Licence and Faithfulness: Taking liberties with *kathā* in classical Sanskrit poetry and aesthetics[1]

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Contents

I. Introduction

(I.i) *On the relation between source and retelling*

The relation between source and literary retelling, between what is called *auctorite*[2] in Chaucerian English and art, is seldom one of straightforward repetition and affirmation. In re-writing, one duplicates, in duplicating, one questions, in questioning, one revises, in revising, one recreates. In the sphere

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[2] A term used by Chaucer in the *House of Fame* to refer to the classical literary scholars and sources such as the *Metamorphoses* he and others in the medieval world emulated (for the standard Chaucer source-book, *The Riverside Chaucer*, see Benson 1987).

of the arts, especially in one as richly formalized as the classical Indian sphere, liberty, free will, ingenuity could be manifested, and sometimes with greater imaginative *camatkāra* ("astonishment"), within the constraints and conditions of conventions and narrative *paradigma*.[3]

This holds true in the interpretation by Indian poets of *kathā*s, narratives acquiring the status of *auctorite*. I use as my examples two *mahākāvya*s hitherto largely unknown to scholarship, the *Surathotsava* ("The Festival of Suratha") by Someśvaradeva and the *Durgāvilāsa* ("The Delights of Durgā") by Rāmakṛṣṇa. Their purpose is to animate and in the process expand and reflect on their original source the *Devīmāhātmya* ("The Goddess's Eulogy"), a Purāṇic myth from c. the 8th century CE, which is the canonical source of the demon-slaying narratives of the warrior-goddess Caṇḍikā. Both works re-imagine the legend of King Suratha, the loss of his kingdom and his hard-won encounter with Caṇḍikā that distinguishes the *kathā* of the goddess in the *Devīmāhātmya* from other exemplars of her mythology. However, these two belletristic works are not isolated instances of Sanskrit compositions based on a famous narrative. They can be readily supplemented by a great number of other famous early plays and poems in Sanskrit clarified in treatises on poetics as being particularly imaginative reutilizations of source-materials from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and other *kathās*. The *Rāmāyaṇa* itself is the basis for more than twenty-five retellings in Sanskrit alone, and its versions in other languages are innumerable. These other noted examples negotiating the particular challenges of a celebrated narrative are also considered to support the argument.

In the following discussion, I shall examine how *kavi*s of classical Sanskrit read and interpreted their narrative sources with special reference to these two epic poems while glancing at similar cases. I shall place the metamorphoses encountered in these works in relation to formulations of poetic liberty concerning respected *kathā*s in Indian aesthetics. In so doing, it will be found that, in employing revered tales thought to transmit tradition, poets asserted

[3] Meaning resemblance by example, this is a term used by George Puttenham to refer to an episode from history which is to be emulated and learnt from. His definition of *paradigma* from Book 3 of the *Arte of English Poesie* is as follows: "in matter of counsell or perswasion we will seeme to liken one case to another .... and doe compare the past with the present, gathering probabilitie of like successe to come in the things wee have presently in hand: or if ye will draw the judgement precedent and authorized by antiquitie as veritable, and peradventure fayned and imagined for some purpose, into similitude or dissimilitude with our present actions and affaires, it is called resemblance by example: as if one should say thus, Alexander the great in his expedition to Asia did thus, so did Hanniball coming into Spaine, so did Caesar in Egypt, therefore all great Captains and Generals ought to doe it" (Puttenham apud Bate 1994, p 84).

their individual merit and questions using autonomous techniques, even with a tale of canonized sanctity as the *Devīmāhātmya*. Some of the narrative transformations made by Sanskrit *kavi*s can be considered to have critically altered the established patterns of stories they were drawing from. A particularly ingenious example, subversive in its criticism of cherished assumptions in the source-story, is Bhavabhūti's insertion of a speech in his *Uttararāmacarita* ("The Latter Deeds of Rāma"), a dramatization of events taking place after the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Here Prince Lava upbraids Rāma for his more questionable acts, thereby reminding the audience of ambiguities in his hallowed father's character,[4] an episode that was somewhat controversial as it evoked strong reactions from one classical aesthetician, as we shall see. (One wonders if such a scene, composed in c. the 8th century CE, can at all be staged in India today.)

However, it will be also shown that, by and large, novelties introduced by poets while rearranging thematic unities characterizing known stories are approvingly justified in classical aesthetics as preserving rather than disrupting the spirit, that is to say the *rasa* — the savoured, aestheticized distillation of emotion — thought to be produced by these stories. In fact, the changes are argued to heighten the original *rasa*. Though the classical Sanskrit *kavi*s did not imitate, they preserved similitude by maintaining kinship to the original templates that had left behind a deep imprint on popular cultural memory. By transforming their tales, they were seen to be in conversation with them rather than reacting against their structures. Thus, the classical Indian literary sphere furnishes us with an apparent paradox: poetic licence co-existed with faithfulness to the source, authorial freedom with authorial confinement.

At the end, though, it is the unique vision of the artist — at once faithful and unfaithful, dependent and libertarian in spirit — that shines through in these works. It was important to be original since in the competitive arena of the poetic assembly (*kāvyagoṣṭhī*), in which many poets performed their works, the issue of an author's genius became critical to distinguish the best from the middling. For, not just esteem among peers, but also patronage, depended on poetic inspiration, which was considered to be nothing but the divine spark of Sarasvatī, the Muse of poesy, in the poet. A poet in whose words Sarasvatī sparkled the most could secure the largesse and respect of a patron of the arts (*sabhāpati*) at these assemblies.

Within the *kāvya* retellings of the *Devīmāhātmya*, the greatest number of, and the most interesting, liberties on account of the sophisticated strategies at

[4] *Uttararāmacarita* 5.34.

play, are taken with Suratha's account, which forms a separate narrative thread encircling Caṇḍikā's legend, in comparison with the episodes concerning the goddess. The latter, being relatively more faithful to the sequence of the *Devīmāhātmya*, preserve the primary theological vision and plot-model of the canonical version. Hence, the focus of the present discussion is Suratha's story in these belletristic versions, given that the hand of the poet is most at evidence here. Nevertheless, even though they maybe restricted to the frame-story, the sum effect of such changes is to create two new literary works different from the established legend and to generate an afterlife for the *Devīmāhātmya*, in which poetic motivations playing a part in the process of writing, along with the overall emotional and intellectual demands and effects made on an audience, diverge from those that underlay the source-story. Thus, just as for the Kunstmärchen of Goethe, Tieck and Brentano vis-a-vis their original counterparts, the Volksmärchen,[5] each literary revision of the *Devīmāhātmya* fulfills novel aesthetic possibilities.

(I.ii) *On Kathās*

A *kathā* (talk/tale) requires some explanation. It is difficult to describe this word comprehensively. Medieval Indian aesthetics says that a *kathā* is one of two types of prose poems. The other is called an *ākhyāyikā*. Theoreticians differentiate the two on the basis of structural aspects, for instance an *ākhyāyikā* is said to be characterized by the optional use of *vaktra* and *aparavaktr*a metrical passages, sections called *ucchvāsa*s and an autobiographical revelation of a great deed by a hero, while a *kathā* is said to lack these elements.[6] Later variations from the time of Rudraṭa (c. 9th century CE) onwards of this essentially formalistic description of a *kathā* grew restricted in scope because they were shaped to fit the character of available prose works by the 7th century Sanskrit poet Bāṇa.[7] A limitation with such an understanding of a *kathā* is that it excludes tales whose earliest extant forms are not in prose but completely in metre (such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahābhārata*). With this in mind, it is necessary to adopt an alternative view. A *kathā* can be something much broader than an inventory of features. It can correspond to the nucleus of motifs making up a story, which remain more or less constant in each narration. While these motifs, the narrative ingredients so to speak, are recurrent, the way that they are arranged and elaborated, in other words the telling, is diverse. When we consider a *kathā* to refer to a common kernel granted variations by

[5] Tully 2000 (Introduction: On the German fairytale (Märchen), pp.xi-xii.
[6] De 1924.
[7] Ibid.

each new telling, we can think in terms of Western folkloric traditions. Maria Tatar sees motifs of popular European fairy tales to recur even in narratives originating in divergent cultural contexts, which took on changes according to the environment into which they were transplanted. "Fairy tales ... circulate in multiple versions, reconfigured by each telling to form kaleidoscopic variations with distinctly different effects. When we say Cinderella, we are referring not to a single text but an entire array of stories with a persecuted heroine who may respond to her situation with defiance, cunning, ingenuity, self-pity, anguish, or grief. She will be called Yeh-hsien in China, Cendrillon in Italy, Aschenputtel in Germany and Catskin in England. Her sisters may be named One-Eye and Three-Eyes, Anastasia and Drizella, or she may have just one sister named Haloek. Her tasks range from tending cows to sorting peas to fetching embers for a fire".[8] While the greater part of the story of Cinderella was diversified through pluralizations, there is in fact a structural "constant" that Tatar draws our attention to, which is what scholars of Western cultural studies call the "tale-type index". For example, the tale-type index of Beauty and the Beast is envisaged as: "I. The monster as husband II. disenchantment of the monster III. Loss of the husband IV. Search for the husband V. Recovery of the husband" (Tatar 1999, p. x). This core can be thought to represent the original episodic and thematic shape of a story, to which interpreters added new elements and expansions through the process of transmission. The present paper would like to understand a *kathā* along these lines as a set of fundamental narrative constituents transmitted over a long period of time.

Brahmanical doctrine (Mīmāṃsā) viewed a *kathā* as *arthavāda*, nothing more than a persuasive illustration of ritual action taught somewhere in the Vedas. In contrast, poetics viewed a *kathā* to be the basis of historical lore, moral conduct and knowledge. Bharata (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 19.1 ab) , Bhāmaha (De 1924, p. 507), Daṇḍin (*Kāvyādarśa* 1.15 ab), his commentator Ratnaśrījñāna (*Kāvyādarś*a pp. 11-12) and Rājaśekhara (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā,* pp. 35-41) include statements in their works recommending *kathā*s as the most elevating sources (*āśraya*-s/*bhitti*-s/*yoni*-s) for poetry of gravitas. Among these authors Rājaśekhara devotes the entirety of the eighth chapter in the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* to systematizing and illustrating with examples from *kāvya* no less than sixteen categories of famous stories and the broad vision of the narrative source that he maps out is connected in his view to the building (*vyutpatti*) of the scholar-poet through cultivating wide reading habits and thereby to pedagogy. However, *kathā*s were also regarded as more powerfully transformative than instructive

[8] Tatar 1999, p. ix (Introduction).

tools. Classical poets regarded certain tales like the lost *Bṛhatkathā* with romanticized fascination: it was said to contain "marvellous contents" (*adbhutārthām*)[9] and is mentioned in the *Meghadūta*, in which Kālidāsa's *yakṣa* asks his friend the messenger-cloud to travel over Avantī, a place simply described as one wherein village-elders versed in the tale of Udayana (*udayanakathākovidagrāmavṛddhān*) the principal narrative of the *Bṛhatkathā* (*Meghadūta* 1.31) dwelt. Some *kathā*s like the *Mahābhārata* were seen as invested with the potency to block the fruition of the latent imprints (*vāsanā*s) of transmigration (*saṃsāra*).[10] In all these ways examples from famous repositories of *kathā*s — the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* (also referred to as histories "*itihāsa*"s) and the Purāṇas — functioned as venerable archetypes for *kavi*s to emulate and engage with in their writings in a manner whereby specific elements in their retellings diverged but the entirety bore the auspicious imprint of the original.

The reader may notice that I am assuming a distinction between a *kathā* and a *kāvya*. In order to explain this distinction I look, once again, at more recent theories of narratology. My understanding of a *kathā* is contiguous with what the Russian narratologists call *fabula* "the raw material of story events as opposed to the finished arrangement of the plot".[11] A *kāvya* work then would coincide with the "finished arrangement". It represents the end rather than the means. The peculiar way the "means" — the mode of telling — is handled by a teller grants a new identity to the "end", which is the poem as an experienced product. This distinction, between *kāvya* as what is ultimately experienced and *kathā* as its mode, was already discerned by A.K.Ramanujan, who writes in his famous essay on the many *Rāmāyaṇa*s that the "traditional distinction between *katha* (story) and *kavya* (poem) parallels the French one between *sujet* and *recit*, or the English one between story and discourse. It is also analogous to the distinction between a sentence and a speech act. The story may be the same in two tellings, but the discourse may be vastly different. Even the structure and sequence of events may be the same, but the style, details, tone, and texture — and therefore the import — may be vastly different".[12]

II. Sources from classical Indian aesthetics on poetic liberty

The notion of interpretive freedom as known to Sanskrit writers was articulated

[9] *Kāvyādarśa* 1.38, *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* p. 826 ff.

[10] Kuntaka, *Vakroktijīvita*, commentary to 4.16-17, describes the *Mahābhārata* with a *bahuvrīhi*, the relevant part of which is *-vāritaniḥsārasaṃsāravāsanāmahimani* ("which blocked the might of imprints of transmigration which lacks true substance").

[11] Baldick 2001, p. 93.

[12] Ramanujan 1991, p. 25.

in some detail in the aesthetic treatises of the time. Going by the broad level of consensus among the most influential and learned scholars of poetics discussed below, *alaṃkāraśāstra* condoned the most radical departures from a *kathā*, even in cases where plots are fabricated to eliminate perceived moral defects in lead-characters. In this way, *alaṃkāraśāstrin*s (literary critics) privileged the paramountcy of aesthetic experience over that of the authority of the *kathā*. The intellectual environment delighted in, rather than viewed with suspicion, novel and ingenious interpretations of ancient and respected sources.

(II.i) *Ānandavardhana on transforming famous kathās*

The earliest poetician to deal with the subject of changing *kathā*s with a degree of elaboration is the 9th century Kashmirian author, Ānandavardhana, who treats the matter of altering *kathā*s between verses 3.10-14 of the *Dhvanyāloka*, while discussing poetic strategies whereby a literary work as a whole (*prabandha*) can manifest *rasa*. These five verses postulate five ways whereby *rasa* can be manifested, uninterruptedly, by the whole work: (i) by the appropriate devising in the plot of contributory aesthetic factors producing *rasa* (namely, *sthāyibhāvas*, *anubhāvas* and *vyabhicāribhāvas*); (ii) by modifying the established narrative where necessary to modulate *rasa;* (iii) by following the stages of plot development (*sandhi*s) sensitively so that the entire work manifests *rasa*, not blindly following rules for plot structure; (iv) by intensifying and weakening the *rasa* at the right moments; and (v) by using rhetorical ornaments discerningly and not in a heavy-handed manner, so that they agree with the *rasa* of the work. It is in elaborating on this context that the subject of narrative change is considered under the second point, verse 3.11.[13]

In concluding his explanation of the first point contained in verse 3.10, Ānandavardhana advises a poet to select his source carefully, though historical tales dense with emotional content abound, only choosing a story that contains the contributory factors (*sthāyibhāva*s and so on) that will manifest the *rasa* the poet wishes to develop. If inventing his own plot, the poet has to be doubly careful in maintaining the development of *rasa* in each and every part (*Dhvanyāloka*, p. 142). By so establishing the primacy of *rasa* as a consideration guiding every stage of the creative process, particularly in the very first step of selecting a story, he moves into the topic of changing *kathā*s, in which the same motivation is brought to bear.

Ānandavardhana introduces his discussion on verse 3.11 by asserting a point apparently contradictory to the purport of the verse: that to tales such as

[13] *itivṛttavaśāyātāṃ tyaktvānanuguṇāṃ sthitim | utprekṣyāpy antarābhīṣṭarasocitakathonneyaḥ || Dhvanyāloka*, p. 134.

the *Rāmāyaṇa*, traditional narratives which are already renowned for having a perfected *rasa* (in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the "pitiful" or *karuṇa rasa*), a poetic "liberty" (*svecchā*) contradicting the original *rasa* (*rasavirodhinī*) may not be introduced.[14] In order to substantiate this, he quotes an interesting passage that seems to represent an earlier view concerning plot changes, stipulating that there should be "no deviation regarding the path of the narrative" (*kathāmārge na cātikramaḥ*). This citation can be identified, thanks to Abhinavagupta's sub-commentary to the *Dhvanyāloka*,[15] to be a fragment from the lost work *Rāmābhyudaya* ("The Ascent of Rāma") by an earlier writer, Yaśovarman, a contemporary of Lalitāditya of Kashmir (c. 8th century CE).[16] The full verse, of which the citation is a part, is quoted in the later treatise the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* of Bhoja, and Yaśovarman's complete opinion framing the fragment used by Ānandavardhana may be extricated from here, thus:

> Fittingness of words suitable to the nature [of the characters], the nourishment of *rasa* at the right time appropriate to the characters, **no deviation regarding the path of the story** (*kathāmārge na cātikramaḥ*), purity in the method of arranging the subject matter, and the full development of words and meanings: may the learned be attentive and consider these. That's all we want![17]

From the way the citation is originally positioned in the full verse, it appears that Yaśovarman, though certainly recommending compliance to the conventional story, is not prioritizing it as the most essential feature of a good literary reworking. It is rather Ānandavardhana who singles out that particular phrase making it into something much more important than its original import. In so doing, Ānandavardhana presents Yaśovarman's point of view to be that of an absolute naysayer, someone who is saying that the poet must never alter the story of the authoritative source. In reply to this argument, Ānandavardhana, though agreeing with Yaśovarman on the principle that the spirit of the traditional narrative — the *kathā* — should not be disrupted, goes on to make his own point that episodic changes in the *"*path of the *kathā"* may indeed be introduced, provided the *rasa* of the original is not contradicted as a

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[14] *santi siddharasaprakhyā ye ca rāmāyaṇādayaḥ | kathāśrayā na tair yojyā svecchā rasavirodhinī || Dhvanyāloka,* p. 142.

[15] Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyālokalocana*, p. 335.

[16] Ingalls et al 1990, p. 434.

[17] *aucityaṃ vacasāṃ prakṛtyanugataṃ sarvatra pātrocitā puṣṭiḥ svāvasare rasasya ca kathāmārge na cātikramaḥ | śuddhiḥ prastutasaṃvidhānakavidhau prauḍhiś ca śabdārthayor vidvadbhiḥ paribhāvyatām avahitair etāvad evāstu naḥ* || cited in *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa*, p. 711.

consequence of such change. Having thus furnished Yaśovarman's view with a proviso, he then introduces the matter of verse 3.11, our second condition governing the manifestation of *rasa* in a work as a whole.

