CHAPTER IV
COMMENTARIES

There are original works in Sanskrit in different branches of literature as also of scientific studies. Equally important are the commentaries to these works. A commentary gives elaboration and explanations wherever required. Many commentaries are equally, perhaps more, important than the original work. The commentators like Sankaracharya and Abhimargupta have put forth more genuine ideas than their predecessors who wrote the originals. Commentaries, thus is, an important branch of learning in Sanskrit.

Kerala has made substantial contribution to the field of commentaries both on literary and scientific works. The commentaries of R V P are valuable additions in this field.

Com – of R V P

R V P has commented four works. They are –

1 Sārartha dīpika on Abhijñānasākuntala
2 Bhāvadīpika on Rukmiṇīsvayamvara campu
3 Subodhini on Muktávali.
4 Commentary on Uttaranaśadhīya by name Trisargi – available only for the first three cantos.
COMMENTARIES ON ABHIJñĀNAŚĀKUNTALA

Abh.sak is popular in Kerala mainly as a literary piece. It is read and relished from the literary point view. It is doubtful whether it was appreciated on theatrical merits.

The Kāvyas of Kalidasa mainly attracted the commentators. The dramas did not seem to have fascinated their faculties. For instance Mallinatha who commented on the Kāvyas of Kalidasa did not touch his dramas. The Trivandrum plays also did not have well-recognized commentaries. This being the case it is astonishing to note that Śākuntala alone has more than 30 commentaries. A glance at the existing commentaries will be helpful to get a background to judge the relative merit of each commentary.

I  ŚĀKUNTALA TIPPAṆAM : Dakṣināvartanātha

This can be considered as running commentary on the drama.

The work begins with the following introductory stanza:

आश्रयं दारां धर्म: वारकांमः सत्त्रिभः ॥

यहेऽः ध्रेष्टःहरलं कलिवद्य: कलिवद्य: ॥

This stanza occurs also in the Raghuvamśa dipika by the author.

The short commentary concludes with the colophon:

दुर्गिरोधवर्तकारणं सिद्धितं अर्थमवद्यः ॥

समारम्भम् लिप्तं अवबट्टमीरण्मुख: प्रियम् ॥
Abhijñanasākuntala carca refers to this commentary on five occasions. The passages under reference are –

1 amunā sāramgena - I act

 Tippaṇaṃkārsatru kṛtyādigbhyai Upasaṃkhayānam iti trkeeyetya ha //

2 talsadhu kṛtāsandhānam -

 Tippaṇaṃkārastu talaśdhu tadeva yuktamiti vakyabhedena vyācaṣṭa /

3 “tatraśeṣu ...................... Kreedāsthaneśvityarth” // II Act.

4 Anākkhratam puṣpam II act

 tippaṇakārastu brūte kam bhoktaram .....

 vyavahārah //

5 Āśamsante surayuvatayaḥ

 Āśamasante icchanti prarthayanta iti tippaṇaṃkāraḥ

 The tippaṇa as the name indicates is very brief.

II ARTHADYOTANIKA : Raghavabhatta

 This is one of the most celebrated commentaries on the drama. His style is simple and eloquent on account of which he offers a sharp contrast to the other commentators who often seem to prefer the laconic style while
commenting. The following remark occurring at the end of his commentary reveals his stature as a commentator:

His commentary has given lead to others in the field in explaining the words Kalidasa.

III Dīṇmātradarsāna: Abhirama

Abhirama was the disciple of Rudra and flourished according to A.R. R in the 14th C.A.D. This commentary is very popular in Kerala. The introductory stanza gives the name of the work and author

अबिरामनं यदिमिस्राब्रजाकृतिकलमिति स्मृतम्

वक्तुभिधेयं दिइ.नाब्राजिराजेन लिख्यते

Abhirama has closely followed pūrṇasaraswati in his work. He quotes from many classical authors like Kalidasa, Bharavai, Rajasekhara, Murari, Bhavabhuti, Bhoja, Vagbhata and others. This commentary is an important contribution to the Kalidas studies.

IV. Abhijñānasākuntalacarca

The author of this work is not known. Dr. Kochi G. Paulose has identified him with the author of natankusa attributed to the 15th century A.D.
The work is unique as it gives a theatrical interpretation to the play. The Com. is available only for the first six acts.

