

**Voices from the Margins:  
Aesthetics, Subjectivity, and Classical Sanskrit Women Poets**

by

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## Abstract

In this thesis, I discuss classical Sanskrit women poets and propose an alternative reading of two specific women's works as a way to complicate current readings of Classical Sanskrit women's poetry. I begin by situating my work in current scholarship on Classical Sanskrit women poets which discusses women's works collectively and sees women's work as writing with alternative literary aesthetics. Through a close reading of two women poets (c. 400 CE-900 CE) who are often linked, I will show how these women were both writing for a courtly, educated audience and argue that they have different authorial voices. In my analysis, I pay close attention to subjectivity and style, employing the frameworks of Sanskrit aesthetic theory and Classical Sanskrit literary conventions in my close readings. In concluding this analysis I make the case that the two authors have different authorial voices and through these voices, had different engagements within mainstream Sanskrit literary production. Overall, my reading of these two authors portrays an alternative image of women's courtly literary production—namely, that they wrote for an audience and were invested in mainstream Sanskrit literary aesthetics.

## Lay Summary

Classical Sanskrit women poets have been portrayed as belonging to a tradition that is different from their male counterparts and less engaged as serious Sanskrit poets. By conducting a close reading of two specific women's texts, I show that they were more likely to have been writing for an educated, courtly audience as demonstrated by the style and content of their writing. Overall my targeted analysis of individual women writers suggests that they were more actively engaged with mainstream courtly literary practices than previously thought.

## **Preface**

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Kathryn Marie Sloane Geddes.

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Miigwetch!

## **Dedication**

To the young girls in my life who make me smile: Felehni, Rowan, and Élinore.

## Chapter 1: Classical Sanskrit Women Poets

### 1.1 Querying the nature of Authorship

nilotpalaḍalaśyāmāṃ vijjakāṃ mām ajānatā |  
vṛthaiva daṇḍinā proktaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī ||  
Vijjakāyāḥ

Vijjakā is dark like the petal of the blue lotus.  
Not knowing me, it has been said in vain by Daṇḍin that Sarasvatī is pure white.  
—Vijjakā

Amongst Sanskrit women poets, Vijjakā is, no doubt, one of the most memorable. Her poem above, chastising Daṇḍin’s description of the goddess of learning as being white while she, Vijjakā, was dark-skinned, has been passed down throughout the medieval period and stands as her defining poem. Vijjakā stands out not only for her chastising words but also because she was a woman—a rare voice amongst an ocean of medieval Sanskrit poets. And yet, who was she? The historical record has been unkind to classical Sanskrit authors and even more to women poets. From the classical to early medieval periods (approx. 4<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), the list of Sanskrit literature attributed to women comprises less than 140 poems and one play. What we know of Vijjakā is limited to a few references by medieval commentators and the presence of 38 poems with various authorial attributions like Vidyā(ka), Vijjā, Vijā, Vijjakā, Vijayakā, Vijjaka(kā), Bijjaka(kā), Bijjāka, Bijākā, Bijjikā, Vijjaka, Vijjaka, Bijjaka (Chaudhuri 1940: XXXVIII; Sternbach 1980: 446). Because these names are all variations of a single name (Sanskrit Vidyā, Prakrit Vijjā) it is assumed that these poems were the work of a single female author. All in all, we know that she wrote somewhere, sometime between the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was highly regarded by certain medieval commentators, but nothing more (see sections 1.2 and 2.2).

At the end of the 1920s a Sanskrit scholar named Ramakrishna Kavi published for the first time, a drama called the *Kaumudīmahotsava* (The Harvest Moon Festival). The section presumed to

contain the author's name has been partially eaten by worms in the sole manuscript copy of the drama, and this unfortunate fact has left us to conjecture who the author was (see section 3.1). The only clue as to the author's identity is the feminine declension of the Sanskrit name—telling us that the author was a woman. The authorial ambiguity in the publication of this play prompted a slew of scholarly articles investigating its authorship, trying to find a name to fit the missing section of the manuscript (see section 3.2). Vijjakā became a major talking point as scholars sought to determine whether or not she authored the play. However, once the authorial debate around the *Kaumudīmahotsava* was found to be inconclusive, she became rarely discussed. The issue of authorship surrounding the *Kaumudīmahotsava* brings up some interesting questions about how we know who the author of a text is, what it means to be a woman poet, and how we are to value women's voices within the Sanskrit literary tradition. Is authorship constituted solely on the basis of attribution? Scholarly debates on the authorship of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* seem to suggest so; however, does an author simply exist because a text names her? Are there other criteria for determining authorship? And what is an authorial voice anyway?

If we take this leap of faith in ascribing authorship on the sole basis of authorial attribution, a more challenging question emerges for our project: What does it mean for us, as readers, if an author was a woman? And is it possible to identify an author's gender simply on the basis of the text? In this regard, S. N. Dasgupta has discussed women poets like Vijjakā and given a number of problematic statements. Firstly, while women appear to write about mostly love, he says that “there is not much that is truly feminine in these verses, which might as well have been written by men” (1947: 417). He then goes on to say that poems authored by women give the impression that women are “more fully ardent and less self-controlled than man,” and that such an image would “lead to a dubious generalisation.” Therefore he suggests instead that these may not be actual women poets but rather, that “the woman-poet looks suspiciously like a replica of the passionate heroine of the normal Sanskrit poetry and verses” (1947: 417). He then proceeds to suggest that women's voices are only fictitious women's voices passed off with feminine names (1947: 418). Overall, Dasgupta's argument is centered around what women “should” sound like. If women poets were writing more or less like men,

how are women thought to be “more” or less ardent than their male peers? This brings me to the question raised earlier—can we tell the gender of an author on the basis of text? Read, for example, the following verse and try to discern the gender of the author:

gate premābandhe hṛdayabahumāne ‘pi galite  
nivṛtte sadbhāve jana iva jane gacchati puraḥ |  
tathā caivotprekṣya priyasakhi gatāṃs tāṃś ca divasān  
na jāne ko hetur dalati śatadhā yan na hṛdayam || (Chaudhuri 1939: 48).

When the bond of love has gone, when even great respect in the heart has trickled away, when true feelings have disappeared, and when he has already moved on, as people do—even though it can see clearly that those days are gone—Oh dear friend, I don’t know why my heart does not split into a hundred pieces. (Translation my own).

While this poem has been attributed to Vijjākā, it has also been attributed to a man named Amaru (Sternbach 1980: 448), whose highly-regarded *Amaruśatakam* (The 100 Verses of Amaru) has circulated extensively in the medieval period (Bronner 1998: 233). Within this verse, there is arguably nothing that is marked about women’s writing, nor men’s. Shalini Shah, for example, has argued that this verse is marked by its representation of love that is distinctly feminine (Shah 2009), but that regardless of whether the image can be deemed to be feminine or masculine, there is no definitive way to say this poem was written by a woman or a man.

In his landmark essay, the “Death of the Author,” Roland Barthes questions the nature of authorial voice, claiming that writing is an act that produces a special voice “consisting of several indiscernible voices... to which we cannot assign a specific origin” (Barthes 1986: 49) It is a space where “every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes;” in other words, it is where the author dies. Barthes argues that the author, the biographical historical ‘real’ person, no longer governs the reception of a text once it is written—that power now belongs to the reader. He emphasizes a way of reading that centres the reader and the text at the basis of textual interpretation. There is no benefit in trying to read the work from the eyes of the author because, “to give an Author to a text,” for Barthes, “is to impose upon that text a stop clause”

(Barthes 1986: 53). Barthes ultimately argues for an alternative reading strategy where the hegemonic framing of the author is replaced with a renewed focus on how a text creates meaning from the basis of the reader's perspective. The only recoverable authorial voice, therefore, is the voice created in the text's creation of meaning.

While I do not think the author is completely dead, as Barthes says, his framework prioritizes text and de-emphasizes the identity of the author in a way that allows for a less biased reading of women's texts. Reading a text with an a priori notion of what to expect based on the biographical author—here the identity being the femininity of a woman—is limiting and suggests that we know exactly when and where an author's individual identities begin and end. Women poets are simultaneously women—who may or may not conform to feminine ideals—and poets. In the course of my reading of women Sanskrit poets I will let the text speak for the author rather than let the author speak for the text.

What can we conclude from these ideas of authorship and authorial voice? Authorship is constituted partially through attribution and partially, I would argue, by authorial voice. Mentions by medieval commentators suggest that there actually were women poets in classical India—contrary to what Dasgupta speculates—who, like Vijjakā, wrote poetry in Sanskrit, even though most of their authorial biography has been lost over time. I suggest we treat these poems as being written by the person given in the poem's authorial attribution. Even if we are comfortable with the idea that these poems are authored by the names of the women whose names are attributed to these poems, what about the single, female-authored play from this time period—the *Kaumudīmahotsava*—whose author's name appears to have been eaten by a worm? Was this person Vijjakā, our brash poet who chastises Daṇḍin? Or could it be someone else? The only way to answer this question in lieu of a full authorial attribution, I would argue, is to compare their authorial voice and style. With this aim in mind, this thesis will conduct a close reading of the two individual sets of texts—the poems of Vijjakā and the *Kaumudīmahotsava*. I will utilize a text-centered approach to individual women's writing, breaking from current trends in the scholarship of classical Sanskrit women poets which have

emphasized reading women's works collectively and through pre-conceived notions of what kind of poetry women write. Both the works of Vijjakā and the *Kaumudīmahotsava* show a close engagement with classical (male-dominated) Sanskrit literary conventions, such that in the end these women's texts remain interpretable by the classical *sahṛdaya*—the ideal literary connoisseur of classical Sanskrit literature. In the following section of this chapter I will give an overview of prior scholarship on classical Sanskrit women poets, setting my overall argument into dialogue with ongoing debates and subsequently, I will outline my interpretive frameworks. In Chapter Two I will focus on a close reading of Vijjakā's poems while Chapter Three focuses on the *Kaumudīmahotsava*. In each chapter I will begin with a discussion of who the author was and what we know about the author, and then move on to a close reading centered around questions of style, subjectivity, and authorial voice. Finally, in the concluding section of my thesis I will give a short comparison of Vijjakā's writing style to that of the author of this play and explain, in more detail, why I do not think these works were written by the same writer.

## 1.2 Women's Sanskrit Literary Production 2nd Century-13th Century:

Women's participation in literary production in the classical and early medieval periods is largely ambiguous. Early sources like the *Kāmasūtra* (Treatise on Pleasure, early centuries CE), indicate that courtesans were linked to *goṣṭhīs* (learned gatherings) where men would congregate to perform, listen to, and discuss poetry and literature composed in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages:

veśyābhavane sabhāyām anyatamasyodavasite vā  
samānavidyābuddhiśīlavittavayasām saha veśyābhir anurūpair ālāpair āsanabandho  
goṣṭhī | (Durgāprasāda 1900: 53)

A learned gathering (*goṣṭhī*) is held by men of similar age, wealth, disposition, and knowledge in either the house of a courtesan, the court assembly, or at a house of another, and speak of suitable matters with the accompaniment of courtesans.  
(Translation my own).

That these *goṣṭhīs* could take place a courtesan's house, at a political court, or at a private home suggests at least that some kinds of women would have had exposure to *kāvya*. Discussing the place and role of the courtesan in urban literary practices around the *goṣṭhīs*, Sanjay Gautam suggests

that the courtesan was the ideal host of the goṣṭhī (2016: 190). She was not only the sexual partner of the nāgaraka (the dandy) but also the source of his education in the fields of arts and aesthetics due to her cultured learning (2016: 190). There is ample evidence that courtesans throughout the first millennium were highly educated. In the *Kuṭṭaṇimata* (“The Courtesan’s Counsel”, 8<sup>th</sup> cent.), for example, courtesans are said to be trained in the *Kāmasūtra* and other texts on erotics, as well as Bhārata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* (“Treatise on Dramaturgy,” early centuries CE) However, despite their learned involvements, there is no clear evidence that courtesans were composing their own poetry at these literary gatherings.

Clearer evidence of women’s participation in literary production is found, however, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the comments of Rājaśekhara’s *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (Analysis of Literature, 10<sup>th</sup> cent.) and Bhoja’s *Śṛīgāraprakāśa* (Light on Passion, 1050 CE). In the tenth chapter of his *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* —dedicated to the daily routines of poets and duties of kings—Rājaśekhara explains that:

puruṣavat yoṣito ‘pi kavibhaveyuh | saṃskāro hy ātmani samavaiti | na strainam  
pauruṣam vā vibhāgam apekṣate | śrūyante dṛśyante ca rājaputrya  
mahāmātyaduhitaro gaṇikāḥ kautukibhāryaś ca śāstraprahatabuddhayaḥ kavayaś ca |  
(Parashar 2000: 157)

Like men, women could also become poets. Refinement manifests in the self and does not consider a division in masculinity or femininity. It is heard and seen that princesses, daughters of nobles, courtesans, and the wives of entertainers are learned and versed in śāstra (sciences) and are poets. (Translation my own).

The use of an optative verb and the “api/also” in Rājaśekhara’s description suggests that there was some question of women’s place in literary production—almost as if someone had asked him, “What about women poets?” However, it appears that there were women in Rājaśekhara’s time participating in literary activities. Interestingly, his description provides evidence that other types of women—not just courtesans—were learned and composing poetry.

It is around this period of the 10<sup>th</sup> century that we also get the earliest mentions of specific classical Sanskrit women writers. For example, Rājaśekhara, quoted in the *Suktimuktāvali* of Jalhana, writes:



śabdārthayoḥ samo gumphaḥ pāñcālī rītir ucyate |  
śīlābhaṭṭārikāvāci bāṇoktiṣu ca sā yadi || (Krishnamacharya 1938: 47).

It's called the Pāñcālī style if there is an interweaving (gumpha) of sound and meaning similar to the speech of Śīlābhaṭṭārikā and the sayings of Bāṇa, too, (Translation my own).

ke vikaṭānitambena girāṃ gumphena rañjitāḥ |  
nindanti nijakāntānāṃ na maugdhyamadhuraṃ vacaḥ || (Krishnamacharya 1938: 47).

What men, entertained by the poetic composition belonging to Vikaṭānitambā, do not find fault in the words of their own lovers that are sweet with charm? (Translation my own).

sarasvatīva karnāṭī vijayāñkā jayaty asau |  
yā vaidarbhaḡirāṃ vāsaḥ kālidāsād anantaram || (Krishnamacharya 1938: 47).

That Vijayāñkā, the Sarasvatī of Karnataka, prevails!  
In terms of the vaidarbhi style, she comes next after Kālidāsa.<sup>1</sup> (Translation my own).

While women poets may have been few in the time of Rājaśekhara, there were clearly women whose works merited a high level of praise. Śīlā and Vijayāñkā are compared to two of the classical Sanskrit literary greats—Bāṇa and Kālidāsa. Bhoja likewise mentions women Sanskrit poets in the second chapter of his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (1025 CE). In explaining that there are people who speak Sanskrit badly and others who speak it well—like Patañjali—he concludes his examples of people who can speak good Sanskrit in saying:

yoṣid api kadācid āśritaprāgalbhyāt puṃvad vakti | (Josyer 1955: 47)

At times, even women, through recourse to boldness, speak like men. (Translation my own).

Curiously, Bhoja's passage says that people who "ought to" speak Sanskrit well—like priests—at times do not and there are also others who speak Sanskrit well, almost in spite of who they are. He

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<sup>1</sup> Literally: She is the next abode of vaidharbhi speech after Kālidāsa.

gives the example of women who prevail in Sanskrit in spite of their social identity. He therefore implies that Sanskrit is a skill one can refine and harness, regardless of one's identity. Following this statement, Bhoja gives the same verse quoted by Rājaśekhara on Vijayāṅkā. In Namisādhū's 11<sup>th</sup> century commentary on Rudraṭa's *Kāvyaḷaṅkāra* (*Ornament of Poetry*), Vikaṭānitambā is referenced:

kāle māṣam sasye māsam vadati śakāsam yaś ca sakāśam |  
uṣṭre lumpati ṣaṃ vā raṃ vā tasmai dattā vikaṭānitambā || (Chaudhuri 1939: XLVI).<sup>2</sup>

Oh fate, Vikaṭānitambā has been married off to a guy who says “maśam” (lentils) in the sense of time and “masam” (month) in the sense of a grain, and “śakāsam” instead of “sakasam” (nearby) and elides the “ṣa” and “ra” sounds in the word “uṣṭra” (camel). (Translation my own).

Amusingly, taken in conjunction with other verses describing Vikaṭānitambā's skill with Sanskrit, this verse describes how the poet's husband is incompetent in pronouncing Sanskrit. In the (1363 CE) of Śārṅgadhara, a verse attributed to Dhanadadeva praises women poets saying:

śilāvijjāmārulāmorikādyāḥ kāvyam kartum santu vijñāḥ striyo 'pi |  
vidyāṃ vettum vādino nirvajetum dātum vaktum yaḥ pravīṇaḥ sa vandyāḥ ||  
(Peterson 1888: 26).

Even women, like Śilā, Vijjā, Mārulā, Morikā and others, were skilled in writing kāvyā. One who knows knowledge, conquers in speech, and is clever in giving and speech—that person should be praised. (Translation my own)

Again, there is a notion that these women poets were skilled in writing Sanskrit literature in spite of being women, suggesting that they were a relatively small group of poets—but they thrived nonetheless. Similar to the other descriptions is the notion that skill in Sanskrit can manifest in anyone, and when it does, that genius should be praised. Overall, the picture of what has been said about women Sanskrit poets is sparse and fragmentary. We only have a small picture of who these women were and what they were writing. The poetic styles attributed to Vijayāṅkā and Śilābhaṭṭārikā

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<sup>2</sup> There is a variant version of the first line of this verse, quoted in chapter 24 of Bhoja's Śṛṅgāraprakāśa (Raghavan 1963: 833).

do not tell us much, either, about the poets and their provenance. While the vaidarbhī style is tied to south India and pañcālī to the north, the poets' fame in these styles does not necessarily suggest they were from these places. For example, Kālidāsa was famous for a vaidarbhī style (Leinhard 1984: 34-35) but appears to have been writing somewhere in the Gupta empire in north India (Vasudeva 2006: 15). While we cannot glean much information about the authors as individuals, the praise of these women poets shows a great deal of respect and admiration for their works—the comparisons of the poets to major figures of Bāṇa and Kālidāsa are not insignificant.

The identity of these classical Sanskrit women poets seems to be constrained to a group of women who had access to Sanskrit education and Sanskrit literary circles. It appears that many of the women writers known to us in the overall history of Sanskrit women poetry were aristocratic and/or tied to a learned man.<sup>3</sup> However, this definition of women who had access to Sanskrit and literary circles does not only describe noble women but also encompasses women associated with the arts (like entertainer's wives) and courtesans. There are a few names amongst these women poets which might suggest some were courtesans—for example, one well-known poet goes by the name Vikaṭānitambā (She with the massive hips).

To approach the question of what their literary production comprised is difficult to ascertain. We have only scattered sources and reference to women's work and much of these early poets survive only in citation form within anthologies and rhetorical treatises. Aside from the play called the

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<sup>3</sup> For example, there is (1) Avantīsundarī, wife of Rājaśekhara (Chaudhuri 1939: LXXIII) (2) Vijayaṅkā who declares herself the dearest of the Kaṇṇāṭṭa king in one of her preserved verses (Sternbach 1980: 438), (3) Gaṅgādevī, queen consort to King Kampana, who wrote the *Madhurāvijaya* ("The Victory of Madurai," 14<sup>th</sup> century), (4) Tirumalāmbā who wrote *Varadāmbikāpariṇaya* ("The Marriage of Varadāmbikā," 16<sup>th</sup> cent.) and who was likely a mistress of King Acyutadevarāya (5) Rāmabhadramā who wrote the *Rāghunāthābhaya* (The Prosperity of Rāghunātha," 17<sup>th</sup> cent.) and was part of King Rāghunātha's harem (Hiebert 1988: 5), (6) Sundarī and Kamalā who were the co-wives of a court-poet and minister named Ghanaśyāma, who wrote the *Camatkāratarāṅgiṇī* ("River of Wonder," 18<sup>th</sup> cent.), a commentary on Rājaśekhara's *Viddhaśālabhaṅjikā* ("The Broken Statue," c. 900) (Chaudhuri 1943: 11).

*Kūmudīmahotsava*,<sup>4</sup> the majority of surviving Sanskrit poetry from the first millennium that is attributed to women comes in the form of muktaka (free-verse). Muktaka as a genre can be defined as single-verse poems that lack context (in comparison to verses in drama) and are centered on building up “a description of a single theme” (Leinhard 1984: 71). While these verses comprise a genre of their own within earlier Sanskrit literature, later anthologies often derive their content from dramas and other literary sources in addition to individually written muktakas (Leinhard 1984: 88). Many of the anthologies that contain verses attributed to women poets belong to this latter category of anthologies,<sup>5</sup> meaning that it is nearly impossible to tell if their works were originally written as muktakas or if they are extracted from larger literary works.

### 1.3 Scholarly Views on Women Poets & their Literary Production:

The influence and importance of J.B. Chaudhuri’s 1940s series of books entitled “The Contribution of Women to Sanskrit Literature” to the study of Sanskrit women poets cannot be overstated. His work brought together many of the attestations of women’s free-floating verses from various medieval sources into a single volume, with English translations provided by Roma Chaudhuri to the Sanskrit texts that he edited. His critical notes on the Sanskrit text are quite thorough and detail a number of sources for each verse in addition to noting variations amongst sources. Additionally, Roma Chaudhuri dedicates the first section of the book to describing each poet and their writing style, and gives a brief overview of the poems attributed to them. I have been unable to find any earlier sources which try to piece together who these women authors were, making the Chaudhuri volume an extremely valuable resource for Sanskrit women poets. The Chaudhuris’ work, however, is at times problematic because (1) their opinions often appear to reflect outdated attitudes towards women, (2) they tend to censor descriptions of sexuality, (3) and Roma Chaudhuri’s translations sometimes take liberties with what is actually written in Sanskrit. First, for example, while Roma Chaudhuri describes

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<sup>4</sup> The dating and authorship of this 5-act play (nāṭaka) is highly debated and will be addressed in Chapter Three.

