Rudrata, living in the ninth century A.D. The name of his work on Sanskrit poetics is *Srangaratilaka*. The work is devoted exclusively to the theory of *rasa* (sentiment). It contains three chapters, first dealing with nine sentiments, second with the *Vipralambha Sringara* and the third chapter with the remaining *rasas* and four *vrittis* namely *Keshiki*, *Satvati*, *Aarbhati* and *Bharti*.

The next great Sanskrit Kashmirian poet is Anandavardhana whose *Dhvani* theory stands as a prominent landmark in the growth and development of Sanskrit literature. By propounding this theory, Anandavardhana brought a revolution in the science of poetics. Very little information is available about his personal history. In the colophon of the chapter third of *Dhvanyaloka*, he is mentioned as the son of Nonopadhyaya. Kalhana mentions him as the poet at the court of king Avantivarman (855-884) of Kashmir. Rajashekhara mentions him with great respect in his *Kavya-mimamsa*. These references suggest that Anandavardhana might have lived in the second half of ninth century A.D.

Anandavardhana himself mentions that he was the author of *Dhvanyaloka*. In *Dhvanyaloka*, he mentions the name of his two other works namely *Visamabanalila* and *Arjunacharita*. *Dhvanyaloka* is divided into three parts i.e. the *karikas*, the *vritti* in prose explaining the *karikas* and the illustrations from the works of other authors. It contains four chapters, each of which is known as *Uddoyata*. The *karikas* are composed in *Anustup* metre. There is a keen controversy regarding the authorship of *karikas* and *vritti*. Some scholars argued that these are the compositions of Anandavardhana while others held the view that these were composed by two different authors.

The title of the work *Dhvanyaloka* itself suggests that its main concern is the theory of *Dhvani*. According to Anandavardhana, all good poetry contains two meanings. One is spoken one which is expressed by words and embellished with *alamkaras* and the other is implied or concealed one which is inferred by the reader. In this implied meaning, *Dhvani* lies. The main object of the work *Dhvanyaloka* is twofold i.e. to assert that *Dhvani* is the soul of poetry and to examine the relation of *Dhvani* theory with the existing ideas of *rasa*, *alamkara*, *riti*, *guna* etc.

According to Anandavardhana, there are three kinds of poetry:

1. *Dhvani kavya* where the implied sense (*vyangyārtha*) predominates the expressed sense (*vacyārtha*).
2. *Gunibhuta vyangya kavya* where the implied sense is subordinated (*gunibhuta*) to the expressed sense.
3. *Chitra kavya* where there is no implied sense. This is expressed either through *sabda-chitra* (pictorial words) or *artha-chitra* (pictorial sense). This is the lowest grade of poetry.

The next Kashmiri writer on the science of poetics is Mukulabhatta, son of Bhatta kallata and the teacher of Pratiharenduraja. Kalhana mentions Bhatta Kallata as a great savant living during the reign of King Avantivarman (855-884) of Kashmir. Mukulabhatta refers to the works of Udbhata, Kumarilabhatta, Bhartrimitra, poetess Vijjika, Sabarasvami, Anandavardhana etc. He has been roughly assigned the period of ninth century A.D. His contribution to the science of poetics is *Abhidhavr̥ttimatr̥ka*, consisting of fifteen *karikas* and a *vritti* thereon. The work primarily deals with the two senses of words namely *mukhya* and *lakshnik* and gives a detailed treatment of *Lakshana* along with its sub-divisions and examples. Later works like *Kavyaprakash* base their treatment of *Lakshana* on this work.

The next Kashmiri writer on the science of poetics is Kuntaka. Though he was the younger contemporary of Abhinavagupta, neither mentions the other. No information is available about his personal history and genealogy. On the basis of the title *Rajanaka* prefixed to his name mentioned in

the colophon of his work, we can assume that that he was a Kashmirian. Kuntaka's frequent illustrations from the works of Rajashekhara and Mahimabhatta's references to Kuntaka suggest his date in the middle of tenth and eleventh century A.D.

His contribution to the science of poetics is the composition of *Vakroktijivita*, which is available only in the form of references and quotations. The title of the work itself suggests that its primary concern was the principle of *vakrokti* i.e. figures of speech. It consists of three parts namely *karika*, *vritti* and illustrations from the works of other authors. It contains four chapters, each of which is called as *unmesa*. Though the idea of *vakrokti* was there in the science of poetics from the time of Bhamaha, but it attained its full maturity during the time of Kuntaka. Kuntaka declares *vakrokti* as the soul of poetry. He says that not only the words and ideas constitute *kavya*, it is the element of *vakrokti* which adds an extraordinary charm to it. He then mentions six varieties of *vakrokti* namely *varnavinasaya*, *padapurvardha*, *padaparadha*, *vakya*, *prakarana* and *prabandha*. He then sub-divides *vakrokti* into *rudhivakrata*, *paryayavakrata*, *vrittivakrata*, *kriyavakrata*, *karakavakrata*, *sankhyavakrata*, *purusavakrata*, *upagrahavakrata* and so on.

The greatest contribution to the Sanskrit poetics of Kashmir was made by Ksemendra. His works cover the entire field of Sanskrit literature. He has written about forty works, each of which reveals his depth of learning and command over the Sanskrit language. In this section, his contribution to poetics is discussed. His other works are given in the respective sections. He wrote two works on poetics namely *Kavikanthabharna*, also called *Kavisiksha* and *Aucityavicarcarca*. Although we do not have any regular account of his personal history, but still some information about it has been given in his works. For example, in his *Dasakumaracharita*, we find that he was the son of Prakasendra and the grandson of Sindhu. In *Kavikanthabharna*, he mentions the name of Chakrapala, whose identity is not known. In his *Brihatkathamanjari*, he mentions that he learnt the science of rhetoric from the great Shaivite teacher Abhinavagupta. From Gangaka, the author of *Vidyavivrti*, and Somapada of Vaishnav faith he learnt other branches of literature. He too had large number of pupils as he quotes the verses of many of them in his work *Kavikanthabharna*. One of the verses was composed by his student *Rajanaka* or *Rajaputra* Lakshmanaditya. Though he was born in a Shaivite family and studied under the great Shaivite teacher Abhinavagupta, he later turned towards Vaishnavite faith under the influence of Somacharya, one of his teachers. He wrote several of his works at the request of a Brahman Ramayasas. He calls himself Vyasadasa in most of his works.

During the period of eighth and twelfth centuries A.D Kashmir witnessed a surge in the development of literary activities. The authors in Kashmir wrote in different genres and they didn't limit their craft in a linear way. The literary tradition in Kashmir was immensely rich and wide and it began with discussing the fundamentals of science of poetics. Various Kashmiri poets like Bhamaha, Vamana, Rudratta gave their ideas regarding the nature and essential prerequisites for the compilation of good poetry and their successors like Anandvardhana helped by establishing new set of rules in his *Dhvanyaloka*. Kshemendra by his theory of *Auchitya* defined the essence and purpose of poetry and the use of different elements at appropriate place.

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