

LOVE OR LEAVE ? BHARTR-HARI'S (?) DILEMMA*

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§1.1 The first question mark in the title of this paper signals that I intend to discuss a situation in which a difficult decision is to be made — a situation in which there are disadvantages and losses, no matter how one decides. What I wish to indicate with the second question mark is that the question I am raising about loving and leaving is not Bhartr-hari's (abbreviated to "BH" hereinafter, except in citations) dilemma alone — that there is a universality to it.

Another clarification I should offer at the outset is that I assume that the following observation is valid: We set up dichotomies and then we find them too constraining, distorting or misleading. After entertaining them for a while — not without profit — we feel the need to transcend them. In the spirit of this observation, I wish to ask : what happens when an author well-known for his depiction of *śṛṅgāra* shows an undercurrent of *vairāgya* and when the same author, equally well-known for leading a march of tanks of *vairāgya*, finds that the ground under his tanks is mined by the fifth-columnists of *śṛṅgāra* ?!

* I am grateful to Professors Albrecht Wezler (University of Hamburg) and Gregory M. Bailey (La Trobe University) for helping me in catching typographical errors in an earlier version of the present contribution, originally written for the "Seminar on Shanagara and Sringara" organised by Dr. Harsha V. Dehejia at Mumbai on 21-23 December 1998. The Gujarati word shanagara (which would be *śanaḡāra/śanḡār* in scholarly transliteration and which is cognate with Marathi *śiṅḡāra* Hindi *śiṅḡāra* etc.) used in the title of the seminar is historically the same as Sanskrit *śṛṅgāra*. However, it has acquired the distinctive sense of 'physical embellishment, body decoration, ornamentation, make-up.' This fact should be kept in mind while reading the following text.

§1.2 The question just elucidated can be asked in terms of the theory of *śṛṅgāra* rasa or *sānta* rasa. Is the development of either *rasa* precluded or hampered by the intrusion of the signs of the other? What exactly is the aesthetic process — assuming there is one — in compositions that refer to physical beauty or points of attraction but use them to urge renunciation? What would be the ultimate effect of a poem that, when read one way, depicted *śṛṅgāra* and, when read another way, spoke of *vairāgya*?³ However, I am not going to ask my question at such a theoretical and generalized level, because the insightful discussions of *rasa-vighnas* in the Sanskrit tradition address it to a significant extent, because in the examples I have seen (note 2) the ultimate impact is clearly one (that of *vairāgya* or a feeling conducive to *vairāgya*), and not mixed or intertwined, and because in the examples I can think of (note 3) I cannot see how the development of *śṛṅgāra* and *vairāgya* can be anything but parallel, that is, again not intertwined. I will rather ask my question at a more concrete and particular level — that of considering *śṛṅgāra* ('physical love', 'feeling or sentiment of love', 'aesthetic, especially literary, experience of love') and *śaṅkāra* ('ornaments, decoration, make-up'; see note*) together.

§ 2.1 Given the realities of the present philological research, any talk about BH as an author must start with an acknowledgement of three personae: two almost exclusively from written literature and one largely from oral literature. The latter is not confined to Sanskrit, but is best preserved in Sanskrit sources deriving their material from legends and folktales that seem to have been current in many languages and dialects of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra, if not of other parts of India. This is predominantly the 'leaving B' persona. He is either disillusioned by the unfaithfulness of his wife or is cured of his illusion by

Goraḁṣa-nātha⁴ after an unparalleled demonstration of devotion by his wife. As a consequence, he gives up the life of gilded royal luxury and embraces the naturally adorned existence of a mendicant's life.⁵ Whether this BH is identical with either of the two Bs known to us from the literary remains generally titled (a) Śataka-traya and (b) the Vākyapadiya and the Mahābhāṣya-ṭikā is a question that has so far defied a convincing solution. Those who, rightly, notice a recurrent pessimism and disillusionment in the Śataka-traya naturally feel that the third renouncing BH is at least more likely to be the author of the Śataka-traya stanzas (cf. Kale 1971:iv; Jinavijaya 1959:8). On the other hand, the scholars who are aware of the mention by I-ching,⁶ a Chinese scholar who travelled through many parts of India in the late seventh century, that the author of the Trikāṇḁi or Vākyapadiya and Mahābhāṣya-ṭikā was a Buddhist monk (at least for a significant length of time) are more likely to accept that the 'monk-disciple-of-Goraḁhnath' persona could have developed out of an earlier 'Buddhist monk' persona.

§ 2.2 The situation is made more complicated by the fact that the name of the Śataka-traya author could have been "Bharṭṭ-hara" instead of "Bharṭṭ-hari" (Kosambi 1948:Introduction, pp. 20, 22, 23; Jinavijaya 1959: 9-10) and that there is a remarkable similarity of attitude and a remarkable nearness in time and space between the Śataka-traya author and the Vaiyākaraṇa or Grammarian BH. The difference of name would suggest that the poet BH and the Vaiyākaraṇa BH were two different historical persons, albeit in a weak way, for a corruption of "hari" to "hara" can easily and independently occur in manuscripts.⁷ On the other hand, the similarity of attitude is at such a fundamental level that it seems improbable that there could

have been two authors with the same attitude and capable of giving forceful expression to that attitude in easy-flowing verses in just about the same area of India in the early centuries of the Christian Era. The research on BH, the Vaiyākaraṇa, has established beyond any reasonable doubt that some important details in I-ching's account cannot be correct. The Vaiyākaraṇa BH is unlikely to be a Buddhist and is unlikely to have died forty years before I-ching's visit to India (691-692 A.D.). Rather, he cannot be later than 450 A.D. Also, while he was sympathetic toward and accommodative of Buddhism, he was not a follower of Buddhism in the usual or 'strong' sense of the word. His place of residence is more likely to be those parts of western India in which the adherents of the Maitrāyaṇiya branch of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda were found in significant numbers. Now, through a systematic investigation of an impressive number of Śataka-traya manuscripts, D.D. Kosambi (1948:56-57, 59, 78-79, 81) has independently suggested that the stanzas constituting the oldest core of the Śataka-traya could have been composed in the early centuries of the Christian Era (although they were collected as an anthology some centuries later), that there could be one author persona behind them, and that this persona is likely to have hailed from western India.⁸

