

SŪRSĀGAR , ed. Nandadulare  
Vajpeyi

(Kāshī : Nāgariprachārini  
Sabha,  
S. 2035)

राग बिलावल ॥६६३॥

नान्हरिया गोपाल लाल, तू बेगि बड़ी किन होहि ।  
इहि मुख मधुर बचन हँसि कै धौं, जननि कहै कब मोहि ।  
यह लालसा अधिक मेरे जिय, जो जगदीस कराहि ।  
मो देखत कान्हर इहि आँगन, पग द्वै धरनि धराहि ।  
खेलहि हलधर संग रंग-राच, नैन निरखि सुख पाऊँ ।  
छिन-छिन छुधित जानि पय कारन, हँसि-हँसि निकट बुलाऊँ ।  
जाकौ सिव-विरंचि-सनकाटिक, मुनिजन ध्यान न पाव ।  
सूरदास जसुमति ता सुत - हित, मन अभिलाष बढ़ाव ॥७५॥

राग बिलावल ॥६६४॥

तृणाव तं-बध

जसुमति मन अभिलाष करै ।

कब मेरौ लाल घुटुरुबनि रंगै, कब धरनी पग द्वैक धरै ।  
कब द्वै दाँत दूध के देखौं, कब तोतरै मुख बचन भरै ।  
कब नंदहि बाबा कहि बोलै, कब जननी कहि मोहि ररै ।  
कब मेरौ अँचरा गहि मोहन, जोइ-सोइ कहि मोसौं भगरै ।  
कब धौं तनक-तनक कछु खैहै, अपने कर सौं मुखहि भरै ।  
कब हँसि बात कहैभौ मोसौं, जा छबि तै दुख दूरि हरै ।  
स्याम अकेले आँगन छाँड़े, आपु गई कछु काज घरै ।  
इहि अंतर अँधवाइ उठ्यौ इक, गरजत गगन सहित घरै ।  
सूरदास ब्रज-लोग सुनत धुनि, जो जहँ-तहँ सब अतिहि डरै ॥७६॥

हौहू णफऽः ६९३ छंदः १६

मेरे नान्हरिया गोपाल बेगि बडे से काहे न होहि  
इहि मुष मधुर बचन हसि कबहू जननि कहोगे मोहि  
यह लालसा अधिक मोहि नित प्रति फुणि जौ ईस करै  
इन नैननि देषत सषि माधौ पग द्वै धरणि धरै  
हलधर संग षेलत ब्रज अंगना चरण सबद सचु पावै  
छिन छिन छुधित पान पै कारण हसि हसि निकट बुलावै  
जा कौं निगम नेति नित गावै सिव उनमान न पावै  
सूरदास जसोदा सुत हित मन अभिलाष बढावै

# Sūrdās

rāga bilāvala ||693||

nānhariyā gopāla lāla, tū begi baṛau kina hohi|  
ihiñ muk<sup>h</sup>a mad<sup>h</sup>ura bacana hañsi kai d<sup>h</sup>auñ, janani kahai kaba mohiñ|  
yaha lālasā ad<sup>h</sup>ika mere jiya, jo jagadīsa karāhiñ|  
mo dek<sup>h</sup>ata kānhara ihiñ āñgana, paga dvai d<sup>h</sup>arani d<sup>h</sup>arāhiñ|  
khelahiñ halad<sup>h</sup>ara sañga rañga-ruci, naina nirak<sup>h</sup>i suk<sup>h</sup>a pāūñ|  
c<sup>h</sup>ina-c<sup>h</sup>ina c<sup>h</sup>ud<sup>h</sup>ita jāni paya kārana, hañsi-hañsi nikaṭa bulāūñ|  
jākau siva-birañci-sanakādika, munijana d<sup>h</sup>yāna na pāva|  
sūradāsa jasumati tā suta-hita, mana ab<sup>h</sup>ilāḱ<sup>h</sup>a baṛ<sup>h</sup>āva||

12. Yaśodā daydreams:

**BRYANT** NPS 693 <sup>3</sup>

**BRYANT**

"When will my little one crawl upon his knees,  
when will he plant his two feet upon the earth?

