

## Bhramaragītā: A Brief Comparative Study

R. SATHYANARAYANA

### Background

**B**hakti, the concept of godhead and devotion to god, are universal to all religions. These are manifested in diverse direct and oblique ways in different religions. All devotional cults are founded on *bhakti*, i.e. total and ultimate love exclusively focussed on a person, object or god which is a means to *mokṣa*, i.e. liberation. If god is regarded as the abode of infinite auspicious qualities, the *bhakti* is called *saguṇa*; if god is regarded as the negation of all quality, then the *bhakti* is *nirguṇa*. The former is more popular and relatively easier to practice.

*Bhakti* as a mode of spiritual emancipation is known to India from pre-vedic days; evidence of it is found in the Mohenjodaro-Harappa civilizations; it may be inferred from several passages in the *Vedas* and is explicitly mentioned in the Upanisads—notably in the *Katha-* and *Śvetāśvatara;* *purāṇas* became the most influential and ubiquitous media for preaching *bhakti* to the common man. The *Bhagavadgītā* may be largely regarded as commentary on the plurality of *bhakti* modes. Even Paninī has an aphorism in his *Aṣṭādhyāyī* explicating the etymology of the term. Even before the advent of Christ the Bhagavata school had taught monotheism and asserted that *bhakti* alone is the means to *mokṣa*. Buddhism and Jainism exchanged much doctrinal and practising tenets with Hinduism on *bhakti*. In the South, the *śaiva* devotees called *nāyanāras* and *vaiṣṇava* saints called *ālvārs* (counting women saints among them) were great votaries of the *bhakti* movement in which the unquestionable equality of all *viṣṇubhaktas* irrespective of differences in sex, caste, colour, creed, social status, etc. was propagated. Some features common to *bhakti* in all Indian religions include idol (image)-worship, shrine construction, pilgrimage, fasting, meditation, prayer, identifying oneself with everyone and everything (*sarvasamatva*), being beneficial to all beings (*sarvabhūtahita*), etc.

While the period from the Vedas to the thirteenth century A.D. may be regarded as the first phase in the development of the *bhakti* movement in India, the period between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century A.D. is the second phase, during which both Hinduism and Islam influenced each other much, establishing common elements in both and trying to develop identity between Rama and Rahima, Kṛṣṇa and Karīm, etc. During this period the *bhakti* movement became pan-Indian largely due to the influence and work of saints such as Rāmānanda, Tulsidas, Surdās, Vallabhācārya, Caitanya, Mirābāi, Nāmadeva and the Haridāsa and Śivaśaraṇas of Karnataka. As a consequence developed the social and religious stances of the common man in India through the revival and rejuvenation of the precepts of firm and constant *bhakti* in god, worship of a single god, purity of living in body, mind and word, introspection and self-examination, sympathy and compassion, the greatness of repeating god's name, identity of oneself with all beings, etc.

Mercy, benevolence towards all beings and equal regard for all beings became the keynote of this movement.

### *Bhaktiyoga*

*Bhaktiyōga* defines *bhakti* as the means adopted by a devotee to attain to *mokṣa* or obtain god's grace; it is a major mode of the threefold practice of spiritual endeavour, the other two being *jñāna* (wisdom) and *karma* (action). It has a history of at least some two millenia and is extolled by such sacred scriptures as the *upaniṣads*, *purāṇas*, *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavadgīta*, the *Bhāgavata*, etc. and is equally esteemed by *śaiva*, *vaiṣṇava*, *śakta* etc. forms of religion also. Its efficacy is universally acclaimed by poets in all Indian languages and by all saint singers all over India, and by the great spiritual leaders like Śankara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and others.

The most influential aphoristic texts on *bhakti* are due to Nārada and Śaṇḍilya. According to *Nārada Bhaktisūtra* there are eleven kinds of *bhakti*, viz. *āsakti* (involvement) in i. *guṇamāhātmya*, ii. *rūpa*, iii. *pūjā*, iv. *smaraṇa*, v. *dāsyā*, vi. *sakhyā*, vii. *vātsalya*, viii. *kāntā*, ix. *ātmanivedana*, x. *tanmayatā* and xi. *paramaviraha*; these are comprised in the ninefold *bhakti* extolled by the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, viz. *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa*, *bhajana*, *pūjana*, *abhivandana*, *dāsyā*, *sakhyā* and *ātmanivedana*. The *Nārada Bhaktisūtra* teaches that *bhakti* is of the nature of ultimate love in god, is immortal. Whosoever attains it is fulfilled, content, immortal, free from want, sorrow and hatred. He becomes love-intoxicated, self-contained and loses all mundane interests. Love is full of detachment and is therefore not *kāma* (lust). The main distinguishing feature of *bhakti* is the total dedication of all physical, mental and emotional manifestations to god and the great sorrow which befalls him on forgetting god. The classical example of this is given by the *Bhagavata* in the form of the *gopis* of Brndavana through the *Bhramaragīta* episode. Even here, they are not fully forgetful of the *māhātmya* (divinity) of Kṛṣṇa; if they had, they would have degenerated to mere paramours (*jarā*). It is this *bhakti* which sublimated the mundane love of the *gopis* into divine love, transmuting the dross into gold. The *Śaṇḍilya Bhaktisūtra* says that once love of god takes hold of the heart, all the fourfold *puruṣārthas* (human goals) lose their lure.

*Bhakti* functions at levels viz. gross (*sthūla*) and subtle (*sūkṣma*), also called *sādhana* and *phala* (or *parā*) respectively. The former is preparatory to the latter and brings about purification or refinement of the mind (*cittasamskāra*, *cittaśuddhi*). This is the form of *bhakti* which is propounded in the main in the *Bhagavadgītā*. The latter is the final *puruṣārtha*, transcending the mundane three and even *mokṣa*, to be aspired to by the practitioner, without which *jñāna* does not result. It is in the nature of a fruit (*phalarūpa*) or culmination. The Caitanya school holds that even *mokṣa*, leave alone *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, are of no value whatsoever in comparison with *parābhakti*. It is the final fruit of all spiritual endeavour. It is attained by means of renunciation of mundane interests and objectives (*viśayatyāga*), of bad company (*dussangatyāga*), incessant *bhajana* ('*bhaj sevayam*', i.e. service, worship, adoration), *śravaṇa* (listening to the divine qualities of god in rapt attention), *Sankīrtana* (singing god's glories), god's grace, association with great souls, conquest of the six enemies *kāma*, *krodha*, etc., and renunciation of the fruits

of action (*karmaphalatya*). It can only be experienced, not described; it is free from quality and desire. It expands incessantly and is uninterrupted. *Sādhana-bhakti* is also called *gaṇa* or secondary and is described as the *bhakti* of *ārta*, *jijñāsu*, *arthārthī*, etc. in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

*Kṛṣṇabhakti* is directed towards *Kṛṣṇa*, universally acclaimed as the highest and the perfect incarnation of Viṣṇu; '*Kṛṣṇas-tu bhagavān svayam*'. His incarnation is almost entirely manifested as *līlā* (sport). He is the symbol of love and *dharma*. His is the only *avatāra* in which god has revealed himself directly in both word and deed. It is small wonder that *Kṛṣṇabhakti* is extremely popular with all religious and social strata in India from early times.

The *Bhagavadgītā* and *Bhāgavata* are the fountainhead of *Kṛṣṇabhakti*. The purport of this is conciliation of different theistic, scriptural and practical modes into a single mould: the devotee receives the interest, desire and faith to worship a god of his choice by *Kṛṣṇa*'s grace. Viṣṇu calls forth, in the form of the cowherd (*gopa*), to all his devotees to seek him and worship him, each according to his taste and competency. The *Gitācārya* promotes different devotees from principle to principle, from a lower to a higher level, beyond all of which exists only the *Kṛṣṇa* principle and the *Kṛṣṇa* way. Arjuna is but the symbol of all humanity aspiring to spiritual emancipation. *Kṛṣṇa* comes to him as friend, guide and philosopher.

The *Bhagavatapurāṇa* teaches the ninefold *bhakti*, but highlights two of these, *vātsalya* and *madhura*, i.e. parental and conjugal love, which are universally pervasive and within the reach of everyone. The infant *Kṛṣṇa* accomplishes the purpose of his incarnation, punishment of the wicked and protection of the good and the meek by mere sport (*līlā*). In *madhura bhāva* *Kṛṣṇa* symbolizes *parabrahman* and the *gopis* the *jīva*, yearning for reunion with *parabrahman* from which it has emerged as an apparently separate entity.

