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***Abhisārikā* – the Heroine Proceeding to a Tryst as Seen by Indian Theoreticians of Literature**

Abstract

The paper shows very briefly a fascinating story of the long-lived subject of the *nāyikā-bheda*, taking as the telling example the *abhisārikā* category.

The *Nāṭya-śāstra* is the earliest source mentioning different types of *nāyikās* and *nāyakas*. The association of god Indra (Mind) and the *nāyaka* of each and every performance, understood as the sacrifice on the one hand and the identification of Sarasvatī (Speech) and the *nāyikā* on the other, has been shown by M.K. Byrski. These are the **roots** of the classification of heroes and heroines, as usual a hidden part of any phenomenon, the most difficult to discover and describe. The fruit born later, after transferring the subject into the field of *alaṃkāra-śāstra* and love poetry, will be discussed in the present article.

I. The place of the *aṣṭa-nāyikās* in *nāyaka-nāyikā* classification

The subject of the classification of the hero and heroine (*nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*) has been dealt with by a great number of Indian theoreticians of literature and poets. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* is the earliest source mentioning different types of *nāyikās* and *nāyakas* (Byrski 1997). Bharata explains that the theatrical performance represents different characters. As V. Raghavan points out:

Different persons in different ages, countries, levels of culture, character and emotional condition will dress, walk, look, speak, react and behave differently. In emotion whose representation is of paramount importance, the same feeling will exhibit itself differently in persons of different ages, temperaments and culture. To enable the actor, therefore, to understand completely this variety and complexity in nature and mood in the characters that he is to portray, Bharata analyses them and shows some leading classes. (Raghavan 1951: 15)

Out of all proposed divisions of characters the eightfold classification of *nāyikās* requires closer attention. First of all this categorisation based on the emotional states (*avasthās*) of the heroines, called by later theoreticians *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās*, is repeated in all later works dealing with the theme of *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*. It is beyond doubt that Indian love literature owes a lot to the *Nāṭya-śāstra* and other treatises on dramaturgy and theory of literature discussing the erotic flavour (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*) and the divisions of *śṛṅgāra-nāyikā* and *śṛṅgāra-nāyaka*. A literary work may contain a number of *rasas* but only *śṛṅgāra-rasa* is called *rasa-rāja* – the king of all *rasas*, as it excels all other aesthetic emotions existing in poetry. “Whatever in the ordinary world is bright, pure (*medhya*), shining or beautiful, is associated with love”¹ – says Bharata while explaining the mechanisms of creating the first *rasa* enumerated by him, namely *śṛṅgāra*. According to Rudraṭa, the absence of *śṛṅgāra-rasa* in any poetic composition will bear a permanent want (*Kāvya-lankāra* 14.38).² Ānandavardhana (1982: 48-49) too declares it the most delightful *rasa*:

śṛṅgāra eva madhuraḥ paraḥ prahlādano rasaḥ /

The Erotic indeed, is the sweetest and the most delectable of all sentiments.

(*Dhvanyāloka* 2.7.a)

Its supremacy is also attested by later poeticians and poets writing in Sanskrit and other Indian languages. Let us quote Keśavdās, the Hindi poet and scholar who lived in the age of Akbar:

Love, laughter, compassion, and wrath,
Wonder and dread; the awesome, brave,
And silent – nine emotions are
Which diverse forms and meanings take.
Says Keshavadāsa, of these the prime
Is love – which has over others sway. (Keśavdās 1972: 5)

Theoreticians are unanimous that the process of completion of each *rasa* (*rasa-niṣpatti*) is closely connected with the hero and heroine. If *rasa* results from the conjunctions of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhicāri-bhāva*,³ *vibhāvas*, i.e. objective conditions producing an emotion are of two kinds: *ālambana* and *uddīpana*. The latter technical term signifies the circumstances arousing the emotion whereas the former means a person or persons

¹ *yathā yat kiñcil loke śuci medhyam ujvalam darśanīyam vā tac chṛṅgāreṇa upamīyate*, NŚ 6, commentary after śloka 45. Masson, Patwardhan, 1970, vol. I: 49.

² KAr., 14.38:

*atādhyaṃ upasamharan sarva-rasebhyah śṛṅgārasya prādhānyam pracikatayīṣur āha –
anusrati rasānām rasyatām asya nānyaḥ sakalam idam anena vyāptam ābala-vṛddham /
tad iti viracatīyaḥ samyag eṣa prayatnād bhavati virasam evānena hīnam hi kāvyam //*

³ NŚ VI: *vibhāvānubhāva-vyabhicāri-saṁyogād rasa-niṣpattiḥ*.

with reference to whom the emotion is manifested. Bhoja, proposing a new theory of *rasa*, claims that the soul (*ātman*) of the *rasika* is the abode (*āśraya*) of *rasa*. Under the term *rasika* he understands both the spectator and connoisseur, the poet and character. While discussing the subject of the seat (*āśraya*) of *rasa*, Rudraṭabhaṭṭa, the author of *Rasa-kalikā*, states:

tatrāśrayo dvidhā nāyako nāyikā ceti //

The locus of the sentiment (*rasa*) may be twofold, the hero and the heroine. (1988: 2, 104)

As far as the emergence of the *śṛṅgāra-rasa* is concerned, one could say that the heroine would be at the centre of attention as she is the character with reference to whom the emotion is manifested. The principal role of the feminine character is to evoke an aesthetic experience of love. One has to bear in mind that Sanskrit poetry was mainly male-written and no wonder, in such a case, that it is the beauty of the heroine which is depicted by poets as a factor creating intense passion and love-longing in the hero. The commonly held opinion that in love man was the main subject and women were the objects to be enjoyed, was clearly voiced by Abhinavagupta:

tatra bhokṛtve puruṣasya prādhānyam / pramadāyās tu bhogyatvam /

In love (*tatra*), man is the main enjoyer, and women are the objects to be enjoyed.⁴

In conformity with this notion, theoreticians of literature were more concerned with the classification of the *nāyikās* than with cataloguing the *nāyakas*. The *nāyikās* were classified according to their age, nature, behaviour, marital status and relations with their husband or lover. And the poets were providing subtle literary portraits of the feminine characters enumerated by poeticians.

