

# Co-presence of Multiple Rhetorical Figures in One Stanza:

Śobhākaramitra on *alaṃkāra*

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## 1. Introduction

Śobhākaramitra, a Kashmirian Sanskrit rhetorician (*ālaṃkārika*) active around the latter half of the 12th century, focuses on the relation between three themes in his *Alaṃkāra-ratnākara* (*AlRat*), namely *alaṃkāra*, *saṃsṛṣṭi* and *saṃkara*, in the context of co-presence of figures of speech. According to his theory, one principal rhetorical figure or figure of speech (*alaṃkāra*) must be present in an exemplifying verse together with the shade of other figures acting as its ancillaries. This main figure is given the appellation *alaṃkāra*, while the ancillaries are designated as *saṃkara*. Therefore, there is a hierarchical relation called *aṅgāṅgibhāva* between *alaṃkāra* and *saṃkara*. As for *saṃsṛṣṭi*, he does not consider it as an independent figure at all. The views of Śobhākaramitra on these three themes are obviously opposed to those of the main target of his aesthetic criticism, Ruyyaka (ca. 1100–1150), who advocates for the possibility of both *saṃsṛṣṭi* and *saṃkara*. This paper will focus on Śobhākaramitra's theory of what constitutes an *alaṃkāra* and examine how he defends his viewpoint.

## 2. The Appellation *Alaṃkāra*

Śobhākaramitra starts with the definition *sūtra* 110 “*ete 'ṅgitve 'laṃkārah.*” All aforementioned rhetorical figures are distinct from each other because each has its unique aesthetic beauty. A figure gets its appellation on account of being the principal in a stanza, and there must be present the shades of other ancillary figures. In this case, the principal one is called *alaṃkāra*, the ancillaries *saṃkara*.<sup>1)</sup> According to Śobhākaramitra, no rhetorical figure can appear in pure form in a stanza because we inevitably perceive the existence of *saṃkara* therein, either in an explicit way or in a suggestive way. If one were to admit a pure form of rhetorical figures, there would not arise any eminent aesthetic

beauty and thus a stanza containing such pure rhetorical figures does not deserve to be called poetic.

When Śobhākaramitra talks about *alaṃkāra*, he takes into account two conditions. Firstly, an example of some particular figure is given under the appellation of this very figure just because it appears in that very example, not because it is the principal figure therein. Secondly, there may be some other strikingness (*vicchittiyantara*) at first glance, either due to the shade of other figures on account of being mixed up with the principal figure, or due to a different mode of expression (*bhaṅgyantarābhidhāna*); yet, a subsequent reconsideration by the reader will finally convince him/her that it is actually the rhetorical figure under discussion, not the other ones.

### 3. Analysis of examples

Śobhākaramitra provides several examples to explain the aforementioned two conditions of *alaṃkāra*. The following verse is an example of a figure mixed with the shade of other rhetorical figures:

*yan nyasyati sma smayavaty aśoke padaṃ ranan nūpuram āyatākṣī |*  
*svairam sa cakre tata eva mūrdhni padaṃ batāśeṣamahīruhāṇām* ||<sup>2)</sup>

Since a smiling long-eyed lady placed her foot with tinkling anklet on the *aśoka*-tree, willfully it has taken up the position, oh! at the head of all [other] trees.

This example can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, one can take the placing of the lady's foot as the cause and the taking up of the position at all other trees as the suitable result of that. This gives us the shade of the rhetorical figure *sama*.<sup>3)</sup> On the other hand, if one takes the action of that lady as an insult, this action is undesirable for the *aśoka*-tree; yet, another desirable object, namely its greatness, arises by the action of taking up the position at all other trees. The unsuitability between an undesirable object and a desirable object will make readers understand the shade of the figure *viśama*.<sup>4)</sup> Śobhākaramitra identifies no other strikingness existing here.

The next verse is an example of the *bhaṅgyantarābhidhāna* subtype:

*bimboṣṭhaṃ bahu manute turaṅgavaktraś cumbantaṃ mukham iha kinnaraṃ priyāyāḥ |*  
*śliṣyantaṃ muhur itaro 'pi taṃ nijastrīm uttuṅgastanabharabhaṅgabhīrumadhyām* ||<sup>5)</sup>

Here [in the mountain] the horse-faced one highly appreciates the Kinnara kissing the *bimba*-like [lower] lip of his beloved. That one (i.e., Kinnara) also [highly appreciates] this one who is

repeatedly embracing his wife, whose waist is about to break because of the burden of high breasts.

