

# Upamā, Rūpaka and Dhvani in Sanskrit Oral Poetry<sup>1</sup>

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[The Sanskrit term *alamkāra* generally designates the collection of figures of speech used in Sanskrit Literature. However, in its broadest sense, it refers to anything that constitutes the poetic language of an author or a literary work. The science of *alamkāraśāstra* or “the science of poetry” is applied mainly to the learned literature of written tradition, which includes such prominent exponents as the poet Jayadeva, author of *Gītagovinda*. This paper analyzes and describes the use of *alamkāraśāstra* applied especially to the oral tradition of poetry, thus demonstrating that many of the essential aspects of poetic language are already found in these earlier oral compositions. The analysis focuses on the use of the two figures of speech par excellence: *upamā*, “simile”, and *rūpaka*, “metaphor”, particularly, in nominal composition. Finally, we illustrate the use of complex metaphor or “chain of metaphors” that builds a complete image, and the importance of the concept of *dhvani*, the power of suggestion of the poetic word. The concept of *rasa* related to this power of suggestion is also commented on in the final pages.]

**Keywords:** upamā, rūpaka, dhvani, alamkāra, rasa.

## 1. Introduction

The collection of figures of speech used in Sanskrit Literature is usually given the generic name *alamkāra*, which can be translated as “embellishment”, “ornamentation”, “ornament”.<sup>2</sup>

However, in its broadest sense, the notion of *alamkāra* includes much more than the specific figures of speech of Sanskrit literature: it refers to anything that contributes to the poetic language of an author or a literary work, that is to say, any strategy or method adopted by the author to express him or herself through poetic language.

The science of *alamkāraśāstra* or “science of embellishment” is applied especially in the domain of Classical Sanskrit Poetry, which includes such notable exponents as the poet Jayadeva (XII a. C.).<sup>3</sup> Classical Sanskrit Poetry, called *kāvya*, is characterized by its beauty and stylistic complexity, in which sometimes the demonstration of virtuosity can achieve unexpected levels of sophistication. This kind of learned literature is full of “figures of sound” or “phonetic figures”, called *śabdālamkāra*, such as rhyme and assonance, and “figures of sense” or “semantic figures”, called *arthālamkāra*, like simile or metaphor,

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2. From the root *alam-√kr*, lit., “to make enough”, “to prepare”, “to adorn”.

3. See: B. Stoler Miller, *Love Song of the Dark Lord. Jayadeva's Gītagovinda* (New York, 1977), pp.7-8.

as well as a complex variety of different metres, far removed from the characteristic *śloka* of the earlier oral tradition, which had an eminently didactic and mnemonic purpose.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, this doesn't mean that rhetoric and poetics aren't present in Sanskrit oral compositions, such as *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, the various different *Purāṇa* and *Upaniṣad*. The poetic use of language is common to every culture and is inseparable from the use of language. Poetry is always prior to Rhetoric; the poetic use of language is prior to its theorization.

This paper analyses and describes the use of figures of speech especially in the Sanskrit oral tradition, in the period before learned written *kāvya* poetry, by applying concepts of *alaṅkāraśāstra* to those works. The analysis focuses on the two *alaṅkāra par excellence*: *upamā*, the simile, and *rūpaka*, the metaphor.

## 2. *Upamā and rūpaka*

The term by which the simile is named in Sanskrit Literature is *upamā*, a word composed of the preposition *upa*, “near to”, “by the side of”, and the verbal root  $\sqrt{mā}$ , “to measure”. Therefore, the use of *upamā* implies comparison, rapport, similitude, resemblance. The same terminology is mentioned in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini<sup>5</sup> to describe some compounds which express degrees of comparison.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, metaphor is referred to with the term *rūpaka*, derived from the word *rūpa*, which means “form”. The distinction or limit between *upamā* and *rūpaka* is not always clear, but Sanskrit tradition establishes that *upamā*, the simile, expresses a comparison, while *rūpaka*, “form”, “shape”, “figure”, implies an assimilation, complete identity.<sup>7</sup>

There are several different ways of expressing *upamā* and *rūpaka* in Sanskrit Literature, but one of the most frequent is through nominal composition. Comparisons, and especially, metaphors, usually become complex images where we find assimilations with reference to previous tradition and at the same time we discover deep symbolic value.

## 3. *Samāsa: The Simile and Metaphor through Nominal Composition*

Sanskrit grammatical tradition establishes a classification of the different types of nominal composition, according to the relationship between the elements of the compound, referred to with the generic name *samāsa*, which literally means “aggregation”, “combination”, “composition [of words]”.

There are consequently nominal compounds with a copulative relation between the elements, called *dvandva*, (e.g. *sūryacandrau*, “the sun and the moon”), compounds in which there is established a determinative relationship, classified in turn into two categories, but usually referred to with the generic name *tatpuruṣa* (e.g. *himālaya*, “the abode of snow”) and compounds with an adjectival function qualifying a substantive notion external to the compound. This third kind of nominal compound is called *bahuvrīhi* and usually has a possessive value (e.g. *mahātman*, “great soul”, “one whose soul is great”).<sup>8</sup>

Determinative compounds, in which the subordinated element qualifies the main element of the compound, can be classified into two groups: the determinative dependent compounds called *tatpuruṣa*, in which there is established a relationship between the elements equivalent to the relation of two

4. See: R. K. Sharma, *Elements of Poetry in the Mahābhārata* (Delhi, 1988 [First ed. 1966]), pp. 11-14.

5. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, (2.1.55-56, 3.1.10, 3.4.45).

6. See: Ś. Chandra Vāsu, *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini* (New Delhi, 2003 [First ed. 1962]), pp. 243, 351, 573.

7. Biswanath Bhattacharya, *A History of Rūpaka in the Alaṅkāraśāstra* (Varanasi, 1982), pp. 72-74.

8. See: L. Renou, *Grammaire Sanscrite* (Paris, 1975), pp. 114-120.

independent inflected words with different endings, and the *karmadhāraya*, in which the qualifier has the function of an adjective or an adverb. This latter type of compound is the most frequently used to express a simile or a metaphor in Sanskrit Poetry.

The *karmadhāraya* compound can be formed by two or more substantives, two or more adjectives or by a combination of both. In the case of the simile, the combination of a substantive with an adjective expressing comparative meaning is particularly frequent. The standard of comparison, called *upamāna*, appears in first place and the last member of the compound indicates the property compared.

### मेघश्याम

*meghaśyāma*, “dark as a [storm] cloud”  
From *megha*, “cloud”; *śyāma*, “dark”.

This kind of compound is called *upamānapūrvapadakarmadhāraya*, that is, “the determinative descriptive compound in which the standard of comparison appears in the preceding position”.<sup>9</sup>

In the metaphorical use of nominal composition, the combination of two or more substantives tends to be frequent.

### कन्यारत्न

*kanyāratna*, “jewel of girl”, “a girl who is a jewel”.  
From *kanyā*, “young girl”; *ratna*, “jewel”.

Because of the fact that nominal composition implies a certain degree of ambiguity, some compounds can be interpreted as a simile or as a metaphor. There is a subtle difference of meaning between the two interpretations: in the case of *upamā* a comparison is established, in the case of *rūpaka*, we find an assimilation or identification.<sup>10</sup>

### पदपद्म

*padapadma*, “lotus feet”, “the lotus of your feet”.  
From *pada*, “feet”; *padma*, “lotus”.

### मुखचन्द्र

*mukhacandra*, “moon-like face”, “the moon of your face”.  
From *mukha*, “face”; *candra*, “moon”.

In order to describe the relationship between the elements of the compound, the analytic explanation will use the particle *iva*, “like”, if a comparative meaning is understood.

### पदं पद्मम् इव

*padam padmam iva*, “feet like lotus”.

9. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 2.1.55.