Among *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās* or *avasthā-nāyikās* Bharata lists: *vāsaka-sajjā* (*vāsaka-sajjikā*) – a lady expecting her lover to come to her house, *virahotkaṇṭhitā* – one whose lover cannot come to her house for some reason, *svādhīna-bhartṛkā* (*svādhīna-patikā*) – one whose husband is devoted to her, *kalahāntarītā* – one who is separated from her lover or husband in consequence of a quarrel, *khaṇḍitā* – one whose husband or lover is guilty of infidelity, *vipralabdā* – one disappointed by her lover's breaking an appointment,

⁴ Then Abhinavagupta continues: *prādhānyād eva ca tasya bhogyenāparatantrī-karaṇam iti nāyikāntara-yoge 'pi na śṛṅgāra-hāniḥ / bhogyasya tu pāratantryād evāny-sammīlane śṛṅgāra-bhaṅga iti darśitam /* "Because the man is the main subject, not dependent on women who are (only) objects of (his) enjoyment, therefore even if a man makes love to another woman this does not disturb the aesthetic experience of love. But because a woman is subject (to man), and is an object to be enjoyed (i.e. primarily passive), if she makes love to another man, the aesthetic experience of love is spoiled." (Masson, Patwardhan, vol. II, 1970: 84)

proṣita-bhartṛkā (*proṣita-patikā*) – one whose husband or lover has gone away on some business, and finally *abhisārikā* – one who goes to meet her lover.

The *aṣṭa-nāyikās* are mentioned by later theoreticians dealing with dramaturgy and also theory of literature, however some of them make the eightfold classification of the heroine more elaborate introducing the subdivisions of each type, subordinating some of them to broader categories of feminine characters, slightly changing the definition of certain types of *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās* or sometimes adding new types. Nevertheless, all of them do appear not only in Sanskrit poetry but also in literature written in Hindi, Telugu and other Indian languages. It is common knowledge that the popularity of the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* was closely connected with the importance of this subject to Vaiṣṇava poets and poeticians. In Vaiṣṇava lyrics Kṛṣṇa is the supreme *nāyaka*, the embodiment of *kāma*, “sublimated in the *rasa* of love⁵, by which He attracts and charms the hearts and souls of all” (Rossella 2004: 82), whereas *gopīs* are described in the categories of *nāyikā*.

As far as the *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās* are concerned, the *svādhīna-patikā* is the only type of heroine successful and perfectly happy about her relationship with her husband, and at the same time is the least popular category with the poets. “Love suffering is ultimately considered to be the extreme proof of the absoluteness of devotion to the *priya* (‘lover’)” – as D. Rossella points out (Rossella 2004: 83). The question of how love in separation (*vipralambha-śṛṅgāra*) should be depicted in literature was thoroughly discussed by literary critics. They explain that without experiencing separation, love in union (*sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*) cannot reach its height (Viśvanātha, SD III. 213: *na vinā vipralambhena sambhogah puṣṭim āsnute*). Also poets in their turn corroborate this statement showing a predilection for describing the pains of separated lovers, and pointing out, as for instance Kālidāsa does (*Megha-dūta* II.5; *Vikramorvaśīya* III.21; *Abhijñāna-śākuntala* II.1), that separation increases love. Even if *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* is usually accompanied by the pathetic sentiment (*karuṇa-rasa*), the lovers should eventually be reunited, and their story should end with their happiness. One could say that the heroines aim at obtaining the ideal stage of the *svādhīna-patikā* and enjoy love in union.

Among the heroines who are about to meet their lovers there are the *vāsaka-sajjikā* and the *abhisārikā*. The *proṣita-bhartṛkā* and her husband love each other deeply and their separation is due to external factors. She awaits her beloved’s return, tortured by pangs of love. The other four categories of the *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās*, i.e. *virahotkanṭhitā*, *kalahāntarītā*, *khaṇḍitā* and *vipralabdā* are unhappy women: disappointed by their lovers or husbands, betrayed, suffering from jealousy.

In the group of eight *śṛṅgāra-nāyikās* perhaps the *abhisārikā* is the most interesting, or at least deserving the name of the heroine of the poem. In this case one cannot say that she is a mere object of the hero’s love-longing. Remembering the title of G. Tubb’s article (1984), we could speak about the “heroine as hero”. It is she who takes the decision to meet her lover and despite all the obstacles finalises her plan. That is why I propose

⁵ According to the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, Viṣṇu is the presiding deity of erotic *rasa* (NŚ VI.44).

this particular type of the *nāyikā* as an example for closer analysis in order to show the importance and history of the subject of the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*.

