

Personal Details

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|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Principal Investigator | Prof. A. Raghuramaraju | Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad |
| Paper Coordinator | Prof. Bijoy H. Boruah | Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi |
| Content Writer | Dr Kavita Chauhan | Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad |
| Content Reviewer | Prof. Raghunatha Ghosh | Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal |
| Language Editor | Miss Aruna Ramachandran | Freelance editor, Manipal, Karnataka |

Description of Module

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| Subject name | Philosophy |
| Paper Name | Aesthetics |
| Module Name/Title | Nature of Poetic Language: <i>Abhidhā</i> , <i>Laksanā</i> and <i>Vyañjanā</i> |
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Nature of Poetic Language: *Abhidhā*, *Laksanā* and *Vyañjanā*

In any attempt to define poetry, it cannot be denied that poetry is a combination of word and meaning. Words are tools that poets use to express their feelings. But what is the special usage of words that turns them into a poem? What is special about poetic language that differentiates it from non-poetic expression? In order to understand poetic language, it is essential for us to understand what a ‘word’ is. What is the relation between a word and its denoted object? And where does the power of expression lie—in the letter, the syllable, in the word or in the sentence? In this module, we shall explore these questions in the study of the nature of poetic language.

The investigation of words and the relationship between words and their meanings leads us to the discussion of the three *vrttis* of a word, namely, *abhidhā* (denotation), *laksanā* (indication) and *vyañjanā* (suggested sense). The early theoreticians of poetics recognised only two types of meaning: the conventional meaning (*sanketārtha* or *vācyārtha*), and the metaphorical meaning (*lakṣyārtha*). The third kind of meaning was introduced only in the 9th century by Ānandavardhana as an integral element of poetry: *vyañjanā*, or suggested meaning.

we find a distinction between prose and poetry for the first time in Bhāmaha. He divides the *vāñgmaya* into two categories: *śāstrokti* and *kāvvyokti*. On the one hand is ordinary discourse or matter-of-fact expression, termed *śāstrokti*, and on the other hand is poetic expression, *kāvvyokti*. *Śāstrokti* is defined in terms of the primary meaning of words, or *abhidhā*, while *kāvvyokti* is characterised by the secondary meaning of words or *laksanā*. There were long discussions on the nature of poetry in terms of *laksanā* or secondary meaning till the end of the 9th century, when Ānandavardhana introduced the idea of the suggested sense or *vyañjanā*.

Ānandavardhana maintained that secondary meaning is inadequate to evoke emotions in the reader. It is *dhvani* or suggestion that arouses feelings and emotions in the reader. Later, Abhinavagupta defined *dhvani* in great detail in his treatise *Dhvanyāloka-Locana*, where he argues that the essence of poetry cannot consist merely in the conventional or metaphorical use of language. Rather, it is the suggestive sense (*vyañgyārtha*) in poetry which is appreciated by critics and enjoyed by men of taste (*sahrdaya*). But suggested meaning (*vyañjanā*) is not independent of the primary and secondary meanings of words.

Thus, these three kinds of meaning—*abhidhā*, *laksanā* and *vyañjanā*—require deep understanding.

Abhidhā

Abhidhā is the verbal power to convey the literal meaning of words. It is the potency of words to convey their conventional dictionary meaning. Mammata defines denoted meaning or *vācaka* as:

साक्षात्संकेतितः योर्थमभिधत्ते स वाचकः ।

[That which denotes the direct conventional meaning is the expressive word.¹] Mammata maintains that a word is expressive if the conventional denotation is apprehended directly without the intervention of any other agency.

