





Svapnavāsavadattam  
*or*  
Dream-reality of Vāsavadattā

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General Editor: KIREET JOSHI

Author and compiler of this monograph: Dr. Rama Jain

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*and*

The Mother's Institute of Research, New Delhi

mothersinstitute@gmail.com

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*Illumination, Heroism and Harmony*

Svapnavāsavadattam  
*or*  
Dream-reality of Vāsavadattā

*A six-act play*  
*by Bhāsa,*  
*the great Indian dramatist*

General Editor: KIREET JOSHI



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## PREFACE

**T**he task of preparing teaching-learning material for value-oriented education is enormous.

There is, first, the idea that value-oriented education should be exploratory rather than prescriptive, and that the teaching-learning material should provide to the learners a growing experience of exploration.

Secondly, it is rightly contended that the proper inspiration to turn to value-orientation is provided by biographies, autobiographical accounts, personal anecdotes, epistles, short poems, stories of humour, stories of human interest, brief passages filled with pregnant meanings, reflective short essays written in well-chiselled language, plays, powerful accounts of historical events, statements of personal experiences of values in actual situations of life, and similar other statements of scientific, philosophical, artistic and literary expression.

Thirdly, we may take into account the contemporary fact that the entire world is moving rapidly towards the synthesis of the East and the West, and in that context, it seems obvious that our teaching-learning material should foster the gradual familiarisation of students with global themes of universal significance as also those that underline the importance of diversity in unity. This implies that the material should bring the students nearer to their cultural heritage, but also to the highest that is available in the cultural experiences of the world at large.

Fourthly, an attempt should be made to select from Indian and world history such examples that could illustrate the theme of the upward progress of humankind. The selected research material could be multi-sided, and it should be presented in such a way that teachers

can make use of it in the manner and in the context that they need in specific situations that might obtain or that can be created in respect of the students.

The research team at the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIIER) has attempted the creation of the relevant teaching-learning material, and they have decided to present the same in the form of monographs. The total number of these monographs will be around eighty to eighty-five.

It appears that there are three major powers that uplift life to higher and higher normative levels, and the value of these powers, if well illustrated, could be effectively conveyed to the learners for their upliftment. These powers are those of illumination, heroism and harmony.

It may be useful to explore the meanings of these terms – illumination, heroism and harmony – since the aim of these monographs is to provide material for a study of what is sought to be conveyed through these three terms. We offer here exploratory statements in regard to these three terms.

Illumination is that ignition of inner light in which meaning and value of substance and life-movement are seized, understood, comprehended, held, and possessed, stimulating and inspiring guided action and application and creativity culminating in joy, delight, even ecstasy. The width, depth and height of the light and vision determine the degrees of illumination, and when they reach the splendour and glory of synthesis and harmony, illumination ripens into wisdom. Wisdom, too, has varying degrees that can uncover powers of knowledge and action, which reveal unsuspected secrets and unimagined skills of art and craft of creativity and effectiveness.

Heroism is, essentially, inspired force and self-giving and sacrifice in the operations of will that is applied to the quest, realisation and triumph of meaning and value against the resistance of limitations and obstacles by means of courage, battle and adventure. There are degrees and heights of heroism determined by the intensity, persistence and vastness of sacrifice. Heroism attains the highest states of greatness and refinement when it is guided by the highest wisdom and inspired by the sense of service to the ends of justice and harmony, as well as when tasks are executed with consummate skill.

Harmony is a progressive state and action of synthesis and equilibrium generated by the creative force of joy and beauty and delight that combines and unites knowledge and peace and stability with will and action and growth and development. Without harmony, there is no perfection, even though there could be maximisation of one or more elements of our nature. When illumination and heroism join and engender relations of mutuality and unity, each is perfected by the other and creativity is endless.

“Svapnavāsavadattam” of Bhāsa is an outstanding play in Sanskrit literature; its technical qualities are of the highest order and are easily recognised; these qualities owe a great deal to the sublime substance of the story itself. And the substance itself brings out some of the finest qualities that Indian culture has constantly nourished among many women of India. That love can be so heroic, as is depicted in Kathāsaritsāgar, from where Bhāsa has drawn the substance of his play, brings out the characteristic endeavour of Indian culture to pour strength and self-sacrifice in the joy and adventure of life. And what a sense of harmony we find sprayed in the colourful threads of the story!

But while we admire the story and drama, as also Bhāsa, we must draw the attention of the reader to a greater drama based on the earlier part of the story of Vāsavadattā. This drama, written by Sri Aurobindo in English is a five act play. It is impossible to describe in this short preface the extraordinary charm and fragrance of Indian vitality that one can breathe, in the atmosphere, craft and dialogues of this play. One can only recommend the perusal of this play. Sri Aurobindo surpasses not only Bhāsa and Shakespeare but even Kālidāsa in this play.

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**T**he drama ... is the most attractive though not therefore the greatest product of the poetical mind of the age. There its excessive intellectuality was compelled by the necessities of dramatic poetry to be more closely and creatively identified with the very mould and movement of life. The Sanskrit drama type is a beautiful form and it has been used in most of the plays that have come down to us with an accomplished art and a true creative faculty.... It is an art that was produced by and appealed to a highly cultured class, refined, and intellectual and subtle, loving best a tranquil aesthetic charm, suavity and beauty, and it has the limitations of the kind but also its qualities. There is a constant grace and fineness of work in the best period, a plainer and more direct but still fine vigour in Bhasa and the writers who prolong him, a breath of largeness and power in the dramas of Bhavabhuti, a high and consummate beauty in the perfection of Kalidasa.

— Sri Aurobindo,  
*The Foundations of Indian Culture*,  
SABCL Vol. 14, pp. 304-5



## INTRODUCTION

**S**anskrit drama is in a special sense universal. Some of it is concerned almost wholly with the permanent seats of joy and grief in the human psyche, to the exclusion of most other topical, passing verities of life. Moreover, it commits itself to a supremely satisfying pleasure principle, and to an exultant, optimistic vision of life, without in any manner vulgarizing the passions or being crudely sentimental and unrealistic. Since it is grounded upon an extraordinarily refined aesthetic taste it also contributes to a chastening of sensibility. Its masterful fusion of prose and poetry, of the temporal and universal, of values of joy and duty, of worldliness and otherworldliness, could be one of the means to a profound education both moral and aesthetic for the modern man.

The Indian mind has always been religious without being dogmatic, so Aesthetics and Poetics have no quarrel with Ethics and Philosophy in ancient India. Drama very much accepted this relationship and its duty towards religion and morality. It aimed at removing evil and vindicating truth, beauty and goodness. And in this task, it was more effective than the other art forms in so far as it was the only audio-visual art (*dṛśyam śravyaṃ ca*), and its representation of life, therefore, more immediate and persuasive.

The great Indian classical plays, and the monumental dramatic treatise, Nāṭya Śāstra, give the impression of a highly sophisticated and self-contained aesthetic world. The intellectual and cultural mi-

lieu reflected in the traditional literature also supports a similar view, encouraging one to visualize a harmonious, settled, classically controlled universe. Historical researches in modern times have, however, revealed a different picture. For all its solid façade of established conventions and values, the Indian subcontinent was experiencing a series of upheavals at the social, political<sup>1</sup> and philosophical levels during the period when Sanskrit drama was attaining maturity. The Indian people did, of course, succeed in maintaining a certain steadiness and stability in respect of their culture through all the changing dimensions of their historical life, but they did not really allow themselves to sink into a state of servile conformism. While the bold experimentalism and innovativeness in the realms of ancient culture and politics have received some attention in the post-independence period,<sup>2</sup> the modalities and mores in the sphere of literary appreciation have, for the most part, remained unchanged. Literary criticism is yet to respond adequately to the controlled dynamism of life which ancient Sanskrit plays so beautifully and variously portray.

Dramatic literature occupies a significant place in the domain of literary output. Not only does it occupy a large space in the libraries, but also has its deep and sacred station in the heart of millions.

## ORIGIN OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

The very fact that there developed in ancient times a well-articulated and richly elaborated treatise of dramatic art, which is known as Nāṭya Śāstra and which has been attributed to an ancient sage Bharata-Muni, is a testimony of the Indian temperament that was not satisfied merely with a body of knowledge derived from higher facul-

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1. R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar (ed.) *The History and culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1.1, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1951.

2. See, D.D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Vikas Publishing House, Pvt Ltd. Delhi 1970. Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, Vol. 1, Penguin Books, 1966.



ties of intuition, revelation and inspiration, but it aimed at the efflorescence and flourishing of the powers of intellect in the domains of science, philosophy, ethics and aesthetics.

The text of *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, following the traditional view of the origin of all branches of knowledge in intuitive consciousness, traces the entire *Nāṭyaśāstra* to the Divine origin. It is rightly pointed out that the dramatic form originated from several elements of the four most ancient texts, Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. Recitation was borrowed from Rigveda, music from Sāmaveda, the art of representation and imitation from Yajurveda and sentiments (*rasa*) from the Atharvaveda.

Although all the elements constituting a drama are found in the Rigveda, namely dialogues, music and dance, some sort of visual representation of situations and events, various amusements and recreations like chariot-race, hunting and gambling, drama does not seem to have been a source of enjoyment to the people of the Vedic times, in so far as there is no hint of the prevalence of such an art. Yet, we may assume that there had been some kind of visual representation of situations and events through dialogues and action accompanied with music and dance even at that time, since all the elements are separately found in the Rigveda.

We do not know the date of Bharata but it seems certain that about the time when Bharata wrote his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, there was an immense wealth of dramatic literature available to him. He describes the various categories of dramas, and mentions the names of dramas falling under various divisions. The art of drama and works dealing with the art were known to Pāṇini, and his date is definitely a few centuries prior to the beginning of the Christian era, perhaps five centuries. In his time also there must have existed many dramas. Pāṇini is not later than the date of the great tragedies in Greek.

Kālidāsa mentions three dramatists famous in his time, and they are Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. Of them we know only the last two. There certainly were many dramas even prior to Bhāsa, as is found in the work on dramaturgy of Bharata. But in the history of Sanskrit literature, in dealing with drama, we have to start with Bhāsa, since of all extant works, his are the earliest.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

Drama, like every form of art, is a creative interpretation of life, and the dramatist renders the rhythms of the life of men and women and their circumstances by expressing them in a concentrated manner; the working out of a certain rhythm that can be discerned universally. There is, it may be said, a certain rhythm of development which depicts a cycle of genesis, growth of action and character, confrontation with circumstances, and the resultant complexity of consequences. In India, the law of Karma suggests the law that seems to describe the pattern of the rhythms of life. According to this law, human life is a living experience of the rhythms of life, and in the ultimate analysis, the joys and sorrows, good fortune and misfortune, rise and fall, lead to a final culmination of the liberation of the agent of action, the inmost soul of man. The best forms of drama in India have avoided tragedy as a denouement. Indian drama, indeed, depicts both that is agreeable and disagreeable; it ends ultimately in the sense of release from tension, from tragedy and from death. It is for this reason that no Indian drama is comparable to tragedies of Greek and English literature or any similar literature. This vast scope has made the drama what it is. In it we find royal personalities like Udayana, Duśyanta and Rāmabhadra, noble characters like Carūdatta, great sages like Kaṇva and Durvāsā, illustrious ladies like Sītā, and Vāsavadattā, Śākuntalā as well as innumerable types of common folk. In fact, drama includes in its sphere so easily and charmingly the utmost sublimity and the commonest trivialities, so easily does it rise to the highest peak of human grandeur, and descend to the pit of buffoonery; it is closely associated with the consciousness of society. It is at once the most peculiar, the most elusive and the most enthralling of all types of literature.

An important aspect of Sanskrit drama is that the dialogues are often interspersed with verses in diverse metrical forms or *cchandās*. Lyricism is thus a constant consequent of the atmosphere of the Sanskrit drama. Most of the noble and leading characters express

themselves in chaste, chiseled and lyrical expressions.

Humour and comedy are adequately portrayed in Sanskrit drama, and the device that is normally employed is to introduce the character of the Vidūṣaka or Jester, similar to what we find in the character of the clown in Shakespearean drama. Such a character was considered very important; therefore he was allotted a pivotal role in the dramatic preliminaries beside the hero and the heroine. In most Sanskrit plays the Vidūṣaka is introduced as a constant, trusted companion of the king, the hero. He is a Brahmin with a strange, ugly, uncouth appearance, dwarf-stature with teeth protruding, lame, and bald-headed and sometimes with red fiery eyes. He occasionally refers to his traditional greed for food. He acts as an intermediary between the hero and the heroine. He is a great favourite of the ladies in the royal apartments. On the one hand, he could joke with the minor female characters, and on the other, he is privileged to be friendly with the inmates of the royal inner chambers.

From Bhāsa to Aśvaghōṣa down to the later dramatists, with a few exceptions, all have introduced this character with varying degrees of success.

*Rūpaka* is the term used in Sanskrit for all dramatic compositions; *Uparūpaka* being the term for a subordinate class of dramatic compositions. The *Rūpaka* which has *Rasa* or sentiment for its substratum, is divided into ten classes. The *Uparūpakas* or Minor Dramas are of eighteen types, the most important of which are *Nāṭikās*, such as *Ratnāvalī*, etc., *Troṭakas* such as *Vikraorvaśīyam*, etc. The three essential constituents of *Rūpakas* which constitute their very life-blood are: (1) *Vastu* or the plot of the play; (2) *Netā* or the hero; and (3) *Rasa* or the Sentiment.

## **The plot and its structure**

Commentators are generally agreed that the plot (*vastu*) of a drama is primarily of two kinds: 'principal' and 'accessory'. The 'principal' is that which relates to the chief characters or the persons concerned with the essential interest of the piece, and pervades the whole

arrangement. The 'accessory' is that which appears in furtherance of the main topic, and is concerned with characters other than the hero and the heroine.

Besides these two, there are three other elements requisite for the development of the plot. These are: The seed (*bīja*), the drop (*bindu*) and the final issue (*kārya*).

The development of the dramatic plot involves five stages or conditions. There is the beginning or start of the enterprise (*ārambha*), which leads to the organized effort (*prayatna*). The third stage is the prospect of success (*prāpti-sambhāvana*) in relation to the input of effort and the obstacle to be surmounted, followed by the certainty of success (*niyatāpti*) and the actual attainment (*phalāgama*).

While these five stages of dramatic action are in progress the necessary links to connect them with the episodes and incidents are called *saṃdhis* or critical meeting points of the plot, which are five in number:

1) The opening juncture (*mukha or protasis*); 2) the progression (*pratimukha or epitasis*); 3) the development (*garbha*, meaning deepening or *catastasis*); 4) the pause (*vimarsha or peripeteia*), and 5) the dénouement or conclusion (*Nirvahana*).

## The hero

Four kinds of heroes are mentioned, *viz.*, *Dhīrodātta*, *Dhīralita*, *Dhīrshānta* and *Dhīrodhatta*. Basically the hero "is required to be modest, decorous, comely, munificent, civil, of sweet address, sprung from a noble family etc.," says M. R. Kale.

The principal assistants of the hero should be clever in discourse, devoted to his master and a little inferior to him in qualities. The *Vidūṣaka*, or Jester, his constant companion, helps his friend in his love-intrigues, assisting in the *dénouement* of the play.

The *nāyikā* or the heroine must be possessed of the same qualities as the hero, and also has an assistant, sister or maid.

## Rasa or sentiment

Bharata enunciated the eight Rasas in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the ancient work of dramatic theory. *Rasa* is, as described by M. R. Kale, “that lasting impression of feeling produced to his overwhelming delight in a man of poetic susceptibility”; it is a developed relishable state of a permanent mood or sentiment called *sthāyibhāva*, brought about by attendant emotional conditions such as *Vibhāvas*, *Anubhāvas*, *Sattvika bhāvas* etc. *Bhāva* or ‘feeling’ is the complete pervasion of the heart by any emotion, whether of pleasure or pain, arising from the object under sight or sound. There are eight *sthāyibhāvas*, on which are based respectively the sentiments or moods *Rasas*; the eight rasas are: *śṛṅgāra* or love, attractiveness, erotic; *hāsya* or laughter, comedy; *karuṇa* or compassion, mercy, pathos; *raudra* or fury; *vīra* or the heroic; *bhayānak* or the terrible; *bībhatsa* or disgust, loathsome; and *adbhuta* or wonder, amazement, the marvellous. There is a ninth *rasa*, that of *shānta*, the quietistic, not being suited to dramatic purposes it rarely occurs as the main sentiment in a drama.

In most Sanskrit plays the prevailing sentiment tends to be *vīra* or the heroic, or mostly that of *śṛṅgāra* or love, attractiveness, the erotic. This is mainly divided into *vipralambha* or love-in-separation and *sambhog* or love-in-union.

## The general conduct of the play

Each drama opens with a Prelude or Prologue (*prastāvanā*), which in turn is introduced by *Nāndī* which is a benediction and as some say suggests the gist of the plot or gives the clue to the plot. The one, who arranges the preliminaries on the stage, is known as the *Sūtradhāra*, (holder of the clue) or the Stage Manager. He recites the *Nāndī* at the opening of the play and generally at the closing and invokes blessings on the audience. He may sometimes retire after the recital at the opening and in his place an actor called the *sthāpaka* takes his place. One or the other of them suggests the subject in the form of the *bīja* (the seed or germ of the plot of the play).

The *Sūtradhāra* was expected to know several dialects, people of different places, and was also expected to be experienced in dramatic details including the mechanical art. In short he was the chief architect of the theatre, on the one hand, and the accepted leader of the troupe, on the other. He was expected to know the customs, manners, dresses and characteristics of different countries consistent with his knowledge and position. He was also expected to possess some basic moral qualities.

The Prelude over, the play commences arranged and exhibited in a manner indicated; the whole, being well determined and divided into Acts and Scenes. The number of acts varies from five to ten. Scenes are indicated by the entrance of one person and the exit of another. There is, strictly speaking, no front curtain, though the use of one in modern presentations does not affect the dramatic movement.

\* \* \*

## BHĀSA

Bhāsa, a renowned Sanskrit dramatist of the pre-Christian period, was the most prolific and versatile among classical Sanskrit dramatists.

Kālidāsa openly declared that Bhāsa was one of the celebrated dramatists of his day and that he himself was just a dwarf before the ancient giants of the dramatic art. Kālidāsa in the prologue to his *Mālvikāgnimitra*, confesses that his work could be no match for the dramas of his predecessors and pleads, rather apologetically, to his discriminating audience to judge him on merits without being swayed by blind partiality for the ancients. Three dramatists are specifically mentioned, that is Bhāsa, Kaviputra and Saumilla; Bhāsa heads the list from amongst these three. Bhāsa's works have alone survived today.

### WORKS OF BHĀSA

The discovery in 1912 of thirteen dramas, by Shri T. Ganapati Śāstrī<sup>1</sup> of Trivandrum, was momentous in the history of Sanskrit literature. The lost treasure of the plays of the famous dramatist Bhāsa, —whose works till then, had only been heard of, in the praises of Kālidāsa and Daṇḍin and others, —appeared to have been recovered. The extant dramatic works of Bhāsa, stand today as the earliest available specimens of the dramatic art in India. The number of these

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1. See page 117 for a note on Shri T. Ganapati Śāstrī.

surviving plays of Bhāsa is quite considerable. They are thirteen in number. No other playwright of the ancient, medieval or modern period, including the greatest, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, could reach anywhere near Bhāsa's score. It is on account of this exceptionally large number of plays written by him that his dramas came to be known as *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra* (cycle or garland of Bhāsa's plays).

The thirteen plays are:

- 1) *Madhyamavyāyogaḥ*;
- 2) *Pañcharātram*
- 3) *Dūtvākyam*
- 4) *Dūtghaṭotkacam*
- 5) *Karṇābhāram*
- 6) *Urubhaṅgaḥ*
- 7) *Pratīmānāṭakam*;
- 8) *Abhiṣekanāṭakam*
- 9) *Bālacaritam*
- 10) *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇam*
- 11) *Svapnavāsavadattam*
- 12) *Avimārakam*
- 13) *Cārudattam*

Bharata, the father of Indian dramaturgy, recognized the basic principle of drama; of the ten major types of dramas, classified and discussed by him, all but one, have plots drawn from history or other well-known chronicles or tales. True to this deep-rooted Indian tradition of drama, Bhāsa drew on the epics and contemporary lore for the plots of his thirteen plays. The first six of these are based on the Mahābhārata, *Pratīmānāṭakam* and *Abhiṣekanāṭakam* on the Rāmāyaṇa, *Bālacaritam* on Harivaṁśa, *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇam* and *Svapnavāsavadattam* are based on the stories of Vatsarāja (Udayan) and Vāsavadatta, which were current in the poet's time.

With thirteen plays to his credit, his works outnumber those of Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, Śūdraka, Śrīharṣa and others. His plays present a diversity of forms and techniques as well as themes, characters and sentiments unparalleled in Sanskrit drama. Unlike other Sanskrit



dramas of the later ages, Bhāsa's plays rank highest in respect of stage-worthiness. He is also considered a humorist par excellence.

In the words of V. Venkatachalam in his book *Bhāsa*:

If the fire of mellow genius is not fully ablaze in all of them, the alluring glow of the bursting spark is evident everywhere. Some of the mature plays like *Svapnavāsavadattam* can easily stand comparison with the best dramatist of the world for their pure dramatic qualities: the deftness of plot construction, the unity and verisimilitude of the plot tissue, the even rise and fall of dramatic tempo, the organized build up of the climax from the initial seeds of conflict and its entanglement followed by its swift unraveling in unanticipated denouement, the effective alternation of foreshadowing and suspense, the sparkling wit of its dialogues, the portrayal of living characters holding a mirror up to life and, above all, the powerful representation of the varied emotions of the human-heart, wherein lies the soul of any drama. And for sheer stage-worthiness – the crown of dramatic excellence – it will be quite safe to say that Bhāsa ranks higher than even Kālidāsa.