II. *Abhisārikā* – the heroine proceeding to a tryst

1. Selected definitions and examples of the *abhisārikā* in theoretical treatises

The first definition of the *abhisārikā* is given in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, in chapter XXII entitled *Sāmānyābhinaya* (Kāśī ed., chapter XXIV):

*hitvā lajjāṃ tu yā śliṣṭā madena madanena ca /
abhisārayate kāntaṃ sā bhaved abhisārikā // 220 //*

That one is *abhisārikā*, who overpowered by love and lust, goes to her lover leaving aside (her) bashfulness.⁶

Bharata mentions three sub-varieties of the *abhisārikā*: *kulajā* (a highborn lady), *veśyā* (courtesan) and *preṣyā* (a maid servant) and he gives details concerning their manner of acting:

*samadā mṛdu-ceṣṭā ca tathā parijanāvṛtā /
nānābharaṇa-citrāṅgī gacched veśyāṅganā śanaiḥ // 227 //*

An intoxicated courtesan bedecked with various ornaments, accompanied by her servants, should slowly proceed [to a tryst] moving gently.

*saṃlīnā sveṣu gātreṣu trastā vinamitānanā /
avakuṇṭhana-saṃvītā gacchetu kulajāṅganā // 228 //*

A highborn lady should cover herself with a veil and walk timidly, with her face bent and covered body.

*mada-skhalita-saṃlāpā vibhramotphulla-locanā /
āviddha-gatisaṃcārā gacchet preṣyā samuddhatam // 229 //*

A maid-servant should walk boldly with uneven steps, rolling wide-open eyes, speech stammering due to intoxication.

*gatvā sā ced yadā tatra paśyet suptaṃ priyaṃ tadā /
anena tūpacareṇa tasya kuryāt prabodhanam // 230 //*

⁶ All translations from Sanskrit are my own unless otherwise stated.

alaṅkāreṇa kulajā veśyā gandhais tu śītalaiḥ /
preṣyā tu vastra-vyajanaḥ kurvīta pratibodhanam // 231 //

If she comes and sees her lover sleeping,
 he should be awakened in the following manner.
 A highborn lady should awaken him with [the sound of her] ornaments,
 a courtesan with her scents, and a maid-servant by fanning him with clothes.

Definitely such a method of exposing the subject of *nāyikās*, indicating the manner of acting, was very useful to the actor. However, the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* as well as some other theoretical considerations and proposals designed within the scope of the *nāṭya-śāstra* pertained to the *alaṅkāra-śāstra*. The *Kāvyaṅkāra* of Rudraṭa is another theoretical work containing the passages devoted to the classification of the characters. V. Raghavan claims that Rudraṭa in fact discussed in his text only “four out of the eight Avasthā-Nāyikās, Abhisārikā, Khaṇḍitā, Svādhīnapatikā and Proṣitapatikā, as the fourteen earlier verses mentioning all the eight are not commented upon by Namisādhū, and what is more, Namisādhū expressly states in his comments on XII.44 that two of the other Nāyikās, Vipralabdā and Kalahāntarītā are included in Khaṇḍitā” (Raghavan 1951: 21).

Such a hypothesis explains the presence of the two definitions of the *abhisārikā*. One appears in the above-mentioned fourteen-verse passage, the other in *śloka* XII.42.

The first definition reminds us of the one present in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*:

abhisāriketi seyaṁ lajjābhaya-lāghavān anālocya /
abhisarati prāṇeśaṁ madanena madena cākṛṣṭā // 7 //

That one is *abhisārikā*, who overpowered by love and lust,
 goes to her lover leaving aside bashfulness, fear and derogation of dignity.

The other definition informs us that *abhisārikā* can proceed to a tryst alone or accompanied by other characters mentioned in the classifications, namely female or male messengers (*dūti* or *dūta*):

abhisārikā tu sā yā dūtyā dūtena vā sahaikā vā /
abhisarati prāṇeśaṁ kṛta-samketā yathā-sthānam // 42 //

That one is *abhisārikā*, who has made an appointment in a proper place
 and goes to her lover alone or accompanied by a female or male messenger.

Rudraṭa points out that the *abhisārikā* varieties occur in all the three main types of female characters: *svīyā* (one’s own wedded and virtuous wife), *parakīyā* (someone else’s wife) and *sāmānyā* (courtesan).

Rudraṭa – the author of the *Kāvyaṅkāra* was quite often confused with another poetician Rudra or Rudrabhaṭṭa – the author of the *Śṛṅgāra-tilaka*, a treatise on the

varieties of the *nāyakas* and *nāyikās* and the stages of love. Here, for the first time the meticulous and clear-cut exposition of different types of hero and heroine is given in a systematic manner. According to A.K. Warder, the text comes from around the eleventh century or earlier as Hemacandra quotes from the *Śṛṅgāra-tilaka* (Warder 1988: 802).

The definitions contained in the *Śṛṅgāra-tilaka* are nicely illustrated with poetical examples. Thus the definition of the *abhisārikā*⁷, again similar to that presented in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, is accompanied by the following stanza:

*no bhūtaṁ tadīto dṛśā jala-mucāṁ tad-darśanākāṁkṣayā
no garjīd-gaṇitā bhṛṣaṁ śruti-sukhaṁ tad-vāci saṁcintya ca /
dhārāpāta-samudbhavā na ca matā pīḍā tad-ālīṅganam
vāñchantyā dayitābhisāraṇa-vidhau tanvyā paraṁ tatvare //* 146 //

A maiden was in a hurry, yearning to meet her beloved in the appointed place.
Eager to see him, she was not afraid of the sight of lightning from the clouds,
Thinking about sweetness in his voice, she disdained thunder completely,
Longing for his embrace, she did not mind pain caused by streams of rain.