If a "sequence of events" (*sthitim*) traditionally transmitted through the narrative source (*itivṛttavaśāyātāṃ*) obviates the experience of *rasa*, a poet can eliminate it if he so chooses, and he may also introduce new plots of his own devising that are suitable in enhancing *rasa*. This is exemplified in the works of Kālidāsa — Ānandavardhana continues — or in the *Harivijaya* ("Hari's Victory") of Sarvasena or in his own *mahākāvy*a, the *Arjunacarita* ("The Deeds of Arjuna"). A poet should be passionately intent on *rasa* while composing a poetical work. If he feels that the conventional story does not conform to the desired *rasa*, then he may even, having deviated from this *of his own free will* (*svatantratayā*), compose a different story favourable to the *rasa*. For, Ānandavardhana explains, there is no use for a poet in simply regurgitating the narrative source (*na hi kaver itivṛttamātranirvahaṇena kiṃcit prayojanaṃ*) without leaps of the imagination, because such is achieved in a historical account (*itihāsād eva tatsiddheḥ*), a dry, factual record of the past. In this way, he makes a pointed distinction between a poetic work and a historical document, between, in other words, the imaginative role of a poet and the documentative function of a historian.

It is important at this stage to consider Abhinavagupta's views embodied in his sub-commentary, or *Locana* ("Eye"), to the preceding aesthetician's words, and, given that on this matter they clarify and do not oppose Ānandavardhana, they will not be disentangled from the opinions of the latter. Poetic liberty (*svecchā*) in Ānandavardhana's commentary is taken by Abhinavagupta to mean an alteration to narrative-content made at will. This is made clear when Abhinavagupta, explaining Ānandavardhana's comment that poetic novelties contradicting the *rasa* pervasive in the original should not be introduced to historical narratives, gives, as an example of such a "license discordant with the savoured emotion" (*rasavirodhinī svecchā*), making Rāma into the hero of a *nāṭikā*, a romantic play centred on the pleasures of a king and his harem.[18] This would be achieved by adding steady amorousness

[18] According to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (18.58-60), a *nāṭikā* is as follows: *prakaraṇanāṭaka-bhedād utpādyaṃ vastu nāyakaṃ nṛpatim | antaḥpurasaṅgītakakanyām adhikṛtya kartavyā || strīprāyā caturaṅkā lalitābhinayātmikā suvihitāṅgī | bahunṛttagītapāṭhyā ratisambhogātmikā caiva || rājopacārayuktā prasādanakrodhadambhasaṃyuktā | nāyakadevīdūtī saparijanā nāṭikā jñeyā ||* "The subject matter [of a *nāṭikā*] is to be made different from a *prakaraṇa* and a play. It is to be composed having a king as the hero, and a singing girl in the harem. It is mainly filled with women, has four acts, its nature is full of amorous enactments, its parts are well arranged, it is to be recited with many gestures and songs, its nature is the enjoyment of

(*dhīralalitatvayojanena*) to his character. Such a liberty would be, he notes, supremely inapposite (*atyantāsamañjasam*). The term *sthiti*, whose core meaning is "state" but which is used by Ānandavardhana in quite a special sense with reference to a story pattern, is further explained by Abhinavagupta through a quote again attributed to Yaśovarman. This says that a *sthiti* is "the same as a *śayyā*" (*yathā śayyāṃ*), the last term meaning in a technical context "a particular type of narrative arrangement which is consistent" (*śayyā ... ekarūpaḥ sanniveśaviśeśaḥ*).[19] (Accordingly, I have translated *sthiti* as a "sequence of events".) Furnishing with specific literary samples the authors named by Ānandavardhana considered to make appropriate changes to the *sthiti*s of original *kathā*s that beautify rather than proscribe their feeling, Abhinavagupta cites the marriages of kings like Aja in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* ("The Lineage of Raghu") that are not described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, the episode of Kṛṣṇa taking the *pārijāta* tree in order to placate his beloved in the *Harivijaya*, which is similarly absent in the traditional account, and in Ānandavardhana's own work the *Arjunacarita*, now lost, Arjuna's victorious wars in the netherworld that the author introduced as a novelty.[20]

In sum, Ānandavardhana's, and Abhinavagupta's, views are as follows. Changes to the governing paradigm of the *kathā* may indeed be introduced to maintain the integrity of *rasa* in the literary work as a whole, provided the *rasa* of the original *kathā* is not obstructed by the new inventions of the poet. Moreover, if a traditional sequence of events in the original story is found to disrupt the *rasa* the poet wishes to maintain in his creation, the poet can freely eliminate that displeasing episodic pattern of the narrative-source, and may instead introduce innovations to the story that enhance the *rasa* of his choice.

Ānandavardhana's dictum was influential. Somadeva, a later Kashmirian, in setting out his methods of rearranging the *Bṛhatkathā,* expresses an interpretational strategy strikingly akin to the one propounded in the *Dhvanyāloka*. He tells us in his version of the *Bṛhatkathā*, the *Kathā-saritsāgara* 1.1.10-11,[21] that in interpreting the contents of the *Bṛhatkathā*, he

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love, it is with offerings to the king, with [emotions that are]: that which is soothing, wrath, and pride, it has a hero, a queen and a messenger, it is filled with attendants." The *Mālavikāgnimitra, Ratnāvalī* and the *Priyadarśikā* refer to themselves as *nāṭikā*s in their openings (information provided by Prof. H. Isaacson).

[19] This is from a sub-commentary to the *Locana* called the *Kaumudī* by Uttuṅgodaya. I have cited it from Ingalls et. al, 1990, p. 153. This is the meaning evidently considered by Ingalls and Masson (see Ingalls et al 1990, p. 436), who translate the term used *sthiti* as "a pattern", in accordance with the meaning of *śayyā*.

[20] *Dhvanyālokalocana* p. 335. See also Ingalls et al 1990, p. 435-436.

[21] *yathā mūlaṃ tathaivaitan na manāg apy atikramaḥ | granthavistarasaṃkṣepamātraṃ bhāṣā ca bhidyate || aucityānvayarakṣā ca yathāśakti vidhīyate | kathārasāvighātena*

did not deviate from the source even in the slightest — an echo of Yaśovarman — and when adding material ensured that this was in accordance with the *rasa* of the *Bṛhatkathā*. There was a concern to outwardly legitimize retellings by asserting their closeness to the original, even though in practice, the retelling might have departed considerably from it.

(II.ii) *Bhoja*

Another theorist to have considered in depth the matter of altering sources in order to intensify the aesthetic moment is Bhoja, eleventh century ruler of Dhārā and patron of arts and letters. In his magnum opus the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* ("The Light of Eros"), Bhoja makes the novel argument that the basis of all *rasa*s is one alone — *śṛṅgāra* (generally the erotic *rasa* but considering the broader function Bhoja attributes to it, translated as "love" or "eros"). Within the driving force that is *śṛṅgāra* all other *rasa*s are subsumed. The roots of *śṛṅgāra* lie in our sense of self (*ahaṃkāra/abhimāna*), which facilitates our ability to savour and recognize *rasa*.[22] In Bhoja's view the continuous presence of *rasa*, what he calls *rasāviyoga*, literally "the non-separation from *rasa*", is the essential feature of a superb literary composition.

In the eleventh chapter of the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa,* Bhoja follows in Ānandavardhana's footsteps in his consideration of poetic liberties with *kathā*s while analysing ways of preserving the flow of *rasa* in a work as a whole (*prabandha*), as opposed to its specific sections. In contrast to the *Dhvanyāloka*, which, as we have seen, postulates five ways of achieving the unity of *rasa* in the whole work, Bhoja states three, one of which is, like Ānandavardhana's, making appropriate plot-changes to the original narrative to improve its *rasa*. This is what he has to say on the matter (the passage makes a few specific references, but these will become clear later):

> We shall explain [the presence of *rasa*] whose sphere is that of the entire composition. As it shines forth through the 'elimination of faults', the 'addition of poetic merits', and the 'mixture of rhetorical ornaments' it too causes delight in the hearts of the knowledgeable. Among these three things, the 'elimination of faults' is by an elimination of literary impropriety as in the following examples. In the *Nirdoṣadaśaratha*, Rāma is banished by the magical simulacra of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha, not by his [real] parents. In the *Mahāvīracarita*, Vālin is slain by Rāma while he is fighting Rāma himself and not Sugrīva. In the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, Duḥśāsana's

kāvyāṃśasya ca yojanā ||

[22] Pollock 1998.

blood is drunk by the *rākṣāsa* Rudhirapriya, not by Bhīma ... In the *Śākuntala*, Duṣyanta forgot his promise to Śakuntalā because of his disrespect towards Durvāsas, not because of an inconstant passion [for her]. In the *Chalitarāma*, Sītā is abandoned after two *rākṣasa*s employed by Lavaṇa, [and] not Kaikeyī and Mantharā, tell Rāma various [slanderous things about her] in private. In the *Tāpasavatsarāja*: "When Vāsavadattā was burnt I married Padmāvatī for revenge against my enemy and now that my wish is achieved I cannot survive even a moment without her." This intention of Vatsarajā underlying his entering the fire, [because] he did not know of Vāsavadattā's proximity [to him at that time] plucked out the thorn of offence [of his being with another woman] from his beloved's heart. In the *Vikrāntaśūdraka*: "Without hindrance shall I achieve my lord's duties! Thus in devotion to my master's business, I set fire to my beloved though she was blameless and I survived for so long in consideration of my duties to him. However today since I have completed my master's duty, I shall go only to her". Thinking thus Śiva's attendant entered — before his beloved — the magical funeral pyre conjured up by Śūdraka. As for her, she too, having forgiven her lover's [former] offence on witnessing his love's great testament, cast herself into that very [pyre] anguished by separation from him. Like these, other examples too of the "elimination of flaws" can be cited. On the other hand, the "addition of poetic merits" is the condition that plots are well-connected in different types of works that I will discuss later by the addition of appropriate characteristics. In those very works the fact that descriptions of towns, oceans etc [exemplify] are laudable are because of a "mixture of rhetorical ornaments". This has been said — "Fittingness of words conforming to the nature [of the characters], the nourishment of *rasa* at the right appropriate to the characters, no deviation regarding the path of the story, purity in the method of arranging the subject matter, and the full development of words and meanings: may the learned be attentive and consider these. That's all we want!"[23]

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[23] *prabandhaviṣaya ucyate so 'pi doṣahānena guṇopādānenālaṅkārasaṅkareṇa ca prakāśamāno manīṣiṇāṃ manaḥpraharṣahetur bhavati | tatra doṣahānam anaucityādiparihāreṇa yathā — māyākaikeyīdaśarathābhyāṃ rāmaḥ pravāsito na mātāpitṛbhyām iti* ***nirdoṣadaśarathe****; rāmam eva yodhayan rāmeṇa vālī nihato na sugrīvam iti* ***mahāvīracarite****; rudhirapriyarākṣasena duśśāsanasya rudhiraṃ pītaṃ, na bhīmaseneneti* ***veṇīsaṃhāre****; anaṅgāvatārasya pradyumnasyaiva janmāntarapatnī ratir māyāvatī na gurvaṅganeti* ***harivaṃśe****; durvāsaso 'vadhyānād duṣyantaḥ śakuntalāsvīkaraṃ visasmāra, nānavasthitānurāgatayeti* ***śākuntale****; lavaṇaprayuktarākṣasābhyāṃ rāmam upahvare tat tad abhidhāya sītā parityājitā na kaikeyīmantharābhyām iti* ***chalitarāme****; dagdhāyām api*

On the relation of this passage to the *Dhvanyāloka*, it is interesting to remark in passing, that a few of the works and citations used by Bhoja, *Tāpasavatsarāja*, *Veṇīsaṃhāra* and the quotation from Yaśovarman already familiar to us, are referred to by Ānandavardhana in one and the same context — how to produce *rasa* in the work as a whole. The *Veṇīsaṃhāra* is analysed in Ānanadavardhana's commentary to verse 3.12 of the *Dhvanyāloka*, as a negative example of plot-divisions used in a composition simply to follow guidelines, and the *Tāpasavatsarāja* in his commentary to 3.13, as a play displaying a charming modulation of *rasa* in its entire body.[24] In this way Bhoja seems to be reusing some of Ānandavardhana's materials, and also within overlapping topical parameters while asserting a highly original point of view. Either Bhoja was consciously engaging with the *Dhvanyāloka*, having it in mind or in front of him while composing this section, or, in the event that he was not modeling himself to some extent on Ānandavardhana, he was drawing from a traditional stock of examples commonly known and circulated by aestheticians as illuminating certain topics in *alaṃkāraśāstra*, including, in our case, how a *prabandha* can manifest uninterrupted *rasa*.

With regard to our argument on poetic engagement with sources, what is truly new and exciting about Bhoja's discussion is that he provides a range of specific examples from literature based on *kathā*s, which demonstrate changes to episodes in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and the *Bṛhatkathā* that writers were deriving their stories from. Bhoja sees all these changes in the named literary revisions as desirable because, he argues, they eliminate aesthetic flaws (*doṣa*s) and thereby remove perceived infelicity (*anaucitya*) in the originals.

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vāsavadattāyāṃ vairapraticikīrṣayā padmāvatī mayoḍhā, siddhe ca samīhite tayā vinā kṣaṇam api na jīvāmīty avijñātavāsavadattāsannidher vatsarājasyāgnipraveśādhyavasāyaḥ priyāhṛdayato vyalīkaśalyam uccakhāneti ***tāpasavatsarāje****; abaddhaṃ svāmikāryaṃ sādhayāmīti prabhubhaktyā niraparādhām api preyasīṃ dagdhvā svāmikāryāpekṣayā aham etāvanti dināni jīvitaḥ; adya tu kṛtasvāmikāryas tām evānugacchāmīti śivagaṇaḥ śūdrakavinirmitāṃ māyāmayīṃ citāṃ priyāsamakṣaṃ praviveśa, sāpi tatpremāpa-dānadarśanāpahnutapriyavyalīkā tadviyogakātarā tatraivātmānaṃ pracikṣepeti* ***vikrāntaśudrake*** *| evam anyad api doṣahānam udāhāryam | guṇopādānaṃ tu vakṣyamāṇaprabandhabhedānāṃ samyaglakṣaṇayogena saṃvidhānakasusūtratā; teṣv eva nagarārṇavavarṇanādīnāṃ saṃniveśaprāśastyam alaṅkārasaṅkara iti | tad uktam | aucityaṃ vacasāṃ prakṛtyanugataṃ, sarvatra pātrocitā puṣṭiḥ svavāsare rasasya ca kathāmārge na cātikramaḥ | śuddhiḥ prastutasaṃvidhānakavidhau, prauḍhīś ca śabdārthayoḥ vidvadbhiḥ paribhāvyatām avahitair etāvad evāstu naḥ ||*

The text is based on Raghavan's edition of the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa,* p. 710, with emendations indicated as follows: '*vadhyānād*] em, *avadhyānād* Raghavan. *abaddhaṃ*] original reading in manuscripts (see Raghavan, p. 710 n. 5), *nīcākṣaḥ*, Raghavan. *dagdhvā*] original reading in manuscripts (see Raghavan, p. 710 n. 7), *hitvā*, Raghavan. *rāmam*] em. H. Isaacson, *rāma* Raghavan.

[24] *Dhvanyāloka,* p. 144.

His first example is entitled *Nirdoṣadaśaratha* ("Blameless Daśaratha"), which refers to a chapter from a play the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* ("The Young Rāmāyaṇa") by Rājaśekhara, based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[25] This chapter retells its corresponding episode in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in such a way that Daśaratha, Rāma's father, who in Vālmīki's version is responsible for banishing his son to fourteen years in the forest, is made blameless of this deed. As Bhoja tells us, this is achieved because the dramatist changes the real banishers, Rāma's father and step-mother, into two demons magically adopting their appearance, so that the Daśaratha and his instigator Kaikeyī are exonerated of mistreating the child. Obviously Bhoja sees this is an implicit flaw in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*. This is of course a complete falsification of both plot and character, the innermost depth of the story. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Daśaratha is portrayed as unable to escape feeling bound to promises made to his scheming wife. In the *Nirdoṣadaśaratha* poetic intervention, as described by Bhoja, has succeeded in removing his flaw. Bhoja's second example of "eliminating flaws", the *Mahāvīracarita*[26] ("The Deed of the Extraordinary Hero"), a play attributed to Bhavabhūti also based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, makes an even more radical intervention to the character of the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s noble hero Rāma himself. For, as Bhoja tells us, it changes the episode of Vālin's slaying, one of the controversial moments in the epic that serves as a powerful testament of defects in Rāma's morality. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma kills the heroic monkey-king Vālin by duplicitous subterfuge, while Vālin is engaged in mortal combat with his brother Sugrīva. In the *Mahāvīracarita* this has changed so that we now have Rāma, not hidden in the background, but engaged in a perfectly just confrontation with Vālin, so that his death is presented by the dramatist as the outcome of a heroic encounter, not of an unjust deception. Questionable ethics are glossed over here too. Other examples employing similar tactics "cleaning up" follow. In Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa's play the *Veṇīsaṃhāra* ("Gathering the Braid"), based on the *kathā* of the *Mahābhārata* with Bhīma as the hero, it is a demonic *rākṣasa* who fulfills Bhīma's vow of drinking the blood of his own brother, the enemy-Kuru Duḥśāsana, unlike the older pattern in the *Mahābhārata* where Bhīma

[25] The *Nirdoṣadaśaratha* is identified to be the sixth act of the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* by Raghavan 1978, p. 867, on the ground that the events identified by Bhoja correlate only with what happens in this act. He also notes that acts in plays were commonly referred to by their individual titles (Ibid).

