

In the footsteps of Alexander

# DHVANI

1

[The concept of 'Dhvani' was given by Anandavardhana who lived in the 9<sup>th</sup> century Kashmir in his brilliant work 'Dhvanyaloka' literally meaning 'the light of resonance']

[Art-philosophy in India named the highest form of aesthetic realization as Dhvani] [The word Dhvani literally means 'sound' and even suggests sense of echo] [In Indian Aesthetics, instead of pictorial, great importance is given to sonorous character of art-experience] [For Indian Aestheticians all art-experience is ultimately musical and rhythmic] [They consider it to be a continuum of blissful illuminations supervening over the sensible elements] [These flashing movements of rhythmic and creative state going beyond the direct and the known or in other words the visible elements, are just like echoing resonance from a gong] [It is a kind of mentally realizable rhythm or harmony, existing above the apparent element of art as an echoing voice] [Beauty of a work of art is to be judged by how much it is able to bring about such a rhythmic resonance of emotions and thoughts by the dynamo of its perceptible elements] [What makes a work of art an inexhaustible source of aesthetic charm and newness is this element of Dhvani only in the form of reverberation of meaning arising by suggestion.]

Thinkers like Bhatta Lollata or Sankuka before Anandavardhana were unable to distinguish aesthetic knowledge from intellectual knowledge and were trying the impossible task of deriving the art-quality from logical and empirical categories. The Aesthetic emotion was taken by them to be an ordinary mental condition different only in degree from ordinary feeling as a psychological condition. Also the Alamkarists (including the Ritivadis) represented by Bhamaha, Dandin, Vamana and Udbhata confined their analysis of aesthetic facts mainly to formal and structural aspects like poetic figure, diction, style and mode of expression, leaving out what constitutes the essence of poetic experience. Alamkarists limited their interest to listing and describing the varieties and sub-varieties of figures such as the simile. Some of their insights about the aspects of

poetic beauty were valuable but its theorists could not establish any inherent relation between an emotional state and a poetic quality.

The poetics following the approach of the alankarists were satisfied with the contention that a good poetry meant "agreeable feelings in agreeable words and language". Anandavardhana, a poet himself, wondered how the poetics were so indifferent to the vibrating inner essence of poetry. By ignoring the impact of the emotional appeal hiding in the meanings of the words, they appeared to be more interested in analysing the external aspects of poetry. He was fully aware of the fact that the followers of the alankara school was interested in making the poetic language decorative; the riti and guna took care of style and diction. But none of these theories gave a clear-cut account of the power of evocation in poetry. Emotions are the very foundations of drama and poetry, and it is therefore important to explore how they get manifested in poetry rather than analysing the diction and metaphors. Anandavardhana along with Abhinavagupta was the first poetics to realise the importance of dhvani as the source of suggesting the emotional core without which the reader can never have an aesthetic experience.

[Anandavardhana points out that aesthetic delight cannot be evoked through propositional statements, but through suggestion or basic obliquity of poetry, as poetic meaning unfolds itself at a level much deeper than ordinary speech can reach.] Essence of poetry as per him is not in its representational or descriptive powers, no matter how aptly they are presented but in the emotional mood the poem could arouse. Consequently [Anandavardhana drew attention to the fact that the beauty of a work of art is not due to its outward formal construction, but an intangible inexpressible quality given to it by suggestive power of words.]

Words have the potential and power to suggest various meanings. Such meanings are of different kinds and level. The Indian philosophers and Grammatians have used the term sphota (explosion) for the process through which the meaning of a word is comprehended. The power of ordinary language depends on the potentiality of words to denote objects and ideas which are conventionally associated with their sounds and letters. But the poetic language functions in a different way. As per Anandavardhana, words which are material of poetry, when used in a certain way possess the power

to evoke aesthetic emotion and are not merely symbols for conveying of facts in a literal manner [In poetic language, words donot serve any practical functions like that in ordinary life. They deal with a different kind of reality which cannot be evoked by ordinary powers of speech or language like that of Abhida, lakshana or Tatprya].

ABHIDA (denotation) conveys the meaning that is direct or literal. It has been defined as that power of a word which conveys the meaning attached to it by convention. A word with such a meaning functions as both the vehicle of thought and instrument of action. Such a word indicates a particular object yet it goes much beyond it to the universal class essence. It is this universal implication of the word which defines its immediate and exact meaning. It is obvious that this sort of meaning is indispensable for life and science.

