

Someśvaradeva's Stand Point to Make a Good Poet in Terms of His *Suratotsava* and *Kīrtikaumudī*

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Abstract: Sanskrit scholars of literature and literary criticism are well aware of *Suratotsava* and *Kīrtikaumudī* which were composed by Someśvaradeva. In positing an essentialist view of poetry, it seems to me that poets like Someśvaradeva are suggesting that a poem itself has a soul. Someśvaradeva offered us with his writings which represent wealth of historical information on political circumstances of then Chalukya empire, along with subtle reflections on the ethical matters of poetry. Attributes to be a good poet, disqualifications of a poet render him or her to be bad one have been nicely delineated by the author. He represented the term, *sajjana* which means the process to make a good poet as worthy individual. On the contrary the term, *durjana* implies a badpoet as reprobate. Models and methods of poetic propriety have gained a place to be consulted herein also. Theme frequently appears to be satirical. Commentaries on standards of poetry and on ideal poetic disposition give the impression in the openings of his two epic poems. The analysis of those two epics of Someśvaradeva towards poets is being felt to underlay the art of poetry including ethical matters. Sometimes poets are being captivated by offering of money for flattery in favour of rulers. Such trend among the poets must be avoided. Collective poetic ability to compose a literary creation by a group of poets or *Kavigoṣṭhī* was also praised. Someśvaradeva's tried to articulate broader academic and intellectual issues of then period related to poetic matters and to console the urge of the connoisseurs. His utmost effort regarding poetry and poetical matters were to bring peace and harmony.

Keywords: *Suratotsava*, *Kīrtikaumudī*, *Satire*, *Sajjana*, *Durjana*, *Ethics*, *Poetic Propriety*.

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Someśvaradeva (1178 – 1255 AD) was a Gujarati poet and employed at the Chalukya court whose legacy “includes two *mahākāvya*s, a play, several benediction stanzas, a collection of satirical verses and a number of panegyrics inscribed on temples appointed by important political personages of his day. His gift for satire has gone completely unnoticed.”¹ To judge Someśvaradeva through widespread conventions or personal standards of literary merit, we can recall the observation of B. J. Sandesara that the style of his poem the *Suratotsava* was “more or less of the Gauḍī type, forced and obscure, and full of tiresome puns”² and “Someśvaradeva’s poetry would have delighted, not distanced, the audiences of his times: his jokes would have been seen as an index of his poetic sophistication and ingenuity, while his ready wit and acerbic tongue enthralled, by all accounts, his patron.”³ Subhāṭa, Harihara, Jahlaṇa, Vastupāla etc. poets were his contemporary and they praised the high standard and quality of Someśvaradeva. His talented creations amply fulfilled the desire of the connoisseurs. The accomplishment of the poet is being in such a way - “One ought to regard him therefore in accordance with the standards of good authorship that prevailed in his age. Someśvaradeva wrote a considerable amount of literature, which functioned in one sense as propaganda for Vastupāla. His panegyrics in inscriptions to the minister, along with his historical epic the *Kīrtikaumudī*, about the war Vastupāla fought against Saṃgrāmasiṃha the king of Lāṭa, as well as flattering references in his play the *Ullāgharāghava* and in his other epic the *Suratotsava* demonstrate how he skillfully employed poetry to promote this high-ranking official. One can only speculate why. Vastupāla was Someśvaradeva’s patron and the chaplain’s livelihood perhaps depended to an extent on serving his interests. Or perhaps after the weak character of Bhīma, he readily welcomed, and wished to show his support for, the strong and intelligent Vāghelas and the able new man they had appointed their minister. On the other hand, from the admiring though not obsequious tone of Someśvaradeva’s writing to Vastupāla, and the latter’s personal admiration of him, it seems that it was in friendship and not in homage for the sake of favours that Someśvaradeva focuses much of his poetic efforts on this man. Like him Vastupāla was an aesthete (*sahr̥daya*) and no mean poet. Intellectually, and artistically, both were at par.”⁴

