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**Prof. RAMKARAN SHARMA**



BHARATIYA VIDYA PRAKASHAN
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# Ratnaśrījñāna

**Sheldon Pollock**

Measured by the crudest quantitative standards—miles travelled, size of readership, kinds of language-traditions influenced, numbers of translations and adaptations and borrowings–Daṇḍin's seventh-century *Kāvyādarśa* can safely be adjudged the most important work on literary theory and practice in Asian history, and, in world history, a close second to Aristotle's Poetics. Its impact on the literary histories of southern India, in particular Kannada, Sinhala, and Tamil in the period 800-1200, is common knowledge among scholars, so too its appropriation into Pali (in the *Subodhālaṅkāra*) during the later centuries of this same epoch, when Theravādin literati undertook a dramatic reordering of their aesthetic objectives according to Sanskrit principles. Less well-known is the influence the *Kāvyādarśa* exercised on Chinese in the formation of Recent Style Poetry in the high T'ang, and onTibetan after the remarkable educational reforms initiated by Śakya Paṇḍita (1182-1251).[1] In view of these facts, any text pertaining to the history and interpretation of Daṇḍin's work will hold cosiderable scholarly interest. Foremost among such texts, of course, are commentaries on the *Kāvyādarśa* iteself.

It is sobering to realize, however, that the number of published commentaries on the *Kāvyādarśa* stands in almost directly inverse proportion to the text's importance. Only four had found their way into print up to 1957 (of the two dozen or more pre-colonial commentaries that we know of). Three of these in fact were published together, in a now rare edition, by D.T. Tatacharya in 1936, and largely ignored since.[2] The editor believed that nothing was known about the authors of these commentaries except their names (and for the third, not even that). This may not in fact be the case.

The first of the commentaries is printed in Tatacharya's edition in the *Śrutānupālinī* composed by oneVādijaṅghāladeva (or Vādighaṅkāla, orVādighaṅghala).[3] Neither the printed version of this commentary nor any of its additional manuscripts tell us anything about the identity of the author. In 1921, however, a tenth-century Gaṅga grant was published that may have bearing on this question. The record, which is dated *Śaka* 884 (A.D. 963), describes the gift of an *agrahāra,* as *śrutagurudakṣiṇā* or teacher's fee, to one Vādighaṅghala [sic] Bhaṭṭa, and contains a long *praśasti* describing the scholar. Included in the encomium is the following list of accomplishments:

*niravadyasāhityavidyāvyākhyānanipuṇa -.....*
*sakalarājavidyāpratipādanapratibuddhabodhaprabodhitavallabharāja.....*
*tadātvāyatisughaṭamantrakramopadeśānuṣṭhānavaśīkṛtākhiladigaṅganā...*
*kṛṣṇarājadeva-*

That is, Vādighaṅghaḷa was an "expert in the exegesis of the science of literature" as well as a "political theorist who shaped the thinking of the Vallabha king, Kṛṣṇarāja, who, by following his systematic advice, sound both for the present and for the future, has been enabled to conquer the quarters."[4] The Kṛṣṇa in question here, whose deeds are described earlier in the grant and who crowned as his vassal king Vādighaṅghaḷa's actual patron, Gaṅga Mārasiṁha, is Kṛṣṇa III Rāṣṭrakūṭa (r. 939-67).

It seems to me probable that this scholar is to be identified with the author of the *Śrutānupālinī*. It may be objected that the Vādighaṅghala of the grant is a Jain. He is attributed in the inscription with *jineśvaracaraṇakamalārādhane 'bhiyogaḥ*, and in fact, it appears that this rather curious name is a sobriquet, "swiftest *(jaṅghāla)* among debaters," that he acquired by his mastery of Jaina thought.[5] The *Kāvyādarśa* commentary itself by contrast shows no sign of this religious affiliation, and actualluy begins with a salutation to Sarasvatī and mention of Bhahmā and Murāri. But as the *praśasti* shows, Vādighaṅghaḷa was a recent convert to the faith—his grandfather is described as an orthodox Brahmin—just like many other tenth-century Jainas of Karnataka, most notably the great poet Pampa, a contemporary of *Vādighaṅghala's* (his Vikramārjunavijaya was composed around 950). Such men often retained signs of their Brahmanical heritage, a feature that appears to have become institutionalized among the Jaina Brāhmaṇa community of Karnataka. The surname Bhaṭṭa in the grant may be taken as evidence of this.