10. For an overview, see: K. Kapoor, *Language, Linguistics, and Literature, the Indian Perspective* (Delhi, 1994), pp. 127-130.

**मुखं चन्द्र इव**

*mukhaṁ candra iva* , “a face like the moon”.

Owing to the fact that the standard of comparison appears at the end of the compound, this kind of *samāsa* is called *upamānottarapadakarmadhāraya*<sup>11</sup>, that is to say, “the descriptive determinative compound in which the *upamāna* appears in second place”.

However, if the relationship between the members is interpreted as an actual metaphor or means of identification, the particle *eva*, “just so”, “exactly so”, “certainly”, “indeed”, will be used in order to describe and analyze the meaning of the compound.<sup>12</sup>

**पदं पद्मम् एव**

*padam padmam eva* , “feet that are actually a lotus”.

**मुखं चन्द्र एव**

*mukhaṁ candra eva* , “a face that is actually a moon”.

Finally, the possessive compound, called *bahuvrīhi* is also common in poetry. In this kind of *samāsa*, the whole compound becomes an adjective that qualifies an external notion, outside the compound.

**पद्ममुखी**

*padmamukhī*, “one who possesses a lotus face”.

The second element of the compound is, strictly speaking, a substantive, a noun which has changed its own gender in order to qualify a feminine noun, even though the subject is not explicitly mentioned. The compound *padmamukhī* can only mean “She who has a lotus-like face” or, “she whose face is actually a lotus flower”. Therefore, the whole compound acts as an adjective with a possessive value and that is the reason why it agrees in gender, number and case with the noun it modifies. In the narrowest sense, it could be said that a *bahuvrīhi* compound is no more than a determinative compound, generally of the *karmadhāraya* type, used in a particular context with an adjectival function.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Purāṇa*, for instance, we find several passages where determinative and possessive composition co-exist with a poetic use, to express a simile or a metaphor.

The following passage of the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*'s *Lakṣmīstuti*, “the hymn of praise to Śrī Lakṣmī”, is a lucid example of this.<sup>14</sup>

**इन्द्र उवाच**

**नमस्ते सर्वलोकानां जननीम् अब्जसम्भवाम्।**

**श्रियमुन्निद्रपद्माक्षीं विष्णोर्वक्षःस्थलस्थिताम् ॥ १ ॥**

*indra uvāca namaste sarvalokānām janaṇīm abjasambhavām. | śriyamunnidrapadmākṣīm viṣṇorvakṣaḥsthalasthitām || 1 ||*

11. The term *uttara* means “upper”, “higher”, “posterior”, “later”, “concluding”.

12. Biswanath Bhattacharya, *A History of Rūpaka in the Alaṅkāraśāstra* (Varanasi, 1982), pp. 58-61.

13. For the use of *bahuvrīhi* in oral poetry, see: L. L. Patton, *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (Berkeley, 2005), pp. 55-58.

14. *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, 7.9.

“Indra said:”

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto you, mother of the Universe, born from the lotus flower, unto Śrī, who has blooming lotus-like eyes, and rests on Viṣṇu’s chest.”

**पद्मालयां पद्मकरां पद्मपत्रनिभेक्षणाम् ।**

**वन्दे पद्ममुखीं देवीं पद्मनाभप्रियामहम् ॥२॥**

*padmālayāṁ padmakarāṁ padmapatranibhekṣaṇām |  
vande padmamukhīm devīm padmanābhapriyāmaham || 2 ||*

“I bow down before her, the one who has her abode in the lotus, who holds a lotus flower in her hand, whose eyes are like the petals of the lotus flower, who possesses a lotus-like face, before Devī, beloved of Viṣṇu, the Lord with a lotus-shaped navel.”<sup>15</sup>

The compound formed by three elements *unnidrapadmākṣīm*, “the one with eyes like blooming lotus flowers”, which appears in the first *śloka*<sup>16</sup>, can be considered a *bahuvrīhi*, because the last element, *akṣi*, “eye”, which is in fact a neuter noun, appears here in the accusative feminine singular form so as to agree in case, gender and number with the noun it qualifies, which is the Divine Śrī Lakṣmī, defined by a sequence of compounds.

The same possessive value can be found in the compound of the second *śloka* *padmapatranibhekṣaṇām*, “whose eyes are like the petals of the lotus flower”, because the last element, *īkṣana*, “eye”, “gaze”, appears in the accusative feminine singular form, despite the fact that it is a neuter noun. The possible ambiguity in the interpretation of this term as a simile, *upamā*, or metaphor, *rūpaka*, is solved by adding inside the compound the adjective *nibha*, “like”, “similar”, which indicates the comparative meaning of the *samāsa*.

It should be noted that the use of the simile and metaphor in Sanskrit Poetry is based on the power of evocation of the comparison and identification, more than on formal similarity. What does it mean, for instance, that the eyes of Śrī Lakṣmī resemble the petals of a lotus flower, that her abode is the lotus or that she resides in the lotus flower? The emphasis on mentioning the relationship between Śrī Lakṣmī and the lotus is by no means trivial. The lotus is the characteristic emblem of this female deity, with all the symbolic value that this implies.<sup>17</sup> A plausible interpretation is that the comparison with the petal of the lotus flower suggests the idea of an almond-shaped eyelid, but the evocative power of the term goes beyond this possible formal similarity. In ancient Indian culture, the lotus flower generally suggests the idea of purity, but in relation to Śrī Lakṣmī, it also evokes the notion of beauty, prosperity, auspiciousness, as well as softness, delicacy and pleasure.<sup>18</sup> The eyes of Śrī Lakṣmī and her way of looking conjure up the same purity, beauty and pleasure as the contemplation of a lotus flower. She resides in every auspicious place and any place is auspicious if she resides in it.

In the same way, the afore-mentioned expression *mukhacandra*, “moon-like face” doesn’t imply a formal resemblance between both elements. The relationship established is based on the power of

15. One of the names of Śrī Viṣṇu is *Padmanābha*, “one who possesses a lotus-like navel”.

16. The most common Sanskrit metre consisting of four quarters or *pāda* of eight syllables each, with a specific combination of *guru* and *laghu* syllables (“heavy” and “light” syllables).

17. See: J. S. Hawley & D. M. Wulff (ed.), *Devī. Goddesses of India* (California, 1996) pp. 87-108.

18. See: V. Narayan, “The Goddess Śrī: Blossoming Lotus and Breast Jewel of Viṣṇu”, in *The Divine Consort. Rādhā and The Goddesses of India*, (ed.) J. S. Hawley & D. M. Wulff (Delhi, 1995 [First ed. 1984]) pp. 224-237.

evocation, the sensation caused by contemplation of the moon which is similar to the effect caused by contemplation of the Deity's face.

#### 4. *Upamā*: "The Simile"

The simile is defined by the poet Jayadeva as a figure of speech which entails mentioning the properties by which two elements can be compared.

**उपमा यत्र सादृश्यलक्ष्मीरुल्लसति द्वयोः ॥३॥**

*upamā yatra sādṛśyalakṣmīrullasati dvayoh ॥ 3 ॥*  
(*Candrāloka*, 5.3)

"*Upamā* is the figure of speech in which the comparable properties of two elements are mentioned".

The tradition establishes that the simile, *upamā*, consist of four elements, whether they are explicitly mentioned or not: *upameya*, "the subject of comparison", *upamāna*, "the standard of comparison", *upamānadharmā*, "the notion evoked", and *laupamyavācaka*, "the particle that indicates comparative value".<sup>19</sup>

The most common particles that indicate comparison are: *iva*, "like", *sadṛśa*, "similar to", "resembling", *sama*, "equal", "equivalent", and *yathā*, "as", "in which manner".

