CHAPTER II
FROM ĀŚVAGHOṢA TO KĀLIDĀSA

1. ĀŚVAGHOṢA AND HIS SCHOOL

Fifty years ago Āśvaghoṣa was nothing more than a name, but to-day all his important works have been published, and he is recognised as the first great Kāvyā-poet and precursor of Kālidāsa. Very little however, is known of his personal history except what is vouchsafed by legends¹ and what can be gathered from his works themselves. The colophons to his Kāvyas agree in describing him as a Bhikṣu or Buddhist monk of Sāketa (Ayodhyā) and as the son of Suvarṇākṣi, 'of golden eyes,' which was the name of his mother. They also add the style of Ācārya and Bhadanta, as well as of Mahākavi and Mahāvādin. As an easterner, Āśvaghoṣa’s admiration of the Rāmāyaṇa² is explicable, while it is probable that he belonged to some such Buddhist school of eastern origin as the Mahāsaṅghika or the Bahuṣrutika. He makes little display of purely scholastic knowledge; but the evidence of his works makes it clear that he had a considerable mastery over the technical literature which a Sanskrit poet was expected to possess, and a much wider acquaintance than most other Buddhist writers of the various branches of Brahmanical learning. His Sanskrit is not strictly faultless, but his easy command over it is undoubtedly not inferior to that of most


² On the poet’s indebtedness to the Rāmāyaṇa, which Cowell and Johnston deal with in the introductions to their respective editions of the Buddha-carita, see also A. Gawronski, Studies about the Sanskrit-Buddhist Lit., Krakow 1919, pp. 27-40; C. W. Gurner in JASB, XXII, 1927, p. 347 f.; Winternitz, HIL, I, p. 512 f.

³ See Johnston, op. cit., pt. II, introd., xxxi f,
Sanskrit writers. Everywhere great respect is shown to Brahma-
nical ideas and institutions, and it is not improbable that he was
born a Brahman and given a Brahman's education before he
went over to Buddhism. The obvious interest he shows in the
theme of conversion in at least two of his works and the zeal
which he evinces for his faith perhaps fortify this presumption.
The Chinese tradition makes\(^1\) Aśvaghoṣa a contemporary and
spiritual counsellor of king Kaniṣṭha. The poet did not probably
live later than the king, and it would not be wrong to put the
lower limit of his date at 100 A.D. But in associating with
Aśvaghoṣa the Sarvāstivādin Viśālaka commentary on the
Abhidharma, or in naming the Viśālaka scholar Pārśva or his
pupil Puṇḍayaśas as having converted Aśvaghoṣa, the tradition,
which cannot be traced further than the end of the 4th century
and which shows more amiable than historical imagination, is
perhaps actuated by the motive of exalting the authority of this
school; for neither the date of the commentary is certain, nor can
the special doctrines of the Sarvāstivādins be definitely traced in
the unquestioned works of Aśvaghoṣa. That he was a follower
of Hīnayāna and took his stand on earlier dogmatism admits of
little doubt, but he was less of a scholastic philosopher than an
earnest believer, and his emphasis on personal love and devotion
to the Buddha perhaps prepared the way for Mahāyāna Bhakti,
of which he is enumerated as one of the patriarchs. It is not
necessary for us to linger over the question of his scholarship or
religion;\(^2\) but it should be noted that, while his wide scholarship
informs his poems with a richer content, it seldom degenerates
into mere pedantry, and the sincerity of his religious convictions

\(^1\) On Chinese and other Buddhist sources concerning Aśvaghoṣa, see S. Lévi in \(JA\),
1892, p. 201 f.; 1896, II, p. 444 f.; 1908, II, p. 57 f.; 1928, II, p. 193 ; M. Anesaki in \(ERE\), II,
1909, p. 159 f. and ref. ; T. Suzuki in the work cited below. On Kaniṣṭha's date, see Winternitz,
\(HIL\), II, App. V, pp. 611-14 for a summary of different views.

\(^2\) The question is discussed by Johnston in his introduction. Some doctrines
peculiar to Mahāyāna have been traced in Aśvaghoṣa's genuine works, but his date is too
early for anything other than primitive Mahāyāna. The recommendation of Yogācāra in
\(Saundarananda\) XIV. 18 and XX. 68 need not refer to the Yogācāra school, but perhaps alludes
only to the practice of Yoga in general,
imparts life and enthusiasm to his impassioned utterances, and redeems them from being mere dogmatic treatises or literary exercises.

To later Buddhism Aśvaghoṣa is a figure of romance, and the Chinese and Tibetan translations of Sanskrit works, made in later times, ascribe to him a number of religious or philosophical writings, some of which belong to developed Mahāyāna.¹ In the absence of Sanskrit originals, it is impossible to decide Aśvaghoṣa’s authorship; but since they have not much literary pretensions it is not necessary for us to discuss the question. Among these doubtful works, the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra, which attempts a synthesis of Vijñāna-vāda and Mādhyamika doctrines, has assumed importance from its being translated into English,² under the title ‘Aśvaghoṣa’s Discourse on the Awakening of Faith,’ from the second Chinese version made about 700 A.D.; but the internal evidence of full-grown Mahāyāna doctrine in the work itself puts Aśvaghoṣa’s authorship out of the question. Another work, entitled Vajrasūci ‘the Diamond-needle,’³ a clever polemic on Brahmanical caste, has also been published, but it is not mentioned among Aśvaghoṣa’s works by the Chinese pilgrim Yi-tsing (7th century) nor by the Bstan-hgyur, and it shows little of Aśvaghoṣa’s style or mentality; the Chinese translation, which was made between 973 and 981 A.D., perhaps rightly ascribes it to Dharmakīrtī. Of greater interest is the Gaṇḍī-stotra-gāthā, a small poem of twenty-nine stanzas, composed mostly in the Sragdharā metre, the Sanskrit text of which has been restored⁴ and edited. It is in praise of the Gaṇḍī, the

¹ A full list is given by F. W. Thomas in Kūs, introd., p. 26 f.
² By T. Suzuki, Chicago 1900. Takakusu states that the earlier catalogue of Chinese texts omits the name of Aśvaghoṣa as the author of this work. The question of several Aśvaghoṣas is discussed by Suzuki and Anešaki, cited above. On this work see Winternitz HIL, II, pp. 361-62 and reff.
³ Ed. and trs. by Weber, Über die Vajrasūci, in Abhandl. d. Berliner Akad., 1859, pp. 205-64, where the problem of authorship is discussed.
⁴ By A. Von Staël-Holstein, in Bibl. Buddh., no. XV, St. Petersburg 1913, and re-edited by E. H. Johnston in IA, 1933, pp. 61-70, where the authorship of Aśvaghoṣa has been questioned. Cf. F. W. Thomas in JRAS, 1914, p. 752 f.
Buddhist monastery gong, consisting of a long symmetrical piece of wood, and of the religious message which its sound is supposed to carry when beaten with a short wooden club. The poem is marked by some metrical skill, but one of its stanzas (st. 20) shows that it was composed in Kashmir at a much later time.\footnote{A work, entitled Tridaya-mala, is ascribed to Aśvaghūsa in JBORS, XXIV, 1938, pp. 157-60, but Johnston, ibid, XXV, 1939, p. 11 f. disputes it.}

The next apocryphal work is the Sūtrālaṃkāra,\footnote{Translated into French on the Chinese version of Kumārajīva, by Ed. Huber, Paris 1908.} over the authorship of which there has been a great deal of controversy.\footnote{For references see Tomomatsu in JA, 1931, II, p. 135 f. Also L. de la Vallée Poussin, Vijñaptimātrāśiddhi, pp. 221-24.} The Chinese translation of the work, made by Kumārajīva about 405 A.D. assigns it to Aśvaghūsa; but fragments of the same work in Sanskrit were discovered in Central Asia and identified by H. Lüders,\footnote{Bruchstücke der Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā des Kumāralāta in Kongl Preuss Turfan-Expeditionen, Kleinere Sanskrit-Texte II, Leipzig 1926. The fragments are valuable, but unfortunately they are too few in number, and the work is still to be judged on the basis of the Chinese version. Some scholars hold that Aśvaghūsa was the real author, and Kumāralāta only refashioned the work; but it is now generally agreed that Aśvaghūsa had nothing to do with its composition.} who maintains that the author was Kumāralāta, probably a junior contemporary of Aśvaghūsa, and that the work bore in Sanskrit the title of Kalpanā-maṇḍitikā or Kalpanā-laṃkṛtikā. As the name indicates, it is a collection of moral tales and legends, told after the manner of the Jātakas and Avadānas in prose and verse, but in the style of the ornate Kāvyā. Some of the stories, such as those of Dirghāyuṣ and Śibi, are old, but others clearly inculcate Buddha-bhakti in the spirit of the Mahāyāna. The work illustrates the ability to turn the tale into an instrument of Buddhist propaganda, but it also displays wide culture, mentions the two Indian Epics, the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika systems, the Jaina doctrines and the law-book of Manu, and achieves considerable literary distinction. It is unfortunate that the Sanskrit text exists only in fragments. Yuan Chhwang informs us that Kumāralāta was the founder of the Sautrāntika school and came from Taxila; it is not surprising, therefore, that
the work pays respect to the Sarvāstivādins, from whom the Sautrāntikas originated, or that some of its stories can be traced in the works of the school. In two stories (nos. 14 and 31), Kaniṣkā appears as a king who has already passed away; the work, apparently written some time after Kaniṣkā’s death, cannot, therefore, be dated earlier than the 2nd century A.D.¹

¹ The three works, which are known for certain to be Aśvaghoṣa’s, are: the Buddha-carita, the Saundarananda and the Sāriputra-prakaraṇa; and his fame as a great Sanskrit poet rests entirely on these. The first, in its original form of twenty-eight cantos, known to Yi-tsing and to the Chinese and Tibetan versions, is a complete Mahākāvyya on the life of the Buddha, which begins with his birth and closes with an account of the war over the relics, the first Council, and the reign of Aśoka. In Sanskrit² only cantos two to thirteen exist in their entirety, together with about three quarters of the first and the first quarter of the fourteenth (up to st. 31), carrying the narrative down to the Buddha’s temptation, defeat of Māra and his enlightenment. It is the work of a real poet who, actuated by intense devotion to the Buddha and the truth of his doctrine, has studied the scripture and is careful to use the authoritative sources open to him, but who has no special inclination to the marvellous and the miraculous, and reduces the earlier extravagant and chaotic legends to the measure and form of the Kāvya. Aśvaghoṣa does not depart in

¹ If, however, Harivarman, a pupil of Kumāralāta, was a contemporary of Vasubandhu, then Kumāralāta could not have been a younger contemporary of Aśvaghoṣa, but should be dated not earlier than the 3rd century A.D.

² Ed. E. B. Cowell, Oxford 1893, containing four additional cantos by Amṛtānanda, a Nepalese Pandit of the 19th century, who records at the end that he wrote the supplement in 1830 A.D., because he could not find a complete manuscript of the text. Also tr. into English by Cowell in SBE, vol. 49; into German by C. Cappeller, Jena 1922; into Italian by C. Formichi, Bari 1912. Re-edited more critically, and translated into English, by E. H. Johnston in 2 vols., Calcutta 1936 (Panjāb Univ. Orient. Publ. Nos. 31-32), which may be consulted for bibliography of other Indian editions and for critical and exegetical contributions to the subject by various scholars. Johnston remarks: “The textual tradition of the extant portion is bad, and a sound edition is only made possible by comparison with the Tibetan and Chinese translations.” The Tibetan text, with German translation, under the title Das Leben des Buddha von Aśvaghoṣa, is given by F. Weller, in two parts, Leipzig 1926, 1928.
essentials from the received tradition, but he succeeds in infusing into his well conceived and vivid narrative the depth of his religious feeling and the spontaneity of his poetic emotion. Not unworthily praised is the skilful picture he draws of the young prince Sarvārthasiddhi’s journey through the city, of the throng of fair women who hasten to watch him pass by, of the hateful spectacle of disease, old age and death which he encounters on the way, of the womanly blandishments and the political arguments of wisdom set forth by the family priest, which seek to divert the prince’s mind from brooding thoughts of resignation, as well as of the famous night-scene of sleeping women, who in their moment of unconsciousness present all the loathsome signs of human misery and thereby hasten the flight of the prince from the palace. The requirement of a battle-scene in the Kāvya is fulfilled by the pleasing variation of the spirited description of the Buddha’s fight with Māra and his hosts. The work is, therefore, not a bare recital of incident, nor is it a dry and dogmatic exposition of Buddhist doctrine, but the Buddha-legend is conceived in the spirit of the Kāvya in respect of narrative, diction and imagery, and the poet’s flame of faith makes the best lines of the poem quiver with the needed glow.