V. SĀKUNTALA SAṆṆĪVANA : Ghanasyama

The name of the author is referred to in this stanza.

तत्त्वुचिथ यो न इत्यामः कवीजां स यदि घनश्यामः ।
कवने कामनस्याम्रः किनतूमाथि मुदेत न ख्रामः ॥

The commentary gives an information regarding other works and scholars.

VI. SĀHITYA SĀRA OR SĀHITYA TīKA : Srinivasadikshita

Srinivasadikshita is author of many works and his commentary on Sākuntala is extensive. His confidence on the qualities of his commentary is revealed for these lines.

सत्काव्यकार कालिदास कालिदास रचिताभिख्यात्साहिङ्गकुन्तल ।
त्वारुल्या व्यासहृदे पि विस्मयकारी कीतिनिर्वाहः कृता ॥
VII. ANVAYABODHINI: Srinivasa

The author begins the work with the following statement.

किन्ने मिरदविलम्
प्रणन्या स्मया समुत्सुखम् तेजन्
अन्वयवविधिव्यासान

VIII. RASACANDRIKA: Sankara

The commentary discusses the various aspects of the texts quoting a large number of authorities.

IX. GOVINDABRAHMĀNADIYAM: Govinda Variar

A Kerala scholar named Kochu Govinda Variar belonging to Haripad is the author of third commentary. It is called Samkṣipta Sreenivāśiya, since it is composed as a summary of the extensive commenting of Srinivasa.
SĀRĀRTHADĪPIKA OF RVP

Sārarthadīpika is the last in the series of the Sanskrit commentaries on Sankuntala from Kerala. RVP has co-authorized it with his friend Rama Pisharoti. They have taken Abhirama as their model. The commentary is prepared often carefully examining all the previous writings on Kalidasa. Moreover extensive study of the MSS have helped the author to find a pure version popular in Kerala. This Keralapāṭha differs from the printed texts we get from North in its reading.

This commentary is important in three respects

1. It gives a philosophic interpretation to the whole theme.
2. It employs the method of inner meaning – samādhi
3. It gives the Kerala reading of Sakuntala as popular here for several centuries.

1. Philosophic Interpretation

Kalidasa in Bharatavākyya has prayed for the ultimate liberation of his soul. Perhaps this led the learned scholars to elevate the theme form its empirical romantic level to a higher transcendental plane. According to the commentators Śākuntala is Ātmavidyā and Dusyanta’s search for the
attainment of the same. The play achieves its objects when the hero finally attains her.

The word king etymologically signifies the soul. The chariot signifies the reflection. The horses stand for sense organs. The Āśvāḥ Indriya, Suta for Prāṇa / and the deer stands for the attachment towards the subjects of the world.

The Kulapati is preceptor. Śakuntala is atmavidyā 15. The word Anasuya and Priyamvada stand for the aggregate to ethical excellencies such as absence of jealousy, no use of harsh words and the like never indeed does one who is affected by jealous etc. attain the height of the self, all this has been indirectly conveyed in the first act. 16

In the second act Dusyanta desists from the act of hunting as he attached to Sakuntala 17. The entry of hermits with a request to protect the hermitage provides an occasion for the king. He sends Vidusaka to his capital, and the vidusaka stands for Ahaṁkāra or the ego Viśeṣeṇa duṣayati iti viduṣakah – Ahaṁkara. The greatness of the holy place would enable one to leave out the sense of ego.

In the third act the King attains Śakuntala, philosophically this means that puruṣa has attained self-realization. The fifth and sixth act which portray the loss of memory on the part of the King imply that in the
case of soul which is attained self-realization, there is every possibility of losing sight of it owing to association with the objects of the material world. In the seventh act wherein Dusyanta is portrayed as united with Sakuntala at the Marīcāsrama, it is implied that the purusa owing to the blessing of the high self-personality attains the immediate stage of his true nature and remains bliss. In the Bharatavākyā at the end it is stated that all this is due to the grace of God.²

II. Inner Meaning

Kerala has a hoary tradition of extracting a sub-text from a given text. This they call Inner meaning- akaporul - samādhi in Sanskrit. The Kūtiyāttam Theatre has used this technique successfully.²

The interpretation of Sakuntala as ātmavidyā is a samadhi. There are many other instances of employing this method in this commentary. For example in explaining these lines the com. States as follows

मुक्तेषु रहितमेषु विराजयत पूर्वकायः ।

The intention of the poet is brought out in some occasion with rare insight- E.g. The King gets down from the chariot and hands over his ornaments and the bow to the charioteer by saying that hermitages are
holy places and one who draws nearer to it shall do so in a humble manner.