Someśvaradeva inscribed those two literary creations not only to oblige and prompt political comforts but also to contemplate inner poetical interests, philosophical enquiries so that that people may gain inspiration to compose literature. Bihani also commented – “Both the *Suratotsava* and the *Kīrtikaumudī* are narrative poems. Apart from plot driven narratives, subtle reflections on poetic criteria and the ethics guiding the writing of good poems.”⁵ The matters like features of good poetry, good poet, poetry related other matters and way to conduct ourselves with others in social life are represented. Then Jaina literatures of the western India “presenting the idealized disposition of the *kavi* and the criteria for his craft, particularly in the biographies of famous poets”⁶. Someśvaradeva’s productions produced a sense to reflect and articulate broader academic and intellectual issues of then period related

to poetic matters and to console the urge of the connoisseurs.

Someśvaradeva commented that a poem must have a soul. He accepted that Poetry has a formal and body and that body of poetry has a soul which is unseen or invisible: "it is the resplendent tusk of *Varāha*, a fragrant flower perfuming the air, a charm with innate powers, a streaming river or its static counterpart a reservoir, but, above all, a time-less Goddess of Speech. Only the ideal poet is in possession of this soul. Or perhaps in his eyes it is the other way round: the soul of Poetry possesses, flowing in many streams, into the true *kavi*. It is also something that can, and often is, as he intends to demonstrate, desecrated in this world, just as it is exalted in the heart of the good poet. After the usual benedictions to deities, come lengthy passages in both works praising good poets and men while satirizing rogues employing complex, sometimes ambiguous language involving frequent wordplay. They function as learned excursions in the works with little bearing on their actual plots. Far from wavering from the point, they would I think have been appreciated as a stimulating cerebral discourse by a discerning mediaeval audience, who would have relished tonal variety, difficulty in language and subtlety of thought in writing."⁷

Poetical Ethics: Creations of Someśvaradeva were composed in stylish, informally, corrosive and concise panache. Prowls symbolically presented tone of incapacitated romanticism in inimitable way. The world might have lost some assured things. The poet tried to brighten them and the revive them. Someśvaradeva's sensation in respect of concentration of disillusionment, sanitizes poet's alembic into controlled wittiness. These quips verses unfold poet's views, models and methods of poetic superiority. Poems first contemplate the Gods or good people. Thereafter enter into specific literary subject according to the objective. The society abounds with good and bad people. Poet must try to arrange them in idealized order with artistic view to inherently make this universe peaceful and to prepare the psycho-cognitive structure of good citizen.

A careful consideration attracts more attention and alluded that good and bad people are not good and bad. Under circumstances apparently they perform good or bad activities. Same thing is applicable to the poets also. A real enlightened poet acts with contemplation and kindness to his fellow beings in literature, society and nature. Then are being placed in the place of *sajjana* or *mahātman* or *sādhu*. Unreal poet uselessly uses slurs which are not worthy to be trusted and appears as *durjana* or *khala* or *duṣṭa*. Poetic excellence is fashioned with the candid spirit of truth - *satyena sāhityarasena* which comes in the language of good poet and the bad poet only spoils much better poets' writings and ridicules worthless fatalities of poetry.⁸ Same things are applicable to real applied world. In *Suratotsava* poet first described the principles of literary excellence. Then he reproduces some prime samples of reprobate purloiner and defamer: "those whose words, not deeds, are unreliable? As we shall see, for him the conscientious use of words and the poet's character, in other words poetic habit and disposition, are mutually linked. A poet has the power to control the meanings of words, that

is to say, to mediate truth. So, in his view, a poet's misapplication of meaning to willfully distort truth is indicative of a deeper, a far more serious ethical flaw in his very nature: deception, slipperiness in conduct. In the ethics of poetry, he describes it nothing other than Truth itself that poetic language must strive to become a vehicle of, and the makers of poetic language (and therefore of Truth) must necessarily commit themselves to this serious responsibility."⁹

Someśvaradeva read out his verses in a literary assembly of fellow poets which was known as *kaviḡoṣṭhī*. The enlightened poets of that *kaviḡoṣṭhī* evaluate and analyse the standard, merits and demerits of the represented verses on basis of ethical guidelines. Thus, creation of poet gains the appropriate measure to nurture social and literary value system for the welfare of both the poet and society.