'The Saundarananda, all the eighteen cantos of which are preserved in Sanskrit, is connected also with the story of the Buddha; but its actual theme is the conversion of his reluctant half-brother, Nanda, nicknamed Sundara for his handsome appearance. Nothing more than a mention of the fact of

1 Parallelisms between Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa in some of these passages, not only in ideas but also in diction and imagery, have been set forth in detail in Nandargikar’s introduction to his edition of Raghuvamśa (3rd ed., Bombay 1897, pp. 163-96); but the argument based thereon that Kālidāsa was earlier and Aśvaghoṣa imitated him has not found general support and is very unlikely.

2 Discovered and edited by Haraprasad Shastri, Bibl. Ind., Calcutta 1910; critically re-edited and translated into English by E. H. Johnston, Oxford Univ. Press, 1928, 1932, which gives full bibliography. In spite of the richer content and wider interest of the Buddha-carita, Johnston is of opinion that “the handling of the Saundarananda is altogether more mature and assured than that of the Buddha-carita”; contra Winternitz, HIL, II, p. 262 note.
conversion is found in the *Mahāvagga* and the *Nidāna-kathā*; and the subject is perhaps too slender to support an extensive poem. But the opportunity is taken, in the earlier part of the poem, to expand the legend with the proper *Kāvya*-embellishments, and in the latter part, to give expression at length to the poet’s religious ideas and convictions. The first six cantos, therefore, describe the mythical foundation of Kapilavastu, its king, the birth of the Buddha and Nanda, the latter’s love for his wife Sundarī, the forcible conversion of Nanda to the life of a monk, which he intensely dislikes, his conflict of feelings, and Sundarī’s lament for her lost husband. All this is pictured skilfully in the manner and diction of the *Kāvya*, and possesses considerable narrative interest; but in the rest of the poem there is not much of description or narration except the account of Nanda’s ascent to heaven and yearning for Apsarases. Entire space is, therefore, devoted to an impassioned exposition of the evils of pride and lust, the vanities of the world and the joys of enlightenment. Here, more than in the imaginative presentation of the Buddha-legend, Āśvaghoṣa the preacher, no doubt, gets the upper hand of Āśvaghoṣa the poet; but in this very conflict between his poetic temperament and religious passion, which finds delight in all that is delightful and yet discards it as empty and unsatisfying, lies the secret of the spontaneity and forcefulness which forms the real appeal of his poetry. It is not merely the zeal of the convert but the conviction of the importance of what he has to say that often makes him scorn mere verbal polish and learned ostentation and speak with an overmastering directness, the very truth and enthusiasm of which sharpen his gift of pointed phrasing, balance his sentences and add a new zest to his emotional earnestness.

In this respect Āśvaghoṣa’s poetry lacks the technical finish and subtlety of the later *Kāvya*; but it possesses freshness of feeling in the simplicity and nobility born of passionate faith. Āśvaghoṣa is fully conversant with the Brahmanical and Buddhist learning of his day, while his metrical skill and use of
rhetorical ornaments betoken his familiarity with the poetic art; but the inherent contrast between the poet and the artist, on the one hand, and the scholar and the preacher, on the other, often results in strange inequalities of matter and manner. At the conclusion of his poems, Aśvaghoṣa declares that he is writing for a larger public, and not merely for a learned audience, for the attainment of peace and not for the display of skill in the Kāvyā. The question, therefore, whether he belongs to this or that school of thought, or whether he employs this or that metre or ornament in his poems is immaterial; what is material to recognise is that religion is not his theme, but religious emotion, which supplies the necessary impetus and evolves its own form of expression without making a fetish of mere rhetoric or mere dogma. Aśvaghoṣa is a poet by nature, a highly cultivated man by training, and a deeply religious devotee by conviction. This unique combination is often real and vital enough to lift his poetry from the dead level of the commonplace and the conventional, and impart to it a genuine emotional tone which is rare in later poetry. What is most pleasing in his work to modern taste is his power of combining a sense of reality and poetry with the skill of art and scholarship. His narrative, therefore, is never dull, his choice of incident and arrangement never incoherent, his diction seldom laboured and his expression rarely devoid of elegant simplicity. If he is not a finished artist in the sense in which his successors are, nor even a great poet capable of great things, his poetic inspiration is genuine, and he never speaks in a tiresome falsetto. If his poetry has not the stress and discipline of chiselled beauty, it has the pliability and promise of unrefined form; it has the sincerity and the throb, if not the perfectly ordered harmony, of full-grown music.

Aśvaghoṣa's versatility is indicated by his third work, a Prakaraṇa or nine-act drama, entitled Śāriputra-prakaraṇa, or

---

1 On Aśvaghoṣa as scholar and artist, see Johnston, op. cit., pt. II, pp-xliv-lxxix.
Śāradvatiputra春季 of which only fragments on palm leaf were discovered in Central Asia and a few passages restored by Lüders. Fortunately the colophon exists, and the question of authorship and name of the work is beyond doubt. Its theme is, again, an act of conversion connected with the Buddha, namely, that of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, but the fragments give us little idea of the way in which the story, well-known from such older sources as the Mahāvagga, was handled. In having a Prakrit-speaking Vidūṣaka as one of the characters and in conforming to the requirements regarding division into acts, use of literary Prakrits, ornamental metrical excursions and other details, the fragments, however, afford clear testimony that the method and technique of a fairly developed Sanskrit drama were already established in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. This presumption is confirmed also by the fragments of two other plays, which were discovered with the remains of Śāriputra-prakarānā, but which bear no testimony of authorship and may or may not have been written by Āśvaghoṣa. The first has for its theme a Buddhist allegory, of which the details are not clear, although a whole leaf of the manuscript has been recovered. It has Kīrti ‘Fame,’ Dhrīti ‘Firmness’ and Buddhi ‘Wisdom’ as characters, and apparently foreshadows such allegorical plays as Kṛṣṇamiśra’s Probodha-candrodaya of a much later time. The Buddha himself appears, as in the drama described above, and all the characters, so far as the fragments go, speak Sanskrit. In having real, as well as allegorical, figures, it

1 On the Prakrits employed in this and the following plays, see Lüders in the works cited, and Keith, HSL, pp. 85-89. The Prakrit is literary and shows the influence of Sanskrit.

2 The metres employed (besides Śloka) are the usual classical ones; Āryā, Upajāti, Śālīni, Vamsānthavila, Vasantatiñaka, Mālinī, Śikharini, Harini, Suvadanā, Śārdulavikṛtīdita and Sragdharā.

3 Contra Sten Konow, Indische Drama, Berlin and Leipzig 1920, p. 50, but the grounds are weak.

resembles more the Caitanya-candrodaya of Kavikarṇāpūra in its manner of treatment, but no definite conclusion is possible. The other play appears to have been also intended for religious edification, but from what remains of it we may infer that it was a social drama of middle class life of the type of the Mrčchakaṭīka. It concerns a young voluptuary, called simply the Nāyaka and probably named Somadatta, and his mistress Magadhavatī, apparently a courtesan converted to Buddhism. There are also a Prince (Bhaṭṭidālaka), an ever-hungry Vidūṣaka, named Kaumudagandha, a maid-servant, and a Duṣṭa or Rogue. The fragments are few in number and not consecutive, and it is difficult to make out the story. But in view of the uncertainty of the origin and antiquity of the Sanskrit Drama, these specimens, which belong probably to the same age, are highly interesting; for they reveal the drama in its first appearance in a relatively perfected form, and clearly indicate that its origin should antedate the Christian era.

From the literary point of view, Āsvaghoṣa’s achievement, we have seen, is marked not so much by crudity and primitiveness as by simplicity and moderation in language and style; it is artistic but not in the extravagant manner of the later Kāvyā. Its matter and poetic quality, therefore, more appealing than its manner and artistic effect. This is certainly different from the later taste and standard of verse-making; and it is not surprising that with the exception of Kālidāsa, who is nearer his time, Āsvaghoṣa exercised little influence on later Sanskrit poets, although the exception itself is a sure indication of the essential quality of his literary effort. Despite their religious zeal, the literary works of Āsvaghoṣa could not have been approved whole-heartedly also by the learned monks for his freedom of views and leaning towards Brahmanical learning.

1 The only quotation from Āsvaghoṣa in Alamkāra literature occurs in Rājaśekhara’s Kāya-mimāṃsā, ed. Gackwad’s O. S., p. 18 (= Buddha-c. viii. 25). For other quotations see Johnston, op. cit., pp. lxxix-lxxx, and F. W. Thomas, Kāvī, introd., p. 29.
With the Buddhist writers of the Kāvya, on the other hand, Aśvaghoṣa was deservedly popular; and some of their works were modelled so closely on those of Aśvaghoṣa that they were indiscriminately assigned to him in later times, with the result that the authors themselves came to be identified with him.¹

Of the successors of Aśvaghoṣa, who are to be taken into account, not because they were Buddhists but because their works possess a wider literary appeal, we have already spoken of Kumāralāta, one of whose works is ascribed by the Chinese tradition to Aśvaghoṣa himself. Some of the poems² of Mātṛceṭa have likewise been attributed to Aśvaghoṣa by the Tibetan tradition, one of whose famous chroniclers, Tāranātha being of opinion that Mātṛceṭa is another name for Aśvaghoṣa! Of the twelve works ascribed to Mātṛceṭa in Tibetan and one in Chinese, most of which are in the nature of Stotras and some belonging distinctly to Mahāyāṇa, only fragments of Satpaṅcāśataka-stotra³ and Catuhśataka-stotra,⁴ or panegyrical of one hundred and fifty and four hundred stanzas respectively, are recovered in Sanskrit. Both these works are simple devotional poems in Ślokas. They are praised by Yi-tsing, to whom Mātṛceṭa is already a famous poet, and who himself is said to have translated the first work into Chinese; but they do not appear to possess much literary merit. That Mātṛceṭa, in spite of his name occurring distinctly in Yi-tsing and in the inscriptions, was confused with Aśvaghoṣa, may have been due to the fact that he belonged to the same school and was probably a contemporary. A Tibetan version of another

¹ Concerning the identifications, see F. W. Thomas in Album Kern, Leiden 1903, pp. 405-08 and JA, 1903, pp 345-60; also see ERE, VIII (1915), p 495f.
² For a list of the works see F. W. Thomas, Kus, introd., pp. 26-28.
³ Fragments published by S. Lévi in JA, XVI, 1910, pp. 433-56 and L. de la Vallée Poussin in JRAS, 1911, pp. 759-77. Siegling is reported to have reconstructed about two-thirds of the Sanskrit text; see Winternitz, HIL, II, p. 271 note. Both these works exist in Tibetan and Chinese.
⁴ The work is called Varṇanārtha-varuana in the Tibetan version and Central Asian fragments. For a translation of this text from Tibetan, see F. W. Thomas in JA, XXVIV, 1905, pp. 145-163.
work, called *Mahārāja-kanika-lekha*, in eighty-five stanzas, ascribed to Mātrcitra, has been translated into English by F. W. Thomas,¹ who is probably right in thinking that Mātrcitra is identical with Mātrceṭa, and that king Kanika of the Kuśa dynasty addressed in this epistle of religious admonition is no other than the Kuśāṇa king Kaniṣka.²

Of greater interest than the rather meagre works of Mātrceṭa is the *Jātaka-mālā*³ of Ārya Śūra, which consists of a free but elegant Sanskrit rendering, in prose and verse, of thirty-four⁴ selected legends from the Pali *Jātakas* and the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, illustrating the Pāramitās or perfections of a Bodhisattva. Although sometimes marked by exaggeration, the tales are edifying. They were apparently composed for supplying ready illustrations to religious discourses, but the interest is more than religious. The work reveals a close study of Aśvaghōsa’s manner, and is inspired by the same idea of conveying in polished, but not too highly artificial, diction and noble doctrine of universal compassion; and it is not surprising, therefore, that the author should be identified sometimes with Aśvaghōsa. The attractive form in which the old stories are retold in the Kāvya-style shows that it was meant for a wider but cultivated audience, and we have Yi-tsing’s testimony, confirmed by the existence of Chinese and Tibetan translations, that the work was at one time popular in India and outside. Ārya Śūra’s date is unknown, but as another work of his⁵ was translated into

---

¹ *IA*, XXII, 1903, p. 345 f. The epistle is supposed to be Mātrcitra’s reply declining king Kanika’s invitation to his court. The vogue of such epistolary exhortation is borne out by Nāgārjuna’s *Suhṛtlekha* and Candragomin’s *Śīva-lekha*.