#### *Bhramaragītā in Sanskrit*

The *Bhramaragita* episode occurs originally in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* towards the end of the first half of the tenth canto (ch. 47). Kamsa, who has usurped the throne of Mathura from his father Ugrasena, is afraid that he would be destroyed by his sister Devaki's son *Kṛṣṇa* who is growing at Vraja or Gokula. Therefore he sends his minister Akrūra, who is *Kṛṣṇa*'s cousin, to Vraja to invite *Kṛṣṇa* (and his foster brother Balarāma) to take part in the annual Bow Festival (*dhanuryāga*) which features a contest centred around a huge, strong bow. He develops many devices and situations to get both *Kṛṣṇa* and Balarāma killed, but the duo turn the tables on him. Ultimately *Kṛṣṇa* lifts and breaks the bow, kills Kamsa and restores the throne to Ugrasena. He stays on in Mathura and sends his minister and friend Uddhava as an emissary to Gokula to inform his beloved *gopis* of his continued love for them, his welfare and of the riddance of Kamsa.

On his arrival at Vraja, Uddhava is surrounded by the lovelorn *gopis* and eagerly questioned. They need to be reassured that *Kṛṣṇa* has not forgotten them in the lure of the belles of Mathura. They are also jealous, and pour out their fear of the fickleness of *Kṛṣṇa*'s love. A *gopi* spies a bee humming and hovering near her feet. She construes the

bee (*bhramara*) as Kṛṣṇa's messenger because of a common quality: the *bhramara* flits from flower to flower, enjoying the honey, rejecting one after enjoyment and attracted by another, even as Kṛṣṇa enjoys the amours and favours of one damsel and moves on to the next. Then follows a monologue of reproach, dejection, blame, reiteration of her own total, consuming love, and finally the humility and awareness of how small and insignificant they are in comparison with Kṛṣṇa, the *Puruṣottama*, the ultimate lord whom she had naively taken to be a common mortal. Because this outpouring in analogy with *bhramara* is addressed to a *bhramara*, it is called *bhramara-gītā*. The nominal term in this expression is doubly appropriate both because it is in the nature of a song and because it has an underlying profound philosophy. Uddhava, full of his own arrogance of his *nirguṇabrahma upāsana*, is humbled by the profound yet simple philosophy of the *saguṇabrahma upāsana* practised by the naive and rustic cowherdesses in their total, unswerving devotion and dedication to one who is personified *brahman*. He expresses his admiration for them and carries back to Mathura the news and message of the *gopis* for Kṛṣṇa.

The *bhramara-gītā* (the original text of which is given in Appendix I) may be translated as follows (10.47.11-28):

Seeing a bee while contemplating union with Kṛṣṇa, a *gopi* feigned it to be a messenger sent out by her beloved [Kṛṣṇa] and spoke as follows: (11) O bee, kin of the Fraud (Kṛṣṇa), do not touch my feet with your whiskers which are stained with the vermillion [coloured] pollen dust [gathered] from the garlands dangling from the breast of our rival. Let the King of Bees (Kṛṣṇa) receive the favours of these women [through your mediation; favours, after all, which are stale leavings of our own] and be ridiculed in the Yādava assembly; being his messenger, you also have partaken the same quality! (12)

Allowing us to drink but once the enchanting nectar of his lips, he discarded us like a flower even as your Excellent Honour does! [We wonder] how Lakṣmī, her heart lost to his excellent [but empty] charming words, continues, alas, to serve his lotus feet. (13)

What is the use of more words O Bee! Your friend flits from one innocent woman to another with only two feet; [you flit from flower to flower with six feet!] Why do you sing so much before us [now rendered homeless] the glories of the ancient lord of the Yādavas? [We know him from so long ago!] Sing such contingencies before those girlfriends of Kṛṣṇa, who of shrunken breasts may satisfy the itching of their breasts, would be delighted with you and reward you by granting your desires (14).

In heaven, earth or *Rasātala* [nether world] what women are not susceptible to such fraudulent [erotic advances like his] charming smile and crooked eyebrows? When Lakṣmī herself is serving the dust of his feet, what are we to him? After all, the epithet '*uttamaśloka*' [excelling in glory] is applied to him only by the object (15).

I know you too well; coming from Kṛṣṇa as envoy, you are an expert in flattering words and supplicatory conciliation. Do not step on our head. We came to him, renouncing husband and children as well as our duties to this and the next world. And he rejected us, not taking us to his heart. What remains now for you to negotiate reconciliation? (16)

[Consider his history:] He hunted the King of the Apes (Vāli) as if the latter was a [mere] animal; surrendering to woman [Sītā], he disfigured another woman [Śurpaṇakhā] who courted him in desire; he received every worship from Bali and yet bound him with Varuṇa's noose as if he were a crow. Enough of our friendship with him! Nevertheless O Bee who art dark [like Kṛṣṇa], it is difficult not to give up [listening to or singing] accounts of him (17).

For on whosoever's ear falls even a single drop of the nectar of his sports, [it] does completely away with duality, [makes him] renounce home as well as the destituted wife and son; such *yogis* live out of sight of the world and become mendicants. Such is Kṛṣṇa (18).

Persuasive Little Counsellor, the innocent, foolish brides of Kṛṣṇa that we are, we fully believed in good faith as true his fraudulent words as do the she-deer the delectful melodies of the hunter. With only one touch of his fingernail [on our breasts] we became intensely lovesick and are reduced to this condition now. So speak of something else [than Kṛṣṇa] (19).

Friend of our Beloved, will you come again, commissioned by him? What do you desire? Ask. I have high esteem of you. Howsoever can you take us to him when he is inseparably embraced on either side by the women [of Mathura]? Moreover, Friend, does not his bride Lakṣmī constantly dwell in his bosom? [How could there be place there for any one else?] (20).

Is our honourable consort still in Mathura (with no thought of coming back to us?) Does he remember now and then his parent's home and his [boyhood] friends, the cowherds? Friend, does he ever recall and speak even a little of us, who are his slaves? When will he place again his shoulder smeared with fragrant aloe on our head? (21)

Suka (muni) said: 'Uddhava listened attentively to the lamentation of the *gopis* who were yearning to behold Kṛṣṇa [again], consoled them with the message from their beloved (Kṛṣṇa) and spoke as follows . . .' (22)

Thus the passage in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* in which the *gopi* laments her pangs of separation with reproach, irony, ridicule, blame and sorrow using an allegory between Kṛṣṇa and the *bhramara* is known as *bhramaragītā*. The *bhramara* (bee) is here construed as a messenger from Kṛṣṇa and is reciprocally used by the *gopis*. The employment by separated lovers of a male messenger (*dūta*) or female messenger (*dūtī*) is a time-honoured, well known literary convention in both Sanskrit and other Indian languages and is exhaustively treated in treatises on dramaturgy and poetics. Some works such as the *Dūtīkarmaprakāśa* (of Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala) deal exclusively with the nature, variety, characteristics and functions of such messengers. The idea of messenger is sometimes extended to imaginary inanimate (e.g. *megha*) and animate (e.g. *hamsa*, *śuka*, *bhramara*) agents also in poetry.

*Bhramara* is conceived as a messenger for the first time in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* as mentioned above. This is appropriate both on literary and philosophical criteria. In *kāvyaśāstra* it is apt because both Kṛṣṇa and the bee are black (not deep blue) in appearance and both are accusable of inconstancy in love, flitting from one object of joy to another, deserting each after enjoyment. The *bhramara-kīta nyāya* may be applied in a philosophical stance; because of constant and intense *dhyāna* of the *bhramara*, the *kīta* is metamorphosed into the latter. Here Kṛṣṇa-*gopi* and *parabrahman-jīva* are comparable with *bhramara* and *kīta* respectively. The philosophical content of this allegory is revealed both elaborately and explicitly in the dialogue between the *gopis* and Uddhava which follows the *bhramaragītā*. Uddhava inclines at first to an intellectual arrogance of the abstract and sophisticated *nirguṇabrahma upāśanā* but soon learns humility and admiration for the relatively more practicable, easier mode of *saguṇabrahma upāśanā* of the simple, rustic *gopis*. The *bhramaragītā* thus offers two equations between *parabrahman* and Kṛṣṇa and between the *jīva* and the *gopis*, upholding the superiority of *saguṇabrahma upāśanā*. This

philosophical stance is adopted by the *aṣṭachāp puṣṭimārga* Hindi poets, mainly by Surdas and Nandadas in their *bhramaragītā* kāvyas, which will be presently studied.

