

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory

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Lecture- 58

Vakrokti: Prakarna-vakrata

Hello everyone,

In the previous lectures, we were studying the various forms of vakrokti. I hope you have understood these varieties of vakratā that I have been talking about very well. In this lecture, we are going to see the fifth variety of vakrokti called prakaraṇa-vakratā. This is the penultimate form of vakrokti that Kuntaka is mentioning in his *Vakroktijivita*. For Kuntaka, prakaraṇa-vakratā and prabandhavakratā constitute an important category in the realm of *vakrokti*. According to him, many sentences or vākya make a *prakaraṇa* or an episode, and many episodes make a *prabandha* or a plot. In the context of prakaraṇa vakratā, Kuntaka is discussing how the descriptions of certain episodes can lend beauty to the work as a whole. In other words, prakaraṇa-vakratā is the creation of episodes or incidents in such a way that they give maximum consistency to the total effect of the poetry.

Prakaraṇa-vakratā, says Kuntaka, is divided into ten categories. These ten varieties of prakaraṇa-vakratā that Kuntaka mentions include:

pariṇāmagopana vakratā

utpādyalāvaṇya vakratā

upakāropakaṛṭṭva vakratā

abhideyāvarttana vakratā

kathopakāra vastu vinyāsa vakratā

kathāvaicityra vakratā

aṅgirasa niṣyanta vakratā

vastvāntara vaicityra vakratā

prakaraṇāntara vakratā

aṅgāmgisāṅgatya vakratā

Now let us take a look at these varieties of prakaraṇa-vakratā one by one in detail. The first variety that we are going to see under prakaraṇa-vakratā is pariṇāmagopana vakratā.

Pariṇāmagopana vakratā

Pariṇāma-gopana-vakratā is that variety of vakratā where the inner feelings or the ability of the great and noble heroes remain inscrutable to the readers and other characters till the end of the episode so as to maintain the suspense of the event mentioned in the episode. But at the end of the episode, it gets revealed. Kuntaka firmly believes that an abundance of such instances will intensify the readers' literary interest, as well as aesthetic appeal of the work.

An example that Kuntaka cites for pariṇāma-gopana-vakratā is an episode from the drama *Abhijñāna-jānakī*. Kuntaka's observation is noteworthy here. In the third act of the drama *Abhijñāna-jānakī* which is based on the Ramayana, the monkeys think that they can easily build a bridge across the ocean. They claim that they are already playing with mountains as if "they were balls" (IV.II.2). They do not know that it is a great task that can be achieved only with the help of Rāma. Rāma also does not reveal his ability till the last moment. Finally, when all the efforts taken by the monkeys are proven futile, Rāma prays to Varuṇa and seeks his help to build the bridge. But it is of no avail.

At this point, Rāma takes his divine arrows from the quiver and shoots them into the sea. Soon the sea starts getting dried up. Frightened by this act, Varuṇa appears to Rāma and offers his help to build the bridge. Here the ability of Rāma to facilitate a situation congenial for the building of the bridge remains hidden from the monkeys till the last moment, when Rāma shoots the arrows to the sea. Here the information about the capability of Rama to pull off such a great action is kept hidden till the end of the story. According to Kuntaka, this lends great charm to the episode.

Kuntaka illustrates the episode of Raghu and Kautsa from the fifth sarga of *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidasa as another example for pariṇāma-gopana-vakratā.

Raghu who has conducted a yāga called viśvajit has gifted away his entire wealth and possessions. He is currently deprived of any wealth. At this point, the disciple of a sage named Varatantu approaches him, hoping that the king will give him the wealth to be gifted to his guru at the end of the learning. But when the king receives him with an earthen pot, instead of a gold pot, the disciple Kautsa realizes that the king is bereft of any wealth. His hopes shattered, the Kautsa is about to leave. But Raghu stops him and asks him the intention of his visit. Kautsa states that he owes his teacher gold coins to the extent of fourteen crores as guru daksina. Hearing this, the king says that he will give Kausta the amount of gold coins

he had asked for in three days. The King was thinking of asking for the gold from Kubera, the god of wealth. But understanding the requirement of the king, Kubera himself, showers a rain of gold in front of the king's house. The next day when the king woke up, he saw a heap of gold coins which had the size of a mountain. The king gifted the whole heap of gold to Kausta. But Kausta refuses to take anything more than he needs. Thus, the king Raghu and Kausta become the subjects of the appreciation of the citizens of Ayodhya. The king is appreciated for his generosity, while the disciple for taking only the amount of gold he needs. The poet, says Kuntaka, does not reveal these great qualities of the King and the disciple Kausta in the middle of the story. He keeps this suspense reserved till the end of the story so as to maintain the interest of the readers. The next variety that we are going to see is called Utpādyalāvaṇya vakratā.

