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THE ROLE AND LARGER MEANING OF SAKHI IN INDIAN DANCE



Preface:

While the sakhī has been a perennial presence right from the Sangam age and the Vedic age even, if we may say so; not much thought has been given to her vital presence or philosophical inferences, if any.

Composers down the ages have generally couched deep significances of Indian philosophy and thought within poetic imagery. The sakhī comes out as a very interesting conundrum. How does one infer her presence. While many aver her to be in place of the Guru, many have also argued against that possibility saying then, she would need to be venerated.

The prime and living characterisation of the sakhī was clearly seen in Kalidasa's 'Shakuntala' where she assumed a highly important role and meaning. This study was to largely and generally look into the many facets associated with the sakhī. Understanding her presence and meaning through many compositions used in Bharata Natyam and other dance styles was one way that was adopted. While the aim was lofty, I still feel much more can be done to give a more clear analysis and philosophical meaning to her raison d'être of existence. This work can thus be deemed to be a starting point.

It was a supposition to check whether the sakhī was merely an imaginative idea as conveyed through many dance compositions or whether she could be the mind or the heart or inner conscience. Interestingly many agreed to this idea saying that one could look at it as a possible way. But yet again philosophy runs deep. So too give it a clarity one would need to delve into philosophy as a whole. Yet it was interesting to see how many senior dancers and Gurus, who had never considered the sakhī as heart or mind, briefly thought about it and said yes, that it could be a possibility.

Again there is a slight line of blurring in the dūtī and sakhī bhava. While most often a time the sakhī could be a dūtī , a dūtī need not necessarily be a sakhī. The Nāṭya Śāstra mentions the sakhī as one of the possible dūtīs without elucidating much more on the sakhī aspect. It is only in the Rasikapriya, 17th century, where Keshavadasa has devoted chapters about the duties and role of the sakhī. Also mention must be made of other works like Rasamanjari and the Kāma Sūtra where a chapter on go-between is mentioned. Viśvanātha in his Sāhitya Darpaṇa (14th century) briefly elucidates about the sakhī classifying her as uttama, madhyama and adhama which later is seen again in Akbar Shah's Shringara Manjari. One would have liked to find out examples of sakhīs who would fit into this classification but one could only fleetingly touch upon these rather than in-depth.

The sakhī proves to be an enigmatic character. She is bold, wise, balanced and perhaps all the the nāyikā may yearn to be even. She does come across as a more evolved personality specially since she is the one who instructs the nāyikā and the nāyaka on the best approaches or rapprochement. She is well-versed in the arts, perhaps even the sixty-four, for in many compositions one finds the nāyikā pleading with the sakhī to turn the mind of the nāyaka with sweet music. Often times she is seen not pampering the nāyikā but maintaining an effective distance perhaps allowing the nāyikā to mature and wait for the right moment. She is astute. Often she finds the remedies to calm and soothe the nāyikā. This is almost the role of the present day counsellor and psycho-therapist. Thus when desire in general is thwarted or ambitions not achieved the mind and heart runs amok. It is here that a calming presence is required to bring balance to the aggrieved spirit.

Thus it has been interesting to explore books and works to find out references and a more layered meaning for the sakhī. Later composers from North like Kabir, Vidyapati (14th century) also use the sakhī variously. Specially in Vidyapati's works one finds many verses addressed to the sakhī.

And among the interesting finds has been that the marriage ritual is consummated through the ritual of saptapadī wherein the last padī or step is the acceptance of the partner as a friend. In the Kumara Sambhavam, Kalidasa mentions how sakhī is the one who takes seven steps, the sapta padī.

sakhā saptapadenam uchyate

In fact, as per the vedas, the couple is said to be married only after completing the sapta padī ritual! When the seventh step is placed the girl is said to become the friend of the husband. Perhaps the meaning lies in her ability to become an alter-ego in a sense.

Manu (8.227) says:— ‘The Vedic mantras recited in the marriage rite are a sure indication of wife-hood; but their completion should be understood by the wise as occurring on taking the seventh step’. So it follows that the marriage becomes complete and irrevocable the moment the saptapadī rite is performed, but before that rite is gone through there is a locus or a right to revoke the commitment.

Again in the work Thirukkural (literally Sacred Verses), dated variously from 300 BC to 7th century CE, one finds chapters about the the nāyikā’s state of torment, pangs of separation, sharing with the sakhī etc. What is interesting is to note is the presence of an exclusive chapter of the nāyikā talking to her heart! This reiterates the basis and premise of this work where it was a supposition whether the sakhī could be postulated as the mind or heart. For in many later compositions and specially those used for dance we have seen the sakhī’s role though perennial seems to be almost non-existent! This consolidates the fact that the mind or heart is the sakhī in later compositions, where the nāyikā often is seen pouring out her woes as a soliloquy implying that the search for peace, contentment, balance lies within. It is only when the mind, body, spirit is in harmony can bliss be possible or attained. And since the summum bonum of life is the quest of this eternal bliss, the path is to therefore go within and

meet the sakhī who is the vital link between the material, finite form and the supra, infinite source. The sakhī stands at the centre. So she is a witness, a sākshī to all. At the right time when the seeking starts, when the spirit is defeated or losing ground in the material world, she becomes alive to throw light on the path to the Supreme. She is the care-taker, a friend in every sense. She is almost like the dwārapālakā who must be befriended to be allowed entry to the supra regions.

*The essence of **sakhī bhava** is trust or viśrambha which Jiva Goswami has further defined as **meaning a feeling of mutual identity** (Brs 3.3.106).*

In the Chaitanya tradition (15th century) all devotees as in the pushtī mārga are sakhīs. It is only in the form of the sakhīs that the devotee can express his love for Krishna by serving Radha. In the Gita Govinda tradition and in the later Chaitanya tradition, Radha is the supreme force of Krishna. She is the shakti of Krishna.

And Krishna is under her sway! The devotees can love Krishna only through Radha. There is no sakhī in the Bhagavatha Purana. Viraha enables moving from śṛṅgāra to śṛṅgāra bhaktī, says eminent scholar, Shri Harsha Dehejia. It changes the way you look at the beloved at that point. Jayadeva brings in viraha on both sides. Chaitanya too picks up on the idea of viraha. The sakhī in the Gaudiya tradition because of the fact that she cannot enjoy Krishna as such but only through Radha, has an intense longing. And it is through this intense longing that śṛṅgāra is transformed to śṛṅgāra bhaktī, which characterizes the unique bhāva of the sakhī! The sakhī's message is not just for Krishna but equally for us, for Jayadeva points out in no uncertain terms that

shrījayadeva bhanitam idam...sakhī vacanam pathaniyam

-(4.9)

If your heart hopes to dance to the haunting song of Jayadeva study what the sakhī said about Radha's suffering.

Sukanya Sarbadhikary in The Place of Devotion: Siting and Experiencing Divinity in Bengal
Vaishnavism explains about sakhīs, ‘Sakhīs are the same age as Radha or older. Thus they have experienced sexual satisfaction. Mañjarīs are however all younger than Radha. They never desire any form of selfish sexual gratification. Vaishnavas argue that the complete lack of possibilities of sexual possession paradoxically multiplies the Mañjarī’s sensory empathy while exemplifying the best case of ego effacement. Sakhīs have their households to look after while Mañjarīs stay with Radha all the time. Sakhīs arouse reverence and inhibition in Radha while Mañjarīs arouse pure unabashed affection.

The counselor of today would do well to understand the role, person and characteristics of the sakhī in taking aggrieved spirits from a state of disconnect to a state of equanimity, balance and harmony. From ill-being to well-being! And this perhaps can be the larger thrust of this work.

One with an assistant is capable of accomplishing the object beset with obstacles. One, even though possessed of eyes cannot perceive an object without the light of the lamp. —Kalidasa.



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I. SAKHĪ- TEXTUAL REFERENCES.

A look at key texts where references to sakhī are mentioned.

Her qualifications, duties as enumerated in these texts.

Classification of sakhī in different texts.

Vedic References to the sakhī.

The *sakhī* is a perennial presence in the classical dance tradition of India. Where the *nāyikā* is, there is the *sakhī*.

Her prime role as confidante to the *nāyikā* and as an intermediary was to make all efforts to secure the union of the *nāyikā* with the *nāyaka*. She occupied an equivalent if not a higher status as the *vidūṣaka/jester*, the comparative assistant to the *nāyaka*. The *vidūṣaka*, most often with buffoonery, in his own blundering way, helped the *nāyaka* while the *sakhī* used her guile and charms to win over the *nāyaka* for her *nāyikā*. She was an adept in finding ways and means to educate and pacify the *nāyikā* in her lovelorn state and it ultimately rested on her wit and wisdom in helping the *nāyikā* achieve her ends.

The *sakhī* known variously as *pārśvacārīṇī*, *priyajana*, *sahacārī*, *sakhī-janah* was important in the classical dance-drama tradition of India and considered an important *uddīpana vibhāva** for the *śṛṅgāra rasa* as per the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as seen in many of the Sanskrit plays. The *sakhī* became an important *sahāya* or factor in accentuating the *vipralambha* or *sambhoga śṛṅgāra*.

The *Sanskrit-English* dictionary of Principal V. S. Apte explains the word *sakhī* (सखि)m. and *sakhī* (सखी) f. as - saha samānam khyāyate - A friend , companion or an associate.

uddīpana vibhāva- is the excitant or determinant which inflames sentiments or emotions. It refers to an excitant that supports the main stimulating factor/s in evoking an emotion . For eg. the situation or the environment in which the person or object is placed and which is helpful in intensifying the emotional experience as in the spring season, the moonlit night, the soft breezes, the fragrance of flowers and so on all come under the *uddīpana vibhāva* . It indirectly plays the role of enhancer of a particular emotion borne out of a stimulant. - *Nāṭyaśāstra* .

In Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*,

*ṛtu-mālyālankāraiḥ- priyajana-gandharva-kāvya-sevābhiḥ
upavana-gamana-vihāraiḥ śṛṅgāra-rasaḥ samudbhavati*

- (VI.47)

The *śṛṅgāra rasa* is brought about by the season, garlands, ornaments, by the songs and **poetry of dear friends** and by wandering and playing in flower gardens. *Priyajana* here implies the *sakhī*.

The earliest role that can be identified as played by the *nāyikā*'s girlfriends is that of *dūtī* or messenger. The *sakhī* though very close to the *nāyikā*, condescends to playing the role of the female messenger or *dūtī*, as the situation demands.

As messenger (*dūtī*), she often helps the heroine in the midst of impending circumstances by carrying tales or messages of love from one side to the other thereby sustaining the loving instincts and creating favourable opportunities for the interim meetings between the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*.

Bharatamuni in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* has dealt with this topic in detail. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* (chap: Vaisikopacara-9-10) is the first to name the different people who filled the role of a go-between. These were nearly always women, because they alone would have the facility of entering the private quarters of a home. Sometimes the heroine's foster mother, neighbour women, intimate friends and other female artisans served as emissaries. The class of *dūtī*, is deemed a class of persons of eminent responsibility, who has certain privileges of freedom of action and is in close contact with the heroine.

About the necessary qualifications of a *dūtī* , it is said in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that,

प्रातिवेश्या सखी दासी कुमारी कारुशिल्पिनी ।

धात्री पाषण्डिनी चैव तथा रङ्गोपजीविनी ॥

प्रोत्साहनेऽथकुशला मधुरकथा दक्षिणाथकालजा ।

लडहा संवृतमन्त्रा दूती त्वेभिर्गुणैः कार्या ॥

-(*ibid.* XXV.10-12)

The following types of women can become the female messenger(*dūtī*)- a woman of the neighbourhood, a female companion, a maid servant, a virgin, a woman of crafts and fine arts, a foster mother or wet nurse, a heretical nun or a female fortune-teller, one endowed with knowledge, one who can narrate tales, a saintly woman, a woman whose means of sustenance is the stage, one who dyes clothes, an intelligent woman.

The *dūtī* is required by the heroine as well as hero, to assuage her/his condition of burning love.

प्रदह्यमानः कामार्तो बहुस्थानसमर्दितः ।

प्रेषयेत्कामतो दूतीमात्मावस्थाप्रदर्शिनीम् ॥

-(XXIV. 191)

Being overpowered with burning love and affected through its several stages, one should send a female messenger (to the beloved) to speak of one's conditions. She must deliver the message in a befitting manner.

सन्देशं चैव दूत्यास्तु प्रदद्यान्मदनाश्रयम् ।

तस्येयं समवस्थेति कथयेद्विनयेन सा ॥

-(XXIV.192)

One should ask a female messenger to carry a message of love (to the beloved) She (should deliver the same) with proper courtesy (and the like) after saying, “this is her condition”.

About her functions it is said that:

कुलभोगधनाधिक्यैः कृत्वाधिकविकल्थनम् ।

दूती निवेदयेत्काममर्थाश्चैवानुवर्णयेत् ॥

-(XXV.14)

Besides this the messenger should make an exaggerated statement about his birth, wealth and (capacity for giving) love's enjoyment and say what (various) acts should be done (to facilitate the union)

And

नवकामप्रवृत्तायाः क्रुद्धाया वा समागमः।

नानोपायैः प्रकर्तव्यो दूत्या हि पुरुषाश्रयः॥

-(XXV.15)

The messenger should in various ways bring about the union with a woman who is in love for the first time or a beloved woman who has been angry with him.

The acts mentioned by Bharata as to the *dūtī*s of the *dūtī* are *protisāhana* (enthusing the lovers), *anurāga-anukīrtana* (conveying the love of one to the other) , *yathokathā-kathan* (truthful report by messenger), *bhāva pradarśana* (conveying the desire of one to the other), *kārya-nivedana* (information of what is to be done) and *artha-bhāṣaṇa* (speaking of the relevant issues) . She must be able to arrange through various means the union of the lover with the lady in fresh love and also pacify the *nāyikā* when she becomes angry. She is generally to study and grasp the mind of the lovers.

The appropriate locations where the *dūtī* must organize the meeting of the lover and the loved one are mentioned as follows:

उत्सवे रत्रिसञ्चार उद्दयाने मित्रवेश्मनि ।

धात्रीगृहेषु सख्या वा तथा चैव निमन्त्रणे ॥

व्याधितव्यपदेशेन शून्यागारनिवेशने ।

कार्यः समागमो नृणां स्त्रीभिः प्रथमसङ्गमे ॥

-(XXV.16-17)

The first meeting of men (with women) may be made on a festive occasion, during night, in a park, in the house of a kinsman, a foster mother or a female , or in a dinner party(*nimantraṇa*) on the pretext of seeing a sick person or in an empty house.

एवं समागमं कृत्वा सोपायं विधिपूर्वकम् ।

अनुरक्ता विरक्ता वा लिङ्गाकारैस्तु लक्षयेत् ॥

-(XXV.18)

After meeting a woman in one of these various ways one should ascertain from different marks whether she is friendly or not.

The female messenger employed by the hero too helps in ascertaining the result of the first meeting.

प्रोत्साहनेऽथकुशला मधुरकथा दक्षिणाथकालजा ।

लडहा संवृतमन्त्रा दूती त्वेभिर्गुणैः कार्या ॥

-(XXV.12)

Any woman should be engaged as a messenger when she knows the art of encouraging (the beloved), is sweet in her words, honest, able to act suitably to the occasion, charming in her behavior and is able to keep secrets.

However,

न जडं रूपसम्पन्नं नार्थवन्तं न चातुरम् ।

दूतं वाऽप्यथवा दूतीं बुधः कुर्यात्कदाचन ॥

-(XXV.11)

A wise person should never engage as a person (male or female) who is foolish, beautiful, wealthy or diseased.

It is interesting to note here that the *dūtī* is not required to be beautiful else there is a risk of the hero getting charmed by her.

In many dance compositions, the *nāyaka* has been charmed by the wit and beauty of the *sakhī* often forgetting the *nāyikā* pining for him. There are many instances of such dishonest messengers in literature.

This can be seen in the following verse from *Amarūśataka*.

निःशेषच्युतचन्दनं स्तनतटं निर्मृष्टरागोऽधरो

नेत्रे दूरमनञ्जने पुलकिता तन्वी तवेयं तनुः।

मिथ्यावादिनि दूति ! बान्धवजनस्याज्ञातपीडागमो

वापीं स्नातुमितो गतासि न पुनस्तस्याधमस्यान्तिकम्।

- (Amarūśataka,105)

The sandalwood on your breasts has disappeared, the rouge on your lips is smeared. The mascara has been washed away from your eyes, and your entire body is shivering all over. O *dūtī*, you are a liar!

Not knowing the suffering that had befallen me, your friend, you went to the tank to take a bath instead of going to bring a message to my rascal lover.

The classic example in this genre is the Tamil padam cited by nearly all Bharata Natyam practitioners and Gurus -*unnai dūtanupinen* in Tamil. It shows the case of the errant, disloyal *dūtī*.

P: Unnai tudanupinen ennadi nadandadu ullai durai par sakhīye

A: kannan sevadi valar tenral kunrugai kurum kannu valam urugida

Girivalam mudalidam enadullam nalidanai odai seyya mada mayile

C vāri mudindu kuzhal varisai punaindadenna vannam tavazhum un kangal uruvam kalaindadenna
sīr peru kasturi azhindadenna jivvu jivvenru kangalil tirukku sivandedenna(madhyamakala)
seyya pavazha miga tayyale nin udadu shuddha tūya venmaiya velutta seigai en porrkodi
metta sukha moham seida inda vida sokam puribavan guhanidam aruginil varuvadu teriyādo

The *sakhī* was sent as a *dūtī* and returned all dishevelled suggesting that she must have had a dalliance with Krishna. This is one of the rare off-beat *padams* where the *nayikā* is in confrontation with *sakhī* or where the *sakhī* seems to have deceived the *nayikā*. In an interesting and divergent viewpoint Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam felt that this *padam* could even be portrayed in the *hāsya rasa* as the situation itself can be considered comical.

Another celebrated composition by Swathi Thirunal as a dialogue between the *nāyikā* and the *sakhī* describes this treachery very subtly. One can see here how respectfully the *sakhī* is yet addressed by the *nāyikā* variously as Kāminīmaṇī, Kokiḷavāṇi, pankajākṣī, mānini.

Kaminī mani in Malayalam; R: Poorvi kaambhoji; T: Adi.

Kaminī manisakhītāvaka mukhaminnu

Kāmam svinnamāyatente vada?

nāyikā : O Kāminīmaṇī ! Dear friend! Today why is your face sweating like this? Tell!!!

tāmarasabāndava kiranamettur vadanam tāntamāy nitāntam

sakhī : I sweat due to the rays of sun.

tarunamrga nayane tava locanayugala-maruna taram āyatente hanta?

nāyikā : Oh the one, with eyes like the young deer! Why are both your eyes reddish?

taruni tava dayita vacanodita kopena paramarunamāyinnu

sakhī : Alas! May be due to the harsh words of the beloved one.

nīlavāridanibhamākum tava kuntalam bāle lulitamāyatente

nāyikā : Why is your hair which is always beautiful as dark clouds looking untidy?

malayamāruta calanam atukontatre cāle lulitamāyinnu

sakhī : The fresh gentle breeze has made my hair untidy

kunkumapankilam azhivāentu kārāṇam kolilavāni tava kelka

nāyikā : Why the kumkuma on your forehead is disturbed? Oh Kokiḷavāni!

pankajākṣī sāmpratamuttarīya-kaṣaṇāl paricotazhinjitaho

sakhī : Oh pankajākṣī! My upper garment might have rubbed over it.

meni vātuvānentu mūlamennu paraka

nāyikā : Tell me the reason as why you are looking tired?

yānāyānattālatre bata

sakhī : It is due to my wandering here and there

mānīnī connatellām satyam iniyum mama vācam shrṇu kimapi

sarasanām shrī padmanābhanotu saha-sambhogamatilenniye ippol

varatanu tavādharakṣatamāyatengane nirupamātbhutatarāṅgi

nāyikā : Oh māninī! What ever you spoke may be true. But now listen to my words, oh the one of marvellous unparalleled form! It may be that you must have united with the charming Sri Padmanābhā and that is why there are marks in your lips!

The *Sāhitya Darpaṇa* enumerates the qualifications of the *dūtī* as

कलाकौशलमुत्साहो भक्तिश्चतुर्जता स्मृतिः ।

माधुर्यं नर्म विज्ञानं वाग्मिता चेति तद् गुणाः ॥

- (Sāhitya darpaṇa III.137)

‘The merits of emissaries are loyalty to the cause of the *nāyikā* or *nāyaka*, arduous zeal for accomplishment of the purpose, acquaintance with fine arts, capacity to know the mind of others, retentive memory, amiability of temperament, sweet behaviour, spokesmanship and knowledge of various kinds of erotic artifices.’

The popular Tamil varnam ‘sakhīye inda velayil’ in R: Ānandabhairavī. T: Ādi by Śivanandan brings out the qualities of the *sakhī* as mentioned above. It can be inferred then that she could be classified as *Mitārthā* pleasing, *madhyamā*: One who speaks pleasing words and *sahaja*: of almost the same age.

P: sakhī ye inda velaiyil jālam sheyyāde endan sāmiyai azhaittodi vādi

Why are you playing tricks on me my sakhī. Please bring my beloved to me.

A: mahitālam pugazhum metta mahimai rājanagaril tigari shengendum tigazh rājagopālan
(muktāyi svara sāhityam)

He is well-known all over the world holding in his hands the shankha and chakra.

nāgarika mighavum sarasa vaghaiyāi malaranamel anudinamum

arumaiyāgha sallāpa matiyodu nalla ullāsa villāsa kalāvum nilāvil kulāva

We used to spend such happy moments together, say sweet nothings to each other, carefree under the beautiful moonlight.

C: pāṅgāna mayile adhika mayalāi mati mayangi puvvāli mānmadanidodudan

Oh you as beautiful as the full-grown peacock I am swooning with the arrows of Kāma devā.

1: nīngā iravil tūṅgā kuyil paluka

Won't this situation change. I can't bear the sound of the koel.

2: Edo oru vaghaiyāi varugudu shol nī dupāyamā viveka nayaguna

Something is happening to me. Please suggest me a remedy.

3: mā mohana ratiye nī tām dayavudane duraiyai varavum nī shollu

Oh you as beautiful as Rati. You alone can show me some compassion and tell him to come.

nīdu malar shūdi vara vādi vilaiyādi shruti kūdi ishai pādi ennai kūda manam modi enna

You go to him with flowers decked in your hair, playfully talk to him, sing him a sweet song and turn his mind towards me.

So from the earlier description from the *Sāhitya darpaṇa* about the qualities of the *sakhī*, we find here that the *nāyikā* is requesting her to go sing to him implying her 'acquaintance with fine arts'. That she says to turn his mind towards her implies 'her capacity to know the mind of others'. *Vilaiyadi* meaning playfully suggests 'amiability of temperament'.

Vātsyayana's *Kāmasūtrā* devotes an entire chapter (Chapter IV) to the role of the go-between and the ways for her to accomplish her work and in the different situations that she can enter into. The *Kāmasūtrā*, by the very nature of its subject matter affords greater scope to the subject of accomplices used for the furtherance of love affairs. They are particularly necessary and in a large variety in *pāradārika* love.

Chap::ABOUT THE BUSINESS OF A GO-BETWEEN

If a woman has manifested her love or desire, either by signs or by motions of the body, and is afterwards rarely or never seen anywhere, or if a woman is met for the first time, the man should get a go-between to approach her.

Now the go-between, having wheedled herself into the confidence of the woman by acting according to her disposition, should try to make her hate or despise her husband by holding

artful conversations with her, by telling her about medicines for getting children, by talking to her about other people, by tales of various kinds, by stories about the wives of other men, and by praising her beauty, wisdom, generosity and good nature, and then saying to her: 'It is indeed a pity that you, who are so excellent a woman in every way, should be possessed of a husband of this kind. Beautiful lady, he is not fit even to serve you.' The go-between should further talk to the woman about the weakness of the passion of her husband, his jealousy, his roguery, his ingratitude, his aversion to enjoyments, his dullness, his meanness, and all the other faults that he may have, and with which she may be acquainted. She should particularly harp upon that fault or that failing by which the wife may appear to be the most affected. If the wife be a deer woman, and the husband a hare man, then there would be no fault in that direction, but in the event of his being a hare man, and she a mare woman or elephant woman, then this fault should be pointed out to her.

(Here once again the *dūtī* as per the Sahitya Darpana fulfils 'The merits of emissaries are loyalty to the cause of the *nāyikā* or *nāyaka*, arduous zeal for accomplishment of the purpose, acquaintance with fine arts, capacity to know the mind of others, retentive memory, amiability of temperament, sweet behaviour, spokesmanship and knowledge of various kinds of erotic artifices.')

Spokesmanship: The go-between should tell the woman about the obedience and love of the man, and as her confidence and affection increase, she should then explain to her the thing to be accomplished in the following way. 'Hear this, Oh beautiful lady, that this man, born of a good family, having seen you, has gone mad on your account. The poor young man, who is tender by nature, has never been distressed in such a way before, and it is highly probable that he will succumb under his present affliction, and experience the pains of death.' If the woman listens with a favourable ear, then on the following day the go-between, having observed marks of good spirits in her face, in her eyes, and in her manner of conversation, should again converse with her on the subject of the man, and should tell her the stories of

Ahalya, Indra, Shakuntala and Dushyanta and such others as may be fitted for the occasion. She should also describe to her the strength of the man, his talents, his skill in the sixty-four sorts of enjoyments mentioned by Babhravya, his good looks, and his liaison with some praiseworthy woman, no matter whether this last ever took place or not.

Capacity to know the mind of others : In addition to this, the go-between should carefully note the behaviour of the woman, which if favourable would be as follows: She would address her with a smiling look, would seat herself close beside her, and ask her, 'Where have you been? What have you been doing? Where did you dine? Where did you sleep? Where have you been sitting?' Moreover, the woman would meet the go-between in lonely places and tell her stories there, would yawn contemplatively, draw long sighs, give her presents, remember her on occasions of festivals, dismiss her with a wish to see her again, and say to her jestingly, 'Oh, well-speaking woman, why do you speak these bad words to me?', would discourse on the sin of her union with the man, would not tell her about any previous visits or conversations that she may have had with him, but wish to be asked about these, and lastly would laugh at the man's desire, but would not reproach him in any way.

Thus ends the behaviour of the woman with the go-between.

Knowledge of various kinds of erotic artifices: When the woman manifests her love in the manner above described, the go-between should increase it by bringing to her love tokens from the man. But if the woman be not acquainted with the man personally, the go-between should win her over by extolling and praising his good qualities and by telling stories about his love for her.

Vātsyāyana however lays it down that even though they may not be personally acquainted with each other and may not have shown each other any signs of affection, still they are both capable of placing confidence in a go-between.

Amiability of temperament : Now the go-between should show the woman the presents, such as the betel nut and betel leaves, the perfumes, the flowers, and the rings which the man may have given to her for the sake of the woman, and on these presents should be impressed the marks of the man's teeth, and nails, and other signs. On the cloth that he may send he should draw with saffron both his hands joined together as if in earnest entreaty.

Arduous zeal for accomplishment of the purpose: The go-between should also show to the woman ornamental figures of various kinds cut in leaves, together with ear ornaments, and chaplets made of flowers containing love letters expressive of the desire of the man and she should cause her to send affectionate presents to the man in return. After they have mutually accepted each other's presents, then a meeting should be arranged between them on the faith of the go-between.

Now go-betweens or female messengers are of the following different kinds:

A go-between who takes upon herself the whole burden of the business

A go-between who does only a limited part of the business

A go-between who is the bearer of a letter only

A go-between acting on her own account

The go-between of an innocent young woman

A wife serving as a go-between

A mute go-between

A go-between who acts the part of the wind

A woman who, having observed the mutual passion of a man and woman, brings them together and arranges it by the power of her own intellect, such a one is called a go-between who takes upon herself the whole burden of the business. This kind of go-between is chiefly employed when the man and the woman are already acquainted with each other, and have conversed together, and in such cases she is sent not only by the man (as is always done in all other cases) but by the woman also. The above name is also given to a go-between who, perceiving that the man and the woman are suited to each other, tries to bring about a union between them, even though they be not-acquainted with each other.

A go-between who, perceiving that some part of the affair is already done, or that the advances on the part of the man are already made, completes the rest of the business, is called a go-between who performs only a limited part of the business.

A go-between who simply carries messages between a man and a woman, who love each other, but who cannot frequently meet, is called the bearer of a letter or message.

This name is also given to one who is sent by either of the lovers to acquaint either the one or the other with the time and place of their meeting.

A woman who goes herself to a man, and tells him of her having enjoyed sexual union with him in a dream, and expresses her anger at his wife having rebuked him for calling her by the name of her rival instead of by her own name and gives him something bearing the marks of her teeth and nails and informs him that she knew she was formerly desired by him and asks him privately whether she or his wife is the best looking such a person is called a woman who is a go-between for herself. (*swayamdūtī*). Now such a woman should be met and interviewed by the man in private and secretly.

The above name is also given to a woman who having made an agreement with some other woman to act as her go-between, gains over the man to herself, by the means of making him

personally acquainted with herself, and thus causes the other woman to fail. The same applies to a man who, acting as a go-between for another, and having no previous connection with the woman, gains her over for himself, and thus causes the failure of the other man.

A woman who has gained the confidence of the innocent young wife of any man, and who has learned her secrets without exercising any pressure on her mind and found out from her how her husband behaves to her, if this woman then teaches her the art of securing his favour, and decorates her so as to show her love, and instructs her how and when to be angry, or to pretend to be so, and then, having herself made marks of the nails and teeth on the body of the wife, gets the latter to send for her husband to show these marks to him, and thus excite him for enjoyment, such is called the go-between of an innocent young woman. In such cases the man should send replies to his wife through the same woman.

When a man gets his wife to gain the confidence of a woman whom he wants to enjoy, and to call on her and talk to her about the wisdom and ability of her husband, that wife is called a wife serving as a go-between. In this case the feelings of the woman with regard to the man should also be made known through the wife.

When any man sends a girl or a female servant to any woman under some pretext or other, and places a letter in her bouquet of flowers, or in her ear ornaments, or marks something about her with his teeth or nails, that girl or female servant is called a mute go-between. In this case the man should expect an answer from the woman through the same person.

A person, who carries a message to a woman, which has a double meaning, or which relates to some past transactions, or which is unintelligible to other people, is called a go-between who acts **the part of the wind**. In this case the reply should be asked for through the same woman.

(Guru V.P. Dhananjayan in his discussion in fact highlighted the important role of vayu/ether as a silent dūṭī.)

Thus end the different kinds of go-betweens.

A female astrologer, a female servant, a female beggar, or a female artist are well acquainted with the business of a go-between, and very soon gain the confidence of other women. Any one of them can raise enmity between any two persons if she wishes to do so, or extol the loveliness of any woman that she wishes to praise, or describe the arts practised by other women in sexual union. They can also speak highly of the love of a man, of his skill in sexual enjoyment, and of the desire of other women, more beautiful even than the woman they are addressing, for him, and explain the restraint under which he may be at home.

Lastly a go-between can, by the artfulness of her conversation, unite a woman with a man even though he may not have been thought of by her, or may have been considered beyond her aspirations. She can also bring back a man to a woman, who, owing to some cause or other, has separated himself from her.

The following are of the kind of friends:

One who has played with you in the dust, i.e. in childhood.

One who is bound by an obligation.

One who is of the same disposition and fond of the same things.

One who is a fellow student.

One who is acquainted with your secrets and faults, and whose faults and secrets are also known to you.

One who is a child of your nurse.

One who is brought up with you one who is an hereditary friend.

These friends should possess the following qualities:

They should tell the truth.

They should not be changed by time.

They should be favourable to your designs.

They should be firm.

They should be free from covetousness.

They should not be capable of being gained over by others.

They should not reveal your secrets.

Charayana says that citizens form friendship with washermen, barbers, cowherds, florists, druggists, betel-leaf sellers, tavern keepers, beggars, Pithamardas, Vitas and Vidushekas, as also with the wives of all these people.

A messenger should possess the following qualities:

Skilfulness

Boldness

Knowledge of the intention of men by their outward signs.

Absence of confusion, i.e. no shyness.

Knowledge of the exact meaning of what others do or say.

Good manners.

Knowledge of appropriate times and places for doing different things.

Ingenuity in business.

Quick comprehension.

Quick application of remedies, i.e. quick and ready resources

This extensive work highlights the importance of the *dūtī* and her myriad roles, means and ways she employs or can employ to bring the hero and heroine together.

Three categories of *dūtī* are found enumerated in the *Sāhitya darpaṇa* of Vishwanāthā as follows:

निःसृष्टार्थो मितार्थश्च तथा संदेशहारकः ।

कार्यप्रेष्यस्त्रिधा दूतो दूत्यश्चापि तथाविधाः ॥ -(ibid.47)

- i) *Niśṛṣṭārthā*-clever.
- ii) *Mitārthā* –reserved
- iii) *Sandēśahārakā*- message bearer.

उभयोर्भावमुन्नीय स्वयं वदति चोत्तरम् ।

सुश्लिष्टं कुरुते कार्यं निःसृष्टार्थस्तु स स्मृतः ॥ -(ibid.48)

Niśṛṣṭa means bestowing, giving, entrusting. *Artha* means –affair. So *Niśṛṣṭārthā** is the one to whom the management of an affair is entrusted.

Thus she is the clever emissary capable of surmising the feelings of both parties and able to offer a suitable reply. Such a person handles the job gracefully. She cleverly drives out the wedge of discord from the heart of one against the other. { eg. *sakhī* Sunandā in *Raghuvamśam* }

मितार्थभाषी कार्यस्य सिद्धकारी मितार्थकः।

यावद्भाषितसंदेशहारः संदेशहारकः॥ -(ibid-49)

*Niśṛṣṭārthā**- *tan nipūnam niśṛṣṭārthā dūtī kalpaha sūtra itavyah* - Malati Madhava of Bhavabhuti, First act. Jagaddhara in his ommentary on the above explains *niśṛṣṭārthā*, as *Nayikāya nāyakasya vā manoratham gnyātva tva matyā kāryam sādhayati yā* – the messenger who brings about the union of her own accord, using her own mind.

The *Mitārthā* speaks little, yet cleverly accomplishes the task entrusted to her. She is very useful in handling delicate matters and so is appropriately known as *Mitārthā*. { eg. Priyamvadā and Anasūyā in *Śakuntalam* }.

The third – *Sandeshaharakā*, is responsible for simply conveying the message.

This classification of *dūtī* is also seen in **Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*** (5.4.44) as the first three of eight kinds of *dūtī* based on the extent of authority vested in them and are parallel to those as mentioned in *Arthaśāstra*. Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* and *Ujjvalanīlamanī* of Rūpa Goswāmin also refer to them.

Among the class of *dūtī*, *swayamdūtī* is to be especially noted as the lady in love who acts as her own messenger and arranges for the union with her lover. *Vātsyāyana* describes her elaborately in two ways.

1. *Dūtī – sambhoga – duhkitā*: messenger sent by the heroine but herself begins to woo the lover.
2. The second type approaches the lover as a messenger of another *nāyikā* who may be fictitious or real.

The one who instils confidence in the *nāyikā*, who restores her faith and who is always with her. Who decorates her, who supports her in her activities and counsels her.

The 'Rasamanjari' further states that *sakhī* is one who is by the lady's side, in whom the lady confides and from whom she derives relief. Bhanudatta mentions the friend and messenger: *sakhī* and *dūtī* separately and in general without any classification devoting some attention to their different aspects of work.

'Śṛṅgāramanjari' of Saint Akbar Shah classifies *sakhī* as

Uttama: One who wishes the most for the *nāyikā* 's happiness.

Madhyama: One who speaks pleasing words

Adhama: One who speaks and helps at random.

As per **Bhoja's** '*Sarasvatikānthābharana*' , V.121, the *sakhīs* are further classified as

Sahaja: the equal,

Purvaja : the elder and

Agantu: occasional friend.

As in 'Rasamanjari', in 'Śṛṅgāra-manjarī' too the *sakhī* is defined as one who is by the *nāyikā* 's side and a fit person to confide in.

Following the 'Rasamanjari', the 'Śṛṅgāra-manjarī' classifies the *sakhī* and *dūtī* separately.

Though the *sakhī* may become the *dūtī*, the two are functionally distinct.

sakhī –kṛtya:

In the Rasamanjari and Āmoda * the various acts performed by the *sakhī* : *sakhī –kṛtya* are given as : toilet, censure, coaching, making fun, eulogy, diversion, removing maṇa,

*Amoda- commentary of Bhanudatta's Rasamanjari by Gurajalāsyaī Pandita. *Viraha vedana* is of two kinds. Conveying during separation of the news of the suffering of the lover to the lady and vice versa. Rudrabhatta mentions female accomplices as *sakhī-janah*. Ch. V of Bhoja's shorter work on the subject-the *sarasvatikānthābharana* V.121 mentions inferior characters(hina patras) as *Pithamarda*, *Vidushaka*, *Vita*, *Ceta* and the *sakhīs*. Of the *Vaiṣṇava alankārikas* of Bengal , Kavikarnapura Goswamin adopts a different and general classification of the friends of Krishna and the Gopis into four main kinds according to the intensity of friendship and intimacy (*preman* and *narman*). His '*Alankāra-kaustubha*' says that Krishna's aides are of four kinds Sakhā, Priyasakhā, Narmasakhā and Priyanarmasakhā.

inculcating maṇa, inquiry about her mind, consoling during separation, sport in forest and water, sport on the swing, games with dolls and balls, the games of wheeling round, blind folding and dice, and drinking. In addition to these Saint Akbar Shah in Śṛṅgāraṃjanjārī adds deceiving (for fun), circular dance, picking flowers and spring sports. In this the *dūtī* is defined as the one adept in going as a messenger and is of eight kinds: servant, friend, artisan woman, daughter of one's foster mother, neighbour lady in disguise, artiste and the *nāyikā* herself.

Śṛṅgāraṃjanjārī classifies the *dūtī* as

Dāsī is she who takes special efforts to serve.

Śilpinī is one who is herself a painter or brings a painting. **Svā** is the *nāyikā* herself who goes about and arranges her union. The work Āmoda adds to the above the female recluse, the little girl who is innocent of love-matters, the relative, the omen-teller and the danseuse qualified in music and dance. Saint Akbar Shah adds two more to these- the woman pedlar and the anxious one (*śankita*).

Other kinds of *dūtī* mentioned in the Śṛṅgāraṃjanjārī are *Vikretrī* - the one that sells articles.

These can be of various kinds. Four are taken as pertinent in matters of love- the sellers of glass (bangles), of perfume, of gems and of flowers. Besides the *śankita* or anxious one is the one who on hearing harsh words of the lady fears that the lover may get upset and undertakes the work of mediation. If the recluse and the omen reader are in guise they are generally classified as *Liṅginī* or woman in disguise. Peddlars in disguise would also come under *Liṅginī*. If not in disguise they are deemed as an independent variety of love accomplice. Their work comprises of bringing together (*sanghataṇa*), conveying the suffering of

separation, conveying the love, encouraging, reporting the lover's affair with another lady, bearing message and divining the mind.

Similarly the female ladies of the *nāyikā*'s of Krishna are *Sakhī*, *Priyasakhī*, *Narmasakhī* and *Priyanarmasakhī*.

Sakhya as mentioned in the Vedic period: The Vedic emphasis on friendship, recognizes that a sustained relationship in a marriage transcends and complements the sensual relationship.

There is an incident in the Yaksha Prashna, where the Yaksha asked Yudhishtira '*kimsvin mitram grihesatah*? i.e. Who is the friend of a householder? To which the prince answered '*bhaaryaa mitram grihesatah*' i.e. the friend of a householder is his spouse. In another question the Yaksha asks Yudhishtira: *kimsvid daiva kṛtah sakhā*? Who is man's god-given friend?

Yudhishtira's answer was: *bhāryā daivakṛtah sakhā*- *The spouse is man's God-given friend*. To repeat, the emphasis on friendship fulfills a fundamental human need for companionship and intimacy. In fact, the defining moment of the Hindu wedding, the seventh step of the Saptapadi concludes appropriately with the following *shloka*, which emphasizes the central role of friendship in a *dhārmic* marriage.

sakhā sapta padī bhava sakhyam te gameyam sakhyam te māyoshah sakhyam te māyoshṭah

With these seven steps you have become my friend. May I deserve your friendship, May my friendship make me one with you.

Manu (8.227) says:— 'The Vedic mantras recited in the marriage rite are a sure indication of wife-hood; but their completion should be understood by the wise as occurring on taking the

seventh step'. So it follows that the marriage becomes complete and irrevocable the moment the *saptapadī* rite is performed, but before that rite is gone through there is a locus or a right to revoke the commitment. Some *ācāryas* are of the opinion that the *pāṇigrahana* (taking of the hand) is the moment of no return.

The bond of friendship is not allowed to easily flourish between man and wife as it can be a source of strength for the couple in their endeavours to withstand the pressures of patriarchal hegemony and build a more independent marriage.

Sakhya as explained in the Mahabharata:

After the death of Dushasana, at the hands of Bhima, Ashwathama, approached Duryodhana, and pleaded him to make peace with the Pandavas . His logic was that by becoming friends with the Pandavas both parties could live happily as he thought that the Pandavas would certainly forego the war on becoming friends. To convince Duryodhana, he explained the four kinds of friends.

1. First kind of a friend is a natural friend, without any reason.
2. Second kind of friend is one who becomes a friend by truce.
3. Third kind of friend is one who makes a friend by purchasing friendship.
4. Fourth kind of friend is one who on being influenced by the power of a person, wants to be the friend of such a personality.

The Indications of *sakhya* or friendship in the Mahabharata:

Friendship is said to possess six indications: firstly friends delight in the prosperity of friends, secondly they are distressed at their adversity. If any one asks for anything which is dear to his heart but which should not be asked for a true friend will surely give away even that.

Fourthly, a true friend who is of a righteous disposition, when asked, can give away his very prosperity, his beloved sons and even his own spouse. Fifthly, a friend does not dwell in the

house of a friend, on whom he may have bestowed everything but should enjoy what he earns himself (in other words friends should always maintain an independence). Sixth a friend does not hesitate to sacrifice his own good for his friend. -(Mahābhārata Udyoga Parva chapter 45 verse 12.)

As we sift through the Sanskrit works many interesting facets arise about the role, character and personality of the *sakhī* and its larger implication together with its deeper symbolism in Indian spiritual and *bhakti marga*.

The historical and spiritual implication of the celebrated text of the Bhakti movement-The Gita Govinda:

In the *Gita Govinda* , we seem to find the epitome of the *sakhī*. While Radha is the epitome of a *nāyika* ,graceful in love's fulfillment and dignified in love's separation, richly sensual in her romantic expressions and yet serenely spiritual in the realisation of that love,then the *sakhī* or the love messenger in the hand plays a unique and important part as an intermediary in the dynamics of love in Jayadeva's creation. The *sakhī*'s only concern is to see Radha and Krishna united and joyous in love and to this end she not only carries messages but comforts and even admonishes them.

While Bharata in the *Nāṭyashāstra* and Vatsyānaṇ in the *Kāmasūtrā* describe the requirements and functions of the *sakhī* , K a l i d ā s a creates the cloud messenger in his *Meghadūtam* and the *Bhagavata Purāna* is replete with the accounts of the *gopīs*. It was left to Jayadeva to create the artful, selfless and compassionate *sakhī* . When Radha cries out poignantly

sakhī he keshi mathanam udāram, ramaya maya saha madana manoratha bhavitayasavikaram 2.11

O *Sakhī* make Krishna make love to me, I am engrossed with the desire for love, her call does not fall on deaf ears.

The *sakhī* forthwith carries her message to Krishna in the fourth *sarga* of the *Gita Govinda* with the words.

M ādhava sa virahe tava dīna

She is distressed in your absence.

Such is her state, the *sakhī* tells Krishna, that she slanders sandal, considers the Malayan wind to be poison, draws a likeness of you with musk, evokes you in deep meditation, laments, laughs, collapses, cries and trembles.

Radha and Krishna function in their own aesthetic spaces but it is the *sakhī* who links the two. **The *sakhī*'s message is not just for Krishna but equally for us, for Jayadeva points out in no uncertain terms that**

shrījayadeva bhanitam idam...sakhī vacanam pathaniyam

-(4.9)

If your heart hopes to dance to the haunting song of Jayadeva study what the *sakhī* said about Radha's suffering.

This leaves us in no doubt that the *sakhī* is not just a literary device but an indispensable persona in the dynamics of love and in our celebration of that love.

When we identify with the *sakhī* we raise for ourselves, the celebration and realisation of *shringara rasa* to lofty aesthetic heights.

The unique status that Jayadeva attached to the *sakhī* paved the way for the doctrine of Bengal *Vaishnavism* and Jayadeva's aesthetics were transformed into *Vaishnava* theology. This short love lyric suddenly changed from *kavya* to *shastra*, a transformation unique and unmatched in the Indian tradition, leaving no doubt about the exalted status of the *Gita Govinda*.

The evocation of *bhaktī shringāra* in the *Gita Govinda* is a multi-step process. The romantic emotion arises in the *pratibhā* of Jayadeva and it is from this creative imagination that the romantic text is created. The second is the evocation of that romantic emotion in the reader from a celebration of the text through dance and music. And in the third and final step, the reader who is chastened by that romantic emotion then transfers that same emotion in ecstatic and romantic adoration of Krishna.

Dimboka portrays a *sakhī* or a love messenger who says to a *nāyikā*:

To dispel her pain of fever your mistress painted you upon her canvas although with lines that shook from trembling of her hands. Then to deceive her friends who saw her tears she offered mango sprays and bowed her head implying that the portrait was that of the god love (Kāma).

Bharatā in his taxonomy of emotions recognizes *shringāra* as a primary emotion and goes on to offer a very detailed classification of the various stages and types of romantic love and lovers and their depiction on the stage through *nāṭya*

Like the four *Vedās* that preceded it, the *Nāṭyashāstra* left its stamp on all classical art and thought and remains even today a foundational treatise, but like the *Vedās*, it placed certain constraints, regulated the expression and articulation of the romantic emotion and therefore it could not prevent a protest through an evolution of the concepts and expressions

of the romantic emotion. The *Nāṭyashāstra* did to classical Sanskrit what the *Tolkāṇṇam* did to ancient Tamil, namely, it became a banyan tree which covered and protected creativity, and thereby gave it sanctity.

Within 500 years of the first millennium, both in the north and south, there was both an artistic and a political exhaustion; romantic idioms were becoming stale and worn out and the political and cultural will to conquer and assimilate the entire country was equally weak. Creativity in the two classical languages was at a low ebb, the ritualistic Vedic literature was overpowering, the *Purāṇās* entrenched in myth, Buddhism and Jainism too austere and ascetic. This led to the emergence of a cult of sensuality and pleasure seeking in the north and it was this that contributed to the emergence of romantic literature in Sanskrit. In the Tamil country, similar conditions led to the transformation of the romantic idioms of *aham* poetry to those of *bhaktī* and the development of the *śhrīngāra bhaktī* cult in the south. Both these movements were of singular importance to the evolution of the romantic emotion in the Indian tradition as they took the romantic idiom in two different directions, and were responsible for a significant growth in romantic art, both visual and oral.

Among Sanskrit dramas we have some shining examples of *sakhīs* like Anasūya and Priyamvadā in Kālidāsa's *Shakuntalā* who make sure once they know that Dushyanta and Shakuntalā are both inclined to each other that they come closer and are united in love.

In *Vikramorvaśīyam* of Kālidāsa, Chitrālekḥā is another shining example of a *sakhī* (also referred to by Smt. Nandini Ramani) whose very existence lies in the union of the *nāyikā* and *nāyikā*. As can be noted in the following:

Citrālekḥā, a friend and well wisher of Urvaśī, appears on the scene along with Urvaśī to congratulate the king Pururavas for their rescue from demon Kesiṇ, who had captured them. She with Urvaśī

remained concealed by the power of *tiraskārini* and witnessed the ardent love of Pururavas by listening to his conversation with *vidūśāka*. She then met the king with a message from Urvaśī to protect her from the capture of Kāma and return back as a messenger of the king. While appearing as abhisari, she made Urvaśī angry and desperate by jokingly saying that the king is enjoying the company of his beloved, but all on a sudden correcting herself and making her happy satisfied of her listening to the confidential talk of the king and *vidūśaka*. When the king showed high respect and courtesy to Urvaśī, she reading her mind said '*mugdhe nrigarikah adhikam daksiniih bhaanti*'. As a friend, she became happy to see that all the obstacles in the love of Urvaśī had gone. It is only then that she left Urvaśī. Later, Citralekhā who knew from meditation that Urvaśī had transformed into a creeper on entering Kumāravana, exhorted women to worship the Sun as remedy. Before her return to heaven, her abode, she entrusted Urvaśī to the king. As suggested by Citralekhā herself, Urvaśī deserted her on her union with the king. - (MINOR FEMALE CHARACTERS OF KALIDASA, Devaky, E S. "Feminist Readings in

Kalidasa's works ,” Thesis)

Note: Similarly and most often the sakhī usually disappears in the union of the nāyikā and the nāyakā. And this leaves the question to be probed and analysed further through Bhakti literature as to who is the ephemeral sakhī then. Is she finally the inner conscience, ātman guiding the jīvatman to the paramātmā?

The seed of the idea in choosing this topic for the Fellowship selection had grown from the idea of trying to work out a collaborative performance on the 'sakhī' And in penning down thoughts towards this, one had come to the Thillana where it was felt it can be presented symbolically as in the ardha- nārīshwarā, with the sakhī and the nāyikā merged into one, half and half, dancing with the Lord. And this had set off thoughts as to who is the sakhī really? Is she perhaps an alter-ego for in most compositions she does not carry a name and in most of the literature she exists only for and until the union?

In the last section, probing a few texts and literature, one found that most works spoke more about the dūtī than the sakhī. Prominent texts like the Sahitya Darpana, Kavya Prakasa, Rasamanjari etc have referred to her separately.

The Natya Sastra, only cites the sakhī as one of the likely dūtīs. The sakhī's persona seemed entwined with that of dūtī. Yet the difference was always maintained. Some of the respondents felt that only a sakhī could really become a dūtī for only the sakhī could be entrusted with a love message which was intimate and often needing secrecy. One thing was clear that where there was śṛṅgāra there was the dūtī or sakhī. Later texts have however chapters devoted to the sakhī and prominently stands the Rasikapriya (16th century).

In beginning to understand the character of the sakhī, the bosom pal, the confidante one has to understand the larger meaning of friendship. The sakhī in her task in uniting lovers is an indispensable tool of consummating the love that may have only begun in the hearts of two lovers. And most interestingly she is consumed or even disappears or is rendered non-existent

in the union. Most compositions in Bharata Natyam only feebly refer to the sakhī as somebody who is addressed to, allowing for the exposition and expression of the gamut of emotions of the nāyikā. Most often she is the vehicle or medium or vessel that receives the nāyikā's suffering like a patra in which the nāyikā is able to completely pour out her deep longings, anxiety and suffering. A complete catharsis in the deep labyrinths of love emotions which at its height if unaddressed can lead to death (marana) even. As the nāyikā suffers the effects of the arrows of Manmatha of which according to Bharata Sāra Sangraha, the nilotpala effects death, it is the sakhī who is a constant presence alleviating, cajoling, reprimanding and finally going out to seek the nāyaka herself. Whether it is the deep empathy or karuna that stirs the sakhī whether it is her devotion or dāsyam that motivates her or whether that she is the nāyikā herself, her own heart cajoling her, reprimanding her, makes for an interesting study.

The below verse, from Kesavadas's Rasikapriya, encapsulates this thought, where Radha expresses her hidden love:

आपुनहीं तन, आपुनो होत न देखें जाहि ।

आपुनहीं तैं आपनो क्यों मन, करिहै ताहि।

-(8.96)

O my mind! When after you have met him, your own body does not remain yours, how will you get him under your control?

Most say she is the Guru or like the Guru, the preceptor, who leads the jivatman to the paramatman. In śṛṅgāra she is said to instruct in the art of love like a love Guru. The question then is how is she so well-versed in the art of love herself. Then she must have a paramour of her own which is never alluded to. Or like one of the respondents said she was a nāyikā who after gaining experience in love is now a sakhī to another. This again puts to

question the status of the sakhī in society then. While she grew up with the nāyikā, she was yet of a lower class and often as in Sangam literature the foster mother's daughter became the sakhī by birth. In this her life role was very clear. The nāyikā and the sakhī were often referred together as one person. They were often referred to as 'us' vis a vis the nāyaka or lover. She existed for the nāyikā alone subsuming her own likes etc. Almost like the devadāsī. And dāsi she was! Dāsyam is one of the important paths in the navavidha bhakti besides sakhya. And so does the sakhī also often fulfill the role as a dāsyā too? Does she also pine for the same Lord as the nāyikā, in a way. And is that what fires her and makes her understand him so well to lead him to the nāyikā or vice versa?

Classification of the *Sakhī*:

Looking further into texts and trying to find further the classification for the *sakhī* we find that some texts suppose *duṭīs* and the *sakhīs* of the heroine to be merely a variety of each other and others treat them both as independent or as co-species of a common entity.

According to **Bharata's Nāṭya Śāstra** (200BC-200CE) the work of a *duṭī* can be done by the following:

1. *Kathanī*- a female narrator
2. *Liṅginī*- a female ascetic
3. *Raṅgopajīvanā*- an actress
4. *Pratīśyā*- a neighbor
5. ***Sakhī*- a friend**
6. *Dāsī*- a maid-servant
7. *Kumārī*- a maiden
8. *Dāruśilpikā*- a female artist
9. *Dhātrī*- A foster mother
10. *Pāṣaṇḍinī* – female heretic
11. *Īkṣāṇikā* – a female fortune teller.

विज्ञान गुणसम्पन्ना कथिनी लिङ्गिनी तथा

प्रातिवेश्या सखी दासी कुमारी कारुशिल्पिनी ।

धात्री पाषण्डिनी चैव तथा रङ्गोपजीविनी ॥

प्रोत्साहनेऽथ कुशला मधुरकथा दक्षिणाथकालजा ।

- (XXV.10)

Vāgbhaṭa (8th century) in Ashtāṅgahridayasamhita mentions four types of *duṭīs*:

1. *Pravrajitā*- A female ascetic
2. *Dhātreyikā*- a foster sister
3. *Hīnastrī*- a woman of low status
4. *Dāsi*- a maid servant

In **Śṛṅgāra-Tilaka of Rudrabhaṭṭa (10th century)** there are mentioned eight possible *sakhīs* of the heroine.

1. *Dāsī*- a maid-servant
2. *Natī*= *Raṅgopajīvanā*- an actress
3. *Dhātrī*- A foster mother
4. *Pratiśyā*- a neighbor
5. *Śilpinī*= *Dāruśilpikā*- a female artist
6. *Bāla*= *Kumārī*- a maiden
7. *Pravrajitā*= *Liṅginī*- a female ascetic
8. *Kāru*- a washer woman

The only different one being that of *Kāru*- a washer woman. *Sakhī* has not been mentioned here.

The following qualities of the *sakhī* have also been enumerated:

1. Taste for art and craft
2. Capacity to know one's mind
3. Sweetness of temper
4. Ability to make good humour
5. Eloquence of speech.
6. **Absolute devotion to the heroine.**

The last being most important!

Further according to Rudrabhatta the following are the *dūtīs* of the *sakhī*:

1. *Vinoda*- to make humour
2. *Maṇḍana*- to adorn
3. *Śikṣā*- to advise
4. *Upālabha*- to complain with sarcasm
5. *Prasādana*- To pacify, to appease
6. *San̐gama*- to unite
7. *Virahāśvāsa*- to console at the time of separation.

Daśarūpaka of Dhanañjaya (late 10th century) lists eight *dutīs* similar to that of Rudrabhatta.

1. *Dāsī*- a maid-servant
2. *Dhātreyī*- A foster sister
3. *Pratiśyā*- a neighbor
4. *Śilpinī*= Dāruśilpikā- a female artist
5. *Pravrajitā*= Liṅginī- a female ascetic
6. *Kāru*- a washer woman
7. ***Sakhī***- friend
8. *Svaṃ*- heroine herself

Here we see *Natī* and *Bāla* as given in Nāṭya Śāstra eliminated.

Sakhī has also been mentioned in the Nāṭya Śāstra as we had seen earlier. However here *Swayamdūtīkā* has also been mentioned for the first time which succeeding writers too have adopted. Another difference is that instead of *Dhātrī*- A foster mother we have *Dhātreyī*- A foster sister.

Bhoja in Saraswatī - Kaṇṭhabhāraṇa (early 11th century AD) has generally classified *sakhīs* as

1. *Sahajā*- natural

2. *Pūrvajā* – of old relationship
3. *Āgantuḥ* - stranger

According to **Śāradātanayā's Bhāva Prakāśa**, women who serve both the hero and the heroine as messengers are

1. *Pāṣaṇḍinī* – female heretic
2. ***Sakhī***- friend
3. *Pratiśyā*- a neighbor
4. *Dhātreyī*- A foster sister
5. *Raṅgopajīvinī*- an actress
6. *Prekṣaṇikā*= *Īkṣāṇikā* – a female fortune teller

Vaidyānātha in his Pratāparudra-Yasobhūṣaṇa (13-14th century) mentions that the agents who help the heroine in gaining favour with the hero are nine.

1. *Liṅginī*- a female ascetic
2. *Pratiśini*- a neighbor
3. ***Sakhī***- a friend
4. *Dāsī*- a maid-servant
5. *Śilpini*- a female artist
6. *Dhātreyī*- A foster sister
7. *Īkṣāṇikā* – a female fortune teller.
8. *Kāru*- a washer woman
9. *Dutī*- the messenger.

Śiṅga Bhūpāla in Rasārṇava-Sudhākara (14th century) mentions that the *dutīs* who help the heroine are ten in number.

He adds *Vipraśnikā* which is the

Īkṣāṇikā – a female fortune teller of Bharata and the *Prekṣaṇikā* of Śāradātanayā.

Viśvanātha in his Sāhitya Darpaṇa (14th century) enumerates ten types of *dūtī* similar to the previous ones and further adds importantly a three-fold classification as was seen earlier.

1. *Nisrṣṭārtha*- The one who having known the mind of both parties through insight speaks and argues of own accord to make the mission a success.
2. *Mitārtha*- This messenger speaks little but accomplishes the end.
3. *Sandeśahāraka*- delivers the message as it is.

Viśvanātha also classifies them as : 1. *Uttama* 2. *Madhyama* and 3. *Adhama*

In **Bhanudatta's Rasa Mañjarī (15th century)** we find precise definitions for the *sakhī* and the *dūtī*.

Sakhī: the one remaining by the side of the heroine who is a source of solace to her and enjoys her confidence.

'Vishwasavishrambhakaarini parshvacharini sakhī tasyaa

Mandanopaalambhashikshaaparihaasaprabhruthini karmaani.

The one who instils confidence in the *nāyikā*, who restores her faith and who is always with her. Who decorates her, who supports her in her activities and counsels her.

Her duties include:

1. *Maṇḍana*- to adorn
2. *Śikṣā*- to advise
3. *Upālabha*- to complain with sarcasm
4. *Parihāsa*- to make humour

And as for the *dūtī* : The one who is proficient in the art of conveying messages the following duties have been enumerated:

Bhanudatta has assigned the following functions to the *dūtī* s:

1. *Sanghaṭana* - to bring about the union
2. *Viraha-nivedana*- To describe the miserable plight of the heroine.
3. *Sandeśa kathana* - delivering an oral message
4. *Patrikā dāna*- delivering a letter.

In a lesser known 14th century work **Varṇa- ratnākara**, in Maithili language of North Bihar , the manuscript preserved in Bengal presently , the *sakhī* of the *nāyikā* with different descriptions, qualities and charms is clearly described as

1. श्याम 2. चित्रिणी 3. मोहिनी 4. भद्रा

The **Ujjvala Nīlamanī of Rupa Gosvāmīn (16th century)** classifies *dūtī* as

1. *Swayamdūtī* – The heroine herself working as a messenger

She conveys the message to the hero in three different ways: 1. Through direct speech, 2. Through movement of her limbs and 3. Through the expression of her eyes

2. *Āpta dūtī* – A reliable and trustworthy woman acting as messenger.

Of three types : 1. *Amitārtha*- The one who having discovered the love of the hero or the heroine brings about their union through her efforts. 2. *Nisṛṣṭārtha* – one entrusted with the work by the hero or the heroine arranges to unite them through her device. 3. *Patrahāri*- like *Sandeśahāraka*, merely conveys the message.

The *dūtī* may employ devices as *stutī* or *nindā* etc. to achieve her ends. For eg. An *uttama dūtī* may take recourse to *stutī* and *vinaya*. The *adhama* may use *ninda* as her weapon to subdue the hero or heroine.

Reviewing the above it can be seen that the *dūtī* and the *sakhī* are two important persons connected to the love life of the heroine. Though a *sakhī* may act as the *dūtī* and vice versa, they cannot be brought one under the other as they have distinct *dūtīs* to perform.

It cannot be generally said that women from a certain class are *sakhīs* or *dūtīs*. It all depends on their proximity with the heroine. Rupa Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha seem to have logically classified the two distinctly.

In the latter half of 17th century we have Saint Akbar Shah who in the *Śṛṅgāramanjari* classifies the *sakhī* as

Uttama: One who wishes the most for the *nāyikā* 's happiness.

Madhyama: One who speaks pleasing words

Adhama: One who speaks and helps at random.

In the **Kāmasūtra of Vatsyayana**(2nd century AD) the nature of friends who help in the matter of love are described as follows:

One who has played with us since childhood, who is bound by an obligation, who has the same taste, who is a classmate, who knows the secrets and faults or whose faults and secrets

are known, who is the child of a nurse, who is brought up with us and who is a hereditary friend!

The Kāmasūtra advises that they should tell the truth, should not change over time, should be favourable according to the desire, should be firm, should be free from covetousness and should not reveal secrets. Vātsyāyana opines that it is better to keep friendship with washermen, barbers, florists, perfumers, vendors of spirituous liquor, beggars, cowherds, betel-leaf sellers, goldsmiths, *pīṭhāmardas*, *viṭas*, *viḍūṣaka* and also with the wives of these people. Kokkoka adds some more who are fit to be messengers. They are maidservants, female friends, girls, widows, female astrologers, female servants of other's house, shop keepers, foster mother and neighbours. Those clever may also use parrots, starlings as messengers.

We come across many examples which show heroes taking the help of above mentioned people to win over their beloved. Agnimitra takes the help of Vidūṣaka. Mādhava wants the help of Kāmandakī, an ascetic, Vatsarāja takes the help of a magician, Śākara needs the help of Viṭa, Candrāpīḍa desires the help of his maidservant, Nala sends a swan, Uphāravarman takes the help of Puṣkarikā and her old mother to win the heart of his beloved. Hence Kālidāsa has remarked ,

‘One with an assistant is capable of accomplishing the object beset with obstacles. One, even though possessed of eyes cannot perceive an object without the light of the lamp.

The Kāmasūtra tells the hero to take the help of the companion but the poets and dramatists have expanded this idea for the heroines too. Hence Bakulāvalikā helps Mālavikā, Śakuntalā

seeks the help of Priyamvada and Anasūyā, Susaṅgatā assists Ratnāvalī, Manoramā supports Priyadarśikā or Araṇyakā. Vasantasenā takes the help of Madanikā etc. Vātsyāyana states that the following qualities should be possessed by the messengers.

Skill, boldness, grasping the intention by outward signs, absence of confusion, understanding the other's hearts, capacity of reasoning, trickery, knowledge of time and place, quick comprehension, swift and good planning. All these qualities are seen in the above messengers.

In the Kuṭṭanīmata, Vikārāla hence suggests Mālātī to send a go-between who is clever and bold, who is able to understand the mind of others and who is expert in speaking with dual meaning.

The Kāmasūtra says that when the *dūtī* expresses the love of her master before the woman, she may laugh but not reproach him in any way. She may not tell her decision at once and hesitates to express her love. When Bakulāvalikā narrates the love of Agnimitra, Mālavikā stops her words there. But when she continues Mālavikā hears but shows no interest. After knowing the heart of Agnimitra she too expressed her love. This is as per the *sūtra* of Kāmasūtra where Mālavikā exhibits different stages of mind where she first prohibits then becomes neutral then finally consents. This also depends on the tact and persistence of the *dūtī-sakhī*.

Any woman who is fit to be enjoyed without causing sin is called a *nāyikā*- Vātsyāyana

The Kāmasūtra says that a woman should learn about the art of love from a confiding friend. Her teacher may be the daughter of a nurse brought up with her and already married

or a female friend who is trustworthy or the sister of her mother, or a woman of equal age, or an old female servant or a female beggar who may have formerly lived in the family or her won sister who can always be trusted.

With the rise of regional literary cultures, the integration of Kāmaśāstra with literary form and content is seen in the poems of Jayadeva (12th century) Chandidas (fourteenth century), Vidyāpati (fifteenth century), and Sūradās (sixteenth century) and Keśavadās 's (seventeenth century).

Kesavadas in Rasikapriya (17th century) states explicitly who can become the *sakhī* and her different roles.

There are sixteen prabhavas (chapters) of which the twelfth chapter deals with

–Different type of *sakhīs* and the thirteenth chapter – The work of *sakhīs*.

धाइ, जनी, नाइन, नटी, प्रगट परौसिनि नारि।

प्रालिनि, बरइनि, सिल्पिनी, चुरिहेरनी, सुनारि । - (12.1)

रामजनी, संन्यासिनी, पटु पटुवा की बाल ।

केसव नायक नायिका, सखी करहिं सब काल । - (12.2)

Nurse, servant, the wife of a barber, actress, a woman neighbour, gardener's wife, betel seller, painter, bangle seller, goldsmith's wife, woman of a lower caste, ascetic, ornament maker- these are the *sakhīs* of the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā*.

Hindu women in Keshavadasa's time did not intermingle with men and kept to the inner quarters. Love affairs were carried on in secret and a go-between or a near friend of the *nāyikā* who could have access to the *nāyaka* without arousing suspicion was of great help.

The ways in which women bring about the meeting of the lovers are vividly described by Keshavadas.

For a woman who was confined to the inner apartments, a female companion or a confidante was thus invaluable in conveying messages to her lover and in bringing back his messages to her. The importance of such an intermediary in love was acknowledged by the famed Roman poet Ovid who offers the following advice to an expectant lover, 'But first you must get to know the girl's maid, she will make things easier for you- provided that she is completely in her mistress's confidence and can be trusted with the secret of your intrigue.' This same thought has been echoed in Sangam literature.

The woman who thus acted as a go-between would naturally be one who was absolutely intimate with a girl in love, so that she could freely talk about her attachment and tell her everything which lay hid in her heart. The messenger would also have to be a woman with free ingress into different homes and families without exciting suspicion and completely loyal and trustworthy. She would help the girl either because of her nearness and friendship or for money.

Of the messengers of the former category viz. the *sakhī* or friend, Keshavadas mentions a woman neighbour, a dancer, a female recluse and a faithful nurse.

Most of the go-betweens however fall within the latter class viz those who did the work for gain. These are a maid-servant, a barber's wife, a gardener's wife, a female bangle seller or betel seller, a goldsmith girl, a girl of mixed caste or the clever wife of a worker in ornaments with silk and gold threads. These women were most probably professional go-betweens of the

kind mentioned by Vatsyāyana employed by ordinary women. Those of the elite like the daughters of princes, chieftains and nobles would depend more on their female friends and woman companions, the *sakhī*, a large number of whom surrounded them.

The most appropriate *dūtī* according to Keshavadas is the *sakhī*.

The most appropriate go-between is considered to be the near and trustworthy friend of the woman known as the *sakhī*.

सिखा, बिनय, मनाइबौ, लिलवै करि सिंगार ।

झुकि अरु देइ उराहनों, यह तिनकौ ब्योहार । -(13.1)

The acts done by the *sakhī* are to instruct, entreat, adorn, stoop and chide. By these means she persuades the lover and his beloved to be inclined towards each other and brings the affair to a successful conclusion. In doing so the *sakhī* has to encounter many obstacles most of them of the lover's own making as for example bashfulness, ignorance, obduracy, arrogance, deceit, and frigidity on the part of the woman and hesitancy, lack of zeal and infidelity on the part of the lover.

These impediments the *sakhī* removes by the means mentioned above. She instructs the woman, when she finds her ignorant in the ways of love, causes her to leave shyness, overcomes her arrogance and harshness by sweet words, inflames her with passion when she finds her frigid and reproves her when she encounters deceit.

In like manner, she encourages the lover by urging him on when he is hesitant and lacking in zeal and by censuring him when she finds him to be false to his beloved.

तिनके चित को जानि सखि, पिय सों कहै सुनाय।

कहै सखी सों प्रीतमै, आपुन तैं अकुलाय ।

Sometimes the *sakhī* understands the state of the *nāyaka* and speaks to him and at other times, the *nāyaka* who is troubled speaks to the *sakhī*.

In the course of the performance of these intimate *dūtīs* sometimes the bosom friend herself gets involved with the *nāyaka* and then the position becomes complicated and instead of pressing her friend's love suit she begins to plead her own.

Despite this however she is more sincere than the other go-between viz. the maid-servant, the nurse, the wives of the gardener and the barber and the betel leaf seller. When the others deceive the *nāyikā* by trying to win over the *nāyaka* for themselves, she is the one who alone remains faithful.

Without the *sakhī*, the girl would stay deprived of the pleasures of love and many a lover would remain thwarted in his amorous advance. The incentive of the *sakhī* is to seek his friendship and a desire to oblige and not financial gain as for other go-betweens. It is perhaps for this reason that the *sakhī* proves herself to be a better and more reliable intermediary than the others.

Keshavadas has thus glorified the role of the *sakhī*.

Some extracts from his work follows:

Giving **instruction**, *śikṣā*, to the *nāyikā* the *sakhī* says:

नाह लगै मुख सौति दहैं दुख, 'नाहिं' लगै दुख देह दहैगौ ।

नाहीं अबै सुख देति है केसव, नाह सदा सुख देत रहैगौ ।

नाहीं ते नाहीं री नाहीं भलाई, भली सब नाह ही तें पै कहैगौ ।

नाह सों नेह निबाहि बलाइ ल्यों, नाहीं सों नेह कहा निबहैगौ ।

-(13.2)

'If love you to your lover show
 Your co-wife will with sorrow burn,
 And if you firmly stick to 'no',
 To your own body pain will come!
 This 'no' may please you for a while
 Your lover will you ever please.
 Oh! Bosom friend , no good there lies
 In 'no'; but good lies, friend, indeed,
 In loving your beloved; may
 I die on you, if you will thus
 Not love him and 'no' always say
 How long will you maintain your love?'

Entreating, बिनय मनाइबौ, the *nāyikā*, the *sakhī* says to Radha,

ऐसैही क्यों चुप हवै रहिहों सखि हों सहिहों सतराहट सों लौं।
 क्यों सरिहै मिलिबे बिन तोहि तऊ मिलियै मिलियै दिन जौ लौं।
 केसव कोटि करौ उपचार मिलै को कहा मिलिहै सुख तौ लौं।
 देखि धौं अंगनि आरसी लै मिलिहै पिय सों मन ही मन कौ लौं।

-(13.4)

'How long will I, oh! bosom friend,
 Thus tolerate your arrogance
 And quiet remain?
 How can this task be done, if friend I meet him not?
 A million schemes though you may plan
 The joy to meet him ne'er you can
 Obtain till then: in the mirror see
 Your limbs in what a state they be!
 How long will you in secret meet
 Your lover thus, tell me, my sweet?'

Chiding, देइ उराहनों the *nāyikā*: the *sakhī* says to Radha:

बोलति नाहिं बुलाएँहुँ बोल कहा लगी मोहिं बकाएहीं मारन।

सो पर्यो पाइनि बूझि सखी सब देति हैं ज्यौ जुवती जिहि कारन ।

हठु छाँडिकै कंठ लगाइ उठाइ कहा लगी ऐंठि अकास निहारन ।

कौनै भए नहिं द्वै दिन तू ही लगी कछु उलट पारन ॥

-(10.16)

If you do not speak by yourself, at least speak when spoken to. Are you trying to kill me by forcing me to talk? Other women would give their life to him who has fallen at your feet. Please give up your obstinacy and embrace him now. How long will you keep looking at the sky? Stop talking in riddles. Each day is becoming like two.

Another example of the **appeasement**, झुकि, stooping, of the *sakhī*

जौ हौं गनों औगुननि तौ तूँ गनै गुनगन,

जौ हौं गनौ गुन तौ तूँ औगुन के गन में ।

केसौदास ऐसैं प्रीति छिपावति छलनि में,

जैसे छनछबि छूटै छिपै जाइ धन में ।

भारी है निठुर निसि भादों की भयावनी में,

सु क्यों बसै घर जाकौ पीउ बसै बन में।

बैठे ते उठावै, उठि चलें ते मचलि रहै,

सोई मेरी क्यों न कहै जोई तेरे मन में ॥

-(13.11)

‘When I about his faults do speak,

His virtues you start to describe,

Your love adroitly you conceal

As in a moment lightening hides

Amidst dark clouds; Oh! How can you

In your house stay on dreadful nights

Of Bhadam, when within the woods

Your lover keeps? You make me rise

When I sit, and then you create

A scene, dear friend, I wonder why

You do not trust me so, to say

What buried in your mind does lie’

Entreating बिनय मनाइबौ the *nāyaka*, Krishna, the *sakhī* says:

कंज कैसे फूल नैन दास्यों से दसन ऐन,
बिंब से अधर हास सुधा सों सुधाहर्यौ है ।
बेनि पिकबैनी की त्रिबेनी सी बनाइ गुही,
बार कै सेवार करिहाँ कों करि हास्यौ है ।
कीने कुच अमल कलपतरु के से फल,
केसौदास यातें बिधि मुगध बिचार्यौ है ।
देखौ न गुपाल सखी मेरी कौ सरीर सब,
सोने सों सँवारि सब सौंधे सों सँवार्यौ है ।

-(13.5)

Her eyes are like a lotus, her teeth like the seeds of the pomegranate, her lips like the bimba fruit , her smile as sweet as nectar, her voice like that of the cuckoo, her braid like the triveni sangam , her tresses long and as Brahma made her waist he almost accepted defeat. He made her breasts out of the fruit of the wish fulfilling tree. And looking at her Brahma was speechless and wondered . Oh Krishna! Take a look at my friend. It seems that she has been made from fragrant gold!

Appeasement बिनय मनाइबौ of the *nāyaka*, Krishna the *sakhī* says:

भूषन-भेद बनाइकै केसव फूल बनाई बनाइकै बागे ।
भाग बडाइ सुहाग बढाइकै राग बढाइ हियें अनुरागे ।
पाइनि लागत सौंधो चढावत पान खवावतहीं निसि जागे ।
कान्ह चलौ उठि बैठे कहा ? मन मूसि परायौ ब रसून लागे ॥

-(13.8)

‘With flowers and ornaments you decked
Her and oh! Krishna thus did increase
Her good fortune and happiness;
Advanced your suit, and loved her deep
Within your heart and clasped her feet!
Sweet smelling things to her applied
And forcing on her betel leaves
Kept her awake many a night!
Oh! Krishna , I pray you, now arise!

We now look into the idea of friendship or *sakhyam* in the Vedic times.

Vedic references to the *sakhī* or *dūtī*.

In the Vedas, we find a reference where Indra is referred to as *Mitrapate*- Lord of friends.