Here, we are dealing with a portrait of the heroine proceeding to a tryst typical for *kāvya* literature.

In the next stanzas Rudrabhaṭṭa shows the difference in behaviour between *veśyā-abhisārikā* and *kulajā* and *para-nārī* (*parakīyā*) types:

*kulajā saṁvṛtā trastā savrīḍā tad-grhaṁ vrajet /
nāyakam para-nārī tu samantād anavekṣitā //* 152 //

A highborn lady should go to his house timidly, veiled and full of shame.
Someone else's wife proceeds to her lover unnoticed.

*sakhīyuktā madādhikyāt sphāritākṣī tv aśaṅkitā /
saśabdābharaṇā kāmam veśyā sarati nāyakam //* 153 //

Accompanied by her friends and jingles of ornaments, a courtesan
walks to her lover joyfully, with her eyes rolling due to abundance of liquor.

In comparison with the *Nāṭya-śāstra* the description of the heroine is less detailed in reference to her movements and appearance as the author was not expected to provide any hints to the actors.

⁷ Rudrabhaṭṭa, *Śṛṅgāra-tilaka* I.145:

*yā nirlajjī-kṛtā bādham madena madanena vā /
abhiyāti priyam sābhisāriketi matā yathā //*

The fact that *alaṃkāra-śāstrins* adopted the subject of character division and realised it in their own manner does not mean that treatises on theory of drama or rather their authors resigned from continuing and developing it. Just the contrary.

The *Daśa-rūpaka*, a treatise on dramaturgy coming from the 10th century A.D. and written by Dhanamjaya, contributes further to the classification of heroes and heroines. As far as the *abhisārikā* is concerned, Dhanamjaya comes out with an innovation. He introduces two kinds of the *abhisārikā*: one who goes to her lover and another who makes her lover come to her (DR II.44: *kāmārtābhisaret kāntaṃ sāraved vābhisārikā*). Both sub-varieties are illustrated with examples from Amaru's and Māgha's works respectively. As V. Raghavan points out, such a division of the *abhisārikā* type evoked discussion. Some theoreticians held both varieties as *abhisārikās*, others showed the impossibility of the latter being *abhisārikā*.

Viśvanātha (14th century) belongs to those who adopted the view of Dhanamjaya. In the *Sāhitya-darpaṇa* he treats "all topics of Poetics, including Dramaturgy" (De 1988: 216). He did not develop his own ideas, he usually quotes his predecessors and interprets their theories. Viśvanātha speaks about both types of *abhisārikā* proposed by Dhanamjaya, changing however the *sūtra* style of *Daśa-rūpaka*:

abhisārayate kāntaṃ yā manmatha-vaśaṃ-vadā /
svayaṃ vābhisaraty eṣā dhīrair uktābhisārikā // 115 //

[The heroine] who, proclaiming the power of Love, sends for her lover⁸
or goes to him herself is called by the learned *ābhisārikā*.

(*Sāhitya-darpaṇa*, 3.115)

This *kārikā* is accompanied by two illustrative verses: one *udāharaṇa* is repeated after Dhanamjaya (Māgha, *Śiśup.* IX.56), the source of the other is not certain. Viśvanātha was a poet himself and he used to illustrate canons of poetics with his own verses.

To these *kārikā* and *udāharaṇas* he adds the stanza describing how different heroines, namely *kulajā*, *veśyā* and *preṣyā*, go out to meet their lovers. This passage seems to be a compilation from the *Nāṭya-śāstra*.

Among other treatises on dramaturgic topics it would be worthwhile to mention the *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratna-kośa* of Sāgaranandin⁹, as in many points it follows a tradition different from that handed down by Bharata. Sāgaranandin adds to the eight *avasthā-nāyikās* a ninth category, *sabhayā*, i.e. a wife in constant dread in her husband's home. In the treatment of the *abhisārikā* he follows Bharata mentioning *kulajā* and *veśyā* types

⁸ It would be worth pointing out that the causative form of *abhi/sy* does not necessarily mean 'to send for a lover' or 'to invite to a rendez-vous'. It can be understood as 'to approach, visit' (MBh I.1221). In the latter sense the verb was also used in the *Nāṭya-śāstra* XXII.220. I am grateful for this remark to H. Tieden.

⁹ The date of the *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratna-kośa* is uncertain. The text cannot be earlier than the 10th century as it quotes from the Rājasekhara's *Kāvya-mīmāṃsā*. On the other hand it is quoted only by theoreticians living in the 13th and 14th centuries.

and illustrating the way in which they proceed to their tryst, however the *parakīyā* heroine does not appear in his work at all. Then Sāgaranandin presents nine occasions suitable for lovers' meetings.

A text worth mentioning here is the *Rasa-kalikā* of Rudrabhaṭṭa¹⁰, even if it has nothing new to offer in the case of the *abhisārikā*. The author discusses all aspects of *rasa* in reference to both *kāvya* and *nāṭya*. He deals with the subject of *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* in a very systematic manner as he treats the characters as an important locus of *rasa*. Rudrabhaṭṭa's classification of the *nāyikās* is very clear, his definitions are quite often new and the examples illustrating each thesis very apt. However, the definition of the *abhisārikā* is repeated exactly after Dhanamjaya (RK 34: *smarātābhisaret kāntam sāraved vābhisārikā*) as are the examples.