His thirteen plays present such extraordinary diversity of form and technique, not to be met with in the creations of any other Sanskrit dramatist.

It is a coincidence that these direct and indirect references in later writings to Bhāsa or his works are representatives of different parts of the country, covering practically the whole of the subcontinent and extend over a full span of nearly fifteen centuries from the beginning of the Christian era. Such poets and critics who refer to Bhāsa or his works include Kālidāsa and Bhoja (11th century) of Malava, Vāmana (9th century) and Abhināvagupta (11th century) of Kashmir, Bāṇa (7th century) and Vākpatirāja (8th century) of Kanauj, Somaprabhāsuri (12th century) of Anhilwad (Gujarat), Soddhala (11th century) of ancient Koṅkana and possibly Śārdātanaya (13th century) of Tamil Nadu and last of all the Cakkyars of Kerala, where Bhāsa plays became part and parcel of the repertoire of the professional actors for

many centuries. One of the most significant of these extolling references to Bhāsa's popularity in the Indian theatre comes from no less a critic than Daṇḍin, who came nearly 12th century after Bhāsa, in *Avanti-Sundarikathā*:

Long ago did Bhāsa breathe his last;  
But lo, even now, after all his life is past,  
He lives, through plays of flawless skill,  
His veritable bodies, which time dare not kill.

This gives us a sure indication of Bhāsa's uninterrupted and supreme hold over the Indian theatre, throughout the length and breadth of the country for nearly two millennia.

Thus it is clear that the ancient writers as well as modern scholars were aware of a great poet and a dramatist Bhāsa, to whom is attributed a *cakra* (cycle or garland) of dramas including the *Svapnavāsavadattam* which is the most outstanding one. They were also aware that he was a pre-Kālidāsa dramatist and as such these plays were among the oldest Indian plays. That these compositions were not lacking in merits have been testified to, by the glowing tribute of Kālidāsa to the poet. But it remained a riddle why none of these plays had seen the light of day despite the intrinsic merit and popularity of their author. It is against this background of mystery, that Trivandrum sprang an agreeable surprise (the discovery by Shri Ganapati Śāstrī) which could legitimately be described as the discovery of the century in the realm of world literature.

## BHĀSA'S DATE

For want of sufficient and reliable data it is difficult to arrive at any precise determination of Bhāsa's date, like that of many other Sanskrit writers. The earliest direct reference to Bhāsa is by Kālidāsa in his *Mālvikāgnimitra* and we may safely date Kālidāsa about the 1st century BC. It is clear then that in the time of Kālidāsa i.e. 1st century BC, Bhāsa was recognized as an ancient poet of established fame.

There is another reference in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*, too, which can, indeed, serve to push the lower limit up to the 4th century BC but unfortunately it is not as uncontroversial as the reference by Kālidāsa.

An upper limit is given by the fact that Bhāsa is doubtless later than Aśvaghōṣa, whose *Buddhacarita* is probably the source of a verse in *Pratijñāyagandharāyaṇam*, and whose Prakrit is assured by and unquestionably older in character. It is useless to seek to estimate by the evidence of the Prakrit whether Bhāsa is more closely allied in date to Kālidāsa than to Aśvaghōṣa, because changes in speech and the representations of them in literature are matters which do not in the slightest degree permit of exact valuation in terms of years. The most that can be said is that it may be held without improbability that Bhāsa is nearer to Kālidāsa's period than to Aśvaghōṣa.

Besides these direct references to Buddhist and Jain monks, Bhāsa's plays mention Nāgavana, Venuvana, Rājagṛha<sup>1</sup> and Pātaliputra, "all of which rose into prominence after Buddha's time." These are also clear pointers of a post-Buddha age for the Bhāsa's plays.

It will, therefore, be safe to conclude until any decisive proof to the contrary is unearthed by future research that Bhāsa lived somewhere between the two clear landmarks, Buddha and Kautilyā; nearer the former than the latter. Hence, the nearest possible approximation for the date of Bhāsa in the present state of our knowledge should be put down as the early 5th century BC.

## BHĀSA'S LIFE

Bhāsa's reticence about himself is total. Later dramatists whispered at least their names to their contemporary and future audience through the conversation of the Sūtradhāra and his assistant in the conventional prologues to their plays. However, unlike Kālidāsa and others, who came in his wake, Bhāsa did not care to record for posterity even his name in the prologues, which are invariably very brief and conform to a set pattern; typically Bhāsa's.

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1. Rājagṛha, was built by King Bimbsāra (528 BC – 500 BC) as the capital of Magadha and has been identified with the modern Rajgir.

We have to go to his works themselves for our knowledge of Bhāsa's true parentage, caste, provenance, education and other accomplishments. The picture of Bhāsa that emerges from his dramas is that of a Brāhmaṇa, well versed in the conventional branches of learning current during his days and having an abiding faith in and reverence for the ancient Vedic religion and its basic scriptures, the Vedas, the Kalpasūtras, the epics and the Purāṇas.

As for the home of Bhāsa, the prevailing atmosphere of all the plays without exception leaves us in no doubt that he lived and worked in India, north of the Vindhyas. Though the advocates of the Cakkyar theory have tried to see Keralite influences in some of the customs described in the plays and sometimes even in select words of Bhāsa's vocabulary, it has been more or less firmly established that such conclusions stand nowhere. If we view it dispassionately, the conclusion is irresistible that Bhāsa's home must have been somewhere in the country between the Himālayas and the Vindhyas, though it may be difficult to narrow down the region or pinpoint the place. Bhāsa's beautiful phrase *himvad-vindhya-kundalā* gives the final verdict in this matter. Bhāsa's repetition of the words *himvad-vindhya-kundalā* breathes not only the poetic fervor but also the personal warmth of the love of one, who loved his country.

## AUTHENTICITY OF BHĀSA'S DRAMAS

In the year 1909, the department for the publication of Sanskrit manuscripts was organized by the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore. While touring Kerala State, searching for Sanskrit manuscripts, Dr Ganapati Śāstri came across a palm-leaf codex in Malayalam of *nātakas* in a small village near Trivandrum in the Monatkaro Matham near Padmānābhapuram. The manuscript was found to contain 105 leaves with ten lines of twenty granthas in each page written in old Malayalam characters. Though the manuscript seemed to be more than 300 years old, there was no defacement of characters except in certain parts of the first twelve leaves.

The style and dignity of conception appeared to be such as characterizing the great works of the Rishis, and superior to what we find in famous works of the great poets.

On examination the manuscript was found to contain the following ten *Rūpakas*: *Svapnavāsavadattam*; *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam*; *Pañcharātram*; *Cārudattam*; *Dūtghaṭotkacam*; *Avimārakam*; *Bālacaritam*; *Madhyamavyāyogaḥ*; *Karṇābhāram*; *Urubhaṅgaḥ*.

Besides, there was also an eleventh *Rūpaka* just begun but abruptly left unfinished, towards the middle of the reverse side of the first leaf. During a subsequent tour, from one Govinda Pisharadi, an astrologer of Kailashpuram, near Kaduthurutli were obtained two *nāṭakas* of a similar character, named *Abhiṣekanāṭakam* and *Pratīmānāṭakam*. It was subsequently discovered that the palace library also contained a manuscript of each of these works. All these manuscripts written in Malayalam characters were on palm-leaves.

Pandit T. Ganapati Śāstrī observed a family-likeness in all the thirteen plays, besides a number of common passages and repetitions. It is usual for classical plays to begin with *Nāndī* (the benedictory verse) and then to state “नान्द्यन्ते सूत्रधारः” But the plays in this collection, as a rule begin with “नान्द्यन्ते ततः प्रविशति सूत्रधारः” (“After prayers the stage manager or stage director enters”), and then the maṅgala-śloka is introduced. Again instead of the word *Prastāvanā*, (Prologue) used in classical plays, these plays use the word *Sthāpana*. Thirdly, in the plays of Śūdraka, Kālidāsa and others, mention is made of the name of the author and of the works and in some instances in terms of praise, in the *Prastāvanā*. But in the plays before us, in the *Sthāpana*, not even the name is mentioned in any of the works of the author. In the “*Bharata-Vākya*”<sup>1</sup> or the closing sentence of every one of these plays, invariably occurs the prayer: – “May our greatest of kings or may our king rule the land.” In all these plays there is at the close, a sentence, announcing such and such a play is finished and here the name of the work is given.

These in the opinion of Shri Ganapati Śāstrī, were unmistakable evidence of their common authorship.

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1. This stanza is an expression of good wishes etc., repeated by the actors भरत (bharats).

The question then arose, who this common author could be? And here came two earlier references to Bhāsa and his plays. Speaking of Bhāsa's fame, Bāṇa has mentioned certain special characteristics of his dramas and instituted a punning comparison of Bhāsa's plays with temples:

सूत्रधारकृतारम्भैर्नाटकैर्वहुभूमिकैः ।  
सपत्ताकैर्यशो लेभे भासो देवकुलैरिव । ।

This characteristic of Bhāsa's plays mentioned by Bāṇa in this verse viz., that the expression सूत्रधारकृतारम्भैः points to the distinguishing characteristic of Bhāsa's plays, that they began by the sūtradhāra, was to be found, according to Dr. Śāstrī, in the thirteen plays, pointing to Bhāsa as their common author. However, the opponents of this theory contend otherwise as they lay emphasis on the words देवकुलैः i.e. temples, to which Bhāsa's plays are compared.

The second reference was more decisive:

भासनाटकचाऽपि छेकैः क्षिप्ते परीक्षितुम् ।  
स्वपनवसवदातताम्वासवदत्तस्य दाहकोऽभून्न पावकः । ।

The verse quoted above of Rājashekhara preserved in one of our early anthologies, not only speaks of *Svapnavāsavadattam* as a drama of Bhāsa but also glorifies its excellence by the assertion that it was the only play that proved incombustible, when the complete works of Bhāsa were subjected to the fire of literary criticism. With this clear affirmation that Bhāsa was the author of *Svapnavāsavadattam*, it was possible to conclude that the common author of all the thirteen plays was Bhāsa.

As it happens with all new discoveries, strong protests were raised against Shri Śāstrī's identification of the plays as Bhāsa's works. These protests actually gave rise to more research in this area. And close scrutiny revealed more facts. In the words of V. Venkatachalam in his book *Bhāsa*:

More evidence of common authorship emerged out of such

studies, which unraveled the numerous similarities of the thirteen plays with regard to their structural pattern, dramatic technique, use of *Patākāsthānaka*, vocabulary and expression marked by recurrence of certain typical words and phrases, depiction of prohibited things on the stage like death and sleep, actual bringing of water on the stage, uniform patterns of grammatical solecisms, and Prakrit archaisms and stylistic and metrical peculiarities; besides common dramatic situations, common imagery and predilection for certain motifs, themes and descriptions, common names for minor characters and also repetition of similar ideas and of stanzas in whole or parts.

Giving a conspectus of such similarities, Dr. Sarup wrote:

The community of technique, language, style, ideas, treatment and identity of names of dramatis personae, prose and metrical passages, and scenes are so remarkable that the conclusion of their common authorship is inevitable.

In the opinion of Dr. Paranjape:

... the uniformity of grammatical solecisms is the most unquestionable proof that places beyond all doubts the common origin of all these plays.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BHĀSA'S PLAYS

The most remarkable feature of Bhāsa's plays is their introduction. The specialty of it has been marked by many, especially by Bāṇa who speaks of the plays of Bhāsa as having the special feature of beginning with the *Sūtradhāra*. The beginning of all the dramas in Sanskrit is done by the *Sūtradhāra*, the statement of Bāṇa, as already observed, has got a special meaning. The role of the *Sūtradhāra* of Bhāsa is of a singular type and as such forms a class by itself. All the thirteen plays ascribed to him show the speciality of this technique of

Introduction.

The introduction has two aspects according to Bharata. The first is the *Pūrvāraṅga* ending with the *nāṇḁi śloka* and the second is *Prastāvanā* or the proper introduction of the play. The former is allotted to the *Sūtradhāra* and the latter to the *Sthāpaka*. It is pointed out that the *Pūrvāraṅga* does not come under the jurisdiction of the dramatist and his work begins with the *Sthāpanā*. Accordingly, Bhāsa eliminates the *Pūrvāraṅga*, or rather allots it to the body of actors and begins his play with the *Sthāpaka* whom he gives the name of *Sūtradhāra*. His practice was so much appreciated, it seems, that in the latter Shāstra we find no mention of *Sthāpaka* whose functions are entirely assigned to the *Sūtradhāra*.

Apart from this, the introduction in Bhāsa, which is styled as *Sthāpanā* (which also points to the fact that Bhāsa was conscious in making the change) is remarkable for its brevity. Bhāsa has shown a great skill in completing the introduction of his plays with the greatest economy of words. The number of lines used by the *Sūtradhāra* in all the plays is given below:

*Svapnavāsavadattam* 7 lines;  
*Pratijñāyauḁandharāyaṅam* 9 lines;  
*Avimārakam* 18 lines;  
*Cārudattam* 80 lines;  
*Pratīmānāṭakam* 13 lines;  
*Abhiṣekanāṭakam* 19 lines;  
*Pañcharātram* 10 lines;  
*Madhyamavyāyogaḁ* 18 lines;  
*Dūtvākyam* 8 lines;  
*Dūtgḁaṭotkacam* 14 lines;  
*Karṇābhāram* 10 lines;  
*Urubhaṅgaḁ* 20 lines;  
*Bālacaritam* 10 lines.

From this it will appear that whether the plays belong to the larger types, viz: *Nāṭaka*, *Prakarna*, *Samavokāra*, or to the smaller, viz: *Vyāyoga*, *Vithī*, etc, Bhāsa introduces them with equal ease and



brevity. The only exception is the *Cārudattam* which has 80 lines in the *Sthāpanā*. The Introductions of all his plays display a similarity not only on the point of brevity but also in the method of execution.

The success of Bhāsa in this respect is remarkable. The technique of introduction by the *Sūtradhāra* is typical to Sanskrit plays and serves many purposes. The chief of which is that the *Sūtradhāra* supplies to the audience, the link of the subject–matter of the play. It is a very difficult task to lead one, completely ignorant of the theme, to the understanding of the very first scene unaided. This is affected by the *Sūtradhāra*, and the successful dramatists have shown remarkable skill in this respect. The best type of introduction is that which introduces the main events without much ado. The test of the successful dramatist, thus, lies in his power to begin a play with as brief a preamble as possible. Bhāsa is undoubtedly one of the best dramatists from this point of view.

Bhāsa very often uses two dramatic devices – ‘speaking from behind the curtain’ and ‘speaking to the sky’ for the sake of brevity. An introduction has a speech or sound from behind the curtain; by way of explaining that the *Sūtradhāra* ushers in the main character or hints at the main event. The other technique of ‘speaking to the sky’ is very helpful to dramatists in giving so much information by a single character.

One of the striking features of Bhāsa’s dramas is the use of a dramatic device *patākāsthān* in order to excite astonishment. For example, in the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam*, the king of Ujjayinī, Mahāsena, (father of Vāsavadattā), while discussing with his queen the merits of various suitors of Vāsavadattā, asks her: “Which of these do you think is worthy of our daughter?” A chamberlain enters and exclaims “Vatsarāja”. He actually brings the joyful news of the capture of Vatsarāja, and unable to contain his joy bursts out “Vatsarāja”! Another example of this device is seen in the *Abhiṣekanāṭakam*, when Rāvaṇa while taunting Sītā says to her, “When that wretch of a mortal together with his brother Lakṣmaṇa is killed by Indrajit, by whom wilt thou be set free?” A rākṣasa enters just then and says, “By Rāma.”

Of the five explanatory devices, Bhāsa uses only two – the Explanatory and the Introductory Scenes. (*Viṣkambhaka* and

*Praveśka*). Herein also, Bhāsa shows his skill in the economy of words. His explanatory devices are usually short.

With reference to the usual practice of ending a drama with a Benediction (generally known as *Bharatavākya*) some are of the opinion that Bhāsa dispensed with it and left this task to the stage-manager, which can be surmised from the fact that the same verse appears at the end of most of Bhāsa's dramas. It would have been otherwise, had the poet himself furnished the same, as he could have written any number of them, did he so choose.

...The principal characteristics of his [Bhāsa's] plays that strike the reader the most, are their simplicity in construction, naturalness in style, and realism in description as well as the dramatic qualities of vigour, life and action and sharpness of characterization.<sup>1</sup>

## BHĀSA'S STYLE

According to Dr. M.L. Gaur and Shri M.R. Kale:

As a dramatist Bhāsa is unique in Sanskrit literature. He knows the technique of the drama and like an expert of it he utilizes it properly. The plot of each drama of Bhāsa is unfolded in a few effective situations that follow each other in their natural sequence and are calculated to bring out the sentiment in hand.

An essential dramatic merit in Bhāsa is that his expression is far easier to follow than in much of the later dramatic poetry. He possesses in fact that clarity, which is theoretically a merit of the Kāvya-style, which is signally neglected by the average Kāvya-writer in his anxiety to display the complete familiarity which he possesses with every side of the art of poetry.

Bhāsa is an accomplished master of the art of poetry, but one whose good sense and taste preserve him from adopting in drama the artifices which are permitted in the court-epic and lyric which were

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1. M. R. Kale, *Svapnavāsavadattam of Bhāsa*.

intended to be studied at leisure. The simple and sententious is beloved of Bhāsa.

The necessities of the drama saved Bhāsa from one great defect of the epic style, the lack of measure, which permits the *Rāmāyaṇa* to illustrate by twenty-nine similes the sorrows of Sītā in her captivity, while in the *Abhishekanāṭakam*, Bhāsa is satisfied only with one. On the other hand he owes to it the relative simplicity of his diction, and his freedom from the excesses of the poetic equivalent of the nominal style, which comes to dominate later Sanskrit literature.

Bhāsa's style is very simple, sweet and clear. The words are simple and easily understandable. He avoids long compounds and elaborate figures of speech common in the later Sanskrit literature.

Bhāsa's style is sometimes obscure; sentences are sometimes elliptical and it is difficult to get at their meaning unless we supply the ellipsis. Sometimes the connection between sentences is left by the poet to be found out by his readers. It is his compressed style that makes some part of Bhāsa's writing obscure and the reader in order to clear up the obscurities must have recourse to a comparison with his original, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* as well as his own works.

Bhāsa's power of depicting irony is especially prominent in *Svapnavāsavadattam*, where it is used to intensify the (rasa) sentiment of *vipralambhaśṅgāra* (love-in-separation). A striking example is where Vāsavadattā is asked to weave the garland for the marriage of her husband to Padmāvati.

According to Shri M.R. Kale and Shri Karindikar, it seems that Bhāsa was the first dramatist who has taken the plots for his plays from the epics as through the study of Bhāsa's plays everyone can easily reach this conclusion that as a dramatist Bhāsa has used more ungrammatical or archaic forms and constructions in his plays, so, it is clear that his style, description and language etc. are greatly influenced by the epics.

Bhāsa no doubt, drew his inspiration from the epics, and the dominating influence of the epics is clearly seen everywhere in his dramas. Along with many beautiful expressions and ideas of the epics, along with their naturalness and simplicity of diction,

Bhāsa seems to have unconsciously adopted even the solecisms from his great originals. Or more probably Sanskrit being the living tongue in his time, Bhāsa did not, like later writers, feel obliged to use forms, and constructions strictly in conformity with the hard and fast rules of Pāṇini's grammar.<sup>1</sup>

A characteristic of Bhāsa is his fondness for pithy proverbial phrases, 'everything suits a handsome figure', 'misfortune never comes singly', 'Good news sounds more pleasant from a friend's mouth', 'there are many obstacles in the road to fortune', etc.

An idea once expressed fascinates Bhāsa and is repeated again and again in the same terms, a fact which incidentally helps to assure the genuineness of the plays.

Varied figures of speech are used in Bhāsa's plays. Through the study of these, we see that Bhāsa is very effective in *Svabhavokti* (natural description). Although there are various examples in his plays of this figure of speech, I give below some examples from *Svapnavāsavadatta* which are really very beautiful. The first paints a beautiful serene picture of the hermitage:

The unperturbed deer in whom confidence is inspired, in the safe place of penance grove grazing the grass confidently, all the trees, tenderly nurtured, have their branches fully laden with flowers and fruits.

Abundant are the herds of yellow-colored cows, which are like wealth, the outer place without farmland indicates that this must be a penance grove, especially because the smoke is rising from many places.

Bhāsa's descriptions are simple, natural and straight-forward. He always aims to produce before his readers, his pictures in such a way as they not only please them but put before them a beautiful, clear and real position of the scene concerned. Though beautiful and realistic, his descriptions are never lifted into the sphere of the sublime like

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1. M. R. Kale, *Svapnavāsavadatta of Bhāsa*.

other great poets of Sanskrit literature.

Bhāsa's plays contain many characters. He has taken characters for each of his plays, in such a number, which is necessary in all respects for the play. None of the characters can be removed from his plays because it would not be possible, neither justified nor correct. Says Prof. M. R. Kale:

Bhāsa's characters are sharply distinguished or individualized. Every character is strongly marked with its own individuality, and made to help development of the plot each in its way.<sup>1</sup>

In the second act of *Svapnavāsavadattam*, a character – the Brahmachārin – appears and then disappears after that, and is nowhere seen again in the drama; his importance is immense although he appears for a short while. Bhāsa borrowed his characters from different classes of the society. His characters are of both qualities, high and low, and due to these he succeeded in pleasing or entertaining the whole society, his audience and admirers. All his characters are not only externally charming, but are also individuals with many good qualities. They are open, straight-forward, sympathetic and full of human emotions.

### **Bhāsa's deviation from Bharata**

While strict adherence to Bharata rules was not obligatory, though literary practice, more or less, demanded it, Bhāsa at times struck out a new way and thereby deviated from the master. A dramatist may very well take a new path even if the Shastra directs otherwise. Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that the definition and rules of Bharata are too elastic in comparison with those of the later law-givers. In following Bharata one may very easily strike a new path without in the least violating totally the rules of Bharata. But none can do so with the rules of Dhananjaya or Vishvanātha.

