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WHAT IS NEW AND WHAT IS NAVYA:
SANSKRIT POETICS ON THE EVE OF COLONIALISM

A remarkable trend of innovation seems to characterize Sanskrit Poetics on the eve of colonialism. Like intellectuals in other Sanskritic disciplines, *ālaṃkārikas* – from about mid sixteenth-century onward – adopted a new discursive idiom, composed in novel genres, demonstrated a fresh interest in the history of their tradition, and worked across disciplines at a hitherto unknown rate. Moreover, they often had a clear sense of themselves as breaking new ground and were thus conceived by their colleagues. But of what exactly did their innovations consist? The new poetics may have identified themselves and their fellows as new (*navya*) in contrast to their antecedents (*prācīna*), an act which, as Sheldon Pollock puts it, “appears to signify not just a different relationship with the past but a different way of thinking.”¹ Yet they seldom presented their theories as innovative, let alone as general theoretical breakthroughs, and mostly worked from within the conceptual frameworks of their predecessors. Indeed, many modern scholars see their work as simply redundant. One Indologist maintains that by the sixteenth century “the age of really original or thoughtful writers was long gone by.”²

The utter discrepancy between the emic sense of innovation emanating from the works of post-sixteenth century *ālaṃkārikas* and the etic evaluation of them as superfluous, is of less interest to me here. Modern judgments stem more from a biased picture of the history of Sanskrit poetics, with the ninth-century thinker Ānandavardhana as its only apex, than from a careful and impartial examination of the late-precolonial texts. Far more interesting is the fact that even to a sympathetic reader, the sense of novelty is rarely accompanied by the ability easily to detect innovative agendas. New statements are often in the form of answers to age-old questions, and they are commonly grounded in some older-day view. Indeed, the new *ālaṃkārikas* invoke and discuss the views of the “ancients” more often than ever before, and in ways not seen earlier – a novel practice which concomitantly leads to a confusing sense of *déjà vu*. In short, what novelty actually meant to poetics of the period, and how it was related to a newly shaped interest in their tradition’s

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past, are highly complex questions for which no ready-made answer can be found.

Moreover, as soon as we ask the question of what is neoteric in late precolonial *alaṃkāraśāstra*, this discipline's unique history and specific concerns immediately give rise to further complications. I shall briefly consider these here, even at the obvious risk of opening up more questions than I can possibly answer in this short paper. This is because the complexity of the general investigation must be borne in mind before a smaller set of case-studies can be examined.

Three unique aspects of *alaṃkāraśāstra* merit mention here. First, it has an exceptionally multifaceted nature. This tradition never possessed a core *sūtra* text of unquestioned authority, nor commentaries and sub-commentaries branching out from it, which would have created distinct schools of clear ancestry. In the earlier period (mid-seventh to mid-ninth centuries), we find several unsuccessful attempts to compose such core texts, each taking a somewhat different approach and rarely engaging in direct conversation with one another. The groundbreaking thesis of Ānandavardhana (c. 850) – declaring that suggestion is poetry's soul and that all other poetic phenomena are subordinate to it – provoked a serious controversy lasting roughly two centuries. Thereafter, the universal acceptance of Ānanda's thesis was not accompanied by a uniform practice of "Ānanda poetics." On the contrary, between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries we find an explosion of topics (those stemming from Ānanda's thesis along with more traditional ones), discussions (some supra-local, others regional) and genres of composition. This great variety, which itself has not yet been fully charted, certainly complicates our search for new tendencies in the later period.

Secondly, there is the potential openendedness of the discipline's subject-matter. For *Mīmāṃsā*, the paradigmatic text-oriented *śāstra*, the Vedas are a fixed corpus. But Sanskrit literature, to which *alaṃkāraśāstra* relates – however obliquely – continued to evolve and reinvent itself throughout the period of early modernity. Did contemporaneous trends in practice of poetry have an impact on the new practice of theory?

Finally, unlike other systems of knowledge, *alaṃkāraśāstra* did not remain the monopoly of Sanskrit: By the sixteenth century there were *alaṃkāra*-like discourses in many South Asian languages, which borrowed, adapted and modified Sanskritic notions. Did the regional discussions leave any imprint on the Sanskritic one, or was the direction of the influence always from the cosmopolitan to the vernacular?

As I have already mentioned, I cannot address all of these questions here, but they should be kept in mind as we turn to discuss the question of novelty in *navya-alamkāraśāstra*. This we shall do by examining the works of three key scholars who, between them, cover almost the entire time-span of new scholasticism: the South-Indian polymath Appayya Dīkṣita (1520–1593³), Banaras’s highly prominent thinker and poet Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja (c. 1650), and the prolific, Almora-based writer Viśveśvara Bhaṭṭa (c. 1725). As I believe Appayya’s discussion exerted great influence on those of his successors, the first and larger portion of my paper will be devoted to an exploration of a small selection of his writing. I shall then turn to discuss more briefly the contributions of Jagannātha and Viśveśvara in its light.

APPAYYA DĪKṢITA’S CONTRIBUTION TO ALAMKĀRAŚĀSTRA

Tradition has ascribed to Appayya 108 books in various disciplines – obviously a rounded-up figure, but one which is nonetheless indicative of his immense productivity. Three of these are dedicated to poetics, the earliest of which is probably a small work titled “The Exposition of Linguistic Powers” (*Vṛttivārttikā*), which sets out to explain and distinguish between the denotative and figurative operations of poetic language.⁴ This treatise belongs to a relatively minor sub-genre of Sanskrit literary theory dedicated to a general overview of linguistic capacities in poetry.⁵ It has been the least influential of his contributions to the discipline of poetics, although the book does much more than recapitulate old arguments.

