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## Human Values as Envisaged in *Kavyaparakāśa*

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### Abstract

Indian literary tradition has always integrated aesthetics with ethics and human values. One of the most influential works of Sanskrit poetics is the *Kāvyaparakāśa* written by Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century. Though primarily a treatise on literary theory, it reflects profound philosophical and ethical values embedded within literature. This research article explores the concept of human values as presented in *Kāvyaparakāśa*, focusing on how poetry promotes moral guidance, emotional refinement and social harmony. The study highlights the role of *rasa* (aesthetic experience), *dhvani* (suggestion) and poetic propriety in shaping ethical consciousness. It argues that classical Sanskrit poetics does not view literature merely as artistic expression but as a medium for cultivating virtues and guiding human conduct.

**Key words:** Human Values, Social & Cultural Value, *śabda-śakti*, *Dhvani*, *doṣa*, *guṇa*, *rīti* & *alaṅkāra*.

### 1. Introduction

Indian aesthetics is closely connected with ethical and philosophical ideals. Classical Sanskrit literature often regards poetry as a powerful medium for educating society and refining human sensibility. Among the major texts of Sanskrit poetics, *Kāvyaparakāśa* occupies a central position in synthesizing earlier theories of literary criticism. The author, Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa, was a Kashmiri scholar who integrated earlier poetic traditions into a comprehensive framework. His work discusses elements such as word (*śabda*), meaning (*artha*), poetic merits (*guṇa*), faults (*doṣa*), figures of speech (*alaṅkāra*), and aesthetic emotion (*rasa*).

However, beyond its literary analysis, the text implicitly promotes human values through its concept of poetry. According to the treatise, poetry should provide delight while simultaneously offering guidance for proper social behaviour and moral living.

Thus, the study of *Kāvyaparakāśa* reveals how aesthetics and ethics are interwoven in classical Indian thought. Classical Indian literary theory places significant emphasis on the relationship between art, morality, and emotional experience. Sanskrit poets and aestheticians believed that literature has the power to refine human emotions, shape ethical behaviour, and cultivate cultural ideals.

One of the most important works in this tradition is *Kāvyaparakāśa*, written by Mammaṭa Bhaṭṭa, a renowned Kashmiri scholar. The treatise synthesizes earlier theories of Sanskrit poetics and presents a systematic explanation of the nature of poetry. It discusses concepts such as *rasa* (aesthetic emotion), *dhvani* (suggestion), *guṇa* (qualities), *doṣa* (faults), and *alaṅkāra* (figures of speech).

Although the primary aim of the work is literary analysis, its principles reveal a deeper ethical framework. Poetry is regarded as a means of providing both aesthetic pleasure and moral instruction. Through the depiction of noble characters, emotional depth, and philosophical reflection, literature encourages the cultivation of human values. Thus, *Kāvyaparakāśa* represents a harmonious synthesis of aesthetics, ethics, and cultural philosophy.

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## 2. Concept of Human Values

Human values are principles or ideals that guide human behaviour and help individuals distinguish between right and wrong. These values include honesty, compassion, harmony, respect, responsibility, and justice. They promote moral conduct and social well-being. Values are essential because they form the foundation of ethical decision-making and help maintain harmony within society. They shape character and influence actions, thereby ensuring peaceful coexistence among individuals and communities. In Indian philosophical traditions, human values are often connected with the concept of *dharma*, which represents righteousness, duty, and moral order. Literature, particularly classical poetry, plays a significant role in cultivating these values by presenting examples of ideal behaviour, emotional sensitivity, and social responsibility. In Indian philosophical traditions, values are closely related to the concept of *dharma*, which represents righteousness, duty, and moral order. Literature and art play an essential role in transmitting these values across generations.

Human values commonly emphasized in classical literature include:

- Compassion (*karuṇā*)
- Courage (*vīrya*)
- Truthfulness (*satya*)
- Harmony (*sāmya*)
- Self-control (*dama*)
- Wisdom (*jñāna*)

Sanskrit poetry often conveys these ideals through stories, metaphors, and emotional experiences rather than direct moral preaching. In this way, literature becomes an effective medium for ethical education.

## 3. Overview of *Kāvya prakāśa*

*Kāvya prakāśa* is one of the most important works in Sanskrit literary criticism. Mammaṭa defines poetry as the harmonious combination of word and meaning that is free from faults and enriched with poetic qualities and embellishments. Through these principles, he emphasizes that literature should not only be aesthetically pleasing but also intellectually and morally uplifting. *Kāvya prakāśa* is considered one of the most comprehensive treatises on Sanskrit poetics. It combines the theories of earlier scholars such as Bharata, Ānandavardhana and Bhoja.

The text is divided into ten chapters (*ullāsas*), each dealing with different aspects of literary theory:

1. Definition of poetry
2. Nature of words and meaning
3. Word powers (*śabda-śakti*)
4. *Dhvani* or poetic suggestion
5. Rasa theory
6. Dramatic representation
7. Poetic faults (*doṣa*)
8. Poetic qualities (*guṇa*)
9. Styles of composition (*rīti*)
10. Figures of speech (*alaṅkāra*)

This systematic treatment made the work extremely influential in Sanskrit literary criticism.

## 4. Definition of Poetry and Its Ethical Significance

Mammaṭa begins his treatise with a famous definition of poetry:

*śabdārthausahitaukāvyam.*

This definition highlights the idea that poetry must balance linguistic beauty and meaningful expression. Words alone are not sufficient; they must convey meaningful content that resonates with the reader. Later commentators explain that poetry should also be free from faults and enriched with qualities and figures of speech.

### Ethical Interpretation

This definition indirectly reflects human values:

- Harmony between word and meaning symbolizes balance and integrity.
- Proper expression encourages clarity and truthfulness.
- Avoidance of faults parallels moral discipline.