In order to cognise the actual meaning of a word, it is necessary to know where the conventional denotation (*sanketāgrahana*) of that word lies. Let us discuss the grammarians', Mimāmsakas' and Naiyayikas' views of conventional denotation. Mukulabhata, in his treatise *Abhidhāvrttimātrkā*, writes that in order to understand the process of derivation of words, the study of *padaśāstra* (grammar), *vākyāśāstra* (Mimāmsā) and *pramānaśāstra* (Nyāya) is indispensable:²

पदवाक्यप्रमाणेषु तदेतत् प्रतिबिम्बितम् ।

यो योजयति साहित्ये तस्य वाणी प्रसीदति ॥

The grammarians hold that conventional denotation lies in the fourfold classification of the word: *jāti* (universal class), *guṇa* (attribute), *kriyā* (action) and *yadrcchā* (name of the thing). Though the performing agent of an action is the individual, it is not appropriate to accept the conventional denotation of that particular individual. If the conventional denotation is accepted in the particular thing, there arise two defects (*dosas*): *ānantyadosa* and *vyabhicāradosa*. In *ānantyadosa*, the convention would become indefinite and endlessness would arise, because then we have to accept convention in each and every object in existence independently, which would be impractical and pointless. In the second case, *vyabhicāradosa*, the convention would be restricted to the particular thing, and it would not be applicable to other individuals. This would restrict the meaning too narrowly to be of any

¹ *Kāvyaaprakāsa of Mammata*, trans. Ganganatha Jha, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, 2005, ch. 2, verse 7.

² *Abhidhāvrttimātrkā of Mukulabhata*, trans. Rewa Prasada Dwivedi, Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, Varanasi, 1994, 1.14.

practical use in communication. Hence, there is convention only in respect of the attribute of an individual. The attribute (*upādhi*) is twofold: the inherent property of a thing (*vastudharma*) and that which is applied to it by the speaker of his/her free will (*yadrcchā*), such as *Ditha*, etc., where the speaker of his own will attaches a name to a particular object. The inherent property of a thing is of two kinds: that which is accomplished (*siddha*), and that which is being accomplished (*sāddhya*). The latter is action, and the former again is twofold: that which constitutes the very essence of the thing denoted by the word, and is universal (*jāti*), and that which is the means of the imposition upon it of some distinguished feature, or quality (*guna*).

Hence, according to the grammarians, the conventional meaning of a word is derived in four ways.³ This fourfold conventional meaning is expressed by *vācaka* words, e.g., ‘This white cow named Ditha is walking.’ In this sentence, ‘this white’ is the attribute; ‘cow’ is the universal class; ‘named Ditha’ is the name; and ‘walking’ is the action. Grammarians hold that we cannot differentiate these four basic elements of a thing.

According to Mimāmsakas, the conventional denotation of a word consists only in the universal class (*jāti*). All other fundamental factors, namely *guna* (quality), *kriyā* (action) and *yadrcchā* (name), are merged into one, which is the universal class (*jāti*). The word ‘cow’ in the sentence, ‘Bring the cow,’ denotes the generality of ‘cowness’. Every word conveys its own individual meaning which is restricted to convention. Though Mimāmsakas accept the existence of individual words, they differ regarding the nature of verbal comprehension which arises from a sentence. According to the Bhatta school of Mimāmsakas, each word of the sentence expresses its meaning, and these meanings when syntactically related together give rise to the meaning of the sentence. This theory is called *abhihitavayavāda*. Mimāmsakas of the Prabhākara school propound the *anvitābhidhāna* theory, according to which words have no meaning apart from the sentence.

Unlike the grammarians and the Mimāmsakas, for Naiyāyikas the conventional denotation of a word exists neither in the individual nor in the community (*jāti*). If they accept conventional denotation in the individual, the two defects, namely *ānantyadosa* and *vyabhicāradosa*, would arise, as discussed earlier. If conventional denotation is accepted in the community (*jāti*), the individual object cannot be apprehended. Therefore, words, for Naiyāyikas, are neither particular nor universal, but particular as qualified by the universal (*jāteviśistavyakti*).

³ सघकेतितश्चतुर्भेदो जात्यादिर्जातिरेव वा । Ibid., p. 12.