<sup>5</sup> Anthologies such as the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* of Śrīdharadāsa (1205 CE) and *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa (1258 CE) (Sternbach 1978: 3).

women poets' voices as being "rich with the subtle fragrance of an intense feminine heart and reflect its particular joys" (Chaudhuri 1939: LI) and while she gives high praise for some poets, overall she portrays women as being amateurish Sanskrit poets (Chaudhuri 1939: LIV).<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, the authors often balk at discussions of sexuality and have minimal commentary on poems that have erotic content. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Roma Chaudhuri's translations are inconsistent and appear to deviate markedly from the Sanskrit text. Take, for example, the following:

nāryāḥ sā ratiśūnyatā nayanayor yaddr̥ṣṭipāte sthitaḥ  
kāmi prāptaratārtha eva na bhavaty āliṅgituṃ vāñchati |  
āśleṣād api yāparam mṛgāyate dhik tām ayogyāṃ striyaṃ  
śronīgocaram āgato ratiphalaṃ prāpnoti tiryāṇ na kim || (Chaudhuri 1939: 48).

Chaudhuri's Translation:

A woman lacks attractiveness if her lover, though standing before her, is not satisfied, but wants to embrace her. Fie upon that worthless woman who wants something more than an embrace. Does not a bird get its heart's desire when it comes near its beloved one? (1939: 114).

My Translation:

A woman has a lack of sexual pleasure when a man comes into her field of vision but does not attain the goal of sex, and instead only wants to hug. But damn that improper woman, who looks for something other than just a hug—wouldn't it be weird if he got the fruits of sexual pleasure as soon as he's near your loins?

Notably, Chaudhuri attempts to erase all explicit mentions of sex within her translation of the poem, instead choosing to translate "ratiśūnyatā" (one with a lack of sexual pleasure) as one who lacks beauty, "prāptaratārtha eva na bhavaty" (one who does not have the goal of attained sex) with "is not satisfied," and "śronīgocaram āgato ratiphalaṃ prāpnoti" (one who comes to the sphere of the loins gets the fruits of sexual pleasure), with "does not a bird get its heart's desire when it comes near the

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<sup>6</sup> For example, she says: "they write for the sake of poetry writing and do not make poetry a vehicle of something else" that we can describe their verses as "lyrical rather than reflective, sentimental rather than serious, sensuous rather than intellectual, indicative rather than injunctive, lively rather than lofty" (Chaudhuri 1939: LIV).

beloved one.” It is valuable to note these issues with the Chaudhuris’ work—namely the dated assumptions of gender and translation—as there has not been much targeted, textual study Sanskrit poems attributed to classical Sanskrit women poets (13<sup>th</sup> cent. and earlier) since Chaudhuri’s time, and studies which do engage critically with these authors often do so in translations that are based on the Chaudhuris’ texts and translations.

There have been a handful of studies on women poets by various scholars after Chaudhuri’s book. Shakuntala Rao Sastri dedicates a book to the study of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* and discusses the authorship of the play, conjecturing that Vijjakā is the author of the play (1952: 9). She does not discuss other Sanskrit women poets and the emphasis of her work is on giving an extensive technical description of the play. Vaishali Trivedi and Julie Hiebert have worked on Sanskrit women poets, focusing primarily on poets from a later period. Trivedi mentions some classical Sanskrit women poets but her information is descriptive and largely draws on Chaudhuri’s book.<sup>7</sup> Hiebert mentions women poets from earlier periods and points out issues in the scholarship of their works to emphasize the quality of the works from her period of study. She notes that “the short, erotic verses attributed to courtesans in poetic anthologies are indistinguishable from most men’s works on similar themes. All other texts attributed to women are treated as anomalies, intermittently appearing from various regions of the Indian sub-continent” (1988:4). Additionally, a collection of papers on Sanskrit women writers have been published in the *Kavayitri-Kaṇṭhābharaṇam* (2000). Much of the text is concerned with modern Sanskrit women writers, but there is a small section, in English and Hindi, dedicated to women poets and classical literature. However, the emphasis in these chapters is on description rather than analysis, and remains largely a list of the works of women Sanskrit poets.<sup>8</sup>

Classical Sanskrit women writers tend to have been side-lined or unmentioned in many discussions of women’s writing from the past century. In the 1990s, Susie Tharu and Ke Lalita

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<sup>7</sup> See Trivedi for her coverage of Classical-Medieval Sanskrit women poets (2003: 5-14).

<sup>8</sup> The verses listed in this book appear to have been collected from a much later anthology and sometimes show significantly different variations in verses. Take for example verse 1 of Vijjakā in the *Kavayitri-Kaṇṭhābharaṇam* (2000: 85) and verse 118 in J.B. Chaudhuri’s *Sanskrit Poetesses* (1939: 50).

published a multivolume book series entitled, *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the Present*. While there is a significant amount of work touched upon, the series fails to mention any Sanskrit works. Their series starts with the *Therīgāthā* (Songs of the Nuns), which is preserved in Pāli and dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Tharu and Lalita 1991: vii). The series then jumps to the poetry of Sangam Tamil poets of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and then moves to later medieval vernacular writers, focusing on Kannada and Marathi from the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries (Tharu and Lalita 1991: vii-iii). There is a similar picture of women's writing—both secular and devotional—in Mandakranta Bose's *Women in the Hindu Tradition*: she, too, briefly discusses the Pāli *Therīgāthā*, jumps to the Tamil Sangam poets, and then moves on to medieval vernacular writers (2010: 7-8). I point to these two sources here not to criticize the lack of Sanskrit women poets in their accounts, but point to a general trend where analysis of premodern South Asian women's writings has focused on non-Sanskrit languages.

The identity and the literary production of these women Sanskrit poets has been taken up recently by Supriya Banik Pal, in her 2009 article "Some Women Writers and their Works in Classical Sanskrit Literature," and Shalini Shah, in her 2008 article "Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE" and her 2009 book "Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature: Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries." Supriya Banik Pal and Shalini Shah and both work largely in translation, drawing heavily from the Chaudhuri book. Pal repeats what has been said by Chaudhuri about a handful of women authors like Vijjākā and Śīlābhaṭṭārikā and focuses on showing readers what women poets have written. For example, she prefaces Vijjā's poem describing a tree with: "Vijjā portrays the necessity of conservation of plants and trees..." (2010: 153). In another case she describes how Vijjā, "like many poets in the Sanskrit literary tradition" describe the rainy season and explains how she participates in writing about "a traditional concept in Sanskrit literature" where the rain figures as a tormentor for an estranged lover—but she does not give us the poem, nor does she discuss what this engagement with convention might mean for women poets. Pal concludes her paper, however, with some analytical comments on what constituted women's literary production in ancient India and provides a new perspective. She suggests that society preferred male poets, which meant that women were discouraged from writing lengthy literary works like epic and drama, and

therefore “specialized in miniature forms such as individual poems or small clusters of verses”—referring here to the *muktaka* (free-floating verse) genre (2010: 158). Pal also argues that women’s poetry articulates an aesthetic that differs from that of normative (male-oriented) Sanskrit literary theory through their verses on love—namely, they depict freer love—and that their verses were memorable because they recognized “reader’s demand for freer depictions of love and passion” (2010: 158). Pal explains that “Sanskrit literary theory frowned on representations of free love outside of marriage bonds in court epics and drama” and that “traditional theorists nearly always favored the representation of love within marriage, establishing the view that while love arises from the body and its physical dimension, it should ultimately be transformed into spiritual love” (2009: 158). Overall, she draws a distinction between women’s poetry and a larger Sanskrit literary culture, saying that the “the boldness with which women poets “addressed the passions of the body testifies to their untrammelled freedom from restrictions of various kinds, including state-supported orthodox literary theory” (2010: 158). Pal’s picture of women’s literary production is that of writing on the fringes, separate—but free—from orthodox literature production.

Arguably the most analytical scholarship on early women’s poetry comes from Shalini Shah’s recent work spanning a 2008 article “Poetesses in Classical Sanskrit Literature: 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE,” and larger book *Love, Eroticism and Female Sexuality in Classical Sanskrit Literature: Seventh-Thirteenth Centuries* (2009). She argues that there are two gendered traditions within the Prakrit and Sanskrit literary worlds: a feminine “prema” literary tradition and a masculine “śṛṅgārī” tradition (Shah 2009: 163). The prema tradition, she argues, is a love tradition which emphasizes mutuality and reciprocity in relationships, a decidedly feminine sentiment (Shah 2009: 166). The śṛṅgārī tradition, on the other hand, is a tradition of objectification and unbalanced power arrangements which are dominated by the male gaze and objectification of women (Shah 2009: 165). While she argues that these traditions are gendered, they are by no means limited to writers of one gender—indeed she argues that Bhavabhūti and Jayadeva should be categorized as participating in the “prema” tradition (2009: 167). Her justification for why women’s works should be read in the feminine tradition relies on genre, topic, and voice. She asserts that there is no evidence of women writing anything other than



free-floating verse (muktaka) during this period of literary production which means that we cannot consider these poems as courtly śṛṅgārī poetry like other examples found in anthologies (2009: 167). Furthermore, she argues that women wrote primarily about the topic of love (2009: 167). And finally, she argues that female articulations of desire can be taken as female voices with the implication that female voices within the poems are women's authorial voices in the real world (2009: 168). While Shah's analysis of the gendered dynamics of Sanskrit poetry is valid and much needed, an analysis of the texts of Vijjakā and the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* (to be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) reveals a slightly more complex situation for these two women poets.

#### 1.4 An Alternative Aesthetic: Shah's "Prema" vs Śṛṅgāra

At the basis of Shalini Shah's argument, and placement of women authors works into a prema tradition, is the idea that there are two binary traditions within early Sanskrit literature: a prema (love) tradition and a śṛṅgārī (erotic) tradition (2009: 163). The prema tradition, as defined by Shah, is a tradition which deals primarily with love as represented by "reciprocity and emotions in sexual relations." (2009: 167) This tradition is ultimately concerned with balance in the depiction and expression of heterosexual coupling in poetry and is distinctively feminine (2009: 167). In contrast, she defines the śṛṅgārī tradition as being a tradition of the erotic objectification of women through a male gaze, which consequently denied female authorial voices (2009: 169). Having made her case for a binary tradition, Shah argues that classical women authors (7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century), whose works appear in medieval Sanskrit poetry anthologies, belong solely to the "prema" tradition.

Shah begins by trying to situate the poems of women within the context of genre and asks us to consider women's poetry as a category of its own because they are difficult to contextualize. She notes that these women's verses could not have been taken from any specific kāvya work, assuming that because we have no surviving works of mahākāvya or drama written by women from this period<sup>9</sup> and that we cannot link any of these verses to specific literary works, that women did not write kāvya

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<sup>9</sup> The *Kaumudīmahotsava* being an exception, in our case.

(167). On the other hand, it is possible that some women's muktakas could, actually, derive from dramas that are no longer extant. For example, A.K. Warder notes that the use of āryā metre in the case of one of Vijjakā's poems presents the possibility that it came from a play (1989 p. 426). Overall, Shah argues that it is difficult to pinpoint the genre of women's verses, stating that "if we treat them like the other verses of anthologies, as śṛṅgārī poetry of courtly origin, that does not explain why we should place them within the prema tradition at all." (2009: 167). While it is potentially valuable to consider the implications of two separate traditions within the world of classical kāvya, it creates a double-bind for women authors: What would it mean if women authors were a part of one tradition or the other, and what would their position then be with regard to their male counterparts? Is there the possibility to be a poet of both śṛṅgārī and prema traditions and do they have to be in binary opposition to each other in practice?

Part of Shah's argument that women poets participated in a "prema" tradition, as compared to a śṛṅgārī one, is based on the specific topics they seemed to have written of in the first millennium. She explains that women's poetry is predominantly concerned with love, an observation made already by early Indological scholarship, and often in a pejorative way. Dasgupta and De, for example, felt that women's Sanskrit verses are "...mostly dainty trifles, concerned with lightly erotic topics, in the conventional embroidery of romantic fancy. Almost all the women-poets are occupied with the theme of love; and even where the verse is descriptive, there is most often an erotic implication" (Dasgupta 1947: 416). This notion that women are primarily concerned with love, and that their poetry is a reflection of this, is a dated notion of gender which has its roots in a Victorian trivialization of women's lives as being completely centered around love. Aside from their overt misogyny, their statements are misleading because women did write about topics other than love and many men wrote about love. Take for example, the following verse of Vijjakā praising a King:

yaśaḥputram deva tvadasilatikā 'bhūt samare  
samīras taddhūlipaṭalapāṭarāśiṃ vikirati |  
śivā gāyantyuccair naṭati ca kabandhāvalir abhūd  
arātīnām mokṣaḥ sapadi bhavabandhavyatikarāt || (Chaudhuri 1939: 43).

Hey King, in war the blade of your sword was born to a son called fame. The wind scattered about heaps of cloth and clouds of dust from it. The jackals sang loudly and a row of headless trunks danced about. From contact with the fetters of life, the liberation of your enemies came about instantly! (Translation my own).

The verse is not about love but the glorification of the king, utilizing grotesque images like the dancing row of the enemies' headless torsos. Of the 29 poems Chaudhuri attributes to Vijjakā, 12 poems deal with love and among those, many would fall under Shah's definition of śṛṅgārī poetry. Additionally, most anthologies contain an abundance of love poetry written by men. For example, take the following verse related by a cloud to the wife of a yakṣa (a kind of demi-god being) who has been separated from his wife in Kālidāsa's *Meghādūta* ("The Cloud Messenger"):

When I manage to find you  
in the visions of my dreams  
and stretch my arms into space  
in the hope of a tight embrace,  
it is from none-other than the watching earth-spirits  
that teardrops as big as pearls  
rain down on the trees' sprouting leaves (Mallinson 2006: 93).

The beauty and tenderness of many of Kālidāsa's poems like the one here, is but one example among many of men's ability to not only focus on love as a poetic topic but also write with the sort of "prema" aesthetic described by Shah.

The question of women's authorial voice vs. poetic voice is another aspect of Shah's analysis worth closer consideration. She tends to assume that women Sanskrit poets composed poetry that directly reflected their own emotions and feelings. She conflates the subject ("aham/I") or object ("sā/she"—third person) of the poem with the poets themselves. It is valid to consider articulations of female desire as female voices, but to assume that female poetic voices equal female authorial voices is problematic as anyone can take on female voices in writing. For example, take a verse from

Govardhana's 12<sup>th</sup> century anthology, *Seven Hundred Elegant Verses*, which takes on the voice of a chastising wife:

You stupid man! You give pleasure to the young woman of someone else, but your own wife you make merely serve you: the moon embraces all quarters but causes his own stone to dissolve in water. (Hardy 2009: 107)

A female voice is a voice characterized by what is signified as female and as Shah has explained, there are a number of different female voices within Sanskrit literature. Considering the prevalence of character typologies—among which are the various *nāyikās* (female lovers or heroines)—it might be more productive to consider how gender is constructed and navigated within these tropes rather than assuming they are women's voices outright.

### 1.5 Building on Tradition:

While I believe Shah's consideration of a distinction between love and the erotic important, I find the word "tradition" is too rigid to be particularly useful. There are poets who write poetry that could fit in either or definition of her *śṛṅgāra/prema* divide. Although her discussion of *prema* and *śṛṅgāra* does raise important concerns for the study of gender in Sanskrit studies, it becomes problematic in discussing women Sanskrit poets because it denies them agency as public or professional writers, since, in her analytic model, women could only write "for themselves." (2009: 168)

Overall, prior scholarship falls into three trends: (1) Women's poetry is not taken as a serious subject of study and dismissed as feminine simplicity (2) or else when taken seriously, are shown to comprise a tradition apart. Both Pal and Shah's analyses of women's poetry argue that women have a markedly different aesthetic than their male counterparts and attribute this difference to the reason that they were not writing for a larger audience than themselves. Both scholars appear to assume that because women poets were uncommon, women wrote largely outside of mainstream courtly literary

circles and neither have considered the possibility that women were writing for the same audiences as their male counterparts. While there is little evidence of women writing in goṣṭhīs, some women were present and we have no reason not to doubt that women could participate in other ways. Could, for example, a poet write a text which then circulated around the court? Not all literary production has to be publically facilitated. Women's participation in literary production must have been very small and constrained—similar to what Shah has said previously. Rājasēkhara's quote "like men, women *too* could be poets" suggests that at his time women poets were not common. However, while women's literary production was constrained to a few well-educated women, there is textual evidence within the surviving poems to suggest that certain women were participating in mainstream literary production in similar ways that male poets did—namely, writing Sanskrit works to be read by a refined, educated, and courtly audience.

In order to develop this argument, I will conduct a close reading of the works of individual writers—specifically, Vijjakā's poems (Chapter 2) and the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, a play written by a woman poet (Chapter 3). In conducting this close reading, I will provide new translations of the original Sanskrit texts. Notably, Pal and Shah have relied on the Sanskrit translations of other scholars—mostly Chaudhuri—in their analyses and I hope to avoid some of the issues with Chaudhuri's text by relying on the Sanskrit originals. Additionally, their work has focused on women writers as a whole and this notion of a "tradition" obscures the individual writer. In our case, all classical Sanskrit women poets (save the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*) have been lumped together in previous analyses in a way that strips them of their individuality.

As I have said before, Shah's discussion of a prema and śṛṅgāra divide is useful but perhaps too rigid if it necessitates the classification of poets as belonging to either/or tradition. The basis for her distinction between the two lies in subjectivity and objectivity—where a prema tradition allows for both sexes to be subjects of a poem and where the śṛṅgāra tradition objectifies the feminine other. To get at Shah's dynamic without having to pre-emptively separate the texts of an author, the first aim of my analysis will be centered on the creation of subjectivity and objectivity within the poetry of these

two poets. My second aim lies in analyzing these works for style and engagement with tropes and conventions of classical Sanskrit literature and literary theory. In the following section, I will set the basis for how I will discuss convention and authorial participation in “mainstream” literary practices. Specifically highlighting the idea of the “sahṛdaya” (connoisseur) and notions of what this reader knew and expected to encounter in literature.

## 1.6 Life Imitates Art: Rasa & the Rest

At the heart of my analysis is the literary connoisseur. Over the course of Sanskrit aesthetic theory were various definitions of what a connoisseur was. The first was the *prekṣaka*, as discussed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni (c. 300 CE). Bharata explains that the ideal spectator:

Familiar with words and metres, learned in the various śāstras [law, government, erotics, ect.]: such are the spectators of drama. Possessing refined organs of sense, skilled in logical thought, capable of recognizing (aesthetic) defects, having an emotional [or ‘passionate,’ *anurāgin*] temperament: such is the spectator of drama. One who feels happiness at the portrayal of happiness, grief at the portrayal of grief, misery at the portrayal of misery, such is the spectator of drama. (Goodwin 1998: xi).

Later at the end of the millennium, Abhinavagupta (c. 1000 CE) defines the connoisseur—the *rasika* or *sahṛdaya*—as:

One who shares in the concordance of heart (*hṛdayasaṃvāda*), ie. one who has the capacity to become one with (*tanmayībhavana*) what the poet depicts in a mirror-like mind made clear by the constant cultivation of and practice with poetry. (Goodwin 1998: xi).

Overall, the *sahṛdaya* is not just any reader of literature but one who is trained to respond and in a sophisticated way. The notion of the connoisseur is important to us for two key reasons. Firstly, that there is an ideal connoisseur of literature within Sanskrit literary aesthetics—a view informed and shared with courtly, educated spheres—helps define, and inform us, of what a connoisseur would be expected to know. In seeing how the field of Sanskrit aesthetics has self-defined its target audience,

we can assume that writers tailoring their writing to this type of audience—informed of certain conventions and mindsets—is suggestive of writing for an audience that values this ideal. It is through this means that I will argue that the poets Vijjakā and the author of the Kaumudīmahotsava were writing for courtly, educated audiences.

But secondly, and perhaps most importantly, there is an important relationship between the sahr̥daya (literary connoisseur), the nāgaraka (the dandy/man about town), and the nāyaka (the hero of drama), all of whom are ideal figures within the discourses of kāvya- and kāmāśāstra (the sciences of literature and pleasure). Goodwin draws us to the fact that Sanskrit drama developed and thrived in the court and city “with its affects and manneristic codes” and suggests that the worlds of ideals are more than just ideals but also inform the real worlds for which these texts were written in and about (1988: xv). Daud Ali discusses this dynamic at length in chapter five of his book *Courtly Culture: Courtly Life in Early Medieval India*. Ali explains that “men and women were expected to understand the conventions and themes of drama, even when they were stylized, for the drama presented a picture of their own society with the totality of its situations” and that “audiences were to empathize with the characters in the drama,” through which the audience would be able to relate to the characters of drama (2002: 190-91). For Ali, drama and poetry was integral to the “self-styled emotional sophistication” at court and the nāyaka—the focal character on stage—became “the idealised projection of the emotional concerns of the sahr̥daya community” (2002: 200-1). Overall, the actions and relationships depicted in poetry and drama are not simply concerns for the “story world,” nor are they solely concerns for aesthetic theorists and writers. The world of literature and the aesthetics of Sanskrit literature played into and contributed to a court idiom of being and feeling, engaging with the real world of its patrons.

The importance of women’s voices in classical Sanskrit kāvya is made all the more important in light of this discussion. In a space of relationships and aspirations for an ideal society, spaces for women to articulate their own position within the world of classical Sanskrit kāvya was rare—however, some women’s voices found spaces for themselves and have come down to us through time.

If the nāyaka was at the centre of the dramatic world as an ideal male, how did women claim space in this discourse and what did they say about the nāyaka (hero), the nāyikā (heroine), and their various, typified, idealized relationships? My dual focus on subjectivity/objectivity and style and aesthetics in chapters 2 and 3 will try to get at this question.