[26] The alternative name for this play, which in its present form is incomplete, is *Vīracarita*. For a summary see Warder 1983, Vol. 4, para 2268, p. 308 and para 2314, p. 331. Interestingly Warder notes that Bhavabhūti presents Kaikeyī and Mantharā to have been possessed by Śūrpaṇakhā, thereby eliminating their responsibility in banishing Rāma (Warder, 1983, Vol. 4, p. 312, para 2274): this is of course comparable to what happens in the *Nirdoṣadaśaratha*.

personally sees this promise out to the end. In Kālidāsa's famous play, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, based on an episode in the *Mahābhārata*, the hero Duṣyanta forgets his promise to the heroine Śakuntalā not through any fickleness of his heart, but because of a curse laid by the fractious sage, Durvāsas. In the more ancient narrative predecessor in the *Mahābhārata* drawn on by Kālidāsa, Duṣyanta is simply forgetful of the woman he had wed in the forest on his return to his kingdom, and no such curse by Durvāsas, which may in some way excuse his lapse of memory, is narrated. In a play of anonymous authorship, the *Chalitarāma*[27] ("Rāma Deceived"), known only through citations in treatises (such as Bhoja's), which indicate that it concerns the final part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* after Rāma's return to Ayodhyā the hero is made to doubt the heroine because of a demon Lavaṇa, and not because of his step-mother. (In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kaikeyī and her servant Mantharā cast aspersions against Sītā's virtue after her long period of captivity). In the *Tāpasavatsarāja*[28] ("The Saintly King of Vatsa"), a play by Mātrarāja/Mayūrāja, whose source is Bhāsa's play *Svapnavāsavadattā*[29] ("Vāsavadattā in a Dream", itself an expansion of the *kathā* of Udayana from the *Bṛhatkathā*), Bhoja specifies a plot-addition in which the protagonist Udayana, king of Vatsa, is shown preparing himself to leap into a pyre, an episode that proves the constancy of his love for his first wife Vāsavadattā, thereby removing the doubt of infidelity lingering in her heart. The central trope in the original *Svapnavāsavadattā*, which Mātrarāja seizes on, is the continuity of Udayana's love for his queen throughout political vicissitudes sundering their union, notably the loss of his kingdom, the false rumour of Vāsavadattā's death in a fire, and his obligation to marry Padmāvatī, a princess of Magadha, to forge an alliance in order to retrieve his realm. However, there is no such dramatization in Bhāsa's template of Udayana's intention (*adhyavasāyaḥ*) to kill himself for Vāsavadattā. One of the recurrent themes in that play is Vāsavadattā's worry that her husband has genuinely fallen out of love with her, and in love with the new woman.[30] In the reworked version in the *Tāpasavatsarāja,* this perceived shortcoming — her, and in turn our, slender suspicion about his loyalty to her, what Bhoja elegantly calls "the

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[27] The fragments are collected in Raghavan's study of Rāmāyaṇa retellings, Raghavan 1961, pp. 50-59. Warder speculates that the author might be by Meṇṭha (Warder 1977, Vol 3, para, 1362, p. 113).

[28] Raghavan, 1978 p. 868; Warder 1983, Vol 4, para 2117, p. 234. Abhinavagupta discusses the work at length to exemplify how variation in *rasa* is achieved in the work as a whole (see *Dhvanyālokalocana*, p. 341, Ingalls et. al, 1990 p. 443 ff.

[29] Warder 1983, Vol. 4, para 2114, p. 233.

[30] This is derived from Warder's summary and analysis of the *Svapnavāsavadattā* in Warder 1974, Vol 2, para 964, p. 278- para 976, p. 285.

thorn of offence" (*vyalīkaśalyam*) — has been fully extracted through Mātrarāja's insertion of Udayana's desire to self-immolate, whose driving force is nothing but his steady, virtuous passion for his true love. In the final example, the unknown work *Vikrāntaśūdraka*, it is unclear what the poet is altering, but Bhoja emphasizes as poetic liberty an episode in the story in which, duties to Śiva having been fulfilled, a character, Śiva's attendant, thinking his beloved dead, attempts to immolate himself in an artificial pyre contrived by Śūdraka, while beheld by his wife, alive unbeknownst to him, who also accompanies him into the flames.

What is clear about these examples is that, though all these novelties are argued to improve the original stories and turn what Bhoja calls "improper" to "fitting", they, in fact, erase "problems" in the original *kathā*s, from a father turning out his son, a husband forgetting he had a wife, to the possibility of a hero being unfaithful to his lover. In so doing, they restore the impeccable conduct of leading personae before audiences. In other words, they are changes that overturn, even falsify, in the name of rehabilitation, elements in the original legend not just at the surface level of plot but at the deepest level of nature, which seem to have been perceived as *doṣa*s, and thereby as problematic, by later poets confronting the ethical grays and shadows in their older narrative archetypes. All their *svecchā*s, to return to the word used by Ānandavardhana, however questionable in their intention to wipe clean ambivalences by fabricating plots, are justified by Bhoja, and permitted on the grounds of beauty. For him, it is the aesthetic experience of *kāvya*, the rush of delight in the learned spectator of poetry that forms the overriding motivation in the creation of poetry at the expense of all else. He sees the domain of *kāvya* as one of perfection and harmony, while that of source-tales potentially fraught with tensions, ragged ends and inexplicability. Yaśovarman's warning that the story must not be broken and Ānandavardhana's proviso to it that alterations should still preserve the flavour of the original are not of principal interest to Bhoja. An earlier view that stories could be changed for the sake of Beauty is being adapted to suit a conservative attitude to change.

(II.iii) *Kuntaka*

If Yaśovarman argues for absolute verity, Ānandavardhana for a sensitive handling of source-materials, and Bhoja for a free interpretation to enhance pleasure (as long as it restores the moral conduct of lead characters), our next aesthetician Kuntaka adopts the middle ground. He argues for a revision that is close to the original while supporting the liberty of a skilled poet to make required changes altering the basic aesthetic effect of the original. However

Kuntaka says that changes transforming the original *rasa* should be restricted to the end of the work. His opinions, perhaps the most developed on the topic, synthesize what we find in the writers previously discussed. Strictly speaking though, in terms of date, Kuntaka precedes Bhoja, for his work on aesthetics the *Vakroktijīvita* ("The Life of Indirect Expression") was probably written in c. 950 CE,[31] a good century before Bhoja's reign. Nevertheless, his views are here discussed after Bhoja's, as this allows us to consider the topic in terms of a theoretical, rather than a chronological, development, and to see thereby the confluence of each view in one place.

The key idea in the *Vakroktijīvita* is of "indirect speech" (*vakrokti*), that is, speech possessing a quality of "indirectness" (*vakratā*). Inherent in good literature, this is what astonishes and grants joy to the lover of literature. The word *vakra*, whence the abstract noun ending in *-tā*, means crooked or serpentine, and in this sense contains the idea of circumvention, even deviance. This quality is synonymous with unusualness in poetic language. Implicitly this presages Kuntaka's opinion on how a poet should handle a respected story. Beauty in poetry is conceived to be an astonishing departure from the pre-established. A poetic work in order to yield greater "indirectness" can and should be moulded by a skilled poet so that it curves away from the beaten track of the story and at the same time returns to it. Such "deviation" only enhances aesthetic pleasure.

There are three places in the *Vakroktijīvita* in which Kuntaka discusses how to handle stories, and in all of them the underlying reasoning is such. In the first place, in verse 1.21 and the accompanying commentary thereon, Kuntaka talks about how a quality of crookedness in either a part (*prakaraṇa*) or the entirety of the work (*prabandha*) ravishes the spectators' heart through loveliness that is both innate (*sahaja*) and acquirable (*āhārya*) through a poet's scholastic education. In exemplifying how this crooked quality is achieved in a chapter of a literary work, Kuntaka uses a plot-transmutation from the *Udāttarāghava* ("Eminent Rāghava"), a play by Mātrarāja based on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He chooses the treatment of the Mārīca episode, in which Mātrarāja portrays Lakṣmaṇa to have gone in search of the magic golden deer, followed by Rāma dispatched by Sītā to find him. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the reverse had occurred. There, Rāma had gone to fetch the deer while Lakṣmaṇa had been sent by Sītā to find him when he had tarried. Kuntaka finds this change important because, introduced by Mātrarāja "because of his skill" (*vaidagdhyavaśena*), it removes extreme literary impropriety, which Vālmīki is

[31] *Vakroktijīvita*, p. XIV (Krishnamoorthy's Introduction).

guilty of (the argument also used in Bhoja). Why? Because, argues Kuntaka, Vālmīki ought not to have presented Rāma as chasing a deer when his younger brother was at hand to undertake this menial task, and, furthermore, the possibility that Rāma's life could be saved by a younger brother is unthinkable. Hence, Mātrarāja's plot-inversion is the very life of beauteous *vakratā*, a cause of delight to knowers of poetry.[32] As in Bhoja's case, there is a tendency here to use the older view in favour of poetic liberty, which goes back to the tradition of the *Dhvanyāloka*, to justify a growing conservativism. However, in whatever way it might have been used, the view itself remains fundamentally unquestioned: *kavi*s hold the upper hand in interpreting tales and legends. This will be emphasized throughout Kuntaka's argument.

He then enters deeper into the subject from 4.16, while dealing with manifesting *vakratā* in the whole work (as had Ānandavardhana and Bhoja). Ānandavardhana had advised against disrupting the *rasa* of the original tale. Kuntaka adopts a position at variance with this tradition of the *Dhvanyāloka*. In 4.16-17,[33] he says that in order to present *vakratā*, and thereby loveliness, in a

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[32] ***vakrabhāvaḥ prakaraṇe prabandhe 'py asti yādṛśaḥ | ucyate sahajāhāryasaukumāryamanoharaḥ || 1.21 ||*** *vakrabhāvo vinyāsavaicitryaṃ prabandhaikaikadeśabhūte prakaraṇe yādṛśo 'sti yādṛg vidyate prabandhe vā nāṭakādau so 'py ucyate kathyate | kīdṛśaḥ sahajāhāryasaukumāryamanoharaḥ | sahajaṃ svābhāvikam āhāryaṃ vyutpattyupārjitaṃ yat saukumāryaṃ rāmaṇīyakaṃ tena manoharo hṛdayahārī yaḥ sa tathoktaḥ | tatra prakaraṇe vakrabhāvo yathā **rāmāyaṇe** mārīcamāyāmayamāṇikyamṛgānusāriṇo rāmasya karuṇākrandākarṇanakātarāntaḥkaraṇayā janakarājaputryā tatprāṇaparitrāṇāya svajīvitaparirakṣānirapekṣayā lakṣmaṇo nirbhartsya preṣitaḥ | tad etad atyantam anaucityayuktam yasmād anucarasaṃnidhāne pradhānasya tathāvidhavyāpārakaraṇam asaṃbhāvanīyam | tasya ca sarvātiśāyicaritayuktatvena varṇyamānasya tena kanīyasā prāṇaparitrāṇasaṃbhāvanety etad atyantam asamīcīnam iti paryālocya **udāttarāghave** kavinā vaidagdhyavaśena mārīcamṛgamāraṇāya prayātasya paritrāṇārthaṃ lakṣmaṇasya sītayā kātaratvena rāmaḥ preritaḥ ity upanibaddham | atra ca tadvidāhlādakāritvam eva vakratvam| Vakroktijīvita*, pp. 37-38.

[33] *evam anekaprakārāṃ prakaraṇavakratāṃ pratipādya samudāyātmakasya prabandhasya tām abhidadhāti **itivṛttānyathāvṛttarasasaṃpadupekṣayā | rasāntareṇa ramyeṇa yatra nirvahaṇaṃ bhavet || 4.16 || tasyā eva kathāmūrter āmūlonmīlitāśriyaḥ | vineyānandaniṣpattyai sā prabandhasya vakratā || 4.17 ||*** sā prabandhasya nāṭakasargabandhāder vakratā vakrabhāvo bhavatīti saṃbandhaḥ | yatra nirvahaṇaṃ bhaved yasyām upasaṃharaṇaṃ syāt | rasāntareṇa ramyeṇa itareṇa rasena rāmaṇīyakatvavidhāyinā | kayetivṛttānyathāvṛttarasasaṃpadupekṣayā | itivṛtta itihāse 'nyathāpareṇa prakāreṇa vṛttā nirvyūḍhā yā rasasaṃpac chṛṅgārādibhaṅgī tadupekṣayā tadanādareṇa tāṃ parityajyeti yāvat | kasyās tasyā eva kathāmūrtes tasyaiva kāvyaśarīrasya | kiṃbhūtāyāḥ | āmūlonmīlitaśriyaḥ āmūlaṃ prārambhād unmīlitā śrīr vācyavācakaracanāvaicitryasaṃpat yasyāḥ sā tathoktā tasyāḥ | kimarthaṃ vineyānandaniṣpattyai pratibodhyapārthivādipramodasaṃpādanāya | anenedam abhihitaṃ bhavati itivṛttāntarvṛttāyāḥ kasyāś cid ekasyāḥ kathāyāḥ kavis tannibandhanirvahaṇagatarasapaddhatiṃ parityajyābhijātānām āhlādakāriṇā kāmanīyakena kenāpy anyena rasenopasaṃharaṇam upapādayan prabandhe kam api vakrimāṇam ādadhāti | yathā **veṇīsaṃhāre** sa hi †kāmāntarakavalita†sakalabhāva-*

whole work, a poet can substitute the *rasa* in the conclusion — such as one that destroys *śṛṅgāra*, he adds in an aside — with an entirely new *rasa.* The implication of this rule is noteworthy. Ānandavardhana's understanding concerning limited interpretation has transmuted in Kuntaka to accommodate an idea of the total liberty of imagination. For, though Kuntaka's statement ostensibly restricts the province of changes, in effect it supports freely inverting the conclusion of the source-story. Kuntaka instantiates this with the *Veṇīsaṃhāra*, whose conclusion (*nirvahaṇa*), he argues, introduces the Heroic (*vīra*) and the Wondrous (*adbhuta*) *rasa*s, by eliminating the Tranquil (*śānta*) *rasa* of the *Mahābhārata,* which in aesthetics is considered to contradict the erotic *rasa* (see *Dhvanyāloka* 3.24). This is achieved by the dramatist's presentation of Yudhiṣṭhira as an unvanquished hero in the finale surrounded by his slain enemies in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. In the *Mahābhārata*, the final book, the Svargārohaṇaparvan, provides the antithesis of such heroism. It presents Yudhiṣṭhira and his brother, having given up the kingdom of Hastināpura, the object that had for long riven two clans in the battle of Kurukṣetra, and, with it, all the political forces that had propelled the war, to ascend to heaven. In this way the *Mahābhārata* is envisaged to evoke *śāntarasa* in us all. Kuntaka provides an interesting comment on the kind of response witnessing this plot change evokes in a learned audience, which is of course not one of tranquility— seeing the victory of the Pāṇḍavas against most difficult odds at the end of the play will make viewers cope in times of trouble and thereby grow stronger. "They become bearers of infinite energy even in calamities" (*vipatsv api vipulotsāhabhājo bhavanti*) he says. In this way a variation of narrative, one that alters the very nature of the affective power contained in the original *Mahābhārata*, is explained as a strategy that has an energizing effect in the spectator of art. The transformed ending is also meant to "cause delight to those who are to be instructed" (*vineyānandaniṣpattyai*), a phrase further glossed in the commentary as "for the sake of causing delight to

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bhāvanāvāritaniḥsārasaṃsāravāsanāmahimani mahābhārate śāntarasavināśinā nibandha-nirvahaṇapaddhatau pāṇḍavakathāyās tathāvidhādbhutābhogaśobhinā vīreṇa raṇaprāṅgaṇa-nihatākhilārāticakradhārādhiṣṭhitarājadharmadharmarājābhyudayasaṃpāditāṃ samāptim upapādayan prabandhaprarūḍhaprauḍhavakratāvicchittyācchinnam abhijātānām āhlādam āvahati | te hi tathāvidhavyasanakṣetrībhūtair api punaḥ svapakṣopabṛṃhita-parākramaparājitaparipanthibhir bhujyata eṣā rājyaśrīr iti akhidyamānā vipatsv api vipulotsāhabhājo bhavanti | yathā ***vottararāmacaritam*** *rāmāyaṇe 'py aṅginā karuṇena dāruṇavirahavedanābhājanajanakarājaputrīpātālapraveśāt †pravāhodara* (*patitasya*)† *sodarasahitasya raghupater nibandhanirvahaṇaviparyastakathāyāḥ sakaladivyāstra-kuśalalavabaladarśanotsavāntaropabṛṃhitatvena videhanandinīsaṃbhogaśṛṅgāraḥ upasaṃ-haraṇamātre vicchittiviśeṣapoṣaṇapadavīṃ bhajann abhijātānām abhinandanīyo bhavati |* *Vakroktijīvita* pp. 275-276.

those such as kings who are to be enlightened" (*pratibodhyapārthivādi-pramodasaṃpādanāya*). In Kuntaka's view, poetry is meant to teach, foremost among others, kings, and in this respect the poet is an important agent of such education, whose decisions to change stories serve to educate. In this way the liberty of the poet is justified through its enlightening instrumentality.

The other example he cites is the *Uttararāmacarita*. This play is a notable example of a work that plays freely with the *Rāmāyaṇa*, because it inverts the well-known ending of the epic. Where the *Rāmayaṇa* finishes in tragedy — the descent of Sītā into the Earth — the *Uttararāmacarita* concludes with a happy ending. Rāma is reunited with Sītā and her children. This happy ending is Bhavabhūti's resolution of what is left unresolved in the epic conclusion. Kuntaka explains that in the *Uttarāmacarita* the *rasa* is changed thereby from the Tragic (*karuṇa*) to the Erotic (*śṛṅgāra).* The reason is that Sītā's entry into the Netherworld bears the unbearable misery of separation (*dāruṇavirahavedanābhājana-*). Bhavabhūti spares us the pain. In this way his ending arouses the admiration of knowers of poetry, who while seeing the *Uttararāmacarita* welcome the pleasure of love in union (*sṛṅgāra*), because this type of aesthetic response is developed by "a special kind of deviation" (*vicchittiviśeṣa*) from the original. In other words, the change from the original is an example of surprising *vakratā*, one that might elicit gasps of delighted astonishment from the spectator of poetry. Thus, what is couched in terms of a minor proviso in the form of two *kārikā*s justifies works in which plots are turned on their heads in their culmination. One must recall here the importance of endings. Towards them the entire drive and purpose of a story irresistibly leads, and on them the final emotional effect of an audience bidding adieu to the poetic-work turns. When a poet alters, indeed opposes, at the climax rather than at any other part of the narrative, what had been imagined previously the implications naturally ripple wide.[34]

He then proceeds in 4.18-19,[35] to discuss the use of *in media res* by a poet

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[34] See previous note.

