

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory
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Lecture- 55
Vakrokti: Pada-pūrvārtha-vakrata III

Hello everyone,

In the previous video lecture, we saw three kinds of vakratās under padapurvartha vakratā. In this class, we are going to see two more varieties under padapurvartha vakratā, namely **liṅga-vaicityra vakratā** and **kriyā-vakratā**. First, let us take a look at liṅga-vaicityra vakratā.

Liṅga-vaicityra vakratā

Liṅga-vaicityra vakratā is vakrokti with respect to the gender of words. This variety is of three kinds. The first variety is found when two genders, quite distinct from each other, are employed to denote one and the same object. The following is an example of this variety of vakratā where two distinct words belonging to two different genders are used to denote the same thing:

“While placing on his shoulder a wreath produced with effort by all seasons, the lotus of Lakṣmī’s hand [karāravinda], shedding drops of honey, was turned into a lovely ear ornament” [karṇapūra].

In this example, Lakṣmī’s hands or karāravinda which is compared to a lotus, appear to be a lovely ear ornament or karṇapūra. Here, it is her hands that later look like a lovely ear ornament. Here the word karāravinda is neutral gender and karṇapūra is masculine gender. Although the word used to refer to the hands was neutral gender, it turned out to be of masculine gender when it was imagined as an ear ornament by poetic fancy. Here the base for the two words is the same, however, these two words belong to two different genders, even though they refer to the same base.

Now let us take a look at the second variety of *liṅga-vaicityra* where even though other genders could be used, the feminine gender is specifically preferred. Kuntaka explains this variety in detail:

“Though the name of an object could be used in all the genders, poets are seen preferring the feminine while designating that object. The purpose is to achieve beauty. It is so because even a name in the feminine is pleasing. The designation in the feminine itself is appealing to the heart; for it becomes suitable for association with *rasa*, etc. to produce a new sense of beauty” (393).

The following example that Kuntaka cites will illustrate this variety further:

“Here is the shore burning in summer heat, presenting a distinctive paleness; the leaves of creepers shaking in the wind of hot sighs. Indeed, the shore suffers hard. Again there is a cloud with the glory of defeating moon. Therefore, I can imagine the impending conquest of the entire earth by the lovely shore united with the cloud!” (393).

Here the Sanskrit word used to refer to ‘shore’ is *taṭī*. Although there are words in all the three genders to denote a ‘shore,’ the poet has specifically chosen the feminine word *taṭī*. This word is chosen specifically to denote the romance between the hero cloud and the heroine shore. Kuntaka notes, “It provides a basis for suggesting the love affair, yet to come, between the heroine, ‘shore,’ and the hero, the cloud.”

Now let us take a look at the last variety of *vakrokti* under *liṅga-vaicityra vakratā*. In this form of *vakratā*, although other genders are possible, a specific gender is significantly used by a poet in harmony with the idea to be conveyed. Kuntaka cites numerous examples for this variety. The decision on the gender is taken by the poet to suit the context. The next variety that we are going to see under *padapūrvārtha vakratā* is *kriyā-vakratā*.

6. Kriyā-vakratā

Kriyā-vakratā is *vakrokti* related to an action. According to Kuntaka, this particular variety is of five kinds, namely the choice of a verb to show the extreme capability of the of subject, attribution of an action which is otherwise not possible for the subject to perform, metaphorical superimposition, and finally the concealment of the direct object. Let us take a look at the first variety, that is the extreme capability of the subject. Kuntaka says that in this

form of *kriyā-vakratā* the subject is so independent that he has all the capability required to bring about the action described. Kuntaka cites the following verse as an example of this form of *kriyā-vakratā*:

“Gaurī smiled and said, "Am I beautified by this, my dear?" Śiva covered her with kisses in reply. May that reply protect us.”

In this example, Śiva could not have possibly indicated the extreme beauty of Pārvatī by any other action so well than by his kiss. Here through an action, the poet has expressed the reply of Śiva that Gaurī was indeed beautiful. This action is possible only because it is Śiva. This shows the extreme capability of Śiva to perform this action. No one can kiss Gaurī thereby expressing this message indirectly.

Now, let us take a look at the second variety where an action is attributed to a subject which cannot otherwise perform this action. Kuntaka explains this variety in detail in the following words:

“There is another variety of this beauty in action, i.e. strikingness due to a different subject. The different subject will not only be appropriate in the context, but also be of the same class. Its beauty lies only in endowing an action with a shade of beauty in a way singularly distinct from the results achieved by other subjects in regard to the same action” (396).

Kuntaka’s definition is composed in a florid style. So, you may be able to understand it properly. So, all that you need to keep in your mind is this: this is a form of *vakratā* where an action is attributed to a subject which cannot otherwise perform this action. The following is an example of this variety of *vakratā* under *kriyā-vakratā*:

“Let those nails of Madhu’s foe which cut asunder the woes of devotees save you.”

