

THE NATURE OF CREATIVE *PRATIBHA*
ACCORDING TO KUNTAKA

Kuntaka's analysis of poetry reveals a very keen literary sensibility and his *Vakroktijivita* is the only work of true literary criticism we have in Sanskrit. In the vast galaxy of Indian literary theorists Kuntaka (c. 950 A.D.) is the only one who offers practical analysis and criticism of the Sanskrit literary masterpieces in various genres in an almost modern style. Recently, the present writer has brought out a complete edition of this Sanskrit text with material newly procured from Mss. fragments at Jaisalmer and accompanied by a complete English translation¹. The present paper attempts to focus attention on Kuntaka's analysis of *pratibhā* or creative imagination, an analysis which is not only illuminating and perceptive, but very helpful in harmonising and integrating into a unity the several literary and aesthetic concepts in the field which were more or less scattered and diffuse till his time. The several concepts of *guṇa*, *alaṅkāra*, *rīti* or *mārga*, *rasa* and *dhvani* found a meaningful explanation for the first time in the new concept of *vakrokti* advocated by Kuntaka; and though his theory was consigned to oblivion by latter-day thinkers in their excessive admiration for Ānandavardhana's counter-theory of *dhvani*, it deserves our appreciation today because of its intrinsic worth.

The question of deciding the *ātman* or « soul » of poetry weighed heavily with the classical Indian theorists from the time of Vāmana onwards. Vāmana opined that the soul was *rīti* or style, as against the earlier orthodox theorists who gave that status apparently to *alaṅkāra* or figurative language. But Ānandavardhana declared that *rasa* which was « *dhvani* » *par excellence*, deserved that place better, and brought in philosophical and semantic arguments to justify his aesthetic stand.

1. Published by the Director of Publications, Karnatak University, Dharwad, pp. 636, 1977. References to the work in the following footnotes are to this edition, and abbreviation used is VJ.

All the polemics were more or less agreed that the « body » (*śarīra*) of poetry was constituted by *śabda* and *artha* or language and meaning. Whether an exclusive « style » (*rīti*) of language constituted the poetic essence or an exclusive « mode of meaning » (*kāvyaārtha*) was the central point at issue in the controversy that attracted the best minds of medieval Kashmir like Vāmana and Ānandavardhana to begin with, and later on Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, Kuntaka, Abhinavagupta and Mahimabhaṭṭa. Among these, again, while Abhinavagupta is an able advocate of the *dhvani* school, Mahimabhaṭṭa, the logician, denies *dhvani* (suggestion) and explains it easily as a form of logical inference (*anumāna*). In spite of these radical differences, they are agreed that the *ātman* of poetry is *kāvyaārtha* whose best specimen is *rasa*.

But Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka and Kuntaka stand apart from all the rest in holding that the soul of poetry cannot be *kāvyaārtha* at all; only *kavi-vyāpāra* or the poet's creative power (*śakti*) may be so regarded. This is technically known as *vyāpāra-prādhānya-vāda* as against *vyāngyārtha* (= *dhvani*)-*prādhānya-vāda* in Sanskrit poetics². Between them, again, we have no access to the full-fledged theory of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka since his work on aesthetics, the *Hṛdayadarpaṇa* is lost. We have to form an idea of his stand only from fragmentary quotations by later writers like Abhinavagupta. Fortunately, since Kuntaka's work is recovered almost wholly now from its unmerited oblivion, we can form an idea why he differed from both Vāmana and Ānandavardhana regarding the *ātman* of poetry; and how he revived the classical idea of *vakrokti* or poetic turn as the underlying principle of all *alaṅkāra* or figurative language, and then invested it with a wealth of significance to entitle it for the status of *kāvyaātman*. The method of practical criticism he adopted to prove his point is so singularly arresting and appealing that one is sure to agree with him in his views, even if they be found wanting from the angles of abstract semantics or aesthetics. He has explained the facts of poetry in the best possible way without being burdened by considerations of *śāstras* like *tarka*, *vyākaraṇa* and *mīmāṃsā*, whose theories, after all, are general and not concerned with poetry which is *sui generis*.

Like the Greek word *poiēma*, the Sanskrit word *kāvya* literally means « something made or created by a poet » (cf. *kaveḥ karma kāvyaṃ*). Hence, if anything is the soul of poetry, it should be *kavi-vyāpāra* or the poet's creative art. This is the initial incontrovertible stand of Kuntaka and on this foundation is built the superstructure of his theory of *vakrokti*.