तवमीशिषे वसुपते वसूनां तवं मित्राणां मित्रपते धेष्ठः ।

इन्द्र तवं मरुद्भिः सं वदस्वाध पराशान रतुथा हवींषि ॥

-(I.170, Indra.

Maruts.)

Thou, Lord of Wealth, art Master of all treasures, thou, Lord of friends, art thy friend's best supporter.

O Indra, speak thou kindly with the Maruts, and taste oblations in their proper season.

The friend or sakha is a recurrent word in the Vedas used to address the God as protector, seeking his protection and so seeking his friendship.

The friend has been used in many verses as an equal to the God and at other times to wealth.

The friend has also been referred to as the enricher.

Thou rich in friends, O son of strength – here an address to Agni implies his strength due to his having a number of friends!

अछिद्रा सूनो सहसो नो अद्य सतोऽभ्यो मित्रमहः शर्म यच्छ ।

अग्ने गर्णन्तमंहस उरुष्योर्जो नपात पूर्भिरायसीभिः ॥

-(I.58)

Agni, the seven tongues deftest sacrificer, him whom the priests elect at solemn worship, the herald, the messenger of all vasus, I serve with dainty food, I ask for riches. Grant, Son of Strength, thou rich in friends, a refuge without a flaw this day to us thy praisers.

A prayer to Indra goes thus,

उक्थमिन्द्राय शंस्यं वर्धनं पुरुनिष्पिधे ।

शक्रो यथा सुतेषु णो रारणत सख्येषु च ॥

तमित सखित्व ईमहे तं राये तं सुवीर्ये ।

स शक्र उत नः शकदिन्द्रो वसु दयमानः ॥

- (I.10.5,6, Indra)

To Indra , praise to him to strengthen him who freely gives, That Sakra may take pleasure in our friendship and drink-offerings. Him, him we seek for friendship, him for riches and heroic might. For Indra, he is Sakra, he shall aid us while he gives us wealth.

Him- we seek for friendship, for riches and heroic might. From here it is clear that friends were as important as riches or heroic might. Thus **friends are treated as equivalent to wealth!**

Also in the Vedas we find the sakha and the *dūta/ dūtī* are seen as distinct entities here.

In the Rig Veda, Chapter X, 108 Saramā , a dog, is sent as **the messenger** of the Gods or of Indra to Paṇi, the envious demons, who carried off the cows or rays of light which Indra wished to recover.

The hymn is also alluded to the capture by Indra of the cows of the Paṇi who possess herds of cows which they keep hidden in a cave far beyond the Rasa, a mythical river. Saramā , as Indra's messenger tracks the cows and asks for them in Indra's name but is mocked by the Paṇi. Paṇi (पणि) were the wealthiest sect of the society then, and were famous for their unlawful ways and means to collect wealth. They were also famous for their cunning, tactful, and miserly behaviour. Most of the wealth was collected by them was not used for greatness of society. In the olden time the wealth was measured with the animals one had and their usage for farming would imply the prosperity of the place. Among such Paṇi, Brubu was one of the wealthiest as well chief of them. Once they snatched most of the wealth of the area

and kept it in a place, aloof from any usage, and hidden in dark caves. Even reaching this place was impossible.

Indra the king of divine abode, wished to utilize this captured wealth by Paṇi for betterment of society and use it for purpose of agricultural usage. For this he wanted one of the royal, focused representatives and one who would advocate the purpose of his vision. After a keen analysis he found Saramā one who was equated as mother of dogs, most appropriate to go and visit Paṇi and get the wealth from them. In case of a difficult situation she must resort to advocating the strengths of Indra and his kingdom, his purpose and his pure attitude for society. As per Indra's instruction, Saramā proceeded ahead for her mission. Way to reach the place of Paṇi was not easy. When she reached finally crossing the sea, rivers, mountains after a long journey, the Paṇis were amazed and wondered how she made her way to reach them as it was not possible to cross the many hindrances.

Saramā replied "I am the *dūtī* (representative or envoy) of Indra. Yes I was afraid of water, however **my mission took over that fear** and with this courage I have crossed sea and rivers and here have I come to collect information from you, inform mission of Indra and to explain you the rightful things". *We see here the dūtī of single-minded purpose.*

Paṇi replied with sarcasm "Oh how is that Indra? What is his strength? What powers does he have? We would be very happy to be friendly with him and will even make him chief of one of our cattle section".

Saramā the loyal representative of Indra's kingdom informs them that Indra has great strength and no one can win over him whilst he can win over anybody." Paṇi subtly replies "Oh

Saramā ! The most beautiful one! You travelled so far and reached to an impossible destination which is why we are happy. We grant you few cattle and you can happily take them for yourself. Use it for your personal benefits. We can do without war. You can take a few of them and become one of us.”

The strongest reply of Saramā indicates many qualities. **Qualities like being faithful, non judgemental, truthful, candid and goal oriented.** (The conscientious *dūtī* did not swerve from her mission.) Her reply was “Oh Paṇi! Your language is not of a warrior or soldier, you are bribing me, it shows your ill mentality, and it also reflects how you would be treating your own people. I order you to come ahead and negotiate with me for betterment of society or else we have enough strength to attack you.” Paṇi informs Saramā about how it is impossible to reach to the wealth hidden by them as it was kept secretly and tactfully. They also say “Gods (Clan and people of Indra) have sent you because they are afraid of war and thus they have sent a woman for negotiation.” Paṇis now diplomatically change their attitude towards Saramā and say “We consider you as our sister. Be with us, enjoy the wealth and be part of our Kingdom. You are intelligent and we wish to have intelligent people like you with us.”

Saramā without delay said “I am on my mission of negotiating with you and not to surrender to you. Either we reach to a win- win situation or get ready to face serious consequences of not reaching to an understandable solution.”

Even after her candid information Paṇi did not bother to go ahead with negotiations. Saramā then challenged them and strategically challenged to run away from that place. Saramā with

the help of Brihaspati, Soma, Somabhashavakarta, Rishis and intelligent dogs wins over Paṇi and the wealth was then used for Indra's vision.

Indra was intelligent to use his manpower for appropriate work. He chose Saramā (mother of Dogs) over many other male colleagues like Brihaspati, Soma, Aditya and so many. Saramā was called as mother of dogs because of qualities she and her team possessed. Dogs are considered loyal, intelligent. They can find their way with intelligent usage of their senses, and are courageous, faithful.

Even though Paṇi played many tactics such as initially calling her as a beautiful lady, later sister and then a weak woman bribing her at each state, Saramā was **focussed** and *did not bother about her personal benefits*. She did not give up and accomplished her mission.

Thus we see in the Vedas how even Indra used a dūtī to accomplish his task. Why? One may ask. Why could he not do it on his own? For one, his very presence would have been confrontationist. The dūtī was sent to soften the other side. The able dūtī can often turn the opposite side towards reconciliation or make them amicable towards a commonly mutually viable solution. Often the dūta/ dūtī alone can deftly accomplish such a task.

Similarly we see in later epics how Hanuman as the dūta of Rama reaches Lanka first and tries to placate Ravana.

In the **Rig Veda** we further find the following references regarding the dūta.

Agni is often referred to as the dūta.

अग्निं दूतं वर्णीमहे होतारं विश्ववेदसम ।

अस्य यज्ञस्य सुक्रतुम ॥

-(I.12)

We choose Agni the messenger, the herald, master of all wealth, well skilled in this our sacrifice.

अग्ने विवस्वदुषसश्चित्रं राधो अमर्त्य ।

आ दाशुषे जातवेदो वहा तवमद्या देवानुषर्बुधः ॥

जुष्टो हि दूतो असि हव्यवाहनो.अग्ने रथीरध्वराणाम ।

सजूरश्विभ्यामुषसा सुवीर्यमस्मे धेहि शरवो बर्हत ॥

अद्या दूतं वर्णीमहे वसुमग्निं पुरुप्रियम ।

धूमकेतुं भार्जीकं वयुष्टिषु यज्ञानामध्वरश्रियम ॥

- (I.44)

Immortal Jatavedas, thou many-hued effulgent gift of Dawn, Agni, this day to him who pays oblations bring the Gods who waken with the morn. For thou art offering-bearer and **loved messenger**, the charioteer of sacrifice: Accordant with the Asvins and with Dawn grant us heroic strength and lofty fame. As messenger we choose to-day Agni the good whom many love, Smoke-bannered spreader of the light, at break of day glory of sacrificial rites

अग्निं होतारमीळते वसुधितिं परियं चेतिष्ठमरतिं नयेरिरे हव्यवाहं नयेरिरे । विश्वायुं विश्ववेदसं होतारं यजतं कविम ।

देवासो रण्वमवसे वसूयवो गीर्भोरण्वं वसूयवः ॥

-(I.128, Agni)

Agni the Priest they supplicate to grant them wealth: him, **dear, most thoughtful**, have they made their messenger, him, offering-bearer have they made, Beloved of all, who knoweth all, the Priest, the Holy one, the Sage Him, **Friend**, for help, the Gods when they are fain for wealth, him, Friend, with hymns, when fain for wealth.

विद्वानग्ने वयुनानि कषितीनां वयानुषक छुरुधो जीवसेधाः ।

अन्तर्विद्वानध्वनो देवयानानतन्द्रो दूतो अभवो हविर्वाट ॥

-(I.72, Agni)

Thou, Agni, knower of men's works, hast sent us good food in constant course for our subsistence: Thou deeply skilled in paths of Gods becamest **an envoy** never wearied, offering bearer.

In the **Bhikshu sukta** we find another reference to the friend or *sakha*. Bhikshu has three meanings: 1. Mendicant 2. Frightener of mara –the demon king and 3. Destroyer of evil.

न स सखा यो न ददाति सख्ये सचाभुवे सचमानाय पित्वः ।

अपास्मात्प्रेयान्न तदोको अस्ति पृणन्तमन्यमरणं चिदिच्छेत् ॥

-(10.117. 4)

He is not a friend who doesn't give anything to his friend/companion/supporter who approaches him in need. His house is not a house. One has to go away from such a place immediately and should seek help from some other generous man.

This is a pertinent definition of the *sakha/sakhī* , in a way. The *sakhī* reversely can be defined as that person who gives his all when somebody approaches him/her in need.

मोघमन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेताः सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्स तस्य ।

नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ॥

-(10. 117.6)

A fool greedily earns his own food without giving to others. I tell you the truth, that food shall bring him destruction! He who neither gives to God nor friends and eats all by himself becomes a sinner!

Again we find the equation of *sakha* to the Gods! He who neither gives to Gods or friends implies the lofty state that the *sakha/sakhī* had and was equated to the Gods!

In Mandala VI we find an address to Soma seeking his friendship.

गरावाणः सोम नो हि कं सखित्वनाय वावशुः ।

जही नयत्रिणं पणिं वर्को हि षः ॥

- (6.51.14)

Soma, these pressing-stones have called aloud to win thee for **our Friend**.

Destroy the greedy Paṇi, for a wolf is he.

In many of the vedic verses we find a prayer and a yearning for the Gods to become the friend. The friend is considered as protector and thus so equated to the level of the Gods.

परेहि विग्रमस्त्रमिन्द्रं पछा विपश्चितम ।

यस्ते सखिभ्य आ वरम ॥

उत बरुवन्तु नो निदो निरन्यतश्चिदारत ।

दधाना इन्द्र इद दुवः ॥

उत नः सुभगानरिर्वोचेयुर्दस्म कर्ष्टयः ।

सयामेदिन्द्रस्य शर्मणि ॥

एमाशुमाशवे भर यज्ञश्रियं नर्मादनम ।

पतयन मन्दयत्सखम ॥

-(I.4.4,5,6,7 Indra)

Go to the wise unconquered One, ask thou of Indra, skilled in song, Him, **who is better than thy friends**. Whether the men who mock us say, Depart unto another place, Ye who serve Indra and none else; Or whether, God of wondrous deeds, all our true people call us blest, Still may we dwell in Indra's care. Unto the swift One bring the swift, man-cheering, grace of sacrifice, That to the Friend gives wings and joy.

सख्ये त इन्द्र वाजिनो मा भेम शवसस पते ।

तवामभि परणोनुमो जेतारमपराजितम ॥

-(1.11.2 Indra)

Strong in thy friendship, Indra, Lord of power and might, we have no fear. We glorify with praises thee, the never-conquered conqueror.

सदसस पतिमद्भुतं परियमिन्द्रस्य काम्यम ।

सनिं मेधामयासिषम ॥

(1.18.6, Brahmanaspati.)

To the Assembly's wondrous Lord, to Indra's lovely Friend who gives Wisdom, have I drawn near in prayer.

तं तवा वयं विश्ववारा शास्महे पुरुहूत ।

सखे वसो जरिभ्यः ॥

अस्माकं शिप्रिणीनां सोमपाः सोमपाव्नाम ।

सखे वज्रिन सखीनाम ॥

तथा तदस्तु सोमपाः सखे वज्रिन तथा कर्णु ।

यथा त उश्मसीष्टये ॥

रेवतीर्नः सधमाद इन्द्रे सन्तु तुविवाजाः ।

कषुमन्तो याभिर्मदेम ॥

आ घ तवावान तमनाप्त सतोऽभ्यो धर्ष्णवियानः ।

रणोरक्षं न चक्र्योह ॥

-(1.30.10-14 Indra)

We pray to thee, O much-invoked, rich in all precious gifts, **O Friend, Kind God** to those who sing thy praise. O Soma-drinker, Thunder-armed, Friend of our lovely-featured dames And of our Soma-drinking friends. Thus, Soma-drinker, may it be; thus, Friend, who wielded thunder, act to aid each wish as we

desire. With Indra splendid feasts be ours, rich in all strengthening things wherewith, wealthy in food, we may rejoice. Like thee, thyself, the singers' friend, thou movest, as it were, besought, Bold One, the axle of the car.

तवमग्ने परथमो अङ्गिरा रषिर्देवो देवानामभवः शिवः सखा ।

तव वरते कवयो विद्मनापसो.अजायन्त मरुतो भराजद्रष्टयः ॥

-(1.31.1 Agni)

Thou, Agni, wast the earliest Angiras, a Seer; thou wast, a God thyself, the Gods' auspicious Friend.

Here Agni is considered God's auspicious friend.

इमामग्ने शरणिं मीम्षो न इममध्वानं यमगाम दूरात ।

आपिः पिता परमतिः सोम्यानां भर्मिरस्य रषिब्रन मर्त्यानाम ॥

-(1.031.16 Agni)

Pardon, we pray, this sin of ours, O Agni, -- the path which we have trodden, widely straying, Dear Friend and Father, caring for the pious, who speedest nigh and who inspirest mortals.

Friend and father is equated here!

उशिक पावको वसुर्मानुषेषु वरेण्यो होताधायि विक्षु ।

दमूना गर्हपतिर्दम आ अग्निर्भुवद रयिपती रयीणाम ॥

-(1.60.4, Agni)

Good to mankind, the yearning Purifier hath among men been placed as Priest choice-worthy. May Agni be our Friend, Lord of the Household, protector of the riches in the dwelling.

Friend as protector.

सनेमि सख्यं सवपस्यमानः सूनुर्दाधार शवसा सुदंसाः ।

आमासु चिद दधिषे पक्वमन्तः पयः कर्ष्णासु रुशद रोहिणीषु ॥ -(1.62.9 Indra)

Rich in good actions, skilled in operation, the Son with might maintains his perfect friendship. Thou in the raw cows, black of hue or ruddy, storest the ripe milk glossy white in colour.

Maintaining perfect friendship is a quality revered.

मा नो अग्ने सख्या पित्र्याणि पर मर्षिष्ठा अभि विदुष कविः सन ।

नभो न रूपं जरिमा मिनाति पुरा तस्या अभिशस्तेरधीहि ॥ -(1.71.10 Agni.)

O Agni, break not our ancestral friendship, Sage as thou art, endowed with deepest knowledge. Old age, like gathering cloud, impairs the body: before that evil comes near protect me.

Ancestral friendship-purvaja. Again here we see friend addressed as protector.

तवं जामिर्जनानामग्ने मित्रो असि परियः ।

सखा सखिभ्य ईड्यः ॥ -(1.75.4 Agni.)

The kinsman, Agni, of mankind, their well beloved Friend art thou, A Friend whom friends may supplicate.

स हि करतुः स मर्यः स साधुर्मित्रो न भूदद्भुतस्य रथीः ।

तं मेधेषु परथमं देवयन्तीर्विश उप बरुवते दस्ममारीः ॥ -(1.77.3 Agni)

For he is mental power, a man, and perfect; he is the bringer, **friend-like**, of the wondrous. The pious Aryan tribes at sacrifices address them first to him who doeth marvels.

The friend is the harbinger of goodness.

देवानां भद्रा सुमतिर्ज्यूतां देवानां रातिरभि नोनि वर्तताम ।

देवानां सख्यमुप सेदिमा वयं देवा न आयुः पर तिरन्तु जीवसे ॥ -(1.89.2 , Visvedevas)

May the auspicious favour of the Gods be ours, on us descend the bounty of the righteous Gods. The friendship of the Gods have we devoutly sought: so may the Gods extend our life that we may live.

Friendship of Gods must be sought.

तवं नः सोम विश्वतो रक्षा राजन्नघायतः ।

न रिष्येत्त्वावतः सखा ॥

-(1.91.8 Soma)

Guard us, King Soma, on all sides from him who threatens us: never let The friend of one like thee be harmed.

Again Friend is Protector.

गयस्फानो अमीवहा वसुवित पुष्टिवर्धनः ।

सुमित्रः सोमनो भव ॥

यः सोम सख्ये तव रारणद देव मर्त्यः ।

तं दक्षः सचते कविः ॥

उरुष्या णो अभिशस्तेः सोम नि पाह्यंहसः ।

सखा सुशेव एधि नः ॥

आ पयायस्व मदिन्तम सोम विश्वेभिरंशुभिः ।

भवा नःसुश्रवस्तमः सखा वर्ध ॥

-(1.91,12 14,15,17)

Enricher, healer of disease, wealth-finder, prospering our store, Be, Soma, a good

Friend to us. O Soma, God, the mortal man who in thy friendship hath delight, Him doth the mighty Sage befriend. Save us from slanderous reproach, keep us., O Soma, from distress: Be unto us a gracious Friend. Wax, O most gladdening Soma, great through all thy rays of light, and be A Friend of most illustrious fame to prosper us.

देवो देवानामसि मित्रो अद्भुतो वसुर्वसूनामसि चारुध्वरे ।

शर्मन सयाम तव सप्रथस्तमे.अग्ने ॥

-(1.94.13, Agni)

Thou art a God, thou art the wondrous Friend of Gods, the Vasu of the Vasus, fair in sacrifice. Under, thine own most wide protection may we dwell. Let us not in thy friendship, Agni, suffer harm.

घर्तप्रतीकं व रतस्य धूर्षदमग्निं मित्रं न समिधान रञ्जते ।

इन्धानो अक्रो विदथेषु दीद्यच्छुक्रवर्णामुदु नो यंसते धियम ॥

-(1.143.7 Agni)

The kindler of the flame wins Agni as a Friend, **promoter of the Law**, whose face is bright with oil. Inflamed and keen, refulgent in our gatherings, he lifts our hymn on high clad in his radiant hues.

सुप्रेतुः सूयवसो न पन्था दुर्नियन्तुः परिप्रीतो न मित्रः ।

अन्नर्वाणो अभि ये चक्षते नो.अपीव्रता अपोर्णुवन्तो अस्थुः ॥

-(I.190.6 ,Brhaspati)

Like a fair path is he, where grass is pleasant, though hard to win, a friend beloved most early. Those who unharmed by enemies behold us, while: they would make them bare, stood closely compassed.

A friend is not easily got.

From the above verses from the Rig Veda we find that the friend is equated to the Gods.

Also seeking the friendship of the God is equivalent to seeking riches. Having friends is wealth. The relationship with the Gods is that of friendship-sakhyam.



II. Sakhyam in Sangam Literature:

300BC to 300AD

In Sangam literature, friendship was considered a token of one's breeding. Friendship regardless of return or rewards was held so high that the poet Piśirāndaiyār, was ready to almost identify his great friend Kopperuñcholā's name with his own name and when the latter was resting on the north on an austerity till death ritual, he said,

‘True friends though they may not meet during a period of prosperity will unfailingly meet in adversity.

—(Puram 215, 8:9)

True friendship was considered to be without any real element of separation or dislike and was compared to the mythical bird Gaṇḍabheruṇḍa, with two heads but only one body.

—(Aham82: 4-5)

Friendship once contracted never got severed.

—(Kurun. 313: 4-5)

The art of friendship was cultivated so seriously that its failings and strengths were well understood . The false friends who exploited the frankness of true friendship were truly abhorred. In fact it was said that

‘Wise men strike up a friendship only after they have fully studied the nature of those whom they befriend and not adopt the other way round, of studying them after becoming friends.

—(Naṟṟ . 32:8-9)

This is particularly so because they felt that ending a friendship once developed was a very sad and painful thing. A poet goes to the extent of describing a true friend who wittingly would accept a cup of poison offered by his friend having full faith in the friend. Such friends were called **ṇāgarikas** (civilized persons).

—(Naṟṟ 355: 6-7)

The *Akam* poetry, of which *Kuruntokai* is an example, lies deeply rooted in the Tamil landscape, ecology and country. Love remains the dominant theme here, but a love beyond sensory or emotional gratification finds no place here. In a way, these love poems stand juxtaposed to the later *bhakti* hymns that connects the physical world of love to the metaphysics of *bhakti* while including within its ambit the concept of *saranagati*.

The *Kuruntokai* is blissfully unaware of such higher forms of enlightenment not making it inferior, in any way.

Sorrow is the very stuff of which Sangam poems deal in. But it is the sorrow of the immediate present never despair. There is always a subtle note of hope running like a golden thread through the Sangam poetry. So much so that one sided love is clearly avoided. To cite this case in point and highlighting the *sakhī*'s role therein there is an interesting poem and anecdote related to it. The poetess has earned the title- the one who sang of the crow'.

In this poem, set in the meadows the lover returns after considerable delay, expecting the girl of his heart to be emaciated due to the anguish thus caused. But to his surprise his wife is looking healthy and even radiant. One possible explanation could have been that it was one-sided love and she did not miss the separation too much. But since one-sided love is not thought of, the possible explanation could only be that the lady's friend took very good care of her. The lover thus compliments the *sakhī*. The *sakhī* however replies that the lady was beside herself and her sorrow was too deep to be consoled with any cajoling from her. It was due to the crow which cawed vigorously every morning in her courtyard. The crow's cawing is considered as harbinger of a beloved guest. She presumed the beloved guest only meant her husband soon to arrive and that kept her spirits up and going.

A significant and characteristic feature of Sangam poetry is that every one of the poems is put in the direct speech being the expression and thought of one of the characters. In none of

them do we find the poet intruding with his own views. This contributes largely to a high literary value.

The pristine nature of human relationship in its evolutionary state with its thrust on genuineness and stability is at the core of *Kuruntokai*. The relationships are not aimed at an ethereal domain or infused with abstract thoughts. The relationships between man / woman or maid/mistress are simple and conceivable with a primitive-native innocence.

The *sakhī- nāyikā* relationship in Sangam literature:

The special focus of the *sakhī- nāyikā* relationship in Sangam literature is its prevalence in a state of no-conflict zone unlike the man–woman relationship that undergoes numerous moods like separation, pain, infidelity, conflict, union etc. The *sakhī- nāyikā* relationship operates on a linear level with an unparalleled sturdiness to which the *nāyikā* and the *nāyakā* turn to for an emotional anchorage.

The *Kuruntokai* by itself is a notable achievement within the larger body of *Sangam* Tamil poetry. The *sakhī-nāyikā* relationship depicts certain elementary simplicities of life, concerned with vital human emotions and passions where nature rules the roost. The characters, their ambitions and way of life are earthy and earthly, not soaring into the metaphysical domains (as in the later Tamil bhakti poetry), while also not trivialising the world from which they emanate. Their world is devoid of contemporary postmodern and ultramodern complexities. It is simply aimed at the fulfillment of elementary desires that human life on earth demands whilst simultaneously illustrating the typical nature of Sangam life, with its exuberance, vitality and cultural codes of conduct that imbue an

eternal quality to human relationships in general.

A basic prerequisite of this genre of love-poetry is the compatibility of the hero and the heroine in ten points like beauty, wealth, age, virtue etc. since such pairs alone remain capable of the full range of union. In compliance with the major texts of Sangam poetry, the *Kuruntokai* remains deeply rooted in the Tamil soil and ecology, so much so, that the landscape and verse are fused into a harmonious whole. Nature does not form a mere backdrop in these compositions but forms an integral part of the poems, or rather as a co-text in delineating its dominant mood. Such deep connections have led to the five major moods of love each denoted by a symbolic landscape, its flora, and the presiding deity.

The major characters in *Kuruntokai*, as in *Akam* poetry, include that of the hero, heroine, heroine's mother, the foster mother, the heroine's companion (usually the foster mother's daughter), the concubine and in a few cases, the hero's friend. Most of these relationships are sociologically designated as 'primary' bonds since they are of a consanguine nature, although the relationship between the heroine's mother and the friend's mother, as also that of the heroine and the companion are non-consanguine.

Although Sanskrit literature has few parallels, the depth, intricacies and nuances of the sakhī- nāyikā relationship of Sangam poetry is unparalleled.

The *Tolkappiam* delineates the complexity of this relationship by its description of the landscape, circumstance and the dialogues of the companion. The heroine's friend *thozhi* refers to the hero as our lover *nam kaadalar* often, even though she means 'your lover', since the two of them are very close friends.

While the *Ettuthogai* alone has 777 songs sung by the *sakhī*, the songs between the *nāyikā* and the *sakhī* alone number 376. The sheer volume is ample testimony to the profundity of the relationship, as evidenced by a song in *Kuruntokai* that is sung by the hero who showers accolades on the unique bond. The 222nd song composed by *Ciraikkutiyantiyar* expresses the near-synonymous emotions that the duo display. If one takes the "head of the raft" the other also does similarly. Together, they flow across in the stream. The hierarchy-free relationship withstands all vicissitudes as they are inseparable in all troubles.

Here we see in detail how the lover at a very early stage of the romance tries to understand the friend of the *nāyikā*.

सखी प्लवं यद्यवलम्बतेऽग्रे बाला तमग्रं यदि चान्तमन्तम्
 त्वक्तवा प्लवं याति यदीयम् स्रोतोबलात्सापि तथैव याति॥
 प्रावृज्जलार्द्राङ्करपेशलेयं यदक्षियुग्मं जलमुक्प्रशीतम् ।
 वर्षासु रक्तोत्पलरङ्गरेखासमङ्कितं दृष्टिमनोभिरामम्॥

If the friend starts swimming by catching hold
 Of the top of the float, she follows suit,
 If the friend takes up the bottom of the float
 She too moves to seize that end.
 If the friend decides to let go of the float
 And swim with the current, she might follow her!
 What a friendship and what dependence
 This girl I love has towards her-
 This girl I love that's tender as a shoot
 With eyes that are shot with delicate veins
 Red like the pithi that blossoms with the rains!

-(Kuruntokai 222)

The relationship is simultaneously democratic and emotional since they mutually address each other as 'friend' and also as 'mother'. The inseparable union is best described as a 'bird

with two heads’.

Such female companions abound not only in *Akam* songs, but also in the other major Tamil epics like *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekalai* where Kannaki, Madhavi and Manimekalai have close female confidantes like Devanthi, Vasanthamala and Sudhamathi respectively, who also don the roles of a poetic persona since commentaries in a bardic composition is primarily through characters.

The dominant emotion of *Akam* poetry is love. An early verse of *Kuruntokai* composed by Tevakulattar thus states :

Bigger than earth . . .

Higher than the sky,

Unfathomable than the waters

Is this love for this man

-(Kur 3 Ramanujan 1970: 19)

Such vastness and sheer magnitude of love needs to be expressed to the male lover. But the heroine expresses her love only to herself. Moreover, the Sangam concept of "*karpu*" (chastity) prevents explicit statements of love by women, and in such circumstances the *sakhī* is transformed into a vehicle to convey the depth of the love, the pangs and pining as illustrated in the following song by Kapilar.

Even if passion should pass,

O man of the hills,

where after the long tempestuous rains of night

the morning's waterfalls

make music in the caverns,

would our love also pass

with the passion?

- (Kapilar, Kur 42)

This passionate poem is a clear illustration of the innermost yearnings of a love-lorn young maiden that remain amply laden with images from nature. The man described here is a person

from the hills. The mood of love is not experienced by the heroine alone but is experienced in equal intensity by the companion also. Hence, the first person singular "I" hardly occurs in their conversations. Instead terms like "us", "we" and "our" abound in the poems. In a particular composition by Palaipatiya Perunkatunko the *sakhī* partakes of the pangs of separation that the heroine suffers:

*Will he not really think of us
when he passes the clumps of milk-hedge
with their fragrant trunks
and hears the red-legged lizard call
to his mate
will he not really think of us friend?*

- (Kur 16, Ramanujan 1970: 26)

The dominant emotion expressed in these poems is love at a basic level of gratificatory passion. Bodily desire is clearly expressed through sexual metaphors like the 'clumps of milk-hedge' and the red-legged lizard calling his mate. The sexual union of the animal/insect world is a metaphor for the union which the hero may long for. The heroine also similarly pines for such a state of union, which is succinctly understood by her friend.

There are no hints of the poem trying to attain a level of transcendentality, but there is a definite attempt at moving beyond a temporary emotive state in quest of stability. The intention of moving beyond the earthly realities is nowhere seen in these compositions given the very nature of life of the Sangam poets.

Their external lives are more clearly illustrated in the *Puram* poems. George Hart's introduction to the *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies* (1979) clearly states how the life of the poets of ancient Tamilnadu was not easy since most of the poets merely lived a hand to mouth existence as evidenced in verses like *Purananuru* (159, 160, 47, 107). They lived a life

of instability since the land was made up of hundreds of small kingdoms when they mutually feared each other. Therefore Sangam Tamil poets could not produce poems of the spiritual world as did their counterparts of the bhakti era or the Sanskrit poets (Hart 1979: 4). But the *Kurunthokai* depicts an attempt at surpassing a mere level of fleeting emotions. True, that the love depicted is at the physical level, but this is the emotion that she finds it the most difficult to communicate directly to her beloved, and hence the female companion communicates the same on her behalf.

The most important aspect of this dramatic and communicative poem is that the *nāyikā*'s feelings are best surmised by the *sakhī*. Yet in another composition by Kapilar, the *sakhī* communicates the love-lorn state of the heroine with apt poetic metaphors from nature thus:

The *sakhī* to the *nāyaka*:

आमूलतः फलति यस्य नगे प्रमुख्य वर्षाभिपुष्टपनसः शृणु स त्वमेतद्।
वृन्तं सखे गतबलं पनसं गुरु सयात् प्राणोऽगुरात्तमहिमा प्रणयस्तथास्याः॥

I grant you love her, O chief of the hills !
But you don't see how she wastes away
With all this delay in your coming together
In holy wedlock: her love has grown
Almost too great for her slender frame
To contain it. Have'nt you seen
Gigantic jack-fruits in your native hill
Hanging by their slender stalks?
A touch may fell them, the littlest breeze.
A careless brush by a passing beast
May send them crashing down to the ground.
If you fail to secure her
Through a proper wedding, mountain chieftain,
The fruit of her love growing great, May well snap the slender stalk
Of her fragile life, crashing down
A useless mass that will rot away

Laden with numerous poetic images, the jack fruit tree with its numerous pods is a symbol of fertility. A consequence of the union is the procurement of progeny which is aptly expressed through the image. At another level, the giant jackfruit tree with hanging fruits is also a sexual metaphor connoting the ripe breasts of the woman, waiting to be consumed by the man. This song bears ample testimony to the fact that nature and human life are deeply entwined to such an extent that an action / movement in one, automatically affects the other. Human beings need to derive from nature, the natural laws of union, of oneness and the beckoning of the physical attachments which have a cumulative effect on the lovelorn soul.

In moments of the hero's absence, the heroine suffers a love-laden psycho-dermatological affliction known as *pasalai* during which her eyes lose their lustre, and her bangles loosen up due her withering in the 'miserable evenings' and 'loneliness' (*Kuruntokai* 46). In fact, the world remains apathetic to the grief of the beloved. Her love-ridden condition is sadly misunderstood as an evil possession, and her family members perform rites of exorcism on the heroine. During such testing moments it is her friend who states that rites like that of sacrificing a goat or 'offering special platters of grain' (*Kur* 263) may not easily placate her except the presence of 'the right one, her lover' (*Kur* 263).

Vellivittiyar's composition in the 130th verse of *Kuruntokai* acts as a soothing balm to the *nāyikā*'s heart that strays around in search of the beloved. She infuses hope to her drooping spirits when she thus utters :

*If only one looks for him in land after land,
from town to town,*

*family by family, our lover
cannot slip through the cordon, can he?*

-(Kur 130 Ramanujan 1970: 58)

The litmus test of the depth of the relationship is evident when the heroine agonizes over her *sakhī*'s concern for her, much more than her beloved's absence thus.

This is aptly delineated in a composition of Kuvanmaintan:

*This is worse than the sleepless agony
of thinking about him, far away
This is much worse: I cannot bear to think
of my friend's grief for me*

- (Kur 224 Ramanujan 1970: 71)

Such unshakable bonds are consequences of the union of the two female souls that remain closely fused despite the oddest of circumstances. Let it not be construed that the bonding exists on an idealistic plane alone, since the *Kuruntokai* compositions are anything but platonic. The core of *Akam* poetry in general is not its depiction of illusory planes of imaginative love that fails to earn a deep footing in the realities of human (if not mundane) existence; rather the soul of *Akam* poetry dwells in its capacity to make enduring love an earthly quality, as the earth. The enjoyment of non-spiritual pleasures are never dubbed as being gross or vile. Thus, the *sakhī*'s active participation in the love-life of the *nāyikā* here is simultaneously realistic and sincere.

The 294th verse of *Kuruntokai* composed by Ancilantai is in a cautionary mode as the *sakhī* cautions the *nāyikā* on the nonchalant ways of her beloved, since he exhibits moments of infidelity. **It is significant to note that the pangs of infidelity are experienced to a greater extent by the friend than her mistress.**

The 324th verse of *Kuruntokai* proves this point. When the male lover desires to meet his

beloved in the nights, the *sakhī* gently reprimands him in a wistful tone. Despite the hazard of the ‘man eaters’, ‘male crocodiles, etc. on the ‘traffic waterways’, he would still come to her, ‘swimming through the shoals of fish’. While the *nāyikā* continues to suffer in her simplicity, it is the *sakhī* who silently partakes of her psychological strife by shuddering ‘like a woman watching poisoned twins’. The **maternal image** ascribed to the *sakhī* throws a significant light on a relationship devoid of queerness and its existence in a pristine state in the Sangam era.

Verses 294 of Ancilantai depicts the **stern voice** of the *sakhī* as admonishing both the unfaithful husband (for his revelries) and the innocent wife (for her simplicity). To cite from the poem :

*He comes and leaves
as he does
without ceremony, like a neighbour
after making love.*

-(Kur 294, Ramanujan 1970: 89)

So, she concludes that ‘naturally there would be talk’ (Kur 294). To the unfaithful husband, she directly reprimands his play with mistresses since he presently has carnivals ‘since the windfall’ (Kur 29) that his wife has brought on him. The two-fold aspects of Nature (external and the human nature) remain inseparably fused in a holistic union where each intensifies the other's presence. While the ecological nature forms a vast backdrop to the drama of human experience, the human experience in turn validates the ecological geography through its emotional twists and turns.

Some further examples from Kuruntokai rendered in Sanskrit:

The *nāyikā* **confiding** *Virahāśvāsa* to the *sakhī*:

क्लिष्टं चिरं दुखघनं मनो मे यद्वाष्पमक्षिप्रतपन्तमेनम् ।

न दैवक्लृप्तः परिमार्ष्टि भर्ता चिराय यातो दयितां विहाय ॥

I'm anguished. My eyes shed tears which burn as they stream down my sunken cheeks
And my Lord whom the Gods have named
To dry my tears is not present
To perform the task, he left on his travels
Condemning me to anguished tears.

सुस्नातकुञ्जर इव प्रसभं प्रवृष्ट्या प्रक्षालिता स्फुरति यस्य शिलाद्रिपादे ।

उद्भेदवत्प्रचुरभूमिपतिर्व्यदान्मे वैवर्ण्यमुत्पलनिभस्य दृशाद्वयस्य ॥

The chieftain of the hills
Where the big round rock washed clean by the rains
Stands out against the green verbiage
Gave me this love-disease
My eyes that were black like the bluebell flower have now been turned white through pallor

-(Kuruntokai 13)

The *sakhī* **placating:** *prasādana* , the *nāyikā*

चोरा रवं बाणानिशातनार्थम् अग्रे नखानां लुठनाच्छराणाम् ।

यं कुर्वते तं सरटः प्रियाया आह्वानमिच्छन्प्रकरोति मार्गे॥

स्वनं तमाकर्ण्य कृतं प्रियायाः कृते सरागं तव वल्लभोऽपि ।

किं न स्मरे त्वां चिरविप्रयुक्तां मध्येपथं वित्तचयाभिलाषी॥

You think, dear, the Lord of your heart,
May go forgetting you in his quest
For a hoard of wealth. It is'nt likely.
For the desert lizard can be heard sending his call to his loving mate
By making a sound that is rather like that produced by the brigands of the desert
Sharpening their arrows on the nails of their fingers
The call of the lizard to his mate
Will send him speeding home to you!

-(Kuruntokai 16)

गजोऽपनेतुं त्वकरेणुकायाः क्षुधां त्वचं निर्हरति द्रुमस्य।

तिर्यञ्च एवं पथि कामवन्तः दयेत ते कामितया स कान्तः॥

Do not despair for he loves you well

And he shall be back to make you happy

He shall return from the desert walks

Where the elephant peels the juicy bark Of the Yam tree that he may feed

His mate going hungry: the animal lover

Showing solicitude for his mate in torment

Shall furnish him with the fleetest wings

To hurry home to dry your tears!

-(Kuruntokai 37)

क्रियावलम्बं पुरुषस्य जीवितम् गृहाङ्गनानां पतिरेव जीवितम्।

इति प्रियेणैव हि बोधितं सखि ध्रुवं प्रयाणाद्विरमेत मा शुचः॥

He was the one who said

“work is the life-blood of men!”

But it was he again that said

“ For the women with handsome foreheads

Who choose to stay at home,

It’s their men that form their sole sustaining force!”

So do not cry dear!

He surely shall abandon his plans for a journey afar!

-(Kuruntokai 135)

The *nāyaka* confiding *Virahāśvāsa* to the *sakhī* of the *nāyikā* :

तालच्छेदैः कल्पितवाजिसादी धृत्वार्कमालां नगरस्य वीथ्याम्।

पौरैषु हेलामुखरेषु गच्छेदन्यानि कुर्यादपि रूढकामः॥

Those in whom the seed

Of love has taken root

Might ride a horse of leaves,

Wearing round their heads

Garlands of the bloom

Of even the arka plant,

Might welcome being riled by crowds in public streets

Might do all these things

And other things besides-

Those men with hearts assailed

By the deadly darts of love!

- (Kuruntokai 17)

Here in a beautiful allegory with choice comparison the sakhī deftly makes the nāyaka, the husband here, aware of the nāyikā's plight.

The *sakhī* **admonishes, upāmbha**

क्षेत्रेभ्यः कृषिकैः स्वकर्मनिरतैश्छिन्नं निरस्तं भुवि

पुष्पं नष्टमवेक्ष्य वीतसुरभिं प्रस्थाय नीलोत्पलम् ।

अन्यत्स्थानमितो न गच्छति पुनस्तत्रैव संफुल्लति

त्वत्कर्मव्यथितापि नीलसुमवत् त्वय्येव लीना प्रिया ॥

Welcome, the foot-loose! Your wedded wife

Whom you have treated with such ill grace

Extends her welcome to you returning after months of straying, now home to her.

For she cannot live without you, apart.

Whatever the heart-ache you cause in her

You must have seen the neidal plant growing wild in the paddy fields,

Blooms and all, cut off by the farmers

And thrown out on the ridges to fade

But from the root it gains a foothold

In the self-same field: it does not feel,

‘I shall not trespass where I am not wanted !’

It needs the fields , it has no life apart from that

Your lady love needs you likewise for her sustenance

However deep you pierce her heart

With the javelin thrusts of your faithlessness

She cannot help loving you still

You still are the factor, the only reason

For which she lives!

-(Kuruntokai 309)

The *sakhī* **advising** the *nāyikā* : *śikṣā* and *prasādana*

घूर्णद्दक्षिणतः कदम्भसुमं स्वेङ्गे प्रसूते तरुः

तद्वद्वन्धयुतं ललाटमिह ते त्यक्तवा गृहे वल्लभः।

कान्तामश्रुमुखी वसन्तसमये ह्येकाकिनी दुःखिनी

को वा गन्तुमितो व्यवस्यति समं कान्तस्त्वया यास्यति ॥

On the slope of the hill, the kadamba tree

Brings forth clusters of flowers with a whorl

Your forehead , dear , gives off the same

Sweet perfume as the kadamba bloom.

Which young man will leave behind his loving wife in the height of spring

Condemned to a life of lonely tears?

If he goes, you go with him!

-(Kuruntokai 22)

आभुग्नशुण्डः करिणीमिभेन्द्रःपरिष्वजन्श्वासमनोग्न्यगन्धाम्।

महीध्रपल्लीषु सभाङ्गणानि शनैः समागच्छति यस्य राज्ये॥

तस्मै धवायाद्य निशान्तयामे क्रूरो यदा वाति तुषारवायुः।

अन्तःशुचायाः शमनार्थवाचः का नाम हानिः समुदीरणेन ॥

What is the harm, my dearest,

If you do mouth the words Nearest to your heart

In the presence of the Chief –The Chief of mountain slopes

Where an elephant embracing

Its handsome mate whose breath smells sweet, descends down To the common ground

In the hamlet on the highlands-

What's the harm in expressing that which is nearest to your heart,

Thus healing the heartache, dearest

That's so difficult to bear

In the endless winter's night

When the cold northern wind blows wafting drops of rain?

-(Kuruntokai 332)

Consoling the *nāyikā* : *prasādana* and *Virahāśvāsa*

भूमिं भित्त्वा नैव कान्तो गताऽघः नैवारूढं व्योम तेनालि यत्नात्।

पारावारो विस्तृतो लङ्घितो न तस्यार्थं त्वं मा शुचः प्रोषितस्य॥

प्रतिदेशं प्रतिपुरं कुले क्रमात्।

अन्विष्यतां वल्लभो नः दुर्लभः स कथं भवेत्॥

He could not have taken deep refuge
In the bowels of the earth or climbed to the heavens,
He could not have voyaged on the stormy sea
By walking on air: he must be somewhere!
Will he prove so hard to find
If we enquire at every house
In the towns and villages in every land
In every remote habitation?
Will he, my dear, prove elusive
If diligently we look for him,
If we search for him with a will to find?

-(Kuruntokai 130)

Nāyikā confiding to the *sakhī*: *Virahāśvāsa*

शर्वयौ मम तल्पमेत्य दयिते गाढं परिष्वज्य माम्

मिथ्यावादपटौ तु सत्यमिव मे स्वप्ने भ्रमं कुर्वति।

उत्थायागत इत्यवैमि चपला तल्पं परामृश्यत-

मेकाकिन्यलिपादघातनिहतोत्फुल्लप्रसूनं यथा॥

Listen to this dearest, he came last night.
The king of liars- and embraced me
Body to body-it was a dream
But one that looked so true, so real
I woke up and kept on stroking the bed
I am rushed to pulp by last night's dream
Even like a blue-bell trodden under by swarms of bees gathering honey
My condition dear, is worthy of pity!

-(Kuruntokai 30)

हस्ती गोप्तृभिरीरितोपलभयान्नमीकृतं यत्नतः

सद्यो मुञ्चति कीचकं स बडिशं मत्स्यं गृहीत्वा यथा।

नम्रत्वं विसृजेतथैव दयितस्यैवंगते चेष्टिते

तिष्ठाम्यत्र हि निश्चला मम पुनः स्त्रैणत्वमस्याश्रयः॥

I am here helpless and my feminine graces
Have been grabbed by the Chief of the mountain
Where the green stem of a full-grown bamboo
Bent down by a jungle elephant
Is suddenly let go by the animal, Panicking
Hearing the sound of a stone discharged
By a sling by the wakeful watchman-farmer
And the bamboo resumes its wonted position
Just like the line cast by a man, fishing.

-(Kuruntokai 54)

*The nāyikā conveys to the sakhī the change in attitude of her lover from his earlier
considerate and attentive nature to indifference now.*

An interesting verse is about the *sakhī* addressing the natal and the foster mother: **saṅgama**

वृक्षस्य तुंगवितपेषु सम्यङ्निषण्णशिखिनो वनितोपमेयाः।
तस्याग्रमद्य यदवोचदनर्हमस्याः सोपासकी न रक्नु विश्वसनीयमेतत्॥
आमं फलं रुचिरमद्रितटेषु डिम्भः जग्ध्वा कपेर्विहरति प्रततं हि यस्य।
सोऽपि प्रमुख्यमवगच्छति दुर्विनीतम् प्रत्यादिशेन्न नयनद्वयदृष्टमेषः॥

It's possible that the princess has pronounced the Chieftain of the wooded hills
Unfit to wed my friend, your daughter-
The chieftain in whose highland woods
Peacocks sitting on Vengai branches
Look like the girls who pluck the blooms
They in truth, have met, my mothers,
He, the chieftain and your darling daughter
Under the veil of secrecy.
But there, indeed, was a living witness
Who saw them come in love together
A he-monkey, the one that has sired young ones, prancing over the mountain slopes
Plundering the fruit of the mango-trees
He will surely testify To the ruthless chieftain and this girl,

Coming together in ardent love.
He will not deny what he saw
With his own eyes- he never will!

-(Kuruntokai 26)

Here while the sakhī is expressing her annoyance at the lack of initiative of the young chieftain who she feels should have taken steps to apprise the girl's parents and avoided the fuss and embarrassment caused is also in a way divulging the truth of the love affair to the natal and foster mother, which is one of the prime dūtīes of the sakhī in Sangam works.

śikṣā:

मुख्यस्योरः केवलं वाञ्छसि त्वं छित्वा वृक्षं नन्नभूपेन्द्ररक्ष्यम् ।

जित्वा कोशस्ते यथा दीर्घकोपास्त्वं चापि स्याः मा शुचः क्रूरचिन्ता ॥

You deeply desire , dear
Embracing the Chief,
If so, you should nurse over a period of time,
A vengeful sentiment Against him, even like
The Kosas who, in battle,
Worsted Nannan , the King
And even felled the tree,
The symbol of royalty.

- (Kuruntokai 73)

The sakhī , a gifted psychologist, advocates harsh action against the lover when the nāyikā points out to her that he would be upset if she kept cancelling the meetings.

The *sakhī* **assisting** the *nāyaka*: **saṅgama**

मप्पुत्रिकां जलनिधेर्विनिवँश्य पारे

वाचानुसारमिह तामनयं प्रमुख्य।

काले प्रियां गमय यामि बका गृहीत-मत्सयाः

सुतां पदतलेन निपीडयेयुः ॥

Leaving my doll on the sandy shore
I have brought her here, as we planned
Chief of seashore hamlets, now
Sport with her but note this well,
She should go home before it's late!
Me, I cannot tarry longer
For I am worried that the crane replete with aral fish may trod on my doll
And crush her face!

-(Kuruntokai 114)

Interestingly in the period of Sangam society, there was a certain degree of freedom of movement between men and women. Nor was there undue segregation nor undue liberties were taken. Thus there arose naturally a tendency to express freely one's heart to one's lover and to seek his loyal love to herself resulting in a love-match. In Kallitogai 94, there is a strange reference to a midget and a hunchback exchanging words of love in the dark corridors of a temple.

Love marriage was not scorned by elders but was spoken highly of, if circumstances did not taint the reputation of the lover and the beloved and if the rules of the game were followed. Eternal and steadfast love between a male and a female was considered as a continuing process over many births(Narr. 109 :1-2) . If both parties understood the full implications of unsullied love then this was considered praiseworthy was usually followed by regular wedlock. This institution of free love before married life was one of the important features of early Tamil society. It is possible that with the advent of the Aryans and lapses in the practice of free love the matrimonial tie came to be considered essential. This gave rise to many rituals which merged in the process and attained a local flavor not generally seen in North India.

- (Tol. Porul karpu, 3-4)

Three important features characterized free love before family life. Firstly the lover and the beloved exchanged messages and expressed their feelings mainly through **male and female companions**. These companions then revealed the truth to the parents. This was called ‘strictly standing by the code’. After this stage the parents contracted the marriage between the two.

In the second category due to lack of acceptance by parents the beloved of her own accord would go to the place of the lover and start staying with him. If neither the first was allowed to materialize the maiden was strictly warned by the parents to desist from doing anything foolish. The third stage arose when the lover voluntarily demonstrated his undying love for the maiden by a process called *madal-erudal*. This consisted of a horse like object made out of woven palm leaf and decorated with beads, flowers etc. the lover riding on this dummy horse and keeping a figure of his own self and his beloved drawn on a cloth in his hand he would put on the appearance of a semi-demented person for whom life without his beloved would be totally meaningless. Taking pity on him and seeing his steadfastness, his parents and those of the beloved would then arrange their marriage

-(Kuru 17, Kali. 58 20-23)

In the high plane of conjugal love, the wife would take care not to rebel against the wicked actions of the husband but submitted herself to him with the same loving tenderness and sweet response. It is the companion’s mouth, the poet says, which alone which can restore him to her love and wean him away from the courtesan.

-(Pari 20, 86-93, Kuru 2 202:2-5, Narr 247:6-7)

A commonly held view of the Sangam classics is that they extol romantic love which is requited mutually and which rises spontaneously in the lover and the beloved. The early Tamil poets differentiated between base sensual desire and deep love. It was fully realised that the transient period of youth called for the best enjoyment of its burning passions with

decorum and decency. It was equally well understood that there was something deeper in life partnership between husband and wife than mere gestures of romantic love and physical enjoyment. Thus the ardent prayer of the beloved was that in every birth she should be born as the beloved of the chosen lover so that the continuity of their mutual attachment remains perpetual.

-(Kurun 49 :3-5, Pari 11: 138-139)



III Later Texts

1. Gāthāsaptāśatī (2nd century AD)
2. Amaruśatakam (7-8th century AD)
3. Kāvya Prakāśa of Mammata, (14th century AD)
4. Sahitya Darpana (14th century AD)
5. Vidyāpati (15th century AD)
6. Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu (16th century AD)

References in : Bhartrihari (5th century AD), Vikāṭānītibā
(9th century AD), Vallana (9th century AD), Kalidasa (5th
century AD), Mrchhakatikam of Sudraka (3rd century BC-
5th century AD).

The Gāthāsaptasatī is an anthology of 700 verses in Maharashtri Prakrit reputed to have been compiled by Sātavāhana King Hāla (second century AD) mostly on love and many of which are spoken in the voice of the *sakhī*.

The verses in these are comparable to those in the Sangam period for their brevity and direct expression of intimate feelings not couched in the classic language with a very direct earthy and spontaneous appeal and sometimes even indecent due to its rustic tone. However unlike in Sangam verses here the identity of the character or voice of the verse is not explicitly revealed. The gāthās are densely populated with errant and misbehaving husbands and wives.

śikṣā:

सहि ईरिसिक्विश्र गई मा रुक्वसु तंस-वलिश्र-मुह-श्रन्दं।

एश्राणँ बाल-बालुङ्कि-तन्तु-कुडिलाणँ पेम्माणं॥

Why are you crying friend? That's how love is
A cucumber tendril-it's emblem.

Prasādana:

बहुसो वि कहिज्जन्तं तुह वश्रणं मज्झ हत्थ-संदिट्ठं ।

ण सुश्रं ति जम्पमाणा पुणरुत्त-संश्रं कुणइ श्रज्जा ॥

Your message delivered, “What did you say?”
She asked a hundred times and a hundred times I repeated it.
Here we can discern the loving patient sakhī.

śikṣā:

उज्जुश्र-रए ण तूसइ वक्कम्मि वि श्राश्रमं विश्रप्पेइ।

एत्थ श्रच्चाएमए पिए पिश्रं कहँ णु काश्रव्वं॥

He finds the missionary position tiresome

and grows suspicious If I suggest another
Friend, what's the way out.

*Here the nāyikā is unabashedly conveying her predicament in love-making and seeks the
advise of the sakhī for a solution on such an intimate matter.*

तस्स श्र सोहग्ग-गुण श्रमहिला-सरिसं च साहसं मज्झ ।

जाणइ गोला-ऊरो वासा-रत्तोद्ध-रत्तो श्र॥

Ask the nights of rain and the Godavari in spate
How fortunate he is and unwomanly my courage.

*Here is an interesting verse in the voice of the nāyikā to most likely her lover's friend where
she is playing the role of swayamdūtī!*

*In a very concise medium a lot is conveyed about the nāyikā's state, the imagery, the locus of
her love suffering and so on.*

Another example of the beauty and romance of verse can be seen in

कस्स हमारिसिति भणिए को मे अत्थिति जंपमाणीए।

उव्विग्गरोइरीए अम्हे वि रुआविआ तीए ॥३११॥

When she was questioned 'Whom thou thinkest of?' she replied –“Who is mine”?

*Here the dūtī /sakhī describes before the lover or husband the miserable state of the nāyikā.
Her husband's neglect has made her an object of on-looker's pity. It suggests the husband's
attention has been diverted by some other lady. Here one can also discern the extent of the
plight of the nāyikā. Another aspect is the discrete expression of the same. It was a political
maxim (as Smt. Jamuna Krishnanji too pointed out) that a person would express her secret
or intimate thought only to those who partook of her joys and sorrows and most cases the*

sakhī. Sympathy it is said is an essential requisite of those seeking liberation. Here we find the verse clearly directed at evoking sympathy in the on-looker.

In another interesting verse, on another occasion, the *sakhī* offers an admonishing rebuke.

Prasādana , upālambha, śikṣā:

किं रुअसि? किं व सोअसि? किं कुप्पसि? सुअणु! एक्कमेक्कस्स ?

पेम्मं विसं व विसमं साहसु को रुंधितं तरइ।।

Why weepest thou? What pinest thou for? Why art thou enraged , O fair one? You are the very object of your lord's love. Love's course is as sharp as poison . Say who can stay it?

The sakhī admonishes and reasons with the nāyikā that her grief is a sheer waste , since her Lord sincerely loves her. Love's course is unchecked. Yet none can wean her from his side.

This verse also highlights the profound śikṣā offered by the sakhī. Weep not signifies. Iti dharma. Love should not lose itself in sands – iti niti. Weeping is futile. Disintegration from such emotions alone can lead to liberation. – iti yukti.

Another pertinent and pithy verse of *śikṣā* goes thus,

Don't peep at him on the sly,

Look him straight in the eye,

People will take you for an innocent

- (225)

If you want to be happy,

Take care in choosing a lover,

For what is dear to you

Does not bring happiness

Unless you are dear to it.

- (652)

I am not her go-between

You are not her lover

So what have we to do with each other?

But let me tell you the truth: she is dying and the disgrace is yours.

-(178)

Wait a moment , my handsome friend

I have a message from someone

Or perhaps I have'nt.

She always acts so rashly

She'd be better off dead.

No, I've nothing to tell you.

-(604)

Here in both the above, it can be that she has a low opinion of the lover, and so refuses to pass on the message entrusted to her by the girl.

If he does not do what you ask him

On my behalf, you useless messenger

Why not give your lips a rest?

They are already bruised.

-(718)

Here is obvious that the dūtī has dallied with the lover. A case of sambhoga-duhkita dūtī .

Go-between, you are brilliant,

-the way you know to mix the rough with the smooth

Please do it in such a way

That he itches all over

Without having a rash.

-(181)

The artful and resourceful go-between-sakhī or dūtī .

In the celebrated text of **Amaruśatakam*** (7-8th century) we find the exquisite imagery of

~* Amaruśatakam with Śṛṅgārādīpikā of Vemabhūpāla - A centum of Ancient love lyrics of Amaru. Critically edited:

Chintaman Ramchandrar Deodhar

the feelings experienced by the *nāyikā* in the different stages of love. The celebrated text is considered one of the finest lyrical poetry in Sanskrit literature . It reveals the layers of intense intimate feelings of the *nāyikā* caught in different situations of love pangs she can but convey only to her *sakhī*. The verses are chiefly addressed to the *sakhī*.

The *nāyikā* expressing intimate moments spent with the *nāyaka*,

तद्वक्त्राभिमुखं मुखं विनमितं दृष्टिः कृता पादयो-

स्तत्संलापकृतूहलाकुलतरे श्रोत्रे निरुद्धे मया ।

पाणिभ्यां च तिरस्कृतः सपुलकः स्वेदोद्रमा गण्डयोः

सख्यः किं करवाणि यान्ति शतधा मत्कञ्चुकीसंधयः ॥ १२ ॥

When my face was turned to his face, I bowed it down, and I bent my glance at my feet; I closed my ears which had great eagerness to hear him speak, I covered with my hands the sweat breaking forth together with horripilation on my cheeks , but what could I do, my friends when the seams of my bodice were bursting in a hundred places.

Virahāśvāsa:

कथमपि सखि क्रीडाकोपाद् व्रजेति मयोदिते

कठिनहृदयः त्यक्त्वा शय्यां बलाद्रत एव सः।

इति सरभसध्वस्तप्रेम्णि उग्रपेतघृणे स्पृहां

पुनरपि हतव्रीडं चेतः करोति करोमि किम् ॥१४॥

Hardly had I Oh dear friend, spoken in playful anger , ‘Leave me’ , when the heartless one left the bed and tore himself away violently. What can I do, now that my shameless heart yearns after him who has violently trampled upon love and cast off all sense of pity?

गते प्रेमावेशे प्रणयबहुमाने विगलिते

निवृत्ते सद्भावे जन इव जने गच्छति पुरः।

तदुत्प्रेक्ष्योत्प्रेक्ष्य प्रियसखि गतांस्तांश्च दिवसान्

न जाने को हेतुर्दलति शतधा यन्न हृदयम् ॥३८॥

Dear friend, when the ardour of love has abated, when the high regard springing out of affection has vanished, when the friendly feeling is no longer evident, and when he the beloved of my heart moves before my very eyes like a perfect stranger : I call to my mind that humiliating experience and look back on the days that are no more and wonder that my heart has not broken into a hundred fragments.

The *sakhī* admonishing, reminding, advising the *nāyaka*: *saṅgama, upālabha*.

दत्तोऽस्याः प्रणयस्त्वयैव भवता सेयं चिरं लालिता

दैवाददय किल त्वमेव कृतवानस्या नवं विप्रियम् ।

मन्युर्दुःसह एष यात्युपशमं नो सान्त्व वादैः स्फुटं

हे निरिंश विमुक्तकण्ठकरुणं तावत्सखी रोदितु ॥७॥

It was you who gave your love to her and it was you who entertained and cherished her for a long time, and it is you who as fate would have it, have inflicted a fresh grief on her. The resentment she feels is hard to overcome and cannot be allayed by soothing words . Oh cruel one! Let this friend now weep piteously out with a full throat.

A clear indication of dependency on the *sakhī* in matters of love.

प्राणेशप्रणयापराधसमये सख्योपदेशं विना

नो जानाति सविभ्रमाङ्गवलनावक्रोक्तिसंसूचनम् ।

स्वच्छैरच्छकपोलमूलगलितैः पर्यस्तनेत्रोत्पला

बाला केवलमेव रोदिति लुठल्लोलालकैरशृभिः ॥२७॥

Upon the first offence against love on the part of the husband, the young wife does not understand how to express her feelings by sallies of wit accompanied by a charming movement of her limbs, **without the instructions of female friends**, but with her lotus like eyes roving she only knows weeping so that the bright tears tumble down on her clear cheeks mixing with her fluttering locks.

पटालग्ने पत्यौ नमयति मुख जातविनया

हठाश्लेषं वाञ्छत्यपहरति गात्राणि निभृतम् ।

अशक्ता चाख्यातुं स्मितमुखसखीदत्तनयना

ह्रिया ताम्यत्यन्तः प्रथमपरिहासे नववधूः ॥३६॥

When the husband clings to the garment she demurely bends her countenance ; when he desires a passionate embrace she moves her limbs aside stealthily ; she directs her glance towards her smiling friends and is unable to say anything, the newly married one suffers inwardly in shame during the first pleasantries.

virahāśvāsa, prasādana, śikṣā

अङ्गुल्यग्रनखेन बाष्पसलिलं विक्षिप्य विक्षिप्य किं
तूष्णीं रोदिषि कोपने बहुतरं फूत्कृत्य रोदिष्यसि ।
यस्यास्ते पिशुनोपदेशवचनैर्मानेऽतिभूमिं गते
निर्विण्णोऽनुनयं प्रति प्रियतमो मध्यस्थतामेष्यति॥६॥

Why weepest thou o angry one, silently pushing aside thy tears with your finger nails? Thou shalt weep more loudly when thy beloved seeing thy sulkiness past the proper limit suggested by evil gossip , will get disgusted at any attempt at reconciliation and will become indifferent.

śikṣā, upālambha

सन्तयेवात्र गृहे गृहे युवतयस्ताः पृच्छ गत्वाऽधुना
प्रेयांसः प्रणमन्ति किं तव पुनर्दासो यथा वर्तते ।
आत्मद्रोहिणि दुर्जनप्रलपितं कर्णे भृशं मा कृथाः
छिन्नस्नेहरसा भवन्ति पुरुषा दुःखानुवृत्त्या यतः॥५९॥

In every house here there are young women like thee, go and ask them if their lover bows down to them as this thy slave does. Oh thou thyself have become thy enemy , do not lend ear to the wild prattle of the wicked, for by repetition of painful experience , love's savour is apt to pall on men.

The nāyikā to herself नायिका स्वजीविते प्रत्याहः

प्रस्थानं वलयैः कृतं प्रियसखैरस्त्रैरजस्त्रं गतं
धृत्या न क्षणमास्थितं व्यवसितं चित्तेन गन्तुं पुरः ।
यातुं निश्चितचेतसि प्रियतमे सर्वैः समं प्रस्थितं
गन्तव्ये सति जीवित प्रियसुहृत्सार्थः किमुत्सृज्यते ॥३१॥

The bracelets have left and after them go the tears, my sweet companions, flowing incessantly, courage no longer stays behind, and my mind has resolved to wander ahead, all these depart with my beloved who is determined on leaving. If thou must depart on a journey, dear life, do not scorn the escort of thy dear friends.

śikṣā

मुग्धे मुग्धतयैव नेतुमखिलं कालं किमाभ्यते

मानं धत्सव धृतिं बधान ऋजुतां दूरे कुरु प्रेयसि ।

सख्यैवं प्रतिबोधिता प्रतिवचस्तामाह भीतानना

नीचैः शंस हृदि स्थितो हि ननु मे प्राणेश्वरः श्रोष्यति ॥८२॥

Oh you innocent child! Why do you think of passing all your time in simple faith? Show proper pride, take courage and give up your frank and open behavior towards your lover. Thus admonished by her friend her countenance betraying fear (in her heart) she replies: Speak softly for my beloved dwells in my heart and he may perchance hear you.

The *sakhī* is able to detect the love of the *nāyikā*

अलसवलितैः प्रेमाद्राद्रैर्महुर्मुकुलीकृतैः

क्षणमभिमुखैर्लज्जालोलैर्निमेषपराङ्मुखैः ।

हृदयनिहितं भावाकृतं वमद्भिरिवेक्षणैः

कथय सुकृती कोऽयं मुग्धे त्वयाद्य विलोक्यते ॥९॥

Tell oh charming one, who is the happy one at whom you are looking to day with languid eyes, overflowing with love – which time and again close themselves, which for a moment turn to him directly and flicker to and fro in bashfulness , then move away for a moment and betray involuntarily the feeling of love that has nested in your heart.

Bhartrihari-5th century AD

What is the nature of friendship between noble souls ? It's like water mixing with milk and the latter imparting all its qualities- Niti 76.

We find poems by **Vikaṭānitambā** (9th century), a noted Sanskrit woman poet noted for her simple and elegant verse frequently with erotic elements and suggestiveness.

To cite from the anthology *Sarngadhara Paddhati* compiled by Sarangadhara, (14th century) we find the explicit nature of intimacy between the *sakhī* and the *nāyikā* here.

कान्ते तल्पमुपागते विगलिता नीवी स्वयं बन्धनाद्
वासश्च श्लथमेखलागुणधृतं किञ्चिन्नितम्बे स्थितम् ।
एतावद् सखि वेद्मि केवलमहो तस्यांगसंगे पुनः
कोऽसौ काऽस्मि रत च किं सखि शपे स्वल्पापि मे न स्मृतिः॥

-(SP 137)

My lover stepped towards the bed, somehow the skirt clung to my hips but the knot came undone by itself . What can I say? Nothing makes sense in his arms not who I am , not who is taking me. Is it me that comes? Is it him?

The deceitful *sakhī*:

निद्रातं किल लोचनं मृगदृशा विश्लेषयन्त्या कथा
दीर्घापाङ्गसरित्तरङ्गतरलं शय्यामनुप्रेषितम् ।
उञ्जृम्भः किल वल्लभोऽपि विरते वस्तुन्यपि प्रस्तुते
धूणन्ती किल सापि हंकृतवती शून्यं सखी दक्षिणा॥

Suddenly there is silence. Sleepily she looks sideways at the bed. He stops in the middle of a sentence. She sees her friend yawn and leave gracefully.

Vallana (9th century AD):

When he removed my garments because my arms could not cover my breasts I clung to him tightly to hide my shame. But his hand explored below my hips. What could I do except swoon, saved thus in the drowning sea of shame?

An erotic verse that highlights the plight of the *mugdha nāyikā* relating to her *sakhī* the intimate happenings during love-play.

An interesting verse from an unknown author quoted in the text on Sanskrit Poetics by Bechan Jha states,

चतुर सखीजन वचनैर् अतिवाहित वासरा विनोदेन ।

निशि चाण्डल इवायम् मारयति वियोगिनीश्चन्द्रः ॥

The days have been beguiled by the diversities of the conversation of **clever friends**, but the moon kills the ladies separated from their lovers like a pariah in the night.

An interesting verse by **Sillabhatarika**, a Sanskrit poetess, date unknown.

“You are panting!” ; “I have been running”
“ Your cheeks are flushed” ; “ You won He lost”
“ Your braid’s loose”; “ Because I fell at his feet”
“ You look tired” ; “ The amount of talking I had to do”
“ Your dress knot’s untied” ; “ Oh, I was careless”
“ And what about your lips dear lying messenger
Why do you think they look like two faded lotuses.”

In **Kāvya Prakāśa of Mammata**, (14th century AD) an important text on poetics, we find verses quoted variously to highlight important aspects of *alamkāra*. These verses pertaining to the many moods of *śṛṅgāra rasa* are either from other texts or as written by the author himself.

Nāyikā to herself:

दुर्वाराः स्मरमार्गणाः प्रीयतमो दूरे मनोऽत्युत्सुकं
गाढं प्रेम नवं वयोऽतिकठिनाः प्राणाः कुलं निर्मलम् ।
स्त्रीत्वं धैर्यविरोधि मन्मथसुहृत्कालः कृतांतोऽक्षमो

नो सख्यश्चतुराः कथं नु विरहः सोढव्य इत्थं शठः ॥ ११६ ॥

Irresistible are Cupid's arrows, the beloved is away, the mind is extremely anxious, our love is deep, the age in its prime, the life-breath very hard, the family untainted, the feminine nature opposed to equanimity, the season friendly to love; Death relentless, **the friends not at all tactful**, How then can this cruel pang of separation be borne?

It is clear from the above verse how much the nāyikā is dependent on the sakhī during the separation with her lover. Her life breath seems to be in the hands of the sakhī.

Sakhī to the nāyaka:

त्वयि दृष्ट एव तस्या निर्वाति मनो मनोभवज्वलितम् ।

आलोके हि हिमांशोर्विकसति कुसुमं कुमुदवत्याः॥ ६४॥

- (Rudratta's Kavyalankara 8.95)

No sooner are you seen than her mind that is aflame with love, cools down. At the sight of the moon the flower of the lily plant blooms.

Nāyikā to the sakhī or dūtī :

निःशेषच्युतचन्दन स्तनतटं निर्मुष्टरागोधरो

नेत्रेन दूरमञ्जने पुलकिता तन्वी तवेयं तनुः ।

मिथ्यावादिनि दूति बान्धवजनस्याज्ञातपीडागमे

वापी स्नातुमितो गतासि न पुनस्तस्याधमस्यान्तिकम् ॥

The sandal paste has vanished from thy breast, its colour has fled from thy lip, thine eyes have lost their collyrium and thy slender frame is quivering with hairs on end. Thus I learn , o false friend, that knows not how to approach the friend's sufferings, that thou has been only to the tank and not to that mean wretch.

ओष्णिद्दं दोब्बल्लं चिंता अलसतणं सणीससिअं ।

मह मंदभाइणीए केरं सहि तुह वि अहह परिहवइ ॥

O my friend for the sake of wretched me, thou also art suffering from sleeplessness , weakness, anxiety, lassitude and breathlessness!

It implies the *nāyikā* is aware of the *sakhī*'s deceit , who was acting as an intermediary has been enjoying the company of her lover.

मुग्धे मुग्धतयैव नेतुमखिलः कालः किमारभ्यते
मानं धत्स्व धृतिं बधान ऋजुतां दूरे कुरु प्रेयसि ।
सख्यैवं प्रतिबोधिता प्रतिवचस्तामाह भीतानना
नीचैः शंस हृदि स्थितो हि ननु मे प्राणेश्वरः श्रोष्यति॥

O beautiful one, why do you proceed to pass the whole time in mere simplicity? Have self-respect. Hold out with patience. Set aside your artless behavior towards your lover-on being thus exhorted by the friend the girl replied, Talk low, lest the lord of my life residing in my heart should overhear what you are saying.
Here while the sakhī is offering advise śikṣā, the nāyikā seems to be a strong girl who retorts back wisely.

Sakhī to the nāyaka,
सह दिअहणिसाहिँ दीहरा सासदण्डा
सह मणिवलयेहिँ बाहधारा गलन्ति ।
तुह सुहअ विओए तीअ उब्बिगिरीए
सह अ तणुलदाए दुब्बला जीविदासा ॥

O beautiful one, at her separation from you, her breaths have become long drawn along with the nights and days, her flow of tears continue to drop along with the bracelets, and the very hope of life becomes feeble along with her slender body.

त्वं विनिर्जितमनोभवरूपः सा च सुन्दर भवत्यनुरक्ता ।
पञ्चभिर्युगपदेव शरैस्तां तापयत्यनुशयादिव कामः ॥

You are one who have subdued the beauty of the Love-God, and O beautiful one she is attached to you; for this reason the Love-God, though hated as it were strikes her simultaneously with all five arrows.

The sakhī-dūtī describes the plight (viraha-nivedana) of the nāyikā to the nāyaka with choice expressions that will convey the extreme condition of the nāyikā and so help in bringing about the union (sanghaṭana) .

Sahitya Darpana (14th century)

The highest in rank among the various classes of assistants are the comrades- (76)

In discussing about the *nāyikā* who makes advances when caught in the throes of love pangs sends her *sakhī* to seek her lover, instructs her:

‘ Having understood his feelings thoroughly speak to him in such a manner that he may not discern my levity (in sending to lure him back after having capriciously repelled him) and that he may act tenderly towards me.’ (115 a)

‘I have laid aside this pair of bracelets , I have fastened my girdle tight, with much pains I have produced dumbness in my chattering anklets – and O my dear friend just when I had begun to be eagerly impatient to set out on Love’s errand , this wretch of a moon throws aside the protecting mantle of the dark.’ (115 b)

A female servant going out in search of the lover will go with giant strides , will have her speech stammering through delight and her eyes staring wide open in her flurry. (116)

The servant girl repeatedly exhibits her betel stained teeth, laughs without a reason, and with an affected tone of voice resembling the neigh of the mare, flauntingly sets her staggering

footsteps here, there, everywhere, with her hips dancing high, stays wriggling about the young men. -(116 b)

“I did not listen to his fond speeches nor was the necklace he presented me regarded by me, the admonitions too of my female friend, to the effect that I should show kindness to my lover were rejected. When he fell at my feet alas, at that moment -why was he not retained by me , fool that I am -with my two arms, and clasped eagerly to my neck?” -(117 a)

You may recognize her , of measured discourse, my second life, in the absence of me her companion , like a solitary duck. I can fancy the girl grievously pining whilst these heavy days go by , altered in appearance like a lotus pinched by the cold’. -(119 a)

ताञ्जानीयाः परिमितकथाञ्जीवितं मे द्वितीयं
दूरीभूते मयि सहचरे चक्रवाकीमिवैका।
गाढोत्कण्ठां गुरुषु दिवसव्वेषु गच्छत्सु बाखां
जातां मन्ये शिशिरमथितां पद्मिनीं वान्यरूपां ॥ ११९ ॥

She utters no harsh word (even when treated unkindly) , she makes no frown, she throws not aside in rage the ornaments of her head, but towards the face of her female friend contemplating her from without through the lattice she only turns her two eyes suffused with tears. -(134)

She pours forth sighs, and rolls upon the ground, she looks out upon your road, and long she weeps, she flings hither and thither her weak tendril of arms, moreover O dear to her as life, even in her dreams she longs to be re-united with you, she wearies for sleep but her hapless state bestows it not. -(147 a)

Means available to a lady for revealing her affection.

By sending of letters, by soft looks and by sending female messengers it is agreed a woman may reveal her sentiments. –(156)

The qualifications of a female messenger

Her qualifications are skills in lighter arts, perseverance, fidelity, penetration, a good memory, sweetness, readiness to understand a joke and fluency of speech. These women too are of *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama* types.

Coming down to the seminal work of Rūpa Gosvāmin, one of the principle disciples of Chaitanya at Vṛndāvana, in his **Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*** (16th century) , philosopher of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition where there is an elaborate description of the gradation of bhakti from the lowest stage *śraddha* to *atma nivednam* it beautifully lays down the travails and the journey of bhakti yoga in the pursuit of ecstatic love or prema bhakti .

Krishna and Radha stand on the pinnacle of this goal. Krishna’s love, sweetness, beauty is secondary to his power and majesty. Krishna and his beloveds are the ālambana-vibhāvas of this rasa. Radha is Vṛndāvaneśvarī , the best of the Gopis and the most beloved of Krishna. Radha is considered as Krishna’s equal.

Among the different types of bhakti he has regarded prema bhakti (devotion in the form of love) as the highest and states that there are five bhakti rasas:

1. Śānta – tranquility ,
2. Prīta- love of a servant to his master and Gaurava Prīta-love of a younger relative for his elder.
3. **Preyas- friendly affection**
4. Vātsalya- parental affection.

~ *translated with introduction and notes by David L. Haberman

5. Ujjvala or madhura- sexual love corresponding to traditional Sṛṅgāra rasa which he considers as King of rasas.

In this philosophy, all souls are eternal and the striving is towards soul awakening and consciousness. This philosophy is divided into three categories:

1. *Sambandha*- relationship –the nature and relationship between the entity and the Supreme.
2. *Abhideya*-method of attainment- the proper course of action to be taken up to make the first happen.
3. *Prayojana*-ultimate perfection- the ultimate goal and purpose of the living entity in relation with the Supreme.

