

## A Problem in Dhvani Karikas

**D**HVANYĀLOKA of Ānandavardhana (circa 9th c. A.D.) needs no introduction to students of Sanskrit poetic theory and poetry. This treatise is well known as the pioneer work on the theory of Dhvani, the most progressive and practical school of thought in the realm of Sanskrit poetics. The theory of Dhvani anticipates most of the axioms of modern Western aesthetic thought and has opened up new avenues of contemplation for Indian theorists of poetry. As the first treatise to expound this theory, *Dhvanyāloka* occupies a place of eminence in the history of Sanskrit poetics, and its teachings have formed the subject of scholarly discussions and interpretations both then and now.

The basic thesis of the theory of Dhvani is that suggested meaning which contributes to the evocation of poetic beauty over and above the expressed meaning is the soul of poetry. Words employed in poetry possess two main functions—viz. the expressive and the suggestive. It is the presence of this suggestive quality that distinguishes poetry from other writings of a documentary or didactic nature. Such writings primarily make use of the expressive quality of words while poetry depends more on the suggestive. When this suggestive quality overrides the expressive in its contribution to poetic appeal, that is called dhvani; and this should be the essential element of all good poetry.

*Dhvanyāloka* is committed to expound this theory in all its ramifications. In the first instance, it essays to prove the existence of the quality of suggestion in poetry distinct from the qualities of expression and indication—a thing which was not hitherto accepted by theorists of poetry. It also attempts to distinguish it from other aspects of poetry already accepted, such as poetic figures (*alamkāra*), styles (*rīti*) and so forth. It also expounds how suggestion is to be expected from poetry and how it contributes to poetic appeal, its relation to the theory of *Rasa* and a host of relative subjects. The work is in the form of verse *kārikās*, subsequent explanatory prose *vṛtti*, examples (mostly in verse) and *parikara ślokas*. The entire work is divided into four chapters called *uddyotas*.

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The object of this paper is to draw attention of the scholars to a kārīkā in this valuable treatise which demands scrutiny and an intelligent interpretation—for, it poses a contradiction that could result in weakening the thesis postulated by the theory of Dhvani.

The second kārīkā in the first uddyota of *Dhvanyāloka* reads as follows :

Arthaḥ saḥṛdayaślāghyaḥ kāvyātmā yo vyavasthitaḥ,  
Vācyapratīyamānākhyau tasya bhedaḥvubhau smṛtau.

The subsequent prose exegesis (vṛtti) too may be quoted here, as it clarifies and substantiates the idea contained in the kārīkā.

Kāvyaśya hi lalitocitasanniveśacāruṇaḥ śārīrasyevātmā sārārūpatayā sthitaḥ saḥṛdayaślāghyo yo'rthastasya vācyaḥ pratīyamānaśceti dvau bhedaḥ.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the stanza is clear and presents no difficulty, and the following vṛtti makes it all the more explicit. *Dhvanyāloka* has been translated into many languages such as German, English, Hindi and Kannada ; and among them, those authors who translated this work into German, English and Hindi have understood and translated this kārīkā in substantially the same way.<sup>2</sup> As a representative example I quote the following English translation by Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy.

“That meaning which wins the admiration of cultured critics is decided to be the soul of poetry. The ‘Expressed’ and the ‘Implied’ are regarded as its two aspects”.<sup>3</sup>

The vṛtti is translated as follows : “That meaning which wins the admiration of cultured critics and which is of the very essence of poetry, even as the soul is of a body which is naturally handsome by the union of graceful and proper limbs, has two aspects, viz., the Expressed and the Implied.”

1. The kārīkā and the vṛtti are quoted from *Dhvanyāloka*, NSP edn., Bombay 1891, pp. 12 and 13.
2. The German translation by Dr. Jacobi appears in *ZDMG*, Vols. 56 & 57. I am grateful to Prof. A. M. Ghatage, Deccan College, Poona 6 for drawing my attention to this work. I am unable to say anything about the Kannada translation due to my ignorance of that language. Nor was I able to procure a copy of that work.
3. *Anandavardhana's Dhvanyāloka or the Theory of Suggestion in Poetry*. Poona 1955, p. 3.