The deviations are to be considered not as transgression of the

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1 M. R. Kale, *Svapnavāsavadattam of Bhāsa*.

laws of Bharata but should be acclaimed as the landmarks in the gradual development of the drama. The chief deviations are the presentation of death on the very stage in the *Abhiṣekanāṭakam* (Act-I) and the *Urubhaṅgaḥ*, the speech of *Sūtradhāra* in Prakrit in the *Cārudattam* and the new function of *Sūtradhāra* in Bhāsa's dramas. The *Sūtradhāra* in *Cārudattam* uses Prakrit instead of Sanskrit. This is the only drama of Bhāsa which has got a Prakrit-speaking Sutradhāra. It is definitely a remarkable deviation from the Shastra and it may be due to the influence of another current of thought which attempted at giving the dramatic directions in Prakrit.

As regards the killing of Vāli in the *Abhiṣekanāṭakam*, we may say that the dramatist could have avoided it by resorting to the use of a *Viṣkambhaka* or *Praveśaka*, but so far as the death of Duryodhana is concerned, it was indispensable. And as the latter is an *Anaka* in form, having *karuṇā* as its *rasa*, we may say that a death-scene in such forms of drama could hardly be avoided. The rule that no death is to be presented, came it seems, as a result of a consideration of the technical difficulties in presenting it. The killing of one by an arrow on the stage seems even today incredulous and ludicrous instead of being awe-inspiring and effective. A consideration of this fact is most probably responsible for the elimination of death-scenes. But the death of Duryodhana in *Urubhaṅgaḥ* is of another type. There he is not directly killed on the stage. He dies due to the mortal blow of Bhīma, which is not shown. As a result, his death becomes much more pathetic and effective. So, as a technique the presentation of death by Bhāsa, it may be said, is successful in the case of *Urubhaṅgaḥ* and is flat in the *Abhiṣekanāṭakam*.

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## THE SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM

**T**he *Svapnavāsavadattam* is undoubtedly the poet's masterpiece and the fruit of his mature genius. That it was considered the best among Bhāsa's works in Rājaśekhara's time (9th century AD) is proved from the well-known verse of that poet: भासनाटकचक्रेऽपि छेकैः क्षिप्तैः परीक्षितुम् । स्वप्नवासवदत्तस्य दाहकोऽभूत् पावकः ॥ <sup>1</sup>

As with many other plays, the plot of this one, too, has been drawn from the legends and stories of Udayana and Vāsavadattā, which were prevalent at the time. Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadattam* is in effect a sequel to his play *Pratijñāyagandharāyaṇam*. The main theme of the drama is the sorrow of Udayana for his wife Vāsavadattā, believed by him to have perished in a fire. The legend has been taken from the *Kathāsaritsāgar*.

If *Pratijñāyagandharāyaṇam* is a play of political intrigue closely intertwined with the thrilling adventures of romantic love making, *Svapnavāsavadattam* is an immortal saga of dedicated love set in the hard frame-work of political intrigue.

*Svapnavāsavadattam*, in six acts, pictures the self-denying love of Vāsavadattā for Udayana which impels her to make the most challenging sacrifice a woman may be called upon to make, of willingly

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1. M. R. Kale, *Svapnavāsavadattam of Bhāsa*.

acquiescing with the intrusion of a rival woman in her love. Political intrigue plays its role in this play, too, but there is a clear shift in emphasis here. *Svapnavāsavadattam* is in a very real sense, a play of the heroine, not of the hero, and is comparable in this respect to Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, where, too, the heroine carries more weight.

The interest in the story of the play does not so much lie in the incidents as in the development of the principal characters in it. The prevailing sentiment (*rasa*) in the *Svapnavāsavadattam* is 'love in separation' or 'wistful love' *vipralambha śṅgāra*, and with it is associated the sentiment of pathos, *karuṇā*. Prominent amongst the dramas that delineate *vipralambha śṅgāra* (love in separation) and contain therefore, a great deal of pathos are the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* of Kalidasa and *Svapnavāsavadattam* of Bhāsa. It is needless to go into the details of how delicately and effectively pathos is woven by these two poets, each in his own way, into the fabric of the drama to bring into relief the deep love between the hero and the heroine. Both the poets are masters of expression, expert in handling their themes with a great sense of beauty and know very well how best to describe a feeling or a state of mind whether with restraint or with abandon, whether with a single word, silence, or as an emotional outburst.

The play is a noble creation of the poet which depicts conjugal love in a most exalted form. To quote Dr. Sukhthankar:

The aim of the dramatist is to portray on the one hand the complete self-abnegation of the noble queen, who suffers martyrdom for the sake of her lord with cheerful resignation, and on the other hand to depict her husband as at heart true to his love, while unwillingly submitting to the exigencies of the life of a king. The burden of the story is the triumph of steadfast, unfaltering, undying Love for which no sacrifice is too great.



## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### *In order of Appearance*

Sūtradhāra : Stage Manager or Director, who superintends the whole performance, appears only in the Prologue, or even sometimes a principal actor

Two guards : in the retinue of princess Padmāvati

Yaugandharāyaṇa : Chief Minister of Udayana, King of Vatsa

Vāsavadattā : Princess of Ujjain, daughter of king Pradyota Mahāsena, and the first queen of Udayana, supposed to have been burnt alive and brought to Magadha in disguise as the lady of Avanti

Chamberlain : From Magadha with Princess Padmāvati

Maid : of Padmāvati

Padmāvati : Princess of Magadha, sister of king Darśaka. In the last three acts the second queen of Udayana

Lady Hermit

Brahmachārin : Student of Theology

Nurse : of the Princess Padmāvati

Vidūṣaka : Jester (Vasantaka) of King Udayana

Udayana (Vatsarāja) : King of the Vatsas

Padminikā and Madhukarikā : Maids in attendance on the princess of Magadha

Chamberlain : of the Vatsa king at Kauśāmbī

Vijayā : Portress at Kauśāmbī palace

Raibhya : Chamberlain from the Avanti court of Ujjain

Vasundhara : nurse of Vāsavadattā from Ujjain

## SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM

(A TRANSLATION)<sup>1</sup>

The Nāndi (prayers to the deities) being over, (*enters the Stage Manager*).

Stage Manager — May the arms of Balarāma resembling the colour of the newly risen moon, invigorated with wine, splendid like the lotus flower and delightful like the spring-season, protect you (the audience).<sup>2</sup>

I thus beg to address you, noble sirs! Ah! What is this that something like a sound is heard when I am just engaged in addressing (the audience)! Well; I will see (what it is).

*(Behind the curtain)*

Keep aside, keep aside, gentlemen! Keep aside.

Stage Manager — So be it. I understand.

All the people in the penance grove are being impudently (roughly) driven away by the devoted servants of the king of Magadha, accompanying the Princess. (*Exit*)

End of Introduction

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1. We have referred mainly to Prof. M.R. Kale's and Dr. Vedprakash Shastri's translations of the play.

2. The arms of mighty Udayana protect you, (the arms) whose strength is Vāsavadattā, fair as the moon and devoted to Udayana, (the arms) which are satisfied by marrying Padmāvatī and which are attractive in the company of Vasantaka.

## ACT – I

[Forest road near a hermitage]

*(Enter two guards)*

GUARDS — Out of the way! Away! Sirs, out of the Way!

*(Enter Yaugandharāyaṇa, disguised as a religious mendicant, and Vāsavadattā in the garb of a lady of Avanti)*

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — *(Listening)* What! Even here the people are driven aside? Why,

These self-possessed dwellers of the hermitage content with woodland fruits and clad in bark, worthy of all respect, are being terrified?

Who is this insolent fellow, lacking courtesy, made arrogant by fickle fortune, who by his rough command is turning a peaceful penance-grove into a village street?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Sir, who is this (person) that drives away (the ascetics).

Yaugandharāyaṇa — My lady, whoever drives himself away from the dharma (righteousness).

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Noble one, I did not mean to say that.

(But actually I wanted to know) whether even I should be ordered to clear the way?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Even the gods, lady, are rejected

unawares.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Ah! Noble one, fatigue is not as distressing as humiliation.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Such honour has been enjoyed and then renounced by you.

So, there need be no worry in this case. For –

Formerly thou also hadst gone (moved about in your city) in this covetable way. With the victory of thy lord thou wilt once more attain an exalted state. The cycle of worldly fortunes revolves with the march of time in a series like the spokes of a wheel.

GUARDS — Out of the way, sirs, out of the way!

*(Enters the Chamberlain)*

CHAMBERLAIN — Sambhāṣaka! No, the people should not indeed be driven away. See –

You should avoid reproach (blame) to the king. Harshness should not be adopted towards the inmates of hermitages. These ascetics have come to the forest for avoiding insults of the city life.

GUARDS — Very well sir. *(Exit)*

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Ha, why, he seems to be an enlightened person. *(To Vāsavadattā)* come child, let us approach him.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — As you please noble one.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — *(Approaching)* Oh, Sir, what is the reason of this hustling?

CHAMBERLAIN — Ah! Good hermit.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — *(to himself)* 'Hermit' is an excellent form of address. But not being used to it, it does not well appeal to my mind.

CHAMBERLAIN — Sir, listen, this verily is the sister, by name Padmāvatī, of our king Darśaka who is (so) named by his elders. Here she, having visited the mother of our king Darśaka, who resides in the hermitage and permitted by her, she (Padmāvatī) will go to Rājagṛh. So, today she is pleased to stay in the hermitage. Therefore you may fetch from the forest, at your sweet will, holy water, fuel, flowers and sacred grass. The king's daughter is a friend of piety; she would not

wish your pious duties to be hindered. Such is the tradition of her family.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — *(To himself)* So, this is the Magadha King's daughter by name Padmāvātī, who was predicted by astrologers, Puṣpakabhadra etc. to become the queen of our lord. Hence,

Great hatred or high respect springs from (one's) intention (feeling). On account of my being desirous (of having her) as (my) master's wife, I feel great kinship for her.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* Hearing that she is a princess, I too feel for her a sisterly affection.

*(Enter Padmāvātī with her relative and a maid)*

MAID — Come, come Princess, here is the hermitage; please enter it.

*(Then appears seated lady ascetic).*

LADY ASCETIC — Welcome to the Princess.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(To herself)* (so) This is that princess. Her form (beauty) indeed (is) in keeping with her noble birth.

PADMĀVATĪ — Revered lady, I bow to you.

LADY ASCETIC — Live long! Come in, my daughter, come in, for all guests penance groves indeed are their own homes.

PADMĀVATĪ — So, it is your reverence. I feel quite at home, and grateful to you for your kind words.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* Her words are as sweet as her looks.

LADY HERMIT — *(To the maid)* My good girl, has no king as yet sought the hand of your blessed sovereign's sister?

MAID — There is one, Pradyota by name, king of Ujjayinī. He has sent an ambassador on behalf of his son.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* well, well. Now she has become mine (relative).

LADY HERMIT — Such loveliness well deserves this honour. We have heard that both are mighty royal families.

PADMĀVATĪ — *(to the Chamberlain)* Noble one, have you found

any hermits that will do us the favour of accepting our gifts? Distribute according to their heart's desire and demand, by proclamation, what any man would have.

CHAMBERLAIN — As is desired by you, respected princess. (*Addressing ascetics of the hermitage*) O, ascetics residing in the hermitage listen, do listen. Here her highness, the Magadha Princess in whom confidence is created on account of the respectful treatment accorded to her, invites you in keeping with her dharma, to accept from her gifts.

Who requires a pitcher? Who seeks a garment? What does he again, that has finished the course of his studies according to his resolve, desire, that he may have to give to his Preceptor (as a fee)? By (making) this request the daughter of our king, who is a friend of the righteous, wishes that she herself should be favoured. Whatever be the desired object of anybody, let him declare that – what should be given and to whom.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — (*Aside*) Ah, I see my opportunity. (*Aloud*) Sir, I ask a boon.

PADMĀVATĪ — Happily my visit to this penance grove is fruitful.

LADY HERMIT — This hermitage is one in which all the ascetics are quite content, so this one must be a stranger.

CHAMBERLAIN — Well, sir, what can we do for you?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — This is my sister. I wish that she, whose husband has gone on a journey, should be protected by the princess for some time. For –

I have nothing to do with money, nor with objects of pleasure or raiment. It is not for livelihood that I have put on these ochre garments. This noble (or, firm) minded princess, whose observance of religious duties is seen (proved), is able to protect the character of my sister.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) So, the noble Yaugandharāyaṇa wishes to leave me here. Be it so, he will not act without reflection.

CHAMBERLAIN — Lady! His expectation is great indeed. How can we consent? For wealth it would be easy to give, or one's life, or the fruit of austerity. Anything else would be easy, but hard is the guarding of a pledge.

PADMĀVATĪ — Noble one, having first proclaimed, 'who wants

what', it is improper to hesitate now. Now you please do whatever he wishes.

CHAMBERLAIN — This is worthily spoken by your ladyship.

Maid — Long live the princess, thus true to her word.

LADY ASCETIC — Live long, O auspicious one!

CHAMBERLAIN — Very well my lady. (*Approaching* Yaugandharāyaṇa) Sir, her Honour accepts the guardianship of your sister.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — I am much indebted to Your Highness (*To Vāsavadattā*) my child! Approach Her Honour.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) there is no escape. I will go, unfortunately that I am.

PADMĀVATĪ — Yes, come hither. Now you belong to me.

LADY HERMIT — She looks to me like the daughter of a king.

Maid — Your reverence speaks well. I too perceive that she has experienced happiness.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — (*Aside*) Ah! half my task is done. Things are turning out just as it was arranged with the other ministers. When my royal master is reinstalled and Vāsavadattā is restored to him, her Highness, the Princess of Magadha, will be my surety for her. For indeed, Padmāvati then has been predicted as the future queen of the king, by those (Puṣpakabhadrā etc.) who foresaw the calamity first. (Because it has happened accordingly, so) this is done through confidence in that (prediction), for luck does not transgress the well-judged declaration (or prophecy) of prophetic seers.

*(Then enters Brahmachārin, a student)*

BRAHMACHĀRIN — (*looking upwards*) It is midday and I am greatly fatigued. In which place then shall I rest?

(*Turning around*) Good, this area must be a penance grove because:

The deer are roaming about freely and without taking fright, full of confidence engendered by the place as being secure; the trees, with their branches fully laden with flowers and fruits are all tended with kindness; the herds of cows, that form the wealth (of the ascetics)

are for the most part brown-coloured; the quarters disclose no fields (of corn); and this smoke (that is seen) is rising from many sources (huts); undoubtedly this is a penance forest.

I will enter it. (*Entering*) Ah. This person is out of keeping with a hermitage. (*Looking in another direction*) But there are also hermits. There is no harm in proceeding further. Oh! ladies!

CHAMBERLAIN — Freely, freely, you may enter. A hermitage as is well known is common to all people.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Hum!

PADMĀVATĪ — Ah, the noble lady avoids the sight of a stranger. Well; it will be easy for me to look after my charge.

CHAMBERLAIN — Sir, we have arrived here before you. Accept the hospitality due to a guest.

BRAHMACHĀRIN — (*Sipping water*) Fine, fine. I am relieved of fatigue. Yaugandharāyaṇa — Sir, where do you come from? Whither have you to go? Where does the noble one reside?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Hear, sir. I have come from Rājagṛha for acquiring preeminence in Vedic lore. I resided in a village named Lāvaṇaka, in the Vatsa territory.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Ah! Lāvaṇaka! At the mention of that name my anguish seems renewed.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Now, did you finish the course of your studies?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Not indeed.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — If the studies are not finished (then) what is the purpose of your coming here?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — A terrible catastrophe occurred there.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — What was it?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — A king Udayana by name lived there.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — We have heard of the noble Udayana. What of him?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — His wife, Vāsavadattā by name, daughter of the king of Avanti, it was said, was deeply loved by him.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Quite possible. What then?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — When the king had gone out hunting the village took fire, and she was burnt alive.



VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Untrue, untrue, I am still living, the unfortunate one!

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — What then?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Then in attempting to rescue her, a minister named Yaugandharāyaṇa fell into the flames himself.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Did he really fall in? What then?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Then when the king returned, and heard the news, he afflicted with the loss of the two, wished to sacrifice his life in the same fire; but was kept off with great efforts by the ministers.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Yes, I know my lord's tender feelings for me.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — What then?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Then the king became unconscious having embraced the burnt remnants of her ornaments.

ALL — Alas!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*To herself*) May the noble Yaugandharāyaṇa now have his desires fulfilled.

MAID — Princess, this noble lady is in tears.

PADMĀVATĪ — She must be very tender hearted.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Quite, so, quite so. My sister is tender hearted by nature. What then?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Then very slowly, he regained consciousness.

PADMĀVATĪ — Fortunately he lives. My heart became paralysed as it were on hearing that he swooned.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Then, what?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — Then that king, with his body reddish with dust owing to his rolling on the ground, suddenly got up and poured many a lament incoherently saying – Alas Vāsavadattā! Alas daughter of the king of Avanti: Oh darling! Oh my beloved pupil! What more? To be brief, now not even the *Chakravākas*<sup>1</sup> are like him (in sorrowing).

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Now sir, did none of the ministers try to compose him?

BRAHMACHĀRIN — There is a minister, Rumaṇvāna by name, who did his utmost to console the king, for he – like him is not taking

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1. Birds that are referred to as a model of conjugal love in post-Vedic literature.

food, his face worn out by continued weeping. Depressed by sorrow like his lord, he neglects the care of his person. Day and night he attends untiring on the king. Should the king suddenly depart this life, he too would cease to exist.

Vāsavadattā — (*To herself*) Fortunately, has my husband been placed in good hands now.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — (*Aside*) Oh! what a heavy responsibility Rumaṅvāna has to bear! For,

my burden has been lightened, his toil is constant. Everything depends on him, on whom the king himself depends.

(*Aloud*) Well, sir, by this time is the king consoled?

BRAHMCHĀRIN — That I do not know.

“Here it was that I laughed with her, here I conversed with her, here I dwelt with her, here I got angry with her, and here I passed the night with her”: as the king was lamenting thus, the ministers took him with them with a great effort and went away from the village. With the departure of the king, the village became desolate like the sky when the moon and stars have vanished from it.

LADY HERMIT — The king must be virtuous who is so praised even by a stranger.

MAID — Princess, is it likely that another woman’s hand may be given to him?

PADMĀVATĪ — (*To herself*) She has spoken as if in consultation with my heart.

BRAHMACHĀRIN — I take leave of you both. We must go now.

BOTH — You may go and gain success in your undertaking.

BRAHMACHĀRIN — May it be it so (*exit*)

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Well, I too wish to depart, permitted by your ladyship.

CHAMBERLAIN — The honourable one wishes to depart, permitted by your ladyship.

PADMĀVATĪ — Your honour’s sister will feel lonely (lit. anxious) without you (in your honour’s absence).

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Being in the hands of worthy persons she will not feel lonely.

(*Looking at the Chamberlain*) I will go now.

CHAMBERLAIN — Very well, we shall meet again.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Be it so.

*(Exit)*

CHAMBERLAIN — May your honour leave only to see us again.

PADMĀVATĪ — Revered lady, I salute you.

LADY HERMIT — My child, may you get a husband as worthy as yourself.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Revered lady, I too salute you.

LADY HERMIT — You too be soon united with your husband.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — I am obliged.

CHAMBERLAIN — Then, come this way, your ladyship,  
for now –

The birds have returned to their nests. The hermits have plunged into the stream. Fires have been lit and are burning brightly, smoke is spreading in the penance–grove. The sun has dropped a long way down, gathering his rays together he turns his chariot and slow descends on the summit of the western mountain.

*(Exeunt omnes)*

First Act ends



## ACT – II

[Palace garden at Magadha]

*(Enter a Maid)*

MAID — Kunjarikā, Kunjarikā! Where, O where, is the princess Padmāvati?

What dost thou say that the princess has been playing with a ball near the mādhavī bower? I will then just approach the princess. *(Walking about and looking)*. Oh, here is the princess coming hitherwards, playing with her ball, with her face having its pendant earrings raised up, bestrewed with drops of perspiration produced by exertion and looking charming owing to exertion. I will just approach her.

*(Exit)*

*(Enter Padmāvati, playing with a ball, accompanied by her retinue and Vāsavadattā)*

Vāsavadattā — Friend, here is your ball.

PADMĀVATĪ — Lady it is enough now.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Friend, having played with the ball for a very long time, your hands with redness enhanced, belong as it were, to someone else.

MAID — Play on, play on, my princess; let the charming days of maidenhood be enjoyed.

PADMĀVATĪ — Lady, why do you look at me thus as if you are laughing at me.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — No, no; not at all. My dear, you are looking more beautiful than ever today. Looking at your face from all sides, you appear as charming as a bride.

PADMĀVATĪ — Away with you. Do not make fun of me.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Here I hold my tongue, you, the would-be daughter in-law of Mahāsenā.

PADMĀVATĪ — Who, pray, is this Mahāsenā?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — There is a king of Ujjayinī<sup>1</sup>, named Pradyota, who is called Mahāsenā on account of his vast army.

MAID: My princess does not desire alliance with him.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Then with whom does she desire it now?

MAID — There is a King of the Vatsa country by name Udayana.

The princess is attracted by his qualities.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*To herself*) She wants my lord as her husband (*aloud*) for what reason?

MAID: Because he is tender hearted.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) I know it: I know it. This person (*myself*) too, was thus infatuated.

MAID — But, Princess, suppose the king is ugly.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — No, No, he is good looking.

PADMĀVATĪ — How do you know that, dear lady?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Partiality to my lord has made me transgress the bounds of propriety. What shall I do now? Yes, I see (*Aloud*), that is what everybody says in Ujjayinī, my dear.

PADMĀVATĪ — It can be so. He is not, of course inaccessible to the people of Ujjayinī. That is really called beauty which has a charm for the minds of all.

