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Kavirahasya, "The Secret of Poets": Rājaśekhara's View on Poetry

SUMMARY: In the tenth century AD, a Sanskrit poet Rājaśekhara composed a peculiar text, the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā,* "Investigation in Poetry". In this work he proposed a new, fresh approach to literature: *kāvya* as a sphere of life rather than mere theory of figuration, *alaṅkāraśāstra.* This paper will concentrate on the *Kavirahasya,* the first chapter of the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā,* describing a poet and his place in the world of literature.

KEYWORDS: Rājaśekhara, *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, *Kavirahasya*, *alaṅkāraśāstra*, *kāvya*, Sanskrit poetics, Kauṭilya, Vatsyāyana, *Arthaśāstra*, *Kāmasūtra*, *śāstra*.

Over the centuries most Sanskrit theorists of poetics were concerned with the final product of poetic activity—*kāvya* (poem), rather than with its maker—*kavi* (poet). It was only at the beginning of the tenth century that the court poet of the Pratihāras, Rājaśekhara, set about writing a revolutionary text covering all topics relevant to the making of poetry. He entitled it *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, "Investigation in Poetry".[1]

At the beginning of the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (hereafter *KM*), Rājaśekhara provided a table of contents for his work, listing eighteen chapters; but the only chapter of the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* available to us

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[1]   I am using the edition: '*Kāvyamīmāṃsā*' of Rājaśekhara. Edited by the late C.D. Dalal and Pandit R.A. Sastry. Baroda: Oriental Institute, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 1934.

is the first *adhikaraṇa,* entitled the *Kavirahasya*, "Secret of Poets". The *Kavirahasya* chapter, as we have it, contains eighteen *adhyāya*s, or sub-chapters, of which the first three *adhyāya*s, I believe, constitute a general introduction to the entire work, and the *Kavirahasya* begins only in chapter four.

Whether Rājaśekhara ever finished his work or whether the first chapter was the only one he had ever planned to write is of no importance. The *Kavirahasya* is an independent treatise, which on its own presents Rājaśekhara's views on poetry. Unlike other works, the *KM* deals with the entire process of composing poetry. It is a textbook for poets, containing information from all aspects of a poet's life: description of the nature and the genesis of the profession, skills required to perform this work, and advice on every day living. Rājaśekhara does not leave a poet and his work in vacuum: he supplies an environment in which the creation of poetry takes place.

The *KM* begins with the Introduction, which contains information setting out the entire work. In the first chapter, *śāstrasaṅgraha*, "The summary/introduction of the knowledge [of poetry]", Rājaśekhara names the subject of his work, explains the reason for writing it, and gives the table of contents. He states: *athātaḥ kāvyaṃ mīmāṃsiṣyāmahe,* "Now/here I will investigate *kāvya*, poetry", supplying information about the divine origin of the subject: *yathopadideśa śrikaṇṭhaḥ* (...) *śiṣyebhyaḥ*, "just as Śiva taught it to his students". Then comes the list of topics of instruction, which were handled by various divine characters. This list is also the table of contents of the work. In the process of the transmission, these individual topics became separate theories, and the knowledge of poetry became vast and scattered, impossible to study.[2] This explains the reason for writing the *KM*: Rājaśekhara composed his work for the sake of poets. He gathered all the material

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[2]   *itthaṅkārañca prakīrṇatvāt sā [kāvyavidyā] kiñcid uccichida*, "Then it became scattered and broken up."

All translations are mine, except where I cite the name of a translator in the footnote.

and made it into one comprehensive book[3] with many examples to facilitate study.[4]

Already in the first chapter, Rājaśekhara distances himself from other theories. He begins with a sentence common in texts of *mīmāṃsā,* the school of Vedic hermeneutics. This sentence suggests that he will follow the style of writing of this philosophical system (which was not unusual for *alaṃkāraśāstra* authors). The next part of his work, however, mirrors texts from different *śāstra*s: *kāma-* and *artha-śāstra,* erotology and polity.

Rājaśekhara partly modeled his work on two texts: Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra,* a manual for a king, and Vatsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra,* guidelines for a *nāgaraka,* dandy or man-about-town. These two texts were foundational for two spheres of human life:[5] *artha*—polity, and *kāma*—pleasure. The first two chapters of the *KM* closely reflect the beginning chapters of the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Arthaśāstra.* Vatsyāyana's first chapter, also entitled *śāstrasaṅgraha*, presents the story of the divine origin of *kāmaśāstra,* and gives the reason for composing his work: in the process of transition, the theory of pleasure became scattered and too vast to study. Kauṭilya does not claim a divine origin for the *arthaśāstra,* but

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[3]   *itīyaṃ prayojakā(nā)ṅgavatī saṅkṣipya sarvam artham alpagrantheṇāṣṭadaśādhikaraṇī praṇītā* "because of that this [book] of 18 *adhikaraṇa*s was published, summarizing the entire matter in a short treatise, gathering all separate authors / containing all useful topics."

[4]   *samāsavyāsavinyāsaḥ saiṣa śiṣyahitāya naḥ:*
       citrodāharaṇair gurvī granthena tu laghīyasī.
       iyaṃ naḥ kāvyamīmāṃsā kāvyavyutpattikāraṇam.

       It is synthesis and analysis (summary and detailed form) for the
       benefit of my students.
       It is heavy with various examples, but lighter in its length;
       This *Kāvyamīmāṁsa* of mine is a means of education in poetry.
       (*KM* page 2. lines 5–8)

[5]   I use the term "spheres" to refer to the four *puruṣārtha*s, "goals of human life". The four goals were: *artha*, polity; *kāma*, pleasure; *dharma*, moral laws; and *mokṣa*, liberation.

he introduces his work as a summary of ancient texts. In his final verse, he describes it as easy to learn and comprehend. Just as in the *KM*, the table of contents in both the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Kāmasūtra* comes at the beginning of the work.

