SANKARADEVA'S RUKMINI-HARAṆA AND PĀRIJĀṬA-HARAṆA NĀṬAS

A. LIFE AND WORKS OF SANKARADEVA:
A BRIEF SKETCH

Sāṅkaradeva, the pioneer of the Neo-Vaiśṇavite movement of Assam, was also a musician, poet, dramatist and a great social reformer. As with many other personalities of the early period there is some controversy about the date of his birth and the span of his life also. The early biographies of the saint have not mentioned the date of his birth. Only Daityāri Thākura, one of the earliest reliable biographers, has clearly mentioned the date of his death on 1568 A.D. (1490 Šakābda)\(^1\). But he is silent about the date of his birth and span of his life. But biographers since the eighteenth century have recorded two dates of his birth viz. 1449 A.D. (1371 Šaka) and 1463 A.D. (1385 Šaka). The tradition as well as the majority of the biographies of the later period, however, supports the former date. The modern opinion is also in favour of accepting 1449 A.D. as the year of Sāṅkaradeva's birth.\(^2\) The Kathā-guru-carita gives Thursday Kārtikā Samkrānti, that is, Kāti Bihu day (the last day of Āświna) of 1371 Šaka as the date of birth, 119 years 6 months as the span of his life and 1490 Šaka as the year of passing away.\(^3\)

Sāṅkara lost his parents very early in his life and was left to the care of his grandmother, Khersūti, the wife of Sūryavara. Starting his education late, Sāṅkara had his first education in schools (tols) maintained

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2. (a) B. Kakati, *Mother Goddess Kamakhya*, 1948, p. 72
   (b) L. Bezbarua, *Śrī Sāṅkaradeva Āru Śrī Mādhavadeva*, ed. 1, 1914; ed. 2, 1963
by Mahendra Kandali at Bardowā¹ where he was taught medieval Sanskrit lore. On completion of his education he settled down as a householder. After the death of his first wife Sūryavatī and marriage of their daughter Manu, Śaṅkara set out on his first pilgrimage (1481). During this pilgrimage of twelve years duration he covered almost all the important holy places of India.² Details of his travel differs from account to account. Daityārī narrates that Śaṅkara went to Jagannāth Kṣetra of Puri and stayed there for a longer period.³ It is not unlikely that Śaṅkaradeva might have received spiritual illumination from one Vaiṣṇava saint at Puri. Due to his (the Vaiṣṇava saint’s ) close intimacy with Śaṅkara, he sent one Jagadīś Miśra with a copy of Bhagavata recite and ultimately handed over it to the saint of Assam.

On returning from the pilgrimage Śaṅkaradeva set himself to the tasks of propagating his new faith. His kinsmen insisted him on marrying for a second time and taking up the duties of Śiromoni Bhuyān. At last he yielded to the pressure and married Kālindī (1497) but declined to be chief of the Bhuyāns and expressed his desire to lead a life of devotion and prayer. Śaṅkaradeva had a prayer hall (devagṛha) built by his brother Rāmarāī at his native place where regular prayers and discussions began to be held. Śaṅkaradeva arranged one dramatic performance known as Cihna-yātrā.⁴ The success of this performance earn him reverence of the people and he was accepted as a preacher of the new faith.

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2. Ibid, pp. 29-33
Śaṅkaradeva's new faith came to be known as Neo-Vaiṣṇavism. It is also known as Ekaśaraṇa Nāmadharma, the religion of complete surrender to the supreme one. Thus Śaṅkara's Vaiṣṇava movement had its inception while he was at his native place Bardowā. Śaṅkaradeva and his relatives had to leave the Bhuyān territories for fear of the Kachāries. After temporary stays at several places they migrated farther and settled finally at Dhuwāhāta. Here at Dhuwāhāta that Śaṅkara won to his side his great disciple and apostle, Mādhavadeva in 1522.¹ This union gave a new impetus to the progress of Vaiṣṇavism in Assam.

But in the meantime the happenings in the Ahom kingdom embittered the feelings of Śaṅkaradeva and ultimately made him decide to migrate. The kingdom of the Koch king Naranarayanawho had the reputation of the patronising scholars and saints was considered an ideal resort. So ultimately Śaṅkaradeva set out with his relatives and faithful followers for Kāmrūpa which was then a part of the kingdom of Naranāryāyana. After temporary staying at several places he finally settled permanently at Pāṭbāṣī near Barpetā and lived there for about eighteen or twenty years of his life.

At Pāṭbāṣī, the prayer hall and the shrine having been erected, regular religious discussions and recitation of the Bhāgavata, dramatic performance and congregational chanting of prayers were regularly held. Three of his Brahmin associates Dāmodaraṇa, Hārideva, Ananta Kandali came under his influence.

From Pāṭbāṣī Śaṅkara went on his second pilgrimage and visited Purī. He was accompanied by about one hundred followers (1550 A.D.) including Mādhavadeva.

¹ R. Deva Goswami, ed. Essays on Śaṅkaradeva, 1996, p. xi
On his return the pilgrimage Śaṅkara now resumed his customary work of holding congregations, receiving neophytes and writing books. The growing popularity of the new faith also drew fresh hostilities against him, mainly from the old priestly class who could not tolerate Śaṅkara’s teachings. They lodged complaint before king Naranārāyana that Śaṅkaradeva, a śūdra was preaching and practising religion which he was not entitled to do. The king sent for Śaṅkaradeva with a view to punishing him. He was taken to Cilārāi’s abode directly.

As Śaṅkaradeva presented himself in the royal court, the king was deeply moved by his scholarship and the virtue of the faith he propagated and honoured him with costly presents and requested him to attend the court every morning. The king became a patron and remained a patron till the last. At the request of the king Śaṅkara had a magnificent cloth woven under his own supervision and presented it to the king. In this Vṛndāvanī Vastra the idea of Vṛndāvana was shown in designs in coloured threads.¹ He carried this huge cloth from Pāṭbāusī by boat.

Considering his great contributions in the fields of religion, literature, music and theatre Śaṅkaradeva may be rightly called the noblest and greatest man that has been ever born in Assam. Śaṅkaradeva established numerous sattras and nāmgharas at different places which in the course of time have become centres of Assamese culture. People of Assam belonging to various castes, tribes and races were attracted by his new faith based on devotional principles. Thus Śaṅkaradev’s Neo-Vaiṣṇavite movement turned the land of Kamrupa famous from the earliest times as the stronghold of Tantricism and Saktism into a predominantly Vaiṣṇavite land.

¹ Rāmcaran Ṭhākura, Gurucarit, ed. Basanta Bhattacharyya, 1995, v. 3612
One of the important social contributions of the movement is the upliftment of the backward castes. The regours of caste distinctions were considerably reduced as people of all castes and even tribal groups were freely initiated into the new religion. A significant process of integration has been set in motion by the activities of the Vaiṣṇava preachers of Assam. Even persons outside the fold of Hinduism were also accepted by Śaṅkaradeva as his immediate disciples, e.g. Jaihari Āṭai originally a Muslim, Govinda Āṭai, a Garo, Bholāi Āṭai, a Mikir and Rām Āṭai, a Kachāri.¹

Early Assamese religious literature in the forms of renderings into Assamese from original Sanskrit texts was started by Śaṅkaradeva and his colleagues and continued till modern times under the guidance and in of the heads of various sattras. Out of the twelve books of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa he rendered into Assamese verse no less than seven of which book X (Daśama-Skandha) is most famous. The saint made all his major poetical and dramatic works at Pāṭbāusi. The last section of the Kīrtana Ghoṣā were also completed there. His Guṇamālā in verse remains the master piece of his poetic ginius. Śaṅkara is the creator of the class of one-act plays known as Āṅkīyā nāṭas. There are six such Āṅkīyā nāṭas in Brajabuli language. Śaṅkaradeva composed a large number of devotional songs based on rāgas, these songs in the later years came to be known as Bargītas. The Bargītas reveal Śaṅkaradeva as a scholar, a poet and a passionate devotee. The sattras have continued to act as the centres for the cultivation of these art forms. In later periods these Bargītas became characteristically associated with the sattra system and used as part of daily and occasional prayer services.

¹TS.K. Bhuyan, Studies in the History of Assam, 1985, p.55
Dramatic performance generally known as Bhōonā introduced for the first time by Śaṅkaradeva nearly five hundred years ago, as the medium of religious propagation continued up to the present time. The Aṅkīyā natas written by Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva including other Vaiṣṇava poets of Assam are still enacted in various sattras. With the increase in popularity of the Bhōonā performances in the various sattra circles a particular class of artisans began to specialise in the art of preparing the various accessories necessary for the performance. The accessories included such things as the effigies and masks representing demons, animals and birds.
B. SOME LITERARY ASPECTS

(a) PLOTS OF THE RUKMINI-HARAṆA AND PĀRIJĀTA-HARAṆA NĀṬAS

Both Rukmiṇī-haraṇa and Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭas of Śaṅkaradeva centre round the theme of 'haraṇa' (which means abduction as well as stealing or robbing). The former as its title suggests is about the 'haraṇa' or abduction of Rukmiṇī by Kṛṣṇa. Both of them have already been attracted towards each other by the stories of their matchless beauty and enviable virtues. King Bhīṣmaka, Rukmiṇī's father, also wants to marry his daughter to Kṛṣṇa, but is strongly opposed by his son Rukma. He wants one Śiśupāla, a groom of his choice, to marry his sister and he even invites Śiśupāla to Bidarbha. At this stage seeing no way out Rukmiṇī sends Bedanidhi, a Brahmin with a letter to Kṛṣṇa requesting him to take her away immediately. Kṛṣṇa rushes to Bidarbha and as he is about to take away Rukmiṇī from the temple of Bhavanī, Śiśupāla with other kings challenges Kṛṣṇa to a fight only to be routed by him. Kṛṣṇa also defeated Rukma, but spares his life at the request of Rukmiṇī and let him go after shaving his head as a punishment. Thereafter Rukmiṇī is taken to Dwārakā where marriage between them is solemnized.

On the other hand, 'haraṇa' (stealing) of the divine Pārijāta flower constitutes the theme of the nāṭa bearing the same name. One day celestial sage Nārada calls on Kṛṣṇa to report the evil doings of Narakaśura of Prāgjyotiśpura. He has with him a divine Pārijāta flower which he offers as a present to Kṛṣṇa telling him about its wondrous virtue. Nārada then describes the sad plight of the gods and goddess of heaven in the hands of demon Naraka and urges upon him to rescue
them. Kṛṣṇa assures Nārada of killing Naraka. Then turning towards Rukmiṇī who has been sitting by him, he puts the divine flower in her hair. Mischievous Nārada reports this incident in an exaggerated way to Satyabhāmā, another consort of Kṛṣṇa's with a view to rouse her jealousy. She in fact smarts from a feeling of humiliation and insists on Kṛṣṇa bringing a Pārijāta for herself. Not satisfied with Kṛṣṇa's promise she accompanies him to heaven. So Kṛṣṇa takes her with him and after killing Nārada arrives heaven and sends Nārada to collect a flower from Indra. But Śaci, the consort of the king of heaven, refuses to give the flower. At this enraged Kṛṣṇa uproots the whole plant to carry with him and as a result a fierce fighting breaks not between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. Even Satyabhāmā and Śaci quarrel and there is angry exchange of words between them. In the fighting Indra is defeated and he acknowledges Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Lord and presents him the plant of the Pārijāta flower. Kṛṣṇa carries it and plants at the gate of Satyabhāmā's palace.

The stories of both the nāṭas are found in Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa, Harivaṃśa, and Viṣṇu-purāṇa. The episode of Rukmiṇī-harana occurs in the 52-54th chapters of the tenth part of the Bhāgavata purāṇa, in 47-51st chapters of Viṣṇuparva of Harivaṃśa and in only twelve verses of 25th chapter of the fifth part of Viṣṇu-purāṇa. Similarly the episode of the Pārijāta-harana constitutes the 59th chapter of tenth part of Bhāgavata-purāṇa, the 120-133rd chapters of Viṣṇuparva of Harivaṃśa and the 29th to 31st chapters of the fifth part of Viṣṇu-purāṇa.

It may be worth nothing that Śaṅkaradeva had composed a long poem, Rukmiṇī-harana kāvyā, before he indited the nāṭa on the
same theme. We know from Śaṅkaradeva's own admission\(^1\) that he had made use of both the Bhāgavata and Harivaṃśa in composing that poem. Some critics therefore try to assert that in case of the play on the same topic Śaṅkaradeva used Harivaṃśa and Viṣṇupurāṇa along with the Bhāgavata as the source of the play\(^2\). But neither the plot nor the sequence of events in the nāṭa lends support to this view.\(^3\) Rather Śaṅkaradeva seems to strictly adhere to Bhāgavata only in writing this play. Of course in composing Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa he exploited both the Bhāgavata and Harivaṃśa for materials.\(^4\) In the Bhāgavata both the episodes of killing Narakāśura and of stealing the Pārijāta from heaven are included in the same chapter and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is shown to have accomplished both the aims in a single journey. But in Harivaṃśa these two episodes are treated separately as two distinct and different episodes. In including both the episodes in his Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa Śaṅkaradeva has definitely adhered to Bhāgavata only.

The themes of both the nāṭas, though borrowed from original Sanskrit scriptures, bear indelible stamp of Śaṅkaradeva's creativity. In the construction of the plot as well as in characterization he has displayed his originality and his skill in the use of dramatic technique. As for instance in the original Sanskrit stories there are no names to the bhatas (mendicant singers). Śaṅkaradeva has given them names and identity in

\(^1\) eke harivaṃṣā kathā amṛta saksata
aro bhāgavata kathā miśra dilo tāta
duo kathā pade bandhe rākhiho milai
jene madhu miśra dūgdha ati svāda pāya

- Śrī Śaṅkara Bākyāṃṛta
  (ed. H.N. Dutta Baruah)
  Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Kāvya, v. 5

\(^2\) Dr. Harinath Sarmadalai, Asamīya Nāṭya Sāhitya Jñānani,

\(^3\) Dr. R. Thakuria, ed. Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa, 1986 'Bhumika', p.25

\(^4\) Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, Asamīya Nāṭya Sāhitya, ed. 2, 1965, p.49
his nāṭa. Similarly, the unnamed Brahmin messenger sent by Rukmiṇī to Kurṣṇa with a letter becomes a lively character in the person of Bedanidhi. The name Śaśīprabhā to the queen of Bidarbha is also Śaṅkaradeva’s creation. The wonderful description of the grace and beauty of Rukmiṇī in Nāṭa owes entirely to the saint’s poetic genius. The Bhāgavata describes the kings who are besides themselves with carnal desire at the sight of beautiful Rukmiṇī, but there is no mention how they were laughed at by the companions of Rukmiṇī. By adding the reaction of the companions of Rukmiṇī Śaṅkaradeva has succeeded in making the kings appear more ludicrous. Fainting of Brahmā in the wedding hall at the sight of Rukmiṇī is also a product of Śaṅkaradeva’s imagination.

