CHAPTER IV

THE SUCCESSORS OF KĀLIDĀSA IN POETRY

The difficulty of fixing an exact chronology, as well as the paucity and uncertainty of material, does not permit an orderly historical treatment of the poets and dramatists who, in all probability, flourished between Kālidāsa, on the one hand, and Māgha and Bhavabhūti, on the other. It must have been a period of great vitality and versatility; for there is not a single department of literature which is left untouched or left in a rudimentary condition. But a great deal of its literary productions is probably lost, and the few that remain do not adequately represent its many-sided activity. We know nothing, for instance, of the extensive Prakrit literature, which presupposes Hāla’s poetical compilation, and which sums up its folk-tale in the lost collection of Guṇāḍhya’s Brhatkathā. No early collection also of the popular tale in Sanskrit has survived; and of the possible descendants of the beast-fable, typified by the Pañcatantra, we know nothing. Concurrently with the tradition of Prakrit love-poetry in the stanza-form, illustrated by the Sattasai of Hāla, must have started the same tradition in Sanskrit, which gives us the early Śataka of Amaru and which is followed up by those of Bhartṛhari and others; but the exact relationship between the two traditions is unknown. The origin of the religious and gnomic stanzas, such as we find crystallised in the Stotra-Śatakas of Mayūra and Bāṇa and the reflective Śatakas of Bhartṛhari, is equally obscure. Nor do we know much about the beginnings of the peculiar type of the Sanskrit prose romance; and we possess no earlier specimens of them than the fairly mature works of Daṇḍin, Bāṇa and Subandhu, who belong to
this period. The dramatic works of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa must have inspired many a dramatist, but with the exception of Śūdraka, Viśākhadatta, Harṣa and the writers of four early Monologue Plays (Bhāṇas), ascribed respectively to Vararuci, Śūdraka, Iśvaradatta and Śyāmilaka, all other names have perished; while Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa probably, and Bhavabhūti certainly, come at the end of this period. The number of early poetical works in Sanskrit, the so-called Mahākāvyas, is still fewer. If the poetical predecessors of Kālidāsa have all disappeared, leaving his finished achievement in poetry to stand by itself, this is still more the case with his successors. Bhāravi, Bhaṭṭi, Kumāradāsa and Māgha, with just a few minor poets, practically complete the list of the composers of the Mahākāvyas of this period. With the example of a consummate master of poetry to guide them, the general level of merit should have been fairly high and wide-spread; but, since much is apparently lost, the solitary altitudes become prominent and numerous in our survey.

1. The Erotic Śatakas of Amaru and Bhartrhari

Although love-poetry blooms in its fullness in the Sanskrit literature, more than in the Vedic and Epic, its earliest specimens are lost. It should not be supposed that the passionate element in human nature never found expression. The episode of the love of Nanda and Sundarī painted by Aśvaghoṣa, the erotic theme of the poem of Ghaṭakarpara, as well as the very existence of the Megha-dīta, show that erotic poetry could not have been neglected. Love may not yet have come to its own in the Kunstpoesie, the polished and cultured Kāvyā; but the example of Hāla's Sattasaī, whose stanzas are predominantly erotic, makes it possible that in folk-literature, the tradition of which is at least partially preserved in Prakrit, it finds an absorbing theme. The Prakrit poetry here is doubtless as con-
votional as Sanskrit, and is not folk-literature in its true sense; but it is clear that, while these early Prakrit stanzas, popular among the masses, have love for their principal subject, the early Sanskrit poems, so far as they have survived, do not often accept it as their exclusive theme. There is indeed no evidence to show that the Prakrit love-lyric is the prototype of the Sanskrit, but the presumption is strong that the erotic sentiment, which had diffused itself in the popular literature, survived in Prakrit poetry, and gradually invaded the courtly Sanskrit Kāvya, which provided a naturally fertile soil for it, and of which it ultimately became the almost universal theme.

It is remarkable, however, that, with the exception of a few works like the Megha-dīta, the Ghaṭakarpara monody and the Gītā-govinda, which, again, are not unalloyed love-poems, the Sanskrit erotic poetry usually takes the form, not of a systematic well-knit poem, but of a single poetical stanza standing by itself, in which the poet delights to depict a single phase of the emotion or a single situation within the limits of a finely finished form. Such is the case mostly with the seven hundred Prakrit stanzas, which pass under the name of Hāla Śatavāhana. If in Prakrit the highest distinction belongs to Hāla’s Sattasai for being a collection which gives varied and charming expression to the emotion of love, the distinction belongs in Sanskrit without question1 to the Śataka of Amaru, about whose date and personality, however, as little is known as about those of Hāla. It is a much smaller work, but it is no less distinctive and delightful.

A Śataka, meaning a century of detached stanzas, is usually regarded as the work of a single poet, although it is probable that Hāla’s seven centuries, in the main, form an anthology. The form, however, allows easy interpolation; and most of the early Śatakas contain much more than a hundred

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1 Although the commentator Ravicandra finds a philosophical meaning in Amaru’s stanzas! And Vemabhūpāla, another commentator, would take the work to be merely a rhetorical text-book of the same type as Rudra Bhaṭṭa’s Śṛṅgāra-tilaka, meant to illustrate the various classes of the Nāyikā and the diversity of their amorous conditions!
stanzas. It is not always possible, however, for several reasons,\(^1\) to separate the additions with certainty, and arrive at a definitive text. The *Amaru-śataka*,\(^2\) for instance, is known to exist in at least four recensions,\(^3\) in which the text fluctuates between totals of 96 and 115 stanzas,\(^4\) the number of stanzas common to all the recensions, but given in varying sequence, being only 51. The uncertainty of the text not only makes an estimate of the work difficult, but also diminishes the value of any chronological conclusion which may be drawn from the citation of a particular stanza in later works. Vāmana’s quotation,\(^5\) for instance, in the beginning of the 9th century, of three stanzas without naming the work or the author, establishes nothing, although these stanzas occur in the present text of Amaru’s *Śataka*. The earliest mention of Amaru as a poet of eminence is found in the middle of the 9th century in Ānandavardhana’s work,\(^6\) but it is of little assistance, as Amaru is perhaps a much earlier writer.

\(^1\) The attribution in the anthologies, which often quote from Amaru, is notoriously unreliable; and there is a great deal of divergence regarding the number and sequence of stanzas in the texts of the commentators and in the manuscripts of the work.

\(^2\) Ed. R. Simon, in four recensions (Roman characters), Kiel 1893 (cf. *ZDMG*, XLIX, 1895, p. 577f); ed. Calcutta 1808 (see J. Gildemeister, *Bibliotheca Sanscrita*, Bonn 1847, p. 73, no. 162), with the comm. of Ravicandra (*alias* Jñānānanda Kalādhara); ed. Durgaprasad, with comm. of Arjunavarmadeva, with addl. stanzas from commentators and anthologies, NSP, 3rd ed., Bombay 1916 (1st ed., 1889).

\(^3\) Viz., South Indian (comm. Vemabhūpāla and Rāmānandanaśtha), Bengal (comm. Ravicandra), West Indian (comm. Arjunavarmadeva and Kokasambhava), and Miscellaneous (comm. Rāmarudra, Rudramadeva, etc.). Simon bases his text chiefly on the South Indian recension, but it hardly supersedes the text of Arjunavarmadeva of Dhārā (circa 1215 A.D.), who is the oldest known commentator. No certainty, of course, is possible without further critical examination of materials.

\(^4\) Arjunavarman’s printed text contains 102 stanzas; in the NSP, (Bombay) ed., the appendices add 61 verses from other commentators and anthologies. Aufrecht’s suggestion (*ZDMG*, XXVII, p. 71), on the analogy of one-metre Śatakas of Bāṇa and Mayūra, that only stanzas in the Śārdūlavikṣṭā metre are original, would give us about 54 to 61 in recensions i-iii, and only 33 in recension iv. For the anthology stanzas, some of which are fine pieces, but ascribed sometimes to other authors, see Thomas, *Kis*, p. 22f; some of these are not traceable in the printed text; they are in varied metres.

\(^5\) Ed. Simon, nos. 16, 30, 89 = Vāmana, *Kavyālaṃkāra*, iii. 2. 4; iv. 3. 12; v. 2. 8.

\(^6\) *Dhvanīloka* ad iiii. 7,
The suggestion that he is later than Bhartṛhari proceeds chiefly on the debatable ground of style and technique; but after the poetic art of Kālidāsa, elaboration and finish of expression may be expected in any writer, and need not prove anything. Even if Amaru is later than Bhartṛhari, the works of both exhibit certain characteristics which would preclude a date later than this period, and probably they could not have been very far apart from each other in time.

Amaru is less wide in range than Hāla, but he strikes perhaps a deeper and subtler note. Amaru’s poems lack a great deal of the homeliness and rough good sense of Hāla’s erotic stanzas; but they do not present, as more or less Hāla’s verses do, the picture of simple love set among simple scenes. Amaru describes, with great delicacy of feeling and gracefulness of imagery, the infinite moods and fancies of love, its changes and chances, its strange vagaries and wanton wiles, its unexpected thoughts and unknown impulses, creating varied and subtle situations. His language, with all the resources of Sanskrit, is carefully studied, but not extravagantly ornate; and his gift of lyric phrasing gives it the happy touch of ease and naturalness. Amaru does not confine himself to the narrow limits of Hāla’s slow-moving moric stanza, but appears to allow himself greater metrical variety and more freedom of space. His employment of long sonorous metres, as well as short lyric measures,¹ not only relieves the monotony of metrical effect, but adds richness, weight and music to his little camoes of thought and feeling.

In spirit of inequalities, almost every stanza in this collection possesses a charm of its own;² and the necessity of compressing

¹ The metres employed in their order of frequency are: Śārdūlavikṛtā, Hariṇī, Śikhariṇī, Mandākrāntā, Śragdharā, Vasantaillaka and Mālinī; while Drutavilambita, Vaktra and Vamśasthavilla occur sporadically in some recensions only. See Simon’s metrical analysis, p. 46.

