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THE THEORY OF GUNA IS THE MOST ANCIENT, WHEN COMPARED TO OTHER PROMINENT ELEMENTS THAT GIVE BEAUTY TO POETRY.

Dr N A Shihab

Asst.Professor

M.G.University

All Alankarikas accept Guna as an essential quality of poetry, it cannot be said that it developed into a school (Padhathi). The reason most probably is its connection with Riti. There are different opinions as to their number, nature and relationship to other salient features of poetry.

Origin of the concept of Guna

It is in the Arthasastra (B.C.1st Century) that we see for the first time some kinds of Gunas. Our epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha are other sources of this concept. Gunas like Laghu, Madhura, Chitra and Udara are seen in both of the epics.

Bharatha

Coming to Sanskrit poetics Bharatha is the first to insist that the sahitya's drama should have some qualities like mrdu, lalita. In the sixteenth chapter of Natyasastra, Bharatha deals with the topics of Lakshanans, Alankaras, Gunas and Dhoshas. Bharatha does not define Guna or indicate its function and difference from Lakshanas and Alankaras. He simply says that the ten Gunasⁱ related to Kavya.

Bhamaha

Bhamaha seems to have held that as Gunas and Alankaras are the features of poetic beauty, a distinction between them is unnecessary. He was aware of some theories based on Gunas. But according to him they are not essential qualities of any particular mood of writing and should belong to all good Kavyas generally. He mentions Madhurya and Prasadaⁱⁱ and refers to Ojas as accepted by some others. It is noted that these are the three Gunas which are later defined and accepted by Anandavardhana and his followers

Dandin

Dandin is considered as the founder of Guna Theory. His Kavyadarsa is the first authentic work dealing with Gunas in connection with the Riti otherwise known as Marga. Dandin says that whatever enhances the poetic beauty is its Alankara and in this view gunas are not different from Alankarasⁱⁱⁱ. Dandin admits the ten Gunas accepted by Bharatha. According to him there are two types of poetic composition – Marga viz. Vaidharbha and Goudiya. Between the two Vaidarbhamarga is perfect with all the ten Gunas while Gaudiya is characterised by two Gunas, Ojas and Kanthi. Just after the enumeration of ten Gunas, Dandin declares the soul of Vaidarbha marga is ten Gunas. It is because of that Dandin, though a follower of Riti and Alankara School is taken as the founder of Guna School.

Vamana

Vamana theoretically follows his predecessors Bharatha and Dandin is the names of the Gunas. But he doubles the number by spelling up each of the Gunas as relating to Sabda and Artha. This classification of Sabdagunas and Arthagunas was first made by Vamana, as is clear from his treatment. He held that a Guna is to be called a Sabdaguna or an arthaguna according as it belongs to the Sabda or to the Artha. But sometimes this seems to be mistaken. For example Arthavyakthi is taken as a Sabdaguna by Vamana. Vamana himself was perhaps conscious of the defective nature of some of his definitions. However Vamana's distinction and treatment of numerous Gunas were later contravened by Dhvani Vadins.

Kuntaka

Kuntaka is a writer of originality in the history of Gunas. He accepts two main sets of Gunas viz. Sadarana and Asadarana. The Sadarana Gunas which belongs to all kavyas in general are soubhagya and auchitya. The Gunas that distinguishes the various margas are called as Asadarana Gunas. They are Madurya, Prasada, Lavanya and Abhijathya. Among them, the first two are old ones and the latter two are new. In illustrating Guna Saubhagya, Kuntaka shows various kinds of Vakrata. Finally he says that Gunas also are Alankaras and Alankaras means Sobhakara Dharma of Vakrokthi^{iv}.

Namisadhu

Namisadhu is an important name in the history of Gunas. He establishes a strange idea in his commentary on Rudrata. After discussing three Ritis, he says that these Ritis are not Alankara, but they are Gunas of Sabda^v. Again in the chapter of Rasa he says that the Sabdalankaras and Arthalankaras are considered as artificial ornaments whereas Rasas are the natural Gunas like Soudarya etc.

