



## Dhvani Theory in Indian Aesthetics

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**Abstract**— Two texts have made significant contributions to Indian Aesthetics throughout the history of Indian literary criticism: *Dhvanyāloka* by Ānandavardhana and *Locana*, a commentary on the first text by Abhinavagupta. Both works have had a direct or indirect influence on all Indian Sanskrit critics. One of Ānandavardhana's significant contributions is that he incorporates emotions and other association meanings into language meaning. As a result, the poetics expanded on conceptions of primary and secondary meaning. Given that Ānandavardhana was influenced by Bharathari, the proponent of the *sphota* theory, he highlighted the need of considering the entire utterance as an important unitary linguistic symbol. He had also demonstrated that the meaning of an utterance is influenced by context, and that the logical interpretation of meaning of a sentence based on individual word meanings is often fallacious. He also asserted that the overall meaning of an utterance may differ from the meaning of the individual words. Bharathari influenced Ānandavardhana to build his theory of language, but his attempt was limited to poetic meaning. In this research article, we shall make an attempt to comprehend the suggestive sense, also known as *dhvani*, along with its various forms, as described by Ānandavardhana.

**Keywords**— Suggested Sense, Dhvani Theory, Indian Literary Theories, Indian Aesthetics, Meaning of Literary Works.

*Dhvani* is a suggested sense; the most significant part of the poetry. To know what is this *dhvani*? One should understand the function of the word and go through *Dhvanyāloka*. One should get familiarized with this terminology, poetry; the *Kāvya* is a combination of word and its meaning, what is giving the aesthetic effect upon the reader is the most important thing to be discussed, hence knowing the function of the word is necessary. Grammarians and *Alankarikas*, they mentioned there are three such functions of the word. The first one is *Abhidhā*, there is a function of the word which signifies or denotes, it is a primary sense like this is Mukesh, this is red color, it's a direct meaning etc. The second one is *Laksanā*, the function of the *Laksanā* is to indicate, and when the primary sense is obstructed the word conveys a sense other than the primary sense; but related to it. Third is *Vyanjanā*; the meaning of the word is not limited to its primary sense

but much more than that it has the power to reach beyond the obvious, like a statement made by the head of the family as: 'Sun has set', but it gives different sense or meaning to each one of the family member like wife, son, daughter and father and even to the neighbors etc. So finally we can summarize it like this; *Abhidhā* is a function which gives a direct meaning, the word is called *vācaka* and the meaning is *vācyārtha*. And *Laksanā* is the function, it gives the secondary sense, *lakchaka* is the word and *lakchyārtha* is the meaning, and *vyanjanā* is a suggestion and *vyanjaka* is a word and *vyangārtha* is the meaning. There was much debate under suggestive meaning, though not explicit, far more beautiful and sensitive becomes the object of awareness is regarded as the essence of poetry. The *dhvani* theory of Ānandavardhana focused on the potential of suggestive sense in poetry. *Sabda* with its *vācyārtha* forms the body

of *kāvya*, but the essence of *rasa* can be perceived only through suggestion (*vyājanā*). Thus the suggestive word, the suggested meaning, the power of suggestion with their appropriate relation makes a good poem and delights the people of literary taste (*Sahrdaya*). (Sharma and Shrawan)

There were lot of discussions on the poetry, and what forms the beauty of the poetry; even before Ānandavardhana. Ānandavardhana belongs to the ninth century, before that there were many *Alankārikas* who focused on *sabda* and *artha*, and lingered around the word and its meaning. Because a poetry is defined as: “*Sabda-Artha sahītau Kavyam*” (Bhamaha), poem is the combination of *sabda* and *artha*. Earlier poetics; like Bhamaha, Dandin and Vāmana, all these people concentrated on the *sabda* and *artha*, which is the body of the poem and that is causing beauty to the poem. Ānandavardhana, he developed a new theory and pointed out that words of great poets continue to resonant in our hearts and give numerous meanings as one reflects on it. Though he does not say it specific explicitly, hence the poet does not say anything explicitly but it resonates and pleases the heart. There has a responsive reader *Sahrdaya*, it should go beyond the meaning to capture the suggested or hinted meaning and enjoy the poetry, that is *dhvani*.

