SRI AUROBINDO

KALIDASA

(SECOND SERIES)

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(*Second Series*)

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The studies comprising this series are compiled from the manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo's Drafts and Notes written during the nineties of the last century and the early years of the present. Though unrevised and necessarily incomplete, they have been collected to from a companion volume to the one already published on Kalidasa, as a help to a fuller study of Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Poet and his Age.

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Section One

I

HINDU DRAMA

THE vital law governing Hindu poetics is that it does not seek to represent life and character primarily or for their own sake; its aim is fundamentally aesthetic: by the delicate and harmonious rendering to awaken the aesthetic sense of the onlooker and gratify it by moving and subtly observed pictures of human feeling; it did not attempt to seize a man's spirit by the hair and drag it out into a storm of horror and pity and fear and return it to him drenched, beaten and shuddering. To the Hindu it would have seemed a savage and inhuman spirit that could take any aesthetic pleasure in the sufferings of an Oedipus or a Duchess of Malfi or in the tragedy of a Macbeth or an Othello. Partly this arose from the divine tenderness of the Hindu nature, always noble, forbearing and gentle and at that time saturated with the sweet and gracious pity and purity which flowed from the soul of Buddha; but it was also a necessary result of the principle that aesthetic and intellectual pleasure is the first object of all poetic art. Certainly poetry was regarded as a force for elevation as well as for charm, but as it reaches these objects through aesthetic beauty, aesthetic gratification must be the whole basis of dramatic composition, all other superstructural objects are secondary. The Hindu mind therefore shrank not only from violence, horror

and physical tragedy, the Elizabethan stock-in-trade, but even from the tragic in moral problems which attracted the Greek mind; still less could it have consented to occupy itself with the problems of disease, neurosis and spiritual medicology generally which are the staple of modern drama and fiction. An atmosphere of romantic beauty, a high urbanity and a gracious equipoise of the feelings, a perpetual confidence in the sunshine and the flowers are the essential spirit of a Hindu play; pity and terror are used to awaken the feelings, but not to lacerate them, and the drama must close on the note of joy and peace; the clouds are only admitted to make more beautiful the glad sunlight from which all came and into which all must melt away. It is in an art like this that the soul finds the repose, the opportunity for being confirmed in gentleness and in kindly culture, the unmixed intellectual and aesthetic pleasure in quest of which it turned away from the crudeness and incoherence of life to the magic regions of Art.

If masterly workmanship in plot-making and dramatic situation, subtilty, deftness and strength in dialogue and a vital force of dramatic poetry by themselves make a fine and effective poetical play for the stage, for a really great drama a farther and rarer gift is needed, the gift of dramatic characterisation. This power bases itself in its different degrees sometimes upon great experience of human life, sometimes on a keen power of observation and accurate imagination making much matter out of a small circle of experience, but in its richest possessors

on a boundless sympathy with all kinds of humanity accompanied by a power of imbibing and afterwards of selecting and bringing out from oneself at will impressions received from the others. This supreme power, European scholars agree, is wanting in Hindu dramatic literature. A mere poet like Goethe may extend unstinted and superlative praise to a *Shacountala*, but the wiser critical and scholarly mind passes a far less favourable verdict. There is much art in Hindu poetry, it is said, but no genius; there is plenty of fancy but no imagination; the colouring is rich, but colour is all, humanity is not there; beautiful and even moving poetry is abundant, but the characters are nil. Indian scholars trained in our schools repeat what they have learnt. A Hindu scholar of acute diligence and wide Sanscrit learning has even argued that the Hindu mind is constitutionally incapable of original and living creation; he has alleged the gigantic, living and vigorous personalities of the Mahabharat as an argument to prove that these characters must have been real men and women, copied from the life, since no Hindu poet could have created character with such truth and power. On the other side, the Bengali critics, men of no mean literary taste and perception, though inferior in pure verbal scholarship, are agreed in regarding the characters of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti as beautiful and energetic creations, not less deserving of study than any personality of an Elizabethan drama. This contradiction, violent as it is, is not difficult to understand, since it takes its root in an element always more or less present in

criticism, the national element; national characters, national prejudices, national training preordain for the bulk of us the spirit in which we approach unfamiliar poetry. Now the average English mind is capable of appreciating character as manifested in strong action or powerfully revealing speech, but constitutionally dull to the subtleties of civilised characters which have their theatre in the mind and the heart and make of a slight word, a gesture or even silence their sufficient revelation. The nations of Europe, taken in the mass, are still semi-civilized; their mind feeds on the physical, external and grossly salient features of life; where there is no brilliance and glare, the personality is condemned as characterless. A strength that shuns ostentation, a charm that is not luxuriant, not naked to the first glance are appreciable only to the few select minds who have chastened their natural leanings by a wide and deep culture. The Hindu on his side dislikes violence in action, excess in speech, ostentation or effusiveness in manner; he demands from his ideal temperance and restraint as well as nobility, truth and beneficence; the Aryan or true gentleman must be *mitācārah* and *mitabhāṣi*, restrained in action and temperate in speech. This national tendency shows itself even in our most vehement work. The Mahabharata is the section of our literature which deals most with the external and physical and corresponds best to the European idea of the epic; yet the intellectualism of even the Mahabharata, its preference of mind-issues to physical and emotional collisions and catastrophes, its continual

suffusion of these when they occur with mind and ideality, the civilisation, depth and lack of mere sensational turbulence, in one word, the Aryan cast of its characters are irritating to the European scholars. Thus a historian of Indian literature complains that Bhima is the really epic character in this poem. He meant, evidently, the only character in which vast and irresistible strength, ungovernable impetuousness of passion, warlike fury and destroying anger are grandiosely deployed. But to the Hindu whose ideas of epic are not coloured with the wrath of Achilles, epic motive and character are not confined to what is impetuous, huge and untamed; he demands a larger field for the epic and does not confine it to savage and half savage epochs. Gentleness, patience, self-sacrifice, purity, the civilised virtues appear to him as capable of epic treatment as martial fire, brute strength, revenge, anger, hate and ungovernable self-will. Rama mildly and purely renouncing the empire of the world for the sake of his father's honour seems to them as epic and mighty a figure as Bhima destroying Cichaka in his wild fury of triumphant strength and hatred. It is noteworthy that the European temperament finds vice more interesting than virtue, and, in its heart of hearts, damns the Christian qualities with faint praise as negative, not positive virtues; the difficulty European writers experience in making good men sympathetic is a commonplace of literary observation. In all these respects the Hindu attitude is diametrically opposed to the European. This attitude of the Hindu mind as evinced in the Mahabharata

is so intolerable to European scholars that they have been forced to ease their irritation by conjuring up the phantom of an original ballad-epic more like their notions of what an epic should be, an epic in which the wicked characters of the present Mahabharata were the heroes and the divine champions of right of the present Mahabharata were the villains! The present Mahabharata is, they say, a sanctimonious monastic corruption of the old vigorous and half-savage poem. To the Hindu the theory naturally seems a grotesque perversion of ingenuity, but its very grotesqueness is eloquent of the soil it springs from, the soil of the half-barbarous temperament of the material and industrial Teuton which cannot, even when civilised, entirely sympathise with the intellectual working of more radically civilised types. This fundamental difference of outlook on character, generating difference in critical appreciation of dramatic and epic characterisation is of general application, but it acquires a peculiar force when we come to consider the Hindu drama; for here the ingrained disparity is emphasised by external conditions.

It has been often noticed that the Hindu drama presents many remarkable points of contact with the Elizabethan. In the mixture of prose and poetry, in the complete freedom with which time and scenery vary, in the romantic life-likeness of the action, in the mixture of comedy with serious matter, in the gorgeousness of the poetry and the direct appeal to the feelings, both these great literatures closely resemble each other. Yet the differences, though

they do not strike us so readily as the similarities, are more vital and go deeper; for the similarities are of form, the differences of spirit. The Elizabethan drama was a great popular literature which aimed at a vigorous and realistic presentation of life and character such as would please a mixed and not very critical audience; it had therefore the strength and weakness of great popular literature; its strength was an abounding vigour in passion and action and an unequalled grasp upon life; its weakness a crude violence, imperfection and bungling in workmanship combined with a tendency to exaggerations, horrors and monstrosities. The Hindu drama, on the contrary, was written by accomplished men of culture for an educated, often a courtly audience and with an eye to an elaborate and well-understood system of poetics. When therefore English scholars, fed on the exceedingly strong and often raw meat of the Elizabethans, assert that there are no characters in the Hindu drama, when they attribute this deficiency to the feebleness of inventive power which leads "Asiatic" poetry to concentrate itself on glowing description and imagery, seeking by the excess of ornament to conceal poverty of substance, when even their Indian pupils perverted from good taste and blinded to fine discrimination by a love of the striking and a habit of gross forms and pronounced colours due to the too exclusive study of English poetry, repeat and reinforce their criticisms, the lover of Kalidasa and his peers need not be alarmed; he need not banish from his imagination the gracious company with which it is peopled; he need

not characterise Shacountala as an eloquent nothing or Urvasie as a finely-jointed puppet. These dicta spring from prejudice and the echo of a prejudice; they are evidence not of a more vigorous critical mind but of a restricted critical sympathy. If we expect a Beautiful White Devil or a Jew of Malta from the Hindu dramatist, we shall be disappointed; he deals not in these splendid or horrible masks. If we come to him for a Lear or a Macbeth, we shall go away discontented; for these also are sublimities which belong to cruder civilisations and more barbarous national types; in worst crimes and utmost suffering as well as happiness and virtue, the Aryan was more civilized and temperate, less crudely enormous than the hard and earthy African peoples whom in Europe he only half moralised. If he seeks a Père Goriot or a Madame Bovary, he will still fail in his quest; for though such types doubtless existed at all times among the mass of the people with the large strain of African blood, Hindu Art would have shrunk from poisoning the moral atmosphere of the soul by elaborate studies of depravity. The true spirit of criticism is to seek in a literature what we can find in it of great or beautiful, not to demand from it what it does not seek to give us.

II

KALIDASA
THE HISTORICAL METHOD

Of Kalidasa, the man who represents one of the greatest periods in our civilisation and typifies so many sides and facets of it in his writing, we know if possible even less than of Valmike and Vyasa. It is probable but not certain that he was a native of Malwa born not in the capital Ujjaini, but in one of those villages of which he speaks in the *Cloud-Messenger* and that he afterwards resorted to the capital and wrote under the patronage of the great Vikramaditya who founded the era of the Malavas in the middle of the first century before Christ. Of his attainments, his creed, his character we may gather something from his poetry, but external facts we have none. There is indeed a mass of apocryphal anecdotes about him couching a number of witticisms and ingenuities mostly ribald, but these may be safely discredited. Valmike, Vyasa and Kalidasa, our three greatest names are to us, outside their poetical creation, names merely and nothing more.

This is an exceedingly fortunate circumstance. The natural man within us rebels indeed against such a void; who Kalidasa was, what was his personal as distinguished from his poetical individuality, what manner of man was the great king whose patronage he enjoyed, who

were his friends, who his rivals and how he dealt with either or both, whether or not he was a lover of wine and women in practice as well as in imagination, under what special surroundings he wrote and who were the minds by whom he was most influenced, all this the natural man clamours to know; and yet all these are things we are very fortunate not to know. The historical method is certainly an attractive one and it leads to some distinct advantages, for it decidedly aids those who are not gifted with fine insight and literary discrimination, to understand certain sides of a poet's work more clearly and intelligently. But while it increases our knowledge of the workings of the human mind, it does not in the end assist or improve our critical appreciation of poetry; it helps to an understanding of the man and of those aspects of his poetry which concern his personal individuality but it obstructs our clear and accurate impression of the work and its value. The supporters of the historical method put the cart before the horse and placing themselves between the shafts do a great deal of useless though heroic labour in dragging both. They insist on directing that attention to the poet which should be directed to the poem. After assimilating a man's literary work and realising its value first to ourselves and then in relation to the eternal nature and scope of poetry, we may and indeed must,—for if not consciously aimed at, it must have been insensibly formed in the mind,—attempt to realize to ourselves an idea of his poetic individuality from the data he himself has provided for us;

and the idea so formed will be the individuality of the man so far as we can assimilate him, the only part of him therefore that is of real value to us. The individuality of Shakespeare as expressed in his recorded actions and his relations to his contemporaries is a matter of history and has nothing to do with appreciation of his poetry. It may interest me as a study of human character and intellect but I have no concern with it when I am reading *Hamlet* or even when I am reading the *Sonnets*; on the contrary, it may often come between me and the genuine revelation of the poet in his work, for actions seldom reveal more than the outer, bodily and sensational man while his word takes us within to the mind and the reason, the receiving and the selecting part of him which are his truer self. It may matter to the pedant of the gossip within me whether the sonnets were written to William Herbert or to Henry Wriothesley or to William Himself, whether the dark woman whom Shakespeare loved against his better judgment was Mary Fitton or someone else or nobody at all, whether the language is that of hyperbolical compliment to a patron or that of an actual passionate affection; but to the lover of poetry in me these things do not matter at all. It may be a historical fact that Shakespeare when he sat down to write these poems intended to use the affected language of conventional and fulsome flattery; if so, it does not exalt our idea of his character; but after all it was only the bodily and sensational case of that huge spirit which so intended,—the food-sheath and the life-sheath

of him, to use Hindu phraseology; but the mind, the soul which was the real Shakespeare felt, as he wrote, every phase of the passion he was expressing to the very utmost, felt precisely those exultations, chills of jealousy and disappointment, noble affections, dark and unholy fires, and because he felt them, he was able so to express them that the world still listens and is moved. The passion was there in the soul of the man,—whether as a potential force or an experience from a past life, matters very little,—and it forms therefore part of his poetic individuality. But if we allow the alleged historical fact to interfere between us and this individuality, the feelings with which we ought to read the *Sonnets*, admiration, delight, sympathy, rapt interest in a soul struggling through passion towards self-realisation, will be disturbed by other feelings of disgust and nausea or at the best pity for a man who with such a soul within him prostituted its powers to the interests of his mere bodily covering. Both our realisation of the true Shakespeare and our enjoyment of his poetry will thus be cruelly and uselessly marred. This is the essential defect which vitiates the theory of the man and his *milieu*. The man in Dr. Johnson expressed himself in his conversation and therefore his own works are far less important to us than Boswell's record of his daily talk; the man in Byron expresses himself in his letters as well as his poetry and both have therefore to be read. It is only the most sensational and therefore the lowest natures that express themselves mainly by their actions. In the case of great

poets with whom expression is an instrument that answers spontaneously and accurately to the touch of the soul, it is in their work that we shall find them, the whole of them and not only that meagre part which struggled out brokenly and imperfectly in the shape of action. It is really this difference that makes the great figures of epic poetry so much less intimately and thoroughly known to us than the great figures of drama. Kalidasa was both an epic poet and a dramatist, yet Shiva and Parvatie are merely grand paintings while Dushyanta, Shacountala, Sharngava, Priyamvada, Anasuya, Pururavas and Urvasie and Chitraleqha, Dharinie and Iravatie and Agnimitra are living beings who are our friends, whom we know. The difference arises from the importance of speech in self-revelation and the comparative inadequacy of action, except as a check or a corroboration. The only epics which have creations equal to dramatic creation in their nearness to us are the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana;* and the art form of these far more closely resembles the methods of the modern novel than those of epic poetry as it is understood in Europe; they combine, that is to say, the dramatic method with the epic and introduce a minuteness of observant detail with which European poets would have shrunk from tempting the patience of the sensational and soon-wearied West. The importance of the *milieu* to criticism has likewise been immensely exaggerated. It is important as literary history; but history is not criticism; a man may have a very wide and curious knowledge of literary

history and yet be a very poor critic and the danger of the present times lies in the immense multiplication of literary historians with their ass's load of facts and theories and opinions and tendencies and the comparative rarity of really illuminating critics. This is at least the case with all poets who represent their age in some or most of its phases and with those who do not do this the *milieu* is of very small importance. The *milieu* of Shakespeare or of Homer or of Kalidasa, so far as it is important to an appreciation of their poetry, can be gathered from their poetry itself, and knowledge of the history of the times would only litter the mind with facts which are of no real value as they mislead and embarrass the judgment instead of assisting it. (I do not say that these things are not in a measure necessary but they are always the scaffolding and not the pile.) The tendency of the historical method beginning with and insisting on the poet rather than the poem is to infer from him as a "man" the meaning and value of his poetry—a vicious process, for it concentrates the energies on the subordinate and adds the essential as an appendix. It has been said that in a rightly constituted mind the knowledge of the man and his *milieu* will help to a just appreciation of his poetry; but this knowledge in its nature rather distorts our judgment than helps it, for instead of giving an honest account to ourselves of the impression naturally made by the poem on us, we are irresistibly led to cut and carve that impression so as to make it square with our knowledge and the theories, more or less erroneous and ephemeral, we

deduce from that knowledge. We proceed from the *milieu* to the poem, instead of arguing from the poem to the *milieu*. Yet the latter is the only fair method; for it is not the whole of the *milieu* that affects the man nor every part of it that affects him equally; the extent to which it affects him and the distribution of its various influences can only be judged from the poem itself. We know from literary history that Marlowe and Kyd and other writers exercised no little influence on Shakespeare in his young and callow days; and it may be said in passing that all poets of the first order and even many of the second are profoundly influenced by the inferior and sometimes almost worthless work which was in vogue at the time of their early efforts, but they have the high secret of mental alchemy which can convert not merely inferior metal but even refuse into gold. It is only poets of a one-sided minor genius who can afford to be aggressively original. Now as literary history, as psychology, as part of the knowledge of intellectual origins, this is a highly important and noteworthy fact. But in the task of criticism what do we gain by it? We have simply brought the phantoms of Marlowe and Kyd between ourselves and what we are assimilating, and so disturbed and blurred the true picture of it that was falling on our souls, and if we know our business, the first thing we shall do is to banish those intruding shadows and bring ourselves once more face to face with Shakespeare.

