



Dhvani Theory: Understanding Meaning of a Literary Composition

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Abstract: Today, when we have crossed each boundary wall, inner and outer, these academic pursuits are the greatermost platforms where we try to locate the bright side of each subject. In our country, we have a very rich tradition of critical inquiry known as Indian *Sanskrit*-Poetics which flourished into the following schools (sampradayas): *Alankar* (Embellishment), *Riti* (Style), *Vakrokti* (obliquity), *Aucitya* (Propriety), *Dhvani* (Suggestion) and *Rasa* (Aesthetic Experience). It also offers an insight into some queries like

- What is good poetry?
- What is the purpose of reading poetry?
- What one can suggest about a particular piece of poetry?
- What makes it succeed or fail as a literary work?

A thoughtful reader continues to ask questions like these. The paper modestly purport to underline the fact of our own tradition or tools of language and literature. Rajgopal Parthasarathy, an Indo-Anglian poet says

Language is a tree, loses colour under another sky.

He says that one can not fly with borrowed feathers. This is the proper time to develop applicational models from Indian *Sanskrit* Literary theories to a wide variety of Text in English. Thus the present paper is a modest attempt to understand the meaning of a literary composition in the light of *Dhvani* Theory to the selected canvas of English text.

Index Terms

Dhvani, Application, *abhidha* 'Laksana' 'Laksyartha' 'abhideyarth' 'vacyartha'. 'vyangyartha' 'pratiyamanarth', Aesthetic pleasure

Anandvardhana, propounder of *Dhvanyaloka*, remarks *Dhvani* as the soul of poetry. He regards it the basal principle of all poetic-speech. In *Dhvanyaloka* for the first time we hear the word '*dhvani*' used in a technical sense of "a particular type of poetry". According to Anandvardhana, words can convey also a suggested meaning in addition to their conventional primary meaning. In the domain of poetry the suggested meaning occurs in three forms, viz, '*Vastumatra*' (mere matter of fact), *alankar* (figures of speech) and '*rasadi*' (The *rasa* and other such mental states). And a composition where a suggested sense predominates is called '*dhvani*'. In other words the suggestive aspect of poetry is called '*dhvani*'. Thus the *Dhvani Siddhanta* is founded upon a threefold division of meaning, emanating from a threesome of word-powers. The first power of word is called '*abhidha*' and the meaning flowing therefrom is called '*abhidayatha*' or '*vacyartha*'. The second power is called '*Laksana*' and the meaning derived therefrom, is called '*Laksyatha*'. The third word-power is known as '*vyanjana*' and the meaning, obtained therefrom, is called '*vyangyatha*' or '*pratiyamanartha*'. The ancient *acaryas* hold:

यत्रार्थः भाब्दो वा तमर्थमुपसर्जनी-कृतस्वार्थो ।

व्यंक्तः काव्यविशेषः स ध्वनिरिति सूरभिः कथितः ॥ (Karika I/13)

Dhvani is that type of *kavya* where the word and the *vacyartha* lose their independent entity and suggest some special meaning with greater carutava or beauty than the '*Vacyartha*'.

(That kind of poetry, wherein either the conventional meaning or the words renders itself or its conventional meaning secondary (respectively) and suggests the implied meaning is designated by the learned as '*dhvani*' or suggestive poetry).

Thus *Dhvani Siddhanta* attaches importance to meaning rather than word. Anandvardhana belauds *dhvani* in the following memorable verse:

Dhavni is classified by Anandvardhana as

1. The *Avivakstavacya* or *Laksana* born *Dhvani* where *vacyartha* is not desired and *Laksayatha* appears.
2. *Vivakstanyaparavacya* or *Abhidha* born *Dhvani* where *Vacyartha* is intended and suggests three types-1 *vastu* 2 *Alankar* 3 *Rasadi*.

The *Avivakstavacya* or *Laksana* born *Dhvani* again is of two kinds:

i *Arthantar-Sankramita* ii *Atyant Tiraskrata*

Vivakstanyaparavacya or *Abhidha* born *Dhvani* is of two kinds as well:

i *Sanlaksya-Krama-Vyangya* ii *Asanlaksya-krama-Vyangya* or *Rasa dhvani*

Sanlaksya-Krama-Vyangya again is of two kinds:

i *Vastu Dhvani*

ii *Alankar Dhvani*

Vastu Dhvani is of two kinds:

i *Kavipraudhoktimatrasiddha*

ii *Swatahsambhavi*

As we know that *vastu dhvani* comprises of *kavipraudhokti matra siddha* and *swatah sambhavi*. The first is born of the poet's inventive fancy and the second is grounded in material possibilities. Accordingly, the latter is based on a certain sanction of realism while the former happens to be a mere figment of poetic imagination. The first variety of fact-suggestion may be called fanciful suggestion and the second variety may be termed as possibility-based suggestion where suggested idea may belong entirely to the imaginative world of the poet, (or a character in poetry invented by the poet) or it may have correspondence with the world of reality also.