The second chapter of Rājaśekhara's work, *śāstranirdeśa,* or "Specification of theories", corresponds to the second chapter in the *Arthaśāstra*: *Vidyāsamuddeśa.* In both books the chapter contains a discussion of the field of Sanskrit *śāstra*s,[6] systems of knowledge. It is one of the subjects of studies for a poet and a king respectively. Instead of the chapter on *śāstra*s, the *Kāmasūtra* offers a chapter on *kalā*s, fine arts subject necessary for *nāgaraka*.

According to Rājaśekhara, every poet before approaching the study of poetry has to learn *śāstra*s, sciences.[7] First comes the division of *vāṅmaya,* all linguistic production, into two broad groups: *śāstra* and *kāvya*. One of the requirements for students of poetry is to posses the knowledge of theories: studying poetry is impossible without it. Theory is necessary like a lamp in the darkness: without its light one cannot discern objects. The presentation of knowledge systems did not concentrate on the field of *śāstra*s alone but also included other possible categories, such as *vidyā*s and *vidyāsthāna*s. It formed a curriculum for students who aspired to become poets.

The two types of *śāstra*s are *apauruṣeya* (authorless) and *pauruṣeya* (authored). Four *Veda*s and six *vedāṅga*s belong to the first group. The second type contains four *śāstra*s: the *purāṇa*s, *ānvīkṣikī* (logic/reasoning), *mīmāṃsā* (hermeneutics/exegesis), and *smṛtitantra* (non-*śruti* texts, remembered meaning of *śruti*).[8] These four *śāstra*s can further be divided into subgroups. A broader category encompassing

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[6]   There is no single translation of the term *śāstra*, the most common English equivalents being: theory, system of knowledge, or science.

[7]   This chapter of the *KM* is, to my knowledge, the first systematized exposition of Sanskrit theories.

[8]   Rājaśekhara's definition of *smṛti*: *śrutyarthāt smaraṇāt smṛtayaḥ* (*KM* 3.24).

all *śāstra*s was the group of *vidyāsthāna*s, departments of knowledge. There are fourteen[9] *vidyāsthāna*s: four *Veda*s, six *vedāṅga*s and four human sciences. Together they cover the entire knowledge pertaining to all three worlds: earth, sky and heaven. Rājaśekhara introduced into his discussion one more way of dividing knowledge systems, into *vidyā*s, or sciences. As with the previous lists, the number of *vidyā*s was not agreed upon. In his exposition Rājaśekhara followed the view of Kauṭilya. He quoted the opinions of various schools and accepted four *vidyā*s: *ānvīkṣikī* (logic), *trayī* (the *Veda*s), *vārttā* (economics) and *daṇḍanīti* (criminal science).

This systematic categorization of knowledge systems was only a part of Rājaśekhara's agenda. In the discussion of possible groups of sciences, Rājaśekhara added parts of *kāvyavidyā* to each group. He attached knowledge of poetry to the *apauruṣeya śāstra*s by listing *alaṅkāraśāstra* (knowledge of poetic figures) as the seventh *vedāṅga*: without poetics the comprehension of the *Veda*s is incomplete. To the list of fourteen *vidyāsthāna*s, he added *kāvya*, poetry,[10] as the fifteenth one: it is the *dharma* of poets, it can be either in verse or in prose, and it is an abode of all departments of knowledge. In the list of *vidyā*s,[11] he included *sāhityavidyā*, knowledge of literature, as the fifth one, because it is the essence of the other four.

In his exposition of the sciences, Rājaśekhara offers his understanding of poetry and its theory. By including elements of *kāvyavidyā* in different groups of knowledge systems (*śāstra*s, *vidyāsthāna*s and *vidyā*s), he joins it with theories from many fields of Sanskrit tradition. Literature is present in all fields of human life. What Rājaśekhara

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[9]   Since there had never been agreement on the constituents of these groups, the review presented by Rājaśekhara is only a summary of the views existing at his time.

[10]   At the beginning of the chapter, Rājaśekhara presented *kāvya* as the second group of language production, *vāṅmaya*.

[11]   According to Kauṭilya, *vidyā* is that by which one obtains *dharma* and *artha*.

proposes in his work is something more than a simple theory of poetry. He creates an entirely new field of knowledge or rather a new sphere of life. Before his work, there were two separate fields: *kāvya* and *alaṅkāraśāstra.* In Rājaśekhara's theory they are united as two aspects of language production, the first the domain of poets, the second of theoreticians. In his discussion of the *śāstra*s, Rājaśekhara bridged the two: in each śāstric field there are elements of *kāvya*, and *śāstra*s are indispensible for *kāvya.* The *KM* is not a work on poetics in its limited meaning. It discusses a much broader field: *kāvya-vidyā*,[12] which*,* in the theory proposed by Rājaśekhara, encompasses all: *alaṅkāra-śāstra,* traditional poetics, *kāvya*, poetry, and one additional category: *sāhityavidyā*, literary theory proper.

    Rājaśekhara ends his exposition of the sciences with the definition of *sāhityavidyā*; the knowledge of the proper coexistence of word and meaning; it has sixty four *kalā*s,[13] auxiliary sciences. Rājaśekhara promises to discuss the *kalā*s in the *Aupaniṣadika* or Esoteric Chapter, which is not available to us.

