

An Introduction to Indian Literary Theory
Dr. Sreenath VS
Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research - Bhopal

Lecture- 08
Sanskrit Literary Theoreticians--Medieval Period B

Rupa Gosvami and Jiva Gosvami

Rupa Gosvami is an important literary theoretician from the medieval period. He was a vaishnavite, and the influence of vaishnavite philosophy is quite apparent in many of the works that he wrote. He was born in Karnataka, and his father's name was Kumāra. He later migrated to Bengal, where he received a traditional Sanskrit education from the celebrated logicians. Then he entered the service of Nawab Husain Shah as a private secretary. His encounter with the religious reformer Chaitanya prompted him to leave his political life altogether. Along with Sanatana, his elder brother, and later Jiva, the son of his younger brother, he eventually settled in Vrindavana, the legendary site of Krishna's childhood, and then devoted himself to Vaishnava theology. We can undoubtedly say that Rupa was a leading theoretician of one of the most remarkable religious movements of early modern India. The striking aesthetic turn that he introduced in theology is very remarkable. In his works and those of Jiva, many of the complexities of rasa theory achieve their greatest intensification. Among his works, the most important ones are Bhaktirasāmṛta Sindhu and Ujjvalanīlāmaṇi. His Ujjvalanīlāmaṇi is written in the form of Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa. Jiva Goswami, the son of Rupa Gosvami's brother, had written a commentary on Rupa Gosvami's Ujjvalanīlāmaṇi. It is very interesting that the idea of these two theoreticians about the ontology of rasa is very much related to that of Bhoja. While Bhoja argues that sṛṅgāra is the sole rasa, Rupa Gosvami and Jiva Gosvami, along the same line, argue that bhakti, the feeling that the devotees feel towards Kṛṣṇa, is the sole primary aesthetic emotion.

Also, their notion of rasa is very much close to the classical account of Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa that rasa is in the character. Their dramatic innovation was to re-evaluate who the "character" actually was. They argue that the term character is a broader category which includes not only those who appear in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa as devotees of Krishna but also the real-world devotees. Here the real-life devotees are theologically envisioned as "characters", and at the same time, actors in the drama of life staged by the god. They opine that we have the same attitude toward Krishna like his female attendants have, and we can even take on their

identity. Rupa and Jiva were viewed by their disciples as incarnations of female attendants of Krishna's beloved Radha. The other works by Rupagosvami include *Dānakelikautuka*, *Vidagdha mād̥hava*, *Lalitā madhava*, *Ulkalikavallari*, *Nāṭakacandrikā* and *Rasamṛtaśeṣa*.

Appayya Dikṣita

Appayya Dikṣita is undoubtedly one of the most important literary theoreticians from the medieval period. The writings on the walls of Kālakaṅṭheśvara Temple in Adayapalam, a village near Vellore in the northern Tamilnadu, celebrates Appayya Dikṣita as a man of outstanding achievements. The inscription highlights Appayya's association with the Vellore-based king Cinnaboma. In the inscription, he is lauded as a great scholar who has resurrected Śrīkaṅṭha's commentary on the Brahmasūtra so as to fortify the Śiva school. He is also said to have taught Śrīkaṅṭha's commentary on the Brahmasūtra and his own sub-commentary on it, Śivārkamaṇidīpa, to a crowd of five hundred scholars.

The legend has it that Appayya authored around 108 books in various disciplines. Though it is obviously a rounded-up figure, it is very much indicative of his immense productivity and great scholarship in various fields of knowledge. Three of this vast library of works are dedicated to poetics. And these works include *Vṛttivārttikā* or *The Exposition of Linguistic Powers*, *Kuvalayānanda* or *The Joy of the Water Lily* and *Citramīmāmsā* or *The Investigation of the Colorful*.

