

Sound Play and the *Madhurā Vijaya* of Gaṅgādevī

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Translating the form a verse takes, as opposed to simply its meaning, is a challenge that modern translation techniques largely fail to address. This article discusses the issues involved in translating one particular type of form-centric poetry – sound play or figures of sound - from Sanskrit to English. After looking at the work of contemporary translators in this regard, the authors quote from their recently published translation of a rare Sanskrit court epic, the *Madhurā Vijaya*, which makes extensive use of sound play.

INTRODUCTION

*tāratāratarairetairuttarottarato rutaiḥ
ratārttā tittirī rauti tīre tīre tarau tarau*

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In an English-language journal such as this, you might reasonably expect the Sanskrit verse above to be accompanied by an English translation. But a translation of what? To render the meaning alone in English would do little to convey to the non-Sanskritist the full impact of the verse:

Wracked with love, the partridge laments upon every river bank and every tree, his cries growing shriller with each passing moment.

The meaning (*artha* in Sanskrit terms) in this instance is almost inconsequential. It is the form that the verse takes, the sound (*śabda*) that it makes, that is important. And whereas contemporary translation techniques have a well-established method of conveying *meaning* from one language to another, they struggle to carry across the *form* which is by its very nature bound to the original language. Where the form cannot be carried across, the translator can perhaps at best try to create a parallel effect in the target language. In the instance above, the Sanskrit

technique of using only two consonants (here, 't' and 'r') throughout the verse is in theory do-able in English. It proves to be more difficult in practice. A four-consonant-only translation is possible:

A *tittiri*, in Eros' snare, tires not
as it tunes its strain.
On trees it rests, on straits nearest,
to raise its notes sans restraint.

The sound of the Sanskrit is though perhaps more clearly heard in English using an alliterative effect:

Trawit trawit,
trills the twitterer tragic-struck,
traversing
tree after tree
track after track.

In this article, we would like to discuss some of the issues surrounding translation of a particularly prevalent type of form-centric poetry in Sanskrit where sound play (*śabdālaṃkāra*) is an integral part of the verse. In particular, we look at a new translation we have been working on of a rare court epic (*mahākāvya*), the *Madhurā Vijaya* of Gaṅgādevī, which makes use of sound play throughout. A selection from our translation forms the second half of this article.

SOUND PLAY IN THE SANSKRIT TRADITION

For the purposes of this article, we have divided form-centric verse in Sanskrit into two categories: *citrakāvya* and *śabdālaṃkāra*.

Citrakāvya is poetry that causes you to exclaim, 'Clever!'. In *citrakāvya*, a poet must compose a verse within certain often very limiting structural restrictions. In the visual type of *citrakāvya*, verses are arranged, syllable by syllable, into a complex pre-set pattern (in the shape of a snake, say, or a flower) which demands that, for instance, the third and twenty-first syllables must be the same. The aural type is more varied and includes verses composed with only one type of consonant or vowel, or without a certain group of letters; verses that can be read in two ways based on the metre; verses that seem at first glance to make no sense or to be grammatically unsound and whose hidden meaning has to be teased out; and riddles in verse

form. There are also instances where the wonderment lies in the fact that the verse can be read in different directions – not just from left to right and top to bottom, but also backwards, in a zig-zag, or even from all sides. *Citrakāvya* is prized for its ability to perform such marvels more than for the idea it is conveying or for its beauty. Although such verse must nevertheless make sense, meaning is usually a secondary consideration.

The term *śabdālaṃkāra* refers to one of the two types of *alaṃkāras* – literally ornaments – which are an integral part of Sanskrit poetry and poetics. It can be translated as sound play or figure of sound. Our discussion here is focused on the two main categories of *śabdālaṃkāra*, *anuprāsa* and *yamaka*¹. *Anuprāsa* is the repetition, often several times, of certain consonants within a verse, something akin to alliteration except that the repeated consonants need not occur at the beginning of a word. *Yamaka* literally means 'twin' or 'twofold' and the device depends upon the repetition of a particular pattern of syllables with an identical sound but a different meaning. These two main categories are then subdivided, sometimes seemingly infinitely, into different groups.

