

Mayūra's Literary Art in Sūryaśataka

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Abstract

All the Sanskrit treatises begin with a hymn for the blissful ending of the text without any hindrances. Mayūra Bhaṭṭa wrote hundred verses as a prayer to the Sun god to cure his disease. The Sun worship prevailed in India from centuries. At a point of time the Sun god and the worship to the Sun attracted most of the people. Therefore, the work Sūryaśataka also gained large momentum among readers and each critic. Each of hundred verses of Sūryaśataka is called Mukṭaka and is a prayer. Not only the deity Sun is worshipped but also Aruṇa his charioteer, horses of the Sun and the aura is described by attributing it to nature. The poetic beauty of this work is commendable. This paper is trying to discuss about various points mentioned by Mayūra regarding the Sun and its associated things.

MAYŪRA THE AUTHOUR OF SŪRYAŚATAKA

Sūryaśataka written by Mayūra Bhaṭṭa is well known around the world. It has been translated to various regional languages. The most famous works of Mayūra includes the *Sūryaśataka* which consist of hundred Śloka praising the Sun. This was said to be composed by Mayūra during seventh century. The *Sūryaśataka* is also known as *Mayūraśataka*. The well-known poet such as Abhinavagupta and Mammaṭa also has made references about Mayūra and *Sūryaśataka* in their literary works. Mammaṭa has made passive references about Mayūra and his work while talking about the merits of writing of composing poem in his well-known work known as *Kāvya prakāśa*.¹

There are various myths regarding the writing of *Sūryaśataka*, the most famous among them can be read as like this- Mayūra, the author of *Sūryaśataka* and Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the author famous literary works such as *Kādambari* and *Harṣacaritam* were poets in the assembly of the Kanuja king Śrī Harṣa there were various stories regarding Mayūra as the friend of Bāṇa but the others who are in disagreement said that he is the brother-in-law of Mayūra. Mayūra who has been turning to a leprosy patient with the curse of Bāṇa has started worshipping Sūrya for his disease and get cured. Mayūra has started chanting Sūryastotra after making an Agnikuṇḍa, sitting in a domestic swing made up of hundred strands of coir which is hanged in position. He himself had cut each strand of coir after chanting each Śloka. The Sun appeared and cured him while he was completed the last and hundredth Śloka and cut the strand of thread. This same myth has also been described in *Narasimhamanīṣa*, *Sudhāsāgara*, *Sūryaśatakadīyam* and *Prabanthacintāmaṇi*.

SUN, THE LUMINOUS DISC

In the first twenty-four verses poet beautifully describes the rays of the Sun. Mayūra who describes all the things surrounding the Sun is an excellent observer of nature. The red colour of the Sun is described as follows: let the rays of the Sun which make the world prosperous extend light to the world as if the lotus which blooms along with it has given its colour. Goddess Lakṣmi who resides amidst lotuses make

the flowers bloom and provide insight and happiness to people who are unhappy with their miseries through the sunrays.²

Like Viṣṇu who rescued the world from Mahābali, the enemy of gods with the short span of time the Sun rescues the world from the darkness which wraps the world. Not only travels two different directions and returns during dusk. It acts like a ship which could transport man through the sea of fears. It acts like a Kalpavṛkṣa by providing the needy everything you want when prayers are done. It gives insight to the world and expands the lotuses. It is the royal road to the heaven and the gate to mokṣa.³ When Sun rises it just rests for a while in Udaya Mountain and receives the grateful signs of bird Cakravāka. It is described by four faces of Brahma, includes pañcabhūta (Fire, Water, Earth, Air and Sky) and six seasons namely autumn, spring, winter, summer, monsoon and pre-winter. And praised by seven sages and spread over all directions.⁴

It absorbs water from the earth and gives it back as rain. It acts unbiased to everyone. The beauty of Sun multiplies by a small leap in the morning. Deities of generation organization and destruction, Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva also praise Sun god. Śiva praises Sun with the fear that it may be able to destroy the beauty of Moon in his head. Brahma praises in order that the lotus may not be able to sad and Sun being brighter than Viṣṇu is praised not to lose the colour.⁵ The Sun rays are bright equally from dawn to dusk. And rests nowhere in between. Like the vel of God Subrahmaṇian the heat liberated is a sign of prosperity and readers colours to the world like the painters painting, the Sun beautifies the biosphere giving white colour in the morning, multiple colours throughout the day and using the pollen grains of lotus, it is turned golden and during evening red. Like *Sūryaśataka*, *Rgveda* also mentioned about the rays of Sun, which are seeing all the activities of the human as a shining ball of fire.⁶

POETRY ON HEAT AND ENERGY

From verse twenty-five to forty-three, described about the heat of the Sun. When it comes down the mount Mahāmeru in the morning, when the Sun turns red it is doubted whether it is flag or other jewels. It doesn't over express their abilities. It leads to Mokṣa as an atom wide present mortal and immortal it consists of many such prevalent practices.

