



Exploring poetic treasures: A comprehensive analysis of poetical contents in Mānasollasa by Someśvara

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Abstract

This article explores the poetic treasures concealed within the Mānasollasa, a comprehensive Sanskrit text authored by King Someśvara III in the 12th century. The Mānasollasa, often translated as "the delighter of the mind," is an encyclopedic masterpiece encompassing a wide array of subjects, including governance, ethics, astronomy, perfumes, and music. This analysis, however, places its primary focus on the poetic contents.

Someśvara, celebrated as a distinguished Indian poet, skillfully combines poetic artistry with critical acumen. His work demonstrates an unparalleled balance of sound and sense, vivid characterizations, and profound insights into human nature. Notably, he addresses a broad spectrum of poetic topics, showcasing his extensive knowledge of Alamkāra Śāstra, the study of poetic ornamentation.

The analysis delves into Someśvara's thoughts on the essence of poetry, theories of Rasa (aesthetic sentiment), Chandas (prosody), and various figures of speech. Someśvara's poetic brilliance is further revealed as he explores Rāgas (melodic modes) and Bhāvas (emotions), exhibiting his proficiency in composing poetry in multiple languages. A key highlight is the elucidation of Śāstra Vinoda and the nature of kāvya (poetry) within the Mānasollasa.

The study underscores Someśvara's adept handling of figures of speech like simile, metaphor, and allegory, showcasing his mastery over poetic devices. His use of language is characterized by a seamless flow, simplicity, and a focus on substance over form.

In abstract, comprehensive analysis of Mānasollasa by Someśvara unveils the poetic treasures hidden within this ancient Sanskrit text. It sheds light on the profound insights, linguistic artistry, and creative brilliance of Someśvara, making the Mānasollasa an invaluable resource for scholars and enthusiasts interested in Indian poetics and culture.

Keywords: Mānasollasa, kāvya, Alamkāra Śāstra, Sanskrit Literature, Rasa, Chandas, Rāgas, Simile, Indian poetics and culture, etc.

Introduction

The ancient Indians were celebrated for their insatiable quest for knowledge. Their inquisitive minds explored a multitude of domains, amassing a vast wealth of knowledge about the inner and outer worlds through various means. In the Mānasollasa, Someśvara's statements stand out for their significance^[1]. He describes the work as vast, akin to the hundred branches of the Kalpataru tree and as invaluable as the wish-fulfilling Kāmadhenu. Someśvara's Mānasollasa is an encyclopedic Sanskrit text from the early 12th century, authored by King Someśvara III of the Kalyani Chalukya dynasty, ruling in South India. It covers a wide range of topics, including governance, ethics, economics, astronomy, astrology, rhetoric, veterinary medicine, horticulture, perfumes, food, architecture, sports, painting, poetry, and music.

The title Mānasollāsa is a compound Sanskrit word,

composed of "manas" meaning "mind" and "ullāsa" meaning "rejoicing" or "delighting." It translates to "the joy, delighter, or entertainer of the mind." Alternatively, the compound can be split into "manasa" and "ullasa," denoting the "happiness of the mind."

Someśvara is acclaimed as a leading Indian poet, excelling in various aspects of poetic art. He stands unmatched when all facets of his poetry are considered collectively. His consistently high stylistic excellence is unique and not paralleled in his era. The perfect blend of sound and sense in his work is unparalleled. His use of words flows effortlessly from his brilliant mind, showcasing his creative prowess. Someśvara exhibits a keen understanding of human nature, offering lifelike characterizations. As a poet of human nature, he is renowned for his vivid descriptions, portraying the joys, sorrows, emotions, and sentiments of humanity. His work is rich in 'Svabhāvoktis,' reflecting his keen sense

of humor, optimism, and enthusiasm for life. Upon analyzing the *Mānasollasa*, it becomes evident that Someśvara addresses almost all topics of *Alaṅkāra Śāstra* (the study of poetic ornamentation) in his work. The *Alaṅkāra Śāstra* had been evolving for over a millennium before Someśvara. He meticulously studied the works of his predecessors and incorporated the essential theories and doctrines proposed by earlier rhetoricians into his *Mānasollasa*. Remarkably, Someśvara, a great critic, was also a poet. This harmonious combination of critical acumen and poetic genius is a rarity.