His second work, “The Joy of the Water Lily” (*Kuvalayānanda*), is a manual meant to familiarize beginners with one of the basic subjects of the field: the sense-based figures of speech (*arthālamkāras*).⁶ Although this work is of rather limited scope – setting aside, as it does, all other topics of the discipline – and despite its commentarial nature – it claims to supply illustrations in verse and brief explanations in prose of definitions already found in the earlier *Candrāloka* of Jayadeva – Appayya’s *Joy* quickly became the most popular *alamkāra* textbook in the subcontinent, a status it retains even today. In fact, the *Joy* became something like *alamkāraśāstra*’s number one “bestseller.” Major manuscript collections often possess more copies of this work than of any other treatise in the field.⁷ Although the rate at which the work gained such popularity has yet to be investigated, my guess is that this happened rather rapidly.⁸ It seems that within a generation after Appayya’s death most scholars interested in speech-figures were

familiar with his primer, and the majority of later *ālaṃkārikas* were introduced to the field by studying it. However, the reasons for the work's amazing success have never been explored.

The immense popularity of *The Joy* notwithstanding, Appayya's main contribution to the field of poetics is his unfinished magnum opus, "The Investigation of the Colorful" (*Citramīmāṃsā*). This in-depth interrogation of the same sense-based speech-figures, which he merely introduced in his primer, had a remarkable influence on later writings. To a large extent, the post-Appayya debate in Sanskrit poetics takes up the discussion begun in the *Investigation*, either in the form of approval or disapproval. It therefore seems only reasonable to examine a section from this work for the purposes of the present study.

DEFINING THE SIMILE: APPAYYA'S REFUTATION OF EARLIER FORMULATIONS

I have selected the discourse on the simile – the very first *ālaṃkāra* Appayya turns to, and one which he discusses at great length. For Appayya, like so many before him, the simile, or *upamā* (fem.), is the prototype *ālaṃkāra*. He thus envisions it as "the one and only actress on the stage of poetry, who delights the heart of those who know her, by assuming variegated roles."⁹ While Appayya is not the first to grant such a status to the simile, he seems to take this idea further than his predecessors and seriously to entertain its logical implications. He likens the status of the *upamā* in the figurative realm of to that of *brahman* in the phenomenal world. Just as one understands reality in its totality (*viśvam*) by understanding its only source and cause, the *brahman*, so one can only grasp the entire figurative domain (*citram*) by knowing the simile. This being the nature of the *upamā*, it merits the most thorough exploration – one which includes all of its types and subtypes (*nikhilabhedasahitā*).¹⁰

As a result, Appayya's exploration of the simile is matchlessly comprehensive and thorough. While the *upamā* was by no means a neglected topic before him, no thinker had dedicated so much space and energy to its analysis. His unique meditation on the simile and the crucial status he himself grants it, make it a particularly important case-study for his overall contribution to Sanskrit poetics.

Two surprises await the reader at the outset of the *Investigation's* simile section. The first is the lack of a definition. Until Appayya's intervention, there had been a universally respected, unwritten rule in *ālaṃkāraśāstra*, that when one introduces a figure of speech one does

so by defining it. Appayya departs from this millennium-long tradition, thereby sending a message: The definition of the quintessential *alaṃkāra* is not yet in our possession, nor can it be easily extracted from the work of previous thinkers. A definition, in other words, can by no means act as the starting point of the discussion, but rather must serve as its end, and it soon becomes clear that it has to be arrived at through a fairly elaborate process.

This process is the second surprise. In his work's introduction, Appayya states that his definitions (*lakṣaṇas*) and illustrations (*lakṣyas*) are mostly those given by the "ancients" (*prācīna*).¹¹ But as soon as his discussion begins, we learn that it consists first and foremost of *refuting* the definitions of these "ancients."

Indeed, Appayya examines five definitions (one anonymous, the others by Mammaṭa, Vidyānātha, Bhoja and Ruyyaka), and each is shown to be ill-conceived. The main concern of Appayya's five antecedents was to characterize the simile in order to distinguish it from various figures which closely resemble it. Yet Appayya is skeptical precisely about their success in setting the simile aside from its "kin."

We will sample one small section from Appayya's lengthy procedure, where he criticizes the renowned Andhra-based thinker Vidyānātha (c. 1300). Vidyānātha defines the simile as "a singularly expressed, substantial similarity, which the entity being described shares with a separate, approved and self-established entity."¹² At first, Appayya seems to approve of this definition, closely following Vidyānātha's own exposition.¹³ Thus, we are told, the stipulation that the similarity must be with a *separate* entity rules out *ananvaya*, that is, a comparison of an entity to itself (e.g. the battle of Rāma and Rāvaṇa is like that of Rāma and Rāvaṇa). Likewise, the modifier *expressed* eliminates over-extension with respect to suggested similes. The word *substantial* eliminates a possible overlap with *śleṣa*, where the similarity pertains to the language used to describe the entities rather than to the entities themselves. The demand that the other entity be *self-established* does away with *utprekṣā*, where the object of comparison is not real but imagined (e.g. the king is like the moon come down to earth).

Yet none of these neat distinctions, maintains Appayya, can withstand serious scrutiny. Take, for instance, the stipulation that in a simile, the tenor has to be measured against a standard *separate* from it, unlike in an *ananvaya*, where the tenor and the standard are the same. Appayya undermines this adjective, *separate*, gradually, first citing Kālidāsa's famous description of Mt. Himālaya:

Source of unending treasures, none of his splendor
 is lessened at all by the snow. A single
 fault will vanish under a mass of virtues,
 as the spot on the moon is lost in rays of light.¹⁴

Appayya's point has to do with the comparison in the latter half of the verse. This is clearly a simile, yet, according to Appayya, Vidyānātha's definition cannot apply to it. The moon's spot and rays are particular instances of the more general categories of faults and virtues respectively. And since a specimen cannot be said to be separate from its class, Vidyānātha's provision of a similarity "with a *separate* entity" fails to apply to this instance.