The historical method leads besides to much confusion and is sometimes a veil for a bastard impressionism and

sometimes a source of literary insincerity or at the best anaemic catholicity. As often as not a critic studies, say, the Elizabethan age because he has a previous sympathy with the scattered grandeurs, the hasty and vehement inequalities, the profuse mixture of flawed stones, noble gems and imitation jewellery with which that school overwhelms us. In that case the profession with which he starts is insincere, for he professes to base his appreciation on study, whereas his study begins from, continues with and ends in appreciation. Often on the contrary he studies as a duty and praises in order to elevate his study; because he has perused all and understood all, he must sympathise with all, or where is the proof of his having understood? Perfect intelligence of a man's character and work implies a certain measure of sympathy and liking; antipathy has only half sight and indifference is blind. Hence much false criticism misleading the public intelligence and causing a confusion in critical weights and measures, a depreciation of the literary currency from which in the case of the frank impressionist we are safe. In more truth the historical method is useful only with inferior writers who, not having had full powers of expression, are more interesting than their work; but even here it has led to that excessive and often absurd laudation of numberless small names in literature, many of them "discoveries", which is the curse of latter-day criticism. The historical method is in fact the cloven foot of Science attempting to insinuate itself into the fair garden of Poetry. By this I mean no disrespect to Science. The devil is a gentleman

and Shakespeare himself guaranteed his respectability; but he is more than that, he is a highly useful and even indispensable personage. So also is Science not only a respectable branch of intellectual activity,—when it does not indulge its highly civilized propensity for cutting up live animals,—but it is also a useful and indispensable branch. But the devil had no business in Paradise and Science has no business in the sphere of Poetry. The work of Science is to collect facts and generalize from them; the smallest and meanest thing is as important to it as the highest, the weed no less than the flower and the bug that crawls and stinks no less than man who is a little lower than the angels. By introducing this method into criticism, we are overloading ourselves with facts and stifling the literary field with the host of all the mediocrities more or less "historically" important but at any rate deadly dull and uninspiring who at one time or another had the misfortune to take themselves for literary geniuses. And just as scientific history tried to lose the individual genius into movements, so the historical method tries to lose the individual poem in tendencies. The result is that modern poets, instead of holding up before them as their ideal the expression of the great universal feelings and thoughts which sway humanity, tend more and more to express tendencies, problems, realisms, romanticisms, mysticisms and all the other local and ephemeral aberrations with which poetry has no business whatever. It is the sign of a decadent and morbid age which is pushing itself by the mass of its own undigested learning into Alexandrianism

and scholasticism, cutting itself from the fountainheads of creation and wilfully preparing its own decline and sterility. The age of which Calimachus and Apollonius of Rhodes and Simonides were the Homer and the age of which Tennyson is the Shakespeare and Rudyard Kipling the Milton present ominous resemblance.

III

ON TRANSLATING KALIDASA

THE life and surroundings in which Indian poetry moves cannot be rendered in the terms of English poetry. Yet to give up the problem and content oneself with tumbling out the warm, throbbing Indian word to shiver and starve in the inclement atmosphere of the English language seems to me not only an act of literary inhumanity and a poor-spirited confession of failure, but a piece of laziness likely to defeat its own object. An English reader can gather no picture from and associate no idea of beauty with these outlandish terms. What can he understand when he is told that the *atimukta* creeper is flowering in the grove of *kesara* trees and the *mullica* or the...is sending out its fragrance into the night and the *chacravaque*[1] is complaining to his mate amid the still ripples of the river that flows through the *jambous*? Or how does it help him to know that the scarlet mouth of a woman is like the red *bimba* fruit or the crimson *bandhoul* flower? People who know Sanscrit seem to imagine that because these words have colour and meaning and beauty to them, they must also convey the same associations to their reader. This is a natural but deplorable mistake; this jargon is merely a disfigurement in English poetry. The cultured may read

[1] *Chakravāka*

their work in spite of the jargon out of the unlimited intellectual curiosity natural to culture; the half-cultured may read it because of the jargon out of the ingrained tendency of the half-cultured mind to delight in what is at once unintelligible and inartistic. But their work can neither be a thing of permanent beauty nor serve a really useful object; and work which is neither immortal nor useful what self-respecting man would knowingly go out of his way to do? Difficulties are after all given us in order that we may brace our sinews by surmounting them; the greater the difficulty, the greater our chance of the very highest success. I can only point out rather sketchily how I have myself thought it best to meet the difficulty; a detailed discussion would require a separate volume. In the first place, a certain concession may be made but within very narrow and guarded limits to the need for local colour, a few names of trees, flowers, birds etc. may be transliterated into English, but only when they do not look hopelessly outlandish in that form or else have a liquid or haunting beauty of sound; a similar indulgence may be yet more freely permitted in the transliteration of mythological names. But here the license ends; a too liberal use of it would destroy entirely the ideal of translation; what is perfectly familiar in the original language must not seem entirely alien to the foreign audience; there must be a certain toning down of strangeness, an attempt to bring home the association to the foreign intelligence, to give at least some idea to a cultured but not orientally erudite mind. This may be done in many ways and I

have availed myself of all. A word may be rendered by some neologism which will help to convey any prominent characteristic or idea associated with the thing it expresses; blossom of ruby may, for instance, render *bandhula*, a flower which is always mentioned for its redness. Or else the word itself may be dropped and the characteristic brought into prominence; for instance, instead of saying that a woman is lipped like a ripe *bimba*, it is, I think, a fair translation to write, "Her scarlet mouth is a ripe fruit and red". This device of expressingly declaring the characteristics which the original only mentions, I have frequently employed in the *Cloud Messenger*, even when equivalent words exist in English, because many objects known in both countries are yet familiar and full of common associations to the Indian mind while to the English they are rare, exotic and slightly-associated or only with one particular and often accidental characteristic.[1] A kindred method, especially with mythological

[1] It is an unfortunate tendency of the English mind to seize on what seems to it grotesque or ungainly in an unfamiliar object; thus the elephant and peacock have become almost impossible in English poetry, because the one is associated with lumbering heaviness and the other with absurd strutting. The tendency of the Hindu mind on the other hand is to seize on what is pleasing and beautiful in all things and turn to see a charm where the English mind sees a deformity and to extract poetry and grace out of the ugly. The classical instances are the immortal verses in which Valmikie by a storm of beautiful and costly images and epithets has immortalised the hump of Manthara and the still more immortal passage in which he has made the tail of a monkey epic.

allusions, is to explain fully what in the original is implicit; Kalidasa, for instance, compares a huge dark cloud striding northwards from Crouncharundhra to "the dark foot of Vishnou lifted in impetuous act to quell Bali", *śyāmaḥ pādo baliniyamanābhyudyatasyeva viṣṇoḥ*. This I have translated

> "*Dark like the cloudy foot of highest God*
> *When starting from the dwarf-shape world-immense*
> *With Titan-quelling step through heaven he strode.*"

It will be at once objected that this is not translation, but the most licentious paraphrase. This is not so if my original contention be granted that the business of poetical translation is to reproduce not the exact words but the exact image, associations and poetical beauty and flavour of the original. There is not a single word in the translation I have instanced which does not represent something at once suggested to the Indian reader by the words of the text. Vishnou is nothing to the English reader but some monstrous and bizarre Hindu idol; to the Hindu He is God Himself, the word is therefore more correctly represented in English by "highest God" than by Vishnou; *śyāmaḥ pādo* is closely represented by "dark like the cloudy foot", so the word cloudy being necessary both to point the simile which is not apparent and natural to the English reader as to the Indian and to define the precise sort of darkness indicated by the term *śyāmaḥ*; Bali has no meaning or association in English, but in the Sanscrit it represents the same idea as "Titan"; only the particular

name recalls a certain theosophic legend which is a household word to the Hindu, that of the dwarf-Vishnou who obtained from the Titan Bali as much land as he could cover with three steps, then filling the whole world with himself with one stride measured the earth, with another the heavens and with the third placing his foot on the head of Bali thrust him down into bottomless Hell. All this immediately arises before the mental eye of the Hindu as he reads Kalidasa's finely chosen words. The impetuous and vigorous term *abhyudyatasya* both in sound and sense suggests images, the sudden starting up of the world-pervading deity from the dwarf shape he had assumed while the comparison to the cloud reminds him that the second step of the three referred is to that of Vishnou striding "through heaven". But to the English reader the words of Kalidasa literally transliterated would be a mere artificial conceit devoid of the original sublimity. It is the inability to seize the associations and precise poetical force of Sanscrit words that has led so many European Sanscritists to describe the poetry of Kalidasa which is hardly surpassed for truth, bold directness and native beauty and grandeur as the artificial poetry of an artificial period. A literal translation would only spread this erroneous impression to the general reader. It must be admitted that in the opposite method one of Kalidasa's finest characteristics is entirely lost, his power of expressing by a single simple direct and sufficient word ideas and pictures of the utmost grandeur or shaded complexity; but this is a characteristic which could in no case be

possible in any language but the classical Sanscrit which Kalidasa did more than any man to create or at least to perfect. Even the utmost literalness could not transfer this characteristic into English. This method of eliciting all the values of the original of which I have given a rather extreme instance, I have applied with great frequency where a pregnant mythological allusion or a striking or subtle picture or image calls for adequate representation, more especially perhaps in pictures or images connected with birds and animals unfamiliar or but slightly familiar to the English reader. (At the same time I must plead guilty to occasional excesses, to reading into Kalidasa perhaps in a dozen instances what is not there. I can only plead in apology that translators are always incorrigible sinners in this respect and that I have sinned less than others; moreover, except in one or two instances, these additions have always been suggested either by the sound or substance of the original. I may instance the line,

A flickering line of fireflies seen in sleep,

Kalidasa says nothing equivalent to or suggesting "seen in sleep", but I had to render somehow the impression of night and dim unreality created by the dreamy movement and whispering assonances of the lines

alpālpabhāsam khadyotalīvilasitanibhām vidyudunmeṣa-dṛṣṭim

with its soft dentals and its wavering and gliding liquids and sibilants. Unable to do this by sound I sought to do

it by verbal expression, in so far made a confession of incompetence, but in a way that may perhaps carry its own pardon.)

There is yet another method which has to be applied far more cautiously, but is sometimes indispensable. Occasionally it is necessary or at least advisable to discard the original image altogether and replace it by a more intelligible English image. There is no commoner subject of allusion in Sanscrit poetry than the passionate monotoned threnody of the forlorn bird who is divided at night by some mysterious law from his mate, divided if by a single lotus leaf, yet fatally divided. Such at least was the belief suggested by its cry at night to the imaginative Aryans. Nothing can exceed the beauty, pathos and power with which this allusion is employed by Kalidasa. Hear, for instance, Pururavas as he seeks for his lost Urvasie,

Thou wild-drake when thy love,
Her body hidden by a lotus-leaf,
Lurks near thee in the pool, deemest her far
And wailest musically to the flowers
A wild deep dirge. Such is thy conjugal
Yearning, thy terror such of even a little
Division from her nearness. Me thus afflicted,
Me so forlorn thou art averse to bless
With just a little tidings of my love.

And again in the *Shacountala*, the lovers are thus gracefully warned:

O chacravaque, sob farewell to thy mate,
The night, the night comes down to part you.

Fable as it is, one who has steeped himself in Hindu poetry can never bring himself wholly to disbelieve it. For him the melancholy call of the bird will sound for ever across the chill dividing stream and make musical with pity the huge and solemn night. But when the Yaksha says to the cloud that he will recognise her who is his second life by her sweet rare speech and her loneliness in that city of happy lovers, "sole like a lonely Chacravaque with me her comrade far away", the simile has no pathos to an English mind and even when explained would only seem "an artificiality common to the court-poetry of the Sanscrit age". I have therefore thought myself justified by the slightness of the allusion in translating

"*Sole like a widowed bird when all the nests*
are making",

which translates the idea and the emotion while suggesting a slightly different but related image.

I have indicated above the main principles by which I have guided myself in the task of translation. But there still remains the question, whether while preserving the ideals one may not still adhere more or less closely to the text. The answer to this is that such closeness is imperative, but it must be a closeness of word-value, not oneness of word-meaning; into this word-value there enter the elements of association, sound and aesthetic beauty. If these

are not translated, the word is not translated, however correct the rendering may be. For instance, the words *salila*, *āpaḥ* and *jala* in Sanscrit all mean water, but if *jala* may be fairly represented by the common English word and the more poetic *āpaḥ* by "waters" or "ocean" according to the context, what will represent the beautiful suggestions of grace, brightness, softness and clearness which accompany *salila*? Here it is obvious that we have to seek refuge in sound suggestions and verse-subtleties to do what is not feasible by verbal rendering. Everything therefore depends on the skill and felicity of the translator and he must be judged rather by the accuracy with which he renders the emotional and aesthetic value of each expression than brought to a rigid (*regard*) for each word in the original. Moreover the idiom of Sanscrit, especially of classical Sanscrit, is too far divided from the idiom of English. Literal translation from the Greek is possible though sometimes disastrous, but literal translation from the Sanscrit is impossible. There is indeed a school endowed with more valour than discretion and more metaphor than sense who condemn the dressing up of the Aryan beauty in English clothes and therefore demand that not only should the exact words be kept but the exact idiom. For instance they would perpetrate the following: "Covering with lashes water-heavy from anguish, her eye gone to meet from former pleasantness the nectar-cool lattice-path-entered feet of the moon and then at once turned away, like a land-lotus-plant on a cloudy day not awake, not sleeping". Now quite apart

from the execrable English and the want of rhythm, the succession of the actions and the connexions of thought which are made admirably clear in the Sanscrit by the mere order of the words, is here entirely obscured and lost; moreover the poetic significance of the words *prîtya* (pleasantness) and *śabhre*, implying here rain as well as cloud and the beautiful force of *salilagurubhih* (water-heavy) are not even hinted at, while the meaning and application of the simile quite apparent in the original needs bringing out in the English. For the purpose of immediate comparison I give here my own version: "The moon beams..."

This I maintain though not literal is almost as close and meets without overstepping all the requirements of good translation. For the better illustration of the method, I prefer however to quote a more typical stanza:

Sabdayānte madhuramanilaiḥ kīcakāh pūryamāṇāḥ
Samraktābhistripuravijayo gīyate kinnarîbhiḥ
Nirhādī te muraja iva cit kandareṣu dhvaniḥ syāt
Sangītārtho nanu paśupatestatra bhavī samagraḥ

Rendered into literal English this is:

The bamboos filling with winds are noising sweetly, the Tripour-conquest is being sung by the glued-together Kinnaries, if thy thunder should be in the glens like the sound on a drum—the material of the concert of the Beast-Lord is to be complete there, eh?

