in his *Kuṭṭanī-mata* a performance of the *Ratnāvalī*, and ascribes the work distinctly to Harṣa; while Yi-tsing, in the last quarter of the 7th century, clearly refers to a dramatisation of the subject of the *Nāgānanda* by Harṣa. That all the three plays are by the same hand is also rendered certain by the almost verbatim repetition of the same Prologue-stanza which praises Harṣa as the author, as well as by the close likeness which exists in all the three plays with regard to theme, treatment, structural peculiarity, parallel situations, kindred ideas, repeated phrases and recurring stanzas.

Although the *Nāgānanda* is somewhat different in character as a drama, the *Priyadarśīkā* and the *Ratnāvalī* are practically variations of a single theme in almost identical form; and the striking similarity of structure, characters and situations is more than merely accidental. Each of the two plays is a four-act Nāṭīkā, and is based on one of the numerous amourettes of the gay and gallant Udayana, famed in legend, whose romantic

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3. Bāṇabhaṭṭa also refers more than once to Harṣa's gifts as a poet (*Harṣa-carita*, ed. Führer, pp. 112-21); and in the Anthologies, as we have already noted, stanzas chiefly from the dramas are attributed to Harṣa.
4. See Jackson, introd. to *Priyadarśīkā*, pp. lxxviii, for a detailed study of the relation of the three plays and examples of parallelisms of style and treatment.
8. In the *Ratnāvalī*, which appears to have been the most current of the three plays, the question of interpolation of stanzas or passages may arise, but the textual corruption in all the three plays is not conspicuous, nor are the variations of such consequence as would justify the assumption of different recensions. Although MSS are abundant, the *Priyadarśīkā* appears to have been comparatively neglected, and only one quotation from it (i. 1) occurs in *Skīm* (i. 114) and only two in the *Dāsarāpaka*. 
adventures, familiar to the audience of the day, made him a suitable hero for the erotic and elegant court-plays of this type. In conformity with the old legend, both the plays exhibit Udayana as the hero, Vasantaka his jester, Vāsavatattā as his chief queen, and Kāñcanamālā as her principal attendant. The two heroines, Sāgarikā and Āraṇyakā, both for the time being so named from the peculiar circumstances of their rescue from the sea and the forest, are indeed not traceable in the legend, but in their conception and presentation, they afford unmistakable parallelism throughout. It is true that the characters of the hero and the chief members of his entourage are, in a large measure, fixed by tradition, but the main action of the two plays centres respectively round the two heroines, who being independent of the legend, could have been developed, not only with originality but also as characters more definitely distinguished from each other; and it is certainly not praiseworthy to create them as replicas with only slight variations. The incidents of the two plays, again, are almost the same in general outline, even to the repetition of similar situations, and are such as one would normally expect in a comedy of court-life, of which the earliest example is found in Kālidāsa’s Mālavikāgni-mitra. They consist of the light-hearted love-intrigue of the king with a lowly maiden of unknown status, their secret meetings chiefly through the help of the jester and the damsel’s friend, the jealousy of the queen (cosi fan tutte!) and her final acceptance of the

1 loke hāri ca vatsarāja-caritam, Prologue-stanza.
2 E.g., the garden-scene in act ii; the avowal of heroine’s hopeless passion; her attempt at suicide; the intrigue which leads, though differently worked out, to the meeting of the lovers; the imprisonment of the jester and the heroine by the queen and their subsequent release; the rescue of the heroine by the king, supposed in each case to be at the point of death; recognition of the heroine as a princess and cousin and acceptance by the queen as a co-wife; announcement of the victory of the royal army at the end, and general rejoicing, etc.—Some of the common tricks of plot are utilised, e.g., the device of the picture, monkey escaping from its cage and causing disturbance (elephant in Kālidāsa and tiger in Bhavabhūti), rescue of the heroine by the hero from a danger, the Vasantotsava and Kaumudi-mahotsava, etc. On some of these motifs in Indian story-telling and drama, see L. H. Gray in WJR, XVIII, 1904, pp. 43 f.
situation in the last act, when the maiden is discovered as her long-lost cousin. In the invention of the plot, therefore, there is perhaps not much opportunity, nor is there much inclination, of showing fertility of imagination, which is confined chiefly to the detailed management of the intrigue. Indeed, the extraordinary similarity of plot-development, however neatly conducted, as well as the close resemblance of the characters, make the one play almost a repetition or recast of the other. The only original feature of the Priyadarśikā is the effective introduction of a play within a play (Garbhāṅka) as an integral part of the action, and its interruption (as in Hamlet) brought on by its vivid reality. But, barring this interesting episode, the Priyadarśikā, by the side of the Ratnāvalī, which is undoubtedly the better play in every respect, is almost superfluous for having hardly any striking incident, character or idea which does not possess its counterpart in its twin-play.

The subject, form and inspiration of the Nāgānanda is different. It is a five-act Nāṭaka, a more serious drama, on the obviously Buddhist legend of the self-sacrifice of Jīmūtavāhana, which is told in the two Sanskrit versions of the Brhatkathā, in a longer and a shorter version in both. The Prologue, however, speaks of a Vidyādhara Jātaka in which the story is found related, but of this work we know nothing. Although the Buddha is invoked in the benedictory stanza, Gaurī is introduced as a deus ex machina, and purely Buddhistic traits are not prominent, except in its central theme of universal benevolence. The benedictory stanza, however, in introducing an erotic note, probably anticipates the general tenor of the play, which brings

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1 Kathā-sarit-s. xxii. 16-257, xc. 3-201; Brhatkathā-m. iv. 50-108, ix. 2. 776-903. A comparative analysis is given in introd. to P. V. Ramanujasvami's ed. of the Nāgānanda (Madras 1932). On the legend see F. D. K. Bosch, De Legende van Jīmūtavāhana in de Sanskrit Litteratur, Leiden 1914 (on Harṣa's treatment of the legend, p. 90 ff).

* From Bāṇa we learn of Harṣa's intention to become a Buddhist, while Yuan Chwang's testimony makes him a Buddhist in old age. Harṣa himself pays homage to Śiva (in Priya and Ratni) and to the Buddha alike; and it is probable that as a king he practised religious toleration.
in an erotic sub-plot on the hero’s love for Malayavatī and connects it with the main quietistic theme of his heroic sacrifice. The episode is a simpler story of love and marriage without much intrigue, but it occupies the first three acts almost entirely, and its tone and treatment show considerable likeness to those of the author’s other two erotic plays, not only in isolated passages, but also in particular situations.¹ The result is that the first three acts are almost completely separated from the last two, which depict the different theme of supreme charity, and on which the chief interest of the drama rests. The one part is not made essential to the development of the other; there is thus no unity of action or balance between the two isolated parts. It is difficult to reconcile also the picture of Jīmūtavāhana’s unlimited benevolence and resolution in the face of death, which draws Garuḍa’s praise of him as the Bodhisattva himself, but during which he does not even think of Malayavatī, with the unnecessary and unrelated preliminary account of him as the conventional lovesick hero, or of Malayavatī as the simple, sentimental heroine. It is not his love which inspires his great act of sacrifice, nor is it rendered difficult by the memory of that love; and an inexplicable hiatus is, therefore, felt when one passes from the one episode to the other. The plot of the drama does not also appear to be as carefully developed as in the other two plays.² The denouement is also weak; for the great sacrifice suggests a real tragedy, and the divine intervention of Gaurī to turn it into a comedy and reward of virtue is an unconvincing artificial device. The free use of the supernatural is, of course, not out of place in the atmosphere of the drama, of which the hero is a Vidyādhara and the heroine is a Siddhā, but it offers too easy a solution of the

¹ Such as the meeting of the lovers in the sandal-bower by the help of the jester, the love-sickness of the heroine, and her attempt to commit suicide, etc.

² E.g. the somewhat unnatural want of curiosity on the part of the lovers to know each other’s identity, even when they had friends at hand who might have enlightened them, or even their ignorance of each other, is inexplicable; the heroine’s melodramatic attempt to commit suicide (repeated from the other two plays) is not sufficiently motivated here, the exit of Śaṅkhacūḍa and his mother in act iv is poorly managed, etc.

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final tragic complication and destroys the grandeur of its appeal. Nor can Harṣa be said to succeed in the comic interlude, apparently introduced for the sake of contrast in the third act; for the Vidūšaka, who is lively enough in the other two plays, is here stupid and vulgar,¹ and the Viṭa a poor sot and sensualist, while the whole passage is a paltry farce or burlesque, rather than a necessary picture of character. Nevertheless, these defects need not altogether negate the real merits of the drama. However strange the setting, the embodiment in Jīmūtavāhana of the high and difficult ideal of self-sacrificing magnanimity, in a romantic atmosphere of pathos and poetry, is not altogether unsuccessful.

If the Nāgānanda had ended with the first three acts, it would have, in spite of a few scattered references to the hero’s generosity, passed for a short comedy of love like the Priyadarśikā and the Ratnāvali. While Harṣa’s power of depicting sentiments other than love is acknowledged, it is clear that he excels in his three plays in his fine gift of delineating the pretty sentiment in pretty environment. Sometimes perhaps he deals with it in a maudlin and melodramatic fashion, but he shows himself capable of treating it with purity and tenderness. His works throughout show unmistakable traces of the influence of the greater dramatists,² but he is a clever borrower, who catches not a little of the inspiration and power of phrasing of his predecessors; and perhaps in light plays of the type he favoured, elegance was more expected than originality. In the Ratnāvali, if not to the same

¹ This late instance of a degraded buffoon does not support Schuyler’s suggestion (JAOS, XX, 1899, p. 399 f.) that the character is a relic of earlier popular plays, allowing as it does full opportunity (which the author as a Buddhist is supposed to have availed himself) of ridiculing the Brahmans.

² Apart from the general outline of the theme, which must have been popularised by Kālidāsa’s Mālavikā,⁶ we find reminiscences of Kālidāsa in the incident of the bees tormenting the heroine, the heroine’s ruse to delay her departure from the sight of her lover, the part played by the jester in bringing about the meeting of the lovers, his talk in sleep revealing the secret, the imprisonment of the heroine, the use of magic spells to counteract the effect of poison, etc. The influence of Svapna-rāsavatīta is not clearly traceable, unless the fire-scene brought about by magic is taken as being suggested by the fire-incident at Lāvaṇaka.
degree in his other two plays, Harṣa is great in lightness, vivacity and sureness of tender touch, although in brilliancy, depth of feeling and real pathos he falls below some of his fellow-dramatists. It is remarkable that even if his Priyadarṣiṅkā and Ratnāvali inexplicably choose the same theme and pattern, they are still separately enjoyable as pretty little plays of light-hearted love, effectively devised and executed. If Kālidāsa supplied the pattern, Harṣa has undoubtedly improved upon it in his own way, and succeeded in establishing the comedy of court-intrigue as a distinct type in Sanskrit drama. The situations are prepared with practised skill; they are admirably conducted, adorned, but not over-embellished, with poetical sentiment and expression, and furnished with living characters and affecting incidents; it is no wonder that the Sanskrit dramaturgists quote the Ratnāvalī, which is undoubtedly Harṣa’s masterpiece, as the standard of a well-knit play. Harṣa is graceful, fluent and perspicuous; he possesses a quaint and dainty, if not original and soaring, fancy, and a gift of writing idyllic and romantic poetry, with frequent felicities of expression and musical cadence.¹ Essentially a decorative artist, he embroiders a commonplace tale with fine arabesques, and furnishes feasts of colour and sound by pictures of a spring or moonlight festival and of refined luxuries and enjoyments of the court-life of his day. But considering his contemporary and protégé, Bāṇa, his style is markedly simple, and his prose is unadorned; the emotional and descriptive comments in the poetical stanzas are neither profuse nor inappropriate. The types of conquering heroes and frail heroines he draws may not possess great appeal, but they have a tender and attractive quality of romance, and their creator does not lack insight into human nature, nor the power of developing