Utpādyalāvaṇya vakratā

Utpādyalāvaṇyavakratā is the way in which an already existing story is given novelty through the addition or deletion of episodes in conformity with the notion of propriety in the society. First Kuntaka gives an example of a scene being added to an already existing plot to avoid impropriety. Kuntaka cites the scene of Durvasa's curse in Kālidasa's *Abhijñānaśākuntala* as an example for the first variety of utpādyalāvaṇyavakratā where a scene is added to the already existing plot to avoid anaucitya or impropriety. We know that Kālidasa took the story of Śakuntalā from *Mahābhārata*. In the original story, in *Mahābhārata*, Śakuntalā's lover king Duṣyanta forgets Śakuntalā because Duṣyanta's love for Śakuntalā is inconsistent, for he is a womanizer. But thinking that it would be inappropriate on the part of a poet to portray a king as someone who is inconsistent in love, Kālidāsa adds a new scene in his *Abhijñānaśākuntala* wherein Duṣyanta does not recognize his lady love Śakuntalā, not because his love for Śakuntalā is inconsistent, but because Śakuntalā was cursed by sage Durvāsa that Duṣyanta would forget her.

After this, he gives the example of the second variety of utpādyalāvaṇyavakratā wherein a scene is amended or deleted to stick to the decorum of the period. The example that Kuntaka gives, in this regard, is from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma's younger brother Lakṣmaṇa goes in search of Rāma, upon hearing the cry of Rāma who has gone to catch the golden deer for Sita. But in the drama, *Udāttarāghava* by Māyurāja, the plot is rewritten in such a way that it is Rāma who goes to rescue Lakṣmaṇa. Such a revision of the plot was justified on the ground that it is highly improper for a man of great prowess and courage like Rāma to be rescued by his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa (131).

Now the next variety that we are going to see is Upakāropakarṭṭva vakratā.

Upakāropakarṭṭva vakratā

Upakāryopakarṭṭva-vakratā ensures that each component of the story adds to the total effect as a whole. Kuntaka defines upakāryopakarṭṭva-vakratā in the following words. According to him, “upakāryopakarṭṭva-vakratā is that kind of deviant representation where an organic unity, which strikingly underlies the various incidents described in different parts of the work, leads to the ultimate end intended. Here each component is bound to the other by a relation of natural assistance.” (IV.5) In other words, in this form of vakrokti, various individual components described in different parts of the work finally add to the central plot the story.

As an example of this form of vakrokti, Kuntaka cites a scene from the second aṅka of the play *Puṣpadūṣitaka*. In the play, the hero Samudradatta returns unexpectedly from his journey. He is madly in love with his wife Nandayantī. So, in the wee hours of the night, on the same day, he sneaks into her house. But while entering the house, he disturbs the guard Kuvalaya, who was in charge of protecting the home of Nandayantī. At this point, Samudradatta bribes Kuvalaya by offering his own ring to him to enter the house of Nandayantī.

Now, this incident becomes very helpful in resolving the complication arising in the fourth act where Nandayantī’s father-in-law, that is Samudradatta’s father, thinks that his daughter-in-law Nandayantī is unchaste and has a paramour. But when the servant shows the ring of Samudra Datta to the father-in-law, the latter realizes the so-called paramour is none other than his own son Samudradatta. Here a rather insignificant component in the earlier part of the plot finally gets connected to the larger story of the story.

Another example that Kuntaka cites is from Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmacarita*. In the beginning of the play, Rāma is seen spending time with his queen Sītā who is in her advanced pregnancy. He is showing her the pictures of the past kings. At this point, they come across the pictures of Jṛmbhaka missiles. Seeing this Rāma declares that these missiles will attend on her sons. Later in the fifth act of the play, when Rāma’s son, Lava and Lakṣmaṇa’s son, Candraketu fight with each other, you can see Lava using Jṛmbhaka missiles. Here also, a relatively insignificant component in the story is taken up later to knit it well with the main plot of the story.

The next variety of vakrokti we are going to see under prakarana- vakrata is abhidheyāvarttana vakratā.

