

## CHAPTER-III

### **LANGUAGE AS AN AID TO AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE**

One may raise the question, whether language plays any role in aesthetic experience or not ? It is true that literary form of art i.e. *kāvya* is composed with language and hence it is the language which serves as vehicle... in aesthetic communication. The role of language in communicating aesthetic experience cannot be ignored.

The analysis of language is also essential for enjoying the poetic excellence. Had there been no analysis of language, one would not have been enjoyed the linguistic beauty represented through the implicative or suggestive and metaphorical meaning. Poetic meaning is not like ordinary meaning. From Ānandavardhana and his predecessor Abhinavagupta's view regarding poetic meaning we can say that there is no proper sense in which we can say that poetry means 'anything'. But rather it only suggests or evokes. They give the name '*dhvani*' to this suggestive meaning. The *Dhvani* is possible only when the primary meaning fails to convey the intention of the speaker. In other words, the suggestive or implicative meaning is available after analysing the given sentence bearing the primary meaning (*Śakyārtha*). We generally look for the secondary or suggestive meaning if there is incompatibility in the primary

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meaning. When the suggestive meaning is known, the primary meaning becomes the instrument through which we arrive at the suggestive meaning.

According to the *Dhvani* theorists, poetic meaning is characteristically different in kind from logical meaning. In ordinary language when we state the meaning of a phrase or an expression or a word we are stating what the word refers to, what it has by convention come to stand for. Words are conventional symbols, referring to something beyond themselves.

The Indian thinkers mention three different logical functions of language viz. (1) *Abidhā* ; (2) *Tātparya* and (3) *Lakṣaṇā*.

(i) *Abidhā* - is that meaning which through denotation gives the conventional meaning of words. (2) *Tātparya* is that meaning which the word acquires within the contextual relationship of the sentence. (3) *Lakṣaṇā* is the implied meaning, often a statement if taken literally, gives contradictory meanings in which case the meaning even though it is not directly stated can be implied from the words. For instance, if we say, 'A house on the river, Ganges' it is clearly implied that the house is on the bank of the river Ganges and it is not situated on the current of water.

Above three functions of language is not sufficient to give the poetic meaning it depends on another indirect function of language i.e., the power to manifest a suggested sense.

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In scientific works and for the purpose of everyday communication language is used as an instrument. We are concerned only with the meaning which is directly given. Meaning in poetry are not directly given but rather indirectly through the suggestive power of language. The essence of poetry lies in the effect it evokes, the imagery and feeling it gives rise to, and not in the factual accuracy of its statements.<sup>1</sup> In this respect it is totally contrasted to science, wherein the function of language is purely statement of fact.

“The words in poetry actually have a double function. As conventional symbols, they convey direct meanings. But within the structure of the poem words also function suggestively. Indirectly, they give rise to images, feelings, effective tones and associations. When all these are merged together they combine to give rise to a unique kind of meaning, which is not given by individual words in their normal usage. This indirect meaning is what the Indian aestheticians call *dhvani* in order to distinguish it from the ordinary and direct meaning of words. *Dhvani* taken as extraordinary meaning, however, does not totally forego the symbolic use of words. The vivid imagery of poetic language depends primarily upon a complete understanding of words, first is their symbolic and then their suggestive function.”<sup>2</sup>

We have to understand the symbolic meaning of words first in order to understand and appreciate a poetry. Vaguely or obscurely grasping the meaning of the words used in poetry cannot give us the meaning of the poetry

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but it is necessary to know the words clearly upto their finest shade of meaning. The poetic meaning emerges when the referential use of words are understood but submerged into the background. It is when the symbolic meanings do not intrude upon the mind, but slip unobtrusively into the unconscious, that the suggestive sense is aroused. In poetry, the final effect of words is predominantly a suggestive one.

In poetry the meaning lies in the suggestive power evoked by the combined effect of the words, and emerges as the result of word juxtaposition, arranged to convey direct effects through rhythm, vowel quality etc. In science, the meanings are derived by an analytical process of the literal statement of words used as symbols for meaning lying beyond them. In poetry, the sense is immediately and directly presented, it appears to rise, wholly and suddenly from the words without any direct connection with the literal statements.