*Sabda* and *artha*, the word and the meaning; they are the body of the *kāvya*, like how the human beings have the body and the inner soul is there. That inner soul, he considered it as *Dhvani*. *Dhvanyāloka* is divided into four chapters they are called *udyota* (flash), and that way the whole text is written in three parts *kārikā*, *vrtti* and examples. In the first chapter of *Dhvanyāloka*, he establishes *dhvani* by refuting all the objections by answering all the questions and doubts of the anti *dhvani* scholars. The second chapter deals with the varieties of *dhvani* from the standpoint of this suggested – *vyangya*. The third chapter deals with the varieties of *Dhvani* from the standpoint of the suggestion – *vyanjaka*. Fourth chapter deals with the endlessness of the creative imagination of the poet and main *Rasa* in *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*.

Now coming to what is this suggestive meaning, what Ānandavardhana meant by such a suggestive meaning is:

प्रतीयमानं पुनरन्यदेव वस्त्वस्ति वाणीषु  
महाकवीनाम् ।

यत्तत्प्रसिद्धावयवातिरिक्तं विभाति  
लावण्यमिवाङ्गनासु ॥ (*Dhvanyāloka*.1.4)

Like the distinct charm of a fair woman other than have beautiful limbs, which pleases the eyes of the beholder, in the same way there will be a meaning in the

words of the Mahākavis, which is referred to as the *pratiyamāna* or suggestive meaning that which flashes that is known as *Dhvani*. In *vācya*, *vācaka* and *sabdas*; there will be a *pratiyamānartha* that which beautifies the whole poem like the beautiful ladies limbs other than the limbs how her wholesome beauties gives a pleasure to the eyes, in the same way *pratiyamānartha* also gives pleasure to the reader.

He defines *Dhvani* like this: that kind of poetry is called as *dhvani kāvya*; in which the conventional meaning or the conventional word rendered its meanings subordinate and suggests the intended are implied meaning, is termed as “*dhvani*” or “suggested poetry” by the learned people.

*Vyanjanā* is the term for the suggestive power of language. Ānandavardhana’s major argument is that utterances have literal meaning and can also communicate a 'socio-cultural meaning,' which comprises everything other than the literal meaning. And the term 'meaning' includes not only the information given, but also the feeling elicited; this, of course, implies the concept of suggestive power of meaning. It comprises all contextual aspects, including intonation, emphasis, gestures, and even the pure sounds involved in the utterance, as well as the literal sense, as indicators of the whole meaning of an utterance. Because Ānandavardhana is mainly interested in poetic language, he ignores many of these aspects of speech in his observations. His main interest is the suggestion of components that are pleasing to the eye. Though *Vyanjanā* comprises all of these components in its broadest definition, Ānandavardhana only analyzes this problem in its narrower form as applied to poetry.

The end of the previous period, which had witnessed the discovery and enunciation of the principles of poetic forms like *Alankāra*, *Guna*, *Riti* and *Vritti*, which come up due to the inadequacy of the principle of *Anukriti* of Bharata Muni, marks the beginning of the most creative age in the history of literary criticism. This age was characterized by the development of a number of innovative approaches to analyzing works of literature. Ānandavardhana is credited with formulating the notion of *Dhvani*, which is regarded as the ultimate source of poetic appeal. According to Ānandavardhana, the *Dhvani* theory went through an extensive amount of revisions throughout the course of its long history, and there was a significant amount of debate around it. Speculation about “*Kāvyaśyātma dhvanirīti*” (*Dhvanyāloka*.1.1) remained for a considerable amount of time in learned societies;

however, it was only defined for the first time by Ānandavardhana.