[35] *asyāḥ prakārāntaram apy avatārayati* ***trailokyābhinavollekhanāyakotkarṣapoṣiṇā | itihāsaikadeśena prabandhasya samāpanam || 4.18 || taduttarakathāvartivirasatvajihāsayā | kurvīta yatra sukaviḥ sā vicitrāsya vakratā || 4.19 ||*** *sā vicitrā vividhabhaṅgībhrājiṣṇuḥ | asya prabandhasya | vakratā vakrabhāvo bhavatīti saṃbandhaḥ | kurvīta yatra sukaviḥ| kurvīta vidadhīta | yatra yasyāṃ | sukaviḥ | aucityapaddhatiprabhāvacaturaḥ | prabandhasya samāpanam | prabandhasya sargabandhādeḥ | samāpanam upasaṃharaṇaṃ samarthanam iti yāvat | itihāsaikadeśena | itivṛttasyāvayavena | kiṃbhūtena trailokyābhinavol-lekhanāyakotkarṣapoṣiṇā jagadasādhāraṇasphuritanetṛprakarṣaprakāśakena | kimarthaṃ taduttarakathāvartivirasatvajihīrṣayā | tasmād uttarā yā kathā tadvṛtti tadantargataṃ yadvirasatvaṃ vairasyam anārjavaṃ tasya jihāsayā parijihīrṣayā | idam uktaṃ bhavati | itihāsodāhṛtāṃ kāñcana mahākaviḥ sakalāṃ kathāṃ prārabhyāpi tadavayavena*

wishing to avoid a displeasing arrangement of events in the traditional transmission in order to showcase the valour of a heroic character. This technique is said to enhance beauty by manifesting an element of specially charming divergence (*vakrimāṇam*) from the original *itihāsa*. The rule is not strictly about changing plot, but about re-arranging it in such a way that we have a new work. It shows the kinds of motivations that were felt to underlie the selection of particular scenes from a narrative source, and one clear motivation, as might be understood from this passage, was to enhance the hero's role. Kuntaka says that *vakratā* is manifested while ending a composition using a singular episode from a myth, in which the virtues of a great hero are praiseworthily magnified. This is done in order to avoid tastelessness (*virasatva*) in the sequential progress of the rest of the *kathā*. The example used is the *Kirātārjunīya,* whose action focuses on one episode of the *Mahābhārata,* Arjuna's confrontation with Śiva in the guise of the Kirāta and his acquisition of the divine *pāśupata*-missile from that god. However, as Kuntaka argues, *in medias res* is employed by Bhāravī in such a way that a single moment encapsulates the entire narrative of that legend and also showcases a hero's prowess. Three verses are cited from the *Kirātārjunīya* — 1.3 ab referring to the report of the spy to Yudhisthira, the reason for Arjuna's search for divine missiles and for the beginning of war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas; 1.46 cd revealing Draupadī's ire, the precipitating force of the battle; and 3.22 cd, describing Vyāsa foretell the victory of the Pāṇdavas in Kurukṣetra after Arjuna's success in obtaining the *pāśupatā*-missile from Śiva. In this way these verses from the *Kirātārājunīya* are argued to present a telescopic view of the entire *Mahābhārata*, and to concentrate within a single episode the broader lineaments of the tale.

The selection of the ending of that *mahākāvya* is said to demonstrate Arjuna's matchless heroism. The question of who the true hero of the *Kirātārjunīya* is remains a thorny one, since, both Śiva and Arjuna can equally

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trailokyacamatkārakāraṇanirupamānanāyakayaśaḥsamutkarṣodayadāyinā tadagrima-granthaprasaṅgataḥ saṃbhāvitavirasabhāvabhayād upasaṃhāramāṇaḥ tasya prabandhasya kāmanīyakaniketanāyamānaṃ vakrimāṇam ādadhāti | yathā ***kirātārjunīye*** *| sa hi sargabandhaḥ dviṣāṃ vighātāya vidhātum icchato rahasy anujñām adhigamya bhūbhṛtaḥ ||50|| riputimiram udasyodīyamānaṃ dinādau dinakṛtam iva lakṣmīs tvāṃ samabhyetu bhūyaḥ ||51|| ete durāpaṃ samavāpya vīryam unmūlitāraḥ kapiketanena ||52|| ityādinā duryodhananidhanāntāṃ dharmarājābhyudayadāyinīṃ sakalām api kathām upakramya kavinā nibadhyamānatvāt tejasvivṛndārakasya durodaradvārā dūrīkṛtavibhūteḥ prabhūta-drupadātmajānikāraniratiśayoddīpitamanyoḥ kṛṣṇadvaipāyanopadiṣṭavidyāyogasaṃpadaḥ pāśupatādidivyāstraprāptaye tapasyato gāṇḍīvasuhṛdaḥ pāṇḍunandanasyāntarā kirātarājasaṃpraharaṇāt samunmīlitānupamavikramollekhaṃ kam apy abhiprāyaṃ prakāśayati | Vakroktijīvita,* pp. 276-277.

be perceived as either the protagonist or the antagonist. Kuntaka though regards Arjuna to be the hero, and the episode from the Mahābhārata (*itihāsaikadeśena*), selected by Bhāravi — exemplifying the principle stated in the aphorism — to "augment a hero's eminence, as it manifests in an original manner in all three worlds" (*trailokyābhinavollekhanāyakotkarṣapoṣiṇā*). This is because — he glosses — the episode "reveals the hero's great ability when it had flashed forth in the universe in an extraordinary way" (*jagadasādhāraṇasphuritanetṛ-prakarṣaprakāśakena*). Of especial interest are Kuntaka's readings of Arjuna's ambivalence in the *Mahābhārata*, which he sees Bhāravī to elide by singling out this episode for his subject matter. First, Kuntaka says Arjuna suffers the loss of his power in the original epic through the loss of his kingdom and power in Yudhiṣṭhira's game of dice with Duryodhana. Then Draupadī rebukes him. To these indignities, instances of Arjuna's own baseness are added: deceiving Bhīṣma into loss, chopping off King Bhūriśravas's arms when he was fighting someone else, and killing Karṇa while he was otherwise preoccupied.[36] All these moments in the epic are consciously avoided by Bhāravi in Kuntaka's view "because of his fear that they would produce a quality of distastefulness" (*saṃbhāvitavirasabhāvabhayāt*) in his reworking. In the broader context of Arjuna's ignominy, the Kirāta episode is explained to provide an occasion to reinforce his heroism next to none but Śiva himself (*Vakroktijīvita* pp. 276-277). In essence, Kuntaka argues, that though a *kāvya* inspired by a famous story is no doubt an entirely new work with its unique motivations, it still carries within itself the seed of the source. Here he betrays indebtedness to Ānandavardhana's intellectual stance. The *Kirātārjunīya* is by no means a derivative simulacrum of the *Mahābhārata*, but it is pregnant with the concerns of that epic. Poetic licence as exercised by Bhāravi articulates a deeper, a more sensitive, understanding of the myth.

Not all deviations from a *kathā,* though, coloured over grey areas with happier shades. As mentioned previously, Bhavabhūti is acutely aware of Rāma's failures implicit in the epic, which he reifies before his audience by inserting an accusatory speech that offers a new awareness of the nature of heroism in the myth. In this speech appearing in the fifth act of the *Uttararāmacarita* (5.34), Lava blames Rāma of three misdemeanours: killing the demoness Tāḍakā, and thereby incurring the guilt of slaying a woman;

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[36] *aucityapradhānapaddhatipravardhamānavīrarasaparivṛḍhaprabandhanibadhyamānam ayaśasyam evānyathā vyāpṛtasya pṛthivīpater bhūriśravaso'py adhīravartmanā bhujadaṇḍocchedanam | tadvan medinīnimagnasyandanābhyuddharaṇavyāpṛtasya vyāhṛta-virodhitāhavapaddhater apy aṅgabhartur uttamāṅgakartanam | evam anyad apy ūhyam | Vakroktijīvita*, p. 278.

taking three steps in retreat while in battle with Khara, degrading behavior in a warrior; and killing Vālin while the latter battled Sugrīva. While most aestheticians find no problems with this important insertion, given, as we have seen, their unanimous appreciation of moments of divergence in *kāvya*, the sole voice of dissent belongs to Kṣemendra (fl. c. 1037-1036 CE). Regarding Bhavabhūti's liberty, he says,

> *atrāpradhānasya rāmasūnoḥ kumāralavasya parapratāpotkarṣāsahiṣṇor vīrarasoddīpanāya sakalaprabandhajīvitasarvasvabhūtasya pradhānanāyakagatasya vīrarasasya tāḍakādamanakhararaṇāpasaraṇānyaraṇasaṃsaktavālivyāpādanādijanavihitāpavādapratipādanena svavacasā kavinā vināśaḥ kṛta ity anucitam etat* ||
> *Aucityavicāracarcā*, p. 26, commentary on *kārikā* 16.

> Here, the poet [Bhavabhūti] has destroyed, the "Heroic" *rasa* in the hero [Rāma] which is so to speak the entirety of the life of the complete work by his statement explaining the criticisms made by people — such as his killing Tāḍakā, his retreat during the battle with Khara, and the killing of Vālin while he was warring with another. [He has done so] in order to enhance the "Heroic" *rasa* in Rāma's son, Prince Lava, a secondary character, who cannot tolerate the excellence of another's valour. Thus, this is inappropriate.

The criticism against Bhavabhūti is voiced circuitously — outwardly, Kṣemendra takes umbrage with the weakening of *vīrarasa* inherent in Rāma, which also characterizes the aesthetic effect of the entire work. However, in fact his argument seems to mask a discomfort with the impeachment of Rāma's conduct in that speech, which, the implication is, could have been avoided. A marked novelty in the *Uttararāmacarita* is the fully fleshed-out character of Lava, who had been a relatively minor figure in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Elsewhere in the *Aucityavicāracarcā*, Kṣemendra voices no objection with this new fancy, and he approves of Bhavabhūti voicing defiance through Lava because, he writes glowingly, it "grants to the work the colour of propriety dense with *rasa*" (*prabandhasya rasabandhurām aucityacchāyāṃ prayacchati*).[37] So in this respect he is hesitant in openly disputing the issue of poetic licence (because that would go against the grain of forerunners of the aesthetic tradition like Ānandavardhana, who profoundly influenced Kṣemendra). Nevertheless, he

[37] *atrārthe rāmāyaṇakathātikrameṇa nūtanotprekṣitā rāmatanayasya sahajavikramānusāriṇī śauryotkarṣabhūmiḥ parapratāpasparśāsahiṣṇutā prabandhasya rasabandhurām aucityacchāyāṃ prayacchati* | *Aucityavicāracarcā* pp. 16-18, commentary to *kārikā* 13.

remains ambiguous about it.

III. The *Durgāvilāsa* and the *Surathotsava*

(III.i) *The relation of the Durgāvilāsa and the Surathotsava to their source*

Our survey of classical poetics shows that, whether subtle modifications or grander metamorphoses, methods whereby the authors of classical Sanskrit literature asserted their independence from the original *āśraya* were not to be considered simply arbitrary changes made at will, but as purposeful and vitally necessary, as long as they enhanced the elegance of the work and the savouring of *rasa*. This opinion was held, as we have seen, even if some among the acts of poetic liberty caused the retelling to diverge in marked respect from the tale as it was canonically known. Some of the interpretive strategies, such as those instantiated by Bhoja in the *Nirdoṣadaśaratha* and the *Mahāvīracarita*, efface the culpability of heroes in the original sources, for example, that of Rāma in the episode of Vālin's slaying, and cleanse their characters of ambivalence, while others, such as Lava's criticism of Rāma in the *Uttararāmacarita*, which questions the *Rāmāyaṇa* in this respect, can be seen as occasionally subversive in their relation to the source. Nevertheless, all these alterations and insertions, whatever their implications, be they conservative or subversive, are by and large favourably viewed by the learned, for they were felt to arouse a certain pleasure — a complex aesthetic effect variously understood in poetics treatises — in the spectator. In fact poetic liberties scattered throughout *kāvya* are argued not to be deviations from the source-*kathā* at all, rather essentially in agreement with the concerns, spirit and *modus operandi* of the established pattern of the story. In this way liberty was provided a firm basis and recognized as a governing principle of making poetry in classical Indian literary tradition. The poet was encouraged to have a free hand in the imaginative process that was seen to be fluid, fertile and spontaneously responsive to stimulus.

I would like to understand poetic liberties in the *Surathotsava* and the *Durgāvilāsa* keeping in mind this wider conceptual framework of innovating upon the source. Both works are the outcomes of a tradition of making many myths, of performance with *vakratā*. They are the cultural descendants of a long line of older revisions and expansions in *kāvya* famously transforming known patterns, such as the various *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* plays and poems. I see the innovations in these two *mahākāvya*s as being more than just whimsical variations on the themes of the model-narrative, for they are carefully thought-out forms of interaction, in other words conversations, with a cherished legendary paradigm, that were intended by their makers to heighten the experience of beauty — to be a play with *rasa* — and to be astonishing

marks of their poetic ingenuity.

(III. ii) *The kathā of King Suratha in the Devīmāhātmya*

The *Devīmāhātmya,* also known as the *Caṇḍī* ("The Fiery Goddess") and the *Durgāsaptaśatī,* ("Seven Hundred Verses to Durgā") is a mythological narrative found in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* (Chapters 81-93) that relates the deeds (*carita*s) of a Supreme Goddess manifesting herself as a tempestuous warrior and an all-pervasive deity. These deeds comprise her battles with demons, which are recounted in three myths. The demons have usurped power and the goddess's business is to restore to the universe its lost equilibrium, and return the kingdom of the gods to their safekeeping. In the first myth, she is presented as the slayer of the demon brothers Madhu and Kaiṭabha, in the second of the buffalo demon Mahiṣa, and in the third of the demon brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha. Codicological evidence shows that by the 12th century CE this *kathā* had already acquired an independent status from its parent-text, the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, since one of the earliest stand-alone *Devīmāhātmya* manuscripts, from Nepal, is dated 1109 CE (Nepal Saṃvat = 229),[38] showing that it was sufficiently well-established by then to be circulated on its own. The date of composition can be determined on iconographical grounds as established by Yuko Yokochi. Her analysis of the available sculptural evidence, taken together with the earliest textual sources, leads her to situate the *terminus post quem* to sometime in the late 8th century CE.[39]

The popularity of the narrative as an object of exegesis is verifiable through a corpus of at least sixty-seven commentaries in Sanskrit,[40] and its gradual ritualization is reflected in the addition, in the course of transmission, of six ancillary texts (*aṅga*s) containing information about an associated practice of worship. Three of these *aṅga*s are texts of magical charms or mantras (the *devīkīlaka* "The Stake Mantra of the Goddess", the *argalā*, "The Pin Mantra" and the *devīkavaca* "The Amulet Mantra of the Goddess") introducing the legend, the purposes of which are to destroy potential obstacles in the formal recitation of the legend and to protect the reciter from dangers in his lifetime. Another three are on esotericized ontology (*Rahasya*s or "Secret" texts) placed after the completion of the legend, revealing the true and

[38] NAK MS Nr.1-1077 (Reel Nr. A1157/11) NS229: Reference kindly supplied by Prof. Y. Yokochi.

[39] Yokochi 2004, p. 141.

[40] Coburn 1991, p. 121. At least two of these commentaries explain the myth within particular theological frameworks. The commentary by Nāgoji Bhaṭṭa interprets the *Devīmāhātmya* within an Advaita Vedāntin outlook, while the one named *Guptavatī* by Bhāskararāya within a Śrīvidyā theological outlook.

"unutterable" (*anākhyā)* nature of the Supreme Goddess to Suratha, and thereby elucidating a higher truth about the forms (*avatāra*s) taken by the goddess in the narrative. It is likely that these materials were gradually added in the course of the legend's development from a single tale into a composite litany with a function to play in public worship, as they are meant to prepare the reciter of the *Devīmāhātmya* to invoke the main narrative during readings, to unlock its auspicious powers and to reveal to the listener essential knowledge concerning the nature of the deity. Separating these ancillaries from the legend at each end are hymns, which further elaborate, dignify and structure the process of ritual recitation, and as suggested by Coburn, act as "coverings" (*saṃpuṭa*s) between tale and *aṅga*s (Coburn 1991, p. 100). These are a *Rātrisūkta* (invocation to the Night) and a *Devīsūkta* (invocation to the goddess) attributed to the *Ṛgveda*, and visualizations (*dhyāna*s) of Caṇḍikā, her lion, and the three goddesses revealed in the *Rahasya*s — Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī. Due to these layers, it is important to consider the *Devīmāhātmya* not just as the tale of the goddess's three deeds, but, as it is most commonly circulated, as a collection with additional works that empower the most potent part of the work, the *kathā* at its very heart.[41] They reflect a process whereby the goddess's story becomes a persona: a speaking, living presence that is an object of worship and an agent of salvation with prosopopoeiac[42] force.

The narrative of Suratha embedded in the broader theological project of this work may be summarized as follows. The three demon-slaying myths of the goddess are enclosed by a frame-story of a *kṣatriya*, Suratha, a once powerful king, and a *vaiśya,* Samādhi, the human interlocutors to whom these tales of the goddess are revealed by a sage Sumedhas. Along with this sage, they represent the highest levels of the social hierarchy, the priestly, aristocratic and mercantile classes, whose power ultimately derives from the goddess, the

[41] The addition of the *aṅga*s has been speculated to have occurred around the 14th century (Coburn 1991, p. 101), though this date is far from certain as it is not philologically verified. In a personal communication, Prof. Y. Yokochi kindly pointed out to me that she had come across a Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript paleaographically assignable to the 12th century, containing an early version of the *kavaca*-text (communication on 12 March, 2014), suggesting that these materials could have been added much earlier than the date proposed by Coburn. The inclusion of the *aṅga*s has important implications for the religious history of the *Devīmāhātmya*, as they point to the growth of a corpus and thereby to the development of the recitation-tradition of the *Devīmāhātmya*. The chronological outline for the growth of this corpus can only be specifically plotted by a scrutiny of all the early manuscripts containing these additional works, which is beyond the scope of the present article.

[42] Prosopopeia: a trope whereby inanimate objects are personified, as for instance in the Old English poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, in which Christ's cross is a living character.

apex of this order. The goddess sanctifies their position and purpose in society. They appear in the very beginning of the tale in Chapter 1.1-1.46, which opens with the declaration that the following account concerns the arising of Sāvarṇi, the Eighth Manu, a descendant of the Solar line, through the great powers of the goddess Mahāmāyā, a name of Caṇḍikā. Thereafter, a king in the Caitra lineage Suratha, destined to be reborn as the Eighth Manu Sāvarṇi, is introduced. In this way, the explicitly stated purpose of the *Devīmāhātmya* is a description of the origin of this Manu through Suratha. However in order for Suratha to be reborn, he has to undergo a process of disenfranchisement leading him to worship the goddess and obtain from her the boon of being reborn as Sāvarṇi. The goddess's tale, though in length and detail clearly the primary concern of the *Devīmāhātmya*, is nevertheless, in view of the text's own articulation of its purpose, an accessory for the fulfillment of Suratha's glorious fate.

