

# Development of The Theories of Guna Dosh

(Academic Script)

Hello everybody,

Today we would be learning about the concept of Guna and Dosh in poetry, arts and literature.

**Gunas are the excellences added to a composition, they add beauty and grace to the Kavya making it more fascinating for the observer or reader.**

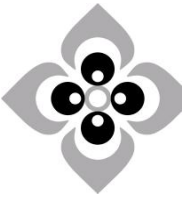
The Gunas are those elements which provide beauty and grace to a Kavya; Doshas are the negative elements or the flaws that take away the beauty and grace from a Kavya. Doshas can be grammatical, logical or literary.

When we speak of positivity, naturally the negativity becomes apparent in our minds. Similarly Gunas cannot be talked about without realizing the Doshas in any Kavya or Composition.

The subject expert is Ms. Sana Afreen who is working as TGT Drawing with the Delhi Administration and I am...

**The schools of Indian philosophy and poetics have been producing theories that help us to understand the concepts of Indian theoretical system. It not only starts and ends with theoretical compositions; in fact it is deeply rooted in the Indian socio-cultural scenario that deals with art and processes of art making, be it drama, dance, music, sculpture, painting and poetry.**

**There exist numerous schools or 'Sampradayas' that corresponds to Indian poetics. And they co relate and**



**sometimes oppose to each other's views. Each Sampradaya transmitted its own beliefs and practices in field of poetry and they also learned and got inspirations from each other's theories and concepts.**

But, three things are accepted universally by poets of all schools that are Rasa, Guna and Alankara. Bharata's Natyashastra being the oldest of all Shastras becomes a major inspiration for rhetoricians all over India and it's been also researched by poets, philosophers and rhetoricians around the globe.

Bharata's notions of Guna (merit), Dosha (defect), Riti (style) etc. were fully developed by the later scholars such as Bhamaha, Dandin, and Vamana, although with slightly varied interpretations of the ideas suggested by Bharata.

Ananda Vardhana made a major accomplishment in the field of Guna and Dosha through the theory of Dhvani. He had given an innovative turn to the concept of Guna. According to Ananda Vardhana Rasa is the main component in composing Drama, Music and Poetry, accommodates Guna and Alankara, making them indispensable from Rasa. Hence, a good composition needs the inclusion of Guna and Alankara that also adds grace and beauty to it.

Shilpa Shastra also recognizes the significance of the concept of Gunas. Gunas are used to denote lines in a drawing or diagram that conveys the three qualities: character, Characteristics and multiplication.

Bharata deals with morpho-semantic features in relation to vakya, such as Lakshana, Alankara, Dosha and Guna. As Bharata says in Natya Shastra:

*"Where Alankaras and Gunas are similar to each other and they adorn each other, in that place their position is similar and their similarity is accepted."*

But Natya Shastra speaks of Guna pertaining to actor, spectators and poems and others but it does not define the term Guna.



In Natyashastra “the application of Gunas, Doshas and Alankaras will be described in connection with Rasa”

As he conveys: “the Gunas are the negation of faults and they are characterized by sweetness and depth of meaning”

Gunas and Alankaras co-exist together but also differ as Gunas are the permanent and eternal qualities that add up to the Kavya whereas Alankaras are extraneous sources that create charm and fascinate the observer.

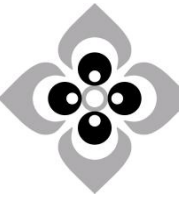
Vamana too has differentiated Gunas from Alankara by saying that Gunas beautify the Kavya composition while Alankaras heighten the nature of composition.

Doshas and Gunas are relative in character. There is no fixed specific formula of assessment for them. They are to be judged only in context of the inner meaning which becomes the source of realization of emotions in a Kavya. The artist never actually feels concerned about them; he only intends to bring the desired thought or feeling in his composition. That feel is to be experienced with poetic intensity and intended to find a certain expression. The expression is also likely to be more or less imperfect, but the question is not whether it is perfect, but whether it is adequate to convey the thought or emotion to others. And this adequacy is called Auchitya.

Art represents the spontaneous expressions of a responsive mind when it comes under the spell of an imaginative or an emotional mood. In Kavya Gunas are the negations and reversals of Doshas, Gunas relates to the qualities of Sabda and Artha.

In the Natya Shastra Bharata mentions ten categories of Gunas. Sabda Gunas means the qualities pertaining to word form and Artha Guna means qualities pertaining to word meaning.