Śabdālaṃkāra is quite different from *citrakāvya* in two ways. Firstly, it is much more common than *citrakāvya*, and is used by most poets at some point in the course of their regular composition. The subtler *anuprāsa* is almost ubiquitous and the more artificial *yamaka* too is enduringly popular. Even the uncontested king of *kāvya*, Kālidāsa, who is celebrated for *not* producing the at times unnecessarily elaborate show-off verse of other poets, has used *yamaka* throughout much of the ninth canto of his *Raghuvamśa*. *Yamaka* also appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which is a much simpler, less highly wrought poem than its successors; and there are several *mahākāvyas* which are composed entirely in *yamaka*². *Citrakāvya*, especially the visual type, appears much less in mainstream poetry. The second point of difference is that *śabdālaṃkāra*, when done well, should contribute to the meaning rather than distract from it. It is an additional adornment not an end in itself.

¹ We are not here including punning (*śleṣa*) among *śabdālaṃkāras*. Although often classified as a *śabdālaṃkāra* rather than as an *arthālaṃkāra*, it is really a bit of both and requires different techniques and a separate discussion.

² The most famous is probably the *Yudhiṣṭhira Vijaya* of Vāsudeva

TRANSLATING ŚABDĀLAṂKĀRA

The very fact that *śabdālaṁkāra* is so mainstream and prevalent warrants it attention in translation. In addition, though, we should remember that this poetry was designed to be heard not read and thus the sound assumes far greater importance than the silent letters imprisoned on the printed page would have you believe. For those translating for the language student or for the historian, a meaning-only translation is perhaps sufficient. For translations intended for a wider audience, to ignore the *śabdālaṁkāra* is to fail both the verse, whose beauty lies partly or mainly in the sound, and the poet, a large part of whose skill and aesthetic sense is thus overlooked. Translating *śabdālaṁkāra* though can be a tall task.

With two languages as different as Sanskrit and English, translating form is particularly challenging. *Yamaka* for instance relies on an aspect of Sanskrit which English does not share, namely that a given combination of letters will always be pronounced in exactly the same way, irrespective of which word or words it is a part of. An example, taken from the first half of a verse from the *Madhurā Vijaya*, should illustrate this:

api dayitatamena vāritābhirṇhasaraso vijahe na vāri tābhiḥ |

(see below for the translation and audio of this verse)

The *yamaka* at the end of the first and second *pādas* (verse quarters), '*na vāritābhir...na vāri tābhiḥ*', pays no heed to word boundaries, and makes use of single-syllable, meaningless parts of words – such as '*na*' in the first *pāda*. Nevertheless, the sound of the two half *pādas* is identical. And because of Sanskrit's fondness for compounding and the joining of words through *sandhi*, such patterns are often easy for the silent reader too to spot.

In English by contrast the situation is quite different:

He rears a reindeer.

Her ears are inflamed.

Although the first 12 letters in both these sentences (h-e-r-e-a-r-s-a-r-e-i-n) are the same and arranged in exactly the same order, they do not sound the same because of the oddities of English. In addition, because the pattern crosses word boundaries, it is almost undetectable even to the reader who sees rather than hears the verse. Were the letters to be written without any spaces, of course, the same reader would instantly see the repetitive pattern.

Indeed, in general English as a language has several limitations that make it less flexible than Sanskrit and thus less capable of sound and word jugglery. Its pool of synonyms is considerably smaller, especially for nouns. Leaving aside technical and scientific terms which find no place in poetry, there is for instance really only one word for the moon; by contrast, the most popular Sanskrit lexicon, the *Amarakoṣa*, lists 20 base terms for 'moon' in Sanskrit and building on these it is possible – and poets do this a great deal – to make many many more synonyms³. To illustrate just how many options the Sanskrit poet has at his disposal to meet any type of demand the verse places upon him, take the word 'sun'. When the sound play favours a 'd'-starting synonym, a poet may use 'dīprāṃśu' ('the shining-rayed one'). Should there be a requirement for a synonym composed only of gutturals, he can use 'khaga' ('the sky-roving one') and if conversely he needs a word with no gutturals, he has 'āditya' ('Aditi's son'). If he wants a one-syllable name, he has 'ka'; and if a ten-syllable word is needed, he could use 'sarasijavanīpriyatama' ('the lover of the lotus groves'). And so on. English can use adjectives for an alliterative effect, for instance 'radiance-ringed sun' where an 'r' sound is needed, but offers little scope for meeting other requirements. In addition, as an uninflected language the word order in English is less fluid – although English verse has always allowed more flexibility than prose.

