

## **An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory**

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**Lecture- 47**

**Theory of Dosa or Poetic Blemish: Dandin's View**

Hello everyone,

In the previous video lectures, we saw the theory of doṣa conceptualized by Bharata and Bhāmaha. In this lecture, we are going to see how Daṇḍin sees the idea of doṣa. Daṇḍin is of the view that a poet should at any cost avoid the presence of doṣas in his work. According to him, just as a body, extremely healthy and beautiful, looks blemished due to discoloration, so also a poetic composition marked by the presence of dosas looks less charming. He is of the view that the only way to ward off poetic faults is to master kāvyāśāstra. A poet desirous of composing a good kāvya should always avoid kāvya doṣas by his knowledge about kāvyāśārīra. According to Daṇḍin, “Just as a blind person cannot distinguish between different colours, so also a poet untrained in poetics cannot differentiate between poetic merits and faults” (8). He goes on to say that a poet, irrespective of whether he is naturally endowed with poetic genius or not, can master the art of poetry simply by learning and practicing kāvyāśāstra (63). Daṇḍin observes that a word that shines forth with the absence of doṣas, and the presence of the guṇas and alaṅkāras will undoubtedly function as the sacred cow kāmadhenu. It will fulfil any wish that one has, whereas a word infested with kāvyadoṣas will reveal the lack of knowledge of the poet.

Like Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin also mentions ten doṣas. These ten poetic faults mentioned by Daṇḍin include apārtha, vyartha, sasamśaya, apakrama, śabdahīna, yatibhr̥ṣṭa, bhinnavṛtta, visandhika, deśavirodha, kālavirodha, kalāvirodha, lokavirodha, nyāyavirodha, and āgamavirodha. Here you need to remember that the dosas kālavirodha, kalāvirodha, lokavirodha, nyāyavirodha, and āgamavirodha are treated as one single dosa. In other words, after the ninth dosa, deśavirodha the remaining five dosas are put together and treated as a single dosa.

In addition to these ten guṇas, Daṇḍin also refers to some other doṣas such as pratijñāhāni, hetuhāni, dṛṣṭāntahāni, sādhyasādhanāhāni, prasiddhodaharaṇopanyāsa, etc. But he does not

initiate a discussion on these ideas, citing the reason that the debate on these doṣas is so opinionated that it will not ultimately take us anywhere. In this lecture, we are going to see the ten doṣas mentioned by Daṇḍin in detail.

The first doṣa that Daṇḍin deals with is apārtha. According to Daṇḍin, apārtha is the absence of meaning due to the lack of the logical connection between sentences. As an example of apārtha, Daṇḍin cites the following verse: “The sea is drunk by the gods. I am old and invalid. The clouds are roaring. The elephant Irvat is dear to Indra” (III.129). Daṇḍin observes that these sentences are complete in themselves. But due to the lack of a logical connection between the sentences, here the sentences give no meaning together. Daṇḍin also reminds us that we cannot consider this blemish as a nitya doṣa or eternal doṣa. He is of the view that this will turn out to be a merit in the representation of children, and characters who are inebriated or mentally deranged (III.130). It is also significant to note that this doṣa is very much similar to Bharata’s abhiplutārtha.

Now, the next doṣa called vyartha. The contradictory meaning that exists in two consecutive sentences is the doṣa called vyartha. The following is an example that Daṇḍin cites to illustrate this poetic blemish: “You should win all your enemies. You, who are kind to all, have no enemies in the world” (III.132). Here in the first sentence, the speaker says that the hero should win over all his enemies and then in the next sentence, he says that he has no enemies, since he is so powerful. These two sentences are mutually contradictory to each other. Daṇḍin notes why does the speaker need to tell the hero to win over the enemies, when he has no enemies to win over. Again, Daṇḍin reminds us that this is also not a nitya doṣa or an eternal fault. Sometimes, this doṣa will turn out to be a guṇa, especially in the portrayal of a person who is under an intense mental conflict (III. 133). The following is an example for this variety: “It does not suit an Arya like me to have an illicit relationship with the wives of other men. Oh, when will I get an opportunity to relish the tender lips of the wives of other women” (III.134). Here the speaker is under extreme mental conflict. He wants to have a relation with other women, but at the same time his family legacy does not allow him to do it. This cognitive dissonance has driven him crazy. So, he utters statements that are contrary to each other. In this context, says Daṇḍin, this doṣa will turn out to be a guṇa.