विनीतवचेण प्रवेष्टप्राप्ति तपोवनालिनि नाम ।
हदम् तावदु प्रतिवृहत्यताम् हि ॥

Here our commentators R V P and R P explain the care that Kalidasa has taken for using words. They remarked that Kalidasa has not said that one should draw near a hermitage without wearing one’s ornaments. He has only said that one while doing so should be humble. By this Kalidasa indicates that the ornament, which one should wear, must be worn. That is why the King has not given his ring to the charioteer as one should always wear the ring.20

The commentary gives different meanings to the same verse in accordance to the tone it is uttered. For example the verse – ‘asmān sādhu’ contains meanings at three levels – Šama, Dama and Bheda. This shows the close familiarity of the authors with the stage traditions.

III. Kerala Version Of Śākuntala

S.D. gives the different readings in many occasions and choses the correct one, which is prevalent in Kerala.
महायान दृष्टे सुपक्सि बहुरो वेणप्पु मतीन्
रहस्यान्यत्वीय स्वस्ति मदुकरण्यावित्तिकरः
करां व्याख्यान्यतः: पिरासिः रतिस्वरस्वमधर्मः
वर्य मात्रावेयणमधुकर हवस्थी खलुकृती

(Act I verse – 25)

Calāpāṅgam dṛṣṭam is used by locanakāraḥ etc.
‘cala’ is adjective form.

The meaning is also given there. Here it seems that ‘calāpāṅgam’
is the suitable version.

This is the nature of S.D. While considering the opinions of other
scholars, disagreement with their views is indicated in mild way. The
commentary thus is dignified elaborate with the new meanings. This is
perhaps one of the best commentaries of Sākuntala.

The dissatisfaction is indicated in a mild way. Even if we practice
other commentaries it is doubtful. Whether one will get the benefits we
get from S.D. The people of Kerala can be proud of S.D.
COMMENTARIES – Comparative Study:

In this context it seems interesting to enter on a comparative study of Śākuntala commentaries of Kerala with that of other places.

It is a renowned fact that there are many interpretations in the works of Kalidasas. With regard Sakuntala the version given by Abhirama is accepted commonly as the pure one. Fortunately all the Keralite versions there is no dearth of additions. Āśrama mṛgoyam na hantavyo na hantavyah “: after this quotation sreenivasa leearns another verse “na khalu na khalu bāṇah.” There is no doubt that this is an addition, because the same idea has already been mentioned. Abhirama and other Keralite interpreters did not accept this verse. Raghava bhatta is also with the Kerala authors in this matter.

Identification of correct reading.

The Keralites are in the forefront of choosing the proper text. The example, the second line of the verse start with “anāghṛatam puṣpam” is learned by Sreenivasam as ‘anāvidham ratnam’. He gives the meaning of imperforated to the word anavidham and illustrates that the extra-ordinary beauty has not been touched by any one and thereby implies chastity and by the word Ratna implies noble womanhood and scarcity.
Raghavabhatta also accepted this version but seems to experience some difficulty in furnishing the gist. After saying that ‘Sthūlavedhanatvam’ is a defect and the defectlessness is manifested by this usage, he gives another meaning to this as ‘akutilam’ subsequent to an over thought. Now come back to Keralite interpretations. The version of Abhirama is ‘anāmuktam ratnam’ and its illustration is given as not worn as an ornament. The aesthetic beauty of this usage is still more manifested in Sārārthādīpika. Its says that if it is adorned the ornament may gather filth from the body and hence not worn. By this the extra ordinary beauty and nobility occurs to nobility are manifested.