It is strange that notwithstanding a profusion of *Kṛṣṇabhakti* *kavya* in Sanskrit the theme of *bhramaragītā* is but rarely taken up when compared with its occurrence in other languages, particularly Hindi and Kannaḍa. I am aware of only *Bhramarāṣṭaka*, *Bhramaradūtakāvya*, (or *Bhramarasandeśakāvya*) and *bhramaragītaṭikā* in Sanskrit.

#### *Bhramaragīt in Hindi*

Just as the *Mahābhārata* contains the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* contains several forms of the Gita such as Bhramarā, Gopī-, Venu-, Uddhava- and Aṣṭavakra- etc., all of which are replete with philosophical content and precept. Among these, *Bhramaragītā* is favoured the most in literature because of its symbolic and poetic potential. It is readily adapted to singing and dancing because of its dramatic theme. The largest number of *Bhramaragītā* poems are available in Hindi with many variations in theme and form.

More than fifty *bhramaragītā* poems were composed by different poets at different times in different metrical structures in different lengths in Hindi in the middle age alone and a few in modern times. Some of these are listed below (ñh=nasalised aspirate; N=number of verses/stanzas; C=couplet; D=doha; \*=a couplet lacking in the first quarter; S=sonnet; Q=quatrain; Tr.=triplet)

No.	Poet	First Words	Form	No. of Verses	Title
1.	Akṣar Anany	Jākī Śakti pāi	C, S	70	Premdīpikā
2.	Ālam aur Śekh	Jake jog jugiyā	S	23	Bhaṇvargit
3.	Gosvāmī Haridās	Ūdhau Sūdhau bacan	C	10*	-
4.	Gval-kāvi	Jaise kanh jān taiseñ	S	20	-
5.	Ghāṣirām	Syam likhe gunapāṭi	S	20	-
6.	Caturbhujdas	Tum soñ kyon kahau	-	3*	-
7.	Cācā Vṛndāvandās	Udhau Sakhā man bhavatai	C	40*	Bhramargit
8.	Cand Sakhi	Ham par kubja sok	-	17	-
9.	Jayasinh	Ūdhau Braj lom	D	67	Bhramargit Dohavali
10.	Jain Ānandghan	Piya tum nīthur bhae	10 x 2* lines	-	-
11.	Thākur	Dhik kām jo dūsari	Q	2	-
12.	Tulsidas	Udhau yā Braj kī	S	26	Śrī Kṛṣṇagītāvalī
13.	Tej Simh	Coraso ayi	Q	3	Bhramargit
14.	Toṣanidhi	Ekai kahain	Q	3	-
15.	Dyalāl	Ja chinte	S	32	Prem Batīsī
16.	Dvij-nārāyan Śarma (Vichu)	Chāṇḍī diyo	Q	3	-
17.	Dev	Kubija bateva	Q	9	-
18.	Nandadās	Udhau kau upades	Q+O.5 l	75	Bhaṇvargit (O.5 l has no rhyme)
19.	Nandadās	Jalim julamdār	S	1	-
20.	Nāgaridās	Udhau nirgun kaise	-	10*	-
21.	Padmākar	Pat bin kinhe	-	5*	-
22.	Paramānandadas	Udhau nāhin parat	-	8*	-
23.	Prāgan	Āyasu dinho sakhā	-	46*	-

24.	Premdas	Gopin ki bahuprīti	Q + C	8	Premśāgar
25.	Bagasī Hamsadas	Jadapi raj sobhā	Q + C	6	-
26.	Barkatullāh Premi	Madhukar ham	-	14*	-
27.	Brajnidhi	Bhog mein na jog mein	-	25	Prītipacāsī
28.	Birah Salitā	Kubaja tribhangi	C	25	Rekhatā
29.	Beni Pravīn	Jog ki na kahiye	Q	1	-
30.	Premdhan	Udhau kaha kahi	5 x 2	2*	-
31.	Bharatendu Hariścandra	Udhau jau anek	-	22*	-
32.	Bhikharidās	Udhau tahāni	Q	2	-
33.	Matirām	Lagī prem Nand Lāl	-	7	-
34.	Malukdās	Suni suni bātey	-	3	-
35.	Mahārāṇa Javānsimh	Pahale lagay prit	Q	1	-
36.	Mubārak	Hamko tum ek	Q	1	-
37.	Raskhān	Lāj ke lep caḍhāyī	Q	4	-
38.	Raghunāthdās Sanehi	Sumiri Ram siya	-	286	-
39.	Rang-pāl	Udhau yahān ko	S	1	-
40.	Ras-nāyak	Śrī gokul madhukar	-	-	Birahvilās
41.	Ras-rūp	Jab te gaye hain	Q	1	-
42.	Ras-rāsi	Param pavitra tum	Q	26	Rasikpacīsī
43.	Rasik	Udhau samajhi layi	10 x 8	8*	Uddhau-gopī-samvad
44.	Rasiee	Ya guni ke man mein	Q	7	-
45.	Rahim	Udhau bhalau na kah	C	37	-
46.	Lalji	Cahai jo viyog	Q	1	-
47.	Senāpati	Kubija var lagāi	Q	1	-
48.	Santdās	Kamalnayan	C	38	Kakākhakhā (first couplet always commences with Kakā, Khakhā, Gagā, etc. followed by 4 C.)
49.	Śrīrāmhari	Udhau juve sat	C	17	-
50.	Surdas	a) Yah sandeś kahyau	C	13	Laghu Bharamargūt
		b) Rath ratan	C	70	"
		c) Udhau ki upades	C	35	"
		d) Jadupati Sakha	St	735	Bṛhat Bhramargūt
51.	Harirāy	Ek samai brajvas	C	128	Snehlīlā
52.	-	Katik killol	Tr.C	12 x 12	T+C=12 for each of 12 months; each stanza com- mences with a refrain from 'b' of first line
53.	Birahā	Gokula mein kayil	Q	1	-
54.	-	Kubari ka nākvā	C	2	Padhiya ke git; 'tek' at end of each line
55.	Jatsār	Madhuvan se mor	Q	2	'Tek' is a separate refrain line
56.	-	Udhau sab Kāre	-	13*	-
57.	Numerous bhajans in quatrains.				

Among modern Hindi poets who have composed on the theme of *Bhramaragītā*, the noteworthy are Bharatendu Hariścandra (No. 31 *supra*), Ayodhyasimha Upadhyaya 'Hariāudh' (*Priyapravās*), Pandit Satyanarayana 'Kaviratna' (*Bhramardūt*) and Jagannathdas 'Ratnākar' (*Uddhav-śatak*). Of these, *Bhramaradūt* does not relate to the



*Bhāgavatapurāṇam* at all but is based on the theme of Yaśoda (=Mother India) who sends the messenger *bhramara* to Kṛṣṇa inviting him to come to her. The *Priyapravās* is frankly a thesis on metaphysics. The *Uddhav-śatak* has some points which are comparable with the *Bhramargīt* of Sūrdās and Nandadās. This will be taken up presently.

In Hindi literary tradition the *Bhramargīt* serves two purposes: it is a vehicle for reproach, ridicule and irony addressed to the beloved by indirection through the bee and necessarily involves paronomasia (*śleṣa*). Secondly, it became a powerful instrument of propounding the superiority of *saguṇabrahma-upāsanā* over *nirguṇabrahma-upāsanā*.

