CHAPTER VII

KUNTAKA AND AESTHETIC ENJOYMENT
"The real meaning of Sanskrit term, *alaṁkāra*, is beauty. Vāmana has made this clear in his definition of *alaṁkāra* as *saundaryayāṁ alaṁkāra* (*alaṁkāra* is beauty). In the *alaṁkāra-śāstra* the word *saundarya* is rarely used. The term *ramaṇīyatā* is generally used in the sense of beauty. It is interpreted by Jagannatha as follows:

*ramaṇīyatā ca lokottrelādājanakajñānagocaratā*

(Rasagaṅgādhara C-1.P.14)

That is *ramaṇīyatā* which rouses in the mind some transcendent joy."

"This a beautiful object rouses in the mind a feeling of beauty. This aesthetic enjoyment is nothing but the manifestation of our true self which is bliss itself.

" The poet Māgha, in describing the characteristics of beauty, says :-

*kṣaṇe kṣaṇe yannavatāmupaiti tadeva rūmapa ramaṇīyatāyāḥ*

(Sīśupālavadha C.IV.V.17)

That is beautiful which assumes at every moment some new aspect to mind of the experience."

**Poetry and Aesthetics :**

"The theory of beauty which has developed in Sanskrit is built upon facts. In our estimate of these facts everything depends upon our intellectual standpoint. The great interest in poetry kindled in the creative period has contributed much to the making of aesthetics conceived by the Indian thinkers. Beauty reveals itself in rhythmic utterance, the medium of the poetry. It may be said that rhythm plays a very important part in representing the authors mind to the readers. That is the noblest function of poetry."³

2. Ibid. P. 1
3. Ibid. P. 7
“In estimating aesthetic theory considerable guidance is to be obtained from the writings of Kuntaka, the author of Vakroktīvīta, a treatise on poetry and rhetoric. The aesthetic theory started here is not to be ordinarily met with in any other book of the like sort. There is no dobut a long array of good rhetoricians who have left a name in Sanskrit literature, but it is Kuntaka and Kuntaka alone who proclaims in a trumpet-voice the grand glory of the beautiful. At the very outset to say that the former rhetoricians were not able to explain the source of aesthetic pleasure that results from the study of a poem.”

Function of Poetry:

Poetry is that Which generates an experience which is similar to the experience of the self. “When this function is achieved, poetry is beautiful and belongs to that department of philosophy which is called Aesthetics. Such poetry, beauteous in expression, rich in harmony, shining in glory, unceasing in flow may be found in Isa, Kena, Katha, Švetāsvatara and Muṇḍaka, Upaniṣadas. The poetic beauty which symbolises the beauty of the artist’s imagination offers here a very refreshing delight. Instantly the aesthetic quality inspires and the imagination of the reader, excites a distinct kind of pleasure and gives him the knowledge of the beautiful. The ancient seers rose from the physical plane of beautiful things to a spiritual plane of higher beauty. Only in the absolute, (which is the whole universe) the beautiful was realised.”

1. Ibid. P.132.
Psychological Theory of Beauty:

"To some extent the development of Sanskrit aesthetics has a course parallel to that of the Psychological theory of beauty which resides in the disinterested contemplation. "The beautiful" says Kant, is what pleases without interest, the beautiful is what pleases without concept. One point is sufficiently clear, viz. that Kant lays great stress upon the mental faculty, feeling, the peculiar characteristic of which is that it is disinterested. To use the words of Caird, 'A beautiful object affects us pleasurably from without, yet our relation to it is a free relation, a relation in which we are not subjected to yoke of desire, and in which there is no heteronomy of the will. This is what Kant expresses by saying that the beautiful pleases us without interest, or is the object of disinterested satisfaction. In other words, the will does not come into play at all in this case; we have a contemplative pleasure in an object. which is not the result of our self-determination by the moral principle, not yet the satisfaction of a desire.""