In the above, we see the beautiful allegory for the *nāyikā*'s pining and the *sakhī*'s intermediation. The *sakhī* unwittingly becomes an instrument of *Abhideya* to foster the *sambandha* and lead it to *prayojana*.

This same allegorical thought is found in the introduction of this work of how Shri Rupa Goswamin interpreted or rather reinterpreted Shri Chaitanya's verse quoted from the Sahitya Darpana.

*Yah kaumdra-harah sa eva hi varas ta eva caitra-ksapas
Te conmilita-malatī-surabhayah praudhah kadambanilah
Sa caivasmi tathapi tatra surata-vyapara-ITla-vidhau
Reva-rodhasi vetasi-taru-tale cetah samutkanthate*

That very personality who stole away my heart during my youth is now again my master. These are the same moonlit nights of the month of Chaitra. The same fragrance of malati flowers is there and the same sweet breeze is blowing from the kadamba forest. In our intimate relationship I am the same lover, yet my mind is not happy here. I am eager to go to that place on the banks of the Reva under the Vetasi tree. That is my desire.

—(Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya 1.58)

This is a verse said to be uttered by Radharani.

*Priyah so yam krsnah saha-cari kuru-ksetra-militas
Tathaham sadrd tad idam ubhayoh sangama-sukham
Tathapi antah-khelan-madhura-murali-pancama-juse
Mano me kalindi-pulina-vipindya sprhayati*

My dear friend now I have met my longtime dear friend Krishna on this field of Kurukshetra. I am the same Radharani and now we are meeting together. It is very pleasant but still I would like to go to the banks of the Yamuna and beneath the trees of the forest there wish to hear the vibration of his sweet flute playing the fifth note in the forest of Vrindavana. —(Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya 1.76)

On friendship **sakhyam** it states that :

अथ सख्यम् :

ये स्युस्तुल्या मुकुन्दस्य ते सखायः सतां मताः ।

साम्याद्विश्रम्भरूपेषां रतिः सख्यमिहोच्यते ।

परिहास-प्रहासादिकारिणीयमयन्त्रणा ॥

-(30)

The wise have determined that those who consider themselves to be equal to Mukunda are his friends. Their love which takes the form of **intimacy that comes from a sense of equality is called ‘Friendship’**. It is free from restraint and produces such actions as joking and laughing.

वैशिष्ट्यं पात्रवैशिष्ट्याद्रतिरेषोपगच्छति ।

यथार्कः प्रतिबिम्बात्मा स्फटिकादिषु वस्तुषु॥

-(7)

The primary foundational emotions which consists of love that is both self supporting and supporting of another are of five types: Nondistinct-śuddha, respect-prīti, friendship- sakhya, parental affection-vātsalya and amorousness – priyatā.

We can say that these are the universal emotions for a true friend. We have often seen the *sakhī* with *vātsalya* where as advisor she counsels the *nāyikā*.

स्थायी भावो विभावादयैः सख्यमात्मोचितैरिह ।

नीताश्चित्ते सतां पुष्टिं रसः प्रेयानुदीर्यते ॥ १ ॥

When the foundational emotion of ‘friendship’ (*sakhya*) is fully developed in the heart of the devotee by means of the appropriate excitants and other aesthetic components , it becomes the **rasa of companionship. (preyo-bhakti-rasa)**

रूपवेषगुणाद्यैस्तु समाः सम्यगयन्त्रिताः।

विश्रम्भसम्भृतात्मानो वयस्यास्तस्य कीर्तिताः॥८॥

His friends are said to be equal to him in form , dress and qualities. They are completely unrestrained and enjoy a confident familiarity.

क्षणादर्शनतो दीनाः सदा सह-विहारिणः।

तदेकजीविताः प्रोक्ता वयस्या व्रजवासिनः।

अतः सर्व वयस्येषु प्रधानत्वं भजन्तयमी ॥१६॥

The friends in Vraja are miserable if they do not see Krishna for even a single moment. They accompany him continually as he wanders about for pleasure, for their lives are devoted to him alone. Because of this they are considered to be the finest among his friends.

बलानुजसदृग्वयो-गण-विलास-वेष-श्रियः

प्रियङ्करण-वल्लकीदल-विषाण-वेण्वङ्किताः।

महेन्द्रमणिहाटकस्फटिकपद्मरागत्विषः

सदा प्रणयशालिनः सहचरा हरेः पान्तु वः ॥१७॥

An illustration of their form:

They are identical to Krishna, the younger brother of Balarama, in age, qualities, playfulness, dress and beauty. They are very charming and make music with lutes, horns, flutes and musical instruments made from leaves. In their brilliant colour some resemble blue sapphires, some resemble gold, some crystal and some resemble rubies. May Hari's friends who always accompany him with great love protect us!

उन्निद्रस्य ययुस्तवात्र विरतिं सप्त क्षपास्तिष्ठतो

हन्त श्रान्त इवासि निक्षिप सखे! श्रीदामपाणौ गिरिम्।

आधिर्विध्यति नस्त्वमर्पय करे किंवा क्षणं दक्षिणे

दोष्णस्ते करवाम काममधुना सव्यस्य संवाहनम् ॥१८॥

An illustration of their friendship:

(Addressed to Krishna during his lifting the Mount Govardhana.)

Friend, you have remained standing for seven continuous days without any sleep. You must be exhausted. Hand that mountain to Sridama. Our minds are greatly distressed by this. At least switch the mountain over to your right hand for a few moments so that we can massage your left hand.

सुहृदश्च सखायश्च तथा प्रियसखाः परे ।

प्रियनर्मवयस्याश्चेत्युक्ता गोष्ठे चतुर्विधाः ॥२१॥

The friends in Vraja are said to be of four types **the allies(suhṛt), the assistants(sakha), the dear friends(priya-sakha) and the dear playful friends (priya-narma-vayas) .**

वात्सल्यगन्धि-सख्यास्तु किञ्चित्ते वयसाधिकाः।

सायुधास्तस्य दुष्टेभ्यः सदा रक्षा-परायणाः ॥ २२॥

The allies:

Since these are slightly older than Krishna, **their friendship is tinged with parental affection.(vatsalya) .** They bear arms and protect Krishna at all times from the wicked.

प्रियनर्मवयस्यास्तु पूर्वतोऽप्यभितो वराः।

आत्यन्तिकरहस्येषु युक्ता भावविशेषिणः।

सुबलार्जुन-गन्धर्वास्ते वसन्तोज्ज्वलादयः ॥ ४३॥

The dear playful friends are even better than the dear friends since they **have very special roles to play in the love affairs of Krishna.** These include Subala, Arjuna, Gandharva, Vasanta and Ujjvala.

दासास्तु प्रश्रितास्तस्य निदेशवशवर्तिनः।

विश्वस्ताः प्रभुता ज्ञान विनम्रितधियश्च ते ॥१६॥

The servants are **humble in harmony with Krishna's will , confident and their minds are submissive** because of a predominant awareness of Krishna's majesty.

द्वयोरप्येजातीयभावमाधुर्यभागसौ।

प्रेयान् कामपि पुष्पाति रसश्चित्तचमत्कृतिम् ॥१३४॥

Since there is the **sweetness of identical emotional states** in both Krishna and his friends in the rasa of companionship it produces a special sense of wonder in the mind.

From this we can infer the possible level of *sakhyam* displayed by the *sakhī* most often where she is only thinking about the *nāyikā*, just as the Gopis and sakhas have only Krishna on their mind.

In **Kalidasa's (5th century AD)** celebrated text **Abhijnana Sakuntalam**, the two *sakhīs*, Priyamvada and Anasuya, dear *sakhīs* of Sakuntala play the role of the *sakhī* to the hilt. They fulfill all the pre-requisites for a dependable *sakhī*. The *sakhī*'s have only the interest of Sakuntala in their hearts and from the moment they see her develop feelings for Dusyanta they make all necessary efforts to unite the two lovers.

They show the best type of **sisterly affection**. Their love for Sakuntala is pure and disinterested. Contrasted with each other their characters show a slight difference corresponding to age. Both are equally clever and courteous in their discourse. Priyamavada as her name implies is more gay and vivacious and characterized by strong feeling. Anasuya , the older, is more thoughtful and grave showing a mature understanding. The poet's dramatic ingenuity is seen in the manner in which the King Dushyanta conducts the conversation with the friends who become the spokeswomen. Their agitated state and bashfulness is also beautifully delineated. Interestingly the original incident, from the Mahabharatha the friends are missing. Kalidasa using his versatile imagination has vividly created the female characters of the two *sakhīs* of Sakuntala. It makes the situation dramatic and charming. Thus it can be said to form an interesting poetic device.

From Katayavema's commentary in C.S.R Sastri's translation of Abhignana Shakuntalam we find प्रियमवदया नियन्त्रितास्मि . This brings out the character of Priyamvadā as a lover of fun in the view of Sakuntala. The commentator Śatāvadhāna makes the curious remark about the tightening of the knot of the petticoat at the back. The request made to Anasūyā by Shakuntala shows that she is a more responsible friend than the other. Priyamvadā in a jocular strain gives her own reason for the tightness of the petticoat viz., the expansion of Sakuntala's breasts every moment. पयोधरयोः विस्तारयितृकं . She says censure your own youthful age, आत्मनः यौवनं उपालभख. जानासि किं शकुन्तला . This query of Priyamvadā brings out further her jocular mood. This conversation between Sakuntala and her friends overheard by the king is calculated to rouse his admiration which develops into love for the heroine. This can also thus reflect the tactfulness on the friend's part.

True to the etymological significance of her name, Priyamvadā, प्रियं वदतीती प्रियंवदा; she generally indulges in pleasing talks as distinguished from wholesome talks which characterise Anasūyā not one that merely speaks sweet.

Anasūyā is more prosaic and admits her ignorance as to why Śakuntalā looks so keenly at the jasmine creeper. Priyamvadā clarifies the joke she had in her mind. She attributes a longing on the part of Śakuntalā to get a suitable bridegroom in the same way as the Vanajyotsna jasmine creeper has got hold of the mango tree. Śakuntalā then confesses a longing of that sort to Priyamvadā. From this we can see how the *sakhī* Priyamvadā is able to grasp the fine inner feeling of Śakuntalā.

It is from Priyamvada's words that Dushyanta comes to know that her foster father has the idea of giving her away in marriage. This allows him to progress further and makes him

believe that his wish is not beyond his reach. In this context, Śakuntalā describes Priyamvadā as असंबद्धप्रलापिनी to Anasūyā as one indulging in irrelevant talk.

Gajendragadkar states that the two girl friends of Sakuntala are wonderfully united in their friendship for Sakuntala and are yet so beautifully differentiated. They show a most sensitive kind of devotion to her welfare and almost a feverish desire to avoid causing their *prakrutipelava* friend any unnecessary worry, either mental or physical. In other respects they have characteristics peculiar to themselves. While the one is serene , grave, sober; the other is vivacious , gay and even saucy. While one has her eye turned towards the serious aspect of life the other is inclined to take things easily and in a jolly manner.

The one goes deep into human nature and has a foresight that reaches far in the future while the other is carried away by superficial appearance and cannot look much ahead. The one is more or less of a religious temperament, scrupulously conscious of her *dūti* es, plain in her talk and candid in her manners; the other is sentimental and romantic, witty in her speeches and jocular in her ways. Almost every sentence that they utter is characteristic.

This balance of qualities while being wonderfully contrasted is superbly complimentary. From situation to situation this difference provides room for apt diversions of mood, especially in a serious or difficult situation.

Further in the First Act , the King is addressed as आर्य by the *sakhīs* and later as वयस्व as friend simply because he is their friend's lover. When Śakuntalā says अन्तः पुरविरह, it is Anasūyā who makes a pertinent request about polygamy to the King.

बहयओ वल्लभाः येषां ते बहुवल्लभाः.

चक्रवाकवधु is cleverly uttered by Śakuntalā's friends to warn her of matron Gautami's arrival. The chakravaka birds noted for their constancy in love remain in pairs during the day and separate during the night due to a curse by remaining on opposite banks of the river. The shrewd Śakuntalā understands the clue and intimates to the King her friend's clever warning. In the Fourth Act we see Anasūyā, as a serious friend, anxious if the King will remember the love-affair. She realistically tells Śakuntalā that the marriage that has been concluded will be acceptable to her father. She is only worried about the King's attitude. The less realistic Priyamvadā is however confident that the King will not play false. The corrective for the curse granted by Durvāsas is nothing in the eyes of Priyamvadā but a source of consolation to Anasūyā as the ring granted by the king will serve as a token to rouse his memory. Anasūyā puts the less wary Priyamvadā on caution that the curse should be withheld in absolute secrecy in order to avoid Śakuntalā's dejection.

In attending to the guest to the ashram in act IV, Priyamvadā hopes that Śakuntalā will attend to the guest. It is the shrewd Anasūyā who apprehends discourtesy to the guest. अतः सखीभ्यां संदिष्टास्मि . In Act VII, Śakuntalā realises the significance of her friend's advise to show the ring to the King if he was slow to recognise her.

In fact here the celebrated advise of Kanwa rishi to Shakuntala goes thus ,

*śuśrūṣasva gurūn kuru priyasakhīvr̥tīm sapatnijane
bhartur viprakṛtāpi roṣaṇatayā mā sma pratipaṁ gamaḥ
bhūyiṣṭhaṁ bhava dakṣiṇā pariḥkṛtā bhāgyeṣu anutsekini
yānti evaṁ grihiṇi-padaṁ yuvatayo vāmaḥ kulasyādhayaḥ*

‘Serve your elders, take to the behavior of a **dear friend** to your co-wives. Even though wronged by your husband, do not , out of anger be of refractory spirit. Be ever courteous to your attendants , do not become arrogant in your prosperity. Thus do young women attain the status of a house-wife; those of an opposite character are the banes of the family.’

This oft-quoted verse delineating the qualities of an ideal wife clearly mentions about being a dear friend to one’s co-wives!

The idea of sending a message may have been suggested by the embassy of Hanuman in the Ramayana or of the swan in the story of Nala in the Mahabharata. Sita anxiously listening to the message of Hanuman and the longing of Rama for Sita may be the inspiration to Kalidasa in depicting the similar plight of banished Yaksha for his wife in the Meghaduta another classic from Kalidasa.

Choosing a cloud to be a messenger of Yaksha’s wife a highly poetical device is not an unnatural choice considering the mass of Indian clouds, instinct with life travelling from the Southern tropical skies to the snow clad Himalayas. In the Kamavilasa Jataka, a crow is even sent as messenger by a man in danger to his wife.

In **Mrchhakatikam of Sudraka** we find the *sakhī* Madanika who is a clever and resourceful maid. Like Vasantasena she yearns for true love.

In **Viramorvasiyam**, we see Chitrlekha who plays an important role for the *nāyikā* in helping her identify her paramour.

Chitralekha, a friend and well wisher of Urvaśi, appears on the scene along with Urvaśi to congratulate king Pururavas for the rescue from demon Keśin, who had captured them. She with Urvaśi remained concealed by the power of *tiraskārinī* and witnessed the ardent love of Pururavas by listening on to his conversation with *viduśaka*. She met the king with the message from Urvaśi requesting him to protect her from the capture of Kāma and then returned as a messenger of the king. On her return, she made Urvaśi angry and desperate by jokingly saying that the King is enjoying the company of his beloved, but then all of a sudden corrected it and made her happy and satisfied her by relating the privy talk she had overheard between the king and *viduśaka*. When the king showed high respect and courtesy to Urvaśi, Chitralekha reading her mind said '*mugdhe nrigarikah adhikam daksin ābha antiśe*'. As a friend, she was happy to see that all the obstacles in the love of Urvaśi were over. Later, Citralekha knew from meditation that Urvaśi had transformed into a creeper on entering Kumaravana. Before her return to heaven, her abode, she entrusted Urvaśi to the king. As suggested by Chitralekha herself, Urvaśi deserted her on her union with the king.

Kāṭyāvēma says about the below line from **Malavikagnimitra**:

Na hi buddhiguṇennaiva

It is not only through intelligence that one can know how to help the interests of friends.

Through affection also, one can think of shrewd ways of attaining one's purpose.

Vidyāpati who flourished in the early part of the **fifteenth century** is a great poet who adopted Radha-Krishna as the principal theme of his lyrics. There is a controversy whether his lyrics mean the soul's yearning for God or simply that he is a poet of human emotions. In the frankness of expression, in the sweetness of language, in the beauty of metaphors, and

other figures of speech and in the vividness of descriptions Vidyapati is similar to Jayadeva. Hence he was conferred the title Abhinava-Jayadeva by king Śivasimha in 1400AD. Unlike in the Gita Govinda there is no definite story structure here. Vidyapati brought in his poetry Radha's point of view, her emotions, her suffering.

Vidyapati's lyrics extend over a wide ground of the love affair from adolescent Radha and the development of her love through different stages. It is as lovers that they are commemorated in Vidyapati's poems. In the region of Mithila, Vidyapati's love songs are still sung at marriages. The songs are almost as a guide to married love. Only few people today would allude to the love of Krishna and Radha as an allegory of the love of the soul for the divine, or the love of humans for God. Most of the types of *nāyikās* are covered and also the functions of the *sakhīs* and *dūtī* s. He has exclusively categorized *sakhī shiksha bacanādi*

Chance meetings of Radha and Krishna begin their attraction for each other. Here are some pertinent verses that highlight the many situations where the *sakhī* is needed or redeems the situation or helps take the situation forward.

Radha conveys to the *sakhī* in Vidyāpati's poems ,

“I did not see Krishna with my right eye for fear of the wicked. I did not see Krishna with half my left eye for fear of relatives. Seeing him even with the corner of my left eye, I have become mad.’

Having arranged Rādhā as *abhisāra* , **the friend instructs** her how to behave with Krishna.

“You should keep yourself at a little distance from him. He will then crave for you still more. Remain bashful and look at him with oblique eyes. Show him only half your breasts keeping the other half covered. Cupid will himself teach you the rest.”

Radha is hesitant to go meet Krishna but her friends prod her on. Meanwhile Krishna is advised to be moderate in his behavior towards Radha and not to be aggressive. In the beginning Radha is bashful and not able to enjoy Krishna’s pranks. A few days later her bashfulness diminishes and she pretends ignorance when Krishna asks her for *surata* (sexual union). She says: “I don’t have *surata* with me . I don’t know what it is. I will ask my friend and get it for you.’

Radha later does not need her sakhī and is ready to meet Krishna even through unkind weather.

Nāyikā to sakhī:

सुन्दरि तोके बोलजो पुनु-पुनु बेरा एक परिहासे ॥

मजे खँओल ओ बोल बोलह जनू ॥

कथा अमी कथा तुमी पार ओआरि वासा ॥

जे निरवाह करए नहि पारिअ ता कके दीअ आसा ॥

O good girl I tell you one should crack jokes only occasionally,

I have excused you so many times so please do not talk about that any more.

Where am I ? Where are you? (great is the disparity between the two)and his residence is far-off.

Why should you give hopes for a thing you cannot procure?

नागरे नागरि हृदयक मेलि पाचवान-वले बहुलत केलि ॥

अनुनए मोरि बुभक्ताउभि रोए वचन क कौशले की नहि होए॥

Weeping you will please convey to him my humble request

What is there that is not possible to be attained by cleverness in conversation.

The *nāyikā* conveying to the *sakhī* her diffidence in being able to meet her lover.

I know not the taste of love, nor the colour of desire, How may I have ado, my dear, with yonder swain, That I should love him as you ask ? A young thing I, afraid of shame. What can I tell you, dearest maiden ? I may not dare to have ado with him. He is a herdsman lover, new-enflamed. With all five arrows Love awakens his desire. No sooner seeing me, but he will clip me tight : Who then will save me, when my life is dying ? Vidhyapati says :
Tourfears are vain. Believe me, that his love is not of such a sort.

śikṣā in the art of love:

प्रथमहि अलक तिलक लेब साजि काजरे चञ्चल लोचन आजि ॥

वसने जाएब हे आग सवे गोए दुरहि बरते अरथित होए ॥

सुन्दरि प्रथमहि रहब लजाए कुटिले नयने देब मदन जगाए ॥

झापब कुच दरसाओब आध खने खने सुदृढ करब निवि -बान्ध ॥

मान कइए दरसाओब भाव रस राखब ते पुनु पुनु आव ॥

सुन्दरि मजे कि सिखओविसि आओर रङ्ग अपनहि गुरु भए कहत अनङ्ग ॥६२॥

First you will decorate your hair and besmear sandal paste over your body. Then you will paint your unsteady eyes with collyrium.

You will go with all your limbs covered with cloth. You will remain at a distance so that he may become very desirous of meeting you.

O damsel, first you will manifest bashfulness and with your side glances arouse Cupid.

You will cover one-half your breasts and expose the other half. Every moment you will make the knot in the lower garment tighter .

You will show anger and then exhibit some love for him. You will preserve the sentiment so that he may come again and again.

O damsel, what further instructions in the science of love shall I give you? Cupid himself shall become your guide and tell you everything.

Sakhī: Listen O fair damsel, to good advice, for I shall teach you special wisdom. First you shall sit beside the bed. Then with bended neck half regard him. And when your lover touches you, push out your hand remaining silent, uttering never a word. And when he takes you forcibly and clasps you to his side, passionately exclaim. Nay, nay ! In his embrace, your

body you must try to wrench aside breaking away in the moment of delight. Saith Vidhyapati,
: What can I say ? You will become the Guru yourself.

कुन्द भरम सम्भ्रम सम्भार नयने जगाए अनङ्गे ॥
आसा दए अनुराग बढाओब लङ्गिम अङ्ग -विभङ्गे ॥
कामिनि तोहे उपदेश धरब जे सुन सुन सुललित वानी॥
नागरपन किछु कहबा चाहिअ कहलेहो बझए सयानी॥
कोकिल कूजित कण्ठ बढाओ (ब अनुरञ्जब रितु राजे)॥
मधुर हासे मखमण्डल मण्डब तिला एक तेजब लाजे ॥
कैतब कए कातरता दरसब गाढ आलिङ्गन दाने॥
कोप कला पर रोष न मानब अधिक न करबे माने ॥
सम पसेमनि सह तनु दरसब मकुलित लोचन हेरी॥
नखे हरि पिआ- मनि-सम छडाओब सुरत बढाओब बेरी ॥
जूझल मनमथ पुनु जुझाओब केलि-रस परचारी ॥
गेल भाव जे पुनु पलटावए सेहे कलामति नारी ॥
सुख- सम्भोग सरस कवि गावए बझ समय पचवाने ॥
राजा सिवसिंह रूपनराएण विध्यापति कवि भाने॥

You will turn about your eyes repeatedly – the eyes that bear the semblance of *kunda* flowers; thereby you will arouse the feeling of Cupidity in him.

By arousing hopes in him you will make his love grow more with graceful movements of the limbs of your body.

O girl, whatever guidance in charming words you receive from me , please guard that in your mind.

I want to tell you something about the ways of love, a wise girl knows on being told.

In your larynx you should develop the notes of the cuckoo; that will give pleasure to the King of seasons.

You will please decorate your face with a sweet smile and forsake your bashfulness for a moment.

You will feign helplessness at the time he will closely embrace you.

In accordance with the code of the art of showing anger you will not feel otherwise; do not show yourself to be too much of a haughty temperament,

When you see his eyes half-closed you will show him your body full of perspiration caused by fatigue.

Pricking him with your nails you will manage to divert the attention of your lover to another place and cause your amorous delights to increase in time.

You will again make Cupid active after he has become tired by indulging in a lustful conversation.

She who makes passion that has been suppressed return back, is a girl expert in the ways of love.

The sarasa poet sings the theme of a happy sexual union; Cupid knows the time of love

The poet Vidyapati says Rajā Śivasimha is Rūpanārāyaṇa.

Jayadeva and Vidyapati spurred many others in the wake of their poems that were erotic and tinged with the religious element at the same time. Surdas, Kabir, Chandidas to name a few.

The *Sahaja* faith of which Chandidas's (16th century) poems are said to follow, blandly preached erotic love as the easiest and quickest means to self-realisation which is the ultimate aim of the *Hindu* religious belief. It claimed that an erotic relationship of spiritual nature was possible only with a woman who belongs to another man. Love-making is one of the important aspects of *sahaja* worship since every man is Krishna and every woman Radha, and the contact between the two is their devotion, their intense awareness of one another.

The artistic self-expression of love poetry generally has the double character. Of mystical consciousness mediating between going out in loving adoration towards God and of telling the secrets of eternity to other men. Kabir's songs are love poetry written with a missionary intention.

Naihar se jiyarā phāṭ re

My heart cries aloud for the house of my lover, the open road and the shelter of a roof are all one who has lost the city of her husband.

My heart finds no joy in anything, my mind and my body are distraught.

His palace has a million gates, but there is a vast ocean between it and me,

how shall I cross it, **O friend**, for endless is the outstretching of the path.

Samajh dekh man mīt piyarwa

O friend, dear heart of mine, think well, if you love indeed then why do you sleep?

If you have found Him, then give yourself utterly and take Him to you,

Why do you loose Him again and again?

Note: Thus through and through right from the vedic times we find the presence of a 'friend' criss-crossing through many works. The friend occupies a very important position in our literature. A few shining examples immediately come to mind like Krishna-Sudama, Hanuman the dāsa of Rama etc. As sakhī, the friend to the nayikā, is like a raft helping the nāyikā caught in the storms of love, swim ashore to safety, sometimes singularly, sometimes with the lover. She is often like a mute saakshi too listening patiently to the nayikā's woes. The role of the sakhī has been so wide-ranging that she stands as an incomparable beacon. The poets have chosen to make her sometimes just a messenger, sometimes a bosom pal, sometimes an instructor and sometimes all put together.

It was said by a respondent 'where there is śṛṅgāra there is the sakhī'. While this is the case, it is also that where there is viraha there is the sakhī. Or is it only then, that she is actually there. For when the union happens she is dissolved.

The present work was to try and ascertain the many roles and situations she conducted herself in or made her presence felt. In going through the Sanskrit texts and literary works that have been inspiration for all later regional composers, one tried to ascertain the definitive roles and situations one found her in.

Since most compositions like those of the Thanjavur quartet or Swati Thirunal or the Trinity belong to 18th and 19th centuries, they are most certainly inspired by preceding literary works and compositions. It would now be an attempt to find out through these how the sakhī makes her presence felt. In these compositions, she largely does not have a voice unlike in the earlier works. What could be the larger significance? Is she now required with changing times as a mere buffer. It was interesting to note during this period how one respondent also

pointed out that many of Lalgudi Sir's compositions do not have any reference to the sakhī.

The nayikā most often directly confronts, accosts the lover. What does it imply? That the nayikā of today is better equipped with knowledge to deal with her own problems.

Many had said the sakhī was an apt poetic device to lay threadbare nuances of emotions faced by the nāyikā. Then in contemporary compositions how is this effected if the sakhī is dispensed with?

As again, one respondent pointed out the sakhī has never been a political sort or never has played tricks, so to say. Or even cheated really. In that sense, we do find the sakhī to be a very evolved character.

She is of the moment. She lives only in the present. There is no past and no future. So she is always light-hearted, vivacious and most important, able to instantly offer and work towards a panacea for both the nayikā and the nāyaka. The nayikā and the nāyaka are caught in that web of illusion of the past memory and of future longings. But the sakhī seems to be free of all this baggage. As seen in most literary works she does not have a history. She is the guiding presence for the present.

And this is what we discern in Jayadeva's magnum opus-the Gita Govinda, which seems to give the sakhī a lofty status running through the work and a mainstay through the entire journey of longing, separation and union.

In knowing more about the sakhī can we have a more clearer picture of the nāyikā? As one respondent had said the sakhī is who the nayikā aspires to be. Thus looking further

metaphysically one hopes to find parallels and understand whether the sakhī is then a mere projection of the better half of one's own self. The half that is unsullied, untouched, pure self that is ever anew living in the moment. It is the state everybody hopes to attain.

Thus developing sakhyam should be the summum bonum of life. Whether a true sakhya to a spouse, to a sibling, to a parent to anybody where one is able to completely come out of oneself, be able to shed one's past and future and be able to fulfil the role as Krishna did shedding his real Self in aiding another on the path.

Developing sakhyam and being fortunate to have a sakha or sakhī is equated as we have seen to the Gods and to riches. A true enricher of life.



Radha seated. Krishna tending her feet. The *sakhī* pleased and speaking to Radha.

(Kangra 1800). Back inscribed with Keśavadasa's v. 5.

IV Sakhī in the seminal work of Jayadeva’s

Gita Govinda (12th century AD)

Commentary from

1. Ujjvala–Nīlamanī of Śri Rūpa Goswami (15th century AD.

2. Śri Chaitanya Caritamrita by Śri Śri Kṛṣṇadasa Kaviraja

Goswamin (15th century AD)

3. Comments on Vaishnava philosophy.

One finds that the *sakhī*'s role, definition, importance and larger meaning seems to be crystallized in Jayadeva's Gita Govinda (12th century) in the manner and role the *sakhī* has played therein.

The Gita Govinda, ripe in devotional sentiment is considered a nearest approach to Vaiṣṇava *rasa-śāstra*, composed three centuries ahead of the formal introduction of Vaiṣṇava rhetorics by Śrī Rūpa Goswami and his followers under direct instructions from Mahāprabhu Chaitanya. Vaiṣṇava sects of later times, followers of Chaitanya in the 16,17th centuries began to read the Gita Govinda as a coded text of deep spirituality using the figure of Rādhā as an exemplary metaphor of union with God. In seeking to understand the persona of the *sakhī*, the conceptualization of Chaitanya philosophy provides an interesting outlook and dimension and also accords a lofty status to the *sakhī*.

It is said that Śrī Jayadeva in the Gita Govinda employed a female confidante or *sakhī*, as a mediator to arrange Śrī Kṛṣṇa's meetings with Śrī Rādhā. Why? For it is believed that **unless one is under the personal guidance of such a *sakhī* and until one attains the help of the *sakhīs*, one cannot achieve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is the conclusion of all the *bhakti-śāstras*. The help of a *sakhī* and the help of *Guru* are one and the same. Indeed, that confidential *sakhī* is none other than *Guru-sakhī*. To be a *Guru* one must take shelter of the disposition of the *sakhīs*; and to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa one must accept the shelter of a spiritual master who is perfectly situated in the transcendental mood of a *sakhī*.**

तस्माद् गुरुं प्रपद्येत

जिज्ञासु श्रेय उत्तमं

शब्दे परे च निष्णातं

ब्रह्मणि उपशमाश्रयं

- (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.21)

To know the Absolute Truth (Brahman) one must take shelter of a perfect *Guru* who is fixed in devotion to the Absolute.

Thus in the light of the Chaitanya rhetoric the sakhī has been often posited as Guru generally. Further deliberation on this thought follows later.

The revival of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-cult cast its imperishable impression on all spheres of medieaval Indian life. Literature too was no exception. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is greatly indebted to Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, the Agnīpurāṇa, Viṣṇudharmotara-purāṇa, the Bhāgavatha-purāṇa and also draws up stimulating ideas from distinguished writers of the early *rasa* school such as Rudraṭa, Ānandavardhana, Rudrabhaṭṭa, Bhojadeva etc. The works on the 'Divine erotics' are also indebted to the pre-chaitanya *rasa* concept as discussed mainly by Bharata, Ānandavardhana, Rudrabhaṭṭa, Bhojadeva, Viśvanātha, Bhānudaṭṭa, Sudeva and others.

The erotic concept of later Vaiṣṇava poetics is the churned cream of *mokṣa śṛṅgāra* refined consecutively by Bhoja, Bhānudatta, Rūpagosvāmin, Kavi Karṇapūra and others. Divine eroticism is basically a particular change in the mind of the blessed devotee. It is the inconceivable and transcendental love between Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The psycho-erotic stream of Indian aesthetics –flowing down through the ages of Agnīpurāṇa, Bharata, Rudrabhaṭṭa, Ānandavardhana and Bhoja attained perfection in the hands of Vaiṣṇava rhetoricians headed by Rūpagosvāmin, Jīvagosvāmin, Madhūsudana Sarasvatī and others who preached the new philosophy of the 'neo-*rasa* cult by the name of devotional sentimentalism or the *bhaktī rasa*. The Rasikapriyā of Keśavadāsa (16th century) and the Rasachandrikā of Madhusūdana Kavīndra (17th century) occupy a distinguished position in propagating *mokṣa śṛṅgāra*.

Jayadeva, Caṇḍīdāsa and Vidyāpati's songs contributed a sweet attachment towards one's tutelary deity, a personal God. The sweet attachment towards God also formed a nucleus of the devotional poems of Vaiṣṇavaite Ālawār poets of South India. Caṇḍīdāsa, owed his

allegiance to *sahajiyā vaiṣṇava*, a by-product of the tantrism of orthodox Hindu and Buddhist origin wherein there is no scope for renunciation or sensual lust and the same is exuberant with the attachment and sentiment of love. The *sahajiyā* cult is *tantric* in character and a votary of the left-wing (*vāma-mārga*) introducing the female element in the religion. Vidyāpati on the other hand was an adherent of the *smārta* sect that influenced the Bengal Vaiṣṇavism eulogizing the love-sport of Rādhā and *Kṛṣṇa* through his songs.

Śrī Jayadeva, like other great Vaiṣṇava poets, instructs about this very self-effacing transcendental love (*aprākṛta prema*). The Gita-govinda is the very essence of all the Vedas and Śrī Jayadeva is the highest class of devotional practitioner (*sādhaka*) and perfected spiritualist (*siddha*), with complete mastery of all Vedic wisdom.

The Gita Govinda establishes the shift in vesting godliness in the dual figure of Radha and *Kṛṣṇa*. Gita Govinda is a celebration of desire. The devotee is taught the central place of erotic love in human life. Using the exemplary metaphor of Radha's union with God, eliminated all worldly references from the poem and it was read as entirely metaphorical expressions of the anxious communion between God and his ideal devotee. The love of Radha and *Kṛṣṇa*, is perpetually poised between the different perfections of their godliness and their unforgettable humanity.

The composition of The Gita Govinda presents both separation and meeting which is the basis of *śṛṅgāra rasa*. The poet upholds the view that when the union of lovers has been thoroughly nourished first by feelings of separation it bestows a greater joy upon perfected spiritualists and devotional practitioners who are expert in relishing the heights of this contrasting principle. It pertains to the very same sublime transcendental *rasa* that the vedas ascribe as the cause of lasting joy for all living beings.

The desire to satisfy the senses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called pure love or *viśuddha-prema*. The goal of lust is one's own enjoyment, whereas the purpose of this immensely powerful *prema* is simply to make Śrī Kṛṣṇa happy. The understanding of that love to the point of total abandonment of all social customs, vedic religious principles and bodily connections – as Śrī Rādhikā and her friends-the *sakhīs*, have done – can suggest the principles underlying these pastimes. Only after making such a sacrifice, is it possible to understand that selfless *prema* can be expressed only by those who do not cherish even the slightest ambition for their own pleasure.

The pastimes of Śrī Rādhikā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the transcendental love play of *śakti* and *śaktimān*, the power and the possessor of that power. This Divine Couple have the power to sanctify the whole world because they are completely free from even the slightest trace of lust. **A diligent study of these pastimes constitutes one of the limbs of *bhakti-yoga*!**

In fact, Śrī Jayadeva wished to write that wherever Śrī Kṛṣṇa finds the scent of such unmotivated *prema*, He is always ready to fall at the feet of that person with the humble entreaty:

स्मरगरलखण्डनं मम शिरसि मण्डनं

देहि पदपल्लवमुदारम्।

ज्वलति मयि दारुणो मदनकदनानलो

हरतुतदुपाहितविकारम् ॥ ८ ॥ प्रियेचारुशीले

-(10.8)

dehi pāda-pallavam udāram –

‘Mercifully bestow upon Me the soft petals of Your lotus feet.’

In fact it is stated that Śrī Jayadeva's biographers affirm that he became greatly perturbed at the thought of writing these words, which formed the fourth line of the verse he was

composing (Gita-govinda 10.8). In great anxiety the poet pondered, ‘How can I put down such words as being uttered by the ultimate controller of unlimited millions of universes, Śrī Vrajendranandana Śyāmasundara?’ Many a time he asked himself, “Can I write such a thing?” And many times he thought, “Yes, I should.” However even though he wanted to do it, he could not bring himself to write this line. Śrī Jayadeva knew Śrī Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Bhagavān; thus his *aiśvarya bhāva*, the mood of veneration, checked his pen. To settle Śrī Jayadeva’s dilemma, one day bhaktavatsala Bhagavān, who is always affectionate to His devotees, assumed the guise of Śrī Jayadeva and came to his house. The Lord took the manuscript and with His own hand, completed the fourth line of the verse, *dehi pāda-pallavam udāram*, in golden letters. By doing so, Śrī Kṛṣṇa made a resounding announcement, as if beating kettledrums everywhere, to loudly proclaim His love for His devotees.

To enter into the internal mood (*bhāvārtha*) of such a sublime text as the Gita Govinda, it is said one needs proper qualification. To read any great literary work and understand the words at their face value is one matter, but to appreciate the profound sentiments by which one becomes truly familiar with the text is entirely another experience. All ancient scriptures traditionally begin by defining specific parameters of eligibility for prospective readers. Some deeply realized authors have strictly forbidden unqualified persons to study their compositions and have even pronounced curses upon those who might dare to delve into that for which they are ineligible. What is the necessity of such strict prohibitions? They are needed because unqualified persons will inevitably misinterpret elevated texts. The result is that both the author and the unqualified reader lose the potential benefits from such literature, and instead accrue harmful effects. In the beginning of the auspicious invocation of his book, Jayadeva has also clarified the subject matter of eligibility thus:

यदि हरिस्मरणेसरसं मनो यदि विलासकलासुकुतूहलम् ।

मधुरकोमलकान्तपदावलीं शृणु तदा जयदेवसरस्वतीम् ॥

-(1.4)

‘If at all your heart yearns for that remembrance of Śrī Hari which bestows all happiness; if you are hankering to contemplate upon Śrī Hari with intense affection and if you are overwhelmed with curiosity to know about Śrī Hari’s skill in His amorous pastimes, then by all means read this book. You may find this poetry very sweet and pleasing, but if you do not nurture these three desires, then this moving and lyrical literature is not for you. Only if your heart is full of intense eagerness to fathom Śrī Hari’s love dalliance will you be able to appreciate my mellifluous and inspiring poetry.’

अनुग्रहाय भक्तानाम्

मनुषं देहं अस्थितः

भजते तद् ऋषि क्रीडाः

यः श्रुत्वा तत् परो भवेत्

- (ibid 10.33.36)

When the Lord assumes a humanlike body to show mercy to His devotees, He engages in such pastimes as will attract those who hear about them to become dedicated to Him.

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied thus in answer to the inquiries of Parīkṣit Mahārāja.

Śrī Jiva Gosvami explains in this connection that when Lord *Kṛṣṇa* descends to this world; out of kindness He manifests that form in a way that His devotees conditioned in human society can perceive and understand. Thus here it is stated, *manusam deham asthitah*-He assumes a humanlike body.

When Śrī Suta Gosvāmī began to narrate Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in the sacred forest of Naimiṣāranya, he called it the essence of the entire Vedas. And ultimately he revealed that the very path of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is *rāsa līlā*.

‘Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*’s body is the complete manifestation of eternal existence, consciousness and pleasure. His one spiritual potency manifests in three ways. *Hlādinī* is His bliss aspect;

sandhinī -eternal existence; and *samvit*- cognition and also knowledge. The essence of *Hlādinī* is *prema*, unconditional love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The essence of *prema* is *bhāva*, spiritual emotion and the ultimate development of *bhāva* is *mahābhāva*. Śrī Rādhā, the very embodiment of *mahābhāva*, is likened to a deep mine of all precious qualities and She is the crest jewel among Śrī Kṛṣṇa's beloved gopīs.' -Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.61-62, 68-69).

Radha's human form is compared to a full brimming vase (*Mangal Kalasa*) symbolising the earth; her ears are the music of the sphere (*sruti mandala*), her hair, the swarming bees over a lotus. The yellow robed lover (*Kṛṣṇa*) does what she asks. In short, the lord omniscient re-adorns the universe with fertility of the universe and appropriately the Gita Govinda concludes on a note of obeisance: 'let blissful man of wisdom purify the world by the singing of the *Gita Govinda*'. The power of poetry, the joy of the ecstasy, is contained in the last line, which reminds us that the poem is of devotion and *bhaktī*.

The deceptively simple story encapsulates a complex multilayered texture full of allusions, myths, metaphors. Each appellation and metaphor can be expanded at multiple dimensions. Each is contextually loaded at the level of myth, as also perceptions of senses of body, mind and spirit.

Śrī Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, a Gaudiya Vaishnava Āchārya, glorifies the Lord's conjugal pastimes, stating that the romantic pastimes have an inconceivable spiritual potency to attract the polluted heart of conditioned souls. It is an undeniable fact that any pure- or simple-hearted person who hears narrations of the loving affairs of *Kṛṣṇa* will be attracted to the lotus feet of the Lord and gradually become His devotee. Thus Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifests *rāsa līlā* to bestow mercy upon His devotees. The non-devotees are naturally fond of romance or *śṛṅgāra rasa*. Therefore, when they hear these pastimes they gradually become absorbed in thoughts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Mahārṣi Vedavyāsa was moved by compassion to record it for the benefit of all and Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, with the same motivation, preached it throughout the world. Following them Jayadeva Gosvāmī reproduced this thought in his lyrical composition, the Gita Govinda.

Śrī Jayadeva has condensed the gist of *rāsa līlā* further just as one might perform the impossible feat of confining the ocean within a jar. Compelled by compassion, he has manifested the nectar of immortality in the form of the Gita-govinda for the upliftment of all living beings in this age of Kali.

In the sixteenth century, the saint and scholar Śrī Chaitanya set in motion a wave of devotion to *Kṛṣṇa* that began in eastern India and found its way around the world. Chaitanya taught that the highest aim of life is to develop selfless love for God *Kṛṣṇa*, the blue-hued cowherd boy who revealed the perennial truth as in the Bhagavad Gita. Although only a handful of poetry is attributed to Chaitanya, his devotional theology was expounded and systematized by his followers in a vast array of poetical, philosophical, and ritual literature.

Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda, great devotee of Chaitanya has said, ‘The *kunja- līlā* or *rāsa līlā* of Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa is exceedingly deep. Devotees established in the moods of servitude, friendship and parenthood cannot perceive this. None of them have eligibility to enter into this pastime – **only the *sakhīs* are qualified. Without them it cannot be nourished.**

The *sakhīs* expand this *līlā* and only they can taste it. **Indeed no one can enter Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa’s *kunja- līlā* without cultivating the moods of the *sakhīs*.** There is no way to obtain this objective except to absorb oneself in intense remembrance of the *sakhīs* (*smaraṇa*) while taking complete shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa.’

When lovers are separated, especially after the woman is tormented by the fickleness of her man, it becomes a prestige issue for both the man and the woman. Even when they desire

each other and care for each other more than for their own lives it is humiliating to take the initiative of rapprochement. *Kṛṣṇa* is absolutist. It is hard to conceive of him kneeling before the whimsical pride of Radha. Radha is convinced of her uniqueness and superiority over any other woman of Brindavan. She does not like to stoop too low, even in this matter of highest concern by returning to *Kṛṣṇa* as if she is only one among the many.

It is to break this deadlock that a confidante, a *sakhī* of Radha is used by Jayadeva to act between Radha and *Kṛṣṇa* as their common mediator. In song 11, the *sakhī* is making a fervent appeal to Radha to surrender herself to *Kṛṣṇa* without succumbing to her own pride.

After coaxing Radha effectively, the *sakhī* continues her mission by returning to *Kṛṣṇa* to assure him of Radha's love and preparation to receive him. The *sakhī* is stimulating in Radha her undying hope in *Kṛṣṇa* and also reports to *Kṛṣṇa* the care and love of Radha. She gives him a description of Radha's preparation to meet him at the appointed place in Brindavan.

The sympathetic *sakhī* acts as an **excellent manipulator**. In spite of exciting anticipation created in the mind of Radha by the *sakhī*, Radha seems hesitant to abandon her pride. In the event the *sakhī* decides to go and tell *Kṛṣṇa* that her friend assailed by the arrows of *Kāma* is too weak to get up and walk to the bower of *Kṛṣṇa*. Although *Kṛṣṇa*'s pride is never compromised, his compassion is boundless. The *sakhī* exploits this weakness of the virtuous Lord.

In Song 14, seventh canto there are several shades of Radha's emotions. There is evident fear and an acute sense of insecurity. Her hallucinative vision of another woman having amorous sports with *Kṛṣṇa* is a direct result of her paranoia. At the same time her eagerness for union with *Kṛṣṇa* gets a temporary relief through her vicarious experience of the fantasy of love-making by projecting a hypothetical mate for *Kṛṣṇa*.

In the ninth canto *Mugdhamukundaḥ*, the *sakhī* makes an earnest appeal to Radha. **The *sakhī* is not an ordinary woman. She is wise in her restraint and mature in her wisdom.** Her words in song 18 and its epilogue make an excellent introduction to the tenth canto, *Caturacaturbhujah*.

The *sakhī* heightens Kṛṣṇa's desires by describing how Radha is wasting herself in passionate longing for him, eagerly awaiting in the leafy arbours, preparing beds of soft blossoms for her union with him. Coming back to Radha she tells of the equally anguished moments suffered by Kṛṣṇa longing for her company. At last when Kṛṣṇa approaches and offers his love, Radha in an outburst of hurt feelings rejects him and blames him for spending time with someone else and carrying the tell-tale signs of their union.

The relationship between the female form of the human soul and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not the relation between the material female form and its corresponding male form. The amorous pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with the spiritual milkmaids of Vraja are not comparable to the amorous pastimes between male and female of this world. Śrī Rādhikā is not specifically mentioned in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. But in the description of the *rāsa līlā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is represented as leaving the circle of the dancing milkmaids in the company of a female who is more favored than all the rest. The milkmaids who were thus abruptly abandoned in the very midst of the dance praised the genuine devotion of the unnamed female who could induce Śrī Kṛṣṇa to prefer Her sole company to the combined attractions of all the others.

The individual souls serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa as constituents of Śrī Rādhikā. When they forget that they are constituents of Śrī Rādhikā they forget the nature of their own selves and engage in the abnormal activities of the mundane plane. The relation between one individual soul and another is that of obeying each other as constituents of Śrī Rādhikā in the performance of their allotted service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. To use a mundane analogy, all individual souls are

spiritual females in a subordinate position to Śrī Rādhikā, whose service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa they share by their nature as constituents. **The object of endeavour of the individual souls is to learn to obey Śrī Rādhikā.** Only by obeying Śrī Rādhikā can they serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only object of all worship. Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is the recipient of all service.

In spite of the Śrī Gita-govinda and its companion works, the subject of the relationship of Śrī Rādhikā to Śrī Kṛṣṇa remains shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Radha is the embodiment of *mahābhāva* and surpasses all in merits. She is Kṛṣṇa's own energy and she helps him in his sports. Radha-Kṛṣṇa are one and the same. They have assumed two bodies and sport eternally to taste their mutual sweetness and *rasa*. Śrī Radhika fulfills all desires of Kṛṣṇa. Hence she is called *sarvakānti*.

Lord Kṛṣṇa enchants the world but she enchants him. Śrī Radha is the full power and Kṛṣṇa is the possessor of that power. So Śrī Radha and Kṛṣṇa are one principle but for divine sport they have assumed two bodies to taste *līlā rasa*. Radha's love is infinite. It has no room for expansion but still it expands constantly. It is bereft of pride which is the sign of greatness. For Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Radha is the abode of such love. Kṛṣṇa says, 'I am only the object of that love'.

'As heat is to fire, as cold is to ice, as sweetness to honey so are God's qualities to himself, so is Rādhā to Kṛṣṇa. Rādhā, or Rādhikā, is Kṛṣṇa's power brought into play so that he may have a partner in his game, who may supersensuously share his love. Her love is the highest possible, and it is when identified with her as the Supreme Lover of God that the soul attains perfection. 'Just as Kṛṣṇa is essentially Gd and beyond Nature, so too is Rādhā essentially God, immaculate' She is the power by which God creates, herself remaining beyond what he creates through her. She remains ever immaculate even while manifesting through Nature's three 'modes' *sattva, rajo, tamo, gunas* or subtle elements; she cannot be bound by the laws of their interaction, for she is the source of their activity.' -

Naarada pancaraatra.

Man is connected with the entities of this world for the satisfaction of the needs of his body and mind by five varieties of relationship.

1) A person may stand in the relationship of impartiality to other human beings. **The emotional forms of relationship may be said to begin with this relationship**

2) **Of the servant towards his master.** This is characterized by the sentiment of distant respect for the master.

3) **The relationship of friendship is closer than that of servitude.**

4) Parenthood is still more intimate.

5) Consorhood, as of the wife or mistress to her husband or lover, is the most intimate and comprehensive form of relationship possible with another entity. This chain of relationships is completed by the reciprocal relationships of master to servant, friend to friend, child to parents, husband or lover to wife or sweetheart.

Dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā and madhura are the four *rasas* as stated by Śrī Rūpa Goswamin says in his Bhaktī Rasāmṛtasindhu. **Lord Kṛṣṇa is won over by the devotees of these four *rasas*.** Each kind of devotee cherishes in his heart that his sentiment is superior to others and tastes the sweetness of *Kṛṣṇa* accordingly. When we compare impartially we find the sentiment of *madhura* as superior to all in sweetness.

'This sweet sentiment gradually excels in taste by its peculiar relish, sometimes it manifests to some devotees by becoming particularly tasteful in accordance with the variety of desires. Hence I call it madhura rasa. It is of two kinds 1. Wedded love and 2. Unwedded love. -Śrī Rūpa Goswamin, Bhaktī Rasāmṛtasindhu

The unwedded love reaches its ecstatic state but except in Vraja such sentiment does not occur elsewhere. The damsels of Vraja possess such a sentiment and its perfection is to be found in Śrī Radha. Her nature and pure *prema* surpasses all and is the means of tasting the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa.

Yogamaya with her power inspires in the *Gopīs* a sentiment as if Kṛṣṇa is their paramour.

And this is known neither to Kṛṣṇa nor the *Gopīs*. And thus Kṛṣṇa tastes the essence of *rasa* and confers grace on all devotees through such sentiments.

So in Śrīmad Bhāgavatham

*anugrahāya bhaktānām
mānuṣaṁ deham āsthitaḥ
bhajate tādṛśīḥ krīḍa
yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet*

- (10-33-36)

‘Lord Kṛṣṇa plays such pastimes out of his mercy to the devotees, listening to which they yearn after him.’

‘Bharata lays down that the sentiment of the lover and the beloved are equal. But he does not know my *vraja-rasa*. For the love of Radha preponderates over that of mine.’ - Rūpa

Goswamin, Bhaktī Rasāmṛtasindhu.

Kṛṣṇa says to Radha-

‘Oh my dear Radha! Thy lips are crimson red like the bimba fruit and surpass in excellence the beauty and fragrance of nectar. And thy countenance has the scent of lotus. And thy voice defeats the pride of cuckoo. And thy limbs are cool as sandal paste. Thy form is an embodiment of universal loveliness. All my senses have been gratified for ever having possessed thyself.’

The joy of the *Gopīs* merges in the joy of their beloved Kṛṣṇa. The loveliness of Kṛṣṇa increases at the sight of the *Gopīs* and the loveliness of the *Gopīs* increase at the sight of Kṛṣṇa. In this way there is a competition between the two without acknowledging defeat. Kṛṣṇa derives pleasure from the beauty and merits of the *Gopīs*. And seeing his pleasure the joy of the *Gopīs* increases. By this we find that the joy of *Gopīs* adds to the joy of Kṛṣṇa.

In the *Gopī Premamrita* (Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura) Kṛṣṇa says,

‘ Oh Arjuna! I speak to you the truth that the *Gopīs* are my helpmates, *Gurus*, disciples, objects of my enjoyment, **friends** and consorts and I know not what else they are not to me. They know my sublime prowess, my loving service, my devotion and my mentality. Others cannot know these essentially.’

The *śaktis* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are of three kinds:

1. The lakshmis of Vaikuntha. All beauty and lustre rest in Her body. All the lakshmis derive their beauty from her.
2. The Queens in Dwaraka
3. The Gopīs in Vrindavana who are the highest.

In Śrīmad Bhagavatha (10-82-28), the Gopīs saw their beloved Kṛṣṇa at Kurukshetra after a long time. They secured and embraced him in their hearts through their eyes. And they attained such union with Him which the Yogis or the Queens cannot do though the latter are in communion with Him. And these Gopīs cursed the creator for creating eyelashes which stood in the way of their vision.

There is no scent of *kāma* in Gopī’s love. Their connection with Kṛṣṇa is only for giving enjoyment. Their own pleasure or pain, all their physical and mental activities are directed towards the enjoyment to their beloved Kṛṣṇa.

‘Oh my beloved *Gopīs*! You have renounced social rules, Vedas and your relatives for my sake. I disappeared behind you only to increase your concentration upon me. But I heard all your sweet discourses in your sorrow though you did not see me. So you should not blame me.’ -Śrīmad Bhagavatha (10-32-20) (10-46-2)

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतीपूर्वकम् ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते॥

- (Bhagavad Gita,10-10)

‘O Arjuna! To those who are always in communion with me, I grant the light of understanding by which they can realize me.’

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.33.36), Lord Kṛṣṇa plays such pastimes out of his mercy to the devotees, listening to which they yearn after him.

‘Oh Arjuna! There is no deeper object of my love than the Gopīs which is beyond comprehension.’ -
Gopī premamrita

My heart hankers after the said bliss which I cannot taste inspite of my best efforts. How may I taste the same. If only I can be a receptacle of that love can I taste it. The thirst of this love grows in Kṛṣṇa’s heart. This is the first desire. Realising his own beauty Lord Kṛṣṇa muses thus:

‘My loveliness is wonderful, infinite and full of sweetness. None in the three worlds can measure it. Only Śrī Radha by the strength of her love tastes its sweetness every moment.’

Śrī Radha’s love is like a mirror. Though it is pure, its purity increases every moment. My loveliness also has no room for expansion still it reflects itself in ever-green forms in front of this mirror. There is constant competition between my loveliness and Radha’s love mirror. They mutually go on increasing but know no defeat. If I see my loveliness reflected in the mirror, I am tempted to taste the same, which I cannot do inspite of my efforts. Deliberating on this point I find my mind hankers after Śrī Radhika.

‘Oh behold the unprecedented, wonderful and superb mass of splendor shining from me! Seeing this even my mind is tempted to assume identity with Śrī Radhika in order to taste the same.’ - Lalita –
Madhava (8-32) of Rūpa Goswamin.

In the *Ujjvalanilamani* it says that of Radha and Chandravali, Radha is superior to Chandravali in all respects. She is the embodiment of *mahābhāva* and surpasses all in merits. Her mind, senses and body are made up of Kṛṣṇa *prema*. She is Kṛṣṇa’s own energy and helps him in his sports.

It is written in *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10-31-6) (10-47-20), that the Gopīs said, ‘Oh, thou remover of the afflictions of the people of Vraja, Oh hero! Thou who destroy the pride of thy own people by thy sweet gentle smile. Oh Friend! **We are thy maid-servants.** Do thou fulfill our desires and do thou

show us, thy attendants thy lovely lotus feet.’ *Even Śrī Radhika, who has bound Śrī Kṛṣṇa by the strength of her love serves at his feet as his maid.*

‘Oh Lord. Oh my loving consort. Where art thou? Oh Friend! Reveal thy presence to thy poor serving maid who is pining for thee.’
-(Ibid 10.30.31)

The consorts of Kṛṣṇa at Dwaraka, Rukmini and others also consider themselves as serving maids of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

All the sentiments such as those of father, mother, preceptor and friend are transformed into the sentiment of servitude. And this is the nature of Kṛṣṇa-Prema.

The sweetness of Kṛṣṇa is not be tasted by those who consider themselves as equal to Kṛṣṇa. It is only to be tasted through the sentiment of servitude. This verdict of scriptures is also the realization of high-souled persons. Just as the incarnating principle Lord Kṛṣṇa causes all his incarnations, so the integral principle **Śrī Radha is the cause of all these consorts.**

‘Devotion towards me on the part of all beings conduces to their ultimate peace. It is your good fortune oh maids! That you have cherished such affection towards me by which you have attained myself.’
-(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10-82-31.)

In the **Ujjvala–Nīlamanī of Śrī Rūpa Goswami**, the status of Mañjarī is mentioned **as the serving maid of Śrī Radha-Kṛṣṇa.** Radha has eight dear *sakhīs* who make all necessary arrangements for her daily secret trysts with Kṛṣṇa. **Each of these *sakhīs* has eight assistants called *Mañjarīs*.**

In the same work are given names of Mañjarīs eg. Mani Mañjarī and others, who do not wish to enjoy Kṛṣṇa as his sweet-hearts do, but who only feel within themselves infinite joy in love association with the only one. It is said that one when Mani Mañjarī was tested by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who tried to coax her into loving company with him, Mani Mañjarī held off saying:

‘Oh my dearest Lord. I am but a serving maid of thine. I feel rapturous service in rendering loving service to thee and Sree Radha, and my heart never hankers for lovely companionship with thee. So I pray that I may be granted to graciously please you by my eternal servitude at thy holy feet.’

On another occasion Śrī Kṛṣṇa was eagerly approaching to embrace a Mañjarī who was gathering flowers to weave a garland for the Holy one. On seeing Kṛṣṇa very close to her, she was extremely amazed and withdrew from him exclaiming:

*‘Oh moon of vrindavana! I shall prefer death and give up my body before it is touched. **I am a serving maid of Sri Radha. My only yearning is to render loving service.***’

Thus from above it is seen the status of a Mañjarī is quite different from that of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s sweet-hearts. Thus all Vaishnava philosophers declare with one voice that **one must endeavour to attain this status of Mañjarī and thus enjoy ultimate bliss of soul.**

Sukanya Sarbadhikary in The Place of Devotion: Siting and Experiencing Divinity in Bengal Vaishnavism explains about *sakhīs*,

‘*Sakhīs* are the same age as Radha or older. Thus they have experienced sexual satisfaction. Mañjarīs are however all younger than Radha. They never desire any form of selfish sexual gratification.

Vaishnavas argue that the complete lack of possibilities of sexual possession paradoxically multiplies the Mañjarī’s sensory empathy while exemplifying the best case of ego effacement. *Sakhīs* have their households to look after while Mañjarīs stay with Radha all the time. *Sakhīs* arouse reverence and inhibition in Radha while Mañjarīs arouse pure unabashed affection.

Each of the *sakhīs* has particular services which she performs assisted by her Mañjarīs. These include braiding Radha’s hair, fanning her, applying āltā, dressing her up for the night etc. All these services aim at arousing the couple’s sensuality.

The Mañjarīs witness the most intimate activities which give the devotee the finest taste of divine love. Mañjarīs are role models of perfect subservience since they are completely controlled by their senior *sakhīs*.’

The essence of ***sakhī bhava*** is trust or *viśrambha* which Jiva Goswami has further defined as **meaning a feeling of mutual identity** (Brs 3.3.106). It is said that the Mañjarīs experience Radha's pleasure equally (if not more!) . They are satisfied to experience Kṛṣṇa through her alone.

The two verses (from Govinda-līlāmṛta) found in the teachings of Ramananda Ray,(associate of Shri Chaitanya) illustrate this:

*sakhyāḥ śrī-rādhikāyā vraja-kumuda-vidhor
hlādinī-nāma-śakteḥ
sārāṁśa-prema-vallyāḥ kiśalaya-dala-puṣp-
ādi-tulyāḥ sva-tulyāḥ
siktāyām Kṛṣṇa-līlāmṛta-rasa-nicayair
ullasantyām amuṣyām
jātollāsāḥ sva-sekāc chata-guṇam adhikam
santi yat tan na citram*

Just as the moon enlivens the lilies, so Kṛṣṇa is the bright moon who enlivens the lily-like hearts of the residents of Vrindavan. His pleasure-giving potency is personified in Radha, who is like a creeper whose fruits are *prema*. Her girlfriends are like the unlimited branches, leaves and flowers which expand out from her self and are thus equal to her. For this reason, when that winding creeper of love is watered with the heavenly potion of Kṛṣṇa’s sporting activities, then the leaves and flowers, the ***sakhīs***, find hundreds of times more pleasure than if they were themselves to be sprinkled. This seems quite normal.

-(GLA 10.16, CC 2.8.210)

*sprśati yadi mukundo rādhikām tat-sakhīnām
bhavati vapuṣi kampa-sveda-romāñca-bāṣpam*

*adhara-madhu mudāsyāś cet pibaty eṣa yatnād
bhavati bata tad āsām mattatā citram etat*

If Kṛṣṇa should touch Srimati Radharani,
then lo and behold! her *sakhīs* start to tremble;
they sweat and their body hairs stand on end
and tears well up in their eyes.
And if Kṛṣṇa should carefully sip
the spirituous liquor of Radha's lips,
it is they who become intoxicated!
This is truly something wonderful.

So, clearly, the *sakhīs* and *mañjarīs*, no matter what their specific actions are in the *līla*, do
not miss anything experientially.

In Śrī Chaitanya Caritamrita by Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Goswamin's Antyalīlā we find the
following:

Radha to Lalita:

Oh Friend! Hard indeed to cure this affliction in the heart of Radha. No physician will ever earn any
reputation by treating it; he will only court defeat and blame by it.' - (Vidagdha Madhava, 2-16.)

Radha to Bishakha.

'If the lord Kṛṣṇa be not merciful unto me , Oh friend! Why should I blame you? That is due to my
misfortune. So do not weep. For your weeping is of no avail. But do one thing. Oh Friend! When I am
dead fasten these two long arms of mine on the tamala tree. Tie them fast so that this body of mine
may hang steadily forever in the holy Vrindavana of the Lord. Do it oh friend! And perform thus my
last obsequies. - (Ibid 2-70)

Radha to Bishakha.

Alas! Alas! Lord Kṛṣṇa is now slighting me. Yet for the pleasure of his sweet embrace I stifled my
sense of shame before my superiors , I pained thee oh friend who art dearest to me than life. I set at
naught that holy duty which was performed with reverence by all chaste women of the world. And all

these I did for him. And now I am wretched. And yet I continue to live and love. Fie, fie to this patience in me.’
-(Ibid 2-60)

Gargi’s speech to Purnamashi.

‘Victorious indeed is the sound of the **flute which acts as an expert go-between** and makes Radha lose all sense of modesty and lures her away from home to the forest’. -Lalita Madhava 1-50.

The Supreme Truth has been described as *rasa* in the *śrutīs*. In the Śrīmad Bhagavata, the revered author invokes the Supreme truth: *satyama param dhimahi*: we meditate with devotion on the Supreme truth for realization and **Mañjarī is considered the ultimate spiritual body for the realisation of Supreme truth**. From the beginning, all beings hanker after pleasures of senses. How are we to find out the real nature of pleasure, and also the position of beings who in their very essence are the Mañjarīs.

In text 2.5.128, Sri Rupa Goswami teaches that there are those who have *rati* for Kṛṣṇa (a *sthayi bhava* or dominant loving emotion for him) who at the same time have love for another devotee. Generally this love for another devotee is less than one’s love for Kṛṣṇa, or at best equal to one’s love for him. In such cases this love for another devotee or one’s friend is constituted of as a *sancari bhava*, a loving emotion that augments one’s dominant loving emotion for Kṛṣṇa. **Rupa Goswami calls this love for one’s friend—another devotee—a special *sancari bhava* named *suhrt rati*, ‘love of a friend.’** Thus we learn that in Kṛṣṇa *līla* the devotee’s love for one another constitutes the *sancari bhava* named *suhrt rati* that augments their *sthayi bhava* or dominant loving sentiment for Kṛṣṇa as friend, lover, etc. Although this love is addressed by Rupa Goswami in the context of discussing *bhakti rasa* proper, in principle it also extends down into the lives of *sadhakas*, spiritual practitioners. Devotees love one another in a manner that assists them in loving Kṛṣṇa.

There are two kinds of *suhrt rati*, or “love of the friend.” In the first kind of *suhrt rati*, a devotee has a *sthayi bhava* for Kṛṣṇa—friendship, romantic love, etc.—and an equal or lesser degree of love for another devotee. This *suhrt rati* is *asancari bhava* in which the friend is the object of that *sancari bhava* that nourishes the devotee’s *sthayi bhava* for Kṛṣṇa in the way that *sancari bhavas* normally do. But in the second type of *suhrt rati* the devotee experiences *asancari bhava* that is unique in that it is not a loving sentiment that augments one’s love of Kṛṣṇa and is thus sometimes prominent in one’s loving relationship with him and sometimes not. Unlike ordinary *sancari bhavas* it is ever-present and ever-increasing. Furthermore instead of nourishing the devotee’s love for Kṛṣṇa, the devotee’s love for the friend nourishes it! Thus Sri Rupa Goswami distinguishes this loving sentiment from the *sancari bhava* known as *suhrt rati* by giving it its own name: *bhavollasa*—the “most exalted loving sentiment.” ***Mañjarīs perfectly embody this bhavollasa.*** The Mañjarīs’ object of love is *rasa*, or the *mahabhava* that involves Radha-Kṛṣṇa becoming one in love. (***Thus we see that this very quality of suhrt rati is what drives the sakhī bhava’s selfless devotion in the context of the Chaitanya tradition.***)

Note: It is these qualities that distinguishes the sakhī too as we see later elevating her to be the closest companion of the nāyikā among other possible confidantes. Among her prime qualities is this sense of devotion comparable to that of a Mañjarī which elevates her status in no small measure. While her social status may be of one lower than the nāyikā it is this sense of single-minded devotion that elevates her possible even above the nāyikā. According to the Chaitanya concept there are the sakhīs and then the mañjarīs. The sakhīs foster the love-play sakhīs between Radha and Kṛṣṇa while the mañjarīs assist them in several dūtīs. The sakhīs fulfill what Radha would like to do for Kṛṣṇa. The sakhīs identify themselves completely with Radha and thus through her enjoy the bliss of proximity with Kṛṣṇa. So understanding this as the basis of the Chaitanya school of thought one is able to come to better understand the role of the sakhī in the Gita Govinda. This then puts us in a quandary as to how to equate her with that of the Guru. While most compositions prevalent in Bharata Natyam post its revival including the varnams, padams, javalis follow those of composers post the Chaitanya period; it would be pertinent to see how the concept of the sakhī fits into that genre and whether she sustains her position as the Guru.

As one tries to understand her persona, through the Bharata Natyam compositions, one can see that she is completely tuned to the nāyikā towards egolessness. She is the silent witness and listener to the pangs the nāyikā goes through. Her only thought as per the Chaitanya concept is to foster the love play. And so this gives her the freedom to play pranks, tease the nāyikā and so on.

As a step further when analysing those compositions which pose a question as to how does she have a dalliance with the nāyaka if we resort to the Chaitanya thought we can say that she is attached to the nāyaka in serving the nāyikā. When she goes to the nāyaka to deliver the message from her nāyikā, she becomes the first face of the nāyikā, so to say. And it is here that the nāyaka can slip when in his anxiety and feverish pang of separation from his beloved

he engages with the sakhī. When he sees his beloved in the sakhī. And this can be the highest role the sakhī enters into in still serving not her needs but the needs of the nāyikā. Taking this thought it could drastically alter the presentation of padams such as ‘Unnai Dhootanupinen’ among others where the nāyikā may positively engage with her sakhī rather than questioning her infidelity. It also sets to rest where it was accepted that the sakhī served the nāyakā too. And that the nāyikā may be pleased in the hope that the nāyakā will now hasten towards her since he has expressed it so in seeing her in her sakhī. This is only a thought process that has emerged in the light of the Chaitanya thought. In further work that will analyse compositions, this thought may be checked for its veracity based on further dialogue and analysis.

Vaiṣṇava philosophy of rasa:

The words *rasa* and *rasika* fervently used by Kesavadasa and Madhusūdana Kavīndra has not been used in their ordinary sense. The *rasa* as relished by them is that particular aesthetic experience obtained by the realization of the divine love-play of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa which promises *svārtha* (mundane bliss) and *paramārtha* (transcendental bliss). They carry impetus to the divine erotics from Bhoja who counts *śṛṅgāra* as the only *rasa*. **It is the self-luminous faculty of the unstained ego.** The blessed devotee who has qualified himself with that self-luminous relishing faculty of the soul is especially termed as *rasika*. Keśavadāsa has defined Parakīyā as the ‘beloved of Para’, the Supreme one.

Śrī Rādhā according to the Vaiṣṇava faith is herself the embodiment of the *hlādinī śaktī* or the *mahābhāva* and Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself is the image of the Divine erotics. The author of the Rasachandrikā believes the erotic *rasa* is the hero of the *rasa* family and deserves first consideration. The planning of the Rasachandrikā directly resembles the plan of the Rasikapriyā of Keśavadāsa who was indebted in turn to Rudrabhaṭṭa’s *Śṛṅgāra-tilaka*.

The Rasachandrikā may be assessed as one of the latest and complete work of Sanskrit poetics in general and of ‘divine aesthetics’ in particular that deals with the psycho-erotic and religio-erotic concepts based on the doctrine of the unthinkable dual-non-dualism of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava cult.

The theme of the Rasachandrikā is tuned up with the famous Vaiṣṇava motto ‘*ādya eve paro rasaḥ*’ i.e. the first one, the erotic is the paramount relish. **The mono-rasa concept and the multi-rasa concept are the two principal streams of Indian aesthetics.** The school of rhetoricians all along believed in monistic eroticism through the ages which the Vaiṣṇava saint-poets has promoted to a sublime order.

The concept of *Prachhana* and *Prakāśa* (implicit and explicit realisation of *rasa*) as explained psychologically in the *Rasachandrikā*, and its source literature the *Rasikapriyā* covers nearly the entire field of the Vaiṣṇava erotics of the later period. It is not strictly limited to the concepts of ‘love in union’ and ‘love in separation’, but other constituents come within the limit of the two-fold realization. Thus the hero, the heroine, their natures, functions, feelings, attendants all have two fold expressions, implicitly and explicitly.

The hero and the heroine:

- a) In the Divine erotics, as tasted by Vaiṣṇava saint-poets, there is no other hero than Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself. Nature and characteristics which have been explained here are nothing but his own different natures and attributes as are necessary to satisfy the different types of heroines who are practically either the hymn of the Vedas or the heavenly maids or the transmigrated divine souls of pious sages.
- b) Heroines in the Divine erotics are many in number. The *Rasamañjarī* counts them as 1152. In addition to the traditional classification of the heroine, Keśavadāsa and Madhusūdana, both believe in the psycho-physiological distinctions of the heroine as illustrated in the Indian science of erotics propogated by Vātsāyana and others. A few orthodox rhetoricians have slightly touched the point. They have mainly discriminated the psychological aspects of a heroine but they are not much inquisitive to their physiological characteristics. The Vaiṣṇava rhetoricians have weighed them on the scale of ‘mind-body’ parallelism or on the ‘psycho-physiological balance’.

In connection with the justification of the conduct of a hero, the reference to *Aṣṭagranthi* or the eight physio-psychological knots of one’s personality –i.e.-i) mind ii) word iii) work iv) laugh v) look vi) action vii) cleverness or efficiency and vii) covetousness- is a new approach to the study of human character which is referred to by Keśavadāsa to justify the conduct of the obstinate hero. Madhusūdana Kavīndra and Keśavadāsa both have explained *Aṣṭagranthi* to be the eight important knots of behaviourism. These are the eight-fold essential factors of human behavior which build up one’s character and constitute the personality.

The *parakīyā nāyikā* occupies a very important position in Vaiṣṇava erotics. The love of a *parakīyā nāyikā* according to the orthodox concept of love comes under the category of *ābhāsa* (fallacious appearance) but due to its rich suggestiveness it has been appreciated to be the best type of poesy if not the finest example of *uttama kāvya* which falls under the category of *ābhāsa kāvya*. Bharata as quoted by Rūpagosvāmin counts the secret love as a very rare thing in the domain of love and literature.

The concept of *madhura rasa* is the finding of meditation and selfless devotion of Vaiṣṇava saint-poets. The Vaiṣṇava concept of *parakīyā* plays an important role in the development of the *madhura rasa*. Śrī Rādhā who herself is the metamorphic body of body of the *mahābhāva*, is regarded according to the Vaiṣṇava faith as *svīyā* and *parakīyā* both. She is the *svīyā* as the blissful other half of the ‘Supreme one’ in the *swarūpa līlā* (the transcendental life) but she is *parakīyā* to be the sweet-heart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *avatāralīlā* (the metamorphic life). A *sāmānya vanitā* has no place as a *parakīyā* in the Vaiṣṇava literature.

Keśavadāsa defines that ‘the beloved of the Supreme one, who is beyond anything and everything and yet well-known in the world is called *parakīyā* . Madhusūdana Kavīndra defines that ‘the particular heroine of the Lover may be attributed as a *parakīyā* who is the utmost beloved one and who supersedes all other beloveds in the merits of love and is known widely as such in the world.’ In spite of the good hold of *parakīyā* concept in Indian literature the problem of its propriety has been all along acute to reconcile between the two contradictory views. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī observes that the nature of love subjected to worldly relations either in its true sense or in literature is not the same as the love dealt in Vaiṣṇava literature. It is too small like a glow worm in comparison to the ‘divine love’ which shines like the sun.

Rati is rhetorically explained to be the dominant love-feeling which matures up to the erotic sentiment with the mutually combined special relation of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *sañcāri bhāva*. It is sometimes interpreted to be the amorous love-play of implicit and explicit love-play according to the Vaiṣṇava concept of love. Madhusūdana Kavīndra and Keśavadāsa classify it into two categorical distinctions ‘*vāhyarati*’ and ‘*āntararati*’.

Keśavadāsa sub-divides each of the two into seven kinds. But Keśavadāsa’s *āntararati* is not so refined as Madhusūdana’s. The seven kinds of the *āntararati* as defined by Keśavadāsa are nothing but the seven feats of sexual intercourse.

Madhusūdana accepts the view of Keśavadāsa secondarily, but he gives priority to the Vaiṣṇava concept of *rati*. The *vāhyarati* as explained is tasted by four kinds of gross sensual experiences i.e. i) eager look ii) touch of the body iii) kiss iv) marks of teeth and nails . The *āntararati* describes the five kinds of passive realization of love or the mental reaction of love i) recollection ii) hearing of his name and qualities iii) painting of his picture iv) curiosity to enjoy his company v) chanting of his exalted attributes. The orthodox poetics counts them in the categories of *anubhāva* and *vyābhicāri bhāva* but the Vaiṣṇava poetics evaluates them separately as to be some essential agencies to relish love.

The action that expresses the mutual love, the devices- that a heroine plays to charm her lover and the persons and places that help them to unite together are defined and illustrated as to be important factors in secret love-play. Among the common devices to draw attention of the lover, **self-messengership** and ‘*abhisāra*’ (willful approach) are to be considered **the finest ways of the love-play**. These are the special characteristics of the *parakīyā* and are also relished by the two-fold realization of the *Prachhana* and *Prakāśa*.