Gems glow beautifully when it is placed in the right place. The fire is for burning trees likewise the moon light gives tranquility but not as the Sun who could explore all the three worlds and avoid sins and provide rain not beyond the thought of layman. It blesses with the favorites like a doctor who rescues a patient from a strongly poisons snake bite, the Sun showers immense care to the world. Like the application of añjanam in eye wonder to prevalent stagnation of dust, excess water etc. the Sun wakes up the world from the night of tears. With the intention to see the world as a garden the virgin called night take water in the moon plate and waters the horizon, the Sun is thus sprouted. The tender leaves and saplings provide happiness to the world and eliminate the sins of the universe along with the music of the Gandarvas, instruments, chanting of mantras by sages like Nārada and gives youth to earth.⁷

THE CELESTIAL STEEDS WHO BEAR THE BRUNT OF CHARIOT

In verses forty-four to forty-nine, the horses of the Sun are described. Even though there are no signs in Mahāmeru to identify the routes the Sun loving stone emit fire and seeing that without stopping on land it travels through the sky. It defeats air with its spread. Due to the immense heat the horses flee so fast and immerse their head in Milky Way to drink water. As they see the reflections of themselves thinking that they are other horses' step slowly and charioteer Aruṇa find it difficult to identify the actual form of

green horses. Like *Sūryasataka*, *Rgveda* also there is a mention about seven horses of the Sun. It is mentioned that the chariot of the Sun is drawn by seven horses.⁸ The horses seen in the eastern direction of the sky and the green colour with white in between seems us of the flowing Yamuna River. During the path devas offer prayers but there will be Kinnara women in front of each cave. Even if Aruṇa scold's horses look at them.⁹ The whimper of horses shall expel all the sorrows and with the green colour and they act like the birds in the tree over Sumeru Mountain.

ARUṆA; THE CHARIOTEER OF THE SUN GOD

In verses fifty to sixty-one, charioteer Aruṇa is described. Various stages of the Sun are compared with a drama. The drama led by the charioteer of the Sun; he is acted as the stage director. When the curtain of the night goes upon the top most part of Udaya Mountain, then the Lakṣmi of light can be seen. Then the Aruṇa has showered the rare flowers of stars as Puṣpānjali. He performs consecration in the four Yāmās of a day is travelled and states the commencing narrative of the stage event. In the next Śloka the capabilities of Aruṇa are compared with Garuda, the vehicle of Viṣṇu. Garuda tilts itself according by and Aruṇa does the same with all the horses. Garuda great among the birds but Aruṇa is elder than Garuda.

Aruṇa being worshipped by Siddhās in morning but stand humble have hundred rays. He freed rays in the morning and during evening destroys them. Being saluted by Vedic hymns and happy with worships is considered equal with Sun.¹⁰

The eight directions are well maintained by saluting presides of the directions viz., Indra, Agni, Nirurti, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Kubera and Īśa. Aruṇa is scolded not to wish for the lash of varuṇa, cakra of Kṛṣṇa and that his chariot does not work in one wheel, the Ucchaiśravas of Indra etc., Even it whips the horses, survives the heat of the Sun it constantly remains energetic. If horses don't reach somewhere with the commands, Aruṇa make it too everywhere. It rescues from all the problems of human beings, gives comfort etc., Poet wishes all the readers that the blessings will be granted to all.

THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN GOD

In verses sixty-two to seventy-two the chariot of Sun is described. During morning it starts running suppressing the clouds and stepping upon Udaya Mountain, it seems like saluting Aruṇa in opposite direction. To eliminate the darkness, the Sun is believed to have one thousand hands which are the rays Sun in order to reduce the stress of each Marut tend to sit on them alternatively. Garuda and chariot is compared in the next verse that both are having high speed. The speed is high as that, it can cover all the three worlds by a single day and can reach the top and bottom of the setting mountain. The wives of the sages during dusk tie a knot over the axis and do ritualistic traditions.¹¹ Devas tend to come closer to worship the Sun. They offer flowers called mandāram and chariot moves very fast near the river Mandākini.¹²

THE SOLAR SPHERE: THE INEXHAUSTIBLE SOURCE OF LIGHT AND HEAT

The solar sphere is described in verses from seventy-three to eighty also. The reason behind the day, the Añjana eliminates darkness of the eyes, the only way of yogis to Mokṣa, the soul of all light sources, the provider of water and it contain all the rasa.¹³ Like the rise of water level in tide the half-submerged planets with stars and the face of spring season stand beautifully above the Udaya Mountain. In the morning it charms in the golden colour as ruby in the Udaya Mountain as the pollen of the Lilly called

sky and the gem over the head, the solar sphere glows itself. When Sun rises the light of Moon and the stars vanishes it reduces the light of Kausthubham and gives light all over the sky, provides more light in midday in the end of each epoch oceans get decertified, the mountains get hot in scorching heat, the three worlds get hot, and reduces it size so that it is visible through the human eye.

SUN GOD REIGNING SUPREME AMONG CELESTIALS

In verse eighty-one to hundred, Sun is given more importance compared to all other gods and goddesses. Sun is worshipped in the morning by Sidhās, Devās, Cāraṇās and prominent among Gandharvas, Nāgas, Rākṣasas, Sādhyas, Yogīs, Sages etc.¹⁴ Due to the immense heat, it makes the horizon hot, cut it off with the hoofs of the horses and scrub on the sheet of the chariot- through these three ways the quality of gold is being tested. It is purification fire, tested the lusture and scrubbed to ensure whether it is worth. Caution is taken not to immerse amaraganga in an Akṣaganga (Milky Way). Lotus bloom in its Nandana Vana, the garden in heaven is not willing and mountains in Sumeru glow due to the blessings of the Sun. Not only darkness but also the sins of the devotees are eliminated; not only lotus blooms but the sins of devotees are eliminated and give insight and Mokṣa to them. Men in darkness are given rescue and energy from the Sun. It travels through the worlds and does virtuous deeds give insight mokṣa and Nīrvāṇa and is evolutionary.¹⁵ The Sun is behind the chronological appearance of seasons without fail, also the reason for fruits in the trees, rain and wind etc., Devas make Sun happy through Yañjās, stars are illuminated directions seen to be happy mountains exist without fail are all due to the impact of the Sun.¹⁶

Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva rest peacefully with the belief that the Sun will take care of things in the world. The sphere of the Sun turns out to be the rigs and the offerings and arches. Which glow at height to be the Sāmas and the man turns out to be Yajus and all the three Vedas form part of the Sun. He has that force so that the enemies of the lords can be destroyed. Even though all devas are equal and are the sons of Aditi, Āditya are considered important. He is worshipped by sages including Nārada.¹⁷ The Sun and Lord Śiva also compared in one verse. He renders the Earth, Rain, Fire, Sky, Moon, Wind and eight entities in total. The Śiva possesses eight bodies such as Earth, Water, Air, Fire, Master, Sky, the Moon and the Sun. The same way the Sun also possesses eight bodies. In another verse, the Sun is compared with Viṣṇu. Both have the glory in the feet by the morning. When the Sun enters the lotus pond Viṣṇu is survived by the tender touches of Lakṣmi. Viṣṇu is also led by the son of Vinitha called Aruṇa. Both Viṣṇu and the Sun are worshipped by gods.¹⁸

SŪRYAŚATAKA: DEVOTION COUCHED IN POETIC GARB

When one goes deep into the poem, aware that the work is not a mere stotrakāvya which is devoted of poetic excellences. Here one can observe various synonyms¹⁹ to the Sun. On the contrary, *Sūryaśataka* is a poem which betrays sublime imagination and literary excellence. Mayūra's imaginary is superb. His poetic fancies are lovely and prominent with contextual propriety. He has been adjudged as a poet. Who can conceive great things and his poetic art is beset with supreme imaginative faculty. The creativity of the poet is such that it is far different from the large corpus of stotra literature in Sanskrit barring a few exceptions.²⁰