synthetically one whole idea or image within the limits of a single stanza not only gives a precision and restrained elegance to the diction, but also presents, in each stanza, a complete picture in a finely finished form. In this art of miniature word-painting, of which we have already spoken, Amaru unquestionably excels. The love depicted in his stanzas is often youthful and impassioned, in which the sense and the spirit meet, with all the emotions of longing, hope, ecstasy, jealousy, anger, disappointment, despair, reconciliation and fruition. Amaru's world is indeed different from ours, but his pictures are marked by a spirit of closeness to life and common realities, not often seen in the laboured and sustained masterpieces of this period, as well as by an emotional yet picturesque directness, by a subtle harmony of sound and sense, and by a freedom from mere rhetoric,—qualities which are not entirely devoid of appeal to modern taste. But, on the surface, the light of jewelled fancy plays, and makes beautiful even the pains and pangs which are inseparable from the joys and hopes of love. It is not love tossed on the stormy sea of manhood and womanhood, nor is it that infinite passion and pain of finite hearts which lead to a richer and wider life. But, as we have already said, the Sanskrit poet delights in depicting the playful moods of love, its aspects of Lilā, in which even sorrow becomes a luxury. When he touches a deeper chord, the tone of earnestness is unmistakable, but its poignancy is rendered pleasing by a truly poetic enjoyment of its tender and pathetic implications. Rightly does Ānandavardhana praise the stanzas of Amaru as containing the veritable ambrosia of poetry; and in illustrating the theme of love as a sentiment in Sanskrit poetry, all writers on Poetics have freely used Amaru as one of the original and best sources. In Sanskrit sentimental poetry, Amaru should be regarded as the herald of a new development, of which the result is best seen in the remarkable fineness, richness of expression and delicacy of thought and feeling of the love-poems of later Satakas, of the numerous anthologies, and even of the poetical drama,
The same traits as we notice in the Śataka of Amaru are found more or less in later centuries of love-poems, among which the Śṛṅgāra-śataka\(^1\) of Bhartṛhari must be singled out, not only for its early date and literary excellence, but also for the interest which attaches to the legends surrounding the mysterious personality of the author. Tradition ascribes to him also two other Śatakas, on wise conduct (Niti) and resignation (Vairāgya), respectively, as well as an exposition of the philosophy of speech, entitled Vākyapadiya.\(^2\) Although the last named work shows little of the softer gift of poetry, it is not inherently impossible for the poet to turn into a philosophical grammarian. From the Buddhist pilgrim Yi-tsing we know that a grammarian Bhartṛhari, apparently the author of the Vākyapadiya, died about 651 A.D.; and even if his reference does not make it clear whether Bhartṛhari was also the poet of the three Śatakas, his ignoring or ignorance of them need not be exaggerated. Bhartṛhari, the grammarian, was probably a Buddhist,\(^3\) but the fact that the Śatakas reveal a Śaiva of the Vedānta persuasion\(^4\) does not necessarily justify the supposition of two Bhartṛharis; for, apart from the question of interpolation,

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\(^1\) Ed. P. Bohlen, with Latin trs., Berlin 1833; also ed., in Haeberlin's Kāvyasaṁgraha p. 143 f., reprinted in Jivananda's Kāvyasaṁgraha, II, p. 53 f., which also contains the Niti and Vairāgya at pp. 125 f., 172 f. The Niti and Vairāgya have been edited, from a number of Mss, and with extracts from commentaries, by K. T. Telang, Bomb. Skt. Scr., 1874, 1885. Thr three Śatakas are also printed, under the title Subhāṣitātṛīśati, with comm. of Rāmacandra Budhendra, NSP, [6th revised ed., Bombay 1922 (1st ed. 1902.)] A critical edition of the Śatakas is still a necessity. Eng. trs., in verse, of Niti and Vairāgya by C. H. Tawney in IA, V, 1876 (reprinted separately, Calcutta 1877); all the Śatakas trs. B. H. Wortham, Trübner: London 1886; J. M. Kennedy, London 1913; C. W. Gurner, Calcutta 1927.

\(^2\) Sometimes the grammatical poem Bhaṭṭi-kāvya is ascribed to him, but there is nothing more than the name Bhaṭṭi as a Prakritised form of Bhartṛ to support the attribution. The legends which make Bhartṛhari a brother of the still more mysterious Vikramāditya is useless for any historical purpose. The story has been dramatised in later times in the Bhartṛhari-nirveda of Harihara, ed. NSP, Bombay 1912. Cf. Gray in JAOS, XXV, 1904, p. 197 f.; A. V. W. Jackson in JAOS, XXIII, 1902, p. 313 f.

\(^3\) See Pathak in JBRAS, XVIII, 1893, p. 341 f.; but this view has not found genera acceptance.

\(^4\) Telang, op. cit., p. ix f.
Harṣa likewise invokes the Buddha in his Nāgananda, but pays homage to Śiva in his Ratnāvalī.

The texts of the Śatakas of Bhartṛhari, as they stand, are much more uncertain and devoid of definite structure than that of Amaru’s Śataka; and stanzas from them occur in the works of other well-known writers,¹ or ascribed to other authors in the anthologies. The fact, however, should not be made the ground of the presumption that Bhartṛhari, like Vyāsa and Cāṇakya, is only a name under which miscellaneous compilations were passed,² or that Bhartṛhari himself incorporated stanzas from other writers to make up his own poem.³ The argument lacks neither ingenuity nor plausibility, but very few Śatakas, early or late, have escaped the misfortune of tampering and interpolation; and a critical examination of the textual question is necessary before the problem can be satisfactorily solved. There is still nothing to prevent us from accepting the tradition of Bhartṛhari’s original authorship, which is almost uniform and unbroken, and which does not relegate him to the position of a mere compiler.

Nor is there any cogency in the suggestion that the Śṛṅgāra-śataka alone is genuine, made on the alleged ground that it shows individuality and unity of structure as the product of a single creative mind. As the text itself is admittedly uncertain, regarding both originality and order of stanzas, such surmises, based on content and style, are always risky; but there is hardly anything to justify the position that the Śṛṅgāra-śataka can be sharply distinguished in this or other respects from the Niti- and Vairāgya-śatakas. If there is any substance in the legend recorded by Yi-tsing that Bhartṛhari vacillated no less than seven times between the comparative charms of the monastery and the world, it signifies that the poet who wrote a century of passionate

¹ E.g. in Abhijñāna-sākuntala, Mudrā-rākṣasa and Tantrākhāyikā; see Peterson, Sbh, pp. 74-75.
² Aufrecht, Leipzig Catalogue, no. 417.
³ Bohlen, op. cit., Prefatio, p. viii.
stanzas could very well write the other two centuries on worldly wisdom and renunciation.

The susceptibility to contrary attractions is evident in all the three Śatakas. The *Niti-śataka* should not be taken as a mere collection of moral maxims or an epitome of good sense and prudence; it shows at once a lurking attachment to the world and an open revulsion from its sordidness. The poet says, with considerable bitterness, at the outset: "Those who are capable of understanding me are full of envy; men in power are by arrogance disqualified; all others labour under stupidity; all my good sayings have, therefore, grown old within myself." In the same strain, the poet refers to the haughtiness of kings, to the power of wealth, to the humiliation of servitude, to the clash of passion and prejudice with culture and education, to the wicked and the ignorant reviling the good and the wise, and to the distressing things of life, which he calls darts rankling in his heart. Nor is the *Vairāgya-śataka* the work of an ascetic or inelastic mind. It gives expression to the passionate pain of an idealist, whose inborn belief in the goodness of the world is shattered by the sense of its hollowness and wickedness. It refers to the never-ending worries of earning and spending, of service and perpetual insults to one's self-respect, and of the wreck of human hopes in the striving for an ideal; it condemns the smug complacency of humanity in the midst of disease, decay and death, and falls back upon the cultivation of a spirit of detachment.

The vehemence with which Bhartṛhari denounces the joys of life and attractions of love in these two poems is on a level with his attitude disclosed in his stanzas on love; for the *Śrāgāra-śataka* is not so much a poem on love as on the essential emptiness of love, an outburst not so much on its ecstasies and sunny memories by a self-forgetful lover, as on its darkening sorrows and wrongs by a man in bitter earnest. It indicates a frame of mind wavering between abandon and restraint; "either the fair lady or the cave of the mountains,"

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"either youth or the forest," "either an abode on the sacred banks of the Ganges or in the delightful embrace of a young woman"—sentiments like these are scattered throughout. The delights of life and love are as much captivating as they are reprehensible; the bitterness of the denunciation only indicates the measure of the terrible fascination which love and life exert on the poet; it arises not so much from any innate repugnance as from the distressing necessity of convincing himself and tearing away from them. Bhartṛhari’s philosophy of love is simple: woman is both joy and sorrow, trouble and appeasement; there is continual attraction and continual repulsion; from loving too much the poet ceases to love at all and takes to asceticism. A man of artistic temperament and strong passions, the poet frankly delights in all that is delightful, but it gives him no peace nor any sure foothold anywhere. The tone is not sombre, but pungent, and even vitriolic. Bhartṛhari inevitably reminds one of Aśvaghoṣa, by the side of whose indignant outburst against woman, can be placed his biting interrogation: "Who has created woman as a contrivance for the bondage of all living creatures: woman, who is the whirlpool of all doubt, the universe of indiscipline, the abode of all daring, the receptacle of all evil, the deceitful soil of manifold distrust, the box of trickery and illusion, a poison coated with ambrosia, the hindrance to heaven and a way to the depth of hell?" If the poet sometimes attains a calmer frame of mind in his two other Śatakas on Niti and Vairāgya, his intense conviction is hard-won, and can be best understood in the light of the powerful longings and their attendant sufferings which he describes in his Śataka on love. It is no wonder that his assumption of the yellow garb so often conflicted with his craving for worldly delights.

Bhartṛhari, therefore, differs from Amaru both in attitude and expression. He is too earnest to believe in the exaltation of woman as such, even though he cannot withstand the fascination; he is too serious to depict in swift succession the hundreds of tender memories and pleasing pains of love, its flying thoughts
and dancing feelings, its delicate lights and shades, in the same way as they reflect themselves in Amaru's little poems in their playful warmth and colour. Bhartrhari's miniature love-stanzas have not the same picturesqueness of touch, the same delicacy and elegance of expression, but they gain in intensity, depth and range,1 because they speak of things which lie at the core of his being; they have enough piquancy and sharpness to require any graceful trimming. If Amaru describes the emotion of love and the relation of lovers for their own sake and without any implication for connecting them with larger aspects of life, Bhartrhari is too much occupied with life itself to forget its worries, and consider love and women2 apart from it in any fanciful or ideal aspect. Amaru has perhaps more real poetry, but Bhartrhari has more genuine feeling.3

There is a large number of erotic and reflective stanzas scattered throughout the Sanskrit anthologies, but the absence or uncertainty of chronological data makes it difficult to separate the early from the late compositions. If, however, the anthology poet Dharmakirti, who is sometimes cited also with the epithet Bhadanta, be the Buddhist logician and philosopher, he should

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1 The metres employed by Bhartrhari in the present texts of his three poems are diversified, but his inclination to long sonorous measures is shown by his use of Srondhara twenty-two times. See L. H. Gray, The Metres of Bhartrhari in JAS, XX, 1899, pp. 157-59.

2 It is noteworthy that Amaru always speaks of man's fickleness, and never echoes the almost universal bitterness regarding woman's inconstancy, which characterises much of the poetical, as well as religious and didactic, literature. Bhartrhari, in one passage, recommends boldness and even aggressiveness in dealing with women, which the commentator facetiously explains by saying that otherwise woman will dominate man!—For a general appreciation of Bhartrhari, see C. R. Narasimha Sarma, op. cit., pp. 23-56; H. Oldenberg, Lit. der ind. Indien, p. 221 f.; S. K. De, op. cit., p. 34 f.

3 The attitude of mind, which leaves no alternative between the world and the monastery, between love and renunciation, is not only an individual trait, but seems to have marked the outlook of a class of Sanskrit poets, who wrote stanzas, applicable by double entendre at once to the themes of enjoyment and resignation. In general also, the Sanskrit poets have enough simplicity and integrity of feeling to make them grateful for the joys of life, but penitent when they have exceeded in enjoying them. In such an atmosphere, it is clear, the idea of the chivalrous Platonic love or the so-called intellectual love could not develop at all,
belong to a period between the 6th and 7th century A.D. The total number of stanzas independently assigned to him in the different anthologies\(^1\) is about sixteen.\(^2\) There is nothing of the scholar or the pedant in these elegant little poems, which are generally of an erotic character, and some of them are worthy of being placed by the side of those of Amaru and Bhartṛhari. If Dharmakīrti, in the intervals of heavier work, wrote such a collection, its loss is much to be regretted.

