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► To cite this version:

Judit Törzsök. Self-reflection of an art: allusions to drama and dramatic theory in the Anargharāghava of Murāri. World Sanskrit Conference, 2003, Helsinki, Finland. hal-00711426

HAL Id: hal-00711426

<https://hal.science/hal-00711426v1>

Submitted on 24 Jun 2012

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Self-reflection of an art: allusions to drama and dramatic theory in the Anargharāghava of Murāri*

Judit Törzsök

The only surviving drama of Murāri, the Anargharāghava, has been one of the most popular dramas among the learned in India. Its popularity and importance in the Sanskrit tradition is shown by the large number of commentaries written on it as well as by the fact that there are almost four hundred catalogued manuscripts of the play, which are scattered all over India.¹ Moreover, Murāri's stanzas are among the most frequently cited in the *subhāṣita* literature; he is evidently a favourite poet for instance in Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*.² In spite of its popularity in India, the Anargharāghava has not been much appreciated in the West. One of the faults for which it has been criticised in secondary literature is the sophistication of its language, which was precisely the main reason why it was a favourite in India. This criticism does not deserve much attention, for it derives from a romantic type of aesthetics³ which values what it sees as natural, while rejecting anything allegedly artificial.⁴

*I am grateful to H.N. Bhat at the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient in Pondicherry for reading some difficult passages of the play with me and for explaining Viṣṇubhaṭṭa's ways of interpreting them. I would also like to thank Dr Bhat for making available his working edition of the commentary *Iṣṭārthakalpavallī* for me. Citations of this commentary below are taken from this unpublished working edition. I am also indebted to Lyne Bansat-Boudon for her remarks and comments on an earlier draft of this paper, and to Somadeva Vasudeva for his corrections of the final draft, especially concerning the problem of *rasaśabdavācyatā*.

¹I am grateful to S.A.S. Sharma at the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient in Pondicherry for this information and for showing me the preliminary work he has done with his colleagues to collect manuscripts of this play, in view of a future critical edition. Unfortunately, the project of the critical edition has been abandoned.

²See the table in INGALLS 1965: 32.

³This kind of romanticism in the secondary literature has been pointed out, in the context of subjectivity and discussing other authors, by SHULMAN in 1997:69: '...[such] views are heavily colored by an anachronistic romanticism, which made expressionistic lyricism the touchstone of quality in the mainstream of English and German poetry from the late 18th century on, and which regularly filtered down into scholarly judgement of non-European literatures as well.'

⁴For such criticism, see e.g. WILSON 1827: 382 ff. KEITH 1924: 225 ff. as well as WARDER 1983: 23 ff.

There is another reason why the Anargharāghava has been neglected for a long time: its admittedly undramatic or static nature.⁵ Indeed, the play cannot be considered action-packed. However, many masterpieces of Western theatre are not focussed on action, either. Again, this criticism of the play assumes that one should subscribe to a certain kind of aesthetics which few people would judge relevant today.

As Western appreciations of Sanskrit literature managed to discard such principles and prejudices, it came to devote more attention to Murāri. Two important works signal this change of attitude: one is the first translation of the play into a European language, Karin STEINER's German translation (1997); the other is the critical edition of Viṣṇubhaṭṭa's commentary by Harinarayana BHAT (1998), published by the French Institute of Pondicherry and the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient.

In her introduction, STEINER briefly analyses the relation of Bhavabhūti's Mahāvīracarita and Murāri's Anargharāghava and points out the major differences between the two treatments of the same subject matter.⁶ In spite of these differences, Bhavabhūti's influence on Murāri is undeniable. But it is not only the outline of the plot or certain details of the characterisation that these two authors have in common. An often cited particularity that characterises the other Rāma play written by Bhavabhūti, the Uttarāmacarita, is that it presents a theatrical production: a scene of 'theatre-within-the-theatre'. Although Murāri does not employ this very device in his drama, he includes a large number of references to theatre and dramatic theory, which constantly remind the spectator or the reader that he is in a world created by the theatrical art.⁷ In what follows, I shall try and analyse a number of these references and their importance in the play as a whole.

One type of allusions to drama concerns the predominant sentiments of the play, its *rasas*.⁸ The two main *rasas* of the Anargharāghava, the heroic (*vīra*) and the miraculous (*adbhuta*), are mentioned in the prologue (*prastāvanā*), while these and other *rasas* figure in various contexts throughout the text. A half-verse (64cd)⁹ of the second act, uttered by Lakṣmaṇa,

The validity of their critical judgement has already been questioned in STEINER 1997: 9 ff, who gives a brief overview of the problem.