The above mentioned Ślokas, Mayūra likens the journey of Sūrya to the Mahānāṭika called human existence. The drama of the sarga states that human life begins by Aruṇa, the charioteer of Sun. He is like Sūtradhāra of stage direction. When the curtain of night goes up on the stage of the peak of Udaya

Mountain the Lakṣmi of light is beheld. Aruṇa the charioteer, like a stage manager starts showering the rare flowers as in a Puṣpājñali or adoration by flowers. He performs the consecration of the four yāmas of the day. The charioteer does so as the Sūtradhāra does things pertaining to the development of the acts in which various sentiments are enacted. Then the charioteer, like Sūtradhāra, announces the drama of the Sun's world travel. The comparison of Sun's journey to the great drama of life is important.

Thus, by praying to the Sun through hundred verses Mayūra got his rheumatism cured. This work is evidence of Sun worship from ancient times. This has won acclaim from Sanskrit scholars. Through the nature descriptions he proves his mettle as a fine observer. In most of the Sanskrit works the Sun is being mentioned. Through this work the importance of the Sun in a particular part of time is well portrayed. Mayūra is known for years as the Sun devotees, who has worshipped Lord Sun by composing the beautiful hundred ślokaś and get cured. The older works in the oldest period contains the picture of the Sun omnipresent, impartial and prompt in duty and also the depiction of devotee who sincerely worshipping him while describing anything related to the Sun. The Mayūra through his work is describing about the lord Sun as someone who is working for the goodness of the world and least interested in showing his own merits.

Foot Notes

1. Śrī Harishankara Sharma., *Kāvyaaprākāśa of Ācārya Mammaṭa*, Ed. With The 'Nṛgeṭvari' Commentry by, Chawkhamba Prakashan, Varanasi, 2007, sloka- 2

2. *Sūryaśataka.*, verse.2

3. *ibid.*, 10

4. *ibid.*, 13

5. *ibid.*, 16

6. *R.V.*, 1.50.3

7. *ibid.*, 36.

8. *R.V.*, 1.50.8-9.

9. *ibid.*, 48.

10. *ibid.*, 52

11. *ibid.*, 67.

12. *ibid.*, 70

13. *ibid.*, 73.

14. *ibid.*, 81.

15. *ibid.*, 84.

16. *ibid.*, 87.

17. *ibid.*, 90.

18. *ibid.*, 92

. भास्करः, बध्नपादाः, तिग्मरोचिषु, तीव्रभानोः, घर्मशोतः, हरिदश्वः, खशंशोः, दीप्ताम्शोः, भानोः, दिनकरः, चण्डरोचिषु, मार्ताण्डः, धर्मत्वषो, तिग्मभानोः, तापनः, दिनपतः, भास्वतः, बध्नः, उष्णत्वषो, अहर्पते, तीक्ष्णत्वषोः, तीक्ष्णरूपः सवितुः, अर्कः, अर्कतेजः, अर्कजन्मा, विभवतु, अर्कविभासः, दिवसकृतौ, अहिमाशौ, एनि, इनन्, चण्डार्चिषो, खशंशोरुषसि, तीक्ष्णभानो, अशिशिरमहसा, पातङ्गा, तापनी, असमहरे, सूर्यः, सर्वकर्मकसाक्षि, पूष्णात्म, धामाधिपः, ग्रहग्रामणि, अजितो, घनदः, सौरः, पूष्णः, तप्तचामीकरः, जातवेदा, दिवसपते, रविः, भास्वतः, सवितुः, सावित्रि, बध्नः, अंशुः, तीव्रभानोः, दिनकृतः, दीप्तांशुः, सर्वकारोपकारि, अशिशिरकिरणः, विदधत, चण्डभानोः, तप्ताम्शु, अर्यमा, सूर्यः, भास्वान्, अंशुमान्, देवोर्देवाः, अर्चिषमकरो, दिवसस्यैवहेतु, तीव्रतपः॥

20. *Sūryaśataka.*, verse. 50

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6. Sampadananda Mishra (Ed.), *Stotrāvali: A Book Hymns, Prayer and Praises in Sanskrit*, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondichery, 2006.
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9. Tamra Andrews, *Dictionary of Nature Myths: Legends of the Earth, Sea and Sky*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998.