The doctrine of *sphota*, which was held by the Grammarians, served as the foundation for and the inspiration for the development of this *Dhvani* school of thought. The *sphota* of a word is said to be revealed by the experience of the last sound of the word in combination with the imprints left by the experiences of the sounds that came before it. This is according to the Grammarians. This idea of *śabda*, which is actualized through sounds, is put to use by the proponents of *Dhvani*. They maintain that poetry is appealing to the man of taste (*Sahrdaya*) due to the fact that it conveys a proposed meaning that is carried through by a number of words or sentences. The usual significant capacity of words, the denotative sense, and the metaphorical meaning are not similar to the suggestiveness that is peculiarly innate to the language of poetry. This capacity is distinct from the metaphorical meaning and the denotative sense. The process that is known as suggestion, or *Vyanjanā*, is the action that is engaged in acquiring the sense that is being proposed.

Take this as an example: if someone states that there is a hamlet in the Ganges that goes by the name "*gangayamghosah*," what exactly do they mean by that? It is illogical to suppose that a hamlet might be found in the Ganges, considering that the river takes the form of a current. It's possible that this is meant to be interpreted figuratively, as the hamlet being on the bank of the river. It's possible that the person mentioned this. What does he hope to accomplish by omitting to mention this fact and instead asserting that the hamlet is located in the river? If it is accepted that the speaker is able to appropriately articulate himself, then it is plausible to think that he is trying to convey some sort of meaning when he says that the hamlet is "in the Ganga" rather than "on the banks of the Ganga." The third function of language is known as *Vyanjanā*, and it refers to making suggestions. This function comes into play when the speaker's intention is revealed. It is clear that the speaker intends to imply, through the use of such a phrase, that the hamlet, due to its close proximity to the Ganges, is as calm, pleasant, and holy as if it were located in the current itself. This is shown by the fact that the usage reveals that the speaker intends to suggest that. These concepts of coldness, holiness, and pleasantness become sources of delight when they are offered to the reader or the hearer in this way. When looking to obtain this kind of suggested meaning, there is a special exercise for the mind that a person who has a high degree of internal appreciation can take part in, and it gives him a significant amount of pleasure.

We can take another example. There is a verse in the *Kāvyaadarsa* of Dandin:

गच्छ गच्छसि चेत्कन्ता पन्थानं सन्तु तेशिवाः  
|

ममापि जन्म तत्रैव भूयाद्यत्र गतो भवान् ॥  
(Kavyadarsa - II, 1)

(My dear, if thou has to go away, do so.  
Then thy paths may have to be safe.

But let me also be born again in that  
place, where thou wouldst be gone").

Her beloved is about to depart on a long journey, and she is suffering a tremendous deal because of his leaving. It would seem that she gives her lover permission to leave and wishes him well on his voyage. However, she also prays to be reborn in the same place as her lover, so that they can be together again in the hereafter. In this way, she is implying that in his absence, she will have to pass away from the anguish of being parted from him, and as a result, he should not begin his voyage. However, being the respectful and obedient wife that she was, she would not say anything that would be considered unlucky at the time of her husband's departure. If she did convey the concepts openly, they are probably crude and would be considered self evident. However, when they are suggested, they transform into poetry and become delightful. This verse seems to be implying a couple of different things. To begin, would there be a thought or the form of a request that her partner not continue on the long journey? Second, there is the powerful feeling, also known as *Rasa*, which is characterized by an overwhelming sense of love as well as the agonizing awareness that a parting is near. In certain poems an *Alankāra* is suggested. *Vāstu*, *Alankāra*, and *Rasa* are the three forms of *Dhvani*, and they are responsible for the vitality of poetry.

There are many illustrations of the power of suggestion to be found in western literature as well. The scene with Brutus and Portia, which takes place just before Julius Caesar is murdered, is a fantastic illustration of the evocative power that Shakespeare has in conveying the nobility of the marriage as well as the purity of their married life. When Brutus goes to the Senate hall, Portia becomes concerned for his safety and becomes agitated. She urges the kid Lucius to rush to the Senate house without telling him anything, and she cries out about how weak she is. "I have a man's intelligence, but a woman's might," is how I like to think of myself (Act II Scene III). Her agitation is suggestive of pity for her helplessness. In the battlefield when Brutus says calmly that she drank fire because she could not bear his separation, his words

brilliantly suggest the faithfulness and the nobility of Portia.

