

Principal Sentiments of the Works of Sri Sankaradeva

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Literary works like epics and dramas have the delineation of various **Rasas**. But each one of such works might have the predominance of only one principal sentiment. That Rasa is called the **Angi Rasa**, i.e., the principal sentiment of a certain literary work, the relish of which is given by the literary work as a whole and in the most impressive way. For example, the *Mahabharata* is full of the sentiments like Vira, Adbhuta and Karuna, and for obvious reasons there is a greater predominance of Vira Rasa. Yet **Anandavardhana** has concluded that Santa is the principal sentiment in that great epic. This is because the total effect of the *Mahabharata* on the mind of a reader happens to assume the form of a spirit of renunciation (Vairagya). The reader becomes more impressed by the worthlessness of the worldly pleasures, gains and glories. Because, he finds that even after being victorious in devastating war and even after regaining a vast kingdom, the Pandavas preferred to renounce everything, to put on bark garments and to retire to the Himalayas. As the reader ruminates over this situation, he also gets the relish of Santa as the principal sentiment of the *Mahabharata*, bearing in his own mind as well the most indelible impression of a spirit of renunciation. In the *Ramayana* also the sentiment of pathos (Karuna) is the predominant one. The great poet sage Valmiki himself has made it clear by his own declaration – “sorrow has taken the turn of a stanza”. It has in fact been deliberately kept up as the predominant sentiment till the very end of the work by way of concluding the work at the point of the eternal loss of Sita by Rama.

Similarly the different individual literary works of **Sri Sankaradeva** also may be supposed to be endowed with respective principal sentiments. Hence an attempt is being made here to sort out such principal Rasas which are abundant in the various literary compositions of Sri Sankaradeva.

Hariscandra Upakhyana: - Although there is a very successful delineation of other sentiments like Adbhuta, Bibhatsa, Hasya and Karuna, in Hariscandra Upakhyana, yet the principal Rasa of this narrative appears to be ***Bhakti***. The poet also asserts that by reading or listening to this great narrative about religious merit one should have more **love or devotion (*bhakti*) for Krsna:** -

ito mahāpunya kathā yito padhe
sune yito ekamane /
khandibe durgati bādhibe bhakati
Krsnara dui carane //

(Hariscandra Upakhyana, 615 B)

It may, however, be contended that the Vaka-Sarali episode occurs more like an appendix, because before beginning this episode, Sri Sankardeva already declares the end of the main story of Hariscandra in verse No. 515b with the words: ***sankara vadati bhaila samāpati Hariscandra upākhyāna***. Hence, the couplet quoted above relates to the Vaka-Sarali episode, and not to the story of Hariscandra. While conceding this argument, it may be pointed out that the main story of Hariscandra is also presented by way of narrating the exploits of a Vaisnava. According to Sankaradeva's Vaisnava cult the Sravana or Kirtana of the stories of Visnu and Vaisnava are equally efficacious for removing sin. Sri Sankaradeva presents the story of Hariscandra in conformity with this very principle, cf.: -

Visnu Vaisnavara kathā duyo samatula /
sravana kirtane kare pāpaka nirmula //
cāndāla paryyante kare savāko pavitra /
jāni nirantara sunā Vaisnava caritra //
(Hariscandra Upakhyana, Verse No. 4)

If it is judged independently of the poet's own opinion, it must be admitted that

by reading this narrative the reader develops an admiration for Hariscandra, the hero, who is an ideal devotee. This admiration for a devotee finally assumes the shape of devotion for the deity, and that is how this narrative happens to have **Bhakti** as the principal sentiment.