2. The Stotra-Śatakas of Bāṇa, Mayūra and others

The vogue into which the Śataka style of poetry came in this period is also illustrated by the Stotras of Mayūra and Bāṇa, but their spirit, theme and method are different. The production of hymns in praise of deities obtained from the Vedic times, but the ancients possessed the secret of making their religion poetry and their poetry religion. Their descendants lost the art, but evolved a new type of Stotras or poem of praise and prayer. The Epics, as well as the Purāṇas and Tantras of uncertain date, abound in liturgical poems in which the gods of the new Hindu mythology receive adoration; while the Jainas and Buddhists do not stay behind in addressing a large number of similar religious poems to the deities and teachers of their own pantheon and hagiology. Some of these compositions are meant solely for the purpose of sects and cults; some are mere theological collections of sacred epithets or

\(^1\) For a complete list, see Thomas, Kś, pp. 47-50, which gives also a list of Dharmakīrti's poetical works translated into Tibetan, including two Stotras. Also see Peterson, Sktu, pp. 46-48, and in JBRAS, XVI, pp. 172-73; Aufrrecht in Ind. Stud., XVI, pp. 204-7, ZDMG, XXVII. p. 41.

\(^2\) Of these, Ānandavardhana quotes one (iii, p. 216; laugya-dravīna\(^6\)) with the remark: tathā caṇḍa Dharmakīrtiḥ sūkta iti prasiddhiḥ, saṃbhāvyate ca tasyavai; and he adds another stanza (p. 217) by Dharmakīrti, which is not found in the anthologies. The first of these stanzas is also quoted and ascribed to Dharmakīrti by Kṣemendrā in his Auciya-śicāras.
strings of a hundred or thousand sacred names; most of them have a stereotyped form and little individuality; but the higher poetry and philosophy also invaded the field. Aśvaghoṣa’s early eulogy of the Buddha in *Buddha-carita* xxvii is unfortunately lost in Sanskrit, while the Stotras of his school, as well as the spurious *Ganḍī-stotra* of a somewhat later time, are hardly of much poetical worth. We have, however, two remarkable Stotras to Viṣṇu and Brahman, both in the Śloka metre, uttered by the gods in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuśraddhā* (x. 16-32) and *Kumāraśraddhā* (iii. 4-15) respectively, although it is somewhat strange that there is no direct Stotra to his beloved deity Śiva. In this connexion, a reference may be made to a similar insertion of Stotras in the Mahākāvyas of the period, such as the Stava of Mahādeva by Arjuna in the closing canto of Bhāravi’s poem, that of Krṣṇa by Bhiṣma in *Śiśupāla-vadha* xiv, and that of Caṇḍi by the gods in Ratnākara’s *Haravijaya* xlvi (167 stanzas). But praise and panegyric very early become the individual theme of separate poems; and an endless number of Stotras has survived.¹ They are mostly late, and of little literary worth; for many have attempted but very few have succeeded in the exceedingly difficult task of sacred verse. Their theme and treatment do not always concern Vairāgya, but their devotional feeling is undoubtedly, and they are seldom merely doctrinal or abstract. Their objective, however, is not poetry, and they seldom attain its proper accent. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Sanskrit poeticians and anthologists do not give much prominence to the Stotra works, nor consider them worthy of a separate treatment.

The early efforts of Mayūra and Bāṇabhaṭṭa are not very impressive for their purely poetic merit, but they illustrate the early application of the elegant, but distinctly laboured, manner of the Kāvya and its rhetorical contrivances to this kind of litera-

¹ For religious hymnology, in general, a subject which has not yet been adequately studied, see S. P. Bhattacharyya, *The Stotra-Literature of Old India* in *IHQ*, I, 1925, pp. 340-60, for an eloquent appreciation.
ture. Mayūra is associated, chiefly by late Jaina legends, assertions of late commentators and recorded traditions of anthologists, with Bāṇabhaṭṭa as a literary rival in the court of Harṣa and as related by marriage either as brother-in-law or father-in-law. The legends also speak of Mayūra’s affliction with leprosy by the angry curse of Bāṇa’s wife, Mayūra’s alleged sister or daughter, whose intimate personal beauty he is said to have described in an indiscreet poem. This work is supposed to be identical with the highly erotic, but rather conventional, poem of eight fragmentary stanzas, which goes by the name Mayūraśṭaka, and which describes a fair lady returning from a secret visit to her lover. Three of its stanzas are in Srāgṛharā (the metre of Śūryaśataka) and the rest in Śārdūlavikrīḍita; it refers, with more wit than taste, to the “tiger-sport” of the lady with the “demon of a lover,” and to the beauty of her limbs which makes even an old man amorously inclined. If the poem is genuine, it is possible that such descriptions in the poem itself started the legend; but the legend also adds that a miraculous recovery from the unhappy disease was effected, through the grace of the sun-god, by Mayūra’s composing his well-known poem, the Śūrya-

1 All that is known of Mayūra and his genuine and ascribed works will be found in G. P. Quackenbos, The Sanskrit Poems of Mayūra, New York 1917 (Columbia Univ. Indio-Iranian series); it gives the works in Roman transliteration, with Eng. trs. and notes, and also contains the Caṇḍī-śataka of Bāṇa with trs. and notes.

2 In the enumeration of the friends of his youth, who are said to have been of the same age (payasā samānāḥ), Bāṇa refers in his Harṣa-carita (ed. A. A. Führer, Bombay 1909, p. 67; ed. Parab, NSP, Bombay 1892, p. 47, 4th ed., 1914, p. 42) to a certain Jaṅgulika or snake-doctor, appropriately named Mayūraka, who may or may not be our poet; but the earliest mention of the poet Mayūra, along with Bāṇa, in the court of Harṣa occurs in the Navasūrasūkas-carita (ii. 18) of Padmagupta (about 1005 A. D.). The later eulogistic stanza of Rājaśekhara in Sml. (iv. 68), however, punningly alludes to the art of the snake-doctor. The earliest anonymous quotation of two stanzas (Nos. 9, 23) from the Śūrya-śataka of Mayūra occurs in Ānandavaradhana’s Dhvanyāloka (2nd half of the 9th century), ii. p. 92 and 99-100. There is another much inferior tradition which connects him, along with many other Sanskrit poets, with king Bhoja of Dharā.

3 Quackenbos, op. cit., pp. 72-79, text and trs.; also in JAOS, XXXI, 1911, pp. 343-54.

4 kenaśā rati-rākṣasena ramitā lārdūla-oṅkriṣṭitā, st. 3; and dṛṣṭoā rūpam idam priyāṅga-gahanaṃ vṛddho'pi kāmāyate, st. 5.
śataka, in praise of the deity. But it must be said that the Śataka gives the impression of being actuated not so much by piety as by the spirit of literary display. The theme of the work, which retains in its present form exactly one hundred stanzas, consists of an extravagant description and praise of the sun-god and his appurtenances, namely, his rays, the horses that draw his chariot, his charioteer Aruṇa, the chariot itself and the solar disc. The sixth stanza of the poem refers to the sun’s power of healing diseases, which apparently set the legend rolling; but the belief that the sun can inflict and cure leprosy is old, being preserved in the Iranian story of Sām, the prototype of the Purānic legend of Sāmba; it may not have anything to do with the presumption that the cult of the sun was popular in the days of Harṣa, even if Harṣa’s father is described in the Harṣa-carita as a devotee of the sun. With all its devotional attitude, the poem is written in the elaborate Sragdharā metre; and its diction, with its obvious partiality for compound words, difficult construction, constant alliteration, jingling of syllables and other rhetorical devices, is equally

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2 With an apparently spurious stanza at the end, not noticed by the commentator, in NSP ed., giving the name of the author and the Phala-śruti. The order of the stanzas, however, is not the same in all editions and manuscripts; but this is of little consequence in a loosely constructed poem of this kind.

3 It is remarkable that puns are not frequent; and the poem has some clever, but very elaborate, similes and metaphors, e.g., that of the thirsty traveller (st. 14), of antidote against poison (st. 31), of the day-tree (st. 34), of the dramatic technique (st. 50); there is a play on the numerals from one to ten (st. 13; cf. Buddha-carita ii. 41); harsh-sounding series of syllables often occur (st. 6, 98 etc.); while st. 71 is cited by Māmata as an instance of a composition, where facts are distorted in order to effect an alliteration. The Aksara-dambara, which Bāna finds in the diction of the Gauḍas, is abundant here, as well as in his own Carīt Śataka; and it is no wonder that one of the commentators Madhusūdana (about 1654 A.D.), gives to both Mayūra and Bāna the designation of eastern poets (Paurastya).
elaborate. The quality of graceful and dignified expression and the flowing gorgeousness of the metre may be admitted; in fact, the majesty which this compactly loaded metre can put on has seldom been better shown; but the highly stilted and recondite tendencies of the work have little touch of spontaneous inspiration about them. Whatever power there is of visual presentation, it is often neutralised by the deliberate selection and practice of laboured tricks of rhetoric. The work is naturally favoured by the rhetoricians, grammarians and lexicographers, and frequently commented upon,¹ but to class it with the poems of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti shows the lack of ability to distinguish between real poetry and its make-believe.²

The Caṇḍi-śataka³ of Bāṇa is of no higher poetical merit; it is cited even less by rhetoricians⁴ and anthologists, and commentaries on it are much fewer.⁵ Written and composed in the same sonorous Srāgdhāra metre⁶ (102 stanzas) and in the same elaborate rhetorical diction, the poem shows noteworthy similarity to Mayūra’s Śataka, and lends plausibility to the tradition that it was composed in admiring rivalry. The myth of Caṇḍi’s slaying of the buffalo-demon is old, being mentioned in the Mahābhārata (ix. 44-46) and amplified in the Purāṇas; but Bāṇa makes use of it, not for embellishing the story, but for a high-flown panegyrical of Caṇḍī, including a glorification

¹ The number of commentaries listed by Aufrecht is 25; see Quackenbos, op. cit., p. 103.
² About 20 stanzas in various metres, not traceable in this work, are assigned to Mayūra in the anthologies; some of them are clever and less artificial, but are not of much poetical value. For these, see Quackenbos, pp. 229-42. Some of these verses are ascribed to other poets as well; see Thomas, Kes, p. 67f.
³ Ed. in Kāvyamālā, Guechaka iv, with a Sanskrit comm. : ed. G. P. Quackenbos, as above, pp. 243-357. There is nothing improbable in Bāṇa’s authorship of the work. Arjunavarmadeva in the 12th century (on Amaru, st. 1) expressly ascribes this work to Bāṇa and quotes a stanza from it. There is a picturesque description of a temple of Caṇḍikā in Bāṇa’s Kādambarī.
⁴ The earliest quotation is by Bhoja, who cites st. 40 and 66.
⁵ Only two or three commentaries are, so far, known.
⁶ With the exception of six stanzas in Śārdūlavikṛṣṭita (nos. 25, 32, 49, 55, 56, 72), which may or may not be original, for the variation has no special motive.
of the power of Caṇḍi’s left foot which killed the demon by its
marvellous kick! Bāṇa does not adopt Mayūra’s method of system-
matic description of the various objects connected with Caṇḍi,
but seeks diversion by introducing, in as many as forty-eight
stanzas, speeches in the first person (without dialogue) by Caṇḍi,
Mahiṣa, Caṇḍi’s handmaids Jayā and Vijayā, Śiva, Kārttikeya,
the gods and demons—and even by the foot and toe-nails of
Caṇḍi! Bāṇa has none of Mayūra’s elaborate similes, but puns
are of frequent occurrence and are carried to the extent of
involving interpretation of entire individual stanzas in two ways.
There is an equally marked tendency towards involved and
recondite constructions, but the stylistic devices and love of
conceits are perhaps more numerous and prominent. The work
has all the reprehensible features of the verbal bombast with
which Bāṇa himself characterises the style of the Gauḍás. Even
the long-drawn-out and never sluggish melody of its voluminous
metre does not fully redeem its artificialities of idea and expres-
sion, while the magnificent picturesqueness, which characterises
Bāṇa’s prose works, is not much in evidence here. To a greater
extent than Mayūra’s Śataka, it is a poetical curiosity rather
than a real poem; but it is an interesting indication of the
decline of poetic taste and growing artificiality of poetic form,
which now begin to mark the growth of the Kāvyā.

