

Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara and the Genre of Mantrarahasyaprakāśikā  
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Introduction

The author Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara is best known to the world of Sanskrit letters for his Bhāratabhāvadīpa commentary on the Mahābhārata. The Bhāratabhāvadīpa (BhBhD) has emerged as the standard companion to the text of the great epic, and has largely eclipsed the many other commentaries written before and after Nīlakaṇṭha's day. The maṅgala passage at the beginning of the BhBhD includes a celebrated verse that has endeared Nīlakaṇṭha to modern text-critics of Sanskrit literature everywhere, in which he describes himself as what one might identify as a Wissenschaftler of a sort, assembling many manuscripts from different regions, and settling on the best reading of the text.<sup>1</sup>

As if authoring the BhBhD were not enough, Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara was also the author of about fifteen other works. Most of these works were also written in the form of commentaries, but most of them have proved to be rather unsuccessful by comparison with the commentary on the epic. I wish to speak today about a group of these relatively less-known commentaries, written in a style and for a purpose quite different from that of the BhBhD. These are the texts that carry the generic title Mantrarahasyaprakāśikā.<sup>2</sup> Most notable among them are the Mantrarāmāyaṇa and the Mantrabhāgavata. The purpose of these works is the somewhat improbable project of assembling verses from the Ṣgveda Saṁhitā, (verses which to us appear to be on some other topic,) and reading them in such a way that they come to narrate the story of the Rāmāyaṇa in one case, or the story of the Bhāgavata in another, and so on.

To date these works have been accorded relatively little scholarly attention. Now, it is sometimes the case that obscure texts deserve to be obscure, and are not studied for a good reason. Nevertheless, I wish to turn your attention to Nīlakaṇṭha's mantrarahasya texts at this conference so that we might consider them from the point of view of Vedic studies. Needless to say, commentaries of this sort have not been taken very seriously by

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<sup>1</sup> vs. 6: bahūn samāhṛtya vibhinnadeśyān kośān viniścītya ca pāṭham agryam / prācāṃ gurūṇām anusṛtya vācam ārabhyate bhāratabhāvadīpaḥ //

<sup>2</sup> The colophons all include the term as a generic component of the title: for the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, "...śrīnīlakaṇṭhasya kṛtiḥ svoddhṛtamantrarāmāyaṇavyākhyā mantrarahasyaprakāśikākyā...;" for the Mantrabhāgavata, "... śrīnīlakaṇṭhasya kṛtau svoddhṛtamantrabhāgavatavyākhyāyāṃ mantrarahasyaprakāśikāyāṃ...;" for the Mantrakāśikhaṇḍa, "... nīlakaṇṭhasya kṛtiḥ svoddhṛtamantrakāśikhaṇḍavyākhyā-mantrarahasyaprakāśikā."

Vedists as a guide to understanding the meaning and function of the Vedic texts.<sup>3</sup> But it might be fruitful at this moment to reconsider why that is, and to ask some further questions: What is the relationship of these mantrarahasya works to the 'serious' commentaries of Sāyaṇa, Uvaṭa, and others? What are the implications for the destiny of the Vedas in the appearance of works of this genre? And finally, what did Nīlakaṇṭha think he was doing in writing texts of this sort?

After all, the result of the sort of academic Vedic studies that has been produced in the last two centuries has been largely to conceptualize the Vedas as ancient, even primordial texts, to de-emphasize their embeddedness in later custodial and practical traditions, and to separate them from their historical vicissitudes. Yet if we wish to know about the historical destiny of the Vedas, it is useful to consider their uses and meanings exactly in the later periods of their existence.

Nīlakaṇṭha's mantrarahasya works, then, can be taken as one example of a late development in the story of how Vedic mantras came to be preserved, transmitted, interpreted and used. What I shall argue here is that the appearance of this mantrarahasya genre, though in some ways a continuation of certain strands of exegetical thought available in the tradition, represents a turning point in the treatment of Vedic authority by Vaidika intellectuals. Let me first turn to some biographical and textual information about Nīlakaṇṭha and his work, and then give a brief survey of his mantrarahasya texts.

#### Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara and his Works

Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, son of Govinda Sūri and Phullambikā, was a Marāṭhī-speaking Brahmin of the Gotama gotra who flourished in the second half of the 17th Century, and whose family had been established in what is now Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra.<sup>4</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha moved from Karpūragrāma on the banks of the Godāvarī to Banaras, where he understook the study of Veda and Vedāṅga, Mīmāṃsā, Śrauta, Yoga, Śaiva texts, Tarka, and especially Advaita Vedānta.<sup>5</sup> His teacher for Advaita Vedānta was

<sup>3</sup> Already Aufrecht, in his Catalogus Catalogorum vol .1(1891), described the Mantrabhāgavata as a selection of 200 Vedic verses which are "perverted into a reference to Rāma and Krishna." In fact the factual description is erroneous and based on the concluding verses of the text. See below note 19.

<sup>4</sup> P.K. Gode, "Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, the Commentator of the Mahābhārata - his Genealogy and Descendants," ABORI 23 (1942): 146-61. Also W. Printz, "Bhāṣā-Wörter in Nīlakaṇṭha's Bhāratabhāvadīpa usw.," KZ 44 (1911): 70-74.

<sup>5</sup> See the passages from Nīlakaṇṭha's work cited in P.K. Gode, "The Exact Date of the Advaitasudhā of Lakṣmaṇa Paṇḍita (A.D. 1663) and his possible identity with Lakṣmaṇārya, the Vedānta teacher of Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara, the Commentator of the Mahābhārata," Poona Orientalist X, 1-2 pp. 1-7. Reprinted in Studies in Indian Literary History III (Poona: 1956), 52-53.

Lakṣmaṇārya, whom he mentions in the introduction and / or conclusion to many of his works, and who Gode has argued was the same person as Lakṣmaṇa Paṇḍita of Benares, the author of the Advaitasudhā and of the Sāracandrikā commentary on the Rāghavapāṇḍavīya.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to his commentary on the Mahābhārata, Nīlakaṇṭha composed commentaries on the Śivatāṇḍavatantra in 1680, on the Gaṇeśagītā in 1693, on the Harivaṃśa, on the Rudrasārasaṃgraha, and on Appaya Dīkṣita's Vedāntic work, the Ratnatrayaparīkṣā.<sup>7</sup> He wrote an independent work on Advaita, the Vedāntakataka, and a doxographic work of the Advaitan type, the ātmanrīsāra. He wrote an independent work on a śrauta topic - the question of whether a widower can perform Vedic sacrifices - entitled the Vidhurādhānavicāra. Nīlakaṇṭha also produced a short work that attempted to reconcile the cosmographical views of the Purāṇas with those of the astronomical Siddhāntas, the Saurapaurāṇikamatasaamarthana.<sup>8</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha dedicated his commentary on the Śivatāṇḍavatantra to Anūpasimha, Mahārāja of Bikaner from 1669-1698, a noted bibliophile and sometime general in the service of Aurangzeb.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Nīlakaṇṭha says in the colophon to the work that he was commissioned to write the commentary by Anūpasimha.<sup>10</sup> None of Nīlakaṇṭha's other works was explicitly dedicated to a ruler. No study has yet been made of Nīlakaṇṭha's 'situatedness' in the cultural, much less political, historical moment in which he lived, as indeed no such study has been made of most learned authors writing in Sanskrit who lived in the 17th century.<sup>11</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha also wrote the works belonging to the mantrarahasyaprakāśikā genre. The extant texts bear the titles Mantrārāmāyaṇa, Mantrabhāgavata, Mantrakāśikhaṇḍa, and possibly the Mantraśārīrika. Evidence from his commentary on the Harivaṃśa shows that

<sup>6</sup> P.K. Gode, "The Exact Date of the Advaitasudhā," 48-54. Gode has also suggested that the Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha whom Nīlakaṇṭha mentions as his teacher is identical with the author of the Bhāṭṭabhāṣāprakāśikā and other works. "Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara," 141.

<sup>7</sup> New Catalogus Catalogorum 10 p. 171. See also Gode, "Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara," 146ff.

<sup>8</sup> See C. Minkowski, "Nīlakaṇṭha's Cosmographical Comments in the Bhīṣmaparvan," Purāṇa, forthcoming, for bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> See David Pingree, "Astronomy at the Court of Anupasiṃha," in From Astral Omens to Astrology, From Babylon to Bikaner, Serie Orientale Roma 78, (Roma: Istituto Italiano per L'Africa et L'Oriente, 1997), 91-103. The vss. are cited in Haraprasad Shastri's Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit manuscripts in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal vol. 8 (1939) Cat. No. 5968, Accn. No. 3323.

<sup>10</sup> iti ... śrīmahārājādhirāja-karṇamahāśaya-sūnūnā śrīmad-anūpasimhena prerita- etc. Sastri, Catalogue p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> See Sheldon Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture From the Inside Out," in Sheldon Pollock, ed. Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Nīlakaṇṭha experimented with the style in that commentary as well.<sup>12</sup> Haraprasād Śāstrī, in his description of the Śivatāṇḍavatīkā,<sup>13</sup> notes that Nīlakaṇṭha refers to himself as having completed at that time a Mantrarāmāyaṇa, Mantrabhāgavata, and Mantramahābhārata.<sup>14</sup> Since the Śivatāṇḍavatantra was completed in 1680, Nīlakaṇṭha had completed the Mantrarāmāyaṇa and Mantrabhāgavata before that date.

Of these mantrarahasya texts, the Mantrarāmāyaṇa and the Mantrabhāgavata must have been the most well-received. There are about a half-dozen known manuscripts of each one. Both texts have been published twice in this century.<sup>15</sup> More on them in a moment. There is one manuscript of the Mantrakāśikhaṇḍa described by Haraprasād Śāstrī in the catalogue of the Vedic manuscripts of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.<sup>16</sup> This work takes 47 Vedic verses and interprets them in such a way as to reveal the Skandapurāṇa's Kāśikhaṇḍa, the most celebrated tīrthamāhātmya of the sacred city of Kāśī, Nīlakaṇṭha's adopted home. The Mantraśārīrika is listed only by title in the Punjab University catalogue of manuscripts, with the information that it is Vedāntic.<sup>17</sup> Given the other works by Nīlakaṇṭha which have the parallel titles beginning with mantra-, it would seem to be a work that reads Vedic verses as expounding Vedāntic philosophical principles.<sup>18</sup>

#### Mantrarāmāyaṇa and Mantrabhāgavata

As mentioned above, these two works appear to have circulated somewhat more widely in manuscript form, and they have both been edited and published twice. Both texts

<sup>12</sup> See P.L. Vaidya, ed. The Harivamśa (Poona: BORI 1969), L, where he mentions some 60 Vedic passages treated in the commentary in the style discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> See above, note 9.

<sup>14</sup> There is, however, no extant text entitled Mantramahābhārata. Furthermore, in checking through the introductory passage in two manuscripts of the Śivatāṇḍavatīkā I find reference to the MBhg and MR - ASB 5968 - G23323 folio 3r, line 1 - but no reference to a Mantramahābhārata. My thanks to Prof. Anil Sarkar of the ASB for providing me with copies of ASB 5968 and ASB 5969.

<sup>15</sup> The MR was published in Bombay in 1910 at the Veṅkateśvara Steam Press and edited again by Rām Kumār Rāy in Vārāṇasī in 1988 as Tantra Granthamālā 16 (Pracya Prakashan). The MBhg was published in Bombay in 1903 by the Veṅkateśvara Steam Press. It was re-edited by Sraddhā Cauhan in Jodhpur in 1969, Rajasthan Purātana Granthamālā 112. Note that Cauhan based her edition on two MSS not listed in the NCC, one from RORI Jodhpur, the other from the Rāmkr̥pālu Śarma MSS collection in Jaipur.

<sup>16</sup> A descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Government collection under the care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. 2 (1923) Cat. No. 181, Accn. No. 5768. My thanks to Prof. Sarkar for providing me with a copy of this manuscript as well. A study of the text is forthcoming.

<sup>17</sup> Labhu Ram, Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts in the Panjab University library vol. 2 (1941), 50. Also F. Kielhorn, A catalogue of Sanskrit mss. existing in the Central Provinces (1874), 126.

<sup>18</sup> A reference to the Mantraśārīrika in the Mantrakāśikhaṇḍa, folio 9v, line 1, though not probative, does suggest that text works in the same way as the others discussed here.

proceed in the same way, though in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa an effort is made to narrate the entire Rāmakathā, if somewhat unevenly. The Mantrabhāgavata confines itself to the life story of Kṛṣṇa, and primarily the first half of that story. It is subdivided into four parts of Kṛṣṇa's story cycle, identified with events at Gokula and Vṛndāvana, with the visit of Akrūra and Kṛṣṇa's departure, and with events at Mathurā. It appears to have been written after the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, for at its conclusion Nīlakaṇṭha refers to having revealed the story of both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa as contained in the Vedic verses.<sup>19</sup>

The Mantrarāmāyaṇa is the longer text, comprising a commentary on 157 Vedic verses. These verses are not evenly spread over the narration of the whole Rāmakathā, but rather are clustered in particular on the Bāla, Sundara, and Yuddha kāṇḍas.<sup>20</sup> The 109 verses of the Mantrabhāgavata, as mentioned above, are carefully divided into four titled sections, with round numbers of verses for all sections except the third.<sup>21</sup>

### Selection of Verses

From the contemporary Vedist's point of view these works of Nīlakaṇṭha are of interest for a variety of reasons. The first questions one might ask are these: what sort of verses has Nīlakaṇṭha selected, and what has been his criterion for selecting them?