Another work important in the history of *nāyikā* classification is the *Rasa-mañjarī* of Bhānudatta¹¹. The classification of the *ābhisārikā* proposed by him is very detailed. For Bhānudatta, as for other theoreticians also, there are basically three categories of *nāyikās*: *svīyā*, *parakīyā* and *sāmānyā*. *Sāmānyā* is of one single type but *svīyā* has three main categories (further division of these categories will not be discussed here): *mugdā* (a very young heroine, new to the secrets of love), *madhyā* (a heroine gaining experience in love affairs) and *pragalbā* (a mature and self-assured woman); *parakīyā* is again divided into two main types, i.e. *praudhā* (a confident and bold woman) and *kanyakā* (an inexperienced girl). Thirteen kinds of *svīyās*, two of *parakīyās* and one of *sāmānyā* makes altogether 16 kinds which may be further multiplied by eight: *proṣita-bhartṛkā*, *khaṇḍitā*, *kalahāntarītā*, *vipralabdā*, *utkā*, *vāsaka-sajjā*, *svādhīna-patikā* and *abhisārikā*. But it is not the end of Bhānudatta's classification. We end up with 1152 *nāyikās*. Apart from these, female friends and messengers of *nāyikās* are described, as well as twelve kinds of *nāyakas* whose helping friends are of four types.

As for the *abhisārikā* category of *nāyikās* the author recognises eight kinds:

- *mugdābhisārikā* – one who due to her shyness approaches her lover inspired by a female messenger or friend;
- *madhyābhisārikā* – her passionate feelings make her eager to meet her lover but still she hesitates whether to do it;
- *praudhābhisārikā* – she boldly dares to approach her lover;
- *parakīyābhisārikā* – she violates all the etiquette to meet her paramour;
- *jyotsnābhisārikā* – she approaches her lover in the bright moonlight, smearing her body with sandal paste, prefers to be clad in white garments to minimise the possibility of being seen by others;
- *kṛṣṇābhisārikā* – one who prefers to meet her lover in the complete darkness of night;
- *divābhisārikā* – she spares herself in the daylight by trick and approaches her lover;
- *sāmānyābhisārikā* – being a courtesan she is free from social boundaries and can approach her lover any time.

¹⁰ The date of the *Rasa-kalikā* cannot be fixed with certainty. It must be later than the 10th century as it quotes from the *Avaloka* commentary by Dhanika. Among those who quoted the work are Vidyānātha and Mallinātha.

¹¹ According to P.V. Kane, Bhānudatta flourished after 1250 and before 1500 A.D. (Kane 1987: 307).

Bhānudatta introduces one more *abhisārikā*-variety in his work *Rasa-pārijāta*. This is *durdinābhisārikā* – one who goes to a secret meeting in the rain.

Bhānudatta recognises both categories of the *abhisārikā*: the one going to a tryst and the other sending for her lover.

According to V. Raghavan: “The appearance of the *Rasa-mañjarī* of Bhānudatta marks a definite period in the history of the subject of Nāyikā classification; before his time the subject was dealt with in works on drama or Rasa as one of the topics; Bhānudatta for the first time made it the sole theme of a separate book [...].” (Raghavan 1951: 27) However, it should be stressed here that the intrinsic importance of the *Rasa-mañjarī* and its creator is essentially connected with the immense influence it wielded on later writers. Bhānudatta was able to influence and inspire his successors. His text became a standard work, very much commented upon, adopted and translated into vernaculars, as the subject was taken up not only by Sanskrit poets and poeticsians but also by authors writing in other Indian languages, too. The impact of the hero and heroine classification is particularly apparent in Hindi literature. Before mentioning the most outstanding examples of Hindi *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* works and their contribution to the idea of the *abhisārikā*, one more stream adding to the vitality and longevity of the tradition discussed here should be mentioned.

2. The classification of the characters in the hands of Vaiṣṇava rhetoricians

The eleventh century witnessed a great popularity of the Vaiṣṇava movement, which made its powerful impact apparent in the field of literature. One of the brightest stars in the galaxy of Vaiṣṇava poets was Jayadeva, who wrote ecstatically on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's love, i.e. love of the soul for God. Rādhā and other *gopīs* were described in the Krishnaite erotico-mystical poetry in the categories of *nāyikās* longing for their Beloved. Soon the doctrine of devotion to God (*bhakti*) was transposed into the domain of literary theory. The credit of introducing the doctrine of *bhakti* concentrating on Kṛṣṇa to the theory of *rasa* goes to Rūpa Gosvāmin (died in 1590/91), a follower of the mystic-thinker Caitanya (1485-1533) and the author of the theoretical treatises entitled *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujñvala-nīla-maṇi*. Using the theory for the first time proposed by Bharata and later elaborated by others, he introduces, in connection with the aesthetical experience of love, one more sentiment: *bhakti-rasa*. The basic emotion of it (*sthāyī-bhāva*) becomes *madhurā-rati* and it reaches a position of aesthetic enjoyment through the *vibhāvas*. The six *bhāvas*: *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇātha*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and *mahā-bhāva* are playful manifestations of love (*prema*). The fundamental causes or *ālambana-vibhāvas* of *bhakti-rasa* are Kṛṣṇa as the subject (*viśaya*) of *madhurā-rati* and the beloveds (the devotees) of Hari who are the *āśraya* (locus) of *madhurā-rati*. The qualities of Kṛṣṇa and his behaviour are the circumstances arousing the emotion (*uddīpana-vibhāva*). Thus the *nāyikās* play an important part in generating the *bhakti-rasa* and as such they call for the utmost attention.

