

The *Śāravatī* and Some Other Commentaries on the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva- A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The *Gītagovinda* is a romantic poetry based on the love story of Rādhā and Śrīkṛṣṇa. It was composed by Jayadeva who is regarded as the last great Sanskrit poet in the history of Sanskrit literature. The *Gītagovinda* is a great literary work which became famous not only in India but also in different parts of the world. Because of the popularity of the *Gītagovinda*, various commentaries have been composed on this work by different scholars at different period. There are approximately about forty-six commentaries on the *Gītagovinda*. Some of these are- *Śāravatī* commentary of Śukladhvaja, *Bālabodhini* of Chaitanyadāsa, *Rasamañjarī* of Śankaramiśra, *Rasikapriyā* of King Kumbhakarna, *Śrutirañjanī* of Lakṣmaṇasurī, commentary of King Mānāṅka. One of such commentaries on the *Gītagovinda* is the *Śāravatī* which has been composed by Śukladhvaja, i.e. Chilārai. In the present paper, a comparative analysis has been done between the *Śāravatī* and three other commentaries on the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, viz., the *Rasikapriyā*, the *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānāṅka's commentary.

Keywords: Chilārai, *Śāravatī*, Jayadeva, *Gītagovinda*, commentaries, comparative analysis

INTRODUCTION

The *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva is a Sanskrit lyrical poetry that occupies an important place in the history of classical Sanskrit literature. The *Gītagovinda* is very famous in the whole world because of its beautiful devotional songs. The *Gītagovinda* is one of the highly commented works of Sanskrit. One of the unique commentaries is the *Śāravatī* commentary of Chilārai who was the commander in chief of the Koch kingdom during the reign of King Naranārāyaṇa. From the list of numerous commentaries three have been chosen to make a comparative analysis among these and the *Śāravatī* in the present paper.

Jayadeva is the great name in Sanskrit literature that needs no introduction to the students of Indian literary world. It is said that Jayadeva was one of the five jewels that adorned the court of King Lakṣmaṇasena.¹ Jayadeva was recognized as the last great Sanskrit poet in the history of Sanskrit literature.² The *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva is a work on the legend of Śrīkṛṣṇa. The work is divided into twelve *sargas*, containing twenty-four lyrics. A unique character of the *Gītagovinda* is that each of the chapters is named according to the particular plot of the story narrated in the concerned chapter. As for example, the titles of the chapters in this work go as *Sāmodadāmodarī*, *Akleśakeśava*, *Mugdhamadhusūdana*, *Snigdhamadhusūdana*, *Sākāṅkṣapūṇḍarikākṣa*, *Kuṇṭhavaikuṇṭha*, *Nāgaranārāyaṇa*, *Vilakṣanalakṣmīpatīh*, *Mandamukuṇḍa*, *Mugdhamādhava*, *Sānandamukunda*,

Supritapītāmbara. All these names project various playful activities of Kṛṣṇa on the basis of his mood and emotions. In the English translated version of the *Gītagovinda* of Barbara Stoler Miller, the name of the tenth chapter is given as *Caturacaturbhujah* which means four quickening four arms.³

COMMENTARIES ON THE *GĪTAGOVINDA* TAKEN HERE FOR COMPARISON.

In the present paper, three commentaries are taken for the comparison with the *Śāravatī* commentary. They are - *Rasikapriyā*, the *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānāṅka's commentary. The *Śāravatī* commentary will be discussed separately. The other three commentaries are-

The *Rasikapriyā* of King Kumbhakarṇa

The real name of the writer is Kumbhakarṇa but he is famous with the name Rāṇākumbha. He is identified as a King of Mewar which is mentioned as Medapāṭa in the introductory verses of his commentary.⁴ At the very beginning of the work, Rāṇākumbha has mentioned about some areas that are enclosed in his commentary. He says that his commentary identifies figures of speech, i.e. *Alaṅkāra* in many places. There is identification of different forms of the hero, i.e. *Nāyaka* and also of heroine, i.e. *Nāyikā*. The name of the meters, i.e. *Chandas* is also depicted in his commentary.⁵

The *Rasamañjarī* of Śaṅkaramiśra

The *Rasamañjarī* of Śaṅkaramiśra is another important commentary on the *Gītagovinda*. The manuscripts of this work are found throughout northern India. Śaṅkaramiśra starts his work by eulogizing Lord Gaṇeśa in the first verse.⁶ In the colophon of the commentary, it was said that Śaṅkaramiśra was the son of Mahāmahopādhyāya Dineśvaramiśra. Śaṅkaramiśra composed this work on the request of a person named Śrī Śālinātha who showed faith on him.⁷

King Mānāṅka's Commentary

The commentary of Mānāṅka is referred to as *ṭippanīkā*. It is meant for the beginners. It gives merely a gist and literal meaning of the text. It neither enters into a critical appreciation of the poem, nor discusses the rhetorical and poetical aspects of it.⁸ The commentary of king Mānāṅka is a simple commentary that consists mainly of glosses on individual words and analyses of compounds.