Similarly, in Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa also he added new dimensions to the character of Nārada and depicted him as a mischievous person playing tricks for fun. The quarrel between Satyabhāmā and Śaci towards end of the play is also Śaṅkaradeva’s own creation which helps in taking story to its climex.

In the following pages I have attempted an elaborate discussion on the various aspects of these two nāṭas under the headings characterization, language and use of figures of speech and rasa (sentiments) with a view to show his originality and unique dramatic skill.

(b) CHARACTERIZATION

The aṅkīyā nāṭas, devised primarily for the propagation of Vaiṣṇavism, have been immensely popular since their inception. Perhaps this general popularity is due to their appealing themes and the depth of characterization. A true dramatic genius Śaṅkaradeva has been able to create sharply individualized characters in his nātas at a time when
dramatic literature was not developed in any of the modern Indo-Aryan languages. Besides, to add topicality to the plots he has introduced in them a good number of imaginary characters not found in their original versions and thus succeeded in making them more appealing to the masses. In *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa* and *Pārījāta-haraṇa Nāṭas* also we find a good number of such characters.

**Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa**: Dramatic personae of *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa* are Kṛṣṇa, Rukmiṇī, Bhīṣmaka, Rukmavīra, Bedanidhi, Haridāsa, Surabhi, Śīśupāla, Daivakī, Lilāvatī, Madanamañjari and others.

A brief analysis of the characters is given below:

**Śri Kṛṣṇa**: He is the chief protagonist of *Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa*. Through different situations and actions of the nāṭa he has been depicted both as an incarnation of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, and as a mortal being to fulfill the missions of human life. He has been endowed with all the noble virtues and is projected as a symbol of manly prowess with immense courage.

Like any ordinary other mortal he is overwhelmed with passionate love for Rukmiṇī about whose beauty and virtues he hears from a wandering minstrel, Surabhi. As an ideal king he is full of reverence to the elders and the wise. He rushes to welcome Bedanidhi as soon as his arrival is announced and embraces him and ushers him into the palace with deep respect — "brāhmanaka paranāmi ālingi dhariye abhyantara parabesa karāwala"\(^1\) etc.

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\(^1\) *Rh*, p. 41
He displays his great valour in defeating Śiśupāla and other kings in the battle. He fulfils the heart's desire of Rukmini, a true devotee, by marrying her.

In sparing the life of Rukmavīra after being vanquished in the battle at the instance of his Rukmini he shows his love and affection for his spouse.

The nāṭa leaves no doubt in the minds of the audience that he is the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu himself. This fact is being stressed at the beginning of the nāṭa - "je jagataka para guru nārāyana jāheri aṁse avatari bārambahra bhumiṅa bhāra haraya sohi bhagavanta śrīkṛṣṇa sāksāte āpuni avatari ohi sabhāmadhye rukmini-haraṇa bhāra nṛtya parama kautuke karaba" (That Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of the Supreme master of the Universe who has appeared in this world again and again to relieve her of the burdens of sins, will personally present himself in this council to perform happily the play of Rukmini-haraṇa). Through this character Śaṅkaradeva succeeded in popularising Kṛṣṇa worship cult among the masses.

Bhīṣmaka: In Bhīṣmaka, the king of Kuṇḍina, we find a picture of responsible father. He is ever aware of his duty towards his daughter. He seeks the suggestion of his ministers and kinsmen on the matter of his daughter's marriage, though he considers Śrī Kṛṣṇa of Dwārakā to be the only groom worthy of Rukmini. But being old he has lost his resoluteness and fails to go against the will of his arrogant son Rukma and unwillingly consents to marry his daughter to Śiśupāla, the choice

1. Rh.p.6
Rukma as a groom for Rukmiṇī. But after Kṛṣṇa has taken away Rukmiṇī he proceeds to Dwārakā to perform the sacred duty of offering his daughter in marriage.

**Rukma:** He is the son of king Bhīṣmaka and elder brother of Rukmiṇī. He is depicted as an arrogant prince proud of his own power. He has deep affection for his sister. When his father decides to marry her to Kṛṣṇa he vehemently opposes and says: "Ah hāmāra bhagini rukminika kāhāka sakati kṛṣṇaka bibāha dewaba"¹ (Ah! who has the power to marry my sister to Kṛṣṇa). He himself chooses a groom for his dear sister. He has his own reasons of rejecting Kṛṣṇa as a groom. According to him he is guilty of many sins like slaughter of cow, killing of women and even of his own maternal uncle: "se jādava anācāra, gobadha, stribadha, mātula badha kata pāpa kaye thika"². He vows that if he fails to vanquish Kṛṣṇa and to bring back Rukmiṇī he will not enter the city of Kuṇḍīna. True to his vow after being defeated by Kṛṣṇa, he never comes to his own kingdom. In this regard Dr. Ramcharan Thakuria comments: "In reality it is the actions of Rukmacāra that helps the development of the plot and carries it to its climax"³. According to Dr. Harinath Sarmadalai Rukmi is a tragic figure from the point of view of his actions as well by nature. His fate creates in the minds of the audience a tragic feeling ⁴.

**Bedanidhi:** The name Bedanidhi is a wonderful creation of Śaṅkaradeva. In the original Sanskrit Bhāgavata it is nameless character. Śaṅkaradeva has created a living character out of this nameless letter-bearer Brāhmaṇa of the Bhāgavata. He is the source of the humour of the nāṭa. But he

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1. Rh, p. 26
2. Ibid
3. Dr. R. Thakuria, ed. Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa, ed. 1, 1974, p. 35
4. Dr. Harinath Sarmadalai, Śaṅkaradevara Sāhitya Pratibhā, ed. 1, 1950, p. 171
means well to all. He enjoys working for others. He is deeply moved by the sufferings of Rukmiṇī. He tells her "hāmu thākite tohāka ki manadukha thika he mātā tāpa cāraha"¹ (So long I am here nothing can trouble you. Oh mother, stop grieving). About bringing Kṛṣṇa from Dwārakā he boastfully says: "kṛṣṇaka ènite kona cintā thika tapaka mahimāye ākāsaka candra āni dite pāru"² (There is no problem in bringing Kṛṣṇa. I can even bring the moon from the heaven by the power of my meditation). He is totally devoid of any greed. In return to his service to Rukmiṇī he wants nothing. He says, "he mātā hāmāra āsirbbāde śrī kṛṣṇa sahite tohāka subasati hoka taba hāmāra sakala parasāda-bhela"³ (Oh! mother, I bless may you live happily with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and that will be my ample reward). Again, failing to stand the speed of the chariot his hands and feet become motionless, his belly swells and breathing fails him. He has no senses like a dead man; "hāta pāwa thira bhela, peta uphandala, nāsāta niswāsa nāhi niḥsare, jaice mṛtaka tadvata acetana bhela"⁴. Thus Bedanidhi in his brief appearance on the stage has been able to leave permanent impression in the hearts of the audience.

**Surabhi and Haridāsa**: These two characters are instrumental in the development of the plot. Both the characters are products of Śaṅkaradeva’s creative genius. They are clever both in words and deeds. They are the match-makers of the marriage between Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī. The wandering minstrel from Kuṇḍiṇa, Surabhi, visits Kṛṣṇa in Dwārakā and thus describes the matchless beauty of Rukmiṇī.

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1. Rh, p. 36
2. Ibid, p. 37
3. Ibid, p. 58
4. Ibid, p. 49
"katanu jatane bidhi kaya niramāna/
se kanyā howe hari tohāri samāna//
kahalo swarupa ava bacana bicāri/
hovaya grhini jaba rukmini nāri//
taba grhabāsa sāmpahala howe nātha/"¹

(God has created with care utmost
The maiden as thy match perfect
I have now put the truth in words proper
If that maiden becomes your wife
Blessed will be thine conjugal life).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is deeply moved by the reports of matchless beauty of Rukmini and her thought begins to disturb him day and night: "āna cintā saba cori rātri divase rukminika jaiche dhyāna kaye rahala"². On the other hand Haridāsa, the wandering minstrel from Dwārakā reports of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beauty and virtues to Rukmini:

"bhubana nirupama rupa/
suna dhani bacana swarupa//
jaba tava pati sohi hoi/
sāmphala janama taba toi/"³

(Matchless in beauty in the earth
Know this truth in thy heart
If he becomes husband thine
With bliss life will shine).

¹. Rh, pp. 13-14
². Ibid., p. 15
³. Ibid., p. 20
The condition of Rukmini after hearing about Kṛṣṇa from Haridāsa is thus described: "rūkmini bhikṣuka mukhe kathā sunīye mohita hūyā śrī kṛṣṇaka swāmi bhābe barala/ kṛṣṇa grahe hṛdaye dharala/ kṛṣṇaka carana cinti mātra sarbathā rahala/ āna cinta saba carala"^{1} (Being utterly charmed by the reports of wandering ministrel she accepted Kṛṣṇa as her husband in mind and began to imagine him in her heart and to spend time thinking about him only. All other thoughts left her mind). So the reports of these two wandering ministrels contribute much to the development of the plot.

✓ Brahma and Nārada: These two characters are sources of humour in the play. To act as the priest in the wedding of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini, Brahma arrives the wedding hall with his foster son Nārada. After completing the preliminaries he starts offering in the sacred fire. Thereafter, as the bride and groom look at each other he sees the enchanting beauty of Rukmini and loses his sense and fell on the ground: "mukhadandrikā karite rukminika bhubana mohana rupa pekhiye brahmā māti luṭi parala?" Being ashamed of it Nārada says: 'he pitā swastha hawa, swastha hawa/ tohāra bewahāra nohe"^{2} (Oh father, come to your sense, come to your sense. Such behaviour is not worthy of you). Then only he gets back his senses and completes the rites of offering in the sacred fire. Their brief appearance in the play is quite impressive.

Rukmini: She is the most attractive character in the nāṭa. She is the daughter of king Bhīṣmaka. She is unmatched in beauty and in virtues: "pekhi sura nara muni mana mohe"^{3}. Her appearance steals the hearts

1. Rh, p. 21
2. Ibid, p. 90
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p. 13
of all, of men and gods alike). Darling of her parents she is like a golden
doll(sonara putali). Of calm and quiet disposition she is witty intelligent
generous and above all an ardent lover.

She is attracted towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa after she has heard about him
from Haridāsa. She becomes almost mad in love for him. Now she can
think of nothing but Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇaka carana cinti mātra sarbathā rahala
āna cintā saba cārala).¹

She is besides herself in joy when she hears that her father
Bhīṣmaka after consultation with his ministers and kinsmen has decided
to marry her to Kṛṣṇa. She is shocked when her elder brother in opposition
to her father's decision to marry her to Śiṣupāla. She weeps bitterly and
sees darkness all around and faints (dīsa dasa āndhiāri dekhiye murccita
huyā tatakāle paralā)². But she does not give up hope. Being woman of
great fortitude she forthwith decides the line action and summons
Bedanidhi and sends him to Dwārakā with a letter in which she appeals
Kṛṣṇa to rescue her.

In spite of her deep love and devotion she is not devoid of feminine
grace and tenderness of heart.³ It is at her entreaty Kṛṣṇa spares the life
of her brother Rukma whose death she has desired once. In Rukmini's
Śaṅkaradeva has portrayed a symbol of feminine grace, beauty and
virtues.

¹. Rh, p. 21
₂. Ibid, p. 29
³. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, Asamiya Natya Sahitya, ed. 2, 1965, p.55
Madanamañjarī and Lilāvatī: These two lovely characters are products of Śaṅkaradeva's unique creative imagination. They are introduced as companions of Rukmini. They share her joy and sorrows and try their best to help her at the time of her crisis.

Śasīprabhā and Daivaki: They are the mothers of Rukmini and Kṛṣṇa respectively. They are portrayed as typical mothers with love and affection for their children. Śasīprabhā has no opinions of her own. She accepts the decisions of her husband and kinsmen about the marriage of her only daughter.

On the other hand we see Daivaki doing duty of a mother when she accompanied by the choir of female singers ceremoniously welcomes the daughter-in-law on her reaching Dwārakā.

Besides these we find some minor characters like Śiśupāla, Jarāsandha and others. Though minor, they are not superfluous for all of them contribute something to the development of the plot, but they themselves are not fully developed in the nāṭa.

Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa: Within the limited scope of his best and dramatically superb play Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa, Śaṅkaradeva has created a number of memorable characters. Among them the most noteworthy are Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, Indra, Rukmini, Śaci, Satyabhāmā and others.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa: The chief protagonist of this nāṭa also is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The character displays a unique juxtaposition of divinity with humanity. While in some of his actions he appears human, in others his divine nature is
revealed. Nārada at one place of the nāṭa aptly observes: "he śwāmi kṛṣṇa manusya cestā dekhāyā sabaloka muhica tohāka iśvara buli jānaye nāhi/hāmu tohāri bhakatibale saba jāni hāmāku muhite cāwa ah śwāmi sunaha"¹ (Oh! Lord Kṛṣṇa projecting yourself as the best of men you have charmed all, they do not know that you are God incarnate; but I know the truth by the strength of my devotion; oh Lord how can you deceive me).