    The third chapter of the *KM*, *Kāvyapuruṣotpatti*, "The birth of Poetry-Man", is yet another innovation by Rājaśekhara. It contains his elaborate definition of *kāvya*, poetry, and its theory, *sāhityavidyā*, presented in the form of a myth. In the first chapter of the *KM*, Rājaśekhara talks about the origin of *kāvyavidyā*, the knowledge of poetry; in the third chapter he concentrates on *kāvya*, the heart of *kāvyavidyā*. According to Rājaśekhara's story, *kāvya* came to the world in the form of a man, Kāvya-puruṣa, the son of Sarasvatī, the Goddess of speech.

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    [12] In his work Rājaśekhara is very inconsistent with his terminology. Based on the entire text, I take *kāvyavidyā* to be the broadest category: the knowledge that Brahmā, one of Śiva's students, transmitted to his pupils. *kāvya* and *sāhityavidyā* refer to particular elements in creation of poetry, which becomes clear in the third chapter of the *KM*.

    [13] *kalā*s refer to any practical science or art, such as music, dancing, arranging flowers, etc. The full list of all 64 of them can be found in the *Kāmasūtra* 1.3.15.

Right after his birth, Kāvyapuruṣa welcomed his mother with a verse, the first metrical utterance in common speech. He employed in every-day language a form until then restricted only to the *Veda*s; in that moment *kāvya* was born in the world. As a template for this special verse, Rājaśekhara chose a verse from Bhartṛhari, a grammarian. In his theory of *śabda-brahman*, Bhartṛhari accepts language as a constitut-ing element of the world. Rājaśekhara modified this idea. In his work he identified Kāvyapuruṣa with *vāṅmaya*, equating the language of *kāvya* with the sacred language of grammarians.

In the story, Sarasvatī, mother of Poetry, gives a detailed descrip-tion of her son. Rājaśekhara used the Vedic hymn *Puruṣasūkta* as a template showing particular languages as Kāvyapuruṣa's body. To depict particular features of Poetry, Rājaśekhara used concepts taken from the earlier *ālaṅkārika*s, poeticians:

> Words and meanings are your body, Sanskrit your mouth, Prakrit your arms, Apabhramśa your loins, Paiśāća your feet, mixed languages your chest. You are complete (*sama*), pure or delighted (*prasanna*), sweet (*madhura*), noble (*udāra*) and vigorous (*ojasvin*). Your speech is famous for the *ukti*s (beautiful expressions), *rasa* is your soul, meters are your hair, question-answer and riddles and the like are your word-play, *anuprāsa* (alliteration—*śabdālaṅkāra*s), *upama* (simile—*arthālaṅkāra*s), etc., adorn you.[14]

The first phrase of the description: *śabdārthau śarīram*, clearly comes from Bhāmaha's definition of *kāvya: śabdārthasahitau kāvyam*,[15] "words and meanings together are *kāvya*". The adjectives used to describe Kāvyapuruṣa's qualities correspond to the list of *guṇa*s, good qualities of poetry: *samatā*, *prasāda*, *mādhurya*, *audārya* and *ojas*. Poetic ornaments (*alaṅkāra*s) are his adornments, etc.

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[14] *śabdārthau te śarīraṃ mukhaṃ prākṛtaṃ bāhuḥ jaghanam apabhraṃśaḥ paiśācaṃ pādau uro miśram. samaḥ prasanno madhura udāra ojasvī cāsi. ukti-caṇaṃ te vacaḥ rasa ātmā romāṇi chandāṃsi praśnottarapravahlikādikaṃ ca vākkeliḥ anuprasopamādayaś ca tvām alaṅkurvanti.* (*KM* 6.10–14)

(In transliteration I follow the text as given in Dalal, Shastry 1994.)

[15] Bhāmaha, *Kāvyālaṅkāra*, 1.16.

Rājaśekhara's definition of poetry is very broad and idiosyncratic; it includes elements of pre-Rājaśekhara theories of literature. Instead of giving primacy to any one of the constituents of *kāvya* (as for example *alaṅkāra*s for Bhāmaha or *mārga*s for Daṇḍin), Rājaśekhara gave all of them a place and function in the body of poetry.

To introduce Kāvyapuruṣa, Rājaśekhara employed styles and ideas from many fields: a mythical story, hinting at the *purāṇa*s or the *Mahābhārata*, beginning phrases such as those in *dharmaśāstra* texts, elements from grammatical theories, Vedic hymns, and ideas from other poeticians. It is an example of Rājaśekhara's exposition of sciences: *kāvyavidyā* is interrelated with all other theories.

After his exhaustive description of Kāvyapuruṣa or Poetry, Rāja-śekhara introduces into the story Sāhityavidyāvadhū,[16] Poetics-Woman. This was the fifth *vidyā* in the world of *śāstra*s, and another element of *kāvyavidyā*. In the following part of the chapter, Rājaśekhara talks about the birth of Poetics,[17] her pursuit of Poetry, and their eventual union. In this chapter he explains the function and responsibilities of a poet as well as the reward that awaits those who understand the story of Poetry and Poetics.

In Rājaśekhara's myth, the Goddess Umā created Poetics as means of restraining the unruly Kāvyapuruṣa. After Poetics left in search of Poetry, Umā sent initiates of poetic lore, *kāvyavidyāsnātaka*s,[18] to fol-low the couple and praise their deeds. She explained that the account of the history of the union of *kāvya* and *sāhityavidyā* would become

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[16]   Although the name Kāvyavidyāvadhū for the wife of Kāvyapuruṣa would be more appropriate, Rājaśekhara most probably used Sāhityavidyā-vadhū to differentiate the theory of literature in the narrow sense, *sāhitya-vidyā*, from the broader field of *kāvyavidyā*.