One of Rājaśekhara’s eulogistic stanzas quoted in the Śūkti-
muktāvali (iv. 70) connects Bāṇa and Mayūra with Mātaṅga (v. l.
Caṇḍāla)1 Divākara as their literary rival in the court of king
Harṣa. Nothing remains of his work except four stanzas quoted
in the Subhāṣitāvali, of which one (no. 2546), describing the sea-
girdled earth successively as the grandmother, mother, spouse and
daughter-in-law, apparently of king Harṣa, has been censured for
inelegance by Abhinavagupta. It has been suggested2 that the

1 The GOS edition (Baroda 1938, p. 45) reads Caṇḍāla, without any variant, but with
the note that the reading Mātaṅga is found in SP. Apparently the latter reading is
sporadic.
2 F. Hall, introd. to Vāsavadattā, Calcutta 1859, p. 21, and Maxmuller, India, p. 330.
note 5.

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poet should be identified with Mānatuṇga, the well known Jaina Ācārya and author of two Stotras (namely, the Bhaktāmara\(^1\) in Sanskrit and Bhayahara\(^2\) in Prakrit), on the ground that some Jaina tales of miracles\(^3\) connect him with Bāṇa and Mayūra. But the evidence is undoubtedly weak,\(^4\) and the presumption that the three Stotras of Bāṇa, Mayūra and this poet were meant respectively to celebrate sun-worship, Śaktism and Jainism is more schematic than convincing. The date of Mānatuṇga is uncertain; the Jaina monastic records place him as early as the 3rd century A.D., but other traditions bring him down to periods between the 5th and the 9th century A.D. There is little basis of comparison between Mānatuṇga’s Stotra and the Śatakas of Bāṇa and Mayūra. It consists of 44 or 48 stanzas, in the lighter and shorter Vasantatilaka metre, in praise of the Jina Rśabha as the incomparable and almost deified saint; but it is not set forth in the Āsir form of Bāṇa and Mayūra’s Śatakas, being directly addressed to the saint. It is in the ornate manner, but it is much less elaborate, and the rhetorical devices, especially punning, are not prominent. Its devotional feeling is unmistakable, but there is little that is distinctive in its form and content.\(^5\)

To the king-poet Harśavardhana himself are ascribed, besides the three well known plays, some Buddhist Stotras of doubtful poetical value, if not of doubtful authorship. Of these,

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\(^1\) Ed. Kāvyamālā, Gučhaka vii, pp. 1-10; also ed. and trs. H. Jacobi in Ind. Stud., XIV, p. 359f. The title is suggested by the opening words of the poem.

\(^2\) Addressed to Jina Pārśvanātha, but the work is not yet printed. In 1309 A.D. Jinarāja Sūri wrote a commentary on it (Peterson, Report 1882-83, p. 52).

\(^3\) The legend of the Jina’s delivering Mānatuṇga from his self-imposed fetters, on the parallel of Cāndil’s healing the self-amputated limbs of Bāṇa, is probably suggested by the general reference in the poem itself to the Jina’s power, apparently in a metaphorical sense, of releasing the devotee from fetters.

\(^4\) See Quackenbos, op. cit., p. 10f.

\(^5\) The later Jaina Stotras, in spite of their devotional importance, are not of much literary value; see Winternitz, HIL, II, p. 551f. Even the Kālyāṇa-mandira Stotra (ed. Kāvyamālā and Ind. Stud., loc. cit.) of Siddhasena Divākara is a deliberate and much more laboured imitation of the Bhaktāmara in the same metre and same number (44) of stanzas.
the *Suprabha* or *Suprabhāta* Stotra, recovered in Sanskrit, is a morning hymn of twenty-four stanzas addressed to the Buddha, in the Mālinī metre. About a dozen occasional stanzas, chiefly of an erotic character, but of a finer quality than the Stotra, are assigned to Harṣa in the anthologies, in addition to a large number which can be traced mainly in the *Ratnāvali* and the *Nāgānanda.*

3. **The Mahākāvya from Bhāravi to Māgha**

One of the most remarkable offshoots of the literature of this period is represented by a group of Kālidāsa’s direct and impressive poetical descendants, who made it their business to keep up the tradition of the sustained and elevated poetical composition, known in Sanskrit as the Mahākāvya, but who developed and established it in such a way as to stereotype it for all time to come. The impetus, no doubt, came from Kālidāsa’s two so-called Mahākāvyas, but the form and content of the species were worked out in a different spirit. It would be unhistorical in this connexion to consider the definitions of the Mahākāvya given by the rhetoricians, for none of them is earlier than Kālidāsa, and the question whether Kālidāsa conformed to them

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1 Ascribed wrongly to king Harṣadeva of Kashmir in *Bstan-hgyur* and in Minayeff’s manuscripts. It is given in extenso by Thomas in *JRAS*, 1903, pp. 703-22 and reproduced in App. B. to P. V. Kane’s ed. of *Harṣa-carita*, Bombay 1918. See *Sbhv*, Introd. under Suprabhāta.


3 J. Nobel, *The Foundations of Indian Poetry*, Calcutta 1925, p. 140f. The Mahākāvya or ‘Great Poem’ is a poetical narrative of heroic characters and exploits, but it is not a work of the type of the Great Epics, the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyana*, which correspond to our sense of a heroic poem, but which are classified and distinguished as Itihāsas. The eminence denoted by the prefix ‘great’ does not refer to the more primitive epic or heroic spirit nor to directness and simplicity, but rather to the bulk, sustained workmanship and general literary competence of these more sophisticated and deliberate productions. If an analogy is permissible, the Mahākāvyas stand in the same relation to the Great Epics as the work of Milton does to that of Homer.
does not arise. Nor should the group of early poets, with whom we are occupied here, be supposed to have followed them. On the contrary, the norm, which even the two earliest rhetoricians, Bhāmaha (i. 19-23) and Daṇḍin (i 14-19), lay down appears to have been deduced from the works of these poets themselves, especially from those of Bhāravi, the main features of which are generalised into rules of universal application. As such, the definitions are, no doubt, empirical, but they deal with accidents rather than with essentials, and do not throw much light upon the historical or poetic character of these compositions.

Perhaps for this reason, Vāmana (i. 3. 22) brushes aside the definitions as of no special interest; but it is important to note that the rather extensive analysis of Rudraṭa (xvi. 7-19), more than that of earlier rhetoricians, emphasises at least one interesting characteristic of the Mahākāvya, as we know them, when it prescribes the rules for the development of the theme. Like his predecessors, he speaks indeed of such formal requirements as the commencement of the poem with a prayer, blessing or indication of content, the pursuit of the fourfold ends of life (conduct, worldly success, love and emancipation), the noble descent of the hero, the occurrence of sentiments and ornaments, the division into cantos, the change of metre at the end of each canto, and so forth; but he also gives a list of diverse topics which may be introduced into the main narrative. These include not only subjects like political consultation, sending of messengers and spies, encampment, campaign and triumph of the hero, but also descriptions of towns, citizens, oceans, mountains, rivers, seasons, sunset, moonrise, dawn, sport in park or in water, drinking bouts and amorous dalliance. All this is, of course, prescribed as it is found conspicuously in Bhāravi and Māgha; but Rudraṭa adds that in due time the poet may resume the thread of the main narrative, implying thereby that these descriptions, no matter what their relevancy is, should be inserted as a matter of conventional amplification.
and embellishment, and may even hold up and interrupt the story itself for a considerable length. This seldom happens in Kālidāsa, in whom the narrative never loses its interest in subsidiary matters; but in Bhāravi and Māgha these banal topics, loosely connected with the main theme, spread over at least five (iv, v, vii-x) and six (vi-xi) entire cantos respectively, until the particular poet has leisure to return to his narrative. While Bhaṭṭi is sparing in these digressions, which are found mostly scattered in cantos ii, x and xi, Kumāradāsa devotes considerable space to them (cantos i, iii, vii, ix and xii). Although there is, in these passages, evidence of fluent, and often fine, descriptive power, the inventiveness is neither free nor fertile, but moves in the conventional groove of prescribed subjects and ideas, and the over-loading of the parts necessarily leads to the weakening of the central argument.

The motive for such adventitious matter is fairly obvious. It is meant to afford the poet unchartered freedom to indulge in his luxuriant descriptive talent and show off his skill and learning. While it tends to make the content of the poem rich and diversified, one inevitable result of this practice is that the story is thereby pushed into the background, and the poetical embellishments, instead of being incidental and accessory, become the main point of the Mahākāvyya. The narrative ceases to be interesting compared to the descriptive, argumentative or erotic divagations of unconscionable length; there is abundance, but no sense of proportion. The theme, therefore, is often too slender and insignificant; whatever may be there of it is trammeled by a huge mass of digressive matter, on which the poet chiefly concentrates; and the whole poem becomes, not an organic whole, but a mosaic of poetic fragments, tastelessly cemented together.

It must be admitted that there is no lack of interesting matter in these Mahākāvyas, but the matter is deliberately made less interesting than the manner. The elegant, pseudo-heroic or succulent passages are generally out of place, but they are an
admirable outlet for the fantastic fancy and love of rhetoric and declamation which characterise these poets. At the time we have reached, the stream of original thought and feeling, after attaining its high-water mark in Kālidāsa, was decidedly slackening. The successors of Kālidāsa pretend to hand down the tradition of their predecessor's great achievement, but what they lack in poetic inspiration, they make up by rhetoric in its full and varied sense. The whole literature is indeed so saturated with rhetoric that everything, more or less, takes a rhetorical turn. It seeks to produce, most often successfully, fine effects, not by power of matter, but by power of form, not by the glow of inspiration, but by the exuberance of craftsmanship; and one may truly say that it is the age of cultivated form. If Kālidāsa left Sanskrit poetry a finished body, the subsequent ages did no more than weave its successive robes of adornment.

There is, therefore, an abundance of technical skill—and technical skill of no despicable kind—in the Mahākāvayayas of this period, but there is a corresponding deficiency of those subtle and indefinable poetic powers, which make a composition vital in its appeal. The rhetoric, no doubt, serves its own purpose in these poems, and no one can deny its vigour and variety; but it never goes very far, and often overreaches itself by its cleverness and excess. It breeds in the poets an inordinate love for itself, which seduces them to a prolixity, disproportionate to their theme, and to an extravagance of diction and imagery, unsuitable to their thought and emotion. This want of balance between matter and manner, which is rare in Kālidāsa and which a true poetic instinct always avoids, is very often prominent in these lesser poets; and their popularity makes the tradition long and deeply rooted in Sanskrit poetical literature. It degenerates into a deliberate selection of certain methods and means wholly to achieve style, and loses all touch of spontaneity and naturalness. To secure strength, needless weight is superadded, and elasticity is lost in harmony too mechanically studied. The poets are never slipshod, never frivolous; they are indeed far too serious, far
too sober either to soar high or dive deep. Theirs is an equable merit, producing a dainty and even effect, rather than a throbbing response to the contagious rapture of poetic thought and feeling. As they never sin against art, they seldom reach the heaven of poetry.