प्रौढोक्तिमात्रनिष्पन्न"रीरः सम्भवी स्वतः।

अर्थोऽपि द्विविधो ज्ञेयः वस्तुनोऽन्यस्य दीपकः ॥ Dhv.II24.

In order to understand this kind of '*Dhvani*' Vishwanath quotes the following sloka:

drstim he prativesini shnamihapyasmad-grhe dasyasi,
prayenasya sisoh pita na birsah kaupirapah pasyati
ekakinyapi yami satvaramitah strotstmalkulam,
nirndhrastanumalikhantu jrathccheda nalgrnthyah.

दृष्टिं हे प्रतिवेशिनि क्षणमिहाप्यस्मद् – गृहे दास्यसि,
प्रायेणास्य शिशोः पिता न बिरसाः कौपीरपः पास्यति।

एकाकिन्यपि यामि सत्वरमितः स्रोतस्तमालाकुलं,

नीरन्ध्रास्तनुमलिखन्तु जरठच्छेदानलग्नथयः ॥

(*Dhvanyaloka II, 24*)

(O neighbourly woman! kindly have a look at my house, too. My child's father will not perhaps drink of the tasteless water of this well. I am, therefore, going alone to that spring, covered with Tamala trees. I shall not mind the scratches likely to be produced on my limbs by the tangled knots of the olden watery reeds.)

The speaker, a libidinous woman, is going to the rendezvous to meet her paramour. She is inventing a plausible excuse, that of going to the spring for bringing water for her husband, this is a possibility in worldly matters. further, if she goes to the spring, located amidst thickly growing tress and covered with old watery reeds, there is every possibility that her limbs will get scratches due to the contact with the thorny knots of

the watery reeds. But, her real purpose is to enjoy, the company of her paramour. Obviously, the woman will get scratches on her limbs from his nails and teeth in the course of amatory enjoyments. The woman is cleverly hiding her purpose and also providing to her neighbor a ruse as to the possible scratches on her limbs. This is an instance of *svatah sambhavi vastu dhavni* or possibility based fact suggestion. The following examples from English texts may serve the applicational model of *Dhvani*

Let us relish upon *vastu dhvani* specifically possibility based suggestion or suggestion of fact. While passing through sleepless night Brutus is engrossed in a thoughtful process. Brutus is loved by Caesar and loves Caesar but he loves Rome more and that's why will have to sacrifice his friend and love:

***“...in a general honest thought
And common good to all.”***

This sensation is burning inside his bosom. When Brutus asks his servant Lucius to light a candle in his study, Lucius replies

The taper burneth in your closet Sir. (Julius Caesar Act I S-I)

Here, the speaker seems to mention the fact unknowingly but the primary meaning sanctions the factual reality and the cultivated reader easily can catch material possibility of Brutus being an evaluator and undoubtedly a conspirator who after a long trial reached upon a decision of sacrificing Caesar for the common good to all. This trial actually is the instance of *swatah sambhavi vastu dhavni* or possibility based fact suggestion.

Next, in the lines:

***where youth grows pale, and
spectre thin, and dies...***

where beauty can not her lustrous eyes...

(Keats Ode to a Nightingale)

Possibility based suggestion of fact is discernible. Here, the invigorating and refreshing quality of love seems to be juxtaposed with the transitoriness of bodily fulfillment and with the images of death and despair. The predominant voice in each case is one of moderate melancholic acceptance of disappointment with an irritable but unprotesting gloominess and a bleak recognition of the self's and life's own limitations. The poet Keats here seems to give vent to a truth that love, beauty and time are subject to depletion. It can, therefore, be predicted that the *dhvanyartha*' of the above stanza, is the evanescence of human love and beauty. Realization of ultimate truth through the material possibilities is an exquisite example of *vastu dhvani*.

Again, the cited lines:

*Flood-tide below me! I see you
face to face!...
The simple, compact, well joined
scheme, myself
disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme.*
(Walt Whitman Crossing Brooklyn Ferry)

The lines above begin on the factual, realistic level and at last the poet considers his ties with the past, present and future, Here “I” symbolize the individual and the collective self of the universe, a long catalogue of the scenes and sights and human activity constitute the shared experience of man from generation to generation. Thus the matter of fact tone of the present verse suggests that past, present and the future are thus linked up in a cosmic unity, all pervasive and universal. Infact, the scene itself reflects the universal fact and hence this is an example of ‘*vastu-dhvani*’.