§ 2. 3 The similarity in fundamental attitude to which I have referred can be described thus: a relentless pursuit of the meaning of life, devastating honesty, ability to rise above conventional boundaries and antinomies, repeated return to perspectivism and a never-ending engagement with the manifestations of language.⁹ BH, the poet, is very probably the most translated author next to the author(s) of the Gitā (Bailey 1994:1) Modern Europe's interest in Sanskrit literature (as distinct from Sanskrit language) began

with a Latin translation published in 1651 and based on what the Dutch Missionary Abraham Roger heard of the Śataka-traya stanzas from a south Indian Brahmin named Padmanābha. BH's poems are the only extensive body of classical Sanskrit literature that have a more than reasonable chance of antedating the works of Kālidāsa.¹⁰ In reading him, one is reminded of Omar Khayyam more than once by the poignant and novel expression that the unavoidable questions regarding 'life : death,' 'permanence : impermanence' etc. receive. However, at the same time one feels that he has more varied capabilities than Khayyam. BH could have enriched the poetic conventions and techniques that the tradition made available to him, as well as set the pattern for the conventions and techniques that we find in later authors.¹¹ All these considerations establish that he has a universal appeal that very few literary personalities can command. Practically, the same thing, with different details, will probably have to be said about BH, the Grammarian, in the next one hundred years or so (depending on how much interest the philosophy departments at Western universities take in non-Western philosophers.) He has anticipated the linguistic turn taken by Western philosophy in the 20th century in such a basic and comprehensive way, although his major aim was not to give such a turn to philosophy, that he will, if properly presented, force a rewriting of the global history of philosophy.

Thus, taking some risk, I will speak of a single revolutionary and legendary linguistico-literary as well as religio-philosophical persona called BH, born a few decades or centuries before or after the beginning of the Christian Era and ask what we learn from his Śataka-traya about *śaṅgāra*.

31 In the legends about BH, we have a mirroring of most of the qualities I have ascribed to him so far. He loves the day-to-day world but leaves it suddenly. He epitomizes

the ordinary man's (frequently unarticulated) bond with the beautiful in this life and also with the fear that one day this beauty will no longer be his. After he leaves the run-of-the-mill world, he has moments of spiritual delight and self-assurance but he also realises how strong the pull toward the beauty spots, *visayas*, of this life is.

Now, there is not much that could be said to be unique or unusual in this tension. Spiritual leaders are constantly telling us to think of what comes after the pleasant sensual experiences, as well as of what a razor's edge the path one takes to transcend them is. Of the great literatures of the world, Sanskrit literature is particularly rich in this respect (which fact, in turn, explains its perennial appeal to some extent). What sets BH apart is the clarity with which he faces the dilemma of loving and leaving, the varied expression he gives to it, the tradition he has obviously created or strengthened unlike anyone else, and the heart-rending honesty with which he gives expression to his trials and tribulations. I-ching tells us that BH became a monk seven times and that each time he separated himself from the monks as soon as he realised that improper thoughts had begun to dominate his mind.¹² This uncompromising nature of his pursuit is seen also in his description of sensual pleasures and of worldly systematic (*śāstra*) knowledge. He wants the real, unalloyed, full 'stuff' and he makes no effort to conceal or qualify his failures and limitations.¹³ I am not aware of any other Sanskrit poet in whose case we come so close to believing that a personal experience is finding expression in his compositions (cf. Miller 1967:xvii-xviii; 1990:6.)¹⁴

§ 3.2 At least 5 stanzas of the 200 that Kosambi collects first as found in all versions of the *Śataka-traya* (nos. 81, 84, 85, 88, 135) speak of what I have called 'the basic dilemma of life' as one would speak of a dilemma — that

is, with the requisite explicitness of antithesis. At least 4 stanzas out of the 152 that Kosambi collects next (nos. 222, 223, 224, 257) do the same.¹⁵ I do not think we need any additional proof to ascertain that BH recognized the dilemma for what it is, and that the dilemma weighed heavily with him.¹⁶ We come across lines such as the following, for example:

*satyaṃ janā vacmi, na pakṣa-pātāt,
lokeṣu saptasv api tathyam etat /
nānyam manohāri nitambinībhya
duḥkhaika-hetur na ca kaścid anyañ //81//¹⁷*

“I do indeed speak without bias,
this is acknowledged as truth among men:
Nothing enthralls us like an ample-hipped woman;
nothing else causes such pain.” (Miller 1967:63 = 1990:60).

*kim iha bahubhir uktair yukti-śūnyaiḥ pralāpair
dvayam iha puruṣāṅgāṃ sarvadā sevanīyam /
abhinava-mada-līlā-lālasaṃ sundariṅgāṃ
stana-bhara-parikhinnam yauvanam vā vanam vā //85//*

“Why all these words and empty prattle ?
Only two worlds are worth a man’s devotion:
the youth of beautiful women wearied by heavy breasts
and full of fresh wine’s excitement,
or the forest.” (Miller 1990:61.)¹⁸

*āvāsaḥ kriyatāṃ gāṅge pāpa-vāriṇi vāriṇi /
stana-madhye taruṇyā vā mano-hāriṇi hāriṇi // 135 //*

“Rest yourself on a shore of the Ganges
whose waters ward off sin,
or between the breasts of a maid

whose necklace snares the mind.” (Miller 1967:99 = 1990:78)

Similar in vein is the following poem which finds itself on the outskirts of the 200 having the best chance to be BH's genuine compositions but which has a vary strong chance of being authentic in terms of the versions in which it is attested as well as the way it expresses a disturbingly poignant thought:

*eko rāgiṣu rājate priyatamā-dehārdha-hārī haro
nīrāgeṣu jino vimukta-lalanā-saṅgo na yasmāt paraḥ /
durvāra-smara-bāṇa-pannaga-viṣa-vyāsaṅga-mugdho janaḥ
śeṣaḥ kāma-vidāmbito hi viṣayān bhoktuṁ na moktuṁ
kṣamaḥ //224//*

