The Authorship of the Commentary on Vopadeva’s Harilīlā

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1. Introduction

Vopadeva was a prolific writer who lived in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century. He is known for his works on the Bhāgavatapurāṇa called the Muktāphala and the Harilīlā. The Harilīlā explains the themes in each of the purāṇa’s twelve books. It also provides a short summary of the chapters within each book. The Harilīlā occupies an important place in the history of the Bhāgavata tradition since it predates Śrīdhara’s famous fourteenth century Bhāvārthadīpikā commentary.

Vopadeva’s Harilīlā has a commentary, which is variously called Harilīlāmṛtaṭīkā, Harilīlābhāṣyavivarana, Harilīlāviveka, or Harilīlāvyākhyā. Concerning its authorship, scholars have argued for various possibilities: (1) Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, the sixteenth century Advaita author (Divanji 1926; Gupta 2006; Karmarkar 1962; Modi 1985; Pellegrini 2014; Rocher 1986; Saha 2014; Sasstri and Vidyabagisa 1920; Upadhyaya 1933); (2) A Madhusūdana Sarasvatī of the thirteenth century (Abhyankar 1986; Raghavan 1978); (3) Hemādri (Palsure 1954); and (4) Vopadeva himself (Bhattacharyya 1944). The majority of contemporary scholars attribute the commentary to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, the Advaita author. However, following Palsure (1954) I argue that the commentary should be called the Harilīlāviveka and that its author was likely to have been Hemādri.

2. Hemādri’s Authorship of the Harilīlāviveka

As Palsure (1954, xxx, fn. 10) points out, one of the concluding verses in the commentary states Hemādri’s authorship: ‘Hemādri composed this Harilīlāviveka at the abode of Rāmarāja in the capital, for the satisfaction of good people.’ This verse appears in both the printed editions and in a manuscript (Lalchand #5220).1) Hemādṛī was a patron of Vopadeva and served as a minister to two successive Yādava kings, Mahādeva and Rāmacandra,
in the court at Devagiri (currently Daulatabad) in Maharashtra from 1260 to 1309 (Bhattacharyya 1944, VI–VII; Palsure 1954, xxix).

The concluding verse of the Kaivalyadīpikā, the commentary on Vopadeva’s Muktāphala, employs a very similar construction expressing Hemādri’s authorship: ‘Hemādri composed this commentary on the Muktāphala called Kaivalyadīpikā at the abode of Rāmarāja in the capital.’ The Kaivalyadīpikā is usually convincingly attributed to Hemādri. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Hemādri also wrote this concluding verse of the Harilīlāviveka identifying himself as the author.

At the end of the Harilīlāviveka there is a reference to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī: ‘This was completed by Sarasvatī Śrī Madhusūdana, who pleases wise people. May all people achieve devotion to the lord of Vraja through this tasting of rasa.’ According to Raghavan (1973, 124), this verse appears only in some manuscripts. It would require further research to find out when this verse was added, and to identify exactly which part of the commentary was added by Madhusūdana, if he was at all involved. In any case, the expression that Madhusūdana ‘completed (nirvyūḍha) the commentary suggests that Hemādri composed its main body.

3. Other Overlapping Verses

The Harilīlāviveka shares the following two verses with the Kaivalyadīpikā:

These good statements of Vopadeva do not please those people who see truth in untruth, and who see untruth in truth.

He [i.e. Vopadeva] has ten dense and excellently crafted compositions on grammar, nine celebrated [compositions] on medicine, one amazing [composition] on determining tithis, exactly three [compositions] on literature, and three [compositions] regarding the statements of truth in the Bhāgavata. In this world, which extraordinary qualities did he not have, [he] who is the best among gods on earth [i.e. Brāhmaṇas]? The fact that the Harilīlāviveka and the Kaivalyadīpikā share the same verses indicates that Hemādri authored both.