In the initial verses of the first part of *Rāmāyaṇa*, known as *Bālakāṇḍa*<sup>20</sup>, there is the following description of Rāma's qualities, from the lips of the sage Nāradamuni, addressing to the very same Vālmīki:

**स च सर्वगुणोपेतः कौसल्यानन्दवर्धनः।**

**समुद्र इव गाम्भीर्यं धैर्येण हिमवान् इव ॥१६॥**

*sa ca sarvagūṇopetaḥ kausalyānandavardhanaḥ |*  
*samudra iva gāmbhīrye dhairyaṇa himavān iva ॥ 16 ॥*  
(*Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.1.16)

"He possesses all good qualities and He is the cause of Kausalyā's<sup>21</sup> happiness. In depth, like the Ocean, in steadfastness, like the Himālayas".

**विष्णुना सदृशो वीर्यं सोमवत् प्रियदर्शनः।**

**कालाग्निसदृशः क्रोधे क्षमया पृथिवीसमः ॥१७॥**

*viṣṇunā sadṛśo vīrye somavat priyadarśanaḥ |*  
*kālāgnisadṛśaḥ krodhe kṣamayā pṛthivīsamaḥ ॥ 17 ॥*  
(*Śrī Rāmāyaṇa*, 1.1.17)

"He has the power of Viṣṇu and is as pleasant to the eye as the moon. With a fury like the fire at the moment of the destruction of the Universe and, at the same time, as tolerant as the earth".

19. See: E. Gerow, *A History of Indian Literature. Indian Poetics*. Vol. 5. Fasc. 3 (1977, Wiesbaden) pp. 220-222.

20. Lit., "The book of the childhood".

21. Kausalyā: Śrī Rāma's mother.

धनदेन समस् त्यागे सत्ये धर्म इवापरः।

तमेवंगुणसंपन्नं रामम् सत्यपराक्रमम् ॥१८॥

ज्योष्ठं श्रेष्ठगुणैर्युक्तं प्रियं दशरथः सुतम्।

यौवराज्येन संयोक्तुम् ऐच्छत् प्रीत्या महीपतिः ॥१९॥

*dhanadena samas tyāge satye dharma ivāparaḥ |*

*tamevaṅguṇasaṃpannaṃ rāmam satyaparākramam || 18 ||*

*jyeṣṭhaṃ śreṣṭhaguṇairyuktaṃ priyaṃ daśarathaḥ sutam |*

*yauvarājyena saṃyoktum aicchat prītyā mahīpatiḥ || 19 ||*

*(Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, 1.1.18-19)*

“He is like Kubera in generosity and truthful like the Deity of *dharma* himself. To this Rāma, endowed with all good qualities, sovereign and owner of laudable virtues, Daśaratha was eager to crown him because of the love and affection he felt towards his dear son”.

This passage constitutes a classic example of the principal expressions of simile in Sanskrit oral tradition through the particles already mentioned. In the first comparison, *samudra iva gāmbhīrye*, “as deep as the Ocean”, the notion explicitly compared, *upamānadharmā*, is *gāmbhīrya*, “depth”. The subject of comparison, *upameya*, is, in all cases, Rāma, while the standard of comparison is here *samudra*, “the Ocean”. The particle with comparative meaning, *laupamyavācaka*, is *iva*, “like”, which establishes the comparison between the independent terms. The second example, *dhairyeṇa himavān iva*, “as constant as the Himālayas”, shows the same way of expressing the simile by means of the particle *iva*, with an evident syntactic parallelism with respect to the previous *pāda*<sup>22</sup>, although, in this case, the notion compared, *upamānadharmā*, is expressed through a word in the instrumental case, *dhairyeṇa*, “steadfastly”, instead there being a locative, *gāmbhīrye*, “in depth”, as in the former case. The position of the particle *iva*, “like”, has also been changed around with respect to the previous comparison, thus adding more rhythm to the stanza (*samudra iva gāmbhīrye dhairyeṇa himavān iva*).

In the first *pāda* of the following stanza, *viṣṇunā sadṛśo vīrye*, the notion compared, *upamānadharmā*, appears again in the locative case, *vīrye*, “in strength”, while the standard of comparison, *upamāna*, is expressed by an instrumental, due to the fact that the particle used is *sadrśaḥ*<sup>23</sup>, “similar to”, instead of *iva*, which appears with terms in nominative (*samudraḥ, himavān*).

In the expression *somavat priyadarśanaḥ*, “pleasant to observe like the moon”, the *taddhitapratyaya*, “secondary suffix” -*vat* indicates comparative value. In the two following similes, *kālāgnisadrśaḥ krodhe kṣamayā pṛthivīsamaḥ*, “with a fury like the fire at the time of destruction of the Universe, with the tolerance of the earth”, the particles *sadrśa* and *sama* have a similar function as a part of a compound, and their purpose is to indicate the standard of comparison (*kālāgni, pṛthivī*). Here again, we note the alternation between the locative, which expresses the standard of comparison, *krodhe*, “in anger”, and the instrumental, “with tolerance”, as in the last two *pāda* of the *śloka* 1.16.

In the final comparisons *dhanadena samas tyāge satye dharma ivāparaḥ*, “in generosity, like Dhanada [Kubera], in truthfulness, like the deity of *dharma* himself”, the particles *sama* and *iva* act with a similar function, expressing comparison between the independent words. In both cases, the concept compared appears in the locative case, *tyāge*, “in generosity”, *satye*, “in truthfulness”, while the standard of

22. *Pāda*, “foot” or quarter of a stanza. The *śloka* consists of thirty two syllables divided in four *pāda* of eight syllables, after each one of them there is a pause.

23. External *sandhi*: *sadrśaḥ vīrye > sadṛśo vīrye*.

comparison appears in the instrumental or nominative case, depending on the particle related to each one of them: *dhanadena samas, dharmah iva*<sup>24</sup>.

Most of the similes in this passage use, as *upamāna*, elements of nature that educe particular notions, *upamānadharma*. Thus, for instance, the ocean suggests depth and the earth is usually associated with tolerance.

In the oral tradition, these relations are usually fixed formula, already established conventions and not spontaneous creations of the poet, so the mere mention of the earth evokes the idea of tolerance, in the same way that the Himālayas are usually associated with steadfastness.<sup>25</sup> Dhanada, “the Lord of wealth and celestial treasurer” is usually associated with generosity and grandeur, and Dharmarāja or Yamarāja, the deity of death, evokes the concepts of duty and truthfulness. In the case of the comparison with Śrī Viṣṇu a deeper level of interpretation can be inferred because the listener is aware of the fact that Rāma is Viṣṇu himself. Similarly, in the numerous passages where the beauty of Sītā is compared with that of Lakṣmī, the simile goes beyond the topic, because the emotional aspect suggested by the comparison is intensified when we understand that Sītā is Lakṣmī herself personified as Lord Rāma’s consort.

Repetition, syntactic parallelism, word order in every sentence, the rhythm and regular metre, as well as the semantic oppositions (*krodha*, “anger”, *kṣama*, “tolerance”, *agni*, “fire”, *pṛthivī*, “the earth”) are essential features of oral tradition.

Sanskrit poetics distinguishes between several different kinds of simile depending on whether *upameya*, “the subject of comparison”, *upamāna*, “the standard of comparison”, *upamānadharma*, “the notion compared”, and *laupamyavācaka*, “the particle”, are mentioned explicitly or not, apart from including classifications that depend on the kind of comparison; for instance, the notion compared might be a property, *dharma*, or an action, *kriyā*.

First of all, there is a distinction between the simile called *purṇopamā*, lit., “complete simile”, and *luptopamā*, lit., “elided simile”. There are, for instance, eight kinds of *luptopamā* according to the element or elements elided. On the other hand, when different *upamāna* have only one *upameya*, this particular kind of simile is called *malopamā*, lit., “sequence or garland of comparisons”.

Bharata distinguishes between four kinds of *upamā*: *ekasyaikena*, lit., “one to one”, when there is one subject and object of comparison, *anekena ekasya*, various subjects for one object, *ekena anekeṣām* a subject to various objects, and *anekena anekeṣām*, various subjects and objects of comparison.