Constitutes of a Good Poet: According to Someśvaradeva a real poet does not only employ rhetoric (*alaṃkāra*) but also be careful to inculcate the soul of poetry which is *rasa*. Poetic triumph and awnings are dependent on cordial *Rasa* as chief objective. Just like the magnitude brightness of Jewels of material world, specific intelligence in terms deploying *Rasa* is central charming mater of poetic quality. *Rasa* must have to be outstanding and *guṇa*, *alaṃkāra* and other beautifying elements be secondary in poetry—

“Rasapradhānaiḥ kavitāvitānair mānyā na mānyāḥ kavayo vayobhiḥ |
tejoviśeṣān maṇayo'rhaṇīyā bhavanti na prastaravatprathimnā ||
rasāśrayā vakratayā ca ramyā vyākurvati kāñcanakāntim uccaiḥ |
sūktiḥ kaveḥ kasya cid eva vaktre vibhāti daṃṣṭreva kirīśvarasya ||”¹⁰

Being influenced by *Kāvyaḍarśa* of Daṇḍin, Someśvaradeva composed *Kīrtikaumudī*. Kings attain fame by the verses. So, monarchs carefully look after the intelligent poets (*kavis*) and royal patronage goes to them for maintaining their standard livelihoods. –

“Vandyās te kavayo yeṣāṃ sūktisaurabhavāsitā |
kṛtatrijagadāhlādaṃ kīrtir bhramati bhūbhujāṃ ||”¹¹

Someśvaradeva thought that spirit of quality is the core of poetry. And this is directly related to societal behavior. Real poets always sympathetic about connoisseurs by nurturing in real life situation. They have to stay tuned with feelings of their listeners, their afflictions etc. so that audience can enjoy the poetry with bright and lightened faces and forgetting the trammels of life –

“Khinnātmanāṃ niḥśvasitānilena duḥkhānale'ntar jvalituṃ pravṛtte |
śyāmāyamānāni mukhāni yeṣāṃ dhūmabhramaṃ bibhrati te namasyāḥ ||”¹²

Poets must have devotion for Sarasvatī to achieve artistic vision. Poets do not snip the words of other poem. Poets never swag others' treasure. Greed or *lubdhatā* of poet or *sādhu* is considered as unconceivable or *acintyaiva*. It is to be mentioned that four objectivity of a poet desirable - “inevitably tend to attract, or innately generate, obstructions or defilements, paradoxically through their inherent merit. It is futile to wish for a lake to haveno creatures,

for no snakes to lurk in sandalwood trees, for lights to never produce soot. Just the same way, the learned always attract detractors Someśvaradeva implies. Which is why his plea for their enjoying a worthier fate becomes even more forceful.”¹³

Poetic Propriety: In *Suratotsava* and the *Kīrtikaumudī* Someśvaradeva mentioned embodiments of the virtues in favour of poetic propriety. Someśvaradeva had mentioned the name of few authors and their writings which bear clearly idolized poetic propriety. These are namely - the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and *Bṛhatkathā*. In this respect he continued to mention the names of the poets with poetic propriety. They are - Subandhu, Kālidāsa, Māgha, Murāri, Bhāravi, Bāṇa, Dhanapāla and Bilhaṇa. Someśvaradeva give such a list of ancient predecessors and their literary creations to approve and greet high standard tradition of literary culture. These examples are aimed at to remind connoisseurs the heritage of poetic art and to show way of its revolving within the pace of time, want of place and taste of people.