[17]   For simplicity I substitute the names Poetry and Poetics for Kāvya-puruṣa and Sahityāvidyāvadhū respectively.

[18]   Rājaśekhara defines *kāvyavidyāsnātaka* as: *yaḥ kavitvakāmaḥ kāvya-vidyopavidyāgrahaṇāya gurukulāny upāsate sa* [*kāvya*]*vidyāsnātakaḥ* "one who in order to gain poetic skills studies *vidyā*s and *upavidyā*s at a university (*KM* 19.19–20).

the essence of the poet's work. In the rest of the chapter, Rājaśekhara describes how Sāhityavidyāvadhū won over the heart of Kāvyapuruṣa. Following her husband-to-be through the Indian Subcontinent, Poetics kept changing her appearance in order to seduce him. In the end, Kāvyapuruṣa married Sāhityavidyā.

The task of poetics is to follow poetry and adjust to its changes.[19] But Rājaśekhara also shows how the actions of Poetics caused changes in Poetry. The more Sāhityavidyā attracted Kāvyapuruṣa, the more refined his speech became; one without the other would remain unchanging. The unified couple, in the form of poetic imagination, took residence in the hearts of poets; those who understand the union between poetry and poetics obtain immortality.[20] In the last sentence of the chapter, Rājaśekhara states the reward for those who understand that inspiration comes from *kāvya* accompanied by *sāhityavidyā*: they rejoice in this and in the next world.[21] Studying *kāvyavidyā* also leads to *mokṣa*.

In the first three chapters of the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, Rājaśekhara provided a short exposition of his ideas. He introduced the subject matter: *kāvyavidyā*, a new field of knowledge that he proposed, provided it with a divine origin; and stated the need to compose a theoretical work for it. He then assured the place for his theory among other systems of knowledge. Finally, in the last chapter of the Introduction, Rājaśekhara told a story of the birth of literature, *kāvya*, and its theory, *sāhityavidyā*, and the relation between these two. He also explained the role of a poet in the world of literature, and his reward. In the fourth

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[19] For the discussion of the relationship between theory and practice see: Pollock 1985.

[20] "And they created the heavenly world for poets, where poets rejoice till the end of time with divine bodies, and at the same time they inhabit the mortal world with their corpus of poetry (bodies made of poetry)" (*KM* 10.10–12).

Similar idea can be found in Bhāmaha's work: good poets live forever in the body of their poetry. (*Kāvyālaṅkāra* 1.6)

[21] *evaṃ vibhajya jānānaḥ pretya ceha ca nindati* (*KM* 10.14).

chapter of the *KM*, he then turned to the beginning of the *Kavirahasya*, the first book of the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*.

Rājaśekhara proposed a fresh view of literature: *kāvya* not as an abstract concept, but rather as a way of life. Composing poetry is a profession like any other, and a poet is a craftsman practicing it. It is part of everyday life: *kāvya* is the divine language in the human realm. But it also belongs to the world of *śāstra*s: it is indispensable for sciences and itself depends on them. Poetry, *kāvya*, has its own theory, *sāhityavidyā*, but not as a separate field: they are useful only together.

After three chapters of the general introduction, the *Kavirahasya* proper begins. It is a manual for students, offering a description of the profession, its requirements, and skills necessary to compose poetry. Poets-to-be can learn from it about the steps in their education, the curriculum of their studies, and what to expect on the way.

The process of creating poetry begins with a poet, and that is the first topic in Rājaśekhara's work. He introduces types of students: *buddhimat* (an intelligent one) and *āhāryabuddhi* (one who can be trained), and one contrary to these two, *durbuddhi* (dullard).

In the next lesson, Rājaśekhara discusses *kāvyahetu*s, causes or sources of poetry. Traditionally, there were three possible *kāvya-hetu*s: *pratibhā*: imagination or talent, *vyutpatti*: learning or training, and *abhyāsa*: practice. Many poeticians gave more importance to one above others or claimed a particular one to be the single cause.

Rājaśekhara offered his own idea: *śakti*, ability, is necessary to compose poetry. It is a combination of *samādhi,* concentration, and *abhyāsa,* internal and external effort. These two together bring out imagination and learning. *Śakti* is the base of poetry, and it is different than *pratibhā* or *vyutpatti*. It is a basic requirement for a student entering the school: he needs to be a *śakta*, able to concentrate and patient enough to practice. Without *śakti* neither *pratibhā* nor *vyutpatti* can be used. As Rājaśekhara points out: "It is a capable person (*śakta*) who deploys imagination and a capable person (*śakta*) who can really be trained" (*KM* 11).

In the next part Rājaśekhara elaborates on the two *hetu*s: *pratibhā* and *vyutpatti*. He begins with imagination. First he presents views of other scholars and then introduces his new ideas: he divides *pratibhā* into two kinds, creative (*kārayitrī*) and receptive (*bhāvayitrī*). The creative imagination belongs to a poet and the responsive one is necessary for a critic. According to Rājaśekhara, imagination arises from different sources: it might be inborn, obtained through training or gained by esoteric practices.