*(Enter a nurse)*

NURSE — Victory to the princess. Princess you are given away.

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1. Ujjayinī, an ancient city on the banks of the River Kṣīprā, was the capital of the kingdom of Avanti. It is the modern day Ujjain, in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — To whom, good lady?

NURSE — To Udayana, the king of the Vatsas.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Now, is it all well with the king?

NURSE — Not only is he well, but he has arrived here and has accepted the hand of the princess.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh, a great mishap!

NURSE — Where is the mishap in this?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh, nothing. His grief was so great, and now he is indifferent.

NURSE — Lady, the hearts of great men are ruled by the sacred scriptures, and are therefore easy to console.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Good lady, tell me, did he ask for her hand?

NURSE — Oh, no. He came here for some other purpose, when our King observing his nobility, wisdom, youth and beauty, offered to him the hand of the princess of his own accord.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Oh! So that is it! Thus my lord is without reproach.

*(Enter another maid)*

Second Maid — Make haste, lady, make haste. Today indeed, the constellation is propitious. And our Queen says that the nuptial ceremony should be performed just today.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) The more they hasten, the deeper the gloom in my heart.

NURSE — Come Princess, come.

*(Exeunt omnes)*

End of Act II





## ACT – III

[Palace Garden]

*(Enter Vāsavadattā, deep in thought)*

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Having left Padmāvati in the quadrangle of the inner chambers full of the bustle of the marriage festivities, I have come here to the ladies garden. Now I shall console my grief brought upon me by fate. *(Walking about)* Oh! What a great calamity! Even my husband as he is belongs to another. I will sit down. *(Sitting down)* Blessed is the Chakravāka female that does not live when separated *(from her mate)*. I do not indeed abandon my life; but in the fond hope that I may see my husband live, unfortunate that I am.

*(Enter a Maid with flowers in her hand)*

MAID — Where can the revered Āvantikā have gone? *(Walking about, and looking on)* Oh, here she is seated on the stone-slab under the Priyangu creeper, with her heart vacant on account of thought, wearing an unadorned dress like the crescent of the moon dimmed by mist. I will just approach her. *(Approaching)* Revered Āvantikā, for how long a time I have been looking out for you.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — For what purpose?

MAID — Our queen says – her ladyship has sprung from a noble

family, affectionate and skilfull; let her therefore, string the nuptial garland.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — For whom am I to string it?

MAID — For our princess.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Must I do even this? Oh pitiless, indeed, are the gods.

MAID — Lady, pray do not think of any other thing now. Here is the son-in-law bathing on the jeweled floor. Your ladyship should string it quickly.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) I can think of nothing else. (*Aloud*) Friend, have you seen the son-in-law?

MAID — Yes, I have seen him. That was through affection for the princess and my own curiosity.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — How does the son-in-law look?

MAID — Oh, lady, I tell you, I never saw anyone like him!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Friend, tell me, tell me, is he handsome?

MAID — One might say the God of Love himself, without the bow and arrows.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — That is enough.

MAID — Why do you stop me?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — It is improper to hear the description of another's husband.

MAID — Then lady, please string the garland quickly as you can.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — I shall string it. Give me the flowers.

MAID — May your ladyship take these.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Turns out the flowers from the basket and examines them*) What is the name of this plant?

MAID — It is called "one that wards off widowhood".

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) This must be woven in plenty; both for me and for Padmāvati. (*Aloud*) What do you call this plant?

MAID — Oh. That is called "Vanquisher of the co-wife"

VĀSAVADATTĀ — This must not be woven.

MAID — Why not?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Because his (first) wife is dead; so it is useless.

*(Enter another maid)*

SECOND MAID — Your ladyship, make haste, Make haste! Here is the son-in-law being conducted into the inner quadrangle by ladies having their husbands living.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — My girl, I say take this.

FIRST MAID — How beautiful! Lady, I must be off.

*(Exeunt the two maids)*

VĀSAVADATTĀ — She is gone. Oh the calamity! Even my husband (now) belongs to another. Alas! I'll go to bed; it may soothe my pain, if I can sleep.

*(Exit)*

End of the Third Act



## ACT – IV

[Palace at Magadha]

### INTERLUDE

*(Enter the Jester)*

JESTER — *(Joyfully)* Ah! Fortunately, I have seen the time, delightful and auspicious on account of the coveted marriage-ceremony of his Honour, the king of Vatsa. Oh! Who could have known that after being hurled into such a whirlpool of misfortune we would emerge again. Now, we live in palaces, we bathe in the tanks of the inner court, we eat dainty and delicious dishes of sweetmeats – in short, I feel myself to be in Paradise, except that there are no heavenly nymphs to keep me company. But there is one great drawback. I do not digest my food at all well, and I do not get sleep even on a bed having excellent coverlets, so that I see as if gout is down upon me on all sides. Ah! There is no happiness in life, if you are full of ailments, or without a good breakfast.

*(Enter a maid)*

MAID — Where could the noble Vasantaka have gone? *(Walking*

*about and looking on*) Ah! Here is the noble Vasantaka?

*(Approaching)* Noble Vasantaka, it is such a long time that I have been searching for you.

JESTER — *(Seeing her)* – For what purpose are you looking for me, my dear?

MAID — Our queen asks – “Has the son-in-law bathed?”

JESTER — Why does her ladyship ask that?

MAID — Why else? So that I may bring flowers and unguents (sandalwood paste and garland etc.) for him.

Jester — His Honour has bathed. Your ladyship may bring all except food.

MAID — Why do you forbid food?

JESTER — Because unlucky as I am, there is some thing turning in my belly like the rolling of the eyes of the cuckoo.

MAID — Well, remain like that.

JESTER — Your ladyship may go. In the meantime I too will go to his Honour.

*(Exeunt)*

## End of Interlude

*(Then enter Padmāvati with retinue and Vāsavadattā disguised as Āvantikā)*

MAID — What has brought your ladyship to this pleasure garden?

PADMĀVATĪ — Friend, that I may see if the Śephālikā clusters have blossomed or not.

MAID — Yes, Princess, they have blossomed and are thickset with flowers, like pendants of pearls interspersed with coral.

PADMĀVATĪ — If that is so, my dear, why do you delay?

MAID — Then may the princess sit on this stone-bench for a moment, while I gather some flowers?

PADMĀVATĪ — Lady, shall we sit here?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Let it be so.

*(Both sit down)*

MAID — *(After gathering some flowers)* May the princess behold! May the princess behold! My hands are full of Śephālikā flowers that look like the half cut flakes of red arsenic.

PADMĀVATĪ — Oh! The varied hue of the flowers! See, see revered lady.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh, the loveliness of the flowers!

MAID — Princess, shall I gather the flowers again?

PADMĀVATĪ — Friend, do not, do not pluck the flowers again.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Friend, why do you forbid her?

PADMĀVATĪ — If my noble lord should come here and see this abundance of flowers, I shall be so honored.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Friend, is your husband so dear to you?

PADMĀVATĪ — That I do not know; but separated from my husband, I long for him (feel uneasy).

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* I, indeed, find it hard (a trial); this (princess) also says so.

MAID — Nobly indeed, did my princess say, “I love my husband”.

PADMĀVATĪ — I have one doubt, indeed.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What is that, what is that?

PADMĀVATĪ — Whether my noble lord was (as dear) to the revered Vāsavadattā as he is to me?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Even more than this.

PADMĀVATĪ — How do you know?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* Hum! Partiality to my noble lord has made me transgress the bounds of propriety. So this is what I will say. *(Aloud)* Had her love been less, she would not have forsaken her own people.

PADMĀVATĪ — It must have been so.

MAID — Princess, you might gently suggest to your husband, that you too would like to learn to play the lute.

PADMĀVATĪ — I did speak to him about it.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What did he say then?

PADMĀVATĪ — Without saying anything, he heaved a long sigh, and remained quiet.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What do you guess may be the reason?

PADMĀVATĪ — I think he remembered the virtues of her ladyship, Vāsavadattā, but did not weep out of courtesy in my presence.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Blessed, indeed, am I, if this be true.

*(Enter the King and the Jester)*

JESTER — Ho, ho! The Female-garden is lovely (inviting) owing to the gentle breeze blowing (therein) and the fallen Bandhujīva flowers, collected in heaps. This way, my lord.

KING — Friend Vasantaka, here I come.

When I who had gone to Ujjayinī, saw at will (unchecked), the daughter of Avantī and was reduced to an indescribable state, (all the five arrows were let fall upon me by Kāma (god of love): my heart has to this day their barbs in it; and I am again wounded (with a shaft), when Madana has (is known to have) five arrows only whence is this sixth arrow dropped on me?

JESTER — Where could her ladyship Padmāvati have gone? Can she have gone to the arbour of creepers, or repaired to the stone seat, by name Parvata-tilaka, strewn with the asana flowers, and therefore looking as if covered with a tiger's skin, or entered the Saptacchada grove with its strong pungent odour, or retired to the wooden-hill, crowded with the painted figures of beasts and birds?

(*Looking upwards*) Ho, Ho, may your honour! First behold the flight of cranes sailing in an even line and looking charming like the extended arms of Baladeva in the clear sky autumnal sky.

KING — Friend, I see it.

Now straight and extended, now in a thin line, now sinking low and again rising up, and now crooked like the constellation of the Great Bear in its turnings, as though it were a boundary line that divides the sky in two, and white like the belly of a serpent when being freed from its skin.



MAID — See, see my princess, this flight of cranes moving in a compact mass, beautiful and white as a garland of Kokanada lotuses. Oh, my lord! (*on seeing Padmāvati's husband*)

PADMĀVATĪ — Hum! My lord! Madam, on your account I avoid the sight of my husband. So, we shall just enter this bower of Mādhavī creepers.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Let it be so.

*(They act accordingly)*

JESTER — Her ladyship Padmāvati, might have come here and then gone away.

KING — How do you know this?

JESTER — Your highness may just see these clusters of Śephālikā from which flowers have been plucked.

KING — Oh, the varied appearance of the flowers, Vasantaka!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*To herself*) By his mention of Vasantaka I feel as if I were in Ujjayinī.

KING — Vasantaka, sitting on this very stone (slab), let us wait for Padmāvati.

JESTER — Oh, we shall do so.

*(Sitting and rising)* Oh, oh, the scorching autumnal sun is unbearable. Let us just enter this Mādhavī bower.

KING — All right! Go ahead.

JESTER — Let it be so.

*(Both walk about)*

PADMĀVATĪ — The noble Vasantaka is going to upset the whole (arrangement). What shall we do now?

MAID — Princess shall I keep off the lords by shaking the hanging creeper swarming with black bees?

PADMĀVATĪ — Yes, do

*(Maid acts accordingly)*

JESTER — Help, Help! Hold; hold, your Honour.

KING — What is the matter?

JESTER — I am troubled by these wretched bees.

KING — You should not say so, you should not. We must avoid frightening the bees. See —

The bees that are humming sweetly through the intoxication of honey and are embraced by their beloveds smitten by passion, will like myself be separated from their dear mates when disturbed by our foot steps.

We shall therefore just sit here.

JESTER — Very well.

*(Both sit down)*

KING — *(Marking the seat)*

The flowers are trodden under foot, and this stone bench is warm, so some female sitting here must have hurriedly gone away on seeing me.

MAID — Princess, we are held up indeed.

PADMĀVATĪ — Fortunately, my lord has sat down.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* Fortunately my lord is quite well now.

MAID — Princess, the eyes of her ladyship are full of tears.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Indeed my eyes are full of tears owing to the pollen of the Kāśa flowers that fell by the rudeness of the bees.

PADMĀVATĪ — It is right.

JESTER — Well, now, there is nobody in this pleasure garden. There is something I want to ask. May I ask you?

KING — Undoubtedly.

JESTER — Who is dearer to you? Her ladyship Vāsavadattā then (when she lived), or Padmāvati now?

KING — Why do you put me in this very great difficulty?

PADMĀVATĪ — Friend, see into what kind of difficulty my noble lord is thrown?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — *(Aside)* And I too, hapless woman.

JESTER — Freely, freely may you speak. The one is dead; the other is not near at hand.

KING — Friend, not indeed, not indeed, shall I tell. You are a babbler.

PADMĀVATĪ — By so much he has said enough.

JESTER — Oh! I swear truly, I won't tell a soul. My lips are sealed.

KING — No, my friend, I will not speak.

PADMĀVATĪ — Oh, his foolishness! Even after that he can't read his heart!

JESTER — What, you won't tell me? If you don't, you shall not stir a step from the stone seat. Your honour is now my prisoner.

KING — What, by force?

JESTER — Yes, by force.

KING — Then let me see.

JESTER — Forgive me your Highness. I adjure you in the name of our friendship to tell me the truth.

KING — No escape. Well listen,

Although Padmāvati I much admire for her beauty, charm and virtue, yet she has not won my heart still bound to Vāsavadattā.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) This has paid me the compensation of this suffering. Oh, even remaining incognito here proves very beneficial.

MAID — Princess, the lord is impolite indeed.

PADMĀVATĪ — Friend, say not so. My lord is full of kindness, since he even now remembers the virtues of the revered Vāsavadattā.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Dear, you have spoken in a manner worthy of your noble birth.

KING — I have told you. You should tell me now – who is dear to you? Vāsavadattā then, or, Padmāvati now?

PADMĀVATĪ — My lord also has become (is acting like) Vasantaka.

JESTER — What is the use of my prattling? Both their ladyships I hold in high esteem.

KING — Idiot, having heard me thus by force, why do you not confess now?

JESTER — What from me too, by force?

KING — What else? By force.

JESTER — Then you cannot hear it.

KING — Be pleased, be pleased great Brāhmaṇa. Freely, freely speak out.

JESTER — Your honour may hear it now. Her ladyship Vāsavadattā was highly liked by me. Her ladyship Padmāvati is young, beautiful, free from anger and vanity, of sweet address and courteous. And she possesses this quality above all – she welcomes me with delicious food saying – “Where could the noble Vasantaka have gone?”

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Well, well, Vasantaka, bear these words in your memory now

KING — Well, well, Vasantaka, I shall report all this to queen Vāsavadattā.

JESTER — Pity! Vāsavadattā! Where is Vāsavadattā? Vāsavadattā is dead long since.

KING — (*Sorrowfully*) Thus it is; dead Vāsavadattā! By your railery you confused my mind and by force of former habit these words escaped me just as they did formerly.

PADMĀVATĪ — This was a delightful conversation, but now the wretch has spoiled it all.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Aside*) Well, I am consoled. How, sweet it is to hear these words without being seen.

JESTER — Take courage, take courage, your Honour. (The will of) Fate is inviolable. Such is this (that has come to pass) now.

KING — Friend, you do not know the state (I am in). For, It is difficult to cast off (forget) deep-rooted love; grief revives at each remembrance. It is (in) the course of nature that on shedding tears in this world the mind attains freshness, having a debt paid off (as it were).

JESTER — His Highness’s face is wet with tears. I shall get some water to wash it. (*Exit*)

PADMĀVATĪ — Lady, the face of my lord is concealed by the veil of obstructing tears. In the mean time we shall depart.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Be it so. Or rather do you stay. It is not proper to go away leaving your husband affected with tender emotion. I will alone go.

MAID — The lady speaks well. Let the princess at once go

forth.

PADMĀVATĪ — What, shall I go into his presence?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — My dear, do so. (*Exit having said so*).

*(Enter the Jester)*

JESTER — (*With water in a lotus leaf*) Here is her ladyship Padmāvati!

PADMĀVATĪ — Noble Vasantaka, what is this?

JESTER — It is this – This it is.

PADMĀVATĪ — Speak out, speak out – let the noble one speak out.

JESTER — Lady, the pollen of the Kāśa flowers, wafted by the wind has got into his Honour's eyes, and his face is wet with falling tears. Please take him this water to wash his face.

PADMĀVATĪ — (*Aside*) Oh! Like master, like man, how courteous he is.

*(Approaching the king)* Prosperity to my lord! Here is some water for washing your face with.

KING — Ah Padmāvati! (*Aside to Jester*) Vasantaka, what is this?

JESTER — It is like this. (*Whispers in his ears*).

KING — Bravo, Vasantaka, bravo. (*Having washed his face*), Padmāvati, be seated.

PADMĀVATĪ — As my lord commands (*Sits down*).

KING — Padmāvati,

This my face, O charming one, this my face had tears trickling down from it owing to the pollen of the Kāśa flowers, white like the autumnal moon, wafted by the breeze.

*(Aside)*

She is but a girl and newly wed, should she learn the truth it would distress her. Courage she has, it is true, but women are by nature easily alarmed.

JESTER — It is proper that his Honour, the king of Magadha should see his friends, in the afternoon, giving you the lead. Honour, met with reciprocal honour, begets affection. So let your Honour rise.

KING — (*Rises*) Yes, indeed. It is of capital importance. The conferrers of mighty benefits and of high honours are always easily found in this world, but their appreciators are rare.

*(Exeunt Omnes)*

End of Act IV

## ACT – V

[At Magadha]

### INTERLUDE

*(Enter Padminikā)*

Padminikā — Madhukarikā, oh, Madhukarikā, come here quickly.

*(Enter Madhukarikā)*

MADHUKARIKĀ — Here I am, my dear, what is to be done?

PADMINIKĀ — Don't you know my dear, that Princess Padmāvati is troubled by a headache.

MADHUKARIKĀ — Oh, fie upon it!

PADMINIKĀ — Friend, run quickly and call the revered Avantikā. Only tell her the princess has a headache, and she will come of her own accord.

MADHUKARIKĀ — My dear, what good can she do?

PADMINIKĀ — Why, she will tell the princess pleasant stories and drive away the pain.

MADHUKARIKĀ — Very likely. Where have you made up the princess's bed?

PADMINIKĀ — It is spread in the lake-house. Go you now. I too will seek out the noble Vasantaka that he may inform the lord of it.

MADHUKARIKĀ — Let it be so. (*Exit*)

PADMINIKĀ — Where can I see the noble Vasantaka now?

*(Enter the Jester)*

JESTER — Today indeed, on the extremely auspicious and joyful occasion, the pangs due to the fire of love of his lordship the king of the Vatsas, whose heart has been agitated by separation from his ladyship Vāsavadattā, fanned by the acceptance of the hand of Padmāvātī, are greatly increased. (*Observing Padminikā*) Hallo! It is Padminikā. Well, Padminikā, what is the news?

PADMINIKĀ — Noble Vasantaka, do you not know that Princess Padmāvātī is distressed by a headache?

JESTER — Truly lady, I did not know.

PADMINIKĀ — Well, let his Highness know about it. Meanwhile I will hurry up with the ointment for her forehead.

JESTER — Where is the bed arranged for Padmāvātī?

PADMINIKĀ — It is spread in the lake-house, I am told.

JESTER — Your ladyship may go; in the meanwhile I will inform his Honour.

*(Exeunt both)*

## End of the Interlude

*(Enter the King)*

KING — I, on who in course of time, the responsibility of a wife has fallen again, brood over that laudable, worthy daughter of the king of Avanti (Vāsavadattā), whose tender frame was consumed by the fire at Lāvāṇaka, like a lotus plant smitten by frost.

*(Entering)*



JESTER — Make haste, make haste, Your honour.

KING — What for?

JESTER — Her ladyship Padmāvati is tormented by headache.

KING — Who says so?

JESTER — It is reported by Padminikā.

KING — Oh, painful.

Having attained a wife, rich in (radiant with) the splendor of beauty and endowed with virtues, I, although yet suffering from the pain of the former blow, felt my grief softened as it were today (but) having experienced misery I expect Padmāvati also to fare similarly (to meet a similar fate). Now at what place is Padmāvati ?

JESTER — Her bed is spread in the lake-house.

KING — So then lead the way to that place.

JESTER — Come, come, your Honour

*(Both walk on)*

JESTER — This is the lake-house. May your honour, enter.

KING — You enter first.

JESTER — Oh, I will. *(Entering)* My God! Stay, just stay, your Honour!

KING — What for?

JESTER — Here is a serpent, rolling on the ground, his form revealed by the light of the lamp.

KING — *(Enters and looking at it carefully, smiles)* Oh, the fool sees in this a snake!

Fool, you mistake for a serpent, the straight, and long garland hanging on the front arch of the summer house, fallen on the ground, being shaken by the gentle breeze at night, that imitates somewhat the movements of a serpent.

JESTER — *(looking closely)* your Honour is right. It is not a snake.

*(Entering and looking round)* Lady Padmāvati must have been here and gone away.)

KING — Friend she could not have come here.

JESTER — How does your Honour know that?

KING — What is to be known here? Look –

The bed has not been pressed; it is as smooth as when made. There is no crinkle in the counterpane, the pillow is not rumpled nor stained with ointments for an aching head. There is no charming arrangement to divert a patient's gaze. A person having gone to bed through pain does not leave it again quickly of his own accord.

JESTER — If so, your Honour should sit on this bed for a short while and wait for her ladyship.

KING — Very well. (*Sits down*) Friend, sleep overpowers me. Tell some story.

JESTER — I shall tell. Your Honour should listen with a 'hum'.

KING — I will.

JESTER — There is a city Ujjayinī by name. There are in it, as they say, many delightful pools (tanks) for bathing.

KING — What, Ujjayinī did you say?

JESTER — If you don't like this story, I shall tell you another.

KING — Friend, it is not that I do not like the story; but –

I think painfully (at the mention of Ujjayinī) of the daughter of Avantī's king, (who) remembering her kinsfolk, at the moment of departure with me (to Kauśāmbī), and causing to fall, through love, on my bosom the tears that had flowed from her eyes and clung to their corners.

And again—

Many a time during her lessons, while gazing at me, the playing (on the lute) was done in the air, with her hand having the bow dropped from it.

JESTER — I shall tell you another. There is a town called Brahmadata, where there was a king named Kāmpilya.

KING — What is it? What did you say?

*(Jester repeats what he has just said)*

KING — Fool, say – king Brahmadata, the city Kāmpilya.

JESTER — Is Brahmadata the King and Kāmpilya the city?