Here, the poet in effect tells us this: If it is to be love or śṛṅgāra, it should be so absolute as in the Ardha-nārīśvara Śiva, leaving no room for the duality of the lover and the loved. If it is to be detachment, it should be so firm as to rival that of Śiva. Unfortunately, neither seems to be within the reach of human beings. They seem to be condemned to an in between state of poison-filled delirium.¹⁹

§ 3.3 The varied and forceful expression of the dilemma, regarding which I just gave evidence, is accompanied by a very straightforward, no-holds-barred, expression of personal frustrations and failures in overcoming desire or craving (stanza nos. 102, 147, 149, 155, 158, 160, 176, 185), on the one hand, and an honest expression of (at least moments or degrees of) success (stanza nos. 6, 187, and possibl stanza nos. 291, 301, 308, 344), on the other. Thus, for example:

*bhogā na bhuktā, vāyam eva bhuktās.
tapo na taptam, vāyam eva taptāḥ /
kālo na yāto, vāyam eva yātās.*

tr̥ṣṇā na jīrṇā, vāyam eva jīrṇāḥ // 155 //

I did not consume. I was consumed.²⁰

I did not scorch the pleasure-seeker. I was scorched.²¹

Time did not go away. I went away.²²

Craving did not wither. I withered.²³

*bhikṣāśanam, tad api nīrasam eka-vāram,
śayyā ca bhūḥ, parijano nija-deha-mātram /
vastram ca jīrṇa-śata-khaṇḍamayī ca kanthā,
hā hā tathāpi viṣayā na parityajanti //158 //*

“Begging for food,

I eat one tasteless meal a day.

The earth is my bed.

These four limbs are my only companions.

I wear a tattered old cloak

patched together from hundreds of rags.

Ah ! Ah !

Still this thirst for pleasure won't abandon me !

(Cort 1983:24)

*yadāsīd ajñānam smara-timira-saṃskāra-janitam
tadā dr̥ṣṭam nārīmayam idam aśeṣam jagad api
idānīm asmākam paṭutara-vivekāñjanajuṣām
sam̐bhūṭā dr̥ṣṭis tri-bhuvanam api brahma manute²⁴ //6 //*

“When I was ignorant

under the influence of passion's darkness,

I saw everything in the entire world as woman.

Now that I have the salve of superior discernment,

my vision, restored,²⁵

sees all the three worlds
as nothing but brahman.”²⁶

§3.4 On the other side of the intensity seen here is an uncompromising expectation regarding what an ideal sensual experience should be like :

*agre gītam, sarasa-kavayah pārśvato dākṣiṇātyāḥ,
prṣṭhe līlā-valaya-ṛaṇitam cāmara-grāhiṇīnām /
yady asty evaṁ kuru bhava-rasāsvādane lampāṭatvam,
no cec, cetaḥ, praviśa sahasā nirvikalpe samādhau // 183 //*

“A song is going on in the front.

On the sides are seated southern poets, masters of literary effect.

At the back are heard the jingling bracelets of the fanning maids.

If it is a set-up like this,

go ahead and enjoy the delights of the world !

But if not, o my mind,

plunge at once into a uniform state of meditation.”²⁷

§3.5 Now, what could be the nature of the psychological association with *śaṅgāra* of a man who is so clearly conscious of the two diametrically opposite forces working on his mind and who is so honest, open, articulate, and intense in speaking about them ? I think we could learn something valuable about him and his society if we catch him unawares — while he is struggling with something so fundamental to his existence and is unaware that we are observing him not for his message but what the carriers of his message are. The process would be similar to what good researchers do in determining authorship on the basis of stylistic-statistical considerations. In such studies, what really matter are not

the denotative or referential words, especially the common vocabulary or the technical jargon of the field (important though they are), but the particles etc. A clever person can imitate the common vocabulary and technical jargon, but while he is busy doing that his 'slip' in terms of particles and syntax is likely to show. Now, if with this methodological 'detective' consideration in mind, we study BH's poems, we find that the references to ornaments are surprisingly far and few in between. Also, they are restricted to *muktā* 'pearls,' *muktā-jāla* 'pearl strings,' mostly 'necklaces,' *divyāmbara* or *pratanu vasana* 'fine garment,' *kuṇḍala* 'earring,' *kaṅkaṇa* or *līlā-valaya* 'bracelet,' *keyūra* 'arm ornament,' *hāru* 'necklace,' *mekhalā* or *kāñcī* 'girdle, waistband,' and *nūpura* 'anklet' (stanzas 7, 21, 76, 80, 97, 117, 139, 147, 183, 326, 326, 349). Further, a preference for natural ornaments is seen (e.g., stanzas 54, 134, 349, 144, 297, indirectly also 141) as in Kālidāsa. For example, in a poem reminiscent of Omar Khayyam's most well-known rubai,

"Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,
a flask of wine, a book of verse---- and thou
beside me singing in the wilderness —
and wilderness is paradise now."²⁸

BH says :

mālatī śīrasi jṛmbhaṇonmukhī,
candanam vapuṣi kuṅkumāvilam /
vakṣasi priyatamā madālasā,
svarga eṣa pariśiṣṭa āgataḥ //116//

"White Jasmine about to bloom in her hair;
sandal paste mixed with saffron on her body;
my dearest one, languorous in her intoxicating youth,

resting on my chest!

This is nothing but heaven

paying me a visit.”²⁹

These highly selective references to ornaments, in turn, agree with the predilection the author shows for certain parts of the female body; e.g., breasts and hips, as in:

*vacasi bhavati saṅga-tyāgam uddīśya vārtā
śruta-mukhara-mukhānām kevalam paṇḍitānām /
jaghanam aruṇa-ratna-granthi-kāñcī-kalāpam
kuvalaya-nayanānām ko vihātum samarthah //147//*

“Talk about renunciation of attachments

only occurs in the speech of learned men

whose mouths are eloquent with learning.