⁵See e.g. RENO in RENO and FILLIOZAT 1996: §1890 and MAHALINGA SASTRI 1950: 196. This is of course a reproach often reiterated about Sanskrit drama in general.

⁶STEINER 1997: 73-74.

⁷Note that Bhavabhūti also uses terms of drama and performance in his plays, in addition to the play-within-the-play device. See e.g. the use of *dbiroddhata*, *saṃvidhānaka* and compounds ending with *-rasa* in the Uttarāmacarita, cited in STCHOUPAK 1968: xxxiii. For an analysis of additional references to poetry in the Uttarāmacarita, especially to the sentiment of compassion (*karuṇarasa*) as the source of all poetry, see BANSAT-BOUDON 2000.

⁸It is not the aim of this paper to discuss the exact meaning and the relevant translation of this term, or its importance in Indian aesthetic theory. However, it must be noted that, as is clear from the text, Murāri certainly did not define one single *rasa* as the dominant one of the play. On the association of the heroic and the miraculous, see e.g. Nāṭyaśāstra 6.41 and Daśarūpaka 4.41-42 with Dhanika's commentary.

⁹The numbering of verses follows that of the Pondicherry edition. Aesthetic terms are highlighted in

describes how the sages reacted when Rāma killed the demoness Tāḍakā:

*kṛttonmuktā bhūvi ca karuṇāścarya-bībhatsa-hāsa-trāsa-krodhottaralam ṛṣib-
bir dṛśyate Tāḍakeyam*

And here she is, torn asunder and cast aside, in front of the sages, who are trembling with compassion, astonishment, disgust, laugh, fear and anger while looking at her – this is Tāḍakā.¹⁰

As STEINER also remarks in her translation,¹¹ the list of sentiments is certainly meant to allude to six *rasas*: the *karuṇa*, *adbhuta*, *bībhatsa*, *hāsyā*, *bhayānaka* and *raudra*. The translator as well as the commentators are eager to point out or justify why each of these sentiments is provoked in the sages. However, it is also remarkable that through the use of these words, which are technical terms of aesthetic experience, a double or triple staging is created here – the sages witness the killing of Tāḍakā as spectators in a play, they are observed by Lakṣmaṇa, who analyses their sentiments, and transmits what he sees to us, the spectators of the Anargharāghava.¹²

In act 5, it is again Lakṣmaṇa who comments on a *rasa*, this time on Rāma's state of mind after Rāvaṇa has taken away Sītā: Which other sentiment could possibly override this one? (i.e. grief, *kena punar eṣa raso rasāntareṇa tiraskriyate?*) But this time, his remark is preceded by Rāma's self-analysis in 5.22 as follows.

bold. Only the most significant variants of available editions and commentaries are pointed out in footnotes.

¹⁰Although I have attempted to translate the verses as literally as possible, sometimes it was necessary to add some information in the translation itself. Contrarily to common practice in Sanskrit translations, these additions are not marked by square brackets or other means, simply because they are not always separable syntactically.

¹¹STEINER 1997: 132 note 152.

¹²It must be noted that according to some of the theoretical literature on the subject, *rasas* are not supposed to be named in a play, and their mention is considered an aesthetic fault. (See STCHOUPAK xxxiv citing REGNAUD 1884: 204ff., which refers to Kāvya prakāśa 7. In that chapter, *kārikā* 60ab mentions some *doṣas* concerning *rasas*. It is a fault to mention a secondary or a permanent sentiment as well as a *rasa* (*vyabbhicāri-rasa-sthāyibhāvānām śabdavācyatā*). For naming a secondary sentiment, such examples are given as *vṛīḍā*, *karuṇa*, *trāsa*, *vismaya*, *rasa*, *īrṣyā*, *dīnatva*; for the fault of naming a *rasa*, the example of *śṛṅgāra* is cited, and for naming a permanent sentiment, *utsāha* is mentioned.) However, this prohibition seems to depend on the *rasa* being evoked and on the way in which it is done. In addition to Murāri, Bhavabhūti also frequently uses the term *rasa* in the Uttarāramacarita (as mentioned above). Let us also note that the mention of theatrical terms in general is considered a merit in *kāvya*. See e.g. Kṣemendra's Kavikaṅṭhābharaṇa 5.1, in which he mentions various qualities a poet is supposed to have, including knowledge of various *śāstras* such as the art of dramaturgy, *bharataparicaya*. LÉVI 1890: 182 refers to this passage and mentions the term *bharatasamuccaya*, which, however, is not used by Kṣemendra and which I have not encountered elsewhere. ('L'accumulation dans une stance de termes empruntés à la technique du théâtre est une beauté de style, et elle a reçu en rhétorique un nom particulier, c'est le *bharatasamuccaya*.) The examples given by LÉVI include three plays (the others are from *mahākāvya*s): the Mālatīmādhava, the Anargharāghava and the Mudrārākṣasa. Concerning the last one, LÉVI remarks the parallel between the political and theatrical intrigue, which is also an important feature of the Murārināṭaka. ('Rākṣasa compare ses combinaisons politiques à celles du poète dramatique et donne un véritable plan de drame.')