If we try to define *kavi-vyāpāra* more precisely, we realise that it is nothing but *vakrokti* or a turn of speech deviating from the discursive or denotative mode of language. What are the means at the disposal of the poet in achieving this deviation from normal usage? They are

2. Cf. Ruyyaka's *Alaṅkārasarvasva* (Introductory paragraph), Nirṇaya Sāgar Press, Bombay, 1939, pp. 1-3.

nothing but *alaṅkāras* or figurative turns of expression. The figurative turns include not only referential uses of language (*abhidhā*), e.g., the simile (*upamā*), but also secondary uses of language (*guṇavṛtti*, *lakṣaṇā* or *bhakti*), e.g., the metaphor (*rūpaka*). Further, they also include the suggestive uses of language (*vyañjanā*), e.g., *aprastuta-praśaṁsā* or indirect description. True, all these three linguistic modes are common to poetry and non-poetry; but the poet succeeds in transforming them into things of beauty in his artistic and creative use of *alaṅkāras* or figures of speech. In his hands, a half-penny can become a hundred pound note³. A proper realisation of this is possible by examining any passage of poetry accepted as beautiful by *sahṛdayas* or critics with a trained literary sensibility; for these alone are competent to judge poetry. By adducing and analysing scores of such examples, Kuntaka concludes that the ways of *vakrokti* are infinite; and all that they have in common is the poet's artistic or creative power (*pratibhā* or *śakti*)⁴. Literary criticism, in Kuntaka's treatment, becomes nothing but a sensitive analysis of all the appealing (*rañjaka*) elements in a poem by a competent *sahṛdaya* or *tadvit*⁵; elements that evidence the poet's *pratibhā* through diverse forms of *vakrokti* which may be classified as sixfold for convenience of treatment:

ART OF VAKRATĀ OR KAVI-VYĀPĀRA

| 1. <i>varṇa</i> | 2. <i>pada-pūrvārdha</i> | 3. <i>pratyaya</i> | 4. <i>vākya</i> | 5. <i>prakaraṇa</i> | 6. <i>prabandha</i> |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| figures of sound; rhyme, rhythm | suggestive use of linguistic elements | suggestive use of affixes, etc., and <i>guṇas</i> | figures of sense: <i>upamā</i> , <i>rūpaka</i> , etc., and <i>guṇas</i> | episode in plot with artistic unity and originality and <i>guṇas</i> | whole plot well-knit according to rules and revealing originality and <i>guṇas</i> |
| (<i>śabdālaṅkāra</i>) and <i>guṇas</i> and <i>lāvanyaḡuṇa</i> | | | | | |

3. Cf. « Any word, every word in language, every circumstance, becomes poetic in the hands of a higher thought ». EMERSON, *Letters and Social Aims*, Macmillan, London, 1910, p. 26.

4. *kavipratibhānāmānāntyāt niyatatvaṁ na sambhavati*, VJ, p. 36.

5. *hṛdayasaṁvādaṁ āmodaḥ sukumāravastudharmaḥ rañjakatvaṁ nāma*, VJ, p. 39.

It is this sixfold *vakratā* that distinguishes poetry from scientific discourse⁶. And this alone is therefore entitled to be considered as the *jīvita* or vital essence of poetry:

*śrīraṁ jīviteneva sphuriteneva jīvitam /
vinā nirjīvātāṁ yena yāti kāvyarṇ vipaścītām //*⁷

Mere presence of life is not enough; it should also be active. Such is the active vivacity of *vakratā* or *sāhitya* in poetry.

The above division is modelled after Ānandavardhana's division of the modes of *dhvani* schematically beginning from syllables, the minutest ingredients, and going up to the whole epic or dramatic work which constitutes the highest end in the structural scale. But it should be noted that all the beauties so analysed derive from the whole and sole source of *pratibhā* or the creative imagination of the poet.

Kuntaka does not forget the synthetic view of poetry either in his enthusiasm for the analytical mode of treatment. As a matter of fact, he clarifies the synthetic stand before embarking on the analytical method. All poetry is essentially an inseparable whole where both word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*) are in perfect concord (*sāhitya*); where the content adorned (*alaṅkāra*) and the adornment (*alaṅkāra*) form once again an indivisible whole⁸. This is indeed a view very much in advance of the incoherent views of pioneers in Indian poetics like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin. Kuntaka's definition of *śabda* as « the only adequate medium for conveying the intended sense » and *artha* « as that alone which delights the hearts of *sahṛdayas* with its beauty » (VJ. I.9) reminds us of T. S. Eliot's term « objective correlative » very pointedly. Active *pratibhā* endows at once that literary *atiśaya* or excess which is required to heighten the theme by creating the expression which strikes one as inevitable or most appropriate⁹.