The story then continues. This Suratha, "He of the Excellent Chariot", who treated his subjects like his own children, was defeated in battle by the "destroyers of Kolā" (*kolāvidhvaṃsinas*), though they were weaker than he (1.3-1.5), and, on returning to his kingdom, was duped by his ministers and his enemies who had grown powerful, and had unscrupulously seized his wealth and army (1.7). On the pretext of hunting, he escaped to a dense forest on his horse, and found therein a tranquil hermitage of the powerful ascetic Sumedhas, in which beasts of prey dwelt companionably with students (1.8-9). Biding there for some time, Suratha underwent a period of profound self-reflection, lamenting the citadel bereft of his presence that once was ruled by his illustrious forefathers, and now was governed in defiance of the Law by his unrighteous servants; and the probable neglect meted out to his chief elephant, now gone to enemy hands (1.10-13ab). He wondered at the fickleness of followers once devoted to his daily worship, now performing the same for other kings while frittering away the wealth he had accumulated with great effort (1.14-15). While submerged in such thoughts, he noticed a *vaiśya* in the proximity of the hermitage, and asked him who he was and why his countenance appeared forlorn. The *vaiśya* replied that he was a merchant by name of Samādhi, born into a family of rich men, but now, being banished by his wicked sons and wives because of their covetousness of his wealth, he had become a pauper (1.16-19). Having come to the forest, Samādhi continued, he no longer knew any news of either his sons or his household, but at the same time he wished to know how they fared (1.20-22). On the king exclaiming at the man's compassion towards the people who had defrauded him, the *vaiśya* replied that, like the king, who held a perception of his dilemma that was

peculiar to himself, he too wrestled with a paradox, which was that his heart was not angry towards anyone. Though knowing what had been done to him, his feelings were disposed to love even those false friends and relatives (1.23-26). The two then went to Sumedhas and having honoured him and sat at his feet, presented their problems to him. The king asked why he was attached to his kingdom, though knowing it was irrevocably lost and, speaking on behalf of the *vaiśya*, why Samādhi felt attachment towards his family though they had tricked him. In both cases, though they were wise men, their minds clung to what had to be abandoned — what was this delusion whereby discriminating knowledge has been blinded in both (1.27-33)?

The sage then answered as follows. Knowledge exists in all beings, including animals, concerning the realm of sensory perception. Objects of sense-perception are perceived in various ways. Some creatures are blind by day, some by night, while some can perceive in both darkness and light. This knowledge dependent on senses is common to both man and beast. But behold (*paśya*)! Despite having knowledge, birds feed their young though tormented by hunger themselves because of their delusion (*mohāt*). In the same way, men too are full of love (*sābhilāṣāh*) for their children, but out of avarice for favours returned (*lobhāt pratyupakārāya*). In both cases, man and beast are plunged into the "whirlpool of thinking that something is mine" (*mamatāvarte*), which is nothing but the grotto of delusion (*mohagarte*) by the power of the goddess Mahāmāyā "The Great Illusory Magic". She bewilders the entire universe! Ravishing the hearts of even wise men, the goddess casts them into delusion. She is the supreme cause of the mobile and immobile world, the bestower of liberation, the goddess over all gods (1.34-44).

In the sage's perspective, delusion (*moha*) is a universal condition experienced by all creatures, causing every creature to be innately selfish, to think, for instance, when loving his/her progeny, in terms of "my-ness" (*mamatva*), that a child is "my child". Even if creatures possess knowledge that should enable them to overcome this thinking, they still act irrationally because of *moha*. There may be slight differences in this delusion. While animals are less calculating, men plan ahead for the future and anticipate the benefits their children will grant them. The ultimate cause of this paradoxical condition is the goddess herself. Since she is the principle of this natural delusion, which is nothing but existence in this world, only she can liberate one from it. The king then inquired about this goddess, and the sage began to introduce him and Samādhi to Caṇḍikā, here described as Mahāmāyā, the bewitching force of Viṣṇu, also his tranquil sleep of meditation, Yoganidrā (1.45-46). After this, the goddess's *carita*s are declared, spanning the next twelve chapters, and our two

dispossessed protagonists, enlightened by the lore of the goddess, re-enter the narrative in Chapter 13 only after the deaths of the final demon-duo Śumbha and Niśumbha, a prophecy of the goddess's incarnations, and the rewards of worshipping her, have been narrated.

Having been urged by the seer to worship the goddess for the revival of their lost fortunes, the two went to a riverbank to propitiate her so that she would appear before them. There they performed ritual penance, fasting, their mind solely intent on her, repeating her invocation (*devīsūktam*) in prayer, having made an earthen image representing her, honouring it with flowers and incense, and offering to it a sacrificial offering of blood from their own bodies (13.6cd-9ab). After a period of three years of being propitiated in this way, Caṇḍikā was gratified and appeared before them and offered them boons of whatever they desired. The king chose sovereignty in a future birth, and in his lifetime, his own kingdom with his enemies vanquished. The *vaiśya* chose knowledge that would dispel despondency and egotistical thinking. The goddess prophesied that in a few days the king would regain his lost sovereignty by slaying his enemies, and after his death would be reborn as the Manu Sāvarṇi. In the same way she granted knowledge to the *vaiśya,* and with that disappeared. Thus the bull among *kṣatriya*s Suratha became Sāvarṇi (13.9cd-13.17). In this way, the tale of Suratha playing out at the level of the real world and emblematic of real human troubles serves as a "conversation-piece" framing the legend of the goddess that unfolds at a cosmic level.

(III.iii) *The kathā of Suratha in the Surathotsava*

The author of the "The Festival of Suratha", to-wit the earliest *kāvya* based on the *Devīmāhātmya*, is Someśvaradeva (c. 1178-1255 CE), ancestral chaplain (*kulapurohita*) to the Caulukya, and then the Vāghela, kings of Gujarat. As its title suggests, the poem, a *mahākāvya* in fifteen cantos, places emphasis on Suratha, to the extent that it excises the *vaiśya* Samādhi from the story, a significant modification that isolates the relationship between king and goddess and makes it an exclusive interaction. In so doing, the vital link between Caṇḍikā and a warrior, thought to be the cornerstone of heroic practice and belief in ancient India, is emphasized.

Taking the form and essence of the *Devīmāhātmya*, Someśvaradeva tells it again, and though there are various levels of newness that he grants to his telling, I will focus on one particular addition. From 12.52, Someśvaradeva invents a completely new episode, which, he says in the canto colophon, is placed "in the casket of verse-jewels" (*kāvyaratnakaraṇḍikāyāṃ*) named the *Surathotsava*, suggesting that this particular episode was viewed as the most

glittering gem, the loveliest among all the cantos of the *Surathotsava*, one in which the king's greatest trial is beautifully inlaid. The canto is about Suratha's temptation by a *māyāstrī*, a "magical woman" conjured by Caṇḍikā, by whom the perfection of the ascetic ideal will be put to the test. The episode, described in a hundred and two verses encompassing the end of Canto 12 and the entirety of Canto 13, dramatizes the triumph of asceticism over eroticism. But it is a severe test not easily won, and it is hard to know which side the author is truly on. My own sense from the poem is that our respectable Vedic scholar and chaplain is a soft-hearted sensualist, a *rasika* through and through, and it is only his decision as an author to keep the *Devīmāhātmya*'s ending — Suratha's successful completion of stern ritual observances — that forces him to inscribe the failure of fleshly love to interrupt this. As an audience, we are always on the side of the *māyāstrī*, who, though artificial, develops real feelings for the king. With her entrance, *śṛṅgāra* is the note that begins to suffuse the poem, which had been intent on the heroic battles between Caṇḍikā and demons for a prolonged section. And it is a welcome note, though potent with its own tragedies and disturbances. It is also at this point that clever paronomasia, for which Someśvaradeva is famous ceases, the poetry becomes limpid and flowing, the music more evident to the ears through subtly heightened *anuprāsa*s.

We realize that this illusory woman is an aspect of the goddess herself in her role as Viṣṇumāyā, the bewitching Magic of Viṣṇu, who, in her desire to test the strength of Suratha's asceticism, creates a simulacrum "with her mind as it concentrated in meditation" (*cittena ... praṇidadhatā viṣṇumāyā*) (12.53-54). In the *māyāstrī*'s temptation of the king, Someśvaradeva thereby impregnates the subtlest suggestion of the Great Goddess playing with her devotee (*bhakta*): here is a manifestation of the *Devīmāhātmya*'s chaotic and ineluctable Māyā, who casts us into labyrinths of confusion. Maddeningly beautiful, "igniting the fire of love even in seers" (*manīṣiṇām api janitasmarajvarā*) with "gestures of her eyebrows like writhing snakes" (*bhrūbhaṅgair ... ahibhir iva sphuradbhir*), this bewildering emanation is instructed by her progenitor Durgā to stop Suratha's restraints. For Durgā explains, "the minds of self-denying hermits (*yatīnāṃ cittāni*) harsh from rejecting love (*smaraparihārakarkaśāni*) because of their sole dedication to the religious life (*dharmaikapravaṇatayā tayā*) become soft (*mṛdūbhavanti*) when moistened by the nectar of the smiles (*siktāni smitasudhayā*) of charming girls (*sundarīṇāṃ*) who capture hearts with their beauty (*saundaryāpahṛtahṛdāṃ*)" (12.57). To support the fictive temptress the goddess in a playful mood commands the god of Love, Kāma, and his friend Spring to invade the forest

where the king is deep in meditation.

Acting on the goddess's commands, the *māyāstrī* took refuge in that hermitage with her friends, while her accomplices Spring and his *makara*-bannered friend entered the forest granting lustre to all the buds. Instantly, a wave of transformation rippled through the woods. The call of cuckoos aroused a sentiment that was contrary in the minds of seers even though they were immersed in meditation. A breeze wafted from the Malaya mountains that punished those who had violated Love's commands by denying themselves, stirring the leaves on plants and with it the impassioned hearts of young men. The mango tree declared the rite of Love with freshly budded sprays, and the hot rays of the warm Sun sprinkled the lotus-like faces of the daughters of the ascetics with sparkling beads of sweat. Lotuses, receptacles of sweet liquor, expanded their yearning bodies to the Thousand-Splendoured Sun and the crimson *palāśa* flowers became as it were the missiles of Kāma, their ravishing redness counterfeiting the blood of his victims (13.1-9). More is described forming the actions of crafty Kāma setting the stage for the *māyāstrī*'s appearance. In this way, "the five-arrowed lord of love (*pañcaśaraḥ*) roamed (*cacāra*) unfettered (*ucchṛṅkhalaḥ*) there in the hermitage grove (*tapovane tatra*) as he spread passion (*tanvan ratiṃ*) in inhabitants of the forest who depended on love (*vanecarāṇāṃ ... ratyavalambināṃ*) by means of the *kaṅkeli* trees (*kaṅkelibhiḥ*) whose branch-tips had sprouted (*pallavitāgra-śākhair*)" (13.14).

Into this many-splendoured bower of love, steps the goddess's self-born embodied principle of intoxication. Instantly "she tightly bound (*sā ... bhṛśaṃ babandha*) the eyes, likewise the hearts, of young men (*yūnāṃ manāṃsīva vilocanāni*) with the noose of her hair (*keśapāśena*) that was resting on (*āśritena*) a garland of pearls (*muktāmayaṃ dāma*) that, by mingling with the lustre [of her glossy dark strands] (*nijāṃśuyogān*), seemed mixed with sapphires (*nīlāśmabhir miśram iva*)" (13.18). Between 13.20-30, Someśvaradeva elaborates a trope dear to Sanskrit *kavi*s, a descriptive navigation of the girl's fulsome body, but by using elliptical expression, idiomatic language and many conceits, he enlivens stale conventions, and one is left with an intensely sensuous portrait, dripping with genuine feeling. Before her breasts, pots were nothing, before her limbs, gold was inferior, a full moon was the only alternative for her face, to the colour of her cheeks, the lustre of ivory was as a slave girl, in her speech there was an extraordinary music, the orbs of her buttocks were the site of supreme happiness, the delicate line of hair on her stomach like a rope stretched out by Kāma in his desire to enter the grotto of her deep-set navel.

On entering the grove, the magic-woman is addressed by a certain wise friend, who described the hermitage and its ascetics for her and directed her to the river near which Suratha sat (13.32-45). There soon appears a rather telling verse, which will be our key to understanding the broader resonance of this episode. The verse says: "seeing this beautiful maiden descending (*tām āpatantīm avalokya ramyāṃ*), Kāma (*smaraś*) became certain of (*niścikāya ... cetasi*) victory *(jayaṃ*). However (*tu*), on perceiving *(paśyan*) that this king (*bhūpam amum*) was comparable to Śiva (*śaṃbhūpamaṃ*), he (*asau*), with sighs (*saniḥśvāsaṃ*) became bereft of hope (*abhūn nirāśaḥ*)" (13.48). We shall return to the significance of this verse and the reversal it contains later but for the time being, keeping it, and its critical word "comparable to Śiva" (*śambhūpamaṃ*), in mind let us proceed to what happens next. The girl then went to the river, but from now, the sheer, vital, reddening force of her eros is brought into direct confrontation with its anti-sentiment, the fierce clear blaze of the absence of desire. She arrives at the river which is correlated, through a pun, to the pellucid thought of renunciates solely intent on the Universal Spirit, Brahman (13.49), and then her glance falls on Suratha, who is the splendid apogee of all this, the confluence, fancies Someśvaradeva, of both the heroic (*vīra*) and the pacific (*śānta*) *rasa*s (13.50-54). Here is a warrior who is also a sage.

Frightened by the intensity of his self-absorption, she hastily begins her task of seduction, enacting her coy tremulous gestures of love, even getting her friend to dance for him to the accompaniment of musicians playing Rāga Vasanta, but the power of his tranquility makes him unmoved by all this sophisticated display of art and beauty. His stillness is placed next to the flurry of her dynamism. The *māyāstrī,* though associated with artifice, embodies all that great art strives to be a vehicle or commentary of — life itself. While she is vital, pleasing to the heart, permeated with emotion though ultimately unreal, the king as ascetic is cool in his equanimity and inwardly focused, his great energies self-contained. If she is Art and Life, then he is Spirit and Transcendence. At this time, tragedy intercedes with its pointed shaft: Kāma, unable to bear this injustice, the poet says, shoots an arrow at the *māyāstrī.* Our resplendent magical weapon of love becomes the lover, and now, we are enfolded by levels of confusion: the girl, who is an aspect of the goddess, grows to love the king who loves the goddess but does not love the girl who is the goddess. And thence into a further paradox: one meant to be unfeeling feels and one who feels remains unfeeling. The wise friend, concerned for the *māyāstrī*, feverish with passion's malady and on the point of death, takes matters into her own hands and addresses an eloquent petition to Suratha,

beseeching him to marry her, or else she will die. However, Suratha remains firm in his resolve. Passion is frustrated. Asceticism is victorious. Gods shower him with flowers and praise him "whose chest was unbroken by Love's dart" (13.92). The *māyāstrī* holding within her grief (*antar dadhatī viṣādaṃ*) regarding the wealth of her beauty (*saundaryasaṃpadi*), which had not fulfilled its mission (*akṛtakriyāyāṃ*), a compound that has the second sense of "which had not made love", disappeared (*antardadhe*) (13.91). This subtly echoes *Kumārasambhava* 5.1 in which Pārvatī, rejected by Śiva, had privately cursed her beauty, for among lovers, Kālidāsa says, the fruit of physical loveliness is said to be conjugal union. The *māyāstrī*'s body, which is the ground of fertile love, is similarly unused. Her tragedy is Suratha's joyous triumph.

But why is Suratha "comparable to Śiva"? Apart from the *Devīmāhātmya*, an episode from another great work on love forms the mighty tree of influence casting its shade over this chapter. Someśvaradeva stages the tension between the erotic and the ascetic by alluding to the richest archetype for this play of oppositions — chapter three of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, in which Śiva is tempted by Pārvatī. Someśvaradeva is not imitating Kālidāsa by repeating his words, but rather paying homage to a writer he greatly admired by using *Kumārasambhava* 3 as a conceptual *paradigma* for the *māyāstrī* episode.[43] Both are about the temptation of a great ascetic by a beautiful woman in collusion with Kāma and Spring (though the fourth ally in Kālidāsa's plot — Rati — is absent in Someśvaradeva's interpretation). In its introductory description of the advent of Spring in the forest before the temptation; the stirring of love, a violent emotion, in the hearts of sages; the image of the

[43] On the type of influence exerted by the *Kumārasambhava*, Someśvaradeva's use of Kālidāsa's style and content conforms to what is described by Rājaśekhara as a second and positive kind of *śabdārthaharaṇam*, "taking another's words and meaning", that which was *anugrāhyam*, "to be encouraged", since it was seen as an example of *upajīvanam* or "appropriate dependence" on learned predecessors. The first kind of *śábdaharaṇam* that is inappropriate amounts to plagiarism, and is to be shunned by all poets. Rājaśekhara (though conceding that the purely original poet is ultimately supreme) discusses four kinds of such positive dependence: *pratibimbakalpaḥ, ālekhyaprakhyaḥ, tulyadehatulyaḥ, parapura-praveśapratimaḥ*. These categories of legitimate borrowing were clearly influential as they filter into Hemacandra's *Kāvyānuśāsana* and Vāgbhaṭa's *Kāvyānuśāsana* (for the verse correspondences see the table provided by the editors in *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, p. 256), among which Hemacandra's work on the practice of poetry would surely have been familiar to Someśvaradeva, who dedicates a full verse of praise to Hemacandra in *Kīrtikaumudī* 1.18. He was therefore aware of what kind of *chāyā*, or poetic "shadow" of another writer, conformed to literary *aucityam*, appropriateness, as outlined in the aesthetic treatises of his times (particularly since he is stridently critical of culpable *śabdaharaṇam* i.e plagiarism, in several verses of his *Surathotsava*). And accordingly, his own evocation can be described as fitting the legitimate categories of "like a painting" (*ālekhyaprakhyaḥ*) and *parapurapraveśa-pratimaḥ*.

radiant *māyāstrī* walking towards the meditating Suratha; her thwarted efforts; and in its presentation of the dualism between desire and renunciation, *Surathotsava* 13 is thematically modeling itself on *Kumārasambhava* 3. In fact with regard to that final dualism, related oppositions presented in the *Surathotsava*, such as that between love and indifference and between two paradoxes, passionate artifice and dispassionate truth, have their roots in the grand conflict between Kāma and Śiva in the *Kumārasambhava*. Even the chapter numbers echo each other, while the metre is *upajāti* in both cases. So, the rhythms we hear in one work are replicated in the other. The *māyāstrī* is a reflection of Pārvatī — note that her kinship to Caṇḍikā reinforces this parallelism — while the idea that Someśvaradeva wishes the reader to find in Suratha an evocation of Śiva is suggested in verse 13.48, in which he seems to have embedded our key, the compound *śambhūpamaṃ* deliberately:

tām āpatantīm avalokya ramyāṃ jayaṃ smaraś cetasi niścikāya |
śambhūpamaṃ bhūpam amuṃ tu paśyann
asau saniḥśvāsam abhūn nirāśaḥ ||

