

Form not “apart,” but “a part,” of meaning as exemplified in Sanskrit Literature

FROM R̥gvedic times *via* the Bhagavadgītā to later kāvya, the Sanskrit texts employ certain formal devices to emphasize the main concepts in question. For example: in R̥gveda V. 85.5 the significant term *Māyā* of the text is corroborated in its meaning by other derivations from the same root in the same verse (. . . *māyām* varuṇasya pravocam, *mānena* . . . *mane*. . .). While concentrating on the implication of the term *māyā* the full verb *mane* and another noun derived from the same root, *mānam*, is introduced. Similarly in the Bhagavadgītā *bhajāmi*, *bhakta*, etc., give stress to the term *Bhakti* by placing it side by side with these other derivations of its root *bhaj*. Likewise the importance of the term *yoga* is here emphasized by its juxtaposition in the context with *yukta*, *vi-yoga*, *sam-yoga*, etc.

Repetition is a psychological means of corroboration and continued concentration. The term is fastened, secured as it were, by double or multiple ties. To use a profane simile: as a careful needlewoman strengthens a seam by repeating the same or similar stitches in close connection, just so the most important concepts are retained, halted as it were, while going over the same or interconnected ground again and again. Thus, either interrelated concepts, derivations of the same root, or the actual term itself is repeated for the sake of its emphasis. To quote a well-known example of verbal repetition: the main teaching of the transcendental Brahman of the Upaniṣads is coined in a double slogan “*neti, neti*” (it is not this only, it is not this only): Brh. 4.4.2. and elsewhere.

And yet another type of repetition, slightly different in its formulation, but leading towards the same psychological aims, is applied in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. The identification of *Kam* and *Kham* is emphasized by a kind of crosswise repetition. “Whatever is *Kam* is *Kham*, and whatever is *Kham* is *Kam*.” (Bliss is width and width is bliss. . . Chānd. Up. IV. 10.5). Subject and predicative object here change places in order to emphasize their complete interchangeability. The identification of the rational contents of the two concepts is further enhanced by throwing into relief their similar sound picture. We shall deal with this acoustic device of emphasis in a later section.

And still another form of repetition is employed in the seventh Prapāthaka of the Chāndogya. Here the Highest is taught by revealing it in different

stages of its gradual realization. As each link of a chain has a double position, connecting backwards to the former and forwards to the following members of the chain, just so the teaching of Ch. Up. VII is given in a kind of double fastening :—

“ Speech is higher than name ”

“ Mind is higher than speech ”

“ Will is higher than mind ”

“ Consideration is higher than will. . .etc.”

The single strands are twisted together in order to produce a strong rope, as it were, suitable to give a support in this process of intellectual mountaineering.

The same psychological device of fixation by interweaving the single constituents of the contents while securing them backwards and forwards is applied in the admirable Indian method of memorizing. The sequence of the words is invariably laid down by step-wise progression and retrogression. (I, 2 ; 2, 1 ; 1, 2, 3 ; 3, 2, 1 ; a.s.o.).

Literal repetition for the sake of emphasizing the term under consideration is sometimes replaced by introducing synonyms for it. It is not only by the repetition of the word itself, nor by applications of other derivations of the same root, but also by the introduction of co-extensive terms that our attention is kept fixed to the subject in question. Religious texts and profane texts are in India significantly interconnected. Both employ the same psychological means of intensifying concepts of special significance. *Rasas* (psychological savours or sentiments) and *Alamkāras* (forms of external embellishment) in later Kāvya are not primarily artistic ends in themselves and accidentally and arbitrarily born out of the poet's momentary fancy. They are predestined by the socio-religious background of the poet. For instance, Bhavabhūti, the poet of old Brahmanic tradition, favours certain *rasas* and *bhāvas* which are indicative of strict self-control and dutiful *dharma*. As such in his 'Mahāvīracarita' and Uttara-Rāma-carita' he employs the *vīra-rasa*, heroic *rasa*, with special emphasis on the heroic ennobled duties. As to the *śṛṅgāra-rasa* (the *rasa* of love) instead of indulging in the descriptions of passionate and sensuous emotion (*kāma, amuṣāga*) he gives prominence to *vāśalyam*, love and obligation towards the child, *śaunḍīyam* ✓ or 'miratam', balanced friendship, 'pranaya' and 'preman', tender regard. (Cf. the Thesis of my student Ludwig Kretzschmar, "Bhavabhūti, the poet of *Dharma* and his *Rasas*" Leipzig 1934).