In spite of his divinity he behaves like a man. He is full of humility and revers the elders and the wise as is evident from the respect shown to Nārada: "tadantare nāradaka dekhi śri kṛṣṇa sabhāryye uthi kahu sapate paranāma kayala."²

The nāṭas also stresses on his amorous nature. His deep feeling of love towards Rukmīṇī is seen when he presents the Pārijāta flower, that was offered to him by Nārada, to her. But mischievous Nārada reports this in an exaggerated manner to another consort of Kṛṣṇa, Satyabhāmā to play upon her feeling of envy and vanity. His adventure does not end there. He comes back to Kṛṣṇa to report that "se priyā satyabhāmā pārijātaka nimite apamāne annapāna saba cārala"³ (Your darling Satyabhāmā has stopped taking food and drink out of deep feeling of humiliation for the Pārijāta). Kṛṣṇa is moved and rushes to appease her. He assures her of his love and affection and promises to fulfil all her heart's desire.

We also find him as a henpacked husband in his failure to refuse to take Satyabhāmā with him in his adventure of collecting

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1. Ph, p. 116
2. Ibid, p. 111
3. Ibid, p. 128
the Pārijāta. It is for her he engages himself in a battle with Indra, the king of gods.

But he is shown more as an incarnation of Supreme Lord Viṣṇu when he kills tyrannical Narakāśura to relieve the world of the wickeds. He appears as a saviour of men and gods alike. Thus in Kṛṣṇa we have a dual identity—one as the incarnation of Viṣṇu and the other as a mortal with all the noble virtues.

Nārada: Mischievous Nārada of Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa is a unique creation of Śaṅkaradeva's genius. He has been the source of the humour of the play. He is depicted as a person who enjoys provoking other people to quarrel. Nārada plays the pivotal role in the development of the plot. It is Nārada who provokes envy and jealousy of Satyabhāmā against her co-consort Rukmiṇī. All the actions of the nāṭa are in a way result of this feeling of envy of Satyabhāmā provoked by Nārada.

Nārada is also instrumental in leading Kṛṣṇa to fight Indra for the Pārijāta plant, for he gives an exaggerated report about Śacī's refusal to part with the Pārijāta plant.

Comenting on the character of Nārada Dr. Harinath Sarmadalai observes that Nārada "is worthy of reverence, honourable and a true devotee of the Lord, but also extremely mischievous. He enjoys twisting and distorting reports to make people quarrel. It is in his very nature. But such actions are without any selfish motive. If there is any it is only to show the greatness of God through conflict. It is with such a motive he creates the feeling of envy and resentment in the heart of
Satyabhāmā. The development of the plot entirely owes to this action of Nārada.1

**Indra:** Sāṅkaradeva seems not have given much importance to this character in his nāṭa. He is depicted merely as a helpless and weak king. Of course at the beginning of the nāṭa we have in a picture of a person who is full of humility and gratitude to Kṛṣṇa. Tyranny of Narakāsura drives him to Kṛṣṇa and he prays to him—"jagannātha trāhi, trāhi "2 (O Lord of the Universe, please deliver me from the crisis). On Kṛṣṇa’s arrival at heaven after the slaying Narakāsura Indra receives him with great reverence and with a feeling of humility expresses his gratitude. He says, "he kṛṣṇa pāpi narakāsuraka māri hāmāka kṛtārtha kayala/ bārambārā tuhu uddhāra karaha/ tohākaguna sujaye nāhi pāri "3 (Oh! Kṛṣṇa you have really blessed me by killing Narakāsura. You have delivered me again and again. I cannot repay my indebtedness to you).

On the other that very Indra at the behest of consort Śacī fights with him for a mere Pārijāta flower and is vanquished and humiliated. Thus in Indra we do not have a picture of a powerful king appropriate to his position as the king of heaven.

**Satyabhāmā:** She the most boastful, envious and arrogant of the eight consorts of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She is seen sulking like a common woman. She is not appeased even by the sincere promise of Kṛṣṇa to bring the Pārijāta flower for her and insists on accompanying him to heaven, lest Kṛṣṇa may offer the flower to someone else. She in fact says to Kṛṣṇa: "he

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2. Ph, p. 119
3. Ibid, p. 150
Oh, my husband, I have a number of co-consorts. I don't know to which of consorts you offer the Pārijāta this time. I will, therefore, accompany you wherever you go.

Even in the quarrelling heaven she is involved in an angry exchange of words with Śacī. She scolds Śacī using vile language like an ordinary rustic woman. Seeing her thus quarrelling Indra tells her - "aye satyabhāmā ohi śrī kṛṣṇaka jata patani thika tāheka madhye tuhu bari pracaṇḍa pragalbhā" (O Satyabhāmā you are the most quarrelsome of all the consorts of Kṛṣṇa).

Again after having the Pārijāta plant for herself she teases Rukminī by addressing her as princess of Bidarbha and scornfully draws her attention to her own good fortune: "hāmāra sobhāgyaka mahimā pekhu, pekhu" (Look at the turn of my good fortune).

Thus in Satyabhāmā we have more of a picture of a common village woman than a queen of a kingdom. She seems not at all worthy to be a consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Rukminī: On the other hand in Rukminī, the daughter of King Bhīṣmaka we find a picture of feminine beauty, grace and dignity. She is an ideal consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa. She is amiable in nature and full of humility. A true devotee of Kṛṣṇa she deems herself fortunate in being

1. Ph, pp. 137-138
2. Ibid, p. 170
3. Ibid, p. 176
able to serve him as his wife. On hearing, the wondrous power of the Pārijāta flower that is offered to Kṛṣṇa by Nārada she begs for it without being aware that it may arouse envy of Satyabhāmā. The flower is of no special worth to her as evident from her polite reply to Satyabhāmā’s boastful utterance after having the Pārijāta plant: “aye bhagini satyabhāmā ki kahaica jagataka parama guru śrī kṛṣṇa unikara carana sevā karite brahmānda bhitare kona dullabha thika/ dharma, artha, kāma, moksa, cāri padārasa hāte milāye tohāri pārijāta kona kathā”¹ (Oh! Satyabhāmā what have you said? When you have the rarest opportunity in whole Universe to serve the feet of Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa which fulfils all the purposes of life - dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa, what value is your Pārijāta?) In Rukmini Śaṅkaradeva has portrayed an ideal Indian woman.

Śaci: In Pārijāta-harana Nāta Śaci, the consort of Indra, the king of the gods, appears as an ordinary woman of quarrelsome and proud nature. She has been the source of entertainment and humour of the nāta. When Nārada asks Indra for a Pārijāta flower for Kṛṣṇa she promptly replies before her husband could say anything: “hāmāra pārijāta Indre dite pāraye nāhi”²(Indra cannot give my Pārijāta). This refusal ultimately leads to the battle between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. She herself becomes engaged in a bitter exchange of angry words with Satyabhāmā. In fact she instigated Indra to fight by her insinuating comment that her husband is devoid of manly prowess; (tohāta purasa teja kicu nāhi)³. In the scene of bitter quarrel with Satyabhāmā she appears more like a common woman than a queen. In narrating the scandals of Kṛṣṇa and in scolding Satyabhāmā

1. Ph, p. 170
2. Ibid, p.156
3. Ibid, p. 165
in vile languages she displays her inferiority of taste. Thus she is projected as vain and boastful woman in the nāṭa.

There are a few more minor characters in the nāṭa like Narakaśura, Basumati, Aditi and others, but none of them has any significant contribution to the development of the plot.

The two characters common to both the nāṭas are Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī. The chief protagonist of both the nāṭas, Šrī Kṛṣṇa, is shown as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord of Universe. Yet he is born in this earth as a mortal human being endowed with all noble virtues. We see him as an ardent lover and a great fighter. In Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa hearing the stories of beauty and grace of Rukmiṇī he abducts her and defeats Rukma, Śīṣupāla and others who oppose him.

On the other hand in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa he is involved in a deadly battle just for a Pārijāta flower for his dear wife Satyabhāmā.

In both the nāṭas we find Rukmiṇī as an ardent lover with immense fortitude and as a true devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Amidst dangers and difficulties she does not lose her composure. When she learns that her brother Rukma will not marry her to Kṛṣṇa she does not lose her patience and sends Bṛdanidhi with a letter to Kṛṣṇa. With deep faith in God she marries Kṛṣṇa against the will of her brother.

In Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa hearing the virtues of the Pārijāta flower she gets the flower by humbly begging for it. Again, when Satyabhāmā boasted of her good fortune in having the entire Pārijāta
plant for herself Rukmini with great humility points out to her that being able to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa is the joy and achievement of life.

In both the plays Sankaradevahas shown great dexterity and skill in characterisation. Like modern playwrights he has created characters, complex in temperament and motivation and represented with subtle particularity. From purely dramatic point of view, however, "Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa" is superior to "Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa". According to Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma also: "Parijata-harana Nata can be called the best from the point of view of dramatic technique. Generally dialogues and characterization are not given much importance in the ankiya nāṭas. But in composing Pārijāta-haraṇa the saint seemed to have particularly careful about these two elements of drama. As a drama undoubtedly Pārijāta-haraṇa is his best nāṭa."¹

But the prime objective of the nāṭas has been to inculcate Vaiṣṇava concepts of religion and to make the untutored masses vicariously participate in the emotions and the convictions of the characters of the nāṭas about the greatness of Kṛṣṇa worship cult.

(c) SENTIMENT

An analysis of poetic sentiments (rasa) is as important in dramatic composition as in any other genre of literature. Indian dramaturgy recognises eight types of poetic sentiments corresponding to eight primary feelings or emotions of human heart. Later on inclusion of sentiment of tranquility (śānta) by scholars as one of the poetic sentiments raises their number to nine.

¹ Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, Asamīya Nāya Sāhitya, ed. 2, 1965, p.48
"With the beginning of bhakti movement of the medieval period a new poetic sentiment is added to the existing ones. It is the sentiment of devotion (bhakti). Commenting on its nature the 13th century Marathi scholar Bopdeva observes' that it is the cumulative effect on mind of all the nine poetic sentiments produced on listening to the accounts of Viṣṇu or devotees of Viṣṇu as narrated by poets like Vyāsadeva."¹

Dr. Satyendra Nath Sharma also observes: "The inter-action of the causes (vibhāva) and effects or external signs (anubhāva) of emotions as expressed in a poetic or dramatic composition carries the primary feelings or emotions of our heart to a state of sentimental poise. But proper analysis of poetic sentiments of aṅkīyā nāṭas is not possible on the basis of the recognised nine primary feelings or emotions of heart. For, the prime objective of these nāṭas is not to give the audience a taste of the poetic sentiments, but to plunge them completely in devotional sentiment."² In the words of Dr. Maheswar Neog, "the great stress, that Śaṅkara lays on bhakti, stands as a direct impediment to the development of the poetic sentiment (rasa)."³ Dr. Ramcharan Thakuria also observes: "Vaiṣṇava literature is mainly of devotional sentiment, other sentiments are merely external gloss over it."⁴ The writings of Śaṅkaradeva, a true devotee of Viṣṇu, is also thoroughly permeated with devotional sentiment. Rajani Kanta Deva Sarma says, "Devotional sentiment is nothing but an expression of love towards the Supreme Lord of the Universe; this sentiment of devotion is as bright as the sun; before it erotic and other sentiments are like fire flies throwing feeble light."⁵ Satyendra Nath Sarma also writes,

1. Naravan Das. Śaṅkara Śāhītvar Bhūmika, ed. 1. 1979, p. 49
2. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma. Asamiya Naṭiya Śāhītva, ed. 2, 1965, p. 36
3. Dr. Maheswar Neog, Śaṅkaradeva and His Times, 1965, p. 22
4. Dr. R. Thakuria, ed. Rukmini-harana Nāṭa, ed. 1, 1974, p. 35
"The love of devotees towards Lord Kṛṣṇa is expressed in five ways. These five ways of expression of love towards God give rise to five types of sentiments of devotion, viz. tranquil sentiment of devotion (śānta-bhakti rasa), filial sentiment of devotion (bātsalya), slavish (dāṣya) sentiment of devotion, friendly (sakhya) sentiment of devotion and erotic Śṛṅgāra sentiment of devotion".

The feelings of love is often produced in the heart of a devotee, by the exceptional beauty and charm of Kṛṣṇa leading the devotee to desire him as a mate for the fulfilment of her carnal desire, or at being charmed by the beauty and virtue of Kṛṣṇa the devotee desires to be married to him and to have him for husband or just to get him as a lover to whom she is ready to surrender her body and mind willingly and Kṛṣṇa is also seen reciprocating such desire of a devotee. The depiction of such feelings of love and their fulfilment excite in the heart of audience an erotic sentiment of devotion. Both Rukmini-haraṇa and Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭas are replete with such scenes of erotic sentiment of devotion.

In Śaṅkaradeva's Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa hearing the description of matchless beauty and grace of Rukmini, Kṛṣṇa "ḥeṣha mātha kaya niśwasa phokārala/ghana ghana rukminika mātra dhyāna kaye rahala" (Sighned deeply lowering his head and kept thinking only of Rukmini). Again in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa Kṛṣṇa "ḥāsi ḥāsi hāte tuli pṛyāka gaurave kole baiṭhāi kautuke jagataka nāthe māthe pārijāta pindhāwala." (With a smile raised her and proudly took her on his lap.

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1. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sarma, Asamiya Nātya Sahitya, ed. 2, 1965, p.37
2. Ibid, p. 39
3. Rh, p. 14
4. Ph, p. 115
and then the Lord of the Universe put the Pārijāta in her hair). These are good examples of erotic sentiment. Again, the line "ghana ghanā nayana pankaja muha heri heri karata kānu keli"¹ (Kānu is revelling with his eyes fixed on the face with lotus eyes) etc. may excite the erotic sentiment, but it should be borne in mind that Rukmiṇī is not merely an ordinary beloved but a true devotee in the guise of a beloved and Krṣṇa too is not an ordinary lover, but a "bhakata kṛpālu"² (merciful to devotees).

The sentiments (rasas) that are introduced in the nāṭas of Śaṅkaradeva as subservient and complementary to the dominating sentiment of devotion are Karuṇa (pathos), Bīra (heroism), Hāsyā (humour) and Bībhasa (disgust).

In Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa thus Rukmiṇī expresses her disappointment when she learns from her companions that her marriage has been fixed not with Krṣṇa, but with Śiśupāla:

"hari hari kino bihi likhila lalāta/
aawatu milata meri maranaka bāta//
pāwula bahu punye hāmu pahu raṅka/
hāte haraya nidhi bidhi bhela banka//
āwala kaicana nātha abhāgika lai/
kācaka cāhite junu mānika harāi//³
(Oh God what destiny for me fixed,
Now that the end of my life is reached.
Much have I earned the wealth of virtues all,
Fortune being adverse now has taken them all.
What a lord for wretched me has come,
As if for a bead of glass precious stone is gone)

1. Rh, p. 94
2. Dr. Mukunda Madhava Sharmā, Śaṅkarī Sāhityar Rasamimānsa, 1980, p. 50
3. Rh, p. 71
Such description evoke the sentiment of pathos in the hearts of readers or audience.

Similarly, the earnest entreaty of Basumaṭī who has earlier approved and allowed the killing of her tyrannical son Narakaśura before Śrī Kṛṣṇa to protect her young grandson Bhagadatta — "Oh, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the master of millions of Universes and the preceptor of the world my sinful son has perished for his sin of revolt against you. I now deliver his son and my grandson young Bhagadatta to you for your protection so that my line continues"\(^1\) — evokes in the hearts of all worthy men and women the sentiment of pathos.

The disagreement of Rukminī with his father Bhīṣmaka and his proud utterance — "Ah! who has the power to marry my sister Rukminī to Kṛṣṇa"\(^2\) and the abduction Rukminī by Kṛṣṇa alone\(^3\), the defeat of Rukmi and other in battle\(^4\) in *Rukminī-haraṇa Nāṭa* are instances of the sentiment of heroism. Similarly, the scenes of the battles between Kṛṣṇa and Narakaśura\(^5\) and between Kṛṣṇa and Indra\(^6\) excite the sentiment of heroism in the hearts of the audience.

Instances of humours are numerous in both the nāṭas. In *Rukminī-haraṇa Nāṭa* humour has been created through the character of Bedanidhi. Bedanidhi who boasted of his power and strength — "ah! he māwa rukmini kṛṣṇaka ānite kona cintā thika/ tapaka mahimāye

\(^{1}\) Ph, p. 146
\(^{2}\) Rh, p. 26
\(^{3}\) Ibid, p. 67
\(^{4}\) Ibid, p. 85
\(^{5}\) Ph, pp. 143-144
\(^{6}\) Ibid, pp. 166-168
ākāsaka candra āni dite pāru"¹ (Oh, my daughter Rukmiṇī, what is the problem of bringing Krṣṇa. I can even bring the moon from heaven by virtue of the strength of my meditation) — loses his balance at the tempestuous speed of the chariot in his journey from Dwārakā. The playwright’s vivid description — "hāta pāwa thira bhela, peta uphandala, nāsāta niswāsa nāhi niṣare, jaice mṛtaka tadvat acetana bhela"² and "śrī krṣṇai hā hā buli sire jala sinciye phunki dhātu ānala"³ (Hands and feet became motionless, belly swelled and there was no sign of breathing; he was as unconscious as a dead man); — and again the questions put to him "he bāpu, tahu ke? hāmu kona ? ki nimiti ethā āwala thika"⁴ (O Bāpu, who are you ? who am I ? Why have you come here?) evoke laughter among the audience. Similarly, each and every act of mischievous Nārada in Pārijāta-haraṇa is a source of humour. Humour is evoked not only through actions of the characters but also through situations. Following are two instances of humorous situations:

Indra proudly warned Krṣṇa that he would not allow him to take away Śacī’s Pārijāta and would rather kill him with his sharp arrows (āhe jādaba, sacika pārijāta kaice niyā jāwa, ohi tikhnatara sare tohāri prāṇa corāwaba)⁵. But that very Indra could not stand for a moment in his fight against Krṣṇa. Again being taunted and ridiculed by Satyabhāmā at his defeat Indra vainly attempts to cover up his shame and humiliation and it is a source of hearty laughter of the audience. He says, "aye satyabhāme, ohi sri krṣṇaka jata patani thika tāheka madhye tuhu bari pracaṇḍa pragalbhā ihā hāmu jānalu, ki nimiti hāmāka ataye nindā

1. Rh, p. 37
2. Ibid, p. 49
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p. 50
5. Ph, pp. 165-166
kadarthānā karaica/ dekhu ohi koṭi koṭi brahmandesvara brahmā mahese sebita padapankaja jagataka parama guru nārayana śrī kṛṣṇa tāheta hāmu juddha hārala ihāta kona lāja thika tuhu stri jāti kicu bujaye nāhi hāmāka micā balkaha”

(Āi, Satyabhāmā, I have now learnt that of all the wives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa you are the most arrogant or else why will you thus taunt and ridicule me? See, there is no shame in being defeated in battle by that Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the Supreme Lord of the Universe and whose feet are even worshipped by Brahmā and Maheśā. You women folk do not understand anything and you are scolding me for nothing).

The quarrel between Indra's consort Śacī and Kṛṣṇa's consort Satyabhāmā is also a source of humour. But the humour it invokes is tinged with a feeling of disgust. Same can be said of the scene where the gathering kings infatuated by the beauty of Rukminī lose their senses and fell down from their seats ('āsanahante ḍhali ḍhali parala) Sentiment of disgust, rather than of humour is also evoked by the scene where even Brahmā falls down on the ground losing his consciousness at the sight of Rukminī's beauty ('mukhacandrikā karite rukminika bhuvana mohana rupa pekhiye brahmā māti luṭi parala) and Nārada tries to bring him back to his senses by his words, "he pitā swastha hawa, swastha hawa tohāra byavahāra nohe” (O! father, come to you to your senses, such behaviour is not worthy of you.)

In the final scene of Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa the words of Rukminī "ataye kaice kahasi māi/harika bhakati sati kona nimilāi/” (Why are

1. Ph, p. 170
2. Rh, p. 65
3. Ibid, p. 90
4. Ibid
5. Ph, p. 177
you saying so? What is not possible through pure love and devotion to God) in reply to the boastful utterance of Satyabhāmā after she gets the Pārijāta plant "hāmāra sobhāgyaka mahimā pekhu pekhu"¹ (Look at my good fortune) clearly demonstrate the predominance of the sentiment of devotion over all other poetic sentiments of the nāṭa.

Similarly, in Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa Kṛṣṇa’s marriage with Rukmiṇī overcoming all obstacles is shown not merely as a marriage, but as a union of the devotee with the Lord; an act of God to fulfill the heart’s desire of a devotee.

From the above discussion it is seen that the poetic sentiment which predominates in both Rukmiṇī-harana and Pārijāta-harana Nāṭas is the sentiment of devotion. All other sentiments are made subservient and complementary to this sentiment. It is for this predominance of devotion or bhakti, Śrī Śaṅkaradeva’s works have remained a source of pure joy for all sections of the society till to-day.

( d ) DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

Each and every dramatic composition in any literature follows some dramatic techniques. A dramatist applies his own dramatic device or technique in composing a drama. These techniques, however, differ from dramatist to dramatist and drama to drama. As for example, we can refer to the use of the direction of the Nāndī verse in the drama of Kālidāsa and Bhāsa. Dramatic techniques include the preliminaries (called

¹ Ph. p. 176
Pūrvarāṅga¹ in Sanskrit, Invocation or Benediction (Nāndī² in Sanskrit), Prelude (Prastāvanā or Āmukha in Sanskrit), Juncture (Sandhi in Sanskrit) and concluding Benediction. Though these techniques are mainly applied in Sanskrit plays, also have the application in the Assamese plays particularly in the ankiyā plays of Śaṅkaradeva.

The first dramatic technique that we find in the ankiyā plays of Śaṅkaradeva is the recital of a benedictory verse in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit drama, we find the benedictory verse as Nāndī. However, it should be specially mentioned that even before the recital of the benedictory verse by the stage manager (Sūtradhāra) it is observed that the artists like Gāyana and Bāyana and so on enter the stage and make a dance which is followed by a song called Nāndigītā in Brajabuli language. This dramatic device is peculiar to the ankiyā plays. Thereafter, the stage manager announces the name of the play going to be staged to the audience after invoking Lord Kṛṣṇa. The introduction of a stage manager though of a Sanskrit origin is a creation of Śaṅkaradeva in a different way. While in a Sanskrit play the stage manager enters the stage first but after the announcement leaves the stage permanently, in the ankiyā plays on the other hand the stage manager continues to stay in the stage to the end of the play. This is entirely a novel idea of Śaṅkaradeva. The Nāndī verse is simply used as śloka in an ankiyā play.

1. yamātyavastunah pūrvam pangavighnopāntaye/
   kusilavah prakurvaanti pūrvarāṅgah sāucyate//
Sahitya Darpana, Vf.22

2. asirvacanasamnyuktā stutiryasmat paryujyate/
   deva-dvija-nṛpātināṁ āsāmāṇāṁdāṁ saṁ jñi dātā//
Sahitya Darpana, Vf.24
As in Sanskrit plays in aṅkiyā plays also we come across the introduction of propitiation called Prarocana in Sanskrit which gives the contents of the play and appeals to the benevolence of the audience, for example, 'bho bho sāmājika' etc, which is followed by a Bhaṭimā, a sort of song. As in Sanskrit drama there is the application of Preleude (Prastavanā) found in the aṅkiyā plays.

Another technique of Śaṅkaradeva for his plays is the recitation of many Sanskrit verses. Though a play contains dialogues in prose yet the verses play a vital role in Sanskrit plays. This is also found in the plays of Śaṅkaradeva, for example, mention may be made of 42 verses in the Rukmiṇī-haraṇa and 45 verses in the Pārijāṭharaṇa dramas.

One peculiar dramatic technique of Rukmiṇī-haraṇa and Pārijāṭa-haraṇa is that after some intervals, there is the presentation of songs called Gīṭa accompanied by the specific musical instruments like Khola, Tāla etc.

Another dramatic technique in the aṅkiyā plays is the introduction of the Muktimāṅgal Bhaṭimā which appears to be similar to that of an appeal of the Bharatavākyya at the end of the Sanskrit plays. But, however, it is to be pointed out that while in Sanskrit drama it is recited by the hero alone, it is recited by all present in the stage in an aṅkiyā-nāṭa.

1. naṭī vidūṣako vāpi pāripāraṇa eva vā/
   sūtrādhāreṇa suhita samāpaṁ yatra kurvate/
   citravākyaiḥ svakāryottaraiḥ prastutakṣepibhṛyathā/
   āmukhaśiṁ tattu vijñeyaiṁ nāmāṁ prastāvānāṭśaṁ/

   Sahitya Darpaṇa. VI,31-32
(e) A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RUKMINI-HARANA AND PĀRIJĀTA HARANA NĀṬAS.

Source and Date of Composition: The Śrīmadbhāgavata is the primary source of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradevas Rukmini-harana and Pārijāta-harana Nāṭas. In this regard Sri Narayan Chandra Goswami observes: "The theme of Rukmini-harana Nāṭa is mainly based on Śrīmadbhāgavata. This episode is also found in Harivaṃśa-purāṇa, which is regarded to be a part of the Mahābhārata and also in the Brahmabaibarta-purāṇa and some other old scriptures. But the guru (preceptor) has depended mainly on the Bhāgavata for the basic theme and only some minor incidents of the nāṭa are borrowed from other sources".1 About the dates of its composition Ambika Nath Bora says: "The great preceptor Śaṅkaradeva wrote Rukmini-harana Nāṭa before his second pilgrimage when he was at Pāṭbāusi. He set out for his second pilgrimage in the year 1533 A.D. So this nāṭa was written in 1531 or 1532 A.D.".2 But Dr. Maheswar Neog observes: "The Kathā-guru-carita and Rāmcaraṇa agree in their statements that this work and the Kurukṣetra were composed by the saint at Pāṭbāusi after his second pilgrimage. The former, moreover, states that the work was done much after Śaṅkara had presented at Naraṇārāyana’s court, which happened about 1558. We are, therefore, inclined to consider 1560 as the date of composition of the drama".3

The story of the Pārijāta-harana is found in the Bhāgavata, Harivaṃśa and Viṣṇu-purāṇa. According to Narayan Chandra Goswami also the main episode of the Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa occurs in the

There is no definite mention of its date of composition anywhere. Yet most scholars are of the opinion that it was composed after the saint written his *Rukmini-harana Nāṭa*. Dr. Maheswar Neog observes: "Rāmcaraṇa, however, tells us that a little after his return from the pilgrimage Śaṅkara wrote and produced on the stage two dramas, the *Janma-yātra* and the 'great and peerless' *Pārijāta harana*."\(^1\) According to Dr. Krishna Prasad Magadha also "the date of composition of Śaṅkaradeva's *Pārijāta-harana* is believed to be after his second pilgrimage (1550 A.D.)."\(^2\)

**Sentiments**

An examination of the poetic sentiments (rasa) of these two nāṭas shows the evocation of the sentiments of eroticism (Śṛṅgāra), pathos (Karuṇa), humour (Hāsyā) and heroism (Bīra). Mutual attraction of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī towards each other on hearing description of their exceptional beauty and grace from Surabhi and Haridāsa evokes the erotic sentiments. The characters of Śāsīprabhā and Rukmiṇī are employed for evoking the sentiment of pathos (Karuṇa), while Bedanidhi in *Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa* is a source of humour. We find the expression of the sentiment of wrath (Raudra) in the boastful utterances of Rukma. The vivid account of battles between Kṛṣṇa and Śiśupāla and other kings gives the audience or readers a test of sentiment of heroism (Bīra). But the prime objective of *Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa* being the singing of the glory of the omnipotent God and the showing to the masses the true path of salvation Śaṅkaradeva has made all poetic sentiments subservient to the dominating sentiment of devotion (Bhaktirasā).