In the *Ujñvala-nīla-maṇi* Rūpa Gosvāmin proposes some changes in the classification of heroines. The beloved of Hari are of two main types: *svakīyā* and *parakīyā*. The

sāmānyā or *veśyā* for obvious reasons are absent. As for the *avasthā-nāyikās*, he divides this group into two classes: happy *nāyikās* (*hṛṣṭāḥ*) and those suffering from pangs of love – *khinnāḥ*. The heroines wearing exquisite ornaments and attire (*maṇḍitāḥ*)¹² belong to the first class. The other heroines are characterised by neglect of dress and decoration (*maṇḍana-varjitāḥ*). The *abhisārikā* together with *vāsaka-sajjā* and *svādhīna-patikā* form a class of happy feminine characters. Rūpa Gosvāmin accepts the twofold division of the *abhisārikā* type into those heroines who go to a tryst and those who send for their lover.

Rūpa's classification was accepted by some other Vaiṣṇava authors, for example Kavikarṇapūra, the contemporary of Rūpa and the author of *Alaṅkāra-kaustubha*.

3. Hindi *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* works

The vast legacy of *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* works was remarkably enriched by Hindi authors. Rākeśagupta in his monograph “Studies in *Nāyaka-Nāyikā-Bheda*” enumerates 36 Hindi treatises discussing this subject, which is obviously only a small part of *nāyaka-nāyikā* literature. There are texts not yet published and probably not yet discovered, as well as the commentaries not yet studied. The period of Hindi literature to which such treatises belong, often termed *rīti-granths*, has been neglected by modern scholarship. Only recently has the importance of *rīti-granths* as both theoretical and literary documents been noticed, which should bring to light new materials on this subject deepening our understanding of *rīti-kāl* (dating from ca. 1650 till ca. 1850) and its role in establishing the position of the Hindi language and its literature.

The appearance and development of *rīti-granths* written in the Hindi dialect of Braj-bhāṣā was closely connected with courtly culture and patronage monopolised throughout centuries by Sanskrit poets and poeticians. The authors of Braj-bhāṣā *rīti-granths* successfully joined the intellectual tradition inherited through Sanskrit writings, proving the ability of a vernacular to compete or replace cosmopolitan Sanskrit in its traditional role as the language of courtly circles in the discipline of refined literature and literary science. As Allison Busch stresses:

“That Brajbhasa was now functioning alongside Sanskrit as a major transregional language of letters at a Dakhani court is another telling index of its new cultural status. Nor was its literary presence at Golconda particularly exceptional. Compositions in Braj and other dialects of Hindi were also routinely sponsored by the Maratha courts.” (Busch 2004: 47)

¹² Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Ujjvala-nīla-maṇi*, “Nāyikā-bheda-prakaraṇam”:
hṛṣṭāḥ svādhīna-patikāvāsa-sajjābhisārikāḥ /
maṇḍitāś ca parāḥ pañca khinnā maṇḍana-varjitāḥ /
vāma-gaṇḍāśrita-karāś cintā-santapta-mānasāḥ // 94 //

The authors of *rīti-granths* inventively presented the ideas borrowed from their predecessors' writing in Sanskrit, sometimes including also other traditions, e.g. inspirations with folk and Persian poetry present in Keśavdās' *Kavi-priyā* (Stasik 2005: 277).

The eightfold presentation of the female characters is typical of the *rīti-granth*. The authors follow some of the definitions offered by Sanskrit writings, some others are not accepted and more attractive innovations are introduced. Vaiṣṇava-oriented writers do not describe the *sāmānyā* type of heroine. Thus the *sāmānyābhisārikā* division does not appear in their works. A great number of authors following Bhānudatta recognise the types of the *abhisārikā* connected with the time of her proceeding to a tryst. They recognise *jyotsnābhisārikā* (other synonyms used: *śuklābhisārikā*, *candrābhisārikā*), *kṣṇābhisārikā* (*śyāmābhisārikā*, *tamirābhisārikā*, *tamobhisārikā*, *timirābhisārikā*) and *divābhisārikā* (*divasābhisārikā*). Some of them disagree with the concept of the *abhisārikā* who sends for her lover, whereas some others permit such a category (Rākeśagupta 1967: 131-133). A few new types were introduced under this class of heroine, too.

The fundamental treatise discussing the *aṣṭa-nāyikā-bheda* is the *Rasika-priyā*¹³ of Keśavdās (?1555-1617), a poet at the courts of Orchā and nearby Gvāliyar, who is considered a forerunner of *rīti-kāl*. According to Keśavdās, taking into consideration the feelings which urge her to proceed to a tryst, the *abhisārikā* can be of three types:

- *premābhisārikā* – one who goes to meet her lover out of her love for him;
- *garvābhisārikā* – one who is impelled by pride;
- *kāmābhisārikā* – one who is driven by passion.

The first two types were supplemented by Toṣa, the author of the *Sudhā-nidhi* (1634) with the *pāvasābhisārikā*, known from Bhānudatta's *Rasa-pārijāta* as the *durdinābhisārikā* – one who goes to the secret meeting in the rain, thunder and lightning. The same category in the classification of Kumāraramaṇi Śāstrī receives the name of *varṣābhisārikā*. Kumāraramaṇi in his *Rasika-rasāla* (1719) introduces a fourth *abhisārikā*, namely *vyājā* – the one who goes to meet her lover pretending that she is going to meet her female friend or to the market place, etc. An interesting division is proposed by Nandarāma in the *Śṛṅgāra-darpaṇa* (1872). His *abhisārikās* are divided into *aruṇa*-, *pīta*- and *harita*-types. Red, yellow and green *abhisārikās* can be connected with the classification of passions (*rāgas*) proposed by certain theoreticians of Sanskrit literature.¹⁴ The subject requires further investigation.