The second type of imagination, receptive (*bhāvayitrī*), belongs to a critic. A critic with imagination is indispensable, only he can appreciate a poem: "It [receptive imagination] brings out poet's effort and intention. Thanks to it the tree of poet's effort bears fruit. Otherwise it would be barren" (*KM* 13.21–22). According to Rājaśekhara good critics are extremely rare. A good critic is able to discriminate between the good and bad qualities of a work, admit the first, and disregard the latter. And a critic is a master, friend, adviser, pupil and teacher for a poet. There is no use in composing poetry if there is no one to appreciate it. A poet and a critic are two sides of the same coin; one does not exist without the other:

> What use in poetry, which exists only in poet's mind,
> Which critics do not spread in ten directions.
> Works of poetry gathered in books are found in every house,
> But those engraved on the stone tablets of critics' minds are rare.[22]

Poetic imagination, *pratibhā,* is not the only cause of poetry, another one is *vyutpatti*, learning. Pre-Rājaśekhara poeticians disagreed on the primacy of one over the other. Some claimed that *pratibhā* is more important because it is able to conceal faults coming from the lack of learning. Others considered *vyutpatti* as more important because it can entirely

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[22] *kāvyena kiṃ kaves tasya tanmanomātravṛttinā*
nīyante bhāvakair yasya nanibandhā diśo daśa
santi pustakavinyastāḥ kāvyabandhā gṛhe gṛhe
dvitrās tu bhāvakamanaḥśilāpaṭṭanikuṭṭitāḥ
(*KM* 15. 5–8)

conceal faults coming from the lack of imagination. In Rājaśekhara's opinion the two together create perfection. A poet endowed with both imagination (*pratibhā*) and training (*vyutpatti*) is extremely rare and it is he who is called a poet.

After discussing the *kāvyahetu*s, Rājaśekhara introduces types of poets depending on the cause of their poetry. Some theoreticians considered one type of a poet to be better or worse than the other. Rājaśekhara disagreed with this view. For him each type of a poet is good or bad in his own field. Comparing different types of poets is impossible since different rules apply to each. For Rājaśekhara there are no universal rules for judging literature: types of poems depend on the types of their authors.

Another way of dividing poets is based on a stage in their training. A poet at the outset of his career is called *kāvyavidyāsnātaka*,[23] an initiate in the field of poetry. He is eager to become a poet and enters the university to study. There is also *sevitṛ*, a "copycat", a poet who copies styles of ancient authors in hope of developing his own. The highest status is *kavirāja*, a king of poets: he can compose poems in every language, style, and genre.

In the next lesson, students of *kāvyavidyā* learn about maturity, *pāka*. Rājaśekhara explains: "Words of a good poet through continuous practice attain maturity" (*KM* 20.4). Opinions regarding *pāka* differed. Some said that "lack of hesitancy in putting words together" is maturity, others that a poet obtains maturity when words in his poem cannot be substituted. According to Avantisundarī, Rājaśekhara's wife, "maturity is a cause for the beautiful statements with words and meanings appropriate for *rasa*" (*KM* 20.16–17). Rājaśekhara explains that maturity can be inferred from its effect: only accomplished connoisseurs can prove it.

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[23] *kāvyavidyāsnātaka*s are the ones whom, in the *Kāvyapuruṣotpatti* chapter, Umā sent to follow Poetry and Poetics. She explained that understanding of the union of Poetry and Poetics would become the heart of their poetry.

Students aware of requirements, expectations and character of the profession, proceeded to learn how to compose a poem. First course in their curriculum was *padavākyaviveka*: "Introduction to words and sentences", namely grammar. Rājaśekhara begins with a short discussion of a word, *pada*: it is a union of *śabda,* sound and *artha,* a meaning it expresses. Following views of grammarians, he divides words into five modes, *vṛtti*s, e.g. *sup*, nouns or *tiṅ*, verbs. Next he talks about a sentence, *vākya.* He defines it as such arrangement of words, which can bring out the intended meaning of a speaker. Then he quotes different views about types of sentences, their division and function. Discussion about sentences leads to Rājaśekhara's definition poetry. While in the third chapter he invented a mythical story as an allegory elaborating on his vision of *kāvya*, in this chapter he offers a definition in a style of *sūtra*: *guṇavad alaṅkṛtañ ca vākyam eva kāvyam*, "Poetry, *kāvya* is a sentence possessing *guṇa*s, excellences and ornaments *alaṅkāra*s" (*KM* 24.26). It differed from the views of earlier authors who, following Bhāmaha, treated *śabda* and *artha* as the body of *kāvya.* They considered word, *śabda*, and its meaning, *artha,* as separate elements, which combined make *kāvya*. For Rājaśekhara *vākya,* a sentence, was a bearer of meaning, and *kāvya* was nothing but a sentence with *kāvya*-specific adornments.

This definition was a problematic one. There were people who considered *kāvya* to be dangerous and argued that it should not be taught. Rājaśekhara warned students against attacks. Treating a sentence as a base of *kāvya* could serve as proofs for its hurtfulness. Some could say that poetry contains untrue statements, that it gives false instructions, and expresses obscene meaning. For all three accusations there are exemplary verses. Rājaśekhara refutes all of these arguments by showing that sentences of all three types can be also found in the *Veda*s, *śāstra*s, and everyday life. He quotes examples from each source.

Possible explanation for those attacks is misunderstanding of poetry. Rājaśekhara brings in the discussion of the importance of grammar. This part of the lecture is based on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. Students learn that it is crucial to know how to use language correctly;

one who knows correct forms obtains endless glory, while one who, even knowing correct forms, uses incorrect ones becomes unclean.[24] Students also learn how important is *pāka,* maturity. Rājaśekhara talking about this topic explained that mature poets are able to distinguish between proper and improper. It allows avoiding any impropriety in works.