¹ It is notable that unlike earlier dramatists, Harṣa is decidedly fond of employing long and elaborate metres, his favourite metres being the Śārḍūlavikṛḍita and the Śragdharā, which occur quite frequently in all his plays; but his versification is smooth and tuneful. The Prakṛitas employed are mainly Sauraseni and Māhārāṣṭrī; they are easy and elegant but offer no special features.
character by action. There is, however, a certain trimness about Harṣa’s plays, a mastery of technique which is too smooth and unmodulated. They give the impression of a remarkably fine, but even, writer, seldom rising far above or sinking much below a uniform level of excellence. Apart from the importance attached to him as a royal author and patron of authors, Harṣa claims place among the worthies of this period, not so much by any transcendent genius, but by a pleasing gift of delicate workmanship, conscious but not too studied, assured but not too ingenious.

d. Viśākhadatta

Of Viśākhadatta, author of the Mudrā-rākṣasa,¹ we know only what he himself tells us in the Prologue to his play, namely, that he was son of Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta (or according to most manuscripts, Prthu) and grandson of Sāmanta Vaṭeśvaradatta; and in spite of all the conjectures and theories that have centred round his date and personality, we shall probably never know anything more. In the concluding stanza (vii. 21), which, however, is not an integral part of the play but is meant to be spoken by the actor and hence called Bharata-vākya, there is a mention of a king Candragupta, whose kingdom is said to be troubled (udvejyamāna) by the Mlecchas. As a reference to Candragupta Maurya, who is the subject of the play itself, would be unusual in the Bharata-vākya, it is taken as the eulogy of a reigning sovereign; and some scholars are inclined to see² in


² K. P. Jayaswal in IA, XLII, 1913, pp. 265-67; Sten Konow in IA, XLIII, 1914, p. 66 f. and Ind. Drama, p. 70 f.; Hillebrandt in ZDMG, XXXIX, 1889, p. 130 f., LXIX
Viṣākhadatta a contemporary of Candragupta II of the Gupta dynasty (cir. 375-413), and apparently of Kālidāsa. But since the readings Dantivarman, Rantivarman or Avantivarman, instead of Candragupta, are also found, no finality is reached on the question. The first two of these names cannot be traced anywhere; but since two Avantivarmans are known, the author's patron is identified sometimes with the Maukhari king Avantivarman, who flourished in the 7th century and married his son Grahavarman to Harṣavardhana's sister Rājyaśrī, and sometimes with Avantivarman, king of Kashmir, who reigned in the middle of the 9th century. From Hillebrandt's critical edition of the text, however, it appears that the variant Avantivarman is most

1915, p. 363 (4th century A.D.); S. Srikantha Sastri in IHQ, VII, 1931, pp. 163-69. The difficulty, however, of taking the term mleccha in the sense of the Hūnas (even though they are mentioned as allies of Malayaketu in v. 11) and of explaining the word udvecyāmaṇa satisfactorily in terms of the known facts of Candragupta's time should be recognised; while Jayaswal's identification of Pravartaka and Malayaketu are wholly fanciful. J. Charpentier, in JRAS, 1923, p. 586 f. (also IHQ, VII, 1931, p. 629), would, however, take Viṣākhadatta to be a contemporary of one of the last Guptas, probably Samudragupta, but he confesses inability to adduce much historical or literary evidence in support of his theory. Raghu vii. 56 and Śīha i. 47 are adduced as parallels to the stanza in question (vii. 21), as well as Raghu vii. 43 to Mudrā v. 23; but it is admitted that such literary coincidences by themselves are of not much use in fixing a date. The presumption of Konow and Charpentier that the drama must have been composed before the destruction of Pāṇḍaliputra, because the town plays an important part in it, should not be pressed too far in view of the conventional geography which we often find in Sanskrit imaginative writings.—The assumption (JASB, 1930, pp. 241-45) that the drama is a Bengal work is purely gratuitous and conjectural.

1 K. H. Dhruva in WZKM, V. p. 25 f. (2nd half of the 6th century); V. J. Antani in IA, LI, 1922, pp. 49-51. Dhruva rightly points out that the way in which the king of Kashmir is mentioned in the play itself would preclude any reference to Avantivarman of Kashmir.

2 Telang, introd. to his ed.; Jacobi in WZKM, II, pp. 212-16. Jacobi adduces also passages which Ratnākara, who flourished in Kashmir at about the same time, is said to have imitated from the Mudrā; but Dhruva points out that the passages are not conclusive. By astronomical calculation, again, Jacobi would identify the eclipse mentioned in the play as having occurred on December 2, 860 A.D., when, he holds, Śūra, Avantivarman's minister, had the play performed. Some passages from Mudrā occurs, with some variation, in other works, e.g., Mudrā ii. 13=Tantrākhyāyika i. 46; ii. 18=Bhartṛhari's Nīti 27 and Pañcatantra etc., but there is nothing to suggest that Viṣākhadatta could not have utilised the floating stock of Nīti verses, and such passages are of doubtful use in questions of chronology. See also Hertel in ZDMG, LXX, 1916, pp. 133-42; Keith in JRAS, 1909, p. 145 (9th century).
probably a later emendation; and if this is so, the theories based
upon the name lose much of their force. In view of these
difficulties, the problem must still be regarded as unsolved; but
there is nothing to prevent Višākhadatta from belonging to the
older group of dramatists who succeeded Kālidāsa, either as a
younger contemporary, or at some period anterior to the 9th
century A.D.¹

Whatever may be its exact date, the Mudrā-rākṣasa is un-
doubtedly one of the great Sanskrit dramas. In theme, style and
treatment, however, it stands apart from the normal Sanskrit
play, even to a greater degree than the Mṛcchakaṭika. It is part-
ly for its originality that its merits have been even less
appreciated than those of Śūdraka’s play by orthodox Sanskrit
theorists. It breaks away from the banal subject of love, having
only one minor female character; and poetic flights are naturally
circumscribed by its more matter-of-fact interest. If the
Mṛcchakaṭika gives a literary form to the bourgeois drama, its
theme is still an affecting story of love and suffering, and politics
merely forms its background; the Mudrā-rākṣasa, on the other
hand, is a drama of purely political intrigue, in which resolute
action in various forms constitutes the exclusive theme. The
action, however, does not involve actual fight, war or bloodshed.²
There is enough martial spirit, but there is no fondness for violent
situations, no craving for fantastic adventures and no taste for
indecorous ashrayments. The action takes the form essentially
of a conflict of wills, or of a game of skill, in which the interest
is made to depend on the plots and counterplots of two rival
politicians. One may wonder if such a subject is enough to
absorb the mind of the audience, but the action of the play
never flags, the characters are drawn admirably to support it,

¹ The earliest quotation from the work occurs in Daisarūpaka (10th century A.D.).
² The antecedent incidents of the drama are not indeed bloodless, for we are told of the
extirpation of the Nandas and of the murders of Sarvārthasiddhi and Pravartaka, but in the
drama itself Cāṇakya’s policy is directed rather towards preventing the shedding of
blood.
and the diction is appropriate in its directness, force and clarity. The Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa is also another drama of political intrigue, but the plotting in it centres round the romantic legend of Udayana’s love for Vāsavadatta, both of whom do not make their appearance indeed, but of whom we hear a great deal throughout the play. The Mudrā-rākṣasa is unique in avoiding not only the erotic feeling but also the erotic atmosphere. It is a drama without a heroine. There is nothing suggestive of tenderness or domestic virtues, no claim to prettiness of romance, no great respect even for religion and morality. Politics is represented as a hard game for men; the virtues are of a stern kind; and if conduct, glorified by the name of diplomacy, is explained by expediency, its crookedness is redeemed by a high sense of duty, resolute fidelity to a cause, and unselfish devotion. There is a small scene between Candanadāsa and his family indicative of affection, but it is of no great importance to the development of the plot, and there is nothing of sentimentality in it even in the face of death.

Perhaps the suggestion is correct that the Bṛhatkuthā of Guṇḍādhya could not have been the source of the plot of the Mudrā-rākṣasa; for the events narrated there might have supplied the frame (as Viśākhadatta did not certainly invent the tale), but the main intrigue appears to be the work of the dramatist himself. It is also not necessary to assume that the drama is historical in all its details, or to see in the working out

1 Speyer, Studies about the Kathāsaritasāgara, p. 54; the drama is held here to belong to the 4th century A.D.

2 In the printed text of the Daśarūpaka (i. 61) we have the statement in Dhanika’s Vṛtti: bṛhatkuthā-mūlaḥ mudrārākṣasam, followed by the quotation of two verses; but these verses are obviously interpolated from Śemendra’s Bṛhatkuthā-mājaṇjari (ii. 216, 217). See G. C. O. Haas, Introd. to Daśarūpaka (New York, 1912), p. xxiii.

3 The story of the downfall of the Nandas and the rise of the Mauryas occurs also in Hemacandra’s Pariśiṣṭa-parvan and other works, and is probably traditional. The details of Cāṇakya’s intrigue, and even the name of Rākṣasa, are not found in these sources. The very name of the drama, derived from the signet ring (Mudrā) which plays an important part in the winning over of Rākṣasa, as well as the employment of the old idea of a token in this particular form, appears to be entirely Viśākhadatta’s own.
of a political plot a tendentious piece of literature, which may be conveniently referred to this or that period of Indian political history. It is unquestionable that Candragupta and Cāṇakya are historical personages, and so are possibly Rākṣasa and Sarvārtha-siddhi, although these latter names do not occur in the traditional accounts we possess; but how far they are historically or purposely presented is a different question; at least, the occurrence of historical facts or persons does not justify the designation of a historical drama to the work of art, which must necessarily owe a great deal to the author's imagination in the ingenious matur- ing of the story.

The main theme of the drama is the reconciliation of Rākṣasa, the faithful minister of the fallen dynasty of the Nandas, by that traditional master of statecraft, Cāṇakya, who wants to win him over, knowing his ability and honesty, into the service of Candragupta Maurya, who has been established on the throne by Cāṇakya's cleverness and his own bravery. To the crafty machinations of Cāṇakya are inseparably linked the almost co-extensive plots of Rākṣasa, acting in alliance with Malayaketu, son of Candragupta's former ally, now alienated by the treacherous murder of his father by Cāṇakya's agents. The detailed development of the plot of the drama is complicated, but perspicuous; ingenious, but not unnecessarily encumbered. The first act plunges at once into the story and gives us a glimpse into Cāṇakya's resolution and his deeply laid schemes, cunningly devised and committed to properly selected agents, which set the entire plot in motion. The second act shows, by way of con- trast, the counter-schemes of Rākṣasa and the character of his agents, as well as the traps of Cāṇakya into which he unsuspect- ingly walks. The next act is an ably constructed dramatic scene of a pretended but finely carried out open quarrel between Candragupta and Cāṇakya, meant as a ruse to entrap Rākṣasa further into the belief that Cāṇakya has fallen from royal favour. In the next three acts the plot thickens and moves rapidly, drawing the net more and more firmly round Rākṣasa, and ending in
Malayaketu's suspicion of the treachery of his own friends, execution of the allied Mleccha kings, and dismissal of Rākṣasa, who is left to soliloquise deeply on the heart-breaking failure of his aims and efforts, and on the fate of his friend Candanadāsa who is led to death. The misguided but valiant and pathetic struggle of Rākṣasa perhaps suggests tragedy as the natural end, by making him a victim of the misunderstandings created by Cāṇakya; but the intrigue is developed into a happy end, not in a forced or illogical manner, but by a skilful handling of the incidents, which are made to bring about the denouement in the natural way. Cāṇakya's intention from the beginning is not tragedy but a happy consummation. He makes, therefore, an accurate estimate of both the strength and weakness of his opponent's character and prepares his scheme accordingly. Cāṇakya knows that the only way to subdue Rākṣasa and impel him to a supreme act of sacrifice is through an attack on his dearly loved friends, especially Candanadāsa, whose deep affection and spirit of sacrifice for Rākṣasa is equally great. In the last act, cornered and alone, Rākṣasa is ultimately compelled to accept, with dignity, the yoke which he never intended to bear, not to save his own life, but to protect those of Candanadāsa and his friends. The acts are complete in themselves, but they are not detached; no situation is forced or developed unnaturally; all incidents, characters, dialogues and designs are skilfully made to converge towards the denouement, not in casual strokes, but in sustained grasp; and there is no other drama in Sanskrit which achieves organic unity of action and inevitableness with greater and more complete effect.