SĀRAVATĪ COMMENTARY- ITS IMPORTANCE

The *Sāravatī* commentary was written probably between 1560-70 C.E when Chilārāi gave up his victorious campaign and completed the repair and reconstruction of the ruined temples of western Assam. In the *Sāravatī* commentary, Chilārāi has eulogized Lord Gaṇeśa in the beginning and started his work. It is the customary rule for a Sanskrit *kāvya* to start with an auspicious saying.⁹ Another important feature of a *mahākāvya* is to mention the sub-matter at the very beginning of the work which is technically termed as *vastunirdeśa*.¹⁰ Chilārāi also mentions the sub-matter in the first verse of the *Sāravatī*. Thus, Chilārāi is seen to follow the characteristic features of a *mahākāvya*. Chilārāi has mentioned various categories of works in support of his views and comments. The important works that are frequently cited by Chilārāi belongs to different categories of literature.¹¹

From the study of the *Sāravatī* commentary, it can be said that it is really a great commentary that stays at par with the other renowned commentaries of other scholars from different parts of India.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE *ŚĀRAVATĪ* COMMENTARY IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER SANSKRIT COMMENTARIES ON THE *GĪTAGOVINDA*

In this section, the *Rasikapriyā*, the *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānāṅka's commentary have been taken up for comparison. While comparing these commentaries, it is found that in various places the chronology of the verses differs from one another. In some places the use of different words is seen due to which the meaning of the verses differs to some extent. Again, some verses appear to be different but they denote the same meaning. These types of differences that are found in various commentaries are taken up for discussion here. During this journey, the chronological order and the numbering of the verses are used following the pattern of the *Śāravatī* commentary. To do the comparison, a particular methodology has been followed. The concerned verse has been quoted in the respective footnote. The letter G stands for *Gīta* which possesses some differences from general verses. As the numbering of *Gīta* in the text followed by the *Śāravatī* commentary is not distinct, so to be precise and coordinated in this direction, the numbering of the *Gītas* found in the text followed by the *Rasikapriyā* commentary has been projected here. The numbering of the verses is used accordingly as given in the text followed by the *Śāravatī* commentary.

While comparing the chapters, it is seen that almost all the chapters contain some differences in the four commentaries except the ninth chapter. It is also seen that most of the eulogical verses at the end of the chapters are not discussed in King Mānāṅka's commentary. During comparison of the last chapter, it is found out that *Rasikapriyā*, *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānāṅka's commentary explained another three verses which are not included in the *Śāravatī* commentary. But, Chilārāi mentions about those verses and says that those verses are not given by Bhagīratha and they also do not have any relevance to the content. And thus they are not explained in this commentary.

The comparison of some verses of the *Gītagovinda* has been given below.

In the verse I.G.1.5, Jayadeva eulogies the *Vāmana* incarnation of lord Viṣṇu. Jayadeva says that when Hari cheats Bali with wide steps in the form of a dwarf, water falls from His lotus toe nails to purify creatures. Here the composer praises the god by remembering the nails of his incarnation. He is regarded as the lord of the world by the poet here.¹² In the *Śāravatī* commentary while explaining this verse, Chilārāi has written the meaning of the term *bali* specifically as *balināmānamasurarājam* which means the king of Asuras named Bali.¹³ That mean Chilārāi has preferred to give the specific meaning of the term by associating it with Bali- the king of Asuras. But the other commentaries are satisfied with the general connotation like Daitya and Dānava. The *Rasikapriyā* and the *Rasamañjarī* commentary have elucidated the term *bali* as *daitya*¹⁴ and *dānava*¹⁵ respectively which are regarded as other names of Asuras.¹⁶ The King Mānāṅka's commentary has not mentioned anything about it. Thus, it can be said that the *Śāravatī* commentary in many places has adopted an elaborative method of explanation.