## Rasa Theory

One of the major concerns of the literary connoisseur (prekṣaka/sahṛdaya/rasika) lay in the discernment of rasa. In the following section I will give a brief overview of rasa theory from its first articulation in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra until the "aesthetic revolution" of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's theorization (Pollock 2016: 25). I focus here on only a handful of theorists whose ideas detailed a significant shift in the theorizing of rasa.<sup>10</sup>

### Bharata (c. 300)

The earliest discussions of rasa begin in the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata Muni (c. 300), a vast and comprehensive text on the staging of drama (Pollock 2016: 151). In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra introduces the concept of rasa for the first time. Bharata creates an analogy between rasa and flavour, explaining that rasa is something to be savoured (Pollock 2016: 158). Just as food connoisseurs are able to appreciate the taste of specially prepared food, so too, are literary connoisseurs able to savour rasa within a literary work. Bharata articulates that rasa is central to the dramatic production and that the focus or goal of the dramatic piece to be "rasavat," or filled with rasa. Using the analogy of how food requires flavour in order to be tasted, Bharata says that no dramatic work "will succeed without attention to rasa" (Pollock 2016: 151). Given the importance of rasa, what exactly *is* rasa? Rasa, we can generally define as 'aestheticized' or 'literary emotion,' of which there are 8 main kinds: śṛṅgāra (the erotic), vīra (the heroic), karuṇa (the pathetic), adbhuta (the wonderful), raudra (the wrathful), hāsyā

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<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed treatment of the history of rasa theory, see Sheldon Pollock's *Rasa Reader*, and Lawrence McCrea's dissertation "The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir" for Abhinavagupta's contribution to aesthetics.



(the comic), bhayānaka (the fearsome), and bibhatsa (the disgusting) (Cuneo 53). For Bharata, rasa is created via a combination of factors that gave rise to something that could be savoured by the audience of a dramatic production:

na hi rasād ṛte kaścid arthaḥ pravartate | tatra vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicārisaṃyogād  
rasaṇiṣpattiḥ | (Gosh 1967: 82).

No work proceeds without rasa. Wherein rasa arises from the union of vibhāvas (determinants) anubhāvas (reactions), and vyabhicāribhāvas (transitory states). (Translation my own).

How rasa is produced from these three factors may perhaps be best illustrated through an example. Take the following dramatic verse from the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, which contributes to the development of śṛṅgāra rasa in Act 1 of the play. Prince Kalyāṇavarman bids farewell to his new paramour, Kīrtimatī, expressing his growing feelings for her:

gatā priyā prasnutacittarāgair  
ārecitabhrūlalitairapāñaiḥ |  
karṣatyaśau mānasamaśmadīyaṃ  
mayi svamātmānamutārpayantī || (Sastri 1952: 14).

My beloved is gone with side-long glances that are filled with love from her oozing heart and playful with wide-open brows. She drags away my heart, could it be that she is placing herself in me? (Translation my own).

The vibhāvas for this verse are the subject and object of a rasa and in the case of śṛṅgāra rasa, would be the two lovers—Kalyāṇavarman and Kīrtimatī—who are the basis for the rasa to arise (Cuneo 2013: 54). The anubhāvas (reactions) would then be the effects of the emotion which can comprise, in the case of śṛṅgāra rasa, sidelong glances, and voluntary and involuntary responses—like declarations of feelings or horripilation, ect. (Cuneo 2013: 54). In this example, the anubhāvas would comprise the princess's side-long glances and open eyebrows, as well as the prince's declaration of feelings, all of which would be acted out on the stage. Finally, the vyabhicāribhāvas (transitory states)

are secondary emotions that would lead the dominant emotion of a rasa (Pollock 2016: 167). Here we might see the actor performing secondary emotions like recollection, anxiety, or joy in order to build up śṛṅgāra rasa (Keith 1954: 315).

Overall, for Bharata, rasa was a necessary element within a dramatic production that came into being from a variety of factors and constituted one of the many formal features of drama. Unlike rasa as theorized in later periods, rasa appears to be located in the text or actor of the drama.<sup>11</sup>

### **Bhāmaha (c. 650 CE) & Daṇḍin (c. 700 CE)**

Following Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, rasa moved from the domain of drama (dṛṣya-kāvya "literature to be seen") to verbal poetry (śrāvya-kāvya "literature to be heard"). For both of these theorists, rasa is found in three figures of speech: the "affectionate utterance" (preyas), the "rasa-laden statement" (rasavat), and the "haughty declaration" (ūrjasvin). An affectionate utterance is "...an expression of heightened affection" and the haughty declaration occurs when the "speaker's ego is prominent" (Pollock 2016: 180). However, most prominent amongst these figures was the rasa-laden statement within which a specific rasa has fully developed (Pollock 2016: 182). Ratnaśrījñāna, a commentator of Daṇḍin, explains that this statement "a particular emotion wherein rasa "is produced by the requisite foundational and stimulant factors and made known by the requisite reactions," (Pollock 2016: 182), closely resembling Bharata's explanation of rasa. Like Bharata too, rasa for Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin is located in the text as a formal figure within the literary work (Pollock 2016: 177).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Sheldon Pollock's *Rasa Reader*, pg. 154 for further discussion.

<sup>12</sup> See McCrea for further discussion (1998: 49-52).

### **Ānandavardhana (c. 850 CE)**

Ānandavardhana's theorization restructured rasa's role within literary works. Under Ānanda's conceptualization, rasa moved from being another poetic element within literature to the organizing principle for the use of poetic figures and elements within a literary work (McCrea 1998: 63). Significantly, Ānanda theorized that rasa was manifested in a work through the means of dhvani (suggestion, resonance), where the revelation of some meaning is not directly stated (McCrea 1998: 121-23), which differed from the normal modes of communication like abhidhā (denotation) and lakṣaṇā (connotation) (Sathaye, 2010: 361). Overall, Ānanda understood literary works as being geared toward a single goal which was to convey particular rasas to the audience of a literary work (McCrea 1998: 120), signifying that rasa was still located within the text—as with Bhārata, Bhāmaha, and Daṇḍin.

### **Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (c. 900 CE)**

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century under the theorization of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, rasa underwent a major revolution where it was no longer thought of as a feature of a text but an experience facilitated through the reader. For Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, rasa is located neither in the reader, nor the literary work (Pollock 2016: 377). Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka argues that connoisseurs undergo a literary experience which begins (1) in encountering literary language (and its various aesthetic elements) which is then (2) actualized through a process of commonization (sādhāraṇī-karaṇa). In this process, the specifics of the literary world are made common so that the reader may relate to the text (Pollock 2016: 383), where “the emotions represented in art are felt by the connoisseurs as ‘generalized’ or ‘universalized’, namely as deprived of any spatial or temporal qualifications” (Cuneo 2013: 63). Once these aesthetic elements have been commonized, (3) experientialization (bhāvanā)—the savoring of rasa or literary affect—is able to occur (Pollock 2016: 365-72). For Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, rasa is located neither in the reader, nor the literary work (Pollock 2016: 377). He argues that rasa within the reader would have to be experienced as real emotion, and therefore could not be aesthetic emotion, and further argues that if rasa was located in someone else—like a literary work—the reader would be indifferent and therefore unable

to access rasa (Pollock 2016: 377). Rasa therefore is not a thing that is created or “manifested,” rather, it is an experience which comes into being (Pollock 2016: 377). Take for example, a hypothetical literary work in which Rāma sees Sītā and expresses his love for her. Rasa, if it was located in the reader, would necessarily entail that Rāma’s experiencing of love for Sītā prompts the reader to experience love for Sītā too, which is not what happens in literary experience (Pollock 2016: 374-5). If rasa was located, however, solely within the literary work, the reader would be unable to access rasa and therefore have no affective response to the literary work (Pollock 2016: 375). Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s solution to this theoretical issue is the process of commonalization which enables the reader to imagine the aesthetic elements to be connected to his or her self, and therefore enjoy the rasa of the text (Pollock 2016: 383). Overall, the result of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s literary experience allows the reader to become a subject of a literary text, displacing rasa from the literary work—as in prior theorization—and into the literary connoisseur (Pollock 2016: 366).

## Chapter 2: Vijjakā

In the course of this chapter I will introduce the poet Vijjakā, after which I will begin a targeted close reading of Vijjakā's works. I pay close attention to subjectivity, style, and overall meaning within the poem. In conducting this close reading, I will argue that Vijjakā's style is concerned with the conventions of Classical Sanskrit poetry but while her poetry utilizes convention, she maintains her own voice. Specifically, she writes conventional poetry centered around the figure of the virahiṇī (lovelorn woman), but also has other authorial aims. She also writes about sambhoga śṛṅgāra (love in union) which focuses not on love or sex, but in the humor of these situations. Finally, she also discusses love and sex through a set of poems through a conversational frame, and in these poems, rather than giving an emotion for her readers to "taste," she leaves them ambiguous, prompting a reflective response from the reader. Overall, a close analysis will try to reveal Vijjakā's authorial voice with respect to love poems.

### 2.1 Vijjakā the Poet

Vijjakā is known to us through a variety of names within the various anthologies and rhetorical works in which her poems are found: Vidyā(ka), Vijjā, Vijā, Vijjakā, Vijayakā, Vijjaka(kā), Bijjaka(kā), Bijjāka, Bijākā, Bijjikā, Vijjāka, Vijjaka, Bijjaka (Chaudhuri 1940: XXXVIII; Sternbach 1980: 446). Vijjakā is a Prakrit derivative of the feminine Sanskrit name Vidyā (Warder 1994: 421) Because these are all variations of the same name, it is generally assumed that these works all belong to a single author.<sup>13</sup> As Sanskrit is a gendered language, the "ā" at the end of the name tells us that it is a woman's name. In addition to these poems attributed to Vijjakā (and her variations), there are a number of other poems and authorial names associated with her. A woman poet from Karnataka named Vijayāṅkā is mentioned by Rājaśekhara as being an abode of vaidarbha diction from the time of Kālidāsa and is argued to be the same poet as Vijjakā by Shakuntala Sastri (1952: 10). Sastri has also argued that Vijjakā is the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* (1952: 9); however, as I will discuss in

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<sup>13</sup> See Sternbach for an explanation of the various forms of her name as they appear in manuscripts (1980: 446).

Chapter Three, this identification is open to debate, and I tend to conclude that they are separate authors.

In light of the fragmentary state of Vijjakā's works, it is difficult to say anything certain about the author herself. The lower limit of her dating, on the basis of her poem that references Daṇḍin, cannot be earlier than the 7th century (Chaudhuri 1942: XXXVIII). For her upper limit, the earliest reference to one of her poems is in Makula Bhaṭṭa's *Abhidhāvr̥ttimāṭrkā* which dates to the late 9th century (Chaudhuri 1942 XXXVIII). Vijjā therefore can confidently be dated to the 7-9<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>14</sup>

It is much more difficult to speak about where Vijjā may have lived. If we take Vijayāṅkā to be in reference to Vijjakā, then we can say that she was from Karnataka on the basis of Rājaśekhara's description of the poet (Sastri 1952: 10). However, we may also guess from early sources that she was writing from north India generally, and Kashmir more specifically. The earliest attestations of her works are preserved in Makula Bhaṭṭa's *Abhidhāvr̥ttimāṭrkā* (9<sup>th</sup> cent. Kashmir; 1 poem), Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* (c. 900 CE, Kannauj; 2 poems), the *Kāvyaprakāśa* of Mammaṭa (1050 CE Kashmir; 2 poems), and the *Kavīndravacanasaṃucaya*<sup>15</sup> of Vidyākara (1100-1130 CE Kashmir; 2 poems). While we might speculate that Vijjā was writing in Kashmir due to the earliest attestations of her work, we actually see the bulk of her poetry preserved in anthologies compiled elsewhere. It isn't until the *Saduktikarṇāmr̥ta* of Śrīdharadāsa (compiled 1205 CE; Bengal)<sup>16</sup> and the *Sūktimuktāvali* of Bhagadatta Jalhaṇa (compiled 1258 CE; South India)<sup>17</sup> that we find the bulk of Vijjā's verses—both newly and previously attested.

Overall, Vijjakā is largely unknown to us and the only knowledge we have of her is her rough dating (7th-9th centuries) and voice from her remaining poems. I will refer to her as Vijjakā as that is the name she gives us in her poem concerning Daṇḍin (see the introduction to Chapter 1). I will

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<sup>14</sup> Sternbach gives a slightly more specific dating of 650 CE- 850 CE (1980: 444).

<sup>15</sup> This is a fragment of Vidyākara's larger anthology, the *Subhāṣitaratnakośa* (Sternbach 1978: 3).

<sup>16</sup> See Sternbach for location and date of the author (1974: 16).

<sup>17</sup> See Sternbach location and date of the author (1974: 17). Krishnamacariar and Srinivasachariar give a more detailed account of the author Jalhaṇa (1989: 385).

consider any poem that bears a “Vijjakā” signature—or derivative forms—as being a poem of Vijjakā’s. Additionally, for the poems analysed within this chapter, I derive the Sanskrit texts from the Chaudhuris’ “Sanskrit Poetesses” (1939).

## 2.2 Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra and Virahinīs—Separation and Lovelorn Women

Vipralambha śṛṅgāra is one type of love poetry which deals with the separation of the lovers and comprises many different subjectivities—the subject can be a woman or a man, or even a third-person observer. For example, in the *Vikramorvaśīya* of Kālidāsa, we read vipralambha śṛṅgāra within the verses of Purūravas as he laments the loss of Urvaśī. At the end of Act 3 Chitralekhā explains that Purūravas has gone out of his mind, searching for signs of Urvaśī’s presence within the garden. Act 4 is dedicated to his maddened actions and in his longing, and in one case, he chastises some geese, saying:

If you didn’t see her,  
on the bank of the lake,  
then where did you get  
this graceful way of walking,  
drunk on desire? You thief, you stole it  
entire. (Rao and Shulman 2009: 151).

One trope within this type of poetry is the virahinī—a lovelorn woman who is separated from her lover. Within Vijjakā’s poetry there are three poems which share a similar form that focus on the figure of the virahinī. Close analysis of these will reveal how Vidyā creates affect through the manipulation of gendered figures, the employment of tropes, and the positionality she creates around the trope of the lovelorn woman.

Consider the following verse, in which Vijjakā takes on the first-person voice of the virahinī and heightens her emotions around separation through mythological references and specific characterizations of masculinity.

devena prathamam jito 'si śaśabhṛllekhābhṛtā 'nantaram  
buddhenoddhatabuddhinā smara tataḥ kāntena pānthena me |  
tyaktvā tām bata haṃsi mām atikṛśāṃ bālām anāthām striyaṃ  
dhik tvām dhik tava pauruṣaṃ digudayaṃ dhik kāmukaṃ dik śarān ||  
(Chaudhuri 1952: 46).

You were first conquered by that god who bears the mark of the moon and after, by the Buddha with elevated perception and then, by my love—the wayfarer. Alas, having abandoned them, you harmed me—that exceedingly frail girl, a woman without a protector. Damn you! Damn your masculinity! Damn your raising, damn your bow, and damn your arrows! (Translation my own).

Here Vidyā takes on the subjectivity of an angered lovelorn woman who curses Kāmadeva, the Love God, for her condition. Her lover has managed to overcome Kāmadeva's love-arrows, as Śiva and the Buddha did, and now, having lost those battles, he has turned his eye to her. She then describes Kāmadeva's attack, her curses illustrating her sight as she watches him pick up his bow and take aim at her. Vidyā thus uses mythological imagery to draw parallels between the absent lover and his ability to overcome love's afflictions. The image of the god with the mark of the moon—Śiva—is a clear reference to the purāṇic myth of his burning of the god Kāmadeva. It is most famously recounted in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (Ingalls 2000: 58). Kāmadeva was enlisted to stir Śiva out of a state of yogic meditation and fall in love with Parvatī, so that their son could defeat the demon Tāraka. But, just as Kāmadeva unleashes one of his arrows at Śiva, his third-eye opens and let loose a blast of ascetic tapas that obliterates Kāmadeva's body.

The reference to the Buddha recounts a similar story of an ascetic figure overcoming passion: the Buddha's victory over Māra, the Buddhist equivalent of Kāmadeva (Ingalls 1965: 51; Olivelle 2008: 373). While engaged in meditation on the night before his enlightenment, Māra tries to tempt the Buddha with beautiful women, but the Buddha resists their advances and prevails over Māra. Both examples illustrate a de-erotized male subject defeating a supernatural figure embodying love and passion through ascetic practice, projecting similar qualities onto the figure of the lovelorn woman's



absent lover. Just as these two figures have turned their backs on Kāma, so too has our poetic subject's wayfaring partner.

The second half of the verse gives us a contrasting image: a lovelorn virahini who is vulnerable to the pains of Kāmadeva's arrows. Unlike the mythic men of the first half of the verse, the female subject experiences love's painful torment—both literally and figuratively. The poet makes the virahinī directly address Kāmadeva—"haṃsi mām—you're hurting me", emphasizing Kāmadeva's culpability and the pain that love causes. This verse not only places emphasis on the god's masculine power as the agent of violence and pain, but also highlights the virahinī's feminine helplessness and vulnerability. We should note that Vidyā's female subject here is *exceedingly* frail. In the Sanskrit original, she uses an ambiguous word to qualify the virahinī, calling her "anāthā". This has two possible meanings: (1) a woman without a lord, husband, or man, or (2) a woman without a protector. Her word choice here allows both sets of meanings, allowing her to simultaneously highlight the woman's state of separation from her lover and her vulnerability.

The two halves of the poem thus create a contrasting gendered dichotomy—there are the dispassioned men and an impassioned woman. In effect, this binary heightens the emotional impact of the poem. The woman is weak and helpless while the male figures are able to best Kāmadeva through emotional detachment. This image of the virahinī's weakness pulls at the reader's sympathy—especially targeting, perhaps, male readers who act in imitation of Śiva or the Buddha. The models of ascetic behavior these two men encapsulate belong to the world outside of the court or city. In the social world of the court, such detached behavior has real consequences—such as harming women emotionally. This sympathy is further enhanced in the way in which she describes Kāmadeva taking aim. In the last line of the verse she curses Kāmadeva four times: she curses him, she curses his *masculinity*, and then curses his bow and his arrows. It is important to note that she uses masculinity ("pauruṣam") specifically to describe and denounce his behaviour. Kāmadeva's almost ruthless pursuit of his target is striking and his assault on the virahinī, being associated with masculinity, and in conjunction with the detachedness of the other male figures in the poem creates a starkly critical characterization where the "masculine" is without both passion or compassion. Drawing on Shalini

Shah's description of a *śṛṅgārī* poetic, it is "lacks empathy" (Shah 2009: 163). Directly, the *virahinī*'s words curse the masculinity of Kāmadeva but indirectly, she curses the masculinity of the lover—the one who has so cruelly left her in pain. Kāmadeva is only an embodied conduit for her emotional torment—he is a personification of what her lover's absence and detachment does to her. Overall, Vijjakā highlights the gender of the lovers to dramatize the suffering of the *virahinī*, enhancing the emotional impact of the poem.

Precisely what this emotional impact is, however, is unclear. The poet's choice to take the *virahinī* as a first-person subject invites the reader to see the scene from her eyes. This use of first-person voice gives a personal quality to the poem and the use of "me/mām" highlights the fact that it is not just anyone that Kāmadeva is hurting—it is a subjective person. Regardless of the reader's own subject position, there is a direct relationship between reader and textual-subject—so that the reader must partake in the *virahinī*'s pain, whether she is female, male, with a lover, or in separation. The crux of the poem's affectual content—and the power of Vijjakā's poetry—lies in reader's being able to experience the suffering of the female figure at the hands of an emotionless male.

Vijjakā's other *virahinī* poems rely on the juxtaposition of seasons to produce emotional content. Consider the following verse:

meghair vyoma navāmbubhir vasumatī vidyullatābhir diśo  
dhārābhir gaganam vanāni kuṭajaiḥ pūrair vṛtā nimnagāḥ |  
ekāṃ ghātayitum viyogavidhurāṃ dīnāṃ varākīm striyaṃ  
prāvṛṭkāla hatāśa varṇaya kṛtaṃ mithyā kim āḍambaram || (Chaudhuri 1952: 47).

The rivers are stopped and the heavens are filled with clouds, the earth with fresh water, the quarters with vines of lightning, the sky with streams of water, the woods with kuṭaja (conessi) trees. Oh Hopeless Monsoon Season, tell me why this whole show—created in vain—was made to hurt a single, miserable, unfortunate woman, bereaved by separation? (Translation my own).

The focal point for meaning in this poem lies in its contrasting imagery. In the first half of the poem the author builds up numerous images of the lushness of the monsoon season—everywhere

water abounds. The images show that the monsoon is in full motion and therefore, indicates that it is the time for sambhoga—for love in union. Vijjakā herself explains this in another of her poems, explaining that the monsoon is “that time that is good for love-making” (poem 27, Appendix A). The second half of the poem, in contrast, shows us the virahiṇī who is struck with sorrow. Similar to the earlier verse, the virahiṇī is in a pitieous state, and the poet uses multiple descriptors to emphasize her wretched state. But in this poem, her tormentor is slightly different. It is no longer a mythic being, Kāmadeva, but the season itself, personified. Like Kāmadeva, her tormentor is cruel—as implied through the futility (“vain-ness”) of the weather. The virahiṇī knows that she is alone and does not need the season to highlight her loneliness by showing all the signs that the time for union has come. And yet, the monsoon season puts on a show for the virahiṇī. Overall, the emotional content of the verse is constructed through the suffering of the lovelorn woman who is cruelly tormented by another. It is important to note here that the virahiṇī figure is constructed as being helpless and unable to fight back against her tormentor. She is at the mercy of monsoon, who is depicted again as being cruel and without compassion.

In contrast to her first poem, the writer takes on an ambiguous subjectivity in this poem—we could read the poem as being a first-person voice of the virahiṇī or we can take it as a third-person description of her condition, where the vocative of the poem (“Oh hopeless monsoon season”) is uttered by a witness to the suffering of the lovelorn woman. If we do read the vocative as the words of the virahiṇī, her description of herself is rather generalized—she is a generic “striyāṃ/woman” and not an individual “aham/I”. The indirectness of her speech implies that the cruelty of the weather should not be done to any woman, not just this particular virahiṇī.

The second way to read the vocative is to introduce a third-actor within the poem—a voyeur. This figure draws attention to the virahiṇī’s suffering and chastises the weather. The effect of this view is to create a feeling of sympathy, it appears, as the reader takes on the viewpoint of the kind observer, regardless of their actual subject-position—whether they are male, female, lovelorn, or not. Overall, the ambiguous subjectivity of this verse produces a different relationship between the reader and the figure of the virahiṇī, in contrast to Vijjakā’s verse considered earlier.