My own translation runs,

Of Tripour slain in lovely dances joined
And linkèd troops the Oreads of the hill
Are singing and inspired with rushing wind
Sweet is the noise of bamboos fluting shrill;
Thou thundering in the mountain-glens with cry
Of drums shouldst the sublime orchestra fill.

The word Tripura means the "three cities", refers to the three material qualities of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, light, passion and darkness, which have to be slain by Shiva the emancipator before the soul can rejoin God; but there is no reference here to the theosophic basis of the legend, but possibly to the legend itself, the conquest of the demon Tripura by Mahadeva. There was no means of avoiding the mythological allusion and its unfamiliarity had simply to be accepted. *Tripuravijayo gīyate*, "of Tripour slain are singing" requires little comment. *Saṁsaktābhiḥ*, meaning "linked close together in an uninterrupted chain" is here rendered by "joined in linked troops"; but this hardly satisfied the requirement of poetic translation, for the term suggests to an Indian a very common practice which does not, I think, exist in Europe, women taking each other's hands and dancing as they sing, generally in a circle; to express this in English, so as to create the same picture as the Sanscrit conveys, it was necessary to add "in lovely dances". The word Kinnaries presents a serious initial difficulty. The Purana has, mythologising partly from false etymology, turned these Kinnaras into men and women with horse faces

and the description has been copied down into all Sanscrit dictionaries. But the Kinnaries of Valmikie have little resemblance with these Puranic grotesques; they are beings of superhuman beauty, unearthly sweetness of voice and wild freedom who seldom appear on the earth, their home is in the mountains and in the skies; he speaks of a young Kinnar snared and bound by men and the mother wailing over her offspring; and Kekayie lying on the ground in her passion of grief and anger is compared to a Kinnarie fallen from the skies. In all probability they were at first a fugitive image of the strange wild voices of the wind galloping and crying in the mountain-tops. The idea of speed would then suggest the idea of galloping horse and by the usual principle of Puranic allegory which was intellectual rather than artistic, the head, the most prominent and essential member of the human body, would be chosen as the seat of the symbol. Kalidasa had in this as in many other instances to take the Puranic allegory of the old poetic figure and new-subject it to the law of artistic beauty. In no case does he depart from the Puranic conception, but his method is to suppress the ungainly elements of the idea, often preserving it only in an epithet, and bring into prominence all the elements of beauty. Here the horse-faces are entirely suppressed and the picture offered is that of women singing with unearthly voices on the mountain-tops. The use of the word Kinnarie here would have no poetic propriety; to the uninstructed it would mean nothing and to the instructed would suggest only

the ungainly horse-face which Kalidasa here ignores and conflict with the idea of wild and divine melody which is emphasised. I have therefore translated "the Oreads of the hills"; these spirits of the mountains are the only image in English which can at all render the idea of beauty and vague strangeness here implied; at the same time I have used the apparently tautologous enlargement "of the hills", because it was necessary to give some idea of the distant, wild and mystic which the Greek Oreads does not in itself quite bring out. I have moreover transposed the two lines in translation for very obvious reasons. The first line demands still more careful translation. The word *śabdāyante* means literally "sound, make a noise," but unlike its English rendering it is a rare word used by Kalidasa for the sake of a certain effect of sound and a certain shade of signification; while therefore rendering by "noise" I have added the epithet "shrill" to bring it up to the required value. Again, the force and sound of *pūryamānāḥ* cannot be rendered by its literal rendering "filled", and *anila*, one of the many beautiful and significant Sanscrit words for wind,—*vāyu*, *anila*, *pavana*, *samīra*, *samīraṇa*, *vāta*, *prabhañjana*, *marut*, *sadāgati*—suggests powerfully the breath and flowing of wind and is in the Upanishad used as equivalent to Prana, the breath or emotional soul; to render adequately the word "inspired" has been preferred to "filled" and the epithet "rushing" added to wind. *Kīcakāḥ pūryamānāḥ anilaiḥ* in the original suggests at once the sound of the flute, because the flute is in India made of the hollow

bamboo and the shrillness of the word *kīcakāḥ* assists. The last two lines of the stanza have been rendered with great closeness, except for the omission of *nanu* and the substitution of the epithet 'sublime' for *Paśupateḥ*. *Nanu* is a Sanscrit particle which sometimes asks a rhetorical question but more often suggests one answered; the delicate shades suggested by the Sanscrit particles cannot be represented in English or only by gross effects which would be intolerably excessive and rhetorical. The omission of Pasupati, the name of Shiva as the Lord of Wild Life, though not necessary, is, I think, justified. He is sufficiently suggested by the last stanza and to those who understand the allusion, by the reference to Tripura; the object of suggesting the wild and sublime which is served in Sanscrit by introducing this name is equally served in English by the general atmosphere of wild remoteness and the insertion of the epithet 'sublime.'

This analysis of a single stanza—*ex uno disce omnes*—will be enough to show the essential fidelity which underlies the apparent freedom of my translation. At the same time it would be disingenuous to deny that in at least a dozen places of each poem,—more perhaps in the longer ones—I have slipped into words and touches which have no justification in the original. This is a literary offence which is always condemnable and always committed. In mitigation of judgment I can only say that it has been done rarely and that the superfluous word or touch is never out of harmony with or unsuggested by

the original; it has sprung out of the text and not been foisted upon it.

The remarks I have made apply to all the translations but more especially to the *Cloud Messenger*. In the drama except in highly poetical passages I have more often than not sacrificed subtlety in order to preserve the directness and incisiveness of the Sanscrit, qualities of great importance to dramatic writing, and in the epic to the dread of diffuseness which would ruin the noble harmony of the original. But the *Cloud Messenger* demands rather than shuns the careful and subtle rendering of every effect of phrase, sound and association. The *Meghadutam* of Kalidasa is the most marvellously perfect descriptive and elegiac poem in the world's literature. Every possible beauty of phrase, every possible beauty of sound, every grace of literary association, every source of imaginative and sensuous beauty has been woven together into a harmony which is without rival and without fault; for amidst all its wealth of colour, delicacy and sweetness, there is not a word too much or too little, no false note, no excessive or defective touch; the colouring is just and subdued in its richness, the verse movement regular in its variety, the diction simple in its suggestiveness, the emotion convincing and fervent behind a certain high restraint, the imagery precise, right and not overdone as in the *Raghuvamśa* and yet quite as full of beauty and power. The *Shacountala* and the *Cloud Messenger* are the *ne plus ultra* of Hindu poetic art. Such a poem asks for and repays the utmost pains a translator

can give it; it demands all the wealth of word and sound effect, all the power of literary beauty, of imaginative and sensuous charm he has the capacity to extract from the English language. At the same time its qualities of diction and verse cannot be rendered. The diffuseness of English will not thus lend itself to the brief suggestiveness of the Sanscrit without being so high-strung, nervous and bare in its strength as to falsify its flowing harmony and sweetness; nor to its easy harmony without losing close-knit precision and falsifying its brevity, gravity and majesty. We must be content to lose something in order that we may not lose all.

* * *

In Kalidasa another very serious difficulty meets the unhappy translator beyond the usual pitfalls. Few great Sanscrit poems employ the same metre throughout. In the dramas where metrical form is only used when the thought, image or emotion rises above the ordinary level, the poet employs whatever metre he thinks suitable to the mood he is in. In English, however, such a method would result in opera rather than in drama. I have therefore thought it best, taking into consideration the poetical feeling and harmonious flow of Kalidasa's prose to use blank verse throughout varying its pitch according as the original form is metrical or prose and the emotion or imagery more or less exalted. In epic work the license of metrical variation is not quite so great, yet there are

several metres considered apt to epic narrative, and Kalidasa varies them without scruple in different cantos, sometimes even in the same canto. If blank verse be, as I believe it is, a fair equivalent for the *anuṣṭubh*, the ordinary epic metre, how shall one find others which shall correspond as well to the "thunderbolt" sloka (*Indravajrā*) of the "lesser thunderbolt" sloka (*upendravajrā*), "the gambolling-of-the-tiger" sloka (*śārdūlavikrīḍita*) and all those other wonderful and grandiose rhythmic structures with fascinating names of which Kalidasa is so mighty a master? Nor would such variation be tolerated by English canons of taste. In the epic and drama the translator is driven to a compromise and therefore to that extent a failure; he may infuse good poems or plays reproducing the architecture and idea-sense of Kalidasa with something of his spirit, but it is a version and not a translation. It is only when he comes to the *Cloud Messenger* that he is free of this difficulty; for the *Cloud Messenger* is written throughout in a single and consistent stanza. This *Mandākrāntā* or "gently stepping" stanza is entirely quantitative and too complicated to be rendered into any corresponding accentual form. In casting about for a metre I was only certain of one thing that neither blank verse nor the royal quatrain stanza would serve my purpose; the one has not the necessary basis of recurring harmonics; in the other the recurrence is too rigid, sharply defined and unvarying to represent the eternal swell and surge of Kalidasa's stanza. Fortunately, by an inspiration and without deliberate choice,

Kalidasa's lines, as I began turning them, flowed into the form of triple rhyme and that necessarily suggested the terza rima. This metre, as I have treated it, seems to me to reproduce with as much accuracy as the difference between the languages allows, the spiritual and emotional atmosphere of the *Cloud Messenger*. The terza rima in English lends itself naturally to the principle of variation in recurrence which imparts so singular a charm to this poem, recurrence in especial of certain words, images, assonances, harmonies, but recurrence always with a difference so as to keep one note sounding through the whole performance underneath its various harmony. In terza rima the triple rhyme immensely helps this effect, for it allows of the same common rhymes recurring but usually with a difference in one or more of their company.

* * *

THE prose of Kalidasa's dialogue is the most unpretentious and admirable prose in Sanskrit literature; it is perfectly simple, easy in pitch and natural in tone with a shining, smiling, rippling lucidity, a soft carolling gait like a little girl running along in a meadow and smiling back at you as she goes. There is the true image of it, a quiet English meadow with wild flowers on a bright summer morning, breezes abroad, the smell of hay in the neighbourhood, honeysuckle on the bank, hedges full of convolvuluses or wild roses, a ditch on one side with cress or forget-me-nots and nothing pronounced or poignant except perhaps

a stray whiff of meadow-sweet from a distance. This admirable unobtrusive charm and just observed music (Coleridge) makes it run easily into verse in English. In translating one has at first some vague idea of reproducing the form as well as the spirit of the Sanscrit, rendering verse stanza by verse stanza and prose movement by prose movement. But it will soon be discovered that except in the talk of the buffoon and not always then Kalidasa's prose never evokes its just echo, never finds its answering pitch, tone or quality in English prose. The impression it creates is in no way different from Shakespeare's verse taken anywhere at its easiest and sweetest[1]:

Your lord does know my mind: I cannot love him:
Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
In voices well divulged, free, learned and valiant;
And in dimension and in shape of nature
A gracious person; but yet I cannot love him.
He might have took his answer long ago.

Or again, still more close in its subtle and telling simplicity:

Ol. What is your parentage?
Vi. Above my fortunes, yet my state is well.
I am a gentleman.
Ol. Get you to your lord,
I cannot love him; let him send no more;

[1] Twelfth Night—Act I, Sc. V.

Unless perchance you came to me again
To tell me how he takes it.

There is absolutely no difference between this and the prose of Kalidasa, since even the absence of metre is compensated by the natural majesty, grace and rhythmic euphony of the Sanscrit language and the sweet seriousness and lucid effctiveness it naturally wears when it is not tortured for effects.

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Section Two

KALIDASA'S CHARACTERS

I

PURURAVAS

Pururavas is the poet's second study of kinghood; he differs substantially from Agnimitra. The latter is a prince, a soldier and man of the world yielding by the way to the allurements of beauty, but not preoccupied with passion; the sub-title of the piece might be, in a more innocent sense than Victor Hugo's, *Le Roi S'amuse*. He is the mirror of a courteous and self-possessed gentleman, full of mildness and grace, princely tact, *savoir faire*, indulgent kindness, yet energetic withal and quietly resolute in his pleasure as well as in his serious affairs. "Ah, Sire," says Dharinie with sharp irony, "if you only showed as much diplomatic skill and *savoir faire* in the affairs of your kingdom, what a good thing it would be." But one feels that these are precisely the gifts he would show in all his action, that the innocently unscrupulous and quite delightful tact and diplomacy with which he pursues his love-affair is but the mirror of the methods he pursued in domestic politics. We see in him the typical and ideal king of an age hedonistic, poetic, worldly but withal heroic and capable. Pururavas is made of very different material. He is a king and a hero, a man of high social and princely virtues, otherwise Kalidasa would not

have taken the trouble to depict him; but these qualities are like splendid robes which his nature has put on, and which have become so natural to him that he cannot put them off if he would; they are not the naked essential man. The fundamental Pururavas is not the king and the hero but the poet and lover. The poet on a throne has been the theme of Shakespeare in his *Richard II* and of Renan in his *Antichrist*; and from these two great studies we can realise the European view of the phenomenon. To the European mind the meeting of poet and king in one man wears always the appearance of an anomaly, a misplacement, the very qualities which have fitted him to be a poet unfit him to rule. A mastering egotism becomes the mainspring of the poetic temperament so placed; the imagination of the man is centred in himself, and the realm and people whose destinies are in his hands, seem to him to be created only to minister to his ingenious or soaring fancies and his dramatic, epic or idealistic sense of what should be; his intellect lives in a poetic world of its own and thinks in tropes and figures instead of grappling with the concrete facts of the world; hence he is unfitted for action and once absolute power is out of his hands, once he is no longer able to arrange men and events to his liking as if he were a dramatist manoeuvring the creatures of his brain but is called upon to measure his will and ability against others, he fails and his failure leads to tragic issues; for he persists in attempting to weave his own imaginations into life; he will not see facts; he will not recognize the inexorable logic of events. Hence,

though not necessarily a coward, though often a man of real courage and even ability, he plays the part of an incompetent or a weakling or both. Moreover, he tends to become a tyrant, to lose moral perspective and often all sense of proportion and sanity; for he regards himself as the centre of a great drama, and to all who will not play the part he assigns them or satisfy his emotional needs and impulses, to all who get in the way of his imaginative egotism he becomes savage and cruel; his rage when a word of this life-drama is mispronounced or a part ill-studied or a conception not complied with is a magnified reflection of the vexation felt by a dramatist at a similar *contretemps* in the performance of his darling piece; and unfortunately unlike the playwright he has the power to vent his indignation on the luckless offenders in a fashion only too effective. The last end of the poet-king is almost always tragic, the mad-house, the prison, suicide, exile or the dagger of the assassin. It must be admitted that this dramatic picture largely reflects the facts of history. We know some instances of poet-kings in history, Nero and Ludwig of Bavaria were extreme instances; but we have a far more interesting because typical series in the history of the British Isles. The Stuarts were a race of born poets whom the irony of their fate insisted upon placing one after the other upon a throne, with the single exception of Charles II (James VI was a pedant, which for practical purposes is as bad as a poet) they were all men of an imaginative temper, artistic tastes or impossible ideals and the best of them

had in a most wonderful degree the poet's faculty of imparting this enthusiasm to others. The terrible fate which dogged them was no mysterious doom of the Atridae, but the natural inexorable result of the incompatibility between their temperament and their position. Charles II was the only capable man of his line, the only one who set before him a worldly and unideal aim and recognised facts and using the only possible ways and means quietly and patiently accomplished it. The first James had some practical energy, but it was marred by the political idealism, the disregard of a wise opportunism, and the tyrannical severity towards those who thwarted him which distinguished his whole dreamy, fascinating and utterly unpractical race. Nor is the type wanting in Indian History. Sriharsha of Cashmere in the pages of Kalhana affords a most typical picture of the same unhappy temperament. It is interesting therefore to see how Kalidasa dealt with a similar character.