Who can forake the hip, girdled with knots of rubies,
of lotus-eyed women ?” (Bailey 1994:17)

A well-integrated poetic personality thus emerges — one that has its definite preference points or eye-catchers, which are common and easy to notice but which imply that the living and the moving are more important than the artificial and the unresponsive.

§3.6 When the preceding observation is conveyed to him a historian with an interest in material culture may conclude that the references to artificial physical ornaments are sparse and general — there are not many specific words denoting variety in the categories of necklaces, anklets etc.— probably because not many ornaments of the artificial physical type were known. A scholar specialising in the sociolinguistics of ancient India may conclude that the references tend to be general because Sanskrit in BH’s time was a literary language not frequently employed to speak of objects of the everyday

give-and-take. However, I think a conclusion of another kind is more justified in the present situation. BH makes it a point in several stanzas (nos. 41, 54, 72, 76, 90) to play down the value of physical ornamentation.³⁰ This is accomplished sometimes by simply suggesting that the physical ornaments have no role to play, sometimes by contrasting a physical ornament with an abstract quality and sometimes by juxtaposing one abstract quality with another abstract quality, as the following three poems will show :

*vaktram candra-vidāmbi, pañkaja-parīhāsa-kṣame locane,
varṇaḥ svarṇam apākarīṣṇur, alinī-jīṣṇuḥ kacāyām cayaḥ /
vakṣojāv ibha-kumbha-vibhramaharau, gurvī nitamba-sthali
vācām hāri ca mārḍavam, yuvatiṣu svābhāvikaṁ
mañḍanam //90//*

“A face to rival the moon,
eyes that make mockery of lotuses,
complexion eclipsing gold's luster.
thick tresses that shame the black bee,
breasts like elephant's swelling temples,
heavy hips,
a voice enchanting and soft —

The adornment in maidens is natural.” (Miller 1990:63)³¹

*śrotram śrutenaiva, na kuñḍalena,
dānena pāñir, na tu kañkaṇena /
vibhāti kāyaḥ karuṇā-parāṇām
paropakāreṇa, nu candanena //54//*

“The ear of a compassionate man
is graced by the scriptures,
not by pendants:

his hand by bounty,
not by bracelets;
his body by benevolence,
not by sandal paste.” (Miller 1990:51)³²

*aiśvaryaśya vibhūṣaṇam sujanatā, śauryaśya vāk-samyamo
jñānasyopāśamah, śamasya vinayo, vittasya pātre vyayah/
akrodhas tapasah, kṣamā prabhavitur, dharmasya nirvyājatā
sarveṣām api sarva-kāraṇam idaṁ sīlam param
bhūṣaṇam //41//*

“Kindness is an ornament for power,
restrained speech for valor,
dispassion for wisdom,
discipline for tranquility,
munificence for wealth,
forebearance for austerity,
patience for majesty,
and candor for duty —
but moral conduct, the cause of all,
is a gem that crowns the rest.” (Miller 1990:45)

Also, when BH describes a situation that he obviously values in the area of sensual experiences, relatively abstract achievements of culture almost always enter the scene in a very natural way. Without poetry, music or display of sharp erudition, nothing is really enjoyable to him. In another stanza reminding us of Omar Khayyam's rubai quoted in §3.5, he says :

*āvāśah kilakimcitasya dayitā pārśve vilāsālasā,
karṇe kokila-kāminī-kala-ravaḥ, smero latā-maṇḍapuh /*

*goṣṭhī sat-kavibhiḥ samam katipayair, mugdhāḥ sitāmṣoḥ karāḥ
keṣāmcit sukhayanti cātra hṛdayam caitre vicitrāḥ
srajaḥ //138//*

“By the side is the beloved,
an abode of love’s articulations,
relaxing after the fun.

The sweetly indistinct cooing of the cuckoo
is approaching the ear.

The bower of creepers is coming to life.

Ralaxed talk with select masters of poetry is going on.
The bright rays of the moon are hanging around,
as if mesmerized.

And, in such a Spring,
garlands of many a sort

are gladdening the hearts of the few fortunate ones.”³³

Similar to the preceding in integrating culture with nature
is :

*ramayās candra-marīcayas tṛṇavatī ramyā vanānta-sthali
ramyam sādhu-samāgamāgama-sukham, kāvyeṣu ramyāḥ
kathāḥ /*

*kopopāhita-bāṣpa-bindu-taralam ramyam priyāyā mukham,
sarvam ramyam, anityatām upagate citte na kimcit
punah //193//*

“Attractive are the rays of the moon.

Attractive is the grassy ground in the woods.

Attractive is the pleasure of good company.

Attractive are the stories told in poetry.

Attractive is the beloved's face

with its shimmering of tears of anger.

Yes, everything is attractive.

But once the mind has sensed impermanence, nothing, nothing is the same."³⁴

Further, it is noteworthy that in the rare instances in which BH refers to physical ornaments the ornament itself never acts as his direct stimulant.³⁵ It is either the body parts (stanza 97, 102, 119, 131, 146) or the glance which functions in this capacity (stanza nos. 79, 80, 92, 262, 282).³⁶ Now, glance in such contexts implies convention, the ability to grasp much on the basis of a momentary movement of a small part of the body — in short, unarticulated but subtle and cultured communication. That is the level at which the attractive things of the world ensnare our poet :

*smitena bhāvena ca lajjayā dhiyā
parān-mukhair ardha-kaṭākṣa-vikṣitaiḥ /
vacobhir irṣyā-kalahena līlayā,
samasta-bhāvaiḥ khalu bandhanam striyaḥ //79//*

“With smiles, affection, modesty, and art;

hostile looks and ardent glances;

eloquence, jealous quarrels, and play³⁷—

with all her emotions woman enchains us.” (Miller 1990:59)

*bhrū-cāturyaḥ kuñcitākṣāḥ kaṭākṣāḥ
snigdha vāco lajjitāntās ca hāsāḥ /
līlā-mandaṁ prasthitam ca sthitam ca
striṅṅam etad bhūṣaṇam cāyudham ca //92//*

“Side glances with eyes curved by the dexterity of brows, affectionate words, laughs ending in coyness, playful languor, whether moving or still —

this is both ornament and weapon of woman."³⁸

Obviously, BH presupposes a society in which the language of the eyes is pretty and is pretty well-developed.