Nevertheless, the poets we are considering are not entirely devoid of purely poetic merit, even if they are conscious and consummate artists. The period, as we see it, is neither sterile nor inanimate, nor is it supported by the prestige of a single name. It is peopled with striking figures; and, apart from smaller poems of which we have spoken, the body of larger works produced is fairly extensive in quantity and not negligible in quality. Even if they do not reach the highest level, it is not necessary to belittle them. The qualities of the literature may not awaken the fullest critical enthusiasm, but it is certainly marked by sustained richness and many-sided fullness. Of the four greater poets of this period, namely, Bhāravi, Bhaṭṭi, Kumāradāsa and Māgha, it is curious that we possess only a single work of each. It is not known whether they wrote more works than what have survived. The verses quoted from these poets in the anthologies and rhetorical works are generally traceable in their extant poems; but in view of the uncertain and fluctuating character of these attributions, the surplus of untraceable verses need not prove loss of other works which they are conjectured to have written. While Bhāravi and Māgha select for their themes particular episodes of the Mahābhārata, Bhaṭṭi and Kumāradāsa conceive the more ambitious project of rehandling the entire story of the Rāmāyaṇa. All the four agree in choosing a heroic subject from the Epics but their inspiration is not heroic, and their treatment has little of the simplicity and directness, as well as the vivid mythological background, of the Epics.

a. Bhāravi

Of the composers of the Mahākāvya who succeeded Kālidāsa, Bhāravi is perhaps the earliest and certainly the
foremost. All that is known of him is that he must be placed much earlier than 634 A.D., at which date he had achieved poetic fame enough to be mentioned with Kālidāsa in the Aihole inscription of Pulakeśin II.¹ As the inscription belongs to the same half-century as that in which Bāṇa flourished, Bāṇa’s silence about Bhāravi’s achievement is somewhat extraordinary; but it need not be taken to imply Bhāravi’s contemporaneity or nearness of time to Bāṇa.

The subject-matter of the Kirātārajuniya² of Bhāravi is derived from one of the episodes of Arjuna’s career described in the Vana-parvan of the Mahābhārata.³ Under the vow of twelve years’ exile the Pāṇḍavas had retired to the Dvaita forest, where the taunt and instigation of Draupadi, supported by the vehement urging of Bhīma, failed to move the scrupulous Yudhiṣṭhira to break the pledge and wage war. The sage Vyāsa appears, and on his advice they move to the Kāmyaka forest, and Arjuna sets out to win divine weapons from Śiva to fight the Kauravas. Indra, in the guise of a Brahman ascetic, is unable to dissuade Arjuna, but pleased with the hero’s firmness, reveals himself and wishes him success. Arjuna’s austerities frighten the gods, on whose appeal Śiva descends as a Kirāta, disputes with him on the matter of killing a boar, and, after a fight, reveals his true form and grants the devotee the desired weapons. This small and simple epic episode is selected for expanded and embellished treatment in eighteen cantos, with all the resources of a refined and elaborate art. Bhāravi adheres to the outline of the story,

¹ For the alleged relation of Bhāravi and Daṇḍin, see S. K. De in IHQ, I, 1925, p. 31 f., 113, 1927, p. 396; also G. Hariharā Sastrī in IHQ, III, 1927, p. 169 f., who would place Bhāravi and Daṇḍin at the close of the 7th century. The quotation of a pāda of Kīṭṭha XIII. 14 in the Kāśīki on Pāṇ. i. 3, 23, pointed out by Kielhorn (IA, XIV, p. 327), does not advance the solution of the question further.

² Ed. N. B. Godabole and K. P. Parab, with the comm. of Mallinātha, NSP, Bombay 1885 (6th ed. 1907); only i–iii, with the comm. of Citrabhānu, ed. T. Ganapati Sastrī, Trivandrum Skt. Ser., 1918; trs. into German by C. Cappeller in Harvard Orient. Ser., xv, 1912.

³ Bomb. ed., iii. 27–41.
but he fills it up with a large mass of matter, some of which have hardly any direct bearing on the theme. The opening of the poem with the return of Yudhiṣṭhira’s spy, who comes with the report of Suyodhana’s beneficent rule, at once plunges into the narrative, but it also supplies the motive of the following council of war and gives the poet an opportunity of airing his knowledge of statecraft. The elaborate description of autumn and the Himalayas, and of the amorous sports of the Gandharvas and Apsaras in land and water, repeated partially in the following motif of the practice of nymphal seduction upon the young ascetic, is a disproportionate digression, meant obviously for a refined display of descriptive powers. Apart from the question of relevancy, Bhāravi’s flavoured picture of amorous sports, like those of Māgha and others who imitated him with greater gusto and created a tradition, is graceless in one sense but certainly graceful in another; and there is, in his painting of natural scenery, a real feeling for nature, even if for nature somewhat tricked and frounced. The martial episode, extending over two cantos, of the rally of Śiva’s host under Skanda’s leadership and the fight with magic weapons, is not derived from the original; but, in spite of elaborate literary effort, the description is rather one of a combat as it should be conducted in artificial poetry, and the mythical or magical elements take away much of its reality.

Bhāravi’s positive achievement has more often been belittled than exaggerated in modern times. Bhāravi shares some of the peculiarities of his time and falls into obvious errors of taste, but in dealing with his poetry the literary historian need not be wholly apologetic. His attempt to accomplish astonishing feats of verbal jugglery in canto xv (a canto which describes a battle!)¹

¹ The puerile tricks of Citra-bandha, displayed in this canto, are said to have originated from the art of arraying armies in different forms in the battle-field! But it is more plausible that they arose from the practice of writing inscriptions on swords and leaves. They are recognised for the first time by Daṇḍin; but Māgha appears to regard them (xix. 41) as indispensable in a Mahākāvyya. Rudrāṭa deals with them in some detail, but they are discredited by Ānandavardhana, suffered by Mammaṭa in deference to poetic practice, and summarily rejected by Viśvanātha.

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by a singular torturing of the language is an instance of the worst type of tasteless artificiality, which the Sanskrit poet is apt to commit; but it must have been partly the fault of his time that it liked to read verses in which all or some of the feet are verbally identical, in which certain vocables or letter-s are exclusively employed, in which the lines or feet read the same backwards or forwards, or in a zigzag fashion. One never meets with such excesses in Kālidāsa; it is seen for the first time in Bhāravi. We cannot be sure, however, if Bhāravi originated the practice; the deplorable taste might have developed in the interval; but there can be no doubt that Bhāravi succumbed to what was probably a powerful temptation in his day of rhetorical display in general and of committing these atrocities in particular. His pedantic observation of grammar, his search for recondite vocabulary, his conscious employment of varied metres are aspects of the same tendency towards laboured artificiality. His subject, though congenial, is not original; it is capable of interesting treatment, but is necessarily conditioned by its mythical character, and more so by Bhāravi’s own idea of art. But these patent, though inexcusable, blemishes, which Bhāravi shares with all the Mahākāvyya writers of this period, do not altogether render nugatory his great, though perhaps less patent, merits as a poet and artist.

Bhāravi as a poet and artist is perhaps not often first-rate, but he is never mediocre. It is seldom that he attains the full, haunting grace and melody of Kālidāsa’s poetry, but he possesses not a little of Kālidāsa’s charm of habitual ornateness, expressed with frequent simplicity, force and beauty of phrase and image. There are occasional bursts of rare and elsewhere unheard music, but what distinguishes Bhāravi is that, within certain narrow but impregnable limits, he is a master of cultivated expression. He has the disadvantage of coming after and not in the first flush of the poetic energy of the age; his poetry is more sedate, more weighted with learning and technique; but, barring deliberate artificialities, he is seldom fantastic to frigidity or meditative to dulness.
Bhāravi’s subject does not call for light treatment. With his command of polished and stately phrase, he is quite at home in serious and elevated themes; but the softer graces of his style and diction are also seen in the elegant effect which he imparts to the somewhat inelegant episode, not on love, but on the art of love, which is irrelevantly introduced, perhaps chiefly for this purpose. The beauty of nature and of maidens is an ever attractive theme with the Sanskrit poets but even in this sphere which is so universally cultivated, Bhāravi’s achievement is of no mean order. Bhāravi’s metrical form is also skilled and developed, but his practice is characterised by considerable moderation. He employs about twenty-four different kinds of metre in all, most of which, however, are sporadic, only about twelve being principally employed. Like Kālidāsa in his two Mahākāvyas, he employs mostly short lyrical measures, which suit the comparative ease of his manner, and avoids larger stanzas which encourage complexities of expression. There is, therefore, no unnecessary display of metrical skill or profusion, nor any desire for unlimited freedom of verse. He gives us, in general, a flawless and equable music, eminently suited to his staid and stately theme; but there is not much of finer cadences or of more gorgeous melody.

Bhāravi’s strength, however, lies more in the descriptive and the argumentative than in the lyric touch; and this he attains by his undoubted power of phraseology, which is indeed not entirely free from indulgence in far-fetched conceits, but which is never over-gorgeous nor over-stiff. His play of fancy is constant and brilliant, but there is always a calm and refined dignity of diction. Bhāravi has no love for complicated

1 In each of cantos v and xviii, we find sixteen different kinds of metre, but Bhāravi does not favour much the use of rare or difficult metres. The only metres of this kind, which occur but only once each, are Jaloddhatagati, Jaladharamālā, Candrikā, Mattamayūtā, Kuṭāḷā and Vamsāpatrapatiṭā. He uses, however, Vaitāliya in ii, Pramitikṣāra in iv, Praharṣitī in vii, Svāgata in ix, Puspitāgrā in x, Udgaṭā in xii and Aupacchandāsiṅka in xiii.
compounds; his sentences are of moderate length and reasonably clear and forceful; there is no perverse passion for volleys of puns and inversions, for abundance of laboured adjectives, or for complexities of tropes and comparisons. He has the faculty of building up a poetical argument or a picture by a succession of complementary strokes, not added at haphazard, but growing out of and on to one another; the amplification has vigour and variety and seldom leads to tedious verbiage. His phrases often give a pleasing surprise; they are expressed with marvellous brevity and propriety; it is impossible to improve upon them; to get something better one has to change the kind.

Bhāravi’s poetry, therefore, is seldom overdressed, but bears the charm of a well-ordered and distinctive appearance. Of the remoter and rarer graces of style, it cannot be said there is none, but Bhāravi does not suggest much of them. The Artha-gaurava or profundity of thought, which the Sanskrit critics extol in Bhāravi, is the result of this profundity of expression; but it is at once the source of his strength and his weakness. His maturity of expression is pleasing by its grace and polish; it is healthful by its solidity of sound and sense; but it has little of the contagious enthusiasm or uplifting magnificence of great poetry. One comes across fine things in Bhāravi, striking, though quaintly put, conceits, vivid and graceful images, and even some distinctly fascinating expressions; but behind every clear image, every ostensible thought or feeling, there are no vistas, no backgrounds; for the form is too methodical and the colouring too artificial. Nevertheless, Bhāravi can refine his expression without making it jejune; he can embellish his idea without making it fantastic. His word-music, though subdued, is soothing; his visual pictures, though elaborate, are convincing. If he walks with a solemn tread, he knows his foothold and seldom makes a false step. In estimating Bhāravi’s place in Sanskrit poetry, we must recognise that he cannot give us very great things, but what he can give, he gives unerringly; he is a sure master of his own craft.