4. References to the Paramahaṃsapriyā Commentary

Karmakar (1962, xiii–xiv) lists the commentary on the Harilīlā as one of the works written by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in the sixteenth century. This is because the Harilīlāviveka cites
a work called the *Paramahaṃsapriyā* and Karmakar believes that this is a reference to Madhusūdana’s commentary on the *Bhāgavata* (Karmakar 1962, xiii–xiv).

It is certainly the case that the commentary on *Harilīlā* 1.3 and 1.10 mentions a work titled the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*. However, this *Paramahaṃsapriyā* is not Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s commentary on the *Bhāgavata*. *Harilīlā* 1.3–4 lists the ten topics discussed in the *purāṇa*, starting with *sarga* and ending with *āśraya*.⁵ The *Harilīlāviveka* says each topic relates to the preceding topic as a part relates to a whole, and that this part-whole relation (*aṅgāṅgibhāva*) is also discussed in the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*.⁷ Madhusūdana’s *Bhāgavata* commentary discusses the same ten topics, but it does not discuss the part-whole relation. *Harilīlā* 1.10 states that in the first book of the *Bhāgavata* Śaunaka asked five questions and Sūta answered three of them.⁸ The *Harilīlāviveka* adds that these questions are elaborated in the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*.⁹ However, we do not find any explicit reference to Śaunaka, Sūta, or to any of these questions in Madhusūdana’s *Bhāgavata* commentary.

Bhuvaneshwari (2018) provides two additional reasons why we cannot take the references to the *Paramahaṃsapriyā* as evidence for Madhusūdana’s authorship of the *Harilīlāviveka*. First, nowhere does the commentator on the *Harilīlā* claim authorship of the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*. Therefore, we cannot assume that the author of the *Harilīlāviveka*, and the author of the *Paramahaṃsapriyā* are identical (Bhuvaneshwari 2018, 170). Second, Hemādri’s *Kaivalyadīpikā* on Vopadeva’s *Muktāphala* also mentions the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*. Therefore, the *Paramahaṃsapriyā*, which is currently unpublished or lost, must have been written by the thirteenth century, and its author cannot be Madhusūdana in the sixteenth century (Bhuvaneshwari 2018, 169–170).

### 5. Vopadeva’s Authorship

In the introduction to his edition of the *Muktāphala* and the *Kaivalyadīpikā*, Bhattacharyya (1944) argues that Vopadeva wrote not only the root text but also the commentary, the latter of which is usually attributed to Hemādri. Bhattacharyya provides two reasons for his opinion. First, the colophon in one of the manuscripts attributes the *Kaivalyadīpikā* to Vopadeva (Bhattacharyya 1944, 324, fn. 3). Second, one of the concluding verses in the *Kaivalyadīpikā* includes the expression ‘Vopadeva’s good statements (*vopadevasya sūktayah*)’. Bhattacharyya argues that this cannot refer to the *Muktāphala*, the root text, since most of it is citations from the *Bhāgavata*. From this Bhattacharyya infers that the ex-
pression ‘Vopadeva’s good statements’ must refer to the Kaivalyadīpikā, the commentary, and not to the Muktāphala, the root text. (Bhattacharyya 1944, VII–VIII). He then goes on to doubt whether Hemādri had actually written works such as the Caturvargacintāmaṇi and the Harilīlāvivekā in the midst of his time-consuming duties as a minister, and suggests that all the works usually attributed to Hemādri must have been in reality written by Vopadeva (Bhattacharyya 1944, VIII–XI).