This meaning, though obvious as it may seem, sets a poser. For, here it is stated unambiguously that expressed sense (vācya) forms a part of the soul of poetry. The soul of poetry which wins the admiration of the critics is said to be having a twofold division, and one of them is vācya or the expressed while the other is pratiyamāna or the suggested. Obviously this is contrary to the basic postulation of the Dhvani school which, as mentioned in the very first kārīkā of *Dhvanyāloka*, is that suggestion is the soul of poetry. As mentioned earlier in this essay, the Dhvani theorists pointed out that expressed sense is common to all writing whether it be poetic, documentary or didactic; but what distinguishes poetry is its suggested sense. 'Kāvyaśāstrī dhvaniḥ' is the aphorism with which the text begins. Hence, how can one reconcile with this, the statement in the very next kārīkā that the expressed sense forms a part of the soul of poetry?

Sanskrit theorists of old were not oblivious to this apparent contradiction. It was noted by Abhinavagupta in his *Locana* on *Dhvanyāloka* and by Viśvanātha in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa*. What Abhinavagupta attempts is to resolve the contradiction by giving a new interpretation to the kārīkā in question. In his opinion, though a contradiction appears here on the face of it, it is not real. What the kārīkā really means is not that the soul of poetry is divisible into two, but that sense in poetry is so divisible into (1) vācya and (2) pratiyamāna. However, the adjective saḥṛdayaślāghya (worthy of approbation of cultured critics) is the special attribute of the second category, viz. pratiyamāna (suggested). Hence that and that alone should be accepted as the soul of poetry. 'Ata evārtha ityekatayopakramya saḥṛdayaślāghya iti viśeṣaṇadvārā hetumabhidhāyāpoddharanaḍṛṣā tasya dvau bhedaḥ saḥṛdayaślāghya ityuktaḥ. Na tu dvāpyātmānau kāvyasya.'<sup>4</sup> Based on this interpretation, the kārīkā may be understood as follows: 'That poetic expression, one aspect of which is established as the soul of poetry and is praised by the critics, has two divisions—i.e. the expressed and the suggested'.<sup>5</sup>

Although this interpretation adequately circumvents the obstacle posed by the kārīkā, it has to be admitted that this is not exactly the meaning verbally expressed therein. And this is deducible only by reading imaginatively into what is so expressed. The verse as well as the prose vṛtti does not make room to construe the adjective saḥṛdayaślāghya to qualify

4. NSP edn., p. 13.

5. This translation was supplied by late Dr. A. Sankaran, the author of *The Theories of Rasa and Dhvani*, one of the outstanding authorities on Sanskrit Poetic Theory.

the pratīyamāna sense alone. It is an appellation to artha which is also established as the kāvyātmā and which has two divisions. Hence, it is only by a process of artificial construing that this idea could be obtained. Thus it remains an ingenious attempt to by-pass the difficulty, without facing it squarely.

Apparently, Viśvanātha is not satisfied with this interpretation of Abhinavagupta. Hence, even though he is a follower of Abhinavagupta well acquainted with the writings of the latter, he does not accept it. On the contrary, he finds the sense contained in the kārīkā in question quite irreconcilable with the dhvani theory, and pronounces it to be an inconsistency on the part of the propounder of dhvani. 'Yacca dhvanikāre-noktam - Arthaḥ sahr̥dayaślāghyaḥ iti. Atra vācyasyātmatvam 'Kavyasyāt-mā dhvaniḥ' iti svavacanavirodhādevpāstam.'<sup>6</sup>