All poetic lapses are due to inadequate *pratibhā* which, when active, is expected to ensure a happy and harmonious blend of emotive power, inspirational immediacy and critical or reflective judgement. If in a given instance of poetry verbal tricks preponderate and beauty of matter gets ignored, we have to decide that it is an instance of poverty of *pratibhā* on the part of the poet¹⁰. Similarly, vulgarity in idea is the

6. Cf. *vakro yo'sau śāstrādhiprasiddhaśabdārthopanibandhavyatirekī ṣaṭprakāratāviśiṣṭaḥ kavivyāpāraḥ*, VJ, p. 13.

7. *parikara-śloka*, VJ, I.39, p. 26.

8. Cf. *sakalasya nīrastāvayavasya sataḥ samudāyasya kāvyatā kavikarmatvam; tena alaṅkārtasya kāvyatvamiti sthitaṁ, na punaḥ kāvyasyālaṅkārayogaḥ*, VJ, p. 6.

Cf. also: « The value of a poem lies in the fact that in it sound and sense together make up an indivisible whole ». PAUL VALERY, *Essays on Language and Literature*, Allan Wingate, London, 1947, p. 100.

9. *yasmāt pratibhāyāṁ tatkālollikhitena kenacit parispaṇdena parisphurantaḥ padārthāḥ prakṛtaprastāvasamucitena kenacidutkarṣeṇa vā samācchāditaśvabhāvāḥ santo vivakṣāvidheyatvena...*, VJ, p. 16.

10. *pratibhādāridryadāinīyādatisvalpasubhāṣitena kavinā...*, VJ, p. 7.

result of the poet's imperfect judgement. The same may be said of other classical *doṣas* like *vyārtha*, *apārtha*, etc. Also, we cannot have different categories of poetry like « good », « bad » and « indifferent ». Something is either poetry or not poetry; that is all. That is why the slightest lapse or defect in poetry, as noticed by the early theorists, makes a composition unpoetic. And in anything which is accepted as poetry by the above definition, there is no room for any kind of blemish—grammatical, rhetorical, logical or aesthetic¹¹. Hence Kuntaka can simply drop out an account of *doṣas* in his book which is concerned only with « poetry ». Whatever detracts from the delight of the trained reader is a *doṣa* which has no place in poetry, e.g., *prakramabhaṅga* or loss of sequence¹². Supposing that a poet has a new flash or insight regarding a subject, can he embody it in any pedestrian or logical language that might readily occur to him by force of habit? No. It is demanded of him as a poet that he bestow equal attention on the manner of utterance also. A really illuminating idea in a dry logical manner stands equally condemned¹³. Thus, in Kuntaka's classical theory of poetry, there are only « poets » and « non-poets ». A bad poet is a misnomer. What makes a poet is the perfection of his *pratibhā* which leaves no chinks or openings for defects in either his matter or manner. Mere theme, even if it be holy and high, will not make it poetry when grace of manner is absent as in *Purāṇas*¹⁴.

In the operation of *pratibhā*, however, Kuntaka distinguishes two stages: (1) a bare flash of some new and original idea and (2) an artistic embodiment of it in an adequate manner. The idea in the first stage is likened to that of an unpolished gem without much lustre while the result of the second stage is compared to the gem perfectly polished on grindstone¹⁵. In all this Kuntaka has improved upon Bhāmaha's dictum that both *śabda* and *artha* together constitute poetry¹⁶.

We saw how the poetic function is analysable into a sixfold *vakratā* or poetic beauty. In the terminology of earlier theorists, one might well ask as to what exactly this beauty relates among the well-known categories of *guṇa*, *alaṅkāra*, *rasa*, *rīti* etc. Kuntaka is very clear on this point. All beauty in poetry is reducible in any ultimate analysis to that of *alaṅkāra* and *alaṅkārya*; while the variations in poetic temperament and artistic skill yield different *guṇas* in *bandha* or *vākyavinyāsa* or

11. *tena neyārthāpārthādayo dūrotsāritatvāt prthaṇna vaktavyāḥ...*, p. 9.