In Dhvanyaloka, Anandavardhana characterizes Artha into two types. First is the explicit meaning which is clear and unambiguous, the second is implicit meaning, which is unspoken, yet could be understood. These Arthas help in estimating the



worth and appeal of a poem by indication to the latter than to the former.

According to Dandin “The explicit meaning is no less than the words in which it is clothed, constitutes, according to this view, the mere vesture of poetry. They together are its outward embodiment – the necessary conditions under which a poetic mood manifests itself.”

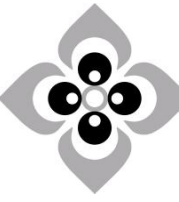
Dandin made no division between Gunas and Alankaras, and portrays them in the category of style.

The Gunas that Bharata signifies in his master work are follows:

1. Slesa (coalescence of words)
2. Prasad (clearness)
3. Samta (evenness)
4. Samadhi (superimposition)
5. Madhurya (sweetness)
6. Ojas (strength)
7. SaukianiTrya (smoothness)
8. Arthavyakti (explicitness)
9. Udara (exaltedness)
10. Kanti (loveliness)

Guna is the Dharma of Rasa, in a secondary aspect its presence is accepted in Sabda and Artha.

The Madhurya Guna provokes melting of psyche in Sringara rasa as it causes the liquefaction that evokes the sense of pleasure. Madhurya becomes attraction and an element that catches interest, in Karuna. In Vipralambha and Shanta this is suitable. The glow that causes the amplification of the heart in Vira is Ojas. It is in abundance in Bibhatsa and Raudra that produces



extraordinary elegance. Prasad like fire on dried fuel spreads in the heart and saturates all Rasas.

Bharata's Natyashastra focuses on Sabda Gunas, although the same are interpreted as Artha Gunas by Abhinav Gupta. According to Dandin it is not only the poetic figures but several literary excellences or Gunas that makes up the poetic essence. Unlike Vamana (Vamana holds that Riti is the essence of poetry), he give importance to Gunas, Vamana too recognizes Gunas but he focused on Riti and talks about Gunas in custody of Riti.

Dandin in the 8<sup>th</sup> CE elaborates on his text Kavyadarsa, where he confirms that Guna along with Riti is an inseparable aspect of a Kavya. He asserts that there are six types of Gunas:

- Shlesh
- Prasad
- Samata
- Madhurya
- Arthavyakti
- Ojas

Vamana holds on to the ten Gunas specified by Dandin, but he customized and changed their names, and augmented the quantity of Gunas to twenty as he explained the Gunas in his own method.

(1. Ojas: vigor or brilliance of long compounds; 2. Prasad: clarity and lucidity; 3. Shlesh: well knit composition skillfully employing many shades of meanings; 4. Samata: evenness of sound within a line; 5. Samadhi: ambivalence through the use of metaphors; 6. Madhurya: sweetness in the refinement of expression; 7. Sukamarata: soft and delicate; 8. Udaratva: exaltation or



liveliness; 9. Arthavyakti: directness avoiding obscure words, pun etc; and, 10. Kanti: glow or luminous elegant turns of phrases or grace)

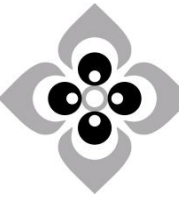
Vamana classified his ten gunas into two groups:

- Sabda Guna: this type of gunas associates to words.
- Artha Guna: this type of gunas represents meanings or sense.

This distinction between two sets, propounded by Vamana, clears some of the abstraction in the definition of Bharata and Dandin.

These classifications are also known as sarira i.e., Sabda Sarira and Artha Sarira as Vamana consider Gunas to be the body of Kavya. The first sort of Guna (Sabda Guna) is about how the word is treated in the text, and the second sort (Artha Guna) is about the shades or the layers of meaning that the word is capable of revealing. Mutually, Sabda and Artha brighten the beauty (Kavya shobha), add grace and enhance the quality of Kavya. And, the peculiarity of the two groups helped to clear some of the vagueness in the definition of Guna as offered by Bharata and Dandin. Vamana in his theory brings a connotation where he suggests that in a Kavya sometimes Dosha is in need according to the context, where it converts to merits because the situation desperately desires such expressions. Interestingly he portrays Guna Dosha in relative to each other.