*iyam avirala-śvāsā śuṣyan-mukhī bhidura-svarā tanur avayavaiḥ śrānta-srastair
upaiti vivarṇatām
sphurati jaḍatā, bāṣpāyete dr̥ṣau, galati smṛtir, mayi rasatayā śoko bhāvaś cireṇa
vipacyate*

I can hardly breathe, my mouth is parched and my voice trembles, my limbs are tired and hang down loosely while my body becomes all pale; my numbness increases, tears appear in my eyes and my memory fails – this is how my feeling of sorrow is slowly being transformed into a dominant mood.

As all commentators point out, there is a clear reference here to the aesthetic terms *bhāva* and *rasa*. The permanent feeling (*sthāyibhāva*) of sorrow (*śoka*) is a condition to evoke one of the predominant aesthetic sentiments of the play, that of compassion (*karuṇarasa*).

Occurrences of such *rasa* terms and the term *rasa* itself are by no means infrequent, which thus make the audience reflect on their own aesthetic experience several times. Another example, which concerns the central *rasas* of the Anargharāghava, can be found in the description of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. The verse is recited by Śauṣkala, who represents Rāvaṇa in Janaka's court, when he sees the two brothers for the first time. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa bear the weapons of warriors while they are clad in the clothes of *brahmacārins*, thus suggesting the heroic mood as well as tranquillity. (3.34)

*punyaḥlakṣmīkayoḥ ko 'yam anayoḥ pratibhāsate
mauñjyādīvyāñjanāḥ śānto vīropakaraṇo rasah¹³*

What is this? They possess holy splendour, and with their sacred threads and other attributes they suggest the sentiment of tranquillity, seconded by the heroic mood.

The characterisation of the heroes by the *vīra* and *śānta rasas* is important not only in this particular scene, but in the Rāma story as a whole. For it reflects the general dilemma of the good king, who is supposed to act in a heroic manner to defend his subjects and thus fulfill his *dharma* in this world, but who is also concerned about final release, *mokṣa*, and is thus attracted to the ascetic way of life, outside society.¹⁴

A similar mixture of *rasas* is observed by Rāma himself, when he sees Paraśurāma. Rāma immediately states that one experiences a mixture of various moods when beholding Paraśurāma (*saṃkīryamāṇānekarasānubhāva-*). Here (4.27), the mood of tranquillity is contrasted with the furious (*raudra*) and the miraculous (*adbhuta*).

*jaṭām dhatte mūrdhā, paraśu-dhanuṣī bāhu-śikharam, prakoṣṭho raudrākṣam valayam,
iṣu-daṇḍān api karaḥ*

¹³I have adopted the reading of the Bombay and Calcutta editions here. The Pondicherry edition has *so* for *ko* and *vīropakaraṇam* for *vīropakaraṇo*.

¹⁴This can be seen as a special case of the conflict between fulfilling social duties and leaving society, of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*.

*prarūḍha-prauḍhāstra-vraṇa-vikaṭa-raudrādbhutam idaṃ praśāntām aiṇeyīm
tvacam api ca vakṣaḥ kalayati*

He wears matted locks on his head, carries a battle-axe and a bow on his shoulder, a rosary of Rudraksha beads on his forearm and arrows stuck in his hand. His chest is frightening, terrible and extraordinary with the wounds inflicted by powerful weapons – but he wears an antelope skin on it, suggesting peaceful asceticism.

The matted locks (*jaṭā*), the rosary (*raudrākṣa*) and the antelope skin (*aiṇeyī tvac*) are the signs of an ascetic and thus suggest peacefulness and the *śāntarasa*; the battle-axe (*paraśu*), the bow (*dhanus*), the arrows (*iṣu*) and the wounds (*vraṇa*) are signs of a warrior and suggest not only the fearful (or wrathful) and the miraculous, but also the heroic mood (*vīrarasa*).¹⁵ It is probably not accidental that these two important characters, Rāma and Paraśurāma, who are also two embodiments of Viṣṇu, are described in similar aesthetic terms.¹⁶

The frequent occurrences of *rasa* have the effect that even in some not necessarily technical contexts the halo of the technical meaning is still present.¹⁷ In the following stanza (4.2), *rasa* describes the relishing of carnal enjoyment and sleep at night.