Now this may seem like a rather cheap shot. Indeed, Appayya concedes that there may be a way to distinguish between what appears to be an inseparable pair of a specimen and its category, and allows his imagined opponent to suggest one. The interlocutor appears to be a logician, as his *navyanyāya* jargon reveals. The simile's standard (*upamāna*), he argues, is an entity delimited by the delimiting characteristic (*avachedaka*) of "standardness," whereas the simile's tenor (*upameya*) has an altogether different delimiting characteristic, namely "tenorship." What we have here, then, are not a class and a specimen but two different groups: faults (the tenor), of which faultiness is the delimiting characteristic, and the moon's spot (the standard), of which "spotness" is the defining factor. These two groups are mutually exclusive, and in that sense *separate*.¹⁵

But this interpretation of the definition's word "separate" leads to a new difficulty. For now the definition cannot extend to include chain-similes (*rasānopamā*), such as the one found in the second part of the following praise of a king:

You who have hordes of petitioners drenched in water,
 poured on your hand, when you give away endless gold,
 your mind is equal with your speech, your action with your mind, your fame with
 your action,
 in being utterly spotless.¹⁶

In this chain of equations, 'mind' is the tenor of the first clause (mind equals speech), and then the standard of the second (action equals mind). So it is impossible to say that here the delimiting characteristic of the tenor ("tenorship") and the delimiting characteristic of the standard ("standardness") are mutually exclusive.

Again, this may seem to be a rather specious argument. Obviously, the delimiting feature of the standard separates it from the tenor in *its own clause*. In other words, there is no problem with the definition if every "link" in the chain of similes is taken *individually*. But as

Appayya reminds us, this would force the interlocutor to concede that the adverb “singularly” in Vidyānātha’s definition is redundant, since its role is taken up by the full import of the adjective “separate.”¹⁷

Now comes the main argument. Let us accept that the word “separate” posits the standard and the tenor as two mutually exclusive entities in a single clause. There are still similes in which the very same entity serves as *both* the tenor and the standard, and which are nonetheless not considered *ananvayas*. Take, for example, the following verse:

The Thousand-Rayed Sun holds his bright parasol for him,
newly crafted by Tvastr.
Its sloping rim of cloth nearly touches his crest,
so as to make him appear like the One on whose head the Gaṅgā is falling.¹⁸

Here Śiva with a bright parasol, the rim of which nearly touches his head, is compared to *his own self* at the moment river Gaṅgā fell on his locks. The verse is understood to express similarity between the two iconic representations of Śiva, and not to imply that Śiva is beyond comparison. This is therefore not an *ananvaya* but a simile. But since Śiva cannot be said to be separate from his own self, this is a simile which Vidyānātha’s definition fails to include.

The definition likewise falls short with respect to the following example:

Knocking on door after door, a beggar,
preaches the following rather than plead:
“Don’t give, and you’ll be like me,
give, and you’ll be like yourself!”¹⁹

In the last portion of this ironic stanza, the beggar’s addressee is compared to his own self. Here, as above, argues Appayya, the standard and the tenor cannot be said to be mutually exclusive, even if one uses the *navyanyāya* idiom. And as the adjective “separate” does not allow this example into the domain of the simile – where it belongs – the definition (*lakṣaṇa*) fails to delimit the defined phenomenon (*lakṣya*) in its entirety.

One could argue with Appayya on this issue, as did many in the generations to follow. One could say, for instance, that in the above verse the tenor and the standard are indeed separate in time, location and so forth. But one also has to admit that Appayya raises a nontrivial point. He demonstrates that not all of the similes consist of easily separable entities, such as the stock face and moon. Rather, there seems to be a continuum of separateness among entities in poetic propositions. On one end we find sets of highly distinct entities, while on the other there are pairs of self-same entities. In between these two extremes, we find a

whole gamut of relatedness: a type is compared to its own specimen, an entity is both a tenor and a standard (in a chain of similes), and a person is compared to his/her own future or past self. Appayya maintains that the language used by Vidyānātha fails to draw the line which is meant to break up this continuum and distinguish between a simile and an *ananvaya*. The adjective “separate” is simply too insensitive; it is a crude *lakṣaṇa* which betrays the intricacy of its *lakṣya*.

ARRIVING AT A DEFINITION

Appayya examines virtually *every word* in each of the five definitions he cites. No matter how hard thinkers tried to craft their *lakṣaṇas*, meticulously choosing their words, Appayya demonstrates that they failed to accurately delimit the simile. So perhaps such precision in the description of speech-figures cannot be achieved? Maybe the poetic landscape is so intricate and dense that for any definition there will always be an exception or counter-example; maybe each solution only generates new difficulties? Indeed, Appayya concludes his long section of refutation by plainly stating that the “definition of the simile [in such a way that is free of faults] is impossible (*durvacam*).”²⁰

This is a shocking conclusion. The discipline’s bread and butter had always been the identification and characterization of distinct speech-figures. Can it not define its most paradigmatic trope? Despite his statement, though, Appayya is not really willing to give up. He does come up with a definition, but one which is very different from anything the tradition had seen in over a thousand years. A simile, he says, is “the act of comparison, if intended up to the full completion of the action.”²¹

That is all there is: a brief and cryptic statement which appears to explain nothing. Upon first reading, there is a strong feeling of anticlimax – the definition seems to amount to little more than a tautology. However, a closer inspection reveals it to be subtler. It consists, we realize, of two parts. First, the simile is purposely characterized rather inclusively as an *act of comparison*, or a “description of similarity” (*sādrśyavarṇana*), of any kind.²² Why try and specify the simile formally, when *any* description of similarity may fall under its scope? A simile may entail either substantial or insubstantial similitude, its entities may be clearly separate or one and the same, contextual or extraneous to the context, repeated once or twice. A simile is a description of similarity which cannot be limited by any of these formal considerations.

The first part of Appayya's stanza thus supplies a necessary requirement, which is not in itself sufficient. For clearly, it applies to numerous other *alamkāras*; there is "an act of comparison" in a *vyatireka* (A is superior to B) or an *ananvaya* (A is like itself). It is the second part of the definition which bars such poetic devices, by stating that the act of comparison has to be "intended up to its full completion." This means, first, that nothing should prevent the act from being fulfilled. Hence the figure of *vyatireka*, where a similarity is described but negated, is excluded from the domain of the simile. In the statement "the spotless face is superior to the moon," the face is explicitly said to lack what the moon is known to possess (namely a spot). This prevents the act of comparison from being fulfilled. As for *ananvaya*, here the issue of intention is crucial. For in statements such as "your face is like your face," the poet intends to highlight the uniqueness of the face and to deny the possibility that there exists a standard against which to measure it. The act of comparison is thus *not meant* to be completed in an *ananvaya*.