The verses of the Mantrarāmāyaṇa are drawn primarily from the Ninth and especially the Tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṣgveda. Fully 70 of its 157 verses are drawn from the latter parts of the Tenth Maṇḍala. In the Mantrabhāgavata, on the other hand, the Third and especially First Maṇḍalas predominate. Nineteen of its verses are drawn from the Asyavāmīya hymn alone (1.164). No verse is ever repeated, either within a work or in the other work. On the other hand, adjacent individual verses from the same Ṣgvedic hymn appear at extreme ends of the same work, or else in the other work.<sup>22</sup> A handful of Vedic verses drawn from extra-Ṣgvedic texts are also sprinkled in, almost as if they were a

<sup>19</sup> vākyārthe vyāsavālmikī padārthe yāskapāṇinī / rāmakṛṣṇakathāṃ mantrair gāyato mama nāyakau // 1 // etacchatadvayam ṛcāṃ rāmakṛṣṇakathānugam / darśitaṃ bhagavāṃs tena tuṣyatāt sātvatām patih // 2 // The number of vss. in the Mantrabhāgavata is, however 109, One of Cauhan's MSS. reads sārddham śatadvayam ṛcāṃ, and this is also the reading recorded in the MS described in ASB catalogue as vol II Cat. No. 177, Accn. No. 5768B. The combined number of vss. in both MR and MBhg is 109 + 57 = 266, for which "two and a half hundred" is a reasonable approximation.

<sup>20</sup> The events of the Bālakāṇḍa are concluded with vs. 38, of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa with vs. 47, of the Hraṇyaka with vs. 61, of the Kiṣkindha with vs. 71, of the Sundara with vs. 112, and of the Yuddha approximately with vs. 153. Events of the Uttarakāṇḍa are only glancingly covered. See below.

<sup>21</sup> 30 vss. for Gokula, 39 vss. for Vṛndāvana, 30 vss. for Akrūra, 10 vss. for Mathurā.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. ṢV 8.41.6 is the third verse of the MBhg, ṢV 8.41.5 and 7 its 101st and 102d, and ṢV 8.41.8 its last. MR includes ṢV 10.54.1, 2, 4 and 9, while MBhg includes ṢV 10.54.3. See Appendix.

seasoning.<sup>23</sup> There are verses drawn from dialogue hymns, from "secular" and "speculative" and dānastuti hymns, as well as from the more statistically common hymns in praise of deities, including especially hymns that praise by reference to mythic narratives. Nevertheless, Nīlakaṇṭha has avoided to a great extent making use of the obvious choice of Vedic verses, the ones indicated by the anukramaṇīs to be dedicated to Viṣṇu.<sup>24</sup>

As suggested by the comments above, Nīlakaṇṭha's criteria for selection of the verses has very little to do with their sequential order in the Saṃhitā. While it is the case that Nīlakaṇṭha will consciously use two, three, sometimes four consecutive verses from a single Śgvedic hymn in their sequential order in his text, and occasionally even an entire hymn, he is just as likely to use them in scattered places in the text, or even out of order in a single passage.<sup>25</sup> The longest passage that uses Śgvedic verses in the order of their appearance in the Saṃhitā appears again to be anomalous by design, in which nearly the entire Akrūra section of the Mantrabhāgavata is based on ŚV 3. 54.19 - 3.55.22, which are commented on in that order.<sup>26</sup>

Thus there is no suggestion that the sequential order of the Vedic verses, so crucial as an organizational principle in Vedic ritual and recitational contexts, is itself revelatory of the Rāmāyaṇa and Bhāgavata. Or, put another way, there is no suggestion that the narrative order of the Rāmākathā and the Kṛṣṇa story cycles finds "vedamūlatva," a Vedic basis, in the order of the Vedic verses.

What then is Nīlakaṇṭha's criterion for selecting verses? Is he setting himself as difficult a commentarial task as he can so as to make his work that much more a feat of interpretative bravura? Does he wish to imply that any Vedic verse can be found to be revelatory of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa? While the answer to both of these questions appears to be "yes," Nīlakaṇṭha's method of selection in general becomes clearer if we consider the evidence of even a small number of his choices in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa.

Of course the difficulty that Nīlakaṇṭha faces is that the opinion of Vaidikas in his day, as of Vedists in ours, is that the Rāma story was simply not a subject treated by the

<sup>23</sup> In the MR appears Vāj.S. 3.50, while in MBhg appear ŚV Khila II.14.7, KS 7.12, and TB 3.7.4.8. Note that ŚV Khila II.14.7 appears in Scheftelowitz edition of the Khilas, but is not found in the Śāradā manuscript of the ŚV on which Scheftelowitz' edition is primarily based.

<sup>24</sup> The Vaiṣṇava vss. in the ŚV are as follows: 1.22.17-21; 1.154; 1.155.4-6; 1.156; 7.99.1-3, 7; 7.100. Viṣṇu and the gods 1.22.16; Viṣṇu, Rudra, and Maruts 5.3.3; Indra and Viṣṇu 1.155.1-3. 6.69. 7.99.4-6. Of these, 1.154.1-3, 6 and 1.156.4, appear in the MBhg and 7.99.4 appears in the MR.

<sup>25</sup> Some examples of verse scattering are listed above in note 22. The MR's 139th, 140th, and 141st vss. comprise ŚV 10.111.9, 10, 7. See Appendix for more examples.

<sup>26</sup> The Akrūrakāṇḍa of the MBhg section comprises 30 vss., of which 3. 54.19- 3.55.22. comprise the first 26.

authors of the older Vedic literature.<sup>27</sup> By coincidence, however, some terms do appear in the Ṣgveda that correspond with the names of characters from the Rāma story. Nīlakaṇṭha can make good use of verses containing these terms. In the most simple examples the names of figures in the ṢV coincide with names in the Rāma story. Thus "vásiṣṭha" and "viśvṛmītra" appear as proper nouns in the ṢV, as does "bharatá." Nīlakaṇṭha uses verses including these names in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa when narrating the portions of the story where Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra and Bharata, respectively, appear.<sup>28</sup> "sṣṭā" appears in two verses in the Ṣgveda (4.57.6-7), and both verses appear in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa.

Nīlakaṇṭha also makes use of verses containing nouns that are not proper names when he can interpret them to be so. "rāmá" appears twice in the ṢV, and one of those instances (10.3.3) is chosen. Similarly the lone occurrence of "dáśaratha" (1.126.4) is used, one of the seven instances of the term "hánu" (ṢV 10.79.1), and one of the three instances of "kāvandha" (ṢV 5.85.7). Nīlakaṇṭha works similarly with more common terms such as "raghú".<sup>29</sup> In the Mantrabhāgavata he makes use of verses that contain, for example, "kṛṣṇá" and "vrajá".<sup>30</sup> Other rare words also suggest themselves: "ullkhala" appears in only one sūkta of the ṢV (1.28). Nīlakaṇṭha makes use of two verses from the sūkta to tell the story of the infant Kṛṣṇa tied by his mother to a butter churn.

Since Nīlakaṇṭha has the direct evidence of the presence of the characters' names in the Vedic verses, he finds a basis for interpreting the remainder of the verse as revelatory of the Rāma story through the application of Mīmāṃsaka principles of liṅga, ekavākyatā and so on. And he can introduce many other verses to fill out his narration, even when these verses contain no such obvious indications of the Rāma story. It is on this latter type of verses that Nīlakaṇṭha must exercise his interpretative skills most imaginatively. Words that appear frequently in one sense in the Ṣgveda are interpreted by Nīlakaṇṭha in their later, classical senses: for example, verses with the term "hári" are used in narrating the deeds of the monkeys in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, and verses with the term "camḷ" are taken to refer to the armies.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> On the opinion of his own day, of which NC was aware, see below, notes 65 and 74. For the current assessment see Brockington, *The Sanskrit Epics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha makes use in the MR of "vásiṣṭha" (ṢV 7.33.6); "viśvṛmītra" twice (ṢV 3.53.9 and 13.); and "bharatá" three times (ṢV 3.33.11 and 12; 7.33.9). See Appendix.

<sup>29</sup> Verses with "raghú" are used three times in the MR: (ṢV 5.45.9; 8.33.17; and 10.61.16).

<sup>30</sup> Verses with "kṛṣṇá" are used four times in the MBhg (ṢV 1.35.2; 1.123.1; 1.164.47; and TB 3.7.4.8). Verses with "vrajá" are used three times (ṢV 1.156.4; 4.51.2; and 8.41.6).

<sup>31</sup> Vss. with camḷ are ṢV 3.55.20; 9.69.5; 9.71.1; 9.72.5; and 9.96.19. Vss. with hári are ṢV 8.34.4 and many others.

Nīlakaṇṭha makes perhaps his most brilliant finding in MR 141, which he bases on ŚV 10.111.7. In that verse the accusative singular of the feminine root-noun from the root *rā-*, i.e. the term "rīm," makes its only appearance in the Śgveda, for that matter its only appearance in all of Vedic literature.<sup>32</sup> It is clear to Nīlakaṇṭha that this verse contains the very heart of Rāmaite worship, the bīja syllable of the six-syllabled Rāma mantra. And using the principles of mantroddhāra known to him as a student of the Śaiva tantras Nīlakaṇṭha is able to extract the entire ṣaḍakṣara Rāma mantra from this and the next verse, ŚV 5.3.3.<sup>33</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on this verse is, in several senses, a revelation.

Thus Nīlakaṇṭha bases his choice of Vedic verses not necessarily on their overall meaning, or on the valences attributed to the verses by the anukramaṇīs and commentaries and ritualists, but rather on the presence in the verses of suitable terms, especially terms that are for Nīlakaṇṭha evidently referring to the characters and events of the Rāma story. Given the foregoing assessment of Nīlakaṇṭha's ability to find rare, even unique, terms from among the Vedic verses, it also becomes clear that Nīlakaṇṭha had at his command not just the "raw" text of the Saṃhitā, but the working apparatus of pada-pāṭhas, indices and other mnemonic aids that would have been under the control of a well-trained Vaidika. This is not the work of an outsider, or amateur, or novice.

Relation to the Sanskrit texts of Vālmīki and Vyāsa.

Nīlakaṇṭha makes it clear at several points that the Vedic verses he comments on disclose specifically the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa of Vyāsa.<sup>34</sup> Given how brief his works are, however, it is inevitable that the density of coverage is uneven. The passage on which Nīlakaṇṭha lavishes the most attention is the departure of Kṛṣṇa from Vraja for Mathurā. This episode, beginning with Akrūra's arrival in Vraja, fills the entire Akrūra section of the Mantrabhāgavata. Many verses from ŚV 3.55 are used to dwell on the gopīs' pain at separation from Kṛṣṇa. In the Mantrarāmāyaṇa the Uttara Kāṇḍa is only very minimally covered, with some reference to Rāvaṇa's tapas (MR 150) and to the Śambūka episode (MR 148), and with a very limited allusion in the text's penultimate verse to the abandonment of Sītā in the forest (MR 156).

<sup>32</sup> *sācanta yád uśasaḥ śrīyeṇa citrīm asya ketávo rīm avindan | rīm yán náksatraṃ dádr̥ṣe divó ná púnar yató nákir addhm̐ nú veda ||* The usual noun built from this verb root is *rayí-*, the usual accusative form *rayím*.

<sup>33</sup> A similar extraction of the ṣaḍakṣara Kṛṣṇa mantra appears in MBhg 97-99, a commentary on three verses dedicated to Viṣṇu, I.154.1-3. On mantroddhāra see for example, Raghu Vira and Shodo Taki, *Dakṣiṇāmūrti's Uddhāra-kośa*, Sarasvati Vihāra 4 (Lahore 1938).

<sup>34</sup> See above note 19 and the discussion below of the identity of Vamra Vaikhānasa with Valmiki.

There are some disruptions in Nīlakaṇṭha's order of "narration" by comparison with the order in the texts of Vyāsa and Vālmīki. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, for example, the episode of Brahmā carrying off the cows and cowherds is narrated at BhgP 10.13-14, while the destruction of Kālīya is told in BhgP 10.16. In the Mantrabhāgavata, however, the killing of Kālīya comes before the other episode.<sup>35</sup>

Some of the displacement in narrative order is caused by Nīlakaṇṭha's use of narration through the direct speech of a character. That is to say, Nīlakaṇṭha puts a verse or a series of verses into the mouths of characters as dialogue, who then reflect in their speeches on events that have happened or are going to happen in the story. In the Mantrarāmāyaṇa about half of all the verses are used in this way as dialogue between characters, or as praise of one character by another, with allusions to past and future events. Thus it can happen that an event can be alluded to for the first time at a point outside the expected order of its telling. One of the reasons for the use of this much "direct discourse" is the nature of the language of the Vedic verses themselves, with their abundance of first and second person verbs, especially in non-indicative moods. Yet it should also be noted that Nīlakaṇṭha is not heavily constrained by the types of discourse in the Vedic verses - not all verses from dialogue hymns are used in dialogue; nor are verses from narrative hymns used only to narrate. His "narrator" can also speak directly to the characters with modal verbs, and can urge them to do what they have already done.