In characterisation, Viṣākhadatta fully realises the value of contrast, which brings distinctive traits into vivid relief; and one of the interesting features of his delineation is that most of his characters are dual portraits effectively contrasted, but not made schematically symmetrical. Both Cāṇakya and Rākṣasa are astute politicians, bold, resourceful and unscrupulous, but both are unselfish and unflinchingly devoted, from different motives, to
their respective cause. Any possible triviality or sordidness of the plot is redeemed by the purity of their motives and by the great things which are at stake. Both are admirable as excellent foils to each other; Cāṇakya is clear-headed, self-confident and vigilant, while Rākṣasa is soft, impulsive and blundering; the one is secretive, distrustful and unsparing, while the other is frank, amiable and generous; the one is feared, while the other is loved by his friends and followers; the hard glitter of the one shows off the pliable gentleness of the other. The motive of Cāṇakya’s unbending energy is not any affectionate sentiment for Candragupta, for in his methodical mind there is no room of tender feelings; Rākṣasa, on the other hand, is moved by a high sense of duty and steadfast loyalty, which draws the unwilling admiration even of his political adversary. It is precisely Rākṣasa’s noble qualities which prompt Cāṇakya to go to the length of elaborate schemes to win him over; and it is precisely these noble qualities which lead ultimately to his downfall. He is made a victim of his own virtues; and the pathos of the situation lies not in an unequal fight so much as in the softer features of his character. Rākṣasa is, of course, also given to intrigue, but he does not live and breathe in intrigue as Cāṇakya does. There is, however, no feeling in Cāṇakya’s strategy; there is too much of it in Rākṣasa’s. Although sharp and relentless, Cāṇakya is indeed not a monster, and whatever one may think of his deception, impersonation and forgery, one admires his cool and ingenious plotting; but our sympathy is irresistibly drawn towards the pity of Rākṣasa’s stumbling and foredoomed failure, his noble bitterness on the break up of his hopes and efforts, his lofty desire to sacrifice himself for his friend, and his dignified but pathetic submission. The same contrast is seen in the presentation of Candragupta and Malayaketu. Although they are pawns in the game, they are yet not mere puppets in the hands of the rival statesmen. Though low-born and ambitious, the Maurya is a sovereign of dignity and strength of character, well trained, capable and having entire faith in his preceptor and
minister, Cāṇakya; but the capricious young mountaineer, moved as he is by filial love, is conceited, weak and foolishly stubborn, and has his confidence and mistrust equally misplaced. It is clear that the characters of this drama are not fair spirits from the far-off and unstained wonderland of fancy, nor are they abstract embodiments of perfect goodness or incredible evil. Even the minor characters, none of whom is fortuitous or unmotived, are moulded skillfully with a natural blend of good and evil. The secret agents of Cāṇakya, Bhāgurāyaṇa and Siddhārthaka, faithfully carry out their commissions, not with spontaneous enthusiasm, but from a feeling of awe and meek submission; they are, however, finely discriminated as individuals, for while the one hates his work and feels secret compunctions, the conscience of the other is more accommodating. Rākṣasa’s agents, the disguised Virādhagupta and the honest Śakaṭadāsa, on the other hand, are moved by a sincere attachment to Rākṣasa and honest desire to serve. One of the most touching minor characters of the play is Candanadāsa, the head of the guild of lapidaries, whose affection for Rākṣasa is as sincere as that of Induśarman for Cāṇakya, but it is strong and undefiled enough to rise to the height of facing death for the sake of friendship and to be used, for that very reason, as a lever by Cāṇakya to play upon the magnanimous weakness of Rākṣasa. It is true that the characters of the drama are not always of a pleasant type, but they have a consistent individuality, and are drawn as sharply and coloured as diversely as the shady characters in the Mrčchakaṭṭika.

The mastery of technique which the work betrays is indeed considerable, but there is no aggressive display of technical skill or any wooden conformity, so far as we know, to fixed modes and models. Nor is there any weakness for the commonplace extravagances of poetic diction affected by some of his contemporaries. Viśākhādatta’s style is limpid, forcible and fluent; and he appears to be fully aware of the futility of a laboured and heavily embellished diction for the manly strain of sentiment and vigorous development of character which his
drama wants to attain. His metrical skill\textsuperscript{1} and literary use of Prakrits\textsuperscript{2} are considerable, but in no way conspicuous. Perhaps as a stylist he does not claim a high rank with his great compeers, and yet some of his stanzas stand out among the loftiest passages in Sanskrit literature. We do not indeed find in him the poetic imagination and artistic vigilance of Kālidāsa, the dainty and delicate manner of Harṣa, the humour, pathos and kindliness of Śūdraka, the fire and energy of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, or the earnest and tearful tenderness of Bhavabhūti; but there can be no doubt that his style and diction suit his subject, and, in all essentials, he is no meaner artist. He uses his images, similes and embellishments, with considerable skill and moderation; and, if he does not indulge profusely in elaborate poetical and descriptive passages, it is because his sense of dramatic propriety recoils from them. The soliloquy of Rākṣasa is indeed long, but it is not longer than some of the soliloquies in Hamlet. It shows, however, that the author was not incapable of truly emotional outbursts; and the paucity of citations from his work in later rhetorical and anthological works need not prove that his drama is devoid of poetical or emotional touches. The kind of poetry and sentiment, which are normally favoured, are perhaps not to be found here; but in easy and subdued elegance of its own poetry and sentiment, the work is certainly successful. Viśākhadatta never thinks less of his subject and more of himself, so as to make his work a convenient vehicle for the display of his literary ingenuities; nor does he pitch his voice too high and exhaust himself by the violence of his effort. He has the gift of projecting himself into the personality of his characters; his dialogues and stanzas have

\textsuperscript{1} The metres most employed (besides the Śloka) in order of frequency are Śārdūla-vikṛti, Sragdharā, Vasantatilaka and Śīkharini. Other metres are sporadic, but no rare kind is attempted.

\textsuperscript{2} The usual Prakrits are Śauraseni and Māhārāṣṭrī, but Māgadhī also occurs. Hillebrandt rightly points out that, as in Śakuntalā, Mrčhakatakā and other earlier plays there is no justification in this case for the assumption that Śauraseni was exclusively employed for the prose.
the dramatic quality necessary for rapidity and directness of action and characterisation; and if his work is necessarily of a somewhat prosaic cast, it still conforms more to the definition of the drama as the literature of action than some of the greater Sanskrit plays. The only serious defect is that the drama lacks grandeur, with a grand subject; it also lacks pity, with enough scope for real pathos. The downfall of a dynasty and fight for an empire are concerns only of personal vanity, wounded by personal insult; they are matters of petty plotting. Our moral sense is not satisfied even by the good result of placing Candragupta more securely on the throne; and the atmosphere of cold, calculated strategy and spying is depressing enough for a really great and noble cause.¹

e. Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa

Both Vāmana² and Ānandavardhana³ cite passages anonymously from the Veṇīsamhāra⁴ of Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, who must,

¹ Passages from a drama, entitled Devi-candragupta, are quoted seven times in the Nāṭya-darpaṇa of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra (12th century); ed. GOS, Baroda 1929, pp. 71, 84, 86, 118, 141-42, 193, 194), and the work is attributed to Viśākhadeva, who is probably identical with our author Viśākhadatta (whose name, however, does not occur in the anonymous quotations from the Mudrā-rāṣṭra). The work has not been recovered, but it probably dealt with the story (cf. Rājaśekhara, Kāya-mimāṃsā, p. 46) of Kumāra Candragupta’s rescue (in the disguise of a woman) of Dhruvadevi who had been abducted by a Śaka prince. This is perhaps the same story as is alluded to by Bāṇa in Harsa-carita (ariṣṭe ca parakalatra-kāmukaṃ kāmini-veṣa-gupta candraguptaḥ śaka-ṇaṇpatim aśāyat); see IA, LII, 1923, pp. 181-84, where this Candragupta is taken to be Candragupta II of the Guptan dynasty. From the citations it appears that the drama extended at least to five acts. Abhinavagupta also quotes the work, without the name of the author, in his commentary on Bharata; so does also Bhoja in his Śrīgūra-prakāśa (see S. K. De in BSOS, 1V, 1926, p. 282). Another work of Viśākhadeva’s, entitled Abhisārikā-valcitaka (*vandhitaka) is also cited by Abhinavagupta and Bhoja. It appears to have been based on another love-legend of Udayana, in which Padmāvatī wins back the lost affection of Udayana, who suspects her of having killed his son, by disguising herself as a Śābari and in the rôle of an Abhisārikā, making her tender-minded husband fall in love with her again!—It is curious that a drama called Pratijñā-cāṇakya on the same theme appears to have been composed by one Bhima, as we knew from its citation also by Abhinavagupta and Bhoja; apparently it was modelled on Viśākhadatta’s play (see R. Ramamurthi in JOR, Madras, III, 1929, p. 80).

² Kāvyāl. iv. 3. 28=Veṇī⁰ v. 26d.
³ Dhvan. (ed. Kāvyamālā, 1911) ad ii. 10, pp. 80, 81=Veṇī⁰ i. 21, iii. 31; Dhvan. ad iii. 44, p. 225=Veṇī⁰ v. 26.
therefore, belong to a period anterior to 800 A.D.; and this lower limit is confirmed by the fact that the work, along with Harṣa’s Ratnāvali, is frequently quoted by the Daśarūpaka, in the last quarter of the 10th century, as one of the approved types of the Sanskrit drama. Beyond this, nothing definite is known about the exact date of the play; and of the author, the Prologue gives us the only information that his other name or title was Mṛgarājalakṣman, about the significance of which there has been much conjecture but no certainty. The Bengal legend that Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa was one of the five Kānyakubja Brahmans who were invited by an equally fabulous king Ādiśūra of Bengal, should be relegated to the realm of fantastic fables which often gather round celebrated names. Serious attempts have been made to extract history from these legends of genealogists, but unless corroborated by independent evidence, these so-called traditions of Bengal match-makers and panegyrists of big families are hardly of much value for historical purposes, particularly for events of comparatively early times. Traces of Pāñcarātra tenets are discovered in Veṇī i. 23 and iv. 43, 45, but the interpretation is far-fetched, while there is no justification for the view that the character of Cārvāka is meant to ridicule directly the materialistic doctrine of the reputed philosopher Cārvāka. Even if these ingenious conjectures are admitted, they are of little use for determining the age of the work.

Barring the epic pieces ascribed to Bhāsa, the Veṇī-samhāra is the only surviving work of the earlier group of dramatists, which takes valour as its ruling sentiment, but the presentation is too formless and rhetorical to be convincing. It attempts in six acts to dramatise a well-known episode of the Mahābhārata,

1 Sten Konow, Ind. Drama, p. 77; discussed also by Grill, op. cit.
2 It should be noted that while the historicity of Ādiśūra himself is doubtful, the genealogical works, are not agreed among themselves with regard to the names of the five Brahmans who were invited, the time and motive of their invitation, as well as their detailed genealogical account.
but practically goes over the entire epic war; and in subject, style and inspiration it differs from contemporary plays. The first act depicts Bhīma’s revengeful pride of power, Draupadī’s brooding resentment at the ignominious insult heaped on her by the Kauravas, as well as failure of Kṛṣṇa’s embassy, which makes war inevitable. With this menace of war hovering on the horizon, the second act introduces a frivolous and ineffective love-episode, censured even by the Sanskrit theorists, between Duryodhana and his queen Bhānumatī, relates her ominous dream, describes a sudden storm symbolical of the coming turmoil, and leaves Duryodhana gloating over the insult done to Draupadī at his instigation. The next act commences with a rather conventional, but loathsome, picture of the horrors of the battle-field, described by a couple of demons who feed on human flesh and blood, and we learn that most of the Kaurava heroes, including Droṇa, have in the meantime fallen; but it goes on to a finely conceived scene of altercation between the suspicious Aśvatthāman and the sneering Karna, interrupted by Bhīma’s boastful voice behind the scene. The dramatic possibilities, however, of the rivalry between these two Kaurava warriors are not at all developed; the scene, therefore, becomes a lively but an uncalled for and unmotived episode. In act iv, we find Duryodhana wounded in battle and his brother Duḥśasana, who had insulted Draupadī in public assembly by dragging her by the braid of her hair, killed by Bhīma; but the account, given by the Kaurava messenger, Sundaraka, of Karna’s death is too long and tedious, and serves no dramatic purpose. In the next act; the violent and insulting address of Bhīma to poor old Dhṛtarāṣṭra may be in the best heroic style, but it is gratuitous and only shows Bhīma as a wild, blood-thirsty and boastful bully. The last act, in which Duryodhana’s death is announced, introduces a poor comedy of mischief in the midst of all this fury and tragedy, through the instrumentality of the disguised demon Cārvāka, but it is as absurd as it is unnecessary; and Bhīma’s dragging Draupadī by her hair in mistake is perhaps an un-
wittingly ludicrous repetition of her rude treatment by a similar method on a former and more serious occasion!