Of the four *Bhramargīts* of Sūrdās listed above (50a,b,c,d), only the last (d) is detailed and contains his elaborations and imaginative innovations. Of the remaining, (a) is a very brief but complete summary of the *Bhramargītā* episode of the *Bhāgavata*. This is true of (c) also. The other (b) is composed in *dohā-caupāī* metre, greatly influenced by the *Bhāgavata*, and is often a translation. The two summaries introduce neither the bee nor the *gopī*'s address to it, but merely contain a metaphysical dialogue between Uddhava and the *gopīs*. In the other short version, the *bhramara* is mentioned by the *gopī* but does not otherwise appear in it. In the large version, Kṛṣṇa sends Uddhava to Vraja in order to break down the latter's intellectual arrangement about *nirguṇabrahma-upāsanā*. The work is replete with highly sensitive and subtle descriptions of the pangs of separation of the *gopīs* and contains a systematic exposition of the various phases of *vipralambha śṛṅgāra*, viz. *abhilāṣā*, *cintā*, *smaraṇa*, *guṇakathana*, *udvega*, *pratāpa*, *unmāda*, *vyādhi*, *jadatā*, *mūrchā* and *maraṇa* discussed in standard treatises on *śṛṅgārarasa* under *kāmāvasthas*. The *padaśayyā* of the song is highly musical and is prescribed in respect of specific ragas (but not *tālas*). The figures of speech employed are very natural and quite apt. Even though Sūrdās does not explicitly profess the *puṣṭimārga* (*śuddhādvaita*) in the work, it is undoubtedly influenced by the precepts and doctrines of the latter (*vide infra*) with some modifications (e.g. omitting of *āvirbhāva*, *tirobhāva*, calling *māyā* a black room instead of '*kanakakapiśa-vastra*'—an analogy used by Vallabhacarya; a serious difference is that *Sūrsāgar* has for its heroine Radha who is entirely unknown to *Bhāgavata*, and who is totally irrelevant to Vallabhācārya). Sūrdās's Kṛṣṇa is in reality *nirguṇabrahman* but manifests as *saguṇabrahman* to grant *ānanda* to his devotees. His doctrine of *māyā* accords with that of Vallabha. His *Bhramargīt* is rich with human emotions and not a didactic, metaphysical thesis. So is his description of *śṛṅgāra* but the other *rasas* also find a suitable place in the poem, which is primarily oriented to *prasāda* and *mādhurya* qualities.

Nandadās bases his *Bhramargīt* solely on the 47th chapter of the *Bhāgavata* but athetises completely the Uddhavā-Nanda dialogue and elaborates with poetic skill much more Uddhava's sojourn to Mathura. Again, unlike the *gopīs* of *Bhāgavata*, those of *Bhramargīt* are not consoled and content at once with Uddhava's words but argue with him the superiority of *saguṇabrahma upāsanā* and convince him; in fact, Uddhava returns to Kṛṣṇa with an emotionally charged conviction and ecstasy over *saguṇabrahma upāsanā*. Nandadās differs from Sūrdās in the treatment of the *Bhramargītā* episode in the following: he has composed only one *Bhramargīt* of 75 stanzas instead of Sūrdās's four one of which (d) runs to almost 740 stanzas; His *bhramara* enters the episode even before the Uddhava-*gopī* dialogue whereas with Sūrdās it does so in the course of the dialogue. In



Nandadās the treatment of the philosophical content and the argument is sophisticated and polemic, didactic and dialectic, whereas it is moderated with subtle but profound emotions and conviction. Sūrdās's *gopīs* are innocent, rustic cowherdesses supported by their simple, unswerving faith and conviction whereas with Nandadās they are learned, sophisticated, argumentative and contentious. The *gopi* of *Bhāmivargīt* swoons, overwhelmed with *viraha*, when she is told that Kṛṣṇa promises to return to them early. Further, unlike Sūrdās's *gopi* she visualizes Kṛṣṇa as soon as she recovers and begins to address him in reproach. Even though both are inspired and guided by the philosophical doctrine of *Puṣṭimārga*, that of Sūrdās is diluted with emotional vigour whereas that of Nandadās is concentrated with metaphysical rigour, and is more dramatic. Unlike Sūrdās, Nandadās inserts his own words during the Uddhavā-*gōpī* dialogue. Like Sūrdās, Nandadās also limns the erotic sentiment in both separation and union in all its aspects and details, including both behavioral and affective states (shyness, demureness, enthusiasm, liveliness, self-forgetfulness, etc.) not only in the *Bhāmivargīt* but in his *Rūp-mañjarī*, *Virah-mañjarī* and *Raspancādhyaī*. He is equally adept in the delineation of the ten states of physical love (*daśakāmāvasthā*), e.g. *abhilāṣā*, *cintā*, etc. Like all the *aṣṭachāp* poets, both Sūrdās and Nandadās revel in *vātsalyabhakti*, losing no opportunity of describing Bālakṛṣṇa-līlā. Nandadās is profoundly influenced by Sūrdās in this. However, both favour the *madhurabhakti* through the *nāyakā-nāyikā bhāva* predominantly.

As mentioned earlier, Jagannathdas Ratnakar's *Uddhav-śatak* is probably the most influential contribution on the theme. However, it was not conceived as a single, whole composition, but an ingenious, ordered compilation of some 118 pieces created at different times. The format adopted by Sūrdās and Nandadās is of course retained here. But there are significant deviations: On seeing a withered lotus while bathing in the Yamunā, Kṛṣṇa remembers Rādhā and becomes lovesick. Uddhava carries him to the bank in his arms. In order to purge Kṛṣṇa of this *moha* (infatuation), Uddhava preaches him the knowledge of *nirguṇa-nirākāra-brahma*. With the purpose of destroying Uddhava's conceit Kṛṣṇa insists on the former's going to Vraja with a message for the *gopīs*. As soon as Uddhava enters Vraja, its beauty and transmundane greatness scatter away his stock of knowledge, the lanes of Gokula wean him away from his conceit. He becomes spellbound at the focussed love, expectant hearts and total involvement of the *gopīs* and yet begins to perorate them with *yoga*, *dhyāna*, etc. The *gopīs* reply in reproach and irony with reference to himself and the Kubjā, Akrūra and the *nirguṇa upāsana*. Uddhava becomes an enthusiastic convert to their faith and begins to return to Mathura with their message to Kṛṣṇa. He is attracted to return to Gokula. But he controls himself and returns to Mathura, carrying in one hand the symbol of the love of Yaśodā, viz. butter, and in the other, the symbol of Rādhā's love, viz. the flute. He tells Kṛṣṇa, "My rags of conceited knowledge have stayed back at Gokula; the same thing would happen to you if you went there!"

The *Uddhav-śatak* differs from the *Bhramargīt* of Surdas in the following ways: (i) It does not conform to the account in the *Bhāgavata*. (ii) It does not contain the bee incident. (iii) Uddhav is greatly influenced by the beauty and atmosphere of Vraja and speaks his views but once in only three stanzas. (iv) The *gopīs* reveal their reactions to Uddhava individually but not collectively. (v) The *gopīs* of Sūrdās are of immediate appeal because of

their irony about Kubjā, Akrūra and Kṛṣṇa through indirection of the bee but those of Nandadās and Ratnākar tend to be logical, metaphysical and polemic. (vi) Kṛṣṇa in *Uddhav-śatak* is lovesick. (vii) It has no dialogue between Uddhava and Yaśodā and Nanda. (viii) The deeds of infant and teenage Kṛṣṇa in Gokula and Mathura are compared in both sources. (ix) In both Kṛṣṇa sends Uddhava to Gokula to break the latter's arrogance of superior knowledge. (x) Kṛṣṇa sends both a verbal and written message to the *gopīs* in both sources. (xi) Sūrdās is engaged in a more elaborate treatment of the moods of the *gopīs*. (xii) The *gopīs*, Yaśodā and Nanda confound Uddhava approaching in a chariot for Kṛṣṇa in Sūrdās and Nandadas; this situation is absent in *Uddhav-śatak*. (xiii) The physical and affective reactions of the *gopīs* on receiving the message and on of regaining consciousness are absent in *Uddhav-śatak*. (xiv) The detailed messages of Kṛṣṇa to his parents, Rādhā's mother, Śrīdāmā etc. found in Sūrdās are missing. (xv) Reference to the other incarnations of Kṛṣṇa is missing. (xvi) *Māhātmya* is not appended as in Sūrdās. (xvii) The *gopīs* experience good omens at the approach of Uddhava in Sūrdās, but not in Ratnākar. (xviii) Both sources dramatize the event. (xix) The *gopīs* of Sūrdās ridicule the urban belles of Mathura as fit for *nirguṇabrahma upāsanā*. (xx) Both sources show the *gopīs* in gentle and decent humour. (xxi) Only *Uddhav-śatak* mentions gifts to Kṛṣṇa from Yaśodā (butter), Nanda (yellow garment, *pīṭāmbara*), Rādhā (flute), etc. sent through Uddhava. (xxii) Both sources make the *gopīs* say to Uddhava "If we can only see Kṛṣṇa again, we would be prepared to do anything, let alone *yoga*. (xxiii) Both employ many similar metrical structures. (xxiv) Both offer the message that a devotee does not need the hard and exacting practices of *haṭhayoga*, *vrata* or religious rules; Sūrdās does so by suggestion while Ratnākar does so by *double entendre*.

#### *Puṣṭimārga*

The *Bhramargīt* in Hindi is by and large the poetical expression of the school of philosophy called *puṣṭimārga*. This may be briefly described now.

