

**An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory**  
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**Lecture- 48**  
**Theory of Dosa or Poetic Blemish: Vamana's View**

Hello everyone,

In the previous lectures, we saw the theory of dosa conceptualized by Dandin.

The next major theoretician we are going to see vis-à-vis the concept of doṣa is Vāmana. When it comes to Vāmana, the idea of doṣa becomes an important category. According to Vāmana, the term doṣa refers to the absence of guṇas. He says, "gunāvīparyātmano doṣaḥ". Vāmana divides the idea of doṣa under four major categories namely *pada*, *padārtha*, *vākya* and *vākyaṛtha*. The word *pada* refers to the word, *padārtha* is the meaning of a word. *Vākya* means sentence and *vākyaṛtha* means the sentence meaning.

Vāmana enumerates five *pada doṣas* first. The *pada doṣas* mentioned by Vāmana includes *asādhu*, *kaṣṭa*, *grāmya*, *apratīta*, and *anarthaka*. Let us take a look at these five doṣas in detail. The first doṣa is *asādhu*. *Asādhu* is the use of ungrammatical usage. According to Vāmana, the employment of ungrammatical usages can adversely affect the poetic charm. This doṣa is very much similar to Bhāmaha's *śabdahīna*. The next *pada doṣa* that Vāmana deals with is *kaṣṭa*. What is *kaṣṭa*? *Kaṣṭa* is the employment of words that are not soothing to the ears. This is also called *duḥśrava*. The next doṣa is *grāmya*. *Grāmya* is the employment of words that are uncultured and unsophisticated. It is the use of the popular usages. The next doṣa *apratīta* is the exact opposite of *grāmya*. It is the use of words that are found only in *śāstra*. *Anarthaka* is the use of an *avyaya* or *indeclinable* just for the sake of conforming to the metrical pattern of the verse. Vāmana also reminds us that the words that are used for the ornamentation of the sentence will not fall under this category. According to Vāmana, these words which are used ineffectively for the sake of retaining the metrical pattern in the composition reveals the lack of the genius of the poets.

After this, Vāmana goes on to list the *padārtha doṣas* or poetic defects pertaining to the meaning of words. According to Vāmana, there are five *padārtha doṣas*, namely *anyārtha*,

neyārtha, gūḍārtha, aślīlārtha and kliṣṭārtha. First, let us take a look at the doṣa called anyārtha. This is a deviation from the *prasiddhartha* or the popular meaning of a word. If a poet discards the popular meaning of the word and goes for the obsolete etymological meaning, then the doṣa anyārtha will arise. The next padārtha doṣa is neyārtha. If the readers have to guess the meaning of a sentence, then there is the doṣa called neyārtha. After, neyārtha, Vāmana describes the doṣa called, gūḍārtha. What is gūḍārtha? A word has got two kinds of meanings-- popular meaning and less-known meanings. If the poet uses a word in such a manner that it signifies the lesser-known meaning, then the poet is said to have committed the doṣa called gūḍārtha. The next doṣa is aślīlārtha . Aślīlārtha is the employment of words that can generate obscene meaning. Vāmana says that there are three kinds of aślīlata or indecorous meanings, namely the meaning which gives rise to shame, the meaning which gives rise to disgust, and finally, meaning that forebodes evil. Vamana exempts some meanings from the ambit of obscenity. According to him, if the word generates an obscene sense only through its metaphorical or secondary usage, then it cannot be considered an instance of aślīlata or obscenity. Similarly, some words will drive home to our mind the resonance of some other words that signify an obscene meaning. These words, if they are accepted by the cultured people, also cannot be considered to have the doṣa aślīlata. Finally, Vāmana is of the view that if the aślīla or the obscene meaning of the word is not so popular, there is no problem in using that particular word in poetry. The next doṣa that Vāmana talks about is kliṣṭa. If the meaning of a word is not fully revealed, then it is called kliṣṭa. According to Vāmana, the last two *doṣas*, that is aślīlata and klišṭa, are applicable to the vākya or the sentence as well.