The title suggests that the main theme, to which all incidents are made to converge, is the satisfaction of Bhīma’s ferocious revenge, celebrated by the killing of the Kaurava chiefs and by binding up, with blood-stained hands, the braid of Draupadī, which she had sworn to let down until the wrong to her is avenged. The subject is one of primitive savagery, but the polish of the drama has nothing primitive in it. There is undoubtedly much scope for fury and violence, but since violent situations have no sanction, the fury exhausts itself in declamatory blustering. There is enough of pathos and horror, but the pathos is tiresome and the horror uncouth; there is enough of action, but the action is devoid of dramatic conflict or motivation to carry it on with sustained interest; there is enough instinct for claptrap stage-effect, but the effect limits itself to a series of detached and disjointed scenes of excitement. We do not know whether the work chooses to follow faithfully the dramaturgic rules which we find elaborated by the theorists, or whether the theorists themselves faithfully deduce the rules from the model of this work; but the correspondence is undoubtedly close and almost slavish. Judged by the conventional standard, its dramatic merit may be reckoned very high, but considered absolutely, it must be admitted that the plot is clumsily contrived, the situations are often incongruous, the scenes are disconnectedly put together, and the incidents do not inevitably grow out of one another. There is also considerable narrative digression after the manner of the Kāvya. The work is hardly a unified play, but is rather a panoramic procession of a large number of actions and incidents, which have no intrinsic unity except that they concern the well-known epic personages who appear, no naturally developed sequence except the sequence

¹ But even the Dasharāpaka and the Sāhitya-darpāna are unable to find as proper illustrations of the Garbha and Vimarśa Saṃdhis from the Vepī, as from Ratnāvali, for instance.
in which they are found in the Epic. The drama suffers from the common mistake of selecting an epic theme, without the power of transforming it into a real drama, and the modifications introduced for the purpose are hardly effective. The presentation is rather that of a vivid form of story-telling, and the author might as well have written a Kavya.

It is true that Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa's characterisation of the peculiar types of 'heroes' is interesting; they are living figures, and not mere violently moved marionettes; but, with the exception of the cautiously peaceful Yudhiṣṭhīra and the wisely moderate Kṛṣṇa, the characters are hardly lovable. Bhīma has fire and energy, and his grandiloquent defiances do credit to the rhetorical powers of his creator; but he is a boisterous, undisciplined and ferocious savage, and his equally valiant brother Arjuna is a worthy second in rant and fury. Draupadi's bitterness is well represented, but this is not made the only thing for which the brothers fight, and she is herself rather crude in her implacable hate and desire for revenge. The duplicity of the weak Dhṛtarāṣṭra is suggested after the Epic, but not properly developed. The sneaky jealousy of Karna and the distrustful anger of Aśvatthāman offer dramatic opportunities, but the figures are made too short-lived in the drama; and the vain, selfish and heartless arrogance of Duryodhana is scarcely relieved by his irrelevant amorousness befitting a conventional love-sick hero.

There is much good writing and some diffused pathos in the work, but since the dramatic construction is poor and the epic and narrative details hamper the action and mar the result of otherwise able, but unattractive, characterisation, the general effect is wholly undramatic. It is more so, because the diction, though polished and powerful, is laboured and generally unsuited for dramatic purpose. The author appears to be obsessed with the idea that long, high-sounding words and compounds are alone capable of imparting force, the so-called Ojas, to a composition. The procedure is sanctioned by the rhetoricians,
but its excessive employment in Sanskrit and Prakrit prose and verse is rightly censured by Ānandavardhana, especially with reference to dramatic writing. It should be noted, however, that the extravagances of grandiose expression and lengthy description are not only tedious, but they also indicate that the author perhaps conceives his work more as a poetical than a dramatic piece. And perhaps it would not be right to judge it otherwise. The Veṇī-samhāra is one of the earliest and best examples in Sanskrit of that peculiar kind of half-poetical and half-dramatic composition which may be called the declamatory drama; and it shares all the merits and defects of this class of work. The defects are perhaps more patent, but they should not obscure the merits, which made the work so entertaining to the Sanskrit theorists. Even if overdone very often, there is considerable power of poetry and passion, vividness of portraiture of detached scenes and characters, command of sonorous and elevated phrasing, and remarkable skill and sense of rhythm in the manipulation of a variety of metres.\footnote{Next to the largest employment of the Śloka, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa favour Śārdūla-vikṛḍita and Sradgharā equally with Śīkharinī and Vasantatilaka as the principal metres of his play. His Prakrit with long compounds and absence of verse, like that of Bhavabhūti, is apparently modelled on Sanskrit and calls for no special remarks. Normally it is Śaurasenī, although Māgadhī is also traceable.} The work does not indeed pretend to any milder or refiner graces of poetry; and the defect of dramatic form and method is almost fatal; but it has energy, picturesqueness, and narrative motion. These qualities, which are best seen in detached passages, if not in the drama a whole, are indeed not negligible, and perhaps eminently suit the type of composition affected. If the work is neither a well judged nor a well executed dramatisation of the epic story, it still attains a certain vigorous accomplishment and holds its popularity by this power of appeal and excitement. Notwithstanding these allowances, carefully but not grudgingly made, even a generous critic will find it difficult to assign a high-rank to Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, both as a poet and as a
dramatist. It may be urged that if there is bad drama, there is good poetry in his play; but even in poetry, as in drama, the fault which mars Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa’s forceful work is that it is too often rhetorical in the bad sense, and rhetoric in the bad sense is hardly compatible with the best poetry or drama.

f. Bhavabhūti

In the earlier group of great dramatists, Bhavabhūti is perhaps one of the youngest, but he occupies a very high place, which in Indian estimation has been often reckoned as next to that of Kālidāsa, as the author of three important plays. One of these, the Mālatī-mādhava\(^1\) gives a fictitious romantic love-story of middle class life, and the other two, the Mahāvīra-carita\(^2\) and the Uttara-rāma-carita,\(^3\) deal respectively with the earlier and the later history of Rāma and drive their theme from the Rāmāyaṇa. Unlike most of his contemporaries and predecessors, Bhavabhūti is not entirely reticent about himself. In the Prologues to his

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\(^1\) Ed. R. G. Bhandarkar, comm. of Jagaddhara, Bombay Skt. Ser., 1905; ed. M. R. Telang, with comm. of Jagaddhara, Tripurārī (i-vii) and Nānyadeva (viii-x), NSP, Bombay 1926. No Engл trs., except Wilson’s free rendering in Select Specimen, ii; French trs. by G. Strehly, Paris 1885; German trs. by Ludwig Fritze, Leipzig 1884. One of the earliest editions is that of C. Lassen, Bonn 1832.


three plays he gives us some autobiographical details.⁹ We are
told that he belonged to a pious and learned Brahman family of
the Kāśyapa Gotra, who followed and taught the Taittiriya
branch of the Black Yajurveda, duly maintained the Five Fires,
performed Soma sacrifices, bore the surname of Udumbara and
lived in Padmapura, probably in Vidarbha (the Berars).
Bhavabhūti was fifth in descent from one who was called Mahā-
kavi (Great Poet) and who performed the Vājapeya sacrifice;
and his grandfather was Bhaṭṭa Gopāla, his father Nilakanṭha
and his mother Jātūkarnī. The poet himself was given the title
of Śrīkaṇṭha, but commentators imagine that Bhavabhūti was
also a title he won as a poet blessed with luck or the holy ashes
(Bhūti) of Śiva (Bhava). His preceptor was a pious and learned
ascetic, named appropriately Jñānanidhi.⁸ He studied the Vedas
and Upaniṣads, the Sāṃkhya and Yoga, and mastered various
branches of learning, including grammar, rhetoric and logic; a
statement which it is not impossible to corroborate from the
knowledge displayed in his works.⁷ Although a scholar and
given occasionally to a love of display, Bhavabhūti seldom pushes
his scholarship to the verge of pedantry. He was essentially a
poet; and like his predecessor Bāṇa, he had apparently a rich
and varied experience of life, and stood, as he himself tells us, in
friendly relation with actors, into whose hand he gave his
plays; but this fact need not justify the efforts that have been
made to trace evidence of revision of his plays for stage-
purposes. All his plays were enacted at the fair of Lord

⁹ The account, scantiest in Uttara⁸ and fullest in Mahāvīra⁹, is summarised and dis-
cussed by Bhandarkar, Todar Mall and Belvalkar in the works cited above.

⁸ The colophon to act iii of a manuscript of Mālati-mādhava (see S. P. Pandit’s introd.
to Gaudavaho, pp. ccv, et seq.) assigns the play to a pupil of Kumārila, while the colophon to
act iv gives the name of this pupil as Umbekācārya. But undue weight need not be attahced
to the testimony of a single manuscript to prove that these acts are substitutions, or that
Bhavabhūti is identical with the well-known pupil and commentator of Kumārila, although
chronology is not incompatible and knowledge of Mīmāṃsā not impossible to infer from the
plays.

⁷ On Bhavabhūti’s scholarship, see Keith in JRAS, 1914, p. 719 f and Todar Mall,
pp. xxv-xxvi, xliii-xliv; Peterson in JBRAS, XVIII, 1891, p. 109 f.
Kālapriyānātha, usually identified with Mahākāla, whose famous shrine at Ujjayānī is mentioned by Kālidāsa and Bāṇa.

Although, like Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti has given us an interesting account of himself and his family, yet, unlike Bāṇa, he says nothing about the time when he lived. He shows familiarity with court-life, but does not refer to any royal favour. On the contrary, he is evidently distressed by the lack of contemporary appreciation of his works, and declares, with defiant but charming egotism, that there will some day arise a kindred spirit to do justice to his genius, for, 'time is boundless and the world is wide.' The inference is possible that he had to struggle hard for fame and fortune, although we do not know how far the bliss of conjugal love, which he idealises in his writings, proved a solace to him in reality.¹ In view of all this, it is surprising to find that the Kashmirian chronicler Kahlaṇa² mentions Bhavabhūti, along with Vākpatirāja, as having been patronised by king Yaśovarman of Kānya-kubja. Obviously, this Vākpatirāja is the author of the enormous, but unfinished, Prakrit poem Gauḍavaha,³ which glorifies Yaśovarman and in which the poet acknowledges indebtedness to Bhavabhūti in eulogistic terms. As this poem is presumed to have been composed about 736 A.D. before Yaśovarman's defeat and humiliation by king Lalitāditya of Kashmir,⁴ it is inferred that Bhavabhūti flourished, if not actually in the court of Yaśovarman, at least during his reign, in the closing years of the 7th or the first quarter of the 8th century. This date agrees with what is known of our poet's chronological relations with other writers. He is certainly

¹ The view that Bhavabhūti is rural, as Kālidāsa is urban, is not justified by his works.
² Rāja-tarangini, iv. 144.
⁴ The exact date is a matter of dispute; see Stein's note on the point in his translation of the Rāja-tarangini, introd. sec. 85; also the works of Bhandarkar, Pandit and Belvalkar cited above.
later than Kālidāsa, with whose writings he is familiar, and apparently also than Bāna, who does not mention him. The earlist writer to eulogise Bhavabhūti (besides Vākpatirāja) is Rājaśekhara, and the earliest work in which anonymous quotations from his works occur is the Kāvyālāṃkāra of Vāmana; both these references set the lower limit of his date at the last quarter of the 8th century.