To our surprise we find that the Hindu poet does not associate incompetence, failure and tragedy with this image of the poet-king; on the contrary, Pururavas is a Great Emperor, well-loved of his people, an unconquered hero, the valued ally of the Gods, successful in empire, successful in war, successful in love. Was then Kalidasa at fault in his knowledge of the world and of human nature? Such a solution would be inconsistent with all we know of the poet's genius as shown in his other works. The truth is that Kalidasa simply gives us the other side

of the shield. It is not an invariable law of human nature that the poetic temperament should be, by its temperament, absolutely unfitted for practical action and regal power. Nero and Charles I were artistic temperaments cursed with the doom of kingship. But Alexander of Macedon and Napoleon Buonaparte were poets on a throne, and the part they played in history was not that of incompetents and weaklings. There are times when Nature gifts the poetic temperament with a peculiar grasp of the conditions of action and an irresistible tendency to create their poems not in ink and on paper, but in living characters and on the great canvas of the world; such men become portents and wonders, whom posterity admires or hates but can only imperfectly understand. Like Joan of Arc or Mazzini and Garibaldi, they save a dying nation, or like Napoleon and Alexander they dominate a world. They are only possible because they only get full scope in races which unite with an ardent and heroic temperament a keen susceptibility to poetry in life, idealism and hero worship. Now the Hindus, before the fibre of their temperament had been loosened by hedonistic materialism on the one side and Buddhistic impracticability on the other, were not only the most ardent and idealistic race in the world, the most ready to put prose behind them, the most dominated by thought and imagination, but also one of the most heroic, and they still preserved much of this ancient temper in the days of Kalidasa. It was only natural therefore that the national dramatist in representing the great legendary founder

of the Kurus as of the poet-emperor type, should mould him of stronger make and material and not as one of the beautiful porcelain vessels that are broken. Yet always, even when gifted with the most extraordinary practical abilities, the poetic temperament remains itself and keeps a flaw of weakness in the heart of its strength. The temperaments of Alexander and Napoleon were both marked by megalomania, gigantic imaginations, impossible ideals; though not wantonly cruel or tyrannical, they at times showed a singular insensibility to moral restraints and the demands of generous and humane feeling; especially in times of abnormal excitement or temporary indulgence of their passions, the birth-mark came out and showed itself in acts of often insane tyranny. This was especially the case with Alexander; but Napoleon was not free from the same taint. Alexander, we know, strove consciously to mould his life into an Iliad; Napoleon regarded his as a Titanic epic and when facts would not fit in ideally with his conception of himself as its great protagonist, he would alter and falsify them with as little scruple as a dramatist would feel in dealing licentiously with the facts of history. All men of this type, moreover, show a strange, visionary impracticability in the midst of their practical energy and success, make huge miscalculations and refuse to receive correction, insist that facts shall mould themselves according to their own imaginations and are usually dominated by an unconquerable egoism or self-absorption which is not necessarily base or selfish. Their success seems as much the result of a favouring destiny as of their own

ability and when the favour is withdrawn, they collapse like a house of cards at one blow. Joan of Arc dreamed dreams and saw visions, Mazzini and Garibaldi were impracticable idealists and hated Cavour because he would not idealise along with them. The rock of St. Helena, the blazing stake at Rouen, the lifelong impotent exile of Mazzini, the field of Mentena and the island of Caprera, such is the latter end of these great spirits. Alexander was more fortunate, but his greatest good fortune was that he died young; his next greatest that the practical common sense of his followers prevented him from crossing the Ganges; had Napoleon been similarly forced to recognise his limit, his end might have been as great as his beginning. Pururavas in the play is equally fortunate; we feel throughout that the power and favour of the Gods is at his back to save him from all evil fortune and the limits of a legend help him as effectively as an early death helped Alexander.

Kalidasa's presentation of Pururavas therefore is not that of a poetic nature in a false position working out its own ruin; it is rather a study of the poetic temperament in a heroic and royal figure for no issue beyond the study itself. This is in accordance with the temper of the later poetry which, as I have said, troubles itself little with problems, issues and the rest, but is purely romantic, existing only to express disinterested delight in the beauty of human life and emotion and the life and emotion of animate and inanimate Nature.

When Pururavas first appears on the scene it is as the

king and hero, the man of prompt courage and action, playing the part which he has assumed like a royal robe of purple, but it is not in the practical side of his character that Kalidasa is interested. He has to introduce it only as a background to his inner temperament, in order to save him from the appearance of frivolous weakness and unworthiness which always surrounds the dilettante in life, the epicure of his own emotions. This he does with his usual consummate art. Pururavas is introduced to us at the very beginning in a scene of extraordinary swiftness, decision and tumultuous excitement, like an eagle cleaving the winds in his rushing swoop upon his prey. The remembrance of this rapid and heroic episode lingers with us and gives us a sense of concealed iron behind his most feminine moods as lover and poet. Then when again at the end of the play Kalidasa skilfully strikes the same note and we take leave of the Ilian, it is again as the king and hero whose strong arm is needed by the Gods in their approaching war with the Titans. Thus finding and leaving him as the warlike prince, we always have the impression that however great the part played by his love for Urvasie in his life, it is not the whole, that we are listening only to a love episode in some high epic. This impression again is skilfully aided by brief but telling touches in each Act, such as the song of the Bards, for example, which remind us of the King of Kings, the toiling administrator, the great warrior; in not a single Act are these necessary strokes omitted and the art with which they are introduced naturally and as if without design is beyond praise. But

here again Kalidasa does not depart from the artistic principle of "nothing too much, nothing too little"; the purple robes of the Emperor and the bow of the hero being needed only for the background are not allowed to intrude upon the main interest, which is Pururavas the man in his native temperament.

From the very first utterance that temperament reveals itself; the grandiose and confident announcement of his name and his communion with the Gods is characteristic of the epic megalomaniac. We are not deceived by his proud assumption of modesty, which he only wears as a fit outward ornament of the role he is playing on the world's stage, part of the conventional drapery of the heroic king. "For modesty was ever valour's crown." Through this drapery we see the man glorying in himself as a poet might glory in some great creation and when madness has removed all conventional disguise, this temper breaks out with the most splendid frankness. We see his mind empurpled with the consciousness of his world-wide fame, "This is too much, it is not possible he should not know me"; of his marvellous birth, "the grandson to the Sun and Moon"; of his matchless achievements as "the chariot-warrior, great Pururavas"; of his mighty empire, "the universal sceptre of the world and sovran footstool touched by jewelled heads of tributary monarchs". The glory of this triple purple in which he has wrapped himself, matchless valour, matchless fame, matchless empire commingles in his imagination, and he speaks in the proud brief language of the hero but with an

evident consciousness of their fine suitability to the part. We seem to see Napoleon robing himself in the dramatic splendour of his despatches and proclamations or Alexander dragging Batis at his chariot wheels in order that he may feel himself to be Achilles. Shall we accuse these men as some do of being liars, theatrical braggarts, inhuman mad men, mountebanks? Let us not so in our feeble envy spit our venom on these mighty souls to half whose heights we could never rise even if we have no opportunity given us of sinking to their depths!

And then as he rushes in pursuit of the Titan and revels in the speed of his chariot and the scenic splendour of the crumbling thunder-clouds flying up like dust beneath it, all the poet in him breaks out into glories of speech. Surely no king before or after, not even Richard II, had such a royal gift of language as this grandson of the Sun and Moon. It is peculiar to him in the play. Others, especially those who habitually move near him, Manavaka the Chamberlain, the Huntsman, the Charioteer catch something at times of this enthusiastic poetry, but their diction is usually simple and unpretending and, when most ambitious, pale to the colour, energy and imaginativeness which floods all his utterance. For example in the scene of the vulture how he catches fire from a single trope of the Huntsman's and his imagination continues coruscating and flashing over the jewel until it has vanished from sight. I have said that his imagination has become empurpled but the tendency

is really inborn in him, he sees, thinks and speaks in purple. Not only is his mind stored with pictures which break out in the most splendid tropes and similes, but he cannot see any natural object or feel any simplest emotion without bathing it in the brilliant tones of his imagination and expressing it in regal poetry. He has also the poet's close and inspired observation, the poet's visualizing power, the poet's sensuousness and aim at the concrete. Little things that he has seen in Nature, a portion of the bank of a river collapsing into the current, the rapid lightening of a dark night by the moon, fire at night breaking its way through a volume of smoke, a lotus reddening in early sunlight, a wild swan flying through the sky with a lotus fibre in his beak, remain with his inner eye and at a touch burst out in poetry. So inveterate is this habit of seizing on every situation and emotion and turning it into a poem, that even when he affects a feeling as in his flattery of the queen, he takes fire and acts his part with a glory and fervour of speech which make the feigned emotion momentarily genuine. Thus with a mind stored and brimming with poetry, a habit of speech of royal splendour and fullness and an imagination fired and enlarged by the unequalled grandeur of his own destiny, Pururavas comes to the great event which shall be the touchstone of his nature. Such a man was alone fit to aspire to and win the incarnate Beauty of the world and its sensuous life, the Apsara who sprang from the thigh of the Supreme. The Urvasie of the myth, as has been splendidly seen and expressed

by a recent Bengali poet,[1] is the spirit of imaginative beauty in the universe, the unattainable ideal for which the soul of man is eternally panting, the goddess adored of the nympholept in all lands and in all ages. There is but one who can attain her, the man whose mind has become one mass of poetry and idealism and has made life itself identical with poetry, whose glorious and starlike career has itself been a conscious epic and whose soul holds friendship and close converse with the Gods. This is Pururavas, "the noise of whom has gone far and wide", whose mother was Ila, divine aspiration, the strange daughter of Human Mind (Manu), who was once male and is female, and his father Budha, inspired and mystic wisdom, Hermes, of the moonlike mind, and his near ancestors therefore are the Sun and Moon. For Urvasie he leaves his human wife, earthly fame and desire, giving her only the passionless kindness which duty demands and absorbs his whole real soul in the divine. Even he, however, does not enjoy uninterrupted the object of his desire; he transgresses with her into that fatal grove of the Virgin War-God where ethereal beauty and delight are not suffered to tread, but only ascetic self-denial and keen swordlike practical will; at once she disappears from his ken. Then must his soul wander through all Nature seeking her, imagining her or hints and tokens of her in everything he meets but never grasping unless by some good chance he

[1] *Tagore: Urvasie (1895).*

accept the Jewel Union born from the crimson of the marvellous feet of Himaloy's Child, Uma, daughter of the mountains, the mighty Mother, She who is the Soul behind Nature. Then he is again united with her. And their child is Ayus, human life and action glorified and ennobled by contact with the divine. It is therefore one of the most profound and splendid of the many profound and splendid allegories in the great repertory of Hindu myth that Kalidasa has here rendered into so sweet, natural and passionate a story of human love and desire. [The religious interpretation of the myth, which is probably older than the poetical, is slightly but not materially different.][1]

In one sense therefore the whole previous life of Pururavas has been a preparation for his meeting with Urvasie. He has filled earth and heaven, even as he has filled his own imagination with the splendour of his life as with an epic poem. He has become indeed Pururavas, he who is noised afar, but he has never yet felt his own soul. But now he sees Urvasie and all the force of his nature pours itself into his love for her like a river which has at last found its natural sea. The rich poetry of his temperament, the sights and images with which his memory is stored, his dramatic delight in his own glory and greatness and heroism, are now diverted and poured over the final passion of his life, coruscate and light it up and reveal it as in a wonderful faeryland full of

[1] The square brackets are in the original.

shimmering moonlight. Each thought, image, emotion of his mind as it issues forth, connects itself with his love and for a moment stands illumined in the lustre of his own speech. The same extraordinary vividness of feeling and imagination is poured over Ayus when Pururavas finds himself a father; never has the passion of paternity been expressed with such vivid concreteness or with such ardent sensuousness of feeling. Yet the conventions of life and the dramatic part in it he feels bound to sustain cling about him and hamper his complete utterance. In order therefore to give him his full opportunity, Kalidasa has separated him from Urvasie by a more romantic device than the dramatically unmanageable contrivance of the original legend, and liberated him in the infinite freedom of madness. The fourth Act therefore which seems at first sight episodical is really of essential importance both to the conduct of the play and the full revelation of its protagonist.

Yet madness is hardly the precise word for the condition of Pururavas; he is not mad like Lear or Ophelia; it is rather a temporary exaltation than a perversion or aberration from his natural state. An extraordinarily vivid and active imagination, which has always felt a poetic sense of mind and sympathy in brute life and in the encouragement of romantic "inanimate" Nature, leaps up under the shock of sudden and inexplicable loss into gigantic proportions; it is like a sudden conflagration in a forest which transfigures and magnifies every petty object it enlightens and fills the world with

the rush and roar and volume of its progress. The whole essential temperament of the man comes whirling out in a gyrating pomp of tropes, fancies, conceits, quick and changing emotions; everything in existence he gifts with his own mind, speech, feelings and thus moves through the pageantry of Nature draping it in the regal mantle of his imagination until the whole world exists only to be the scene and witness of his sorrow. For splendour of mere poetry united with delicate art of restraint and management, this scene is not easily surpassed. We may note one of the smaller and yet essential feature of its beauty, the skill with which the gradations of his excitement are indicated. When he first rushes in he is in the very height and tumult of it mistaking the cloud for a Titan who carries off his Urvasie and threatening him with a clod of earth which he imagines to be a deadly weapon. But he is not really mad; the next moment he realises his hallucination, and the reaction produces a certain calming down of the fever; yet his mind is still working tumultuously and as it ranges through the forest, every object is converted for a moment into a sign of Urvasie and the megalomaniac in him bursts out into the most splendid flights of self-magnification. But each fresh disappointment brings a reaction that sobers him just a little more; he turns from the inanimate objects of nature to the bee in the flower, then to the birds, then to the beasts; he gifts them with a voice, with articulate words, with thoughts lent out of the inexhaustible treasury of his teeming imagination.

Next he appeals to the God of the mountain and fancies the Echo to be his answer. Mark that now for the first time it is a real articulate voice that he hears, though but the reflection of his own. And immediately afterwards his mind, coming nearer and nearer to sanity, hits upon something very close to the truth; he realises that a divine force may have transformed her to some object of nature and at first by a natural misapprehension imagines that it must be the river which has the appearance Urvasie wore when she fled from him. Then reason as it returns tells him that if he wishes to find her, it must be nearer the place where she disappeared; as he hurries back he appeals for the last time to an animal to speak to him, but does not lend him a voice or words; again also he sees tokens of her in flower and tree, but they are no longer hallucinations but real or at least possible tokens. He touches the Jewel Union and hears the actual voice of the sage; he is now perfectly restored to reason and when he embraces the creeper, it is not as Urvasie but as an "imitatress of my beloved". Through the rest of the scene it is the old natural Pururavas we hear—though in his most delicate flights of imagination. What a choice of a "conveyance" is that with which the scene closes and who but Pururavas could have imagined it! I dwell on these subtle and just perceptible features of Kalidasa's work, the art concealing art, because the appreciation of them is necessary to the full reception on our mind-canvas of Kalidasa's art and genius and therefore to the full enjoyment of his poetry.