Thus, grammarians, Mimāmsakas and Naiyāyikas regard the denotative function of a word in terms of convention. Words which convey the conventional meaning are denotative.

In this connection, we must also consider the treatise *Nyāyasiddhānta-Muktāvali*, in which Bhattācharya talks about the different ways by which we learn the meaning of words. He says that there are eight methods of learning the relation between words and meaning:

शक्तिग्रहं व्याकरणोपमानकोषाप्तवाक्यादव्यवहारतश्च ।

वाक्यस्य शेषाद्विवृत्तेर्वदन्ति सानिध्यतः सि(पदस्य वृत्तिः ॥⁴

1. **Vyākaraṇa (grammar):** The meanings of words are learnt from an acquaintance with the roots, suffixes and syntax of words, which are derived from grammar. The knowledge of root meanings, the significance of suffixes, etc., help in learning a language.
2. **Upamāna (comparison):** *Upamāna* is the second source of learning the meaning of words. Suppose a person does not know what is meant by the word *gavayā*. He is told that a *gavayā* resembles a cow. Now, on some occasion, he actually sees a *gavayā* in the forest, and recalls the instruction and concludes that it is this animal that is meant by the word *gavayā*. So, *upamāna* is one of the means of our knowledge about the relation between words and their meanings.
3. **Kośa (dictionary):** The dictionary is another source from which the meanings of words are learnt.
4. **Āptavākya (direct statement of a trustworthy person):** Meanings of words may also be learned when a trustworthy person or authority explains the special meaning of a particular word.
5. **Vyavahāra (general usage):** Children learn the meaning or usage of words by listening to their elders. The Prabhākara Mimāmsakas hold this to be the only method of learning a language.
6. **Vākyaśeṣa (rest of the passage):** If there is doubt about the meaning of a word, the rest of the passage provides the meaning in context.
7. **Vivṛti (explanation):** The meaning of a word is also determined by giving an explanation of that word with the help of a synonym or another word.
8. **Siddhapadasānnidhya (syntactic connection within words):** Suppose one does not know the meaning of the word *pika* (cuckoo). The meaning of *pika* can be learnt from

the adjacent words in a sentence. For example, ‘The *pika* sings beautifully on the mango tree.’

So far we have been analysing the denotative meaning of words. We shall now dwell on how the meaning of a word is determined. A general division of words is accepted according to the different ways in which their meaning is determined. These are: *yaugika* (derivative), *rūdha* (conventional), *yogarūdha* (derivative–conventional) and *yaugikarūdha* (either derivative or conventional).

Yaugika (derivative): A word is *yaugika* when the meaning is determined by its component parts. For example, the word *pāthaka* (reader) means anybody who reads, and the word *pācaka* (cook) means anybody who cooks. These are words that can easily be understood from their etymology.

Rūdha (conventional): Words not directly connected with their derivation and expressing only a conventional meaning are called *rūdha*. *Rūdha* is the universally or generally accepted usage of words. For example *gauh* (cow), *ghatah* (pot), and so on: the meanings of such words are determined by the whole word rather than their root meanings.

Yogarūdha (derivative–conventional): Words that are both derivative and conventional are called *yogarūdha*. The meaning of the word is determined both by its parts and also by its general usage. For example, the word *pankaja* means anything which grows in mud. So, the etymological meaning of the word *pankaja* is anything which is born in mud. But conventionally the word *pankaja* expresses ‘lotus’. It is thus partly derivative, partly conventional.

Yaugikarūdha (either derivative or conventional): In *yaugikarūdha*, the meaning is either etymological, derivative or conventional by general usage. For example, the word *udbhij* means ‘a sprout or shoot of a plant’ in its etymological sense, while conventionally it is used as the name of a sacrifice.