*prācīm vāsakasajjikām upagate Bhānau diśāṃ vallabhe
paśyātā rucayaḥ pataṅga-dr̥ṣadām āgneya-nāḍimḍhamāḥ
lokasya kṣaṇadā-nirāṅkuśa-rasau sambhoga-nidrāgamau
koka-stoma-kumudvatī-vipinayor nikṣepam ātanvate*

When the Sun, the beloved of all directions, comes to meet the East, who has been impatiently expecting Him, then look, these rays, which kindle the fire

¹⁵See Viṣṇubhaṭṭa *ad loc* and footnote 75 in STEINER (1997: 182). Again, the miraculous (*adbhuta*) is associated with the heroic (*vīra*).

¹⁶There is a noteworthy parallel in Bhavabhūti's Mahāvīracarita 2.26. The construction of the stanza is very similar and Paraśurāma's clothing is qualified as terrible (*ugra*) and peaceful (*śānta*) at the same time, which is explained as inspiring a mixture of the heroic (*vīra*) and peaceful (*śānta*) sentiments by the commentator, Vīrarāghava : *jyoti-jvālā-pracaya-jaṭilo bhāti kaṇṭhe kuthāras, tūṅiro 'mse, vapuṣi ca jaṭā-cāpa-cīrājīnāni, / pāṇau bāṇaḥ sphurati valayībhūta-lolākṣasūtram, veṣaḥ śobbhāṃ vyatikaravatīm ugra-śāntas tanoti //* ('His axe surrounded with sheets of bright flames is held near his neck; on his shoulder is a quiver; and on his body matted locks, a bow, bark clothing, and a deer-skin; an arrow flashes in his hand, in which a string of nuts forming a bracelet revolves; his dress spreads a twofold splendour, terrible and peaceful.' Trsl. PICKFORD 1871: 41-42, with slight change in the first sentence.) Among the several other occurrences of names of *rasas* in the Anargharāghava, see also the prose passage before 6.44, in which a *vidyādhara* describes the battle as frightening and extraordinary (*bhayānaka, adbhuta*); 3.7, which refers to the aesthetic pleasure (*rasa*) experienced upon seeing young women; *vipralambha-rasa* in 7.37 mentioning that Śiva and his wife do not experience this sentiment of love-in-separation, since they are forever united in the Ardhanārīśvara form; *sābasa-rasa* in 7.89 (standing probably for *vīrarasa* or *utsāba*).

¹⁷In addition to the example analysed here, see also the following occurrences: *rasam dāsyāmi* (after 5.4, said by Śūrpaṅkhā, who, according to Viṣṇubhaṭṭa, means the juice of passion as well as poison); *nidrārasaḥ* in 6.81; *pratyāvṛttarasasya* (6.11, of the moon); and *nṛttārambharasa* in 7.104, referring to the effect of Śiva's dance.

in the veins of the sun-stones, transfer the joys and the sleep people relished at night without disturbance onto the sheldrakes and the white night-lotuses.

The transfer of relish (*rasa*) the Sun provokes takes place as follows. The *koka* birds come to receive the carnal enjoyment (*sambhoga*) people relished at night, for they finally meet during the day, after their separation; and the white night-lotuses (*kumuda*) will be given people's undisturbed sleep (*nidrā*), for they close up during daytime. Although the word *rasa* is not used here in the technical sense, Murāri employs another term which occurs in works on poetic theory: *vāsakasajjikā*, 'she who is ready in her bed-chamber'. The Eastern direction is personified here as a particular type of heroine called *Vāsakasajjā*,¹⁸ who waits for her beloved (here: the Sun) impatiently, fully ready and bejewelled to receive him.

Such personifications or descriptions of goddesses as types of heroines is not uncommon in the *Anargharāghava*. The goddess of poetry, *Sarasvatī*, for instance, mentioned in the prologue (1.11), is described with another term for a *nāyikā*: *pragalbhā*. The *pragalbhā* type of heroine denotes the mature and confident type, well-versed in the art of love, eloquent and dominating her husband.¹⁹

Perhaps more relevant for the present discussion is the mention of an important type of actor, the buffoon or jester. A synonym of the *Vidūṣaka*, the word *vaiḥāsika*, is used to describe the rising Sun at the beginning of Act 4, who acts as a buffoon to entertain the day-lotuses (*mr̥ṇālinī*), which are thus pictured here as the ladies of a royal palace (4.4).²⁰

ayam mṛdu mr̥ṇālinī-vana-vilāsa-vaiḥāsikas
tviṣāṃ vitapate patib ...

Here is the Sun, the Lord of lights, shining forth gently,²¹ becoming the buffoon to amuse the lotuses...

