WOMEN IN SANSKRIT DRAMAS

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with a foreword by
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Foreword

I have read with pleasure and much absorbing interest Dr. Mrs. Ratnamayidevi Dikshit's thesis on Women in Sanskrit Dramas. It has impressed me as a scholarly work dealing with women characters of Sanskrit plays. This work does credit to her not only as a diligent and pains-taking researcher in the field but also as a competent writer. Drama forms an important section of Sanskrit literature and characterisation in the same is the fundamental and lasting element. The interests which keep drama alive are characters, male and female. Dr. Dikshit has chosen women characters of Sanskrit dramas for her study. In the course of her study, she has examined the conception of women in their various spheres as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. She has shown at length how the divinity of the Indian woman travelled to a low ebb and its subsequent revival. Besides, in a short chapter Dr. Dikshit has given a critical appreciation of the origin and development of Sanskrit Dramas and also in the course of the whole thesis a vivid and lucid account of their growth, decay and revival.

The book is a very useful and a welcome addition to our knowledge of Indian Women through the ages in general and women characters of Sanskrit plays in particular. We also get glimpses into the cultural and social life of ancient, medieval and modern times in India. I am confident Dr. Dikshit's work will be welcomed by all scholars and lovers of Sanskrit studies. I heartily congratulate the author.

December 1, 1964.

—N. N. Chaudhuri
PREFACE

The quintessence of literature is to represent life in a realistic perspective. And life, as a social concept, is much influenced by woman. This abstraction is deliberately used; for women indeed are the organizing and moderating nucleus, around which society in its human aspect revolves.

This thesis, as the title shows, does not only consist of an historical and literary study, but has a certain social pertinence too. It aims at an evaluation of the position of women based on their portrayal in the various Sanskrit plays.

This is an attempt at description, analysis and evaluation of women's character and their position in Indian society from the days of old to the present. This is not a mere study of literature from the aesthetic or literary point of view, but an effort to reach life, the society—woman in society—through literature. In other words, this is a voyage of discovery to understand and realize the Indian womanhood in its representative character as depicted in the Sanskrit dramas. For this purpose, as many Sanskrit dramas were studied as could be laid hands on in the book-shops as well as many an important library of Sanskrit manuscripts. To supplement the study by comparison and contrast, numerous plays in the modern Indian languages, e.g., Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati and Malayalam were gone through. Books on dramaturgy and literary criticism in some of these languages and in English could not but be consulted or studied extensively. Sanskrit books of course invariably served as the bed-rack.

The first chapter deals with the origin of Sanskrit drama, its course of development and the relative theories found in the Sanskrit dramaturgy. After setting forth the background in preambles, it is sought to embark upon the study of the subject proper, dealing with the women characters in general. Incidentally, the question as to who played these feminine roles and what was the significance and effect of the related directives and regulations are also discussed. An examination of the corroboration of the above-mentioned analysis in the plays available is followed up. For this purpose, the available Sanskrit plays are divided into six groups on the basis of the discussion that precedes. The division is as follows—
1. The pre-Kālidāsa writers,
2. Kālidāsa.
3. Play-wrights from Kālidāsa to Bhavabhūti.
4. Play-wrights from Bhavabhūti to Jayadeva.
5. The later writers upto the 19th century.
6. The modern Sanskrit play-wrights.

The cumulative analysis and evaluation of the women characters begin with the second chapter. One chapter is devoted to each group. Then follows a chapter in which the archaeological and iconographical evidences have been examined. One chapter is devoted to estimating the trend of the plays written in the modern Indian languages in general and to getting a bird’s eye-view of the influence of the Sanskrit plays over the women characters depicted in them by writers closer to our times or still living and contributing their mite to the multifold literary wealth of the country as a whole.

As pointed out in the beginning, the main aim of this study is to assess the position of women as depicted in the Sanskrit dramas. The evaluative opinion arrived at, is characterized by contrast more than by comparison, by analysis more than by assertion. Thus one re-discovers the truism that women enjoyed a much more potential and influential position in the classical period than in the later days.

There is a sceptic jeer that drama is legendary and legends are no evidence. But even a legend has a social content, the proverbial grain of truth, which can hardly be denied. Hence the conclusion arrived at cannot be dismissed as baseless. Being primarily a literary project, this treatise admits of no pretensions on the part of the author of having made a comparative sociological study of the position of women in ancient India. Yet, literature, being life sublimated to language, has its relations to the social realities. So the opinions expressed need no apology apart from the explanations and justifications proffered in the discussions of various points.

While the depiction of contemporary women in Sanskrit drama by the play-wrights of what may be called the mediaeval period cause negative feelings, if not casts a gloom over the mind, it is impossible not to acknowledge the gallant efforts made by the play-wrights of the 19th and 20th centuries at bringing the concept of Aryan womanhood to the fore-front once more. The depiction by the modern writers of heroines like Draupadī, Sāvitrī and Damayanti in their true spirit, and the choice of historical figures for their themes, give evidence enough of their aims and intentions. The resurgent influence of this trend is recognized.

It is said that knowledge is assertive about its knowing and wisdom is humble about its relative ignorance. The latter truth is humbly
acknowledged and no claim is laid to the final validity of the opinions expressed; for the spirit of humility and honesty and sincerity of purpose have been the main guiding lights throughout this study. But if the opinions expressed provoke further study and analysis, the purpose of this attempt will have been amply served. For, achievement is not completion; it consists of constant evolution.

My deepest gratitude is due to my revered Guru, professor N. N. Chaudhuri, M. A., D. Litt., the Head of the Sanskrit Department of the University of Delhi, who has ably guided me through the thick and thin of this venture. Without his utmost patience, consideration and kindness and his consistent encouragement, guidance, advice and instructions, this work would or could never have reached its completion. It is his alertness in procuring the newly published plays, in directing me rightly, in checking me at every wrong step and in encouraging the smallest spark of originality that lurked in the study, that has made possible the inclusion of so much material in this thesis. It is impossible for me to thank him enough for all that he has done to help me.

The officials of the Delhi University Library, specially of the Sanskrit Section, deserve no less thanks. But for their sympathetic co-operation, much of the information I have been able to gather, would not have been possible at all.

Special mention must be made here of the Authorities of the Banaras Hindu University Library, who were kind enough to lend me the only available copy of the Kaumudimahotsava.

The Authorities of the Archaeological Department, New Delhi, cannot be thanked adequately for all the help they tendered to me by making available the various reference books, manuscripts and other material. The help of Shri Parab in this respect was invaluable.

Shri G. Sivaramamurti, Superintendent of the Rashtrapati Bhavan Museum and noted scholar and author not only lent his valuable books, but also helped in fixing the dates of the pictures given in the appendix and in removing many a doubt. His help was invaluable and it is difficult to thank him enough.

My sincere thanks are due to Messrs. Meharchand Lachhman Das for their untiring efforts to make this book a success.

—Ratnamayidevi Dikshit
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ABBREVIATIONS

Ab. Š., Ab. S.—Abhijñānaśākuntalam
Ab. N.—Abhiṣekanāṭakaṁ
A. D.—Adbhuta-darpaṇa
Ad. R.—Adhyātma-rāmāyaṇa
A. M.—Amara-maṅgalam
A. m.—Amṛtādayam
An. R.—Anargha-rāghavam
A. Ch.—Āścarya-cūḍāmani
Arth.—Arthaśāstra
Ash.—Aṣṭādhyāyī
do.
Ba. bh.—Bāla-bhāratam
Ba. R.—Bāla-rāmāyaṇaṁ
Bh. G.—Bhagavad-gīta
Bh. P.—Bhāgavat-purāṇa
Bh. Su.—Bhakta-sudarśanam
Bh. H. N.—Bhartṛhari-nirvedaṁ
Bh K. S.—Bhūmi-kanyā Sītā
Br. Sam.—Brhat-samhitā
B. D. P.—Brhatadharmapurāṇaṁ
Ch. Ta.—Canda-tāṇḍavam
Chh. Sa.—Chhatrapati-sāmrājyaṁ
Chh. Śa.—Chhāyā-śākuntalam
D. R.—Daśarūpakam
Dh. Ā.—Dhvanyāloka
D. G.—Dūta-ghaṭotkacacam
D. A.—Dūtaṇgadām
D. Va.—Dūtavākyam
H. C.—Harṣacaritam
Hit.—Hitopadesaṁ
Ka.—Kādambarī
Katha.—Kathāsaritsāgaram
K. V.—Kaṁsavadham
Kau. M.—Kaumudi-Mahotsavam
Kr. N. P.—Kṛṣakāṇām-nāgapāśam
K. S.—Kumārasambhavam
K. M., Ku. ma.—Kundamālā
Li. P.—Līngapurāṇam
M. Vy.—Madhyama-vyāyogam
Ma, Bha., Ma. Bh., M. Bh.—Mahābhāratam
M. Bh.—Mahābhāṣyam
M. C., M. V. Ch.—Mahāvīrācaritam
M. M.—Mālati-mādhavam
M. A., Ma. Ag.—Mālavikāgnimitram
Manu.—Manusmṛti
Megh. Purva.—Meghadūtam—Purva
Mrch., Mrchh.—Mrchhakaṭikam
Mu. Ra.—Mudrā-rākṣasam
Na. Da.—Nala-damayantīyam
N. V.—Nalavilāsam
N. M. S.—Nāradiya-manu-saṁhitā
N. D.—Nāṭyadarpaṇam
N. S.—Nāṭyaśāstram
P. P., Padma.—Padma-purāṇam
P. Ra.—Pancarātram
P. Sm.—Parāśara Smṛti
Pa. Va.—Parivartanam
Pr. R.—Prasannarāghavam
Pr. Ra.—Prasānta-ratnakaram
Pr. Yau.—Pratijñā-Yougandharāyaṇam
Pratimā.—Pratimā-nāṭakam
P. Ch.—Puranjanacaritam
Pu. Ra.—Puruṣa-ramaṇīyam
R. V.—Raghuvaṁśam
R. V.—Ṛgveda
R. P.—Rukminipaṇiṇiyanam
S. D.; Sa. D.—Sāhitya Darpanam
Sa.—Sāmavatam
Sa. M.—Samvādamālā
S. R. B., S. R. Bh.—Subhāṣitaratnaviṣādvīpa
Sa. Sw.—Śāmyogita-śrayanamvaram
Ś.—Śārviloka
Sa. N.—Śāvitrī-nāṭakam
S. K., S. Kau.—Śiddhānta-Kaumudī
Ś. Ch.—Śivāji-caritam
Śk. P.—Skanda-Purāṇam
Śv. Va., S. V.—Śvapnaśāsavadattam
Ta. V.—Tāpasa-vatsaraṇam
Ud. D.—Udgātr-daśānanam
Un. Ra.—Unmatta-rāghavam
Ū. Bh.—Ūrubhaṅgam
U. R. Ch., U. R.—Uttara-rāma-caritam
V. R.—Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam
V. P.—Vangīya-Pratāpam
V. S.—Veni-saṁhāram
V. M.—Vidagṛha-Mādhavam
Vi. Sa. Bh.—Viddha-śāla-bhañjikā
Vi. Vi.—Vidhi-viparyyāsam
V. P.—Vidyā-pariṇāyam
V. U.—Vikramorvasīyam
V. V.—Viṇā-Vāsavadattā
V. Mo.—Viśva Mohanam
V. Bh.—Vṛṣabhānuja
Vy. Vi.—Vyakti-viveka
Yoga. Va., Yog. V.—Yoga-Vāsiṣṭham
CHAPTER 1

SANSKRIT DRAMAS: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

A full history of the gradual development of India’s social life and literature covering her entire past would have provided the most proper background for any study of this type. Then it would have been possible to examine the women-characters of each play in the framework of their own age and times. But, as every student of social sciences knows, such a history yet remains to be written and hence other makeshift arrangements have to be sought. The alternative is the more strenuous, albeit the less satisfactory, one of trying to reconstruct such a history from the available literary material. Against this resuscitated historical set-up, each play is to be viewed afresh from a new vantage-point. This being the case, before going to the main theme of the study, it is only proper that we attempt to trace the origin and development of Sanskrit dramas from the earliest possible times.

Drama forms an important section of Sanskrit literature. A general study of the available Sanskrit dramas convinces the student that its technique, both literary and dramatic, had attained a high degree of excellence from early times. Based on high and noble principles, the Sanskrit plays, with their highly developed art and technique, are able to stand comparison with the dramas of any other literature, ancient or modern. We can unhesitatingly assert that the Greek and Roman theatres, even in their height of glory, have not staged better dramas than the Śākuntala of Kālidāsa, or the Mṛcchakatika of Śūdraka. We come upon
the Sanskrit drama in its full-fledged form, and the existent dramatic literature does not give an adequate idea as to its origin or development. Still there is enough material which can point to some definite conclusions.

In no country it is possible to trace the origin of the drama back to any single source. In the west, they trace the origin of their drama to Greece. It is said that the religious representations of the Greek people grew to an art by itself, and became the mother of the modern European dramatic art. According to Aristotle, tragedy arose from the leaders of Dithyramb just as comedy did from the leaders of Phallic songs, and it is these formal ritualistic dances and music that combined with the popular forms of enjoyment to make the Greek drama. In England also, the origin of the drama is not traced to one source. The religious elements such as the mystery plays, church liturgies and the morality plays were the factors which later on combined with the popular mimes and farcical episodes to develop into the artistic plays of today.

Working on this analogy, a few scholars have tried to prove that Sanskrit drama also had its origin in religious solemnities and spectacles. Keith thinks that a popular mime might have existed to which the epic lent a helping hand in forming the Sanskrit drama. Ridgeway, after discussing at length the various theories advanced in this connection, arrives at the conclusion that the Hindu dramas arose out of the primitive rites to honour the dead. Professor Weber supposes that the Sanskrit drama had its beginnings influenced by the Greeks, though he could not trace any internal connection between the two.

All these opinions seem to be far-fetched. Whatever may be the merits or defects of the Sanskrit drama, it may be safely asserted that it had unmistakably an indigenous origin.

The very fact that the Indian theatre had already come into existence by the sixth century B.C. is enough to show that it could not have had a Greek origin. For, no historical records point to any cultural relations between the Greeks and the Hindus before the invasion of Alexander in the 3rd
century B.C. Further, the Sanskrit drama belongs to the type described as romantic by modern critics, while the Greek plays belong to the classical type. In fact, the two belong to different schools quite alien to each other in construction, taste and sentiment.

In all likelihood, the germs of Sanskrit dramatic representations are to be sought for in the public exhibitions of dancing, referred to in the Vedas themselves. A study of the Vedic literature goes to show that originally dancing was concerned with rhythmic steps only, and was later accompanied by appropriate bodily movements also. We hear of a special institution in the Vedic age called Sabhā or Samiti, where matters concerning the clan were regularly discussed. They might have served as centres of entertainment and cultural pursuits as well. It is true that drama was not known in those days and no reference to theatres or plays is found anywhere in the Vedic literature. But there are many dialogues spread all over the Vedic and Upanishadic literature. The dialogues between Saramā and Panīś1, Yama and Yamī2, Indra and Varuṇa3, Purūravas and Urvāśī4, are a few examples. There are proofs to show that some kind of mimicry also existed as pastime among the people. Historical records relating to ancient India make it quite clear that, from the remotest times, Indians were keen enthusiasts of music. Thus we see there is much of dancing, singing, dialogue and mimicry, existing as separate elements in the Vedic age itself. It is quite possible that all these gradually mingled together and adjusted themselves to constitute the various types of Sanskrit dramas. The story about the creation of the Nāṭyaveda, found in the Nāṭyaśāstra, goes far to support the above conclusion.

The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata is the earliest work known to us on dramaturgy. In this work, every thing is classified

1. R. V. X. 108  
2. R. V. X. 10  
3. R. V. IV. 42  
4. R. V. X. 95
and catalogued in detail: forms of drama, types of characters, their qualities, sentiments, gestures to express the various feelings, modes of dress, method of acting and many other things. This induces one to conjecture that Bharata was drawing upon a living stage which was catering to the full satisfaction of the learned public of the day. And undoubtedly this work on dramaturgy is of a much earlier date than any work on poetics. Scholars, after much discussion and deliberation, attribute Bharata to the second century A.D.

Long before this period, we have references to Nāṭa, Nāṭya and Nāṭaka. There is a reference to the Naṭaśūtras, in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī where Śīlāli and Kṛṣṇaśva are cited as the authors of the same. The Naṭaśūtras are defined by the great grammarian as the rules followed by the Naṭas. But it is not known whether the word Naṭa refers to an actor or a dancer. In any case, by the time of Patanjali, the word had come to mean an actor, as could be inferred from a reference to the women-actors. Moreover, Patanjali refers to Kāmsavadha and Bālibandha in the course of his discussions about using present tense in describing past events. These references clearly indicate the existence of plays and actors when he wrote. Pāṇini dates back to the sixth century B.C. and Patanjali to the second century B.C. Hence, we are justified in concluding that Nāṭa and Nāṭaka must have come into being not later than the fifth century B.C.

The expression of ideas in the form of dialogues

1. पारारायणविवाहित्रम् मिह्यु नट यूत्योऽः, पारारायण प्रोक्तं मिह्युसुत्रमधीयते | पारारायणीभवं | शैलालिनीनांता: || Ash: 4. 3. 110
कर्मदक्षकार्शिनिः मिह्यु नटसूत्रयोरित्येत। कर्मदक्षेत कर्मदक्षीनो भिलावः। कुशालालिनो नाता: || 4. 3. 111

2. नदानां क्षियो रंगं गता यो य: पृष्ठ्यति कस्य यूर्यं कस्य गृहिमिति ते । ते तव तव इत्यादी: || M. Bh. 3. 2. 111

3. वे तावदेते शोभमिका नामेते प्रस्यकं कसं धातयान्ति, प्रस्यकं वालि वन्ध-वन्तीति || M. Bh. 3. 1. 126
is familiar not only in the Vedas, but also in the Aranyakas and the Upaniṣads. Later on, the great epics and Purāṇas contain much in the form of conversations. Perhaps in the epic recitations, the reciter accompanied the narration with gestures and songs to make it more effective and impressive. The greater appreciation shown by the audience must have given a clue to the earlier dramatist as to the immense possibilities of dramatizing the same stories. The very ideal of literature is to combine instruction with enjoyment. Drama, the cream of literature, is most suited to fulfil this aim. The Creator said to the sage Bharata, “This Nātya, portraying the acts of good, bad and indifferent people, will be a counsellor as to what is good in general. This being the reflection of the activities of the various people, will be an instructor, as it were, giving them advice, making them wise, good and longlived.”

Though much has been said and written about the Sanskrit drama, still it is not easy to determine the precise stages of its evolution. But we have enough material to draw upon, in order to reach a fairly correct conclusion about how the height was reached. The Nātyaśāstra of Bharata is the main authority to which we look for support. Taking the speech from the Rgveda, music from the Sāmaveda, action from the Yajurveda, and sentiments from the Atharvaveda, Brahmā is said to have created the fifth Veda—the dramatic art. Following up this story, we are able to gather much information about the course of development and also other details.

1. उत्तमायममध्यानां नराणां कर्मसंबंधयम् । हितोपदेशाजननं वृत्ति श्रीदा
   सुखादिक्षु ॥ धर्मं यशस्यमायुष्यं हितं बुद्धिविवर्णम् । लोकोपदेशाजननं
   नात्मयेतंदूरिृत्तिः ॥ N. S. I. 113-115

2. जप्रायास्यमुमुकेश्वरू सामेन्द्रो गीतमेव च ।
   यजुवर्दिनयावि रसानाधिकां दिपि ॥
   वेदोपवेदें संबंधो नात्मवेदो महात्मना ।
   एवं भगवतं समृद्धं प्रहर्गं सर्वं वोणिना ॥ N. S. I. 17-18
Even though the Nātyaśāstra is said to have been created by Brahmā himself and taught by him to Bharata, there were many obstacles cropping up one by one in the staging of the plays. First and foremost came the opposition of the asuras who thought that the choice of Indravijaya as the theme to be acted, was an insult to them. So, they created many obstacles during the performance. To overcome this, the theatre was built by Viśvakarmā according to the advice of Brahmā, and many protective rituals were performed. The enraged asuras also were pacified by Brahma. After this, the play Amṛtamanthana was enacted successfully. Another play Tripuradāhā was staged with Lord Śiva as the chief guest. Pleased by this spectacular entertainment, He presented to them another equipment to add to the beauty of the art. He taught the art of Dance to Tandu, one of Bharata's sons, who became the preceptor to others. When dance was included in the performances, a fresh difficulty arose. Among the hundred sons of Bhatata, there was none who could present the lāṣya type of dance and the Kaiśiki Vṛtti which manifest the soft, sweet and beautiful side of the art. Once again Brahmā came to the rescue and the proper personages were created for the purpose.

All these details are very significant in themselves

1. योज्यं भगवता सृष्टो नाटपवेदः सुरेश्च्या।
   प्रत्यादेशोज्यमस्माकं सुरार्यं भवता कृतः॥ N. S. I. 103
2. N. S. I. 66-98
3. N. S. I. 101-120
4. ततोऽस्मृतो भगवता योजयामृगतमयनं॥
   ततस्मृतो समवकारे तु प्रमुखे देवदानवः।
   हृष्टा: सममवनव सवं कर्मभाववातर्यानातः॥ N. S. IV. 2-4
5. पूर्वरेण कृतं पूर्वं तत्रायं विजतसम्माः।
   तथा निपुरदाहश्रेष्ठममाण्डः प्रयोजितं॥ N. S. I.
6. N. S. IV. 11-266
and they help the student in tracing the course of development of Sanskrit drama, as we shall presently see.

Drama is regarded by Bharata as the art of reproduction by imitation. Brahmā defines the word Nātya thus, “as the whole universe is represented by suitable actions here, it is called Nātya.”¹ Consistently with this idea, Dhanañjaya defines Nātya as the reproduction of situation in his Daśarūpaka. He further adds, “as the various actors are given visible forms, a drama is called Rūpaka.”²

Nātyadarpana also explains the word Nāṭaka more or less in the same way³. Man enjoys mimicry from his earliest childhood. He learns from imitation. Imitating others and modifying the original as suited to himself, he forms his own life. So, there is nothing more suitable than a drama to tell the man what is right and what is wrong. The advantage of the dramatist lies in the fact that he can attract all kinds of people, big and small, rich and poor, learned and illiterate alike. It is said in the Nāṭyaśāstra that even the tired and sorrow-stricken get relief in witnessing a play.⁴ This is the statement of a psychologist who has observed the world in all its phases. It is this view that has been accepted by the Indian dramatists. Accordingly, imitation became the main element in the dramatic art.

The first play staged by Bharata’s disciples immediately after the creation of the Nāṭyaveda was the Ini'ravijaya, an imitation of the victory of the devas over the asuras

1. योध्य स्वभावो लोकस्य मुखः लक्षमणविचित्।
   सोद्धः भाविनयोपसेतो नाटयमित्रयभिषियतेः।
   II N. S. I.

2. प्रवस्य अनुक्रितानं तथा हस्तवत्योपच्चयते।
   हस्तकं तत्संसारपातु। D. R. p. 8

3. नाटकमिति—नाटविति विचित्रं, रखनावं प्रवेशेन पात्राणि सम्यन्त्वं हस्तवं
   नरवति इति नाटकम्। N. D.

4. दुःखार्तनां भ्रातां शोकार्तनां तपस्विनाम्।
   विश्रान्तिजनं काले नाटपेतमथ्यात्मकः। II N. S. I. 114
The very wording of the description, "the imitation of how the asuras were defeated by the devas", has its own story to tell. It was only an imitation of what actually happened. All the Devas were very much pleased at the performance, and every one of them gave something or the other to the actors as presents, which were the various equipments useful for the stage and the actors. At this time, goddess Sarasvatī is said to have given to this visual entertainment the quality of being heard also. This obviously suggests the advent of literary talents to help the actors, so to say.

There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that the first plays were staged in the open air, where they were accessible to attacks and disturbances from outsiders. Naturally the necessity of a well-planned theatre was felt, and slowly the theatre came into existence. The main sentiment depicted in the Indravijaya was enmity—dveṣa—and it was full of feuds, battles and other calamities. This, along with the absence of female-characters, supports the view that it represented the first stage of the dramatic art.

The story of the attack by the Asuras and the consequent building of the theatre leads us on to the next stage. The plays enacted after the pacification of the Asuras were Amrtamanthana and Tripuradāha, belonging to the types called Samavakāra, and Dima respectively. The description of these, as given by Bharata, shows almost the same characteristics as the first play, except for the specific inclusion of

1. तदनेनुक्तिबंध्य यथा दैव्या: सुरूजिता: I N. S. I. 57
2. शायतं देवनारायणस्य देवी देवी हरस्वती II N. S. I. 61
3. संपूर्त विद्रवं कृता द्वेषे भेद्भाषाभाषारिमका II N. S. I. 58
4. सम्बांकाः देवाकुर्ब स्वर्गकुः प्राक्षातोदालनायकश्चव II भाष्करत्लय स्वर्गकुः निवर्गत: स्वाविश्वश्रृङ्गार:। 
   ध्रुव्य नायको भूतह धार्मिकांकां परमाण: II N. S. XVIII. 114–115
5. प्रस्तात वस्तुक्षिप्य: प्रस्तातोदालनायकश्चव। 
   ध्रुव्यशंकिण्युक्तातुरुस्त्रोवङ्किम: कायम: II N. S. XVIII. 136
the three types of erotic sentiments, and the suggestion of having as few women-characters as possible. Another point worthy of notice is that, at this time the plays staged are not only cited by their names, but the types to which they belonged also are mentioned. It seems the literary talents combining with fertile imagination had created various kinds of plays, which warranted certain classifications also by this time.

The addition of dance, gift of Lord Śiva, to the theatrical representations seems to mark another step in the forward march of this art. The science of acting was complete in its necessary items and dance was not felt needed either to clarify the meanings or the expressions. Doubts arose in the minds of the spectators as to the utility of this new item, and they are voiced in the question of the sages to Bharata. He answers plainly that there is actually no necessity to have dance in the dramatic performances; but it is added because it enhances the beauty, and also because it is considered as auspicious. Thus the dramatic art was complete in its varied forms. Once the models came into

1. a. ततोऽभ्योक्तो भगवता योजयामुक्तमंडनम्। एवदुस्ताहजननं सुरक्षीतिकरं तथा। योज्य समकरास्तु शरमकायार्य साधकः। मया प्रश्नितो विद्वृत्त समयोः। प्रसुव्याताम्।

तत्त्वम् समवारं सु ष्रीको देववाणवः।

हुः: सम्भवनः सवः कर्मभावमुदश्चानां।। N. S. V. 2-4

b. ततो हिमवतः: पूष्टे नाना नग समाकले।

बहुत्तुल्माकोणं रम्यकन्दरनिग्द्दे।।

पूवर्गे क्रते पूवं: तनायं हिसंज शतना:।

तथा निवुपवाहम् हिमसंज प्रयोजिता:।। N. S. IV 9-10

2. यदा प्रामयययिमवानं कृतीविनय: स्मृतः:। कस्मानुर्बु शुश्य होतत्व: त्र्यम्बक-मये।। N. S. IV. 267-268

3. घर्षण्यते न वल्वर्वं कृतिस्तुतमङ्गले। कितु वीमां जनयतीत्यतो दृढः
existence, brains and imagination were not wanting to increase the number of plays based on the various phases of life as found in this world. Thus there must have accumulated a vast number of plays, varying in nature and having different characteristics based upon the sentiments, hero, theme, time, place, number of characters represented, and other things—plays ranging from one to fourteen acts, and depicting divine beings, kings, or even demons in the leading role; plays religious, secular, political, allegorical, comic or tragic. In short, the Sanskrit dramatists allowed their imagination and fine histrionic sense to infuse life, flesh and blood into skeletons, and also translated formulas into lively forms of beauty.

All these dramas are not available for study to posterity, because most of them have disappeared. But we have innumerable specimens quoted by the various dramaturgists and rhetoricians who describe different types of dramas and also cite examples from them.

While Nāṭyaśāstra\(^1\) refers to ten types of dramas and one minor type, the later dramaturgists describe eighteen minor types apart from the ten types described by Bharata. Of the ten types of rūpakas, the Dima, Samavakāra, Vyāyoga and Ihamṛga are classified as Aviddhās\(^2\)—the hard or masculine types, while the remaining six, Bhāna, Vīthī,
Anka, Prahasana, Nāṭaka and Prakarana, along with the minor type called Nāṭika, belong to the *Sukumara* class.

The first group is characterised by hard and crude actions fit for male actors only. But, the other group is characterised by the presence of high and noble women-characters and depicts noble and high culture. All these Rūpakas except the Dima, Samavakāra and İhāmṛga, have only one act each, while these three are allowed to have four. The Nāṭaka is to have at least five acts, Nāṭika four, and Prakarana ten. The last three types represent the height of glory reached by the theatrical art in ancient India. The various characteristics of these ten types are described by Bharata as well as by later dramaturgists, who have gone into the details of the eighteen minor types also. Though the differences between these types are very minute and subtle, they are undoubtedly representative in character and definitely point to an age when dramatic art was very much alive in its variety as well as glory.

A close and critical study of these Rūpakas and Uparūpakas is enough to convince the student about the possibility of accepting them as the various landmarks in the course of development of the Sanskrit drama.

Though it is stated that Bharata was the first actor who learned this science from the Creator himself, we come across certain references within the Nātyaśāstra itself to earlier preceptors who are said to have expounded the various constituents of the dramatic art. For example, when asked about music and orchestra Bharata says, 'I will repeat what has been said by the earlier sages Śwāti, Nārada and Puṣkara.' In another place it is said that the dramatic art was brought to the terrestrial world by the

1. नाटकं सम्बंधसरं भाणो वीणाप्रनाणापिके। सुकुमारप्रयोगानिः मानुपूर्ववर्षादितानिः।। N. S. XIII. 58
2. यदोलकमुनिमिः पूवः स्वातिनारस्युकः। सर्वलक्षणसमुकः सर्वतोभवंअभिशृष्टितम्।। N. S. XXXIV. 341
sons and disciples of Bharata, where the name Kohala is emphasised as of the one who would establish this art in this world. There are other names also quoted in the course of the narrative by Bharata. Explaining his own contribution as Samgraham, he says that he is only summarising what was already existing as Sutras and Bhäṣyas. It is quite probable that the names referred to were of the earlier dramaturgists who contributed their mite before Bharata and his systematic and ingenious exposition of every thing that covered the science of drama.

In the Rāmāyana we are told that when peace and order prevailed, maidens used to go about in the evenings to gardens for recreation or to witness plays. There are references in the epic about dramatic companies formed of women exclusively.

In one place, Sitā says to Rāma that he is behaving like a Śailūsa—an actor—in leaving her behind in Ayodhyā. In Mahābhārata there is a reference to a puppet show. We hear of dramatic performances in Royal courts.

1. एवमुवैतले नाटद्विध्यम समवतारितम्। मरतानां व वंशोद्धरं भविष्यच प्रवर्तितम्। कोहालाबीर्मिरेव तु वल्ल शाशिकथ्य धृतिति।।

N. S. XXXVIII. 23-24

2. विस्तयेन्दुपद्धतानामयानं सूच भाष्यम्। निबन्धो योः समासेन संबंधूं तं विदुर्दुचिा।।

N. S. VI. 9

3. तास्तु योवनशालिन्यो घपवत:। स्वल्क्कुरता।।

उद्धानमूमिमागाय प्रायुक्तव शत्तुरं।

गायनयो नूत्यमानात्रान वादयत्त्र सर्वनं।

प्रामोदं परमं जमुवररामरणमृविता॥ V. R. I. 22. 12-13

4. वधुनाटकसंपूर्ण समुकं सर्ववं पुरी॥ V. R. I. 5. 12

5 स्वन्तं तु भार्यं कोमारं चिन्मषणप्रितं सतीम्।

शृङ्खिष इव मां राम परम्परं दातुस्मृतसि॥ V. R. II. 30

6. यथा दाशमयो योगं नरोधरस्माहिन।।

ईर्ष्यत्वंमृतं शाश्च तथा राजधिरेत॥ प्रजा॥ Ma : Bha. IV. 26.
and public places for the entertainment of people. There are references in Harivamsa, Manusmriti and Arthasastra which prove the existence of actors and dramatic performances at the time. All these point to the conclusion that Sanskrit drama had reached its full-fledged form long before the date of the Natyasastra.

According to the statement in the Natyasastra, dramas are supposed to depict the world as it were in a mirror. The whole universe with its good and evil, with its happiness and sorrows, is presented on the stage. The onlooker

1. तत्र यस्य वर्तमाने सुनात्थेन नटस्तदा ।
महावैद्यायामाय महानैमति नामस्त ॥ Ma : Bha. XVIII.

2. विष्णुनानृतिभूमाय नातिविद्वाय नामस्त ॥ Manu. IV. 214

3. चतुर्विद्याय नातिविद्वाय नातिविद्वाय महावैद्यायामाय नातिविद्वाय नामस्त ॥ Arth. II. 27. 41-42

4. भवतः देवतानां च श्रुतायुभन्नयः ॥
कर्मभवायायर्पली नातिकाव्येः मया कृतः ॥
नैचाल्यतो मया धर्मम् नातिकाव्यम् ॥
एकांकालिप्तयम् सर्वस्य नातिकाव्यम् ॥
ब्रह्मचरीणम् ब्रह्मचरीणम् ॥
ब्रह्मचरीणम् ब्रह्मचरीणम् ॥
चर्मम् चर्मप्रवृत्तां कामः कामसंपत्तिविनाम् ॥
निपिदि निपिदि च चिन्हो चिन्हां दमनक्रिया ॥
अवोद्धवश्च क्रियां वेदकण्ठ विद्वामपि ॥
संस्कृताणि विद्वानि तथैव दु:खाविद्वाय च ॥
अवोद्धवश्च क्रियां विद्वाश्च क्रियामपि ॥
नानाभवायप्रमूत्यः नानावश्चतर्कान्तः ॥
लोकमुन्नुकरण नाटिकाव्यम् कृतम् ॥ N. S. I. 106-112
is to see himself and his surroundings held up in their true colours by the dramatist. We see before us men, women and children, kings and queens, Brahmarṣis and Devarṣis, Brahmanas and Śūdras, as they are, or as they ought to be. The good or evil in society, the good or evil in man, and its consequences are to be presented on the stage. Though all the happenings of the world are to be portrayed on the stage, it is strictly ordained that no violent action, shameful episodes, shocking or revolting scenes should be shown. A well-acted play creates a firm and durable impression on the human mind. This possibility was realised by our ancient dramatists, as is clearly proved by the delineation of characters in the best Sanskrit plays. The various characters thus depicted on the Sanskrit stage have lived up to this day, shedding their lustre in the literary as well as the practical world. Even the most unimportant character of the ancient Indian theatre has a story to tell and a lesson to give the modern man, if the latter will only care to learn.

To achieve the aim of combining instruction with enjoyment, every kind of character is brought on the stage. Bharata has described, in minute detail, the characters to be depicted in the various plays. Though many scholars have explored the dense field of dramatic literature, none seems to have been adequately interested in the innumerable and varied types of characters presented therein. Much valuable information concerning the theatre, its technique and such other details in theory and practice has been gathered, but the living and talking elements seem to have been rather neglected, except for the general information about the types of characters found in the various books of criticism and dramaturgy. A detailed study of the characters serves to throw much light on the life and history of our people in ancient times. And it is much more true in the case of the female characters.

From the earliest dawn of civilization, it is an accepted fact that women form an important constituent of society.
The condition of a society can be correctly judged by the position it gives to its women. This is the idea propagated by the Vedic Aryans and their descendants up till quite a late period, as is clear from the statement: "Dharma and Artha are achieved through them; wealth, prosperity and happiness are derived from them; and hence women are to be honoured by every one who wishes happiness in this world." The ancient poets, true to this ideal of society, have portrayed all types of women and have shown the contrast, emphasizing the desirable qualities, and differentiating them from the undesirable, in all spheres of life. Bharata seems to have had an abundant variety of examples before him when he drafted the rules and specified the characters to be presented on the stage.

In the Nātyaśāstra all characters are first classified into three sections: the best, the worst and the mediocre. Then follows the more detailed classification of each individual character. The women characters also are of varied types and belonging to different status in society from the highest queen to the lowest maid-servant, divine, semidivine and human beings. Minute details are given about the heroes and heroines. But the other characters are only mentioned and the details are left to the discrimination of the writers with the instruction that the usage of the time should be followed as far as the dress, characterisation and other details are concerned.

1. तद्र्घ भर्मायणि विभववरसीमायि च ततः।
   श्रेष्ठ लक्ष्मणो मान्या सततमबला मानविभैः। स्नीप्रशासना p. 6
2. समासतस्तु निबिधा प्रकृति परिकीतिता।
   श्रीणां च पूर्वपालां च उत्तमाधममच्यमा। N. S. XXIV. 1
3. नीत्ता न्येनुषु नैरुपये लोकाद ग्राम्यास्तु प्रविधीत।
   लोको नैदास्तवाच्याद्भ प्रमाणेन विबिध स्मृतम्। N. S. XXV. 121-122

लोकसिद्ध भवेत् सिद्ध नात्य लोकार्थं नित्यं। N. S. XXV. 125
"Since all that is done here in this world by human beings has happiness as the ultimate aim, and this happiness can be complete only when there is companionship between man and woman, so women are the ultimate sources of happiness"¹ says Bharata. And then he goes on to give the various details about the nature, habits and other signs that help to portray the true characters as found in the world.²

One very remarkable characteristic of the Sanskrit stage is that the particular aspect of woman as wife alone has been emphasised again and again. The position of woman as the companion of man, either as wife or beloved, has been presented in almost every drama. The other relationships of women with men do not seem to have attracted the ancient people. The erotic sentiment is given the honoured name, Rasarāja, the king of all sentiments. Conjugal love on the physical plane and its representation on the stage has been described in detail by Bharata, and the later theorists on dramaturgy and poetics follow his footsteps faithfully. As a consequence almost all the Sanskrit dramas have love for their theme and the final happy union of the couple as the denouement. Only very few exceptions exist such as Mudrārākṣasa, Venīsārhā, Mahāvīracharita and Chandā Kauśika where scope was found for politics also.

These being the circumstances, it is only natural that, the definition, description and other details concerning the heroine completely depend upon her relations with the hero. The fact that Bharata's classification of the heroines is limited to their relations with the respective heroes supports the above conclusion. After enumerating the various women-characters to be depicted on the stage,³ he proceeds to des-

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1. सर्व: प्रायोण लोकोऽः सुखमिस्थाति सम्बंदा || N. S. XX. 93
   सुखस्य च निविष्यो मूलं नानाशीतहरास्व तत: || N. S. XX. 93
2. N. S. XXII. 94-282
3. N. S. XXIV. 6-16
cribe the peculiarities of each. The descriptions of Mahādevī,\(^1\) Devī,\(^3\) Nrpavallabha\(^3\) and Sthāyini\(^4\) clearly show that they are to be depicted as the wives of the leading characters. “All women belong to three classes”, says Bharata, “they are best, worst and mediocre.”\(^5\) Then he continues to define each of these three,\(^6\) and the types of heroines are taken up after this. The first classification, though not found in the Nāṭyaśāstra, depends on the nature and tem-

1. तथा मूर्याविस्तका च कुलशोलविमृःपिता।
   समुदुःष्म्वरिता च वयस्या कोषवविषयता।
   भ्रीष्याः नुपशोलजा समुदुःलुब्जश्वय।
   वाल्लोपशर्यनैन्ति भुंगुजलकांविण।
   विलिलता शमायुठा श्रोतुरुपस्मिते।
   एनिमवृषेः संगुठका महादेवी श्रीकृपिता। N. S. XXII. 18-20

2. एनिमरेत गुरूपूरुता वहुमानविविषयता।
   गौतिरा राजपूतीस रतिसंभोगवतरा।
   बाला निस्तल्लोक्तमणा श्रीप्रतिशुभशिविका।
   यौवनादि गुणोकृता सा देवीशिबिष्यते। N. S. XXII. 21-22

3. सेनापतेरिणानाः दमिता तत्वरा च या।
   तनया नामतेव शास्त्रीत्यविभिन्नतत्त्वा।
   शीतलवृषेः संगुः नुषर्वललम्ब। N. S. XXII. 23-24

4. N. S. XXIV. 25-27

5. सर्वातात्मकानार्याः तिब्बिता प्रकाशित: स्नृता।
   उत्तमा मध्यमा चैव तुल्या चाष्मा स्नृता। N. S. XXIII. 33

6. पुरुषरता कारणाद्वर्त्य गतवथी अस्वरस्वरूः प्रकाशित।
   कार्यकाल विपेक्षा सुन्नमा सा। स्नृरतीतमः।
   पुंस: कामयते या तु पुरुषरियाः तु कामयते।
   कामिनिरक्षेः श्रीप्रतिश्वयम्बिनी।
   ईश्वर्तवा चारिक्षता लक्ष्मीश्वरा च।
   लक्ष्मी प्रतापते या च सा नारी मध्यमा स्नृता।
   लक्ष्मीने कोषप्रयत्थन्ति शुक्लीश्वरा चारिक्षीति।
   पुरवा प्रतिकृत्ता च दीर्घं रोषायमा स्नृता। N. S. XXIII. 36-39
permanent of the character. If she is of young age, easily convinced and innocent, she goes under the name, Mugdhā. One who is quite competent to understand the deceitful behaviour of her husband or lover, and who is powerful enough to deal with him as he deserves, is classified as Pragalbha. And she, who has passed the stage of the first, and who has not yet reached the height of the second, goes by the name Madhyā. The next classification is based on the attitude of the hero towards the heroine. There are eight kinds mentioned in this connection, and the characteristics of each are enumerated and described.1

It is very significant that Bharata gives detailed instructions only about the heroines. The other characters to be represented are named and general hints are given. But no mention whatever is made about representing women as daughters, sisters or mothers. Various minute details as to the words, gestures, actions and attitudes of women to their

1. उचिते वासके या तु रतिसमभोगलालसा |
मझूलं कुलते हृष्टा सा व वासकसज्जिता ॥
शनेक कार्येन व्यासज्ञातू यस्या नागच्छिति प्रियः ॥
तस्यानुपादे सारित्वा विरहोत्कृष्टानन्ति मता ॥
सुरार्तिरसबंधे यस्या: पार्वश्नात: प्रियः ॥
सामोदे गुणसंयुक्ता म्हेऽवु स्वाधीनन्तु का ॥
ईण्जिकलितिविचारान्तः यस्या नागच्छिति प्रियः ॥
श्यामस्वेपंसतसा कलहान्तिरता म्हेऽवु ॥
व्यासज्ञातुचिते यस्या: नासकेनागत: प्रियः ॥
	लदनागमनाता तु खण्डितेयपित्यवेदये ॥
	तस्मादस्सुतां प्रिय: प्रायं गत्वा संकेतमेव वा ॥

N. S. XXII. 205-212
lovers or husbands are given, and finally the warning is sounded to the actors that since the plays are to be witnessed by parents, children, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, they should be careful as to what is presented on the stage.\(^1\)

It is not possible for us to say definitely whether Bharata drew his conclusions from the contemporary dramas or not, because most of those dramas are not available to us. The few that are available, like the plays ascribed to Bhāsa, do not seem to agree with the rules laid down by the Nāṭyaśāstra. Even Kalidāsa does not seem to be much bothered about what is said in theory. It is much later, when creative genius seems to have come to a standstill, that we witness the servile following of rules and regulations by the playwrights. Hence we do have a variety of women characters to study in the actual plays, though their main part happens to be as the beloveds of the heroes.

The ten types of Rūpakas may be classified into two groups: one, full of soft, sweet and beautiful sentiments and emotions and actions suitable to them; and the other, characterised by fights and chaotic conditions befitting the masculine elements. The Nāṭaka, Prakāraṇa, Bhāṇa, Aṅka and Vīṭhī belong to the first group, and they, being of human interest, are to be acted with the help of women. The others, namely, Dimā, Samavākāra, Vyāyoga and Iha-ṁṛga are masculine and hard in nature. They are befitting the rākṣasas and asuras and are to be acted only by men. “Women should be completely left out”, says the master.

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1. पिन्युर्वर्त्तनयायाभ्रूहिस्यं यम्मातु नाटकः।
   तत्मादेवतानितवौणिं वज्रियायानि यल्लतं। II N. S. XXII. 284-288

2. प्रयोगो विविधविषबैं विजेयो नाटममन्नितः।
   सुकुमारस्त्रयाविद्वो नानाभावसाध्यं। II
   नाटकेऽप्रकरणां भाणो वीयवकु एव च।
   जीयानि सुकुमाराणि मानुषीराहितानि तु। II
   युङ्घोष्टां वेग्यंता सर्वभव्यतित्वं ये।
In this connection, the natural question arises who acted the parts of women usually on the ancient stage. Bharata clearly states that men should represent the male characters and women the female characters as far as possible. He ordains that the actors should be chosen to suit the person and the character represented. Only if the properly qualified person is not available, a male may take the part of a female or vice-versa. In that case, the choice must be very carefully made, so that the features, voice and other things are as similar as possible to the character represented. It is further stated in the Nātyaśāstra that the Nātya, in heaven, depended on the Apsarās and so, it should depend on terrestrial women in this world. The beautiful, soft and charming parts can be well acted only by women. Hence, the learned people should teach this art to the ladies in the harems of the kings and other suitable women, considering this also as a science worthy to be learned. In the

न ते श्रीभ्र: प्रयोत्त्वथा: प्रयोज्या: पुरुषीहि ते ॥
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हिम: समवकारवच व्यायोगेहामृगों तथा ।
एतासां विदंसंस्तानि विजेयानि प्रयोक्तुभिः: ॥
एवा प्रयोग: कर्तवयो देववन्दनवाचः: ।
उद्वता ये च पुरुषा: श्रीप्रयोगसमन्विता: ॥

N. S. XXXV. p. 653-54

1. ब्रजस्वल श्री गते भावे पुरुषा: पी Harbour यथा ।
यथा बयस्तथा तत्स्मिन्द ह्रनृद्धे मिन्सा मृगो तथा ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653

2. एवमयस्वपि तथा नात्स्मवशी प्रयस्यते ।
देववन्दनन्तुनेपिपात ग्रोष्ण सिद्धीशुम्भवः ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 652

3. पुरुष: श्रीगते मावं यो वा पुरुषां पुरुष: ।
रूपाप्यारित्वा नेया प्रयोगे भरतोरमः: ॥
छंदस: पीली नुरामृतमुल्लुमृकांश्रीप्रयोगस्त: ।
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श्रीपु योज्य: प्रयत्नेन प्रयोग: पुरुषाश्रय: ॥ N. S. XXXV. p. 653
palaces of kīrs, plays with Śṛngāra as the leading sentiment should be acted by women, because they have greater capacity to stage the plays properly due to their natural gifts of beauty and aesthetic efficiency. The musical voice and graceful movements of body are natural to women and this is an additional qualification for her to be an actor.

These instructions are quite unequivocal and go to prove that women did participate in dramatic performances, in those days when Bharata wrote his book. Apart from this, in the legend about the creation of the Nātyaveda, a very interesting episode is found when Sātvatī, Bhārati, and Ārabhaṭī Vṛttis were used to constitute the dramatic art, the preceptor of the Devas advised the sage to use the Kāśikī Vṛtti also to make it more beautiful and artistic. When this was done Bharata found himself in a difficult situation, because there was no one amongst his disciples who could reproduce this Vṛtti which had its source in the erotic sentiment and which was full of graceful movements of the body impregnated with soft and sweet sentiments. Then, he appealed to Brahmā who created the celestial women who were experts in the arts of dance and drama. This part of the story seems to establish the indispensability of women in the successful staging of plays.

1. भूमिकः सुकुमारः च निल्यं स्थिरत्वस्तितम्।
   तत्वः मानुषीप्राणां विश्वायमानुस्वयोत्तवः।
   रम्भोवंशिप्रभृतिः स्वार्ण नाट्यं प्रतिद्वितिम्।
   तचेव मानुषे लोके राजामात्रे पुरेर्विप।
   उपदेश्यमार्यस्तु भाकुबुध्यांग्नां च।
   सुकुमार प्रयोगोऽव राजामामोदकारः।
   श्यूतिःरसमासादः तत्त्वार्थवेव योजेवः।
   भमसाप्तब्धवोऽपत्त्वो विलासः प्रश्रये प्रयत्ते।
   N. S. XXXV. p. 653

2. संपीतकमपरिकल्पनोऽनिल्यं प्रस्मादज्ञनस्य गुणवेव।
   N. S. XXXV. p. 653

3. भारती सात्विकीचैव कृत्तिमार्धमी तथा।
   समाधित्व: प्रयोगस्तु प्रयुक्तों वै मया दिजाः।
In the Vedic hymns there are descriptions of maidens who adorn themselves beautifully and enjoy themselves in singing and dancing. In the post-Vedic period also, music and dancing seem to have been encouraged among the girls. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, there are passages to suggest that girls were trained in fine arts such as music and dancing. As has been already stated, in the Rāmāyaṇa, there is a clear reference to women’s dramatic companies[1]. The heroines of the plays written during this period are shown to be well versed in these arts. There are references to plays actually enacted by women in the harems of the kings for the enjoyment of the royal audience. In the Vikramorvaśīya, the celestial women are said to have enacted the play Lakshmīswarayāmvara, written and directed by the sage Bharata. All these points go a long way to prove beyond any doubt, the custom of women participating in the staging of plays in the ancient days, when Sanskrit dramatic art was flourishing in its full glory. If this is so, there may not be anything wrong in assuming that women enjoyed an equal status, if not better, with men in society at the time when Bharata wrote, namely the first half of the first millennium

परिःपृथ्वी प्रणमयाय श्रद्धा विज्ञापितो मया ||
प्रयाह मां सुरगुहः कृतिकीमिपि योजय ||
यबल तस्या: क्रमं द्रव्यं तदुपरिः तिष्ठतातम ||
एवं तेनास्मानस्मिहितं प्रयुक्तत्वं मया प्रभु: ||
दीयतों भगवन् ! द्रव्यं कृतिक्या: संप्रयोजकम् ||
नुस्तङ्गः हरसम्पन्नाः रसभावविलासतिमका ||
हट्टा मया भगवतो नीलकण्ठस्य नृत्तत् ||
कृतिकी श्लक्षणनीय्यः शुच्यः भरसम्बन्धवा ||
प्रशक्त्या पुरुष: साधु प्रयोत्तुः लोकनाहते ||
ततोतुज्ञमहतेऽज्ञ मनसात्मस्तो विशु: ||
नाटपालः श्रुत्वचुः प्रादान्त्या प्रयोगत: || N. S. I. 41-47
1. वर्षात्खंसंवेषकं संयुक्तां सर्वत: पुरीम् ||
उद्भारावब्रजीपेतां भहुती सालमेल्लाम् || V. R. I. 5-12
of the Christian era.

It is not possible to ascertain how long this custom continued. The later dramas, specially those that came after Bhavabhūti, do not give any information as to this point. In the plays of Śrī Harṣa we have a play enacted in the harem of the king by the girls in attendance of the queen. But, in the Mālatimādhava of Bhavabhūti, it is plainly said by the Sutrādāra and the Pāripārśvika, that they were preparing to take the parts of Kāmandakī and Avalokitā respectively. Within the same plays we hear of Makaranda being disguised as Mālatī and getting married to Nandana in order to save Mālatī herself from the plight of marrying against her own wishes. From this time onwards, we see that women characters are lesser and lesser on the stage, and even those who are presented do not show much life. This clearly indicates that women had ceased to take part in the enacting of plays in public. We can still remember the days when it was considered something unbecoming for women to go to see a picture or a play to say nothing about participating in these. We may, perhaps, safely conclude that from the period when Bhavabhūti wrote, the seclusion of women became so pronounced that their appearing in public had become almost prohibited.

There are a good number of dramas available in print at present. Many more of the older works are still in manuscripts only. Many Sanskrit plays are being written in these days also. This treatise can in no way be called exhaustive as far as the Sanskrit plays are concerned, though care has been taken that all types of plays representative of the bulk of the entire collection are taken up for studying the women characters, whether actually presented on the stage, or referred to, as in the Mudrārākṣasa.

The authors of the earlier plays, quite true to their philosophical attitude towards life, have been indifferent about giving any information concerning themselves and their works in general. Quoting W. D. Whitney, Winternitz
says, "All dates given in Indian literary history are pins set up to be bowed down again." This statement is only too true about the Sanskrit dramas. The authors as well as their critics seem to be equally indifferent to preserve details about the writers as about their works. Hence, as we have already noticed, we are forced to resort to vague, and sometimes fantastic, conjectures even about the authorship of certain very fine pieces of literature representing our ancient culture. The utmost one can do under these circumstances is to guess at a relative chronology of the various authors up to the times of King Harṣavardhana, whose date has some historical data to support it.

Anyway, it may not be very wrong, if by drawing our own conclusions from the available dramas, we divide the older plays into three groups belonging to three periods, with the Master-poet Kālidāsa as the central figure, from whom we can look backwards and forwards. This would be most convenient for a close and critical study. In the first place, the main groups would fall into the following sub-groups—

1. Plays before Kālidāsa
2. The Plays of Kālidāsa
3. Plays after Kālidāsa

The last group being spread over a very long period, will have to be divided into further groups for the sake of convenience, and so, this last has been further divided into four sub-groups making Bhavabhūti and Jayadeva as landmarks in the course.

Accepting this division as the basis, we have attempted a critical, comparative and analytical study of the women-characters presented in these dramas. Incidentally, a comparative study of the same character by different authors at different periods, and also of different characters by the same author, has also been attempted. This has thrown much light on the ideas and ideals of society at the various periods.

Now, we pass on to the first group of the Sanskrit plays, those which were written before the Master-Poet Kālidāsa.
CHAPTER II

WOMEN IN THE PRE-KALIDASA PLAYS

When launching on a study of the women-characters depicted in the various Sanskrit plays, the first dramatist who attracts our attention is the great poet Bhāsa. As has already been said, the dramatic art had reached a high degree of development by the second century B.C. Though many plays might have been composed and staged, the only dramatists who are known to us, at least by name, are Bhāsa, Aśvaghoṣa and Śūdraka. Kālidāsa is the earliest of the dramatists who gives some information about himself or his predecessors, however meagre that may be. Such a reference, found in his Mālavikāgnimitra, first introduced Bhāsa to the later students. He refers to “Bhāsa, Saumilla, Kaviputra and others,” as of great fame. But no work of these poets was available to posterity, till as late as the year 1912, when the thirteen plays collectively called as “the Trivandrum plays”, were brought to light by Ganapati Śāstri, who ascribed them to Bhāsa.

Of the thirteen plays ascribed to Bhāsa, only five are full dramas, whereas the others seem to be more like scenes taken from one or more full-fledged plays, adding a kind of stereotyped beginning and ending to them. Before going to the women-characters depicted in each, it would not be out

1. पारिपाठिकः—भा तावद्। यत्रत्वसःं भाससौमिल्लकविपुत्रायां
   प्रवाहानितिकम् वर्तमानकेकं कालिदासस्य क्रियाययं कथं बहुमानः।

M. A. I. p. 184
of place to make a general survey of these plays and their peculiar characteristics as a back-ground for such a study. These thirteen plays can be divided into three groups on the basis of their sources: those based on the Rāmāyāna, those based on the Mahābhārata, and those based on the Brhatkathā. The Pratimā and the Abhiśeka are the two plays which, together, tell the story of the Rāmāyāna up till the Yuddhakāṇḍa. The Pancarātra, the Dūtavākya, the Madhyama-Vyāyoga, the Dūtaghaṭotkaca the Karṇabhāra and the Urubhaṅga are based on the various incidents described in the last portion of the Mahābhārata; the Bālacrīta is based on the Harivamśa, while the Pratijñāyaugandhara-yāna, the Svapnavāsavadattā, and the Chārudatta can trace their themes to the stories found in the Brhatkathā.

What appeal most to a student of these plays are the rapidity of action, directness of characterization, and simplicity of diction. There seems to be no consideration as to following or rejecting the rules of dramaturgy, as laid down by Bharata and others. But, all these plays seem to be bubbling with vigour and life. There is no lack of dramatic situations or actions. To quote a scholar on the subject—"It seems as if the roughness of the social life is reflected in the crudity of the plays. They are typical of the age in which they were written. They are virile, forceful and move with speed and determination."

The similarity of language, the use of identical stage-directions, repetitions of scenes, situations, expressions, ideas, verses, imagery, and the devices employed to show rapidity of actions—all point towards the conclusion that all these plays might have originated from the same brain. After heated discussions and strong controversies, the common authorship of these plays is more or less accepted by the scholars of today.

The date of Bhāsa is also a controversial point, though he is not unique in this. All evidences point to the prob-

1. R. V. Jagirdar: Drama in Sanskrit Literature; p. 86.
ability of his having flourished somewhere between the third century B.C. and third century A.D. The historical references to persons and places and other internal evidences point towards the affinity of these plays to the age of the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, and the Arthasāstra of Kautilya. The women-characters in general also show the characteristics of the same women as depicted in the source books, as we are to see presently. The Kings herein, are seen giving greater importance to Vedic sacrifices than those depicted by later authors. The social conditions, as found in these dramas, are almost the same as found in the earlier Smṛtis and also the epics. We find this more clearly when each play is taken individually for a critical study with special reference to the female characters.

Taking up the two plays dealing with the story of Rāma and Sītā, we find a few very noteworthy points. The Pratimā Nātaka deals with the story told in the Ayodhyākanda, the Aranyakānda and the portion of the Yuddhakānda relating to the coronation of Rāma. And the Abhiseka Nātaka seems to complete the threads cut out in between. These two dramas, taken together, seem to tell the complete story of the Rāmāyana, beginning from the exile of the prince. Thus, it is plain that the story treated by the poet comprises only the portion of the Rāmāyana beginning with the Ayodhyākanda and ending with the Yuddhakānda. Perhaps these two were the first plays ever written on the basis of this story. The story of Rāma existed even before the Rāmāyana was composed by the Adikavi. But those versions are not available and so Vālmiki's work has to be taken as the earliest on the story of Rāma.1 Even here, there are evidences to show that, the first Rāmāyana did not have either the Bālakānda or the Uttarakānda. This idea, put forth by other authors before, has been taken up by Camil Bulke and discussed at great length in his Rāmakathā. He has

proved the claim very effectively.¹ He accepts that the exile of Rāma, the abduction of Sītā and the consequent killing of Rāvana can be naturally accepted as historical facts.² According to him, even the fire ordeal, which Sītā had to undergo, is a later interpolation. The story of Rāma and Sītā is found in the Aranya Parva of the Mahābhārata, and also in two subsequent parvas, the Droṇa and the Śāṅtiparvas. It is significant to note that here also the story includes only the portion from the exile of Rāma to his return and coronation at Ayodhyā. Another point to be noted is the absence of the mention of Urmilā throughout the Rāmāyaṇa, except in the Bālakāṇḍa. Not only this, there is a significant reference to Laksmaṇa as “unmarried.”³ Both these points taken together seem to lead to the conclusion that in the first instance the marriage of Rāma alone was mentioned, and the dramatic marriage of all four brothers with the four sisters at Mithilā was a later interpolation. In the Pratimāṇātaka, where Sītā and the three queens are mentioned, no mention of the other princesses is found. The Śūrpanakhā episode also is missing in the play, as well as in the first nucleus of the Rāmāyaṇa. Perhaps all these points may be evidences to show that Bhāsa wrote at a period nearer to the first recension of the Rāmāyaṇa, and followed the trend as far as the main threads were concerned.

It is true, that there are many remarkable changes found in the course of development of the main story in the Pratimāṇātaka which enhances the poetic interest and also the dramatic effect. For example, Rāma is shown as departing to the forest without taking leave of Daśaratha personally. He asks Sumantra to drive the chariot soon so that there might not be any obstacle in his departure. “May

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¹ Camil Bulke: Rāma kathā, p. 120-123
² Ibid p. 462
³ श्रीमानकृतदासरघचलमणो नाम वीर्यवान्। V. R. III. 18. 3
the king see the place where we bowed down to him."\(^1\) Bharata is shown as coming to Ayodhyā alone and the news of his Father’s death is revealed to him by the sight of the statues in the ‘Pratimāgrha’. Kaikeyī’s character is saved by the reference to the curse of the blind sage and laying emphasis on her intention to save the king from the sin of forgetting his word of honour. The amorous advances of Śūrpaṇakhā, in fact even the mention of Śūrpaṇakhā, are left out completely. The only reason Rāvana gives for carrying off Sītā is his desire for revenge.\(^2\) Perhaps, this suggests the custom of abducting women as booties of war, existing at the period when these dramas were staged. After the death of Jātāyu the story is cut short, and the scene is changed to Ayodhyā. Here, the character of Kaikeyī is cleared and Bharata with all his retinue goes out to the halting place of Rāma, and the coronation takes place there.

The plot of the Abhīṣeka nāṭaka covers the story contained in the Kiṣkindhā, Sundara and Yuddhakāṇḍas. Sītā and Tārā are the only women-characters worth mentioning in the play, whereas in the Pratimānāṭaka, Sītā, the three queens of Daśaratha, and a few maid servants are depicted. All these characters resemble their prototypes in the Rāmāyana, thus perhaps pointing to the close vicinity of the times of the epic to these plays.

None of the women characters show an atmosphere of suppression or servility. The conversation between Rāma and Sītā, and also between the king and his queens, represents a society in which man and wife enjoyed equality of status, mutual respect and consideration founded upon true love. The conversations between Rāma and Sītā in the palace as

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1. रामः—गतेन्द्रसमासु राजा न: सिरस्वस्मानिनिपदयतुः। Pratimā. I. 31
2. राजः—एष्टोः।

नियतमनिविर्ततात्मा हृपमेतदृ बृहत्त्वा खरवधकुतवरं राधवं व्यवित्त्वा।
स्वरपदपरित्वां हत्याधारामिवाहों जनकवपस्वतां तां हदुकामः प्रयामिः।

Pratimā. Act V. 7
well as in the forest are examples to the point. Rāma’s observations of Sītā not wearing any ornaments and also his insistant opinion that she had removed them only recently, taken along with Sītā’s anxiety to hide from him the truth that she had removed them in order to present to the maid-servant who brought the good news about the coronation of her husband, is eloquent enough to tell us how loving and considerate they both were to each other. Seeing Sītā clothed in bark garments, Rāma also desires to try it on himself. What a natural and lovely picture of the young couple! In the forest also the behaviour of Rāma and Sītā towards each other proves the respect and honour with which the men treated their women and also the equal status women enjoyed.

When Bharata came to the forest, it was Sītā who was sent to welcome him. Sītā was like a mother to all the younger brothers of her husband. As Lakṣmana starts to go to Bharata, Rāma stops him with the words: “Let herself go as a mother to welcome her son with eyes brimming with tears of happiness at the very thought of his advent.” This was the noble relation between the sisters-in-law and the younger brothers-in-law. When Rāma is worried about performing the last rites of his father, Sītā gives the advice which shows her profound knowledge of the Śāstras and the methods of performing the various rites. She says, “Let Bharata do the

1. रामः—मैथिली किमस्थ विमुक्ताल्पारासिः।
   सीता—न तावद्, प्रावधनामि।
   रामः—न ललु प्रस्वानतारित्वृष्णयं भम्भितव्यम्।
   तथाहि—
   कष्टां त्वरपहुच्छपुष्णन्यमपवः संप्रासितांमरसमौरतलौ ज हृत्तो।
   एतानि चामरणभारस्तानि गाते स्थानानि नैव समारुपयानां तावद्॥
   Pratimā. Act I. 8

2. Pratimā Act V.

3. रामः—इत्य स्वयं गच्छतु मानहेतोमलिव भाव तनये निवेदय।
   तुपार्प्याज्ञानोपत्त्रमेवा हर्ष्यमासारमिवेष्टज्ञस्ति॥
   Pratimā. Act IV. 13
WOMEN IN THE PRE-KALIDASA PLAYS

’srāddha’, in great splendour. You perform the same according to your present position and ability with fruits and water’. The same idea is found in the Rāmāyaṇa also that every one should perform the rites of the dead according to one’s own capacity and status in life. The manes should be offered only what the performers of the rites themselves eat. There are many instances to show that the words of Sītā count a lot with Rāma. The place of the wife as the betterhalf of man is held up by the poet in this drama quite clearly.

Rāvana is already aware of the chastity of Sītā. He is anxious to avoid touching her lest his Māyā may be recognized. In this connection he refers to Sītā as the shadow of Rāma, meaning thereby their interdependence and inseparability.

Thus, the position of women appears to be quite ennobling as depicted by the poet in these plays. The relationship between husband and wife seems to be one of mutual love, respect and understanding. The woman who causes harm to her husband is denounced even by her son. Bharata in his anger and sorrow openly declares that a woman who brings misery to her husband is no more worthy of honour even from her own sons. The position of mother was always very high in society. But, according to the changing times the wife’s duties seem to become more and more emphasized, and this is perhaps an example to the point.

The veil had come to exist as a sign of nobility even in the epic age as could be seen from the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. But Rāma is heard asking Sītā to remove the same

1. सीता—प्रायःपुरुष ! निवर्तियथ्यति भाद भरत श्रावण, प्रवर्तानुशु पूते- 
   दक्षिणायार्थणुः। तत्तु तात्तथ्य बहुमत्तरं निवर्तियथ। Pratimā. Act V. 13

2. इवं भुस्व महाराज प्रीती यद्वना वयम् 
   यदन्तः पुरुषो महत तदर्थास्त्य द्वेषा:।। V. R. II. 102-30

3. रावणः—प्रियं छायां परिहेय शरीरं न लयस्यम्र । Pratimā. Act V.

4. भरतः—लोके पूर्व स्वाधयपेय धम भूण्य ब्रह्मादत्तु माताप्रभाता। 
   Pratimā. Act III. 18
just before departing to the forests, saying that there is nothing wrong in women’s faces being exposed to the eyes of the public in particular circumstances.¹ This idea is almost a repetition of the verses found in the Rāmāyaṇa at two occasions.²

The references to dresses of different provinces are available in the Pratimānāṭaka. Bharata on his return journey to Ayodhyā, imagining all sorts of incidents that would happen when he reaches his paternal home, fears that Lakṣmanā would laugh at his dress and his changed language.³

The manners and customs of the people as depicted in these dramas are to a great extent similar to those found in the Rāmāyaṇa. The position of women also does not seem to have deteriorated so much as at the time of Manusmṛti or later days. The natural conclusion is that these plays must have come into existence at a time when women were still keeping their position as the real companions of their husbands, within the household at least.

Six of the thirteen plays are based on the incidents of the Mahābhārata, as has been noticed already. The ennobling delineation of characters and effective depiction of dramatic situations prove the touch of a masterhand beyond any doubt. The general trend of social life, ideas and ideals is

1. राम:—मिथिल! अपनीयतामवगुण्यम्।
   भो भो: पीरा। अष्टावस्तुः अष्टावस्तु भवत:।
   स्वेर हि पत्यनुः कल्याणेतः बाय्याकुलालाकाव्यंभवत:।
   निर्दोषहस्याः हि भवति नायोऽयों भवाये भवाये वने च ॥

Pratimā Act I. 29

2. (1) या न शक्या पुरा द्रष्टे; नूतरकाष्ठान्गरिप।
   तामथ सीताः पत्यंति राजमार्गंगता जना:।
   V. R. II. 33. 8

(2) भवायेः च कुच्छ्रेण न युक्तनु स्वयंवरे।
   न क्रीति न विबाहे च वदने तु कुर्यान्ति द्रम्या।
   V. R. VI. 117. 27

3. भरत:—परिधिसिततिवातमस्त्र प्रस्थापि वें च भापां च सीमितिरितु॥

Pratimā Act III. 3
easily traceable in these dramas. Of these six plays, the Pancarātra, the Dūtavākyā and the Karṇabhāra do not present any female characters. The remaining three, namely, the Dūtaghaṭotkaca, the Madhyama Vyāyoga and the Ürubhaṅga are only one-act plays. The poet has taken the liberty to change the incidents and even the general characteristics of the characters to suit his dramatic purpose. At the same time it is quite obvious that he does not differ from the ideas propagated in the Mahābhārata itself.

Queen Gāndhārī and the Princess Dussalā are presented in the Dūtaghaṭotkaca. Both of them clearly prove their royal birth in their general behaviour, talks and movements. The few words uttered by Gāndhārī show her dignity and also prove her insight into situations and people. The same queen Gāndhārī of the Epic who told her son plainly, “Victory is there where there is dharma”, is found in this play. The same firmness mingled with the same love for her sons, characterizes the Gāndhārī depicted by Bhāsa. Dussalā, her daughter, seems to have as much foresight and understanding as her noble mother. The womenfolk of the Kauravas, as seen in the Mahābhārata, are more far-sighted, brave, patient, though spirited and endowed with greater power of discretion and understanding. The same characteristics are shown by these women portrayed in the plays of Bhāsa also. It may not be wrong to say that this is a proof of the fact that women still held their ground by their own high and noble qualities, in spite of the deterioration traceable in their menfolk.

Though the lawgivers were making all sorts of rules and regulations in order to curb the spirit of the loving and courageous women, the Kṣatriyas did not care so much to follow them. The rules concerning the age of marriage, and education did not affect the Kṣatriya girls. But the re-marriage of widows and the custom of Niyoga were definitely dying out. There are numerous examples to show that the society did not look with favour on these customs, perhaps
because they were causing the degeneration of the social conditions in general. Widows had begun to be considered as inauspicious and they, perhaps, had separate costumes to distinguish them. In the Dūtaghaṭotkaca, when the death of Abhimanyu is known and Jayadratha is found to be the cause of the same, Dussalā in her misery due to her fears for the life of her husband, says that she also would go to Uttarā and console her. Asked the reason why, she answers, "I will go and tell her that I am also nearing that fate of taking the widow's garments like you very soon." The veil is referred to as a mark of dignity for the women of royal families. Duryodhana is miserable, because his wives had to come to the open battlefield with uncovered heads. Stray examples of Satī are also heard here and there. Pauravi, one of Duryodhana's beloved wives, announces her determination to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband.

The Madhyama Vṛtyoga presents two women characters, the wife of Keśavadāsa and the mother of Ghaṭotkaca, named Hidimbā. The Brahmin woman is more or less the prototype of the women belonging to the orthodox Brahmin families as seen even to this day—simple, loving and submissive to the husband. She offers her life to save her husband, because she knows that the only duty of a good woman is to live and die for her husband. Hidimbā also shows the same love and devotion for her husband Bhīmasena. She tells her son that Bhīma was even like God to her as well as to him. Though there are not many words said, still the ideals of this

1. दुसला—एवं च मण्डियांचिं—पथ कालिकं च ते वेषप्रह्रुणमहम्मुष्यपार-विवाहारी ।
D. G. Act I.