KING — Yes. That's right

JESTER — Then your Honour should wait for a short while, in

which time I shall make it sit firmly on my lips. (*He repeats this several times*). King Brahmadatta and city Kāmpilya. Now your Honour may hear. Oh! His Honour has fallen asleep. It is very chilly at this hour. I shall go and fetch my cloak.

(*Exit*)

(*Enter Vāsavadattā in the disguise of Āvantikā and a maid*)

MAID — Come this way, lady. The princess is suffering from a severe headache.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh pity! Where is the bed of Padmāvātī arranged?

MAID — It is spread in the *samudragṛha*.<sup>1</sup>

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Then lead the way.

(*Both move around*)

MAID — This is the *samudragṛha*; your ladyship should enter. In the meantime I shall quickly bring the ointment for her forehead.

(*Exit*)

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh, how cruel are the gods to me.

Padmāvātī, who was a source of comfort to my lord in the agony of his bereavement has now fallen ill herself. I will go in. (*Entering and looking above*) Ah! How careless the servants are. Padmāvātī is ill, and they have left her alone with only a lamp to keep her company. So, she is asleep. I shall sit down. But if I sit elsewhere it might look as if I had but little love for her. So I shall sit on the same bed. (*Sits down*) Why is it that now I am sitting beside her, my heart seems to thrill with joy? Happily her breathing is easy and regular. Her headache must have gone and by leaving me one side of the bed she seems to invite

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1. Water pavilion or summer pavilion. Literally Sea or Lake House.

me to clasp her in my arms. I will lie by her side. (*She gesticulates lying down*).

KING — (*Talking in his sleep*) O Vāsavadattā!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Starting up*) Oh, my lord and not Padmāvati to be sure! Can it be that I am seen? Surely the momentous work undertaken by the noble Yaugandharāyaṇa is rendered vain by my being seen.

KING — O daughter of the King of Avanti!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Happily my lord is only dreaming. There is no one about. I shall stay a little while and gladden my eyes and my heart.

KING — Dear one, my darling pupil, answer me.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — I speak, my lord, I speak.

KING — Are you angry?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Oh no, oh no, only very miserable.

KING — If you are not displeased, why do you wear no jewels?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What could be better than this?

KING — What! do you remember Virachikā?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Angrily*) Avaunt! Here also Virachikā?

KING — In that case I conciliate you with regard to Virachikā

*(Stretches forth his hands)*

VĀSAVADATTĀ — I have stayed long; some one might see me here. So, I shall go or I will first replace on the bed the hand of my lord that is hanging down from the bed and then go. (*Does so and departs*).

KING — (*Rising up at once*) Vāsavadattā, Stay, stay. Oh pity! Darting out in haste, I was struck by the panel of the door; I therefore, do not know clearly whether this is a reality or only my heart's fancy?

*(Enters Jester)*

JESTER — Oh! His Honour has risen from sleep

KING — Friend, I have happy news to tell you, Vāsavadattā is alive!

JESTER — Tush! Vāsavadattā! Where is Vāsavadattā? Vāsavadattā is indeed long dead.

KING — Friend, Do not, do not say so.

She went away, friend, having awakened me while I was enjoying sound sleep in bed. I was then deceived by Rumaṇvāna when he told me that she was burnt.

JESTER — Alas! This is not impossible. Ah! By Your Honour thinking of her ladyship at my mention of the bathing pools of Ujjayinī, she might have been seen in a dream!

KING — Thus then she was seen by me in a dream!

If that was a dream, how glorious never to wake again, if this be illusion, long may that illusion last.

JESTER — Friend, in this city there dwells a Yakṣiṇī (sylph) named Avantisundari. *She* might have been seen by you.

KING — No, no.

At the end of my dream I awoke and saw her face; the eyes strangers to collyrium and the long unbraided locks were those of a lady guarding her virtue.

Moreover, friend, behold, do behold.

This arm of mine which was tightly clasped by the agitated queen, does not even now give up its horripilation (it has not ceased to thrill with joy) though it felt her touch only in a dream.

JESTER — Your Honour should not think of such futile things. Come, come my lord; let us go to the inner quadrangle.

*(Enter the Chamberlain)*

CHAMBERLAIN — Victory to Your Honour! King Darśaka, our sovereign lord, sends you these tidings: Here indeed has Your Honour's war-minister, Rumaṇvāna, come with a large force to attack Āruṇī. Likewise, my own victorious army, elephants, cavalry, chariots and infantry, is equipped and ready. Therefore arise. Moreover,

Your foes are divided, your subjects, devoted to you by reason of your virtues, have gained confidence. Arrangements are completed to protect your rear when you advance. Whatever is needed to crush the foe, I have provided. Forces have crossed the Ganges, the Vatsa

Kingdom is in the hollow of your hand.

KING — *(Rising)* Excellent! Here now.

Having met that Āruṇī, adept in dreadful deeds, in the battle field surging like a mighty ocean with huge elephants and horses and swelling with the fierce waves of the scattered arrows, I will destroy him.

*(Exeunt Omnes)*

End of the Fifth act

## ACT – VI

### [THE PALACE OF KAUSĀMBĪ]

#### INTERLUDE

*(Enter a Chamberlain)*

Chamberlain — Who is here, oh, that attends at the golden-arched gate?

*(Enter Portress)*

PORTRESS — Sir, it is I, Vijayā, what is to be done?

CHAMBERLAIN — Lady, tell please tell Udayana, whose prosperity (power) has increased on account of the acquisition of the kingdom of the Vatsas – Here has come from Mahāsenā's presence a Chamberlain, of the family of Raibhya, as also Vāsavadattā's nurse named the revered Vasundharā, sent by queen Angāravatī; and both are waiting at the gate.

PORTRESS — Sir, this is neither the proper place nor the proper time for the announcement.

CHAMBERLAIN — How is it not the proper place and time?

PORTRESS — May Your Honour hear. Today, a lute was played upon by some one, residing in the Sūryāmukha palace of our lord. On hearing it my lord said – the sound, like that of Ghoṣavatī is heard.

CHAMBERLAIN — Then, then?

PORTRESS — Then my lord, having gone there, asked – where was the lute got from? He said thus – It was found by us lying in a

clump of reeds on the bank of the river Narmadā. If it is wanted, my lord may take it. When it was taken to him my lord placed it on his lap and fell into a swoon. Then having recovered from the swoon, he said with his face fully covered with tears – Thou art seen, Ghoṣavaṭī, but she, indeed, is not seen. Sir thus is the time unsuited; how can I inform him?

CHAMBERLAIN — Do inform him, lady; this (our visit) is also in connection with that.

PORTRESS — Sir, here I inform him. Here is our lord descending from Sūryāmukha palace. So, I will inform him just here.

CHAMBERLAIN — Lady, do so.

*(Exeunt Both)*

End of the mixed prelude

*(Enter the King and the Jester)*

KING — O thou with a sound gratifying to the ear; how couldst thou that reposed on the pair of breasts and the lap of the queen, take thy residence, which was dreadful, in the wilds, with thy body covered with the dust scattered by the flight of birds.

Moreover thou art heartless, O Ghoṣavaṭī, since thou dost not (sorrowfully) remember – of thy poor queen –

How she pressed thee to her side as she bore thee on her hip; the happy clasping of thee between her breasts, when fatigued, the lamentations with reference to me when separated from me, and the talking accompanied by smiles in the intervals of music.

JESTER — Enough. Do not torment yourself beyond measure.

KING — Say not so, dear friend.

My passion that was long dormant, has been roused by the lute, but I cannot see that queen to whom Ghoṣavaṭī was dear.

Vasantaka, have the Ghoṣavaṭī repaired by a skilled artisan and bring it back to me at once.

JESTER — As Your Honour commands.



*(Exit, taking the lute with him)*

*(Enter Portress)*

PORTRESS — May my lord be victorious! Here have arrived at the door, a Chamberlain of the Raibhya clan, from the court of Mahāsenā and Vāsavadattā's nurse named the revered Vasundhara, sent by Queen Angāravatī.

KING — If so then let Padmāvati be first called.

PORTRESS — As my lord commands. *(Exit)*

KING — Can Mahāsenā have learned this news so soon?

*(Enter Padmāvati and Portress)*

PORTRESS — Come, come my Princess.

PADMĀVATĪ — Victory to my noble lord.

KING — Padmāvati, did you hear that a chamberlain of the family of Raibhya has come from Mahāsenā as also Vāsavadattā's nurse named the revered Vasundharā, sent by her ladyship Angāravatī, and that they are waiting at the door?

PADMĀVATĪ — My noble lord, I shall be glad to have good news of my relatives' family.

KING — This is worthily said by your ladyship, that the relatives of Vāsavadattā are your own relatives. Padmāvati, be seated. Now, why don't you sit?

PADMĀVATĪ — My noble lord, would you have me seated at your side when you receive these people?

KING — What is wrong in that?

PADMĀVATĪ — That your lordship has married again may seem like indifference (to the feelings of others).

KING — (But) the fact that I (the king) prevents people fit to see his wife, from obtaining a sight of her, will lead to serious blame (or blemish, viz., breach of etiquette). So please be seated.

PADMĀVATĪ — As my noble lord commands. *(Sits down)* my lord, I am rather uneasy so as to what the dear parents will say.

KING — Quite so, Padmāvati.

My heart is full of misgiving as to what he will say. I stole away

his daughter and I have not kept her safe. Through fickle fortune I have greatly injured my fair name and I am afraid, like a son who has roused his father's wrath.

PADMĀVATĪ — No; what, forsooth, can be saved, when its time (of destruction) has arrived?

PORTRESS — Here are the Chamberlain and the nurse waiting at the door.

KING — Let them come in at once.

PORTRESS; As the lord commands.

*(Exit)*

*(Enter the Chamberlain, the Nurse and the Portress)*

CHAMBERLAIN — Oh! Great is my joy,

On coming to the kingdom of our kinsman; but again there is sorrow felt when I remember the destruction of our princess. What indeed would not have been done by you, oh fate! Had there been the kingdom seized by the enemies (regained) and the queen safe?

PORTRESS — Here is the lord. Let the noble one approach him.

CHAMBERLAIN — *(Going forth)* Victory to your Highness!

NURSE — May the master be victorious.

KING — *(with great respect)* Noble one.

Is that king, who has the power to bring about the rise and fall of the offspring of royal races on earth and my coveted relative, all well?

CHAMBERLAIN — What else? Mahāsenā is all right, and asks about the welfare of you all here.

KING — *(Rising from his seat)* What does Mahāsenā command?

CHAMBERLAIN — Worthy is this of the son of the princess Videha. Your Honour should please hear Mahāsenā's message, seated on your seat.

KING — As Mahāsenā commands (through you). *(Sits down)*

CHAMBERLAIN — Fortunately is the kingdom regained that was

seized by the enemy. For,

No enterprising spirit manifests itself in those, who are timid or weak; generally royal splendor is enjoyed only by the energetic alone.

KING — Noble sir, all this is due to the power of Mahāsenā. For –

I was, indeed first conquered and yet fondled (afterwards) along with his sons; I forcibly carried away his daughter but did not save her (from destruction); and even after hearing of her demise, his regarding me as his own is just the same; or why, that I obtained the Vatsas, over which I used to rule, was owing to the king.

CHAMBERLAIN — This is Mahāsenā's message; that of the queen, her ladyship here will tell.

KING — O Mother!

The lady goddess of the city, chief among the sixteen queens, my mother – so afflicted with grief at my departure – is she in good health?

NURSE — The queen is well, and inquires after your honour's well-being of every kind here.

KING — Well-being of every kind you say? Mother, of this sort is the well-being!

NURSE — Do not torment yourself beyond measure, my lord.

CHAMBERLAIN — Take courage, my noble lord. Though dead the daughter of Mahāsenā is not dead when thus remembered with tenderness by your lordship. Or rather,

Who is able to protect whom in the hour of death? Who can hold the pitcher when the rope (attached to it) is cut? Thus man fares equally with (lit. has the same law of life as) trees: each is cut down (dies) when his time comes and grows (is born) again.

KING — Noble one, do not say so.

Mahāsenā's daughter, my pupil and my beloved queen – how could I forget her, even in the births to come?

NURSE — Thus said the Queen: Vāsavadattā has passed away. To me and also to Mahāsenā you are as dear as our Gopālaka and Pālaka, being the son-in-law, as chosen from the first. For this reason you were brought to Ujjayinī. We gave her away to you under the pretext of the lute, without fire as witness to the act; owing to your

impetuosity you carried her off without the celebration of the auspicious nuptial rites. Thereafter we had the portrait painted of you and of Vāsavadattā on a panel and performed the marriage. Here is the picture sent to you. Be looking at it and comfort yourself.

KING — Ah, How loving and how noble is the message of her Majesty?

Those words I hold more precious than the conquest of a hundred realms. For we are not forgotten in her love, although transgressors.

PADMĀVATĪ — My lord, I would like to see the portrait of my elder sister and salute her.

NURSE — Look, Princess, look (*shows her the picture*)

PADMĀVATĪ — (*Aside*) Why! It is very much like the lady Āvantika. (*Aloud*) my lord, is this a good likeness of her ladyship?

KING — Likeness? No, I think it is herself. Oh! How could cruel calamity befall this charming loveliness? How could fire ravage the sweetness of this face?

PADMĀVATĪ — On seeing the portrait of my lord, I shall be able to know whether this portrait is similar to her ladyship or not.

NURSE — May the Princess see it, may the princess see it.

PADMĀVATĪ — (*On seeing*) From the (exact) resemblance of my lord's portrait I know that this portrait too is similar to her ladyship.

KING — My queen, since the time of seeing the portrait I see that you appear to be greatly delighted and dejected. What can this be?

PADMĀVATĪ — My lord, a lady resembling this portrait lives here.

KING — What, resembling Vāsavadattā?

PADMĀVATĪ — Yes.

KING — Then send for her at once.

PADMĀVATĪ — My noble lord, a certain Brāhmaṇa left her with me as a ward, before my marriage, saying that she was his sister. Being separated from her husband she shuns the sight of other men. So when you see her in my company you will know if she is the same.

KING: If she be a Brāhmaṇa's sister, it is manifest she must be another. Identity of form occurs in life as of very doubles.

(*Enter the Portress*)

PORTRESS — Victory to my lord. Here has a Brāhmaṇa, belonging to Ujjayinī, come to the door to receive back his deposit, a woman, whom he says he left as his younger sister in the hands of the queen.

KING — Padmāvati, can it be that he is that same Brāhmaṇa?

PADMĀVATĪ — He may be.

KING — Let that Brāhmaṇa be ushered in at once with the formalities proper to the inner court?

PORTRESS — As my lord commands. *(Exit)*

KING — Padmāvati, you too bring her.

PADMĀVATĪ — As my noble lord commands. *(Exit)*

*(Enter Yaugandharāyaṇa and the Portress)*

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Ah! *(Aside)*

Though it was in the king's interest that I concealed the Queen consort, though I can see that what I have done is to his benefit, yet even when my work is done my heart misgives me as to what my royal master will say.

PORTRESS — This is the king; your reverence may approach him.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — *(Having approached)* Victory to the king! Victory!

KING — The voice seems to have been heard before. O Brāhmaṇa, was your sister left as a deposit in the hands of Padmāvati?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Just so.

KING — If so, hasten, hasten his sister here.

PORTRESS — As my lord commands. *(Exit)*

*(Then enter Padmāvati, Āvantikā and the Portress)*

PADMĀVATĪ — Come, come quickly, my lady, I will tell you something pleasing.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What, What?

PADMĀVATĪ — Your brother has come.

ĀVANTIKĀ — Fortunately, he remembers me, at least now.

PADMĀVATĪ — (*Having approached*) Victory to my lord! Here is the deposit.

KING — Restore it Padmāvati. (But) a deposit ought to be returned in the presence of witnesses. The worthy Raibhya here and his ladyship will form the court.

PADMĀVATĪ — Now, Sir, resume your charge of this lady.

NURSE — (*Observing Āvantikā carefully*) Oh! This is the Princess Vāsavadattā!

KING — How now? The daughter of Mahāsena! Oh, my queen, enter inside (the ladies' apartments) with Padmāvati.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — No no, she must not go in there. This lady is, I tell you, my sister.

KING — What are you saying? This is the daughter of Mahāsena.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — O king!

You are born in the race of Bharata, are well disciplined, enlightened, and pure; it does not therefore behove you to take her away by force – you who are to show what are (guide in the matter of) the royal duties.

KING — Very well; let us see this similarity of form. Let the veil be removed.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Victory to my royal master!

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Victory to my noble lord!

KING — Ah! This is Yaugandharāyaṇa; and this Mahāsena's daughter!

Is it a reality or dream, that she is again seen by me? For by her although seen, I was then deceived.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Sire, by concealing the queen I am guilty of a grave offence. Please pardon me, my royal master. (*With these words falls at his feet*)

KING — (*Raising him up*) You are certainly Yaugandharāyaṇa to be sure. By feigning madness, by battles and by plans worked out according to the codes of polity – thus indeed by your efforts we were rescued when plunged into adversity.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — I do but follow the fortunes of my royal master.

PADMĀVATĪ — Oh! This is the Queen. Lady, I in my ignorance, transgressed the bounds of propriety, by treating you as a friend. So I bow my head and beg your forgiveness.

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Raising* Padmāvati) Rise, rise, oh blessed one, rise! It was my body that was in fault being falsely presented to you as belonging to a suppliant.

PADMĀVATĪ — I am beholden to you.

KING — Friend Yaugandharāyaṇa, what was your object in deciding to remove the queen?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Because I administered Kaushambi only.

KING — Then, what was the reason in leaving her as a deposit in the hands of Padmāvati?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Because it was predicted by the astrologers, like Puśpakabhadra and others, that she was to be the queen of my lord.

KING — Was this too known to Rumaṇvān?

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — My lord, It was known to everyone.

KING — Oh, Rumaṇvān is a rogue indeed.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — Lord, let the noble Raibhya and her ladyship here return just today and communicate the news of the queen's being safe.

KING — No, no, we shall all go with queen Padmāvati.

YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA — As my lord commands.

(Bharata – Vākya – Benediction)

May our Rājasimha (lion-like king) rule the earth girt by the oceans, the Himālaya and the Vindhya mountains for her ear-ornaments and marked by one (royal) umbrella.

*(Exeunt omnes)*

End of Act VI

Here ends the play SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM





## SOURCE OF SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM

The source of *Svapnavāsavadattam* is certainly *Kathāsaritsāgar* authored by Somadeva. It is here that we come across the story of Vāsavadattā and the 'Kathāmukha' of the *Kathāsaritsāgar* starts with the story of Udayana. *Kathāsaritsāgar* is divided into eighteen sections, each of which is called *Lāmbaka*. Udayana, who was a descendant of the Pāṇḍavas, grew up to be a fearless hero who was well versed in ancient lore, and he was highly proficient in playing the lute. Udayana's father retired to the life of *vāṇaprastha* and entrusted the kingdom to Udayana. Udayana left the day to day work to one of his faithful ministers, Yaugandharāyaṇa, and started spending his time in luring wild-elephants by playing on his lute. Having heard about Vāsavadattā, the princess of Avanti, he wished to make her his queen and waited for a favourable opportunity to arrive his way.

Vāsavadattā's father was Mahāsenā who was a very powerful monarch and had two sons, Gopālaca and Pālāca. Mahāsenā wanted to conquer Kauśāmbī<sup>1</sup> and seeing that Udayana could not be subdued by direct means, he made a huge artificial elephant, filled it with warriors and put it in the elephant forest in the Vindhya. In this intrigue Mahāsenā succeeded; when Udayana approached the fake elephant with his lute, all the warriors came out of it and surrounded him.

There was a skirmish, Udayana was seized from behind, bound with creepers, and sent to Ujjayinī. Mahāsenā treated Udayana re-

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1. Kauśāmbī, capital of king Udayana, is where the chief scene of the play is laid. It was a city that was famous in ancient times, being mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. Known for its grandeur, it is today an insignificant village on the river Yamunā, near Allahabad.

spectfully and requested him to teach Vāsavadattā the art of playing the lute. And in this process of learning both of them fell in love with each other.

On the other hand, in Kauśāmbī, Yaugandharāyaṇa resolved to free Udayana from Mahāsenā. He left the kingdom in the hands of another very faithful minister Rumaṇvān and left for Ujjayinī with Vasantaka. The minister turned himself into a hunch-back and Vasantaka into a pot bellied clown through the exercise of magic and entered the palace. However, Udayana very well recognized Yaugandharāyaṇa who taught him spells for breaking the prison chains and charms for winning Vāsavadattā's love. Soon, Vāsavadattā herself began to take sides with Udayana as against her own father. Coming to Udayana again, Yaugandharāyaṇa asked him to elope with Vāsavadattā, so that they could break the pride of Mahāsenā. Vāsavadattā agreed on it, both of them eloped, reached safely at Kauśāmbī. Mahāsenā accepted the fact, made peace with Udayana and all was well.

Such is the 'fable' of the original Vāsavadattā of *Kathāsaritsāgar* of Somadeva.

According to Somadeva, Udayana excels in music; in lute-playing that could tame the wild-elephants. In Bhāsa's play, it is Udayana the musician, with his lute Goṣavaṭī and Udayana and Vāsavadattā are brought together as teacher and pupil. Udayana's famous ejaculation in *Svapnavāsavadattam* is:

Ha priye! Ha priye-śiṣye!

Yaugandharāyaṇa in Somadeva's *katha* exercised his magical powers and changed himself into a hunch-back; there are no such miracles found in Bhāsa's play.

In Somadeva's *katha*, Vāsavadattā herself invites Yaugandharāyaṇa and the jester to her palace. This episode does not occur anywhere in Bhāsa's play.

In Somadeva's *katha*, again, Mahāsenā receives the captured Udayana with princely honors. Bhāsa provides no such welcome to the Kauśāmbī king.

