



# DEVELOPMENT OF THEORIES OF RITI

## (Academic Script)

Hello Everybody,

Today we will learn about theory of Riti, which is an indispensable limb of Indian Aesthetic Theory. The concept of Riti was highlighted by Dandin and Vamana.

Theory of Riti relates to the particular arrangement of sounds combined with poetic excellence. Riti is the going or the flowing together of the elements of a poem.

The language and its structural form lead us to the inner core of poetry. And, when that language becomes style (Riti), it absorbs into itself all the other constituent elements of poetry. It allows them, as also the poetic vision, to shine through it.

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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of philosophy and aesthetics in India is as old as history. The Indian aesthetics developed into eight schools of theories that consist of Rasa, Alankara, Riti, Guna & Dosa, Vakrokti, Svabhavokti, Auchitya and Dhvani. Rasa is an outcome of poetry but other theories are the means by which rasa is produced.

The writers and philosophers gifted the Indian aesthetics with some amazing texts, which are evident of India rich socio-religious and culture scenario.

The most famous and well presented works of art are famous as five schools of Indian Aesthetics.



1. Alankarwad - bhamah
2. Ritisiddhant - Vaman
3. Dhvani Siddhant - Anand Vardhan
4. Vakrokti - Kuntak
5. Auchitya Vada - khemindra

The Natyashastra is considered the basis of Indian Aesthetic theories. Indian history of literature and philosophy is evident of India's artistic practices be it poetry, literature or sculpture & painting. Whether it was Abhinav Gupta, Mammata, or Viswanatha discuss poetry and literature during the subsequent centuries, they inevitably turned to Bharata's formulations as the polar star of Indian aesthetics.

There is no refuting that his path breaking insight in the psychology of aesthetic reception was an unparalleled achievement of intellect. He synthesized the concept of poetry and the concept of drama by combining theology, philosophy and criticism. The Natyashastra is not devoted only to the description of rasa theory but a fragment of the whole compilation.

A range of elements regarding poetry and compositions is described by Bharata in his assemblage of concepts of aesthetic. One of them is Riti, which is known as an element of literary composition. Bharata had discussed it under the title of Vrttis.

Bharata discovered four Vrttis i.e., Kaisiki, Bharati, Sattavati and Arabhatti.

According to Bharata the Kaisiki Vrtti should be employed in the Sringara and Hasya Rasas, the Sattavati in Vira, Raudra and Adbhuta, the Arabhatti in Bhayanaka, Bibhatsa and Raudra and the Bharati in Karuna and Adbhuta Rasas.

The Riti is connected to the objective beauty of representation of the intended idea, arising from a suitable amalgamation of certain well defined excellence, or from tuning of sound and sense i.e. the outward expression should be suitable to the inward sense.

Later the theory of Riti was explored by Dandin, who at that time emerged as the leading scholar of poetry and he focused his research on poetic diction and style, which was later described as Riti by coming intellectuals. Unlike Vamana, Dandin had named literary styles as Marga and mentioned Vaidarbhi and Gaudiya margas.



But the substance to Riti was given by Vamana, who believed that Riti is the soul of poetry. Vamana, the author of Kavyalankara Sutravritti and the founder of the Riti School flourished in Kashmir in the 8th century. Vamana was the minister of King Jayapida.

Vamana and Dandin also are often grouped together as the two ancient exponents of the Riti or Guna School of poetics.

Like Udbhata, Vamana should be seen as a follower who brought not only an analytic interest to the study of poetry but attempted for the first time to offer a rationalization of the subject; unlike Udbhata, rather than singling out a single principle for inquiry, he attempted to find a way of relating in a single organized whole the various principles that had been discussed by his predecessors. He seems most closely indebted to Dandin (rather than Bhamaha) in the sense that he assigns great importance to the notion of Guna, or "stylistic element" but he differs markedly also from Dandin, not only in trying to organize his subject but in appearing to find in the notion of Guna, and style itself (Riti) that very principle that permits the integration of the other principles of analysis (including most particularly Alankara) in a holistic view of poetry.