LAKSHANA (Indication) refers to the power of words capable of conveying indirect meaning. Lakshana can also be described as the second or metaphorical usage. There is some joy and beauty felt in such words as there is little release to imagination from its bondage of the perceptual plane. When we say 'Camel is the ship of the desert' we can neither understand nor enjoy the meaning if we are not able to rise above the literal plane of understanding. The condition is similar in painting if we see nothing beyond colours in it, and in music if we hear nothing beyond notes and numbers. In the same way we enjoy the immense meaning in 'architecture is frozen music' by understanding the implied meaning of the word 'frozen'. In apprehending the meaning of a word, the mind grows towards its primary, conventional and customary sense. Meeting an obstruction as immediate meaning seems to make no sense and looks absurd the mind tries to find a new meaning using imagination. It is a mediate meaning and results from reflection. But this new meaning is not absolutely unattached to its primary sense that is why Lakshana or indicated meaning is called the tail of the abhidha. Lakshana is of derivative nature and helps the poetic expression by enhancing the effect of the speech. It is instrumental in embellishing the poetic language. Most of the alamkar (poetic figures) are illustrations of this function of the words.

The third function or power of the language is known as Tatparya which means the total sense or purport which the words together in a sentence bring out collectively. It may be called the total or contextual meaning as against the individual or textual meaning of a word.

As per Anandavardhana and his followers it is not fully possible to know or grasp the inner beauty of poetic feeling through the above mentioned powers or function of the language. He introduced a fourth function called VYANJANA suggestiveness and made it a criterion of good poetry. The suggested meaning, he explained, is not opposed to the semantic or literal meaning, but just transcends it. Metaphors and allegories may be performing this function of suggesting, some sense indirectly, but yet this may not go beyond what the words express. The Vyanjana vyāpāra, however, by taking us beyond the words brings home the very heat of emotion, its poignancy, and thus makes poetry a vehicle for suggesting the sthayī-bhāvas leading to rāsa [The grammarians are mainly conversant with Abhidhā and lakṣanā (metaphorical) functions of the words but not with the secret of the power of poetry to suggest and manifest emotions through unexpressed sense and sound. Anandavardhana gave this suggestive power the name of DHVANI or resonance.

As per Anandavardhana the words can name the emotions but force of emotions is felt only when a sensitive reader (sahridaya) uses his imagination to catch the suggested sense. A linguist, versed in deep lore of grammar etc fails to enjoy beauty in a poem which sends a man of culture and taste into a rapturous state. Anandavardhana, in fact claims that he has written Dhvanyaloka only for the pleasure of sahridayas or sensitive readers who are fully aware of the significance of the dhvani.

Anandavardhana strongly believes that vyanjana as a function of suggesting the unexpressed sense cannot be equated with simple denotation i.e. abhidhā nor with indication lakṣanā. He also vehemently denies that vyanjana is another name for inference or Anumāna. Abhidhā or denotation can acquaint us with common conventional meaning, lakṣanā can do the same with implied meanings, inference or anumāna can enable us to connect the words and their sense, but all this put together cannot perform

Abhidhā  
lakṣanā  
Anumāna

~~per from the function of suggesting the unexpressed sense or the unconventional content which is a revelation of some unspelt emotional state or subtle object.~~

the function of suggesting the unexpressed sense or the unconventional content which is a revelation of some unspelt emotional state or subtle idea

The lowest kind of poetry as per Anandavardhana is pictorial poetry i.e. citra-kavya. Being one dimensional it is without any suggested sense and is like a picture with more or less a mechanical composition depicting everything straightway where as the best kind of poetry according to him is Dhvani-kavya. It is that poetry in which the suggested sense predominates and supersedes the expressed sense. This is par excellence suggestive poetry manifesting through its meanings the force of subtle feelings and ideas.

Based on the nature of what is being suggested the Dhvani-kavya is of three kinds. The first one is the Vastu (object) Dhvani. In this an idea or distinct object is suggested. The second one is Alamkara (metaphor) Dhvani in which the suggested sense is imaginative and relates to a figure of speech. The last one is the Rasa-Dhvani in which a mood or feeling or state of mind is suggested.