The image of the buffoon reappears later in the play, and this time not in a descriptive verse. In the prose passage before 6.21, it is *Mālyavān* who calls the monkeys buffoons (*vaiḥāsikāḥ*) that make fun of *Rāvaṇa* with irony. Here *Mālyavān* uses yet another theatrical term for 'irony,' which often occurs in stage directions: *ullun̥ṭh-*.

¹⁸See e.g. *Daśarūpaka* 2.23 cited by *Viṣṇubhaṭṭa ad loc.*

¹⁹A type of hero, the proud one (*dhīroddhata*), is also mentioned twice: once describing the descendants of *Raghu* (2.65) and once describing *Rāma* (5.1). For this type of hero, see e.g. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 3.38. However, these occurrences in the play are somewhat unsure, for they are found only in the Southern editions in both places, while the Bombay edition has *vīra* for *dhīra*, although *dhīra* is noted as a variant. Another character type is mentioned in 7.62: *pīṭhamarda*, the friend of a hero in a drama who helps the hero with various intrigues. See e.g. *Daśarūpaka* 2.7.

²⁰Both early edited commentaries, *Rucipati's* as well as *Viṣṇubhaṭṭa's*, confirm the use of the word *vaiḥāsika* in this sense here.

²¹Taking *mṛdu* adverbially, following *Viṣṇubhaṭṭa*. Other commentators understand it to be in the compound as adjective to *mr̥ṇālinī-vana*.

Another comic element that recurs several times in the play is the term for farce, *prahasana*. At the end of Act 2, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are about to set out for Videha, following Viśvāmitra's advice. Rāma remarks that he has always been curious to see Śiva's famous bow, to which his brother adds, referring to Sītā: 'as well as to see the noble girl who was not born from a womb'. To this teasing, Rāma replies by saying:

Katham anyad eva kim api prahasanaṃ sūtrayati bhavān.
So you are making fun of me again.

But his words could be more literally translated as follows: 'What? So you are staging a farce again.'²² This expression, *prahasanaṃ sūtrayati*, is again not just one member in a long series of references to theatre, but seems to be quite important in the structure of the play. As Stephanie Jamison remarked in a review article,²³ the bantering of adolescents, of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, mirrors the conversation of the two *brahmacārins* at the beginning of the same act. Thus, Act 2 is framed in between two such conversations between youngsters, which are not without any comic elements. Moreover, the word *prahasana* links the last scene of Act 2 to the subsequent Act, whose first stanza also mentions the genre of farce, but in a very different context. Here, the old Chamberlain (*Kaṅcukin*) introduces himself with the following reflections on his role and age.

gātrair girā ca vikalāś caṭum īsvarāṇām
kurvann ayam prahasanasya naṭaḥ kṛto 'smi
tan mām punaḥ palita-varṇaka-bhājam enam
nātyena kena naṭayiṣyati dīrgham āyubh²⁴

Praising my masters without having the voice or the limbs to do so, I have been made a comic actor. With my grey hair for greasepaint, in what play will I still be made to act, directed by this long life of mine?

The *prahasana* is no longer a light-hearted joke as it was in the preceding scene, but forms part of a metaphor with a rather sour self-irony.²⁵ The theatrical parallel is brought out in detail: the *Kaṅcukin* presents himself as the actor in a farce, wearing grey hair for greasepaint, directed by his old age, playing in front of his masters as the audience.²⁶ The image of one's life being staged as a play may be influenced by Bhartṛhari's lines (*Vairāgyaśataka* 50cd):

²²For yet another occurrence of the same term for farce, see verse 5.27.

²³JAMISON 2000: 176.

²⁴Note the following important variants, which affect the style and the exact meaning, but not our argument: *tan mām* PTI, *tat tvām* BB*J, *na tvām* CBvI, *kṛtvā* BvI (P = Pondicherry ed., T = Tanjore ed., I = Iṣṭārthakalpavallī printed in the Telugu ed. I used H.N. Bhat's preliminary edition for this commentary, C = Calcutta ed. without commentary, B = Bombay ed., * indicates the reading attested by the commentary in that edition, J = Jivānanda Vidyāsāgara's reading, vI = varia lectio.)

²⁵For yet another occurrence of the word, see 7.36 (in the sense of joke or mockery).

²⁶On this, see Rucipati's gloss: *īsvarāṇām prekṣakāṇām*.

*jarā-jīrṇair aṅgair naṭa iva valī-maṅḍita-tanur
naraḥ saṃsārāṅke viśati yamadhānī-yavanikām*

With the body worn out by age and covered with wrinkles instead of make-up, man enters the abode of Death from the scene of life like an actor exiting behind the curtains.