2. राजा—यन्मे प्रकाशीक्रितमूर्वंजानि रवं प्रविश्न्यवरोधनानि।U. Bh. 38

3. पोरवी—एकखात्र्यविवाहसवद्य । रोदिमि ।
U. Bh. p. 504

4. ब्राह्मणी—प्रार्य, मायवयम्। रतिमात्राःची रतिभ्रेति नाम।
M. Vy. p. 425

5. हिषिद्वा—उन्मत्तक! देवतं खलस्माकम्। तव च मम च। M.Vy. p. 436
so called Rākṣasī are in no way lower than those of the cultured Aryan women.

The custom of Niyoga—leverate—is vehemently questioned by Duryodhana, again and again, in the Dūtavākya. In the beginning itself Duryodhana asks, “How is it possible for my uncle to be the father of those who were born after he had become disabled to have children and how can they have any right to the kingdom that was his share?”

Kṛṣṇa retorts by asking how Dhrträgtṛa could have a right to the kingdom of Vicitravirya, since he was born of Vyāsa after the death of the former? The discussions and arguments continue in the same strain, and finally Duryodhana stops them by saying, “There can be no relationship between the children of gods and the children of human beings. So why argue? Stop it.”

The whole of Mahābhārata shows by the various incidents the evil in this custom and Bhāsa was only portraying logically the idea that was gathering strength in society, at his time. Almost all the Kaurava leaders were children born of leverate: Dhr特朗ṛa, Pāndu, all sons of Pāndu, Karna and others. Naturally, there was no love lost between these cousins who had actually no blood relationship with one another. The result was the complete destruction of the family by internal feuds, the only survivor being Parīkṣit, the posthumus son of Abhimanyu, who had a fully legitimate lineage from both sides. This child, who

1. दुर्योधनः—वने पितृयो मूर्गयासस्य सत्तुः कुतपरावी मुनिवापमापनान्
   तद्विप्रहुः स दारस्युः: परात्मपानां पितृतां कथं ब्रजेदृः
   D. Vā. 21.

2. वामुदेवः—पुराविवं भवंत्व पृत्यामि
   विचित्रवीयों विवयी विपृत्ति क्षेत्रेण या: पुनर्मिवसत्यायम्
   व्यासेन जातो धुतराशु एष लम्बेत राज्यं जनकं: कथं ते
   D. Vā. 22.

3. दुर्योधनः—देवाःमनुष्यायां कथं वा बन्धुता भवेदूः
   पिण्डशेषामेततावत् पयातं खिलतां कथा
   D. Vā. 30.
was alone, saved by Kiśpa, continued the dynasty later on. A perusal of the whole story in this light suggests the undesirability of this custom quite strongly. This adverse opinion of the society is echoed in the Dūtavākya, which must have been written somewhere near this age or perhaps a little later.

In the plays which mainly deal with battles and killings, women-characters, naturally, do not find much place. Since five out of the six Mahābhārata plays deal with the incidents after the return of the Pāṇḍavas from their exile, there is very little scope for depicting women-characters. There is ample material which suggests growing seclusion of women and definite deterioration of their condition in society. In the Pancarātra when asked by the charioteer, “what should I describe of the captor of Abhimanyu, beauty or valour”, Bhuṣma’s answer is very significant. He says, “Women are known by their beauty, and men are known by their valour.”

It was against the rules of etiquette to ask about the welfare of any woman other than one’s own relatives. Abhimanyu gets enraged when Brhannāla asks him about the welfare of Subhadrā, his mother, and gives him a very spirited answer. But, we do not find Ghaṭotkaca raising any objection when Bhima asks about the former’s mother. Perhaps according to Bhāsa, the Rākṣasas did not care so much for formalities.

These plays are dotted with examples of the accepted superiority of the Brāhmaṇas. Ghaṭotkaca, a Rākṣasa youth, was aware that Brāhmaṇas were not to be oppressed

1. सूत:—किमसिद्धास्यामि रूप वा पराक्रमं वा 

   भीष्म:—रूपे एव नित्य: कथ्यं ते पराक्रमेष तु पुष्यताः ॥

   P. Rā. Act III. p. 412

2. भ्रमिम्यु:—कथं कथ्यं जननी नाम?

   कि भवात् धर्मराजो मे भीमसेनो धनक्रयं: 

   यथा पितृवदाक्रय स्त्रीगतां वृजेन्ती कथाम् ॥

   P. Rā. Act II. 48
He decided to kill the Brāhmaṇa boy only because his mother wanted human flesh and there was no one else available. And a mother’s wish was to be fulfilled—Brāhmaṇa or no Brāhmaṇa. The respect for the Brāhmaṇa and the reverence for the mother even disregarding the former, are both in keeping with the ordinance in the Manusmṛti. Bhīma later on asks Ghatotkaca to release the Brāhmaṇa, for the Brāhmaṇas were not to be killed even if they were found guilty of the foulest sins. Still, he also appreciates the boy’s devotion to his mother; and when Ghatotkaca insists that he should satisfy his mother, Bhīma obliges him by offering himself in place of the Brāhmaṇa. The whole episode seems to support the ruling of Manu concerning the Brahmanaṇas and the mother, the latter “a thousand times greater”.

The manners and customs as depicted in these plays seem to be more or less similar to those in the earlier epics. But, the position of women seems to be on the path of descent, with restrictions on their freedom slowly setting in.

There is a peculiarity common to these six plays which is very obvious and which calls for some observation. Reading through them one does not feel that they are complete in themselves. They do not at all seem to be the finished products of a master hand, as the dramas based on the Rāmāyaṇa we have studied, or those other plays based on the story of Udayana, which we are to examine presently. These seem to be portions taken from various fulfledged dramas, to be

1. घटोत्रकचः—जानामि सर्वच सदा च नाम हिजोतमा: पूज्यतमा: पूजितम्याम् । । । ।
   ब्रह्माययेतः भवायक कार्यं मातृनियोगायपनीयं शक्तम् ।
   M. Vy. 9

2. भीमः—युधिष्ठिरसन्यवत्यवान्मुच्यतं हिजस्तम: ।
   M. Vy. p. 431

3. (प्रा) उपाध्यायवान्धशचार्यं सन्त चिता ।
   सहस्त्रं तु पितृमाता गोर्ववेच्छातिरिच्छते ।
   Manu, II. 145
acted on some particular occasions. We are familiar with the practice of adapting one or two acts of a play to suit some entertainment programmes, with necessary adjustments for the particular stage. In this connection, we are reminded of the various plays found in the cosy south, in Kerala, which are actually adaptations of the Sanskrit plays used for performances in the temple yard by the Chakkyar from very early times. In the course of discussions about the authenticity of these thirteen Trivandrum plays, learned scholars have drawn our attention to this point. For example, the story of the Rama has been always an attraction for these Chakkyars, and we have the story divided into eight sections, each one called an anka, such as Abhishekanka, Anguliyanka etc. We also have similar stage versions of the plays such as the Ascaryachudamani, the Sakuntala, the Ratnavali, the Subhadrā-Dhananjaya and others, used even to-day. It may be possible that these also are only such stage-adaptations of the original plays, which were lost to posterity, while these survived due to the constant use by the Chakkyars. The similarity in their beginnings and conclusions, and also in other techniques employed, only strengthens this view.

Coming to the third group, we have the Carudatta, the Avimāraka, the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa, and the Svapnavasavadatta, all of which trace their source to the Brhatkathā. Of these, the Carudatta has given room to a lot of discussions and controversies due to its close resemblance with the first portion of Mrchakatika, a prakarana ascribed to Sudraka. Speaking in general, this is the only play among all the thirteen plays that does not show the one characteristic common to all the rest, namely, the theme constituting the loss and restoration of the throne to the hero. Here, in this drama, we are introduced to a completely different set of characters from those of all the other plays which deal with the kings and courts. This is a social play, in which we are brought face to face with courtesans,
Viṣṇa and Cetiṣṭ. The two noble characters portrayed are Čārūdatta who is repeatedly and rather obstinately called Daridra Čārūdatta and Vasantasenā, the courtesan, who is so called only due to her birth and not by character or nature.

A close study of the Mrćchkaṭika attracts our attention to the point that this play can be easily divided into two sections. As Ryder suggests, the former portion of the first act along with the last five acts of Mrćchkaṭika can go to form a consistent and ingenious plot, while the remaining portion, i.e. the portion from the beginning of the latter half of the first act up to the end of the fourth, can go to make a light comedy. That is exactly what seems to have been done by the clever compiler, whoever that may be, in the composition of Čārūdattam which is included in the thirteen plays and ascribed to Bhāsa.

The story told is about the love of Vasantasenā for Čārūdatta, the persecution of the heroine by the king’s brother-in-law, Śakāra, the love of Śarvilaka and Madanikā, the theft committed by Śarvilaka in the house of Čārūdatta, and the restoration of the ornaments of Vasantasenā by the thief himself. The play ends with the heroine starting off to the hero’s house abruptly. The signs of unskilful adaptation for the stage are very obvious in this case.

The only female characters represented here are Vasantasenā, the two maid-servants, Radanikā and Madanikā, belonging to the Master and Mistress respectively, and also the poor wife of Čārūdatta who is love and loyalty personified. The times represented in this play seems to be when a slow prejudice was growing against the freedom women were enjoying. Courtesans had already come into existence to attract the men who were not satisfied with the company of the secluded and submissive wife within the harem. For the first time, we hear of the possibility of buying female beauty in the bazar. The Viṣṭa and Śakāra repeatedly describe that the duty of the courtesan is to please man without any discretion. At the same time, it is also clear that they them-
selves were not pleased with their lots, and there were women like Vasantasenā who cared for character and nobility more than wealth. The buying and selling of women as slaves and getting them freed by payment used to be the custom of the day as could be concluded from the position of Madanikā and the attempt of Sarvilaka to get her freed by paying her mistress. Manu refers to different kinds of slaves among whom those bought as slaves are also included.¹ Though this seems to be an abridged form of some bigger drama, the characters presented are all of a noble nature, specially the female ones. Even Vasantasenā and Madanikā who belong to the lower status in society, due to their being courtesans, show very high and noble qualities.

The Pratijñā Yaugandharāyana and Svapnavāsavadattā are two plays based on the story of Udayana, the king of Kauśāmbī, who is called the Prince charming of the Indian legends. There are a number of romantic stories with him as the central figure. Both these plays trace their sources to the Brhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya. The first one treats of the capture of Udayana by the king of Siṁhala, the famous Pradyota Mahāsenā, and the successful vow of the Brāhmaṇa minister Yaugandharāyana to get him released from the captivity. Actually the idea of Mahāsenā in making king Udayana a captive was to get the latter as the husband for his daughter, Vāsavadattā, though it is not made known to anybody by him. This aim also is fulfilled in the end, because when Udayana is rescued by the faithful minister Yaugandharāyana, and devoted friend Vasantaka, the princess Vāsavadattā, who had fallen in love with Udayana, her music-teacher, also was carried away. The play ends with the marriage of the princess with Udayana, and the blessings given by the parents of Vāsavadattā.

The Svapnavāsavadattā is a sequence of the same story. Because king Udayana became too much engrossed in his

¹. व्यक्तिहृदी भक्तवासी गृहजः क्रीतद्रिकम्।
   वैज्ञानिको दण्डासश्च सप्तेते दासयोगयः॥

   Manu. Ch. IX. 415
beloved wife, he lost all interest in the kingly duties, and consequently lost his kingdom. The Minister, Yaugandharāyana, in coalition with the other ministers, and also in council with the queen herself, indulges in a plot in which the king is made to believe that Vāsavadatta is burnt to death. The marriage with Princess Padmāvatī of Magadha is then made possible, as a result of which the king gets back his kingdom. In the end, Vāsavadatta, who was all the time living under the protection of Padmāvatī in the guise of Avantikā is also returned to the king, and everything ends well. Though the story deals with Udayana as the hero, the leader of the actions in both the plays is Yaugandharāyana, because king Udayana belonged to the Sachivāyatatasiddhi type, and the one end and aim of the Brāhmaṇa minister was the prosperity and fame of his master.

The society represented in these plays shows the growing supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas. Respect to the Brāhmaṇas had become a second nature to the people. There seems to be peace and prosperity reigning in society. The quarrels between the various kings and the consequent battles were limited to the court-circles and the soldiers only. The family-life was not affected much. It was the duty of the ministers to look after the welfare of the state and people in the absence of the king.

The Varnadharma and the Aśramadharma were gradually taking root. The second Aśrama, namely the Grhaṭhāśrama, or the house-holder's life, was considered to be the asset of life in this world. Marriage was considered equally desirable for man and woman. But the marriage of girls had become compulsory. The queen Angāravatī wishes that her daughter may get married soon. At the same time she does not want to part with her. Mahāsenā notices this plight of the mother and expresses it also.¹ The typical attitude of a father, who has a

¹. राजा—प्रदत्तेश्यागता लज्जा दर्शति ब्यक्ति ब्यूढित मनः।
धर्मस्तन्हुःतरे नवस्तता हुःकिता। बलु मातरः। II Pr. Yau. Act II. 7
grown up daughter of marriageable age, is portrayed in the king Mahāsena. The whole of the second act of the Prati-
jāyayugandharāyana gives us an idea as to the conception of the duties of the parents towards their daughters. Marriage seems to have been considered as the end and aim of their lives, as far as women were concerned. The parents tried their best to obtain a suitable bridegroom for their daughter, but the result was considered to be in the hands of God. The qualities desired in a bridegroom were manifold. Of those courage and power were the most important, because women had indeed to be protected in all circumstances. The mothers were more anxious when their daughters attained the age of marriage, and the girls were to be consulted before the decision was taken.

Queen Angāravati and the mother of Vatsarāja are rather contrast types to each other. The wife of Mahāsena is a submissive and loving wife. But the mother of Udayana seems to be quite independent and efficient in all matters. She is capable enough even to give advice to the clever minister Yaugandharāyana in matters of state in the absence of the king. Still it is also noticeable that both the queens were only shadows, as it were, of their husbands whether alive or dead. Angāravati is respected and honoured by her husband Mahāsena. She in her turn considers herself to be his most obedient servant.

The daughters were treated with love and consideration.

1. राजा—ब्रत्तिवऽभादरगुणानामतित्वोम्ह वासवदत्तायां
   न शक्नोभि निर्वचयं गतुस्मु || Pr. Yau. Act II.

2. राजा—कल्याया: वरसम्पति: पितू: प्राय: प्रवलन: ।
   भाग्येयु शेषमावतं हुष्टपर्यं न चाभ्यया || Pr. Yau. Act II. 5

3. राजा—कुल ताबच्चुलाध्वत्म प्रथममभिकावः हि मनसा ।
   तत: सानुक्रोश मृदुरपि गुणो होप बलवाव् ।।
   ततो रूपे कार्ति न खलु गुणत: स्त्रीजनमयादु ।
   ततो बीयोद्वर्यं न हि न परिपाल्या गुवतयः ।। Pr. Yau. Act II. 4
They were given some kind of education. But training in music and other fine arts alone seems to be considered necessary for the girls of noble families. The reference to Uttara, the lady-teacher of music, points out the custom of women taking up teaching of fine arts as a profession. At the same time this kind of education could not have been common; for Mahasena enquires of the queen, how did Vasavadatta come to have a desire to learn the lute.

The whole conversation gives an impression that the king as well as the queen were in no way anxious that their daughter should get trained in music, vocal or instrumental. And Mahasena seems to be less willing to yield to his daughter's wishes. Even after he is asked to provide her with a teacher, he answers in an indifferent way, "Where is the necessity of a teacher for her now that she is about to be married? Now her husband will teach her." Perhaps, these were the trends of thought which finally led to the ruling of Manu that marriage shall be the initiation ceremony for girls, the husband her teacher and the household duties her sacrifices. The statements of Mahasena, "Vasavadatta has, in every way, reached the age which makes her capable of serving her parents-in-law's house" and "let her play now, when she can; this will not be possible in her father-in-law's house", indicate how the parents dreaded the fate of their

1 देवी—उत्तराया: बैतालिंक्या सकाळे वीणां शिष्यतुं नारदीया गतातीव।
Pr. Yau. Act II.

2. राजा—कब्जुक्तज्ञाय गांधबुभित्व।
   देवी—केनापि किलोदातेन काठजनमाला वीणायोग्यां कुर्वती गृहय शिष्यति तुकमासीव।
   राजा—सह्यं वाल्यं।
Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 75

3. राजा—उपस्वितविवाहकालया: किमिदानीमाकायोग्यं पतिरिपेनां शिलिक्ष्यति।
   Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 76

4. राजा—सच्चं श्वायुपरिचरणसमवं बयसि वर्तते वासवदत्ता।
   Ibid.

5. क्रीडतु, क्रीडतु। नैतव सुलभं श्वायुरकुले।
   Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 81
daughters in the houses of their parents-in-law. The sum and substance of all their thoughts about the bridegroom is given in the words of Angāravati, "She should be given in such a place where we would not have to repent after giving."

Though the main concern of arranging the marriage of their daughters was that of the parents, the consent of the girls was sought in right earnest. In the Svapnavāsavadattā, the maidservant tells Avantikā that though the king Pradyota was anxious to make Padmāvatī his daughter-in-law, the princess herself did not favour the idea. The marriages in the royal families were not necessarily intended for the perpetuation of the race; nor were they necessarily caused by love. Instead they were more often brought about in order to fulfil some political motives. Both the marriages of Udayana described in the respective dramas are evidences to this point. The reason why Mahāsenā was anxious to get Vatsarāja as prisoner is that though the former had become all-powerful, the proud Udayana did not bow his head before him. If, therefore, that king was captured and made to accept his daughter's hand, Mahāsenā would have no rival in the political arena.

The whole plot of Svapnavāsavadattā centres round the conspiracy of Yaugandharāyana motivated by his desire to make his king a sovereign lord on earth. In fact, two motives appear to govern the plot of this play, political as well as psychological, with the clever brains of Yaugandharāyana

1. देवी—किमिदानी विस्तरेण । यत्र दत्ता न सत्त्यामहे तत्र दीयताम् ।
   Pr. Yau. Act II. p. 76

2. चेदी—भयो वारिका तेन राजा सह सम्बक्षं नैक्षवति ।

3. राजा—मम हम्मुरमन्न मान्यरेणु नरिस्त्रा
   मुखतापिवलतं शृष्ट्यभूता वहनिः ।
   न च मम परितोषो यन्त मां वस्त्रराजः
   प्रणमति गुणवाली कुख्सरामानहस: ।
   Pr. Yau. Act II. 3
working behind the scenes all the time. The play is concerned with two restorations, the restoration of Udayana to his throne and of Vāsavadattā to her husband, the separation of the king and his beloved queen itself being the doing of the minister to achieve the political motive. The king was getting negligent about the affairs of the state due to his attachment to the newly wedded queen, and this had resulted in the loss of his kingdom. The alliance with Darśaka, the brother of the princess Padmāvatī, was one sure way by which Udayana could regain his kingdom. So, Yaugandharāyana hatched the plot, with this motive in his mind. In this drama, we find that the political motive works in the background while the main picture depicts a series of domestic events.

These plays point to a period when various small kingdoms existed, and when one king or another secured supremacy over the others according to his strength or strategy. To achieve this end, military alliances were secured by marriage alliances. Udayana, according to a modern writer, is the Prince Arthur of the Indian legends. His romance and love adventures were made use of by his ambitious minister Yaugandharāyana in securing alliances with almost all the powerful kings of his time.

Marriages by mutual love, the Gāndharva type, and that by capture, the Rākṣasa type, were accepted as legal among the Kṣatriyas at about the period after 400 B.C. The carrying away of the daughter of Pradyota by Vatsarāja, though by mutual consent, was accepted by the parents of the princess. But they would not leave it at that. They considered it necessary to perform the marriage ritual in the approved manner, keeping at least the portraits of the bride and bridegroom in their places. Perhaps, this is an indication of the fact that the Gāndharva type of marriage was slowly outgrowing its time and the proper marriage ceremony performed by the parents was necessary to get the approval of the society.
Polygamy was not unknown then. Udayana testifies to this fact when he inquires about the welfare of his mother-in-law from Vasundharā in the Svapnavaśavadattā. Still it does not seem to have become the custom of the day. People seem to have scruples about marrying again while the first wife is alive. Udayana, though very romantic by nature, would not dream of marrying a second time, with Vāsavadattā by his side. Neither would king Dārśaka give his sister in marriage to a person who has a wife living already. That is why Vāsavadattā had to be removed from the scene, before such a marriage could even be contemplated. Of course, Yaugandharāyana could easily win over the queen to do any thing in her power to secure the prosperity and welfare of her husband. And thus the queen Vāsavadattā became dead, for all practical purposes, though she was living and witnessing everything that happened in Udayana’s court. Even so, it is seen that the king as well as Padmāvatī were very careful not to hurt each other by any unwelcome words or deeds. Further they both are equally anxious not to give any cause of grievance to the relations of Vāsavadattā also.

The way in which queen Angāravatī, in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyana, and Padmāvatī, in the Svapnavaśavadattā, stand up to go away at the announcement of strangers, perhaps suggests that the appearance of women in public freely was not considered laudable in that period. It is plain

1. राजा—पोढाणातःपुरुषेष्ठा पुष्या नगरदेवता।
मम प्रवाससुःखाता माता कुशलिनी ननु॥ Sv. Va. Act VI. 9

2. राजा—(प्रायस्मतम्)
इव वासा नवोदाहरात् सत्यं भृत्वा व्यवहारं ब्रजेद्।
कार्यं धीरस्वमावेऽस्त्रीवद्भास्वतु कारः॥ Sv. Va. Act. IV. 8
प्रायश्चीति—प्रायपुन्निर्वापमः परिप्रेम: हल्यवदासीनिमि भवति।
Sv. Va. VI. p. 47

3. प्रायश्चीति—प्रायस्मुः! तातो बाद्वा वा किं नु खलु भणिभट्टिवयविभेदाभृत्ता।
Sv. Va. VI. p. 48
from the contexts quoted, that noble women were not expected to expose themselves to public gaze and only on special occasions, when desired by their husbands, they remained with the latter to meet any one from outside. At the same time there seems to be another aspect of the question. If women retired from the presence of honoured guests or relatives, it might be taken as an insult by the latter. While the messengers from Mahāsena were announced, and Padmāvatī wished to retire, Udayana reminded her that they might take it amiss that she retired from their presence.¹

The Brahmachārī who comes to the penance grove hesitates to enter, because he saw Vāsavadattā there in disguise. His words "Oh! there are women!"² perhaps indicate that men were not expected to enter the places frequented by women. But it may also be noted that all these rules apply only to married women. Maidens, and women retired to the penance groves, were not forbidden to be seen by men. For example, neither Vāsavadattā nor Padmāvatī was in seclusion before her marriage. Vāsavadattā was seen by Udayana from his prison-house while she was visiting the Yakšī temple for worship in an open palanquin.³ And Padmāvatī, when she went to the penance grove, was accessible to every one.

Married women perhaps had to follow a set code of behaviour. The character of women was so jealously guarded in those days that it was very necessary to keep them above suspicion. It seems to be a purposeful device of Yaugandharāyana

1. राजा—कल्यावर्त्तानां जनं कल्यावर्त्तानां परिहर्दीतति ब्रह्मदैभानौ पायवति।
   तत्स्मादायताम्।
   Sv. Va. Act VI. p. 48

2. ब्रह्मचारी—प्रवृम्य स्वीक्षणः।
   Sv. Va. Act I. p. 8

3. विद्वृक्ष:—या सा कालान्नी अर्थात्का, तस्यां तताभवति वासवदत्ता नाम राजवर्तिका धानिधित्वाय कर्त्तकायं निर्द्वोषक्षिति कृत्वापनीतः
   कर्त्तकायं विलिबाच्यां च विशिष्टायो भवदुर्वृक्षातिनाः भगवत्त्याय वलिष्ठाः: स्फानं, तत्स्मिन्देवकायं कर्तृं गतासीतः।
   Pr. Yau. Act III. p. 91
that he kept Vāsavadattā in the keeping of Padmāvati, whom he was planning to make Udayana’s wife in the very near future. This is proved by his own words to Padmāvati at the beginning,¹ and in another place as a soliloquy.² Women who were separated from their husbands were expected to lead a very simple life. Avantikā’s life in the palace of Udayana by the side of Padmāvati is a good example. She seems to follow the rules laid down by Yājñavalkya ³ to the letter. This ideal life of hers is later on testified by Padmāvati herself.⁴ Generally, the women of the royal family lived within the inner apartments strictly guarded by the Chamberlain. The manner and formalities to be observed within the harem—the “antahpura samudācāra”—are emphasised in all the thirteen Trivandrum plays. To be well beloved by her husband was the greatest good fortune that any woman could be blessed with. The words of the Brahmacārī concerning Vāsavadattā are quite noteworthy in this connection. He says, “that woman is indeed fortunate whom her husband considers thus; she is really not dead though burnt, as she is so well loved by her husband.”⁵

In both these dramas, there are references to the separate modes of dresses for different provinces. Vāsavadattā ¹

1. योगन्धरायणः—चीरा कन्येः ह्रुष्यमन्यवारा शकता चारिन्यः रक्षित्युः ने
भगिन्यः।
Sv. Va. Act I. 9

2. योगन्धरायणः—(प्रातमगतम्) ततः प्रितिहिते स्वामिनिः तत्रभवतीमुपनयतोः मे
इहात्रभवती मंगचाराजयुः विद्वातस्वां मिविच्यति।

3. क्रोधं शरीरसंस्कारं समाजोत्सवदर्शनं।
हस्यं परस्परे यानं व्यक्तवेत् प्रितितमत् का।
Yājñavalkya S. IV. 84

4. परावती—प्रितितमत् का परस्परदर्शनं परिहरति।
Sv. Va. Act VI. p. 52

5. भ्रातुराचारी—नन्देदाती ताहसाचक्रवाका नैवायित्वे छोविते विविक्ताः।
वन्या सा मी यां तथा वेत्ता भर्ति भूतं लेखावृत सा हि दर्शायद्वमा।
in the disguise of Avantikā is described in the stage direction as “one who is dressed according to the custom of Avanti,” or Avanti-veṣadhārīni.

Nothing is heard about the education of women in this period more than what we have already noted in these pages, though education among men seems to have been of quite a high standard. We see here that women also retired to the forest in their old age and their relatives came to pay respects to them off and on. Peace and contentment seem to have reigned over those places of retirement. The respect towards Brahmāṇas seems to be on the ascendency. Still, there is nothing to suggest that the social classes had bound themselves down within the hard walls of caste system.

Belief in fate, rebirth and reaping the fruits of one’s own deeds appears to have got a strong hold on the minds of the people. The words of prophets and sages were held as gospel truths. Such beliefs were so strong that clever and intelligent people like Yaugandharāyāna allowed their whole plans concerning even the welfare of the kings and the countries to be influenced by those prophecies. It is because some siddhas prophesied that Padmāvatī was destined to be Udayana’s wife that he dared to go to the extent of proclaiming the queen herself to be dead¹.

Apart from Padmāvatī, Vāsavadattā and the two queen-mothers, the other female characters portrayed in these two plays are only ordinary characters necessary to carry on the dramatic representation smoothly. They have nothing special to tell the student about the contemporary society or the women in particular.

1. Yūgamāryayān :— (prayatnātma)
पंथावती नरपतेमंहिंही भविष्य
ह्यं किलपितिरथ ये: प्रथमं प्रदिष्ट ।
तत्रविलयं कुतुमिं न हि सिद्धवाल्या
न्यूत्क्रम्य गच्छति विषि: सुरीश्विताति ॥

Sv. Vā. Act I, 11
Passing on to the Avimāraka, the third play which traces its source to the Brhatkathā, we meet with quite a different atmosphere. There is a vast difference between the two Udayana plays and this drama with a Vidyadhara prince as its hero. It is filled with fanciful and fantastic ideas. Though intended to be a play, it appears more to be a narration with suitable actions and gesticulations. The introduction of supernatural influences also has reduced its value and interest as a dramatic piece of art.

This being the case, it is only natural that we are not able to gather much useful information as to the existing social conditions or any other details. The aim of this play seems to be nothing more than to give the audience a little enjoyment and surprise. The entrance of Nārada and his presenting the ring with magical powers to Avimāraka, and similar incidents, do give momentary enjoyment mingled with wonder to the people. But we miss in this drama the impressive and admirable dramatic technique and the natural delineation of characters found in the other two plays.

The eagerness of the parents to get their daughter married is clear in this play also. The possibility for the young prince Avimāraka to enter the apartments of the maiden princess, his being able to live there with her for more than one year, the handing over of her son by Sudarśanā to the queen of Sauvīrarāja and similar other incidents reflect a condition of society in which the actions of women were unscrupulous and untrustworthy. Such portrayals of women could only help the growing suspicion and bad feelings against women which seem to have taken root in the society about this period. We have already noticed that in this period, there were two definitely opposite trends of thought traceable in society—one supporting women and the other denouncing them as doors to hell. This particular play may be a pointer towards that trend of thought which was being propagated by those who were out to discredit women. Bhāsa was not a person who looked down upon women.
Nor are women denounced in any other of the plays ascribed to him. The light mood, the abundance of supernatural powers used in it, and the inferior technique traceable in this play make two conclusions possible: either this drama is the work of some other poet who held adverse opinions about women, or Bhāsa himself wrote this in an adverse way with the intention of ridiculing those who exaggerated the evil as attributed to women, and to please an audience, which was neither capable of, nor interested in, understanding the deeper meaning of life or real dramatic art and technique, but was only eager to witness some strange and miraculous spectacles.

The Bālacarita, based on the story of Kṛṣṇa, as found in the Harivaṃśa, retells the story of Kṛṣṇa's childhood in a very effective and attractive way. The only female characters presented are Devaki and the girls of Gokula. All the characters as depicted in this play are almost the prototypes of the same characters as found in the Hari-vaṃśa or the Bhagavata. There may not be anything wrong in concluding that these represent the simple folk of the society the poet saw.

There is another play called the Yajñaphala, recently published and ascribed to Bhāsa. This deals with the story contained in the Bālakanda of the Rāmāyana. It describes the advent of the sage Viśvāmitra to take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the forest, the killing of the Rākṣasas by the princes, their going to Mithilā, the meeting of Sītā and Rāma, their love at first sight, and then the final scene of the happy union of the couple. Even a rapid reading of the text is enough to convince us about the absurdity of ascribing this play to the great poet. There is no similarity whatever between the Trivandrum plays and this newly published play in plot- construction, delineation of characters, scenes, imageries, or even language and diction. The scenes of love between Rāma and Sītā described in this play are, to say the least, jarring to those who are accustomed to hear of this ideal
couple of India in the language of Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. In these scenes, we are able to trace the shadows of the first three acts of the Abhijñāna Śākuntalam, though these are only an apology to an imitation when one goes diving deeper into the text. These and other internal evidences point clearly to a later date and crude intellect of the anonymous poet who has taken the trouble of adding one more number to the innumerable stereotyped dramas existing in Sanskrit literature.

The female characters depicted in this play are Sītā and her friends who are really poor imitations of the princesses and their friends found in the romantic plays of the poets after Kālidāsa. The love-sick condition of the hero and the heroine alone has been attractive to this poet, whoever he may be. There is nothing worthy of notice about the female characters depicted herein.

Another poet who wrote in this period is Aśvaghoṣa. Up till the last part of the 19th century, Aśvaghoṣa was only a name to the Sanskrit scholars. But, now, many important works of this great poet have come to light, and scholars have found enough evidence to consider him as a poet who wrote much earlier than Kālidāsa. The Sāriputra Prakaraṇa is a drama ascribed to this poet. There is another allegorical drama also recovered and published recently.

Dr. De, in his treatise on Sanskrit dramatic literature, says, “Aśvaghoṣa is a poet by nature, a highly cultured man by training, and a deeply religious devotee by conviction”1 He was a Buddhist and his works are mostly religious, eulogizing Buddha or Buddhism. The colophon found at the end of the third act of the Sāriputra Prakaraṇa helps us with the name of the work, as well as of the author, beyond any doubt. This play is found only in fragments. But they afford clear testimony to the fact that Sanskrit drama

1. De and Dasgupta : History of Sanskrit Literature; p. 147
possessed a fairly developed technique at the time when this poet was writing. In these fragments, no mention of women characters is found, and so we have to be silent as far as our particular subject of study is concerned.

Śūdraka’s Mrćchakatākī is another earliest play that attracts our attention and holds it by the various interesting women-characters. In the long and varied history of Sanskrit dramas, this play occupies a unique place. It is a prakaraṇa, and in the prologue itself the whole life-history of Śūdraka, the author, is given. But the very construction of the statement in the past perfect tense causes confusion in doubting minds. There is actually no definite information about the author, apart from what is found in the above-mentioned prologue. Some scholars go to the extent of even dismissing this very name as fictitious and ascribe this play to a poet of much later date—Dandin. But there is no more reason to disbelieve the information given in this prologue than to believe the story that Mrćchakatākī is an expanded form of Cārudatta, ascribed to Bhāsa. There is a king Śūdraka referred to in the Padmapurāṇa, and there are other reasons to accept this king as the author of this Sanskrit play, which shows more dramatic effect and utility on the stage than any other drama belonging to that early period.

In any case, there is nothing to hinder us from making a close study of the female characters depicted in this play,

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1. सूत्वार :—एतकविं : किल—
ढिरेदन्तशतिक्कोररेण : परिपूर्णान्तोऽस्म: मुविप्रहः।
ढिमस्यतमः : कविवेयुवः प्रभीतः : शुद्धक हत्यागाः सस्य:।
शुद्धेऽद सास्वेऽद ग्रंथात्मकां शैविकां हस्तिविलां
शत्वा शाप्प्रसादात्प्पगतातिमरे चचापृषी चोपलमय।
राजानं श्रीक्ष्य पुरं परमस्मुद्येनाश्मेचेत चेत्ता
लङ्काय चायु : शतायद्व द्वादिनसहितं शुद्धकोजिनं प्रविष्टा :।

Mrcch. Act I. 3-4
which at every step provides us with evidences of a masterly imagination and intellect at work. This play presents before us a variety of women-characters, the Brāhmaṇa wife and the courtesan, the servant-maid of a noble lineage and also the women of lower character. Not only this, there are very interesting characters drawn from all grades of society—from the virtuous Brāhmaṇi to the old courtesan well-versed in the art of money-making, from the high souled Brāhmaṇa to the daring thief: all of them giving an impression of individuals with life and action, with diversified interests. The scene is set in the cosmopolitan city Ujjayinī and, as the prologue itself testifies, portrays a graphic picture of the contemporary society.¹

Mrçchakāṭikā belongs to the type called prakaraṇa.² According to the dramaturgists, the plot should be the invention of the poet, based on the general life of the people; the hero should belong to the dhirapraśānta type, and must be a Brāhmaṇa or merchant or minister; the heroine can be either a noble-born woman or a courtesan; and love should be the main sentiment. We cannot say that

1. सूत्रचारः—पृष्ठस्यं च तत्काली
प्रवन्तिपुर्वं दिवसार्थवाही युवा दरिद्रः किल चार्कैत्तः ।
गुणानुरक्ता गरिष्णा च वस्त्र वसत्तथोभयेव वसत्तथेना ।।
तयोरिव सत्यसुरतोत्षाधयं नयप्राचरं भ्यवहारदुःखाताम्।
शतस्वभावं भवित्वयं तथा चकार सर्व किल शूरङ्को गुपः ॥

Mrçch. Act I. 6-7

2. (श) प्रात्मवाण्यं कविज्ञेन कथा नायकमेव च।
शौत्तरिकं प्रकृते तत्थि प्रकरणं विदुः।।
दिया प्रकरणं तत्तु शुद्ध संकोचाभिमेव च।
कुलस्थिरतं शुद्ध संकोचं वेष्यया कहत॥ N. S. XXXV.

(श्र) महाबलकरेऽवृत्तं लोकं कविकल्पितम्।।
श्रवणारोपणं नायकस्तु विप्रोमालोभोजव्य कणिक्।
सापायवर्मकामार्यं धीप्रशास्तकः।।

S. D. VI. 224-225
this drama fulfils all the requirements of the rules, nor can it be said that it does not. The theme of this play is as curious as its title. For the first time we come across a hero who belongs to the class of the ordinary human beings. We are able to forget the kings and queens and the royal atmosphere to come down to the ordinary and natural life of the real world. As we read through this play, we come to have a feeling of descending, as it were, to the firm rock of grim reality, from the flowery path constituted of poetry and imagination alone.

The idea of a courtesan in love with a Brāhmaṇa is found in the story of Rupanikā in the Brhatkathā. The original work of Gunaḍhyā is lost to us, but the Kathāsaritsāgara gives us the stories faithfully to the original. There we get a reference to the courtesan being advised by her mother not to get herself entangled with a poor man. If at all the original of this had served as the source for Śudraka, he has taken only the skeleton, and having supplied flesh and blood, he has also injected new life into it.

The Mrcchakatikā is a most enjoyable drama, as a literary piece as well as a piece on the stage. In this drama, it seems that all the three aims of a play as given by Bharata are fulfilled. Among the hundreds of stereotyped plays in Sanskrit, this play reveals to us quite a different and pleasant atmosphere. There is such a variety of incidents occuring close upon one another, almost at a breakneck speed, acting and reacting on one another, but steadily leading up to the final goal. The skilful combining of the love-story with the political events is simply marvellous.

1. किमवं पुष्पः पुष्पि, निर्धनं: सेव्यंते लब्या ।
शयं स्थावतं मुखं गणिका न तु निर्धनं ॥
कानुरागः क्षेष्यवर्षं इति ते विस्मृतं करयं ॥
सन्न्यायो रामस्या वेद्या न च चरं पुष्पं दीप्यते ॥
नटीव कृत्वं प्रेम गणिकावर्षवं दश्येदु।
तदेनं निर्धनं मुखम् मा कृष्या नाशमात्मनः ॥
Kathā. S. 12
The delineation of the varied and innumerable characters is extraordinarily successful. None of them is a mere ideal or a slavish image. Most of them are faced with the dark side of life, but they seem to go undaunted on their onward march with a resolute and philosophical smile on their lips. Even thieving and gambling are portrayed as fine arts. The philosophy of life even from the mouth of the executioners and slaves is quite significant, in so far as these point to the ideas current in the contemporary society. The atmosphere of the Mrçchakatika breathes of a time when the highest philosophy of life was being moulded. The path of action, the karma marga, was to be followed without any consideration for the results or the future. Even the lowest characters seem to be permeated with the spirit of Indian culture, with its ideas of life after death, and also the doctrine of karma. This play seems to give us a fair picture of the contemporary Indian society in its various aspects. It will not be out of place to survey the society in general, here, before taking up the women-characters depicted in this play.

Ujjayini is described as a gay, prosperous city which attracted various people from different countries. Samvahaka and Sarvilaka are two examples. Inland and maritime trade seems to be in a flourishing condition. There are many merchant millionaires, equally prosperous and charitably minded. The town was enlivened by rich courtesans who had their own ideas of right and wrong, and who dared to act

1. चाण्डालः—प्रायँचाश्वलः गगनतले प्रतिवासनाय चन्द्रसूर्यार्बोधि विपां वमेते। कि पुराज्ञा मराणभीशका मानवा वा। लोके कोष्पुलतः पतति कोषिपि पतितोऽपुलिष्ठते। Mrçch. Act X.

2. चेतः—ताम्रयु मृठः मारपथु मृठः प्रकार्यं न करिष्यामि। वेनासम गर्भदारो विनिष्यती भाष्येयदर्षः। ब्रह्मकं च न क्रियामि वेनाकार्यं परिह्यामि। Mrçch. Act VIII. 25.
according to their convictions. They seem to be cultured enough to realise the noble qualities in people and court them in spite of sure troubles and even death. Gambling also seems to have rules to regulate it. The four castes are known by name. But the supremacy of the priestly class does not seem to have taken root in the soil. The change of professions among castes does not seem to be any thing unusual. The Brāhmaṇa Cārudatta is a merchant by profession. Another Brāhmaṇa uses his brains to become an expert in the art of theft. Vīraka and Candanaka, barber and shoemaker respectively by birth, are seen holding responsible positions in the defence department of the Government. Again and again it is heard that family or birth does not count. What really matters is character. For, even in a fertile field it is quite possible that thorn-trees grow in abundance. Slavery was in vogue, but it was possible to get the slaves freed by payment of money to the master or the mistress. There are two cases to illustrate this custom in the play: one of Madanikā, who was released by generous-hearted Vasantasena, and the other of Sthāvaraka who was set free by the order of Āryaka, the new king. We have already noticed that the custom of buying and selling servants was existent in the Āryan society, and is recorded in the Manusmṛti also. The king had the power to change the position of a person, as is testified by the numerous orders of Āryaka which were carried out by Śarvilaka in the tenth act of this play. Vasantasena being given the position of a woman of noble lineage and also the freedom granted to Sthāvaraka are examples to the point.

1. कि कुलेनिपितते कीलमेवात्र कारकाम्।
भवति हुतरां स्पीता: मुलेने कष्टकिमुग्मः॥
Mrchch. Act VIII. 29 and Act IX. 7.

2. श्वाज्राढ्यो भक्तदसो गुहजः कीलदत्रिमो।
पैविको दण्डासाथ्र सप्तेते दासयोनय:॥ Manu. VIII. 415.
All the conditions described or indicated in this play point to a time which was very near to the 2nd century, A.D. The judicial system as represented in the play at the trial of Cārudatta¹ and also the contention of his that he should have been tried by means of ordeals before finally condemning him to death,² shows the author's knowledge of the system of law as expounded by Yājñavalkya. The reference to Pālaka as beginning the Yajña and his being killed in the Yajñashāla,³ are indications to show that Vedic sacrifices were still in vogue. The handing over of the sacred thread by Cārudatta to his son as the last present⁴ also shows that the sacredness of the same was held high among the people at the time.

Even as the male characters, so also the female characters portrayed by Śudraka are all true to nature, with individualities of their own. Vasantasenā, the heroine, Dhūtā, the wife of the hero Cārudatta, Madanikā and Radanikā, the respective maid-servants of the heroine and the hero, and the old mother of Vasantasenā are the main female characters who attract our attention. Though a courtesan

1. Mrçch. Act IX.
2. चारदतः—वियतलिलबुलाप्रिप्रापिते मे विचारे
निकनिमित्वो शरीरे वीष्य दातव्यमय ।
ब्रह्म रिपुचनाडा ब्राह्यण मां निहिसि
पति नरकमथे पुत्रपीते समेतः ॥
Mrçch. Act IX. 43
3. शविलकः—पचुवनञवत्स्यो दुरात्मा पालको हृतः ॥
Mrçch. Act X. 51
4. चारदतः—कि पुनः प्रयञ्जनाभिमि । (भार्त्तानमृववलोक्य यशोपवीतं हृदा) प्रां हरं ताक्षणि सम म ।
शराहन्तनं कौमसौस्वर्यं ब्राह्यानं मम ब्रह्मपुराणां ।
देवतानां पितृएं च भागो वेन प्रदीपिते ॥
Mrçch. Act X. 18
by birth and breeding, Vasantasena stands out as a noble and good Hindu woman to be honoured and loved. No other heroine in the Sanskrit literature is able to produce a permanent impression on the mind as this famous courtesan of Ujjayini. She has neither the girlish charm of Sakuntala, nor the mature womanly dignity of Dhārini. Witty and wise, disillusioned and sophisticated, she has seen much of a sordid world. Yet, she has a heart for romance. She is introduced on the stage as a courtesan, and makes her exist as a noble lady, the wedded wife of the most noble and honoured man in Ujjayini.

Vasantasena possesses all the qualities that go to make an ideal lady, viz, nobility of heart, sincerity, constancy, kindness, love for children, and a high sense of dignity. She is described, in the prologue itself, as a courtesan who loves virtues, which sounds paradoxical. It seems to be as nonexistent as the flower in the sky. She who is rolling in wealth and is wooed by the brother-in-law of the king himself, with presents worth ten thousand gold coins, is on her part madly in love with a poor Brähmana merchant, who cannot even make both ends meet. Her answer to her mother, who asks her to go to Saṁsthānaka, shows her mentality clearly. She tells the servant-girl, who brought the message from the old woman, "If mother wants me to remain alive, she should not send me such orders; go and tell her this." By this answer, she is not only showing her repulsion to the brother-in-law of the king, but she is actually refusing to continue in the profession.

She worships Cārudatta as a god, though she would have nothing to do with kings, ministers, or rich people. For, her idea is not to serve but to enjoy. Neither does she de-

1. "...गुणानुरक्ता गणिका..."
2. वसन्तसेना—यदि मां जीवन्तिमिथ्च्छि तदेवं न पुनर्रहु मात्राजापितव्या।
3. वसन्तसेना—रत्नमिथ्च्छामि न सेवितु।
sire the company of Brāhmaṇa scholars, because they are only worthy of worship as far as she is concerned.¹ Nor are rich traders able to satisfy her, as they always want to leave their beloveds and go in pursuit of more and more riches and thus give more sorrow than happiness.² And she professes that, as far as she is concerned, virtues are instrumental to the feeling of love not force.³ Not only this, she is also aware that a courtesan who loves a poor man will be beyond dispraisy in this world.⁴ The intensity of her love and admiration for Cārudatta is such that any object associated with Cārudatta is sacred and holy to her. Śamvāhaka receives a right royal welcome in her house, because he had the privilege to serve the noble Brāhmaṇa for some time in the past. When Śakāra insultingly calls him ‘daridra Cārudatta’ she is almost mad with rage and kicks the former, thus actually inviting death. With her unassuming and frank nature, she secures a place for herself in the hearts of every one in the household of Cārudatta, including Dhūta, the wedded wife of her lover. In all humility she sends back the diamond-necklace presented to her by Cārudatta in place of the stolen ornaments with a suitable message to the noble Dhūta.⁵ She could not bear to see little Rohasena weeping for a shining toy-cart. Hence she gives away all her golden ornaments to get a golden toy-cart made for him. Here it is more her motherly love for Rohasena that is re-

1. वसन्तसेना—पुजनीयो मे ब्राह्मणजनः। Mrcch. Act. II. P. 50
2. वसन्तसेना—उपास्वदनेहमपि पश्चायिन्परित्यज्य देशान्तरामनेन वाणिज्य-जनो महद्वियोग्यः दुःखमुच्याति। Mrcch. Act II. P. 50
3. वसन्तसेना—गुणोऽविद्या अनुरागस्य कारणः, न पुनर्विलाक्याः। Mrcch. Act I. P. 23
4. वसन्तसेना—दरिद्रपुरुषस्तवकल्तमनः कल्य गरिकाका लोकाकर्जनीया भवति। Mrcch. Act II. P. 51
5. वसन्तसेना—प्रहुः श्रीचार्यलस्य गुणनिष्टा दासी तदा गुणाकर्मि।
   तदेवा तवेत कण्ठामरणं भवतु रत्नावली। Mrcch. Act VI. P. 176
vealed than the admiration and love she bears for his father.

Her sense of humour and jolly temper is seen in the very dramatic situation that she creates in giving Madanikā to Śarvilaka, when he brings the stolen ornaments according to advice given to him by Madanikā, her equally clever and resourceful maid-in-company. The whole scene reveals the nobility of Vasantasesa's heart. When, in the end, Śarvilaka enters the scene as the representative of the new king and bestows the status of a kulavadhū on her, one cannot help feeling that this was the most proper thing the king has done.

Dhūtā, the wife of the hero, is seen only once or twice on the scene. She is the ideal Hindu wife as described in the Epics and Manusmṛti. Her sole purpose in life is to safeguard the happiness, good name and welfare of her husband. Her ideals are the same as those of her husband and it is clearly shown that she is the real sahadharmacārīti. Character is the only thing that counts with her also. She prefers bodily wounds to the wounds on the character.1 The way in which she offers the priceless necklace to save her husband’s name, though she knew very well that it would go to her rival, and a courtesan for that matter, is simply admirable. It seems to represent a time when women had the sense of honour and dignity even as men themselves, if not more. Rightly does Maitreya remark, "Friend! accept this, the result of marrying a wife suitable to you in every way."2 Dhūtā’s answer to Vasantasesa while returning the necklace is quite befitting her position as the better-half of the noble Cārudatta, and also her own noble nature. She sends word, "My lord has given it as a present to you. It is not

1. वचूः—चेटि फ़ि कि भृगुसिंहिव प्रपरिक्षतत्त्वरीर भाययुज्ञः इति। वरमिवद्वा स मारीरेण परिपि्यतः न युनःस्वारिष्योऽः म्रच्छ. एक्ष्म. एक्ष्म. प. 100
2. विद्वूषकः—भो! यत्स महत्त्वद्वास्थ्यस्तत्त्वस्य फलम्। म्रच्छ. एक्ष्म. प. 102
proper that I should take it back. Further, you must know that my husband is my greatest ornament. Maitreya obeys her commands without a question, which shows the high regard he had for his friend’s wife. Her love for her husband is such that she cannot brook the idea of hearing evil news about him. She prefers committing the sin of suicide, and prepares to enter the fire before the news could reach her. When every thing ends well and all come home, including Vasantasena as the wedded wife of her husband, none is more happy than Dhūta, who welcomes the latter as her own sister.

Madanikā and Radanikā are the two maidservants of Vasantasena and Chārudatta respectively. Both befit the situations they hold in the respective households and suit very well their respective master and mistress. Madanikā is a sprightly young lady, very clever and intelligent, as is proved on more than one occasion. Her advice to Sarvilaka how to manage the situation, made difficult by his stealing the ornament from Cārudatta’s house, is indeed very admirable. Her conversations with her mistress on various occasions show her as a practical woman with a sense of humour and quick repartee. She is loyal to her mistress and has a high regard for her. She is very sad to part with her. Her love for Sarvilaka also is very deep and sincere. At the same time, she, as a true wife, would not have him shirk his duty. She sends him to rescue his friend, who is in danger, immediately after they are united.

Radanikā is the right kind that suits a house like that of Cārudatta. She is also a loyal and sincere servant who respects character in preference to wealth. She has her own

1. चेटी—प्रायः ! भण्ट्यायिञ्छ धूता—प्रायज्ञुष्ट्रवेण युम्भाकं प्रसादीक्षुद्वता । न युक्तं ममेतां प्रहोतुमु । प्रायज्ञुष्ट्र एव ममाभरणबिशेष एति जानानं भवति ।
   Mrcch. Act VI. P. 176

2. धूता—विभेम्यायंप्रस्त्याम ज्ञपाक्षणानातु । । । । चररायं-पुत्रस्याम ज्ञपाक्षणानामु ।
   Mrcch. Act X. P. 333
simple and comely individuality that distinguishes her even as a maid in the house. The scenes with the Šakāra and also with Vasantasenā are examples to the point.

Vasantasenā's mother, the old courtesan, appears on the scene only once, while she is called to the court to give evidence against Cārūdatta. Of course, once before, she had sent a message to her daughter asking her to accept the advances of Saṁsthānaka and was refused obedience. That comes to us only as a hearsay. The little seen of her on the scene is enough to convince us that, though an old courtesan, well advanced in her profession, she was not devoid of the qualities that go to make a good woman. Her futile attempts to save Cārūdatta, in spite of the fact that he was denounced for the murder of her own daughter, is indeed very pathetic. Her whole behaviour in court, as depicted by the poet, makes one forget every thing about her being a despicable bazar woman. We begin to question ourselves, "if left alone, would she also have not developed into a good and chaste woman?" Our hearts go out in sympathy to her in her bereavement.

We have already noticed the general condition of society as found in this play. We have enough material to gather that women were neither as free as they were in the Vedic period, nor were they confined within the four walls of the harem. This play also seems to represent a society in which women were struggling hard to keep their deteriorating position with the help of people like the author himself and the law-givers like Varāhamihira. Polygamy had not come into vogue as a common custom. But, even people like Cārūdatta took more than one wife with the excuse that "there it is the youth that is to be blamed, and not character."1 Some scholars point out on the basis of Dhūtā attempt-

1. चारुदत्:-भो श्रीचिक्षा: मया कथमीहां वर्णयम्य यथा गणिया भम भिन्नभिन्नि। प्रथमवा योवनमत्रापराध्यत्व न चारियम्।

Mrchh. Act IX. P. 271
ting to enter the pyre, that the custom of Sāti was prevalent in the time of Mrchchakaṭīka. But, the words of the lady herself disprove this conclusion. She is aware that it is a sin to commit suicide, but she would prefer to sin than hear any thing bad about her husband. This is clearly meant by the author to show the intense love the lady had for her husband, and nothing else. In this connection, it will be well to remem- ber that not only Dhūtā, but Maitreya, and even Rada- nikā were going to follow suit. If we accept that Dhūtā's entering the fire was a proof of Sāti, then we will also have to accept that friends and servants too entered the funeral pyre with their friends and masters in turn. The veil is presented to Vasantasenā as a mark of honour by the king through Šarvilaka, while she was raised to the position of a woman of noble birth. This perhaps goes to support our conclusion that by this period people of royal and aristocratic families had begun to use the veil as a mark of dignity. We have had examples of similar instances in some of the plays ascribed to Bhāsa also.

In general the impression one gets, after reading through these plays, is that women were still holding out, though slowly the sands were slipping away from under their feet.

Let us now examine what the greatest of Indian poets has seen and recorded for posterity.
CHAPTER III

THE PLAYS OF KALIDASA

After a study of the three plays of Kalidasa one of the ideas that insistantly occurs to the mind is the attitude of the poet towards women. Woman seems to be a sacred name to him. He looks up to her with worshipful eyes. In all his works he depicts the world in its true colours. He had a vast treasure of knowledge. He seems to have travelled all over India and to have acquired a detailed and close knowledge of places and people, their manners and customs. He saw the society in its various phases. And he portrayed all that he saw. He has depicted all kinds of people, and also every possible type of relationship: the king and his subjects, the parents and children, the husband and wife, the master and servant, the ascetic and soldier. He has painted before us children, youths, old people, the sensuous, the spiritualists and the materialists. But it is to the woman that we are made to pay homage by him.

He seems to approach her with a mingled feeling of respect, love, reverence and wonder. In his works we find all types and kinds of women. Women in all stages and conditions are depicted there: love-lorn woman, the happy wife, and the discontented beloved, the daughter, wife and mother, the widow, the deserted woman, and she who has renounced the world. But nowhere is the picture of woman half-painted, for, he depicts the other half in the man of suitable relation to complete the picture. Where there is the daughter there is the father also, if it is the wife, then
the husband; if the mother, then the son. Kālidāsa believes and convinces his audience that man and woman are never complete without each other. It is this idea that he has propagated in all his works. Satyam, Śivam Sundaram is the aim of the whole universe, or the ultimate goal of every human being. To achieve this, a pure and sacred approach to life is needed; and for this, both men and women are equally responsible. Both have their respective duties to perform in supplementing and complementing each other. When this requirement is fulfilled, the result cannot but be śreya, the highest good for everyone concerned. When it is not, the only result is deterioration and destruction. This is the idea he propagated. He considers woman as the power incarnate of man, the strength, that makes man act in the right way.¹ Hence women are considered by him as the pillars of society; and also that, there can be no safety for anyone or anything, if they are ill-treated or neglected by men. This firm belief of his, he propagated in all his works—dramas as well as poems.

Of the three plays of Kālidāsa, the Abhijñānaśākuntalam is undoubtedly the master-piece of the master-poet. As to the other two, scholars are of opinion that the Mālavikāgnimitra preceded the Vikramorvaśīya. But the internal evidences found in these plays seem to point out just the opposite way. It will not be out of place here, to examine the different points and see how far we can go in deciding the relative chronology of these three plays. This will help to guide us in following the working of the poet’s mind in the development and depiction of the various female characters.

In the Vikramorvaśīya, Kālidāsa seems to be feeling the pulse of his audience. He takes a legend from the Vedas which had also caught the epic fancy. His heroine is a hea-

¹. स्त्राणान्तिं प्रकृति पुरुषार्थप्रवतिनिम् ।
तद्रशनमुदाति त्वाभव पुरुषं विद्धः || K. S. II. 13
venly nymph, who is loved by a mighty king equally well-known in the celestial and the terrestrial worlds. For all appearances, Kalidāsa is only trying to give pleasure to his audience by portraying before them a very enjoyable aspect of life, mingling heaven and earth, filling their minds with wonder and joy. But, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, the theme chosen is more human, and more true to life. Queen Dhārini, Mālavikā, Bakulāvalikā and Nipunikā are more familiar to the people who visualise them. Moreover, these characters seem to have greater purposes to fulfil than those who are shown in the first mentioned play. There, the poet seems to be a bit nervous as to the welcome his work may meet with. In his introduction to the Vikramorvaśīya the words of the Sūtradhāra are remarkable in this context. "Oh! learned ones! please listen to this work of Kalidāsa attentively, either as a token of your kindness and courtesy to those who love you, or of the respect due to a good theme or hero." On the other hand, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, the poet seems to be on surer grounds. There, the Sūtradhāra is allowed to indulge in a conversation with his colleague as to the propriety of staging the work of a new poet, leaving out those of the famous poets of the day. The statement of the Sūtradhāra that the audience wishes to see the new play written by Kalidāsa along with the assertion that, "all things are not good just because they are old, nor are others bad, because they are new. Wise men accept everything after putting them to test, while the fools follow the deci-

1. प्रणयिणु वा वाचविष्याद्वया सदस्तुपुरुषवहुमानात्। श्रुयुत जना प्रवचनान्त्यिमां कालिदासस्य ॥ V. U. Act I. 1

2. सूत्रचारः:-भक्ष्यम्बिकापरं बिधापरिवर्धा कालिदासप्रसिद्धवस्तु मालविकाप्रसिद्धिमिन्न नाम नाटक प्रसिद्धव वस्त्योत्सबे प्रयोक्तव्यवस्थित। पारिपारिविकः-मा तावतु। प्रथितवादां भास्तकविपुत्रसूत्रमिल्लकादीनां प्रवचनान्तिक्रमेण वर्तमानकः: कालिदासस्य क्रियायां कथे परिपदेव बधुमानः:

M. A. I. P. 184
sion taken by others," points out clearly towards the position Kalidāsa had come to possess at the time when his play was being staged. Obviously he was prepared to put his work to test by that time.

In the choice of the theme and the development of the plot also, the Mālavikāgnimitra compares favourably with the Vikramorvaśīya. In the latter play, he chose a theme from the ancient legends, and attempted to give a feeling of joy and wonder to his audience, only hinting at what he actually wanted to tell them. But, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, it seems that he had pleased the people. They have appreciated his method. Now he is prepared to try his technique of remedying the evil prevalent in society. For this purpose, he came down to the human world this time. He chose Agnimitra, the king of Vidiśa, as his hero, and depicted the court intrigues, as he saw them. According to Vincent Smith the Śunga dynasty was founded by Puṣyamitra in 183 B.C. Agnimitra, Puṣyamitra and Vasumitra are historical personages; while the ministers Vāhṭaka, Mādhavasena and Yajñasena also might have been known persons.

The love-story of Mālavikā, and a few of the characters might have been the invention of the poet who perhaps was following the footsteps of his much adored predecessor Bhāsa.

In the Mālavikāgnimitra, the development of the plot and the character delineation present a more mature hand. Queen Dhārini is a definite improvement on the Queen Auśīnari. Gautama undoubtedly shows an individuality of his own, and compares favourably with Māṇavaka, the friend

1. सूक्ष्मारः—प्रयो विवेकविश्वासतमभिहितम्। पश्च—
   पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वं न चापि काव्यं नवविश्वासं।
   सत्यं परिवत्तनं तर्कजले सूक्ष्म: परस्तत्त्वमनेकुर्वद्भ:॥

M. A. I. 2
of Purūravas, in fact, with any other Vidūṣaka in the whole arena of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Following up this method of comparison there is enough evidence to prove that Vikramorvasīya was the first play of the poet, while the Mālavikāgnimitra came next.

In the Abhijñānaśākuntala, he seems to have got over much of his hesitation. Here, he seems to be quite sure of his grounds, sure as to what he wanted to say and also about the methods he had to use. Though the theme is still a love-story, and the poet also is the same, the finished product before us is very different from anything that any body had hitherto seen. Of course, the poet does not leave his natural humility even here, as is clear from the introduction he makes through the Sūtradhāra. He says, “as long as the wise and learned people are not pleased, I do not take my knowledge and practice to be good and laudable. For, even after receiving the best of education the mind is not sure of one's own efficiency.”1 Accepting this relative chronology of these plays, we pass on to the detailed study of each with special reference to the female characters depicted therein.

The central theme of all the three plays of Kālidāsa is the same. The scenes represented by him are palaces, royal gardens, forests and penance groves. But each of these plays has a typical atmosphere of its own, depending upon the leading female character.

The story centering round Urvasī, the heavenly nymph, begins and ends as just a love-story, with sprinklings of refreshing ideals natural to the works of Kālidāsa. In this play, only the conjugal relationship of man and woman is emphasized. Urvasī, the heavenly nymph, is the heroine. She

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1. प्रापतितोपादिकूर्वा न साधु मन्ये प्रयोगविज्ञानम्।
   वल्लवविन मिलितानाम् प्रात्मन्यप्रत्ययं चेत: ||

Ab. Ś. I. 2
is a good actress who is admired and honoured in heaven for her beauty and accomplishment. According to the traditions a courtesan should be well-educated, cultured and refined. Urvaśī fulfils all these requirements. She belongs to the pragalbhā type of heroines. She, being a celestial personage, is much above the terrestrial women. By nature and temperament she is different from all other women in the Sanskrit dramatic literature. She has powers which others do not possess. The very nature of the heroine and the mode of the beginning of the play show that Kālidāsa was trying to create an interest in the heart of his audience, and that he was bent upon forcing them to listen to what he had to say. So, very deliberately, he was offering them strange and wonderful spectacles on quite a familiar theme bedecked in very beautiful language. The story of Urvaśī had a long tradition behind it. The Rgveda, the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, the Brhaddevatā, and the Vedārtha Dīpikā give the story in one connection or other. In the Matsyapurāṇa, the Bhāgavata, and the Kathāsaritsāgara too we hear of the love of Purūravas for Urvaśī, the jewel of Indra's court. But in all those versions of the story the love is all one-sided, Urvaśī having no feelings whatever for her lover. She seems to be crude and brutal in her refusal to stay with the king after she had enjoyed his company for some time. The conditions she enjoin to ensure her company to Purūravas appear to be rather a foreconsidered excuse to leave the king at her will. But the Urvaśī, presented by Kālidāsa, is a new character altogether. She is a combination of the celestial powers with the most human and womanly qualities. She is a dignified woman with her flaws as well as good qualities, a woman to be loved and respected by all.

As has already been stated, Urvaśī is a heroine belonging to the pragalbhā type, and so is capable of finding ways and means to achieve her desire herself. She, with the help of her friend Chitrālekhā and her own superhuman powers,
makes bold advances to the king. She is so love-stricken that she cannot bear even a moment’s separation from her lover. In the first act itself, Chitrakāhā is heard to be chiding her for her impatience.¹

The character of Urvasī seems to be rather inconsistent throughout. At times she is only an ordinary love-sick woman. She loses herself in her dreams so much that, in acting the part of Lakṣmī in the drama Lakṣmīśwayamvarā, she blurts out ‘Purūrvasi’ instead of ‘Puruṣottama.’² At another time, she is ready to approach the king as an abhisarika. She being a divine being, the king is unable to do anything except wait and pine away for her.

In the Vikramorvasīya, we hear much praise about the courage, strength, dutifulness and other fine qualities of king Purūravas. But what we actually see does not bear out all that we are told. His duties as the king or other ties do not seem to count much with him. Nor does he seem to have much respect or real consideration for his chief queen. As we have already noticed, Kālidāsa is a believer in the supplementing and complementing nature of man and woman to each other. Accordingly, only a self-confident, courageous and dignified heroine could supplement such a hero. The queen Ausināri did not have the strength of love and dignity that could command the love and respect of her lord and master. The ‘should be sakti’ of Purūravas was only a weak and ordinary woman, who was struggling in the cobweb of her own jealousy and consequent suffering. It was Urvasī, who came on the scene to show what a real woman could do.

¹ हसा उद्वैति ! पर्यवस्थापत्य ग्राम्यानम्। भ्रष्टत्वात् मे प्रतिभाति।
V. U. Act I. P. 109

² तततः श्रुः पुरुषवसीति निर्मिता वाणी।
V. U. Act III. P. 135
Urvaśī is an unseen witness to the scene between the king and the queen and says, "the king does love his wife." But she is not very much bothered about this, either because she is quite confident about her own powers, or because she has a keen insight into the nature of her lover and also of the situation. The moment the king is released by the queen to have his own way, he hurries to enjoy his good fortune without the least thought as to what would happen to her after his departure; which fact perhaps justifies the above conclusion. But when he loses Urvaśī in the forest, his attitude is very different. His one desire is to find her back. He wanders about frantically, as an unmatta, searching for his beloved. It is Urvaśī who reminds him of his duties after she comes back to life by the touch of the sangamaniya ratna. If not for her insistence, the king might not have even remembered that he was a ruler and so must look after his subjects. Again, when he knows about the existence of his son, he is very happy; but the moment he hears that, as a consequence, Urvaśī will have to leave him, neither the son nor the kingdom can hold him back. He decides to retire to the forest, and stops only when he is sure of the eternal company of Urvaśī through the kind intervention of Indra. Thus we see that it is she who always comes up as the redeeming power to keep up the dignity of the hero.

There is one strange incident that sounds a jarring note in the sweet melody of the character of this heavenly nymph. Ayus, their firstborn son, was immediately removed to a hermitage and hidden there. Urvaśī is a constant witness to the agony of the king due to his having no

1. उर्वशी—हला मियकलशी राजापि:। न पुनर्हृदय्य निवतापिलुः शक्नीमि।
   V. U. III. P. 135

2. उर्वशी—महानु खलु कालस्वतः प्रतिहानालिन्गतस्य। प्रसूनयति महां प्रहृतयः।
   तदेहि। निवतावहे।
   V. U. IV. P. 167
issues. Yet she keeps quiet till it becomes impossible to hide the fact any further. She seems to be justified in her action, as we notice the reaction of the king to the whole situation. But, still, the whole episode appears to be a bit unnatural and selfish. Desire seems to predominate the love of both the king as well as Urvashi. The poet is famous, the treatment and development of characters are excellent; and the happy conclusion is reached, but when everything is said and done, we feel not fully satisfied, there seems to be something strange in the atmosphere. It is the heroine, who is a celestial courtesan brought to the nether world. Her environments and language are not quite intelligible to the ordinary man. Many things are natural and simple to her, which are not so to the ordinary human beings. The poet himself feels this and, in more than one places, hurries to remind us of the fact that she is a superhuman individual, and so one should not try to apply the same standards as those of the human-beings to her.

Queen Ausinārī is brought on the stage, perhaps to show the real position of women in the contemporary society. She is a good woman in the general sense of the word. She loves her husband, and is prepared to go to any extent in order to please him. She is cultured and refined as the average women belonging to royal families. We have an example of her scrupulous nature in the episode of the love-letter of Urvashi flying into her presence. She does not want to read it herself till she is sure about the origin of the letter. But, at the same time, she does not hesitate to encourage her maid-in-waiting to read and find the contents of the letter.

Matsyapurāṇa and the other sources of this play do not mention any other wife of Purūravas. It is Kalidāsa

1. भो ! मा भवानु सर्व मानुषीयम दिव्यायु संभावयतु। प्रभाविनिमूढानि तासां चरितानि। V. U. Act V. p. 146
who introduces the chief queen Auśinari as a rival to Urvasī, and perhaps he had a special purpose in doing so. Kālidāsa holds that the Puruṣa can do nothing without his Sakti. He intends to prove this by the plight of Purūravas. Though a very strong and powerful monarch, great enough to help even the king of gods, he cuts a sad figure due to his love for the celestial nymph and his disregard for his own lawfully wedded queen. The queen, who ought to have been his better half, is really no better than him, and so is incapable of getting him out of the plight. She is very jealous by nature, and behaves like any other ordinary woman. As soon as she knows that the heart of Purūravas has gone astray, she goes out of her way to find out the cause. Once she realises that she has lost her supremacy over his heart, she indulges in the most bitter taunts. Though a princess by birth and a queen by marriage, she does not seem to be able to hold her position, or command respect from any one around her. The Vidūṣaka dares to ask her on her face, “is the king so dear to you?” At the same time within himself he feels rather amused at the socalled generosity of the queen. When she leaves the presence of Purūravas he plainly tells the king, what he thinks about it.

In her presence, her status and position is respected by people around her; but she is not capable of commanding the spontaneous affection and respect of others. With all her good qualities, she is still a woman of an ordinary type.

1. नासित क्षतु भवतोऽपराधः। प्रहोमवातस्पराद्या या प्रतिकूलदर्शना मृत्युव्रते विश्वामिः। V. U. II. p. 132
2. भवति ! कि ताहशस्ते प्रियस्त्रं भवावः ? V. U. III. p. 144
3. भिन्नहर्षस्ते मत्यो पतापिते निविष्णौ धीवरो भरति—मण्ड ! धर्मो भवति। V. U. III. p. 144
4. प्रसाध्य इति वैमेनातुर इव स्वरुः भूक्तो भवास्त्रवष्टभवत्या। V. U. III. p. 145
Her soliloquy and her later behaviour are quite typical. The king's formal attempts to please her prove to be of no avail, and she leaves in anger. Pururavas is only happy at the turn of events. It is the queen herself who is sad and repentant. Her power over the king is very limited, and so she has to be patient if she has to keep her position. Thus she has to accept the inevitable, and does it through the priyānuprasadana vrata, wherein she takes the vow of treating her rival also as a friend. Neither the king nor the queen seems to have a high ideal as far as the family life or individual duties are concerned. This attitude towards life has brought Pururavas to the lower plane. But his sincere love for Urvasī seems to save the situation. For, it is she who, after purifying herself by long penance in the Kumāravāna and also after becoming the mother of a son, was able to raise him back to his lost glory.

The condition of society portrayed in this play seems to be not very much different from what we see in the present day. Polygamy was the order of the day, and the position of women not very commendable. Kālidāsa does not feel satisfied with the existing state of affairs. At the same time, he has to be very careful as to what he says. Though he has much to say, he cannot say anything before preparing the ground for it. Hence, in this first play, he only draws pictures of the existing conditions without much comment. In Ausīnāri he portrays the average woman, while through the celestial heroine he gives a glimpse of what a woman can possibly do if she wishes to. The realistic portrayals of society, as it were, are found in this play.

1. या खलु लघुहद्याहमनुपद बहु मन्ये | कि त्रदासिष्ठक्तात्यत्रक्तात्याप- 
ि भवेनि | V. U. II. p. 132

2. एवाहू देवतामिनाण रोहिणीमृगलाभ्यां वाचीक्र्ययांगुर्मनुप्रसादायमि | 
प्रद्वप्रभृति यां स्त्रियमयायुष्म | प्रार्थयते या चायकुस्य समामस्रणयिनी तवा 
यह मया प्रीतिवन्चन वर्तितव्यमु हिति | V. U. III. p. 144
They are the same ideas and ideals that are held up in the second play, Mālavikāgnimitra. This play, though naming Mālavikā as the heroine, is really led by queen Dhārini. It shows an atmosphere of happy and prosperous home-life. In spite of the fickle and amorous nature of the hero, Agnimitra, the dignity of the court and the nobility of the harem are kept up. We do not have to search or to know the reason. Queen Dhārini, the loving and noble wife, is here as the saviour.

