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BHAMAHA'S CONTRIBUTION TO SANSKRIT POETICS

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Bhamaha, author of Kavyankara is considered as founder of Alankara School of Sanskrit poetics. His views especially about Alankaras are often quoted by almost all later writers on poetics. The date of Bhamaha like that of several Alankaras has been the subject of long discussion among scholars. The main reason for this is that we do not have any direct clue about the personal history of Bhamaha from any source. At the same time there are several parallel passages in the works of Bhamaha and Dandin. This leads to various opinions regarding the relative position of these two earlier poeticians. But scholars have Kunjuni Raja recently re-examined the problem and gave an answer to the arrangements. In the commentary on Yaska's Nirukta, Maheswara who lived in the middle of the seventh Century A.D. quotes to verses from Bhamaha's kavyalankara. Hence Bhamaha cannot be later than 600 A.D. Bhamaha refers to two Buddhist philosophers Vasubandhu, Dignaga, who lived in the fifth Century A.D. Hence Bhamaha cannot be earlier than 500 A.D. Thus without any hesitation Bhamaha's date can be fixed as sixth Century A.D.

Bhamaha is the first poetician to formulate the different topics of poetics in a well defined outline. Kavyalankara is divided into six chapters called paricchedas. The first chapter deals with the subjects on the purpose, sources, definition and divisions of poetry. Some of the poetic defects are also dealt with. The second and third chapters treat Alankaras including Gunas. In his view the most important element of poetry is Alankara or poetic figure. Bhamaha recognizes Vakrokthi, which he practically identifies with Athisayokthi as the principle underlying all figures of speech. Though he does not define Vakrokthi the term is used to denote poetic expression which entirely differs from common speech.

The credit of establishing the Alankara School is attached to Bhamaha though he is not the originator. He held that poetic beauty occurs only by Alankaras. In the first chapter of Kavyalankara after discussing the distinction of Vaidarbha and Gaudiya kavyas he declares “ beauty of speech cannot be secured simply by the use of words like Nitanta, an expression composed of figurative word and figurative sense is the Alankara of Speech. Therefore alankara is the figurative expression of words and meanings. It is because of that he accepts both the Sabdalankaras and Arthalankaras different from some other Alankaras of his time. Discussing the rival views he declares that he likes both of them.

Bhamaha defines and illustrates thirty eight Alankaras including the four described by Bharata. In the second and third parichedas of his work he treats Alankars in four stages. First he gives a list of five alankaras including the four seen in Bharata and a fifth one Anuprasa. The second list consists of six Alankars viz. Akshepa, arthantharanyasa, Vyathireka, Vibhavana, Samasokthi and Athisayokthi. During the discussion of Athisayokthi, Bhamaha equates it with Vakrokthi and says that it is the underlying principle of all Alankaras. By its meaning is well brought out – Here a poet should direct his efforts in this way- What is Alankara without this?

The Alankaras viz. Yathasamkhya and Utpreksha are described in the third list. Swabhavokthi is admitted with the comment-“ according to some” These three alankaras in the same order are included in the third Varga of Udbhata’s work. Hence some other writer older than Bharata must have treated them. The fourth list consists of twenty three Alankaras beginning from Preyas and ending with Bhavikatva. After Bhavikatva, Bhamaha defines and illustrates Asish as the view of some other writers.

Another contribution of Bhamaha to Sanskrit Poetics is his discussion of poetic blemishes. They are described as instructions to poetics. He enumerates them in four groups. First we see two aspects consisting of ten doshas. In the second pariccheda again seven defects of Upama are described. Third group consisting of eleven doshas is dealt with in fourth pariccheda. The fifth pariccheda treats the eleventh dosha viz. Prathjnahethudrshtanthadosha. The sixth or the last chapter is on Sabdasudhi, where Bhamaha insists on the Grammatical purity of poetry.

References

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