⁴ The Chinese version contains only 14 stories.

⁵ For a list of other works ascribed to Ārya Śūra by Chinese and Tibetan traditions, see F. W. Thomas, *Kus*, introd., p. 26 f.
Chinese in 434 A.D., he cannot be dated later than the 4th century A.D.¹

2. THE AVADĀNA LITERATURE

Closely connected with the *Jātaka-mālā*, which is also entitled *Bodhisattvāvadāna-mālā*, are the works belonging to what is called the Avadāna literature; for the Jātaka is nothing more than an Avadāna (Pali Apadāna) or tale of great deed, the hero of which is the Bodhisattva himself. Their matter sometimes coincides, and actual Jātaka stories are contained in the Avadāna works.² The absorbing theme of the Avadāṇas being the illustration of the fruit of man’s action, they have a moral end in view, but the rigour of the Karman doctrine is palliated by a frank belief in the efficacy of personal devotion to the Buddha or his followers. The tales are sometimes put, as in the Jātaka, in the form of narration by the Buddha himself, of a past, present or future incident; and moral exhortations, miracles and exaggerations come in as a matter of course. As literary productions they are hardly commendable, but their historical interest is considerable as affording illustration of a peculiar type of story-telling in Sanskrit.

The oldest of these collections is perhaps the *Avadāna-śataka*,³ which is well known from some of its interesting narratives, but its literary merit is not high. The tales are arranged schematically, but not on a well conceived plan, into

---

¹ We do not take here into account the works of other and later Buddhist writers, such as the *Catuh-śataka* of Āryadeva, the *Subhūtlekha* of Nāgārjuna, the *Śīya-lekha* and *Lokānanda-nāṭaka* of Candragomin, or the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śaṅtideva, for they contribute more to doctrine or philosophy than to literature.

² See Serge d’Oldenberg in *JRAS*, 1893, p. 304; and for Avadāna literature in general, see L. Feer’s series of articles in *JA* between 1878 and 1884, and introd. to his translation of the *Avadāna-śataka*.

³ Ed. J. S. Speyer, Bibl. Buddh., St. Petersburg 1902-09; trs. into French by L. Feer in *Annales du Musée Guimet*, Paris 1891. An earlier but lost *Aṣokāvadāna* was composed, according to Przyłęski, by a mathematician monk about two centuries before Kaniṣka.
ten decades, each dealing with a certain subject, and are told with set formulas, phrases and situations. The first four decades deal with stories of pious deeds by which one can become a Buddha, and include prophecies of the advent of the Buddhas; while the fifth speaking of the world of souls in torments, narrates the causes of their suffering with a tale and a lesson in morality. The next decade relates stories of men and animals reborn as gods, while the last four decades are concerned with deeds which qualify persons to become Arhats. The legends are often prolix, and there is more of didactic than literary motive in the narration. The date of the work is uncertain, but while the mention of the Dināra as a current coin (Roman Denarius) is supposed to indicate 100 A.D. as the upper limit, the lower limit is supplied more convincingly by its translation, into Chinese in the first half of the 3rd century.

Hardly more interesting from the literary point of view is the Divyāvadāna, the date of which is also uncertain, but which, making extensive use of Kumāralāta’s work, cannot be earlier than the 1st century A.D. It is substantially a Hīnayāna text, but Mahāyāna material has been traced in it. Being probably a compilation of polygenous origin, extending over different periods of time, its matter and manner are unequal. The prose is frequently interrupted by Gāthās and pieces of ornate stanzas, but this is a feature which is shown by other works of this type. The language is reasonably correct and simple; but debased Sanskrit, marked by Prakritisms, is not absent, and the diction is sometimes laboured and ornamental. We have here some really interesting and valuable narratives, specially the cycle of Aśoka legends, but they are scarcely well told; the arrangement is haphazard and chaotic; and the work as a whole possesses little literary distinction.

1 Ed. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, Cambridge 1886. Almost all the stories have been traced to other works.

2 For other collections of unpublished Avadānas, see Speyer and Feer, in the works cited, and Winternitz, HIL, II, pp. 290-92.
To the first century of the Christian era probably also belongs some parts of the *Mahāavastu*,¹ the ‘Book of Great Events,’ even if its substantial nucleus probably took shape in an earlier period. Although its subject is Vinaya, it contains, besides the life-story of the Buddha, some narratives of the Jātaka and Avadāna type; but in its jumbling of confused and disconnected matter and for its hardly attractive style, it has small literary, compared with its historical, interest. The same remark applies more or less to the *Lalita-vistara*,² the detailed account of the ‘sport’ of the Buddha, the date of which is unknown and origin diverse. Whatever may be its value as a biography of the Buddha, its style is not unlike that of the Purāṇas. The narrative in simple but undistinguished Sanskrit prose is often interrupted by long metrical passages in mixed Sanskrit, and its literary pretensions are not of a high order.

3. The Literature of Tale and Fable

The Buddhist anecdotal literature perhaps reflects an aspect of the literary, as well as popular, taste of the time, which liked the telling of tales in a simple and unadorned, but distinctly elegant, manner; for the origin of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* and the Prakrit *Bṛhatkathā*, which represent story-telling from another point of view, is perhaps synchronous, although the various extant versions of the two works belong to a much later period. The Avadāna, the didactic beast-fable and the popular tale are indeed not synonymous. While the Avadāna, closely related to the Jātaka, is clearly distinguishable as a Buddhist *gest*, which has a definite religious significance, the other two species are purely secular in object and character. The method of story-telling is also different; for in the Jātaka or Avadāna, we have generally the application of a past legend

¹ Ed. E. Senart, 3 vols, Paris 1882-97, with detailed summary of contents and notes.

² Ed. Rajendralal Mitra, Bibl. Ind., Calcutta 1877; English trs. by same (up to ch. xv), Bibl. Ind. 1881-86; re-edited by S. Lefmann, Halle 1902, 1908; complete French trs. by P. E. Foucaux in *Annales du Musée Guimet*, Paris 1884, 1892.

O.P. 150—11
to a tale of to-day. In the Jätaka the Bodhisattva tells a tale of his past experience, but it is not narrated in the first person; the device of first-hand narrative as well as of enclosing a tale, is a feature which characterises the classical method. The Sanskrit poetic theory ignores the Jätaka and Avadāna, presumably because they have a religious objective and seldom rises to the level of art, but it does not also clearly define and discriminate between the fable and the tale. The elaborate attempt to distinguish between the Kathā and the Ākhyāyikā, as the invented story and the traditional legend respectively, is more or less academic, and has hardly any application to the present case. Some of the stories of the Pañcatantra are indeed called Kathās, but one of the versions of the entire work is styled Tantrākhyāyikā, while Guṇāḍhya’s work is designated as the Great Kathā. Possibly no fine distinction is meant, and the terms Kathā and Ākhyāyikā are employed here in the general sense of a story. A rigid differentiation, however, cannot perhaps be made in practice between the fable and the tale; for the different elements in each are not entirely excluded in the other, nor isolated. The beast-fable, as typified by the Pañcatantra, is not seldom enriched by folk-tale and spicy stories of human adventure, while the tale, as represented by Brhatkathā, sometimes becomes complex by absorbing some of the elements of the fable and its didactic motive. Both these types, again, should be distinguished from the prose romance, the so-called Kathā and Ākhyāyikā, such as the Harṣa-carita and the Kādambari, in which all the graces and refinements of the Kāvya are transferred from verse to prose, either to create an exuberantly fanciful story or to vivify and transform a legend or folk-tale.

The currency of tales and fables of all kinds may be presumed from remote antiquity, but they were perhaps not used for a definite purpose, nor reduced to a literary form, until

1 See S. K. De, The Kathā and the Ākhyāyikā in Classical Sanskrit in BSOIS, III, p. 307f.—Dandin (i-28) speaks of Ākhyāna as a general species, in which collections of tales like the Pañcatantra were probably included.
at a comparatively late period. The ancestor of the popular tale may have been such Vedic Ākhyānas as are preserved, for instance; in the Ṛgvedic dialogue-hymn of Purūravas and Urvaśī, or in such Brāhmanic legends as that of Ṣuṇaḥśēpa; but it is futile to seek the origin of the beast-fable in the Ṛgvedic hymn of frogs (vii. 103), which panegyrises the frogs more from a magical than didactic motive, or in the Upaniṣadīc parable of dogs (Ch. Up. i. 12), which represents the dogs as searching out a leader to howl food for them, but which may have been either a satire or an allegory. Nor is there any clear recognition of the fable in the Epics as a distinct literary genre, although the motifs of the clever jackal, the naughty cat and the greedy vulture are employed for the purpose of moral instruction. But all these, as well as the Jātaka device of illustrating the virtues of Buddhism by means of beast-stories,1 may have suggested the material out of which the full-fledged beast-fable developed in the Pañcatantra. In its perfected form, it differed from the simple parable or the mere tale about beasts, in having the latent didactic motive clearly and deliberately brought out and artistically conveyed in a definite framework and a connected grouping of clever stories, in which the thoughts and deeds of men are ascribed to animals. There is nothing simple or popular in such a form; and the beast-fable as an independent literary creation diverged considerably in this respect from the popular tale, which is free from didactic presentation and in which the more or less simple ideas of the people and their belief in myth and magic, as well as racy stories of human life, find a direct expression. In the case of beast-fable, again, the connexion with the courts of princes is clearer. The popular tale, no doubt, speaks of romantic prince and princess of a fairy-land; but the framework of collection of beast-fables like the Pañcatantra, which is delivered in the form of

1 The Barhut Stūpa reliefs, depicting some of the stories, establish the currency of the beast-fable at least in the 2nd Century B.C.
instruction to tender-minded young princes in statecraft and practical morality, leaves no doubt about one form of its employment. It is thus closely related to the Nīti-śāstra and Artha-śāstra, but it is not directly opposed to the Dharma-śāstra. The fact is important; for even if the beast-fable inculcates political wisdom or expediency in the practical affairs of life, rather than a strict code of uprightness, it seldom teaches cleverness at the expense of morality.

a. The Pañcatantra

The only collection of beast-fable and the solitary surviving work of this kind in Sanskrit is the Pañcatantra, which has come down to us in various forms; but it is a work which has perhaps a more interesting history than any in world-literature. There can be little doubt that from the very beginning it had a deliberate literary form. Each of its five parts, dealing respectively with the themes of separation of friends (Mitra-bheda), winning of friends (Mitra-prāpti), war and peace (Saṃdhīvigraha), loss of one’s gains (Labdha-nāśa) and hasty action (Aparikṣita-kāritva), is a narrative unit in itself; but all together they form a perfect whole fitted into the frame of the introduction.