Poetic Figures satisfy the basic demand of human nature, i.e the pleasant surprise’ In the infancy of the world, neither poets themselves nor their auditors are fully aware of the excellence, poetic figure and sentiment of poetry: for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness; and it is reserved for future generations to contemplate and measure the mighty cause and effects in all strength and splendour of their union.

The expression attains a heightened beauty due to the application of acquired skill. Here, the acquired skill means the technical art of the poet acquired by teaching or practice. This far excels the beauty of individual elements such as words, meaning, attributes and poetic figures. It should be understood that the subject-matter is with no attraction. The poet, by his art, imagines a divine beauty in it and its character becomes potent and prominent, manifesting a new form of beauty. And art is not different from *alankar* or poetic figure. Anandvardhana unfolds the importance of ‘*alankar*’.

He says

भारीरीकरणं येषां वाच्यत्वे न व्यवस्थितम् ।
तेऽलंकाराः परां छायां यान्ति ध्वन्द्वतां गताः ॥

(Acarya Vishveshwar, *Dhvanyaloka*,)

Explaining his views about *alankar*, he says that after getting *vyangyārtha*, *alankar* not only attains common bodily experience but also glitters with the glimmering grace or ‘*lavanya*’. In other words, Acarya Anandvardhana says that poetry becomes lovely with figures of speech- personification, simile, metaphor and the rest- having a ‘*dhvani*’ causing beauty or *carutva*. As already stated, this type of ‘*dhvani*’ is recognized in the suggestion of an *alankara* through an *alankara* or a *vastu*. According to the western tradition also, ‘a figure, therefore, is effective only when it appears in disguise’, that is

to say, when it is shaded by the brilliance. Anandvardhana considers the appropriate employment of *alankar* as *alankar dhvani*.

R Parthasarathy, the Indian English poet makes the best use of figures of speech in explaining the complex human feelings. In his poetry, we have *padagata* and *vakyagata dhvani*. They are best explained through the fusion and transmutation of image, symbol, metaphor, rhythm and tone. The lines:

*Across the seas a new knowledge,
sudden and unobtrusive as first snow
transforming the landscape,
rinses speech, affirms the brown skin.
and the heart beating to a different rhythm.*

(R Parthasarathy)

Here, by employing the poetic figure 'simile', the poet says that as with the change in the season circle snow converts the appearance and causes a better and pleasure-giving sight all around the landscape, similarly a new understanding of himself and of Indian with the intention of identifying himself with Indian society totally after passing a year in England emerged in Parthasarathy's mind and hear. Thus new emergence in Parthasarathy's Tamil soul has been compared to snow due to common factors like freshness, natural occurrence and transforming quality between them. This can be treated as instance of *alankara-dhvani*.

Further, *Rasa Dhvani* or suggestion of aesthetic experience is *abhidha-born-dhvani*, some emotional content, 'rasa' or a 'bhava' that is purposed to be suggested and creates the charm. Moreover, there is little difference between *rasa* and *rasa-dhvani* except that the latter concept stresses the fact or *rasa* being *vyanigya*, that is, suggested. According to Anandvardhana, *carutva* resides where a *rasa* or *bhava* becomes tangibly felt by virtue of the dexterous management of the verbal art by the poet, without the *rasa* being "named" as such although such avoidance cannot be assured always. One important contribution by Anandavardhana has been the identification of an *angin rasa*, the principal relish. That supports the widely accepted principle of unity of impression which should characterize a poem, narrative or otherwise. Even in the tragedies where *karuna* and *bhayanak rasas* are supported to be jostling together, on central emotion can be located. for example, of the four major tragedies of Shakespeare's, *bhayanaka rasa*, may be discovered in 'Macbeth' while the *karunna rasa*, a product of the development of the *sthayi* of *soka*, can be identified in the other three tragedied of Hamlet, Othello and King Lear. Annandavardhana has constantly reminded the poets that the only purpose of writing poetry is the evocation of *rasa* and not mere narration of a fact or story. He has unequivocally stated that whatever material is prouduced in poetry is all oriented to the evoking of the desired meaning or *rasa* even as a lamp is

lighted solely for the obtainment of light'. (RS Tiwari, *A Critical Approach to Classical Indian Poetics*)