When will I see his first two teeth,  
when will he lisp his first word?

When will he call Nanda "father,"  
when will he call me "mother"?

When will he catch my skirt  
and babble angry words at me?

When will he first feed himself  
with his own two tiny hands?

When will he laugh and talk with me,  
his beauty dissolving all my cares?"

She left Kṛṣṇa alone in the courtyard,  
left to work in the house;

And a whirlwind arose,  
and the clouds began to growl. . . .

Sūr says:

The people of Braj heard this sound  
and froze in fear where they stood.

हौहू णफऽः ६९३ छंदः १६

मेरे नान्हरिया गोपाल बेगि बडे से काहे न होहि  
इहि मुष मधुर बचन हसि कबहू जननि कहोगे मोहि  
यह लालसा अधिक मोहि नित प्रति फुणि जौ ईस करै  
इन नैननि देषत सषि माधौ पग द्वै धरणि धरै  
हलधर संग खेलत ब्रज अंगना चरण सबद सचु पावै  
छिन छिन छुधित पान पै कारण हसि हसि निकट बुलावै  
जा कौं निगम नेति नित गावै सिव उनमान न पावै  
सूरदास जसोदा सुत हित मन अभिलाष बढावै

SŪRSĀGAR

ed. E. Bryant  
(forthcoming)

**NPS 693**

§4 *Mere nānhariyā gopāla begi baḍe se kāhe na hohi* (NPS 693)

- 1 "O Gopāl, my little tiny child,  
why can't you grow any faster?  
2 When will your mouth learn to smile and shape sweet words?  
When will you call me Mother?  
3 And my great wish—the one that comes each day,  
the one I want the Lord to realize—is this:  
4 That these eyes of mine will be watching, friend,  
when Mādhav plants his two feet firmly on firm ground.  
5 Let me rejoice to hear the sound of footsteps  
as he plays in this Braj courtyard with Balarām.  
6 Let me see him moment by moment become famished,  
and let me laugh and call to feed him milk."  
7 That Being whom the Vedas laud by always saying  
"Not this!" and whom Shiva's yogic transports never found—  
8. The son of Yaśodā, Sūrdās says:  
Her love for him magnifies the longings of the mind.

This poem garners much of its charm through the poet's evocation of a mother's longings for her son's development and for the role she herself would play in that process. In this sense, it is a classic *vātsalya* ("parenthood") poem, of just the sort for which Sūrdās is celebrated throughout the Hindi-speaking world. The poet underscores this mood by using the very word "longing" (*abhilāṣa*, v. 8) to summarize the poem in its concluding phrase.

Within this framework, however, Sūr introduces touches of irony that make the poem far more intriguing than if he were merely cataloguing motherly desires. He begins in verse 3 by playing upon the fairly obvious irony that the very Lord (*īśa*, v. 3) to whom Yaśodā would appeal for an answer to her prayers is actually Krishna himself. No one in the audience would miss the point. In verse 4 this little joke gathers into a fullblown pun, for in speaking of how she yearns for the moment when Krishna will "set his two feet firmly on firm earth," Yaśodā makes use of a phrase that names the very Person upon whom this earth is grounded. She ends that verse with the words *dharāṇi dharai*, meaning "set on [firm] earth"; yet *dharāṇi dhar* is a title of Vishnu/Krishna as the one who supports (*dharai*) that which supports us: *dharāṇi*, the earth. This title recalls the time when Vishnu assumed his incarnation as a boar and raised the earth on his tusks, but it also resonates to the moment when Krishna raised Mount Govardhan above his head.