Bhāsa introduces a personal message to Yaugandharāyaṇa

through Hamsaka: “Go and see Yaugandharāyaṇa.” Udayana knows the far-sightedness of his minister, and hence that simple message is enough. Perhaps by the message he means that Yaugandharāyaṇa, being all sufficient, will know what to do. In the *katha*, there is no such message.

If we compare the narrative in Somadeva’s *Kathasaritsagar* with Bhāsa’s play, we cannot but admire the latter. His work is worthy of the greatest admiration on account of the delicacy and fineness with which Bhāsa has eliminated all that is clumsy and rude in the narrative. In Bhāsa’s play the loosening of the knot brought about with the help of the dream, which is certainly a creation of the dramatist, is fine and delicate. Without doubt, it was this well merited pride for this innovation that induced the poet to insert the word ‘dream’ in the title of the drama.<sup>1</sup>

The historical Udayana appears in the Purāṇas as a ruler of the Pururara dynasty. His name appears among the twenty-nine Puru Kings, tracing their lineage to Arjuna, the hero of the Mahabharata war. They removed their capital from Hastināpura to Kauśāmbi as the former capital had been destroyed by the floods of the Ganges. From a passage in one of the Buddhist canonical writings we learn that he reigned shortly after the death of Buddha and consequently was a contemporary of Canda Pradyota of Avanti, of Pasenadi and his son Ajataśatru of Kosala; and of Bimbasāra and his son Ajataśatru of Magadha. Most of the historians of the present day agree on these points and establish matrimonial relations of Udayana with Avanti, Magadha and Anga Kingdoms. Moreover, the literary figure of King Darśaka, the ruler of Magadha has been identified with the famous ruler Ajataśatru of Magadha, and Padmāvatī as his sister.

It is not possible even now to trace the origin and the growth of the legends that gathered around the figure of Udayana. But even in the canonical Pāli writings, we find a few hints of his amorous traits that would make him a suitable hero for romantic adventure, just as his contemporary Pradyota had gained early an unenviable reputation for

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1. M. Winternitz – *A History of Indian Literature*. Translated from the German, by Subhadra Jha. Vol. III Part I. Classical Sanskrit Literature, Motilal Banarasi Dass. Delhi, Varanasi, Patna.

ferocity. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that popular fancy should have woven a story that brings the two monarchs together in dramatic contrast, narrating the capture of Udayana through Pradyota's stratagem and the former's subsequent elopement with his captor's daughter as a prize. That the story of Udayana had long been popular in the secular literature of India is proved by a statement of Sri Harśa, its use in the dramas of the early poet Bhāsa and many other later poets, and numerous incidental references to it in technical works and classics.

### STORY OF *SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM*

Bhāsa here picks up the thread of the Udayana story from where he left it in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam*. Yaugandharāyaṇa's ambition to recover the lost slices of Udayana's territory, annexed by usurpers and reinstall him as the suzerain monarch of the whole Vatsa kingdom is at the bottom of the whole plot. But this political resolve is given a different twist here by the dramatist to make it a dream of love, unlike in *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* where the minister's pledge dominates the theme. In *Svapnavāsavadattam*, love and marriage become political tools. He plans the king's marriage with the Magadha princess Padmāvatī as the only sure means of boosting up Udayana's political and military power. But this was impossible without the elimination of Vāsavadattā, without which, Udayana was sure to spurn the very idea of another wife. Moreover, the king of Magadha<sup>1</sup> would not consent to his daughter taking the position of a second wife. This induces the faithful and clever minister to take recourse to a trick. Yaugandharāyaṇa takes Vāsavadattā into his confidence and she agrees to be his accomplice in a strategic plan to lead Udayana into believing that she is dead. To give it greater credibility, Yaugandharāyaṇa is also to be declared dead. One day, while the king is away on a hunting expedi-

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1. The country of Magadha corresponds roughly to the southern part of the modern state of Bihar. Rājagṛha was its capital.

tion, the royal pavilion, in a frontier village Lāvāṇaka<sup>1</sup> is burnt down. A rumour is spread that Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa have both perished in the fire, whereas they have in reality slipped away to Magadha disguised as pilgrims.

The queen and the minister are on their way, and passing by a forest hermitage, meet the retinue of the Magadhan princess Padmāvati, in Act I. She has been to visit the Queen Mother, Mahādevi. The princess Padmāvati is to stay one night at the hermitage and has it proclaimed that anyone there may claim a boon. This is the minister's opportunity to put Vāsavadattā under the security of the Magadhan court. He pretends that she is his sister and asks the princess to take her as a ward. His request is granted.

At this stage, a *brahmachārin*, a supposed eye-witness, gives a poignant picture of the tragedy of Lāvāṇaka, which serves to project Udayana's great qualities and his tender sensibilities as a lover. The ground is thus prepared to create a place for Udayana in Padmāvati's heart.

In Act II we see Padmāvati and Vāsavadattā playing ball together. The two immediately become friends. From their conversation we learn that Padmāvati has made up her mind to marry king Udayana. Soon the nurse of the Princess too, reports that Udayana has agreed to accept the latter as his wife. The soliloquy of Vāsavadattā shows how greatly she is perturbed at this. But she has, however, some consolation, when she concludes from the words of the nurse, that her husband wants to have a second wife only out of the sense of duty and not on account of lack of affection for her.

The second and third act present a novelty in having wholly feminine scenes with no male presence. Both acts are in Prakrit, whereas the rest of the play is in Sanskrit and both acts do not have a single verse either. The second act provides an excellent glimpse of Padmāvati's joyful life of light revelry in the company of her jovial friends, typical of adolescent youth; now absorbed in indoor games, now indulging in

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1. Lāvāṇaka was the name of a village adjacent to Magadha, and was probably situated on the south bank of the river Yamunā, near its confluence with the Ganges. It seems to have been a centre for education according to the account of the Brahmachārin, in the play.

outdoor games, taunts and jokes centering on her approaching matrimony; she is betrothed to Udayana.

In Act III and IV the marriage of Udayana and Padmāvati is solemnized. Vāsavadattā comes alone to the garden, while the preparations for the wedding are going on. She is highly perturbed and seeks refuge in solitude to give vent to her pent up feelings. Cruel fate assigns to her the task of weaving the wedding garland for her rival, with her own hands. Bhāsa has opened up new vistas of dramatic irony with a deep under-current of pathos, in her exchanges with Padmāvati and the maids, quite unlike those in a light vein, providing amusement.

In Act IV there is an interlude in which the Vidūṣaka enters and expresses his satisfaction that the marriage has taken place early in which he has tasted dainty dishes. But he complains that his stomach has gone out of order. Then Padmāvati enters with Vāsavadattā. From the conversation of the king and Vidūṣaka, we learn that king Udayana still loves Vāsavadattā who is supposed to be dead, and continually thinks of her. The Vidūṣaka asks the king as to who is dearer to him, whether Vāsavadattā or Padmāvati? The king evades the answer for a long time but at last admits that although Padmāvati is admired greatly by him, his heart is still bound by Vāsavadattā, who is no more. Then the king asks the Vidūṣaka which one he likes of the two. The Vidūṣaka, however, decides in favour of Padmāvati because she gives him more dainty dishes and takes care of him. The king again and again remembers Vāsavadattā and his sorrow which is deep-rooted becomes fresh and he starts weeping. When the Vidūṣaka goes to fetch water for the king to wash his eyes, the two ladies are deeply touched by the conversation overheard by them; Vāsavadattā retreats and Padmāvati approaches her husband. Now the Vidūṣaka brings water for the king to wash his eyes and the king, in order that Padmāvati may not feel hurt, says that flower-pollen has fallen into his eyes.

Act V is played in the *samudragrha*<sup>1</sup> (Water Pavilion or Summer Pavilion) of the palace. In an interlude we learn that the young queen, Padmāvati is unwell. The maid-servants report that Padmāvati has

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1. Literally: Sea or Ocean mansion.

got a headache and she is resting on a bed in the *samudragṛha*. The Vidūṣaka reports this to the king and both of them enter into the *samudragṛha*. There the Vidūṣaka gets frightened and hurries backward. He thinks he has seen a cobra; but in fact, it is a garland of flowers that is lying on the ground, and he is ridiculed by the king. In Sanskrit dramas it is one of the typical peculiarities of the Vidūṣaka that he gets terrified easily. But here this peculiarity has significance. It has given an indication of the forthcoming event. After an amusing exchange of pleasantries the Vidūṣaka sees the king napping, and finding the place too cold for him, goes out to fetch a blanket. Just then Vāsavadattā also arrives with a maid, who leaves her there and rushes out to get an ointment for the princess. The king has covered himself completely, obviously on account of the chill in the air. Vāsavadattā mistakes the sleeping king to be Padmāvati, takes her seat on the same bed and infers that she must be feeling better as she is sleeping peacefully. She finds that half of the bed is left empty and reads in that, Padmāvati's suggestion to her to lie beside her, to clasp and comfort her. As she proceeds to share the bed, the king, dreaming of Vāsavadattā, talks in his dream and mutters Vāsavadattā's name. That is the climactic point, which descends on Vāsavadattā and the audience too — with a suddenness which totally unnerves her.

She shoots out of the bed, only to discover that, luckily, the king is only dreaming and no damage has been done to the plans of Yaugandharāyaṇa. That is a crucial psychological moment for her. To flee or not to flee is the main question. How could she, poor soul, resist the temptations of the God-given moment to have a secret heart-gratifying look at the deity of her soul, who is her own husband no doubt, and yet denied to her; who has been so near all the while and yet so distant, cut off by cruel political will. Just then, the king continues his talk in sleep. "Oh! Dearest darling, why don't your respond?" Vāsavadattā is at her wit's end – to speak or not to speak. Instinct decides where reason does not and she promptly responds in a subdued tone. "Yes, my lord, here I am, I do respond". Thereafter this fantastic dialogue begins:

KING — Are you angry with me?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — Not at all, not at all; I am grieved.

KING — If you are not angry, why have you not put on your ornaments?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — What, other than this?

KING — Why? Do you remember Viracika?

VĀSAVADATTĀ — (*Angrily*) Avaunt! Here also Viracika?

Here ends this mysterious exchange between the two sensitive souls.

Hardly is she out of the Pavilion, when the King awakes from his slumber and shouts:

“Vāsavadattā, stay, stay! Oh pity!  
While I was going out in haste,  
I struck against a wing of the door,  
Thence I know not clearly,  
if this is true or it is just my wishful thinking

(*Vidūṣaka enters*)

VIDŪṢAKA — Oh! His Honour has risen from sleep.

KING — Friend, I have agreeable news to tell you. Vāsavadattā is, forsooth, alive.

VIDŪṢAKA — Oh! Vāsavadattā! Where is Vāsavadattā? Vāsavadattā is indeed, long dead.

KING — Friend, do not, do not say so.

When I was asleep,  
She awakened me and went away,  
I had been deceived by Rumaṇvāna,  
Who had reported earlier that she was burnt.

VIDŪṢAKA — Pity! this is inconceivable. Since I made a mention of the bathing place in Avantī<sup>1</sup>, you thought about Vāsavadattā and you feel you have seen her in dream.

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1. Avanti is another name of Ujjayinī, the capital city of the Avanti kingdom.



KING — Thus then she was seen by me in a dream!  
In case, it is merely a dream, a blessing it would be, if I had  
not awaked. In case it is an illusion, let this illusion continue  
forever.

The hero talking in a dream and the heroine, almost dreaming in wakefulness, such a dialogue cannot, naturally, go on for long. With deep psychological insight, Bhāsa has forced in the Virachika episode to cut this exchange short from Vāsavadattā's side. Otherwise, would Vāsavadattā, then totally lost to the outside world, stop and withdraw at all from that hypnotic situation? Not on her own, it can be presumed. Some such expedient was, therefore, an inevitable psychological necessity. The king, at last, opens out his arms, appealing to Vāsavadattā to forgive him for his breach of faith and that is the end of this sensational little drama, within the bigger drama.

Vāsavadattā feels she has stayed too long, fears she might be discovered and wishes to quit. But her legs pull her back. She wavers for a while. Her hankering to touch her lover for just a second drives her crazy. She returns to replace the sleeping king's hanging hand in position and rushes past. But the touch awakes the king. He has a dreamy vision of the real Vāsavadattā for a split-second, hurrying out of the sombre chamber like an apparition, as a tantalizing continuation of the figure in the dream. But the thin line between the dream-vision and real vision is so convincingly palpable that he senses the reality of Vāsavadattā, leaps from the bed, calls aloud to her to stop and rushes behind her. But in his drowsy excitement and the mad rush to get to her, he knocks against the door panel. Vāsavadattā escapes by the skin of her teeth. Just then, the jester returns with the blanket. The king jubilantly cries out to him that Vāsavadattā is alive and that he had seen her in flesh and blood. But the Vidūṣaka laughs it away saying that Vāsavadattā was dead long, long ago. That he must have either dreamt of her or must have seen a *yakṣiṇī*. A *yakṣiṇī* called Avantisundari was believed to haunt the place. Thus, the real Vāsavadattā, who is seen by Udayana for a fleeting moment and had really emerged from dreamland for Udayana, is pushed back into the realm of fairyland for the time being. But, in this unconscious mention

of Avantisundari by the Vidūṣaka, the audience is sure to sense a jolt of tragic irony, for they know only too well that the king had seen Vāsavadattā, who was, in a very real sense, Avantisundari!

An abrupt twist is given to the whole episode by the message, just received from the Magadha king that all is set for the campaign against Aruni, the usurper. This brings in a sudden change of mood and the king proceeds to assume the lead. This dream-scene in the fifth act is the unique and unparalleled creation of Bhāsa's dramatic genius. There is certainly no dearth of highly dramatic scenes in the varied plays of Bhāsa – we have them in good number – but the high drama of the dream scene, its uniqueness and the grandeur of its design are a class by itself. A headache of Padmāvati – ironic as it might look – proves to be the ground for the momentary but highly nuanced meeting between Udayana and Vāsavadattā in a mysterious dream-world.

Act VI takes us into the palace of king Udayana. The king finds the lute *Ghoṣavati* that at one time was played upon by Vāsavadattā, when he was training her in playing on the lute. At the sight of the lute the painful recollection wakes up in the King:

Beloved lute, once thou hast rested  
over her breasts and on her thighs  
How hast thou led the terrible life in the forest?  
Where birds have scattered thy stick in dust?  
Besides, thou art devoid of sentiment,  
O *Ghoṣavati* that thou remember not about her –  
Carrying thee between her thighs, pressing thee between her  
arms,  
Offering thee the pleasant embrace between her warm  
breasts,  
Bewailing in her separation from me,  
And the conversation full of smiles,  
That took place in between musical pauses.

The concluding act opens with the recovery of the hero's lost lute, and here starts the revival of wistful memories of his giving lute les-

sons to Vāsavadattā. This Vāsavadattā mood provides the emotional background for the recognition scene. Bhāsa has no need for supernaturally forced artificialities for unveiling the knot. The wedding portrait of Udayana and Vāsavadattā, brought by Vāsavadattā's nurse, serves his purpose very beautifully. On seeing the portrait of the two, Padmāvaī recognizes the close resemblance of Vāsavadattā with her friend Avantikā. At that moment, even Yaugandharāyaṇa (in the guise of a Brahmin) arrives to reclaim his so-called sister Āvantikā from Padmāvaī. Āvantikā is presented behind a side curtain. The truth about Āvantikā is suddenly unveiled by the nurse of Vāsavadattā who shouts in excitement. "Oh! Princess Vāsavadattā!" Udayana also gets very excited and asks her to proceed to the inner chambers with Padmāvaī. This was objected to by Yaugandharāyaṇa who knew it very well that under these given circumstances it would be difficult to hide her identity any longer. When the king himself steps down deciding to verify for himself, Yaugandharāyaṇa sheds his disguise, changes his assumed tone, strikes a new attitude on the stage and becomes his faithful minister again. Āvantikā also follows him, casts away her assumed cloak and becomes Vāsavadattā, the king's beloved queen.

And the play ends here with the benedictory stanza:

May our lion king protect the whole of this earth that extends  
upto the sea, on whose face the Himalayas and the Vindhya  
appear like two giant earrings.

\* \* \*

## SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM — AN ANALYSIS

Is the plot of *Svapnavāsavadattam* political, or is it psychological? Set in a politically disturbed background, the theme of the *Svapnavāsavadattam* is essentially a study in psychological conflict. What would *Svapnavāsavadattam* be like without this psychological conflict? It is a great study of the subtle and deep conflict and of the delicate emotions of love of the king and Vāsavadattā.

In *Svapnavāsavadattam*, no word is wasted, no technique misapplied, no incident purposed, no character superfluous, no device abused, no jarring excess in poetic embellishment, no incursion of melodrama, and no flagging of the tempo. Every little part has a role to play in producing the impression of integral perfection. It is this phenomenal totality of perfection that had made Rājaśekhara single out *Svapnavāsavadattam*, of all the dramas and declare, that it was totally immune to all attacks of the critics' fire.

Among the other merits of the play must be mentioned its abiding human interest, with all the actions proceeding from the characters and centered on the purely human plane.

The minister Yaugandharāyaṇa unfolds the machinery of a political design in the opening act of the play, with a view to restoring Udayana back to his lost kingdom. This is a political motive which is of immense importance. And the mode of the characterisation of Udayana and Vāsavadattā is truly psychological; particularly, the conflict in the mind of Udayana, his vacillation between Vāsavadattā and Padmāvati, are spread over throughout the play.

As we come to know from the story itself, Udayana neglects his affairs of state because of his great attachment to his beloved

Vāsavadattā. A strong and watchful enemy takes advantage of the situation and inflicts defeat after defeat on Udayana who loses the greater part of his kingdom and retires to a frontier village Lāvāṇaka. Yaugandharāyaṇa's utmost devotion to the king rouses him to retrieve the situation so as to restore the king to his ancestral throne. But it seems difficult initially to carry out this motive.

It was not easy for Udayana to fight against the powerful enemy without any strong military help. The king of Magadha could be approached but he would not naturally be induced to stir unless a powerful factor, such as that of relationship, was to prevail. It meant that a matrimonial alliance with the king of Magadha was an indispensable necessity.

To carry out this matrimonial alliance, Vāsavadattā was a strong impediment, because as long as she was alive, Udayana could never think of marrying another woman because he was so deeply in love with Vāsavadattā. Therefore, the sacrifice on the part of Vāsavadattā became essential for the interest of the state.

There was yet another difficulty in carrying out the plan. If Yaugandharāyaṇa's conceived plan were consummated, the restoration of Vāsavadattā would pose a problem. Vāsavadattā's character must remain above suspicion. Udayana might refuse to take Vāsavadattā back suspecting her purity during the period of separation. Therefore, it would be necessary to furnish convincing proof of the chastity of the queen during her absence.

Yaugandharāyaṇa had a brilliant strategy to overcome these difficulties. Udayana's marriage with Padmāvatī was predicted by the soothsayers, Act I-11, so it was not a problem for Yaugandharāyaṇa. To separate Vāsavadattā and Udayana, Yaugandharāyaṇa persuades Vāsavadattā to go into disguise and remain incognito till the whole plan is successful. In making Vāsavadattā an accomplice in the plot, Yaugandharāyaṇa has surely counted on Vāsavadattā's great love for Udayana and her earnest desire to win back the lost glory for her dear husband. A lucky event, which is described in Act I brings Yaugandharāyaṇa and Vāsavadattā to Padmāvatī. Vāsavadattā, as Āvantikā, is to remain in the care of Padmāvatī, and at the time of restoration Padmāvatī would be able to convince Udayana of the purity of Vāsavadattā.

This way the plot of the play shows a strong political color. It is true that the political motive works behind the scenes. Yet its solidity and reality is never mistaken. It gradually unfolds itself and appears to be spread over the entire length of the play; the consciousness of the political plot is generally present everywhere. Thus the political motive is not the kind of background that only contributes to or heightens the main picture; rather, it is the picture that owes its life to the background.

The play opens with the initial stage of the political plan which is worked out in Act I. The final act shows the winding up of the scattered threads in a scene of general revelations.

The very disguise of Vāsavadattā as Āvantikā, in which she is present before us throughout, is motivated by the political plan.

Yaugandharāyaṇa initiates the action, to set the machine going, and reappears to wind it up. Though he is absent otherwise from the stage, his presence is felt everywhere and by everyone.

It is indubitable that the main characters are thrown together as they have been done by a motive which is political. And there are references here and there to the success of the various phases of the political plan.

If we consider the psychological aspect, the play depicts a series of domestic scenes which are suffused with psychological colors. The very human and acute struggle in the mind of Vāsavadattā, the humiliation in the guise of Āvantikā to which she has nobly surrendered, the agonizing way she bears her lonely sorrow of separation and of the misery of Udayana's second marriage which she has to witness, the reassuring comfort of Udayana's conscious (Act IV) and sub-conscious (Act V) confession of love, leave behind a deep impression.

The very same is true of Udayana; the shocking news of Vāsavadattā's so-called death, and his loving obsession for Vāsavadattā, with ever-renewing colors, has a solid reality. It appears that a political crisis made the play possible, but once the main characters are thrown together, Bhāsa became more interested in working out their psychological reactions so as to present a fascinating picture of a domestic crisis in a royal household.

*Svapnavāsavadattam* is concerned with two restorations: that of

the lost kingdom to Udayana, and that of the lost Vāsavadattā to her husband. These two restorations are quite interrelated and derive from one another mutual sustenance. The political motive is a powerful background and the main picture is a vivid study in a psychological crisis. Such is the synthesis in the play.

Acts II and III are the shortest in the play and contain only prose dialogues without a single verse, which is very peculiar for a Sanskrit drama. It could have been possible in the interest of swift movement to put the two together but the author chose otherwise and positively for reasons of psychological interest. These two acts are quite important for the psychological reactions of Vāsavadattā which are very minutely drawn.