Beauty as Viewed by Indian Thinkers:

"It will not be out of place to mention in this connection that the theories of Beauty held by Indian thinkers were all metaphysical. Psychological study of aesthetic theory is seldom found in Sanskrit poetry. The ancient seers seem to have made no attempt to explain beauty 'as a certain kind of feeling existing only in the mind of the beholder.' The metaphysical theory considers beauty as an aspect of a thing. That is, beauty is objective, if belongs to the object. Just as to Hegel 'Beauty is the absolute idea shining through some sensuour medium' so to the Indian thinkers the beauty in all the visible objects of the nature is a fragment of the Divine Splendour'. That is -

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1. Ibid Pp.14-15
2. Ibid Pp. 16-17
yad yad vihutimat sattvaṁ kṛimadurjīrtameva vā |
tattadevaśvagaccha tvāṁ mama tejoṁ āśambhavaṁ || (Bhagavadgītā X.41)

"No one but Kuntaka has observed with such precision and has expressed with such perspicacity the essence of poetic beauty. In his view, beauty is purely subjective; beauty does not belong to things. Beauty lies in the emotion of the artistic observer, physical objects are aids to aesthetic conception. H. Wildom Carr observes:

Beauty has no meaning when applied to a mere physical fact, and to speak of physical things as beautiful of things as beautiful is really to speak paradoxically. It is easy enough to see how we come to do so. Physical facts, being aids to the beautiful, come elliptically to be themselves called beautiful, and in this way give rise to the concept of physical beauty. The beautiful is not a physical fact, beauty does not belong to things, it belongs wholly to the human aesthetic activity, and this is a mental or spiritual fact."¹

The concept that expression or out-word colouring of a poem sets the imagination working in the readers and thrills them with the sense of the beautiful, is most satisfactorily worked out with greater completeness by Kuntaka who emphatically observes that masterly and musical words is directly agreeable to the ear and very rapidly fills the mind with the highest contemplative satisfaction, no matter whether the essential meaning is clearly grasped or not. What Kuntaka means is this point of view. (The previous chapter VJ.C-1, V.17/Ex-37-40, I have pointed out)

"Kuntaka holds that the aesthetic activity begins with a nice selection of subject-matter and tuneful and harmonious arrangement of expressions. The uniqueness of expressions and their meanings is the life of art. The beautiful is neither inherent in words nor in their sense. Beauty is a quite different quality from the

¹. Ibid. Pp.132-133
poetical components. 'A good poem if fully appreciated, arouses in the mind of the wise reader some in expressible delight other than that caused by the mere understanding of the meanings of words and sentences. Just as the sweet taste of lemonade consists of a peculiar sweetness other than that of its ingredients like lemon, sugar etc. Special it is not only image or sound nor is it the thought that moves us here, for a kind of intoxication of delight is produced even before the sense can penetrate the consciousness: It is a power inexplicably hidden in the words themselves and called forth by their arrangement in a magical order. I say hidden, because the effect often appears to be quite independent of any richness in the words it taken singly and apart from their context. Adequate satisfying harmony between thought and expression contributes much to the making of aesthetics.'

**Context of the Book VJ:**

1. The peculiar relationship of subject
2. Context and language
3. Expression of poetry.

"Its subject when it first flashes across the poet’s imagination will be no better than a very rough stone. This rough thought or subject matter comes to be finely polished by the skill of the poet in the course of its being embodied in beautiful language. Thus fully polished it delights the men of taste like a precious diamond perfectly cut and polished. That is why even when the subject is the very same, the works of two poets, one careful in beautiful poetic creation and the other lacking such care reveals vast gap in their poetic achievement. This also shows that neither beautiful content alone, nor beautiful form alone can constitute poetry but only both of their unity can do it."