Māna or pride is another important aspect of the Vaiṣṇava erotics. It is a kind of pride of extraordinary nature and is conditioned by three successive grades. I) light ii) medium and iii)

heavy. Each of them is realized in the two-fold realization of *Prachhana* and *Prakāśa* .To ward off *māna* fortified in the heart of the heroine the Rasachandrikā adopts four well-known devices of politics: i) *sāma* – treaty ii) *dāna*-presentation or bribery iii) *bheda*-negotiation or duplicity iv) *daṇḍa*-punishment. The love-play is sometimes compared in Indian literature to the battle of love.

In addition to these four general policies according to Vaiṣṇava poetics three more devices to ward off *māna* are i) *Praṇati* (bowing down to the heroine's feet ii) *Upekṣā*-indifferent attitude and iii) *Prasaṅgaviddhavaṁsa*- setting aside either due to fear or forgetting or unbalanced mind . The policy of *Praṇati* is strictly limited only to the hero otherwise it may harm the beauty of *rasa*. Some of the above are also traced to the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Māna is a very delicate instrument in the conflict of love. It should not be exercised indiscriminately. It must not change into *haṭha* (obstinacy) . **Awe and love are the two inter-dependent feelings. There is no love if there is no reverential fear, and if there is no reverence, love is impossible.** Impertinence or obstinacy can never peep out if the heart is filled up with reverence. Extravagance, foolishness, pride, ill-treatment, excitement, passion etc. may create indifference in the heart of a lover towards a beloved.

In the prologue to tenth canto of Gita Govinda, Song 18, we find the the *sakhī* cajoling Radha through sweet words to give up her *māna*. On seeing poor Radha sitting depressed and heartbroken, her soul torn between remorse and longing, unable to forget *Kṛṣṇa* and his glorious life even for a moment and yet adamant not to give up her pride, the *sakhī* tactfully tries to appease the situation.

॥ गीतम् १८ ॥ Raga: Kambodi ; Adi Tala

हरिरभिसरति वहति मधुपवने।

किमपरमधिकसुखं सखि भुवने॥

माधवे मा कुरु मानिनि मानमये ॥१॥

Hari comes when spring winds bearing honey, blow. What greater pleasure exists in the world friend?
Don't turn wounded pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

तालफलादपि गुरुमतिसरसम्।

किं विफलीकुरुषे कुचकलशम् ॥२॥

Your swollen breasts are riper than palm fruits. Why do you waste their rich flavour? Don't turn
wounded pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे कति न कथितमिदमनुपदमचिरम्।

मा परिहर हरिमतिशयरुचिरम् ॥३॥

How often must I repeat the refrain? Don't recoil when Hari longs to charm you! Don't turn wounded
pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे किमिति विषीदसि रोदिषि विकला ।

विहसति युवतिसभा तव सकला ॥४॥

Why do you cry in hollow despair? Your girlfriends are laughing at you. Don't turn wounded pride on
Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे मृदुनलिनीदलशीतलशयने ।

हरिमवलोकय सफलय नयने ॥५॥

See Hari on his cool couch of moist lotuses! Reward your eyes with this fruit! Don't turn wounded
pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे जनयसि मनसि किमिति गुरुखेदम्।

शृणु मम वचनमनीहितभेदम् ॥६॥

Why conjure heavy despair in your heart? Listen to me tell how he regrets betraying you. Don't turn
wounded pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे हरिरुपयातुवदतुबहुमधुरम् ।

किमिति करोषि हृदयमतिविधुरम् ॥७॥

Let Hari come! Let him speak sweet words! Why condemn your heart to loneliness? Don't turn wounded pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे श्रीजयदेवभणितमतिललितम् ।

सुखयतुरसिकजनं हरिचरितम् ॥८॥

May Jayadeva's lilting song please sensitive men who hear Hari's story! Don't turn wounded pride on Madhava. He is proud too, sullen Radha.

माधवे स्निग्धेयत्परुषासि यत्प्रणमति स्तब्धासि यद्वागिणि

द्वेषस्थासि यदुन्मुखे विमुखतां यातासि तस्मिन्प्रिये।

तद्युक्तं विपरीतकारिणि तव श्रीखण्डचर्चाविषं

युक्तं तद् शीतांशुस्तपनो हिमं हुतवहः क्रीडामुदो यातनाः ॥

When he is tender, you are harsh. When he is pliant you are rigid, When he is passionate you are hateful, When he looks expectant you turn away. You leave when he is loving. Your perverseness justly turns your sandalbalm to poison. Cool moon rays to heat and ice to fire. Joys of loveplay to torments of hell.

The *karuṇā rasa* is not an extra sentiment from the nine *rasas*. The *karuṇa-vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* (pathos of the love in separation) is here termed as *karuṇā*. *Karuṇā* and *karuṇa* are quite different sentiments. The dominant feeling of *karuṇa* is *śoka* (pathos) and the dominant feeling of *karuṇā* is love. **When the anxiety to meet rises up to the climax and no hope of reunion is traceable at hand- it is specially called the *karuṇā rasa*.**

The Vaiṣṇavas who believe in the eternal union of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are not in the position to believe in complete separation. They take it as a kind of 'hide and seek' play of love. Lord Kṛṣṇa himself is the embodiment of truth, beauty, bliss and happiness. The question of pain does not arise in transcendental love.

The Rasachandrikā of Madhusūdana Kavīndra further elaborates on the the attendants and their functions: ***Sakhīs* or the attendants of the heroine occupy an important position in Indian erotics.** Apart from their ordinary *dūtīs* of attending to the heroine, they not only advise the heroine in delicate love-affairs, but sometimes **act as messengers to unite the Holy consorts.** Attendants of the heroine come from generally all classes and orders of the society.

They are the nurse (*dhātrī*), the house-wife (*janī*), the barber's wife (*nāpitī*), the actress (*naṭī*), the neighbour (*prativeśinī*), the gardener's wife (*mālākāriṇī*), the betel seller's wife (*tambula kāriṇī*), the artisan's wife (*śilpinī*), the bangle seller's wife (*jatukābharaṇa-kāriṇī*), the washermaid (*rāmājānī*), the goldsmith's wife (*svarṇa-sūtra-kāriṇī*), the nun (*sannyāsinī*) and the weaver's wife (*paṭṭa-sūtra-kāriṇī*).

It is not they are paid or are constant companions of the heroine but they have always an easy access to the houses of the heroines under the pretext of their individual trades. Under the disguise of their professional badge they often carry secret messages to either of the consorts. It is nice to witness that the message they convey and the duty they discharge bear the distinct marks of their individual trades in the illustrations of the *Rasachandrikā*, āloka xii

Ānandavardhana also emphatically declares the superiority of the *madhura*, a property of *śṛṅgāra* over all other *rasas*. The sweet sentiment of *madhura rasa* based on the culmination of the attachment of sweetness (*madhurā-rati*) as the predominant stable emotion developed though the multifarious ancillary and auxiliary sub-currents of *vibhāvas* etc. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his dear ones are the *ālambana vibhāvas* of the *madhura rasa*.

Of the five primary sentiments *śānta*, *prīta*, *preyas*, *vātsala* and *madhura*, the last one is the sweetest and outshines the other four as it is based on the predominant stable emotion of sweet love (*madhurā rati*) itself wherein subsists the *rati*, *prema*, *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and the crest emotion of *mahābhāva*, each rising in succeeding order above its

predecessor in order of merit, quality and degree of intensity. The sweet love of *madhura rati* is exclusive and uncommon. **It requires a most personal and intimate relationship for its realization.** Such an emotion is private and never public. The sweet love described and developed though *Gopīs* can hardly stand the gaze of sensuous eyes. In this sweetness of love all other affections and modulations meet and as Śrī Rūpa rightly declares that *rati*, *prema*, *sneha* and other forms of *bhāvas* are all included in the sublime, supreme and abiding sentiment of love. It is aptly remarked that attaining union with the Lord is nothing but supplanting emotion of worldly objects unto the Lord himself. This process is known as sublimation.

One finds the highest enjoyment in the inseparable fusion of the lord and the beloved through various stages of intense pangs of separation, longing, entreaty for protection, vision, acceptance, union and identification. This manifestation of the most secret and most sacred stage of erotic sentiment is the chief reason of its private nature especially for people of mundane level.

The qualification for devotion requires a natural bent of mind, attraction and unrestrained urges and a sweet loving attachment of inexplicable intense joy and severe pangs of separation.

The purification of the physical attraction through the suffering of separation and completing the sublimation of the love through the child constitutes the essence of Kalidasa's treatment of love, indeed of that of all Sanskrit poets for in poems or plays, others but followed the lead that Kalidasa gave in portraying the emotion.

The idea that separation acts as the true touchstone of love and as a greater welding force is given expression to by different poets. In the Bhagavata Purāṇa, when the cowherd lasses are in anguish because of their separation from *Kṛṣṇa*, the latter tells them: To the degree to

which the mind gets possessed of the lover when he is far away it does not when he is near and within sight.

अहमिहैव वसन्नपि तावकःत्वमपि तत्र वसन्त्यपि मामिका ।

न तनुसंगमः हृदयसंगम एव सुसंगमः॥

In a stray verse the lady separated from her beloved says: Between company and separation, separation not his company is preferred. For in company he is single , in separation the whole universe is full of him.

Maximum enjoyment in *śṛṅgāra* is to be seen only in *upapati* as stated by Bharata. The staff of the hero includes attendants (*ceṭa*), clever agents in love affairs (*viṭa*), clowns (*viduśaka*), personal assistants (*pīṭhamarda*), confidential friends in love-affairs (*priya-narmasakhā*), lady messengers as also the flute. They are all very intimately attached to the hero and dexterous in love affairs. They are equally efficient in matters of time and place (fit to arrange love meetings), know how to please the annoyed *Gopīs* and guard the secrets of the hero.

The beloved companions of the lord who possess the same amount of qualities as their beloved Lord are possessed of intense love, sweetness and wealth of virtuous traits that put them at the head of general companions as the foremost prop of the sentiment of sweetness next to Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*.

Like the lord himself the beloved also constitute the very prop of the sweet sentiment. They are *svakīyās* and *parakīyās* in various moods, shades, grades and degrees of intensity of love for Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*. Since no love sports are possible when He is all alone, the Beloveds were made to incarnate by Śrī *Kṛṣṇa* for the sole purpose of the real culmination of sweet devotion.

In spite of the many kinds of love, which in Greek are designated as *philia* (friendship), *eros* (aspiration toward value), and *epithymia* (desire), in addition to *agape*, (Theo. Christian love, esp. as distinct from erotic love,) which is the creation of the Spirit, there is one point of

identity in all these qualities of love, which justifies the translation of them all by "**love**"; and that identity is the '**urge toward the reunion of the separated,**' which is the inner dynamics of life. Love in this sense is one and indivisible." –(Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 137.)



V. Sakhī as Guru

In trying to understand the role of the *sakhī* as Guru we find that according to the *śāstras* the Guru is the most favourite of *Kṛṣṇa* in truth. And *Kṛṣṇa* confers his blessings on his devotees in the shape of the *Guru*.

In Śrīmad –Bhagavatham

*dvitīyaṁ prāpyānupūrvyāṁ
janmopanayanaṁ dvijaḥ
vasan gurukule dānto
brahmādhīyāta cāhūtaḥ*

-(11-17-22)

‘O Uddhava. Do know the Guru to be identical with me. Never slight him nor envy him thinking him as a human being. He is the embodiment of all deities.’

The *Śikṣa–Guru* is also identical with Śrī *Kṛṣṇa*. He has two forms 1. Inner soul and 2. The greatest devotee of God.

*naivopayanty apacitīm kavayas taveśa
brahmāyusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ
yo ’ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann
ācārya-caitṭya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

-(ibid 11-29-6)

‘O lord! The great sages delightfully meditate on Thy merciful bounties. They cannot pay off their indebted gratitude to thee even if they get the life-time of the Brahma. Thou in the shape of the *Guru* dispellest the darkness of ignorance of all beings from within and without and thou manifests thyself to them.’

According to Śrī Chandrashekharendra Swami in The Guru Tradition-The voice of the Guru, the term ‘Gu’ means darkness and ‘ru’ means that which banishes something. Thus *Guru* means one who dispels darkness. The *Guru* gives the illumination of *jñāna* to his disciples. When the *Guru* is defined as the one who dispels darkness it means his function is the removal of something. His inner strength or greatness works significantly outwardly. Giving *upadeśa* orally or through example of his life or by grace (it may be that he does not

consciously bestow this grace but does so through Ishwara. He dispels the ignorance of his disciple. Ignorance in matters small or big like those relating to the Self.

According to another meaning of the word, the '*Guru*' has the character of divinity. The *paraBrahman* has neither an attribute or form. How can we understand it with a mind that knows a thing only through its attributes and form. It is for this purpose to grasp the *paraBrahman* with our mind that the *paraBrahman* itself in its compassion comes to us in the person of the *Guru*.

Gu denotes –gunas and ru – form. So the *Guru* is *paraBrahman* that has attributes and form. The *Guru* is one who teaches us the reality about ourselves and instructs us in the *sadhana* by which we may realise this reality.

If the *Guru* performs a function for the disciple there must be a link between the two. Even if something is not made known openly by the *Guru* and its meaning suggested only inwardly, it is *upadeśa* because whatever the *Guru* does to banish the disciple's ignorance must be called *upadeśa*.

Surrender or '*śaranāgati*' has its own weight. A disciple can be blessed by a *Guru* who has realised himself but does not have the desire to give *anugruha* to his disciple. In the same way a disciple is also blessed if he has surrendered to a *Guru* who may not have the power in the least of blessing anybody. If a disciple goes to a *Guru* and places his trust unquestioningly on him and if he does not by speech or action lower the prestige of his master he will be elevated by such conduct even if the *Guru* is elevated or not.

If a disciple firmly surrenders and believes somebody to be a *Guru*, he will receive the gift of '*jñāna*' from the person however unworthy he may be as a *Guru* and however inadequate the weight of his inner experience may be. **This is because of the attitude of the 'surrender'. 'Surrender' or '*śaranāgati*' has its own weight.**

And in this context of śaranāgati one finds that when the nāyikā surrenders unquestioningly to the sakhī, resting all her hopes upon her; this very act as seen in the light of the above puts the sakhī on par with the Guru, whether the sakhī is qualified or not, so to say. The act of śaranāgati by the nāyikā elevates the position of the sakhī.

One realizes from the Dharmaśāstras that the teacher, though younger in years than the taught, must be regarded as an elder or a senior and therefore as a *Guru*. We may learn from one younger than us. *Vidyā in the true sense must be able to remove ahaṁkāra*. Learning an art or *vidyā*, taking up a *mantra* by oneself, performing a meritorious work or rite without the aid of a *Guru* are not permitted by the *śāstras*. A *Guru* is needed for all these. It is said that knowledge gained without a *Guru* is like begetting a son by one's wife's paramour.

Two qualifications for a *Guru* are mentioned in the Mudakopanisad (1-2-12) in the passage dealing with *paramātmā tattva*. Here it says 'Go to the *Guru* for refuge'.

One qualification is that the *Guru* must be a *shrotiya*. One steeped in the Vedas. As a *Guru* he must be a *Brahma nishtaka*. Thus apart from possessing knowledge of the *paramātmā* he must have realisation in his heart. ***Such personal experience is not possible without love, the spirit of sacrifice, the desire to help others and truthful conduct.***

Just as a disciple is moulded by the *Guru*, the *Guru* is indirectly moulded by the disciple. The quality of the disciples determines the quality of the *Guru*. The *Guru* alone bestows wealth that is everlasting. It is wealth that unites us inseparably with that which is eternal, the *paramātmān*.

Yasya deve para bhaktī yatha deve thata gurau.

One must have the same high devotion for the *Guru* as one has for *Īśvara*. It means that the disciple through such devotion gains knowledge of the Self (*ātmajñāna*).

When the form of an object is revealed its substance may be unilluminated. It remains secret or hidden. It is '*paroksha*'. When it goes in and its form is dissolved its fruitful essence shines in us and becomes '*aparoksha*'.

When *upadesha* is grasped on the intellectual plane without our realising the bliss that is its substance it is *paroksha*. When its essence is revealed within as part of the inward life itself in the state of *samādhi* in which we forget ourselves then the upadesa is '*aparoksha*'.

For *upadesha* to transcend the intellectual place and become rooted within, there is needed absolute devotion to the *Guru*. The *Guru* blesses by the direct experience of *ātman* , realization out of supreme compassion.

Like the season of spring the *Guru* brings benefits to the world without any reason- *ahetuna*.

In *Prasnottara ratnamalika* we come across the question as to Who is a *Guru*?

Adhigatatattvah sishyahitayodyataha satatam.

He who has fully grasped the meaning of *tattvas* and realised them.

The *Guru* is *udyataha*. Always exerting himself to the utmost to do good to others and impart what he has learnt and to help others realise such learning. To put an end to the *karma* of the disciple. While the intellect is aware of one thing, the inner being, the basis of intellect knows another. The intellect does not experience anything, it only knows based on logic. The heart which experiences objects is not aware of debates or arguments based on knowledge. **The essential truth of life is the heart, the innermost being.** The heart does not open out easily. Somehow importance is given to a man's intellect. Matters relating to the *ātman* which are to be experienced by the heart are first assessed by the intellect in order to determine whether they are right or wrong.

When the intellect is fatigued by the work it has to do and fails to attain the goal of knowledge there is the urge to open out the heart. Such behavior is a perverse consequence of man being endowed with the intellect. The difficulty of opening out the heart is felt more by people who are

highly intelligent than by those of humbler intellect. The latter without racking their brains accept things in faith. Sometimes matters cannot be resolved through the intellect and it is then that we wonder whether all things must go through the intellect. Thus the Vedas and the eternal truths were considered and revealed as *srutī*. The *paramātmā* is beyond the reach of the intellect.

And this implies that the nāyikā fatigued by the non-responsive nāyaka pours out her heart to the sakhī not understanding the play of the nāyaka. It is the sakhī then that strives to put an end to the karma of the nāyikā. The sakhī necessarily is of a humbler intellect and towards egolessness. And thus the nāyikā must use the intervening step of shedding the intellect to reach the nāyaka -the paramātmā.

Who is an *āchārya*?

According to the Dharmaśāstras, an *āchārya* is he who without having given *Brahmopadesha* to a pupil teaches him the *śāstrās* in their entirety or in part. By virtue of his erudition, an *āchārya* gives a particular group of people instruction in a well-ordered system or subject. So while a *Guru* may give *upadesha* in any language the *āchārya* teaches only the Vedas.

The tradition of āchāryas is essential to make the light of the ātman in us fully radiant and to teach us the way in which we will be free from sorrow.

The Hamsa Sandeśa of Vedānta Desika represents Rama's attempt, after getting the tidings of Sita's welfare through Hanuman, in sending her a message through a swan assuring her of rescuing her from the demon Ravana. Esoterically the swan is the *Āchārya* and Sita is the *jīva* suffering due to separation from Rama, the Supreme Being and keenly desiring to have reunion with him.

Indian philosophy assumes that the selves are afflicted with the ills of the world which are not remediable by the means known to mankind. It seeks therefore to make provision for

speculative reflections on the possibility of getting at the means to get rid of these ills for ever. Religion, which concurs with philosophy, aiming at reunion with God on the removal of these ills, lays down some methods which require to be practiced for this purpose. A self, however enlightened it may be, requires the help of an *Āchārya* to guide it in the pursuit of knowledge of reality and in practising a way of life that would surely take him to the goal. Only that knowledge which a man acquires from the *Āchārya* would be fruitful for him. It is however not easy to get an *Āchārya*. God's will and grace and one's own luck play a significant role in getting an *Āchārya*.

An aspirant to the spiritual goal should know what marks out one as *Āchārya*. Vedanta Desika says, One shall seek to get an *Āchārya* who is thoroughly conversant with the good tradition, is steady in thought and faultless. Proficient in the Vedas, he must be firmly adherent to *Brahman*. Possessing the *sattva guṇa* he shall be true in speech and shall follow a walk of life according to the time. He shall be devoid of hypocrisy and jealousy and have control over the object of senses. He shall be a relation lasting for a long time, be compassionate, be guiding (the pupil) when lapses occur and be interested in the well being of himself and others. **However the human beings by nature are prone to fault and could not be expected to become of the need to approach the *Āchārya* even if he is available with the above mentioned characteristics. God takes therefore the initiative to select an *Āchārya* and send him to the people whom he desires to save from distress.**

According to the Vaishnavite tradition, an enlightened self shall consider itself to be encased in a body having ten dreadful sense organs and faces, controlled by the demon of mind. He should acquire the discriminative knowledge and control of that demon by issuing against him the shaft of this knowledge.

In his Sankalpasuryodaya, Vedanta Desika says that the self is distressed by being present in the body possessed by the haughty demon of mind having ten faces and ten sense organs. He is made by a preceptor comparable to Hanuman, to realize the truth about reality.

The self is like Sita, both being *sesha* to God. Hanuman's crossing the sea and acting as the messenger of Rama show that the *Āchārya* alone could relieve the self of the sufferings by giving it the knowledge of *arthapanchaka*- the five cardinal principles. 1. The nature of *Brahman* 2. The nature of self 3. The means of attaining *Brahman* 4. The result that is obtained and 5. The obstacles that lie in the way of realization.

In his Sankalpasuryodaya (Haṃsa Sandeśa of Vedanta Desika in the Sanskrit commentary by Mahamahopadhyaya), Vedanta Desika says that the colour of the swan is described in the *Haṃsa Sandeśa* as akin to the full moon (Rakachandradhyutisahacara 1.2). Possession of this colour marks it off from other birds. This may be taken to suggest that the *Āchārya* must be taken to be at the stage marked by white colour. **This means that he is either a released soul or nearly released and so has competence to guide others.** In fact the *Āchārya* shall be respected as though he is divine. Besides the swan is a representative of the family in which the Lords took shape as a swan and came down to help Brahma in getting back the *vedas* which were lost to him. The swan too represents the white colored stage though it is its natural colour.

When asking the swan to deliver the message Rama asks it to state before her at the outset the lineage of Rama which besides instilling her courage and encouragement would arouse interest in listening to the person who had come there with the message. This suggests too that the *Āchārya* shall draw the attention of the disciples to the matter which he would be conveying to them.

In the message Rama conveys, he shows he was spending his time by finding the likeness of her touch, looks, bed of his beloved Sita in several places. This suggests how the devotee bewails unable to find the form of God in full. Another important aspect served in sending the message is the assurance given by the sender, here Rama, about his will to rescue Sita from Ravana and also foreseeing the pleasant times they would be spending after reunion. This is also suggestive of the assurance the *Āchārya* is expected to give the *jīva* that he would soon join God and enjoy unlimited bliss after reunion in *sayujya*. *Sarupya*, *sālokya* and *samīpya* are the other kinds of *moksha*. The *vishishtadvaitins* prefer only *sayujya*. **The *Āchārya* gives *tattwagnana* to the *jīva*.**

‘**Easy accessibility, sweetness and gentleness in speech**, dependence on food that is easily made available, exalted character, possession of the marks of conch and discus on the body, **shyness, reticence, descending to the level of devotees in the interest of their welfare**, being well-disposed to those who seek their guidance and ability to convey the secret doctrines to their pupils are some of the chief traits which an *Āchārya* is expected to possess’. -Love and Devotion, Nitya Chaitanya yati.

Rama out of extreme absent-mindedness regarded the swan superior to even Hanuman and began to endear himself with the bird that could not articulate. **Persons whose minds are afflicted with the separation from their sweet-hearts go about requesting the clouds, mountains and trees etc. for favour and so why not one capable of understanding be approached.**

When Rama beseeches the swan to be a messenger he says:

Friend, I am only an ordinary man amongst many on earth but you are a distinguished one among those that tread the aerial path. It is indeed fit that you are to be a messenger for one who has taken refuge in you, considering that even the creator of the universe (Brahma) once served as charioteer.

The *jīva* may be a man or woman but its painful experiences are depicted as though they belong only to the woman. A woman by nature is shy and retiring. The emotive aspect in her

married condition gains prominence and fills her to the very nerve. Steadfastness in her love for her husband, abiding faith in him, perfect fidelity, utter inability to stand in society without him, abject dependence on him and living her life only through him marks the nature of a woman. These traits become conspicuous when she is forced to remain with him. During this period she is observed to have no liking even for her own wanted things, averse to seeking the aid of anybody else for her requirements, emaciated and continually absorbed in the reveries about her husband. A devotee even if he were to be a male, is found to reveal while in communion with God, the very same traits which a woman is found to possess in the company of her husband.

Likewise his cravings for God's presence when he is separated from him bear resemblance to those of a woman in separation. Emotion has a greater hold over a woman than man just as in the same way as man has more reason than a woman. The sufferings which represent the excited mental states do not as they are displayed by man and woman arouse the sympathy of others to the same extent. Those of the woman who is fully charged with emotion touch the feelings of others more powerfully, compelling them to find a way for their removal. People do not go forth readily to offer relief to the suffering man, feeling that man could throw off his sufferings without much dependence upon others.

What has been stated above has a general application to the male and female under emotional strain. The case of a devotee is unique and should be looked at from a special angle.

The devotee though he may be a man has all the sufferings which a woman undergoes when she is separated from her husband. Reason then deserts him fully. Everything around him has an intimate connection with God. He is attracted to the bewitching beauty of God. The ineffably entrancing divine beauty has a powerful hold on him which he can never shake off. Naturally when he could not have the incommunicable delight of divine communion, he

cannot but muse on his mystic experience and find delight in observing divine presence in the surroundings which appear to correspond directly or indirectly connected with God. Now and then he becomes alive to the practical world and becomes much miserable. Such a life which is fully charged with emotion cannot be pictured by drawing a parallel from any aspect of the world. In fact nothing except the life of a woman can be brought in for effectively delineating his life. There is the scope in depiction of bridal mysticism. All *jīvas* both male and female are women.

Guru bhaktī is the source of the student's humility.

While most respondents to date have referred to the sakhī as Guru, Smt. Padmaja referred to her as an āchārya. In the light of above, we can consider the sakhī as an āchārya in the sense of the sakhī leading the nāyikā towards her goal by effecting the way of union through instruction. By instructing her as to what exact steps must be taken to reach the goal-the nāyakā. As a Guru, the sakhī leads the nāyikā within to her deeper self and helps her tide over the pangs of separation and or come to terms with it. Guru Smt. Poornima rightly pointed out that the sakhī is the one who even by her silence and non-demonstrative role as seen in most varnams, allows the nāyikā to grow from within. In that sense, she acts as the Guru showing and sowing the glimmer of hope in the nāyikā towards realization of union with her paramour.

So while many look upon the *sakhī* as a *Guru*, Prof Gomatam, Director of Bhaktī Vedanta Institute, Mumbai has refuted the same. He said that if she has to be a *Guru* then she ought to be worshipped by the *shishya* for the *Guru* stands in place of God. So he felt that it did not hold.

Also clearly in the Gita Govinda, as Prof pointed out, and as seen in the ninth canto and eighteenth song, we find the *sakhī* addressing Radha as *sakhī*!!

This is a very interesting and pertinent observation that refutes the earlier and most commonly held theory that the *sakhī* plays the role of a *Guru* in the Gita Govinda and as stated by many respondents. How do we come to terms with this? Here a sense of equality suggests that both treat each as an equal.

The sakhī addresses Radha as sakhī in Canto 18.

हरिरभिसरति वहति मधुपवने।

किमपरमधिकसुखं सखि भुवने॥

माधवे मा कुरु मानिनि मानमये ॥

Hari comes when spring winds bearing honey blow,
What greater pleasure exists in the world friend?
Don't turn wounded pride on Madhava, He is proud too sullen Radha.

In Canto 11, verse 10

सा मां द्रक्ष्यति वक्ष्यति स्मरकथां प्रत्यङ्गमालिङ्गनैः

प्रीतिं यास्यति रंस्यते सखि समागत्येति चिन्ताकुलः ।

स त्वां पश्यति वेपते पुलकयत्यानन्दति स्विद्यति

प्रत्युद्गच्छति मूर्च्छति स्थिरतमःपुञ्जेनिकुञ्जे प्रियः ॥ १० ॥

“*Sakhī*, Your beloved is wrapped in the dense darkness of a secluded bower, anxiously thinking, ‘When Radha comes, Her eyes will be brimming with affection for Me. She will speak words of love, revealing Her amorous desires. She will take delight in fully embracing Me and We will enjoy intimacies.’ Feeling Your presence and thus absorbed, He pines for You, His body trembling, hairs bristling, perspiring profusely and blooming with unlimited joy. Thinking You have come, He steps forward to meet You and faints in the frenzy of pleasure.”

Verse 11 in the same canto,

अक्ष्णोर्निक्षिपदञ्जनं श्रवणयोस्तापिच्छगुच्छावलीं

मूर्ध्नि श्यामसरोजदाम कुचयोः कस्तूरिकापत्रकम्।

धूर्तानामभिसारसत्वरहदां विष्वङ्निकुञ्जे सखि

ध्वान्तं नीलनिचोलचारु सुदृशां प्रत्यङ्गमालिङ्गति ॥ ७॥

“*Sakhī*, look! The night covers the *kunja* with a dark cherished cloak which embraces beautiful adulteresses whose hearts hasten to meet with their cunning lovers. The dark has lined their eyes with black collyrium, it has become the clusters of *tāmala* leaves on their ears, the dark blue lotus wreaths on their heads, and the leafy designs of musk on their full breasts.” “Radha,” Her *sakhī* continues, “the darkness of the whole world has been gathered up and is cloaking the *keli-nikunja* where Shyama eagerly awaits you. Do not delay another moment.

Abhisārikā heroines, dressed in deep dark blue, move unnoticed in the dead of night. The whole environment is encouraging accomplished lovers to go and meet with their sweethearts. ‘Go! Be on your way! You should arrive there before another rival heroine takes Your place. Do not take the time to decorate Yourself with eye-liner, earrings, garlands, musk paintings or anything else. Just go at once.’ Instigates the *sakhī*.

Radha moves slowly for the journey of the inner self of the giving up of false pride and outer adornments and she enters Madhava’s world (twenty first song). The descriptions are couched in an imagery of war and love, of the beauty of nature and the dense dark night and expectancy. Human as the two are, the meeting is the coming together of Vishnu and Sri.

As explained by Prof Gomatam, in the Chaitanya tradition, the *sakhī* is also a devotee or in love with *Kṛṣṇa*. She exists to foster the pastimes of *Kṛṣṇa* and Radha. She must see *Kṛṣṇa* happy. This was similar to the Kings and their retinue of many *dāsīs*. The *dāsī* fostered the love play between the King and Queen and that was because they themselves would have been in awe or had a semblance of love for the King himself so much so that if the King needed their attention they would gladly shower it on him.



VI. Rasa, bhaktī and sakhī.

- i. Understanding nature of manas, ātman, citta in Indian
Philosophy.

Ravi Gupta in Chaitanya Vaishnava philosophy: tradition, reason and devotion mentions Śrīnātha's philosophy of devotion as different from Rūpa Goswamin's. While Rūpa Goswamin talks of *rasa* of devotion, Śrīnātha Cakravartī, contemporary of Rūpa Goswamin analyses devotion with *rasa* (*rasa bhaktī* or *sarasa bhaktī*). The concept is further explained as:

‘Devotion is the mental state that arises when there is an awareness of something that is worthy of worship (*upāśyatva-jñāna*). If this is connected with another state of mind such as a dominant emotion like love it is then called devotion with *rasa* (*rasa bhaktī*). The two mental states do not occur simultaneously but in succession. Thus in devotion with *rasa* there are aspects of devotion (*bhaktīva*) and aspects of *rasa* in its nature (*rasatva*). In devotion devoid of *rasa* only aspects of devotion are found.’

Bhakti is defined as absolute love-The intense love experienced between two persons is called *prema* in Sanskrit. *Prema* can also be treated as *bhakti* if its quality is pure, ennobling and of self-denial as in devotion. - *Bhakti sūtra* of Narada

Devotion does not have a single type of *rasa* nor does a devotee have a single type of devotion according to Śrīnātha. He classifies ten types of worshippers with *rasa* (*rasopāsaka*) akin to Bharata's eight, then peaceful *rasa* and *rasa* of love. The different emotional states arise when the proper causes are present and so they are not permanent. Śrīnātha also mentions that the natural (*svābhāvika*) *rasa* of devotees are permanent while other *rasas* come and go according to the situation. Arjuna's natural *rasa* is the *rasa* of friendship or *sakhya* but when he witnessed the cosmic form of *Kṛṣṇa* he was filled with *bhaya*. This resembles Rūpa's analysis of primary and secondary *rasa*.

According to Rūpagoswāmi, in his two works Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu and Ujjvalanīlamanī the *rati* that is existing in the hearts of devotees assumes the form of *bhakti rasa* when it is intensified with the presentation of the *vibhāvas* etc. Being the highest bliss it is self-illuminating and *akhaṇḍa* (without parts).

In accordance with the nature of the *rati* it has two varieties-*mukhya* (the chief one) and *gauṇa* (secondary). Of the twelve *rasas śānta, prīti, preyaś, vātsalya* and *madhura* are taken as *Mukhya* and *hāsyā, adbhuta, vīra, karuṇa* and *raudra, bhayanaka* and *bībhatsa* as *Gauṇa*.

एवं भक्तिरसो भेदाद् दूयोर्द्वादशधोच्यते ।

Rūpagoswāmin says the enjoyment of all the varieties of the *bhakti rasa* is possible in five different ways- *pūrti, vikāśa, vistāra, vikṣepa* and *kṣobha* which are the states of the mind.

The mental reactions are nothing but the modifications or changes in the mind.

Vikāśa is a mental state produced when there is contact of the senses with a person of *Puṇya* or such object. At that time there arises the feeling of *muditā* (joy) in the mind and this is the indicative factor of this state. Like the bud of the flower which blooms and spreads fragrance in all directions the mind expands when it begins to enjoy the pleasure of *sattvagauṇa* which keeps the person in a blissful state. The experience is got in *ṣṛṅgāra rasa* and *hāsyā rasa*. It is said in the Nāṭyaśāstra that whatever in this world is pure, pious, bright and beautiful is compared with the *ṣṛṅgāra rasa*.

यत्किञ्चित्लोके शुचिमेध्यमुज्ज्वलं दर्शनीयं वा तच्छृङ्गारेणोपमीयते ।

It is therefore but proper and in accordance with the *śāstra* that the external object which causes the *muditā-bhāvanā* which is identical with the experience of *ṣṛṅgāra* should be good and pious(*puṇyaprāda*). Only a person of nobility and action can rouse it. Now a question

arises -is it acceptable to the Yogaśāstra, that the *prasādana* (pleasing) of the mind which is its *vikāsa* is brought about by experience of *śṛṅgāra*? In reply to this, it may be said that Yoga strives to remove future distress whereas the *nātya* or *kāvya* is meant for securing the *ānanda* through the removal of the present distress. Therefore what is avoidable in Yoga may be acceptable in the *nātya* or *kāvya*. The similarity is only in this aspect that the *chitta* in both becomes concentrated in the *samprajñāta* state.

Vistāra is another reaction of the mind. When the senses come into contact with a pleasant external object then the mind gets *vistāra* (spreading). The word *vistāra* indicates the nature of the effect produced on the mind. It also implies the existence of the place on which something spreads. **The *vistāra* of the mind is experienced through the feeling of *maitrī* which is mainly connected with the *vīra* indirectly with the *adbhuta*.** The *Vistāra* of the mind is felt when the *utsāha* (high spiritedness), the *sthāyi bhāva* of the *vīra rasa* energises every part of the body.

Whenever we come under the influence of a pleasant object or a person we get so much of *utsāha* which effects the *chitta* in the form of *Vistāra*, as a result of which we cannot keep quiet and become very active. This is what is called ***maitrī bhāvanā***. The appearance of the *maitrī bhāvanā* is the sign of *Vistāra* which is possible through the direct or indirect contact with a pleasant person or object. **Every good person makes friends with a person enjoying happiness.** That is why in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *vīra* is said as the nature of a noble person and as being produced by clear understanding, determination, foresight, modesty and prowess.

In *Kṣobha* (agitation) the mind gets disturbed by distress. When the senses come into contact with an object which causes distress its reaction on the mind will be in the form of agitation which results in the *bhāvanā* of *karuṇā*. When the mind is disturbed there will be terrible conflict of the *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* of which there will be a powerful effect on the nervous

system. As a result effects like weeping, crying, losing the consciousness take place.

Weeping and crying bring back the mind to its normal condition as said by Bhavabhūti:

शोके क्षोभे च हृदयं प्रलापैरेवधार्यते ।

In *Vikṣepa* (distraction), the distracted state of mind produces the feeling of *Upekṣā* (indifference). Its reaction would be in the form of disgust and fear which develop into *bībhatsa* and *bhayānaka*. The *vikṣepa* of the mind which causes *Upekṣā bhāvanā* is the result of the reaction of the contact with sinful external objects.

Thus from above we understand that *Vikāsa*, *vistāra*, *kṣobha* and *vikṣepa* are the fundamental modifications or reactions of the *chitta* which are experienced in the form of feelings *muditā*, *maitrī*, *karuṇā* and *upekṣā*. That is the reason why *śṛṅgāra*, *vīra*, *bībhatsa* and *raudra* are accepted as the fundamental rasas in the Nāṭyaśāstra. The other four rasas: *hāsya*, *karuṇa*, *adbhuta* and *bhayānaka* are the bye-products of the above four *rasas*.

शृङ्गारादधि भवेद्धास्यो रौद्राच्च करुणो रसः ।

वीराच्चैवाद्भुतपत्तिर्बीभत्साच्च भयानकः ॥

We find that typically the nāyikā goes through the above modifications of the mind Vikāsa, vistāra, kṣobha and vikṣepa.

Vikāsa when she possibly sees the nāyaka for the first time. When she is bewitched either by his looks, speech, deeds, valour, strength or recollection of her union in past life.

Vistāra is when she goes through the effect as in the signs of first love.

Kṣobha when she goes through the unpleasantness of not being able to speak to him or talk to him or the fact that he may have gone away on some work.

Vikṣepa when the length of time caused by separation leads to the cause of indifference or upekṣā.

These are given as modifications of the mind and this can lead us to the thought that perhaps the nāyikā represents the mind undergoing these modifications.

According to Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha, the *sthāyi bhāvas* like *rati* are the *dharma*s (qualities) of the mind and lie there in the latent form. **The vedantic theory of *sākṣibhāsyatva* (being directly illumined by the *ātman*) can be applied here and the *dharma*s of the mind (*bhavas*) can be said to be directly illumined by the *ātman*(consciousness).**

In the Yogadarśana, different reactions of the mind are enumerated when there is contact between the senses and the external objects. This reaction of the mind is not always the same. It depends on the nature of the instigating external objects. The classification of the external objects is into four groups. *Sukhāspada* (pleasant), *Duḥkhāspada* (distressing), *Puṇyaprāda* (meritorious) and *Pāpaprāda* (sinful). The mental reactions in the form of *maitrī* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (pity), *muditā* (joy) and *upekṣā* (indifference) are given this fourfold classification on the basis of the nature of external objects. Thus *maitrī* is connected with *sukha*, *karuṇā* with *duḥkha*, *muditā* with *puṇya* and *upekṣā* with *pāpa*.

According to Niruktakāra, *ātman* is derived from the root 'at' 'to move constantly' by adding the suffix 'manin' it means that element (*tattva*) remains unchanged amongst things which goes on changing and perishing. It is used in the sense of the body because it continues to exist when the stages like childhood, youth and old age etc are changing. Similarly *jīva* like the *sūkṣmaśarīra*, is called *ātman* because it continues to exist even when the different bodies appear and perish. In the same way *chaitanya* (consciousness) is called *ātman*, because being entirely different from the external objects and the body, senses, *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and *sūkṣmaśarīra*, it always continues to exist when all of them perish.

Ātman means all pervading. Also *antaḥkāraṇa* is called *ātman* because it pervades throughout the body. Thus *ātman* has two *lakṣaṇas* (definitions). That which is all-pervading

and eternal. As these two qualities have reached the highest point in God he is called *paramātmān*. As compared with *paramātmān*, the all-pervasiveness and eternality of the *jīva* is limited.

According to Dhanañjaya, the mind of an individual is the *ātman* and it is *sva* (one's own).

Dhanika in his commentary however states that the word '*ātman*' in the phrase *ātmānanda samudbhavaḥ* means the *hṛdaya*.

The word *bhoga* is a very important technical term in the *sāṅkhyadarśana*. As is said by the author of the *sāṅkhya-sūtra*: *bhoga* has its fulfillment in the *Puruṣa*, the consciousness:

चिदवसानो भोगः

The difference between *jñāna* (cognition) and *bhoga* is that the former does not effect *ātman* whereas the later effects it. That which gets its fulfillment in *ātman* is *bhoga*.

The Nāṭyaśāstra explains the medium of the *rasa* experience as from only the mind but not the senses. There are eight permanent moods like *rati* in our minds which are generally latent. When they are roused it is called their '*udreka*' and they are experienced in that state only. Their *udreka* is brought about in two ways- when we come across certain exciting objects which instigate them or when such objects are presented through a poem or a drama. When excited by the *Kāvya* or *Nāṭaka* they become the objects of the experience directly through the mind.

Charaka describes the nature of the spirit, 'The spirit, which is changeless and transcendental becomes the cause of consciousness when united with the mind, the sense objects and the senses. It (the spirit) is the eternal witness observing actions. 'But the spirit is no mere witness, but he is a doer too. He is the knower, doer and witness at the same time. Charaka's soul is not inactive as described in Sankhya but the self is ever active and the real doer. 'Thus

man is able to perform various actions. He is given that particular appellation which is characteristic of the actions which he does either as an agent or instrument or the doer.

Such is the spirit or the self. It occupies the central place in Indian psychology because it is consciousness itself. It is awareness and man is man because of the self. Such self has its seat in man. Even though it covers the whole body, it has its special seat, or central place wherein it can be realised. **Charaka points out that heart as the seat of the spirit.** 'Further it (heart) is the seat of the supreme vital essence; in it, too, is the seat of the consciousness. Therefore, the heart is called the Mahat and Artha by the Physicians.'

As the soul has its seat in the heart so also mind and senses and body also are dependent on the heart as mind and senses and the body naturally follow the self. 'The body with its six limbs, the understanding, the senses, the five sense objects, the spirit with its attributes, the mind and the 22 mental concepts, are all dependent on the heart.' Heart is the main support of the spirit and its mental and physical adjuncts 'The heart is regarded by the cardiologists as the support of all these (above mentioned) factors. **In Upanishads, heart is considered the seat of the soul.** Ramana Maharshi, the late South Indian Sage of Arunachalam used to show heart as the seat of the spirit from his own experience of self

All this shows that Charaka like all other Indian philosophers regards self as the central thesis and its place in the body is heart. The inclination of the Indian philosopher or the scientist is for the recognition of the self as the fundamental principle of life and the universe. 'The bias of the Indian philosophers has been towards the self as the basic principle, for which everything else exists and acts, and mind is not an exception to the rule

The mind is an instrument only. This fact is very clearly stated by Charaka. **'The mind which is supersensual is designated 'sattva' and some call it 'chitta. Its function is dependent on the presence of the mental object and the spirit.** It is the cause of the activity of the sense-organs.

'Mind is above the senses. It is the connecting link between the senses and the spirit, but at the same time it moves the senses and serves the self. It is sentient only because of the presence of the self. This much description of the mind gives its initial introduction.

To know the nature of the mind something more is required to express the nature of the mind: 'On account of the multiplicity of mental objects, sense-objects and impulses, as also of the combinations of the qualities of Rajas, Tamas and Sattva, the mind appears as multi-faceted in one and the same person There is no multiplicity of minds, because a single mind cannot have contact with many sense-objects simultaneously. Hence all sense organs do not function at one and the same moment.'

This material concept of the mind is generally the same all throughout the ancient Indian philosophy. Mind is quite distinct from the self as it is material, of course it is made of subtle matter. Still however, **it partakes of the nature of the soul on one side and influences and is influenced by the senses on the other.**

'Indian philosophers from the very beginning have avoided this pitfall by recognising mind or *Manas* as something distinct from the self or the *Ātman* , though partaking of its nature as intelligence through association with it. Since it is subtle in nature it is not gross matter.

It follows from this that *Manas* like any other material object possesses priority, posteriority and speed. To sum up the concept of mind in Ayurveda, it can be described in short as this: It is atomic and one, is of subtle matter, is an inner organ and by unity with the self it works for the self and does all mental movements like **perception, cognition and connection.** By describing mind as material, Ayurveda alongwith other systems of philosophy, placed mind in the class with insentient categories and has thus facilitated the attribution of faculties and functions it performs. This description is quite consistent with the philosophy it adhered to.

It also gives scope for the evolution of mind in due course. Thus in short, **mind in Ayurveda** is (1) material and atomic (2) is made of subtle matter (3) is the inner organ of the self (4) exists for the self and (5) **does all the mental functions like perception, cognition etc.** This is a workable and rational concept.

Perception and cognition take place when there is a conjunction of the soul, the senses, the mind and the sense-objects. It takes place at once and is definite in nature. 'Perception or observation is defined as cognition, definite and immediate, arising from the conjunction of the soul, the senses the mind and the sense-objects

This means that the organiser and perceiver is the soul, mind is its instrument, the senses are the secondary instruments or the doors of perception and cognition and the sense objects are objects of perception and cognition. 'The self is conscious. It is conscious of objects when it is in conjunction with the sense organs. It has consciousness, perception, retention, recollection, reasoning, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, emotion, volition, subconscious impressions, habits, merit and demerit. This comment of Chakrapani on Charaka's thesis of perception and cognition is appropriate in as much as the self is placed in the centre.

There are emotional forces which affect the intellect, reasoning, and the life itself and its goal.

'Three indeed are the pursuits that should be followed by every.- man who is possessed of unimpaired intelligence, understanding, energy and enterprise and who wishes to secure his good both in this world and hereafter. They are the pursuits of life, the pursuits of wealth and the pursuits of the other world.' At the root of all drives and motives is the desire. Desires use senses. They may be good or bad and perverse.

Charaka maintains that envy, grief, fear, anger, pride, hatred, and the like are the affections of the mind (*manovikars*) due to perversion of the intuitive knowledge (*Prajnaparadha*).

Confusion of such intellect is the root of all unwholesome emotions. Sorrow is due to comprehension of non-eternal things as eternal due to the confusion of the intellect (*buddhivibhramsha*), lack of self-control and lapse of right memory.

Charaka maintains that there is a reciprocal relation between feeling and desire. Pleasure is the cause of desire and aversion is 'the cause of pain. When the mind is concentrated on the self and acquires a pure vision of it, pleasure and pain are no longer experienced. Prompted by *upadha* or the grasping and vitiated by *prajnaparadha*, the mind gives rise to emotional abnormalities like *moha*, aversion, anger etc.

At the back of all these are the confusion of intelligence, want of self-control and lack of right knowledge. This is how *prajnaparadha* is defined by Charaka. It is in a wider sense an error of judgment or misapplied intelligence and is at the root of all kinds of moral depravity.

Prajna generally means integral intellectual outlook connected with mental bent and inclination. *Prajna* means in general, wisdom or mental inclinations in general when it is steady. When the mind is upset by Rajas and Tamas, *prajnaparadha* takes place.

In Sushruta's 'Concept of mind' according to Sankhya philosophy, the *purusha* or the self is non-active and when in association with the mind it experiences pleasure and pain and the actions of the qualities. Sankhya regards the body, senses, mind, intellect, and egoism (*ahamkāra*) as evolution of *prakṛti* constituted of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the three eternal qualities. There is interaction between the body and mind in perception and volition and even interaction between body, mind and the self as self or *purusha* is active according to Sushruta's change in Sankhya concept of the self. The mind is insentient. **Mind gives rise to *vrittis* or mental modes, when mind contacts an object.** These are the distinguishing features of Sushruta's changes in Sankhya concept of the soul and mind.

Mind and its activities are purposeful and in this it amplifies the - ultimate purpose of the mind and life of man. **This final aim is salvation wherein mind becomes as pure as the spirit and it merges in the self. Here is seen the Upanishadic influence. It also clarifies the fact that mind by purification can become completely spiritual and shows the ultimate spiritual nature of mind.**

'The Naiyayika includes self and mind in the category of substance. But its substantiality is spiritual.' According to Nyāya School, man consists of *ātman* (soul), *manas* (mind) *indriyās* (sense organs) and *śarīra* (body). Each of these has a distinct function to perform.

- *Manas* : It is an organ for attaining knowledge. It gets the report of the sense organs and carries it to the *ātman* (soul). It also apprehends the internal states of pleasure, pain etc. It is atomic in size and is one in each body. If the mind were possessed of magnitude it could come in contact with many senses at a time. Since this is not possible the mind is an atom. *Manas* is also an organ of attention and it attends to one thing at a time in quick succession giving rise to a stream of thought or attention, which appears to be one continuous act of attention or stream of consciousness.

- *Ātman*: **is the real knower, feeler and actor behind the mechanism of mind, senses and body.** These are mere instruments for the *ātman*. Whereas the mind is *anu* (atomic) in size, the *ātman* is *vibhu* and *nitya* (unlimited in space and time). Although the *ātman* is capable of knowing, feeling and acting, it cannot do so without the means or instruments of mind, sense organs and body-*śarīra*: made of material particles of the five elements. It is a composite structure, which is changing, growing and is apt to disintegrate and be ultimately destroyed. It is a base for sense organs; a means for the soul to come into contact with the external objects.

In the Vaishesika School we find that the human is said to consist of body, sense organs of knowledge and of action, *manas* (mind) and *ātman* (soul). The minds and souls are infinite in

number and eternal in existence. **Each soul in the worldly existence has association with a mind, which acts as the instrument of knowledge, feeling and action.** The mind connects the soul with the sense organs of knowledge and through them with the objects of knowledge. The soul is a substance with certain generic and specific qualities. Its generic qualities (the qualities it shares with other substances) are number, distinctness, magnitude, conjunction and disjunction. It is conjoined with *manas* and due to this conjunction it exercises many qualities such as cognition, pleasure and pain. Consciousness is an unintended (not essential) quality of the soul. It is acquired from its concurrence with mind and it does not exist or function in sleep, trance and *moksha* (state of liberation). The explicit qualities of the soul are knowledge, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, volition, merit (*dharma*), demerit (*adharma*) and impressions (*saṃskāra*). These qualities distinguish it from other substances.

Whereas *manas* (mind, the inner sense) is defined as apparatus for getting knowledge of what takes place in the soul. It is, therefore, the sense through which introspection of inner states is possible and hence it is called the inner sense (*antarindriyā*). Mind is also the medium through which the impressions of the outer senses reach the soul. It is also the intermediate through which the will acts on the organs of action. Mind is different in different *jīvas* (individual souls). It is *nitya* and *vibhu* (imperishable and all-pervading) like the soul. It is atomic in extent but not physical like the atoms of the four kinds of physical substances.

Mind has no other special characteristic except of serving as a medium between the senses and the soul.

The two other characteristics of mind are: (i) It can quickly take up impressions from one thing to another. (ii) It goes with each soul while leaving a body for rebirth but it does not accompany the *mukta ātman* (liberated soul). Therefore, according to Vaisheshika, mind is a substance. It is one of the nine *dravyas* or substances having various qualities and is regarded as an internal organ and is one in each body. It is immaterial, atomic, unconscious and

capable of action or movement. Perception of external objects takes place with the help of the mind. Cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion and volitions are perceived through mind.

Mind is the internal organ through which the soul recollects, doubts and dreams.

According to the Samkhya philosophy there are twenty- five principles of evolution, which in the order of the cosmological process of evolution define the following:

Manas as ‘The inner sense (mind in a narrow sense) partaking in the nature of the above two.

These eleven *indriyās* (instruments of knowledge and action) arise out of the *ahaṁkāra*.

Puruṣa: It is neither the cause (*prakṛtī*) nor the effect (*vikṛtī*) of any thing. According to the Samkhya School, *puruṣa* (spirit) is of two kinds, the freed (*mukta*) and the unfreed or in bondage (*baddha*). The former is pure consciousness and so it has no other adjunct to identify with. The *baddha* is made up of *cit* (consciousness), which is the inner self and the body to which the consciousness is attached. The body consists of two sheaths: 1. The subtle body (*suksma - śarīra*). 2. The gross body (*sthula - śarīra*), which is derived from the parents and with which, the former remains united during life. The subtle body is split into two: 1. The inner body (*linga-śarīra*), consisting of intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṁkāra*), senses of knowledge and actions (*indriyās*) and the basic elements (*tanmātras*). 2. The outer body (*adhistan-śarīra*), which is formed of the five elements (*mahabhūtas*) in their subtle conditions arising immediately out of the five *tanmātras*.

The inner body cannot exist without the support of the outer. The subtle body is created at the beginning of the manifestation of the *pradhana*, its movements are not thwarted by anything i.e. it is capable of entering anywhere on account of its subtlety: it is permanent (*nitya*) so long as the changing universe continues i.e. so long as the universe does not lapse into the *pradhana* at the time of *mahapralaya* (the great dissolution). It is made up of *buddhi*, *ahaṁkāra*, *manas*, *indriyās* and *tanmātras*; it dissolves into the *pradhana* at the time of

mahapralaya, or the constituents of it merge into their causal condition; it is by itself incapable of giving the *puruṣa* any enjoyment of the fruits of past *karma*. For this purpose it needs a gross body; and so it moves from body to body with the dispositions acquired by one's good or bad karmas. The *Puruṣa* - the ultimate self behind every individual - is pure consciousness, which is unchanging and is active witness (*dṛṣṭa*) of all the changes in body and mind. It is the core of the personality of individual.

The psychology of Samkhya falls under two heads: (a) Instruments of knowledge and (b) functions of each instrument. The instruments of knowledge are *antahkarana* consisting of intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṁkāra*), the inner sense (*manas*) and the five external senses of ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose. The first three are inner instruments of knowledge because they are situated inside the body and five are outer senses as they are on the surface of the body and are turned outward. The distinctive function of *buddhi* is ascertainment or determination of the true nature of everything. The distinctive function of *ahaṁkāra* is to refer to the self (egotism) as for instance 'I am doing this or feeling this'. The function of *manas* is said to be *saṁkalpa*. There are two meanings of *saṁkalpa*.

The *manas* confirms to the nature of a sense of knowledge (*budhindriyā*) and that of an organ of action (*karmendriya*) being involved in the functions of both. The function of *manas* is *vikalpa*- i.e. doubt about the nature of an object - whether it is this or that. In connection with the latter, the function of *manas* is *saṁkalpa* i.e. desire to do something.

The function of the senses of knowledge (*budhindriyā*) is to get knowledge of an object. It is mere acquaintance with their appropriate objects. The more definite and articulate knowledge of the objects, involving that of their name, class etc. is regarding as being due to *buddhi* (intellect) after the *manas* has performed its function of doubting.

Yoga is predominantly a psychological philosophy. It is a science of mental discipline for attaining the highest state (*samādhī*). The ultimate aim of Yoga is complete freedom from the mind and its modifications (*vr̥ttīs*). Therefore, a thorough and critical study of mind has been undertaken in Yoga. It is necessary to know the nature, structure and function of mind in order to be free from the clutches of the mind.

Mind is called *chitta* in Yoga Philosophy. The word *chitta* is derived from the root *cit*, which means 'to know'. *Chitta* is used in the Yoga system to mean the entire knowing mechanism. *Chitta* has three chief aspects with distinct functions to perform namely *manas*, *ahaṁkāra* and *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is the capacity for illumination, determination and certainty. It is the source of virtue, non-attachment and wisdom. It manifests itself through determination and resolution in thought and action, formation and retention of concept and generalization. It is the last to act in all cognitional, affectional and volitional processes of *ahaṁkāra*, *manas* and *indriyās*. When the *manas* is registering the objects of thought, it is the *buddhi* that discriminates, determines and recognizes. *Ahaṁkāra* is that aspect of '*chitta*' wherein the personal consciousness realizes itself as a particular 'I'- experiences. It is an ego principle. It arrogates to itself the experiences held by the *manas* and passes it on to *buddhi* to be determined. It is the conscious subject of all psychological experiences. *Manas* is said to be the directing power behind all actions. It possesses the capacity of attention, selection etc; it synthesizes the discrete manifold of the sensations. It can perceive but cannot conceive, as does *buddhi*. These aspects constitute the mind (*chitta*) as a whole.

Samkhya and Yoga are regarded as allied systems as there is no fundamental difference in their respective positions regarding logic, ontology, ethics, and psychology. As regards *puruṣa*, the Samkhya admits only individual finite spirits (*jivātman*) whereas Yoga recognizes also the existence of a Divine Spirit (*Īśvara*) apart from the individual *puruṣas*, which is not at all mentioned in Samkhya.

In the Mimamsa School, man is said to consist of a physical body (*śarīra*), sense organs (*indriyās*), mind (*manas*), consciousness (*jñāna*) and soul (*ātman*). Each of these constituents has a distinct function to perform, which is done under the influence of *apūrva*, an unseen force generated by past acts of *dharma* (virtue) and *adharma* (vice).

The functions of body and sense organs are more or less same according to all the six systems of Indian thought. *Manas* is an internal organ through which the apprehensions of the sense organs (about external objects) and also pleasure, pain, cognition and other qualities of the self (internal) are perceived. The mind is not atomic (*anu*) in dimension as the *NyāyaVaisesika* maintains. It is also not quick in motion. It is all pervasive (*vibhu*) and motionless (*aspaṇḍam*). It is an intangible substance, which is neither an effect nor cause of anything else. Although all-pervading, it is limited by the body. It serves as an organ of internal perception. It functions in conjunction with the self, which is also all-pervading. *Ātman* is the eternal, immaterial substance, which is all pervading. It is distinct from body, sense organs and cognitions. It transmigrates from body to body. It is the knower (*jñātā*) active agent (*kartā*) and enjoyer (*bhoktā*).

Cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, volitions, impressions, merit and demerit (*jñāna*, *sukha*, *dukha* *iccha*, *prayatna*, *roga*, *dvesa*, *sanskara*, *dharma* and *adharma*) are the modifications of the soul. Although the soul is eternal, the modifications of the soul are not. During sleep, these modes do not take place. There is no cognition in deep sleep. What is regarded, as pleasure of sleep is mere absence of pain. The soul is not cognized by any other means but only by itself. It is an object of 'I' consciousness, which refers to its bare existence. Perception happens when the soul comes in contact with *manas* which is the internal organ and the *manas* comes in contact with the sense organs and the sense organs come in proper contact with real external objects. Supervised by the *manas* the external sense organs produce perceptions of sound, touch, colour, taste and odour (*śabda*, *sparsa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha*).

Manas produces perception of the qualities of the self namely cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion and volition (*jñāna, sukha, dukha, rāga, dweśa, prayatna*).

According to the Vedānta School, man is a composite structure consisting of soul (*ātman*), which is the same in all individuals and in the cosmos. It is called *ātman* in the individual and *Paramātmā* or *Brahman* in the cosmos. This Universal *ātman* is reflected in or limited by the bodily mechanism of each individual and is called *jīva*, which for the time being assumes an identity and separateness for itself.

The bodily mechanism of the individual, as well as that of the cosmos, consists of individual ignorance (*avidyā*), which is a part of the cosmic ignorance (*muḷa avidyā* or *māyā*).

Antahkārāṇa, the internal organ (mind) consists of the four aspects or parts of the mind namely: *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṁkāra* (ego), *chitta* (storehouse of past impressions) and *manas* (organ of attention), *pancha prāṇa* (five vital airs), *pancha jñānendriyās* (five organs of knowledge: ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose), *pancha karmendriyās* (five organs of action: mouth, hands, feet, sex organ and the organ of excretion), *sthūla śarīra* (physical body) made of physical elements.

These constituents of human personality are organized in the form of three bodies: *karma* (causal), *sūkṣma* (subtle) and *sthūla* (gross). The *karma śarīra* is constituted by the *avidyā* (the finest layer of *avidyā*), which contains all the past *saṁskārās* (impressions) of the individual ever since he assumed individuality. *Sūkṣma śarīra* is constituted by the four-fold mental principles, five *prāṇas* (vital airs), *pancha jñānendriyās* and *pancha karmendriyās*.

Kisor kumar Chakrabarti in the Classical Indian philosophy of mind-The Nyāya dualist tradition, states that: *Ārambha* and *nivṛitti* which are translated as ‘moving toward’ and ‘moving away’ may also be translated as ‘moving’ and ‘cessation of moving’.

Gotama says ‘Moving toward and moving away are due to the cognizer’s desire and aversion.(desire, aversion etc. are qualia of the cognizer’ (NS 3.2.34).

Vatsyayana explains: One comes to know that this causes me pleasure and this causes me pain. Having known this it desires to acquire the cause of pleasure and to avoid the cause of pain. Moving toward is the special effort required to acquire the cause of pleasure being motivated by the desire to acquire. Moving away is the avoidance of the cause of pain being motivated by the desire to avoid.

Thus it follows that cognition, desire, volition , aversion, pleasure, pain are connected with the same entity , have the same agent and also that cognition, desire and volition have the same support. Therefore desire, volition, aversion, pleasure and pain are qualia of the cognizer and not of something unconscious. (NSB 3.2.24).

One could hold that while cognition is the quale of the self ; **desire**, volition, pleasure, pain are not qualia of the self but of the inner sense (*manas*). Gotama argues that not only cognition but also desire and the rest are qualia of the self. His reason for repudiating this is that the inner sense being an instrument is unconscious but desire and the others require consciousness and cannot belong to something unconscious. We desire something and move to acquire it when we are aware of it as something likeable and pleasant. We turn away from something when we are aware of as unpleasant and painful. So desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain are all linked to consciousness and must all belong to the same substance to which consciousness belongs.

According to Vatsyayana, consciousness belongs to the body. As per Gotama’s aphorism 3.2.35, Since moving toward and moving away require desire and aversion and since the latter require consciousness, it is clear that all these belong to the same thing. That thing is the

body, for it is the body that moves toward something or moves away from it. So consciousness is a body quale.

In particular, cognition of being pleasant is the cause of desire and the cause of desire is the body moving forward. Similarly cognition of being unpleasant is the cause of aversion and the latter is the cause of moving away.

After arguing that the self cannot be identified with any of the external sense organs or their aggregate, Gotama proceeds to show that the self cannot be identified with the inner sense organ (*manas*) either. **Consciousness is unfunctional.** Two or more cognitive acts do not take place at the same time. Since the inner sense is unfunctional only one perception arises at a time even when several external senses are activated at the same time. It follows that the inner sense can grasp information about both colour and sound unlike the eye which can grasp colour but not sound and the ear which can grasp sound but not colour. If the inner sense can grasp everything, why infer self? Gotama replies: Since an instrument of knowing presupposes a knower, there would only be difference in name.(NS 3.1.16)

Vatsyayana comments:

There can be an instrument of knowing only if there is a knower. In the Nyāya view , ‘thinking does require an instrument, that is, the inner sense.’ Gotama argues the theorizing that **although the self has instruments for the perception of external things it has no instrument for the perception of internal states.**

Vatsyayana puts forth two reasons for which inner sense is to be inferred. I) Since pleasure are directly perceived and not through external sense, the inner sense should be admitted to account for that. II) Since cognitions do not arise simultaneously , although several sense organs may be activated at the same time, it should be inferred that there is another inner

organ that is connected with only one organ at a time so that several cognitions do not arise together.

Udyottakara(6th century) explicitly and unambiguously describes internal states as intentional. To put it succinctly: All intentional cognitions require an instrument. For eg. The perception of colour and like. The internal perception of a cognition is an intentional cognition. Therefore it requires an instrument. This instrument is either one of the external senses or an additional inner sense. It is not one of the external senses as internal perception takes place independently of the external senses. Therefore it is an additional inner sense.

According to Vacaspati Mishra: Whatever is unconscious is incapable of self-control , for eg, the eye and so on. **The self is capable of self-control.** Therefore the self is conscious.

Some of the functions attributed by the *nyāya* to the inner sense are in modern parlance attributed to the physical brain. For eg, the brain is supposed to provide the activity needed for the direct awareness of internal states. The materialistic thesis of the idea between mind (self) and brain is a well-known and popular view in twentieth century philosophy. As may be expected in marshalling arguments against the identification of self with inner sense *nyāya* is in a sense anticipating such modern developments and in effect arguing against some versions of materialism. So long as the brain is assumed to be physical, *nyāya* would object to assuming that the brain is self-controlled.

***Nyāya* does not claim that the self (or the mind) is essentially conscious.** A major part is sought to be accomplished that the self is not identifiable with the external senses or the inner sense.

A common Sanskrit word for the inner sense –*manas*- is also part of the Indo-European word root from which the word ‘mind’ is derived.

Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha in his *Rasa-Gangādhara* states that according to Vedantic philosophy , pleasure and pain are the attributes of the *antaḥkaraṇa*, and likewise even the *sthāyins -rati* (love) , *śoka* (mourning) etc.being the form of pleasure and pain alone should be regarded as the attributes of the same (*antaḥkaraṇa*) and they (pleasure, and pain and the *sthāyins* in all) have been regarded as being directly illuminated by the *ātman* (soul) without taking recourse to anything else and as such these *sthāyins* and pleasure and pain etc. are called *sākṣibhāsyā*-getting felt or understood by the soul.

On the other hand, outer things-pot, clothes etc. are not so. For the knowledge of these outer things, the *ātman* has to take recourse to the said *antaḥkaraṇa*. This is why these outer objects have been regarded as being illumined by the soul indirectly (*paramparāya*) and not directly and hence these are not *sākṣibhāsyā*. The *sthāyins -rati* etc. being identical to *antaḥkaraṇa* , are inner senses like pleasure and pain and the trinity of *vibhāva* etc. are but outer objects *vāhya-kāraṇa* like *ghaṭa* (pot) and *paṭa* (clothes) etc. In this state of affairs there may arise a question, as to how does Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha make the statement:

एवमात्मचैतन्यं विभावादिसंवलितान् रत्यादीन् (प्रकाशते)

The consciousness or soul illuminates the *sthāyins* alongwith *vibhāva* etc.

The fact is that the consciousness can illumine the *sthāyins* only and not the *vibhāva* etc. being an outer object.

Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha says: अन्तः करणधर्माणां implying that there is no fault in maintaining these *vibhāvas* as *sākṣibhāsyā*. There are lot of mundane examples. When a horse is seen in a dream it is maintained as *sākṣibhāsyā*. It should be appreciated says Jagannātha that the

illusory knowledge of a horse in a dream is maintained as *sākṣibhāṣya* as these objects are perceived by the consciousness or soul alone.

The creation and destruction of *rasa* is *āropita*. In course of self-realisation , the soul once covered or uncovered remains the same forever. In case of *rasa* experience the uncoveredness of soul exists as long as there exists the relish of *vibhāva* etc. After the end of relish the soul becomes covered by ignorance again, the *sthāyins* plunge into darkness, the current of *rasa* is broken.

It must be noted that the *sthāyins* are enlightened through their contact with *vibhāva* etc. only. Otherwise they lie dormant in the psyche. When the feeling of *rasa* is over, the soul becomes covered by ignorance and the *sthāyins* do not come into light inspite of being permanently existent in the psyche of the perceiver. Like a lit lamp covered by a bowl is unable to illuminate anything inspite of being able to do so. Thus after the end of the relish of *vibhāva* etc. even the perception of *rasa* comes to an end.

The worldly pleasures are attributed to the *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner senses) and not to the soul directly. At the time of enjoying the worldly pleasures, the consciousness has to relate itself to the functions of the inner senses, that are four in number. Hence worldly pleasures are associated with the soul through the medium of the inner senses and so indirectly.

Mind in Western Philosophy

Every human being consists of two different substances namely mind and body. Mind is defined as a substance, which has no spatial location. It is referred to as the locus or centre or owner of thoughts, feelings and sense-experiences. On the other hand, body is the locus of all the physiological changes.

Mind as Immaterial:

Plato was the first western philosopher to declare that mind is an immaterial entity, separate and distinct from the body and able to exist without it. Plato held that the mind (psyche) is incharge of the body and directs its movements. Plato believed in the subsistence of both material entities and immaterial entities.

The poetic delight or perception of *rasa* is purely of the form of soul. Thus the soul does not take recourse to *antaḥkaraṇa* for the perception of *rasa*. However the *Rasānubhūti* is a mental experience. It is one's experience of one's own mental modifications (moods).

In Bhamini Vilasa of Jagannatha Pandit, we find

प्रतिपलमखिलाँल्लोकान्मृत्युमुखं प्रविशतो निरीक्ष्यापि ।

हा हन्त किमिति चित्तं विरमति नाद्यापि विषयेभ्यः ॥२५॥

Even after marking every moment all people entering the jaws of death yet alas! Why does not mind desist from the worldly objects?

तरणोपायमपश्यन्नपि मामक जीव ताम्यसि कुतस्तवम् ।

चेतःसरणावस्यां किं नागन्ता कदापि नन्दसुतः ॥२८॥

O my soul, though not conversant with any means to save (yourself) why do you pine? Will the son of Nanda (*Kṛṣṇa*) never (come into the way of your mind) be remembered by you?

सेवायां यदि साभिलाषमसि रे लक्ष्मीपतिः सेव्यतां

चिन्तायामसि सस्पृहं यदि तदा चक्रायुधश्चिन्त्यताम्।

आलापं यदि काङ्क्षसि स्मररिपोर्गथा तदालाप्यतां

स्वापं वाञ्छसि चेन्निरर्गलसुखे चेतः सुखं सुप्यताम् ॥१९॥

O friend mind, if you desire to serve, serve the consort of lakshmi, if you desire to contemplate , contemplate over Vishnu (whose weapon is the disc) . If you want to converse ,sing the verses of Shiva, if you want to sleep, sleep in unlimited joy(i.e. the joy of Brahma)

भवग्रीष्मप्रौढातपनिवहसन्तप्तवपुषो
बलादुन्मूल्य द्राडगडमविवेकव्यतिकरम्।
विशुद्धेऽस्मिन्नात्मा मृतसरसि नैराश्यशिशिरे
विगाहन्ते दूरीकृतकलुषजालाः सुकृतिनः ॥२०॥

Blessed persons removing the net of sin, with their bodies scorched by the excessive heat of summer in the form of this world breaking immediately the chain of contact with ignorance, bathe in this excessively pure pond of the bliss of *ātman*, cool on account of hopelessness.

रे चेतः कथयामि ते हितमिदं वृन्दावने चारय-
न्वृन्दं कोऽपि गवां नवाम्बुदनिभो बन्धुर्न कार्यस्तवया ।
सौन्दर्यामृतमुद्गिरद्भिरभितः संमोहय मन्दस्मितै-
रेष त्वां तव वल्लभांश्च विषयानाशु क्षयं नेष्यति ॥१५॥

O mind, I tell you this for your benefit –you should not form friendship with a certain person (*Kṛṣṇa*) resembling a new cloud (in complexion) and feeding a herd of cows in the Vrindavana forest. For he will entice you by his charming smiles emitting all around the nectar of his beauty and will quickly lead you and your fond objects to extinction (liberate you from this transmigratory existence).

In Shantivilasa of Jagannatha Pandit,

विशालविषयाटवीवल्लयलग्नदावानल-
प्रसूत्वरशिखावलीविकलितं मदीयं मनः।
अमन्दमिलदिन्दिरे निखिलमाधुरीमन्दिरे
मुकुन्दमुखचन्दिरे चिरमिदं चकोरायताम् ॥१॥

May my mind which is distressed by the rows of flames spreading around of the forest of conflagration which is burning the circle of the extensive forest in the form of the objects of senses (that surround me) act like the chakora bird towards the moon in the form of the face of Mukunda which is the receptacle of all sweetness and whose splendor is rapidly increasing.

सन्तापयामि किमहं धावं धावं धरातले हृदयम् ।

अस्ति मम शिरसि सततं नन्दकुमारः प्रभुः परमः॥३१॥

Why do I torment my heart by running frequently (after everything) on the surface of the earth? The Supreme Lord, the son of Nanda , is there always over my head (to rescue me).

मृद्वीका रसिता सिता समशिता स्फीतं निपीतं पयः

स्वर्यातेन सुधाप्यध्यायि कतिधा रम्भाधरः खण्डितः ।

सत्यं ब्रूहि मदीय जीव भवता भूयो भवे भ्राम्यता

कृष्णेत्यक्षरयोरयं मधुरिमोद्गारः क्वचिल्लक्षितः॥३॥

O my soul, you have tasted the grapes, enjoyed sugar to your heart's desire , drunk ample milk, when you went to heaven , how many times did you suck nectar and bite the lower lip of Rambha, yet, tell me the truth, did you anywhere in your wanderings in the transmigratory existence witness the stream of sweetness which oozes from the two letters of which the word *Kṛṣṇa* consists?

In Bhartrhari's Nitisataka, Śringarasataka and Vairagyasataka, we have the following

विरोहोऽपिसङ्गमः खलु, परस्परं संगतं मनो येषाम् ।

युद्धदयविघटितः सः, संगमोऽपि विरहं विशेषयति॥११॥

When the hearts of lovers are flowing in a perfect mental union, though quite apart from each other they are still to be considered as enjoying each other's society, but on the contrary when they cannot agree between themselves the actual company is even more painful than separation.

युवतिनम् यथा यूनी युनांच युवतौ यथा ।

मनोभिरमते मित्यं मनोभिरमतां त्वयि ॥

-(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad)

Just as the mind of young women always finds joy in a young man and of young men in a young woman, so may my mind find joy in thee.

In ancient India, this concept is found in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad for the first time in a passage which is very well-known

यथा प्रियया स्त्रिया संपरिष ।

वक्तो न बाह्यं किंचना वेद न अंतरं ॥

तद् वा अस्य एतद् आप्त।

कामं आत्मा कामं अकामं रूपं शोकान्तरम् ॥

- (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, IV.3.21)

As a man, who in the embrace of a beloved wife, knows nothing within him or without. Verily, that is his true form in which his desire is satisfied in which the soul is his desire, in which he is without desire and without sorrow.

Note: Often in the context of Indian poesy and literature, we come across ample references to mind, heart and soul. Loosely interpreted as manas, hṛdaya and ātman. In most philosophies as enumerated earlier right from Charaka to Sushruta and then the schools of Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta, we find that the mind mostly defined as manas which when comes into contact with external objects goes through modifications.

Charaka points out that the heart is the seat of the spirit. In Upanishads, heart is considered to be the seat of the soul. Mind is above the senses. It is the connecting link between the senses and the spirit, but at the same time it moves the senses and serves the self. It is sentient only because of the presence of the self. Indian philosophers from the very beginning have recognised mind or manas as something distinct from the self or the ātman.

In Sushruta's 'Concept of mind', the purusha or the self is non-active and when in association with the mind it experiences pleasure and pain and the actions of the qualities.

In Samkhya- The final aim is salvation wherein mind becomes as pure as the spirit and it merges in the self. Here is seen the Upanishadic influence. It also clarifies the fact that mind by purification can become completely spiritual and shows the ultimate spiritual nature of mind.

In Nyāya, manas is an organ for attaining knowledge whereas ātman: is the real knower, feeler and actor behind the mechanism of mind, senses and body. Manas (mind, the inner sense) is defined as apparatus for getting knowledge of what takes place in the soul. It is, therefore, the sense through which introspection of inner states is possible and hence it is called the inner sense (antarindriyā). Mind is also the medium through which the impressions of the outer senses reach the soul.

In Yoga, chitta has been defined as that which has three chief aspects with distinct functions to perform namely manas, ahaṁkāra and buddhi. When the manas is registering the objects of thought, it is the buddhi that discriminates, determines and recognizes.