Bhattacharyya’s first argument is significant and it suggests the need for further manuscript research. However, on its own, a reference in the colophon of one manuscript is not substantial enough to establish Vopadeva’s authorship of the Kaivalyadīpikā. As for the second argument, it has three difficulties. First, as pointed out above, both the Harilīlāvivekā and the Kaivalyadīpikā state Hemādri’s authorship. Second, it is not impossible to refer to the Muktāphala as ‘Vopadeva’s good statements’ because the text includes more than the citations from the Bhāgavata. The root text includes Vopadeva’s compositions in the form of opening and concluding verses, and occasional prose comments on the Bhāgavata passages. Third, the verse referring to ‘Vopadeva’s good statements’ also appears in the Harilīlāvivekā. In this case, it is perfectly reasonable to regard the Harilīlā as ‘Vopadeva’s statements’ as the verses are composed by Vopadeva. Therefore, Bhattacharyya’s arguments are not strong enough to establish Vopadeva’s authorship of the Kaivalyadīpikā or of the Harilīlāvivekā.

6. Internal Evidence

Regarding Bhattacharyya’s argument that Vopadeva wrote both the Harilīlā and the Harilīlāvivekā, there are internal indications that suggest that the author of the commentary is different from the author of the root text. For example, the very first verse of the Harilīlā states:

Wise Vopadeva explains the content and so on of the glorious (śrīmad) Bhāgavatapurāṇa, its books and chapters, for the satisfaction of the minister Hemādri.10)

This verse is problematic as the first verse. At the beginning of a work it is customary for an author to offer respect to a chosen deity (iṣṭadevatā) in the form of a maṅgala verse. The commentary on the above verse emphasizes this need for a maṅgala verse by appealing to the authority of Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya: ‘Texts that start with a maṅgala verse prevail, and
The problem is that the first verse of the Harilīlā, cited above, is not a maṅgala verse in any explicit manner. To address this issue the commentator explains that the first term of the verse 'the glorious (śrīmad)' is not only an adjective denoting the beauty of the Bhāgavata but it also functions as a maṅgala. With the term śrīmad, Vopadeva must have offered respect to the chosen deity, the commentator argues, because the text was successfully completed and because it gained popularity. Otherwise, the commentator adds, these achievements would not have been possible due to the hindrance of obstacles. In short, the commentary defends in a very round about manner the apparent lack of a maṅgala verse in the root text. All this suggests, I argue, that the commentator was different from the author of the root text. If both the root text and the commentary were written by Vopadeva, as Bhattacharyya suggests, then he could have simply written an actual maṅgala verse for the root text.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued for Hemādri’s authorship of the Harilīlāviveka. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in the sixteenth century is not the author because the commentary clearly states Hemādri’s authorship (section 2); the commentary shares several verses that also appear in the Kaivalyadīpikā attributed to Hemādri (section 3); and the reference to the Paramahaṃsapriyā in the Harilīlāviveka does not support the authorship of the sixteenth century Madhusūdana (section 4). Vopadeva is not the author of the Harilīlāviveka either since there is no positive evidence (section 5); and there is internal evidence that indicates that the commentator is different from the author of the Harilīlā, the root text (section 6).

Then who was this Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, who is said to have “completed” the Harilīlāviveka? The first possibility is, as Raghavan (1978, 124–125) suggests, that there was a Madhusūdana who was contemporaneous with Vopadeva and Hemādri in the thirteenth century. The existence of this thirteenth century Madhusūdana is purely hypothetical. The second possibility, which is more likely, is that the final verse of the Harilīlāviveka is a later interpolation. In this case it would require further manuscript research to identify when and why the final verse containing Madhusūdana’s name was added to the commentary.
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Notes

