

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory

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Lecture- 49

Theory of Dosa or Poetic Blemish: Anandvardhana and Mammata's View

Hello everyone,

In this lecture we are going to study the views of two literary theoreticians on the question of dosa. These two theoreticians are, Ānandavardhana and Mammata.

Ānandavardhana divides the whole realm of doṣa into two broad categories. These two categories are: doṣas that arise out of the lack of training of the poet and the doṣas that arise out of the poet's lack of pratibhā or poetic genius. According to the Ānanda, the most severe of these two is the second one. Ananda says that *dosas* that is due to lack of mature judgment may be concealed by the poet's skill in such a way that it never gets noticed. This is what Dandin also mentions in his *Kavyadarsa*. In our discussions on the poetic fault in *Kavyadarsa*, we saw various instances where an apparent dosa turns out to be a *guna* due to the poet's skill. Ananda says that if the poetic genius can hide a visible dosa, a fault that is due to the poet's lack of skill can never be hidden and it will appear glaring to the readers. An example that Ānandavardha cites in this regard is a scene from the eighth sarga of *Kālidasa's Kumārasambhava* where the poet presents the śṛṅgāra *rasa* of Siva and Parvati. This scene is generally considered to be an example of dosa, since a poet is not supposed to present the love-making of gods on stage, considering that fact that it can put the readers to shame. But in *Kumārasambhava*, Kālidasa with the help of his *pratibha* or poetic genius presents this scene in such a manner we do not feel any impropriety or dosa. When we discuss the idea of dosa in the theoretical corpus of Anandavardhana, we notice that Ananda's discussion of the idea of dosa is mostly related to the idea of *rasa*. Ananda in *Dhvanyaloka*, talks about certain situations that can function as the poetic fault in the process of the development of *rasa*. Although Ananda does not use the term 'dosa' in this context, we can undoubtedly consider them as the examples of *dosas vis-à-vis* the question of *rasa*. The following are the faulty situations which, according to Ananda, can mar the beauty of *rasa*:

(1) Incorporation of *vibhāvas*, etc., that belong to an obstructive *rasa*;

- (2) the description at great length of something alien, even though it may be connected with the subject at hand;
- (3) Breaking off the rasa too suddenly;
- (4) Revealing the rasa at an importune moment.
- (5) Flashing the rasa again and again after it has reached full maturity;
- (6) and finally impropriety of style (vṛtṭyanaucitya).

Since, we have already seen these situations in detail in connection with our discussion of rasa, I do not intend to elaborate on them again. In addition to this, Ānanda also implicitly deals with the question of dosa, when he talks about the structure of plot. He lists around five situations or dosas that can mar the beauty of a plot. These situations mentioned by Ananda include:

- 1) The forming of a plot, either traditional or imagined, without taking into account the appropriateness of its vibhāvas, sthāyibhāvas, anubhāvas, and sancārins.
- (2) The retention of a pattern traditionally imposed on a story, even though it fails to harmonize [with the intended rasa
- (3) The construction of sandhis and sandhyāṅgas just out of a desire to fulfill the requirements of a textbook system.
- (4) Inability to intensify and relax the rasa at the appropriate place and the inability to revive the predominant rasa whenever it begins to fail.
- (5) The inability to apply the figures of speech in conformity with the rasa.

After Ānandavardhana, the next major critic we are going to see, in connection with the question of dosa, is Mammata. Mammaṭa broadly divides doṣas into three broad categories namely, rasadoṣa, śabdadoṣa, and arthadoṣas. First, let us take a look at the rasa doṣas mentioned by Mammaṭa. We will soon see that Mammata is merely reproducing the idea of rasa dosas already mentioned by his predecessor Anandavardhana. According to Mammata, rasa dosas are ten in number. These ten rasadoṣas mentioned by Mammaṭa include svaśabda-vācyata, kaṣṭakalpana, virodhi-rasa-sāmagrī-parigraha, paunaḥ-punyena-dīpana, akaṇḍa-prastāva, akaṇḍa-viccheda, aṅginonanusandhāna, aṅgasyātivistrīti, prakṛtīviparyaya, anamga-varṇana. Let us see these doṣas one by one.

