

## FRESH DIMENSIONS VS. BLUNT REJECTIONS: SANSKRIT POETICS AND SIRI GUNASINGHE

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The late Prof. Siri Gunasinghe (1925-2017), a great scholar in several disciplines graduated from the University of Peradeniya with a BA Special degree in Sanskrit. He won renown as a poet, a novelist and a literary critic in particular. It seems that Gunasinghe's approach to literary criticism is replete with fresh attitudes towards it. This is more relevant to some prime concepts of Sanskrit literary criticism as well. This paper explores critically how Gunasinghe addresses some major concepts of Sanskrit literary criticism i.e. *Rasa* (sentiment), *Camatkāra* (astonishment), *Pratibhā* (intuition) and *Śabdārthau sahitaū kāvyam* (poetry is the union of word and meaning), and identifies to what extent his approach helps to clarify such concepts clearly. Five articles written in English and Sinhala by Gunasinghe on literary criticism are critically and comprehensively examined comparing his approach to aforementioned concepts recommended by Sanskrit critics such as Bhāmaha, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta etc. An article written by Guansinghe in the work titled සම්ප්‍රදාය සහ ප්‍රගතිය (tradition and progress) states '...මේ ප්‍රතිභාව හෙවත් කවියාගේ පෞද්ගලික ශක්තිය වශයෙන් සංස්කෘත විචාරකයෝ ගනන් ගන්නේ සම්ප්‍රදායට යටවීම නොව සමකාලීන සමාජය විමර්ශනයට භාජනය කිරීමයි. අපූර්ව වස්තු නිර්මාණයයි.' Seemingly, this quotation emphasizes Gunasinghe's critical understanding of *Pratibhā* compared to traditional definitions such as *pratibhā apūrvavastu nirmāṇakṣamā pragñā* (genius is an intelligence capable of creative new things) and *pratibhā navanavollekhaśālinī pragñā* (*pratibhā* is the intelligence that can invent new things) provided by Abhinavagupta (10 AD) and Hemacandra (10-11 AD) respectively. Moreover, Gunasinghe has clarified the concept of *Camatkāra* through his article 'රසය, චමත්කාරය සහ සාහිත්‍ය විචාරය.' It says 'අංග උපාංග, රචනයට අවශ්‍ය ප්‍රායෝගික උපකරන පමණයි. ඒ උපකරන රචනයේ ප්‍රධාන ලක්ෂණ හැටියට ගැනීම නිසා කලා කෘතිය පුරා දිවෙන ධ්වනිකාර්ථ කුලු ගැන්වීම වැලකෙනවා. රසිකයාගේ මානසික කම්පනය ඇති වෙන්නේ ඒ ධ්වනික හරය අවබෝධ කරගැනීමෙන් පමණයි. ඒ අවබෝධයයි චමත්කාරය.' These instances underline critical and independent approach to *Camatkāra*, a central concept of Sanskrit literary criticism. Gunasinghe's critical views on Sanskrit theories of literature are attractive in several aspects. First, it seems that he is critical in understanding the above concepts of poetics by Sanskrit theorists. Second, he attempts to clarify them in details and in a comprehensive manner. To conclude, it seems that Guansinghe is insightful in defining major concepts of Sanskrit poetics such as *Rasa*, *Camatkāra* etc. rather than following them as aphorisms. Moreover, his views on the above concepts seem helpful in widening later discussions on Sanskrit literary criticisms as well.

*Keywords:* Siri Gunasinghe, *Rasa*, *Camatkāra*