In modern times too, many scholars have recognized the problem engrained in this kārīkā and have attempted to give it a satisfactory interpretation. Sri P. S. Subbarama Pattar is of opinion that the term ātman here is synonymous with artha. Consequently the soul of poetry mentioned herein is nothing but the sense in poetry; and hence what the kārīkā really means is that sense in poetry has two aspects—viz. (1) expressed and (2) suggested. The adjective sahr̥dayaślāghya qualifies artha and it is the sense that is worthy of praise of the cultured critics. "The most essential element of poetry is universally acknowledged to be the sense. It is divided into two sorts, the expressed and the suggested."<sup>7</sup>

An eminent scholar who seems to hold this same view is Mahāmaho-pādhyāya Prof. P. V. Kane, and his opinion is recorded in his comments to the above mentioned citation from Viśvanātha in *Sāhityadarpaṇa*. Prof. Kane notes the view of the author of *Locana* in this context, but himself expresses the following opinion. "The Dhvanyāloka here speaks of artha, the soul of poetry, as divided into vācyā and pratīyamāna in accordance with ordinary ideas."<sup>8</sup> Thus according to him too, the word ātman in the kārīkā is synonymous with artha. And he does not seem to hold the view that the adjective sahr̥dayaślāghya applies only to the pratīyamāna sense and that alone should be considered the soul of poetry—the position maintained by Abhinavagupta.

6. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (ed. Mm. P. V. Kane), 5th edn. 1965, pp. 4 and 5.

7. *Studies in Dhvanyāloka or Reign of Rasa*, Trichur 1938, p. 13. The author does not expressly mention that this is a translation of the kārīkā in question. But from what precedes and succeeds the above citation, it is obvious that such is the case.

8. Notes to *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 5th edn. 1965, p. 29.

However, how far is it advisable to hold the term *ātman* as identifiable with *artha*? Does that not contradict the initial aphorism that the soul of poetry is *dhvani*? Although such an identification would help to surmount the difficulty posed by the *kārikā*, is it in keeping with the spirit of the theory of *Dhvani*?

Sri Sivarāmakṛṣṇa Śāstri too would favour the opinion that *ātman* here is identifiable with *artha* in poetry—but he views it in a different light.<sup>9</sup> He draws attention to the fact that in *Dhvanyāloka*, the *kārikā* in question is introduced with the words: ‘*Tatra punardhvanerlakṣayitumārabdhasya bhūmikāṃ racayitumidamucyate.*’ Accordingly, the *kārikā* is meant to serve as the basis to the definition of *dhvani* which is being undertaken in the succeeding pages. When the new concept of *Dhvani* is to be defined, it is natural by way of introduction to postulate the existing views on this matter, so that the required definition may be built upon that basis. Hence, it is possible that in the first half of the *kārikā*, what the *Dhvanikāra* expresses is not his own view, but the widely accepted view prevailing at the time.

Based on this point of view, the meaning of the *kārikā* may be expounded as follows. Poetry is composed of two entities, viz. sound (*śabda*) and sense (*artha*). Out of them, *śabda* should be considered the body of poetry, and is easily grasped by every reader. (This view is expressed in *Locana* too: ‘*Tatra śabdastāvachcharīrabhāga eva sanniviśate.*’)<sup>10</sup> But it is the sense—*artha*—that determines poetry: not ordinary sense, but sense that is praised by appreciative critics. If *śabda* is the body of poetry, *artha* is what enlivens it; and hence, that has been established as the soul of poetry. Thus the adjective *sahṛdayaślāghya* qualifies sense in poetry. Though *śabda* is grasped by every reader, poetic sense is grasped only by those who are truly appreciative of it. This may be considered as the view prevalent among scholars when *Dhvanyāloka* came to be written. And in the second half of the *kārikā* is shown how the *Dhvani* theorists would deal with this poetic sense. According to them, this can be divided into two divisions—viz. (1) expressed and (2) suggested.

This exegesis deserves our serious consideration as it easily resolves the problem posed by the *kārikā*, and it is not without textual support. The fact that *śabda* should be considered the body and *artha* the distinguish-

9. This point of view and the exegesis based thereon were expressed by the scholar in an interview with the author of this paper.