In Mimamsa, manas is an internal organ through which the apprehensions of the sense organs (about external objects) and also pleasure, pain, cognition and other qualities of the self (internal) are perceived.

In Vedanta we find the concept of jīva and the concept of avidyā.

Further Rūpagoswāmin says the enjoyment of all the varieties of the bhakti rasa is possible in five different ways- pūrṭi, vikāsa, vistāra, vikṣepa and kṣobha which are the states of the mind and that the mental reactions are nothing but the modifications or changes in the mind.

When we look at the nāyikā- sakhī paradigm and into the tradition of poesy and literature often addressing the mind and heart variously (as cited earlier) and further looking into the many compositions used in Bharata Natyam that refer to a sakhī, there is the possibility that instead of referring to the mind or heart which does not seem as appealing, the inclusion of the character of the sakhī offers the via media of addressing the audience and so offering a direct device as a point of connect with the audience. The other possibility being that instead of referring to the heart and mind as two entities as seen through early literature, we have the eternal dialogue of nāyikā- sakhī personified as mind and soul or the manas and ātman.

In the many discussions held so far, it was perceived that perhaps there was the possibility of looking upon the sakhī as manas-the mind, generally believed to be the reasoning faculty and the ātman as the nāyikā, the jīvātman of the Vedantic concept. However in the light of the functions and nature of manas and ātman and looking to the role and purpose of the

existence of the sakhī who is near egolessness it can be a possibility that the sakhī is perhaps the ātman-the life force and the nāyikā-the manas.

The nāyikā who is figuratively pining for the paramātmā, akin to the mortal nāyakā, undergoes the transformations as given earlier , of the manas. For the manas when it comes in contact with an external object, here the nāyakā, undergoes transformations. Again we have seen that desire is the quale of self. It means the self here would imply the sakhī whose only desire is seeking to unite. It is the sakhī who instructs the nāyikā as a Guru. In Nyāya, ātman is the real knower, feeler and actor behind the mechanism of mind, senses and body. Manas (mind, the inner sense) is defined as an apparatus for getting knowledge of what takes place in the soul. So the nāyikā seeks the knowledge from the ātman- sakhī who is the real knower.

Charaka maintains that envy, grief, fear, anger, pride, hatred, and the like are the affections of the mind (manovikars) due to perversion of the intuitive knowledge (prajñaparādha). Thus the nāyikā due to her entanglement with mortal desire having forgotten her intuitive self (prajñaparādha) is moved by the senses –the pangs of separation-as in she cannot bear the cool breeze, the cool moon, the cool sandal paste and so on.

On account of the multiplicity of mental objects, sense-objects and impulses, as also of the combinations of the qualities of Rajas, Tamas and Sattva, the mind appears as multi-faceted in one and the same person. Mind partakes of the nature of the soul on one side and influences and is influenced by the senses on the other.

As quoted earlier, ‘Indian philosophers from the very beginning have avoided this pitfall by recognising mind or Manas as something distinct from the self or the ātman, though partaking of its nature as intelligence through association with it.’

As Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha has stated, the worldly pleasures are attributed to the antaḥkāraṇa (inner senses) and not to the soul directly. At the time of enjoying the worldly pleasures, the consciousness has to relate itself to the functions of the inner senses, that are four in number.

Further in Samkhya, it is said- The final aim is salvation wherein mind becomes as pure as the spirit and it merges in the self. Thus the nāyikā, caught in the web of desire and longing, seeks to merge in the self- sakhī. The self, sakhī, leads her step by step and in the final union all differentiations are cast away and so the nāyikā and sakhī unite into oneness which is the first step in merging with the Infinite self. This also rests the case of the sakhī as a Guru who guides and instructs the nāyikā to achieve the union.

Experientially when one is caught in the throes of deep anguish or sorrow that is almost unbearable, the manas gets tossed through the rajas, tamas, sattva guṇas, losing its ability to rationalize. It is only an inner strength that can take the manas to the other shore of calmness and inner strength. This inner strength or soul can be approximated to the sakhī.

In the light of above, one would now take up analysing many key and prominent compositions like varnams, padams etc., some already referred to contextually, to now further establish the subtle nexus, parallelism, meaning raison-d'être of the nāyikā- sakhī paradigm viewing it through the afore-mentioned prism.



VII. The genesis of the ‘padam’ and the presence of sakhī therein

- i. Tracing compositions of Kshetranya, Annamayya,
Nammalvar, Vaishnava, Bhakti, Sufi and of Maratha period,
Swati Thirunal
- ii. The portrayal of women in vedic literature.
- iii. Thirukkural

We saw previously how in the Gita Govinda and in the Chaitanya tradition the *sakhī* as an entity is also a devotee/lover of Lord Krishna whose prime duty and reason of existence is to make all efforts to promote the pastimes of Radha and Krishna.

The *sakhī* as some have averred and as textual references have indicated has been variously personified across time. As a physical entity in dramatic traditions and compositions and inspired through them later, as an imaginary theatrical device or as in Tanjore quartet and thereof compositions like *padams*, *varnams*- as an imaginary entity whose presence cannot be negated, who is the protagonist, to whom the *nāyikā* opens her heart out and seeks redressal. Thus the role and persona of the *sakhī* has been also dependent on the type of compositions and the period in which the composition has been set in. To elucidate this point we look briefly into the trajectory of the different genre of compositions with special reference to the *padams* which form the cornerstone of the *sakhī* 's role and meaning specially in Bharata Natyam.

The early precursor of a *padam* in Sanskrit is stated to be the Gita Govinda (12th century). The genre is said to assume a standardised form in the second half of 15th century with Annamacharya. The *padam* tradition reached its expressive peak in Telugu during 15-18th century in southern Andhra and Tamil region.

The early examples by Annamayya are wholly located within the context of temple worship and are directed toward the deity Venkateshwara and his consort Alamelumanga, at Tirupati. Later poets seem to have composed their songs outside the temples, nevertheless mentioning the deity as the male protagonist. The God assumes here the role of the lover seen for the most part through the eyes of one of his courtesans, mistresses or wives whose persona the poet adopts. In Kshetrappa, we find him belonging less to the temple than to the courtesan's quarters of the *Nāyaka* royal towns. We see in him as a poet composing for and with the

assumed persona of the sophisticated and cultured courtesans who performed before Gods and Kings.

The devotional component, with its suggestive ironies, is overshadowed by an emotional and sensual immediacy. These are devotional works of an erotic cast composed by male poets using a feminine voice and performed by women. They articulate the relationship between the devotee and God in terms of an intensely imagined erotic experience. And where there is the lover and beloved, there follows the *sakhī* to foster and bring to union or towards union.

If Kshetrappa marks the *padam* tradition at its most subtle and refined, Sarangapani, in the early 18th century shows us its further evolution in the direction of a yet more concrete, imaginative and sometimes coarse eroticism. And through these different genres the *sakhī* continues to be a prominent presence.

The Maratha kings of Thanjavur (17th century onwards) figure as the patron lovers of a rich literature of *padams* composed at their court. Similar works were sung in the palaces of Zamindars throughout South India right up to modern times. With the abolition of the devadasi tradition by the British, *padams* like other genres made their way to the concert stage.

From its formative period, 7-9th century onward, South Indian devotional poetry was permeated by erotic themes and images. In the Tamil poems of Śaiva Nāyanmār and the Vaiṣṇava Ālvārs, God appears frequently as a lover, in roles inherited from the more ancient Tamil love poetry of the so-called Saṅgam period. (1st century A.D.).

The *akam* poems, as were seen previously, were addressed to God, Śiva or Viṣṇu contextualised by a devotional framework as that of worship in the temple. They represent early South Indian examples of literary linkage between mystical devotion and erotic discourse.

If we compare the *padam* to the Nammalvar poems we can sense the distinct evolution of the *padam* tradition away from its roots in Tamil devotionalism. Here the *nāyikā* is not waiting eternally for her lover's arrival; there is no landscape of sky and cloud and dark night waiting with her, symbolic of the God's engulfing nature. Nor is the God himself invoked with all his insignia (wheel, mace, lotus feet) nor are we reminded of his many cosmic avatars and acts, against which the speaker's little drama of unrequited love is played out. *Viraha*, separation—a dominant mood in Nammalvar and other *bhaktī* poets—is located in the past and thus relegated to the early part of the poem ("Have we talked even a little while to undo the pain of our separation till now?").

If the tradition of love poetry and all its signifiers are enlisted to speak of the human yearning for the divine, the signifiers of *bhaktī* poetry are only fleetingly alluded to, often by no more than the local name of the god like Muvva Gopala.

Thus we see that the original context of the Ksetrayya *padams* was the courtesan's bedroom, where she entertained a customer identified as a god. No amount of apologetic spiritualizing, no exaggerated classification in terms of the Sanskrit courtly types, was allowed to distort the sensibility that gave rise to these poems—even, or especially, if this sensibility has largely died away in contemporary South India. At the same time, we should not make the mistake of underestimating the vitality of the devotional impulse at work in the *padams*. These are still **poems embodying an experience of the divine**. The *bhaktī* idiom is never truly lost through the long process of reframing.

One indication of its survival, is the existence of strong intertextual resonances in the *padams*, as themes and phrases proper to South Indian devotionism familiar from its basic texts are assimilated to the *padam's* erotic context. Thus we see in the devotional context the *sakhī* often taking on the status of a *Guru*.

A historical continuum can be seen from these Tamil poets of devotion to Kṣetrayya and Saraṅgapāṇi, a millenium later. The *padam* poets draw on the vast cultural reserves of Tamil *bhaktī*, in its institutional as well as its affective and personal forms. Their God, like that of the Tamil poet-devotees, is a deity both embodied in temple images and yet transcending icons. They sing with all emotional and sensual intensity that characterises the inner world of medieval South Indian Hinduism.

O Heart, you too are not on my side
The long night with no end
Has lengthened into aneon
My Lord Rama will not come,
With his protecting bow.
I do not know how it will end-
I with all my potent sins,
Born as a woman.

– (Nammālvār 5.2.3)

“Those born as women see much grief
But I’ll not look at it,” says the Sun.
And he hides himself,
Our Dark Lord, with red lips and great eyes.
Who once measured this earth,
He too will not come.
Who will quell the unthinkable ills
Of my heart?

- (5.2.4)

Here we see a picture of a plaintive and frustrated desire by the *nāyikā*. Of her heart tortured by longing and unrequited love. She blames her ‘sins’, her ‘womanhood’ and her god-lover.

To reduce the poetic autonomy to metaphysical allegory is to destroy the poem’s integrity and with it most of its suggestive power.

In verse 10 we find

Even as I melt continually,
The wide sky melts into a fine mist
This night,
And the world just sleeps through it
Saying not a word, not even once,
That the lord who paced the earth
Long ago
Will not come.

In Tamil poetry the external world is continuous with and expressive of inner experience.

Lord, Kṛṣṇa or Māyā is the *mullai* deity and the ceaseless rain is another conventional marker.

The heroine is slowly turning to water, ‘melting’ in the language of tamil devotion and the pain of unanswered longing is a stage in the progressive softening (*urukutal*) of the self that Tamil *bhakti* regards as the ultimate process whereby one achieves connection with the object of one’s love. And it is in this softening process that the *sakhī* becomes a guide, a patient listener gently watching the *nāyikā* suffering yet gently consoling her, prodding her, offering her hope to move towards her goal.

The basic experience of *viraha* is a constitutive feature of the *bhakti* relationship between God and human devotee. The heroine in some sense speaking for the poet is relatively

helpless vis a vis her beloved. He, in contrast, is free to come or not, to show compassion if he wishes and save her life or let her die of love. There is no way for her to reconstitute his presence. She feels dwarfed by the inherent lack of equality between them as the universe proclaims to her his remoteness. She is not in control of her emotional life. **She accuses her heart of having turned against her. As if a part of her had split away. This sense of a torn and conflicted personality is typical of the Tamil *bhaktī* presentation of self. Overruling passion for the unpredictable and usually distant deity has disrupted the harmony and coherence of the devotee's inner being.**

And it is at such times of the peak of suffering of *viraha*, where the *sakhī*, acts like a beacon, a raft for her to cross to the other side. As seen earlier in Sangam poems, most of the poems are addressed to the *sakhī*. Either pleading for help, description of her state or as request to arrange a meeting or help in understanding the many cross-currents of her emotional state. The steady and comforting presence of the *sakhī* provides the support for the *nāyikā* to bear the pangs of suffering.

Kshetrayya's compositions offer a stark contrast to this *viraha* genre. The woman as depicted by Kshetrayya depicts the helplessness of womanhood, blocked desire, unending separation- a world turned dark on many levels.

Woman! He's none other
than Cennuḍu of Pālagiri
Have'nt you heard?
He rules the worlds.

When he wanted you, you took his gold-
But could'nt you tell him your address?
Some lover you are!
He's hooked on you.

And he rules the worlds.

I found him wandering the alleyways.

Too shy to ask anyone.

I had to bring him home with me

Would it have been such a crime

If you or your girls

Had waited for him by the door?

You really think it's enough

To get the money in your hand?

Can't you tell who's big, who's small?

Who do you think he is?

And he rules the worlds.

This handsome Cennuḍu of Pālagiri,

This Muvva Gopāla,

Has fallen to your lot.

When he said he'd come tomorrow,

Could'nt you consent

Just a little?

Did you really have to say no?

What can I say about you?

And he rules the worlds.

The senior courtesan or madam who plays the *nāyikā*'s *sakhī* is chiding her younger colleague. God himself has come as customer to this young woman, but she has treated him rather haughtily- taking his money but refusing to give her address. It is the woman who has the upper hand in this transaction, while the deity behaves as an awkward and essentially helpless plaything in her control.

The emotional tone of the Telugu *padam* is radically different from Tamil. The atmosphere of tormenting separation, *viraha*, has dissolved, replaced by a playful but not so harmonious tone. God and woman here involved in a kind of hide and seek with money as part of stakes and the woman an active, independent partner in the game.

Often in Kshetravya *padams* the male deity-lover is also the speaker. The image of the woman-the human partner to the transaction- is on the whole quite consistent. Most often she is a courtesan well-versed in the arts of love. She tends to be worldly, articulate, educated and even at times sarcastic. In most *padams*, we find her complaining to the *sakhī* often about the divine lover's infatuation with another woman. So she is angry at him. The relationship is filled with friction and tension **less intense** as that in the Tamil *bhakti* corpus.

It may be argued that the God's persistent betrayals, his constant affairs with other women are felt to be an integral and necessary part of the love bond. So then this also reveals how the sakhī's role was thus more prominent and intense in earlier Tamil poetry than in the later era. In earlier Tamil poetry (the Sangam period) the sakhī assumed a more keen presence than in the later ones where she is often a mute spectator and the anguish of the nāyikā finds a patient listening ear.

The tiffs and sulking so perfectly conventionalised come close to defining the *padam* genre from the point of view of its contents which sometimes seem incongruous. Through the angry recriminations, the quarrels and even the heroine's occasional resolve never to see her lover again, many *padams* end in an intimation of sexual union. A cycle is usually completed: initial love sexually realised, leads to the lover's loss of interest or temporary disappearance and to his affairs with other women. In general physical union represents a potential

resolution of the tensions expressed in many of the poems. **The *padam* contrasts strongly with the Tamil *bhakti* models.**

The courtesan often appears as the major figure in this poetry of love. As an expressive vehicle for the manifold relations between devotee and deity, the courtesan offers rich possibilities. She is bold, unattached free from the constraints of home and family. She represents the possibility of choice and spontaneous affection, in opposition to the largely predetermined and rather calculated marital tie. She can manipulate her customers as the devotee manipulates his God. Above all, the courtesan signals a particular kind of knowledge, one that achieved pre-eminence in the late medieval cultural order in South India.

Bodily experience becomes a crucial mode of knowing, especially in this devotional context; the courtesan experiences her divine client by taking him physically into her own body. **Even Annamayya shows us this fascination with bodily knowledge of God.**

Don't you know the house
Hidden by tamarind trees,
In that narrow space marked by the two golden hills?
That's where you lose your senses
Where the Love God hunts without fear.

The woman's house of love (*madanagrha*) is the true point of connection between her and the deity-lover. This notion, basic to the entire *padam* tradition, takes us beyond the sensual and emotional openness of earlier South Indian *bhakti*. The Tamil devotee worships his deity in a sensually accessible form and through the active exploration of his emotions, he sees, hears, tastes, smells and above all touches the God. For the Telugu *padam* poets, the relation

became fully eroticised in a manner quite devoid of any facile dualistic division between body and metaphysical or psychological substratum.

The ancient tradition of love poetry with its rich body of conventions, *dramatis personae* and its set themes was thus absorbed into the literature of Tamil *bhaktī*. **In effect, ‘*bhaktī*’, comes to frame poems composed after the prototypes of *akam* love poems.**

We see this in the verses from Nammālvār in which the lovesick heroine laments the absence of her lover who is the God.

If my Kaṇṇaṇ too,
Dark as the blue lily,
Will not come,
Now who will save my life,
sinner that I am?

This simple love poem becomes a lyric of devotion. It uses the signs and language of *akam* poetics but subordinates this usage to its new aim that of internal reference to the divine object of worship, replete with mythic and iconic identifying traits. By the time of Telugu *padam*, the process has evolved a step further where the reframed *bhaktī*-oriented love lyric acquires yet another frame which reeroticises the poem turning it into a courtesan’s love song that is still impregnated with devotional elements. This development however takes somewhat different forms with each of the major *padam* poets.

Annamayya composed a song a day for his deity Lord Venkateshwara and is attributed to about thirty-two thousand songs. These songs were probably sung by courtesans who led the processions and danced before the deity in the temple. Annamayya’s songs are divided

generally into two categories: the metaphysical and the erotic. The two categories echo Nammālvār's poems.

The courtly tradition in both Sanskrit and Telugu subsumed sexual themes under the category of *śṛṅgārarasa*. It was thought that depicting the lovemaking of a god and Goddess even for devotional purposes blocked the highest aesthetic experience. Thus the controversy in Sanskrit texts whether *bhaktī* is an aesthetic experience. In Annamayya we find instances of how Padmāvatī, Lord Veṅkaṭeśvara's consort sleeps after making love to her husband.

Mother, who speaks so sweetly
Has gone to sleep
She has made love to her husband
With all her feminine skills

And is now sleeping
Long into the day,
Her hair scattered on her face.

Annamayya has further described the lovemaking of other women with Veṅkaṭeśvara, women representing every erotic type described in the *kāmaśāstra*.

For Annamayya, love/devotion is an exploration of the ideal experience of the divine. Most often he assumes the persona of the woman who is in love with the God-either the consort herself or another woman. Unlike later *padam* writers, Annamayya does not describe a courtesan/customer relationship between the devotee and the God. No money changes hands and the woman does not manipulate the customer to get the best deal. In Annamayya it is always an ideal love relationship which ultimately achieves harmony. God is always male and he is usually in control. He has the upper hand even when he adopts a subservient posture

to please his woman. The woman might complain, get angry and fight with him, but in the end they make love and the God wins.

Pallavi:

Intatidi gaavalada yinthe yaitenu

Kaantuni galalanti karaginchenipudu

This woman is more than a match to anybody.

See how she touches him in erotic places and melts away his resistance.

Charanam1:

Aligi vacchinapati nalami kaagita netti

Palukula vinayaalu pacharinchagaa

Solasi kopaana naata jooche vibhudanthalone

Cheliya chemata gora jimmebo kannulanoo

She enfolds in her embrace, her husband , who for some reason is sulking.

And speaks sweet words, filled with devotion to him.

In anger, when he looks at her sharply,

She, unaffected, sprinkles beads of sweat in his eyes with the tip of her nail.

Charanam 2:

Makkuva mankulatoda maatalaadakunna pati

Chekku nokki jalajaakshi seda derchagaa

Vekkasamu laadeti vibhuni vadanamuna

Pukkiti tammula midi polati vaalinchene

Seeing that he refuses to talk to her because of stubborn pride,

The lovely eyed woman flicks his cheek playfully and makes every attempt to relieve his stress. When he talks sarcastically to her, she puts an end to his tirade, by cleverly placing betel leaves between his teeth and bending sensuously over him.

Charanam 3:

Pantapu shree Venkateshu badati voyyane cheri

Antaranga mella derchi yaadarinchagaa

Rantuto ratula nibbaramu choope naatadunu

Mantanaana jokkinchi marapinche menu

The woman approaches the strong-willed Venkatesha,

And fully understanding his every inner most thought, she gratifies him completely.

She makes even a man like him, who is controlled in the act of love,
Lose all sense of himself with her prowess.

As can be seen above all references are clearly sexual and of a human relationship. Lord Venkatesha is clearly brought down to a one on one level where a close bond is pursued fraught with human inconsistencies and frailties.

Another interesting composition shows the *sakhī* in dialogue with the *nāyikā*.

Pallavi:

Niluchunaadatandu nivveragandhi neevu
Salupujoopula nele saadhincheve
He is standing here, woman, why do you,
Cast upon him looks meant to wound?

Charanam 1:

Chanavu sesuka neevu sanagulu challitenu
Nanupusesukatadu navvu navvenu
Penachi sarikisare besigaadu nee vela
Venakati neraalenchi vidanaadeve
Taking liberties, if you sprinkle murmured words of resentment on him,
Taking the opportunity, he expresses his mirth,
If measured against each other, there is no odd number,
Both of you are evenly matched, as you recount past grievances and don't favour him.

Charanam 2:

Nindaluvesi neevu neramu lenchitenu
Kanduvalanti yatadu kalarechenu
Yinduku nanduku neede yeetakante lotuledu
Mandemelaana ninkela maccharincheve
When you hurl accusing words and count his sins,
He touches you in private parts and rouses your desire.
Whichever way we look at it, for one who swims,
What is deep water! Why do you continue to broadcast your anger to one and all.

Charanam 3:

Vaavuluchoopi neevu valapinchi kooditenu

Movuluchoopi yitadu mohimpinchenu

Neevu naatadu nokkate name meedamikkili

Shree Venkateshude taanu chimmulu rechakuve

If you incited him to join with you by showing him all the ways in which you were closely related,

He made you mindless with desire, by making you aware of the magic of lips.

Both of you are of the same kind, after all.

He is Venkatesha, so cut out the unnecessary squabbling.

Thus we see the *sakhī* 's presence more inferred rather than addressed. The voice of the poem is the *sakhī* as the mediator and counsellor. She continues unobtrusively her role to foster the love between the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*.

The following one is a self-realization song as a dialogue with *antaryāmi* or inner soul.

Antaryāmi is one who resides in inner self (of everybody). Usually the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha) are referred to as *antaryāmis*. It is unclear if Annamayya is referring to someone (from Trinity) as *antaryāmi* or just his inner soul.

Annamayya puts forth his state addressing it to inner soul, and seeks help. He is of the strong opinion that nothing is under control. All the things that lead to salvation cannot be obtained/met unless the inner soul wishes those things for a person. As the first line of this poem says, Annamayya is dejected how he has tried and failed and therefore attributes it to be the soul's mercy to bestow him with salvation and in the process describes the ways or various things involved in getting to salvation.

antaryami alasiti solasiti

inthata nee sharanide jochhitini

Annamayya says that he is fatigued and tired. And at such a time he is seeking the shelter of the inner soul dweller.

korina korkulu koyani katlu

teeravau neevavi tenchaka

bharapu baggalu paapa punyamulu

nerupula boneevu neevu vaddanaka

One must break away from wishes/wants and get away from the cycle of sins and good deeds

janula sangamula Ogamulu

vinu viDuvavu neevu vidipinchaka|

vinayapu dainyamu viDuvani karmamu|

neevitu shanta parachaka

People's pride and lots of diseases

won't leave,(unless) You dont break loose

with modest humility; the never-leaving deeds

will continue to come if You dont tranquilize them

madilo chintalu millu manugulu

vadalavu neevavi vaddanaka

edutane shree venkateswara neevade

adana gachithivi attittanaka

With Venkateswara right in front, Annamayya thinks that his inner soul is seeking too much, without proper consultation, i.e, if one seeks shelter with Venkateswara, then they don't have to depend on anything for salvation.

The above succinctly conveys the philosophy of the ātmān pining for the paramātmān. This composition clearly validates the supposition of whether the sakhī is somebody within. In this composition the inner soul can very well be taken to take the place of the sakhī!

In the next *keerthana*, one can infer the importance of the *sakhī* in this love-play. Here she is seen advising the *nāyikā* on how to handle the *mugdha nāyikā*.

P:

Baalakigaani yinti proudhagaadu aake
Chelakongantuchunu macchika seyavayyaa
She is young girl, not an experienced woman, so,
Win her over, by repeatedly touching her upper garment playfully.

C1:

Neevuvacchederagaka nelata ninnu baadi
Chevalla ninnatuchoochi sigguvadenu
Yeevela naasiggudera intitoda suti goodi
Tova choopi choopi itte todū vaadapayyaa
Unaware of your approach, the girl sings your praises.
Suddenly spying you, she drops her head bashfully.
To overcome that shyness, join your voice with her's
And guiding her step by step, walk in tune with her.

C2:

Naatakasaalalonanaathi yaadi ninnu gani
Cheetikimaatiki nitte siggupadenu
Neetuna naa siggudera neevu ropuletti yeti
Tootari tanamutoda todaadavayyaa
As she was dancing in the drama room,
She realized your presence and was shy, for every little thing.
To overcome that shyness, you with full enthusiasm,
Mischievously dance in step with her.

C3:

Kaagitiki jeyi chaachi gakkuma nee momu choochi

Chegalanavvulu naavi sigguvadenu

Yeegati shree Venkatesha yinythisiggudera goodi

Kaagitane ninchi ninchi kaladaakinchavayyaa.

Wanting an embrace she extended her hand,

But seeing your face, with uncontrollable giggles she withdrew bashfully.

O Venkatesha overcome that shyness and keeping her in your embrace touch her erotically and unite with her.

So as seen above in Annamaya's compositions the *sakhī* plays a key role, has a keen presence as an intermediary and a vital link between the *ātmān-paramātmān*.

In Kshetrappa however the situation is transformed. Kshetrappa composed during the period of Vijayarāghava Nāyaka (1633-1673), the Telugu King who ruled Tañjāvūr and the Kāveri delta. This period witnessed a significant shift leading to the identification of the king with the deity. Earlier the God was treated as the King; now the King became God.

Employing but a small number of themes and voices (the courtesan, the god/customer, a senior courtesan who may even be the madam of the house, and sometimes a married woman who has taken a lover), Kshetrappa creates a lively variety of poems with unusual details.

The *sakhī* in this following *padam* is eager to know about the union of the *nāyikā* with the Lord.

Aluku deerena Raga : Saranga: Tala: Chapu.

P:

Aluka deerena nedaina mee yaluka deerena

Are you pacified now? Have you got over your indignant mood?

AP:

Palukku laadu kuntira? Muvvagoplal Gumma! Mee

O sweet friend! Are you and Muvvagopala finally on talking terms?

C1: chekera bomma mee yiddari manasu challa mayena
nikka manateeyave nedu mee nenjili deerena
makkuva to nedaina meeku manchi dina mayena
akkadikakkada vibhudu neevu nasurusurani yuntire cheliya mee ||

Oh sweet doll, have both of you spent time pleasantly? Tell me the truth, is your heart's desire fulfilled? Did you have a nice day? Or did you and your Lord abuse each other angrily?

C2:

sudatiro yokarikokaru momulu juchu kontira
pedavulani tiyyani muddulu bettu kontira
adumukoni kougilla niddaru galsi yuntira
padari vaniki neeku boya pagala valene yundene cheliya mee ||

Oh lady with beautiful teeth, did both of you gaze at each other? Oh my friend, did you both kiss sweetly on lips? Did you both embrace closely?

C3:

balaro nedaina eka sayya meeda bavalinchitira
melumelani yiddari valapulu mechchukontira
chala vedukato muvvago paludu neevu guditira
vela velala chadi matalu vinti manukoltiri gadave mee ||

Oh young lady, did both of you sleep on the same bed at least today? Did you praise each other's love? Were you listening to your Lord talking secretly about others?

For the *bhakti* poets of Andhra, especially Annamayya's period, the King was only too human, at most sharing an aspect of divinity in the strict Brahminical *dharmaśāstra* tradition. These poets did not recognise him as their true sovereign since for them the real King was the God in the temple.

But during the Nāyaka period in South India, roughly mid-sixteenth to mid- eighteenth centuries, the distinction between the King in his palace and the God in the temple blurs. Kshetrayya thus addressed his songs to the King and at the same time invoked God.

Here we can see how Muvvagopala or Krishna, is suggested as both in human and divine aspects. In the third *charanam*, the *nāyikā* questions her own lack of devotion to the *sakhī*.

P:

Emi setune komma? Na netula saitune
What did I do? O friend? How do I hear it?

A:

Bhaamaro! Maa Mumvva gopaludela raade O yaama!
Why does't Muvvagopala come to me, friend?

C 1:

Oddika toda chekkita gorulunchanaitio?
Diddi madana shaastramella delupaniti no
Muddu mudduga natani kenu mrokkanitino
Vaddika rammani piluva nampite, gaddarinche nata gadave O yamma.
Did I not place my fingers against his cheek with love?
Did I not engage in exploring the Madana shastra along with him?
When I sent a messenger to summon him to me, is it not true that he was very rude to her?

C2:

Vanchana leka siganu puvvulunchanaiti no yinchu yinchuka sepu kouga linchanaitino
Lanchamichi keniovani laalinchanaitino
Kanchu padanu vanta manasu kanuku vadindu raade O yamma.
Did I not adorn myself with beautiful flowers? Did I not enfold him in sweet embrace?
Did I not bribe him enough with the tenderness of my lips?
The reason why he does not come is because he has a heart as sharp and ruthless as a knife.

C3:

Cheluvuda! Ani chaala bhakti seyanaltino

Chelmi toda momu jerchanaitino?

Kaliki! Man muvvagopala ramani kalaynaitino?

Yaluka chesi alla daani valanu chikki raade O yamma!

Did I not treat him with utmost devotion? Did I not place my face lovingly against his? Did I not meet him eagerly enough? He is cross with me and has fallen for that woman's wiles, hence he does not come.

From the above we can see the implicit trust in the superiority of the sakhī's knowing. It clearly places the sakhī as a more knowledgeable one in this journey of the nāyikā. The questions albeit asked are of a sort of mundane and mortal nature philosophically. They address the perennial self-doubt of the ardent devotee who goes all out and tries many ways to please the Lord conveying the simple doubts that rankle one in this path. In this mārṅa the sakhī comes like a Gurū leading her onward clearing the doubts and showing her the onward path.

Further, this period also saw cash playing a powerful role in interpersonal transactions as can be gauged in the following Kshetrāyya padam.

P:

Hitamu gaademo neekennadainmaa intiki,

Batimaalina raavu gopala!

Maybe it is no longer profitable to come to my home, since you seem to be disregarding all pleas to do so.

A:

Sata Maitivani yeedu sarasij aakshula lona pratiledani yunti gopaala!

I considered you to be without an equal amongst other young lotus-eyed men.

C1:

Nee vetla janavaitivo? Neepai marulukonna daani

Bhaavamū teliva levu gopala!

Naa venta badinatlu nee ventabadakunna

Bhaava juni kemaaya gopala!

I do not understand how you can be considered worldly since you have no inkling as to what is going on in the heart of the woman who is enamoured of you. What can be said of the cruel God of love who chases me more purposefully than he does you.

C2:

Epatla daya judavu nee vevvarane vemi

Paapamu Chesitino gopala!

Yee puttuvu puttinchi ginta nannalayinchi

Paapapu vidhiniemandu gopala.

I must have committed some grave sin to come to this stage, where you refuse to acknowledge me and pretend not to know who I am. What can be said of the cruel fate which has brought me into this world but is determined to bring me only unhappiness?

C3:

Kalisi ninnu chousheeti gatula delinchinanu

Bhali yanu noraadada? Gopala! Yalachi naa valenunna

Vanitalendaro neeku balavantam? Muvvagopala!

Even though I have always pleased you in every way, is it too much to expect a word of appreciation from you? There might be many women like me who have set their hearts on you, so do you consider it an unpleasant compulsion to come here now?

A new elite was emerging, one composed not of landed peasants, as in Vijayanagara territories, but of soldier-traders, who cut across social boundaries. These people combined two qualities usually considered incompatible in the Brahminical world view- martial valour and concern for profit, the quality of the *kṣatriya* (warrior) and the quality of the *vaiśya* (trader).

To be recognised as a King, one had either to be born in a particular caste as a legitimate heir or fabricate some such pedigree. In the more fluid social universe of the Nāyaka times, qualities like birth became less important than acquired qualities like wealth. If a king is God and if anyone who has money is King then anyone who has money is also God. For Kshetravyya therefore who sang of Kings as Gods, the shift to customer as God was not far-

fetched. Courtesans who were earlier linked to temples became linked to kings. The devotional mode however did not change. The new God who was not much more than a wealthy customer was addressed as Muvva Gopāla, as Kṛṣṇa, known in the local temple.

The following lyrics were composed in the court of King Vijayaraghava Nayak at Thanjavur.

It was intended to be presented with dance and music before the King, praising him by the best of courtesans of the court.

Sudinamaayanee yiiproddu sudinamaayanee yii
Madanaava taaruni seeva manaku galigene
Very auspicious is today! Very auspicious is today!
Serving Cupid's re-incarnation is our great pleasure!!

Prodduna niluvutaddamu bodaganna phalamu yii
Muddu moomuJuuda galige muddulagumma!
The fruit of having looked into the mirror early morning
Is seeing thismost lovable face, O charming little doll!!

liproddu puurna kumbha meduraina phalamu
Bhuupaala Kunjaruni neebodagantinamma
The fruit of coming face to face today with a water-pot
Is seeing this unique and majestic roya person!!

Dvijaraajula seevincina divya sakunamu-yii
Vijaya raaghava saurini Vididiloo gantini
The sacred omen of having worshipped the twice-born ones
Bears fruit in the royal presence of Vijayaraghava!!

One of Kshetranya's compositions as below interestingly upholds the *sakhī*'s role and brings out her importance in the words of the *nāyikā*.

Nii eelu maratunatee! Yoo muddugumma!
Kaamini tiruvalluri viira raaghavula pondu

Galige nennatikaina noo celiyaa!
Can I forget your favour O lovable doll!!
O young woman, at least after
A long time, I am able to achieve
Communion with Veera Raaghava
Of Tiruvallur, O my dear!

Inti niivanti *sakhī*ni nenni janmamulakaina
Santarincu koogalanāa sagamu deehamiccina
Yentaināa nii runamu diirunāa madilooni veedana
entatanaina callaarunāa niivu raakunna
kantudu nanu jeerunāa yennatikaina

Dear, can any one get a friend like you
For many generations, even after bequeathing
Half of one's own physical self?

Can I get redeemed of my indebtedness to you?
Had you not come into the scene, how could the anguish in my heart have subsided and helped my
Lord return to me after ages!

manasu ciikatigammi maataa da celululeeka
ghanamaina virahaagni gaageetappudu vacci
nanu ceera diistive tanumadhya praanee
Suni daara boositivi nanu jeppina
Vanajaakshula nooru muusitivi yennatikaina
When darkness spread all over mymind
And there were no friends around me to talk
And when I was at the boiling point in the
Fire of frustration, you came there
Pulled me towards you, **O beauty with a thin waist**
And gifted away to me the Lord of our life, having shut the mouths of those jealous women for good!!

Baalaroo muvvagopaaludau viira raaghavuna
Kiilaaguna nunna suddi hitavuga vinnavinci
Vaalaayamindu meppincitivi nanuguudina
Vaani ceebaasa lippincitivi yennatikaina

O young woman , you conveyed the news about my plight
To Veera Ragahav who is Muvva gopala , in an agreeable manner
Made him come here under compulsion and due to your good offices
One who never cared to see me, was reconciled
And made promises for all time.

The *bhaktī* and *sufī* periods cannot be confined to a medieval age. The *bhaktī* movement emphasised lived experiences over doctrine, *bhaktī* or devotion in relation to *jnāna* (knowledge) equality in the face of brahminical hierarchy and emotion over intellect.

Between the sixth and seventh centuries the work of nayanmars and alwars marked the first phase of the *bhaktī* movement. From the thirteenth century onwards the *bhaktī* movement swept over North India when it came into contact with Islam and Sufism in particular.

While the literature of the Nayanmars and Alwars began to take shape in late sixth century as an expression of ‘strong hatred’ of Buddhism and Jainism, the two ‘heretical’ religions that held sway over Tamil Nadu primarily because of royal patronage; it was also characterised by the growth of an intense emotional *bhaktī*.

In the thiruviruttam of Nammalwar, the most accomplished of Alwar saint poets **messenger songs became a prime vehicle of expression.** God appears as a lover-hero to his devotee-who in the guise of the love-sick heroine sends messages through birds or animals. The sorrow of separation and the ultimate longing for the divine being, place this work within the realms of mystic poetry with the difference that Nammalwar’s poetry is underlined by a message of hope.

-(Das2005; 44-45).

The fourth Alwar, Thirumalisai, added yet another dimension of reciprocity between man and God, bringing the divine and human realms closer to each other. ‘Narayana, I know, as I do not exist without you, so you too cannot live without me’. (Das 2005:50)

The only woman poet we have record of among the alwars is Andal, a ninth century Tamil precursor of Mirabai, who too considered herself married to Krishna but unlike Mirabai had refused to marry any mortal for that reason.

With Nachiyar Thirumozhi, she introduced a strong note of bridal mysticism that became a powerful feature of Sufi poetry in the fourteenth century. Nachiyar Thirumozhi is an autobiographical poem in which the mystic idiom clearly creates the space for expressions of female sexual desire that are exceptionally liberated for the time.

So great is my desire

To unite with the Lord

Who rests upon the milky ocean

That emotion chokes my breath

My breasts rise and fall

And quiver in joy

- (Das 20005:50)

The erotico-mystical cult of Krishna that had emerged around the figures of Nimbarka and Vallabhacharya in the 12th century consolidated itself under the influence of Chaitanya in Bengal in the 16th century.

Surdas and Mira two of the most well-known poets of the *bhakti* period in the 16th century were both Krishna devotees and while the former’s poetry enhanced the *madhurya bhāva* of *bhakti* through the spiritual allegorisations of Radha and Krishna, Mira’s poetry was to become emblematic of the allegoric expressions of female desire and a mediated liberation.

With Vaishnavism in Bengal, the emphasis shifted from service to surrender to mutual attachment and attraction between Krishna and the devotee.

While Krishna appears in many forms through the ages, Radha who is virtually absent in early Sanskrit literature, and appears in a secular form in the Gita Govinda, is according to Das, ‘essentially a creation of the medieval poets. She emerged out of an artistic necessity and grew out of various tensions, both poetic and social(Das 1984:69-70)

The Radha legend was transformed into a doctrine from the 16th century under Chaitanya, with Radha representing the *śaktī* power of Krishna. Subsequent legends and romances like Heer Ranjha, Sohni and Mahiwal that Punjabi and Sindhi poets drew their symbolism from the Chaitanya tradition share certain central features with the Radha theme. They glorify a woman passionately in love with a man against stiff social opposition and portray the tragic separation of the lovers.

The figure of Radha embodies in *bhaktī* literature a wide range of oppositions. Represented as the inseparable *śaktī* of Krishna, in the Radha doctrine of the Vaishnavas, she was simultaneously the *parāṅmukya*, another’s wife, involved in an illicit love and hence subject to cruel separation. In fact according to Das if love in all its romantic associations is one aspect of Radha, another aspect is suffering and humiliation of the worst kind (1984:76). This is reinforced in the Vaishnava poet Chandidasa’s choice of epithets for Radha as *abala* (powerless), *paradhina* (subjugated to others), *Katherputali* (wooden puppet), *abhingini*(hapless), *anathi*(orphan) and *dukhini* (distressed). - (Das 1984:77).

In the secularisation of the later Sahajiya Vaishnavism, that held men and women to be physical manifestations of Radha and Krishna, the doctrine of *parākīya* received a new impetus giving rise to a spate of erotic literature aiding the growth of licentiousness under the cloak of religion.

-(Das 1984:78)

Mira's poetry is imbued with a sharp tension between her subjective outpouring of her pain, vulnerability, joyousness, defiant commitment on the one hand and on the other an objective reporting (now fearful, now scornful, now distanced) of the social voice commenting on her life.

The voice of aspiration and desire was not only feminine but often richly sensuous and at times erotic, resulting in the creation of a field of liberated gendered significations though only in the spiritual idiom. The negative perceptions of the feminine remained pervasive resulting in a central contradiction between the spiritual and social constructions of gender.

Kabir observes: **In one direction we see that love for woman is accepted as the metaphor for the most serious of obstacles and in the other direction the same love is made into the most beloved metaphor of uninhibited devotion.**

Kabir's experience of love is shown not only to be constitutive of personal desire but also accommodating the desire of 'the other' and that translates directly into meaningful social action. The beloved Ram is the object of a feminine desire and also the '*shabad*', the word that takes the form of unbroken continuity of the inner and outer worlds and as such a metaphor for all of existence. Kabir's metaphors activate both the 'erotic' and the 'transcendental' in the mind of the reader and yield insights into the deep relationship of

kamabhavana (sexual desire) , *Ramabhavana* (spiritualrestlessness) and *samajabhavana* (outrage against injustice) .

For Kabir, **femininity is a metaphor for the agency of love**, for the capacity to be able to love. In order to attain the capacity to love, he takes the form of a female in his poetry and makes the object of his love, ‘loving ‘Ram, not the avatar Ram.

In the *bhaktī* tradition, the woman became the object of love. The divine was conceived in a male form. Indian folk tradition had the practice of abstracting the sexual desire of a woman in love. The element of taking a female form in spiritual practice can also be understood as seen through the various *sakhī*s of love and *viraha* in which Kabir and other *nirgun* poets represent a continuation of the popular, anonymous poetic compositions.

For the female, according to Kabir, the desire is the purpose of her existence. **Kabir expresses devotion toward Ram in the voice of an uninhibited woman expressing desire for an explicitly sexual union.**

Bathing in the light of love, Kabir, in order to talk to the beloved inside himself, becomes a woman. The object of his love, like the fragrance of the flower, is pervasive in the life of the world.

A female Kabir tells her *sakhī* , whoever realizes the presence of Ram in themselves will never have to endure an empty bed.

Sabghat mera saiyam suni sej na koi

Bhag tinhon ka he sakhī , jihi ghat pragat hoi.

My master dwells in all bodies, so no one’s marital bed is empty, that person is fortunate in whose body my master is revealed.

- (Gupta 1986:87)

The *sadhana* of desire of the fortunate one does not just address the confidante, it also calls out to Ram, calling him the husband's sister's brother (nanad ke bhai) in the unadulterated idiom of women.

Our consciousness of the presence of femininity within the male mind and body is indeed the outcome of the self –interrogation of the dual–gendered self, carried out by devotees ranging from Nammalvar to Kabir. This poetic sensibility that finds its expression in the voice of the woman is the sensibility of surrender.

This surrender is what causes an upheaval which the *sakhī* tries to placate. Thus Ram becomes a metaphor for equalizing social relationships – he becomes the very name given to this restless spiritual search.

While pursuing a deep re-assessment of social history, psychology and sexuality, feminist thinkers have developed a critique of sexual desire in which they have argued that the 'male' conception of love sees it as an adventure, a victory whereas the 'female' conception of love sees it as life itself, in its entirety.

***Sakhī* literally means a witness. Saint poets like Kabir use this term for their couplets which are otherwise also known as dohas.**

Ramanujam pays close attention to the peculiarities of female saints together with the tradition of men taking the form of women and underlines the attempt to 'redefine identity' in the poems of both. –(Ramanujam 1999.291)

Thus in the course of constituting or reconstituting themselves in this new way of being, men may take on feminine roles, speak through female personae and yearn for their male God as women do for their lovers. Women saints may take on the characteristics of men; they leave the house questing for their personal God and a community of their own choosing, in ways

that shatter rule after rule of Manu's book. They become the third gender: men, women and saints.

In the *premakhyān*, Sufi poetry of love, in Awadhi, (13-16 century) , the generic convention demands that the beloved who is sought by the hero is not his wedded wife- he is generally a married man who is fired with desire for another woman whose spiritual beauty he has chanced to see.

The genre of the *premakhyān* demands that the revelation of the beauty of the woman who is the symbolic object of the spiritual quest can be accidental or **made known to the seeker by an agent** who can be equated with the *pir* or the *Guru* in Sufi, Nathpanthi or *bhakti* beliefs.

This is a literary device that appears to duplicate the Sufi beliefs about the creation of the Universe –according to Hafiz, ‘primordial beauty unveiled herself by chance and one thousand words came into being. A beam of this struck the rose which reflected the beauty to the nightingale which was filled with ecstasy, frenzy and melody.’ (quoted in Ghomshei 1996-96). This is the birth of poetry touched with the vision of primordial beauty facilitated by the help of the teacher- the vision informs the life of the seeker poet. **Thus revelation is the starting point of the quest and revelation is so powerful that it renders the seeker *diwana* or *baora*, literally mad, fired by the desire to unite with the beauty that has been momentarily revealed.**

This can be taken as the underlying concept of the nāyikā- nāyaka bhava. Where the nāyikā seems to glimpse her paramour or beloved or perhaps have a divine vision and then is struck with the acute sense of separateness. This chasm can then only be cemented by the work of the sakhī. It is the sakhī alone who can convince the nāyaka about the suitability of the nāyikā and takes all measures to fulfill a union. It is the sakhī alone who propels and motivates the nāyikā towards the final goal.

In a poem entitled *Ātmasatakam* attributed to Shankara, he claims

‘aham nirvikalpo nirakarakarupo bibhutvacca sarvatra’

I am without an alternative, without a form and as I am all pervading, I am omnipresent.

The very same epithet is also used by him in *Brahmastotram*’.

‘namoadvaita tatvaya muktupradaya/namo brahmane vyapine nirgunaya’

Obeisance to the monism-incarnate deliverer, the omnipresent nirguna.

The self or the *ātman* and the *Brahman* thus coalesce. No question of coalescence at all arises; an advaitin would argue, because both are one and the same.

The *bhaktī* literature in India that crystallised around the first century AD was but a reinvention of the mystical traditions of the Vedic origin. It saw the resurgence of Hindu ideology from the Alvars and Nayanmars in the South to the Bauls of the east and the synthetic Vaishnavism of the North, down upto the 18th century. The basic characteristics of these schools of poetry have been summarised as 1. Ineffability 2. Transiency 3. Passivity 4. Noeticity (Intellectual) 5. Consciousness of oneness of every object 6. Sense of timelessness 7. Immersion in a phenomenal ego not the real self.

The personal yearning for communion with God was interrupted by the induction of the Guru in the *bhaktī* tradition. It left a tremendous impact on the devotee’s pathway to God, not only the course of devotional expression changed, the nature of love and its concomitant experiences lost its intensity but also miracles that were deprecated in the early phases were given up.

This path can be trodden only through an intermediary, the teacher.

But he alone is a teacher who is dead to self and established in unity.

A mind troubled

was appeased

An eye blinded

Opened

A garden blossomed

In the desert

- (Sur Ramkali, 420/14 to 16, Advani1958:145.)

Verse of Amir Khusrau

Aa piya more nainan mein, palak moond karlun,
Na mai dekhun auran ko, na tohe dekhan dun.
Come into my eyes, Love, and I'll shut them fast
Never another shall I see, nor let your gaze wander.

In the treatment of such compositions one can ask-who is the beloved who comes, who is the one who speaks and rejoices in the coming of the loved one? Is this Kanhaiya who comes? Who speaks and sings this? An ordinary woman *nāyikā* ? Radha herself? A gopi? Khusrau? A wandering, seeking mystic?

For both singer and listener, the apparently separate categories of *bhaktī* and ordinary human emotion (in this case expressed by the un-spiritual voice of the courtesan) become not so clearly separate any more. In such a rendering one can only ask in amazement- Who sings? Who listens? What is it that is being said? – and realise that there will never be an answer, only a joyous asking.

For *bhaktās*, this kinlessness manifests as the discarding of accepted kinship ties and forming a conjugal or romantic /erotic or a filial bond or a bond of servitude with the *ishta*, the preferred form of God. Wandering, homelessness is a part of this life – sometimes the *bhaktā* actually wanders, sometimes she is simply absent to her household. In *bhaktī* poetry both

protagonist and poet deliberately break all the made relationships of the world, as Ramanujam puts it (1973)

Vatsyayan (1968) explains that the Nāṭyaśāstra describes the process of *rasa* evocation from a detached impersonal state, therefore advocating a sense of objective distance. On the other hand, *bhakti* philosophy is engaged in a more subjective interpretation of the divine and articulates *rasa* as a more personal, immediate, earthly, erotic experience that dissolves boundaries -(Lynch 1990)

Mahadevi Akka rejected outright all notions of modesty as a virtue. She is supposed to have thrown off her clothes at one point in defiance to the indecent pruderies of society around her. This stresses the view that love of God is not only an unconditional giving up of all, but is necessarily anti-structure, of un-making, un-doing the man-made. It is an act of violation against ordinary expected loyalties.

The portrayal of women in vedic literature is a topic of much debate. Some scholars argue that women enjoyed a relatively favourable position in the vedic period. A.S. Altekar, argued that the position of women was higher in India than in ancient Greece and Rome. Similarly R. C. Dutt claimed ‘No nation held their women in higher honour than the Hindus’(1972, 168-169). **Women’s voices are not directly heard in Brahmanical literature such as the Upanishads.**

Yajnavalkya has an affectionate and personable exchange with his wife. In fact Yajnavalkya’s dialogue with Maitreyi is one of two separate occasions when he speaks to women about philosophy thus setting him apart from other Upanishadic teachers especially the traditional Kuru-Panchala Brahmins.

In his conversation with Maitreyi, for example, he frames his teaching in a way that specifically acknowledges her relation to him as his wife.

“Indeed a husband is held dear not for the love of a husband but a husband is held dear for the love of the self (*ātman*). A wife is held dear not for the love of the wife but for the love of the self (*ātman*) -(2.4.5) .

Yajnavalkya specifically relates his teaching to the particular relationship that exists between himself and his wife. This dialogue establishes a mode of address whereby Brahmin men can speak to their wives about philosophy.

When Yajnavalkya is teaching Janaka , he describes knowing *ātman* as an embrace(*samparishvaktā*) comparable to embracing a female lover which leaves a man oblivious- (BU 4.3.21)

Similarly in the Chhandogya Upanishad-(5.2.9),

A successful ritual performance produces a vision of a woman. Although these teachings do not prohibit women from gaining access to this knowledge they are clearly not aimed at a female audience.

As seen upanishadic teachings richly employ sexual metaphors specifically relating to the attainment of knowledge with male sexual pleasure.

The character of the self in ancient India.

Knowledge of *ātman* is often cast as a replacement to ritual. For eg. The transmission of knowledge from father to son is presented as a ritual. Having a son leads to immortality, virility and sexual potency –the fundamental aspects of male subjectivity. The Chhandogya Upanishad (1.1.6) describes om as uniting in sexual union. Knowledge of *udgitha* chant is equated with fulfilling sexual desires.

Another important soteriological goal in the Upanishads is *ānandā*, which is often translated as joy or bliss. In his study of the semantic history of the term, Olivelle argues that in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and the Taittiriya Upanishad, *ānandā* has overt sexual connotations. ‘These Upanishads present *ānandā* as the faculty or power of the sexual organ parallel to the sensory and motor faculties associated with other organs’ .-(1997b,162) .

***Ānandā* is often associated with knowledge of the *ātman* thus suggesting that knowledge of the self brings orgasmic rapture’.** As orgasmic bliss is part of the procreation process that ideally results in the birth of sons, *ānandā* is thus linked with immortality. **Olivelle’s study shows that that there is an explicit connection which suggests that the rapture brought about by knowledge of *ātman* is associated with a man’s sexual pleasure.** Hence we find the path to *ānandā* or the final union laden with erotic suggestions and metaphors.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad -(1.4.1-6)

-the gender dimensions of *ātman* are highlighted by depicting the self as the primordial man who creates the first woman from his own body. At the beginning of creation, *ātman* is alone and afraid thus he creates a wife to have as companion. Significantly the female body is explicitly created from *ātman*’s body implying that the existence of the female body is ultimately derived from the primordial male body.

The Upanishads tend to represent the female body differently from the male body and by linking *ātman* with the mythology of the *puruṣa* and *prajāpati* they present a particularly male conception of the self.

This also reveals the eternal tension of union of the *ātman-parmātman* reflected down the ages as the eternal tryst of the *nāyikā-nāyaka*. It also reveals why *śṛṅgāra* became the cornerstone of *bhakti*. Why erotics entered the domain of spirituality. Why the two streams run parallel to a final goal that offers a similar experiential state.

Note: *It is this giving up of the mortal vanities nay of mortality itself that the sakhī seems to drive the nāyikā to. It is perhaps the consciousness of divine that can be implied to be the sakhī too. And it is this consciousness when once awakened creates a restlessness that cannot stop unless it can reach its goal or final destination. Hence the idea of baori. The consciousness that is the middle force of the seeker and the sought tries its best to reduce the gap. It has been said 'If you take one step towards me, I will take ten steps towards you'. Thus the interesting point is once the journey has begun there are sights and sounds that fill the senses of the beyond. The sought too begins its journey to meet the seeker. And this is the unique parallel of the lover and the beloved. The twain shall meet. The sakhī here is often a silent witness and if one or the other lags behind she makes sure the momentum is not lost .Thus the sakhī is said to be the powerful link between the two- the seeker and the sought.*

One of the premises of this work was to understand if the sakhī philosophically could imply an entity within one, just as philosophically the nāyikā-nāyaka implied the ātman-paramātmā entity. It was an interesting finding to know that the Thirukkural (third Sangam) presented clearly a chapter on the nāyikā talking to her heart. The heart could therefore it seems have been the precursor to the sakhī. It is clearly interesting that this ancient text details matters of love clearly in simple verse where the presence of the sakhī or the confidante is prominent. The sakhī or confidante is referred to both vis a vis the nāyikā and the nāyaka.

The Thirukkural contains in a nutshell, the quintessence of the Vedas and Indian

Philosophy and the social and cultural code of the Tamils. It is one of the most important works in the Tamil language. This is reflected in some of the other names by which the text is given by, such as *Tamiḷ marai* (Tamil veda), *Poyyāmoḷi* (words that never fail), and *Deiva nūl* (divine text). The term *Tirukkural* is a compound word made of two individual terms, *tiru* and *kural*. *Tiru* is a honorific Tamil term that corresponds to the universally Indian, Sanskrit term *sri* meaning "holy, sacred, excellent, honorable, and beautiful".

The **Tirukkural** or **Thirukkural** (literally *Sacred Verses*), or shortly **the Kural**, is a classic Tamil text consisting of 1330 couplets or kurals, dealing with the everyday virtues of an individual. Considered one of the greatest works ever written on ethics and morality, chiefly secular ethics, it is known for its universality and non-denominational nature. It was authored by Valluvar, also known in full as Thiruvalluvar. The text has been dated variously from 300 BC to 7th century CE. According to traditional accounts, it was the last work of the third Sangam.

Thirukkural believed that if one could observe *dharma*, earning money(*porul*) and enjoying sex(*kAma*) correctly then one would not worry about *moksha*(*veedu*).

Thiruvalluvar also explains how righteous life is to be based on the principle of *Aram* or righteousness through a consistent practice of virtues which makes life more meaningful. The attainment of God-realization is possible only through self-realization on the part of a pure and disciplined soul. It is through human realization of values of goodness, truth and justice that divinity is affirmed. Prof. Toy observes, "Human relationships are based on moral laws

of truth and goodness sustained by love and justice. It is those cardinal virtues which contribute to the cultural life of the people "(160)

The book on virtue (*aram*) contains 380 verses, that of wealth (*porul*) has 700 and that of love (*inbam*) has 250.

Book III: *Inbam* (*Kāmatuppāl*) deals with love (Chapters 109-133) from which verses are quoted below.

In the chapter on

Divining the heart-110

The hero speaks to himself thus:

Her painted eyes possess twofold looks

One harms while the other treats.

–(1091)

Her swift steady glance gives more pleasure than half of sexual pleasure

Hero speaks to the heroine:

Great is the charm the slender maiden owns.

When I gaze in love, she gently smiles.

–(1098)

Confidante speaks to herself:

Looking at each other as strangers belongs only to lovers.

–(1099)

They look at each other as strangers but really they are lovers.

When eye to eye lovers lock their looks

Spoken words are of no use.

–(1100)

Words are of no use when lovers convey the message of love through their eyes.

From the above we can see how the *sakhī* is an adept in understanding the extent of feeling, involvement and the degree of closeness established between the lovers.

From chapter on : On praising her beauty 112

Hero speaks to himself:

Oh my heart! how deluded you are and unwise

To match her eyes with common flowers. -(1112)

The lover is confused at the sight of flowers as they resemble the eyes of his beautiful maiden.

Hero speaks to the confidante

Anicham flower and swan's soft feathers

Are like nettle to the feet of damsels. -(1120)

Even the delicate anicham flower and the swan's soft feathers are like thorns to the maiden's soft feet.

Chapter 113 : Glorification of love

Hero speaks to himself:

The intimacy between this dame and me is like the union of soul and body. -(1122)

The intimacy between the lovers is similar to the union of the body and soul.

Hero speaks to the confidante :

If I forget I can recall but I forget not the qualities

Of my maiden with bright warring eyes. ... -(1125)

If the lover forgets her rare qualities, he can recall them. But he never forgets them

Heroine speaks to herself:

As my lover resides in my eyes forever,

I paint them not, for he may disappear. -(1127)

As the lover is within her eyes, she does not paint them fearing he would disappear...

My lover dwells forever within my heart

I shun hot food lest he should be hurt.

–(1128)

The lover lives in her heart, so she avoids hot food for fear of harming him.

My lover always dwells happily in my heart

Yet villagers decry he lives unkindly apart....

– (1130)

The lover always resides in her heart. Even then, the villagers blame him as a heartless deserter.

In Chapter 114 Decorum defied

Hero speaks to himself:

Lovers with pangs of love find no safety but in riding the palm-horse only.

–(1131)

There is no solution for those suffering from love-sickness except riding the palm-horse...

Hero speaks to the confidante:

Unable to bear pangs of love, my body and soul

Will shamelessly resort to riding the madal (An ancient practice of carrying a lover on a Palmyra horse to get consent for marriage.)

–(1132)

Unable to bear the grief of separation, the lover's body and mind are prepared to ride the madal

Heroine speaks to herself:

Passionate love reveals itself at once

Despite purity and tenderness.

–(1138)

Despite modesty and gentleness, intense love breaks its secrecy and comes out in public.

The fools laugh at me before my eyes

For they've suffered not my pains.

–(1140)

The ignorant make fun of her in her presence, for they have never suffered the pangs of love like her.

In Chapter 116: Pangs of Separation

Confidante speaks to the hero:

Tell me only when you do not ever leave,

About your fast return tell those alive.

–(1151)

The 'lover' must tell her only if he does not part, about his speedy return, he must inform the survivors.

Heroine speaks to her confidante:

Knowing the pain of separation he leaves,
How can I trust his consoling words? -(1153)
Though he knows the pain of separation, he leaves and so his words cannot be trusted.

To save my life, stop my lover from leaving,
If he leaves, impossible is rejoining. -(1155)
If the lover wants to save her life, he must not leave.
If it happens she will not be alive for reunion.

Won't the gliding bangles on my forearm utter
My seashore chieftain's departure? -(1157)
The departure of her lover is proclaimed by the loosening of her bangles.

Fire burns certainly when touched
But love burns when left. -(1159)
Fire injures only when touched. But lovesickness burns the lovers when separated.

From chapter 117 **Pining** we see:

Heroine speaks to her confidante:
I try to control my intense love-suffering
But it swells like a spring. -(1161)
She is trying to hide her lovesickness but it swells like a spring.

Crueller than the heartless
Are the unending nights. -(1169)
The long and slow moving nights are crueller than the heartless lover , who has deserted her...

If my eyes like my mind could go where he is

They need'nt swim in flood of tears. -(1170)
If her eyes could travel like her thought to her lover's abode, she need not shed tears.

In chapter 118, on Grieving eyes we see,

The eyes eagerly loved him that day

Is it not a mockery to weep today? -(1173)

It is ridiculous to see that the eyes which eagerly loved him now weep for him..

As all my miseries my tell-tale eyes trumpet

People here easily know my secret. -(1180)

She cannot conceal her secret from the townsfolk , as her eyes reveal her sufferings

From Chapter 119, Suffering from Pallor.

Heroine speaks to herself:

I myself agreed to the parting with my lover

To whom can I now complain of my pallor. -(1181)

Heroine speaks to her confidante:

He robbed me of my beauty and modesty

Giving in return pain and pallor to me. -(1183)

He took away her beauty and modesty giving her pain and lovesickness in return

In Chapter 120 Pining alone

Heroine speaks to her confidante:

None is harder than the one who can live

Without her lover's words of love. -(1198)

There is no one bolder than a woman who endures life without her lover's sweet words.

Heroine speaks to her heart:

O heart, why tell the heartless your pains?

Rather fill the sea of sorrow with tears. -(1200)

Instead of telling her grief to her loveless lover, it is better to fill the sea of sorrow with tears

In Chapter 121 Sad memories of love

Hero speaks to his friend:

Endless joy comes from the thought of love fine,

Love is, therefore sweeter than wine.

Even the very thought of love brings joy, but wine delights only when drunk. So love is sweeter than wine.

Heroine speaks to her confidante:

My lover ever resides in my heart.

Do I too reside in his heart?.

–(1204)

He always dwells in her heart but she doubts if he has a place in his heart.

He often enters my heart, is he not ashamed when he keeps me out of his heart?

–(1205)

He is not ashamed of coming into her heart even though he keeps her out of his heart.

Thoughts of his separation burn my bosom

What would happen if I forgot him?

–(1207)

Her heart burns at the thought of his separation. She will not survive if she forgets him.

In Chapter 124: Losing physical beauty

Confidante speaks to the heroine:

Brooding over him who left us in great pains

Your dim eyes feel shy at sweet flowers.

–(1231)

Thinking of her lover who had gone away, her eyes have lost their grace and feel shy to see flowers.

Heroine speaks to her confidante:

With shrunken arms and loose bangles I wail

As others call my lover cruel.

–(1236)

She can bear her arms becoming thin and bangles slipping down but not her lover being rebuked.

Heroine speaks to her heart:

O heart, carry the news of withering arms

To my cruel lover and earn his praise.

–(1237)

Her heart should carry her miserable message to the unkind parted lover and thus earn glory

Chapter 125 -Speaking to the heart is exclusively about the *nāyikā*

Heroine speaks to her heart:

O heart, can't you suggest any remedy

To cure the incurable malady?

-(1241)

She seeks prescription of some medicine to cure her incurable lovesickness.

O heart, longing for him is folly

When he has no love for me.

-(1242)

It is the folly of her heart to long for her unkind lover and grieve at the separation.

Why suffer and pine for him, o heart

Who caused pallor but loves me not.

-(1243)

Her suffering and longing for her lover are in vain as he has caused lovesickness but has no love for her.

O heart, take my eyes to my lover

Or else they will kill me for sure.

-(1244)

She is pleading to her heart to take her eyes to the lover. Or else her eyes will kill her.

Thus as we can note now from the ancient text –the Thirukkural, from the third Sangam most likely, there is a clear reference to the mind and heart. The mind is the traveler and the heart is referred to as the stationary one.

From Chapter 125, we see:

O heart, can't you suggest any remedy

To cure the incurable malady?

-(1241)

Where the heroine is talking to her heart.

In the context of sakhī-nāyikā-nāyaka, how do we read this?

As we can analyse the above, the heart is in the place of sakhī.

Time and again we find these references through various texts. So we can infer that there is a disconnect between mind and heart when the jīvātman has had a glimpse of the divine. Now the heart is in a turmoil. The heart is unable to handle itself on its own. It can go beserk. In terms of modern medicine we can infer that this is the same of a mind-body disconnect.

As stated above:

If my eyes like my mind could go where he is

They need'nt swim in flood of tears.

– (1170)

Because the divine is inaccessible it is the mind by various methods that can calm the heart. So the nāyikā initially as seen above talks to the heart and tries to cajole it. When she begins suffering she seeks a remedy and here the mind comes to her rescue. Looking at it from the nāyikā-nāyakā aspect we can say that the nāyikā variously addresses the mind or heart in her turmoil. These the first steps of going within of making the mind-heart apparatus united. It is their balance that brings a calm which the nāyikā lacks. The sakhī can be likened to the ātmān too –the all-knowing who can help one cross the sea of samsārā. A patient listener, a silent witness it is she who gently directs the nāyikā's state from restlessness to peace.

According to Keshavadasa **mind is the basis of the entire creation –seen and unseen.** Creation arises due to the association of God and Maya. This association gives birth to mind. The mind has two partners: activity and inactivity. From activity are produced the three worlds, attachment, passion, greed, rage, egoism , thirst etc. Wisdom, evenness, contentment, thought etc. are the children of inactivity.

A parakiya nāyikā tells her sakhī about tempting situations when it is difficult to control her mind in this composition of Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer- apuDu manasu;

raagam: kamaas taalam: roopakam.

pallavi:

apudu manasu nilucunade ativaroyideti mata (apudu)

O lady, will mind be stable then?

anupallavi

capalameti ketuvantei samarthyamugala varai nanu (apudu)

However capable one is, temptation is stronger.

caranam 1

cokkapu yauvanamu gala cakkani purusudu yuvatula
pakkajeri sarasamuga balkucu kanusaiga jeyaka (apudu)

If a handsome man who has beautiful youth comes closer, speaks pleasantly, and winks,

caranam 2

varada venkatesha varuditu surata sambhramamu telisi
tarunamerigi marudu viricaramulu koniveyaka (apudu)

While Cupid showers the flower arrows and Venkateshwara is eager for lovesport.

An interesting composition in Manipravalam by the celebrated Swathi Thirunal (early 19th century) **addresses the mind** or citta interestingly.

aho citta

raagam: Shankarabharanam taalam: Misra chapu. Composer: Swati Thirunal.

pallavi

aho citta cintaya kim taya hanta te visayesu

O mind behold. Why should you indulge in sensual enjoyment?

anupallavi

bahu vyamohadayihu duh-svapnasamesu esu dustyaja matsaragraharopa karisu

It enhances your greediness and draws you toward jealousy, desire, anger etc. which are akin to bad dreams and hence are to be condemned.

caranam 1

manda hasita madhu manjumukhambujam indivaraksinamiti ma ma ganaya
syandiputika pasandramidam sarvam nindanIyamiti nikhila budhajana nigathitam khalu ha
Do not count on the maidens merely going by their pleasant sweet smile, lotus like face etc. They are just the collection of blood, flesh, dripping and stinking phlegm etc. The wise men have indeed proclaimed that all these are condemnable.

caranam 2

kalakala bhashigu kathamayi caliteshu kalitadara hasita kamramukheshu

kalaya ma ratimanishu suteshu kalusa nirayapata kantha baddha shilanukaristu

Do not count on the pleasant smile, beautiful cool lotus face and the red lotus like eyes etc. of ladies who attract by their intoxicating talk, smiling by revealing their attractive teeth. This only will bring forth the despicable sins tied very hard like a stone around the neck.

caranam 3

madabharamantha rAmatAnga rutangama madanIya mrgamada maNiharmyAdini

vada vada vastUni vapushivilayajusi dadati mudam kiyadacira ruci lasita capalAni hA

Do not count on those who walk majestically with the gait of an elephant, those who sport intoxicating musk paste, those who live in huge mansions. Though these may give delight, they are transient and lead you to fickle mindedness.

Another Swati Thirunal manipravala composition ‘Kaantanodu cennumelle’ in

raagam: Nilambari taaaam: rupaka has reference to the heart and mind clearly.

pallavi

kantanodu cennumelle kilimozhishu mihavada

O Kilimozhi-parrot voiced one. Go to my beloved and tell him my miseries.

anupallavi

kataraksitantayayi maruvunnen tarunimani heramaniya gunavasati calamizhi

O Kadarakshi! I feel exhausted. O Tarunimani Gunavasati chalamizhi!

caranam 1

induvumuyarnuvannu mamahradi nirupama shucamiha nalkitunnu

manda marutanumme manattarilaho bahu khedavumiha vitaratipada

The moon is rising up and causing immeasurable miseries in my heart! The cool breeze-alas!- is creating deep sorrow in my mind.

caranam 2

sutasayakanum hr̥di shiva shiva karunaiyumiha shobhanangi varumennu
priti pundayi bale priya manasavum mayimoda sahita mayi viracaya

O Shobhanangi. Siva siva! In my heart I thought he the Cupid will come to me in full passion. Oh my dear! Explain to him my lovelorn state of mind and bring him to make me happy.

caranam 3

pala divasam undiha jnyan parina dasa shadharamukhi valayunnadumorkka
nivala bhidadi suranadanam vasudeva sutan varumenniha mama dhavanayi **sakhī**

O the full moon faced! Remember that I have been engulfed with miseries for a long time. That son of Vasudeva worshipped by Indra and other celestials I thought he will come and become my husband.

Sakhī addressing the *nāyaka*-Padavarnam- Swati Thirunal

Satura kamini raagam: Kalyani taalam: Adi

pallavi

satura kaminidevatamyati sakala loka nāyaka ha hanta

O Sakalalokanāyaka !-Lord of the entire universe . Due to increasing desire she has become very meek.

anupallavi

matangayana shri padmanabha harina madala lasibala desha (svara sahityam) sarasa gama ni ghana
tapa mapan-nidhana sama tanuroditi sadhunita visabata ragama parama kalitakhila madhava sudi vasa
nikadam-abhishanayati rupa kama sakama vidhruta dara ratha paritavi budha jalaruha sama locana
pavanapa nanu

O Sri Padmanabha, having the gait of an elephant. One who is adorned with musk on the forehead.

That lady is out of her wits, she is immersed in the ocean of dense misery and crying helplessly. Her desires are also escalating. O Lord! How is she going to pass the days of spring? O the one who outshines Cupid. You sport the conch and disc. The protector of the celestials! Eyes that equal the lotus! Due to her pure agony she has become weak.

caranam

ni rujandama ho guru (svara sahityams)

Alas do not make her feel disappointed.

1: niti visharadatisa rasamala caru shobha rada

You are the righteous and competent one. You are pure, charming and have beautiful teeth.

caranam 2

sarasa vishikha sayaka parava shasakalanuta saraguna pada

Oh the one having glorious feet worshipped by all! She is helpless being afflicted by the flower arrows of Cupid.

caranam 3

palite bhavara patalarunaja pada raja hara pakavairinuta

parijata suma patavasi kaca papa rina jana palana kulita

O the protector of the King elephant! Having charming red lips. Honoured by Brahma, Shiva and Indra. Tresses having the fragrance of the heavenly flower parijata. O the one engaged in protecting the sinless.

caranam 4

nilatara rajani ramana kamaniya mukha bhajaniya padayuga

nira ruhatapa niya ruci vasaniya bahu mahaniya gata mada

O the moon faced! Having lotus like feet that are worthy of worship, draped in shining garment, the most supreme one, devoid of pride.

caranam 5

pada patitakhila parijana palana rasadi hasati-yanugrahana vima ni

bhutatara hrdayamayi dhira parama karuna sandra candanapralipta

vapusamiha sadaramāyā visara su-nayanam anagha mudha kimiva

dinani gamāyāsi samari haratara sa vibhoga laya su-krpamaye mrdula pada

O the one who delights in protecting those who worship Thy feet! Her heart is perplexed. O one who is the ocean of compassion. Delight your long eyed one with your sandal smeared body. The days are passing in vain. One who destroys the enemies, O Lord. Be compassionate. O the one with soft feet! Do not disappoint her.

Another one by Swati Thirunal that refers to mind explicitly.

attaliyannidunnu raagam: Sahana Taalam: Mishra Chapu

pallavi

attaliyannidunnulk-kambilippoludayyo jnanendu ceyvu

What shall I do now? Alas my mind is in turmoil with longing?

anupallavi

mattani veriye veliyum ninmoli kelkkanju

Your sweet speech excels honey and melts the hearts of ladies adorned with pearl garlands. Without listening to such speech.

caranam 1

iravu pakalu ninnurapolttaradigale karuyiya katiliral maruvunnorennodu

aru tarudue kayarppingaranaliga vaigade tarika naltanettam coriyum corivayinnu

Day and night I am meditating upon your golden feet in my heart and embracing you within. Without ego and without wasting a second come to me with your honey flowing mouth.

caranam 2

panimatiyato cenkanalatu polave kanattoru tuyar nenjaka matil valarttidunnu

kanivodu ni cemme kalaviyaduga yennodini malpidigal vedinjettam pankajanabha

Cupid is tormenting me by shooting his arrows ; resolve my miseries , leave your pride and come embrace me with your flower like body and unite with me.

The cool moon like a ball of fire is piercing my heart. Leave all your stubbornness and come and unite with me, O Pankajanabha.

In the following manipravaala *padam* , *sakhī* he ni , raagam: Shamnkarabharanam and taalam: Mishra chapu, there is the reference to mind wavering because of Cupid's arrows.

pallavi

sakhī he ni gamikka vegam sarasanodu sakalam me kathaya shokam

O dear friend. Go at once. Tell my beloved about my anguish.

anupallavi

vikhila bhuvana nathan nirajanabha ninnu sukhayati kamiha sukrta tamam bhuvi

I wonder which girl is blessed today to enjoy the company of Sri Nirajanabha , the lord of the world.

caranam 1

caru tarangi jnyan cata kiyatu pole nirittarsha rasamanennu vannennodu

cerumennu tozhi cetasi cindiccu paramuzhalunnu parvanendu sumukhi

O Charutarangi-having a charming form. I am like the chataka bird fervently waiting for my beloved , the one as beautiful as Cupid to come and enjoy with me. O friend with moon-like face, since am constantly thinking like this, I am languishing. **Because of the target of Cupid's arrows my mind is wavering .** As I have lost my confidence, even the cool rays of the moon torture me like fire produced from lightening. Alas! Do help to lessen my sorrows.

caranam 2

alamati vacasa capalatara haranaksi pala dinam undayyo valayunnu taniye jnyan

kalayasi kimu maunamalaghu tara viraha jalanidhiyatil vinakulitendriyayam mayi

O Krushatanulatike, having a slender body like a creeper.

Enough of this talk, oh one with doe-like eyes. Alas! For many days am suffering due to loneliness.

Why are you keeping quiet? I have fallen into this ocean of separation and all my senses are confused.

A reference to mind yearning for the *nāyaka*.

Shri padmanabha raagam: Madhyamavati taalam: chapu Composer: Swati Thirunal

Pallavi:

shri padmaabha kalayitum tvam mama cittam paramutkanthate

Sri Padmanabha. My mind yearns to be merged with you fervently.

Anupallavi:

tapasa manomāyā tamarasa nivasana apannadhiniyaha harana lokanāyaka

You reside in the lotus like hearts of the sages who meditate upon you. You destroy all the sorrows.

You are the Lord of the world.

caranam 1

taruni virahatura dayitam prositamivasarala bhrngamalika sarasinimiva

para brtatata tiriva vara vasantika kalam parama pipasuri vapaniyavam su madhuram

I yearn for you just like the lovelorn maiden longs for her beloved who has left for a distant land, like the swarm of bees hovering over a lotus pond, just like koels welcome the spring season and like the most thirsty person longs for a sweet drink.

caranam 2

cataka tatiri valajadamanamyapara jata garuto-andajajananamiva

Like the thirsty cataka birds await longingly for the dark clouds as they will not take any other water, like fledgelings long for their mother's return, like the man weary of the fierce sun longs for shade, like the bird chakora longs for the moon, I long for you always.