And while Pururavas glorifies and revels in his passion, he is also revealed by it; and not only in the strength of the poetic temperament at its strongest, its grasp of, devotion to and joy in its object, its puissant idealism and energy and the dynamic force with which for a time at least it compels fate to its will, but also in its weaknesses. I have spoken of his self-magnification and touches of megalomania. There is besides this a singular incompetence or paralysis of activity in occasional emergencies which, as I have before suggested, often overtakes the poetic temperament in action even in its most capable possessors. His helplessness when confronted by Aushinarie compares badly with the quiet self-possession and indulgent smile with which Agnimitra faces Iravatie in a much more compromising situation. Characteristic too is his conduct when the jewel is lost. We feel certain that Agnimitra when rushing out of his tent would have caught up his bow and arrows and shot the thief on the spot; Pururavas occupies[1] in pouring out splendid tropes and similes over the bird and the jewel and appeals helplessly to Manavaka for advice. This is characteristic of the poetic temperament whose mind has long trained itself to throw out its imagination to meet every new object or situation and not its acting faculties; except in natures of a very firm balance the habit must lead to paralysis of the will. Such a sapping of vigour has been

[1] The word *himself* has evidently got omitted in the MS.—Ed.

going on in Pururavas during the long years of absorption in his romantic passion. One must hope that when he stands again in the forefront of battle, "Heaven's great soldier" will have sufficient plasticity of character to recover in the shock of action what he has lost in the peace of the seraglio. Then there are certain moral insensibilities, certain feelings which seem to have been left out in his composition. It is part of his self-assumed role in life to be the ideal king, the mirror of gallantry and conjugal duty, the champion of the gods and of religion. Yet it is Urvasie and not he who remembers that his "high capital awaits him long" and who shrinks from the displeasure of the people. He exhibits deference and a show of love to Aushinarie because he "owes" her respect and affection, but in spite of his glowing language and fine acting we feel that he cherishes towards her none of the genuine respect and affection or of the real and indulgent kindliness Agnimitra feels for Dharinie and Iravatie. In the last Act he expresses some fear that he may lose religious calm; one feels that religious calm in Pururavas must have been something like the king's robe in Hans Anderson's story. But it was one of the necessary "belongings" of the great semi-divine king which Pururavas just considered his "part" in life as impassive calm and insensibility to human misfortune and grief was one of the necessary "belongings" of the great demi-god, the human Jove which Napoleon thought to be his destined role. If the vast, flaming and rushing mass of genius and impetuosity which we call

Napoleon was incompatible with stoical calm and insensibility, so was the ardent mass of sensuousness and imagination which Kalidasa portrayed in Pururavas incompatible with the high austerity of religion. It is in the mouth of this champion of Heaven Kalidasa has placed one of the few explicit protests in Sanscrit of the ordinary sensuous man against the ascetic idealism of the old religion:

And yet I cannot think of her
Created by a withered hermit cold.
How could an aged anchoret dull and stale
With poring over Scripture and oblivious
To all this rapture of the senses build
A thing so lovely?

The minor male characters of the piece look too wan in the blaze of this great central figure to command much attention except as his adjuncts. As such the Charioteer, the Huntsman and the Chamberlain, Latasya, appear; the former two merely cross the stage and are only interesting for the shadow of tropical magnificence that their master's personality has thrown over their mode of speech.

II

URVASIE

(1)

In nothing else does the delicacy and keen suavity of Kalidasa's dramatic genius exhibit itself with a more constant and instinctive perfection than in his characterisation of women. He may sometimes not care to individualise his most unimportant female figures, but even the slightest of his women have some personality of their own, something which differentiates them from others and makes them better than mere names. Insight into feminine character is extraordinarily rare even among dramatists for whom one might think it to be a necessary element of their art. For the most part a poet represents with success only one or two unusual types known to him or in sympathy with his own temperament or those which are quite abnormal and therefore easily drawn; the latter are generally bad women, the Clytemnestras, Vittoria Corombonas, Beatrice Joannas. The women of Vyasa and of Sophocles have all a family resemblance: all possess a quiet or commanding masculine strength of character which reveals their parentage. Other poets we see succeeding in a single feminine character, often repeating, but failing or not succeeding eminently in the rest. Otherwise women in poetry are generally painted very much from the outside. The poets

who have had an instinctive insight into women, can literally be counted on the fingers of one's hand. Shakespeare in this as in other dramatic gifts is splendidly and unapproachably first, or at least only equalled in depth though not in range by Valmikie. Racine has the same gift within his limits and Kalidasa without limits, though in this as in other respects he has not Shakespeare's prodigal abundance and puissant variety. Other names I do not remember: there are a few poets who succeed with coarse easy types, but this is the fruit of observation rather than an unfailing intuitive insight. The *Agnimitra* is a drama of women; it passes within the women's apartments and pleasure gardens of a great palace and is full of the rustling of women's robes, the tinkling of their ornaments, the scent of their hair, the music of their voices. In the *Urvasie* where he needs at least half the canvas for his hero, the scope for feminine characterisation is of necessity greatly contracted, but what is left Kalidasa has filled in with a crowd of beautiful shining figures and exquisite faces each of which is recognizable. These are the Apsaras and Urvasie the most beautiful of them all. To understand the poetry and appeal of these nymphs of heaven, we must know something of their origin and meaning.

In the beginning of things, in the great wide spaces of Time when mankind as yet was young and the azure heavens and the inter-regions between the stars were full of the crowding figures of luminous Gods and gigantic Titans by the collision of whose activities the cosmos was

taking form and shape, the opposing forces once made a truce and met in common action on the waves of the milky Ocean. The object for which they had met could not have been fulfilled by the efforts of one side alone; the good must mingle with the evil, the ideal take sides with the real, the soul work in harmony with the senses, virtue and sin, heaven and earth and hell labour towards a common end before it can be accomplished; for this object was no less than to evolve all that is beautiful, sweet and incredible in life, all that makes it something more than existence, and in especial to realise immortality, that marvellous thought which has affected those even who disbelieve in it, with the idea of unending effort and thus lured men from height to height, from progress to progress, until mere beast though he is in his body and his sensations, he has with the higher part of himself laid hold upon the most distant heavens. Therefore they stood by the shore of the milky Ocean and cast into it the mountain Mandara for a churning stick and wound round it Vasukie, the Great Serpent, the snake of desire, for the rope of the churning and then they set to it with a will, god and devil together, and churned the milky Ocean, the ocean of spiritual existence, the ocean of imagination and aspiration, the ocean of all in man that is above the mere body and the mere life. They churned for century after century, millennium after millennium, nothing rewarded their labour. The milky Ocean swirled and lashed and roared. The snake Vasukie panted and anguished and his hundred heads began to faint and hang down over the raging billows

and from the lolling tongues of them a poison streamed out and mingled with the agony of the Ocean so that it became as a fire and all the world burnt and shrivelled before it. For this was the great poison of the world, the horror and the agony of existence, its tears and cruelty and despair, disbelief and disillusionment and rage and madness and all the demoniac and brute beast that is in man and the evil and the tyranny he inflicts upon himself and upon his fellows and upon all that is weaker than himself. Then the Gods fled to Shankara where he abode in the ice and snow and the iron silence and inhuman solitudes of the mountains where the Ganges streams through his matted locks, for who could face the fire of that poison? Who but the great ascetic Spirit clothed in ashes, who knows not desire and sorrow, to whom terror is not terrible and grief has no sting, but who embraces grief and madness and despair.

And now wonderful things began to arise from the Ocean; Ucchaisravas arose, neighing and tossing his mighty mane, he who can gallop over all space in one moment while hooves make music in the empyrean. Varunie arose, Venus Anadyomene from the waters, the daughter of Varuna, Venus Ourania, standing on a lotus and bringing beauty and delight and harmony and opulence into the universe; Dhanwantari arose, cup in hand, the physician of the Gods who can heal all pain and disease and sorrow, minister to a mind diseased and pluck out from the bosom its rooted sorrow; the jewel Kaustubha arose whose pure luminousness fills all the world and,

worn on the bosom of the Saviour and Helper, becomes the cynosure of the suffering and striving nations.

(2)

Such then is Urvasie, Narain-born, the brightness of sunlight, the blush of the dawn, the multitudinous laughter of the sea, the glory of the skies and the leap of the lightning, all in brief that is bright, far-off, unseizable and compellingly attractive in this world, all too that is wonderful, sweet to the taste and intoxicating in human beauty, human life, the joy of human passion and emotion: all finally that seizes, masters and carries away in art, poetry, thought and knowledge, is involved in this one name. Of these outward brilliances Kalidasa's conception of Urvasie is entirely void. His presentation of her is simply that of a beautiful and radiant woman deeply in love. Certainly the glories of her skiey residence, the far-off luminousness and the free breath of the winds are about her, but they are her atmosphere rather than part of herself. The essential idea of her is natural, frank and charming womanliness; timidity, a quick temper, a harmless petulance and engaging childishness, afterwards giving way to a matronly sedateness and bloom, swift, innocent and frank passion, warm affections as mother, sister and friend, speech always straight from the heart, the precise elements in fact that give their greatest charm to ideal girlhood and womanhood are the main tones that compose the picture. There is nothing here of the stately pace and formal dignity of

the goddess, no cothurnus raising her above human stature, no mask petrifying the simple and natural play of the feelings, the smile in the eyes, the ready tears, the sweetness of the mouth, the lowered lashes, the quick and easy gesture full of spontaneous charm. If this is a nymph of heaven, one thinks, then heaven must be beautifully like the earth. Her terror and collapse in the episode of the abduction and rescue, where Chitraleqha manages pretty successfully to keep up her courage as a goddess, is certainly not Apsaralike. Chitraleqha with sisterly impatience expresses her sense of that, "Fie, sweet! thou art no Apsara"—but it is nevertheless attractively human and seizes our sympathies for her from the outset. There is also a sensitiveness in her love, a quickness to take alarm and despond which make her very human. If this is jealousy, it is a quick and generous jealousy having nothing in it of "jealous baseness"; it is hardly more than the quick rush of hasty temper which leads to her separation from Pururavas, but rather a panic born of timidity and an extreme diffidence and ignorance of the power of her own beauty. This detail is very carefully observed and emphasized as if Kalidasa wished to take especial pains to prevent even the most hidebound commentator from reading into her character any touch of the heavenly courtesan. The ostentations, splendours, the conscious allurements of the courtesan are not there, but rather a divine simplicity and white candour of soul. It is from an innate purity and openness that the frankness and impulsiveness of her love proceeds. Incapable of disguise, hastily open, direct

in words, even tremulously playful at times, she is easily dashed in her advances and quick to distrust her merit. And she can be very sweet and noble too, even dignified as in a few utterances of the Third Act, her reunion with Pururavas in the Fourth and all through the Fifth where she is wife and mother, and while losing the girlishness, petulance and playfulness of the earlier scenes has greatly deepened her charm. I see nothing of the heavenly courtesan which some overprecise commentators insist on finding in her; within the four corners of the play which is all Kalidasa allows us to consider, she is wholly delightful, innocent, even modest, at any rate not immodest. Certainly she is more frank and playful in her love than Shacountala or even Malavica could venture to be, but something must be allowed to a goddess and her demeanour is too much flavoured with timidity, her advances too easily dashed to give any disagreeable impression of forwardness. There are few more graceful touches in lighter love-drama than her hasty appearance, unconsciously invisible, before Pururavas, and her panic of dismay when he takes no notice of her. In the same scene her half playful, half serious self-justification in embracing her lover and her immediate abashed silence at his retort, portray admirably the mixture of frank impulsiveness and shy timidity proper to her character. These are the little magic half-noticeable touches of which Kalidasian characterisation is mainly composed, the hundred significant trifles which Kalidasa's refined taste in life felt to be the essence of character in action. Urvasie's finest

characteristic, however, is her sincerity in passion and affection. The poet has taken great pains to discharge her utterance of all appearance of splendour, ornament and superfluity; her simple, direct and earnest diction is at the opposite pole to the gorgeous imaginativeness of the Ilian. And while her manner of speech is always simple and ordinary, what she says exactly the uns udied and obvious thing that a woman of no great parts, but natural and quick in her affections, would spontaneously say under the circumstances; it is even surprisingly natural. For example, when she sees Ayus fondled by Pururavas, "who is this youth", she asks with the little inevitable undertone of half jealousy

Himself my monarch binds his hair
Into a crest.
Who should this be so highly favoured

and then she notices Satyavatie and understands. But there is no positive outburst of maternal joy and passion. "It is my Ayus! How he has grown!" That is all and nothing could be better or truer. Yet for all the surface colourlessness there is a charm in everything Urvasie says, the charm of absolute sincerity and direct unaffected feeling. Her passion for Pururavas is wonderfully genuine and fine from her first cry of "O Titans! You did me kindness!" to her last of "O a sword is taken out of my heart!" Whatever the mood, its speech has always a tender force and reality. Her words with Chitraleqha and the other Apsaras, from the outburst "O sisters, sisters, take

me to your bosoms" to her farewell "Chitraleqha, my sister! do not forget me", are instinct, when moved, with "a passion of sisterliness" and at other times bright and limpid in their fair kindness and confidence. She comes to her son "with her whole rapt gaze

> *Grown mother, the veiled bosom heaving towards him*
> *And wet with sacred milk*".

And her farewell to the Hermitess sets a model for the expression of tender, genuine and tender friendship. Urvasie is doubtless not so noble and strong a portraiture as Shacountala, but she is inferior to no heroine of Sanscrit drama in beauty and sweetness of womanly nature.

III

MINOR CHARACTERS

(1)

NOTHING more certainly distinguishes the dramatic artist from the poet who has trespassed into drama than the careful pain he devotes to his minor characters. To the artist nothing is small; he bestows as much of his art within the narrow limit of his small characters as within the wide compass of his greatest. Shakespeare lavishes life upon his minor characters; but in Shakespeare it is the result of an abounding creative energy; he makes living men as God made the world, because he could not help it, because it was in his nature and must out. But Kalidasa's dramatic gift, always suave and keen, had not this godlike abundance; it is therefore well to note the persistence of this feature of high art in all his dramas. In the *Urvasie* the noble figure of Queen Aushinarie is the most excellent evidence of his fine artistry; but even slight sketches like the Apsaras are seen upon close attention to be portrayed with a subtle and discriminating design; thought has been bestowed on each word they speak, an observable delicacy of various touch shows itself in each tone and gesture they employ. A number of shining figures crowded into a corner of the canvas, like in meaning, like in situation, like in nature, they seem to offer the very narrowest scope

for differentiation; yet every face varies from its sister, the diction of each tongue has its revealing individuality. The timid, warm-hearted Rumbha easily despondent, full of quick outbursts of eagerness and tenderness is other than the statelier Menaca with her royal gift of speech and her high confidence. Sahajanya is of an intenser, more silent, less imaginative, more practical type than either of these. It is she who gives Pururavas the information of the road which the ravisher has taken, and from that point onward amid all the anxious and tender chatter of the sisters she is silent until she has the practical fact of Pururavas' disappearance to seize upon. This she is again the first to descry and announce. Her utterance is brief and of great point and substance; from the few words she has uttered we unconsciously receive a deep impression of helpfulness, earnestness and strength. We know her voice, are ready and recognize it again in the Fourth Act. Her attitude there is characteristic; she will not waste time over vain lamentation, since she cannot help. Fate has divided the lovers, Fate will unite them again; so with a cheerful and noble word of consolation she turns to the immediate work in hand.

Chitraleqha, more fortunate than the other Apsaras, obtaining through three Acts a large canvas as the favourite and comrade of Urvasie, suffers dramatically from her good fortune, for she must necessarily appear a little indistinct, so near to the superior light of her companion. Indeed, dramatic necessity demands subdued tones in her portraiture lest she should deflect attention from

Urvasie; richness of colour and prominence of line therefore are not permissible. Yet in spite of these hampering conditions the poet has made her a sufficiently definite personality. Indeed, her indulgent affection, her playful kindliness, her little outbreaks of loving impatience or sage advice,—the neglect of which she takes in excellent part—her continual half-smiling surrender to Urvasie's petulance and wilfulness and her whole half matron-like air of elder-sisterly protection, give her a very sensible charm and attractiveness; there is a true nymph-like and divine grace, tact and felicity in all that she says and does. Outside the group of Apsaras the Hermitess Satyavatie is a slighter but equally attractive figure, venerable, kind, a little impersonal owing to the self-restraint which is her vocation, but with glimpses through it of a fine motherliness and friendliness. The perpetual grace of humanness, which is so eminently Kalidasian, forming the atmosphere of all his plays, seems to deepen with a peculiar beauty around his ascetics, Kanwa, Satyavatie, the learned and unfortunate lady of the Malavica. The "little rogue of a tiring woman" Nipounica, sly and smooth-tongued, though with no real harm in her beyond a delight in her own slyness and a fine sense of exhilaration in the midst of a family row, pleasantly brings up the slighter of these feminine personalities. The masculine sketches are drawn in even more unobtrusive outlines and, after Kalidasa's manner, less individualized than his women. The Charioteer and the Huntsmen are indeed hardly distinct figures; they have but a few lines

to utter between them and are only remarkable for the shadow of the purple which continual association with Pururavas has cast over their manner of speech. Manavaca and Ayus need a larger mention, yet they are less interesting in themselves than for their place, one in the history of Kalidasa's artistic development, the other among the finest evidences of his delicacy in portraiture and the scrupulous economy, almost miserliness, with which he extracts its utmost artistic utility, possibility, value from each detail of his drama. The Chamberlain again, fine as he is in his staid melancholy, his aged fidelity, his worn out and decrepit venerableness and that continual suggestion of the sorrowfulness of grey hairs, is still mainly the fine Kalidasian version of a conventional dramatic figure. The one touch that gives him a personal humanity is the sad resignation of his, "It is your will, Sire", when Pururavas, about to depart to asceticism in the forests, commands the investiture of his son. For it is the last and crowning misfortune that the weary old man must bear; the master over whose youth and greatness he has watched, for whose sake he serves in his old age, with the events of whose reign all the memories of his life are bound up, is about to depart and a youthful stranger will sit in his place. With that change all meaning must go out of the old man's existence; but with a pathetic fidelity of resignation he goes out to do his last bidding uttering his daily formula,—now changed in its newly acquired pathos from the old pompous formality, "It is your will, Sire".