The following line carries this devotional double entendre further still. On the surface, Yaśodā seems to be relishing the moment when she will rejoice (*sacu pāvai*, v. 5) to hear the sound of his footsteps. The way in which she designates this sound, however, is to speak, literally, of a "foot sound" (*carāṇa sabada*, v. 5) or,

as this phrase might also be interpreted, “the word foot.” Now in a devotional context, the real joy of the word “foot” (*carāṇa*, v. 5) comes when a worshiper turns to the Lord’s feet for succor and support, or delights in praising those feet for providing such help (cf. §10). Thus as one verse leads to the next, the overarching irony of a mother wishing God would grow up is steadily reinforced.

The last two verses of the poem, in which the narrator himself takes over the diction, reinforce this motif, but in a somewhat different way. Here the poet develops a contrast between the success Yaśodā has in gaining access to God through simple, heartfelt longings, and the failure that is met by those who follow a formal, “religious” approach. The latter is outlined in the Upanishads (i.e., “Vedas,” *nigama*, v. 7), and enacted in the veneration of Shiva, and in the whole vocabulary of yogic discipline for which he serves as exemplar. Yaśodā’s desire for fulfillment, expressed in simple devotion, triumphs over the most elaborate versions of the *via negativa*. The Upanishadic formulation “not this!” (*neti*, v. 7; cf. §33.8) represents the theological aspect of this orientation, while the practical aspect is represented by Shiva’s yogic efforts to attain the Absolute by means of suprarational states of consciousness (*unamāna*, v. 7). By his choice of word order, Sūrdās makes it clear that the true object of these aspirations is “the son of Yaśodā” (*jasodā suta*, v. 8). Only after he utters these two words—the “answer” to the poem—does he move into the actual syntax of the final verse.

Yet that syntax is no afterthought. It works forward toward a further subtlety: Yaśodā achieves her theological longings not because Krishna (Vishnu! God!) is her son, but through the very process of longing. In the field of force that connects mother and son, the act of longing is its own fulfillment (v. 8). *Bhaktas*, lovers of God, have often claimed that the meaning of bhakti is to be found in the *bhāv* itself—the emotion of it—rather than the attainment of any object thereby. Sūr brings this thought into focus by choosing the word he does to end his poem. This is the verb *baḍhāvai*, which means “magnify” and denotes an increase in the direction of a goal. By positioning it as the last word in his poem (cf. §424), Sūr suggests that with bhakti, real closure is actually the process of love’s unending “magnification.” It is therefore fitting, perhaps, that this popular composition seems to have spawned other, later ones, such as the well-known poem Kenneth Bryant has analyzed under the title “Yaśodā daydreams” (*jasumati mana abhilāṣa karai*, NPS 694). Its title is drawn almost entirely from words that could have been quoted from the last line of the poem at hand: *jasodā . . . mana abhilāṣa* (“Yaśodā . . . the longings of the mind”). Bryant’s translation nicely locates this particular form of mental longing as a mother’s daydreaming.

\* Bryant, *Poems to the Child-God*, pp. 26–35.

revisionist may best be measured by a brief look at how Sūr is read by other critics. Ultimately, I shall argue, they are perceiving the same phenomena, but valuing them differently. Perhaps some among them are, with great courtesy, turning an intentionally blind eye to what they view as a great poet's occasional lapses; I suggest that it is in part those lapses that make the poet great.

## 2. *Censorship and the courteous critic*

He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. Cranly questioned the inscrutable dial. . . .

—Joyce, *Stephen Hero*<sup>15</sup>

If one were to essay a brief illustration of critical approaches to a well-known English poet, the first step at least would be relatively simple: to select one or two poems which have been commented upon by a representative number of respectable critics. In the case of Sūrdās, the first step is complicated by, among other things, the magnitude of his work. There are 4,927 *padas*<sup>16</sup> in the *Sabhā* edition of the *Sūrsāgar*; it is thus not surprising that a great many have never found their way into the critical literature at all, and that only a very few appear with a frequency that would permit comparison.

When we find one poem, then, appearing in study after study (and invariably drawing nothing but the highest acclaim) we may reasonably assume it to be, by the criteria

15. *Stephen Hero*, p. 211.

