

Prāsa and Anuprāsa in Haridāsa Sāhitya

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The Haridasa movement in Karnataka has presented to the world a galaxy of pure and pious souls who struggled and strove for the love of Hari. It was a devotional movement based on mystical experience, which spread to all classes of the society and touched all hearts. The Haridasa literature was perfectly 'Vaidika' in tone and in its tenets, and was perhaps the greatest interpreter of the abstract metaphysics and sublimity of sentiment of Vedic and Upanishadic teaching. Besides, it conveyed great and sacred truths in Kannada in a very simple and clear style so as to be understood by the common people. With immeasurable compositions in the form of Keertanas (or Devaranamas), Ugabhogas, Suladis, Vruttanamas and many more, the Haridasas made distinctive contribution to Kannada literature as well as Traditional South Indian Music. To the Haridasa, poetry and music were twin-born and one would not exist without the other.

One of the striking features of Haridasa compositions is the use of Shabdalankaras in the form of Prasa (Rhyme) and Anuprasa (Alliteration) which, like ornamental elements, have enhanced the lyrical and musical value of those songs. Prasa and Anuprasa are literary or rhetorical stylistic devices which are employed in literature to beautify and embellish the lyrical passages. Prasa is rhyme which consists of identical or similar sounds placed at the ends of lines or at predictable locations within lines. This is normally of 3 types namely adiprasa (first syllable of each line rhyming), dviteeyakshara prasa (second syllable of each line rhyming), and antyaprasa (final syllable of each line rhyming). Anuprasa is alliteration that refers to repeating the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in close succession. It is like a jingle of the same letter or letters happening at the beginning of each word.

Karnataka Sangeeta Pitamaha, the king among Haridasas, Purandara Dasa, in one of his most popular compositions 'bhAgyada lakShmi bAramma...', has brilliantly used in each charana, the dviteeyakshara prasa.

“hejjeya.....gejjeya...sajjana...majjige...” – jj as the second syllable in every line.

“attittagalade...nittyā mahOtsava...sattyake tOruva...chittadi poLeyuva...” – tt as the second syllable in every line.

“sakkare tuppada....shukravArada....akkareyuLLa....chokka purandara viThalana rAni....” – kk as the second syllable in every line.

A similar approach can be seen in a familiar composition of Kanaka Dasa, ‘nammamma shArade...’ which also has dviteeyakshara prasa in all its charanas.

“nammamma shArade..... nimmoLagiha..... kammagollana..... hemmeya gaNanAthane...” – mm as the second syllable in every line.

“uTTadaTTiyu.... diTTatAnivanyAramma.... paTTada rANi..... hoTTeya gaNanAthane...” – TT as the second syllable in every line.

“rAshi vidyeya balla....bhAShiganivanyaramma....lEsAgi janara....kEshavadAsa kanE...” – sh or s as the second syllable in every line.

The dviteeyakshara prasa is the most used in Haridasa literature. ‘rAma kRuShnarū manege bandarū...’, ‘Enu maDidarEnu....’ of Purandara Dasa, ‘samsAravEmba sAgara...’ of Kanaka Dasa, ‘Gajamukhane...’ of Saint Vyasaraya are a few instances.

We find beautiful prasas in Sripadaraja’s ‘bAro namma manegE...’

“gollabAlakaranu – nillisi hegalEri – gullu mADade mosa – rella savida kRuShna” – Here we find ‘ll’ used with a, i, and u kAras as the second syllable.

“anganeyara vrata – bhangava mADida – ranga viTThala bhava – bandha pariharisO” – Here the composer has used the Adi prasa where the first syllable of every line is used with an anuswAra.

Saint Vadiraja, in his ‘bArO murAri....’, has used small delightful phrases with antya prasa.

“bArO murAri – bAlaka shouri – sAravichAri – santOShakAri

Ata sAkELO – maiyella dhULO – UTamADELO – kRuShnA kRupALO

vEnkaTaramaNa – sankatAharaNa – kinkarAmaragaNA – vandita charaNA

aravinda nayana – sharadEndu vadana – vara yadusadana – siri hayavadana”

In Purandara Dasa’s ‘innu daya bAradE...’ we come across a simple and attractive illustration of anuprasa –

“nAnA dEshagaLalli nAnA kAlagaLalli nAnA yOnigaLalli nalidu puTTi

nAnu nannadu emba narakadoLage biddu neenE gati endu nambida dAsana mEle”

Here we see a successive repetition of words beginning with the consonant ‘na’ throughout this charana.

In a devaranama by Gopala Dasa, we come across anuprasa in the form of recurrence of the word ‘vishwa’ in quick succession throughout.

“vishwatOmukha neenE vishwatashchakShu neenE

vishwatObAhu neenE vishwatO hasta neenE

vishwataH shravana neenE vishwAdhAraka neenE

vishwavyApaka sarvavishwamayanu neenE

vishwanAmakahari gOpAla viTThala

vishwAsa koDu ninna vishwacharaNadali”

Mahipati Dasa, great but unnoticed, has been a master in the use of Shabdalankaras. A repeated occurrence of the syllable ‘tta’ in this composition of his makes it a feast to the ears. Furthermore, the antya prasa is also noteworthy.

“datta dattenalu hatti tA bAhanu

chittadoLagAguva matte shAshvatanu

datta uLLavana hattile ihanu

vRutti ondAdare hastaguDuvanu

etta nODidare mottanAgiha tA

uttamOttamaranettuva tAyi tA

attalittAgade hattile sUsuta

muttinantihanu nettili bhAsuta”

The compositions of haridasas are poetically so rich that we hardly come across a composition without the employment of these Shabdalankaras. In addition, various kinds of Arthalankaras in the form of Upama (simili), Roopaka (metaphor), (personification), Uthpreksha (hyperbole), Virodhabhasa (paradox), Nidarshana (irony) also adorn these compositions with all their charm. Besides, the songs are perfectly metrical confirming to the rules of Chandas Shastra. Thus, the Haridasas produced musical literature in Kannada which are scholarly, yet intelligible and have been an integral part of the treasure of Carnatic Music compositions over the centuries.