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b. Bhaṭṭi

Bhaṭṭi, author of the Rāvaṇa-vadha,¹ which is more usually styled Bhaṭṭi-kāvya presumably after his name, need not detain us long. The poet’s name itself cannot authorise his identification with Vatsabhāṭṭi of the Mandasor inscription,² nor with Bhartṛhari, the poet-grammarian. We are told in the concluding stanza³ of the work that it was composed at Valabhi ruled over by Śrīdharasena, but since no less than four kings of this name are known to have ruled at Valabhi roughly between 495 and 641 A.D., Bhaṭṭi lived, at the earliest, in the beginning of the 6th century, and, at the latest, in the middle of the 7th.⁴

The so-called Mahākāvya of Bhaṭṭi seeks to comprehend, in twenty cantos, the entire story of the Rāmāyaṇa up to Rāma’s return from Iaṅkā and coronation; but it is perpetrated deliberately to illustrate the rules of grammar and rhetoric. It is, in the words of the poet himself, like a lamp to those whose eye is grammar; but without grammar, it is like a mirror in the hands of the blind. One can, of course, amiably resolve to read the work as a poem, ignoring its professed purpose, but one will soon recognise the propriety of the poet’s warning that the composition is a thing of joy to the learned, and that it is not easy for one, who is less gifted, to understand it without a commentary. Sound literary taste will hardly justify the position, but there is not much in the work itself which evinces sound literary taste.

² As suggested by B. C. Majumdar in JRAI, 1904, p. 306f.; see Keith in JRAI, 1909, p. 435.
³ The stanza is not commented upon by Mallinātha.
⁴ See Hultsch in ZDMG, LXXII, 1908, p. 145f. The work is of course known to Bhāmaha, but since Bhāmaha’s date itself is uncertain, the fact is not of much chronological value. On the relation of Bhaṭṭi’s treatment of poetic figures to that of Bhāmaha, see S. K. De, Sanskrit Poetics, I, pp. 51-57.
Apart from its grammatical ostentation, the poem suffers from a banal theme. Bhaṭṭi attempts some diversity by introducing speeches and conceits, as well as occasional description of seasons and objects, but the inventions are negligible, and the difficult medium of a consciously laboured language is indeed a serious obstacle to their appreciation. What is a more serious drawback is that the poet has hardly any freedom of phraseology, which is conditioned strictly by the necessity of employing only those words whose grammatical forms have to be illustrated methodically in each stanza; and all thought, feeling, idea or expression becomes only a slave to this exacting purpose. It must be said, however, to Bhaṭṭi’s credit that his narrative flows undisturbed by lengthy digressions; that his diction, though starched and weighted by grammatical learning, is without complexities of involved construction and laboured compounds; that, in spite of the inevitable play of word and thought, there is nothing recondite or obscure in his ideas; and that his versification, though undistinguished, is smooth, varied and lively.

Even very generous taste will admit that here practically ends all that can be said in favour of the work, but it does not very much improve its position as a poem. If one can labour through its hard and damaging crust of erudition, one will doubtless find a glimmering of fine and interesting things. But Bhaṭṭi is a writer of much less original inspiration than his contemporaries, and his inspiration comes from a direction other than the purely poetic. The work is a great triumph of artifice, and perhaps more reasonably accomplished than such later triumphs of artifice as proceed even to greater excesses; but that is a different thing from poetry. Bhaṭṭi’s scholarliness has justly propitiated scholars, but the self-imposed curse of artificiality

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1 Like the early Mahākāvyā poets, Bhaṭṭi limits himself generally to shorter lyrical metres; longer metres like Mandākrāntā, Śārīrāvatikṛṣṇita and Srāgdrāhā being used but rarely. The Śloka (iv–ix, xiv–xxiii) and Upajāti i, ii, xi, and xii) are his chief metres. Of uncommon metres, Aśvalalita, Nandana, Narkūṭaka, and Praharanaṇakalikā occur only once each.
neutralises whatever poetic gifts he really possesses. Few read his worst, but even his best is seriously flawed by his unfortunate outlook; and, unless the delectable pursuit of poetry is regarded as a strenuous intellectual exercise, few can speak of Bhaṭṭī’s work with positive enthusiasm.

c. Kumāradāsa

Kumāradāsa, also known as Kumārabhaṭṭa or Bhaṭṭa Kumāra, deserves special interest as a poet from the fact that he consciously modelled his Jānakī-haraṇa,¹ in form and spirit, on the two Mahākāvyas of Kālidāsa, even to the extent of frequently plagiarising his predecessor’s ideas and sometimes his phrases. This must have started the legend² which makes this great admirer and follower of Kālidāsa into his friend and contemporary, and inspired the graceful but extravagant, eulogy of Rājaśekhara,³ quoted in the Sūkti-muktāvalī (4. 76) of Jahlanṭa. A late Ceylonese tradition of doubtful value identifies our author with a king of Ceylon, named Kumāradhātusena or Kumāradāsa (circa 517-26 A.D.), son of Maudgalāyana. Even if the identity is questioned,⁴ the poet’s fame was certainly widely spread in the 10th century; for the author of the Kāvyāmīmāṃsā (p. 12) refers to the tradition of the poet’s being born

¹ Reconstructed and edited (with the Sinhalese Sanna), cantos i-xv and one verse of xxv, by Dharmarama Sthavira, in Sinhalese characters, Colombo 1891; the same prepared in Devāṅgari, by Haridas Sastri, Calcutta 1893; i-x, ed. G. R. Nandargikar, Bombay 1907 (the ed. utilises some Devāṅgāri Ms, but most of these appear to owe their origin to the Sinhalese source); xvi, ed. L. D. Barnett from a Malayālam Ms in BSOS, IV, p. 285f. (Roman text), to which addl. readings furnished from a Madras Ms by S. K. De in BSOS, IV, p. 611f.
² Rhys Davids in JRAS, 1888, pp. 148-49.
³ The stanza pungingly states that no one, save Kumāradāsa, would dare celebrate the abduction of Sitā (Jānakī-haraṇa) when Rāghuvarṣa was current, as no one but Rāvana would dare accomplish the deed when Rāghu’s dynasty existed.
⁴ Keith in JRAS, 1901, p. 578f. Nandargikar, Kumāradāsa and his Place in Skt. Lit., Poona 1908, argues for a date between the last quarter of the 8th and the first quarter of the 9th century A. D., which seems quite reasonable. Rājaśekhara (Kāvyā-mīmāṃsā ed. GOS, 1916, p. 26) quotes anonymously Jānakī-haraṇa, xii. 37 (madan navaśāvya).
blind, and Kumāradāsa’s stanzas are quoted in the Sanskrit anthologies dating from about the same time.¹

The entire Sanskrit text of the Jānaki-harana has not yet been recovered, but the Sinhalese literature has preserved a Sanna or word-for-word gloss of the first fourteen cantos and of the fifteenth in part,² which brings the story down to Aṅgada’s embassy to the court of Rāvana. From this gloss it has been possible to piece together a text, which is perhaps not a perfect restoration, but which cannot diverge very far from the original.³ The extent of the original work is not known, but since the gloss also preserves the colophon and the last stanza of canto xxv, giving the name of the work and the author, it is probable that the poem concluded with the theme of Rāma’s coronation apparently handled in this canto. If this is correct, then it is remarkable that Kumāradāsa’s poem exactly coincides, in the extent of its subject-matter, with the work of Bhaṭṭi.⁴ Like the Rāvana-vadha, again, the Jānaki-harana suffers from a banal theme derived from the Epic, although Kumāradāsa’s object and treatment are entirely different. In the handling of the story, Kumāradāsa follows his original fairly faithfully; but, for diversity, poetical descriptions and episodes are freely introduced. In the first canto, for instance, a picture of Ayodhyā, which is rivalled by the account of Mithilā in canto vi, is given, while the sports of Daśaratha

¹ For the citations see Thomas, Kos. pp. 34-36. Kṣemendra in his Aucitya-vicāra (ad 24) wrongly ascribes a stanza to Kumāradāsa, of which one foot is already quoted by Patañjali. Whether the poet knew the Kāśikā (circa 650 A.D.) is debatable (see Thomas in JRAS, 1901, p. 266); and Vāmanā’s prohibition (v. 1.5) of the use of khalu has no particular reference to Kumāradāsa. These and such other references are too indefinite to admit of any decisive inference.

² The Madras Ms existing in the Govt. Orient. Ms Library, contains twenty cantos, but it is a very corrupt transcript of an unknown original, and it is not known how far it is derived ultimately from the Sinhalese Sanna. The last verse of the Ms describes Kumāradāsa as king of Ceylon and son of Kumāramaṇi.


⁴ For an analysis of the poem, see the article of Thomas, cited above.
and his wives in the garden are described in canto iii. We have a fine description of the rainy season in canto xi, while the next canto matches it with a picture of autumn. In most of these passages the influence of Kālidāsa is transparent. Daśaratha's lecture to Rāma on the duties of kingship has no counterpart in Kālidāsa's poems; but the appeal to Viṣṇu in canto ii, the description of spring in canto iii, the entire canto viii on the dalliance of Rāma and Sītā after marriage, and Sītā's lovelorn condition (Pūrva-rāga) before marriage in the preceding canto, inevitably remind one of similar passages and episodes in Kālidāsa's two poems. But these digressions are neither too prolix nor too numerous, and the interest of the narrative is never lost. In this respect Kumāradāsa follows the manner of Kālidāsa rather than that of Bhāravi, and has none of the leisurely and extended scale of descriptive and erotic writing which prevails in the later Mahākāvyas.

The incomplete and not wholly satisfactory recovery of Kumāradāsa's work makes it difficult to make a proper estimate; but the remark is not unjust that the Jānakī-haraṇa, as a poem, is more artificial than the Raghu-vamśa and the Kumāra-sambhava, perhaps more than the Kirātārjuniya, but it does not approach, in content, form and diction, the extravagance of the later Kāvya. Some of Kumāradāsa's learned refinements take the form of notable grammatical and lexicographical peculiarities, and of a decided love for circumlocution, alliteration and dainty conceits, but none of these propensities take an undue or elaborate prominence. His metrical skill is undoubted, but like Kālidāsa in his two longer poems, he prefers short musical metres and does not seek the profusion or elaboration of shifting or recondite rhythmic forms. Although Kumāradāsa has a weakness for the pretty and the grandiose, which sometimes strays into the ridiculous, he is moderate in the use of poetic figures; there is some play upon words, but no complex puns.