The heroine of the play is Mālavikā, in so far as her union with the hero is the final aim of the play. In fact, she leads the play without any effort on her part. In contrast to Urvaśī, who belongs to the pragalbha type of heroines, Mālavikā is the mugdha, described by the dramaturgists as young, timid, and soft even in anger. She is the model of a girl of noble birth—a kulakanyaka. She is innocent, humble and submissive. Her love is pure and trusting. She just moves about, as though lead by some unseen hand of fate, suffers every thing silently, and accepts the happiness when it comes to her with equal submissiveness and humility. Very often one begins to wonder whether anything would have happened if Bakulāvalikā, Parivrājikā, and Gautama did not intervene. The poet seems to present before us the ideal of a daughter, a girl of noble birth, in Mālavikā, who in course of time can bloom into the guardian-angel of the hearth and home, the bud which, when it blossoms forth, would fill the whole world with the sweet fragrance of innocence, nobleness and purity.

As has already been stated, though the love-story centres round Mālavikā, the real leader of the story is Dhārini, the chief queen of Agnimitra. The king has already seen Mālavikā's beauty in the picture. He is anxious to meet her personally. But his love is not so intoxicating as to make him forget everything else, like king Purūravas. He would like to get Mālavikā for himself. And he asks his trusted friend, the clever Gautama, to do the
needful. And then, he is seen attending to his royal duties. He hears the cases brought to him by the ministers and gives them definite orders as to what should be done and what should not be. The ministers, officers, and the army seem to be quite under his control. He is indeed a voluptuous king, but his court does not show any loss of dignity. His amours are limited within the four walls of the harem and are, extraordinarily enough, as allowed or disallowed by his noble queen, Dhārīṇī.

According to the story, where the theme is more or less the same as in the first play, Dhārīṇī's place is similar to Auśīnari's. But actually she strikes a different note in our hearts. The poet himself seems to be standing with folded hands before her who is love and kindness incarnate. She is the real mahādevī, the ideal grhini, as Kālidāsa would have her. From the very beginning, we feel the guarding and protecting love and grace of the queen, even when she is nowhere to be seen. The conversation between Bakulāvalikā and Kaumudikā¹ is a key to the whole situation. Immediately, the presence of a guardian-angle is felt, who is ever alert to correct, to love, to chastize and to bless everyone in the arena. Once again Kālidāsa proves here that woman is the power that lends light and life to man. As long as Dhārīṇī is there, Agnimitra cannot fall below his status. She supplements and complements him everywhere. It is impossible to imagine either Agnimitra or Dhārīṇī without each other, even though we may forget Irāvatī, and even Mālavikā for that matter. Herein lies the difference between the two queens. By the very first introduction², the poet draws our attention to her special qualities in his typically suggestive way. Of course,

1. Ma, Ag. I, Miśravīśambhaka. pp. 185-188
2. राजा—मंगलांश्रुता भार्ति कौशिकवा यातिबेवया।
   नयमि विग्रहबत्तयं सममध्यायमविबय॥ Ma, Ag. I. 14
there is a similar description of Auśīnārī in the Vikramorvaśīya also, but the difference is too obvious to be lost sight of. While the appearance of the former as the Veda personified—vigrahavatī trayī—was natural and constant, the pacific appearance of Auśīnārī was only temporary as indicated by the words, vratapadeśojhita garvavṛttinā. Her real nature is characterized by pride and prejudice. Dhārīnī is not a person who can be ignored at any time by anybody, the king, the Vidyāsaka Gautama, the Parivrājikā, Mālavikā, the maid-servants and even Irāvatī seem to be tied up to her by a soft but strong chord of love and reverence. None of them could be what they were, if not for her, whose moral support and loving care are extended even to the most insignificant of her dependents. She rules with love and justice.

The episode of the dance performance of Mālavikā, with the preceding and following incidents, was a terrible test to the queen’s patience. Still she carried herself with full dignity and wisdom. Though her attempts to save the girl from the eyes of the king did not succeed, everybody, even the servants, knew that Agnimitra would not do anything to hurt the queen. She was wise enough to realize that the inevitable had happened. She knew her husband well enough and when she had to yield, she did that gracefully, thus compelling others to yield themselves to her in turn.

While the Parivrājikā, with faked innocence, states that the test of dance is in performance and so debates would not make anyone any wiser, and then enquires about

1. राजा—सिताधुका मंगलमात्रमूपणा पवित्रदूतवीर्यराजिष्ठतालका।
   ब्रतापदेशोभिन्नतमरवीन्धिना मध्य प्रसन्ना वयुष्च लक्ष्यते॥

   V. U. III. 12

2. समाहितिका—वार्त फिल तस्यां सामिलायो भर्ता किन्तु केवलं देव्या
   धारिष्याशिषितं रञ्जनालमन: प्रमुलं न दर्शयति।
   Mā. Ag. III. p. 206
the opinion of the queen,\(^1\) the answer the latter gives is very significant.\(^2\) She makes it quite plain that she is not blind to the reality. Her own statement to the king is a proof of this point.\(^3\) Any other individual in her position would have put a stop to all that nonsense, using her own authority; but Dharini would not do it in that way. She rises to the occasion and wishes to manage in such a way that everything may end well for everybody concerned. As the queen and presiding deity of the harem, her responsibility was manifold. She had to keep up her own dignity, the dignity of the king and also that of the royal harem. She would not and could not allow her husband to become an object of laughter for any one. At the same time, she would not have him run away with the idea that he had walked a step over her. Though she had all respect for her husband, when she found that the pranks of Gautama were crossing the limits, she calmly told Ga\-\'nadasa, “your disciple has finished her performance,”\(^4\) indicating thereby that he should take away Malavika, thus ending all that foolishness which was quite below the dignity of the king.

In connection with the \(\text{a\-sokadohada}\) episode, some critics are of opinion that Dharini is also a jealous wife. They say, “her jealousy towards Iravati is manifest by her action of appointing Malavika to fulfill the \(\text{dohada},\) while she could have easily deputed the former for the job.” This conclusion has hardly any truth in it. \(\text{A\-soka-}\) dohada has to be fulfilled by beautiful women of noble

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1. \(\text{देव! प्रयोगप्रथानं हि नामशाख्यम्। किमत्र बाग्यवहरिः? कबये वा देवी मन्यते?}\) \(\text{Ma. Ag. I. p. 193.}\)
2. \(\text{यदि मां पृच्छिसि तदैवनोबिवाद एव न मे रोचते}\) \(\text{Ma. Ag. I. p. 193}\)
3. \(\text{यदि राज्यकार्यविवेकयुपायिनिपुणतार्य पुवस्य ततः शोभनं नभेतु}\) \(\text{Ma. Ag. I. p. 196}\)
4. \(\text{भार्य गणदास! ननु दशिलोपदेशा ते लिख्या}\) \(\text{Ma. Ag. II. p. 202}\)
birth. Ir̄avatī, though beautiful, is not of noble lineage, as indicated by many statements in the text itself similar to that of Gautama in one place. The order to fulfill _dohada_ seems more to be a test of Mālavikā’s birth, as could be deduced from the conditions attached to it and the reward promised. If the Aśoka tree blossomed within five nights, Mālavikā was to have her desire fulfilled. That the intention of the queen was not unknown to Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā is proved by the latter’s statement to console her friend. Before finally giving her consent to the union of Mālavikā with her husband, the queen wishes to prove that the girl deserves the honour. In fact, the episode goes to prove not the jealousy, but the goodwill and discretion of the

1. Kālidāsa refers to the _aśokadohada_ in the Meghadūta, the Raghuvamśa, the Kumārasambhava and the Mālavikāgnimitra:

2. _Uttarameghah._ 18

3. *R. V. VIII._ 62

4. _K. S. III._ 26

5. _Mā. Ag._ III. 12

6. _Mā. Ag._ III. p. 221

7. _Mā. Ag._ III. p. 209

8. _Mā. Ag._ IV. p. 239
queen. Her treatment of Iravati, throughout the play, gives evidence of the consideration the queen had for her. The imprisonment of Malavikā by her at the instigation of Iravati is another point towards the true character of Dhārini. She is always anxious to do the right thing and keep the discipline of the harem. At the same time she is careful not to hurt the feelings of any one who is under her protection. Her rule is not authorised by fear but by love. She is not a jealous wife but an indulgent mother, so to say. She is the real sahadharmachārīni and the true well-wisher of the king. When the king says in the end—
“Oh Queen! may you be always pleased with me; that is the only thing I desire,”1 we feel like joining hands with him. When such a woman is happy nothing bad or inauspicious can happen to any one who is in any way connected with her. Dhārini stands high above all with her peaceful and loving character, herself doing the right thing always, wishing happiness for all, patient and forgiving, a combination of the divine love and patience mingled with all the sweet human trends of character; thus personifying the highest ideal of Indian womanhood. It is the power of Dhārini that gives Agnimitra his dignity; it is her prayers and blessings that make her son Vasumitra victorious everywhere. She is the real protector of the hearth and home, as visualised by the sages and described by Manu.2

Queen Dhārini, the maiden Malavikā, and the rājavallabha Iravati are three important women-characters that attract our attention in this play of Kālidāsa. Each is a type by herself. In Malavikā we have a noble daughter, who is the future hope of a happy house-holder. In Dhārini

1. राजा—वः में प्रसादसमुली भव देवि नित्य मेलावदेव हृदये प्रतिपलनीयम्। Ma. Ag. V. 20

2. प्रजनायं महामागाणा: पृजाहां गुह्यसत्य:। ख्रिय: ख्रियः गेहेघु न विशेषप्रस्तित कश्चन। II Manu. IX. 26
we have a guardian-angel of the home that she rules over. But both these are the flowers of Indian womanhood in their respective arenas as visualised by the poet. The reality is represented to us in the person of Irāvatī, the mistress of the king Agnimitra. Queen Auśinārī and Irāvatī are very similar to each other in character and nature. The difference noticeable between the two is more due to their respective positions in the harem than inherent. Their prying nature, their jealous reactions at meeting their rivals, and their unwilling and ungracious acceptance of the respective situations, when they found them inevitable, are all such traits as would readily place them at par with each other. After a close study of both the above plays, we are left with the impression that, while Auśinārī and Irāvatī are the norms, Dhārini and Mālavikā are the ideals held up to society by Kālidāsa.

Coming to the Abhijñāna Śākuntala, his last play, we find a more developed form of his technique. In his first play he only hinted at what he wished to say about women and painted different portraits as illustrations; in the second he showed more boldly the various types by contrast and pointed out by examples what is good and what is bad, and what the ideal of womanhood can be; in the third and last, the Abhijñāna Śākuntala, he shows how a girl can and has to develop to that height idealised by him and painted in the person of the noble queen Dhārini. He had already tried his hand on a Vedic legend and a story with historical background. Now he takes up the story of Śākuntala, first told in the Mahābhārata, and retold later on in many other purāṇas also. The story related in the Padmapurāṇa resembles very much the Abhijñāna Śākuntala of Kālidāsa. He chose the story of a much wronged woman, a woman who stood up courageously to save the honour and rights of her son and herself in the royal assembly of her unscrupulous husband. We have to examine the original story a
little in order to understand how the poet depicts the same character in fresh colours. Śakuntalā was the true and simple daughter of mother Nature, who yielded to King Duṣyanta, and who came to the forest and tempted her. After fulfilling his own desire, he left her, and she waited in vain for long, expecting him to keep his parting promise. Finally, when the father sent his wedded daughter to the husband, the man like a coward denounced her as a pretender and addressed her with words unsuitable to the dignity of both himself as a king and of her who innocently and trustfully yielded to him. But, it was a lioness awakened from sleep that faced him. She was courageous enough to face the impossible situation and to argue out the case for herself and her son. When all hopes were lost, and the king denounced her as a wicked woman, she answered him in a spirited way and left the palace. Her words were remarkable. She said, "I do not care to stay with you. And, even without you, oh Duṣyanta! my son will be the sovereign ruler of the world." Then heavenly words were heard which testified to the purity of Śakuntalā and restored her to her rightful place. It is this story that the poet took up. There is one more feature noticeable in this connection. There is a parallel, if it can be called a parallel, in the Rāmāyana where an innocent woman is repudiated almost in the same words by her husband. The reference here is to the treatment of Sītā by Rāma after the killing of Rāvana. The reactions of the women concerned were different, even as the circumstances also were different, though the purpose

1. Ma. Bh. I. 84. 1-40
2. Ma. Bh. I. 86. 28-30
3. Ma. Bh. I. 86. 35-110
4. "तत्त्वज्ज्वलित! सौर दुस्यंति! श्रीराजावतस्मिना स"।
   "वहुरन्त्वभिमामृतिनी शुमारी भज पालिविष्ठ ि।" Ma. Bh. I. 87-43
5. Ma. Bh. I. 88. 1-12
was the same, namely saving the name and position of the men concerned irrespective of the fate of the women. But, while the words from heaven sufficed to redeem Sakuntala in the Mahābhārata, even the fire-ordeal was not enough to keep the noble Sītā beside Rāma in the Rāmāyaṇa. While later poets were never tired of depicting the story of Sītā in plays as well as poems without number, Kālidāsa was the only poet who dared to portray the love of Sakuntala and to immortalize it. And even he had to make many changes in the body-plot of the play before allowing the audience of his time to see it. It is against this background that we have to examine the maiden Sakuntala who is presented before us by Kālidāsa.

Here, we have to remember that the Padmapurāṇa gives the story of Sakuntala almost on the same lines as Kālidāsa. Almost all the characters found in the drama are also found in the Purāṇa. The loss of the signet ring, its recovery from the stomach of the rohita fish by the fisherman and his capture by the policeman and even the episode of the merchant who died issueless, are all found in the Padmapurāṇa. Of course, there are also noticeable differences. For example, Priyārvadā is shown to be accompanying Sakuntala to Hastināpura.¹ The ring is lost by the carelessness of Priyārvadā and not unconsciously by

1. Compare the curse of Durvāṣa in the Padmapurāṇa and the Abhijñanaśākuntalam:
(प्र) दुर्वासा उवाच—
यः तव विचिन्तयसे बाले मनसाजन्यवृत्तिः।
विस्मरित्यति स त्वां वै प्रतिव्रो मनसालिनीम्॥ Padma.
(प्र) विचिन्तयताः यमनन्यनानसा तपोषं वैतस्ति न मामुपस्वतम्।
स्मारित्यति त्वां न स धीरोधितपि सर्वत्र श्रमितः प्रभमं कृतामिव ॥

Ab. Ś. IV. 1

2. प्राहूय नौत्मी दुष्टां संही चास्या: प्रियवदाम्।
उवाच इत्यक्रमं वा च लिख्यो चापि महाप्रत्तो॥ Padma.
THE PLAYS OF KĀLIDĀSA

Sākuntalā as in the play. The union of Śākuntalā and Duṣyanta is managed in a very natural way by Kālidāsa. In the Purāṇa, Duṣyanta meets the boy in the hermitage of Mārīcha, where Kaśyapa arrives and reveals the identity of the boy to the king, also telling him about the curse of Durvāśa.

These similarities do lead to the question of precedence or otherwise of Padmapurāṇa to Kālidāsa. As this question does not directly affect the present study, it is enough to state here that the complete absence of this story in the Anandāśrama edition of the Purāṇa may have its own significance. There are critics who argue that if the author of Padmapurāṇa was borrowing from Kālidāsa there is no justification in his omitting the excellent features of the drama. The answer seems to be in the fact that while the former is a Purāṇa intended to be written in the paurāṇika style, the latter is a piece of art coming from the pen of the master-poet. The least that can be said in this connection is that Padmapurāṇa-story may be a latter recension and interpolation in the body of the Purāṇa and based on the

1. प्रियंवदाकरे न्यस्य श्रविज्ञानादेवुगुलीयक्षमं।
   स्नातुं सरस्वतीतोयममाहत सुलोचना।
   प्रियंवदा तु तदुपह वसनांबलमयतः।
   यातनायतवती तवत्तपात सलिले दिवा।
   प्रियंवदा भिया तस्ये बृजान्तः न न्यवेदवनः।
   शकुन्तलापी ततस्क्ये प्रप्रण्यापि न विस्मृताः।
   Padma.

2. कदयप उवाच—
   तववेव ततपक्षे राजसि! यमसूत शकुःलाः।
   दमनं सर्वसत्वानं सिद्धादिनां महावतं।
   Padma.

3. दुर्भृससा हि शासन त्वया या विस्मृता पुरा।
   त्वत्ता मेनकया नीता मयं न्यस्ता मनस्विनी।
   सा ते शकुःलाः राजी सुपार्वम कुमारक्षम।
   महाबलो महाप्राणो दुर्भृष्यं सर्वभृससः।
   Padma.
Mahābhārata-story as well as the play, but written to suit the epic style.

We cannot see any comparison between that Śakuntalā who puts forward conditions⁴ for her union with the King saying unabashedly, "King! all necessary equipments for marriage are available here,"² and the Śakuntalā—the timid, sweet, and soft-hearted maiden—presented to us by Kālidāsa in the hermitage of the sage Kanva. The magic wand of the master-poet has transformed her beyond all recognition. We feel the presence of an exquisitely sweet and charming rose-bud, which after withstanding the manifold tests and trials of this unkind world, and having learned the necessary lessons, was to blossom into the full-grown rose that would fill the whole world with its fragrance.

This Śakuntalā comes before us as the maiden, the bride, the rejected wife, the mother and, finally, the happily united wife of the great king Dusyanta. The Śakuntalā, who is watering the plants in her hermitage along with her friends, fills our hearts with affection and wonder. She is as innocent as the animals and birds around her. She is quite happy among the forest-plants and vines, loving and serving them as her own sisters and brothers.³ At the same time, she is just awakening to new feelings and new desires, as is very subtly told to us by the episode of the Nava-mallika and the Sahakarapādapa in the first act itself.⁴

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1. यदि धम्मक्षस्तवेष्य यदि चात्मा प्रमुर्मम ।
   प्रदाने पोरवशेषु! श्रुतु मे समवं प्रभो ॥
   मम जयेत य: पुत्र: स राजा त्वदन्तततमः ॥
   युवराजस सत्यक्षस्तवेत्वदु ब्रवीहि मे ॥
   वचेतदेव् हुष्णुत! प्रस्तु मे सज्जमस्तवया ॥ Ma. Bh. I. 84. 19-20

2. वैवाहिकानि चात्मानि सत्यस्तीह परविव ॥ Ma. Bh. I. 84. 26

3. शकुन्तला—न केवल तात्तिनियोग एव । प्रस्तित मे सीवस्नेहोऽवस्थेयु ।

All three of them—Śakuntalā as well as her friends—are aware of the father’s desire to give her to a suitable husband.¹ This paves the way for many maidenly jokes between them², as is only natural.

Kanva seems to be the ideal father who has brought up his daughters well, giving them good education and training them in the proper and suitable way. To them, by God’s grace, comes Duṣyanta who is a good and virtuous man, who can confidently say that his heart cannot go the improper way.³ His exclamation at the first sight of Śakuntalā,⁴ is an eye-opener to the real character of the king. He had known and enjoyed all that the city could give. Now he is confronted with some thing new, a beautiful and untouched wild-bud, which surpassed everything he had hitherto seen. His heart goes out to that innocence-incarnate. Of course, he is neither unscrupulous nor sensuous. He finds out all that he can about the beauty that has become a joy for him, before he makes his desire explicit. The first sprouts of love are in the minds of both, but both are equally tied down by their respective states and circumstances. The feelings of Śakuntalā as depicted

1. श्र. सहस्रो—हला शकुन्तले ! वदनराग तातः संनिधितो भवेत् ।
   शकुन्तला—ततः कि भवेत् ।
   सहस्रो—ह्म जीवितस्वेतेनाच्यतत्तिथिविवेषेहेंकुतारः करियति ।
(Shr. Ś. I. p. 13)

2. Instances are spread throughout the first three Acts of the Śakuntalam.
3. श्रसंशयं ज्ञानप्रदशाहम यदायमन्मत्वबलायि मे मनः ।
   सतं ति सन्देहावेदु वस्तुः प्रमाणमन्तः करारप्रवृत्तयः ॥
(Shr. Ś. I. 21)

4. भुदान्तुपर्ववधिमिदं बपुराधिमवासिनो यदि जनस्य ।
   दूरीरुत्ता। खलु गुरुःध्यानवता वनलतामि: ॥ (Shr. Ś. I. 17)
here are quite remarkable. At the very beginning she realizes them to be against the purity of the penance-grove—Tapovanavirudha. She is not a wayward girl who would follow the impulses of her youthful heart. She is the loving and obedient daughter of a father, who was gone on a pilgrimage for her own sake. Here is the picture of the daughter as the complement of the father. The father protected the people, the trees and vines, birds and beasts and even the Vanadevatās from all calamities by the strength of his penance and also his love and understanding, while it was the duty of his daughters to give water to them, feed them and meet other practical needs of his dependents, moveables or immovable. In his absence, it was the duty of these daughters, especially of Śakuntalā, to welcome the guests and keep up the routine of the hermitage going, as king Duṣyanta is informed by the Vaikhānasa. The conversation of the three friends among themselves and their behaviour throughout the first three acts go to complete the portrayal of that noble and ideal picture of the three daughters awaiting the arrival of their beloved and honoured father. At every step, they miss their father and feel, "Oh, if only he was here!" In spite of her strong love and desire for Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā is quite firm in her refusal to yield to him. It is the irresistible persuasion of the king

1. वैश्वानसः—द्वानीमेव द्रुहितार शकुन्तलामतिप्रियवस्तिकाराय निवुज्य दैवमस्यः  
   प्रतिकूलं शमवित्वं सोमतिथि गतः ।  
   Ab. Ś. I. p. 7

2. श्र. श्रन्तूया—हला शकुन्तले ! त्वत्रोपिति तातकण्बस्याभ्याब्यामकः भियतारा  
   इति तत्त्ववामि ।  
   Ab. Ś. I. p. 8

   श्र. सत्यो—यवनाब तातः समर्हितो भवेतः ।  
   Ab. Ś. I. p. 13

   इ. धर्माचरशोधिपि परवशिष्यं जनः । गुरोऽपि पुनर्वा:  
   ननुपचरव्र्रदाने संकल्पः । Ab. Ś. I. p. 15

3. शकुन्तला—रीरव रश्याधिनयम् ।  
   मदनसन्तुसांपि न खल्वातमन: भिवामि ।  
   Ab. Ś. III. p. 38
along with the encouraging words and deeds of her dearest friends that finally gave her courage to write a love-letter and also to unite with him by the rites of Gāndharva marriage in the absence of her father.

The fourth act shows us Śakuntalā at the parting of the ways. She is a newly wed bride, filled with the thoughts of her recently separated husband. Neither the fear about the possible anger of her father, nor any doubt about the intentions of the king mars her day-dreams. She is still the innocent and trustful young girl, who has yet to learn her lessons about the world. Fate was weaving her future in unknown ways, or perhaps known only to her ever alert friends. The curse of sage Durvāsā came as a bolt from the blue, and would have burnt the blossoming bud, if not for the protective hands of the powerful father behind the scenes and the loving watchfulness of Priyāṁvadā and Anasūyā, who hastened to safeguard the interests of the "naturally soft hearted" friend of theirs. The father returned and relieved their anxiety about his anger by giving his unreserved blessings to the couple and also by making arrangements to send Śakuntalā to her husband. In this act we find the daughter slowly growing into the bride and then becoming the wife with the motherly instincts developing within her. Sage Kaṇva, the father, who moulds the character of this beloved daughter of his, with his advices, remarks, counsels and hearty blessings, strengthened by his penances, is ever present to complete the picture. The fraternal affection depicted in this act among not only human beings, but also the birds, beasts, trees and creepers, portrays the happy family life and the place of a beloved sister in it. The leave-taking of Śakuntalā from each one of the familiar objects,¹ the counsels of her

1. शकुन्तला—वन्यजीवले ! चूतसंगतार्थि मां प्रत्यासिंह इतोपताभिः शाखाकृति मेवाहिः। ग्रहप्रभृति दूरपरिवारिनी ते बलु भविष्यामि।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 51
father, her parting words to the deer and the request to her father, all clearly indicate the growth of her mind and the development of the maternal instincts in her. At the end of the fourth act, Śakuntala leaves the cosy, protected life of the hermitage for her rightful place by the side of her husband.

The word *patnī* held a very noble meaning for Kālidāsa. He always condemned the husband who disregarded or ill-treated his wife. He is quite sure of the nobility of the wife. He fully believes that women are too kind-hearted and noble to harbour anything except love and goodwishes for everyone in their minds. The man who misuses his power over woman, given to him by herself and perhaps by society, is despicable in the eyes of the poet. There are innumerable examples of his anger and condemnation against such men in the works of Kālidāsa. It is this idea that is predominantly shown in the fifth act of the Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Śakuntala had met Duśyanta, the lover, but not the king of Hastināpura. The time seems to have come for her to see the world in its true colours and also to rise up to the occasion.

Śakuntala, escorted by Gautamī and the two disciples of Kanva, enters the court presided over by king Duśyanta.

1. कथा:—पातू न प्रथम ्यवस्थिति जलं युध्मास्वपङीतेशु या नादते प्रीयमण्डनागीपि भवता स्नेतेन या पञ्चवम्।
   स्वादेव व: कृष्णप्रवृत्तितस्मये यस्या: भवत् पुत्रस्वः
   सेत्य याति शकुन्तला पतिश्च वर्गपुरुषायताम्॥
   Ab. Ś. IV. 9

2. शकुन्तला—वस्त! कि सहवायपरिवारगीत्यां भावमुक्तिः। श्रवरमुक्तिः
   जन्या बिना वाचित एव। इदानीमपि मया विरहितं लवं तात्तिथिन्त्र-विज्ञप्ति
   निवर्त्तस्य तावतु।
   Ab. Ś. IV. p. 52

3. शकुन्तला—तात सपोजपरिवृत्तचारिस्येन गर्भमन्यरा मृणमयीव नश्रकशवा
   भवति तव धनं कम्पि प्रीयनवेदितुकं विसर्जिविष्यतो।
   Ab. Ś. IV. p. 51
But Duṣyanta at court is quite different from the fond lover whom we met at the hermitage. The song of Hamsapadikā makes him laugh callously and remark, “Oh! she was once loved by me. Friend, Mādhavya, go and tell her from me that I am well chided.” The whole episode, especially the above-quoted remark, seems to be an eye-opener to the general character of the king. That he loved Hamsapadikā once and then neglected her for a new favourite is of no importance to him. We begin to realise that the fears expressed by Anasuya may not be out of place. Though the king had readily promised the anxious friends that “Śakuntalā, and she alone, will be the substratum of my dynasty, in spite of the fact that I have a number of wives,” there is no guarantee that he will keep the promise. His harem is full of Hamsapadikās and Vasumatis. The society that enjoins woman to be single-heartedly devoted to her husband, was not going to blame Duṣyanta if he took one love today and left her tomorrow without hesitation, even like a Purūravas or Agnimitra. Here it is that we begin to realize the full significance of the message of Kanva to the

1. श्राकाशे गीयते—
श्रभिनवमयुतोधोपी भवान्तया परिच्छल्य चूतमयारोम ।
कमलबस्तिमानार्धनिर्दृश्वी श्रधुरकर विस्मृतोश्येनां कथम ।

2. राजा—(स्मतं कल्याणं) सहकल्नत्रणयोजयं जनं । तदस्या देवीविम्बविस्मृतमंतरं
मयूपालम्भमयेतोज्ञवस्मी । ससे माणव्य मदवचनाकूच्यतां हंसप्रविका—नियुपणामुपालव्योज्ञमीति ।
Ab. Ś. V. p. 56.

3. अनसयू—श्रथ सं राज्यविरिष्टिः परिसाम्या कृत्विभिन्नमिच्छितं श्रातमनोनागरं प्रविश्यान्तः गुर्वसंगतं इतोगं बुद्धान्तं स्मरति वा न वेति ।
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 41

4. राजा—परिस्थिताबहुवेदियपि हे प्रतिष्ठि कुलस्य मै ।
समुद्रवसना चोवीं सह्या च युवयोरियम् ।
Ab. Ś. III. 17
king. In other words, the sage is reminding the king that Sakuntalā is not just one among the many women who fill his harem. She has her own simple and sacred back-ground. Her love is not prompted by the desire of any worldly gain or lust. The king himself is of a noble lineage, where virtues are more respected than riches. Remember all these and treat her accordingly, the sage implies.

To the Duṣyanta whom we saw in the hermitage, all these reminders may be unnecessary, but, the Duṣyanta in the court seems to belong to a different category. He is a good king. The praises of the vaṭṭalikas and also his appearance have the ring of truth and sincerity. He rules according to dharma. But, would he, amongst this pomp and glory, remember the innocent love he enjoyed in the remote penance-grove? When the party enters his presence, he does not even look at the veiled beauty presented before him; for, it is not proper to look at another man's wife. The message of Kanya does not hold any meaning for him. If we had not heard the curse of Durvāsa sometime before, we would have certainly remembered the Duṣyanta of Mahābhārata without any hesitation. As it is, we are only afraid for the future of Sakuntalā. The king is in a fix. In his embarrassment, he asks Sārṅgarava, what he can do. His doubts are genuine. After all he is a man of the city. His sneering remarks are only the reflections of the idea existent in society, and also his own opinions born out of experience. Neither the humble pleadings of Gautamī, nor the indignant statements of Sārṅgarava, nor the details given by Sakuntalā about their life in the

1. कृष्णः—प्रसमाचारी निषिद्धय संवेदनानुमानः कुले चालनः
   स्वयम्यस्या: कथमण्यवान्यवहुतां सनेहप्रभृति च तामु:।
   सामान्यप्रविवाहकमिवं दारेणु हस्या त्या
   भास्यायत्तमत: परे न खलु तद्वृह्वच्च वकृतवन्युभ: Hi Ab. Ś. IV. 17

2. राजा—मूडः स्वामहेयम् वा वकृतिकर्मिणीति संवाये।
   दारस्यानि भवायाहो परस्परस्यांतुल: Hi Ab. Ś. V. 29
hermitage were capable enough to break through the thick iron surface of the prejudices well set in the mind of the king. Unhesitatingly he comes out with the insinuation that women are deceitful by nature and gives the example of the cuckoo who gets its own eggs hatched by the ignorant crow.¹ The moment these words are uttered by Duṣyanta, the whole situation changes. Śakuntalā is no more the same innocent girl who was playing with the deer and the creepers in the forest. Within the past few hours, she has grown up. Her first reaction to the king’s attitude was despair, a despair characterised by dignity and nobility. She thinks to herself, “Why remind him (the king) of any thing now that love has changed to this indifference?”² She believes in true love, which is eternal and constant. If that is lost, then nothing matters. But the word parbhṛtah—a child reared by others—reminds her of her duties as a mother. The shame that comes by the rejection of the king would fall not on her alone, but also on her unborn child. The wife’s patience gives way to the indignation of the mother. The spontaneous words of injured innocence³ stopped the king’s unbridled sneer. He is shaken out of his smuggish contempt for women and is forced to doubt his own contentions⁴. Duṣyanta has to bow down before this womanly dignity,

1. राजा—क्रीणामिशिकितपतुलमानोनुष्योऽ
    सहस्यते किमत या: प्रतिबोधयतः।
    प्रागन्तरिलगमानान्तवपत्रावल-मन्येणिजेः परमृतृतः: खलु पोषयति॥ Ab. Ś. V. 22

2. श्यान्तला—(धपवायष)—हेमस्थानतरश्यते ताहिष्टेयुज्यागे कि वा स्मारितेन। Ab. Ś. V. P. 63

3. श्यान्तला—(सरोपम्)—धनाय भ्रात्मनो हृद्यानुमानेत प्रेक्षसे। ते
    इदानीमन्यो धर्मकेश्यक्रप्रवेधिनस्तुध्यानयुज्यमथ तवानुकृतिः प्रतिपत्यते?
    Ab. Ś. V. P. 64-65

4. राजा—(भ्रातंगतम्)—संदिष्ठबुधि मां कुवंशकृतव इवास्या: कोपो
    लक्ष्यते। Ab. Ś. V, P. 65
though his suspicions are not removed. The ascetics left Śakuntalā at the door of the king and the royal priest was prepared to give her shelter till her child was born. Even Fate could not tolerate such a disgrace to a noble woman, hence the heavenly powers intervened. In the Mahābhārata, the words of the gods vouchsafed for the purity and truthfulness of Śakuntalā. But here, the intervention came in the person of her mother Menakā, the heavenly nymph, who hearing the heart-rending cries of her daughter, took her away to a safe place, far from the hue and cry of this un-understanding world.

Kāma, the physical love, was predominant in the union of Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta, and so it could not have culminated in the ultimate good for all. Hence this separation was necessary. From this point, Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta also, are working their way up. She has lost all desires and the only end and aim of her life now being centred in her child. As for Duṣyanta, he is not so sure of himself after that angry outburst of Śakuntalā. He has his set-back while he is at the height of his blindness. All the while he is boasting much about his firm character and virtuous life. He would not look at the veiled woman presented before him as his wife because he is not sure of the truth. He turns his eyes away and thus earns the applause of his servants. He is contemptuous about the ordinary woman and he makes no secret of his contentions. But the moment the real and pure woman asserts herself, her strength is felt and the man of the city, a hard nut though he is, begins to crack. At the end of the fifth act, we find

1. पुरोहितः—सा निन्दन्ती स्वाभिः भाग्यानि बलात बाहूल्यकेषौ ब्रजिनितु च प्रवृत्ता ।
   भौतिकस्वाभिः चाप्सरस्तिष्ठमाराधुलिलायणां व्यक्तिरेऽक्षण समागम ॥
   Ab. Ś. V. 30

2. प्रतीहरी—पहो धमविविषिता भर्तुः । ईशान्य नाम मुखोपन्तयूं ऋषं हृद्याकोश्यो विचारपिताः
   Ab. Ś. V. 62
the king accepting to himself that there is something wrong somewhere. It is true, he cannot remember his marriage with the ascetic girl, still he is beginning to believe in the possibility of such a thing\(^1\). The sin of insulting the virtuous woman, his own Śakti, even unconsciously, has begun to worry him.

Both Śakuntalā and Duśyanta were burning themselves in the fire-sacrificial of sorrow and suffering. Śakuntalā's life in the Hemakūta was one long dark night of separation, and the dawn came in the form of Duśyanta once again; but quite a different Duśyanta from the one whom she saw a few years ago in the royal court. After the curse of the Sage was removed by the sight of the ring, the King had known no peace. His repentence was twofold, because he himself had spurned the luck that came to him.\(^2\) The reunion of the couple is very cleverly contrived by the poet. Duśyanta, though victorious and honoured even by gods, is sad at heart and bewailing. In the hermitage, where he is confronted with the boy Sarvadamanā and the attendent ascetic women, every word of the conversation pierces his already broken heart like sharp arrows. The answer to his question regarding the father of the boy is the climax, containing within it the denouncement also\(^3\). It reminds him mercilessly of his own guilt, while almost assuring him of the possibility of the boy being his own son. Only after Śakuntalā, the humble yet dignified mother, comes to take

1. राजा—काम प्रत्याविद्यां स्मृत्ति न परियहुं मुनेस्तनवाम्।
   बलवतु दूषयमात् प्रत्याविद्या में हुदवम्। Ab. Ś. V. 39
2. भ. राजा—चिंड्रामुपस्पित्यतुलयोज्यमानिनम्। Ab. Ś. V. p. 85
   भ. राजा—संरोपितेष्यत्मभिः घर्मस्वेती ल्यक्ता मया नाम कुलप्रतिष्ठा।
   कलियमाणा महते फलाय वुषुवरा काल इवोतस्वीजा। Ab. Ś. VI. 24
3. ता.सी—कस्तोत्य घर्मदारपरित्यायिनो नाम संकीठितिं चिन्तितिहिति।
   Ab. Ś. VIII. p. 96
her rightful place beside her son's father only after the relationship between Sarvadamana and the king is clearly established by the combination of circumstances.

Śakuntalā has now developed into the ideal that Kālidāsa wished her to be. There is a vast difference between the Śakuntala of the first four acts and the one at the close. Her love in the beginning, though true, was still of a lower standard, more terrestrial, materialistic and self-centred. Duṣyanta, the man from the city with all his glamour, tempted her and she fell for him. She was so much engrossed in her lover that she was lost to the rest of the world. The punishment was instantaneous. She was fated to be rejected by the man for whose stake she sacrificed her everything, and she was redeemed only after the long penance and single-hearted devotion to that husband for a period of more than seven or eight years. This was necessary to purge her love of its materialistic elements and make it divine, and also to raise her to the highest seat of glory, that of the mother. Duṣyanta also had burned himself in the furnace of repentence and befitted himself to be the partner of the newly evolved Śakuntalā, and thus the couple again met at the Hemakūta. There was a great difference between this union and the first one. The first was a secret, known only to both of them and the friends of Śakuntalā, and hence giving rise to fear, doubt and suspicion. But this last union is the result of great penance on the part of both. Not only this union is contrived by the gods, but is blessed by the parents of the universe, Dākṣayāṇī and Mārīchā. In this union Kālidāsa holds up to the world his ideal of marriage, as is clearly stated in the words of Mārīchā, who says, "fortunately, the noble Śakuntalā, this noble child and yourself are united even as the triad—faith, fortune and sacrifice—are."¹

¹ According to the ancient

1. मारीचः—विरुष्यां शकुन्तला साध्वी सदपत्यमिदं भवान्।
श्रद्धा वित्त विगितेनति त्रितवं तत्समागतम्॥ Ab. Ś. VII. 29
scriptions as well as the law-givers, the second Āśrama is considered to be the best of all, for herein is the fulfilment of life. The union of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti is essential for the perpetuation of the universe. This union of the Satpatni, Sadapatyam and Satpumāṇ, to perform the greatest of all sacrifices, namely, life for the good of others, Jīvana-yajña, has been accomplished, and every thing ends well. Thus, in this last play of his, Kālidāsa, while representing the world, has also held up the ideal of life, as he would have it, centering round the ideal woman.

Apart from the heroines around whom centered all the other characters in the plot and the atmosphere of the plays, there are many other women portrayed by Kālidāsa in his works. The drama being the depiction and representation of the world, it is but natural that all kinds of people find a place in it. And Kālidāsa has not left out any type. Even in portraying the ideals, he has been careful to observe the various possible types. He has painted Auśināri, Dhārini, Irāvatī, Mālavikā, Urvasī and Śakuntalā, each a different type. It holds true for the other female-characters too.

Of the maidens presented by Kālidāsa, Anasūyā and Priyāmvedā attract our attention next to Śakuntalā herself. Though equally loving, simple and straightforward, these two show a definite contrast to each other by their behaviour and the very nature of their quality and method of conversation. Anasūyā is mature, serious and more understanding, whereas Priyāmvedā, true to her name, is more

1. तद्व तवत्त तस्मात्तथाविभिन्नं मूलमुदाहरिः। Ma. Bh. Śāntiparva. 179.17
धर्मव यथा वायू समाभिष्ठ्य बतौते सब्जन्तवः।
तथा श्रुत्स्मात्तथार्थ्य बतौते सब्ज ग्राम्यमः॥
वत्मत्रसौर्यायांतिर्यस्मादिवो भानेनाननेन चाववहम् ॥
श्रुत्स्मानवं धार्यते तस्मात्त्वथाभिष्ठाभमो धृती॥
Manu. III. 77-78
jolly, clever and resourceful. Anasūyā seems to be the personification of tranquility, thoughtfulness and consideration, while Priyāṁvadā is bubbling with laughter, fun and frolic. She is foremost in teasing her friend, and loses no chance to try the same with the king also. To Priyāṁvada Śakuntalā confesses her love-sickness, but it is to Anasūyā that she turns to when she is in need of real help. It is interesting to note that Anasūyā is the one who tells the story of Śakuntalā's birth and heritage to Duṣyanta, while it is the clever conversation of Priyāṁvadā that helps the king to come into the open with his offer of love. The dialogue between the two at the beginning of the fourth act is characteristic of their different temperaments. Anasūyā is more practical and worldly-wise. Priyāṁvadā is more trusting and simple. While the former is much worried about what Duṣyanta would do after reaching the palace, the latter is quite sure that, "such beautiful forms cannot be devoid of nobility." She is only afraid of the possible displeasure of their father, simple-minded that she is, and Anasūyā with her mature understanding, assures her with reasonable arguments that there need not be any fear about the blessings of the sage. Again, it is Anasūyā who remembers the customary worship of the Saubhāgya-devatā which the light-hearted Priyāṁvadā overlooks. But, when it is a question of pacifying the quick-tempered Durvāsā, Anasūyā at once deputes the sweet-tempered Priyāṁvadā, thus showing her own confidence in the resourcefulness of her friend. Both of them are equally devoted to Śakuntalā and their one end and aim of life seems to be the happiness and welfare of their friend. The love of these two devoted friends for Śakuntalā is unparalleled in the mortal world.

Bakulaśvalīka, Nipunikā, Jyotsnīka and Kaumudikā in the Mālavikāgnimitra and Nipunikā in the Vikramorvaśīya

1. प्रियंवदा — न ताहशा प्राकृतिविलेया गुणविरोधिनो भवन्ति।

Ab. Ś. IV. p. 41
are a few other female characters depicted by Kālidāsa. Though maids-in-waiting of the different courts, each one of these has a characteristic of her own that distinguishes her from the rest. For example, Bakulāvalikā, though only a maid-in-attendance to the queen, shows clear traits of culture and refinement. Her conversation with Mālavikā in the third act,¹ and at other similar occasions, shows a keen intellect and shrewd understanding on her part. When Mālavikā enjoins her to be always helpful to her if she comes to grief in her desire for the king,² her answer is very remarkable. She says,—"I am Bakulāvalikā, the flower which emits more fragrance, the more it is crushed."³ The girl seems to have an insight into the characters of those whom she loves and serves. When Mālavikā despairs about the fulfilment of her desires, Bakulāvalikā reassures her friend saying that the queen is true to her words.⁴ That one sentence of Bakulāvalikā tells a lot to the close student. Her loyalty and devotion to the queen, and also the reverence and esteem in which the latter was held by all around her, is shown clearly in this sentence. The resourcefulness, cleverness, quick repartee and the refined nature of this young girl leave a deep and lasting impression of affection and admiration in our minds. Nipuṇikā, the friend and maid-in-attendance on Irāvati, and also the Nipuṇikā in attendance on queen Ausinari, are more or less similar to each other, and both of them remind us of the women who enjoy creating troubles in the ordinary life. It is remarkable that in the earlier dramas, the number of such women is almost

2. मालविका—सवे ताक्षुरुज्ञति गच्छतः सहायिनी भव ।
Mā. Ag. III. p. 217
3. बकुलाविका—विमर्दसुरभिवबुकुलाविका सत्त्वम् ।
Mā. Ag. III. p. 217
4. बकुलाविका—ग्राम्यसिदु सबी । सत्यप्रतिज्ञा देवी ।
Mā. Ag. IV. p. 239
The number of characters in the dramas hitherto studied was limited to the indispensable roles only. It is Kālidāsa who, for the first time, brought on the stage every type of character that represents society-life in general. The Nipunikā, Kaumudikā and Jyotsnikā whom we meet in the harem of either Purūravas or Agnimitra are not at all strangers to us, for we seem to remember familiar faces, when they confront us or we hear them talk.

Citralekha and Sānumatī form another pair of unique women presented to us by the master-poet. Both of them are celestial women, brought to the mortal world due to their love for their respective friends. But here ends their similarity. Sanumatī is the friend of Menakā, the heroine's mother. Though celestial, she is quite human in her feelings and behaviour. She refuses to use her super-human powers even to know the real condition of the king, but decides to see everything by the natural means available to mortals also. Hence, she herself goes to the palace of Duṣyanta to find out how he fared after rejecting Śakuntalā. Her divinity does not make her immune to the human feelings natural to a woman, or a mother. She being the friend of Menakā, her feelings towards Śakuntalā are motherly, and she feels happy at the sufferings of the king, because that foreshadowed the happy reunion of Śakuntalā with him. Though seen for a few minutes, Sānumatī earns our love and respect without any reservation. Citralekha, the friend of Urvaśī, is quite a different personage. She loves Urvaśī, and helps her to attain her desire when she finds that the latter cannot be dissuaded from her infatuation. At the same time, it is quite clear that Citralekha does not at all approve of her friend's love for a terrestrial being, however, great he may be. She is a true friend, wise and resourceful counsellor, and ever-alert helper to Urvaśī.

There are a few women of the ascetic type also presented to us by Kālidāsa. Satyavati, Gautami, Suvrata and
her companions, Dākṣāyanī and Parivrājikā come before us as equally lovable, dignified and commanding our respect. Still, their characteristic difference of individualities is so obvious that it is impossible to miss it. Mother Gautami, a pure and simple soul, makes us bow down before her in reverence. She is a straightforward and loving old woman. The clever way in which the girls dodge her in the bower, her concern for the health of Śakuntalā, the simple remedies she prescribes for the ailment about which she knows nothing, her vain attempts at the court to convince Duṣyanta of the truthfulness and purity of her foster-daughter, and her pathetic appeal to Sārngarava about Śakuntalā’s plight, all make her so dear to us that we actually miss her in the later acts, specially when everything ends happily. The poet himself seems to be paying homage to the pure and innocent old lady who is the personification of motherly love.

Dākṣāyanī and Satyavatī are both wives of ascetics who lived in the hermitage. The first is the mother of the gods and thus revered by the whole universe. Naturally, there cannot be any comparison between her and Satyavatī, the wife of a comparatively lesser sage, Cāvanna. As the foster-mother of Ayus, Satyavatī fulfils her role quite well. But, no stretch of imagination can make us visualize her as being able to look after Sarvadamanī. Suvaratā, her companion, and even the mother of the universe, together, do not seem to be a match for that spirited boy.

Parivrājikā, in the Mālavikāgnimitra, stands quite by herself in the whole arena of Sanskrit dramatic literature. Of course, there are Sāṅkṛtyāyanī, portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, and Kāmaṇḍakī and others portrayed by Bhavabhūti later on. But, Paṇḍita Kauśikī is a unique personage who fulfils her role as the protector of Mālavikā without in any way losing the dignity of the ascetic robes she had accepted when she became a helpless widow. She is a learned lady of noble
birth, the sister of no less a person than the minister of a state. According to her own statement, she was left helpless after the death of her brother who was accompanying Mālavikā to Vidiṣā. As a consequence, she took to the ascetic life and by chance, entered the harem of Agnimitra. She enjoyed the respect and affection of both the king and the queen. She seems to be a very scholarly woman, well informed in Dharma and Niti. Her benediction to the king, her clever statement assuring the queen about the greatness of the latter, and similar others, are good examples of her knowledge and wisdom. When she is asked as to the defects in the performance of Mālavikā, she answers, “the meanings of the words were intimated well by the correct and significant movements of the limbs; the steps were in tune with the music; there was full identification of the various sentiments; the gentle actions with the hands were graceful and the different emotions, developing one from the other, kept up the interest continuously. In short, every thing was perfect.” This shows her deep knowledge of the art of dance beyond any doubt. The king himself is profuse in his praise for her. Once he says, “You are, indeed,
Pandita—the learned—Kauśiki." Her knowledge and wisdom are accepted by all as is proved by the fact that both the dancing masters were completely agreeable to her being the judge in the discussions as well as the performances that would go to decide their quarrel. She was a good story-teller, and she is seen as a trusted and respected companion of the queen. She knew something about medicine also. For, when the Viduṣaka was said to have been bitten by a snake, she suggested cutting off that finger, and quoted authority also for the same. Of course, we cannot be sure whether she was pulling his legs or was really serious, when she said, "The first thing to be done, at such times, is to cut off the bitten place. So, let that be done here." But, there cannot be any question about the knowledge that prompted that statement. She seems to have been an expert in dressing and make-up also, as could be judged from the fact that the queen made her responsible for decorating Mālavikā in the bridal attire, when she wanted to give her away to the king in marriage.

One thing here is worth noticing. The Parivrājikā might have been an unattached Buddhist nun till she entered the apartment of the queen Dhārini, and met Mālavikā in the guise of a maid-in-waiting. But, after that, she does everything in her power to fulfil the mission of her deceased brother. She does not reveal the identity of Mālavikā,

1. राजा—पण्डितकौशिकी खलु भगवती। पश्चात्तिनावहं देवी च।
   Ma. Ag. I. p. 193

2. परिब्राजिका—तेन हि दंशच्छेदः पूर्वकमेि शूष्यते। स तावत्यां क्रियताम्।
   चेढः दंशत्य दाहो वा अतेि रत्नोवस्तम्।
   एतानि दद्धमात्रापामायुष्णाः। प्रतिपक्षय: ॥
   Ma. Ag. IV. 4

3. विदुःपकः—प्रथा किल देवयं व पण्डितकौशिकी भगिना। भगवति यस्य प्रसाधनम्
   वहसि तदांश्य मालविकाः। भरीरेव विवाहनेप्यामिति। तत्या
   सशिश्चेपलंकुटामालविका।
   Ma. Ag. V. p. 243
because she remembers the prophecy about the girl's fate of being a servant for one year before getting married to a suitable husband. The Vidūṣaka knowingly or otherwise makes a remark when she enters the scene for the first time, "Here comes the queen Dhārini, accompanied by the learned Kauśiki, who is the Pīthamardika. And really speaking the Parivrājikā is the Pīthamardika—the helper—to Mālavikā in the play. She is fully responsible for bringing Mālavikā to the presence of the king. It is she who says that the art of dancing being more practical than theoretical, a debate between the two masters is of no use. It is she again, who provokes Gaṇadāsa to insist on producing Mālavikā on the stage, by her seemingly casual statement that only he can claim to be a good teacher who is equally good at teaching as well as performing himself. It is she who suggests the

1. परिव्राजिका—इयं पितिर जीवित केनापि देवयात्मातेन सिद्धाभकेन सापुष मतस्मध समावधारा—प्रासंविकसमात्मिकं श्रेयवावं सुभूषय तत: सहस्मतुगामिनी भविष्यतीति । तदेव भाविनमदेशस्यस्तवत्सादशुभूषयाय परिवर्णमन्त्ववेकय कालण्त्रिकयथा मया सादु कुतमिति पश्यामि।

Ma. Ag. V. p. 249

2. विदुर्यकः—श्रीय उपस्थिता देवी पीठमर्दिका परिवारकी जीवनमय मया सहस्मती धारिषी।

Ma. Ag. I. p. 192

3. (श) दूरानुविधितत्ति श्वास्थम श्रास्तिनिक्षेत्रेऽतु।

किचिंतरुवणिक: सहाय एवास्तम पीठमर्दिक:।। स. द. आ. 39

(च) गोदिति। कार्यविवेकंविशिष्टतात्त्वी पीठ मुद्रतीति पीठमदं इत्यवथा संभा। सा स्त्री पीठमर्दिका। Commentary on above.

4. परिव्राजिका—देव! प्रयोगप्रकास! हि नाथशाश्वम्। किमधि वामवहारण।

Ma. Ag. I. p. 193

5. परिव्राजिका—राष्ट्रिय क्रिया कस्यचित्तंसत्वा

संभावितस्यस्य विवेशेवृत्ता।

यस्योत्तत् साधु स शिवकारणोऽधुरि प्रतिधापयितवभ एव।। Ma. Ag. I. 16
type of the dance and the piece to be sung by the disciples which, when actually performed, appeared to be a direct request from Mālavikā to the king. The piece chosen has its own significance, when we remember the position of Mālavikā in the service of the queen, which is very similar to that of Śarmiṣṭhā, the author of the song. The only difference is that while Devayāni purposely kept princess Śarmiṣṭhā as the servant, Dhārini does not have any such idea at all. For all appearances, Parivṛṣṭikā is just and impartial in all her statements but it is not difficult to see how skilfully she was contriving the situation to a very definite purpose. Nor is the queen deceived by appearances as could be understood from her statement, "why are you trying to treat me as asleep while I am wide awake?" When all ends well and the union of Mālavikā with the king is achieved, Parivṛṣṭikā wishes to retire, and she is held back only by the loving and insistent persuasions of the King and the Queen.

Perhaps, Parivṛṣṭikā is a representative of the noble women who took to ascetic life and lived as dependent on the aristocratic or royal families. Buddhism and Jainism were the two religious sects who allowed their women to leave the hearth and home to take up ascetic life. Of course, Manu and the other Hindu law-givers allow the four Āśramas for the people. In the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, we have instances of the queens retiring to the forest when they wanted to withdraw from the worldly life. For example, Kuntī and Gāndhārī retired to the forest with Dhrtraśtra, after the Pāṇḍavas were settled in the kingdom. In the Svapnavāsavadattā of Bhāsa we have seen that the mother of princess Padmāvatī had retired to the hermitage when she became a widow and when her son was ruling.

1. देवी—(जनानितकम्) मूढे परिव्राजिकेमा मां जाप्रतीमपि सुमामिब करोपि।
   Ma. Ag. I. p. 195

2. Ma. Bh. XIV.
In the Abhijñānaśākuntala, Kanva is heard consoling Śakuntalā that she could come back to the hermitage after her son was grown up enough to rule the kingdom. There are repeated references to the four Āśramas in the works of Kālidāsa. In the Vikramorvāṣīya, Purūravas told his son that it was high time he entered the second āśrama, since he had finished the first one.¹ He himself expresses the wish to retire to Vānaprastha, when he sees that he is going to be deprived of the company of Urvaśī.² But, Parivrājikā is the unique instance of a woman who, though retired, still takes an interest in worldly affairs. She seems to be a link between the waning Budhism and the rapidly reviving Hinduism. She is a respectable person who keeps up her dignity. Later on, we find similar characters who play the same role, but who show much deterioration, due to their dependence on aristocratic families. There is no direct mention of Budhism in the works of Kālidāsa. Parivrājikā is an ascetic lady, but there is nothing to show that she was a Budhist nun.

We have mentioned of fasts and rites performed by women in general. We saw this in the plays of Bhāsa and Śūdraka in the previous chapter. The works under study at present also show the same customs. Queen Dhārini is giving out Daksinā to Brāhmanas for the protection and long life of her son Vasumitra. The reference of Horse-Sacrifice is also found here. Queen Ausinari, in the Vikramorvāṣīya, is seen performing the priyānuprasādana vratam to gain the love of her husband and, here, the method of performing the

1. राजा—प्रायः वत्स उपित्त त्वाय पूर्वसिरसाधारमः। हितीयम्यासितः तत् समयः।
   V. U. V. p. 176

2. राजा—न हि मुलभवियोगः कर्तुमात्मत्त्रियारिषेष
   प्रभवति परवत्ता शासने तिष्ठु भवेः।
   प्रहर्मविप तव सूनावश विनयस्य राज्यं
   विचरितमूलप्रणायाश्रयिब बनानि॥
   V. U. V. 71
same also is described incidentally. According to the Āśrama-vyavastha, women were allowed to retire to the third āśrama with their husbands, or alone, if widows. Buddhism, as we know, allowed women to become nuns. Later, it is possible that women began to take the orange robe even without embracing Buddhism. Sītā is described by Kālidāsa as clad in an orange robe when she entered the Rājasabhā to take her last oath. It is to be remembered here that there is no mention of this in the Rāmāyana, and it is Kālidāsa who, for the first time, refers to Sītā as wearing this dress. This perhaps supports our conclusion that at the time when Kālidāsa wrote, women who had nothing to bind them to this worldly life took to this dress, which had come to be considered as a symbol of retirement, and led a life useful to others.

We have already seen that Kālidāsa always wrote with a purpose. Every one of his characters has a message to give to those who listen. This is true in the case of Pari-vrājikā also. As long as those ascetic women limited their activities to the spiritual life alone, there was no harm done. But human nature being what it is, it was not always possible for even those detached people to keep out of all kinds of temptations. As in the case of Mālavikā, instances may arise which can drag these women into the worldly life once again. It is possible that the highly revered spiritual life may deteriorate and become a mask for selfish activities. Kālidāsa, with his natural instincts, seems to be lifting a warning finger against such activities, and the warning seems to be amply justified, when we remember similar characters in the later plays, such as Kāmandakī and her disciples.

The other female characters are only the door-keepers and the attendants in the palaces. Of these, there is one character, who is peculiar—the Yavant—the keeper of the

1. कायायपरिवीततेन स्वपदाप्ततचबुद्धिः
   ऋषिमीयत्तुद्रद्वित्षाणन्तो वपत्ति सत

Raghuvaṃśam. XV. 77
weapons of king Purūravas and also of Duṣyanta. Kālidāsa is the only poet, up to this time, who mentions Yavanī. This word has been taken by some critics to mean a Greek woman. It need not be necessarily so. When the Aryan conquest took place, the people who were conquered, were reduced to slaves and each was given suitable work to do. It is only natural that wild people are well versed in the use of weapons, especially because of their hunting habits and warlike nature. It is a well-known fact that these people of Nature are proverbially trustworthy and loyal. It is also a fact that these women were experts in the use of weapons. So, there is nothing wrong in concluding that they were given the custody of weapons. The Bhīls of Rājasthān, the Kurichyars of Malabar, and the mountaineers of the Tamilnād provide examples of women, expert in the use of weapons. Only trustworthy people can be given the custody of weapons, for obvious reasons. The very fact that Kiratī is used as a synonym of Yavanī also goes a long way to support the conclusion that we have arrived at. We have other examples of the same word, Yavanī, used in many places to indicate 'non-Aryan', without any special reference to the Greeks. In the Pāṇinīya Sūtras also we have the word explained1. After this time, we have references to the same Yavanī in the capacity of the nearest servant of the king.

The harems of all the three kings seem to have many women as attendants. Apart from the old chamberlaine, all other attendants are young and beautiful women. The natural conclusion is that women in general did take up employment in aristocratic families as servants, keepers of

1. इन्द्रवर्षभवशबंधनमहामारणययवस्मादतुलाजायामानुक्क्। एतेयामानुतमः स्यांकीषय च। या तु स्वयमेववाच्यविका तन वा कौश वाच्य।।
उपात्यायो उपात्याया। ब्राह्मणाय स्वयं व्यास्यायण। यवाहोपि यवनालिफ़्यामु। यवनस्य पत्नी यवनी।

S. K. 4.1.49. p. 149
gardens, door-keepers and attendants, and the society thought nothing wrong about it. All the later dramas also have serving women of this type. But all the women attendants presented by Kālidāsa have the same peculiarity. Though similar in character and conduct, each one of them has a special trait of her own suited to the atmosphere of the play in which she characterises, and also to the heroine thereof. For example, while Nipunikā befits queen Aūsināri, and the other Nipunikā suits Irāvatī, we cannot imagine either of them as a friend to Mālavikā. Bakulāvalikā alone seems to befit that position. Similarly, Kaumudikā, Madhukarikā and Jyotsnikā are the girls who can serve queen Dhārinī, while Parabhrtikā and Madhukarikā seem to be quite befitting to the inner courts of Duṣyanta, presided at that time by queen Vasumatī and full of ladies like Harṣapadikā.

M. R. Kale, in his introduction to the Abhijñānaśākuntala, says, "The Plays of Kālidāsa, on the whole, do not aim at giving a realistic picture of the society of his times." But, the first two plays of the poet do not at all bear out that statement. On the other hand, they very clearly represent the society with all its good and evil. In Abhijñānaśākuntala, there are instances that go to prove the above statement of Kale. Still, the true and natural representation of the society is too obvious to be missed even there. The women in the harem, the fun and frolic of young girls, the innocent and pure life of the hermitage, the king and his court, the fisherman and the policemen are all glimpses of real life in society.

Kālidāsa was not only a scholar, or a thinker. He was a man of Nature. Nature and natural beauty fascinated him. He was a seer—a draṣṭā, but he was also a creator—a sraṣṭā. Having seen and known everything, he was not

1. श्रपारे काल्यासंसारे कविरेक: प्रजापति:।
   यवास्मै रोचते विश्वं लयेतं परिवतते।।

   Dh. A. III. p. 498
satisfied with all that he saw. Being a poet of nature, he desired perfection everywhere, even as in nature. It was not enough for him that he saw things; he wanted the world also to see and realise what he himself saw. This desire he fulfilled in his dramas, slowly. The deteriorating condition of women in society seems to have been prominent in his mind when he wrote his first play. And he seems to have been quite sure that the society itself could not hold long, if this deterioration was not stemmed; because it was his firm belief that woman was really the better-half that constituted the society; and where she is not honoured, no good can happen. He seems to be a staunch believer in the dictum of Manu, "where the women are honoured, there the gods live; and where they are not revered, all rites are futile." Though he was sure of what he wanted to tell the people, it seems he was not sure of the manner in which his ideas would be received by them. Hence, he portrayed the society as he saw it in his first play. The deteriorating condition of the society seems to be rather prominent in the Vikramorvaśīya. In the Mālavikāgnimitra, there seems to be the real condition pictured side by side with the ideals that could be.

In the Vikramorvaśīya, the position of woman as wife is emphasised, and the plight of the puruṣa devoid of his proper companion is shown, as has been already discussed. In the Mahābhārata, it is stated that the king is responsible for his times. The time portrayed by Kālidāsa is that of monarchy when the divinity of the ruler was fully accepted. The ministers looked after the affairs of the state with the

1. यत्र नार्यस्तु पुज्यन्ते रमणे तत्र देवता:।
वर्तरास्तु न पुज्यन्ते सविस्त्रतःफलः क्रिया:।। Manu. III. 56
2. कालो वा कारणं राजा राजा वा कालकारणः।
इति ते संस्यो मा भूतः राजा कालस्य कारणः।।
Ma. Bh. XIII. 63. 101
final approval of the king. Even as the king of gods, Indra enjoyed life in the heavens surrounded by innumerable nymphs, so also the kings in this world enjoyed life, surrounded by a number of women. Polygamy seems to be the order of the day, as is evidenced by all the three plays. Though we hear of only the chief queen of Purūravas, there is reason enough to believe that he had a full harem. Agniparikṣa seems to be a past master in the fickleness of his affections. Duṣṇyanta also is no exception. The chief favourite today may be a back number tomorrow. Irāvatīs and Hamsapadikās were not uncommon. The only way for the ordinary woman to keep her dignity was to accept the inevitable, as queen Auśinārī did by her priyaṇuprasādana vrata, and leave the scene vacant for the new favourite.

But there is one redeeming feature for the woman. If she was the mother of a son, her position was secure. Childlessness was considered to be the result of sin, and the householder without a son went deep down to hell. Hence, it was only natural that the woman who saved her husband by giving him a son was honoured above all. This reverence to the mother of the son is emphasized by Kālidāsa again and again. Purūravas was woe-stricken due to his childlessness after he returned with Urvaśī from the forest. Duṣṇyanta's repentence in rejecting Šakuntalā was aggravated by the remembrance that she was about to become a mother. And, in Mālavikāgnimitra, the position of queen Dhārinī as the happy mother of a heroic son, shines by contrast. Here again, Kālidāsa seems to hold up the ruling of

1. निचुर्यक: —दियत्रि चिरश्च कालस्वर्णवैश्वीसहायो नन्दवनप्रमुबेशु देवतार्यस्य निचुर्ण कुलभाबस्य: प्रियवचनिवृत्त: प्रियवचन:। प्रविष्ट्य नगरमिदानी ससत्कारोपचारः प्रकृतिभिरतुरुपमानो राज्यं वर्तित। सत्तानल्यं ब्रज्ययित्वा न किमव्यः हीनम्।

V. U. V. p. 169
Manu as to the greatness of the mother.¹

In Mālavikāgnimitra, the condition of women in society and the general conditions are more clear to the student. In both the first plays, we are taken round the royal courts and surroundings only, the one deviation being in the wanderings of Purūravas in the forest searching for his beloved. Those seem to be the days when the king was considered as the mainstay of the kingdom, and the subjects followed the ideals set by their king. The dictum, “as the king, so the subjects,”² perhaps held the day, and that is why the master-poet satisfied himself by creating literature that centred round one king and the other. In the Uttarakānda of Rāmāyana, we have a passage in which the people discussing about the rule of Rāma say, “How can he accept back a woman who lived long in another man’s house? We also will have to do the same thing; we will have to bear with our wives also, because what the king does has to be followed by the people.”³ There may not be anything wrong if we conclude that the same idea held good when Kālidāsa wrote, and he is justified in depicting the aristocratic life which sets examples to the people in general.

At the time when Kālidāsa wrote, the freedom of women seems to exist in name only. The dictum of Manu, that, “in childhood, the father protects the girl, in youth the husband, and in old age, she is protected by her son; the woman does not deserve freedom,”⁴ seems to be observed in

1. उपाध्यायान्द्रशाचार्य प्राचायांशं शतं पिता ।
   सहस्रं तु पितुमाता गोर्वेशणातिरिच्छे ॥ Manu. II. 145
2. राजि ध्वमिशा धर्मि: पापे पापा: समे समा: ।
   लोकास्मातशनुवत् यथा राजा तथा प्रजा: ॥ S. R. Bh. 119
3. प्रस्माकम्पि दारेपु सहुनीयं भविष्यति ।
   यथा हि कुश्ले राजा प्रजास्मातमुवत् ॥ V. R. VII. 43-19
4. पिता रक्षति कौमारे मर्ताः रक्षति योक्ते ।
   रक्षन्ति स्वविशे पुजना न क्री स्वातन्त्रमहिः ॥ Manu. IX. 3
its most narrow meaning possible then. The general condition of women, as portrayed in these plays is rather quite unsatisfactory. They do enjoy life in the ordinary sense of the word. They eat, sleep and are merry as long as they are loved by their lords. Then, they are very much respected by the people around also. But the fancy of the man is so fickle that the favour may lapse at any moment. Of course, these women have nothing to complain in their everyday life physically. As long as they follow the ordinary code of life existing in society, they get food and shelter in their husbands’ homes. But the real companionship and emotional satisfaction implied by the word sahadharmaçarিত seem to exist only in words. The husband did what he liked and the sahadharmaçarana amounted to the implicit obedience and quiet acceptance of his will by the wife. Their position being so insecure, the women jealously guarded the affections of their husbands and were overwhelmed with anger and sorrow at the mere suggestion of a possible rival. This was only natural, because a new love of the husband meant the definite dethronement of the former favourite for all practical purposes. Of course, the man was expected to treat all his wives equally and the antahpuradaksīya was considered an essential quality for a gentleman. But it is absurd to expect actual observance of this rule in a human being, however noble and broad-minded he may be. A man infatuated by one beauty can never do justice to his other wives, however dear they might have been to him before. Kālidāsa emphasizes this point repeatedly. Purūravas says to his friend, “Hundreds of gallant words from the mouth of the lover do not propitiate the beloved if they lack in genuineness, even as the gem with artificial colouring does not deceive the one who has the knowledge of real precious stones.”

1. राजा—प्रियवचनकृतोष्ण मीतिंतव्यनुमयो रसाहस्ते ।
प्रविःशति हृदयं न तदिवविरिरिर इत्यमरागयोजित: ॥ V. U. II. 21
idea to Gautama while saying about with propitiating Irāvati. Irāvati herself says in one place that the king is only like a picture of himself because his mind is fixed elsewhere. This being the general condition, it is only natural that the relations of a newly-wed girl become apprehensive as to her fate in the husband’s house. It is this anxiety that is echoed in the words of Anasūyā to Duśyanta and also in the message that Kanva sends to the king.

In Mālavikāgnimitra and Abhijñānaśakuntala, young girls of marriageable age are portrayed by Kalidāsa. They are loved and adored by their people. The education imparted to girls, in the court of Agnimitra, seems to be limited to dance, music and other fine arts. The end and aim of their lives seem to be to please their husbands and their education is mainly to make them attractive enough for this purpose. The presence of Haradatta and Gaṇadāsa at the court of Agnimitra, under the patronage of the king and queen respectively, and also the sending of artists as presents to the king by Vīrasena, whenever he won a battle, are examples of the encouragement given to the various arts by

1. राजा—वयस्य, निसागतिपुण्यः: भ्राय:। कथमन्यसंक्रान्तःदिनमुनालयन्ता-मणि ते सकी न मां स्वयमित्यति। ब्रत: पश्यामि।
उज्ज्वलः: प्रणयो वरं विहलं बहुवं: लोगन्तेतवो हि हष्ट:।
उपचारविधिमण्डितनीनां न तुपूर्वन्याचिकोषिपिभव्युष्यः॥

Ma. Ag. III. 3

2. इरावती—मुखे याहेश्विनिर्गतो नशु ताहत: एवायतसंक्रान्तःदिनम् प्रायपुः।
केवल मुप्चारातिक्रम महामाजितुमयमार्माम:।
Ma. Ag. IV. p. 235

3. श्रन्मूया—वयस्वम् बहुवल्लभा राजन: धूलले। यथा नौ प्रियसिद्धि बन्धु-जनशोचनीया न भवति तथा निवर्त्य।
Ab. Ś. III. p. 37

4. प्रस्तासातु विचित्र्य संयमधनागुणे: कुलं चातमन-स्वव्यस्यं: कथमन्यवाचारवृक्षं स्नेहप्रगुणित: च तायु।
सामान्यप्रतिपत्तिपुरुषकेमियं दारेषु: हस्यालया
भास्यायत्तमत: परं न लघु तदाच्छय बन्धुचन्दुमिः॥
Ab. Ś. IV. 17.
the kings, ministers and other aristocratic families. The episode of Kaumudikā and Jyotsnikā, the example of Irāvati, who belonged to the retinue of the queen, rising to the position of the beloved of the king, the maid Bakulāvalikā being taught the art of decorating by the king himself, are all examples to the point. The last example goes to prove that the education of girls included the art of decorating the house, the gardens and also the person. As has been already noticed, Parivrājikā was also an expert in these arts, and we may rightly conclude that she learned these things when she was a young girl at the house of her father, the minister Mādhavasena.

