

# The Influence of Śiṅgabhūpāla II on Bengali Vaiṣṇava Aesthetics

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## 1. Śiṅgabhūpāla II and Rūpa Gosvāmī

Śiṅgabhūpāla II was a son of king Anapota [*Rasārṇavasudhākara*, lix]. Anapota reigned the kingdom of Recalla or Recarla in Andhra in the 14th century. The kingdom's capital was Rājakoṇḍa [*Rasārṇavasudhākara*, xliii]. According to inscriptional evidence, Śiṅgabhūpāla succeeded his father sometime after 1381, and he himself was succeeded by his sixth son Mādhava sometime before 1421 [Vijayan 1981: 5–6].

Rūpa (1470–1554) and his elder brother Sanātana (1464–1554) [Haridāsa Dāsa 1957: 1248] were the two leading disciples of Caitanya, the charismatic inaugurator of Bengali Vaiṣṇavism. Following Caitanya's order they moved to Vṛndāvana. Later their nephew Jīva joined them. Together, these three played major roles in laying down the aesthetic and theological foundation of Bengali Vaiṣṇavism.

According to the family lineage Jīva gives in his *Laghuvaiṣṇavatoṣaṇī*, Rūpa's family descended from a king of Karṇāṭaka called Sarvajñajagadguru. Jīva describes the king as follows:

He whose tongue which obtained the sequence of excellent lovely words, which constantly streamed nectar, and which was a honey collector from the desire-creeper like three Vedas, danced vehemently, that glorious Sarvajñajagadguru shone on earth, whose feet were honored by the assembly of kings, who was the king of Karṇāṭa, who was the chief of the Bharadvāja clan.<sup>1)</sup>

According to the family lineage given by Haridāsa Dāsa, Rūpa, and Sanātana were six generations removed from Sarvajñajagadguru. In the lineage chart, Haridāsa Dāsa says that Sarvajña became the king of Karṇāṭaka in AD 1381<sup>2)</sup> which roughly corresponds with Śiṅgabhūpāla II's date of succession. Neal Delmonico in fact suggests, with some

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reservation, that Sarvajñajagadguru could have been identical with Śīṅabhūpāla II [Delmonico 1993: 147–149]. However, currently we do not have enough evidence to connect him directly with Śīṅabhūpāla.

Narahari Cakravartī's *Bhaktiratnākara* reports that Rūpa and Sanātana invited a group of Brāhmaṇas from Karṇāṭaka, which Narahari describes as their own homeland (*nijadeśa*).<sup>3)</sup> It is probably more reasonable to suggest that Rūpa acquired his familiarity with the works of Śīṅabhūpāla through his contact with the Brāhmaṇas he invited.

## 2. The *Rasārṇavasudhākara* and the *Ujvalanīlamanī*

### 2.1. Previous Scholarship

Various authors noted Śīṅabhūpāla's influence on Rūpa.<sup>4)</sup> Måns Broo [2011] particularly discusses the topic in his paper on Rūpa's *Nāṭakacandrikā*, a work on dramaturgy. In the opening verse of the *Nāṭakacandrikā*, Rūpa says that he wrote this work as a summary after studying Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* and Śīṅabhūpāla's *Rasārṇavasudhākara*.<sup>5)</sup> According to Broo, 165 out of total 307 *kārikās* in the *Nāṭakacandrikā* come from the *Rasārṇavasudhākara* [Broo 2011: 58]. Furthermore, in the second verse of the *Nāṭakacandrikā* Rūpa rejects Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, saying that it is not very suitable and it goes against Bharata's system.<sup>6)</sup> Broo [2011: 57] rightly suggests that for Rūpa, the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* is not suitable because it describes Kṛṣṇa's relationship with the Gopīs as an example of pseudo-*rasa* (*rasābhāsa*). The verse given in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* goes as follows:

My husband is so naïve! This forest is thick. I am a young woman all alone. The expanse of darkness that is the dark shades of Tamāla trees covers the ground. Then—O charming Kṛṣṇa! Get out of my way quickly! Hearing the Gopī's words he embraced her. May that Hari who follows the skill of Cupid protect you.<sup>7)</sup>

According to Viśvanātha, there is no proper *rasa* in this relationship because Kṛṣṇa is a paramour. This denigration of paramourship poses a major challenge. Since Rūpa's goal is to develop a system which celebrates Kṛṣṇa's paramourship with the Gopīs, he has to find a way to circumvent Viśvanātha's criticism. We know that Rūpa is conscious of Viśvanātha's view because Rūpa cites the above example in his *Padyāvalī* and changes the expression "the Gopī's words" (*gopyā girāḥ*) with "Rādhā's words" (*rādhāgirāḥ*).<sup>8)</sup> By appropriating Viśvanātha's example in this way, Rūpa implicitly argues that aesthetic

experience derived from Kṛṣṇa's relationship with Rādhā is not pseudo-*rasa* but rather the ultimate culmination of *rasa*.