(2)

The age of childhood, its charm and sportive grace and candour, seems to have had a peculiar charm for Kalidasa's imagination; there is an exquisite light and freshness of morning and dew about his children; an added felicity of touch, of easy and radiant truth in his dramatic presentation. Kalidasa's marvellous modesty of dramatic effect and power of reproducing ordinary, hardly observable speech, gesture and action, magicalising but not falsifying them, saves him from that embarrassment which most poets feel in dealing dramatically with children. Even Shakespeare disappoints us. This great poet with his rich and complex mind usually finds it difficult to attune himself again to the simplicity, irresponsibility and naive charm of childhood.

Arthur, whom the Shakespeare worshipper would have us regard as a masterpiece, is no real child; he is too *voulu*, too eloquent, too much dressed up for pathos and too conscious of the fine sentimental pose he strikes. Children do pose and children do sentimentalise, but they are perfectly naïve and unconscious about it; they pose with sincerity, they sentimentalise with a sort of passionate simplicity, indeed an earnest businesslikeness which is so sincere that it does not even require an audience. The greatest minds have their limitations and Shakespeare's overabounding wit shuts him out from two Paradises, the mind of a child and the heart of a mother. Constance, the pathetic mother, is a fitting

pendant to Arthur, the pathetic child, as insincere and falsely drawn a portraiture, as obviously dressed up for the part. Indeed throughout the meagre and mostly unsympathetic list of mothers in Shakespeare's otherwise various and splendid gallery there is not even one in whose speech there is the throbbing of a mother's heart; the sacred beauty of maternity is touched upon in a phrase or two; but from Shakespeare we expect something more, some perfect and passionate enshrining of the most engrossing and selfless of human affections. To this there is not even an approach. In this one respect the Indian poet, perhaps from the superior depth and keenness of the domestic feelings peculiar to his nation, outstripped his greater English compeer.

Kalidasa, like Shakespeare, seems to have realised the instinct of paternal tenderness far more strongly than the maternal; his works both dramatic and epic give us many powerful and emotional expressions of the love of father and child to which there are few corresponding outbursts of maternal feeling. Valmikie's Cowshalya has no parallel in Kalidasa. Yet he expresses the true sentiment of motherhood with sweetness and truth if not with passion.

Ayus and Urvasie in this play were certainly not intended for the dramatic picture of mother and child. This mother has abandoned her child to the care of strangers; this child is new to the faces of his parents. Such a situation might easily have been made harsh and unsympathetic, but for the fine dramatic tact of the

poet which has purified everything that might repel and smoothed away all the angles of the incident. But here the circumstances excuse it, not justify Urvasie. Acting under hard conditions, she has chosen the lesser of two evils; for by keeping Ayus she would have lost both her child and Pururavas; by delivering him into wise and tender hands, she has insured his welfare and for her part only anticipated the long parting which the rule of education in ancient India demanded from parents as their sacrifice to the social ideal; but it is not from maternal insensibility that she bears quietly the starvation of the mother within her. Knowing that the child was in good hands she solaces herself with the love of her husband. When he returns to her, there is a wonderful subdued intensity, characteristic of her simple and fine nature, in the force with which that suppressed passion awakes to life; she approaches her son, wordless, but her "veiled bosom heaving towards him and wet with sacred milk"; in her joy over him she forgets even the impending separation from the husband to avert which she has sacrificed the embrace of his infancy. It is this circumstance, not any words, that testifies to the depth of her maternal feeling; her character forbids her to express it in splendours of poetic emotion such as well spontaneously from the heart of Pururavas. A look, a few ordinary words are all; if it were not for these and the observation of others, we should have to live with her daily before we could realise the depth of feeling behind her silence.

Ayus himself is an admirable bit of dramatic craftsmanship. There is a certain critical age when the growing boy is a child on one side of his nature and young man on the other and of all psychological states such periods of transitional unstable equilibrium are the most difficult to render dramatically without making the character either a confused blur or an ill-joined piece of carpenter's work. Here Kalidasa excels. He has the ready tact of speech gradations, the power of simple and telling slightness that can alone meet the difficulty. By an unlaboured and inevitable device the necessary materials are provided. The boy comes straight from the wild green and ascetic forest into the splendours of an Oriental court and the presence of a father and mother whom he has never seen; a more trying situation could not be easily imagined; he inevitably becomes self-conscious, embarrassed, burdened with the necessity of maintaining himself against the oppression of his surroundings. He attempts therefore to disguise his youthful nervousness behind the usual shield of an overdose of formal dignity, a half unconscious pompousness and an air of playing the man. We are even conscious of a slight touch of precocity, etc. Confronted with all these new faces making claims upon him to which his past consciousness is an alien, the whole adult side of his nature turns uppermost. But fortunately for our comprehension of his true state of mind, something of the green forest which is his home has come with him in the person of his fostermother Satyavatie. With her he feels as a child may feel with his mother.

When he turns to her or speaks to her, he is again and instinctively in manner, utterance and action the child who ran by her side clutching the skirts of her dress in the free woodland. He speaks like a child, thinks like a child, acts docilely at her bidding like a child. Nothing could be more finely artistic in execution or more charmingly faithful to nature in its conception.

Vasuluxmie in the *Malavica* does not even appear on the stage, yet in that urbane and gracious work there is nothing more charming than her two fateful irruptions into the action of the play. They bring up a picture of the laughing light-hearted and innocent child, which remains with us as vividly as the most carefully-drawn character in the piece. The scene of the child playing with the lion's cub in the *Shacountala* has the same inevitable charm; ninety-one poets out of a hundred would have hopelessly bungled it, but in Kalidasa's hands it becomes so admirably life-like and spontaneous that it seems as natural as if the child were playing with a kitten.

Manavaca on the other hand is an element of weakness rather than of strength. I have already spoken of the progressive attenuation of the traditional buffoon part which keeps pace with Kalidasa's dramatic development. Gautama in the *Malavica* is a complete and living personality who has much to say to the action of the plot; witty, mischievous, mendacious and irresponsible, he adds to the interest of the play even independently of this functional importance. But in the *Urvasie* to have made the main action of the plot turn in any way on the buffoon

would have been incongruous with the high romantic beauty of the drama and therefore a serious dramatic error. The function of Manavaca is accordingly reduced to that of an interlocutor; he is there because Pururavas must have somebody to confide in and talk with, otherwise his only dramatic purpose is to give rise by his carelessness to the episode of Aushinarie's jealousy and self-subdual. Nevertheless his presence affects the composite tone of the picture. He is other than the buffoons of the *Malavica* and *Shacountala*, far more coarse in the grain, far less talented and high-spirited than Gautama, yet not a stupid block. He has, along with the stock characteristics of gluttony, ugliness and cowardice, an occasional coarse humour, infertile and broad, and even a real gift of commonsense and rather cynical practicality, to say nothing of that shadow of the purple flung across the speech of all those who associate habitually with Pururavas; he is at the same time low in mind, unable to understand characters higher than his own. His best virtue is perhaps the absence of all pretentions and readiness to make a gibe of himself. Such a figure necessarily tends to set off by its drab colour and equal dimensions the lyric idealism of Pururavas, the radiant charm of Urvasie and the pale loftiness of the Queen. But it is by his place in the picture and not what he is in himself that he justifies his existence. He does not attract or interest, indeed he at times only just escapes being tiresome. At the same time he lives.

Among all these minor figures who group themselves

around the two protagonists and are of purely accessory interest, there is one who stands out and compels the eye by her nobler proportions and her independent personality. Queen Aushinarie has no real claim by any essentiality in her action on the large space she occupies in the play; her jealousy does not retard and her renunciation sanctifies rather than assists the course of Pururavas' love for Urvasie. The whole episode in which she figures fits more loosely into the architecture of the play than can be exampled elsewhere in Kalidasa's dramatic workmanship. The interest of her personality justifies the insertion of the episode rather than the episode that justifies the not inconsiderable space devoted to her. The motif of her appearance is the same conventional element of wifely rivalry, the jealousy of the rose-in-bloom against the rose-in-bud that has formed the whole groundwork of the *Malavica*. There the groundwork, here its interest is brief and episodical. And yet none of the more elaborated figures in the earlier play, not even Dharinie herself, is as fine and deep a conception as the wife of Pururavas. Princess of Kashie, daughter of the Ushinars, acknowledged by her rival to deserve by right of her noble majesty of fairness the style of Goddess and of Empress, we feel that she has a right to resent the preference to her even of an Apsara from heaven and the completeness of Pururavas' absorption in Urvasie gives a tragic significance to her loss which is not involved in the lighter loves and jealousies of Vidisha. The character is more profoundly and boldly conceived. The passion of her love strikes deeper than the

mere heyday of youth and beauty and the senses in Iravatie, as the noble sadness of her self-renunciation moves more powerfully than the kind and gentle wilfulness of Queen Dharinie. And in the manner of her delineation there is more incisiveness, restraint with a nobler economy of touch. The rush of her jealousy comes with less of a storm than Iravatie's but it has fierier and keener edge and it is felt to be the disguise of a deep and mighty love. The passion of that love leaps out in the bitter irony of her self-accusal:

Not yours the guilt, my lord. I am in fault
Who force my hated and unwelcome face
Upon you.

And again when in the very height of her legitimate resentment she has the sure consciousness of her after-repentance:

And yet the terror
Of the remorse I know that I shall feel
If I shun his kindness, frightens me.

Anger for the time sweeps her away, but we are prepared for the repentance and sacrifice in the next act. Even in her anger she has been imperially strong and restrained and much of the poetic force of her renunciation comes from the perfect sweetness, dignity and self-control with which she acts in that scene. The emotion of self-

sacrificing love breaks out only once at the half-sneering reproach of the buffoon:

Dull fool!
I with the death of my own happiness
Would give my husband ease. From this consider
How dearly I love him.

Putting gently but sorrowfully away from her the king's half-sincere protestations of abiding love, she goes out of the drama, a pure, devoted and noble nature, clad in gracious white and sylvanly adorned with flowers, her raven tresses spangled with young green of sacred grass; yet the fragrance of her flowers, of sacrifice and the mild beauty of the moonlight remain behind her. She does not reappear unless it is in the haste of Urvasie to bring her recovered child to his "elder mother". This haste with its implied fulness of gratitude and affection is one of Kalidasa's careful side-touches to tell us better than words that in spirit and letter she has fulfilled utterly the vow she made on the moonlit terrace under seal of

The divine wife and husband, Rohinie
And Mrigalanchan named the spotten moon.

The deepening of moral perception, the increase in power and pathos, the greater largeness of drawing and finer emotional strength and restraint show the advance

Kalidasa has made in dramatic characterisation. Grace, sweetness, truth to life and character, perfect and delicate workmanship, all that reveals the presence of the artist were his before; but the *Urvasie* reveals a riper and larger genius widening the scope, raising mightier vans before yet it takes its last high and surpassing flight.

IV

APSARAS

THERE is nothing more charming, more attractive in Kalidasa than his instinct for sweet and human beauty; everything he touches becomes the inhabitant of a moon-lit world of romance and yet—there is the unique gift, the consummate poetry—remains perfectly natural, perfectly near to us, perfectly human. Shelley's *Witch of Atlas* and Keat's *Cynthia* are certainly lovely creations, but they do not live; misty, shimmering, uncertain, seen in some half-dream where the moon is full and strange indefinable shapes begin to come out from the skirts of the forest; they charm our imagination, but our hearts take no interest in them. They are the creations of the mystic Celtic imagination with its singular intangibility, its fascinating other-worldliness. The Hindu has been always decried as a dreamer and mystic. There is truth in the charge but also a singular inaccuracy. The Hindu mind, in one sense, is the most concrete in the world. It seeks after abstraction, yet is it never satisfied so long as it remains abstraction. To make the objects and concepts of this world concrete, that is comparatively easy; sun and rain or air are, at their most ethereal, the sublimated *secrets* of matter. The Hindu is not contented till he has seized things behind the

sunlight also as concrete realities. He is passionate for the infinite, the unseen, the spiritual, but he will not rest satisfied with conceiving them, he insists on mapping the infinite, on seeing the unseen, on visualising the spiritual. The Celt throws his imagination into the infinite and is rewarded with beautiful phantoms, out of which he evolves a pale, mystic and intangible poetry. The Hindu sends his heart and his intellect and eventually his whole being after his imagination and for his reward he has seen God and interpreted existence. It is this double aspect of Hindu temperament which is the secret of our civilisation, our religion, our life and literature; extreme spirituality successfully attempting to work in harmony with extreme materialism. On the one side we spiritualise the material out of all but a phenomenal and illusory existence, on the other we materialise the spiritual in the most definite and realistic forms; this is the secret of the high philosophic idealism which to the less capable European seems so impossible an atmosphere and of the prolific idolatry which to the dogmatic and formalising Christian seems so gross. In any other race-temperament this mental division would have split into two broadly disparate or opposing types and attempts at compromise comprising action and reaction would have built up the history of thought. In the myriad-minded and undogmatic Hindu it worked not mental division, but as the first discord which prepares for a consistent harmony; the best and most characteristic Hindu thought regards either tendency as essential

to the perfect and subtle comprehension of existence; they are considered the positive and negative sides of one truth, and must both be grasped if we are not to rest in a half light. Hence the entire tolerance of the Hindu religion to all intellectual attitudes except sheer libertinism; hence also the marvellous perfection of grades in thought-attitudes which the Hindu mind travels between the sheer negative and the sheer positive and yet sees in them only a ladder of progressive and closely related steps rising through relative conceptions to one final and absolute knowledge.

The intellectual temperament of a people determines the main character-stamp of its poetry. There is therefore no considerable poet in Sanscrit who has not the twofold impression (spiritual and romantic in aim, our poetry is realistic in method), who does not deep his feet on the ground even while his eyes are with the clouds. The soaring lark who loses himself in light, the ineffectual angel beating his luminous wings in the void are not denizens of the Hindu plane of temperament. Hence the expectant critic will search ancient Hindu literature in vain for the poetry of mysticism; that is only to be found in recent Bengali poetry which has felt the influence of English models. The old Sanscrit poetry was never satisfied unless it could show colour, energy and definiteness, and these are things incompatible with true mysticism. Even the Upanishads which declare the phenomenal world to be unreal, yet have a rigidly practical aim and labour in every line to make the indefinite definite and the abstract concrete.

But of all our great poets Kalidasa best exemplifies this twynatured Hindu temperament under the conditions of supreme artistic beauty and harmony. Being the most variously learned of Hindu poets he draws into his net all our traditions, ideas, myths, imaginations, allegories, the grotesque and the trivial as well as the sublime and the lovely, but touching them with the magic wand teaches them to live together in the harmonising atmosphere of his poetic temperament. Under his slight touch the grotesque becomes strange, wild and romantic, the trivial refines into a dainty and gracious slightness, the sublime yields to the law of romance, acquires a mighty grace, a strong sweetness; and what was merely lovely attains power, energy and brilliant colour. His creations in fact live in a peculiar light, which is not the light that never was on sea or land but rather our ordinary sunshine recognisable though strangely and beautifully altered. The alteration is not real; rather our vision is affected by the recognition of something the sunbeams concealed and yet the cause of the sunbeams; but it is human sunlight we see always. May we not say it is that luminousness behind the veil of this sunlight which is the heaven of Hindu imagination and in all Hindu work shines through it without overpowering it? Hindu poetry is the only Paradise in which the lion can lie down with the lamb.