Acts IV and V again resemble one another a great deal; they both show a situation which seems to be deliberately created. In both the acts, the author creates a possibility of an encounter of Udayana and Vāsavadattā and thus leads on to a fine dramatic suspense. This he resolves by a clever device in Act IV, by making the ladies hide behind a bower and finally giving Vāsavadattā, a chance to escape, and in Act V by sending Udayana to sleep and thus avoiding for the second time the disclosure of Vāsavadattā.

Naturally, in both these acts the dominant interest is psychological which is heightened by suspense present in the dramatic irony of the whole situation. The psychological actions and reactions of all characters, including those of Udayana, are focused on one effect, namely, the revival and the strengthening of the memory of Vāsavadattā.

In the construction of a dramatic action which is spread over a number of acts, every dramatist has to create and employ small or big situations. It is through them that the dramatic action moves towards the desired goal. Bhāsa follows this pattern beautifully for the growth of the plot and the dramatic situations that Bhāsa has created are as follows:

Bhāsa, through the introduction of the Brahmachārin, achieves the purpose of reporting the incidents at Lāvāṇaka, namely the fire, the supposed burning of Vāsavadattā and Yaugandharāyaṇa, the giant grief of Udayana and the care of Udayana undertaken by Rumaṇvān. This reporting by the Brahmachārin is full of dramatic irony also be-

cause, Yaugandharāyaṇa and Vāsavadattā who are reported to be burnt, are actually present in disguise before the audience. Thus, the situation is very essential, effective and interesting.

The main scene of the fourth Act takes place in Pramadavana where Padmāvatī has gone to see her favourite blossoms along with Vāsavadattā and her maid. On the other hand, Vidūṣaka also brings Udayana to Pramadavana to lessen his grief. And the two parties move in different directions in the same place. As Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā are near the bower, Udayana reaches with Vidūṣaka. It is now possible that Vāsavadattā would be exposed. But it is absolutely in the interest of the dramatic action, that Vāsavadattā's remaining incognito should be maintained and Bhāsa saves the situation very cleverly by resorting to a very simple and natural device.

Another occasion also arises in the fourth Act when Udayana and Vāsavadattā would meet each other, but the unexpected meeting must not be permitted to take place. Bhāsa again uses a powerful device. It once again shows how Bhāsa was interested in the psychological aspect of the plot.

Another highly intense situation arises, when Vidūṣaka asks Udayana as to whom he loves more, Vāsavadattā or Padmāvatī; Udayana and Vidūṣaka are totally unaware of the presence of Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā nearby. The unwilling king is forced to answer when the Vidūṣaka adjures him in the name of friendship (*Satyena Śapāmi*).

The entire conversation and the scene that develops have a profound effect on all the people concerned. Udayana is once more reminded of Vāsavadattā's death and his obsession for Vāsavadattā returns. He is fully distracted and is driven to the verge of tears. This scene was very essential in the entire plot, to show that the king still loved Vāsavadattā more, because Vāsavadattā, on her part, is assured by the confession of Udayana's abiding love. It is a sort of a consolation in her lonely sufferings, a consolation that she deserves by virtue of her selfless sacrifice.

It would not perhaps be wrong to believe that the confession of Udayana may have had a sub-conscious effect on Padmāvatī which resulted in her headache. The situation thus paves the way for a psy-



chological development on which the following act is based.

The fifth Act which is supposed be the most important one starts with the entry of Padminikā indicating the headache of Padmāvati, and that a bed for her has been laid in the *samudragṛha*, and makes arrangement to report about this development to Udayana and Vāsavadattā. Bhāsa has evidenced great skill in utilizing this motif to build up the entire act, for, were it not for this indisposition of Padmāvati, Udayana and Vāsavadattā would not have hastened to the *samudragṛha* and the dream-scene would not have occurred. Therefore, it is rather surprising that having revealed this subtle, psychological device, Bhāsa speaks no more about it in the entire Act. It is possible that Bhāsa was more interested in the psychological reactions of another meeting of Udayana and Vāsavadattā and having assured himself of it through the means of Padmāvati's headache; he refused to bother himself any further about it. The author is quite silent about the unexpected development that Padmāvati does not go to the *samudragṛha* at all where her bed is laid. Bhāsa has surely created a situation in which the two queens and Udayana shall come together with Padmāvati's temporary illness. Those who are interested in Padmāvati will be rather disappointed as they are left to themselves to imagine what happened to her headache afterwards. The author has no time for it in the development of the dream-scene and in the final winding up of the Act, amid the loud cry of the battle.

The dream-vision also shows the great pressure on the king's mind, because of the mental conflict and tension, which finds an outlet in the dream. The King's and Vāsavadattā's conflicts experience a climax in this Act because the king confesses his love for Vāsavadattā, in the dream.

The result of the battle announced at the close of the preceding Act are suggested in the *Miśra-Viṣkarāmbhaka* of Act-VI. Udayana regains his kingdom and is established in his palace situated in Kauśāmbi. One restoration is over. Bhāsa now proceeds to the second restoration; that of Vāsavadattā which he accomplishes through progressive steps.

The first link in this restoration is the recovery of the lute Ghoṣavati. This lute was a divine gift to Udayana with which he tamed wild-

elephants, and that art was his alone; besides, it was the witness of the love that sprang between him and Vāsavadattā.

The recovery of the lute at this point of the story serves a very powerful dramatic purpose. This recovery renews the memory of Vāsavadattā and leaves Udayana in a condition of mind which is very appropriate for the scene of Vāsavadattā's restoration.

The second step towards the second restoration is the arrival of Raibhya, the chamberlain of Mahāsenā, and Vasundhara, the nurse of Vāsavadattā.

The third step is the entry of Padmāvati. Her presence was absolutely necessary because but for her the resemblance between Vāsavadattā and Āvantikā would never have been brought to light, and if so, the scene of Vāsavadattā's restoration would not have followed.

The next step is furnished by Padmāvati's desire to see the portrait of Vāsavadattā to enable her to pay her salutations to her. The desire is quite natural on the part of Padmāvati. It reflects her respectful attitude.

The fifth step towards the restoration of Vāsavadattā is the producing of Vāsavadattā and the arrival of Yaugandharāyaṇa.

And the final step in the restoration is achieved by the unveiling of Āvantikā.

After the recognition of Vāsavadattā what remains is only a brief explanation of her disguise and her stay with Padmāvati. When that is given by Yaugandharāyaṇa the second restoration is complete.

We appreciate Bhāsa's selection of an entirely human aspect of the story. He focuses his attention on the psychological actions and reactions of his characters. The whole story acquires, as far as possible, an emotional value which brings the story from the world of misty romantic legend within the orbit of common human experience. The characters gain a sure air of realism and the play becomes very appealing. The best part of Bhāsa is that once a situation is created he generally handles it naturally and skillfully. The meeting in Pramadavana and the unveiling of Vāsavadattā are good testimonies to this.

Bhāsa definitely possesses a power of creating and maintaining dramatic purposes. It appears that in this play he is greatly helped by

the intrinsic potentialities of the plot for dramatic irony.

Drama is 'visual poetry' and its one test is the success of stage-representation; it would be difficult to find easy parallels to the successful construction of *Svapnavāsavadattam* as a stage-play. Bhāsa surely shows greater stage-craft than most of the other Sanskrit dramatists.

The entire drama passes before our eyes in sheer expectation and heart throbbing suspense. The play itself, both while being witnessed and while in reminiscence, floats before us as a dream. There is the intensity of tense situations – imagine the companion of the king asking the king about the latter's feelings for the first queen who was supposed to be dead, and then also about the new queen, precisely at the time when both queens were actually present in the vicinity, although not visible to the companion and the king!

There are inventive flashes displayed in the play *Svapnavāsavadattam*: the introduction of the Brahmācārīn in Act I is one, the whole lay out of Act IV with the scene in the *samudragṛha* is the second, and the presenting of the wedding portrait in Act VI is the third.

M. Winternitz in his monumental work on Indian literature, while giving a summary of each of Bhāsa's plays, dwells upon the comparison of the story of the *Svapnavāsavadattam*, with what we know about it from the *katha* literature. In the course of this comparison, he praises Bhāsa for well-grounded scenes. Bhāsa is acknowledged as an outstanding poet on account of the poetic beauties of the play.

The critic A.B. Keith concludes that the drama in question is undoubtedly the poet's masterpiece and the most mature of his dramas. On Bhāsa's art and technique we find an assurance that Bhāsa excels in suggesting heroism; this characteristic being admirably depicted in the character of Yaugandharāyaṇa. Keith closes his criticism with the statement, that the harmony and melody of Bhāsa's style, added to its purity and perspicuity, have no better proof than the imitations of his verses which are unquestionably to be traced in Kālidāsa, who attests thus to his practical appreciation of the merits of the dramatists with whose established fame his nascent genius had to contend.<sup>1</sup>

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1. A.B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*, Oxford 1924, pp. 91-126.

The *Svapnavāsavadattam*, in the opinion of S.K. De, has an effectively devised plot and there is a unity of purpose and inevitableness of effect. The dream is finely conceived, the characters of the two heroines are skillfully discriminated and the hero is figured as seriously faithful, if somewhat lovesick and imaginative. The main feature of the play is the dramatic skill and delicacy with which are depicted the feelings of Vāsavadattā. It is a drama of fine sentiments, the movement is smooth, measured and dignified, and the treatment is free from the intrusion of melodrama, or of rant and rhetoric, to which such sentimental plays are often liable. De further says that what appeals most in this drama is its rapidity of action, directness of characterization and simplicity of action.<sup>1</sup>

C. Kunhan Raja, after the summary of the play, says that *Svapnavāsavadattam* is a beautiful drama. The characterization is superb and the plot development is very natural and charming. The language is simple and elegant and it is essentially a drama of the study of human feelings, plenty of arresting situations and the hero has many exploits to his credit.<sup>2</sup>

K. Chaitanya calls the *Svapnavāsavadattam* a moving romantic comedy, whereas the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* is a powerful play of political intrigue. He holds that Bhāsa is always on his guard against the merely poetic which serves no dramatic function and that in structuring the plot and working out the dialogues, Bhāsa always visualized how effective they would be on the stage. Humour enlivens his plays along with superb characterization and a profound insight into human nature.<sup>3</sup>

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1. S.K. De, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta 1962. (Second ed.) pp. 101-117.

2. C. Kunhan Raja, *Survey of Sanskrit Literature*, Bombay 1962. p. 157-162.

3. K. Chaitanya, *A New History of Sanskrit Literature*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 289-307.

## PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Each character in *Svapnavāsavadattam* is well chiseled by the dramatist, and marked with a strong individuality. Each one of them can be witnessed by us as a living and developing personality, each appropriate to his or her temperament and truth of being, and each in its own way, helps in the development of the plot.

### VATSARĀJA OR UDAYANA

Udayana, known as Vatsarāja, is a prince of exalted character, who ruled over the Vatsas with his capital at Kauśāmbi. He is dearly loved and highly honoured by his people. He is a faithful and devoted husband who is so distraught when he hears of his queen and minister perishing in a fire, that he is ready to sacrifice his life in the same fire.

He marries Padmāvatī, sister of the king of Magadha only for political reasons. In Act VI, Udayana sends for Padmāvatī as he wants to meet along with her, the Chamberlain and the nurse of Vāsavadattā. Padmāvatī is naturally skeptical about the effect of her presence on the relatives of Vāsavadattā. Udayana removes the doubt in her mind by pointing out that the parents of Vāsavadattā look upon him as their own son and therefore, their affection would prevent them from not welcoming his second marriage, and secondly, assured of their love for him, Udayana would be failing in his duty if he were to omit presenting his new wife to the elders, as good conduct demanded.

He is very loving and considerate towards all, including his subordinates, and generous in praise for them. Thus, the magnificent words he utters in verse 18, Act VI of *Svapnavāsavadattam*, regarding Yaugandharāyaṇa, would have compensated the individual for all his trouble.

His love for Vāsavadattā whom he imagines he has lost forever, remains as deep as ever and he suffers acutely due to the bereavement. His sorrow is described by the Brahmachārin in Act I, so poignantly that the reader is touched to tears. The description of Udayana, on hearing the news of the conflagration, rolling on the ground in grief, rising up suddenly and calling out in agony: —

Alas Vāsavadattā! Ah daughter of Avanti's king! Oh beloved!  
Oh my beloved pupil!

will haunt us long after we have finished the play, and we too will say with Udayana:

Can one forget a love that shook the heart?  
Fond memories bring it back with a start, grief revives at each remembrance. It is (in) the course of nature that on shedding tears in this world the mind attains freshness, having a debt paid off (as it were).

## VĀSAVADATTĀ

*Svapnavāsavadattam* is an immortal song of the soul-stirring self-effacement of the complying wife Vāsavadattā, at the altar of pure love. Vāsavadattā's figure easily towers over Udayana's in this play; in the dream scene, too, the chief centre of attraction is not Udayana, the dreamer, but Vāsavadattā, 'the dreamed of', who captures the sympathy of the audience with her lingering charm.

She is a truly devoted wife and readily agrees to the plan of Yaugandharāyaṇa for regaining the lost kingdom of her husband. Thus she shows that she possesses a high sense of duty to her husband

and her people. Finding it difficult to put up with the crude methods used by the servants of the Magadha King and with common people, she prepares herself to suffer these worldly indignities, when she is consoled by Yaugandharāyaṇa in the first Act. It is only because of Vāsavadattā that the bold plan of the chief minister succeeds. With none to console her, alone in grief, yet she has great solicitude for the king's welfare and health.

Vāsavadattā is a memorable character; her supreme trait is her complete identification with her husband, and readiness to sacrifice her all for him. That is very well expressed in verse 4 (a) of Act IV, and she represents the ideal Hindu wife, from Sītā's days to the present.

Bhāsa, with a style simple, direct and brief, paints the internal conflict of Vāsavadattā with such a realistic touch that *Svapnavāsavadattam* can claim a place among the world's classics. Vāsavadattā is the daughter of Mahāsenā and of Angarāvati. She bears all good qualities. Her intellectual wit, pleasing nature, presence of mind, broad-mindedness, sense of self-respect and immense love for her husband prove her an ideal wife, a great lady and a unique creation of the poet. The name of the play suggests that even the dramatist himself was 'impressed by her'.

Vāsavadattā's beauty is not a beauty that is 'skin deep'; it has the quality of the soul. It has a touch of spiritual sublimity, of which, we might either say with Shakespeare that 'age cannot wither it, nor custom stale', or with Bhāvabhūti, "Jarasā yasminnahāryo rasaḥ" (whose ecstatic relish is 'old-age' proof).

In anything that Vāsavadattā says or does, we find the mellow glow of mature love that is happily free from carnal-dross. She prays from the inmost depths of her soul for the well-being of her own potential rival in love who, at least, could keep her lover happy. What love can be more exalted than this? Bhāsa has invested Vāsavadattā with such supernal beauty that, along with Śākuntalā and Sītā of the Orient and Cleopatra and Desdemona of the Occident, she has a place amongst the great heroines of world-drama.

The wonderful dream-scene and the angelic sacrifice of Vāsavadattā are the two highlights of the play, the former in point of technique and the latter, in point of characterization. Vāsavadattā, the nerve-

centre of the drama, fleets through the play like a godly angel, great in beauty, but greater still in soul.

Bhāsa has pictured Vāsavadattā in the dream scene, as an exquisite multi-dimensional emotional complex, blending at once, such varied and conflicting feelings like tender love, and rapturous delight on one side and nervousness, excitement, fear and surprise on the other; all these kept under check by the overwhelming spell of a mighty grief evoking many *rasas* simultaneously; *karuṇā* (pathos), *vipralambhasṅgāra* (wistful love), *bhayānaka* (fear) and *adbhuta* (wonder).

The pent-up soul of Vāsavadattā, blurts out something or the other related to her real self, and finds itself in a quandary. When Udayana's beauty is doubted, she abruptly blurts out that he is beautiful. When Padmāvati waxes eloquent about her love for Udayana and expresses a genuine doubt as to whether Vāsavadattā could have loved him so much, her soul as it were bursts open and declares unwittingly that Vāsavadattā's love was much greater! In all these cases, she has to summon up all her resources of ready wit to wriggle out of these awkward situations of her own creation. The climax of situational irony is reached, when cruel fate assigns to her the task of preparing the garland for her rival, to wed her own husband, and, what is still more touching is that the mystic herbs to be strung, include one, that has the power to stamp out the co-wife (in this case, herself). She instinctively spurns it, but finds herself in an awkward corner, when the maid questions why. Again her ready wit, alone helps her parry the question with her quick and apt retort: "His first wife is already dead. Where is the co-wife now to stamp out?"

Here is a beautiful picture of a true lover who, for the sake of the good of her own loved one, is prepared to sacrifice everything she has and to whose noble and steadfast love no sacrifice is too great. What wrenches of agony her heart must suffer when she is asked to weave the wedding garland of her co-wife! She exclaims:

अक्रुणाः खल्वीश्वराः Oh! Pitiless are the gods!

Her words, that her husband now belongs to someone else, cannot



but bring tears to one's eyes:

आर्यपुत्रोऽपि नाम परकीयःसंवृत्तः

It is this *karuṇā* or pathos which touches the heart quick, pierces the vital and gives a jolt to the reader or audience. According to Kālidāsa, it is in *karuṇā* that the heart melts: "Prāyaḥ sarvo bhavati Karuṇāvṛttir ardrantarātma."

From this conflict of emotions, like that of love and duty, and the conflict of circumstances, there emerges a beautiful and delicate picture of ideal womanhood. Thus, the struggle that is going on in the heart of Vāsavadattā – the struggle between the claims of duty on the one hand and love on the other hand, becomes the central ideal of the play *Svapnavāsavadattam*.

Bhāsa's picture of Vāsavadattā, therefore is unique, as the other characters, though finished masterly, provide only the background against which Vāsavadattā is drawn.

## PADMĀVATĪ

Padmāvati is a beautiful, innocent, high-minded princess, who desires to marry Vatsarāja because he is known to be tender-hearted.

Though young she accepts the guardianship of the older Vāsavadattā to keep her promise which was implied in her proclamation. In Act I when the Chamberlain is reluctant over the acceptance of Avantikā, Padmāvati quietly steps forward and in a terse but decisive sentence points out that she will not go back on her words. She is pious and generous with her gifts.

Padmāvati bears malice to none. She wants none to suffer for her sake. Her treatment of the maids, and Avantikā was exemplary, tender, kind, considerate and free. She is free from jealousy and we see when in the flowering bower, she hears the king tell Vidūṣaka, in confidence, that he still loves Vāsavadattā; she does not feel offended. When her maid says in her presence, that Udayana lacked all courtesy, by preferring his dead wife Vāsavadattā to Padmāvati, she corrects her and

says that Udayana, far from lacking courtesy has rather shown great courtesy by remembering the merits of Vāsavadattā even after her death. This statement brings forth from Vāsavadattā the praise: “My dear, your words are worthy of your exalted birth”.

On one occasion in Act IV, she expresses her desire to learn music from her husband; and noting his silence, does not persist in her request, judging for herself that she has not been able to replace Vāsavadattā in his heart. The way she expresses her love for her husband is also characteristically modest. And she bears the suffering caused by Udayana’s confession of his love for Vāsavadattā in Act IV, quite silently. The desire to see the portrait of Vāsavadattā in Act VI shows Padmāvati’s respectful attitude. Her hesitancy at sitting in place of Vāsavadattā, along with Udayana, at a moment that she feels is delicate, that is, when he is about to receive messengers from Ujjayini, does her honor and credit.

The exquisite scene in the hermitage when the Chamberlain at her behest asks the hermits what gifts they want, her desire to see the portrait of her husband along with Vāsavadattā and do honor to them both, her spending a day at the hermitage, really brings her to a supreme level.

Padmāvati shows she has a sense of humour. When the Jester gives the excuse that the king’s eyes were wet due to the pollen from the kaśa flowers falling into his eyes, which had been already said by Vāsavadattā, and the king was going to repeat later on, she remarks indulgently: “the chivalrous master has a chivalrous servant. “

## YAUGANDHARĀYAṆA

The importance of Yaugandharāyaṇa’s plot and of the clever political strategy that he puts into action, is seen everywhere in the play. He is the real Sūtradhāra of the play; all other characters, including Vāsavadattā and Udayana, are conscious accomplices and tools in his hands. Yaugandharāyaṇa’s devotion to Udayana is very obvious. But he fully realizes from the way Udayana loves Vāsavadattā that Udayana would any day prefer his beloved wife to the lost kingdom.

This knowledge, together with the trust that Udayana places in him, would never allow Yaugandharāyaṇa to raise the political issue above the fact of love. Further, his concern for Vāsavadattā as shown in Act I is quite genuine. She has already obliged him by consenting to be a part of his political strategy. And when she is worried over the humiliations entailed by her disguise, Yaugandharāyaṇa consoles her by wise philosophical observations. It is an open fact that Yaugandharāyaṇa's political ambition is wholly selfless. His anxious solicitude must be acknowledged as prompted by a genuine emotion of affection; hence the responsibility he takes upon himself. In Act I, this sense of responsibility that Yaugandharāyaṇa evinces is aptly rewarded by the confidence that Vāsavadattā places in him.

It is thus necessary to remember that all Yaugandharāyaṇa's actions, initiated though by political motive, are moulded by the considerations of the royal love. And in the sixth Act, while returning the 'deposit' (Vāsavadattā in the guise of Āvantikā), how was Padmāvati to be aware of any definite connection between Āvantikā and Vāsavadattā? It is clear, therefore, that if Yaugandharāyaṇa were not to appear in the background as described, the immediate production of Āvantikā on the stage could not have been so dramatically achieved. As it is, the dramatic, timely arrival of Yaugandharāyaṇa helps, as nothing else could have done, to bring Vāsavadattā forward.

Yaugandharāyaṇa had an inborn capacity to organize plans, as is shown by his organizing Vatsarāja's release from Ujjayini, the fire at Lāvāṇaka, and the entrustment of Vāsavadattā to Padmāvati, etc. Of course, he has the necessary psychological insight; he knows that Vāsavadattā would be well treated by Padmāvati; that Padmāvati would not go back upon her word once given, and that the king of Magadha would offer Padmāvati to Vatsarāja, the moment he became a widower, and would offer his help for regaining his kingdom.