It is clearly evident that Hindi poets proposed their own solutions and their way of presentation gained the appreciation of the audience. Their contribution enlivened the

¹³ Keśavdās was not the first writer to familiarise vernacular poets and their audiences with the theory of poetics. His predecessors in that aspect were Kṛpārām (fl. 1540) and Nandadās (fl. 1570). Nandadās' *Ras-mañjarī* is indebted to Bhānudatta's work bearing the same title (McGregor 2003: 925).

¹⁴ Bhoja (11th century) in his *Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa*, Chapter XXXVI, enumerated the twelve kinds of passions (*rāga*) in connection with types of heroes and colours. These twelve *rāgas* are as follows: I: 1. *haridrā-rāga*, 2. *rocana-rāga*, 3. *kāmpilya-rāga*, 4. *rīti-rāga* (belonging to *sāttvika* hero); II: 5. *kusumbha-rāga*, 6. *lākṣā-rāga*, 7. *akṣība-rāga*, 8. *māñjiṣṭha-rāga* (*rājasa* hero), III: 9. *kardama-rāga*, 10. *kaṣāya-rāga*, 11. *sakala-rāga*, 12. *nīli-rāga* (*tāmasa* hero). Bhoja included this classification of *rāgas* both into his theory concerning the psychology of *nāyaka* and the types of love connected with the aims of human life (see Sudyka 2006).

conventional, timeworn topic of *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda*. It is Keśavdās, Bihārīlāl, and others like them, who gave new life to the heroes and heroines from the ancient treatises.

4. *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* – on the crossroads of cultures and languages

The *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* ascribed to a Muslim author, Akbar Šāh belongs to the priceless treasure of the group of works dealing with the classification of *nāyakas* and *nāyikās*. The text itself reveals its interesting history to the reader:

tenāndhra-bhāṣayām racitaḥ śṛṅgāra-mañjarī-granthaḥ /
svayam akabareṇa bhūbhṛn-mukūṭa-maṇi-rañjitāmghri-kamalena // 15 //

This lotusfooted Akbar, who was the jewel illuminating the king's crown, himself wrote the work *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* in the language of Andhra.

tad-viracitāndhra-bhāṣā-kalitām śṛṅgāra-mañjarīcchāyām /
sevadhmaṁ sura-vāṇī-racitām rasa-toṣatā-rasika-bhṛṅgāḥ // 16 //

Ah! connoisseurs, who are fond of *rasa* like bees of flower juice, enjoy a copy of *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* which composed in the language of Andhra is put together in the language of the gods.

Who was this Akbar Šāh, so important for a king? Was he the author of both Telugu and Sanskrit versions of the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī*? V. Raghavan in his detailed *Introduction* to the edition of *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* identifies the author, his ancestors and his royal patron. Sayyid Šāh Kalīmullāh Hussainī known as Akbar Šāh or Baḍe Šāhib belonged to the family descended from the famous Muslim saint Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥussainī known as Muḥammad Gesū Darāz of Gulbarga (1321-1422). Akbar Šāh's father named Šāh Rājū was a teacher of Sulṭān Abul Ḥasan known as Tānā Šāh, the last Quṭb Šāhī ruler of Golconda (ruling between 1672-1687). V. Raghavan anticipates that Akbar Šāh "must have succeeded Šāh Rājū as the king's spiritual preceptor after his father. The friendship must have persisted, and as Tānā Šāh, the king given to pleasure, Abul Ḥasan might well have commissioned his guru's son to produce a treatise on the types of heroes and heroines figuring in love." (Raghavan 1951: 8)

The introductory verse 15 puts stress on creating the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* by Akbar Šāh himself (*svayam*), however such a firm statement does not accompany the information about the Sanskrit rendering. It may well be that an anonymous Sanskrit scholar translated the Telugu treatise into Sanskrit. The opening verses being the homage to Hindu deities in that case would be indispensable (*guruṁ gaṇapatiṁ durgāṁ vaṭukam śivam acyutam / brahmāṇaṁ giriḥ giriḥ lakṣmīṁ vāṇīm vande vibhūṭaye //1//*). V. Raghavan suggests also the possibility that at the instance of Akbar who is described in the work itself as a patron of poets and eulogised as the *nāyaka*, some Telugu scholar wrote the original *Śṛṅgāra-*

mañjarī in Telugu. The use of Telugu works on *alaṅkāra-śāstra* seems to corroborate this hypothesis. On the other hand Hindi works cited here and application of metaphors characteristic for Dakhini poetry according to V. Raghavan show that – provided Akbar did not write the work himself – he was also not “a mere passive patron, but an active collaborator” (Raghavan 1951: 8). It is Hindi works which made the subject of the *nāyikās* so popular among Muslim patrons and writers. Muslim courtly patronage was, so to say, responsible for the further expansion of the theme of *nāyikās* and *nāyakas* into the realm of music and painting. The illustrators tried their best to present the texts through visual forms and composers were not a step behind them.

Coming back to the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* itself, the *abhisārikā*’s case demonstrates very well that the subject of the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* instigated an absorbing discussion carried on with undying vigour in different languages, different ages and cultural environments.