Vidyā's third poem concerning the *virahinī* trope offers a synthesis, of sorts. It shares a similar highlighting of gender as the first poem, and a similar detachment to the second poem. It reads as follows:

sotsāhā navavāribhāraguravo muñcantu nādaṃ ghanā  
vātā vāntu kadambareṇuśabalā nṛtyantv amī barhiṇaḥ |  
magnāṃ kāntaviyogaduḥkhajaladhau dīnāṃ vilokyāṅganāṃ  
vidyut praspurasi tvam apy akarūṇā strīve 'pi tulye sati || (Chaudhuri 1939: 54).

The clouds, kinetic and heavy from the bearing of fresh water, set free a roar; the winds—spotted with the pollen of kadamba (burrflower) trees—blow about, and these peacocks dance. Oh lightning, having seen the poor woman sunk into an ocean of sorrow from separation with her lover, you pulsate without compassion despite being a woman yourself! (Translation my own).

The first half of the poem sets the scene, portraying the stormy weather of the monsoon season. Consistent with the prior two poems, the second half of the poem is a vocative statement and like the previous poem, it addresses a non-sentient entity—the lightning. What is interesting here is the comment that the lightning torments her in spite of its shared femininity. The word “vidyut” in Sanskrit is grammatically feminine and the author clearly plays with this grammatical gender. There are two possible ways to read the implication of their shared femininity. Firstly, we can read that since the lightning is *also* female, she should exercise compassion for the *virahinī*. In a sense then, the author seems to imply that women should be kind to each other. Another way to read this is to compare the figure of the *virahinī* and the lightning. Lightning is solitary in nature, striking once and rarely in a group. The lightning therefore shares a similar state of loneliness *and* femininity as the lovelorn woman. The implication of these similarities is that the lightning should be able to sympathize with the *virahinī*; however, despite their similar situations, this lightning pulsates in the sky, reminding the *virahinī* that it is the season of union. In comparing the *virahinī* to lightning on the grounds of its femininity, Vijjakā suggests that the lightning is acting outside the bounds of its prescribed gender. Like the tormentors of the first *virahinī* poem, the lightning is without compassion which is for Vijjakā, a markedly masculine characteristic in response to heartbreak.

Another similarity this poem shares with the previous one is an ambiguous subjectivity. We could again read the subject of the vocative as either the first-person narrator or a third-person voyeur who comments on the virahiṇī's situation. I lean toward the second option because of the way the lovelorn woman is described—it is a markedly impersonal description, and the structure of the vocative appears to describe a scene which suggests that the narrator is looking in. This point of view establishes a voyeuristic relationship between the reader and the virahiṇī which is different than the subject point of view in the first poem. Importantly though, this distanced perspective is no less important as the poet highlights certain aspects within this image she creates for us to see—gender, specifically. In the first poem, she highlights “pauruṣam,” masculinity,” whereas here, she highlights “strītvā,” femininity. In both cases, there is a consistent characterization with regards to masculinity where it is a lack of compassion in the first poem. Although more obliquely expressed in the third poem, Vijjakā maintains this characterization of masculinity and lack of compassion. In the lightning acts without compassion in spite of its gender which implies that the lightning acts like its gendered other—the masculine. Overall, regardless of the point of view, the reader, in all three cases, is compelled to derive affectual content through sympathy with the suffering figure of the virahiṇī. Her helplessness is consistent in all three poems, as is the idea that we, the readers of the poem, are to understand and sympathize with this helpless state.

Reading these poems, we can see a few commonalities in Vijjakā's style. Firstly, each poem relies on using multiple descriptors of the virahiṇī to emphasize her pitiful state, regardless of the subjectivity of the poem. In each case the virahiṇī is modified with three descriptors which directly illustrate her state of separation. Secondly, the poems all follow a similar structure where the first half of the poem is replete with imagery and the second half consists of a vocative calling out to her tormentor. Thirdly, the poem creates a dynamic where the virahiṇī is powerless against her compassionless tormentor—leaving her at the tormentor's mercy. Finally, gendering is highlighted in all three cases but gendered characterization is inconsistent amongst the tormentors. The virahiṇī is consistently a helpless female figure whereas her tormentors, while both male and female, are cruel.

The virahiṇī and her tormentor take on different forms but are constant in their characterization, implying that the writer paid close attention to follow certain conventions within the virahiṇī trope. Overall, Vijjakā's use of the virahiṇī and her engagement with standard images within Sanskrit love poetry demonstrates an investment with a certain aesthetic however, an analysis of the poems also reveals commentary on gender vis-à-vis the virahiṇī which makes readers simultaneously sympathize with the virahiṇī and become more attuned to ideas of gender.

### 2.3 Reading Between the Lines: Dhvani and Sambhoga

In contrast to vipralambha śṛṅgāra is sambhoga śṛṅgāra—love in union. This type of Sanskrit love poetry is concerned with the various ways that two lovers come together, and is considered the other half of love poetry. As Pollock puts it, in Sanskrit aesthetics, we may think of śṛṅgāra rasa has having two types—the “erotic enjoyed and the erotic thwarted” (Pollock 2016: 161). The poetry of Vijjakā here is just a sampling of some of her poetry that can be classified as sambhoga śṛṅgāra and I have clustered these examples around their shared reliance on a literary technique called dhvani, or suggestion. In this section of poems, we will investigate what sorts of meaning Vijjakā creates through dhvani and focus on discovering which subjectivities she writes about and how they contribute to the meaning of a poem.

Our first verse depicts a conversation between neighbours, and reads as follows:

dr̥ṣṭiṃ he prativeśini kṣaṇam ihāpy asmadgṛhe dāsyasi  
prāyeṇāsyā śiśoḥ pitā na virasāḥ kaupīrapaḥ pāsyati |  
ekākiny api yāmi satvaram itaḥ srotas tamālākulaṃ  
nīrandhrās tanum ālikhantu jaraṭhacchedā nalagranthayaḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939:44).

Hey neighbour, watch my house just here for a moment, will you? Most of the time the father of this child will not drink tasteless well-water. Although alone, I will go quickly hence to the river that is thronging with tamālā (yellow mangosteen) trees. May the thick and hard-cutting knots of reeds scratch my body!

From a very literal point of view, this poem describes a woman asking her neighbour to watch over her house while she herself, runs down to the riverside to collect fragrant river water for her husband. She then seems to relish the fact that her body will be scratched by the harsh river reeds. The subtext of the poem, however, is that this woman is running to meet her lover, under the pretense of being a devoted wife. Her exclamation concerning the reeds is not a reference to plants, but a cover-up for the love-scratches she will receive from her lover. The meaning of the poem therefore hinges on the reader's ability to pick up the subtext of the poem. Interestingly, this dhvani (implied message) of the verse is prefaced by the subject's apparent enactment of being a devoted wife. She explains that she is going to the water for the sake of her husband which reads as an act of a devoted wife, or *pativrata*. In the first half of the poem then, the poet builds up the expectation that the woman will act a certain way and then flips this expectation on its head in the second half of the verse through the final line.

The poet's flipping of expectations entices her readers to reread the poem and in doing this, the reader is able to see foreshadowing in the first half of the reversal of the *pativrata* trope that will take place in the second half. In the second line of the poem we notice that the subject's reference to her husband is unusual and implies some distance between the couple. Rather than describing him as 'my husband,' the subject refers to her husband in a very distant manner—she calls him "the father of this child." This reference appears to be a usage of *vakrokti* (crooked speech), a "rhetorical figure which consists of an indirect phrase used in some evasive and clever way" (Selby 1991: 102). Here, the effect of this phrasing is to imply distance between the woman and her husband. There is therefore a disconnect between what the woman says she will do (go to the river for her husband's sake) and how she refers to him ("the father of this child"). This distancing of her husband ultimately foreshadows the dhvani lynch-pin at the end of the poem.

The subject in this poem is a woman who partakes in extra-marital sex and belongs to a larger trope of female characters marked by their incomppliance to the ideal of the chaste woman (*satī*). The riverside is a common trysting ground for lovers within the imaginary of love poetry and this poem

picks up on the connotation of that image through the woman's reference to where she is going. Indeed, Vijjakā makes reference to the riverside as a popular trysting ground in another poem, describing the Marulā riverbanks as possessing trees which “are givers of hindrance to the uninterrupted love-making of immodest women!” (Appendix A, Poem 7). The women she refers to are “avinayavati” or women who comprise immodesty or lack propriety. The woman in this poem is likewise structured as antithetical to the satī in the way her actions rupture the expectations of her being a devoted wife (pativratātva). The poet therefore crafts her subject by exploiting pre-existing conventional frameworks of femininity (the devoted wife and the immodest woman) to create new meaning with this poem. Within this subjectivity, however, there is no space for readers to engage with the emotions of the text and instead, the poet provides readers an image to react to. While this poem is technically a sambhoga śṛṅgāra poem, the affectual content of the poem is not exactly erotic. The juxtaposition and twisting of expectations creates a pleasurability for the audience that might be best defined as either amusement or comedy. Reading this poem at face value shows the woman as an incredibly devoted wife—one who will suffer the pains of harsh topographies to satisfy her husband. Once the reader picks up on hints within the poem—namely, the distant reference to her husband, the associations tied to the place she is going to, and the implications of what the scratches signify—the poem takes on a new resonance in depicting the figure of the “asatī” or “kulaṭā.” The audience is “in” on the actions of the woman and can laugh both at the woman's deceit. Lee Siegal has discussed this poem in his book, *Laughing Matters*, and reads the response to this verse as being laughter at the cheated husband however (87: 132-3), the husband is more or less an abstract figure around which different forms of womanhood are contrasted—ie. the satī vs. asatī. The poem does not address the husband but rather, the female neighbour, and so it is her neighbour who is falling for the deceit. The result is that the humour lies more in the woman's actions rather than laughter around a cheated husband.

The next verse engages with a similarly “asatī”-like figure through the words of a “bad woman”:

vayaṃ bālye bālāṃ taruṇimani yūnaḥ pariṇatā  
vapicchāmo vṛddhāṃ tad iha kularakṣā samucitā |  
tvayārabdhaṃ janma kṣapayitum anenaikapatinā



na me gotre putri kvacid api satī lāñchanam abhūt || (Chaudhuri 1939: 45)

In childhood we desire boys, in youth we desire young men, and even in old age, we desire old men. And now, its proper to protect the family honor. With that husband alone, your life is beginning to go to waste. Dear daughter, nowhere in my lineage is the stain of virtue!

The woman explains to her daughter that while marriage is currently required, desire is a constant at every age of life. The mother lays out what is “right” to do and what is expected of the daughter. But then she tells her that she’s wasting her life away because she limits herself to her husband alone. The mother then sanctions the daughter to act like an *asatī* because there are no virtuous women in her family. The poem derives its meaning from certain communiqués on normative discourses like marriage and what is appropriate to a married figure and juxtaposes these expectations with “unsuitable” *asatī* behavior. The first part of the poem disparages marriage, making it clear that marital status has no bearing on expressions of one’s desire—it is only something that is proper to the current life stage of the daughter. The disapproval of the daughter’s fidelity to her husband in the third line further clarifies this dismissive attitude towards marriage. These statements run counter to normative standards where, in many dramas and the *Kāmasūtra*, the wife is a figure of modesty (Kaul 2008: 69). The topsy-turvy nature of this commentary on marriage however is understood once we recognize that these opinions and advice are those of the *asatī* – the unchaste woman, specifically, an unchaste elderly woman.

Important to this work is the speakers themselves. The woman giving the advice is an older woman whereas the one being a good wife is the younger woman. This presents a bit of a divergence from the standard *nāyikā* and is perhaps what makes this verse humorous. The standard *nāyikā* is a young woman and around whom many other types of *nāyikā* emerge—like the *abhisārikā* (the one who goes forth to meet her lover) and the *virahiṇī* (the lovelorn woman). The comedy in this verse lies in the way that the woman who normally would be the *asatī* figure (the younger woman) is actually acting within the bounds of propriety and it is the elder woman who is encouraging her to become an *asatī*. As with the previous poem, *Vijjakā* manipulates readerly expectations by manipulating normative frameworks like the *satī* and married women, and characterizations of certain tropes. In

both verses Vidyā's manipulation of expectations creates literary enjoyment from the creation of a topsy-turvy world, akin to Bakhtin's notion of a literary carnivalesque. In light of a whole host of these types of poems within Sanskrit love literature, there is nothing particularly novel about the idea of the *asatī* which leads me to think that this poem is not trying to challenge existing norms of femininity (like the *satī* and *pativrata*)—this is not the platform for it. However, looking at the construction of the poem suggests instead that the inversion of expectations was used to create humor.

Finally, we come to the third poem of our collection which deals with the description of a village woman:

mañce romāñcitāṅgī ratimṛditatanoḥ karkaṭivāṭikāyām  
kāntasyāṅge pramodād ubhayabhujapariṣvaktakaṇṭhe nilinā |  
pādena preñkhayantī mukharayati muhuḥ pāmarī phairavāṇām  
rātrāv uttrāsahetor vṛtiśikharalatāmbinīm kambumālām || (Chaudhuri 1939: 46).

She whose body, thrilled with horripilation, is pressed with delight. She is fused into the limbs of her lover— whose neck is embraced by both of her arms—from pleasure, on a bed composed of a *karkaṭī* (snake cucumber) grove. The village woman, causing the garland of conch shells that hang down from the top of the fence to shake repeatedly, makes noise with her foot with the intent of scaring away the jackals in the night. (Translation my own).

Reading this poem from a very literal angle we see a village woman, wrapped up in the arms of her lover, whose foot shakes the conch shells in her endeavor to scare away the jackals. However, the subtext is that she shakes the shells not out of a duty to keep away predators but from her engagement in sexual pleasures with her lover. The real cause of the shaking conch shells is implied through various means. Firstly, we have the horripilation of hair which is often a sign of *śṛṅgāra* rasa and carries the implication of sexual activity (Cuneo 2013: 54). Secondly, the physical setting is quite explicit: the woman lies on a makeshift garden-bed and is wrapped up in the body of her lover. Vijjakā builds up the implication of sexual content through the first half of the poem only to subvert it in the second half by giving a specifically non-sexual reason for the shaking of the conch shells. She writes that the woman makes noise with the intent of frightening (*uttrāsahetor*) the jackals, leaving her readers

to make their own assumption about why the shells are moving. The poet is almost “cheeky” with her readers because the audience knows the woman in the poem is engaged in sex but the poet tells us that she is shaking the conch shells for a less-erotic and more utilitarian purpose: to scare the jackals. However, we might also read this in another way too. The poet tells us that the woman shakes the shells so as to scare away the jackals which implies that there are jackals around however, what if these were not jackals but the sounds of the woman having sex? The purpose of the conch shells, in this reading, would instead be to cover up the sounds of the woman’s lovemaking. In either reading, the conch shells work as a cover-up for the true actions of the woman. As with the poems prior, there is nothing particularly romantic or sexual for readers to “taste,” if we think of this poem as a sambhoga śṛṅgāra poem. Rather, like the previous verses, the poem creates a pleasurability that is defined by humor and amusement.

Overall, we can see more than a few shared commonalities between these poems. Firstly, while all three poems topically deal with sex and sexual liaisons, the śṛṅgāra rasa is subverted by humor. Secondly, this humor is created in two key ways: two of the poems create humor through the use of dhvani (suggestion) while the other two create humor through the use and juxtaposition of character types and associations like the *asatī*. Thirdly, to speak of structure, in each poem Vijjakā leaves clues as to what is going on within the micro-narrative of the poem but ultimately leaves the main action unstated. Each poem follows a similar structure where the key to the poem is left until the very end, flipping readerly expectations. In the first and second poems, the key confirms the poem’s sexual content whereas in the third poem, this key denies it. Overall, the style of her poems dealing with sambhoga śṛṅgāra lies in playfully twisting tropes and expectations to create humorous affect rather than actually writing about love or sex and emotions tied to both.

## 2.4 Conversation Poems

There are a handful of poems in Vijjakā’s oeuvre which rely less on formal rhetorical figures and conventions and instead utilize conversation to as a tool to frame questions for the audience.

Our first poem of analysis centers around the lament of a woman whose lover has now gone:

gate premābandhe hṛdayabahumāne 'pi galite  
nivṛtte sadbhāve jana iva jane gacchati puraḥ |  
tathā caivotprekṣya priyasakhi gatāms tāmś ca divasān  
na jāne ko hetur dalati śatadhā yan na hṛdayam || (Chaudhuri 1939: 48).

When the bond of love has gone, when even great respect in the heart has trickled away, when true feelings have disappeared, and when he has already moved on as people do—even though it can see clearly that those days are gone—Oh dear friend, I don't know a single reason why my heart does not split into a hundred pieces.<sup>18</sup>  
(Translation my own).

The poem's speaker describes her heartbreak to her friend, saying that she does not understand why her heart is not breaking despite the fact that all the signs for heartbreak are there. There are no formal rhetorical devices like similes or metaphors—the poem relies solely on “versified” prose, delivered through the premise of conversation between friends. Where and how, is the reader supposed to read *rasa*, within this poem? Interestingly, while this poem is among the most emotionally expressive poems we have seen, the poem has been criticized as an example of *rasābhāsa*, or “semblance of *rasa*.” That is, while it appears to be a *śṛṅgāra* poem, it ultimately lacks the production of aestheticized emotion. In his *Moon on the Rasa Ocean*, Siṅghabhūpāla explains that the semblance of *śṛṅgāra* *rasa* can manifest in four ways, one of which is “unrequited passion” where one member of a couple lacks passion for another (Pollock 2016: 644). Giving this poem as an example, Siṅghabhūpāla explains that the lack of passion on the part of the male lover makes *rasa* unsavory and therefore, this poem only has a “semblance of *rasa*” (Pollock 2016: 645). Sanskrit love poems have a tendency to move from moments of gain (*sambhoga*) to moments of loss (*vipralambha*) but always carry the implication that there will always be union (Selby 1991: 96-97). In aesthetics, this notion that the lovers will be united, even if the poem deals with *vipralambha* *śṛṅgāra*, is what separates the creation of *śṛṅgāra* *rasa* from *karuṇa* *rasa* (grief) (Pollock 2016: 162). And yet, despite these norms, the

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<sup>18</sup> I have chosen to consider all poems attributed to Vijjakā by J.B. Chaudhuri as being her poems however, it would be important to note here that this poem has been quoted by many scholars as belonging to Amaru. Further work on tracing Vijjakā's poems within anthologies and rhetorical works is needed to improve her literary record history.

poet has articulated something else in a way that perhaps can be read as challenging aesthetic norms because it produces affect despite not “following the rules” of *śṛṅgāra rasa*.

The verse is striking and emotionally charged because of how it engages the reader through first placing the reading into dialogue with the poem and secondly through the way it prompts the reader to question his or her own experiences. I argue that this poem’s uniquely personal quality and expression of affect lies in the poet’s use of conversation as a rhetorical tool. The poem is addressed specifically to the *sakhī* (female friend) of the speaker who talks to her as if this is a private conversation. In doing so, the poet draws in the reader, allowing them to inhabit the same subjective space of the *sakhī*. This talking between friends sets up an atmosphere of intimacy which transfers over to the reader of the poem and this conversational intimacy is a powerful tool in the creation of literary affect. In making the reader the *sakhī*, the poem draws the reader into the story world of the poem and like any good friend, the reader is prompted to think about the situation of the poem’s subject and so doing, brings in their own “real” life experience into the context of the poem. This conversational framing ultimately creates a bridge where, on the one side, is the literary subject who supplies “emotional fodder” for the reader, and on the other side, is the reader and his or her own experiences. Through this mechanism, the reader is able to engage with the speaker of the poem.

The dynamics of this conversational frame might productively be understood through Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s theorization of literary experience—specifically as it pertains to “communization.” Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka argues that literary experience occurs in three phases: (1) the reader encounters literary language (figures of speech and its accompanying meanings) and then (2) actualizes these aesthetic elements (through the process of commonization) (3) so as to produce experientialization—the savoring of *rasa* or literary affect (Pollock 2016: 365-372). The second phase of literary experience describes a process where the situations and emotions of the literary text are generalized so that anyone can relate to them, thereby allowing the reader to care about, and experience, the intended *rasa*. Herein lies the similarity of what Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka theorizes and how *Vijikā* expresses affect within her poem: *Vijikā* uses the dynamic of conversation and the absence of another clearly defined

participant (we know nothing of the *sakhī* other than her existence) to directly engage the readers of the poem. There are no real specifics within this verse and so it exists in a “ready to communize” state. This conversational framing creates a bridge that allows the reader to bring their own emotions and experiences into the text, creating a similar “communization” effect which ultimately allows the reader to savor the poem’s affect.

Now we come to the question of the poet’s intended affect. In one sense, it seems as if there is some hope in the heart of the woman that keeps it from breaking, as if she is in denial of her situation. However, we might also understand the intention of stating that “she knows no reason as to why her heart does not break” as being a riddle that the speaker poses to the readers of the poem. The fact that speaker does not know, despite all the common signs of why it should break, makes readers supply their own reason for why her heart does not break. By posing this paradox, the poet engages with the reader’s own memories and minds as the readers are now left search for a reason from within their own subjective experience. In not following literary norms, the poem forces readers try to comprehend what is going on in the text and in doing this, the poem asks readers to abandon conventionalized literary heartbreak and instead asks readers to think of a non-aesthetized, “real-world” heart might feel. The overall affect is therefore derived from the reader’s own answer to why the heart of the woman in the poem does not break.

Let us look at another conversation poem that follows a similar structure as our first poem. It reads:

dhanyā ‘si yā kathayasi priyasaṅgame ‘pi  
narmokticāṭukaśatāni ratāntareṣu |  
nīvīm prati praṇihite tu kare priyeṇa  
sakhyaḥ śapāmi yadi kiñcid api smarāmi || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 49).

You’re lucky—you’re telling us about the hundreds of little flatteries and teasing words that happen in the midst of lovemaking when you’re united with your lover. But friends, I’ll be damned if I remember anything at all when my lover has reached a hand out to the knot of my skirt. (Translation my own).