In the Abhijñānaśākuntala, we observe something different. The three young girls introduced to us here are born and bred in the hermitage. Though growing up among deer and peacocks, trees and creepers, seers and saints, none of them is illiterate or ignorant. Their conversations among themselves and also with others, their behaviour, their treatment of the unknown guest who presented himself to them, all go to prove their high education and culture. They have good knowledge of the epics and purāṇas, keen power of understanding and application, and a good poetic sense. Besides, they are indeed very clever. Even in their teasing remarks to each other we get many examples to prove their wisdom, wit and humour. While Śakuntalā complains to Anasuyā that Priyāṉvadā had tied the upper garment too

1. श्र. सारसिकः—द्वृद्धां तेन महासाराणि रत्नानि बाहुनानि शिल्पकारिका-पृष्ठबिन्दु मन्मपायनीकृत्य भर्तूः सकावं प्रेषित इति।
Mā. Ag. V. p. 241

2. मालविका—केन प्रसाधनकलायामभिनीतासि।
वकुलाविका—प्रत्र कर्तु भर्तुः शिल्पास्मि।
Mā. Ag. III. p. 215
tightly, the ready repartee comes from Priyamvadā—"the blame should go entirely to your ever-growing youth. Why blame me for it?" On another occasion, while Priyamvadā compliments her saying,—"the kesavṛkṣa looks as though adorned by a beautiful creeper, by your nearness," Śakuntalā answers, "that is why you are named Priyamvadā" (one who speaks pleasing words); thus perhaps showing her knowledge of Śabdaśāstra. Another example of the same is found in the fact that Śakuntalā named the creeper full of white flowers as Vanajyotsna—the moonlight of the forest. By their own statements on various occasions, it is clear that they were well-versed in the different branches of literature as well as arts. Though they had neither the practical experience of the worldly life, nor any direct contact with the people of the city, still they

1. शकुन्तला—सब वनसपुष्प न वा यहलन प्रयंबद्ध नियतितार्थम्। शिखलय तावेदेतु।
प्रयंबद्धा—(सहासम्)। प्राण पयोधरविस्तार्यपिषुकमात्मनो योवनमुपालम्बवेत्। मां किमुपालभेसे।
Ab. Ś. I. p. 9

2. प्रयंबद्धा—हला शकुन्तले। प्राणव तवनमृत्तित तिष्ठ। यावस्तयोगमत्या
लतासनाथ इवायं केसरकुशक: प्रतिभाति।
शकुन्तला—प्रत: खलु प्रयंबद्धासित: स्वम्।
Ab. Ś. I. p. 10

3. प्रयंबद्धे वदः खचु। (३-१२-३७) प्रयंबद्ध:। वर्यमच्छ:। गमे सुपि वाच्यः।
S. Kau. 64-2953-p. 494
शशिषवद्यमंत्रस्य मुद्। ६। ४। ६७। द्रव्यो द्वजोज्जतस्य च मुमागम:।
स्वातु बिद्वेसे उत्तरपेरे न लघुलघुस्य।। शिखर्वाच्चवाच्चवादि।
S. Kau. 64-2942-p. 494

4. वनसपुष्पोऽहला शकुन्तले। प्राणमयते मदनमयतस्य वृद्धनस्य किर्तिः
वाही इतिहासनिविवेषु कामयमानामवस्या श्रूयते ताही से पवयामि।
Ab. Ś. III. p. 32
सब्यो—याये अनुपत्तसूपत्रोऽजनः। निर्वम्बपरित्वाच्चवानास्सौच्छ। आभरणं
विविद्वेसे कुँवः।
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 48
have heard a lot about the manners and customs existent among people leading a worldly life. For example, Anasūyā had heard that kings are polygamous, and so is anxious for the welfare of her friend after she would be married to Duṣyanta.¹ The girls know about the various ceremonies to be performed by married women as is indicated by the statement of Anasūyā that Śakuntalā had to worship the deity of Saubhāgya.² The things to be used for auspiciousness are also not unknown to them, as is proved from the fact that Anasūyā had kept the Kesaramalikā in the coconut-shell for the occasion of sending their friend to her husband’s home³. The sage Kanva claims himself to be well-versed in the ways of the world, though a constant resident of the forest⁴. These girls were brought up under the careful and loving eyes of this skillful father who seems to take the places of both parents for them. The training imparted to them by the sage is so perfect that he could safely leave them in charge of the hermitage, whenever he had to go on pilgrimage or other important journeys. The efficiency with which Anasūyā and Priyānvadā perform the duties and rites of daily life is indeed commendable. Their courtesy and manners to the guests show their culture and good taste. Though these characteristics are very much marked in these girls, those in the other dramas

1. अनसूया—वयस्य वहुवल्लभा राजान: शूक्लन्ते । यथा नौ ध्रुवसंस्ती वन्धु-जनवोचनीयाः न भवति तथा निर्वैरयेत् । Ab. Ś. III. p. 37

2. अनसूया—ननु सहवा: श्रुकुन्तलायाः सोभाय्यदेवतास्वतिनीयाः । Ab. Ś. IV. p. 42

3. अनसूया—तेन हेतुसिंहं शुचाषुवल्लभान्तिते नारिकेलसमुद्रं एततिनिस्मितर्वेव कालान्तरका मिकित्वा मया केशरामालिका । तदिमां हस्तसंतिनिहितं कुरु । यावदहमपि तत्वे मुगरोचनाः तीर्यंतिकाः दूराकितस्यानां निर्विशेषानां समालम्बनानां विरचयाभि । Ab. Ś. IV. p. 40

4. कण्व—वनोक्तोपि सतो लोककक्षा वयस्म् । Ab. Ś. IV p. 53
also show more or less the same qualities according to their environments.

The maidens portrayed by Kālidāsa, seem to be quite grown up and in their youth. This obviously goes to prove that child-marriage was not the custom of the day. It may be argued that the girls of royal and aristocratic families were not subjected to this custom till very late days. But Śakuntalā and her friends do not represent the maidens of royal families at all, and Kanva seems to follow the customs of the people in general. So, there cannot be anything wrong in concluding that marriage was thought of only after the girls attained a mature age, when they are able to know and understand the significance of that incident in their lives. At the same time, there are indications of girls being not allowed to move about freely after they reached the marriageable age. When leaving for Hastināpura, Śakuntalā desires that her friends also accompany her if possible but Kanva tells her that it would not be proper for them to do so, because they are also to be given away in marriage.¹

The repeated statements of Kanva point towards a society which considers marriage a necessity for the girl. The unmarried girl meant a great burden to the parents. While Śakuntalā was taking leave of her foster-sister, Vana- jyotsnā, the sage says, "Even as I desired, you, by your own meritorious deeds, have obtained a suitable husband. This creeper also has united with the mango tree. Now I am free of all anxiety concerning both of you."² Again, we hear him heave a sigh of relief, when Śakuntalā is sent

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1. कण्व:-बले! इसे धन्व प्रदेये । न युक्तमनयोस्तत्र गन्तुम । ल्वया सह गौतमी यास्यवित ।
    Ab. Ś. IV. p. 53

2. कण्व:-संकल्पितं प्रथममेव मया ति-वाक्यं
    भारिमात्सवदृशं सुकुल्लंगंता ल्वम ।
    चूतेन संप्रितत्वी नवमालिकेयः
    मस्यामहं ल्वमयि च सम्प्रति वीतचिन्ता: ॥
    Ab. Ś. IV. 18
off to her husband, even though he is very sad due to the separation of that beloved daughter, as testified by himself twice.\(^1\) His words at the end of the fourth act are an eye-opener to the ideas of the society portrayed by the poet. It is plainly said that, by sending the daughter to her husband's house, the father has got relief, for, "the maiden is indeed the property of others, and having sent her now to her husband, I feel relieved like the man who has returned to the owner the trust left with him."\(^2\) Here we have an echo of the ruling of Manu who says, "The father who does not give away the girl in marriage at the proper time, the husband who does not enjoy her at the proper time, and the son who does not protect the widowed mother are all to be despised."\(^3\)

The possibility of girls taking up the vow of life-long celibacy also seems to be existent, for, in the very beginning itself Duṣyanta asks Anasūyā what the intentions of their father are about Śakuntalā—whether she is to lead a life of

1. **कथा:**—पाण्ड्ययुग सुभग्नीयस्त्रिमालानि गीता संस्कृतमुलकान्तम्
   कथा: स्तम्भितवाप्त्यवृत्तिकलुपविचलताजह दर्शभूमि।
   वैत्तिकः मम तावदीहः स्त्रियाशीर्षस्वक:।
   पीड़नीते श्रद्धिष्ठ: कथं नु तनयाविश्लेष्यते।[वैनं:।]

Ab. Ś. IV 6.

2. **कथा:**—यदमेध्यति मम शोकः कथं नु वते त्वः रचिष्ठपूर्वः।
   उपजारविरुघः नीवारवल्लिविलोकक्ष्मः।

Ab. Ś.IV. 21

3. **कथा:**—शकुन्तलाम् पतिकुचं विसुध्य लवचमिदानि स्वास्थ्यम्।
   कुतः।
   ब्राह्मणोऽहि कथा परकीय एव तामथ संप्रेष्य पारिश्रृंहै।
   जातो ममाय विशादः प्रकांम प्रत्यपितन्यास इवान्तरात्मा।

Ab. Ś. IV. 22

3. **कालेखातात पिता वाच्यो वाच्यस्बानुपवन्यतः।
   मृते परमिर पुनः वाच्यो मातुररक्षिता।

Manu. IX. 4
celibacy or she is to be given in marriage.\textsuperscript{1} Only after he is reassured by the plain words of the friends, does he allow his mind to take its free course. This reminds us of the custom existent in the times of the earlier literature and also referred to in the Mahābhārata. The word amujah, meaning spinster, is found in the literature, up to 500 B. C., thus showing the existence of such women at that time. In the Mahābhārata, we hear of Sulabhā who decided to take up life-long celibacy, because she could not get a suitable husband.\textsuperscript{2} But, this seems to have become a very rare custom, because Kālidāsa repeatedly refers to the anxiety of the parents to get their daughters married to suitable persons.\textsuperscript{3} The real duties of women began with their marriage.

In the third, fourth and fifth acts of the Abhijñānasa- kuntalam, we have some glimpses of the marriage customs of the day. Of the eight types of marriages known to the Mahābhārata, and also ordained in the Manusmrti\textsuperscript{4}, the Gandharva, Brāhma and Prājāpatya types seem to be the best

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1. राजा—वेशान्वें किमन्या प्रवत्माप्रदानाः
   द्वारापारोपिच मदनस्य निजेदिवित्वः ।
   प्रत्यलभेव मदिन्दियाणवल्लभाभि—
   राशो निवस्त्यति समं हरिणाजुङ्गाभि: ॥
   Ab. Ś. I. 25.

2. साधुं तस्य कुले जाता भर्त्येषु संहिष्ठो
   बिनीता मोचस्मु परायणवा मुनिब्रतः ॥
   Ma. Bh. XIII. 302. 186.

3. हिमयंवत्र—गुरोः पुनरस्य धर्मरुपवर्षदोऽसंकल्पः ।
   Ab. Ś. I. p. 15.
   द्बन्धुया—गुरवते कन्यका प्रतिपादनीयतयं तात्वप्रमम: संकल्पः ।
   त यदि देवमेव संयोगवति नवन्त्वप्रयासेन कुता गुह्न: ॥
   Ab. Ś. IV. p. 42

4. ब्राह्मो दैवश्ययायः श्राजापत्यस्तपाचानु: ।
   मन्य्येन राजसधैव पश्चाश्चराथ्मोऽधमः ॥
   Manu. III. 21.
known to the society depicted by Kālidāsa. It is also clear
that the Gandharva, though prevalent, was not quite ap-
proved by society in general. The poet himself does not seem
to be very much in favour of this, as could be realised from
the various statements in the fifth act and also from the re-
sults shown throughout the play. The fully recognized mar-
riage is the Brahma type, as described in the Kumārasam-
bhava, while the Prajāpatya in which the girl is given
to the husband by the father for the sake of Sahadharmā-
carana, that is, partnership in life,¹ is the best. This is proved
by the fear felt by the girls at every step, as to the reaction
of their father when he comes to know of this. Śakuntalā was
diffident to the very end. It is the assurance of Duṣyanta
that there were many royal maidens who were wedded by
Gandharva rite and were finally blessed by their parents,²
along with the encouragement of her dear friends, that made
her yield to her strong desire. The opinion of the poet that this
was not the right thing to do is made clear by the words of
Kanva himself, as repeated by Priyāmvaḍā to Anasūya.³ The
sage after embracing her said, “My dear child, though the
eyes of the sacrificer were dimmed by the smoke, luckily the
offering has fallen in the fire itself. So I need not be anxious
about you, even as about the knowledge imparted to a
good disciple.” The reference to the eyes dimmed by smoke
and the use of the word “luckily” show how Kanva felt
about all this. That the man happened to be the right one

1. सहीभूति चरतां धर्ममिति वाचानुभाव च।
कन्याप्रदानमम्मथ्य प्रागापत्यो विचित्र स्मृत:॥

2. राजा—गाम्यवृत्तिविवाहेन बल्हृधो राज्यिकायः।

3. प्रियवंदा—ततो याबद्धेन लक्ष्मणस्तत्वमेव परिव्यव्यय
tसाक्षेपनमनवममममष्टमः—विद्याभृमाकृतितत्त्विरूपे यज्ञानुकुलज्ञ पायक
एवाहृति पतिता। वते। शुचिष्ठ्यपरिर्दता विबेद्यविशोचिनया
s्वभूतुता। ॥

Manu. III. 30
Ab. Ś. III. 20
Ab. Ś. IV. p. 46
was due to sheer luck. The girls ought not to have been so hasty to allow the course of free love in the way they did. It is these ideas that are emphasized later on in the fifth act through Sāṅgarāva, who flares up in anger and tells his foster-sister: “This is how one’s own thoughtless, unchecked, deed burns.” He adds, as though to the world in general, “Hence, every union should be sealed after due consideration, much more so when it is done in secret. Otherwise, intimacy with unknown hearts will end thus in hostility.” Not only here but throughout the fifth act, Sāṅgarāva and also Śāradvāta seem to be echoing the feelings of the society in general. The similarity and contrast between the two disciples are only too obvious. Both are simple and straight-forward ascetic youths and both are equally devoted and obedient to their preceptor. But, while Śāradvāta is just satisfied with carrying the message of Kanva to the king, Sāṅgarāva could not be so calm and cool at all the injustice he visualised. A close study of the fifth act will help us to see clearly the general condition of women in society and also what Kālidāsa felt about the same.

The daughter, now being married, was to take her place by the side of her husband. So, the father sent her with the necessary escort to the city. The farewell ceremony was performed and the girl was blessed by the elderly married women before her departure from her paternal home. The blessings given to Śākuntalā at this time are very significant. “My daughter, may you obtain the title of Mahādevī, as a token of your husband’s love and respect for you.” “May you be the mother of heroic sons.”

1. शाङ्गरावः—दत्तमात्रमेकत प्रतिहतं चापलं दहति। Ab. Ś. V. p. 65
2. श्रतः परोक्ष करत्वं विशेषसंगतं रहः। श्रात्तदयोष्टवें वै भीमवति सौहदयं। Ab. Ś. V. 24
3. तापसीनामन्यतमां—जाते, भूतंवद्रामतसौचकं महावेदीवाद्यं लभस्व। Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47
4. द्वितीया—वस्ते, वीरप्रसविनी भव। Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47
you be always respected by your husband." These are the highest things desirable for a married woman. She does not seem to have any existence as an individual by herself. To be honoured by her husband and bear heroic sons to him are the highest honours that a woman could hope for. The blessings of Kanva also are noteworthy. Though he has accepted the inevitable and wishes her all the best a woman can hope for, there seem to be certain doubts lurking in his mind as to the reception she will meet with at the court. It were those fears and hopes that are signified in his words when he says, "May you be honoured by your husband, as Sarmiṣṭhā was by Yayāti; and may you get as imperial a son as Puru himself!" The meaning is much deeper than what obviously the words convey. Sarmiṣṭhā, the asura princess, also was married to king Yayāti according to the Gândharva rites secretly. She had to undergo many difficulties and suffer much humiliation before she could finally obtain her rightful position as the queen. Even that happened only after Puru, her son, proved his worth beyond any doubt. Kanva blesses that Sakuntala also may give birth to a son as great as Puru and thus raise her to her rightful place. Of course, the difference is there between the circumstances of the two cases. While Yayāti could not accept Sarmiṣṭhā because of his fears about his first wife and her father, the great sage Śukrāchārya, Duṣyanta had obviously no such reasons to reject his duly wedded wife. Kanva, who was worldly-wise, doubted the reception his daughter may get, because he was aware of the aversion of the society to love-marriages. His advice to Sakuntala as to her duties as a wife:

1. tūtīya—वत्से ! भर्तुंबुध्मता भव। Ab. Ś. IV. p. 47
2. कष्ठः—वत्से !

ययातिरित शमिष्ठा भर्तुंबुध्मता भव।

पूरं त्वमिति सम्राजज सेव पुरुषबन्धनः॥ Ab. Ś. IV. 7
3. कष्ठः—सा त्वमिति: पतिकुलं प्राप्यः.
is also to be understood in this light. It is not enough that she should serve her elders, treat her co-wives as dearest friends, be good to servants and be humble, even though she is raised to a very high position. She is specially told that she should not in any way go against her husband, even if he ill-treats her. Could it not be a warning to Šakuntalā, who has erred in her duties knowingly or unknowingly? It is the same trend of the ideas that predominate the message Šarṅgarāva delivers to Duṣyanta at the court. Presenting Šakuntalā before the king, Šarṅgarāva gives the message thus: “Since, by mutual consent, you have married my daughter, now I allow it to be so, because of my love for both of you. You are the best among deserving men, and Šakuntalā is the very personification of all good actions, and the Creator having united you both, has done some thing beyond any criticism. So now, with my blessings, accept her who is about to be the mother of your child for eternal companionship." These words seem to repeat the ideas of the formulas of both the Gāndharva and Prajapatya types of marriages as described in the Manusmṛti. While the first is described as the rite by which the bride and the groom unite with each other by mutual consent in secret.  

\[ \begin{array}{l}
\text{शुक्रप्रस्व गुह्न्यु स्म्रसशीवृति सपत्तिने} \\
\text{पर्वतवीरनवर्तिप रोपेरुत्तवा मा सम प्रतीयम गमः।} \\
\text{वृत्तिष्ठ भव दक्षणा परिजने भामेयूवनसेकिनी} \\
\text{वाण्यप्रभु शुक्रविपाय गुड़तपे वामा: कुलसमाधय:॥} \\
\text{Ab.Ś.IV.18} \\
\end{array} \]

1. शाङ्ग्रूः—यन्विन्य: समायदिमां मदीवें हुहितर विवाहस्य अद्यत्ता \\
प्रीतिमया भूयोरुग्नात्मम। कुल।। \\
लोमहेतां भार्सनर्व: स्त्रृतोश्च न: शकुनलाः प्रीतिमती च सक्षिया। \\
समानायस्तुल्यगुणं बुद्द्वर्त्य बिवस्य बाचयं न गत: प्रशालिति॥ \\
तद्वैदिनामप्पन्नसेवर्य प्रत्यक्षत्वाद सहवर्त्यचरणाविति। Ab.Ś.V.p.61 

2. इस्यप्रायोपयोगसंयोगो: कल्यायास्य वरस्य च। \\
गृहवर्य: स तु विसेयो मैत्रुन्य: कामसंभव:॥} 

Manu. III. 32
to satisfy their lust, the other is defined as the bestowing of the girl by her parents on the suitable man with the words "for eternal companionship." It seems that the father was not quite happy about the marriage performed by mutual consent alone. But, being a loving father and a man of understanding, he accepted the situation and fulfilled the rites of the marriage in the way acceptable to society by sending Śakuntalā to him in the bridal garb and with the usual words, Sahadharmachariniya. Under ordinary circumstances, all should have ended well here. But, the king was silent and the bridal party naturally got uneasy. Gautamī, the old foster-mother also felt the urge to say something. Being an old woman, she was more conventional and was feeling more uncomfortable. Her words plainly prove that she did not at all approve of the whole affair. She is very remorseful when she says: "Neither did you wait for permission from your elders nor did you consult us before entering into this union. In a matter like this in which you only cared for each other, what can a third person say to either?" All these show that though love-marriage existed as legally binding, the society did not look favourably on such unions. But once married, the girl had to remain with her husband, whether he liked her or not. That is why Kanva hastened to send her to Hastināpura, and Śāṅgarava says it in so many plain words. Even if the husband does not like her, the girl's relations would like her to be with him.

1. सतोभी चरतो धर्ममिति बाचानुभाष्य च।
कन्याप्रदानसम्बर्यं प्राणापत्यो विधिः स्मृत:॥ Manu. III. 30
2. गोतमी—आये! किमिपि बलुकामानसिम। न मे वचनावसरोपित।
कथमिति!
नापेक्षितो गुहजनोज्जवये न बलु पुष्पम बलुधुजनः॥
एककोमें चरिते भणामि किमेकमेकस्य॥ Ab. Ś. V. 16
3. शार्क्ररसः—कथमिदं नाम? भवत् एव सुतरां लोकवृद्धांतिनिष्णातः॥
Inspite of all that was said and done, the king had no remembrance of having married Šakuntalā, and so would not accept her. The society seems to give an upper hand to the man. However, beloved the daughter may be, she had no claim on her parents after she was married. Śāradvata very calmly pronounces the verdict: "Here is your wife. Accept her or reject her, as you like; for the husband has all-round authority over his wife." This seems to be an echo of the injunction found in the Manusmṛti that however bad or cruel or despicable the husband may be, he should be worshipped by the wife as the divinity. In the above words of Śāradvata, we have the law of society in its naked form. This is once more emphasized by the angry Śāṅgarava, when Šakuntalā in her desperate condition starts after them. Gautami, with her motherly affection, pleads with him saying: "What can my poor girl do when her husband is cruelly rejecting her?" But no. The brother, loving though he may be, cannot allow her to go on committing mistake after mistake. She had already brought enough disgrace on herself as well as an the family. He trembles with rage and shouts at Šakuntalā: "What! you, wayward one! do you still dare to take liberties? If what the king says is correct, then of what use are you, who have brought dis-

सतीमपि ज्ञातिकृतकसंबन्धयां
जनोज्यया मरूङ्गती विशञ्चुतेन।
प्रत: समीपे परिशोच्करियते
प्रियाप्रिया वा प्रमदा स्तवन्धुभि:॥ Ab. Ś. V. 17

1. शारद्वतः—तदेवा भवत: कात्ता स्वाज बैना श्रुत्ताणि वा।
   उपपन्ना हि दारेयु प्रभुता स्वर्तंतः कुक्तवी॥ Ab. Ś. V. 26
2. विशील: कामप्रकाशो वा गुणवकी परिवर्जितः।
   उपचरः: भ्रिया सद्वाय सततं देववप्ति:॥ Manu. V. 154
3. गोतमी—पर्यादेशपणे मतरिः कि वा मेघुनिका करोतु।
   Ab. Ś. V. p. 66
grace to the family, and to the father? On the other hand, if you are sure of your pure character, it is better for you to live even as a maid-servant in your husband’s house.”1 This need not necessarily mean that Śakuntalā may have to stay as a slave in the king’s house. In fact the vehemence of the statement only reflects the strong opinion of the society that the place of the wife is always near her husband in whatever capacity and position she may find herself—because a married woman who stays away from her husband is open to all kinds of criticism as has already been stated by Śrāṅgarava himself.2 The rule of Manu, that neither by selling nor by rejecting does the wife get separated from the husband3 seems to hold good.

In Śrāṅgarava we see the honest, straight-forward and loving brother, who finds himself in a terrible position. He had to stand by and see his sister insulted and disgraced. He is angry with the man who brought her to this position. He is enraged at his foster-sister, who by her innocent and trusting nature, has made a fool of herself by falling into the clutches of such a man. Over and above all this he is angry with the society which calmly allows such a stark injustice to the woman and allows the man his upper hand everywhere.

1. शाक्तेश्वरः—(सरोवर निभृत्य)—कि पुरुभागे! स्वातन्त्र्यमवलम्बने।
   यदि यथा वदति शिष्यपस्तथा
   त्वममति किं पितुरुक्तकाया त्यथा।
   प्रथ तु धेति शुचिव्रतमत्मन:।
   परितुष्टे तत्व दास्यमपि भम्मु॥
   Ab. Ś. V. 27

2. शाक्तेश्वरः—सतीमपि श्रातिकुलैकस्यायः
   जनोन्न्यान्ति भर्तृभवनी विशेष्यते।
   प्रतिसंतिति श्रृवणम्
   प्रियाप्रयोगा वा प्रमदा स्ववनुभविः॥
   Ab. Ś. V. 17

3. न निश्चयनिनिरंगयां भर्तुभविः विमुच्यते।
   Manu. IX. 46
There is another side of the picture—woman as seen in the society. In Manusmṛti, women are denounced as the personification of bad qualities,\textsuperscript{1} selfish and clever to get what they want. It is the same attitude that is perceived in the Kings towards women in general.\textsuperscript{2} He repeatedly asks how can the sages blame him on the basis of a woman’s words.\textsuperscript{3} When Śākuntala is in a fix due to the loss of the ring, which she realized suddenly at the court, Gautami in her simple and natural way tells her what the possibility is. The king comes out at once with the sneering remark: “this is what is called the ready resourcefulness of women.”\textsuperscript{4} He says without any hesitation that women are deceptive by nature.\textsuperscript{5} All this shows what the general trend of thought in the society was, the examples of which are many in the Hitopadesa also.\textsuperscript{6}

The period between 500 B. C. to 500 A. D. was a landmark in the history of Indian women as a whole. The high and noble ideals that held sway over the Aryans in the early Vedic period had given way to practical worldly wis-

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1. शायसनमलंकारः काम प्रोधमनाजवम्।
   भृहभावं कुच्यां च स्त्रीस्मो मनुरकल्यास।।
   Manu. IX. 17

2. राजा—एवमादिभिरात्रकायिनिक्तिनामनानुमुक्तवार्दुभिराकुण्डले
   विषयिणः।
   Ab. Ś. V. p. 64

3. राजा—प्रध्यमोः। किमवभवत्विप्रस्थयाविवाहान्तातुध्वधाकरणकहिसुषुः?
   Ab. Ś. V. p. 65

4. राजा—(सत्समत्वः)॥ इदं तत्त्वश्रुत्वनमञ्च स्त्रेष्णमिति यदुर्वयते।
   Ab. Ś. V. p. 63

5. राजा—लीणामविशिष्टपद्वुत्फमानुशीघ्रुः
   संदर्श्यते किमुत् या: प्रतिवोधवतः।
   Ab. Ś. V. 22

6. स्र. उदासा वेद यज्ञास्तव यज्ञ वेद वृहस्पति:।
   स्वभवेनैव तत्क्षारं सोबुधी सुप्रतिहतम्।।
   Hit. V. 123

7. भा. आहारी द्विगणेष्ठे ऐमु बुद्धस्तातो चतुर्गुणं।
   यहृणो व्यवसायस्य कामश्चायुष्गुणः स्त्रृतः।।
   Hit. VI. 117
dom predominated by self-centered ambitions. The desire of the intellectual class for supremacy in all fields of life, mingled with the desire of man for power over woman, created an atmosphere of confusion full of drastic actions, reactions and counteractions. The literature that came into vogue at this period contains opposite views concerning women. This is a common trait found in the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata and also the Manusmṛti. Of course, examples are not few that show the laudable position women enjoyed in their homes at the time. But apart from the individual cases, the general attitude of the society appears to be hostile to women. There are many disparaging statements about women in both the Rāmāyana as well as the Mahābhārata. In the Rāmāyana, what Kausalyā had to say about women in general is note-worthy. On one occasion Laksmana observes that women are cruel by nature and also malicious. In another place, Agastya says, women combine in themselves the fickleness of the lightening, the sharpness of the sword and the swiftness of Garuda and wind.

1. भवतां नानामयस्यतो विनिपततयं सिमयं।
2. एव स्वाभावो नारीमनुभूमयुरा सुखमु।
3. वर्षामण्डल् प्राप्य हुयासिं प्रभुत्वयि॥
4. लत्यर्जिंश्च विविधं हुयासिं हुहुः॥
5. युवत्वं पपसश्च्चल्लाः क्षामास्त्राहिरामणः॥
6. न कुलं कुलं विवाहं न दत्तं नापि संप्रवृष्टं।
7. स्रीणो भृहायति हुदयमनित्यस्वद्यः हि तां।
8. साध्वीनां हि स्वतानां तु शीर्षे सत्ये बुद्धे धमे।
9. स्रीणो विविधं परमं परिके विनिपत्ये॥

V. R. II. 39. 20-24

V. R. III. 45. 29-30
The Mahābhārata also abounds in deprecating statements. Bhīṣma informs Yudhiṣṭhira, in the course of his advice to the latter, that women do not have any discretion as to the man with whom they co-habit.¹ A man with thousand tongues and living for hundred years will not be able to finish describing the evils of women, even if he does it day in and day out without ceasing.² What would become of a family left to the influence of a woman without virtue, an influence hidden and increasing, and the more dangerous, because those on whom it is exercised are not aware of it. The mutual attraction of man and woman is unconquerable. So the law-givers and ancient seers decided to safeguard the purity and sanctity of the nation by controlling the tempting elements themselves. They set out to make the laws of matrimony more and more rigid. A series of laws were enacted from time to time, as necessity arose, sometimes to save women from troubles and at other times to enforce fidelity, when that was unwillingly given. Most of these laws finally became codified under the name of Manu, and his Smṛti became the final word for conduct to keep the Aryan society firm in its path of duty. Perhaps, it was as a matter of necessity and as a criterion of good conduct, chivalry and gallant nature, that Manu ordained—"The woman should be protected in her childhood by her father, in her youth by her husband, and in her old age by her

1. शतहृतं लोकत्वं शक्षराणं तीक्षणं तथा।

2. शतहृतं लोकत्वं शक्षराणं तीक्षणं तथा।

V. R. III. 13. 5-6

1. म. नासं करिष्ठेम्योपसितं नासं वर्यसं संस्थितं।

विहिः पुपवलं व दमान्तदे भुज्ज्ञे।

M. Bh. XV. 37. 17

2. म. नासं करिष्ठेम्यो व पुपवलं व दमान्तदे भुज्ज्ञे।

M. Bh. XV. 38.8
son.”¹ There are many passages in the Manusmṛti which support this view. Again and again it is enjoined that women were to be treated with love and affection.² One is inclined to think that Manu’s aim was not so much to deny all freedom to women, as to ensure adequate and incessant protection to them.

Buddhism and Jainism which were powerful during this period were both propagating asceticism and renunciation. The Epics and Purāṇas of the Brahminical society also asserted that the best way to salvation was to avoid woman, and all sorts of arguments were brought forward and incidents described to prove their own points. Such sentiments did not go unchallenged. Nor did the society in general accept this attitude completely. For example, Varāhamihira in his Brhatasparśa criticises such remarks about women in a very searching way. “Let us seek the truth”, he says, “what is that wrong committed by woman alone which is not done by man? The Śāstras have ordained that faithlessness of man or woman to each other is equally sinful. The man does not care to observe this rule, while the woman is firm in the observance of her duties. The man is not satisfied even after enjoying the sensual pleasures for hundred

¹ Manu. IX. 3
² Manu. II. 129-132
years. But the woman leaves them by her sheer will-power. The man goes on talking to his wife about the intense love he has for her as long as she is alive but hurries to contract a second marriage as soon as she dies, even before her ashes are cooled down. Woman, on the other hand, follows him even to the funeral pyre, because of her love for him. Fie unto the man who makes disparaging statements about the noble woman! It is just like the audacity of the thief who, having stolen all that could be taken, challenges loudly the innocent man.”

If these are the facts then how is it that the opposing opinions get firmly rooted in the society? Varāhamihira is ready with his answer: “Those who denounced women, did so, not because they themselves believed what they said, but because they were anxious to dissuade man from marriage and family-life. The ascetic school was out to decry women with this end in view. They are men with no good intentions, I believe.”

This period emphasized that, of the four aims of life, namely, Duty (Dharma), Wealth (Artha), Worldly pleasures (Kāma) and Salvation (Mokṣa), the first alone is to be

1. प्रभूत सत्यं कतमोज्ञानानं दोषोपकत्ति यो नाचरितो मनुष्यं: ॥
   दम्पत्योपयुक्तं दोषं: समं: शास्त्रेः प्रतिष्ठितं: ।
   न ते न समवेशान्ते तेनात्र वरमज्ञाना ॥
   न शतेनाविपि वर्षं वर्षाति मदनायाय: ।
   तत्राशक्यं निवर्तने नराः भाव्यो योपितं: ॥
   पुरुषमातुलानि कामिनीनां कुस्ते यानिपरं न तानि पश्चाद् ।
   पुरुषात्यतयाज्ञाना गतासूनवगृहं पञ्चवासिन्ति स्वतंत्रं ॥
   प्रहो दाक्ष्यमसाधूनां निन्दतामभवा: क्रियं: ।
   मुष्ठातामभव चौरणां तिष्ठ चौरिति जल्यातामु॥

Br. Sam. LXXVI. 11-17

2. योयज्ञानाः प्रवदलि दोषादाने बैराग्यमार्गमुदानु विहराय ।
   ते फुज्जना मे मनसो वित्तको सज्जावर्त्त्यानि न तानि तेपां ॥

Br. Sam. LXXIV. 5
adhered to in order to reach the final goal, that is, Mokṣa. The Mahābhārata, which seems to depict more or less a true picture of the contemporary society repeatedly emphasizes this point in its didactic passages.\textsuperscript{1} The author of the Yogavāsiṣṭha emphasizes both sides of the question and states a balanced view. Rāma anxious to renounce the worldly pleasures said, “He who has got a wife gets himself entangled in the desire for enjoyment. How can there be desire if there is no wife? By renouncing the wife one renounces the world and by renouncing the world one becomes happy. The woman is the mine of all imperfections. I leave woman and thus renounce the world and will become happy.”\textsuperscript{2} Vasiṣṭha answered this extreme statement of Rāma in very convincing words and proved to the prince that his attitude was wrong. He praised women for the valuable assistance they give to their husbands in all spheres of life;\textsuperscript{3} and quoted the story of Ćudālā who actually raised her husband to the eternal height of Jīvanamukti, by precept

1. धर्मःएववर्यस्तीणाः: धर्मः लोकः: प्रतिष्ठितः।
2. धर्मः देवा दिवः धर्मः चायस्मात्मितः।
3. धर्मः सिस्थितानां कोष्ठेऽविशिष्टभवित शाश्वती।

1. धर्मः एववर्यस्तीणाः: धर्मः लोकः: प्रतिष्ठितः।
2. धर्मः देवा दिवः धर्मः चायस्मात्मितः।
3. धर्मः सिस्थितानां कोष्ठेऽविशिष्टभवित शाश्वती।

M. Bh. XIII. 146. 7
M. Bh. XIII. 258. 24
M. Bh. XV. 100. 16

Yoga Vā. XXI. 35
as well as example. But human nature being what it is, such writers were not allowed to find favour with the general public. The bards of the ascetic school indulged in hyperbolic language to describe the faults and short-comings of women who were really the centre of the house-holder's life. The changing conditions of society, due to repeated wars and the changing religious ideas, thus provided for the deterioration of the position of women to a great extent.

The Manusmrti which gives minute details as to the conduct of man from birth to death, breathes a spirit of contempt for women in general with a few exceptions here and there. Their rights are identified with those of the Śūdras, slaves and children. Though in one place it is ordained that the daughter is to be considered equal to the son,\(^1\) in another place the rule is given that, "the girl may be initiated without any mantras; for marriage is the initiation for woman, serving the husband her education and the household duties her sacrifices,"\(^2\) As far as the character of women is concerned Manu goes to the extent of saying, "One should not stay alone even with one's own mother or sister or daughter, because the attractions of the senses are

\begin{quote}
सब्बा भ्राता सुहृद्रृष्टयो गुरूमित्रत्र घनं सुल्ख ।
शाल्मायतनं दासं सब्बेभृत्तु: कुलाङ्गमानं ||
सब्बंबेव सर्वं तलेन पूजनीयाः कुलाङ्गमानं ।
लोकालयं सातु सम्मक्ष सब्बं प्रतिहिषितम् \||
निरिच्छ्या: प्रयातायाः पारं संसारवारिष्टे: ।
कथमस्यापरारस्य करिष्येऽत्र प्रतिक्रिया \||
\end{quote}

Yoga Va. 109. 25-29

1. यथवावतमा तथा पुत्र: पुरुष दुहिता समाः \ | M. Bh. X. 4. 11

2. अरोमित्रिका तु कायं श्रीषामात्रेष्वेत: ।
संस्कारं शरीरस्य यवाकालं यवाक्रमम् \||
वेत्तिहृदे विच: श्रीवां संस्कारो वैदिक: स्पृहा: \|
पवित्रस्वा गुरोर्वासो ब्राह्मणिनिपरिक्रिया \||
\begin{quote}
Manu. II. 66-67
\end{quote}
so strong that even wise people are unable to resist them."¹
While minute details of man’s duties to gods are given, the
only duty ordained for woman is to serve her husband. It is
said, "There is no separate sacrifice nor fast nor pious
practice for woman. She is honoured in heaven by her
service and loyalty to her husband."²

There are many self-contradictory statements in the
Manusmṛti itself. In one place it is said that the woman
and her husband are really one and the same.³ In the same
chapter, in another context, it is said that women do not
deserve freedom at any stage.⁴ In one place it is said that
perpetual celibacy is better for a girl than a badly assorted
union.⁵ In another context it is said that the girl should be
given in marriage even before she attains the proper age, if
a suitable man becomes available.⁶ Apart from these self-
contradictory statements of Manu, there are other law-
givers also who contradict the dictums of the former. While
Manu ordains that, “wife, children, younger brothers and
servants, if found guilty, should be beaten on the buttocks
or on the back, but never on the head,” Narada says, “do

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1. मात्रा स्वच्छा दुहित्रा वा न विविधास्थिनो भवेत्।
   बलवानिन्द्रियग्रामो विहारसमयः कर्मचित्।
   Manu. II. 215

2. नासितम् क्रीणां गृहव्यज्ञा न व तं नापुपोपायम्।
   पति शूचिरते यथेऽन लेन स्वयं महीयते।
   Manu. V. 155

3. एततावनेव पुरुषो यज्ञायास्यम् प्रजेति ह।
   विप्रा: श्राद्धव्यया जैत्यो भति सा सत्ताज्ज्ञा।
   Manu. IX. 45

4. पिता रक्षति कौमारे भति रक्षति योविने।
   रक्षनित स्वाबिरे पुजाः: न क्री स्वात्त्वभव्यहिति।
   Manu. IX. 3

5. काम्मामिरणाणिसिद्धेतददेव कन्यार्थमत्वः।
   नाचवैनां प्रकृतेषु गुणाभितां कहितिच।
   Manu. IX. 39

6. उत्कुट्टायाभिन्नाय विलाय सहवाययो।
   श्रावातमपि तो तस्म दन्तवियविच।
   Manu. IX. 88

7. भाया पुत्रं दासव स्वयं भावते सोदर।
   प्रस्तुपरायामस्ताक्ष्या: स्यू रज्ज्या वैसुदेशन।
   Manu. IX. 89
not strike your wife even with a flower, though she may be guilty of a hundred faults." It is clear that according to Manu, the widow should not take even the name of another man, but Nārada and Parāśara agree that a woman may re-marry in case her husband is dead, lost, gone away for a long time or is impotent or degraded. All told, a very close affinity is found between the Manusmṛti and the Rāmāyaṇa. The Mahabharata, on the other hand, does not seem to have much in common with this code, but for the open denunciation found in certain places. The self-contradictory statements found in the Smṛti support the view that there existed two opposite trends of thought running side by side during these centuries. The position of women in this period is well expressed by Madame Bader in these words: "As an infant, when born, her birth was cursed; as a girl, by her grace and purity, she became the joy and blessing of the paternal heart. As woman, she was deprived of the right to perform the religious duties but she imposed some upon herself. As wife, she was made to submit to her husband. Yet she counselled him as a friend. As widow, she was placed in dependence upon her son; yet, she governed him. Ardent in piety, a kind of spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of self, unlimited devotion to her family and a boundless need for love formed the character of the epic woman." Thus, we see that the conception of women as the highest 

1. पुष्पस्त्रुः शरीरस्य नीतमाञ्जः कथितम्।
2. प्रतोत्प्रयोगे नु प्रहर्षितः स्याच्चिन्तः किलिश्चू।
3. प्र. पत्यो नर्विजिते नन्ते क्रीवेश पतिते मूते।
4. पाष्णस्वास्यायु नारीणां पतिरथ्यो विध्रायते।
5. प्र. नन्ते मूते नर्विजिते क्रीवेश च पतिते पति।
6. पाष्णस्वास्यायु नारीणां पतिरथ्यो विध्रायते।
7. P. Sm. IV. 30
8. N. M. S. XII. 99
9. Manu. VIII. 299-300
10. नारदिक्षमा नापियाच्ये सर्वमुक्तीयो निरन्तर।
11. नारदिक्षमा नापियाच्ये सर्वमुक्तीयो निरन्तर।
12. मादमा बेईर : वर्मन इन अंचेन्ड्री यो, प. 42
and noblest being, worthy of worship, was running side by side with the verdict that they are the worst specimens of humanity. These opposite trends were existent even before the advent of Jainism and Buddhism. Though the condition of society that called for reforms required equal treatment for man and woman, the society in general seemed to have favoured the attempts to curtail women's freedom. Women who submitted to these rules silently were eulogised, while those who questioned them were either denounced or ignored. This is what happened with the various characters in the Mahābhārata.

It was impossible for a seer and creator like Kālidāsa not to notice such injustice and to keep quiet after noticing the same. Hence he gave a glimpse of the society as it existed, but also showed quite clearly what he would like to see as the ideal. He made it clear that he did not like what was going on. What his ideals were is well-understood by a critical study of the three ideals of womanhood he has given to posterity—Śakuntalā, Umā and Sītā.

How Śakuntalā, the daughter of the Mother Nature, slowly developed into the mother of Sarvadamana and the queen of Duṣyanta has been already discussed. In the Kumārasambhava, once more, we find the picture of a girl growing up to maturity and achieving her end by hard penances which finally brought about the welfare of the whole universe. A third portrait drawn before us is the highest ideal of Indian womanhood, Sītā, the mother of Kuṣa and Lava, in the fourteenth canto of Rāghuvamśa.

In the Kumārasambhava, we see Umā as a daughter, as a maiden deeply in love and also as an ascetic woman. The individuals, the circumstances and the atmosphere are all different from those of the dramas that we studied hitherto. The story is the union of the parents of the universe for the birth of the saviour of the world. The girl Pārvati was born with the aim of reuniting with her lord of the previous
birth.¹ Lord Siva also was doing penance on the peak of the Himalayas ever since his wife, Dakṣāyaṇī left her body due to the disgrace she had to suffer from her father.² Pārvati's beauty was unsurpassed and her father was sanctified and adorned by such a daughter.³ When the girl attained the marriageable age, the father naturally became anxious, but the prophetic words of Nārada, that she was to be the wife of Lord Śiva, whose body itself will be shared with her due to love,⁴ consoled him. Consequently the girl began to attend him daily in worship. In this case there is no question of love at first sight or Kāma. Dharma and final union with the Lord seem to be the end in view, which is the ideal visualised by Kālidāsa. By referring to the incidents in the previous birth of Pārvati, Kālidāsa was hinting that the final aim was there from the beginning itself. But, for the progress of the world, Artha and Kāma also are needed. And it has to be shown to the world that great things can be achieved only by great sacrifices and still greater penances. Kāmadeva sent by Indra to achieve the union of the couple was not the one who could do any good to any one. The boasts of Kāmadeva and the very description of him⁵ clearly show the nature of attraction he can create in the minds of the people. This lustful love could not be instrumental to the final attainment of oneness, or of the birth of the divine son who could

1. प्रयावमानेन पितुः प्रयुक्ता दक्षस्य कन्या भवपूर्णपल्ली ।
   सती सती योगविसृज्देहा तां जनने शौचवृत्त प्रयेदे ॥
   K. S. I. 21
2. यदैव पूर्वे जनने शरीरं सा दक्षरोपयात्सुवदिः ससर्ज ।
   तदा प्रभृत्येव विमुक्तस्मः पतिः पत्नूनापिन्दाधीश हृदय ॥
   K. S. I. 53
3. प्रभा महत्त्वा शिबयेव शेषपिंशयांगेव विदिस्या मार्गः ।
   संस्कारवलयेव पिरा मनीषी तत्या स पूर्त्वेव विमूषितितः ॥
   K. S. I. 28
4. तो नारदः कामचरः कदाचित्कन्यां कित्र प्रेक्षय पितुः समीपे ।
   समाधिद्वैज्ञानिक्युः भविष्यं प्रभणं शरीरं रस्य ॥
   K. S. I. 50
5. K. S. III. 3-10 and 22-39
save the world. What such a Kāma can do is also described by Kālidāsa in the last canto of Raghuvamśa where he tells the story of Agnivarna. Such a Kāma let loose in the world was sure to destroy all Dharma and Karma. It was that illusionary love that was burnt in the fire of the third eye by the Lord of the Universe. The physical beauty was of no avail in this case because eternal union with the Lord was the end in view. Pārvatī realised the greatness of the thing that she desired. She was as firm as her father and she decided to obtain that beauty which was eternal by means of equally high and mighty penance. She underwent the most difficult kinds of penance and forced Śiva to come to her. Still she had to undergo one more test. Maheśvara was testing himself and also her, who was to be his better half, by the very natural questions he put to her. Even an atom of self or the material consideration, if existent, would mar the divine union. Every possible objection was searched out and presented to Umā by the Vatū. The limit was reached. Calmly, but firmly she told the fellow to get out of her way. Thus the trust and confidence of identity proved beyond any doubt. The final union came. The Lord of the Universe Himself bowed down before His Śakti and told her that He was her slave bought by the unimaginable penances she did. The union was all but complete. Here is another proof of Kālidāsa’s sense of right or wrong. Umā and Maheśvara had become one by their mutual love and their penances. But they could not deviate from the right path. The message is given to Śiva by Gaurī through the friend that she would abide by the will of her father and so

1. इवेय सा कर्तुंबन्वयह्यं समाधिमात्राय तवोभिरास्मन्: ।
   प्रवाप्यते सा कथमन्यया द्वयं तथाविचं प्रेम पतिश्र ताहिष्ठः ॥

K. S. V. 2

2. प्रब्रम्होक्तयवनतान्त्रि तवाखिम दासः क्रीतस्तपोमि: ।

K. S. V. 86
he should ask him for her hand.\textsuperscript{1} Here is found the echo of Manusmṛti,\textsuperscript{2} as well as Rāmāyana.\textsuperscript{3} The Father of the Universe accepted this correct attitude and the seven sages accompagnied by Arundhati were sent to Himalaya for the purpose and finally they were married according to the usual marriage rites approved by the society.

In the case of Śakuntalā, the love tainted by material and lustful desire, was purged of all its evils by sorrow and suffering which raised both the couple to a plane of divine and eternal love. In the case of this second couple the final union was, once more, the result of long suffering. In both the cases, the necessity of keeping within the rules of social conventions is clearly emphasized. The poet seems to warn that if you live under the protection of the society, you will also have to accept the laws that govern the society. The greatest ideal that he holds up to posterity is Sītā, the patient and sad queen who kept up her dignity and self-respect, inspite of the odds arrayed against her in the form of social conditions.

In the Raghuvrāmaṣṭa, many women are portrayed by the poet, each having her own special traits of character and individuality. But none rises to the height of Sītā, whom we see in a new light in the fourteenth canto of the Raghuvrāmaṣṭa. As we have already pointed out, Kālidāsa is indebted to Valmiki to a great extent. And there is actually no difference between the Sītā portrayed in the Rāmāyana and the one seen in the Raghuvrāmaṣṭa. All that happened till the death of Rāvana was more or less natural, and the beha-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} 1. ग्राम विश्वासमने गौरी संविदेश मिथ : सबीमृ \।
\item \textsuperscript{2} 2. यस्मेव द्यासातितात स्वेनां सभाना वातुमते तितुः \।
\item \textsuperscript{3} 3. इहलोके च पितृमियाः भृ यस्य महामते \।
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item K. S. VI. 1
\item Manu. V. 151
\item V. R. II. 29. 18
viour of Sitā throughout was as it should be. But it is the last phase of her life, her banishment by her husband for whom she had dedicated the whole life and her reaction to the same, that gives food for thought to any wise man. Here it may not be out of place to compare the Sitā of the Rāmāyāna with the Sitā of the Raghuvāmśa in order to see the working of Kālidāsa's mind in this direction.

After reading the whole of the Rāmāyāna, we are left with two ideals: Sitā, the best of women and Rāma the truest of kings. It is Sitā who attracts more attention due to the unique experiences she had all through her life. In-spite of the unimaginable trials and tribulations she had to undergo, Sitā is as firm as a rock in her fidelity and love for her husband. Rāma is everything to her, his fame and welfare are the only things she cares for; and her only duty seems to be to obey him in all circumstances. Though mutual fidelity between husband and wife was considered praise-worthy, it is the duty of woman towards the husband that is emphasized throughout. The greatness of the husband and the necessity of the wife's complete self-dedication to him has been eulogised at every possible place. Sitā kept up this ideal to the very end and suffered the utmost for the sake of her husband. But when the time for compensation came, the fact that counted most was the only incidence of her being a woman. Rāma's treatment of Sitā after the killing of Rāvana is abominable. Like a cruel and callous man he said to Sitā in front of all assembled, "May it be known to you that this battle which has ended successfully with the help of my friends was not undertaken for your sake. It was only to redeem the name of myself and my family."

1. बिदिताब्राह्मणु ते प्रेम योयं। रणपरिश्रमः।
   स तीर्थं मुदृष्ट्वां वीर्यं त्वदर्थं मया कुतः।
   रक्षता तु मया वृत्तमवादं च सवेशः।
   प्रब्ध्यतस्वात्मवेशस्य ल्यंज्जुं च परिरक्षता॥
   V. R. VI. 118. 15-16
Adding insult to injury he continued, "I have rescued you from the enemy, and my name and fame has been enhanced. I have no more use for you. Go wherever you like."

Though cut to the quick, Sītā, like patience on a monument, kept her courage and balance of mind. Pathetically she spoke asking him why he was talking to her like that, even as an uncultured man to a woman of the same type. She voiced there the complaint which echoes and re-echoes in the minds of women through the ages ever since. "Blindly swayed by anger, like a fickle-minded man, you have placed above all qualities the one fact that I am a woman." Still Rāma was unmoved and to clear her own good name, Sītā underwent the fire-ordeal of her own accord, thus proving her purity beyond any doubt. She was accepted back and they came back to Ayodhya. Though the whole incident is elaborately described in the Rāmāyana, Kalidāsa has summarily disposed it off with half a stanza only.

The only conclusion we can arrive at is that the whole episode was undignified and unsuitable to the greatness of the ideal couple whom Kālidāsa had visualised in his mind. He did not believe in the one-sided dutifulness of the wife alone, as emphasised in the Rāmāyana. At the same time, his admiration for the sage Vālmiki would not allow him to completely oppose his statements. Hence he just passed over these incidents which would show Rāma in a lower light.

1. तृक्ष्य हाम्युन्नता यथेष्टं जनकातमजे।
   एता दश दिशो भद्रे कायमहति न मे त्वया॥
   तदर्थ निन्जिता मे तव यश: प्रत्याहृतं मया॥
   नान्ति मे त्वयामिच्छाहो यथेष्टं गम्यतामिति॥

2. कि मामसहवं वायस्मीहसं श्रीवदारुणम्।
   स्वपथं भ्रायसे चीर प्राकृतं: प्राकृतामिति॥

3. त्वया तु नरसार्थातु ख्रोमेवानुवर्तता।
   लजुतव मनुय्येष्व श्रीवमेव पुरुषकम्तम्॥

4. रघुपतिरियि जातवेदोविन्युद्धं प्रवृत्तं प्रियं।

V. R. VI. 118. 18-21
V. R. VI. 119. 5
V. R. VI. 119. 14
R. V. XII. 104
There is another instance of Kālidāsa acting in the same way. The only instance in the Rāmāyaṇa, where Sītā has acted in a way, unsuitable to her noble character, is when she rebuked Lakṣmanā for not running to help Rāma when she thought he was calling for help. Overcome by circumstances, she doubted, for once, the strength of her own husband and also the loyalty of her brother-in-law, though only for a moment. This lapse on her part is very elaborately described by Vālmīki. It is this one mistake on her part that paved the way for the misery she had to suffer the rest of her life. But, Kālidāsa does not even refer to this incident. It was impossible for him, perhaps, to believe that the noble Sītā could ever stoop to such ugly insinuation against the trusted and beloved Lakṣmanā, who was more like a son to her.

In one of his opening verses of the famous Raghuvāra, Kālidāsa plainly accepts his indebtedness to his predecessors and says, "Even as the thread enters the precious jewel already pierced through by the Vajra so also, I shall find my way into the story of this great dynasty which has been described by the great scholars of old." The influence of Vālmīki is obvious all through his works. He has also pronounced his admiration for the other people like Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. At the same time we see that his admiration for the elders does not make him a slavish imitator. He is bold enough to leave the trodden path and trail his own. As we have already noticed, the Śurpanakhā episode and the fire-ordeal of Sītā were ignored by Bhāsa. Kālidāsa summarily deals with these episodes which do not in any way ennable the characters he was portraying. Poets are entitled to change the plot as they like, and the rhetoricians give their sanctions to it. Anandavardhanāchārya

1. ग्रहणाः कर्तव्रात्तिरे बंकोड्हम्मथवस्मृतिमि: ।
   मणि वज्रसमस्वस्वरूपमेव गतिः ॥

R. V. I. 4
in his Dhvanyāloka says, "In this world of poetry, the poet is the creator," and goes on to explain this fact with ample illustrations.²

Kālidāsa had definite ideas and ideals, and he was quite sure of what he wanted to say to the listeners. This free spirit of the poet, we see very clearly in the fourteenth canto of the Rāghuvamśa where the banishment of Sītā by Rāma is described in detail. Sītā was about to become a mother and then the bolt from the blue came. The people of Ayodhyā were happy by the rule of Rāma except for the fact that he had accepted Sītā who stayed in the captivity of the king of Lāṅkā.³ The test came not only for Sītā but Rāma also, as Kālidāsa makes clear. The duty of the king is to please his people, and Rāma decided to do his duty and

1. भ्रापरे काव्यसंसारे कविरेकः प्रजापति:।
   यथास्मै रोचते विश्वं तवेवं परिवर्तते॥
   श्रुज्ञारी चेतुं कवि: काव्ये जातं रसमयं जगन्॥
   स एव वीरारागश्रेष्ठं नीरसं सर्वेष्वं तत्॥
   भावानचेतनानांपि चेतनवचेतनातिचेतनवद्॥

   अववहारपति याहेण सुकवि: काव्ये स्वतंत्रतया॥
   Dh. A. III. p. 498

2. भ. कविना काव्यमुपनिवाचनता सवर्माना रसपरसानेषा भवित्वमू।
   तत्रेतत्फलं यदि रसानुगृहं सर्वत्तमति पश्येद् तदेमां महकत्वाविष्ट स्वतंत्रतया
   रसानुगृहां काव्यांतिरस्यपर्यंतदेव॥ न हि कविरित्वत्रतमात्रानवर्ज्ञेन
   किष्टे प्रमोदनमू। इतिहासादेव तत्सदृशः॥ Dh. A. III. p. 336

   भ्रा. रसानुगृहानुस्वर्णात्मकानि स्थिरतिमत्ततेः
   क्षणं स्वरूपस्यात्मका प्रज्ञेव प्रतिवा कवे॥
   सा हि चतुर्भरोकवस्तीयमिति गीत्ये॥
   वेन साधान्करोक्ष्य भावासैवकाल्यवित्तन:॥

   Vy. VI. II. 117-118

3. निर्बन्धस्पृष्टः संजगाद सर्वं स्तुवति पौराणिकं त्वदियमू।
   प्रक्षण रक्षोभवनोपिताया: परिप्रहासानवेदेव देव्या:॥

   R. V. XIV. 32
keep his fame clear. To do this, he would abandon his own body, nothing to say about the object of senses. Almost the same idea is found in the Rāmāyana. There it is said that he called his brothers and said, “Every one works for fame in this world. And I, to save my name, would abandon not only life, but even you all, much less to say about Sītā.” Whatever may have been the idea of Vālmīki when he made Rāma say, “What to say of Sītā,” Kālidāsa gives his own interpretation and that is indicated clearly by the word Indriyartha—object of the senses. According to Kālidāsa the husband and wife are inseparable and if Rāma abandons Sītā, it will be only physically. Whether far or near, she is always one with him. So what he will be missing can only be the sensual pleasures which are of no matter to the noble king. This idea is made clearer in the later statement of Kālidāsa—“Sītā was sent away only from the house by Rāma, who was afraid of the scandals, but not from his heart.” In the later days, Bhavabhūti also seems to have accepted the same idea as we see him making Rāma say almost the same words. Describing Sītā’s journey to the

1. निःश्रेयः चानन्यन्त्रृत्ति वाच्यं त्यगेन पत्या: परिमाण्यमेच्छद्व।
   प्रपि स्वदेहातिकमुत्तुऽदिवायाविभोजनान्तं हि यशो गरीयः।
   R. V. XIV. 35

2. कौशल्यं तु समारम्भः सर्वथां सुमहात्मनाम्।
   अव्ययं जीवितं जलां युम्यान्त्या पुह्यवर्णम्।
   जनवादवायाः हि कि पुनर्जनकालम्बाम्।
   तत्समाज्ज्वृवत्तं पवितरं शोकसहिते।
   V. R. VII. 45. 14-15

3. ब्रह्मव राम: सहसा सवाप्प्तसुपरविच्छ्व सहास्यचन्द्रः।
   कौशल्यमीतेन गुहास्विरस्ता न तेन बैद्यनुथुता मनस्त।
   R. V. XIV. 84

4. स्वेहुं दयां च सीहे च यदि वा जानकीः।
   म्भाराणाय लोकस्य मुख्तो नासिते मे व्यवह।।
   U. R. Ch. I. 12
forest, Kalidasa says, "She did not realise that her husband has changed from being a Kalpadruma into a tree of swords for her." The word atmani is specially significant. Rama has become a tree of swords not only for her but for himself also. This is the idea Kalidasa wishes to convey.

Sita was taken to the bank of the Ganga and there Lakshmana told her the irrevocable order of the king. The sudden bolt from the blue struck down the vine. Kalidasa says, "Even Mother Earth would not accept Sita into herself because she began to doubt why the righteous and just king abandoned her." Perhaps the poet is suggesting the power of scandal to influence even inanimate beings. When she came back to consciousness by the efforts of Lakshmana she could but wail at her own fate which gave only sufferings as her share. As a good wife, she accepted the order of her husband. When Lakshmana fell at her feet, she tried to console him saying how well she realised his plight. None has ever shown her pity, but she would not cause any heartaches to any one if she can help it. She blesses him with all her heart and tells him that he is faultless because he is only obeying the orders of his elder brother. The simile used here is very significant. For, it indicates, even Lord Vishnu himself had to do something wrong because of his duty towards his elder brother; so also, Lakshmana was being forced to do an unjust act. The poet had made this clear.

1. सा नीयमाना शिविराम्यदेशानिम्यसंयंकरो मे प्रिय इत्यन्दव।
   नाबुद्ध कल्याधुमतां विहाय जातं तमात्स्मयसिप्तव्युक्तम्।

R. V. XIV. 48

2. इत्वाकुक्ष्यं प्रभव: कथं ततं स्थानक्षमायतिरियं वृत्तः।
   इति निति: संस्कृयतेत्तस्य ददो प्रचेषं जननी न तावत्।

R. V. XIV. 55

3. सीता तमुत्त्वाय जगाद वाक्यं श्रीतास्मि ते सौम्य विचारं जीव।
   विचीत्जसा विचचुरिवाप्रजन्य भ्राता यदित्यं परवानसि त्वम्।

R. V. XIV. 59
earlier. 

Rāma was the king and also the elder brother of Lakṣmāna and thus he was doubly bound by duty to obey. By abandoning her in the forest he was actually destroying the sprout of the very dynasty. But it was really no fault of his. And so she hastens to console him. At the remembrance of the implications of this banishment she realised how this scandal would affect her child also. So she began the message to her loving and kind mothers-in-law who, she knew, would understand her well. She requested Lakṣmāna to pay her respects to them one by one and remind them of the child of their son who was in her womb then. The terrible injustice done to her dawned upon her. Her self-respect and the indignation at the wrong done to her, asserted themselves for a moment. The result was the famous message from her to the king. "Go and tell the king", her message began. Not 'my husband' or 'lord', but, 'the king'! For, it was his kingly duties and the fame as a king that counted with him when he passed the judgement on her. "Go, and tell the king from me thus: Though I have proved my purity by the fire-ordeal in front of you, you abandoned me just because of some scandal-mongers' words. Is it suitable to the great and just dynasty of yours, or to your own wisdom?" But Sītā, the noble queen, who was forbearance incarnate, could not harbour any harsh thoughts for any one. Immediately her trend of thought changed and she began to console herself that it was all the results of her own misdeeds in some

1. स श्रुतुवान्मातिर भागवेन पितृनियोगायङ्ग्रहुनं द्विषदत्।
   प्रत्यप्रहोदकः जशास्त्रनं तदाशा गुरुप्यां हाविचारणीया॥
   R. V. XIV. 46

2. श्रुतुजनं सर्वानुक्रमेन विशायः प्राप्तिमञ्जर्णमाम।
   प्रजानिष्येकं मयं वर्तमानं सूनोरुप्यायं चेतसेति॥ R. V. XIV. 60

3. वास्मायस्या महानञ्जलराजा बल्क्षी विग्रहदामिनि वयस्मस्मतू।
   मां तोकंवादश्रवणादहृः: प्रूतस्य कि तस्तस्मां कूलस्य॥
   R. V. XIV. 61
previous birth. The *Karma* theory that held root in the Hindu soil, and Kalidāsa’s theory of cause and effect, are gaining ground here. The message continued. Her thoughts were wandering. She faced many practical problems. Where could she go now? She could not, even for a moment, forget that whatever she did would have its effect on Rāma. As the *Prakṛti*, it was for her to keep the torch burning. Thoughts were flashing while she spoke. She could not go to any one else for help or refuge because Rāma was still alive and ruling.¹ She could not put an end to her life because Rāma’s child was in her trust and had to be saved.² She had to live for duty’s sake and she decided to live. Sītā knew that she was Rāma’s *Sakti* and he will need her, if not in this birth, may be some time after. But when the time comes she will be ready with greater strength and greater love obtained by penance, to supplement him. Rāma had decided to play the role of the king and so she claimed his protection as his subject. As a king, it was his duty to protect all the *Varnas* and *Āśramas*. So, as per duty, he will have to protect her, as a woman belonging to the hermitage.³ The whole message is an expression of mixed feelings. Indignation at the injustice done to her; the love and consideration for the husband who, she knows, is in a much worse condition than herself due to this unending separation; the remembrance of the fate of their children; and the sense of wronged self-respect: all are vying with

¹ निशाचरोपप्युतमद्वं काणां तदस्विनीनां भवतः प्रसादाद्।

भूतवा शरणश्या शरणार्थमवं कर्ष प्रपत्ये त्वथि दौव्यमाने॥

R. V. XIV. 64

² कि कः तवत्त्वत्त्ववन्यमोऽधृतजीवितर्वसि।

स्याद्रस्त्रेष्येव यदि मे न तेजस्वद्यमन्तर्तमस्तमन्त्राय॥

R. V. XIV. 65

³ तुप्रस्य वर्षाणामपालं यत्स एव धर्मो मदुना प्रणीतः।

निर्वर्धिसिध्येवमतस्त्वाहं तदस्विनायायमवेक्षणीया॥ R. V. XIV. 67
one another in this message. Sītā realizes fully well that she was banished not by Rāma, her beloved husband, but by Rāma, the ideal king. So the message was meant really for the King, reminding him of his duty to herself even as a subject. This is the Sītā who is to be revered and held up to be worshipped throughout the ages as the ideal of Indian womanhood.

Lakṣmaṇa was gone, and then Vālmiki, the sage who was struck by grief when he saw one of the two birds killed by the cruel arrow of the hunter, came on the scene. Once more, we have Kālidāsa speaking for himself, after showing the society as it was. Now he speaks through Vālmiki. Of course there is a great similarity between the words of the sage here and in the Rāmāyana. He consoled Sītā at the very outset, assuring her of his confidence in her purity. "I know from my inner sense that thou art abandoned by the husband who is annoyed by the false scandals. Do not be sad, my daughter, but believe, thou hast reached the abode of thy father, who is living in another city." He continued to tell her that she is welcome to the hermitage and convinced her of the truth of his statement by quoting proofs as to why it was his duty to look after her. This portion is more or less a literal adoption of the words in the Rāmāyana. But, the denouncement of Rāma by Vālmiki in so many plain words is Kālidāsa’s own. He does not hesitate a moment to denounce the injustice done by Rāma. He

1. नियादविश्वामाण्डलेनात्मन्त्र: श्रूक्तलमापवतं यस्य शोकः।
   R. V. XIV. 70

2. जाने विस्तृतं प्रविशानसवतं मिथ्यावदाचुभिस्तेन मर्यां।
   तम्मा व्यविश्वासविशालस्तवं प्राणाति वैदेहि पिषुनिषेकतम।
   R. V. XIV. 72

3. तवोषकीति: श्रमुरः: सतां में सतां मथोच्छेकरः: पिता ते।
   चुरितस्यतं स्वं परिवेतानां फ़ि तत्र वेनानि ममानुक्मया।
   R. V. XIV. 74
may be good; he may be strong; he may be truthful; but he is heartless and unjust and I denounce him: this seems to be the attitude of Kalidasa when he makes Valmiki say, "Though he has destroyed the thorn of the three worlds, though he is truthful and humble, indeed I am angry with that elder brother of Bharata, because he has acted unjustly towards you." After this outburst the sage calms down and describes to her how she has a right to live in the calm and tranquil surroundings of his hermitage.

In the next few verses, Kalidasa makes it clear that, if Sita was doing penance, Rama had to do greater penance, for, the fault was again his, the Man's. He was anxious to save his name. But what greater infamy could there have been than the clear injustice he did to his noble wife? At the time, his eyes were blinded by the intoxication of his status and the pride of his noble lineage. His words to his brothers clearly point out this. "I cannot allow such a shame to fall on the noble solar dynasty," he said. His reference to Sita as a possession and such other statements were new traits in his character which were not there before he won the victory over Ravana and before he ascended the throne of Ayodhya. While he was in the forest with Sita and Lakshmana and till he conquered Lanka, his attitude towards his wife was ennoblingly different. The change that came over him after he held the sceptre, seems similar to that which was seen in Dushyanta at his court. Even as Dushyanta realized his loss only after Sakuntala was lost to him, so also Rama realised his own mistake the moment he

1. उत्तातोत्तकंतत्तकंतकेि सत्यसन्तिवेिविकल्वनेतििपि 
वां प्रत्यक्षामालक्ष्यप्रवृत्तावस्त्येव मनुमंरतायिन्ये मे इल

R. V. XIV. 73

2. राजसिवचनस्य रविप्रसुतेऽस्पष्टम्: पवित्रत कृत्योध्यम्
मतः सदाचारपुऽः कलः: पयोद्वादादिव दर्पायस्य

R. V. XIV. 37
found himself bereft of his beloved and noble wife. Kālidāsa himself vouchsafes to this fact: "Sītā was banished by the king, who was afraid of the scandals, from his home only, but not from his heart."

Twelve years passed. Sītā had borne and brought up the twins who would continue the solar dynasty. The sons were accepted by the father. And he was ready to accept Sītā at the exhortation of Vālmīki. But, the weak fame-hunter that he was, he wanted Sītā to convince the people about her purity. Herein lies the difference between the other heroes portrayed by Kālidāsa and Rāma. While the others were ready to accept the truth as soon as they were convinced about it, Rāma did not have the courage of his convictions. It was not enough that he knew the facts. He could act according to his convictions only if his people also were convinced. This remained as an obstacle in the final reunion of Rāma and Sītā.

There is a great similarity between the two couples that Kālidāsa chose to portray: Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta on the one hand and Sītā and Rāma on the other. The difference between the two is also remarkable. The love between the husband and wife was equally strong and noble in both the cases. The sincerity and loyalty also were unsurpassed. Cause of repudiation is basically the same in both cases, namely the doubt of being polluted by another. But the difference lies in the heroes themselves and their respective outlook on life. While the doubt was genuine in the case of Duṣyanta, as far as he knew, it was completely baseless in the case of Rāma. In the first instance, the fault was not his own and so there was possibility of redemption. But, in the other instance, the weakness was in Rāma himself and so there could be no remedy. Again and again Sītā was called upon to convince the people of a fact for

1. बभूष राम. सहसा सबाञ्चवारवर्षीव सहस्यचान्द्र:।
कोलीनभीतेन श्राहिनिरस्ता न तेन बेदहुमुता मनस्त:। || R. V. XIV. 84.
which Rāma himself needed no proof. So, the only way open to Sitā was to rise above the very possibility of doubt. As an obedient wife, she accepted the order of her husband and came forward to convince the people as to her pure and irreproachable character. Her very appearance was enough to make the people bow down before her in reverence. Kālidāsa describes her in his typical way: "Wearing the orange coloured ascetic garb, with eyes fixed on her feet, she convinced the people of her purity by her divine and peaceful appearance itself."

She had fulfilled her duty as a wife to Rāma, when he was exiled for fourteen long years. She fulfilled her duty as a mother till her sons were grown up and able to take their rightful place near their father. Till then she forgot herself for the sake of others. Now the time had come for her to do her duty to herself; to do justice to herself which was denied to her all these years due to consideration for others. She stood before the royal assembly and called upon the powers of nature to prove her greatness. "As I have not known any one else but my husband by words, deeds or thoughts, so, O mother Earth, take me into yourself." Mother Earth had to obey the noble daughter and Sitā was taken away into the lap of her mother. That is how Sitā convinced the doubting world once for all. The poet has faithfully followed the foot-steps of Vālmiki in this later portion also. But even in following it up, he has expounded the full meaning of the whole incident as none else could or would. The picture of Sitā, as portrayed by Kālidāsa, is that of a woman unique in this world. It is a woman who, fully confident of her power, is still humble,

1. कापायपरिवीलेन स्वपदामिितञ्चुधुपा ।
श्रावभीयत शुद्धतिः शान्तेन वपुष्व सा ॥

2. वांज्ञनकरमभिः पतीं व्यभिचारो यथा न मे ।
तथा विस्वमरे देविः मामंत्यांहुमहसेः ॥

R. V. XIV. 77
R. V. XV. 81
loving, kind and considerate; one who is capable of thinking about every body else before herself; and yet the one who never forgets her own self-respect and dignity as part and parcel of this universe; and the one who realises her duty to all around her, while remembering her duty to herself also—the highest ideal of Indian womanhood as visualised by Kālidāsa.