Dosha plays a significant part in a Kavya; it is very well demonstrated by Dandin as he says that the eye-shadow applied by the Nayika is not a thing of beauty in itself, yet, it enhances the beauty and grace to the eyes. Similarly, Dosha sometimes helps in detecting and making the Guna visible in a composition, it is mentioned that Nir-doshatva or faultlessness is itself a Guna. Thus Gunas and Doshas are not absolute entities. Their merits or defects are relative; and, each, in its turn, enhances or diminishes



the beauty of the composition depending on the context in which it is placed.

Sabda Artha devoid of Dosha combined with Guna (normally with Alankara) and sometimes without Alankara, is Kavya.

There are some characteristics as courage and valor etc. for the inner being, the inevitable glorification of Rasa (soul of Kavya) is Guna.

Vamana opens his work with the famous quote pithily catching his view of Kavya:

*“Kaavyam graahyam alankaaraat; Soundaryam alankaarah”*

A Kavya becomes agreeable on account of Alankara; and, Alankara means Beauty. Thereafter, he outlines the notions of merit or Guna and Alankara; and, links Alankara with Guna in a Kavya. The research on Gunas expanded gradually, making it an inseparable content that brings excellence in Kavya.

In his text Kavyalankara Sutra, Vamana writes: ‘Kavyasobhayah kartarodhamia gunah’.

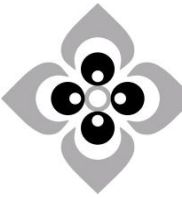
When Mammata was working on Gunas he categorized gunas into three parts, only considering Madhurya, Ojas and Prasada.

In his treatment of gunas, Mammata differs from Vamana, he holds the opposite views of Vamana that gunas are related to Sabda and Artha, but he interpretes them after Anandavardhana, as the property of rasa

In fact these three Gunas are defined broadly enough to include most of the ten Gunas of Bharat, Dandin, and Vamana. All of them regarded same number of Gunas and Doshas, they considered both of them important in creating beauty in Kavya, only the level of preference changes in their theories. Their texts makes it clear that the quality of Sabda and Artha brings grace to the expression which forms the Guna, and if anything ruins the grace or beauty of expression, either in word or meaning, that is called Dosha.

Mammata defines Gunas as quality of kavya or composition and





accepted only three types of gunas: Madhurya, Ojas and Prasada. According to him all other gunas (presented by Vamana) comes under these heading gunas and many others are actually doshas. In his view gunas are those excellences that influence the mind in particularly favorable manner.

Rhetorician Visvanatha describes the gunas as the properties of predominant sentiment. The gunas reacts as a means to heightening the Rasa.

Beauty and grace in Kavya confirms the presence of Guna in it, as it enchants and delights the observer. The presence of Guna and the absence of Dosha in the Sabda make for correction of language, and in the Artha tend to promote coherence of thought.

It is supposed that expressions are the source of beauty in a composition; hence, the expressions play an important part in communicating the content of the Kavya, although the value of expression is not supreme but it is always together with the inner meaning.

Actually the adequacy (Auchitya) is the determining and formative element in experiencing the beauty of kavya. Henceforth, the question is not whether the expression is beautiful, but whether it is adequate (Auchitya) to lead the reader to the inner meaning representing the emotion.

Considering the above statement, we can imagine that Guna and Dosha not only locate to beauty or ugliness, but actually to the suitability of Auchitya (Adequacy).

To speak in terms of the soul and body, once Bhava (or rasa) is regarded as the soul of poetic content, Gunas in the expression come to be conceived of in the manner of qualities of the soul, such as bravery or charity, whereas the previous writers thought of Gunas in the manner of embellishments of the body.

Vamana explains what form vishishtata or deviation takes in a discourse, he asserts that it is characterized by, what he calls, the Gunas (desirable features or merits) as he says:





“vishesho gunatma”

(By deviation is meant having the desirable features).

This means that Vamana considers the Gunas to be an essential ingredient of a literary discourse, as he says:

*“kavya shobhayah kartaro dharmah gunah”*

(The features which make a literary text literary are called Gunas).

Vamana too, like Bharata identifies ten Gunas. Vamana also made efforts to clarify as to which kind of text needs which kind of phonological features. For instance, the retroflex phonemes of Sanskrit suit a text with fire-like quality, while the lateral consonant phonemes suit a text with water-like quality.

Vamana treated Rasa as a facet of Guna which is considered very important to Kavya composition. And, within the Guna, he considered Rasa as an asset of Kanti (glow or brightness) and classified it under Artha Guna. Vamana did not however accord an independent status to Rasa.