16. *Pada* is the term usually applied to the genre of short lyric verse employed by Sūr. S.M. Pandey says of the genre: "The literal meaning of *pada* in Sanskrit is 'step,' 'mark,' 'trace,' or 'position.' It appears that among the musicians of the Middle Ages this word was also used to mean 'a description of a hero (*nāyak*).' Another meaning for the term is 'word' or language itself. The name *pada* was also given, for unknown reasons, to a musical form of short lyric poetry. This *pada* form was the most popular style for the singing of devotional songs in the medieval period" ("Mīrābāi and Her Contributions to the Bhakti Movement," *History of Religions* 5:1 [1965]: 59-60).

informing twentieth-century Hindi criticism, a masterpiece. Such a verse is *jasumati mana abhilāṣa karai*:

- 1 Yaśodā daydreams:
- 2 "When will my little one crawl upon his knees,  
when will he plant his two feet upon the earth?"
- 3 When will I see his first two teeth,  
when will he lisp his first word?
- 4 When will he call Nanda 'Father,'  
when will he call me 'Mother'?
- 5 When will he catch at my skirt  
and babble angry words at me?
- 6 When will he first feed himself  
with his own two tiny hands?
- 7 When will he laugh and talk with me,  
his beauty dissolving my sorrows?"
- 8 She left Śyāma alone in the courtyard,  
busied herself in the house;
- 9 And a whirlwind arose,  
and the clouds began to growl.
- 10 Sūr says: The people of Braj heard this sound  
and froze in fear where they stood.<sup>17</sup>

The *Sabhā* text places the poem in a section entitled *ṭṛṇāvartavadha*, "the slaying of Ṭṛṇāvarta." Briefly, Ṭṛṇāvarta is a demon who stormed into Gokul in the form of an enormous whirlwind. His mission was to slay the infant Kṛṣṇa, whom Yaśodā had most conveniently left alone in the courtyard.<sup>18</sup> The sky darkened, the *Brajvāsīs* were blinded with dust and terrified by the roar of the wind; and Kṛṣṇa was plucked aloft and spun into the midst of the obscuring cloud of dust. (Kṛṣṇa, of course, speedily disposed of the demon; that dénouement, however, is conspicuously absent in the present poem.)

17. *Sabhā* 694; Caturvedī p. 142. For the Caturvedī version, the first half of line 8 should read instead: ". . . so saying, she left him in the courtyard."

18. In the classical version (*Bhāgavata Purāna* X:vii:18-19), Kṛṣṇa becomes miraculously heavy, so that Yaśodā is forced to remove him from her lap. This supernatural explanation is totally absent from Sūr's version, as pointed out by Jagdīś Gupta, *Braja-bhāṣā Kṛṣṇa-bhakti kāvya* (Allahabad, 1968), p. 57.

Jagdīs, Bhāradvāj is one of the very few critics to have discussed the poem *in its entirety*.<sup>19</sup> Bhāradvāj first lauds Sūr's description of Yaśodā's feelings of "maternal love" (*vātsalya*), "impatience," and "possessiveness," which precede the attack of Tṛṇāvarta. After paraphrasing Yaśodā's reverie (lines 1-7), he comments upon the effect of the closing lines:

Against the particular background of Yaśodā's mental state, lost as she is in such joyful hopes and ambitions, what a tremendous sense of conflict [*virodhātmakatā*] is presented by the sudden emergence of the whirlwind! On one side, sweet, tiny ripples of emotion arise in the mother's heart; and on the other, a terrible storm has erupted.<sup>20</sup>

Bhāradvāj concludes by judging the poem a fine example of Sūr's *kavitvacāturī*—his "poetic skill," but also in a sense his "poetic cunning."