Laksanā

The potency of a word to signify secondary meaning is known as *laksanā* (indication). It is also called metaphorical usage. Though the indicated meaning is different from the literal meaning, it is nevertheless based on the primary meaning. Secondary meaning arises only when the denoted meaning of a word is incompatible. The phrase *gangāyām ghosah* (house

⁴ *Nyāyasiddhānta-Muktāvali of Bhattācharya*, Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, Varanasi, 2003, p. 374.

on the river Ganges) cannot be explained by its denoted meaning, because a house cannot be situated on the stream of a river. The meaning of the phrase ‘on the river Gangā’ can be understood only in terms of indication.

Three conditions are necessary to convey indicated meaning (*lakṣyārtha*). The first condition is that the primary meaning should be inadequate to convey the real sense. Second, there should be a close connection between primary meaning and secondary meaning. Third, there should be a particular purpose (*prayojana*) or some linguistic usage (*rūdhi*) because of which one resorts to the secondary meaning.

In the expression *karmāni kuśalah* (an expert in one’s work), the primary meaning of the term *kuśalah* is grass-chopper, but this meaning is inapplicable in the present context. The actual meaning of the word *kuśalah* is comprehended through the indicated meaning, that is: ‘a person who is generally efficient in her work’. The second condition of *lakṣanā*, the existence of some definite relation between the primary and secondary meaning, is also fulfilled: the term *kuśalah* is used in the sense of an expert, which is close to the primary sense of ‘grass-chopping’. Grass-chopping is an exercise which is accomplished by an expert adept at cutting a special kind of grass known as *kuśa*. According to the third condition, the term *kuśalah* is used to denote expertise in doing something on the basis of usage in the sense of an expert.

Lakṣanā, according to Mammata, is of six kinds.⁵ It is broadly divided into two categories: that based on similitude, known as qualitative (*gauni*), and that based on pure indication (*śuddha lakṣanā*), based on relationship. *Śuddha lakṣanā* is of four types, but it is essentially dependent on the first two—the inclusive indication (*upādāna lakṣanā*) and the exclusive indication (*lakṣana lakṣanā*).

When the secondary meaning is imposed for the purpose of completing the primary sense, it is called *upādāna lakṣanā*. In the expression *kuntah praviśanti*, ‘the lances enter,’ the men who bear the lances are superimposed on the instruments which they carry to assert their own entry with them. The primary meaning ‘the lances’ implies the men holding the lances, as the lances cannot do the act of entering, except through the men holding them.

In the case of the exclusive indication (*lakṣana lakṣanā*), the primary sense completely surrenders its own force to the secondary sense. In the example *gangāyām ghosah*, the word *gangā* surrenders its primary sense, ‘the river’, to ‘the bank of the river’ to

⁵ Mammata and Mukulabhatta accept six kinds of *lakṣanā*, whereas Visvanātha in *Sāhityadarpana* enumerates sixteen types of *lakṣanā*. Visvanātha’s categorisation is based on Mammata’s six types of *lakṣanā*.

signify an appropriate location for the hamlet. This is done only when the indicated word ‘bank’ and the indicative ‘river’ are comprehended as identical.

The other two forms of pure indication (*śuddhā laksanā*) are superimponent indication (*sāropā laksanā*) and introsusceptive indication (*sādhyā-vasānikā laksanā*). In superimponent indication, both the ‘imposed’ as well as that ‘imposed upon’ are distinctly expressed. The object which is being imposed (*visayi*), such as ‘longevity’ in the example *āyurghrtam* (clarified butter), and the object upon which the thing is being imposed, such as ‘clarified butter’, are indicated without concealing their individual difference with a common relationship of equipollence. Both the ‘imposed’ and ‘imposed upon’ are correlated and yet clearly distinct from each other.

In introsusceptive indication, ‘the imposed’ swallows the other that is ‘imposed upon’. For example, *āyurvedam* is longevity itself. Both these indications—superimponent and introsusceptive—are forms of pure indication (*śuddhā laksanā*) if based on appropriate relationship; if these are based on similitude, they are called qualitative indication (*gaunī laksanā*).

