



RASAMANJARI OF BHANUDATTA with English transliteration, translation and commentary by Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao. [Pappus Academic & Cultural Trust (PACT) Ph: 91-44-24953870. Pp. x + 208. ₹ 750, US \$ 40.]

Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao has translated the great text of Bhanudatta into English and provided a commentary. Dr. Rao is an acknowledged and accredited sangeetagna with deep theoretical knowledge of geetam, vadyam

and nrityam. Natya practitioners and Carnatic musicians seek his generous help in understanding the complex meanings of sahitya to enhance the quality of their performances. He has written several scholarly books that provide a solid base for the present and future generations interested in research.

Nothing is left untouched in Bharata's *Natya Sastra*. Later scholars have written commentaries and added observations according to the time, environment and evolutionary changes in human behaviour. Such a commentary is *Rasamanjari* by Bhanudatta on 'nayaka and nayika' – nayika-nayaka bhava in literature – applicable in the performing arts, especially natya and nataka.

Dr. Pappu has attempted to unveil some more of the mystery by simplifying the textual meaning. He says "The scientific classification of nayika-s and nayaka-s in different treatises from Bharata's *Natya Sastra* to Bhanudatta's *Rasamanjari* and from *Dasaroopaka* to *Bhavaprakasa* is a very exciting intellectual journey." He further says that studying *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana is heart touching, giving a totally different perspective of the same subject – nayika-nayaka bhava.

A student of literature and alankara sastra will immediately get a comprehensive idea of the idiom looking at the classification tables at the beginning of the book. For serious practitioners of natya, including theatre artists, Pappu's delineation will serve as a reference text in elaborating the avastha-s (mind behaviour) of heroes and heroines in specific situations. The imaginative descriptions of the

avastha-s can be incorporated or woven into 'sanchari-s'. For example, there is the description for "*ajaata youvana*" (nayika is not conscious of her youth) as *neera teera mupaagataa*. (p. 24). "The moon-faced nayika came to the riverbank and mistook her full blown eyes to be two lotuses stuck to her ears and tries to brush them away.... There are several such allegories for both nayika and nayaka 'manodharma prakatanam' in a given situation in a drama.

Suddhananda Bharati's *Kuyile* in Kambhoji raga, could be an idea probably taken from Bhanudatta. The nayika asks the kuyil to sing for her nayaka to come. Here the nayaka - Krishna, is making the kuyil sing: *maya vidheyo muhu* (p. 192) (I need to make the cuckoo sing today at the grove, hearing which Radha, mistaking it as the advent of spring feels happy).

Similarly, Bhanudatta might have got inspiration from Jayadeva "*aneeya neeraja mukhim*" (p. 186) - Bring her to the bed chamber. This is similar to Jayadeva's "manjutara kunja tala... pravesa Radhe Madhava sameepey..."). So the simple ashatavidha nayika avastha-s visheshani, and nayaka avastha-s can be woven into a beautiful programme of nayika-nayaka prakaranam. That may turn out to be a connoisseurs delight, if properly understood and treated well. Natya practitioners and drama, theatre artists can get good ideas, poets can be inspired by the commentaries of Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao.

Scholarly translations and commentaries are appreciated by people who enjoy poetry and poetic expressions in language. People familiar with alankara sastra will get immersed in the authentic meaning of the sloka-s of Bhanudatta. The sensual meaning of the nayaka-nayika bhava is also very sensibly and subtly translated to help the lay reader delve into the sringara bhava. Literary connoisseurs familiar with alankara sastra and the *Kamasutra* will certainly relish Pappu's translation of the original 'Sanskrit' pada prayoga (usage of sensational words).

I always get upset when I see 'Sanskrit' written in place of 'Samskritam'. Venugopala Rao has also followed this usage.

Another worthy attraction in the book is the different kind of old unusual painting plates of the nayika-s and nayaka-s. Rao has published some Basholi paintings from Uttar Pradesh which can be seen in the Allahabad Museum. The soothing, aesthetic colour schemes used in these old paintings will certainly be an inspiration to natya practitioners to design costumes and employ good colour schemes on stage. They also represent the moods of the characters to enhance the stage presentations. Needless to say, the simple yet pleasing paintings and cover design by the inimitable Sribappu add lustre to the publication.

One may observe the contrast between Bappu's paintings and the illustrations of the old ashtanayika-s and nayaka-s. The colours in the anonymous Basholi paintings of the old school illustrate the mood for each avastha of the pair. Bappu's non-ornamental paintings are of the Krishna-Radha pair with predominant chilly red and lemon yellow – plain sketches with clear expressions on the face. This could be both a compliment as well as a criticism!

Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao and his associates have taken good care to avoid the printer's devil, but a few errors have crept in. However, people with Samskritam knowledge will read them correctly.

I would certainly recommend that all practitioners of natya and sangeetam, artists who want to improve their abhinaya and go deep into the nayika-nayaka bhava, should possess this edition of Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao's *Rasamanjari* English translation and commentary.

Dr. Venugopala Rao should be congratulated for bringing out yet another brilliant book.

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