1 No direct influence of Kautīlya’s Artha-śāstra can be traced in the Pañcatantra.

2 F. Edgerton in JAOS, XL, p. 271 f.

3 J. Hertel (Das Pañcatantra, seine Geschichte und seine Verbreitung, Leipzig and Berlin, 1914, Index, p. 451 f.) records over 200 different versions of the work known to exist in more than 50 languages (three-fourths of the languages being extra-Indian) and spreading over a region extending from Java to Iceland. For a brief résumé of this history, as well as for brief summary of the work, see Winternitz, GIL, III, pp. 294-311; Keith, HSL, pp. 248 f, 357 f.—The question whether the individual tales or the Indian fable itself as a species, were borrowed, in their origin, from Greece is much complicated. Chronology is in favour of the priority of Greece, but the suggestion that India consciously borrowed from Greece is not proved. Some points of similarity may be admitted, but they may occur without borrowing on either side. At any rate, if reciprocal influences and exchanges occurred, India seems to have given more than it took. Benfey’s position that the tale is entirely Indian, while the fable came from Greece, need not be discussed, for folklorists to-day no longer seek to find the birthplace of all tales and fables in any one country.
The stories are told, as in the case of the popular tale, in simple but elegant prose, and there is no attempt at descriptive or sentimental excursions or elaborate stylistic effects. The combining of a number of fables is also a characteristic which it shares with the popular tale, but they are not merely embossed; there is, in the weaving of disjointed stories, considerable skill in achieving unity and completeness of effect. The insertion of a number of general gnomic stanzas in the prose narrative is a feature which is dictated by its didactic motive; but the tradition is current from the time of the Brāhmaṇas and the Jātakas. More interesting and novel, if not altogether original, is the device of conveniently summing up the moral of the various stories in pointed memorial stanzas, which are not general maxims but special labels to distinguish the points of individual fables. The suggestion\(^1\) of a hypothetical prose-poetic Vedic Ākhyāna, in which the verse remained fixed but the prose mysteriously dropped out, is not applicable to the case of the blend of prose and verse in the fable literature; for the prose here can never drop out, and the essential nature of the stanzas is gnomic or recapitulatory, and not dramatic or interlocutory. There must have existed a great deal of floating gnomic literature in Sanskrit since the time of the Brāhmaṇas, which might have been utilised for these passages of didactic wisdom.

The Pañcatantra, however, is not a single text, but a sequence of texts; it exists in more versions than one, worked out at different times and places, but all diverging from a single original text. The original,\(^2\) which must have existed long before 570 A.D. when the Pahlavi version was made, is now lost; but neither its date nor its title nor provenance, is known with

---

\(^1\) H. Oldenberg in *ZDMG*, XXXVII, p. 54 f; XXXIX, p. 52 f; also in his *Zur Geschichte d. altindischen Prosa*, Berlin 1917, p. 53 f and *Lit. d. alten Indien*, cited above, pp. 44 f, 125 f, 153 f.

\(^2\) The idea of a Prakrit original is discredited both by Hertel and Edgerton. The literature on the Pañcatantra is vast and scattered, but the results of the various studies will be found summarised in the works, cited below, of these two scholars,
certainty. The character and extent of the transformation, to which the work was subjected in course of time, make the problem of reconstruction one of great intricacy, but the labours of Hertel\(^1\) and Edgerton\(^2\) have succeeded in a great measure in going back to the primary \textit{Pañcatantra} by a close and detailed examination of the various existing versions. That it originally contained five books with a brief introduction and was called \textit{Pañcatantra}, is now made fairly certain, but there is a considerable discussion of the meaning of the word Tantra. It may denote nothing more than a book or its subject-matter, but since it occurs in the title \textit{Tantrākhyāyikā} of one of the versions,\(^3\) it may indicate a text of polity as an art. There is no evidence at all of authorship; for the name Viṣṇuśarman, applied in the introduction to the wise Brahman who instructs, with these stories, the ignorant sons of king Amaraśakti of Mahilāropya in Deccan, is obviously as fictitious as the names of the king and the place. Hertel thinks that the work was composed in Kashmir, but his arguments are inadequate; while nothing can be confidently inferred from the mention of Gauḍa or Rṣyamūka or of well known places of pilgrimage like Puṣkara, Vārāṇasī, Prayāga and Gaṅgādvāra.

The various important recensions of the \textit{Pañcatantra} have been classified into four main groups,\(^4\) which represent diversity of tradition but all of which emanate from the lost original. The first is the lost Pahlavi version,\(^5\) from which were derived

\(^{1}\) \textit{Das Pañcatantra}, cited above, as well as works and editions cited below.


\(^{3}\) Jacobi, however, would translate it apparently as a collection of ākhyāyikā in tantras, ‘die in bücher eingeteilte Erzählungssammlung.’ See F. W. Thomas in \textit{JRAS}, 1910, p. 1347.

\(^{4}\) Hertel, however, believes in two versions of one Kashmirian recension only as the archetype of the other three recensions, namely, the \textit{Tantrākhyāyikā} and what he calls ‘K’.—For a short genealogical table, setting forth the relationship of the four main recensions or groups, see Edgerton, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 48, and for a full and detailed table of all known versions see Penzer’s \textit{Ocean of Story}, Vol. V. p. 242 (also by Edgerton).

\(^{5}\) Made by the physician Burzō under the patronage of Chosroes AnūshIrwān (531-79 A.D.) under the title \textit{Karaṭaka and Damanaka}. 
the old Syriac and Arabic versions; and it was through this source that the *Pañcatantra*, in a somewhat modified form, was introduced into the fable literature of Europe. The second is a lost North-western recension, from which the text was incorporated into the two North-western (Kashmirian) Sanskrit versions of Guṇāḍhya’s *Bṛhatkathā*, made respectively by Kṣemendra and Somadeva (11th century A.D.). The third is the common lost source of the Kashmirian version, entitled *Tantrākhyāyikā*, and of the two Jaina versions, namely, the Simplicior Text, well known from Bühler and Kielhorn’s not very critical edition, and the much amplified Ornator Text, called *Pañcākhyaṇa*, of Pūrṇabhadra (1199 A.D.). The fourth is similarly the common lost source of the Southern Pañcatantra,?

1 Made by Būd, a Persian Christian, about 570 A.D. under the title Kalilag wa Dammag. Ed Schultess, Berlin 1911.


3 *Bṛhatkathā-mañjāri* xvi. 255 f; *Kathā-sarit-sāgara* lx-lxiv. Leo von Mankowski has edited, with trans. etc., (from only one imperfect MS), Kṣemendra’s version separately in Der Auszug aus dem *Pañcatantra* in Kṣemendras *Bṛhatkathā-mañjāri*, Leipzig 1892. Lacôte, Hertel and Edgerton make it probable that the original *Bṛhatkathā* of Guṇāḍhya did not contain the *Pañcatantra*—Somadeva’s version of the *Pañcatantra* (according to Emenau’s computation in *JAOS*, LIII, 1933, p. 125) contains 539 Šlokas, while Kṣemendra’s in Mankowski’s edition, has 306; but deducting the stories not found in Somadeva, Kṣemendra’s total would be about 270 only.


6 Ed J. Hertel, Harvard Orient Ser., Cambridge Mass., 1908-12; trs into German by Schmidt, Leipzig 1901; into English by A. W. Ryder, Chicago 1925.—Pūrṇabhadra uses both the *Tantrākhyāyikā* and the Simplicior text.

the Nepalese version and the Bengali *Hitopadeśa*. A detailed study of the character and interrelation of the various recensions and versions is not possible here, but some of their general characteristics may be briefly noted. The *Tantrākhyāyikā* is perhaps the oldest Sanskrit version, and preserves the original text better and more extensively than any other version. But none of the recensions—not even the *Tantrākhyāyikā*, the claims of which have been much exaggerated by Hertel—represents in its entirety the primitive text. The North-western original of Kṣemendra and Somadeva must have been a version made much later in Kashmir. Kṣemendra’s fairly faithful, but dry, abstract suffers from its brevity, but Somadeva’s narrative, in spite of a few omissions and some interruption of sequence by the introduction of extraneous tales, is normally clear and attractive. There is a great deal of reshuffling of stories, as well as intrusion of additional matter, in both the Simplicior and Ornatior Texts, the former adding seven and the latter twenty-one new stories. The Southern recension exists in several sub-versions; it is much abbreviated, but nothing essential appears to have been omitted, and only one complete story (The Shepherdess and her Lovers) is added. The *Hitopadeśa*, which has currency mostly in Bengal, is practically an independent work, containing only four and not five books, by one Nārāyaṇa, whose patron was Dhavalacandra and who must have lived before 1373 A.D., which is the date of one of the manuscripts of the work. The compiler amplifies the stories derived in the main from the *Pañcatantra*, by drawing upon an unknown source, considerably omits, alters, remodels

---


2 See J. Hertel, Über Text und Verfasser des *Hitopadeśa* (Diss.) Leipzig 1897, p. 37, and *Das Pañcatantra*, p. 38 f. In spite of omissions and alterations, the *Hitopadeśa* preserves over half the entire sub-stories of the *Pañcatantra*, and follows closely the archetype which it shares with the Southern recension.
the sequence of books and stories, and inserts large selections of didactic matter from Kāmandakīya Nīti-sāra.

Although Hertel is right in believing that the Pañcatantra was originally conceived as a work for teaching political wisdom, yet the fact should not make us forget that it is also essentially a story-book, in which the story-teller and the political teacher are unified, most often successfully, in one personality. There are instances where the professed practical object intrudes itself, and tedious exposition of polity prevails over simple and vivid narration; but these instances are happily not too numerous, and the character of the work as a political text-book is never glaring. Inequalities doubtless appear in the stories existing in the different versions, but most of them being secondary, it can be said without exaggeration that the stories, free from descriptive and ornamental digressions, are generally very well and amusingly told. They show the author as a master of narrative, as well as a perfect man of the world, never departing from an attitude of detached observation and often possessed of a considerable fund of wit and humour veiled under his pedagogic seriousness. If he makes his animals talk, he makes them talk well and the frankly fictitious disguise of the fabliau eminently suits his wise and amusing manner. With a few exceptions, the individual stories are cleverly fitted together into a complex but well planned form. The language is elegantly simple, and the author shows taste and judgment in never saying a word too much, except for a touch of the mock-heroic, and in realising that over-elaboration is out of place. The gnomic stanzas, if not the title-verses, are not always demanded by the narrative, but they are meant to give sententious summary of worldly wisdom and impressive utterance to very ordinary, but essential, facts of life and conduct. We do not know how far these stanzas are original, for some of them occur in the Epics and elsewhere; but they are generally phrased with epigrammatic terseness, and form an interesting feature, in spite of the tendency to over-accumulate them. It is not
without reason, therefore, that the work enjoyed, and still enjoys such unrivalled popularity as a great story-book in so many different times and lands.

b. The Brhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya

The popular tale is represented by a number of works in Sanskrit, but the earliest appears to have been the Brhatkathā, or 'the Great Story', of Guṇāḍhya, the Prakrit original of which is lost, but which is now known from three comparatively late Sanskrit adaptations. Its exact date cannot be determined, but that it already received recognition before 600 A.D. is clear from the references to its importance by Bāna and Subandhu; and there is nothing to show that it cannot be placed much earlier. If it belongs to a period after Christian era, it is not improbable that the work took shape at about the same time as the lost original of the Paṇcatantra; and to assign it to the fourth century A.D. would not be an unjust conjecture. The recorded tradition informs us that the original Brhatkathā was composed in Pāścāti Prakrit; and it is noteworthy that the literary form which the popular tale first assumed was one in Prakrit. Like the Paṇcatantra, the work of Guṇāḍhya was undoubtedly a new literary creation, but the medium of expression perhaps indicates a difference in method and outlook.

---

1 On the question of date and author, see J. S. Speyer, Studies about Kathāsaritvāgara, Amsterdam 1908, p. 44 f. Bühler in his Kashmir Report summarily places the work in the first century A.D., with which F. Lacôte (Mélanges Lévi, p. 270) appears to agree; but S. Lévi (Théâtre indien, 1891, p. 317) cautiously assigns it to the 3rd century. See Keith in JRAS, 1909, p. 145 f. Both Daṇḍin's Daśa-kumāra-carita and Subandhu's Vāsavadattā refer to the story of Naravāhanadatta.