Nīlakaṇṭha also seems aware of other versions of his stories. His dwelling at such length on painful separation as a religious mode, the virahabhakti of the gopis in the Akṛūra section of the Mantrabhāgavata, shows his awareness of the growing importance of that religious form in the Kṛṣṇaite movements that grew in the centuries after the Bhāgavata's composition. He also bases the treatment of one verse on an episode in the Harivaṃśa about Kṛṣṇa playing in the ocean.<sup>36</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha was certainly aware of the versions of the Rāma story other than Vālmīki's. In MR 32 he accepts the version that has Sītā as the daughter of Rāvaṇa, attributing it to the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa.<sup>37</sup> He also accepts the chāyā Sītā episode, presumably

<sup>35</sup> Kālīya's death appears as MBhg 33-35, while Brahmā's stealing the cows and cowherds appears as MBhg 44. There are other examples as well, among them that Kṛṣṇa's slaying of Aghāsura (BhgP 10.12) appears in the MBhg well after both of the preceding episodes and even after the lifting up of Govardhana (BhgP 10.24-27).

<sup>36</sup> MBhg 108. This is apparently an allusion to the Jalakrīḍaṇa chapter, Harivaṃśa 2.89 = Appendix 29D in the Critical Edition.

<sup>37</sup> See Camille Bulcke, "La Naissance de Sītā," BEFEO 46 (1952) pp. 107-17. Sītā as Rāvaṇa's daughter does appear in the Mahā(devī)bhāgavata purāṇa, as cited by Bulcke. I cannot locate this account of Sītā's origins in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa. In fact in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa's primary mention of the Rāma story (Pratisarga 4.15) Sītā is born from the earth - bhūmimadhyāt samudbhūtā (vs. 56.) Of course the Bhaviṣyapurāṇa continued to be altered

from the Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa and perhaps the Rāmacaritamānasa, though he does not attribute his source. He refers to an episode from "another purāṇa" (purāṇāntara) in which Jāmbavān recognizes Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from an encounter he has had with them before.<sup>38</sup> And as mentioned above, Nīlakaṇṭha pays only very cursory attention to the events of the Uttara Kāṇḍa, perhaps sharing with many Rāma devotees of his day a dislike for the episodes contained there.

#### Four Examples from the Commentary

At this point nothing will serve better to give an idea of the nature of Nīlakaṇṭha's "textual practices" than to give some examples of Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on specific verses. Now, to enter into a discussion of the specificities of Nīlakaṇṭha's commentarial style is to enter into a veritable forest of traditional erudition. I cannot hope to comment on every feature of what Nīlakaṇṭha is doing, and even in limiting myself to a few comments on four examples, as you will see, the density of explanation necessary begins to dwarf the few points I will be attempting to make. More on the problem of atipāṇḍitya below.

#### Example 1: Mantrarāmāyaṇa 54:

striyaṃ dr̥ṣṭvīṃya kitavaṃ tatāpānyēśāṃ jāyīṃṣṣūkr̥taṃ ca yōnim |  
pūrvāhñé ásvān yuyujé hí babhr̥ṣn só agnér ánte vṛṣalāḥ papāda || ŚV 10.34.11<sup>39</sup>

imaṃ vṛttāntaṃ sūrpaṇakhāmukhād ākarṇya rāvaṇaḥ kiṃ cakārety ata āha - striyam iti | **striyam** nikṛttakarṇanāsaṃ sūrpaṇakhām **dr̥ṣṭvāya** dr̥ṣṭvā **kitavaṃ** kapaṭamṛgasannyāsiveṣadhārirākṣasadvayaṃ karṭṛ strīdarśanena kṣubdhaṃ sat **anyeśāṃ** anyasya rāmasya **jāyāṃ** sītāṃ **sukṛtaṃ** agnihotrādikaṃ **yoniṃ** vaṃśaṃ **ca tatāpa** tāpitavat | jāyāharaṇenaiva trayam api taptam abhūd ity arthaḥ | **hi** yataḥ **babhrūn ásvān** **pūrvāhñe** eva **yuyuje** rathe, tena ca rathena **vṛṣalo** dharmadrohī rāvaṇaḥ **agner ante** rāmāgnīśālāsamīpe **papāda** jagāma mārīcena saheti śeṣaḥ ||

Having heard this news from the mouth of Sūrpaṇakhā, what did Rāvaṇa do? In order to answer this question [the sage] says: "striyam" etc. [i.e. ŚV 10.34.11]. After having seen (dr̥ṣṭvāya) Sūrpaṇakhā with nose and ears cut off (striyaṃ), the pair of Rākṣasas,<sup>40</sup> one dressed as a Sannyāsī, the other [taking the shape of] a mock deer, - [the two] being agitated by the sight of the woman (kitavaṃ); this term is the subject of the verb - caused torment (tatāpa) to Rāma's (anyeśāṃ) wife Sītā (jāyā) and [also to Rāma's] Vedic rituals (sukṛtaṃ) and [also to his] progeny (yoniṃ). - The sense is that through abducting the wife

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even after Nīlakaṇṭha's day. See Adam Hohenberger, Das Bhavīsyapurāna Mīnchener Indologische Studien 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> MR 64. I have not located the purāṇic source he refers to.

<sup>39</sup> Geldner: Es peinigte den Spieler, als er das Eheweib und das wohlbereitete Lager anderer sah. Da er schon am Vormittag die braunen Rosse angespannt hatte, so sank er elend in der Nähe des Feuers nieder.

<sup>40</sup> Rāvaṇa and Mārīca.

all three [of these aspects of Rāma's life are going to] suffer. - For which reason (hi) [Rāvaṇa] yoked the brown horses (babhrūn aśvān) to the chariot in the morning (pūrvāhne). With that chariot the demon Rāvaṇa (vṛṣalaḥ) went near to Rāma's sacrificial fire hall (agner ante) - "together with Mārīca," one must supply.<sup>41</sup>

This first example shows Nīlakaṇṭha's general commentarial approach. The verse is taken from ŚV 10.34 - the Gambler's hymn, a verse which Nīlakaṇṭha brings into the Mantrarāmāyaṇa in order to elicit the moment when Rāvaṇa sets out to abduct Sītā. Note first of all, that as usual, the commentary introduces the verse with an introductory statement or avataṛaṇa. In this case the avataṛaṇa is an explanation, which comes before the verse's citation, of where in the Rāma story the verse should be understood to belong. These avataṛaṇas are the primary means by which Nīlakaṇṭha structures the narrative component of his text. Nīlakaṇṭha has chosen this verse because of the presence of terms that lend themselves to his narrative task - "strīyaṃ dṛṣṭvīya" and "āśvān yuyujé." Nīlakaṇṭha interprets the terms in the verse as necessary to disclose this intended meaning - after seeing his sister disfigured Rāvaṇa yoked his chariot and traveled to Rāma's forest-dwelling. The yoking of horses requires no explanation.<sup>42</sup> "striyaṃ" is glossed as "Śūrpanakhā with nose and ears cut off," "agner ante" is glossed as "near to Rāma's sacrificial fire hall," and so on. Of course in order to render the verse this way, Nīlakaṇṭha must reread the syntax of the verse, taking the troublesome accusative "kitavaṃ" as neuter nominative. And because the verb "tatāpa," together with its presumed objects, intervenes in the verse between the actions of seeing the woman and yoking the horses, Nīlakaṇṭha must take the action of tormenting proleptically, to refer to the future grief that Rāvaṇa will cause once he has abducted Sītā.

Nīlakaṇṭha's approach here - and this is true generally for both texts - does not depend on any careful arguing out of why he is interpreting the Vedic terms to refer to the particular episode of the Rāmāyaṇa that he chooses. That argument has already been made in general terms in the introduction to the text. He simply asserts the connection in his avataṛaṇa before the verse, and relies on a general plausibility for the verse as a whole based on the presence of terms that can be taken as indications of the appropriate episode in the Rāma story.

<sup>41</sup> A word about these translations: dashes - set off NC's annotations and supplements, parentheses () mark off the Vedic terms cited in the commentary; and brackets [] mark off my annotations and supplements.

<sup>42</sup> Though in fact Rāvaṇa's chariot is drawn by mules / asses - Rāmāyaṇa 3.40.6 in Crit. Ed.

## Example 2: Mantrabhāgavata, Vṛndāvana 7

I draw a second example from the Mantrabhāgavata, in which Nīlakaṇṭha uses a verse from the Asyavāmīya hymn, RV 1.164, to disclose the subepisode in which the demon Pralamba attempts to abduct Balarāma.

ná ví jānāmi yád ivedám ásmi niṇyāḥ sáṃnaddho mánasā carāmi |  
 yadrñ mṃgan prathamajñ ṛtásyñd íd vácó aśnuve bhāgám asyñḥ || ŚV  
 1.164.37<sup>43</sup>

atha goparūpiṇā pralaṃbāsuraṇa hriyamāṇo rāma āha | na vijānāmīti | ivaśabdo bhinnakramaḥ | **yad idam** aparimitaśaktikaṃ brahmāsmi tad ahaṃ **na jānāmīva** dehāveśāt pramādyatīti nyāyena jānann api na jānāmīty arthaḥ | tvadanugraham vinā svīyam aiśvaryaṃ āvirbhāvayitum na śaknomīti bhāvaḥ | kuta evaṃ **manasā sannaddhaḥ** bandhanena baddhaḥ pāravaśyaṃ prāpitaḥ, ata eva **niṇyāḥ** parapraṇeyaḥ san **carāmi** | **yadā** kāle **mā** māṃ **ṛtasya** vedasya prathamajñāḥ kāraṇabhūtaḥ paramātmā **āgan** āgacchet tadā **āt** asmāt asyānugraham prāpya **it** niścitaṃ **asyāḥ vācaḥ** sakāśāt **bhāgaṃ** bhagāni vidyante 'syeti bhāgaḥ paramātmānaṃ **aśnuve** vyāpnuyām, taṃ guruṃ prāpya tat tvam asy ādivākyaśārtham aikātmyaṃ labheyam ity arthaḥ ||

Then [Bala]rāma speaks while being carried away by the Asura Pralamba, who had disguised himself as a cowherd, "na vijānāmi" etc. [ŚV 1.164.37]. - the word 'iva' is out of order [in the line and belongs after 'vijānāmi'.] Even though (yad) I am that Brahman of limitless power, [nevertheless] - because of the [Vedāntic] maxim that being embodied causes one to err in understanding - although [ultimately] knowing that [Brahman], I as it were do not know [it] (na jānāmīva) - this is the meaning. And the sense is "without your [Kṛṣṇa's] showing favor I am not able to manifest my might.' Why so? - Being bound by the bondage [of ignorance] (manasā sannaddhaḥ), that is, put into a state of subservience, for that reason I go (carāmi) being dominated by another (niṇyāḥ). At the time when (yadā) the Supreme Being, who exists as the first-born cause of the Veda (ṛtasya), will come (āgan) to me (mā), then, having received from Him His favor (āt), surely (it) I shall attain (aśnuve) to the proximity (asyāḥ vācaḥ) of the Supreme Being (bhāgaḥ). - The sense of the term 'bhāga' is that various good fortunes are found in Him. The sense is that " After finding a Guru, I shall attain that Unity which is expressed in such [Vedāntic] utterances as 'thou art that' - ."

Here the verse is taken as dialogue, the words of Balarāma as he is being carried off by Pralamba. The crucial words in the passage for Nīlakaṇṭha appear to be "na vijānāmi," "I do not know," which, by a reordering of the words of the verse, he makes "na vijānāmīva""I do not know, as it were." Nīlakaṇṭha finds in this passage an expression of an Advaitan formulation of self-ignorance. The Ultimate Reality, though always self-aware, in the state of ignorance appears as if not to know itself. A further theological point that shows the blending of Advaitan and Bhāgavata theology at work in Nīlakaṇṭha's text is that

<sup>43</sup> Geldner: Ich verstehe nicht, was dem vergleichbar ist, was ich bin. Ich wandle, heimlich mit dem Denken ausgerüstet. Sobald der Erstgeborene der Weltordnung über mich gekommen ist, da erlange ich Anteil an dieser Rede. Geldner's note: Das Rätsel des Denkens. Der Mensch schweift mit seinem Denken ungesehen in die Ferne.

this statement of (as if) self-ignorance is expressed to Kṛṣṇa as an appeal, so as to imply that Brahman can only be reached by the unenlightened with the aid of the Supreme Being.