My own reading of the poem is very close to Bhāradvāj's. Clearly, the first line promises a poem of *vātsalya*; equally clearly, lines 2 through 7 seem to fulfill this promise. They do so by a sequence of repetitive, syntactically parallel descriptions of rather unextraordinary childhood behavior. The hypnotic drone of questions—"When, when, when?"—soon becomes self-sustaining, each repetition increasing our expectation of the next. The litany is scarcely calculated to arouse intense curiosity; by line 7, the course of the poem seems set: it will be cozy, domestic, perhaps a bit cloying.

Those first seven lines serve another, related function: they lead us to generalize the child. The very banality of the questions, the commonplace nature of the actions described, leads us away from Kṛṣṇa's godhood; it places Kṛṣṇa in a class with all children everywhere, and Sūr is careful not to break

19. The only other exception I have found is Yajñadatta Sarmā, who quotes the whole poem—but discusses only the *vātsalya* aspect—in his *Sūra-sāhitya aura siddhānta* (Delhi, 1955), p. 82.

20. Jagdīs Bhāradvāj, *Kṛṣṇa-kāvya meṃ līlā-varṇana* (New Delhi, 1972), p. 242.

this illusion. The child is anonymous for seven lines of the poem.

But in line 8, the pattern with which we have become so comfortable is rudely interrupted. Repetition has led us to expect a line beginning with *kaba*, "when"; instead it begins with Śyāma—an epithet of Kṛṣṇa. The naming of the god jolts us from drowsy daydream into a fully awake sense of time, place, and person. Abruptly we have Kṛṣṇa placed (in the courtyard), Yaśodā placed (in the house), and both of them occupied ("alone," "at work"); the daydream is over, the stage set for action, all in the space of a line.

The action of line 9 slams into our earlier complacency with the realization that we have been sorely tricked, our contract with the poet violated. We *know* that whirlwind; we know what it portends, and anticipate the consequences of Yaśodā's moment of negligence. Yet the poet has not finished toying with us. Instead of presenting, and resolving, the expected battle, Sūr executes a fade-out at the moment of greatest peril—leaving to the audience the task of completing a tale they know by heart. It is in the process of retelling the story themselves that the audience is led forcibly to remember that the helpless child of lines 1 to 7 is neither helpless, nor an ordinary child.

It should be apparent that I, like Bhāradvāj, find the locus of Sūr's "skill" or "cunning" in the *virodhātmakatā*—the "conflict." But this appears to be a minority position. In study after study, the *pada* is presented as an example of unalloyed *vātsalya*; it also appears, in study after study, in a radically abbreviated form. This abbreviation is certainly not based on considerations of space; the entire poem is ten lines in length, and the usual surgery performed by the critics shortens it by a mere three lines. Nor does the solution lie in a discrepancy between the edition of the *Sūrsāgar* used in this study and that used by other critics. The texts do indeed vary in minor ways, but all editions agree on the number



and disposition of the lines in "Yaśodā daydreams." The phenomenon might still be of no more than passing interest were the excised lines of little importance to the poem as a whole, but in fact the converse is true: the three commonly deleted lines completely reverse the sense of the preceding seven. In my terminology, the critics have seen fit to edit out the epiphany.

A typical response is that of K. B. Jindal, who prefaces his remarks on the child-poems with words of high praise for the entire *bālalīlā* corpus:

(T)he first one-thousand verses of the tenth canto of the Sursagar have no parallel in the literature of the world. Each verse is a complete picture of the child in a particular mood or at a particular stage of his development. All the one thousand deserve to be studied to appreciate fully how deeply Surdas has penetrated into the child mind.<sup>21</sup>

Having thus portrayed Sūr as above all a master of psychological realism, Jindal supports his case with several examples—including "Yaśodā daydreams," which he introduces with another brief comment, quoted here in full:

In his [Sūr's] verses we can almost see the child playing with the mother. What are the ambitions of a woman when she first rises to the dignity of a mother? She weaves cobwebs of imagination and looks forward to the day when the child in her lap will toddle and lisp.<sup>22</sup>

