

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory
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Lecture- 50
Theory of Dosa or Poetic Blemish: Mammata's View II

Hello everyone,

In the previous lecture, we saw the rasa dosas mentioned by Mammata.

In this class, we are going to see the pada dosas listed by him in Kavyaprakasa. According to Mammata, there are fifteen padadosas. These dosas include śrutikaṣṭa, cyutasamskṛti, aprayukta, asamartha, nihatārtha, anucitārtha, nirarthaka, avācaka, aślīla, sanniddha, apraṭīta, grāmya, neyārtha, kliṣṭa, avimṛṣṭavidheyāmśa, viruddhamadhikṛt, smāsagata. Let us take a look at these dosas in detail.

The first pada doṣa mentioned by Mammaṭa is śrutikaṣṭa. Srutikaṣṭa is the employment of words whose sounds are harsh and hence melodious to the ear. The next doṣa is cyutasamskṛti. Cyutasamskṛti is the use of a word against grammatical correctness. The third doṣa is aprayukta. Aprayukta, according to Mammaṭa, is the use of a word that, though correct and formal, fails to be in the poetic convention. According to Mammaṭa, aprayukta is the employment of a word which is correct and formal, but not accepted by the poets into usage. Now the fourth doṣa. It is called asamartha. Asamartha is the use of a word in such a way that the word is not able to denote the idea the poet is trying to make it denote. It is an attempt to make a word denote an idea which it is incapable of denoting because that word is not conventionally associated with that meaning. For example, if I use the word 'cat' to denote the idea 'bat.' I will be committing the doṣa, which Mammaṭa calls, asamartha. The next pada doṣa is nihatārtha. Nihatārtha is the use of a word to denote an idea which is not popularly associated with it. In other words, it is the use of a word to denote an obsolete meaning which was at some point associated with that word. The sixth doṣa is anucitārtha or improper signification.

The doṣa called nirarthaka occurs when the poet uses a word that does not suit the context and benefit the characters presented. The following is an example of the doṣa called nirarthaka:

"The glorious men who have become beasts offered in the sacrifice quickly attain that condition, which is attained by ascetics by prolonged austerities, and which is eagerly sought after by performers of sacrifices."

Here the meaning of the sentence is that those heroes who lose their lives in the battle attain heaven more quickly than others; this has been figuratively expressed by means of the sentence "men who are killed in battle attain the heaven like the beasts that are offered in sacrifice." Here, the comparison is drawn between the beasts and the warriors to suggest the idea that both reach the heaven quickly without doing great penance and taking a lot of efforts. But according to Mammata, it is improper to compare the beasts and the great warriors. So, comparing the heroes of the war to beasts is not appropriate.

The next doṣa is called nirarthaka. It is the use of redundant particles just to conform to rules set by the metrical pattern. The eighth doṣa is called avācaka. It is the doṣa caused by the use of words that are not expressive. The following is an example of this doṣa:

"To him whose anger is never futile and who is ever able to destroy his own troubles, people surrender themselves of their own accord ; on the other hand, if one is devoid of resentment, men do not mind his enmity, nor do they care for his friendship, if he is not generous."

In this context, the word 'jantu' which actually means 'animal', is used in the sense of 'not generous'. Here, the word 'jantu' does not express the idea 'not generous,' although the poet has used the word in that sense. But, here the word fails to denote the meaning intended by the poet.

Now, he moves on to the doṣa called aśīla or obscenity. According to Mammaṭa, an indecorous word is of three kinds: a word that implies indecency; a word that denotes disgust and a words that denote inauspiciousness. Since, we have already seen this variety, I do not intend to elaborate on it again.

The next doṣa, that is the tenth doṣa, is sannigdha or ambiguity. If a word creates ambiguity by generating two meanings due to equivocation, then it is said to have the defect called sannigdha. After sannigdha, the next doṣa that Mammaṭa talks about is apraṭīta. The word

apratīta means unintelligible. According to Mammaṭa, the doṣa called apratīta arises when the poets use words that are employed primarily in śāstras. The doṣa called grāmya arises when the poets use a vulgar or colloquial expression commonly used by the lumpen public. It is important to note that Mammaṭa is asking the poets to strike a balance between two extremes. In other words, one should use words which are not too formal or too colloquial.

The next doṣa that Mammaṭa explains is neyārtha. If the meaning of a word has to be guessed by the reader due to the lack of clarity, then the word is said to have the poetic defect called neyārtha. We should note here that this is different from sannigdha because in sannigdha the reader is confused about the two equally valid meanings. But when it comes to neyārtha, the meaning itself is not clear. Kliṣṭa is the next poetic defect related to the word. This padadoṣa arises due to the obscurity generated by a word. The fifteenth padadoṣa mentioned by Mammaṭa is avimṛṣṭavidheyāmsā. This defect occurs when the predictive factor of a compound is not sufficiently discriminated. That is to say in this compound, the predictive factor of the compound is not sufficiently emphasized as the principal factor. The penultimate doṣa is viruddhamadhikṛt. What is viruddhamadhikṛt? Viruddhamadhikṛt is repugnant suggestion. Here goes an example for this doṣa: "What shall I say of him who is a disinterested friend, his conduct being as pure as the rays of the moon. Here, the sense meant to be conveyed through the word 'akāryamitra' is that he is friendly without any selfish motive—a disinterested friend; whereas the word has also another repugnant signification—that is, he is a 'akāryamitra' or a companion in akārya, that is evil deeds. The last doṣa is samāsagata śrutikaṣṭa. It is compounding of words in an unmelodious manner.

Having seen all the padadosas, it is time to call it a day. Soon, in the next class we will see the vakya dosas and artha dosas listed by Mammata. Thank you!