Thus, I do not think that one can simply opt for a materialistic or sociolinguistic explanation and put aside the possibility of a philosophy of high culture or aesthetics. On the contrary, the way the poet presupposes the participation of his readers in the individual instances or examples of his way of looking at things leaves no doubt that such aesthetics was not just ideosyncretic or personal. It must have been a dominant way of thinking in the circles in which he was brought up and moved.³⁹

§3.7 There is another aspect of ornamentation in the Śataka-traya that belongs to a different sphere and could even be considered paradoxical or contrary. While the author is grappling with very fundamental problems of human existence and is forthright and original, his stanzas frequently come out like well-chiselled idols.⁴⁰ If a statement approaching the force of a slogan or a manifesto is to be made, the metres chosen remind us of cascades, as in

*mātsaryam utsārya vicārya kāryam
āryāḥ samaryādam idam vadantu /
sevyā nitambāḥ kimu bhūdharāṇām
uta smara-smera-vilāsinīnām //84//*

“Cut off all envy, examine the matter,
tell us decisively, you noble men.

which we ought to attend upon:

the sloping sides of wilderness mountains

or the buttocks of women abounding in passion?”

(Miller 1967:65 = Miller 1990:61)⁴¹

Compare with this the leisurely and sonorous movement of :

*urasi nipatitānām srasta-dhammilakānām
mukulita-nayanānām kimcid-unimīlitānām /
upari-surata-kheda-svinna-gaṇḍa-sthālīnām
adhara-madhu vadhūnām bhāgyavantāḥ pibanti //123//*

"She is lying on the chest.

The braid of her hair has come loose.

Her eyes are buds, half-closed half-open.

She has relaxed, just a little.

Her young cheeks are wet with the sweat

brought by the fatigue of making love like a man.

The honey of the lips of such a woman,

only the blessed ones get to drink."⁴²

As the same stanzas illustrate, alliteration and symmetrical phrasing are also found. Rarely indeed does a meaning unit step beyond a pāda unit or a cesura. The effect created is frequently that of a highly proportionate Ardha-nārīśvara statue.

Does this not introduce artificiality in the composition and indicate that the poet is not as spontaneous as we would expect him to be if we wish admire his honesty of sentiment and forthrightness of expression ? Besides, are there not stanzas in the Śataka-traya that appear to be the poet's experiments with the same theme (e.g, compare no. 79 with nos. 89, 92, 93)?

Due weight must be attached to these questions. However, we should also bear in mind that what seems artificial or forced to one person can be very easy and natural to another. Most of the alliteration and symmetry in the Śataka-traya

is morphology-based (cf. stanza nos. 210, 236, 264, 324, etc.). If the author was a grammarian who spent years and years exploring relationships between forms, he could easily utilize his knowledge to create the features we have identified — as if no deliberate effort was involved. In fact, he does not even have to be a grammarian. The pre-modern Indian educational system usually gave such a strong foundation in grammar even to those who later specialized in fields other than grammar that toying with the morphology of the language became their second nature. Furthermore, we should entertain the possibility that BH might not have edited his compositions to ensure that they contained no repetition or that only the best of stanzas with similar content were retained. This is especially likely to be the case if worldly recognition carried little value for him. He could have composed spontaneously on his favourite themes at different places and just left the compositions for posterity to collect and edit if it wished to do so. Thirdly, exploring the possibilities of language could have been some kind of Yoga for him. Just as a superior Brahmin did not perform the Agni-hotra simply to ensure safe passage for the Sun⁴³ but also as a mental discipline for himself — to cultivate restraint and patience (to keep his blood-pressure down, if you will) or to nourish the spirit of karma-yoga in him, our poet might have worked steadily at thought, language, metres etc. to develop his concentration and to practice a śilpa-yoga in the relatively ethereal medium of language.

Foot-notes

1. Even a non-specialist of the field has felt this to be a feature of the poems of BH. Wm. Theodore de Bary, in his Foreword to Miller 1967, wrote : "The poetry attributed to Bhartrihari does so conceive of [the Indian] people [that is, as very worldly and very world-renouncing], but reveals also the conflict they experience between

a profound attraction to sensual beauty and the yearning for liberation from it. In a classic style and refined language, Bhartrihari shows how creative the tension between these opposing lives could be. And not in these lives alone — for they help us to understand how most great Indian art could be at once so sensuous and so spiritual." Cf. also Kosambi 1948 : Editor's Preface: "Bhartr̥hari's poetry..." Miller 1967:xvi: "...a tone of irony, skepticism, and discontent..."

2. The implicit reference here is to works such as śrngāra vairāgya-taraṅgiṇī. At least two compositions go by this name: (a) Soma-prabhācārya's, printed in Kāvya-mālā, gucchaka 5, pp. 142-165, with Sukha-bodhikā vṛtti, Bombay: Nirṇaya-sāgara Press, 1888. (b) Divākara-muni's, published by Abhaya-candra Bhagavāna-dāsa, probably in Ahmedabad, and distributed by Śrī-Yaśo-vijaya-Jaina-grantha-mālā Office, Khāra-geṭa [=Khargate], Bhāva-nagara, Kāthiyāvāda, 1916.
3. I do not know if such a poem actually exists, but I am sure the Sanskrit poets were capable of writing one, given the success they have registered in narrating two of more stories simultaneously with the same sequence of syllables. If paranomasia could enable them to cover the stories of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata with a common phonetic continuum in compositions like the Rāghava-pāṇḍaviya, I do not see why, if they put their mind to it, they could not write texts that served as a locus for both the ecotic and the ascetic content.
4. Alternative spellings: Gorakha-nātha, Gorakh-nath.
5. The stories alluded to here can be found in Gopinath 1896:4-8, 19-23, 43-39; Kosambi 1948: Introduction pp. 79-80, Cort 1983:7-9, Miller 1967:xvi-xvii and Miller 1990:3. It should, however, be noted that in providing these references I am confining myself to the publications referred to elsewhere in this article. The actual body of literature collecting BH stories and discussing them is much larger.
6. Older spelling: I-tsing.
7. In my experience, loss of writing strokes occurs much more commonly in manuscripts than the addition of strokes. Both "hari" and "hara" being very common words, a scribe can easily write one under the influence of the other. Seeing a predilection toward Hara in the Śatakatraya stanzas (1, 317, 325, 338, 339, 344, 347 etc.), a scribe could have changed "hari" to "hara", but a similar explanation cannot be given for the attestation of "hari".
8. (a) This article is not the occasion to enter into a full discussion of BH as a historical personality or of the identity of the various BHs that our

sources present to us. I have referred to only a few philological details and concentrated on those considerations which are logically closer to the observations I make below. An allied discussion is available in Miller 1990:23-24.