The version of the *pada* that follows is at least in conformance with Jindal's introduction; it consists of lines 2 through 7 only. Line 1 ("Yaśodā daydreams" in my translation) has presumably been subsumed under Jindal's prefacing remarks, and its deletion need occasion no surprise. What does surprise is the deletion, without comment, of lines 8

21. Jindal, p. 109.

22. Jindal, p. 111. Jindal does not footnote his source; however, the lines he does cite are all identical in form with those of the Venkateśvara Press edition—which contains the missing lines. (See Caturvedī, p. 142, for variant readings.)

through 10. In Jindal's version, there are "waves of emotion" but no *virodhātmakatā*; a reverie but no whirlwind; a child but no god.

When we turn to other critics, we find that the same lines (8, 9, and 10) have been cut by Harbaṃs Lāl Śarmā,<sup>23</sup> Mun-śīrām Śarmā,<sup>24</sup> Premnārāyaṇ Ṭaṇḍan,<sup>25</sup> and Charles S. J. White.<sup>26</sup> Śaśī Tiwārī gives only lines 3 and 4.<sup>27</sup> Like Jindal, all of the latter critics portray the *pada* as an excellent illustration of Sūr's skill at describing parental fantasies; like Jindal, none of them alludes to the *tṛṇāvarta* episode.

23. *Sūra aura unakā sāhitya* (Aligarh, 1958), p. 320.

24. *Sūradāsa kā kāvyā-vaibhava*, p. 151.

25. "Sūr kā vātsalya varṇana, kucha prasaṅga," in Harbaṃslāl Śarmā, ed., *Sūradāsa* (Delhi, 1973), p. 112. Perhaps Ṭaṇḍan's most striking bit of surgery is performed on *Sabhā* 681. The full poem is translated in Part Two. It begins:

"Taking foot in hand, he sticks his toe in his mouth;  
The Lord lies alone in his swing,  
playing happily by himself."

The remainder of the poem describes the scenes of apocalypse envisioned by all the gods of the universe, who, seeing Kṛṣṇa again in this iconographically suggestive pose, prepare for the seas of *pralaya*. Ṭaṇḍan, however, deletes all but the first two lines and thus is able to comment of the poem: "One day the child Kṛṣṇa was lying on a swing. He grabbed his big toe and put it in his mouth. This scene is extremely realistic; from time immemorial chubby little boys lying in swings have always sucked their big toes" (p. 110).

26. "Kṛṣṇa as Divine Child," p. 173. White does note elsewhere in the article that "The Cosmic Kṛṣṇa unites, in Sūrdās's writing, with the infant" (p. 174). Indeed, Jindal, too, is by no means blind to the presence of the divine in Sūr's verse ("Both Sur and Tulsi wanted to stress the divine element in the incarnation," p. 107). The point here is not that the "censors" fail to see either aspect, but simply that they appear to regard them as separable; they seem not to consider important the interaction of cosmic and commonplace in the same poem. Jindal comes very near a recognition of the potential for irony when he notes that "To intensify the supernatural element [Sūr] makes Krishna perform all the miracles even as a child" (p. 108); but I think he misses the point entirely when he charges that "We lose sight of the divinity of Krishna when we find his ears being boxed, his hands being tied, his acts being censured by his mother, and his comrades taking liberties with him" (p. 138). Not so; as we shall see, Sūr reminds us of Kṛṣṇa's divinity with sufficient frequency to make the sight of God having his ears boxed one of awesome irony.

27. *Sūra ke Kṛṣṇa*, p. 49.