WHAT IS NEW ABOUT APPAYYA'S DISCUSSION?

It should be clear by now that Appayya, who begins his discussion by claiming merely to recycle old formulations, radically differs from his predecessors, and does so quite consciously. But again, of what exactly does his innovation consist?

There are several answers to this question. First, Appayya's discursive style is remarkably new. By this I mean not just his criticism of older writers – unprecedented in both scope, tone and systematic nature – but also what I see as his breaking of various genre-distinctions and his novel style of composition, somewhat in the mode of a general scholarly "essay." I discuss these stylistic innovations elsewhere.²³ Then, of course, there is the unique, almost puzzling formulation of the simile's definition, the novelty of which we have already witnessed, though not yet fully explained.

Another possible answer to the question of novelty in Appayya's writing – one which may partly explain those mentioned above – is a new sense of historicity traceable in it, a sense which, according to Pollock, is a central feature of scholarship on the eve of colonialism.²⁴ For even if, unlike the seventeenth-century scholars cited by Pollock, Appayya does not classify his colleagues into ancients (*jīrṇa*), elders (*prācīna*), followers of the elders (*prācīnānuyāyin*), moderns (*navīna*), most up-to-date scholars (*atinavīna*) and so forth, an important distinction

between two historical phases of literary theory is strongly implied by his discussion.

The first consists of the earlier, pre-Ānanda authors: Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Udbhata, Vāmana and Rudraṭa. While these thinkers are frequently quoted and treated as authorities, their definitions of the simile are *not* cited and hence not criticized. Whenever Appayya's discussion runs contrary to the views of these earlier scholars, the contradiction is explained away. We are never told that they are wrong, but rather that the apparent meaning of their statements was not the intended one.²⁵

A second phase combines the later thinkers – those who return to discuss *alaṃkāras* as part of a modified domain of poetics in the wake of Ānandavardhana's essay on suggestion. The treatment of these authors – Bhoja, Mammata, Ruyyaka and Vidyānātha – is distinct. Their definitions are cited and unequivocally refuted as “wrong” (*ayuktam*), even as their views on other matters may be quoted respectfully.

Now Appayya is not the first to distinguish between pre- and post-*dhvani* thinkers. The paradigm shift led by Ānanda's theory on suggestion had already been noticed by Ruyyaka.²⁶ Yet Appayya's tacit understanding of his tradition's past is subtler than Ruyyaka's and serves two further purposes. First – and this is part of what is really new about Appayya's discussion – in a tradition which never possessed a root-text nor a figure of unquestioned authority, a small group of early thinkers is, for the first time, instituted as something of a collective founding father. These pre-Ānanda writers, and Daṇḍin in particular, are now viewed as authorities, and therefore cannot – by definition – be wrong.²⁷

Secondly, Appayya's differential treatment of pre- and post-Ānanda writers is informed by- and hence serves to highlight the differences in their definitional practices. Earlier writers, while clearly shaping their definitions so as to reflect what they viewed to be the distinctive features of separate poetic ornaments, seemed far less worried than their followers about possible overlap between them, and paid much less attention to this possibility in wording their definitions. Their main concern was to characterize speech-figures positively, not to set them apart from one another. It is in later generations that we find, perhaps under the influence of the logical discourse (*nyāya*), a growing preoccupation with questions of over- and under-extension. The desire to avoid the shading of categories now becomes *the* driving factor behind definitions, and each definition had to take into consideration the figurative-system in its entirety. Vidyānātha's definition and his self-supplied justification for it perfectly exemplify this trend.

Appayya's position *vis-a-vis* these two groups of authors is complex. Similar to later writers, he is concerned about the danger of overlapping figurative domains, and shares their premise that a good definition must avoid over- and under-extension. Yet he views the kind of solutions proffered by this second group as solving nothing. Indeed, each clarification only created a further complication. In this sense, Appayya is siding with what he tacitly identifies as the older school. For instance, his insistence on not specifying the type of similitude in his definition of the simile echoes Daṇḍin's definition of it as "a similitude which arises in whatever manner."²⁸

Viewed in light of this new historicity, Appayya's definition of the simile is better understood. Like his most immediate predecessors and perhaps even more so, Appayya is driven by the need to craft a definition that would delimit the simile with utmost precision; nothing more and nothing less. But unlike authors such as Vidyānātha – and perhaps closer in spirit to writers of old, such as Daṇḍin – Appayya is pessimistic about the possibility of formally characterizing it with any accuracy. He drops the technical analysis in favor of a more conceptual one.

Note that prior to Appayya, *ālaṃkārikas* all identified the simile (*upamā*) with similitude (*sādrśyam* or *sāmyam*). This forced them to take into consideration both the structure of its proposition – similitude had to be of one entity (*upameya*) with another (*upamāna*), the two had to be separate from one another, and so forth – as well as its truth value – the two entities had to be *truly* similar.²⁹ Appayya was the first to altogether avoid the structure and truth value of the simile as a *proposition*, and to adopt a vision of it as a verbal *action*. A propositional definition of the simile proved insufficiently flexible to include all the various types of poetic similitude-making and nothing but them. It is this traditional type of definition which Appayya believes to be impossible (*durvacam*). But defining the simile as a kind of poetic *speech act* is free from such problems. For acts are defined not by their formal structure and truth value, but rather by the intentions behind them and their success in being fulfilled.

The parameters of intention and effect allowed Appayya to solve the dilemma of his more immediate predecessors, namely the crafting of a definition capable of covering all similes and nothing more, and, at the same time, facilitated his tapping into the older notion of the *upamā*, as found in the work of Daṇḍin and the other elders. Moreover, his new, notional definition is closely related to the old view of most (or all) speech-figures as variations on the theme of the *upamā*, insofar as

they either qualify or negate its expression of similitude. Only when the poet intends no such qualification – just the expression of similitude, fully stated and unhindered – is there a simile. This brings to mind the image with which Appayya begins his discussion. A simile, we may conclude, is a successful poetic act, wherein the poet means for us to see the real actress on stage, unobscured by makeup or costume.