## 2.2. Upapati in the *Ujjvalanīlamanī*

It is not only Viśvanātha who prescribed a lower status to paramourship. Rūpa's goal therefore is to theorize and justify Kṛṣṇa's paramourship with the Gopīs. In this context, the *Rasārṇavasudhākara* offers literary precedence, since Śīṅabhūpāla accepts paramour as a type of *nāyaka*.<sup>9)</sup> When we examine Śīṅabhūpāla's definition and example of a paramour, it becomes clear that Rūpa consciously crafted his *Ujjvalanīlamanī* based on the *Rasārṇavasudhākara*. In his definition of paramour, Śīṅabhūpāla says:

In contrast, wise people call him a paramour, who is brought to the place of meeting with a woman who transgresses good conduct even though he is not married to her.<sup>10)</sup>

Two important elements of this definition are that a paramour is someone who meets with a woman to whom he is not married, and that the lady transgresses good conduct.

Rūpa develops his definition of paramour based on Śīṅabhūpāla. Rūpa defines a paramour as follows:

It is traditionally remembered by wise people that a paramour is the object of intense love that belongs to them [i.e., the Gopīs]. He transgresses the moral codes out of passion, [the passion] which is longing for a woman married to other person.<sup>11)</sup>

Both elements of Śīṅabhūpāla's definition are visible. The extra-marital nature of the relationship is expressed by the phrase "a woman married to other person." Transgression is also articulated in the statement, "He transgresses the moral codes." However, Śīṅabhūpāla describes the woman as transgressive, whereas Rūpa attributes transgression to the man. Rūpa also adds that the man is the object of the woman's love. Thus, he emphasizes the mutual attachment of the man and woman involved.

Śīṅabhūpāla's influence on Rūpa becomes clearer when we compare examples they give. The *Rasārṇavasudhākara* gives the following illustration:

When I just sigh, my husband grumbles. Co-wives suspect my mind. My mother-in-law is like a god when it comes to any sign. My sisters-in-law lick the movement of my eyes. So, this is my apology from a distant. What is the use of that loving gaze of yours? O you who have taste in various arrangement of skills! This effort [of yours] in this regard is useless.<sup>12)</sup>

In this example a woman laments her inability to meet her lover because her family

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members are keeping their eyes on her every movement. While this is an example of a paramour, the verse is written from the viewpoint of a woman. This corresponds with Śiṅgabhūpāla's description that it is the woman who transgresses the codes of good conduct. More importantly, the dominant sentiment described is that of separation.

In his example, Rūpa also emphasizes the element of separation:

The enemy of Kāṃsa made the sound of a Indian cuckoo and so on which had been made into signal, [and] heard repeatedly the sound of shell bracelets which was shaking because of [her] opening the door, [then he] was afflicted by the utterance of a conceited old woman who said "Who is there? Who is there?" He passed the night in the bosom of the Koli tree at the corner of Rādhā's courtyard.<sup>13)</sup>

This is a citation from Śrīdhara-dāsa's *Saduktikarṇāmrta* compiled in 1205. The scene depicted is similar to the one described by Śiṅgabhūpāla. In fact, in his *Padyāvalī*, Rūpa cites this verse immediately after a verse that closely resembles Śiṅgabhūpāla's example.<sup>14)</sup> Kṛṣṇa informs Rādhā of his arrival by imitating cuckoo's sound. However, she is not able to meet him because her mother-in-law Jaṭilā notices her movement. This Jaṭilā corresponds to the mother-in-law in the previous verse who is described as being divinely perceptive of any sign. The skillful man who casts his loving gaze is replaced by Kṛṣṇa who skillfully imitates birds' sounds that are used as the sign of his arrival (*saṅketikṛta*). This expression *saṅketikṛta* resonates with Śiṅgabhūpāla's definition which uses the term *saṅketa* (a meeting place). An important difference, however, is that Rūpa's example is written from the *nāyaka*'s perspective, which corresponds to his definition of paramour where he describes the *nāyaka* as transgressive.