The next doṣa that Daṇḍin wants to talk about is ekārtha. We have already seen this doṣa in Bharata and Bhāmaha. However, I will explain this once again for you. Ekārtha is tautology

or punarukti. The following is an example of ekārtha that Daṇḍin cites: “The roaring clouds in the sky make the sad lady with the long hair sorrowful” (III. 136). In this example, the words, ‘sad’ and ‘sorrowful’ convey the same meaning. The author could have just said, “The roaring clouds in the sky make the lady with the long hair sorrowful.” But, by way of repeating the same idea twice, the poet has committed the poetic fault called ekārtha.

But Daṇḍin again reminds us that this is not a poetic blemish, if it is used in a speech that is spoken to express pity, etc. (III.137). The following is a verse that Daṇḍin uses to substantiate this point: “Alas! The beautiful lady is being tortured by pitiless Kama. Alas! The lady whose speech is as sweet as the honey is tortured!” (III.138). In this specific context, the same idea is repeated over and over again. But according to Daṇḍin, it is not a doṣa, but an ornament, since this speech is used to express the speaker’s mercy towards the lady.

The next doṣa that Daṇḍin mentions is apakrama. Apakrama is the absence of order. This is an example of apakrama. “Glory to Śambu, Nārāyaṇa and Brahma who do the cosmic functions of maintenance, creation, and destruction” (III.145). In this example, the order of trinity is Śambu, Nārāyaṇa and Brahma. But in the next part of the sentence, the functions performed by them are not mentioned in conformity with the order of the trinity given in the first part. We know that Śambu performs the cosmic function of destruction; Nārāyaṇa, that of sustenance and finally Brahma performs the cosmic function of creation. So, ideally the poet should have followed the order destruction, maintenance, and creation. But instead, the poet follows a different order—maintenance, creation, and destruction. So, this is the poetic blemish called apakrama. Here also, Daṇḍin reminds us that this is not a nitya doṣa or eternal issue. If the poet is changing the order to conform to the metrical pattern and clarity of meaning, it is not a problem.

The next doṣa is śabdahīna. Śabdahīna is the ungrammatical use. Daṇḍin observes that a śabdahīna usage will become acceptable, if it is approved by the cultured people.

Yatibhraṣṭa, the next doṣa that Daṇḍin mentions, is the fault of deviation from the rules of metrical pause. Daṇḍin is of the view that due to the doṣa called yatibhraṣṭa, the poetic verses will turn out to be less melodious. The next doṣa is bhinnvṛtta. According to Bhāmaha, the fault called bhinnvṛtta occurs, when the rules of metrical caesura have been ignored.

The next doṣa is called visandhika. Visandhika is the absence of conjunctions or the necessary euphonic combination. After visandhika, Daṇḍin mentions deśavirodha. What is deśavirodha? We have already see this variety in Bhamaha. Deśavirodha is the statements that are against the known facts about places such as mountains, forests and nation. The following is an example of a deśavirodha statement that Dandin cites to illustrate this poetic fault: “The Malaya Mountains are decked up by the presence of the camphor trees” (III.165). According to Daṇḍin we cannot find the camphor trees in the Malaya Mountains. What we can find in the Malaya mountains is the sandal trees. Here goes one more example that Daṇḍin cites. “There are giant elephants in the Kalinga” (III.165). According to Daṇḍin, the elephants are found not in Kaling, but in the Island of Simhalas. Since, this is a statement that goes against the well-known facts about the places, it is considered a fault called deśavirodha. Here goes one more example which is related to the nation. The land of Chola is endowed with the banks of the river Kaveri. Since the river Kaveri does not flow through the land of Chola, this is again a deśavirodha statement.

Daṇḍin is of the view that even a deśavirodha statement can turn out to be a poetic excellence, if properly used by the poet. Here goes an example given by Daṇḍin where a deśavirodha statement becomes poetic excellence. In consequence of the prowess of that king, his gardens became the home of the heavenly trees whose foliage furnished freshest garments to ladies. Technically speaking, this is an example of the doṣa called deśavirodha because the heavenly trees are found only in the heaven. The reference to their presence on earth is a deśavirodha fault. But, here in this context, the author has used this reference to show the prowess of the king. So, it is not a doṣa in this context.

The next doṣa that Daṇḍin refers to is the doṣa called kālavirodha. Kālavirodha is a statement that is against the well-known facts about time. Daṇḍin gives a series of examples in this respect. For example, "The swans sing during the rainy season." Daṇḍin says that the swans never sing during the rainy season. Similarly, “the summers are getting worse with the presence of rain clouds.” It is a known fact that it is not possible for the rain clouds to appear during the summers. So this statement is also an example of Kālavirodha.