When a poet has the general knowledge of language, he should learn about the origin and development of human speech. According to Rājaśekhara there are three styles, *rīti*s, of human speech: *vaidarbhī, gauḍīyā* and *pāñcalī*,[25] and based on them there are three kinds of expression. The idea of *rīti*s as regional styles of speech was present in the literary theory before Rājaśekhara's work, and there was no agreement among poeticians as to the number or characteristics of rītis. Even though Rājaśekhara accepted three styles, he admitted that in reality they are manifold due to differences in *kāku*, intonation.[26] Intonation is responsible for expressing emotions and hidden meanings; one type of intonation is used to recite a sentence containing a question, and a different one to recite a sentence expressing conciliation, etc. Employing proper intonation uncovers additional meaning suggested by the author.[27]

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[24]   Bhāmaha expressed a similar sentiment:

   sarvathā padam apy ekaṃ na nigādyam avadyavat.
   vilakṣmaṇā hi kāvyena duḥsuteneva nindyate. (*Kāvyālaṅkāra* 1.11)

[25]   A more detailed discussion of *rīti*s, their number and definitions can be found in the third chapter of the *KM*.

[26]   The idea of *kāku* was not entirely new: it is first found in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* as referring to a tone of voice in general. Rājaśekhara gives examples of different understanding of *kāku*:

   "According to Rudraṭa *kāku* is a figure of form, called *vakrokti.*
   Yāyāvarīya asks: How can it be a kind of poetic figure if it is an expressive property of recitation?" (*KM* 31. 8–10)

[27]   In Rājaśekhara's theory, *kāku* is responsible for uncovering of hidden, suggested meanings. It serves the same function as Ānandavardhana's *dhvani*. Ānanda in the *Dhvanyāloka* considered kāku to be *guṇībhūtavyaṅgya,*

Kāku is important not only for a poet, but also for a sophisticated reader. The success of a poem depends also on quality of recitation; only knowing types of intonation one can fully appreciate a poem. After introducing the theory of recitation, Rājaśekhara gives examples of its practical application. He describes particular methods of recitation belonging to people in different regions, for example:

> People from the East to Benares, such as Magadha,
> Recite Sanskrit well, but are blunt when it comes to Prakrit.[28]

After discussing a poem's form, Rājaśekhara proceeds to its content. Poets-to-be learn possible sources of themes for their poetry, *kāvyārthayoni*s, such as *śruti*, *itihāsa*, *pramāṇavidyā (*epistemology or philosophy), *rājasiddhāntatrayī (artha-, nāṭya-, and kāmaśāstra)*, or *loka* (worldly affairs). This again shows that *kāvya* is closely connected with other fields of knowledge. Rājaśekhara reminds students that studying of sciences necessarily precedes studies of poetry and used examples which required knowledge of *śāstra*s.

As a part of the lecture about *kāvyārthayoni*s, Rājaśekhara discusses the extent of meanings (*arthavyāpti*). Poems can use themes belonging to the sphere of divine, divine-mortal, or pertaining to the underworld. Concluding the discussion, Rājaśekhara agrees with Lollaṭa that even though there are endless themes for a poem, only ones endowed with *rasa* should be employed. Rājaśekhara elaborates on this idea: *rasa* does not lie in ideas but in compositions. It is poet's way of expression that adds *rasa* to a poem. Poets-to-be learn that they alone are responsible for bringing taste into their compositions; the style of

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subordinate suggestion (*The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana. With the locana of Abhinavagupta*. Translated by Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan. Harvard University Press. 1990: 616–619). Rājaśekhara in his work never refers to Ānandavardhana's theory of *dhvani*, and it is difficult to say whether or not he was familiar with it.

[28] *paṭhanti saṃskṛtaṃ suṣṭhu kuṇṭhāḥ prākṛtavāci te*
vāṇāra(rāṇa)sītaḥ pūrveṇa ye kecin magadhādayaḥ. (*KM* 33.25 –26).

their writing can either increase or diminish *rasa.* A bad poet even using an idea full of *rasa* can destroy it, and create a tasteless work.

In the middle of his work, Rājaśekhara puts a chapter containing practical advice for poets: where to live, when to work, and what kind of friends to choose. He shows a poet as a craftsman of poetry-making at work. In order to be productive in his job, a poet needs proper tools, and a workshop. He also needs an employer. The title of the chapter: *Kavicaryā rājacaryā ca*, "The conduct of a poet and of a king", promises to discuss the responsibilities of a poet's patron, a king.

This chapter marks the end of student's theoretical education, and the beginning of practicing poetry: *gṛhītavidyopavidyaḥ kāvyakriyāyai prayateta.*[29] "After learning sciences and auxiliary sciences, one can advance to composing poetry." (*KM* 49.8) As a reminder Rājaśekhara lists the subjects of instruction, such as grammar, lexicon, metrics and poetics, as well as auxiliary sciences, and 64 practical arts.[30]

A poet should be pure in mind, speech as well as body because the nature of a poem reflects the nature of the poet. He should also be of impeccable manners, and his speech should always be pleasant.

An important aspect of poetry-making is a rigid schedule.[31] Rājaśekhara describes an exemplary day of a diligent poet: a poet should get up at daybreak, begin his day with morning worship of Sarasvatī, and in the second and third watch of the night he should rest.

Following the description of *nāgaraka*'s house in the *Kāmasūtra*, Rājaśekhara depicts a mansion appropriate for a poet: it should have orchards, lotus ponds, gardens with peacocks, deer, *cakravāka* birds and geese, rooms with showers and baths, and the like.