“The words in poetry do not have any conventional reference of things beyond them, their function is only to evoke certain images. The truth of these images do not lie in their correspondence to their inner essence and law of things. Of this essence and law, the sensitive spectator is made aware of in the depth of his experience.”<sup>3</sup>

Aesthetic experience takes place by virtue of the squeezing out of the poetical word. Aesthetically motivated person read and taste a same poem many times. Each reading may expose different meanings of the poem. But practical

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means of perception once they are accomplished they have no use. Suppose a letter which contains some informations. After reading once when one gets the information then the letter becomes useless. There is no necessity of reading it several times. Here the meaning is fixed. So the words in poetry must have some additional power, this additional power is called the power of suggestion.

Kāshmiri writer Udbhata holds the view that the essence of poetical language is the secondary or metaphorical function of the words. Poetical expressions enriches itself with various things like rhymes, figures, inversion etc. which are considered as useless in Practical language but essential in poetic language. Practical language is dominated by a direct way of expression but the mode of poetic language is different from it. Poetic language is decriminated by the secondary function of words. But Ānandavardhana disagrees. The secondary function does not necessarily imply poetry. Actually all language is metaphorical. The source of poetry must then be another sense of value that is assured by words, altogether different from the primary and the secondary one. "Practical meaning is different from conventional meaning. In the words of great poet it shines out and towards above the beauty of the well known another parts even as charm does in ladies."<sup>4</sup> This new sense – the poetical sense – irreducible, as it is, to the literary one cannot however do without it but is, as it were, supported by it. The "poetic meaning", he says,

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“is not understood by the mere understanding of the grammar and dictionary. It is understood only by those who have an insight into the true essence of poetry.”<sup>5</sup>

The meaning of the poem comes to us at a flash or suddenly. We cannot find the meaning of a poem just by joining the dictionary meaning. Poeticians give the name resonance (*Dhvani*) to that particular type of poetry where the conventional meaning and conventional words both are subordinate.

A truly poetical expression or word is that which cannot be replaced by another expression or word and if we do this then this may change the value of previous expression or word. Poetry knows no synonyms.

Abhinavagupta points out that the meaning which is expressed by the poetry is not the literal, direct and referential meaning but rather it is suggested, indirect and emotive meaning. In a good poetic work this suggestive meaning dominates over literal meaning. Here we may mention famous western aesthetician S.K.Langer's distinction between discursive language and presentational symbol.

According to her, language is a system of symbol. She distinguishes between two types of symbol, viz. discursive symbol and presentational symbol, the latter being the case of art symbol. Langer's distinction between two types of symbols may be put forward in her own words :

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“The import of an art symbol can not be built up like to meaning of a discourse, but must be seen in toto first; that is, the ‘understanding’ of a work of art begins with an intuition of the whole presented feeling ... In discourse meaning is synthetically construed by a succession of intentions; but in art the complex whole is seen or anticipated first.”<sup>6</sup>

We cannot get the meaning of a poem by combining all the dictionary meaning of the words used in the poem. After reading the whole poem we grasp the meaning of the poem. In the case of discursive language meaning is almost fixed. But in poetic language which Langer calls presentational symbol the meaning is not fixed. Different reader may interpret the same poem in different ways. This is due to the presentational character of poetic language.

The proper reader of poetry or spectator of drama gathers from the words or acting something more than the obvious presentation. Such a reader has to be an *adhikāri* i.e. duly qualified. His heart must be capable of pure intuition. Such a person on hearing the sentences attains a mental intuition where the specific time and place of direct meanings are disregarded. Thus, in the presentation of fear, neither the object nor the subject of fear are apprehended in relationship to any specific actuality. That is why the idea of fear is vividly experienced without the spectator being overcome by fear.”Abhinavagupta in his *Locana* has repeatedly stressed that *dhvani* is unique and uniqueness, that it

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is exclusively a poetic function of language as distinguished from the commonly accepted function like *Abhidhā*, *Lakṣaṇā* and *Tātparyasakti* (Purport).”<sup>7</sup>

The ideal critic is a *sahṛdaya* or one with the temperament of a poet. The poet creates and the critic recognises poetry because he recreates it in himself, being of a kindered heart. The poet and critic are not two different units; they are two faeces of one living principle like the mythical bird *Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa* on the mysore flag. This is the basic finding of the *Dhvani* theorists headed by Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.

Many scholars of Indian Aesthetics deals with this theory to *Dhvani*. The theory is so complex and manifold in its implications that the task of mentioning its essentials in summary fashion is very difficult. Here an attempt is made to make the understanding of *Dhvani* theory clear. Here we are concerned mainly with the views of Ānandabardhana and Abhinavagupta.

