

The Karṇāṭaka Connection:
Sinhābhūpāla II's Influence on Bengali Vaiṣṇava Aesthetics

The *Ujjvalanīlamanī* was one of the *magnum opuses* of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who established Bengali Vaiṣṇava aesthetics in the sixteenth century. As Edwin Gerow (2012) describes, the work stands out due to its unique contributions to the tradition of Sanskrit poetics. Among other features, the text reveals that Rūpa's understanding of foundational aesthetic sentiment (*sthāyibhāva*) is radically different from the dominant Kāśmirian view as articulated by Abhinavagupta in the tenth century.

According to Neal Delmonico (1990), Rūpa's 'deviation' is attributed to Bhoja's (eleventh century) influence. There are certain parallels between Bhoja's and Rūpa's theories. For example, both authors say that amorous aesthetic sentiments (*śṛṅgārarasa*) are the basis for all other types of aesthetic sentiments. However, a close study of the *Ujjvalanīlamanī* shows that Rūpa directly borrows from the works of the Recarla king, Sinhābhūpāla II (fourteenth century). As Māns Broo points out (2011), Rūpa's *Nāṭakacandrikā*, a composition on a Kṛṣṇa-centred dramatology, also demonstrates the closeness of these two authors. In the work, more than a half of *kārikās* are copied from Sinhābhūpāla. Because his ancestry hailed from Karṇāṭaka, Rūpa was likely exposed to Sinhābhūpāla II's works through his family heritage.

In this regard, it is possible that Rūpa considered the tradition of Sinhābhūpāla II as his own. For instance, when Rūpa cites other authors in the *Ujjvalanīlamanī*, he generally acknowledges the source. However, in the case of Sinhābhūpāla II, Rūpa mentions neither the king's name nor his works. Although Delmonico and Jan Brzesinski (1997) point out the close connection between the two authors, neither of them examines the issue fully. In this paper, I compare the fourteenth chapter of *Ujjvalanīlamanī* with Sinhābhūpāla's *Rasārṇavasudhākara* and argue that Rūpa's aesthetic theory is more directly influenced by Sinhābhūpāla II than by Bhoja.

Reference

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