JAGANNĀTHA AND VIŚVEŚVARA

Let us now turn to two of Appayya's important successors and see how his innovations were received by them. It should be stated at once that both Jagannātha and Viśveśvara were harsh critics of Appayya. Jagannātha is particularly known for his animus against him. He dedicated an entire work, *The Critique of the Investigation of the Colorful* (*Citramīmāṃsākhaṇḍana*), to debunk his forerunner; his attack on Appayya often carries personal and even ethnic overtones.³⁰ Moreover, the *Critique* merely summarizes Jagannātha's criticism of Appayya, which is omnipresent in his larger work, *The ocean of Rasa* (*Rasagaṅgādhara*). Naturally, then, in examining Jagannātha's definition of the simile, one is attuned to find differences between it and the formulation of his predecessor.

And indeed, reading Jagannātha's brief definition of the *upamā* – “a charming similarity, which beautifies the meaning of the sentence”³¹ – one immediately realizes that he switches back from Appayya's identification of the simile with the act of comparison to the more traditional equation of it with the similitude itself. Jagannātha makes sure his readers do not miss this move. As soon as he is finished with explaining and defending his own definition, he tackles a series of older formulations, beginning with Appayya's. His predecessor's conception of the simile as a verbal act, or rather a “description” of similarity (*varṇana*), is at the heart of his critique.

Jagannātha claims that the use of the verbal noun *description* in characterizing the *upamā* is ill-advised, for by ‘description’ one either refers to the employment of a specific vocabulary, or to some knowledge arising from it, neither of which is equal to the unique expressivity typifying a sense-based ornament.³² Furthermore, the phrase “description of similarity” may equally apply to non-poetic acts of comparison. There is, after all, such a description in matter-of-fact utterances such as “the cow resembles the ox,” and even in scientific statements which point out the similarity between two grammatical cases.³³ Clearly, then,

Appayya's radical attempt to define the simile as an act of comparison is seen by Jagannātha as flawed.

But this important difference between Appayya and Jagannātha should not obscure the overall agreement in their concerns, style of discussion and definitions of the simile. Jagannātha too, like Appayya, seems pessimistic about the possibility of formally defining the simile with any accuracy, and shares the same sense of historicity as his predecessor. This is clear from the following two features of his simile-discussion. First, after criticizing Appayya's definition, Jagannātha goes on to quote the very same post-Ānanda thinkers cited by his predecessor. He proves their endless effort formally to define the simile to have been futile by finding virtually the same faults as Appayya.³⁴ Secondly, Jagannātha's definition is as 'notional' as Appayya's. Note that like Appayya, Jagannātha is brief, cryptic and shies away from any formal characterization. Like his antecedent's formulation, Jagannātha's definition has minimal specifications. He qualifies his identification of the simile with similitude by requiring that the latter be charming and beautify the meaning of the sentence.

Indeed, Jagannātha defends his minimal stipulations in a way that closely resembles Appayya's defense. My definition excludes *ananvaya*, says Jagannātha, because in that figure beauty is not the result of similitude but rather of its absence. An *ananvaya*, after all, negates the very possibility that an entity similar to the tenor exists. Likewise, there is no overlap with a *vyatireka*, for in it the negation and not the similarity is responsible for the charming effect.³⁵ There can be little doubt, then, that Jagannātha, like Appayya, wishes to differentiate the simile from its closely related figures not by any formal features but through its unique poetic effect, and that the two are in full agreement as to what accounts for that effect and how it differs from both *ananvaya* and *vyatireka*. Moreover, both scholars share the desire accurately to define the simile, and the view that the formalistic definitions of Vidyānātha's generation failed to achieve such accuracy. In short, both agree on what the problem is and on the general way to solve it, and differ only as to the actual solution. Appayya emphasizes the intention and completion of the *act* of comparison, while Jagannātha insists on the charm of the similarity as the defining factor.

If all of this is not sufficient to prove just how closely Jagannātha follows on the heels of his predecessor's discussion, it should be noted that the kind of criticism he employs against Appayya is quite "Appayya-like." Indeed, the very warning that the definition of the simile must exclude scientific and matter of fact statements of similarity, was earlier

issued by Appayya himself.³⁶ In short, Jagannātha's discussion and definition are closely modeled after Appayya, with the major difference being Jagannātha's attempt to outdo him.

The irony in the overall agreement between the two famous rivals is not missed by Viśveśvara, who half-jokingly pegs Jagannātha as “the follower” of Appayya Dīkṣita (*dīkṣitānuyāyin*).³⁷ Distinguishing himself from both, Viśveśvara first defines the simile in a rather conventional manner, as the “similarity of two separate entities which is expressed by a single sentence.”³⁸ Yet this definition, which is much closer to Vidyānātha's than to Appayya's and Jagannātha's, is entertained for no longer than two lines and never mentioned thereafter. In its place, Viśveśvara introduces its “realized purport” (*phalitārtha*), which serves as his actual definition for the remainder of the discussion.

This “realized” definition is completely written in *navyanyāya*'s formal metalanguage. It is thus impossible to translate, but I shall nonetheless attempt to render it into English so as to allow the reader to get a sense of its complexity. “When there is the state of being a counterpart in whichever relationship of similarity,” says Viśveśvara, “that [relationship of similarity] is a simile given two absences: (1) of the counterpart being delimited by the delimiting characteristic of tenorship, and (2) of co-referentiality [of the counterpart] with a property which exists merely in the counterpart, excepting any such property which serves as a delimiter of it [i.e. of the counterpart].”³⁹

This basically means – to use the set example of face and moon for purposes of clarification – that when the moon is the counterpart [i.e. standard] in a relationship of similarity, that relationship is a simile unless: (1) the moon is also the tenor (which would make it an *ananvaya*), (2) the moon's properties (such as a spot) exist only in the moon (but not in the face, otherwise this relationship would be a *vyatireka*), except, of course, for the moon's defining property, namely moonness, which necessarily exists in it, and in it alone.