Here again we have the woman speaker addressing her friends, though this time it is a group of friends. She describes how she cannot remember a thing when she is united with her lover. This verse has both similarities and differences with the poem prior. First, it diverges from the previous poem as it conjures up an image of the sakhīs and their lovers which builds up to the dhvani of the final line. The poet builds up the eroticized image of banter between lovers during lovemaking only to subvert it in the final line—because the speaker points out a greater fortune in not being able to remember these words at all. Similar to the previous poem, however, is the space the poet leaves for readers to fill in the blanks with their own thoughts and experiences. By stating that the speaker does not remember anything, the poet entices her readers to think of what may have happened during the speaker’s union with her lover. Again, the poet sets up a situation which prompts the readers to reflect and think about the content of poem.

Our next poem is noticeably different from the ones before it. This poem appears to depict someone either speaking to themselves and making a comment, or perhaps speaking to an unaddressed audience like a sakhī. It reads:

nāryāḥ sā ratiśūnyatā nayanayor yaddr̥ṣṭipāte sthitaḥ  
kāmi prāptaratārtha eva na bhavaty āliṅgituṃ vāñchati |  
āśleṣād api yāparaṃ mṛgāyate dhik tām ayogyāṃ striyaṃ  
śroṇīgocaram āgato ratiphalaṃ prāpnoti tiryāṇ na kim || (Chaudhuri 1952: 48).

A woman has a lack of sexual pleasure when a man comes into her field of vision but does not attain the goal of sex, and instead only wants to hug. But damn that improper woman, who looks for something other than just a hug—wouldn’t it be weird if he got the fruits of sexual pleasure as soon as he’s near your loins?

Before we begin the discussion proper about this poem, I will first go over how I have translated this poem because it is quite difficult to read in the Sanskrit original. The poem begins by saying that there is a woman without sexual pleasure, literally translating into: of that woman who is “ratiśūnyatā,” she who possesses a lack of “rati”, or sexual pleasure. When a male lover or man (kāmi)

comes into her field of view (yaddṛṣṭipāte sthitaḥ) but does not attain the goal of sex (prāptaratārtha eva na bhavaty—literally, “is not one who possesses an attained goal that is sex”), he wishes to hug her (āliṅgituṃ vāñchati). The second half of the verse translates into: but damn that improper woman (dhik tām ayogyām striyaṃ) who looks for something other than just a hug (āśleṣād api yāparaṃ mṛgāyate). The word “tīryaṇ” carries a number of possible meanings but at the very basics, it means “oblique.” It can at times refer to an animal because animals move obliquely—this is perhaps the reason why Roma Chaudhuri has made an animal reference in her translation of the verse (see section 1.3). However, I have taken it here to mean “strange’ or “weird,” which is another common way of translating the word. The next section of the verse therefore reads: wouldn’t it be weird (tīryaṇ na kim) if he got the fruits of sexual pleasure (ratiphalam prāpnoti) as soon as he is near, or has come to, the loins (śroṇīgocaram āgato).

In the first half of the poem the poet lays out a scene for the speaker to comment upon in the verse’s second half. In the first half, we see a woman with a lack of sexual pleasure and a man with a lack of desire for sex—he simply wants to hug the woman. In the second half of the poem the speaker curses the woman for wanting something more and comments on how it would be weird if the man got sex as soon as he was in the vicinity of her loins. Implicitly, we can take the woman in the poem as wanting to rectify her lack of sexual pleasure and therefore, wishes to have sex right away once the man has entered her field of view. This desire of the woman is critiqued by the speaker. The speaker’s critique overall seems to imply that there is something improper and unrefined about the woman’s desires. The implication is built up in the final verse when she says, “wouldn’t it be weird if he got the fruit of sex as soon as he’s near your loins,” an action which describes the behaviour of animals—another denotation of the word tīryaṇ.

This poem is interesting because, while it describes the sexual union of two lovers, it appears that the poem’s emphasis is not on the lovers but in commenting on the actions of the lovers and cursing the woman for having what we might call, “unrefined desires.” It is difficult to place who the speaker is. The speaker is not a nāyikā like the mānini (angered woman) nor is s(he) a typical sakhī of



the woman described in the poem. The speaker's position is that of a voyeur to the lovers' actions who passes judgement on the two, despite not being directly involved—s(he) exists outside of the lovers' paradigm. The gender of the speaker is ambiguous and I would argue, does not matter, because the figure of the speaker, more importantly, seems to embody a voice of decorum and repression. The speaker curses the woman's unrefined desires in a way that wants to regulate how desire is enacted and expressed. If the speaker were male, the poem would read as a male anxiety about women's sexual desire and the critique of such a desire would express the speaker's own wish to constrain desire through the rules of etiquette. But if she were female, it might read as a female anxiety about how to fulfill one's sexual desires without breaking decorum. By leaving the speaker's gender unspecified, perhaps the poem allows the space for the reader to interject their own subject position, enabling different audiences to read the poem in a way that was suited to them and like the *virahinī* poems, making the reader conscious of gender.

Amongst this selection of poems is a significant similarity in that these conversation poems not only draw in the reader of the poem, but also leaves spaces for the reader to engage with what is said. In the first case the poem poses a riddle to the reader, eschewing aesthetic norms to consider heartbreak in the "real world." In the second case, the poet begins setting up a *śṛṅgāra sambhoga* scene but leaves the main action unstated, creating a moment of reflection for the reader. Finally, the third poem sets up a situation and comments on the behavior of the depicted lovers however, the unclarified speaker set up another scenario where the reader must reflect on what is said to derive the poems meaning. In comparison to the previous sets of poems, these are much more reflective and focused on engaging the reader.

## 2.5 Conclusions

Shalini Shah has argued that women poets, like Vijjakā, have focused largely on love poems as a means to express their sensuousness and their own desire (2009: 169) and do so through an aesthetic which emphasizes mutuality in relationships (2009: 164) however, the portrayal of love described in Vijjakā's verses are, at the very surface level, tied to an aesthetic of courtly love poetry, suggesting that

these were meant to be read by an educated reading public. Through the course of this close reading of text we see a number of complex dialogues occurring between subjectivity, style, and meaning within Vijjakā's poems that presents a more complicated picture of the poet and her writing.

Vijjakā writes a number of poems centred around the figure of the *virahiṇī* (love-lorn woman) and in engaging with the trope of the helpless *virahiṇī*, she utilizes discourses of gender. Gender is used to highlight the plight of the *virahiṇī* to get her readers to sympathize with the *virahiṇī*. Significantly, all the tormentors are cruel and without passion however, not all tormentors are men. In some cases, the tormentor is an insentient figure like the weather, but at times that tormentor can also be a woman and significantly, in the case when the tormentor is a woman, her femininity is called into question.

Another specialty of Vijjakā is her use of *dhvani* (suggestion) in poems on *sambhoga śṛṅgāra* (love in union). These poems tend to focus less on the erotic or romantic situations described in the poem but rather focuses on the potential for humour and amusement. Amongst these poem, she not only uses suggestion, but employs a number of twists and turns to create amusement out of the implications tied to individual figures like the *asatī* (unchaste woman). Overall, her poems here about *sambhoga śṛṅgāra* are irreverent of the actual topic of *śṛṅgāra*.

Finally, Vijjakā also writes a handful of poems centering around conversations which often appear to diverge from aesthetic norms to accomplish something else—they center around reflection and reader response. She poses situations and portraits where she does not tell us how to feel, but instead leaves the poetic situation unresolved so that the reader must complete the puzzle to come to a final meaning.

Overall, in reading these poems we see that Vijjakā at times engaged in highly conventionalized poetry—like the *virahiṇī*—but also shows moment of divergence, where she writes

with another purpose. Both her sambhoga poems and conversation poems reveal a desire to engage her readers in a less conventionalized manner but still engage with conventional tropes.

## Chapter 3: The Kaumudīmahotsava

The *Kaumudīmahotsava* is a 5-act nāṭaka play which exists in a single, damaged manuscript.<sup>19</sup> Other copies of the play have not been found to date and this makes it very difficult to say anything concrete about the context of the play and who the author was, though it is commonly thought that it was written by a woman poet named Vijjakā. In this chapter I will give an overview of the history of scholarship on this play and the question of its authorship. I then delve into an understudied topic within the play: the figure of the nun and subjectivity in the *Kaumudīmahotsava*. I argue that the writer of the play made a conscious decision to include a Sanskrit-speaking nun as a key subjective female figure in the play, whose Sanskrit speech can be compared with the male protagonist of the play, Prince Kalyānavarman. Building on opportunities for speech and subjectivity, I then look at how rasa is entangled with subjectivity and use this as a basis to further argue the writer's conscious choice to create a subject position for the nun. Following this argument, I briefly look the author's style and creation of rasa to add to ongoing scholarly discussion of the play's dating, background, and authorship.

### 3.1: The Manuscript & Writer of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*

The single version of this play was discovered by Ramakrishna Kavi in Kerala and was first published in 1928 (Kavi 1928: i). This single manuscript dates back to only about the 18th century and is of a southern palm-leaf style (Kavi 1928: i). The manuscript was found within a stack of leaves from a copy of a play entitled the *Abhirāmacitrlekha*, which appears to date back to the 13th century (Kavi 1928: i).<sup>20</sup> The covering leaf only mentions the *Abhirāmacitrlekha* and the manuscript lacks a colophon. We know little else about its prior textual history. Even the name of the play is uncertain as

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<sup>19</sup> The play falls under the classification of “nāṭaka” and not nāṭikā. A nāṭaka is a play containing 5-10 acts and notionally centers around epic characters (like Rāmā) or other royal or divine characters (Krishnamachariar and Srinivasachariar 1989: 546). Both A.K. Warder and S.N. Das Gupta define a nāṭika as a play comprising 1-4 acts though it may still centre around royal figures as in the nāṭaka (Dasgupta 1947: lxxxiii; Warder 2009: 138)

<sup>20</sup> The play was written by Kavivallabha and is a 10 Act prakaraṇa according to Krishnamachariar (1984: 698). A.K. Warder has discussed this play at length and classifies it as a nāṭikā (1992: 892.).

the title was chosen by the editors when it arrived at Trivandrum Manuscript Library (Kavi 1928: i). The name is derived from the final words of the manuscript: *kaumudīmahotsava samāptaḥ* (the *Kaumudīmahotsava* is finished) (Kavi 1928: i; Sastri 1952: 78). Ramakrishna Kavi describes the play as lacking a colophon and explains that the editors assigned the title based on these final words and a reference by the *Sūtradhāra* in Act 1 (Kavi 1928: i).

The authorship of this play presents another issue for the background of this drama. The way that scholars have discussed the *Kaumudīmahotsava* suggests that we know the name of its author; however, a definitive name does not exist. While the play is generally referred to as being written by Vijjakā or Vijayabhaṭṭarikā, both names are conjectures based on the following line of prose found in Act One of the play. The *Sūtradhāra* (stage-manager) enters the scene, walking about, and explains that he is to put on a play for the celebration of King Kalyāṇavarman. He then comes up with an idea of what to perform and says:

bhavatu yattadasyaiva rājñāḥ samatītaṃ caritam adhikṛtya (\*vijji)kayā nibaddham  
nāṭakam | Sastri 1952: 2).

Good! A play, having taken as its subject the history of the king, was composed by  
\_\_\_\_\_ [\*by Vijjakayā, \*by Morikayā, or, \*with sub-plots]. (Translation my own).

As denoted by the spaces in the translation and transcription above, there is a worm-eaten portion in the manuscript. The eaten section is tiny and appears to obscure only two letters (Kavi 1928: i). Some scholars have reconstructed this to be “Vijjakayā,” identifying her with our poet from Chapter 2 (Jayaswal 1930: 50, Sastri 1952: 9). Kavi believes that a ‘ja’ could be read from the remains of the worm-eaten portion which would support the probability that it previously said Vijjakā (Kavi 1928: i).

P.V. Kane has suggested in his translation of the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (The Mirror of Composition), that Vijjakā might be a 7<sup>th</sup> century Badāmī Cālukyan queen named Vijayabhaṭṭarikā (qtd. by Winternitz 1936: 361). Sakuntala Rao Sastri has taken this supposition a step further and suggests that this reconstructed Vijjakā from the *Kaumudīmahotsava* is not only Vijjakā from the anthologies but also refers to Vijayabhaṭṭarikā (Sastri 1952: 9-11). Taking Vijjakā’s verse chastising Daṇḍin (c. 7<sup>th</sup>

century), Sastri takes Vijjakā to be a contemporary of the writer and draws a connection between her and Vijayabhaṭṭārikā. She further connects this writer to Vijayāṅkā, a Karṇāṭī poet praised by Rājaśekhara, as discussed earlier (Sastri 1952: 10). I am cautious of Sastri's claims because it relies on the assumption that Vijjakā is referenced in the verse and also assumes that this queen was a writer, an assertion for which we have no evidence. She appears to link a number of learned women without clear reason. For example, the name Vijjakā (a Prakrit version of the Sanskrit name derived from "knowledge") is not etymologically linked to Vijayā ("she who is victorious") or its other derivatives like Vijayāṅkā ("she whose mark is victory"). Sastri also attempts to locate the provenance of our poet, asserting that she grew up in a North Indian rather than South Indian cultural context, but then connects her to Karṇāṭaka in southern India (1952: 9-12). Overall, she postulates that the Queen was from a north Indian family and composed her play in Pāṭaliputra (where the play is set) before her marriage and movement to Karṇāṭaka (1952: 12). Sastri focuses on creating a grand narrative for the author of this play based on a number of tenuous connections—namely, that the lacunae in the manuscript might read Vijjakā, and that there are two other women whose names begin with a "va" in a vaguely similar time period. That being said, it would be worthwhile to look further into the depiction of the Kaumudīmahotsava festival and its depiction in other plays or to evaluate the references to place throughout the play's context.

Other commenters on the play have suggested additional names for consider. Kavi, for example, suggests that a reference to the goddess Vijayā in the fourth act may actually be a reference to the play's poet (Kavi 1928: ii). The following verse from Act One, given by the Sūtradhāra before deciding on a play to put on, has also been suggested as a source for the author's name:

kṛṣṇasārāṃ kaṭākṣeṇa kṛṣṇivalakīśorikā |  
karotyeṣā karāgreṇa karṇe kalamamañjarīm || (Sastri 1952: 2).

"The daughter of the farmer, who is the essence of Kṛṣṇa with side-long glances, places rice-shoots on her ear with the tip of her fingers.

On the basis of this verse and the possibility that we could read “rice-shoots” as a “pen”, D. R. Bhandarkar and Jayaswal believe that the author’s name could be Kiśorikā, daughter of Kṛṣaṇa (qtd. in Jayaswal 1930: 50). This suggestion has been refuted by others like Winternitz (1936: 362),

Other instances where a name may possibly be found—as in the case of Vijayā in Act 4 or Kiśorikā in Act 1—are, in my opinion, less likely to be the author’s name in comparison to the worm-eaten portion at the beginning of the play. However, while this portion is our most promising clue to the author’s name, there is still the possibility that we have the name wrong, or that the worm-eaten portion refers to something other than a name. A.K. Warder makes the point that while \*Vijjakayā is possible, \*Morikayā could also be possible, referencing another female poet known from various medieval poetry anthologies (Warder 1994: 427)<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore, Warder notes that the worm-eaten portion could also be reconstructed as “patakayā,” changing the reading from a claim of authorship to a statement that the play was composed with a sub-plot (Warder 1994: 427). I am of the same opinion of Winternitz who asserts that the most probable source of evidence for the writer’s name is in the worm-eaten portion and on that basis, the writer was probably a woman (1936: 361). My reason for thinking this is on the basis that it is not uncommon that the author’s name is found in the “prologue” (sthāpaka/pūrvaraṅga/prastāvanā) of a play (Krishnamachariar and Srinivasachariar 1989: 556; Tieken 2001: 117) but also because the worm-eaten portion logically appears to mention the name of the author. Both Krishnamachariar and Herman Tieken note that there are a group of plays—largely referring to the “Trivandrum Plays” or the plays of Bhāsa—that do not include the name of the author but in both of these cases, the prologue and entrance of the sūtradhāra is markedly different from the format of play’s like Kālidāsa’s or Śudrakas. The Kaumudīmahotsava’s prologue falls in line with the group of dramas which do include the name of the author in this beginning section of the play which leaves us with no reason not to expect an authorial attribution. Furthermore, the verse with the lacunae employs a past passive participle to say that a “play has been arranged” and is preceded with a third-case feminine word which often denotes the agentive subject of this type of passive use—it seems very probably that this section denoted who wrote the author and the feminine form of the

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<sup>21</sup> See J.B. Chaudhuri’s *Sanskrit Poetesses* “Morikā” (1939: xxi) and “Morikā” as listed in Sternbach’s *Descriptive Catalogue of Poets* (1980: 265).

word suggests that it was a woman. That being said, we have no definitive evidence of who the author is and the conundrum will not be solved until another manuscript containing more concrete information is found.

### 3.2: The Dating of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*

There has been much more discussion on the dating of this play than anything else, mostly based on stylistic grounds of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*. One of the first scholars to comment on the dating of this play is Ramakrishna Kavi who believes it dates back to the 6th-8th centuries CE on the basis that the play reflects the simple style of Sanskrit literature from this period (Kavi 192: iii). Further hints that this play belongs to an earlier period of Sanskrit literature are, he argues, the poet's clear familiarity with the works of Kālidāsa and Bhāravi, and the poet's references to other early plays like the *Vīṇāvāsavadattā* of Śudraka, the *Avimārika* of Bhāsa, and the *Avantisundarīkathā* of Daṇḍin (Kavi 192: iii). Additionally, the play uses specific names for the palaces at Pāṭaliputra and Kauśambi<sup>22</sup> which are used in only a few other works—those being the *Mudrārākṣasa* of Viśākhadatta and the *Bṛhatkathā* (Kavi 1928: iii). K. P. Jayaswal dates the play to the Gupta period and identifies the character named Caṇḍasena, who usurps the Magadha throne from the protagonist's father, as being Candragupta I (Jayaswal 1930: 54). While the names Sundaravarman and Kalyāṇavarman are not known within the Gupta dynasty, Jayaswal argues that the Licchavi alliance between Caṇḍasena (in the drama) and Candragupta I (in history) are strong indicators that the play is a historical drama from this period (1930: 54). D.R. Mankad has also placed the *Kaumudīmahotsava* at an early date on the basis of its similarities with the plays of Kālidāsa; however, he argues that the play must have been written a bit later than Jayaswal's hypothesis of 340 CE (Mankad 1934-5: 155; Winternitz 1936: 362). He highlights a number of parallel verses, similar turns of phrase, and the use of similar action between the *Kaumudīmahotsava* and four of Kālidāsa's works, concluding that the author was familiar with Kālidāsa's works and must have written the *Kāumudīmahotsava* not too long after Kālidāsa (1934).

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<sup>22</sup> Sugāṅga and Suyāmuna, respectively.



Moriz Winternitz contests Jayaswal's opinion that this play recounts historical events and suggests that the play is as historical as the events of the *Mṛcchakaṭikā*—that is to say, the political intrigue is only vaguely based on actual events (1936: 362). Like others, he notes that the author of the play knew Kālidāsa's works well, in addition to knowing Daṇḍin's *Avantisundarikathā* (The Story of Avantisundarī) and Bhāsa's *Avimāraka* (1936: 362). He suggests that the play was probably of a later date than Kālidāsa because of the appearance of a *viṭa*, or dandy, in Act Five, which is reminiscent of later bhāṇa plays (1936: 362). He further suggests that the play, despite sharing similarities with the *Mudrārākṣasa*, was composed at a later date than Viśākhadatta's time (1936: 362), an opinion shared by Daniel Balogh (2015: 174).

Other scholars like Chattopadhyaya, Sastri, and Dassupta generally agree that the play was written in a later period than what was originally thought. Chattopadhyaya assigns the play to a later date as well, reading its opening verse as a reference to Śaṅkārācārya, placing the Kaumudimahotsava's earliest date at 700 CE and not earlier (Chattopadyāy 1938: 591-92). Dasgupta likewise reasons that the play is post-8<sup>th</sup> century, though his reasoning is based on the play's stylistic imitation of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, and Bhavabhūti (1947: 478).

Overall, the history, context, and authorship of the *Kaumudimahotsava* is largely unknown. Generally, in arguments of authorship there are three main answers: the author is Vijjakā, Vijayabhaṭṭarikā, or the author is an unknown woman. As others have argued, I believe that the name of the author logically appeared, at one time, in the space of the worm-eaten portion of the manuscript and on that basis, I believe that the author was a woman. There are too few pieces of evidence to link the author to either Vijjakā or Vijayabhaṭṭarikā. Until another manuscript is found, the question of authorship will remain an open one. The same should be said for the dating of the play however, a detailed study on the play's intertextuality and style may provide more solid clues for its dating. The play is replete with early literary allusions that have compelled scholars to consistently suggest a pre-10<sup>th</sup> century dating of the play—though which part of that millennium remains open to debate. On the other hand, the nature of play's intertextuality has not been fully investigated—are these allusions representative of a shared literary period (and by extension, is this a play a relative

contemporary to the plays alluded to) or is it possible that this is pastiche, a conscious imitation of literature from a specific period? If this question could be answered in future research, to some extent, then we may find new evidence for the dating of the play. Until further evidence comes to light, I will conclude by summarizing the *Kaumudīmahotsava* as being a nāṭaka written by a woman author in the first millennium.

### 3.3: Clarifying the *Kaumudīmahotsava*

While we cannot be sure of the exact title of the play and nor are we sure of the author's name, we do have a text—that was probably written by a woman—which has thusfar been studied with only a narrow set of concerns. The history of scholarship on this play has largely focused on the play's importance to dynastic history—whether of the Guptas<sup>23</sup> or the Maukharis<sup>24</sup>—or else focused on the play as being an example of early Sanskrit theatre. In this regard, scholarly assessments are not always positive. Kavi, for example, describes the play as having a plot that is “laid with perfect simplicity, and the expression” of the play is “simple and quite natural” (1928: iii). Dasgupta gives a decidedly negative critique of play saying that “...in spite of simplicity and directness, the diction and treatment, as the enthusiastic editors themselves admit, possess little dramatic realism or poetic distinction, and do not improve by the extreme mediocrity of the attempt” (1947: 478). Jayaswal argues that the play's value lies in its historical facts and explains that “the inherent defects [of the play], the poor personality of the hero, and an essentially historical narration of facts, assigned the drama into oblivion” (1930: 51). He further comments that the author “shows skill in creating a romance for the newly married couple who had seen each other only once before the marriage. Her descriptions of the beauties of the young queen is a description of a woman by a woman, and in the language of the stage, which makes it difficult for it to be of any lasting impression” (1930: 52).