There are instances where the effect used in the Sanskrit can, with some imagination on the part of the translator, find an equivalent in English – such as this:

*madhye na kraśimā stane na garimā dehe na vā kāntimā
śroṇau na prathimā gatau na jaḍimā netre na vā vakrimā |
lāsye na draḍhimā na vāci paṭimā hāsye na vā sphitimā
prāṇeṣya tathāpi majjati mano mayyeva kiṃ kāraṇam ||*

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My figure shows no curvitude,
my breasts no altitude,
my body has no pulchritude,
my hips no amplitude,
my walk suggests no gravitude,
my eyes no magnitude,
my charm reveals no plenitude,
my speech no aptitude,
and my laugh no latitude –
why in the world has my lover given

³ Thus a synonym such as *himadyuti*, which means 'the cold-shining one', can be almost infinitely adapted using any combination of the words 'cold' and 'shine', both of which have plenty of synonyms themselves.

his heart to me and me alone?

Verse 70 of the *Rasamañjarī* - translated by Sheldon Pollock

Most often, though, it is extremely difficult to translate the sound acrobatics of Sanskrit into the less pliant English language. It is at times more practical to create a fresh sound effect, representing but not translating the original, using a technique native to English verse in the target language. Thus instead of trying to replicate for instance a series of *yamakas* in English – a difficult task even if you don't need to worry about capturing the meaning of the original, which you do – it may be more effective to use the end rhyme so favoured by English poets. Aside from rhyme, there are other devices such as alliteration, assonance and consonance which can also be pressed into service.

Armed with such tools, the translator is often able to create sound play parallel though not equivalent to the Sanskrit. And indeed many translators have done and continue to do so with great success. For example:

lalitavaṅgalatāpariśīlanakomalamalayasamīre |
madhukaranikarakarambitakokilakūjitakuñjakuṭīre ||

[Click here for audio](#)

When winsome westerly winds
caress comely creeping cloves
As bumblebees' buzz-buzzing and cuckoos' coo-cooing
resound in huts, in coves, in groves.

3.1 of the *Gītagovinda*⁴ – translated by by Lee Siegel

Isabelle Onians' translation of the *Daśakumāracarita* deserves special mention here. As she notes in her introduction it is perhaps the first translation that attempts to mimic in English⁵ the device used in the story of Mantragupta, in which no labials are used at all (because Mantragupta was trying to avoid pressing his kiss-sore lips together). The resulting p- b- and m-free English flows as naturally as Daṇḍin's original labial-free Sanskrit does.

⁴ The *Gītagovinda* continues to be the most favoured text for shabdalamkaric translations. Dániel Balogh informs us that there is a particularly brilliant metrical Hungarian translation of the text by the Indologist József Vekerdi and the poet Sándor Weöres. There is also a similar attempt in German by Erwin Steinbach.

⁵ Erwin Steinbach has also managed the same feat in German, according to his colleague Christian Ferstl.

As sound play finds its way into almost every poem to some degree, most translators will have come across at least one very consciously sound-centric verse. The majority of translations though ignore *śabdālamkāras* almost entirely and focus only on conveying the meaning. While such translations are often excellent in all other respects, the English reader remains wholly unaware of the *śabda* quality of the original.

TRANSLATING THE MADHURĀ VIJAYA

The *Madhurā Vijaya* is a rather special poem. Not only was it discovered just under 100 years ago, more than six centuries after it was composed, but it was also written by a woman. Although there were quite a number of women in the domain of *kāvya* or poetry, unlike in many other branches of Sanskrit literature, little of their work survives. And nor was Gaṅgādevī a run-of-the-mill Sanskrit poetess – if such a thing existed in the middle ages – but a queen of the once mighty Vijayanagara Empire.