In what must be viewed as a strong reaction to the notional definitions of his predecessors – both Appayya and his “follower,” Jagannātha – Viśveśvara resorts to the extremely technical idiom of logic. Not identifying the simile with similitude (as do all early *ālaṃkārikas*, and as does Jagannātha) nor with the act of describing it (as does Appayya), Viśveśvara chooses to describe it as a relationship between part and counterpart, which *navya-nyāya* has already defined with great sophistication. The importation of *nyāya* concepts and vocabulary allows Viśveśvara access to its tools. These tools alone, he implies, are capable of characterizing the simile with precision.

Thus Viśveśvara very consciously distances his definition from what he sees as the similar formulations of Appayya and Jagannātha. Yet despite this obvious distancing, he shares several important features with the definition and discussion of his two predecessors: 1. All are largely in agreement as to what the phenomenon under discussion, namely *upamā*, really is. Their argument is first and foremost about the definition and not the thing defined – the *lakṣaṇa* rather than the *lakṣya*.⁴⁰ 2. All three scholars are driven by the need for absolute accuracy in the characterization of the *upamā* – they wish to craft a definition of the *upamā* which would include all of its instances and nothing but them. More specifically, all three definitions are crafted so as to distinguish the *upamā* from the same two figures – *ananvaya* and *vyatireka*, which are seen as particularly problematic from the perspective of *lakṣaṇa*-making. 3. All three thinkers seem to agree that the ancient *ālamkārikas* correctly understood the basic notion of the simile. 4. Yet all find the attempts of Vidyānātha and his colleagues to define it as not fully satisfying. This position is more explicitly expressed by Appayya and Jagannātha, who openly criticize Vidyānātha, and is only implicit in Viśveśvara’s work. In fact, Viśveśvara defends Vidyānātha from Appayya’s criticism, but this seems to be more out of opposition to the latter than from satisfaction with the former. After all, his own realized (*phalitārtha*) definition is very distinct from Vidyānātha’s formulation.

Viśveśvara totally differs from Appayya and Jagannātha in his unwillingness to accept their pessimism regarding the possible accuracy of a formal definition. This pessimism, which Appayya expresses most straightforwardly, is replaced in Viśveśvara’s work by an enthusiastic adoption of *nyāya*’s concepts and terminology, indeed a complete “nyāyization” of *alamkāraśāstra*. This new vocabulary, for Viśveśvara, enables the tradition to delimit the phenomena observed by the elders with hitherto unknown tools.

NOVELTY AND NAVYATĀ: CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the admittedly limited scope of the above discussion, we are now in a position to draw several conclusions about *alamkāra*-discourse on the eve of colonialism. First of all, it should be clear that in this period *alamkāraśāstra* was highly innovative. Probably the most visible break from the past consisted of the actual simile-definitions we have examined. The differences between the formulations of Appayya, Jagannātha and Viśveśvara notwithstanding, none of these is even remotely similar to what tradition had yielded in nearly a millennium

of intensive discussion of its quintessential figure. All three definitions smack unmistakably of ingenuity, both in tone and thinking.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly than the visible innovations in the field of definition-making, is the new relationship to the tradition's past from which they seem to stem. This new historicality is characterized first and foremost by *ambivalence*. On the one hand, we find a newly expressed admiration for the discipline's earliest known figures – Daṇḍin, Bhāmaha and their followers. There is a sense that these ancients succeeded in identifying the basic ornamenting components of Sanskrit poetry – *upamā*, *ananvaya*, *vyatireka*, *utprekṣā*, *rūpaka*, *śleṣa* etc. – and in realizing the true nature and effect of each. This profound understanding enabled them to differentiate the *alaṃkāras* from one another. Thus they were capable of conceiving a *system* of figures – an exhaustive survey and analysis of poetic “morphemes,” in the numerous combinations of which the poet's tongue can be said to consist. The achievement of these *ālaṃkārikas* is not deemed less significant than Ānanda's discovery of suggestion.

Yet, accompanying this profound respect for the elders one also senses anxiety concerning their very accomplishments. This anxiety seems to derive from a new look at the second generation of *ālaṃkārikas* – the post Ānanda thinkers such as Mammaṭa, Ruyyaka and Vidyānātha. These writers tried to further strengthen the figurative system by providing each *alaṃkāra* with a more accurate, formal definition, emphasizing the differences between it and similar poetic phenomena. Yet, at least for Appayya Dīkṣita, there can be no doubt that such efforts amounted to an enormous failure. Appayya's criticism of the *upamā*-definitions of this later group of writers makes it clear that all of the *lakṣaṇas* examined failed to delimit their *lakṣyas* in their entirety, and what is more, they overextended to other *lakṣyas* as well. Appayya's discussion therefore implies that the entire well-ordered system of *alaṃkāras* was in imminent danger of collapsing. This notion is more openly expressed by Jagannātha who, as Pollock notes, occasionally warrants the rejection of a particular position, “out of what seems to be the sheer anxiety that the [ancient] ‘taxonomy’ would be ‘destroyed’ or even ‘weakened’.”⁴¹

Poeticians from the sixteenth-century onward thus viewed the old taxonomy as valid, but, at the same time, as fragile. They therefore tried first and foremost to protect it. The paradox inherent in this project is that one had to amend the system in order to preserve it. Even if the ancient taxonomy succeeded in capturing the essence of poetic figuration, it was necessary to modify and refine it – by adding new categories and sub-categories, by merging others and by redefining

the figures – in order to assure its overall survival. Thus, although the earliest scholars were often invoked as authorities, they were just as frequently sidestepped when new categories were invented or borrowed from later thinkers (Mammaṭa, Ruyyaka, etc.), and when remarkably new definitions were crafted.

