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Rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy and their implimentation in the *Keligopāla nāṭ* of mahāpuruṣa śaṅkaradeva

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Abstract:

Sanskrit has a wide dramatic tradition since its inception. Sanskrit dramatic works have passed through various stages of development and could curve its deep connection with regional performances and local deliberations everywhere in India. Assam is not an exception. The *Aṃkiyā* performances of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva can express a deep connection with Sanskrit dramatic tradition. Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva has composed six *Aṃkiyā Nāṭs* which are invaluable properties to the granary of Assamese literature. These six *Aṃkiyā Nāṭs* are 1. *Patnīprasāda* 2. *Pārijātaḥaraṇa* 3. *Kālidamāna* 4. *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* 5. *Keligopāla* and 6. *Rāmavijaya*. Among these six plays, except the *Patnīprasāda*, the other five plays have borrowed some of the characteristics of Sanskrit dramaturgy. Among these five plays, *Keligopāla* has been taken as the field of study in this present work. The present study will aim at finding the similarities between Sanskrit dramaturgy and the proposed play. Moreover, a study on the dissimilarities between them will also be done simultaneously. The methodology followed in this study is primarily narrative.

Keyword: Sanskrit dramaturgy, *Aṃkiyā Nāṭs*, *Keligopāla*, similarities, dissimilarities.

Introduction

In the arena of Indian literature, Indian dramatic literature has received the utmost applause from its spectators as it gives absolute pleasure to them with its charming characteristics. No other branch of literature has gained such acclamation because in a drama, audience and reader both can completely connect themselves with the dramatic characters.

Indian dramatic tradition has been started with the Sanskrit dramas. Like all other branches of knowledge, Indian dramatic literature also finds its root in the Vedas. The dialogue hymns found in the *R̥gveda* i.e. Yama-Yamī (10.10), Pururvā-Urvaśī (10. 95), Viśvāmitra-Nadī (3.33) are the sources of Sanskrit dramatic literature. From the time of Bhāsa (2nd century B.C.) to the time of Rāmabhadra Dikṣīta (1700A.D.), plenty of Sanskrit dramatic works had been composed. Sanskrit dramatic tradition has its large influence in regional performances and local speculations everywhere in India. Assam is not excluded from this endeavour. The *Ankiyā Nāṭs* of Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva are highly influenced by the Sanskrit dramaturgy and it is evident from various examples in respect of their structure, subject and characters and so on. Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva composed six *Ankiyā Nāṭs*. They are- 1. *Patnīprasāda* 2. *Pārijātaḥaraṇa* 3. *Kālidamāna* 4. *Rukmiṇīharaṇa* 5. *Keligopāla* and 6. *Rāmavijaya*. Among these six plays, the *Keligopāla nāṭ* will be the field of our present study. Therefore, the study will try to focus on the influences of Sanskrit dramaturgy on the *Keligopālanāṭ*. In the tenth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* in its five chapters (29-33) description the *Rāsālīlā* of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs of Vraja is found. 29th chapter describes the arrival of the gopīs in Vṛndāvan and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's thought provoking speech reminding them their own responsibilities. 30th chapter describes ŚrīKṛṣṇa's disappearance with one gopī. In the next chapter, the sorrowful condition of the gopabālās bring separated with their lord is depicted and *Kṛṣṇabhakti* is delineated with excellence. In the next chapter, reunion of Kṛṣṇa and gopabālās is portrayed and the 33th chapter shows *Mahārāsa*. To make the *Keligopālanāṭ*, more appealing, Mahāpuruṣa Śaṅkaradeva has added the story of Śankhacūḍa who kidnapped a few gopabālās forcefully, found in the 34th chapter of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1 where he was killed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

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Objectives

1. The primary objective of the study is to find out the influence of Sanskrit dramaturgy on the *Keligopāla Nāṭ* with proper examples.
2. Secondly, the present study will aim at finding out the dissimilarities the play bears with Sanskrit dramaturgy.