Different scholars based their theories of riti on different gunas. For instance the basis of Dandin's theory of Marga is based on Gunas and he recognized two branches, the Vaidarbhi and Gaudi Ritis. We witness a prominence on Vaidarbhi, Gaudi and Panchali Ritis along with all the gunas in Vamana's texts.

Anandavardhana presents us with asamasa, madhyamasamasa, and dirghasamasa, on the basis of use of compounds. Kuntaka categorises riti into Sukumara, Vichitra and Madhyama.

Rudrat describes Vaidarbhi, Gaudi, Panchali, and adds Latiya. Bhoja uses the Vaidarbhi, Gaudi, Panchali, Latiya, magadhi, avantika and mentions all Ritis these in context of Gunas and Alankaras. Mammata categorizes Riti into three branches of upanagarika, parusa, and komala. Vishwanatha put focus on Vaidarbhi, Gaudi, Panchali and Latiya, we see arrangement of letters and presence of compounds in his theory.

Vamana is regarded as the rhetorician who worked extensively to bring attention to the theory of Riti. He figuratively illustrates that the Sabda (word) and its sense (Artha) forms a body in which the essence is Riti and he defines it as visistapadarachana or particular arrangement of words.



According to Vamana, "Poetry rests on one or the other of these three styles just as a painting on depends on the lines drawn on the canvas."

There are three kinds of Riti presented by Vamana:

1. Vaidarbhi Riti
2. Gaudi Riti
3. Panchali Riti

The combination of these three Ritis co-exists with Visistapadarachana that is comprised of various Gunas or fixed excellences of composition. Vamana recognizes all the Gunas and he also talks about Alankaras in his texts but his focus remains on the concept of Riti, which he called the essence of Kavya or poetry.

### **VAIDARBHI RITI**

'Vaidarbhi Riti' is replete with ten excellences - sweetness, clarity, etc,

He has given the highest status to Vaidarbhi Riti as it holds all the excellences but also includes the Gunas, Ojas and kanti with the Gaudiya Riti and Madhurya and sukumarata with the Panchali Riti.

Careful study of the work of ancient poets can be a very useful source of information that can be helpful in weaving together a fair and accurate learning of ancient Indian literature and poetry traditions. Kalidasa is known for the use of Vaidarbhi Riti in his poetics. A brief view of the existing material on Kalidasa's literary style would be helpful in understanding the Vaidarbhi Riti.

Another fine poetic illustration is Gita Govinda composed by Jayadeva. Gita Govinda consists of a verse that exemplifies Vaidarbhi Riti and Gaudi Riti styles. For instance:

*"Ganayati guna-gramam bhamam bhramadapi nehate' or recaya kucayo patram citram kurusva kapolayor"*

This verse can be cited as examples of Vaidarbhi style, whereas *"unmilanmadhugundha lubdhamadhupavyadhutacutan kura"* etc. can be put-forth as example of Gaudi.

All the Gunas or various Gunas are required to generate the Vaidarbhi Riti or other Ritis, as we have already understood that Riti depends on the qualities of words or Gunas that consists of both Sabda Guna and Artha Guna.



The ancient rhetoricians believe that only Madhurya Guna along with softer use of words give rise to the Vaidarbhi style. From the beginning to the end Jayadeva stands faithful to his declaration of composing the madhura-komata-kantapadavali'.

Kalidasa lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> CE, in Ujjain during the era of Gupta Empire. Kalidasa's vast knowledge of early India's arts, sciences and culture, makes him a very valuable and helpful source for poetry and literature studies. His creative texts enable us with socio-religious as well as knowledge of politics and history. His poetry was different from other poets as he combined many aspects of poetic elements such as Sringara, Hasya, Adbhuta and many other Rasas, with a simple and subtle writing style. The simplicity of his poetry became his penchant style and his style became a favorite among critics and scholars who explored his poetics extensively.

Kalidasa's poetry is different from early medieval Sanskrit poetry, such as that of Dandin and Bharavi. Kalidasa's poetry is characterized by simple and fine language, small compound phrases (samahas), simple metres, extremely apt and beautiful similes (of which he is justly famous), excellent humor and understated irony and satire. This style has been called the Vaidarbhi by later aesthetes.

