

paper to the *JAOS.* (xc/1, 64–72) in 1979 in which he gave an outline of ‘The early *Sūrsāgar* and the growth of the Sūr tradition : this is a seminal but fundamentally important piece of research. The *Butter thief* volume is likewise primarily concerned with the *Sūrsāgar*, though investigation of Kṛṣṇa’s aspect as *Navanītapriya* necessarily leads the author into much more ancient layers of the Kṛṣṇa tradition also.

The first section of the book surveys the butter-thief motif ‘before Sūr Dās’ in literature and sculpture. This is close to territory recently travelled by F. Hardy and B. Preciado-Solis, but Hawley’s concentration on the *navanītapriya* motif itself, and on the related *dānālilā* conceit, is original and provides an essential backdrop for his later discussion. A tabulation of the distribution of Kṛṣṇa motifs at the Kancipuram and Vellore temples (pp. 89–90) demonstrates the early popularity of the butter-thief episode, either centrally as in *navanītacāurya*, or in conjunction with other elements of the myth such as *Yamalārjunoddhāra* : only the *Kāliyadamana* episode can outstrip the butter-thief in popularity here. Important among the sculptural examples discussed at this point is a Rangmahal terracotta apparently depicting *dānālilā* (according to Goetz and others), which identification, if correct, shows that the appearance of this motif in sculpture ‘precedes the first mention of the *dānālilā* in extant literature by more than a millennium, for the motif first appears in the *Sūrsāgar* itself and in the roughly contemporaneous *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana* of Bengal’ (p. 58). The author wisely points out the difficulty of definitively identifying sculptural motifs (though in the discussion of the Hoysalesvara temple (p. 77), an element of surmise evidently supports the statement that ‘[one woman], whose arms are now broken off, seems once to have raised her index finger in a gesture of threat and reproof’ !); similar caution should be brought to the claim of Sūrdās’s own originality in bringing the *dānālilā* theme to literature, for at the very least the title *Caurāsī pad* (attrib. Hit Harivamś, A.D. 1502–57) must be added to Hawley’s list of *Sūrsāgar* and *Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtana*.

The second section of the book turns to the *Sūrsāgar* itself, and constitutes an important contribution to Sūr studies. The crucial discussion of the shift of themes distinguishing early and late strata of the *Sūrsāgar*—a discussion begun in the *JAOS* paper—is continued here in the fourth chapter ; and it must be said that the debate is well in advance of most Hindi-medium treatments of the text, wherein analysis of textual history takes second place to a more traditional concentration on literary style and rhetoric. Given this fact and the fascinating nature of the material, it is not difficult to understand Hawley’s enthusiasm for turning to this subject *before* the completion of the *Sūrsāgar* editing project : but putting the cart before the horse in this way does inevitably lead to many frustrations for the reader who, while fascinated by Hawley’s observations about the changing nature of the text, is not privy to the actual manuscript data. Hopes are raised by

JOHN STRATTON HAWLEY : *Krishna, the butter thief.* xxi, 415 pp. Princeton and Guildford, Surrey : Princeton University Press, 1983. £43.20.

J. S. Hawley’s latest contribution to the study of Kṛṣṇa-*bhakti* has its origin in a Ph.D. thesis completed in 1977. Between that date and the appearance of the present work Hawley has published a number of books and articles on Braj Bhāṣā literature and the *rāsa līlā* tradition which acts as dramatic vehicle to that literature in contemporary Vaiṣṇava tradition. Much of his work has centred on the poet Sūrdās, and derives in part from an edition of the voluminous *Sūrsāgar* on which Hawley is currently co-operating with Kenneth Bryant of the University of British Columbia. Most importantly, Hawley contributed a

a listing on pp. 102-4 of the manuscripts identified as representing the 'early' *Sūrsāgar* (up to v.s. 1764); but these hopes are not to be fulfilled, and the reader who craves such factual information has to be content with the occasional crumb—for which he has often to grovel in the footnotes. Hawley is certainly not unaware of the importance of his data: rather, he confuses the preoccupations of the traditional consumer of *bhakti* verse ('the listener's delight is not so much in ferreting out the truth but in the rhetoric itself', p. 132) with the interests of his own readers. Thus when one sees that pp. 311-75 are dedicated to excellent appendices giving full information about the appearance of Kṛṣṇaite sculptures up to A.D. 1500, it is maddening that in the literary field one is fobbed off with vague statements such as that which appears on p. 165: 'The Nāgari-pracārini Sabhā edition lists some three hundred poems under that heading [*dānalilā*], whereas the old manuscripts never include more than twenty or so.'