The story the Andhra princess tells is that of the birth and youth of her husband – the Vijayanagara Empire’s crown prince, Kampa – and his successful campaign against the Muslim invaders and their allies in the South. The two major battles, in Kanchipuram and Madurai, take up just two of the extant nine cantos. The remainder of the poem is far removed from the battlefield. Vijayā – today’s Hampi – is described in fantastic detail. We are then taken gradually through Queen Devāyī’s pregnancy, the birth of Kampa and the joy his parents take in their new-born son. When Kampa comes of age, he is duly married – to several wives including Gaṅgādevī we assume although this portion of the poem is lost – and then dispatched on the twin campaigns described above.

In between the first and second battle, Kampa spends his time enjoying the delights of each season, picking flowers and playing about in water – all with the court’s comeliest women. We are also treated to an evening of luminous beauty in the company of Kampa and his chief queen, the poetess herself. Finally the Prince is summoned south to the Turk-occupied Madhurā, where the land has been reduced to a terrible state: temples destroyed, men and cattle butchered and, worst of all, parrots speaking not Sanskrit but Persian.

Gaṅgādevī plays subtly with sound throughout the poem and much of the beauty of the poetry lies in its appeal to the ear. On rare occasions she privileges form above meaning, such as in the *yamaka* verse partially quoted above and given here in full with the translation:

api dayitatamena vāritābhirgrhasaraso vijahe na vāri tābhiḥ |
parilulitalalāmacarcikābhirvihṛtirasānmahilāmarcikābhiḥ ||

[Click here for audio](#)

Though many a time did their beloved ask,
they left not their much-loved bask,
their *tilaka* and sandal paste in every way faded,
those beautiful wives of his in no way jaded.

6.65 Madhurā Vijaya

However, most of the time she lays an equal emphasis on both sound and sense. This is particularly clearly seen in the seventh canto, in which she describes in fresh and marvellous pen pictures the night - the setting of the sun, the onset of darkness and the rise of the moon – using *śabdālaṃkāra* throughout to embellish this already incredibly rich verse.

In translating we have used some of the English verse sound devices described above. Thus for example:

madhuropavanaṃ nirīkṣya dūye bahuśaḥ khaṇḍitanālikeraṣaṇḍam |
parito nṛkaroṭikoṭihārāpracalacchūlaparamparāparītam ||

[Click here for audio](#)

‘In Madhurā’s gardens
great swathes of coconut groves have been cut down
and all about
serried spikes stand
swaying under the hundreds of long-dead human heads
strung together.
To see it is to weep.

8.8 Madhurā Vijaya

The restrictions placed upon us by English, and our own shortcomings in composing English verse, at times led us to compromise: either we were not able to convey, or not able to convey fully, a *śabdālaṃkāra* or we did so but at the risk of violating English idiom. We were also conscious that the effects we used in the English should be no more conspicuous than their counterparts in the Sanskrit. And as neither of us is well acquainted with English fixed verse, we did not attempt a metrical translation.

The following is a selection of verses from the incomplete seventh canto of the poem in which Gaṅgādevī appears as a character in her own poem delivering some beautifully descriptive and sound-rich verse. As can be seen the *śabdālaṅkāra* here serves to heighten the vivid visual effect of the poetry and is by no means an end in itself.