Dhvanī  
kāvya  
is  
3 types -  
1) Vastu  
Dhvanī  
2) Alamkāra  
3) Rasa  
Dhvanī

The rasa is awakened in our minds through the suggestive power of words. This whole process based on the power of suggestion resulting in awakening of rasa or feeling or mood is imperceptible. It is felt by us but not perceived as we perceive a tree or desk. We are aware of the physical presence of the words with their denotation, but not of the moods and feelings brought to our consciousness. Anandavardhana, thus makes it abundantly clear that the fundamental principle of the best poetry is its capacity and art of suggesting the moods and feelings which words cannot express but only suggest to the imaginative mind. This explains the secret of the relish of poetry. As a verbal composition, poetry is not different from discursive essays, prosaic description or philosophical sūtras, since they all consist of the words possessing denotative functions. But it is only poetry that can communicate something more..... the inner core of human heart vibrating with emotions, and land the reader in a unique world of joy and delight

Mashhoor

To quote Prof. S.K. De :-  
(History of Sanskrit Poetics)

The unexpressed is bound up by means of definite links with the expressed, without which it cannot exist; but it is wrapped up in such a manner as to make it possible only for the initiated in the poetic hieroglyphics to comprehend it in its subtlety. The unexpressed is not understood by those who know grammar and lexicon, but only by men of taste and literary instinct who know essence of poetry. It is the province of the *sahridaya* - the connoisseur, who is expert in discerning through the intricate meshes of veiled word and sense into the aesthetic relish of deeper significance.

Anandavardhana's greatest lies in the fact that he did not deny the utility of the normal powers of language, denotation, indication and purport to poetry, but assimilated all of them into it. This concept also covered the elements of *alamkara*, *gunar-riti* etc. Poetic experience or *rasa* of course was of supreme importance in his scheme of things with *dhvani* being the best instrument for its evocation.

Authors of various books subsequently tried to interpret the *dhvani* doctrine in the light of their respective standpoints and we can quote *Dhvanyāloca* of Abhinavagupta, *Kāvyaśrautāra* of Mammata, *Sāhitya Darpanā* of Pandit Visvanātha among others to substantiate this fact. The general attitude of these authors shows their keenness to accommodate *Dhvani* as an essential element in establishing the ultimate end of poetry, the *rasa*. Abhinavagupta is the most important commentator on *Dhvanyāloca* and his observations of the merit of *dhvani* theory certainly magnify the importance of Anandavardhana as the champion of the theory. Abhinavagupta did not modify the general pattern of the theory, but tried to associate it with Bharata's theory of *rasa* and build a combined doctrine of dramaburgy and poetry.

Anandavardhana had brought out the significance of *dhvani* by emphasizing the notion of *rasa-dhvani*. However, he had included

vastu and alamkara also among the suggested senses. Abhinavagupta wanted to retain the position of rasa as the soul of poetry. He therefore maintained that the suggestion of matter of fact or vastu dhvani and of the poetic figure Alamkara dhvani ultimately resolved themselves into the suggestion of rasa which was actually the essence of poetry. In the original theory of Anandavardhana, rasa-dhvani is only one of the three forms of unexpressed; but with Abhinavagupta's bold attempt to reduce all forms of dhvani to rasa-dhvani, the gravity of poetic effect thus changes in favour of rasa without eliminating dhvani.

Abhinavagupta gave the dhvani theory a kind of metaphysical grounding and focussed his attention more on its psychological aspects. Abhinavagupta's theory of mind relates the aesthetic response with the memory of latent traces in the reader's mind of emotional experiences which are activated by the semantic aspect of dhvani and then "seep into consciousness" not as ideas but as feelings. The experience of a literary work is precisely the experience of these feelings.

Abhinavagupta has the distinct honour of being considered as a person who has said the last word on the theory of rasa. The later thinkers had nothing new to expose on the subject. Pandit Visvanatha, a poetician of the 14<sup>th</sup> century continued the tradition of entertaining the concept of kavya-purusa which compared poetry to a living organism with Rasa as its soul or vital part, and other aspects such as alamkara, gunas, riti etc as the limbs of this organism and ornaments which decorate the body. He compared rasa to a jewel which hides all defects or dosas by the radiance of its own light. The poetic delight is compared to the ultimate bliss Brahmāsvāda.

## ATYASĀSTRA

dian speculation on aesthetic experience is usually understood to have originated in the famous Natyasastra of Bharata Muni (200 BCE - 200 CE).

is a collection of rules and instructions connected mainly with drama, music, dance and poetry. In this book are contained not only myths of origin of theater but also various types of rituals dealing with performance and also technical instructions that contribute to theatrical production i.e. dance, dramatic movement and language, character portrayal and musical forms.

