The Jaina Contribution to Indian Poetics

Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy

I

A number of studies are available giving an idea of the number of Jaina authors on Alankāraśāstra. The object of this paper is not to add to their number by mechanically cataloging them in a historical order. I would like to highlight a few points which are solid contributions by Jaina thinkers to the mainstream of Indian thought on poetry and which are in the nature of new watersheds or new turns given to conventional ideas.

II

It is long known to scholars that the earliest reference to nine rasas of "kāvyā" (nava kāvyarasā) is to be found in Anuṇgaddāra, an early canonical text. It is also realized that the first mention of sānta under the name pasānto (Skt. praśānto) is to be had here; and Velanao (Skt. vraṇakā) is reckoned here in place of bhyanaka (Vide, Agamodaya Samiti Series Edition, p. 134). But what is not usually emphasized is the fact that Kalunco (Skt. Karunā) is used here in a special sense, viz. that of Karunā, i.e., pity or compassion and not in the usual sense of 'sorrow' (śoka). The word has a masculine ending as it agrees in gender with its substantive in masculine gender, viz. rasa. But its meaning was not 'sorrow' as it was commonly understood in the tradition of Bharata's Nātyaśāstra. That is why, while listing the names of rasas in the chapter on Nāṭya in his famous lexicon Amarakośa, the Buddhist lexicographer states the following synonyms all of which refer to 'pity', 'pathos', 'compassion' etc. and not even one which means 'sorrow' or 'suffering':

Karunyan karunā-gṛṇā
kritā dayā-amukampā syāt
amukrośopī (Loc. cit. VIII. 226)

This new tradition is corroborated by the first Jaina author in Kannada on poetics, viz. kavirājanāmargā (9th century A.D.), who more than once, uses the expression karunā-rasa instead of karuna-rasa; and who recommends the literary quality of Mrdutā or 'softness' of heart' as most appropriate for its delineation in poetry. That he was following the Jaina tradition is clear also by his use of the name 'preśānta' instead of sānta in his enumeration of rasas (Loc. cit. II. 100). The example cited for karunā rasa by this author, (Nratunga or his protege, Śrīvijaya-deva, as sometimes averred) describes the love-lorn condition of a heroine and calls upon the hero to show pity on her (III. 191); there is no question of eternal 'sorrow of bereavement' consequent upon death of the beloved here.
The Jaina shift in emphasis from downright misery of characters to situations involving human sympathy or pity is a major turn from the perspective of literary criticism.

It is a major turn because it changes the very goal of literature too, centred on man. The Jaina view of worldly life or saṁsāra is such that it encourages the rise of renunciation (vairāgya) conducive to pralānta-rasa on the one hand and to pity (karunā-rasa) on the other. ‘Poetry for poetry’s sake’ is ruled out; only poetry for religion’s sake gets priority. The Jainas have an infinitely vast story-literature in Sanskrit, Prākṛta, Apabhraṃśa and modern Indian languages. But they are always dharma-kathā or religious stories or legends; and they inculcate the highest spiritual value in a sugar-coated way through. This point is made explicit in the very invocatory verse of Hemacandra’s Kavyāmṛtasaṇa:—

\[
\text{Aṣṭṭrima-svādu-pādām} \\
\text{paramārthabhāhidhāyīnī} \\
\text{sarvabhāṣāparinatām} \\
\text{Jainīṁ Vācanupāsmahe}
\]

In explaining the above verse in his auto-commentary, Hemacandra further observes:—

\[
\text{Vairāgyopajananamitivṛttam prastūyate} \\
\text{ityavādātakathanena vairāgyahetuvād} \\
\text{dharma-kathāḥ parama puruṣārthabhī} \\
\text{dhyāyakvam asti.}
\]

The religious myth or story or poem contributes indirectly to the achievement of the sumnum bonum or ultimate enlightenment as it engenders a sense of revulsion to worldly pleasures. This view may be puritan; but that is the Jaina view of man. Man deserves pity of the wise or the Enlightened saints for his indulgences due to ignorance! This reminds us of the famous English remark:—“Life is a tragedy to those who think and a comedy to those who feel!”

III

The Jaina idea of the Goddess of learning or Sarasvati also deserves our consideration. We have already seen her description by Hemacandra as sarvabhāṣā-parinatā or embodiment of all languages on earth. Māṇikyacandra, the Jaina author of the earliest commentary, viz. Saṅketa on Mammatā’s Kavyaprakāśa makes this, much more explicit. According to him, the speech of Arhat Himself is that Sarasvati, not any other goddess associated with any individual god as in Hindū mythology. She dwells in the mouth of Arhat and is the Mother of all humanity. Without her grace, nothing can dawn upon the minds of even the learned! Hence though people widely differ on the issue of praiseworthy divinities, there is an exceptionally complete concensus among one and all about the praiseworthiness of Sarasvati! Nor is it surprising, because She upholds Wisdom:—

\[
\text{Stutyaṁ tannāsti nāmā} \\
\text{jagati na janatā yatra bādhāṁ vidadhyaḥ} \\
\text{anyonya-spardhino'pi} \\
\text{tvayi tu nanti-viśhāḥ vādino nirvivādah} \\
\text{yat tattvamān na kīmci} \\
\text{sphurasi matimatāṁ mānase viśvamatah} \\
\text{brāhmaṁ tvam yena dhatse} \\
\text{sakalānayamayāṁ rūpaṁ arhamukhasthā}
\]