10. *op. cit.*, p. 13.

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ing mark of poetry is attested by *Locana* itself. And relying on the word bhūmikā in the preceding vṛtti, it is not difficult to assume that the author is giving the view prevalent at the time.

In attempting to arrive at a satisfactory comprehension of the kārīkā another important fact deserves mention here. That is in the usage of the word ātman. In *Dhvanyāloka*, the word atman is not always used in the sense of 'soul'. It is true that in a majority of instances it is used in this sense: but at least in a few places it is also used synonymous with svarūpa—nature. In this context, the following passages deserve consideration.

In the first uddvota in dealing with the views of those who declared that dhvani is beyond the scope of words, *Dhvanyāloka* states: 'Ye'pi sahrdayahṛdayasamvedyamānākhye'ameva dhvanerātmanamāmnāśi'suste'pi na pariṅsyavādīnaḥ (Even those, who declare that the nature of suggestion is only within the experience of cultured critics and that it is inexpressible, betray only their lack of discernment.)

Once again, in dealing with that variety of suggestion known as anuvānopama in the second uddyota, kārīkā 24 reads as follows :

'Kramena pratibhātyātmā yo 'syānusvānasannibhaḥ.  
Śabdārthaśaktimūlatvāts'o'pi dvedhā vyavasthitah.'

(The other element of this suggestion manifests itself in the same way as resonance, and the temporal sequence of the two meanings will be noticeable. It is also twofold :—'that which is based on the power of word,' and 'that which is based on the power of sense'.)<sup>11</sup>

Now in both these passages, the word ātman, if it is understood as 'soul' would convey no plausible meaning. On the other hand, if it is taken to mean 'nature' (svarūpa), that sense fits appropriately into the context. In fact in both these instances, commentators have explained the word ātman by svarūpa.<sup>12</sup> Hence, it can be asserted beyond doubt that sometimes *Dhvanyāloka* uses ātman synonymous with svarūpa, and that is not without lexical support.

11. NSP edition, p. 59 and p. 94 respectively. The translations are quoted from Dr. K. Kāśhān-moorthy, *op. cit.*, p. 19 and p. 37 respectively.

12. For example, see Dīdhitī commentary, *Dhvanyāloka*, Harīdāsa Sanskrita Granthamāla 66, Varanasi 1953, p. 84 and p. 153 respectively.

If the word *ātman* is taken to mean *svarūpa*, the *karika* in question can be understood satisfactorily without making room for any inconsistency. For, then in its entirety it would mean:

‘That sense which is worthy of praise by the appreciative critics, and established as the nature of poetry is of two divisions, viz. the expressed and the suggested’.

It is *artha* that determines the nature of poetry—but mere presence of *artha* by itself is not considered poetry. To become poetry it must have some special virtue, and that speciality is its praiseworthiness of the appreciative critics (a fact attested by *Abhinavagupta* too). Hence, the presence of a sense which wins the admiration of the appreciative readers determines the true nature of poetry. Though the possession of words and sense (*śabdārtha*) is a quality shared by all forms of speech such as poetic, documentary or didactic, it is this particular feature that distinguishes poetry from the rest.

This poetic sense, which on account of it being praised by the critics is established as of the nature of poetry, can be divided into two—viz. the expressed and the suggested. In other words, poetry possesses a twofold sense (while all other forms of speech have only one, namely, the expressed). And it is found that both these types of senses contribute to some charm in poetry. The fact that the suggested sense is appealing, need not be disputed; and that is what *Dhvanyāloka* takes great pains to prove. And the expressed sense is also found appealing in diverse ways—especially in many a beautifully conceived figure of speech which springs from the creative genius of the poet. And when this beautiful expressed sense gives rise to a suggested sense which surpasses the former in its appealing nature, that enters the sphere of *dhvani*.\*

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