Gaurvāhikah (‘the ox is the ploughman’), and *gaurayam* (‘this ox’) are examples of qualitative superimponent and introsusception indications respectively. In the first case, the innate disposition of the ox is the thing that is being imposed, and the ploughman is the thing upon which the ox is to be imposed, with its characteristics of dullness and sluggishness. In this indication, both the ‘imposed’ and ‘imposed upon’ are mentioned as distinct from one another. In the second case of qualitative introsusceptive indication (*gaunīsādhyāvasānā laksanā*), the character imposed, i.e., the ‘ox’, swallows up the man upon whom it is imposed.

Vyañjanā

Vyañjanā is the third power of language that inheres in all the elements that constitute poetry. It is the capacity that suggests a meaning other than the literal or metaphorical meaning. Mammata states:

यस्य प्रतीतिमाधतुं लक्षणा समुपास्यते ।।

फले शब्दैकगम्येत्रा व्यञ्जनान्नापरा क्रिया ।

[In regard to that intended idea for bringing about the cognition whereof one has recourse to indication, and which is cognisable through the word only—the function of the word can be

none than ‘suggestion’.^{6]} For example, the comprehension of the meaning of coolness and purity from the expression ‘a house on the Ganges’ is possible only through this special function of words, namely, *vyañjanā*. The notion of sanctity is obtained from the same words that indicate the intended meaning to convey the purpose of the utterance. Mammata gives reasons why this function of words is suggestion. He says, ‘it cannot be direct denotation, as there is no usage to that effect’ (नाभिध समयाभावात्). The characteristics of Gangā—sanctity, etc.—are not derived through conventional denotation. The word ‘Gangā’ is not used to denote directly the qualities of coolness and holiness. Nor can it be a form of indication, as it does not fulfil the requisite conditions of indication. According to Mammata,

लक्ष्यं न मुख्यं नाप्यत्रा बाधे योगः फलेन नो ।
न प्रयोजनमेतस्मिन् न च शब्दः स्वलदगतिः ॥

[What is ‘indicated’ is not the primary meaning; nor is that meaning incompatible; nor has it any connection with the intended idea; nor again is there any purpose served by it (i.e., by making the intended idea an object of further indication); nor lastly is the word itself wanting in the requisite force.^{7]}

The three essential conditions which are required for *laksanā*—the incompatibility of the primary sense, the connection of the indicated sense with the primary sense, and the usage or motive—are inadequate to indicate the qualities of ‘sanctity, etc., of the river Ganges. The expression *gangāyām ghosah* suggests the qualities of coolness and holiness, etc., of the Gangā through a special function, namely *vyañjanā*. The indicated meaning of the word *gangā* in *gangāyām ghosah* is the bank of the river Ganges, but the term *gangā* does not indicate coolness or holiness, etc. The three conditions which are required for *laksanā* are incapable of indicating the sanctity of the river. In the sentence *gangāyām ghosah*, the word *gangā* indicates the riverbank because the primary meaning ‘river’ is inappropriate. If, in the same way, the meaning of the ‘bank’ were also incompatible, then alone could it be taken as indicating the intended idea. Moreover the word ‘bank’ does not form the primary meaning. Hence, the first condition of indication is not fulfilled. So also the second condition is not fulfilled because there is no affinity between the ‘bank’, as indicated by the word ‘Gangā’, and ‘sanctity’ or other qualities that would be indicated. Also there is no purpose served by the indicated idea of ‘sanctity’.

⁶ *Kāvyaṅprakāsa of Mammata*, trans. Ganganatha Jha, Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, 2005, ch. 2, verse 14.

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 2, verse 16.

The word ‘Gangā’ is incapable of denoting the ‘bank’, and hence for the purpose of evoking the notion of ‘bank’, it seeks the help of *laksanā*. In the case of the idea of ‘sanctity’, etc., the original indication becomes the purpose of further indication. The purpose of this second indication is supposed to be conveyed through another indication, and the purpose of that subsequent indication would be communicated through a further indication by positing another purpose. This instability may cause infinite regress, and the desired purpose cannot be obtained.