Thus, poetic composition becomes analogous to ethical living. Ethical Parallel Therefore, the discipline required in poetry reflects the discipline required in human life.

## 9. Social and Cultural Values in Poetry

Sanskrit literature frequently portrays ideal characters such as:

- noble kings
- wise sages
- devoted lovers
- courageous warriors

These characters embody virtues such as:

- loyalty
- sacrifice
- justice
- compassion

Through such portrayals, poetry becomes a powerful medium for cultural education and moral inspiration. *Kāvya prakāśa* encourages poets to depict themes that elevate the human mind rather than degrade it.

## 4. Purpose of Poetry in *Kāvya prakāśa*

The purpose of poetry, according to *Kāvya prakāśa*, goes beyond entertainment. Poetry is seen as a medium that offers both pleasure and instruction. The text states that poetry:

- Provides aesthetic enjoyment
- Educates people about proper conduct
- Guides individuals in social interactions
- Enhances knowledge of life and the world

Thus, poetry serves as a subtle teacher of ethics. It communicates moral principles not through direct preaching but through emotional experience and artistic expression. This approach reflects the belief that learning through art is more effective than rigid instruction.

## 5. Rasa and the Cultivation of Emotional Values

One of the most important concepts discussed in *Kāvya prakāśa* is *rasa*, the aesthetic emotion experienced by the reader or spectator. *Rasa* represents the refined emotional experience produced by poetry. Classical Indian aesthetics recognizes several *rasas*, including:

- *Śṛṅgāra* (love)
- *Hāsya* (humour)
- *Karūṇa* (compassion)
- *Vīra* (heroism)
- *Raudra* (anger)
- *Bhayānaka* (fear)
- *Bībhatsa* (disgust)
- *Adbhuta* (wonder)
- *Śānta* (peace)

These emotional states are not merely feelings; they are transformative experiences that elevate human consciousness.

For example:

- *Karūṇa rasa* promotes compassion and empathy.
- *Vīra rasa* encourages courage and heroism.
- *Śānta rasa* leads to inner peace and spiritual awareness.

Thus, *rasa* theory contributes to the cultivation of moral and emotional maturity in individuals.

### 6. Dhvani and the Ethical Suggestion in Literature

Another important concept in *Kāvya prakāśa* is *dhvani* (suggestion). *Dhvani* refers to the deeper meaning suggested by poetic language beyond its literal expression. Through suggestion, poetry conveys subtle philosophical and ethical ideas. This indirect mode of communication allows poetry to influence the reader's mind gently and effectively. For example, a poem describing the bravery of a hero may implicitly inspire courage and dedication in readers.

Thus, *dhvani* serves as a powerful tool for transmitting human values without overt moralizing.

### 7. Guṇa and Doṣa: Moral Parallels in Poetics

Mammaṭa classifies poetic qualities (*guṇas*) and faults (*doṣas*) in literature.

#### Poetic Qualities (*Guṇa*)

*Guṇas* represent the positive attributes of poetry, such as:

- Clarity
- Sweetness
- Elegance
- Strength of expression

These qualities reflect harmony and balance in literary composition.

#### Poetic Faults (*Doṣa*)

*Doṣas* include errors or weaknesses that disturb the aesthetic effect. Examples include:

- Ambiguity
- Improper expression
- Inconsistency

Interestingly, these literary categories parallel moral philosophy. Just as poetry should avoid faults and cultivate virtues, human life should avoid vices and promote virtues. Thus, poetic theory mirrors ethical ideals.

### 8. Social and Cultural Values in *Kāvya prakāśa*

*Kāvya prakāśa* also reflects broader social and cultural values. The text emphasizes that poetry should depict:

- Noble characters

- Ideal conduct
- Social harmony
- Respect for tradition

Epic poetry, for example, often presents heroes who embody courage, loyalty, and righteousness. Through such portrayals, literature becomes a medium for transmitting cultural values across generations. Poetry also strengthens collective identity by celebrating shared ideals and moral standards.

### 9. Aesthetic Experience and Spiritual Development

Indian aesthetic theory often connects artistic experience with spiritual development. The experience of *rasa* is considered similar to spiritual bliss because it transcends ordinary emotions and leads to a higher state of awareness. When readers immerse themselves in poetry, they temporarily transcend personal concerns and experience universal emotions. This process cultivates detachment, empathy, and inner harmony.

Therefore, literature contributes not only to moral education but also to spiritual refinement.

### 10. Relevance of Human Values in Modern Society

Although *Kāvya prakāśa* was written centuries ago, its ideas remain relevant today. Modern society faces numerous challenges such as:

- Moral decline
- Social conflicts
- Emotional stress

In such circumstances, literature can play a vital role in promoting human values. The aesthetic principles discussed in *Kāvya prakāśa* encourage:

- Emotional sensitivity
- Ethical awareness
- Cultural appreciation

By integrating artistic beauty with moral insight, classical Sanskrit poetics provides valuable guidance for contemporary education and cultural development.

### 11. Conclusion

*Kāvya prakāśa* is not merely a technical manual of literary criticism; it is a profound reflection on the relationship between art, emotion, and ethics. Through concepts such as *rasa*, *dhvani*, *guṇa* and *doṣa*, the text demonstrates how poetry can shape human character and promote moral values. The treatise emphasizes that literature should provide both pleasure and guidance. By presenting noble ideals and refined emotions, poetry contributes to the cultivation of compassion, courage, harmony and wisdom. Thus, the human values envisaged in *Kāvya prakāśa* reveal the holistic vision of Indian aesthetics, where artistic beauty and ethical excellence are inseparable.

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