As for the second commentary published by Tatacharya, that of Taruṇavācaspati, we now know that this was almost certainly composed at the Hoysaḷa court in the mid-thirteenth century. For, one Keśava Bhaṭṭāraka identifies himself as the son of Tartuṇavācaspati and tutor to King Vīra Rāmanātha (r. 1257-74), in the colophon of his own commentary on the *Kāvyādarśa*.[6]

In 1957, Anantalal Thakur and Upendra Jha placed students of Daṇḍin under a heavy debt when they edited from a single manuscript the remarkable comentary of "Master Śrījñāna from Sinhala" (*ācāryaratnaśrījñānasya siṁhalajanmanaḥ).*[7] The editors did a magnificent job in making sense of the often imperfect manuscript (though areas for improvement remain), and have provided an informed introduction to the questions concerning the author. Proceeding on the basis of the final verses of the commentary and the colophon, they suggest that it was composed under the patronage of "some Rāṣṭrakūṭa king named Tuṅga who most probably ruled under the overlordship of Emperor Rājyapāla of Gauḍa and Magadha," but they have nothing more of substance to suggest.[8]

The work dates itself to the 23rd year of the reign of Rājyapāla. Thakur and Jha take this to be A.D. 931, though the reckoning of the succession of Pāla rulers is disputed, and a truer date may be 955.[9] Ratnaśrī refers to his patron not just by name, *śrīmattuṅganarādhipa,* but also as *sarvābhyunnatarāṣṭrakūṭatilaka* ("the forehead ornament of the universally ascendant Rāṣṭrakūṭas") (p. 281). This is hardly the manner in which to describe a Rāṣṭrakūṭa family resident at Gayā and occupying the status of vassal of the Pālas, as the editors believed, and this is to say nothing of the fact that we have no information from elsewhere corroborating the existence of such a famiy. On the face of it this is evidently a reference

to a king of the imperial Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Karnataka, and another document, of which the editors were unaware, makes this identification close to certain.

An inscription found at Bodh Gayā, "palaeographically assignable to circa 9th century," and published more than a century ago was composed by the very man who wrote the *Kāvyādarśa* commentary, "Paṇḍit Ratnaśrījñāna, the Buddhist mendicant of the island Sinhala" (*siṁhaladvīpajanmanā paṇḍitaratnaśrījana* [read: *jñāna*] *bhikṣuṇā*, line 18).[10] The inscription records the dedication of a repository for incense (? *gandhakūṭi*) on the part of the author's patron—named, again Tuṅga—in the fifteenth year of his reign.

According to the inscription, this Tuṅga was second in descent from some one named Nanda (or perhaps Nanna). A number of epithets are given to Nanda in the inscription, one of which is particularly revealing: *"Maṇipuradurgadhavala,"* "Him of Pure White [Fame] of the fort of Manipura" (line 4). It is far likelier in terms of phonology that Manipura refers to Mānyapura—that is, Mānyakhēṭa (Malkhēd), the Rāṣṭrakūṭa capital in what is today's eastern Karnataka—rather than Mainpuri, as suggested by Rajendralal Mitra, the original editor of the inscription. This identification becomes more probable when we recall that the founder of Mānyakhīṭa (or perhaps son of the founder), the great king Nṛpatuṅga Amoghavarṣa (814-80), alone among the Rāṣṭrakūṭas bore the *biruda (Atiśaya) dhavala*. Repeated references to him by this title are found in the inscriptions issued during his reign, and in the remarkable work on Kannada poetics produced at his court, the *Kavirājamārga*, itself an adaptation of the *Kāvyādarśa*.[11]