Kāma watching the girl, then watching Suratha who is like Śiva, the state of mind the sequence of this gazing arouses in him, resonate with *Kumārasambhava* 3.57, where Kāma looks at Pārvatī and then at Śiva (Ibid 3.64), and then experiences the after-effect of this furtive seeing. In *Surathotsava* 13.48, though, the final *pāda,* in which Kāma's hopes of success are dashed (*asau...abhūn nirāśaḥ*) is the exact reverse of the last *pāda* of its counterpart in the *Kumārasambhava* describing Kāma as full of renewed hope, and even derivatives from the same verbal form *ā-śaṃs*, meaning "to long for" (*nirāśaḥ* and *āśaśaṃse*), appear in both verses, though contrapuntally in relation:

tāṃ vīkṣya sarvāvayavānavadyāṃ rater api hrīpadam ādadhānām |
jitendriye śūlini puṣpacāpaḥ svakāryasiddhiṃ punar āśaśaṃse ||

A few other suggestive verses:
The structure of *Surathotsava* 13.1, particularly that of the final *pāda* (place in accusative followed by the perfect of the root *gam*, "to go" with the prefix *ā*), which tells us of Kāma's entry into the home of seers as follows —

atha drumāropitapallavaśrīḥ śrīkaṇṭhakāntānumato vasantaḥ |
mitreṇa sākaṃ makaradhvajena tapodhanānāṃ vanam ājagāma ||

evokes *Kumārasambhava* 3.23:

sa mādhavenābhimatena sakhyā ratyā ca sāśaṅkam anuprayātaḥ |

aṅgavyayaprārthitakāryasiddhiḥ sthāṇvāśramaṃ haimavataṃ jagāma ||

The idea that love is dangerous for sages expressed in *Surathotsava* 13.2, which says,

uttasthivān āmravanasthitānāṃ kolāhalaḥ kokilakāminīnām |
yo bhāvam udbhāsitavān viruddhaṃ samādadhāneṣv api mānaseṣu ||

is reminiscent of *Kumārasambhava* 3.24:

tasmin vane saṃyamināṃ munīnāṃ tapaḥsamādheḥ pratikūlavartī |
saṃkalpayoner abhimānabhūtam ātmānam ādhāya madhur jajṛmbhe ||

The marvellous redness of *palāśa* flowers, and its comparison to wounds in *Surathotsava* 13.9 that says:

palāśapuṣpeṣubhir eva devaḥ puṣpeṣur adhvanyajanaṃ jaghāna |
tallohiteneva tathā hi teṣu lauhityam atyudbhutam āvirāsīt ||

also appear in the description of Kālidāsa's forest where Kāma attempts to strike Śiva, as follows:

bālenduvakrāṇy avikāsabhāvād babhuḥ palāśāny atilohitāni |
sadyo vasantena samāgatānāṃ nakhakṣatānīva vanasthalīnām ||
Kumārasambhava 3.29

Regard *Surathotsava* 13.13:

viśeṣitatvāt kusumākareṇa vanaṃ tad apy anyad ivāvalokya |
vedāntavedyāny api mānasāni calanti yatnān munayo niyemuḥ ||

In the *Kumārasambhava*, seers try to restrain sudden thoughts of passion when devious Spring with his comrade Kāma infiltrate their habitat:

tapasvinaḥ sthāṇuvanaukasas tām ākālikīṃ vīkṣya madhupravṛttim |
prayatnasaṃstambhitavikriyāṇāṃ kathaṃ cid īśā manasāṃ babhūvuḥ ||
Kumārasambhava 3.34

Of course, in the *Kumārasambhava*, love triumphs because asceticism achieves integration with it, and Śiva's great heart in which no duality exists finally melts, but this process of integration is inverted, made tragic and transmuted to unfulfilled eros in the *Surathotsava*. If we think of what this achieves in terms of *rasa*, then *śṛṅgāra* is made a counterpoint to *śānta*, which seems to form the dominant *rasa* of this part of the *Surathotsava*, threatening for some time to break the latter but ultimately giving way to its pervasiveness. This clash of two apparently opposing *rasa*s creates a powerful tension in the work. *Śānta* itself,

though restored in the thirteenth canto, finally makes way but without opposition to *vīra*, which appears to me to be the main *rasa* characterizing the entire work, but which is modulated so that it waxes and wanes at the right moments (as in fact the *Dhvanyāloka* 3.13 advises). Both these *rasa*s, pacific and heroic, are intimately connected in the *Surathotsava*, and Suratha himself is their embodied amalgam, as we have seen. That verse, 13.51, indicates that Someśvaradeva was aware of the idea in aesthetics that two apparently disruptive *rasa*s can co-exist in the same poem. However, all such analyses are in the last resort profoundly indeterminable as the Indian philosophers of beauty themselves knew well. The ebb and flow of *rasa* lurks somewhere but we cannot pin it down to a definite category, only feel its effects.

In Canto 14, we leave behind the tragic conclusion to this invented and inverted Kālidāsean universe and enter into an expansion of what happened next to our triumphant king. The transition from the *Kumārasambhava* is first signalled by the metre of Canto 14, which is *mañjubhāṣiṇī*. The king's self-restraint has paid off. The goddess, pleased by his fortitude, appears before him as a bodiless blaze of shimmering glory, and we hear her speak. The goddess as formless light seems to be a deliberate contrast to the *māyāstrī* as perfected physiognomy. She asks him to choose a boon. The familiar narrative of the *kathā* is resumed. Overcome, Suratha sings a moving hymn to her (14.6-23), a moment left undramatized though implicit in the *Devīmāhātmya*. The narrative is made to pause for a while in its onward rush, for this encounter with the divine is the culmination of everything that has happened before, and the poet must not deny his audience from imbibing the full extent of its pleasures unhurriedly. The tone subtly changes from the previous canto and becomes richer in language, as Someśvaradeva places intricate grammatical forms in Suratha's mouth to grant gravitas to his adoration of the deity. In 14.9, which pays obeisance to Caṇḍikā's foot — her violent but compassionate foot which grinds to dust the enemy demon — Suratha uses the unusual construction of genitives as the objects of the verb, following a Pāṇinian rule (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 2.3.56), which says that such syntax is used in order to express cruelty, in this case the death-delivering action of the goddess's foot. He showcases ornamentation with sound in nearly every verse, playing with *anuprāsa* and *yamaka*, particularly in the opening quarters. For example, in 14.17, he repeats the word-cluster *alikāya* twice in two different senses, creating a sensuous effect on the ear with its fluid "l". In the first sense, it is embedded at the very beginning of the verse quarter in a vocative compound *alikāyamātar* ("O Bee-Bodied Mother") referring to Bhrāmarī, a curious bee embodiment of Caṇḍikā mentioned in the *Devīmāhātmya* 11.49-50ab and other

sources. In the second sense, it is found rolling smoothly after the vocative as a dative *alikāya* ("to her forehead"), which is the object of Suratha's salutation (*namas*). Weaving through these is a continuous strand of "l" flowing through the verse-half. In 14.7, he doubles the dental "d" by placing *adarśam*, the aorist *parasmaipada* first person singular of *dṛś* ("to see") just next to *darśanam*, its nominal formation. All this fine detailing occurs at a micro level in Suratha's song, as differently coloured threads delicately interwoven in an intricate tapestry, representing, as its complete image, Caṇḍikā's warrior aspect displayed through separate portraits of her most renowned martial deeds. The heroic is thereby gradually brought back into focus and then fully restored when the goddess makes her reply to the king, in which she urges him to abandon the rosary and take up arms again to fight his enemies, grants him the glory of royal power lasting a thousand years; a future free of dangers, and rebirth as the eighth Manu Sāvarṇi (14.24-31). The poem replaces the world of self-abnegation and the higher spirit with the one it had first begun, that of kingship. A new episode is inserted in which Suratha is shown to return to Sumedhas to pay his respects and an extended interlude portraying their camaraderie follows.

If the evocation of the *Kumārasambhava,* and the infusion of a hint of *śṛṅgāra,* form clearly visible intentions in the addition of new material to the *Surathotsava*, one can speculate about other authorial intentions behind the emphasis on the king, given that the poet has left behind other writings supporting our speculations, and his historical background is fairly well-known. In this case, the emphasis on Suratha may have derived in some part from Someśvaradeva's closeness to the wielders of political power in Gujarat. The first among these is King Bhīma II (1178-1241 CE). It is evident that the culture of the court Someśvaradeva, and before him his priestly ancestors, traditionally inhabited lies in the background of the *Surathotsava,* which in 15.49 asserts that the poet "caused the cultivated people at the court of King Bhīma to become transported with supreme delight by his poem, a locus of *rasa* developed through novel words and his play written in one and half hours".[44] In its attention to the world of royal power, its highly mannered, embellished and densely punning style, its often didactic tone particularly in the opening epigrams on good men and bad men, and its self-confessed wish to entertain the well-read (*bahuśrutānām anurañjanāya*), the *Surathotsava* addresses and instructs an illustrious audience at Bhīma's glittering literary assembly (*sabhā*). Suratha's expanded role may have, to a slight degree, played

[44] *kāvyena navyapadapākarasāspadena yāmārdhaghaṭitena ca nāṭakena |*
śrībhīmabhūmipatisaṃsadi sabhyalokam astokasaṃmadavaṃśavadam ādadhe yaḥ ||

to the expectations of this patrician audience, though of course in a highly idiosyncratic and even critical manner, for the king is shown to have his powers stripped. At the same time political constraints — turmoils that Bhīma had to face during his reign[45] — might well have formed the broader historical picture to Someśvaradeva's deployment of a story about a ruler losing and retrieving his kingdom, though it is difficult to ascertain in what ways the *Surathotsava* forms a political allegory, as all temporalities, if there are any, remain deliberately subsumed by metaphors. Moreover, given that Someśvaradeva was a priest, he would have understood very well the tension between the life of the sage and the life of pleasure presented in chapter 13. Suratha's worship of the goddess can also be linked to celebrations customary at the Western Caulukya court, in which goddess-worship for martial empowerment and royal vigour continued as a matter of tradition alongside Jainism, and indeed formed the older religion.[46] In fact, the unnamed lineage-goddess of the *Surathotsava*, a local aspect of Caṇḍikā, her intimate closeness to the king, and his justification of acts of policy such as his self-imposed exile in the forest in her name, are closely paralleled by the character and purpose attributed in Jaina chronicles to the Western Caulukya clan-goddess Kaṇṭeśvarī, who is said to have been traditionally worshipped by the Caulukyas in the palace of Aṇahilavāḍa-Pāṭan as the sanctifier of royal authority, and greatly dear to them. Someśvaradeva continued his position as courtier under Bhīma's successors, Lavaṇaprasāda and his son Vīradhavala and his admiration for men in the new administration was clearly manifest, given that he composed three lengthy panegyrics for three of them — Vastupāla and his brother Tejaḥpāla, the two ministers resident at the Gujarati court, and Vīradhavala's son and successor, Vīsaladeva — etched into inscriptions they had commissioned,[47] as well as a *mahākāvya,* the *Kīrtikaumudī* ("The Moonlight of Fame"), eulogizing Vastupāla's achievements. His background and those among his poems that can be considered propaganda are witnesses to a certain fascination in Someśvaradeva for powerful and charismatic leaders, particularly Vastupāla and Tejaḥpāla, his patrons. Suratha and all that he

[45] Munshi 1944, p. 208; Dasgupta 1962, p. 67.

[46] We know from Jaina chronicles that the Western Caulukyas at Aṇahilavāḍa-Pāṭan were devoted to a form of Caṇḍikā called Kaṇṭeśvarī, their clan goddess, to whom worship was offered during the Navarātra (for a detailed analysis of the religious policy of the Western Caulukyas see Sanderson 2009, pp. 246-247).

[47] The Mount Abu, Girnār and Darbhāvatī inscriptions composed by Someśvaradeva were commissioned by his masters Vastupāla and Vīsaladeva. For the Girnār Inscription, see *Prācīnajainalekhasaṃgraha* II, pp. 47-57, for the Mount Abu Panegyric see *Kīrtikaumudī* Appendix A, for the Darbhāvatī see *Epigraphia Indica* Vol. 1, No. 4.

represents — a fully self-sufficient and atypical ruler ultimately viewed as positioned outside an essentially insubstantial world of sovereignty — is resonant with these men, who were not direct descendants of the Caulukya ancestral line but inducted "from the outside" to make changes to the administration. Whatever the subtle and imperceptible net of reasons behind the figure of Suratha and the actions he takes, the effect of his role is to modify certain assumptions in the basal myth. If the assumptions in the *Devīmāhātmya* were that the goddess is pre-eminent and the king is a subsidiary figure, while proselytizing the Śākta religion the chief purpose to which all other considerations are subordinated, then the *Surathotsava* in re-writing the *Devīmāhātmya* alters those, making rather the king one of the central personages in the story and complementing its praise of Caṇḍikā, patroness of heroes, with an equal exaltation of the special connection seen to exist between herself and the king, the two sources of regal authority on heaven and earth.

(III.iv) *The kathā of Suratha in the Durgāvilāsa*

The second example of *kāvya* picking up and expanding on the goddess-king relationship implicit in the *Devīmāhātmya* is the *Durgāvilāsa.* This is an unpublished, previously unknown *mahākāvya* from no later than the 17th century, here introduced for the first time. Apart from the fact that this is the second *mahākāvya* re-rendering the legend of the warrior goddess and the king, there is another very important reason for the *Durgāvilāsa*'s significance. An unstudied *mahākāvya* from the medieval period makes this work an important subject of investigation that I hope scholars of Sanskrit aesthetics and literature, apart from myself, will also care to embark on. The *Durgāvilāsa* promises to add richly to our knowledge of Sanskrit literary history, and it introduces us to a new poet from, in all probability, the seventeenth century poetic firmament, whose literary achievement has been hitherto unevaluated. While I wish to introduce to the scholarly world this poem within the framework of the present argument, I hope to undertake a complete edition and translation for the future that would make the whole work accessible for readers.

Comprising fifteen cantos, the *Durgāvilāsa* presents itself as following — by which it actually revises and inflates, unmaking by making — the *Devīmāhātmya*. The work is preserved in a paper manuscript (Chambers 428) in 49 folia, written in Jaina Devanāgarī characters in a clear hand, now kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. The colophon to the manuscript says that the work was copied by the scribe in 1711 Samvat (=1654 CE), but it could have been composed much earlier. The ligature of the manuscript, and codicological features, such as double margins framing the text, further enclosed by an

ornamental border and the writing of each verse as one continuous sentence followed by a double *daṇḍa* and the verse number, conform very closely to that of several manuscripts found in Jaina collections from Western India.[48] This indicates a Rajasthani or Gujarati provenance for the work. The tale of Suratha encompasses Cantos 1-3 and Cantos 13-15, approximately 246 verses.

Little is known about the *Durgāvilāsa*'s author Rāmakṛṣṇa, although he yields certain facts about his ancestry in the colophon to the final fifteenth chapter. His grandfather was an eminent scholar called Śivanātha from the Kaśyapa lineage. His father was Somagopālācārya, who seems from Rāmakṛṣṇa's description, to have been a great grammarian and a poet. Somagopālācārya is honorifically addressed as Śeṣa, or Patañjali, in 15. 20, and he is said to have been a supreme connoisseur of poetry (*kāvyavid uttamaḥ*). Next to his illustrious sire, Rāmakṛṣṇa adds that he is merely a "vessel of dulness" (*jāḍyapātraḥ*), and the statement does not feel as if it simply repeats an anodyne humility (which is sometimes the case with Someśvaradeva), but has a ring of sincerity. It is possible that Rāmakṛṣṇa's teacher was someone called Prabhākara, as he says that he wrote the poem having obtained "the mercy of Prabhākara" (*prābhākarīṃ kṛpām*). This could of course also mean the "mercy of the goddess who causes light", which would hint at an ecstatic religious experience of Durgā he might have had that had prompted him to write the poem. If it was indeed the goddess's mystical power that had inspired the *Durgāvilāsa*, then Rāmakṛṣṇa is not alone in attributing the cause of writing to a visionary manifestation of the goddess: Ānandavardhana, too, had said very much the same thing in his poem to Durgā, the *Devīśataka*, in which he writes that the goddess instructed the entire poem to him in a dream (*Devīśataka* 101).

To speculate on the identity of the author, there is a commentary on the *Devīmāhātmy*a by one Rāmakṛṣṇa called the *Devīmāhātmyakaumudī*, of which there are several manuscripts catalogued in the *Catalogus Catalagorum*. I have seen one G7986 kept in the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata. The opening and closing of that work gives no information on the identity of this Rāmakṛṣṇa, though it is possible, I suspect, that the author could also have been the poet of a *kāvya* based on that Purāṇic work.

In terms of style, our Rāmakṛṣṇa seems to grow as a poet throughout the the Suratha story. While he is not as dextrous in his technique in the first two cantos and less willing to take creative risks while exploring a moment from

[48] To compare with Jaina manuscripts, see the excellent archive of images at http://www.jainpedia.org/home.html. I am grateful to Ms. Judith Ünterdöfler for making me aware of this resource.

the *Devīmāhātmya*, he grows in confidence by the final three cantos, his willingness to assert individual creative freedom showcased in greater plot-interpolations and his technical maturity in the use of more difficult metres such as different varieties of *āryā.* Given this development — at least in the frame-story — it is possible that Rāmakṛṣṇa wrote the poem over a period of time, returning to it at different points in his life. In contrast to Someśvaradeva, Rāmakṛṣṇa shows more sensitivity towards projecting and rationalizing inward difficulties faced by his characters as a consequence of external crises faced by them. These internal difficulties are externalized through a greater frequency of monologues, particularly laments, and dialogues, of which there are a comparatively fewer number in the *Surathotsava*.

Judging from an echo of the *Kirātārjunīya* 1.1 in *Durgāvilāsa* 1.12 and the *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.30 in the *Durgāvilāsa* 1.30 — note the exact verse numbers — it is evident that he had read Bhāravi and Kālidāsa, though he does not engage with the *Kirātārjunīya* in greater depth. However, the indebtedness to the *Raghuvaṃśa* is further manifested in a substantial echo of a part of its Canto 5 in the *Durgāvilāsa*'s final canto, which we will turn to shortly. This indebtedness to the *Raghuvaṃśa* runs much deeper, however, than a formal resonance at the surface. The presentation of ideal kingship in both *mahākāvya*s seems to run in parallel lines. For example, we are told in the *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.26 that the first Raghu king Dilīpa ensured a mutually beneficial, transactional relationship between heaven and earth by milking the earth and offering the rewards to gods, while the god Indra proffered rain in return. Good kingship was premised on the king acting as a link between the gods and his people through regular cycles of exchange: by performing sacrifices at the correct hour, a king offered the fruits of the earth and of oblation to the gods, who in return provided rainfall and bounty to the kingdom. Suratha in the *Durgāvilāsa* is introduced in very much the same way (*Durgāvilāsa* 1.5). The cycle of bounty is said to be preserved in his land while he was fulfilling his duty in appeasing the gods. The ideal king also takes taxes for the sake of good governance, and not for self-enrichment. While this is said in Dilīpa's case in the *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.18, it is also said of Suratha (*Durgāvilāsa* 1.3). However, over and above correspondences at the level of images, it is the particular way in which Kālidāsa views the Raghu clan as an instructive template for the wider function and role of the ruler that seems to have left the deepest impression on Rāmakṛṣṇa. In the *Durgāvilāsa*, Suratha is employed as a metaphor for articulating a much broader conception of the 'good king', and this concern seems to draw from the purpose served by the Raghus in the *Raghuvaṃśa*.