1) harilīlāviveko’yaṃ rāmarājasya veśmani / katake racayānacakre tuṣṭayai hemādrinā satām // Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 96). Upadhyaya (1933, 57) and Lalchand manuscript (#5220, 81) read kāmarājasya for rāmarājasya. 2) tikām muktaphalasyemāṃ nāmā kaivalyadīpikām / hemādrinā kātake cakre rāmarājasya veśmani // Chattacharyya (1944, 324). In a footnote Chattacharyya notes that kāmarāja is an alternative reading for rāmarāja. 3) The Kaivalyadīpikā commentary ends by confirming Hemādri’s authorship on the Mukṭāphala: śrīmatprīḍhapratāpacakravartimaḥārājādhirājasomayaduvan- śodbhavārmārājahamtrivaryahemādriścavyam citā muktaphalatācā // (Chattacharyya 1940; Sastri and Vidyabagisa 1920, 361). 4) sarasvatīśrīmadhusūdanena nirvīśhdam etad budhamodonana / janāḥ samastopī rasādanena vrajābhbhatkiḥ vrajatād anena // Lalchand (#5220, 81); Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 96); Upadhyaya (1933, 57). 5) atavte tatavadhir yeṣām tatve cāttvadhīr nṛṇām / na tān ānandavyanty etā vopadevasya sūktayā // ṣaṇkara varṇaīghatataḥ śrīmad parabhadā daśā / prakhyātā nau vaidyake ‘thā tīhinirdhārthāh eko’dbhutaḥ / sāhitie trayā eva bhāgavatattvottkou trayas tasya ca bhāgovānaśiromanera iva guṇāḥ ke ke na lokotorāḥ // Lalchand (#5220, 81); Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 96); Upadhyaya (1933, 57). 6) Harilīlā 1.3–4: sā ca dvitiyādāsane daśadā daśitā yathā / atra sargo visargsa ca sthānām poṣanām utaḥ // manvantarēśānukathāḥ nirdhātī muktir āśrayaḥ / sargvādasas tīṭhāvidheśukta kāma kramat // Lalchand (#3593, 2; #5220, 4–5); Upadhyaya (1933, 2–3). Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 3) record Harilīlā 3c and 4ab as a part of the commentary. 7) Harilīlāviveka 1.3: ete ca yathottaram anāṅgītvādā śrīvaiśeṣaḥ / uktas ca paramahamsapriyāyā māṅgībhāvāḥ / Lalchand (#5220, 4); Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 2, 3–4); Upadhyaya (1933, 5). 8) Harilīlā 1.10 pāñca prāṣnāḥ śaunakasya sātuḥātrottaḥ triṣu // Lalchand (#3593, 3; #5220, 8); Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 7); Upadhyaya (1933, 5). 9) Harilīlāviveka 1.10: śaunakasya pāñca prāṣnāḥ prathme’nyaḥ iti śeṣaḥ / vīvṛtāḥ ca te paramahamsapriyāyām // Lalchand (#5220, 8); Upadhyaya (1933, 5). Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 7) omit ‘śaunakasya. 10) Harilīlā 1.1: śrīmad iti hetugarbhaṃ viśeṣāṇam / vīdūṣa vopadevaḥ mantrasāṃ jñāntīḥ / viduṣā vopadevena mantrīmatriṣṭhuṣaḥ // Lalchand (#3593, 2; #4804, 2; #5220, 2); Lalchand (1920, 1); Upadhyaya (1933, 1). 11) maṅgalādīni maṅgalakāṇḍaḥ maṅgalādīni maṅgalamāṇḍaḥ ca sāstrāṇi prayante na siddhārthadyotakāni / Maṅgalādīnāḥ śāstrāṇi prayante siddhārthādhyetṛkāṇi ca // Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920, 1). Lalchand #4804, 2; #5220, 2; Upadhyaya (1933, 1). Sastri and Vidyabagisa (1920) attribute this citation to a bhāṣya. Only Upadhyaya (1933) specifies that it is the Mahābhāṣya. This citation is indeed based on Mahābhāṣya 1.3.11 but it is slightly modified. 12) Harilīlāviveka 1.1: śrīmad iti hetugarbhaṃ viśesāṇam / suṇaravatī nirāṣrayaḥ iti arthāḥ … anyārthasyāpya asya pārvakumbhiyāyena maṅgalārthaḥ / […] iṣṭadevatāprayāṇas tu kra ta iti gāthas amāptiṣṭhānaḥ viṣesāṇam avāṃsāyā / anyāthā vighnopaghātā tu na staḥ // Lalchand #4804, 2; #5220, 2; Upadhyaya 1933, 1; Sastri and Vidyabagisa 1920, 1).

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