Nanda is also called in the grant Mahībhadraka (?) and Guṇāvaloka, and whereas the first sems nowhere attested in connection with *Amoghavarṣa, -avalōka* is at least an epithet-suffix of the Kannadiga Rāṣṭrakūṭas (cf. Khaḍgāvaloka in the case of Dantidurga, and Raṇāvaloka of Stambha, son of Dhruva).[12] The title "Beholder of (Literary) Excellence" would make good sense in reference to the patron of the *Kavirājamārga*, whose knowledge of literature is praised throughout the text. The name Nanda or Nanna itself is not found in reference to Amoghavarṣa, either, though Ṇaṇṇa (or Ṇaṇṇappa) is not uncommon among the earlier Rāṣṭrakūṭas.[13] What is especially significant, however, for the identification of Nanda with Amoghavarṣa is the fact that Ratnaśrī describes Nanda having become a renunciate at the end of his life:

*yaś cānte tanum utsasarja vidhivad yogīva tīrthāśrayaḥ* (line 4)

(At the end of his life he abandoned his body according to rule, like a yogin, residing in a holy place.)

This fits well with what we know about Amoghavarṣa from other works, especially the celebrated little "catechism" entitled the *Praśnottararatnamālikā*. Although this work has been variously attributed--most commonly to Śaṅkara, in a highly vedantized version-what I believe to be the oldest extant manuscript copy of it, a palm-leaf written in an Old Kannada script and preserved in the Oriental Research Institute, Mysore, ends with the following verse:

*vivekāt tyaktarājyena rājñeyaṁ ratnamālikā /*
*racitāmoghavarṣeṇa sudhiyāṁ sadalaṅkṛtiḥ //*[14]

(This Little Garland of Gems, a goodly ornament for the wise, was composed by King Amoghavarṣa, who on gaining discriminating insight renounced his Kingship.)

If the line of reasoning offered so far is correct, then it remains to determine the king of the imperial Rāṣṭrakūṭas to whom 'Tuṅga' refers. Now, among the overloads whose dates are close to both the old and revised Pāla chronology, "[Nṛpa]tuṅga" is recorded as a *biruda* of both Govinda IV and Kṛṣṇa III; the reign of the first began in 930, that of the second, as noted earlier, ended in 967.[15] Govinda IV, however, ruled for only six years (he was succeeded by Amoghavarṣa III, whose reign lasted only from 935-39), and this would leave Kṛṣṇa III as the Tuṅga who was Ratnśrī's patron. Little additional hard data are available to corroborate this identification; the Bodh Gayā grant gives Tuṅga the *biruda* Dharmāvaloka, which I have not yet found used in connection with Kṛṣṇa III. There are, however, several more pieces of circumstantial evidence that can be adduced in support. The fact that Ratnaśrī calculates Tuṅga's date according to regnal years conforms with Kṛṣṇa III's own practice in his records for most of his reign (all other Rāṣṭrakūṭas, like their predecessors the Bādāmi Cāḷukyes, used the *Śaka* era). Moreover, there is an important historical linkage with Sri Lanka at just this time.

We have little information regarding the circulation of religious professionals and scholars between India and Sri Lanka in the first millennium, but what we do know about political history suggests a very intense interaction between the two regions precisely in the mid-tenth century. Kṛṣṇa III, sometime around 950 perhaps, invaded the island and was repulsed (thus according to Sinhala chronicles; the grant to Vādijaṅghāla also alludes to the event). At some later point, according to a Coḷa inscription, a Sri Lankan prince king Srivallabha Madanarāja, visited the court of 'Kannara,' that is, Kṛṣṇarāja III.[16] Where kings and armies go, intellectuals generally follow.