In order to apply '*rasa dhvani*' it is also indispensable to take into account the following parts of '*rasa-dhvani*'. '*Rasa-dhvai*' has been divided into eight classes, designated as *rasa*, *rasabhasa*, *bhava*, *bhavabhasa*, *bhavodaya*, *bhava-sandhi*, *bhava-sandhi*, *bhava-prasama* and *bhava sabalata*. Thus *rasa-dhvani* comprises the entire gamut of *rasa* or the emotional complex. The emotions called '*bhava*' have been classified into two broad categories, designated as the "Sthayi or the Permanent and '*vyabhicari*' or Transitory. The '*sthayis*' are those emotions which have been regarded as dominant in the human emotional life as compared with the '*Vyabhicaris*' which are considered as of a transient nature, rising and disappearing in the service of the dominant emotions. Bharat sets forth his famous '*Rasa-sura* thus:

vibhavanu bhav vyabhicari-snyogad-rasa-nispattih

विभावानु भाव व्यभिचारि-संयोगाद्-रस-निष्पत्तिः

The formula means that *Rasa* is produced by a combination or commingling together of the '*vibhavas*', '*Anubhavas*' and '*Vyabhicaris*' which may respectively be said to be causes or determinants, consequents or ensuants and transitories (as alred said) or assistants.

He is explicit that *Rasa* is so called because it is capable of being tasted or relished: "*rasa iti kah padarthah? atrocyate, asvadyatvat*" "रस इति कः पदार्थः? अत्रोच्यते। आसवद्यत्वात्"।

A striking example of *bhava-sabalata*, however, is available in the following verse form Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

Seyton... I am sick at heart.

When I behold...Seyton, I say...This push

Will cheer me ever or disseat me now.

I have lived long enough; my way of life

Is fall'n into the sear the yellow leaf,

And that which should accompany old age,

An honour, Love, obedience, troops of friends,

I must not have to look; but in their stead,

Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth honour breath,

Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not

(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*)

Macbeth is depicted here as maturing for his fall. People have begun deserting him, but he is not apparently bothered. He is aware that the crucial hour is fast approaching when he will either secure full dominance or meet his eventual liquidation. He feels he has grown old and his powers of sovereignty will be vanishing for good. He can not aspire to enjoy the goods of life, which invest old age with joy and grace, such as, love, honour, loyalty etc. He is aware that he will get only the lipservice of sycophants. It is in this cast of mind that he is calling out to Seyton.

Now, let us examine this utterance of *Macbeth* in the light of the *vyabhicaris*. Certain it is that the utterance is charged with an emotional content which will bring it within the purview of *bhava dhvani* 'sram' (exhaustion) is suggested by '*I am sick at heart*'. '*dainya*' (depression) is suggested by '*My way of life is fall'n into the sear the yellow leaf*'. '*Avega*' (excitement) and '*garva*' (conceit) are suggested by '*This push will cheer me ever or disseat me now*'. '*visada*' (despondency) is suggested by '*And that which should accompany old age... I must not look to have*'. And, '*unmada*' (derangement) is suggested by the entire utterance. By calling out to Seyton, Machbeth betrays the *vyabhicaris* of *cinta* and *sanka* (apprehension). Accordingly, we get here a manifest example of *bhava-sabalata*, union of *vyabhicaris* or transitoriness. Macbeth's present mood of mind in which the different *sancarais* have mingled together creates *camatkara* or charm to the *sahridayas*, endowed with the faculty of quick emotional response, '*hrdaya-samvada*' in Abhinava's terms. Let it be repeated that a person not dowered with emotional capabilities, will not find any charm or thrill in all such portrayals.

Let us locate the poem, '*Three Years She grew in Sun and Shower*' by William Wordsworth, a narrative by nature about the tale of Lucy's growth, mature beauty and the whole process of her natural upbringing. The poem in all, unfolds the one and only universal truth about human life and nature. The poet laureate William Wordsworth first develops our interest for Lucy's marvellous upbringing and we feel a bond with the three years old Lucy who grew in sun and shower. The esteemed process by which Lucy is brought up is paused all of a sudden and we are really stunned with the lines when poet quotes:

*She died, and left to me
This heath, this Calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been.*

And never more will be. (William Wordsworth)

The lines leave us in a pathetic situation. We literally feel पुटपाक पीड़ा/*putpak pida* and a deep sense of loss as memories are the inevitable parts, never supposed to be revised physically in man's life. Thus, the lines before us are charged with emotional fervor which can be understood as '*bhava dhvani*'. Here '*Visada*' (despondency) is the source of '*angin rasa*' or principal relish.

To conclude it can be said that *Sanskrit* Poetics, being an integral part of our legacy, is full of insights and perceptions. It purtosforth the view that the *Sanskrit* poetics has a

power and richness in bringing out the aesthetic potential of literary texts- ancient or modern, eastern or western. These applicational models promote the fusions and transmutations of image, symbol, metaphor, rhythm and tone with emotion and feeling and prone to develop a high sensitivity to language and the ability to overcome cultural barriers as well.

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