Meghadut is a famous Sanskrit compilation of poetry written by Kalidasa. This Kavya is divided into two parts namely Purva Megha and Uttara Megha. The Meghadūta has been translated many times in many Indian languages.

Kubera the treasurer of gods has a group of attendants called Yaksha. Meghadut describes the story of one of these Yakshas. This Yaksha in obsession of his beautiful wife ignored his duties, so he was cursed and he banished into the woods of Ramgiri on earth. But he desperately longed to meet his wife, he kept thinking about his beloved all the time. When monsoons arrived on earth, this lovelorn Yaksha then starts to describe the route the cloud should take. Then clouds acts as the messenger to take his message to his wife in Kubera's city Alaka, on the slopes of Mount Kailas.

These verses are coated with beauty, emotions, and various elements of Rasas. This description is interesting and so captivating that it takes the listener or the reader into the world of Kalidasa's Meghadut. Many artists have been taking inspirations from Meghadut. Drawings by Nana Joshi are a good example of Meghadut. The Meghadut depends entirely on



exceedingly beautiful descriptions of places, incidents, sentiments and people for its extraordinary impact on the reader.

The legend of the exquisitely beautiful Shakuntala and the mighty king Dushyant is a thrilling love story from the epic Mahabharata, which the great ancient poet Kalidasa retold in his immortal play Abhijnanashakuntalam.

King Dushyanta on a hunting trip meets Shakuntala. They fall in love with each other and, in the absence of her father; Shakuntala weds the king in a ceremony of 'Gandharva', a form of marriage by mutual consent with Mother Nature as the witness. Having to leave after some time, Dushyant gives Shakuntala a royal ring as a sign of their love, promising her that he will come to her.

Shakuntala, pregnant with their child, inadvertently offends a visiting sage and incurs a curse, by which Dushyanta will forget her completely until he sees the ring he has left with her. On her trip to Dushyanta's court in an advanced state of pregnancy, she loses the ring, and has to come away unrecognized. The ring is found by a fisherman who recognizes the royal seal and returns it to Dushyanta, who regains his memory of Shakuntala and sets out to find her.

Vikramorvasiyam ("Pertaining to Vikrama and Urvashi") tells the story of mortal King Pururavas and a celestial nymph Urvash, both of them fall in love with each other. As an immortal, she has to return to the heavens, where an unfortunate accident causes her to be sent back to the earth as a mortal with the curse that she will die (and thus return to heaven) the moment her lover lays his eyes on the child which she will bear him. After a series of mishaps, including Urvashi's temporary transformation into a vine, the curse is lifted, and the lovers are allowed to remain together on the earth.

Kalidasa has had great influence on several Sanskrit works, on all Indian literature. Kalidasa also had a great deal of influence on Rabindranath Tagore. The Meghadutam's romanticism is found in Rabindranath's poems on monsoon.

Sanskrit plays by Kalidasa influenced late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European literature.



## GAUDI RITI

'Gaudi Riti' abounds in Ojas and Kanti. This Riti is fond of the use of too many complex compounds, exaggerations (atyukti), poetical embellishments and powerful expressions. Gaudi Riti attained prominent status during the Pala Dynasty. The Palas patronized several Sanskrit scholars, some of whom were their officials. Many Buddhist Tantric works were authored and translated during the Pala rule. The famous Pala texts are Agama Shastra by Gaudapada, Nyaya Kundali by Sridhar Bhatta and Karmanushthan Paddhati by Bhatta Bhavadeva.

Sandhakar Nandi composed his famous work "Ramacharita" wherein each verse told us twofold meaning, on one hand it narrated the story of Ramayana, on the other is narrated the history of Ramapala of the Pala dynasty.

## PANCHALI RITI

The 'Panchali' is endowed with sweetness and softness.

While Gaudiya is marked by the grand, the glorious and the imposing, the Panchali is exemplified by sweetness and softness.

Vamana (in context of Dandin's view) terminates the view that the practice of Gaudi and Panchali would help a poet gain experience to adopt Vaidarbhi. The interesting example given by him is:

*Nashanasutravaanabhyaasetrasarasutravaanvaichitryalaabhah."*

This verse says 'how can anyone trained in weaving jute cloth ever hope to weave silk cloth?'