Regarding the use of the terminology in Sanskrit poetics, it should be noted that *upamānadharma*, the notion compared, can also be called *sādhāraṇadharmā*, lit., “quality shared”, and *laupamyavācaka*, “the particle that conveys the comparison” is also called *dyotaka*, lit., “clarifying element”.

All of these terms offer a hint of the depth and exhaustiveness of Sanskrit poetics as we will see in greater detail below.

##### 5. Creations of Images through Metaphor

The evocation of an image through a succession of metaphors that are closely interrelated is very common in Sanskrit poetry. For example, in the first chapter of the first Canto of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, we encounter the well known stanza where the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* defines itself as *niḡamakalpataror galitaṃ phalam*, “the ripe fruit from the desire fulfilling tree of Vedic knowledge”.

24. External *sandhi*: *dharmah iva > dharma iva*.

25. R. K. Sharma, *Elements of Poetry in the Mahābhārata* (Delhi, 1988 [First ed. 1966]), pp. 43-58.



निगमकल्पतरोगलितं फलं शुकमुखादमृतद्रवसंयुतम्।

पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ॥३॥

*nigamakalpatarorgalitam phalam śukamukhādamṛtadravasāmyutam|*

*pibata bhāgavatam rasamālayam muhuraḥo rasikā bhuvi bhāvukāḥ ||1.1.3||*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 1.1.3)

“Oh ascetic sages on earth, who relish *rasa*, spiritual essence, drink constantly this ripe fruit from the desire fulfilling tree of Vedic knowledge, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, from the lips of Śrī Śuka [Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī], which is juicy nectareous fruit.”

Vedic knowledge is represented through this image as the source in which any later tradition is rooted. This idea takes on a special meaning if we consider that the various schools which stem from the Vedic sources are traditionally called *sākhā*, which literally means “branch”.

The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is the fruit of this Vedic knowledge, is its consequence, its condensed essence. This ripe fruit, *galitam phalam*, qualified by a sequence of adjectives which give sense to the use of the verb in the imperative, *pibata*, “drink”, because this fruit is nectar, ambrosia in liquid form, *amṛtadravasāmyutam*, is the Vedic essence in a fluid state. Finally, the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is defined as *rasam*, “sap”, “juice”, “taste”, “essence”. This term qualifying *phalam* is the culmination of the image arising from the wealth of nuances and connotations that this word evokes in Sanskrit tradition, according to context and time. It is not possible to translate and properly understand this passage without taking account of the different levels of reading implicit in the term *rasa*.

The word *rasa* is already mentioned in the Veda with reference to the fluid element considered to be the source of life and manifest in the Universe, *jagat*, in the sacrifice, *yajña*, as well as in the body, *śarīra*.<sup>26</sup>

In this regard, the streams, the *ghṛta*, clarified butter used in sacrifice, the blood and semen in living entities, and the sap or resin of the trees are considered different manifestations of *rasa*, the vital fluid. Furthermore, in the *Āyurveda*, the term *rasa* is also related to the notion of “taste”, especially in connection with the method known as *rasāyana*, the method of the six tastes: sweet, salty, acid, pungent, bitter and astringent.<sup>27</sup>

In the philosophical and mystical field of *bhaktiyoga*, “the linking with the Supreme Being through devotion”, the concept of *rasa* is usually translated as “relationship” referring to the relationship established between the devotee and God, between the individual soul and the Supreme Being.<sup>28</sup> Finally, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the “science of theatre”, the term *rasa* refers to the several different emotional effects caused by the theatre performance.<sup>29</sup>

*Rasa* is experience lived through by the spectator, conceived of as a transcendental experience in which artistic beauty is seen as a reflection of divine beauty. Therefore, in using the term *rasa* to designate *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, this is defined as “source of life”, “taste”, “relation”, as well as “experience”.

The metaphorical image is then extended with the reference to the narrator of this literary work, by adding a play on words difficult to translate. The speaker of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is called Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, but the term *śuka* also means in Sanskrit “parrot”. The tradition explains that when a ripened

26. D. G. White, *The Alchemical Body* (Chicago, 1996), pp. 184-188.

27. D. G. White, *The Alchemical Body* (Chicago, 1996), p. 26.

28. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmī Prabhupāda, *The Nectar of Devotion* (Bombay, 1989 [First ed. 1970]), pp. 151-153.

29. A. Rangacharya, *The Nāṭyaśāstra* (New Delhi, 2007), pp. 55-63.

fruit is touched by the beak of a parrot, it turns into nectar and its sweet flavour is intensified as it changes from solid to liquid state. Thus, the term *sukamukhāt*, which literally means “from the mouth of *śuka*” evokes the idea that this *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, defined as the “fruit” or essence of Vedic knowledge, turns into liquid nectar, even sweeter than before being narrated by the lips of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, just as a fruit touched by a parrot, *śuka*, becomes mellifluous juice.

In this kind of complex metaphor, in contrast to *upamā* and even *māloṇama* (“sequence of comparisons”) it is not a mere comparison that is established but a complete identification, an absolute assimilation, so that all the elements that have been mentioned form a single reality in which every notion acts in a consistent manner, in connection with the other words included in the metaphorical image.<sup>30</sup>

In some cases, metaphor and simile are combined in the same passage, as shown in the following *śloka* from the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad*.

आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।

बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च ॥३॥

*ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ rathameva tu |*

*buddhiṁ tu sārathiṁ viddhi manaḥ praḡrahameva ca || 3 ||*

(Śrī Kaṭhōpaniṣad, 3.3)

“Know that the soul is the occupant of the chariot, and the body is the chariot itself. The intelligence is the charioteer and the mind, the reins.”

इन्द्रियाणि हयानाहुर्विषयांस्तेषु गोचरान् ।

आत्मेन्द्रियमनोयुक्तं भोक्तेत्याहुर्मनीषिणः ॥४॥

*indriyāṇi hayānāhurviṣayāṁsteṣu gocarān |*

*ātmendriyamano yuktaṁ bhoktetyāhurmanīṣiṇaḥ || 4 ||*

(Śrī Kaṭhōpaniṣad, 3.4)

“The sages have said that the senses are the horses and the object of the senses, their field of action, but the soul is the enjoyer, together with the mind and the senses.”

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्ययुक्तेन मनसा सदा ।

तस्येन्द्रियाण्यवश्यानि दुष्टाश्चा इव सारथेः ॥५॥

*yastvavijñānavānbhavatyayuktena manasā sadā |*

*tasyendriyāṇyavaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ || 5 ||*

(Śrī Kaṭhōpaniṣad, 3.5)

“One who does not possess knowledge, with a mind always out of control, has the senses like the indomitable horses of a charioteer.”

30. About complex metaphor in Sanskrit oral poetry, see: R. K. Sharma, *Elements of Poetry in the Mahābhārata* (Delhi, 1988 [First ed. 1966]), pp. 126-131.

यस्तु विज्ञानवान्भवति युक्तेन मनसा सदा ।

तस्येन्द्रियाणि वश्यानि सदश्वा इव सारथेः ॥६॥

*yastu vijñānavānbhavati yuktena manasā sadā /*  
*tasyendriyāṇi vaśyāni sadaśvā iva sārathēḥ ॥ 6 ॥*  
(Śrī Kathopaniṣad, 3.6)

“But one who possesses knowledge, always with a serene mind, has his senses under control like the docile horses of a charioteer.”

The expressive strength of the two first *śloka* lies in the use of an absolute association through a complex metaphor. The body doesn't actually share characteristics with the chariot; it is not compared with it, but is the chariot itself, where the occupant, the soul, resides.

The identity between subject and object is established through *sāropā*, “attributive indication”, by explicitly mentioning both of them and connecting them by an implicit copular verb.