The *puṣṭimārga* was founded by the South Indian Telugu brahmaṇa Vallabhācārya (1473-1531 A.D.) according to whom the *upaniṣads* teach nondualism without the hypothetical construct of *māyā* (as was done by Śrī Śaṅkara); so the doctrine is called *śuddhādvaita*, and is based on the authority of four scriptures: the *Vedas*, *Bhāgavadgītā*, *Brahmasūtra* and *Bhāgavata* each of which progressively answers the questions posited by the previous text. The central focus of worship is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *parabrahma* manifesting both as *sākāra-saguṇa* and *nirākāra-nirguṇa*. His grace (*anugraha*) is not equal on all individual souls but depends on the preparation, fitness and ripeness. Turning towards god and love of god by the *jīva* are proportional to the divine succour (*anugraha*) which is called *puṣṭi*. *Puṣṭimārga* is defined as a way in which the means and the end are identical; wherein the means of *svarūpā-prāpti* or *paramānanda* of Kṛṣṇa is the very and complete absence or renunciation of the mundane or unworldly *sādhana* or endeavours based on desire or nondesire. The best example of the *puṣṭimārga* is the *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana who are esteemed as the spiritual teachers of the way. Those who receive *puṣṭi* love god by themselves as not only their master but as the entirety of all existence; this is called *sarvātmabhāva*; this is different from *brahmabhāva* in which the *jñāni* perceives

*brahman* in everything; but in *puṣṭi*, the *bhakt* sees everything in Kṛṣṇa; this *svarūpānanda* is esteemed by the *puṣṭimārgi* as superior to *brahmānanda*. God is of the nature of *rasa* and the highest and best *rasa* is *śṛṅgāra*; therefore the experience of *rasa* by the devotee is also twofold — *saṁyoga* and *viyoga* — of which the latter is superior. Another doctrine of this *mārga* is *maryādā* in which the devotee must put in his effort in terms of vedic injunctions, *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* etc. until the Lord begins to love him and gives him *sāyujya mukti* (union with Kṛṣṇa). But in *puṣṭimārga* the devotee begins to love god as soon as he has *anugraha* or *puṣṭi* and then engages in *śravaṇa* etc. *Maryādā* is open only to the *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* and *vaiśya* *varṇas* whereas *puṣṭi* is a universal religion open to all. In *maryādā* one does everything because of and according to vedic injunctions whereas in *puṣṭi* he does everything because of and for god. Thus the *puṣṭimārga* proved a boon to devotees who could not or would not engage in *karma* or *jñāna*. Depending on the strength of *puṣṭi*, the latter is of four kinds, viz *pravāhapuṣṭi*, *maryādāpuṣṭi*, *puṣṭi-puṣṭi* and *śuddhapuṣṭi*. In a word, therefore, *puṣṭi* is a way in which the devotee experiences the joy of union even when he/she experiences the Lord's *līlā* in *viraha*, in which all mundane things are renounced in every mood, and surrenders his/her everything, including the body, to the Lord. This Lord is in the form of Śrīnāthji (Kṛṣṇa) discovered by Vallabhācārya and consecrated by him on the *Goverdhanā giri*. The twelve cantos (*skandās*) of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* are believed by the *puṣṭimārgi* to be embodied in the various parts of Śrīnāthji.

#### *Bhramaragītā in Kannaḍa*

The *Kṛṣṇabhakti* movement was at its zenith in the 16th century A.D. in India. Vallabhācārya and his son Viṭṭhalanātha, together with their eight renowned *puṣṭimārgi* poets called the *aṣṭachāp* poets viz. Sūrdās, Kṛṣṇadās, Paramānandadās, Kumbhanadās, Caturbhujadās, Nandadās, Govindasvāmī and Chitdās spearheaded the movement in the North, while Caitanya and his school led it in Bengal and Mirābāi in Rajasthan and Mathura. In Karnataka the movement was inaugurated by the Vaiṣṇava (Haridāsa) saints much earlier, by Śrīpādarāja in the 15th century A.D. This reached its acmé with the work of Vyāsārāya and his disciples, particularly Vādirāja and Purandaradāsa and later Haridāsa composers such as Gopāladāsa, Mahipātidāsa, Prasannavenkaṭadāsa, Vijayadāsa, Helavanakatte Giriyammā and as late as the 19th century A.D. by Harapanahalli Bhīmakka. (The last two are female saints.) They and other saint singers sang eloquently the glories of the *gopīs* (but not Radha, because they strictly conformed to the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* as the exemplar) in the *vipralambha* and *saṁyoga-śṛṅgāra* experience with Kṛṣṇa.

The *Bhramaragītā* episode of the *Bhāgavata* was enthusiastically and consistently (almost as part of orthodoxy and/or literary convention) adopted—and occasionally adapted — by the saint-singer Haridāsa weaving a symbolism of the individual soul (*gopī*) separated from the universal soul (Kṛṣṇa) and drifted into the mundane world (Gokula), yearning to reunite with it. In Kannaḍa there are two major *Bhramaragītās*, viz of Śrīpādarāja and of Vādirāja. There are numerous songs or song-groups of Vyāsārāya and others which unmistakably constitute a respective *Bhramaragītā* complex. All these employ

reproach, ridicule, irony and telling jest while intensifying and magnifying the original theme in the *Bhāgavata*. The *vipralambha śṛṅgāra* of the *gopīs* is often delineated not only in discrete songs but in a musical form called *ṛttanāma* (*Śṛṅgārapārijāta*) specially evolved for the purpose by the Haridāsas. On the other hand, Śrīpādarāja has composed a single long piece; Vādirāja has a complex of some 25 songs; both are specifically called *Bhramaraḡitā* by the composers.

### Śrīpādarāja

The *bhramaraḡitā* of Śrīpādarāja (1404-1502 A.D.) is composed in *pallavi* (refrain) of a quatrain and nine sonnet-stanzas. The *pallavi* and each of the stanzas are of approximately the same or comparable syllabic quantity, invariably rhyming on a (different) second syllable. The prosodial structure is medial to prose and verse and is eminently suitable for musical rendering.

The text may be translated as follows:

*Pallavi*: O Bee, did Śrī Raṅga stay back in Mathura and send you instead? You fraud, the hunter Manmatha is quickly killing us—lady deer—with his piercing flower-arrows.

*Stanza 1*: Fellow, beholding you is like beholding Acyuta [After all, you are both of a kind!]. May be our handsome lord is well and prosperous [while we are miserable and wretched, pining for him]? Mr Fraud, we know him [too] well from his childhood, this cheat Hari, the stealer of hearts. He induced us, innocent maids, into his ship of love, promising to cross the ocean of love-separation; but he deserted us in mid-ocean!

*Stanza 2*: He has sent you here but this once just to look up his father Nanda and mother Yaśodā, has he not, this Lord of Lakṣmī? We are grief-stricken to no avail because of those shameless hussies [of Mathura]. Why would Śrī Hari now have any ardour [left] for us? While enmeshed within the arms of those damsels with vermilion-musk painted breasts, he is persecuted with the arrows of Manmatha; is it so easy to come away here [to us]?

*Stanza 3*: When the destroyer of [the demon] Madhu breathed music into his flute in the sweet harbour [on the banks of the Yamunā], all the love-intoxicated-eyed damsels [of Vraja], listening to the sweet strains, shed all thought of their homes, traced his location through the scent of deer-musk, approached him, and full of ecstasy, stood shyly, gazing at the ground (and writing their love with their big toes!). Then he used to embrace [them] with tender words and was endlessly adequate with the feast of his lip-nectar. How could this merciful lord, O Bee, become so stone-hearted?

*Stanza 4*: We know well the [divine] marks of diamond, hook and flag on the soles of his feet, used to follow him to the Garden of Amour and became intimately one with him [multiplied into a Kṛṣṇa for each one of us] in water sport. Where has fled this joy of ours? Are our hearts not hard as diamond, for even after our lord—who is worshipped even by the very Brahma and the sages—has left us, we continue to eke out an existence, maimed and lifeless, with emaciated body [once so beautiful and loved] and with eyes collyrium-smeared [because of tears]?

*Stanza 5*: O Bee, is it ever possible to describe [fully] our beloved Śrī Hari who is adorned with a spot of deer-musk [on his forehead/cheek], pearl tassels in the knot of his hair, palpitating earring, shining, round countenance, who with the cool moonlight of his smile would assuage our flaming hearts; [describe] again, that Puruṣottama [Viṣṇu] who wears the Śrīvatsa, Kaustubha, Vaijayanti and the fragrant Tulasi garland, diamond wristlets and bracelets?