In 1.2 of the *Durgāvilāsa*, Rāmakṛṣṇa says that in writing the poem he had

followed Mārkaṇḍeya: "as for myself, I follow the son of Mṛkaṇḍa in this work" (*ahaṃ iha tu bhaje mṛkaṇḍasūnuṃ*), an explicit acknowledgement of *auctorite*. This would suggest that the *Durgāvilāsa* repeats accurately the plot of the *Devīmāhātmya* attributed to the sage Mārkaṇḍeya. How true is this? The following table compares narrative elements in the *Durgāvilāsa* to the *Devīmāhātmya*:

The Tale of Suratha		
Narrative elements in the *Durgāvilāsa*	***Durgāvilāsa***	***Devīmāhātmya***
Introducing Suratha the good king; the contentment of his subjects and kingdom	1.3-1.5	1.3-1.4
Suratha's court	1.6-1.11	—
The messenger from the forest (cf. *Kirātārjunīya* 1.1)	1.12-1.18	—
War with the Kolās; Suratha defrauded by ministers	1.19-1.28	1.4cd-1.7
Suratha's lament on his loss while in his palace	1.29-1.31	—
Escape to the forest; Sumedhas' hermitage	1.32-1.33	1.8-1.9
The sage gives him shelter; Suratha laments his loss	1.33, 2.1-2.10	1.10-1.15
Suratha meets Samādhi; asks him who he is	2.10-2.13	1.16-1.17ab
Samādhi's story	2.14-2.21	1.17cd-1.26ab
Suratha's words of consolation to Samādhi	2.22-2.25	—
Samādhi's reply and his question about the king's identity	2.26-2.34	—
Suratha's answer; his suggestion to go to the sage	2.35-2.40	—
They go to the sage	2.41	1.27
Suratha presents their problems to him and asks for a solution	2.42-2.46	1.28-1.33
The sage's answer: knowledge concerning sense-objects is common	2.47-2.54	1.34-1.44
"Who is the Goddess?"	2.55-2.58	1.45-1.46
Sage's answer: introducing the goddess as Nityā/Nidrā/Mahāmāyā as a preamble to the legend of Madhu and Kaiṭabha	2.60-2.67	1.47-1.49ab

The Deeds of the Goddess		
Sage concludes. Suratha and Samādhi worship Caṇḍikā on the bank of a river with *bali*s moistened with their blood	12.1-12.7	13.1-13.9ab
Gods are frightened by Suratha's ascetic practice; meet Brahmā, Viṣṇu and then Śiva, who reassures them	12.8-12.21	—
Goddess appears to Suratha after three years; gives him boons of restored power in the present life and rebirth as the 8th Manu in the next	12.22-12.30ab	13.9cd-13.17 (tale concluded)
The creation of Citrapura	12.30 cd-12.44	—
Description of the dusk (*saṃdhyāvarṇana*); Suratha goes to his harem with the Queen and other women	13.1-13.45	—
Description of the vassal kings' lovemaking at night (*rajanīkelivarṇana*)	14.1-14.35	—
Bards' eulogy of the dawn (*prātarvarṇana*) (cf. *Raghuvaṃśa* 5.65-76); the vassal kings awaken; after their morning ablutions and rituals, they meet Suratha and accept his command	15.1-15.17	—

The column on the far left isolates the main narrative episodes of the tale of King Suratha. The second column shows their locus in the *Durgāvilāsa,* while the third shows their locus in the *Devīmāhātmya*. Despite promising to remain faithful to the narrative pattern of the original, we find that the poet adds materials at will, particularly those that enhance the role of the king. The introductory description of Suratha's court, his interaction with the messenger from the forest (*vanecara)* giving news of invaders, his return to his citadel on his defeat and subsequent discovery that his ministers had deserted him, his conversation with Samādhi in the forest, the episode of the gods and their taking fright at his ascetic practice, his creation of a new capital, Citrapura, through powers acquired through *yoga*, and the subsequent episodes in Citrapura describing his enjoyments as king — all these are poetic novelties strengthening and expanding Suratha's position as the hero (*nāyaka*) of the *Durgāvilāsa*. Apart from these *svecchā*s, Rāmakṛṣṇa develops moments with Suratha dealt with concisely in the original Purāṇic version. The war with the

Kolās was recounted in two and a half verses in the *Devīmāhātmya*. In the *Durgāvilāsa*, it becomes a much more important moment, expounded with richness of detail in ten verses. Suratha's peregrinations in the forest and encounter with the sage's hermitage are described in five verses in the *Devīmāhātmya*. In the *Durgāvilāsa*, it is told in ten. The sage's introduction of the goddess before his narration of the Madhu and Kaiṭabha story took up two verses in the *Devīmāhātmya*. In the *Durgāvilāsa*, it takes up seven. This strategy — initially asserting faithfulness while going on to practise licence — reminds us of the technique Somadeva had adopted while introducing the *Kathāsaritsāgara*.

However, on the whole, Rāmakṛṣṇa keeps his promise to tread the path of the original *kathā*, for there are no excisions like those in the *Surathotsava*, but in doing so he circumvents its conventional pattern through side-routes of his own forging in order to intensify, rather than preclude, what is latent or undeveloped in the *Devīmāhātmya*. In this respect the relation of the *Durgāvilāsa* to its parent-text is more complex than it would first appear. It is of course creative interpretation, but it is not, nor does it present itself as, an entirely new and independent work like the *Surathotsava*. Unlike the latter poem, the *Durgāvilāsa,* in following all the main aspects of the *Devīmāhātmya,* can be seen to serve in some respects as a kind of poeticized commentary (*ṭīkā*) to the original — a hermeneutical companion — wishing to remain true to the source and clarifying it through exposition and amplification. Thus parts dealt with briefly in the source are always turned into something weightier in Rāmakṛṣṇa's version (to compare numbers of verses, see table above). The narrower window of the Purāṇic fable is thereby broadened to incorporate a much wider view of the narrative. We shall see its aspect as a "commentary" later.

After asserting, using a topos from earlier poetry, the victoriousness of Indra and Kāma in the past, and the continuous victory of Ambikā, beautiful women and great poets in the present, and having asserted that he would follow, among poets of yore, Mārkaṇḍeya whose teachings grant bliss (*sukhāya*), Rāmakṛṣṇa portrays an elaborate scene setting up the king as the chief protagonist in the poem. He achieves this through a depiction of an enthroned Suratha presiding over a jewel-encrusted, crystal-paved court splendidly peopled with vassals god-like in their appearance. This image of power is immediately undercut from verse 1.12, as Rāmakṛṣṇa inserts a scene in which a forest-dweller acting as a spy for the king informs him that enemies have overrun his kingdom and that this power has departed. This short interlude is closely modeled on the famous opening episode of the *Kirātārjunīya*, in which

a *vanecara* had gone to Yudhiṣṭhira to report to him what transpired in the kingdom of the Kurus (*Kirātārjunīya* 1.1). The spy upbraids Suratha for being negligent and prophesies that enemies will seize his kingdom, advising him to wage war. Here, as in the *Surathotsava*, the poet makes concrete the assumption in the *Devīmāhātmya* that Suratha, prior to his reversal of fortune, had been a foolish king, and so requires the experience of calamity to transform his nature. Suratha follows the advice of the messenger. In this way, Rāmakṛṣṇa, like Someśvaradeva, emphasises the temporary nature of royal power from the beginning of the poem. Unlike Someśvaradeva, who is not concerned in portraying royalty but rather its opposite the ascetic state, Rāmakṛṣṇa, is intensely interested in the imagery of kingship. The portrayal of Suratha acting as king is treated with more finesse in the *Durgāvilāsa* particularly through the interpolated final three cantos in which the pleasures of palace life are described in minute detail. The creation of the city of Citrapura serves in presenting an image of the ruler as a *yogin* capable of supernatural powers, as does the scene in which his ascetic powers threaten to usurp that of the gods.

There follows a vivid description of the battle with the Kolās briefly stated in the *Devīmāhātmya*, which is likened to the final moment of aeonic destruction (*pralaya*) in its ferocity. To return to the point made before, I see this as an instance of the poet commenting on the concise action of the *Devīmāhātmya*. The act of exegesis here involves poetic amplification, for example, as follows: "When the deep sound of the war tabor had spread (*prasarati raṇatūryadhīranāde*), the horizon had been filled with the trumpeting of able elephants (*varakaribṛṃhitapūrite digante*), and when a lion-roar had been delivered by numerous foot soldiers made keen for battle by the neighing of well-trained horses (*caturaturagaheṣitaprahṛṣyadbahutara-pattikṛte ca siṃhanāde*), the countless forces of kings (*dharādhipānāṃ ... agaṇitaṃ balaṃ*) with bows in their hands, their steady strides making the earth tremble (*dharaṇivikampanadhīravikramāṇām*) filled the earth *(avaniṃ pupūre*) like the inexorable waters of oceans at the time of destruction (*pralayaviśṛṅkhalavār ivāmbudhīnāṃ*) (1.20-21)". In a universalizing aside, Rāmakṛṣṇa adds that only Ambikā's grace would determine martial outcome, despite royal policy being favourable for Suratha, his army being powerful and his lineage strong (1.26). Though keen on the idealism of monarchy, Rāmakṛṣṇa is aware that the tale of the king in the *Devīmāhātmya* implicitly teaches the transience of glory and the pre-eminence of a chaotic Fate (*niyati*), and he too treats the story as an allegory of human life subject to the caprices of a deterministic force, as well as a description of the arduous process of coming to terms with human loss, in his interpretation. Only the goddess can act as a

foil to the powers of *niyati*. He makes the tale of the *Devīmāhātmya* into a story of a complacent king jolted into wisdom, and in this respect an undercurrent of *nīti*, political understanding and ethics flows through the king's tale in the *Durgāvilāsa*. This it seems to me derives in spirit from the first chapter of the *Kirātārjunīya*, in which the spy and later Draupadī had instructed Yudhiṣṭhira on correct action as a king. We are also aware from the start that Caṇḍikā, despite her all-encompassing nature in the *Devīmāhātmya*, is in essence a deity of war and warriors for Rāmakṛṣṇa.

During the battle, thick dust flung upwards obscures the enemy army and thereby prevents Suratha's soldiers from being able to effectively attack their target. Though powerful, they are eventually defeated, and Suratha returns to his citadel to discover the duplicity of his ministers. Rāmakṛṣṇa adds a lament at this point in which Suratha is unable to come to terms with his loss, though understanding the willfulness of Destiny (*vidhi*). This awareness of an entropic Vidhi is the first realization Rāmakṛṣṇa shows the all-powerful king to undergo. That any human fate, however privileged, is pitted against Destiny is something that forms an ever present current in both the *Surathotsava* and the *Durgāvilāsa*, which it does not in the *Devīmāhātmya*, wherein only Viṣṇumāyā represents the unpredictability of the human condition.

After this realization, Suratha resolves to go to the forest in disguise. Here, roaming for a long time — as in the *Surathotsava* — he arrives at the hermitage of a sage, and is welcomed into it. Rāmakṛṣṇa changes the name of the sage from Sumedhas to Medhas, another, though perhaps not highly significant, exercise of liberty. Here Suratha laments again the loss of his former life — as we are told in the *Devīmāhātmya* — and much of the language and imagery here is prefigured in the *Devīmāhātmya*: *Durgāvilāsa* 2.3 in *Devīmāhātmya* 1.15, *Durgāvilāsa* 2.4 in *Devīmāhātmya* 1.13, *Durgāvilāsa* 2.5 in *Devīmāhātmya* 1.12. However, what was a promising yet short outburst there is given psychological depth and clarity here, and the effect on our understanding of the intent of the source is once again similar to that of an explanatory commentary. In addition to the topos in the source, Suratha also mourns the fact that those loyal to him were forced to submit to the enemy for the sake of their lives (2.4). This is one among many fine details that exemplify how Rāmakṛṣṇa emphasizes the world of politics that the goddess was always considered to empower (here represented through the effects of war on those attacked) hinted at though never glorified in Mārkaṇḍeya's version.

He then encounters Samādhi, as in the *Devīmāhātmya*, but unlike the *Devīmāhātmya,* which is not particularly interested in portraying their interaction, the *Durgāvilāsa* builds this up. We get a fine passage of dialogue

between the two, in which Samādhi's character is presented as a more socially exalted one than his Purāṇic counterpart, and this could be in order to keep both him and Suratha on par with each other. Suratha exclaims at his splendour, and calls him an old and wise man. From Samādhi's reply, we know that he was once famous and rich, desired even by celestial women, a king of merchants, arrived at the forest because of his own sins. These "sins" (*pāpa*s) are, as in the *Devīmāhātmya*, his softness towards those family members that had defrauded him, and his state of miserable delusion. The King consoles him with words evocative of the philosophy of the *Gītā* (*Durgāvilāsa* 2.22), asking him not to regret and to be firm in his duty. He advocates a life of sole contemplation of Śiva, and a total renunciation of all aspects of day-to-day existence including one's lovers and family. His speech introduces four *tāpakara*s, "causes of affliction", in life, offspring, women, servants and wealth, which generate woe both while one acquires them and when one loses them (2.24). The *vaiśya* is heartened by this consolation. He agrees that those four causes of woe appear to be sources of contentment to the deluded (2.30). In fact, "wealth is death (*dhanāni nidhanāni ca*), wives wear [away at one] (*dārā dāraṇāḥ*), the body is an evil planet (*vigraho graha*), [and] a dwelling place in this world is nothing but ruin (*kṣaya iha kṣaya eva*)" (2.32). However, he adds, despite this being a truism acknowledged by all doctrines, it is hard to put into practice. With this he admonishes the king for being a mere pedant, again a subtle — and *vakra* — detail added by Rāmakṛṣṇa. Then the king reveals his identity to Samādhi, and asserts the equality of his condition with the Vaiśya. Like Samādhi, he, though learned in all doctrines, mourns what was inevitable. With this they resolve to go to the sage, and to practice observances preventing calamity.

This brief interlude, undramatized in the *Devīmāhātmya*, is a contemplation of sorrow, its causes and how to come to terms with it. It perceives sorrow to be the lingering imprint on memory of a trauma from the past. The self clings to those imprints in an obsessive manner, unable to detach itself from their power, though it desires to. Rāmakṛṣṇa sees this inexorable clinging as a sin because it is an obscuration of clear perception. While king and merchant are from two very different levels of society, misfortune and their characterization of it due to their delusion unite them at a human level. It is evident that this equality of experience, characterized as a form of erroneous perception that governs life, preoccupies the author. The existential problem faced by the king and merchant in Rāmakṛṣṇa's poem derives from a common point in the Purāṇic source. In the *Devīmāhātmya* 1.32-33, the primary issue troubling the king and the merchant was that despite knowing that one ought not to be attached to objects of the material world (such as sons, wives, wealth

and property), their minds still could let go of their fondness for them.[49]

This is the same question put to the sage by the two in the *Durgāvilāsa* (2.44-2.45).

The sage's answer also integrates the chief points of its counterpart in the *Devīmāhātmya*. It too can be viewed as a poetic commentary to the introductory theology of the source text, in which the goddess is seen as the cause of and liberator from worldly sorrow. According to the *Devīmāhātmya*, awareness concerning materiality — the *tāpakara*s of land, wives, offspring and wealth — is inherent in all creatures, animal and human. In the *Durgāvilāsa*, what is new to the scheme of acquisitive animals and humans is the addition of gods. Rāmakṛṣṇa says that even gods see happiness as the result of acquiring one's desires, and in this respect there is no difference between all beings from the highest to the lowest (2.51). Behold (*paśya*), he says, echoing the language of the *Devīmāhātmya*, birds, beasts, men and gods (*pakṣipaśumānuṣadevān*) have greed, delusion, arrogance and envy (*lobhamohamadamatsaracittān*), correlating thereby *lobha* with birds, *moha* with beasts, *mada* with men, and *matsara* with the gods. The cause of this deluded understanding common to the universe is the goddess as the beguiling Māyā of Viṣṇu. The rest then is a close echo of the original *kathā*. However, in introducing the goddess, the sage adds that ascetics contemplate her to be seated on a thousand-petalled lotus (2.61), after they have restrained their breaths and withdrawn their minds from the outer world. She is also called the "bliss of permanent knowledge" (*nityabodhasukhitā* 2.63), and to cause the destruction of the universe at the end of each *kalpa* "simply in play" (*līlayaiva* 2.63) — a clue perhaps to the meaning of the title. The tale of the goddess then takes over, which is implied to contain magical powers in causing the fruition of wishes: the sage in introducing the "tale of the goddess" (*daivīkathā*), says that it will bring about (*racitā*) the desires of her devotee "whose hearing (*yasya ... śrutipatham*) it attains (*upayātā*), who, day by day (*pratidinam*), visualizes the beloved of Śiva (*kurvataḥ śarvakāntām*) on the lotus of his heart resplendent with passion (*anurāgaprollasaccitpadme*), in which the pollen, that is bliss, is glimmering (*sphuritasukhaparāge*)".

