CHAPTER - I

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SANSKRIT POETICS

Man from the earliest period of civilisation tried to assert himself, express himself rightly by words for his own good and for the good of those in close contact with him; hence we see some studies in and uses of Alâṅkâras even in the most ancient Vedic period. The Vedas use Upamâ, Atiśayokti, Rûpaka, Dîpaka and other figures of speech. The Vedângas are Śikṣâ, Kalpa, Vyâkaraṇa, Nirukta, Jyotiṣ, and Chandas. Though not openly still covertly Alâṅkâras were being discussed and used when the Vedângas fully developed more than two thousand years ago. That a single word signified volumes and "more than what meets the ear" is to be inferred from the age-old declaration "Ekâh sabdâh saṁyag jñâtâh suprayuktâh svarge loke kâmdhug bhavati" (Patañjali, Mahâbhâṣya).

Then Yâska in some eighth century B.C. in his Nirukta deals with Alâṅkâras like Upamâ and Rûpaka by saying "Athâta upamâ yadetat sādṛśyamiti gârgyâḥ."
Later Pāṇini also in the sixth century B.C. shows his knowledge of Upama, Rūpaka, and Atiśayokti in the sūtras “Upamitam vyāghrādibhiḥ sāmānyaprayoge”, “Upamānāni sāmānyavacanaiḥ”, and “Atiśayane tamavisthanau” showing that the learned of his days were conversant with these figures and used these in their writings.

Patañjali (approximately 150 B.C.) indicates a work 'Vāraruca kāvya', and also he quotes some verses in Nīti, Śṛṅgāra and Vairāgya in his Mahābhāṣya.

Many ancient works like the Rāmāyaṇa, and the Mahābhārata abound in figures of speech, both of word and of sense. In fact the Rāmāyaṇa is accepted as not only the first Kāvya or ornamented poem but also as the ideal Kāvya.

Although these speculations have an indirect bearing on the science of poetics only this much cannot prove that there existed independent treatises on poetics in ancient times. It seems that in our country, composition of poetry has developed from the beginning of ancient civilisation, but scholars did not give much attention towards laying down the principles of poetic composition.

It is striking indeed that we have no direct or indirect
references to poetics as a śāstra in early texts, although at the end of the 9th century A.D. Rājaśekhara speaks of a tradition which makes it the seventh Vedāṅga. And he tells that the science of poetics had been proclaimed by Śiva to Brahmā. He enumerates eighteen divisions of Poetics and states that each section was taught by an ancient teacher. ¹

But it is not accepted as reliable because statements like 'Citraḿ citrāṅgadaḿ', 'śabdaśleșam șeșah', 'Aupamyam Aupakāyanah', and 'Doșādhikaraṇam Dhišanah', show Rājaśekhara's taste of alliteration. So P. V. Kane rightly observes—"It is doubtful how far this list is authentic or whether most of the writers named are mythical." (P.V.Kane, HSP, p.1)

We have not come across any works on poetics written before the beginning of the Christian era. We have no source to say that at that period treatises on Poetics had been composed.

V. Rāghavan opines—

"It is the list of sixty-four arts, Catuhaustī karāh, given by Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra (see Appendix I) that gives the first glimmer in this connection. After mentioning 'the composing of poetry', Kāvyakriya, and two of the
subjects helpful for that purpose, namely, Lexicon (abhidhānakosa) and Prosody (chando-jñāna), Vātsyāyana mentions a subject called 'KRIYĀ-KALPA' (I.3.16). What does the Kriyākalpa mean? Coming immediately after the composing poetry, lexicon and prosody, it is very likely that Kriyā-kalpa is a subject related to literature and poetry. A reference to the Jayamangala upon this reveals to us that Kriyā-kalpa means Poetics or Alāṅkāraśāstra: Kriyākalpa iti kāvyakaraṇavidhiḥ, kāvyālāṅkāra ityarthabhratṛtāyamapi (i.e. Abhidhāna, chandas and Alāṅkāra) Kāvyakriyāngam, parakāvyabodhārtham ca (p.39). To explain, Kriyākalpa must be expanded into Kāvyā-kriyā-kalpa, a practical treatise showing the way to compose poems." (Some Concepts, p.289).

If this view is accepted it will be the first source to estimate the origin of poetics in the period before the beginning of the Christian era.

On Sanskrit poetics the oldest extant work is the Nātyasastra of Bharata. There is difference of opinions about the date of its composition. Eminent scholars consider that it belongs to the first century B.C. But some believable evidences show that literary treatises were written even earlier. The names of such treatises are—treatise on Rasa by Nandikesvara, on Rīti by Suvarṇanābhā; Kohala, Kāśyapa,
Vararuchi, Medhāvin and other names are found in the Nātya-
sāstra itself.

So, it shows that there were many works on literary
theory, but they were lost in the current of time.

In the beginning it seems that there was no separation
of Nātaka from Kāvya because most of the early works deal
with only on dramaturgy. After Bhāmaha it was separated
into Kāvya and Nātaka. But most of the rhetoricians like
Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Vāmana and others do not touch the
dramaturgy in their works. For this reason only Nātaka
lakṣaṇa granthas came out separately like Daśarūpaka, Nātya-
darpana and Bhāvaprakāśa.

When the Rasa theory took a prominent place in poetics
then Nātaka and Kāvya lakṣaṇas were discussed together. Then
they came to know that essence of Drśya and Śravyakāvyas is
one. From the beginning to the Rasa theory there are several
significant developments in Sanskrit poetics. Bhāmaha,
Daṇḍin, Vāmana and Rudraṭa gave importance to the Alaṅkāras.
Therefore in the beginning this treatise was called as
'Alaṅkāraśāstra'.

Then Dhvani theory came into existence. It started a
new era in the history of Sanskrit poetics. The distinct feature of the Dhvani theory turned into the Rasa theory. Then the Rasa theory remained unchallenged.

In the meanwhile Riti, Vakrokti, Aucitya and Anumiti theories come forth but they did not receive much approval.

The concept of beauty was discussed under the names, of Saundarya, Camatkāra Ramanīyatā and so on. But Sanskrit rhetoricians do not separate the concept of Aesthetics and concept of poetry. They feel Aesthetic and poetry are indivisible.

Thus Sanskrit poetics has grown rapidly with new ideas. And Sanskrit poetics influenced on literary theories of all Indian languages.
1. As this topic has been discussed in detail by P.V. Kane and others, only a jist has given here.

2. As this topic has been discussed in detail by P.V. Kane and others, only a jist has given here.