One additional, if minor, indication that Ratnaśrī attended the Rāṣṭrakūṭa court of the Deccan, and in the tenth century, is offered by the fact that he quotes from the *Damayantīkathā* (*Nalacampū*) of Trivikramabhaṭṭa. Trivikrama himself lived in the first quarter of the tenth century, and worked as an inscriptional poet at the court of Indrarāja III, for whom he composed an important *praśasti* in *Śaka* 836 (AD 915).[17] This is the latest text Ratnaśrī quotes in his commentary, and in fact this appears to be the very first citation of Trivikrama in *alaṅkāra* literature (the next being in the works of Bhojarāja, two generations later).[18] No one outside of the Deccan in the tenth century appears to have known the work of Trivikrama.

As the Bodh Gayā inscription shows, however, Ratnaśrī had an important connection with the Pāla world, or at least with Buddhist religious and no doubt educational institutions in the Pāla world. This, rather than Tuṅga's subordination to Pāla overlord, is likely to account for the dating of his commentary according to Pāla regnal years. Again, if Ratnaśrī's text of the *Kāvyādarśa* often agrees with the Tibetan, according to the editors, it often agrees with that of Vādijaṅghāladeva as well; indeed, the two sometimes share readings of Daṇḍin's *mūlagrantha* not found elsewhere.[19] And this would make sense if, as the above logic leads

us to conclude, Vādijanṅghāladeva and Ratnaśrī were contemporaries at the Rāṣṭrakūṭa court of Kṛṣṇa III (note that Vādijaṅghāla is also called *Bauddhabudhopama,* "like the Buddha himself in the mastery of Buddhist doctrine").[20] It is therefore possible to argue, *contra* the editors, that, rather than being dependent on some earlier northern textual tradition of the *Kāvyādarśa*, Ratnaśrī's version of the work comes from the south and was subsequently introduced into the northeast, where it formed the foundation of the Tibetan tradition in consequence of the authority of his exegesis and the fact that he was a Buddhist. His close relationship with centers of learning in Magadha as evinced in the Bodh Gayā inscription makes this perfectly reasonable.

The fact that all of our other early exegetical works on Daṇḍin (those of Vādijanṅghāla, Taruṇavācaspati, and Taruṇa's son Keśava Bhaṭṭāraka) were produced in late-medieval Kannada country seems to me additional evidence in favour of identifying this as the time and place of Ratnaśrī. Daṇḍin spoke with special force to Kannadiga (and other southern) scholiasts, as he spoke to vernacular scholars such as Śrīvijaya, author of *Kavirājamārga*, or the anonymous author of the twelfth-century Tamil work, the *Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram*. This is no doubt a consequence of the acute understanding that Daṇḍin himself, a southerner, brought to bear on the question of how southern poets wrote Sanskrit; his idea of *vaidarbha mārga*, for example, does not emerge from the realm of pure imagination.[21] (And it is worth remarking parenthetically but very explicitly that Daṇḍin's work entirely transcended religious boundaries. Aside from adducing in illustration poetry composed by Buddhist authors, Ratnaśrī betrays not a sign of anything we could properly call a *Buddhist* literary culture. Literary culture is entirely ecumenical: *sāhitasya sarvapārṣadatvāt*, as Bhojarāja put it with epigrammatic simplicity.) That Daṇḍin spoke so powerfully at this particular moment, in the mid-tenth century, surely has some connection—but whether as cause or effect is unclear—with the explosion of vernacular writing in the Deccan, of which Pampa's *Bhārata,* composed at the court of the Vemulavāḍa Cāḷukyas (vassals and ultimately competitors of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas), is the most compelling example.

An intriguing question awaiting further investigation concerns the possible identity of Ratnaśrījñāna with a learned Thera of Sri Lankan named Ruvan-mī. To Ruvan-mī is ascribed the paraphrase (*sannaya*) that accompanies the *Siyabaslakara* (Poetics of One'a Own Language), the enormously influential Sinhala adaptation of the *Kāvyādarśa*, which itself is now generally dated to the ninth or tenth century. Nothing further is known about this monk, whose name is usually taken to equate with Ratnamadhu. But it could well be a *tadbhava* of Ratnamati(pāda), a name by which Ratnaśrī is known in the Sinhala tradition. Ratnamatipāda was the author of two works on grammar, the *Śabdārthacintā*, and a *Pañjikā* on Candragomin's grammar. (Note that Ratnaśrī's knowledge of grammar is everywhere evident in his commentary on Daṇḍin; he is also one of the very few commentators to demonstrate knowledge of a now-lost work on Prakrit grammar by Harivṛddha.)[22] Whether Ruvan-mī is to be identified with Ratnaśrījñāna—and indeed, whether he may be the actual author not only of the paraphrase but of the *Siyabaslakara* itself, which is ascribed (probably pseudonymously) to King Sena I (846-66)—seems not beyond the realm of possibility.[23]