Abhidheyāvarttana vakratā

Abhidheyāvarttana-vakratā is the way in which the same episode or emotion or object is depicted in different ways, with different effects (547). Kuntaka defines abhidheyāvarttana-vakratā in the following words: “When even one and the same theme is again and again described in different places with a new touch of creative originality,” it is called abhidheyāvarttana-vakratā. Kuntaka further says: “The upshot may be described as follows: “The different incidental subjects of description in a work such as moon-rise may occur more than once. But they may be repeated only in case the plot demands the recurrence. Yet the style of the description should be made to vary in each case, being adapted to the harmonious embodiment of different sentiments and figures of speech which are equally beautiful. Such an elegant variation invests even repeated conventional themes with aesthetic appeal” (548).

Kuntaka cites the repeated description of the mountains towards the close of the night, at different junctures in the play, *Harṣacarita* as an example of abhidheyāvarttana-vakratā. Although the same object is described in multiple places, all these descriptions appear strikingly new to the readers. Another example that Kuntaka cites is from the play *Tāpasavatsarāja* where karuṇa rasa is repeated in the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth aṅkas in such a way that they look charming to the readers. A modern example can be seen in the Japanese author Ryūnosuke Akutagawa’s short story 'In the Bamboo-grove' adapted by the famous director, Akira Kurosawa into the film *Rashomon* (1950). The same incident of the murder of a young samurai is recounted by four different people with different results. I hope this variety of vakrokti is pretty clear to you. Now let us move on to the next variety which is kathopakāra vastu vinyāsa vakratā.

Kathopakāra vastu vinyāsa vakratā

When a small incident in the story which is useful to the main plot is elaborated in detail in a way that it contributes to the main rasa of the story and thus becomes a crucial element in the main storyline, it is called kathopakāraka-vasu-vinyāsavakratā (555–556). According to Kuntaka, such an incident can be likened to the very ornament of the story. Kuntaka says, “Even a little incident, when given literary treatment, i.e. when it is made to be imbued with the beauty of episode promoting expressions of appealing sentiment thereby making one feel as if the very floodgate of rasa re opened up, it is called kathopakāraka-vasu-vinyāsavakratā.”

The example of this variety of vakrokti is Kālidasa's treatment of Daśaratha's hunting episode in *Raghuvamśa*. Daśaratha during his hunting kills the son of a sage, mistaking him for a deer. When the sage gets to know about it, he curses Daśaratha that the latter will die of his grief for his son. It is a small episode in the story. But in *Raghuvamśa*, the playwright Kālidāsa elaborates this event in such a manner, that it is laden with rasa. This even is of great significance in the story because it sets the emotional tone of the play. Kuntaka says, "The incident is such that it can be stated in a short sentence. But the poet is such a creative genius that one might well deem him as the embodiment of the Muse of *rasas* at their best; he gives a delightful turn to it investing it with episodal beauty which exquisitely appeals to the readers" (552). The next category of vakrokti under prakaraṇa vakrata is Kathāvaicityra vakratā.

Kathāvaicityra vakratā

In stories, there are some stock incidents like water-spot, flower-collection, etc. These stock incidents when they are knit together in such a manner that they suit not only the episode in which they are presented, but also the main story of the kāvya, they will result in the vakratā called Kathā-vaicityrāvakratā. Kuntaka opines, "Novel artistic beauty is attained even when the conventional themes like water-sports are described as an integrated part of a whole pattern supplied by the art of plot-construction." Kuntaka further notes, "The substance is this:— Themes or incidents such as water-sports and flower gathering should be described in such a manner that they come within the general pattern of the plot as a whole, if they have to yield their best to aesthetic relish." An example for this form of vakrata is the water-sport of kuśa in Sarayū in the play *Raghuvamsa*.

Once, while Kuśa is sporting in the river Sarayu, his bracelet gets dropped in the water and it sinks to the bottom. Although the river gets searched by the soldiers at Kuśa's behest, the ornament could not be found. Thinking that it was taken by the Nāga king Kumuda, Kuśa takes up an arrow to kill Kumuda. Kumuda hurriedly comes up along with his sister Kumudvati who had taken the bracelet in curiosity. Kumuda requests Kusa to accept his sister as his wife and Kuśa agrees and the two are then married. Here this conventional or stock incident is presented in such a manner that it has a lot of bearing on the main story.

The next form of vakrokti is aṅgirasaniṣyantavakratā.