Similar metaphors or comparisons involving words for actor or acting are numerous in the Anargharāghava, although they rarely form such a full-fledged image.²⁷ In Act 4, before verse 43, the following words are addressed to Paraśurāma, who is eager to be involved in a fight with Rāma:

kiyacciram iyam aparam iva bhavantam naṭayiṣyaty āyudhapiśācikā?

How long will this demones of war make you dance to her tune, just as she did before?

Thus, the same causative of *naṭ-* is used to express that certain characters in the play do not perform their actions independently, but are directed by some other force or person. However, words denoting actor, acting as well as dancing – a closely related term in the Indian theatrical tradition – are not used exclusively in this sense; they appear in many other expressions. The following is uttered by Daśaratha (Act 1, after verse 33), to show his joy at greeting Viśvāmitra.

*iyam tvad-upasthāna-sulabha-saṃbhāvanātiprasaṅga-saṃgītaka-nartakī citta-
vṛttir niyogānugrahāya sprhayati*

My mind, a dancer who has appeared in a performance of great affection and respect, which was rendered easy by your presence, now desires to be favoured by your command.

The poem in fact uses the expression ‘[my] working of the mind’ (*cittavṛtti*), a word employed partly to have the feminine corresponding to the image of the female dancer and partly perhaps to borrow another term of aesthetics, a synonym of *bhāva*, ‘state of mind [as source of aesthetic experience]’ and of *rasa*.²⁸ Daśaratha’s mind is compared to a dancing girl, for he has already greeted Viśvāmitra with a long praise, just as the dancer pays homage to her audience with an initial performance, rendered easy by the presence of the noble spectators.²⁹ Now Daśaratha desires to hear Viśvāmitra’s request and the purpose of his visit, just as the dancer is eager to hear what her audience wish her to present in the

²⁷For the occurrence of a similarly detailed image, see 7.70, in which the moon is pictured as dancing on the buds of night-lotuses to the song of the humming bees (*kumudamukulakeṣu vyañjayann aṅgabārān*).

²⁸For this meaning of *cittavṛtti*, especially in the Abhinavabhāratī, see BANSAT-BOUDON 1992: 108 and 339.

²⁹Let us note the use of another term, *saṃgītaka*, in the sentence. In addition to the primary meaning of ‘concert’ or ‘musical performance’, it is yet another word for theatre. On this and other synonyms for theatrical production, see BANSAT-BOUDON 1994: 195–197 ff.

main part of the performance.³⁰ The image is particularly suited to the context, for most of Act 1 is a well-choreographed conversation between the king and the two sages. Each person performs several songs of praise of the other, thus putting up a rather elaborate theatrical performance, before they introduce their actual purpose.

It is in the same Act, in one of the praises that another term of performance is used: the verb to act out with gestures, *abhi-nī-*. The stanza is uttered by Vāmadeva and addressed to Daśaratha (1.29):

*tvayy ardhāsana-bhāji kiṃnara-gaṇodgītair bhavad-vikramair
antar-sambhṛta-matsaro 'pi bhagavān ākāra-guptau kṛtī
unmīlad-bhavadīya-dakṣiṇa-bhujā-romāñca-viddhoccarad-
bāṣpair eva vilocanair abhinayaty ānandam Ākhaṇḍalaḥ*³¹

While you politely made room for him on your seat, he – although filled with jealousy hearing the horse-headed celestial bards singing about your exploits – skillfully hid his feelings. With his thousand eyes getting full of tears – for they were hurt by seeing the hair stand on end on your right arm –, he feigned joy, the venerable Indra.

The scene Vāmadeva recalls is itself a representation, a scene in which the Kimnaras as bards sang about Daśaratha's exploits. Daśaratha feels a thrill upon recalling his heroic fights, which makes the hair on his arms stand on end; and seeing this, the jealous Indra, who is sitting on Daśaratha's right, acts (*abhinayati*) that he is delighted, pretending to cry out of joy and not out of envy.³²

Most allusions to drama, representation and acting that one finds in Act 1 underline the theatrical character of courtly conversation staged in that act. However, the presentation of the court as theatre is not the only function of this set of allusions. In the Prakrit-Sanskrit Prelude (*miśraviṣkambhaka*) of Act 4, such allusions serve a different purpose, which is perhaps best illustrated with Mālyavān's exclamation.

aho durātmanah kṣatriyabrāhmanasya kuśikavaṃśajanmano durnāṭakam!

This is the wicked arrangement of that ill-willed warrior-brahmin, Viśvāmitra!

Mālyavān, the great intriguer of the demons, Rāvaṇa's minister, is angry with Viśvāmitra, who is directing a 'bad drama', *durnāṭaka*, a play which is altogether against Mālyavān's will. The expression is further made explicit by one of the commentators, Viṣṇubhaṭṭa, who gives the following paraphrase: he [Viśvāmitra] directs everything himself, just as a stage-manager does (*svayaṃ sūtradhāravat sarvapreraka iti bhāvah*).