It should be noted at this juncture that the hierarchical relationship between the elements that constitute this complex metaphor takes on special significance if we consider the importance of these notions in Sanskrit tradition. In the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, for instance, we find a definition of *citta*, “consciousness”, based on its constituents: *manas*, “the mind”, *buddhi*, “the intelligence”, and *ahamkāra*, “the false identification with a material ego” (lit., “I am the doer”).<sup>31</sup> In the *Bhagavadgītā* there also appears a hierarchical classification of these elements, from lowest to highest, from the gross to the subtle:

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः।

मनसस्तु पारा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥४२॥

*indriyāṇi parāṇyāhurindriyebhyaḥ param manah |*  
*manasastu pārā buddhiryo buddheḥ paratastu saḥ ॥ 42 ॥*  
(Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, 3.42)

“The sages have said that the senses are superior to the objects of the senses, and the mind, superior to the senses; the intelligence is superior to the mind, but he [the soul] is superior to the intelligence.”

The intelligence, *buddhi*, which is superior to the fickle mind, *manas*, is manifested by the exercise of the will. Being superior, the intelligence has to control the mind whose main activities are thinking, feeling and willing. The mind, in turn, has to control the senses. Following this metaphor used in the *Kathopaniṣad*, we could say that the intelligence has to control the senses with “the reins of the mind”.

On the other hand, in the last two verses, a common simile in Sanskrit oral tradition has been used: the *upameya*, “the subject of comparison”, is *indriyāṇi*, “the senses”, the *upamāna*, “the standard of comparison”, is *hayān*, “the horses”; and the *upamānadharma*, “the notion compared”, is the difficulty of controlling the senses which act like “indomitable horses”. The comparison is clearly indicated by the particle *iva*, often used in the figure of speech called *upamā*. Finally, it is significant that the term used to describe the feature common to the subject and object of comparison is the participle *yukta*, lit., “connected”, “linked”, referring to a controlled mind, and *ayukta*, “disconnected”, meaning the opposite, from the root  $\sqrt{yuj}$ , “to yoke”, “to connect”, which is the very same root as we find in the word *yoga*, which literally means “connection”, “junction”, “joining”, “linking”.

31. See: E. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* (New York, 2009), p. 12.

In the use of a complex metaphor, just as in the simile, the constructed image may be based on a traditional metaphor, that is to say, an established convention.

An example of this use is the metaphor of the ocean identified with material existence. In previous passages we have seen the use of the concept of ocean as *upamāna* to evoke the notion of depth. As a metaphor, the ocean can suggest the idea of the complexity and depth of material existence; its vastness and the difficulty of achieving freedom from the cycle of reincarnations.

**समाश्रिता ये पदपल्लवप्लवं महत्पदं पुण्ययशो मुरारेः।**

**भवाम्बुधिर्वत्सपदं परं पदं पदं पदं यद्विपदां न तेषाम्॥५८॥**

*samāśritā ye padapallavaplavam mahatpadam puṇyayaśo murāreḥ |  
bhavāmbudhīrvatsapadam param padam padam padam yadvipadām na teṣām ||  
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 10.14.58)*

“For those who have taken shelter in the boat of the lotus feet of Murāri (Kṛṣṇa), which is the only solace in this material world, the ocean of existence is like the water in the footprint of a calf. They achieve the Supreme Abode, and no longer reside in this world, where there are adversities at every other step.”

Here we should note the effect caused by the use of the figure of speech called *anuprāsa*, consisting in the repetition of one or more sounds (*padapallavaplavam*, *padam*, etc.), and also the effect of rhyme, *antyānuprāsa* (lit. “repetition in final position”).

The power of evocation of this image resides in the contrast between the immensity of the ocean and the insignificant puddle caused by the footprint of a calf’s hoof. The same metaphor or association between the ocean and material existence surfaces on several occasions throughout the work, like a literary formula, to the extent that there is the commonly used specific expression, *bhavasamudra*, which literally means “the ocean of existence”.

In the second chapter of the tenth Canto of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, we encounter an almost identical example with the words *kurvanti govatsapadam bhavābdhim* “they cross the ocean of existence as if it were the water contained in the footprint of a calf”.

**त्वयि अम्बुजाक्षाखिलसत्त्वधाम्नि समाधिनावेशितचेतसैके।**

**त्वत्पादपोतेन सहत्कृतेन कुर्वन्ति गोवत्सपदं भवाब्धिम् ॥३०॥**

*tvayi ambujākṣākhilasattvadhāmnī samādhināveśitacetasaikē |  
tvatpādapotena mahatkr̥tena kurvanti govatsapadam bhavābdhim || 30 ||  
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 10.2.30)*

“With absorbed meditation on you, the lotus-eyed one, the origin of all existence, with the consciousness only occupied in this powerful activity, taking shelter in the boat of your feet, it is possible to convert this vast material ocean into [the water contained in] the footprint of a calf”.

The same use appears again in this verse with the following expression:

**ध्येयं सदा परिभवघ्नमभीष्टदोहं तीर्थास्पदं शिवविरिञ्चिनुतं शरण्यम्।**

**भृत्यातिहं प्रणतपाल भवाब्धिपोतं वन्दे महापुरुष ते चरणारविन्दम्॥३३॥**

*dhyeyam sadā paribhavaḥnamabhīṣṭadoham  
tīrthāspadam śivaviriñcinutam śaraṇyam/  
bhṛtyārtiham praṇatapāla bhavābdhipotam  
vande mahāpuruṣa te caraṇāravindam || 33 ||  
(Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 11.5.33)*

“Oh, Mahāpuruṣa, protector of those who show respect to you, who eradicate all distress, I bow down before your lotus feet, which are a constant object of meditation, victors over all adversity, the most desired, the highest good, the abode of all places of pilgrimage, the true shelter, worshiped by Śiva and Viriñci (Brahmā), and which are the boat to cross the ocean of material existence.”

Repetition of this kind of formulaic metaphors is common, especially in oral tradition. Nevertheless, these complex constructions with numerous interrelated elements sometimes show a creative, original and spontaneous use added to the already known image. Therefore, the poet has complete freedom to apply the metaphor according to the context, adding new elements and modifications.

In this sense, the following verse of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, shows an interesting variation on the aforementioned metaphor, in which the boat, *plava*, is the human body, the captain is the *guru*, the spiritual master, and the favourable winds are his instructions.

नृदेहमाद्यं सुलभं सुदुर्लभं प्लवं सुकल्पं गुरुकर्णधारम्।

मयानुकूलेन नभस्वतेरितं पुमान् भवाब्धिं न तरेत् स अत्महा ॥१७॥

*nṛdehamādyam sulabham sudurlabham plavam sukalpam gurukarṇadhāram |  
mayānukūlena nabhasvateritam pumān bhavābधिं na taret sa ātmahā || 17 ||*

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatapurāṇa, 11.20.17)

“This human body, an incomparable gift, though apparently easy to achieve, is, in fact, an exceptional opportunity, very difficult to obtain, and is the proper boat to cross the ocean of material existence in, with the help of the spiritual master, as the captain of the vessel, and his instructions, which are the favourable winds. Who doesn’t take advantage of this situation, by not crossing the ocean must be considered the assassin of his own soul.”

The adjective *sudurlabha* (lit., “very difficult to obtain”) referring in this passage to the human body, emphasizes the idea that it is only possible to attain liberation from the bounds of *karma* through the human body, because, unlike animals and plants, in which the soul also resides, the human being has free will and the capacity to meditate in transcendence and become conscious of the Supreme Being. Again, the term *bhavābधि* refers to the ocean of material existence, which can be crossed by a human body, *nṛdeha*, as an appropriate instrument for that purpose. In each one of the examples mentioned, the term *plava*, “boat”, “ship”, is identified with different realities: in the first case, with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Murāri, in the second, with the human body. Nevertheless, the notion evoked by the identification is the same in both cases: the instrument or mean through which it is possible to attain liberation from material existence.