Sārārthādīpika gives new meanings and dimension to the Śākuntala studies. It is to be regretted that this valuable contribution is little known outside Kerala.
RUKMIṆĪŚVAYAMVARA CAMPU - BHĀVADĪPIKA

Rukmiṇīśvayamvara of Itavettikkattu Narayanan Nambutiri is a well-known campu describing the Mba story of Rukmini’s marriage to kṛṣṇa. Scholars have praised this campu as equal to those of Melputtur in poetic merits. The campu is used by Chākyārs.

The commentary RVP wrote to this Campū is very attractive. The commentary is exhaustive and gives the reader a glimpse to the scholarship of the author indifferent branches of knowledge.

RVP explains every verse and passage giving word by word meaning, Alaṅkāra, Grammatical peculiarities and rasa. Quotations from classical works like Dasarūpaka, Dhvanyāloka, Abhijñānasākuntala, Kumārasāmbhva etc. are seen in abundance in the commentary.

The commentary gives apart from the meaning alaṅkāra etc. necessary information regarding the customs to be followed. The description of ‘lājahoma’ is an example. It was after the marriage of Rukmīni, the husband and wife went round the fire. Melputtūr also has accepted this order in Paṅcālīśvayamvara. But Kalidasa prefers the other reverse order. Our poet has followed Kalidasa.
At the end of the commentary the author gives in three verses, the details of this percepter and some biographical notes, which is very much useful for us.

The name of the commentary itself is important, it sheds a light to the emotions depicted as also the devotion of the author to Lord Vishnu.
SUBODHINI

The traditional texts on sastras are classified under two heads—Prakaraṇa and Vāda. The ancient and original texts of a particular branch come under the first. In Nyāyaśāstra, for example, the Siddhāntamukthāvali by Viśvanātha and its commentary Prakāśa by Mahadeva are the basic texts (Prakaraṇagrantha). Texts like Maṇidīdhiti and Gādādhari are comparatively modern and are classified under the second category of Vādagrantha. They are the elaborations, elucidations and commentaries of the basic texts. Therefore for a student of Nyāya the story of basic text is a pre-requisite, for his study of the higher texts—Vādagranthas. Mukthāvali with its prakāśa commentary thus forms the basic text for any Nyāya student.

Mukthāvali has several commentaries like Prabhā and Maṇjusha. But they are not very useful for its story. The accepted commentary for it is prakāśa and hence considered as Prakaraṇa. But this Prakāśa commentary is not complete. Dinakara Bhatta completed it. Hence Prakāśa is also called Dinakarīya.

The teachers and students of Dinakarīya are highly benefited by a commentary for it by Rudrabhatta. The commentary is known as tarangini. Unfortunately this is not complete. It is available only upto the Sabda parecheda.
It was in this background that RVP took up the ardorus work of writing and elaborates commentary for Prakāśa by name subodhini.

It has to be noted that RVP has a special inclination to the Prakāśa commentary. There was in Kumbhakoṇa a quiet Nyāya scholar by name Īśvārachārya who was the student of the direct disciple of Ramarudrabhatta the author of Tarangini. Being directly connected to the prakāśa and its commentary through his guru Īśvācārya had a scholastic particularly towards Prakāśa. It was he who brought the Nyāya tradition to Tripunithura by teaching the Rājarṣi. The present Sanskrit College was established in honour of this guru – Īśvācārya. Rājarṣi was the guru of RVP for his higher studies in Nyāya. Thus the tradition of Ramarudra from Kumbhakoṇam passed through Īśvācārya to Tripunithura and was inherited by RVP. Naturally the Tripunithura School of Nyāya Sāstra is partial towards the views of the author Prakāśa.

It is quite natural in the above background that RVP is highly in favour of the views of Prakāśakāra. The author of Prabhā has attacked the views of prakāśa on several occasions at times without sufficient justification. Mañjushakāra generally appreciates and approves the line of Prakāśa, yet at times he too has adversely criticised his views. Ramarudra also has pointed out certain blemishes in the prakāśa commentary.
The efforts of RVP therefore are concentrated on refuting vehemently all the arguments against Prakāśa, which the author does with a rare clarity and insight. He refers to Karikāvali, Muktāvali etc. Only as long as it helps him in defending the arguments of Prakāśa.