I give this example to demonstrate some differences that I would claim are typical of the Mantrabhāgavata, by comparison with the Mantrarāmāyaṇa. In this passage, Nīlakaṇṭha does not work as hard at sustaining the conceit of Vedic-verse-as-purāṇic-narrative as he did in the Mantrarāmāyaṇa. Instead, since the verse constitutes "direct discourse," he is free to dwell on philosophical/theological nuances the verse might offer. I would claim this is generally true of the Mantrabhāgavata: Nīlakaṇṭha is confident that his basic assignment of narrative meaning to the Śgvedic verses can be simply sketched, almost simply stipulated. This may be not just because it is a more fitting way to treat the Bhāgavata Purāṇa by comparison with the Rāmāyaṇa, but also because the Mantrabhāgavata was probably written later than the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, and the Mantrarāmāyaṇa had already made his point.

If in the Mantrabhāgavata Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara is not working as close to the Śgvedic text, he is nevertheless very close to the text of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa here. For Nīlakaṇṭha introduces the passage cited above as uttered by Balarāma while he is being carried away by the demon Pralamba. Nīlakaṇṭha thus has in mind only a nuance expressed fragmentarily in the Purāṇa. For allusion is made, in a few words of one verse of BhgP 10.18.27, to the fact that Balarāma is momentarily a little frightened (īśad atrasat) as Pralamba assumes his full demonic form after throwing off his disguise as a cowherd.<sup>44</sup> This brief phrase is the basis for the whole passage just discussed.

### Example 3: Mantrarāmāyaṇa 43

I have selected the third example to show Nīlakaṇṭha's philosophical and theological approach to the Rāmāyaṇa, which is something different from what it is for the Bhāgavata. Nīlakaṇṭha sets himself the project at the outset of the Mantrarāmāyaṇa of commenting on each verse from both an ādhidaivika and from an ādhyātmika point of view. That is, he states at the outset that he will both show how the verses he has compiled reveal the story of Rāma as the great manifestation of the deeds of the Supreme Being in human form, and he will also show how these same verses reveal an underlying Vedāntic meaning about the gaining of Enlightenment through knowledge of the Self as Brahman. In the initial design,

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<sup>44</sup> In BhgP 10.18. 25-29, Pralamba is an asura who takes on the disguise of a cowherd. When all the cowherds are horsing around with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, and Pralamba is carrying Balarāma on his back, Pralamba suddenly attempts to carry Balarāma away, and takes on a huge, splendid rākṣasa form in verse 26. Verse 27: **nirīkṣya tadvapur** alam ambare carat pradīptadṛg bhrukuṭītaṭogradamṣṭrakam | jvalacchikhaṃ kaṭakakirītakuṇḍalatviśādbhutaṃ **haladhara īśad atrasat** ||

then, each Vedic verse is to be commented on in two ways. I will discuss Nīlakaṇṭha's general description of his commentarial principles more below.<sup>45</sup> The following verse, Mantrarāmāyaṇa 43, shows how the commentary works in practice.

madhyṁ yāt kārtvam ābhavad abhṅke kṛmamaṁ kṛṇvāné pitāri yuvatyṁm |  
manānág réto jahatur viyántā srñnau nīśiktaṁ sukṛtāsya yónau || ŚV 10.61.6<sup>46</sup>

vaneṣād ity uktam tatra ayodhyāyā rāmāya dīyamānam rājyaṁ bharatāya deyaṁ rāmaś ca vanaṁ prasthāpanīya iti kaikeyīcaritram niṁṣaṁ tad āha - madhyeti | **abhīke** saṅgrāmanimittam **madhyā** madhyasthābhyām mantharākaikeyībhyām **yat kartvam** kartavyam **abhavat** tad api tvatta eva jātam iti pūrvodāhṛtād ayaṁ stuta ity etasmād apakṛṣyate | kasmin sati **pitāri** daśarathe **yuvatyām** kaikeyyām nimittabhūtyām **kāmaṁ** tasmai varapradānam **kṛṇvāne** sampādayati | **vīyantā** videśam gacchantau rāmalakṣmaṇau **retas** tatpradātāram pitaram **jahatuḥ** tyaktavantau | kīdrśam retaḥ **manānak** manasā na añcati prakāśata iti manānak rāmagamanam anicchat nirmanaskaṁ mṛtam iti vā | ata eva **sukṛtasya yonau** satye **nīśiktaṁ sānu** mahaty uccasthāne svarge vā |

pakṣe nihataṛṣṇātātakasya nirastakartṛtvābhimānamāricasya hataphalāsaṅgasubāhoḥ viditādhyātmaavidyābālātibalasya bodhi śubhatanavāsanāhalyasya<sup>47</sup> toṣitadharmagautamasya ṛṇīkṛtabrahmalokadhanuṣaḥ labdhasītāsṛddhasya bādhitabrāhmalaukaiśvarya-jāmadagnyatapasaparokṣabodhalakṣmaṇajyeṣṭhasya<sup>48</sup> aparokṣabodharāmasya dehāyodhyāyām vastum icchataḥ sānujaśṛddhasya pravāsam bhāratajīvasya ca tatra rājyaṁ icchantībhyām bhogadehavāsanābhyām mantharākaikeyībhyām madhyasthābhyām yat kartavyam manodaśarathasya vacanam kāmarāvaṇavadhanimittam tatrāpy antaryāmyanugraha eva hetuḥ | tataḥ saśṛddhe dvididhe 'pi bodhe manasto 'pagate manaḥ svargaparam abhūd iti | ayaṁ mantra yogyatvād upanyastaḥ |

[In the previous verse the term] "capable in the forest" was used.<sup>49</sup> [In this verse the sage, saying] "madhyā" etc. [i.e. ŚV 10.61.6], tells the episode concerning that [event], the behavior of Kaikeyī [when she demanded that] the kingdom of Ayodhyā that was being given to Rāma should [instead] be given to Bharata, and [that] Rāma should be sent to the forest.

<sup>45</sup> See below, note 60 and following

<sup>46</sup> Geldner: Als man mitten in der Arbeit war bei der (Liebes)begegnung, da der Vater bei der Jungfrau der Liebe pflegte, da liessen beide im Auseinandergehen ein wenig(?) Samen zurück, der auf dem Rücken (der Erde) vergossen war, auf dem Platz des guten Werks.

<sup>47</sup> There is a gap in the printed text and -tana- is difficult to render. I suggest that we read bodhitaśubhatanuvāsanāhalyasya.

<sup>48</sup> I suggest we must read here, for -jāmadagnyatapasaparokṣa-, jāmadagnyatapaḥ parokṣa-

<sup>49</sup> A reference to ŚV 10.61.20, which is used by Nīlakaṇṭha as MR 42: ādhāsu mandrō aratīr vibhṛmīva syati dvivartanīr **vaneṣmṛ** | ūrdhvṁ yāc chrēṇir nā śīsūr dán makṣī sthirām śevṛdhām sūta mātrī || There Nīlakaṇṭha had taken the verse as one of five verses (10.61.16-20 = MR 38-42) uttered by the gods in praise of Rāma at the moment when Rāma was returning to Ayodhyā newly married to Sītā. vaneṣmṛ had been glossed as "vane sahate śītavātādikaṁ vā rakṣasām vadham kartum utsahate vā," "someone able to withstand the cold winds and other [hardships] in the forest, or alternatively someone able to slay rakṣasas [in the forest.]" Thus the gods foretold Rāma's future exile in the forest.

That [banishment of Rāma and installation of Bharata], which was brought about (yat kartvam abhavad) for the sake of the [future] battle [between Rāma and Rāvaṇa] (abhīke), by Mantharā and Kaikeyī who were in the middle (madhyā) [of the events], [that banishment was] caused only by you, [Daśaratha] - [This is comprehensible when ] we read it in the context of the verse discussed above "ayaṃ stutaḥ"<sup>50</sup> When what has occurred? When Daśaratha (pitari) has brought about (kṛṇvāne) the giving of a boon (kāmaṃ) to him [Bharata], of which Kaikeyī has been the cause (yuvatyām). [Then] Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa going to a foreign place (viyantau) abandoned (jahatuḥ) their father, the bestower of their seed (retah). What sort of seed [i.e. father]? One who is not mentally active or awake (manānak) - so we should understand the term manānak. Which is to say become mindless (kāmaṃ)[from grief] at not wishing Rāma to go - . And therefore [a seed, i.e. father] who is poured (niṣiktaṃ) into truth (sukṛtasya yonau), that is, [who has gone] to a great high place (sānu), or rather, gone to heaven.

The alternative [ādhyātmika] reading [of this verse is as follows:] [Rāma / Manifest Enlightenment] slew Tātaka / Craving, [and] threw down Mārīca / Mistaken Pride in Agency. He slew Subāhu / Attachment to the Fruits [of Action], and he learned the Balā and Atibalā [weapons] / Spiritual Knowledge. He awakened the auspicious form of Ahalyā / Latent Impressions, and he gave delight to Gautama / Dharma. He won Sītā / Faith when he rendered inconsequential [Siva's] bow / the Brahmaloaka. The elder brother of Lakṣmaṇa / Unmanifest Enlightenment, blocked the tapas by which Paraśurāma sought lordship of the Brahmaloaka. He wished to dwell in Ayodhyā / the Body along with his younger brother / Faith. Brought about by Mantharā and Kaikeyī / Sensory Enjoyment and the Latent Impressions in the Body, who were positioned in the middle, and who wished the kingdom for Bharata / Jīva and the exile of Rāma / Manifest Enlightenment, the command of Daśaratha / Mind was motivated by the slaying of Rāvaṇa / Desire. Therefore the cause [of the exile] was purely as a favor of Brahman as Regulator of individuals [antaryāmin]. Thus when Enlightenment in both forms, accompanied by Faith, departed from Mind, Mind became intent only on heaven. This verse is included here because it is appropriate to the context.

This rather lengthy commentarial passage gives you an idea of the density of interpretative activity that fills these brief works of Nīlakaṇṭha. By comparison with Nīlakaṇṭha's dilation on the abduction of Balarāma discussed in the previous example, it also shows how Nīlakaṇṭha can achieve a radical contraction of the story. The entire opening of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa, up through Daśaratha's death, is compressed into the commentary on this one verse. Note here again the influence on Nīlakaṇṭha of docetic versions of the Rāmāyaṇa, in which Rāma's banishment is understood as foreordained by the characters themselves.

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<sup>50</sup> ŚV 10.61.16, from the same hymn, which was cited as MR 38: ayaṃ stutó rñjā vandi vedhṃ apās ca vípras tarati svāsetuḥ | sá kakṣvantam rejayat só agniṃ nemim ná cakrām árvato raghudrú || This verse is taken by Nīlakaṇṭha to refer among other things to a boon given to Daśaratha by the sage who enabled him and his wives to have children (in the Rāmāyaṇa Rṣyaśṛṅga, in the MR identified with Kakṣivānt,) that his son will, among other things, conquer the ocean by building a bridge across it. Implied is that Rāma's destiny as slayer of Rāvaṇa is foreordained.

After setting out the narrative meaning of each word in the verse, Nīlakaṇṭha turns in this commentary to its ādhyātmika reading. These "spiritual" readings are introduced by the term "pakṣe" - "in the alternative reading." As can be seen from the long string of compounds modifying Rāma, each character in the story is identified with an internal psychological or spiritual principle, in an extended Vedānticizing allegory. Daśaratha is Mind; Rāvaṇa is Desire; and so on. Note however that this allegorical reading is based on the construction of the verse's meaning already developed in the first part of the commentary. There is no direct appeal to the Vedic verse or any of its language. The spiritual reading is mostly an interpretation of the Rāma story, and is only secondarily related to the verse at hand. This is generally true of the ādhyātmika passages in the MR.

Speaking of compression of story, one can also see that Nīlakaṇṭha here allegorizes all the events in Rāma's life up to this point, beginning with his first adventure. This is because Nīlakaṇṭha has not and does not sustain the ādhyātmika sections of the commentary on each verse, despite his initially stated intention to do so. The allegorizing appears for a stretch of verses, then tapers off, and vanishes entirely for long stretches, only to reappear in the same fitful way later. Although the chief complaint of contemporary readers of Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on the Mahābhārata is that "he Vedānticizes everything," nevertheless the evidence of the Mantrarāmāyaṇa is that the ādhyātmika reading of the verses is of less interest to him than the revelation of Rāma's story. If I dared to say so in discussing such an erudite and high-minded text, I would suspect that Nīlakaṇṭha did not find the aridity of Vedāntic allegory, by comparison with the richness of the Rāma story tradition, as much fun.

ṢV 10.61, from which this verse and seven others are drawn, is a famously difficult hymn of the seer Nābhānediṣṭha. As modern readers we are far from certain that we fathom its meaning, in part because of its language - the forms, the unusual vocabulary, the odd constructions - but largely because of an intentional opacity caused by suppressions of obvious meanings in riddles, allegories, perhaps mysteries.<sup>51</sup> I cannot help but suspect that Nīlakaṇṭha is at home in his reading of a hymn like this. More on this point below.