## 6. *Dhvani*, the Power of evocation of the poetic Word

In order to understand properly the notion of *dhvani*, it is necessary to point out that all *dhvani* implies suggestion, but not all suggestion can be considered a case of *dhvani*. When the suggested sense is prevalent over the literal meaning and the mind is more attracted to the first than to the second one, in this case, it is said that we can talk of *dhvani*.<sup>32</sup>

Let us consider an example in the following *śloka* from the *Bhagavadgītā*:

32. T. N. Sreekantaiyya, *Indian Poetics* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 224.

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।

तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥५२॥

*yadā te mohakalilam buddhirvyatitariṣyati*<sup>33</sup> /

*tadā gantāsi nirvedaṁ śrotavyasya śrutasya ca* ॥52॥

(*Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā*, 2.52)

“When you cross the thicket of the forest of illusion, you will become indifferent to everything that has been heard in the past or all that will be heard in the future.”

The word *kalilam* can mean “confusion”, “a large heap”, or “thicket”, but it is usually used to refer to a dense forest. The verb *vyatitariṣyati* in the future tense, from the root *vi-ati-√tṛ*, “to pass completely across”, strengthens the evocative sense of this image. Both terms are irreplaceable; there is no possible substitution. Any other word used to refer to the darkness of illusion instead of *kalila* would not allow this double interpretation that creates the metaphorical image of a dense forest. Similarly, the use of any other verb than *vi-ati-√tṛ* to allude to the idea of overcoming or transcending confusion could not replace the evocative power of the image of “crossing” physically the “thickness of illusion”. In this case, the suggested sense of the terms, that is, the metaphor of illusion as a dense forest that has to be crossed by *buddhi*, the intelligence, takes precedence over the literal sense. Therefore, we find here, according to Sanskrit tradition, an authentic example of *dhvani*. It should be noted, however, that the suggestive power of *dhvani* in a passage has to be considered as a whole. A word for word analysis without taking account of the interrelation of the terms and the effect caused by its combination will do no more than diminish the intended expressive force.

In a similar fashion, Sanskrit tradition defines the sentence, *vācya*, as a group of interconnected words whose relationship implies three elements: *ākāṅkṣā*, “syntactic expectancy”, *sannidhi* or *āsatti*, “proximity” and *yogyatā*, “semantic compatibility”.

वाक्यं स्याद् योग्यताकाङ्क्षासत्तियुक्तः पदोच्चयः ॥१॥

*vākyam syād yogyatākāṅkṣāsattiyuktaḥ padocchayaḥ* ॥ 2.1 ॥

(*Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 2.1)

“The sentence consists of a group of words with syntactic expectancy, proximity and semantic compatibility”.

*Ākāṅkṣā* is the syntactic interdependence between the words of a sentence. Thus, for example, in a sentence with a transitive verb, a noun in the accusative case will be expected in order to mark the direct object.

The factor called *sannidhi* or *āsatti* refers to the uninterrupted sequence of words in a sentence. Therefore, *sannidhi* or *āsatti* implies “proximity” between the words that are part of a sentence, without an excessive interval or pause between them to perceive the expression as a whole. The third requirement, *yogyatā*, is the semantic compatibility between the terms, that is, congruence with regard to the meaning, *artha*.<sup>34</sup>

33. External *sandhi*: *bhuddhiḥ vyatitariṣyati* > *bhuddhir vyatitariṣyati*.

34. T. N. Sreekantaiayya, *Indian Poetics* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 207-209.

However, there are sentences in which this semantic compatibility seems not to be observed. In an expression like “drink the fruit”, the literal interpretation doesn’t seem possible, so, a different approximation is necessary, in order to make this sentence congruent. The same is true of a sentence like “this body is a chariot whose reins are the mind”. The impossibility of accepting a literal reading leads to a new interpretation in which the identification between the subject and object is understood and allows a congruent meaning. Furthermore, the power of words, *pada*, to express a meaning is called *śakti*, *vṛtti* or *vyāpāra*. The term *pada* here refers to the phonetic entity formed by *varṇa*, “sounds” or “phonemes”. Therefore, according to tradition, a sequential combination of *varṇa* has the power to express a meaning.

Sanskrit tradition describes three functions of the word: *abhidhā*, the denotative function, *lakṣaṇā*, the connotative or indicative function, and *vyañjanā*, the suggestive function.

In conclusion, a word will be *vācaka*, *lakṣaka*, or *vyañjaka* according to its function in a specific context. In the denotative function, *abhidhā*, the meaning is taken literally, and this is, therefore, considered the primary meaning.<sup>35</sup>

In this case, the signifier is called *vācakaśabda*, the primary meaning is named *vācyārtha*, and the power of denotation is *abhidhāvyaṅyāpāra* or *abhidhāvṛtti*, that is, “the power of the word to express the meaning directly”.

When the literal interpretation is not possible, because there is no semantic compatibility, when the sentence doesn’t express a congruent meaning, then the indicative function of language, *lakṣaṇā*, is activated. In this case, when it is necessary to look beyond the primary meaning to find congruency, when there is an obstruction with respect to the literal meaning, this is a clear example of *lakṣaṇāvṛtti*, “the power of connotation of the word”.

This kind of secondary meaning is called *lakṣyārtha*, and the word is referred to as *lakṣaka*. For example, the word *mūla*, “root”, can be interpreted literally as “the root of any plant or tree” but, depending on the context, may also refer figuratively to the idea of “basis”, “commencement”, “origin” from which something has been raised. The first case is an example of the denotative function of language, *abhidhā*, while the second one shows the connotative or indicative function, *lakṣaṇā*. The same is true of the term *śākhā*, “branch”, which can be interpreted literally, or figuratively as the idea of a “limb”, “a division”, “subdivision” or “extension”, as in the case of the use of the word to imply the result or consequence of something.<sup>36</sup>

This indicative function is constantly present in the use of language in general and is the key to mastery of poetic language. Thus, for example, there are several different categories of metaphor according to the kind of indicative function used in each case.

Tradition establishes the distinction between the relationship based on similarity, *gauṇīlakṣaṇā*, “indication of a quality or characteristic”, and the relation based on other factors, called *śuddhīlakṣaṇā*, “pure indication”. For example, a relationship based on the idea of cause and effect is considered to belong to this second group.<sup>37</sup>

The indicative function of language which is based on similarity is defined as *sādrśyamūla*, “whose root is the comparison or similarity”, while the indicative function of language based on any other

35. G. T. Deshpande, *Indian Poetics* (Mumbai, 2009), p. 25.

36. The different values or meanings that the use of these terms can evoke are related to the power of suggestion of the word, as it will be explained below.

37. Concerning the *śuddhīlakṣaṇā*, “pure indication”, we could mention expressions like “the falling of the leaves” to refer to autumn and based on the idea of “cause and effect”.

consideration, as the above mentioned notion of cause and effect, is defined as *sambandhamūla*, “whose root is connection or relation”.

In turn, two main kinds of *gauṇīlakṣaṇā* can be distinguished: *sāropāgauṇīlakṣaṇā*, “attributive indication”, and *sādhyavasānāgauṇīlakṣaṇā*, “determinative indication”. In a sentence like “he was a lion in the battle”, there is a comparison with attributive value. However, if the expression is “the lion threw himself into the battle” referring to the same person, this is an example of determinative indication in which the identity is absolute, and one element is used as a substitute for the other. Another variety of indicative function is *rūḍhilakṣaṇā*, “conventional indication”, when the secondary sense or the non-literal interpretation loses its strength through frequent use and the term is adopted as if it were literal.<sup>38</sup>

If we analyse in detail some of the previously quoted expressions, we will see that, in most cases, different values and meanings are evoked which go beyond an interpretation necessary to re-establish congruency. Thus, for instance, when the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is defined as the “ripe fruit from the Vedic tree”, which can be “drunk” because it is in a liquid nectarean state, this expression involves a whole range of evocations, like the idea that the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is not only derived from the Veda, but also its condensed essence, just as juicy nectarean fruit, becomes easier and more pleasant to imbibe. All of these values and meanings which go beyond the mere connotative function are examples of the suggestive function of language. In the suggestive function, *vyañjanā*, there is established a distinction between the primary and secondary function. When the evocative function prevails, when the suggestive power is shown in all its splendour, then we can consider that a case of *dhvani* in the strict sense of the term has been produced.

