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## Nityananda mukhopadhyay's contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit devotional *Dṛśyakāvya*: An analytical study

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### Abstract

Devotional Composition is a major feature of modern Sanskrit Literature. The tradition of writing literature based on devotion has been going on since ancient times. Mokṣa is the main or ultimate goal of the four puruṣārtha of Human life. The dramatists have shown through their works that devotion is one of the best path to ultimate salvation. But the path of salvation is very difficult. Dramatists sometimes portray this devotion through the biography of a great man, sometimes through a mythological phenomenon, sometimes by adopting the words of Gitā. However, in recent times, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the extent of which has increased significantly. Some of such notable dramatists are: Śrījīva Nyāyāfūrtha, Viśveśvara Vidyābhūṣaṇa, Jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri, Roma Chaudhuri, Virendra Kumar Bhattacharya, Nityananda Mukhopadhyay. The main purpose of this article is to light up on the devotional works of Nityananda Mukhopadhyay.

**Keyword:** Drama, devotion, knowledge, worship, modern Sanskrit literature

### Introduction

During the wave of renaissance of 19<sup>th</sup> century besides English education, huge changes even in the study of Sanskrit can be noticed. In one hand Sanskrit poems and dramas were being translated into Bengali and on the other hand the culture of Bengal was being influenced by Western literature. As a result of this a group of Sanskrit Scholars (Pandits) came into sight who had broken down the difficult Sanskrit literature and wrote poems, dramas and short stories in lucid comprehensible language that could make Sanskrit language quite acceptable to all. In the writings of these Scholar Poets and Dramatists the contemporary problems of India are portrayed like Second World War, socio-economic problem of India as well as Bengal, exclusion of Sanskrit from text books and many others. The Remarkable among these works are devotional works. *Mokṣa* is the main or ultimate goal of the four *puruṣārtha* of Human life. The dramatists have shown through their works that devotion is actually the path to ultimate salvation. But the path of salvation is very difficult. Dramatists sometimes portray through the biography of a great man, sometimes through a mythological phenomenon, sometimes by adopting the words of *Gitā* Sometimes by adopting the stories of *Upanishads* or through the Poet's imagination have ushering the devotion. The aim of this devotional work is to present that devotion is the only path to liberation or ultimate truth. There are some evergreen writings from these Poets and Dramatists that are invaluable asset in Sanskrit literature; for example Amiya Nath Chakravorty's *Śrīkṛṣṇa- Caitanyam*, *Harināmāmṛtam* (*Śrī Caitanyadeva & Vaishnavism*), Śrījīva Nyāyāfūrtha's *Śrīsaṅkarācāryavaibhavam*, jatindra Bimal Chaudhuri's *Bhaktiviṣṇupriyam*, *Mahaprabhuharidasam*, Roma Chaudhuri's *Caitanyacaitanyam*, *Prasannaprasādām*, Virendra Kumar Bhattacharya's *Siddhārthacaritam*, *Śrīgītāgaurāṅgam* etc are the dramas that have enriched Sanskrit literature<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Methodology

The research paper is mostly based on the secondary resource. In primary research, the original texts and related books have been sourced from various libraries and the internet has also been utilized.

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**Results and Discussion**

Nityananda Mukhopadhyay is one of the eminent authors of the Sanskrit texts of Bengali. He was born on 10<sup>th</sup> of April, 1923. His father Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay is the first son of Yajñeshvara Mukhopadhyay. His mother Dinatarini Devi is the first daughter of Umakanta Bhattacharya. Our author is the fourth son of Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay. His wife is Jayanti Devi. Sri Mukhopadhyay did not take admission to any English school to fulfill the will of his father. He began his study under Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay at *korārbāgān chatuspāthi* (known as *Rāmgopal Chatuspāthi* at present). He studied under many other famous teachers. Unfortunately he lost his mother at the age of 18 and his father at the age of 24. Afterwards he faced many ups and downs in his life. When his father was alive, he had been appointed as an assistant professor at *korārbāgān chatuspāthi*. Later, he was appointed as a teacher of *Mugdhabodha Vyākaraṇa* at Navadwip Sanskrit toll (under government of west Bengal) on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1956. Then he was promoted as a professor of *Mugdhabodha Vyākaraṇa* at the Sanskrit college Calcutta on 17<sup>th</sup> march 1966. He retired after completing 65 years in 1988 [2].