#### Example 4: Mantrarāmāyaṇa 86.

I choose my last example to show further how Nīlakaṇṭha deals with passages that present difficulties for modern philologists as they did for Sāyaṇa and for other traditional

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<sup>51</sup> Geldner: An den Schwierigkeiten dieses Liedes ist z.T. der Dichter selbst schuld, denn er liebt die dunkle Rede, die gewundene Satzkonstruktion, die seltenen Wörter, das Verschweigen des Satzsubjekts, die Ellipsen und andere poetischen Lizenzen und Kapricen. See the rest of his unusually long introduction to his translation of the sūkta.

commentators. I should say at the outset that in general Nīlakaṇṭha chooses verses that are not filled with difficulties. He does at times deploy Pāṇinian terminology to explain forms that are irregular from the classical point of view. In general, though, Nīlakaṇṭha's primary concern is with the aptness of the verse at hand for the narrative purpose he wishes to make for it and not its meaning "in itself."

ŚV 9.71 is one of the more difficult Soma hymns for contemporary readers, and occasions some lengthy comments from Sāyaṇa as well.

riṅ dākṣiṇā sṛjyate śuṣmy `āsādam veti druho rakṣasaḥ pāti jṅgrviḥ |  
hāriṅ opasāṃ kṛṇute nābhas pāya upastīre camvoṛ brāhma nirṇije || ŚV 9.71.1<sup>52</sup>

tad evaṃ svāmibhaktān vānarān jñātvā sampātir apy anujagrāhety āha - ṛṣabho vaiśvāmitrā navarcena sūktena ā dakṣiṇety ādinā | **śuṣmī** balavān **harir** vānaraḥ **ā dakṣiṇā** dakṣiṇādīgabhimukham **āsṛjyate** ājñāpyate sītānveṣaṇārthī tvam dakṣiṇasyāṃ diśi laṅkāyāṃ tasyā anveṣaṇaṃ kurv ity ājñāpyate, arthāt sūktānte dṛṣṭena divyena suparṇeneti gamyate | evaṃ ājñāptamātro hariḥ **āsadam** āsīdanty asminn iti rāmasya grhaṃ sītārūpaṃ **veti** prāpnoti | tat prāpya **jāgrviḥ** jāgarūkaḥ san **druho** drogdhuḥ **rakṣaso** rāvaṇāt **pāti** ātmānam iti śeṣaḥ, sa eva hariḥ **opasāṃ** sarvasya dharaṅkaṃ **nabhaḥ** avyākṛtaṃ māyāmayāṃ sītākhyāṃ **payah** payasvat prasravayuktaṃ **kṛṇute** karoti, vatsaṃ gaur iva sītā tam avekṣya snigdā bhavatīty arthaḥ | kasmai prayojanāya - **camvoḥ** vānararākṣasasenayoḥ **upastīre** uktalakṣaṇāya tatpūrvakāya camvoḥ saṃgrāmāgnau homāyety arthaḥ | homasyāpi prayojanam **brahma nirṇije** brahmaṇaḥ brahmāṇḍasya kaṅṭhakodddharanena śodhanāya, tena kaṅṭakā eva mṛtāḥ, vānarās tu mṛtā api punar utthāpitā iti dhvanitam ||

Sampāti then showed favor to the monkeys, once he knew that they were devoted to his Lord [Rāma]. And so [the sage] Śṣabha, son of Viśvāmitra says the nine verses that begin with "ā dakṣiṇā" etc. [i.e. ŚV 9.71.1-9.] The powerful (śuṣmī) monkey (hari), commanded (āsṛjyate) to go south (ā dakṣiṇā) - that is, commanded with the words: "do you, seeking for Sītā, look for her in the South, on Lankā." The sense is [commanded to go] by the divine bird seen at the end of the hymn - .<sup>53</sup> As soon as he was commanded thus, the monkey went (veti) to Sītā (āsadam) - "āsadam" means the place in which one sits, i.e. Rāma's home, in the form of Sītā -. Reaching there and being alert (jāgrviḥ), he protects (pāti) himself - one must supply - from the malevolent (druhaḥ) Rāvaṇa (rakṣasaḥ). That monkey makes (kṛṇute) the supporter of all (opasāṃ), the unmanifest, consisting of māyā, Sītā by name (nabhaḥ), to be full of milk or maternal (payah). - Just as when a cow looks upon its calf, so Sītā, looking upon him [Hanumān] becomes affectionate; this is the

<sup>52</sup> Geldner: Er ward mit der Dakṣiṇā losgelassen, der Ungestīme, um sich zu setzen. Er verfolgt die Tückebolde, schützt vor dem Unhold, der Wachsame. Der Falbe macht in beiden Camū's Wolke (und) Milch zum Kopfputz, zur Unterlage (Teppich), das feierliche Wort zum Festkleid.

Renou: (Le lait de) la vache se répand (sur le soma, lequel), fougueux, court s'asseoir (dans le récipient; lequel), vigilant, protège du dol, du démon./ (Le soma) alezan revêt le turban, (prend) pour l'étendre sous les deux récipients la nuée (qu'est) le lait, (il prend aussi) la Formule pour s'en parer.

<sup>53</sup> This is a reference to the ninth and final verse of ŚV 9.71, which appears as MR 94: ukṣeva yūthm̄ pariyānn arāvīd ādhi tvīṣir adhita śrīyasya | **divyāḥ suparṇó** 'va cakṣata kṣm̄m̄ sōmah pāri krātunā paśyate jṅḥ. The divyāḥ suparṇāḥ is glossed by NC as a reference to Sampāti.

meaning -. To what purpose? For the sacrificial offering (upastire) in the [sacred] fire of battle between the two armies of monkeys and rākṣasas (camvoḥ) in the manner described before; this is the meaning. The purpose of the sacrificial offering is for the purification (nirṇije) of the cosmos (brahma) through removal of its thorns. - Thereby the thorns are killed. But the monkeys, who are also killed, will be raised up again, so this verse suggests.

Nīlakaṇṭha takes this verse to describe the vulture Sampāti's instructions to the monkeys, including Hanumān, to go South to Laṅkā in order to find Sītā. And indeed, the entire sūkta (9.71) is cited in order here and used to narrate as far as Hanumān's finding Sītā and identifying himself to her. The choice of this verse appears to have been motivated by the presence in it of the terms, "hāriḥ," "dākṣiṇā," "rakṣāsaḥ" and "camvoḥ."

Geldner finds this verse, especially its first two pādas, "schwierig." How many sentences are there? Do they break across the caesura? Is "dākṣiṇā" instrumental or nominative? Is there asyndeton in both the first line and the second? Are "druháḥ rakṣāsaḥ" both accusative plural? Does asyndeton explain the -s sandhi of "nābhas páyaḥ"? Renou's translation and notes decide many of these same points differently. While Sāyaṇa is relatively confident of the meaning of the first two pādas, he does have alternative explanations for both "nābhas páyaḥ" and for "brāhma nirṇije."

Nīlakaṇṭha takes there to be three sentences in the first line, though he divides them differently from Renou, Geldner (in notes), and Sāyaṇa. As usual he can easily render "harí" as "monkey," and "camḥ" as "army," but he must work harder than usual in his treatment to domesticate the verse as a whole, especially in dealing with the pesky phrases "nābhas páyaḥ" and "brāhma nirṇije." This can be seen by the number of times he must read well above the level of the words of the text in passages that are set off by phrases that indicate his additional efforts, such as "iti gamyate," "iti śeṣaḥ," "ity arthaḥ" and "iti dhvanitam."

### Rationale

What is the justification for these extraordinary renderings? Nīlakaṇṭha gives a general discussion of the rationale for his approach at the beginning of both of his works. The introduction to the Mantrarāmāyaṇa is a more complete statement of his hermeneutics, and I will depend primarily on Nīlakaṇṭha's formulations there.

The Mantrarāmāyaṇa begins with a commentary on the Rāmarakṣā, or more specifically, the five verses of the kavaca of the Rāmarakṣāstotra.<sup>54</sup> These five verses

<sup>54</sup> This is the oldest and most stable part of a widely circulating text with many versions. See G. Bīhnmann, Budha-Kausika's Rāmarakṣāstotra, Publications of the De Nobili

arrange a series of 20 names of Rāma in an order so that the epithets of Rāma alone relate the entire Rāma story.<sup>55</sup> In fact the Mantrarāmāyaṇa appears to emerge from a verse that Nīlakaṇṭha prefixes to the Rāmarakṣā, in which the relationship between the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, the Rāmarakṣā, and the Vedic Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī mantra is compared to that between a tree, its first sprout, and the seed from which sprout and tree spring.<sup>56</sup> From here, and especially in an extended passage that serves as a bridge from the commentary on the Rāmarakṣā to the rest of the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, Nīlakaṇṭha argues out the rationale of his Mantrarahasyaprakāśikā works.

The basic thesis is that just as the kavaca of the Rāmarakṣā encapsulates the Rāma story, so the Vedic verses do also. Just as the Rāmāyaṇa has a story as its lesser meaning and liberative knowledge as its higher meaning, so do the Vedic verses that it is based on.<sup>57</sup> All verses of the Vedas can be interpreted at all three levels of Vedic meaning: ādhyātmika, ādhidaivika, and ādhibhautika or ādhiyajñika.<sup>58</sup> Through appeal to the Mīmāṃsa principle of liṅga or indication,<sup>59</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha argues that even a verse whose apparent meaning is about something else can denote Rāma as its main sense.

Now a practitioner of Mīmāṃsā might object that the use of the liṅga principle is carefully restricted in Mīmāṃsā, and a fundamental tenet of that philosophical position holds that not every verse can be interpreted on every level of meaning. Some verses are simply about ritual action. For if all verses were treated in Nīlakaṇṭha's way it would cause torment to the Vedas, and eradicate the ritual practice enjoined by the texts.<sup>60</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha

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Research Library 10 (Vienna: 1983). Bīhnmann's work includes a discussion of Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on the Rāmarakṣā verses.

<sup>55</sup> śiro me **rāghavaḥ** pātu bhālaṃ **daśarathātmajaḥ** / **kausalīyeyo** dṛṣau pātu **viśvāmitrapriyaḥ** śrutī // ghrāṇaṃ pātu **makhatrātā** mukhaṃ **saumitrivatsalah** / jihvām **vidyānidhiḥ** pātu kaṇṭhaṃ **bharatavanditaḥ** // etc. Rāma's dynastic forebears are suggested by "rāghavaḥ," his birth to his parents by "daśarathātmajaḥ" and by "kausalīyeyah," his adventure with Viśvāmitra by "viśvāmitrapriyaḥ," and so on.

<sup>56</sup> rāmāyaṇadrumaṃ naumi rāmarakṣānavāṅkuram / gāyātrībijaṃ āmnāyamūlaṃ mokṣamahāphalam //

<sup>57</sup> rāmāyaṇasya tanmūlabhūtānāṃ ca mantrāṇāṃ ca avāntaratātparyeṇa kathāparatvaṃ mahātātparyeṇa vidyāparatvaṃ ca vaktuṃ yuktam. MR p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha says, in summarizing his discussion of a verse from the Puruṣa sūkta: ādhyātmiko' rtho mukhyaḥ upeyatvāt ādhidaivikas tu tatpratyaśannatvād amukhyaḥ tṛtīyas tu ... yajñatvam atijaghanyaṃ bhavati. MR p. 7. The lattermost, ritualistic, reading of the texts is provided by the established commentators, and Nīlakaṇṭha does not bother with it in his works.

<sup>59</sup> See ad loc. liṅga, in B. Jhalkīkar and V.S. Abhyankar, *Nyāyakośa* 3d ed. (Poona: BORI, 1928), 710-15. As NC puts it, even a word that has one commonly accepted meaning through the force of an indication (liṅga) can express a different meaning - kiṃcānyatrarūḍho 'pi śabda liṅgabalād anyam artham bravīti. MR p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> tena cātyantaṃ śrutipīḍākarmakāṇḍocchedau syātāṃ. tasmāt mantrāṇāṃ rāmāyaṇamūlatve saṃbhavaty api adhyātmaparatvaṃ na yujyate.

replies by asserting that the meaning of texts is different for different readers of them.<sup>61</sup> He appeals to Yāska's practice of explaining the same word in a variety of meanings.<sup>62</sup> He also invokes Yāska's practice of commenting on the same verse in both *ādhyātmika* and *ādhidāivika* terms, and Yāska's statement that in ascertaining the deity of a verse, one should understand that it is ultimately the Self that is being praised.<sup>63</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha also confronts directly the objection that it seems improbable that the whole mass of Vedic literature would have, as its primary intention, the telling of a story. This is not a problem, argues Nīlakaṇṭha, when we consider how filled with narrative elements so many of the Vedic verses are, and how often even the specifics of ritual practice are established through reference to stories.<sup>64</sup>

But more problematic is the objection that the Rāmakaṭhā is, after all, nowhere mentioned in the Vedas; and that it would depart from the whole approach to analysis of the Vedas built up in the Mīmāṃsā, Śrauta, and Bhāṣyakāra traditions to find this wholly new meaning in the verses. Here Nīlakaṇṭha is clearly aware of the point of view of his contemporaries, even as he anticipates our objections today. But Nīlakaṇṭha is unabashed. He is unconcerned that no one has read the Rāmakaṭhā as the primary meaning of the Vedic verses before, invoking the maxim that a post should not be blamed if a blind man walks into it!<sup>65</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha's rationale section leads directly into the beginning of the Mantrarāmāyaṇa, in a reading of the first five verses from ŚV 10.99. This sūkta is traditionally attributed to a sage named Vamra Vaikhānasa, and Nīlakaṇṭha shows, through some fancy grammatical footwork, that Vamra is none other than Vālmīki. Thus the first five verses of this sūkta, being the product of the Ḥḍikavi, are an encapsulation of the Rāma story and are in that respect just like the five verses of the Rāmarakṣā kavaca. The Mantrarāmāyaṇa then begins with a reading of these five verses as a telling of the whole Rāmakaṭhā, and then offers a rereading of them from the *ādhyātmika* perspective, to

<sup>61</sup> ekasminn eva viṣaye pratipattṛbhedenā pratipattibhedadarśanāt. MR p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> The passage cited is from Nirukta 2.8 in a commentary on ŚV 1.164.32.