Now the old system was rather amorphous, and each new scholar envisioned it somewhat differently. Likewise the category of the ancients often seemed quite open-ended and was used with considerable flexibility. As we noted in the very beginning, the *ālaṃkāra* tradition never possessed founding figures of unquestioned authority nor clearly defined schools following them. The fact that even after a category of ‘ancients’ was created it remained fuzzy, alongside the inconsistent attitude towards these ancients – at times venerated, at others disputed – may lead one to think that the new scholars constantly contradicted themselves.⁴² But it is important to remember that this apparent contradiction is rooted not in some logical inconsistency. Rather, it is the result of their newly found ambivalence towards the past, and of the drive, shared by all of the three scholars we have examined, to protect an overall excellent system from its own destabilizing faults.

The new historicity of late precolonial *ālaṃkārikas* is, to my mind, the most important feature of their writing, and what they all seem to have in common. Besides this, however, their new practice of poetics lacked a shared agenda, and they spoke in many and often conflicting voices. In this respect it should be noted that *navyatā* in the *ālaṃkāra*-discipline can by no means be identified with the period’s widespread use of *navya-nyāya* idiom. The use of this vocabulary and tool kit was seen twice above – as the position of the imaginary disputant of one scholar (Appayya) and in the actual position of another (Viśveśvara). It was, then, just one possible path taken by scholars of the period to improve upon the definitions of older generations. But, as we have seen, there were also other ways to reach the same goal, such as the ‘notional’ definitions of Appayya and Jagannātha, and it has yet to be determined which way, if any, was the more dominant.

Our discussion should have clarified why the outstanding innovations of the scholars we have examined were so easy to ignore. The fact that these innovations are based upon a fresh perspective of the past – that the new is so intimately connected to reestablishing the old – must have obscured their novelty. When Appayya Dīkṣita knowingly breaks with his tradition in the *Investigation* – a pivotal work which inaugurated a whole new way of writing Sanskrit poetics – he begins by claiming that he is only setting out to paraphrase the words of the

ancients. There is certainly irony in such a statement, but it is perhaps also emblematic of the complex relationship between new and old in his work.

It is, for instance, telling that the most visible index of change we have seen consisted of new definitions to age-old categories. The innovations of the new *ālaṃkārikas* involve novel answers to old questions, rather than asking questions which have never been asked. Neither Appayya nor his followers showed the slightest interest in challenging the millennium-old basic concepts of their discipline. These proved to be extremely resilient, and continued to be seen as valid as far as the discussion went.

Thus, *navya ālaṃkārikas* after Appayya do not present us with radically new agendas, theories or questions, about language, poetic expressiveness and so on. In this and other senses, then, we may view these scholars as “innovative traditionalists.” This, combined with the lack of a single, unified voice in the “new poetics,” makes it difficult to pinpoint its novelty, and partly accounts for the ease with which late *ālaṃkārikas* were unfairly labeled unoriginal and redundant.

Finally, I would like to briefly consider the possible effects of the three unique features of *ālaṃkāraśāstra* mentioned at the beginning of this paper on the late precolonial discussion. The tradition’s exceptionally multifaceted nature, and particularly its lack of founding figures, has definitely influenced the discussion on the eve of colonialism. The need to recognize the “founders,” the fuzziness of such a group, and the equivocal attitude towards it, all exemplify the importance of this unique feature.

Regarding the two remaining aspects, however, the picture is more complicated. On the one hand, since the discussion of Appayya and his successors is almost entirely theory-driven – propelled by internal concerns about the system of figures itself – there seems to be little scope for influence of the two evolving external traditions we mentioned above – poetry in Sanskrit and poetics in the vernacular.

On the other hand we should be careful not to dismiss these possible influences altogether. New *ālaṃkārikas* follow Appayya in the practice of criticizing older formulations by citing numerous counter examples, for which purpose any piece of poetry seems useful. Verses by Kālidāsa may be cited along with much later and less famous ones. The result is that each chapter of a work such as the *Citramīmāṃsā* is like a mini-anthology consisting of numerous Sanskrit stanzas from varied sources. This widening of the canon is in itself worth noticing, and may

not be insignificant, although its magnitude and possible consequences require further investigation.

As for poetics in the vernacular, we have seen no direct indication that they exerted any influence on the Sanskritic discussion. Still, it is not altogether impossible that the resurrection of Daṇḍin by Appayya is not somehow related to the former's lasting prominence in non-Sanskritic circles, particularly in the South. Moreover, understanding the potential relationship between Sanskritic scholars and intellectuals of vernacular and Persian cultural spheres cannot be carried out as long as the social dimension of new scholasticism is left uncharted. Indeed, only once this social dimension begins to unfold – through the research project of which this paper is part – will we be able to gain a better understanding of the fascinating movement of new scholasticism.

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NOTES

¹ Pollock, 2001: 5.

² De, 1960, Vol. 2, p. 252.

³ The dates of Appayya given here are based on V. A. Ramaswami Sastri's edition of the *Tattvabindu* by Vācaspatimiśra, pp. 94–103.

⁴ On the relative dating of Appayya's works see De, 1960: Vol. I, p. 223, as well as the new edition of the *Vṛttivārtikā*, edited and translated by Edwin Gerow in collaboration with H. V. Nagaraja Rao.

⁵ On this genre see McCrea, 1998: 286ff.

⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that Appayya composed both the *Kuvalayānanda* and the *Citramīmāṃsā* simultaneously, completing the former and leaving the latter unfinished.