Clearly, six of the seven critics cited are not very interested in the reversal, the epiphany, or whatever we are to call the change that occurs in the second half of the poem; and unless the critics say that they perceive a reversal, it is impossible to prove that they do so. It is quite possible, however, to establish that such deletions are too systematic to be coincidental; that there exists a definable set of poems in which the critics are seeing *something* which they consider at best peripheral to the poem's main theme; and that this "something" is consistently identical with the "something" I have called epiphany. It is, for example, that thing which occurs, most unambiguously, in lines 5 and 6 of *calata dekhi jasumati sukha pāvai*:

- 1 Yaśodā delights in watching him walk.
- 2 Clumping along on faltering feet,  
showing off when he sees his mother,
- 3 He walks as far as the doorstep,  
but returns again and again;
- 4 Stumbles and falls, but can't quite cross,  
and the gods are made to wonder;
- 5 *For he makes in a second a million worlds,  
and destroys in a second a million more;*
- 6 *Yet he sits in the lap of Nanda's wife  
as she teaches him to play,*
- 7 And she leads him by the hand  
across that doorstep,  
step by step by step.
- 8 The sight of the Lord of Sūr  
stuns the minds of gods and men.<sup>28</sup>

Jindal prefaces his discussion of this *pada* with the comment (again quoted in full):

A toddling child's attempt to cross the doorstep and the insurmountable barrier before him are a common occurrence in every home. But none could have depicted better than Surdas has done this common phenomenon in the life of our children.<sup>29</sup>

28. *Sabhā* 744; Caturvedī p. 215.

29. Jindal pp. 109-110.

Jindal then gives the original Braj for lines 2, 3, 4, and 7. His deletion of line 1, as in "Yāsodā daydreams," presumably reflects nothing more than a sense that the introductory *ṭeka*<sup>30</sup> is made unnecessary by his own prefacing remarks. No such excuse can be made in the case of lines 5, 6, and 8: "For he makes in a second a million worlds" etc. In this instance, there can be absolutely no doubt that Jindal has erased the epiphany. (In this instance, there can also be no doubt concerning Jindal's awareness of the existence of the lines: he has replaced lines 5 and 6 with two proper and explicit rows of ellipsis marks.)<sup>31</sup>

Jindal's treatment of the verse is characteristic of that administered by the critics to all the poems traditionally known as the *pāṇvoṃ-calnā-pada*, the *padas* which describe Kṛṣṇa learning to walk. There are twenty-three of

30. *Ṭeka*: "prop," the half-line which usually begins a *pada*, and which is, in most styles of performance, repeated several times during the course of the poem (usually at the end of every couplet). The rhetorical function of the *ṭeka* in the performance of a *pada* has been described by Gaurīśaṅkar Mīśra, who in turn cites his debt to Brajeśvar Varmā: "By presenting the central mood of the entire *pada* in a few concise and well-constructed words in the form of a *ṭek*, the poet produces a particular charm in his *pada*" (*Sūra-sāhitya kā chandaḥ-śāstrīya adhyayana* [Allahabad, 1969], p. 16). The repeated effect of this first line should be kept in mind when reading all *padas*; I shall refer to its specific rhetorical functions only when they are other than the obvious one of reinforcement of "contract."

31. *Ṭaṇḍan* cleanses the poem still more thoroughly of the cosmic. His version of the poem begins with "Yaśodā delights" and ends with "but can't quite cross," allowing him to comment only that: "Kṛṣṇa rapidly learned to crawl; but he still couldn't cross the threshold. When, after several attempts, he fell, the clever child began to turn back as soon as he reached the threshold. Seeing this, his mother is overjoyed" (p. 112). *Ṭaṇḍan* seems determined to prove at all costs the thesis stated in the first paragraph of his article: "The love of parents for their offspring, and of elders for small, chubby and cheerful children: to describe this is *vātsalya-rasa*. . . . Sūr's poetry contains extensive description of this *vātsalya*" (p. 107). The thesis itself is indisputable; what is amazing is that, with all the *padas* of "straight" *vātsalya* to choose from, *Ṭaṇḍan* chose nearly half his examples from the "epiphany" poems, and then went through such editorial gymnastics to make them come out *vātsalya*.