<sup>63</sup> ata eva yāskaḥ sthālīpulākanyāyena kāṃś cin mantrān adhidaivatam adhyātmaṃ ca vyākhyāya sarveṣāṃ acetanadevatānāmabhir adhyātmaparatayā vyākhyānam kartavyam ity āśayenāha: mähābhāgyād devatāyā eka ātmā bahudhā stūyate ekasyātmāno 'nye devāḥ pratyāṅgāni bhavanti api ca sattvānām prakṛtibhir ṛṣayaḥ stuvantīty āhuḥ | This is Nirukta 7.4. My thanks to Eivind Kahrs in helping me identify this passage.

<sup>64</sup> tathā hi sarvo 'pi mantra adhyātmikīm ādhidaivikīm vā kathām upajīvyāiva stuvan vidhyartham smārayati. MR pp. 9-10.

<sup>65</sup> nanu rāmāyaṇīyakathā kasyāṃ cid api sākhyāyāṃ vṛtravadhādivan na dṛṣyate 'to 'syāḥ śrutimūlatvam eva nāstīti cen naiṣa sthāṇor aparādho yad enam andho na paśyatīti nyāyena tvayi vedārthānabhijñe sati na rāmāyaṇam aparādhyati. MR p. 9. The maxim of the blind man and the post is found in Nirukta 1.16, in exactly these words.

demonstrate the multi-layered interpretative project that the rest of the work will lay out in detail.

In the Mantrabhāgavata the shorter opening statement of interpretative principles is largely the same. There is again appeal to a text called the Mantrasaṅgraha, which states that the meaning of all Vedic verses is basically Kṛṣṇa.<sup>66</sup> The Vedic verses have a meaning that pertains to ritual activity, but this is only a figurative meaning, occasioned by their use in Vedic rites.<sup>67</sup>

We have already seen examples of this rationale put into practice in the commentary - the selection of verses with indications (liṅga) of the Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories, and the compilation of additional verses which are not so explicit, but which are related by context or by narrative connection, as Nīlakaṇṭha sees it. And indeed, at many points Nīlakaṇṭha pauses to remind us that what he is doing is quite justified. In MR 22, for example he says, "In this way I bring in a collection of verses that are endowed with special indicators (liṅgaviśeṣa). I do not forcibly drag in verses devoid of indicators."<sup>68</sup> In order to justify his reading of a verse Nīlakaṇṭha will also regularly appeal to the context of the verse in the ŚV Saṁhitā, referring to passages in preceding or following verses, when they provide a context (ekavākyatā) helpful to his interpretation.<sup>69</sup>

#### Relation to the Vedic Commentators

In the process of commenting Nīlakaṇṭha makes use of the established Vedic commentaries. The commentary that he appears to know is that of Sāyaṇa / Mādhava.<sup>70</sup> This is clearest when Nīlakaṇṭha indicates an awareness that he is differing from the "bhāṣya." For example in MR 76 ( on ŚV 9.69.2),<sup>71</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha glosses the term "mandrṁjani" as "vāgdevatā," the speech deity, but then notes that the term is glossed

<sup>66</sup> ṛgārūdhāni sāmāni turyo vedo 'pi ṛṁmayah / yajūṁṣy ṛganugāny eva sarvastutyo janārdanaḥ / The Mantrasaṅgraha is also cited in the MR rationale, p. 9, but the verses cited in the two works are not all the same. I find no record of an extant text with this title.

<sup>67</sup> tasmāt siddham sarveṣāṁ mantrāṅgāṁ viṣṇuparatvam | kriyāparatvam tu teṣāṁ upacārāt tadgatabrahmalīṅgānāṁ kriyāṅgāṁ sāmānjasyenānvayāyogāt |

<sup>68</sup> evam anyad api liṅgaviśeṣopetaṁ mantrajātam udāhriyate na nirlīṅgaṁ haṭhād ākṛṣyata iti dik. Similar comments appear in MR 23, 29, 38, 44, and elsewhere.

<sup>69</sup> See above example 3, and elsewhere, e.g. MR 11, 12, 35, 58, 59, 60, 110, 130.

<sup>70</sup> On folio 2v of the Mantrakāśikhaṇḍa Sāyaṇa is referred to as vedabhāṣyakartā mādhavaḥ.

<sup>71</sup> úpo matīḥ pṛcyáte sicyáte mádhhu mandrṁjani codate antár āsāni | pávamānaḥ saṁtanīḥ praghnatṛm iva mádhumān drapsāḥ pári vṛram arṣati ||

differently in the commentary (bhāṣye). The commentary he cites parallels Sāyaṇa's.<sup>72</sup> The same phenomenon occurs elsewhere in both works.<sup>73</sup>

Even when Nīlakaṇṭha does not refer to the commentators, his reading of terms often follows them quite closely. Of course the commentators are not attempting to read these verses as disclosing the Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories, and therefore Nīlakaṇṭha's glosses of words are turned in a different direction. Yet often the commentators' glosses lie right on the surface of, or not far beneath the surface of, Nīlakaṇṭha's readings. Compare from example 4 cited above, (MR 86 on ŚV 9.71.1), the following glosses from Sāyaṇa with those of Nīlakaṇṭha

Nīlakaṇṭha	Sāyaṇa
śuṣmī balavān	śuṣmī balavān somah
opaśam sarvasya dharaḥ	opaśam ... sarvasya dhāraḥ
nirñije kaṇṭakodharāṇena śodhanāya	nirñije padārthānām nirñjanāya pariśodhanāya

Obviously, Nīlakaṇṭha's purpose in writing his text is significantly different from that of the commentators he has at hand. The nature of the difference is "theorized" in the rationale sections, where the following question is posed: What if someone were to object that there is no precedent in the Vedic commentarial tradition for reading the ṛcas in Nīlakaṇṭha's way?<sup>74</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha replies that the commentaries are oriented toward the performance of the Vedic rituals. This orientation, which assumes as basic the ritual application of the verses, cannot refute Nīlakaṇṭha's philosophical explanation, which is derived from a semantic elucidation of Vedic stanzas (nigamanirukta.)<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore even the most literal reading of the Vedic verses does not always yield a ritual meaning. And indeed there are passages which in their literal reading would be far

<sup>72</sup> mandrājanī vāgnāmasu paṭhitaḥ, bhāṣye tu madakarasya prerayitrī somasya dhāreti vyākhyātam. Sāyaṇa here: madakarasya rasasya prerayitrī somadhārā. The vāgnāmāsu that NC refers to constitute Nighaṇṭu 1.11, where indeed mandrājanī appears.

<sup>73</sup> In MR 150 on ŚV 9.73.1, ṛtasya yonā is explained this way: ṛtasya yonā yonau ṛtasya yonir iti padaṃ jalanāmasu praviṣṭaḥ bhāṣye tu yajñasyotpattisthāne iti vyākhyātam. Sāyaṇa's gloss: ṛtasya satyabhūtasya yajñasya yonā yonāv utpattisthāne. Again, ṛtasya yonih appears in the udakanāmas of Nirukta 1.12. Similarly see MR 82, 130 and elsewhere.

<sup>74</sup> nanu vedabhāṣye 'pi na rāmāyaṇakathāsūcakatvaṃ kasya cid api mantrasya paśyama iti cet. MR p. 9.

<sup>75</sup> naiṣa doṣaḥ viniyogānusāriṇaḥ karmasvayutpādanārthasya bhāṣyakāriyavyākhyānasya nigamaniruktānusāritāttvikavyākhyānādūśakatvāt . MR p. 9. For my translation of "nigamanirukta" see E. Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis* (Cambridge: 1998).

from conducive to happiness or even life. For example the passage in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā in which Prajāpati cuts out his own omentum can hardly serve as a guide to practice.<sup>76</sup>

A more general problem with the ritualist reading of the Vedas is that the ritual application of verses is often only minimally related to the verses's content, or not related at all. And furthermore, the same verse can be used in more than one ritual application, without any indication in the verse itself that would justify this multiple use.<sup>77</sup>

Thus while it might be pleasing to commentators who are stupefied by their obsession with ritual (karmajaḍa) to read Vedic passages only to find a ritualist meaning, this cannot obstruct the sort of reading Nīlakaṇṭha proposes, which is the meaning cognoscenti will find in the texts, a meaning based on the direct evidence of the very summit of the śruti.<sup>78</sup> And thus the reading imputed by the commentators is not the primary meaning of the texts.<sup>79</sup>

Nīlakaṇṭha makes a good point when he argues that even within the Śrauta-Mīmāṃsā-Bhāṣya exegetical viewpoint many verses must be read against their transparent meaning to get them to fit a ritual context. It is a viewpoint that runs parallel to that of contemporary Vedists. Louis Renou produced a study of the aptness of Ṣgvedic verses for their ritual applications, in which he found the relationship often quite superficial, based sometimes on no more than the presence of the deity's name in the verse.<sup>80</sup>

### Nīlakaṇṭha and the Nirukta

At the close of the Mantrabhāgavata Nīlakaṇṭha asserts that his two main guides for understanding have been Pāṇini and Yāska.<sup>81</sup> As I have mentioned, Nīlakaṇṭha makes use of the vyākaraṇaśāstra for the explanation of unusual forms in the mantras as they come up, though he does not seem overly bothered by grammatical explanation. More remarkable is the extent of his reliance on Yāska's Nirukta. Nīlakaṇṭha appeals to Yāska in his rationale section as a source for justifying his multilayered readings of Vedic verses.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> TS 2.1.1.4. sā ātmāno vaprīm údakhidat

<sup>77</sup> NC gives as an example here ṢV 1.22.17: idām viṣṇur ví cakrame tredhrīn ní dadhe padām | sámūlham asya pāmsuré || NC points out that this verse is to be used in three different ritual contexts without any indication in the verse of why this should be so: na cātra tadanukūlaṃ kimcil liṅgaṃ dṛṣyate yena viniyogabhedena vyākhyānabhedo 'tra kalpayitum śakyate. MR p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> so 'yam arthaḥ karmajaḍānām rucikaro 'pi pūrvoktasyārthasya pratyakṣaśrutiśikharamūlasya sahrdayagrāhyasya na bādhaḥ. MR p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> evaṃ ca karmastāvakarṭhavadānusāribhāṣyakāriyaṃ vyākhyānam amukhyam MR p. 9.

<sup>80</sup> L. Renou, "Recherches sur le rituel védique: la place du Rig-Veda dans l'ordonance du culte," JA 250.2 (1962): 161-84.

<sup>81</sup> See above note 19.

<sup>82</sup> See above note 63. For more examples of the influence of the Nirukta, see notes 62 and 65.

In the Nirukta, Yāska offers a reading of a verse first according to an ādhidaivika interpretation, and then according to an ādhyātmika interpretation.<sup>83</sup> This practice becomes very prominent in the Nirukta's pariśiṣṭa or apocryphal chapter(s), which by Nīlakaṇṭha's day had long been accepted as an integral part of the text.<sup>84</sup> Indeed double treatments of seven verses from ŚV 1.164 appear in the Nirukta's pariśiṣṭa chapter(s), verses that Nīlakaṇṭha brings into the Mantrabhāgavata.<sup>85</sup>

Thus Nīlakaṇṭha's reliance on Yāska is found not just in the rationale section of the work, but frequently in the commentary on passages as well. For that matter the references that Nīlakaṇṭha makes to his differences from the Bhāṣyakāra, mentioned above, are provoked by his reliance on the Nirukta.<sup>86</sup> Sāyaṇa and the other commentators certainly make use of the Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta, but not to the extent that Nīlakaṇṭha does and not in the same ways.<sup>87</sup>

### Nīlakaṇṭha and Innovation

What has Nīlakaṇṭha accomplished in writing these texts? Is his work simply an example of an excess of learning run amok? An intellectual diversion - the pedantic equivalent of a parlor game? The overly zealous display of learning of a parvenu in Banaras, overwhelmed among the long-established families of learned Dākṣiṇī paṇḍits?<sup>88</sup> Or has Nīlakaṇṭha created something new? And if so, did he want to? For that matter, do we as Indologists believe that in Sanskrit literature there is ever anything new under the sun?

Nīlakaṇṭha is, no doubt, a learned author. His learning is not excessive if by that we mean unfocussed or getting in its own way. For Nīlakaṇṭha brings all of his literary training to bear on accomplishing a coordinated purpose. In the mantrarahasya texts Nīlakaṇṭha displays the education he received in many subjects - especially Advaita Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā, the Mantraśāstra of the Tāntrikas, and Nirukta-nirvacana - but he applies it to texts of the Itihāsa-Purāṇa genre, the central genre of his literary activity.