The tragic conclusion of Desdemona is really upsetting. It is a literal deluge of *Karuna Rasa* that is pouring forth. When she is speaking to Emilia, Iago's wife, she recalls a song about willow that was sung by Barbara, her mother's maid. Barbara sang the song to her mother. It was Barbara's swan song before she passed away. Desdemona starts to sing it at this point. The fact that Othello is about to show there only serves to heighten the tragic nature of the situation. As soon as Emilia leaves, Desdemona goes to sleep in the bed. Othello comes and kisses her. She wakes up. After a brief conversation with her, Othello smothers her and thinks she is dead. While everything is going on, Emilia arrives, witnesses the awful murder of Desdemona, and asks Othello, "O who hath done the deed?" Desdemona, who is on her deathbed, responds, "Nobody I myself. O, farewell, please convey my gratitude to my kind Lord, farewell, "and dies. (Act V Scene II)

Even as she was drifting away, she pleaded with Emilia to commend her to her loving Lord. Along with this heartbreakingly pitiful scenario, the writer alludes to the noble qualities of Desdemona and her selfless devotion to Othello, even after he has killed her. This facet of Desdemona's nature cannot be conveyed in any statement of fact due to the nature of the facts themselves. It is only the strength of the "*Vāstu dhvani*" that is enriched by the potent suggestion of tragic sentiment, which is referred to as the "*Karunarasa dhvani*."

In point of fact, the formidable power of *dhvani* is the source of life for all of the vibrant characters in plays and books, even those who owe their existence to the imaginative brilliance of literary artists like Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. The characteristics of the characters are hinted at gradually from one scene to the next or from one chapter to the next, and they don't fully materialize in the thoughts of intelligent people until the very end.

Therefore, it is not the typical connotative function of words—the primary and secondary meanings and ideas—that are responsible for depicting the characteristics of the characters; rather, it is a third activity that is inherent in words and is referred to as *dhvani*. There are many different types of *dhvani*, and one of those types is known as variants of *dhvani*. Varieties of *dhvani* include provocative phrases and thoughts, as well as the lyrical passage that incorporates them.

We find ourselves drawn to the works of our greatest novelists and playwrights because of the genuine richness of life that they depict in their works. We are as familiar with and convinced by them as possible; we

empathize with them to the same profound degree; and we love and despise them just as if they were real people living in the world of flesh and blood. All of this is only possible because of the power that *Dhvani* possesses. The ability of a skilled artist to pick and accumulate significant details, as well as the ability to stimulate the imagination of the reader through the use of subtle infrequent touches that transmit many suggestions, is one of the artist's most recognizable traits. In most cases, the author takes a back seat and allows his characters to bring attention to themselves by their words and deeds. He then bolsters their self-definition by having other characters in the novel make observations and evaluations about them. The way in which a character should be made to unveil them is an approach that is completely valid. This technique is referred to as *Vāstu dhvani*.

It is a well-known fact that any great book, be it a novel or a play, or any other notable piece of literature, is based on a particular view of the world, and this view typically conveys some sort of philosophy about how one should live their life. This is in stark contrast to the ethical lessons that these authors convey through the exchanges of characters like Bhishma, Vidura, and Shrikrishna. They are the direct teachings passed down from great souls. In addition to these fundamental tenets, the authors present a variety of ethical principles and philosophical ideas during the course of the story's recounting of events and descriptions of its settings. All of these are often suggested through the use of either *Vāstu dhvani* or *Rasa dhvani*. (Sarma)

*Dhvani* is available in a wide variety of flavors. But the significance of the other two cannot be overstated. The first is *Samlakshyakrama dhvani*. A good illustration of this can be found in the sixth canto of Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava*. The envoys of Lord Siva approach Himavant, Parvati's father, with the intention of asking for his daughter's hand in marriage to Lord Siva. Parvati and her father are there in the room at the time that Himavant is having a conversation with the leader of the seers, Angiras. The idea that the Lord has presented her with gives her a great deal of joy. However, she is unable to exhibit or express her delight at being in the presence of her father and the elderly seers because of her inherent modesty. She acts as if she is absorbed in counting the petals of the lotus with her face set down as a means of concealing the natural shyness and happiness that she possesses.