⁷ I list, as an illustration, the number of copies of the *Kuvalayānanda* copies in three major collections (Madras, Varanasi and Poona), compared to those of Mammaṭa's extremely popular work, the *Kāvya prakāśa*. The Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Madras has, according to its descriptive catalogue, 25 copies of the *Kuvalayānanda*, out of a total 195 *alamkāra* manuscripts (nearly 13 percent). In comparison, there are only 12 mss. of the *Kāvya prakāśa* (6%). The *Kuvalayānanda* seems as popular, if less dominant, in the North. The descriptive catalogue of the Sarasvati Bhavan collection in Varanasi lists 48 mss. of this work (with or without a commentary), and 27 additional mss. of separate commentaries or summaries (the exact percentage is not available since the catalogue lists both *kāvya* and *alamkāra* works). In comparison, there are 51 copies of the *Kāvya prakāśa* (with or without a commentary), and 15 more works that summarize, amend or criticize Mammaṭa's

treatise. However, there also 82 mss. of separate commentaries and sub-commentaries on the *Kāvyaṣṭakāśa*, an area in which Mammaṭa's treatise vastly outnumbers the *Kuvalayānanda* or, for that matter, any other work in Sanskrit poetics. Indeed, commentaries on the *Kāvyaṣṭakāśa* seem to be the most productive genre in poetics during the period under discussion. The collection of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Poona yields a similar picture. Its descriptive catalogue lists 13 copies of the *Kuvalayānanda* (with or without commentaries), and additional 8 copies of commentaries, summaries etc. (about 7 percent of its *alamkāra* collection). As for the *Kāvyaṣṭakāśa*, there are 19 mss. of that work (with or without a commentary, a similar percentage), but 44 separate commentaries.

⁸ On the swiftness of circulation of books and ideas in this period one learns much from Christopher Minkowski's yet unpublished paper on Nīlakaṇṭha's commentarial work.

⁹ Or the roles of all other figures, *citra* denoting both "variegated" or "colorful," as well as the entire figurative domain. *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 33.

¹⁰ *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 42, cf. *Pratāparudrīya*, p. 253: svataḥsiddhena bhinnena sammatena ca dharmataḥ | sāmyam anyena varṇyasya vācyam ced ekadopamā ||

¹³ Compare *Citramīmāṃsā*, pp. 42–43, to *Pratāparudrīya*, pp. 253–256.

¹⁴ *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 48, cf. *Kumārasambhava* 1.3. The translation, with a slight modification is by Hank Heifetz, 1985: 21.

¹⁵ *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 48.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48. Giving is accompanied by pouring water on one's hand.

¹⁷ This is an oversimplification of Appayya's argument about the adverb "singularly" (*Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 48). It later becomes clear, however, that what negates the opponent's point here is the impossibility of viewing every clause of the chain simile individually for the purpose of the definition. For the same logic forces one to take an *upameyopamā* (A is like B, B is like A) as a combination of an *upamā* (A is like B) and a *pratīpamā* (B is like A) (p. 62).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 48. Tvaṣṭṛ is the architect of the gods.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁰ *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 68, on which the commentator Dharānanda says: upasamharati – tasmād dhetor asyā upamāyā lakṣaṇam doṣarahitam iti śeṣaḥ durvacam vaktum aśakyam iti (*ibid.*, p. 69).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69: vyāpāra upamānākhyo bhaved yadi vivakṣitaḥ | kriyāniṣpattiparyantam upamālakṣṛtis tu sā ||

²² A phrase Appayya seems to prefer later on, when offering a pair of alternative definitions (*ibid.*, p. 78).

²³ See "Arriving at a Definition: Appayya Dīkṣita's Meditation on the Simile and the Onset of New Poetics" (forthcoming in David Shulman and Shaul Shaked, eds., *Language, Myth and Poetry in Ancient India and Iran*), where the themes presented here are discussed more elaborately.

²⁴ Pollock, 2001: 8–19.

²⁵ See, for example, *Citramīmāṃsā*, pp. 54–55, when an apparent contradiction with Rudraṭa is explained away.

²⁶ *Alamkārasarvasva*, pp. 3ff. For the term "paradigm shift" in this context, see McCrea, 1998: 21ff.

²⁷ My initial findings suggest that even the opponents of Appayya respected the newly acquired status of Daṇḍin and his colleagues. See, for example, how Viśveśvara refutes Appayya's use of Daṇḍin's example of *asambhāvitopamā* (*Citramīmāṃsā*, pp. 44–45, cf. *Kāvyaḍarśa* 2.39). Viśveśvara does not say that Daṇḍin was wrong (in

classifying this as an *upamā* rather than *utprekṣā*), but rather that his true intention was misunderstood by Appayya (*Alaṃkāraustubha*, p. 11). In addition to Daṇḍin and the other pre-Ānanda writers, Ānanda himself seems to be granted a similar authority in Appayya's work and later.

²⁸ yathākathamcit sādṛśyaṃ yatrodhbhūtaṃ pratīyate | *Kāvyaalakṣaṇa* 2.14.

²⁹ A position which Appayya rejects. In statements like “a face is like the moon,” he says, the brightness of the moon cannot, in truth (*vastutas*), be the same as that of the face. (*Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 77, cf. my forthcoming paper mentioned above, in note 23).

³⁰ E.g. draviḍaśiromanibhir abhidhīyata, *Citramīmāṃsākhaṇḍana*, p. 25.

³¹ sādṛśyaṃ sundaraṃ vākyaṛthopaskāram upamālaṃkṛtiḥ | *Rasagaṅgādhara* Vol. II, p. 211.

³² Ibid., p. 226.

³³ Ibid., pp. 227–232. The example for the latter is Pāṇini 1.2.57. An earlier *sūtra* stated that teaching some basic grammatical notions is unnecessary. This *sūtra* adds that “[the meanings of the terms] ‘tense’ and ‘secondary’ too are *likewise* [not to be taught].”

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 233 ff.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 211–212.

³⁶ *Citramīmāṃsā*, p. 37.

³⁷ *Alaṃkāraustubha*, p. 21.

³⁸ tatraikavākyavācyaṃ sādṛśyaṃ bhinnayor upamā | Ibid., p. 4.

³⁹ yatsādṛśyapratīyogitāyām

upameyatāvachedakāvacchinnatvasvāśrayamātravṛttisvānavacc –

hedakadharmasāmānādhikaranyobhayābhāvaḥ sopamā | Ibid., p. 5. I am grateful to Lawrence McCrea for his useful comments on my “translation” of this definition.

⁴⁰ There are, however, occasions where the *lakṣya* itself is being debated, as in the case of *śleṣa*. See, again, my forthcoming paper mentioned in note 23.

⁴¹ Pollock, 2001: 15.

⁴² See, for example, the contradictions noted by Pollock, 2001: 15–16.

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