An interesting padavarnam where the *sakhī* compares herself to the *nāyikā*!

Swati Thirunal

sa vama rusa raagam: Khamas taalam: Adi

pallavi

sa vama rusa yatu mananiya ya samanya ramāyā ma

That beautiful girl is angry. She is equal in every aspect to Goddess Lakshmi.

anupallavi

pavanambhoja nabha paradhinatam aham tavaki majanana tapaya sada jata (svara sahityam) sa niti vimaladhamala mahamagasa samāyāmapī nahi tasya avitanniti dhurandhara matta naga kamini tatha siki mutapamiha manasa manuvīdhi sa nidhi pati girisha sumadita mrdupari

O immaculate Lord Ambhojanabha! I am the slave of you. Oh Lord, She is yearning for you always.

She always follows the path of ethics and is without any blemish. She will never err from the righteous path. I don't even deserve to be looked at by her. She does not know about her own capabilities. Her gait is majestic like a youthful elephant. Don't you pine for her as dictated by your mind? You are pleased in the company of Kubera and Siva.

caranam

damodara janami (svara sahityams)

O Damodara, I know you!

vamala paniha mama

Oh handsome one. Do listen to my narration.

manidarpana vidhu padapa rakha kavidha vivada māyā pi ma samani

O one whose feet resemble the reflection of gem studded mirror. O Lord! you ride on Garuda. Please tell me.

dhatru krpa pada madhava vadatidhuni tava bahudha

bhavatihi kimu vahasi mudataramiha himagiri sama

O repository of compassion , Madhava. Ocean like lord. Indeed your manifestations are many. Where are you going now? You remove all the temporal pleasures. You are great like Himalaya.

sama gamani vimukha muni sarasabisi ni dayitapada ma shuma

kalaya mama mama visru japataka kula pati ratha kapata gati catura

satyadhaniya pada nirnita hina guna baddhanu rga kamaddavidhaya

viphalamiha kathamagama nilaya karunarasa rahitobha vanajani

Oh one with majestic gait! Just as the lotus turns away from the moon, the eminent sages spurn the worldly passions and attain your feet, you bestow upon me that place attained by sages. Now leave me alone. You have Garuda as mount. You are expert in deceiving. You are the destination of virtuous people. Please redeem me by being bound by transient worldly pleasures and fruits of actions. O the personification of all scriptures. How come you are so merciless?

damodara janami tavakashayam mayi janakate mukha ma janaya vitosam

O Damodara, I know your intentions. Why does your face show unhappiness?

The *nāyikā* refers to the havoc caused in the mind by Cupid in this following composition.

manasi dussaham raagam: Ahiri taalam: chapu

pallavi:

manasi dussaham ayyo madanakadanamendu madiraksi jnyan ceyyavu

O Madirakshi, one with bewitching eyes. Alas, I can no longer tolerate the havoc caused in my mind by Cupid. Advise me as to what should I do?

anupallavi

panimatimukhai bale padmanabhaninnennil kanavillaikalal kaman parameyyunnu

Since Padmanabha has no mercy on me I am still tormented by the arrows of Cupid.

caranam 1

loka vasigalkellam lobhaniyanamindu shokamekkumatram sumukhi tarunnadendu

ekantattillenodu sakam ceida lilagal akave mama kantana shubhada maranno

O Sumukhi-good looking one. While the world is enthralled looking at the coveted moon, it gives me nothing but sorrow. Has my beloved forgotten all the amorous sports he enjoyed with me in private?

caranam 2

innuvarumen kantanennavu dinavum jnyan dhanyeharudi ninaccu tandayayi maruvunnuu

anna panadiyilu mannanadayalame nannayi vimukhatayum nari ratnamevanu

Oh blessed one. Many a days I have spent hoping he would come to me today but alas only to be disappointed and depressed. O gem of a woman with the gait of the swan, I have totally lost my appetite as well.

caranam 3

banatrayattal tanne paridangal munnume ksinamakki ceyyunna shri pancavishikham

nilanayi valayumme niravadhi shucam nalkan enamizhivaisamyam endupara ka tozhi

O my friend with eyes like a doe. Tell me, is it difficult for Sri Manmatha , who can make the world powerless just by his three arrows thus leave me helpless to endure this endless agony?

The reference to the the sakhī as swan can be philosophically implied as the one who is discerning. Just as the swan is known to separate milk from water the sakhī will be able to guide her to the truth.



VIII. Viraha bhaktī and sakhī

- i. Madhura bhakti and sakhī

In the enumeration of the nine devotional disciplines only *dāśya* (servitude) and *sakhya* (companionship) are mentioned in the Text of Bhaktī Ratnavali. Besides these there is mention also of *ātma nivedana* (self dedication). Probably the other attitudes are included in the last one.

Dāśya the seventh of the devotional disciplines means cultivating the attitude of a servant of the Lord. This and the succeeding disciplines (*sakhya* and *ātmanivedana*) have to be distinguished from the earlier ones. These *bhavas* or devotional attitudes are of the very essence of the higher forms of *bhaktī* (*para bhaktī*) which are distinguished from the formal ordinance regulated (*vaidhi*) *bhaktī*. In the stage of *vaidhi bhaktī* it is incumbent that the devotee practises the earlier disciplines dealt with, but when devotion has become spontaneous these disciplines cease to be disciplines but become natural channels for the expression of the devotional sentiment. But to feel that God is one's child or companion or sweetheart is so intimate a form of relationship that no ordinary devotee who is dominated by a sense of divine majesty will dare to cultivate it.

The attitude of *madhura* (conjugal love) is considered the most intimate involving in itself the essence of *dāśya* (servitude), *sakhya* (companionship) and perhaps *vātsalya* (parental affection) too.

According to Sri Ramakrishna, A servant serves a Master for long very faithfully. The master is extremely pleased with him and putting him on his own seat says, 'You are my own self'. Advaitic consciousness is like that- a gift of God on his faithful and loving servant.

According to this philosophy we can infer the merging of the sakhī and nāyikā. The sakhī as ātmān has served the nāyikā faithfully. The nāyikā is extremely pleased and says to her ‘You are my own self!’ The sakhī and nāyikā merge in the final union!

Companionship is a very close relationship wherein the degree of intimacy is greater than in servitude. It is this closeness and intimacy with God that the upholders of personal devotion point to as its superiority over intellectual (*santa bhava*).

What companionship with God achieves is put in the words of Rishabha:

एवं मनः कर्मवशं प्रयुंक्ते अविद्यात्मन्युपधीयमाने ।

प्रोतिर्न यावन्मयि वासुदेवे न मुच्यते देहयोगेन तावत् ॥

-(Bhagavad Geeta, 5.5.6)

So long as the *ātmān* is enshrouded in ignorance, its association with the mind subjects the *ātmān* to *karma* and consequently to repeated births and deaths. **Until the aspirant cultivates intimate love (*prīti* or *sakhya*) for Vasudeva, he is not released from the bondage of the body.**

Prīti is the loving joyous feeling one has in the presence of an object that has deep and irresistible attraction for one. All the preparatory part of the ninefold devotional disciplines is meant to generate *prīti* in man for God. *Prīti* grows into *prema*. *Sakhya*, *vātsalya* and *madhura* are all aspects of *prema* and *prīti* in different degrees in the experience they yield.

Ātmanivedana or dedication of oneself to the lord is the end of all devotional disciplines. The devotee ignores all and finds self-fulfilment in contemplation on and service of Him.

The Bhagavatha and the *bhaktī* scriptures hold the Gopis as the most conspicuous instance of self-dedication and surrender. Unlike devotees in general, they did not pass through the earlier phases of devotion. Their mind got fixed in passionate personal love of Krishna. Their purification was effected by direct contact with him. When they were separated from Krishna when he went to Mathura from Gokula they were given the message, ‘Separation only strengthens love. Soon will you attain the joy of Brahman which will make you experience separation and union as equally blissful.’

The *atma nivedana* or self dedication as an expression of personal love and intimacy with the Divine brought enlightenment to the Gopikas.

Śaranāgati is difficult to differentiate with *ātmanivedana*. Self dedication is described as the effect that gradually comes on a soul after having gone through the earlier disciplines.

According to Friedhelm Hardy, early Tamil material contributed a system of poetic conventions pertaining to the love of man and woman which came to exert considerable influence on the form of emotional *bhaktī*. It is in the religiosity of the Alvars that sectarian Krishnaism fused with classical Tamil culture and emotional *bhaktī* was born. In the final phase, Alwar religion was sanskritised in the Bhagavatha Purana.

In ‘Viraha Bhaktī’ of Friedhelm Hardy, we find the reference where it is said the friend draws the mother’s attention to a number of tell-tales which suggest that the girl has embraced Kannan of Tiruppuliyur. **The friend describes him in such emphatic terms that it looks almost as if she had seen him ‘with the girl’s own heart’.**

There are clear traces that the *nāyikā* has enjoyed all the favours sinking completely into the divine grace of Krishna. ‘She must have come into contact with Krishna’s divine grace, could there be any other reason for her being redolent of beautiful, cool tulsi?’

All this by no means suggests that she is in a state of complete happiness, for the friend asks twice, ‘What can I do for her?’, thereby suggesting that she needs help. **Even actual union involves pain and suffering.**

The focal point of all poems in Thiruvaimozhi is the emotions of the girl, a projection of the *bhakta* onto the plane of poetry. Whether the girl experiences complete union with Krishna or whether she feels that he has abandoned her, agony and suffering pervade all her feelings.

However much the girl may be aware of Krishna’s presence, her mortal frame does not allow her to transcend the symbol itself and reach out for the transcendental Krishna symbolised by it. However nowhere is it suggested that this physical frame can be or ought to be abandoned.

One of the fundamental premises of emotional *bhakti* is the manner in which the ‘I’ is aware of itself. This awareness is conditioned and transmitted by the cultural traditions as of the Alvars and not Northern culture. The Alvars are influenced by Tamil culture characterised as anthropocentric, humanistic, down to earth, world-positive etc. The concrete and sensuous form of temple religion reinforced this attitude.

A stanza by Poykai, illustrates the attitude towards *bhakti*:

Love speaks to me , ‘Go close to him with the discus’

The tongue says, ‘Praise and extol his shoulders’,

The eyes say 'Gaze at Him who does not look at past deeds.

The ears say, 'Listen to the praise of Him who is adorned with ornaments and necklaces.'

Sweet they say is lust, even sweeter than that is water, O my Father'. But not craving for sweet lust and water, if one craves for your splendour even a little, one obtains security and happiness.

Aware of being safe from *samsārā* and from all evil, the early Alvars exclaim, 'Whatever could happen to me?' He united with me in my inside.; is there any strength comparable to this? 'I have become replete: I have transcended earth and heaven. In this awareness, *bhaktī* transcends even the ideal of *moksha*.

'Grant me in your grace that I become a servant solely to your feet in all my (future) births and thus live without any fear.

Such confidence is clearly motivated by the new conception of Krishna's indwelling the heart. Because Krishna is inside the *ātman*, the mind must be freed from all sensuous and emotional disturbances.

Krishna's indwelling in the heart is confusion 'mal', just as myths describe contradictory incidents containing *māyā*. The girl sinks into Krishna's *māyā* which robs her of all control. More precisely Krishna's *māyā* consists first of making the girl infatuated and then withdrawing from her. *Māyā* is the mode in which Krishna appears in the world of time, space and matter.

The early Alvars conceived of Krishna's *māyā* as the contradiction between his divine nature and his earthly manifestations. The mother intervenes with Krishna on her girl's behalf.

Krishna's attitude does not allow for anything but reproof and upbraiding. 'You have no compassion', she sarcastically asks. What good qualities do you have? More directly, 'What deceitful deeds have you done to her? 'Do not harm her lovely fresh beauty.'

She gives an elaborate description of the girl's emotional state. 'She dances and dances'.

Melts away inside. Constantly sings songs. Her eyes get filled with tears. She is in great agony. In the desire to see you she becomes feeble. She is like a wax candle near a fire. She sighs, her heart whirling around. She talks incoherent nonsense. The soul in her inside spins round and dries up.

Krishna is the girl's refuge. But he is not just 'refuge' in an external sense and thus separated from her.

The suffering she experiences is right inside her because he is 'inside her inside'.

The mother introduces the girl to the Piran in the temple. The problem arises when the girl breaks through the institutionally restrained symbols (the temple image) and gives way inside her own heart to what the symbols symbolise. The friend pleads that the mother recognise her own responsibility for what has happened, show understanding and sympathy for the girl and thereby establish a 'new bond of affection' between herself and her daughter. The daughter tells her mother, 'Use my own heart to see'.

The above displays *bhakti*'s enigmatic and dialectical nature. Happiness and misery are not differentiated according to different emotional situations, the 'presence' and 'absence' of Krishna. One is intrinsically connected with the other. The feeling is of separation when

Krishna is close. It rests on Krishna's own nature. He is not perceptible to the eye. Yet a deep desire makes the girl say, 'Please let me know a means by which to see you'.

It is the friend to whom the girl can pour her heart out and is the one who understands and explains a few things to the mother. The friend points out three major possibilities in Indian thought to explain the girl's behaviour : the laws of *karma*, the notion of *avatara* and Krishna's *māyā*.

Krishna caused the disease which can only be cured by following the friend's advise to the mother to worship Krishna, as that is the only cure. Although Krishna is so close to the girl as to possess her, she is as if without life. The means and effect to the cure is 'dance and worship'. The ecstatic dance is as much a medicine as a manifestation of health as it also symbolises the disease.

The friend draws the mother's attention to a number of tell tales which suggest that the girl has embraced Kannan.

We hear of the soul's longing for Vishnu. It means that one individual symbol of the third order structure is directly equated with one element of the second order level (viz. the soul).

In other words the autonomy is destroyed. **If girl is allegorical for soul, why should the Alwar have chosen this indirect manner of speaking?**

Bhaktī in Nammalwar is defined as total loving openness to Krishna's *māyā*.

The gossiping women, nature and Krishna remain silent, the girl's friend intervenes, as does not occur in Sanskrit love-poetry or in Sangam *akam* lyrics , between the girl and her mother. The mother's attention is divided between dealing with the slander of society, worrying about the girl and scolding Krishna. Only the mother actually talks to Krishna, **the girl can only address nature or tries to send messages to him through various animals, a striking device to stress Krishna's transcendence and absence.** Only once do we find the monologue by the girl, however great her agony, it is still a part of society, whether sympathetic or not and is communicated to an audience.

The eyes have taken in Krishna's beauty which enters into her heart and fills it - the rapture of the beauty of Krishna and the girl seem to merge into one. At the same time the fusion remains incomplete. Krishna is hidden in her heart, and in a different image- my heart went away along with his eyes and along with his beautiful red mouth. Thus the rapture is as much unifying as separating.

She says,

My mother! You do not see the way in which Kannan rides on the bird in the middle of my heart. What can I say to describe it? It has abandoned me. Day and night it is under the power of its red lips. **Her heart is firmly fixed on his eyes and has lost all shame and balance. She has sunk into his māyā.**

My heart has gone to Pereyil and searches for Him; I cannot see it returning. There is nobody who could call my heart back. Whom could I take for help and what would be the use?

She faces another dilemma:

Vaikuntam, the milk ocean and the collyrium mountain (Venkatam) could easily be reached but he won't permit me to see those places unless I cut my fetters.

We could infer here then that the heart which experiences or glimpses the divine cannot experience complete union unless the mind is discarded. For mind is the basis of māyā as is said. So when the nāyikā implores the mind to go and fetch her Lord, it can imply that the mind needs to dissolve so that she can see her Lord and be united with him.

Peruntinai symbolises on the emotional and social level the breaking of these fetters : to follow after the heart in the direction which is pointed out by disappearance of the bracelet and the fine dark complexion.

We see how the girl seeks different messengers from Nature : the clouds, parrot, the storks. She entrusts mostly birds but then she chides them, 'You have not told him anything – from now on you can look at someone else to put sweet food into your beaks! **She therefore turns to a more intimate and reliable messenger, her own heart:**

'Speak to him about my condition and do not give up until I (sinner), have united with Him.

Here we can see the determined statement as stop not till the goal is reached.

Her condition is only briefly described. She has lost her mind to him, her thoughts are confused, her eyes are filled with tears, she has lost her beauty. **Just as she realises the**

futility of speaking to Nature, and turns to her heart, she becomes aware of the insufficiency of this form of ‘presence’.

Following the same symbolism she turns to a more intimate representation of Krishna, the Bird, who is an ocean of mercy. This is Garuda, who by virtue of the quality of Krishna’s own quality of mercy participates in it.

By trying to make the relationship more immediate (turning to the heart and Bird) the basic incongruity of ‘sin’ and holiness becomes apparent. Accepting nature as the mediator, the girl realises its mediateness and that immediate contact with Krishna is only possible through grace.

Separation acquires a dynamic character compared with the static conception of Krishna’s ‘absence’. Thus we have ‘Krishna took away my good nature’, ‘he stole my heart’ etc. Symbolic representations of Krishna viz, are areas where his presence is covered up by his maya: temple, myth and the human heart.

The early Alvars achieved the fusion of Yoga and *bhaktī* through purely devotional psychological means. It can be assumed that they knew the Bhagavad Gita where the origin of *bhaktī yoga* can be located from.

The early Alvars construct a parallel between Krishna’s presence in the heart and in the temple. The whole chain of factors (sense objects, senses, emotions like passion and desire, bliss and ecstasy) is accepted as positive because Krishna is the object from which

they derive and towards which they are directed. The sensuous perception of Krishna is made possible through his presence in the temple *vighraha*.

But what about Krishna in the heart who has to be realised through yoga? The early Alvars constructed a parallel between Krishna's presence in the heart and in the temple.

Thus we see such phrases.

He is inside my mind.

He is in the inside (ullam).

He is in the ullam of those who meditate on him.

These expressions indicate the ultimate identity of the Krishna incarnate in the temple image and present in the heart.

'Krishna very gently entered into my heart, and never going away from it again, stands, sits and reclines on it. This means that the love and passion which are stimulated in the heart

by the sensuous experience of the temple *vighraha* encounter and encompass Krishna who abides in the heart, the passionate love is the *puja* appropriate also for the *arca* in the heart.

In most cases it is impossible to distinguish between the sight of the temple image and the internal vision of Krishna in the heart.

Today I have seen his body of gold

Today I have seen your feet

While my mind united with you.

‘Mind’ may be taken here to suggest a vision obtained through meditational exercises.

My eyes call to each other look! look!

And rejoice in looking at the body of gold.

Of him whose chest is radiant with ornaments and garlands

I worship with my hands the anklets of fine gold

And sing in *paans* about his deeds.

Here the vision is clearly placed in the context of *puja*.

Both these interpretations leads one to the brink of emotional *bhaktī*. To see Krishna’s beauty in the image, to have in concrete form a symbol of the innermost centre of one’s self and to cherish the passion and love engendered thereby stimulate a drive to bridge the factual gap between externally –the *bhakta* and the *vigraha* and internally the ego and Krishna in the *ullam* of the person.

A number of verbs suggest this with sexual overtones.

Pulku-to embrace, *maruvu*-to be united in affection, *cer*- be in close friendship.

The Alwar combines worship symbolised in the lighting and offering of the lamp with *yoga* in a metaphor . A certain change in the character of *yoga* is added with the emotional element of love, desire melting in bliss.

Worship was in the Gita, no more than ‘ the humblest acts of devotion’ and integration through spiritual exercises the highest ideal . With the early Alwars the *puja* became emancipated. It is said that to recite the name of Krishna is a short cut to the Vedas.

The temple is not the only context in which the early Alvars encounter Krishna.

Pey says, ' The young cowherd has taken as his abode the minds of those who have withdrawn (their attention) into the lotus with fine petals.

This means that the yogins realise their meditation with Krishna within themselves. We can connect this with the *bhakti* yoga of the Bhagavad Gita –to perform the traditional yogic exercises (withdrawing the senses etc) in total surrender to Krishna 'who abides in those who commune with him, in love's devotion.'

The Bhagavatha Purāṇa expresses for the first time at least in Sanskrit-emotional *bhakti* whereas the Vishnu Purana with Prahalada charitram seems to be the last text to illustrate intellectual *bhakti* before the emotional type makes its appearance in the Bhagavatha Purana.

'What Prahalada is looking for is the 'highest' quite different (*para*) form of the God. He is not concerned with seeing the God. Nor is he concerned with feeling the God. The art of savouring the deity through different nuances of feeling began with the Bhagavatha Purāṇa. Prahalada wants to possess his God through his thinking, his remembering.

The following expressions are metaphorical terms for this type of intellectual *bhakti*, *nyasya hrudayam*- to sink one's heart into Vishnu, *hrudayenodvahan* and *hrdayena dhr* – to carry Vishnu in one's heart.

The yoga exercises aim at gathering the diffuse energies of the mind (*manas*, *buddhi* etc.) perfecting them and making them instrumental in the 'liberating' perception of the

ātman. Those factors that constitute the definition of emotional *bhaktī* like erotic, aesthetic, ecstatic colourings are clearly absent in the Gita.

In that sense, *bhaktī* is intellectual and non emotional. *Bhaktī* in the Gita according to Zaehner presupposes Yoga.

In order to draw near to God it is assumed the aspirant is already *yukta*, integrated in himself.

In Philosophy and theistic mysticism of the Alvars, S.M.S. Chari states that the purpose of using the analogy of body and soul is to explain the immanence of the Supreme Being (*ishwara*) as the inner controller of the entities both sentient and non-sentient in the universe. The concept of body and soul used in the Upanishadic passage and the same referred by Nammalwar acknowledges the difference, *bheda*, that exists between Ishwara and the universe of *chit* and *achit*.

Nammalwar openly condemns the theory of identity of unity of the *paramātmān* and *jivātmān*. The implication of this statement as explained by Pillan is that *jivātmān* and *paramātmān* cannot become one in the sense of absolute identity (*aikya*) just as *bhava* and *abhava* , two contradictory qualities cannot become one.

Nammalwar explicitly states in many hymns that God dwells inside the body of the individual and also in all entities. **All the Alvars say that *paramātmān* abides in the heart in conformity with the upanishadic teaching** . Nammalwar points out that the *paramātmān*

enters into the three worlds which are comparable to the impenetrable forest cave and pervades the entire place.

The Supreme being which is equated with the Universe is conceived as the universal soul (*ātman*) and all that exists in the universe as its body (*śarīra*). This concept of body-soul relation (*śarīrātma-bhava*) constitutes the unique doctrine of *vishishtadvaita vedānta* (*pradhana pratītantra*) as expounded by Ramanuja. This concept is found in the Antaryami Brahmana of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and briefly referred to in the Ramayana and Vishnu purana.

The Alvars adopted the metaphors of conjugal love. The ‘union’ of lovers is not understood as union of lovers in an erotic sense.

The description of *samslesha* as found in the Alvar hymns is a mental experience (*manasanubhava*). In the words of Ramanuja it is *darshana- samanakara jnana* or an experience similar to what one would have seen.

According to the Vishishtadvaita Vedānta, the term ‘I’ or the *jīvātman* connotes ultimately *paramātman* as integrally related to the *jīva* (*jīva-śarīraka-paramātman*).

The mystic saint is also subjected to varying mental dispositions and consequent changes in the physical condition. Generally these descriptive accounts are conveyed by the Alvars through the media of the imaginary mother of the maiden or her companions.

The dejected mood of the mystic saint during the separation from God is portrayed in a different manner. In one, the mother describes how the Alvar as a *nāyakī* behaves in a

strange manner by running after the objects which have some resemblance to God or things which are associated to him even remotely. The young calves appear to him as the same calves tended by Krishna. The dark blue colour of the clouds brings to his memory the complexion of Krishna. And so on. The strange behaviour of the mystic saint is presented in an interesting way.

There are several passages in the Rig veda addressing God as father or mother. The vedic seers also conceive God as child. **And the devotee as mother in the reverse order of the soul's relation to God.** The sensual love exhibited by the Alvars falls under the category of *Bhagavat kāma*. The ideal example of spiritual love is depicted in the characters of Rama and Sita similar to the sun (*prabhavan*) and its luminosity (*prabha*). This ideal portrayal of love is also found in the Bhagavat Purāṇa in the personality of Lord Krishna and the gopis.

The motif for a maiden's love for her lover or husband can be traced to the Rig veda. There are passages in the Rig veda in which the vedic seers adore the higher deity in the same way as a woman loves her husband. The Pancharātra Samhita also commends the worship of God just as a faithful woman adores her husband.

The mystic saints have chosen this metaphor not so much in the manner of the love poetry found in classical Tamil literature of the Sangam period as assumed by some modern day scholars but as a symbol of spiritual experience referred to in the Vedas and puranas.

The love theme of the Alvars may be similar to that found in the ancient Tamil poetry but it is unlikely that the Alvars who are born yogis gifted with divine vision would have adopted the love motifs from the Tamil poets of earlier period.

Further according to Vaishnava theology, the individual soul is dependent on God in the relationship of master and servant (*Sheshi* and *shesha*).

The soul exists for the pleasure of God and the ultimate goal of the soul is to get united with him. On the basis of this doctrine of *jīva*, Nammalwar as an individual soul (*jivātman*) exhibits his absolute dependability on God (*atyanta paratantrya*), his unshakable faith in not serving anyone else but God and his conviction that no one else other than God is most enjoyable (*ananya bhoga*).

All these characteristics are personified in the concept of a consort of God. It is in this sense that both Nammalwar and Thirumangai Alwar have chosen to act as *nāyakī* and Andal as a bride wedded to the Lord as *nāyaka* and pour out their heart through mystic songs in praise of the glory of God.

This Viraha *Padam* elucidates the philosophy of yearning, seeking and merging.

Pallavi

Sārasākṣise viraha sāgara dustara

The ocean of pangs of suffering from the beloved and lotus eyed one is difficult to cross over.

Caranam 1

Pārāvāra vikāḷa samhara

Sāratara aśanādi saṅgamoha visara

The dreadful ocean unmindful of every important deed

Bharasāra sudhārasadhāra

Drowns in the amruta pana

Sārī vṛddhi jhāli dayā navhe

Every thing (emotion) grew up but there is no compassion.

Caranam 2

Nānā bhramataraṅga mānita cancaḷa

Mānātipḷavamāna phena mīnaketana krūra

Suna bāṇāḷi kimbhinasā gūḍa

Mānasa graha vitānasānta udadhi kuru dīpā

The cruel Cupid with fish banner plays delightfully in my mind, gyrating with waves; with arrows pointed deeply into the minds's deepest areas, in such a mind, ocean mind- make your repose.

Looking into the above notes we find that when Krishna has entered the heart or ullam the mind is tossed and turned.

The yoga exercises aim at gathering the diffuse energies of the mind (*manas, buddhi* etc.) perfecting them and making them instrumental in the 'liberating' perception of the *ātman*.

So when the nāyikā implores the sakhī to go fetch the nāyakā she implies that the mind be united with the heart or ullam. For in that union can bliss be attained. When all becomes one.

As stated above it is 'gathering the diffuse energies of the mind'; stilling the mind where the mind is in equipoise with the heart then union can be said to be established. Hence it is that when the union happens the *sakhī's* existence ceases or is merged into oneness.

When the *jīvātman* is stirred by the divine glimpse of the *paramātman* there ensues a disturbance. The *jīvātman* pines for the Supreme bliss having experienced some *ānanda*. It tries to find the same bliss through Nature and assumes they are the messengers. For nature is yet removed from the material world and closer to the source of Infinite bliss. Hence nature is

referred to in myriad ways in our poetry and *sāhitya*. What the *nāyikā* is able to do is to converse and convey her deepest angst and torment to Nature. So similarly when one is ill, one is advised to move to a nature environ. Nature has the ability to absorb the harmful effects of disconnect. So the messengers are the pure white swan, the parrot who can speak, the clouds who are forever moving. All these are in the absence of the physical *sakhī*.

As we trace the journey of the padam we see that in the Thirukkural we find the reference clearly of the *nāyikā* speaking to the heart.

O heart, longing for him is folly

When he has no love for me.

–(1242)

It is the folly of her heart to long for her unkind lover and grieve at the separation.

Why suffer and pine for him, o heart

Who caused pallor but loves me not.

–(1243)

Her suffering and longing for her lover are in vain as he has caused lovesickness but has no love for her.

O heart, take my eyes to my lover

Or else they will kill me for sure.

–(1244)

She is pleading to her heart to take her eyes to the lover. Or else her eyes will kill her.

Note: So we find that from Vedic times the intermediary has been a powerful factor in cementing the bond with the Supreme. As we have seen through the journey of the compositions from Vedic times an outpouring of the heart to the intermediary has been concurrent. Who is this intermediary, really? Sometimes the nāyikā addresses nature. Sometimes her own heart. So the intermediary is a silent witness. The sākshī. It is the jīvātman itself.

The intermediary prepares the mind-heart identity in torment, in tussle grappling with the storms of māyā of worldly attachments and confused reality to finally behold the Supreme vision within. The sakhī can thus be linked to the jīvātman the knower, the all-knowing. The better half of the nāyikā! She helps the nāyikā gradually evolve and transcend to the Supreme State. In this sense one finds the sakhī to be the all-knowing, the advisor, the silent witness or even the one who finally requests the Supreme One to bestow his infinite grace. The triad of nāyikā- sakhī-nāyaka and the ātman- Gurū- -paramātmān all merge into one.

As senior dancer Rama Vaidyanathan has mentioned anybody who helps one on the path of seeking can be called a sakhī. “A book can be a sakhī that the jīvātman reads to gain self-realisation. So anybody who can lead one on the path of realisation can be called a sakhī. She is better informed about both the nāyikā and the nāyaka.

The Guru we can say is the realised soul and one usually closer to the nāyaka than the nāyikā. So we can infer the sakhī is more in proximity to the nāyaka than the nāyikā. That is why the nāyikā is always in a pining state. The sakhī is never in a crying state etc. In dance, whenever the nāyikā is addressing the sakhī it is not necessarily that she is addressing a woman, girl etc . It can be anybody or anything that can help her build the bridge between her and her Lord.

We can even take it that the sakhī can be somebody within. Like a sixth sense where she is figuring out herself the ways and means to reach her lover. She is harnessing her own energies. She is in dialogue with herself to understand how to make the journey. How to reach the goal. So when she addresses the sakhī, she can be actually addressing the strength within her. According to the literature one can accord a suitable position to the sakhī.

*She is not given a name most often because it is not being specified who she ought to be. That is the reason she can be anything or anybody who can become the bridge for the nāyikā to achieve her goal. She could be addressing the Universe. She could be addressing the Nature. So in order not to have any separate identity there is usually no name given to her. **Sakhī is a concept. Sakhī is a metaphor.***

As mentioned earlier, the boundary between the nāyikā and the sakhī is usually blurred. It is the oneness of the human spirit. Depending on the avastha of the heroine the sakhī can be within or without. Sometimes you need outside support, a hand to hold on but later you may not need it.

In śṛṅgāra the sakhī is a Guru. She teaches the nāyikā many a time the art of making love.”

In modern terms one can say it is the intuitive or sub-conscious state of our own selves who can be the sakhī. Often one has only to dive within for answers. The intuitive self is know-all. Sakhī thus is the untapped wisdom within who can guide us on the path to self-realisation. However it is only in viraha or pain usually that we become aware of this intuitive wisdom. Often it is pain that brings gain. ‘No pain without gain’ is an oft-repeated quote. Thus in torment, in pining the sakhī or wisdom is revealed. Thus it is she becomes the Guru. The one to lead us in the path of self-realisation.

Thus it is in Vedic times that the devotee called out to the elements as his friend. Agni, Vayu and so on. They were symbols of the Supreme. And thus invoking their powers and praising

their unmatched qualities their reality was revealed. Just as the nāyikā praises the sakhī and pleads her to reveal the reality, to reveal the true wisdom.

In most dance compositions it is viraha and a virahotakandita nāyikā who is beseeching the sakhī to go and fetch her Lord. Time and again through so many varnams and padams down to Swati Thirunal in the 19th century we hear of the same labyrinth of emotions the nāyikā goes through. It is just the same pining for true wisdom. All our great works have only advocated a going within to realize oneself. And it is this reaching out to the sakhī that symbolizes that the journey has begun. The torment must be endured. The searching and seeking, of tearing away from material comforts will bring its pain and hardships. Through all this the constant presence of the sakhī, is the source of strength and also the source of wisdom.

The sakhī thus is that complete side of our own self that we wish to cement. Till the wisdom or the sakhī is not reached we will not realize and will continue in ignorance.

All our Indian dance compositions highlight this journey of being in seeking. Hence the torment, the viraha. The moment the seeking begins there surfaces the sakhī, the gentle light within us. And as we go through the torment, she guides us on this path of seeking. She is the source of strength. She begins to reveal our true larger self. And when the true self has been revealed or the union happens all becomes one.

The sakhī thus becomes a metaphor for wisdom or jñāna that is untapped. Hence she is often thought of as the Guru.

The sakhī as the intuitive Intelligence helps the nāyikā to break the bonds of samsāra and emboldens her to continue to her final destination amidst the strife.

Thus there is a sakhī in each one of us waiting to be tapped into and unleashing the unbounded energy and positivity whilst revealing our true identity and our final destination.

We all come with intuitive wisdom that is marred by the material existence. As we suffer the discord and realize the impermanence of mortality and begin the seeking we are slowly revealed our own intuitive wisdom. Our sakhī!

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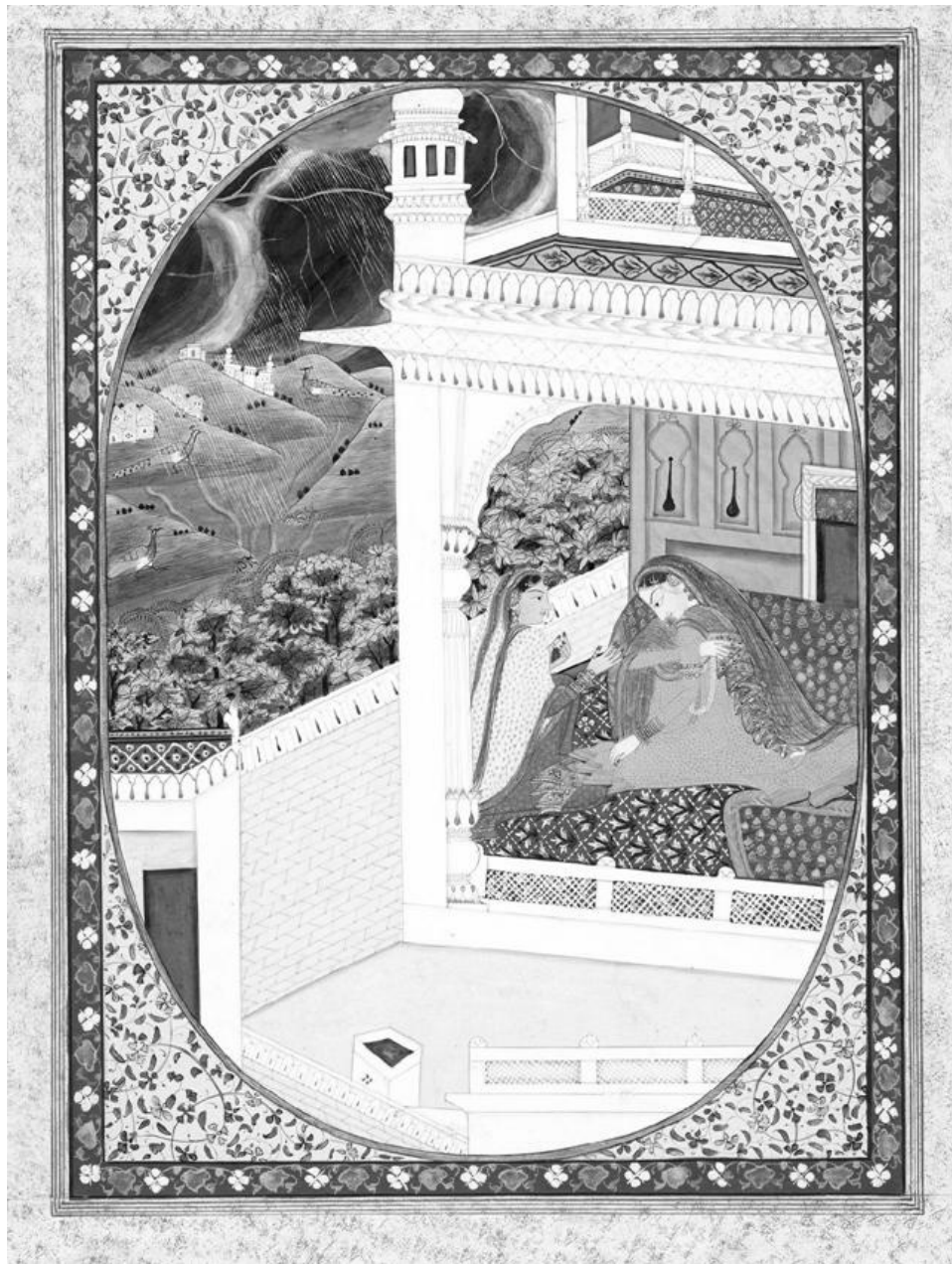
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INTER-VIEWS

These are the transcribed notes of meetings both live or telecons, with dancers, dancer-scholars, senior Gurus etc. Some additional notes and references have been added alongside to supplement statements/observations made.

Grateful to all for their generous time and inputs.

**Dr. Smt. Sucheta Chapekar, well-known Bharata Natyam exponent-
teacher-scholar. March 2016, Pune.**



According to Dr. Smt. Sucheta Chapekar, the well-known padam which was very popular and frequently performed- *Mālai Pozhudinile* has an inferred *sakhī* as she is not referred to explicitly.

She adds, “In this padam, I choose to show the *sakhī* though it is not indicated. It cannot be a monologue according to me. The *nāyikā* cannot talk to herself. There has to be somebody to whom she can pour out her emotions. Then only can the emotions flow and be expressed.

R:Behāg; Composer: Kalki Krishnamurthy.

*mālaipozhudinīle oru nnāl malarppozhilinīle
kolak-kīḷigaluḍan kuyīlgaḷ konjiḍum velaiyile
mālaikulavu mārban maruvil māmāti pol mughattān
velonru kaiyilendi ennaiye vizhunguvan pol vizhittān*

The *nāyikā* starts by describing the setting of her dream: One (*oru*) day (*nāl*) at the time of intoxicating dusk (*mālaipozhudinīle*), in a flower-garden (*mālaipozhulinīle*) when (*velaiyile*)

cuckoos (*kuyīlgaḷ*) caress/talk sweet nothings (*konjīdum*) with (*udan*) beautiful (*kola*) parrots (*kiligaḷ*), as the *nāyikā*'s senses are getting used to the sylvan settings, her repose is shattered by the appearance of a handsome young man with the face (*mukh(g)attān*) like (*pol*) that of the splendid, full (*mā*) moon (*madi*), a chest (*mārban*) resplendent (*kulavu*) with garlands (*mālai*), and wielding (*endi*) a (*onru*) spear (*vel*) in his hand (*kayil*). He startles her by staring at her unabashedly (*vizhunguvan pol vizhittān*).

nīlakkāḍalinaippol en nenjam nimirndu pongiḍavum

nālu puram nokki nāni nān yār ingu vandadenren

Ālilai mel tuyinre bhuvanam anaittume alikkum

mālin marumaghan yān ennaiye velan murugan enbār

The appearance of this stranger startles the *nāyikā*, and she says, even as tumultuous feelings like (*pol*) the waves of the blue (*nīla*) ocean (*kāḍalīnai*) filled (*nimirndu pongiḍavum*) my heart (*nenjam*), I (*nān*) looked (*nokki*) around in the four (*nālu*) directions (*puram*) and with hesitation (*nāni*) I (*nān*) asked (*enren*) who (*yāru*) it was that had come (*vandadu*) here (*ingu*). In reply, this is how the stranger introduced himself (*yān*) am the nephew (*marumaghan*) of that great vishṇu (*mālin*) who protects (*mevallikkum*) the entire (*anaittum*) world (*bhuvanam*) even as he sleeps (*tuyinre*) on top (*mel*) of a small banyan leaf (*ālilai*); and people call (*enbār*) me (*ennaiye*) the spear-wielding (*velan*) handsome one (*murugan*). •

R: Sindhubhairavi

chandiran veṭkurum un mukhattil canchalam tonruvaden

dondam illādavalō pudidāi todarndidum uravo

mundai piravigalil unnai nān muraīyiniḷ maṇanden

endan uyirallavo kaṇmaṇi Eninda jālam enrān

Seeing the *nāyikā* still hesitant after his introduction, the hero asks (*enrān*) the *nāyikā* why are doubts (*chanchalam*) still surfacing/appearing (*tonruvaden*) on your face (*mukhattil*) that is so beautiful that even the moon (*chandiran*) has fallen in love with (*veṭkurum*)? It is not as if you do not have (*illādavalō*) a history of intimacy (*dondam*) with me and this is a relationship (*uravo*) that is beginning (*todarndidum*) all anew (*pudidāi*). Don't you realize that I (*nān*) have married (*maṇanden*) you (*unai*) according to proscribed rituals (*muraīyiniḷ*) in many previous (*mundai*) births (*piravigalil*)? You are the very essence of my (*endan*) life (*uyir allavo*), my darling (*kaṇmaṇi*), so why (*En*) continue with this (*inda*) pretence (*jālam*)? •

R: Mohana

*ullam urugidinum uvagai uṭru pergudinum
kallattanamāga kaṅgaḷil kanal ezha vizhitten
pulli mayil vīran mohana punnakai tān purindān
tulli arugil vandān en karam mella toḍavum vandān*

The *nāyikā* says that even as my heart (*ullam*) was melting (*urugidinum*) and a geyser (*uṭru*) of delight (*uvagai*) gushed (*perugidinum*) out, I stole (*kalla tanamāgā*) glances (*vizhitten*) even as a blush (*kanal*) rose/suffused (*ezha*) my cheeks. The brave (*vīran*) who rides the peacock (*pulli mayil*) responded (*purindān*) with just (*tān*) a delightful (*mohana*) smile (*punnagai*) and with a leap (*tulli*) came (*vandān*) to my side (*arugil*) and tried to hold/touch (*toda*) my (*en*) hand (*karam*).

R: *Māyāmālavagaula*

*penmati pedamaiyāl avan kai patriḍa mun peyarnden
kan vizhitten ezhunden tuyara kadalil vizhunden
vanna mayil erum perumā vanjanai eno seidān
kangal urangamo akkurai kanavai kandidhenō*

Bound by conventions, the *nāyikā* hesitates, and laments her fate . Due to the vagaries (*pedamaiyāl*) of the female (*pen*) mind (*madi*) I recoiled (*peyarnden*) just before (*mun*) I held (*patriḍa*) his (*avan*) hand (*kai*). And as I awoke (*ezhunden*) and opened (*vizhitte*) my eyes (*kan*) I fell (*vizhunden*) into a sea (*kadalile*) of despair (*tuyara*). I do not know why (*eno*) the Lord (*perumān*) who rides (*erum*) the colorful (*vanna*) peacock (*mayil*) created (*seidān*) this illusion (*vanjanai*). Oh! won't my eyes (*kangal*) go back to sleep (*urangamo*) and will I not experience/see (*kandideno*) the same (*akkurai*) dream (*kanavai*) again?

Most often the *sakhī* is a sympathizer. Sometimes she feels too important that since I am entrusted to bring the *nāyaka* she occasionally is seen to harass and tease the *nāyikā*.

In an interesting and deviant *varṇam* of Swāti Thirunāl, the *sakhī* is the protagonist who relates to the *nāyaka* the plight of the *nāyikā*.

Swarajati: Suma sāyaka R: kāpi. T: Rūpaka

P: *suma sāyaka vidhuramava mādghava sudatim ati dinam*

A: *ramaṇi maṇi shayane rati lālasa hrdaya samayam bahu nayate mānini.*

The *sakhī* says: *suma sāyaka* -cupid (*kāma deva*), the lady is suffering from the separation (*vidhuram*) from you. Save (*ava*) her *mādghava*-lord vishnu(*padmanābha*). She who is lovely (*sudati*) with wisdom (*mati*) is now tired (*dina*)- mentally tired (*mati dina*) . The winsome lady (*mānini*) lies on the beautiful bed (*ramaṇimaṇi śayane*) spending (*nayate*) a lot of (*bahu*) time (*samayam*) having thirst for love (*rati lālasa*) about you(*tava*)

Sarasiruhanābha

(svara sāhityam)

ni pa ni ri ga ma ni ma pa ni dha ni pa ni sā sā ri ga ri ni ri sā sani daha ni pa ni pa mā ni sā ri ni

C: *mānini hā te tāpam*

Sucheta: Here the *sakhī* goes to the *nāyaka –mādghava*. She is a very mature person and very close to the *nāyikā*, of course. She takes the side of the *nāyikā* and tells Madghava that you must go to her-*mānini*, the one with *māna*, with self-respect so she cannot come to you. That is her nature.

The word ‘*sarasiruhanābha*’ must align itself to refer to the *virahini nāyikā*. So here I usually interpret as you the great *sarasiruhanābha* –Please become the *rasikavara* to the *nāyikā*.

Once you know the *sakhī*’s mind it helps to portray the character of the *nāyikā* well.

Another interesting padam in tamil is *Ena tavam sheidanai yashoda*.

R: Kāpi T: Ādi Composer: Papanasam Sivan

P: *enna tavam sheidanai yashodā engum nirai parabhrammam ammāvenr-azhaikka*
(*enna tavam*)

Yashoda, what tapas (prayer, sacrifice) did you make, that the Almighty himself calls you dearly, ‘Mother’?

A:Īrezhu bhuvanangal padaittavanaik-kaiyil endi shīrātti pālūti tālātta nī
(enna tavam)

To take Krishna, the One who created the 14 worlds, to lift him into your arms, to rock him to sleep, to feed him milk, what great tapas did you do, Yashoda?

C 1:bhramanum indranum manadil porāmai kola uralil katti vāi pottik-kenjavaittai tāye
(enna tavam)

O mother what tapas did you do, that to the great envy of Brahma and Indra, you could tie Krishna himself to the grinding stone and bound his mouth and make him beg you for mercy!

C 2:sanakādiyar tava yogam sheidu varundi sādhattadai punita māde elidil pera
(enna tavam)

What great sages like *Sanakā* could only achieve through great tapas, yoga and prodigious effort, you have achieved so easily - what tapas did you do to beget this great fortune?

Dr. Sucheta: Here a gopi comes to talk to Yashoda. I feel this is also a type of *sakhī* . A *sakhī* in *vātsalya bhāva*. The *sakhī* is close to Yashoda and is so able to reveal that little sense of a nagging thought that is bothering her. Why was Yashoda the chosen one to mother Krishna? How did she become so fortunate? (questioning within herself why that fortunate one could not be her?)

There is also a similar composition in Hindustani in R:Tilak Kamod – *dhana dhana bhaga Yashoda, Tere aangan bāla murat hai, jag jag khelat nanda murari*. Thus though this is not *shringāra* one feels in that in *vātsalya bhāva* too there can be the *sakhī bhāva*.

In a similar vein there is a Shahaji composition, where a bhakta tells Devi –

Vinati maajhi tūcha kari

You request Lord Tyagesa on my behalf

Vinita nave karane nyā tu asa kā

It is not good that I approach him when you are there.

Muni bhaktatuni vinata karū mahatlyā

All the munis and sages are his bhaktas

Mani swabhimān nako wādat...

But I am also his bhakta and I have some self pride.

In *sakhyam* age does not matter. And this similar thought was echoed by Guru Shri V.P.

Dhananjayan who quoted the padam of Mārimuthu Pillai - *Yethai kandu nee ichai kondayadi* , *magale yen kanne, nee ippode* in R: Kalyānī, T: Rupaka, where the mother counsels the daughter as a *sakhī* would.

Yethai kandu nee ichai kondayadi , magale, yen kanne, nee ippode

Oh Daughter, Now based on what did you start loving him, Oh dear.

A:Shuddha payithiyakkaran gangadharan thogayai munnavan,

peyudan adiya thondikko, Pazham kandhaikko ,

Yerum Nandikko , Seyyum vindhaikko

For that carrier of Ganga who is absolutely mad, Who has developed intimacy with others earlier,
Is it for his dance with the ghosts, Or is it for his old tattered clothes, Or for his steed Nandi the bull,
Or for the magical acts that he does?

C:1.Puliyai urithu athai anithitta porvai asaikko,

Karathil mazhuvai yendidum manadhu thunivukko,

Malayin Pambai pidithu kazhthil matti konda athai pootikonda malaikko,

Tharum chelaikko , cheyyum velaikko Shiva leelaikko

Is it for his skinning the tiger and wearing its skin as a shawl,

Or Is it for his bravery of the mind in holding an axe as a weapon,

Or is it for the fact that he caught hold of the snake of the mountain,

And started wearing as a garland on his neck,

Or Is it for the Sari he gives or is it for the job he does or is it for his sports?

*C 2: Mamanum mamiyum ondrai cheygindra varisi perumaikko,
Somanai sirathil anindu oru kan thulangum netthikko,
Kamanai vendravar , aalathai undu markandanukku agave ,
Chandani udaitha kalukko , Chambal melukko , kerī tholukko, Kalai valukko*

Is it for the likely presents that his parents are likely to give you, Or is it for his wearing the moon and the one eye on his forehead, Or Is it for his winning the God of love or is it for the poison he swallowed,

Or for his leg that killed the God of death for the sake of Markandeya, Or for his body coated with ash , Or is it for the skin of the elephant that he wears, Or for his youthfulness?

In the *swarajati* from *Thanjavur nritya prabandha-* under *sakhīne biddhivād sangnyāci kalpita kathā* one can see how the mature *sakhī* is advising the *nāyikā* of appropriate behaviour with her lover. The *sakhī* can be assumed to be role-playing the mother for the *nāyikā*. So just as the mother or foster-mother exhibits *sakhya* in *vātsalya* so too the *sakhī* can exhibit the touches of *vātsalya* and hence we can assume thus that she is more mature.

cānga bhānga tū karavuni ghe sarasa nesaga suvasanahi
You make a nice hairdo and wear a lovely garment.

ramaṇa gharās jaṇva yeyīl tuzhya tava haḷūca hasunī sarasa nirakhi ghadighadi sumukhī
Sumukhi-sundari, when your husband returns home keep a smile playing on your looks and throw him soft glances now and then.

aṇikahi to kim rasikashikhamaṇi karī tuja vinoda vividha tain tu rusū nako baraki

And your husband being a rasikavar when he plays around with you don't be upset.
When he passes a flower over your two cheeks and says these two flowers are so beautiful, don't show smirkiness.

aṇikahin yaduvar parama chatura shayanagharim tujashi janva bolala tain bola madhura vachana tun

And when Yaduvar Krishna comes into the bedroom and when he talks to you, you must reply sweetly.

To tija na putam ga vinavu nako nija guja tun janva pushel tanva ādari tayāshi.

Only when he speaks to you, you speak to him most humbly. Don't irritate him with your talk on petty matters. Be diplomatic.

Tayāshi basavoni shayanāvar sakhī maga haḷuca pāyā charuni vanduni jzavaḷi thāk

You bring him lovingly and seat him on the bed and then after saluting him –(vandana) , you gently begin pressing his feet.

The bond between lovers is the closest human relation after any blood relation. The *sakhī* knows this only too well as she makes all efforts to always unite and keep the two lovers in harmony.

This point is further echoed by:

Padmashri Ileana Citaristi, Odissi danseuse, writer, teacher, March 2016, Mumbai.



The *sakhī* is more mature than Radha. Her role is of listening to Radha's plight and agony. It is her role to bring the *nāyikā* to her goal. As go-between she is a guide, she listens to the *nāyikā*. Often she even pretends to share her feelings but always in her mind she is waiting

for the right moment to take the right step forward. So she is often portrayed even displaying a teasing attitude.

In the oriya song , *Mana bhanjan ā* (from the *rāsa lilā* tradition) the poet has inserted lines where the *sakhī* tells the audience as an aside-“look at the plight of Radha”. The *sakhī* also listens to the *nāyaka*. **She is more mature than both and has a great quality of listening.**

In *Lajore Joregori ajo*, the *sakhī* is bashful and is an alive persona as introduced by the poet himself where *she* is laughing along with the poet as to the plight of Radha.

Padmabhushan Dr. Smt. Padma Subrahmanyam, well-known Bharata Nrityam exponent, researcher, teacher, writer. May 2016, Chennai.



In Germany, when I was to present a padam and it was explained that the *nāyikā* sends her friend as messenger to her lover, the programme host was aghast saying that she would never think of doing such a thing. Why would you send a friend? That is dangerous, she said. And here lies the cultural gap between the Western viewpoint on love or *shringāra* and the Eastern viewpoint.

The *sakhī* as *dūtī* plays a very important role in Indian dance, drama and poetry. She is as important as the *nāyikā*. The choice of *sakhī* is very important. The famous quote is apt ‘Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.’

The *sakhī* depicted in Indian dance and literature is usually intelligent, witty with friendly but feigned anger, teasing, sometimes refusing to co-operate etc.

Though the *padam Unnai dūtanupinen* talks about a deceiving *sakhī*, the situation can be portrayed in *hāsya* though the *nāyikā* is a disappointed one. *Hāsya* has to be created in the

mind of the audience. It is not necessary to evoke *hāsya* deliberately. A contra-treatment of the *padam* can come about.

The *sakhī*'s role is predominant in Kuravanji dance dramas where there are many *darūs*. That would be worth looking into.

Generally the *sakhī* is usually of the same age group or a senior person. It depends on the lyrics-the choice of words by the poet . Like if *adi*, *podī* is used it would imply the *sakhī* is of the same age. The age can also imply often a psychological age.

In Sangam literature, in one of the poems, the foster mother is a *dūti*. The concept of *sakhī* is the same across all Indian literature. One finds the same concept in *padakārs* of Bengal too.

In *Dwaita* philosophy the entire human race is female and there is only one *Purusha*-Krishna. In Meerabai's songs, she implores Krishna directly. There is no *sakhī*. In the Gita Govinda the *sakhī* is an important character. She is like a reporter. She describes to Krishna the plight of Radha.

The classic example of *dūta* is Krishna, the messenger for the Pandavās in the great battle of Kurukshetra. The Supreme Intelligence himself becomes the *dūta*. In padams etc we don't find any name given to a *sakhī* but in Kuravanji dramas the *sakhīs* do have names.

Dr. Smt. Nandini Ramani, Senior and well-known Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher of the Balasaraswathy style. May 2016, Chennai.



In most padams the *sakhī* is a silent spectator. In the *varṇams* too her presence is often there. In the popular Dandayudhapani Pillai *varṇam Sāmiyai Azhaitodi Vā* in R: Navarāgamalika, the *varṇam* is directed to the *sakhī*. Here the *nāyikā* implores the *sakhī* to go and bring her beloved

R:Todi

P: sāmīyai azhaittodivā sakhī ye endan

Oh dear friend (*sakhī ye*) please bring (*azhaittu*) my (*endan*) Lord (*sāmīyai*) without delay/this very instant (*odi*) .

R: mohanam

māmadi mugamo kanalāy viśudadi

His face (*mukhamo*) that is as handsome as the full (*mā*) moon (*madi*) is tormenting me because it seems to be emitting (*viśuda*) fiery (*kanalāy*) rays.

R: vasanta

A: tāmadam Eno vasantāmirta velaiyadi

Oh friend! I do not understand the reason (*eno*) for this delay (*tāmadam*) in meeting me, for after all, is this not the time/moment (*velaiyadi*) to enjoy the essence (*amrita*) of spring (*vasanta*), when every being is frolicking about in the joy of union?

R: devamanohari

bhūmi pugazhum deva manohari magizhum

My Lord is none other than the one who is praised (*pugazhum*) by the entire world (*bhūmi*), and who delights (*magizhum*) in none other than Parvati (*devamanohari*) herself.

cittasvara sāhityam

R: devamanohari

Ādi maraikkup porul nītiyudan uraitta

And the one who expounded (*uraitta*) the essence (*porul*) along with (*udan*) the nature (*nīti*) of the primeval (*ādi*) texts and vedas (*maraičku*)

R:vasanta

Ārumuganaip perra Īśhanadi - oru

He is the Lord (*Īśhanadi*) who gave birth (*perra*) to Kārtikeyā, the six (*Aru*) faced (*muganai*) one.

R:mohanaham

nādi il ādavan pol alaivānadi

Despite his omniscience, he roams around (*alaivānadi*) like (*pol*) a wastrel without (*illādavan*) any (*oru*) purpose/protection (*nādi*)

R:thodi

pādi vudalil pennai marzhaittiruppanādi

He would have concealed (*maraittiruppanādi*) a woman (*pennai*) in one half (*pādi*) of his body (*udalil*)

R:shankarabharanam

C: *sadā ninaivu konu maiyal mīrude Śankarābharananai*

Oh friend! My desire (*mayyal*) is become unbearably excessive (*mīrude*) because my mind and heart are constantly (*sadā*) filled (*konu*) by thoughts (*ninaivu*) of him, Śiva (Śankarābharananai) (*ettugada sāhitya*)

R: sāranga

1. *sāranga nādan porrum mannavanai*

R: kānadā

2. *tedi tedi kodungkānadan tenadi - kodi manmadan pole ninrānadi*

Searching for (*tedi-tedi*) the Lord (*mannavanai*) who is praised/worshiped (*potrum*) by vishnu (*sārangānāthan*), I walked (*nadantenadi*) for miles through the harsh (*kodum*) forest and at the very end I found him (*ninrānadi*) looking like (*pole*) an amalgam of countless (kodi/koti - a crore) *manmathas*.

R: ārabhi

3. *Urariya manam puriven enrānadi uudi pala sonnānadi*

arabimānam kondavalenru arindidāmal ennait tavikka vittanadi

He told/informed (*enranadi*) me and gave (*sonnānadi* - literally 'spoke') me several (*pala*) reassurances (*urudi*) that he would wed me (*manam puriven*) in public (*Urariya* - to the cognizance - *ariya* - of the whole city - *Ur*). However, without understanding (*arindidāmal*) that I am a proud woman (*arabhimānam kondaval enru*) he has now left me (*vittanadi*) languishing (*tavikka*)!

R: bhairavi

4. *gangai cadaimudi tingal amudumāda - ganangalāda sabhaitanil*

mangala bhairavi madiyizhandāda - mālum ayanum laya tālangal poda

nanguto menru nandiyum kūda - nāradar yāzhiśai mīttiyum pāda

tunga vizhiyāda kundalamumāda - śenkamala pādam tūkkiya nādanai - (sadā)

In this last *ettugada sāhityam*, the heroine describes the scene that constantly inhabits her thoughts and sets her desires aflame. She says: The vision of my Lord (*nāthanai*) with a raised (*tūkkiya*) foot (*pādam*) that looks like a red (*śen*) lotus (*kamala*) dancing, with the ganges (*gangai*), his matted (*jadai*) locks (*mudi*), the moon (*tingal*) and the nectar (*amudum*) swaying (*āda*); his *gaṇas* (*gaṇangal*) dancing (*āda*) along; the auspicious (*mangala*) Pārvati (*bhairavi*) performing (*āda*) in unison while clearly lost (*madiyizhandu*) in the music and movement; Vishnū (*mālum*) and Brahmā (*ayanum*) maintaining (*poda*) rhythm (*laya tālangal*); and Nandi joining in (*kūda*) on his *maddālam* to the *sorkattu* 'nangutom' (*nagutom enru*); the celestial bard Nārada struming (*mīttiyum*) his harp (*yāzh*) and singing along (*pāda*) with his pristinely pure (*tunga*) eyes (*vizhi*) and ear-rings (*kundalam*) swaying (*āda*) to his bodily movements is constantly (*sadā*) in my thoughts driving me insane with the desire to be united with him.

In the classical *varṇam*- *Swāmiyai azhaittu vādi* in R: Kamas and T: Adi by Ponnaihi Pillai.

P: sāmīyai azhaittu vādi sakhī ye endan

A: sāmānya durai alladi sakhī ye endan

C 1: bhūmi pugazh shrīmadurāpuri sundareshvaranai

kāmit ārthangal tandu kalavi sheivadarkku samayame

2: sambhogan avan pādame tozhudu mārmurum samayamidu velar

sall āpamadenni malar medaiyil ati moha kāmini ennaittān taniye vandu madan āgama murai

terindanai avar marupamum kamalattukk-iśaiyamu

vā vā en mozhi ketka vā

m āran ido varuginān

2: malar bānam en idayam tanil vidum valināl enadu madandaiye sakhī ye

3: madhu vandugal mevum adā kuyilgalum kūvum adu tākiligalum khalakhalavenatā olittida mati padarudu

vā vā en mozhi ketka vā and *madandaiye sakhīye* implies the *sakhī* to be of the same age group or younger.

The heroine has to lament to somebody to open her feelings. The *sakhī* is a required person though not a prominent character.

Then in the Swarajati- *Mā moha lāhiri mīrude* in R: Kamas, T: Rupaka and composed by Namashivaya Pulavar the *sakhī* 's reference is predominant.

P: *mā moha lāhiri mīrude enna seiguvEn valyavanānum poi vara venum*

A: *sīmān kumāettendiran dinam paṇi kazhugācala velavar*

tān māttiram tanittirukkum samayam pārttu vādi podi

(svarasāhityam)

māte sumāvicānamāmā pazhaginoridam mālai varumunati priyam āga varugira viri vidamānadena adariyamuna māravuruvili vegu cāmāri enaiyuruviliyena mārī vida adanamāga ma moha

C: *ohoho māne nirāshai sukham adīyādavaruravu shatamā enuvadu pisagadi ohoho*

(svara sāhitya)

1: oruvar āshai peridāi nāme alaivadil ena ohoho

2: paruvamāmuna maruviyilāda payil paṇiya vara vādi ohoho

3: tāpamāga ila nilāmālai vādai varudE pasha valai pasha valai mahā māyai polādadadi ohoho

4: *ārāle shūdo idu podāgiyum vārāda tāmada mena veredo māra velai pesinadāl edāvadidālāpamā idenadezhai matiyinālemune kūdiya kāla palam ohoho*

In the *mukhtāyi*, *māne* refers to the *sakhī* .

The *sakhī* rises up to the occasion and asks the *nāyikā* why are you becoming sad for no reason? *Suma vishama*. The *sakhī* says she too suffers to see the *nāyikā* suffering. *māne nirashe sukhamade sadam*. It is foolish to think of a relationship with men as permanent, says the *nāyikā* .

Usually *sakhī* is a contemporary of the *nāyikā* or younger. Older persons cannot be described as apt company to share one's feelings, specially in love.

In the Swathi Thirunal padam, R: Surutti, T: Misra Chapu, *alar śara parithāpam* the *sakhī* is referred to as *kalamozhi*- one endowed with sweet speech.

P:*alar śara parithāpam cholvathinnaliveni paṇi baale*

A:*jalajabandhuvumiha jaladhiyilaṇayunnu
malayamaaruthametu mama manamathitharaam batha
vivasayaayi sakhī (alaR)*

C:*valarunnoo hr̥di mohamennomale
thalarunnoo mama deham kalamozhi
kusumavaatikayathilulavaayoralikulaarava-
mathihakelppathumadhikamaadhinidaanamayī sakhī
(alar)*

In the padam:

oru vazhi shol ātira manam padari

Dondam vidaamal ni chai avar enukum vega sukrutam ondu

Thotiram chaidu

Here the heroine is dignified and *sakhī* equally beautiful. The heroine addresses the *sakhī* in a dignified manner – *toyaharai* – the one with long hair like the peacock’s tail. She places her trust in the *sakhī* when she says ‘go and make the permanent relationship’-dondam. Only you can do that. Or in another sense only you can find a way to unite us taking care not to disturb the bond.

The *sakhī*’s role is defined by the nature of the heroine. We could say that it is the inner conscience personified as the *sakhī*.

In the *varṇam* of Sivanandan, *sakhī ye inda velayil* in R: Anandabhairavi, T: Adi

P: sakhī ye inda velaiyil jālam sheyyāde endan sāmīyai azhaittodi vādi

Why are you playing tricks on me my *sakhī*. Please bring my beloved to me.

*A: mahitālam pugazhum metta mahimai rājanagaril tigari shengendum tigazh rājagopālan
(muktāyi svara sāhityam)*

He is well-known all over the world holding in his hands the *shankha* and *chakra*.

*nāgarika mighavum sarasa vaghaiyāi malaranamel anudinamum
arumaiyāgha sallāpa matiyodu nalla ullāsa villāsa kalāvum nilāvil kulāva*

We used to spend such happy moments together, say sweet nothings to each other, carefree under the beautiful moonlight.

C: pāngāna mayile adhika mayalāi mati mayangi puvvāli mānmadanidodudan

Oh you as beautiful as the full-grown peacock I am swooning with the arrows of *Kāma devā*.

I: nīngā iravil tūngā kuyil paluka

Won’t this situation change. I can’t bear the sound of the koel.

2: Edo oru vaghaiyāi varugudu shol nī dupāyamā viveka nayaguna

Something is happening to me. Please suggest me a remedy.

3: mā mohana ratiye nī tān dayavudane duraiyai varavum nī shollu

Oh you as beautiful as Rati. You alone can show me some compassion and tell him to come.

nīdu malar shūdi vara vādi vilaiyādi shruti kūdi ishai pādi ennai kūda manam modi enna

You go to him with flowers decked in your hair, playfully talk to him, sing him a sweet song and turn his mind towards me.

Here the *sakhī* is called by the *nāyikā* as *Pangāna mayile*- the ripe or mature or fully formed peacock that looks so beautiful. She also calls her Rati.

Another interesting varnam is Swathi Thirunal's Dani Samajendra.

P: *dāni sāmajendrāgāmini tapāmiha kāmīni*

Oh *sāmajendrāgāmini* having the gait of king elephant! You are benevolent. Pray, lovely maiden, I am consumed by desire, pining for the love of my lord.

A: *mānīnī sukhadāni madhumāsa cāru dināni mānanīya shrī padmanābha dhutāni mamatu modhāni*

Oh Estimable and agreeable friend! The Pleasant days of the spring season has become worthless and wasted, because the venerable Sri Padmanābha has abandoned me.

C1: *gāna parānihāli kulāni*

(svara sāhityams)

1. *gādhasānvayapi kopi vitapini*

2. *gāma laghu sa purāpatira krtayāmahaha bahudhā hrdila gati*

3. *māpa māpata tākhil ādhi bharāpaha sucarita mākalaya madhu
rasa madhurima sadrsha vacasamati mrduhasa mayi mayi sarasa mihahi*

4. *pātumayimā sumasharā shugapari patana nīrasa dhrata
visāmupadhānita bāhulatā madhunāsmrte mahāniha nahi nahi*

kima paramavashata tamāsuradhanīpatīm apānnidhimrte vishati

Oh Madhupaveni-hair like the swam of bees! I am afflicted in the night by the arrow-like rays emitting from the full moon, which reminds me of my youthful matchless lord.

Swarm of bees are humming.

The cuckoo birds, perching on the tree are engaged in warm embrace.

Alas! I alone remain still separated from my beloved. Lord has largely left me helpless without any other resource than your help.

Friend! Please bring my virtuous lord unto me, who alone can remove all my anguish. Please bring

forth my charming and benevolent lord, whose lips are adorned with everlasting sweet smile. His words are as sweet as honey.

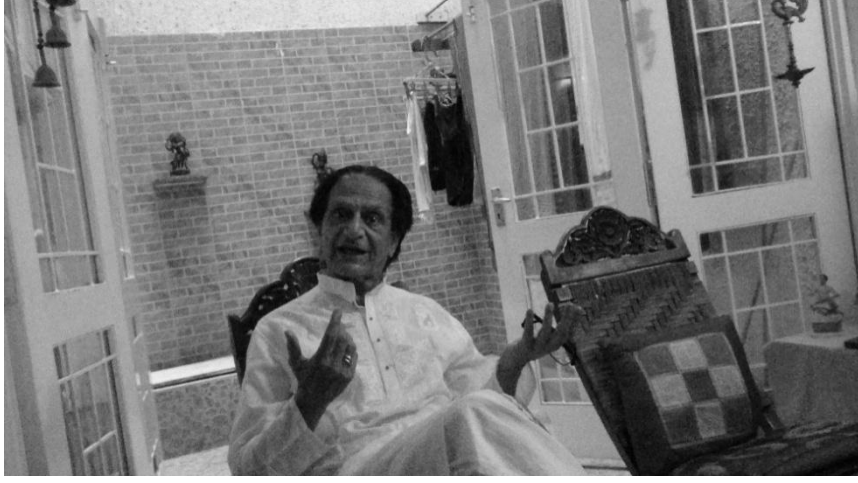
I cannot bear the weight of the flowery arrows of Cupid any longer. My heavy bosom is pulsating uncontrollably like a slender creeper. Oh my friend! Tell me, why the great lord is not coming to rejuvenate me and save me from withering away?

My friend! I request you to fulfil my heart's desire for the immediate company of my lord. Just like the cakora-the ruddy goose, I am helpless and frustrated by the pangs of separation. Nothing in this life, even the sight of bright morning horizon, the cool breeze from the mountain carrying the fragrance of the morning flowers; I swear, brings me solace and happiness. Hence, oh Kamini! I entreat you to bring my lord, whose is the paragon of finest attributes, to me immediately.

Here the *nāyikā* addresses her *sakhī* using choice adjectives. At the outset itself she addresses her as *sāmajendrāgāmini*, the one having the gait of an elephant. As *kāmini*-desirable.

Māninī- beautiful, sukhadāni- bestower of happiness

**Padmabhushan Prof. C.V. Chandrashekhar, Bharata Natyam exponent,
teacher, scholar. May 2016, Chennai.**



Sakhī represents *Gurū* who joins *jivātman* and *paramātman* as in the Gita Govinda. In understanding the *nāyikā* and *nāyaka* she is an important person.

She is tactful and very reliable. A pillar of support for the *nāyikā*.

She has to be a confidante. Needs to understand the emotions of the *nāyikā* and act accordingly. In love poetry she is clever in conveying feelings of the *nāyikā* to the *nāyaka* without getting involved. The *nāyikā* is completely absorbed by the thoughts of her lover. Interpretation and delineation of the *sakhī* and *nāyikā* is important in performance. The back thought constantly must be the seeking of the supreme.

The poets addressed the Lord directly without *sakhī* too. In the human allegory, the Lord is the man. How and where one places the *sakhī* is thus important.

She is a wonderful medium. Often one can't convey or express oneself directly. So the *sakhī* fulfills that. She has to be *chatura* for deftly she must be able to convince the *nāyaka*. One of

the ways is to address him using superlatives and enumerating his qualities. The *nāyikā* places her confidence on the *dūtī*. The *nāyaka*'s reactions/behaviour would also change towards *sakhī* /*dūtī* accordingly. The *sakhī* must be able to take decisions. She does not exist externally like the *nāyikā*. The *nāyikā* feels safe as long as she has the *sakhī* to support her. The *sakhī* can be compared as *ardhanārī* of *nāyikā*. The *nāyikā* is half herself and half her friend. She may not be of equal status. As in life, friends can be of any status. The *sakhī* is also a learner. She does not exist on her own. **She is more superior than the *nāyikā* and *nāyaka*.**

The *sakhī* has to be a strong person. The *dūtī* on the other hand is simply a messenger. The looks of a *dūtī* does not matter. While the *dūtī* also has to have the qualities of the *sakhī* they are different hierarchally. She could be a maid, an older woman. **It is possible that the *dūtī* could prove to be a better confidante than the *sakhī*.** For the *sakhī* can sometimes transgress her line.

In the Gita Govinda we see two immature lovers. It is the *sakhī* who clears the misunderstanding. All the *sakhī* wants is harmony. Both know the *sakhī* and react to her clever acts. She thus acts as the *Gurū*. She knows the psychology of both. She knows how to bring them together. For example in the *ashtapadī –Pravesha Rādhē*. There is no better example of the *sakhī* as in the Gita Govinda. **She is a *saakshi* and does not get involved.** Her status is equal to that of Dakshinamurthy- the *Gurū*.

Mrs. Chandrashekhar used an interesting term for the sakhī - nirlipta. The one who is non-attached.

Shri V.A.K. Ranga Rao, dancer-critic-scholar. May 2016, Chennai:



Sometimes the go-between is more superior to the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā*. The *sakhī* 's place and role is most aptly defined in the Gita Govinda. A prominent *sakhī* is Madhavi, friend of Satyabhama.

The child's love and the *sakhī* 's love are unquestionable and unconditional. The *sakhī* takes liberties with the *nāyikā*.

In Sarangapani poems one finds more elder and more experienced *sakhī* . Kshetrayya padams exhibit *shishta vyavahara*. The *sakhī* 's role is to create a rapport between the hero and the heroine.

**Padmabhushan Shri V.P. Dhananjayan, Bharata Natyam exponent,
teacher, author. June 2016, Chennai**



In all *pauranic* stories there is a hero, a heroine and a mediator as per the rules governing the *alamkara śastra*. In the *alamkara śastra* the human anatomy is beautifully described as seen through the eye of the poets. Poets write poetry based on the principles of the *alamkara śastra*. And according to human behaviour there is always a mediator be it in history, politics, sangeeta , natya.

For the dancer who is the main *pātram*, the first mediator to reach God is the *Gurū* . Thus the *sakhī* concept has been there in *sanātana dharma*.

The mediator to reach the father for a young girl is the mother. Thus the concept of the mediator evolved into the *sakhī bhāva* or *dūtī bhāva*, the person who carries the message. This concept becomes predominant in the *nāyaka- nāyikā bhāva*.

At the human level different types of *dūtīkā* s exist. The first *dūtīkā* is the mother who points to her children, this is your father. So it begins from there. From father then to *Gurū* to reach higher goals or even to know deeply about a subject one needs a guide. The *Gurū* thus serves as a link and so similarly the *dūtīkā*.

Man to man there has always been a mediator in different situations. The poets enlarged this idea. In Kalidāsa's plays one finds the middle man as the *vidūshaka*.

In Nala charithram, the *hamsa* becomes the *dūtīkā*, behaving like a human carrying the message of love to Damayanti. The concept of *nāyikā –nāyaka* relates predominantly to the *nāṭya* tradition. Jayadeva has eulogised the role of *sakhī* here.

In the concept of devotion the poet takes on a female identity. In the Gita Govinda, the situation is built up gradually. The *dūtīkā* plays a very important role.

In *Usha Parinayanam*, Chitrlekha plays a very important role of the *dūtīkā*.

Then in the Swāti Thirunāl *varṇam*, *suma sāyaka*, it is again the *sakhī* who is the protagonist.

The *sakhī* has a lot of emotions to be conveyed to the hero. In *sanchāri bhāva*, the *sakhī* almost becomes the *nāyikā*. Thus to enlarge the scope of *abhinaya*, the *dūtīkā bhāva* has been integrated into the story telling tradition. In the solo dance format, one conceptualises her presence.

The *sakhī* and *dūtī* are the same. **It is only the *sakhī* on whom one can have confidence.** It is a confident friend who can be trusted to play the role of messenger.