Theoreticians like Mahima Bhatta maintain that there is no need for another potency of words if the purpose is served by accepting ‘bank’ as possessing the qualities of coolness and holiness. Mammata denies such a possibility, and says that the object of cognition, that is, *prayojana*, is one thing, and the result of the cognition, that is, *visaya*, is another thing. In other words, the object of knowledge and its resultant are two different things.⁸ In this connection, Mimāṃsakas hold that the object and the resultant are different features of perception. The result of perception is the objective consciousness, which is called *jnātatā* (knowness) or *prakāratā* (exposedness). For example, the object of perceptual cognition is the blue pot (*neel-ghat*), and the resultant of that cognition is the ‘apprehendedness’ of the object. For the Naiyāyikas, it is a representative cognition, in which a retrospective consciousness of a particular percept remains alive in the mind of a knower in the form of ‘I perceive the pitcher’ even after the pitcher is lost or destroyed. Similarly, the object of the cognition obtained by indication is the ‘bank’, and the idea of ‘sanctity’, etc., is only its resultant, which is different from the object. The object of indication and the resultant can never be congruent. ‘Bank’ is the indicated meaning of the word ‘Gangā’; qualities like coolness and purity are recognised as belonging to the bank through a function which is neither denotation nor indication; rather, it is suggestion.

Vyañjanā, according to Mammata, is of two kinds: *śābdi* (verbal), and *ārthi* (ideal). *Śābdi vyañjanā* is based on sound, and *ārthi vyañjanā* is based on sense. *Śābdi vyañjanā* again is of two types: *laksanāmulā vyañjanā* based on indication, and *abhidhāmulā vyañjanā* based on denotation. The suggestion of ‘sanctity’ in the expression *gangāyām ghosah* is an example of indicated suggestion. Denotative suggestion occurs when a word has several meanings, and a particular meaning is understood in a specific context. For example, if we say ‘Hari with conch and discus’ (*sa śankh cakro hari*), here, the meaning of Hari is restricted to Visnu because of the ‘connection’ (*samyogah*) that exists between the words ‘Hari’ and

⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

‘conch and discus’. Otherwise the word ‘Hari’ has many meanings, like the name of a person, monkey, god, and Visnu, among others. In the phrase ‘Hari with conch and discus’, the exact meaning of the word ‘Hari’ is restricted to Visnu, because it is only Visnu who has any connection with the ‘conch and discus’. Bhartrhari in *Vākyapadīya* provides fourteen conditions necessary to derive meanings. These are: *samyogah* (connection), *viprayogah* (disjunction), *sāhacaryam* (association), *virodhita* (enmity), *arthah* (purpose), *prakaranam* (context), *lingam* (peculiarity), *anyasya sabdasya sannidhih* (proximity of another word), *sāmarthyam* (capacity), *auciti* (compatibility), *deśah* (place), *kālah* (time), *vyakti* (gender), *svarādayah* (accent and the like).

Bhartrhari does not restrict the production of meaning to these conditions only. He uses the term *ādi* at the end of the list of conditions above. The term *ādi* means ‘so forth’. Hence, there can be other ways also to derive the denotative meaning of words. For example, gestures can help in deriving the denotative meaning.