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[29] This sentence is similar to the beginning of the chapter on the life style of *nāgaraka* in the *Kāmasūtra*: *gṛhītavidyopavidyaḥ* [...] *nāgaraka-vṛttaṃ varteta*. (1.4.1) "When a man has become educated [...] he can begin the lifestyle of a man-about-town" (Doniger: 2003).

[30] KM 49.8–10.
The importance of training applies also to the king in the *Arthaśāstra.*

[31] Both the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Kāmasūtra* contain a daily schedule for a king and a *nāgaraka* respectively.

A poet needs a study with a tablet and chalk, pens and ink-pots, and either palm leaves, or birch bark. He should employ a scribe who is skilled in all languages, and knows various scripts. It is also the responsibility of a scribe to make multiple copies of a manuscript.

To protect a work in progress, a poet should not recite a half-made poem, or [should recite] a new [poem] in front of a single person. It is a bad idea to recite a good composition in front of a poetaster: a false poet would not appreciate it, but destroy it by composing his own poem.

Rājaśekhara introduces another person necessary in the world of literature: a king, a poet's patron. As an employer of a poet, the king has specific obligations. He is responsible for building an assembly hall, where poets and scientists can participate in learned debates, and where various craftsmen can present their work. Rājaśekhara gives a detailed description of what the hall should look like, and what should be the arrangement of guests. A king is the president of conferences; he facilitates discussion of poetry, where participants examine and judge poems, and he rewards poets according to the quality of their work. To earn fame for his kingdom, he should gather at his court many learned men from all around the world. In big cities of his realm, a king should establish universities, where poetry and science might flourish.

In his work Rājaśekhara described a poet's everyday life from the point of view of a practitioner. He offered advice for real situations that poets might encounter in their career. Being a court poet, he understood the relationship between kings and their poets:

> Kings are known by their alliance with poets,
> And through the support of kings poets become famous.
> There is no other assistance for a poet equal to that of a king,
> And there is no other service for a king like that of a poet.[32]

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[32] *khyātā narādhipatayaḥ kavisaṃśrayeṇa*
rājāśrayeṇa ca gatāḥ kavayaḥ prasiddhim
rājñā samo'sti na kaveḥ paramopakārī
rājñe na cāsti kavinā sadṛśaḥ sahāyaḥ (*KM* 27.9–12).

He also understood the power of poetry: it was capable of creating reality, and changing history:

> The greatest sages say that worldly existence depends on the words of
> poets. Poetry is also the root of happiness. Since:
> The famous deeds of kings,
> The power struggle of gods,
> Miraculous powers from sages' penance
> Live in the words of great poets.[33]

The second half of the *KM* discusses topics useful also for advanced poets. In addition to considering a poem in making, a student of poetry has to understand the relationship between his own work and the works of others. Rājaśekhara in his instruction for poets includes a detailed discussion of *kāvyaharaṇa,* plagiarism. He was the first theoretician to devote significant attention to this problem. First, he gives a general definition of plagiarism and then lists the types of appropriation of form, *śabdaharaṇa*:

> Composing with words or meaning used [before] by another [poet] is plagiarism. It is of two types: unacceptable and acceptable.[34]

As for the distinction between unacceptable and acceptable types of stealing, there were different opinions. For some stealing of one word was not plagiarism. Rājaśekhara considered it to be wrong unless a word had more meanings.

Rājaśekhara presented many types and subtypes of stealing, for example stealing of form, of word, and of part of a verse, and gave examples for all of them, quoting a plagiaristic verse and its original.

There are cases when using a part of another work is not plagiarism, e.g. when a poet incorporates a sentence from another work, but

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[33] *śrīmanti rājñāṃ caritāni yāni*
prabhutvalīlāś ca sudhāśināṃ yāḥ.
ye ca prabhāvās tapasām ṛṣīṇāṃ
tāḥ satkavibhyaḥ śrutayaḥ prasūtāḥ (*KM* 27.5–8).

[34] *paraprayuktayoḥ śabdārthayor upanibandho haraṇam* (*KM* 56.2).

gives it a different interpretation. Buying a poem is the same as plagiarism: lack of success is better than infamy.

In chapter twelve of the *KM*, Rājaśekhara discusses possible reasons for *arthaharaṇa,* borrowing meanings from other works. He points to one of the difficulties of composing poetry: conceiving of a new idea. According to some it is impossible for beginner poets to come up with any new ideas: all themes have already been used in the works of earlier poets, and young writers can only refine old stories. Rājaśekhara sees poets and their ability differently:

> Everything is reflected in a mirror—minds of poets. Words and meanings compete for poet's attention, [saying] does he indeed see us?[35]

Another topic useful for a poet in his work is poetic conventions, *kavisamaya*. Although poetic convention played an important role in Sanskrit literature, it was Rājaśekhara who first discussed this topic. He defined *kavisamaya* as a theme which poets employ, that is neither śāstric or known in the world, but which comes from tradition. And it is correct because it conforms to the ways of poets. Nowadays they might differ from factual situation because of changes of space and time, but compositions based on them are still accurate; they were handed down from wise men who lived in ancient times and mastered all the *Veda*s and sciences, and who travelled in foreign lands.

To make the topic of poetic conventions (*samaya*) easy to study for students of *kāvyavidyā,* he presented it in a clear, systematic way, dividing conventions into separate groups: conventions pertaining to class, quality, substance, etc. For example, lotuses and water lilies are found only in rivers, while geese are only found in lakes, there is no *mālatī* jasmine during springtime, no fruits or flowers from sandal trees, there is the sounding of cuckoos only in spring time even though it happens also during summer, and so forth.