‘*Dhvani*’ is the name given to the essence of poetry primarily in its synthetic aspect. For Ānandavardhana soul of poetry is that which *sahṛdayas* alone feel and which is behind the meaning grasped by dry scholars. *Sahṛdayas* also admire the beauty of form and beauty of content like other scholars but they do it in their own ways. *Sahṛdayas* realise the inner meaning or significance of a poem, if there is any. The realised inner meaning itself, which is over and above the logical meaning is its *Dhvani*. What is the scope of this poetic meaning? primarily it is concerned with the experience of the poet as transmitted

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through the poem. The poet's experience, again, is to be distinguished from the experience of the laymen or academicians in the day to day world. It is a total complex of emotion, imagination and thought.

Any literary form of art depends on the linguistic factor. It is only the language which has been taken as raw materials for building the body of the literary form of art. Though language is taken as a body yet there are some specific character of the same which is accepted as the spirit (*ātmā*) of the literary form of art (*kāvya*).

Some particular linguistic structure is called sometimes *alaṃkāra*, sometimes *Ritī* (style), sometimes qualities (*guṇa*), sometimes *vokrokti*, and sometimes *Dhvani* or suggestive meaning. Among these there is a common element which is a kind of linguistic play. Hence without the help of it one cannot think of creating a literary form of art. Through the twist of language one can have various types of literary forms.

The infinite forms of literary arts would not have been possible, had there not been any mystic power in the language itself. Udhyaṇa, the celebrated Naiyāyika, mentioned the infinite diversity of this world as one of the proofs for the existence of god. From the fact of the infinite diversity of the universe (*vaicitryād viśvavṛttitah*), the existence of god is to be admitted in as much as he is capable of creating infinite diversity in the universe. The infinite diversity of melody also points out the same mystic character in it. Nobody can say that

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whatever we have heard so far are the final forms of melody, because innumerable forms of it are found to be originated through the amalgamation of different notes and ragas. From the time immemorial we are finding different melodic forms. All of them are novel in character though they are based on seven notes like *sā, re, gā* etc. Hence like God melody also possess transcendental or mystic power assumed from its infinite diversity. Māgha, the great Sanskrit Poet, has realised this aspect of melody and language when he says '*geyasyeva vicitratā*' in his *Sisupalavadha*. The original *Śloka* runs as follows : "*Vaṇaiḥ katipayairiva grathitasya svarairiva/Anantā vāṇmayasyāho geyasyeva vicitratā.*"<sup>8</sup> He has mentioned this aspect of melody as a metaphor to explain the infinite diversity existing in language. Just as melody though composed of seven notes is of infinite forms, language though composed of limited number of *varṇas* has got infinite diversity.

The importance of language may easily be understood if we look into the derivative meaning of the term '*sāhitya*' which means 'togetherness'. This concept of *sāhitya* or togetherness presupposes the proper association between sound and its meaning (*sabdārtha*), which is further clarified by Bhamaha. To him the togetherness between a sound and its meaning is called *kāvya* (*śabdārthau sahitaū kāvyam*)<sup>9</sup>. The term '*sāhita*' is used to refer to the togetherness between *śabda* and its *artha*, and hence the term *sāhita* is taken as a qualifier.

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The book where there is the proper co-existence between a sound and its meaning is called *sāhityavidyā* as found in the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā* (Śabdārthayoḥ yathāvat sahabhāvena vidyā *sāhityavedyā*)<sup>10</sup>

The relation between a sound and its meaning is called *sāhitya*. This relation is of twelve types viz, primary meaning (*abhidhā*), will to speak (*vivakṣā*), significance or intention (*tātparya*), potency (*sāmarthya*), faultless (*dosahīna*), association with rhetoric (*alaṃkārayoga*), a formation of quality (*guṇopādāna*) etc.