Daṇḍin reminds us that as we saw before, this can also become a poetic merit, if properly used by a poet with proper skill. The following verse is an example of an instance where this doṣa turns out to be a guṇa:

"The grating wind, presaging destruction of the kings, was blowing, shaking off the sprouts of the [autumnal] Saptachohbada trees along with the pollen of the [ rainy-season ] Kadamba."

In this context, the war is happening in the season of autumn. So the reference to the sprouts of the Saptachohbada trees is correct. Saptachohbada trees bloom in autumn. But the Kadamba trees never bloom in autumn. They bloom in the rainy season. So, technically it is a kāladoṣa. But Daṇḍin says that the reference to the destructive nature of the wind in this context of the portrayal of a war scene is extremely beautiful. So, the doṣa called kālavirodha gets hidden in this context.

Now the next variety of doṣa is called kalāvirodha. What is kalāvirodha? Kalāvirodha is a statement which is against the accepted norms related to arts in the sastras. Dandin explains this poetic blemish in detail. He says that the sthayibhavas of vira and sṛngara rasas are respectively utsaha and rati. Contrary to this dictum, if anyone says that the sthayibhava of vira rasa is krodha and that of sṛngara is vismaya, then the poet will commit the blemish called kalāvirodha. Dandin says that, similarly, the poets should be versed in the technicalities related to all the sixty-four arts.

Daṇḍin is of the view that kalāvirodha can also become a poetic excellence at times, as in the following example. "The inharmonious songs, coming from the mouths of their female companions who were frightened by the propelling of the swing inflame the passion of their lovers." According to saṅgītaśāstra, an inharmonious song can never make the listeners happy. Only a song in tune can delight the listeners. But the poet here says, "the inharmonious songs from the mouths of the frightened women delighted their male lovers." Although this statement is infested with the doṣa called kalāvirodha, it is used to highlight strong passion and love between the female companions and the male lovers. Here, the poet wants to say that the love between the two is so strong that even the frightened wail of the female lover turns out to be musical to the male lover.

The next doṣa is lokavirodha. Lokavirodha is that kind of doṣa where things are represented contrary to the way they naturally appear in the world. The following is an example of lokavirodha. "The elephants with manes." We know that the mane is found in the lions, not

in the elephants. So it is a doṣa called lokavirodha. The following are the other examples given by Daṇḍin: "The horse with a horn," the castor-oil plant with a weighty trunk;" we know that horses do not have trunks and the castor-oil plant is weak. So, these statements are examples of the doṣa called lokavirodha.

In the following example, Daṇḍin shows how a lokavirodha statement can at times become a poetic merit. Here goes the example cited by Dandin. "This lovelorn youth, tormented by the affliction caused by separation from his lady-love, regards fire as cooler than the lunar rays." This line talks about the condition of a lovelorn person. We know that in reality the fire is hot, and the rays of the moon does not have any heat. But, according to poetic fancy, the rays of the moon has the ability to remind a person of his lover. So, the thoughts about his lover who is not with him now are unbearable for the person suffering from the parting. So, the poet says that the fire is cooler than the lunar rays. Here, although it is a lokavirodha statement, it appears charming to the readers.

The next doṣa is nyāyavirodha. **nyāyavirodha. Nyāyavirodha** is the poetic blemish that arises out of the statements which go against the branches of philosophy such as nyāya.

The next doṣa that Daṇḍin mentions is āgama virodha. Āgama virodha is the conflict with mandates in scriptures. The following is an example of āgama virodha: "This boy, although his rite of Initiation or Upanayana was not performed, learnt the Vedas from the teacher." In this example, it is said that the boy who has not completed upanayana has learnt the Vedas. According to the teachings of smṛti, the Vedic education without upanayana is not acceptable. Daṇḍin also says that āgamavirodha is applicable only to the case of subjects related to human beings. For divine entities like deities, it is not a fault at all. He cites the following example to substantiate his point: "The daughter of the Panchala king, although the wife of the five sons of Pandu, became the foremost of chaste ladies: such is the Divine dispensation." According to the rules set in the scripture, says Daṇḍin, a woman having relations with many men is not a chaste woman. But in the case of divine entities, this rule is not applicable. At this point, we also need to note that many of these examples given by these theoreticians will look politically incorrect statements.

So, now we have covered all the ten dosas mentioned by Dandin. After elaborating on all these ten dosas, Dandin concludes his discussion with the following words: "A person exercising his intellect along the method exhibited by the above prescriptions of Bharata and

others secures enjoyment and wins fame, just like a young man in the company of many a wine-eyed lady seeking his company."