The *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* is based on the *Rasa-mañjarī* of Bhānudatta, however Akbar Šāh is critical on certain points and his proposals differ very much from the exposition of the issues given in the *Rasa-mañjarī*. He starts his presentation of the *abhisārikā* by quoting the opinion for the first time formulated in the *Daśa-rūpaka* and shared by many writers, among them Bhānudatta:

*atra rasa-mañjarī-kāraḥ svayam abhisarati priyam abhisārayati vā sā
abhisārikety abhisārikā-lakṣaṇam āha /*

The creator of *Rasa-mañjarī* said there (i.e. in his work) that she who goes to her beloved or makes him come for a rendez-vous is [called] *abhisārikā*. (Akbar Šāh 1951: 37)

Introducing the creator of *Rasa-mañjarī* immediately suggests the distance of Akbar Šāh. In a moment the reader of the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* is going to become acquainted with its author’s opinion. The view of *rasa-mañjarī-kāra* is unsuitable (*tad ayuktam*) as the second variety has to be brought under the *vāsaka-sajjikā*: *priyam yā tv abhisārayati sā tu vāsaka-sajjikā*.

However the commentator of the *Rasa-mañjarī*, Gurijālaśāyin (first half of 17th century) foresaw a possible objection and explained in his *Āmoda* that in the case of the *vāsaka-sajjikā* the meeting place is fixed; it is *vāsaka* – a sleeping-room, bed-chamber. There is no such restriction in the case of the *abhisārikā*. Akbar Šāh joins in the discussion with the author of *Āmoda*. According to him the word *vāsaka* can be understood differently. In fact any place can be called *vāsaka* (*vāsaka* – abode, habitation, any place in which someone stays).

In the same prose passage Akbar Šāh refers to the Hindi work *Rasika-priyā* of Keśavdās:

premābhisāriketi bhedo rasika-priyā-kartrāḥ /

The author of *Rasika-priyā* described *premābhisārikā* (the one who goes to meet her lover out of her love for him) variety.

In Akbar Šāh's opinion such a variety cannot be applied at all (*tan na yuktaḥ*) as all the *abhisārikās* are driven by love (*sarvā abhisārikāḥ premṇaiva bhavantīti*).

Besides three categories of *svīyā* (*mugdā*, *madhyā* and *prauḍhā*), the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* recognizes all the types of *parakṭyā-abhisārikā* in connection with the time of her meeting with her lover: *jyotsnābhisārikā*, *tamobhisārikā* and *divābhisārikā*. He completes this set with two varieties described by Keśavdās but understood by Akbar slightly differently: *kāmābhisārikā* – the one who goes out under the sway of exceeding infatuation, called by Akbar the *uttamābhisārikā* and *garvābhisārikā* – who is proud and having come to her lover's place, pretends to have come on some other pretext.

The *premavākyābhisārikā* is newly introduced by the author of the *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* – the one who goes out to meet her beloved and has a loving conversation with him.

The *Śṛṅgāra-mañjarī* turns out to be an extremely important document in the history of the classification of heroines which supplies the opinions of the theoreticians originating from different cultural milieus, using different languages as the media of their discourse (Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi). It also shows the role of Muslims in promoting indigenous literature and art.

III. Conclusion

The present article shows very briefly a fascinating story of the long-lived subject of the *nāyaka-nāyikā-bheda* taking the *abhisārikā* category as the telling example.

For the first time we come across the definition and the description of the *abhisārikā* in the beginning of our era. This is a kind of the instructions for actors how to play the heroine on the stage. However, the poets transferred the nameless *nāyikās* into the realm of love poetry. And Sanskrit theoreticians started to add new varieties and sub-varieties, trying to take into account all possible situations calling for a new type of heroine and giving suitable definitions. These definitions were accompanied by poetic examples which had nothing to do with the instructive verses known from the *Nāṭya-śāstra*. The happy or unhappy love stories of the *nāyikās*, the moments of their everyday lives were set in scenery described according to the *kāvya* tastes and standards: conventional pictures of the seasons of the year, animals and floral kingdom. When Sanskrit lost its position as the cosmopolitan language of culture the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* topic, probably due to the transformations that occurred in the socio-political sphere, did not extinguish with the end of the Sanskrit domination. Popularised by the Vaiṣṇava poets, it was taken up by Hindi writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They produced verses rich in poetic flavour and having the quality of miniature paintings. Immediately this literature was met with encouraging, some times even enthusiastic response¹⁵ at the Mughal courts.

¹⁵ Āzam Šāh, the third son of Emperor Aurangzeb, known as a lover of Hindi poetry, called a special assembly of poets in order to arrange the verses of Bihārī Lāl's *Sat Sat* according to the classification of heroes and heroines found in the rhetorical works. This recension is called *Āzam Šāhī* (Randhawa 1982: 16).

Surprisingly enough, the theme once introduced stirred up the minds continuously and was keenly studied, discussed and debated throughout the centuries. In fact it has never ceased to occupy the mind of the Indian audience as even today the *nāyikās* are present in the Indian dance and music tradition and also in modern painting. Such a phenomenon able to create literature anew and inspire artists calls for special attention from modern scholarship. Interdisciplinary studies gathering specialists on different Indian languages and literatures, theoreticians of literature, musicologists and art historians should be taken up in order to bring to light the manuscripts on that subject, very often illustrated with beautiful miniatures, yet still unpublished. Detailed study of these texts can discover the mechanisms crucial to sustaining the vitality of the subject, shed light on the cultural interactions of Sanskrit and vernacular languages and cultural ties between Hindu and Muslim cultures.

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