Scholarly explanations of texts in commentaries follow the same psychological method which already the texts themselves employed for stressing

their main concepts. The commentators explain a term of the text either by other derivations of the same root or by synonyms which fall into the same range of thought. Among the innumerable examples see for instance Śaṅkara's commentary to Katha Upaniṣad I. 6. The word *anubhūya* of the text is explained by its synonyms *ālocaya*, *nibhālaya*, and the prefix *anu* is restored to its original full meaning by replacing it with a noun *anukramena*. Indian lexicographers in their glossaries, *Nighāntus* and *Kośas* and in their lists of roots in the *Dhātupāṭhas*, accordingly define the meaning of a term, verb or noun, by placing it side by side with words of synonymous contents.

Besides the use of derivations of the same root, repetition of the same word or its synonyms, there is yet another apparently merely artistic, but in the deeper sense psychological, means applied in Indian literature for emphasizing the significance of a concept. It is not only in late Indian kāvya, but already in early Vedic texts that similes and metaphors are frequently employed. Not mere poetical artistry, but fundamentals of Indian thought come here into play. Nothing stands alone here on earth, nor is only confined to this lower sphere of earthly conditions. Already Yaska in his early Vedic interpretations establishes the dogma that whatever is found here on earth, must have its equivalent also in the upper spheres. The *uḥpamā* (comparison) and all its thirty-two subtle subdivisions in later kāvya is based on this innate idea of a natural relationship between all things—existent or potential. Interrelation is everywhere assumed. It may be either vague similarity, nearer similarity or nearest similarity, i.e. identification. It is not uniqueness of a concept which emphasizes for the Indian its importance, but it is its productive relationship with others that elevates the concept to the rank of significance. Besides the detailed simile also its contracted form, the metaphor, is frequently employed throughout the whole Indian literature in all different kinds of texts. Though the metaphor as its condensation is later than the fully worked-out simile, it is already very much in use in the earliest texts of the Rgveda. Simile and metaphor are not artistic accidentals of external form, but are based on an idea underlying all the expressions of Indian mentality. Nothing stands isolated and unique for the Indian thinker. Thus throughout the Indian literature, repetition of the same word, derivations from the same root, synonyms, similes and metaphors are the expression of basic necessities of Indian thought.

So far we have dealt with the means of stressing a concept by dwelling on its rational contents alone. However, the Indian mind is not satisfied solely with rational investigations. The so-called realistic systems of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, of logical discussion and definite statements on physical phenomena,

never take their practical results as more than mere means to a transcendental and irrational end. The sixteen categories of Nyāya argumentation stating and repudiating logical facts and the apparently merely scientific investigation of physical phenomena in the Vaiśeṣika are meant to lead to a true Reality outside this world, i.e., to the Beyond, to the *Niḥśreyasa*, liberation or deliverance from all empirical bonds. Besides the world of the Rational stands for the Indian, of at least equal value, the world of the Irrational or Super-rational.

The apparently rational science of lexicography also acknowledges in a way this basic truth. A term is not fully grasped by its rational contents alone; its irrational range of meaning has also to be investigated. It is no accident that Indian lexicography has dealt in detail, besides with the *ekārthas*, homogenous meanings, also with the *anekārthas*, the various contents fallen together into one acoustic sound-picture. The psychological relationship established by mere similarity of sound is in India seriously taken into account.