- (b) I am not claiming that conclusive proofs are available for the position for which I have indicated preference. My intention is only to point out that possibility which seems stronger.
- (c) When Kosambi (1948: Introduction p. 79) expressed the following view he was obviously thinking on a background of research which has since become outdated: "There is nothing common to the two [namely, BH associated with the Śataka-traya and BH, the author of the Vākyapadiya] except the name, and as the Vākyapadiya is the last work in the great tradition of classical Sanskrit grammar, the solecisms we have noted earlier would seem to exclude the possibility of identification. ... that Bharṭṛ-hari [=The Vākyapadiya author], on reading I-tsing closely, is seen to be an ardent Buddhist... but there is nothing in our collection [=Śataka-trayādi] that could be traced to such an author."

Kosambi was apparently not aware that Kunhan Raja had pointed out in 1936 that the year of BH's death mentioned by I-ching cannot be correct.

Most of the research locating the grammarian BH in western India is a product of the last three decades. Kosambi cannot be expected to have known it.

Since Kosambi's own research indicates (a) that BH did not put together any collection of stanzas that later led to the formation of the Śataka-traya and (b) that the relevant stanzas were later collected under the belief that they were BH's, the solecisms noticed in a couple of stanzas cannot, with certainty, be attributed specifically to BH. They can be attributed to the earliest reconstructible form of the collection but that form itself not *in its entirety* attributable to a single author well-versed in grammar.

As for Kosambi's last point, hardly any scholar accepts I-ching's description of BH as a Buddhist in a literal sense. All that I-ching's statement really proves is that by his time BH had become a legend and the Buddhists too claimed him as one of their own.

9. Kosambi (1948: Introduction pp. 80-81) determines the tone that gives the stanzas their unity in a very different way: the discontent of a Brahmin who could not get to live a materially comfortable life despite his learning and mastery of Sanskrit. In my view, such a determination is based on the fallacy of taking recurrence of themes as a reflection of the true state of affairs in the author's personal life. In the present case it is all the more fallacious to depend on the frequency of voicing of

discontent to derive very specific inferences about the author's personal life. If a certain type of stanza came to be attracted to the collection from a very distant past and if this process had gone on for several centuries as Kosambi himself has rightly concluded, the unity we feel in the collection must be of a deeper and general kind. It must be a philosophical or temperamental unity, not one arising out of a specific personal circumstances of a single individual. In identifying the unifying element of the collection Kosambi, an impressively versatile and imaginative practitioner of textual criticism, has allowed his own social and political philosophy to read what the available evidence does not warrant.

10. I am as yet not convinced that Aśva-ghoṣa wrote before Kālidāsa, that the surviving versions of Svapna-vāsava-datta and Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa come from a period extending beyond Kālidāsa or that the other plays attributed to Bhāsa were in fact composed by the predecessor carrying that name who is mentioned by Kālidāsa in his Mālavikāgni-mitra.

11. Miller (1967:xxvi, 1990:7, 12-13) and Bailey (1994:2, 1996:203) seem to assume that all the poetic images, conventions and techniques witnessed in BH's poetry were inherited. I do not think we should rule out the other possibility that BH made some original contributions in all these areas and thus influenced the course of Sanskrit poetry in the following centuries. We need to entertain such a possibility especially in view of the likelihood that the earliest poems assignable to BH may predate Kālidāsa's Śākuntala and the earliest reconstructible version of the Pañca-tantra (Kosambi 1948: Introduction p.78).

12. Takakusu's (1896:179-180) translation : "Having desired to embrace [emphasis in the original] the excellent Law he became a homeless priest, but overcome by worldly desires he returned again to the laity. In the same manner he became seven times a priest, and seven times returned to the laity. Unless one believes well in the truth of cause and effect, one cannot act strenuously like him. He wrote the following verses full of self-approach:

Through the enticement of the world

I returned to the laity.

Being free from secular pleasures

again I wear the priestly cloak.

How do these two impulses

Play with me as if a child ?

... Once when a priest in the monastery, being harassed by worldly desires, he was disposed to return to the laity. He remained, however, firm and asked a student to get a carriage outside the monastery. On being

asked the cause, he replied: 'It is the place where one performs meritorious actions, and it is designed for the dwelling of those who keep the moral precepts (*śīla*). Now passion already predominates within me, and I am incapable of adhering to the excellent Law. Such a man as myself should not intrude into an assembly of priests come here from every quarter.' Then he returned to the position of a lay devotee (*Upāsaka*), and wearing a white garment continued to exalt and promote the true religion, being still in the monastery."

13. Noteworthy in this context are the verses appearing at the end of the *Vākyapadīya*, the second book of the *Trikāṇḍī*: *Prajñā vivekaṃ labhate bhinnair āgama-darśanaih / kiyad vā śakyam unnetum svatarkam anudhāvātā // tat tad utprekṣamānānām purāṇair āgamair vinā / anupāsita-vṛddhānām vidyā nātiprasīdati //* "One's intellect acquires discernment through the diverse views found in the inherited branches of knowledge. (After all) how much can one figure out if one follows (only) one's own reasoning ! The knowledge of those who conceive of this or that without (recourse to) the inherited branches of knowledge that have come down from antiquity and who do not sit neat the elders (to learn) does not gain much perspicuity."

