

Dhvanyaloka by Anandavardhana: A Critical Reading of the Theory of Suggestion in Poetry

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Abstract

The present research article attempts to explore Anandavardhana's views on "aesthetic suggestion". Anandavardhana was a Kashmiri Poet and a literary critic whose thoughts on literary creation, types of poetry and varieties of suggestion had a significant place in the Indian aestheticism. He was a *Dhvanikar* i.e. a critic of Dhvani and his most valuable book *Dhvanyaloka* or *A Light on Suggestion* got classical position in the Indian literary criticism. Anandavardhana's philosophical works placed him among the greatest tradition of the writings of Bharata, Bhamah and Vamana. However, his study area or the attitude of looking towards poetry made him greatest and unorthodox theoretician. He was the first literary critic who provided the cohesive and comprehensive literary criticism of poetry. He was the first critic who offered criticism of a literary work as a whole. Before him, the critics were paying their attention towards the stanza pattern, or particular sentence, etc and avoided to study the poetry as a whole. Another reason to call Anandavardhana as a trendsetter in literary criticism is that he turned the focus of criticism from outer part of poetry to the internal part of poetry. Before Anandavardhana, many critics and literary theoreticians profoundly studied poetry considering its external elements such as stanza pattern, poetic devices and artistic elements and neglected the inner beauty of poetry. They didn't care about how language generates meaning in poetry and how the readers understand the meaning. Having got this missing element from the ancient Indian literary criticism, Anandavardhana wrote his seminal book *Dhvanyaloka* that turned the study focus of literary criticism from outer embellishment to the inner beauty of the poetry. It means the book critically studies the thematic aspects of the poetry, the creation of meaning, types of poetry and varieties of suggestion, etc. This paper briefly sheds light on Anandavardhana's seminal book *Dhvanyaloka*.

Key Words: Dhvani, suggestion, external and internal elements of poetry, meaning generation, etc.

Introduction to Anandavardhana and his *Dhvanyaloka*:

Anandavardhana, an expert in Sanskrit and Prakrit language was a court poet and literary critic during the reign of King Avantivarman. He belonged to the 9th century CE. He was honored with the title of Rajanak for his literary and philosophical works. He wrote a large number of books. However, unfortunately many of his creations are lost now. Anandavardhana was mostly famous for his six major works namely epic, narrative work, Lakshana Granth, Darshana Grantha, Buddhist book and a poem. In short, the Sanskrit Mahakavya-*Arjuncarita*, a narrative work- *Visamabanalila*, the Lakshana Grantha-*Dhvanyaloka*, the Darshana Grantha-*Tattvaloka*, Buddhist philosophical book-*Dharmottarivivrti*, and a poem-"Devisataka", etc. are some of the significant works that are at the credit of Anandavardhana.

Dhvanyaloka - the Lakshana Grantha was written by Anandavardhana in the 9th Century. The book became the trendsetter in Indian literary criticism as it turned the focus of literary criticism from the external artistic elements of poetry to the internal structure and inner beauty of

poetry. This colossal book includes four Udyotas with Karikas and Vrittis. In simple words, the book covers four sections, a large number of stanzas along with their paraphrases. There are lot of arguments regarding the title of the book and the author of the *Karikas* and *Vrittis*. Many critics thought that the whole book is not written by Anandavardhana. According to them, only *Vrittis* were written by Anandavardhana. Regardless of all kinds of arguments, the thematic concern and critical analysis of inner beauty of poetry the book made Anandavardhana very famous in Indian literary criticism. Anandavardhana organized his views and thoughts in a very systematic way in this book. The book begins with *Dhvani-Virodhi Vaadas* (Dhvani-Against Arguments) and Anandavardhana's counter arguments as a reply to them. In short the book opens with the meaning and definitions of Dhvani. The second part of this book discusses the types of Dhvani. It also sheds light on figures of speech and Guna-Dosha in poetry. Next to it, Anandavardhana put forth his views of types of poetry, suggestiveness and the concept of Auchitya. In the end part of this book, the author discusses the concept of *Samvaada*, the importance of suggestion and his idea of plagiarism.

Dhvanyaloka: A Critical Reading

Dhvanyaloka or *Kavyaloka* or *Sahradayaloka* advocates Anandavardhana's theory of suggestion (Dhvani) through a number of concepts including dhvani-virodhi views, varieties of suggestion, the idea of good poet, types of poetry and so on. Following is the short introduction to some of the ideas and concepts put forth by Anandavardhana.

Dhvani Virodhi Vaadas:

Dhvani-against Arguments or Dhvani Virodhi Vaadas and Anandavardhana's reply to them form the first section of *Dhvanyaloka*. Many learned men (i.e. critics) rejected the idea of Dhvani on the basis of three major points: non-existence of Dhvani, non-separation from figures of speech and the non-explanatory entity. Many critics opine that the concept like Dhvani that doesn't exist in literary criticism. According to them, the ancient critics have critically analyzed poetry considering the artistic elements such as figures of speech, rhyme, metrical pattern, stanza pattern, etc and didn't mention Dhvani in their study. Hence, the Dhvani-against critics believe that Dhvani doesn't exist. For many other critics Dhvani is not different from figures of speech (Alamkara). As the meaning arises out due to figurative indication, so it cannot be treated as a new concept. In short, this group of critics believes that Dhvani is a kind of figures of speech that indicates an implied meaning. For some critics Dhvani is indescribable. No one can explain the term "Dhvani" exactly as its essence remains beyond the scope of words. According to these critics, there is a big difference in the taste of sugarcane, milk and jaggery, but it cannot be explained exactly. In the same manner, it is impossible to describe the idea of Dhvani.