The plot of the Mālati-mādhava is based on the time-worn theme of love triumphant over many obstacles, but we turn pleasantly from royal courts to a more plebeian atmosphere and find greater individuality of presentation. Bhavabhūti prides himself (i. 4) upon the ingenuity of his plot; to a certain extent, this is justifiable. But the general outline of the central story and some of the striking incidents and episodes have been industriously traced to the two Kashmirian adaptations of the Brhatkathā, respectively made by Kṣemendra and Somadeva, with the suggestion that Bhavabhūti derived them, or at least hints of them, from Guṇāḍhyya's lost work. But even granting that the coincidences are not accidental, it should be recognised that the evolving of the plot as a whole in ten acts by a dexterous combination of varied motifs and situations is apparently the poet's own. The central interest is made to rest, not upon one love-story, but upon two parallel love-stories, skilfully blended together and crowded with such exciting and unexpected

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1 See Todar Mall, pp. xxxix-xlili, and Belvalkar, p. xl.
2 Bāla-rāmāyana, i. 16.
3 Kāvyā i. 2. 12 = Mahāvīra i. 54; iv. 3.6. = Uttara i. 38. For other citations in rhetorical and anthological literature, see Todar Mall, p. xxi; but, curiously enough, Todar Mall omits these two citations of Vāmana.
4 xi. 9-88 (Madirāvati); iii. 218-30; v. 100-163 (Aśokadatta)
5 xiii. 1.17-215 (Madirāvati); v. 2 (Aśokadatta); xviii. 2 (Madanamaṇjarī and Khaṇḍa-kapāla).
6 Such as, impersonation and marriage in disguise, meeting of lovers in a temple, rescue from a wild animal (the conventional elephant being replaced by the tiger), offering of human flesh and seeking the aid of ghosts, in the cemetery, attempted immolation by a magician, abduction and rescue of the heroine, etc. But some of the motifs belong to the floating stock-in-trade of story-telling.
turn of incidents as is not normally found in such stories. There is also some real comic relief—a rare thing in Bhavabhūti—and a free use of the terrible, horrible and supernatural sentiments. The main plot moves round the love of Mādhava, a young student and Mālatī, daughter of a cabinet minister; it is thwarted by the interposition of a powerful suitor in Nandana, nominated by the king, but it ends with achievements of success, partly through accidents and partly through the diplomacy of a shrewd, resourceful and kind-hearted Buddhist nun,1 Kāmandakī, a friend and class-mate of the fathers of Mādhava and Mālatī. The by-plot, which is obviously meant to be a parallel as well as a contrast, is concerned with the love of Makaranda and Madayantikā; it is linked to the main plot by presenting Madayantikā as a sister of Mālatī’s rival suitor Nandana, and by making Mādhava’s friend Makaranda fall in love with her. The interweaving of the plot and the by-plot is complicated and diversified by the comic episode of the pretended marriage of Nandana to Makaranda disguised as Mālatī, as well as by two sensational escapes of Mālatī from violent death. Makaranda’s impersonation, which also involves Madayantikā’s mistaking him for Mālatī and confessing her own love to him unawares, ending in their elopement, is made parallel to the imposition on Mālatī, with a similar result, by Mādhava’s taking the place of Mālati’s companion Lavaṅgikā; while Mādhava’s valiant rescue of Mālatī from the clutches of a Kāpālika becomes, in the same way, a natural counterpart of Makaranda’s heroic, but somewhat conventional, rescue of Madayantikā from the claws of a tiger.

There can be no doubt that the dramatist knows the value of contrast, but he also knows the value of suspense; and in

1 The Buddhist nun as a go-between, or more euphemistically a match-maker, is a familiar figure in Indian story-telling, and occurs in the Daśakumāra-carita, where she helps Apahāravaśi to meet Kāmamañjari, Ratnāvatī to regain her husband Balabhadrā, and Kalahakaṇṭha to evolve the scheme of winning Nimbavatī; but in this drama she is a much more dignified person. Even if she freely discusses matters of love a la Kāmā-śāstra, she is a sincere, wise and loving woman, who promotes the love of the young couples partly out of affection for them and partly out of the memory of her old friendship with their fathers.
spite of the length of the drama, the interest is sustained by skilful inventiveness and by a naturally developed interplay of two parallel, but contrasted, plots. The defect, however, is that the subsidiary plot and its chief characters tend to overshadow the main plot and its hero and heroine. This happens partly on account of the important part played by the daring and resourceful Makaranda, by whose side the love-sick and melodramatic Mādhava pales into the conventional hero, and partly by the extremely arresting character of the shrewd and lively Madayantikā, who similarly surpasses Mālatī the shy and hesitating official heroine. The action also, notwithstanding a series of exciting incidents, suffers as a whole from a vital weakness in the central conception. Kāmandakī, with her kindly scheming, is undoubtedly meant to hold the key-position in the drama (the Kārya-vidhāna, as Kalahamsa says), far greater than the rôle of Friar Laurence in the Romeo and Juliet, or of the Parivrājikā in Mālavikāgnimitra; but the action of the drama is made to depend more on a series of accidents than on her clever diplomacy. It is true that she takes the fullest advantage of lucky occurrences, but too many important events happen by pure accident to further her design. The tiger-episode, which leads to the love of Makaranda and Madayantikā, is a veritable godsend to Kāmandakī, while Mālatī, twice on the verge of death, is saved by the merest chance, as the dramatist himself admits in v. 28. The incidents are, of course, dramatically justified, and the element of chance cannot be entirely ruled out of a drama, as out of life, but their convenient frequency demands too much from credulity. They are consistent perhaps with the supernatural atmosphere, in which uncanny things might happen; but they leave the general impression that the play moves in an unreal world of folk-tale, in which tigers run wild in the streets, ghosts squeak in cemeteries, Kāpālikas perform gruesome rites unhindered, maidens are abducted with murderous intent, and people adept in occult sciences fly through the air with both good and bad
purposes,—but all miraculously resolved into a final harmonious effect!

The lack of a sense of proportion is also seen in prolonging the play even after it naturally ends with act viii, in which the king moved by the valour of Mādhava and Makaranda, is disposed to pardon them and acknowledge the marriage. The episodes of the two abductions of Mālatī hardly arise out of the story, but they are added to satisfy the sensational craving for the terrible and the gruesome, and to fill the whole of act ix and a part of act x with the grief and lamentation of the hapless Mādhava, separated from his beloved, in the approved manner of a man in Viraha. It may be said that the first abduction is meant to establish a parallelism by showing that Mādhava is no less heroic than his friend in the rescue of his own beloved, and that the second abduction by Kapālakunḍalā is a natural act of revenge for the slaying of Aghoraghaṇṭa; but these purposes need not have been realised by clumsy appendages, involving fortuitous coincidences, by the introduction of terrible scenes, which are too unreal to inspire real terror, as well as by an unnecessary display of poetic sentimentality, modelled obviously on the madness of Purūravas in Kālidāsa’s drama.

It is clear that, however lively, interesting and original the plot-construction of the play is, it lacks restraint, consistency and inevitableness. But a still greater defect lies in Bhavabhūti’s tendency to over-emphasise and his inability to stop at the right moment, seen in a damaging degree in the highly poetical, but unhindered, sentimental passages. In his attempt to evoke tragic pathos, Bhavabhūti, with his unhumorous disposition, makes his hero faint too often, and this happens even at a time when he should rush to save his friend’s life in danger. The love-agony frequently becomes prolonged, unmanly and unconvincing. The exuberant descriptive and emotional stanzas and elaborate prose speeches,¹ the high sounding phrases

¹ E.g., the long Prakrit passages in acts iii and vii, the description of the cremation-ground at night in act v, and the forest scene in act ix.

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and lengthy compounds (albeit not so formidable as they look) had perhaps a special relish, as much for the poet as for his audience. Some of the passages are highly poetical and picturesque; but they indicate an expansiveness and lack of moderation, which are fatal to dramatic movement and propriety; and the fact that some of these stanzas are repeated in the other two plays gives the impression that the poet had them ready-made to be utilised whenever an opportunity presents itself. Much of the talk of love and grief, therefore, becomes unreal and tends to overwhelm action and characterisation.

Nevertheless, the Mālāti-mādhava possesses, in many respects, a unique interest in the history of the Sanskrit drama, not only as an attractive picture of certain aspects of middle-class life, but also because of its genuine poetic quality. It is really an interesting story cast in a loose dramatic form, rather than an accomplished drama, but inventiveness and movement are not wanting. There is little individuality in its chief hero and heroine, who are typically sentimental lovers, making a lot of fuss about themselves, but Makaranda and Madayantikā, as well as Kāmandakī, show that the author’s power of characterisation is not of a mean order. There is indeed a great deal of melodrama, of which it is difficult for a romantic play to steer clear entirely, but which often mars its pathetic and dramatic effect; and the gratuitous introduction of supernatural and horrible scenes may be pertinently questioned. It must, however, be admitted that there is a great deal of real poetry and passion in Bhavabhūti’s picture of youthful love, which reaches its most mature and mellow expression in his Uttara-rāma-carita. If the Mālāti-mādhava is one of his earliest works, the faults are those of youth and inexperience; but Bhavabhūti, even in this sentimental play, is far more serious than most light-hearted Sanskrit poets, and the intense poetic quality of his

1 The Mahāvīra-carita is often taken to be Bhavabhūti’s earliest work, but it is difficult to dogmatise on the question of its priority to the Mālāti-mādhava. The Uttara-carita is unquestionably the most mature work, as the poet himself indicates.
erotic stanzas, with their music,\(^1\) colouring and fervour, relieves their banality. The picture of Mālati, tossed between love and duty and reluctantly yielding to a stolen marriage, or the description of the first dawning of the passion in Mādhava and its effect on his youthful mind, is in the best manner of the poet and is much superior to what one finds normally in Sanskrit sentimental literature. The key-note of this weird but passionate love-story is perhaps given in the works of Makaranda (i. 17) when he says that the potent will of love wanders unobstructed in this world, youth is susceptible, and every sweet and charming thing shakes off the firmness of the mind. It is a study of the poetic possibilities of the undisciplined passion of youth; but no other Sanskrit poet, well versed as he is in the delineation of such sentiment, has been able to present it with finer charm and more genuine emotional inflatus.

If the Mālatī-mādhava is defective in plot-construction, much improvement is seen in this respect in the Mahāvīra-carīita which reveals a clearer conception of dramatic technique and

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\(^1\) In this play Bhavabhūti employs a large number of metres, about twenty-five, with considerable skill, including rarer metres like Dāṇḍaka (v. 23; fifty-four syllables in each foot), Nardaṭaka (v. 31, ix. 18) and Aparavaktra (ix. 23). The Śloka is not frequent (occurring about 14 times), but other chief metres, in their order of frequency, are Vasantatilaka, Śārdūlavikrtīta, Śikharinī, Mālinī, Mandākrāntā and Hariṇī, the shorter metres being generally used for softer sentiments and the longer for the heroic and the awe-inspiring. There are eleven Āryās, to which Kālidāsa also shows partiality. In the Mahāvīra-carīita Bhavabhūti uses twenty different metres, in which the Śloka appears in about one-third of the total number of stanzas, the Śārdūlavikrtīta, Vasantatilaka, Śikharinī, Sragdharā, Mandākrāntā and Upajitā coming next in order of frequency; the only unusual metre is Mālayabhārā found in a single stanza, while the Āryā occurs only thrice. The Uptara-carīta has the same metres as above, but here the Śloka easily leads and the Śikharinī comes next to it, after which comes the Vasantatilaka and Śārdūlavikrtīta, while the Sragdharā, Drutavilambita and Māñjubhāṣinī are sporadic here, as in Mālatī. It is noteworthy that there is not a single Prakrit verse in all the three plays. Bhavabhūti’s Prakrit in prose passages, with their long compounds (which remind one of Vākpatīrāja’s laboured verse), is obviously influenced by Sanskrit usage, but it is sparingly employed in the Mahāśāstra. His vocabulary, both in Sanskrit and Prakrit, has a tendency to prolixity, but it is extensive and generally adequate, while his poetic style is fully consistent with his poetical imagery and feeling.
workmanship, even if it is feeble in characterisation and in the literary quality of its poetical stanzas. It dramatises in seven acts\(^1\) the early history of Rāma, beginning a little before his marriage and ending with his return from Laṅkā and coronation. The theme is found ready-made, but since the epic story is in the form of a narrative, containing a large number of episodes, incidents and characters, a mere panoramic reproduction of a series of pictures is hardly enough for a drama proper. The problem before the dramatist is not only to select such incidents and characters as are necessary and appropriate, but also where such selection is difficult, to modify and adjust them in such a way as to make the different units well arranged with adequate dramatic motive and unity of action. In making daring, but judicious, changes even in a well-known and accepted story, Bhavabhūti gives evidence not only of his boldness and power of ingenious invention, but also of his sense of dramatic construction. Accordingly, the whole action is conceived as a feud of Rāvaṇa against Rāma. The seed of dramatic conflict and movement is found in Rāvaṇa’s discomfiture as a suitor by the rejection of his messenger and by the betrothal of Sītā to Rāma at the Svayamvara. Rāvaṇa’s desire for revenge at this insult to his pride and valour is further inflamed by death of Tātākā, Subāhu and other demons at the hands of Rāma; and the action is set in motion by the diplomacy of Rāvaṇa’s valiant minister Mālyavat, which includes the crafty instigation by him of