Similarly, in *Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa* the scene depicting love and affection between Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā evokes the erotic

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sentiments (Srñgāra). The battle Kṛṣṇa fights with Narakāsura and Indra are examples of the sentiment of heroism. The quarrel between Śacī and Satyabhāmā though seems to evoke humour does rather create a sense of disgust (Bibhatsa) in the heart of the audience. The pitiful entreaty of Basumati after the slaying of her son Narakāsura by Kṛṣṇa to put her grandson Bhagadatta on the throne is an example of pathos created in the play. In this nāṭa also the dominant sentiment is the sentiment of devotion (Bhakti) for the nāṭa seems to aim at establishing Kṛṣṇa as the incarnation of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Lord of Universe.

Language : The great saint Śaṅkaradeva employed Brajabuli, a literary language developed and nourished by him and other Vaiṣṇava poets, in his aṅkīyā-nāṭas. As in old sanskrit plays language does not vary in aṅkīyā nāṭas from character to character. Dialogues are invariably in Brajabuli irrespective of their sex. Only the ślokas (verses) are in Sanskrit. Rukmiṇī-haraṇa and Pārijātā-haraṇa Nāṭas are no exception. Ślokas here are used as in other nāṭas for describing some minor incidents or scenes of special significance. Apart from the ślokas (verses) some pure Sanskrit words are used in dialogues, as for instance, cirañjīva, tadantara, bhikṣuka etc.

Characterization : Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa being longer than Pārijātā-haraṇa Nāṭa contains more characters. The main characters of the nāṭa are Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣmaka, Rukmaṇīra, Bedanidhi, Haridāsa, Śīśupāla, Brahmā, Nārada, Rukmiṇī, Śaśiprabhā, Daivaṁ, Līlāvatī, Madanamañjarī and others. Those of Pārijātā-haraṇa Nāṭa are Kṛṣṇa, Nārada, Indra, Rukmiṇī, Satybhāmā, Śacī, Indumatī and a few others.
In the original Sanskrit Bhāgavata there is no mention of the names of the persons who reported to Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī of their beauty, grace and virtues. Śaṅkaradeva has given them identity with names of Surabhi and Haridāsa. The queen of Bidarbha is also unnamed in the original. Śaṅkaradeva has called her Śaśiprabha. Śaṅkaradeva has introduced an imaginary character, Haridāsa to entertain the audience with humour. The names Madanamañjarī and Līlavatī to the two companions of Rukmiṇī are also creation of Śaṅkaradeva. With his unique dramatic skill Śaṅkaradeva has delineated all the characters to perfection.

Nārada of Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa is a wonderful creation of Śaṅkaradeva. Śaṅkaradeva has depicted him as a mischievous person who enjoys fun and frolic. His actions and words are the primary source of humour in the play. His contribution to the development of the plot is immense. In Indra Śaṅkaradeva has portrayed a typical henpecked husband. The scene of quarrel between Śacī and Satyabhāmā which greatly entertains the audience is entirely a product of Śaṅkaradeva's imagination. Both the plays are rich in individualized characters.

**Figures of Speech (alaṅkāra) :** The proper use of rhetorical figures always enhances the worth and beauty of writings. Śaṅkaradeva has displayed its enviable dexterity in making use of different figures of speech in both the nāṭas. Following are a few instances of the figures of speech used in his Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa :

i) **Alliteration (anuprāsa) :** ghana ghana/pankaja muha heri/heri karata karu keli//

1. Rh,p. 94
ii) **Internal rhyme (chekānu-prāsa):** lahu lahu gati dhāi/
    priyā saṅgēraṅge jāī //¹

iii) **Consonance (antyanuprāsa):** raṅgini sakhi saṅgini bālā/
    calali jaice cāndakeri kālā //²

iv) **Analouge (jamaṅk):** hāsi hāsi harase harase nakha parase//³

v) **Tautology (punaruktabadābhāsa):** kubuji kāma/monoratha pūrala/
    barada barada banamāli //⁴

vi) **Simile (upamā):** kācaka cāhite mānika harāj //⁵

vii) **Poetical fancy (utprekṣā):** nakhacaya cāndaka pātni/
    padatala ārakata bhānti //⁶

ix) **Incongruity (biṣama):** he pāpi sodara tuhu sāta satruto adhika
    bheli //⁷

x) **Mixed metaphor (sāṅgarūpaka):** hāsi hāsi harase/
    harase nakha parase //⁸

xi) **Reversed simile (pratipā):** ki kahaba ramanika rupa pracura/
    bayanaka pekhi cānda gela dura //⁹

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1. Rh, p. 68
2. Ibid, p. 60
3. Ibid, p. 59
4. Ibid, p. 5
5. Ibid, p. 71
6. Ibid, p. 19
7. Ibid, p. 32
8. Ibid, p. 94
Some instances of the use of various figures of speech in Pārijāta-haraṇa are given below:

i) Simile (upama): tanu indubara syāmala cori/
   tathi parakāsita pita picori/¹

ii) Metaphor (rupaka): purnnimāka cānd̄a badana parakāsa/²

iii) Internal rhyme (chekānuprāsa): cāru caturbhujā aṅga bhuvāṅga/³

iv) Consonance (antyānuprāsa): kaṅkana kanaka janaka kara mula/⁴

v) Analogue (jamaka): sañcare cañcare madhukara lohe/⁵

vi) Hyperbole (atiśayokti): htu jaba nila nava ghanakhaṇḍa/
   uvare raha rabikara paracanda/⁶

Ślokas (verses) and their metres: There are all together 42 Sanskrit verses in Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa and 45 in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa composed in various metres. Metres used for the verses of Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa are Vasantatilakā, Śardulabikriḍita, Puṣpitāgra and Anuṣṭupa. Majority of the verses are of course in Anuṣṭupa metre.

In Pārijāta-haraṇa on the other hand Śardulabikriḍita metre predominates, though there are verses composed in Mālinī, Anuṣṭupa or Bhujāṅgaprayāt metre.

¹. Ph, p. 101
². Ibid, p. 122
³. Ibid, p. 103
⁴. Ibid
⁵. Ibid
⁶. Ibid, p. 105
Lyrics: The use of lyric in both the nāṭas is significant. The number of lyrics including the Bhaṭimā is 36 in Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa and 21 in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa.

The term Bhaṭimā is ḫ used for a special type of lyric. In fact a Bhaṭimā is a hymn addressed to God, guru (teacher) or the king. This word is derived from the root bhaṭṭa + imanic > bhaṭṭiman > bhaṭṭimā > bhaṭimā, nominative case, singular number, masculine gender. Dr. Kesabananda Devagoswami says, "Like other bhaṭimās (hymns) the dramatic bhaṭimā may also be composed in different metres. Sometimes, therefore, it is said that 'capaya chande bhaṭimā" (i.e. bhaṭimā is in tetrametre) Pārijāta-haraṇa, Keli-gopāla etc. In one bhaṭimā in Rukmiṇī-haraṇa there is a line, 'paḍhi punu bhaṭa capaya kaha bāni'. Perhaps the words caupai' is Hindi and 'capaya' in Assamese are derived from the word 'catuṣpadikā' (i.e. tetrametre).\(^1\)

There are in total four bhatimas in Rukmiṇī-haraṇa Nāṭa and three in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa.

The aṅkiyā nāṭas are basically lyrical in nature. In both the nāṭas lyrics are used to further the plots to their climax. Themes of the nāṭas are exposed through the lyrics. We find elaborate description or the actions of the characters in them.

The lyrics are in different 'rāgas'. The 'rāgas' employed for the 32 lyrics, excluding the bhaṭimās are Āśowāri, Śrigāndhara, Kānaḍa, Gauri, Ahīra, Śrī, Māhura, Dhanasrī, Nāṭamallāra, Sindurā, Suhāi, Belowār, Bhaṭiāli, Sāraṅga, Kalyān etc.

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Those employed for the lyrics of *Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa* are Sindhura, Āsowārī, Śrīgāndhāra, Kalyān, Māhura, Dhanaśrī, Kānāḍa, Gauri, Belowāra, Tura, Basanta, Purbi etc.

Along with 'rāgas' the 'tāla' (rhythm) and 'māna' (scale) are also mentioned in the nāṭas. In *Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa* they are Ekatāli, Jatimān, Paritāla, Rupaktāla, Jatitāla, Bisamatāla, Domani, Catukalāmān and Kharamāṇa.

Those mentioned in the *Pārijāta-haraṇa* are Ekatāli, Paritāla, Jatimāna, Jatitāla, Kharamāṇa etc.

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**Dramatic Skill:** Sāṅkaradeva composed a long poem (*kāvyā*) called *Rukmiṇi-haraṇa Kāvyā* before he had written the play on the same topic. On his own admission we know that his source for the 'kāvyā' was *Harivaṃśa* with some elements added from the *Bhāgavata*.

* keke harivaṃśā kathā amṛta sākṣāta/  
āru bhāgavata kathā miśra dilo tātā/ /  
duyo kathā pade bandhe rākhicho milāi/  
yene madhumisrā dugdha ati svāda pāya/ /  
(Harivaṃśa kathā is like pure nectar  
I mixed with it Bhāgavata kathā  
And put them together into rhyme.  
They become as sweet as milk mixed with honey)

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In the words of Lakshminath Bezbaruah "Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa is the sweetest flow of sweet writings of Śaṅkaradeva. It is a permanent asset of Assamese literature".¹

Śaṅkaradeva has not mentioned the source of his play as he did in case of the poem on the same theme. It is however widely believed that he has based his nāṭa mainly on the Bhāgavata. It remains the longest of all his nāṭas.

On the other hand from the dramatic point of view Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa is considered by the critical opinions as perfect. Śaṅkaradeva himself was perhaps aware of it. For he said:

pārijāta-haraṇa āheri nāma/
suna budhajana hariguna anupāma/²

Dr. Maheswar Neog also says, "The Pārijāta-haraṇa is Śaṅkara's masterpiece with its well developed dialogue, bold and almost realistic characterization, finely developed plot and humour which permeate into the very action".³

LANGUAGE

By and large Śaṅkaradeva's writings are characterised by the use two languages; one is the old Assamese language as it was used by the early Assamese poets including Mādhava Kandali and the other is Brajāvali or Brajabuli. While Śaṅkaradeva employed the former in the

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1. Atul Chandra Baruah, Samālocana Sāhitya, 1958, p. 6
2. Ph, p. 182
3. Dr. Maheswar Neog, Śaṅkaradeva and His Times, ed. 1, 1965, p. 206
composition of the diverse books of verses and in the translation of the Dasāma and the Rāmāyana, he made Brajabuli the chief vehicle of the dramas and the bargits. But Brajabuli is not at all an indigenous tongue of Assam. According to Dr. Sukumar Sen "The seeds of Brajabuli sprouted in Mithilā". Indeed it is closely related to old Maitheli dialect, though it is not entirely free from the influence of Avahaṭṭha and Brajabhāṣā. The celebrated philologist and critic Dr. Birinchi Kumar Baruah also observes, "Though Brajabuli was fundamentally derived from Maitheli dialect, it owed its growth to Assamese literature and it was the Assamese poets who gave it a new vigour". According to Dr. Satyendranath Sarma also, "Brajāvali is a mixture of Maitheli and Assamese, but it contains some elements of Avadhī and Brajabhāṣā." In this regard Dr. Maheswar Neog aptly comments, "Maitheli dialect was the base of Brajabuli and on it was raised the edifice of 'Assamese Brajabuli' in the Assamese grammatical and lexicographical framework imposing a few fragments of Western Hindi on it." Commenting on the significance of the use of this language in the dramas of Ṣaṅkaradeva Sri Ambikanth Bora writes "We would like to suggest two reasons for this being so. Firstly, Śrī Śaṅkaradeva's main object was to preach his religion and he wrote these dramas with that end in view, he therefore, wanted to make them attractive and at the same time to give them solemnity. If the gods and goddesses appeared on the stage and talked in the colloquial language of the ordinary people; they might lose some of the solemnity and reverence attending them and so he made them speak in a language different from the one used by the

1. Dr. Sukumar Sen, Bhāṣā Itibṛta, p. 330
2. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Baruah, Asamīyā Kathā Sāhitya (Ancient part), p. 3
4. Dr. Maheswar Neog, Asamīyā Sāhityar Rūp-rekẖā, 1962, p. 94
people, but at the same time one that would be understood by them. Brajabuli served both the purposes. The second reason is that Brajadhāma is the holy land for the Vaiṣṇavas and the dialect of the place was also considered sacred dialect in his writings, moreover there is the inherent sweetness of the language."¹

Enumerated below the distinctive features of the language as employed by Śrī Śaṅkaradeva in his bārgīts and the plays with special reference to two plays, viz. Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa and Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa.

In both the plays plurals are formed by the addition of words of multitude like 'saba', 'sakala', 'jata'; for example, 'rājāsaba'² (all the kings), 'pātramāntriṇātisaba'³ (all the ministers and the kings); 'sakhisaba'⁴ (all the companions), 'sakala parasāda'⁵ (all the offerings), 'jata sakati'⁶ (all the strength), 'jata patani'⁷ (all the wives) etc.

Of the feminine affixes 'i' and 'ni' are frequently used; e.g. 'rājanandani'⁸ (prince), 'grhini'⁹ (housewife), 'sobhāgini'¹⁰ (fortunate), 'adhikārini'¹¹ (propritress), 'bhagini'¹² (sister), 'rājkumāri'¹³ (princess), 'rājamaḥiṣi'¹⁴ (queen) etc.