Aṅgirasaniṣyantavakratā

In a drama or a kavya, all the acts are not equally beautiful or charming with respect to the main rasa of the story. In that case, when the poet gets a chance to develop the main rasa in an act, he will work on it and develop it to the maximum. This is called aṅgirasaniṣyanda

vakratā. The specialty of this act that the writer chooses for this particular form of vakrata is that the rasa in this particular canto or act, which is same as the dominant rasa of the story, cannot be reproduced in the same intensity in acts before or after this particular act. To quote the words of Kuntaka, “Not all acts are equally beautiful. Only some unique acts will serve as the artistic beauty of that act alone strikes us most. Its artistic excellence will be such that it cannot be imitated or repeated in any other act, earlier or later, of the play.” An example for this variety of vakrata, says Kuntaka, is found in *Vikramorvaśīya*.

We know that the predominant rasa of Kālidasa’s *Vikramorvaśīya* is vipralambha-śṛṅgāra or love in separation. In the particular act which Kuntaka cites as the example of aṅgirasaniṣyanda vakrata from *Vikramorvaśīya*, the king Vikramāditya gets mentally deranged due to his separation from his beloved Urvasī. In this particular act, Kālidasa took the main rasa of the story, which is vipralamba-sṛṅgāra, to its maximum. Kuntaka says, “We find therein a singularly unique aesthetic appeal which enraptures the hearts of connoisseurs: an appeal due to the exquisite heightening of the ruling sentiment of love-in-separation by the poet’s rich accumulation of all the sweet antecedents and ensuing exclusive to that rasa.”

Another example that Kuntaka cites is the episode of arm fight between Arjuna and Śiva in *Kirātārjunīya*. The dominant emotion of the story *Kirātārjunīya* is vīra rasa. In the episode of the arm fight, the emotion of heroic rasa is taken to its apex. In this episode, Arjuna exhibits limitless valor while fighting such a great figure like Śiva. Kuntaka notes, “As another example, we might cite the episode of the arm fight between Arjuna and Śiva in *Kirātārjunīya*. There also we observe that Arjuna displays his limitless valour, which is his sole support in the matchless fight with such an adversary, when his heart is delighted at the unique opportunity that has come his way for exhibiting the natural and abounding strength of his arms, though he does not have any armour and such other equipment to protect his person. And it leads to the sentiment of heroism to a climax” (561).

Another example of the same kind of vakrata that Kuntaka cites is an invented by the poet in *Kirātārjunīya*. In this episode, Lord Parameshvara himself was thrown up high in the sky to dangle about in space by a mere human sage with the strength of his arms exclusively.

The next variety that we will be seeing is vastvāntara vaicityra vakratā.

Vastvāntara vaicityra vakratā

Kuntaka says another type of beauty is seen, when even a small and apparently independent incident, is so invented by the poet that it ultimately contributes to the plot as a whole. It will be appealing by its construction as a pleasant counterpart. The main plot also becomes appealing by such a complexity introduced by the minor episode. Here even a small incident,

apparently independent, ultimately makes a significant contribution to the plot as a whole. The example that Kuntaka cites for this variety is from *Mudraraksasa*. At the beginning of the act, a person enters the stage with a rope. He is the spy of a character named, Kautilya. He then tries commit suicide. Although there is a character named Rakasa nearby, he does not pay attention to him. Seeing this, Rakasa takes pity on the character who is going to commit suicide and asks the latter about the reason why he was going to commit suicide. But the person does not budge an inch and is not willing to divulge the reason for his suicide. Finally, after much prodding the person says that his bosom friend Visnudasa was going to kill himself by jumping into the fire because Visnudasa's friend Candanadasa, a diamond merchant, was about to be hung. Hearing this, even the cleverest Raksasa gets moved and decides to save Candanadasa by pledging his own life. This incident contributes a lot to the main story of the drama. The next variety is prakaraṇāntara-vakratā.

Prakaraṇāntara-vakratā

Prakaraṇāntara-vakratā is that type of vakrokti which is achieved by the incorporation of a play within a play where some actors act as the spectators along with other actors. Kuntaka says, "When actors expert in the art of pleasing the audience, are seen to play the role of an audience themselves on the stage with other actors performing," it is called prakaraṇāntara-vakratā. Kuntaka further notes that such a 'play-episode within a play-episode' may be regarded as illustrating a literary art which beautifies the entire drama exquisitely. Examples can be found in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Bhavabhūti makes his character Vālmīki write and enact a play before Rāma who is traumatized by the memory of his abandonment of Sītā. Like in Hamlet, the play depicts reality as it deals with the plight of the abandoned Sītā. The thin line separating reality and the magical world of the play blurs, as the real Sītā herself appears, and a repentant Rāma is reunited with her. The play within the play usually had a specific purpose, much like the way Shakespeare used it later.