\(^1\) Unfortunately, the genuineness of the last two acts, namely, the sixth and the seventh, and the concluding part of the fifth act is not beyond question. Bhavabhūti’s authorship of the text up to v. 46 alone is proved by the agreement of all manuscripts and printed editions; but for the rest we have (i) the Vulgate text, found in most North Indian manuscripts and generally printed in most editions, (ii) the text of Subrahmanya, found in South Indian manuscripts, (printed in Ratnam Aiyar’s edition as such) and (iii) the text of Vināyaka (printed in Todar Mall’s ed.), which agrees with the Vulgate in having the same text for acts vi and vii, but differs from it, as well as from Subrahmanya’s text, in the portion from v. 46 to the end of that act. None of these supplementary texts probably represents Bhavabhūti’s own text, which is perhaps lost. For a discussion of the whole question see Todar Mall’s introduction, reviewed in detail by S. K. De in IA, LIX, 1990, pp. 13-18,
Paraśurāma and the despatch of Śūrpaṇakhā in the clever disguise of the nurse  Mantharā, the second episode ingeniously exonerating Kaikeyī and supplying a motive for Śūrpaṇakhā’s later conduct. The first scheme fails, the second succeeds, after which the abduction of Sītā becomes easy. In order to frustrate Rāma’s efforts, there is then the intrigue of Mālyavat with Vālin, which serves the twofold purpose of exculpating the dubious conduct of Rāma and avoiding the unseemly fraternal quarrel between Vālin and Sugriva. But Vālin dies; and on the failure of diplomacy, nothing remains but the use of force, leading to the denouement of Rāvana’s defeat and death, rescue of Sītā and coronation of Rāma. The changes, therefore, in the original story are many, but they are justified by the necessity of evolving a well-knit and consistent plot; and the action is developed mainly on the basis of a conflict between strategy and straightforwardness. Whatever may be said about its adequacy, the attempt to motivate the episodes shows considerable dramatic sense and skill.

But the plot fails to impress us as a whole. The central conception of the dramatic conflict is weak. The strategy of Mālyavat fails, not because it is met with an equally ingenious counter-strategy, not even because Rāma has superior strength and resources, but because it is destined that Rāma, with virtue in his favour, must ultimately win. On the side of villainy, Bhavabhūti was doubtless permitted to take as much liberty with the original story as he wished, but perhaps he could not do so with equal impunity on the side of virtue; the entire dramatic conflict, therefore, becomes unconvincing. The plot also suffers from Bhavabhūti’s usual lack of restraint and of the sense of proportion, which is so glaring in his Mālati-mādhava, from a greater feebleness of characterisation and from a heavier and more uncouth style and diction. As in his Uttara-carita, Rāma here is human and normal, but he is conceived as the ideal hero of valour, nobility and chivalry, and the human traits of his character (as also those
of Sītā, who is here presented as fidelity incarnate) are not made as appealing as they are in Bhavabhūti’s more mature play. Mālyavat is shrewd and resourceful and has a sense of better things, but he falls far below Cāṇakya or Rākṣasa. Paraśu-rāma’s great prowess is balanced by his furious temper; Vālin’s magnanimity by his susceptibility to bad advice; Rāvana’s qualities of body and mind by his inclination to thoughtless passion; but none of these characters rises above mediocrity, and there is hardly any development of character by action, hardly any fine colouring or diversity of shading. Bhavabhūti also appears to be less successful in the heroic than in the softer sentiments; it is a kind of flaunting, but really meek and bookish, heroism that he paints even in his Rāma. Moreover, action is often substituted by narration of events in long and tedious speeches. The Bharata-episode at the end of act iv and the scene between Vālin and Sugrīva are indeed ably executed, but Mālyavat’s self-revelation is carried to an unnecessary and tiresome length. Like the lamentation of Mādhava, spread over an act and a half, the wordy warfare between Paraśu-rāma, on the one hand, and Janaka, Daśaratha, Rāma and their friends on the other, is dragged tediously through two acts. All such passages reveal the author’s multifarious knowledge and rhetorical power, but they also show a distinct desire for parade and tend to hamper reality and rapidity of action, as well as effectiveness of characterisation. In all this, Bhavabhūti may have been carried away by convention, but temperamentally he appears to be too prone to over-elongation by means of description and declamation; and even if his language in this play is often vigorous and adequate, it lacks his usual ease and grace.

Even if still deficient in action, for which the theme hardly affords much scope, the Uttara-rāma-carita shows a much greater command of dramatic technique and characterisation. A detailed appreciative study of Bhavabhūti’s dramatic art and technique will be found in Belvalkar’s introduction to the play, pp. lxxvi-lxxxv. 

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himself declares, of his mature genius, and has deservedly earned the high reputation of having equalled the dramatic masterpiece of Kālidāsa. It depicts in seven acts the later history of Rāma extending from the exile of Sītā to the final reunion; and Bhavabhūti’s literary characteristics may be studied to the best advantage in this work, which reaches a high level as a drama but which undoubtedly ranks higher for its intense poetic quality. Bhavabhūti derives his theme from the Rāmāyaṇa, but to suit his dramatic purpose he does not, as in his earlier Rāma-drama, hesitate to depart in many points from his authoritative epic original. The conception, for instance, of the picture-gallery scene, derived probably from a hint supplied by Kālidāsa (Rāghu° xiv. 25), and of the invisible presence of Sītā in a spirit-form during Rāma’s visit to Paṅcavaṭī, of Rāma’s meeting with Vāsantī and confession, the fight between Lava and Candraketu, the visit of Vasiṣṭha and others to Vālmiki’s hermitage, and the enactment of a miniature play or masque on Rāma’s later history composed by Vālmiki, are skilful details which are invented for the proper development of his dramatic theme, as well as for the suitable expression of his poetic powers. Here again, Bhavabhūti’s principal problem is not the creation but the adequate motivation of an already accepted story. While not monotonously adhering to his original, he accepts for his particular dramatic purpose the epic outlines of a half-mythical and half-human legend of bygone days, which had already taken its hold on the popular imagination by its pathos and poetry, but he reshapes it freely with appropriate romantic and poetical situations, which bring out all the ideal and dramatic implications of a well-known story. In taking up the theme of conjugal love as a form of pure, tender and spiritual affection, ripening into an abiding passion, Bhavabhūti must have realised that its beauty and charm could be best brought out by avoiding the uncongenial realism of contemporary life and going back to the poetry and idealism of olden days. It was not his purpose to draw the figures on his canvas on the generous and
heroic scale of the Epic; but he wanted to add to the ancient
tale an intensity of human feeling, which should transform an
old-world legend into one of everyday experience, the story of
high ideals into one of vivid reality.

In this drama Bhavabhūti idealises conjugal love through the
chastening influence of sorrow, and he does this in a way which
is unparalleled in Sanskrit, or perhaps in any literature. There
are indeed some charming pictures of domestic happiness in
Indian literature; but the causes, both social and religious,
which lowered women in public estimation by depriving them
of their early freedom and dignity, naturally hindered the evolu-
tion of a free conjugal relation. It is conceivable that the larger
and more heterogeneous group comprising the family in ancient
India may have also hampered its growth; for a girl left her
father’s home to enter the home, not of her husband, but of her
father-in-law, and the husband is often merely one of the factors
of the big family. Wedded love was indeed highly prized, but
ordinary marriages were perhaps often prompted by motives of
convenience, among which must be reckoned the necessity of
having a son for religious purposes; and self-choice of husband
was almost entirely confined to the Epics, being forbidden by the
customary Smṛtis, even if permitted by the Kāma-śāstra. The
Aśokan edicts, though now and then didactic on family rela-
tions, are silent on conjugal life. Buddhism brought greater
freedom to women; but the Epics, as well as the Dharma-
śāstras, are full of utilitarian precepts—not merely priestly
generalisations—regarding marriage, and domestic happiness is
still summed up in the loyalty of a fruitful, patient and thrifty
wife. Moreover, the existence of polygamy, which was perhaps
the Dharma more of the higher classes than of the people in
general, rendered the position of the wife difficult and sometimes
less than real. When, like queen Dhāriṇī, she finds herself
treated by her husband with scant grace and deserted for a
younger rival, it becomes useless for her to show her temper and
jealousy like Irāvati; she can, if she is shrewd and discreet,
only say pathetically: *na me eso maccharassa kālo* ('this is not for me a time for jealousy'), and all that is possible for her to do is to make the best of a bad job by falling back upon her own sense of dignity and pride. The author of the *Mrčchakatika* discreetly keeps Cārudatta's wife in the background; on the very rare occasions in which she does appear, we have just a sad and dignified picture, in which her gentleness and generosity are not feigned indeed but are apparently virtues made of helpless necessity.

It is natural, therefore, that even from antiquity Indian opinion represents the god of love as different from the deities who preside over marriage and fertility. No doubt, restrictions placed on the physical gratification of love, except in marriage, are due not only to moral and social necessity, but they also indicate a tendency which harmonises with the biological law that mating is the final cause of love. But in a society where mating was also a religious duty and where conjugal relation was moulded by a peculiar social evolution, an errant tendency was inevitable; and many writers have not hesitated to express a startlingly heterodox view. There are indeed genuine praises of the wife, but one poet, for instance, represents married life as a prison-house, and the usual note is that of the glorification of the love-union permitted by Kāma-śāstra. It is not difficult to understand a similar attitude, occasionally, on the part of the wife. Apart from the numberless tales of naughty and cunning wife's intrigues in Sanskrit folk-tale, a more refined sentiment is expressed by one woman-poet who is impatient with the perfect spouse, who has all the virtues of a stage-hero, but none of a lover, which alone can make her happiness perfect. Free and continuous courtship is thus recognised as a stimulus of permanent love. Married love can remain unspoiled by time and familiarity and retain its romance and beauty only where there is enough of that idealism which can make such continuous courtship possible and redeems it from the debasing contact of the littleness of life's daily experience. In such a discouraging
atmosphere, where the tendency to take the marriage-vow lightly was not uncommon, Bhavabhūti had the courage to represent conjugal love as a serious and abiding human passion, as a blend of sex-feeling, parent-feeling and comradeship, or as expressed in the words of the wise Kāmandakī (vi. 18): "Know, my dear children, that to a wife her husband and to a husband his lawful wife, are, each to each, the dearest of friends, the sum-total of relationships, the completeness of desire, the perfection of treasures, even life itself." The implications, both real and ideal, of such love, are best brought out, in the idea of our poet, not by an invented plot, nor by a story based on the narrow realism of actual life, but by the idealism, pathos and poetry of an intensely human legend of the past, round which a hundred romantic associations have already gathered.