2 Natyashastra, in particular the rasa theory contained in it, came to be the theoretical base for all art in India. Dealing primarily with "Natyā" (Dance Drama) the rasa theory was all encompassing and immediately applicable to arts of all kinds. Bharata Muni tried to find answer to the fundamental question that what is the essential quality of a work of art (a poem or drama) which constitutes its universal appeal? His solution lay not in the discovery of a conceptual norm, as his predecessors did, but in the evocation of a subjective state, i.e. RASA aroused by the combined audio-visual effect of the drama. The source of rasa according to Natyashastra is human emotion not in its raw form but in a dramatised situation. Natyashastra essentially, rasa, which consists of situations, transient emotions and basic emotions which can be perceived, not through the means of empirical knowledge, but through aesthetic susceptibility only. The word sastra stands for the means of knowing the essential nature of natyā. (Natyā is both of the ear and eye, graphic and auditory. It is the complete form of art). Around it cluster and move all other arts like satellites round a bit. The term Natyā was given the authoritative status of veda in order to establish the higher ethical value of art and aesthetics. For this Bharata declared natyā to have a supernatural origin. It was created by Lord Brahmā by borrowing the chanting of mantras from Rigveda, singing from Sāmaveda, dancing and acting from Kajurveda and rasa from Atharvaveda to fulfill the request of the GODS regarding some audio-visual sport capable of providing entertainment and relaxation in their leisure time.

Drama when it is staged and presented along with dance, music and abhinaya (i.e. dramatisation) it becomes natyā, which has been designated as drśya-lāṅkā by the poets. Natyā is not just an art in the sense of skill but more than that. Bharata claims that there is no science or art, no craft or skill, no yoga and kaśya that is outside the purview of drama. To call it just silpa or lāṅkā (craft) is to



the sātāvika-abhinaya is the subtle manner in which the actor is able to express his innermost feelings through the facial gestures. ✓

In the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter, the details of āhārya-abhinaya are given according to which it is again a dramatic technique of convincing the audience about the position, age, social and financial status of the character on the stage. It is in other words what we call 'make-up' in modern language. As per his analytic method, Bharatā mentions the type of ornaments, dresses, flowers, decorations etc. to be worn by the different characters according to their roles. ✓

The staging of the drama requires all these skills and techniques to make it successful. The success of the drama, however, is to be measured in terms of the experience of the rasa the viewer is able to acquire. The viewer also has to fulfill certain conditions in order to derive rasa. As per Bharatā that viewer is the most deserving one who becomes emotionally identical with the emotion that is being imitated on the stage. In other words, the viewer should be able to enter into the emotional state which is being imitated (bhāvanulcarana), forgetting his own personal emotional states at the moment. Such a viewer is the most merited and deserving rasika according to Bharatā. ✓

Bharatā, thus leaves no detail untouched about the art and science of dramaturgy and makes very important observations about human nature. [Bharatā's theater was a composite theater and included not only speech and physical action, but dance and music too as enhancing devices. He uses the term 'rasa' to describe the total experience of the stage spectacle.]

α ————— α

use it has the capacity to visualize the events of all the three worlds (triloka) including gods, men and women and the daityas and dānavas in action with their successes and sufferings. It is the reflection of life itself along with the gamut of all possible human emotions. It is a product of meditative thinking and imagination of it presented in a visual form with the help of the skills of acting, singing and dancing and other dramatic techniques. According to Bharata, nāṭya was created primarily for entertainment, but yet he claims that it has a therapeutic role since it can be a source of relief for persons who are grief-stricken, grieved on account of hard work, bereaved and sorrowed.

The secret of providing entertainment or recreation is the element called rasa. Bharata gives a graphic detail of all the rasa (eight in number) and even goes to the extent of describing the use of eyebrows, eyelids, pupils, facial muscles, teeth, lips for the expression of the emotions with a view of arousing the rasa in the minds of viewers. The description of the facial and bodily movements along with the verbal movements for the purpose of anubhāva (consequents) and vyabhicāribhāva (complementary emotional states) forms part of Abhinaya. (Abhinaya indicates an activity that sees a staging of a drama possible.) There are four kinds of abhinayas as per the classification made by Bharata. They are —

1) NĀCIKA (2) VĀCIKA (3) SĀTTVIKA and (4) ĀNĀRYA. These abhinayas are the modes of enacting the anubhāva and vyabhicāribhāva and hence we should understand the bhāvas and abhinayas as complementary to each other.

In the chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra, there is a detailed description of the gestic abhinaya, which gives a graphic account of the movement of the different parts of the body such as head, face, eyes, neck, back, chest, hands and feet etc. Now a posture for each bhāva and rasa. Even the smallest detail is analysed with great detail. For example, the slow movement of the head upward and downward is called akampita while the fast movement is called kampita.

The chapter serves as a useful vocabulary for the dancers particularly since they have to depend on the expression through body language to a large extent.

2) vācika abhinaya is the use of dialogue and exclamations to express the thoughts and emotions. The characters communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings through words not only amongst themselves but also to the audience. Bharata discusses the type of language to be used by the respectable persons and not by the servants and prostitutes etc.