1 The only uncommon, but minor, metre is Avitathā.

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Although Kumāradāsa’s poem furnishes easy and pleasant reading, his poetic power is liable to be much overrated. The compliment which ranks him with Kālidāsa, no doubt, perceives some superficial similarity, but Kumāradāsa’s originality in treatment, idea and expression is considerably impaired by his desire to produce a counterfeit. Possessed of considerable ability, he both gains and loses by coming after Kālidāsa. He has a literary tradition, method and diction prepared for him for adroit employment, but he has not the genius to rise above them and strike out his own path. With inherited facility of execution, he loses individuality and distinction. Kumāradāsa is a well-bred poet who follows the way of glittering, but not golden, poetic mediocrity: he is admirable but not excellent, learned but not pedantic, neat but not overdressed, easy but not simple. He has a gift of serviceable rhetoric and smooth prosody, but he is seldom brilliant and outstanding. He has a more than competent skill of pleasing expression, but he lacks the indefinable charm of great poetry. It is not easy to feel as much enthusiasm for Kumāradāsa as for Bhāravi; but it is not just on that account to deny to him a fair measure, though by comparison, of the extraordinarily diffused poetic spirit of the time.

d. Māgha

The usually accepted date for Māgha is the latter part of the 7th century A.D. The approximation is reached by evidence which is not altogether uncontestable; but what is fairly certain is that the lower terminus of his date is furnished by the quotation from his poem by Vāmana and Ānandavardhana1 at the end of the 8th and in the middle of the 9th century A.D. respectively,

1 Dhvanyāloka, ed. NSP, 1911, Second Uddyota, pp 114, 115 = Śiṣu v. 26 and iii. 53. A little earlier (end of the 8th century) Vāmana quotes from Māgha (Śiṣu i. 12, 15 = Kāyāl. v. 1.10, v. 2.10; x. 21 = v. 1. 13; xiv. 14 = iv. 3.8). Mukulabhaṭṭa in his Abhidhā-ṛtti-mārskā (ed. NSP, Bombay 1916, p. 11) similarly quotes Śiṣu iii. 33 anonymously.


and the upper terminus by the very likely presumption that he is later than Bhāravi whom he appears to emulate. There are five stanzas appended to Māgha's poem which give, in the third person, an account of his family, and which are commented upon by Vallabhadeva, but not by Mallinātha. From these verses we learn that Māgha's father was Dattaka Sarvāśraya, and his grandfather Suprabhadeva was a minister of a king named Varmala. An attempt has been made to identify this Varmala (v.l. Varmalāta, Dharmanābha or-nātha and Nirmalāta) with king Varmalāta, of whom an inscription of about 625 A.D. exists. But neither is this date beyond question, nor the identification beyond all doubt.

Like Bhāravi, with whom Māgha inevitably invites comparison, Māgha derives the theme of his Śisupāla-vadha from a well known episode of the Mahābhārata, but the difference of the story, as well as perhaps personal predilection, makes Māgha glorify Kṛṣṇa, in the same way as Bhāravi honours Śiva. At Yudhiṣṭhira's royal consecration, Bhīṣma advises the award of the highest honour to Kṛṣṇa, but Śisupāla, king of the Cedis, raises bitter protest and leaves the hall. In the quarrel which ensues, Śisupāla insults Bhīṣma and accuses Kṛṣṇa of mean

1 See Kielhorn in Göttinger Nachrichten, 1906, pp. 143-46, and in JRAS, 1908, 409f.; R. G. Bhandarkar, Report 1897, pp. xviii, xxxix ; D. R. Bhandarkar in EI, IX, p. 187f.; Pathak in JBRAS, XXIII, pp. 18-31 ; Kane in JBRAS, XXIV, pp. 91-95; D. C. Bhattacharyya in IA, XLVI, 1917, p. 191f.; H. Jacobi in WZKM, III, 1889, pp. 121f., and IV, 1890, p. 236f.; Klatt in WZKM, IV, p. 61f. The minor arguments that Māgha knew the Kālikā or the Nyāsa of Jitendrabuddhi (Śiṣṭa ii. 112), or the Nāgānanda of Harṣa (xx. 44) are, for the indefiniteness of the allusions, hardly worth much. The Jaina legends have been invoked to prove that Māgha was a contemporary of the poet Siddha (about 906 A.D.), but the legends only show that the Jainas made use of famous men in their anecdotes, and nothing more. More worthless is the Bhaja-prabandha account which makes Māgha, as also many other poets, a contemporary of King Bhoja. The legend related in Merutunga's Prabandha-cintāmani is equally useless.

2 Ed. Atmaram Sastri Vetal and J. S. Hosing, with comm. of Vallabhadeva and Mallinātha, Kāshi Skt. Ser. no. 69, 1929 ; ed. Durgaprasad and Sivadatta, NSP, Bombay 1888, 9th ed. 1927, with comm. of Mallinātha only. Trs. into German by E. Hultsch, Leipzig 1929, and in extracts, by C. Cappeller (Bālamāgha), Stuttgart 1915, with text in roman characters.

3 Bomb. ed. ii, 33-45.
tricks, including theft of his affianced bride. Having endured Śiśupāla’s insolence so far, on account of a promise to his mother to bear a hundred evil deeds of her son, Kṛṣṇa now feels that he is relieved of the pledge, and severs the head of Śiśupāla with his discus. The epic story here is even simpler and more devoid of incidents than the episode of Arjuna’s fight with the Kirāta, but it contains a number of rival speeches, which give Māgha an opportunity of poetical excursions into the realm of politics and moralising, vituperation and panegyric. The outline of the epic story is accepted, but its slenderness and simplicity are expanded and embellished, in twenty cantos, by a long series of descriptive and erotic passages deliberately modelled, it seems, upon those of Bhāravi. A variation is introduced in the first canto by the visit of Nārada to Kṛṣṇa at the house of Vasudeva, with a message from Indra regarding the slaying of Śiśupāla; but it has its counterpart in Bhāravi’s poem in the visit of Vyāsa to Yudhiṣṭhira. A similar council of war follows, in which Baladeva advises expedition and Uddhava caution; and the knowledge of statecraft displayed by Uddhava corresponds to that evinced by Bhīma in Bhāravi’s poem. After this, Māgha, like Bhāravi, leaves the narrative and digresses into an even more luxuriant, but disproportionate, mass of descriptive matter extending practically over nine cantos (iv-xii), as against Bhāravi’s seven. Kṛṣṇa’s journey to Indraprastha to attend Yudhiṣṭhira’s consecration and the description of the mount Raivataka, which comes on the way, correspond to Arjuna’s journey and description of the Himalayas; and Māgha wants to surpass Bhāravi in the display of his metrical accomplishment by employing twenty-four different metres in canto iv, as opposed to Bhāravi’s sixteen in canto v. The amours and blandishments of the Apsarases and Gandharvas in Bhāravi are rivelled with greater elaboration and succulence by the amorous frolics of the Yādavas with women of fulsome beauty; and it is remarkable that in some of these cantos Māgha selects the same metres (Praharṣīṇī and Svāgata) as Bhāravi does. Māgha makes a similar, but more
extensive, exhibition of his skill in the over-ingenious construction of verses known as Citra-bandha (canto xix), and follows his predecessor in introducing these literary acrobatics in the description of the battle, although the battle-scenes are depicted, in both cases, by poets who had perhaps never been to a battle-field!

It is clear that the tradition, for once, is probably right in implying that Māgha composed his Śiśupāla-vadha with a view to surpass Bhāravi’s Kirāṭarjunīya by entering into a competition with him on his own ground. The orthodox Indian opinion thinks (with a pun upon their respective names) that Māgha has been able to eclipse Bhāravi completely, and even goes further in holding that Māgha unites in himself Kālidāsa’s power of metaphorical expression, Bhāravi’s pregnancy of thought and Dāṇḍin’s graciousness of diction. While making allowance for exaggeration not unusual in such indiscriminate praise, and also admitting freely that Māgha can never be mentioned lightly by any one who loves Sanskrit poetry, it is difficult for a reader of the present day to share this high eulogy. Māgha’s deliberate modelling of his poem on that of Bhāravi, with the purpose of outdoing his predecessor, considerably takes away his originality, and gives it the appearance of a tremendous effort. He can claim the literary merits of Bhāravi, but he also exaggerates some of Bhāravi’s demerits. In respect of rhetorical skill and exuberance of fancy, Māgha is not unsuccessful, and may have even surpassed Bhāravi; but the remark does not apply in respect of real poetic quality, although it would not be just to deny to him a gift, even by comparison, of real poetry.

But Māgha’s work, though not great, has been distinctly undervalued in modern times, as it was once overvalued. It is

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1 The question of Māgha’s relationship to Bhāravi has been discussed by Jacobi (in WJKM, III, 1889, pp. 121-40) by a detailed examination of the structure of the two poems, their form, content and parallel passages, with the conclusion that Bhāravi’s poem served as a model for that of Māgha. Jacobi (p. 141 f.) further wants to show that Bāna and Subandhu borrowed from Māgha, but the parallelisms adduced are not definite enough to be of much use for chronological or literary purpose.
impossible to like or admire Māgha heartily, and yet there are qualities which draw our reluctant liking and admiration. His careful and conscientious command of rhetorical technique is assured. He has an undoubted power of copious and elegant diction, and his phraseology and imagery often attain a finite, though limited, perfection. His sentences have movement, ease and balance; and the variety of short lyrical metres,¹ which he prefers, gives his stanzas swing and cadence. Māgha himself tells us that a good poet should have regard for sound and sense, and so he cultivates both. Like Bhāravi, he is a lover of harmonic phrases and master of cultivated expression, but he is perhaps more luxuriant, more prone to over-colouring, and more consciously ingenious.² He can attain profundity by a free indulgence in conceit, but he is never abstruse. Fine felicities or brilliant flashes are not sporadic; and Māgha’s faculty of neat and pointed phrasing often rounds off his reflective passages with an epigrammatic charm. He does not neglect sense for mere sound, but the narrative is of little account to him, as to most Kāvya poets; and the value of his work lies in the series of brilliant and highly finished word-pictures he paints. From the hint of a single line in the Epic, he gives an elaborate picture of Yudhiṣṭhira’s consecration; and he must bring in erotic themes which are even less relevant to his subject than that of Bhāravi. In his poetry the Śāṭrīc learning and the rhetorical art of the time come into full flower, but it lacks the flush and freshness of natural bloom. At every step we go, we are stopped to admire some elegant object, like walking in a carefully trimmed garden with a guide. Māgha can make a clever use of his knowledge of grammar, lexicon, statecraft, erotics and poetics; he can pour his fancy into a faultless mould; but it is often an uninspired and uninspiring accomplishment. He would like to raise admiration to its

height in every line, so that in the end the whole is not admirable. Of real passion and fervour he has not much, and he does not suggest much of the supreme charm of the highest poetry; but he has a soft richness of fancy, which often inclines him towards sweetness and prettiness. Like Bhāravi, he is a poet, not of love, but of the art of love; but he can refine the rather indelicate theme of amorous sports with considerable delicacy. It is perhaps not fortuitous that Māgha selects Kṛṣṇa, and not Śiva, as his favourite god. The Indian opinion speaks highly of his devotional attitude, and Bhīṣma’s panegyric of Kṛṣṇa, to which Bhāravi has nothing corresponding, is often praised; but one at once observes here the difference in the temperament of the two poets.

