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## Concept of *guṇa* as Depicted in the *Agnipurāṇa*

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### Abstract

The *Agnipurāṇa* presents a very informative discussion on the *guṇas*. The definition of *kāvya* given by the *Purāṇa* itself shows the importance of *guṇa* in the field of Sanskrit poetics. It considers *guṇa* as an element of poetry which confers great charm to it. The *Purāṇa* classifies *guṇa* into two varieties, viz., *sāmānyagūṇa* and *vaiśeṣikagūṇa*. Again, *sāmānyagūṇa* is divided into three varieties, viz., *śabdagūṇa*, *arthagūṇa* and *ubhayagūṇa*. It presents a very elaborate account of the *guṇas* by observing all the views of the earlier rhetoricians. It is worth mentioning here that the *Purāṇa* incorporates some different aspects of the *guṇas* which are cannot be traced in any work of early rhetoricians. In this paper an attempt has been made to present an analytical discussion on the *guṇas* as revealed in the *Agnipurāṇa*.

**Keyword:** *Purāṇa*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *guṇa*, poetics, *śabdagūṇa*, *vaiśeṣikagūṇa*

### 1. Introduction

One of the eighteen mahāpurāṇas, the *Agnipurāṇa* is well-known due to its encyclopaedic character. Besides the topics incorporated in the *pañcalakṣhna* viz., cosmology, cosmogony, genealogies of ṛṣis and royal families, political issues, geography, religion and philosophy, the *Purāṇa* also contains materials of Sanskrit *alāṅkāraśāstra* or poetics. The contribution of the *Agnipurāṇa* to the area of Sanskrit Poetics and Dramaturgy is innumerable. The *Purāṇa* presents its discussion on Poetics and Dramaturgy in about eleven chapters, in this order: *Kāvyaḍilakṣaṇa*, *Nāṭakāḍinirupaṇa*, *Rasāḍinirupaṇa*, *Rīti* and *Vṛtti*, *Sarirambhānubhava*, *Abhinaya* and *Alāṅkāra*, *Śabdāḍlāṅkāra*, *Arthāḍlāṅkāra*, *Śabdārthāḍlāṅkāra*, *Guṇa* and *Doṣa* without conforming to any conventional school of Sanskrit poetics.

The *Agnipurāṇa* describes *guṇa* as a fundamental constituent of poetry. Its definition of *kāvya* – *kāvyaḍ sphuradalamkāraḍ guṇavad doṣavarjitaḍ*, clearly shows that in poetry the presence of *guṇa* or poetic excellence is compulsory <sup>[1]</sup>. The earliest available work on poetics, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* has been discussed the concept of the *guṇa* in details. In the seventeenth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata defines *guṇa* as an entity which is negation of *doṣa*. Thus, he reads, *guṇa viparyayadesaḍ mādhuryaudaryalakṣaṇaḍ* it means that *guṇas* are the negation of the *doṣa* and are characterized by sweetness and depth of meaning <sup>[2]</sup>. But, the well-known rhetorician of 9<sup>th</sup> century, Vāmana holds an opposite view of Bharata saying that *guṇas* are positive entities, *kāvya śobhāyāḍ kartāro dharmā guṇaḍ* <sup>[3]</sup>. Being influenced by the consideration of Vāmana, the *Agnipurāṇa* also clearly states that it cannot be said that the *guṇa* would only be the absence of *doṣa* and considers it an element of poetry which confers great charm to it <sup>[4]</sup>.

The *Agnipurāṇa* classifies the *guṇas* into two categories, namely, *sāmānyā* and *vaiśeṣikā*<sup>5</sup>. The *sāmānyagūṇa* has been defined as that which is common to all and sub - divides it into three varieties, viz., *śabdagūṇa*, *arthagūṇa* and *ubhayagūṇa* <sup>[6]</sup>. The *Agnipurāṇa*'s classification of the *guṇa* into *sāmānyā* and *vaiśeṣikā* is peculiar in its nature which is not found mentioned in any earlier works on Sanskrit poetics. Bharata, Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin did not give twofold classification of the *guṇas* instead they dealt with ten particular *guṇas*, viz., *śleṣa*, *prasāda*, *samatā*, *samādhī*, *mādhurya*, *ojas*, *saukumārya*, *artha vyakti*, *udāra* and *kānti* <sup>[7]</sup>. Vāmana was the first rhetorician to classify the *guṇas* into *śabda* and *artha* <sup>[8]</sup>. But, it is the *Agnipurāṇa* who classifies each of the *guṇas* into three fold aspects, belonging to the word, sense and belonging to the word as well as to the sense. But, Bhoja like the *Agnipurāṇa* classifies the *guṇas* into three classes, viz., *bāhyagūṇa*, *ābhyantaragūṇa* and *vaiśeṣikagūṇa* <sup>[9]</sup>.