The personages of Kalidasa's poetry are with but few exceptions gods and demigods or skiey spirits, but while they preserve a charm of wonder, sublimity or weirdness, they are brought on to our own plane of experience, their

speech and thought and passion is human. This was the reason alleged by the late Bankim Chandra Chatterji, himself a poet and a critic of fine and strong insight, for preferring the *Birth of the War-God* to *Paradise Lost*; he thought that both epics were indeed literary epics of the same type, largely planned and sublime in subject, diction and thought, but that the Hindu poem, if less grandiose in its pitch, had in a high degree the humanism and sweetness of simple and usual feeling in which the *Paradise Lost* is more often than not deficient. But the humanism of which I speak is not the Homeric naturalism; there is little of the sublime or romantic in the essence of the Homeric gods though there is much of both in a good many of their accidents and surroundings. But Kalidasa's divine and semidivine personages lose none of their godhead by living on the plane of humanity. Perhaps the most exquisite masterpiece in this kind is the *Cloud Messenger*. The actors in that beautiful love-elegy might have been chosen by Shelley himself; they are two lovers of Faeryland—a cloud, rivers, mountains, the gods and demigods of air, hill and sky. The goal of the cloud's journey is the ethereal city of Alaka crowned by the clouds upon the golden hill and bathed at night in the unearthly moonlight that streams from the brow of Shiva, the mystic's God. The earth is seen mainly as a wonderful panorama by one travelling on the wings of a cloud. Here are all the materials for one of those intangible harmonies of woven and luminous mist with which Shelley allures and baffles us. The personages and scenery are

those of *Queen Mab*, of *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Witch of Atlas*. But Kalidasa's city in the mists is no evanescent city of sunlit clouds; it is his own beautiful and luxurious Ujjayini idealised and exempted from mortal afflictions; like a true Hindu he insists on translating the ideal into the terms of the familiar, sensuous and earthy.

For death and birth keep not their mystic round
In Ullaca[1], *there from the deathless trees*
The blossom lapses never to the ground
But lives for ever garrulous with bees
All honey-drunk—nor yet its sweets resign.
For ever in their girdling companies...

And when he comes to describe the sole mourner in that town of delight and eternal passion unsated, this is how he describes her, how human, how touching, how common it all is! While we read, we feel ourselves kin to and one with a more beautiful world than our own. These creatures of fancy hardly seem to be an imaginary race but rather ourselves removed from the sordidness and the coarse pains of our world, into a more gracious existence. This, I think, is the essential attraction which makes his countrymen to this day feel such a passionate delight in Kalidasa; after reading a poem of his the world and life and our fellow creatures human, animal or inanimate have become suddenly more beautiful and dear to us than they were before; the heart flows out towards birds and beasts and the very trees seem to be drawing

[1] Alaka

us towards them with their branches as if with arms; the vain cloud and the senseless mountain are no longer senseless or empty, but friendly intelligences that have a voice to our souls. Our own common thoughts, feelings, and passions have also become suddenly fair to us, they have received the sanction of beauty. And then through the passion of delight and the sense of life and of love in all beautiful objects we reach to the Mighty Spirit behind them whom our soul recognizes no longer as an object of knowledge or of worship but as her lover to whom she must fly, leaving her husband, the material life and braving the jeers and reprobation of the world for His sake. Thus by a singular paradox, one of those beautiful oxymorons of which the Hindu temperament is full, we reach God through the senses, just as our ancestors did through the intellect and through the emotions; for in the Hindu mind all roads lead eventually to the Rome of its longing, the dwelling of the Most High God. One can see how powerfully Kalidasa's poetry must have prepared the national mind for the religion of the Puranas, for the worship of Kali, our Mother and of Sri Krishna, of Vrinddavan, our soul's Paramour. Here indeed lies his chief claim to rank with Valmiki and Vyasa as one of our three national poets, in that he gathered the mind-life of the nation into his poetry at a great and critical moment and helped it forward into the groove down which it must henceforth run.

This method is applied with conspicuous beauty and success in the *Urvasie*. The Apsaras are the most beautiful

and romantic conception on the lesser plane of Hindu mythology. From the moment that they arose out of the waters of the milky Ocean, robed in ethereal raiment and heavenly adornment, waking melody from a million lyres, the beauty and light of them has transformed the world. They crowd in the sunbeams, they flash and gleam over heaven in the lightnings, they make the azure beauty of the sky; they are the light of sunrise and sunset and the haunting voices of forest and field. They dwell too in the life of the soul; for they are the ideal pursued by the poet through his lines, by the artist shaping his soul on his canvas, by the sculptor seeking a form in the marble; for the joy of their embrace the hero flings his life into the rushing torrent of battle; the sage, musing upon God, sees the shining of their limbs and falls from his white ideal. The delight of life, the beauty of things, the attraction of sensuous beauty, this is what the mystic and romantic side of the Hindu temperament strove to express in the Apsara. The original meaning is everywhere felt as a shining background, but most in the older allegories, especially the strange and romantic legend of Pururavas as we first have it in the Brahmanas and the Vishnoupurana.

But then came in the materialistic side of the Hindu mind and desired some familiar term, the earthlier the better, in which to phrase its romantic conception: this was found in the Hetaira. The class of Hetaira was as recognised an element in the Hindu society as in the Greek, but it does not appear to have exercised quite so large an influence in social life. As in the Greek counterpart they

were a specially learned and accomplished class of women, but their superiority over ladies of good families was not so pronounced; for in ancient India previous to the Mahomedan episode respectable women were not mere ignorant housewives like the Athenian ladies, but often they were educated though not in a formal manner; that is to say, they went through no systematic training such as men had, but parents were always expected to impart general culture and accomplishments to them by private tution at home; singing, music, dancing and to some extent painting were the ordinary accomplishments. General knowledge of morality and Scripture tradition was imperative and sometimes the girls of highborn, wealthy or learned families received special instruction in philosophy or mathematics. Some indeed seem to have pursued a life of philosophic learning either as virgins or widows; but such instances were in pre-Buddhistic times very rare. The normal Hindu feeling has always been that the sphere of woman is in the home and her life incomplete unless merged in her husband's. In any case, the majority of the *kulavadhus*, women of respectable families, could hardly be more than amateurs in the arts and sciences, whereas with the Hetaira (Ganikas) such accomplishments were pursued and mastered as a profession. Hence beside their ordinary occupation of singing and dancing in the temples and on great public occasions such as coronations and holy days, they often commanded the irregular affections of highborn or wealthy men who led openly a double life at home with the wife, outside with the Hetaira.

As a class, they held no mean place in society; for they must not be confused with the strolling actor or mountebank caste who were a proverb for their vileness of morals. Many of them, no doubt, as will inevitably happen when the restraints of society are not recognized, led loose, immoral and sensual lives; in such a class Lais and Phryne must be as common as Aspasia. Nevertheless the higher and intellectual element seems to have prevailed; those who arrogated freedom in their sexual relations but were not prostitutes are admirably portrayed in Vasantasena of the *Toy Cart*, a beautiful melodrama drawn straight from the life; like her they often exchanged, with the consent of their lover's family, the unveiled face of the Hetaira for the seclusion of the wife. This class both in its higher and lower type lasted late into the present century, both are now under the auspices of western civilisation almost entirely replaced by a growing class of professional prostitutes, an inevitable consummation which it seems hardly worth while to dub social reform and accelerate by an active crusade.

The Apsaras then are the divine Hetaira of Paradise, beautiful singers and actresses whose beauty and art relieve the arduous and world-long struggle of the Gods against the forces that tend towards disruption by the Titans who would restore Matter to its original atomic condition or of dissolution by the sages and hermits who would make phenomena dissolve prematurely into the One who is above Phenomena. They rose from the Ocean, says Valmikie, seeking who should choose them as

brides, but neither the Gods nor the Titans accepted them, therefore are they said to be common or universal.

We shall now understand why the Apsara is represented as the Hetaira of heaven. They represent all that is sensuous, attractive or voluptuous in the Universe, the element of desire which, being unspiritual and non-moral, finds its sphere in the satisfaction of the senses of beauty and for that satisfaction needs freedom.

We see then the appropriateness of the Hetaira as a material form into which the vague idea of sensuous beauty in the world might run. For the charm of the Apsara even when working on the plane of the mind, is still vital and sensational; it does not belong to the more rarefied regions of the spirit. Now vital and sensational charm in seeking its fulfilment demands that the pursuit of sensuous beauty shall be its sole object, that it shall be without check as without any side-glance or after-thought; it does not seek to be immoral, but simply rejects all moral tests; it recognizes no law but the fulfilment of its own being. This is the very spirit of the Hetaira. The beauty of nakedness sculptured, painted or shaped into words, is not immoral. For the moment we apply the test of morality, it becomes clear that we must either rule it out as not belonging to the world of morality or rule out morality itself for the moment as not belonging to the world of beauty, which is essentially a world of nakedness, in the sense that dress there is an occasional ornament, not a necessary covering; not because there is any essential opposition between them, but because there

is no essential connection or necessary point of contact. Ideals of all the plastic and sensuous arts fall within the scope of the Apsara; she is actress, songstress, musician, painter. When they arose from the waves neither the gods nor the demons accepted them as wives; accepted by none they became common to all; for neither the great active faculties of man nor the great destructive recognize sensuous delight and charm as their constant and sufficient mistress, but rather as the joy and refreshment of an hour, an accompaniment or diversion in their constant pursuit of the recognized ideal to which they are wedded. Moreover sensuous beauty has a certain attraction and splendour which seem to some minds finally, and occasionally to most, fairer and brighter than that other ideal which by daily occupation with it, by permissibility and by sameness, grows stale for some, fades into homeliness and routine for others and preserves its real, undying, unageing and unforsakeable freshness and delight only to the few constant and unswerving souls, who are the elect of our human evolution. In all this the idea of the Apsara coincides with the actuality of the Hetaira. In choosing the Hetaira therefore for the Apsara's earthly similitude, the Hindu mind showed once more that wonderful mythopoeic penetrativeness which is as unerring and admirable in its way as the Greek mythopoeic felicity and tact.

When Narayana, the primeval and dateless sage of old entered upon austerities in the most secret and desolate recesses of the Snowy Mountains, Indra, prince of the air, always hostile to asceticism, always distrustful

of the philosophic and contemplative spirit, was alarmed for the balance of the world and the security of his own rule. He therefore sent the Apsaras to disturb the meditations of Narayana. Then upon the desolate Himalaya Spring set the beauty of his feet; the warm south wind breathed upon those inclement heights, blossoming trees grew in the eternal snow and the voice of the cuckoo was heard upon the mountain tops. It was amidst these vernal sweetnesses that the Apsaras came to Narayana; they were the loveliest of all the sisterhood, and subtlest and most alluring of feminine arts and enchantments was the way of their wooing; but Narayana who is Vishnu the World-Saviour when he comes in the guise of the ascetic, moved neither by the passion of love nor by the passion of anger, smiled in the large and indulgent mood of his world-embracing nature and opening his thigh took from it a radiant and marvellous creature, of whose beauty the loveliest Apsaras seemed but pale and broken reflections. Ashamed they veiled their faces and stole silently away from the snowy hermitage. But Narayana called this daughter of his creation Urvasie (she who lies in the thigh of the Supreme, the thigh being the seat of sensuousness) and gave her to Indra to be his most potent defence against the austerities of spiritual longing.

And yet the work of the philosophic mind incidentally serves sensuous and material life by increasing its resources and the depth of its charm. For the power of the philosophic ideals which have profoundly affected humanity is not limited to the domain of the intellect

but also affects, enlarges and strengthens man's aesthetic outlook upon the world. The sensuous world becomes fuller of beauty, richer in colours, shades and suggestions, more profound and attractive with each widening of the human ideal. It is Urvasie who sprang from the thigh of the withered hermit cold and not any of those original daughters of the inconstant waves who is the loveliest and most dangerous of the Apsaras.

* * *

In dramatic tone and build therefore this is an admirable creation, but there is so far no hint of the world-wide divineness of Urvasie, of the goddess within the woman. In direct allegory Kalidasa was too skilful an artist to deal, but we expect the larger conception of this beautiful and significant figure to enter into or at least colour the dramatic conception of the woman; some pomp of words, some greatness of gesture, some large divinity whether of speech or look to raise her above a mere nymph, however charming, into the goddess we know. Yet in rigidly excluding the grandiose or the coloured Kalidasa has shown, I think, his usual unerring dramatic and psychological tact. Dramatically, to have made both Pururavas and Urvasie equally dramatic in spirit and diction, to have clothed both in the external purple of poetry would have been to offend the eye with unrelieved gorgeousness and converted the play from an interesting and skilfully woven drama into a confused splendour of lyrical dialogue. Psychologically, the divinity

and universal charm of Urvasie would have been defaced rather than brought out by investing her with grandeur of feeling or a pomp of poetic ornament. Perfect beauty has in it a double aspect, its intrinsic self and the impression it makes on the vivid and receptive mind. In itself it is simple, unconscious and unadorned, most effective when it is most naked; ceasing to be these, it loses its perfection and a great part of its universal charm. The nude human figure in painting and sculpture, unadorned magic or strength of style and conception in poetry, clear, luminous and comprehensive thought in philosophy, these are what the pursuing human spirit feels to be ideal, highest, most worthy of itself. Drapery blurs the effulgence of the goddess, ornament distracts the spirit and disappoints it of its engrossed and undisturbed sense of possession. On the other hand, the mind while most moved by what is simple and natural in its appeal, is romantic in its method of receiving the impression; becoming engrossed and steeped with the idea of it, it directs to it and surrounds it with all the fresh impressions that continually flow in on the consciousness, gathers from it colour, fire and passion, creates around it a host of splendid associations and clothes it in the pomp of its own passionate imagery. The first period of a literary race when its mind is yet virgin and has to create beauty, is invariably simple and classical, the last period when its mind is saturated and full of past beauty is always romantic and aesthetic. The relations of Urvasie and Pururavas are true to this

psychological principle. She herself is mere beauty and charm sufficient to itself and commanding delight and worship because she is herself, not because of any graces of expression, imagination, intellectual profundity. But the mind of Pururavas receiving her pure and perfect image steeps her in its own fire and colour, surrounding her with a halo of pomp and glory which reveals himself while seeking to interpret her.

Section Three

MALAVICA AND THE KING

(Rough Draft)

A Play by Kalidasa in Five Acts

Scene: The Palace in Vidisha

Personages:

Agnimitra:	*King of Vidisha, son of Puspamitra, Commander-in-chief and afterwards supplanter of the Maurya Dynasty in Vidisha*
Vahataka:	*Prime minister of Vidisha*
Gautama:	*The Brahmin Buffoon, companion of the King*
Ganadasa] Haradutta]	*Ministers of acting, drama and opera, the one entertained by Queen Dharinie, the other by the King*
Dharinie:	*Queen of Vidisha*
Iravatie:	*Second and hitherto favourite wife of Agnimitra*
Malavica:	*A princess of the Vidurbhan house*
Vacoolavalica:	*A handmaid of Queen Dharinie*
Comudica:	*Her friend*
Coushiquie:	*Widow of the Vidurbhan minister, become a religious mendicant*

JAYASENA: *Keeper of the door in the royal seraglio*
NIPOUNICA: *Handmaid and companion of Iravatie*

ACT I

SCENE I

The Palace Grounds. Outside the Hall of Music

INVOCATION

The One who is Almighty, he who showers
Upon his worshippers all wealth, all joy,
Yet wears himself a hide, nought richer; who
With his beloved is one body, and yet
The first of passionless ascetics stands;
Who in his eightfold form bears up the world,
Yet knows not egoism, he from you
Remove your darkness and reveal the light,
The paths of righteousness to reillume.

After the invocation the Manager speaks
Enter Assistant-Manager

MANAGER

Here, friend.

ASSISTANT-MANAGER

Behold me!

MANAGER

By the audience I am bid
To stage this high Mayday carnival to stage
The drama of Malavica and the King
Plotted by Kalidasa. Therefore begin
The overture.

ASSISTANT-MANAGER

Why, sir, this is most strange!
Are there not classics old, are there not works
of Bhasa and Saumilla, famous plays,
Great Kaviputra's name and others many
That thus the audience honours, all these scorned,
A living poet's work?