I would argue, however, that this rare opportunity to see how a woman portrays women on stage is important to investigate. While the princess' figure tends to be ‘typical’ and reminiscent of

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<sup>23</sup> See Jayaswal (1930).

<sup>24</sup> See Pires (1934)

heroines in similar dramas like those of Bhāsa's, the figure of the nun (parivrajikā), Yogasiddhi, diverges from the standard portrayal of female figures in Sanskrit drama—a remarkable feature that has been largely overlooked. Even in Sastri's work, which is the longest written piece on the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, the nun and her speech in the play is not mentioned. This is a significant point of silence as there are only a handful of instances where a female character actually speaks in Sanskrit (rather than in Prakrit) in classical Sanskrit drama (Shah 2008: 7), and rarely is it a substantial role. According to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bhārata, Prakrit speech was to be assigned to “women, children, and men of low birth” with the exception of queens, celestial nymphs (apsarās), courtesans, and female artists (naṭī) who were permitted to speak Sanskrit in drama (qtd. from Shah 2008: 6-7). However, within classical plays like those of Śudraka and Kālidāsa, only the courtesan Vasantasenā and the nun from *Mālavikāgnimitra* speaks Sanskrit (Shah 2008: 7; Parab 1924; Tawney 1891).

I am therefore in agreement with Shah's opinion on classical Sanskrit drama when she says: “It would not be an exaggeration to state that the classical Sanskrit literature produced in this entire period is essentially a gendered literature written by and for men” (Shah 2008: 7). Robert Goodwin seems to echo this sentiment in saying that while a connoisseur may be female, “...the fact is that kāvya is written from a male point of view, where women are primarily objects of desire” (1998: xx). Overall, there were very few spaces for female characters to speak in Sanskrit and therefore largely unable to articulate their own subjectivity.

The *Kaumudīmahotsava* is striking precisely because of the space it gives the nun Yogasiddhi to speak Sanskrit and through that, articulate her experience and inhabit a subject position within the play. The following sections will therefore look at how subjectivity and objectivity are created in the speech of three main characters within the play, paying particular attention to the speech of the nun and how it compares to that of the prince and princess. By comparing the nun's speech with that of the prince, who is emblematic of the standard nāyaka, I will show that the writer has made a conscious choice to endow the nun with a subjectivity that is comparable to the main male character of the play. That this was a conscious choice by the author is further supported when we compare the

nun and the princess in the play, where we find drastic differences between the two characters' speech and subjectivities despite their shared femininity. To build further on the significance of the nun's subjectivity and Sanskrit speech, I also investigate how rasa production is tied to both literary subjectivity and the opportunity for speech and will argue for a model of rasa that resembles that of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin's aesthetic theorization which takes rasa as a formal component within the play that arises out of the emotions directly expressed by individual characters. Overall, I will argue that the nun is given a key subjective position in the play.

### 3.4: Synopsis of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*:

The play begins with a prince named Kalyāṇavarman who is about to retake his ancestral throne. When he was a child, his father had been overthrown and he was forced to go into hiding. At the beginning of the play Kalyāṇavarman reminisces about his past and, while waiting for his friend, happens to meet a princess and her retinue. Kīrtimati, the princess, is on a journey to get a blessing from the goddess so that she can get married. Upon meeting Kalyāṇavarman, they fall in love with one another. While the two lovers must prematurely part ways at the end of Act One, Kīrtimati's confidant, the Sanskrit-speaking nun named Yogasiddhi, and Kalyāṇavarman's friend Vaikhānasa (the vidūṣaka or clown figure of the play) conspire to unite the couple. At the beginning of Act 2 we learn that the princess has spent the night awake, pining after the prince. She drew a picture of him on a piece of cloth and this portrait, taken by her sakhīs to discuss, was ultimately stolen by a hawk. In the next section of the act, while Yogasiddhi worries about the Princess' love sickness, the portrait of the prince falls down from the sky and causes Yogasiddhi to pass out from distress. The princess' confidante Nipūṇikā helps to revive Yogasiddhi who herself begins to speak Prakrit when she awakes. Soon after she reverts to speaking Sanskrit and, recognizing the prince and realizing for whom the princess is love sick, she vows to unite the two lovers. In the Act Three, Kalyāṇavarman, in a state of lovesickness, is relived when he hears the news that Yogasiddhi will help him win the hand of the princess. In Act Four, we hear through second-hand sources, that the prince is on his way to retake the throne of Magadha and prior to Act Five, he is successfully crowned king. During this final Act, Kīrtimati's father, the Śūrasena king, is convinced by Yogasiddhi and the Goddess (Bhavānī) to permit

the two lovers to marry. Kalyāṇavarman and Kīrtimatī reunite in the pleasure garden of his palace and the play ends with the union of the lovers and the coming of the monsoon season.

### 3.5: The Speech of Kalyāṇavarman, the Prince

In order for us to understand the significance of the nun's speech in this play, we must understand how it compares to the speech of other characters. We will focus on the prince's speech here, as he is a key subject in the play whose voice dominates its majority. For example, he speaks 21 out of the 32 verses in Act One, all 10 verses in Act Three, and 15 out of 33 total verses in Act Five. As the prince is a standard *nāyaka* (hero) around whom the play is centred, his speech provides a baseline for what a subjective character looks like. Simultaneously, we will also evaluate how *rasa* is produced through the prince's speech.

The subjectivity of the prince is created through the way in which he is able to directly express himself. We are not left to guess what the prince feels as he directly expresses his emotions and thoughts to the theatrical audience. Part of this subjectivity is built up in the way he explains his own story. For example, we learn in the first act that the prince is not actually a prince, at the moment, because his father was killed when a rival king took his throne. The main action of the play, we come to learn, is two-fold: the prince's endeavor to retake his ancestral throne and the union of the lovers. The prince provides the audience with personal details about himself through several verses at the start of the play, which enable him to actively articulate his motivations and background, thereby creating what we may acknowledge to be a subject position within the text.

In the first verse, the prince explains his family's past. This family's history will become the *bīja* (seed) for one of the play's two plot complications, and also provides the motive for the prince's subsequent actions. After the prologue (*viṣkambhaka*) ends the prince enters the stage, and decides to sit in the shade of a tree as he waits for his friend, the clown. He then begins to think about his childhood as the Vindhya Mountain breezes trigger his olfactory memories. He informs us that he remembers his youth and then begins to narrate the tale, taking us back to a prior time:

sannaddhaḥ kavacī śarāsanadharas tāto ruṣā proṣito  
jātā dhautakapolapatralatikā bāṣpāmbubhir mātaraḥ |  
ekākī calakākapakṣavibhavo nīto 'smy ahaṃ tāpasair  
mithyeva pratibhāti śaiśavakathā swapno nu māyā nu me || 10 || (Sastri 1952: 5).

Prepared for battle, covered in armor and bearing a quiver, my father went away with rage. My mother's cheek make-up was washed away by the moisture of her tears. I alone, with my trembling side-locks, was carried away by ascetics. The story of my youth seems to be truly false—was it a dream? A delusion? (Translation my own).

Having taken us to the time of his childhood, the prince gives us some key images: a heroic and wrathful father, a distressed and weeping mother, and a lone, terrified child being taken into hiding. The verse paints a pitiful image that makes us sympathize with the prince. The first half describes the prince's parents during the coup as well as the prince's personal trauma at witnessing his parents in such a state. The next two images show the child-prince being separated from his parents and placed into hiding, the implication being that the prince would also be killed if he were left to stay. This peek into the Prince's past allows the character to begin to establish his own subject position within the play.

In regard to *rasa*, we can say that the author relies on descriptive imagery, and the implications of such imagery, to build up *rasa*. *Karuṇa rasa* is only realized in the second half of the verse when we realize that the prince is being taken away for his safety—leaving his parents to die in the coup. Mankad has noted that the final section of this verse is reminiscent of a verse in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntala* when King Duṣyanta, having remembered Śakuntalā, is unable reunite with her (Mankad 155). The verse which shares a similar line, reads:

swapno nu māyā nu matibhramo nu kliṣṭaṃ nu tāvat phalam eva puṇyam |  
asannivṛtṭyai tad atītam eṣa manorathānām ataḥprapātaḥ || (Vasudeva 2006: 280).

Was it a dream? An illusion? A fallacy? A hard-won reward of virtue? Departed beyond recall, it is become this boundless precipice for my desires. (Vasudeva 2006: 281).

This verse uses the idea of a dream to express the illusory and elusive nature of what Duṣyanta desires most—to be reunited with Śakuntalā. In a similar manner, this line draws on the bewilderment and longing of the prince. The prince yearns for the situation to be contrary to fact—but there is no way to rewrite history. Because we know that the prince’s desires can never come into being, the audience can empathize with the prince. Thus in this verse, *rasa* production begins in the subjective experience and emotions of the prince, which are then intensified, causing the audience to taste the emotions of his experience. *Rasa* production would therefore occur at the end in the audience’s response to the prince’s emotions and experience. We can parallel the mechanism of literary affect in this verse to both Bharata’s mechanism of *rasa* production and Daṇḍin’s idea of a “*rasavat*” (*rasa-laden*) statement.

Reading this through Bhārata’s theory of *rasa*, the basis for the *rasa* would be in its *vibhāvas* (stimulant factors) which here would be the suffering of the parents and the child-prince. The *anubhāvas* are then their reactions to their suffering. The fact that this is a recollection of the prince suggests that it may not be staged and therefore, it would be as if reading a text where the audience must imagine the reactions (*anubhāvas*) of the literary characters (the rage and bravery of the father, the sorrow of the mother and the fright of the child). This then results in various *vyabhicāribhāvas* (transitory states) which contribute to the overall *karuṇa* (pathetic) *rasa*. Specifically, the *vyabhicāribhāvas* might consist of the anger of the father in their situation and the anxiety felt by the prince as he is subsequently taken away from his parents, and the actual death of his parents.<sup>25</sup> Daṇḍin’s idea of a *rasa-laden* statement is not far removed from the processes outlined by Bhārata. The definition of a *rasa-laden* statement is that it is one in which a specific *rasa* is produced by the “...requisite foundational and stimulant factors and made known by the requisite reactions,” (Pollock 2016: 182). This statement we might also therefore classify as *rasa-laden* statement where *karuṇa* *rasa* is made manifest through the various elements within the verse. Significantly, for Daṇḍin, Sheldon Pollock argues, aesthetic emotion is largely, and perhaps exclusively, located in “the intensified emotion of the character” (2016: 176). This notion that *rasa* arises directly from a

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<sup>25</sup> See Keith a full listing of the 33 *vyabhicāribhāvas* outlined in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (1924: 315).

character's subjective emotions can easily be used to describe the production of rasa with respect to the prince here.

Just prior to the following verse, Kalyāṇavarman explains that even men of splendor have misfortune which sticks to them like a shadow. He elaborates on this by making reference to Udayana, the illustrious king of the Vatsas:

dhvastaḥ sundarapāṭalo nipatitaḥ kārtyāyanaḥ śaktitaḥ  
prāptaṁ bhairavam andhakāragahanaṁ pradyotakārāgrham |  
tejorāśiravāptavān udayanas tai stair upāyakramaiḥ  
kauśambīṁ ca suyāmunaṁ ca vijayī bhūyo 'pi vatseśvaraḥ ||11|| (Sastri 1952: 6).

Sundarapāṭala is lost and Kārtyāyana fallen down from power, is captured in the terrifying and imperviously dark dungeon of King Pradyota. That Udayana, who is a mass of splendour, regained Kauśambi and Suyāmuna through various series of means and once again, the lord of the Vatsas is victor. (Translation my own).

The main reference of this play lies in the figure of Udayana who appears in many literary works, from early kathā literature like the *Bṛhatkathā* (and subsequently taken up in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*), to drama as in Subhandhu's *Vāsavadattā*, Bhāsa's *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* and *Svapnavāsavadatta*, and Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī*, to name but a few incarnations of his story. This particular allusion to Udayana refers to his capture by King Pradyota. Having set a trap, Pradyota's men overwhelmed Udayana who, though aided by his horse Sundarapāṭala, and his military attendant Kārtyāyana, eventually succumbs to the attack and is locked away in the dungeons (Kavi 1928: iii).<sup>26</sup> In time however, Udayana manages to return to his palace, Suyāmuna, in his capital city of Kauśambi

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<sup>26</sup> Kavi explains that Kārtyāyana was Udayana's "military attendant who accompanied him in Nāgavana" and refers us to the story in *Vīṇāvāsavadattā* (1928: iii). However, I have not been able to find this reference in the *Vīṇāvāsavadattā* of Subandhu (Gray 1913) or the *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* (Swarup and Woolner 1991). This reference to Kārtyāyana (or Kātīyāyana) may suggest a particular story the author was aware of. This reference to Udayana's attendant may be found in Devidhar's 1939 translation of the *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa*, but I have been unable to access a copy of the text. Chettiārthodi Rajendran, who relies on Devidhar's translation in his discussion of the *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa*, notes that Udayana "addresses each of his worthy attendants by name and clan..." when he realizes he is caught in Pradyota's trap (2014: 245). I suspect this source might clarify who Kārtyāyana is.



and is once again victorious.<sup>27</sup> Given the preface of this verse, the prince clearly equates himself to Udayana who, though a man of great *tejas*, also experienced his own misfortune but managed to rise again. The prior verse detailing his events of his past is seen by the prince as his own downfall and source of misfortune. The verse implies and foreshadows, through the rise of Udayana, the prince's desire to retake his hereditary throne. Overall, the verse contributes to the growing subjectivity of the prince by giving the audience a further look into his mind. Having been given an idea of the prince's past and his emotions to it, the audience now knows the prince's goals in the play, that is, to retake the throne.

While the recapture of the Magadha throne is one of the main issues to be resolved, the prince's main concern is his desire for the princess he soon meets and his stage time reflects that. Almost all of the play's coup and planning for the coup is hidden between acts or else recounted afterwards. That being said, Kalyāṇavarman's recapture of the throne is important because it needs to be resolved for the play to finish, and for Kalyāṇavarman to reunite with the princess. It is perhaps with good reason that our poet made this link between Udayana and Kalyāṇavarman. The above Udayana story is taken up in Bhāsa's *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa*, and both plays are similar in how they centre around a nāyaka who, despite being involved with some military endeavour, is more focused on his love life. As Udayana fixates on Vasavadattā in *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa*, so too is the bulk of Kalyāṇavarman's acting and speech fixated on Kīrtimatī. Significantly, the prince is given a lot of space within the drama to talk as he is its main focus. However, while he fixates on Kīrtimatī, she is largely denied a space to speak and instead is an object around which the prince expresses his feelings. We will analyze this more closely in the following section.

Kīrtimatī's objectification by the prince occurs in numerous verses within the play. In many of these instances her body or beauty is used to convey the Prince's feelings of love and lust. For example, the princess's beauty is described in 13 verses in Act One, 3 in Act Three, and 4 verses in Act Five. Many of the prince's verses focus on his love for the princess as expressed through extensive

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<sup>27</sup> See the *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* of Bhāsa to see a dramatic take on this story.

descriptions of her beauty and charms—resulting in her objectification at the expense of creating śṛṅgāra rasa centred around the prince’s subjective emotions. We look at one example here for two reasons (1) to see how this compares to the nun’s objectification of other characters she feels affection for and (2) to further build a picture of the princess to compare with the figure of the nun.

After the princess exits the scene in act 1, Kalyāṇavarman’s friend Vaikhānasa (the vidūṣaka or clown) arrives and the prince tells him about the princess he just met. Enduring some teasing from the clown, Kalyāṇavarman gives a more descriptive verse with her as its object:

asyāḥ sakhe kṣaṇaṃ adṛśyata romarājī  
sraste ‘śuke stanabharān mṛgalocanāyāḥ |  
māleva śatpadamayī bhuvanāni jetuṃ  
maurvīkṛtā bhagavatā makaradhvajena || 25 || (Sastri 1952: 16).

Friend, the line of hair on her abdomen is seen for a moment while her upper garment is loosened due to the weight of the doe-eyed girl’s breasts. It is a garland made of bees—turned into a bow-string by the lord who bears the crocodile flag—to conquer the three worlds.

Rasa is created through the prince’s attraction through the princess and is made manifest through the consumption of her body. The emphasis of the prince’s gaze on sensual areas of the princess’s body leave the audience with no doubts about his feelings: he is attracted to her physical charms. Describing the princess’s dishevelment from her journey, his words focus on the sensual elements of her body that are now revealed: her glory trail, her eyes, and her breasts. Although this verse focuses completely on the feminine body, its aim is to express masculine emotions. The second half of the verse makes this clear with the simile made between her trail of abdominal hair and the bow-string of Kāmadeva. Here, her body is transformed into a weapon which is used, as Kāmadeva’s bow is, as a tool to ensnare the prince, making him fall in love (at least love as it pertains to śṛṅgāra). While the basis for śṛṅgāra rasa in this verse is centered in the emotions of the prince, it is through the objectification of the princess’s body that the rasa is built up, intensified, and ultimately made manifest. The role of the princess here is solely to be an object which stimulates the audience’s

recognition of the prince's feelings. Rather than saying, "I am charmed by the princess" this affection is poetically communicated through the gaze of the prince. The audience then becomes complicit in the objectification of the princess through the production of *rasa* as they must follow this gaze in order to taste the *rasa*.

Because the prince's verses tend to make use of the princess to express his emotions, we can say that the princess serves as an object of *rasa* production. By this, I mean that she is the site where emotions are manipulated and transformed into *rasa*—whether her body (1) be dissected by the prince's gaze or (2) as a space which reflects the signs of a *rasa* (ie. horripilation in the case of *śṛṅgāra*). In technical terms, the prince provides the stimulus for *śṛṅgāra rasa* as an *vibhāva* (determinant) whereas the princess becomes a space where the *anubhāvas* (consequents) and *vyabhicāribhāvas* (transitory states) are manifested. This is true elsewhere in the play where the princess' voice is absent, but her body is present as either (a) a site of imagination or (b) physically present on stage.

To conclude this section, what can we say about Kalyāṇavarman and his speech? The prince speaks predominantly in Sanskrit verse and he occupies much of the speaking space within the play. The way the prince is able to express himself and his central position within the dramatic action place him in a subject position. His speech is personal and often reflects his mind and inner thoughts. When the breezes blow about him while waiting in the *tapovana*, he tells us exactly what he thinks in response to the stimuli—namely that the Vindhya Mountain breezes remind him of his childhood. These thoughts are then expanded on in subsequent verses. The prince's emotions and motivations are not distantly implied through the speech of others but directly communicated and centered as key to the story.

The subjectivity granted to the prince by the poet is also tied to the production of *rasa* in the play. He is often the subject of *rasa* production, in the sense that the *rasa* portrayed in the drama is based on the feelings of this specific character. For example, the *karuṇa* *rasa* built up in this early part

of the first act is an extension of the prince's own emotions. Another trend we see tied to rasa production is the prince's objectification of the princess. She is often the object of his verses and therefore made into the object of his subjective rasa. For example, of Kalyāṇavarman's 21 verses in the 1st act, the princess—through her beauty or body—figures in 13. Through this evaluation of the prince's speech and its link to rasa production, we see that subjectivity is important to the creation of rasa and that this subjectivity is closely related to the ability of a character to speak.

### **3.6: The Speech of Yogasiddhi, the Nun**

Yogasiddhi speaks an unusually large amount of Sanskrit which centres around her own emotions within the play. Significantly, she dominates the second act of the play and her speech resembles that of the prince. In this section I will show how the speech of the nun and the rasa production centred around her, is similar to that of Kalyāṇavarman and will argue that the writer of the play made a conscious choice to write Yogasiddhi as a subjective character. This section will first look at how Yogasiddhi is made a subject through her capability to articulate her own story, motivations, and feelings to the audience of the play—this is in contrast to the princess and indicates that subjectivity was not given to every character in the play. It then looks at how this subjectivity allows rasa production to be centred around the nun and explores how the nun, in a subjective position, objectifies both the prince and princess at different times in the play. Overall, the extent of her speaking parts in the play, the content of her speaking parts, and her role in the production of rasa demonstrate how the author consciously positions the nun in a subject position.

#### **Making the Nun into Subject**

One of the ways to look at the importance of the nun is to look at how often she speaks and how this compares to other characters in the play—and especially the prince. As noted above, the prince dominates much of the speaking space of the play and is the primary speaker in all three acts that he appears in. As we can see in chart 1 below, the next character to have the most speaking lines in terms of verse is the nun. The character with the third highest number of speaking parts is Mantragupta whose verse percentage is almost half of Yogasiddhi's, coming in at about 8% of the

play's total verses. These figures alone suggest that there is something important about the nun and this is further implied when we recognize that she dominates Act Two with 15 out of the total 16 verses being spoken by her. Comparatively, the prince dominates 3 out of 5 acts in the play and no other character, aside from perhaps Mantraguṇḍa in Act Four, comes close to dominating the speaking space of other acts.

	Total Number of Verses	Number of Verses Spoken by Prince	Number of Verses Spoken by Nun	Number of Verses Spoken by Other Non-Female Speakers	Number of Verses Spoken by Princess
Act I	32	22	0	Sūtradhāra (5), Muniśiṣya (2), Kāñjukiya (3)	0
Act II	16	0	15	Nepathya (1)	0
Act III	10	10	0	0	0
Act IV	21	0	0	Vardhamānaka (2), Āryarakṣita (5), Vīrasena (4), Mantragupta (9), Nepathya (1)	0
Act V	33	15	2	Lokākṣiḥ (6), Veśarakṣitaḥ (3), Nepathya (1), Purohita (6)	0
Total:	112	47	17	48	0
Percentage:	100 %	41.96%	15.18 %	Sūtradhāra (4.46%), Muniśiṣya (1.79), Kāñjukiya (2.68), Nepathya (2.68), Vardhamānaka (1.79), Āryarakṣita (4.46), Vīrasena (3.57), Mantragupta (8.04), Lokākṣi (5.36), Veśarakṣita (2.68), Purohita (5.36)	0

Table 1: Sanskrit verse distribution amongst male and female characters in the Kaumudīmahotsava.