12. *prakramabhaṅgavihitam sarasahrdayavairasyamanivāryam...*, p. 13.

13. Cf. *atra hi śuṣkatarka-vākyavāsanādhivāsītacetasā pratibhāpratibhātamātrameva vastu vyasanitayā kavinā kevalamupanibaddham*, VJ, I.11 f., p. 8.

14. ... *vastumātram ca śabdaśobhātīśayaśūnyam na kāvyavyapadeśamarhati*, VJ, p. 7.

15. Cf. *kavīcetasi prathamam ca pratibhāpratibhāsamānamaghaṭitapāṣāṇaśakalakalpamaṇiprakhyameva vastu vidagdha-kaviviracitavakravākyopārūḍham śāṇollīḍhamāṇimanoharatayā tadvidāhlādakatvamadhirohati*, VJ, p. 9.

16. Cf. Bhāmaha, *Kāvyālaṅkāra*, I.15-17 also.

structure¹⁷. This is a very important credo in the aesthetic theory of Kuntaka which bears a very close affinity to the Crocean aesthetics that all art is expression, and that it is creative intuition which culminates in poetry. Since the variation in *guṇa* is rooted in *pratibhā* itself, a similar variation extends to each poet's *vyutpatti* or equipment and *abhyāsa* or practice also.

Thus the beauties of *alaṅkāra* and *guṇa* are enough to explain the whole of beauty in poetic language. That these two kinds of beauty vie with each other in poetry is Kuntaka's asseveration while explaining *sāhitya*¹⁸. Though the term *sāhitya* was deemed in Sanskrit classical theory as standing for the speciality of poetry and used frequently, its intrinsic significance was left unexplained; and it was left to Kuntaka to give for the first time an adequate explanation. In the attainment of *sāhitya*, the pride of place goes to *pratibhā* which works in more than one way¹⁹. When several images occur simultaneously, *pratibhā* does not stop until the ones most suited and equally happy are selected. This selective and decisive imagination is comparable to Coleridge's *esemplastic* imagination so distinct from «fancy»²⁰. Hence this activity of *pratibhā* which makes the images come to life is the most essential characteristic of poetry²¹.

In all linguistic usage we have the operation of grammar, semantics and logic; but in poetic usage we have *sāhitya* also:

*sā kāpyavasthitistadvidāhlādaikanibandhanam /
padādivākparispandasāraḥ sāhityamucyate //*²²

It is rightly that Kuntaka takes pride in the fact that he is the first promulgator of the aesthetic essence of *sāhitya* in the best poetic art; and that none of his learned predecessors had any inkling into its nature²³.

Kuntaka is again the first to recognise new general *guṇas* like *lāvaṇya* or over-all grace and *saubhāgya* or splendour²⁴, besides *aucitya* or decorum, which are all common to all the three *mārgas* or styles. The diametrically opposed styles are but two; the simple and delicate (*sukumāra*) and the pompous or elevated (*vicitra*), the third being only a

17. Cf. *tatra vyavasthitau = viśeṣeṇa lāvaṇyādiguṇālaṅkāraśobhinā sanniveśeṇa kṛtāvasthanau*, VJ, p. 11.

18. Cf. *viśiṣṭameveha sāhityamabhipretam; kīdrśam? Vakratāvicitraguṇālaṅkāra-sampadāṁ paraspāraspardhādhirohaḥ*, VJ, p. 10.

19. *sāhityalakṣaṇasyaiva kavivṛyāpārasya sarvātīśāyitvam*, VJ, p. 25.

20. *bahuṣu ca ramaṇīyeṣvekaṅkyaopayogiṣu yugapatpratibhāsapadavimavataṛatsu vākyārthaparipūraṇārthaṁ tatpratimarṁ prāptumaparaṁ prayatnena pratibhā prasādyate*, VJ, p. 11.

21. *kavipratibhāpraudhireva prādhānyādavatiṣṭhate*, VJ, p. 12.

22. *parikara-śloka*, VJ, I.36 (p. 25).

23. *na punaretiya kavikarmakauśalakāṣṭhādhirūdharamaṇīyasyādyāpi kaścidapi vipaścidayamasya paramārtha itī manāṁmātramapi vicārapadavimavatirṇaḥ*, VJ, p. 24.