It is believed that the earliest of them was *Vṛttivārttikā* or *The Exposition of Linguistic Powers*. This work primarily explains and distinguishes between the denotative and figurative operations of poetic language. Although this work does much more than recapitulate the old arguments in the field, it has been generally considered the least influential of his contributions to the discipline of poetics. His second work *Kuvalayānanda* which can be translated into English as *The Joy of the Water Lily*, is, in fact, a manual meant to familiarize the beginners in poetics with *arthālaṅkāras* or the ornaments of sense, one of the basic subjects of the field. Although this work is of rather limited scope, Appayya's *Kuvalayānanda* quickly became the most popular *alaṅkāra* textbook in the subcontinent. It is significant that it is a status it retains even today. Yigal Bronner, in his article, *What is New and What is Navya*, observes that *Kuvalayānanda* became something like *alaṅkāraśāstra*'s number one "bestseller." The immense popularity of *Kuvalayānanda* notwithstanding, Appayya's real contribution to the field of poetics is his unfinished magnum opus *Citramīmāmsā*, "The

Investigation of the Colorful.” An important observation of Appaya in Citramīmāṃsā is about upama. He observes that upama is the substratum of all the alaṅkāras. He observes that the actress named upama takes on various forms and dances in the world of poetry.

Singabhupala

Singabhupala was king of a small principality in today’s western Andhra Pradesh. His Rasārṇavasudhākara, or Moon on the Rasa Ocean, is in the main, a treatise on dramaturgy. Aside from the vast amount of Sanskrit and Prakrit literature he cites, Singabhupala shows himself to be a subtle and delightful reader of Sanskrit poetry and a writer of Sanskrit prose. He has written a commentary titled Saṅgītasudhākara on Śārṅgadeva’s Saṅgītaratnākara. It is also believed that he has written a work titled Nāṭakaparibhāṣa. He is primarily known in poetics for his work Rasārṇavasudhākara.

Viśveśvara Paṇḍita

Now, Viśveśvara Paṇḍita is another major literary critic that we are going to see. Viśveśvara Paṇḍita, in fact, lived in the eighteenth century. His works include Alaṅkāraustubha, Rasacandrika, Kavīndra kaṅṭhābharāṇa, Alaṅkārapradīpa, and Alaṅkāramuktāvalī. Among these texts, the most important is Alaṅkāraustubha because this text mounts an attack on many of his predecessors and contemporaries like Appaya Dīkṣita and Jagannātha Paṇḍita.

Jagannātha

Jagannātha holds an important position in Sanskrit poetics as the last literary theoretician to be celebrated across the Sanskrit cosmopolis. According to Pollock,

(Refer to Slide Time 8:47)

“Jagannātha marks a historical endpoint in a number of important ways. If it can be said that his ontogeny recapitulated the phylogeny of Sanskrit literary culture, this was probably the last such case; we know of no later poet who circumambulated the quarters of Sanskrit’s cosmopolitan space. (Pollock, “Sanskrit Literary Culture,” 92)

“Jagannātha marks a historical endpoint in a number of important ways. If it can be said that his ontogeny recapitulated the phylogeny of Sanskrit literary culture, this was probably the last such case; we know of no later poet who circumambulated the quarters of Sanskrit’s cosmopolitan space.

Jagannātha was a scholar from what we now call Telangana. His father Peru Bhaṭṭa was also his teacher and mentor. A member of the court of Emperor Shāhjahān, Jagannātha was known in literary circles as “the Emperor of Poets.” He is believed to have received the title “King of Scholars” or paṇḍitarāja from the emperor himself. Along with the strong patronage of the emperor, he was also supported by many other princely houses for whom he often wrote praśastis or eulogies. He could also be viewed as an example of the cultural syncretism of the times, having married a Muslim woman and becoming an integral part of the Mughal courts. His most famous literary work is Bhāminīvilāsa or The Games of Beautiful Women. In many of his treatises on poetics, Jagannātha quotes from his work to illustrate the literary concepts that he was discussing. Rasagaṅgādhara, his magnum opus in the field of literary theory, is often considered a “curious mixture of modernity and tradition.” In Rasagaṅgādhara, Jagannātha effectively employed the framework of Vedānta philosophy to understand the literary categories. Unlike many of his contemporaries and predecessors, such as Jiva Gosvami, who invented a new rasa called bhakti, Jagannātha was a thorough traditionalist.