Another important aspect of Subodhini is that it tries to work art correct reading for the text. The available texts are corrupt with mistakes both in printing and by wrong reading. RVP took pain to collect as many old MSS as possible and held discussions with his colleagues on the correctness of all doubtful reading and prepared a correct reading for the text. This has helped the Teachers and students to remove any ambiguity and doubts. Deep research in old records and what he learned from his gurus formed the solid base in which the author built up his arguments. This he studied the intricate disputations contained in all the ancient texts, codified them and included the relevant portions at the appropriate place in the new work. Subodhini this is not a simple commentary of Prakāśa, but represent the sum total of all the existing works.

Thāranginī is not complete, it does not go beyond śabda paricheda. Want of commentary for Gunjakāndha was a great handicap for teachers and students. RVP therefore attempted an elaborate commentary for the guna portion.

The private secretary to RVP first published Subodhini in 1956. Only a few copies of it were circulated. The loose printed sheets of the rest were
entrusted to the Sanskrit College and in 1987 the college brought out sufficient copies including it as the 17th title of Ravivarman Samskṛta Granthāvali the publication of the Subodini is a landmark in the history of Nyaya studies in the country. Undoubtedly it is the most valuable addition to the treasure of the vāda granthās in Nyaya of this century.

RVP had commented many literacy texts including drama. It was in ripe age that he took up this heavy sastraic text so as to justify the claim of Sri harsha that he was equally proficient in Sastra as was in Sāhitya. 20

His close associate Mānṭhitta has contributed a short tippani to the text.
The story of Nalā and Damayanti in the Mahābhārata has inspired many parts to narrate it in their own medium. Sri Harsha has retold in 22 cantos story in his Naishadhiya. Unfortunately the work is in complete. A Malayalam poet tried to complete it in the latter half of the 18th century. He is a Brahmin – Arur Atitiri the preceptor of the famous Manorama Thampurātty.

The latter part of the story is described in the cantos. The theme is threefold than described by Harsha. Atitiri had to condense it in 16 cantos. Hence the form is more or less narration. The poet could not give detached description or dwells our figures of speech. Yet he has succeeding in accomplishing his desire of fulfilling the left out portions.

RVP attached by the beauty of the work and attempted to give a commentary to it. He has worked only on the first three cantos. The commentary is elaborate and gives all the necessary details such as alankāra Vṛtti etc. it also gives references to Sri Harsha’s work and at times enters upon comparison with it. RVP had a partiality to Sri Harsha and elsewhere he has strongly defended him. The UN is published with the com from Tripunithura in 1973.
References:


2. Ibid P. 21

3. Ibid Ind Act P.P. 110 – 111

4. ibid Ind Act P.124.

5. ed. Bombay

6. T.G.Mainkar, studies in Sanskrit Dramatic Criticism, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi 1971, P.39


10. Abhijñānaśākuntalacarca and Natāṅkuśa have a common authorship.
ASC is a commentary on Kalidasa’s Sanskrit Sākuntala. The author is not mentioned in the text. We believe that both these works emanated from the same author. The conclusion is based on the following grounds.

a) Mahimabhatta, the critic of Ananda, is held in high esteem by both. There are several references in the texts to him. Also the two works commonly share Mahimabhatta’s Sanskrit rebellious character.

b) Both the texts depend on common sources. A comparison of the authorities quoted proves this.

c) The two texts share a common vocabulary. Rare words are seen used—

Eg — Ghantapathah, Pistapasanam, Varnika, Kaparda etc. Even sentences and ideas are seen repeated. Example—

d) Visateh punah karma rangamityarthat labhayate ASC - 10

e) Visateh karma kim rangena vina Bhavet NKS - 16

f) Visterapi vartamanatvat lata nirdesah ASC - 28

g) Kascartho vartamosya latah ityatidurghatam NKS - 16

h) ASC starts with a detailed description of Purvaranga closely resembling the discussion on Kriya in NKS.

i) NKS criticises the introduction of Kriya. He sarcastically refers to it Kriyakolahala. ASC calls it bahala bahalam. The Kriya here is performed by Sutradhara abnd not by a character. Yet ASC opposes it.
j) ASC questions the propriety of Sūtradhāra inviting a character — Maitreya. This closely follows the line adopted by NKS.

k) The arguments against the use of local language are the same in both.

l) The Sūtradhara is not anukārya. He can appear in his original dress.