Methodology

- The methodology followed in this study is primarily narrative. After collecting data a systematic review of those documents are projected in a narrative style.
- Comparative research is also followed in this study.

Findings and Discussion

Before discussing the findings, first we should make a glance in the general characteristics of *nāṭaka* as prescribed in the works of Sanskrit dramaturgy. A *nāṭaka* is the first and foremost variety of *rūpaka* wherein the subject matter must be a well-known one, being borrowed from either history or ancient history or mythology or some folk-lore. The *nāṭaka* should exhibit prosperous condition of the hero as well as of the subject and display a variety of sentiments dealing occasional rise to the experience of weal and woe. It should contain any number of acts ranging from five to ten. The hero should belong to a well reputed family and he should be majestic and one of the *dhīrodāttat* type. He may either be a divine figure like Kṛṣṇa, or a semi-divine figure like Rāmacandra or a human figure like Duṣyanta. One of the nine *rasas* will occupy the predominant position though out the drama and that *rasa* will be either erotic or heroic. The composition of a *nāṭaka* should be just like the tuft of hair at the end of a cow's tail implied thereby that the acts will be successively smaller ^[2].

Now a discussion of the findings is presented below

1. **Use of *Nāndī* verse:** It is a traditional custom in Sanskrit literature that every work must be started with a benedictory verse or word whether it is a work on poetry, philosophy or grammar. Following that traditional custom, Sanskrit dramatists also start their plays with a benedictory verse bearing high dramatic significance. This benedictory verse is called *nāndī*. *Nāndī* is a part of *pūrvaramṅga* (*pūrvaramṅga* is performed by the actors and co-actors on the back stage before starting the drama to prevent any kind of hindrance may occur). *Nāndī* is a eulogy directed towards some deity, brāhman or a king, it is endowed with benediction for the people that have come to the theatre. *Nāndī* is comprised of words that are auspicious like a conch shell, the moon, a lotus, a *cakravāka* or a lily. It is to be couched up in eight or twelve padas ^[3].

The *Keligopāla Nāṭ* also starts with a *nāndī* verse

Śaracchaśānkadyutiḥkomalāsuniśāsuśaśvatsahagopikābhiḥ|
Cakārakeliṃkalagītaṅṭhaḥsagopasūnurjayatīhākṛṣṇaḥ ||

This verse fulfills the characteristics of *nāndī* as it is a eulogy directed towards Lord Kṛṣṇa, it consists of benedictory word like *jayati*, and again it is comprised of twelve padas. Another feature of *nāndī* is that it gives some hint about the dramatic plot. This *nāndī* verse also bears this feature too as it gives the information Lord Kṛṣṇa's love sports with the gopis.

2. **Use of *P rarocan ā*:** *Prarocanā* is also a part of *pūrvaramṅga*. It is defined in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as- where the desired utility of the to be performed *rūpaka* is depicted with its proper objective by the *sūtradhāra* or some other dramatic specialist is known as *prarocanā*. In the play *Keligopāla*, the *sūtradhāra* utters a verse addressing the audience-

Bho Bhoḥ sabhāsadayū yaṃ śṛṇuta sāvadhānataḥ|
Keligopālamnāmedaṃ nāṭkaṃ muktisādhakam||

Here, in this verse Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva describes the play as the means of attaining liberation. This is the desired utility of the play and thus *prarocanā* is applied in this play. By saying *muktisādhakam* in the *prarocanā*, Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva tries to attract the minds of the righteous spectators towards the *nāṭ*