¹. Ambika Nath Bora, Rukmiṇī-harana Nāṭa, 1953, pp. 16-16
². Rh, p. 63
³. Ibid, p. 22
⁴. Ibid, p. 60
⁵. Ibid, p. 58
⁶. Ph, p. 175
⁷. Ibid, p. 170
⁸. Rh, p. 68
⁹. Ibid, p. 11
¹⁰. Ph, p. 124
¹¹. Ibid, p. 157
¹². Rh, p. 26
¹³. Ibid, p. 21
¹⁴. Ibid, p. 23
As regards case affixes the usual nominative ending is ‘-e’; for example, ‘bāpe upājīla mātra’\(^{1}\) (father has just born), ‘brahmā-mahesa sebita padapaṅkaja’\(^{2}\) (Brahmā-Mahesa worshipped ‘lotus-feet’). In the accusative case affixes ‘-ka’ and ‘-e’ are used; e.g. ‘ghana ghana rukminika mātra dhyāna kaye rahala’\(^{3}\) (again and again thought of Rukmini alone). ‘tāhe dekhi śrī kṛṣṇa bāta pucata’\(^{4}\) (seeing that Kṛṣṇa enquired). The affixes ‘-ka’, ‘-e’ etc. are used for the dative in both the plays; e.g. ‘satyabhāmā same swargaka kautuke calala’\(^{5}\) (with Śatyabhāmā happily proceeded to Heaven), ‘bhabānika mathe calaha’\(^{6}\) (to do proceed to the temple of Bhabāni). But dative case ending is often elided, as in ‘bipra dwārakā calala’\(^{7}\) (Bipra proceeded to Dwārakā). The usual ablative affix is hante; e.g. ‘kundina hante’\(^{8}\) (from Kundina), ‘kathā hante’\(^{9}\) (from where). The genitive affixes used are ‘-ka’, ‘ri’, ‘ra’, ‘ta’ etc.; e.g. ‘rukminika ati kātar bani suṇi’\(^{10}\) (hearing the words of grave sorrow of Rukmini). ‘purandararata anumati pāi’\(^{11}\) (having the permission of Purandara), ‘tōhāri padarenuye grhasaba pabitra bhela’\(^{12}\) (the houses are sanctified by the dust of your feet), ‘hāmāra bāma aṅga phande’\(^{13}\) (my left limbs are throbbing). ‘e’ is the most commonly used locative affix; e.g. ‘gaurave kole baiṭhāi’\(^{14}\) (in pride taking into laps), ‘śrī kṛṣṇa garuḍabāhane bāyubege kāmarupa pāi’\(^{15}\) (Śrī Kṛṣṇa (sitting) on (the vehicle of) Garuḍa reached Kāmarūpa at the speed of wind), etc.

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1. Rh. p. 58
2. Ph. p. 170
3. Rh. p. 15
4. Ibid. p. 10
5. Ph. p. 147
6. Rh. p. 59
7. Ibid. p. 40
8. Ibid. p. 11
9. Ibid. p. 11
10. Ph. p. 115
11. Ibid. p. 174
12. Rh. p. 42
13. Ibid. p. 56
14. Ph. p. 115
15. Ibid. p. 143
In both the plays causatives are formed usually by adding 'wa', '-ya' and '-ai' to the primary verb roots; e.g. 'kona strika dewaba' (to which wife be given), 'ekasata pārijāta dewaba' [one hundred Pārijāta (flowers) be given], 'jānupāri pranāma kayala' (paid obeisance kneeling down), 'kāhu ankowāli tuli baiṭhāi' [some one made to sit by raising with an embrace] and etc.

Imperatives are formed by adding '-aw', '-ha', '-u' '-ok', '-wa' and '-bi'; e.g. 'bahubidha parasāda deha' (Do give varied offerings), 'sisupāla sattware ānaha' (Do fetch sisupala quickly), 'svastha hawā' (Do be healthy), 'kṛpā miloka' (let there be blessings).

The use of denominate roots are noticed in both the dramas: e.g. 'homa ārambhala' (sacred fire commenced), 'bipra calala' (bipra moved) 'ratha jogāwala' (chariot is arranged), 'phunki dhātu ānala' [brought to senses by following (air)], 'satyabhāmā nija mandire rahala' (Saiyabhāmā stayed in her own temple) etc.

The infinite forms of the verbs are noticed to have been made by adding '-iya', '-iye', '-i', '-e', 'kaya', 'kahu' etc.; e.g. 'brāhmanaka paranāmi ālingi dhariye' (saluting and embracing the Brāhmaṇa), 'kṛṣṇaka parama iswara jāhi' (knowing Krṣṇa as supreme God) etc.

1. Ph, p. 137
2. Ibid, p. 130
3. Ibid, p. 151
4. Rh, p. 56
5. Ibid, p. 20
6. Ibid, p. 27
7. Ibid, p. 53
8. Ibid, p. 95
9. Ibid, p. 90
10. Ibid, p. 40
11. Ibid, p. 48
12. Ibid, p. 49
13. Ph, p. 110
14. Rh, p. 41
15. Ph, p. 151
For negative conjugation of verbs usually 'na' or 'nāhi' are put before the verbs, e.g. 'tuhu nāhi jānaha'\(^1\) (you do not know), 'tanikara bola bādhaye nāhi pāri'\(^2\) [your words (I) cannot put to tune], 'kṛṣṇaka ānite nāhi pāri lajjāye nāwala'\(^3\) (ashamed for not being able to fetch Kṛṣṇa), etc.

Present tenses of verbs are formed by adding 'ata', 'cha', 'chi', 'che', 'hu', 'ho' etc. to the roots; 'hāmāka sodara dāna dehu'\(^4\) (do give me my brother). Past tenses were usually formed by adding c/c+ila, e.g. 'je śrīkṛṣṇa swāmita cirakāla āsā kayacila'\(^5\) (that Śrī Kṛṣṇa desired ever as husband). To denote future tenses ba, bo, bi etc. were added to the verbs. For example, 'hāmu pācu laiya jāwaba'\(^6\) (I will pursue), 'lāsabesa kaye berāwaba'\(^7\) (shall be out in luxurious dress), 'saba manoratha āju śrī kṛṣṇa puraba'\(^8\) (Śrī Kṛṣṇa will fulfil to-day all desires).

The use of pleonastic suffixes, as in 'swāmika'\(^9\) 'bhāyāka'/ 'bhātrka'\(^10\) 'rājāsabaka'\(^11\) as well as various forms of pronouns like 'moi'\(^12\), 'mohi'\(^13\), 'hāmāka'\(^14\), 'hāmāru'\(^15\), 'hāmāra'\(^16\), 'hāmu'\(^17\), 'hāmākeri'\(^18\), 'hāmāta'\(^19\), 'tuhu'\(^20\), 'tohāka'\(^21\), 'tohāra'\(^22\), 'tohāta'\(^23\), 'tohe'\(^24\), 'tāhāra'\(^25\),

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1. Ph, p. 149
2. Rh, p. 26
3. Ibid, p. 52
4. Ibid, p. 84
5. Ibid, p. 36
6. Ph, p. 120
7. Ibid, p. 150
8. Rh, p. 58
9. Ph, p. 136
10. Rh, p. 84
11. Ibid, p. 75
12. Ibid, p. 22
13. Ibid, p. 25
15. Ibid, p. 22
16. Ibid, p. 26
17. Ibid
18. Ibid, p. 38
19. Ph, p. 131
20. Rh, p. 26
21. Ibid, p. 18
22. Ph, p. 136
23. Ibid, p. 156
24. Rh, p. 23
25. Ph, p. 147
In these two plays Śaṅkaradeva has used fairly a large number of tatsama, semi-tatsama and tadbhava words. Besides, the verses of these plays are composed in pure Sanskrit. There are in total 42 verses in Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa and 45 verses in Pārijata-haraṇa Nāṭa. All these verses are Śaṅkaradeva's own creation. They are employed chiefly to describe some important scenes and episodes. These verses show his scholarship as well as his enviable command over the Sanskrit language. A large number of pure Sanskrit words are also used in the dialogues of the play; e.g. 'ciraṅjiva', 'puṣpa', 'kusumā', 'krandana', 'brahmāndeswara', 'bhikṣṣuṇaka', 'nirantarē' and the vocatives 'āhe pātramāntrijnātisaba', 'oye bhikṣuṇaka' etc.

Both the plays are also full of semi-tatsama words like 'gati', 'muruti', 'paranāma', 'darasana', 'parakāsa', 'parabesa', 'hāta', and 'āju'.

It is interesting to note that a few Māgadhī and Bhojpuri words or grammatical rules occur in the plays. Undeniably they made their way into the Brajabuli of Śaṅkaradeva through the medium of Maithili dialect. A few instances are cited below:

1. Ph, p. 141
2. Ibid, p. 147
3. Ibid, p. 149
4. Ibid, p. 165
5. Ibid, p. 149
6. Ibid, p. 119
8. Rh, p. 41
9. Ibid, p. 22
10. Ibid, p. 28
11. Ibid, p. 41
12. Ibid, p. 49
13. Ibid, p. 58
(i) Šrīkrṣṇa bāta pucata//¹
   (Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked a thing)
(ii) kumāri heṭhamāthe rahala//²
    (the girl stood with her head down)
(iii) kṛṣṇaka gore lāgi etc.//³
    (clasped the feet of Kṛṣṇa)

The word 'thik' derived from Sanskrit verb root 'stha' is extensively used in both the plays. For example:

(i) kothā hante ethā āwali thik//⁴
   (from where have you come)
(ii) jaice nācae lāgala thik//⁵
    (as were dancing)
(iii) hāmāka sama sobhāgini kona thik //⁶
    (who is more fortunate than I am)
(iv) hāmāta kona prayojana thik //⁷
    (what is my need)

It is an important feature in modern Assamese phonology to shorten an anterior -a- before a following 'a'. But Śaṅkaradeva, as it appears from these plays did not follow this rule and he rather preferred the rule of the kāmarūpi dialect where the shortening of anterior vowel does not take place. For example 'rāja'⁸.

1. Rh,p. 10  
2. Ibid, p. 56  
3. Ph,p. 113  
4. Rh,p. 17  
5. Ibid, p. 24  
6. Ibid, p. 25  
7. Ph,p. 131  
8. Rh,p. 26
In both the plays there is abundant use of Sanskrit adjectives like 'bṛddha' (old), 'pāpi' (sinful), 'bara' (very), 'bhalla' (good), 'uttama' (good), 'adhama' (bad). The use of post positions like 'upare' (above), 'hante' (from), 'tabe' (then), 'saṅge' (with), 'saṅite' (with), 'dhari' (including), 'kari' (doing), 'samipe' (by or near), 'nikate' (near) are also noticeable.

Terms used in the plays describing the natural surroundings makes an interesting list. Such terms include the names of flora and fauna, tribes and races of people, their dress and ornaments and musical instruments.

Perhaps with a view to making his brajabuli appealing to the masses he made extensive use of Assamese words, phrases and idioms in the plays. It accounts for the distinctive characteristics of Assamese brajabuli. Often pure Assamese words are given brajabuli look by simple adding 'a', 'la', 'ta', 'ha' etc. As for instance,

(i) śrīkṛṣṇaka bibāha dite nisedhala //¹
   (for bidden to be married to Śrī Kṛṣṇa)
(ii) ah! swāmi sunaha //²
    (O! Lord, listen)
(iii) hā hā ki bhela bulī ānkoāli dharala //³
    (embraced, shouting -hey, hey, what happened)

Besides, the use of Assamese idioms, aphorisms and proverbs greatly enhanced the literary beauty of his plays. A few examples of such idioms, aphorisms and proverbs used in the plays are cited below:

1. Rh, p. 28
2. Ph, p. 116
3. Ibid, p. 130
(i) 'bighinika upari bighini milala' //\(^1\)
(misfortunes after misfortunes befell)

(ii) 'jaice simhkaha bhāga nite śṛgāla cumpiye rahala' //\(^2\)
(as a jackal lurks to elope a mate of a lion)

(iii) 'bhaye dande juga jāi' //\(^3\)
(fear makes a minute seem eternity)

(iv) 'jaice simhkaha āgu kṣudra harina' //\(^4\)
(as a petty deer in front of a lion)

(v) 'jaice hastinisaba sahite matta mātaṅga calali' //\(^5\)
(as rogue elephant accompanies a horde of female elephants)

(vi) 'jaice pataṅga aganita jāsa kayala' //\(^6\)
(as insects are consumed by fire)

(vii) 'caranaka āgu añcora pāti māgu' //\(^7\)
(fervently beg of you clasping your feet)

(viii) 'jaice labaṅga latāka bāte upāralā' //\(^8\)
(as the frail creeper is uprooted by the wind)

(ix) 'kācaka cāhite mānika harāi' //\(^9\)
(losing pearl for a bead of glass)

(x) 'nāsāta prāna bāyu nāhi khele' //\(^10\)
(life breath is not felt in the nostril)

(xi) 'māthe khera dhari ataye kātara karaice' //\(^11\)

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1. Rh, p. 71
2. Ibid, p. 45
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p. 73
5. Ibid, p. 79
6. Ibid, p. 82
7. Ibid, p. 89
8. Ph, p. 126
9. Rh, p. 71
10. Ph, p. 126
11. Ibid, p. 136
(entreat you with a straw on my head,)

(xii) 'jaicana mṛgajutha madhyahante simha nija bhāga laiyā jāi'//¹
(as a lion takes away its share from among the pack of deer)

(xiii) 'jaicana simhaka bhaye śṛgāla laware'//²
(as a jackal flees in fear of a lion)

(xiv) 'jaicana nakṣatra māje punnimāka cānda parakāsa kaye'//³
(as full moon shines among the stars)

The use of these household Assamese phrases, idioms, aphorisms and proverbs, apart from depicting a picture of social life of Assame, appealed to the masses and thus went on to make the plays unbelievably popular. Moreover, such uses gave new dimension to the brajabuli language and established it as a language at once distinct and separate from those prevalent in the other parts of the country.