Another example that Kuntaka himself suggests is from *Bālarāmāyana* where there is a play within the play. The actor who is acting as Rāvaṇa enters the stage along with another actor who is acting as Prahastha. Then he acts as a spectator of the drama within the drama. The subject of this drama within the drama is the marriage of Sītā. The different shades of emotions evoked in them by his sight are well performed by the companions of Sītā.

The last variety of prakaraṇa vakratā we will see, is aṅgāṅgisāṅgatya vakratā.

Aṅgāṅgisāṅgatya vakratā

Finally, there is aṅgāṅgi-sāṅgatya-vakratā, which denotes the continuity and coherence of episodes in the totality of the work. Kuntaka says, “The art of the dramatic plot should be pleasing by the construction of delightful junctures or sandhis. Each of these junctures should be organically related to each other, the succeeding one following logically from the preceding one” (IV.14). Kuntaka says that, “It should not be vitiated by any excessive craze from observing rules even when they are inopportune. Only in such cases, the episodes will reveal a unique charm of originality.”

A case in point here is the drama *Puṣpadūṣita*. In the first prakarana, the hero, Samudradatta is seen suffering from the pangs of the first separation from his beloved Nandayanti. In the second prakarana, he has returned from his travel and he is uniting with his beloved in a bower. He manages this by bribing the guard with his ring. In the third prakarana, the father-in-law exiles Nandayanti, accusing her of having an illicit relation with someone. In the fourth act the father-in-law repents for having exiled his daughter-in-law, and he decides to go on a pilgrimage. In the fifth act, the guard goes to Nandayanti and informs her that her husband is keeping well. In the sixth act finally, we have the accounts of the reunion of one and all, brought about in strange circumstances. Thus, these diverse threads of incidents are so strung together that they assist in leading, each in its own way, to the intended happy ending of the play so as to make the whole story very unique and delightful.

Before I wrap up the class, I will explain all these varieties once again quickly. We have seen that prakarana vakrata is vakrata related to the episode in a drama. There are ten kinds of prakarana vakratas, according to Kuntaka. They include:

pariṇāmagopana vakratā

utpādyalāvaṇya vakratā

upakāropakaṛṭṭva vakratā

abhideyāvarttana vakratā

kathopakāra vastu vinyāsa vakratā

kathāvaicityra vakratā

aṅgīrasa niṣyanta vakratā

vastvāntara vaicityra vakratā

prakaraṅāntara vakratā

aṅgāṅgisāṅgatya vakratā

Pariṇāmagopana vakratā is that variety of vakratā where the inner feelings or the ability of the great and noble heroes remain inscrutable to the readers and other characters till the end of the episode so as to maintain the suspense of the event mentioned in the episode.

Utpādyalāvaṇya vakratā is the way in which an already existing story is given novelty through the addition or deletion of episodes to conform to the notion of propriety in the society.

In upakāropakaṛṭva vakratā, various individual components described in different parts of the work finally add to the central plot the story. Abhideyāvarttana vakratā is the way in which the same episode or emotion or object is depicted in different ways, with different effects (547).

When a small incident in the story, which is useful to the main plot is elaborated in detail in a way, that it contributes to the main rasa of the story and thus becomes a crucial element in the main storyline, it is called kathopakāra vastu vinyāsa vakratā (555–556).

When stock incidents like water-spot, flower-collection, etc. are knit together in in a story in such a manner that they suit not only the episode in which they are presented, but also the main story of the kāvya, that will result in Kathāviacityra vakratā.

In a drama or a kavya, all the acts are not equally beautiful or charming with respect to the main rasa of the story. In that case, when the poet gets a chance to develop the main rasa in an act, he will work on it and develop it to the maximum. This is called āngirasa niṣyanta vakratā.

When even a small incident, apparently independent, is so invented by the poet that it ultimately contributes to the plot as a whole, it is called vastvāntara vaicityra vakratā.

Prakaraṇāntara-vakratā is that type of vakrokti which is achieved by the incorporation of a play within a play where some actors act as the spectators along with other actors. And finally, āṅgāṅgi-sāṃgatya-vakratā denotes the continuity and coherence of episodes in the totality of the work.