The verse I.G.3.8 contains a beautiful description of the spring season. It is stated that the budding mango trees quiver due to the embrace of the *vasantalatā*, i.e. the *mādhavī* creeper.¹⁷ And also the water of the Yamunā River washes the *Vṛndāvana* forest. In this beautiful spring season, Śrīkṛṣṇa plays and dance with the young women. Thus, it is a very cruel period for the deserted lovers.¹⁸ Here, the mango tree and the *vasantalatā* are compared with the hero and heroine. The *Śāravatī* commentary explains that the *vāsantalatā*, i.e. the *mādhavī* creeper has been compared with the heroine and *cūṭavṛkṣa*, i.e. mango tree has been compared with the hero. But, the other three commentaries, i.e., the *Rasikapriyā*, the *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānāṅka's commentary are silent about this comparison. Here, it is seen that Chilārāi is more elaborative in the explanation of the verse in his commentary.

In the verse VI.G.12.2, Rādhā's friend describes the state of Rādhā in her retreat to Śrīkṛṣṇa. She says that in loneliness, Rādhā sees Śrīkṛṣṇa everywhere drinking springflower honey from

lips.¹⁹ There is the word *tvadadhara* in place of *tadadhara* in some works. In the *Śāravatī* commentary, Chilārāi explains both the words. The word *tadadhara* is explained as *tasyā ananyanāyikāyā adharam*, i.e. lips of other Gopīs. The word *tvadadhara* also denote the same meaning.²⁰ But, according to the *Rasikapriyā* commentary, the word *tadadhara* refers to the lips of Rādhā.²¹ According to the *Rasamañjarī* commentary also, the term *tvadadhara* refers to the lips of other heroines.²² In the King Mānānka's commentary the term *tadadhara* refers to the lips of Rādhā.²³

The verse VII.G.13.3 beautifully illustrates the mourning of Rādhā due to her separation. She cries aloud in grief and says that her friend's advice misleads her. Hari avoids the woods just when they promised to meet. According to Rādhā, the perfect beauty of her youth is unfruitful now.²⁴ According to the *Śāravatī* commentary, the word *kathitasamaye* indicates the evening time.²⁵ Though it is not directly mention in the verse, but, Chilārāi states that the time can be presumed from the previous verses.²⁶ The *Rasikapriyā*, *Rasamañjarī* and King Mānānka's commentary does not say anything about the presumed time, i.e., *pradoṣasamayaḥ*, and only says that it is the time said by her friend.

In the verse X.G.19.13, the poet nicely depicts the beauty of Rādhā through the speech of Śrīkrṣṇa. In this verse, Kṛṣṇa tries to reduce the wrath of Rādhā with flattering words. He says that the lips of Rādhā glows like cherry autumn blossom. The skin of her cheek is like a honey coloured flower. Her eyes are glowing like shiny dark lotuses and her nose is a sesame flower. Her teeth are white jasmine. Thus, the five arrows of Kāmadeva are present in her face itself. He also added that Kāmadeva may have conquered the world by worshipping her face.²⁷ Though the meaning of this verse is same in all the commentaries, the *Śāravatī* commentary also says that the lips of Rādhā are compared with crimson autumn blossoms which indicate that they have returned to their natural colour which means the wrath of Rādhā decreases. Again, in the previous verse, the eyes of Rādhā are compared with *kokanadarūpa* which indicates its redness. But here, in this verse, the eyes came to their natural colour and were compared with dark lotuses. This also indicates that Rādhā's wrath is decreasing.²⁸ From this description, it is clear that Chilārāi gives a more detailed description than the other three commentaries.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the comparative analysis, it can be said that the *Śāravatī* commentary appears to be a unique commentary of the *Gītagovinda*. Though many dimensions are common in almost all the commentaries, but in some cases, *Śāravatī* has offered extra ordinary explanations as well as it gives the meaning of all the words used in the verses. While giving the meanings of the words, *Śāravatī* provides more accuracy than some other commentaries. In this way, the *Śāravatī* can be termed as one of the authentic and great commentaries on the *Gītagovinda*. The *Śāravatī* commentary of Chilārāi can be placed along with any other commentary works in the field of Sanskrit literature. It has accomplished all the general features of a commentary work. Therefore, Chilarai can also be placed as one of the Sanskrit scholars of Assam during the medieval era.