Woman, being the asset of the race, has a high position. At the same time, if she errs, she falls not alone but also drags along every one with her. Hence he is careful to tell the world that a mistake committed knowingly or unknowingly, specially by a woman, cannot go without producing its natural consequences. We have examples in abundance of this. First of all, there is Urvaśī, the most beautiful woman of heaven, who was attracted by the greatest of the heroes of the day. There was nothing wrong in it. But, when they both allowed the attraction to become an infatuation, bad enough to make them forget their respective duties, the punishment was inevitable. Urvaśī forgot her duties at the heavenly court and brought down on her head the curse of her preceptor. And the king forgot his duties to the state and also towards his lawfully wedded wife. The result was the separation of the couple in the Kumāravana. Urvaśī became a creeper, due to the curse, hanging over the forest, while Pururavas, having fallen a victim to his senses, was wandering alone in the forest weeping and wailing like a mad man. Urvaśī had to be the silent witness to the plight of the high and mighty king. There could not have been a greater punishment for a loving woman. Lapses do bring punishments in their trail; but they are meant only as chastisement and not for revenge. If there was a curse, there was the remedy also. Urvaśī had enough time to ponder over the whole situation. As a result, she was a different person, when she was brought back to life by the power of the Sangamaniya Ratna (uniting jewel). Urvaśī was no more proud or angry. On the other hand, the king
turned his attention towards the duties of the state. Things took a happy turn from that day onwards. Māṇavaka testifies to the fact that all the king’s wives are happy and peaceful along with the king; he has begun to attend to the duties of the state; and everything is well and happy.1 The infatuation for the heavenly damsel has developed into real love and the real union of the couple has become possible.

In the Abhijñānaśākuntala, the same idea is presented with greater emphasis. The infatuation of Śakuntalā made her forget her duties as the hostess. The curse of Durvāsas came as the chastisement. The ring given by the king was there as the remedy to serve at the right time. The episode of Nandī in the Raghuvāṁśa is another example of the same. Sudakṣiṇā was the indirect cause of Dilīpa’s overlooking Kāmadhenu’s presence. Everywhere, what the poet wanted to show was that, woman, being the balancing power, had to be very very careful at every step that she took. If she erred, she would have to make amends also.

Kālidāsa was not a mere ‘dramatist’ who wrote for the sake of pleasure alone. He wrote with a purpose, and every character he portrayed and every incident he represented, had a message to convey, the main purpose being, to tell the woman what she was, and to remind the man that he should not trespass on the rights of his counterpart. In fulfilling this aim, he has given us an opportunity to have glimpses of society here and there. There is much information about maidens and wives throughout his works. But very little is said about the widows. The idea seems to be that, having lost her counterpart, the best thing for the woman is to retire from the world and live a simple and non-interfering

1. विद्वूषकः—हि हि भो: दिद्धाचा विचरस्य कालस्योवेशीसहायो नन्दनवन-प्रमुखेषु देवतारघेषु विहृत्व प्रतितिवृत्त: म्रिय ववस्यः। प्रविश्य नगर-भिवानी सतकारोपचारे: प्रकृतिभर्तुरुज्जयमानो राज्यं करोति।

V. U. V. p. 169
life. The only direct example we get is that of Parivṛṣṭijīka in the Mālavikagnimitra, who by her own testimony took to ascetic garbs when she was left destitute by the death of her brother. Even there, it is not widowhood that prompted her to take up that life. She had become a widow long before and was staying with her brother. Finally when she was left alone in the world by the death of her brother, she took to ascetic life. When this story was told to Agnimitra, he showed his appreciation by the words, "that is the way with good people." This is proof enough to show that women of good families took to the orange robe as a token of retirement from worldly life, and such women were looked upon with reverence in society.

It has been already noticed that the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa did not consider widows to be of much value. There are many statements found in both the above works which go to prove that widow re-marriages were not looked upon favourably by the society. Manu ordained that a woman should lead the rest of her life in penance and in remembrance of her deceased husband. She should not even take the name of another man after the death of her lord. The widow seems to have been considered an unfortunate and pitiable being. In this connection, it is interesting to note the description of "Dhūmāvati" one of the ten Śaktis, as found in the Tantras. There are ten Mahāvidyās described there, namely, Kāli, Tārā, Shoḍaśī, Bhairavi, Chinna-mastā, Bagalā, Mātangi, Kamalā and Dhūmāvati. Of all these ten, Dhūmāvati is described as bereft of her Bhairava and hence a widow. She is said to be hungry and thirsty,

1. परिव्रष्टिजीका-ततो भ्रातुः शरीरप्रभुतसात्त्वका पुरुन्ततीका पञ्चवेधवेदयः

2. ब्रजमित्रः-मुक्तः सज्जनस्येह पत्याः

3. न तु नामाविष श्रुतियात्त्वतः प्रेते परस्यः तु

4. धृमावती महाविवा विषवाहुप्रार्णीः

M. A. V. p. 248

M. A. V. p. 249

Manu. V. 157

Tantrasāra. II.
haggard, tired and disgusted with the peculiar form of her existence.¹ This description of Dhūmāvatī is very significant when one considers the position of widow in society. The conception that man and wife together make a complete whole implies that the widow, just like the word without its meaning, becomes bereft of life, as it were, and thus discontented and unhappy. This side of the woman’s life had nothing enhancing in it, and perhaps that is why Kalidāsa preferred to pass over this phase without any special comments in any way.

There is no reference to the custom of Sati in the works of Kalidāsa, either in the plays or in the poems. Though the lack of freedom for women is again and again referred to, seclusion within the four walls of the household does not seem to be the custom. Of course, the veil is shown as a sign of respectability. That does not seem to be the general way. Mālavikā was covered with a veil before she was given in marriage and Śakuntalā was wearing a veil when, after her marriage, she was in the presence of the king. Also at the time when Bhāsa wrote, the veil had already come into vogue, as a token of high and noble birth, even as found in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

Kalidāsa seems to support the theory of “women first”, at every possible occasion, though this idea is not very familiar to the present day Hindu society. When Dilipa reached the hermitage of Vaśiṣṭha, it is said that first he helped the queen to get down and then he himself alighted from the chariot.”² In another place, where there was a commotion in the army of Raghu due to the attack of the wild elephant, it is described how the soldiers were eager to

1. विवरण चं बलता रूप दीप्य च मलिनांबरा ।
   ब्रह्मापरांवर्तिन निन्यं भयद्र कलहुःप्रया ।

2. तामवारोह्यतपलिः रवादवततार च ।

Tantrasāra. II.
R. V. I. 54
save the women and children first.

Of all the relationship between men and women, that of husband and wife seems to have been held as the highest and noblest by Kālidāsa. The real duties of women begin only after their marriage. As we have already noticed, there is much similarity between the ideals propagated in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and the rules of Manu seem to have close affinity with them. Kālidāsa also seems to be in agreement with many of the ideals propagated there, specially those concerning the duties of the wife. He is of the opinion that where the women err, there can be no safety for any one. He firmly believes that women should be always protected and cherished by all who desire happiness.

The admiration of the poet for women in general is seen all over his works. The wife devoted to her husband and the mother of heroic sons specially command his respect. The first woman mentioned in the Raghuvrāja is Sudakṣiṇa, the queen of Dilīpa. She is described thus: he had a wife named Sudakṣiṇa belonging to the Magadha family, and who was the Dakṣiṇa of the sacrifice. He presents a society in which polygamy was prevalent. But, he for one, does not approve of the custom, nor does he believe that any man can love more than one woman. He, with his belief of the identity of man and wife, seems to hold the theory of “marriage being made in heaven”, and also “one man for one woman”. This idea is repeatedly shown in all his works, directly or indirectly. It is said in the first canto of the Raghuvrāja that Sudakṣiṇa alone was consi-

1. स विद्यार्थिकुलत्वाय्य पुरुषसंस्थर्वं क्षणं ।
   रामाधिभिरविहस्तयोऽथैषेषं सेनानिषेषं तुमुलं चकार || R. V. V. 49
2. तत्र दासकामदेव नामाय मोघवन्दना ।
   पत्नी सुदर्शनसंगीतवर्षस्येव दशशिरं || R. V. I. 31
dered as the asset of his family. The earth was considered as the real wife for the kings of ancient days, and the mother of a son the asset of the dynasty. This idea is repeated in the Abhijñānaśakuntalam also through the assurance given to the two friends by Duṣyanta. In the case of Indumati, Sitā and Umā, the question of a rival did not arise at all.

The main reason of a man attacking or denouncing the woman is the pride of wealth, beauty or learning. Inspite of the message of the great sage Kaṇva and all the explanations given by the simple and truthful people of the hermitage, the king very calmly put a question, "What? Am I married to this lady?" That insulting question was enough to put an end to the patience of the fiery-tempered Śarṅgarava. Detached and dry ascetic though he was, he had not liked the liberty Śakuntalā had taken in the matter of marriage. The callousness of the seemingly righteous king, at that moment, infuriated him beyond control. That lapse in morals in such a good king can have only one reason—the intoxication of power. It is said in the Śastras that youth, wealth, power and indiscretion, every one of these, leads to destruction. Their combination was present in the court of Duṣyanta. It is the belief of the poet that no normal man can ever disgrace a woman or turn away from his duty towards her. So he makes Śarṅgarava come out with the question, whether it was the dislike of a thing done by him, or aversion to duty, or deliberate intention to insult, that

1. कल्त्रवस्तमात्मानमवरोचे महत्यपि।
तव भेने मनस्तिन्य लहन्या च वसुधापिपिः॥
R. V. I. 32

2. राजा—परियहवहुवेदीपि है प्रतिच्छे कुलस्य में।
समुदवसना चोरी सचिने च युवयोरियम॥
Ab. Ś. III. 18

3. राजा—कि चामनवति मया परिस्रीतपूर्वः।
Ab. Ś. V. p. 62

4. योवनि चलसम्पति प्रमुखविवेकता।
एकैकमथ्यन्याय किमु यत्र चतुष्णम्॥
S. R. B. p. 165
prompted the behaviour of the king. He adds that such feelings are common to those who are intoxicated with the pride of power. The poet seems to point out that man, having got the upper hand over woman due to the sanction of the society, takes mean advantage of the goodwill and love of woman. Once she is married to him, the man can do what he wills. But, those conditions cannot take him far. Destruction alone would be the result and Śarṅgarava, when asked by the King sarcastically, "Oh! truthful one, accepting all that you said, may I know what I am going to gain by deceiving her?" gives the burning answer, "Vini-pataḥ"—eternal fall. That one word ought to have convinced the King that no good could ever come to him unless and until that pride was crushed and he was completely purged of his intoxication by burning repentance. This prediction of Śarṅgarava is fulfilled in the end. Long repentance purified the aishvaryamattata—power intoxication—of the king. His heart became free of lust and illusions. And then he met and recognized the mother of his son who was to keep up his name and his dynasty. By falling at her feet, who by her own penances and sacrifices had purified herself and also him, Duṣyanta got redeemed of his sins of omissions as well as commissions. The same idea is shown by the poet at the banishment of Sītā by Rāma3 in the Rāguvaṁśa.

In Manusmṛti, we find quite a few passages which praise the wife.4 Kālidāsa seems to be in complete agreement with them. The advice given to Śakuntalā by her

1. शास्त्रर्वः—कि कृतकार्यः धर्मः प्रति निमुखता कृतव्रजः ।  
   मूच्छ्यन्तयं विकारः प्रायवेगःधर्ममङ्गलः ॥  Ab. Ś. V. 18  

2. राजा—भो सतविदिद्र ! प्रभुपुरस्त तावदविभिर्नितम् ।  
   कि पुनरामविसंवाय लम्बते ।  
   शास्त्रर्वः—विनिपातः ।  Ab. Ś. V. p. 65  

3. Vide Chapter III. p. 150-154, supra  

4. Manu. IX. 25-29
father describes the duty of the wife very clearly. She being the Patni, the protecting goddess of the household, has a duty to everybody in the family, from the parents-in-law to the lowest servant. Only that woman who follows the above code of behaviour can claim the name, Gṛhini; otherwise, she will be the cause of miseries in the family.¹ Once again we hear Kanva telling Śakuntalā that she would forget the sorrow of separation from him, when she became engrossed in the heavy duties of the wife.² He seems to agree with the ruling of Manu, that only that woman who is well-versed in the household works, who is the mother of sons and who dedicates herself completely to make the husband happy, deserves the name Bhārīya³—wife. But, the difference between Kālidāsa and the others lies in this that, while the latter emphasize the duties of the wife to the husband only, Kālidāsa insists on mutual loyalty and fulfilment of duties. He seems to hold the view expressed in the Harivamśa: "The husband inconsiderate in his actions, fallen or vicious, is saved by his wife, who saves herself also."

The ultimate aim of every human being is the good and happiness of all. To achieve this, man and woman are equally responsible. Both have their respective duties to perform in supplementing and complementing each other. We have seen this idea in his three plays, and also in the Kumārasambhava and the Raghuvamśa. The Kumārasambhava is not the story of the birth of Kumāra, but, the story of the union of Umā and Maheśvara for the

1. यान्येऽर्षु ह्रिणिपदं चुकतयोः: वामः: कुलस्याचयः।
2. कण्वः—ब्राह्मणवतीत्रतु: श्राच्ये सृष्टा ह्रिणिपदे
   विभवयुःधिः: कुलस्य श्रुतिवधानमचुक्ता।
   तनयमिरात्रभाचीराम् प्रसूय च पावन
   मम विरहमन्न न तं वसले शृंगं गणविभिः।
3. सा भार्या या श्रुहेद्वेषा सा भार्या या प्रजावती।
   सा भार्या या पतिव्रताणा सा भार्या या पतिव्रता।

Ab. Ś. IV. 18
Ab. Ś. IV. 19
M. Bh. I
sake of Kumāra, the saviour of the world. The Rāmāyana is not the story of Rāma alone. If there was no Sītā, there would have been no Rāmāyana at all. Urvaśī, Dhārini and Śakuntala were responsible for making Purūravas, Agni- mitra and Duṣyanta respectively what they were. We cannot imagine Dilīpa without Sudakṣinā and Aja without Indumati. Kālidāsa firmly believes that the society is constituted by man and woman with equal capacity to good and great things for the fulfilment of each other. It is this idea that he presented before the world through the opening stanza of his Raghuvamśa, where he says, “I bow to Pārvati and Parameśwara, the parents of the universe, who are intermingled with each other, even as the word is with its meaning.” In this one stanza, the poet has set forth the highest ideal of womanhood. Even as the word is never separate from its meaning, so also is husband never separate from the wife. He repeats the same idea of oneness in the Kumārasambhava, where he says, “You are accepted to be the Prakṛti, which translates the aims of the Puruṣa into actions; and you are also the Puruṣa who is a passive witness to all those actions.” All his works, one after another, prove this same idea, that, the Prakṛti, the woman, is the power that works, while man is the witness who also gives inspiration. This truth, when applied to the material world, shows the high and responsible position occupied by woman. This is the idea which makes Kālidāsa agree with the dictum of Manusmrītī—“Where the women are worshipped, there live the gods; and where they are not, all rituals are futile.”

1. वागर्थाविव संप्रदा वागर्थप्रतिपत्ते ।
   जगतः पितरी बन्दे पारवतीपरमेश्वरी ॥
   R. V. I. 1

2. त्वामामनन्ति प्रकृति पुरुषार्थप्रवृत्तिनीपू।
   तद्विद्विन्दुपुरुषां त्वामेव पुरुष निवदुः ॥
   K. S. II. 13

3. यथा नायक्षु पुरुषते रमन्ते तत्र देवता ।
   यत्र तस्मात् न पूर्वम्यो तर्कस्तित्वादः: किया: ॥
   Manu. III. 56
True to this idea, the husband had definite duties towards the wife according to the earlier works in Sanskrit literature. He was not even to think of enjoying any pleasure that his wife cannot possibly participate in. He is advised not to say anything unpleasant to his wife, even if provoked.\textsuperscript{1} Elsewhere, it is said, "By taking care of the wife and by protecting her the man gets the name Bharta and Pati respectively. He has no right to these names if he fails to perform these duties."\textsuperscript{2}

The general attitude of man and wife towards each other, as found in both the epics, is more or less the same. Mutual fidelity between husband and wife was the main idea held up during this period. If there is complete harmony between the two, the house would be a heaven; if there is discord, it would be hell.\textsuperscript{3} In the Mahābhārata, it is plainly said, "Even if the house is full of sons, daughters and daughters-in-law, it is quite empty if the wife is not there."\textsuperscript{4} In another place, it is said, "House is not really the house, but it is the housewife that makes it. The home without the mistress is much worse than the forest."\textsuperscript{5} And also, the

\begin{enumerate}
\item ज्ञिनयोक्तीय दाराणां न श्रृयादिप्रियं बुधः।
     रीति प्रीति च धर्मं च तद्यत्तमवेक्ष्यं च ॥ M. Bh. I. 86-70

\item भृजापिद फैयो भर्ति पालनादि पति: स्मृत: ॥
     गुणस्याह्स निवृत्ती तु न भर्ति न पुन: पति: ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 251. 35

\item आनुकुलयं हि दम्पत्योऽविवृद्धयेतवे ॥
     आनुकुल लक्ष्या वसा विदेशन हि कि ततः: ॥
     जिनके लक्ष्यां भेद करके हि कि ततः: ॥
     प्रहास्थम: मुखार्थय पतिमूलं तु तत्सुखम् ॥ P. P. Uttara Khanda. 223. 36-37

\item गुणप्रियचुवृद्धयारकीयंगमिः
     सर्वंत: ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 144. 4

\item न गुणं ज्ञेयमयां: श्रीहिणी गुहरुस्यते ॥
     गुहं तु श्रीहिणीं कान्तारावतिरच्यते ॥ M. Bh. XIII. 144. 6
\end{enumerate}
wife is the God-given friend and companion.\(^1\) The wife in her turn is warned that she alone is worthy of the name woman, with whom the husband is pleased.\(^2\)

Patnī is explained by Pāṇini as the helper in sacrifice—Yajña.\(^3\) The word Yajña is very comprehensive. It includes every one of the activities that contribute towards the welfare of the whole universe, from the highest soul to the lowest worm. The idea of Yajña is explained and expounded clearly in the Bhagavadgītā,\(^4\) which in its turn is the summary of the teachings contained in all the Upaniṣads. There it is said that the Creator having created all the people along with the Yajñās told them that those will yield them all their desires. The warning is also sounded there that those who indulge in any activity, except in the spirit of sacrifice, become bound by those, and will be dragged down.\(^5\) Everything that leads to progress depends on the Yajña, and the woman who encourages, helps and participates in that alone can claim the title Patnī. And Patnī thus becomes the inseparable partner of the Pati every moment of his life.

The description of his wife by the Yakṣa in the Megha-

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1. भाष्यां देवकृतः सबा ।
2. सा हि भृत्यवगत्वा यस्या भर्तानुत्तरति ।
3. पतृयुनः यज्ञरूपोऽसः । 4/1/33 । परिचक्ष्यते स्त्रिया साविन्येन संबन्धेऽसः ।
   वस्मीधरः पल्लि । तत्कर्तुः क यज्ञाद्वयः फल भोज्यान्त्यः । समपल्लि: सहायिकारात् ।
4. सह्यमा: प्रजा: सुष्ट्रा पुरोवाच प्रजापति: ।
   सत्यन: प्रतिभयान्त्रे एव वृद्धिधार्याकामयुक्ते ॥
   देवनाभावयतानेन ते देवा भावयतुम् ।
   परस्परं भावयतां: श्रेयोऽपि परमवास्याय
   तत्तत्त्वस्वास्तं श्रेद्ध नित्यं यथे प्रतिविधितम् ।
5. यज्ञशिष्याशिष्य: सत्ती मुच्यन्ते सर्बक्षित्यशः ।
   भृक्ते ते लव्च पापा: ये पत्तस्यात्मकारणात् ॥

M. Bh. I. 86
M. Bh. XIII. 134. 12
S. Kau. I. p. 121
Bh. G. III. 10-15
Bh. G. III. 13
duta gives a clear picture of a good and loving woman as conceived by Kalidāsa. The sorrow of Aja at the demise of his wife Indumati is another example of the high regard in which women are held by the poet. Aja wails: "The mistress of the household, the minister friend, dearest disciple in the fine arts and what not, has been taken away from me by this cruel Death, who has taken you away." The description of Arundhati in the Kumārasambhava is another example of Kalidāsa's conception about woman as wife. "In the midst of those seven sages, the chaste and pure Arundhati, the wife of Vasiṣṭha, with her eyes fixed on the feet of her husband, shone like the very fulfilment of his penances. Lord Śiva looked at her and the rṣis with the same respectful eyes; for, it is the character that counts and not the sex, as far as great people are concerned." Here, the poet clearly expresses what he thinks about women. He adds, "By seeing her, Lord Śiva became more desirous to get married; for, good wives are indeed the inspiration and help for all righteous actions." The same idea recorded by Manu, is accepted and propagated in a wider sense here.

The question naturally arises, if this is so, why was

1. Meghadutā. Part II. 22-24
2. महं स्त्रिया सदिष्टिः सच्ची मिथ: प्रियशिष्या सतिते कलाविषी।
कर्णाविषिषुनेन मृत्युना हरता त्वं बद कि न मे हृतम्।
R. U. VIII. 67
3. तेषां मध्यगताः साभी पति: पावापितकाः।
साभाविद्व तपः सिरित्वमासे भवुपन्याती।
तामौरवब्रह्मेन मुनिःश्राप्पविश्र।।
कोपाणिनित्वान्यायं बुत्तं दि महितं सताम्।।
K. S. VI. 11-12
4. तहर्षकृतस्युत्त्योमोभ्रायाविरायारंभाद्।
क्रियां च धर्मां वर्जयां सत्यत्यो मूलकारणम्।।
K. S. VI. 13
5. प्रपत्यं धर्माकार्याणि शुद्रुषां रतिक्षतमः।
दाराधीनस्य स्वर्गं: पितृणामात्मनञ्ज हु॥
Manu. IX. 28
Kāmadeva, the cause of union between man and woman, burnt? The answer is obvious. As has been explained at an earlier context, it was lust, illusion and sensual love that was burnt in the form of Kāmadeva. Kālidāsa is called the "Bard of Love" by many. He has depicted love in its different aspects: the care-free love against the background of court intrigues, romantic passion which reaches the summits of madness and also the love that slowly grows and gradually develops into the ideal love with its evils purged off by suffering. But what he actually held up as the ideal was the love after marriage, love, which protects the hearth and home and through it the whole universe. Love in the wider sense of the word is praised by Kālidāsa. This all-pervading and chaste love, that is depicted in the Ardha Nariśvara form of Śiva, is the symbol of Kālidāsa's ideal, which he adores and praises in the opening stanza of Raghuvaṁśa. The inter-dependence of husband and wife in this way is once again emphasized by him in the sixth canto of the Kumārasaṁbhava, where the seven sages tell Himavān that he should unite his daughter with Śiva, even as the word with its meaning.

This idea is repeatedly found in many Purāṇas. The Liṅgapurāṇa, and the Skanda Purāṇa refer to Umā and Maheśwara as the word and its meaning. The latter goes a step further and says that while the parents of the universe are as word and its meaning, the child Skanda is the Rasa.

According to the Rāmāyaṇa, Swayamvara and Gāndharva type of marriages were not upheld. Sītā bears testimony to the accepted custom that father is the one who is entitled to give away the daughter in marriage. Another

1. तमर्भमिव भारत्या सुत्तया योक्तुमहीति । K. S. VI. 79
2. ब्राह्म: शम्मु: बिबा बाणी । Li. P
3. ख्योरोक्षरसोमा तत्त्र तत्य नमो नमः । Sk. P
4. इह लोके च पितृभिः प्रत्येके यथा महमते । V. R. II. 29. 18
example is that of the hundred daughters of Kuśadhvaja, who refused the advances of god Vāyu, saying that they cannot and will not go beyond the orders of their father. As has been already seen, Kālidāsa also favours this type of marriage, which is named Brāhma by Manu. Once married, then she belongs to the husband for good and evil. Sisters, brothers, parents and children enjoy the fruits of their own deeds. Wife alone shares the fate of the husband in weal or woe. This is the idea that prevails in the code of Manu. But there is a vast difference between the husband and the wife as far as the rights and privileges go. The idea seems to be that nothing could correct and rehabilitate the man except the wholesome influence of his wife. Perhaps this was the psychology that prompted the law-givers to enforce the duties of the wife with greater care and strictness.

It is interesting to note that the ideal propagated in the Rāmāyana appealed to the people much more than the fiery valour of the women portrayed in the Mahābhārata. It was not Damayanti, who boldly proclaimed a second swayamvara faked though it was; not Draupadi, who questioned the right of Yudhiṣṭhira to pawn her; not even Sāvitrī, who stood up against the Lord of Death himself for the sake of her husband’s life. that found favour with the people and also the majority of writers in later days; but it was Sītā, the patient and forbearing, noble, dignified and yet submissive in all conditions and circumstances, who was accepted as the ideal by posterity. Whether these characters and happen-

1. मा भूतस कालो दुर्मध्य: पितरं सत्यवादिनयः।
   नावमन्यस्म धर्मण्य स्वंबरमुपास्महेः॥
   पिता हि प्रयुरस्माक्ष देवतं परमं हि न:।
   वस्य नो दास्यति पिता स नो महां महिष्यति॥

   V. R. I. 32. 21-22

2. भार्येणुत्र पिता माता भ्राता पुत्रस्तवा स्मुमा।
   स्वानि पुप्पानि मुखानाः व्यवे स्वं भार्यमुपासते॥

   भयुर्माय पु भयंकेप्राप्तो निपुष्पम्भ।

   V. R. II. 27. 3-4
nings were purely legendary or otherwise is not the question. The fact remains that fiction or history reflect the trends of thought that characterized the age.

It is obvious that the ideal position enjoyed by women in the Vedic period was gradually deteriorating. The foreign invasions and changes that were coming over the religious ideals, combined with the natural physical disabilities, paved the way for the slow but sure descent of woman from the equal status she shared with man. Though there were opposing elements who tried to stem the tide, they could not get much success. Kālidāsa was witnessing such a time, and seeing both sides of the picture he wanted to point out how the natural adverse consequences could be avoided. The equal responsibility of man and woman in contributing to the welfare of the society was a foregone conclusion with him. The ideal of the second Aṣṭama, as the mainstay of human life, seemed to the poet as the real thing. Hence he portrayed the ideal of his vision, the woman who is really one with her husband, just as the sweet expressions that enhance the sublime imagination and wisdom. He believed that woman had her own sphere of activity just as the man has his own, and working together with mutual understanding and unity, they both jointly lead the universe to the greatest bliss. This is the ideal that he pictured in all his works as far as the wife was concerned. In fact this is the noblest and most important role for women as visualized by Kālidāsa and portrayed in his plays.

Certain critics are of the opinion that Kālidāsa did not look upon women favourably. They refer to the widely known legend about the master-poet being an ignoramus in the beginning and consequently having been turned out of the palace by his wife, princess Vidyottama, as the cause for this supposed aversion. They support their conjecture by quoting the stray deprecating statements about women found in his works and also the use of the synonym abalā for them
in the Meghadūta and in one or two other places. The basis of the conjecture, as well as the proofs quoted, are equally flimsy and cannot hold water for a moment. The statements of the various characters at the different places are not to be taken away from the context when they are to be interpreted. The ideas embodied in those statements can be correctly understood only after a close and sympathetic study of each word and its significance at the proper place. All those verses and passages have been taken up in this treatise, and everywhere it has been seen that Kalidāsa's adoration for the wife and mother has been prominent and no bitterness against women is found anywhere.

Taking up the word abala used for women, we have to be more careful. We have already seen how Kalidāsa was disturbed at the fast deteriorating condition of women and also the unsympathetic attitude of certain sections of the people, who considered women to be fetters that bound them to this world. Perhaps he was witnessing the process by which the rules of the law-givers, originally meant for the safety of the hearth and home and for the protection of women, were being turned into fetters for them. As all scholars agree, Kalidāsa believed in thought-provoking suggestions more than open declarations. The word abala was being used as a synonym for woman since very early days and the reason is quite obvious. The very word sets one thinking, why is the woman an abala? One does not have to search far for an answer. By nature, she has to fulfil the duty of becoming the mother along with all the accompanying sufferings and difficulties which made her physically weak in comparison with the sturdy physique of the man, while the sufferings of motherhood and the necessity of meeting emergencies made her resourceful, understanding and sympathetic. The man with his physical strength and arguing intellect may achieve much on the materialistic plane; but to have well-being and happiness, the qualities of the heart are necessary.
Hence it is that women have become worshippable and ador-
able in the eyes of all thinking men. It is this peculiarity of woman, this self-abnegation, love and consideration that has really made her an abala. And Kalidasa's intention in using this word at places seems to be nothing else than attracting the attention of the people to this irrefutable fact, and reminding them of their duties to her who is prepared to sacrifice her everything for the sake of her husband and children. It is absurd to think that a seer and saint like Kalidasa could ever stoop down to the narrow-mindedness of holding a grudge against any one, much less against his own wife who, according to his own ideas, is as inseparable from him as his poetry itself.

The Nāṭyaśāstra has ordained that women are the basic sources of happiness and so the dramas should include them in the leading roles. Most of the Sanskrit playwrights have accepted this ordinance in its narrow sense and the result is the innumerable dramas in Sanskrit with love as their main sentiment. Kalidasa also has chosen the same theme for his plays. But the difference of these plays from the bulk of the other Sanskrit dramas can be understood only when the significance of each word and action of the various characters is studied carefully. In his works, we have not only the heroine, but all kinds of women. Here we are introduced to something real and yet new, something which no one else has hit upon. This is specially true about the female characters depicted by him, who are all natural, enduring and great in their respective spheres. Though he wrote many centuries ago, these characters have special appeal to people of the present day. His genius worked for humanity as a whole and that is the secret of his appeal to all times and climes.
CHAPTER IV

KĀLIDĀSA TO BHAVABHŪTI

The plays of Kālidāsa epitomise the contradiction in the social attitude towards women in India. The two trends of thought, one denouncing them as the root of all evils, and the other trying to uphold their greatness, were running side by side for a long time. And, inspite of the staunch supporters of women like Varāhamihira and Apastamba, women were definitely loosing ground, as could be observed from the later literature. This is specially noticeable in the dramas written after the master-poet.

A number of dramatists are named by the later writers on dramaturgy and the variety and the versatility found in those references are themselves proofs of the fact that there was no stagnation in the literary field at least up to the 10th century A. D. But, unfortunately, most of those dramas are known to posterity only by name. Of the writers whose works have survived, Śrī Harśa, Viśākhadatta, Bhavabhūti, Bhaṭṭanārāyana, Śaktibhadra, Rajaśekhara, Murāri and Dīṅgaṅga are note-worthy in the arena of Dramatic Literature. Each of these poets presents interestingly different types of plays. They show variety, elasticity and utility to a great extent. But, significantly enough, the information about women that could be collected from these plays is comparatively scanty and, indeed, very disappointing.

We have already noticed that Kālidāsa was sounding a warning to society about the treatment it was meeting out to women, who really desired to be loved and cherished as
goddesses of the hearth and home. He had skilfully showed how the laws laid down with the best of intentions to protect them, were interpreted by those who had vested interests to forge fetters for them. But it seems, those warnings, though appreciated, did not convince the society in general and the condition of women continued to deteriorate.

Women characters who attract the attention of the student first, in this period, are those represented by king Śrī Harśa, the last great Hindu ruler of Northern India. He is assigned to the first half of the seventh century. Long years had passed since Śakuntalā, Mālavikā, queen Dhārīni and Ausīnāri were portrayed. But the circumstances that created Hamsapadikās and Irāvatis seem to have become more and more compelling at the time when Śrī Harśa wrote. Priyadarsikā, Ratnāvalī and Malayavatī are the heroines of the three plays of this author. The first two themes centre round the amours of the famous king Udayana, while the third describes the self-sacrifice of the Vidyādhara prince, Jīmūtavāhana. The former two plays belong to the type called natika described by Bharata\(^1\) as full of female characters, music, dance and merry-making, and also having the hero, heroine, and the chief queen depicted. Later dramaturgists also have described the natika in greater details.\(^2\) In both the natikas Śrī Harśa

1. ब्रीष्माया चतुर्दशा ललिताभिनयात्मिका सुविभूताः
   ब्रह्मीत्वाद्वादरकिल्लवस्तिसंभोगार्तिकाः
   चैव
   भ्राजोपयायक्का
   प्रसादनक्रोष्यद्विमयाक्का
   नायकहुती चापि देवीसम्बन्धी नायिका शेया

   N. S. XVIII. 110-111

2. नायिका कृष्णातुर्वशा स्वातःब्रीष्माया चतुर्दशा
   प्रसादातो धीरलिंतित्तत्र स्वातःहकात्र नूपः
   स्वादन्तःपुरुस्वद्वा संगीतवादिनुशया
   नवानुरागा कलात्र नायिका नूपवेशाः
seems to be following closely the rules laid down by Bharata. This type of plays, not being expected to contribute to either Dharma or Karma, may have amour as its theme and this limits its scope very much.

Though a great warrior and politician, Śrī Harśa had a deep interest in literature. Many poets such as Bāna, Dhāvaka and others flourished in his court. Apart from encouraging the literary genius dependent on him, he himself was a poet of considerable ability. Of course, there is not much comparison between him and Kālidāsa who influenced him or Bhavabhūti who came after him. There is not much originality found in the plots or development of situations or characters. Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī, remind us of Mālavikā's condition in the court of Agnimitra, though they do not arouse in our minds the same consideration or admiration that is created by the latter. As for Malayavati, the heroine of the Nāgānanda, which is a full-fledged drama, the most that can be said is that she seems to be more a shadow than reality in the whole play.

In the two nāṭikās of Śrī Harśa, we are once more taken to the harem of an amorous king, whose love-intrigues had given enough inspiration to many play-wrights. The very choice of themes and the development of characters show that these belong to a time when the author was more interested in worldly prosperity and enjoyment. History tells us that emperor Śrī Harśa took to the principles of Buddhism in the later period of his life. It was only natural that the lighter moods prevailed in his younger days and the results were Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī. Between

संब्रवत्त नेतात्वाद देश्यास्त्रासेन शान्तिः ।
देवी महेशुन्य्या प्रगत्वा नूपवंशजा ॥
पदपदे मानवति तदवः संगमे ब्रह्मः ।
वृत्ति: स्यालेश्वरी स्वल्पविमलाः: संधयः पुनः ॥

S.D. VI. 269-272
these two nāṭikas the theme, characterisation and treatment of the plots go to show the precedence of the Priyadārśikā to the Ratnāvalī. Even as a literary piece the Ratnāvalī is a mature production compared to the other play. The Nāgānanda, with tranquility as its predominant sentiment, and non-violence and self-sacrifice as the ideals held up, definitely point towards a period in the poet’s life in which he seems to have realised the futility of worldly pleasures, and to have accepted the doctrine of complete self-abnegation for the sake of others to be the most ennobling and desirable thing in this world. True to conventions, Malayavatī has been introduced as the heroine and love scenes have been depicted in the first portion of the play. The author himself seems to be not much interested in ordinary things, for he very easily switches on to the depiction of dutifulness to the parents and self-renunciation as the ideals even for youths. A close study of these plays shows the Nāgānanda to be the last drama, while the Priyadārśikā preceded the Ratnāvalī.

As we are introduced to the heroines of the two nāṭikas of Śrī Harśa, we seem to go back to the story of Mālavikā who was under the care of the chief queen of Agnimitra. But the similarity ends with the outline of the theme. Priyadārśikā and Ratnāvalī are so different from the sister of Mādhavasena, even as both of them are different from each other. So also is queen Vāsavadattā different from queen Dhārini.

The story of Udayana had provided former writers, who wrote long before Śrī Harśa, with themes for dramas. That it was quite popular in those days is proved not only by the words of Śrī Harśa himself in both his dramas,¹ but also by the references made by earlier writers like Śūdraka² and

1. लोके हरि च वसराज्ञरं नाटये च दश्य वयम् ।
Ratnāvalī. I. 5 and Priyadārśikā. I. 3

2. गौमधरायण इत्योदयनस्य राज: ॥
Mṛcch. IV. 26
Kālidāsa. The Brhatkathā by Guṇāḍhya or some version of the same must have served as the source-book of the themes centering round Udayana. We are not able to know much about the original work because it has long been lost to posterity. Three abridgements of the same are available now but all of them belong to a very late date and could not have served as source-books to Śrī Harsa. The only possible conclusion is that Śrī Harṣa took the story from the same sources that served his predecessors.

Though these two plays are very good pieces as literary works, they do not present a very high standard of culture or refinement. In the Priyadarśikā, the heroine was intended as the bride of king Udayana, but as luck would have it, she fell into the hands of enemies and was taken as captive to Udayana, who left her in the custody of queen Vāsavadattā. After some time the king saw the girl and became attracted to her, while she also fell in love with him. Though queen Vāsavadattā was deadly against their union in the beginning, she herself ultimately gave the captive in marriage to the king, as she recognised her cousin Priyadarśanā in her. The main plot of the Ratnāvalī also is more or less the same, the difference being only in the characters of the heroines and the methods in which the union of the lovers was contrived in each case. Queen Vāsavadattā, the chief queen of Udayana and Kānchana-mālā, her maid-in-attendance, are the female characters common to both the plays while Udayana and his friend Vasantaka are the male ones found in both. All these, except Kānchana-mālā, are already known to us from the works of Bhāsa. But the king and the queen in the plays of Śrī Harṣa do not have anything in common with those who were introduced to us by the earlier poet. The queen,

1. श्र. प्राप्यावस्तीसर्गवुदयनकालकोविदयांमवुदयनः | Megh. Pūrva. 32
श्र. प्रशोतस्य प्रयुष्टिबिर्वदवराजोत्स्व जहे | Megh. Pūrva. 35
Vāsavadattā, as portrayed by Bhāsa is a noble, dignified, generous-minded and understanding personage, who could have risen to the height of Queen Dhārīṇī, if the circumstances were the same. But she, as seen in the plays we are studying now, reminds us more of Irāvatī in the Mālavikāgnimitra. The influence of the master-poet over Śrī Harṣa is only too obvious in both these plays, specially in the Priyadarṣikā. Situations, incidents and even ideas seem to have been freely borrowed from the works of Kālidāsa. For example, Śakuntalā was troubled by the bee while she was watering the plants in the hermitage⁴ and that gave king Duṣyanta an opportunity to approach her. Here, in the Priyadarṣikā also, the bees came out of the lotuses and troubled Aranyakā, which gave an opportunity to Udayana to go to her.¹ The words of Vasantaka in this play² seem to repeat the teasing statement of Priyāṅvadā and Anasūyā.³ The similarities in various situations are remarkable between the Priyadarṣikā and the Mālavikāgnimitra. While the dance performance was the means by which Mālavikā was presented to the king, the drama within the play provided greater opportunity to Priyadarṣikā and Udayana. The imprisonment of the new loves of the hero by the chief queen is common to both the natīkas, as found in the Mālavikāgnimitra. The theme being almost the same in the natīka by Kālidāsa and the natīkas of Śrī Harṣa, the similarity

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1. शकुन्तला:—प्रमो! सलिलसेकसंभ्रमोदगतो नवमालिकामुदिततः बदन्मे मधुकरोभिमिलते। Ab. Ś. I. p. 11
2. शारण्यका—हा चिक्क हा चिक्क। एते बलवरे परित्यज्य कमलिनी नीलोत्पलविनानि समापत्तनो नियुक्ततरं बाधमाना यायासवति मां हुष्टमधुकरा। Priyadarṣikā. II. p. 19
3. विवृत्यक:—वस्ति सकलपुष्पीपरित्राणमयं वत्सराजेन परित्राययामाध्या वेदोदितीविरिकं याक्रमदित। Priyadarṣikā. II. p. 20
4. उभे—प्रृथिय्या: य: शरण स तव समीपे बलते। Ab. Ś. II. p. 38
of situations are understandable to a great extent. Still, the evidences are too over-whelming to allow any doubt as to the great influence of Kālidāsa over Śri Harṣa.

But, these similarities are confined only to the literary and technical side of the plays. Coming down to the characters represented and the society reflected in the later plays, we find ourselves brought to a different atmosphere altogether. The women depicted by Śri Harṣa seem to have nothing in common with the same characters portrayed by the earlier poet Bhāsa, or with any one presented by Kālidāsa. The inner apartments of Udayana seem to have been reduced to the condition of the women’s apartments in the house of any ordinary rich man. The king himself seems to be given to music, wine and women. Once his desire was roused for any new found beauty, nothing could stop him, as testified by Manoramā in the Priyadarśikā.¹ Women seem to have become the objects of sensual pleasure only. King Udayana seems to have had no scruples as to right or wrong conduct, once his desires were aroused. He was more concerned with the fulfilment of his own desires than with the welfare of his subjects, for he appears to be always in search of some new acquisition for his lust. Vasantaka testified to the fact that ever since Āraṇyakā was seen by the king, the latter had been thinking of a way to meet her, forgetting even the duties of the state.² In the Ratnāvalī also we find the king to be enjoying life to the full, leaving the matters of state to the able ministers like Yaugandharāyana, Ruman-vān and others. Nāṭikā being the type of play allowing a

1. मनोरमा—(विहर्य) हृतां श्रवणिते! कमलीनीवदान्गुरायागोपि मयुकरो मालितीं प्रवृत्तिमिनन्दसदिस्तानम्प: कप्तस्तामनासाच स्थिरं करोति।

Priyadarśikā. III. p. 26

2. विद्वृक्त:—प्रतिमहानु खल्लु प्रतियवययस्यार्य्यकायः: उपयुगरागः। वेन परिस्थत्ताराय्यकायेत्त्वया एव दर्शनोपायं चित्त्ययःसामान्यिन्दोदयति।

Priyadarśikā. III. p. 27
number of women, it is only natural that both these plays of Śrī Harṣa are swamped with women. The story by its very nature relates only to the royal harem and so it is not possible to know much about the life of women in general at the time when Śrī Harṣa wrote. But what little we could gather seems to reflect a deteriorated condition of women.

Priyadarśikā, Ratnāvalī, and Malayavatī are girls of marriageable age. All the three belong to the type of heroines described as Mugdha² by the dramaturgists. They are young, meek and always frightened, though these conditions do not in any way stop them from following their own hearts' desires. All the three are daughters of noble kings, but they show no particular praise-worthy virtues of their own. It is their beauty, and beauty alone, that is praised everywhere. The words of Bhishmapitāmaha in the Pañcarātra² that women are known by their beauty, while men by their valour, seem to have become deep-rooted in the society by this time. Their beauty and accomplishments in fine arts alone have been brought forward and held up for admiration everywhere. Priyadarśikā, when presented to Udayana as the daughter of Vindhyaketu, is sent to the queen with the message that she must be looked after like a sister by her and be given education suitable to a princess, adding further that he should be informed when she becomes eligible for marriage.³ "The word Varayogya, cannot be taken to mean "when she attains marriageable age,"

1. प्रथमावतीयोवनमदनविकारा रती वामा ।
कथिता मृदुस्व माने समविकल्पावती मुख्या ॥

2. भीष्म:—हृदये स्वयः कथ्यन्ते । पराक्रेण तु पुरुषा: ।

3. राजा—यस्योधरे! गच्छ! लघेव वासवदत्ताय: समप्य! वस्त्रव्य च देवी। मनोविरुढ्ध प्रवेषादशा निबिष्ठक-न्यकोचिन्त सर्व शिशुपिन्यः। यदा वर्योग्या भविष्यति तत्रा मां स्मार्येति।

S. D. III 58
Pañcarātra. III, p. 40
Priyadarśikā. I. 10
because it was while she was actually being taken as a bride to Udayana, that her father was defeated. The custom seems to have been to send the bride to the residence of the bride-groom for marriage, as against the way described in the Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa and the Svaṁavāsavādatta of Bhāsa, or in the Tāpasavatsarāja, where the bride-groom goes to the residence of the bride and brings her with himself. Both Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī were lost on their way while being taken to be married to Udayana, even as Mālavikā got lost on her way while being taken by her brother to Agnimitra. This probably may be an indication of the change of customs from the time of Bhaṣa to the period of the later poets. Kālidāsa has described both the methods. In the Abhijñānaśākuntalam, and the Vikramorvaśīya, the marriage was by Gāndharva rites. But where a marriage properly arranged was to take place, as in the case of Mālavikā, we find the elder brother taking his sister to the betrothed king. But in the Kumārasambhava, we have the seven sages sent as messengers to the girl's father by the bride-groom to ask for her hand, and the marriage took place at the bride's residence. Both these customs are existent to this day in different parts of India. Though the marriage ceremony always takes place at the bride's residence now-a-days, the preliminaries differ from place to place. As for example, while in the North, it is the girl's party that goes in search of a suitable boy, in Kerala, it is supposed to be disgraceful to the girl's family if any initiative is taken from their side to secure a husband for the girl. This being the case, perhaps there is nothing wrong in concluding that Śrī Harṣa was aware of the custom of taking the girl to the bride-groom at the time he wrote. One thing seems to be definite that, child marriages were not prevalent at least in the royal families, and that the girls were to have accomplishments in fine arts to their credit, so that they should be able to keep up the interest of their husbands in themselves.
Āranyakā was to be instructed in these arts under the supervision of the chief queen. Ratnāvalī was already an expert in the art of painting, as is proved by the fact that she, like Sāgarikā, could paint the picture of Udayana from memory, and her friend Susaṅgatā also could draw the former's portrait with equal skill. Malayavatī played beautifully on the lute as testified in the first act of the Nāgānanda. According to the testimony of King Udayana, music, dance, playing on instruments and such other fine arts were the necessary constituents of education to be imparted to the girls of noble families.

Priyadarśikā, though head over ears in love with the king, hesitates at every step, even like Mālavikā of Kālidāsa. She is more timid and frightened as a tame deer, when compared to Ratnāvalī, the heroine of the other natīka. Priyadarśikā does not lift a finger to attain her desire. If not for Manoramā's courage and Vasantaka's complacency, it is very doubtful whether she would ever have been united with king Udayana. Ratnāvalī presents a bolder type of maiden. She is quite courageous in her love. She dares to portray the king on a picture-board, difficult to hide, though she knows very well the possible consequences of a discovery. Her adventurous spirit is evidenced by her acceptance of the suggestions of Susaṅgatā to disguise herself as the queen and go to the king. While Priyadarśikā takes recourse to poison, Ratnāvalī decides to end her life by hanging herself with the aid of a creeper.

The very interesting factors are the actions and reactions common to the heroines of both the dramas. Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī, both saw the king, and recognised in him the person their respective fathers had wished as their husband. Then they fell in love with him, while the king got infatuated with their beauty not knowing their identity, quite true to his own nature. He went about thinking and working out ways and means to obtain his heart's desire with the help of his friend and the maids-in-
attendance on the queen. But the girls invariably decided to commit suicide to escape an unhappy life. The idea seems to be that if one could not get the man one desired for oneself, then life was not worth living. The words of Kālidāsa, "Death is much better for lovers who have no hopes of union with each other",¹ seem to have been well accepted by the maids of the day. Malayavatī, the Vidyadhara princess, too, is no exception; for she also tries to put an end to her life. In each case, it is the entrance of the respective hero that saves the life of the heroine.

Though the girls were kept under the protection of their parents, they were not at all in seclusion. Whether maids or mistresses, the unmarried girls were free to move about in gardens and other safely-protected public places in the company of their particular friends. There was no harm in looking at a maiden, as is repeatedly said in all the three plays of Śrī Harṣa.² But, married women were to be avoided scrupulously.³

The maids other than the princesses, depicted by Śrī Harṣa seem to get intoxicated during the various festivals. They sang and danced during the festival of cupid, the festival of spring, and on many other occasions. The play within the play, in Priyadarśikā, is a proof of the fact that women actors were existent in the harems. Here, we are reminded of the dictum of Bharata who said that women in the harems of kings should be taught the art of acting,

1. परसरामसिनिरावोवैर शरीरनावोधि समानुरागोऽि म. A. III. 15
2. व्र. राजा—वयस्य निर्दोषदर्शना क्रिया खल्वयम्। विश्वयविवाशी पद्याम्।।
   Priyadarśikā. II. p. 18
   व्रा. विद्युक्—भो वयस्य क्रिया खल्वेया। तस्क्त न प्रेक्षाये॥
   नायकः—को दोषः। क्रिया हि निर्दोषदर्शने भवति।
   Nāgānanda. I. p. 18
3. नायकः—(उपरसा रत्नासा स्थित्वा) वयस्य। कदाचिद्व वशतुमनहर्षोऽध्य ख्रूँजनो
   भविष्यति।
   Nāgānanda. I. p. 18
even as the Apsarās in heaven were trained in this and other allied arts. The practice of the girls on attendance in the harem staging plays in order to please the king and queen and the limited audience that could gather within the safely-guarded inner apartments, seems to be quite common. But here, we get an indication that only women participated in such plays and the roles of men also were acted by themselves as proved by the fact that Manoramā was to play the part of the king in the drama written by Śāṅkṛtyāyani. There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that maidens enjoyed comparative freedom during the period when Śri Harṣa wrote.

But, the life of women in general, especially of those who were married, was more fettered and restricted. The companionship and the feeling of oneness between the wife and the husband seems to be dying out in this period which left the woman to be more a “thing of beauty” to be enjoyed by man at his own sweet will and pleasure. Vāsavadattā, the chief queen of Udayana, as presented by Śri Harṣa, is an example beyond doubt. King Udayana seems to be falling in love with any new beauty he happens to come across. The deep love he professes for his queen is no barrier to him in courting any one of her maids-in-attendance, if the latter attracted his fancy. We have already seen Udayana through the pen of Bhāsa. He was not able to forget his beloved Vāsavadattā, even though he was convinced that she was dead and, forced by circumstances, he had to marry Padmāvatī. In the Tāpavatsarājā also, where he is the hero, he does not show such a frivolous nature. There again, the reasons that forced him to a second marriage were political and his affections were constantly cen-

1. रम्भोवर्षीप्रमृतिमः: स्वग्न नाट्यं प्रवतः।
   तत्वेव मानुषे लोके पाधिवानां प्रेम्यु च॥
   उपदेश्वरयामाच्याः: शान्त्रुद्ध्यास्त्यास्त्वपि।

N. S. XXVI. 6-7
tered in his first love. But Udayana, portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, scandalously differs from the heroes portrayed by any of the earlier writers. The readiness with which he accepts the suggestions of Manoramā, to act his own role in the play to be presented before the queen, is a proof of his unscrupulous and callous nature. The reason is not far to seek.

Queen Vāsavadattā, in the natikas of Śrī Harṣa, depicted in almost the same position as Dhārinī in the Mālavikāgnimitra, shows a very different phase of woman's character. It is the jealous wife that predominates in her nature. King Agnimitra is not much different from king Udayana, as far as his fickleness in affection is concerned. The difference of the whole atmosphere depends on the queens, the presiding deities of the two harems.

Priyadarsīkā was brought to the king as a captive princess and Ratnāvalī was brought to the queen as a girl lost in the sea. Both the situations are more or less similar to that in which Mālavikā was brought to the court of Agnimitra, but the difference is also remarkable, which depended much on the treatment of the maids by the respective queens. Mālavikā's presence in the harem was not known to the king till he saw her picture. Similar was the case with Ratnāvali, who came to queen Vāsavadattā, as Sāgarikā. Priyādarsīkā, as Aranyakā, was entrusted by the king to the care of the queen. It was by accident that the girls were seen by the respective heroes after they entered the harem. Thus, the outline of the themes is the same, up till the first meeting of the hero and the heroine.

As we have already noticed, Dhārinī knew her husband well enough and always tried to safe-guard him, and thus herself too by keeping the temptations out of his way as far as possible. She was not aware of the noble lineage of Mālavikā, sent to her by her brother as a booty of war. Still, she was kind and loving to the girl and was careful to
train her in all the fine arts as suited to a noble-born girl. As a wife, naturally, she could not and would not like to add one more number to the full harem. But, as a good judge of character, she guessed the possibility of the girl’s noble birth. She did not hesitate to test the fact when the opportunity arose, as proved by the episode of the Aśoka Dohada. The arrangements to marry Mālavikā to the king were complete even before her identity was revealed. And, when the princess was actually recognised, the repentance of the queen about the way she treated the former was quite genuine, as is proved from the words that fell from her mouth spontaneously.¹ Thus, Dhārini always kept herself the mistress of every situation by the authority gained by love and kindness to all, and also by her own dignity and self-respect. But the character of queen Vāsavadattā, as depicted by Śrī Harṣa, is a sad commentary on womanhood as a whole.

This queen does not at all compare favourably with the Vāsavadattā of the Svapnavāsavadattā—that noble woman, who allowed herself to be considered dead, and also accepted the humiliation of being a dependent on the very same princess who replaced her, for the sake of the glory of her husband. The Vāsavadattā of Bhāsa seems to hold up the ideal propagated in the Rāmāyaṇa, namely, the fame of the husband is to be safe-guarded by the wife, because, her everything is the husband.² The same idea was held by Kālidāsa also, though with a little modification.

¹ धारिणी—कब्जे राजदारिकम् चन्दनं खलु मया पादुकोपयोगेन द्वितम्।
M. A. V. p. 247

² म. यद्र ते वचनीयं स्थादयवादः समुरूपितः।
मया च परिहृतव्यं लवं हि मे परमा गति।।
V. R. VII. 48. 13-14

श्रा. रावध्य यशो हिरीस्तव्या शृङ्गेष्ठु राक्षसः।
V. R. V. 37. 55
The wife, indeed, should safeguard the name and fame of her husband, but not by the method of self-abnegation, sacrificing her own self-respect and dignity as a woman. As we have already noticed, Kālidāsa held that if the woman is lost, the man cannot survive. And he proved it by his portrayal of queen Dhārini and also all other female characters.

But, by the time Śrī Harṣa wrote, the woman seems to have come down in the scale to a great extent, having less capacity for pure and selfless love, which characterised the women of earlier days. The best ideals of his time, represented by queen Vāsavadattā, can only be compared to those found in Irāvatī, portrayed by Kālidāsa. Queen Vāsavadattā, seen in the two plays of Śrī Harṣa, does love her husband, and is loved and respected by him as she deserved. But she does not seem to possess the dignity and broad-mindedness required by her position as the chief queen and the better-half of a high and mighty king. According to the rules of dramaturgy, she falls under the category of the Madhyā type of heroines, described as jealous, proud, easily angered or pleased. Her jealous and unforgiving nature, prejudiced behaviour and frequent nagging bring her down to a very low level. The epithets given to her, such as Kopana, Candi and Manini, by her servants, Vasantaka and the king himself seem to be quite well deserved, when we remember her behaviour at certain critical times. The haste in which she broke up the play, inspite of the pleadings of Śāṅkṛtyāyanī, her anger that resulted in the imprisonment of Aranyakā, Sāgarikā, and even Vasantaka when they were found out, and her general behaviour to the king at such times, all point to the very ordinary level of her character and culture. When she gets the letter from

1. इष्पावुत्रा चानिन्युतां क्षणक्रोधां च गविता ।
क्षण प्रसाधते या च सा नारी मध्यमा स्मुता ॥ N. S. XXIII. 38
her mother pointing out the seemingly passive behaviour of Udayana about the defeat and imprisonment of Drdhavarma, Vasavadatta's words reflect a very shallow and uncultured mind. She asks Sankrttyayanī: "How he, who cares no more for me, can care for mine?" She does not seem to care if her husband, the king, was disgraced before the respected people or the servants of the harem. Perhaps, that is the reason why Manoramā in the Priyadarsikā, and Susāṅgatā in the Ratnāvali, dared to tease the king, though they were only the maids-in-attendance. We are forced to compare these with Bakulāvalikā and Nipunikā who, though in the know of things, still kept their distance from, and respect for their master, the king. Of course, the behaviour of king Udayana also is no better. He did not hesitate to take the hands of the girl Susāṅgatā and plead with her to keep his secret. Neither the girls concerned, nor any body else in the court seem to think there was anything strange or wrong in the king's fickleness. On the other hand, the minister Yaugandharāyana knew that, to keep the girls in the near vicinity of the king was enough to achieve the desired end. These same ideas prevailed among every one who knew the king, as proved by the words of Manoramā telling Āranyakā: "if you were seen by the king, that is enough. Now he himself will search out

1. वासवदत्ता—मनोविर्भवत: प्रतिङ्गाप्रकृतेदा:नार्म: यस्य मया न कर्त्य तत्त: मद्यिनेन कि कार्यम्। Priyadarsikā IV. p. 47
2. विहृत:—एते खलु राजानी दास्यापि एवं नत्भन्ते। प्रभु कार्यस्य गुर्गक।
   Ibid. III. p. 35
3. सुसंगताः—(विहस्य) न केवलं देव:। चित्रफलकेन सह सर्वोऽहतांतोपि
   मया विश्रत:। तत्हैव गत्वा निवेदितिवे। Ratnāvali. II. p. 78
4. राजा—(सुसंगताः हस्ते गृहीतत्वा) सुसङ्गते क्रीडामात्रेतेतु। प्रकाररो लया
   देवी न व्ययधितथाः। इत्य ते पारितीविकम्। (इति कर्णभरण समर्गयति।)
   सुसंगताः—(प्रणयः सर्वस्मितम) ग्रहः सह्याः। मयापि भर्तः: प्रसादेन
   अभितमेव।
   Ibid. II. p. 78
ways and means to obtain you." Udayana behaved properly when he sent the captive princess, brought to him, to his wife and instructed the latter to take care of her and remind him of her when she qualified herself to get married. The duty of the conqueror king should have been to treat the captive according to her status. But, those particular words, taken along with his exclamation when he met and recognised her next, seem to tell a different story. He considered himself cheated out of his rights for a long time. His intentions about the girl do not appear to be any better than those of a lustful man.

A man who is contented with his married life in every way, would not and could not be searching for new acquisitions at all times. This is an elementary factor of a psychological truth. The very fact that Udayana was ever ready to jump at a new arrival, proves his discontented conjugal life. Women being reduced to be mere companions in sexual enjoyment, the degradation of the harem was inevitable. Vāsavadattā, who ought to have been the ruler of Udayana's heart, as depicted by Bhāsa, was ruling only the full harem of the king, even that through the height of her position and not by her innate noble qualities. Her treatment of the girl entrusted to her care by the king is not at all commendable. We do not see any consideration or love for the girl in the heart of the queen. Aranyaka's own words testify to the treatment meted out to her by the queen. She feels her degraded position as a servant in the

1. मनोरमा—यदि द्वारा महाराजन त्यं तदना संतापिते । स एवेदानी
   द्वार्कोपायपपरिक्लो भविष्यति । Priyadarśikā. III. p. 25

2. राजा—इव सा विनियमकोतोढ्हिता । (सार्याःपप्र)
   चिरं मुँहिताः स्मो बल्लुः । Priyadarśikā II. p. 18

3. अराधका—(हवायोज्यमात्ममতम्) तथा नाम ताहे बंध उत्पवायर्याः
   जनामात्मा जितसा सामातं परस्य मया जितोः कर्त्यायति
   नास्ति खलु दुःखरं दैवस्य । Priyadarśikā. II. p. 15
queen’s retinue. The case of Sāgarikā also is not in any way better. Vāsavadattā is feared by her servants as well as others in the harem. But she does not command the admiration, affection and loyalty enjoyed by either Dhārini or the queens portrayed by Bhāsa. Here, Vāsavadattā is ready to imprison any one who crossed her, even if it be a friend of the king himself. True, Mālavikā also was imprisoned by Dhārini. But it is to be remembered that she did so only to please her co-wife Irāvatī, and she took the first opportunity to release her. The confidence of her servants in the benevolent nature of the queen of Agnimitra is proved many times in the Mālavikāgnimitra. For example, while Mālavikā was caught in the act of yielding to the king a second time by Irāvatī and was frightened about the possible consequences, Bakulāvalikā assured her with confidence, “My friend, be calm. The queen is true to her words.” Every one in the court of Agnimitra from master to servant, was sure that the queen could never be unjust or unkind. But neither Manoramā, nor Susaṅgatā, nor even the king was sure of the moods of the Vāsavadattā portrayed in these later plays. Vasantaka, who played a role similar to that of Gautama in the Mālavikāgnimitra, advised the king to break down the walls of the harem, if he wished to rescue Aranyakā. And the king had to remind him that the queen alone was the authority in such matters. This is not the only instance which points out that the respect commanded by this queen is due only to her position. The unforgiving nature of Vāsavadattā is evidenced in both the plays, even to the very end when the girls were in the clut-

1. बकुलालिका—समावेशितु प्रियसवती। सत्यप्रतिभा देवी।
   M. A. IV. p. 239

2. बिद्वृषकः—भोः, लबं तावदनकसमसंवदं ग्याववाहुश्याली, 
   पुनरायणकाकपत्तातिदिविवहवतसुमुदितः। 
   तत्सवदसनन्देवतान्तः पुरं 
   तुषितिदितं इत्तेदानीभवारिष्ठां भोचय।
   Priyadarśikā. IV. p. 42
ches of death. In Priyadarśikā, she actually says to herself that if she did not do something in order to bring Aranyakā back to life, people would misunderstand her.¹ In the case of Ratnāvalī also, there is not much difference in the attitude of the queen except this, that, she remembered the captive girls in the harem, the moment she realised about the danger of fire. But she was prepared to bestow their hands on the king only after their identities, as her long-lost cousins, were revealed.

The difference between the portraits of queen Vāsavadattā, drawn by Bhāsa in the earlier period and that drawn by Śrī Harṣa at a later date, is an eye-opener to the change that had come over the society. The adorable queens as visualised by Kālidāsa seem to have disappeared by the time of Śrī Harṣa, leaving only the second class ladies of the harem for the poet to draw his ideals from. The limited educational facilities allowed to the women and their growing seclusion in the inner apartments, seem to have curbed the noble qualities discernable in the earlier women, while weakness, narrow-mindedness and jealousy seem to dominate their nature. The atmosphere of the whole harem seems to have degenerated and no redeeming feature is found any where.

Polygamy which was already existent in the times of Kālidāsa appears to have become the rule of the day. The unhappy results of the same is also obvious to all. For, the parents of Priyadarśikā and Ratnāvalī are both hesitant to give their daughters in marriage to Udayana, because they were unwilling to give pain to their beloved niece who was already married to Udayana. Yaugandharāyāna seems to

¹ वासवदत्ता—प्रतिदूर्जितां बलु लोकः। कदाचिन्माननया संभाविविषयिति।
वेदेतदय मुक्तम्। (प्रकाव्य संस्करणम्) मनोरमेऽसदन्तव्यतः
ताम्। नागलोकाद्यूष्णतिस्विषविप्य श्राययुत्रोधन कुशलः।

Priyadarśikā. IV. P, 54
have been always eager to add to the number of princesses Udayana married. Whenever he heard about a princess who was foretold by some siddha that she would become the wife of an emperor, the minister immediately set to work to get her married to Udayana. Love marriages had become more frequent, as could be surmised from the words of Sānkṛtyāyanī who says: “Princess, this Gāndharva type of marriage is accepted and approved by the “Dharmaśāstras. Why feel ashamed of it?”1 The position of the wives of the kings was as fickle as bubbles, since there was no restriction on Man’s freedom to take any woman he liked as his wife. The much emphasized Dakṣīṇya existed only in words, as could be seen from the beelike attitude of Udayana.

The veil appears to have come to stay, to cover the married woman. Though maidens could be gazed at by all, it was considered lack of manners, if one looked at a married woman. In the Nāgānanda, Jīmūtavāhana decides to look at Malayavatī only after he was assured that she was a maiden. He is not willing to look at her first, because he was doubtful that she may be a woman who should not be looked at. There are occasional references in the same play to show that even women in general had begun to put on veils. When Vidūṣaka, the friend of Jīmūtavāhana, was disturbed by the bees because of the garland he was wearing, he decided to cover himself with the red garments presented to him by Malayavatī. Here he says, “I shall dress like a woman with these red garments and veil myself with this Uttariya and go.”2 The custom of using a veil as a token of noble birth had come into existence long before, as

1. Sānkṛtyāyāni—Rājanuyuṣṭi dharmarājaśāhavēhitr āṇa gānaśvaśī vīvāhaḥ. । किमत्र
   लक्ष्मायानम् ।

2. Viḍūṣaka:—Bhav va eñena vac cakasāhāsāhānye rakṣāṣukṣukṣuṇāh
   śvēvyuḥ vīvāhaśāhāraṇe vēñveṇī gānaśvaśī ।

Nāgānanda. III. p. 64
we have noticed in the previous chapters. Women of royal families kept themselves within the harem at the time when Bhāsa wrote. The same idea is expressed by Udayana to Vāsavadattā in the Ratnāvali, as by Bhāsa’s Udayana to Padmāvati in the Svapnavāsavadattā. The natural conclusion is that the custom of women of royal families avoiding to appear in public had become common.

The fasts and vows we noticed in the dramas of Kālidāsa seem to have become quite popular among women. According to the Dharmāṣṭrakāras women were not to perform any religious rites. All that they had to do was to serve their husbands faithfully. If they must do something, then, that should be without any mantras. These fasts and vows performed by women were all meant either to secure a good husband in case of maidens, like Malayavati, or for the welfare of the husband, in the case of married women, like Queen Vāsavadattā. This attitude seems to be in the ascendance at the time of Śrī Harṣa. King Udayana is described to be in the pangs of separation, seeking relief by visiting shower-houses, gardens and such other places, because of Vāsavadattā’s frequent and long fasts and other religious activities.

The system of Sati seems to have come into existence. Vijayasena tells the king that all the wives of Vindhyaketu

1. राजा—कौंचनमाले उच्चता देवी। गृहनीय एवायमेन्द्रजालिक: विजनी-क्षत्रियामुद्रेश:। तदागच्छ। सहितार्वेव पश्याव इति।
   Ratnāvali. IV. p. 154

2. नासित श्रीणां गृहयत्रो न ग्रतं नास्तुपोषणम्।
   पति शुद्धवते येन तेन स्वर्ग महीयते।।
   Manu. V. 155

3. श्र. प्रमेयिका तु कार्यायं खोएयामामवशेष्यत:।
   श्र. नासित श्रीणां किया मन्नैरिति धनेऽवशस्थिति:।
   Manu. II. 66

4. विद्युषक:—क्रयेयय प्रियवयस्योश्च देव्या विरेऽविकंठाविनोदतिनिमितं
   धाराग्रहोधानमेव प्रस्थित:।
   Priyadarśikā. II. p. 11
followed him to the other world by ascending his funeral pyre.¹

Bāṇa, the famous writer who flourished under the patronage of king Śrī Harṣa, refers to this custom in both of his novels.² In the Harṣacarita which is a historical novel, the wife of Prabhākaravardhana is said to have ascended the pyre with him. In the other novel, the Kādambarī, the same custom is denounced in unequivocal words. These references support our conclusion that the custom of widows ascending the pyre with their husbands was getting hold in the society more and more, though opposition was still existing.

1. विजयसेनः—एवं सर्बंधुपरिवारे हते विन्ययकेतो, तमनुमुतासु सहयमर्यांचारिणिुः ...।

Priyadarśikā. I. p. 9

2. प्र. शब्दनम्बन्ति हि लेखकातरास्पि कुलीनता देवाकलानुरूपम्। देवी क्षण

यशोवती परिच्छेव मारायां व तं दिरति निर्गत्य चरणास्मार्यां च

अन्नपुरानः पौराकं निमर्यार्यां। उपस्रयमानाः इव दिरिम्। सरस्वतीतीरीय

यथौ। तवच्च ब्राह्मणावकारे: हर्षाप्पातः प्रविनितरंतरप्रज्ञाणुः: इव

ब्राह्मणवत्वा भगवन्तं भानुमान्तिन्व मूल्यः: ऐदली विब्राहानुः प्रविवास्वतः।

H. C. V. p. 540-41

श्रा. यदेषदनुमरतं नामः तददिनित्यंम्। प्रविनिज्ञात्वरित एव भागः।

मोहिलितसतमेतुः। भानुप्रदतिरियम्। रभोसाचितरितिमदम्। शुद्धि-

रेणा। भृत्रिमाय्यामायम्। मौर्यांस्वतिमितमिदम्। यदुरते पितार्ध भ्रातरि

सुध्वदि भंतरि वा प्राणः: परित्यज्यन्ते। स्ववं भेस्व जहृति न परित्याजयः।

श्रा हि विवाहमारे स्ववर्ष्य एव एव भ्रमरिविपयायो यमासह

योक्वेदिना प्रतीकार्त्तवादात्मणः। उपरतस्य तु न कमपि युगामावहृति।

न तत्त्वस्य वै श्रुत्युक्तोष्यः। न तथोपत्यायाम्। न श्रुमातो-पार्जनेत्तुः।

न निरयात प्रतीकाः। न दध्यन्तवः। न परत्स्रसावामम-

निमित्तम्। प्रवावेव स्वकर्ममलपाकोपचितामसावावशो नीयो भृमिय

भ्रान्तावाभासात्तिनः। केवलमेनसा संयुक्त्यते। जीवंस्यु जलाधिदिवा-

नादिना ब्रुपकरोधुपरस्त्यात्मन्त्यव, मृतस्तुमयस्यापि।

Kā. Part. I. 318-19
But burning oneself to death was not sanctioned by Manu. According to the earlier lawgivers, the widows were to live a life of celibacy or take to ascetic life.¹ In the Mālavikāgnimitra, we have already noticed the unique character, Parivrājikā. Here in the Priyadārśikā, there is Sānkṛtyāyani who is also a nun. Like the Parivrājikā, this lady also is well-versed in the śāstras and literature. It was she who dramatized the marriage of Vāsavaddā and Udayana, to be enacted in the auditorium of the palace.² But, one thing is significant here; though a well-wisher of the king and queen, she does not like to interfere in the palace intrigues directly or indirectly. She tries her best to smoothen the relations between the king and the queen, which often got complicated by the unscrupulousness of the king and the jealous and impatient nature of the queen. But, she retired with dignity from such situations which did not suit her position as one dedicated to religious life. The way in which she left the audience-chamber, saying, “It is not proper for me to stay here anymore,”³ when it was detected by the queen that the king himself was acting the role which Manorāma should have acted according to schedule, is an

1. कार्म तु क्षापयेदेहं पुर्युपुलम्: शुभे: ।
   न तु नामापि गुङ्गोयात्ययो प्रेते परस्य तु ॥
   वासीतामरात्वान्ता नयता ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
   यो चर्म एकपल्लिनां काङ्क्षान्ति तमनुलतमने ॥
   मृते भर्तरिस प्राप्ति न क्रोधायं व्यवस्थित ।
   स्वर्ग गच्छस्यपुराणा पद्म ते । ब्रह्मचारिण: ॥

   Manu. V. 157-160

2. मनोरमः—य: स शाक्तृत्यायनायांर्युपस्य मम च बृत्तान्तो नाटकोपनिः—
   बढतस्य नरित्वं यथोपपमवमथ यूिभाम: कौमुडीमहोर्सवे नरित-
   व्यसित ।

   Priyadārśikā. II. p. 23

3. साक्षृत्यायनी—कवयमये वेद प्रेमलीयकम् संज्ञातम्।
   प्रश्नमिरिः समसिद्धव 

   Priyadārśikā. III. p. 43
example to the point. The characterization of this lady is in keeping with the fact that Śrī Harṣa was a staunch follower of Buddhism, which allowed women to accept the ascetic garb and work for the betterment of the world, even as men.