This form of Brajabuli was also successfully employed by his disciple-in-chief Śrī Mādhavadeva in the composition of his bargīts and jhumurās (a kind of short plays). The poets and playwrights of the subsequent period did not carry on the tradition and gradually gave up using it and by the mid-seventeenth century its use became almost obsolete.⁴

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1. Rh, p. 67
2. Ibid, p. 76
3. Ibid, p. 62
C. A COMPARISON BETWEEN UMĀPATI’S PĀRIJĀTA-HARAṆA AND ŚAṇKARADEVA’S PĀRIJĀTA-HARAṆA

There are some scholars who try to assert that the great saint of Assam Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva composed his Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāţa in imitation of a play with the same title by the Maitheḷī playwright Umāpati Upādhyāya. As for instance in the preface to his Āṅkāwalī Kaliram Medhi observes: "It is also possible, though not probable, that the Sanskrit-Maitheḷī drama of Umāpati exercised some indirect influence in minor pionts." In his History of Maithili Literature Dr. Jaykant Mishra writes: "The Pārijāta-haraṇa of Śaṅkaradeva is a play written in a different spirit from the Pārijāta-haraṇa of Umāpati". Noted linguist and scholar of Assam Birinchi Kumar Baruah also observes: "Śaṅkaradeva was possibly influenced and his witnessing some of the plays of Maitheḷī poets, for instances, the Pārijāta-haraṇa of Umāpati, when he was in Bihar in the heyday of Vidyāpati’s fame." At the root of such belief is the fact that Śaṅkaradeva’s itinerary of pilgrimage included Mithilā and he had the opportunity to be acquainted with the art and culture of that region. Moreover, he composed and performed dramas just after his return from pilgrimage.

Though attempts are being made to trace the influence of Umāpati’s Pārijāta-haraṇa on Śaṅkaradeva’s play with the same title doubts still prevail about the time of Umāpati. In their study on Prācin Bhaṣā Nāţak, Jagadish Chandra Mathur and Dr. Dasharath Ojha linguistically place Umāpati in the 14th century. On the other hand in

2. Dr. Jaykant Mishra, History of Maithili Literature, 1976, p. 190
3. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Baruah, Śaṅkaradeva, Vaiśnava Saint of Assam, 1960, p. 77
4. Jagadish Chandra Mathur & Dr. Dasharath Ojha, Prācin Bhaṣā Nāţak, ed. 1, 1975 p. 170
his 'History of Maithili Literature' Dr. Jaykanta Mishra puts Umāpati in the 18th Century and says that he lived during the reign of Mahārāja Rāghava Singh (1704-1740)¹. So, there are problems in straightway accepting the view that Śaṅkaradeva was influenced by Umāpati in composing Pārijāta haraṇa. In this regard Dimbeswar Neog aptly observes: "Mere identity of titles of Śaṅkaradeva's Pārijāta-haraṇa and Umāpati's Pārijāta-haraṇa leads some reckless critics to hurriedly conclude that Śaṅkaradeva imitated the Mithilā poet; but those who have the opportunity of witnessing both the plays will readily discover that these two mythical dramas inspite of outward similarities are completely different in essence"²

Let us now make a comparative analysis of both the dramas and examine their sources, their plots and the way they are treated, dramatic techniques employed, characterization and above all the purposes behind their performances.

Both Umāpati and Śaṅkaradeva based their dramas on a well known episode found in the old scriptures. The episode is found in the Bhāgavata and Viṣṇu-purāṇa and also in Viṣṇu-parva of Harivamsa.³

While Śaṅkaradeva's nāṭa includes the episode of the killing of Narakāśura along with the main episode of Pārijāta-haraṇa, Umāpati's drama is confined to the episode of Pārijāta-haraṇa alone.

In the beginning of Umāpti's drama Kṛṣṇa is seen revelling with Rukminī and sixteen thousand other maidens at the mountain scene

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¹ Dr. Jaykant Mishra, History of Maithili Literature, 1976, p.177
² Dimbeswar Neog, Natun PoharatAsamiyaSdityar Buranji, p. 177
³ The Bhāgavata, 10/59/38/41; Viṣṇupurāṇa, 5/30/31; Harivamsa 64/81
of Raivata. But in Sañkaradeva's nāṭa Kṛṣṇa is seen sitting with Rukmiṇī alone.

In Umāpati's drama Nārada enters alone and meets first Satyabhāmā's attendant maid Sumukhi. Thereafter, he proceeds to meet Kṛṣṇa and gives the Pārijāta flower at his request and narrates the wondrous power of the flower also at being specifically asked about it. But in Sañkaradeva's nāṭa Nārada enters the stage accompanied by Indra, the king of heaven and voluntarily offered the Pārijāta flower to Kṛṣṇa and narrated the magical power of the flower.

In Sañkaradeva's nāṭa Rukmiṇī is graceful and dignified in manners. She gets the Pārijāta flower by politely asking for it and on getting it she remains calm and makes no show of her joy. But in Umāpati's drama Kṛṣṇa himself willingly offers the flower to Rukmiṇī and after getting the flower she is beside herself in joy and she sings and dances wildly at the instance of maid in honour, Sumukhi.

The most important difference between the two plays is marked in the depiction of the scene of Kṛṣṇa's presenting the Pārijāta to Rukmiṇī. In Umapati's play Satyabhāmā, standing behind the shrub of Mādhabilatā with her attendant Sumukhi, herself witnesses Kṛṣṇa's offering of the flower to Rukmiṇī and she finds nothing wrong in it. There is no feeling of envy. It is at the instance of Sumukhi she begins to resent it and sullenly leaves Kṛṣṇa on the pretext of feigned headache. But in Sañkaradeva's nāṭa it is mischievous Nārada who reports the incident to Satyabhāmā and provokes her envy towards her co-consort. It is from Nārada again Kṛṣṇa learns of Satyabhāmā's wrath and resentment about

1. Jagadish Chandra Mathur & Dr. Dasharath Ojha, Pracīn Bhaṣa Naṭak, ed. 1, 1975 p. 176
2. Ph, p. 110
the flower and proceeds to appease her. But in Umāpati's play Kṛṣṇa guesses it from Satyabhāmā's behaviour itself and does not go directly to appease. He first peeps through the window and sees Satyabhāmā swooning and he is full of remorse. On regaining her senses Kṛṣṇa admits his guilt and addressing her as "priye prasid" promises to get for her the entire plant of the flower. But in Śaṅkaradeva's play amorous Kṛṣṇa goes directly to Satyabhāmā and he suffers from no sense of remorse. To reassure Satyabhāmā of his love and affection he promises to bring the whole plant of Pārijāta for her.

In Umāpati's nāṭa Kṛṣṇa summons Nārada from Rukmiṇī's palace and sends him to collect a Pārijāta flower from Indra. He bids Nārada to tell Indra of dire consequences if he refuses to give the flower. But in Śaṅkaradeva's play such warning is issued much later. In Śaṅkaradeva's play Kṛṣṇa, after the slaying of Narakāsura is reminded by Satyabhāmā of his pledge to get Pārijāta for her. Then only he sends Nārada to Indra to obtain the flower for Satyabhāmā. But learning the true purpose of Nārada's visit Śaci, the consort of Indra, loses her temper and drives away Nārada and as a result fighting breaks out between Indra and Kṛṣṇa.

But in Umāpati's play Kṛṣṇa is accompanied by Arjuna in his journey to heaven to collect the flower and he straightway collects it. There is no fighting between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. But in Śaṅkaradeva's play Kṛṣṇa is accompanied by Satyabhāmā. On his way to heaven he killed Narakāsura and recovered the 'amṛta kuṇḍala' of Aditi and 'Catra' of Varuṇa. This scene is followed by a long scene of fighting between Indra

1. Jagadish Chandra Mathur & Dr. Dasharath Ojha, Pracīṇ Bhāṣā Nāṭak, ed. 1, 1975 p. 186
and Krṣṇa. While their husbands are engaged in a deadly battle the wives, Śacī and Satyabhāmā, are quarrelling. There is angry exchange of words, there are accusations and counter accusations. In Umāpati’s play there is no such scene as Satyabhāmā does not accompany Krṣṇa to heaven.

In Śaṅkaradeva’s nāṭa after being vanquished in battle fugitive Indra is taunted and ridiculed by Satyabhāmā which ultimately leads to his acceptance of Krṣṇa as the incarnation of Supreme being and willingly offers the entire plant of Pārijāta to Krṣṇa. This scene is not found in Umāpati’s version.

Rather we find a jubilant Satyabhāmā after the plantation of the Pārijāta in her yard who asks Nārada "Nārada kimdejjam" (i.e. what shall I offer you ?). Nārada asks for her most favourite thing. At this Satyabhāmā offers her husband to him. Similarly Nārada gets Arjuna from Subhadra. Afterwards he returns them to their wives at the price of cows. In Śaṅkaradeva’s play there is no such incidents.

Again in Umāpati’s Rukmiṇī does not appear in any scene after Krṣṇa’s return from heaven with Pārijāta plant. But in Śaṅkaradeva’s play Rukmiṇī along with her companions welcomes and receives them.

Umāpati’s Satyabhāmā though full of pride and envy is not totally devoid of humane kindness but Śaṅkaradeva’s Satyabhāmā is utterly envious, proud, quarrelsome and sharp-tongued. In her Śaṅkaradeva seems to portray a typical Assamese rustic woman of quarrelsome nature.
In Śaṅkaradeva’s nāta Satyabhāmā is visibly proud at having the Pārijāta plant and boasted of her good fortune. In reply to her boastful utterances Rukmini in a very humble manner points out that through sincere love and devotion to Lord even salvation is possible. But in Umāpali’s play no such confrontation between Satyabhāmā and Rukmini is shown.

Umāpati’s nāta ends with ‘Bharatavākyā’ after Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are returned at the price of cows. But in Śaṅkaradeva’s nāta there is a scene of celebration at Kṛṣṇa to Dwārakā and after that Pārijāta is planted in the front yard of Satyabhāmā. Thereafter, only the nāta ends with ‘Muktimaṅga-la-bhaṭima’.

From the above discussion on the themes of both plays we can conclude that while Umāpati has based his play mainly on Harivamśa, Śaṅkaradeva has used only Viṣṇu-purāṇa as the source. Dramatic techniques employed by the playwrights widely differ though both the plays are confined to a single act. In the treatment of the theme and construction of the plot there is a marked difference between these two playwrights, for stresses are different. Where Umāpati is brief Śaṅkaradeva is elaborate and vice-versa. As for instance in Umāpati’s play Kṛṣṇa directly collects the flower from Indra. There is no conflict, no battle. But in Śaṅkaradeva’s play there is a long scene of battle between Kṛṣṇa and Indra.

From purely dramatic point of view Śaṅkaradeva’s nāta seems to be superior to that of Umāpati’s, for its plot has unity of action. All actions of the nāta are directed towards the intended effect of establishing
the greatness of Viṣṇu. The structure Umāpati's play is somewhat loose. It is mainly owing to differences in the purposes of composing the play. While Śaṅkaradeva has a religious and spiritual goal Umāpati's play chiefly aims at entertainment and to gain royal patronage.

In the important matter of characterization also both the playwrights differ. The ultimate source of the plots of both the nāṭas being the well-known episode of the Bhāgavata it is natural that the main characters would be common. Such common characters are Kṛṣṇa, Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Nārada, Indra, Śacī, Aditi and others. Besides these we find in Umāpati's play a few more characters like Arjuna and Subhadra and in Śaṅkaradeva's play Narakāsura, Basumatī etc. This inclusion of additional characters are in accordance with the demand of the respective plays which differ both in their structures and their objectives.

In Śaṅkaradeva's play Kṛṣṇa is depicted as an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, a protector and saviour of people and merciful to its votaries. His character has a divine as well as a human aspect. But Umāpati's Kṛṣṇa is devoid of the divinity, he is rather depicted as an ideal man and a perfect lover. Differences are marked in the portrayal Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā of the two playwrights. While Śaṅkaradeva's Rukmiṇī is graceful and of a quiet nature with full of devotion to Kṛṣṇa, Umāpati's Rukmiṇī even in her brief appearance impresses the readers with the fickleness of disposition. Again, the treatment of Satyabhāmā is also not same in the two plays. Umāpati's Satyabhāmā is proud of her beauty and good fortune. But Śaṅkaradeva presented her as an envious, mischievous and quarrelsome woman.
In Śaṅkaradeva's nāṭa Nārada is a lively character. A true devotee of Kṛṣṇa Nārada leads a vagrant life. He acts as celestial messenger. He is somewhat mischievous in nature and enjoys provoking people to quarrel. Śaṅkaradeva uses his character for the development of the plot. But in Umāpati's nāṭa this divine messenger is depicted with more sympathy and is not endowed with the mischievous nature. He is rather portrayed as a gentle and humoursome person with charitable nature.

Both Śaṅkaradeva and Umāpati also widely differ in their dramatic skill and employment of dramatic technique. As for instance, the role assigned to Sūtradhāra is not same in two plays. Umāpati has modelled the character of the Sūtradhāra in the tradition old Sanskrit plays. His function is limited to speak the prologue to acquaint the audience with the theme of the play and after introducing the characters he leaves the stage permanently. But Śaṅkaradeva's Sūtradhāra serves as the dramatist's vehicle for commenting on the play and for communicating to the audience exposition about its subject, offstage events and setting.

In Umāpati's play male characters' dialogues are in Sanskrit, but those of female characters are in Prakrit. But in Śaṅkaradeva's nāṭa all the characters use only Brajabuli.

There are all together 43 songs and verses in Umāpati's play, while in Śaṅkaradeva's play the number is 63.

As regards the employment of poetic sentiments (rasa) both the plays are replete with the instance of the sentiments of 'heroism'
(Bīra), 'humour' (Hāsyā), 'love' (Śṛṅgār and 'pathos' (Karuṇā). But these sentiments (rasa) are made subservient and complementary to the dominating sentiment of 'devotion' (Bhakti) by both the playwrights.

Dramas are generally written and performed for various reasons with different objectives. Umapati's nāṭa, composed mainly for entertainment of royalty and aristocracy, suffers from lack of profound philosophy of life. It is confined to creating frolic and fun. It belongs to that genre of drama which aims at royal patronage. But Śaṅkaradeva's dramas are of religious tradition. They are indited chiefly as vehicles of carrying the message of his Neo-Vaiṣṇavite faith to the masses. They contain the basic philosophy of the cult of Bhakti (devotion). His Pārijāta-harana Nāṭa is no exception in this respect.