Bhavabhūti’s Rāma and Sitā are from the beginning man and woman of more strenuous and deeper experience than Duṣyanta and his woodland love. In the opening act, which has been praised so often and which strikes the keynote of the drama, the newly crowned king of Ayodhyā with his beloved spouse and his ever faithful brother is looking over pictures which recall the dear memory of their past sorrow. This scene, which is made the occasion for the tender and deep attachment of Rāma and Sitā to show itself, also heightens by contrast the grief of separation which immediately follows. There is a fine note of tragic irony not only in Rāma’s assurance that such a separation as they had suffered would never happen again, in Lakṣmaṇa’s inadvertent allusion to the fire-ordeal and Rāma’s instant declaration of his disbelief in baseless rumours, but also in Sitā’s passionate clinging to the memories of past joy and sorrow on the verge of a still more cruel fate. The blow comes just at a moment when the tired, timid and confiding Sitā falls asleep on the arms of her husband, who is lost in his own thoughts of love. When the cup of happiness, full to the brim, was raised to his lips it was dashed off from Rāma’s hand; and one can understand the sentimental breakdown which immediately follows
in the conflict between his love and his stern sense of kingly duty. With the responsibilities of the state newly laid on his shoulders, Rāma is perhaps more self-exacting than is right or just to himself and his beloved; but having abandoned the faithful and dear wife, who was his constant companion ever since childhood, his suffering knows no bounds. Both his royal and personal pride is deeply wounded by the thought that such an unthinkable stain should attach to the purity of his great love and to the purity of the royal name he bears.

The scene of the next two acts is laid in the old familiar surroundings of Daṇḍaka and Pañcavaṭī, which Rāma revisits. Twelve years have elapsed; his grief has mellowed down; but he is still loyal and devoted to the memory of his banished wife. The sorrow, which has become deep-seated, is made alive with the recollection of their early experience of married love in these forests, where even in exile they had been happy. The situation is dramatically heightened by making the pale, sorrowing but resigned Sītā appear in a spirit-form, unseen by mortals, and become an unwilling, but happy, listener to the confessions which her husband makes unknowingly to Vāsanti of his great love and fidelity. Sītā's resentment is real and reasonable, and she is still mystified as to why Rāma abandoned her. She comes on the scene with despair and resignation in her heart, but it is not for her to sit in judgment on his conduct. She appears as the true woman and loving wife which she has not ceased to be, and is willing to be convinced. Unknown to each other, the reconciliation of hearts is now complete; and with an admirable delicacy of touch the dramatist describes her gradual, but generous, surrender to the proof that, though harsh, he deeply loves her and has suffered no less. When Vāsanti, who cannot yet take kindly to Rāma, reproves him on his heartless act to his wife in a half-finished, but bitter, speech (iii. 26) and denounces him in her righteous wrath, her pitiless words aggravate his grief; but the unseen Sītā, with a characteristic want of logic but with the true instinct of a loving heart,
now defends her husband and resents all disparagement from outside. The denouement of reunion is only a logical develop-
ment of this scene; and the recognition scene in act iv in which Bhavabhūti, like Kālidāsa, represents the offspring as the crown
of wedded love, forms a natural psychological climax. By remov-
ing the inevitable tragedy of the original story, Bhavabhūti runs
the risk of weakening the artistic effect of his drama, but the
denouement of happy ending is not here a mere observance of
convention, brought about in a forced way. It is naturally
developed by rehandling the entire theme and creating new
situations, and no other conclusion is possible from the poet’s
skilful readjustment of motives and incidents. It is a drama in
which the tragic climax occurs, with the sorrow and separation,
at the beginning; and it requires a considerable mastery of the
dramatic art to convert it from a real tragedy into a real comedy
of happiness and reunion. It cannot be said that Bhavabhūti
does not succeed.

Bhavabhūti praises himself for his “mastery of speech”
and claims merit for felicity and richness of expression as
well as for depth of meaning; and the praise that he arrogates
for himself is not undeserved. The qualities in which he excels
are his power of vivid and often rugged, or even grotesque,
description, the nobility and earnestness of his conception, a
genuine emotional tone, and a love for all that is deep and poign-
ant, as well as grand and awe-inspiring, in life and nature.
Contrasted with Kālidāsa, however, he lacks polish and fastidious
technical finish: but, as we have already said, his tendency was
not towards the ornate and the finical but towards the grotesque
and the rugged, not towards reserve but towards abandon. This
would explain, to a certain extent, why his so-called dramas are
in reality dramatic poems, and his plot is, at least in his earlier
plays, a string of incidents or pictures without any real unity.
Bhavabhūti cannot write in the lighter vein, but takes his subject
too seriously; he has no humour, but enough of dramatic irony;
he can hardly attain perfect artistic aloofness, but too often
merges himself in his subject; he has more feeling than real poetry.

His *Uttara-rāma-carī* shows indeed considerable dramatic skill, but it appeals more as an exceedingly human story of love and suffering, steeped in the charm of poetry and sentiment. It is chiefly in this that its merit lies. The story is drawn from the Epic, but the picture is far more homely, far more real; the emotion is far more earnest than is usual in Sanskrit love-poetry. Bhavabhūti is not concerned with romantic and light-hearted intrigues, nor does his theme, in spite of the introduction of the supernatural, consist of the treatment of a legendary subject, removed from the reality of common experience. His delineation of love as an emotion is finely spiritual and yet intensely human. His descriptions are marked by an extraordinary realism of sensation and vividness of touch. While preserving the essential ideality of a theme, which was cherished through ages as an elevated conception, he invests it with a higher poetical naturalness, based on the genuine emotions of common manhood and womanhood. In this he vies successfully with Kālidāsa.

It is natural, therefore, that in Indian estimation Bhavabhūti should rank next to Kālidāsa as a poet, if not as a dramatist. To be judged by this lofty standard is itself a virtual acknowledgment of high merit; and it is not an altogether unjust praise. Bhavabhūti's shortcomings are those of an exuberant poetic mind, lacking the much-desired restraint of an artist, and they are manifest on the surface; but he has excellences which place him very high. As a dramatist he does not certainly lack power, but perhaps he is not as successful as Kālidāsa, much less than Śūdraka or Viśākhadatta. His tendency to exaggerate, to strain deliberately after effect and accumulate series of them, to indulge in sentimental prolixity, to take things too earnestly and identify himself with them, are faults which are fatal to a good dramatist. His lack of humour, which is partially responsible for these aberrations, does not indicate a disorganised mind, but it is perhaps a
temperamental insufficiency, which makes his mind too elevated and inelastic to appreciate fully the lighter side of life and embrace in broad and sparkling sympathy all kinds of men and things. He is too profoundly interested in his characters and their sentiments to care for action as such. In a narrative we are told what occurs, in a drama we see the actual occurrence; in Bhavabhūti’s plays, comparatively little happens, though much is said. And yet he does not excel in mere narrative. His genius is lyrical, implying a development of feeling and reflection at the expense of action; it is too often so in principle, even when it is not so in form. He cannot project himself properly into his characters; he is too personal to be entirely self-effacing, too impetuous to be smooth and even. Bhavabhūti is indeed not a shadowy figure, but lives vividly in his works; he is one of the few charmingly egoistic poets in Sanskrit, who seldom loses sight of himself, but permeates his writings (even though they are dramas) with the flavour of a rugged but lovable personality. It is not surprising, therefore, that his emotions carry him away, often further than the limits of art. His sentiment becomes sentimentality, and his pathos the spectacular sensibility of the man of feeling rather than the poignant rush of tragic sorrow. He is a master of aggravated pathos rather than of heroic agony. He does not condense a world of emotion in one terse pregnant phrase of concentrated passion, but dilutes the strength of the poetic nucleus by diffusing it into graceful and sonorous periods. Perhaps popular taste did not disapprove of such naked wallowing in the pathetic; and very few Sanskrit poets, in accordance with the accepted theory of sentiment, would resist the opportunity of a free outpouring in sentimental verse and prose. But these are not mere concessions to the groundlings, nor is theory not emphatic in the sound view that sentiments should be suggested rather than expressed. The unauthorised practice of wordy emphasis springs rather from an excess of sensibility inherent in Bhavabhūti’s poetic imagination, which is never tiring by unchartered freedom. Leaving aside his Mādhava, even his Rāma’s
prolonged lamentations, tears and faintings, however poetic, are overdone and become undignified.

There can be no denying these facts, which are obvious even to a superficial reader of Bhavabhūti’s plays. Bhavabhūti is fortunate in having good editors and apologists,—the kindred spirits for whom he cried in his life-time; but his merits are also too obvious to require a justification of his demerits. It is not of much consequence if his dramas, judged by a strict standard, are really dramatic poems; it is the type in which Bhavabhūti excels, and he should be judged by what he actually aims at and achieves. Other dramatists may exhibit a greater degree of some characteristic quality, but it is scarcely too much to say that none among the successors of Kālidāsa surpasses Bhavabhūti in pure poetry. It is not necessary to prove it by quoting instances of his mastery of poetical imagery, thought and expression in every variety of melting modulation or sounding pomp; the spirit of poetry, quite indefinable but easily perceivable, pervades all his writings in their theme and treatment, and more especially, in the charming series of lyric stanzas which Bhavabhūti alone could write. If he is a poet of human passion, having a strong perception of the nobility of human character and its deeply felt impulses and emotions, he is no less a lover of the overwhelming grandeur of nature, enthroned in the solitude of dense forests, sounding cataracts and lofty mountains. It is not often that his passionate humanism and naturalism yield to mere academicism. If he expresses his sensations with a painful and disturbing intensity\(^1\) and often

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\(^1\) In his description of primal sensations Bhavabhūti is as often direct as he is uncouth, but terribly appropriate, in his selection of words. The word grāvan, for instance, in his famous line, describing Rāma’s poignant sorrow (Uttara\(^o\) i. 28), is not dainty like Kālidāsa’s upala, but it cannot be substituted for a weaker word. His jagged description of the Dandaka forest, though often bizarre and even grotesque, can be contrasted in this respect to the refined charm of Kālidāsa’s pictures of nature. Bhavabhūti is one of the few Sanskrit poets who can describe a sensation in its intense vividness, without investing it with an ideal glamour or domesticating it. Witness, for instance his description of the sensation of touch in Uttara\(^o\) i. 35, Mālatī\(^o\) vi. 12 and Mahāvīra\(^o\) ii. 22. He is not gross nor sensual, but it is not correct to say that his ideas and objects are spiritually rarefied; on the
strays into the rugged and the formless (or, shall we say, evolves his own form of art and expression?), he thereby drinks deep at the very fountain of life; he realises the man’s joy, even he loses the artist’s serenity. His unevenness and inequality, even his verbosity and slovenliness, are thus explicable. Bhavabhūti suffers from the excess of his qualities, but the qualities are those of a great, but powerfully sensitive, poetic mind. His contemporaries called him Śrīkaṇṭha “Divine Throat”, perhaps in homage to his divine music; but since it is also the name of the rugged and powerful deity, who swallowed poison in lieu of nectar, the epithet is justified by Bhavabhūti’s mastery of overmastering passion, by his nervous energy and terrible sincerity, which scorn mere polish and finish, but speak, with palpitating warmth, of things lying at the very core of his being.

g. Yaśovarman, Māyurāja and Others

The Mallikā-māruta,¹ a Prakaraṇa in ten acts, was at one time ascribed to Daṇḍin, but it is now known to be the work of Uddanḍin or Uddanḍanātha, who was patronised by the Zamorin Mānnavikrama of Calicut (Kukkuṭakroḍa) at about the middle of the 17th century. A poor imitation of Mālatī-mādhava, it describes the love of Mallikā, daughter of a Vidyādhara king, and Māruta, a Kuntala prince, with the subsidiary episode of the love of his friend Kalakaṇṭha and her maid Ramayantikā; it has also a female magician Mandākini, two escapes from mad elephants and two abductions. To Bāna is sometimes attributed a drama of little merit, entitled Parvati-pariṇaya² in five acts,

contrary, the touch of sensuousness is too warmly conspicuous to be ignored. The comparison with the sublimely academic Milton and the coldly polished Thomas Gray, suggested by Lanman, is barely justifiable.