With the motto of promoting and imparting of Sanskrit language he at his age of 14, with the help of Sri Bijayanath Mukhopadhyay, Sri Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay, Sri Priyanath Samkhyatirtha, Mahamopadhyay Kalipada Tarkacharya initiated to establish Howrah Sanskrit Sahitya Samaja.

Sri Nityananda Mukhopadhyay started writing books at the age of 21 only. His first *vyayoga* is *Kālidāsa* and later on he wrote 115 famous Sanskrit dramas. He wrote 12 *mahākāvya*s such as *Śaṅkara Mahānubhabam* (23 *sarga*), *Sarbānanda Baibhavam* (20 *sarga*) etc. He wrote essays like *Smṛtiśāstrasya Lokopokāritvam* (in Sanskrit), *Sagotra Vivāhaḥ* (in Bengali) etc and annotations called *Dāyabhāgatattvam*, *Devapratishṭhātattvam* etc. Sri Mukhopadhyay has written 113 Sanskrit poems like *Goura vandanam*, *Mātr Vandanam*, *Ganeśa Vandanam* etc and 54 Bengali essays also. Variety of themes can notice in his Dramas. He has written dramas on various topics like *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇa*, *Upaniṣads*, Patriotic, Conventional stories, Contemporary issues etc. He wrote almost 40 devotional dramas. I am presenting a short list of Devotional modern Sanskrit Dṛśyakāvya written by Nityananda Mukhopadhyay.

The name of the Dṛśyakāvya	Subject	Publication
<i>Tapovāibhavam Śrīsītārāmāvirbhāvam</i>	Ramagopal Mukhopadhyay (father)	Unpublished
<i>Siddhasītārāmam</i>	Sitaramadasa omkarnatha	Published
<i>Dharmasamsthāpanam</i>	Sitaramadasa omkarnatha	Unpublished
<i>Tailaṅgavandanam</i>	Śaṅkarācārya	Unpublished
<i>Bhaktarāmaprasādam</i>	Tailaṅgasvāmī	Unpublished
<i>Pāpitāraṇam</i>	Rāmaprasāda	Unpublished
<i>Vīravāmācaranam</i>	Conventional Event	Unpublished
<i>Śrīgadādharasambhavam</i>	Vāmācarana	Unpublished
<i>Mātrdarśanam</i>	Rāmākṛṣṇa	Unpublished
<i>Lokanāthābhivandanam</i>	Svāmī Sarvānanda	Unpublished
<i>Mahiṣāsuralānchanam</i>	Lokanātha	Unpublished
<i>Prahlādivinodanam</i>	Mahisāsura's Devotion	Published
<i>Dhruvaprāsādanam</i>	Prahlāda & Hiranyakasipu	Published
<i>Bhāravāhijanārddanam</i>	Dhruva's Devotion	Published
<i>Tapovalam</i>	Arjuna Mīśra's Devotion	Unpublished
<i>Sivaprāsādanam</i>	Episodes of Mahābhārata	Published
<i>Śrīvālmīkitvalābham</i>	<i>Śivapurāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Śrīkṛṣṇāvirbhāvam</i>	Dasyu Ratanākara	Unpublished
<i>Manahprasādanam</i>	Śrīkṛṣṇa's Birth Story	Unpublished
<i>Satyanārāyaṇāvirbhāvam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Śaṅaiścarārcanam</i>	Skandhapurāṇa ( <i>Revā Khaṇḍa</i> )	Unpublished
<i>Bhagavadvacanāmṛtam</i>	Worship of Śani Deva	Unpublished
<i>Akālavodhanam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Madhukaiṭabhanāśanam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Mātrpūjanam</i>	<i>Kālikā &amp; Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Suvacanīprapūjanam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Kaṃsavadhā</i>	<i>Suvacanī</i>	Unpublished
<i>Śumbhaniśumbhaghātanam</i>	<i>Śrīmadbhagavatpurāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Caṇḍamuṇḍavināśanam</i>	<i>Caṇḍī</i>	Unpublished
<i>Raktabījavadham</i>	<i>Caṇḍī</i>	Unpublished
<i>Śaṅiprabhāvam</i>	<i>Caṇḍī</i>	Unpublished
<i>Gaṅgāvataṛaṇam</i>	Worship of Śani Deva	Unpublished
<i>Śamanavijayam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Bilvamaṅgalamaṅgalam</i>	Episodes of Mahābhārata	Unpublished
<i>Bhaktaharidāsam</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Gaṅgāmāhātmyakīrtanam</i>	Śrīcaitanya's devotee Haridāsa	Unpublished
<i>Srīgurupūjanam</i>	Conventional Story	Unpublished
<i>Srīrāmākṛṣṇalīlāmṛtam (ādyā)</i>	<i>Purāṇa</i>	Unpublished
<i>Srīrāmākṛṣṇalīlāmṛtam (madyā)</i>	<i>Ādyalīlā</i> (Śrīrāmākṛṣṇa)	Unpublished
	<i>Madhyalīlā</i> (Śrīrāmākṛṣṇa)	Unpublished [3]