MANAGER

Not well hast thou
Spoken in this, nor like a judging man.
For think, not all that's old is therefore good,
Nor must a poem straightway be condemned
Because 'tis new. The critic watches, hears,
Weighs patiently, then judges, but the fool
Follows opinion's beaten way and walks
By other's seeing.

ASSISTANT-MANAGER

Well, sir, you are the judge.

MANAGER

Haste then. I am all eagerness,
[For ever since I took upon my head
The learned audience' will, I have no ease
Until it is performed, even as yon maiden,
Queen Dharinie's attendant makes speed
Light-footed to her royal mistress' will.][1]

Exeunt. Enter Vacoolavalika

VACOOLAVALICA

My lady bids me seek out Ganadasa
[Her Master of the Stage, from him to learn
How in the Dance of Double Entendre progresses
Our Malavica, a recent scholar yet][2]
Here in this Hall of Music.

Enter another handmaid with a ring in her palm

Comudica,
What, have you taken to religion then
Or why do you sail past me with an eye
Abstracted, not one glance for me?

[1] Being to the audience' will already pledged,
To absolve me, even as yonder maidens are,
Attendants of Queen Dharinie to do her will.

[2] Her Master of the Stage and know from him
How Malavica in her recent study
Progresses of the dance called Mime Antique

COMUDICA

Forgive me,
[Vacoolavalika! I was absorbed
In this delightful jewel—on this ring
Fresh from the jeweller's hands for our great lady
Look 'tis a Python seal!][1]
Therefore I have offended.

VACOOLAVALICA

O Heavens, how lovely!
Well might you have no eyes for aught else, look!
Your fingers are all blossoming with the jewel!
The rays of light are golden filaments
Just breaking out of bud.

COMUDICA

Whither bound?

VACOOLAVALICA

To our stage master. Our lady seeks to know
What sort of pupil Malavica proves,
How quick to learn.

[1] I was absorbed in the delightful jewel—
Look! 'tis a Python seal! here on this ring
Just ready from the jeweller's for the Queen.

COMUDICA

Oh! is it true, the rumour
That Malavica by this study kept
Far from his eye, was by our lord the King
Seen lately?

VACOOLAVALICA

Seen—but in a picture, close
Beside my lady.

COMUDICA

How did it chance?

VACOOLAVALICA

I will tell you.
My lady in the painting-school was seated
Studying the marvellous colours that enhue
The Master's great design—when suddenly
My lord comes on her.

COMUDICA

Well, what followed?

VACOOLAVALICA

Greeting.
Then sitting down by her he scanned the painting,
There saw of all the attendants Malavica
Nearest the Queen and asked of her.

COMUDICA

His words?

VACOOLAVALICA

"This face the like of which I not remember,
And yet she stands just by you—who is she?"

COMUDICA

Beauty's indeed a magnet to the affections
And seizes at first sight. My lady?

VACOOLAVALICA

Made
No answer: he in some astonishment
Urged her with questions. Then my lady's sister
The princess Vasouluxmy all in wonder
Breaks out "Why, brother, this is Malavica!"

COMUDICA

Oh, good! How like the child's sweet innocence!
Afterwards?

VACOOLAVALICA

Why, what else? Since then still more
Is Malavica from the royal eye
Kept close secluded.

COMUDICA

Well, I should not stop you
Upon your errand. I too will to my lady
Carry this ring. *Exit.*

VACOOLAVALICA

Who comes out from the Hall
Of Music? Oh 'tis Ganadasa himself.
I will accost him.

Enter Ganadasa

GANADASA

Each worker, doubtless, his own craft exalts
Practised by all his sires before him: yet not
A mere vainglory is the drama's praise.
For drama is to the immortal Gods
A sacrifice of beauty visible.
The Almighty in his body most divine
Where Male and Female join, disparted it
Twixt sweet and terrible. Drama unites
In one fair view the whole conflicting world,
Pictures man's every action, his complex
Emotions infinite makes harmony;
So that each temperament in its own taste
Howsoever various, gathers from the stage,
Rapt with some pleasing echo of itself,

Peculiar pleasure. Thus one selfsame art
Meets in their nature's wants most various minds.

VACOOLAVALICA

Obeisance to the noble Ganadasa!

GANADASA

Live long, my child.

VACOOLAVALICA

My lady sent me, sir,
To ask how Malavica makes progress. Sir,
Does she learn quickly yet?

GANADASA

Tell my lady,
No swifter brain, no apter delicate taste
Has ever studied with me. In one word,
Whate'er emotion to the dance translated
I show the child, that she improvising seems
To teach the teacher.

VACOOLAVALICA

(*aside*)

Victory! I foresee
Iravatie already conquered! (*aloud*) Sir,

That pupil gains the very aim of study
Of whom her master says so much.

GANADASA

Vacoola,
Because such genius is most rare, I ask thee:
Whence did my lady bring this matchless wonder?

VACOOLAVALICA

The brother of my lady in a womb
Less noble got, who for my lord commands
His watchful frontier fortress by the stream
Mundaquinie, Virasena to his great sister,
For mistresshood and office in the Arts
Deemed worthy, sent her.

GANADASA

(*aside*)

So rare her form and face,
Her nature too so modest and so noble,
I cannot but conceive that of no mean
Material was composed this beauty. (*Aloud*) Child,
I shall be famous by her! The Master's art
Into a brilliant mind projected turns
To power original, as common rain
Into the ocean-harboured shell
Empearls and grows a rareness.

VACOOLAVALICA

Where is she, sir?

GANADASA

Tired with much study in the five parts of gesture
She rests yonder enjoying the cool breezes
Beside the window that o'erlooks the lake.
Seek for your friend.

VACOOLAVALICA

Sir, will you permit me
To tell her how much you are pleased with her?
Such praise will be a spur indeed.

GANADASA

Go, child.
Embrace your friend. I too will to my house
Taking the boon of this permitted leisure.

Exeunt.

SCENE 2

A room in the palace. The King seated with the minister Vahataka in attendance on him. Vahataka reading a letter. The King's attendants stand apart at one side.

AGNIMITRA

(*seeing that the Minister has finished reading the letter*)

Well, Vahataka, what answers the Vidurbhan?

VAHATAKA

His own destruction!

AGNIMITRA

I would hear the letter.

VAHATAKA

Thus runs his present missive:—In these terms
Your Highness has sent to me; "Madhavasena,
Thy father's brother's son, bound to my court
For the fulfilment of contracted bonds,
Within thy dungeons lies: for by the way
The governor of thy frontiers leaped on him
And harried. Therefore if thou regardest me,
Him with his wife and sister straight unbind".
To which I answer thus; "Your Highness knows
What conduct kings should use to princes born
Their equals. In this quarrel then I look
From your great name for just neutrality.
Touching his sister, she in the quick scuffle
Of capture disappeared, whom to seek out
I shall not want in my endeavours. But if

Your Highness must indeed release my cousin,
Then hear my only terms. First from your dungeons
The Premier of the Maurya princes loose
And brother of my queen; this done, at once
Are Madhavasena's farther bonds excused."

AGNIMITRA

(*enraged*)

How! dares the weakling trade with me in favour?
Knows he himself so little? Vahataka,
Command towards Vidurbha the division
That under Virasena new-mobilized
Stands prompt to arms. I will exterminate
This man who rises up my enemy.
Vidurbha was my natural foeman first,
Grows such in action.

VAHATAKA

As my lord wills.

AGNIMITRA

Vahataka, but what thinkst thou of it?

VAHATAKA

Your Highness speaks by the strict rule of Statecraft:[1]
Then is a foeman easiest to pluck out

[1] Your Highness speaks within the rules of policy:

When new upon his throne; for then his roots
Have not sunk deep into his people's hearts,
And he is like an infant shooting tree
Loose in its native earth, soon therefore uprooted.

AGNIMITRA

Wise is the Tantra's author and his word
A gospel. Let us seize this plea to set
Our war in motion.

VAHATAKA

I will so give order.

(*Exit Vahataka, the attendants take their places according to their offices; enter Gautama.*)

GAUTAMA

(*to himself*)

Now can I tell the King that not in vain
He sought for my assistance: "Gautama", he said
Calling me, "know you not some exquisite cunning
By which the face of Malavica seen
At first by chance on a dumb counterfeit
With the dear life may bless my vision?" Well,
By this I have planned somewhat worth the telling.

AGNIMITRA

Here comes my Premier in another field
Of policy.

GAUTAMA

Hail to the King.

AGNIMITRA

Be seated.
Well, Gautama, and has your eye of wisdom
Caught sight of any plan?

GAUTAMA

Ask me, my lord,
About the accomplishment.

AGNIMITRA

How!

GAUTAMA

In your ear, Sir.

AGNIMITRA

O admirable! Thou hast indeed devised
The cunningest adroitness! Now I dare
To hope for things impossible, since thou
Art of my counsels part. In difficulty
How necessary is a helpful friend;
For when one is befriended, every hindrance
Is turned to ease. Even so without a lamp
The eye beholds not in night's murky gloom
Its usual objects.

VOICE

(*within*)

Enough, enough, thou braggart.
Before the King himself shall be decision
Of less and greater 'twixt us twain.

AGNIMITRA

Listen!
This is the flower of your good tree of counsel!

GAUTAMA

The fruit's not far behind.

Enter Maudgalya

MAUDGALYA

The Premier, Sire,
Announces that Your Highness' will ere this
Is put in motion. Here besides the great
Stage-Masters, Haradutta and Ganadasa,
Storming with anger, mad with emulation,
Themselves like two incarnate passions, ask
To see Your Highness.

AGNIMITRA

Admit them.

MAUDGALYA

'Tis done, my lord.

(*Exit and re-enter with Haradutta and Ganadasa*)

This way, this way, noble and worthy signiors.

GANADASA

How quelling-awful in its majesty
Is the great brow and aspect of a King!
For nowise unfamiliar is this face
Of Agnimitra, no, nor stern, but full
Of beauty and kindness, yet with awe I near him.
So Ocean in his vast unresting surge
Stales never, but each changing second brings
New aspects of his grandeur to the eye
That lives with waves even as this kingly brow does
Each time I see it.

HARADUTTA

For 'tis no mortal greatness
But God's own glory in an earthly dwelling.
Lo, I admitted by the janitor
Of princes, led to the foot of his great throne
By one that ever moves near to his lustre,
Feel yet forbidden by his silent glories
That force me to avert my dazzled gaze.

MAUDGALYA

Here is my lord. Approach him, worthies.

BOTH

Hail,
Our sovereign!

AGNIMITRA

Welcome to both. Chairs for these signiors?
What brings into the presence at this hour
Usual to study both the high Stage-Masters?

GANADASA

Sir, hear me! from a great and sacred teacher
My craft was studied. I have justified
My genius in the scenic pomps of dance.
The King and Queen accept me.

AGNIMITRA

Surely I know it.

GANADASA

Yet being what I am, I have been taxed,
Insulted, censured by this Haradutta:
"You are not worth the dust upon my shoes",
Before the greatest subject in the land
Thus did he scorn me.

HARADUTTA

He first began detraction
Crying to me, "As well, sir, might your worship
Compete with me as one particular puddle
Equal itself to Ocean". Therefore, my lord,
Judge twixt my art and his as well in science
As in the execution. Than Your Highness
We cannot ask a more discerning critic
Or just examiner.

GAUTAMA

A good proposal.

GANADASA

First-class. And now, my lord, attend and judge.

AGNIMITRA

A moment's patience, gentlemen. The Queen
Might tax our verdict as a partial judgment.
Therefore in all ways it were better far
She too should watch this trial, Caushiquie
Will give her learned aid.

GAUTAMA

Well urged, my lord.

GANADASA AND HARADUTTA

Your Highness' pleasure shall command our patience.

AGNIMITRA

Then go, Maudgalya, let Her Highness know
All that has chanced and call her to us here
With Caushiquie.

MAUDGALYA

I go, my lord.

(Exit and re-enter with the Queen and Caushiquie)

This way,
My lady Dharinie.

DHARINIE

Good mother, tell me
What do you think of this so sudden passion
Twixt Haradutta and Ganadasa?

CAUSHIQUIE

Idly
You fear your side's defeat, since in no point
Is Ganadasa less than his opponent.[1]

DHARINIE

'Tis so, but the King's favour weighs him down
And wrests pre-eminence to the other.

[1] Is Ganadasa second to his rival.

CAUSHIQUIE

Forget not
That you too bear the style of majesty.
Think that you are an Empress! If fire
From the sun's grace derives his flaming glories,
Night too the imperial darkness solemnises
The moon with splendour.

GAUTAMA

Hawk, hawk, my lord!
Here comes the Queen and with her our own
Back-scratcher in Love's wrestling match, the learned
Dame Caushiquie.

AGNIMITRA

I see her. How fair, how noble
My lady shines adorned with holy symbols
And Caushiquie before her, anchorite.
Religion's self incarnate so might look
When high philosophy comes leading her
Into the hearts of men.

CAUSHIQUIE

Greeting, Your Highness.

AGNIMITRA

Mother, I greet thee.

CAUSHIQUIE

Live a hundred years
Blessed with two queens alike in sweet submission
And mothers of heroic births, the Earth
That bears thy nation and the wife who loves thee.

DHARINIE

Victory to the King!

AGNIMITRA

Welcome, my Queen.
Pray you sit down, good mother. In this collision
Of two great masters, it is just that you
Should take the critic's chair.

CAUSHIQUIE

(*smiling*)

Your Highness seeks
To laugh at me. For who is that mad man
Would leave behind his great metropolis
To test his jewels in some petty village?

AGNIMITRA

No, no! You are the learned Caushiquie,
Then too the Queen and I are both suspect
As partial judges.

GANADASA AND HARADUTTA

This is no less than truth.
Unbiassed is the learned mother's mind.
Her judgment shall, by merit only swayed,
Leave no reserve behind.

AGNIMITRA

Begin debate.

CAUSHIQUIE

Not thus, my lord.
The soul of drama is in its performance,
And not for tilting theories is a field.
What says my lady?

DHARINIE

If I have any voice,
I say I do mislike the whole debate.

GANADASA

Her Highness must not dwarf me in her thinkings,
Misdeeming me inferior to my equal.

GAUTAMA

Come, come, my lady, do not let us lose
The sport of these rams butting each other.
Why should they draw their salaries for nothing?

DHARINIE

You always loved a quarrel.

GAUTAMA

Good mouse, no.
Rather I am your only peacemaker.
When two great elephants go mad with strength
And counter, until one of them is beaten
There's no peace in the forest.

AGNIMITRA

But surely, mother,
You have already seen either's performance,
Judged of their action's each particular
And studied grace in every movement.

CAUSHIQUIE

Surely.

AGNIMITRA

What else is't then of which yet uninstructed
You need conviction?

CAUSHIQUIE

This. One man has art,
Other but science; performance admirable
Distinguishes the first, but in himself

Is rooted and confined, the other's skill
Ranging in swift transmission lightens forth,
[At home inapt and poor: who perfect in both
Him at the head we put of art's instructors.][1]

GAUTAMA

Sirs, you have heard the mother's argument,
The brief and marrow being this that judgment
Goes by your visible proof of good instruction
To shape the pupil in her art.

HARADUTTA

This test
We both approve.

GANADASA

So then it stands, my lady?

DHARINIE

Thus if a pupil, brainless or inapt
Blur in the act the Master's deft instruction,
Rests then the blot upon the Teacher?

[1] Dark at home; but him who is in both
Perfect, to do and teach, we count alone
A master and the head of all his craft.

AGNIMITRA

Madam,
So still 'tis judged. He who a block unworthy
Accepts to hew from it a masterpiece
Shows well the lightness of his wit.

DHARINIE

What more now?
Too much already have I given my lord the rein,
Feeding his eagerness with my indulgence.
Desist, desist; this is an idle movement
And shapes to nothing good.

GAUTAMA

Well said, my lady.
Come, Ganadasa, eat in peace your sweetmeats
Upon the Muses' day, a safe renown
Enjoying while you teach our girls to dance.
But in this path of rugged emulation
To stumble's easy and disgrace expects you.
Caution were good.

GANADASA

Indeed my lady's words
Lend themselves to no other fair construction.