When the plot with Suratha is picked up in Canto 12, a few more interesting expansions appear. After Suratha and Samādhi begin their *tapas*, which includes restraining the breaths, performing Soma libations at the three junctures of the day, sacrificing a flower anointed with blood from their own

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[49] *evam eṣa tathāhaṃ ca dvāv apy atyantaduḥkhitau | dṛṣṭadoṣo'py viṣaye mamatvākṛṣṭa-mānasau || tat kim etan mahābhāga yan moho jñāninor api | mamāsya ca bhavaty eṣā vivekāndhasya mūḍhatā |*

bodies, fasting (the latter two to be found in the source), abandoning cruelty, fear, intoxication and anger, visualizing the goddess in the five elements, sun, moon and in their hearts, and repeating the goddess's invocation (12.5-12.7), a new scene is shown from 12.8. This describes the gods feeling threatened by the king's ascetic powers, which have increased to seize command of the order of the Universe causing the redundancy of godly functions. They go first to Brahmā, then to Viṣṇu when Brahmā fails to gauge Suratha's character, and finally to Śiva when Viṣṇu acknowledges his inability in accomplishing the task. Only Śiva is successful in perceiving Suratha's intention to attain the goddess and not the states of the other gods. In this way, the scene dramatizes a godly hierarchy, in which Śiva is shown to be the highest deity. Śiva removes the other gods' anxieties by telling them about Suratha's imminent blessing by the goddess and his fate as the 8th Manu. When the gods leave, Śiva meditates on his beloved Caṇḍikā, revealing the overall Śākta orientation of the work. This interlude may well indicate that Rāmakṛṣṇa, despite the Vaiṣṇava ring to his name, was Śaiva in his theological outlook, a fact further suggested in verse 15.13 in which Suratha's vassals first worship Śiva before going to meet the king. After this, the story of the *Devīmāhātmya* is picked up and the goddess appears before Suratha and Samādhi after three years, here though astride a lion (12.23). In contrast to the *Devīmāhātmya*, knowledge is the first gift that the king receives, for she grants Suratha her grace whereupon he divines all the sacred doctrines (12.24). Suratha expresses his humility, asking not for liberation but the desire to serve other devotees (12.26). The remaining is faithful to the original. As soon as she leaves, something new appears.

The point of departure in the *Durgāvilāsa* is where the *Devīmāhātmya* ends. Rāmakṛṣṇa traces in three cantos more the restitution of Suratha's glory as monarch. First, he is said to miraculously create a new capital called Citrapura, "The Variegated City", a scene that is arguably one of the most surprising feature of the king's tale. After the goddess's disappearance, a man suddenly appears before the king. He gives him the good news of the birth of a son, the destruction of his enemies, and the revival of the inhabitants of his citadel. While this messenger is making his speech, the king sees the rest of his soldiers arrive. At that instant, the king through his mental concentration acquired through meditation, creates a fabulous city. It is filled with palaces, supernatural men and extraordinarily beautiful women. The author then returns us to the point where the story began — Suratha on his throne. His son Śrutasena, who presumably was born during the three years of the king's observances as he is said to be three years old, is introduced to his father. The king is reunited with his chief queen and his royal chaplain (*purodhas*) amid

great gaiety. Now the poem moves deeper into the life of the court. In Canto 13, called *saṃdhyāvarṇana* ("description of the evening"), the onset of night, the rising of the moon, and the hurrying of the king to the women's apartments to make love are described, in Canto 14, called *rajanīkelivarṇana* ("description of night-time sports"), the vassals' lovemaking with their women-folk, and in Canto 15, called *prātarvarṇana* ("description of the dawn"), a sunrise and the bards' panegyric to the morning. Their purpose is to pad the hiatus between Suratha's ending of the ascetic way of life and his return to the world of kingship.

If we look at Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* 1.15-1.17, we find that among the topical features of a *mahākāvya* therein enumerated, the following are included: the rising of the moon and sun (*candrārkodaya-*), a festival of sexual pleasures (*ratotsava-*) and the resurrection of the hero (*nāyakābhyudaya-*).[50] Along with the creation of Citrapura, each of these other interpolations in the *Durgāvilāsa* fits the formal scheme outlined for a *mahākāvya* by Daṇḍin. While the Citrapura episode stages a *nāyākābhyudaya*, or at least its culminating moment, the *saṃdhyāvarṇana*, the *rajanīkelivarṇana* and the *prātarvarṇana* of the *Durgāvilāsa* all take as their central themes the moon, the sun and love-making. In this way, Rāmakṛṣṇa models and expands the original form of the *kathā* to incorporate some of the recommended constituents of classical *mahākāvya*s, thereby widening and enriching the scope of the original story. A further effect of the inclusion of the final three episodes is to introduce the erotic, which serves in complementing the ascetic and the martial themes already present in the source. Like the *māyāstrī* episode of the *Surathotsava*, Cantos 13-15 introduce *śṛṅgārarasa* to the king's tale, further broadening the range of aesthetic effects produced within the tale, though *vīrarasa* remains, it seems to me, the chief *rasa*. In this way, it seems to me that Rāmakṛṣṇa represents all four traditional goals of man, universal Law, wealth, sexual pleasure and liberation in the *Durgāvilāsa*, within the ambit of Suratha's story — law in the form of Suratha as ideal king, wealth in the form of Citrapura, sexual pleasure in his reunion with his wife, liberation in the form of the goddess. There may have been an aesthetic purpose to the erotic dimension in Suratha's story, which adds *kāma* to the *dharma*, *artha* and *mokṣa* scheme already discernible in the *Devīmāhātmya*. Showing the king as someone who engages with the sensory contributes to his character the charisma of a *rasika*, a person of taste

[50] *Kāvyādarśa* 1.15-1.17: *itihāsakathodbhūtam itarad vā sadāśrayam | caturvarga-phalāyattaṃ caturudāttanāyakam || nagarārṇavaśailartucandrārkodayavarṇanaiḥ | udyāna-salilakrīḍāmadhupānaratotsavaiḥ || vipralambhair vivāhaiś ca kumārodayavarṇanaiḥ | mantradūtaprayāṇājināyakābhyudayair api ||*

and emotion. Suratha's tale is not just about a noble warrior and a sage to these *kavi*s, but also of a man who encounters beauty, the senses and pleasure (though he may choose to repudiate them in the *Surathotsava*), and a king's connoiseurship of those realms was seen as something desirable in the classical period (for instance, compare with the *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.8).

The *prātarvarṇana* section includes formalistic echoes between 15.1-15.12 of the bardic aubade in the *Raghuvaṃśa* 5.65-5.76. Both sections are composed in the *vasantatilakā* metre, contain the same number of verses (11), while aspects of the language certainly give the impression that Rāmakṛṣṇa had this part of the *Raghuvaṃśa* in mind while adding the aubade to the *Devīmāhātmya.* The structure of the first verse in both songs for instance is very similar:

taṃ karṇabhūṣaṇanipīḍitapīvarāṃsaṃ
śayyottaracchadavimardakṛśāṅgarāgam |
vaitālikā lalitabandhamanoharābhiḥ
prābodhayann uṣasi vāgbhir uṣarbudhābham || *Raghuvaṃśa* 5.65

prātar vibhāvya nṛpatīn suratāvasāna-
saṃprāptanidrayuvatiprasabhāvagūḍhān |
vāgbhiḥ prabandharucirābhir agādhabodhā
ābodhayan sukhagiraḥ svarasena nagnāḥ || *Durgāvilāsa* 15. 1

Note that the basic syntax of the verses, comprising a plural nominative of a word meaning "bard", the imperfect of a form of the verb *budh* (to awaken) and the plural instrumental of *vāc* (speech), with an adjective compound conveying the beautiful quality of that speech, is identical. Other formalistic correspondences appear: the second verses address kings (*matimatāṃ vara Raghuvaṃśa* 5.66; *bhūpāḥ Durgāvilāsa* 15.2) while the last two verses have an *iti* marking off the end of the song followed by descriptions of kings awakening, dressing, performing morning rituals and going to court. Rāmakṛṣṇa repeats certain words in Kālidāsa's song like *ruc, vinidra, ahnā, rātri* and *nidhi*. While the bards' song appears in other *mahākāvya*s, and Rāmakṛṣṇa would have been well aware of this, the indebtedness in this case seems to me, given the coherence of style, towards the *Raghuvaṃśa* in particular.

IV. Conclusion

The belletristic tradition of the *Devīmāhātmya* departs in important respects from the sequence of events transmitted by its scriptural tradition, notably in terms of the arrangement and characterization of its frame story of Suratha. In re-configuring this story in a distinctive way, such as by portraying Suratha's

tale as a *nāyakābhyudaya*, the "resurrection of a hero" (in the case of the *Surathotsava* this is suggested by the title itself) and by prominently incorporating the erotic *rasa*, the luxuriantly sensory quality typical of classical *kāvya*, and themes of loss and suffering the poets of this tradition succeeded in widening and adding depth to the original story of the king. There are several historical implications to this. First, the legend underwent a process of what may be called "classicalization" in the belletristic tradition, whereby the representation of kingship came into the foreground, and the story was re-moulded to fit expectations connected to classical *kāvya*. The political realm, its source of order the monarch, its classical goals and its symbol of governance *daṇḍa* that the warrior goddess was seen to particularly support and nurture is thereby granted an important place in this tradition, something which is merely incidental in the Purāṇic version. Second, the language, concerns and imagery of love-poetry are integrated into a legend in which love, or rather eros, does not appear at all. This is diversely represented as love-thwarted in the *Surathotsava* and love-consummated in the *Durgāvilāsa.*

Indian aesthetics places significance on the skill of the poet to emulate without blind imitation. In so doing, it values the role of the poet to exert licence and thereby make something new, even while closely engaging with the exemplar. This view encompassed a paradox: acts of liberty were in fact regarded to be respectful to the original. Poets, even while internalizing in a highly original manner an ancient *kathā*, be it the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bṛhatkathā* or the *Devīmāhātmya*, were considered to remain faithful to the spirit of the original. Their works were not mere reproductions, for as Ānandhavardhana had told us that would be a mere repetition of history, but independent replies, carefully and lovingly weighing each and every element of the exemplar. In this respect they are aided by the nature of tales. Tales are flexible. Their symbols are universal. In the hands of a skilled poet their malleable forms can be shaped to embody particular events and preoccupations, to criticize, reflect, encode and comment on many other things of immediate concern to the writer. They work through the power of suggestion. Audiences fully familiar with the *kathā*s the poets were alluding to, and fully receptive to their nebula of suggestions, would have renewed their delight in the cherished tropes and old patterns through the ever-more ingenious feats of interpretations undertaken in these retellings.

A parallel can be found in the relationship between sources in Greek and Latin and medieval and Renaissance literature in the vernaculars drawing from them, and it is worth briefly diverting the stream of reference to this other cultural wellspring, to quote Petrarch as what he says is of particular resonance

for our case. In a letter to Boccaccio written from Pavia on 28 October 1366, Petrarch says:

> "Thus we writers must look to it that with a basis of similarity there should be many dissimilarities. And the similarity should be planted so deep that it can only be extricated by quiet meditation. The quality is to be felt rather than defined. Thus we may use another man's conceptions and the colour of his style, but not use his words. In the first case, the resemblance is hidden deep; in the second it is glaring. The first procedure makes poets, the second makes apes. This is the substance of Seneca's counsel, and Horace's before him, that we should write as the bees make sweetness, not storing up the flowers but turning them into honey, thus making one thing of many various ones, but different and better." (*Le familiari* xxiii. 19, apud Bate 1994, p. 88)

This must surely remind the reader of what the aestheticians were arguing for in relation to poetic *svecchā*.

I have sometimes heard a charge levelled against Indian poetry, that its poets placed undue emphasis on following the pre-established (the underlying accusations being that Indian poets are pusillanimous and their writings mere repositories of convention). To this criticism my answer is as follows. Indian poetics has, on the contrary, valorized the original, which one can trace in the 9th century CE in Rājaśekhara, who writes:

> *sārasvataṃ cakṣur avāṅmanasagocareṇa praṇidhānena dṛṣṭam adṛṣṭaṃ cārthajātaṃ svayaṃ vibhajati | tad āhuḥ*[51] *suptasyāpi mahākaveḥ śabdārthau sarasvatī darśayati | taditarasya tatra jāgrato 'py andhaṃ cakṣuḥ | anyadṛṣṭacare hy arthe mahākavayo jātyandhās tadviparīte tu divyadṛśaḥ | na tat tryakṣaḥ sahasrākṣo vā yañ carmacakṣuṣo 'pi kavayaḥ paśyanti | matidarpaṇe kavīnāṃ viśvaṃ pratiphalati |*
> (*Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, Chapter 12, p. 62)
>
> The Eye of [insight] granted by Sarasvatī independently divides [poetic] meanings seen [in previous works] and meanings which are original by means of meditative contemplation, whose sphere of activity is not that of speech and mind. Therefore [scholars such as Ānandavardhana] say: "Sarasvatī reveals words and meanings to the Great Poet even while s/he is asleep. In someone else, the Eye [of insight] is blind, even while s/he is

[51] *tad itthaṃ sthite — pratāyantāṃ vāco nimitavividhārthāmṛtarasā na vādaḥ kartavyaḥ kavibhir anavadye svaviṣaye | parasvādānecchāviratamanaso vastu sukaveḥ sarasvaty evaiṣā ghaṭayati yatheṣṭaṃ bhagavatī* || Ānandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka* 4.17.

> awake." For, when we can see the intent [of their writing] in another [work], then [we should know that] those great poets have been blind from birth. However, in a circumstance contrary to this, poets have celestial vision. That which mere mortal poets with fleshly eyes behold is not what Three-eyed Śiva and Thousand-Eyed Indra see. In the mirror of poets' minds, the universe appears reflected.

However, the ambition in this article is not to present a history of the value of Originality in the Indian cultural sphere. I mean to show that originality and conventionalism share a complicated and paradoxical relationship within Indian literature and literary thought (and also music). It is an originality that is deeply knowledgeable of precedent, which must always negotiate a delicate dance between influence and subversion, established and new knowledge, repetition and surprise. In mediocre writers, the tendency was towards a greater reliance on sources of influence, which may have led to a literary work being stale and repetitive. However, in the best writers we find a balance, even a tension, between precept and innovation — an innovation that overturns precept and a precept that enriches innovation — a tension, which complicates and renders more interesting the relation of author with *auctorite*. For at all times the best author wishes to break free of *auctorite* even as s/he wishes to claim it. The extraordinary poetic mind suffers entrapment even as it exults in liberation.

A *kavi*'s engagement with his hallowed *kathā*s, even those that were viewed to contain sacred power, was envisaged as a form of conversation with the past. It is vital to know the past and it is also important, through knowing well, to talk to it. This 'talking' was not perceived as a hostile counter-reaction. Conversations are on-going and spontaneous processes, indicative of the equal and familiar interplay between the source of authority — the set structure — and the individual, its recipient, whereas counter-reactions are the occasional outcomes of the lack of conversation, of an estranging and silencing inequality, between tradition and individual. Sanskrit *kavi*s were conversing with their legacies more frequently than not. Their world was full of the noise of their chatter with the past. For their relation with their legacy was built on complete accessibility, and this accessibility, this right of dialogue, was granted to them by their literary and cultural environment, which saw sources of the past not as being closed and enshrined in a particular order but as open to different kinds of understanding. For, through access to venerable models of history and openness to different points of view comes firm knowledge of the past and of our present identity.

To end though, let us return to Petrarch's image of the poem as honey. In the last resort, it does not perhaps matter to what extent a poet is true to the

source or to what extent s/he may choose to deviate. As flowers are made to honey, so the kaleidoscope of poetic inspiration is turned to another essence. In the turn of the century, the Bengali writer Saralabala Sarkar, in her prefatory letter to her daughter Nirjharini Sarkar in *Citrapaṭ* (published in 1917) writes of the poem immersing the poet in a certain transcendent experience (Saralabala's words: *jagadātīt bhāv*), in which all particulars (the many flowers of Petrarch) are fully sublated.

> *citrakar ākāśer sei varṇavaicitrya kon ekṭi tār tuli diye paṭe enke dhare rākhe; se jena asīmke sīmār bandhane bandha kare rākhbār ceṣṭā | mānuṣ man diye sei sasīm chavi ānkche, ābār mankeyi tāte ḍubiye diye asīme lay peye jācche | man diye eyi jagat gaḍche, ābār nijer gaḍā jagater vaicitryer madhye ḍube giye jagadātīt bhāve magna haye jācche | kalpanāvāyute ūrmihīn apār samudre sukhduḥkhabodhātīt asīm ānande āpanāke hāriye phelche | mā āmār, saṃsārsamudrer tīre base ananter līlāvaicitrye mugdha āmāro chavi ānkte sādh hayechila |* (*Racanā Saṃgraha* Vol. 1, p. 346)
>
> "The painter captures on his canvas with a certain brush of his that variegated colour in the sky; this is like an effort to capture the infinite within the bounds of the finite. Man paints that finite picture with his mind, and then having drowned his very mind in that finds dissolution in the infinite. He builds this universe with his mind, then drowning in the variety of his self-created universe he becomes wholly immersed in a way whereby he transcends the universe. He loses himself on Imagination's breeze in infinite bliss transcending awareness of happiness and sorrow in an ocean with no banks, with no waves. My darling girl, sitting on the banks of this ocean of transmigratory life I too captivated by the variety of the Infinite's play felt the wish to draw a picture."

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Abstract

This article concerns techniques whereby poets of classical Sanskrit literature (*kāvya*) interacted with their story materials (*kathā*s), and conceptions in medieval Indian poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*) concerning their interaction. Taking poetic liberties enabled poets (*kavi*s) of this tradition to assert their independence from canonical versions of their sources. Two court epics (*mahākāvya*s), the *Surathotsava* and the *Durgāvilāsa*, which refashion the tale of a Purāṇic legend the *Devīmāhātmya*, form case-studies for the argument. The *Devīmāhātmya* (c. 8th century CE) tells the demon-slaying deeds of a tempestuous warrior goddess Caṇḍikā, and her encounter with Suratha, a king who has lost his kingdom. The work is the most important *kathā* of the goddess, forming the liturgical text of the Nine Nights (Navarātra), an annual autumnal ceremony worshipping this deity. The *Surathotsava* ("The Festival of Suratha"), a 13th century *mahākāvya* by Someśvaradeva, active in the Caulukya court at Aṇahilvāḍ-Pāṭan, and the *Durgāvilāsa* ("The Delights of Durgā"), from c. the 17th century CE or possibly much earlier, a hitherto unknown and unpublished *mahākāvya* by Rāmakṛṣṇa, draw their inspiration and materials from the narrative-paradigm of the *Devīmāhātmya*. However, the versions of the story of King Suratha to be found in these two *mahākāvya*s diverge from the canonical *kathā* of Suratha in the *Devīmāhātmya.* The purpose, effect and relation of these narrative transformations with their source become more meaningful when considered in the light of a broader tradition favouring poetic licence articulated in classical aesthetics. The

Indian aesthetic tradition acknowledged the exercise of liberty, even with *kathā*s with a sacred character serving a role in ritual, as a fundamental principle in making and experiencing poetry. The discovery of the *Durgāvilāsa* is announced here, and this *mahākāvya* receives its first scholarly treatment in the present study.

Key-words: Indian tales (*kathā*), classical Sankrit poetry and drama (*kāvya*), Aesthetics, *mahākāvya*s on the *Devīmāhātmya*, Śākta poetry, *Surathotsava*, *Durgāvilāsa*