Therefore, *dhvani*, can be considered a special category of suggestion. Not every suggestion is *dhvani*, although all *dhvani* implies suggestion. Usually, the suggestive value arises from a connotative function of language. However, an expression based on the denotative function can also be the source of a suggestive value if the literal expression has sufficient strength. Therefore, the suggestive function is considered a different category from the connotative or denotative function and can be derived from any one of the two, even though it is more frequently derived from the first one.<sup>39</sup> The suggested sense is what is understood, not from the expressed sense, but from its implications. Therefore, suggestion is different from denotation and connotation; it is considered *vyañjanārtha* “suggested meaning”. Therefore, *dhvani*, the evoked sense, can depend on *lakṣaṇā*, but must not be confused with it.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding the use of evocation through metaphor in Sanskrit oral tradition, we find the following verse from the *Kāthopaniṣad* in which the expressive power lies precisely in the fact that there is only one possible interpretation of this expression:

न सांपरायः प्रतिभाति बालं प्रमाद्यन्तं वित्तमोहेन मूढम्।

अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी पुनः पुनर्वशमापद्यते मे ॥६॥

*na sāmparāyaḥ pratibhāti bālaṃ pramādyantaṃ vittamohena mūḍham |*

*ayaṃ loko nāsti para iti mānī punaḥ punarvaśamāpadyate me || 6 ||*

(Śrī Kāthopaniṣad, 2.6)

38. The figure of speech known as “Dead Metaphor” can be considered as a variety of *rūḍhilakṣaṇā*.

39. T. N. Sreekantaiyya, *Indian Poetics* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 218-220.

40. G. T. Deshpande, *Indian Poetics* (Mumbai, 2009), p. 65.



“The human being, who, like a child, is confused by illusion, is unable to see the hereafter. Possessed by illusion, thinking “This is the only world; there is no other beyond this one”, he falls under my power again and again.”

In fact, if the poet had wanted to express a simile, he could have used a particle like *iva* to indicate the comparison explicitly.

If we want to preserve the expressive power of the original verse, the translation could be:

“The hereafter it is not visible to this child, who, confused by illusion, thinking: “This is the only world, there is no other beyond this one”, he falls under my power again and again.”

What is more, the epithets, which usually consist in formulaic expressions derived from previous tradition, can also act as the element which is responsible for the suggestion, if they appear in the proper context. Thus, for instance, in the following verses from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā is defined as *pūrṇacandranibhānanā*, “she whose face is like the full moon”. This type of description through a possessive nominal compound of the kind known as *bahuvrīhi*, is not unusual in Sanskrit.

However, in this passage from the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, it takes on a special meaning because Sītā revives her hope of seeing her husband again after listening to the encouraging words of Hanumān, who has arrived to Laṅka as a messenger of Rāma.

It is said that the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, lit., “the beautiful chapter”, is the “heart” of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as regards both the extent and structure of the work as a whole, and the contents, due to the fact that in this chapter the first real glimpse of hope in the midst of the difficulties emerges, and the future reunion of the couple is anticipated.

Likewise, the following passage, where the meeting between Sītā and Hanumān is explained, is considered the heart of the *Sundarakāṇḍa*. This moment is in fact the true turning point of the narrative, when the proximity of the final success of Rāma is suggested:

**नित्यं स्मरति रामस् त्वां ससुग्रीवः सलक्ष्मणः।**

**दिष्ट्या जीविस वैदेहि राक्षसीवशमागता ॥३५॥**

*nityam smarati rāmas tvām sasugrīvaḥ salakṣmaṇaḥ|*

*diṣṭyā jīvasi vaidehi rākṣasīvaśamāgatā || 35 ||*

(Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, 5.32.35)

“Rāma remembers you constantly, as well as Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa. Fortunately you are alive, oh Vaidehī, despite having fallen into the hands of the *rākṣasī*, the wives of Rāvaṇa.”

**नचिराद् द्रक्ष्यसे रामं लक्ष्मणं च महारथम् ।**

**मध्ये वानरकोटीनां सुग्रीवं चामितौजसम् ॥३६॥**

*nacirād drakṣyase rāmaṁ lakṣmaṇaṁ ca mahāratham|*

*madhye vānarakoṭīnām sugrīvaṁ cāmitaujasam || 36 ||*

(Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, 5.32.36)

“It will not be long before you see with your own eyes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who rides a great chariot, and powerful Sugrīva in the midst of a multitude of monkeys.”

सीता तद् वचनं श्रुत्वा पुर्णचन्द्रनिभानना ।

हनुमन्तम् उवाचेदं धर्मार्थसहितं वचः ॥१॥

*sītā tad vacanam śrutvā pūrṇacandranibhānanā/  
hanumantam uvācedaṁ dharmārthasahitaṁ vacaḥ || 1 ||  
(Śrī Rāmāyaṇa, 5.35.1)*

“After hearing this, Sītā, with her face like the full moon, addressed Hanumān with the following words, so full of meaning and in accordance with dharma: ‘What you have explained to me, oh forest dweller, is nectar mixed with poison; the fact that Rāma has not changed his mind but he is overwhelmed by sorrow’.”

The comparison or identification of the face of Sītā with the moon may generally evoke the idea that its contemplation is as refreshing and pleasant as contemplation of the moon. Nevertheless, in this particular passage, the term takes on even greater significance in intensifying its expressive force, because here the “full moonlike face of Sītā” suggests her emotional state, as if by hearing the words of Hanumān, her face “brightened” for just an instant regaining hope.

Similarly, in the first chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* we find the epithet *kapidhvajaḥ*, “whose chariot bears the ensign of Hanumān” referring to Arjuna. This possessive nominal compound or *bahuvrīhi* alludes to the idea that the chariot of Arjuna carried the image of Hanumān depicted on his flag. In any other context, this epithet might have passed unnoticed, but being mentioned at the beginning of the *Bhagavadgītā*, which takes place just before the confrontation between the Pāṇḍava and the Kaurava, the compound acquires a special significance due to the fact that Hanumān symbolises victory. Through this description, the *śloka* informs us in a subtle way of the outcome of the events. The owner of this chariot, Arjuna, and by extension, the side on which he will fight, the Pāṇḍava, will be successful, and the mention of the banner at that point in the developments also suggests that the final victory was predestined even before the beginning of the battle in the field of Kurukṣetra.

अथ व्यवस्थितान्दृष्ट्वा धार्तराष्ट्रान्कपिध्वजः।

प्रवृत्ते शस्त्रसंपाते धनुरुद्यम्य पाण्डवः।

हृषीकेशं तदा वाक्यमिदमाह महीपते ॥२०॥

*atha vyavasthitāndrṣṭvā dhārtarāṣṭrāṅkapidhvajaḥ/  
pravṛtte śastrasampāte dhanurudyamya pāṇḍavaḥ |  
hrṣīkeśaṁ tadā vākyaṁidamāha mahīpate || 20 ||  
(Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, 1.20)*

“Oh King, then, the son of Pāṇḍu (Arjuna) with the ensign of Hanumān on his chariot, after seeing the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who were ready to fight, raising his bow, spoke the following words to Hṛṣīkeśa (Kṛṣṇa).”

Anyone who knows the story of *Mahābhārata* in depth will immediately associate this allusion with one of the most well known expressions of the *Mahābhārata*, which appears in the *Udyogaparvan*, the part right before the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, where *Bhagavadgītā* is situated: *yato kṛṣṇastato jayaḥ*, “wherever Kṛṣṇa is, there lies victory”.