There is evidence enough in these plays to show that Śrī Harṣa’s rule was a period of tolerance for both Hinduism and Buddhism. This co-existence of both the religions is most obvious in the Nāgānanda. This play seems to be more of didactic importance as far as can be judged from the theme. As it was mainly meant to hold up the ideal of benevolence, and self-sacrifice, there is not much scope for women characters, who were considered at that time as helpers only in enjoying worldly pleasures. The ordinance of Manu which denounced woman as a door to hell, and attributed to her various other evil qualities, came to be taken as gospel truth by people in general, and, perhaps, the mutual distrust of man and woman becoming a vicious circle, paved the way for further deterioration in the conditions of both.

Malayavatī, though introduced as the heroine in the Nāgānanda, appears to be a complete misfit in the play. The atmosphere of the play is rather high and philosophical to allow frivolous love affairs in it. But, some how, the poet did try to connect the love of Malayavatī and Jimutavāhāna with the self-sacrifice and benevolence of the latter. So, it is only natural that the heroine fades into a mere shadow in the background. The conventional situations of a love story are not lacking in the Nāgānanda, in so far as the hero and the heroine are depicted in their lovesick conditions and the desperate love of the latter is shown by her trying to commit suicide as the heroines of the other two plays. On the whole, Malayavatī does not show much individuality. She seems to be a creation of the poet to illustrate the ideal wife and daughter-in-law that would satisfy the contemporary
society. Everywhere she seems to be repeating the words and actions of her parents-in-law, particularly so in the last act. Malayavati and her mother-in-law are the two female characters who are noteworthy in this play. But the only peculiarity noticeable about them is that, they are just two non-entities who did not have any existence apart from their respective husbands. Malayavati’s one desire is to get a suitable husband, for the fulfillment of which she worships the goddess Gouri. Once she is married, her life merges into that of her husband and, for all practical purposes, she lives when he lives and dies when he dies. In this play Śrī Harṣa seems to be holding up the ideals of the two religions which he supported equally: the ideal of self-sacrifice held up by Buddhism for the man, and the complete self-abnegation and devotion to the husband, propagated by Hinduism for the woman. Also, the goddess Gouri, the divine bird Garuḍa, and the Bodhisattva are all brought on the stage as and when required, thus, perhaps showing the happy blending of the good things in both the religions. As a didactic play, the Nāgānanda may be very interesting and valuable, but the picture of the women one visualises in it is rather disappointing and discouraging.

All the three plays of Śrī Harṣa, though good, as far as they go by way of literary pieces, show a very unexhilarating condition of women in general, even though only the royal families are depicted.

The Mūdrārākṣasa, a drama with a full-fledged political theme and, consequently, with no woman character in the leading role, claims our attention next. The author of this drama is Viśākhadatta who is said to have written another drama also, called Devī-Candra-gupta, which is not available in full. His reference to bad poets, who do not keep unity of action in their dramas,¹ and also to the difficulty of com-

1. समिद्धार्थकः—तत्त्वज्ञानिं भुक्तत्वादेकं नामकमेवान्यमुक्तिःस्यस्यविंश्च।
Mu. Rā. VI. p. 179
posing a good drama,¹ go to show that he was well-versed in the Śāhitya Śāstra or the Science of Literature, specially the branch of dramaturgy.

This drama is exclusively devoted to the political happenings during the dethronement of king Nanda by Caṇakya to place his beloved disciple, Candragupta, on the throne. In many respects, this play is unique among the Sanskrit dramas, mainly due to the absence of leading female characters. The peculiar theme, and the variety and peculiarity of the characters represented are also noteworthy. There are kings and ministers, aristocrats and ascetics, warriors and assassins, spies and secret agents. The female characters known to us in this play are the two door-keepers Sonottarā and Vijaya, and the wife of Candanañāsa, who appear on the stage, while the Viṣakānyā and the wife of Amātya Rākṣasa are referred to in the development of the plot.

These references, scanty as they are, indicate that according to this writer at least, women had ceased to be of much importance except as sources of enjoyment to their husbands at the time of prosperity, and of troubles in times of difficulties. When serious thoughts and decisions were needed, it was thought better to keep them away from the scene of action. The wife of Amātya Rākṣasa is referred to as Grhañāna, the person to be at home. The women seem to be becoming more and more confirmed as possessions of men who considered them to be useless and insignificant. Enumerating the various kinds of helpers to

¹ राक्षसः—कायोपक्षेपमादी तत्तुमपि रचयंस्तत्त्य विस्तारमिच्छिद्
न्विजानां गृहमितां फलमितिमहं गृहमुद्युद्वेदयं
कुबंबुअदी विमर्शः प्रस्ततां पुनः सहस्र्मकारंजातं
कर्ता व नात्काराममममनुभवति क्लेशाममस्थितो वा।

Mu. Ra.IV. 3
the king, Čaṇakya says: "They alone, who possess all the three qualities—wisdom, valour and loyalty, may be considered as real servants of the king either in weal or woe. The others are merely wives."¹ One thing seems to be definite; whatever be the general conditions, the author of this play did not have a very high opinion about women as a whole.

Sanskrit dramas in general have depicted only women belonging to royal or aristocratic families. And so, we are not able to gather much information as to the common women belonging to the lower middle class or those who are still lower in society. In this drama, even as in the earlier ones women door-keepers are seen. This indicates the custom of employing women for such services in the courts to be still continuing. Perhaps, women in the lower strata of society had freedom to earn their living, and they took up services according to their capacity as in the older days. The ruling of Manu that a woman should confine herself to the duties of bearing and bringing up children, and also that of looking after the house in obedience to her husband,² perhaps applied only to the women of the upper middle-class families, and families of noble and royal descent. But we have no definite evidences in this play to say anything with certainty.

The condition of woman was slowly but surely deteriorating, as we have seen from the two authors who have been studied after Kālidāsa. Now comes Bhavabhūti, the one dramatist who can be compared with the master-poet,

¹. प्राणवित्तमभक्तय: समुदिता वेष्या गुणा भूतवे।
   ते मृत्या नुपुः: कल्त्रितिरे सप्तसु चापस्यु च॥
   Mu. Ra. I. 15

². श्र. उत्पादादमपत्वस्य जातस्य परिपालनम्।
   प्रत्यहं लोकयाणाय: प्रत्यवयं श्रीनिबन्धनम्॥
   श्र. सदा प्रहृद्या भाव्यं बुधकार्यं वल्लया।
   सुसंस्कृतोपत्स्तया व्यये चामुक्तहस्तया॥
   Manu. IX. 27

Manu. V. 150
even remotely. He draws our attention towards the story of Sītā once more, with the changes he thought fit to make, perhaps to suit the taste of the society he faced. Three plays are handed down to posterity by this author, two of which are based on the Rāmāyana and one on a theme of his own imagination. Critics are more or less agreed about the relative chronology of these three plays. The Mahāvīrācarita, depicting the story of Rāma up to the final coronation at Ayodhyā, gives the impression of being the first attempt of the poet. The Mālati-Mādhava, a Prakarana, is generally accepted as the second, while the excellence of Bhavabhūti's genius reached its heights in the Uttararāma-carita, where Sītā, the venerable ideal of Indian womanhood, is brought to the limelight once more, though in a much different form.

A critical study of the women characters presented by Bhavabhūti, forces the student to pause a little and consider their position in society as the poet saw and understood. For, here is another writer, who wishes to give enjoyment and instruction combined, and to fulfil the true aims of literature through his works. He records what he saw, without thinking much about the immediate reactions of his audience, at the same time trying to tell them what the ideal should be. Whether the contemporary society took the lesson or not, is uncertain, but, the posterity has many things to learn from those outbursts of the poet's soft and emotional heart.

Learned scholars have, after due consideration, fixed his date to be the first quarter of the eighth century A.D.

In the Mahāvīrācarita, which is obviously his first attempt, Bhavabhūti aims at depicting the heroic sentiment with Rāma as the great hero—the Mahāvīra. According to the traditional conception prevailing in society, women did not count much. And so, perhaps the poet does not care to depict Sītā at par with the Hero, Rāma. But this conclusion cannot hold water, when we remember that even in this drama, where heroic sentiment predominates, there are
a few women characters, who can do honour to any society they might belong to. Hence, the difference we find in the Sītā of Mahāvīrācarita, from the same character of the source book itself, will have to be accounted for in some other way.

At the outset itself, we find a peculiarity in this drama of Bhavabhūti, which we do not find anywhere else before his time, throughout the Sanskrit literature. There are two sets of female characters, completely differing from each other in various ways, presented here. One set belongs to the Aryan household, as it were, represented by Sītā, Urmilā and the queen mothers, while the other belongs to the South, beyond the Vindhya forests, represented by Śurpaṅkha, Trijaṭā, Maṇḍodrī, Śramaṇa, Laṅkā and Alakā. While the women of the first group seem to be mild, modest, submissive and devoid of any individuality of their own, those of the other group become conspicuous by their rare qualities such as courage, shrewd understanding in political matters, energy and active brains.

Though the Rāmāyana has served as the source for many brilliant pieces of literature, nowhere is seen a Sītā, similar to the one depicted in the Mahāvīrācarita. The freedom-loving genius of Bhavabhūti has made many drastic changes in the body-plot of the story he had adopted for his first play. He took the liberty of changing not only the course of the story, but he has changed even, the main characters like Sītā, Urmilā and Śurpaṅkha. In the Rāmāyana, in the plays of Bhāsa, in the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa, everywhere, Rāma has his noble counterpart Sītā by his side, at par with him. But, it is very difficult for any student of the Rāmāyana to recognise the weeping and trembling girl who appears in the Mahāvīrācarita, trying to hold back her husband from going to the battle-field. She seems to be more an obstacle than help to her husband in his performance of duties. When Bhārgava challenges
Rāma for a fight, Sitā tries her best to hold him back, and her friends and attendants only encourage her in doing so. When she sees that Rāma would not stay back at her request she does not hesitate to hold on to the bow and try to stop him, though in vain. This behaviour of hers may befit a common uncultured girl belonging to the medieval period, but it was not at all suitable to the daughter of the great king Janaka, or to the daughter-in-law of the famous king Daśaratha of the Solar dynasty. Sitā does not appear often on the stage, but the little we see of her, is enough to convince us as to the correctness of the above conclusion. The way in which Sitā and Urmilā are hustled back into the harem, when the battle between Rāma and Bhārgava seemed to be inevitable, is a proof to the point. It seems that the men looked upon their women as obstacles to be got out of the way when any serious matter was on hand, and considered them such weaklings as to be worthy of being kept in safe custody, within the harem, whenever danger threatened. They seem to be considered as clinging creepers, of course to be loved and cherished, but a source of endless trouble and worry at the time of distress.

But, the women of Dakṣināpatha seem to live a different life altogether. They are free to go about, are well-educated, and have access to the political and administrative spheres also. Śurpanākhā, the leading character of this group is quite a contrast to the same character in the Rāmāyana. She seems to occupy an important position in Rāvana’s court. Mālyavān, the uncle and clever minister of the great emperor of Laṅkā, readily takes Śurpanākhā into his confidence. When she enters his presence, he offers her a seat. She is the emperor’s sister and the minister’s niece, yet, instead of confining herself within the four-walls of the harem like her sisters of the North, she goes about, entrusted with important missions, even into the enemy camp itself. She is called upon by the minister and the emperor to offer
advice in important matters of State. Mālyavān had full faith in her intelligence and discretion. He says, "You are particularly loved by your brother, Rāvana, my child, and you are wise also. So, I am telling you my troubles with an open heart." She seems to act as an espionage-agent bringing news from far and wide and going on missions as an ambassador or a skilful courtier. She is also shrewd enough to observe the moods of Rāvana. Though everybody knows that the King's desire for Sītā is going to bring trouble on all of them, it is only Śūrpanakhā who foresees that Rāvana would not be stopped at any cost. 2 Mālyavān asks her to go and instigate Bhārgava against Rāma. She warns him that if the plan miscarries it will be doubly dangerous. 3 Another time, Śūrpanakhā is sent to manage the exile of Rāma. There again, she gives proof of her sound practical sense and counsels that it is not a good policy to bring near the enemy who is far away, or to create hatred where there is none for the sake of a woman. 4 When Mālyavān insists and further explains his plans she tells him plainly, "If Rāma kills Bāli also, even as he conquered Paraśurāma, then the unavoidable friendship between Vibhīṣana and Rāma will prove to be a great danger to us." 5

1. Mālyavān—रावणप्रियासि वसे कायंशा च ग्रातो जिशकुमाविदते हुयेशेषः। M.C. IV. p. 90
2. Śūrpanakhā—यदा देशमुखः ईयन्मुक्तिविशिष्टिहार्थितमिः निशायमायातिलोलोचनो नमहदनो वाणं तथा जानाम दशाणो ग्रास्य हुयेशेष वेदानवतो नैव विरस्यवातितकः। M.C. II. p. 38
3. Śūrpanakhā—पश्चात्तरे महादेपः। M.C. II. p. 43
4. Śūrpanakhā—मम दयेन्मे एततः न युक्तमु प्रतिमताः। यस्म दृष्टि सत्यवाचाराय प्रियात्मकमालोष्ट्येव एवितमिः। M.C. IV. p. 88
5. Śūrpanakhā—प्रयः रामो परसुरामविज्ञानितविरोधिनः कालिन्य व्यापदयति ततो विभीषण-रामसंयोगो ग्रन्थं इति समावयामि। M.C. IV. p. 93
optimistic minister tries to convince her, and she starts on her mission, as she finds her warning to be of no avail. Her exclamation: "O mother, even you have to face this calamity" shows only too well that she is sure of the coming catastrophe. The fact that she was more wise and shrewd is proved by the final results. The Rāmāyaṇa portrays this sister of Rāvana as an amorous and shameless woman who, attracted by Rāma's charms, tried to win him for herself by any means, fair or foul. Bhavabhūti's Śūrpanakhā is a marvellous contrast. She is the friend, philosopher and guide of the great minister of Laṅka. She is sent to enemy camps to create discord and confusion. She goes fearlessly into battle-fields and the turmoil causes her no fright.

The ascetic woman, Śramaṇā, is a character who goes about on political missions. She carries Vibhīṣaṇa’s message to Rāma, informs him about Sugrīva and Bāli, and also conducts Rāma and Lakṣāmana to Rṣyamūka. Alakā, the presiding deity of the city of Kubera, is another messenger of no mean importance. The portrayal of the whole group, led by Śūrpanakhā is quite unique and unprecedented in Sanskrit literature. Bhavabhūti was the first dramatist who dared to show this aspect of these women. This may mean that he had witnessed in the Dravidian society of Dakṣiṇapatha such embellishing and ennobling conditions of women and he wished to bring them to the notice of the people who tried to suppress and denounce women. He claims his homeland to be Dakṣiṇapatha. The description of women, belonging to that area, reveals his familiarity with a totally different, though highly developed culture well in contrast with Aryan traditions, ideals and customs. The women of Dakṣiṇapatha in this play show more life and spirit while their Aryan sisters make a poor show by comparison. The poet's job is to depict situations and delineate characters in order to combine instruction with enjoyment

1. हा, यज्ञव भगव गुणे प्रेषितवयम् । M. V. Ch. IV. p. 88
for the good of the people, and Bhavabhūti, by offering this clear contrast, perhaps, wished to warn his readers to pause and think whither they were bound.

We have already noticed that the Śūrpanākhā episode was left out by Bhāsa in his plays and by Kālidāsa in his poem. Bhavabhūti also is completely silent about the unabashed wooing of the Aryan prince Rāma by the unscrupulously bold Rākṣasa Princess, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa. It is now an accepted fact that the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata took a long time to evolve into the forms in which we have them today. There is ample evidence of innumerable interpolations in both. So, it is quite possible that this portion of the story was the outcome of some one’s fertile imagination, which revealed in attributing all kinds of vices to the non-Aryan enemies, who showed a tough front to the Aryans for a long time. The first play that depicts Śūrpanākhā in the same colours as the Rāmāyaṇa, is the Aścaryya Cūḍāmaṇi of Śaktibhadra.

However that may be, this ennobling characterisation of the women beyond the Vindhya mountains, does not seem to have had any encouragement from the Sanskrit knowing public of the day. Bhavabhūti’s declaration of despair, pronounced in one of the verses of his second play, shows that his first attempt did not get the welcome he expected. It was with great confidence that he introduced his first play to the learned public. Following the method of Śrī Harṣa¹ he had also said that the poet is blessed with a command of the language, the story is that of Rāma, and the audience is full of people who are experts in literature,

1. श्रीमृगो निषुपुषः कवि: परिशद्येता गुण्मकाः हि
   लोके हारि च वत्सराजवरित नाट्ये च दक्षा वयम्।
   वस्त्रवेक्षकाम्पीह वानिच्छतात्फलप्राप्ते: पदं किं पुनं
   मेंद्रामयोपचारवं समुदितं: सर्वम् गुणानां गएः।

Ratnāvali. I. 5
implying thereby his confidence in the success of the play. But in his second play he announces that his attempt was not for those who scoffed at him, for they were fools. His consolation is in the possibility of a future generation who may be able to understand him and his ideas, because the time is eternal and the world is wide. Perhaps, we need not search far for the reason why, the public did not like this play of Bhavabhūti. The drastic changes he made in the main story, without any improvement on the various characters, and the depiction of the female characters as described above, might have prejudiced the Aryan public who witnessed the play, to such an extent that they could not and would not appreciate the genius of the poet and the courage of his convictions. Perhaps, this sad experience made him so disgusted with all known stories, that he decided to create a new theme for his next play, full of female characters all belonging to the upper middle class with no special individuality of their own. If people want to visualise only the ordinary love and cannot appreciate the nobler things in life irrespective of races and creeds, then let them have it with a vengeance, the poet seems to say in this second play.

Mālati, the young daughter of the Brāhmin minister Bhūrivasu is the heroine of the Mālatimādhava. This belongs to the type called prakarana, and seems to propagate free love. The mutual love of Mālati and Mādhava resulting in their marriage by the help of the Buddhist nun Kāmandaki and her disciples, is the main plot. The love of Makaranda

1. वद्यावचः कवे: काव्यं सा च रामाध्वा कथा ।
संत्रश्च वाक्यनिष्ठवंदिनिपेयनिकष्यो जन: ॥
M. V. Ch. I. 4

2. ये नाम केचिद्वह न: प्रश्यत्तवज्ञाना
जानान्ति ते किमपि तात्स्मति नैप यल: ॥
उत्सस्यते मम तु कोष्ठि समात्स्मार्मा
कालो हायं निरवचिरिवपुला च पृष्ठी ॥
M. M. I. p. 13
and Madayantikā runs as the sub-plot. It is the bombastic flowery language in this play and also the numerous female characters that mainly attract one. They are all, more or less, the common types ordained by the dramaturgists, who seem to recur in all the later Sanskrit dramas one way or the other. This play particularly seems to be over crowded with women, though none of them show much of idealism, or any individuality of their own.

Mālatī and Madayantikā are young girls of marriageable age. They belong to the family of ministers. Their education seems to be limited to fine arts such as painting, singing and making of garlands. There seems to be nothing wrong in accepting them as models of maidens belonging to the aristocratic families of the contemporary society. Mālatī seems to be an image carved by the poetic imagination to suit all the requirements of the cultured society in which the poet lived. She is a very obedient daughter who would not even dream of going against the wishes of her parents. Neither Mālatī nor Madayantikā would talk to their lovers directly, but only through the medium of their friends. Of course, this characteristic of nobly born girls is noticed in the plays of Śrī Harṣa also, where all the three heroines talked only to their friends, and made them their respective media. Even to their friends, they would talk in very low tones, so that none else could hear them.

Kāmandaki, the old Buddhist nun, along with her disciples, Avalokitā, Buddharakṣitā, and Soudāmini seems to make the union of Mālatī and Mādhava the end and aim of her existence. Though she is introduced as an ascetic woman and is addressed as "Bhagavatī", her role is more of a match-maker. Besides, she induces her disciples also to act in the same way. She persuades Mālatī to go against the wishes of her father and marry Mādhava. She quotes the examples of Śakuntalā, Urvāṣī, and Vāsavadattā, who followed the dictates of their hearts, though carefully adding the comment that such daring deeds should not be suggested
to young girls, because they are very risky.¹

There is not much to say about the various female characters, for, all of them are working to achieve the one end—the union of the hero and the heroine. The one laudable idea emphasised again and again by Bhavabhūti in all his three plays is the ideal of true love. This is expounded by Kāmandakī to the newly-wed couple in the Mālati-Mādhava, thus: "Dearest friends and relatives! all desires, riches and life itself is the husband, as far as the woman is concerned. So also is the wife for the man. May this be remembered by my beloved children.""² Apart from this there seems to be nothing new or fresh in this play.

A close study of the plays of Bhavabhūti shows that the poet is very conventional as far as his art is concerned. In the first two plays, he seems to have tried to represent the contemporary society as far as the position of women is concerned. In both, we meet with the normal and ordinary happenings of a deteriorating society, clothed, no doubt, in highflown language. The condition of women as could be read between the lines in these plays is not very elevating or encouraging. Even as Mālati and Madayantikā, Sītā and Urmilā also are young girls of marriageable age. But there is no special indication as to the type of education received by these girls. Though belonging to royal families, they seem to be in no way superior to the ordinary type of girls

1. कामनंकी—प्रयि सरले! किमं भगवत्या शक्यमुः प्रमभवति प्रायः
कुमारीणां जनपिता दैवं च। वचच फित कौशिकी शकुन्तला
हुयतमसरा: पुहरवं चक्कम उव्वीलिप्याविनविव प्राचश्चे, वासवदता
च पित्रा संजयाय राजसे दत्तात्रेयानवि धन्याधित्यादि,
तदपि साहसकलिमित्यनुपदस्तुध्वमने।

M. M. II. p. 122

2. कामनंकी—प्रयो मित्र! बन्नुता वा समपा सर्व कामा: शेविनिधिबित वा।
श्रीगुण भर्ता, धर्मदाराश्र्म पुसामित्यन्योत्य वस्योक्तिमस्तु।

M. M. III. 18
seen around even today. Though hailing from the noble and heroic dynasty of the Videhas, the princesses tremble at the very name, battle. Another peculiarity noticeable is the rule of the elders in the family and of the Brāhmīns in the society. Sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, all bow before the decisions and orders of their elders in the family. Women seem to be the greatest sufferers in this respect. The girls dare not go against the wishes of their parents as has been already noticed in the Mālatī-Mādhava. Marriages are arranged by the parents, and the girls have no voice in the matter. When the king asks the hand of Mālatī for his favourite minister Nanda, Bhūrīvasu answered in all humility "Your Majesty has full authority over your own girls." And, the marriage is as good as accomplished.

Still all women do not seem to be denied the facilities of higher education. Kāmandaki, Soudāmini, Avalokitā and also Ātreyi in the Uttara-Rāmācharita are examples of this fact. Ātreyi tells Vāsanti, about the obstacle in her continuing the studies at the feet of Vālmīki, and her consequent decision to go to Agastyāśrama for the same purpose. This shows that women had the liberty of taking to higher studies and also of going to the preceptor's house to accomplish this aim. Perhaps, only those, who wanted to lead a life of celibacy were allowed this liberty. And the girls belonging to the aristocratic families were more or less compelled to lead a family life.

Once married, it became the duty of the girl to obey her husband and the elders of his family. Thereafter, she may have no individual opinions nor a separate existence, as it were. No mention of widow-marriage or "Sati" is found in these plays. But the veil seems to be prevalent at least as a sign of respect towards the elders. In the Mahāvīra- carita Rāma asks Sītā to put on the veil at the approach of

1. द्वितीया—प्रभवति निजस्य कन्याकाजनस्य महाराज इति।

M. M. II. p. 86
Bhārgava, because he is an elder to be revered. The killing of women was indeed considered sinful. But, the order of Brāhmaṇas and sages was powerful enough to make even a sinful deed a duty, because of their divine knowledge. Rāma declares this when he is ordered by Viśvāmitra to kill Tādakā.

Thus, the society, depicted by Bhavabhūti, does not seem to have offered any better position to its women, than what they were enjoying at the time of Śrī Harṣa or Viśākhadatta. He, as a real poet who saw and understood things in their correct light, was hurt at the plight in which he found the sweet and soft flowers of the nation. As in the case of the first poet, Vālmiki, whose sorrow—‘Śoka’—manifested itself in the form of ‘Ślokā’, that which is laudable, as described by Kālidāsa, so also in the case of Bhavabhūti, the suffering of his soul visualised something new. The supremacy of man over woman, and that of religion over man, seem to have stung the poet to the quick, and his emotional nature rose in revolt. The story of the Rāmāyana and its idealistic value had already attracted him, though he had to accept defeat when he tried to bring it down to the level of the society in which he was living. But, the experience of life he gained by the time, perhaps awoke him to the greatness of the ideal of Indian womanhood, as seen in Sītā, and also he was reminded of the injustice that even such a woman had to suffer. He rose to higher levels of imagination and set up to redraw the picture of Sītā and Rāma, as the ideal he saw, namely, the

1. रामः—प्रये! गुर्हर्वम्। तदप्रसुत्य कृतावधुनाना भव।
   M. V. Ch. II. p. 52

2. रामः—एवम्। भवन्ति जानित।
   सब्दोपाधिभवं भावादाम्नायमसस्त। गतः।
   गुमाकम्मुपगम्। प्रमाणं पुण्यपापयोः।
   M. V. Ch. I. 38

3. निष्कादिब्राह्मणज्ञदसस्तत्पापस्य श्रोत्तमापापवतवश्य शोकः।
   R. V. XIV. 70
identical life of husband and wife. The result was his masterpiece, the Uttara-Rāmācharita. He had caught the significance of the simile used by Kālidāsa in the first verse of Raghuvamśa, where the mother and father of the universe are compared to the word and its meaning. The word and the woman are similar in their meaningfulness and beauty. In the same way, it is also possible to misinterpret the words and misunderstand the nature, habits, and character of women, due to their patient, timid and forbearing nature. Bhavabhūti has had ample experience as to the criticising nature of people as far as words were concerned. The story of Sītā gave evidence to the truth being applicable to woman also. It is this conviction brought home to him by experience as well as precept that he expressed in the introduction of this play.¹

The value of literature does not lie so much in rhetorical finish and literary flourish as in the human appeal it makes and the interpretation of life it offers. In the Uttara-Rāmācharita, we see more humanised characters than in his other plays. They live, move and breathe in an atmosphere of deep emotions, and speak the language of the heart. His idea of conjugal life is immortalised in the words of Rāma,² in the first act itself. Married life can retain the first thrill of love when the couple knows the perfect language of the heart, and thus have complete faith in the constancy of each other's love. It is this meaning of

1. सूत्रधार: —संवेदा व्यवहरत्वस्य कुक्तो ह्यवचनियता ।
   यथा श्रीरामं तथा वाजासागुरवे हुर्जनो जनन।

   U. R. Ch. I. 5

2. राम: —द्रवेण मुखदृ:थोरुगुनमधि संवेदस्वस्त्रयमु य-
   विस्रामो ह्यरोयस्य वच वर्षा रसमध्रस्ते रसः ।
   कलेनाभराण्रायव्यस्तिर्मित्रे यत्रमेत्सारे स्वित्वं
   भ्रेण तत्त्व चुमानुस्य दर्ममंडकोऽहि तत्प्राप्यते ॥

   U. R. Ch. I. 39
love and life, that is emphasised in this play. To achieve this end, the poet took the bold step of bringing about the reunion of Sītā and Rāma—an idea which was beyond the imagination of any one till that time.

The influence of the first poet Vālmīki and the master-poet Kālidāsa over Bhavabhūti cannot be over-estimated in any way. Even in his earlier plays we have examples enough to prove this. In this last attempt of his, the new benedictory stanza is evidence in full to his adoration of his predecessors. Here, he bows down to those venerable predecessors and also to the divine speech which is the embodiment and, hence, part and parcel of the eternal spirit. Thus bowing down to the great Preceptors of old, and accepting his indebtedness to them, he undertakes the noble task of relating the last phase of the story of Sītā and Rāma as he understood it.

Vālmīki and Kālidāsa both agreed as to the last vow of Sītā which forced Mother Earth to take her away from this un-understanding world. But, the very ideal that Bhavabhūti propagated would fall to pieces if Rāma and Sītā were not reunited. Hence, he exploited his poetic licence to the full, beginning the play with the issue of separation, and developing it into a natural and inevitable reunion. The various incidents are only cleverly constructed steps to that final goal.

The banishment of the innocent and trusting queen, is a jarring note in the ideal character of the hero Rāma. It was not at all consistent with the divine love of Rāma and Sītā as eulogised by the poets of all times. Kālidāsa had already pointed this out to the world through the words of Vālmīki, who seems to be denouncing him for this

1. इंद्र कविम्: पूर्वेम् यो नमोवाकं प्रशास्तम्हेव।
   वन्देमहि च तां वाचममृतामातमन: कलाम् ॥

U. R. Ch. I. 1
apparent lapse.¹

According to the ordinary conception, by abandoning Sītā, Rāma failed in his duty towards her as her husband as well as the king. But, according to the ideal accepted by Bhavabhūti, Sītā and Rāma being one in soul, though different in bodies, the above conception of right and wrong cannot hold water, even for a moment. Bhavabhūti’s attempt in this play, is to expound this idealistic oneness of the couple as he understood it, even in that forced exile of Sītā. Rāma, the king, had to please his people by all his actions, and Sītā, his better-half, was bound by duty to share all his responsibilities. This idea is actually pointed out by Sītā in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa also, when she says, “Since such a scandal has risen, I am dutybound to do away with it, because you are my all in all.”² Bhavabhūti has seen into the meaning of these lines and took the bold step of expounding it clearly and upholding it. Both the Nāṭakas of Bhavabhūti have something new to offer to the readers. In this work, his attempt is to show, how the husband Rāma suffered by the dutifulness of the king Rāma. He, by exiling Sītā, was actually banishing himself. This characterization is in accord with the idea suggested by Kālidāsa when he said, “She did not know that Rāma had turned from the ‘Kalpadruma’ he was, to be a tree of swords.” Bhavabhūti expanded the idea contained in the use of “Atmani” there and proved it.

In this connection, it is worth noticing that the poet was following the footsteps of Kālidāsa than of

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¹ उत्कातलोकन्यककर्मकृतं सत्यप्रतिज्ञय्यविवेक्तेनेदापि

² प्रवृत्तजाओष्ठेत्ययावत् क्रमुर्मण्डपवेत् मे ईि

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1. R. V. XIV. 73

2. V. R. VII. 48. 13-14
Vālmīki. In the Rāmāyaṇa, we have already seen the sharp words used by Rāma to Sītā, which caused her undergo the fire-ordeal. Once again, when the scandals arose, the king decided to do away with them by resorting to extreme means. His duty demanded that he should satisfy the people at any cost. It is to this duty that Kalidāsa points out when he says, “Knowing that the scandal could not be stopped by anything else, he decided to remove it by abandoning his wife.”¹ Kalidāsa used his words with great care. Every one of them is apt and very significant. The word tyāga seems to have special significance here, where it is used in connection with the “Pati”, the very derivation of which word suggests the constant companionship with the “Pati”.

In the first act of Uttara-Rāmācharita, it is this oneness of the couple that is pictured clearly by the various incidents and conversations. The mere reference to the fire-ordeal that Sītā had to undergo, seems to be unbearable to Rāma. He declares with obvious vehemence, “How can anything further sanctify her who is sacred by her very birth? Holy water and fire do not require anything else to purify them.”² Rāma was sure that this scandal was going to be a lifelong one for Sītā, and he says so.³ At the same time, he realises how undeserving this treatment was. He remembers the last time when he himself was forced to say cruel and hard words to his beloved wife, whom he

1. निःश्रय वाण्यनिरृति वाण्यं स्यागेन पत्म्या: परिमार्थैः वैभद्व।

R. V. XIV. 35

2. रामं—शालं वाप्पम्। (ससाल्ववचनम्।)

उवितिपरिपूर्वतायः किमस्यं पावनान्तरं।

तीव्रौंदकं च वश्नां नान्यं: शुद्धमहं:। U. R. Ch. I. 13

3. रामं—देवि देवयज्ञसमर्थे, प्रसीद। एष ते जीवितावधिः: प्रवाहः।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 10
knew to be pure. He is full of repentance for his own inexcusable behaviour to her, and he openly apologises for the same.\(^1\) When again, he was told about the renewed scandal, he is broken-hearted. He wails that "this scandal which was once stopped by miraculous methods, still does not end, but is spreading all over, even as the poison of a mad dog."\(^2\) And, his final decision is clothed in a language that is an eye-opener to the real feelings of Rāma. Here Kālidāsa's Rāma says, "I shall abandon her, even as I abandoned the kingdom once before at the order of my respected father."\(^3\) The suggestion contained in that simile is clearly expounded by Bhavabhūti. The Rāma of Uttara-Rāmācharita says, "Good people have to satisfy the world at all costs. After all, that is why my father kept his word, though he had to abandon me and also his own life in order to do it."\(^4\) His contention is quite obvious. Even as his father did, he himself also was actually throwing away his own life, while he was abandoning Sītā.

The offspring is the final seal on happy conjugal love. This is another contention of Bhavabhūti. There are many

1. राम:—कहतोऽजन: कुलसन्नरङ्गजीवः
   स्त्रिया यदुकमशिवं नन्हं तत्समं ते ।
   नैनसंगी सुरभिषा: कुमुमस्य सिद्धा
   मूहिन स्थितिनं चराणूर्वतातानि ॥
   U. R. Ch. I. 14

2. राम:—हा हा विक्षर्यहवात्स्रूपां य—
   इवेहा: प्रवर्चितमदुतेश्वर्यः ।
   एवतु ततु पुनरपि देवदुविपाका—
   दालकं विपिनव सरबंत: प्रसुस्वम ॥
   U. R. Ch. I. 40

3. लङ्कायम वेदेहसतां पुरस्तात्सम्भुसर्वोऽसितुरार्ज्ञेव ।
   R. V. XIV. 39

4. राम:—सतां केनापि कायं भोक्त्याराजानां ब्रतम ।
   यत्पुरितं हि तातेन मां च प्रापयाक्ष मुप्तम ||
   U. R. Ch. I. 41
statements at various places in his works which eulogise the value of the child in the parents’ lives. This is not a new idea to the Indian mind. From the earliest times, the motherhood of ten sons was considered to be the height of woman’s happiness. The first act of Uttara Rāmācharita presents Sītā as worthy of special consideration because she was about to become a mother. The message of the elders sent from the hermitage, is proof enough for this.\(^1\) Nowhere in the drama we are allowed to forget that Sītā was about to become a mother when she was led to exile. The remembrance of Kuśa and Lava in Janasthāna, at the sight of her adopted children, the elephant and the peacock, aroused combined feelings in the mind of Sītā.\(^2\) Tamasā justifies those feelings, saying, “The offspring is the main foundation of the mutual love of husband and wife, and also the unique tie that binds their hearts together.”\(^3\) In another place it is said, “The child is the final limit of mutual love.”\(^4\) This being the case, it was impossible for Sītā and Rāma to remain separate even after the children were born. According to the laws of nature, as understood by Bhavabhūti, the final re-union of the couple was inevitable.

In all climes and times, men have laid down a much

1. प्रत्याब्रकः—हर्षुं च महावत्यासऽरुणतया: देवीभि: शालत्या च भूयो भूयः
   संदित्यम्। य: कविर्मुखदेवोहदो भवस्यस्या: सोज्ञश्चरित्रार्मानानवित्वय इति।
   U. R. Ch. I. p. 8
2. प्र. सीता—भगवति तमसे प्रयं ताबद्वीहो जातः। ती पुनर्बानामि—
   कुशलवःवेतावत तालेन कौहशौ संवृतातातितः।
   U. R. Ch. III. p. 78
3. प्राः भगवति तमसे एतेनापत्यसंसंगमरोगीनीचविन्तसस्मुक्तस्वती इवानी
   वत्सयो: पितु: सन्निगानेन श्रामान्त संसारिष्यपश्च संवृत्ता।
   U. R. Ch. III. p. 78.
4. तमसा—किमोच्चते। प्रसव: खलु प्रकर्षप्यय्यः स्नेहस्य। परमेष्टव्यस्मनेष्टव्यस्म
   संविलय्यः पित्रो:।
   U. R. Ch. III. p. 80
4. तमसाः—प्रत्यःकरणस्यस्य दम्यः। स्नेहसंभवातः।
   श्रान्तव्रित्कोष्यमपत्यमिति कुमायते। U. R. Ch. III. 17
higher standard of sexual morality for women. So, during the times of battles and conflicts between various clans, the womenfolk were protected with great care by their men. Inspite of this, it was not uncommon that women were carried off by the enemies. Great lawgivers like Vasiṣṭha, Atri, and Parāśara, ruled that if a woman is taken into captivity or ravished against her will, she ought not to be abandoned by her family. During the first half of the eighth century A.D., thousands of men and women were taken into captivity by the Muslim invaders from Sindh. Those of them who could effect their escape, were accepted back by their families.¹ Perhaps, this process going on before his very eyes suggested to Bhavabhūti the idea of the possible reunion of the separated couple.

To achieve this end, the poet brought Rāma and Sītā to a more human plane. The hero and the heroine of Uttara-Rāmācharita are inhabitants of this human world, bubbling with feelings and emotions common to all mankind. The Rāma of Uttara-Rāmācharita, is an ideal king, but at the same time he is also an ideal human being. Likewise, Sītā is a loving and obedient wife who has no life or existence apart from her husband.

Rāma, here, is in the double role of a king and a husband. His sense of duty is so strong and perfect, almost to a fault. Sītā knows this and is only proud of the fact. When Rāma, in answer to the message of Vasiṣṭha,² says, “I shall not be sorry to abandon love, kindness, happiness or even Jānaki herself to make my people happy”,³ she

1. Elliot and Dawson: History of India As Told By Her Own Historians. p.126.
2. जामातृयेश्न हवं निम्नाचार्यं बाल एवासं नवं च राज्यं।
   वुक्त: प्रजानमुनुक्कने स्वातात्माधार्यान्वयमं गमं वं: ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 11
3. राम:—यथा समाविष्टि भववान्मत्रावर्जिणि:।
   स्नेहं द्वां च सीठ्यं च यद्व च जानकीमिपि।
   भारापनाय लोकस्य मुख्यो नास्ति नास्ति मे व्यथा ॥ U. R. Ch. I. 12
very proudly adds, "That is why you are the greatest of Raghus, my lord." She had no desire in this world except to see the fame of her husband spreading.

The life of this Sītā is one dark night of sorrows. Tamasā gives a true portrait of her as seen throughout the play—the personification of the pangs of separation, as it were. She is an ideal woman, an obedient wife, willingly accepting her lot, awaiting the pleasure of her lord and master, and desiring and praying only for his welfare and prosperity. She has a personality and individuality of her own, though she desires neither and is on a much higher plane than the Sītā of the Mahāvīrācarita. In the first act of Uttara Rāmācharita we meet with Sītā who is a very loving and soft-hearted wife, and who is agonized by the unavoidable departure of her relatives and friends. But Rāma's constant presence and love console her. The Sītā whom we see at Janasthāna twelve years later seems to have changed very little. She is still devoted to the husband who banished her, and is drowned deep in the pangs of separation. The incidents in the second and third acts of Uttara Rāmācharita are only the expositions of the truth acclaimed by Kālidāsa, "Sītā was banished from the house by Rāma for fear of scandals, but never from his heart."

Yet Sītā as depicted by Bhavabhūti in the Uttara-Rāmācharita is quite different from the one portrayed by Kālidāsa in his Rāghuvaṃśa. The order of banishment came in both cases really as a bolt from the blue. But the

2. Tamasā—paripāṇa-vendra-jana-vanam

   vārthi viññān-kāraṇam

   kalpasya mūrti-rūpavanā śārīrīṇī\n   vipra-hṛtya vana-vātānu jānkhī ||

   U. R. Ch. III. 4

3. Kōlieśa-bhātṛatā n teṇe bṛha-hāvata manast: || R. V. XIV. 84
reactions were typically different. Kālīdāsa's Sītā recovered
her balance of mind after the first shock was over. Of
course, the idea of suicide occurred to her for the flash of a
moment. The shame of the scandal and the plight in which
she found herself as a result of the banishment tempted her
to take the easy way of escape. But she remembered that
the sprouts of the great Solar dynasty within her were to be
protected. That Rāma had to overlook his duty towards
her made it doubly necessary for her to remember her duty
to him, to the children, to the family and to the country.
Hence she decided to live and take care of the children.
She who was the shelter of so many in the bygone days,
scorned to seek protection of another. Rāma, and Rāma
alone would have to look after her, if not as the husband,
then, in the capacity of the King. 

Bhavabhūti's Sītā presents a great contrast. She is so
weak and desperate and seems to have lost all courage,
sense of propriety and perspective at that time of crisis.
She actually threw herself into the Ganges, as announced
by the Sūtradhāra at the beginning of the inner drama. 
Neither the consideration about her children nor the
thought of duty seems to have entered her mind. While
she was informed by her mother that she had given birth to
twin sons, her hopeless answer was "I am a destitute.
What shall I do with them?" If the divine mothers,

1. कि वा तत्वायन्तवियोगमोचे कुर्यामुमेयां हतजीविवेदीतिस्माद्।
               स्थानकशीयं यदि मे न तेजस्त्वदीयमन्तगतमन्तरयायः।
R. V. XIV. 65

2. नूपस्य वर्णाथमपालनं वत्सा  एव  घरमी  मनुता  प्रणीतः।
               निवृत्तितापस्यचमत्सथायां  वपस्तिसासायलयब्जक्षीया।
R. V. XIV. 67

3. सूत्राचारः—विद्यम्भरतमजा  देवी  राजा  चक्का  महावेने।
               प्रासस्वसमाल्लान  गद्यादेशयां  विमुखति।
U. R. Ch. VII. 2

4. सीता—प्रनामार्वम्। किमेतामाथ्यम्।
U. R. Ch. VII. p. 202
Gaṅgā and Prthvī, had not intervened, the end might have been as apprehended by Rāma and told by him to Vāsanti. This Sītā is a weakling, a tender creeper which droops to the ground as soon as she is severed from the supporting tree. She is not capable of either anger or hate. The only occasion when a strong protest escaped her lips was when Rāma in his overwhelming grief exclaimed "My beloved, it is not proper that you abandon me in this condition." Even then, the harshest words she could utter were, "My lord, this is indeed a perverted statement."

When she saw her foster-son, the elephant, pointed-out by Vāsanti to Rāma, the blessing that escaped spontaneously from her heart is very significant, for it reflects the deeper wishes of her own heart. As Rāma once said that everything related to Jānaki was pleasant to him, except her separation, so also did Sītā feel that separation from her husband was the only unbearable thing. Hence she blessed her foster-son, "May you never be separated from your beloved."

Though abandoned, there is a remote hope of reunion lurking in her mind, and it was this hope that enabled her to live. While Rāma lamented "How am I to bear this

1. राम: —वस्तेक्ष्मयनकुरकुविलोलहद्दे- 
स्तस्या: परिस्थितमवर्वृत्तानालस्यामः। 
ज्योत्स्नामधीव मुदुवालमयुवालकः। 
कृष्णाज्ञुरज्ञवतिका नियतं विलुतम्।।

U. R. Ch. III. 28

2. राम: —क्रासि देवी प्रसीद । न मामेव विचं परिस्थःकुमहिसं।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 98

3. सीता—प्रविश्व प्राध्युत विप्रतीपमिवेत्तव।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 100

4. किमस्य: न प्रेमो यदि परमस्माहस्तु विरहः।।

U. R. Ch. I. 38

5. सीता—अवियुक्त इदानीयं दीर्घायुरतरया सौम्यदशनया मवलु।

U. R. Ch. III. p. 78.
unending separation, which has no remedy.\textsuperscript{11} It is immedi-
ately reflected in the desperate words of Sītā, "Un-ending, unfortu-
ate and cursed that I am.\textsuperscript{12} When the re-
union was managed by divine intervention, she accepted it as a matter of course and heaved a sigh of relief, saying, "I am brought back to life.\textsuperscript{13}

One cannot imagine the Sītā of the Rāmāyana or the Raghuvamśa accepting the position so meekly. They, specially the latter, with the inherent sense of self-respect and dignity, would and could never reconcile to the ignominy of depending on fickle public opinion to obtain their rightful place. They would prove their purity to one and all in a way which would awe the spectators and kill all doubts for ever. But the Sītā of Bhavabhūti had only one end and aim in her life, the pleasure and happiness of her husband. If he was well, nothing else mattered to her. Ardent piety, spiritual and ascetic tenderness, complete abnegation of self and unlimited devotion to her husband, are the characteristics of this Sītā. She seems to represent a society wherein woman had no place, except as the most obedient servant of her husband, and no position, except that which is allowed to her by the kindness of man and a society dominated by him.

Other women characters, depicted herein, are the Queen Kauśalyā, Arundhatī, the divine mothers Gaṅgā and Prthvī, the semi-divine beings Vāsantī, Tamasā and Muralā and the ascetic student, Atreyī.

Tamasā and Muralā are two river divinities introduced in the interlude to the third act. Both of them were sent to

1. Rāma: —कथं तुण्णी सहो निरविचिरं त्वप्रतिविचः ।
   U. R. Ch. III. 44.

2. Sītā—निरविचिरिति हि हृतासिम मन्दभागिनी ।
   U. R. Ch. III. p. 102

3. Sītā—प्रत्युज्जविचितासिम ।
   U. R. Ch. VII. p. 210
Janasthāna by the two well-wishers of Sītā and Rāma, namely Bhāgirathī, the protecting deity of the Solar dynasty, and Lopāmudrā, the wife of Agasthya, who was anxious about Rāma. The latter sent Muralā to Godāvari with the request that she must be alert and be prepared to receive Rāma whenever he may faint due to the sad remembrance brought to him by seeing the familiar places where he used to live with his beloved wife.¹ Tamasā was the messenger who brought the real consolation in the person of Sītā herself, though unseen by mortal eyes, according to the instruction of Goddess Gaṅgā.² Muralā is only a passing character, who fulfills her part and departs. Tamasā on the other hand, attracts one’s attention by her loving and kind nature and sympathetic understanding of the whole situation. She behaves like an elder sister as well as a dear friend to Sītā. Though herself a divinity, she is fully aware of the human emotions that were working in the minds of both Rāma and Sītā. Her psychological approach to the whole situation, the clever way in which she made Sītā less and less self-

1. मुराला—सखिः तमसे प्रेमिताधि भगवतोमस्तवस्य पत्या लोपामुद्राया मरिदरो गोदावरीया प्रभिधातुम्। जानासवेव यथा वधूपरित्यागात्रभ्रूति—

2. तपसाकपत्रीकादशो रामस्य कहुएयो रसः।

U.R. Ch. III. p. 60

U. R. Ch. III. p. 62-63
conscious, inspite of the latter's bashfulness and modesty due to the presence of herself, an elderly companion, and also the method by which she made Sītā revive Rāma whenever he fell unconscious, are very remarkable and touching. Tamasā seems to have been influenced by the love and kindness of Mother Gaṅgā herself who was ever anxious for her beloved children who had become toys of a bad fate. From there onwards, one feels the presence of the great divinity herself as the saviour behind the separated couple.

Vāsantī, the Vanadevatā, who was the dearest and inseparable friend of Sītā while she lived at Panchavatī, seems to be a shining contrast to the understanding and sympathetic Tamasā. Of course, much of the difference in attitudes were due to their different circumstances; for, while Tamasā knew all that was to be known about the whereabouts and condition of Sītā, Vāsantī was still under the shock of the knowledge about the injustice done to Sītā, which came to her as a bolt from the blue. Ātreyī brought the news in a casual way and then went her way. The meeting with Rāma, after that rude shock which was still fresh, only added to Vāsantī's sorrow and indignation. Her insinuation addressed to Rāma framed in those pathetic words,¹ and her angry question, "Oh, cruel one! you care only for fame. But can there be a worse infamy than this you have acquired? Tell me oh Lord, have you ever thought as to what might have happened to her in that terrible wilderness?"² are clear indications of the fact that she had visualised only one side of the question, namely, the condi-

1. वासन्ती—ल्लेख जीवितं ल्लवसिः से हृदयं द्वितीयं
   ल्लवः कौमुदी नयनयोगमृतं ल्लमङ्गे ।
   इत्याविदिभ: प्रियशतंत्रुस्त्हव्य पुष्पां
   तामेव शान्तमयवा किमिहोतरेण॥ U. R. III. 26

2. वासन्ती—प्रथः कठोर यशः किंतु ते प्रियं
   किमयशो ननु धोरमत: परम् ।
tion of Sītā. Through Vāsanti, perhaps, Bhavabhūti was bringing to the forefront the feelings of all those who saw only the injustice and desire for fame of Rāma, the king. The poet’s intention in this third act, may be to portray the other side of the picture also, namely, the plight of Rāma who was also a victim to the same injustice committed by himself. Rāma, devoid of his kingly paraphernalia, is presented in Janasthāna, in the company of Vāsanti, the next best representative of Sītā herself. Vāsanti personifies the single-minded devotion of a friend. As a friend of Sītā, she accused Rāma of heartlessness, injustice and cruelty. But, by the end of that meeting, though unconvinced as to the justice of his actions, she was fully aware of the hard lot of Rāma who was actually undergoing hell-fire by the constant remembrances of his beloved whom he had no hopes of seeing again. Vāsanti must have been convinced as Sītā herself was, about the reality that Rāma could banish Sītā only from the house but not from his heart. The final proof to this fact came in the statement of Rāma that his companion in the horse-sacrifice was the golden image of Sītā, hearing which Sītā exclaimed in great relief and consolation, “Thus, the disgrace of my banishment has been uprooted by my Lord.”

The whole of the third act here seems to be a clever device of Bhavabhūti to satisfy those who blindly blamed Rāma. By banishing Sītā, in order to satisfy a group of foolish people, he had taken on himself much more than

किमभवद्विपने हरिणीहसः
कथय नाथ कथय वत मन्यसे ||

U. R. Ch. III. 27

1. रामः—प्रस्ति च्वदानीमवभेदाय सहवर्मवारिणी मे।......हिरण्मयि
सीताप्रतिक्रियति।
U. R. Ch. III. p. 102

2. सीता—अर्प्यपूर्त इदानीमसि त्वम्। श्रद्धो उत्त्कातमवानि मे परियाण-
लज्जाशत्यमवार्यपुष्पे।
U. R. Ch. III. p. 102
what he could bear. But the outsiders, including even the mothers of Rāma, saw only the plight of Śītā. Even Śītā had her own doubts at times. Unless and until Śītā was convinced of the loyalty of her husband, there could have been no real reunion of that ideal couple. Moreover, the bold step of recasting the hitherto known denouement of the Rāmāyaṇa could be acceptable to the public only if the emotional reconciliation was fully established. So, through Vāsanti, the question was raised and answered to the full satisfaction of at least Śītā, if not the others who could not understand the true Rāma behind the kingly attire. Thus, above and beyond being the best friend of Śītā, Vāsanti serves as an instrument to clear the much misunderstood character of Rāma in the emotional plane as a husband.

Ātreyī is the one female character who does not have much direct connection with the plot of the play, except informing Vāsanti about the banishment of Śītā. But, she serves a purpose in the study of the play. She tells that she was on her way to Agastya, for higher studies, because she could not cope with the new students who have come to study at the feet of her former preceptor Vālmīki. This statement is a clear proof of the fact that women were allowed to take to higher studies if they wished so, and co-education was not forbidden. The conclusion we could draw from Mālatīmadhava, in this connection finds support in this statement of Ātreyī.

All the three queens of Daśaratha are referred to in the Uttara Rāmācharita. But only Kauśalyā, the mother of Rāma is actually presented on the stage. What we hear and see about the elderly women in this play give us an idea of their revered position in the household. The partiality of those elders for their adored daughter-in-law, is obvious in the first act itself. Aṣṭāvakra, who brings messages to Rāma from his preceptor has a special message for him from the elder women led by Arundhati. They specially instruct him that every one of her wishes should be fulfilled
immediately. And Rāma, like a dutiful son answers bashfully, “I shall do so if she tells me.” The influence they could wield over the household is more pronounced in the next scene, where the important incidents of the twelve years were summarily stated by Atreyī to Vāsantī. The first question that arose in the mind of Vāsantī when she heard of the facts is very significant in this connection. She asks in utter despair, “How could this happen when the old queens are still alive and the family of the Raghus is under the guidance of the venerable Arundhatī and Vaśiṣṭha?” The answer she got justified Vāsantī’s confidence in them. She was told that all were away in the hermitage of Rṣyaśringa attending the sacrifice which was to be of a duration of twelve long years. Rāma did not stay even to consult the elders either, before he took the final step. As the king he thought his first duty was to please his people and he had Vaśiṣṭha’s message to support his decision. But, he seemed to have got everything wrong, for, when Arundhatī heard about what had happened, she refused to enter Ayodhyā, which had become a wilderness due to the absence of Sītā. The queen mothers were of the same mind; and they all went to stay in the hermitage of Vālmīki, on the advice of Vaśiṣṭha.

1. वासन्ती—हा कष्टम्। प्रायोगिकतीयसिद्धाचित्रितेऽरुषुकदन्मकेतु जीवन्तीपु च प्रेमदासु राजीपु कथमिव जातम्। U. R. Ch. II. p. 44
2. राजेयी—छस्यप्रश्रव्यांमेव गुणजन्तदातादीत। संप्रति तु परिसमावेत तदर- दशवार्षिकम् सतम्। U. R. Ch. II. p. 44
3. प्राणवर्म:—जामानुस्येन वयं निष्कास्त्तव वाल एवांसि नवं च राज्यम्। युक्त: प्रजानामनुरज्ञनेवस्तत्सामाशी यत्ररमं यनं व:।। U. R. Ch. I. 11
4. राजेयी—ततो भयव्यत्तत्ती नाहं कषोविरहितामथयोऽय गमिष्यामीत्यह। तदेव रामानुविरहितमोर्तितम्। तदुपरोऽयांगवलो वसिष्यं परिशुद्गा वाचो वास्मीकितपौवं गव्या तत्र वस्यामीति। U. R. Ch. II. P. 44
Valmiki and Vasiṣṭha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sumantra are almost the same as found in the Rāmāyaṇa. But, the female characters depicted by Bhavabhūti are very much different from their prototypes in the Ādikāvyya. Kauśalyā, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa, belongs to the general type of queens as existed in ancient Kṣatriya families. Her advice to Sītā who was just starting off to the forest following her husband of her own accord, seems to be in the typical style of a mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.1 There seems to be nothing characteristic of a mother who bids farewell to a beloved child who was leaving the hearth and home for long years to come. The queen mother enumerates the evils of women and advises Sītā not to behave disrespectfully to Rāma, because he was really her god who must always be worshipped.2 Sītā had to assure her in so many plain words that she was not such a woman who would behave disrespectfully to her husband.3 And later, at the time of the banishment of Sītā, the queens seem to be as good as non-existent, except for the message that Sītā sent through Lakṣmaṇa. On the whole, in the Rāmāyaṇa, though the highest ideal of womanhood is held up in Sītā, the other women are more or less the ordinary types. Kauśalyā, Kaikeyi, Sumitṛā, Tārā, Mandodari and all others are ordi-

1. स त्वा नाचमलत्वं पुनः प्रभाजितो वनम्।

2. बहुरुपकर्यात् सा न मामसंज्ञनेनायं समानपितुमहः।

3. पुष्पी—किं त्वा न पुनर्गामानि सीतास्मैं रामभद्धर्यम्।

V. R. II. 39. 25

V. R. II. 39. 28

V. R. II. 39. 31

U. R. Ch. VII. 7
nary women who rise or fall according to the circumstances in which they were placed. Even Arundhati, the celebrated “Satī” is no exception. But there is a world of difference found between them and the same characters portrayed by Bhavabhūti. There is a soft, sweet light that comes out of those very same women characters who seem to engulf all those around them in their cool and embalming lustre.

Kauśalyā is actually visible on the stage only in the fifth act of the play. But the picture is impressed on the mind, never to be rubbed off. The sorrow of this mother-in-law, is in no way less than that felt by Prāthivī, the mother who had given birth to Sītā. Mother Earth, true to her forbearing nature, is prepared to see both sides of the question and pardon Rāma for his shortcoming. But, Kauśalyā could not and would not even see the face of her own son who was so heartless and unjust to her beloved child, Sītā.¹

Prāthivī and Bhāgīrathī are two divine beings brought to the human plane by the poet. The depiction of these two characters in the Uttara Rāmācharita is quite unique in the Sanskrit literature. Much has been said about the unlimited patience of Mother Earth, who is rightly called ‘Sarvāṁha-sahā’ or the ‘all-forbearing’. But nowhere else has the picture been so noble and permanent as to justify the name well. Of course she gets besides herself at the sight of Sītā who, in her agony, had thrown herself into the waters of the Ganges. When consoled by the equally bewildered Bhāgīrathī, she asks in all seeming helplessness as any other ordinary mother, “How can I get any consolation, having given birth to Sītā?”² and counts one by one the unbear-

¹ कब्रचकी—राजाय भ्रेनेतव मन्यना चिरपरिलक्तरामभद्रमुखचन्द्रदर्शिनां नाइसु दुःखितुमतःदु:खिताम देवीम्।

² पृथिवी—देवी ! सीतां प्रसूय कथमास्वस्मिम।

U. R. Ch. IV. p. 118

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198.
able sorrows her daughter had to bear. And when Bhāgīrathī tries to put all the blame on fate, she flares up and says, "He did not remember the hand he held at such young age, nor remembered Janaka, nor Agni who testified to her sacredness, nor me, nor her implicit dedication to his will, and not even the offsprings." It is worth noticing here, that this stanza, specially the first line, is a repetition of Sītā's words in the Rāmāyāna when she was repudiated by Rāma at Laṅkā. Mother Prthvī gets angry when Sītā takes Rāma's name and sighs in despair. But the very next moment she is back as her real self. She hastens to stop the folded hands of Bhāgīrathī in apology, and with indescribable love and sympathy says, "I know the deep and unlimit-ed love of Rāma for Sītā", and adds in the most characteristic way of an indulgent mother, "Having abandoned my darling with a burning heart, due to force of circumstances, he is still alive only by the good luck of his subjects and through his own super-human will-power." Mother Earth and Goddess Bhāgīrathī, though divine, are very human in

1. सीता सरासंगवासस्त्रयागोपिण्डितीयो हि सुदृढः सहोदेष्य: ।

U. R. Ch. VII. 4

2. न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिबाल्ये बलेन पीडित: ।
   नाहि न जनको नामिनिजुटितर्भो सत्तित: ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198

3. प्रपदेशेन जनकातोपतितयुघातलाव ।
   मम वृत्तं च वृत्तं बहु तेन पुरस्कृतम् ॥
   न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिबाल्ये बलेन पीडित: ।

V. R. VI. 119. 15-16

4. पृथिवी—या: कस्तवायपुनः ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 198

5. पृथिवी—न पुनर्ज्ञानामिसीतास्तेह्यो राममद्रस्य ।
   न ग्रामानेन मनसा देवादासां नविव्रत: ।
   सोकोतरण सत्येन प्रजापुण्यः जीवित: ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 7
their feelings and understanding. The way in which both of them fulfill their respective responsibilities put on them at different occasions by Rāma is very admirable and touching. What Arundhati was to the mother of Rāma—the same was Bhāgirathī to the mother of Sītā. Arundhati kept up the spirit of Kauśalyā by quoting to her the words of Vasiṣṭha that all would end well, while Bhāgirathī kept up the patience of not only Mother Earth, but also the life and spirit of Sītā and Rāma in Janasthāna. It is her foresight that made it possible for Sītā to see her long separated husband and know his real feelings for her, which actually helped to wash off the misunderstandings and doubts which might have been lurking in her mind. It was Bhāgirathī's knowledge of Rāma in his true colours and his deep love for Sītā that enabled her to foresee the condition in which he would be when once again he would enter Janasthāna. Of course, he was coming there as a king to perform his hard kingly duty, namely, putting an end to the Śudra who violated the rules of society, by taking up the Brāhma-

1. ग्र. रामः—सा त्वमेव स्तुपायामहन्यतः सीतायं शिवानुपुराणामभव ।
   U. R. Ch. I. p. 16
   ग्र. रामः—भगवत वसुंधरे सुद्राध्यायो दुहितरब्रह्मवस्तव जानकीम् ।
   U. R. Ch. I. p. 36

2. (नेपदे)
   ग्र. जगत्ते रामचन्द्र ! स्मयतामालेक्षदशैः मां प्रत्यात्मानो वचनं यथा सा त्वमम ! स्तुपायामहन्यतः सीतायं शिवानुपुराणापरा भवेति तत्रातुपाणास्मि जाता ।
   ग्र. उत्कामतीदायुक्तात्वसायः परित्यागे यथा भगवति वशुंधरे !
   शुद्राध्यायो दुहितरवस्तव जानकीमिति ।
   तदुपुवा कृतचन्द्रानास्मि
   प्रवेष्टस्यत्वेऽतरे ।
   U. R. Ch. VII. p. 208

3. प्रहलादी—ग्रंथं च किं न समरसं यदोच्छवेश्वरः ज्ञातेम् गुणयां कुलगुहं-
   भवित्वत्वेत्युपजातमेव ।
   किं तु कश्वाणोदकं भविष्यतीति ।
   U. R. Ch. IV. p. 122
nical way of living. But, the motherly love of Bhāgirathī made her realise that the very sight of Janasthāna, where he lived in company of his beloved wife, not as a king but as an ordinary man, would once more make him cease to be a king. And she knew that Sitā and Sitā alone could revive him in that possible crisis. Hence she sent Sitā accompanied by Tamasā, who was equally devoted to both of them and who was also in the know of things.¹ By this act of the Goddess, so humane in her understanding, the double purpose of consoling the long suffering couple and of paving the way for the final union was achieved. Thus, we see that those two women characters of the poet present the mingling of all that is best in the human nature with all that is lovable and sweet in the divine. Later dramas relating to the story of Rāma do portray these divinities and also some other similar characters; but none rises to the perfection found here in this play.

Arundhatī, the wife of the sage Vasiṣṭha is a prominent personage in the Uttara Rāmācharita. She reminds us of the same character described by Kālidāsa in his Kumārasambhava, where it is said “Arundhatī who was in the midst of those sages, with her eyes fixed at the feet of her husband, shone like the very fruit of penances.”² Just as Goddess Gaṅgā pacified the mother of Sitā, we see the saintly Arundhatī giving support to the mother of Rāma, and also pacifying the angry Janaka, the father of Sitā.

¹. तमसा—उल्कमत्र भगवत्या भागीरथ्या—वत्से देववजनसंभवे सीते ! श्राब 
   खल्वायुम्मतोऽकुशलविद्वदिष्टजनमसंवस्तसरस्य संश्यामज्ञ्जलप्रनिधियो 
   रमितवते तदात्मन: वुराणश्रववुभोतावतो मानवस्य राज्यि- 
   वंश्य नरसवितारं विविदारवहनप्रचापायां देवं स्वहस्तापिति: 
   पुरशोपदितहस्वः...इति । श्रमय्यासाकिता तमसे ! त्वमि श्रस्व- 
   नेतृणानि श्राष्ट्रस्त्वस्वास्या: प्रयन्तन्तरिभव इति ।
   U. R. Ch. III. p. 64

². तेषाः मद्यगताः साध्वी पत्यः वादापितेश्वरः ।
   साधारिव तप:सिद्धिंवाससे बल्लशनवति ॥ K. S. VI. 11
Arundhati was in the know of things and was awaiting the proper time for the happy union, in the contrivance of which she also had an important part to play. She repeatedly assures Kauśalyā, that all would end well. Her praise of Śitā is always profuse and unreserved, while her understanding and sympathy for Rāma is quite genuine.

Even as Vasiṣṭha held the power to lead the king and guide him in all affairs, so was Arundhati the counsellor and friend of the women of the royal family. In Arundhati the poet seems to hold up the same ideal of the oneness of man and woman which was held up by Kālidāsa centuries before him. Every poet who came after Kālidāsa was influenced by him in one way or other. We have already seen how Śrī Harṣa had adapted in his own plays various situations, incidents and even ideas first envisaged by Kālidāsa. But those adaptations were more or less superficial, because the understanding is of the material plane only. On the other hand, Bhavabhūti seems to have understood and accepted the inner meanings of those pictures drawn by the master-poet. And perhaps, that is the reason why Uttararāmācharita held its place throughout the ages, even as the works of Kālidāsa, while most of the other dramas including Bhavabhūti’s own earlier plays receded into the back rows.

As Vasiṣṭha sent the message to Rāma that he should be ever ready to please his subjects, Arundhati joined in with the instruction that Śitā’s wishes were always to be fulfilled. But, as fate would have it, that injunction of Arundhati itself paved the way for the easy banishment of Śitā. It was Arundhati who decided for staying back from Ayodhyā where such terrible injustice was done to the noblest women ever lived. And Vasiṣṭha could only direct the queens led by his spouse to the next best place for them, the abode of Vālmiki. It was Arundhati who induced Kauśalyā to go and meet the king Janaka who was really the injured party. And finally it was Arundhati who
accepted back Sita from the protecting deities, Mother Earth and the Goddess Bhagirathi, and achieved the final union of the eternal couple, after forcing the general public to see their mistake in doubting the character of the noblest woman in the world.

Arundhati and Vasiṣṭha in this play seem to illustrate the truth of the oneness of Prakṛti and Puruṣa as described by Kālidāsa in his Kumārasambhava, the Puruṣa being the passive witness giving inspiration to the Prakṛti, who actually acts and makes the universe exist. The exclamation of Vāsanti, “Arundhativasīṭhaṭhādhīṣṭiteṣu Raghuḥukalakadambakṣu”—while the family of Raghus was guided and protected by Arundhati and Vasiṣṭha, is really the keynote of the situation as we visualise it. The departure of the queen mothers led by Arundhati under the protection of Vasiṣṭha, started the dark night for Rāma and Sītā. Rāma away from

1. (puṇṇaṃपधे)

2. prabhūtāt jagnathē! gajāpuṇḍbhī jupasv nī ।
prāpitēyāt tāvāvāṁpyāṁ sītā pūṣyati vahuः ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 17

2. twarasv vatte! vajēhi mūtva shaśīnabīlātāṃ ।
ēḥḥi bīvay bhavat praspaśāṃnā pariṇāna ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 18

2. bhū bhū: pūjrajaṇapada, īyamadunā bhagavatīmāṃ bhumābhājāvājīmāmpyuḥ
dhāvām pāyātā pūrṇaḥ c bhagavata vā śrīnāmśe
nirūntuḥpūṣyaḥ caitraḥ sambhūvaḥkāmē dēvē:
sambhuvā sāvitrākṣubhūteva śrīvaśyām-śrīvaśyām-sīntādevī pariṣṭhitāmhitā kṣatriyaḥ bhavatī mānayē ।

U. R. Ch. VII. p. 210

2. niśvētya yathādharmaṃ mīyām ānām dharmacāraṇīm ।
hirānāmya: prakīrtitē: puṣyaḥprakīrtitāṃcērē ॥

U. R. Ch. VII. 19

2. tāmāmambrāt prakīrti puṣyaḥprakīrtitām ।
taṇḍāmumāratāṁ tāmēvā pūrvaḥ vātēः ॥

K. S. II. 13
his wise preceptor, lost his sense of proportion and values. In his eagerness to do his duty to the people, he forgot his duty to his wife, though he was reminded of the same by the message of Arundhati and other elders of the family. This wrong was righted only after he was once again brought back to the protection of that saintly couple at the hermitage of Vālmīki in due course, and after undergoing the fire ordeal of indefinite separation which made Rāma realise the value of Sītā, who was really a part of his own self.

In this play, Bhavabhūti has not only depicted the oneness of man and woman, but he has also portrayed the possibility of true and pure friendship between man and woman. He had already drawn the picture of friendship between Kāmāndaki, Bhūrīvasu and Devarāta, in his second play. The friendship they cultivated in their student life was so strong that the nun Kāmāndaki turned herself to a match-maker for the sake of her friends’ children. In the present play the healthy friendship between Janaka, Daśaratha and Kauśalyā is portrayed with picturesque description. Janaka, though a sage and a “sūhitaprajña”, lost his balance of mind whenever he remembered the insult his daughter had to suffer, twice, for no fault of hers. He got so enraged at times that he was prepared to avenge her either by the bow or by curse. Only the intervening of Arundhati and the pacifying words of the Kanchukin along with the sad condition of his old friend could stay his anger. At the advice of the family preceptor Vasiṣṭha, Kauśalyā went to see the king, Janaka, though with great hesitation. His just rage intimidated all who were in any way related to Rāma. Even Arundhati had to humbly apologise to him for

1. अन्तःसचिवर्ष्ट्यतन्त्र शक्तायति शक्तायति भक्तिवसरविपणि शापपि वा।
   कोष्ठ्यम् ज्वलितुभित्वसरविपणि शापपि वां ।
   U. R. Ch. IV. 24

2. राजस्वपरिणां रामस्व रामवाच्छुष्णम् कुमारारा। जना:।
   U. R. Ch. IV. 25
the wrong done to him and his family. Janaka very tauntingly enquired after the welfare of the King’s mother,¹ and in reply was told that he should not be so cruel to that poor queen who was beside herself with sorrow, and who had refused to see the face of her son because of his treatment of Sītā.² When after all, he became himself, he remembered the past in all its pleasant details, which had become painful at that time due to the changed circumstances. His finer feelings revived and he began to repent about the treatment he meted out to his friend’s dearest and honoured wife whom he had met after a long time.³ His memories of the past portray before us, a healthy friendship between two human beings irrespective of sex or relationship. Janaka remembered now Daśaratha, when alive, used to respect him quite out of keeping with the conventions of the day. According to the general custom it was the father of the girl who worshipped the relations of the boy, but in this case, it was Janaka, the father of Sītā, who was worshipped by Daśaratha,⁴ the father of Rāma. When there were quarrels between Kausālyā and her husband, Janaka became the mediator, and though he became the target of censure

1. जनकः—प्रायः शृङ्खः प्रप्यनामयमलयाः प्रजापालकस्य मातुः।
   U. R. Ch. IV. p. 116

2. कठुकी—राज्येऽऽऽनेन्य मन्युरा चिरपरित्यत्तरामभद्रमुखचन्द्रदर्शानाः
   नाहिंसि हुःकायिततितुः हिताम् देवीम्।
   U. R. Ch. IV. p. 118

3. जनकः—हल्ल हल्ल! सर्वथा नुवंसोदस्त्म संकुच्छः।
   यस्बवरस्य दश्रअप्रयोगुः
   प्रियदरास्य स्निग्ध पश्यामि।
   U. R. Ch. p. 118

4. कप्याया: किल्पुजष्ठलो नित्यरो जामातुरावृं जरें
   सम्बन्धे विपरीतमेव तद्भव्यायानं ते मभि।
   तवं काले तत्परविष्णुपहुः: सम्बन्धीजः च तद्
   धोरेष्विश्वमर्जं जीवलोकनरके पापस्य धिगोधितम्।
   U. R. Ch. IV. 16
from both, his decisions were finally accepted by both. These and similar instances found in this play show the trend in which Bhavabhūti's mind worked in connection with the position of women and also the mutual relationship of the sexes.