When a young girl reaches a mature age the *sakhī* becomes more important than the mother even. In fact in the beautiful padam *Yethai kandu nee ichai kondayadi* the mother becomes an advisor to the daughter.

In padams, varṇams the presence of *sakhī* gives the opportunity to dancers to play two characters at a time. It is a complex role that the dancer plays of both the *nāyikā* and the *sakhī*.

For eg. In *nindati chandana* (Gita Govinda) when she describes the plight of the *nāyikā* to Krishna, she momentarily becomes the *nāyikā*. Thus the poets create such songs to offer a wide scope for its enactment.

In the *jivātman-paramātman* concept, the *jivātman* is mostly characterized as female. The poet, a man, thinks himself, as a *jivātman*, a female. That is the reason the goddess is never a lover. The woman, a mother is given a lofty pedestal. In the *prakritī –purusha* concept also the same is seen.

To reach *ātman*, we need guidance. The *sakhī* is considered by the commentators as the *Gurū*, generally. It is similar as in a temple, where we need the *pujarī* to reach our offerings to the deity.

Prakritī is *dūtīkā*. *Vāyu* is an important carrier. The woman in silent communication with spouse uses the medium of *vāyu*, the in-between environment. When nature accentuates our feelings they play *dūtīkā* in a sense. Indirectly we are connected. According to philosophers *vāyu* plays a very important role.

Even in the *yagna*, it is the *vāyu* who carries the offerings poured or offered to *agnī*.

You cannot touch *vāyu*. Everything in nature has *dūtīkā bhāva* between *jivātman* and *paramātman*. We aspire for divine grace. **To reach the *paramātman* we become female. And so we need a *sakhī*.** When union happens creation takes place. **The *sakhī*'s role is to bring one person to another as happening in Nature all the time.** The butterfly takes the pollen and so on. Nalā's thoughts were carried by *hamsa*.

The *sakhī* can be taken as *māya* personified. **The confidence of your mind can be the *sakhī*.**

Example of a *mitartha sakhī* is Chitrlekha, who does not speak much. The brahmin carries Rukmini's message to Krishna as *sandeshahāraka*. In padam- *ethanai sonnālum* the mother is

like the *sakhī* counseling and chiding her daughter.

P: *ettanai sonnālum teriyādarudan en pinakkik kolvāi magale*

Why are you entangling yourself with someone who is not quite responsive to you (oh, daughter!)

A: *attanalitta kumaresar vaidālumenna āttirappadukirāi pen buddiyāle*

Even if Kumaresan (Lord Subramanya) scolds you why should you get angry out of your girlish ignorance?

anbullapode kobamirrukum menmele

Where there is love there is bound to be anger.

rāttiri rāmāyanam kettumappāle rāmarukku sItai enna muzhai enratu pole

Despite hearing the story of Ramayanam the whole night you are asking what is the relationship of Sita to Rama.

C: *kondavar nayattilum bhayattilum solvār*

One who is close to you will say things nicely as well as threateningly.

kodaiyaip pottukkondur ponadennadi

why should it bother you?

sandai unakkup pālum pazhamumādi kudikedi?

Is fighting like milk and fruit for you? (kudikedi normally means one who destroys a family/relationship)

tāi pereduppāi veghu nerttiyāgave tān

you will earn the name of a good mother in a glorious way!!

mīna vizhiyāle unakkā inda tudukku

Oh, fish-eyed one why do you have such recalcitrance?

nānorutti idarkkellAm podāvittāl tadukku

nānum oru pennenru nī kulukku vāyadaku

Am I not a woman myself to allow this to pass? Control your tongue

Roja Kannan, Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher. Disciple of the renowned Guru Padmashri Adyar K. Lakshman and Padmabhushan Kalanidhi Narayanan. June 2016, Chennai.



The *sakhī* takes the position of *Gurū* . A friend-philosopher-guide. She is the first one to identify a change in the behaviour of the *nāyikā*. In Kuravanji dramas one finds instances of the *sakhī* arriving at her bed-chambers and seeing the *nāyikā* in a melancholic mood and not her usual self. **In general life, too one often confides to the *sakhī* about one's love affairs than to one's own mother.**

So when the *sakhī* notices and asks of the *nāyikā*, a bond is established and the *nāyikā* begins confiding to the *sakhī*. **The *sakhī* is usually of the same age and maturity level as the *nāyikā* .** Many poems portray her as a very balanced person as she views the problem from outside. **So the *sakhī* becomes an apt *dūtī*.** In many cases the hero is known to the *sakhī* too probably due to living in the same area or kingdom etc. So the *sakhī* is well-aware of the hero's likes, dislikes, preferences etc. Thus she is able to give a balanced advise and becomes the most important link between the hero and the heroine. She is the friend. She is the one who will

build the bridge between the two. Sometimes she is the one who will also convey about the relationship to the parents. So she becomes the guide.

Sometimes when things don't move smoothly between the hero and the heroine, she is the one to pacify as in the Gita Govinda. She is then the philosopher.

In the Gita Govinda , there is a line where she tells the *nāyikā* , he will put his head upon your feet even. She educates the *nāyikā*. She is an essential character in any situation. There are a few cases where the *sakhī* seems to have deceived her friend, the *nāyikā*. Sometimes the *nāyaka* comes to meet the *nāyikā* and falls for the *sakhī* . In many Kuravanjis she is given an elevated status.

In a Navroj padam (t:triputa) by Kshetrappa she is the protagonist telling the *nāyikā* to go to the *nāyaka* and reminding her of the abundant love the *nāyaka* has for her. Here she takes on the role of the guide, an apt *sakhī* and not a mere *dūtī*.

P:*Ela vacchitivay etuvanti sami nedabāsi*

Why did you come leaving your Swami?

Elaku kallaadanay O lalanāro

How could your feet move from there O Friend?

A:*Bamaro Muvvagopaludu ninnu dalachi*

O Friend with you thinking about Muvva gopala

Paluvarimchu unduray

All the time he too is thinking about you

C1:*Usurani thalayuchunay*

Sighing he shakes his head

Saiyaiyunti yulugi dikkuna lekanay

From the bed startled suddenly he gets up

Kasari dikkulana jhūsunay

With a hungry look he sees around for you

Kanniru ninchi kannu loragajesunay O Lalanāro

Brimming with tears his eyes become red, O friend.

C 2: Thalavagidanay cherunay neethu

To your doorstep he comes

Kem movi dalasukanochurunay

His red lips salivates thinking about you

Velathi vidini dhoorunay thanalo

His fate he curses within

Thānu vetri korika korunay O Lalanāro

Wild desires consume him, O Friend

C 3: Ninni sāla vālinchunay Muvva

You would pet your Muvva

Gopaluntaynachina vakalenchunay

He would relate your good qualities

Sanuvichi karuninchunay Indarulo nee saati Ledani enchunay.

Becoming intimate he would show you compassionate love

He believes there is none equal to you.

In another interesting *padam* by Muthuthaandavar which can be from one *sakhī* to another or

even a mother to her daughter(which is how Kalanidhi Mami has treated this *padam*) in R:

Dhanyasi, T: Adi. Here she plays the role of an advisor or counsellor.

P: Itthanai Thulaambaramai Neeyum Thirindaal

Like this without any decency if you roam about

Enna Solluvargaladi Ūrārum.

What will the people around say.

A: Uttravar uramuraiyor suttri irukkaiyil

So many relations are around you

Sendil Muthaiyer mīdhu Moga Paithiyakārathanathāl Thiruchendur Muruganmad

You are insanely in love with the handsome Murugan

C: Ādu thinnālum elumbai kūdavum kotthu kazhuthil

Even if you eat meat, the bones strung together on your neck

Haaramaaga poonuvaargalo aanaalum enna

Like a necklace will you wear

Sādu senaigalil lavādi polavay alaigirāyay

at all nooks and corners like a wayward girl you are roaming

Thaiyalay Idhenna nero

O girl is this proper?

Kūdi avarai kodu thavarā kulathil

after having relationship with him you now belong to a respectable family

Kadai mullaitha manam kondapadi ellām muzhu chanditththanam āgavaythān

your ways like weeds are haywire, full of indecent behavior.

**Shri Haripadman, Bharata Natyam exponent and Senior teacher-
Kalakshetra. June 2016, Kalakshetra-Chennai.**



The *sakhī* is very important in both the dance-drama and solo tradition. There are many interpretations for the *sakhī*. As in the Gita Govinda, she is the connecting link between the hero and the heroine and advises both on how to move forward.

The *sakhī* takes on the role of a *Gurū*. She has to have the maturity level to advise. She has to advise the proper way or path to attain moksha.

She makes for an ideal friend as without being told explicitly she understands the *nāyikā*'s remorse.

The *sakhī* as a character can be considered an imaginary one too. She is the medium or becomes the conduit to express both the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā*'s inner feelings. The *sakhī* enables the expression of the deep inner feelings expressed by the *nāyikā* and *nāyaka* which cannot be expressed otherwise.

As a *dūtī*, Krishna is a universal *dūtā*. The *paramātmā* always gives us a way on the path of liberation. The *sakhī* as *Gurū* is one of the ways.

**Dr. T.V. Vasudeva, Sanskrit scholar, Deputy Director, Kuppuswamy Sastri
Research Institute- Sanskrit and Indology. June 2016, Chennai**



Sakhī is one who shares the same wavelength of feeling.

sakhī samānam khedam

In the *Kumara Sambhāvam*, Kalidasa mentions how *sakhī* is the one who takes seven steps, the *sapta padī*.

sakhā saptapadenam uchyate

In fact, as per the vedas, the couple is said to be married only after completing the *sapta padī* ritual.

When the seventh step is placed the girl is said to become the friend of the husband.

Manu (8.227) says:— ‘The *Vedic* mantras recited in the marriage rite are a sure indication of wife-hood; but their completion should be understood by the wise as occurring on taking the seventh step’. So it follows that the marriage becomes complete and irrevocable the moment the *saptapadī* rite is performed, but before that rite is gone through there is a locus or a right to revoke the commitment. Some *ācāryas* are of the opinion that the *pāṇigrahana* (taking of the hand) is the moment of no return.

ॐ एकमिशे विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

The couple takes the first step and promises that they will take care of each other and pray for abundant blessings and prosperity in their life.

ॐ द्वे उर्जे विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

In the second step, the couple promises and prays to the Gods to bless them with physical and mental powers and lead a healthy married life.

ॐ त्रीणि रायस्पोशाय विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

During the third step, they promise to protect and increase their wealth by proper means.

ॐ चत्वारि मायोभवाय विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

With the fourth step, the bride and the groom pledge to share happiness and sadness together.

ॐ पञ्च पशुभ्यो विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

With the fifth step, the couple promises to be responsible and care for their children.

ॐ षड रुतुभ्यो विष्णुः त्वा नयतु । सा माम अनुमृता भव।

The sixth step is taken by the couple to be together always.

ॐ सखे सप्तपदा भव । सा माम अनुमृता भव। विष्णुः त्वा नयतु ।

And while taking the last seventh step, they promise to be truthful and trustworthy to each other and pledge to be united always in **friendship** and harmony.

And the shloka recited immediately after the saptapadi ritual

Sakā -Sapthapadha -bhāva Sakāyov -Saptha padhā –Bhabūva

By these seven steps you have taken with me, you have become my **best friend**.

Sakyam -the -Ghameyam Sakyaath -the Maayosham -Sakyan me

I will never move out of this relationship. God has united us in this bondage.

Maayosta -Samayaava -Samayaava Sangalpaavahai –Sampriyov

We shall perform all activities together with love and affection.

Rosishnu -Sumanasyamanov Ishamoorjam - abhi –Savasaanov

Let us be friendly in our thoughts. Let us observe our *dūtīs* and rituals together.

Managhumsi -Samvrathaas smu Chiththaani -Aakaram –Sathvamasī
If you are the lyrics, I am the music. If you are the music, I am the lyrics.

Amooham -Amoohamasmi saa -Thvam –dhyowraham
If I am the heavenly body, you are the earthly world.

Pruthivee thvam -Retho' aham -retho' Bhruthvam –Manohamasmi
While I am the life source, you are the carrier of the same.

vak thvam -Saamaa ham asmi -Rukthvam –Saamaam
I am the thoughts and you are the speech.

Anuvradhaa -bhāva Pumse' Pumse' -Puthraaya- Veththavai
While you are the words, I am the meaning.

Sriyai -Puthraaya -Veththavai ehi -Soonrurute

With your sweet words, come with me to lead a prosperous life begetting our progeny with children.

The *sakhī* of Sanskrit drama and dance is an evolved character. When she communicates the feelings of the *nāyikā* she becomes the *nāyikā*. As can be seen in poems of Sangam literature especially.

In the path to *moksha* there are *upāyas* as *śravanam*(hearing), *mananan* (repeating in the mind or always thinking of) and *nidhidhyāsa* (deep meditation). Of these the first two may be considered as the *sakhī*. She is an instrument towards emancipation. The individual soul is bound by ignorance .

She acts in her domain to remove this evil of ignorance or *māyā*.

Dr. S. Raghuraman, Associate Professor in Tamil, Research and Resource for Bharata Natyam, Visiting Faculty, Kalakshetra-Chennai. June 2016, Chennai.



In Sangam Age and in Tolkkapiyam, the *sakhī* is mentioned as the daughter of the foster mother of the *nāyikā*. ‘*Tozhidāne seviliyuda magale*’.

Interestingly there is no mention of the father of the *sakhī*. In the Dravidian school of thought works were to be written only of the upper castes. The *nāyikā* belonged to the upper caste. In the grammar of Tolkkapiyam the *sakhī* is the one sent with the newly wed *nāyikā* to her husband’s house. **The *sakhī* acts as the illegal wife of the *nāyaka*.** It was the system that if and when the *nāyikā* delivered a girl child and the *sakhī* delivered a girl child then the daughter of the *sakhī* became the *sakhī* for the daughter of the *nāyikā*.

This system can be seen through the following incident in the Mahabharatha.

Prince Yayati married to Devayāni had an illegal contact with Sharmishthā , the *sakhī* of Devayani. When Devayāni informed her father sage Shukracharya, he cursed Yayati to be deprived of his youth, the cause of the misdeed.

The *sakhī* plays a vital role in Sangam literature:

When the hero falls in love with the heroine he can get the contact with the heroine only through the *sakhī*. The love affair progressed systematically in the following stages.

1. *Iyarkai punarchi*- The hero and heroine meet naturally as a predestined occurrence.
2. *Idam talaipadu*- They automatically meet again the next day at the same place.
3. The hero will find out where the heroine lives through his friend. The friend cannot talk to the heroine directly.
4. *Pāngi udanpadu*- The *sakhī* has to be convinced of the *nāyaka*'s suitability for her friend, the *nāyikā*. She will verify the *nāyaka*'s sincerity before allowing the *nāyikā* to meet him.
5. *Pagal kurī*- The heroine will identify the spot where she will meet the *nāyaka* which will be conveyed to him through the *sakhī*.
6. *Iravu Kurī*- Meeting during night time. If the heroine wishes to meet the *nāyaka* during night time the *sakhī* will arrange the meeting and stand guard.

The love affair must culminate into marriage in three months (*kalavu*). If the marriage is not agreed to by the parents, then the *nāyikā* will decide to elope and will inform her *sakhī* who will ensure the needful is done.

In the Tolkkapiyam, it is stated that even if the mother has a doubt about her daughter's behavior during the love affair she cannot question her daughter directly but will find out through her *sakhī*. The *sakhī* thus plays a significant role all sides – for the heroine, the hero, their parents etc.

If the heroine for some reason is unable to reveal to the *sakhī* about her love, the *sakhī* employs different means to find out based on her observation of the changed behavior of the *nāyikā*.

She will find out or get to know in three ways:

1. *Munnuraunarudal* – She would have seen the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā* together without their knowledge.

2. *Korayarunarudal*:

Through- *Naatrum*-smell or body odour.

Thotram- disturbed decoration of hair, flowers etc.

Orukam- reserved behavior;

undi- not concentrating on food ;

paiyyavu- not interested in playing;

selavu- preferring loneliness;

seivinai mirapu-warbled speech

3. *Iravu mulvazhi avan vazhuvunarudal*

When hero comes in the proximity of the heroine she blushes.

The astute *sakhī* identifies or learns about her friend having fallen in love.

There are two occasions when the *nāyaka* can visit the prostitute .

1. When the *nāyikā* is in menstruation.

In *sevvani vidithal* the *sakhī* goes to the street of the prostitute with a pot of red water and sprinkles the street before the house with red water. This is sufficient to indicate to the prostitute that she should send the *nāyaka* and that the *nāyikā* is now in a ready state to receive him.

2. During childbirth.

In *vellani vidithal*, the *sakhī* goes to the street of the prostitute's house sprinkling it with white lime water using white flowers. This indicates to the prostitute that it is time for the *nāyaka* to return to his *nāyikā*.

The *sakhī* thus plays a very vital role before marriage in fostering the love affair and after marriage as friend, philosopher and guide. The *Tolkkapiyam* cites all situations where the *sakhī* can speak out. If the hero performs any misdeed the *sakhī* will be the first person to condemn his act. She may abuse him, shut the door asking him to leave etc..The *sakhī* is thus the most loyal, sincere, obedient, amenable, amicable, friend , servant, philosopher, guide to the heroine.

It is a myth that a human can be a messenger to the God. The *Bhaktī* movement tries to sublimate the human yearning. So while the *nāyikā*'s feelings are laid bare there is no recount

or reference of any God making preparation to meet the *nāyikā*. Even Andal did not physically marry Krishna. It was in a dream. Even in Kuravanji dance dramas the *sakhī* would go and get the *kurathi* to predict the event only. There was no reference or assurance to his coming.

In the *Bhaktī* movement, the *sakhī* arises as an imaginary character for the *nāyikā* who is consumed by Kāma or lust. She needs an outlet to express her innermost feelings. It also becomes an apt poetic device to lay bare the *nāyikā*'s feelings.

A whole body of literature, the *sandeshā kāvya* covers this aspect where even elements of nature like birds, wind, clouds play the role of the messenger. The messenger literature has come about due to the many stages of the *nāyikā* in love that must be conveyed to the hero or for the heroine to find redemption and relief. The *dūta* keeps her hopes alive.

The *nāyikā* goes through the following stages in love:

1. *Kākshi*- when she sees the hero.
2. *Oreorulladu*- When she starts thinking only of him.
3. *Nokellam adepol*- she sees him in everything. Or everything reminds her of him.
4. *Undiyirkuraithal*- loss of appetite.
5. *Udambunādisurangal*- she becomes emaciated.
6. *Kanpiyil marutthal*- becomes forgetful
7. *Kanvodu nayangal*- lost in fantasy
8. *Marutthal*- forgetfulness
9. *Mayakkam*- unconsciousness
10. *Sakadu*- death.

These states were later adopted for the *bhaktā*.

Further it is said that the heroine was permitted to talk only about things in her vicinity.

kilavikayin tānarikilavi while the *sakhī* had the freedom to talk about anything- *tozhikayin niranpeyandavaraiyum*.

The literature has been conditioned with false modesty in the *Bhaktī* movement. The *upacharas* conducted for the Kings were later replicated in the temples like as in *suprabhātam*, *mallāri* etc.

Thus the *sakhī* does not find a place in the *Bhaktī* era. She is like a hallucination of the *nāyikā* smitten by Kāmā not knowing how to resolve her feelings and whom to tell. Often the *Bhaktī* literature borders on vulgarity. For instance Manickavasara has penned lyrics to this effect.

Udiven udi kudimayangiven peyarthi malarven sevvai kurudven
Having union with Shiva will be an orgasm for me.

The *sakhī* was thus a vital channel in the Sangam age. **She was *azhuthodunilayil* knowing about the deepest feelings of the *nāyikā*.** She was the mouth-piece of the heroine. She had the courage and conviction to even show the door to the hero when it became necessary.

The heroine was more attached to the foster mother than her own mother.

In *Bhaktī* period , the *sakhī* was elevated to the status of *Gurū* . It was the easiest way to communicate for the poet as *nāyikā*. It was the easiest way to portray the *paramātmā* mixing with the *jīvātmā*.

Generally the *sakhī* did not have a social standing and for this reason she had to live with the heroine to be socially acceptable. Many of Bharatiyar poems referred to Chellama but were elevated to that as Kannama of a higher class so as to be acceptable.

The role of the *sakhī* as *Gurū*/mediator/medium was to make the hero get more focus on his love just like a magnifying glass does with the sun's rays. Just like the *Gurū* does for the devotee.

Smt. Indu Raman, Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher(Kalakshetra, disciple of Smt. Rukmini Arundale), August 2016, Mumbai.



The *sakhī* is a very important part of the trio: *nāyaka- nāyikā-sakhī*. This trio is seen mainly in compositions of *madhura bhaktī* specially *padams*, *javalis* and *varnams*. The *varnams* deal with relationship issues in this triangle. In *madhura bhaktī* we find the *nāyikā* pining for her Lord running parallel to the devotee's search for the Supreme. Or as can be said the *jīvātman* wanting to unite with the *paramātman*. The bliss of union of the *nāyaka- nāyikā* is comparable to the bliss or *ānanda* of moksha. The path in this seeking is not easy . One therefore needs a Guru to advise, warn about obstacles that may arise, and also the guidance in the *tapas* or penance required to accomplish the goal. **Just as the devotee looks up to the Guru, the *nāyikā* needs the *sakhī* who will advise, who will show her the path.** The *nāyikā* goes through her gamut of emotions in this path and so she needs somebody like the *sakhī* , somebody older, wiser, who will console her, with whom she can discuss the ways and means of arranging the rendezvous. The *sakhī* patiently listens to the ramblings, confusions, confessions of the *nāyikā*.

The Nāṭya Śāstra cites people who are qualified to be messengers like neighbours, unmarried friends, nuns , nurses, fortune tellers. They unwittingly become confidantes to take the messages of love. A *nāyikā* in the first flush of love, a *mugdha nāyikā* needs a confidant to confess her feelings. In the Kedaram javali, the *nāyikā* says

Entane vanintune sakhī aakaantu keli- how can I describe what happened when we were alone. Just wait and listen to me, I will tell you what happened.

The *sakhī* is usually well versed in the game of love. She must be persuasive, have a way with words. Must be wise and must know when and where to give the message. She must be bold, creative enough to paint a harrowing pitiable picture of the love-struck *nāyikā*.

This can be seen clearly in the Shankarabharanam *padam- Dari juchuchunadi* where the *sakhī* is telling the *nāyaka* don't delay , the *nāyikā*, a young one, is waiting for you. She has adorned herself and the bed chamber in anticipation. The pretty one with deer shaped eyes darting like the fish. The *sakhī* paints a very loving picture of the *nāyikā* to Krishna who is not yet ready to come. The person who is entrusted with this job needs to be flattered and cajoled to fulfil the task or even speed up. In the *padam* of Swati Thirunal we find the line, *Panimathi mukhi baale, Padmanabha innuennil* Oh you moon faced one, when will Lord Padmanabha come. *Madirakshi nyaan, cheliya. Madirakshi* – girl with beautiful eyes. *Nari Rathname-* Like a precious jewel. *Dhanye-* great lady. *Sumukhi-*the one with the beautiful face.

P: *manasi dussaham ayyo madana gadanam*
endu madirakshi jnyan ceyyavu

Oh Madirakshi (girl with bewitching eyes), I have an intolerable mental turmoil, a sadness caused by Madana (Cupid, the lord of love). What shall I do?

A: *panimati mukhi bale padmanabhan innennil*
kanivillaykayal kaman parameyyunnu

Oh girl, with the face of a cool moon, lord Padmanabhan has no compassion for me now. Hence I am tormented by Kaman's (Cupid's) arrows (of love).

C 1: *loka vasikalkellam lobhaniyanamindu*
shokam enikku matram sumukhi tarunnadendu
Ekandattilennodu sakam seyda leelagal
Akave mama kantan ashu bata maranno

Oh, good looking girl, the enticing moon makes all the people in the world rejoice. How come to me alone it gives abundant sorrow? (This line can also mean that the lord is as lustrous and pleasant as the moon for everybody but to this maiden it is not so because she is sad in his absence). Has my lover forgotten, all the amorous adventures he enjoyed with me in private, so soon?

C 2: *innuvarumen kAntan ennanudinavum jnyan*
dhanye hrudi ninaccu tandayayi maruvunnu
annapanadiyilum annanadayaleme
nannayi vimukhatayum nari ratname vannu

Every day I would wait for my lover to come to me that day, Oh, blessed friend! This waiting makes my heart immersed in melancholy. Oh gem among women with the gait of a swan, I have lost interest in food and drinks. I am drenched in too much sadness.

C 3: *banatrayattalal tanne paridangal munnume*
kshinamakki ceyyuna sri panchavisikhan
ninalayi valayumme niravadhi sucam nalkan
enamizhivai shamyam enduparaka tozhi!

Oh, my friend with the eyes of a doe, please tell me why is it hard for Manmatha to sustain my love well while he could defeat the three worlds with just three arrows? I cannot endure the endless agony that I experience currently.

Sometimes flattery may not work. The *sakhī* can be temperamental or refuse to go. In the

Ananda Bhairavi varnam, the *nāyikā* addresses the *sakhī*,

Sakhīye inda velayil, jaalam chaiyaade endan.

Do not play tricks with me Oh *sakhī*. Don't be indifferent.

Again in the Kambodhi *padam*, the essence of this aspect comes out very well . She tells the *sakhī*, Here I am suffering with the arrows of Kama but you look away and pretend indifference. Is your heart made of stone?

Padari varugu durukudennavi padaikuda vagai choladi, shatru nilladi manam kallodi. Adi taluku kuluku meenaena podi.

Then there is the other *sakhī* who is a naughty *sakhī*. She goes with the message to Krishna. She falls for his charms and spends the night with him.

When we think of *sakhī* we think of Kālidasa's *sakhī* Priyamvadā and Anasuyā which was created by Kalidasa but is not there in the original Mahabharata *adi parva*. These two *sakhīs* play a very crucial role. They grow together. They also know Shakuntala is a celestial nymph. They tease her that a prince will come and take her away. And when she falls for Dushyanta they know he is the right person and facilitate the union. When the old matron Gautami appears they take all care to maintain the secrecy. When sage Durvasa curses Shakuntala, Priyamvadā runs to him and begs for forgiveness and implores him to lessen the curse. So here the *sakhīs* play a very important role in young Shakuntala's life.

In the Maratha version, by Ekoji Maharaj II, they give the King a welcome with flowers etc. Usha, the daughter of Bānasura, dreams of a handsome prince but does not know who he is. It is Chitralkhā, her *sakhī*, who draws portraits of various Kings and finally they zero in on Aniruddha, the grand-son of Krishna. When we say *sakhī* we also think of Draupadī who had a deep relationship with Krishna. Another unusual friendship is Radha-Krishna , though lovers, they had a mystical relationship of friendship. In our literature , we also have the

unlikely sakha, the bhaman Sunanda, who is called by Rukmini on eve of her wedding to Shishupala. She needs somebody who has direct access to Krishna.

When we wonder if the *sakhī* and *nāyikā* are facets of a single personality we can only surmise that they are two yet interchangeable. **For the *nāyikā* can become the *sakhī* to another.**

The *sakhī* is not a single character. As the *nāyikā* matures she is ready to be a *sakhī* to another young *mugdha*. That is my understanding.

About whether the mind and heart can be compared to the *sakhī*- *nāyikā* , I feel it may not hold as one has to train the mind before one can train the heart. It is not necessary that the mind is always right. The Guru is qualified to show the path. And if we were to compare the mind to that aspect we cannot be sure as the mind is also known to be fickle. If we look at the *mugdha nāyikā*, how is it possible for her to instruct herself ? So this comparison may not hold .

Smt. Jamuna Krishnan, Bharata Natyam Guru, December 2016 , Delhi.



In *Shringāra Kāvya*, when we try to establish the search for the divine the closest relation we find is that between the man and the woman. And in this, *shringāra* holds a very important place. Whether we take Krishna *kāvya* or poetry on Shiva, right from the time of Alvars, the beginning of Vaishnavism, wherever you find the *nāyikā* seeking the Lord one will always find the divine aspect therein. In 4000 *prabhandams*, which goes into the deepest philosophy of Vaishnavism, you will not find just Radha. Nappinai is mentioned. There are the many Gopis infatuated. There is the one who has lost her heart to Venkatachalapati. Andal to the Lord of Srirangam. She tells her mother that she is madly smitten. The mother tells the others. They relate that she is talking to Nature, to the birds, peacock , the moon, the waves of the Ocean etc. How do you convey this madness of love? It cannot be conveyed directly and these 4000 *prabhandams* relate the different facets. Very beautifully the mother-daughter relationship is weaved herein. The entire flow of emotions between the close man-woman relationship is understood even if we do not take the divine aspect. The Divine becomes accessible even when we give the form of the child to him. We are able to relate to the many

facets of a little child through *vātsalya*- innocence, fun, laughter, joy, vulnerability, etc. So we do not need to access the divine by renunciation or penance. We are able to see the divine aspect in the child and so similarly access the divine aspect in the *nāyaka- nāyikā bhāv*. We try to understand and pursue the Divine in so many ways through contemplation, debate even. And through all that we finally realise that *Brahman* is something within. We realise the omniscience of the divine. That he is everything and in everything. In contrast to this we also have the *saguna* aspect where we give a form to the divine as Rama, Krishna etc. And in *shringāra* we take the Radha-Krishna pair as the closest. Here is where Vidyapati poems fit in. It is *shringāra kāvya* and runs parallel to the *ashtapadis*. The most prominent difference is that it is in Maithili, a local language. Vidyapati comes post Jayadeva about a century later. And here we find Radha relating her innermost feelings, desires, anguish to the *sakhī*. The moment Radha sees Krishna there is an instant falling in love.

To quote: *Ae sakhī dekhai ek aparupa. Aparupa* is Krishna. *Sunahit manabi sapna sa rupa*. She tells her *sakhī* if I tell you I saw him you will say I am sleeping. Because if I were to describe him you will not believe it as real. The ultimate in divine beauty. And that is the reason that he holds a simple bansuri in his hand but produces such exquisite music that can capture the three worlds. One note is played and the *gopis* forget what they are doing. Another note and all the animals in the forest are mesmerised. Such is the power of his music. And so then what to say of Radha. Vidyapati beautifully describes the wonderment of Radha in having seen Krishna with wonderful poetic imagery. *Is it possible to see a tree grow upon a lotus or the lightning compared to a creeper that twirls itself around a tree?*, Radha asks. The comparisons are contrasted and juxtaposed.

Kamal jugal par chand ke malā.

On the two lotus like feet the light of so many moons shine.

tapar upajita taruna tāmala.

Krishna rises on those two brilliant feet like a dark *Tāmala* tree.

Taapar beduni bijuri lata.

It is as if the lightening is woven around the tree comparing his *pitāmbar*.

Kālindi thata dhire chali jāta.

I saw this *adbhuta* sight moving on the banks of the river Kālindi. It goes on to describe his many features- his arms, his beautiful face and so on.

He sakhī rangini kahatha nisār.

Here *sakhī* is referred to as *rangini*. The one who is full of love, she understands the nuances of love.

Heiratha puni mora harat gyaan.

I have lost my sense of discrimination.

Kahi Vidyāpati hei rasa bhāva.

Vidyapati says he is aware of this rasa.

Supuruk maramat tu hu balachaar.

He is not an ordinary man. You know about this secret and you fell in love instantly.

The mind is lost in love, is how it is described. The mind is given the status of a character.

This fits in with your question when you asked is the *sakhī* like the mind, a part of our thinking? There are many pieces in literature where one is talking to the mind . One is in dialogue with the mind.

There is a Surdas pada and I never found any as beautiful as this: ***Main apno man harat na***

jaanyo – I did not know that I had lost my mind. Kidho gayo sanga Hari ke. Did it get lost in

Hari? Now *man chod ke jāna* in English translates as I have lost my heart. *Kahe ko le sudheena meri*. When Krishna left from here I was upset yet I controlled my mind. It wanted to go with Krishna but I held my mind firmly. *Mope kahan risaiyon*. It left me upset yet I held on.

Such beautiful expressions we find scattered across our literature. After expressing her love-lorn state caused by the mere sight or vision of the most exalted one it now rests on the *sakhī* to take the work forward towards uniting the two..

Philosophically the goal is the divine. The other part is the devotee. And we are seeking a path to the divine. How do we reach the goal? In the *bhaktī marga* many ways are mentioned to reach the divine. The Guru helps choose the appropriate one. Gandhi has said: Lead kindly light. Here the divine is being directly addressed. Kabir too when referring to the deep bond between lovers brings the *sakhī* in. He too mentions that the right path can be shown by the Guru. Kabir spells out the relation between the devotee and the divine. He has given no form to the divine-*nirguna Brahman*. He enumerates the path to be of love. You cannot find anything divine without having the fount of love in your heart. He equally criticised the ritualistic tradition being followed in both the Muslim and Hindu ways. That the divine is not in the mandir or masjid. The divine is within. His answers to questions that he raises himself he says are answered by the Guru. His answers are always simple, humane and endearing. Kabir also refers to the middle entity or medium who will take the message across.

Hari bin reha na sakhe mora jeevan. Kiyo singaar Milan ki tayi kahe na aaye Ram gosain. Kabir too assumes the role of a maiden in love.

Ab ki ber milan jo paun kahe kabir laut chalan na aun. Hari mera peev hain..
I am the bride of Hari, he says.

Now the major part in *shṛṅgāra* is also the *viraha*. Torture of not finding your beloved or where there is loss of love, in separation. Where one does not know if the lover will return. And you are clear that you cannot exist without your beloved. ‘Please bring him to me or else I will not survive’, the *nāyikā* implores.

The pangs of separation are vividly described and told to the *sakhī*. **The *sakhī* is a very important part of the *viraha vedana* of the *nāyikā*. Her presence is vital.** And in seeing the *nāyikā* caught in the pangs of love she tries her best to find a relief for her. She is the one who goes to the *nāyaka* and tells him of the plight of the *nāyikā*. That she will not survive. She is the one to convey the sheer mad like behaviour of the *nāyikā*. It is the separation which reinforces the love, so to say. As it is said –the heart grows fonder in absence. In performance, we relive the intensity of this romance, the intensity of this relationship.

The central piece in Bharata Natyam is always the *varnam*. Invariably in most of the *varnams* there is the *sakhī* to whom the *nāyikā* is talking about the greatness of the beloved with whom she has fallen in love and who is not coming or absent. Who is not realising her love for him. In the *charanam*, are usually the lines about how Cupid or Kāmadeva is torturing the *nāyikā* with his arrows. How the sights of nature torment her. And these same sentiments are reflected even in contemporary *varnams*. For eg. in many of Lalgudi Jayaraman’s *varnams* we see this. In his Charukesi varnam the *nāyikā* is directly addressing Krishna. There are quite a few traditional pieces too where the *nāyikā* directly addresses the *nāyaka*. But by and large it is the *sakhī* who relates the *nāyikā*’s plight to the *nāyaka*. She plays go-between not only to the *nāyikā* but will come back to her and pacify her for the *nāyaka*’s sake too. We have her saying to the *nāyikā*: “These thoughts you have about him are not true”. In separation both the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka* are affected. The classic example we see in the Ramayana. Sita is abducted. Hanuman becomes the *dūta* as only he can accomplish the impossible task of crossing the ocean. When he gives Sita, the ring of Rama and sees her

plight what does he do? He sings the praise of Rama and conveys to her how Rama is thinking only of her and wondering when he will be with her. So the *viraha* of Rama is very beautifully portrayed to Sita.

In the ninth section of Surdas's work, it talks of Ramayana. There is a beautiful verse where Rama is telling Lakshmana how this entire *vana* or forest has stolen my Sita. Since there is no *sakhī* as such here Rama conveys to Lakshmana. *How the lotus has stolen her face etc. How the moon has stolen her looks.* The imagery is reversed. **One of the important aspects of *shṛṅgāra* is that you become desperate.** In that desperation one loses one's discrimination. And then one tends to blame. In this piece Rama blames the forest. Surdas very beautifully remarks –What has happened to the greatness of Rama. In his desperation, he has forgotten his own greatness. Surdas, the poet himself laments at Rama's plight.

It is the *sakhī* who enables one to bare out one's heart threadbare in the process of *viraha*.

Meera is a very clear example of a woman's heart in torture. And here the *sakhī* becomes an important person to whom the *viraha* is related. **Many pieces refer to the *sakhī* as sajjani.** In the opening out of the wounds of the heart the *nāyikā* is unabashed in disclosing her *tadap*. She is uninhibited. *Heri mein to prem diwani moro dard na jaane koi. Heri is the sakhī.* Meera is a fine example of one scaling the depths of *viraha* and *shṛṅgāra*.

In Kshetragna *padams* too we can see the depths of *viraha* being expressed . **In *payyada* the reference to *veladi* is *sakhī*.** He would see my face without blinking, the *nāyikā* says. In *aiyyayo vegatayane* she says my face has become repulsive to him. In *vadarakka pove* she says that was a *janma* when perhaps he was there with her...this is another. Maybe it is better he does not come at all.

In all these the *sakhī* plays a very important role. **Yet nobody gives any weight or thought to the *sakhī* when portraying her.** We at the most show her in one common *kai*. The reason being that in the *padam* there is the *sthayi bhāva*. The literature meanders but the dancer has to retain the *sthayi bhāva* in performance. The item or dance piece is woven around the basic sentiment. Due to this the *sakhī* gets relegated to the background. Yet interestingly the entire communication is to the *sakhī* and not to the audience.

In this context there is a beautiful piece when a male friend talks about his plight in Bhramara geet of Surdas. *Uddho mohe braj bisarat nahi*. I remember every fine detail of braj. So Uddho becomes like the *sakhī* here. For Krishna sent him to Braj to go and see for himself the plight of the *gopis* and to instruct them in seeking the supreme. But Uddho realises that for them the Supreme is Krishna.

Thus we see in literature that there is a lot of opening of the mind in love to somebody and that somebody is the *sakhī*. In Andal too the *viraha* is very vividly portrayed. There are lines that depict the intensity of *viraha* such as Radha telling the *sakhī* I am dying just wrap me around his pitambar. She wishes to experience the physical nearness by such means, in his physical absence. She even tells her parents- leave me in Vrindavan and you proceed. The *viraha* is like a bleeding wound, a state of no return and it is here that the *sakhī* is required to take further steps to assuage the situation.

Of course, in cases like the classic *padam*: *Unnai dhutanupinen* , the *nāyikā* accuses her of dallying with the *nāyaka*. But by and large, the *sakhī* has only one thought in her mind solely and that is how to be able to unite the two. The ways in which she effects this is through her clever speech where sometimes she has to convince the *nāyikā* to leave her pride and go to the *nāyaka*.

There is a piece of Vidyapati, where the entire experience of love is being told by Radha to the *sakhī*.

Sakhī ki puchasi anubhāva. Sehu piritha anuraga bakhaaniye, tila tila nutana hoye.

How can I put the experience of love in words? I am unable to. Every moment is new.

In Ramacharit manasa, there is a section where Rama and Sita see each other for the first time. Sita's beauty is described beautifully by the poet. In large part, the experience of love, closeness of relationships, the seeking of the divine, who is the divine – all these are verbalised and expressed through the *sakhī*. In the process of us being able to experience the myriad emotions of love, the *sakhī* plays a very important role. Help me find my heart, implores the *nāyikā*.

In Nammalvar there is the constant address to the *sakhī*. **So where there is *shṛṅgāra* there is the *sakhī*.**

II. Smt. Jamuna Krishnan, December 2016, Delhi.

Sakhī is a medium for us to bare our feelings. It is part of our Indian culture that we by nature are reserved and less communicative and with regards to a physical relation even more so.

Also the direct communication has not been a norm. There are inherent boundaries *maryada*, as to what can be spoken or revealed. The *sakhī* becomes a *conduit*. It allows us an opening, a channel for us through which we can open out our feelings.

Take the ashtapadi-*Sakhīye keshi madanudaaram. Prathama samaagama.*

She talks of the first experience of making love. The *sakhī* is so close that she is able to relate the most intimate moments in this experience. She cannot tell another.

Similarly Vidyapati's verse says-

Ki kahaba sakhī, raat ka baat.

Maanika pada lakumaanik ka haath.

Kaancha kanchane na jaane, gunjana ratana sab tarah samatula.

Here Radha is telling her *sakhī*, Krishna did't know how to treat her, she who is like a precious gem.

The *sakhī* as an entity allows us to share the intimate moments between a man and a woman.

In *madhura bhaktī*, *shṛṅgāra* becomes an elevated experience. In the spiritual path, the *sakhī* takes on the role of the Guru. Kabir has said-*sajade mujhe bataaye*. To the Guru, asking him to show him the path. So Guru is not a fixed entity. If the divine shows the path then the divine is the Guru. **The inner voice or mind can also be considered as the Guru.**

The mind is not a fixed thing it evolves. It learns to have *kshamata* or patience and so overcomes its animal instincts. There are so many relationships we experience in this world. It is in *shṛṅgāra* that we find the presence of the *sakhī*. In other relationships we may be able to express ourselves. In Navavidha *bhaktī* there are many paths shown to us to express our love and devotion to the Supreme. In *smaraṇa* for instance we don't need a *sakhī*.

We can find the experience of Brahman all round us if we can learn to find it. And so too within us. In *Bhaktī* literature, in Ramcharita manas for instance where is the need for *sakhī*?

One cannot call birds or *megha* as a *sakhī*. The *sakhī* is a *sakhī*. A *sakhī* is capable of directly conveying the message or deftly twisting words to make the *nāyaka* understand the plight of the *sakhī*. The human form is the highest. And only a human as the *sakhī* can bring about the union.

In the tamil *padam* 'teruvil varaano' for instance in the line *podu pogathilaye enaku oru dutusolvaailaye*. In this we show *dūta* as many elements of Nature- a bird, clouds, the moon

etc. But these cannot be called a *sakhī*. They serve the purpose of a *sakhī* but they cannot be called a *sakhī*. Is it possible for these *dūta* to really express the pangs of separation?

It is only the *sakhī* who can explicitly express the *nāyikā*'s state. The human form has a mind. And this is what makes her an ideal messenger. It is important here that she can tactfully convey. And it is here sometimes that the *nāyaka* sometimes falls for the *sakhī*. For her tactfulness and even for her devotion to the *nāyikā*. These are the lighter moments in our literature.

In the *charukesi varnam* of Lalgudi Jayaraman—*Innum en manam ariyadavar pole irundidal nyayama yadhava madhav*. Is it fair that you are still behaving as though you don't know my mind. Here the *nāyikā* confronts Krishna directly. She talks about her state in love. She even addresses him loftily as *kamalakanna*, *manivanna* just as a *sakhī* would do. In the *charanam* she says *kurai tirayo*- asking will you not alleviate my suffering?

In his *Neelambari varnam* – *Senthil meyum deva deva siva bala*, the *nāyikā* is directly talking to Karthikeya. **Here is a contemporary composer who does not bring in the *sakhī*!**

Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher, December 2016. Ganesha Natyalaya, Delhi.



There are different ways you can look at the *dūtikā* or *sakhī bhāva*. One is when the *sakhī* herself addresses the Lord, and tells him about the condition of her friend. So the protagonist is the *sakhī*. There are other compositions where the *nāyikā* is addressing the *sakhī*. In the former we have a varnam in raga Atana , a composition of the Tanjore quartet-

Karuna juda vemi chakkani swami.

Oh beautiful Lord, please look at her with compassion. She has become emaciated, she does not know what she is doing etc.

Here the *sakhī* is addressing the Lord. **I feel the concept of *sakhī* is more than a friend. She is an essential bridge between the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*.** Between the *jīvātman* and the *paramātman*. So the *sakhī* plays the role of the Guru. Of connecting the two : the *jīvātman* to the *paramātman*. The *Guru* is a realised being so he can help. The *sakhī* in Indian literature and dance has a spiritual connotation. So when we indicate the *sakhī* we should not indicate

as a girl standing there. **When one is addressing somebody like a *sakhī*, it is somebody who can help you to seek, who can help you to realise.**

Sakhī is like a ladder. ***Sakhī* is anything or anybody that can help you to seek.** Even in the *thodi varnam-daanike* , the *sakhī* is the protagonist. In telling about the state of the *nāyikā* somewhere she herself falls in love with the lord. In a sense love for the Supreme is universal. So whether the *sakhī* or *nāyikā* is in love can get blurred. It is literally the whole of humanity which is yearning. It often happens when doing a *varnam* with the protagonist as *sakhī* describing to the Lord the *avastha* of the *nāyikā*, one becomes so much one with the *avastha* itself and that can cause an overlap.

It is a very good interpretation of yours of looking at the *sakhī* as the mind and the *nāyikā* as the heart. Of looking as the *sakhī* as a higher being it is not explicitly expressed in literature but it should be interpreted as such as the *sakhī* is a being of a higher and more realised self.

There is a beautiful *javalī* in Surutti, by Tanjore quartet, where the *sakhī* is addressing Lord Brihadishwara.

Dani bodhana vina vintu ra.

Oh Lord, listen to the suffering of my friend.

Gaana lola shri Brihadishwara.

Oh Beautiful Shri Brihadishwara.

Here one can find a tinge of teasing by the *sakhī*. In the same composition she describes the *bodhana*. Here it is like quote –unquote. In fact she becomes the *nāyikā*. Also in the line:

nannu bhaaya nyayama. Atiniku preyama.

You spoke of so much love yet you ignore me now.

The word *nannu* means me. The *sakhī*!

So while the first line implies that the *sakhī* is referring to the *nāyikā*. The word *nannu* in the next implies that she assumes the role of the *nāyikā* right there!

Analysing the lines it appears the *sakhī* is treating the *nāyaka* as her equal. This establishes that she has a very open relationship with the Lord. In the last line:

nannelara Brihadiwara,

the *sakhī* returns to her teasing mode. It just implies she is so close to him. She is in love with him. Thus the line between the *sakhī* and *nāyikā* are often blurred.

Somebody or something being addressed who can help one to seek becomes a *sakhī*. In Divya Prabhandham, Nammalvar's composition the *sakhī* is a bird! The tamil varnam-

Anname ariginil vaay, andarum solven kelladi.

Anname means swan. Now here it is a twist. Is the *nāyikā* addressing the swan or is she addressing the *sakhī* who has the gait of a swan?

Most often we have seen compositions where the *sakhī* is addressing the Lord or the *nāyikā* is addressing the *sakhī*. In the composition,

punnai maranil, anda pokkiri kannanen paar

under the shade of the tree , look at that naughty Krishna

The *sakhī* is addressing the *nāyikā*.

Unnai mayaka kural uddhidaan thiridan.

The *sakhī* later advocates Krishna's case to the *nāyikā*. Thus we see the *sakhī* is there only to build bridges. Never will she create any rift.

A book can be a *sakhī* that the *jīvātman* reads to gain self-realisation. **So anybody who can lead one on the path of realisation can be called a *sakhī*.** She is better informed about both the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*.

The Guru we can say is the realised soul and one usually closer to the *nāyaka* than the *nāyikā*. So we can infer the *sakhī* is more in proximity to the *nāyaka* than the *nāyikā*. That is why the *nāyikā* is always in a pining state. The *sakhī* is never in a crying state etc. In dance, whenever the *nāyikā* is addressing the *sakhī* it is not necessarily that she is addressing a woman, girl etc. It can be anybody or anything that can help her build the bridge between her and her Lord.

We can even take it that the *sakhī* can be somebody within. Like a sixth sense where she is figuring out herself the ways and means to reach her lover. She is harnessing her own energies. She is in dialogue with herself to understand how to make the journey. How to reach the goal. So when she addresses the *sakhī* she can be actually addressing the strength within her. According to the literature one can accord a suitable position to the *sakhī*.

She is not given a name most often because it is not being specified who she ought to be.

That is the reason she can be anything or anybody who can become the bridge for the *nāyikā* to achieve her goal. She could be addressing the Universe. She could be addressing the Nature. So in order not to have any separate identity there is usually no name given to her.

***Sakhī* is a concept. *Sakhī* is a metaphor.**

As mentioned earlier, the boundary between the *nāyikā* and the *sakhī* is usually blurred. It is the oneness of the human spirit. **Depending on the *avastha* of the heroine the *sakhī* can be within or without. Sometimes you need outside support, a hand to hold on but later you may not need it.**

In *śṛṅgāra* the *sakhī* is a Guru. She teaches the *nāyikā* many a time the art of making love.

Smt. Madhavi Mudgal, Odissi dancer-teacher, Akhil Gandharva

Mahavidyalaya, December 2016, Delhi.



The *dūtī* or *sakhī* is the contact point between the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*; to take messages across, to bring them together. In fact in the Gita Govinda most songs are by the *sakhī*. Very few of Krishna or Radha. So the *sakhī* or *dūtī* is the main *ādhāram*. The *nāyikā*- *nāyaka* are characters symbolising *puruṣa-prakṛtī*, *ātman-paramātmān*. The *sakhī* plays a very important role. Often the *nāyaka* or *nāyikā* may not be there but the *sakhī* would be there describing the plight of one to the other. She would be enacting their situation. In the ashtapadi, *dhira sameere*, the *sakhī* is talking to Radha. In *lalita lavanga* ashtapadi, we find the use of *sahachari*. It means walking together literally. Throughout ashtapadi it is the *sakhī* who is the main character to me. Radha is listening to the *sakhī* in *lalita lavanga* when the *sakhī* describes the beautiful spring time with Krishna dallying with the Gopis. She is the main character interestingly who does not portray herself but brings out the character and plight of the other two.

***Sakhī* often comes across as a *madhyama*.** In *sanchārīs* she would be shown as more *chanchal* than Radha. She is the one who could be bribed. She is generally depicted as a

madhyama whereas she could be an *uttama* too. In some cases she also revels with Krishna. She is also a Gopi. And often the *nāyikā* may suspect whether the *sakhī* is delayed because she is dallying with Krishna. Krishna is for all.

The *sakhī* cannot be thought of as untrustworthy. When she is describing Krishna's beauty for instance, when she says –satisfy your eyes by looking at Krishna, then she is also partaking of that bliss that Krishna offers. So one can see many shades of the *sakhī* in the Gita Govinda.

The *sakhī* is in a way a teacher, a Guru. The one who takes you or shows the way to the Ultimate. **The *sakhī* is a more evolved person as she is the one to take Radha to Krishna.** If she was not evolved she would be jealous. Since it will be Radha who will meet Krishna she advises, cajoles her accordingly asking her to give up her pride etc.

The *sakhī* cannot be typecast. She can assume the character that you wish her to have depending on the *sancharis* you bring in. So how one may portray the *sakhī* depends on the context of the text and what interpretation to the role that the dancer wishes to convey.

In Guruji's composition *Pashyati dishi dishi* she tells Krishna how Radha is looking for you everywhere and in *dhira sameere* she tells Radha how Krishna is waiting for her.

Only a friend will be able to advise the *nāyikā* and not a *dūtī*. In '*Madhave maa kuru manini mamani*', she tells the *nāyikā*-give up this pride. So she plays the role of an advisor.

Though the *sakhī* plays such an important role she is generally not given the credit. The *sakhī* does not take on a definite persona as she plays many roles, multiple roles. She can scold the friend, show anger, *vatsalya* even. She assumes all kinds of roles. The *nāyikā* opens her heart to the *sakhī*.

While it is so that a *sakhī* generally does not have a name one must note that in Amarushataka there is no name of *nāyaka* or *nāyikā* even. They are as nameless as the *sakhī*.

In Oriya songs like *kohibaju laaja marushi sojjani*- I can't describe to you o my friend what happened. In another *pranasakhīnire kalamuki lajamuki*. I died of shame the other day because Krishna came dressed up as a girl. In these the friend is established through choreography. So though absent she is present.

It can be a possibility that *sakhī* is somebody within. Somebody you seek advise from within. The *dūtī* may not come in but the thoughts can be carried by *manas*.

Smt. Geeta Chandran, Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher. December 2016, Delhi.



The *sakhī* is a very integral part of any kind of exposition in Bharata Natyam. Many of the varnams are addressed to the *sakhī* particularly Guru Dandayudhpani varnams. She is the confidante who takes the message to the Lord. **The main encounter for any dancer with the *sakhī* first happens in the varnam.** In the purvi kalyani varnam –Swamiyai vara solladi

P: samiyai vara shalladi *sakhī*ye kumara bhumi pugazhum shivakami magizhum balan

A: tamadam sheyyalaghumo idu samayam kaman kanai toduttu kalanga sheigiranadi
(cittasvara sahitya)

suda sukham perave tedi avan arulai nadi kanitturukki padi anudinamum
padi alaindi manam vadi vadangudadi koti punyam tanadi ni podi

C: shalladi manam kallodi jalam sheivadenadi

1. mamati mukhattai kana vendumenru

2. kallattanamum kondu mella nadandu talladi talladi vallimel vizhundavarkku

3. vanna mamayileri ingu vara ennam ematramai inda mannum vinnum eno
shuzhaludadi kannum urangadu kattiruppen enru

4. oru nal en kanavinil vindanadi perum vinai tanadi karunai ulla

:arul puriyum enrat-travam urindiva oru payanum illaiyadi ilam paruva kalam

tirumbi varumodi manam urugi vahum nilaiyaru kodi idu tarunam ideru pazhani
malaiyil uraippanadi maruvidave iru karam tudaikkudadi

The address is to the *sakhī* throughout. The *sakhī* is a constant presence. So in *abhinaya* we need to explore the whole process of dialoguing with the person who is there always and building on it. So it is very interesting to do that. There is always a tendency to address the audience. Late Kalanidhi Mami would always say that the *sakhī* is not in the audience. She has to be placed and addressed. The *sthāyī* therefore has to be borne in mind particularly in the varnam. Many a times there is a tendency to elaborate certain lines. It is important to return to the fact that one is addressing the *sakhī*. Each line has to be treated so well as a link in the poetic language and it is here that the *sakhī* helps as a binding factor. She is a wonderful way that helps in knitting the poetry.

It is not possible to build the persona of the *sakhī* per se for eg in the above varnam as the protagonist is the *nāyikā*. However in the line of the charanam

C: *sholladi manam kallodi jalam sheivadenadi*

It shows the *sakhī* has attitude. She is being indifferent and trying to act difficult. One is building an intimate conversation and not the character of the *sakhī*. It shows the closeness of the *nāyikā* and the *sakhī* where she is able to easily tell her –is your heart made of stone?

The first *padam* that I learnt from Kalanidhi Mami was *Dari juchuchunadi*.

P: *dari jucucunnadi nIdu priya taralaksiyau chinnadi*

She is looking out for you, your beloved young maiden.

A: *varijamukhi nivi vaccu Velayanu koni korikato rajagopala sami ni*

Oh Rajagopala! That lotus faced maiden, thinking it is time for you to come, with desire.

CI: *vennala gayaga vedkamira manci sanna jaji virula sarulanu gandhamu panniti cembula
padakintilonunci vanneladi talavakita nilici ni*

As the moon shines , she has readied the bed chamber with jasmine flowers, rose water and sandalwood and waiting at the threshold.

C2: Evaga nainanu cappudaina nivoyani yenci tirigi tirigi juci

Ivaga cittamu niccalu nilipinatti bhāvam evarikaina bayalaina veravaka ni

Whenever there is a sound, she turns around and looks in the direction thinking it may be you without caring if somebody will come to know what is on her mind.

C3. pacci paciganu padamulu paducu vacci rajagopalaswami nivu

muccata laducu muddulu pettucu grucci kaugilinci kuduta dalaci ni

As she sings songs carefreely she hopes you will come, embrace her and kiss her.

This *padam* was a wonderful learning tool as Mami would say you have to bring out the three characters here Krishna, the *sakhī* and the young maiden. And in doing so one had to express the difference in age, experience in love etc clearly. Most often the *sakhīs* are older, more experienced in love as here in the above *padam* she tells Krishna that the young maiden is waiting for you.

In the Swati Thirunal *padam* , *Alar shara paritaapam* she address the *sakhī* with many adjectives: the one with long hair, the one with the voice of a cuckoo. So we cannot be sure if she is really as beautiful.

The *sakhī* is a person definitely who knows the ways of love, more experienced in love matters. She would also have to be good with words. One is not sure whether the *sakhī* is really beautiful or whether the *nāyikā* is all praise for her to get her work done.

There are only very few pieces where the deceit of the *sakhī* is depicted. It remains that the *sakhī* is the closest person and the only person with whom the *nāyikā* shares intimately.

In the Kamas varnam however : *Swami ni rammaanave sakhīyaro*, we find that there could be more than one *sakhī* as it says *sakhīyaro*. So it is interesting to depict many *sakhīs*. It can also mean then the *nāyikā* is more open about her love to share this with many *sakhīs*.

In the Swati Thirunal varnam in Karnataka Kapi, *Sumasaayaka*, she is again telling Lord Padmanabha about the *nāyikā*. She says how time has just stopped for her. So it is the poets' imagination and intensity of the piece that reflects on how the *sakhī* plays a role.

In *padams* one sees other kind of situations besides the fact of description of *nāyikā*'s plight. The *sakhī* here too is indispensable as there are only two ways in which the *nāyikā* conveys her plight either to the *sakhī* or to the *nāyaka*.

In the *ātman and paramātmā* : *nāyikā-nāyaka* context she is the vehicle. **One needs the *sakhī* or Guru to effect the process.** So it is through the *sakhī* that the process happens. Most of our compositions are placed in these two levels the mundane and the spiritual level. In the mundane level you need somebody to express to and so everything is routed through the *sakhī*. It can be that the *nāyikā* is sharing her inner feelings and the *sakhī* is just the outer expression of that.

In *Chudare*, we have the women gossiping about the *nāyikā*. We don't know if they are her *sakhīs*. They could be her competitors. So in this the *sakhī* is very human so to say. **Largely though the *sakhī* helps you realise what you are. What you feel.** She is not judging you. So she is like an alter-ego. She is mostly sympathetic for the *nāyikā*. Always a well-wisher. She is thus a very open person to whom the *nāyikā* can pour out her feelings.

If you wish to see the *sakhī* as mind and *nāyikā* as the heart one could look at it that way and it can be that way. Since it is a conflict of the real-unreal, the emotional-spiritual..so this constant dialogue, dichotomy can be an explorable interpretation.

There are so many compositions where the *sakhī* comes out as a person so close to the *nāyikā* for she is often a mute witness, sometimes she goads her asking who is the man, or she chides her. And all these can be interpreted as an inner conscience telling you which happens in a

human relationship. In a dramatic situation however the *sakhī* is an apt tool to foist these very emotions. Then the dialogue becomes very interesting to the viewer. It becomes an apt dramatic device for the poet, dramatist etc.

Dr. Anita Ratnam, Bharata Natyam dancer-writer, Curator. July 2016, Mumbai.



Sakhīs are very carefully hand-picked by the matriarch of the family. They are checked in many respects like health etc. The *sakhī* need not be of the same age, can be across generations.

The *sakhī* is also a very pertinent poetic device in which to imagine emotions. In Manimekhalai and Silappadikaram too there are the conversations with *sakhīs*. There is the confiding happening with a *sakhī*.

Even in the modern serial Downtown Abbey the heroine Mary, is confiding everything to the maid who is brushing her hair. The *sakhī* becomes the alter ego, the confidante, the reflection of inner feelings. **The *sakhī* is the conduit to hasten the union of *jīvātman* with the *paramātman*.**

In the union whether of *nāyaka* – *nāyikā* or even in Andal the *sakhī* is left behind. We don't know whether she has a life of her own as in family etc. She is always there only to serve the needs of somebody else.

She would have all the attributes that the heroine has. She is exposed to all that the heroine is exposed to. The heroine and the *sakhī* are mostly inseparable. Socially the *sakhī* would be from a lower social class. The arrangement would be such that it would benefit both.

The *sakhī* being exposed to such an environment picks up the finesse of the superior class in time. The *sakhī* can generally said to be street smart. She has to have the ability to argue with the heroine. She has to be a psychologist, advisor. She is a personality constantly invoked, constantly referred to but never celebrated enough. She has a shimmering outline and one does not know who she really is. What are her hopes, dreams, ambitions? Her entire life seems to be subsumed by what the heroine wants. Entire poetry base for dance rests on *viraha*.

In dance compositions, she could even be the person the heroine would like to be but does not have the courage to be or not allowed to be.

The *sakhī* has been a prominent figure in classical Sanskrit dramas. In *ekaharya* tradition one imagines the *sakhī* to be there. The *varnams*, *padams* belong to the eighteenth century. The *jīvātman paramātman* concept came about by the alwars in the seventh century where poets imagined themselves as a feminine *jīvātman*.

**Dr Anupama Kylash, Kuchipudi dancer-teacher-researcher. Hyderabad,
September 2016 (Telecon)**



In Kuchipudi and other traditions specially *kalapams* and more specifically the *Bhama kalapams*, interestingly there is the character Madhavi, the *sakhī* of Satyabhama. When she takes the message of Krishna to Satyabhama she becomes Madhava.

From this, beautiful example one can infer that the *sakhī* or *sakhā* takes on the mood of the particular character or moulds itself depending on the situation in which it is placed or becomes the alter ego of the particular character. So this dual character is such that when Krishna calls him he is Madhava and the same person when Satyabhama calls her is Madhavi. Thus the *sakha* or *sakhī* takes on the mood of the particular character required at the time. The *sakhī* or *sakha* is a very visible character in the theatrical tradition.

In *bhakti* literature, under the *saranagati* concept I feel that the *sakhī* is the poet himself. It is the poet who wishes to convey a message to the Lord and so he assumes the role of a messenger. For example, in Jayadeva's *Geeta Govinda* when the *sakhī* is telling Krishna about Radha's condition it is the poet wishing to express himself. His deep agony. So the *sakhī* becomes an apt medium or tool to convey these emotions.

Generally the poets seem to find more beauty or facility of being able to express the agonies of separation through *vipralambha shṛṅgāra*. In *Vipralambha shṛṅgāra*, the *nāyikā* and *nāyaka* are separated. So since they cannot speak face to face, there has to be medium to bring them together, to communicate their feelings to each other. They need a medium until the time of union. So the poet himself becomes the *sakhī* to effect this union in his mind, in his poetic vision. *Tyaktam vibhaktī*.

In many Anamacharya or Purandaradasa or other *bhaktī* compositions we often find the poets addressing the mind. So it is possible that we can then look at compositions under the *Manasabodha* category to substantiate that the mind can be looked upon as the *sakhī*.

The *sakhī* does become non-existent when the union happens. In *Bhaktī* literature I feel the poet is both the *sakhī* and the *nāyikā*. The *nāyikā* who experiences the pangs of separation and the *sakhī* who is the facilitator for the union. The *nāyaka* is above the domain of his experience or somebody he cannot identify with, which he is yearning for. In the composition where *prana sakhī*, is mentioned the poet wishes to convey to the *sakhī* about who he wishes to unite with. *Sakhī* is facilitating the union and the *sakhī* is also the one who wants to unite. The protagonist is the *nāyikā*. Both women can thus be the poet.

Rama rama Raga: Bhariavi/Ahiri Tala:Adi

P: rama rama prana sakhī nedabasi detuvale taleno mundu

Tamara saksi talncite nagunde talladambande nimandu nayyayyo

Blessed be Rama, having been separated from his beloved wife, how could he endure?

Thinking of the lotus eyed one, my heart gets worried with grief.

What am I to say alas (blessed be..)

C1: kaliki cilukala paluku lilaguna nataniki karna sulambulaiyunda ledō

Nelarayatani palitiki nilaguna kuppaiyayyunda ledō

Teliyakanu ratiri pagalu nitirunanu digulu madilo daya nemo

Celiya nedabasi nappitinundi na manasu cindara vandarai yunnadayyayyo

Were not the calls of parrots, in his time, as they are now

Piercing his ears like lances?

Did not the moon , thenlike now,

Burn him like a scorching fire?

Not knowing day and night passing like this,

Did he not have to pine away in his heart?

Ever since I have been separated from my beloved

My mind is in absolute disarray (blessed be..)

2. marudu pagavadagucu nilagu nadalla manujesu nalayincadaya nemo

kerali ya gandukuyila nadamilagu khedamai yatani badhinca led

viriviga natani kahara nidradulanu virasambugaka nimpaya nemo

viriboni natani kahara nidradulanu virasambugaka nimpaya nemo

viriboni nedabasinadi modalu nenitlu vadaviltu palaiti nayyayyo

Would Cupid like a sworn enemy

not teased the prince like this?

Would the call of the cuckoo not

Have caused him anguish and distress?

Would food and sleep, by far, have not been

Insipid to him but welcome?

Ever since I have been separated from my fair one

I am subjected to the onslaught of Cupid!! (blessed be..)

3.Vemaru navalenu tanasatiki natadunu vedaganu nammikala niyyaledo

Kaminimani vadda lenappudatiniki kanugavala niritu gramma led

Tamasampu premace natdu navalegaka dhairyambu deccukoni yunde nemo

Kaminci nanu muvvagopala rammanucu kalasina celikanula gappe nayyayyo

Would he too have on demand from her,

Not made promises many a time?

When his gem of a woman was away

Were not his eyes filled with tears?

With a vicious typer of love would he have

Put up with courage and will?

My friend who beckoned me with passion, calling me Muvvagopala

Has hood winked me alas, what am I to do? (blessed be..)

Nature messengers are also a beautiful aspect. A Purandaradasa composition about parrot in a cage is a metaphor of soul. Prabhanda lakshana compositions are all conveyed through nature imagery. Each nature element represents a certain quality or stands for something. This the poet uses to highlight his emotive expression. For eg. The Cloud keeps changing form, shape. Not reliable. Quick silver change. So it stands for fleeting emotions.

**Internationally renowned scholar Prof. Ravi Gomatam- Director-
Bhaktivedanta Institute, March 2017, Mumbai.**



In the Gaudiya Vaishnavism tradition there are five types of relationships identified with Krishna the Supreme soul. Every relation of Krishna with every soul is unique. It is just like you have unlimited varieties of say preparing a sabzi. Though the recipe may be the same the flavor of each is unique. These five are

1. Shanta bhāva.
For eg. The grass for instance is a fully realised soul. It offers its service when one walks over it. It is in shanta.
2. Dāsya bhāva
When Gopis offer various services to Krishna. Like waving the chamara etc.
3. Sakhya bhāva
When Gopis may play with Krishna, follow him grazing the cows etc.
4. Vātsalya bhāva.
Looking upon Krishna as a child.
5. Madhura bhāva
When the Gopi looks upon Krishna in *shṛṅgāra*. They are the highest. It is supposed to include all other *bhāvas*.

Just as a wife can be a friend, mother and a wife. She can act in different *bhāvas* but others cannot act similarly. So the madhura *bhāva* is most inclusive.

The Gopi *bhāva* is also called *sarva bhāvam* as it includes all other *bhāvas*.

Those who are seeking to merge with Brahman do not have *adhikāra* to the *bhāvas* as the *bhāvas* are beyond the attainment of *moksha*.

In *advaita* understanding the thought is that the Supreme is impersonal so how can the devotee have the *adhikāra* or possibility of enjoying or relishing these *bhāvas*.

So these *bhāvas* are expressed then in worldly relationships which is very different from the divine relationship. And expressing or reliving the *bhāvas* in the world takes one away from the real divine experience. The *sakhī bhāva* is different from *sakhya bhāva*.

The beginning stage of *bhāva* is our imagination and our conception of who we are. Therefore to understand the *sakhī* or *sakhyam bhāva* one has to transcend its human expression.

Radha Krishna are the original Godhead. We are our own imagination. This is the beginning stage of *bhāva*. Thus one has to first transcend any material understanding of this *bhāva* to really understand it.

When it is said that the *sakhī* is like a Guru it is in terms of advising or introducing the *nāyikā* to the *nāyaka* and vice versa. A Guru introduces a disciple to Krishna . He is an evolved soul who reveals his *swaroopa* to the disciple. In the *nāyaka-nāyikā-sakhī* relationship there is a *chhaya* of this similarity but they don't have to worship the *sakhī*. The *sakhī bhāva* is of

service to the Lord. The Guru *bhāva* is also of service to the Lord. But the disciple is supposed to worship the Guru. The *sakhī* is however not worshipped by Radha-Krishna. Everybody is a servant of Krishna. In the eternal pastimes of Krishna and Radha they would have expanded to unlimited forms and these are the *sakhīs* and *sakhās*. The *sakhīs* are there eternally to facilitate Radha and Krishna's pastimes. They therefore intuitively understand the mood of Radha and Krishna and fan their love. **They are pure devotees, highly liberated souls.** When Radha is angry they will go and tell Krishna don't go near her. Who can tell so to the Lord? They are liberated souls and so they can. These create extremely beautiful pastimes. Gita Govinda was written to describe such pastimes. There are trillions of Gopis facilitating the eternal pastimes of Radha-Krishna.

In olden times the Princess would be married off and all her *sakhīs* would follow. They all became amours of the Prince. Their work was to play up the love of the couple. But in the realm of Radha- Krishna the *sakhīs* don't have a tinge of desire for Krishna as such. They are pure. Their only aim is to intensify the love of Radha and Krishna.

Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that unless you fully surrender can you attain me. Thus unless one can fully surrender one cannot be in the proximity of Krishna. Different souls have a natural inclination to like Krishna as a baby, as a lover and so on.

There are many who only want to facilitate the pastimes of Radha-Krishna. The Radha Krishna relationship is the pinnacle of *shṛṅgāra* tattva. It is so pure that it is open to anybody. So the *sakhīs* and *sakhās* are part of it.

When the *jnānīs* attain Brahman they can fall down as they do not have a stability. This is not the case with *bhaktas*. Bhaktas have learnt to be with Krishna . They have *bhāva*. Hence they

cannot fall down. So the material world is like a prison. The *jnānīs* may scale the wall of the prison but since they do not have *bhāva* they can fall back into the material world. Whereas the *bhaktas* in the world have *bhāva* so they connect with Krishna and can also live in the world. *Moksha* is a negative concept in that sense. It is about getting out of *samsāra*, the prison. But *bhaktī* is a positive concept of being with Radha and Krishna in the spiritual world. So if one gives up the idea of *moksha*, *bhaktī* and so liberation is possible. Beyond *moksha* begins *shanta bhāva* the first stage of *bhaktī*. In *advaita*, *moksha* requires you to quieten the mind completely.

If we take Oothukadu who wrote *Alai payude*, the celebrated composition one can surmise that Oothukadu was a liberated soul in writing in *madhura bhaktī* which is way beyond *moksha* where he is asking Krishna to come to him. And he is filled with an ecstasy.

Radharani is the *Ādi Gopī* and the *ashta sakhīs* are the first eight *sakhīs*. In the spiritual world it is said that each group of *sakhīs* is four billion. There are a variety of *sakhīs*. Some *sakhīs* are passive. Some in quarrelling mood and so on. Their only aim is for Krishna and Radha to be happy.

Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that without being liberated you cannot enter *bhaktī*.

Shṛṅgāra bhāva is *madhurya bhāva*.

Radha is worshipped by everybody including Krishna. In Jayadeva's *ashtapadi* he puts his head on her lap.

Smt. Geetha Upadhyay, UK resident- senior Bharata Natyam Guru.

Founder-Kala Sangam Academy. Trained under renowned Gurus Shri K.

N. Dandayudhapani Pillai and Smt. Gowri Ammal. March 2017, (Telecon)



The *sakhī* is a confidante basically. Nearly twenty five texts mention the *sakhī* including the Natya Sastra enumerating about what the *sakhī* does etc. Mostly she has been conveying a message or supporting the *nāyikā* when she is in a forlorn state. Sometimes she also teases the *nāyikā* so I don't think she attains the state of a Guru.

According to the shloka, 'Gurur Brahma, Gurur Vishnu... The Guru is somebody who instills goodness in the student in a sense of creation, as Vishnu- he protects as in retaining the knowledge for the student , plays the role of mother or father as necessary and as Shiva the Guru destroys the evil in the student. Evil thoughts etc. Thus the Guru Purnima day symbolizes the worship of the Guru for the three roles that he plays in their life. I don't think the *sakhī* has always played such a role. In compositions or instances when she is teasing the *nāyikā* or playing pranks with the *nāyaka* we cannot refer to her as the Guru. So we must analyse each piece in its own value.

In the Gita Govinda she maybe considered to be the link between the *ātman* and *paramātmān*. The gopis are all considered to be *sakhīs* and there are many types of Gopis.

The gopis also tease Radha and they also vie for the love of Krishna. So one cannot take them to be Gurus in such cases.

The *sakhī* is like a Guru when she plays the role of an advisor. The mother can also be a *sakhī*. As in ‘Yethanai sonnalum’. So a *sakhī* need not always be a young girl, a friend of the *nāyikā* etc.

A bird can be a *sakhī* too. As seen in ‘Anname Aruginil vaa’. In Nala Damayanti the swan is a *sakhī*. So I would like to define a *sakhī* as that person or being who is with the *nāyikā* advising her, supports her with her when she is going through pain of separation. In a teasing role we cannot define the *sakhī* as a Guru. A Guru is beyond such states. Almost to the status of a parent. A Guru is somebody whom one is connected throughout life.

The many Gopis also vie for Krishna. The *sakhī* plays many roles and one of them is to unite the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā*.

The *sakhī* is not a more evolved person. If she is evolved, she will not be a teasing person. She is closest to the *nāyikā*. The *sakhī* should not talk about the *nāyikā* to others. In the padam’ Aduvum solluval, the *nāyikā* is telling her *sakhī* about the second woman. *Sakhīs* will never do that. There is a song in Bruj bhasha. Mohe choho nahin. When Krishna comes to Radha she says this to Krishna as the *sakhī* has had a dalliance with Krishna. Hence looking at such compositions we cannot generalize that she is the Guru.

Sakhīs can be said to be Gurus when they link the two. The *sakhī* is a superior entity as compared to the *nāyikā*. She has to be. There are *sakhīs* also that may not link the two but appease the pain of the *nāyikā*. For eg. Sita and Tirijata, Vibhishana’s daughter. Sita was able to survive the pains of separation due to Tirijata. **The *sakhī* here-Tirijata enabled Sita, the *nāyikā* to be in constant mental contact with the *nāyaka*, Rama.** It is Tirijata who handed over

Sita to Rama saying she is now under your care. *So Tirijata becomes an apt example of the Āgantuh - stranger type of sakhī and an uttama.* Though she belonged to the opposite camp she was helping Sita. She was the only *sakhī* for Sita in the Ashoka vatika. She constantly advises Ravana also to give up his desire for Sita. In that sense she becomes a true Guru.

Sakhī is a confidante who will not betray you, who is not in competition with you. They are there for you whenever you need them, night or day. Somebody you can trust your life with. Then they can take the letter to the *nāyaka*, they will not play pranks with Krishna etc. The priest in a temple is our *sakhā*. For he is the link uniting us with the *paramātmā*. **Draupadi is also a fine example as Krishna calls her *sakhī*. The trust factor becomes a key identifier of who can play the role of a *sakhī*.** Draupadi completely relied on Krishna as her friend, protector, advisor etc.

Another type of *sakhī* can be like Shabari who was waiting for Rama. Though she is a bhakta- **all bhaktas are ultimately friends of God.** All the Gopis were bhaktas. **When the *sakhī* becomes an evolved person she attains the status of the Guru.** Thus not every *sakhī* could be a Guru.

In the above cited example of Mohe Choocho nahin, the *sakhī* has betrayed the *nāyikā*. How can then she become a Guru?