Bhamaha recognized only three categories of Gunas: Ojas that represents fire like qualities, Madhurya consists of water like qualities and Prasad compromises air like qualities. These Gunas incorporate particular emotions, for instance; the Ojas arouses the emotion of zeal, bravery and anger, Madhurya is associated with the emotions of love and grief, and Prasad is associated with the enlarging of the sympathies.

Kavyalankara-sutra-vrtti by Vamana is divided into five sections (Adhikarana). Each contains two or three chapters (adhyaya). there are total twelve Adhyayas. The first Adhikarana or section consists of three chapters, namely Prayojana pariksha; Adhikari chinta; and Kavya-kanti. These chapters deal with the need or prayojana of Kavya that characterizes the ability of those who are capable to understand the Alankaras, in a Kavya.



The second section has been included with two chapters of Pada Dosha and Vakya Dosha. These convey the defects of words, sentences, propositions and their meanings.

The third Adhikarana contains two chapters of Guna-alamkara-vivechana; and Sabda-Guna nirupana. It presents concepts of Gunas and its categories.

The fourth Adhikarana have three chapters named as Sabda-Alankarika vichara ; Upamani nirupana ; and , Upama prapancha nirupana. These chapters deals with Yamaka , Anuprasa, Upama and such other Alankaras.

The fifth Adhikarana possesses two chapters of Kavya samaya; and Sabda shodhana, which are devoted to poetical conventions, observance of the rules of sandhi, necessity of grammatical purity and other related elements and also clears the concept of the purity of words.

Anandavardhana writes in Dhvanyaloka:

*“Shringareva madhurah parah prahaladanorasah Tanmayam kavyamashritya madhuryam pratishthati”*

( Dhvanyaloka II, 7)

(He says: Sringara alone is the most delightful and pleasant sweet rasa. The Madhurya Guna is dependent on the aspect of love in a composition).

He adds:

*“Shringare vipralambhakhye karune cha prakarshavat Madhuryamadratam yati yatastatradhikam manah”*

( Dhvanyaloka II, 8)

(Madhurya is in its elevated form in a literary discourse where the rasa is vipralambha Sringara or Karuna).

According to him,



*“Raudradayo rasa deeptya lakshante Kavyavartinah Tad vyakti  
hetu shabdarthavashrityaujo vyavasthitam”*

(Dhvanyaloka II, 9)

(The Rasas like Raudra in kavya or literary texts are illustrated by deepti. The Ojas is dependent on the words and meanings expressing that deepti).

Anandavardhana specifies that all the Rasas are comprised of Prasada Guna, as he states:

*“Samarpakatwam kavyasya yattu sarva rasan prati Sa Prasad guno  
gyeya sarvasasadharana kriyah”*

(Dhvanyaloka III, 10)

The theory of riti defined by Vamana is based on three varieties:

vaidarbhi, gaudia, and panchali as he says:

*“sa tridha vaidarbhi, gaudia, panchali chaiti”*

(Kavyalankar Sutra II, 9)

These names have been given on the basis of geographical regions, as he says:

*“vidarbhadeshu drishtwat tatsamakhya”*

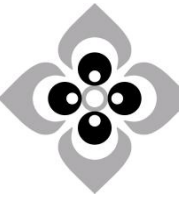
( Kavyalanlar Sutra II, 10)

As they have been identified on the basis of the Gunas each one of them has:

*“samagra guna vaidarbhi, ojah kantamati gaudi, madhurya  
sukumara sampanna Panchali”*

( Kavyalankar Sutra II, 11, 12, 13)

Vamana has also given the morphological features of these styles: the Vaidarbhi style is one in which there is no compounding as he says:



*“Sapi samasabhave shuddha vaidarbhi”*

( Kavyalankar Sutra)

According to Anandavardhana, the Vaidarbhi style is characterized by the absence of compounding, Panchali is characterized by a moderate use of compounding, and Gaudi is characterized by a profuse and bountiful use of compounding.

But all arguments or assumption lead to one fact that a Guna is inseparable form Riti both are closely linked to each other just like the relation of Kavya and Kavi.

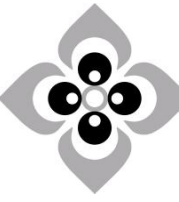
As Vamana redefines the importance Guna, its presence or absence determines not a style within the general framework of poetry, but poetry itself.

Riti was initially described in Bharata's Natyashastra as Vrtti, which was defined in association with Rasa.