Seventh Canto of *Madhurā Vijaya*

atha kampanarendrasubhruvāṃ mukhapadmānyanuhārya pañkajaiḥ |
aparādhabhiyeva bhānumānaparakṣmādharakandarāmagāt || 1 || (viyoginī)

1. At that point the sun,
as if filled with terror
at the crime he had committed
in trying to make lotuses as radiant
as the lotus-faces of the King's wives,
scurried to a cave
buried deep in the setting mountain.

paricūṣitadīptirambujaiḥ punarūṣmāṇamivāptumaurvataḥ |
rayavalgitavāhano raviḥ payasāṃ rāśimavāpa paścimam || 2 ||

2. Sucked clean of energy by lotuses,
swiftly sank the sun into the western sea,
chariot reverberating as he raced downwards,
seemingly to replenish his heat from the fire in the deep.*

*A fire-breathing mare lives in the ocean.

taraṇerarunīkṛtāḥ karairvaruṇastraiṇakapolabhittayaḥ |
madalohinikāmupāvahan madirāsvādanamantarāpyaho || 4 ||

4. The full cheeks of Varuṇa's wives,
reddened by the rays of the setting sun,
took on the rosy flush of wine
though they had not
touched a drop.*

*Varuṇa, lord of the sea, presides over the western direction.

prathamām haritaṃ prabhākaro virahayyātmani tāpamāpa yam |
aparāmupagamya taṃ jahau hrdayaṃ kaḥ khalu vetti rāgiṇām || 6 ||

6. The scorching torment the sun suffered
in parting from his first lover, the East,
vanished in the arms of the next, the West.
Who can fathom the hearts of those red-hot with passion?

pratibimbaparamparāmbudhau pavanoddhūtataṅgasāṅginī |
nabhaso'vatariṣyato ravermaṇisopānadhiyaṃ vyabhāvayat || 8 ||

8. The sun's reflection,
repeated over and over
upon the wave-scored surface of the wind-stirred sea,
looked like a ruby staircase
readied for him to descend from the heavens. || 8 ||

udadhau patitasya bhāsvataḥ katibhiścīt kiraṇaiḥ khavartibhiḥ |
udapādyata kālakuñjaroddalitāhardrumaśākhikābhramaḥ || 11 ||

11. As the sun plunged into the ocean,
the few sunbeams still suspended in the sky
seemed to be the strewn branches
torn from the tree of day
by the tusker of Time.

gataḍṭṭi gabhastimālino viluṭṭhadvīciṣu bimbamambudheḥ |
śapharāḥ palakhaṇḍasaṅkayā rasanābhirlilihurmuhurmuhuḥ || 13 ||

13. As the ray-rich sun's radiance-robbed disc
wobbled from wave to wave,
fish fancied it a piece of meat,
licking at it with flicking tongues.

ghaṭamānadālārārīpuṭaṃ nalinaṃ mandiramindirāspadam |
paripālayati sma nikvaṇaṇaṃ parito yāmikavanmadhuvrataḥ || 17 ||

17. Whistling all the while,
the bee,
like a sentry on night-watch,
patrolled the lotus flower –

the tower which was Lakṣmī's bower* –
as each petal-door was pulled to.

*Lakṣmī here is both the goddess and wealth.

adhipaṅkajakośamādadhe bahirālīnamadhuvratacchalāt |
madhusaurabharakṣaṇotsukā dinalakṣmīriva lakṣma jātuṣam || 18 ||

18. The day herself
seemed to place upon the lotus bud –
a casket in which she was anxious
to keep both nectar and scent safe –
a lac-dark seal in the bee clinging to its edge.

dinaveṣamapāśya yāminīvapuṣā kālanaṭasya nṛtyataḥ |
dadrśe jagatā pīṭṭprasūrdīvi nepathyapaṭīva pāṭalā || 19 ||

19. To those on earth
the glow of the evening sky
seemed to be the crimson curtain
drawn during the dance of the actor Time,
as he changed from playing day
to assume the role of night.

viyati vyarucan payodharāḥ sphuṭasandhyāparipāṭalatviṣaḥ |
acirāvataradvibhāvarī padalākṣāpāṭalānukāriṇaḥ || 21 ||

21. In the sky shone the clouds,
dyed a deep red by the twilight,
as if freshly stained
by a procession of lac-pink footprints
as the dark dame, night, descended.

udiyāya tato diganṅanāśravaṇākāḥkalpatamālapallavaḥ |
rajanīmukhapatralalekhikāracaṇāraṅkumadastamo'ṅkuraḥ || 23 ||

23. Then arose a sliver of darkness –
a *tamāla* leaf earring
for the ladies of the directions;
a decorative design
in musk-drawn lines
upon the face of the evening sky*.