24. These are defined as follows: *saubhāgyaṁ pratibhāsaṁrambhaphalabhūtaṁ cetanacamatkāritvalakṣaṇam; lāvaṇyaṁ sanniveśasaundaryam*, VJ, p. 39; «*pratibhāsaṁrambha*» is explained as «*samagrakavikauśalasamṛpādyā*» (op. cit.).

happy blend of the two (*madhyama*). But in Kuntaka's poetics these two styles shed their traditional enmity and both become equal media for the poet's creative work. Daṇḍin and Vāmana had sung the glories of the former (termed *Vaidarbhī* by them) and disparaged the latter (termed *Gauḍī* by them). Kuntaka takes exception to this and vindicates that all the three styles are equally effective and aesthetic²⁵. If poets like Kālidāsa are models of *Sukumāramārga*, Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti etc., are models of the *Vicitra-mārga*, while Māyurāja belongs to the *Madhyama-mārga*²⁶. All of them are equally great poets though they adopt different styles. In the history of Sanskrit criticism Kuntaka is the first to take such a bold stand on the equal validity and beauty of all poetic styles. The equal beauty is the result of *lāvaṇya*, *saubhāgya* and *aucitya* common to all the styles.

Earlier theorists were aware only of *śabda-guṇas* and *artha-guṇas* in a general way. But Kuntaka's new analysis in terms of *vakratā* enables him to state clearly that *guṇas* relate to *pada* (word), *vākya* (sentence) and *prabandha* (whole literary work). Aesthetic appeal and judgement are adequately accounted for by the three new *guṇas* envisaged for the first time by Kuntaka. In judging of episodes and total works, the *guṇas* of *aucitya* and *saubhāgya* come to be of primary importance²⁷, even as *lāvaṇya* is in appreciating the beauties inhering in word, syllable, etc.

Artha or matter in poetry was a very commonplace general term till Kuntaka took up its analysis. The most crucial question of *rasa* was tied up with it. Amid the numerous conflicting views about *rasa*, one thing that might be said to be commonly acceptable to all is the view that *rasa* constitutes *artha* of *kāvya*. *Artha* can be interpreted as « theme », « substance », « subject », « purport », « meaning » or « end », depending on the context. This singular agreement among differing theorists like Bhāmaha, Vāmana and Ānandavardhana was seized by the penetrative mind of Kuntaka to formulate a theory that *rasas* (sentiments), *bhāvas* (emotions) etc., spoken of by Bharata may form the objectified content of poetry even like ideas in one's experience of nature. The whole realm of poetic content is said to be broadly twofold: (1) Nature as it is, (2) Emotive nature or sentiment²⁸. And in both these

25. *na ca rītināmuttamamadhyamādhamatvabhedena traividhyaṇi vyavasthāpayitum nyāyāṇi...*, VJ, p. 41 f.

26. Cf. VJ, p. 66.

27. *etat triṣvapi mārgeṣu guṇadvitayamujjvalaṇi / padavākyaprabandhānāṇi vyāpakatvena vartate //*, VJ, I.57.

28. Cf. « *tasya tadāhlādasāmarthyāṇi sambhāvyate yena kācideva svabhāvama-hattā, rasaparipoṣāṅgatvaṇi vā vyaktimāsādayati* », VJ, p. 7. If either or both are not impressive, then we have an unpoetic statement due to inattention of the poet (*calitāvadhānatvena kaveḥ kadhāritāṇi*, VJ, p. 19). Though the two heads are given independently, the first, when properly accomplished, becomes a direct partaker and promoter of the second, since Nature etc., treated as *vibhāva* is nothing but a means towards the achievement of *rasa*. Cf. *atra rāśidvayakaraṇasyāyamabhiprāyaḥ yad vibhāvādirūpeṇa rasāṅgabhūtāḥ śakuniruta-taru-salila-kusumasamaya-prabhṛtayaḥ padārthāḥ sātīśasyavabhāvavarṇanaprādhānyenaiva rasāṅgatāṇi pratipadyante*, VJ, p. 47.

forms content is what is beautified (*alaṅkārya*) in poetry. Logically, it follows that it can never be conceived as *alaṅkāra* or ornament, a position which at once negatives the concept of *rasavadalaṅkāra* propounded by Bhāmaha etc., on the one hand and by Ānandavardhana on the other. *Rasa* and *alaṅkāra* can never interchange their places. This should be regarded as a solid contribution of Kuntaka removing the common confusion regarding this much misunderstood concept of *rasa*.