Rational interpretation is only one half of a word's significance. Similar sound, but dissimilar meaning, also provides inner relationship between words. This is the special import lying in the application of *śleṣas*, intertwined or ambiguous meanings. Ambiguity is here not considered as a drawback, as for the Western logician, but as an asset in so far as it does not cut off further possibilities and potentialities of interconnection. Furthermore, *śleṣas* are concerned less with the rational sphere of the word's contents, but more with the irrational one of its sound. We have to keep in mind that Indian literature is preferably an oral recital and not mute written texts. Similar sound, though different in meaning, helps to retain the concept under consideration. It dwells on a concept by emphasizing its sound-picture in acoustic repetition. Articulation of the sound produces in the speaker a certain psychological effect and subsequently produces in the hearer a similar impression. The keenness of the sense organs, ear (or eye), and consciousness of the circulations of breath or of the inner humours are in India through continuous training ever kept alive and are intensely experienced. Hard articulation, soft articulation, etc., thus serve to provide part of the meaning of the word itself. As such the apparently artificial play of later kāvya in writing verses in which nearly every word used contains the same sound and similarly articulated characters is not only an arbitrary fancy of the poet, but conveys in its mere sound already half of the meaning intended.

Just as he is conscious of the significance of sound, the Indian is also conscious of the significance of rhythm. The keen ear of the Indian reacts

not only to single sound, but also to the recurring waves of rhythm, the metrical movement determined by various relations of long and short or accented and unaccented syllables. Again, Indian texts have to be heard and not to be seen. As such not only the verses themselves, but also the prose parts of the commentaries are rhythmically spoken, though not in such a definite rhythm as the verses themselves. The irrational significance of rhythm combines with the rational significance of the contents of the verses. The musical rhythmic points of accentuation within a verse or within the sequence of verses are made use of for emphasizing certain terms of special significance. The main places of emphasis within a verse are either its beginning or—less strongly—the pause of its caesura or—in the highest degree—at the end of the verse. At the end comes the pause of concentration; the voice does not actually stop and fall abruptly short, but lingers on in a middle pitch. I may recall that the word '*am*,' for instance, comes to its highest perfection in the vague echo (*nāda*) of its nasal sound in its final reflexion of its former sound-waves. As such in Indian metrics, as also in Latin metrics, the last sound is considered as *anceps*, indeterminate; the last syllable can be valued as short or long. Furthermore, before the final pause there is, as it were, once more a climax of attention. Accordingly, in all Sanskrit metres there may be a less marked rhythmical structure for the beginning of the verse, but never is this admitted for its last quarter. Here the metre must reveal itself in its full capacity and characteristics. The end is the part of the verse which lingers on in the mind of the hearer. As such in the Bhagavadgītā the terms for the main concepts are placed preferably either at the beginning, or at the end of a verse, and from there the same term or one of its derivations or an equivalent synonym is carried over to the beginning of the following verse (for instance in Bhg. II 33, 34). To remind Arjuna of his *ksatriya* duty of gaining fame (*kīrti*) which is demonstrated in detail in II. 33, at the beginning of verse 34 the word *akīrti* as a stirring insult is thrown at him. Psychological stress by means of repetition is further enhanced by the use of psychological points of musical emphasis.

Again, literary form and acoustic form are not mere artistic external means, but are deeply rooted psychological essentials and constituents of inner meaning. They are not mere external ornaments. The same inner laws of psychological necessities hold good for religious and profane texts. Hindu Art, in Architecture and Plastics as well as in Poetry, is not an isolated discipline in itself, but yet another expression of general laws of thought. The *Alaṅkāra-śāstram*, the science and art of rhetoric, is not only a part of formal logic, but of philosophy in the wider sense, including psychology. *Śruti*, then, holy texts of Revelation, reveals and emphasizes its contents by

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formal artistic means, a complementary addition of meaning. Thus *Sṛuti* has to be in a way also a *kāvya*, a work of art. Conversely, *kāvya* is more than a mere profane piece of art or artistry. Formal means of expression are part of the meaning itself.

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