*Floral patterns were drawn upon women's faces for decoration.

nayanāni janasya tatkṣaṇānnirūṇaddhi sma nirantaram tamah |
ravidīpabhṛtābhrakarparacyutakālāñjanapuñjamecakam || 26 ||

26. In a moment,
solid darkness shrouded people's sight –
a darkened mass of blackened soot
falling from the dome of the sky
where it had collected
as the lamp of the sun below it burnt.*

*Soot used to be collected in an inverted semi-circular receptacle hanging above a lamp.

tadamaṃsata māmsalam tamastanutārāgaṇabindujālakam |
divasātyayacaṇḍatāṇḍavacyutamīśasya gajājinam janāḥ || 27 ||

27. People deemed the dense darkness,
dotted with a legion of slender stars,
to be the fresh-flayed elephant hide
fallen from Śiva's shoulders
as round and round he went in his vehement *tāṇḍava*
at day's end.

avapat kimu kālakaṣakastimirāmbhaḥkaluṣe nabhastale |
vimalāmuḍubijamaṇḍalīm navacandrātapasasyasiddhaye || 29 ||

29. Has the tiller Time
sown upon the surface of the sky –
watered with darkness to a rich, black mud –
a patch of pristine seed-stars
to cultivate a crop of fresh moonlight?

aharatyayarāgapallavastamasā kandalito nabhastaruḥ |
sṛjati sma nirantaram haridviṭapaistārakakorakāvalim || 30 ||

30. The sky was a tree:
the new shoots were the red streaks of the dying day,
the thick foliage they grew into was the darkness,
and at length the tree's branches,
the directions,

began to burst into an unceasing series of flower-stars.

agamannabhisārikāḥ priyānanurāgāñjanarañjitekṣaṇāḥ |
abhinattimire'pi tāḥ punaḥ śvasitenaiva sugandhinā janaḥ || 31 ||

31. Departed for their lovers' houses
 abhisārikās, eyes lined with love's magical *kajjala*.
 Revealed were they even in the darkness
 to wayfarers, by their breath so sweetly scented.

jananīmupalabhya yāminīmadhikasnehadaśābhivardhitāḥ |
divasasya layaṃ prapeduṣo grhadīpā muhurarbhakā iva || 32 ||

32. Upon the demise of the day,
 the lamps in each house,
 his orphaned children as it were,
 turned to their mother the night
 and grew strong with the oil of love she lavished upon them.

tadanu kṣaṇadāgamollasatkalaśāmbhonidhivīcirociṣaḥ |
vyarucan katicit karāṅkurāḥ śaśinaḥ śātamakhe diśāmukhe || 34 ||

34. After that
 there shone in the East,
 where lives Lord Indra of many a sacrificial feast,
 a smattering of soft moonbeams
 pale as the whitened waves of the milky ocean
 surging in jubilation at the onset of the night*.

*It is at night that the moon rises, causing the sea to swell.

taralālasatārakaṃ mukhaṃ kalayantī śarakāṇḍapāṇḍaram |
viḡalattimirāmbarā babhau haridaindrī hariṇāṅkagarbhiṇī || 35 ||

35. The Eastern zone,
 pregnant with the moon full grown,
 was resplendent:
 her star-eyes now glowing bright now growing dim
 her face the shade of a blade of *śara* grass,
 and her dress of darkness slipping off.

atha kiñcidadrśyataindavaṃ vapurādrodayarāgalohitam |
balaśāsanadigvilāsinīmukhasindūralalāmakomalam || 36 ||

36. Then the orb of the moon
started to show itself,
reddened to crimson by its recent rise,
a delicate dot of *sindūra*
on the face of the Eastern quarter,
Indra's beloved.

pariṇḍitayāvakāruṇaṃ pracakāṣe himaraśmimaṇḍalam |
racitaṃ navaraktasandhyakairvijayacchatramivātmajanmanaḥ || 37 ||

37. Red as a rounded ball of lac,
the lunar orb looked like
a royal parasol
wreathed with *raktasandhyakas* freshly blooming
for the triumphant Kāma.

atha kampanṛpo'pi kṛtyavit kṛtasandhyāsamayocitakriyaḥ |
avadat savidhe sthitāṃ priyāṃ bhuvi gaṇgetyabhinanditāhvayām || 39 ||

39. King Kampa,
after completing the customary *sandhyā* ceremony,
conscientious as ever,
then turned to speak to the wife he so loved,
she who was known to the world as Gaṅgā*.