When the nun makes her debut in the second act she begins by giving us her background and current problems, similar to the way the prince is introduced in Act One. The way in which the audience is made familiar with the nun—through the expression of her goals, her past, and her feelings—is one way that the play’s author gives the nun a subjective position like the prince. The nun begins by explaining to the audience that she is unable to properly renounce the world because of her duty to the princess. She says:

apyajavajjivasukhānyavadhīrayantī  
khadyotavaidyutarucikṣaṇabhaṅgurāṇi |  
kṛṣṭāham īśvarasutāguṇapāśabandhair  
baddhaṃ kalevarabharaṃ punar udvahāmi || 1 || (Sastri 1952: 24).

Disregarding slow and fleeting happinesses which are transient like the momentary flashes of lustre from lightening and the sun, I, ensnared by the qualities of the princess, bear up this bound burden of a body once more. (Translation my own).

Here the nun gives us a description of herself through some contrasting images which are used to begin describing her dilemma. The first two images draw on characteristics of ascetic living through their reference to spurning worldly comforts and transient nature. This type of description would be expected of a parivrajikā (literally: one who wanders about as a religious mendicant). It is contrasted however with her third description which explains that she is drawn to the princess, implying the nun has worldly concerns despite the fact that she is highly ascetic. Because she is invested in Kīrtimatī, she bears the bondage of her body again. This implies that the nun is engaged in worldly affairs—though as to what specifically, is not made clear until the prose Sanskrit speech following the verse. The nun details her past, saying that she was a detached, wandering ascetic until she came to Mathurā and became friends with Kīrtimatī’s mother. We then learn that she was not only friends with the queen, but also helped raise the princess and because of her motherly role, Yogasiddhi feels a strong, motherly affection for the princess. She concludes by giving us the reason for her engagement in worldly life and current abandonment of asceticism: she cannot pursue her spiritual pursuits again until she knows that Kīrtimatī has a good husband and family. Through this exposition given directly from the nun’s mouth, the audience is given her background, her feelings,

and her problem—the solution for which will be the nun’s main motivation for her future actions in the play. By giving the nun the space to explain herself, the author imbues the nun with a certain subjectivity that is shared by only one other character in the play—the prince.

There is a handful of verses within this act which, like the prince’s speech, utilize the princess as an object of *rasa*. These verses often appear to be about *śṛṅgāra*; however, in the context of the nun, they produce a somewhat different type of affect: the *vātsalya rasa* centered around filial or motherly affection. Our first example is a verse that follows after the nun’s background exposition. Here, Yogasiddhi describes the state of the princess, saying:

jātaṃ vibhramadṛṣṭipātaśabalaṃ pāṇḍudvayaṃ gaṇḍayor  
gāḍhe yauvanasoṣmaṇī stanataṭe gāḍo ‘pi cintājvaraḥ |  
avyaktas tanimā svakāntyupacayād apyevamālakṣyate  
prabhraṣṭābharaṇapradeśaviṣameṣvaṅge śvanaṅgāmayāḥ || 5 ||  
(Sastri 1952: 25).

Her two pale cheeks appear spotted from casting about flurried glances while the slopes of her tightly drawn breasts are heated from youth. The fever of anxiety is likewise intense. There is an imperceptible thinness from the growth in her own beauty and her love-sickness is thus beheld in her limbs, which are uneven as indicated by her fallen-down ornaments. (Translation my own).

The nun describes the various ailments of the princess, almost as if she was describing a *virahinī*. The princess is in a state of love-sickness, as evidenced through her pallor, bewilderment (as suggested by her flurried looks), fever, and jewelry which has become ill-fitted from her gauntness. The audience is able to recognize the signs of her love-sickness through these descriptions of her body however, these images do not work to express the princess’ feelings.

Rather, this listing of the various parts of the princess’ body works to create an inventory of her sickness and through this, reveals the nun’s concern for Kīrtimatī’s ailment. Instead of emphasizing these features for the purpose of erotic effect (*śṛṅgāra*), the author has used these images to create a feeling of maternal affection (*vātsalya*). In the prose section just prior to this verse, the nun



explicitly explains that she must resolve the princess' love life before she can return to asceticism. The nun, however, not yet knowing that the princess has met someone, only knows that the princess is love-sick and does not know why. Here we see the nun's words as objectifying the princess in a similar manner to the prince's. Both characters' feelings for the princess are expressed through their gaze and description of the princess' body. In Kalyāṇavarman's case, his gaze focuses on the sensual parts of the body to ultimately express that he is enchanted by her, resulting in the production of *śṛṅgāra*. Likewise, Yogasiddhi's gaze also focuses on the sensual aspects of Kīrtimatī's body and mannerisms however, unlike the prince's romantic, sexual feelings, the nun is shown to have a deep concern for the princess and this develops into *vātsalya* as the audience is able to empathize with this motherly concern. With respect to *rasa*, this verse shows that this *vātsalya* *rasa* has its basis in the nun's subjective feelings of motherly concern which is then developed through the use of the princess' body, making her, once again, an object of *rasa*.

A similar verse which could be read as producing *śṛṅgāra*, if we did not know its context, comes near the end of the act. The nun's mind is briefly taken away from Kīrtimatī as a picture falls from the sky. This image then prompts her to focus on the prince and her connection to him. Following this interlude, Nipuṇikā tells the nun that the princess has met Kalyāṇavarman and she is sick precisely because she is pining after him. Having learned of their meeting and giving another verse describing the princess' lovesick antics, Yogasiddhi then says:

sā rājaputrī nayati triyāmāṃ  
kāntaṃ vinā jāgaraṇāruṇākṣī |  
mām eva manye pratipālayantī  
pratyūvelām iva cakravākī || 12 || (Sastri 1952: 32)

That princess, whose eyes are red from wakefulness, passes the three watches of the night without her lover. I think she is waiting for me like the cakravākī bird waits for day break. (Translation my own).

On its own, this verse, like the other verse, suggests that *śṛṅgāra* is the *rasa* the poet intends to create. The poem describes through various images, how the princess is unable to sleep for want of

her lover. One significant image here is that of the cakravākī bird. Cakravāka birds cannot bear to be apart, but often find themselves separated at night, when they cannot see each other (Nadarajah 1994: 268; Ingalls 1965: 20). Up until we realize the verse is spoken by the nun, we would normally expect this to have been said by the prince. The implication here, in saying that the princess is waiting for “me,” is not that “me” refers to the “male cakravāka” but rather, “me” the *daybreak* which allows the cakravākas to be reunited. While this verse is concerned with the union of the lovers, the subject focus of the verse is neither one of the lovers but rather, the one who allows the lovers to be united. This is an important point to keep in mind point because the nun not only has a personal stake in their union, but the author of the play has made consistent references throughout the play that hint at or show the nun working toward the union of the lovers. We will return to this point after discussing the objectification of the prince. For now, we can conclude that the figure of the princess—quite literally—is used to create vātsalya rasa from the basis of the nun’s emotions. This is an important indicator of the nun’s subjectivity because rasa production, as it occurs in this play, appears to be centred in the direct emotional expression of a character. Rasa, as it centres around the nun, can therefore only be created if the character holds a subject position. As we have seen previously, the other major subjective figure in the play is the prince.

### **Motherly Love: Objectifying the Prince**

The princess is not the only character in the play who becomes an object of the nun’s emotions: the prince is also an object of vātsalya rasa. After the nun has described the princess’ lovesickness, an omen drops down from the sky—the image of the prince that was drawn by the princess. Having been stolen from the friends of the prince by a hawk, the image now comes into the hands of the nun. The radiance of the prince’s image blinds Yogasiddhi and eventually causes her to pass out from emotional shock as she recognizes the man in the image. We soon learn that the nun’s first charge was young Kalyāṇavarman. The nun, not yet realizing that the prince lives, gives two verses which describe (a) her reaction to seeing the prince and (b) motherly images in remembrance of the prince. Just prior to the first verse Nipuṇikā asks what befell the child Yogasiddhi that has been speaking of. She responds:

bāṣpāndhāpi yadādaraṃ daśa diśo dṛṣṭiḥ samudvīkṣate  
sthāvirye 'pi parisnutastanamukhaṃ vakṣo yadutkaṇṭhate |  
cintātūlikayā manorathamaye kuṣye yadālikhyate  
prabraṣṭaṃ tadapatyakaṃ nipuṇike dagdho vidhiḥ pṛchyatām || 5|| (Sastri 1952: 26)

Even one whose eyes are blind with tears sees his esteem from ten directions; even in old age, one's chest has a nipple that flows eagerly; he writes on the wall of fancy with the brush of thought. Oh Nipuṇikā, ask of that accursed fate of that lost child!

This verse gives builds up vātsalya rasa through imagery that reveals affection for the child as well as longing and sorrow. The first image appears to comment on Kalyāṇavarman's radiance, a common reference throughout the play. Despite the tears from her eyes, she still recognizes that radiance and in consequence of that recognition, her nipples metaphorically flow eagerly despite her now elderly age. This lactation image is a clear reference to vātsalya rasa as the lactation of the mother cow, in seeing her calf, is a common motif in vātsalya images. Having built up a clear recognition and affection for the prince in the first half of the verse, the second half builds on Yogasiddhi's sorrow and longing for the boy. The brush of thought suggests that he is in her mind, as a dream or fantasy—something that does not exist. This makes sense in the context of the verse as she is not yet sure that Kalyāṇavarman is alive. Finally, the nun's frustration is revealed through her pointed blaming of fate for the child's loss, indicating both her affection and grief for the boy. One point we should note, here, is that this verse does not objectify the prince in the same way that it does the princess. The verse gives two descriptions of the prince and then pairs these with a reaction from the nun. Unlike the nun's verses involving the princess—which relied only on physical descriptions of the princess—this verse inscribes the nun herself into the verse. She is not only a conduit for affect but is shown to respond to the emotion of the verse. The tears are not just anyone's tears, nor is it just anyone lactating—these are her own reactions to the sight of the prince, the emotional stimulus. The audience is able to empathize with the reactions of the nun and thereby taste the vātsalya rasa of the verse.

The mode of rasa production here is in line with early theories of rasa like those of Bhārata or Daṇḍin. The verse begins with an emotional stimulus—the vibhāva being the image of the prince.

The vātsalya rasa is then manifested through the reactions of the nun. These reactions Yogasiddhi has in response to Kalāṇavarman—her crying and lactation—comprise the anubhāvas whereas the vyabhicāribhāvas would consist of the feelings suggested in the second half of the verse, namely, the despair in her cursing of fate. The formalist approach to rasa here suggests that rasa was an ingredient that the playwright consciously added to the text (and the actors, its performance), from which readers may taste the aesthetized emotion being represented on stage. This places our poet stylistically into an earlier, pre-Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka era of rasa production, but the use of vātsalya is especially striking because it was not a part of the rasa mainstays in early aesthetic theory. The canonical number of rasas during the period of Bharata or Daṇḍin remained eight, until śānta “peaceful” rasa was added near the end of the first millennium, and vātsalya was not regarded as one of these.<sup>28</sup> Vātsalya was first articulated, however, in the Kāvyaṭīkā of Rudraṭa (9th century) and considered by Bhoja (11th century) as one of the 11 foundational rasas (Pollock 2016: 691). Considering how we see that rasa is centered in the direct discourse of a subjective character like the nun, whose words manifest vātsalya rasa in the play, the poet’s use of vātsalya rasa, despite it not being a canonical rasa of her relative time period, could suggest that she wrote on the cusp of Rudraṭa and Bhoja,

The vātsalya rasa expressed in this verse is further built upon in the next verse where Yogasiddhi remembers the prince. She sees his hands in the portrait of the grown-up prince and remembers, through a series of vignettes, the prince’s childhood through images of his hands:

yau dvau śaiśavau muṣṭibhedaviśadau rekhātapatrāṅkitau  
 kṣīṇo caṅkamaṇe madaṅgalimukhaṃ yābhyāṃ samāliṅgitam |  
 vandyē yāvapi kārītau gurujane mātṛā balādañjaliṃ  
 tau hastāvuragendrabhogasadrśapraudhapramāṇau katham || 6||  
 (Sastri 1952: 26).

Those two hands—tender at the opening of the clenched fists of infancy; marked like an umbrella with lines; which clung to my fingertips while feebly walking about;

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<sup>28</sup> Sheldon Pollock suggests that śānta rasa probably joined the rasa taxonomy around the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE (2016: 94).

which were also forced into an añjali (clasped hands) by the mother before the elders who are to be praised—how do they, now matured, have an augmented size that is puffed-up like the hood of the cobra?

Vātsalya rasa is created here through the nun's memories and emotions as reflected through the prince's hands which are the object of this rasa. Each of these hand images take us back through the nun's memories, detailing the growth of his hands during successive stages of childhood, from being a newborn to later toddlerhood. The first image of the prince's newborn hands gives us a mother's-eye view of the prince. The details of the hands from the clenched-fists and their line markings prompts the audience to conjure up an image of a doting mother, watching her newborn baby. Rasa is therefore created through the mother's gaze, which has its origin in the nun's own experiences. The next two images then detail how the mother engaged with the baby's hands, utilising the mother's gaze once again to stimulate vātsalya rasa. Finally, the last section of the verse represents the nun's current feelings of amazement at the change in his hands.

Noticeably, while the prince becomes the object of the nun's rasa in both verses, he is not necessarily objectified in the same ways as the princess. While we do not have the space to discuss this fully here, it does appear that the author sees a difference in vātsalya creation as it deals with male and female objects. The objectification of the princess in the nun's expression of vātsalya is similar to how she is objectified by the prince's expression of śṛṅgāra—the only real difference is that the nun is a non-erotic speaker in relation to the princess and so the verses become loci of vātsalya rather than śṛṅgāra rasa. Additionally, the objectification of the princess relies on a one-way fixed gaze on the princess, whereas within these verses focusing on the prince, the gaze of the subject goes both ways: we see the gaze of the subject on the emotional object (the prince) but that gaze also reflects back on itself, depicting the reaction of the subject to the object. I suspect that this difference is partially due to the fact that the nun's main concern with the princess is her love life. Building on this further, the distinction created by the author could suggest that there is an ideal object for vātsalya rasa and that an ideal creation of vātsalya is between the motherly figure and her son. The rasa in the verses pertaining to the objectification of the prince cannot be easily changed if we change

the speaker. The motherly implication of the images used in these verses are difficult to alter regardless of who the speaker is (ie. change the speaker to a king or the princess). This is a marked difference between the verses concerning the prince and princess—the imagery in the verses with the prince are clearly defined as vātsalya whereas the imagery and implications in the verses dealing with the princess can instantly be turned into śṛṅgāra rasa if the speaker is changed to either the lover or a friend of the princess. A further study on the creation of vātsalya rasa in this play and a comparison with others may provide more clear answer to the question of gendered differences in the mother's gaze.

Given these examples of vātsalya rasa which are centered on the nun's subjective experience and realized through the objectification of the prince and princess, we need to ask what the purpose of this is. Do we read this vātsalya as an incoherent addition to this act and is it coherent within the overall play? I argue that not only is it coherent, but its predominance in the second Act also sets up the nun's import for the rest of the play. At the end of Act Two we are given a final example of the nun's intentions and motivations in the play. Having declared that she will fix Kīrtimatī's problems by becoming the dawn to her pining, the nun makes another clear statement of intent. She says:

(ātmagatam) ubhāvapi madutsaṅgasaṃvarddhitau parasparaṃ kāmāturaṃ kīrtimatī  
kalyāṇavarmā ca | tadanayor vāgārthayor iva samavāyaṃ kariṣyāmi | (prakāśam)  
mamāyam abhisandhiḥ | (dhāturāgeṇa paṭānte samālikhya vācayati) |

śaunakam iva bandhumatī kumāram avimārakaṃ kuraṅgīva |  
arhati kīrtimatīyaṃ kāntaṃ kalyāṇavarmāṇam || 15 || (Sastri 1952: 35).

(*To herself*) Both those two, Kīrtimatī and Kalyāṇavarman, grew up on my lap and are in love with each other. I will make a union like that of sound and meaning.  
(*Out loud*) This is my intention. (*Having written on the edge of the cloth, she reads its out*):

As Bandhumatī deserves Śaunaka and Kuraṅgī deserves Prince Avimāraka, this Kīrtimatī deserves Kalyāṇavarman as her lover. (Translation my own).

This prose preface and written verse end the second act with a lasting impression of the nun's wishes and her intent to see them through. In the prose section, she implies that the two are ideal for each other and Yogasiddhi declares that she will unite them like sound and meaning. Here she makes reference to the first verse of Kālidāsa's *Raguvamśa* which describes the union of Parvatī and Śiva as being perfect like the union of sound and meaning. Following this prose statement, she spontaneously comes up with her own poem that expresses the suitability of the lovers' union and in doing so, puts her intentions into words. On the same cloth that Kīrtimatī drew a picture of the prince—that cloth which cause Yogasiddhi to have flashbacks of the prince—the nun writes her verse. In this verse, we see two literary allusions to other lovers, presumably well known to the play's author. These couples are Bandhumatī and Śaunaka from Daṇḍin's *Avantisundarikathā* and Kuraṅgī and Avimāraka of Bhāsa's *Avimāraka* (Krishnamachariar and Srinivasachariar 1989: 600). According to Yogasiddhi, as these lovers deserve each other, so too does Kīrtimatī deserve the prince as her husband.

While the nun does not dominate the speech of other acts, her character is consistently in the foreground, reminding us of her importance—and her desire to accomplish her goals. Nipuṇikā foreshadows Yogasiddhi's role as a uniter in the beginning of Act Two saying:

sā evva ṇo imassim saṃkaṭaptavāhe saṃkamo bhavissidi |  
[saiva na etasmin saṃkaṭappravāhe saṅkramo bhaviṣyati |] (Sastri 1952: 24).

She alone will be a causeway in this stream of our difficulties (translation my own).

The difficulties referred to in this verse are the royal retinue's concern with the princess' love-sickness. Yogasiddhi's importance as a uniter of the lovers is picked up again in Act 3 when the clown relates to Kalyāṇavarman her promise to unite them through the help of their portraits. At this time in the play the prince adds his own drawing of the princess to the cloth. This scrap of cloth now bears the portrait of both lovers and includes the verse written by Yogasiddhi, which appears on its back. In Act Four when Yogasiddhi and Kalyāṇavarman are both absent, the nun's uniting role is remarked on as Mantragupta and Vīrasena discuss the status of the prince. We discover that Yogasiddhi has returned to Śurasena with the princess and via Āryarakṣita, an ally of the prince, she advises

Mantragupta to repeat what she has said prior—a reference to Yogasiddhi's verse. This cloth is then shown to King Kirtisena in Act Five when Yogasiddhi attempts to convince him to give his daughter's hand in marriage to Kalyāṇavarman. Assisted by the goddess Bhavānī, Yogasiddhi persuades the king to let the two lovers marry. While Yogasiddhi speaks in a limited fashion after the second Act, her character is consistently present on stage at key points throughout the drama. I would argue that her role would not be as significant if she did not have her speaking parts in Act Two. Her speech in this Act sets up her back story and motivations for her actions in the drama, demonstrating that she is intimately invested in the drama's main issue—the union of the lovers—through moments of *vātsalya rasa* which are derived from her subjective emotions. Like the prince, Yogasiddhi is able to articulate her own emotions and feelings in a way that the princess is unable to.

### **Subjectivity as Authorial Projection?**

There are moments within this play that we can read as hints of authorial projection. One major point is that the nun is consciously shown writing and speaking Sanskrit. The nun speaks Sanskrit from the time that she enters the play but once she becomes emotionally overwhelmed by the image of the prince she thought dead, she faints and begins to speak Prakrit. She soon after reverts back to speaking Sanskrit. This subtle shift in language represents a conscious choice, on behalf of the writer, to have the nun speak Sanskrit. While the nun could speak Prakrit like the other women in the play, her character is specifically written with Sanskrit as her primary language. The importance of her language use is only heightened when we consider how much the nun speaks in the play. Aside from the prince, she is the next character assigned the most number of verses and speaking time. Characters in a play cannot do anything unless their writers allow them too—and this is what makes the figure of the nun so important. The writer of the play wrote the nun in such a way that she was another subjective character within the play, actively engaged in using Sanskrit. We see this further when we look at the way the nun spontaneously composes a Sanskrit verse in Act Two and writes it down, formally declaring her intention to unite the lovers. In this moment, the nun becomes a poet—and a well versed one at that. It is almost metatheatrical in the way that the nun demonstrates that she's not only familiar with Kalidāsa and Daṇḍin in the composition of her verse, but also states that



she will unite the two lovers through this act of writer, articulating, perhaps, the voice of the actual author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*.

### 3.7: Conclusions

By evaluating and comparing the speech of Kalyāṇavarman and Yogasiddhi in this chapter, I have argued that the author of this play creates a subject position for the nun which is closely paralleled to the main subject of the play—the prince. Both the prince and the nun speak Sanskrit verse and through this, are able to dominate much of the drama’s speaking space. Within their verses, both characters are able to directly express their backgrounds, motivations, and feelings, developing a subject position for each character. The subjectivity and objectivity of a given character, as revealed through their speech and modes of communication, has important implications for the production of *rasa*. Both Kalyāṇavarman and Yogasiddhi shape the play’s affectual content as many moments of *rasa* are centered around their personal feelings. Through this analysis of speech and subjectivity, we see that the poet was particularly invested in the character of the nun. The way in which *rasa* is based in the subjective experience of a character in the drama suggests that the playwright shared certain ideas about *rasa* production with both Bharata and Daṇḍin, understanding *rasa* to be a formal feature within drama centred, specifically, in the direct speech of a character. However, we also see evidence that the author shares ideas with later theorists like Rudraṭa and Bhoja in their inclusion of *vātsalya* *rasa*. Although *vātsalya* *rasa* is not the main *rasa* of the play, it plays a major secondary role and its inclusion is divergent from dramatic standards of its time. Additionally, the emphasis on *rasa* production on subjective characters may have anticipated some issues which get taken up by Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka’s reader revolution in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

To be a subject in Sanskrit drama you must not only speak Sanskrit, but also have the opportunity to speak. In this play, subjectivity and the production of *rasa* is tied to one’s opportunity to speak and as speech in the *nāṭaka* is primarily Sanskrit, a character must speak Sanskrit to hold a subjective role. Furthermore, as *nāṭakas* largely focus on the romance of the royal couple who are at the heart of the drama’s dominant *rasa*, *śṛṅgāra* *rasa*, the main subjective characters are the male

figures at the centre of the romance. The titular character of a nāṭaka is the nāyaka—the hero whose emotional and subjective worlds are the focal point of the drama. One would think that the nayikā—the heroine and apparent equivalent to the nāyaka—would be the most probable place where feminine subjectivity could be construed. However, the nāyaka-nayikā relationship is generally not one of equivalence and balance but one of subordination, where the nāyaka is the subject and the nayikā is the object for the nāyaka's emotions. This nāyaka-nayikā relationship is very much alive in the *Kaumudīmahotsava* however, there is a secondary subjectivity which exists outside of this nāyaka-nayikā dynamic: the nun. The case of the nun in the *Kaumudīmahotsava* is a rare example where a female character is written into a subject position. She is not only given space to speak Sanskrit but her subjectivity made relevant to the overall focus of the drama—the union of its lovers. Like the prince, the nun was also given space to enact her desires and exist in a subject position within the play. Finally, I have also briefly argued that we might read the figure of the nun as projection of the play's own author.