Someśvaradeva followed poet rhetorician Daṇḍin's style of *Kāvyaḍarśa*, *Avantisundarikathā* and *Daśkumāracarita*. His praise also in favour of Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* for its superiority in respect of lucidity of language and presenting the subject very attractive way by following rhetorical technique and including *Rasa* as aristocratic solemnness of poetry.

Guṇāḍhya was admired by him for composing in Prakrit language. Bāṇa's composition, the *Kādambarī* bears power to interject even the serious submission of Vedic scholars engaged in daily recitals. “Here the strict Vedic pedant yields to his love of poetry, and the man of culture in Someśvaradeva avers: it is befitting that upon hearing the *Kādambarī* poets become silent since according to Manu, recitations of the Veda should be interrupted when the sound of an arrow is heard [at times of war] when Bāṇa is heard”¹⁴ –

“*Bhuktaṃ Kādambariṃ śrutvā kavayo maunam āśritāḥ |*

Bāṇadhvanāv anadhyāyo bhavatīti smṛtir yataḥ | |”¹⁵

Someśvaradeva could not forget to mention about the other contemporary immediate predecessor poets and works of his time. They are namely – Hemasūri, Nīlakaṇṭha, Prahlādana, Bhoja, Muñja, Naracandra, Vijayasena, Subhaṭa, Harihara, Yaśovīra, and Vastupāla. Among them except Bhoja, other poets are being called as minor poets. Someśvaradeva, mentioned them as because they employed poetic propriety in respect of delineating the fact and employing other poetic matters like prosody, rhetoric and *Rasa* in apt manner.

Someśvaradeva's criticism went against the poets who have engaged themselves in copying, maligning, stealing, slandering, falsifying etc. They arrive in literary sphere from degraded ethical backgrounds. They become failed in incorporating heritage, provide unnatural description and give non-spontaneous representations. Those efforts on their part are the horrible disparities to the paradigms of standard ethical values poetical matters. They are arrogant and covetous. In practical ground, those coarse-intellectuals or amoral poets create hiatus in quality of standard measures and bring disaster in the arena of literature and literary criticism. They, in their view think that their performance is satisfactory enough.

They are dishonorable unworthy poets or *Khalas*. They eject and spread poisoned malice and make literature or *Kāvya* destroyed. In the hand of *Khals* or bad poets, nectar like poetry appear as harmful equipment of societal believes and survival of humanity. So, for the benefit of human civilization, practice of rough poets are to be put aside.

Someśvaradeva's planning in relation to legendary distinction of literature and poetical ethics are fundamental for any kind of literary temperament. Poets will design their creative work in such a way so that people and connoisseurs could be practically impressed. The follower of poetic creation will accomplish the work of poet not only in their imaginary time of entertainment, but also during their hurry, bustle and hardship in this material world. So, repeatedly Someśvaradeva criticized the non-illuminated manners of ill minded poets or rough poets or *Kukavi* or *Akavi* or *Kuṭakavi*.

Suratotsava of Someśvaradeva strictly emphasized that any literary creation will try to make it free from linguistic unfortunateness or *apaśabdaśūnyam*. Again, it is a matter on real ground of behavioral world that sometimes poets are being captivated by offering of money for flattery in favour of rulers. Such trend among the poets must be avoided. "It seems to me that, in addition to avoiding liability for any mistakes, here too he wishes in part to hint at the fact that he writes not to keep a career going but out of pure, independent inspiration unconditioned by monetary need."¹⁶ At the end of the day, poets are common people of blood and flesh. So they are being tempted by material wanting. "Of course, to a certain degree, flattery for approval must have also played a role in praising the powerful. Working in court, Someśvaradeva would have had to keep several of these people happy in order to keep his own position safe."¹⁷ Same things are visible among the most poets, cinema-directors, artist and so called intellectuals of present time irrespective of states and countries and political loyalty. Someśvaradeva had hinted, pointed out and aware intellectuals like poets. But they become unable to avert the way even now.