2 Harṣa-carita, Introductory st. 17.

3 Ed. F. E. Hall, p. 110.

4 The alleged Sanskrit version of Durviniṣṭha of the 6th century (R. Narasimhachar in IA, LXII, 1913, p. 204 and JRAS, 1913, p. 389 f; Fleet in JRAS, 1911, pp. 186 f) and the supposed Tamil version of the 2nd century A.D. (S. K. Aiyangar in JRAS, 1906, p. 689 f; and Ancient India, London 1911, pp. 328, 337) are too doubtful to be of any use for chronological purposes. See Lacôte, Essai sur Guṇāḍhya et la Brhatkathā, Paris 1908, p. 198 f.
An obviously legendary account of the origin of the work and the personality of the author is given, with some variations, in the introductory account of the two Kashmirian Sanskrit versions and in the apocryphal *Nepāla-māhātmya*\(^1\) of a pseudo-Purānic character. It makes Guṇāḍhya an incarnation of a Gaṇa of Śiva, who under a curse is born at Pratiṣṭhāna on the Godāvari and becomes a favourite of king Śātavāhana; but the king has another learned favourite in Śarvavarman, the reputed author of the *Kātantra* grammar. Having lost a rash wager with Śarvavarman, with regard to the teaching of Sanskrit to the king, who had been put to shame by the queen for his ignorance of the language, Guṇāḍhya abjures the use of Sanskrit and society, and retires to the wild regions of the Vindhya hills. There, having learnt from another incarnated Gaṇa of Śiva the story of the *Brhatkathā*, originally narrated by Śiva to Pārvatī, he records it in the newly picked up local Paisācī dialect, in 700,000 Ślokas, of which only one-seventh was saved from destruction and preserved in the work as we have it! The Nepalese version of the legend, however, places Guṇāḍhya’s birth at Mathurā and makes king Madana of Ujjayini his patron; it knows nothing of the wager but makes Guṇāḍhya, on being vanquished by Śarvavarman, write the story in Paisācī for no other explicit reason than the advice of a sage named Pulastya. The legend is obviously a pious Śaiva invention modified in different ways in Kashmir and Nepal;\(^2\) from the reference in the *Harṣa-carita*, one may infer that it was known in some form to Bāṇabhaṭṭa; but the value of biographical and other details is not beyond question. If Śarvavarman is introduced, Pāṇini, Vyādi and Vararuci-Kātyāyana also figure in the legend as contemporaries, although the Nepalese compiler does not appreciate the grammatical interest, nor the use of

---

\(^1\) Given in Lacôte, *op. cit.*, Appendix p. 291f.

\(^2\) It is as a saint of Śaivism that Guṇāḍhya figures in the Nepalese work, as well as in a Cambodian inscription of about 875 A.D., which is of Śaivite inspiration (S. Lévi in *JA*, 1885, p. 412).
Prakrit. The association with Śatavāhana recalls one of the brilliant periods of Prakrit literature, and probably suggests that the employment of Sanskrit by the Kṣatrapa rulers probably found a counter-movement in favour of the patronage of Prakṛt literature; but Śatavāhana being a dynastic name, which may denote any of several kings, it does not help to solve the chronological problem.¹

But much controversy has naturally centred round the value of the Guṇāḍhya legend regarding its testimony on the form of the lost work and its language. The legend speaks of Guṇāḍhya’s work being written in Śloka and in the dialect of the wild people of the Vindhyā regions, which is called the dialect of the Piśācas or Paiśācī. Daṇḍin, in his Kāvyādarśā (i. 38), appears to know the legend in some form, and states that the work was written in the Bhūta-bhāṣā; but he thinks that it was a type of the prose romance known as Kathā, in which, of course, verse was allowed to be inserted. The three existing Sanskrit versions are all metrical, but this need not invalidate Daṇḍin’s statement, if Daṇḍin can be presumed to have possessed a direct knowledge of the work already famous in his time. More inconclusive is the evidence regarding the nature and location of the dialect in which the work was composed. In accordance with the legend, the Paiśācī Prakrit is localised² as the dialect of the Vindhyā regions lying near about Ujjayini, but it is also maintained³ that it was a North-western Prakrit of Kekaya and eastern Gāndhāra, which is regarded as the ancestor of the group of Dardic dialects now spoken in Kafirstan, Swat valley,

¹ On the alleged Greek influence on Guṇāḍhya’s work, see Lacôte, op. cit., pp. 284-86, who argues the opposite way to show that the Greek romance was influenced by the Indian. See Keith, HSL, p. 366 f.

² Sten Konow in ZDMG, LXIV, 1910, p. 95 f and J.R.A.S., 1921, p. 244 f; Keith, HSL, p. 269. Rājaśekhara (Kāvyā-mīmāṃsā, p. 51) apparently holds the same view. Sten Konow’s view, in brief, is that the Paiśācī was an Indo-Aryan language spoken by Dravidians in Central India.

Citral and adjacent places. The difficulty of arriving at a final conclusion\(^1\) lies in the fact that the statements of fairly late Prakrit grammarians about Paiśāci Prakrit, as well as the doubtful fragments cited by them as specimens,\(^2\) are meagre and uncertain. It is also not safe to argue back from the character and location of present-day dialects to those of a hypothetical Prakrit. The designation Paiśāci was perhaps meant to indicate that it was an inferior and barbarous dialect, and the sanction of a vow was required for its employment; but what we know about it from Prakrit grammarians and other sources makes it probable that it was an artificial form of speech nearer in some respects to Sanskrit than the average Prakrit. If it hardened \(t\) and \(d\) alone, it is a characteristic which may be equally applicable to a Vindhyā dialect influenced by Dravidian and to a dialect of the North-west. The question, therefore, does not admit of an easy solution, although greater plausibility may be attached to the linguistic facts adduced from the Dardic dialects.

The exact content and bulk of the original Brhatkathā cannot also be determined, even to the extent to which we can approximate to those of the original Pañcatantra. We have two main sources of knowledge, derived from Kashmir and Nepal respectively, but both of them employ a different medium of expression, and are neither early nor absolutely authentic. The first is given by two metrical Sanskrit adaptations of Kashmir, namely, the Brhatkathā-maṇjarī,\(^3\) 'the Bouquet of Great

---

\(^1\) Lacôte, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 51 f. Lacôte believes the Paiśāci to be based upon the Indo-Aryan language of the North-west, but spoken by non-Aryan people. He suggests a via media by stating that Guṇḍāhya picked up the idea of the dialect from travellers from the North-west, but his sphere of work lay around Ujjayini! Cf. F. W. Thomas, Foreword to Penzer's ed. of \textit{Ocean of Story}, Vol. IV pp. ix-x.

\(^2\) Hemacandra's Prakrit Grammar, ed. Pischel, iv. 303-24; for Mārkaṇḍeya, see Grierson in \textit{JRAI}, 1913, p. 391. For a discussion of the passages, see Lacôte, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 201 f. Vararuci speaks of one Paiśāci dialect; Hemacandra appears to distinguish three varieties; Mārkaṇḍeya increases the number to thirteen! Different localities are mentioned, but one locality is agreed upon, viz., Kekaya or N. W. Punjab.

\(^3\) Ed. Sivadatta and Parab, NSP, Bombay, 1901. Parts of it (introduction and first two stories), translated with the Roman text, by S. Lévi in \textit{JA}, 1885-86.
Tale,’ of the polymath Kṣemendra, and the Kathā-sarit-sāgara,\textsuperscript{1} ‘the Ocean of Rivers of Tales,’ of Somadeva, the latter written between 1063 and 1082 A.D. and the former about a quarter of a century earlier.\textsuperscript{2} Like Somadeva’s work, that of Kṣemendra is divided into eighteen Lambhakas,\textsuperscript{3} but it is of the nature of a condensed abstract, industriously and perhaps (as his other Mañjaris shows) faithfully compiled. It consists of about 7,500 ślokas, as against more than 21,000 of Somadeva’s work; but Kṣemendra makes up for the brevity and dreariness of his narrative by a number of elegant, but mannered, descriptive and erotic passages.\textsuperscript{4} Somadeva, on the other hand, is not anxious to abridge; but he shows considerable restraint in avoiding useless elaboration, and tells his stories with evident zest and in a clear and attractive manner. At one time it was thought that these two Kashmirian versions drew directly from the Prakrit original, but the idea has now been discarded, not only from the comparative evidence of their contents but also in view of the discovery in Nepal in 1893 of the second important source, namely, the Brhatkathā-śloka-samgraha of Budhasvāmin,\textsuperscript{5} which is also in Śloka, but unfortunately incomplete. Its date is unknown, but it is assigned, mainly on the probable date and


\textsuperscript{2} See Bühler, Über das Zeitalter des kaśmirischen Dichters Somadeva, Wien 1885. Somadeva wrote the work to please Sūryamati, princess of Jalāṇdhara, wife of Ananta and mother of Kalāśa. Kṣemendra also wrote most of his works under king Kalāśa of Kashmir.

\textsuperscript{3} The division does not seem to be original, being missing in Budhasvāmin’s version, which has Sarga division. The sections are called Gucchakas ‘clusters’ in Kṣemendra, and Taraṅgas ‘billows’ in Somadeva, according to the respective titles of their works.

\textsuperscript{4} On these descriptive passages, see Speyer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17 f. Speyer estimates that Kṣemendra’s work contains 7,561 ślokas, Somadeva’s 21,388.

\textsuperscript{5} Ed. F. Lacôte, with trs., Paris 1908-29 (i-xxviii). The work was first discovered by Haraprasad Sastri in Nepal, but its importance was not realised till Lacôte edited the work and published the results of his investigations. The MS is from Nepal, but otherwise there is no sign of the Nepalese origin of the work.
tradition of the manuscript, to the 8th or 9th century A.D. Although this work is a fragment of 28 Sargas and 4,539 stanzas, and also, as its name implies, an abbreviated abstract, its evidence is highly important regarding the existence of two distinct traditions of the text, which show considerable and remarkable divergences.¹

The main theme of both the recensions appears to be the adventures of Naravāhanadatta, son of the gay and amorous Udayana, famed in Sanskrit literature, and his final attainment of Madanamañjukā as his bride and the land of the Vidyādharas as his empire; but in the course of the achievement, he visits many lands and contracts a large number of marriages with beautiful maidens of all kinds and ranks. A vital difference, however, occurs in the treatment of the theme. While the Nepalese recension concentrates upon the main theme and gives a simple and connected narrative, comparatively free from extraneous matters, the Kashmirian recension is encumbered by a stupendous mass of episodic stories, indiscriminately accumulated and remotely connected, regardless of the constant break and obscuration of the original theme. The Nepalese recension, for instance, omits the introductory Guṇāḍhya legend, which occurs in the Kashmirian, and plunges at once into the story of Gopāla and Pālaka and of the love of Gopāla’s son for Suratamañjari, connecting it with the story of Naravāhanadatta, who is made the narrator of the tale of his twenty-six marriages. The Kashmirian authors are apparently aware of this beginning, but the necessity of commencing with the Guṇāḍhya legend and making Guṇāḍhya the narrator of the tale makes them shift the story of Gopāla, Pālaka and Suratamañjari, and place it, unconnectedly, as a kind of appendix at the end. The Nepalese recension omits also the unnecessary tale of Udayana’s winning of

¹ See Lacôte, Essai cited above, for a discussion of the Kashmirian versions, pp. 61-145, the Nepalese version, pp. 146-195, comparison of the two versions, pp. 207-18, and of the original Brāhmatathā, pp. 1-59.
Padmāvatī, and does not think it desirable to provide royal ancestry for the courtesan Kaliṅgasenā, mother of Madanamañjukā, in order to conceal the questionable origin of the heroine. In the Kashmirian recension, the hero Naravāhanadatta does not even make his appearance till his birth in Bk. IV (in both versions), but the narrative of the hero is interrupted for two more books by the stories of Śaktivega and Sūryaprabha, who, recognising in the infant the destined emperor of the Vidyādharas, relate their own adventures as aspirants to the same rank. In this way, the main theme is constantly interrupted by a vast cycle of legends, although Kṣemendra and Somadeva are not in perfect agreement, after Bk. IV, regarding the sequence and arrangement of the extra mass of material. It is clear that both the Kashmirian versions do not, in their zeal for collection, succeed in producing a unified or well-constructed work, although the narrative of Somadeva, who is a consummate story-teller, is marked, in spite of its bulk, by greater coherence and desire to preserve, however strenuously, the effect of the main story. The accretions, for example, not only bring in entirely irrelevant stories of Mṛgāṅkadatta and Mukṭāphalaketu, of expedition to the Camphor Land and the White Island for the winning of Ratnaprabhā and Alaṅkāravatī respectively, but also incorporate the Vikramāditya cycle of legends and interpolate versions of the entire Pañcatantra and the Vетāla-pañcaviṃśati. All this, with the addition of countless number of small tales, legends and witty stories, would justify the quaint, but appropriate, name of Somadeva’s largest collection as the ocean of the streams of stories, and which in their rich mass would make the overwhelmed reader exclaim that here is indeed God’s plenty!