There is a hint here of Parvati's bashfulness, which is a *vyabhichāri bhāva* that contributes to the growth of love. After going through all of the steps described above, we don't become aware of the *lajjā*, or

shamefulness, of Parvati until some time has passed. Because the *dhvani* is accomplished in stages, this type of *dhvani* is referred to as *Samlaksyakrama dhvani*.

एवं वादिनि देवर्षौ पार्श्वे पितुरथोमुखी ।  
लीला कमलपत्राणि गणयामास पार्वती ॥  
(*Kumarasambhava*)

The *Asamlaksyakrama dhvani* in which *rasa dhvani* is implied is the second one. In this case, the *vācyārtha*, or the meaning that is being represented, is the representation of the *vibhāvas* (causes and determinants), *anubhāvas* (consequent), and *vyabhichāri bhāvas* (transient emotions). When we have an understanding of all of these three things at the same time, an emotional state known as *sthāyibhāva* (permanent emotions) is instantaneously sparked within us. This emotional state continues to develop until it reaches its peak when we recognize that our own emotion is invariably accompanied by a thrill. Another poem from *Kumarasambhava* is available for our perusal:

हरस्तु किंचित्परिलुप्त धैर्यः चंद्रोदयारंभ  
इवांबुराशिः ।  
उमामुखे बिंब फलाधरोष्ठे व्यापारयामास  
विलोचनानि ॥ (*Kumarasambhava*)

Therefore, it is not the typical connotative function of words—the primary and secondary meanings and ideas—that are responsible for depicting the characteristics of the characters; rather, it is a third activity that is inherent in words and is referred to as *dhvani*. There are many different types of *dhvani*, and one of those types is known as variants of *dhvani*. Varieties of *dhvani* include provocative phrases and thoughts, as well as the lyrical passage that incorporates them. (Sarma)

Along with the god of the spring season, Manmatha, also known as Cupid, travels to the home of Lord Siva in order to arouse the love that Lord Siva has for Parvati. Manmatha makes an attempt to pierce Siva with his arrow, which is called *Sammohanam*, when she bows down herself before the Lord. By the power of the arrow, which was still in the bow, Lord Siva, who was beginning to lose some of his calmness, similar to the way the ocean does at the beginning of the rising of the Moon, focuses his looks towards the face of Parvati, who had a red lower lip, similar to the *bimbafruit*. Immediately, Parvati responds by lowering her face and seeming embarrassed. The Lord's falling in love with Parvati causes him to lose his typically strong will and serenity, and it also causes him to focus on the lovely features of Parvati's face. The *vyabhichāri bhāvas* of eagerness, agitation, and nervousness are instantly suggested to us by these *vibhāvas* and *anubhāvas*

which then lead to the suggestion of *Sringāra rasa*. This suggestion (*Sringāra rasa*) falls under the umbrella of *Asamlaksyakrama dhvani*.

It is true that poets focus their attention first and foremost on the explicit sense. However, this fact does not imply that *Dhvani* is unimportant or undervalued. A man eager to view things (at night) is seen looking for a torch first as a means of achieving his goal. The torch isn't an end in itself; it's only a tool for achieving another goal. Poets, likewise, are interested in the explicit sense as a means of communicating their other ideas in a suggestive manner. The suggested concepts are the goals that the poets use to drive their selection of other objects. And, just as comprehension of a phrase is dependent on comprehension of its constituent words, comprehension of the suggested sense is dependent on comprehension of the explicit sense. The proposed sense is provided solely through the primary sense. Suggestion cannot be carried out without additionally taking into account the usual connotation. (*Dhvanyāloka*.1.13)

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