I should not be forgotten that the chariot of Arjuna will be driven by Kṛṣṇa at the express wish of Arjuna, thus ensuring the victory of the Pāṇḍava.

The use of *dhvani*, the power of evocation of poetic word, is a feature always present in Sanskrit Literature of all periods and has been the object of a profound analysis for its own tradition due to its richness and diversity. Its use, according to the context, the intention and the expressive needs of the poet, *Aula Orientalis* 32/2 (2014) 337-358 (ISSN: 0212-5730)

often manages to achieve a masterful display of the use of the Sanskrit Language, especially the learned written tradition.

The poetic compositions of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, with his mastery and depth in the use of Sanskrit Language, word play, double meaning, *dvyartha*, and paronomasia, *śleṣa*, are a noteworthy example of the evolution of the use of the poetic word in Sanskrit Literature. In the *Padyāvalī* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, we find the following play on words, in which the term *vāsa* can be interpreted in three different ways: as “dress”, from the root  $\sqrt{vas}$  (*vaste*, cl. 2, “to put on”, “to wear”), as “residence”, from the root  $\sqrt{vas}$  (*vasati*, cl.1, “to dwell”, “to remain”), or as “fragrance”, from the root  $\sqrt{vās}$  (*vāsayati*, cl.10, “to perfume”). In this scene, there is a *līlā* or play on words in the conversation between Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa when both resided in Vṛṇḍāvana in their youth.<sup>41</sup>

There are at least two possible interpretations for this passage:

Śrī Rādhā asks Śrī Kṛṣṇa about his *vāsa*, referring to his usual clothes. However, Kṛṣṇa interprets the term with another possible meaning and answers: “My residence is in your eyes”. Finally, the third meaning of the term as “fragrance” is added in the play on words:

**वासः संप्रति केशव क्व भवतो मुग्धेक्षणे नन्विदं ।**

**वासं ब्रूहि शाठ प्रक्रामसुभगे त्वद्गात्रसंसर्गतः ॥२८३॥**

*vāsaḥ saṁprati keśava kva bhavato mugdhekṣaṇe nanvidam*  
*vāsaṁ brūhi śāṭha prakrāmasubhage tvadgātrasaṁsargataḥ* || 283 ||  
(Śrī Padyāvalī, 283)

- “Oh Keśava, where is your dress now?”
- “Oh charming beauty, isn’t it in your eyes?”
- “Clever one, I’m speaking about your *vāsa*, “your clothes”, not about your *vāsa*, “your residence”.”
- “Oh you, most beloved and fortunate one, I have put on this *vāsa*, “fragrance”, just to come into contact with your body.”

However, the first question admits another plausible interpretation:

- “Oh Keśava, where is your residence now?”
- “Oh charming beauty, don’t you see my clothes with your own eyes?”
- “Clever one, I’m speaking about your *vāsa*, “your residence”, not about your *vāsa*, “your clothes”.”

Then, the poem portrays a play on words of a different nature in which the terms pronounced in a continuous sequence, can mean different things, depending on the place where the pauses between words are established.

**यामिन्यामुषितः क्व धूर्त वितनुमुष्णाति किं यामिनी।**

**शौरिर्गोपवधूं छलैः परिहसन्नेवं विधैः पातु वः ॥२८३॥**

*yāminyāmuṣitaḥ kva dhūrta vitanurmuṣṇāti kiṁ yāminī*  
*śaurirgopavadhūṁ chalaiḥ parihasannevaṁ vidhaiḥ pātu vaḥ* || 283 ||  
(Śrī Padyāvalī, 283)

41. The relationship between Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa narrated in the *Padyāvalī*, as well as in other works as the *Gītāgovinda* of Śrī Jayadeva, refers to the relationship between God and His devotee, as well as the complementarity of the masculine and feminine energy in the Universe.

- “Cunning one, where have you been tonight?”
- “Slender one, how could the night abduct me?”
- “May Śauri (Kṛṣṇa) protect you, who joke with the young milk maid (Rādhā) with these kinds of deceitful words”

The expression *yāminyāmuṣitaḥ* can be interpreted as a term in the locative masculine singular, *yāminyām*, “at night”, or “during the night”, followed by a perfect participle in the nominative case, *uṣitaḥ*, “spent”, “consumed”. Adding to these two words the interrogative pronoun *kva*, “where?”, Śrī Rādhā asks Śrī Kṛṣṇa where he has spent the night. Śrī Kṛṣṇa interprets the question in another way, dividing the sentence into *yāminyā* and *muṣitaḥ*. *Yāminyā* can be interpreted as an instrumental of the word *yāminī*, “the night”, with the function of Agent complement, followed by *muṣitaḥ*, perfect participle of the root  $\sqrt{mus}$ , “to take”, “to steal”, “to captivate”. Therefore, this expression could be translated as: “Have you been stolen by the night?”

It should also be noted that the root  $\sqrt{mus}$ , can mean “to eclipse” or “overshadow”, so the answer could be interpreted as: “Can the moon overshadow me?” The use of this particular verb adds a set of meanings and suggestions which would not be possible with another root, especially because this question on the lips of Śrī Kṛṣṇa evokes one of his most well known epithets: *mukhacandra*, “whose face is like the moon”.

## 7. Conclusion

Through the examples quoted, it can be seen that *dhvani*, the power of suggestion of the poetic word as the intensifier, *uddīpana*, of *rasa*, can be considered the essence of poetic language. However, while in *dhvani* there is always suggestion, it could thus not to be concluded that all suggestion is considered *dhvani*. According to Sanskrit tradition, when the suggested sense prevails over the literal one, when its expressive force is greater, then we can consider it a case of *dhvani*.

Viśvanātha, the author of *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, defines poetry as “words of emotion”, “taste”, “relation”, *rasa*.

**वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यम् ॥३॥**

*vākyaṃ rasātmakaṃ kāvyam ॥ 3 ॥*  
(*Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 1.3)

“Poetry is the word whose essence is *rasa*”.

Bharata, in the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* asserts:

**तत्र रसानेव तावदादावभिव्याख्यास्यामः।**

**न हि रसाद् ऋते कश्चिदर्थः प्रवर्तत इति ॥३२॥**

*tatra rasāneva tāvadādāvabhivyākhyāsyāmaḥ*  
*na hi rasād ṛte kaścīdarthaḥ pravartata iti ॥ 32 ॥*  
(*Nāṭyaśāstra*, 6.32)

“In the first place, I will explain the different *rasa*, because without *rasa* the rest has no sense at all”.

Poetic language, in its broadest sense, is language in which experiences, emotions and ideas are expressed through evocation. The language of poetry is characterized by deviation from the purpose of literalness, in contrast to the use of scientific language, which aspires to an unambiguous and unequivocal use of terms.

In poetry, the meaning of every word will be determined by the intention of the poet and the possible interpretations of the audience. If *dhvani* is conceived as the inciter of *rasa*, it can be considered as the essence of poetry, *sarvaśaktimūladhvani* “the root of the power of suggestion”, that is, the expressive and evocative force of a word, whose presence is irreplaceable. It is the translator who has to decide on the most appropriate strategy, in each case, to convey the correct meaning of this literature in another language, while taking into account the specific context, the work as a whole, the intention of the author as well as the public to whom it is addressed, in order to propitiate or facilitate its understanding without excessive detriment to the quality of the original work. Each author will decide what is most appropriate in every metaphor, in every simile, in every evocation, in every image. Nevertheless, deep knowledge of the Sanskrit Language, its use, grammar, the value of each term depending on the context, and understanding of how grammarians and rethoricians conceived and defined the use of metaphor and simile, can be a decisive factor in offering as a result a translation which conveys the original flavour of the work rather than do a disservice to this alluring and profound literary tradition.

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