After explaining these two categories, Vāmana goes on to describe the third variety which is vākya doṣa or the poetic faults pertaining to the sentence. We have already seen that aślīlata and kliṣṭa are the defects that pertain to the sentence as well. Now, Vāmana talks about the remaining three doṣas which include bhinnavṛtta, yatibhṛṣṭa and visandhi. Yatibhṛṣṭa is the fault of deviation from the rules of metrical pause. If the poet starts a verse in one vṛtta or meter, then changes the vṛtta in the middle of the same verse, then it is the doṣa called bhinnavṛtta. At this juncture, Vāmana anticipates an objection. He says that an opponent may now say that yatibhṛṣṭa and bhinnavṛtta are the same. Vāmana says that this is not a correct observation. Vāmana says, "This however is not correct, as the distinctive features of the two are totally different. In other words, "The characteristics of 'meter' are entirely different from

those of ‘pause’ or ‘yati’. While the meter consists of the arrangement of long and short syllables, the pause consists in the resting of the voice of on certain syllable.

The next doṣa that Vāmana mentions is visandhi. Visandhi is the cacophony generating from the placing of dissimilar words beside each other in a sentence. According to Vāmana, the doṣa called visandhi arises when the collusion of words is unmelodious or inharmonious in a sentence.

After this, Vāmana goes on to explain the vākyārtha doṣa or the poetic fault related to the sentence meaning. The first vākyārtha doṣa that Vāmana mentions is ekārtha. We know that ekārtha is tautology or punarukti. Vāmana says that this is not a doṣa, if the poet wants to achieve something special through the repetition. After ekārtha, Vāmana talks about vyartha. vyartha is the presence of conflicting meanings. Since, we have already seen this fault in the previous classes, I do not intend to repeat it. If a sentence generates confusion with respect to its meaning, then there arises the doṣa called *sannigdha*. The next doṣa is aprayukta. What is aprayukta? According to Vāmana, aprayukta is that sentence where the signification attached to the sentence is purely illusory or imaginary. Although Vāmana says that the examples of this doṣa are abundant, he does not mention them. The next poetic fault is apakrama. Apakrama is the absence of order. We have already seen this category in detail previously. So, I think it does not require further explanation.

The penultimate doṣa is loka virodha. According to Vāmana, that which is opposed to the ordinary conceptions of place, time and nature are called loka virodha. Here, under the doṣa called lokavirodha, Vāmana subsumes the two doṣas, namely kālavirodha and deśavirodha, mentioned by Bhāmaha. The last doṣa mentioned by Vāmana is vidyāvīrudha. The doṣa or poetic fault that he refers to as vidyāvīrudha is opposition to the dictates in the śāstras. Vāmana opines that any representation of facts against what is written in *śāstras* will be a blotch on *kāvya*. To demonstrate the poetic blemish called *vidyāvīrudham* and warn the poet against it, Vāmana cites a few examples. According to *dharmasāstra*, it is to restore justice that kings conquer the world. If a poet says that it is to satiate their material desires that kings win over countries, that will result in a poetic blemish. According to *Daṇḍasāstranīti*, it is because of a person’s prudent conduct and diplomacy that others succumb to him/her. But if somebody says that it is a person’s aggressiveness that enables him to win over others, then it clashes with the socially accepted norm of *Daṇḍasāstranīti* and consequently results in the

poetic blemish of contradicting *caturvarga-śāstra*. He gives another example which is at war with *Kāmaśāstra*. According to *Kāmaśāstra*, lower lip (*adhara*) is the right place to kiss, not the upper lip (*uttaroṣṭha*). Contrary to this dictum in *Kāmaśāstra*, if a poet states that the upper lip is the right place to kiss, the poet will court a poetic blemish.

These are the major dosas mentioned by Vamana. When it comes to Vamana, the scope of the idea of dosa slowly gets enhanced.