Keywords: *Mānasollasa*, *kāvya*, *Alaṅkāra Śāstra*, *Rāgas*, etc.

It is well-established that the expression of thoughts involves a well-defined mental process. As figures of speech are the diverse modes of expressing thoughts, they are intrinsically tied to psychology. Rudraṭa, the earliest rhetorician, provides a systematic classification of the figures of speech based on the senses. One of the most critical questions discussed in *Alaṅkāra Śāstra* is, "What is the essence or soul of poetry?" The answer to this question determines the definition of poetry. Someśvara's stance does not align with any single school of thought but incorporates elements from various schools, such as *Śabda*, *Artha*, *Alaṅkāra*, *Rasa*, *Chandas*, and *Vokroti* (*Śabdavidyā*), which suggests that he draws from a wide spectrum of sources to address different topics in his work.

In *Mānasollasa*, Chapter Four, Someśvara introduces the concept of *Śāstra Vinoda* and provides a description of *kāvya*. Here, he emphasizes that the meaning of *kāvya* holds paramount importance among its constituents. He delves into aspects such as *prasāda*, *Mādhurya*, *Audārya*, and *Ojas* ^[2], in addition to discussing *Rīti*, *Chandas*, and more. Someśvara also elaborates on the nature of *Mahākāvya* and its characteristics, as well as the concept of *Campu*, a literary style blending prose and verse.

Chapter Four of *Mānasollasa* explores various types of *Rāgas*, such as *Śuddh Rāga* and *Bhinna Rāga*, and *Bhāvas* like *Vibhāva* and *Anubhāva*. In '*Gīta Vinoda*,' Someśvara showcases his poetic ability, and his knowledge extends to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (dramatic theory). He introduces eight *Rasas* in drama, namely *Hāsyā* (humor), *Karuṇā* (pathos), *Śṛṅgāra* (love), *Bibhatsa* (disgust), *Bhayānaka* (fear), *Adbhuta* (wonder), and *Vīra* (heroism). Someśvara follows the footsteps of his predecessors while adding his own scholarly insights. He also demonstrates proficiency in composing poetry in various languages, including *Kannāḍa*, *Marāṭhī*, *Lāta*, and *Prākṛta*.

Someśvara's erudition is evident in his verse that provides concise answers to five questions

1. Who is to be served?
2. What is drunk in a sacrifice?
3. Which is stable?
4. Who protects the beloved?
5. Who is truthful?

In this verse, the answer to all these questions is a single word, 'Śrīmat-soma-mahī-paṭiḥ.' This answer deciphers as follows

1. Śrīmat - a rich man
2. Soma - Rasa

3. Mahī - the earth
4. Paṭi - husband
5. Śrīmat-somamahīpaṭiḥ - the rich King Soma (i.e., Someśvara).

This verse showcases Someśvara's intellectual acumen and mastery of language and subject matter. His language flows effortlessly, his narration is straightforward, and he values substance over form.

Furthermore, Someśvara provides insights into various figures of speech, including

1. **Upamā (Simile):** It involves a striking or beautiful comparison between two objects.
2. **Rūpakālmkāra (Metaphor):** This figure identifies the *Upamāna* (comparator) and the *Upameya* (the object being compared) through an extreme resemblance between the two.
3. **Utprekṣā Alaṅkāra** ^[3] (**Poetical Fancy**): This figure is based on a certain fact and requires a certain degree of similarity and volition in creating a fancy.
4. **Ākṣepa** ^[4] (**Paralipsis**): This figure arises when there is a denial of something that is intended to be affirmed.
5. **Nimīlana (Closing the Eyes):** This involves not seeing some positive thing that exists and has an impact.
6. **Ālambana (Support):** This occurs when a poet talks about an object and emphasizes it in order to establish its existence, subsequently rendering its description through an adjective or figure.

Conclusion

Mānasollasa is a treasure trove of poetic wisdom, and Someśvara's scholarship is evident in his comprehensive understanding of *Alaṅkāra Śāstra*. He seamlessly integrates various aspects of poetry, language, aesthetics, and emotion, providing an extensive guide for poets and scholars alike. His poetic artistry and creativity shine through his verses, making *Mānasollasa* a work that continues to inspire and enlighten readers today. It remains a valuable resource for those interested in the study of Indian poetics and culture.

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