Anandavardhana explains the nature of suggestion (Dhvani) to clarify these above misunderstanding about the notion of Dhvani. For the counter argument of non-existence of Dhvani, Anandavardhana replies that according to the learned men of earlier generation the soul of poetry is suggestion (*Kavyaashi Atma Dhvani*). Anandavardhana acknowledges that he is not saying something newly about Dhvani as the principle of suggestion was observed by the celebrated poets of the ancient time and hence, Dhvani or suggestion definitely exists according to Anandavardhana. For answering to the argument of the second group of critics, Anandavardhana clearly shows the difference between the suggestion and indication. He says that figures of speech, the Lakshyarth and the conventional meaning itself offers suggested meaning and hence, there is difference between indication and suggestion. According to Anandavardhana, figures of speech offer common usage meaning whereas Dhvani offers a meaning that has a charm and something speciality. By defining the term Dhvani or suggestive poetry properly, Anandavardhana replies the third counter argument of indescribability. In Anandavardhana's views, that poetry in which the conventional meaning renders itself to the secondary position or the conventional word renders its meaning secondary and suggests the intended or implied meaning is termed as Dhvani or Suggestive poetry. In short, citing the proof of earlier usage of the term Dhvani by the celebrated poets, making comparison between suggestion and indication, and finally defining the term "Dhvani" itself,

Anandavardhana provides a solid reply to Dhvani-Against Arguments (*Dhvani-Virodhi Vaadas*) and establishes his theory of Dhvani in *Dhvanyaloka*.

Dhvani is the Soul of Poetry:

Anandavardhana opines that Dhvani is the soul of poetry. For him, Dhvani is nothing but a suggestion or a suggested meaning. All types of meaning or any meaning cannot be labeled as a soul of poetry. He put forth some criteria or certain attribution and if the meaning achieves these attributions, only those meanings are known as the soul of poetry. According to Anandavardhana, the meaning which wins the admiration of sensitive critics, the meaning that has supreme quality, the meaning that has Rasadhvani qualities, the meaning that appeals to human sentiment and to the heart and mind is the soul of poetry. . While defining the term, Anandavardhana says that the poetry in which the conventional or the literal meaning remains at secondary or subordinate position and it suggests the indicated or implied meaning is termed as Dhvani or suggestive poetry. Here, he highlights that the suggested meaning is the soul of poetry. In short, Anandavardhana accepting the importance of sentiment (Rasa), figures of speech (Alamkara) and poetic qualities and defects, strongly affirms that Dhvani is the soul of poetry.

Types of Dhvani:

Considering the nature, the medium and the process of suggestion, Anandavardhana categorizes Dhvani into different types namely Vastu Dhvani, Alamkara Dhvani, Rasa Dhvani, and Suggestion with Unintended literal import and Suggestion with intended literal import and many more. In Vastu Dhvani the suggested idea is the fact, in Alamkara Dhvani the fact is idealized through an image or figures of speech and in Rasa Dhvani, the sentiment or emotion (Rasa) is suggested. Suggestion with unintended literal import is a Lakshana-born Dhvani in which the literal meaning is not intended. Suggestion with intended literal import is also known as the suggestion through the primary meaning. It is an Abidha-born Dhvani in which the conventional meaning or the literal meaning is intended

Types of Poetry:

Anandavardhana classifies poetry into three broad categories considering the prominence, subordination and negligence of suggestion in poetry. If suggestion is prominent in poetry, it becomes suggestive poetry or Dhvani Kavya. If suggestion has secondary place in poetry, it becomes Gunibhuta Vyangakavya. If suggestion is negligible, it becomes portrait-like poetry. In short, according to Anandavardhana Dhvani Kavya, Gunibhuta Vyanga Kavya and Chitra Kavya are three major types of poetry. In Dhvani Kavya, suggestion is the principal method that offers special meaning. In Gunibhuta Vyanga Kavya, the literal meaning has the important place and in Chitra Kavya, the ornate description or the figurative description has the important place.

Conclusion:

Dhvanyaloka propounds Anandavardhana's theory of suggestion in four sections through Karikas and Vrittis. While writing about Dhvani, or the nature of suggestion, Anandavardhana has explained a number of concepts such as Dhvani as aesthetic principle, suggestion is supreme quality of poetry, suggestion adds beauty to literal meaning, three types of poetry, varieties of suggestion and the idea of coincidence (Auchitya). According to him the similar ideas or themes in the poetry cannot be labeled as plagiarism but can be treated as coincidences because for him great minds think alike.

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