Bhakti Pradipa: - This work also, as its name indicates, contains **Bhakti** as the principal Rasa. The poet observes that one who gets the taste of Bhakti would not long for any other wealth, cf.: -

ekānta bhakati tomāka ārādhi
devaro durlabha deva /
āna visayaka kone vānchiveka
tomāta tejiyā seva //

(*Bhakti Pradipa*, Verse No. 307A)

Kirtana-Ghoshā: - This work is a collection of various independent literary works of various lengths. A few of the works are merely didactic in nature. The rest are rich in Rasa. There are many passages which seem to have Santa as the principal Rasa. Yet, all the literary narratives finally give the relish of Bhakti as the total effect on the mind of the readers. For instance, in the **Prahlāda Caritra** episode there are also other Rasas, yet Bhakti is the principal Rasa. A lot of Adbhuta Rasa is delineated there, for instance by describing that all the weapons applied to kill Prahlada were ineffectual. A sharp spear thrown at Prahlada, for example, became blunt and fell down without doing him any harm. cf.: -

bhotā huyā sula uphari parila
dekhi āche sarva jane /
hena adabhuta dekhi daityapati
parama sankita mane //

(*Kirtana*, Verse No. 347A)

There is Adbhuta again in the appearance of Visnu in man-lion form, cf.: -

adbhuta dekhiyā daityapati bhaila cupa /
nuhikya simha nuhi manusyara rupa //
(*Kirtana*, Verse No. 402A)

Yet, here also **Bhakti** emerges out as the principal sentiment as in the case of Hariscandra Upakhyana.

Sometimes Bhakti assumes the form of *Vatsalya*, as in the **Sisulilā** section of the Kirtana. Sometimes Bhakti assumes the form of **Saprema Bhakti** as in the **Rāsa Kridā** section. It is true that the *gopis* sought and received from the company of **Krsna** the fulfilment of their desire for sensual gratification. Yet Saprema Bhakti differs from ordinary Srngara Rasa. This aspect will again be dwelt on in the context of the *Bhagavata*.

Varagitas: - The Varagitas are prayer songs. Hence, naturally they should all have Bhakti as the principal sentiment. Yet different Varagitas have different principal sentiments, i.e., either **Santa** or **Bhakti**. Thus, for instance, Varagita No. 11 has Santa as the principal sentiment; Varagita No. 24 has Bhakti in the form of Vatsalya; and Nos. 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 have Bhakti in the form of Prema-Rasa. Varagita No. 11 appears to have the Dasya form of Bhakti as the principal sentiment. cf.: -

saphala jivana yo jantu nitya jalpatu Rāmā /
Kesava nesevi yo jivaya vita kita upamā //
yākeri cākeri karataho gati pātaki pāyi /
Sankara kaha sohi Hariko kati bhakati nākayi //
(*Varagita* No.12)

Rukminiharana Kāvya: - This is a typical 'kāvyā' type of composition.

Regarding its Rasa, S.N. Sarma says, “Here the predominance of Srngara and Vira may be noticed, and a sprinkling of Hasya Rasa makes the Kavya enjoyable”¹. But even conceding the presence of Srngara, Vira and Hasya it has got to be observed that here also the principal Rasa is Bhakti. In order to have the relish of Srngara or Vira as the principal sentiment the readers cannot have *Hridayasamvada* with **Krsna**, the hero. They simply ruminate over the exploits of Krsna with sympathy, admiration and pleasure. This is indeed a sort of love for Krsna, **a sort of Bhakti**, and this Bhakti is in fact the principal Rasa of this Kavya.

Bhāgavata: - The *Kirtana*, in fact, is a miniature *Bhagavata*. In content and spirit, the *Kirtana* is just a smaller version of the *Bhagavata*. Hence, in respect of the principal sentiment, what has been said about the *Kirtana* applies equally to the *Bhagavata* also. **Here also the principal Rasa is Bhakti**. Of the various types of Bhakti, **Saprema Bhakti** enjoys here a position of greater conspicuity. Saprema Bhakti is suggested through the description of the love of *gopis* for **Krsna**. Though it involves sensual gratification also yet it is different from the usual erotic sentiment. Some of the salient features which make it different from Srngara are as follows: -

1. Unlike in case of usual Srngara, here a large number of *gopis* loved Krsna collectively without any jealousy for one another.