*Our poetess, we assume

kamalākṣi kaṭākṣyatāmayaṃ samayo varṇanayā rasārdrayā |
jana eṣa vacastavāmṛtaṃ śravasā pāyayituṃ kutūhalī || 40 ||

40. 'My lotus-eyed love,
pay homage to this hour
with a description steeped in *rasa*.
He that stands before you
longs to drink in the *amṛta* of your words
with his ears.'

iti sā dayitena bhāṣitā daranamraṃ dadhatī mukhāmbujam |
vadati sma śanaiḥ śucismitā sarasodārapadāṃ sarasvatīm || 41 ||

41. Addressed thus by her lover,
she lowered her lotus face a little,
smiling shyly,
and in measured cadence
started to speak words to inspire wonder and wisdom.

svadamānasugandhimārutaḥ prasaratkomalacandrikodayaḥ |
nṛpacandra nirīkṣyatāmayaṃ samayaḥ poṣitapuṣpasāyakaḥ || 42 ||

42. ‘O moon among kings,
how magical is this hour!
Sweetly scented blows the breeze,
velvety moonbeams wander all about
and Love of the flower-shafts flourishes.

parirabhya dṛḍhaṃ cirāgataḥ prathamāśāsudṛśāṃ niśāpatiḥ |
ślathayatyayamaṃśubhīrnakhaistimiraśreṇimayīm praveṇikām || 43 ||

43. ‘See how the moon
after a long absence
clasps the lovely-eyed lady of the East
in a tight embrace,
and undoes her simply tied tresses –
tangles of darkness –
combing it through with the fingernails of his rays.

prathamācalamaulimuccakairadhiruhyāmbarapātrasambhṛtam |
ayamaṃśumṛṇālikāmukhaistimiraṃ cūṣayatīva candramāḥ || 44 ||

44. ‘Ascending the soaring summit of the rising mountain,
the moon seems to suck up the darkness
collected in the goblet of the sky
with his rays as lotus-stalk straws.

alinīlamayastamomayaṃ pravilāpyodayarāgavahninā |
kalayatayamoṣadhīśvaraḥ kaladhautam śuci kaumudīmīṣāt || 45 ||

45. ‘Master chemist that he is,
the moon melts down the bee-black iron of darkness

in the red-orange blaze of his rise
forging pure silver
formed in moonlight's image.

muhurāmṛśadeva padminīmapī rāgī kṣaṇadākaraḥ karaiḥ |
yadamuṃ prati neyamunmukhī prabhavatyatra pativratāguṇaḥ || 48 ||

48. 'Flushed pink with desire,
night after night
the moon shrinks not from stroking even the lotus
with rays as roving hands.
Yet still she refuses so much as to look at him –
what firm-founded fidelity!*

*Lotuses bloom only in the presence of their lord, the sun.

alivibhramamantareti ya-
nna vidhostanmṛgalakṣma kintvayam |
purajidrathacakratārjito
bahalaḥ kajjalalepakālimā || 50 ||

50. 'This deer etched within the moon –
black as a bee –
is no such thing.
It is rather a dark mark
from the grinding of the generously greased axel
when the moon became a chariot wheel
for Śiva, conqueror of Tripura.

maghavanmaṇibhaṅgamecakaḥ śaśini śyāmalimā cakāsti yaḥ |
janayatyayamaṅkapālikāpraṇayālīnaniśīthinīdhiyam || 51 ||

51. 'This deep blue darkness,
shining like a shard of sapphire within the moon,
makes you think
night has melted into his loving embrace.'

**The remainder of this canto is lost. **

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