² Printed many times, e.g. by M. R. Telang, NSP, Bombay 1892, 1911; by T. R. Ratnam Aiyar, Madras 1898; by R. V. Krishnamachariar, Śrī-Vāmp-Vilāsa Press, Srirangam, 1906; by R. Schmidt, Leipzig 1917. For bibliography, see Sten Konow, p. 103. Note. On the
which has a theme similar to (or, one might say, which is an undramatic dramatisation of) that of the Kumāra-sambhava; but it is really the work of a comparatively modern Abhinava Bāṇa, named Vāmana Bhaṭṭa Bāṇa, who was a court-poet of the Reḍḍi prince Vema of Konḍviḍu at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, and who also wrote a small but highly erotic Bāṇa entitled Śṛṅgāra-bhūṣaṇa. Of the lost drama, Mukuṭa-tāḍitaka, cited and ascribed to Bāṇa by Bhoja in his Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa and by Caṇḍapāla in his commentary on the Nala-campū, nothing is known, except that the drama apparently dealt with the Mahābhārata episode of Bhīma’s fight with Duryodhana. Another drama, called Śārada-candrikā, by Bāṇa is known only by Śāradātanaya’s reference in his Bhāvaprakāśa.

Yaśovarman, king of Kānyaubjā, who is mentioned by Kahlana as a patron of Bhavabhūti and Vākpatirāja, was the author of a lost Nāṭaka, entitled Rāmābhuyadaya, which is cited by Ānandavardhana, and which, according to Śāradā-


3 Keibl, SD, p. 182, note 3.
4 Ed. Gackwad’s Orient. Ser., p. 252; It is surmised that the plot of this play referred to Bāṇa’s story of Candrapīḍa’s death and revival. In this connexion it is noteworthy that commenting on an erotic stanza, ascribed to Bāṇa, Kṣemendra in his Aucitya-vicāra (ad, śl. 14), thinks that the stanza in question describes the Viraha of Kādambarī; but it does not occur in Bāṇa’s romance. Considering the fact that Bāṇa never lived to finish his romance, it is very unlikely that he wrote either a dramatic or metrical version of the story, especially because the revival of Candrapīḍa is not an item in Bāṇa’s portion of the romance. A large number of verses, untraceable in Bāṇa’s known works, are cited in the anthologies (see Thomas, Kūs, pp. 55-59): but no safe conclusion is possible from them regarding his authorship of other works; and some of the stanzas might belong to Abhinava Bāṇas of later times.

5 Dhvanyāloka, ed. NSP, Bombay 1911, pp. 133, 148 (name of the author given by Abhinavagupta). The play is also cited in the Daśārāpaka (ed. NSP, Bombay, 1917), i. 46; in the Nāṭyadarpana (ed. Gackwad’s Orient. Serics, Baroda 1929), pp. 45, 56, 72-91, 95 109, 116, 144, 158 (the references are to different acts); in Nāṭaka-laṅkaṇa-ratna-koṭa (ed M. Dillon, Oxford Univ. Press, 1933), pp. 33, 130, as well as in Bhoja’s Śṛṅgāra (BSOS, IV. 1926, p. 282).

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tanaya, consisted of six acts. Some of the large number of quotations found under Yaśovarman’s name in the anthological and rhetorical literature\(^1\) probably belonged to this drama, which presumably dealt with the entire Rāmāyaṇa story.\(^2\)

Of Māyurāja, author of another lost Rāma-drama, named Udātta-rāghava, we have no information; but his work is cited five times in the Dasarūpaka\(^3\) and is known earlier to Abhinavagupta\(^4\) and Kuntaka.\(^5\) One of the eulogistic verses of Rājaśekhara, given in the Sūkti-muktāvalī of Jahlaṇa (iv. 82),\(^6\) speaks of Māyurāja as a Kalacuri poet, but since our knowledge of the Kalacuri dynasty of this period is meagre, the poet, if he was a Kalacuri prince, cannot be identified.

Anaṅgaharṣa Māṭrāraṇa,\(^7\) son of king Narendravardhana, is more fortunate in the fact that his drama, Tāpasa-vatsarāja-carita,\(^8\) has survived in a unique Śāradā manuscript. Nothing is known of him, but his work offers in six acts a variation of the theme of the Svapna-vāsavadatta by making Udayana, king of Vatsa, turn into an almost demented ascetic out of grief for his queen’s alleged death, while Yaugandharāyaṇa succeeds by a ruse to marry the king of Padmāvatī who is enamoured of Udayana from a portrait. The reunion with Vāsavadatta, who also turns

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\(^1\) See Thomas, *Kus*, pp. 75-76, and references cited therein.  
\(^2\) For a conjectural summary of the plot of this play from later citations, see R. Ramamurthi in *Jour. Orient. Research*, Madras, III, 1929, pp. 268-72.  
\(^3\) ii. 58; iii. 3, 24 (with name of the author); iv. 13, 28.  
\(^4\) In his commentary on Bharata, ch. xix.  
\(^5\) Ed. S. K. De, Calcutta 1928, pp. 225, 244 (author’s name not given).  
\(^6\) Two of Māyurāja’s verses are also quoted in this anthology (90. 10; 92.5). The Nāṭya-darpaṇa also quotes this work thrice (pp. 66, 116, 194) without the name of the author. The Kula-patyanika, cited several times in the Nāṭaka-ratna-kosa, probably refers to an act of this drama in which the abduction of Sītā occurs. It appears from these and other citations that Māyurāja made certain modifications in the original Rāmāyaṇa story by making Laksmana pursue the golden deer and Rāma follow him later, and by eliminating, after Bhavabhūti, the element of treachery in the slaying of Vāsin.  
\(^7\) There is no authority for identifying him with Māyurāja; see S. K. De in *JRSA*, 1924, p. 664.  
\(^8\) Ed. Yadugiri Yatiraja, Bangalore 1928, from the Berlin manuscript of the play Weber, No. 2166, which is described and quoted by Hultsch in *Nachrichten d. Göttingischen Gesellschaft*, 1886, p. 224 f.
into a Parivrājikā, occurs at Prayāga at a melodramatic moment when the king and Vāsavadattā, both tired of life, are about to commit suicide. The play has some real poetry and pathos, with a great deal of lamentation in elegant and touching verses, clearly after Vikramorvaśīya; but there is hardly any action or any convincing characterisation. The work is known to Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, as well as to Kuntaka, and there can be no doubt that it belongs to a period earlier than the middle of the 9th century.

Both Abhinavagupta and Kuntaka mention and quote from a large number of lost dramas, which are of unknown date and mostly of unknown authorship, but which, being cited by them, presumably belongs to this period. They are: Chālita-rāma, Kṛtyārāvaṇa, Māyā-puṣpaka (all three Rāma-dramas), Pratimāniruddha (ascribed by Nāṭya-darpaṇa to Vasunāga, son of Bhīmadeva), Pāṇḍavānanda,—all Nāṭakas, and a Prakarna called Puṣpa-dāṣitaka (or bhūṣitaka). To this list may be added the following plays mentioned by Abhinavagupta alone: Pratijñā-

1 In his Locana and his commentary on Bharata Ānandavardhana quotes anonymously (p. 131) utkampini bhaya from iii. 16. Also cited by Bhoja in Śrīgīra. The quotations are fully traced in the edition mentioned above.

2 Kuntaka quotes, without naming the author, from acts ii (pp. 151-52), iii-iv (pp. 229-30). The play is also cited extensively in the Nāṭya darpaṇa, pp. 30, 34, 43, 66, 67, 100, 106, 107.

3 A Manoramā-vatsarāja by Bhīmaṭa is also cited in the Nāṭya-darpaṇa (p. 144). We know that Manoramā is a handmaid of Priyadarśikā in Harṣa’s drama; does this play deal with another amour of Udayana with her? Another work of Bhīmaṭa, named Svāpna-dāśāsana, is mentioned by Bhoja and Rājaśekhara, the latter describing Bhīmaṭa as Kaliṇjarapatī and author of five plays; see Sten Konow, p. 87, Keith, SD, p. 239. He may or may not be identical with Bhīma, author of Pratijñā-cānakya. The Viṇḍa-vāsavadatta (ed. Kuppusvami Sastri and C. Kunhan Raja, Madras 1931), which is an incomplete anonymous play breaking off at the beginning of the fourth act, resembles the Bhāsa plays, and appears to be another version of the Pratijñā theme, in which the ruse of elephant, imprisonment of Udayana and music-lesson on the Viṇḍa to Vāsavadattā are utilised as important incidents. It is suggested that this play is identical with the lost Unmāda-vāsavadatta of Śaktibhadra, but this is of course an unsupported conjecture.

4 In his commentary on Bharata.

5 All these works are cited in the Daśarūpakā (excepting Māyā-puṣpaka) and in the Nāṭya-darpaṇa.
cānakya (ascribed to Bhima),

one lyrical or musical plays, named respectively Čūdāmanī and Guṇamālā, (both Dombikā), as well as Devī-candragupta and Abhīśrīrika-vāṇcitaka (both Nāṭakas) which we have already mentioned. The Daśarūpaka adds another play of unknown authorship, named Taranāgadatta, probably a Prakaraṇa, which has a courtesan as a heroine and which was apparently modelled on Šūdraka’s play. The Nātya-darpaṇa which cites most of these works, further mentions another play, which probably belongs to the 9th century, namely, a Prakaraṇa, called Citrotpalālambitaka, assigned to Amātya Śaṅkuka, apparently the Śaṅkuka who belonged to the time of Ajitāpiḍa of Kashmir. The meagre citations do not, unfortunately, give us an adequate idea of these unrecovered plays, but their popularity is indicated by the large number of references in dramaturgic treatises. Some information, however, is available about the plot of the oft-quoted Puṣpa-dūṣitaka, mentioned above, from the accounts given by Kuntaka and by the authors of the Nātya-darpaṇa. A Prakaraṇa in six acts, it had for its theme the love-story of a merchant Samudradatta and Nandayanti, which involved their secret marriage, opposition from Samudradatta’s father Sāgaradatta, her pregnancy, suspicion of her chastity, and the final reunion of the lovers by means of a ring of recognition and by the identification of the constellation under which their child was born.

The Aścarya-cūdāmanī of Śaktibhadra is claimed to be the oldest South Indian play (the author having declared in the

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1 See R. Ramamurthi in Jour. Orient. Research, III, 1929, pp. 80-89. It appears to have been written to emulate Viśākhadatta’s work.
2 Also quoted by Bhoja and Śāradātanaya.
3 The Nātya-darpaṇa also cites a Abhinava-rāghava of Kṣiravāmin, pupil of Bhaṭṭendurāja, who was Abhinavagupta’s Guru; but this work obviously belongs to the end of the 10th century.
5 Ed. C. Sankararaja Sastri, with introd. by Kuppusvami Sastri, Bālamanorama Press Madras 1926; Eng. trs. by the same editor, 1927 separately. It has been claimed that the Abhiṣeka and the Pratimā were also written by Śaktibhadra, and that the Unmādavaśavadatta, mentioned by Śaktibhadra himself as another work of his, is the same work as the Pratijñā. But these suggestions lack proof.
Prologue that he belonged to Dakṣināpatha), and is assigned, not on very adequate grounds, to the 9th century. It dramatises, in seven acts, the story of the Rāmāyaṇa, and betrays knowledge of Bhavabhūti’s plays. Although it contains some fine stanzas and good prose, it is poorly executed as a drama, and there is nothing remarkable in it except the pretty device, from which the play takes its name, of the magic crest-jewel of Sītā as a token of recognition. The first two acts deal with the Śūrpaṇakhā episode in the forest as one of the motives of the feud; the third and fourth, with Sītā’s abduction by Rāvaṇa approaching in the magic disguise of Rāma; the fifth, with Rāvaṇa’s love-making to Sītā interrupted by Mandodari; the sixth, with the embassy of Hanūmat who presents to Sītā the miraculous ring of Rāma for recognition, and returns with the marvellous crest-jewel of Sītā as a token; and the last act winds up with the fire-ordeal. The incident of the crest-jewel and magic-ring, which is mentioned for the first time in act iii and utilised in act vi, is of course suggested by Vālmiki’s Cūḍāmaṇi and Aṅgulīyaka, but it is employed as a mere device and is neither the central motive nor a dramatically effective idea. The play contains some fine verses, but it is really a series of narrative episodes, with some inventiveness (as for instance, Rāvaṇa’s disguise as Rāma, but it is perhaps suggested by Bhavabhūti’s Śūrpaṇakhā disguised as Mantharā), and with a slight dramatic unity of action, derived from Bhavabhūti’s idea of a central feud between Rāvaṇa and Rāma.