In the varnam, ‘Sakhīye inda jaalam’, the *sakhī* seems to be all the time playing pranks. She is a mute listener though. In this one can say that she is trying to elicit the beauty of the *nāyaka* from the *nāyikā*’s lips. She is thereby judging the feelings as to how deeply she is in love with the *nāyaka*. Regarding her character-sketch, there will always be a mixed picture of her character. Thus in the above mentioned varnam, ‘Sakhīye inda jaalam’ one can see that in

the beginning she is the teasing type, then she becomes the listener then she becomes her supporter or advisor.

In the padam, in Valachi, the *nāyikā* confides to the *sakhī* that she has become a laughing stock. So here the *sakhī* is merely somebody who the *nāyikā* leans on. There is no advise etc.

So a good *sakhī* is a good psychologist who listens deeply.

One personally goes through a wide emotional graph in a single day. In some lines where the *nāyikā* says *modi cheyalamo*, it can imply the *sakhī* is angry. With Draupadi and Krishna, there is no male female identity. As Draupadi treats him a equal. She seeks his help in every difficult situation not because he is a God but because she has faith in him.

There can also be evil *sakhīs*. For instance Manthara and Kaikeyi.

The link between *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* need not necessarily be a Guru.

In most Bharata Natyam compositions the *sakhī* is an imaginary person. So it can fit that the *sakhī* is like the mind and the *nāyikā* the heart and the composition is actually like a soliloquy.

The *sakhī* is a thought link between the *nāyaka* and *nāyikā* i.e. whatever the *nāyikā* is thinking is conveyed to the *nāyaka* through the *sakhī*. In Nala Damayanti the swan by its mere presence is thought link. The *nāyaka* when he sees the swan believes that his *nāyikā* has sent him some message. **So just seeing the person as in a *sakhī* reminds you of the other person.**
So it is a mind to mind link.

The *sakhī* by mere watching the *nāyikā* in distress can get affected and go to the *nāyaka* to tell him. Or she may watch the *nāyika* and ascertain that he is in love with the *nāyaka*. In a

way yes, one can place the mind to be the *sakhī*. The *sakhī*'s mind is interpreting the emotions of the *nāyikā* directly or indirectly.

In certain compositions like the above cited varnam- *sakhīye*, since the later line says Swamiyai vara solladi it presumes the presence of the *sakhī* in which case we cannot look at it as a heart mind connection.

In compositions like lai payude kanna of Oothukadu Venkatasubbaiyer, the *nāyikā* is directly expressing her deepest emotions to the *nāyaka*. So there are many such compositions too.

For eg. In Mal Maruga. The Pallavi has

Mal Maruga ! Sharavanabava ! Shanmuka ! Sukumara ! Swami !

My guha ! Umas Son !

Anupallavi goes like this,

In your beautiful face Manohara Muruga

I live each minute in your memory

Mukthai swaram:

My mind was besotted with you Gurupara in your beauty

Appear before me everyday and remove my pangs of longing

Charanam:

One who carries the Vel Kumara ! Protector of all ! come soon to bless me !

In the padam, Swami..

Swami why are you silent with me

I your Kamini – have I committed any wrong

One who is praised by the queen of the earth and Shri

I will garland you with words – won't you show compassion

One who is on the sheerabdhī one who has lotus feet – and lotus eyes

With sweet lips – one with magical protecting hands

Daily I praise you as benevolent, show mercy

Don't waste time – pl come soon

Then in

Intha thamatham

Is this delay good ?

The light of the heritage, are you in debate with me

Free me from the bonds of the past and future and

Make me yours

You measured the world

Fought wars

Protected people by carrying a mountain

Gave sanctuary to many

Gave draupadi her protection

Are u with me today

Just a glance to me is enough for me ..

Malirunj cholai

Oh the handsome one

I have fallen in love with you

You were sleeping on a leaf

You are the joy for all

If one sees your lotus feet all pain goes

Hold your hands all curses go

Your lots eyes give blessings

With joy I sing to seek you

I want to become one with you

In all these we find the *nāyikā* directly communicating to the *nāyaka* whether he may be present before her or whether she imagines his presence and relates to him, her woes. So here most likely the *nāyikā* is very mature. So then the *sakhī* is not needed. She is able to handle her emotions.

Dr. Padmaja Suresh, Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher-researcher.

Doctorate on Natya Tantra. June 2017, Bangalore.



According to my understanding the *sakhī* performs the role of an *āchārya*. Of a tutor or teacher who simplifies the journey to reach the *nāyaka*. As seen in most of the Bharata Natyam items like for instance the varnams, the role of the *sakhī* is a bridge between the *nāyikā* and the *nāyaka*. I would see her as an important medium for the *nāyikā* to achieve her goal. **The *nāyikā* has no other means to reach her *nāyaka* except the *sakhī*.**

She thus completely and implicitly trusts her and hence she is able to pour out her innermost feelings to her, of nostalgia even. Many scholars who have commented specially on the Gita Govinda analyse her role as that of an *āchārya* and I would like to go with that. They have even elevated her to the status of the Guru. We know that the Guru is indispensable in the margam of the *jīvātman* to unite with the *paramātmān*. In the *bhaktī* and *jñāna marga* we find many saint poets, saints who have always had Guru darshana through which they are able to realize the higher goal. In most varnams of the quartet or compositions like that of Papanasam Sivan etc the underlying premise is the composer takes on the role of the *nāyikā*. All these composers were great devotees. Their objective was only expressing their deep love

for the lord. There is no male- female identification as such. The composer is the *jīvātman* reaching for the *paramātman*. The mortal trying to reach the supreme and the only path the *jīvātman* has is to follow the path of the Guru. The *sakhī* gives the right advise. The *nāyikā* surrenders herself literally to the *sakhī*. She is in distress and not able to bear the separation and her only means is to pour her heart all out to the *sakhī*. Even in the Gita Govinda when you posit the thought that Radha pours out her all to the *sakhī*, it is the *āchārya* she is seeking to take her to the Supreme. So in the eternal quest of Prakriti wanting to unite with the Adi purusha there is the metaphysical role and meaning for the *sakhī*. It is the role of the preceptor, a person who can hold your hand and say follow this direction.

In the Natya Sastra many a time Bharata gives us clues rather than a detailed explanation. For eg. He speaks of nirveda, despondency or disillusionment right after *sthāyī bhāvas* and just before *sanchārī bhāvas*. So why should *nirveda* be positioned there one may like to ask. So similarly he has only referred to the *sakhī* as one of the *dūtīs*. Over the years looking at the way the *sakhī* has been treated it is up to us to analyse this deeply. We often just show her and do not think much about it. And it is worthwhile to understand her deeper significance. There could be many interpretations but I would like to stick to her role as Guru, acharya etc.

A sakhī is definitely an evolved person. Else how can you tell her what the lover did to her etc. confiding bare details. I have also often wondered why in so many varnams you have the *sakhī*. And mostly the *sakhī* never replies so the conversation is usually one-sided. Except in the Gita Govinda you find the *sakhī* speaks out to Radha or rather replies to her.

A *sakhī* can never be an *adhama*. She has to be an *uttama*. As the lines of varnam usually go, at first you request the *sakhī* to go and fetch the Lord. Then you enumerate the qualities of the lord. So you are talking to somebody who is aware of the Lord's qualities and perhaps the *sakhī* is equally a devotee of the lord. The composers had high spiritual and philosophical

knowledge. There has to be somebody to give the *vidyā* or knowledge to reach the higher goal as per our *shāstrās*. So am looking at the *sakhī* as a Guru. In *viraha* as seen on most varnams it is the Guru or *sakhī* who helps one continue through the despondency towards the ultimate goal.

The *sakhī* does not have a name or identity. ***This means that she can be the composer, the dancer in you or even the spectator.*** The end objective is *rasa*. The *bhāvas* can be directed to the spectators thus causing their involvement and getting them to reach the higher state. The dramatic element also goes up with the presence of the *sakhī*. So the composers would definitely have thought of this vital tool with whom to paint the *bhāvas*, *anubhāvas*, *vibhāvas* to create the imagery and stage for the *rasa* to blossom. It is interesting to analyse the role of the *sakhī* i) aesthetically ii) philosophically iii) its present status.

It is interesting to note that in compositions like Eppadi manam by Sita to Rama and in Indendu vachithivira, with the kandita *nāyikā* there is no *sakhī*. Here the *nāyikā* is in direct contact with the *nāyaka* or the *nāyaka* is present or she is secure in the *nāyaka*'s attention. It is in Proshita Bhartruka or virahotakandita or even a kandita sometimes that the presence of the *sakhī* becomes necessary.

To a Guru the shishya is equal. He never feels him away from him. So a *sakhī* being defined as somebody equal would fit in that sense. The Guru always tells the shishya to remove the idea of difference. You and me are the same.

The *sakhī* is evolved because the *nāyikā* believes that that person can lead me to the *nāyaka*. One is already assuming that the *sakhī* is in a better position to do your job. It could be also the person knows the *nāyaka* also very well and so becomes an apt tool to do the job. Sometimes the *nāyikā* is bashful and cannot express her feelings directly to the *nāyaka* so thus the *sakhī* makes it possible for her to convey her feelings to the *nāyaka*.

Mind is difficult to define. So I would rather compare the *nāyikā-sakhī* to the right heart and left heart. According to Shri Ramana Maharishi the right heart is the Guru's heart. **It gives you perfect knowledge and the left heart is your biological heart. So maybe the *sakhī nāyikā* pair if compared as cited could be a conversation between the two hearts!**

I feel that the *sakhī-nāyikā* can be posited more as the ida-pingala on either side of the sushumna as one side gets carried away by emotions the other by thought perceptions. Each must guide the other and balance well. And if you position the lord in between one can say the right and left try to get united with the *nāyaka* in between, one being the *sakhī* and the other being the *nāyikā*.

**Smt. Vyjayanti Kashi, Senior Kuchipudi dancer-teacher. June 2017,
Bangalore.**



The *sakhī* is a very interesting topic you have chosen and a subject that needs to be delved into. In Kuchipudi, the *sakhī* is also known as Madhavi.

Kuchipudi has two very important *kalāpams* : one is the Bhama Kalapan and the other is the Gola Kalapam.

The Bhama kalapam that began around the 1830's has survived till today. In Bhama Kalapam there are usually the three characters. Krishna-the *nāyaka* , Satyabhama-the *nāyikā* and Madhavi-the *sakhī*. What does she do? Without her, the story does not move. The story used to carry on for three nights. The first night Satyabhama extols herself. In the second night she is in *viraha* as she is separated from Krishna. Madhavi enters this point where Satyabhama wants to pour out her most personal feelings. Madhavi comes across as light-hearted and often witty. She becomes the connecting point between the *nāyikā* and the spectator.

Everybody needs a *sakhī* through their lives. When young, mother becomes most often the *sakhī*. Later we need somebody to confide our innermost feelings to and most often that person is there for our lifetime.

There is conversation which goes thus between Satyabhama and *sakhī*:

Satyabhama: Did you see somebody holding the conch?

Sakhī: Who-the jangamma?

Satyabhama: The one who holds the chakra.

Sakhī: Oh! You mean the potter.

Satyabhama: The one who wears the kundala?

Sakhī: Oh! You mean the Brahmin.

Satyabhama: No no, The one who wears the peacock feather.

Sakhī: Oh! The chanchu tribe.

Thus in this *vāchikā* there is an element of *hāsya* through the *sakhī*. Also Krishna is not directly referred to. As those days women could not take the name of the man.

In another *dharavu*, the *sakhī* asks Satyabhama that you speak so highly of your man then why did he leave you. The incident goes that Krishna bought a mirror and asked Satyabhama who is the better looking of the two. And Satyabhama who was so beautiful immediately answers that she was obviously the more beautiful. It is then Krishna goes away. The *sakhī* asks of Satyabhama – how could you do that to him? So the *sakhī* educates the spectator not to have ego. So the *sakhī* makes fun of her at times and at times she advises her. In one sense, she is the Guru. The *sakhī* thus is advising not only the *nāyikā*, here Satyabhama but also the audience. After listening to the *sakhī*, Satyabhama starts introspecting.

It is also said that Madhavi is the other half of Krishna. Such good messages are conveyed through Madhavi. **It is believed that the Supreme uses some form to convey good messages.**

The *sakhī* further in the incident cited above suggests to Satyabhama to write a letter to Krishna. So she writes the letter and then requests Madhavi to take it. But Madhavi asks for a tip. Satyabhama tells her you can take all my jewellery which she loved the most. But the *sakhī* asks her for the *nattu*. The *nattu* like the *mangalsutra* was considered the most auspicious aspect of a married woman. But the *sakhī* insists that she wants that if she is to bring Krishna for her. It implies here giving up attachment. The whole concept of the Bhama Kalapam is about the *jivātman* and *paramātman*. And it is said, to become one with God you need the Guru. In Yakshaganas and kalapams the *sakhī* rose to the level of the Guru. There are four types of Gurus.

1. Who tests you. 2. The Guru who insists that this must be done. 3. The Guru who tells you to do so many things as sadhana. 4. The Sadguru- who guides you.

Madhavi seems to fit in very much as the Guru. Satyabhama is even able to tell her how her first night with Krishna was.

Sometimes the *sakhī* speaks of high philosophy. **The *sakhī* especially in the Bhama Kalapam helps the *nāyikā* rise to a higher level.**

The Gola Kalapam is about the milkmaid and the Brahmin. The Brahmin looks about down upon the milkmaid as an untouchable. And the milkmaid questions the Brahmin that you are using the very same milk for the *yagñā* that I have milked with my hands.

The gola or milkmaid through the Kalapam educates the Brahmin. She asks him am I not born the same way as you are. She relates also the process of the growth of a baby through the nine months and questions the Brahmin if he did not go through the same. You chant so many mantras, perform so many *yagñās* but don't you know that God is the same in all.

In Bharata Natyam solo format the sakhī becomes the tool, an imaginary character to convey to the audience the deep felt emotions of the nāyikā etc. In the Yakshagana – Usha parinayam, one of the most popular Yakshaganams in Kuchipudi; Usha dreams of Aniruddha and as soon as she gets up, she shares this with her *sakhī*. Such deep feelings one is able to convey to mother or father generally. The *sakhī* is thus a very important character often seen in most varnams, padams etc and forgotten at the end.

Recently in the ashtapadi I performed , the 21st ashtapadi, the *sakhī* unites Radha and Krishna. By this time both Radha and Krishna have dropped their egos and matured physically, mentally and spiritually. In the solo format the *sakhī* is possibly an imaginary character while in the kalaapams she is brought to life. **She is not there only to further the theme but from time to time educate the audience.** She connects the artist and the spectator and in doing so plays various roles herself. She is almost like the *sutradhāra* too in the dance drama tradition.

Sakhī , I think ultimately exists to pass on the message of dharma.

The *sakhī* is sometimes harsh with the *nāyikā* and in *viraha* she is consoling her. **With a sakhī it allows for taking certain liberties than with a Guru who may inspire awe. This relationship helps brings out the subtleties of the abhinaya. In this friendliness, the rasa is created.**

The *sakhī* helps the artist connect with the audience. The internalization of the *nāyikā*'s emotions is *sāttvika bhāva*. A common man may not understand the *sāttvika bhāva* of the *nāyikā*. **So the sakhī helps in relaying the sāttvika bhāva of the nāyikā to the audience.**

The composers have very beautifully used the tool of the sakhī as a process of evolving of both the nāyikā and the audience. Once the evolution happens there is no sakhī. The

sakhī's purpose is to give the most important messages. Once it is conveyed, her work is done. The sakhī in a larger sense tries to take the audience to *uttama*.

The very fact that Siddhendra Yogi has referred to Madhavi for the *sakhī* has a deeper meaning as they were highly learned Brahmins.

Dr. Vasanth Kiran, Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi dancer-teacher-researcher-Arts Administrator. Head –Department of Performing Arts, Alliance University. June 2017, Bangalore.



The best approach to such a topic according to me would be through compositions since texts can be confusing specially the compositions that you are trying to prove through time. Being an artiste from two different traditions one Kuchipudi that is *nāṭya* based and Bharata Natyam that is repertoire based. In the *nāṭya* tradition the character of the *sakhī* is well-defined whereas in Bharata Natyam her presence is hinted. Broadly *sakhī* is described as friend. In most compositions she is assumed to be below the *nāyikā*. So like the Queen may have many friends but one would probably be the best friend with whom she can share intimately. **The moment the sharing aspect comes in it means she is somebody whom the nāyikā trusts and this makes her in a sense equal to the nāyikā. Unless one considers the sakhī as equal one cannot take her advise.** In many concepts she is then above the *nāyikā*. The Skanda Purana mentions *aṣṭa sakhīs* like *aṣṭa nāyikās*. You have *aṣṭa nāyikās* in different situations. **The concept of nāyikā becomes clearer with the presence of the sakhī. So she has a very important role.**

In the *jīvātman-paramātman* concept the *sakhī* can be taken to be the Guru. Guru is the reason for the *jīvātman* to combine with the *paramātman*. In today's context we can simply put it as you have a message to be given to somebody and there is the other to understand this message. The medium of conveying or conveyance of this message is the *sakhī*.

Unknowingly the *sakhī* has played a fantastic role. She is an ideal mediator. In varnams after the *nāyikā* has poured out her woes the *sakhī* may have found a solution towards the need and then as the need is fulfilled she disappears. Often it does happen that the *sakhī* has had a dalliance with the *nāyaka*. The *sakhī* has often played the role of messenger. The parrot has often been used in this role. Should *sakhī* be a human necessarily? A dog has often been a good reason for couple to stay together.

Is *sakhī* then an imaginary illusion of her inner self? There can be another person within her who does not have an image of self but it is someone you can converse with. There are women who do not believe in sharing with another. What they do is to talk to themselves. Sometimes that other self argues with the person. Which means that it is another side or another person and that is the *sakhī*.

The abhisarika *nāyikā* decides to go by herself . Mind does what logic says. Heart does what emotion says. *Sakhī* is a person who has most of the time helped the *nāyikā*. The *virahotakandita nāyikā* who is unable to bear the pangs of separation needs an advisor. She is unable to think and act of her own. The *sakhī* features in most compositions of the South Indian belt and even in the north like Vidyapati, Geeta Govinda and some Kashmir poets too. So even though her presence is so wide-reaching dancers have not given much thought or importance to this person.

I have composed some varnams , padams with reference to the *nāyaka* as most often one found that the *nāyaka* was also a silent spectator. *Shṛṅgāra* is the ultimate rasa. The *nāyikās*

arise due to lack of love or excessive love or little love and so on. **The concept of love is explained to both the nāyaka and the nāyikā by the sakhī.**

In Bhama Kalapam which has three characters, Madhavi plays the role of *sakhī*. Siddhendra Yogi has very interestingly not given a gender to this person. So this person could be a transgender. In those days the man probably did not take the advise from a *sakhī* and the *nāyikā* or woman would not take the advise from a *sakha*. So when Madhavi went to the *nāyikā* he became a woman. When Madhavi goes to Krishna he tries to console Krishna as a man. He also says Madhavi is an illusion. The character of Madhavi which you do not find in other texts was created with the idea of showing the person as *sakhī-sakha*. **So the sakhī-sakha helps clear the mind of the lover, showing the way to reach the other side. Just like a Guru does.**

The confirmation of the role the *sakhī* has played can be inferred only through compositions which help confirm her identity. Many concepts like what happened to Rama, what happened to Ayodhya etc are all clarified through compositions. In one composition of Dasa Shriramulu, the *nāyikā* is adoring her bracelet. The *sakhī* advises her to come out of the illusion . Stop adoring it and yourself with it. Imagine yourself removing that and find your real self.

The *sakhī* says to the *nāyikā* , I am not telling you out of spite or jealousy but look here I have the bracelet given by Krishna. How many more Krishna may have given others. So here one can clearly see the *sakhī* is on the level of the *nāyikā*. Further the *sakhī* asks the *nāyikā* , did he tell you your face is more beautiful than the full moon, that your hair braid is as lovely as the snake hood that he would like to caress etc. The *nāyikā* asks the *sakhī* , how did you know. The *sakhī* replies that the same were said to her. So here in this composition the *sakhī* is somebody equal to the *nāyikā*. The role of *sakhī* here turns even more meaningful.

In most padavarnams the *sakhī* is lending an ear. She often does not speak. She has no voice. **So the compositions show that for a *nāyikā* in *viraha* sometimes the best medicine is to simply somebody who can patiently listen to her woes.** Most pada varnams is of a one-sided conversation. A *virahotakandita nāyikā* can never exist by herself. **The *sakhī* helps establish the *sthāyi* of a *nāyikā*.** She was often the silent witness to the goings-on between the *nāyaka* and the *nāyikā*. She had the freedom to question the *nāyikā*. This witness and freedom arose due the trust placed in her by the *nāyikā*. Poets like Annamacharya etc too themselves often become the *sakhī*. So here it becomes a different perspective. The poet asks bare faced questions to the Goddess like why are your lips so red, why are these marks all over your body. The *sakhī* enjoys extreme freedom. The *sakhī*'s role has been left inconclusive giving scope to each dancer to interpret it with their own understanding. There is *padārtha*, *vākyārtha* and *kāvyārtha* to understand the composer's intentions and subtleties. So when one is able to understand the *kāvyārtha*, the reason of the poem or composition itself then the reference of *padārtha* and *vākyārtha* of the compositions per se alters.

When the *sakhī* is looked upon as a Guru, it means that the Guru commands worship. But here the *nāyikā*'s worship is akin to being thankful. The Guru's role played by the *sakhī* is a hidden one. The role played on the surface is that of friend. The status of the Guru that the *nāyikā* bestows on the *sakhī* is due to the trust that she concedes. It is said that what is more powerful than a relationship is friendship. What nothing else can do friendship can.

To identify the inner self as *sakhī*, when you look at the mirror somebody inside the mirror is the *sakhī* and the person outside the mirror is you or the *nāyikā*. Some of the compositions do mention *sakhī* as the mind. Often it is seen in some compositions that the *nāyaka* too has become the *sakhī*. In a nutshell the *nāyikā* cannot be fully described without reference to the *sakhī*. **You need her shoulders, her ears, her eyes as witness, her body to question and learn about love, her helping hands.** In most *padavarnams* etc we can take them to be a

soliloquy as they mention the character of the *sakhī* but don't define it. Sometimes the *nāyikā* simply talks to a flower or lotus, the bee that came to you did you call him or did he just come to you. Did you wait for him to come. So how will my *nāyaka* know when to come? Then we can say the flower is the *sakhī* at that point in time.

Looking into the era of most compositions it also seems likely that the *sakhī* has a clear presence and a character.

Dr. Kiran Subramanyam, Senior and well-known Bharata Natyam dancer-teacher-researcher. Bengaluru.



The *sakhī* has always been an important character in *Bharata Nāṭyam* especially though most of the time she is there as an invisible entity. Most of the time we show her with our left hand or place her on the left side. A lower position. Over time her depiction has changed. Earlier her position was sort of fixed. Now it has come to actual characterization. I recently did a production ‘*Manini*’ about the ashta *nāyikā* and here I brought in the *sakhī* prominently. It is through the *sakhī* that the main *nāyikā* understands her own self through the different states. Here I also show how the *sakhī* plays with the emotions of the *nāyikā*. The piece is in the *varnam* format. The second half mainly deals with the *sakhī* and here one can see how she becomes like a mirror of the *nāyikā*. *She almost becomes the reflection of the nāyikā*. So when she goes to meet the *nāyaka* the concept is that *the nāyaka actually gets to see the nāyikā through the sakhī*.

In traditional compositions the *sakhī* had a very subdued presence while she was actually the only one who understood the *nāyikā* completely. She would understand the *nāyikā* in a very balanced way and not be swayed by emotion. If she were to be swayed by emotion she would

not have been able to help the *nāyikā* . So *she is one who knows everything yet holds herself showing more maturity than the nāyikā*. She shows more balance. A *nāyikā* is so deeply caught in her web of emotions that it is natural to lose judgement. One cannot think clearly in this stage. It is the *sakhī* in such a stage who is able to hold the *nāyikā* and bring her the right perspective. She brings a better vision of the reality to the *nāyikā*. So even in my production the *sakhī* is like the heroine, the main character.

We have always minimized the importance of the *sakhī* so here in my production I wanted to change that thought and the *sakhī* assumes a very pivotal role in this. The *sakhī* displays so many emotions in consoling the *nāyikā*, cajoling her, taking care of her as a mother, a good friend who can understand her well, or be stern at times.

Even in *ashtapadis* like ‘*Radhika tava virahe*’ etc. it is interesting to see how *sakhī* almost becomes with the emotions of Radha, is how I have portrayed. Even in other compositions *one can see how the sakhī may experience the exact emotions of the nāyikā but at a different level*. And this is the reason why she is able to handle the *nāyikā*’s emotions in a mature way. *The sakhī has the freedom of experiencing the nāyikā’s emotions and yet be outside of it*. Thus she is able to make a better judgment of the *nāyikā*’s feelings. This aspect makes her a very mature character. Yet often she has been thought to not so. The heroine is placed at a higher level. She is usually looked upon as a servant who is doing her duties. She silently goes through every situation of the *nāyikā*. Yet most often she is never shown as a superior person or even perhaps equal. The *sakhī* is assumed to be just doing what the *nāyikā* tells her to do. But this is not so. She has her own mind, She thinks out the situation, she weighs it thoroughly.

The classification of the *sakhī* is possible. The *sakhī* is generally not able to express herself at will unlike the *nāyikā* who can throw tantrums at will. So this makes the *sakhī* more balanced as she has to have the control of her own emotions as well as of the *nāyikā*’s. It feels that the

sakhī is therefore more mature than the *nāyikā*. The *nāyikā* expresses everything to her *sakhī*.

It means that she knows the *sakhī* can understand her well. Knowingly or unknowingly the *nāyikā* gives her a lofty status. The *sakhī* is also shown in dance as somebody lower.

One can relate to another only if there is a common frequency or wavelength, so to say. So that itself implies that *sakhī* is equal to the *nāyikā*.

As to who is the *sakhī* in the *jeevatmān paramātmān* concept I feel she becomes the actual conversation between them. She is a bridge. ***She is the true reflection of one's inner self.*** You need an outer reflection of self for others to know what is happening inside of you. The *sakhī* has to reflect the *nāyikā* so well for the *nāyaka* to be able to see her in the *sakhī*. In that sense she subsumes herself totally. She is egoless. She is pure. She has an amazing clarity of thought. I think she has a great capacity to lose her identity in the *nāyikā* and this is a high state of being, of being able to subsume one's ego almost completely.

It is possible to look at *varnams* and *padams* as a soliloquy. The heart has no capacity to make judgment. The mind must be of a high nature to be able to drive the heart. Most compositions show the *sakhī* as fulfilling her duties presumably to a fine conclusion.

In another production, I had shown the *sakhī* to take the form of a light beam on stage and how the *nāyikā* is in communication with her and later the light fills the *nāyikā*. So the *sakhī* presents a true reflection of the *nāyikā*.

The *sakhī* may come from a socially lower strata but her inner self may be higher to the *nāyikā*. So we cannot misjudge her level.

In the composition '*Unnai Dhootanupen*' where the *nāyaka* is supposed to have had a dalliance with the *nāyikā* it can mean that the *sakhī* fulfilled the aspect of reflecting the *nāyikā* so well that the *nāyaka* saw the *nāyikā* in the *sakhī*. Even so the *sakhī* is well aware of

her responsibility to the *nāyikā*. She is very much grounded and so may not be carried away by the *nāyaka*'s attentions.

The *sakhī* surrenders her life almost for the *nāyikā* and that act itself puts her on a high pedestal.

In Krishna-Radha lore we can say that Krishna understands everybody but only Radha understands him. If all are *sakhīs* to Krishna, Krishna too needs to be a *sakhī* to somebody. And so Krishna becomes the *sakhī* of Radha. That is where he sees his true self.

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I have thought about this through fourteen years as all *padams*, *javalis* had the character of *sakhī*. She played different roles. She sometimes listened, she sometimes explained to the *nāyikā*, sometimes got them together. In the classic Shankarabharanam *varnam*- ‘*Sakhīyeinda jaaluma ennadi*’ the *sakhī*’s presence is prominent and through and through in this.

However when I started training with Guru Kitappa Pillai’s son and Guru Smt. Nandini Ramani, I learnt many *varnams* and *padams* where the *sakhī* was not present. So I began to wonder what exactly was the role of the *sakhī*. When I asked most parampara *Gurus* including *Guru* Kitappa Pillai’s son I was told the *sakhī* was in place of the *Guru*. She was the one who lead the person who had the desire for fulfillment with the Almighty to the Almighty. Generally there is never any response seen from *sakhī*. So basically this is an introspection of the *nāyikā* about her own feelings. A common progression perceived through all Tanjore Quartet *varnams* is that in the beginning there is *moha* or desire to be one with the *nāyaka*. The *nāyikā* usually puts herself in equality with the *nāyaka*. In the second line there

is usually the *modi*-indifference. In the direct *varnam* the indifference arises from the person she wants to be one with. In the third line she begins to find a difference between herself and the *nāyaka*, as someone not attainable. She refers to his heroic deeds. In the *chittaswaram* there is a transition mostly. She feels the need to deeply introspect and come to an understanding as to who the *nāyaka* is. And that is where Madana comes in or soon after the *chittaswaram*. So there is a fear of Madana who may awaken all her senses taking her back to a physical plane of desire which she has transcended upto now. She realizes the *nāyaka* is much bigger than she had thought. Her senses are all shutting out. When she hears the cuckoo she is shutting down her sense of hearing, when the cool breeze touches her, she is shutting down the sense of touch. When she has thus shut out each sense one by one, she realises that he is everywhere. So in the last line she extols him. Calls him Sureshan, Jagadeeshan etc.

When the *sakhī* comes in, you have lines like *sakhīye modi chaiyade, sakhī inda jaalam ennadi* etc. One can see a sort of indifference in the *sakhī* herself. So while the *nāyikā* continues to express her pangs of separation there is never a helping hand shown by the *sakhī* in this stage. ***She is a silent mentor allowing the nāyikā to introspect and gently pushing her to her own growth.*** There is an understanding of self happening as an expansion of *ahamkāra* in a positive way as given by Bhoja's theory of rasa. ***The sakhī stands through this expansion as a support system.***

In the earlier Quartet *varnams* the *sakhī* does not seem to play a big part. So while the *nāyikā* always says *azhaithuvaadi*, one does not see the union portrayed at all. In most *varnams* too the *nāyikā* converses directly with the *nāyaka*. So there is a thought that the *sakhī* was introduced taking inspiration from Sanskrit plays etc. for entertainment value as such. It was easier to show the *nāyikā* having a conversation with somebody else. Introspection with oneself would have proved a much more difficult concept to portray and communicate.

Most *varnams* refer to constant metaphors of senses shutting down. Moonlight for sight, cuckoo for hearing, the breeze for touch, etc. There is always a fear about Madana coming. In many *varnams* interestingly the word Kaman is not used instead we find Maaran. She fears that he is out to kill this desire that is growing within, to become one with the *paramātmān*. The *sakhī* here then becomes only an aid for the *nāyikā* to ask her to do something about it. So the *sakhī* became a visual aid allowing the *nāyikā* to express herself and make it look like she was having a conversation with somebody. In communicating deep emotions in a *varnam* it may be possible for senior artistes to do away with the *sakhī* but for a novice the *sakhī* becomes an aid to be able to express these deep-felt emotions. Thus ***I feel the sakhī is a later imposition or introduction to the Quartet varnams.***

The *varnams* are soliloquys. One does not see a *sakhī* respond. Sometimes birds etc. are referred to *sakhīs* hence I feel the *sakhī* is simply a visual aid. It is questionable whether you can call anybody to whom you can express as a *sakhī*. *Sambhoga* never happens at the end of a *varnam*. There are instances of happy recollections. Since *sambhoga* never happens I feel the *sakhī* is therefore a visual aid in communicating this concept of evolution of the *nāyikā*.

To compare the mind-heart as sakhī-nāyikā feels perfect. The heart is emotional and the mind is logical. The *sakhī* like the mind stand still while the heart is fluttering, going in circles. A steady mind, a grown up mind who gives the heart time to heal itself. I think it is a beautiful comparison. I would look at the desire to reach the *paramātmān* as *śṛṅgāra*. The *varnam* is about the development of this *śṛṅgāra* or desire. And in all this the *sakhī* is a mute witness. She does not respond as –do this , do that. The *sakhī* thus becomes a tool to enable the *nāyikā* to her growth.

Now in the Gita Govinda the *sakhī* goes to Krishna and Radha. In such compositions including the *javali*s the flavor of the *sakhī* changes. The *sakhī* assumes a character. In the

ashtapadis, the *sakhī* is a live character. I feel in these the *sakhī* has been made more mundane. In ‘*Unnai Dootanupinen*’, too the *sakhī* has had a dalliance with the *nāyaka* so I feel it is humanized here. She is not as elevated as in other higher compositions, so to say.

The non-responsive sakhī is I feel an uttama, who by her silence allows the nāyikā to grow. The madhyama would be the one who has dialogues like in ‘Dheera samire’ where she tells the nāyikā, ‘don’t delay, he is waiting there.’ The adhama would be the one who goes and has a dalliance with the nāyikā.

So in these genre of padams, javalis, ashtapadis I feel the sakhī is more humanized. But in the varnams I feel the sakhī concept is a very elevated one.

Thus in the humanized *sakhī*, the character is defined. The poet or author has well-defined her. In *varnams* which means colour, she is not characterizes as such and a colouring can thus be given to her. Just like we have *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama nāyikā*, *nāyaka* so there are the *sakhīs* and the poets have explored human nature through them even.

Indian literature richly portrays decorum of private-public decorum. So within themselves they would feel so close as to address each other as *sakhī* as seen in the *ashtapadis*. It is well-defined in Indian literature what is permissible etc within the social domain.

And so you have the *javalis* that are a totally different type of composition. In ‘*Adivum solluval*’ it is about Valli and Devayani’s jealousy. And one of them is conveying the intimate thoughts probably to her *sakhī* about the other woman. Some compositions like ‘*Chudare*’ portray interestingly *sakhīs* who are *sakhīs* amongst themselves and into gossiping about the *nāyikā*. It portrays the different natures of *sakhīs* or human there.

In the *varnams* one would say the *sakhī* is like a *Guru*. Other than that one would think they are more humanized so not at that same level.

There is a Kannada *javalī*- '*Idene sakhī, kantanumunithirpa sudhaamshumukhi*'. There again the *sakhī* is not responsive. One can only slot the *sakhī*. And based on the reflection of the *nāyikā*'s feelings alone. So it is all about the *nāyikā*'s feelings. In a *varnam* the *sakhī* is always more mature. The very fact that the *nāyikā* can tell her *sakhī* to go and bring her Lord implies the trust, the confidence she has on her. So that itself elevates the *sakhī*.

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The idea of the *sakhī* as companion is quite old. We see this in Gatha Saptasati, in Kalidasa's plays, in Bana's plays, Sanskrit plays. Here the *sakhī* is the companion of the *nāyikā* or the Queen. She only performs the role of friend. There is no *śṛṅgāra* of any kind.

But the real first turning point comes with Jayadeva. He introduces the concept of the *sakhī* who is a love-messenger. One of the important thing that Jayadeva has done is characterized Radha who was mostly lurking in the background in tribal lore. In the Bhagavatham, she is subtly referenced. In the Hala Saptasati, there is a reference to her. But it is only Jayadeva who brings her out and makes her the chief romantic persona of Krishna. It did not happen before. To think about the *sakhī*, one must therefore think about Radha first. The reason for Radha taking a central place in Jayadeva's Gita Govinda can be ascribed to the influence of the *shakta* tradition where woman is an intermediary between man and God. The idea of the

woman as an intermediary can be seen even in the *devadāsi* tradition. As an intermediary between the deity and the devotee. The way Jayadeva begins the Gita Govinda in the *mangalacharan* where Nanda tells Radha that Krishna is afraid, take him home. Radha becomes the shakti. Later, she falls in love with Krishna through the Gita Govinda. ***The sakhī not only plays companion to Radha as love messenger but she energises Radha making sure that śṛṅgāra proceeds.*** Śṛṅgāra with Krishna goes up and down in Jayadeva's Gita Govinda. Sometimes it flourishes, sometimes it is down. Sometimes Krishna pines for Radha, sometimes she rejects Radha. It is the *sakhī* who takes care of the śṛṅgāra through its ups and downs. And that is significant. When you come down to the Chaitanya tradition, the role of the *sakhī* becomes a turning point.

Radha becomes the consort of Krishna. There are many acts she wishes to do for Krishna in terms of *seva*-offering food, flowers, feeding him, fanning him etc. All these acts which Radha wishes to do are given to the *sakhīs*. Thus we see the chief eight *sakhīs*. They offer the eight kinds of *sevas*.

When we go into Ritikavya, the *sakhī* appears as the love messenger. If we go back to Amarushataka of 4th century, there also the *sakhī* plays the role of an intermediary. In Ritikavya, the *sakhī* plays role of an intermediary but also falls in love with Krishna. In the tradition followed during those times when the girl got married the parents of the girl would send the *sakhī* with her. And it is known that the husband would fall in love with the *sakhī*. There is a historical fact, an actual story. In the 19th century there was a King by name Kalapi in Gujarata in a small kingdom called Lathi. He marries two sisters on the same day. Strange but maybe it was legal at that time. The older wife brings a *sakhī* and King Kalapi falls in love with the *sakhī*. The *sakhī* sings, dances and so on. Eventually he marries the *sakhī* and they even have a child. The older wife takes away the child and then poisons the husband. Meanwhile the *sakhī* is married off to a low-level cleaner. So here again one sees

as a fact that the married woman comes with a *sakhī*. So in Ritikavya, Radha sends a message to Krishna through the *sakhī*. She does not come for a long time. When she comes she is totally dishevelled. Radha questions her that she has probably made love to Krishna. The *sakhī* says, “No, I got caught in a thorny bush”, and so on. So there is this side of the *sakhī* too.

I think that the whole basis of the *sakhī* concept should rest with the Chaitanya tradition. In the lore of Shrinathji, all devotees are Gopis. And they directly love Krishna. All are Gopis- man, woman , child. Whereas in the Chaitanya tradition all devotees are *sakhīs*. We do not have direct access to Krishna. We cannot love him directly except through *seva*. ***You can secretly love Krishna but the sakhī's connection is only with Radha.*** So Radha becomes the intermediary between the *sakhī* or devotee and Krishna. And this concept is also present in Vaishnavism. Just as in the South, Lakshmi is the intermediary between the devotee and Vishnu. So the woman being an intermediary is one of the strands to be looked at in the *sakhī* concept. Thus ***the sakhī is made up of many different strands. One is companion, another is as love messenger, the third is the ashta sakhīs of Chaitanya, fourth is the sakhī in Brij bhasha- Ritikavya where she is love messenger but also secretly in love with Krishna.*** So the *sakhī* concept is a multi-layered one. The philosophy of *sakhī* however can begin and end only with Chaitanya.

In Kalidasa's Shakuntala, Priyamvada and Anasuya are so named as they represent the qualities of Shakuntala. Thus this makes it that she is very much a part of the personality of the *nāyikā*. *Ashta sakhīs* are described at length. The two main focal points of *sakhī* are in Jayadeva and in Chaitanya.

When you come to think of it one feels that there is no *sakhī* in the Shaiva tradition as such. Chaitanya and Jayadeva both were staunch *Vaishnavas*. I think it is the *Vaishnavas* who appropriate the *sakhī*.

Guru Kalyanasundaram- Director, Sri Rajarajeshwari Bharata Natya

Kala Mandir, August 2017, Mumbai.



The *sakhī* is more than a friend whom you can confide in, seek solace and look up to for guidance. She is not categorised in the *shāstrās*. Her presence is always there though subordinate. If we look at the Ananda Bhairavi varnam-‘ Sakhīye inda velayil’ , we find the *nāyikā* stressing on inda velayil. The *nāyikā* is distressed. The *sakhī* tries many ways – tries to show her beautiful flowers in the garden, draws her attention to the sweet notes of the cuckoo birds, plays on the Veena , offers her a glass of milk. Yet none of these seem to have any effect. Then she offers to make sandal paste to anoint on her body. The sandal paste is even offered to the Gods. By applying of sandal paste she means to convey an awakening of the divine in the *nāyikā*. Yet it does not seem to have any effect. The *sakhī* however is determined to change her mind and does not give up. This is also similarly how a Guru works on his disciple. The *sakhī*’s only concern is that her friend, the *nāyikā* must be happy.

Renouncing worldly things is not the only way to achieve *paramātmān*. To achieve *paramātmān* one must have a very deep kind of devotion. There it is the *nāyikā* alone who can reach the *paramātmān* herself without the aid of the *sakhī*. It is the single minded devotion of the *nāyikā* alone that can help her reach the *paramātmān*. This is reflected

naturally in her behaviour. Devotion to God can be expressed in many ways. Here the *sakhī* cannot guide the *nāyikā*. It is the *nāyikā*'s devotion alone that can make her express her devotion and love to the lord in various ways.

It is similar to doing *abhishekam* in the temple. There are so many types of *abhishekams*. Each offers a unique joy. Sincere devotion itself becomes a guide of sorts that can take you closer to the Supreme.

The *sakhī* is the one who shares the *nāyikā*'s joy and sorrows. It is only to the *sakhī* that the *nāyikā* can confide her feelings even before confiding to her mother. So at her level the *sakhī* becomes the first person to approach in times of intense joy or sorrow and who will try and find out a solution as needed.

By definition whoever removes the darkness of your ignorance is deemed to be a Guru. In that sense in certain matters the *sakhī* can play the role of a Guru. It is not all *sakhīs* can be Gurus. **One cannot generalize that the *sakhī* is a Guru.**

Some *sakhīs* may offer only lip sympathy. Some *sakhīs* will try to understand your problem and try to come up with a solution. Some *sakhīs* having gone through a similar experience can offer mature advise. The *sakhī* who tries to advise the *nāyikā* to have faith and keep her faith in the Lord may be considered to be a Guru in a wider sense. The *sakhī* is a most trusted person genuinely interested in solving the *nāyikā*'s problem and very keen that the *nāyikā* comes out from the well of despair. That *sakhī* is different.

The *sakhī* should be one who is not only somebody who can share the feelings but also be able to give sage advise. She need not be an elder necessarily. The *sakhī* even has to often face the wrath of many people. **She faces all the trials for the sake of true friendship.**

Most of the compositions don't reflect or give any deeper idea of the *sakhī*. Again the *sakhī* is often sent as the messenger. If the Lord accepts then her task is fulfilled . If not, then it remains as an unsolved episode. A lot depends on the choreography. In the varnam cited above one highlights *inda velayil*. What and how the *nāyikā* is suffering.

To think of *sakhī* as somebody within is not a plausible conjecture. In compositions one definitely is referring to somebody in physical form.

If you refer to *manasaakshi* then that is different. Personifying mind or heart is something different. **If the heroine is not in a physical form then the *sakhī* is also not in the physical form.**

Based on the exemplary devotion and love of Meera's devotion to Krishna, Andal's to Ranganatha- later composers have based their compositions. And so if Radha can pine for Krishna later composers felt why cannot the *nāyikā* pine for the Kings or the Gods similarly. There are so many composers who have visualized Muruga as a lover as Krishna. So all these had a physical entity. The mind cannot help you out of your grief. The mind can only advise you to perhaps chant the name of God or some such. The physical presence of the *sakhī* however would try out the various measures to calm down the *sakhī* which the mind cannot. So the *sakhī* clearly assumes a physical form.

In looking at the deviant *sakhī*, one can say it is only the composer's imagination that weaves such a kind. If suppose I have sent somebody as a messenger and that person turns up late and I begin asking questions as to why are you late etc. it can be my imagination running havoc. **So in such type of compositions it is the composer's mind that chooses to weave such plots.** If one has to say why is your hair disheveled, it can be because of the breeze!

In ‘Unnai Dhootanupinen’, if you refer to the errant *sakhī*, here too it can simply be the imagination of the composer who chooses to present a different perspective. If the *sakhī* is supposed to truly represent the *nāyikā* when she goes out to meet the *nāyaka*, where is the need for the *nāyikā* to question her *sakhī*. In such deviant pieces I would only attribute them to the intelligence of the composer who offers this twist.

In padams etc. one does not even know who is the heroine often. It is only the hero’s name that is usually brought in whether a king or a deity.

About the composer assuming the role of *nāyikā* that is not generally so as they are not Alvars or Nayanmars. Nayanmars had the *madhura bhakti*. Most of the compositions that date to about 200 years old were by *vaggeyekaras* or *nattuvanars* and they were not Alvars or Nayanmars. Unlike drama in these compositions we don’t find the names of the *nāyikā* or the *sakhī*. **You cannot compare the position of *sakhīs* in Sanskrit dance dramas to that in the Bharata Natyam compositions.** There are very few compositions that may refer to the *nāyikā*. For instance when Devayani may complain about Valli etc. In pada varnams etc the qualities of the King or deity are enumerated, glorified, worshipped. So these are a completely separate genre and cannot be compared to the plot or thought perhaps of the Sanskrit drama tradition. In those traditions we do find celestial nymphs, apsaras, like Urvashi, Rambha etc. You could even take them to be devadasis of that time, servants of God literally. Similarly in Bhuloka thus you have the devadasi.

The Bharata Natyam compositions based on which the premise of the research is taken are compositions of a different nature altogether. Herein you do not have the name of the *nāyikā* mentioned and so too the *sakhī*. Nor does the *sakhī* call to the *nāyikā* by name.

In different pada varnams like Swami ki Sariyavare’ in Shankarabharanam and ‘Swami ni rammanave’ in Kamas, one finds the *nāyaka* mentioned. In one it is Bhaskarendra, Prince of

Ramanad and in the other it is Brihadishwara. **In these you find imagined characters of the *nāyikā* and *sakhī*. It is not a philosophical interpretation.**

There is an instance in the telugu Kutrala Kuravanji of Sundaramurti nayanmar, where Shiva plays the role of a *sakha* as he has to play mediator between a devotee, paravai nachiyar and his wife.

So one has to delve into the classics to truly understand the larger meaning of *sakhī*.

Dr. Ananda Shankar Jayant, well-known Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi exponent-teacher. Telecon. September 2017.



The *sakhī*, as seen even in the Gita Govinda, when she is able to fetch Krishna for Radha; **is the one who is able to destroy the ego and put into perspective whoever she is dealing with. Thus she becomes a *mārgadarshak*, a pathway. She throws light on the path.**

When you want to look into her esoteric meaning you can look beyond the romantic situations and you find that she can be looked upon as the destroyer of ego etc.

When you consider the *nāyikā-nāyaka* in the way of *ātman-paramātmān* you could take the *sakhī*, philosophically as somebody inside which means you need to look into the observer and observed realm.

If we consider ourselves occasionally when we discourse with ourselves there is the observer and observed realm into play. The *sakhī* plays out the idea of a *mārgadarshak*, a guide, an advisor. So it could be within, it could be without. Then the *sakhī* becomes the consciousness.

For eg. For Arjuna, Krishna is the *sakhī* and *sakha*. For Draupadi, Krishna is the *sakha*. He is always there to throw light. To help her. So it can be interpreted in any way.

The *sakhī* need not necessarily imply an evolved personality just because she is an advisor etc. At different points of time different people come to our aid to advise us etc. When the *nāyikā* is so wrapped up in her seeking of the *nāyaka* and suffering the pangs of separation, she is unable to think for herself.

Most padams are very similar to the Gita Govinda construct. The *sakhī* is the connecting link between two people. Often there are people in different situations who become advisors. They show you what you cannot see for yourself. They throw some light or new light on a situation. They reveal a new light or a new solution to the problem which you being very much in the situation are unable to fathom or miss thinking about it.

If you consider the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna , the *sakha* is the *pārthasārathī* . He is the *sārathi*. **So the idea of the *sakhī* is a *sārathi*. A *sārathi* for the soul to realize it's true self.**

I look at *sakhī* as a generic word. In the *bhaktī* movement the *sakhī* takes the position of the Guru. There is no 'her' to the *sakhī*. *Sakhī* , *sakha* are one and the same. The same idea. If the *sakhī* is a Guru, then it is not necessary that she is worthy of worship as suggested by some. A Guru can be a friend too.

**Smt. Srekala Bharath, established Bharata Natyam exponent-
teacher, September 2017, Chennai.**



I have done a *ragam taanam pallavi* on *sakhī*, the first of its kind for the 2007 December season in Chennai. In the raagam section I showed the *nāyikā* is dressing up and calling the *sakhī*. For the taanam section I showed them joyfully playing etc. And in the pallavi section I showed them dancing together. The lyrics were by Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao.

The *sakhī* plays a very interesting role in the compositions of Bharata Natyam. Sometimes the *sakhī* is seen to advise the *nāyikā* to forget her Lord since he is not showing any remorse.

In Sri Ranjani padavarnam of Papanasam Sivan, the *sakhī* goes on behalf of the *nāyikā*.

svamini (padavarnam). raga: shriranjani. Adi tala.

P: svami ni manam irangi arul ta ma dayai nidhiye muruga guha
bhumel vazhve vembena ninaindhal
puvai manam nondal ni

A: tamadam sheidal manam varunda nerume manamodindu ma mayal veyil
puzhuvait-tudittal tiru-mal maruga Shanmukha parivudane

(citta svara sahityam)

vaa vaa vikasita punita mayilin misai vaa vaa varadane pada darishanam tara
deva kunjariyudan kura magalum shirudane maruvum sukumaarane

C: vaata noi kondal viraindu marundu taa ival perum pidi

1: maadumai maghane dayakarane kanavilum unnai nambi

2: madhavan malark-kannan mal marugane inda pedai nidam

3: Arumukham Arumukham enrurugi

4: unadu ninaivil anai tandaiyai manaiyai

vilaiyadalai padalai marandudal talarndu ov-

5: yarumil taniyidam tanil kannir vazhindidum vizhiyudan

shiridum irangavillai paramukhamudan iniyum ni ivalai parishodanai sheidal

dharmamo varmamo uyarndador mantram surar ulaga marundu

naya bhayamodu tantram purindadilum gunam shiridum illai sarasa

In this pada varnam, the composer is describing a love-lorn *nāyikā* who is waiting for muruga to come to her. In the pallavi, the poet says: Oh Lord kumaraswaami, are you not the repository of kindness in the world? Please take pity on me and hear my plea - I come here as the messenger of a young and beautiful woman (poovai = someone who is as beautiful and tender as a flower). She is beginning to feel that the burden of living without you is too much of a cross for her to bear, and she is heartbroken and is hurting a lot.

In the Anupallavi, the messenger describes the consequences of delay: She says, please come with me, oh nephew of the great Vishnu. For if you do not make haste, the maiden will die of a broken heart, because, she is suffering like a worm that is being baked in the sun (worms need lots of moisture to survive, hence their underground burrows in damp areas - and placing one in the sun will surely kill it).

In the cittaswara sahitya, the composer requests that Lord muruga, the one who usually embraces his wives Valli and Deivayani, to come to the *nāyikā* on his peacock (whose tail

feathers are fanned out) and grant her the vision of his feet so that she can surrender herself to him.

Here the *sakhī* implores the *nāyaka*, Muruga. When required the *sakhī* becomes the messenger for the *nāyikā*.

I would not like to give the status of the Guru to the *sakhī*. In a situation , usually a hopeless situation when we are at the depths of emotion we may cry on somebody's shoulder and take their advise as the best advise. At the time when the *nāyikā* is completely anguished and engulfed by the arrows of love and when she confides to her *sakhī*, the *sakhī* becomes her soul mate, not a Guru. She seeks her emotional help.

It is very possible the *sakhī* can be in love with the *nāyaka* or has feelings for him. She is the one who has the opportunity to go close to him on behalf of the *nāyikā*. She knows however that the *nāyaka* has only feelings for the *nāyikā*. She sacrifices her own emotions for her sake.

If you see in the javali- *smara sundaraanguniki*. (javali). raga: paraju. Adi tala.

In this the *nāyikā* says,

P: *smara sundaranguni sari evvare sarasa kotilonava jiruhamire*

Is there anyone equal to him who is endowed with the beauty of Cupid?

C1: *Adina matalu attamu palukade e cediyanu kanula judade*

Among the millions of admirers, he is tactful and valiant

2: *vinula kimpuga vina vayinci aliveni ne pada sabha sincune*

He does not take back his words, he does not lift his gaze to any other girl.

Oh! Aliveni, (girl with long plait) if I play the Veena and sing sweetly, he exclaims “shabash”.

So here we can look at it as if the *sakhī* is the listener. It is the *chappalata* of the *sakhī* to seize the opportunity to have the lord. But by and large the *sakhīs* are utmost truthful and in rare instances thus you find that the *sakhī* is deceitful.

Thus even in ‘*Unnai Dhootanupinen*’ when I present it, I show in the end the *sakhī* asking for forgiveness from the *nāyikā*. The importance and dignity of the *sakhī* is thus maintained.

About looking at it as the conjecture of the mind about the *sakhī*’s dishevelled appearance, I don’t think it could be so. When the *nāyikā* sends the *sakhī* as the messenger, she implicitly trusts her with all her deepest feelings. In this two way trust factor, the *nāyikā* can easily perceive if the *sakhī* has been errant. So the idea about the misconception of the *nāyikā* cannot hold.

The *sakhī* needs to be given importance surely. For twenty-four hours the *sakhī* is with the *nāyikā*. She knows everything about the *nāyikā*. **The *sakhī* never wants to let her *nāyikā* down. So in a reciprocal manner the *nāyikā* also looks up to the *sakhī*.** There is a description where the *nāyikā* cleans her *bullaku* and gives it to her *sakhī*. It shows the closeness. She definitely is on a higher plane than the *nāyikā* as she advises the *nāyikā* and the hero or *nāyaka* too takes her advice.

So if you see in ‘*Unnai Dhootanupinen*’ you can surmise the *sakhī* may have been beautiful surely for lord Muruga to fall for her. She may have been even slightly more so in this particular padam. Thus I show her asking for forgiveness. She takes the blame upon herself. So this itself reveals how dignified she is. **She thus can be considered to be the more evolved personality of the two and she plays the most important role in the heroine’s life.**

In the padam of Subbarama Iyer, *netru varen endru nayamiga pesinavan* in raga Pantuvarali, we find the *nāyikā* lamenting to her *sakhī* and not anybody else not to her mother even about the *nāyaka* not keeping his promise.

Pallavi

netru varen endru nayamigap pesinavan (/ pesi avan)

innalum varak-kanene, en tozhi

Anupallavi

katrulla pode nan tutrik-kollamale

totram marainda pin tigaikkiren (/tigaikkiren) en tozhi

Charanam 1

Atram karai tanile andip-pozhudinile

yarum ariyamale anaittan en devan (/aNaittar en dEvan)

Charanam 2

masilla (/maTrariya) sempon meniyaik-kandu (nAn)

mayangi paravasam adainden (avar vasam anEnE) en tozhi

Meaning:

Having said that he would come yesterday, he has yet to arrive, my friend.

Not having taken advantage when he was here, (literally : instead of winnowing when the wind was there ie. making hay when the sun shines) how I suffer now!

At dusk, beside the stream, he came and embraced me without anyone knowing.

Seeing his flawless red-gold body, I lost myself in ecstasy (alternate : I became his)

The *sakhī* may be as intelligent, as beautiful as the *nāyikā* but finally it is the *nāyikā* who wins the Lord and this realisation rests with the *sakhī*. It is an accepted fact!

Often in the compositions and in dance, the *sakhī* lives out the role of the *nāyikā*. The fact that she comes to the *nāyaka* and is able to lay bare all the emotions of the *nāyikā* shows how trustworthy she is to the *nāyikā*. To that extent she feels for the *nāyikā*.

In the javali, Nee Maatale Maayanura,

pallavi

ni matale mayanura sami balkara

Swami, what happened to your words (matalu), Please talk (balkara)

anupallavi

Ememo bodhinci nanne mecci adina

You taught me several things, and you praised me with words (what happened to those words which have praised me?)

caranam 1

cakkani samivale cekkili nokki (rave) mukkeru nikiccenani takkulace (Takkulato) sokkincina

You are a beautiful/great swami (sarcastic). You pressed my cheek, and my nose ring (mukkeru) with all those bluffs

caranam 2

mati matiki marumatalata pilcucu pampincenani topamuto nidina bhatulu

You are probably mad at me because I sent word for you every now and then, and look at my hardships now

caranam 3

*ninguga venkata nilayu dutti -pa laggaliga pagula aduvaganu
jalamu jesi ratanala jumi kilajata pampenanna talavana lola ala*

Please don't delay in sending my partner, as I cannot stand this anylonger!

A woman is asking her partner to talk to her and not get mad at her for sending word regularly. Finally she is asking him not to delay in coming and talking/meeting with her.

If we want to look at it as the *nāyikā* talking to herself as in a soliloquy, then the *nāyikā* herself has to confront the *nāyaka*. We see this in the above javali- Nee Matale. There is no

sakhī here. So then where is the confrontation between the two if you wish to compare as the tussle between the mind and the heart. The tussle can happen with the hero where he may get confused.

In the varnam ‘Ma Mohalaarigi mirude’ the *nāyikā* dissuades the *sakhī* about the importance of the *nāyaka*. In the first half, she is feeling sorry but then in the second half she tries to tell the *sakhī* that it is no use pining for him. So I don’t think the comparison to mind- heart holds. In this varnam the *nāyikā* is clear, though she is pining for her Lord.

The *sakhī* is crucial to the development of rasa however. Without the *sakhī* the *nāyikā* cannot bring forth her emotions.

**Smt. Nandini Ramani, Dancer-scholar, September 5-11, 2017,
Chennai.**



She has a clear picture of the situation. She is mature. She has well-established reasons. The *sakhī* can be of an adhama type where she can manipulate situations. In padams such as Unnai Dhootanupinen and others similarly as in a Swati Thirunal shloka the *nāyikā* laments for having sent such an instable character. These come under Dhooti vanchita and the *sakhī* in such padams can be considered as an adhama type. She had faith in the *sakhī* but was deceived.

In Ghanam Krishnaiyer's composition,

ella arumaigalum . raga: tadi. Adi tala. Ghanam Krishna Iyer.

P: *ella arumaigalum ellap-perumaigalum ellam terinda duraik-keval bodhanai sheidalo*

A: *pallarkkum sakalamum bhagyamum tan koduttu panbudane panividai sheidu vaikkum lolaradi*

Who has instigated my Lord who knows everything about all forms of greatness and excellence/renown against me? My dear, he is the playful who serves courteously by granting everything including good fortune to many.

Nalla kiridam tarittamarasimhendra naathan aruliya paratapa Ramarajanukku (ella arumaigalum)

Who has instigated my Lord the heroic/brave Ramarajan who is blessed by the King Amarasimhendra who wears a fine crown , against me?

*C: kankanam kattiya nal mudalai iduvaiyil kadindoru varttai shonnad-ariyenadi
enge irundalum avarai ninainduruga en talaiyil Ishan ezhudinaradi
en kanavarukkinai undo rajadhi rajan edir kondu vandu ninru kappamum katti
punga maha mantapamum katti vaikkum lolaradi punniyavan ivar tanadi enninapadi mudikkum*

From when the marriage amulet was tied around our wrists, to this day, I am not aware of his having uttered a single harsh word. The lord wrote on my forehead that wherever I am located, I will have to think of him and glow in love/ become tender with thoughts of love. Is there another who is equal to my husband? He not only appears before the mighty King and pays the tribute due to his suzerain, but is also the dallier who built the tall and big hall as well. He indeed is a fortunate person. Who has instigated my Lord who accomplishes exactly what he desires (against me)?

Here we may say the *nāyikā* is of Uttama type. The *sakhī* is a patient listener. Here is a quiet type of *sakhī*. Not taking advantage of the situation. She is more sattvika type. She seems to be of equal stature and character of the *nāyikā*. A very understanding type. This is a silent type. They partake in all the joys and sorrows of the *nāyikā*.

The madhyama could be the one igniting more problems.

If we are to consider the *sakhī* in Geeta Govinda we may look at her as of madhyama type, medium character, as here there is only one Purusha and all others vie for the love of the Lord through various ways.

Whereas in padams it is always the soul-supreme, non-duality aspect which is the basis of *rasabhinaya*. In the ashtapadi, the role of the *sakhī* is not the same as that in padams. The *sakhī* is more a devotee and is also a paramour of Krishna in some sense. She has probably been a companion to Krishna. The *jīvas* are all *strī*. So I feel that there is no case for the *sakhī*, strongly rooted in the ashtapadi. Here all the *sakhīs* are important at one point and not important at another. They are all in love with Krishna. So there is no solidified role of the *sakhī* in the ashtapadi as in the padams. Padams have a highly emotional content. Full of *shṛṅgāra bhaktī*.

Human *bhaktī* aimed at Supreme. Now at mundane level. Next step is transcendental level. It is a happening theme. What is happening in life is reflected in the padams.

In the varnam , a discussed previously we find the *sakhī* as very mature who makes the *nāyikā* realise the folly of men's steadfastness. The *sakhī* here can be considered as *uttama*.

The madhyama *sakhī* could be defined as somebody who goes against the wishes of the heroine.

In the padam by Subbarama Iyer, Kalyani raga, Ennadi mettu taluku katirai , one can say the *sakhī* is madhyama-adhama. She has had a dalliance with the *nāyaka* and has returned to her *nāyikā*. The *nāyikā* chides her.

We get the shape of padam from Divya Prabhandas , darus.

Whether I am coming here or he is coming here, speak nicely and get the information.

Shudukara

One of the beloved of Lord Muruga says she is a very tricky woman if I say this. Why do you get offended. The conduct of the *sakhī* is not always trustworthy. So it can be a madhyama.

Edu aval

Subbarama Iyer-mid 18th.

Taane varunguraro

Maybe he will come on his own or should I come.

Drohi enu

Thought she is my soul friend, I thought.

Soul pining for the Supreme. **The *nāyikā* is supposed to be the *jīvātma*, the Supreme- the *paramātmā* and the *sakhī* the knowledge force that unites both. The *sakhī* is the jnana Guru.**

Generally in the Maratha period padams were considered like this. This is the height of development of the padam composition. Earlier to Geeta Govinda is the *rāsa krida* and the Gopika *gīta*. The Mahabharata and Srimad Bhagavatham also fall as forerunners. Following the Geeta Govinda runs the Kshetranya padams in Andhra following which is Purandaradasa. This is how the padams evolved.

Muthu Tandavar is one among three called called Sheergali muvar. Other contemporaries are Marimuthappa Pillai, Gopalakrishna Bharati. Muthu Tandavar is among the early composers.

Later we have Ghanam Krishna Iyer, Muvalur Sabhapathy Iyer and others. The Golden period of padam composition is during Shahaji II of Thanjavur.

Padam compositions also featured details like history of wars, Mughal enemies.

The methodology to connect the Soul and Supreme was the *sakhī*.

Generally the *sakhī* is on par with the *nāyikā* agewise. In most varnams we find the *sakhī* on par with the *nāyikā*. The *sakhī* to be an older person means there are less chances for the hero

to have a dalliance with her. So all in all it does not seem the *sakhī* can be one who is older but more likely that she is of the same age as the heroine.

In *Mohalari Mirude*, *ma* means great. She addresses *Made* to the *sakhī*. Which means she addresses her respectfully.

O, o maane.

My disappointment has become a pleasure to me.

Here the *sakhī* acts as an advisor but is not older.

The *sakhī* plays only a subsidiary role.

Oruvara asai perindai

Taapamane ilanila maalai varuvade paruvama

There is nobody

Pashavalai pashavalai.

Web

Mahamaye polladadi..

Treacherous.

Madinale

Action of the mind.

Heroine is all the time keeping her on the side. The *sakhī* is in a higher position to be listening to her woes. But nothing that indicates she is older.

Basically in all the compositions of Bharata Natyam, the *sakhī*'s role is there and not there.

Sometimes they don't matter. Compositions start with identifying the *sakhī* but it need not be always brought her into an address. She holds a mid-way importance.

Rarely she is the tricky woman in the absence of the heroine. Most of the times she is addressed and she is the silent partner. Always the heroine is at the higher level.

That so much is shared by the heroine implies she is very valuable.

Maybe if we delve deeper into shastric aspects we may find that she is the element that induces knowledge.

**Dr. Malati Agnishwaran, Research scholar, Former faculty of Dance,
Nalanda Dance Research Centre, December 2017, Mumbai.**



The *sakhī* has been interspersed in the varnam or padam as a mute spectator. So the idea of the presence of the *sakhī* is due to the choreography.

She is like a transferred epithet. She is not physically there but is there as and when convenient or needed. As in a padam she may come and go. But that is just part of the choreography.

Now in most padams she does not have a voice. Her presence is merely implied. Then how can she be a Guru? *Sakhī* is a minor character facilitating the union. She need not be given such a lofty status. As an Ācārya or Guru. If she had to have a lofty status, if the poet imagined her to be so, then why would he not have penned a few lines about her.

So she is just a tool for the *nāyikā* as and when needed. If she were to hold the status of the Guru then why don't all padams mention her.

The *sakhī* is definitely imaginative. As this is not a drama. Showing the *sakhī* on either side is just a *natyadharmi* technique used in Bharata Natyam.

It is possible to infer that the *sakhī* is like the alter-ego of the *nāyikā* herself. It is a good thought worth looking into and probing. Now in a varnam the *sakhī* is present in the first half and in the second half there is no reference to her. So *sakhī* is merely an inference.

In aham literature you find the *sakhī* as prominent and so too in Kuravanji dance dramas.

One can say that the many minor characters like the *cheti*, *dhatrī* etc in the *anekaharya* tradition have been subsumed into the character of the *sakhī* in the time of the Gita Govinda in the *ekaharya nritya* tradition.

In the ashtapadi ‘*Sa virahe*’ etc. the *sakhī* is speaking about the *viraha* of Radha to Krishna.

In that particular ashtapadi, when the dancer portrays it, do you see the *nāyikā* or do you see the *sakhī* depicting the *nāyikā*. At times the *sakhī* is pleading to the *nāyaka* and at times the *sakhī* is becoming the *nāyikā*. In the padams you find the *nāyikā* showing her *viraha* not the *sakhī* showing her *viraha*. Thus the *sakhī* becomes very important. **We see the *sakhī*’s expertise in being the *sakhī* and in becoming the *nāyikā*.** It is the expertise of the *sakhī* in abhinaya. For sometimes she may say how the *nāyikā* is suffering and sometimes she may act it out to make it convincing to the *nāyaka*.

In the padams mostly the *sakhī* is not given so much of importance. The *sakhī* is just a go-between. The role where she literally becomes the *nāyikā* one can see only in the ashtapadi.

When the *sakhī* is speaking about Radha to Krishna, I don’t get an impression that she feels like the *nāyikā*. She is so completely true to Radha.

Philosophically all the 16,000 Gopis are in love with Krishna. In fact in the Vaishnava tradition everybody is a woman. Even the Goswami is a woman. Only Purusha, Parama

purusha is Krishna. In the ashtapadis however you cannot surmise or conjecture that the *sakhī* is paramour of Krishna.

To be considered a friend of the Lord is an exalted position. The *sakhī* does enjoy an exalted position. In *bhaktī* tradition however one cannot surmise that the Lord considers the *sakhī* as a friend. Sakhyam *bhaktī* implies the Lord as friend but that does not make the *sakhī* as the lord's friend. I don't think she displays that kind of *bhaktī*.

That is raising the level of the *sakhī* too much.

Evolved and exalted are too high words to be used for the *sakhī*. She enjoys a higher position because she is the mediator. So anybody who is the mediator gets a higher position. In case of Krishna, if he is with Draupadi does the *sakhī* enjoy the same exalted position of say Sudama or Arjuna. I don't think so. I don't think the *sakhī* comes in that category of *sakhyam*.

The *sakhī* is evolved no doubt as she is close to both Radha and Krishna.

The *sakhī* is often there and not there.

Yes it is possible to treat the *sakhī* or look at her as the intellectual mind.

However one must delve to ascertain this textually as a large part may be choreographically understood or interpreted.

Interestingly in Kuravanji dance dramas you find the *sakhī* between the Kurathi and Princess. Here the Lord does not come into the picture. The *sakhī* is in a different situation here. She has no connection with the Lord.

There is a beautiful story with reference to Meera. Goswamis were highly knowledgeable. They tell Meera to come and fall at the Goswami's feet just as they were revering him. Meera replies there is only one purusha. The disciple of Goswami told him about Meera's reply. The

Goswami himself comes to Meera and falls at her feet saying that you have understood the core of Vaishnavism. Today you have enlightened me as I thought I was the more knowledgeable one. My ego had come in the way of my enlightenment. And he bows down to Meera.

Dr. Geeta Radhakrishnan, Senior Mohini Attam exponent-teacher-writer-scholar, May 2018, Mumbai.



There is the *Paramātmān*. There is also the seeker. That is the *mumukshu*-The one who is seeking moksha. So we have the concept of *ātman* seeking *paramātmān*. So how does the *sakhī* come in, is the question. *Sakhī* is actually the medium. She is an agent. In case of *padams*, she is personified as a person. But she could very well be a silent link. Like for instance a *bhakta* , who is seeking his or her God can choose any medium. It could be a person, a bird, river, mountain. Could be any manifestation of Nature. So you have to think of *sakhī* , on that level only, a silent presence. **A silent presence who is motivating you to the path of moksha.**

In the case of Gita Govinda, I feel the *sakhī*, is a very important character. Even much more than Krishna and Radha. *Sakhī* is the one who is motivating both the God and the devotee. If you go deeper into the philosophy, Radha is the seeker, the *mumukshu* and Krishna is the ultimate *ātman* or *paramātmān*. *Sakhī* is the link between the two. If there is no *sakhī*, there is no movement. Movement of *sakhī* from Radha to Krishna or even from Krishna to Radha. It is not always from Radha to Krishna. In the Bhagavad Gita, it is said the

love is the most important in the seeking. It is love that drives movement. And **sakhī is the embodiment of love**. She is trying to connect Krishna and Radha through love. *Sakhī* being the embodiment of love is the reason why Radha and Krishna meet each other. So it is not Radha seeking Krishna but Krishna also seeking the loved *bhakta*. In major philosophies it is love that is the major thing that connects the God and the devotee. God is love. She is the one who is bringing *Brahman* and *ātman* together. The merging of the two can happen only through love. This can happen only and because of the *sakhī*. So the best philosophy is the philosophy of love which can connect and bind.

In many compositions, though she is not given importance as a person or character for portrayal, she is called by many names. In Swati Thurunal compositions we have her being referred as *panimati mukhi baale*, moon-faced or *Aliveni*- one with long hair. In all these though she is not given a form with attributes or a personality per se, **she is a greater presence by her absence**. For ultimately she is a witness. A witness could be God. She is donning on that role.

In all the major scriptures and shastras *bhaktī* predominates. There are many kinds of *bhaktī*. There is the innate *bhaktī* where you don't need a medium. You have the *navavidha bhaktī* that includes *dāsyam*, *sakhyam*, *ātma nivedanam*, *pada sevanam*, *shravanam*, *manana*, *archanam*, *vandanam* etc. Here you are using something to work yourself towards *bhaktī*. When one is on that level that is the type of *bhaktī* one engages in. So *sakhī* becomes a part of this too.

Sakhī is definitely more evolved. As one as earlier said she is the embodiment of love. So it makes her even higher to Radha. She is a teacher to both Radha and Krishna. So definitely her role is much superior. To understand *bhaktī*, one must understand the concept of *bhaktī* as expounded in Srimad Bhagavatham.

In the Gita Govinda what is seen is the obvious. It starts at the body level. The path of *bhaktī* is a journey. One has to evolve from the physical to mental to higher planes. Ultimately to reach the state of equanimity. Bhagavatham talks about *madhura bhaktī*. It is this type of *bhaktī* that one finds in the Gita Govinda. The sweetness of *bhaktī*. It is inbuilt not created out of the means as in *navavidha bhaktī*. This is *prema bhaktī* or *prītī*. And you see this only in the *Gopis* of Vrindavan. So perfectly interpreted. In a way all of them are *sakhīs* too. And all of them are Radhas too. Radha is a notch higher than the rest. So the *sakhī* is the link that connects the *ātman* with *paramātmān*. In Gita Govinda she is not a silent link. She is working, moving from Radha to Krishna and from Krishna to Radha. She is the reason for the union of Radha and Krishna as you see in the 24th ashtapadi. The *sakhī* can be given the lofty status of a *rishi munī*.

Prītī bhaktī and *prema bhaktī* are expression of intense love and attachment which can be applied to the *sakhī*. Both have the root *prī* which means to delight, please or gladden. *Prītī* expresses the various shades of love-like affection, enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction, regard and gratification. All these you find in the Gita Govinda. *Prītī* and *prema* is the direct attachment or love to God which is of an intensely emotional nature. When the mind is naturally drawn towards God and remain in that state of contemplation -*ekagratha*, experiencing unlimited bliss then it is called *prema bhaktī*. Boundless bliss is possible only through the embodiment of love. This embodiment of love though personified can be within you. You have to recognize that. A stage will come after intense *bhaktī* and intense bliss you will see that the embodiment of love is in the core of your heart. Finally *paramātmān* is within you.

According to Yoga philosophy when you do intense *dhyāna*, you experience inexplicable bliss. **When you reach that point you find that the *sakhī* is within you.** The *sakhī* has merged within.

In Sankhya philosophy we have the evolutes starting with *prakṛitī* which gives rise to mind of the whole world and that of the individual which is *ahaṁkāra*. The final evolute it is said is the *Puruṣa*. It is a process of evolution, of transcending from the heart to the mind to the intellect. A point comes where the mind no longer directs you but the intellect drives you towards *ātman*. When you reach the *ātman* level of *bhaktī*, it is the *ātman* guiding you. When the *ātman* guides you it becomes a part of you. Initially the *sakhī* is like a separate entity. But when you have evolved it is the *ātman* speaking and the *sakhī* as a representation of love has merged within. And it is then that you can see the *paramātmān*. Even in the Gita Govinda the understanding of Radha of who Krishna really is comes only in the twenty-fourth ashtapadi. Till that time she is full of doubts, anger—all the base emotions. She recognizes that Krishna is within only in the twenty-fourth ashtapadi. The helper or aid is definitely the *sakhī*. The *sakhī* is a separate entity but finally she is the one inside her who tells her or gives her the realization that Krishna is within you. According to Patanjali there is no subject-object in realisation. Dhyana-dhyeya-dhyaksha. In the final stage all are one. Krishna, Radha, *sakhī* all merge into one. The one according to me is the embodiment of love.

In chandan charchita for example, she is in the heart stage. If you go beyond in the ashtapadis, she is in the mind stage. Where the heart is moving into intellectual thinking. When you cross the bridge, there is no more the mind it is the *ātman* alone.

Shyamalaveni

Sitabhanuvadane

Sudati

Vidhumukhi

Manini

Krushataknulatike

Vanajākṣiro

Varaliruchiveni

Sumukhi

Sundari

Tarunimani

Aliveni

Chalamizhi

Mohanangi

Mrudubhashini

Mruganayane

Charutarangi

Charuvani

Gunasadane

Gunavasathi



Kalabhagaamini

Kalamozhi

Kambukanthi

Nalinaksha

Pankajakshi

Shobanangi

Shubharadane

Kalabhashini

Ramaniya

Kirimozhi

Nalinadalanayane

Kokilavani

Komalangi

Sarasavadane

Madhuvaani

Kamini

Kaminimani

Kiravani

Kamalakshi

Madirakshi

Komaliro

Kushalini