How far these episodes and legend-cycles belonged to the original Brhatkathā cannot be precisely determined, but it is clear that much of them is remotely and sometimes confusedly connected with the main theme, and is entirely missing in the Nepalese recension. It is true that Budhasvāmin’s work is specially styled a compendium (Saṃgraha) and that his omissions
may have been dictated by a desire for abbreviation; it is also possible\(^1\) that Budhasvāmin is an independent writer rather than a mere epitomator, although he may have adhered to Guṇāḍhya's narrative in the main. But it is clear, from the way in which the thread of the main story of Naravāhanadatta is kept from being lost in an interminable maze of loosely gathered episodes, that these interruptions or deviations from the predominant interest could not have occurred on a large scale in the original, if we are to presume from its reputation that it was a work of no small literary merit. It seems, therefore, that Budhasvāmin follows the original with greater fidelity\(^2\) than Kṣemendra and Somadeva, who, apart from minor stories which they individually insert, are following a recension refashioned and much enlarged in Kashmir. In this recension the central theme appears to occupy, after the fashion of Kāvya-poets, a subordinate interest; their essentials are often abridged and throughout sacrificed to the elaboration of subsidiary adventures, as well as to a somewhat confused insertion of tales derived from other sources. Whether this Kashmirian recension was in Paiśācī or in Sanskrit is not known; but Somadeva distinctly speaks of having altered the language, and there are not enough verbal similarities\(^3\) between Somadeva and Kṣemendra to warrant the supposition of a common Sanskrit original.

In the absence of the original work of Guṇāḍhya, an estimate of its literary merit would be futile. Each of the three adaptations have their own characteristics, which may or may not have been inherited from the original. Kṣemendra's abridged compilation is rapid, dreary and uninspiring, except in ornamental passages, which doubtless show the influence of the Kāvya. Somadeva's larger and more popular masterpiece has

---

\(^1\) Winternitz, *GIL*, III, pp. 315-17.

\(^2\) Lacôte, *Essai*, p. 207 f. Lacôte believes that the Kashmir recension is far removed from the original *Bṛhatkathā*, and was compiled about the 7th century A.D.

\(^3\) Speyer, *op. cit.*, p. 27 f.

O.P. 150—13
been rightly praised for its immensely superior quality of vivid story-telling and its elegantly clear, moderate and appropriate style. Budhasvāmin’s abstract, considered nearer to the original, is marked by a sense of proportion both in matter and manner, rapid narration, power of characterisation and simple description, as well as by a more bourgeois spirit and outlook suiting the popular tale; but, in spite of these qualities, it is of a somewhat prosaic cast. It is difficult to say how far all the praiseworthy qualities, if not the blemishes, of these late versions, produced under different conditions, were present in the primary Brhatkathā, a verbal or even a confident substantial reconstruction of which is wellnigh impossible. To judge, however, from the principal theme, stories and characters, as well as from the general method and outlook, it is possible to assert that Guṇāḍhyya must have been a master at weaving into his simple story of romantic adventure all the marvels of myth, magic and fairy tale, as well as a kaleidoscopic view of varied and well-conceived characters and situations. Although Naravāhanadatta is a prince, the story is not one of court life or courtly adventure, nor even of heroic ideals; it is essentially a picture consonant with the middle class view of life and sublimated with the romance of strange adventure in fairy lands of fancy. It is certainly a work of larger and more varied appeal, containing a gallery of sketches from life, romantic as well as real; and Keith is perhaps just in characterising it as a kind of bourgeois epic. The loves of the much-married Naravāhanadatta are perhaps too numerous and too light-hearted, like those of his famed father Udayana, but his chief and best love, Madanamañjukā, has only one parallel in Vasantasenā of the Mṛcchakatika; while in Gomukha we have a fine example of an energetic, resourceful and wise courtier and friend. It cannot be determined with certainty if the numerous tales of fools, rogues and naughty women existed in the original; but they form an unparalleled store-house of racy and amusing stories, which evince a wide and intimate experience of human life and are in keeping with the humour and robust good sense of people at large.
4. **The Dramas ascribed to Bhāsa**

From the dramatic fragments of Āsvaghoṣa it is not unreasonable to assume that between him and Kālidāsa, there intervened a period of cultivation of the dramatic art, which we find fully developed in the dramas of Kālidāsa, and which is warranted by Kālidāsa's own references to the works of Bhāsa, Somila and Kaviputra. Of the dramatic works of the last two authors we know nothing, but a great deal of facts and fancies are now available about Bhāsa's dramas.

Before 1912 Bhāsa was known only by reputation, having been honoured by Kālidāsa and Bāna as a great predecessor and author of a number of plays, and praised and cited by a succession of writers in later times\(^1\); but since then, much discussion has centred round his name with the alleged discovery of his original dramas. Between 1912 and 1915, T. Ganapati Sastri published from Trivandrum thirteen plays of varying size and merit, which bore no evidence of authorship, but which, on account of certain remarkable characteristics, he ascribed to the far-famed Bhāsa. All the plays appear to have been based upon legendary material, but some draw their theme from the Epic and Purānic sources. From the Rāmāyaṇa, we have the Pratīmā and the Abhiṣeka; from the Mahābhārata, the Madhyama, Dūta-vākya, Dūta-ghaṭotkaca, Karna-bhāra, Īru-bhaṅga and Pañcarātra; but the Svāpna-vāsavadatta, Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa, Avi-māraka and Cārudatta have legendary or invented plots, while the Bāla-carita deals with the Purānic Kṛṣṇa legend.\(^2\) The

---

1 S. Lévi, *Théâtre indien*, Paris 1890, i. p. 157 f. and ii, pp. 31-32 gives a résumé of literary references to Bhāsa known up to that time; other up-to-date references are collected together in Appendix C to C. R. Devadhar's ed. of the plays, cited below.

2 The legend is, of course, also found in the *Harivamsa*.—All the plays are available in a handy form in *Bhāsa-nāṭaka-cakra or Plays ascribed to Bhāsa*, published by C. R. Devadhar, Poona 1937, but it is better to consult the original Trivandrum editions, to which references are given below. Trs. into English in two volumes by W. C. Woolner and L. Sarup, Oxford University Press, 1930-31. There are also numerous editions of some of the individual plays, but it is not necessary to enumerate them here.
plays were hailed with enthusiasm as the long-lost works of Bhāsa, but the rather hasty approbation of a novelty soon died down in a whirlwind of prolonged controversy. A large number of scholars of eminence and authority whole-heartedly supported the attribution to Bhāsa,¹ but the reasons adduced did not win entire and universal satisfaction.² This led to a further and more detailed examination of the question, yielding some fruitful results, and new facts regarding the plays were also brought to light. Important arguments were advanced on both sides; but it is remarkable that there is not a single argument on either side which can be regarded as conclusive, or which may not be met with an equally plausible argument on the opposite side.³ The problem to-day is delicately balanced; but since emphasis may be laid on this or that point, according to personal predilection, scholars, with a few exception, appear to have taken up unflinching attitudes and arrayed themselves in opposite camps. Between the two extremes lies the more sober view⁴ which recognises that


³ An admirably judicious summary of the important arguments on both sides is given by V. S. Sukthankar in the bibliographical note cited above, and in JBRAS, 1915, p. 126 f.

⁴ Notably Sukthankar, cited above, and Winternitz in GIL, III, pp. 186, 645; but later on Winternitz is reported to have expressed the opinion that he is no longer a believer in Bhāsa’s authorship of the plays (C. R. Devadhar’s Preface to the ed. cited above),
a prima facie case for Bhāsa's authorship can be made out, but the evidence available does not amount to conclusive proof.

It will not be profitable to enter into the details of the controversy, but certain facts and arguments are to be taken into account before we can enter into a consideration of the plays. Since learned opinion is, not without reason, strangely divided, nothing is gained by dogmatic and sweeping assertions; and it should be frankly recognised that the problem is neither simple nor free from difficulties. The first difficulty is the absence of the name of the author, in the prologues and colophons, of all the thirteen plays. It has been argued that this would testify to the great antiquity of the plays; and it has been assumed, plausibly but without proof, that the colophons were not preserved or that such details were left out in pre-classical times. But while nothing can be argued from our absolute lack of knowledge of pre-classical practice, the accidental and wholesale loss of the colophons of all manuscripts of all the thirteen plays by the same author is an assumption which demands too much from probability. On the other hand, the fact should be admitted at the outset that these plays are not forgeries, but form a part of the repertoire of a class of hereditary actors of Kerala (Cakkyars), that manuscripts of the plays are by no means rare, and that in omitting the name of the author, they resemble some of the plays of other classical authors similarly preserved by actors in Kerala. That they are not the absolutely original dramas of Bhāsa follows from this; and the assumption that they are adaptations, in which the adapters had obvious reasons to remain nameless, is at least not less plausible. The next argument regarding the technique of the plays is perhaps more legitimate; for there is undoubtedly a lack of conformity to the dramaturgic regulations of Bharata and his followers, which are more or less obeyed by the normal classical drama. But the argument is not as sound as it appears. The technical peculiarities\(^1\) relate to the commencement of the Prologue by the Sūtradhāra, which is

---

\(^1\) M. Lindenau, \textit{Bhāsa-studien}, Leipzig 1918, pp. 10-37,
supposed to have been noticed by Bāṇabhaṭṭa, the use of the word Sthāpanā for Prastāvanā, the introduction of stage-fights and death-scenes, the tragic ending in some plays, and the difference in the Bharata-vākyā. It has been shewn in reply that, while Bāṇa’s reference is either obscure, misunderstood or entirely irrelevant, the formal features recur also in Malayālam manuscripts of quite a number of Sanskrit plays of other authors and are capable of other explanations equally plausible. In the absence of adequate knowledge of pre-classical technique, such peculiarities, as are not confined to the dramas in question alone, are hardly of decisive value; at most, we can infer the interesting existence of a different dramaturgic tradition, but this does not prove the antiquity of the Trivandrum plays.

It has been also argued by the supporters of the attribution that expressions and ideas from these plays have been borrowed or exploited by authors like Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. While no strict proof or criterion of indebtedness is possible, it can be equally well argued, on the contrary, that the author or adapter of these anonymous plays plagiarised the alleged passages from standard Sanskrit authors. The citations, again, from Bhaṣa, or criticisms in the rhetorical or anthological literature,

---

1 It is pointed out that Bāṇa’s reference merely speaks of the Bhāṣa dramas being commenced by the Sūtradhāra, a characteristic which, being true of all Sanskrit plays, has no special application here. The formula nāṇḍyante, found in the Southern manuscripts before and not after the Nāndi-śloka is now known to be a characteristic of most South Indian manuscripts of Sanskrit plays in general, and was, thus apparently a local practice, which is neither material nor relevant to the discussion. It is not clear if Bāṇa is really alluding to such technical innovations as the shortening of the preliminaries or the combining of the functions of the Sūtradhāra and the Shāpaka. The rhetorical works are neither unanimous nor perfectly clear regarding the position of the nāṇḍyante formula or the use of the word Sthāpanā. With regard to the employment of the Bharata-vākyā, again, the Trivandrum plays do not follow a uniform practice which would support any definite conclusion regarding them. There are no such extraordinary Patākās in the Trivandrum plays as suggested by Bāṇa’s description.