**Based on Purāṇa****Dhruvaprāsādanam**

The playwright Nityananda Mukhopadhyay has presented this drama with a little alteration and expansion of the legendary

story of *Śrīmadbhagavadpurāṇa* and *Vīṣṇupurāṇa*. This drama is divided into seven acts and every act is divided into two scenes each.

Svayambhuva Manu's son Uttānpāda has two wives Sunīti and Suruci. Due to the influence of Suruci, Uttānpāda was compelled to send Sunīti to banishment in the forest. Incidentally, due to the meditation of sages for protecting against cruel beasts' attack, the King went hunting in a dense forest and fortunately, there the King again met with Sunīti. After that in the forest, a child of the King took birth in the forest, whose name was Dhruva.

Incidentally, to achieve the father's identity when Dhruva got presented in the King's court, at that time getting insulted by the stepmother Suruci, he started worshipping for meeting the God Nārāyaṇa in the dense forest. At last, out of God's mercy, he achieved the *pādapadma* or the lotus feet of God.

Here, as the playwright has simultaneously presented Uttānpāda's benevolence towards subjects, religiousness, the cruelty of Suruci, Sunīti's obedience to husband and religiousness, like that he has presented an earthly popular longing and desire in a child at first; exactly like that he has projected him as a flawless gold through the worshipping to meet the God. He started the prayer to God to gain his father's identity and the royal throne but after meeting the God all his earthly popular longings and desires were driven away. So, while God told them to pray for a boon, he said that he had no more wishes, getting the God Janārdana, His feet are his only prayer<sup>[4]</sup>.

The playwright through his drama has collaborated the tradition and modernity. He has shown everywhere in his drama that never the human religion can be left. He has praised the religion through his drama.

#### ***Prahlādavīnodanam***

The *Prahlādavīnodanam* drama has been composed depending on the story of Jaya and Vijaya and *Prahlāda* from the *Śrīmadbhagavadpurāṇa* and *Viṣṇupurāṇa*. The drama is divided into five acts and some scenes.

Due to the curse of Vālakīlya sages, Jaya and Vijaya took birth in the demon lineage and by the God Nārāyaṇa Hiraṇyākṣa was killed. In the house of Hiraṇyakaśipu, Prahlāda took birth. Instead of having extreme prohibition by the father Hiraṇyakaśipu, worshipping Sri Nārāyaṇa, by Hiraṇyakaśipu repeatedly pushing Prahlāda at the jaws of death and lastly taking the form of Nṛsiṃha Sri Nārāyaṇa's killing of Hiraṇyakaśipu and by giving boon to Prahlāda, the drama has been ended.

In this drama, the playwright has presented the irregularities of earthly life and regularity of the *Paramabrahma* with the soul. So, Prahlāda has said that with Sri Nārāyaṇa, the relationship of life with Sri Nārāyaṇa is regular, so not doing His worship, a great sacrilege happens.

The playwright through the drama has presented that who is truly devoted to the God Sri Nārāyaṇa, in his danger; the God Himself becomes present and rescues him. Through the *guṇa* of *Ojha*, *Prasāda*, *Samatā*, *Mādhurya* etc., the dramatist has spontaneously and beautifully presented the drama.

#### **Depending on the mythological gods and goddesses**

##### ***Satyanārāyaṇavirbhāvam***

In the part of *Reba* in *Skandhapurāṇa*, in this drama, the worshipping rules and greatness etc. are presented. Due to the rules of worshipping Satyanārāyaṇa, the projection of this drama has happened. In every house of Bengal due to various reasons like marriage ceremony, entrance to a new home, destroying any omen, and fulfilling the desired things, the Bengalis on the Full Moon Day are used to worship

Satyanārāyaṇa. The contemporary rules of worshipping, the playwright are presented in the scenarios.