<sup>83</sup> Nirukta 3.12 ity adhidaivatam | athādhyātmam. The verse is ŚV 1.164.21, which appears in the MBhg as 2.39 (69).

<sup>84</sup> So also 13.11, 26-29, 31, 32, 34, 36-38, and 40 in Sarup's text. See Sarup's notes to 13.13.

<sup>85</sup> 1.164.15, 16, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 46. Also 10.55.5 appears as MR 60. Note that while Nīlakaṇṭha draws on some features of Yāska's ādhyātmika and ādhidaivata readings, it is more the format of double commentary and the possibility of a spiritual reading that he adapts, and not Yāska's commentary wholesale.

<sup>86</sup> See above, notes 72 and 73.

<sup>87</sup> See Kahrs, *Indian Semantic Analysis*, 29-34.

<sup>88</sup> See Haraprasad Shastri, "Dakshini Pandits at Benares," *Indian Antiquary* 41 (1912): 7-13. See also note 93.

Nīlakaṇṭha's innovation lies not in newness of technique or of knowledge, but in the way existing techniques and knowledges are taken together, across what we would today call "disciplinary boundaries," in the service of a new purpose.

For while Mīmāṃsakas and Śrautins understood the verses selected for ritual practices according to principles such as "indication" (liṅga), Nīlakaṇṭha makes use of the liṅga and other Mīmāṃsaka principles to select Vedic verses for distinctly non-Mīmāṃsaka purposes, even while denying Mīmāṃsaka restrictions in the use of these principles and Mīmāṃsaka assumptions about the possibility of layers of Vedic meaning.

While Nīlakaṇṭha makes regular use of the glosses of the commentator Sāyaṇa, he denies Sāyaṇa's hermeneutic assumptions about the Veda's ritual application, indeed even as he denies the centrality of the commentator's elucidations. While Nīlakaṇṭha invokes Yāska as representative of the Nighaṇṭu-nirvacana tradition to open up the possibility of reading the Vedas on several layers of meaning simultaneously, he never limits himself to the particular meanings Yāska has assigned to the verses.

While the subtitle of each text - Mantrarahasyaprakāśikā - would lead one to expect to find a tāntrika text,<sup>89</sup> in which are revealed the esoteric significance and potency of tāntrika mantras, instead one finds verses from the Ṣgveda, mantras in a different sense, disclosing the Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories. Yet this ambiguity of what sort of secrets about what sort of mantras is itself indicative of Nīlakaṇṭha's "interdisciplinary" method, for at the heart of both texts lies a passage in which Nīlakaṇṭha indeed does engage in the tāntrika textual practice of eliciting mantras (mantroddhāra), in order to extract from Vedic verses the six-syllabled mantras that are basic to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa devotional practices.

And while the literature of Vedānta, beginning with the first Adhyāya of the Brahmasūtras, had already defined the basic purport of Vedic utterance as Brahman, the primary concern of Vedāntins lay with Upaniṣadic passages, and for an ācārya like Śaṅkara, the verses of the Ṣgveda provided only a lesser knowledge.<sup>90</sup> While Madhva wrote a commentary on the first 40 hymns of the Ṣgveda as part of his project to show that the meaning of all Vedic utterances is Viṣṇu,<sup>91</sup> and while Madhva's approach to the Vedas was itself innovative, even radical, setting a new standard for taking liberties with the

<sup>89</sup> And indeed, in some of the Sanskrit manuscript catalogues, these works of Nīlakaṇṭha's are identified as tāntrika.

<sup>90</sup> See Śaṅkara's comm. on Brahmasūtra 1.2.21.

<sup>91</sup> Ṣgbhāṣya vs. 4: sa evākhilavedārthaḥ sarvaśāstrārtha eva ca. See B.N.K. Sharma, History of the Dvaita School of Vedānta and its Literature, 2d ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), 180-86. Thanks to Madhav Deshpande for pointing this reference out at the conference. Madhva's Viṣṇuite approach to Vedic literature strongly influenced the work of many later ācāryas and movements associated with the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and with Rāmaite worship.

meaning of Vedic texts, even reading the Vedic texts to prophesy his own incarnation in the world,<sup>92</sup> yet Madhva did not break the order of the Śgvedic verses in commenting on them. Nor was he interested in the revelation of the Rāma story or the Kṛṣṇa story as such. Nīlakaṇṭha, though an Advaitan in philosophical outlook, with strong influences in his thinking from the devotional movements associated with Bhāgavata worship, is innovative in saying that the Vedas refer not just to brahman, and not just to Viṣṇu as the saḡuṇa brahman, but to Viṣṇu in incarnated action, in a narrativized form.

Thus although Nīlakaṇṭha makes use of interpretative models pre-existent in the Advaita, Mīmāṃsā, Śrauta and other established traditions, he is explicitly aware that he is departing from the standard interpretative approaches to the Vedas. He knows that he is producing something new.

In Nīlakaṇṭha's innovative approach the older principle of vedamūlatva expressed so widely in older smārta literature, in the Rāmarakṣā itself and in the verse with which Nīlakaṇṭha begins - the Vedic Gāyatrī mantra as the seed, the Rāmarakṣā as the sprout, the Rāmāyaṇa as the tree - is subjected to a new inversion. It is no longer that the Rāmāyaṇa has value because it is vedamūla, based in Vedic authority, but rather that the Vedas have value because they are capable of revealing Rāma (and Kṛṣṇa) to us. Older works such as the Yogavāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa, the Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa, and many less well known works such as the Rāmāyaṇarahasya had already shown the 'hidden' meaning of the Rāmāyaṇa, that is they had shown that the Rāmāyaṇa is not only a story about Rāma, but reveals a deeper Vedic or specifically Vedāntic truth. In the reading that Nīlakaṇṭha proposes it is rather the Vedic verses that can be shown to have a hidden meaning; they are not just verses about the Vedic deities and rituals, but have a deeper truth, which is the story of the Rāmāyaṇa.

#### Nīlakaṇṭha in his Historical Moment

Such a reversal of value is in keeping with larger intellectual and religious movements afoot in Nīlakaṇṭha's day among high-culture Brahmins in North India. Some of these trends had been developing for some time, though they seem to have become more pronounced in Nīlakaṇṭha's period. The later Moghul era in Banaras was a period of great literary productivity in Sanskrit scholarship. In the Banaras where Nīlakaṇṭha lived, sāstrīs produced what became highly influential works on a wide array of scholarly subjects, from

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<sup>92</sup> See Roque Mesquita, Madhva und seine unbekanntenen literarischen Quellen: einige Beobachtungen De Nobili Research Library 24 (Vienna: 1997). Thanks to Jan Houben for providing this reference at the conference.

grammar to Dharmasāstra to aesthetics to astronomy.<sup>93</sup> One sees the creation of magisterial works, compendiums of learning. At the same time one sees a series of fusions attempted between formerly disparate intellectual currents, especially in the direction of blending more staid, intellectual forms such as Advaita philosophy, with more popular religious forms such as bhakti devotionism of Kṛṣṇa and of Rāma. There is also a widespread fusion of tāntrika elements of practice with all sorts of devotional and philosophical soteriologies. And there is the rising importance of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Tulsī Rāmāyaṇa, which supersede the Vedas by engulfing or encompassing them.<sup>94</sup>

It is still difficult for me to see how Nīlakaṇṭha's work fits into the larger history of his day, to see, that is, how Nīlakaṇṭha is an "early modern." How might Nīlakaṇṭha, working in Banaras in the days of Aurangzeb's wars in the South, have been influenced by the events taking place in his world, if he was influenced by them at all? At least one can say that despite the usual accounts of Banaras in this period, which focus on Aurangzeb bearing down on Hindu temples and institutions in the city, the literary activities of the Śāstrīs exerted an impact far beyond the limits of the city, and they carried their prestige into other spheres as well. Śāstrīs, especially Jagannātha, had been introduced at the courts of the Moghuls, including of course the court of Dara Shikoh. Kavīndrācārya famously met with Shāh Jahān, and also probably with Bernier. Gāgā Bhaṭṭa had a long-standing connection with Śivāji, and officiated at his coronation. Nilakantha himself had work commissioned by Anūpa Siṃha. Many Śāstrīs in Banaras received support from princes whose kingdoms lay far from the sacred city. Why did so many Śāstrīs move to Banaras in this period, especially from the Godāvāri valley? And why were there so many princes seeking to support scholarship in (and of) Banaras in this period, a period that one sort of historiography depicts as that of a city all but in ruins? Would competition for support from Moghul, Rajput, and Maratha courts, and in turn competition among the donors to provide support, have influenced the content of the work produced? Can one suppose that the general tendency to encyclopedic learning, to the creation of compendiums, and to the fusion of disparate intellectual traditions bears a resemblance to the consolidation of

<sup>93</sup> See Baldev Upādhyāya, *Kāśī kī Pānditya Paramparā* (Vārāṇasī: Viśvavidyālaya Prakāśana, 1983), 1-88; Moti Chandra, *Kāśī ka Itihās* (Bombay: 1962), 220-49. See however Pollock, "Sanskrit Literary Culture." In grammar this is the era in Banaras of Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita and Nāgoji Bhatta, among others; in Dharmasāstra, of Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa; in aesthetics of Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja; in astronomy of Munīśvara and again Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa. This is not even to mention the Advaitins in town.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, on Jīva Gosvāmi's according superior authority to the Purāṇas over the Vedas, Edward Dimock, "Doctrine and Practice among the Vaisnavas of Bengal," in ed. Milton Singer, *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, (Honolulu: 1966), 42.

administrative structures and the integration of economies in the era of the Great Moghuls? Do the strong theological rationalizations in Sanskrit of the popular and expanding devotional movements mark an early step in a wholesale breaking down of the divide between elite and popular religions, or one more attempt at "Brahminizing"? Broad historical pictures are not yet intellectual biography, but at least Nīlakaṇṭha's penchant for innovation might be explainable in relation to the many transformations taking place in the world he inhabited.

### Nīlakaṇṭha and Contemporary Vedic Studies

In the preceding sections I have pointed out how the study of Nīlakaṇṭha's works might be useful in learning about the later destiny of Vedic literature. But the question might still be raised about his usefulness to studies of the Vedas "in themselves." Are we likely to revise our translations or interpretations of any verse of the Ṣgveda based on Nīlakaṇṭha's contributions? Probably not. Do his glosses preserve any precious linguistic archaeological specimens that might shed some light on Vedic language? Probably not.<sup>95</sup>

What then is the use of Nīlakaṇṭha's work for those of us studying the Veda today? Theodore Aufrecht, a Vedist of note in the last century, already dismissed Nīlakaṇṭha's work, saying that it "perverted" the Vedic verses into a reference to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.<sup>96</sup> And although we probably would not say it quite that way today, I doubt that we would take Nīlakaṇṭha's texts any more seriously. But there is at least this second order value: a reading of Nīlakaṇṭha's mantrarahasya works can remind us of the assumptions we make today in doing our work, the location of our own disciplinary boundaries, the distinction that we make between the Vedas' destiny and the Vedas' meaning.

For what is it that bothers us about Nīlakaṇṭha's work, or strikes us as funny, or both? I suppose that we would say that it is his fundamentally anachronistic approach - his lack of concern with the Vedas' meaning as "originally intended," not as later interpreted. Our dismissal proceeds from that reaction coupled with our sense of advances in collective knowledge based on the findings of comparative philology, historical linguistics, and the access to more and more of (extant) Vedic literature in, at least in principle, better and better text-critical editions.

Yet our progress in knowledge coincides with the vanishing of living Vedic schools, and with the decay or disappearance of manuscripts of Vedic literature, in some cases, according to legend, tossed into rivers exactly to keep them from our progressivist

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<sup>95</sup> But see Printz, note 4 above.

<sup>96</sup> See note 3 above. Vaidya calls his Vedicizing comments in the Harivaṃśa "the expressions of his pedantry." See note 12.

scholarly "gaze." Progress in knowledge coincides, more ominously, with the homogenization and objectification of Vedic schools and literatures for distinctly nationalist agendas.