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[35] *matidarpaṇe kavīnāṃ viśvaṃ pratiphalati. kathaṃ nu vayaṃ dṛśyāmaha iti mahātmanām ahaṃpūrvikayaiva śabdārthāḥ puro dhāvanti* (*KM* 62.22–24).

In the next part of the *KM*, Rājaśekhara clarifies that the know-
ledge of poetic conventions is not enough to compose a poem.
In addition, every poet should know the divisions of space and time.
Chapter seventeen of the *KM*, *Deśavibhāga*, is a lesson on geography
and ethnography. Rājaśekhara talks for example about the num-
ber of mountains, number of the worlds, and the number of oceans.
After summarizing different opinions on the subject, he concludes: all
views, because they serve different purposes of poets, are correct, and
each of them can find its basis in scientific texts. Rājaśekhara shows his
knowledge of geography of Indian peoples as well as indigenous flora
and fauna of particular regions. For example, Malaya is the birthplace
of delightful sandal trees, and of nutmeg trees as well as cardamom and
black pepper.

Following the instruction on space, is a section on time,
Kālavibhāga. First of all, a good poet has to possess knowledge about
the units of the measurement of time, and number of seasons, with their
characteristics.

As in the case of space, opinions as to the division of time dif-
fer. In response Rājaśekhara restated the rule discussed in chapters
on *kavisamaya*: poetic convention takes precedence (is *pramāṇa*) over
the factual state. Still, it is profound knowledge of the seasons that
characterizes a great poet. Only knowing factual conditions, a poet
can decide if it is necessary to use poetic convention or not. A poet
can change natural state if it works as an ornament. In the final verse
of the chapter, and at the same time the final chapter of the work,
Rājaśekhara says:

> Lack of knowledge on the subject can cause confusion,
> And a poet learned in this matter is a great poet.[36]

Rājaśekhara wrote his book with a poet in mind. He did not discuss
a finished work; there was no discussion of poetic figures, and genres.

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[36] *kaver iha mahān moha iha siddho mahākaviḥ* (*KM* 112.12).

The *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, or rather its first chapter, is a valuable source of knowledge for those who want to become poets, who begin their education, as well as for accomplished poets. It is also a useful text for those who want to participate in the world of literature. Kings should read it in order to become good patrons. Critics can learn from it what it means to be a poet and how difficult this work is.

The theory of literature is very specific. Before Rājaśekhara started his work, there was *alaṅkāraśāstra*, a science which had a dubious place among other *śāstra*s. As its name suggested, it was theory of figuration; its goal was to dissect a poem and exam its smallest details. Poeticians tried to align themselves with two other fields associated with language: *mīmāṃsā* and grammar, and tried to apply styles of these two systems to their works. The problem was that the subject of theory of literature was not fixed. It was impossible to come up with universal rules for something that did not follow any rules.

This was exactly the problem which Rājaśekhara wanted to solve. He abandoned the idea of writing another theoretical work; he was a poet himself. A practicing poet has a different approach to the results of his work. A finished poem was only a small part of what *kāvya* really was. If someone wanted to write a text for this field, it would have to be different. Poetry was not an abstract concept; it was an entire process. A poem could not exist without its maker or its receiver. Language of *kāvya* was not the language of the *Veda*s or grammar. But neither was it a common speech, *bhāṣā*. That is why Rājaśekhara introduced Kāvyapuruṣa, a combination of the two. He made *kāvya* equal to the divine language, presenting it alongside the Vedic *śāstra*s,[37] and made it human, by sending it to the world of men.

Throughout the entire text, Rājaśekhara interweaves styles and elements of very different fields. He starts with *mīmāṃsā*-like sentences, brings in the *Kāmasūtra*, offers a scientific chapter on *śāstra*s, and then tells the mythical story, interceded with theories of language,

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[37]   I use this term to refer to theories associated directly with the *Veda*s, such as *mīmāṃsā* or the Vedāṅgas.

and the *Veda*s. The *KM* was a text for a new theory: *kāvyavidyā,* and
as such needed a form of its own. To save his work from being filed
in a single, random system of knowledge, Rājaśekhara did not use
a particular form; he mixed all of them.

The only chapter of the *KM* we have is devoted to a poet.
The *Kavirahasya* is a textbook for students of poetry. It introduces
the subject of studies, *kāvya*, and is a guidebook on a way to become
a poet. Rājaśekhara intended it as an instruction for those whose pro-
fession would be poetry. That is why a substantial part of the *KM*
makes use of two instructional texts from two particular *śāstra*s.
A poet in Rājaśekhara's work is a student, in the same way a king
is in the *Arthaśāstra* and a *nāgaraka* in the *Kāmasūtra*. These two texts
served as the templates for a substantial part of the *KM*. From the first
chapter on, Rājaśekhara constantly used either the form or the ideas
from both texts. To be a king and to be a dandy required learning, and
there were textbooks for both. In the same way, to be a poet required
a textbook. The *KM* is exactly that.

But it is also more. The last, or the first thing making Rājaśekhara's
work exceptional/unique is its title, the *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*. To my
knowledge, this was the first text having *-mīmāṃsā* as a part of its
title. The majority of śāstric texts had in their title *-śāstra* or *-sūtra*,[38]
like the *Alaṅkāra-śāstra* or the *Kāma-sūtra*. Already with the title
Rājaśekhara announced that his work would not be a *śāstra*, theo-
retical text, or *sūtra,* an authoritative text for the literary theory.
The *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* was a real "I n v e s t i g a t i o n into literature."

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[38]   *sūtra* often means a foundational or authoritative text for a given sys-
tem.

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