Now we come to *ārthi vyañjanā* or ideal suggestion. Ideal suggestion is that which is based on sense. Mammata defines it as:

वक्तृबो(व्यकाकूनां वाक्यवाच्यान्यसधि ।।
प्रस्तावदेशकालादेर्वेशि ष्टड्ढात् प्रतिभाजु षाम् ।
योर्यस्यान्यार्थधिहेतुर्व्यापारो व्यक्तिरेव सा ।।

[Suggestion is that function of meaning which brings about the cognition of another meaning, by persons endowed with imaginative intuition, through the peculiarities of (a) *vaktā* (the speaker); (b) *boddhā* (the person spoken to); (c) *kāku* (intonation); (d) *vākya* (the sentence); (e) *vācyā* (the expressed meaning); (f) *sannidhi* (the presence of another); (g) *prastāv* (context); (h) *deśa* (place); (i) *kāla* (time) and so forth.⁹]

Ārthi vyañjanā through *vaktā* (the speaker) broadly depends on the character of the speaker. For example: ‘O friend! Having taken up a heavy jar of water, I have come walking fast, I feel fatigued and languid through perspiration and breathlessness; I shall rest a while.’

In this example, it is suggested that the speaker is trying to conceal her amour. The physical signs that the woman describes can be caused either by hard physical work or by amorous flirtation. Hence, based on the speaker’s character, the suggested meaning that is cognised is that she is trying to conceal her dalliance by attributing her condition to having carried a heavy jar of water.

In the same way, *ārthi vyañjanā*, through ‘the person spoken to’ (*boddhā*), depends on the character of the person to whom the words are delivered. For example: ‘O my friend! For the sake of wretched me, thou also art suffering from sleeplessness, weakness, anxiety, lassitude and breathlessness.’ In this example, the words are spoken to the friend who is intermediating between the separated lovers. Here, it is suggested that the friend who is intermediating is herself involved amorously with her friend’s lover, rather than bringing the separated lovers together. The physical signs described can be caused either by constantly moving from one party to another, or by amorous flirtation.

Even intonation or different variations of tone changes the sense of the words. Hence, *ārthi vyañjanā* also depends on *kāku* (intonation or variation of tone). For example, Bheem utters these words in the *Benīsamhār nātak*: ‘The princess of Panchala was subjected to indescribable indignity in the assembly of kings, a long time we spent in the forest, clad in tree-bark, lived in Virāta’s house, engaged in unbecoming acts, having seen all it is still towards myself, sorely afflicted as I am, that our eldest brother bears anger, and not even now towards the Kurus!’

Here what is suggested by the intonation—the emphasis laid upon the pronoun ‘myself’—is that it is not right for the king to bear anger towards me, that it is time now that he was angry with the Kurus.

Similarly, other types of *ārthi vyañjanā* such as *vākya* (the sentence), *vācya* (the expressed meaning), *sannidhi* (the presence of another), *prastāva* (context), *deśa* (place), *kāla* (time), etc., are suggested.

Vyañjanā or suggested meaning—the third potency of a word—was established as a doctrine by Ānandavardhana. In his treatise *Dhvanyāloka*, Ānandavardhana delineates the theory of *dhvani* (suggestion), and maintains that it is the soul of poetry (*kāvyaśāstram dhvanih*). Later, Abhinavagupta developed the theory of *dhvani* in further detail in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka*. Theoreticians before Ānandavardhana had defined poetry in terms of *śabda* and *artha*. The elements of beauty, namely, *alamkāra*, *vakrokti*, *rīti*, etc., had to be subsumed within this unity in order to create poetry. Ānandavardhana does not deny the importance of these expressed elements, as these are the means by which the unexpressed is suggested. But he maintains that these concepts do not describe the real essence of poetry. For him the purpose of poetry is to evoke the universalised emotions that are present in men. This is possible with this new power of words known as *dhvani* or

⁹ Ibid., ch. 3, verse 21, 22.

suggestion. *Dhvani* predominates among the expressed elements and manifests the suggested sense. *Śabda* and *artha* are the *vyañjaka* of the deeper *vyañgya* sense. The suggested sense cannot be understood by knowing the rules of grammar, or by knowing the word meaning alone. It is grasped only by those who know the real essence of poetry. It is the unique power of suggestion that a poet possesses while he composes his work. Ānandavardhana contends,