*Stanza 6*: [This selfsame] Hari, dark as the blue lotus, smeared with sandal-paste, clad in faultless yellow, adorned with tinkling anklets, was like the dark [rain-bearing] cloud unto

the [dancing] peacocks which our hearts became. We went to him believing that he is our all—mother, trusted confidant, relative, clan, our final goal—in short, our very heart. But he forsook us. He ignored our pleas; he made an empty promise of returning soon, got into his chariot and drove away with Akrūra.

*Stanza 7:* [How naïve we were to think that he is an ordinary mortal!] He is the lord of Lakṣmī and subtle, while we are only rough cowherdesses. He protects in his bowels the whole brahmānda while we are verily like flies. He is the giver of the ultimate bliss of liberation—and we are content with cow's milk! How indeed can Hari have any regard for us? He arose [on Earth] to protect the meek, yet feasted our eyes by regaling on our butter and milk; it is unpardonable on our part to have equated with an ordinary mortal this Lord who is avowed to succour the whole universe—movable and immovable. Indeed, we are idiots!

*Stanza 8:* Because of the merit earned [in their] earlier [births], the belles of Mathura attained to the feet of the Lord [Śrī Hari] who arose even as the full moon to the ocean of Nanda's joy. Could anything ever match their fortune? We now humbly prostrate before him, praying for forgiveness for any and every transgression or offence. We also pray to him, who his kith and kin of all devotees to dwell for ever in our heart-temple.

*Stanza 9:* All of us damsels shall together [spend our remaining days] by lauding in music the glorious deeds which the master of our innermost existence enacted here [in sport] with tears in our eyes and the memory in our hearts of the joy which our [physical] union with Śrī Hari who knew well our implicit desires. We shall sing, O Bee, our salutations to Rangaviṭhala [*nom de plume* of Śrīpādarāja, which is also the name of his *iṣṭadaiva*] who took the incarnations of Matsya, Kurma, Varāha, Vāmana, Nṛsimha, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalki.

Śrīpādarāja is by and large faithful to the *Bhāgavata* in the *Bhramaragītā*. He describes parts of the wailings of the *gopīs*, of the pangs of separation, in a separate *sulādi* (commencing with the words '*Vanadedegalu*') and in a few discrete *padas*. Śrīpādarāja's *Bhramaragītā* has an independent lyrical status of its own. It athetizes the appearance of Uddhava. While the *Bhāgavata* calls the *bhramara* *kitavabandhu* (relative of the fraud), Śrīpādarāja calls it *kitava* directly. The *gopī* forbids the bee, contaminated by the touch of the belles of Mathura, to touch her; she also says that it was as if they had seen Acyuta himself, and instead of asking Uddhava, seeks to know whether the bee was deputed by Kṛṣṇa. She realizes the huge gulf of difference which lies between her humble self and Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is in full accordance with the doctrine of *tāratamya* of the dualistic philosophy of Madhvācārya (*vide infra*). She also prays to be forgiven for the ignorant liberties she had taken with him. Śrīpādarāja has also composed a self-contained, short *Bhramaragītā* song beginning with the words '*Vanajanayanana manava madhupa nam-buvare*'. This is in full agreement with the larger version discussed above.

The *bhramaragītā* of Śrīpādarāja is set to *Desi rāga* and *Aṭṭa tāla* in some manuscript sources and *Mukhari rāga* in others. The latter two lines of the quatrain, *pallavi*, are constituted into *anupallavi* in some manuscripts. This is an important indication of the growing need or tendency of decomposing a long *pallavi* into *pallavi* and *anupallavi* in the evolution of the *pada* or *kṛti* form; in this instance, it is not improbable that the decomposition occurred at a later date at the hands of musicians. It is further noteworthy that the word '*pallavi*' is replaced by '*dhruva*' in some manuscripts, probably indicating a state of metastability in structural terminology or a state of *equilibrium* between the *prabandha* and *pada*.

*Vādirāja*

Vādirāja (1480-1600 A.D.), disciple of Abhinavabharatamuni, Kalpanācaturāṇana Vyāsarāja composed the *Bhramaragītā* in the format of a musical play/dance-drama in elaborate detail in musical and literary themes, set to Sulādi *tāla*. This is the very first 'abhinava nātaka' to be composed in any South Indian language and paved the way for other plays in Kannada such as Singarārya's *Mitravindā-Govinda*, Tirumalācārya's *Cikadevarāya Saptapadi* and *Gītāgopāla*, the *Bhāgavata-melas* of Melattur in Andhra, *Pallaki-sevā-prabandha* of Shāhaji, *Prahlādabhakti-Vijaya*, *Naukācarita* and *Sitārāmavijaya* of Tyagaraja, etc. It was performed at Udupi in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa temple in 1532-1534 A.D., probably in the presence of Vyāsarāja himself and the Vijayanagar emperor Acyutarāja, the composer taking the role of *sūtradhāra*. He has used both his name Vādirāja and *nom de plume* Hayavadana in the play.

The contents of Vādirāja's *Bhramaragītā* are: invocation to Gaṇapati, preface in Sanskrit in Vasantatilaka metre (a variety of the prototype Śakvarī), introduction consisting of authorship, name and nature of composition, production of the play, *gopīs* of Gokula come on the stage, supplicate to Kṛṣṇa and sing his glories; they lament the long absence of Kṛṣṇa and seek news of him. In the next scene, Kṛṣṇa has completed his mission killing the wrestlers and Kaṁsa and coronating Ugrasena in Mathura; he desires to comfort and reassure the *gopīs* with news of his well-being; he sends for his friend Uddhava and commissions him with going to Gokula; and conveying to the *gopīs* his message of love and reassurance. Uddhava agrees, goes to Gokula; the *gopīs* seek to know the purpose of his visit and pour out the unbearable pangs of separation; a *gopī* sees a flitting bee and perceives in it a likeness to Kṛṣṇa: both are flitters and frauds (*Kitava*) and therefore of the same ilk. She sings to the bee at length, pleading with it to bring back Kṛṣṇa. The song assumes many hues of moods such as prayer, supplication, surrender, ire, irony, humour, metaphysical exegesis, criticism, jealousy, desire, etc. She fears that he may have, amidst the pleasures and lures of the attractive city belles of Mathura, forgotten the poor, pastoral, rustic, naive maids of Gokula. They are now afraid that the many things they have said to him in frustration, jealousy and anger in the past may have offended him and kept him away; these words should be taken as said in jest or interpreted as the highest metaphysical symbolism and glorious praise. She laments the poignant suffering of all the *gopīs* at their separation from Kṛṣṇa and plead for his immediate return. Uddhava knows that the words addressed to the bee are meant for his own ears and that he is to convey their message to Kṛṣṇa. He returns to Mathura and pleads the cause of the *gopīs*. Next, there is news of Kṛṣṇa's return to Gokula. The *gopīs* are in ecstasy, especially the erotic states called *vibhrama*, *vilāsa*, *bibboka*, *moṭṭāyita* and *kilikiñcita*. They are overjoyed when Kṛṣṇa decides to dwell for ever in their hearts. This *Bhramaragītā* is also an allegory: *gopī* is the individual *jīva*, Kṛṣṇa is *brahman*; the bee symbolizes the proclivity for and involvement of the individual in the sensory world. It draws freely upon *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* and rigorously conforms to the orthodoxy and dogma of the *dvaita* philosophy propounded by Madhvācārya. An unusual feature of the work is the extraction of the relevant *śloka*s from the original *Bhāgavata*, followed up with musico-literary comment exploring the various shades and hues of poetic and metaphysical meaning.