In five chapters of his book, Vamana strongly supported the doctrine of riti. The first part of Vamana's Ritisiddhanta is known as Sarira-adhikaranam, which literally means reflections on the body of Kavya. Vamana also discusses about the aspects that cannot be reduced to physical elements. For Vamana, the formless, indefinite nature of Kavya is Riti.

Vamana says that the vocal construction having certain Gunas is the body of Kavya, while its soul is, Riti (Ritir Atma Kavyasya).

Every living element has soul and it reacts differently in different situations, similarly the creative elements be it poetry or any art has Atma, and the atma of kavya is Riti. Riti is the very mode or the act of being Kavya.



Thus for Vamana, while Riti is the essence of Kavya, the Gunas are the essential elements of the Riti. So basically riti is a combination of structure of sounds (Vishista-pada-rachana Ritihi) and poetic excellence (Vishesho Gunatma).

Vamana, therefore, accorded Riti a very high position by designating Riti as the Soul of Kavya –Ritr Atma kavyasya Sareerasyeva.

– *Rinati gacchati asyam guna iti riyate ksaraty asyam vanmaddhu-dhareti va ritih (Vamana).*

The above verse demonstrates the significance of Riti to the Kavya by naming it Atman and Kavya being its body or Sarira. In his definition of Riti, Pada-rachana represents the structure or the body while Riti is its inner essence. Through this medium of Visista Padarachana the Gunas become manifest and reveal the presence of Riti, the Atman.

Another scholar who had given his views on theory of Riti was Rudrat, who tried to explore the concepts of Indian Aesthetics. Rudrat like Dandin proposed that art or poetry is not dependent on Rasa, according to them Riti serves to be a significant factor of poetry. Both tried to prove their own elements of Riti or style, while Dandin called it Marga. For Rudrat Riti means a definite usage of compound words.

Dandin is credited with highlighting the concept of Riti and he named it Marga. Contrasting Vamana, he refused to believe it to be soul of Kavya.

As mentioned earlier there are similarities in views of Vamana and Dandin. Dandin refused to accept the rasa as the essence of poetry and explored his thoughts on Riti theory. He preferred the term Marga instead of using the term Riti. Dandin treated his concept of poetic style in an elaborate manner for the first time in his monumental Kavyadarsa. He presented the Vaidarbhi Marga in detailed manner. Vaidarbhi Marga binds all the ten Gunas presented by him in his first chapter in a relation that makes the Vaidarbhi Marga the superior to all.

The Gaudiya Marga on the other hand is marked by the absence of these Gunas apart from arthavyakti, udarata and samadhi. He proposed that gunas are just embellishments and the gunas serves as the basis of marga. Although Dandin's treatment of poetic style is quite elaborate compared to earlier theorists he does not consider the marga as an independent element.





His theory somehow remains complicated as he couldn't differentiate between Gunas and Alankaras as he did not consider the Marga as important as Vamana presented them.

In the first place, Guna and Alankara are related to each other through their external relationships to Riti, the level on which the poetic whole, the proper poetic 'beauty' may be said to be palpable. Both Guna and Alankara are judged constitutive elements of that Riti, but in different ways. Relying on time-tested analogies, Vamana speaks of Guna relating to Riti as moral virtues (like courage) relate to the man; Alankaras, as ornaments or embellishments. The former are constitutive, the latter are adventitious, may augment poetic beauty, but do not determine its absence by their absence. In this, the nature of both Guna and Alankara, as understood by previous tradition is radically transformed.

Riti as an independent theoretical category can be attributed to Vamana for whom Riti is the 'soul' of poetry. He very well presented the difference of Gunas and Alankaras as he classifies Gunas into Sabda Guna and Artha Guna and on the basis of the presence or absence of Gunas classifies Riti into Vaidarbhi, Gaudiya and Panchali.

After the era of Vamana, the doctrines of Riti faced the challenge of criticism and disapprovals from various rhetoricians, especially the followers of Dhvani School.