³⁰For another occurrence of the image with a *nartakī*, see the sentence after 7.43, in which the Goddess of Fortune is blamed, because she dances to the rhythm of the tabor of fighting gods and demons.

³¹Note the following important variants: *viddhoccarat* BB*CJII*, *viddhollasat* PT, *bandhoccarat* Bvl.

³²See also STEINER's annotation to the translation, p94.

In the same scene, Mālyavān finds a solution to block Viśvāmitra’s plans. He uses a rhetorical and theatrical term again, *saṃvidbhānaka*: the plot.³³ In fact, two such plots are competing with each other throughout the play: Viśvāmitra’s and Mālyavān’s. The scene and its use of theatre terminology stress an important feature of this Rāma play, namely that in addition to being a story of heroes, it is also a story of competing courtly intrigues, at least up to Act 6. It is not the characters, but the variously envisaged plots that fight each other. In presenting the Rāma story as a story of intrigues, Murāri continues the tradition of Bhavabhūti’s Mahāvīracarita, but renews it with his parallels from the world of stage.

Given that the enmity between Rāma and Rāvaṇa is represented as staged by intriguers, it is an important turning point in the play when, in Act 6, Rāma comes to be seen as the director. Even if the spectator may not necessarily accept Sugrīva’s interpretation of the situation, his words in 6.48 confirm further the theatrical nature of the action.

*Daśamukha-vadha-nāṭya-sūtradhāro Raghupati, asya ca pāripārśvako ’ham
prakaraṇa-phala-bīja-bhāvakānām amṛta-bhujām samuṣāsmabe samājam*
Rāma is the stage-manager of this play about the killing of Rāvaṇa; and I am
his assistant. We propitiate the assembly of gods as our public, before whom
the story of the play unfolds.

The ambrosia eating gods are qualified literally as ‘those who experience / bring about the development and the source of the plot of the fictitious drama’. The verse speaks about a *prakaraṇa*, a drama based on fiction (as opposed to one based on an epic or purāṇic story, which would be a *nāṭaka*), for the Rāma story becomes the source of *nāṭakas* only after it actually happens – but while it happens, it is a *prakaraṇa* for the gods as spectators. The ‘source of the plot’, literally the ‘seed’ (*bīja*), is one of the five prerequisites (the *arthaprakṛtis*) for the development of the dramatic plot according to the theoretical literature;³⁴ while the ‘development’ (*phala*) is a technical term for the last one of the five stages of the plot (the *avasthās*).³⁵ The last element of the compound, *’bhāvaka*, can be understood as ‘[the gods] who bring about’ the play or as ‘who have a poetic taste’ for it. Thus, the gods form a special type of public, who both control the events and enjoy the performance.³⁶

All these references to the world of stage and theatre in acts 1 to 6, in which the action takes place, are crowned by the stanzas describing Śiva’s performance of dance in the descriptive seventh act. As is appropriate for the act which ends the play, these verses are about Śiva’s

³³This term also occurs in the Uttarāmacarita, see STCHOUPAK 1968: xxxiii.

³⁴For another occurrence of the same word, not in the same technical meaning, but mentioning the ‘seed’ of a story, see 7.4, in which *bīja* is the seed of Rāvaṇa’s heroic story (*vikramakathābīja*).

³⁵See e.g. the Daśarūpaka 1.17-18 ff. For an analysis of the relationship between the *kāryāvasthās*, *arthaprakṛtis* and *sandhis*, see BANSAT-BOUDON 1992: 135 ff.

³⁶Viṣṇubhaṭṭa, who takes only the latter meaning of the word, remarks that this is why the gods are called here ‘consumers of the nectar of immortality’, for it is the nectar of aesthetic experience (*rasa*) they consume.

dance at the end of the world. Śiva is called the dancer or actor, *naṭa*, in verses 105 and 111, the former naming him *krīḍānaṭa* ‘he who dances out of play’. While he performs his *ārabhaṭī*, representation of supernatural, horrible events on the stage (verse 103), he frightens Pārvatī and shakes up the world with Mount Meru in its middle (verse 50). As the following stanza (7.111) describes him, he acts in a *nāṭikā*, term for a short or light comedy, which is in fact the end of the three worlds.