#### ***Śaniprabhāvam***

The dramatist wrote this drama centered on the worship of Lord Śani. The dramatist has dramatized the famous story centered on Śanideva's anger. Śanideva's parents are Surya and his wife Chāyā. Śanideva was cursed by his wife that anyone he laid eyes on would be doomed. Everyone fears Śanideva's wrath. In Bengal, this puja is popularly known as "bārer Pujā". Devotees do not even pronounce Śanideva's name out of fear. This puja is performed on Saturday. This puja is very popular in Bengal.

#### **The dramas based on legends**

##### ***Śrīvālmikitvalābham***

The five act-consisted this drama is divided into some scene. The drama is initiated through praising Rāmacandra. In the second verse, the originator of Rāmāyaṇa has praised about Vālmiki. How has the pirate Ratnākara become the originator of Rāmāyaṇa, that journey has been presented through this drama. The discrimination between rich and poor, the torture of rich people towards poor, the pain of the hungry person, (*Mātsanyāya*) disruption what has hurt the playwright, that instances can be found in some verses of this drama.

Apart from this, the story of under the advice of Nārada and Brahmā, the meditation of the pirate Ratnākara at the serene forest in peaceful coast of the Gaṅgā and transformation into an old poet is presented in beautifully spontaneous language.

In *Bharatavākya*, the playwright has given messages of may the discrimination among people be away, may the jealousy towards one person by other may drive away and the *Santana dharma* may be expanded. The playwright in all over the drama has said the human being to walk on the path of the religion. This is because the religion only can show the people the right path.

##### ***Bhāravāhijanārdanam***

In this drama, the annotator of Mahābhārata, in Arjuna Miśra's life also the devotion to the God Nārāyaṇa is the essence. In the drama, there are five acts. The evidence of *Yogakṣema* as mentioned in the *Gītā* the God Nārāyaṇa has given Himself. Arjuna Miśra's unattachment to the worldly life, instead of having erudition, indifference towards the greed for power, and extreme devotion to the God Narayana have been presented in this drama.

Being happy in Arjuna Miśra's devotion, the God himself by carrying his burden has proven the *Yogakṣema*. The praise by Arjuna Miśra for the God Nārāyaṇa, the playwright has presented in beautiful and spontaneous language.

#### **Based on the life and devotion of great personalities**

##### ***Tapavaibhavam***

Nityananda Mukhopadhyay used to worship his father Ramgopal Mukhopadhyay as the God. Based on the father, the playwright has composed this drama in five acts. He has emphasized his father's character, personality, and meditation in this drama.

##### ***Bhaktaharidāsam***

Sri Nityananda Mukhopadhyay has composed this drama based on the life of Sri Chaitanya's companion Haridāsa. Here, the devotion of his life is the main described subject.

**Bhaktarāmprādam**

The playwright Sri Mukhopadhyay has projected the devotion and meditation of the Rāmaprasāda, an eminent singer, poet and the meditator of *Mā Bhavatarīṇī* in this drama.

**Śrīgadādharaśambhavam**

In this drama, the dramatist has presented the description of Shree Shree Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahamsadev's birth, his childhood, the slow exploration of spirituality, the eruption of his religion and spirituality from childhood and becoming Rāmakṛṣṇa.

**Conclusion**

In the twenty-first century, when the whole universe is under our fists, where is there the relevance of these dramas? In our *śāstra*, it has been said that by fulfilling the desires, the desires increase, complete erosion of that is not possible. Exactly like throwing clarified butter into the fire, the flame intensifies. This society full of modern desires and luxuries, though has made the lifestyle of human beings very easy and spontaneous, has taken away his mental peace and patience. Among the human being the gradual accentuation of longing, anger, and six deadly sins has happened. Consequently, dirty and unparliamentarily behaviours are increasing in society slowly. Its proof can be found in every nook of the newspapers today. Due to these rules of societal dirty behaviour and degradations, to initiate morale and principles among human beings, under the disguise of *rūpaka*, by flooded in *Bhakti* rasa, devotion, concentration, meditation, self-sacrifice to the *Paramapurūṣa* etc. the playwright has done in these dramas the praising of the human characters' virtues. As per the present perspective, to execute mental stability, generosity in character, and relationships with all beings, the advantages of meditation are proven and universal. Therefore, in the end, it can be said that these dramas by the *Bhakti* rasa of Sri Mukhopadhyay are still relevant today to build up a healthy and beautiful society.

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