Thus the above comparative analysis of both plays from different angles shows that there are more dissimilarities than similarities. Whatever little resemblances are noticed they do not indicate influence of one over the other; rather they indicate to the common source. Both the dramas being dramatisation of a well-known episode of the Bhāgavata there are bound to be some similarities. But Śaṅkaradeva's genius has created wonderful nāṭa out of a well-known theme by the use of his imaginative faculty and novel dramatic skil.
Saint Śaṅkaradeva indited *Rukmiṇī-harana* and *Pārijāta-harana* Nāṭa chiefly as vehicle for propagation of Vaiṣṇavism and he therefore, faithfully adhered to the original Sanskrit Bhāgavata in the construction of the plots. Yet in many places he introduced some local elements which beautifully reflect the customs and usage of the Assamese society of his time.

In Assamese society when a girl attains marriageable age her parents usually seek the opinions and advice of the relatives and neighbours in the matter of her marriage. In *Rukmiṇī-harana* Nāṭa Rukmiṇī’s father king Bhīṣmaka sought the opinions and advice of his ministers and relatives when he asked: "āhe pātra-mantri jnātisabha hāmāra duhita rukmini bibāhaka jogya bhela/ kanyāka sadṛṣa bara kona thāne thik sabahi bimarīsa kari bola/ hāmu jāhu eka daivakinandana bine kanyāka samāna bara nāhi jaba sabahi bhalla dekhaha tabe svahaste kanyā dāna karoho"¹ (O my ministers and my kiths and kins, my daughter Rukmiṇī has now attained the ripe age of her marriage. Please advise me after due consideration where to find a groom worthy of her. I think none is worthier than one Daivakinandana. If you all consider it proper I propose to offer my daughter in marriage to him.) All the relatives approved of the proposal and said, "dhanya dhanya rājā ah! tohāka uttama mati thik, apeksā nāhi karaba, parama purusa śri kṛṣṇaka kanyā dāna karaha purusa uddhāra hoka"² (Wise, wise O! king, you have rightly

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1. *Rh*, pp. 22-23
2. *Ibid*, p. 23
decided. Do not delay, get rid of your responsibility by bestowing your daughter in marriage to the greatest of all men, Sri Krsna).

It is an endearing old custom of our society which enjoins the youngers to show respect to the aged and the elders and to have their affectionate blessings in return. In Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa on being informed by the gateman (dwarapāla) of the arrival of Bedanidhi Śrī Kṛṣṇa "tatkāle uthi kahu gaurabe gaiyā brāhmanaka paranāmi āliṅgi dhariye abhyantara parabesa karāwala svahaste pāwa pakhāliye pañcāmṛta bhuṅjāwala"1 (at once rose and rushed to greet the Brahmin respectfully and he embraced the Brahmin and ushered him into the place, washed his feet and served him with pañcāmṛta (a mixture of five sweet ingredients). Thereafter, when the Brahmin lay down on the golden bed Śrī Kṛṣṇa massaged his feet to relieve him of the fatigue of the journey and began to ask questions).

In Pārijātā-haraṇa also we get: "tadantare devatā indra nārada sahite āsi kahu śrī kṛṣṇaka sire paranāma kayala: narakāsuraka bicestā jaice nibedala/ nārada āsirbada kaya śrī kṛṣṇaka hāte jaice pārijātā nibedala2 (thereafter god Indra with Nārada arrived and bowed before Śrī Kṛṣṇa and told him of the machinations of Narakāsura, then Nārada with his blessings offered the Pārijāta to Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and "munika mukhe kusumaka mahimā suni rukmini parama kautuke kṛṣṇaka gore lāgi karajuri bolala3" (hearing the divine power of the flower from the lips of the sage Rukmini in utter happiness touched the feet of Kṛṣṇa and politely said) etc.

1. Rh, pp. 41
2. Ph, p. 110
3. Ibid, p. 113
Rites of Hindu marriage system as observed in Assamese society are beautifully depicted in Rukmini-haranā Natā. A preliminary ceremony known as 'adhībāsa' is performed on the day previous to the actual marriage day. Rukmini speaks of this ceremony to her companions when she says, "āju adhibāsa kāli bibāhaka dibasa". In Hindu marriage system 'homa' (a burnt offering of clarified butter) is indispensible. In the play this rite is thus mentioned: "sohi samaye brahmā, nārada putra sahite bibāhaka homa karite jaice milala āhe loka tā dekhaha sunaha nirantare haribola haribolā (o! people chant the name of Hari incessantly and witness how at that moment Brahmā accompanied by his son Nārada arrived to perform the 'homa'). At another place Dhātā said with smile in his face, "hāmu tohāka bibāha suni parama kautuke āwalo svahaste āhuti kariye bibāha karāwabā (hearing about your marriage I have gladly come to perform the marriage by myself making the oblation in the sacred fire).

Some other aspects of marriage rites prevalent in the Assamese society of that time are revealed in the scene in which Daivakā amidst the auspicious sounds of various musical instruments joined the hands of the bride and groom and ushered them into the house in great festivity. There was great fun as several female singers threw bent grass (durbākṣata) on the heads of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini ("tadantare devi daivaki parama maṅgala bādyabhānde āsi kahu bara-kanyāka hāta eka thāma karikahu bahuta utsawe grha parabesa karāwala/ aneka sundari stri āyatisaba sahite kṛṣṇa -rukaminika māthe durbākṣata sīncāriye tathī parama utsawa mīlāwala")

1. Rh, p. 52
2. Ibid, p. 88
3. Ibid, p. 89
4. Ibid, p. 87
In Assamese society customarily it is the duty of the father to perform the actual act of offering the daughter in marriage. In Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa king Bhīṣmaka performs this sacred act. "rājā bhīṣmaka svahaste kṛṣṇaka kanyādāna karite āwala"¹ (king Bhīṣmaka himself came forward to perform the act of offering his daughter). We have a vivid description of the whole process: "sohi samaye rājā bhīṣmaka kanyā sampradāna karite bara kanyāka kesa eka thāma kariye dhari"² etc. (at that moment king Bhīṣmaka in order to perform the rites of giving away of his daughter taking, together the locks of hair of both bride and groom etc.). This rite is alluded to in the songs of the play also, as in "hari rukminika kesa eka kariye, bhīṣmaka dhāle bhṛṅgāra dhari pāṇī"³, (taking locks of hair of Hari and Rukmini, Bhīṣmaka pours water from sacred vessel).

As in many places there has been a custom in Assamese society since olden days of entertaining guests with food and of offering gifts to them. We have a description of it in Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭa. "tadantare brahma, rudra, indra ādi jata devatā, pātālaka bāsuki prabhṛtī jata nāga, prthūvika jata rājā sabākā sādare śrī kṛṣṇa gandha candane puspa tāmbula bastra alaṅkāre parama santusta karāwali⁴ (therafter Śrī Kṛṣṇa utterly satisfied Brahmā, Rudra, Indra and other gods of heaven; Bāsukī and the snakes from hell, and all the kings of the earth with scented sandal and flowers, areca nuts and dresses and ornaments).

Since very old time brother-sister relationship in our society is one of deep love and affection. This relationship is beautifully depicted

1. Rh, p. 88
2. Ibid, p. 91
3. Ibid
4. Ibid, p. 92
in *Rukminī-haraṇa Nāya* through the characters of Rukma and Rukminī. Rukminī was very dear to her elder brother Rukma and he tries to marry his sister to a worthy groom of his own choice. He puts forward strong reasons of not giving away his sister to Śrī Kṛṣṇa -- "se jādava anācār go-
badha stribadhā mātulabadha katapāpa kaye thik" (that immoral Jādava
is guilty of many sins like slaughtering cows, of killing women and even
of killing maternal uncle). He quarrels with his father in favour of marriage
of his sister to Śiśupāla. On the other hand Rukminī, apprehending that
her brother may not allow her marriage to her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, scolded
him: "he pāpi sodara, tuhu sāta satruto adhika bheli, prānakṛṣṇa sahite
kaice hāmāka baṅcita kayali, tuhu janami ki nimite nāhi marala"[2] (O !
wretched brother you are worse than a mortal enemy, or how can you try
to separate me from my dear Kṛṣṇa. You should better have died at your
birth). Yet when that very Rukma is vanquished in battle she entreated
Kṛṣṇa to spare the life of her brother and appeals: "he swāmi tohāka
carane lāgu bhāyāka prāṇa dāna dehu tuhu parama iśvara ohi pāpi tohāka
mahimā nāhi jānala jaice pataṅga aganita jāsa kayala hāmāka dekhite
ohi dosa marasa swāmi"[3] (O ! my husband, I bow before thy feet, please
spare the life of my brother, thou art God supreme and he does not no of
thy power and like ignorant insects jumps into the fire, please forgive
him looking towards me). She pleads again: "he swāmi bhāyāka dukha
dekhiye prāṇa phuṭi jāi/ ohi adhamaka jiva raksā karaha caranaka āgu
āṅco pāti māgu he nātha hāmāka sodara dāna dehu. he swāmi jaba
bhāṭrka raksā karabi nāhi taba hāmāka jiva āgu lehu", (O ! my Lord my
heart bleeds at the sufferings of my brother. I earnestly beg of you to
grant life to that wretched fellow. O ! Lord if I cannot save my brother,
then I should die first).

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1. Rh, p. 26
2. Ibid, p.32
3. Ibid, pp. 82 - 83
4. Ibid, p. 84
In Assamese culture areca nut has always occupied a special place. In ancient times apart from being used in religious functions areca with camphor was also used as a mouth freshner. In both the plays of Śaṅkaradeva the use of camphor-areca has been mentioned several times.

Our society abounds with people of mischievous nature. In Nārada we have a perfect representation of this class of people. The quarrel about the Pārijāta flower is the result of his machinations. It is Nārada who collects this flower from heaven and offers it to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He sees Kṛṣṇa adorning the hair of Rukmiṇī, who is sitting by him, with that flower. Nārada immediately proceeds to meet Satyabhāmā, another consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa and gives her an exaggerated account of the incident merely to incite her against her co-consort Rukmiṇī. He tells Satyabhāmā: "hā hā, he māwa ki kahaba esaba kathā, kahite dosa hāmu deva dullabā pārijāta puspā svarga hante āni kṛṣṇaka hāte delo se pārijāta je nāri paridhāna kale se puspaka mahimāye parama sobhāgini haya ihā jāni hāmu bolalo ohi pārijātaka jogya devi satyabhāmā tathi kṛṣṇe kayali ki tohāk katākṣa kariye āpuna hāte pṛyā rukminika māthe parama sādare se divya pārijata pindhāwala"¹ (flas ! my daughter, how can I say these things; if I say people will only blame me. I gave the rare Pārijāta flower that I collected from heaven to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Knowing that the inherent power of the flower makes fortune smile on the woman whoever wears it I told Kṛṣṇa that Devī Satyabhāmā was only worthy of it. But what did Kṛṣṇa do? He totally ignored you and adorned the head of his darling Rukmiṇī himself with that divine flower.)

The consequences of having more than one wife are always disastrous. It often a ends in turning a husband utterly henpecked. Lord

¹. Ph,p. 125
Kṛṣṇa’s predicament in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa is a pointer to this. He has been ruthlessly scolded by Satyabhāma. She complains that she has been made subordinate to her co-consorts and that she can no longer tolerate such humiliation and feels that it is better to die than to live such a wretched life (‘he śvāmi, hāmu durbhagā satīnīka adhīṇa, tuḥu hāmāka kataye bikarthana karaha ohi apamāne hāmu prāna rākhaha/ ah taba hāmāka jībana dhik dhik’1) These words of reproach visibly move Kṛṣṇa and we have a picture of a truly henpecked husband.

"pṛyāka dukha dekhi nashe sarīra/
kamala nayana bhari jure bahe nīra//
ālīngi pṛyāka cāpi dhari kola/
kari āswāsā bacan hari bola”//²
(Beloved’s sufferings torment his soul
And make his lotus-eyes with tears full
Embracing his darling with affection pure
Of his love Hari does assure.)

Village wives quarrelling over trifles is a characteristic feature of rural life in Assam. We have glimpse of it in Pārijāta-haraṇa Nāṭa when Śacī and Satyabhāma quarrel about the Pārijāta flower. Like all village wives Śacī puts all blames for her misery on Indra, the king of heaven and her husband and ridicules him as being devoid of manly prowess -- "tohāta purusa teja kicu nāhi”³

Besides these social customs and usage we also find reference to and adequate description of the dress, ornaments and ladies cosmetics

1. Ph,p.133  
2. Ibid  
3. Ibid,p.165
used in the Assamese society in those days. Bedanidhi’s white robe gives us an idea of Brahmin’s way of dress in those days. Besides we have description Kṛṣṇa’s yellow robe and reference to such ornaments as maṇi (beads), mukūṭa (crown), kundala (ear-rings), kaṅkana (bracelet), keyura (armlet), mānīka (pearl), hemahāra (golden necklace), nupura (ornaments worn round ankles) and kiṅkini (a girdle of tiny bells).

In these two plays of Śaṅkaradeva there are reference to various musical instruments, as for instance, dambaru (a kind x-shaped drum), cāmar ḍhola (a kind of drum), pāncajanya (Kṛṣṇa’s sconce), saṅkha (sconces), dundubhi (kettle drum), ḍhola (drum) and maṅgala bādyabhāṇḍa (assortment musical instruments) etc.

There are references to flora and fauna of Assam in both the plays. Of the fauna there are references to simha (lion), ṣrigāla (jackal), harina (deer), hastini (she-elephant), airābata (he-elephant) and bhujāṅgama (snakes) etc. The habit of areca nut chewing has been referred to in many places.

As battles figure in both the plays there are references to many arms and weapons of fighting, e.g. saradhanu (arrows and bow), khaḍga (a large sword), cakra (wheel), bajra (thunder bolt) etc.

Thus the present study while making an attempt to restore the original versions of Śaṅkaradeva’s Rukmiṇī-haraṇa and Pārijātaharaṇa Nāṭas on the basis of text-critical analysis of the texts has also been concerned with revealing the various aspects of the contermporary Assamese life and society as depicted in these two plays. Our discussion
shows that we can form comprehensive idea of the Assamese people and society of the sixteenth century. In these plays we have a glimpse into their customs and usage, their social mores, their hospitality, their way of entertainment and their faiths and beliefs. Undoubtedly these two plays are two great documents of considerable historical value and importance.