Kuntaka too is very well aware of the numerous other meanings of the word *rasa* which were responsible for much of the confusion among literary thinkers. Apart from the direct and simple sense of abiding, delectable sentiments and emotions like Love mentioned by Bharata — which is really the only meaning relevant to poetics — the general sense of « relish » or « delectable taste » which the word *rasa* carries was being wrongly brought into the discussions on *rasa*, making it an equivalent exclusively of the tasteful reader's subjective experience. This wrong turn was later given a philosophical foundation by Abhinavagupta and came to be the ruling thought of Mammaṭa and the rest. As a result, most of the exponents of Indian aesthetics today translate the term *rasa* only as aesthetic experience of the connoisseur. Kuntaka is also aware that in the spectrum of meanings of the word « *rasa* » this meaning as well as the meaning of a tasteful liquid or drink are included. But he never confuses them in his usage; he keeps them strictly apart as they deserve to be. Kuntaka is the only writer who does not obfuscate the issue while talking of *rasa* and clarifies the position very pointedly and penetratingly. He realises fully that the presence or manifestation of *rasa* as *alaṅkārya-kāvyārtha* is possible only by way of its *vibhāvādis* or invariable antecedents, consequents and accessories, which are associated with the characters in the poetic work, and not with the subjective mental states or emotions of the poet himself, except when he happens to write in the lyrical vein in the first person. Even there, the generalising *pratibhā* is active; and the question of private emotion is ruled out. In poetry we are concerned with *rasa* or its associates as verbally embodied. It is in the nature of *rasa* to condition a sympathetic response in the readers, making them feel as if they are themselves undergoing the emotional experience²⁹.

Kuntaka's poetics gives a new meaning and significance to the status and function of *alaṅkāras* also in poetry. In spite of the importance accorded to *alaṅkāras* by Bhāmaha etc., in the eyes of later theorists — especially Vāmana and Ānandavardhana — the *alaṅkāras* had fared badly. They were thought to be so many pedantic exercises often indulged in for their own sake and as external appendages which could be discarded at will. They stressed the need for caution on the part of

29. Cf. *manasāṁvādo hṛdayasaṁvedanaṁ svānubavagocaratayā pratibhāsaḥ*, p. 46. Also: *rasāḥ śṛṅgārādayaḥ tadādigrahaṇena ratyādayo'pi grhyante*, VJ, p. 46; *kapāliṇa iti bibhatsarasālabhanavibhāvavācakaḥ śabdah*; *Ibid.*, p. 15, etc.

the poet in their judicious use as accessories of *rasa*. They had understood all *alaṅkāras* as variations of the *vācyārtha* or referential meaning only. Kuntaka realised that apart from these set conventional grooves of figures of speech, the over-all beauty resulting from *vakratā* itself in any of its myriad ways could be deemed as *alaṅkāra* or ornament. *Vakratāvaicitrya* itself, in any of its innumerable forms, could be the poetic essence of *alaṅkāra* or beauty in general. Thus the word *alaṅkāra* gets a new aesthetic connotation for the first time in the poetics of Kuntaka which is a far cry from the rhetorical guidebooks of the pioneers³⁰.

Thus we might conclude that Kuntaka's reappraisal and re-ordering into a system of all the traditional categories in Indian poetics is at once original and significant. It combines the best in the thought of all his predecessors, avoids many of their confusions, and gives us a system of poetics with well defined roles of the diverse elements involved. Kuntaka's eye for unity of principle amidst diversity of categories and his uniformly unerring literary sensibility make him one of our first-rate thinkers, next only to Ānandavardhana perhaps. Kuntaka not only explains; he explores the beauties of classical Sanskrit poetry. He gives not only a new direction, but a new dimension to literary criticism. His aesthetic philosophy too is well worth a reconsideration. He shuns needless controversy and rears up the structure of his poetic theory on the fundamentals where an area of basic agreement exists among his predecessors in the field. Hence his analysis of poetry from the standpoint of *pratibhā* and his findings are as relevant today as when they were first propounded. Unlike the usual run of rhetoricians he makes sure of disengaging the essence of poetic magic while not ignoring the logic of linguistic facts.

30. Cf. *yat śabdārthau prthagavasthitau na kenāpi vyatiriktenālaṅkāreṇa yojyete, kiṁ tu vakratāvaicitryayogitayā abhidhānamātramevānayaṛalaṅkāraḥ, tasyaiva śo-bhātīśayakāritvāt*, VJ, p. 20.