Kuntaka also did not ignore the importance of language while he said that *sāhitya* is a kind of extraordinary presentation of a term and its meaning. It becomes attractive and beautiful if there is the proper presentation of them – which means that they should be arranged in such a manner as if ‘they are made for each other.’ This is expressed in two terms : *anyūṇa* (not less) and *anatirikta* (no more). If a term and its meaning remains in such a way so that they should be properly arranged existing not in less places and not in more places.<sup>11</sup> There is such a beautiful combination between a *śabda* and its *artha* that one is neither superior nor inferior to another, which is expressed as ‘*parasparaspardhitva-ramaṇīya*’ i.e. one is so beautiful that as if one is challenging another.<sup>12</sup> There is a signifier and signified relationship (*vācya-vācaka-sambandha*) between a term and its meaning which is the form of *kāvya* as observed by *Kuntaka*<sup>13</sup>. In this

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combination an individual finds the cause of aesthetic pleasure as one gets oil existing in each and every oil seed.”<sup>14</sup>

A problem may be raised in this context. The signifier – signified relationship remains in each and every sentence. Can all such sentences be called *kāvya*. In reply, Kuntaka rejoins that a particular type of signified – signifier –relation.<sup>15</sup> What type of peculiarity remains in such relation. The peculiarity remains in the challenging combination between a term and its meaning which is endowed with various attributes, rhetories etc manifested through *vakratā*.<sup>16</sup>

*Śabda* and its *artha* is complementary to each other as they can never be differentiated i.e. a sound is endowed with its meaning while its meaning is endowed with the sound. That is why, this phenomenon is described as *ardhanārīśvara* (a deity endowed with maleness and femaleness in each half) which can never be separated. Just as in the case of pictorial art no distinction can be made between lines and pictures, so sound and its meaning is non-distinct. Kālidāsa has beautifully expressed in the introductory verse of his *Raghuvaṃsa*- ‘*Vāgārthāviva samprkṭam vāgarthapratipattaye/jagataḥ pitaran vande parvatiparameśvaran.*’<sup>17</sup>

In this beautiful verse the combination of Pārvati and Parameśvara is compared to the combination between *vāk* (sentence) and *artha* (its meaning). In order to create perfection in the field of literary art Kālidās is praying to Lord

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and Pārvati, which is compared to the embodiment of *vāk* and *artha* and in the *Rudrahṛdayopanisad* Śiva is known as 'artha'. From this it follows that the Śiva and Pārvati is an embodiment of *Vāgartha*.

Daṇḍin in his *Kāvyaḍarsā* has laid on the importance of a sound in the following verse – “*Idam andham tamaḥ kṛtsnam jayeta bhuvanatrayaṁ/yadi śabdāhvayaṁ jyotirāsamsāram na dīpyate*.”<sup>18</sup>

That is, the whole world would have been covered by deep darkness, had there been no light in the form of word illuminating this world. A word, if applied properly, can associate us with all our needs of life just as a mythological cow (*kāmadhuk*). If it, on the other hand, is ill-applied, it proves the bluntness of the applier.<sup>19</sup> The behaviour in our daily life is centred around the language which is also poetic language.<sup>20</sup>

A particular type of language gives rise to implicative meaning and another type of peculiar language gives suggestive meaning that are called *lakṣaṇā* and *vyañjanā* or *dhvani* respectively. What type of language is to be understood as *dhvani*? The meaning of a sentence which does not directly follow from the words and which suggests some meaning through deeper implication indirectly is called *Dhvani* when the direct meaning of a sentence remains manifested without being contradicted, a reader might feel another meaning out of it simultaneously. This meaning is called *dhvani*. Just as the sound of a bell, though stopped, goes on singing for a particular span of time,

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our mind while grasping the primary meaning feels the subtle sense from it. This sense is a suggestive sense (*dhvani*). Which is also based on language. That which is pointed out by the primary meaning is called suggestion, which is taken as a spirit of poetry.<sup>21</sup>

The grammarians and the *Naiyāyikas* have accepted two types of potency in a word – direct meaning (*abhidhā*) and implicative meaning (*lakṣaṇā*) when the primary meaning (*abhidhyārtha*) of a word is constrained, the implicative meaning is taken for account e.g. Kalinga is brave (*Kalingah sāhasikaḥ*). In this case, kalinga, being a country, cannot be brave and hence the ‘inhabitants of Kalinga’ has to be taken as the meaning through implication.

Sometimes a sentence bears a meaning which surpasses the primary and implicative meaning of the same. The power to provide such a “meaning is called *vyañjanā* or suggestion from which a suggestive meaning follows. Just as the glammer is something different from the constitutnets of the body of a woman, though it is manifested by these, the suggestive meaning though latent in the constituents is felt as distinct from them.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, when the meaning suggests an apprehended meaning after making the primary meaning non-prominent, it is called *Dhvani* by the wise men.<sup>23</sup> Let us take a romantic example to show the beauty of suggestive meaning which is emerged from the description. A religious person would disturb the secrecy and beauty of a forest where the lovers and lady loves used to meet.