3. **Use of *P rastāvanā*:** *Prastāvanā* is another important feature in Sanskrit dramaturgy. *Prastāvanā* is that where the *sūtradhāra* makes a conversation with *naṭī* (his wife) or *vidūṣaka* or *pāripārśvika* (an assistant to him) in amazing words that arises out of their own function and that points to the subject that has been taken up, that is which is to come next. In other words, through the *prastāvanā* the *sūtradhāra* introduces the dramatic characters to the audience. In the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, five types of *prastāvanā* are mentioned. They are- *uddhātyaka*, *kathodhāta*, *prayogātīśaya*, *pravartaka* and *avalagīta*. Among these five, *kathodhāta* is that- in which the entry of the dramatic person takes place with repetition of the statement or with a remark on the meaning of the utterance of the *sūtradhāra*⁴. In the present play, the dramatic character does not enter uttering the words of the *sūtradhāra* but he enters performing the action uttered by the *sūtradhāra*. Therefore we may say that *kathodhāta* type of *prastāvanā* is applied here. For example we may cite the references from the present play. After performing *prarocanā* the *sūtradhāra* makes a conversation with his *sangī* where he asks him that what musical instruments are resounded and the *sangī* answers that divine *dundubhi* (kettledrum) is resounded. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa enters ^[5].

4. **The plot of the play:** Another rule of Sanskrit dramaturgy implemented in the present play is the plot of the play. One of the most interesting characteristics of Sanskrit dramas is that the plot of the drama must be a famous one⁶. Either it should be borrowed from the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata* or from *Purāṇa* and the like. As we know Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva has borrowed the plot for play from the tenth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The present *nāṭ* fulfills this regulation also.

5. **The hero of the play:** The hero of the *Keligopālanāṭ* is Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is a general characteristic of the Sanskrit dramas is that the hero of the drama must belong to a reputed family. He may either be a divine figure, or a semi-divine figure or a human figure. In the present play, Lord Kṛṣṇa is a divine figure, he belongs to a reputed family and he is influential too.

6. **Primary sentiment of the play:** Sanskrit rhetoricians have accepted eight *rasas* in *nāṭya* and nine in *kāvya*. The

eight rasas are-*śṛṅgāra*, *hāsyā*, *karuṇā*, *raudra*, *vīra*, *bhayānaka*, *bībhatsa* and *adbhuta*. Sanskrit rhetoricians have discussed *rasa* thoroughly as they accept *rasa* as the most essential element in any work of performing art. Among these eight rasas, either *śṛṅgāra* or *vīra* should be the predominant sentiment in a *nāṭaka*⁷ and the other rasas should be treated as its supportive rasas. In case of Sanskrit dramas the principal objective of the dramatists is to create *kāvya-rasa* throughout the whole drama and impart supreme poetic bliss to the spectators. But during the composition of the *Ankiyānāṭs*, Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva's aim was not to create *kāvya-rasa*, but to submerge his spectators with supreme *Bhakti-rasa*. In this respect, Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva is successful enough that the *Ankiyānāṭs* are regarded as the best type of specimen of *Bhakti-rasa*. But in the *Keligopālanāṭ*, the *śṛṅgāra-rasa* has occupied a very prominent place as the play is about the love sports of Lord Kṛṣṇa with the *gopīs* of *Vraja*. We find various examples of both *sambhog-śṛṅgāra* and *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* throughout the whole play. Some examples of *sambhog-śṛṅgāra* are- "harikahukacumbai: kahukahasyenirikhaye kahukanakhetanaparaxoya: kahukaalingaya| evambidha nana anangakhelayehgopikacittaranjisrigopalekrirakayala|" again – "srikrishnakridayepiritahuya se gokulakaminisavaakulabhela| kexavexakhaxala: kathakaxatorisiriparala: katikamekhelaxithilabhela..... etc. Again we find numerous examples of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra*- "he kamalalusonadulhavimusonasvami: hamupapinixava: daraxonodehu". All these are examples of *śṛṅgāra-rasa*. Therefore we may say that although *bhakti-rasais* the principal sentiment of the play, still following the rules of dramaturgy, Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva exposes *śṛṅgāra-rasa* throughout the whole drama with his utmost poetic merit.