The verses might have been composed by BH or by a student of his. In either case, the thoughts expressed in them are borne out by the *Trikāṇḍī* and can be accepted as a statement of BH's philosophy of life.

14. This statement should be confused with statements like the following which are sometimes made in speaking of BH, the poet: (a) The *Nīti*, *Śṛṅgāra* and *Vairāgya* collections of stanzas reflect, in that order, the stages through which BH's own life passed. (b) Although BH speaks of worldly wisdom and amorous life, the message he really wishes to convey as something he learned from life is that of renunciation. Of course, (a) amounts to simplistic historiography. Kosambi's text-critical work precludes it, as well as (b). It was not BH himself who collected the stanzas known as *Śataka-traya* in the form of three groups. The *Vairāgya-śataka* constitutes the textually least stable group of stanzas. Furthermore, the stanzas cited in this essay will bear out that the attraction to the sensuous infiltrates even many of the renunciation stanzas.

15. It should be noted that Kosambi (1948:Introduction pp.1,66,78-79) does not view these stanzas as definitely inauthentic. His textual investigation leads him to label these stanzas as *samśayita*, not as *prakṣipta*.

16. Cf. Miller 1967:xvii: "Compelled by his strong sense of personal irony, Bhartihari sees man's paradoxical position in a transient, seductive world." This is changed to read as follows in Miller 1990:4: "Compelled by a strong sense of personal irony, Bhartihari sees man's position as paradoxical in a transient, seductive world." Miller (1967:xviii-xxiv) provides further details which support the reading of BH as an author caught in a dilemma. Particularly to be noted is the need she feels to employ the following phrases: "lurking attachment... as well as a revulsion," "undercurrent of turmoil," "painful, perplexing position," "confusion, longing, pain," "enigma which defies ... solution," "inescapable bondage and suffering," "Bhartihari's unrest," "He feels the distressing necessity... But he is weak ...," "In terms of Bhartihari's collected verses man's life is an intricate web of conflicting moments and attractions," "he cannot understand the real meaning of time and his own absurd position in existence. Bhartihari shows a keen awareness for the paradox involved in enjoining a deluded man to abandon the world of his delusion," "Bhartihari does not simply vacillate between worldly indulgence and asceticism; his confusion is more profound..." and "His ironic sense that none of life's possibilities are what they seem to be..." Cf. further Miller 1990:3-4, 14-19, in particular, the remark: "The poet cannot choose between asceticism and worldly indulgence because he finds them equally attractive, and equally deficient." Also, Bailey 1994:1, 15: "...an irresistible pessimism about the human condition. ... Bhartihari wrestled with his own incapacity realistically to influence the fragility he perceived as the defining characteristic of existence. ... Bhartihari uses also [-all] sorts of devices to fracture any kind of absolute vision of received truth which might have been regarded as axiomatic and not in need of defence. ...radical undermining of the available options..."
17. In the following pages, I will utilize existing readable translations if they do not obscure the main idea of a stanza, although they may occasionally not do full justice to the syntax of the original. The objective of this essay does not depend on a literal understanding of the poems. Citing of other's translations will give some idea, incidentally, of the variety of strategies one can employ to make old poetry easily accessible to the contemporary reader.
18. In Miller 1967:65, the second and fourth lines of the translation read: "Two worlds alone are worth a man's devotion" and "And full of fresh wine's heady ardor for sport." Actually, the *muda* mentioned here may not have anything to do with wine. As in stanza 116 quoted

in §3.5, it may refer to the sense 'I am someone special; I can attract this man if I wish' felt to exist in young women. Miller (1967:87 = 1990:72) introduces it with the word "seduction" in her translation of 116.

19. In addition to the select examples given here, there are stanzas in which the dilemma finds a somewhat indirect expression; e.g. in stanzas 147 and 183 quoted in §3.5 and §3.4, respectively.

20. The pronoun *vayam* here may also be rendered in the plural.

21. What the idiom *tapas tap* makes possible in Sanskrit ('build up ascetic heat by refraining from objects of comfort, to accumulate spiritual energy by staying away from sensual pleasures') seems impossible to render in English in such a literal or semi-literal way that the contrast with the following use of *tap* ('be heated, be subjected to suffering') can be brought out. Hence, I have offered a translation concentrating on what *tapas*, the austerities, are supposed to accomplish, namely the eradication of the ordinary worldly pleasure-seeking self.

22. This probably means 'I did not win the immortality or victory over death that I was seeking. I had to give up the effort.' The latter half could also be speaking of impending death with a past tense in view of the certainty of death: 'Consider it certain that I will go away. I am as good as dead.'

23. Miller's (1967:113 = 1990:85) translation puzzles me. It runs thus:

"We savored no pleasure,
so we are consumed.
We practiced no penance,
so we are afflicted.
We did not elude time,
so we are pursued.
We did not wither craving,
so we are the wizened."

Gopinath (1896:228) is much closer to the original in syntax, as well as in bringing out the intended contrasts, but his is not a readable translation.

Somewhere between my rendering and Miller's rendering falls the following translation by Cort (1983:21):

"Thinking I enjoyed the pleasures of life,
I myself was enjoyed by life.
Thinking I didn't need to burn off my sins,
I myself was burnt up.
Thinking that I passed the time,

I myself was passing on.

Greed didn't grow old and leave my body,

I myself grew old."