- 1) Kaisiki
- 2) Bharati
- 3) Satvatti, and
- 4) Arabhatti

In the chronological pattern we observe that Udbhata was followed by Bhamaha, Vamana followed Dandin. Both Udbhata and Vamana differ in their methodologies of presenting the concept of Guna Dosha. Udbhata signifies a single principle for Alankara and Vamana brought innovations in producing new ideas in his theory of poetics. Vamana attempted to find a way of covering under a single organized whole the various principles that had been discussed by his predecessor Dandin. His methodology consists of analytic interest to produce balanced justification of elements implicated in the subject.

Udbhata refers to Bhamaha's kavyalankara in his texts, where he mainly concerns the theory of Alankara. In his justification, he



dedicatedly followed Bhamaha and his characterization of definite poetic principles. The Alankaras that Udbhata speaks in reference to Kavya-Alankara-sara-sangraha are almost the same as those mentioned by Bhamaha in his Kavyalankara. Udbhata's work gained great fame; almost overshadowing the original work of Bhamaha, perhaps because he remained focused on Alamkara and did not deviate into discussions on Guna /Dosha (grammatical purity) or such other elements of Kavya.

Just as the Gunas are considered the element to provide beauty and grace to a Kavya, in a similar way Doshas are considered as the negative elements or the flaws that are capable to take away the beauty and grace from a Kavya. Doshas can be grammatical, logical or literary. It can occur in any part of a composition, in a position of words or in grammar, or possibly in the choice of words. It can be caught in the delineation of emotion, in the metre, in the formation of an idea, or in development of thematic content.

A great Kavya contains less of Doshas and the Gunas are believed to take it nearer to faultlessness. The old rhetoricians used the term 'adosha' means free from faults, Vamana uses the term 'doshanana' while Bhoja calls it 'nirdosham kavyam' and Mammata named it 'adoshau shabdarthau'. Reminiscent of Gunas, Doshas has been defined by various scholars like Bharata, Mammata, and Anandavardhana and others. It came into prominence during the later periods post Mammata.

However Doshas are measured and analyzed according to the subject and circumstances of the Kavya, particularly those flaws that detract the beauty of Kavya.

Doshas can be of various categories, like Rasa Dosha, Pada Dosha, or Vakya Dosha and their categorizations. Rasa Doshas came into light with the theories of Anandavardhana; Mammata also put light on Doshas as he declared Rasa to be the main element of Kavya and defined Dosha as its impediment or mukhyarthaghati.



These categorizations of Doshas unsurprisingly extend to Sabda and Artha, expressions and ideas, in which Rasas are enclosed. Just like Gunas, Doshas too are properties of Rasa.

It may be argued that, when the Gunas, the constructive and positive bodies of poetry are treated, of what significance is the treatment of Doshas, which are mainly of negative character. One is able to understand instantly the negative aspects while knowing the positive ones. On this point Abhinav Gupta remarks that Doshas, though are of negative character, have a positive implication as well. The negation need not necessarily be the contrary. There lies a difference between abhava or negation and viruddha or contrary. The nonexistence of excellences is not as defective as the occurrence of their counterpart is.

That is, *“not consuming the salutary food is not as harmful as the use of unsalutary is”*. Similarly, by mere absence of merits, a Kavya cannot be considered as bad, except in the presence of blemishes that make a composition bad. Thus, mere absence of merit is not a demerit but there must be the presence of demerits also. In this way, the Doshas though are mainly of negative character, but they play a positive role in creation of a Kavya.

Bharata apprehended the Gunas as the reverses of Doshas, whereas Vamana presented the different observation, he says Doshas are the elements that are reverses of Gunas. But, surprisingly Rudrat again upholds Bharata's view.

On the other hand, Bhoja regarded flawlessness itself as a flaw and called it a Dosha known as niralankara. The question, whether Guna is a positive entity or only the absence of Dosha or Dosha is a positive entity or the absence of Guna, seems to be difficult to settle.

The basic principle in the origination of the concept of Dosha, it appears, is in the failure in the effective communication of these values. The word 'failure' includes both the formal and thematic discrepancies with the accepted norms of linguistic and cultural values.



Ultimately, we arrive at the fundamental and the widest classification of dosha into sabdadosa or formal defects and arthadosa or thematic defects.

To conclude the concept of Guna Dosha, we may assert that both are essential elements in the theory of Indian Aesthetics. Hope you find this program helpful in your understanding of theory of Guna and Dosha.