Then can he not use his own language instead of Sanskrit? - ASC

m) No. Natyanayaya has to be followed.

n) Rama can use the language Sanskrit spoken in Uttarakāsala to where he belongs. Sanskrit is the language of Gods, not of Rama - NKS

o) No, Natyanyaya has to be followed.

p) Recognition of imitated and reflected characters is an original contribution of NKS. ASC reiterates this stand on several occasions. For ex-See the discussion of the rasa in the verse Grīvābhangaḥbhīrāma.

Again while describing the mode of introducing chariot in the stage ASC directs to present them through hand gestures. This is the opinion of NKS while presenting serpents’ etc.

q) The strongest evidence in favour of common authorship is the reference to the title of the play NKS. ASC holds that the title with a longthened ‘a’ is erroneous, instead it should be Abhijñānasākuntala. The most reliable Mss of NKS available in the Killimangalam collections
preserves this reading. If it is relied on, we have done so in this edition, it is a conclusive proof for a common authorship.

r) Unlike many of his predecessors the author of ASC recognizes the inseparable union of theatre and drama. Hence his discussions are not on theoretical grounds alone. The reference of non-deformation of Śākuntala etc, in NKS points to the practice of presenting Sanskrit dramas which the ASC also seems to attest.

s) In the light of these we can safely assign common authorship to NKS and ASC. The date does not pose a problem. In all probability, the NKS belongs to the 15th century A.D.


13. Starting sloka – Sreebala Govinda Vārija kṛtau,
   Govindabrahamanandiyabhijdhe śākunthala vyākhāyane
   prathamankāh.

14. Mangalodayam, Trichur 1913
   KSSC VI 138-42

15. Śakantāh paksiṇāh hamsāh, parahamsaḥ taiḥ lalitā śakunthala
   Ātmavidya/
16. पुरुषस्थानम् प्रदेशः एव मुख्यविषयविषयायं तथा प्रभावात
परोक्षव्याप्तिविग्नायां प्रकाश्यायामासः स तु तथा न झालवान्।
किंतु केवलं प्रकाशीरुत्तेत्वाद् असुब्राह्मणिवंतवादा पदे
ज्ञानदाति सामन्य પरे। असुब्राह्मणिवंतवादार्थविद्वेषते
बहुत्तात्मविद्या दृष्टवत्त इति ज्ञानदातस्तवः
स्तु-साक्ष्यवृत्तितयाध्यायानां प्रथमादि, द्वितीये विद्योपेण
दृष्टस्वत्वीति विद्वृत्कोहकार स्तरस्य विष्कानुभवसिद्धान्त
इत्यादिविद्यायां प्रत्येके पुरुषे निवेदः।

17. Philosophical means the soul when it is keen on attaining self
knowledge desist to activities such as hunting and like.

18. मृगया च हिंसेऽति आत्माविद्यायां प्रवृत्तस्य निवृत्तीः
, पुनर्गुणोपनिवृत्तार्थं आश्रमसाहित्यस्यार्थिकरणायाभित्रः
- हद्दक्षरस्य विसेधावृ परिवार इत्यादित्तरस्य, 
तृतीये
चात्रनसाहित्यार्थिकोपलोक्षित्तित्तरस्य, पद्धत म यथोऽस्तथा
लक्ष्यविध्वस्तु पुनरं विशसाभिष्ठत्व मण्ड्यरणमासीदित्तरस्य,
सतपभे, 
पुनरं गुणव्यक्तसाहित्यार्थ सत्सेभेन्तात् तामुपलग्ध
परिपुरोषालाभूदित्तरस्य सर्वनेतरं परमेश्वरातिविलास एवेति
भवत्वावस्य च समाधि:।
19. Presentation of inner-meaning – A tradition peculiar to Kerala

Sanskrit Theatre – Pouluse K.G. (Dr) All India Oriental Conference,
Pune 1993.

20. साहित्य युगान्तरस्तुक्ति हृदयाक्षयविन्ध्यले /
तक्के वा मर्थि संविधानां मक्क मृतायमेते भारती //