The first rasa doṣas that Mammaṭa mentions is svaśabda-vācyata. What is svaśabda-vācyata? Svaśabda-vācyata is the reference to a particular rasa by taking its proper name. According to Mammaṭa, rasa has to be evoked with the help of appropriate vibhāva, anubhāva and vyabhicāribhāvas. If their proper names are mentioned, they will lose their poetic charm. We have previously seen Ānandavardhana's criticism of Udbhaṭa's view that rasa can be generated by saying the proper name of the rasas.

The next rasa dosa that Mammaṭa mentions is kaṣṭakalpana. Kaṣṭakalpana is the difficulty in understanding the vibhava or the causal factor that is responsible for the generation of anubhava or reaction in the characters. According to Mammaṭa, the dosa called kaṣṭakalpana refers to the far-fetched relation between the vibhāva and anubhāva. The third rasa dosa is virodhi-rasa-sāmagrī-parigraha. It is the incorporation of *vibhāvas*, etc., that belong to an obstructive rasa. For example, the incorporation of a vibhava like death is highly problematic in the representation of śrīngāra rasa. The fourth rasa doṣa is paunaḥ-punyena-dīpana. It is the flashing the rasa again and again after it has reached full maturity. Since, we have seen this particular doṣa, when we discussed the theory of rasa, as conceived by Anandavardhana, I do not intend to elaborate on this again. Here, Mammata is reproducing the same rasa dosa mentioned by Anandavardhana. According to Ānanda, if a poet works on a rasa over and over again even after it reaches a state of perfection, it will wilt like a flower. Emotions in excess can only be counterproductive; for example, a long-drawn-out lament over a death can turn an otherwise tragic scene into an extremely tedious one.

The fifth dosa is akaṇḍa-prastāva. It is the untimely introduction of a conflicting rasa. Mammaṭa says that, "An example of 'untimely introduction,' we have in the second act of Veṅiśaṃhāra where while the slaughter of numerous heroes is proceeding, the poet proceeds to describe the loving dalliance of Duryyodhana with Bhānumatī".

The next doṣa that Mammaṭa mentions is akaṇḍa-viccheda. It is the untimely interruption of a rasa. According to Mammaṭa, "An example of 'untimely interruption,' we have the second act of the Mahāvīracarita. In this scene, when the heroic sentiment between Rāma and Paraśurāma reach the highest pitch, Rāma says--I am going to unfasten the nuptial bracelet". Here, the whole vira rasa or the heroic sentiment plummets, when Rama decides to go for a negotiation with Parasurama, his opponent. The seventh dosa is aṅginonanusandhāna or the discarding of the principal factor. Mammaṭa holds that the doṣa called the neglect of the

principal factor can be found in the fourth act of *Ratnāvalī*, where on the approach of *Bābhavya*, *Sāgarikā*, the heroine, is completely ignored. The seventh doṣa is *aṅgivistṛti* or the excessive description of the subordinate factor. We have seen this doṣa in *Anandavardhana*'s description of the *rasa doṣas*. At that time, I have explained this doṣa with the help of a modern example. I hope you remember it. We saw that in *Paradise Lost*, *Milton* describes the fallen angels thronging toward their new-built palace of *Pandemonium* by an elaborate comparison to the swarming of bees. Here, since *Milton* leaves aside his primary goal and then keeps on describing the swarming of bees, this will spoil the major *rasa* in this context. According to *Mammata*, the excessive dilation of the subordinate factor is found in the lengthy description of *Hayagrīva* in the *Hayagrīvavadha kāvya*.

The ninth doṣa is *prakṛtiviparyaya*. If the behavior of the characters is not proper to their nature, class and social status, it results in the doṣa called *prakṛtiviparyaya*. According to *Mammata*, if the hero of a *kavya* is a human, it is improper on the part of the poets to present that human-hero doing things which a man cannot otherwise do. For example, if a poet portrays a human hero leaping across the seven seas, it will sound really inappropriate. The same is the case with ascription of some base human qualities to divine entities. We should not ascribe qualities that we see exclusively in humans to divine characters. Here, *Mammata* is exactly reproducing the words of *Anandavardhana*. The last *rasa doṣa* is *anamga-varṇana*. It is the description at great length of something alien, even though it may be connected with the subject in hand. It is the celebration of the unimportant object.

These are the major *rasa doṣas* mentioned by *Mammata*. I hope you are thorough with all the ideas that we have discussed so far. Thank You!