

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory
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Lecture- 56
Vakrokti: Padaparardha vakratā

Hello everyone, in the previous lectures, we saw the two major forms of vakroktis, namely varnavinyasa vakratā and padapurvardha vakratā. In this class, we are going to see the third variety which is padaparardha vakratā. Padaparārtha vakratā has six subdivisions, viz, kala vakratā, karaka vakratā, samkhya or vacana vakratā, purusa vakratā, upagraha vakratā and pratyaya vakratā. First, let us take a look at kāla vakratā.

According to Kuntaka, kala vakratā is that remarkable beauty in a composition that comes by the virtue of the utmost propriety of time described. By time, here Kuntaka means 'tense.' This is vakratā achieved through the employment of the correct use of tense. Kuntaka says that when the subject and the propriety of time become closely knit, it results in excessive poetic charm. The following is an example of kāla vakratā that Kuntaka refers to:

"Ups and downs in the roads will all be levelled,
Journeys everywhere become slow and slower still;
Before long, they will exceed the reach
Even of one's mind-chariots."

This is a statement made by a lover who is suffering from the pang of separation from his wife. He is already suffering from the pain of separation from his beloved. He is also afraid of the impending monsoon season which he thinks will further add to his woe. He says that due to the rain and his suffering from his separation from the beloved, his mind will be so cluttered that no thoughts will ever be able to travel through it properly. According to Kuntaka, the use of the future tense adds to the charm of the poetic expression here. Kuntaka talks in detail about this passage. He says,

“This is a statement by a vexed lover, who is already suffering the pangs of separation from his beloved and who anticipates the time yet to come in his mind with all its associated deductions and thus becomes exposed to the upsurge of all his pent-up longings because of this kindling stimulus; and unable to bear the impact bewitching beauty of such a nature clad in splendor, he becomes a victim of overwhelming apprehension. He mourns before long the roads will become inaccessible even to the flight of thoughts.’ The future termination here is indeed expressive of unique beauty in the latter part of the word” (400).

The next variety of vakratā that Kuntaka cites under Padaparatha vakratā is kāraka vakratā.

Kāraka vakratā

Kāraka vakratā is that form of vakratā where the main agent is presented as insignificant while the auxiliary agent is presented as significant. According to Kuntaka, this form of vakratā involves a reversal in the status of the instruments described. Kuntaka now addresses the question if there is any procedure for this. He says, “The reply is that there is the procedure superimposing “thatness” on these. ‘That’ stands for the primary action, and ‘thatness’ is its nature which is superimposed adroitly by the poet on the really subordinate instruments.” Kuntaka then asks, “What status has to be assigned then to the primary one?” The answer is that it may be assigned a subordinate status. What is the purpose served by all this? “The purpose served is the endowment of a fresh shade of beauty to poetic expression. That is to say unique and novel originality in poetic style is brought about” (XX). The following is an example of Kāraka vakratā:

“The Ikṣvākus have never been trained in anything like beggary which delights in humiliating oneself. Has anyone ever known as instance of a scion of Raghus raising his folded hands in abject supplication? Yet all this has been done. But the ocean shows no consideration at all. There is no other go left now. Hence ‘my hand rushes’ all of a sudden to wield the bow” (402).

Here the kāraka vakratā is in the word ‘my hand.’ Here the poet should have ideally said “I, all of a sudden, took the bow with my hand,” since the hand cannot indulge in a conscious action on its own. But here the main agent is presented insignificant and the auxiliary agent is presented as significant. Kuntaka says, “Here what the speaker intends to say is this: “I should like to take up the bow in my hand.” The hand is only a means, but conscious agency

has been superimposed on this means or instrument thereby revealing an ineffable beauty."

Let us take a look at one more variety:

"But my sword is too shy to enter into a contest with your axe."

Only a person can become shy, because shyness is a quality that we find only in a conscious entity. A person can be shy to enter into a contest with someone. Two inanimate objects cannot do it. But instead of bringing the real agents to the forefront, here the action is superimposed upon two other entities that are inanimate.

Now, let us take a look at the third variety which is called *saṃkhyā* or *vacana vakratā*.

Saṃkhyā-vakratā subverts the grammatical rules concerning the category of number in Sanskrit. Kuntaka says,

"The poets, who are very particular about making their composition poetically different, transpose numbers. Then we have what is known as *saṃkhyā-vakrata*. This is the purport of the sentence: wherever we need singular or plural form, another number is used, or different numbers are used in the same case relation, for the sake of poetic charm" (314).