### 2.3. *Paroḍhā* in the *Ujvalanīlamanī*

We saw above that Viśvanātha Kavirāja in the 14th century denigrates the aesthetic sentiment based on the relationship between a paramour and a married woman. This view is longstanding in the tradition of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Rudrabhaṭṭa, who seems to have flourished from the end of the 12th century [*Rasakālikā*, xxiv], defines *paroḍhā* as follows:

In contrast, *paroḍhā* is a woman who longs for the union with a man, even though she is married to someone else. Such a character should never be depicted in the works of great poets precisely because her behavior is faulty.<sup>15)</sup>

Śīṅgabhūpāla closely follows Rudrabhaṭṭa in his definition of *paroḍhā*:

In contrast, *paroḍhā* is a woman who longs for the union with a man, even though she is married to someone else. Wise people observe such a character in lowly compositions such as the *Saptaśatī*.<sup>16)</sup>

In contrast to Rudrabhaṭṭa who flatly rejects *paroḍhā*, Śīṅgabhūpāla acknowledges that such a character appears in the works such as the *Gāhā Sattasāi*. Nevertheless, Śīṅgabhūpāla still denigrates such poems as lowly.

Rūpa again appropriates Śīṅgabhūpāla's definition of *paroḍhā* but this time with substantial modification:

*Parḍhās* are women who always long for the union with Hari even though they are married to the cowherds. They are his beloveds, the ladies of Vraja who do not have children.<sup>17)</sup>

The first half of the definition follows Śīṅgabhūpāla closely but Rūpa identifies *paroḍhās* with the Gopīs. Also, in Rūpa's definition the object of longing is not just another man but Kṛṣṇa. Thus Rūpa effectively creates a Kṛṣṇa-centered definition of *paroḍhā*. Rūpa however entirely reformulates the second half of Śīṅgabhūpāla's definition. Instead of deprecating the poems that have *paroḍhā* as a main character, Rūpa describes the attributes of those Gopīs who can be *paroḍhā*.

After providing his definition of *paroḍhā*, unlike Rudrabhaṭṭa and Śīṅgabhūpāla, Rūpa gives a verse as an illustration:

Desiring flowers for [worshipping] Durgā, you eagerly went to the hollow in the large forest. Why?

O friend—The fresh mark of thorns on your pair of breasts, [your] husband's sister looks at it with suspicion.<sup>18)</sup>

This verse is spoken by Padmā to Candrāvalī.<sup>19)</sup> Padmā is a female companion, and Candrāvalī is one of Kṛṣṇa's favorite Gopīs. In this verse Candrāvalī is described as an example of *paroḍhā*. The verse suggests that Candrāvalī had a scratch on her breast resulting from her secret affair with Kṛṣṇa in the forest, and on her return Padmā jokes about it by drawing her attention to the presence of Candrāvalī's sister-in-law. By modifying Śīṅgabhūpāla's definition of *paroḍhā* and providing an example, Rūpa attempts to present his unique system which celebrates the aesthetic sentiment arising from the extra-marital relationship between Kṛṣṇa and the married Gopīs.

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## 3. Conclusion

In this paper, we examined Śiṅgabhūpāla's influence on Rūpa's works, by comparing their views on *upapati* and *parodhā*. On each of these points Rūpa follows Śiṅgabhūpāla closely while simultaneously adding and modifying various elements so that his system is appropriately developed in the context of Kṛṣṇa devotionalism. The devotional trend centred on Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs became influential in the eastern part of South Asia from around 13th century onwards, and Caitanya in the early 16th century was instrumental in making this trend into a powerful religious movement. However, the extra-marital nature of Kṛṣṇa's relationship with the Gopīs was not appreciated by the tradition of Sanskrit dramaturgy. In this regard, Śiṅgabhūpāla gave his definition of *upapati* and thereby created a space for addressing the paramourship in the context of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Thus, I hope to have shown that Rūpa's relationship to Śiṅgabhūpāla is significant in understanding the development of the *bhaktirasa* theory and deserves more attention than previous scholarship has paid.

## Notes

- 1) As cited in Narahari Cakravartī's *Bhaktiratnākara* [p. 40]. 2) 1303 śakābda.  
 3) *Bhaktiratnākara* [p. 42]. 4) See De [1961: 211–218], Delmonico [1990: 210–211], Brzezinski [1997: 37, 99]. 5) *Nāṭakacandrikā* 1. 6) *Nāṭakacandrikā* 2. 7) *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 3.265.  
 8) *Padyāvalī* 250. Rūpa attributes this verse to an anonymous author (*kasya cit*).  
 9) *Rasārṇavasudhākara* 1.80ab. 10) *Rasārṇavasudhākara* 1.83cd–84ab. 11) *Ujjvalanīlamanī* 1.17. 12) The example given after *Rasārṇavasudhākara* 1.84ab. 13) *Ujjvalanīlamanī* 1.18. 14) *Padyāvalī* 204. 15) *Rasakālikā* 24. 16) *Rasārṇavasudhākara* 1.110.  
 17) *Ujjvalanīlamanī* 3.37. 18) *Ujjvalanīlamanī* 3.38, *Padyāvalī* 312. 19) Viśvanātha Cakravartī's *Ānandacandrikā* on *Ujjvalanīlamanī* 3.38.

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