24. Kosambi reads *tanute* at this point. However, he also indicates that the objective support for the reading is not as in the case of the other words to the stanza and that *manute* can also lay a claim for being the authentic reading. An idiom of the form *ḍṣṭih tri-bhuvanam brahma tanute* seems less than probable in Sanskrit. Furthermore, in most Indian scripts *ta* is more likely to result from *ma* (through some parts of the written syllable becoming faint) than the other way round.
25. I am not certain about the sense of *samī-bhūtā* intended by the poet. Normally, an *añjana* cures the eyes or makes them stronger (for the latter, recall references in literature to ointments that enable a hero etc. to see in the dark or to see a hidden treasure.) In view of these associations and the context, *samī-bhūtā* should mean 'one which has come to its normal state' or, much less likely, 'one which has become equal to the task to be performed — to the challenge to be faced.'
26. The readable translations by Ingalls (1965:423), Miller (1967:7, 1990:31) and Bailey (1996:203) have helped me in my choice of words, but I found them all to be unnecessarily diffusing the dramatic contrast in the original.
- 27 (a) The translations by Ingalls (1965:421-422), Miller (1967:135, 1990:96) and Cort (1983:36) deviate too much from the original. (b) Kosambi's (1948: introduction p. 81) comment on the stanza ("No king who had renounced would have advised his soul to renounce if it could not taste the pleasures of royalty.") misses the point.
28. Translation as in Fitzgerald 1859 (first edition), rubai 11.
29. I have taken some help from Miller (1967:87 = 1990:72) in offering this translation. I had to set aside her translation because she misconstrues the original here to an extent that cannot be overlooked.
30. Alos, partially or indirectly in stanzas 27 (*mañinā bhūṣitaḥ sarpah kim asau na bhayamkaraḥ* "Does a serpent cease to be dangerous because it has a diadem hood?"), 37 (*sva-mahimā yady asti kim mañdanaiḥ* "If one has a majestic personality, what need is there of embellishments?"), and 68 (*vibhūṣaṇam maunam apaṇḍitānām* "Refraining from speech is the ornament of fools").
31. (a) Miller 1967:69 has "swelling bosses" instead of "swelling temples." In other respects her earlier translation is identical with the one reproduced

here.

(b) Bailé / 1996:208-209 offers a translation that is very similar to Miller's, except for "breasts which remove fascination with the elephant's bosses."

32. Miller 1967:45 has "Is graced by the Vedas" as the second line. Like some other translators of Sanskrit texts, she has connected *śruta* with *śruti*. However, *śruta* is quite commonly secular learning. Unless the context indicates a clear association with religious or canonical learning, it need not be translated so restrictively as she has. A simple translation like 'knowledge, erudition' would have been more appropriate in the present context.

33. In this stanza, one needs to understand *keṣāṃcit* in the last quarter as *keṣāṃcid eva* 'only of some,' which then implies that only a few lucky ones — only those who have sufficient good karma to their credit — get to enjoy the varied garlands (or perhaps the Spring nights of the described kind); cf. Rāmaṣi p. 73: *keṣāṃcit puṇyavatām*. Dhara-sāra-gaṇiṇ p. 73: *bhāgyavatām pumsām*. Thus, Miller (1967:101, 1990:79), whose translation I could not use here, should not have opted for a translation employing the singulars "he" and "anyone".

A precious explanation of the rare word *kilakimcitu* is preserved in the commentaries of Dhana-sāra-gaṇiṇ (p. 73 *kilakimcitasya surata-śabda-viśeṣasya*) and Rāmaṣi (p. 73, *smṛita-rudita-muditānām saṅkaraḥ kilakimcitam ucyate. kilakimcitasya vilāsa-viśeṣasya*).

Miller rightly corrects her 1967 translation, "A lover's bed beside his mistress," to "Beside him his mistress embodying love" in 1990, but while the latter translation can be thought of as agreeing in spirit with the explanations of Dhana-sāra and Rāmaṣi, it does not have the specificity of those explanations. She also passes over the word *katipayaiḥ* ('some, a few, select') which is significant as an adjective suggesting insistence on maintaining high standards. Alos, Miller's rendering 'stray' of *mugdhāḥ* would be difficult to justify, both in terms of what *mugdha* usually means, as well as the context. One expects the poet to speak of a prominent presence of moonlight, given his intention to create an enchanting scene.

34. I found the blunt contrast in the original muffled in the translations of Miller (1967:141 = 1990:99) and Cort (1983:41).

35. It is possible that my use of "never" may be challenged on the basis of an instance or two in the large corpus of stanzas Kosambi has collected. I have read through the probably authentic 200 stanzas and the possibly authentic 152 stanzas as carefully as I could to

- find out if any of them mention an ornament as a thing stimulating the poet directly.
36. The almost exclusive engagement with the beauty of eyes in stanzas 100 (*vāmākṣī*, *bhrū-latā*), 280 (*mrgākṣī*), 287 (*kuvalaya-dṛṣ*), 336 (*vāmanayanā*) and 341 (*atrasta-kuraṅga-sāva-nayanā*) should also be noted in this context.
37. The only difference in Miller 1967:61 is at this point and it is minor. Her translation there reads "and sport."
38. I have adopted the following translation by Bailey (1996:206) with changes necessitated by the grammar of the original:
 "Eyes curved by her dextrous brows, side glances,
 affectionate words, laughs ending in coyness,
 playfully languorous whether moving or still.
 This is both ornament and weapon of woman."
39. This naturally makes me wonder about what India of our times has done to herself with a rather vulgar interest in ostentatious jewellery seen even is the educated middle class and with the rejection of natural ornaments such as flowers in many parts of north India. How did the transformation come about if indeed there was a transformation on a large scale ?
40. Cf. Miller 1967:xxv-xxix, 1990: 12-13, particularly the remark in the former essay: "... the sententious, reflective epigrams [of Bhartrihari] are not folksy hits of wisdom in verse form. They too are dominated by strict aesthetic controls and a self-conscious idea of art." Bailey (1994:15-25, 1996:202-218) offers several sensitive and insightful analyses of the art present in BH's poems, occasional overreading apart.
41. Miller happily exploits the ambiguity of "attend upon" to connect the items connected in the original with *nitamba*. Cort (1983:19) provides a pun similar to that of *nitamba* but translates the rest more freely (albeit appropriately):
 "Dispel my doubts, pandit.
 Which is better?
 Which is proper?
 Should I frequent the flanks
 of a far mountain
 or the flanks of a woman
 smiling in the embrace of passion?"
42. I find Miller's (1967:91 = 1990:74) translation of this stanza a little too free.

43. According to more than one Vedist, such was the thinking behind the performance of the Agnihotra in the earliest period to which our extant sources can take us. It could be an adequate if not the whole explanation for the specified period. For the later periods, however, it will be only partially true and superficial.

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