In this line, Madhu’s foe is Narasimha, the man-lion avatar of Viṣṇu. The line wishes that let the claws of Narasimha protect the devotee. We know that the function of claws is to cut things or kill entities. Now the same claws are presented as capable of protecting someone.

Here goes one more example:

“May that fire from the shaft of Śiva burn down your sin.”

The function of fire is to burn down things. It causes destruction. Here by placing fire in connection with one's sin, the function of protection which is otherwise not possible for the fire to carry out is attributed to it.

The next variety of *kriyā-vakratā* is that sort of *vakratā* that is achieved by using adverbs or adverbial phrases properly. The following is an example of this form of *vakrokti*:

“She turned on me a tearful glance revealing only a third of her gleaming eye, lovely like that of a deer in fright.”

Here the phrase, ‘lovely like the glance of a deer in fright’ very succinctly summarizes the modesty of the heroine in the presence of the elders.

Now, the penultimate variety under *kriyā-vakratā*, which can be called *upacāramanohārīta vakratā*, is that kind of *vakratā* where the metaphoric usage gives beauty to the poetic utterance. Kuntaka says that, “Metaphoric usage consists in superimposing a nonexistent characteristic on an object on the basis of similarity and so forth. And beauty will result from such metaphoric usage” (397). The following is an example of *upacāramanohārīta vakratā*:

“The limbs appear to swim in the surging sea of youthful charm. Breasts and hips unseal the affluence of development. The coquetish graces of the glances clearly dislodge simplicity. Oh, the maiden's acquaintance with youth is very close indeed” (397).

This verse is full of metaphoric usages. I will explain two of them for you. Here the poet says that the lady's hands are swimming in the surging sea of youthful charm, as if they want to swim across to the other shore. We know that ‘hands’ are not sentient entities. They cannot swim on their own, until and unless the person decides to do so. Similarly, the breasts and hips are portrayed as unsealing the affluence of development. Kuntaka says that:

“The breasts and hips are regarded as sentient agents revealing the extraordinary richness of their development. Just as a sentient person seals some important treasure, kept in his custody to be used when the time for its use comes, unseals or opens it, so also this action of unsealing, is metaphorically applied to the agents—breast and hip. The following is the purport of this sentence. That which was latent in childhood as a mere potentiality and

remained unrevealed gets its first chance of becoming patent, the moment there is advent of youth” (398).

Now, the last variety under *kriyā-vakratā* which is called *karmādi samvṛti vakratā*. In this variety of *vakrokti*, there is the concealment of the associates of an action, such as the object, etc. Kuntaka says that “Their concealment is none other than their veiled communication in harmony with relevant significance so as to suggest extraordinary specialty” (398). The following is an example of *karmādi samvṛti vakratā*:

“O dear, please slow down the pace of your dance and stop for some time, while I fix up your dangling ornament. With these words, lovingly sweet, the crest-moon was adjusted by the beloved Pārvatī. Śiva was indeed in ecstasy then. All glory to that privilege of Śiva!” (399)

In the given example, the word ‘that’ conceals something. It has to be assumed by the reader. Here the word that refers to the privilege of Śiva to have Pārvatī to assist him to adjust the crescent moon on his head.

Now, it is time to wrap up the class by summarizing all the major points we discussed so far. In this class, we primarily saw two categories of *padapurvardha vakrata*, namely *liṅga-vaicityra vakratā* and *kriyā-vakratā*. *Liṅga-vaicityra vakratā* is *vakrokti* with respect to the gender of words. This variety is of three kinds. The first variety is found “when two genders, quite distinct from each other, are employed to denote one and the same object.”

The second variety of *liṅga-vaicityra* is that kind of *vakratā* where even though other genders could be used, the feminine gender is specifically preferred. In the last form of *liṅga-vaicityra vakratā*, although other genders are possible, a specific gender is significantly used by a poet in harmony with the idea to be conveyed.

The next major subcategory was *kriyā-vakratā*. It is *vakrokti* related to the action. According to Kuntaka, this particular variety is of five kinds, namely the choice of a verb to show the extreme capability of the of subject, attribution of an action which is otherwise not possible for the subject to perform, metaphorical superimposition, and finally the concealment of the direct object. First let us take a look at the first variety. Kuntaka says that in this form of *kriyā-vakratā*, the subject is so independent that he has all the capability required to bring about the action described. In the second variety, an action is attributed to a subject which

cannot otherwise perform this action. The third variety of *kriyā-vakratā* is that sort of *vakratā* that is achieved by using adverbs or adverbial phrases properly.

Now the penultimate variety under *kriyā-vakratā*, which can be called *upacāramanohārīta vakratā*, is that kind of *vakratā* where the metaphoric usage gives beauty to the poetic utterance. The last variety under *kriyā-vakratā* is called *karmādi samvṛti vakratā*. In this variety of *vakrokti*, there is the concealment of the associates of an action, such as the object, etc.