2 The thirteen anthology verses ascribed to Bhāṣa (one of which occurs in the Matta-vilāsa and four are attributed to other authors) are missing in the Trivandrum plays. Even if this is suspicious, it proves nothing because of the notoriously uncertain and fluctuating character of anthological attributions. See F. W. Thomas in JRAS, 1927, p. 883 f.
relied upon by the supporters of the theory, have some plausibility, but they do not prove much; for these authors do not unfortunately name the plays from which the passages are taken. It is true that one of the famous dramas of Bhāsa is cited and styled Svapna-vāsavadatta by some old authors; but here again the difficulty is that our present text of the Trivandrum Svapna-nāṭaka does not contain some verses quoted by certain rhetoricians. The difficulty is indeed not insuperable, inasmuch as one can imagine that they are misquotations, or that they are lost in the present recension; but the wholly conjectural character of such an explanation is obvious. The discussion regarding references in the plays to Medhātithi's Bhāṣya on Manu or to the Artha-śāstra has not also proved very fruitful. And, the least valid of all appears to be the Prakrit argument, which presumes that archaism in the Prakrit of the plays prove their earliness; for it is now clear that some of them are obvious blunders, and that, of those which are genuine, archaisms of a similar type recur in the Malayālam manuscripts of the plays of other authors, including those of Kālidāsa and Harṣa; they are apparently local developments and cannot be made the safe basis of any chronological or literary conclusion.

1 The argument regarding the impossibility of the plagiarism of the title does not, as Barnett points out, carry much weight, since we know of three Kumāra-saṁbhavas.

2 Sukthankar in JBRAS, 1925, p. 135 f., shews that the reference of Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra in their Nāṭya-darpaya contains a situation and a stanza, quoted from a Svapna-vāsavadatta of Bhāsa, which really belongs, with some textual difference, to the Trivandrum play. F. W. Thomas in JRAS, 1928, p. 885 f., similarly deals with Abhinavagupta's citation missing in the Trivandrum play. Cf. also F. W. Thomas in JRAS, 1922, p. 100 f.


4 See Hirananda Sastrī, op. cit., p. 13 f.


7 Sukthankar in JBRAS, 1925, p. 103 f. Even where the archaisms are genuine, it is, as R. L. Turner points out (JRAS, 1925, p. 175), dangerous to argue about date without full appreciation of possible dialectical differences, because a form may not necessarily indicate difference of age but only a difference of dialect or locality.
The historical discussion, again, regarding the identity of Bhāsa’s patron, alleged to be mentioned in the word rājasimha of the Bharata-vākya, is similarly shown to be of very doubtful value.¹

Leaving aside minor questions, these are, in brief, some of the important problems that arise out of the Trivandrum plays. It will be seen that the same material has led to absolutely contradictory results; but none of the arguments advanced in support of Bhāsa’s authorship is incontrovertible or resonably conclusive. Opinion, again, is sharply divided about the age of the plays,² between those who place them in the 5th century B.C. and those who bring them down by different stages to the 11th century A.D., the estimate varying by about sixteen centuries! It is no wonder, therefore, that the whole question has run the normal course of enthusiastic acceptance, sceptical opposition and subdued suggestion of a via media. But beneath all this diversity of opinion lurks the fundamental divergence about the literary merits of the plays, the supporters claiming high distinction, worthy of a master-mind, and the dissenters holding that the works are of a mediocre or even poor quality. As the question of literary excellence is not capable of exact determination, the difference of opinion is likely to continue, according to the personal bias of the particular critic, until some objective factor or material would supply a conclusive solution to the problem. But it should be made clear that the whole discussion has now come to a point where the plays need no longer be made the fertile ground of romantic speculations. Already different aspects of the plays have been searchingly inves-

¹ Sten Konow, Ind. Drama, p. 51, would assign the author of the plays to the reign of Kṣatrapa Rudrasimha I, i.e., 2nd century A.D., but the arguments are not conclusive. Barnett conjectures that rājasimha is a proper name and refers to Paṇḍya Tēr-Māran Rājasimha I (c. 675 A.D.).

² See Sukthankar, JBRAS, 1922, p. 233, for different estimates of the date by different scholars.
gated;\textsuperscript{1} and even if no definite solution is yet logically justified by the results of these intensive studies, they have helped to clear up misconceptions, negative baseless presumptions, and bring together a mass of material for further research.

These studies have now made it reasonable to assume that the Trivandrum plays, whether they are by Bhäsa or by some other playwright, are of the nature of adaptations or abridged-ments made for the stage, and they have in fact been regularly used as stage-plays in the Kerala country. This very important fact should not be lost sight of in any discussion of the plays. It explains the traditional handing down of the plays without mention of the author’s name, in closely resembling prologues, which are probably stage-additions, as well as the coincidence of formal technique and a large number of repetitions and parallels, which recur in these, as also in some other Sanskrit plays of Kerala.\textsuperscript{2} Some unquestionably old Prakritic forms and genuine grammatical solecisms may have in this way been fossilised and preserved, although they do not necessarily prove the antiquity or authorship of the plays. The thirteen Trivandrum plays reveal undoubted similarities, not only verbal and structural, but also stylistic and ideological, which might suggest unity of authorship—a theory indicated by the reference of Bäna and others to a Bhäsa Nāṭaka-cakra; but since these are adaptations, and the originals are not known, it would be unsafe to postulate common authorship on similarities which occur also in plays of other known authors preserved in Kerala.


\textsuperscript{2} Some of these are collected together in Hirananda Sastri, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

O.P. 150—14
A modified form of the theory makes an exception in favour of a limited number of the dramas, the merits of which have received wide recognition. It suggests that possibly Bhāsa wrote a *Swapna-vāsavadatta*¹ and a *Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa*, closely related to it, of which the present texts give Malayālam recensions, and that the present *Cārudatta* is the fragmentary original of the first four acts of the *Mṛchakaṭika* of Śūdraka, or at any rate it has preserved a great deal of the original upon which Śūdraka’s drama is based.² But the authorship of the remaining plays is as yet quite uncertain. It must be said that the reasons adduced for these views undoubtedly make out a strong case; but they are still in a great measure conjectural, and do not lead to any finality. It is possible also that the five one-act Mahā-bhārata pieces form a closely allied group, as the surviving intermediate acts of a lengthy dramatised version of the Mahā-bhārata story; but here also we have no definite means of ascertaining it for a fact.

In view of these difficulties and uncertainties, it is clear that it behoves the sober student to adopt an attitude free from susceptibility to any hasty or dogmatic conclusion. The objective criterion proving insufficient, the ultimate question really comes to an estimate of the literary merits of the plays; but on a point like this, opinion is bound to be honestly divergent and naturally illusive. The circumstance that all these plays, even including the limited number which may be, with some reason, ascribed to Bhāsa, are Malayālam adaptations or recensions of the original, causes a further difficulty; for the plays are in a sense by Bhāsa, but in a sense they are not. The fact of their being recasts does not, of course, make them

¹ Sukthankar, in *JBRAS*, 1925, 134 f., and Thomas in *JRAI*, 1928, p. 876 f., believe that the Trivandrum *Swapna* has probable minor changes, but has not undergone any great transformation.

² Morgenstierne, Sukthankar and Belvalkar, as cited above. The *Cārudatta* is undoubtedly a fragment, but from internal evidence it is probable that the author or the compiler never contemplated writing only four acts. It is, however, not explained why this work alone is recovered as a fragment. See below under Śūdraka.
forfeit their connexion with the original, but the extent to which older material has been worked over or worked up by a later hand is unknown and uncertain. The suggestions that have been made about distinguishing the apparently older from the more modern matter and manner are more or less arbitrary; for, in spite of unquestionably primitive traits, the process involves the difficulty of distinguishing the true Bhāsa from the pseudo Bhāsa, not merely play by play, but scene by scene, and even verse by verse. It must also be admitted that all the plays are not, by whatever standard they are judged, of equal merit, and cannot be taken as revealing the alleged master-mind. One must feel that some of the scenes are very inferior and some of the verses are of feeble workmanship. At the same time, it can hardly be denied that here we have a series of plays, which are of varying merit but not devoid of interest; that in part or in entirety they may not belong to Bhāsa, but they certainly represent a somewhat different tradition of dramatic practice; and that, if they are not as old as some critics think, they are of undoubted importance in the literary history of the Sanskrit drama.

Leaving aside the fragmentary Cārudatta in four acts,¹ the two dramas which have won almost universal approbation are the Svapna-vāsavadatta and the Pratijñā-yaugandharāyaṇa; and, in spite of obvious deficiencies, the approbation is not unjust. Both these works are linked together by external similarities and internal correspondences; and their theme is drawn from the

¹ Ed. T. Ganapati Sastri, Trivandrum Sansk. Ser., 1914, 1922; the text, along with correspondences to Śūdraka’s Mrchakatika, is reprinted by Morgenstierne, op. cit. The fragment has no Nāndi verse, and abruptly ends with the heroine’s resolve to start out for Cārudatta’s house. The dramatic incidents do not show any material divergence of a literary significance from Śūdraka’s drama.—The Bhāsa plays are published in the following order by T. Ganapati Sastri from Trivandrum: Svapna (also 1915, 1916, 1923, 1924), Pratijñā (also 1920), Avī-māraka, Pahcarātra (also 1917), Bāda-carita, Madhyama (also 1917), Dūta-vākya (also 1918, 1925), Dūta-ghajotaka, Karna-bhāra and Uru-bhaṅga—all in 1912, the last five in one volume, the others separately; Abhiṣeka 1913; Cārudatta 1914 (also 1922); and Pratimā 1915 (also 1924).
same legend-cycle of Udayana,¹ the semi-historical beau ideal of Sanskrit literature, whose story must have been so popularised by the Bṛhatkathā that Kālidāsa assures us of its great popularity in his time at Avanti. The story of Udayana’s two pretty amourettes supply the romantic plot to Harṣa’s two elegant plays; but what we have here is not the mere banality of an amusing court-intrigue. In the Pratīṭā, Udayana and Vāsavadattā do not make their appearance at all, but we are told a great deal about them, especially about Udayana’s accomplishments, his courage, his love and impetuous acts. It is really a drama of political intrigue, in which the minister Yaugandharāyana, as the title indicates, is the central figure; but it achieves a more diversified interest than the Mudrā-rākṣasa by interweaving the well-known romance of Udayana’s love and adventure into the plot. Although the whole drama is characterised by simplicity and rapidity of action, it cannot be said that the plot is clearly and carefully developed. The ruse of the artificial elephant appears to have been criticised by Bhāmaha (iv. 40) as incredible, especially as Udayana is described as one well-versed in the elephant-lore, but it is a device which is not unusual in the popular tale and need not be urged as a serious defect. It is, however, not made clear at what stage the incident of the music lesson, alluded to in IV. 18, actually took place,² nor why the captive king, at first treated with honour and sympathy, was thrown into prison

¹ On the legend of Udayana, see Lacôte, cited above, and A. V. W. Jackson’s introduction to Priyadarśikā, p. lxxiii f. and references cited therein.

² It could not have come between Acts II and III for the jester and the minister know nothing of it; and Udayana’s famous lute is sent by Pradyota to Vāsavadattā in Act II, while Udayana lies wounded in the middle palace. In Act III we are told Udayana, now in prison, somehow recovers the lute and catches sight of Vāsavadattā, as she goes in an open palanquin to worship at a shrine opposite the prison-gate. Nor is the music lesson made the occasion of the first meeting between Acts III and IV; and yet no other version is given in the play. Lacôte is perhaps right in pointing out that the allusive way in which the theme is developed in these plays proves that it was already familiar to their audience, and the details which the dramatist casually introduces or omits, are to be supplied from popular tradition. The hiatus, therefore, did not perhaps prove very serious or material to the audience of the plays.
so that "his fetters clank as he bows before the gods." Nevertheless, the drama finely depicts the sentiment of fidelity of a minister who is prepared even by sacrifice of himself to bring about a successful royal alliance. Some of the episodes, especially the domestic scene at the palace of Mahāsena Pradyota and the amusing interlude of the intoxicated page, are skilfully drawn; the characterisation, especially of Yaugandharāyana, is vivid and effective; and the sustained erotic sub-plot, despite the non-appearance of the principal characters, enhances its main interest of political strategy.