Collective poetic ability to compose a literary creation by a group of poets or *Kavigoṣṭhī* was also praised by Someśvaradeva. "There also emerges from their descriptions a picture of a highly accomplished literary coterie valued by Someśvaradeva on account of its collective poetic ability and his personal connections to its members. It was dominated not by professional poets of whom the list provides only three examples, Nīlakaṇṭha, Harihara and Subhaṭa but high-ranking, learned employees of the court, or independent chieftains, who wrote for pleasure and prestige among peers, not pay. Judging from their close inter-relationships many such as Vastupāla, Yaśovīra and Someśvara were mutual friends while two had been teachers to Vastupāla and the number of times they appear cited in their works"¹⁸ Any kind of new verses or prose portions were first seemed to be presented or read aloud before the assembly of enlightened audience. Then they will analyse, evaluate, criticize and advice any kind of addition, alteration, refutation or acceptance of that new literary presentation. *Kavigoṣṭhī* was a symbol of co-operation and correction of manners, if necessary. Therefore, there was a free

air to develop intellectual capacity in form of assembly of the poets.

Suratotsava and *Kīrtikaumudī* with all their descriptive facts reproduce a peaceful overwhelming wit of ironic humor. Great poets use wit cautiously. They become aware of the aims, objectives, methods and applicability of didacticism by suggestive cultivation of word and sense. The predecessor of Someśvaradeva, famous Kashmiri poet and rhetorician, Kṣemendra (990 – 1070 AD) practiced and employed allegorical wit and humor in his works. Poets will not be shameful if they successfully indulge themselves in implicating his subjects with implicit and through robust amusement they would inherently teach people and society about their faults.¹⁹ As a successor, Someśvaradeva imitated and cast-off purified the application of same in time of dealing with it. Practically, Someśvaradeva broadsides Kṣemendra's sparkling disdain style of hilarity to reproach fraud people including bad intellectual poets of civilized society. When a day goes to an end, Scoundrel poets and people are being accepted and appeared as dishonest letterings and representative or as black spots to societal transactions. That happens due to their *ahaṃkāra* or useless vanity. Someśvaradeva made himself free from all kinds of possible faults and his artistic application satire reached to all and accepted by the people.

Someśvaradeva was unbiased supporter of valid and ethical writing. Therefore, his quality was prized and praised till now. Eventually, Someśvaradeva stood forward against unethical practices and contended to eliminate thieving, scurrility and honestly became a supporter to inculcate and employ *Rasa* in poetical creations. Ethical practice was valued and perceived by him as poetic propriety and also as a part of aesthetics. Prototypical, classic and good poets' creativity i.e. standard literature direct and suggest for leading a healthy societal life will peace and bliss. Just as a true poet is never a thief of words, he is not a swindler in worldly affairs. Good Poets always keep in mind and relentlessly consider the mentality, societal values of spectators and readers. Their livelihood, pain pleasure should be wisely inculcated by the poets. Appropriate integration of word and meaning, plot, character, description, prosody, quality, style, rhetoric, suggestive sense and *rasa* transcends a literary creation to a state of non-mundane pleasure. Frankly to say, real creations of poets amply pave a path to make a society beautiful which identified as *satya*, *śiva* and *sundara*. "Life and Art are to Someśvaradeva mutually intertwined. In fact, it is the latter that makes and exalts Life, by providing the framework that will inevitably enrich it. The ethics of Poetry are indeed the ethics of Life."²⁰

Diversified personality and quality of Someśvaradeva in regard to the attitude of a poet supported qualities like scholarly behavior, great-heartedness, application of humor with careful consideration, greyhound towards humanity, rejection of useless pride, employing unity among captivating dissimilarities etc. which are actually attached and adjacent to real life. Attributes of a good poet must represent the soul of literary creation with propriety so that whole world become beautiful. Concluding remark is given in form of a quote - "Capacity of

literature to bring welfare can never be denied. Each and every sort of indispensable elements for our peaceful and delightful living is given by the literature. So, literature is for life, literature is for peace, literature is for entertainment, literature is for welfare for all.”²¹

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