Thus it is that we can appreciate Namisāduḥ (writer of a prestigious commentary on Rudrata’s Kāvyālaṅkāra when he postulates ‘ultimate wisdom’ (sanyogājāna) as the sthāyibhāva of sānta-rasa (Op. cit. XVI. 15). This idea came to be adopted later by the highest Hindū authorities also like Abhina-vagupta. Bhoja in his Sarvasvadikāsābhāranā (Kāvyamālā series, Bombay, 1925, p. 524-5) regards a dhīra-sānta (Lit. ‘heroically tranquil’) type of hero in this light itself when he postulates dhīrti or “steadiness of heart” as the ruling sentiment fostered by reflection of the highest Truth:

Kasyacidupasāntaprakṛteh
dhīra-sānta-nāyakasya
vastutaitivaloçanādibhih uddipyamānāh...

This is why the Jaina pontiff (chief priest) pāyakirti is quoted by Rāja-śekhara in his Kāvyamimāṃsā (Gaekwad Oriental Series Edn., 1934, p. 46) as saying that ‘to a lover sporting in his beloved’s company and passing the whole night like a moment, the moon might appear cool ; while to another man love-lorn and suffering pangs of separation from his sweetheart, the same moon light be veritably a scorching fire like a comet. But to a monk like me, who has no wife, and no separation either, the moon is but a round mirror in shape, neither hot nor cold :

Yeṣāṁ vallabhaya samām
ksanamiva sphārā kṣapā kṣiyate
tesāṁ sitārāh saśi
virahināmūlkeva santāpakṛt
asmākaṁ na tu vallabhā
da vīrahah tenabhayahramśinām
inda rājati darpāṇa
kṛtiyam na vā sitālah

IV

Jaina writers like Māṇikyacandra also furnish authentic information about lost works in Indian poetics. We know that all works on poetics before Bhāmaha’s Kāvyālaṅkāra have been lost by the ravages of time. When Bhāmaha refers to a view of earlier thinkers as in—

Rūpakādimalaṅkāram
bhāyamācakṣate pare... (I. 14)

“Others observe that figures of speech like metaphor are ‘external’, because they hold grammatical accuracy of nouns and verbs to be the first norm of figurative beauty!”.

How are we to know who these ‘others’ are? Māṇikyacandra in his Saṅketa (Kāvyaprabhāsa, Mysore edn., pt. I, p. 485) states unambiguously :

Gauḍa-matametat
“This is the view of Gauḍas’.

That this is not a wild surmise, but a statement of fact is proved by Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s testimonial to this very view :

Gauḍeśivakṣaraḍambaraḥ
(Harṣacarita I.7)

४२

अष्टाधंश्र त्री वेशाधरां च शास्त्रदीर्घ ध्वजां अभिमान ग्रहे
Similarly, when Mammaţa quotes a Prakṛta Gāthā (Kāvyaprakāśa, VII. 218, Mysore edn., pt. II p. 80)—

_Jam pariharītuṁ tirāt...

Māṇikyacandra, like a modern scholar, adds the source in all detail:—

Ānandavardhanīya-paṅca-bāna-līlā-kathā-gāthāhṛeyam

In one word, he has told us that it is a verse in Prakrit gāthā metre; the name of the poem is Paṅca-bāna-līlā; and that it belongs to the literary form of Kāthā or verse-poem. The value of such precise information to research scholars is inestimable.

V

Jaina writers have also given us very objective literary judgements. We might cite here one impartial judgement of the prestigious biography of Harṣa by Bānabhaţa who is usually adorated as an incarnation of Sarasvati Herself! Māṇikyacandra states that having introduced the topic of Harṣa’s warlike glory in the work, Bāna had no business to stray far away into a long irrelevant excursion on his autobiography. This has spoilt the unity of the work:—

_Harṣākhyāvyikāyāḥ jayati jvalad... ityādā Harsokarṣavad-vijaya-bijamupakṣipya anupayogi-Bānānvayasya Varnanam._

(Loc. cit., II, p. 177)

VI

We might close this article by indicating a line of critical survey of concepts, thoroughly attempted only by Jaina writers, on Poetics, like Hemacandra and Māṇikyacandra. The development in the concept of gunas from Bharata to Mammaţa, undergoing substantial variations in Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Udbhatta, Vāmana and Mangala—is laid bare at great length in the works of both these authors. Judging from the style of this first-hand material, it appears as if they have given us the lost chapter of Rājaśekhara himself on the subject of gunas from his Kāvyamānasā. It is only a hypothesis, yet to be proved on more solid evidence.

Yet the foregoing considerations would show how the contribution of Jainas to the development of Indian poetics is both substantial and significant.