2. Unlike in case of usual Srngara, here the *gopis* shared their sentiment of love for Krsna even with the flora and fauna ungrudgingly. They realised with satisfaction that even the inanimate rivers were in love with Krsna. As one of the *gopis* says, being enchanted by Krsna’s song the rivers flow in the reverse direction, they bring with their hands in the form of waves many lotus flowers for worshipping Him, and it appears as if they also want to embrace Him with love, cf.: -

¹ Sarma, S. N., *Asamiyā Sāhityara Itivrtta*, 6th edn., p. 112

jada nadi savo suni Govindara gīta /
ulati vahavai vimohita huyā cita //
urmmi haste aneka kamala phula lai /
Krsna pada pujivāka sāksāte āsai //
cale yena karibāka khoje ālingana /
(Bhagavata Purana, Verse No. 870-871A)

The gopis knew that **Krsna**, the object of their love was not merely a son of Yasoda; He is an incarnation for the protection of the world; as the witness of everything He has been worshipped even by Brahma; and their own status in respect of Krsna was not of consorts, but of only devotees: -

nuhika yasodā **nandana Govinda**
niscaya bulilo vāka /
tumi samastare **budhi sāksi sakhi**
prārthilā brahmā tomāka //
jagata rākhibe **lāgi yadukule**
āpuni bhailā udita /
sunā mahābhāga **bhakataka tyāga**
tomāra nuhi ucita //
(Bhagavata Purana, X, Verse No. 1394)

Rāmāyana: - Here **Karuna** is delineated successfully and the Upadesas convey a good deal of the flavour of **Santa**. But yet, **in Sri Sankaradeva's version of the Rāmāyana, it is Bhakti, which emerges out as the principal Rasa**. Here the whole course of the story is followed by the reader with deep sense of sympathy and respectful love for Rama, which ultimately gives the relish of Bhakti as the principal sentiment.

Bhatimās: - While the *Deva-bhatimā* has **Bhakti** as the principal sentiment, the *Rāja-bhatimās* have Raja-visayaka-rati-bhava as the principal sentiment.

Patniprasāda Nāta: - In this short drama, **Bhakti** is unquestionably the principal Rasa.

Rukminiharana Nāta: - This is in content and spirit almost same as *Rukminiharana kāvya*. Hence the principal sentiment of this work is also the same as in *Rukminiharana kāvya*, i.e., Bhakti. In Rukminiharana Nāta also what appears to be Srngara Rasa is in fact a **Saprema Bhakti**, almost similar to that of the *Bhagavata*. This is warranted also by the following comment of the Sutradhāra with regard to the love-sport between Krsna and Rukmini: -

**ohi parakāre bhakataka krpālu Srikrnsna rukminira bhakati vaisya huyā
vividha vihāra madana-khela-lilā-keli-kautuka kayala**
(*Rukminiharana Nāta*, p. 26)

Kālidamana Nāta: - In this play **Vira** and **Adbhuta** are very successfully delineated. But **yet it is Bhakti**, which emerges out as the principal sentiment in this play as well. The Sutradhara also says: -

**ohi Gopālaka kālidamana vanāgni pāna lilā yātrā ye sava loke sune,
bhane, tāheka Krsna carane parama prema bhakati bādhava**
(*Kālidamana Nāta*, p. 12)

As stated earlier, love may be of many forms. Here the love of the parents as well as of the friends and gopis may be relished by the reader with equal felicity. Hence, Sri Sankaradeva applies the term *prema bhakti*.

Pārijātaharana Nāta: - This play depicts the superiority of **Krsna** over Narakasura and more particularly over Indra, the king of gods. The total effect of this in the mind of the readers or the spectators is **a more confirmed sense of devotion for Krsna**. This is how this play also happens to have **Bhakti** as the principal Rasa.

Keli Gopāla Nāta: - This is just a dramatic version of the *Rasa Krida* section of the *Kirtana* or the *Bhagavata*. As such, here also the principal sentiment is **Saprema Bhakti**.

Rāmavijaya Nāta: - The majority of the various kinds of Rasa are depicted in this play with great success. Particularly the **Santa Rasa** is given much importance in the beginning of the play. **Yet, here also the principal sentiment is Bhakti**. That is why Sri Sankaradeva refers to the patron king in the concluding Mukti-mangala Bhatima as ‘the connoisseur of Bhakti Rasa’, cf.: -

**Rāmaka parama bhakati rasa jāna /
srisukladhvajaka nrpati pradhāna //**
(*Rāmavijaya Nāta*, p. 18)

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