## References & Notes

1. For a discussion of Kannada *Kavirājamārga*, see my "The Cosmospolitan Vernacular" (*Journal of Asian Studies* 57,1 [1998]: 6-37).On the Sinhala and Tibetan versions, the most recent and best accounts are, respectively, Charles Hallisey, "Works and Persons in Sinhala Literary Cultures," and Matthew Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," in my forthcoming volume, *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkely: University of California Press). On the transformation of late Pali, see Steven Collions, "What is Literature is Pali?" in the same volume. The influence of Daṇḍin in the Tamil tradition is considered in Anne E. Monius, *In Search of "Tamil" Buddhism: Language, Literary Culture, and Religious Community in Tamil-speaking South India* (Harvard University Dissertation, 1997). The impact of Daṇḍin and related texts in China is discussed in a path-breaking article by Victor H. Mair and Tsu-Lin Mei, "The Sanskrit Origins of Recent Style Prosody" (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51.2 [1991], 375-470). Inaccessible to me is the Mongolian translation of Daṇḍin (Ulanbator: Shinzhlekh Ukhaanui Akademiin Khelel, 1972. Corpus Scriptorum Mongolorum, Vol. 18, fase. 1).
2. Tatacharya, D. T. ed., *Kāvyādarśa* (Tirupati: Shrinivas Press, 1936 [the Upodghāta, however, is dated 1941]). Tatacharya refers (p. i) to earlier editions: of the first chapter of the first commentary by one Krishnacharya of the Government Sanskrit College, Madras (for which I can find no bibliographic details); of complete texts of the two other commentaries by M. Rangacharya (Madras: M.C. Narasimhacharya of the Brahmavadin Office, 1910). I ignore here the fourth commentary, a late (eighteenth-century?) exegesis by Kṛṣṇakānta (or Kṛṣṇakiṅkara) Tarkavāgīśa, a few extracts of which were published by Thakur and Jha (see below), 283ff. There are of course likely to be more than those listed in the NCC. During my examination in December, 2000, of the uncatalogued manuscripts on *sāhityaśāstra* in the royal library in Ramnagar Fort, Varanasi, I found two texts of the *Kāvyādarśa* with commentaries that remain to be identified.
3. The first spelling is found in the printed colophon to the first *pariccheda;* the second and third are according to Madras Mss. (both transcribed from a Malayali original; see *Triennial Catalogue of Manuscripts*, Madras R. No. 4347 and R. No. 2746 respectively).
4. *Mysore Archaeological Report* (MAR) 1921: Plate X, 8 ff., II, 168-169 (on Kṛṣṇa III, 11. 120 ff.) Tatacharya is less impressed with Vādijaṅghāladeva's learning than the man himself is (*vṛthaiva atipariśrāmyati pariśramayati ca*, ii).
5. See MAR 1921: Plate X, 11. 162-63.
6. V. Raghavan, "The Sūktiratnahāra of Kalinṅgarāya Sūrya," *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras 13 (1939): 305-6.
7. Thakur, A. and Upendra Jha,(eds.) *Kāvyalakṣaṇam* (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1957).
8. Thakur and Jha, *Kāvyalakṣaṇam*, 18-20.
9. Thakur and Jha, *Kāvyalakṣaṇam*, 20. For the revised Pāla chronology, see, for example, Susan L. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree: The Art of Pāla India* (8th-12th centuries) *and Its International Legacy* (Seattle and London: Dayton Art Institute in Association with the University of Washington Press, 1990), 542.
10. Mitra, Rajendralal, *Buddha Gaya:* The Great *Buddhist Temple* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972 [originally 1878]), 194ff. The inscription merits re-editing. On the palaeography see *Epigraphia Indica* (EI) 32:114.
11. For the first, see for example EI 6:103; for the second, M.V. Seetha Ramiah, ed., *Kavirājamārgam* (Bangalore: Karnataka Sangha, 1968; reprint 1994), 1.24; 1.148; 2.55.
12. On the use of *-avalōka* see EI 6: 188-9, where Fleet notes that "Both the *birudas* ending in *tuṅga* and those ending in *avalōka* appear to be, originally, exclusive appellations of the Rāṣṭrajūṭas of Malkhed, since, as in the case of the *birdudas* ending in *varsha*, we cannot trace the conception of them to any other source." He offers no reason for then ascribing the Bodh Gayā grant to "another branch of the Rāṣṭra-kūṭa stock" (p. 189).