In Bhavabhūti's plays we trace a revolutionary mind at work. He ventured to bring forward characters and situations which did not agree with the conventions of the day—a fact proved by the obvious disappointment he had to suffer about his first two works. He did not succeed in pleasing his contemporaries by presenting the real pictures. His full belief in the equality of woman and man, is seen all through his dramas, mainly so in his Uttara-Rāmācharita. In the last mentioned play Arundhatī, the most revered of all, says that she worshipped Sītā for her qualities and adds the general dictum, that it is the virtues that count, not age or sex.

As has been already noticed, the first two plays seem to depict more or less the real condition of society as the poet saw it. This is true to a great extent where the female characters are concerned. The women do not seem to have had an enviable position in the society, nor do the women characters of the plays command any respect. Specially, in

1. यद्यप: पत्युर्वा रहस्सि परमं दूषितमभु-  
   दम्भवं दम्भाय: पृथ्वहुतेमण्डलयं।  
   प्रसादे कोरे वा तदनु मद्यीतो विचिरभु-  
   दलं वा तत्समल्ला दह्ति यदवस्तुन्य हृदयम्॥  
   U. R. Ch. IV. 14

2. शियुद्वा शिष्या वा यदवम् मन मतिच्छतु तथा  
   शियुद्वेस्वतःस्वत्वेष्य तु मम मत्वं बहुक्तं सर्वर्षित।  
   शियुद्व स्त्रेण वा महतु नन्दु बल्यासि जगतो  
   गुणाः पूज्याप्न गुण्णु न च लिङ्ङ न च वय:॥  
   U. R. Ch. IV. 11
the prakarana, Mālati-Mādhava, even those girls who belong to noble and cultured families, do not hesitate to cut jokes of quite a low order,¹ and this might have provoked adverse criticism reasonably enough. Perhaps these experiences set the poet thinking and those resulted in the last play which deviated completely from the trodden path. He chose a well-known theme. But with the undaunted courage of his convictions, he decided to give a new turn to the last phase of Rāma’s life, and he created a new story based on the old theme. His admiration for Kalidāsa might have given him an insight into the suggestive creations of the masterpoet. Bhavabhūti might have understood the lesson his predecessor wished to teach the world. He himself, became convinced of the mutual fulfilment of man and woman in each other. True poet that he was, he wished to expound to the public the truth he himself saw, and he set about the self-imposed job in his own way.

In the Uttara-Rāmācharita, the characters depicted are not the ordinary dramatic personages. It is the ideal that is shown—the ideal that held the attention of the common man, and raised him to the heavenly bliss of witnessing and enjoying a thing complete, a thing of perfection that embalms the soul and stirs it to its very depths. The Sītā and Rāma found in this play are both very humane. They along with their friends and well-wishers speak the language of the heart, a language which appeals to all, irrespective of time or clime. At the same time they do not belong to the standard of the low terrestrial world. It is man raised to divinity by the sacredness and purity of his soul and the devotion to duty in all

¹. तवरिष्का—सति मद्यनितिके, स्तुटमास्याहि। ग्रंथि तस्मानवसरे स्नेहज्ञानोपितहसविहसदुविद्यंतालोचनिनहरुपतितमासनमयूरकं परिजनाश्रोपनीयं भवति वा कि न वेति।

M. M. VII. 331
sphere's of life, however unpleasant or painful the performance of the same may mean, that is portrayed here.

In this play, Bhavabhūti visualised a happy household where the mutual love of the husband and wife, rose above all mundane levels to the ennobling heights of selfless devotion and mutual understanding. The love of the parents for their children, the authority of the preceptor over his disciples, the devotion and reverence felt by the disciples and children towards their elders, the loyalty and constancy of the servants to their masters, and similar ennobling emotions that save the man from lowering himself to the standard of animals, are depicted here with peculiar clarity and impressiveness.

Bhavabhūti holds up to posterity, his ideal of the joint family where the elders had made the welfare of their dependants the end and aim of their own lives, and received the fullest devotion, obedience, and respect in return. The relation of Rāma and Sītā together on the one hand and the elder queens, Arundhatī and Vasiṣṭha on the other, pictures such a happily knit family. Bharata, Lakṣmanā and Candraketu are all befitting constituents of the same. Vāsanti, Tamasā and others, even Soudhātakī and Dāṇḍāyana, are elements that contribute their mite to the family, which formed the nucleus of a happy and prosperous society as visualised by the dreaming poetic mind of Bhavabhūti. In such a society, everyone's welfare is the concern of everybody else, and everybody's good name becomes a treasure to be cherished and protected by every other. There the reunion of Sītā and Rāma who knew the hearts of each other only too well, was a definite possibility. Where there is confidence in oneself, the confidence and trust in others prevail and, consequently, mutual love, kindness, and impartial judgement of character also exist. This is what has been achieved by the poet in this play. That vision of the poet, appealed to all, but it remained as an ideal for ever
after, for, man is so self-centered, egoistic, and hard to be able to rise to that height of self sacrifice.

With Bhavabhūti, perhaps, ended such constructive idealism, for, the pictures seen in the later dramas do not come up anywhere near to the characters pictured by this artist of feelings and emotions.
CHAPTER V

THE WOMEN IN THE PLAYS WRITTEN UPTO 1200 A. D.

The depiction of women characters by Bhavabhūti forms a landmark in the course of this study, for, after him, we do not find any writer, portraying women with so much life or individuality. A lull seems to have come over the literary atmosphere as far as the creative genius was concerned. Of course, poems and dramas were written, and writers were not lacking. But it must be admitted that no drama of any out-standing quality has come to posterity after the Uttara Rāmācharita. There are many plays belonging to this period, mentioned by scholars. Some of them are available in print also. Reading through them, one is left with the feeling of a stereotyped atmosphere. Love at first sight, a few obstacles and a happy ending in marriage form the theme of most of these plays. The story is generally taken from the epics and woven into a five-act or seven-act play in more or less the same strain, except for the varying literary skill of the different writers. This being the case, it is obvious that we cannot see much light as to the real position of women by just reading through these plays. And, in fact, there are very few women worthy of notice as individuals with any integrity of their own. Still, there are a few plays, which attract our attention due to the speciality of the theme or the method of its treatment.

The Kaumudimahotsava, a play ascribed to Princess Vijjikā, is one that is notable for two reasons. In the first
place, this is the one Sanskrit play known to have a woman as its author, and secondly, the love-story here, is interwoven with a political theme. We are able to trace reflections of the love as seen in the Mālavikāgnimitra, the intrigues of Cāṇakya in the Mudrārākṣasa and the techniques of Śarvilaka in the Mrchhakatikā mingled in this play. Kirtimati, the heroine, the Princess of Mathurā, falls in love with Kalyāṇavarmen, the Prince and heir to the throne of Magadha. The theme which is historical and romantic, centres round this couple.

The king of Magadha adopted a boy called Candaseha, because he himself had no issues. Later on a son was born to the king, which caused disappointment to the ambitious Candaseha, who turned against his foster-father, killed him and ascended the throne himself. The young prince was separated from his relations and was brought up in the penance-grove of Jāvalī. Kirtimati, the Princess of Mathurā, who came there to visit Parivrājikā Yogasiddhi, met the prince by accident and they both fell in love with each other. By the efforts of Yogasiddhi, who was no other than Vinayandharā, the foster-mother of prince Kalyāṇavarnen, the union of the couple was achieved. By this time, the Prince with the help of his friends had reconquered his own kingdom. This, in a nutshell, is the story of the Kaumudimahotsava.

There are five women characters in this play, namely, Princess Kirtimati, the heroine, Parivrājikā Yogasiddhi, Nipunikā, the friend and maid-in-waiting of the Princess and two other maid-servants. The maid-servants are just the ordinary types, as found in the courts of kings. There is not much to say about them. They are the gay, happy-go-lucky attendants of the Princess, as found in the various dramas of the same type. Nipunikā, the confidant of the princess, reminds us of Kanchanamālā, the maid-in-waiting of Vāsavadattā in the Rātnāvali, or of Nipunikā, the friend of Irāvati in the Mālavikāgnimitra. Loyal, loving
and resourceful, she is a good friend whose first and foremost aim in life is the welfare of her mistress. It is due to her efforts that Yogasiddhi comes to know about the Princess and also of the Prince, her foster-son, who was long lost to her.

Kirtimati is a prototype of any ordinary Princess belonging to the middle ages. She is beautiful, simple and obedient, well-versed in fine arts—specially good and skilful in painting. It is this skill in painting that helps the thread of the story to continue. The painting of a portrait of her lover by the heroine, and the completion of the other half i.e. the portrait of the heroine, by someone else has its parallel in the Ratnāvalī of Śrī Harṣa. The character of Kirtimati has nothing specially noticeable. She is lovesick and wants to be united with her lover. But she is not strong or courageous enough to express her wishes openly to anyone. Only her dearest and nearest friend, Nipunikā, knows about it, and even that because the latter happened to overhear the words babbled by the Princess in her sleep. The whole situation is a pointer towards the condition of maidens at the time when the drama was written. For, it needs quite a courageous head and heart to show something on the stage which goes against the taste of the audience. A modest, bashful and obedient maiden must have been the ideal of the day. The princess may fall in love, but to follow the injunctions of the heart or even to speak about them to anyone, was against decorum. That is why, perhaps, the saintly Yogasiddhi, when she heard the whole story, decided to take a hand in it and to work for the happiness of the two, who were her foster-children.

Śakuntalā Rāo Śāstrī, in her introduction to this play, remarks: "The marriage of Princess Kirtimati recalls the Svayamvara practice, though with certain restrictions." This does not seem to be correct. According to the text of the play, Princess Kirtimati is sent to visit Yogasiddhi who was a friend of her mother, and a foster-mother to
herself. It was by chance that she was seen by Prince Kalyāṇavarman, then known as Kalyāṇasrī, who happened to come to that hermitage on his way back to his own kingdom. There was love at first sight, and undoubtedly a desire to marry. But it was not a Svayamvara, because though both the Prince and Princess were love-stricken, neither of them took any step to bring about their union with each other. The Princess drew the picture of her lover even without knowing his feelings for her. It was a chance that a vulture carried it away, mistaking it for a piece of flesh, and dropped it in front of Parivrājikā Yogasiddhi, who recognised it as that of her foster-son with the help of the Prince’s friend, Vaikhānasa, who reached there at that time. Once Yogasiddhi knew the identity of the prince, she took up the duty of bringing about the union of the two, who were equally beloved to her and whose prosperity was her sole concern in this world. Observing the nature of the Princess, as seen in the text of the play, we have no reason to think that she would ever dare to do anything that did not have the previous approval of her parents. This union can be considered anything akin to a Svayamvara only if the word is taken to mean falling in love with each other.

Svayamvara, in the ordinary sense of the term, means choosing of the husband by the bride from amongst the men assembled in the court of her father at his invitation. We hear of this custom in the Epics. In the historical times also we have heard of Svayamvara. Yogasiddhi wrote a small verse\(^1\) under the portrait indicating that the two persons were the suitable husband and wife to each other. She then took the portrait to King Kirtisena telling him that Goddess Bhavāni came to her in a dream and gave her the portrait with the inscription, thus indicating that it was the will

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1. शौनककौम बन्धुमति कुमारमविमारकं कुरप्रवीव।
   \(\text{व्रह्ति कीत्रिमतीय काभूः क्लयायुवमायः।}\)
   Kau. M. II. 15
of the Goddess that the two royal families should be united by marriage.

In the meanwhile, Kalyāṇavarman achieves a victory over his enemies and is established in his throne. So the Yādava King sends his ministers and the spiritual preceptor along with Kīrtimati, the Princess, to congratulate him. There is nothing in the play to show how exactly the marriage was performed. In the last act of the play, the Purohita of the King of Mathurā meets Kalyāṇavarman and congratulates him on behalf of the king and presents a diamond necklace. There he says to himself that he would decide after consulting Mantragupta and Yogasiddhi, what should be done about the Princess.\(^1\) Immediately after this, King Kalyāṇavarman retires to the pleasure-garden in a condition of longing for his beloved. The conversation between him and his friend, Vidūṣaka, indicates that he is not even aware of the presence of Kīrtimati in his country. The King's soliloquy,\(^2\) on the other hand, goes to prove that he has not yet met his beloved.

Then suddenly he comes across the Princess with Nipunikā in the garden. Kīrtimati does not recognise him at first due to his being dressed in royal robes. She had seen him only in the penance-grove and realises who he was only after hearing his voice. Still she addresses him as "Āryaputra", and she talks freely to the King unlike on the previous occasion when she studiously avoided directly addressing him.

In the Ratnāvali, the Mālatīmādhava and other plays we have already noticed that the young girls were strictly

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1. Kau. M. p. 64
2. राजा—(प्रात्मगान्त) चेतस्वयम सहितमेव तथापिते
   चबू: क्रयाष्ट्रिणि केवलमावर ने ।
   भावितं वर्तनु स्वजने जनात, त्राप्ते मनोरमावतेरीपि कुतः प्रमेव: ॥
Kau. M. V. 28
forbidden to talk to their lovers. They talked by proxy. In the first act of this play also the Princess does not talk to Kalyāṇavarman directly; it was her friend who replied to all the queries of the Prince. Hence, the mode of address and behaviour of Kirtimati in the last act leads one to think that she was already the wedded wife of the King. How, when, and where the marriage could have taken place, is a question that faces the student here. The only possible explanation seems to be that some portion of the text in this act might have been missing in the only manuscript available to the editor who got this play published. Otherwise, the behaviour of Kirtimati seems rather strange, to say the least.

The Parivṛjikā called Yogasiddhi is an important female character in this play. She was the nurse of Prince Kalyāṇaśrī, and her name was Vinayandharā. When she was separated from the royal family and the little Prince, she took to the life of a mendicant and found shelter in the palace of Kṛtisena as the friend of his queen and the nurse of Kirtimati. When Kirtimati grew up, Yogasiddhi retired to the forests, and it is there that we meet her at the beginning of the play. She is more or less on the same level with Panditā Kauśikī of the Mālavikāgñimitra, and Sāṅkṛtyāyāni of the Priyadarśikā, but by nature and conduct, she is nearer to Kāmandaki in the Mālati-Mādhava of Bhavabhūti. Though her actions are more or less on similar lines as the above mentioned mendicant women, her character suits more a match-maker than a woman of spiritual attainments. Though clad in ascetic garments, her mind is full of anxiety for the happiness of her foster-children. She plainly says, "Till I see her married to a loving husband and well-placed in a noble family, how can I be detached!" She goes out of her way and adheres to all kinds of tricks to bring about the union of Kalyāṇavarman and Kirtimati.

1. परिव्रजिका—वालदेंचनातुरस्तपतिकुत्तामिनीं पश्यामि, तावत्व कुलो मे निस्संगता ?

Kau. M. I. p. 24
Though she is called Bhagavati Yogasiddhi and is respected as a lady mendicant, her own actions and behaviour do not at all suit the garb she wears!

Her portrait perhaps is representing the slow decline of Buddhism. Kāmandakī, as we have seen, definitely represents the deteriorated condition of the Buddhist nuns. According to Śakuntalā Rao Śāstrī, this play was written somewhere in the seventh century A. D. If it is so, this play must have been written in almost the same era as Bhavabhūti, or some time before. It may not be very wrong to say that the author of this play was also drawing a character from the society as she saw. She, being a Princess herself, must have been quite aware of the happenings of her own palace and what she has portrayed can be safely taken as reflections of the first-hand knowledge she had.

There are a few things which tell us about the position of women as recapitulated by the author of this play. Maidens were supposed to be timid, bashful and modest. They were well-skilled in the fine arts, such as painting, music and dance. What other things they learnt, we have no idea. But the fact that the author herself was a Princess and she, according to the stories heard, was proud enough of her own scholarship to compare herself with Saraswati, has its own story to tell!  

Marriage was quite a necessary thing and parents were anxious to get their daughters married. Kṛtisena sent his daughter to Yogasiddhi in order to get the blessings of the saintly woman. The custom of taking the bride to the bride-groom’s place is indicated in this play also, as in the Ratnāvalī and the Priyadarśika. Kṛtisena sends his daughter along with his ministers to congratulate the newly crowned king Kalyānavarman and there were great celebrations

1. नीलोत्सवलदलशयां विक्रिका मामजानत ।
बृहा हि दधिना प्रोक्तं सववशुक्ला सरस्वती ॥ Kau. M. I. 1
arranged in connection with their arrival in the Magadha palace.

There is no opportunity to study the position of wife in this play, because, we do not meet with any one in that position. Women were allowed to enter the ascetic life when they became helpless is proved by the life of Vinayan-
dharā, who is seen as Yogasiddhi, well respected by the kings as well as common people. But, it is also obvious that women who thus took to ascetism, still got themselves inter-
ingled with the worldly affairs. Women in general talked Prākṛt and were considered to be easily moved. But, those women, who took to ascetism were considered to be above all worldliness. For example, when Yogasiddhi sees the picture of her foster-son, she faints at the remembrance of the child she had left. She feels anxious as to how he would have grown up to that age and appearance if he had lived. In this condition, she forgets all her disguise and begins to talk in Prākṛt. This change in the saintly lady greatly astonishes the maid Nipūnikā who asks; “My lady, why this behaviour, suitable to the women of the harem? And how this uncultured language unsuitable to the great knowledge that you have acquired?”

This plainly indicates that women who were learned and saintly did not talk Prākṛt. This characteristic also is one that we have seen from the time of Kalidāsa. All the Parivrājikās depicted in the Sanskrit dramas talk Sanskrit. It is only Yogasiddhi who switches off to Prākṛt in a condition of agitation. It is also noteworthy here that none of the others, whom we have already observed, ever lost their balance of mind, as Yogasiddhi does! Actually no occasion arose in any of those plays to make them lose it!

1. राज्यलाभसमाजन्मद्यपदेशेन दूरसेन सचिवेयू राजकुञ्जितस्मादाय प्राप्तेयू शद्वरे समादिष्टोयम्युस्तवः। Kau. M. V. p. 62
2. निपुनिका—भगवती! कः एयोस्यामारिक जनयोग्य ग्रामवासः? कैवा विज्ञान विशेष विस्तृत्वी प्रसंसक्ता वाणी? Kau. M. II. p. 28
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Perhaps the author wishes to show that however detached one may appear to be, the real attachment and the true character never dies out! Yogasiddhi talking in Prākṛt while she is unconscious is a very interesting psychological touch given to the situation by the author. It is a verified fact, that however well-versed in other languages and well-acquainted to them a person may be, when a sudden shock comes, it is the mother-tongue that breaks out from the person's mouth! It is perhaps this observation of the human nature that prompted the author to make the Parivrājikā talk in Prākṛt at that critical moment. The woman, however much she might have trained herself in self-control, lost her balance the moment she was reminded of her dearest foster-son. That is the Mother's heart revealed by the author.

The custom of 'Sati', or a woman entering the funeral pyre with her husband seems to have become established by the time of Vijjikā. We have noticed references to this in the plays of Śrī Harṣa. Here, once more, we hear of the women who followed their husbands to the heaven. Áryarakṣa, describes the result of the attack of Candraśena to Vardhamānaka, where he says, "Hear this also: After our fathers followed their masters (the king of Magadha) to heaven and our mothers also entered fire along with the great queens, we with our friends were taken to the deep forest by the nurse, Vinayandharā of the same age but were again separated from her who got frightened by hearing the roaring of the wild elephants."

Except for the few conclusions we could draw from the above discussions nothing could be known about the

1. भार्यव्रतः—यतदपिष्कृयताःततोःसम्भूक अनविदारः स्वामिना सह स्वरूपः—मातृोपि महाबिनीमि: सह भगवन्तमाधूयुवंनाश्यर्ताः: वयमध्ये—धर्मशरणेण स्वामिना समवस्तक्यां विनवस्थर्यां नाम धात्या प्रस्थात्र्येव रज्ज्ञामत्री कारतार्यपूर्वी वनवऽष्ट्रिततः सभो विश्रक्षित: ।

Kau. M. II. p. 49
position occupied by women in the political, social, or religious fields.

The Tāpasavatsarāja centering round Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī, the two queens of King Udayana, is another play which attracts our attention in this period. The theme of this play is political though love does have an important place. Unlike the Kaumudimahotsava, here, the political and romantic issues are interdependent to the extent of the former being the motive for the latter. It is the story of Udayana, after his marriage with Vāsavadattā that is depicted.

In fact, this deals with the period between the incidents described in the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa and those described in the Svapnavāsavadattā, as dramatised by the earlier poet Bhāsa. Really speaking, Anaṅgaharṣa describes the hows and whys of the disappearance of Queen Vāsavadattā and the marriage of Udayana with Padmāvatī, the Princess of Magadha. The characters in this play are more or less the same as in the Svapnavāsavadattā.

We have already studied the two famous plays by Bhāsa and two others written by Śrī Harṣa. Thus, the characters portrayed by Anaṅgaharṣa are in no way unknown to us. Vāsavadattā, Padmāvatī, Kāñchanamālā and Sānkrtyāyanī are already familiar names. So also are Udayana, Yaugandharāyaṇa and Rumanvān. All these people have their natures and temperaments very much akin to the same characters as depicted by the earlier poet Bhāsa. In the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyaṇa, we have seen how, King Udayana absconded with Vāsavadattā, the daughter of Mahāsena after marrying her according to Gāndharva Vidhi. In the Svapnavāsavadattā we met with Vāsavadattā in the guise of Avantikā, accompanied by Yaugandharāyaṇa. In this play, we see the reason why the ministers and well-wishers of Udayana had to take the drastic step of burning a village and declaring that the queen and Yaugandharāyaṇa have
perished in the fire. The king's complete indifference to the affairs of the kingdom, and the rise of his enemies such as Aruni of Pānčāla, were causing anxiety to all concerned. Kauśambī was already lost. Only a small village remained. The alliance with the King of Magadha was quite necessary for the success of Udayana. The ministers, specially Yaugandharāyana and Rumaṇvān, decided to do their best to bring their king back to his senses and restore him to his throne. In this play, the sense, sensibility and the greatness of women are pictured clearly in the personalities of both the queens, Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī. We find a refreshing change in the characterisation of women.

Udayana's attraction for Vāsavadattā had become an infatuation, and this was being a matter of concern and even resentment among the servants of the harem as is proved by the words of the Kancuki—

"Alas! the attachment for things that are to be avoided!"

"Even defeating the purpose of his own famous minister Varṣarakṣita (Yaungandharāyana), the king has entangled himself in this troublous net of sensual life."

Yaugandharāyana, the clever judge of character, knew where to look for help. He was sure that unless he secured Vāsavadattā's co-operation, nothing could be achieved. He was aware of the real love Vāsavadattā had for her husband. It was not an infatuation. She loved her husband enough, to make any sacrifice, to undergo any penance, for his welfare. That which was to be done by Vāsavadattā, was almost impossible for any woman of a lesser calibre. She had to leave her husband in such a way to make him believe that she was dead, in order to make way for Padmāvatī, the

1. कच्चुको—प्रहो! विगाहितव्यविबंध:।
   परिसूत्य पुन: प्रक्ष्यमात्यं वर्षरसितं।
   देवेनात्मा स्वयं लिङ्गो विप्रमे विषयावते॥
   Ta. V. I. 4
Princess of Magadha. The alliance with the king of Magadha was necessary to make Udayana strong. Yaugandharāyana secured help from all quarters in the proper way. Pradyota was informed about the situation and his permission and help was ensured to carry out the plans he had thought out.

And then he himself approached Vāsavadatta to request her for her co-operation. He was a little doubtful, because he knew women were always frightened of separation.  

But, Vāsavadatta rose to the occasion. The instruction of her father and the request of Yaugandharāyana were accepted, because she saw the situation quite clearly. She willingly helped in separating the king from her, with the full knowledge that when she will meet him next there will be another woman to share his love. Her father wrote to her—"My darling child, leaving the infatuation and weakness of heart natural to women, even throw away your life, if necessary, in such a way, as will be quoted as the ideal for chaste women who really love their husbands." There is no need to say that she did everything in her power to achieve this end.

Vāsavadatta behaves like a sensible, loving and noble woman throughout. Whether in her own role or in disguise, she does not lose her natural dignity as the queen.

The earliest source-book for all the plays centering round Udayana, is the Brhatkatha of Guṇādhya, which is not available in the original to us. As we could get at them

1. योगमङ्कराणः—प्रयोतः स्वमुताप्रवासावविवधः दत्तामुनुसः कृतः:  
प्रारब्धा मपथेश्वरेण घटना तैस्तौत्पायकमः।  
देवी मां केवल यदि मनः संताममत्प्राथिते  
कुर्यायत साधु ततो वियोगविवधे किंतु अभ्यः कार्तरः।  
Ta. V. I. 6

2. घये जीवितसंशयेन वसले ह्वदयात् छोपुलभं विभाय भोहां।  
उपमानपदं पतिबतानं चरित्योपसि यथा तथा विभेश्य। Ta. V. I. 10
through the later works, the Brhatkathā Samgraha and the Kathā-Saritsāgara, both based on the works of Gunādhya, there are many stories which tell how Yaugandharāyana planned and achieved the marriage of Udayana with the Princesses of various kingdoms in order to add to his power more and more. The attainment of power through marriage-alliance used to be a common method in politics from very ancient days. In Udayana's case, it is more clear than anywhere else. Udayana belongs to the Sacivāyattasiddhi type of kings. Really, it is his ministers that manage everything in the name of the king, while the king himself enjoys life in the harem. Even his first marriage, the marriage with Vāsavadattā, was pre-planned by her father, as is clearly stated in the Pratijñā-Yaugandharāyana. Fortunately Pradyota's plans succeeded beyond all expectations because of Vāsavadattā's qualities that enslaved Udayana for ever. She was his first wife and she remained the most beloved as far as one could gather from the plays of Bhāsa, and also from the stories found in Kathā Saritsāgara etc. All the dramas that are available, uphold this fact with slight variations as in the plays of Śrī Harṣa.

In the Svapnavāsavadattā itself, Bhāsa had changed the original story to suit his dramatic purposes, as has been already noticed in a previous chapter.

Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī are the main female characters and both have their individuality and dignity suitable to the age, position and status of each. Here, in this play Anaṅgaharṣa seems to have followed Bhāsa in the portrayal of these two royal ladies with better success. Though Anaṅgaharṣa has followed the trend of the story as depicted by Bhāsa, in the general outlines, the characters seem to rise and shine to a greater extent in this play. This is equally true in the case of Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī,

1. Pr. Yau. I.
and even more so in the case of Udayana. The love of Udayana for Vāsavadattā, which amounted to an infatuation, was the main cause of the loss of his kingdom in both plays. The alliance with the Magadha King was a possible help to regain his sovereignty. Bhāsa had left out the father of Vāsavadattā from the plot. But Anaṅgaharṣa thought it more natural that Vāsavadattā should be blessed nad advised by her father also, before she took the terrible and risky step of leaving her husband.

Even Darśaka, the brother of Padmāvatī is brought in to join hands with the ministers to drive away Aruni and reinstate Udayana. The reason for Darśaka's interest is the fact that Padmāvatī had fallen head over ears in love with the Vatsa King. And it is the brains of the loyal Yaugandharāyana that is working behind the scenes in both the plays. But the difference is that in the Tāpasa-vatsarāja, Yaugandharāyana purposely sends Sankṛtyāyani to Padmāvatī with definite instructions and a picture of Udayana. The Magadha Princess is so much attracted by the beauty and loyalty of the king, that she leaves the palace and all its luxuries to take up the life of an ascetic even as king Udayana, who turned an ascetic because he lost his beloved wife. The various incidents in the play differ from those described in the Svapnavāsavadatta, due to this difference in the characters, the back-ground and the temperament of the three main personages, specially Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī.

Though the name of the play is Tāpasa-vatsarāja, and it is justified by the king leading the life of an ascetic till the end of play, still, it is Vāsavadattā, and later on Padmāvatī, who lead the course of action. Both the queens love Udayana much more than their own lives. Both wish the best for him. But Padmāvatī, being younger and unmarried knows only the importance of love, she is ready to live or die for that love. Her love is sincere and independent of any reciprocal feelings. Of course, she would have
been very happy if she could hope to be accepted by Udayana with love. But, the fact that he could not find a place for her in his heart did not baffle her. She still loves him and follows his foot-steps. When she comes to know that her hopes could only be dupes, she decides to die, not because she resented his love for his dear Vāsavadattā, but because she could not bear insult and indifference from him whom she loved so much. She would have succeeded in her attempt if not for the timely arrival of the king on the spot, due to the persuasions of his friend Vasantaka. It is this crisis that finally brings about his marriage with Padmāvatī in a hurry, which takes place in the hermitage under the supervision of Sānkṛtyāyantī. King Darśaka and others are away at Kauśāmbī at that time, fighting with Aruṇī. Padmāvatī is aware of the deep-rooted love of Udayana for Vāsavadattā. As she herself says, it is this loyalty and devotion to his former wife that attracted her so much! This insistence of getting him as husband inspite of the knowledge she had about his irrevocable love for Vāsavadattā seems rather strange. She loves him. She knows that he has no eye for anybody else except Vāsavadattā, who was dead according to the knowledge of both. Still she is insistent about getting him as her husband. This is an un-understandable psychology of a woman’s heart, which perhaps Anaṅgharṣa wanted to portray before the world. She is always yearning after a thing which she knows to be not easily obtainable! Here is a vast difference between the Udayana and Padmāvatī depicted by Bhāsa, and the same characters shown by Anaṅgharṣa. Udayana’s love for Vāsavadattā is deep-rooted and he could never forget her. Still, in the Svapnavāsavadatta, he does not seem to be so forlorn and disheartened as to be always on the lookout for an opportunity to put an end to his life, as we see in the

1. पदावती—प्रहो ! स्वयरसीहुद एव इति, अत एव मे एतस्योपरि प्रभिन्नवेत्। Ta. V. IV. p. 53
Tāpasa-vatstraṇa. In the former play, when the proposal from Darśaka came, offering the hand of his sister, the king gave his silent consent, considering the possible political gains of such an alliance. But the Vatsaraṇa of this latter play, who took to the ascetic life because he could not commit suicide due to the constant watchfulness of his loyal ministers, would not even hear of looking at the beautiful Princess though he had enough evidence of her deep-rooted love. The friends and well-wishers of Udayana had to invent all sorts of stories to lead him on to the hermitage where Padmāvatī was leading the life of austerity, worshipping his portrait.

Of all the stories told, the most important is that Vatsaraṇa would meet with Vāsavadatta only after marrying a Princess, similar to her in all things. It is this fake prophecy of one of the followers of Yaugandharāyana that finally made the king accept the hand of Padmāvatī. Even then, he would do so only at the last moment when he was suddenly faced with Padmāvatī’s attempt to commit suicide. The one redeeming feature, in the whole happening is that the actions of Padmāvatī and Vatsaraṇa were both genuine and they were equally ignorant about the conspiracy that was being hatched round them for the sake of Udayana’s reinstatement on the throne of Kauśāmbi.

While Padmāvatī’s actions are all motivated by her deep love for Udayana and the desire to become his wife, Vāsavadatta’s actions are characterised by the desire of his welfare and glory. This is quite natural also because she is his wife and it is her duty to share his fate, good or bad, and also to see that he keeps to the right path. She loves him and he loves her. But, she also sees that his love for her was demoralising him, and he was loosing his position, prestige and name because of his constant desire to be with her and to enjoy life. As a good wife, she saw her duty clearly. Of course, the path of duty was spread with too many thorns. It was not enough that she should bear the separation from her beloved husband, but she had also to live as a dependent on the future
co-wife and help in making him marry the woman. In this matter the Vāsavadattā of Bhāsa is more or less on the same level with the one portrayed by Anaṅgaharṣa. The difference lies in this that, in the work of Bhāsa, the planned conspiracy is known only to the ministers and the queen, but in this latter work the only people who do not know anything about it are the King and Padmāvatī. The queen has the support of her father, all the ministers, Sāṅkrtyāyanī, who was already her revered companion, and her friend Kāñchanamālā. Even Vasantaka, the friend of the king is deep drowned in the plot. Vāsavadattā nobly accepts her cross for the sake of her husband, and carries out her part perfectly. Not even once does he betray any feeling of weakness or yield to anyone in her solicitudes for Udayana, unlike Bhāsa’s Vāsavadattā who praises Udayana openly and rather over-enthusiastically.¹

But, once the end is achieved, and Padmāvatī has become the wedded wife of Udayana, we find a great change in Vāsavadattā, which is quite contrary to the Vāsavadattā portrayed by Bhāsa. There, she continues to live with Padmāvatī, loves her and awaits the return of Yaugandharāyana for further action. But, in this later work, Vāsavadattā loses all self-control, and decides to burn herself to death. Her power of understanding, reason and logic seem to have deserted her at this juncture. The situation is saved only by the advent of the equally desperate Udayana who is also determined to burn himself to death, because he has no more hopes of meeting Vāsavadattā. At this moment we feel that, Bhāsa’s Vāsavadattā is more sensible, noble and

¹. ॥ चेति—भनेदारिके ! यरि स राजा विक्रो भवेत् ।
बासवदत्ता—नः नहि नः हि । दर्शनीय एव ।
पद्धावती—प्रायोऽक्रं त्वं जानाति ।
S. V. II. p. 14

श्रा. पद्धावती—यथा ममार्य्य्युन्त्स्तथैवायर्याया वासवदत्तया इति ।
बासवदत्ता—प्रतोध्याधिकम् ।
S. V. IV. p. 24
understanding, whereas the Vāsavadattā portrayed by Anaṅgahṛṣa is more emotional and impulsive. She was prepared to do all that was necessary to save her husband and herself from the scandal and infamy—that, due to their infatuation for each other, they ruined not only themselves but also the kingdom and the people. She showed courage enough to do all that was necessary to wake up her husband to the situation and to his duties. But Udayana did not rise to the occasion at all. When he knew that his beloved wife was dead, he also wanted to die and escape. It is his relations, Pradyota and Darśaka, who go to the battle-field to help his ministers who were actually fighting not only against Aruṇī who was the enemy, but also against Udayana’s own impulsiveness and despair grown out of his infatuation for Vāsavadattā. He loves Vāsavadattā, she and she alone matters to him. He does not show to Padmāvatī even the average daksinīya that is the due of a wedded wife, though he was fully aware of her deep-rooted love for him. He does not care what happens to the new bride Padmāvatī, if he falls into the fire. He pities the plight of the poor Princess who loved him so much, but that realisation does not help kindle a love for her in his heart. Since many portions of the manuscript are lost, it is not possible to follow closely the course of action as visualised by the Poet. But this much is easily seen that, as far as Vāsavadattā and Udayana are concerned, they know and desire only the existence and company of each other. It does not matter to them what happens to others, however near and dear they may be to them. Vāsavadattā, in this case is slightly better. She remembers her duty till the goal is achieved. Padmāvatī seems here to be just a piece in the political game played by the ministers of Udayana. When the aims of the ministers are fulfilled and Vāsavadattā is recognised in the person of the Brāhmaṇī who was living with Padmāvatī all the time, and when all concerned are happy, the only question the king had to ask his newly wedded wife is, “You have not
in any way wronged the Queen? To that she meekly answers, "Yes, my Lord! Not knowing her identity, I addressed her as dear friend." Though Padmāvatī was quite a necessary help in regaining the kingdom she seems to be the least remembered character at the happy ending. And she is indeed great in that she understands the situation and accepts the inevitable in a dignified way.

Another female character brought before us in this play, is Śāṅkṛtyāyāni, the ascetic lady, whom once before also we saw as a good, learned and broad-hearted woman leading an ascetic life. She is the same here also. Though she falls into the category of the Parivṛṣṭī of the Mālavikāgñimitra, and the Mālati-Mādhava, this lady, as portrayed by Śrī Harṣa, did not disgrace the orange-garb she had taken by tying herself up with the desires of the mundane world. Where she finds that her idea might not be accepted, she coolly withdraws and minds her own business, as we have already noticed. The Śāṅkṛtyāyāni in this play, is the same as her prototype, as far as her ideals go. She realises that constant contact with worldly people is always harmful for the ascetic as she knows from her own experience. But though she is leading the life of renunciation, she has to interfere in the matters of the world because of her gratitude towards the king of the Vatsas who had helped her in time of need. She is not a passive witness or a hidden help. She takes an active part in carrying out the plans of Yau-gandharāyana. She actually takes the portrait of Udayana

1. राजा—पचावति ! किंचित्त्वापरांद न देश्य: ।
2. पचावति—ब्राह्मण पुत्र ! ब्रह्मण समाराध : वन्मया ब्रजानन्त्या प्रियसहीति प्रालिपत ।

Ta. V. VI. p. 74

3. See p. 192 supra.

4. साङ्कृत्यायनी—प्रभुवतानां भीमोवर्षमिपि मूलवलांविनामू ।
श्रीहिंस्तह साङ्कृत्यायनाय विरािणामू।

Ta. V. III. 4
to Padmāvatī and it is she who was responsible for creating such deep love for Vatsarāja in the heart of the Princess. Though we are told that she is a Parivrājikā, in all reality, she is a veritable Pītha-mardika as far as Padmāvatī is concerned. Her affection for Vāsavadattā also is quite obvious.

All the characters in this play seem to be pieces of chess, played very carefully by the minister for the success of Udayana, each move being cleverly planned out beforehand. Still they have their own individualities. Anaṅga-harṣa seems to have before him the ideal, as set up by Bhāsa. He saw the greatness of Vāsavadattā's sacrifice and the nobility of Padmāvatī as shown in the Svaṁnavāsavadatta. But, when he himself sets out to portray the incidents referred to in that play, Udayana, Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī seem to have undergone a great change. Padmāvatī and Vāsavadattā seem to be two types representing the ideals of conjugal love. In the case of Vāsavadattā, it is love that bears not even a minute's separation. The king, true to his nature, completely ignores his duties to all others and merges himself in the company of the Queen. But, Vāsavadattā could not, for long, be blind to the destruction that was happening around. So, she is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for the sake of her husband. She realises the dictum that fame is the greatest thing for noble people and duty towards the kingdom should count first with the king.

Though Udayana is the hero of the play, it is really Yaugandharāyana's hands that direct the actions and incidents everywhere. Vāsavadattā and Padmāvatī are helping him, one consciously and the other completely unconscious of the part that she is made to play. Herein lies the difference between the two queens. Padmāvatī is a simple, trusting and noble princess. It was very easy to fill her innocent and romantic heart with admiration for a handsome king who is well-known for his prowess and also for his staunch devotion to his beloved. The story of Udayana's
marriage with Vāsavadattā must have made quite a hubbub in the royal circles of that age. It was only natural that young maidens with romantic turn of minds were attracted towards such young men. And with Sānkṛtyāyani’s maneuvering, the flame of love was kindled in the heart of Padmāvatī. The true and noble woman that she was, her love was firm, whether it was reciprocated or not. That is what is proved by Anāṅgharṣa in this portrayal of Padmāvatī. The moment Padmāvatī chose Udayana as her husband Yaugandharāyana’s aim of getting Darśaka’s help for Udayana, was achieved. But Udayana’s heart was gone with Vāsavadattā, and nothing could bring it back to normal conditions. Padmāvatī, portrayed by Bhāsa, did not have this difficulty to face. Though Udayana was extremely devoted to Vāsavadattā and was still in agonies due to her separation, he had not forgotten his chivalry as a gentleman and duty as a husband. Knowing his own precarious position, he gracefully accepted the hand of Padmāvatī, when offered by her brother, and thereafter treated her as her position and love deserved. But the picture in Tāpasavatsarāja is quite different. Padmāvatī was accepted by Udayana under pressure from various quarters and specially because he was told by a fortune-teller that he would meet with his Queen again only after marrying another princess resembling her,¹ and such a resemblance was found in Padmāvatī. Even then, he gave his consent only at the last moment, just to save Padmāvatī from committing suicide.

Udayana was incessantly remembering Vāsavadattā

1. वसन्तकः —भो वयस्य कि न स्मरति भवानु, यर्चेन भगवता विद्वेन भगितं यथा —देवसहस्यः कन्यकायः: पाणिप्रहण निर्वर्तं देवोसमा-गमस्ते भविष्यति हि ति।
राजा —प्रनयव दुराशया हिमालिभीमवस्या नीतोस्मिः।

Ta. V. III. p. 38-39
and now loosing all hopes of ever obtaining her, because he feared that this second marriage would only estrange her even if she was alive, he was seeking an opportunity to burn himself to death. All the same, Padmāvatī follows him like a shadow and tries to console him inspite of his indifference to her. She seems to be patience on a monument throughout the play and her love does not seek reciprocation. If Udayana would love her she would consider it as a blessing from God. Her love is unconditional and constant. This idea rouses admiration in our minds, and by contrast, Padmāvatī rises in our estimation. Though Vāsavādattā has shown her nobility and selflessness by voluntarily separating from her husband, she could not bear the idea of having a co-wife. She had had enough proof of the king’s constant and deep-rooted love. She knew the real condition of the king. Still she was unable to bear the idea of having another woman who could claim a share of her husband’s love, irrespective of the fact whether she got it or not. Here it is that Vāsavādattā fails in the idealism whereas Padmāvatī wins.

By showing these types of ideals Anaṅgaharṣa was perhaps trying to hold up the status of women, which was not so high, as could be seen from the other plays belonging to this period. In most of them women are depicted as companions in gaiety and pleasures of conjugal love. Even in the Kaumudimahotsava which is written by a woman and which deals with a political theme, the woman does not rise above these heights. The two Udayana plays written by Śrī Harṣa had reduced Vāsavādattā to the status of a jealous, haughty and proud chief Queen. And Padmāvatī appears to have fallen to the ordinary grade of the numerous queens that filled the harem of Udayana. But these two Queens are portrayed quite differently by Anaṅgaharṣa. He does not seem to be drawing upon what he actually saw; may be, that his imagination is working on the lines which he would
like women to follow and, of the two, the ideal of Pādma-vati’s self-dedication seems to appeal to the poet more.

The other women characters, even the maids-in-attendance, Kanchanamālā and Kośalikā, show a culture much above that of the ordinary level, when compared to the characters of the same status, depicted in the other plays of this period. Altogether the play seems to be a stray attempt at upholding the greatness of women at a time when they were pushed very much to the back-ground. The position of women in society on the basis of education, religion and other things is not very clear. But the fact that Dārśaka is prepared to go to war with Aruni for the sake of Udayana, because the latter has been chosen by his sister, is quite significant. It is a proof that the happiness and welfare of his sister is of much importance to him—the brother. So also, because Udayana is his son-in-law, Pradyota is interested in his welfare and is prepared to fall in with all the suggestions of Yaugandharāyaṇa to see him back on the throne. This also points towards the fact that the daughters’ welfare is important to the fathers as that of their sons. Whether this was the true situation at that time or not, we cannot say. But Anaṅgaharṣa wished it to be so, and he imagined and portrayed a society which thus held together for the welfare of one another, with friends working for the good of friends, servants dedicating themselves to the welfare of the masters, wives sacrificing their everything for their husbands and the husbands considering their wives as the most cherished treasures of their own lives.

How far the contemporary society liked this picture, one has no means to know. Only one single copy of the manuscript survives, which is kept in Berlin, and that also is full of errors. Inspite of the various quotations from this work by different authors on rhetorics, their is no source available at present to trace the original.

The literary merit of this work is unchallengeable,
Ideals upheld by it are quite noble and elevating. Characters and incidents described are worthy of appreciation, to say the least. Still, it fell out of circulation and finally got lost even as many other works. Has not this fact its own story to tell? Perhaps, the very idea that such a high and mighty king should be loyal and devoted to his wife, however good or noble she might be, revolted the people who could not imagine that women could be respected and adored. As a piece of art, it might have interested a few, while the rest became indifferent to this play in which ideals held ground than reality. In the modern days also, we do not lack examples where the ordinary incidents in the everyday life become more and more popular, while the idealistic or serious themes fall out of favour very easily with the general public. Human nature being similar, irrespective of time or place, we may not be far wrong in concluding that the reason of Tapasavatsarāja being ignored by the men in general may be that the ideals upheld by the author were not quite palatable to the contemporary society or they were quite out-of-date to arouse any appreciation. However, it cannot be gainsaid that the women as seen through the eyes of Anāṅgahārṣa were noble and worthy of respect and admiration.

Draupadi, the queen of the Pāndavas, is brought on the stage as the heroine of a play, for the first time, in this era. Bhaṭṭanārāyana, the author of the Veṇīsamhāra, seems to be a free spirit with a special inclination towards the heroic and the terrific sentiments with all their paraphernalia. This turn of his mind is manifested not only by the choice of the theme, but of the heroine also. As the very name suggests, this play centres round the tying of the hair of Draupadi, which was let loose years ago by Dussāsana at the instigation of his elder brother. Though Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata were equally popular throughout the ages, the latter did not attract many poets as a source for
their writings, because perhaps it was more history than poetry, and more realistic, than idealistic in nature. In the period we have already covered, only Bhāsa, one of the earliest poets, cared to draw upon the incidents of Mahābhārata for his dramatic works. Even he did not bring Draupadī on the stage in any of his plays. The concept of women is generally characterised by all that is beautiful, peaceful, calm and cool. Draupadī, the offspring of the sacrificial fire, did not appeal to the poetic talents till this period. But now came a poet who dared to put this heroic queen with a fiery and revengeful spirit, in the leading role of his drama. The story concerns with the days of battle, beginning from the return of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the capital. The very nature of the play allows little scope for women characters. Still Bhāṭṭanārāyana has introduced three main characters—Draupadī, Bhānumati and Gāndhārī. Also, there are Duṣṣalā and her mother-in-law, apart from the few maids-in-attendance. The scene of actions changes from one camp to another and finally the play ends with the fulfilment of Bhimasena’s vow, taken at the beginning of the first act.¹

The play begins with the vow of Bhima to Draupadī and ends with its fulfilment. In this way, Draupadī is the heroine of the play. She is a unique figure in the whole of the Sanskrit dramatic literature. According to the general conception, and also the dramaturgists, the woman is supposed to be the representative of all that is gentle, beautiful and attractive. She is concerned as the charming counterpart of man. In the Nāṭyaśāstra and the later works on dramaturgy, the heroes and heroines are described and

1. भीमसेन: —चब्दुज्ञप्रभिमितवण्डगबाभिघात—
   संघुणिश्वुलामस्य सुयोवलस्य।
   हस्यावन्धनवशोरितवेणपारस्य—
   हलंसविप्यति कवांस्तव देवि भीम॥ V. S. I. 21
defined with the specific idea of conjugal relationship between the two. Though it is said by Bharata that the drama is intended to be the imitation of the world, and as such should be the imitation of the happenings of the world, the dramatist has been allowed to use his discretion as to what should be shown and what should not. So, in practice, generally the ennobling and good things are depicted; the Indian stage particularly limiting itself to the triumphs of good and noble lives. Of course, villains and their deeds do form a part of the play, but it is invariably to make the hero and his party shine by contrast, and to enhance the final happiness. Where women characters are concerned the Indian mind has always been a bit conservative. Only good, noble and cultured women are chosen as the heroines and they are portrayed as gentle, patient and submissive. The discussions and definitions of the heroines found in works of dramaturgy are suitable to this concept of women, as we have already seen in the first chapter of this treatise.¹

In dramas, heroines are generally divided into three kinds—Śvīyā, Parakīyā and Sādhārāṇa, according to their relationship with the respective heroes. Each of these is again classified according to their nature. Draupadī being the wife of Pāṇḍavas belongs to the type called Śvīyā and by nature she can be nothing else but Pragalbhā. So far there is no discrepancy between the dramaturgs and Bhatṭanārāyaṇa’s portrayal. But when we come down to a close examination of the play, we find Draupadī as depicted in this drama to be standing out as a unique figure in the whole of Sanskrit dramatic literature. The Venīsamhāra as we all know, is not a play with love as its theme. Nor can we designate it as a political play like the Mudrārakṣasa, nor it is a social play like the Cārudatta. This contains all the elements of all the above mentioned types combined, evenly or unevenly as the case may be. It is the story of the battle between the brother princes of the Kuru
family and it is hatred and self-pity that predominate in the actions of all characters. Draupadi, the heroine, seems to lead in this characteristic. She enters the scene with tears streaming from her eyes, and her heart burning with anger and desire for revenge. Bhimasena is already full of indignation at Yudhishthira's attempts for peace by sending Sri Krsna to Hastinapura. He is for once ready to get out of control and go against the wishes of his venerable elder brother and says: "For one day you are not my elder, nor am I submissive to you".

Sahadeva's fear that the advent of Draupadi would only enhance the anger of Bhimasena, seems to be a key to the nature of Draupadi in this drama. In fact it is she who kindles the fire of anger in Bhima almost at every step. She seems to be an ordinary woman furious at the insults she had to suffer at the hands of the enemies and longing for revenge. Mercy and forgiveness do not characterise her words or activities. She comes to the stage only twice—in the first and last acts. In the first act she appears with her long hair loose with complaints of more insults from the wife of Duryodhana. In the last act she appears along with Yudhishthira where Bhimasena comes after killing Duryodhana and fulfills the vow he had taken by tying the hair of Draupadi with his blood-stained hands. In the first act she appears to be boiling with the desire for revenge. She is angry with all the Pndavas except Bhima, because

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1. भीमसेनः —मुख्मच्छासनल्लख्लाहासि मया मननेन नामस्यर्थे व्रताय नामविगद्धमा स्थितितमता मन्येयजुज्ञानामपि।
कौशल्महासितसिद्धिमित्ताख्यातिस्मादस्योचित्तवतः कौरवान नास्ति विवस्तव समाससि न गुरुनाः कायस्यकर्मानि।
V. S. I. 12

2. सहदेवः —यह चुतमिव ज्योतिरायं कुष्टलयं संवृतम्।
ततु भ्रमितव कुष्टलयं नूनं संवर्षित्विधिः।
V. S. I. 14
of their passive attitudes. She adores Bhirnasena because her feelings find an affinity only in his thoughts, words and deeds. When finally she becomes sure that the battle would take place, only then, does she speak a few words which show the natural feelings a loving wife should have at such a time. Bhirnasena in his anger says: "You will not see Vrkodara again with face clouded by shame due to the unrenged insults from enemies endured, and before the Kauravas are completely destroyed". Here she requests that he should take care of himself and come back safe.

In the last scene, Draupadi appears once more. We find a slight difference in her behaviour here. She has seen the death of her children, of the near and dear relations, and is in constant fear of hearing bad news about her dear husband Bima, who was the only one to fulfill all her desires. These sorrows seem to have calmed her down. Though Draupadi has been brought on the stage as the heroine, the picture is neither an ennobling one nor elevating.

The Draupadi that we envisage in the epic and the heroine presented before us by Bhatanarayana seem to be very different from each other. In the Mahabharata, the queen of the Pandavas shows an individuality the distinguishing characteristics of which are pride and quick resentment of insults and injuries. These common characteristics help us to identify the queen in the Venisamhara also. But, the similarity ends there. She is the central figure around which the main story of the epic evolves. There, she depicts the

1. भीमसेनः —भूयः परिंविक्षान्तिलामितालिङ्गिरिताननम्।

2. द्रोपदी—नाष, मा बलु यान्नस्त्यसम्यतिपंकरितपितकोपस्नः अनवेतितवरिः।

V. S. I. 26

V. S. I. p. 24
admirable type of courageous fidelity personified as a wife. She is the ideal mistress of the household whether in the palace or in the forest. She performed her duties perfectly well, irrespective of places or circumstances. She was the mistress of the house with mercy and solicitude for the poor and distressed, as the prominent traits of her character. Duryodhana himself, who was full of complaints against everyone of the Pândavas, while talking about the Rájasúya testifies to the fact that Draupádi had supervised to the feeding of all alike, from the highest to the lowest, herself remaining without food till everybody was fed and satisfied.

Trials were not wanting in her life. But she stood them all bravely showing patience and preseverence. At the same time, unlike Sítá, she continued to keep the fire of revenge burning in her heart till the proper time came. The thirteenth year of their exile was the worst period for the Pândavas; much more so for their proud queen. Yudhíšthíra was very much perturbed, because he did not know what to do about their wife who deserved to be maintained like a mother and honoured like an elder sister. It was Draupádi herself who came forward to solve the situation by volunteering to accept the position of a maid-servant in the harem of the queen of Viráta. All the same, she would not submit to insult and suffer disgrace silently. Jayadrátha, Kícaka, Duśśásana and Duryodhana himself had to pay with their lives for provoking this patient and loving daughter of fire.

Her knowledge and wisdom are manifest in many contexts. Her question to the elders of the Kaurava court, and her denunciation of the Viráta King are two relevant examples. The influence, her master-mind exercised over the Pândavas and their policy, is obvious at every step in the epic.

1. इब तु न: प्रिया भायी प्रारंभमोधिव गरीवसि।
   मातिव परिपाल्या च पूज्या वोष्ठा स्वस्वेच्च च॥ Ma. Bh. IV. 4. 22
But these ennobling qualities do not find a place in the play under consideration. Here, only one side, rather the hard side of her nature, is portrayed. When the Rākṣasa in disguise announces the death of Bhīma and Arjuna, of course, a glimpse of her softness is found. She along with Yudhiṣṭhira decides to enter the fire and would have done it, if not for the timely arrival of Bhīma.

Bhānumatī, the wife of Duryodhana is another female character presented in the Vaiśampāyana. She belongs to the Swadhīna Patika and Swīya type of heroine. Her love for Duryodhana is so great that she sees nothing wrong in any of his deeds. Her picture is that of a true pativrata, always intent on the happiness and welfare of her husband alone. Those who are loved by her husband are loved by her. Those who are hated by him are hated by her also. We are told in the first act that, just as any other ordinary woman, Bhānumatī insulted Draupadī by asking her pointedly why she still let her hair loose, since Yudhiṣṭhira was prepared to make peace even by getting only five villages.¹ But this is the only place where we see her meanness. In general, she appears to be a good woman and there is nothing to mark her out as specially noteworthy. She is a type of the ordinary woman belonging to aristocratic families, minding her own business and attending to her own life inside the harem. Her husband is her all in all, and she leads a life of peace and comfort. She believes in good and bad omens. She is very much agitated at the bad dream she had in which she saw a hundred snakes being killed and her own upper garment removed by a mongoose. She tries to propitiate the gods by worship and prayers. At the same time, she is very easily persuaded to leave these by her haughty husband. All her ideas of good and bad are just according to the sweet will and pleasure.

¹ चैती—प्रथम याज्ञेन! पञ्चप्रामाण: प्राच्येन्त्र इति श्रुयते। ततो कस्मादिदा
  दानीमिथि ते केशा न संवस्यते।

V. S. I. p. 17
of her husband. When he is informed that, Bhānumatī is undergoing fasts and vows for the victory of her husband, the chamberlaine remarks to himself, "Good, oh! noble lady! good! Even though you are a woman, you are far better than His Majesty the King who, inspite of the fact that the enemies are acting with the help of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is still eager to go and enjoy in the harem. The comparison and the comment are only too correct. That was no time for enjoyment for any heroic king. The battle was raging fiercely, and one by one his own faithful leaders were being killed. But the haughty and fool-hardy Duryodhana refuses to acknowledge the situation. Even though a woman, Bhānumatī sees the point more clearly and tries her best to propitiate the gods in favour of the King. Really, she is much better than her husband, as we could see within the few minutes we are able to see them together.

Bhānumatī is only mentioned in the Mahābhārata. The characteristics attributed to this queen therefore, arise from Bhāṭṭanārāyana’s own imagination. So, there may not be anything wrong in concluding that she was a character drawn from the society as visualised by the author, and it is representative of the character of women in the royal families of his time.

Duśšala, the sister of Duryodhana, and her mother-in-law are the two other female characters portrayed by Bhāṭṭanārāyana. They enter the presence of Duryodhana to tell him about the danger that was engulfing Jayadratha, because of Arjuna’s vow to kill him before sunset. Both of them are frightened and are full of apprehensions about the life of Jayadratha. Duryodhana just laughs over their fears

3. कण्जुकी—सायु पतित्रते ! सायु ! श्रीभावेषिि बर्शामा वरे भवति न पुनर्महाराजः। योमयुष्मेषु बलवस्य भवता कि बलवस्यु, वसुदेवसहाय्ये पाण्डुजुक्षेत्रिविवाचाय्यत् पुरविहारसुम्भवमुः-भवति।  

V. S. II. p. 27
and assures them that nothing could happen to his beloved and heroic brother-in-law!

Queen Gāndhārī is another character presented in this play.

The noblest and best of all women characters, portrayed in the Mahābhārata, is Gāndhārī. No shadow obscures her pure image. Her ‘Sahadharmācharana’ goes to this extent that she closely bandages her eyes the moment she comes to know that she was betrothed to a blind prince of the Kuru family, because it was not right to enjoy the pleasures which her husband was unable to enjoy. She had one hundred sons to make her the mother of heroes, but none worthy of that mother who was really Virtue incarnate. Though very loving and understanding by nature, she never allowed her love and affection for her sons to get the better of her right judgement and wisdom. Her sons never failed to hear their mother’s warning advices whenever they deviated from the path of righteousness. In the game of dice when Yudhiṣṭhira gambled away his everything, including brothers and wife, the whole Kaurava court rose in great jubilation. Even the old blind king joined in for a moment. But there was one soul in Hastināpura at that time, who was terribly stricken with grief. Filled with apprehensions about the fruits of the wild oats her sons were sowing, she sternly ordered Duryodhana to retrace his steps. Once again when Duryodhana, drunk deep in his pride and avarice, dared to insult Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe, it was the grave and firm voice of Gāndhārī that rose in protest to warn her erring sons, though to no avail. Duryodhana, guided by his evil geniuses Karna and Śakuni, would not listen to his wise mother, who again and again warned him that the wages of sin will be death. Still he was fully aware of the greatness of his mother. His one desire was always to get her blessings before he entered the battlefield everyday. But, the only words the sad Queen could utter in answer to the supplications of her son were: “My son!
where there is virtue, there is glory." Even Lord Kṛṣṇa had to submit to the powerful curse of this noble and virtuous woman, when in the agony of seeing her whole family destroyed, she blamed Kṛṣṇa for not avoiding it. She cursed him that his race also will be annihilated by internal conflict. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, omnipotent and omniscient though he was, accepted the curse as coming from the most virtuous woman of the Kuru race, thus recognising before the whole world the greatness of a simple woman, who was a real mother, loving, yet firm in her truthfulness, justice, piety and penance.

But, we do not find any trace of this character in the Gāndhārī depicted by Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa. Of course, she has blindfolded her eyes because her husband was blind. She is a very affectionate mother who is quite blind to the faults of her children. She has only one desire left that she must save the one son who is still alive. She is an ordinary woman who weeps, wails and pleads with her son to remain alive for her sake. She accompanies her husband, the blind Dhrṛtarāṣṭra, to the presence of Duryodhana who is miserable due to the death of all his brothers and also of Karna. They go to him with the idea of persuading him not to fight any more. In short, she seems to be a mere reflection of the many mothers seen in the everyday life.

Buddhimatikā, the maid-servant of Draupadī, and the friends of Bhānumati are the other female characters in this play. All of them are the suitable attendants and companions to their respective mistresses. Buddhimatikā, appears only in the first act. She relates their first meeting with Bhānumati to Bhimasena. The way in which she narrates the whole incident gives us an insight into her character. She is fully aware of the feelings of her mistress. When Bhimasena asked what was the Queen's answer to the insult by Bhānumatī, she spiritedly says, "Her Majesty need con-

1. यतो चर्मस्तति जयः
descend to answer only if she did not have any servants." And then she tells the well-pleased Bhimasena what she, as the servant of the mighty Queen, answered.

This incident and its narration give us an insight into the feelings of both the Pândava and the Kaurava families towards each other. The whole scene reflects the condition of the family-quarrel which had deteriorated to the low depth of meanness and cruelty.

There is nothing much to say about the two friends of the Queen Bhānumati.

Observing these female characters as portrayed by Bhāttanārāyaṇa, we are not able to discover any elevating qualities in any of them. Of all, perhaps the best is Bhānumati who impresses one with her devotion to her husband, her simplicity, her meek and submissive nature. While Duryodhana and Bhīma can be considered as equals in their cruelty, mutual hatred, haughtiness and pride, there is a big contrast between Bhānumati and Draupadi. While Draupadi shows all the fiery revengefulness, Bhānumati is a passive personality, who is satisfied with her life within the harem under the safe shelter given by her husband.

The general idea existent about women is not laudable. Women seem to be condemned as weak, helpless and foolish. The statement of the chamberlaine, "though she is a woman, the Queen is better than the King," shows plainly that women were not counted high in any way. Talking about Bhānumati, Sahadeva says that woman becomes similar to her husband by the constant companionship. After all even a sweet creeper that climbs on a

1. चेटी—कुमार, यदि परिजनहीना भवेतु तदं देवी भरति।
2. चेटी—ततो मया भणितमृ। भ्रणि भानुपति युध्मकमसुप्रेधु केशस्तेशु कष्मभाक्ष्याया केशा: संयम्यव इति। V. S. I. p. 18
3. ब्रह्मब्राह्मवाणपि वर्तमानय वरं भक्ती न पुराणाराजः। V. S. II, p. 27
poisonous tree acquires the power to cause unconsciousness.\textsuperscript{1} Though Duśsalā enters the presence of her brother, the king, she only weeps and wails. The talk is done by the mother of Jayadratha. This perhaps indicates the custom that younger women should not talk before their mothers-in-law, brothers and other elders.

One thing is clear that, the womenfolk of the society visualised by Bhaṭṭanārāyana were not held in much respect by their men nor did they get any appreciation from the people in general. Their dependence on men seems to have become a foregone conclusion as we could see from the comparison of the same characters found in the plays of Bhāsa with those in the Venīsamhāra of Bhaṭṭanārāyana.

We do not have any information about the education of women during this period. The position of a wife was the most desirable thing for a woman. Widowhood was the worst luck that could happen to her. Draupadī does not want to live after her mighty husbands have been killed. She decides to enter the fire and thus follow them to the other world.\textsuperscript{2} There are many references to the wife dying along with her husband in the course of the play.\textsuperscript{3}

Fasts, worships and other vows were kept by women for the welfare of their husbands. It is believed that bad omens and inauspicious incidents being fore-runners of calamities, can be avoided by proper propitiations, oblations and sacrifices. We find Bhānumatī offering Arghya to the Sun and other gods. She is also observing some vows

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} सह्वेदः — छोराणं हि साह्व्यम्यं भवन्ति चेतांसि भंतं सह्वशानि।
  मधुरापि हि मूलवन्ते विपविनिमानितताव बज्जे।
  
  \textsuperscript{2} V. S. I. 10
  
  \item Venīsamhāra. VI. p. 178
  
  \item \textsuperscript{3} सुन्दरकः — हा ध्रतिकर्मणं खल्वचं वर्तेत। एषा बीरमाता समरविनिहतं
  गुरवं शुभं रक्षायुक्तास्या समग्रसूयणया वच्या सहानु-\textsuperscript{2}
  निर्यतं। साधू, बीरमातं: साधू।
  
  \textsuperscript{2} V. S. IV. p. 102
\end{itemize}
and fasts for the welfare of her husband. His interference in the worship is taken as a bad omen by all who are present. It is only the confidence Bhānumatī had in her husband's prowess that gives her consolation. But there is an indication that these offerings and fasts were becoming more and more mechanical and superficial. The devotee herself was easily dissuaded by Duryodhana's playful words.

As we examine the arena of the Sanskrit dramatic literature, we are confronted with one peculiar thing that Rāmāyaṇa has served as a source-book to many dramatists, whereas Mahābhārata is left out almost by all except Bhāsa and Bhaṭṭanārāyana. In fact Bhaṭṭanārāyana was the one author who dared to bring Draupadi on the stage as the heroine of a play.

But there are many plays with Sītā as the heroine. Among them the Aścaryacudāmani by Saktibhadra is quite note-worthy.

This play treats with the main incidents described in the Rāmāyaṇa beginning with the Śūrpanākhā episode and ending with the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā from Lankā.

Śūrpanākhā, Sītā and Mandodarı are the three female characters depicted in this play. Saktibhadra has not deviated from the story in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa as found in the present day. The characters are more or less the same. Still it is possible to read in between the lines and see the change that has come over the attitude towards women in society. Also the natural tendency of the people to look down upon them, and to consider them more as liabilities than assets, is quite obvious.

The depiction of Śūrpanākhā in the play is true to the picture drawn by Vālmīki. She is portrayed as a free, independent, selfish and amorous woman. The beauty of the two Princes aroused her desire and she decides to satisfy herself some how.

She approaches Rāma with her request, and then goes to Lakṣmana as directed by Rāma. After going to both by
turns and finding herself rejected, she is enraged and attacks them who dared to insult her and consequently becomes disfigured. She goes to Khara and Dūṣaṇa with the story of her insult by the two young mortals, and gets them entangled in a battle with Rāma, which ends in the destruction of the whole lot of them. Then, with redoubled hatred and rage she goes to Rāvana. So far, Śaktibhadra faithfully follows the story of the Rāmāyana. In the third act, Lakṣmaṇa brings the ring, the crest-jewel and armour as presents from the sages of Daṇḍaka forest. These presents possess the power to ward off the Maya of the Rākṣasas, and specially the ring and crest-jewel meant for Rāma and Sītā respectively had the power to reveal by touch a disguised Rākṣasa. This idea is also taken from the Rāmāyana. But, the poetic imagination worked to the full in showing the power actually at work in the third and fourth acts. The method of carrying away Sītā is completely original in this play. Rāvana assumes the guise of Rāma and accompanied by his charioteer in the guise of Lakṣmaṇa, makes Sītā enter the chariot of her own accord. The episode of Mārca is the same as in the Rāmāyana. In the meantime Śūrpaṇakhā takes the disguise of Sītā and delays Rāma on the way. And all these disguises are revealed when the real Rāma touches the false Sītā and the false Rāma touches the real Sītā. After she is recognised by Rāma, Śūrpaṇakhā does not appear on the stage. In the Rāmāyana also, we do not hear of Śūrpaṇakhā’s where-abouts, after Sītā was carried away by Rāvana. The killing of Jatāyu by Rāvana, and the following important incidents such as the killing of Bali, the coronation of Sugrīva, Hanumān’s success in finding Sītā, the battle and death of Rāvana and Sītā’s fire-ordeal, are all as found in the source-book itself.

In portraying the female characters, Śaktibhadra has not shown any difference between the Aryan and non-Aryan women as Bhavabhūti had done. Neither has he
tried to deviate from the trodden path. He has allowed his poetic imagination, not to take up any new track, but only to follow up and expand or develop the points which were already existent. This being the case, it is only natural that Śurpanākhā's picture is as repugnant and contemptible here as described in the Rāmāyana. The word "unrestrained" used for her by Rāma seems to describe her correctly.

Mandodari though belonging to the Rākṣasa race, her nobility, love, chastity and self-dedication to her husband are all ideal. There is no difference between this Mandodari and the one depicted in the Rāmāyana. Similarly, Rāvana's attitude towards her is also as it should be. Though he talks about abandoning her and the whole harem for the sake of Sītā, due respect and consideration is shown to her while she is before him. This picture of amicable conjugal life inspite of Rāvana's distraction for women, shows the greatness of Mandodari. Here again, Śaktibhadra has upheld the ideal of the wife who loves and obeys her husband in all circumstances even though he is faithless and bad. Mandodari knows all the shortcomings of her husband, and all his good qualities. She accepts him as he is and loves him, and saves him even from himself as much as she can. She is not the woman who is drowned in self-pity and jealousy. She is a true and noble woman who has a clear understanding, self-sufficiency, broad-heartedness and real love for her husband. She shows sincere goodwill for all around her. She is neither an encumbrance, nor a trouble to her husband; but obviously an asset to him. He knows well that he can always come back to her for comfort and consolation. She is the ideal of an average wife for all times. She is neither a slave nor a down-trodden creature. She is simple, loving, obedient and humble. At the

1. रामः—प्रार्गेल : ख्रोज़नः। A. Ch. II. p. 56
2. रावणः—देवि तव कारणांस्वभमन्तः:पुरुः त्याजामि। A. Ch. V. p. 170
same time she has the strength of her deep love, and the
courage of her convictions. And Rāvaṇa, the strong, cruel,
indisciplined, but just king of Lankā knows the worth of
his wife only too well. Inspite of all the shortcomings of
Rāvaṇa, his family-life seems to be a stronghold of love and
peace due to his noble and balanced wife. In the present
days, when women are in the clutches of the troubles and
difficulties of changing times, a wife and mother like Man-
dodari is the ideal that can help. While both men and wo-
men are looking at each other with suspicion and fear,
while each is trying to prove the inferiority of the other
and gain superiority for self, it is the forbearance, patience,
forgiving nature and tolerance of women like Maṇḍodari
that can solve the problems which invariably rise in the
everyday life. Maṇḍodari, as described in the Rāmāyana
and portrayed by Śaktibhadra, is an ideal that can be easily
followed by women in all positions, circumstances and condi-
tions.

The main character, Sītā, is presented as a happy wife
in company of her husband, as a woman terribly deceived
by force of circumstances and the selish Rākṣasa, as a cap-
tive of Rāvaṇa, and also as the wife who is condemned by
her husband for no fault of hers. In all these situations, her
simplicity, innocence, deep love for her husband, chastity and
courage are exemplary. Her love and concern for her young
brother-in-law, and also other family members are unmistak-
ably clear in her various remarks. In the second act, when Śūrpaṇakha is sent back to Lakṣmana, Sītā feels very bad
and asks Rāma why he is treating her thus! Rāma’s reply
was that undisciplined women are not worthy to be kept in
contact by people of good family. She asks immediately:
“Then why have you sent such an untrustworthy woman

1. Rām.:—वेदि न संसारमहंति कुदुम्बिनाम् अनर्गल: स्त्रीजनः।

A. Ch. II. p. 56
to young Laksmana?"^1

This whole conversation points towards her innocent and trusting nature. Even after Surpanakhā's true character and figure are revealed, she is worried about that beautiful woman wandering alone in the forest. It seems rather difficult for her to believe that the beautiful woman was the same as the Rākṣasi. Her desire to possess the golden deer is prompted only by her natural attraction for beautiful things which is common in all human-beings, specially in those who love beauty. It is quite easy for Rāvana and his charioteer, disguised as Rāma and Laksmana, to persuade her to get into the chariot with the story that Bharata is about to be attacked by enemies. Sitā readily agrees to the proposal to return home, because, as she admits, she will be happy to help Bharata and to fall at the feet of her elders. In her heart of hearts she preferred the simple forest-life to the showy and glamorous life at the palace. Her conscience is so clear that the coming events always cast their shadows and she feels depressed, even though there is no apparent cause.