Despite this rather serious qualification about the overall balance of the discussion, there is a great deal in Hawley's critique of the *mākhancor* poems which helps towards an appreciation both of their own conceits and of their place in the literature as a whole; for the reader armed with a copy of the Nāgari Pracārini Sabhā edition (which remains the 'standard', if not critical, text), Hawley makes a stimulating travelling companion. Like commentators elsewhere, he may tend to sacrifice attention to themes which do not serve his present purpose (such as the much-relished paradox underlying the predication about Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa's simultaneously universal and earthbound nature, cleverly expressed in *Sūrsāgar* 894 (translated p. 113), when the child Kṛṣṇa's darting butter-thief arms suggest a *caturbhūja* form), and occasionally he may tend to attribute to his poet a greater degree of originality than he perhaps deserves; but he has invaluable observations to make on the rhetoric of the text. He lays particular emphasis on the sentiments of *vātsalya* and *mādhurya* which, *pace* Rūpa Gosvāmī (and the later *Sūrsāgar* tradition), most definitely overlap in the various narrative contexts based on Kṛṣṇa's equivocal role as thief both of butter and of young women's hearts.

The third part of the book is concerned with the *rāsa lilā* tradition. As in Hawley's translations of the *lilās* published in his *At play with Krishna* (in association with Śhrivatsa Goswami, Princeton, 1981), so here also the main interest in his rendering of Svāmī Rāmsvarūp's enactment of the *Mākhancorililā* lies in the way in which it weaves into the prose dialogue stanzas of early verse, largely attributed to Sūrdās. Here one sees at first hand not only the propagation of devotional sentiment through the dynamic of popular tradition, but also the operation of one of the vehicles by which *bhakti* texts themselves have been transmitted over the centuries. The photographs of the *lilā* performances themselves are mostly disappointingly uninformative; but the juxtapositioning (pp. 198-9) of a resonant Sanskrit dialogue with the awful *dohā* jingle 'When the milkmaids meet to chat

they talk of Nandakumār: how to catch him, make him dance—their constant seminar' catches the curiously ambiguous mood of *rāsa lilā*—half mystery-play, half vaudeville.

The final section of the book again takes a commentatorial role, and investigates the status and significance of the butter-thief motif within Braj Vaiṣṇavism. This discussion is based initially on the observations of a number of devotees directly involved in the *lilās* themselves: we find here a further step away from consideration of the *mūla* text. Although there is certainly purpose and interest in the renewed consideration as to which *bhāva* is predominant in the butter-thief *lilā* (a question to which Hawley's respondents had, yes, 'no pat answer'!), the incisive power of the commentary is here limited by its increasingly speculative approach. When the author has in his hand such interesting data as have been thrown up by his study of the manuscripts, it is disappointing to find his main focus being transferred to a hazardous foray into the structural study of myth: a book which seemed earlier to have been about textual history has proved unfaithful to that original subject. The arguments in the closing pages are barely germane to any textual analysis of the *Sūrsāgar*, and there is an element of self-indulgence in the arguments which seek to identify a parallel between Kṛṣṇaite and Śaivite mythologies, equating spilt milk/butter with spilt semen in the contexts of those respective personalities.

The book includes, as already noted, substantial appendices indexing Kṛṣṇaite sculpture. This is in itself a most useful resource, including as it does a compilation of comments from a variety of art historians, and a bibliographical guide to illustrated sources; its scope is not restricted to the book's subject matter of the *navanītapriya* motif. There is also a glossary (which, surprisingly, misdefines the *dohā* and omits such important items as *rāsa* and *maryādā*—though these can be traced to the text through the full and cross-referenced index). This is a book which substantially advances the study of Kṛṣṇa literature, even if the direction of that advance is at times rather surprising.

RUPERT SNELL