these; eleven are most explicit examples of epiphany.<sup>32</sup> The latter contribute to a particular irony, and to a recurrent and often explicit message. The irony is that of a god who must learn to walk; the message is one we shall soon see again: Kṛṣṇa places himself voluntarily under the control of his true devotee. Yet irony and message alike are ignored by the majority of critics, who describe the *pāṃvoṃ-calnā* poems as examples of realistic description, and limit their examples to the twelve *padas* in which no explicit irony is in evidence. Here Bhāradvāj joins the majority. His description of the *pāṃvoṃ-calnā* poems is limited to a single paragraph which, while aptly summarizing the human actions involved in the narrative, makes no mention whatsoever of epiphany, *virodhātmakatā*, irony, reversal, or even the fact that Kṛṣṇa is God.<sup>33</sup>

While one may speculate on the question of just what it is that prompts such abridgement,<sup>34</sup> what concerns me here is less the reason than the fact. Two poems that I consider as among the best examples of epiphany, are presented by a considerable number of critics as among the best examples of *vātsalya*; yet they perceive in those same poems elements which are incompatible with that sentiment. By their deletions, the critics confirm part of my thesis: that audience

32. I consider "explicit" *Sabhā* numbers 731, 737 and 742-750; as less explicit, numbers 730, 732-736, 738-741, 751-752.

33. Bhāradvāj p. 224.

34. A partial answer is implicit in a most revealing paragraph in Jagdīś Gupta's *Kṛṣṇa Bhakti Kāvya*: "There is another noteworthy peculiarity of the portrayal of Kṛṣṇa's *bāla-līlās* by the poets [Sūrdās, Nandadās, Paramānandadās], and that is the mixture of the supernatural and cosmic form with commonplace human emotions. From the viewpoint of *rasa*, such descriptions appear to be impediments to its full appreciation [*rasāsvādāna*]; but at the same time, the introduction of the cosmic produces a sense of mystery which, by creating surprise, wonder, and curiosity, awakens toward the object of emotion [*ālambana*] a strange attraction, thereby compensating for the abovementioned flaw" (p. 162). Gupta's *apologia* is clearly a response to a felt, if seldom expressed, criticism of Sūr's mixing of *laukika* and *alaukika* ("commonplace" and "cosmic") elements—and it is precisely this mixture that results in what I have been calling epiphany.

experience of these poems—not just mine, but theirs also—is complex, is composed of conflicting elements. By their recognition of the *vātsalya* portion of the poems as being particularly well done, they support two more arguments that I should like to make: first, that while the epiphanies may have received little critical acclaim as such, they cannot be dismissed as inferior examples of Sūr's craftsmanship; second, that an effective reversal away from *vātsalya* requires that the *vātsalya* portion itself be persuasive.

Clearly, the "censors" consider the essence of these poems to lie in the *vātsalya* itself, while for me that essence lies more in the reversal. Even assuming this a point of reasonable disagreement, we may still approach the question: what relationship exists between *vātsalya*—a category whose validity I most emphatically affirm—and epiphany?

It would appear that epiphany is possible only after distraction; that is, Sūr must first draw his audience away from the fact of Kṛṣṇa's divinity before he may reveal—return—that divinity to them. One of Sūr's favorite strategies for achieving such distraction is to generate the strongest possible sense of *vātsalya*. This strategy is most certainly not the exclusive property of the *Sūr-līlā*; a similar relationship, between flashes of revelation and the oblivion engendered by love, is evidenced in the very plot of the *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* as it appears in the tenth *skandha* of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, that most definitive of sources for the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa mythos.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. *Vātsalya-bhāva* and the forgetful audience

. . . he glanced up at the clock of the Ballast Office and smiled:

—It has not epiphanized yet, he said.

—*Stephen Hero*<sup>36</sup>

35. For an exhaustive discussion of the relationship between the *Bhāgavata* narrative and the *Sūrsāgar* see Ved Prakāś Śāstrī, *Śrīmadbhāgavata aura Sūrasāgara kā varṇya viṣaya kā tulanātmaka adhyayana* (Agra, 1969).

36. p. 213.