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The *bāhyaguṇas* correspond with the *śabdaguṇas* of the *Agnipurāṇa* and the *ābhyantaraguṇa* with the *arthaguṇas* of the *Purāṇa*, the third is not treated as the technical class of the *guṇas*. The three *guṇas* of the *Agnipurāṇa* are discussed below.

## 2. Objectives

- To find out the significant features of *guṇa* as described in the *Agnipurāṇa*
- To highlight the unique points of *guṇa* as discussed in the *Agnipurāṇa*

## 3. Methodology

In the present study analytical method has been used. We propose to rely upon both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from the original texts of Sanskrit Poetics, their commentaries and for secondary data various books, research reports, articles, journals have been consulted.

## 4. Sabdaguna

According to the *Agnipurāṇa*, *śabdaguṇa* is that which relates to the word, the body of poetry<sup>[10]</sup>. The *śabdaguṇas* are eight in number, viz., *śleṣa*, *lāṭīyā*, *gāmbhīrya*, *saukumārya*, *udāratā*, *sati* and *yaugikī*<sup>[11]</sup>. *Śleṣa* is defined by the *Purāṇa* to be a particular arrangement of words which produces cohesiveness<sup>[12]</sup>. This definition of the *Purāṇa* is identical to the *śleṣa* definition of the early rhetoricians, viz., Bharata, Daṇḍin, and Vāmana<sup>[13]</sup>. *Lāṭīyā* is that in which a letter that is already combined in the words by means of *guṇa*, *ādeśa* etc. and never euphonically combined<sup>[14]</sup>. *Gāmbhīrya* is declared as that in which a composition chiseled by special characteristics and also contains elevated words; other names same as the *suśabdatā*<sup>[15]</sup>. Bhāmaha first refers to *sauśabdyā* to verbal beauty in general and verbal figures in particular<sup>[16]</sup>. However in later times, the *gāmbhīrya* and the *suśabdatā* of the *Purāṇa* were admitted by Bhoja<sup>[17]</sup>. Bhoja maintains it as *guṇa* pertaining to word as well as to sense but, their definitions of the two *guṇas* do not correspond to the definitions of the *Purāṇa*. *sukumāratā* consists of words mostly of unharsh letters<sup>[18]</sup>. This *guṇa* of the *Purāṇa* is identical to the *sukumāratā guṇa* of Bharata, Daṇḍin and Vāmana<sup>[19]</sup>. That is said to be *udāratā* which consists of elevated words and is endowed with praiseworthy epithets<sup>[20]</sup>. This *guṇa* of the *Purāṇa* is equivalent to the *guṇa* of the same name given by Daṇḍin and Vāmana<sup>[21]</sup>. The *Purāṇa* does not provide the definitions of the last two verbal excellences, viz., *sati* and *yaugikī*. Instead, it incorporates the definition of the *guṇa* named *oja* which is not found included in the list of *śabdaguṇas* of the *Purāṇa*. Defining *ojas* in the words of Daṇḍin the *Purāṇa* states that it consists in the abundance of compound words and forms the life breath of metrical and other composition<sup>[22]</sup>.

## 5. Arthaguna

The *Agnipurāṇa* defines the *arthaguṇa* as that which brings out the excellence of a described object by any word<sup>[23]</sup>. It enumerates six varieties of the *arthaguṇa*, namely, *mādhurya*, *samvidhāna*, *komalatvam*, *udāratā*, *prauḍhi* and *sāmayikatva*<sup>[24]</sup>. According to the *Purāṇa*, *mādhurya* consists in maintaining tranquil forbearance and calmness of appearance under the influence of anger and malice<sup>[25]</sup>. This definition of the *Purāṇa* is identical to Bharata's definition of *mādhurya* under *sāmānyābhinaya*<sup>[26]</sup>. *Samvidhāna* consists of the effort for the accomplishment of an expected object<sup>[27]</sup>.