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¹Harekrishna Mukhopadhyaya, *Kavi Jayadeva O Gītāgovinda*, p.27

²*Ibid.*, p.37

³Ed. Barbara Stoler Miller, *Gītāgovinda of Jayadeva- Love song of the dark Lord*, p.158

⁴yadanvaye nirjitatarkavādipadaḥ padaṁ tatparamā vyabhāti /śrīmedapāte guhilapradhāne yatrābhavanbhūṭayaḥ prasūtāḥ // *Rasikapriyā*, v.6

⁵śrīngāre saprapaṇce rasa iha rūciraucityayuktau prakṛṣṭe- 'laṁkāre nāyikāyā guṇagaṇagaṇane varṇane nāyakasya /gītau prītau ca vṛṭtau layamanu rasikaḥ kautukam cettademā doṣairmuktā guṇādhyāḥ śṛṇuta narapateḥ kumbhakarmaṇasya vācaḥ // *Rasikapriyā*, v.17

⁶saṅkarajagadambikayoraṅke paṅkena khelantam /lambodaramavalambe yaṁ veda na tattvato vedaḥ // *Rasamañjarī*, v.1

⁷śrīmahāmahopādhyāyadineśvaramiśrātmaśrīmahāmahopādhyāyasaṅkaramiśraviracitāyāṁ śrīśālināthakāritāyāṁ gītāgovindaṭīkāyāṁ rasamañjarī-samākhyāyāṁ dvādaśaḥ sargaḥ samāptim pafāṇa // *Rasamañjarī*, p.201

⁸Ed. V. M. Kulkarni, Jayadeva's *Gītāgovinda* with King Mānāṅka's commentary, Introduction, p.i

⁹āśīrvacanasamyuktā stutiryasmātprayujyate /devadvijanṛpādīnāṁ tasmānnāndīti sajñitā // *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI. 24

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Ed. Satyendra Nath Sarma, Jayadeva's *Gītāgovinda* with *Śāravatī*, Introduction, p.17

- ¹²calayasi vikramaṇe balimadbhutamāmana/padanakhanīrājanitajanapāvana/keśava dhṛtavāmanarūpa jaya jagadīśa hare//*Gītagovinda*, I.G.1.5
- ¹³balim balināmānamasurarājam/ *Sāravatī*, *Ibid*.
- ¹⁴tvaṁ balim dānavam..../ *Rasikapriyā* on *Gītagovinda*, I.G.1.5
- ¹⁵balim daityam..../ *Rasamañjarī* on *Gītagovinda*, I.G.1.5
- ¹⁶*Amarakośa*, p.4
- ¹⁷Vaman Shivram Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit- English Dictionary*, p.497
- ¹⁸sphuradatimuktalatāparirambhaṇamukulitapulakitacūte / vṛndāvanavipine parisaraparigatayamunājalapute// *Gītagovinda*, I.G.3.8
- ¹⁹paśyati diśi diśi rahasi bhavantam/ tadadharamadthuramadhūni pibantam//nātha hare sīdati Rādhā vāsagrhe // *Gītagovinda*, VI.G.12.2
- ²⁰*Sāravatī*, *Ibid*.
- ²¹*Rasikapriyā* on *Gītagovinda*, VI.G.12.2
- ²²tvadadharamadthuramadhuni tvattonyasyā nāyikāyā adharam... // *Rasamañjarī* on *Gītagovinda*, VI.G.12.2
- ²³King Mānāṅka's commentary on *Gītagovinda*, VI.G.12.2
- ²⁴kathitasamayēpi harirahaha na yayau vanam/mama viphalamidamamalarūpamapi yauvanam//yāmi he kamiha śaraṇam sakhījanavacanavañcitā//dhrūvam// *Gītagovinda*, VII.G.13.3
- ²⁵pradoṣasamayah. / *Sāravatī*, *Ibid*.
- ²⁶yadyapi pradoṣasamayah sandhyā kvāpi na padārthavidheyā kathitā, tathāpi pūrvāparagranthaikavākyatayā labhyata ityabhidheyam // *Ibid*.
- ²⁷bandhūkadyutibāndhavoyamadharah snigdho madhūkacchāvir gaṇḍaścaṇḍi cakāsti nīlanalīnaśrīmocanam locanam/nāsābhyeti tilaprasūnapadavīm kundābhadanti priye prāyastvanmukhasevayā vijayate viśvam sa puṣpāyudhaḥ// *Gītagovinda*, X.G.19.13
- ²⁸*Sāravatī*, *Ibid*.

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