7. **Use of *Pañ cāvasthā***: Sanskrit dramas attain five stages of development of the plot or of the subject matter. These five stages are technically termed as *pañcāvasthā*. They are- *ārambha*, *yatna*, *prāptyāśā*, *niyatāpti* and *phalāgama*. The Sanskrit dramas usually contain acts from five to ten in number so that these five stages can be exhibited with their full development. But in the *ankiyānāṭs* there is only one act. When a story attains its accomplishment in only one act, it becomes a little bit difficult to ascertain those five stages of the plot. In case of the *Keligopālanāṭ*, though the play is presented only in one act with a full grown story line, those five stages of development of the plot can be assumed and illustrated like below:

a) **Āram bha**: First comes the beginning stage termed as *ārambha*. It is defined by Viśvanātha as- *ārambha* is that stage of development which is the most important feature in the fulfillment of the purpose of the poetry i.e. the utmost desire of the dramatic person to attain the goal.⁸ In the *Keligopālanāṭ*, after the entrance of Kṛṣṇa, when the *gopīs* were fascinated by hearing the mesmerizing flute tune played by Kṛṣṇa desired to meet their lord, is the *ārambha* stage of the play where the purpose is their union with Kṛṣṇa. C.f.- "Srigopalapravexadiyekahu: adharepanchamapuri:benubajaitelagal tahexunigopixava: bimuhitohuya:

Srigoplaxomipapavala" and "je gopixova Krishnakadekхайenahipavala:swamidevaredwarabandha kayarakhala: xexava:virahatapetapitahuya: hridayepranamadhavakanibidadhyanaalingidharikahu"--- here the utmost desire or mental excitement of the *gopīs* is the stage of *ārambha*.

b) **Yatna**: The second phase is termed as *yatna*. As the name signifies it is the stage which is characterized by a definite and immediate effort undertaken as a result of desire to act. This stage is defined in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* as- "Prayatnastuphalāvāptauvyāpāro'titarānvitah|" In the present play to attain the purpose of the play i.e. union of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, the definite and immediate undertaking of the *gopīs* is their kind request to play amorous sport with him. C.f.-"He swami: tuharigitemuhitahuya: patisutaxavachuri: tajupadaxamipapavala: tuhudaranavakyabulaiso:.....dharamaarathakama moksha: sari padarathaxukhepai: aicanatuharipadapanakaja: ihacharitepranaphutijaai: he parameshwara swami: tavapadapnkajatejayenahipari" Here, the immediate and definite effort of the *gopīs* to make Kṛṣṇa agreed for the accomplishment of the purpose of the play i.e. Kṛṣṇa's and *gopīs* assemblance; is the *prayatnaavasthā*. After that, Kṛṣṇa became ready to fulfill their desire.

c) **P rāptyāśā**: This is the third stage of development of the plot. It is defined as- "Upāyāpāyāsankābhyāmprāptyāśāprāpti sambhavaḥ" means in which stage of the function, the counterbalance of both proper means for the fulfillment of the purpose and its obstacle is executed at the same time and is termed as *prāptyāśā* where the attainment of the function is not certain. In this present play, we have found that being satisfied at the affectionate request of the *gopīs*, Kṛṣṇa decided to play love sport with them. Here the undertaking for the attainment of the function is fulfilled. But obstacle arises when the *gopīs* bore haughtiness in themselves getting Kṛṣṇa's love and affection. Seeing their needless pride Kṛṣṇa disappeared from there leaving them in a pitiful situation. Here, ease and obstacle take place at the same time where attainment of the function is not certain. This stage may be taken as *prāptyāśā*.

d) **Niyatāpti**: This is the fourth stage of development. As the name signifies it is stage of certain fulfillment of the purpose. It has been defined in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* as- "Apāyābhāvatahprāptirniyātāpistuniścitā" means being devoid of any obstacle which stage leads the play to a certain accomplishment of the dramatic purpose. In the *Keligopālanāṭ*, a certain Yakṣa named Śamkhacūḍa being very passionate kidnapped a few *gopīs* forcefully which caused hindrance in the union of Lord with his devotees. ŚrīKṛṣṇa killed him and made their union obstacle free.

e) **Ph alāgama**: This is the last stage of development of the plot termed as *phalāgama*. It is defined by Viśvanātha as "Sā'vasthāphalayogaḥsyādyahsamagrphalodayaḥ". In which stage the purpose of the play is attained entirely, that accomplished stage is termed as *phalāgama*. In our present play, when the *sutrādharā* says- "tadanantarāsankhacurayaksakamarikahuparamapriyag opixavaxahitajamunakajalapravexiShri

*Gopalaatijalakeliarambhla/Evambidha nana
khefnakayejalakelixamapala/
TadanataragopixavaKrishnakaxevakarayelagala/* is the
sage of final attainment of then play.