An arrangement of words free from rigidity appearing after setting aside laxity of structure is known as *komalatā*<sup>[28]</sup>. The origin of these two *arthaguṇas* namely, *samvidhāna* and *komalatā* cannot be traced in any other work of *Alaṅkāraśāstra*. The excessive gracefulness of intention which indicates the characteristic of the disposition of being aimed at explicitly is called *udāratā*<sup>[29]</sup>. Though it is difficult to trace the original source of this yet, in essence it corresponds to Bhoja's *arthaguṇa udātatva*<sup>[30]</sup>. According to the *Agnipurāṇa*, that is called *prauḍhi* in which there are mature reasonings impregnated with logical reasonings bringing about accomplishment of what is intended<sup>[31]</sup>. However, the reference of *prauḍhi* is found discussed in the *Kāvyālaṅkāra Sūtravṛtti* of Vāmana in connection with the *arthaguṇa ojas*<sup>[32]</sup>. Vāmana states that *arthasya prauḍhirojah* it means maturity of meaning is called *ojas*. Afterwards, Bhoja accepts *prauḍhi* as an *arthaguṇa*. Bhoja's definition of *prauḍhi* appears to correspond partly to the *Agnipurāṇa*'s *arthaguṇa* of the same name<sup>[33]</sup>. *Sāmayikatā* consists in the apprehension of the sense in the demonstrated conclusion of something independent or dependent<sup>[34]</sup>.

## 6. Ubhayaguṇa

The *Agnipurāṇa* defines the *ubhayaguṇa* as that which embellishes both word and sense<sup>[35]</sup>. It has been classified under six different sub – divisions, namely, *prasāda*, *saubhāgya*, *yathāsankhya*, *prasastatā*, *pāka* and *rāga*<sup>[36]</sup>. *Prasāda* consists in the use of such word the meanings of which are well-known<sup>[37]</sup>. This definition of the *Purāṇa* is identical to that of Bharata, Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin and Vāmana<sup>[38]</sup>. According to the *Purāṇa*, *saubhāgya* is that when expressed, suggests some eminent attribute<sup>[39]</sup>. This definition of the *Purāṇa* is substantially equivalent to that of Daṇḍin's first definition of the *udāra*<sup>[40]</sup>. *Yathāsankhya* is relative enumeration extended to similar things<sup>[41]</sup>. This corresponds to the *yathāsankhya alaṅkāra* of Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Rudrata and Vāmana<sup>[42]</sup>. It is worthy to note here that the *Agnipurāṇa* is the only known work which converts *yathāsankhya* to a *guṇa*. *Prasastatā* is the description of even a terrible object by means of a word not terrible, when there is an occasion<sup>[43]</sup>. *Prasastatā* of the *Agnipurāṇa* partly corresponds to Vāmana's *arthaguṇa saukumārya*, where inauspicious statements like *mṛtam* etc. are avoided by use of some agreeable expressions like *yaśahśeṣam gataṁ* etc<sup>[44]</sup>. It is evident that Bhoja incorporates the characteristics of the *Purāṇa*'s *prasastya* in his *arthaguṇa susabdatā*<sup>[45]</sup>. *Pāka* is that which implies the highest stage of perfection of a poetic composition<sup>[46]</sup>. The *Agnipurāṇa* is the earliest extent work to define the *pākaguṇa*. The concept of *pāka* is earlier than Vāmana who quotes a verse mentioning it as resulting from the *vaidarbhī rīti*<sup>[47]</sup>. The *Agnipurāṇa* sub divides *pāka* into four varieties, of which only two, viz., *mṛdvikā pāka* and *nārikela pāka* have been mentioned by the *Purāṇa*<sup>[48]</sup>. The *Purāṇa* only defines the *mṛdvikāpāka guṇa*. It holds that *mṛdvikāpāka* is a *guṇa* in which there is sweetness at the beginning and at the end<sup>[49]</sup>. *Rāga* is a particular *guṇa* used with a view to attain the beauty of poetry<sup>[50]</sup>. It excels even the natural grace when put to constant practice. It is of three varieties, viz., *Haridrārāga*, *Kausumbhārāga* and the *Nīlīrāga*<sup>[51]</sup>. But, the later rhetoricians, like, Bhoja, Viśvanātha treat *rāga* as an aspect of *śṛṅgāra* but not as a *guṇa*. They classify it into three varieties, namely, *nīlīrāga*, *kusumbhārāga* and *manjisthārāga*<sup>[52]</sup>. *Ubhayaguṇa* variety of the *Purāṇa* cannot be traced back into any earlier works on *Alaṅkāraśāstra*.