Now as Vedists, we would probably all admit that, for all our efforts, there is some portion of the Vedic literature that remains unsolved. There are some passages that we feel we cannot yet translate or understand with certainty. And most of us would also admit that there will always be some residue of Vedic passages that will never be solved, and that will always elude us. Here, in his mantrarahasya texts, Nīlakaṇṭha takes up some of these verses that are for us as yet unsolved - one was shown above in example 4 - and treats them with nothing but certainty. While our confidence about some of these verses might lie only in knowing that there are some interpretations, including Nīlakaṇṭha's, that we are certain we can rule out, Nilakantha appears to be untroubled by the deep waters he navigates. He seems to be especially at home where the insolubility has been built into the passages by their authors in intentionally opaque language: the rare word chosen, the sentence syntax twisted, the allusion made to the narrative not told, the homage paid to the sacred being hidden from open speech.<sup>97</sup>

Halbfass characterizes the total picture that Śaṅkarācārya has of the Veda as:

a complex differentiated structure of discourse, speaking at different levels and with different voices. The Veda not only teaches or enunciates the supreme and liberating truth concerning atman and brahman; it also paraphrases itself, appeals to the capacities of those who rely on it, relates itself to the world of appearance from which liberation is sought. It is not only the source of those supreme teachings themselves, but also of the human possibilities of understanding and clarifying them, of legitimately reasoning and arguing about them. It speaks not only the language of authoritative testimony and instruction, but also of explication, persuasion, and reasoning.<sup>98</sup>

In advancing his extraordinary claims about the meaning of the Vedic verses, Nīlakaṇṭha is able to take advantage of the multiplicity of possibilities and the internal fissures of understanding and approach that have been built into the Vedic literary edifice in so many ways and at so many levels. His own approach can work successfully with the nature of specific passages of Vedic language and within the overall structure of the Vedic tradition as conceptualized by Śaṅkara, even as it subverts fundamental attitudes about Vedic authority.

This is not to say that Nīlakaṇṭha has the meaning of a particular passage and we do not, and it is not to say that his method of reading is continuous with the Vedic poet's

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<sup>97</sup> See above note 51 and example 3.

<sup>98</sup> Wilhelm Halbfass, Tradition and Reflection (Albany: SUNY 1991), 136

method of composing. Nor is this to relativize all readings of the Veda; nor is it to say by now rather emptily that they are all socially constructed. It is only to say that along with the gains of our own approach to understanding there are also losses, and that some of our progress in knowledge might be more elliptical than linear. How many large-scale explanations of the meaning of the Ṣgveda of the last two centuries have by now proved to be persuasive only to their inventors?

In this sense Nīlakaṇṭha might not be so far from us in his Vedic studies. A student in a class of mine once pointed out that the Ṣgveda will probably always be the darling of Vedists exactly because it is just understandable enough to look solvable and just hard enough never finally to be so. Thus there is the possibility without conclusion that a future reader of the Ṣgveda might have glimmering after glimmering of interpretative notions, flashes of comprehension like distant summer lightning, and occasionally, the torrential brainstorm of interpretative insight. And long may the brainstorms rage.

#### ABBREVIATIONS:

BhBhD	Bhāratabhāvadīpa
MKKh	Mantrakāśīkhaṇḍa
MBhg	Mantrabhāgavata
MR	Mantrarāmāyaṇa
NC	Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara
ṢV	Ṣgveda Saṃhitā
ṢV Khila	Ṣgveda Khila
VS	Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā
TS	Taittirīya Saṃhitā
MS	Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā
KS	Kāthaka Saṃhitā
TB	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
BhgP	Bhāgavata Purāṇa
ASB	Asiatic Society of Bengal
BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
RORI	Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute

## Appendix: Indices to the Mantrarāmāyaṇa and Mantrabhāgavata

I provide the following as a supplement to the indices in the editions of the MR and MBhg, which are incomplete, and which suffer from a number of misidentifications and typographical errors. Unless otherwise noted references are to the verses in the Ṣgveda according to Aufrecht's edition.

Mantrarāmāyaṇa verses in their MR order.

1-5)	10.99.1-5
6-10)	9.73.5-9
11)	10.54.1
12)	5.45.9
13-15)	10.1.2-4
16)	1.164.10
17)	10.54.4
18-20)	1.126.1, 3, 4
21)	1.126.7
22)	3.53.9
23-24)	10.85.18, 29
25-28)	3.53.11, 13, 18, 21
29)	7.86.7
30)	10.103.5
31)	9.96.19
32)	10.61.7
33-34)	4.57.6, 7
35)	10.103.6
36-37)	10.85.33, 36
38-43)	10.61.16-20, 6
44)	7.33.6
45-47)	3.33.9, 12, 11,
48-51)	8.33.16-19
52)	10.99.6
53)	10.54.2
54)	10.34.11
55)	1.80.7
56)	10.34.12
57-58)	10.3.1, 2
59)	10.61.8
60-62)	10.55.5-7
63)	5.85.3
64)	5.78.6
65)	VS 3.50 = TS 1.8.4.1 = MS 1.10.2 = KS 9.5
66)	5.32.12
67-71)	10.64.1, 2, 6- 8
72-74)	10.79.1- 3
75-76)	9.69.1, 2
77)	10.63.5
78-82)	9.69.3-7
83-85)	9.70.8-10
86-94)	9.71.1-9
95-96)	10.86.9, 10
97-98)	10.56.1, 2
99)	10.55.1

100-102)	10.28.8-10
103)	10.53.7
104-107)	10.87.1, 2, 6, 22
108-114)	9.72.1-7
115-118)	10.34.10, 2, 3, 6
119-120)	10.85.21, 22
121)	10.71.4
122)	6.47.17
123-124)	10.85.23, 24
125)	5.45.10
126)	10.53.8
127)	7.99.4
128)	8.43.4
129)	6.47.18
130)	8.32.2
131)	10.3.3
132-138)	10.109.1-7
139-141)	10.111.9, 10, 7
142)	5.3.3
143)	4.26.1
144)	10.111.8
145-146)	1.122.1, 14
147)	7.86.6
148)	7.19.2
149)	10.97.6
150-153)	9.73.1-4
154-155)	10.72.8, 9
156)	SB 1.6.20
157)	10.56.7

Mantrabhāgavata verses in their MBhg order:

Gokula

1-2)	8.75.5, 6
3)	8.41.6
4-5)	1.164.46, 47
6)	1.35.2
7)	TB 3.7.4.8
8)	4.18.11
9-10)	1.164.36, 32
11)	4.7.9
12)	3.54.14
13)	7.59.7
14-15)	7.60.7, 8
16-18)	4.51.1-3
19)	1.164.38
20)	1.123.1
21)	10.165.3
22)	10.97.13
23-24)	5.6.8, 9
25-26)	5.7.5, 6
27)	6.39.4
28-29)	1.28.4, 8

30) 10.54.3

Vṛndāvana

2.1	(=31)	10.95.14
2.1	(=32)	1.164.40
2.3-5	(=33-5)	1.32.11, 7, 8
2.6	(=36)	1.29.5
2.7-8	(=37-8)	1.164.37, 39
2.9	(=39)	9.89.6
2.10-4	(=40-4)	1.164. 27, 28, 9, 19, 22
2.15-6	(=45-6)	5.48.3, 4
2.17	(=47)	1.156.4
2.18	(=48)	1.154.6
2.19	(=49)	10.166.1
2.20-3	(=50-3)	6.28.1-4
2.24	(=54)	1.67.2
2.25	(=55)	5.48.5
2.26	(=56)	4.7.10
2.27	(=57)	6.28.8
2.28	(=58)	10.48.10
2.29	(=59)	1.67.3
2.30	(=60)	1.164.41
2.31	(=61)	10.127.2
2.32	(=62)	1.66.4
2.33-4	(=63-4)	1.10.1, 2
2.35-9	(=65-69)	1.164. 15-18, 21

Akrūra

3.1-4	(=70-3)	3.54.19-22 (last vs. of 3.54 is 22)
3.5-26	(=74-95)	3.55.1-22
3.27	(=96)	5.52.17
3.28-30	(=97-9)	1.154.1-3

Mathurā

4.1	(=100)	1.152.1
4.2	(=101)	3.54.15
4.3	(=102)	ṢV Khila II.14.7
4.4-5	(=103-104)	8.41.5, 7
4.6	(=105)	8.40.6
4.7	(=106)	7.37.6
4.8	(=107)	7.1.19
4.9	(=108)	KS 7.12
4.10	(=109)	8.41.8

Verses in ṢV Saṃhitā order from MR and MBh combined:

1.10.1-2	(MBhg 63-64)
1.28.4	(MBhg 28), 8 (MBhg 29)
1.29.5	(MBhg 36)
1.32.7-8	(MBhg 34-35), 11 (MBhg 33)
1.35.2	(MBhg 6)
1.66.4	(MBhg 62)
1.67.2	(MBhg 54), 3 (MBhg 59)
1.80.7	(MR 55)
1.122.1	(MR 145), 14 (MR 146)

- 1.123.1 (MBhg20)  
 1.126.1 (MR 18), 3-4 (MR 19-20), 7 (MR 21)  
 1.152.1 (MBhg 100)  
 1.154.1-3 (MBhg 97-99), 6 (MBhg 48)  
 1.156.4 (MBhg 47)  
 1.164.9 (MBhg 42), 10 (MR 16), 15-18 (MBhg 65-68), 19 (MBhg 43), 21 (MBhg 69), 22  
 (MBhg 44), 27-28 (MBhg 40-41), 32 (MBhg 10), 36 (MBhg 9), 37 (MBhg 37),  
 38 (MBhg 19), 39 (MBhg 38), 40 (MBhg 32), 41 (MBhg 60), 46-47 (MBhg 4-5)  
 3.33.9 (MR 45), 11 (MR 46), 12 (MR 47)  
 3.53.9 (MR 22), 11 (MR 25), 13 (MR 26), 18 (MR 27), 21 (MR 28)  
 3.54.14 (MBhg 12), 15 (MBhg 101), 19-22 (MBhg 70-73)  
 3.55.1-22 (MBhg 74-95)  
 4.7.10 (MBhg 56)  
 4.18.11 (MBhg 8)  
 4.26.1 (MR 143)  
 4.51.1-3 (MBhg 16-18)  
 4.57.6-7 (MR 33-34)  
 5.3.3 (MR 142)  
 5.6.8-9 (MBhg 23-24)  
 5.7.5-6 (MBhg 25-26)  
 5.32.12 (MR 66)  
 5.45.9 (MR 12), 10 (MR 125)  
 5.48.3-4 (MBhg 45-46), 5 (MBhg 55)  
 5.52.17 (MBhg 96)  
 5.78.6 (MR 64)  
 5.85.3 (MR 63)  
 6.28.1-4 (MBhg 50-53), 8 (MBhg 57)  
 6.39.4 (MBhg 27)  
 6.47.17 (MR 122), 18 (MR 129)  
 7.1.19 (MBhg 107)  
 7.19.2 (MR 148)  
 7.33.6 (MR 44)  
 7.37.6 (MBhg 106)  
 7.59.7 (MBhg 13)  
 7.60.7-8 (MBhg 14-15)  
 7.86.6 (MR 147), 7 (MR 29)  
 7.99.4 (MR 127)  
 8.32.2 (MR 130)  
 8.33.16-19 (MR 48-51)  
 8.40.6 (MBhg 105)  
 8.41.5 (MBhg 103), 6 (MBhg 3), 7 (MBhg 104), 8 (MBhg 109)  
 8.43.4 (MR 128)  
 8.75.5-6 (MBhg 1-2)  
 9.69.1-2 (MR 75-76), 3-7 (MR 78-82)  
 9.70.8-10 (MR 83-85)  
 9.71.1-9 (MR 86-94)  
 9.72.1-7 (MR 108-114)  
 9.73.1-4 (MR 150-153), 5-9 (MR 6-10)  
 9.89.6 (MBhg 39)  
 9.96.19 (MR 31)  
 10.1.2-4 (MR 13-15)  
 10.3.1-2 (MR 57-58), 3 (MR 131)  
 10.28.8-10 (MR 100-102)  
 10.34.2-3 (MR 116-117), 6 (MR 118), 10 (MR 115), 11 (MR 54), 12 (MR 56)

- 10.48.10 (MBhg 58)  
 10.53.7 (MR 103), 8 (MR 126)  
 10.54.1 (MR 11), 2 (MR 53), 3 (MBhg 30), 4 (MR 17)  
 10.55.1 (MR 99), 5-7 (MR 60-62)  
 10.56.1-2 (MR 97-98), 7 (MR 157)  
 10.61.6 (MR 43), 7 (MR 32), 8 (MR 59), 16-20 (MR 38-42)  
 10.63.5 (MR 77)  
 10.64.1-2 (MR 67-68), 6- 8 (MR 69-71)  
 10.71.4 (MR 121)  
 10.72.8-9 (MR 154-155)  
 10.79.1-3 (MR 72-74)  
 10.85.18 (MR 23), 21-22 (MR 119-120), 23-24 (MR 123-124), 29 (MR 24), 33 (MR 36),  
 36 (MR 37)  
 10.86.9-10 (MR 95-96)  
 10.87.1 (MR 104), 2 (MR 105), 6 (MR 106), 22 (MR 107)  
 10.95.14 (MBhg 31)  
 10.97.6 (MR 149), 13 (MBhg 22)  
 10.99.1-5 (MR 1-5), 6 (MR 52)  
 10.103.5 (MR 30), 6 (MR 35)  
 10.109.1-7 (MR 132-138)  
 10.111.7 (MR 141), 8 (MR 144), 9-10 (MR 139-140)  
 10.127.2 (MBhg 61)  
 10.165.3 (MBhg 21)  
 10.166.1 (MBhg 49)
- ŚV Khila II.14.7 (MBhg 102)  
 ĀS 7.12 (MBhg 108)  
 TB 3.7.4.8 (MBhg 7)  
 VS 3.50 (MR 65)  
 ŚB 1.6.20 (MR 156)