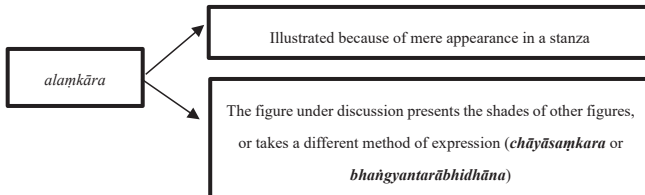
In this example, two Kinnara-s are depicted as contrasting in both appearance and the object of their envy: the former has a horse face not suitable for kissing; the latter, though possessing a human face, has a horse's body not suitable for embracing. The former envies the latter because he cannot kiss his lover; the latter, however, envies the former because he cannot embrace his lover. This is exactly the situation where a subtype of *viṣama*, namely *asākalya*, becomes the ancillary. Both the heroes, although being equal with regard to enjoying their lovers, care more about their rival's advantage than their own pleasure. This fits the definition of the figure *anādara*, where the idea is expressed in a different way.<sup>6)</sup>

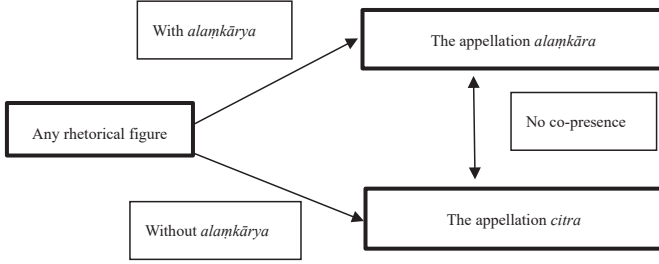
#### 4. *citra* and *alaṃkāra*

Śobhākaramitra also acknowledges a difference between *citra* and *alaṃkāra*. Here *citra* does not denote a figurative poem as in most other rhetorical works, but rather a concept involving multiple rhetorical figures appearing in a single stanza.<sup>7)</sup> According to him, the appellation *alaṃkāra* necessitates the hierarchical *aṅgāṅgibhāva* relation. To explain, the status of being an *aṅgin* relates to other *alaṃkāra*-s, not to sentiments (*rasa*), while the term *alaṃkāra* is used in connection with the object to be embellished (*alaṃkārya*). If this *alaṃkārya* exists, then all rhetorical figures acquire the name *alaṃkāra*; otherwise, there is only a fascinating but incoherent “glitter” (*citratā*) of verbal expression or meaning.<sup>8)</sup>

#### 5. Conclusion

Śobhākaramitra's theory of *alaṃkāra* can be summarized with the following two diagrams:





### Notes

- 1) *Vṛtti* ad *AlRat* 110: *ete pūrvalakṣitāḥ sarvālamkāṛā aṅgino 'laṃkāṛāntaratvam aprāptāḥ, api tu tair aṅgabhūtair upaskriyamāṇā nijanijavyapadeśabhājo bhavanti | anyāṅgabhāvam upagatās tu vakṣyamāṇasamkāṛālamkāṛāntaravyapadeśo bhajante |* 2) *Śṛikaṇṭhacarita* 6.31, reading *padam* instead of *pade* in the edition of the *AlRat* and *nadan nūpuram utpalākṣī* instead of *raṇan nūpuram āyataḥkṣī*. 3) see *AlRat* 61 on the definition and the interpretation of *sama*. 4) see *AlRat* 59 and 60 on the two definitions and the interpretations of *viṣama*. 5) *Śiśupālavadhā* 4.38. 6) *Vṛtti* ad *AlRat* v. 611: *atra turaṅgavaktrasya cumbana ānugūṇyābhāvān nara-vaktrasya cālīṅgam ity asākalyarūpaviṣamopaskṛtāḥ sarvaprakāreṇ ānugūṇyābhāvaḥ, ubhayatrāpīti tulyārthāntarabahuṃānamukhena sthitānādaropanibandhād bhaṅgyantareṇ ānādarāḥ* | The words in bold are corrected according to the readings in manuscripts. 7) Maybe Gerow's translation "glitter" is a good choice to understand this term. See Gerow 1971, p. 175. 8) See *Vṛtti* ad *AlRat* 110. Here *citratā* is a synonym for *vaicitrya* and should not be confused with *citrālamkāra*.

### Abbreviation

*AlRat* *Alamkāraratnākara of Śobhākaramitra, Edited with an Introduction and Appendices*. Ed. C. R. Devadhar. Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1942.

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**Key words** Śobhākaramitra, *Alamkāraratnākara*, *alamkāra*, rhetorical figure

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