8. Use of Mangala Bhatima: In the Sanskrit dramas, there is a tradition of saying a *Bharatavākya* at the end to express for everything to be well with the people. The *mangalabhatima* sung at the end of the *ankiyānāṭs* bears a close resemblance with *bharatavākya*. The only difference is that in the *bharatavākya* usually auspicious sentences uttered expressing the increase of four fold goal of the spectators and expecting their worldly happiness and peace. Whereas, in the *ankiyānāṭs*, *sūtradhāra*, with his assistants utters the *mangalabhatima* expecting happiness of the spectators relating to the next world.

Thus we have discussed a lot of influence of Sanskrit dramaturgy on the *Keligopālanāṭ* of Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva. Besides these similarities between Sanskrit dramaturgy and the *Keligopālanāṭ* we have found a few dissimilarities also. For example we may mention the role of the *sutradhāra* as according to the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy the *sutradhāra* departs from the stage after uttering the *prastāvanā*, but in this play *sutradhāra* does not depart rather he plays the main role in developing the dramatic sequences; which is same in all the plays of Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva. According to the rules of Sanskrit dramaturgy war, killing, activities of love-sports etc., can not be exhibited on the stage. But in the present play fight between Kṛṣṇa and Śankhacūḍa; Śankhacūḍa's killing by Kṛṣṇa are exhibited and sensuous description of love sports between Kṛṣṇa and *gopīs* are displayed with elegant words. Again the Sanskrit dramas must possess a happy ending where the hero and heroine live without separation. But in this play it is seen that at the end Kṛṣṇa asks his devotees to return to their own place as they are someone's wives, someone's mothers and it is not good to stay with him for long. The play is ending in separation.

Conclusion

From the above discussion we may come to conclusion that like all other literary and dramatic performances in India, the *ankiyānāṭs* of Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva have also bore a lot characteristics of Sanskrit dramas and have fulfilled numerous rules and regulations of Sanskrit dramaturgy as prescribed in various works of Sanskrit poetics. Whether it is about the structure of the play, whether it is about the source, whether it is about deliberation of various sentiments etc., the *ankiyānāṭs* of Mahāpuruṣa Śankaradeva have been highly influenced by the Sanskrit dramas. Moreover, a few dissimilarities are also found between these two specimens of Indian dramatic literature.

Notbes

1. Asomiya Natya Sahitya, p. 47.
2. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 6/7-11
3. *Aśīrvacanasāmyuktāstutiriyasmātprajujyate|
Devadvijanrpādīnāmtasmānnāndītīsañjitā||
Māmgalyaśankhacandrābjakokakairavaśamsinī|
Padairyuktādvādaśabhiraṣṭābhīrvāpadairuta||
(SāhityadarpaṇaVI/24-25)4. *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI/31-32*

5. *Padāni tvagatārthāni tadarthagataye narāḥ |*
6. *Yojayanti padairanyaiḥ sa uddhātīyaka ucyate ||*
ibid.,VI/34
7. *Atha praveśamakarot Kṛṣṇakandarpa darpahāḥ |*
Mohayan vādayan venuṃ strībhīḥ saha sakautukaḥ ||
8. *Nāṭakamkhyātavṛttamśyāt*, ibid.,VI/7
9. *Eko 'evabhavedamgīśṛṅgārovīroevavā*, ibid.,VI/10
10. *Bhabedārambhaautsukyāmyanmukhyaphalasiddhaye*,
ibid.,VI/71

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