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1. Ibid. P.137.
The Skill of the Poet:

"Kuntaka thinks whenever the united word and meaning are enshined in a peculiar style i.e. *vakratā* or outstanding artistic skill of the poet and *āhlada* or value of delight of the men of taste that Kuntaka’s theory on poetic utterance is based. Kuntaka says a connection between the style of poetry and the nature of poet’s temperament. He explains the different styles in poetry in terms of difference’s in the nature of poet."¹

"The nature of poets are three fold: Gentle or elegant, brilliant and mixed. But the elegant styles are characterised by the profuseness of *rasas* and *bhavas*. The style becomes sweet and charming because of this quality and the experienced men of taste who know the value of *rasas* feel extreme delight from their beauty. The elegant style bears a beauty which eludes the analysis of the critic. This beauty, created by the poet’s genius and which abounds in the poem, baffles the analytical power of the men of taste and fills them with delight. The creator of the universe Brahma expresses his wondrous art in his creations like femine beauty etc. The artistic skill of the poet who follows the elegant style is comparable to the consummate art of the creator."²

"The excellence of *ābhijātya* or classicallity with regard to brilliant style is marked by great artistic skill. It is neither too soft nor too harsh and appeals the hearts of the men of taste."³

"Words and ideas etc. are the raw materials of poets. But the poet’s genius always attempt to select only some among them. When the selected one becomes most relevant to the poetic activity as a whole, there arises a quality which is designated as *saubhāgya* or splendour. In it each and every constituents of the material available

1. Ibid. P.113.
3. Ibid. P. 122.
to the poet shines at its best without a single flow. The different constituents cooperate in bringing it about. Splendour is described as pervading one and all constituents of the subject described, indicating the wealth of imagination of the poet on the one hand and giving delight to the readers on the other hand. Propriety and Splendour reside in all the elements of poetic language like word, sentence and the work as a whole. The propriety of words is the vakrata or artistic beauty of words which are devided into several varieties. The highest secret of artistic beauty is the proper kind of description which promotes the real nature of things and objects. Proper expression is the life of a sentence. The absence of proper expression even in a part of a sentence destorys delight of the men of taste. A whole work if any of its sections show a lack of propriety, seems like a cloth which is burnt at various parts. The quality of saubhāgya is also a plicable to the sentence, section and total work. Each of these units of composition shines with its own manifold beauty belonging to the diverse casual factors or resources. A comproston becomes extremely charming by a merger of the different sentiments, as the quality of saubhāgya pervades each and every aspect of it.”

“According to Kuntaka subject classified a̅s god etc. acquire beauty by the effective and continuous portrayal or their emotions like love. The portrayal of emotions must be novel and without any blemish. Such a treatement enhance the emotions like rati to the status of rasas like śṛṅgāra. As it has been soundly established by the ancients, it is the sthāyibhāva or basic emotion which is transformed into the concerned rasas or sentiments. Kuntaka illustrates how this is accomplished by closely following the manner of development of the hero vipralambharati or love in seperation of the hero purūnavas in the fourth act of the Vikramorvaśīya and the portrayal of the sentiment of karuṇa or pathos of king of Vastsa in the play Tāpasavatṣarāja.

1. Ibid. Pp.124-125
With regard to second sub-category of sentiments namely lions etc. poet should carefully portray the true nature of each of the species. Each member of the species may possess an individual characteristic but it is strictly subordinated to the general nature of the species. The descriptions of the behaviour of an animal in poetry should be in conformity with the nature of the species to which that animal belongs. As an example the author cites the description of the frightened dear during king Duṣyanta's hunting session in *Abhijñānaśakuntalā*.

The theme of poetry should be appropriate enough to be accepted by the poet for description. The appropriateness of theme is decided by two values: aesthetic and moral.

The aesthetic value is present when the theme is permeated with original beauty without any blemish and which gives delight to men of taste.

The portrayal of the behaviour of the unimportant sentiments and the nature of non-sentients should not be allowed to malign the moral behaviour of human beings. Appropriate behaviour should be chosen with care. The poem, the material of the poem and the poet bears resemblance to the paintings, the materials for painting and the painter respectively. Only the carefully selected actions are found portrayed in both arts. These materials above consititude of *kāvyā* of the objects.

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1. Ibid. P.172.