*uddāma-bhrami-vega-viṣṭṛta-jatā-valli-praṇālī-patat- svah-gaṅgājala-daṇḍikā-
valayitaṃ nirmāya tat pañjaram /
saṃbhrāmyad-bhujā-ṣaṇḍa-pakṣa-pāṭala-dvandvena haṃsāyitas trailokya-vyaya-
nāṭikā-naya-naṭaḥ svāmī jagat trāyatām //*

As he whirls around in a frightening way, his matted locks, disshevelled, spread out to form channels in which the celestial Ganga’s water can fall down in streams – thus he builds a bird’s cage around himself with the pouring water, in which he spreads out his many arms as a swan would its veil-like wings. He is the dancer who plays³⁷ the hero in the spectacle staging the end of the three worlds, he is our Lord – may he protect the universe.

The examples could be further multiplied to show the ways in which theatre is present in the Anargharāghava.³⁸ Now one way of seeing these references is that Murāri is just showing off. This is certainly not inconceivable, and he demonstrates his śāstric knowledge by alluding to other terms: political, philosophical, ritual, grammatical and the like.³⁹ In so doing, he follows his model, Bhavabhūti, again, who also makes use of many technical terms.⁴⁰ However, it is to be hoped that the above analysis of the ways in which theatrical and rhetorical terms appear in the Anargharāghava has shown that they do not function merely to prove the śāstric knowledge of the author, nor are they there simply to underline the theatricalness of theatre⁴¹ but as organic elements of the development of the drama.⁴² Allusions to the world of stage underline the theatrical nature of the court and suggest that the Rāma story is also a story of political intrigue with various plots vying with each other. References to theatre are also used to show that the events of this world – and of this play – are ultimately staged by the gods, some of whom are themselves closely associated with some aspects of drama: Indra acts to convey a different picture of himself, while Śiva is the universal dancer / actor. Finally, through the chamberlain’s monologue we are

³⁷Here, *naya* stands for *abhinaya* as the commentators point out.

³⁸One of the most remarkable examples is worth mentioning here: verse 2.44 pictures the song of the hen sparrows at sunset as the benedictory verse of a play (*nāṇḍī*).

³⁹See for instance the rather striking occurrences of the grammatical terms *ākṛtigāṇa* in 4.44 or *sthāni-vadbhāva* before 4.12.

⁴⁰For examples, see Uttaraṛāmacarita, notes by STCHOUPAK p.xxxiii

⁴¹This is TIEKEN’s complaint (in TIEKEN 2000:118) concerning JASPART-PANSU’s study (1998: 123-136) of the Uttaraṛāmacarita.

⁴²This is equally the case of the Mālavikāgnimitra, as was shown in BANSAT-BOUDON 1992: 271 ff.

reminded of the theatricalness of life and old age; but with the recurring mention of *rasa* the aesthetic pleasure of our worldly experience is discovered and revealed again and again in many verses.

The terminological analysis presented here raises the notorious methodological question of how one is supposed to approach Sanskrit dramas. As Herman TIEKEN remarked in an article,⁴³ a large number of Sanskrit literary studies propose to define the dominant *rasa* or *rasas* of a play and give an interpretation in the light of that definition. What TIEKEN seems to recommend instead, taking up the cases of the Uttaraṛāmacarita and the Anargharāghava, is to examine the role of ritual and sacrifice. However, while it would be unwise to negate the ritual aspect of Sanskrit dramas, TIEKEN's approach seems as one-sided as that of certain studies on *rasas*. Although the investigation of *rasas* in plays may not always yield spectacular results, it seems to me that TIEKEN's emphasis on ritual has not done so, either. And just as studies on *rasas* may sometimes lay too much emphasis on the role of this concept, so TIEKEN, too, appears to reduce theatre to its ritual aspect.

It is probably inevitable that one should reduce a play to one of its aspects in such investigations, for every study must be focussed on a particular proposition. Nevertheless, one could probably try to avoid suggesting generalisations and giving recipes for literary analysis, such as that the key to any play is the analysis of its *rasas* or that what is important to examine in any one play is its ritual aspect.

Now as far as the above analysis of allusions to drama and dramatic theory is concerned, its aim was not to show that Murāri is the only or the first playwright to make such allusions, for Viśākhadatta, Bhavabhūti and Rājaśekhara, for instance, also do so. On the other hand, the analysis of such terms cannot be considered a general model or exemplary approach of Sanskrit dramas either, for only a certain number of Sanskrit writers include technical terms in their works. The plays attributed to Bhāsa, for example, could not be subjected to the same kind of examination. Yet, it seems that in case of dramas which abound in śāstric allusions, it could be worthwhile to attempt to see the actual role of these terms in the text, rather than just label them as the display of the author's learning. Thus, just as it seems that theatrical allusions are not necessarily gratuitous, it is also likely that pāṇinian terms are not employed just to show the author's knowledge of grammar, which usually does not need this kind of demonstration anyway. But the investigation of grammatical terms in the Murārināṭaka would require another paper.

⁴³See TIEKEN 2000: 115-138.

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