In Yaugandharāyaṇa, Bhāsa has portrayed a great minister and a great man, indeed, one comparable to Chāṇakya, or even better as a humane personality.

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## APPENDICES

### LIFE OF T. GANAPATI ŚĀSTRĪ (1860-1926)

Tharuvai Ganapati Śāstrī was born in the village of Tharuvai in the Tirunelveli district as the son of Ramasubrahmanya Iyer – a son of the family of the celebrated Appaya Dikshita. His mother was Sītāmba. In his Aparnāstava he has referred to his native place on the banks of Tāmraparanī River, in the following lines:

गणपतिरिति कश्चित् ब्राह्मणस्ताम्रपर्णी  
तच्छुषि तुरुवानाम्यग्रहारेऽभिजातः ।

In a colophon to his commentary on Svapnavāsavadattam he has mentioned his village as well as his parents thus:

ताम्रपर्णीतीरवर्ति तुरुवाग्रहाराभिजनस्य श्रीसीताम्बाराम  
सुब्रह्मण्यार्यसुनोर्गणपतिशास्त्रिणः  
कृतिषु स्वप्नवासवदत्ताख्यानं सम्पूर्णम् ।

His parents were poor and he was given some basic education in Sanskrit under a teacher named Nilmantha Śāstrī. After acquiring some proficiency in Sanskrit, the young man set out from his village in search of patronage to Trivandrum, the capital of the benevolent Travancore kings. It is said that he reached Trivandrum on foot at the age of sixteen, where he found a residence in the village of Chalai.

There he came in contact with a local scholar Kadayam Subbaya Dīkshīt – an authority in Sanskrit Grammar. With his help the youngster mastered grammar and poetics. Another well-known teacher, Dharmādhikāri Karamanai Subrahmanya Śāstrī also taught him various Śāstric treatises. Ganapati Śāstrī impressed his teachers and colleagues with his brilliance and keen observation. He worked his way up by sheer force of his scholarship, industry and character to an international reputation.

In 1879 he joined the High Court of Travancore as a Junior Assistant and served for sometime. In 1879 the Trivandrum Sanskrit College was founded and Ganapati Shastri was appointed teacher. Soon he became the Headmaster of the institution and then steadily rose to the coveted position of the Principal of the only Sanskrit college in the state in the year 1899. In 1897, Vishakam Tirumal Maharaja appointed him keeper of the palace Library and in this position he came in contact with great scholars of the period like Keral Varma Valiya Koil Tampurām – the Kālidāsa of Kerala, and Hattur Ramaswami Śāstri, a court poet of the illustrious Travancore rulers. Even after rising to the position of the Principal, he continued to be in charge of the Library which also had a rich collection of palm leaf manuscripts. In 1908 the Govt. decided to establish a separate department for the publication of ancient manuscripts and Ganapati Śāstrī was the obvious choice to head this new department. He occupied this position for a period of sixteen years. He was due to retire in 1915 at the age of fifty-five. But his tenure of service was extended on a yearly basis for a record period of ten years. At last in 1916 he retired from service due to ill-health and in the following year at the age of 67 he passed away on the third April 1926.

### **Ganapati Śāstrī's Work**

Ganapati Śāstrī contributed extensively to research and writings in Sanskrit, and is best known for his discovery of the lost plays of Bhāsa<sup>1</sup> in 1912. He later edited and published these plays, for which

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1. See page 23.

he was awarded a Doctorate in Sanskrit from the University of Tubingen. In January 1922, the then Prince of Wales, Edward presented a gold medal to Ganapati Śāstrī for “literary eminence in Sanskrit”. For all these achievements and more, he was given the title of Mahamahopādhyāya by the Government of India.

He was involved in bringing to light several other Sanskrit works as well. He discovered and edited the Trivandrum edition of the *Arthaśāstra*, much before than the Mysore ORI Edition in 1924-25, with a Sanskrit commentary by himself. He pointed out that the name of the author was more likely *Kauṭalya*, which has since been supported by other scholars.

He also wrote *Bhāratānvarāṇanam*, a cultural history of India.

While yet 17 he composed his first work – a Sanskrit play – called *Mādhavīvasantīyam* for which Prince Vishakham presented him a ring. Though his preoccupations did not permit him to contribute much by way of original compositions he has to his credit about 14 works, of which the best known are the following:

*Mādhavīvasantīyam* – A drama;

*Aparnāstava* – Stotra on Goddess Durga with his own Commentary;

*Srimulcharitam* – A Kavya on the history of Travancore during the reign of Sri Mulam Tirunal Mahar;

*Bhāratānvarāṇanam* – A poem describing cultural history of India to which his admirer Prof. Sylvain Levi contributed a foreword;

*Arthaśāstravyākhyā* – styled Srimulam being an original commentary making use of an old Malayalam glossary on the work;

*Svapnavāsavadattavyākhyā* – A comprehensive commentary on the Bhāsa’s play.

In addition to these, he has published short notes on some of the Bhāsa plays re-edited by him. As a commentator his attainment is of a high order and his talent in this regard has come up for praise at the hands of the reputed scholars of the period. The one he wrote on the *Arthaśāstra* can be considered as a classic and it is a significant contribution to the study of that text on Indian polity.

He was the founder curator of the Trivandrum Manuscripts library and Editor of the famous Trivandrum Sanskrit series and under his

able guidance the new series eclipsed similar ones in the other parts of India. In fact he put Trivandrum on the map of Oriental Research. Dr. V. Raghavan observes:

Among Pandits who took to research few attained the eminence of Ganapati Shastri and among research scholars themselves few ever got that measure of recognition and honour that Shastri received during the course of his career.<sup>1</sup>

During his tenure as curator, he brought out 87 publications in the Trivandrum Sanskrit series, of which 68 were his own editions with useful introductions. More than this, the discovery of the so-called Bhāsa plays made him world famous. It took the scholarly world by storm as it were, and when opposition arose and gathered strength against his identification, he stoutly faced the criticism and answered them elaborately and was able to keep on his side advocates like A.B. Keith. Two other important works that he brought out deserve special attention; the Buddhist Tantric work *Āryamaniśrīmūlakalpa* from which the late Dr. K.P. Jayaswal extracted so much interesting historical information was one of his significant editorial efforts. The *Samarāngattasutradhāra* of Bhoja edited by him for the Gaekwad's Oriental Series is yet another important contribution.

There are only a few scholars who have attained so much recognition in their life-time than T. Ganapati Śāstrī. Honours came to the great scholar unsought. At the age of seventeen he won a golden ring from his patron in recognition of his poetic talents. From then onward it was a march from success to success. In 1918 he was invited to preside over the All India Sanskrit conference at Allahabad. In the same year the British Government honored him with the prestigious title *Mahāmahopādhyāya*. In 1920 took place a rather rare function in his honor. The representative of oriental scholars from the American Oriental Society, Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and Societe Asiatique of France, met in Paris and presented an address to Śāstrī applauding his contribution to Oriental research. Among the

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1. Dr. V. Raghavan, MMT. Ganapati Shastri, JI, of Kerala University Manuscripts Lib., Vol. V. No. 2.



signatories to this address were veteran Orientalists like Macdonnel, Keith, Pargiter, Thomas, Grierson, Barnett, Rapron, Emile Senart, Sylvain Levi, Bloomfield, Norman Brown and Lawman. Śāstrī received the homage of the world of scholars in his humble home at Trivandrum when Dr. F.W. Thomas brought the address. Śāstrī was now elected honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. He was probably the only Pandit that became an honorary Fellow of the prestigious society. In 1924 the Tübingen University of Germany honored him with a Doctorate degree. He was only the second Indian, who without knowledge of a European language or a visit to Europe was honored with an honorary Doctorate as a tribute to his unique achievement. In his home town the scholars held him in high esteem and unanimously made him the President of Sanskrit assemblies.

Last, but not least, 23 years after his sad demise, his own institution posthumously commemorated him by unveiling a life-size portrait in 1949. Dr. P.K. Narayana Pillai, the then Curator took the lead and under the auspices of the Research Association of the Institution, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan unveiled the portrait in the presence of a large gathering.

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## A SURVEY OF BHĀSA'S MANUSCRIPTS

For the last three decades, scholars dealing with the Bhāsa controversy were assessing the material, mainly made available by T. Ganapati Śāstrī. To the thirty-seven manuscripts used by him, later scholars added ten more, making a total of forty-seven. Those who opposed the views of the Trivandrum Curator could not lay their hands on any fresh manuscript as evidence. What little they could achieve in regard to the problem was in the form of providing some information about the staging of these plays. Even in this respect the information presented was meagre and it was not enough to convince the scholarly world.

An attempt was made to trace the original codex, discovered and used by Shri Ganapati Śāstrī, but it was found missing. The possibility of splitting up the codex was also carefully looked into, though it could not be satisfactorily established. It was against this background, that a survey of the so-called 'Bhāsa's manuscripts', was conducted and as a result it was known that quite a number of fresh manuscripts were there to be utilized by scholars. A verification with the printed texts showed that most of them were not utilized for editorial purposes.

The survey revealed that there are at least two hundred and thirty-three manuscripts of these plays, at present. Leaving aside the forty-seven manuscripts already made use of, there were one hundred and eighty-six fresh manuscripts. The peculiar feature is that almost all of them (with exception of one or two recent Devanāgarī copies prepared on them) are on palm leaves and in the Malayālam script. They are generally believed to be 300 years old. At present these manuscripts are deposited in different parts of India and abroad. The largest number of manuscripts is found in the Kerala University, Manuscripts Library, Trivandrum. Other institutions where they are preserved include: Sanskrit College Library, Trippunithura, Kochi; Government Oriental Manuscripts library, Chennai; Vishveshwarananda Vedic Research Institute Collection, Sadhu Ashram, Hosiarpur, Punjab; Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune; Brahmasvam Vatakke

Mathom, Trichur; Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai; British Library, London and many private libraries in Kerala. The possibility of unearthing a few more manuscripts from different parts of Kerala is still there.

The manuscripts hitherto known, including the ones used by Ganapati Śāstrī (given in brackets), may be distributed among Bhāsa's plays in Trivandrum as follows:

- Pañcharātram* 8 (2);  
*Madhyamavyāyogaḥ* 5 (2);  
*Karṇābhāram* 6 (2);  
*Bālacaritam* 9 (2);  
*Cārudattam* 6 (2);  
*Abhiṣekanāṭakam* 52 (25);  
*Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* 35 (5);  
*Svapnavāsavadattam* 18 (4).  
*Dūtvākyam* 21 (3);  
*Dūtghaṭokacam* 7 (1);  
*Avimārakam* 11 (2);  
*Pratīmānāṭakam* 49 (6).

The survey made it abundantly clear that Kerala could very well be called the home of the so-called Bhāsa manuscripts. The hope of discovering a manuscript of these plays in other parts of India, especially in the North, cherished by some scholars, is yet to be fulfilled in spite of vigorous search.

As the manuscript of *Svapnavāsavadattam*, the best known of the series, was moth-eaten in several places, and the manuscripts of *Karṇābhāraṇam* and *Cārudattam* were incomplete, Shri Ganapati Śāstrī tried to obtain the complete manuscripts of these plays, with a view to edit and then publish them. With this end in view, he addressed several Sanskrit scholars, European as well as Indian. Many of them replied to say that even these manuscripts however incomplete, of Bhāsa's nāṭakas which had long been regarded as lost were in themselves a very great acquisition, but fortunately, he was able to obtain a complete, though not correct, manuscript of each of the two

plays *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* and *Svapnavāsavadattam*. At the end of the manuscript copy of *Svapnavāsavadattam*, is written

स्वप्नवासवदत्तम् समाप्तम्

This agrees with what was supposed to be the full name of the play. At the end of the manuscript of *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam*, is written the full name of प्रतिज्ञायौगन्धरायणः. After this, during another tour, Shri Ganapati Śāstrī obtained at Haripad a manuscript of *Avimārakam* from Mr. Subramonyan Moottatu of Puttiyal. The *Svapnavāsavadattam* with the aid of the new manuscript has assumed a complete form. When *Svapnavāsavadattam* was in the press, another manuscript of it was secured from Krishna Tantri of Thazhamon Matham Chengannur and a separate manuscript of *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* and of *Abhiṣekanātakam*, were also obtained from the same source.

After *Svapnavāsavadattam* and some other plays were published, a manuscript of the *Svapnavāsavadattam* was obtained from the Killinanu Palace and another manuscript with a number of plays other than *Svapnavāsavadattam*, from Mr. Nilkanthan Chakyar of Manganam.

## INFLUENCE OF BHĀSA ON LATER SANSKRIT LITERATURE

The two plays *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam* and *Svapnavāsavadattam* were so popular that according to some, many later plays appear to have been written in imitation of them. Thus, the *Vīṇā Vāsavadattā*, and the *Unmathavasavadatta* are considered by some to be imitations of *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇam*. *Priyadarśika*, *Ratnāvalī* and even *Mālvikāgnimitra*, have certainly been greatly influenced by Bhāsa's *Svapnavāsavadattam*. In *Ratnāvalī*, the secret loves of Udayana and Sāgarika, an attendant on Queen Vāsavadattā are described. There is a conflagration, and finally Udayana marries Sāgarika also. It is obvious that Sāgarika represents Āvantikā in the Ocean Pavilion.

In *Priyadarśikā*, too, Udayana makes love to Araṇyaka, a maid-servant of his queen, and his intrigues are discovered. Finally, the queen herself presents Araṇyaka, who is discovered to be the daughter of the king of Aṅga, to Udayana as second wife. Needless to say, Araṇyaka is a combination of Virachikā and Āvantikā.

In *Mālvikāgnimitra*, Agnimitra makes secret love to an attendant of his queen, called Mālavika, who is kept jealously out of the king's sight on account of her great beauty. Finally he marries Mālavika, who turns out to be a princess. The resemblance of Mālavika to Āvantikā need not be emphasized. The very word Mālava means Avanti.

Udayana the king of Vatsa is the central figure in a large number of Sanskrit stories of love and adventure.

## SOME OTHER WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO BHĀSA

The question has often been asked: did Bhāsa write any more dramas, besides the thirteen now recovered? Was he also, like Kālidāsa, equally skilled in drama as well as in poetry? If so, did he write any *mahākāvya* or *khandakāvya*, now lost for ever? Or did he, like Bhavabhūti and many other later writers like Jayadeva or Vedanta Deshika, produce works both in literary and Śāstraic fields? Questions such as these admit of no easy answers. There are, no doubt, some vague pointers to conclude that he might have written more plays. Scholars ever ready to clutch at any straw, have indulged in speculations of all kinds; efforts have also been made to attribute one or two poetical works and a work on dramaturgy to him. The fact of the matter is, there is no clinching evidence to decide that Bhāsa really wrote any other play. The fairly large number of verses, ascribed to Bhāsa in the old anthologies, is only so-called evidence, on the basis of which scholars have made endless speculations. Scholars are unanimous about the poetic beauty of these verses. The critical eye of these scholars has compared the style and the thought-content of these verses with that of Bhāsa's published dramas and found a non-Bhāsīte ring in some of them. Ingenious efforts have also been made, sometimes successfully, to find suitable places for some of these verses in the available plays. One of these, a typical benedictory verse, provides the ground to infer that it could be the nāndīśloka of some lost drama. From another verse, describing winter with similes in the manner of Bhāsa, Dr. Pusalker infers that it "belonged to some other work of Bhāsa, now lost to us". Another of these 'Bhāsa verses', in a light-vein, describing the glory of drink, is actually found in *mattavilāsa-prahasana*, a satirical farce of the early 7th century. This has provoked a futile controversy about Bhāsa's authorship, as it should be put down as a case of simply a wrong ascription of the verse to Bhāsa by the anthologists. Ganapati Śāstrī has pointed out that a verse of *Avimārakam* is actually found "in a slightly modified form" in

Shṛṅgadhara's anthology. The learned Śāstrī has also suggested the possibility of another *Bālacaritam* drama by Bhāsa, centring round the boyhood of Rāma, similar to the extant play on Krishna's life, on the basis of a verse quoted in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* and the explanation of the commentator.

These inferences, which are of the nature of speculation, have at least some substance behind them. But the effort of a scholar to attribute a poem (Kāvya) called *Viṣṇudharma* to Bhāsa, on the strength of a eulogistic verse in a late work of the 12th century and its commentary, has nothing to commend itself, as it springs from a wrong interpretation of a corrupt text. Likewise, the attribution of a work on dramaturgy to Bhāsa merely on the strength of some quotations in Raghavabhatta's commentary on *Śākuntalam* – which strangely enough, has received the approbation of Dr. Keith, should also be set aside as doubtful, until more reliable evidence is unearthed.

A brief reference must also be made to the drama *Yajñaphala*, also attributed to Bhāsa. This play in seven acts, dramatizing the story of the Bālakānda of Rāmāyaṇa, was published by Rājavidya Kālidāsa Śāstrī in 1941. Pandit Gopāldatta Śāstrī of Jaipur, who was also associated with the publication of this play, however, declared one year later that he was the real author of this play and also confessed that it was a blatant forgery. He referred to three secret 'keys', which he had concealed in it, to prove his authorship. But the editor maintained that his two manuscripts of the 17th and 19th century were both genuine and that Gopāldatta Śāstrī had indulged in some mischief.

The whole case was examined *in extenso* by Dr. R.N. Dandekar and later by Prof. G.C. Jha. Both of them were agreed that the drama was a clever forgery by some competent Pandit but differed about details. Dr. Dandekar held that the manuscript dated 1670 AD was really old and that the secret key 'Bhashanukari' alone was genuine. He refuted the claim of Gopaldatta Shastri, which would have made the play a mid-twentieth century manipulation. Prof. Jha held the second manuscript also to be fabricated and thought it was a modern forgery.

According to Mr. A.S.P. Ayyar, "Yajñaphala is a clever imitation of Bhāsa's plays by some Sanskrit poet of the 11th or 12th Century AD"

It is a matter of gratification to the academic world that though all the typical characteristics of the thirteen Bhāsa plays have been ingeniously foisted upon this attempted fabrication with “terrible efficiency” as remarked by Mr. Ayyer, the scholarly eye has cut through the veil and exposed the hand of the forger.



## SOCIETY AS PRESENTED IN SVAPNAVĀSAVADATTAM

All of Bhāsa's plays seem to be bubbling with vigour and life. There is no lack of dramatic situations or actions. To quote Prof. Jagirdar on the subject:

It seems as if the roughness of the social life is reflected in the crudity of the plays. They are typical of the age in which they were written. They are virile, forceful and move with speed and determination.<sup>1</sup>

The society represented in these plays shows the growing supremacy of the brahmanas. Respect to brahmanas has become second nature to the people. There seems to be peace and prosperity reigning in society. The quarrels between the various kings and the consequent battles are limited to the court circles and the soldiers only. Family life was not affected much. It was the duty of the ministers to look after the welfare of the state and people, in the absence of a king. In *Svapnavāsavadattam*, Rumaṇvān took care of the king and the kingdom when the king was unwell.

Marriage was considered equally desirable for men and women. Though the main concern of arranging the marriage of their daughters was that of the parents, the consent of the girls was sought in right earnest. In Act II, 14, of the *Svapnavāsavadattam*, the maid tells Āvantikā that though the king Pradyota was anxious to make Padmāvati his daughter-in-law, the princess herself did not favour the idea.

Marriages in royal families were not necessarily intended for the perpetuation of the race, nor were they necessarily caused by love. Instead, they were more often brought about in order to fulfill some political motive. Both the marriages of Udayana are evidence to this point. Polygamy was not unknown then, as Udayana testifies to this fact, when while inquiring about the welfare of his mother-in-law from

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1. R.V. Jagirdar: *Drama in Sanskrit Literature*, p. 86.

Vasundhara, he refers to her as the “eldest of the sixteen queens”, in Act VI, 9, of the *Svapnavāsavadattam*. Still it does not seem to have become the custom of the day. People seemed to have scruples about marrying again while the first wife was alive.

Married women perhaps had to follow a set code of conduct. The character of women was so jealously guarded in those days that it was very necessary to keep them above suspicion, as is seen in what seems to be a purposeful device of Yaugandharāyaṇa that he kept Vāsavadattā in the care of Padmāvati whom he was planning to make Udayana’s wife. This is proved by his words to Padmāvati at the beginning in Act I, 9, and again as a soliloquy in Act I, 17. Women, separated from their husbands were expected to lead a very simple life. Avantikā’s life in the palace of Udayana by the side of Padmāvati is a very good example. This ideal life of Vāsavadattā is later on testified to by Padmāvati herself.

To be the beloved of her husband was the greatest good fortune that any woman could be blessed with. The words of the Brahmachārin concerning Vāsavadattā are quite noteworthy in this connection. He says:

The woman is indeed fortunate whom her husband considers thus, she is really not dead though burnt, as she is so well-loved by her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in fate, rebirth and reaping the fruits of one’s own deeds appear to have a strong hold on the minds of the people. The words of prophets and sages were held in respect.

The life of the Kśatriya seems to have been a hard one. From *Svapnavāsavadattam* and *Avimārakam* one can easily see that the country was divided into a number of petty principalities. Political life was very unsettled and in *Svapnavāsavadattam* we find the king quarrelling with his neighbour. The unsettled conditions are further reflected in the forest with the roughness of policemen, Yaugandharāyaṇa exclaims: “Authority is turning the forest precincts into a town”

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1. *Svapnavāsavadattam*, Act I.13.

(*Svapnavāsavadattam* 1, 3).

A major aspect of the *Svapnavāsavadattam* is that it brings out the delicacies of Indian culture, philosophy of life, aim of life and how Indian life was flourishing in spite of wars and skirmishes. The qualities of heroism and love, qualities of sublimity and sensuousness, qualities of splendour and renunciation were blended well. We see therefore, a cultural epoch of Indian history depicted so intimately in this play.

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