There can be no doubt that Māgha is a poet, but his poetic gift is considerably handicapped by the fact that he is in verse a slave, and a willing slave, to a cut-and-dried literary convention. He appears to possess a great reserve of power, but he never seems to let himself go. He does not choose to seek out an original path for himself, but is content to imitate, and outstrip, if possible, his predecessor by a meretricious display of elaborateness and ingenuity. The sobriquet Ghaṇṭā-Māgha, which he is said to have won by his clever fancy in comparing a hill, set in the midst of sunset and moonrise, to an elephant on whose two sides two bells are hung, is perhaps appropriate in bringing out this characteristic; but it only emphasises his rhetorical quality, which is a different thing from the poetical, although the quaint simile is not a just specimen of what he can do even in the rhetorical manner. Māgha’s extraordinary variety, however, is conditioned by corresponding inequality. His poem is a careful mosaic of the good and the bad of his predecessors, some of whose inspiration he may have caught, but some of whose mannerisms he develops to no advantage. Apart from deliberate absurdities, the appearance of his poetry is generally irreproachable, with its correct make-up, costume and jewellery, but one feels very often that its features are insignificant and its
expression devoid of fire and air. The fancy and vividness of some of his pictures, the brilliancy and finish of his diction make one feel more distinctly what is not there, but of which Māgha is perhaps not incapable. The extent of his influence on his successors, in whose estimation he stands even higher than Kālidāsa and Bhāravi, indicates the fact that it is Māgha, more than Kālidāsa and Bhāravi, who sets the standard of later verse-making; but the immense popularity of his poem also shows that there is always a demand for poetry of a little lower and more artificial kind.

4. The Gnomic, Didactic and Satiric Poems

Although it is difficult to distinguish between gnomic and didactic verse, the two Śatakas of Bhartṛhari on Niti and Vairāgya may be taken as partially typical of the didactic spirit and possessing a higher value than, say, the collection of gnomic stanzas, which pass current under the name of Cāṇakya and contain traditional maxims of sententious wisdom. Of the pronounced didactic type this period does not possess many other specimens than the Śatakas of Bhartṛhari, unless we regard the Moha-mudgara¹ (or Dwādasā-panjariṇā Stotra) as one of the genuine works of the great Śaṁkara. This latter work, however, is a small lyric, rather than didactic, outburst of seventeen stanzas, finely inspired by the feeling of transitoriness of all mortal things; while its moric Pajjhaṭikā metre and elaborate rhyming give a swing and music to its verses almost unknown in Sanskrit, and probably betoken the influence of Apabramaṇa or vernacular poetry. As such, it is doubtful if it can be dated very early, but it is undoubtedly a poem of no small merit.

The gnomic spirit, however, finds expression from remote antiquity in many aspects of Indian literature. Such tersely

¹ Ed. J. Haeberlin in Kāvyasamgraha, Calcutta 1847, p. 263f., reprinted in J. Vidyasagar in Kāvyasamgraha, Calcutta 1888, p. 352; text and trs. by F. Nève in JA, xii, p 607f. For Stotras ascribed to Śaṁkara, see below under ch. VI (Devotional Poetry).
epigrammatic sayings, mostly composed in the Śloka metre, appear in the Niti sections of the two great Epics, in the Purāṇas, in the law-books and in the tales and fables, while some of the earlier moral stanzas occurring in the Brāhmaṇas perhaps helped to establish the tradition in the later non-Sanskritic Buddhist and Jaina literature. But the stanzas are mostly scattered and incidental, and no very early collection has come down to us, although the Mahābhārata contains quite rich masses of them in the Śānti, Anuśāsana, Prajāgara section of the Udyoga and other Parvans. That a large number of such stanzas formed a part of floating literature and had wide anonymous currency is indicated by their indiscriminate appropriation and repetition in various kinds of serious and amusing works mentioned above; but it would be hardly correct to say that they represent popular poetry in the strict sense of the term. They rather embody the quintessence of traditional wisdom, the raw materials being turned into finished literary products, often adopted in higher literaure, or made the nucleus of ever-growing collections. They are of unknown date and authorship, being the wit of one and wisdom of many; but they were sometimes collected together and conveniently lumped upon some apocryphal writer of traditional repute, whether he be Vararuci, Vṛtābhaṭṭa or Cāṇakya. But the collections are often dynamic, the process of addition going on uninterruptedly for centuries and bringing into existence various versions, made up by the stanzas derived from diverse sources. The content of such compilations is thus necessarily varied, the stanzas being mostly isolated but sometimes grouped under particular heads, and embraces not only astute observations on men and things but also a great deal of polity, practical morality and popular philosophy. There is nothing deeply original, but the essential facts of life and conduct are often expressed with considerable shrewdness, epigrammatic wit and wide experience of life. The finish of the verses naturally varies, but the elaborately terse and compact style of expression, sometimes with appropriate antithesis, metaphors and
similes, often produces the pleasing effect of neat and clever rhetoric; and their deliberate literary form renders all theories of popular origin extremely doubtful.

It is unfortunate that most of the early collections are lost while those which exist are undatable; but the one ascribed to Cāṇakya and passed off as the accumulated sagacity of the great minister of Candragupta appears to possess a fairly old traditional nucleus, some of the verses being found also in the Epics and elsewhere. It exists in a large number of recensions, of which at least seventeen have been distinguished, and it is variously known as Cāṇakya-niti, Cāṇakya-śataka, Cāṇakya-niti-darpaṇa, Vṛddha-cāṇakya or Laghu-cāṇakya. The number of verses in each recension varies considerably, but the largest recension of Bhojarāja, in eight chapters, preserved in a Śāradā manuscript, contains 576 verses in a variety of metres, among which the Śloka predominates. Whether the lost original, as its association with Cāṇakya would imply, was a deliberate work on polity is not clear, as the number of verses devoted to this topic in all recensions is extremely limited; but there can be no doubt that, both in its thought and expression, it is one of the richest and finest collections of gnomic stanzas in Sanskrit, many of which must have been derived from fairly old sources.

2 Ed. Mirzapore 1877; also a somewhat different version, ed. Agra 1920, mentioned by Kressler.
4 Ed. Mathuraprasad Misra, Benares 1870; reprinted many times at Benares.
5 Ed. Bombay 1858; trs. by Kressler, op. cit., p. 151 f. It has 340 verses in 17 chapters of equal length.
6 Ed. Agra 1920, as above; also ed. E. Teza (from Galanos Ms), Pisa 1878.
7. The other metres in their order of frequency are: Indravajrā, Sārdūlavikrīḍita, Vasanta-tilaka, Vamśathavila, Śikharinī, Āryā and Sraddhā, besides sporadic Drutavilambita, Puspitāgrā, Pṛthvī, Mandākrānī, Mālinī, Rathoddhata, Vaitāliya, Vaiśvadevi Śālinī and Hariṇī. See Kressler, op. cit., p. 43.
Of satire, or satiric verses in the proper sense, Sanskrit has very little to show. Its theory of poetry and complacent attitude towards life precluded any serious cultivation of this type of literature. Invective, lampoon, parody, mock-heroic or pasquinade—all that the word satire connotes—were outside the sphere of the smooth tenor and serenity of Sanskrit artistic compositions; and even in the farce and comic writing the laughter, mostly connected with erotic themes, is hardly keen or bitter. They may touch our sense of comedy, but rarely our sense of satire, for the arrant fools and downright knaves are objects not of indignant detestation but of mild ridicule. Some amount of vivid realism and satirical portraiture will be found in the early Bhāṇas, as well as in the stories of Daṇḍin, but they seldom reach the proportion and propriety of a real satire.

The earliest datable work of an erotico-comic, if not fully satiric, tendency is the Kuṭṭanī-mata¹ or ‘Advice of a Procuress’ of Dāmodara-gupta, which in spite of its ugly title and unsavoury subject, is a highly interesting tract, almost creating this particular genre in Sanskrit. The author was a highly respectable person, who is mentioned by Kahaṇa as a poet and minister of Jayāpiḍa of Kashmir (779-813 A.D.), and the fact that his work is quoted extensively in the Anthologies, as well as by Mammaṭa, Hemacandra and others, bears testimony to its high literary reputation. The theme is slight. A courtesan of Benares, named Mālatī, unable to attract lovers, seeks advice of an old and experienced bawd, Vikarālā, who instructs her to ensnare Cintāmani, son of a high official, and describes to her in detail the cunning art of winning love and gold. To strengthen her discourse, Vikarālā narrates the story of the courtesan Hāralatā and her lover Sudarṣana, in which the erotic and the pathetic sentiments intermingle, as well as the

¹ Ed. Durgaprasad in Kāvyamālā, Gucchaka iii, NSP, Bombay 1887; but with ampler materials, ed. Tapanukham Manassukhram Tripatii, with a Sanskrit commentary, Bombay 1924. Trs. into German by J. J. Meyer, Leipzig 1903.
tale of the dancing girl Mañjari and king Samarabhaṭa of Benares, in which Mañjari gives an enactment of Harṣa's Ratnāvali and succeeds by her beauty and blandishments to win much wealth from the prince and leave him impoverished. With graceful touches of wit and humour, delicate problems in the doctrine of love are set forth; and in spite of the obvious grossness of its dangerous content, the work does not lack elegance of treatment, while the characters, though not wholly agreeable, are drawn with considerable skill and vividness from a direct observation of certain social types. The pictures are doubtless heightened, but they are in all essentials true, and do not present mere caricatures. The chief interest of the work lies in these word-pictures, and not in the stories, which, though well told, are without distinction, nor in the subject-matter, which, though delicately handled, is not above reproach.

Although the Kuṭṭani-mata displays a wide experience of men and things, it is based undoubtedly upon a close study of the art of Erotics, the Vaiśika Upacāra or Vaiśikī Kalā, elaborated by Vātsyāyana and Bharata for the benefit of the man-about-town and the courtesan; but, on this ground, to reject it lightly as mere pornography is to mistake the real trend of the lively little sketch. There is indeed a great deal of frankness, and even gusto, in describing, in no squeamish language, the art and mystery of satisfying the physical woman; and the heroines of the stories are made the centres of coarse intrigues. Modern taste would perhaps regard all this as foul and fulsome; but there is no proof of moral depravity. On the contrary, the moral depravity, perhaps of his own times (as we learn from Kahlana), is openly and amusingly depicted by the author, not with approval, but with object of making it look ludicrous. As in most comic writings in Sanskrit, the erotic tendency prevails, and there is not much direct satire. But, even if his scope is narrow, Dāmodaragupta is a real humourist, who does not seek to paint black as white but leaves the question of black and white for the most part alone. At the
conclusion of his poem, he tells us that any one who reads it will not fall victim to the deceit of rogues, panderers, and procuresses; but his work is not a mere guide-book for the blind, the weak and the misguided. It is a work of art in which there is no didactic moralising, but which is characterised by direct and animated, but not merciless, painting of droll life, essentially of the higher grades of society. The poet sees two kinds of men in all walks of life—rogues and fools; but he neither hates the one nor despises the other. The result is comedy rather than satire, not virtuous indignation but entertaining exposure of human frailty. Dāmodaragupta is a perfect artist in words and also a poet; and the facetious style, couched in slow-moving and serious Āryā stanzas, is elegantly polished, yet simple and direct in polite banter and power of gentle ridicule. There is hardly anywhere any roughness or bitterness; and the witty, smooth and humorous treatment makes the work unique in Sanskrit. If the atmosphere is squalid, it is not depressing, but amusing. Dāmodaragupta is daring enough to skate on thin ice, but he has balance and lightness to carry him through; and if his onset is not biting, it is not entirely toothless. That the extraordinary coarseness of his subject never hindered the popularity of his work with men of taste and culture is a tribute to its innate literary merit. But we shall see that later authors like Kṣemendra, also a Kashmirian, in trying to imitate him without his gifts, lapsed into bald realism, acrid satire or unredeemed vulgarity. The difficult type of literature, thus inaugurated, had great possibilities, but it never developed properly in Sanskrit.