सोऽर्थस्तद्वद्भक्ति-सामर्थ्ययोगी शब्दस्य कश्चन ।
यत्नतः प्रत्यभिज्ञेयौ तौ शब्दार्थौ महाकवेः ॥

[That meaning, and the rare word which possesses the power of conveying it, only these two deserve the scrutiny of a first-rate poet.¹⁰]

Ānandavardhana, who is basically concerned with poetic language, maintains that the suggested sense is the most powerful aspect of poetry. He maintains that beautiful ideas in poetry are of two kinds: *vācya* (explicit) and *pratīyamāna* (implicit). *Vācya* or the explicit aspect of poetry is expressed either through figures of speech or matter-of-fact expressions. The *pratīyamāna* aspect is unexpressed. Though it does not cancel the expressed sense altogether, it evokes something more than that. According to him, it is like the charm in girls which is distinct from the beauty of the various parts of the body. In the same way, the implied sense (*pratīyamānārtha*) is something more than the whole poem, and not merely based on its parts. Ānandavardhana postulates:

प्रतीयमानं पुनरन्यदेव वस्त्वस्ति वाणी षु महाकवीनाम् ।
यत्तत्प्रसि(वयवातिरित्तं विभाति लावण्यमिवाचैर्नासु ॥

[But the implicit aspect is quite different from this. In the words of a first-rate poet it shines supreme and towers above the beauty of the striking external constituents even as charm in ladies.¹¹]

Dhvani (suggested sense) is divided into three varieties: *vastu-dhvani* (matter or idea), *alamkāra-dhvani* (poetic figure) and *rasa-dhvani* (mood or feeling). Of these, Ānandavardhana gives supreme importance to *rasa*. For him, all instances of suggestion are not *dhvani*. He holds that what is suggested must be charming, and this charm can come only through *rasa*. *Rasa* is something that cannot be expressed by words, it can only be suggested.

¹⁰ *Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana*, trans. K. Krishnamoorthy, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1974, 1.8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.4.

Ānandavardhana considers *rasa-dhvani kāvya* as an excellent form of poetry (*uttam kāvya*). Of the three varieties of *dhvani*, *rasa-dhvani* occupies the supreme position (*uttam*). *Rasa* can never be *vācya*, it is always suggested, whereas *vastu* and *alamkāra* can be both *vācya* and *vyañgya*. Thus, *vastu-dhvani* and *alamkāra-dhvani* are secondary to *rasa-dhvani*.

Abhinavagupta developed the theory of suggested meaning and focused his discussion of aesthetic experience on drama and poetry. Greatly interested in dramaturgy, Abhinavagupta gave importance to the manifestation of *rasa* not only in drama but also in poetry. Having grounded his theoretical standpoint on the *dhvani* theorists, he takes a further step and establishes the theory of *rasa* on the same grounds. He provides a detailed and exhaustive explanation of *rasa* and its place in poetic theory. He correlates the *rasa* doctrine with *dhvani* theory. Though the formulators of the *dhvani* doctrine considered *rasa* as one of the elements of the suggested sense and place great emphasis on *rasa-dhvani*, Abhinavagupta considers *rasa* as the only essence of poetry. The two other aspects of suggestion (*vastu* and *alamkāra*) resolve themselves ultimately into *rasa*. *Rasa-dhvani* is the soul of poetry. It is the suggestion of poetic expression and is the most delightful.

Conclusion

In this module we have discussed the three potencies of words: *abhidhā*, *laksanā* and *vyañjanā*. As Ānandavardhana says, the power of denotation is the power, regulated by convention, to convey literal sense. The power of secondary usage is the power to reveal sense as regulated by such cooperating factors as the blocking of the primary sense. Suggestive power is the power to suggest, which has its origin in one's own understanding of objects revealed by the first two powers, and which is then assisted by the imagination of the listener which has been prepared by these revelations. The suggestive power overshadows the earlier operations of words and hence is the essence of poetry.