Bhoja

Bhoja in his Saraswathikandhabharana points out that like Rasaviyoga and Gunayoga is nitya in Kavya and Alankarayoga is anitya. Bhoja classifies Gunas^{vi} into three classes

1. Bahya sabdagunas
2. Abhyantharthagunas
3. Vaiseshikagunas or Doshas

These Doshagunas are not always Doshas. Sometimes they become Gunas in certain cases like Punarukta in the case of Utkandha.

Prathiharenduraja

Prathiharenduraja, the commentator of Udbhata and a follower of Vamana defines Kavya as Sabdartha beautified by Gunas^{vii}. In the number of Gunas and then nature he differs from Vamana. In their number he follows Dhvanikara and says that Gunas are only three viz. Madurya, Oja and Prasada. In the nature of Guna he differs from Anandavardhana and remarks the Gunas are not Rasadharmas, but they are the characteristics of Sabda and Artha and they are to help Rasa.

Anandavardhana and Abhinavaguptha

It was Anandavardhana who for the first time made a more scientific definition of Gunas and Alankaras. According to him the Vachya and Vachaka is the body of poetry and the Again or the Atma is Rasa. Here the question about the position of Gunas and Alankara arises. Therefore Gunas are related to Rasa, whereas Alankara are related to the body that is Sabda and Artha. Gunas of Kavya resembles gunas like bravery, courage, straight for wordless etc.

According to Abhinavagupta who states Anandavardhana's view more explicitly, the Gunas are of the form of realisation in the heart of the Sahrdaya. They are attributed to the Rasa conditioning the experience and through them to Artha and Sabda. Such Gunas are Maduraya, Ojas and Prasada.

Mammabhatta and Others

The above view of Abhinavagupta is described by Mammata elaborately. Following the former and Dhvanikara, Mammata defines the three Gunas and refutes the ten described by Vamana. Here three ways are shown to eliminate the other gunas^{viii}.

1. Certain Gunas can be included in the three Maduraya, Ojas etc.
2. Some of them are only the absence of certain doshas.
3. A few others are sometimes no Gunas at all; they became positive doshas which have to be avoided.

Jagannathapanditha

Jagannathapanditha has a new idea to tell regarding the nature of Guna. To him Gunas are not related to Rasa, the soul of poetry. Atma of Kavya, like our Atma is Nirguna. There can be therefore no gunas at all. Sabdartha, Rachana and Rasa all produce Madurya and other Gunas which are the states of the mind. All of them go to produce that kind of Chittavrthi called Guna which is also equivalent to the Chittavrthi itself.

Notes and References

ⁱ श्लेषः प्रसादः समता समाधिर्माधुर्यमोजः पदसौकुमार्यम्।

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ⁱⁱⁱ माधुर्यमभिवाञ्छन्तः प्रसादञ्च सुमेधसः।Kavyalankara, Bhamaha, University of Calicut,2008,2/1/2

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^{iv} अलङ्कारशब्दः शरीरस्य शोभातिशयिकारित्वात् मुख्यतया कटकादिषु वर्तते, तत्कारित्वसामान्याद् उपचाराद् उपमादिषु तद्वदेव च तत्सदृशेषु गुणादिषु।वक्रोक्तिजीवितम्, कुन्तकः, चौखम्बा, वाराणसी,2012

^v एताश्च रीतयो नालङ्काराः, किं तर्हि शब्दाश्रयाः गुणाः।Kavyalankara of Rudrata, चौखम्बा, दिल्ली,2003

^{vi} गुणयोगस्तयोमुख्यो गुणालङ्कारयोगयोः।Saraswathikandhabharana, Bhoja, चौखम्बा, दिल्ली,2000.

^{vii} काव्यं खलु गुणसंस्कृतशब्दार्थ शरीरत्वम्, मुख्यतया तावद् वृत्त्या गुणसंस्कृतशब्दार्थ शरीरमेव काव्यम्। Kavyalankara sara Samgraha, Udbhata, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune,1982

^{viii} ये रसस्याङ्गिनो धर्माः शौर्यादय इवात्मनः। उत्कर्षहेतवस्तेसुरचलस्थितयो गुणाः।काव्यप्रकाशः, मम्मटः, चौखम्बा, वाराणसी,2000,8/66