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But the religious person was always scared of the dog remaining in the forest. The learned lady love told the religious person – 'Oh! Religious person, you may roam about the forest without any fear. Because, the dog is killed by an angry lion residing in the same forest on the bank of the *Godāvāri*. "*Bhrama dhārmika! viśraddhaḥ sa śunako'dya māritastena / godāvāri nadikūla latāgahana – vāsinā dṛptasiṃhena.*"<sup>27</sup> The suggestive meaning following from this verse is that, though there is no fear of dog, an angry lion has entered the forest. Hence, he should be cautious and leave the place as early as possible.

The linguistic usage is also described as one of the *Bhāvas* which become instrumental to the phenomenon of *rasaniṣpattiḥ*. Hence, it is very much important factor in aesthetics.

Some philosophers have described the poetic language as *Mantra* as it comes from the different plane of mind. Sri Aurobindo has described *kāvya* as a overhead poetry as it is the product of the overmind. The Vedic seers have invented a language which is called *Mantra* as it is a product of their vision. Hence, for understanding poetic language a different state of mind is also essential. Moreover, *Alaṅkāra*, *Riti*, *Dhvani* are the properties of language. Hence, language is the key factor in aesthetic communication. That is why, the implicative meaning or suggestive meaning of a sentence are discussed in the context of the philosophy of language particularly in the *Nyaya* and *Advaita* systems of philosophy.

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## NOTES & REFERENCES

1. M.Hiriyanna : *Art experience*, Kāvyaṃālā Publications, Mysore, 1954.
  2. We quote it from Sneha pandit's book *An approach to the Indian theory of art and aesthetics*. Starling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1977, p. 78-79.
  3. Ibid, p.85.
  4. "Lāvanyamivāṅganāsu" , *Dhvanyāloka* ¼
  5. R.N.Gnoli : *The Aesthetic experience according to Abhinavagupta*. Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office. Varamasi-I, 1968, p. xxviii.
  6. S.K.Langer, *Feeling and Form* ; Routhledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. London, 1953, p. 379.
  7. K. Krishnamoorthy : *Studies in Indian Aesthetics and Criticism*, D.V.K.Murthy, Mysore, 1979, p.74.
  8. Śísūpālavadhā 2/72
  9. *Kāvyaṃālāṃkāra*, 1/16.
  10. *Kāvyaṃimāṃsā*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter.
  11. *Sāhityaṃ anayoḥ śobhāsālitāṃ prati kāpyasau/anyunaṅātirikta – tva – monohāriṇyavasthitih. Vakroktijīvita - 1/17.*
  12. Vṛtti ḥ ṅ Vakroktijīvita.
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13. *Vācako vācyañca iti dvau sammilitau kāvyam'* – Vṛtti on *Vakroktijīvita*, p.7.
14. "*Pratilīlām iva tadvidāhtadakāritvaṁ vartate*" – Ibid.
15. *Viśiṣṭameva iha Sāhityaṁ abhipretam.* Ibid.
16. Kīdrśam ? Vakratā-vicitra – guṇalaṃkāra – sampradāṁ paraspara – spardhārohaḥ. Tena-sama – sarvagunau śāntausuḥṛdau iva saṃgatau/Parasparasya śobhāyai śabdārthau bhavatoyathā', Ibid.
17. Verse No. 1/1
18. *Kāvyaḍarsā* – ¼.
19. 'Ekaḥ Śabdaḥ suprayuktaḥ samyag jñāta svaṛge loke ca kāmadhug Bhavati' - *kāvyaḍarsā* - 1/6.
20. 'Vācāmeva Prasādena lokayātrā pravartate' - *Kāvyaḍarsā* – 1/3.
21. *Kāvyaśyātmā dhvaniḥ* - Dhvanyāloka 1/1.
22. "Pratiyaṃānaṃ punaranyadeva vāstvasti vāṇiṣu mahākaviṇāṃ yatlat Prasiddhāvayavātiriktaṃ vibhāti lāvaṇyamivāṅganāsu". Dhvanyāloka – ¼.
23. "Yatrāthaḥ śabdo vā tamarthamupasarjanīkṛta – svārthau Vyaktaḥ kāvyaviśeṣaḥ sa dhvaniriti sūribhiḥ kathitaḥ" *Dhvanyāloka* 1/13.
24. *Dhvanyāloka* – ¼, vṛtti.
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