13. Mirashi, V.V., "The Indragaḍh Stone Inscription of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Ṇaṇṇa," Indian Historical Quarterly 31 (1955): 99-104. Edited inEI 32:112:17.
14. Vs. 30 of ORI MS No. P 3995/2.
15. For Govinda IV see EI 13:327: for Kṛṭṇa III, EI 19:289 (correcting EI 6:189). As mentioned earlier, Tuṅga would seem to be the grandson of Nanda according to the Bodh Gayā grant, though it is not at all clear how strictly we are to take Ratnaśrī's genealogy. The actual grandson of Amoghavarṣa was Jagattuṅga, but he predeceased his father and never was king. Indrarāja III, Jagattuṅga's elder son, ruled between 914-28. If there was a "fifteenth" year in Indra's reign, therefore, it would have been his last. At all events, I have not found (Nṛpa)tuṅga as a *biruḍa* of Indra III.
16. See Nagaraju, S, "Rāṣṭrakūṭa Activities in Ceylon," in B.R. Gopal, ed., *The Raṣṭrakūṭas of Malkhed: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Mysore: Geetha Book House on behalf of the Mythic Society, 1994), 123-5.
17. See EI 9:28. Ratnaśrī cites from Trivikrama on p. 23.
18. e.g., *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (edited by V. Raghavan [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998]), 354 (*Nalacampū* 1.4), 1019 (5.34).
19. Thakur and Jha only remark on this (p. 16) but offer no evidence. I have not done a systematic comparison; an informal survey of the first *pariccheda* shows mixed results. On 1,67, both R [atanśrī] and V[ādijaṅghāla] read *param* (against *kharam* of e.g., Taruṇa); on 1.76 *sarva-* (against *kāvya-* of many mss); on 1.95 *anyat tu* (against *anyatra* of many mss.and apparently Taruṇa; on 1.71 believe V read *kāvyam* (not *kāvye*, as printed), in agreement with R, against Taruṇa and others). Some differences, however, are also found: on 1.18, R reads *asaṁkṣipta-*, V *asaṁkṣiptam;* on 1.38, R *paṭhyate*, V *badhyate*. It is impossible to tell from V whether he read in agreement with R on 1.48-49. A comparison of their interpretations of problematic passages would be of interest.
20. *MAR* 1921: Plate X, 1. 162.
21. See "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," 21-5.
22. See his comments on 1.33-5. For Harivṛddha as Prakrit poet, see Harivallabh Chunilal Bhayani, *Indological Studies: Literary and Performing Arts, Prakrit, and Apabhramsa Studies* (Ahmedabad: Prashva Prakashan, 1993), 162ff. (=*Sanskrit and Indological Studies: Dr. V. Raghavan Felicitation Volume*, pp. 61 ff.) Ratnaśrī's quotations of Hari's grammar are unfortunately unknown to Bhayani.
23. This paragraph relies heavily on Martino de Zilva Wickremasinghe, *Catalogue of Sinhalese Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1900), xiii.