An analysis of Vādirāja's *Bhramaragītā* for form, structure and music may now be attempted briefly. It has seven prose passages (which vary in number of lines and do not seem to conform to any of the classical varieties of the *gadya prabandha*), one *śloka* in Vasantatilaka metre, six songs in the format of the *kṛti* (or *pada* in Carnatic music) and the rest, in single or groups of stanzas. Whatever the form, the lines invariably rhyme on the second syllable, and sometimes internally also, displaying alliteration and euphony. None of the *kṛti* structures has *anupallavi* (span between *pallavi* and *carana*), even though many other *kṛtis* of Vādirāja elsewhere do. Both the Vyāsakuṭa and Dāsakuṭa saint-composers of Karnataka have favoured a stanza-structure with two or four lines in each of three or five *caranas*. These are well represented in Vādirājās *Bhramaragītā* also. It is this *kṛti* structure with couplet *carana* but without *anupallavi* which later emerged as the *divyanāma-kīrtanas* of Tyāgarāja and others. But these forms which have only *caranas* but no *pallavi* do not seem to inhere any common pattern; two-line or four-line stanzas are inserted discretely after prose passages; couplets are added at the end of a group of four-line stanzas to provide formal and rhythmic variety: a single stanza is inserted between two prose passages: a *kṛti* is followed by a stanza series without a break; stanza series are arranged consecutively. These form different parts of the composition, not by formal or structural variation but by change in *rāga*, *tāla* or word theme. There is one group of stanzas which is exceptionally long, consisting of 35 quatrains and one couplet set to a single *rāga* viz. Mecabauti and to a single *tāla* viz. Rūpaka. Compositions with a large number of stanzas is common enough with many Haridāsa composers and Tyāgarāja, with or without a *pallavi*. Obviously, they are *māturpradhāna* (words are more important than music), using *dhātu* as only a vehicle. Such composers defeat the purpose of the composer more often than not, because they are reduced to a monotonous chanting at the hands of non-musical users and all but the *aṅkita-carana* are atherized by the musicians, and are probably not intended for concert music. It would sustain audience appeal in a musical or dance presentation only if the different stanzas or set of stanzas were arranged in different *dhātus* for different voices.

The *Bhramaragītā* has only a few roles: Sutrādhāra, Kṛṣṇa, Uddhava and the *gopīs*. Vādirāja must have commended the participation of a number of male and female vocalists, an instrumental orchestra and a few dancers if he produced and directed this music-dance play, which unlike his Nārada-Koravañji play, is set in a classical idiom.

The *apparatus criticus* available for the *constitutio textus* of Vādirāja's *Bhramaragītā* indicates the use of the following four *rāgas*: Nāṭi, Pantuvarālī, Śaṅkarābharaṇa, Ghaṇṭārava, Mukhārī, Bhairavī, Saurāṣṭra, Kambhodi, Kedāragaula, Vāsanta-Bhairavī, Madhyamāvati, Nādanāmakriya, Toḍi, Pādī, Kalyāṇī, Bilahari, Mecabauli, Mārava-dhanyāsi, Megharañjanī, Ahīri and Śrī. Among these, Nāṭi, Pantuvarālī, Kedāragaula, Nādanāmakriyā, Mecabauli, occur for two songs each, and Saurāṣṭra for three songs. Again, Pantuvarālī, Bilahari and Mārava appeared in Carnatic music after Vādirāja's period. Kalyāṇī is already found mentioned by Śrīpādarāja in the 15th cent A.D. in a critically edited song. Bilahari occurs in its modern form in about 1730 A.D. This is true approximately of Pantuvarālī also. The rest were coeval with Vādirāja and their historical evolution is described in detail by me elsewhere. Variation in *rāga-tāla* ascription for the



same song in manuscript sources suggests popularity, performance and experimentation of this opera or ballet. Only Sulādi tālas are employed, as stated by the composer, viz. Adi, Maṭhya, Rūpaka, Jhampā, Tripuṭa and Aṭṭa. The most favoured tālas are Adi and Jhampā. An interesting feature of the composition is that two tālas are set to the same song in some instances, the second tāla being employed for the last stanza, probably to distinguish the *abhoga dhātu* of the song.

#### Other Bhramaragītās in Kannaḍa

The more important of other *Bhramaragītās* available in Kannaḍa may be mentioned in passing:

1. Śrīpādarāja: 'Vanajanayanana manava madhupa nambuvare', *Śrīpādarājara Kṛtigalu*, no. 51, p. 149.
  2. idem. 'Vidhige dayavillavakka emma myāle' ibid. no. 52, p. 153.
  3. Vyāsarāja: 'Yāke Brndāvana yāke Gokula', Vyāsarāyara *Hāḍugalu*, p. 102.
  4. Purandaradāsa: 'Akka ettaṇa billahabba banternage', *Purandara-sāhitya-darśana*, vol. 4, no. 30, p. 88.
  5. Gopāladāsa: 'Naḷe baruvenendu heli madhurege puda', *Śrī Gopāladāsara Kṛtigalu*, no. 44, p. 130.
  6. Bhīmavva, Harapanahalli: 'Nandaputrana ājneyindaluddhava', *Harapanahalli Bhīmavvana Hāḍugalu*, no. 67, p. 147.
  7. idem. 'Byāge baruvenendu sāgi madhurege hoda', ibid. no. 98, p. 202.
- I have discussed these *Bhramaragītās* elsewhere. Their discussion is beyond the scope of this presentation.
8. Nityātmā Śukayogi, Kannaḍa *Bhāgavata*, Canto x, gives an elaborate treatment of the theme with imaginative and poetic description.

#### Philosophical Basis

While the *Bhramaragīta* of the North was inspired and succoured by the *puṣṭimārga* of *śuddhādvaita* of Vallabhācārya and Caitanya, that of the Haridasas was based on the *dvaita* (dualistic) philosophy expounded by Madhvācārya.

The exemplar for both was of course the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam*.

The *dvaita* philosophy may be summarized into nine doctrines: (1) Hari is supreme. (2) The world is an ultimate reality. (3) Fivefold dualities are also ultimate reality. (4) Individual souls are eternal servants of Hari. (5) Individual souls are mutually different and belong to high-low (*tāratamya*) category tiers. (6) Mukti (liberation) is of the nature of the manifestation of *ānanda* (bliss) of *svarūpa* (one's own nature or form). (7) The means to *mukti* is excellent *bhakti* which is preceded (or generated) by knowledge of the greatness of the supremacy of Hari etc. (8) Proof is threefold: *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *āgama*. (9) All the Vedas expound Hari in essence.

The doctrine of duality engenders the theory that every object differs from every and all other objects and is thus distinct, and involves the absence of mutuality or reciprocity. Such *bheda* is fivefold: (i) between god and *jīva* (individual soul); (ii) between god and *prakṛti*; (iii) between *prakṛti* and *jīva*; (iv) between *jīva* and *jīva*; and (v) between any

object and every other object in *prakṛti* (Nonsentient existence). Thus his philosophy posits an independent entity (god) and dependent entity (*jīva* and *jaḍa*). God is not *nirguṇa-nirākāra* but is *Puruṣa* who is perfect with every auspicious attribute, on whose mercy depends the existence and sustenance of all *jīva* and *jaḍa*. His glory, greatness and power are unlimited. He is supreme, omniscient, the highest and best of all; he creates, sustains and destroys the world. He creates the world out of compassion for the *jīvas* so that they may evolve and attain *mukti*. He is one, but incarnates in many forms. This philosophical system postulates ten categories (*padārthas*) and twenty *dravyas* such as *Paramātmā*, *Lakṣmī* etc. Its distinctive contributions are the postulates of *viśeṣa* and *sākṣi*.

#### *Bhramaragītā in Telugu\**

The earliest known reference to *Bhramaragītā* is by Pāṅkuriki Somanātha in his *Paṇḍitārādhyā-Caritraṃ* (Parvataprakaraṇamu) who mentions that pilgrims to Śrīśaila mount sang many songs such as *Tummeda padamu* (*tummeda-bhramara*), *Vennela* (Moonlight) *padamu*, *Candamāmā* ('Uncle' Moon) *padamu*, *Nivālipadamu*, *Samapadamu* etc. (c. 1310 A.D). Several examples of the *Tummeda padamu* are available in Telugu Yakṣagāna (e.g. *Rukmāṅgadā-prasaṅgamu*); a common feature of these is that each line ends with the word 'tummeda'. Some discrete poems are also available in textual tradition, e.g. a poem in five stanzas commencing with the words *Mayure bhrngama* attributed to the great poet Śrīnātha. This has for its theme a paronomasic warning given to the queen by her confidante attendant when the former is engaged in clandestine amour with the minister about the unexpected arrival of the king. These two illustrate the fact that the *bhramaragītā* did not always originate from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* but was nevertheless based on a love-theme. An example of a *Bhramaragītā* in a classical music idiom is available in *Tāllapākam Annamācharya* who has given two songs in divine *vipralambha śrngāra* (nos. 9 and 31, *Śrngāra sankīrtanālu*, Vol. 4 of *Tāllapākam Kṛtulu*, Vol. 11 of Tirupati Venkateshwara Oriental Series). Eganti Lakṣmaṇācārya has composed some *tummeda padas*.