At the end of the Agnipurāṇa's chapter on *guṇa* it refers to *vaiśeṣikaguṇa* and defines it as that which is within the range of its own characteristics is to be recognized as the particular [53]. Thus the *Purāṇa* does not provide any specific definition but tends to convey that this type of *guṇa* is to be known from the particular characteristics assigned to it by individual writers. The *vaiśeṣikaguṇa* of the *Purāṇa* differs from Bhoja, according to whom the *vaiśeṣika* *guṇas* are those *doṣas* which cease to be such under special circumstances [54].

## 7. Conclusion

The present paper reveals that the *Agnipurāṇa* deals with the *guṇas* at great length by observing the views of the earlier rhetoricians. It also incorporates in it some different aspects of *guṇa*, which are untraceable in any work of early rhetoricians, as discussed in the paper. Thus, the *alamkāra* section of the *Agnipurāṇa* can be treated as a valuable source for the study of Sanskrit poetics.

## 8. References

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2. NŚ., 17.94
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5. sambhavatyēṣa sāmānyo vaiśeṣika iti dvidhā // Ibid., 346.3b
6. Ibid., 346.4b
7. NŚ., XVII.133, Kāvyaāla., III.1.4, KD., I.41
8. Kāvya Sū. V., 3.1.4, 3.2.1
9. SK., I.60, SP., p.24
10. śabdāmāśrayate kāvyam śarīram yaḥ sa tadguṇaḥ / AP., 346.5a
11. Ibid., 346.5b-6a
12. suśliṣṭa sanniveśatvam śabdānām śleṣa ucyaṭe / Ibid., 346.6b
13. NŚ., XVII. 134, KD., I.43-44, Kāvya Sū V., III.1.1
14. AP., 346.7
15. Ibid., 346.8
16. Kāvyaāla., I.14-15
17. SK., I.64, 78; SP., p.24
18. anīṣṭhurākṣaprāpyaśabdatā sukumārātā / AP., 346.9a
19. NŚ., XVII.142, KD., I.76-78, Kāvya Sū. V., III.1.23
20. uttānapadataudāryayutaślāghyaiirviśeṣaṇaiḥ // AP., 346.9b
21. KD., I.76, Kāvya Sū. V., III.1.23
22. AP., 346.10a
23. Ibid., 346.11
24. Ibid., 346.12
25. krodherśyākāragāmbhīryānmādhuryadhairyagāhitā/ Ibid., 346.13a
26. NŚ., XXIV.27
27. AP., Ibid., 346.13b
28. Ibid., 346.14
29. Ibid., 346.15
30. SK., I.81
31. Ibid., 346.16
32. Kāvya Sū. V., III.2.2
33. SK., I.65, 78, SP., p.24
34. AP., 346.17
35. śabdārthāvupakurvāṇo namnobhyaguṇaḥ smṛtaḥ/ Ibid., 346.18a
36. tasya prasādaḥ saubhāgyam yathasamkhyā praśatatā/ pāko rāga iti prājñaiḥ ṣaṭprapañcavipañcītāḥ// Ibid., 346.18b-19a
37. suprasidhārthapadatā prasāda iti gīyate/ Ibid., 19b
38. NŚ., XVII.135, Kāvyaāla., II.3, KD., I.45, Kāvya Sū V., III.1.6
39. AP., 346.20
40. KD., I.76
41. yathāsamkhyamanūddeśaḥ sāmānyamatidiśyate/ AP., 346.21a
42. Kāvyaāla. II.89, KD., II.273, Kāvya Sū V., IV.3.17, KL., VII.34
43. AP., 346.21b-22a
44. aparusyam saukumaryam// Kāvya Sū. V., 3.2.12
45. SK., I.83
46. uccaiḥ pariṇatīḥ kāpi pāka ityabhidhīyate/ AP., 346.22b
47. udayati hisa tadrkkvapi vaidarbhitau/ saḥṛdayaḥṛdayānām rañjakaḥ ko'pi pākaḥ// Kāvya Sū V., 1.2.21
48. mṛdvikānārikelāmbu pākabhedāccaturvidhaḥ/ AP., 346.23a
49. ādāvante ca sau (sā) rasyam mṛdvīkāpāka eva saḥ/ Ibid., 346.23b
50. kāvyācchayā viśeṣo yaḥ sa rāga iti gīyate/ Ibid., 346.24a
51. hāriścaiva kausumbho nīlīrāgaśca sa tridhā/ Ibid., 346.25a
52. SK., V.124, pp.609-610, SD., III.217
53. vaiśeṣikaḥ pariñeyo yaḥ svalakṣaṇagocaraḥ// AP., 346.25b
54. SP., I.61
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