It could be taken easy if we pay attention to this quote: *"If creation is art, criticism is art too. If creation is one aspect of art, criticism is another aspect of art. They are different phases of same, the one being the inner phase, other the outer."*

As Anandavardhana too, replace Riti with another concept named as Samghatana, which was classified into three categories, namely asamasa, madhyama samasa and dirgha samasa. These elements were based on the presence or absence of compounds.

Rudrat, by emphasizing the Guna Ojas, is thus able to integrate the Riti theory in the wider Alankara theory; in this he will be followed by most writers, notably Mammata, who goes even further in denying a distinctive "place" to Riti in his system.

But the concept of Riti could not be avoided that easily, as it contributed to the suggestion of Rasa-Dhvani. Riti is basically the style of the text or say it is "the stylistics functioning within the text, the phonetic and the syntactic



limits, within which the text enacts and performs". Riti should not be confused with the western concept of rhetoric because rhetoric is a broad term that covers figures of thought also.

Riti means the 'ways of saying' or the attitude the writer has formed toward the experience he is narrating. Bhamaha does not include Riti or Marga in his discussion of poetic composition but distinguishes between Vaidarbhi and Gaudi as two kinds of poetry.

Later Rudrata, included one additional Riti to Vamana's classification namely the Latiya but makes the foundation of his classification the presence or absence of compound words. The Agnipurana similarly accepts the four ritis of Rudrata but the basis of classification is not only the length or shortness of sentences but also the traits of softness and the importance of metaphors.

Bhoja in his 'Srngaraprakasa' adds two added Ritis, magadhi and avantika and considers the former an intermediary style between Panchali and Vaidarbhi, the latter a khanda Riti or defective style. Kuntaka does not recognize the classification as enumerated by Dandin and Vamana. He does not believe regional variations to be the root of classification of literary approaches of expression. Instead he recognizes three margas – sukumara, vichitra and madhyama, on the basis of what he terms kavivabhava or the power, nature and the practice of the poet.

The sukumara marga, in view of Kuntaka, is identified by natural grace and charm. The vichitra is typified by decoration and ornamentation and the madhyama combines the elements of both the styles. Mammata does not admit riti as a separate element in poetic compositions. He discusses the concept of Riti under the rubric of vr̥tti.

Mammata discussed about existence of three vr̥ttis in his texts, named as upanagarika, parusa and komala or gramya – and says that these were referred to as vaidarbhi, gaudiya and pancali by earlier theorists. The upanagarika is characterized by letters suggestive of the madhurya guna, the parusa by that of ojas and the komala by letters other than the above.

But Mammata focuses on rasa more and proposes that mere arrangements of the letters can never impart poetic charm until and unless they assist in the manifestation of rasa. Similarly, Viswanatha says that Riti is only pada samghatana in which the formal arrangements of words and letters contribute to facilitate in the manifestation of rasa and can thus never claim to be the 'soul' of poetry.



Vamana's theory of Riti lost significance since it conceived poetic compositions only from the formal point of view without referring to its inner nature. But it improves upon the doctrines of the Alankara School in giving primacy to the Gunas over the Alankaras as defining features of poetic compositions. The theory of riti, despite its limitations, has been a chief contribution to the study of literary compositions. This theory of language has close and secure affinities with modern day stylistic studies of literature.

The theory of Riti also corresponds with the regional styles of sculptures and characterizes the various morphological and structural features which distinguish one style from the other.

Professor Ratan Parimoo defines the Vrttis, Gunas and Ritis from Natyashastra onwards, stated in the context of drama. He applies it to sculptural styles which, evolve from graceful to vigorous. Distinguishing Vaidarbhi as agramyā i.e. sophisticated and cultivated as different from Gaudi, which lacks saukumārya and Madhurya, he shows parallel features in the styles of post-Gupta sculpture.

To conclude, Riti mainly depends upon the fact how the meaning of Kavya is communicated in unison with rasa or sentiment. The contribution of eminent rhetoricians, poets and scholars, who made discoveries of various aspects on Indian aesthetics, and many of the theories are born from the mother theory of Natyashastra.

I hope you find this episode interesting and helpful in understanding the concept of Riti in Indian Aesthetics.