Telugu folk songs are rich in mythological, historical, religious and spiritual word themes. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* has been, continues to be, a fountainhead of inspiration for mythological themes. These include *Prahlādacaritra*, *Vāmanavijaya*, *Vāmanacaritra*, *Ambariṣopākhyāna*, *Gajendramokṣam Kṛṣṇa-janma* (lullaby), *Kālinga-lake song*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇalīlā*, *Gummaḍa-pāta*, *Gopika-jalakrīdā*, *Rukmini-kalyāṇa*, *Bratukamma-pāta*, *Parrot-message*, *Satyabhāmā episode*, *Rukmiṇī songs*, *Usāsvapna*, *Bhramaragītās*, *Kucelapākhyāna* etc.

Among the *Bhramaragītās* in Telugu folk songs, the one composed by Kanappa on his *iṣṭadaiva* viz. Jagannātha of Nīlācala (Puri) is very detailed and deserves notice. The poet has expanded the descriptions of *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* with his own imaginative details. He is faithful to his exemplar in essentials, sometimes reminiscent of Potana's *Bhāgavata*. Unlike the original, the *gopīs* address the bee here collectively. An illustration of the author's poetic excellence may be given. When Uddhava returns to Mathura carrying

\* Grateful acknowledgement is made to the eminent Telugu scholar Dr R. V. S. Sundaram, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University, for drawing the attention of the author to source material.

messages from Nanda, Yaśodā and the *gopīs* to Kṛṣṇa, deeply moved by the utter love and dedication of the *gopīs*, he bewails, "Woe is me I was not born as grass in Gokula! If I were, I would have touched the feet of the *gopīs*".

*Bhramaragītā* is a widely prevalent and important item in the repertoire of women's traditional songs in Telugu which are medial to the folk and classical music idiom. One such song, composed by Prativādi-bhayaṁkara Vedāntacārya of Dhavalagiri may be briefly noticed here. It is a very long poem of some 584 verse-lines, each approximately structured in 10-4-10 mātrās. The author mentions Śrīśaila Lord (Mallikārjuna), Vyāsa, Śuka and Vallabha (acārya), and commences '*bhramaragīta*' after obeisance to Gaṇapati and his guru (not named). He introduces the theme by extolling the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* as the best of all means to *mokṣa*. The story commences with Kṛṣṇa's destroying Kāṁsa, discipleship with Sāṇḍipānī, restoring to the latter his dead son alive, and settling down at Mathura. On a full moon night, Kṛṣṇa remembers the numerous devoted amorous services of the *gopīs* to him and their pangs of separation (c. 80 lines) and has a reverie of the metaphysical significance of their love in relation to the supreme being (himself); he calls his friend Uddhava and commissions him to go to Gokula and comfort the *gopīs* with news of his welfare, and harangues on *jñānayoga* and *karmayoga* and of the excellence of *bhaktiyoga*. A very brief summary of the main doctrines of the *Bhagavadgītā* then follows.

Uddhava crosses towns, rivers, mountains and several fruit gardens and reaches Gokula at eventide and visits Nanda and Yaśoda and exchanges news of their welfare and love with those of Kṛṣṇa (53 lines). The *gopīs* see him at dawn (Uddhava is described). The *gopīs* bewail their separation and accuse Kṛṣṇa of betrayal. A *gopī* catches sight of a bee, construes it as Kṛṣṇa's messenger and pours out an oblique message of yearning, jealousy, frustration, reproach, ire, irony etc. much as found in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇam* (c. 85 lines). Then they express remorse for any harsh reproaches and angry or ironical words or behaviour they might have expressed and seek his pardon. They long to see him again. Uddhava warmly congratulates them on their single-minded love and devotion and on their fortune of being the recipients of his love. He advises them to eschew infatuation and to sublimate their emotion to divine love. He exhorts them to realize the greatness and divinity of Kṛṣṇa who is *Brahman*. He harangues them on the bountiful mercy of the Lord (c. 85 lines).

An interesting aspect of the above song is in the emphatic refutation of *bheda*, and notwithstanding Vallabhācārya's influence, the enunciation of *māyā* as the source of illusion (*adhyāsa*).

### Conclusion

The *Bhagavadgītā* is an eclectic and holistic approach to the spiritual fulfilment of mankind. Various aspects of this work are highlighted in different spiritual canons such as *Uddhavgītā*, *Venugītā*, *Gopīgītā*, *Aṣṭavakraḥ*, *Avadhūtagītā*, *Bhramaragītā*, etc. Among these, *Bhramaragītā* symbolizes the most intimate, sublime approach to *mokṣa* through *bhakti*, which is *prema*. □

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Sanskrit**

Śukamuni, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇam*, eds. trs Venkatanathacharya, Nuggehalli, Varadacharya, Kottamangalam, Arsha Grantha Prakashana, Mysore, 1982.

Anon, *Bhramarāṣṭakam* (MS.)

Anon, *Bhramarādūtakāvyaṃ* (*Bhramarasandēśa-kāvyaṃ*) (MS.)

Anon, *Bhramaragīta īkā* (MS.)

**Hindi**

Sūrdās, *Sūrsāgar*, Vol. 2, ed. Nandlal Dulare Vajpeyi, Nagari Pracharini Granthamala No. 35, Sur-samiti, Nagari-pracharini Sabha, Varanasi, 1932.

Damodardas Gupta, *Sūrdās*, Hindi Sahitya Samitar, Delhi, Patna, 3rd ed. 1965.

Snehlata Shrivastav, *Bhramargīt-saṅgrah*, Rajesh Prakashan, Delhi, 1974.

Ramasvarup, Girijasharan Agrawal, eds. *Sūr Sahitya Sandarbha*, Sūr Panchashati Samaroh Samiti, Bijnaur, 1976.

Nandadās, *Ras-pancādhyāyī aur Bhaṇvargīt*, comp. Udayanarayana Tiwari, Tarunabharati Granthavali no. 39, Lakshmi Art Press, Darya Ganj, Prayag, 1937.

Sarala Shukl, *Hindi Sahitya ki Bhramaragīt Paramparā* (*infra*).

**Kannada**

Śrīpādarja, *Śrīpādarājara Kṛtigaḷu*, ed. Varadaraja Rao, G., Haridasa Sahityamale no. 1, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University, Mysore, 1973.

Vyāsarāya, *Vyāsarāyara Hādugalu*, ed. Kavyapremi, Samaja Pustakalaya, Dharwad, 1983.

Vādirāja, *Vādirājara Dīrghakṛtigaḷu*, ed. Nagarathna, T.N., Haridasa-Sahityamale no. 15, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University, Mysore, 1987.

Idem, *Bhramargītā*, ed. Gururao, Pavanje, Sriman Madhvasiddhanta Granthalaya, Udupi, 1922.

Purandaradāsa, *Purandara-sāhitya Darśana*, 4 Vols., ed. Ramachandra Rao, S.K., Directorate of Kannada and Culture, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, 1964.

Bhīmavva, Harapanahālli, *Harapanahalli Bhīmavvana Hādugalu*, ed. Nagarathna, T.N., Haridasa Sahityamale no. 9, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University, Mysore, 1984.

Gopālādāsa, *Śrī Gopālādāsara Kṛtigaḷu*, ed. Nagarathna, T.N., Haridasa Sahityamale no. 8, Institute of Kannada Studies, Mysore University, Mysore, 1977.

Kannada Encyclopaedia, Vol. 9, Prasaraṅga, Mysore University, Mysore, 1977

*Yugayātrī Bhāratīya-saṃskṛti*, Prasaraṅga, Mysore University, 1985.

Raghavendrachar, H.N., *Bharatīya Tattvaśāstrasaṅgraha*, Mysore University, Mysore, 1930.

**Telugu**

Joga Rao, S.V., *Āndhra Yaksagāna-Vāṇmaya Caritra*, Andhra University Series no. 68, Andhra Vishwakala Parishat, Hyderabad, 1961.

'Krishnashree', comp. *Strīla Paurāṇika-pāṭalu*, Deshi Saraswatham, 3, Andhra Saraswatha Parishat, Hyderabad.

Ramaraju, B., *Telugu Janapada Geyasāhityamu*, Andhra Vignana-pracharanalu, Hyderabad, 1978.

Annamacharya, *Śṛṅgāra-saṅkīrtanālu*, Tirupati Venkateshwara Oriental Series no. 11, Tallapakam Keerthanalu, Vol. 4, Tirupati.

**English**

Sathyanarayana, R., *Sulādis and Ugabhogas of Karnataka Music*, Sri Varalakshmi Academies of Fine Arts, Mysore.

Idem. *Music of the Madhva-Monks of Karnataka*, Gnanajyoti Kalamandira, Bangalore, 1988.