## Chapter 4: Conclusions

In the course of this thesis I have tried to show an alternative reading to the works of classical Sanskrit women poets which places particular emphasis on text. Classical Sanskrit women poets are often group together as if they comprise a “women’s tradition” within classical Sanskrit poetry. I have suggested that such a view is limiting because it tends to sideline women poets while also ignoring their individuality as poets. In an effort to counter this trend, I have analysed the texts of two specific women poets, Vijjakā and the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* as distinct authorial voices.

In conducting my analysis, I have tried to read these poems within the context of Classical Sanskrit courtly culture of the mid-first millennium. Prior scholarship generally suggests that women were not writing for “mainstream” audiences but instead writing on the fringes and engaging with alternative aesthetics. Shah suggests that the “personalised quality” of some women poets’ poems was “due to the fact that none of them was in search of a livelihood or was otherwise exposed to a public platform,” concluding that “they wrote, it seems, for themselves to express their innermost thoughts and feelings (2008: 9). A close reading of the texts, however, reveals a strong engagement with Sanskrit literary conventions and aesthetics which complicate the picture of women’s writing. I have tried to show that while women’s participation in literary production is ambiguous, there is evidence that women were poets and that their writing, the the case of Vijjakā and the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, is strongly informed by mainstream conventions and literary theory. However, we have seen moments where these two poets partially diverge from convention. Vijjakā at times eschews conventional rasa production for alternative aims but still relies on a classical Sanskrit literary conventions (ie. nāyikā tropes) to meet these aims. Likewise, the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* creates a rare subject position for a female character, a space not generally offered within the normative aesthetic conventions of Sanskrit poetry. This analysis of Vijjakā and the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* changes the picture of possibilities for women’s participation in classical Sanskrit literary production.

To return to the question I began this paper with—is Vijjakā the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, I have a few points to make. As we see from the way in which women's works were often treated as being very disparate, or else treated as a group, we have often missed the individuality of various women authors. While we cannot definitively say that Vijjakā was or was not the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, we can say that the two authorial voices, on the basis of style and authorial aims, are not the same. This attention to authorial voice suggests that the two writers were different authors however, it could also show that a single writer possesses different voices at different stages of her career and may use various voices for different aims. Firstly, to compare the two voices, the styles of the two poets are strikingly different. Vijjakā's poetry centres around affectual meaning that is located in a later school of rasa production around the time of Ānandavardhana and Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka (9<sup>th</sup> century), as demonstrated by the last two sections of poems. In comparison, the author of the *Kaumudīmahotsava* focuses on rasa production that belongs to an earlier period of rasa theory like that of Bharata and Daṇḍin (3-7<sup>th</sup> centuries).

Secondly, another point of divergence is in the way that gender is discussed and used without the poems of each author. The *Kaumudīmahotsava*'s author participates in the erotic objectification of the princess whereas Vijjakā tends to turn the erotic gaze into something humorous. Vijjakā's poetry also highlights gender within her poems where gender is not explicitly discussed, as in Vijjakā's discussion of "strīṭva" and "pauruṣam" in her virahiṇī poem. By contrast, gender dynamics appear to be highly conventional and largely unchallenged in the play except for in the case of the nun. In both cases however, there is no radical overturning of convention along the lines of gender. Vijjakā's poetry does not depict radically different images of femininity or the feminine experience. Rather, her writing is within the bounds of pre-existing models of femininity and womanhood. That being said, her poetry is attuned and informed by discourses of gender. In the case of the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, the poet creates a subject position for the nun in her play and while such a position is rare in classical Sanskrit literature, it still exists within the bounds of conventions as prescribed by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It is significant that, while such female character can "technically" speak Sanskrit, as opposed to Prakrit,

in Sanskrit drama, relatively few writers have made use of this opportunity and that is what makes the *Kaumudīmahotsava*'s choices around the nun significant.

A further avenue of research to pursue is the use of vātsalya rasa in the *Kaumudīmahotsava*. Based on the general dating of the play, the poet engages with vātsalya rasa before it becomes a formalized rasa and this is perhaps significant that a woman emphasizes it. Vātsalya, as a rasa, is uniquely gendered in that its main motif is the lactating nipples of the mother in response to her child. The poet's use of vātsalya suggests that other types of affection were important to the poet, aside from the dominant category of śṛṅgāra rasa which occurs between two heterosexual figures—a man and a woman. In the play, the poet's use of vātsalya and śṛṅgāra suggests that there is a unique overlap between the two—and that the reading of the rasa depends on the framing and subjectivity of the character articulating the rasa. I refer here to the usage of “śṛṅgāra-looking” verses which become vātsalya in the mouth of the nun. The use and creation of vātsalya rasa and how it is treated, between men and women writers, and gendered voices, warrants a closer study.

Moving forward from this targeted analysis of two women poets, there are a handful of other Classical Sanskrit women poets who have yet to be read on an individual basis. Any comparison of women poets necessitates that we first see what it is they say in their poetry, and also think carefully about who they were saying it to, and for what purposes, before we compare them simply as being women—this might ensure that we do not pre-emptively erase their voices before they are heard.

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## Appendix A: The Poems of Vijjakā

### Poem 1

bhūpālāḥ śaśibhāskarānvayabhuvāḥ ke nāma nāsādītā  
bhartāraṃ punar ekam eva hi bhuvas tvāṃ deva manyāmahe |  
yenāṅgaṃ parimṛśya kuntalam athākṛśya vyudasyāyataṃ  
colaṃ prāpya ca madhyadeśam adhunā kāñcyāṃ karaḥ pātitaḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 42).

By name which kings, in this world that follows the sun and the moon, are not fallen? Hey Lord, there is indeed only one king in the world and I think that is you—by whom Aṅga was seized and having then snatched Kuntala, having scattered about the unchecked Cholas, and having attained the middle kingdom, your hand is now cast down to Kāñcī. (Translation my own).

### Poem 2

yaśaḥputram deva tvadasilatikā 'bhūt samare  
samīras taddhūlīpaṭalapaṭarāśiṃ vikirati |  
śivā gāyantuuccair naṭati ca kabandhāvalir abhūd  
arātīnāṃ mokṣaḥ sapadi bhavabandhavyatikarāt || (Chaudhuri 1939: 43).

Hey King, in war the blade of your sword was born to a son called fame. The wind scattered about heaps of cloth and clouds of dust from it. The jackals sang loudly and a row of headless trunks danced about. From contact with the fetters of life, the liberation of your enemies came about instantly! (Translation my own).

### Poem 3

nilotpalaḍaśyāmāṃ vijjakāṃ mām ajānatā |  
vṛthaiva daṇḍinā proktaṃ sarvaśuklā sarasvatī || (Chaudhuri 1939: 43).

Vijjakā is dark blue like the petal of a blue lotus. While not knowing me, it has been said in vain by Daṇḍin that Sarasvatī is completely white. (Translation my own).

### Poem 4

kaver abhiprāyam aśabdagocaraṃ  
sphurantam ārdreṣu padeṣu kevalam |  
vadadbhir aṅgaiḥ kṛtaromavikriyair  
janasya tūṣṇīm bhavato 'yam añjaliḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 43-44).

The intent of a poet is a soundless range which merely glistens amongst tender verses. This is his praise: the silence of a person with arms speaking from the transformation of goosebumps. (Translation my own).

### Poem 5

dr̥ṣṭiṃ he prativeśini kṣaṇam ihāpy asmadgr̥he dāsyasi  
prāyenāsyā śiśoḥ pitā na virasāḥ kaupīrapaḥ pāsyati |  
ekākiny api yāmi satvaram itaḥ srotas tamālākulaṃ  
nīrandhrās tanum ālikhantu jaraṭhacchedā nalagranthayaḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 44).

Hey neighbour, watch my house just here for a moment, will you? Most of the time the father of this child will not drink tasteless well-water. Although alone, I will go quickly hence to the river that is thronging with tamālā (yellow mangosteen) trees. May the thick and hard-cutting knots of reeds scratch my body! (Translation my own).

### Poem 6

vayaṃ bālye bālāṃs taruṇimani yūnaḥ pariṇatāv  
apīcchāmo vṛddhāṃs tadiha kularakṣā samucitā |  
tvayārabdhaṃ janma kṣapayitum anenaikapatinā  
na me gotre putri kvacid api satilāñchanam abhūt || (Chaudhuri 1939: 45).

In childhood we desire boys, in youth we desire young men, and even in old age, we desire old men. And now, its proper to protect the family honor. With that husband alone, your life is beginning to go to waste. Dear daughter, nowhere in my lineage is the stain of virtue! (Translation my own).

### Poem 7

sikatilatalāḥ sāndracchāyātatañtāvilambinaḥ  
śiśīramarutāṃ nītāvāsāḥ kvaṇajjalaraṅkavaḥ |  
avinayavatīnirvicchedasmaravyayadāyinaḥ  
kathaya murale kenāmī te kṛtā niculadrumāḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 45).

Hey Marulā River, tell me, by whom were these fresh water Mangrove trees made? These trees, which have sandy surfaces and hang down the edge of densely shaded riverbanks, who are the eternal home of cool breezes and have noisy jalaraṅkava (gallinule) birds. These trees are givers of hindrance to the uninterrupted love-making of immodest women! (Translation my own).

### Poem 8

mañce romāñcitāṅgī ratimṛditatanoḥ karkaṭivāṭikāyāṃ  
kāntasyāṅge pramodād ubhayabhuja pariṣvaktakaṇṭe nilinā |  
pādena preñkhayanti mukharayati muhuḥ pāmārī phairavāṇāṃ  
rātrāv utrāsahetor vṛtiśikharalatā lambiniṃ kambumālām || (Chaudhuri 1939: 46).

She whose body, thrilled with horripilation, is pressed with delight. She is fused into the limbs of her lover— whose neck is embraced by both of her arms—from pleasure, on a bed composed of a karkaṭī (snake cucumber) grove. The village woman, causing the garland of conch shells that hang down from

the top of the fence to shake repeatedly, makes noise with her foot with the intent of scaring away the jackals in the night. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 9

devena prathamam jito 'si śaśabhṛllekhābhṛtā 'nantaram  
buddhenoddhatabuddhinā smara tataḥ kāntena pānthena me |  
tyaktvā tām bata haṃsi mām atikṛśam bālam anātham striyam  
dhik tvām dhik tava pauruṣam digudayam dhik kārmukam dik śarān || (Chaudhuri 1939: 46).

You were first conquered by that god who bears the mark of the moon and after, by the Buddha with elevated perception and then, by my love—the wayfarer. Alas, having abandoned them, you harmed me—that exceedingly frail girl, a woman without a protector. Damn you! Damn your masculinity! Damn your raising, damn your bow, and damn your arrows! (Translation my own).

#### Poem 10

meghair vyoma navāmbubhir vasumatī vidyullatābhir diśo  
dhārābhir gaganam vanāni kuṭajaiḥ pūrair vṛtā nimnagāḥ |  
ekam ghātayitum viyogavidhuram dinam varākīṃ striyam  
prāvṛṭkāla hatāśa varṇaya kṛtam mithyā kim āḍambaram || (Chaudhuri 1939: 46-47).

The rivers are stopped and the heavens are filled with clouds, the earth with fresh water, the quarters with vines of lightning, the sky with streams of water, the woods with kuṭaja (conessi) trees. Oh Hopeless Monsoon Season, tell me why this whole show—created in vain—was made to hurt a single, miserable, unfortunate woman, bereaved by separation? (Translation my own).

#### Poem 11

koṣaḥ sphītatarāḥ sthitāni paritaḥ patrāṇi durgam jalam  
maitram maṇḍalam ujjvalam ciram adho nītās tathā kaṇṭakāḥ |  
ityākṛṣṭaśilimukhena racanām kṛtvā tad apy adbhutam  
yat padmena jigīṣuṇāpi na jitam mugdhe tvad iyam mukham || (Chaudhuri 1939: 47).

The lotus (treasury) is made more swollen and the leaves (chariots) are risen up on all sides. The pond (moat) is impassable and the globe (circle) that is the sun (allies) is bright. Finally, the thorns (swords) are born in this way. Having been thus arranged by an amorous bee, charming girl, it is indeed surprising that this face of yours was not bested by the lotus, despite its desire to conquer. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 12

janayati jananātha dṛṣṭir eṣā  
tava navaṇīlasaro ruhābhir āmā |  
praṇayiṣu susamāśriteṣu lakṣmīm  
ariṣu ca bhaṅgam anaṅgam aṅganāsu || (Chaudhuri 1939: 47).

Hey Lord of Men, this raw glance of yours is like a fresh, blue pond with dūrva grass and causes the production of prosperity amongst your companions and dependents, division amongst your enemies, and amour in women. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 13

gate premābandhe hṛdayabahumāne 'pi galite  
nivṛtte sadbhāve jana iva jane gacchati puraḥ |  
tathā caivotprekṣya priyasakhi gatāṃs tāṃś ca divasān  
na jāne ko hetur dalati śatadhā yan na hṛdayam || (Chaudhuri 1939: 48).

When the bond of love has gone, when even great respect in the heart has trickled away, when true feelings have disappeared, and when he has already moved on as people do—even though it can see clearly that those days are gone—Oh dear friend, I don't know a single reason why my heart does not split into a hundred pieces. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 14

nāryāḥ sā ratiśūnyatā nayanayor yaddṛṣṭipāte sthitaḥ  
kāmi prāptaratārtha eva na bhavaty ālīṅgituṃ vāñchati |  
āśleṣād api yāparaṃ mṛgāyate dhik tām ayogyāṃ striyaṃ  
śroṇīgocaram āgato ratiphalaṃ prāpnoti tīryaṇ na kim || (Chaudhuri 1952: 48).

A woman has a lack of sexual pleasure when a man comes into her field of vision but does not attain the goal of sex, and instead only wants to hug. But damn that improper woman, who looks for something other than just a hug—wouldn't it be weird if he got the fruits of sexual pleasure as soon as he's near your loins? (Translation my own).

#### Poem 15

vijñaptir eṣā mama jīva-bandho  
tatraiva neyā divasāḥ kiyantaḥ |  
saṃpratyayogyasthitir eṣa deśaḥ  
karā himāṃśor api tāpayanti || (Chaudhuri 1952: 49).

This is my entreaty husband: exactly how many days are to be passed here? At the moment, this country is an unsuitable residence—even the beams of the moon cause me torment! (Translation my own).

#### Poem 16

dhanyā 'si yā kathayasi priyasaṅgame 'pi  
narmokticāṭukaśatāni ratāntareṣu |  
nīvīm prati praṇihite tu kare priyeṇa  
sakhyāḥ śapāmi yadi kiñcid api smarāmi || (Chaudhuri 1952: 49).

You're lucky—you're telling us about the hundreds of little flatteries and teasing words that happen in the midst of lovemaking when you're united with your lover. But friends, I'll be damned if I remember anything at all when my lover has reached a hand out to the knot of my skirt. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 18

mādyaddiggajadānalīptakaraṭapraṅśālanakṣobhitā  
vyomnaḥ sīmni vicer urapratihatā yasyor mayo nirmalāḥ |  
kaṣṭaṃ bhāgyaviparyeṇa sarasaḥ kalpāntarasthāyinas  
tasyāpyekabakapracāraḥkaluṣaṃ kālena jātaṃ jalam || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 50-51).

The spotless horse of those two is struck on the chest by a wave at the end of the sky, disturbed by the cleaning of elephants that are smeared with the giving of the intoxicated cardinal elephants. Alas, by the contrariness of fate, even the water of that pond—which will endure until the end of the age—will, in time, become muddy from the going forth of a single crane. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 19

priyasakhi vipaddaṇḍapraṇtaprapātaparamparā-  
paricayacale cintācakre nidhāya vidhiḥ khalaḥ |  
mṛdam iva balāt piṇḍikṛtya pragalbhakulālavat  
bhramayati mano no jānīmaḥ kim atra kariṣyati || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 51).

Dear friend, having forcibly made a ball like a potter, and having deposited it on the wheel of worry—that wheel which moves from the successive accumulation and falling down from the edge of the stick of diversity—crooked fate whirls around the heart, like clay. At this time, we do not know what it will do. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 20

virama viphalāyāsād asmād duradhyavasāyato  
vipadi mahatāṃ dhairya-bhraṃśaṃ yadikṣitum ihase |  
ayi jaḍavidhe kalpāpāya-vyapeta-nijakramāḥ  
kulaśikhariṇaḥ kṣudrā naite na vā jalarāśayaḥ || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 51-52).

Desist from this wicked, fruitless and disgraceful determination. During the misfortune of the great you try to see their decline in strength. But silly fate, the mountain ranges—whose own goings are severed by the destruction of the age—are not trifling, nor are the oceans. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 21

vilāsamaśṇollasan musalaloladoḥkandalī-  
parasparapariskhaladvalayaniḥsvanodbandhurāḥ |  
lasanti kalahuṃkṛtiprasabhakampitorāsthala-  
truṭadgamakasaṅkulāḥ kalamakaṇḍanīgītayaḥ || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 52).



The songs of the pestles on rice—which are exceedingly sweet and wordless with bracelets that are hitting each other on the banana trees which are arms that are swaying with pestles that are shining forth and tender in sport—appear like grains, accompanied by breaking notes and forcefully shaking breasts that are makers of a sweet hum. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 22

kenāpi campakataro bata rāpito 'si  
kugrāmapāmarajanāntikavāṭikāyām |  
yatra prarūḍhanavaśākavivṛddhalobhād  
bho bhagnavāṭaghaṭanocitapallavo 'si || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 53).

Oh Champaka Tree, by whom where you planted in a little garden in the vicinity of wicked people of a vile village? Oh! Where, from greed that has increased by a newly born branch, you are a sprout that is suited with the exertion of a fractured fig tree. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 23

succhāyaṃ phalabhāranamraśiharaṃ sarvātīśāntipradaṃ  
tvām ālokya subhūruhaṃ khalu vayaṃ mārگاṃ vihāyā 'gatāḥ |  
antas te yadi koṭarodaracaladvālāvalivisphurad-  
vaktrodvāntaviṣānalātibhayadaṃ dhanyas tadānīm bhavan || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 53).

Having seen you, beautiful Arjuna Tree—who possesses delightful shade, whose peak is bowed down from the bearing of fruit and who is a bestower of exceeding tranquillity for all—we now forsake the path and come. Now, inside of you, suppose the blessed sir is a giver of excessive fright from the fire of poison that is vomited up from the mouth which flashes with a row of snakes which slither within your hollow? (Translation my own).

#### Poem 24

unnidrakokanadareṇupīśāṅgitāṅgā  
gāyanti mañju madhupā gṛhadīrghikāsu |  
etac cakāsti ca raver navabandhujīva-  
puṣpacchadābham udayācalacumbi bimbam || (Chaurdhuri 1952: 53).

The bees, whose bodies are dyed saffron by the pollen of the full-blown red waterlilies, hummed sweetly in the long, oblong pond that is home. And that disk of the sun—that kisser of the Udaya mountains who is beautiful like a collection of blossoms of the new Midday Flower—shone. (Translation my own).

#### Poem 25

sotsāhā navavāribhāraguravo muñcantu nādaṃ ghanā  
vātā vāntu kadambareṇuśabalā nṛtyantv amī barhiṇaḥ |

magnāṃ kāntaviyogaduḥkhaladhau dīnāṃ vilokyāṅganāṃ  
vidyut praspurasi tvam apy akarūṇā strīve 'pi tulye sati || (Chaudhuri 1939: 54).

The clouds, kinetic and heavy from the bearing of fresh water, set free a roar; the winds—spotted with the pollen of kadamba (burlflower) trees—blow about, and these peacocks dance. Oh lightning, having seen the poor woman sunk into an ocean of sorrow from separation with her lover, you pulsate without compassion despite being a woman yourself! (Translation my own).

#### Poem 26

asthiram anekarāgaṃ guṇarahitaṃ nityavakraduṣprāpaṃ |  
prāvṛṣi surendracāpaṃ vibhāvyate yuvaticittam iva || (Chaudhuri 1939: 54).

In the rainy season, the Rainbow—which is fickle, possessed of more than one colour (love), void of a bow-string (good character), difficult to attain and ever crooked—appears like the heart of a young girl.

#### Poem 27

malinahutabhugdhūmaśyāmair diśo malinā ghanair  
aviralatṛṇaiḥ śyāmā bhūmir navodagatakandalaiḥ |  
suratasubhago nūnaṃ kālaḥ sa eva samāgato  
maraṇaśaraṇā yasmin nete bhavanti viyogināḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 54).

With black clouds, the four quarters of the sky are dark like the smoke from a foul fire, the earth is dark-blue with dense grass and newly come-up sprouts. Surely the time that is lovely for love-making has come indeed—during which those who are separated possess no refuge in death.

#### Poem 28

kiṃśukakalikāntargatam indukalāspardhi kesaraṃ bhāti |  
raktanicolakapihitaṃ dhanur iva jatumudritaṃ vitanoḥ || (Chaudhuri 1939: 55).

The bakula flower, which is a competitor of the digits of the moon and is concealed in the bud of the kiṃśuka tree, appears like a bow, enclosed in the reddened breast-plate of Cupid which is pressed with lac.