In other words, if the conventional grammatical rule demands the use of a singular form, the poet would use either a dual or plural form. If a plural form is necessary, the poet would choose either a dual form or singular form. The following is a case in point:

"Her eyes [*nayane*] are huge thickets [*kānanāni*] of full-bloomed *kūvala* blossoms and ponds of water-lilies [*sarojākarāḥ*] make her hands [*pāṇī*]." (315)

The term *nayane* in the given context is grammatically a dual form (two eyes). Here the lady's 'two eyes' (*nayane*) are compared to huge thickets (*kānana*). According to the grammatical conventions governing number in Sanskrit, the word signifying 'eye' being the dual form, the 'thickets,' to which the 'eyes' are compared, should also be dual. That is to say, the poet should ideally use the dual form of the word *kānana*, which is *kānane*. But the author, in this specific context, uses the plural form of the word *kānana*, i.e. *kānanāni*, thus consciously flouting the rules of grammar in Sanskrit. Similarly in the second line, *pāṇī* meaning two hands, is grammatically a dual form. Two hands (*pāṇī*) being compared to the 'ponds of water-lilies' (*sarojākarāḥ*), the number of ponds should be dual, i.e. *sarojanākare*.

But in the given verse, this grammatical rule is not followed; instead the plural form *sarojākarāḥ* is employed in place of the dual *sarojanākare*.

The next variety of padaparārtha vakratā that we are going to see is *puruṣa vakratā*. Kuntaka says, “When in poetry, the first person and the other persons are interchangeably used so as to achieve artistic excellence, we have deviant use of persons or *puruṣa-vakrata*” (316). As an example of *puruṣa-vakrata*, Kuntaka quotes the following verse from *Tāpasavatsarāja* which depicts the minister Gaudanārāyaṇa’s advice to Vāsavadatta:

"I know that our Kauśāmbi is conquered by enemies and our undiplomatic king is weak.

Women’s hearts always pain at the parting of their dear ones—

I don’t mean to talk about it now.

Now, devi you may please know what you need to do next (*jānātu devi svayam*). " (317)

According to Sanskrit grammar, the subject of the last sentence is ‘you’ which is *madhyama-puruṣa ekavacana* (second person, singular). The *dhāturūpa* or the base form of the verb used here is *jñā* which means ‘to know.’ And the tense that is employed here is *lot lakār* or the present imperative tense. If we go by the rules of Sanskrit grammar, when the subject is second person singular in *lot lakār*, the sentence should be—*jānīhī devī svayam*. But in the given example, the poet consciously subverts this rule, and says *jānātu devī svayam*. Here the grammatical rule underlying *lot lakār- prathama puruṣa- ekavacana* or the present imperative tense, first person singular is imposed upon *lot lakār- madhyama puruṣa-ekavacana* or the present imperative tense, second person singular.

Now the next variety under consideration is upagraha vakratā. Kuntaka defines upagraha vakratā in the following words: “When both atmane and parasmai pada affixes are possible for a root, and if a poet is seen preferring the one as against the other because of an aesthetic purpose,” it is called upagraha vakratā. In other words, “When either parasmai pada and atmane pada verb-affixes could be grammatically used in a context, poets are seen restricting themselves to the use of the one alone in preference to the other,” this will result in upagraha vakratā.

Sanskrit has two different sets of verb endings: Parasmaipada endings and Atmanepada endings. Some roots use only parasmaipada endings, some roots use only ātmanepada endings, and some roots can use both. The expression ātmane-pada literally means “word for

oneself,” whereas *parasmai-pada* literally means “word for another.” It is impossible to show this example using an English translation. So, you just need to know, for the time being, that *upagraha* is the *vakratā* related to *atmane pada* and *parasmipada* forms.

The next variety that we are going to see in this category is *pratyaya vakratā*. *Pratyaya vakratā* is the employment of unconventional affixes to a word with a view to achieving beauty. *Kuntaka* says that a unique beauty of affix is instanced when an affix other than the ordinarily used is significantly employed with an eye to literary excellence. In fact, such significant usages do exist. Such fresh usages contribute to the unique splendour in poetry. As we saw before, this variety also cannot be explained with the help of an English translation of the Sanskrit verse. So, I do not intend to explain this variety in great detail. All that you need to remember is that *pratyaya vakratā* is the employment of unconventional affixes to a word with a view to achieving beauty.

The next variety of *vakrokti* that we are going to see is *pada vakratā*. In a poem when particles, prefix, indeclinable, etc. are used to express a *rasa*, it is called *pada vakratā*. The following is an example of *pada vakratā*.

"But how will Sita fare?

Ha! Ha! Ha! My dear queen!

Be bold, I beseech thee."

In this line, we have a very touching description of Rama who is suffering from his separation from *Sitā*. Here ‘ha’ is an indeclinable describing pain. The repeated use of the indeclinable ‘ha’ adds to the emotion of grief. Here goes one more example in this regard:

"The face of my sweet-browed beloved,

With lips covered frequently by the fingers,

Lovely with indistinct no’s

And resting upon her shoulders

Was somehow raised by me;

But [tu] kissed it could not be."

Here the hero is completely enamoured with the fascinating beauty of her moon-faced beloved. He lifts her face with his hand, but he could not kiss it. He regrets that he could not kiss her. Here the word ‘but’ or ‘tu’ in Sanskrit very beautifully expresses his regret.