The much praised Svapna-vāsavadatta, on the other hand, is less open to criticism. It is more effectively devised in plot,\(^1\) and there is a unity of purpose and inevitableness of effect. The general story belongs to the old legend; but the motif of the dream is finely conceived, the characters of the two heroines are skillfully discriminated, and the gay old amourist of the legend and of Harṣa's dramas is figured as a more serious, faithful, if somewhat love-sick and imaginative, hero. The main feature of the play, however, is the dramatic skill and delicacy with which are depicted the feelings of Vāsavadattā, to whose noble and steadfast love no sacrifice is too great; while her willing martyrdom is set off by the equally true, but helpless, love of Udayana as a victim of divided affections and motives of statecraft. It is a drama of fine sentiments; the movement is smooth, measured and dignified, and the treatment is free from the intrusion of melodrama, or of rant and rhetoric, to which such sentimental plays are often liable. If it is rough-hewn and unpolished, it also reveals the sureness of touch of a great dramatist; and to stint the word masterpiece to it is absurd and ungenerous.

\(^1\) But there are some trifling inconsistencies and lack of inventive skill, \textit{e.g.}, the false report of Vāsavadattā's death is made the pivot of the plot, but the audience knows from the beginning that the queen is not really dead. One may, however, justify it by Coleridge's dictum of dramatic expectation, instead of dramatic surprise,
It must be frankly admitted, however, that these happy features are not possessed by the ten remaining Trivandrum plays, although each of them possesses some striking scenes or remarkable characteristics. Excepting the Pañcarātra, which extends to three acts, the Mahābhārata plays, whose literary merit has been much exaggerated, consist of one act each, and form rather a collection of slight dramatic scenes than complete and finished dramas. But they are meant to be of a sterners stuff, and make up by vigour what they lack in finish, although a lurking fondness is discernible for mock-heroic or violent situations. The Madhyama has a theme of the nature of a fairy tale, of which there is no hint in the Epic; but the motif of a father meeting and fighting his own son unawares is not original, nor is the idea of the ‘middle one,’ though cleverly applied, unknown, in view of the Brāhmaṇa story of Śunahśepa (Ait. Br., vii. 15). What is original is the imagining of the situation out of the epic tale; but the possibilities of the theme are hardly well-developed within the narrow limits of one act. There is also in the Epic no such embassy of Bhīma’s son as is dramatised in the Dūta-ghatotkaca, which describes the tragic death of Abhimanyu and the impending doom of the Kuruś; there is some taunting and piquancy, but no action, and the whole scene is nothing more than a sketch. (The Dūta-vākya is more directly based on the account of the embassy of Kṛṣṇa, described in the Udyoga-parvan; but it suffers also from the same lack of action, and the theme is exceedingly compressed and hardly completed.) While the introduction of the painted scroll of Draupadī is an ingenious invention to insult the envoy effectively, the appearance of Viṣṇu’s weapons, though original, is silly in serving no useful dramatic purpose. In spite of its tragic note and simplification of the original story, the Karna-bhāra, which describes the sad end of Karna, is scarcely dramatic, and the only feature which appeals is the elevation of Karna’s character; it is not only a one-act play but really a one-character play. The same sympathy for the fallen hero is seen in the Āru-bhaṅga, which represents
the theme of Duryodhana’s tragic death somewhat differently from that of the Epic. The noble resignation of Duryodhana and the invention of the poignant passage, which brings the blind king and his consort on the scene and makes Duryodhana’s little son attempt to climb on his father’s broken thighs, reveal some dramatic power; but the introductory long description of the unseen fight is not happily conceived, and the play is also remarkable in having as many as sixty-six stanzas in one act alone! The Pañcarātra, in three acts, is longer in extent, and perhaps shows more invention and possesses greater interest. It scietx, from the Virāṇa-parvan, the dramatic situation of the Pāṇḍavas in hiding being forced into battle with the Kurus; but it simplifies the epic story, the details of which are freely handled. While Trigarta’s attack is omitted, Duryodhana’s sacrifice, the motif of his rash promise, Abhimanyu’s presence on the Kaurava side and capture by Bhīma are invented; and Duryodhana and Karna are represented in more favourable light, Śakuni being the only villain in the piece. The number of characters is large in proportion to its length. The play is ingeniously titled, and there are some striking dramatic scenes; but regarded as a story, it is far inferior to that of the Epic, and there is no substance in the suggestion that it is closer to the epic feeling and characterisation. The epic plays are, no doubt, of a heroic character, but they are far removed from the heroic age; their novelty wins a more indulgent verdict than is perhaps justified by their real merit.

The Rāmāyaṇa plays are more ambitious and much larger in extent. The Pratimā seeks, in seven acts, to dramatise, with considerable omission and alteration, the almost entire Rāmāyaṇa story, but its interest centres chiefly round the character of Bharata ahd Kaikeyi. Kaikeyi is conceived as une femme incomprise, a voluntary victim of public calumny, to which she patiently submits for the sake of her husband’s honour and the life of her dear step-son; and here again we find the same sympathy for the martyr and the persecuted. The development of the
plot is skilfully made to depend on the secrecy of Kaikeyī's noble motive for the seemingly greedy conduct of demanding the throne for her own son; but for this, the plea of a Sulka (dowry) promised to her by Daśaratha has to be substituted for the two boons of the original, and the explanation of the secrecy of her motive itself at the end is rather far-fetched. The scene of the Statue Hall is connected with the same motif and create a situation; but it is hardly worked out as the key-note of the play, as the title would suggest. The liberty taken in modifying the scene of Sītā's abduction, no doubt, substitutes a noble motive for the vulgar one of the greed for a golden deer; but it fails to be impressive by making Rāma a childishly gullible person and Rāvana a rather common, boastful villain. One of the striking scenes of the drama is that of Daśaratha's sorrow and death, which reveals a delicate handling of the pathos of the situation; but, on the whole, the merits and defects of this drama appear to be evenly balanced. The Abhiṣeka, on the other hand, takes up the Rāmāyaṇa story at the point of the slaying of Vālin and consecration of Sugrīva, and supplies, in six acts, the episodes omitted in the other play, ending with the ordeal of Sītā and the consecration of Rāma. The play is perhaps so named because it begins and ends with a consecration. But there is not much dramatic unity of purpose behind the devious range of epic incidents. Its main feature is the sympathetic characterisation of Vālin and Rāvana, but the other figures are of much less interest. Rāma is directly identified with Viṣṇu; but he is here, more or less, a ruthless warrior, of whose treacherous slaying of Vālin no convincing explanation is offered. In crossing the ocean, the miracle of divided waters is repeated from the episode of Vāsudeva's crossing the Yamunā in the Bāla-carīta. Even if the Abhiṣeka is not a dreary summary of the corresponding parts of the Epic, it contains a series of situations rather than a sequence of naturally developed incidents, and is distinctly feeble in dramatic character and quality than the Pratimā.
The *Bāla-carita*, in five acts, is similarly based upon a number of loosely joined incidents from the early life of Kṛṣṇa, but there are some features which are not found in the epic and Purānic legends.\(^1\) If they are inventions, some of them (such as the great weight of the baby Kṛṣṇa, the gushing of water from the sands, or the incursion of Garuḍa and Viṣṇu’s weapons) are clumsy and serve no dramatic purpose, while the introduction of Caṇḍāla maidens and of Kārttyāyanī, though bizzarre, is scarcely impressive. The erotic episodes of Kṛṣṇa’s career are missing and the softer feeling is not much in evidence. There is a great deal of killing in most of the epic dramas mentioned above, but the *Bāla-carita* perhaps surpasses them all in melodramatic violence and ferocity. There is the slaying of the bull-demon, of the baby-girl hurled on the stone, as well as of the two prize-fighters and Kāṃsa himself, rapidly slaughtered in two stanzas! Kāṃsa, however, is not an entirely wicked person, but, as a fallen hero, is represented with much sympathy. There is, however, little unity or completeness of effect; the play is rather a dramatisation of a series of exciting incidents. As such, it is a drama of questionable merit; at least, it hardly deserves the high praise that has been showered on it with more zeal than reason.

The *Avi-māraka* depicts the love-adventure of a prince in disguise, whom a curse has turned, for the time being, into an outcast sheep-killer. It is interesting for its somewhat refreshing, if not original, plot, based probably on folk-tale,\(^2\) of the love of an apparent plebeian for a princess. But from the outset it is clearly indicated that the handsome and accomplished youth must be other than what he seems; and the suspense is not skilfully maintained up to the unravelling of the plot at the end. As in the *Pratijñā*, the Vidūṣaka here is lively and interesting, but a Brahmin companion to an apparent outcast is oddly fitted. The denouement of a happy marriage, with the introduction of the

---

1 On the Kṛṣṇa legend see Winternitz in *ZDMG*, LXXIV, 1920, pp. 125-37.
2 The motifs of recognition and of the magic ring conferring invisibility are clearly important elements of the plot, derived apparently from folk-tale.

O.P. 150—15
celestial busy-body, Nārada, is rather lame; and the drama is not free from a sentimental and melodramatic atmosphere, in which the hero seeks suicide twice and the heroine once. For diversion from excess of sentiment, there are amusing scenes, such as the dialogue of the hero with the nurse and the small episode of the jester and the maid; but there is enough of overstrained brooding and one long monologue in the course of the hero’s sentimental burglary, in which the question is not merely of the number of lines, but one of vital connexion. There is, however, no justification for the claim that the Avi-māraka is a drama of love primitive in its expression and intensity.

It will be seen that all these plays are more or less faulty and are not as great as they are often represented to be. Judgment must ultimately pass in respect of the Svajña and the Pratijñā, which have the greater probability, at least from the literary point of view, of being attributed to Bhāsa. They also are not faultless; but what appeals most to a student of the Sanskrit drama in these, as well as in the other plays, is their rapidity of action, directness of characterisation and simplicity of diction, which are points often neglected in the normal Sanskrit drama in favour of poetical excursions, sentimental excesses and rhetorical embellishments. The number of characters appearing never worries our author, but the stage is never overcrowded by the rich variety; and, while most of the major characters are painted with skill and delicacy, the minor ones are not, normally, neglected. There is considerable inventive power; and even if the constructive ability is not always praiseworthy, the swift and smooth progress of the plot is seldom hindered by the profusion of descriptive and emotional stanzas, and monostichs are freely employed. There is no lack of craftsmanship in transforming a legend or an epic tale into a drama, and daring modifications are introduced, although it may be admitted that the craftsmanship is not always admirable, nor the modifications always well judged. The style and diction are clear and forcible, but not uncouth or inelegant; they have little
of the succulence and 'slickness' of the ornate Kāvyā. Even a casual reader will not fail to notice that the dramas do not possess elaborate art and polish of the standard type, but that there is, without apparent effort, vigour and liveliness of a rare kind. The plays defy conventional rules, and even conventional expression, but are seldom lacking in dramatic moments and situations. Perhaps a less enthusiastic judgment would find that most of the plays are of a somewhat prosaic cast, and miss in them the fusing and lifting power of a poetic imagination; but it would be unjust to deny that they possess movement, energy and vividness of action, as well as considerable skill of consistent characterisation. There is nothing primitive in their art, on the one hand, and nothing of dazzling excellence, on the other, but there is an unadorned distinction and dignity, as well as an assurance of vitality. Even after deductions are made from exaggerated estimates, much remains to the credit of the author or authors of the plays. Whether all the aberrations, weaknesses and peculiarities indicate an embryonic stage of art, or an altogether different dramatic tradition, or perhaps an individual trait, is not definitely known; nor is it certain that all or any one of these plays really belong to Bhāsa and to a period of comparative antiquity; nor, again, can we determine the extent and nature of the recast to which they were submitted; but what is still important to consider is that here we have, at least in some of the fascinating plays like Svāpna and Pratijñā, a dramatist or dramatists of real power, whose unlaboured, but not forceless, art makes a direct and vitally human appeal. The deficiencies are patent, and a critic with a tender conscience may feel inclined to justify them; but they need not diminish or obscure the equally patent merits. The dramas have wrestled with and conquered time; and even if we cannot historically fit them in, they have an unmistakable dramatic, if not poetic, quality, and this would make them deserve a place of their own in the history of the Sanskrit drama.