The moment Rāvana is revealed in his true form due to the power of the crest jewel "Chudāmāni", she is beside herself with fear and cries for help. So far Sitā shows the gentle, timid and modest nature that characterises a high-born princess. But it is the last two acts that show a diffe-

1. सीता—यदेवमविभवसनीयो जनः कस्य हेतोऽऽुमारस्य समीपे प्रेषित:।
   A. Ch. II. p. 56

2. सीता—प्रथवा इत्यं प्रतिभेः राजसीभिरवन्नवेदे तथा लावण्यवती गुरुमार- नागाः सीमलिनी कष्टभिव वर्तते।
   A. Ch. p. 70

3. सूतः —पार्थः ! समाधिवदुष्या भरतस्य पश्चकमयमुपसतः हंस्या तु सूतः युधिष्ठिर- रिभगतत्वभिति तपसा रघु निर्मायः महां दल्या वनात्मरेखन्नल्हितात- स्तपथितवः।
   A. Ch. III. p. 114

4. सीता—नमुन्मयायेण्यो भरतस्य व्यसननाभो बन्द्यं गुरुनस्य च।
   A. Ch. III. p. 115
rent aspect of Sītā. Till then she is under the protection of her husband and there is nothing for her to fear, but now those happy days are gone and she has become a captive of the Rākṣasa king.

In this condition we see her in the Aṣokavatikā, along with the coaxing Rāvana. All the temptations he offered, all the terrors he subjected her to, do not have any effect on Sītā. Mandodari's heart is filled with admiration for the courage and greatness of Sītā, as is expressed in her words: "She is indeed courageous. She dares to move her feet away from the touch of the King's head, as if it were mud."

Mandodari's love for her husband alone saves Sītā from being killed by Rāvana, for she comes in between and Rāvana has to withdraw his "Chandrahāsa", and retire. Sītā having lost all hopes now decides to commit suicide. The attempt was thwarted only by the timely arrival of Hanumān with the ring and the message from Rāma. But the greatest trial is yet to come. The ocean is crossed, the battle is won and Rāvana is killed; but Sītā is practically forgotten by Rāma. At last when Vibhīṣana refuses to enter Lankā before Sītā is brought out from there, Rāma asks Sugriva to bring her to his presence. But neither Rāma nor Lakṣmana seem to be over-anxious to accept her back. Rāma has his own doubts as to the propriety of the procedure, whereas Lakṣmana actually advises Rāma to

1. मन्दोदरी—भीरा खल्वेषा, महाराजस्य शीर्ष पञ्चमिव पदेन परिहर्ति।
   A. Ch. V. p. 173
2. व्र. सुप्रीव—देव, इदं विभीषयावचनम्। महं तावत्सरं न प्रविष्ठामि
   याविदं ततो न निष्कमति।
   आ. राम—(सब्दुमान) यशौं तबंबेत तव सलीमानः।
   A. Ch. VII. p. 211
3. राम—(सवितर्क)
   हत्वा बालिनमणे गिरिसत्तानवध्य सेतुं धमा—
   ललंकामेव सहाययवसुसहित कूलवा हतं रावणम्।
test her.\(^1\)

By the time Sītā reaches his presence, Rāma’s whole attitude has changed. Sītā herself has her own misgivings as to how people will talk! She knows that women are not considered trustworthy. She feels bad because it was due to her that Rāma had to face all these troubles.\(^2\)

And to make things worse, the blessings given by Anasuyā that everything will turn into an adornment for Sītā in the presence of Rāma,\(^3\) which was unknown to Rāma, turned out to be a curse for her.\(^4\) Rāma had very proudly instructed Sugriva to bring Sītā openly, so that everyone might see her and realise how miserably she had been spending the period of separation.\(^5\) But what he saw was shockingly different from that which he had expected. His enraged

\[\text{यामध् प्रतिपालयामि वचनप्रामाणयो मार्ते:}\\
\text{संवासादिप नाम सा नुपुसता न स्यादवरणस्पद्धुम्} \]

A. Ch. VII. 11

1. लक्षणः—प्रसीदत्वायः।

लूरे वयमतो देव्या: परीक्षया भावयुद्धता।

A. Ch. VII. 12

2. सीता:—किन्तु बलु मां महाजनो मन्त्रयते। किन्तु बलु मामृ भारयुपुजो मन्त्रयते। अविन्नसस्ये: बलु ची स्वभावः। अवधन्यया भर्म कुते धन्यसागरे पतित भारयुपु:।

A. Ch. VII. p. 215

3. सीता:—किन्तु बलु; न जानात्यायुपु: ननु महायक्षत्वा भ्रान्सूयया भाराश्च मां विसर्जयत्त्वा में दलं वर्णे ‘तव महतुर्वल्लाम्बे सर्वं मण्डनं भविष्यतीति’।

A. Ch. II. p. 58

4. सीता—हा भिक्खु भ्रान्सूयया भ्रान्न्योपिते में इदानी शापं संबृत:।

A. Ch. VII. p. 216

5. राम:—प्रवधुष्य दश्यीवं मामनुभृततेः।

सर्वं पश्चलु जानक्यः रूपं चारितं मृणमण्डु।

A. Ch. VII. 14
question to Sugriva, "Did you not see her before?" has a
world of meaning; and he adds a description of her appear-
ance with an insinuation. Little did he know then that it
was the mud and dust on her body that appeared as sandal-
wood paste to his eyes, the dry leaves of trees that seemed
to be flowers and the torn and dirty clothes she was wear-
ing all these days that appeared to be red silken garments;
Sugriva had to confess that it was because of his respectful
attitude towards Sītā that Rāma had to see this, meaning
thereby that if he had dared to look at her before, she
would not have been allowed to come anywhere near Rāma.
Lakṣmāna and Hanumān also feel scandalized and enraged
at the beautiful and decorated appearance of Sītā, which
to them was the greatest proof for Sītā's moral degradation!
Little do they know that if they had looked at her in the
absence of Rāma they could not have seen her in this attire
at all. One and all—Rāma, Lakṣmāna, Sugriva and Hanu-
mān insult her and would not allow her even to speak.

Rāma in his rage questions her right to stand before
him and showers on her the worst of insults. The insinua-
tion that she was keeping appointments with the Rākṣasas,
even in the Dandakāranya, shows how unreasonable and enraged Rāma had become. Of all present, Sītā alone stood calm and cool. She was sure of her pure and spotless character. She was indeed above suspicion. Still, the shortsightedness and suspicious nature of men would scandalise her. The worst of the situation was that her own husband, who ought to have known her better than any one else, was the first in accusing her. She smiles and says: “Even my Lord speaks harsh words.” Sugrīva wants to send her away from Rāma; but Laksmanā wishes to kill her. He remembered perhaps the last words spoken to him by Sītā in the forest, when he refused to leave her alone, to go and help Rāma. Hanumān waited only for the permission of Rāma to punish her as she deserved! That was the reception Sītā got after a year of long separation from her husband, which period she spent constantly uttering his name and bearing all miseries that were heaped upon her by the Rākṣasas, in the one hope of meeting the beloved husband once more. Disgraced and rejected, she stood alone in that crowd who, one and all, looked upon her as a reprehensible being. Still her courage was undaunted, self-confidence unshaken! She did not want to resort to futile words. Sugrīva’s words here, are quite significant: “Hearing such words from her husband, she still smiles! Either, she is the worst of women, or the best indeed”. And Sītā proved herself to be the latter, by her actions, not words! She wants to enter fire with the permission of her husband. Laksmanā is pleased. He is only too ready to see her destroyed. Naturally enough, Rāma’s inner conscience is not calm. The heart

1. Sītā—(सस्मितम्) प्रायंपुनेशाय गुष्टवचनं भयते।
   A. Ch. VII. p. 218

2. Sugrīva: —हर्ष श्रुत्वा वचो भरुवंदेय गुष्टे सस्मिताः।
   तदं त सबनारीश्चामवरा वा वरा यदि॥
   A. Ch. VII. 18
knows the language of heart. Hence he feels he will not be right in blaming Sītā, though there was clear evidence of her fault. The fire-ordeal is over; Sītā comes out of it unscathed. The Gods, Sages and other divine beings stand witness to her purity and chastity. All are happy and as Rāma starts for Ayodhyā with the permission of all present, the drama comes to a close.

Śaktibhadra has elaborated and expounded the episode of Sītā’s fire-ordeal in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa as it suited his own imagination.

Before going further, it is desirable to examine a few points that strike us in this play. We have already studied the plays by Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti, who have both treated the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. Bhāsa’s plays concerned the story only up to the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā after the killing of Rāvana, while Bhavabhūti wrote a full play over the last phase of Rāma’s life, centering round the most important incident there. It is in his play, the Uttara-Rāmacarita, that we first hear of the fire-ordeal that Sītā had to undergo in Lankā, though we know about the same from the Rāmāyaṇa itself and the Rāghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa. And it is Bhavabhūti who dramatised the banishment of Sītā by Rāma due to the scandals that spread throughout Ayodhyā, because she had to dwell in Lankā away from her husband for about a year. None of the earlier dramatists had treated these incidents in the life of Rāma and Sītā, though all these are found elaborately in the Rāmāyaṇa available to us in the present day.

Scholars are of opinion that though Rāmāyaṇa was the source-book of all other literatures^1, the Adikāvya was cons-

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1. रामायण महाकाव्यमादि वात्सर्वदिनाहिं नरसुरायायोऽवत्तः।
   संहितानां च सर्वसं युतः रामायणं भवतं।
   तदेवद्वैराध्वं बेदवायास्ते कला॥
   चक्रे महाभारताध्वमतिहासं पुरातनम्।

Br. D. P.
stituted of only the portion beginning from the Ayodhya-
kānda and ending in the Yuddhakānda. They think the Bālakānda and Uttarakānda to be later additions to the originals. There are scholars who are of opinion that even the fire-
ordeal of Sītā in the Yuddhakānda is a later interpolation.¹

The story of Rāma in the Mahābhārata, Harivamśa, Viṣṇu Pūrṇa, Vāyupurṇa, Bhāgavata, Kathāsaritsāgara,  
Nṛsimha-Rāmāyaṇa, Tibbati Rāmāyaṇa and many others do not have even a reference to this incident. Still, in the present play, it has been made an issue. We see, it is actually a reflection of that same portion in the Rāmāyaṇa, which, according to Camil Bulke, is a later addition. This may be a pointer towards the change of attitude towards women that has come in the society, and which was gaining ground gradually.

Throughout we have found Sītā as the noblest and most dignified of women. But, even she acts as a mere petty-minded person on two occasions. Once, when Laksmaṇa was in the clutches of Śurpanakhā, and a second time when she heard the wailings of Mārica in the guise of Rāma. At both these places, we miss the love, selflessness and self-confidence of the real Sītā. She would not allow Rāma to go and help Laksmaṇa. In despair, Rāma says, “Oh! my lady, still you don’t leave the womanly nature?”² Her answer at this indignant statement is, “Who will protect me?”³ When asked, who will save Laksmaṇa, she

1. A. Webber: On the Ramayana, p. 65
2. W. Prince: Jacob Memorial Volume p. 108
3. A. Ch. II. p. 64-65
calmly answers, that he has got his weapons. Rāma had to curse his helplessness and keep her company.

This scene perhaps tells us more than what exactly the words mean. Similarly, the words of Sītā addressed to Lakṣmāna, "Only Goddess Lakṣmī follows the successors, Not I!", when he refused to leave her alone, are quite unsuitable to their relationship with each other, and also the behaviour of Lakṣmana, till then. Of course, this incident again has its parallel in the Valmiki Rāmāyana, in a worse form. For, there, Sītā suspects not only Lakṣmanā, but even Bharata, who she says might have asked the former to take her back after his elder brother's death. That Saktibhadra does not go to that extent, is a relief, however small it may be. These two incidents are black spots in the refreshingly noble character of Sītā, even in the source-book as we have it today.

Examining this play closely, we are able to see that Saktibhadra is following a path of his own in dramatising the story of Rāmāyana. He seems to follow the main incidents of the Valmiki Rāmāyana with the intention of holding up certain ideals and making them shine by contrast. Śūrpaṇakhā on one side, and Mandodari on the other, are a study in contrast by themselves. Though both of them belong to the royal family, Śūrpaṇakhā's activities bring destruction not only to the whole family, but to the whole nation. Mandodari is the guardian-angel as it were of Rāvana, and hence of the whole nation also. As long as Rāvana listened to his noble wife, he was saved. The moment he lost control over himself due to his craving for sensual pleasure, roused by Śūrpaṇakhā and became indifferent to his wife's good counsel, his fall began. This is the truth that is told in the Rāmāyana, and Saktibhadra made this quite clear to all by his clever development of the same incidents in his own way.

1. Sītā—अनन्तरगामिना भीगां लक्ष्मी: न कस्त्रहृद्। A. Ch. III. p. 108
2. V. R. III. 45. 21-27
For example, though the Śūrpaṇakhā episode in the first and second acts of the play, is the same as found in the various Rāmāyaṇas, the conversations between Laksmaṇa and Śūrpaṇakhā in the first act, and that between Rāma and Sītā in the second, are pointers to the real nature of both the women. The mention of the three presents from the Sages, the Ring, the Crest-jewel and the Armour, is found in the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, and the author adopted it from there and expanded the same in such a way as to show how all served them in time of need! Śūrpaṇakhā’s jealousy and revengefulness is portrayed clearly and through her, the power of women to influence others is held up.

Though Śaktibhadra has portrayed two very good women, and thus has raised them to a high standard, the general attitude of society towards women is in no way hidden in this work. No specific information is given about the position of women as it was. But, the idea that women are sources of evil and sorrow, seems to be predominant. The appearance of a beautiful woman wandering in the forest creates suspicion in the mind of Laksmaṇa. His idea is that wise people should not take special notice of women⁴ and so he tries to ignore Śūrpaṇakhā who approaches him as a very beautiful woman. As it is, Laksmaṇa seems to be more averse to women than anybody else in the whole play. He does not loose a single opportunity to denounce women. When Rāma feels thankful to Kaikeyī for that happy life they were enjoying in the forest, the dry answer of Laksmaṇa is “There is nothing bad in the eyes of good people.”²

He is justified in getting annoyed with Sītā when she attributes to him evil intentions concerning her at the time

1. Laksmaṇa: — न समाधि: सीयु लोकः । A. Ch. I. p. 19
2. Laksmaṇa: —सत्यमाह लोक: ‘न सत्यमुद्या गुणवताम्’ इति । A. Ch. I. p. 35
he was actually trying to save her from possible danger. But, his behaviour in the last act is quite unwarranted. This is the one place, throughout the Indian literature, where Lakṣmaṇa airs such opinions about Śitā. Everywhere else he has been pictured as the most affectionate and respectful younger brother-in-law. Rāma’s attitude towards Śitā after the killing of Rāvana was not approved by any one, according to any Rāmāyaṇa. Lakṣmaṇa, Sugriva, Hanumān, Vibhīṣana were all sad and resentful, but kept quiet due to their devotion to Rāma. In the Abhiṣekanāṭaka, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān are sure of the purity, chastity and greatness of Śitā. It is nowhere clearly stated why Rāma was angry when he saw Śitā. In the Adhyatma-Rāmāyaṇa, it is stated that seeing the form of the illusory Śitā created for the sake of deceiving Rāvana, Rāma got angry and said unspeakable words to her.

Two incidents which find importance in this play are the presentation of the ring, crest-jewel and armour by the sages, and the beauty of Śitā when she approached Rāma after the killing of Rāvana. Both these are specially referred to in the Adhyatma-Rāmāyaṇa, whereas the remaining parts of the story are more or less common to all the Rāmāyaṇas. It is clearly stated that the poet hails from the south. And it is a well-known fact that Adhyatma-Rāmāyaṇa is more popular in the south than the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa. So it is quite possible that Śaktibhadra based his drama on the book that was more familiar to him. However that may be, the development of the above referred incidents, which are the

1. लक्ष्मणः — तो! कष्टम्।

विज्ञाय देव्यः: शौचं च चुल्ला चार्यस्य शासनम्। Ab. N. VI. p. 367

2. रामोगिनं हद्धा तां मायासौमां कायोविनिमित्तम्।

श्रवाच्यवादान्वहस्ति: प्राहू तां रथपन्दनः। Ad. R. VI. 12. 75-76

3. सुनवारः — प्रायों दशिकायपवादात कामस्य चुडामणि नाम नाटकमन्वया—

चंद्रितस्वाक्ष्यमन्विलचाय इथ्यमिथ्यं शासनम्। A. Ch. I. p. 7
specialities of the Āścaryacūdāmani, give an insight into the attitude of the people towards women. In short, women were looked upon as untrustworthy, weak, easily moved and fickle. Hence, even Sītā was made a victim to the worst possible insults. Even Lākṣmāna thinks that she should be tested.

In an earlier drama dealing with the same incident, we have already heard Lākṣmāna saying, "Having known the pure and chaste character of Sītā and hearing my Lord’s order, my intellect is swinging as though placed on a swing between duty and love." Hanumān is equally helpless there. The same Lākṣmāna, now in this play, seems only too happy to lead Sītā on to the fire-ordeal. He actually says so. This difference can only be due to the strict vigilance on and easy suspicion of women that came into vogue in the later period. Of course this attitude of people in general has changed the situation. But the ideal remains the same. Sītā’s words and deeds are unchanged from the Vālmīki Rāmāyāna till the time of the present play. She is above all conditions, situations and circumstances. This is what Śaktibhadra seeks to tell us, that, while Mandodarī and Śūrpanakhā are the two opposite types of the ordinary daily life, Sītā is the ideal that keeps the head of Indian womanhood quite high above all the world. Her character is not a thing of this world. It is divine, brilliant and inimitable. She is not devoid of short-comings in the ordinary life. She can succumb to desire, misunderstanding and anger but at the time of tests, she is the gem, the crest-jewel of all women that would shine at the top of all, an ideal for all times, to all people. And that is how Śaktibhadra has portrayed her.

1. लक्षण: —विश्वाय देव्या: शौचं च भूल्या चार्यस्य शासनम् ।
   घरम्सनेहान्तरे न्यस्ता बुद्धिस्यायते मम ॥
   Ab. N. VI. 23
2. लक्षण: —(शास्त्रगत) इदानीं प्रीतोष्धिम् ।
   A. Ch. VII. p. 219
Though there are a few Rākṣasis and maid-servants of the palace in Lankā, they are just the ordinary types, common in the harem of any great king.

There are many other plays based on the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. Abhinavagupta and Kuntaka cite many plays, such as the Chhalita Rāma, the Maya Puṣpaka and the Krītyā Rāvana. Later on, there are others that add to the number, such as the Rāmabhhyudaya, the Udāṭta-Rāghava, the Unmatta-Rāghava, the Jānaki-Parinaya, the Anargha-Rāghava, the Prasanna-Rāghava, the Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa, the Maithilli-Parinaya and others. Of these many are known to us only by names and those which are published do not show any special merits. Even those plays written by Murāri, Rājasēkhara and Jayadeva, are of ordinary types, as far as the dramatic art is concerned and they have followed only the traditional story as has been treated by previous writers, especially Vālmīki, and then Bhavabhūti. Women characters are few in number and they are not much different from those whom we have already studied. In the Anargha Rāghava of Murāri, the Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa of Rājasēkhara and the Prasanna-Rāghava of Jayadeva, it is very easy to see the influence of the Mahāvīrācarita, and the women characters also show more or less the same traits.

Murāri is approximately assigned to the last part of the ninth century or the beginning of the 10th century A.D.¹ His play Anargha-Rāghava deals with the story of Rāma till his coronation at Ayodhya after the killing of Rāvana. Śūrpaṇakhā, Śramaṇā and Sītā are the only women characters in the Anargha-Rāghava. The story is not changed in the main outlines. But the causes for some of the incidents within the story have been changed from the original. Even here, the changes are more or less on the same lines as found in the Mahāvīrācarita of Bhavabhūti. The characterisation of Śūrpaṇakhā and Śramaṇā are relevant exam-

¹. History of Sanskrit literature—De & Das Gupta. p. 449
ples. The words of Mālyavān to Śūrpanākhā in the fourth act present a partial repetition, either in words\(^1\) or in ideas.\(^2\) Śūrpanākhā and Śramaṇā are both working as political spies on the kings of Ayodhyā and Mithilā. What Śūrpanākhā was asked to do in the Mahāvīracarita is done by Śramaṇā in the Anargha-Rāghava. And the cause here is Jambhavān’s desire to get Rāma near Kīṣkindhā to cause the death of Bālī. Even this idea has its seed in the words of Mālyavān to Śūrpanākhā in the Mahāvīracarita.

The whole plot was discussed by Mālyavān with Śūrpanākhā and the pros and cons were explained to her. There the question of killing Rāma by Bālī was also contemplated, when Śūrpanākhā shrewdly pointed out that if Rāma, the conqueror of the great Paraśurāma kills Bālī also, all their plans would fail. There, Śramaṇā was sent by Vibhiṣāna to Sugrīva, with the message about Rāma being near the Rṣyamūtka mountains. These two are combined and arranged in a different way by Muraṇī. Here it is Śramaṇā who enters the body of Mantharā and manages Rāma’s exile. The purpose is to help Sugrīva against Bālī, and the person behind this plan is Jambhavān and not Mālyavān. However that may be, the fact remains that the women belonging to the Dravidian races are depicted in this play also in an equal position with men, even in the political arena. Although it is only an imitation of Bhavabhūti, still we will have to accept that Muraṇi was not afraid of the audience who witnessed that play and who might get shocked if those women were to appear thus on the stage. But it is very significant that though Sītā is the heroine of the play, she comes on the stage only in the last act when she returns home with her husband. It is stated that she was

\(^1\) Mālyavān—राजसम्प्रियाःति वर्ले, कार्यर्था \(\text{ch} \) ।  
\(^2\) भाष्यमु—ब्रमु बर्ले, कार्यर्थाति ।

M. V. Ch. IV. p. 90  
An. R. IV. p. 190
accepted by Rāma after the fire-ordeal.\(^1\)

Sitā is the only Aryan woman depicted in this play, and the little that we see of her does not enable us to make an estimate of the position of women in general. Sitā is entertained by Rāma by describing to her the various places they come across on their return journey from Lankā to Ayodhyā. We are not able to discern much from these passages except the respectful and loving regard that Rāma shows to Sitā.

Though the whole story of the Rāmāyaṇa is dramatised, we are not able to find anything special about the women characters depicted there because of the general imitative nature of the play.

The story of Sitā is once again taken up for dramatisation by another famous poet, Rājaśekhara who proclaims himself to be the incarnation of Vālmiki. In the Prastāvana of this play, namely, the Bālarāmāyaṇa, the Sūtradhāra says, “He who was Vālmiki in the ancient days, he who then became Bhartṛmeṇḍha and afterwards was born as Bhavabhūti now exists as Rājaśekhara.”\(^2\)

Perhaps, by this claim, he is justifying his act of imitating those earlier poets as it suited him. The story itself has been reconstructed by him following Bhavabhūti’s Mahāvīrācarita. Unlike Vālmiki, Bhavabhūti and the later poets have made Rāvaṇa’s desire to marry Sitā, the main cause of his enmity towards Rāma.

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1. (नेपथ्ये) तमिलामूच्छ्वलिंगमनमंकाराकिरसे
   रघुणां मोहस्य प्रसवितरि देवे सवितरि।

2. सूतचार: —वसूव वस्मीकब्व: कवि: पुरा
   तत: प्रस्वे भवि भट्टेमृण्डताम्।

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An. R. VII. 1
Ba. R. I. 16
Murāri, of course, mentions this as the motive for Rāvana, though it is made clear only through the entrance of the messenger of Rāma in the second act and the discussion of Śūrpanākhā and Mālyavān in the third act. But Rājaśekhara has made this the very seed of the whole play, and brings in Rāvana on the stage as the suitor of Sītā’s hand in the first act itself. The theme is developed in the same way as in the works of Bhavabhūti and Murāri with minor deviations in the details. This again seems to be less of a drama and more of a literary piece.

Sītā, her friends, Śūrpanākhā, the three queens, the Rivers Gāṅgā and Yamunā, Trijaṭā, Chāraṇī, Alakā and Lankā are the female characters presented in the play. As the main outline of the story is the same as in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, the characterisation of the Aryan race is not different from that of the original work. Sītā is the faithful, obedient and loving wife. Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā, the queens of Daśaratha, are also depicted as dutiful. The Rivers Gāṅgā and Yamunā are as divine as they should be. Kaikeyī who is denounced as the cause of Rama’s exile in the Rāmāyaṇa is completely redeemed here. Of course Bhavabhūti in his Mahāvīrścara, made the conspiracy of Mālyavān, the cause of this for the first time and Murāri followed up, though with a little deviation. But Rājaśekhara made quite a dramatic turn by making Śūrpanākhā and Mālyavān take the guise of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha respectively, and manage the exile of Rāma.

Both the king and the queen were away to help Indra against the Asuras, and this opportunity was taken by the deceivers to achieve their ends. Thus Kaikeyī does not even know anything about the exile of Rāma and when she knows, her grief and shame is unfathomable. Thus the nobility of the queen is kept up. In short, all the women of Ayodhya are shown as good, simple, loving and noble.

Gāṅgā and Yamunā are divinities and they are intro-
duced as accompanying their Lord, the Ocean, to pacify the angry Rāma.

Of the other women, Śūrpaṇakhā occupies an important position. The poet takes the versions of both the poets, Vālmiki and Bhavabhūti and combines them. Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti did not show Śūrpaṇakhā in the shameful position of an amorous woman trying to get Rāma for herself. Bhavabhūti points her out as quite an admirable character held in honour at Rāvana's court. Murāri also accepts this picture of Śūrpaṇakhā and leaves out her shameful and disgusting behaviour as depicted by Vālmīki and Āśaktibhadra. But, Rājaśekhara on the other hand, makes her the head of the spies at Lankā; at the same time makes her fall in love with Rāma and get punished for this by Lakṣmana. The story of the Rāmāyana is followed up and then the role given to her by Bhavabhūti is also accepted in the play. So, Śūrpaṇakhā is presented as a resourceful and devoted servant of the King of Lankā. But as a woman, she has her own weakness and she is not very scrupulous about following her own desires, and seems to have very loose morals. Of course she dares not tell her brother the true reason why she was disfigured by the Princes, but makes up the story that her ears and nose were cut because she tried to take Sītā away from Rāma to be brought to Rāvana.1

And thus she completes the revenge that she planned on Rāma.

Other female characters are only instruments to complete the trend of the narration and through their conversa-

1. शूरपणका—(प्रात्ममतम्) रघुकुलराग्नानीपरिस्थिति रामलक्ष्मणावि-
सरती वाणिज्ञ,उत्साहान्ताम्यां बलाकारकर्मेणीशास्त्रस्यं कृतेति कथं ज्येश्वरातु: कथविषयम्। तदेवं तावतु (प्रकाशम्) देव। ब्रह्मोष्णानमावर्थ राम इति कृत्यकुमारोदित्त। तत्स्य भाषा भुवन्मकुपकर्त्षी सीता नाम। लक्ष्मीशरस्य समुचितेति भगवरत्ती
ताम्यां कार्यालिकक्रमाण्यं कृतास्मि। भा. र. व. p. 294
tions, the reader is informed how Ḥanumān came and found Sītā, how the battle was won by Rāma and how Rāvana was killed.

The fire-ordeal of Sītā is described in detail by Alakā to Lanka. But here again, though faithfully imitating Vālmīki in the general details, Rājaśekhara does not cause Sītā to be humiliated by Rāma, as Vālmīki and Śaktibhadra have done. Murāri, Rājaśekhara and later on Jayadeva, make the fire-ordeal really a supernatural and marvellous incident which raises Sītā’s status.

There are three more plays come down to posterity through the pen of the same author. Draupadī, the heroine of the other famous epic, has been chosen as the heroine of the play, Bāla-Bhāratam, by him. Nobody can say what exactly the finished picture would have been, because only the first two acts of the play are available to us. Draupadī is the main female character here, and she appears on the stage in both the acts. In the first act she is the maiden to be won by fulfilling the condition of “Lakṣyavedha” and in the second she is in the disgraced condition of a slave to Duryodhana. Here also we find Rājaśekhara following faithfully the story of the Mahābhārata. In both places, she is depicted as a beautiful, sensible, courageous and noble-hearted woman. This play seems to be rather more successful in action and suitable to be staged. Its literary merits are commendable and it also has more possibilities for acting on the stage. The first act tells us how Draupadī was won by Arjuna who was present in the Swayamvara in the guise of a Brāhmaṇa along with his four brothers. Draupadī is present with her friend and her brother Dhṛṣṭadyumna. The friend, the Bard and Dhṛṣṭadyumna describe the various kings present, one by one, when each of them comes forward and tries to shoot at the mark to be hit, and fails. The words of Draupadī in those occasions show her knowledge, wisdom, sense of humour and also self-sufficiency. She seems to
possess the special Kṣatriya characteristics and commands our admiration.

In the next act, she is brought to the full court of Duryodhana, in a very pitiable and disgraceful condition, by Duśśāsana. Yudhiṣṭhira has staked her down to his enemy and she along with her five husbands, had become slave to the Kaurava king. We are not told as to how she had become the wife of all the five brothers. But Duśśāsana abuses her and questions her chastity, pointing out, that she is not ashamed of being the wife of five men. He even goes to the extent of suggesting to her to become the wife of Duryodhana also. Even in that helpless position Draupadī seems to be a personification of noble and courageous womanhood. Her words do not cross the limit of modesty. She pleads with the villainous Duśśāsana to spare her from the disgrace of appearing before the elders and other kings with only one cloth on. Her famous question to the elders, whether she was pawned off first by Yudhiṣṭhira or he himself, the answer given by Vikarna fully explaining the significance of the same, commands our respect for her even in her humiliated position. The Draupadī depicted here, is quite a contrast to the one portrayed in the Veṇīsamhāra as we have already seen. Here, she takes the vow not to tie up the hair loosened by Duśśāsana till Bhīmasena ties it up for her with his fingers dipped in the blood of the sinner himself.

In the Veṇīsamhāra, we have seen her with the hair

1. हेतु द्रोपदी त्वमसि कात्र पतिवर्तानाम्, कि द्रुप पञ्चपुष्या विनिता कल्याणः।
   दुर्योधनस्य तद्विं भज वामपूर्णे ज्ञातवालिः मुकुलितागुणिना करेण॥
   Ba. bh. II. 41

2. द्रोपदी—एव मे कंचकर्षणपरिमि: श्रामुक्तवत्त्वमस्तत्सत्समेव चन्द्ररिकार्कमण्याकेशपाशच्छृटा।
   नक्षापांकुशकौटिकोपितमहादु:शास्तोरस्थलीरकत्रोलेखिकरेऽ॥
   निश्वितं भीमेन या वध्यते॥ Ba. bh. IV. 50
let loose in the same condition, thirteen years after the incidents described above. But, the difference between the two pictures is very remarkable. While Draupadi in this play arouses only our admiration, pity and respect at the same time, the same queen as depicted in the earlier play does not create any special feeling for her except, a fear that she was going to work as “ghṛta” in the fire of Bhima's already kindled rage.

Sunandā and Surekhā are the two maids-in-attendance on Yudhīṣṭhira and Duryodhana respectively, and their words and actions are suitable to the masters they serve. While Sunandā is understanding, sensible and respectful, Surekhā is arrogant, talkative and shallow-minded. But, here again, we find that the women depicted have a high standard and respectability, whatever status they belong to.

The Karpūramanjari and Viddhasālabhanjikā are two other plays written by the same author. They have four acts each, with a theme almost the same in the outlines, with different characters. The speciality of the Karpūramanjari is that it is written in prākṛt. Both these plays have the conventional story of the hero falling in love with a maiden, who is a princess in disguise and then final union, with the consent of the chief queen after many obstacles. These plays belong to the type called Nāṭikā and so have naturally many women depicted in them. The Karpūramanjari is named after the heroine who is a cousin of the chief queen of King Candapāla, the hero of the play. This reminds us of the Mālavikāgnimitra of Kālidāsa and the Nāṭikās of Śrī Harṣa. This has greater resemblance to Ratnāvali with the difference that instead of the minister Yaugandharāyana, it is the queen's spiritual guide Bhairavānanda that caused the girl to enter the harem of Candapāla by his own yogic powers.

Vibhramalekha, the queen, Vicakṣaṇā, her friend and maid-in-waiting, Karpūramanjari, and Sārangikā are the women characters presented in this play. The story and
the action are equally fictitious and amorous. The erotic sentiment is predominant and physical beauty and the mutual attraction of the hero and heroine are the only things described. Woman seems to have come to that stage, where her physical attraction alone counted and her value was only as an object of pleasure to man. All the characters are stereotyped and there is no dramatic art worth mentioning existing in this play. Of course, Vicaksanā, her sister Sulaksanā and Karpūramanjari seem to be experts in composing verses characterised by erotic sentiment. All of them seem to be vying with one another in the description of the condition of Karpūramanjari due to her unfulfilled love for the king. The one indication my be that girls of the royal families were educated enough to be able to compose good verses. We have other proofs that corroborate this conclusion. In all similar plays from the earliest days, the girls of royal families were well-versed in all fine arts and literature.

The other play of Rājaśekhara is the Viddhaśālabhanjikā. It is also the story of the king's love for another girl inspite of the presence of his duly wedded wife. But this is more refreshing to read, because of the novelty of the intrigues. The rival of the queen finally turns out to be her cousin and gets married to the king as desired by him. But, the comedy is complete when the Queen who wished to deceive and embarass the king, is deceived and embarrased herself in turn, and the king gets two wives, instead of the one, the queen pretended to give him. In this work, a better device is adopted to put the heroine within the reach of the king, because the father himself sends the daughter in the guise of a boy changing the name Mrgāṅkāvalī to Mrgāṅkavaranman as a hostage to the court of King Vidyādharamalla, the hero. The statue device which gives the name to the play is also a change for the better from the other similar plays existant. The trick played by Vidūṣaka on the queen's foster sister Nikhalā, and the queen's design to
avenge her are quite amusing and show the light-hearted or frivolous nature of the court-life. That even the queen could condescend to play a trick on her own husband, the ruling king, is an evidence to the falling morals and lowering dignity of royalty. When love of pleasure dominates the ruler, it is only natural that the surrounding people take the cue and behave accordingly. Under those circumstances if women become just a means of enjoyment for men, it is only the natural consequence.

The literary merits, poetic excellence and inventiveness of Rājaśekhara have to be acknowledged but the imitative nature of all his works is too clear to be missed.

The Viddhasālabhanjikā has a good number of female characters. Apart from the chief queen Madanavati, the wife of Vidyādharamalla, there is the daughter of Candavaran, named Mrgānkāvalī, and also Kuvalyamālā, the daughter of King Candamahāsena of Vatsa, Pingalikā, Mekhala, Vicaksana, Sulaksana, Tarangikā, Kurangikā, Harayaasti, Kālakāntā, Vasantalata, Mangalikā, Kalākeli, Mrgānkalekhā, Bokulāvati, Parabhrtikā, Kalpalata and others are ladies-in-waiting of different grades on queen Madanavati.

Taking into consideration the women characters in these four plays we find that while those in the first two belong to one type, those of the last two belong to quite a different category altogether. Sītā and Draupadi, the heroines of the oldest epics, show a dignity, strength of character and nobility which is altogether absent in the women of the royal courts of the later kings who had already begun to think of them in terms of their enjoyment of worldly pleasures. Though all the four plays were written by the same poet, the difference of the pictures of the women in those plays sets one thinking. The ancient Indian tradition had lent a galaxy of light around those heroines, that it is next to impossible, to bring them down to the low status of the women, queens and princesses though they may be in the
courts of the luxury-loving kings of the later centuries. Hence there is a vast gap between the standards of Sītā and Draupadi on the one hand and of Madanavati and Viśrāmalekha on the other. The former two still continue to be really the better-halves of their respective husbands, inspite of all they had to suffer. But the queens Madanamālā and Viśrāmalekha are mere companions of their husbands in pleasure. Their interests centre round amorous sports and jealous intrigues to put down any possible new rivals. Naturally, silly pranks and petty quarrels can be the only results. The kings represented in both these dramas are even worse than the heroes of the Ratnāvalī and the Priyadarśikā.

There is one indication in the Viddhasālabhanjikā that maidens and married women could be distinguished by their dresses. The Vidūṣaka, seeing the picture of Mrgāṅkāvalī on the wall decides that she is a maiden as is obvious from her dress.

There are a few suggestions scattered here and there in these works which show the unfavourable attitude towards women among the general public. For example, in the Bālarāmāyana, Rāvana says that the love of women changes according to the higher and higher qualities existent in different men. That is to say, women are fickle and they change their love from one man to another, when they see better and better men. A sentence with the same idea is put into Sītā's mouth also in another place.

Women were considered to be weak and hence deserved to be protected. Killing women was considered a sin from

1. बिदूसकः—कन्येति मुच्यति वेषविशेष एव
 यशोलचोलकवती लिखितात्र चित्रे ।
 पाणिग्रहादु प्रभृति तु प्रमदाजनस्य
 नीवी निवेशमुमगः परिघामारः ॥
 Vi. Śā. Bh. I. 34

2. रावणः—क्रीणां प्रेम यदुत्तरीतरंगम्प्रामसुहास्यकलम् ॥ Ba. R. V. 2
the earliest times, whatever their fault my be. That idea has
become more and more strong and has reached a point, when it
became a shameful act. Rāvana says to Paraśurāma, "Whatever
that be, Rāvana is not Bhārgava, who is unmanly to-
wards women, who are to be pitied and protected". In
short, the condition of women as seen in those plays is
neither praiseworthy nor elevating. They had come to be
considered as weak and pitiable.

Their beauty and attractiveness saved their position
within the four walls of the house. Men could not resist
the temptation of sexual pleasures and hence women, though
not honoured, were still tolerated and preserved as neces-
sary evils. As men in general could not do without women,
they were superficially respected and adored for their phy-
sical beauty.

Quite a number of plays must have been written, during
these centuries but no drama of real quality is available to
posterity. Those available are inferior and imitative produc-
tions cast in loose dramatic form with innumerable lyrical
and descriptive verses in between. The main desire of the
poets seems to be to please the audience of the royal
Courts and they became more of a light strain, full of fun
and frolic and the ideal of the dramatic art seems to have
been forgotten.

The luxury-loving audience were to be pleased and so
court intrigues and amorous life of kings and nobles became
the favoured themes. This naturally gave scope only for
characters of flippant and light-hearted nature. So, it is not
strange that we do not get the real pictures of any charac-
ters, specially of women. Still, dramas continued to be
written. Most of them centre round the marriage of one
princess or another of the ancient lore, such as Rukmiṇī,

1. रावणः—सत्ववस्तिः यतो न भार्गवः हि रावणः कक्ष्यात्मनि (ः) परित्रा-
tवेये श्रीजनेषुशुष्कः।

Bā. R. II. p. 91
Draupadi, Sitā, Damayantī or some fictitious princess. Hence there is not much scope for a detailed study of these characters which are almost stereotyped.

There is one Rāma drama, the Prasanna-Rāghava of Jayadeva which also treats the story of Rāma from the marriage of Sitā to the coronation of Rāma at Ayodhyā after the killing of Rāvana. The approximate date of this author may be taken to be the fourteenth century. The outline of the story is the same as in the Rāmāyaṇa, while there are more ideas and incidents newly introduced. For example, Bāna is unnecessarily introduced as a suitor for Sitā’s hand. Sitā, her friends, the River deities Gangā, Yamunā, Sarayū, Tungabhadrā and Godāvari, and the Rākṣasī Trijaṭā are the female characters in this play. All of them show more or less the same traditional traits and do not seem to have much to do with real life. As the many other plays written after Bhavabhūti, there is no real drama in this work also. We seem to be reading a leaf from some old folklore full of many supernatural interventions.

Sitā, appears on the scene in the second act, and is shown as falling in love with Rāma, before the Bow of Śiva was even lifted. A shadow of the “Yajñaphala” is reflected here also. The meeting of Rāma and Lakṣmāna with Sitā and her friends in the garden is very interesting. Sitā’s feeling towards Lakṣmāna at first sight is that of a mother to her son, even though she does not know who he was.

Sitā is a beautiful and soft-hearted girl—loving, obedient and broad-minded. She has all the good qualities, a girl belonging to a noble family should possess. The characterisation of Sitā and Trijaṭā is more or less on the same lines as by Murāri and Rājaśekhara. Most of the incidents from

1. सीता—हुला, कोश्यय कनकवर्म० शिशुवंपिरिप्यमवितकणपुरोर० मुग्धवत्‌
विमुक्तलोचनविकारः कुमारो हस्यते । इमं पश्यतः मम निजवस्त्रा
इव बालस्यप्रशालिं हरणं बर्तते ।

Pr. R. II. p. 71
the marriage of Sītā up to her abduction are narrated in a conversation among the River Goddesses Gangā, Yamunā, Sarayū and others. The main characteristic of the drama, namely action on the stage, is lacking in this play also. Hence the characters do not have any individuality to attract our attention. The same is true about the female characters also, because they are more or less like puppets moved by a string. After Śaktibhadra, all the plays written centering round the story of Sītā show almost the same characters and characteristics.

The attempt to deify Rāma is seen in all these later Rāma dramas.

A deviation comes in the Kundamālā of Dingnāga, which once again takes up the story of the banishment of Sītā by Rāma. The general outline is the same as that of the Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti. Still there are differences to be noted, which warrant a closer study. Though the story of Rāma up to the end of the Yuddhakānda has formed the basis of innumerable Sanskrit plays, two plays are available in which the main incidents of the Uttararāmacarita, namely, the banishment of Sītā, is dealt with: one by Bhavabhūti and the other by Dingnāga or Vīranāga, who is placed somewhere in the later eleventh century by learned scholars1.

Though the story in the Kundamālā resembles that of Bhavabhūti's Uttararāmacarita, many incidents which helped the rational denouement are either changed or left out in the former. The Sambūka episode and the consequent meeting of Vāsantī and Rāma are replaced by the arrival of the whole court of Rāma at the Naimisāranyā for the Āsvamedha and by inviting Vālmīki with all the inmates of his hermitage. The meeting of Rāma with Lava and Kuśa is described here also. But the circumstances are quite different.

1. History of Sanskrit Literature by De. and Das Gupta.
These changes have affected the development of the theme quite adversely. The play begins with the exile of Sītā and ends in the re-union of Rāma and Sītā. The order of banishment is disclosed to Sītā by Lakṣmana, which leaves her completely helpless and weak. She wails: "Oh! my detention at the place of Rāvana is coming up again: Even I, Sītā, am suspected thus! Indeed, being a woman should cease! Fie with this womanhood!"

This reminds us of the reply Sītā gives to the harsh words of Rāma at Lankā, "You have remembered only this that I am a woman." But there she says this with self-confidence and with the courage of her own righteousness and purity. While Rāma seems to have lost his balance of mind, Sītā tries to calm him telling him that the attitude he has taken is wrong and unsuitable to him.

But, here, the words Sarvathālam Mahilātvena are indicative only of a wailing in the wilderness, the wailing of an ill-treated, helpless woman.

The mode of exile, as described in Kundamāla is also quite different from the earlier works. In the Rāmāyana, Rāma’s specific orders were that she should be left on the other bank of the Ganges in the forest near Vālmiki’s hermitage.

1. अः लक्षणः —त्यक्ता किल त्वमायोऽ चारित्रगुणशालिना ।
   मयापि किल सन्तव्यं त्वकस्वा त्वामिह कानने ॥

   K. M. I. 10

2. अः लक्षणः —तुल्यास्वेषेत्वनुगणोति गुरूणेष्टे ते,
   दुःखे गुष्ठे च सतं सहचारिस्वीति ।
   जानामि केवलमहूं जनवासभीत्या
   सीते! त्यजामि भवतीं न तु भावयोद्याद् ॥ K. M. I. 12

3. सीता—रावणभवनोदलः पुनर्मुदाघ्यति ।
   सीताया श्रीपि नाम एवं संभाव्यत इति सर्वेऽवलं महिलावेन ।
   K. M. I. p. 21

4. त्यया तु नरसार्द्धेऽङ्गः क्रोधमेवानुवावलं ।
   लघुनेष मनुस्येण स्त्रीलमेव पुरस्क्षुलम् ॥

   V. R. VI. 119.14
tage, Kalidasa's Rama also asks Lakshmana to take her to Valmiki's dwelling and leave her there.

Bhavabhuti does not make clear what the orders of Rama were. But, what we can imagine from the later incidents, as described in the Garbhanka agrees with the facts as shown in the Kundama, where Rama specifically asks Lakshmana to leave her somewhere in the forests near the Ganga. This does not at all indicate any soft feelings for Sita in the heart of Rama. And this conjecture is supported by the actions of Rama in the very end of the play.

Sita, of course, is the heroine, and other female characters presented are the girls of Valmiki's hermitage, while the three queens—Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra—their three daughters-in-law and Tilottama, the heavenly nymph, are referred to. Sita appears before us descending the banks of the Ganges, where she was to be abandoned by Lakshmana.

The order of Rama to Lakshmana was to take her in the chariot driven by Sumantra and leave her in some wilderness. This was to be done in the guise of fulfilling her desire to see the river Ganges. Her banishment is necessary because Rama is not prepared to allow any blemish to come on the spotlessly clean fame of this noble family, just for the sake of Sita.

1. गाज्ञायास्तु परे पारे वालमिकेश्वरु महात्मनः।
   आश्रमी विवस्त्राश्तसतातातरमाधिति।
   तवेनां विजने देशे विसुध्य रघुनादन।
   शीतामाकण्ठा सौमिने कुर्ष्वद्व वचनं मम। V. R. VII. 45. 17-19
2. स तथा स्वतै तदुल्यपदेशनेन प्राप्तस्व वाल्मिकिपर्य लघुविनाय। R.V. XIV. 45
3. लक्षणः—(मालमण्डलम्) तत्र शालानीमुख सतामानस्य कृते शर्चनात्मकमिले
   स्मृतवाककुकुलस्य कल्विकुमुदितस्य। सत्तवय चाहु गाम्भीर्यारावस्य
   सुलभं दोहदेः भागीरथीड्यं प्राधिति। तत्सात लघ्नेन
   गाज्ञायास्तु परे पारे वालमिकेश्वरु महात्मनः।
   परिश्रमं निवर्तत्व—इति। K. M. I. p. 10
Dingnāga has tried to follow Vālmīki, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, in the treatment of this theme which is peculiarly different from all the existing dramas. Bhavabhūti was the only one who took up this episode of the Rāmāyana, which is really the most significant and valuable one for all times. We have already seen how Bhavabhūti succeeded in holding up the ideal love of Rāma and Sītā and its fulfilment in his Uttara-Rāmacarita. Dingnāga, who came centuries after Bhavabhūti tried his hand on this theme once more. Though the theme is the same, there are many subtle differences noticeable in this later play. The Kundamālā (flower-garland) itself, from which the play has derived its name, is an invention of Dingnāga. Instead of Vāsantī of the Uttara-Rāmacarita, we have got Vedavatī in this play. Many incidents of the earlier play have been left out and many substitutes added, but these changes have not in any way embellished the play or improved the characters. And the conditions that we can see by reading between the lines are not in any way suggestive of a happy life, as far as the women are concerned.

The poet does not leave a single opportunity of avowing the deep love of Rāma for Sītā. From the time of Vālmīki, Rāma and Sītā was the last word on conjugal love and fidelity. It is claimed to be so in the Kundamālā also. But, actions do not prove the words. The words of Rāma are more of a master than a loving husband. Sītā, the ever-adored ideal of Indian womanhood, remains so in this play also. But the ideal seems to have been remodelled to suit the taste of the audience. This Sītā is weak and timid unlike the Sītā in the Rāmāyaṇa and in the Raghuvamśa. Here, she seems to be as frail and weak as a creeper. The message that Sītā gives to Lakṣmanā at the time of his departure is the same as found in the Rāmāyaṇa and Raghuvamśa but there is a great difference in the expression. In the earlier works, we
find Sītā dignified, self-confident and confident of Rāma's love for her. In the Rāmāyaṇa, she takes the banishment upon her as a duty, because she is the Sahadharmaćarini of Rāma and she is equally responsible for removing the scandal that has come over the noble race of the Raghūs. In the Raghuvaṃśa, she resents the treatment meted out to her but still realises the helplessness of Rāma in the matter and hence, after the first wave of resentment and anger passed, she sends the dignified and meaningful message, which we have already discussed in a previous chapter. But here in the Kundamālā, the order of banishment repeated to her by Lakṣmaṇa comes to her as a stunning blow—a veritable bolt from the blue. She is not able to think or to say anything; she only broods over her own fate. When reminded by Lakṣmaṇa, she gives messages to her mothers-in-law, but none to Rāma. When asked by Lakṣmaṇa, again and again she tries to say something, not because she is courageous or broad-minded enough to do so, but because it was not possible to reject Lakṣmaṇa's solicitations. And finally, she gives a formal message that he should not worry about her, but look after himself and be alertly performing his normal duties.¹ And there she adds, when she is once again asked by Lakṣmaṇa whether she had nothing more to say "Tell him 'it is not proper for you to banish me, who is in no way guilty, from your heart, much less so from your house, and even from your kingdom."" Lakṣmaṇa

¹. सीता—तथा निष्ठुरो नाम सन्निधयत इत्यप्रतिहतवचनतैवा लक्ष्मणस्य, न सीताय भवत्यमूँ। तथा मम चचनात् जनं विज्ञाय—मन्द्भागिनी-मनुष्योचरु वैशाखपरिपालनमिमामनस्तात्त्र्यां न बाध्यः। सद्भव स्वपुरोरे सावधानी भवेति।

K. M. I. 24

2. सीता—एवरमिति जनं विज्ञापय—न युतं तव निरुपराधीमनं जनं सपदि हृदयतो निर्वाचितयन्तुः किं पुनर्विषयं इति।

K. M. I. 125
agrees with her. What a contrast to the spirited words of Sītā portrayed by Kālidāsa?

She also says: "Please submit to him also thus from me," 'that woman, living in the hermitage, requests you with hands folded on the head to be kind enough to remember her, either as a woman without any good qualities but known to you for long, as a destitute, or as Sītā, whichever way you prefer.'

In contrast to this we are forcibly reminded of the last words of the message of Sītā to Rāma in the Rāhu-vāmśa—"It is the duty of the King, as ordained by Manu, to look after all people belonging to all the Vārṇas and Āšramas. So, though you have banished me from your city, you will have to protect me even as the many other hermit women living in the forest."

Throughout the play, wherever Sītā is presented, the same weakness and helplessness are clearly seen. The worst of the whole episode is seen in the last act, where Sītā enters the presence of Rāma to take the vow. There is a vast difference between the entrance of Sītā here and in the Uttara-Rāmacarita. There, Sītā’s purity and chastity were vouched by persons no less than Arundhati, Bhumī and Gangā. And naturally enough she is accepted without a word of opposition by Rāma. But in the Kundamālā, Sītā herself is made to enter as a supplicant

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1. लक्षणः—सन्देशग्रामायण्या सन्देशसू ।

श्रायी निर्वासिता नाम हृदयायु प्रभविद्धुना ।

कथं गुहाभं गुहं नाम कथं जनपदादपि ॥ K. M. I. 15

2. सीता—सा तपोवनवासिनी सर्वं शीति निरंगितेनविज्ञालिना विन्दुपवृत्ति,

यथं निर्गुणं चिरपरिचितं तथा, प्रभायेति ता, सीतेति का

स्मरण—मात्रकेनानुगणितत्वते ॥ K. M. I. p. 25

3. नृस्तव्य वरणविमपालन यस्य एव भमो मनुष्य प्राप्तिः ।

निर्वासितायेवमत्तत्त्वयाहं तपस्विसामायमवेक्षणीयः ॥ R. V. XIV. 67
and take the vow once again before the people. Rāma does not accept even Vālmiki's avowal of Sītā's purity, and willingly allows him to go away in anger. The counter-question of Sītā—"How am I to make them believe?" in answer to Vālmiki's words of anger and sorrow, at the insulting behaviour of the two brothers, is agonising for any one with a heart. And finally Sītā has to stand before the public and repeat her vow. Both Vālmiki and Kālidāsa have described this scene, but the dignity of womanhood was never at stake. Sītā has been shown by both poets as taking the vow, but that vow stands as an eternal lesson to all who doubt the innocent and dishonour the pure women. She gave the proof of her Satītya, but did not accept the worldly happiness as a reward! On the other hand, in Kundamālā, the Goddess Prthvī had to come up and certify to the character of Sītā. The long process of Prthvī's avowal and the people's acceptance seem to be a continuous period of insult to Sītā. At the end of everything, Rāma shows his acceptance only by telling Lakṣmaṇa to bow down at her feet, Still she is quite happy, and feels as though she is blessed. When Rāma, obeying the insistent words of Vālmiki takes her by the hand, her happiness knows no bounds. She clearly says, "As you say now, my soul is breathing again—I have once more come back to life."

1. वाल्मीकः—किमेनेन कण्ठूयवेने। युहार्य कुशलवै। गच्छाम: स्वमा-शमपदं।
   रामरक्षमणौ—प्रसीदु: गच्छतु भगवान्।
   K. M. VI. p. 180

2. सीता—श्रद्धे कि परिवोध्यामि।
   K. M. VI. p. 180

3. वाल्मीकः—बैंदेही! तपोवन-गतानामपि दशं समाजापयति। तत्तपियो-व्यतामात्मा।
   K. M. VI. p. 180

4. रामः—यदाजापयति गुरवः। वस्त सक्षमः! कियतां पादभ्रमामः।
   K. M. VI. p. 194

5. सीता—यदायपुर्ण धाजापयति। उच्छुवसितो मे भ्रात्मा। प्रत्यागता मे
   प्राणः।
   K. M. VI. p. 196
This is so unlike the Sītā, who though one with Rāma, still has a sense of self-respect as portrayed by the earlier writers. Sītā is the same, but the picture seems to have lost its glory and splendour.

There are two hermit women, Vedavatī and Yajñavatī presented in the Kundamālā as friends of Sītā. Vedavatī in this play seems to substitute Vāsantī in the Uttara-Rāmacarita. But, the contrast between the two is too obvious. Of course, the whole situation is different. While Vāsantī was the dearest friend of both Rāma and Sītā, Vedavatī knows only Sītā. So, an amount of partiality towards Sītā on her part is understandable. But, the way in which she persistently tries to convince Sītā that Rāma does not love her, is more suitable to a woman of the ordinary world than a girl of the hermitage. She plainly asks, "Why are you thus destroying yourself for the sake of that cruel and callous man?"

Sītā with her unshakable confidence in Rāma’s love goes on avowing the same against every attack made by Vedavatī. But Vedavatī is not convinced; neither, would she leave it at that. Where Sītā quotes the wondrous feats of Rāma, such as Setubandhan and Rāvanavāhda to rescue her, Vedavatī promptly answers, "Oh! self-praising one! the anger against Rāvana is quite natural for the Kṣatriya, but not the love for Sītā." This reminds us of the words of Rāma in Raghuvamśa, "Does the serpent bite him, who touched it by the feet, due to thirst for blood?"

When

1. वेदवती—ग्राह्य प्रपण्डित! तथा निर्गोष्ठी निर्मन्त्रकोष्ठी यते कीर्तक्र त्वम- 
    सितपक्षचंद्रश्वेब दिने दिने परित्यायो!

2. वेदवती—प्रामुखश्चापिनी! क्षत्रियायां समुचित एव रावणस्य उपरि रोपो, 
    न सीताया: उपर्युपागः।

3. राक्षोवशान्तो न मे प्रवासो व्यर्थः स वर्षप्रतिमोचनायां! 
    प्रमथयः: शोषितकाल्या किं पदा स्वस्फलं दशति दिनिज्यः।

K. M. II. p. 52
K. M. II. p. 53
R. V. XIV. 41
Sitā quotes the fact that Rāma still remains single, the answer is: "Don't be too proud! The time is quite near for Rāma's Yajñadīkṣā"¹, meaning thereby that he would not remain single much longer. All this from a friend who knows Sitā's heart only too well, is rather strange, unless it is to show that the ordinary trend of feminine nature is to seek out the wrong side of things everywhere!

Yajñavatī is an ordinary simple girl, who does her daily duties, obeys the orders of her elders, and loves and adores her friend Sitā. These are the only active women characters in this play, while the three queens of Daśaratha and the wives of Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are mentioned by names. The general idea that one gets after reading the Kundamālā is that women in general are of a low calibre and they deserved to be looked down upon by the high and mighty man. And the nature and conduct of women also seem to have undergone an adverse change.

The seclusion of women seems to have become an established fact by this time. After Lakṣmaṇa's departure, Sitā is very much agitated at the approach of Vālmiki who, she thought, was a stranger. "Oh God! here is some stranger. How am I to avoid this danger! Well, I shall do thus (loudly). I am a woman here, and all alone²." This clearly shows that a woman's seeing a man other than her own near and dear relations, has come to be considered as objectionable. The name "Antarvāsini", one who stays within, is used in this play as a synonym for women³. There is another ins-

1. वेदवती—सलिन मा उत्ताम्य, समासत्रो रामस्य यज्ञ-दीशा-समय: ।
   K. M. II. p. 54

2. सीता—प्रत्याहितम् ! श्रन्य एष को वा परपुरुषः ! कथं इतानी वारविध्यामि
   महास्हितम् ? (विविवत्य) एवम् । स्त्री प्रहीमेकाकिनी च ।
   K. M. I. p. 37

3. वेदवती—सम्भुत एव यज्ञसम्भारो महाराजस्य, निर्माणितः सान्तवतिकः-
   स्तपोषनां सम्पाद: ।
   K. M. II. p. 47
tance in the fourth act, where it is said that Vālmiki, by his power of penance, has made the women invisible to any man in that lake because the women of the hermitage complained to him that they were unable to use the lake in the hermitage for bathing and plucking flowers due to the constant presence of the royal retinue.

While Kuśa and Lava are about to sing the Rāmāyana in the presence of Rāma and other people assembled in the Naimiśāranya for the horse sacrifice, a place is kept apart hidden by a curtain. Rāma is informed by the Kancukī that there are seated the three Queens of the late King and the wives of Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna. This is another proof in support of the conclusion that women did not appear before strangers and the Purdah system was well in vogue when this play was written. This is a clear contrast to the repeated statements found in the Rāmāyana that there is no harm in women being seen in public places, in sacrifices and other celebrations etc.

1. बेदवती—पश्च सप्तमे दिवसे सम्प्राक्षतासमस्तपोवनवातिनीभिविभाषापितो
भगवानु वाळ्मीकीः—एवं तुनमात्रामदीचिका पपापचयादिदिद्रु
श्राम्य उपभोगेव इदानीं महाराजस्य स्निहान्नन परपुख
न्यन्त्र-परिलक्ष्यता न शत्क्या स्त्रीजननावागाहिनिः। इति। तदा
भगबता वाळ्मीकिनिन निध्यान्त-निश्चल-नयनन मूहतः निधाय
धिरंतम्—'एतस्य मौदीकायं वर्त्तमानः स्त्रीजनः पुरुष
न्यनानामग्रोधोरो भविष्यति'—इति। क. म. IV. p. 89

2. रामः—किमिदमपरमस्मदनतिकायुध
यवनिक्या तिरोकोलान्।
कंडुकी—एतास्तिनो महादेवः कोसल्याचा: महोपते।
एतद्वरुत-सरुण-लक्ष्मीनां वधू-नयम्।
क. म. VI. p. 163

3. ग्र.—व्यसनेवु च कश्च्चु न युधेवु स्वयम्भो।
न क्रती न विवाहे च दर्शनं दुहिति निश्रुः।" V. R. VI. 196. 27
श्र.—गायत्रीयो नृत्यानाशेष वादयन्त्यवच सर्वंशः।
श्रामोद्व परमं जम्बुवरामरत्यूषितः।" V. R. I. 32. 13
The conversation between Rāma and Vidūṣaka in the Naimiśa forest, when Rāma was agitated after seeing the reflection of Sītā in the lake, is rather significant. There, when Rāma says, in answer to Kuśika’s question, that he remembers Vaidehi neither by her merits nor demerits, the Brāhmin innocently says: “How is it possible to remember women except by either of these?” Rāma answers that it is so with other couples, but for Rāma and Sītā, their love for each other does not depend upon any cause.¹ The statement might have been taken as a casual one if the particular reference to women—the word Simantinya were not there. Usually, people are specially remembered if they are either very good or very bad. That may be true about women also. But this special reference once more points out to the mentality of men to take the first opportunity to denounce women. The general condition of women as could be seen throughout this play is much worse than what has been observed hitherto.

The Nalavilāsa by Ramacandrasūri is a drama written with the story of Damayantī and Nala as the theme. The story has been changed from the original in many places, perhaps to suit dramatic purposes. It has been brought to the human level, leaving out the desire of Indra and others for Damayantī and also other supernatural elements. Kali and Kārkotaka are completely eliminated. The king of Kalacuri is shown as the rival suitor to the hand of Damayantī, and the Kāpālica, Ghoraghoṇa and his retinue are his helpers. Damayanti, the heroine, Kapinjalā, Maka-

¹ K. M. V. p. 130
rikā, and Lambastani are the four female characters in this play. The outline of the story and the main incidents are more or less the same. Puṣkara in the original story is replaced by Kubera here. Kirāta episode has been done away with. And instead of Kārkotaka, it is Niṣadha, the father of Nala, who bites him in the guise of the serpent. A play within a play is introduced as a means to find out the refuge of Nala after he left Damayanti. Hearing the Sūryapāka in the court of Dadhiparna, Damayanti sends her friends Kalahamsa, Makarikā and Kapinjalā to stage the play describing the incidents after the abandonment of Damayanti by Nala in the forest. She also sends an invitation to Dadhiparna for the alleged second Swayamvara of Damayanti.

The denouement of the story is more interesting by the actions of Ghoraghona, who was not yet pacified nor defeated. He sends the false news of Nala’s demise which makes Damayanti prepare to ascend the funeral pyre. But the timely arrival of Nala, saves the situation and all ends well.

This play though romantic, differs from the many other stereotyped ones. Of course, the love of the hero and the heroine and their pangs of separation are described but that comes only in the second act. This has a refreshing atmosphere. The original character of Damayanti is retained in this drama also. She has an individuality of her own. She is not the ordinary princess who weeps, wails and pines off for her lover, or looks to others for help at every step. She has knowledge, wisdom and courage. The scene of the Swayamvara, where she passes on from one king to another with clever and apt remarks, gives us ample evidence of her ready wit and sense of humour. It is she who plans the staging of the play in the court of Dadhiparna, and also she takes the law into her own hands and announces her second Swayamvara to that king, in order to bring Nala to
Kundina. There is a dignity and a grace that surround her. She is quite a refreshing exception among the many female characters in the different dramas written during this period.

Makarika, the attendant of Nala, and Kapinjala, the friend of Damayanti are two other equally interesting female characters in this play. Both are devoted to their respective master and mistress and equally to both after they are united in marriage. Their loyalty and devotion are equalled only by their untiring activities to help the king and queen in their adversity. Both of them prove themselves to be worthy of the confidence placed in them. These two with Kalahamsa, the friend of King Nala were the real helpers in bringing back Nala to his lost kingdom and wife.

Lambastani is a strange character on the Sanskrit stage. She is the wife of Ghoraghona, the Kapalika. She is very fat, and her description seems to present before us the personification of the Bibhatsa sentiment. And the achievements she claims to her credit are equally fierce and disgusting. Whether she was able to do all that she boasted, is doubtful. But Kalahamsa thinks that of all the things perhaps she is able to manage miscarriage, but nothing else.

1. कलहस: —अपरं च
कारक्षयमृ: स्तनन्तदी न गिरान् विरास: ।
केशा: परले कुष्ठलां दघते न चेत: ।
तस्या: कुरज्ञकौशो गुपचक्रवार्क !
जार्यं गती न तु मती विप्रह्नतायकाशम् ॥ N. V. II. 6.

2. लम्बसतानी—(सगवंश) भो महाराज !
अपुत्रेमयं पुत्रं ददामि । दनाजारसंजाताव गर्भवत् पातवामिः ।
दुलंभस्वर्पिस्यजनं सम्पादयामि । कि बहुना ? यदृ निघुसने
उपचार्यं ततु साधयामि । N. V. II. p. 25

3. राजा—(अपवार्य) श्राहो धूषत्रता ! श्राहो निललंक्रता ! विमृषा संवधति
किम्येतदुहक्कम् ?
कलहस: —न किमपि, गर्भपालं पुनजनानाति । N. V. II. p. 25
A woman in name, and a demon in figure and actions, she is a peculiar character brought on the stage by Rāmacandra Sūri's imagination.

The Candraśakī of Kṣemendra is another play based on an epic theme, the original being the famous story of king Hariścandra found in the Mahābhārata and other epics. The only important female character depicted is Śaivyā, the queen, who shares all the adversities that came upon her husband, through no fault of his except his being too good. First, she is presented in the palace, surrounded by luxuries, and next we see her following the king with their son, in utter poverty. The story as found in the epic is faithfully followed by the author in this drama. The nobility and goodness of Śaivyā is in no way less than that of her husband. The pathetic picture of the queen in the third and fifth acts is quite touching. And when everything ends well we have a sigh of relief, specially for the sake of this noble and patient woman.

Cārumati, the friend and maid-in-attendance of Śaivyā, is "the good servant of the very good queen". She shows evidence of good training and noble birth. She is quite devoted and loyal to her mistress.

There are a number of dramas, mentioned by the various writers on Alāṅkāra, which have themes based on the various episodes from Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Hari-vaṁśa and others. As we have already noticed, all these plays are more or less the reflections of the old epic stories developed by the fertile imaginations of the various writers, and hence they do not create an atmosphere of reality around them.

Apart from the many plays based on the epic stories, there are a number of semi-historical and romantic plays also. To take each of them for study is not necessary for our purpose due to the imitative nature of almost all such works. We have already studied in detail the Viddhasālabhanjikā of
Rājaśekhara. Most of the other plays of this type follow the same techniques, the difference being only in the names of the characters and the sequence of incidents.

The Karnasundari of Bilhana is one such play which borrows the technique from Kālidāsa, Śrī Harṣa and Rājaśekhara. It is said by scholars that the story is actually based on the marriage of the Calukya King Karnadeva, with a princess. Karnasundari, the heroine, Madanalekhā, the chief queen, and the usual maids-in-attendance are the female characters presented. Karnasundari, the heroine is seen in a dream by the king and then in a picture, painted on the wall of the pleasure-house in the royal garden. She is a Vidyādharā princess and is introduced into the palace by the clever minister of the king, who wanted his master to marry this girl, because it was said that her husband would become a great emperor. The usual jealousy of the queen, the imprisonment of the heroine, the disguise of the queen as Karnaśundari, are more or less as found in the Ratnāvali and the Karpūramanjari, the two earlier Nāṭikās which we have studied.

All the women characters show more or less the same traits, and each of them behaves according to pattern. We seem to be reading the same story over and over again, with changed names. The behaviour of the queen does not show any dignity of her position or broad-mindedness which one expects in a noble-born lady. The young girls also do not show any integrity or individuality or grace. After seeing the hero, the heroine is in the agonies of separation and finally the meeting with the hero cures her. All these are court comedies of the lighter type and seem to have come down to the level of a passing mode of enjoyment, even as the women depicted in them betray the status of instruments or objects of pleasure and enjoyment for man.
CHAPTER VI

WOMEN IN THE PLAYS AFTER THE 12TH CENTURY UPTO THE 19TH CENTURY

We have seen in the previous chapter how the literary field was becoming decadent and how very little scope there was to study individual characters. This condition was more true and was growing still worse as far as the female characters were concerned. Coming down to the later centuries, we are able to gather still less data, not because the number of plays written was less, but because originality, creative intellect and imagination were lacking in the works produced during this period.

The records of history tell us that the position of women in society was steadily deteriorating in all respects. The freedom they enjoyed during the earliest times had come to an end. As Dr. Altekar puts it, "Proprietary rights apart, in all other spheres, the position of women continued to deteriorate in this period... From the theological point of view the women came naturally to be regarded as of the same status as the Śūdra. This inflicted an incalculable harm on their general status and prestige."  

The gradual increase in population, the oft-repeated foreign invasions and the consequent psychological changes that came over the society caused the rules, laid down by the law-givers concerning women, to be interpreted and implemented in the narrowest possible sense. The necessity

of protecting women from the eyes of strangers perhaps reached such a stage that seclusion of women, became the law of the day. A close study of the dramatic literature available in this period goes a long way to support this conclusion.

Examining the dramas written during this period one feels that the creative genius had gone underground. These plays do not seem to fulfil the real aim of poetry, combining instruction with enjoyment. The poets, though wishing to give expression to their ideas, seem to hesitate in taking any bold step or treading on any new path for fear of shocking the patternized society in which they lived, and so, confined themselves to provide enjoyment to their audience. To be on the safest side, they chose their themes from the Epics and followed the rules laid down by the dramaturgists to the utmost. Love and marriage being the most attractive elements for the ordinary minds, they formed the themes for most of the plays. Naturally, the heroines depicted in these dramas belonged to royal families of the epic age, who could not have much in common with the age in which these plays were written.

The practice of women taking part in plays seems to have ceased by the time of Bhavabhuti, as we have already seen. The men acting the part of women must have also provided much difficulty in the successful staging of the plays. We have got more than one example within the various plays to show the practice of men disguising as women even within the body-plot of the play. A peculiarity that is found in these later days is that there are quite a number of plays which fall into the various categories of smaller types, called the Uparupaka, such as Prahasana. Bhana, Vyayoga. Srigadita, Vithi etc. There are a few which are indicated by the authors themselves as Chhaya Nataka. There are others which depict abstract qualities personified, and are allegorical in nature. Inspite of
the care taken by the poets to keep up the imaginary characteristics in their works, it is not impossible for a close observer to notice some points that would indicate the nature and position of women in these centuries.

The *Vīṇavāṣavadatta* is an incomplete play that has been published recently. The story closely resembles the incidents described in the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyana* ascribed to Bhāsa. In the *Aścaryacūdāmani* of Śaktibhadra, which we have examined in the previous chapter, a play named "Unmādavāṣavadatta" is referred to. The editor of "Vīṇāvāṣavadatta" suggests that this may be the same as the play of Śaktibhadra. The story goes that the father of the princess Vāsavadatta worships Lord Śiva in order to get a suitable husband for his beloved daughter, and in his dream he is told by the Lord that he would soon obtain a good son-in-law. Though the girl was promised to the prince of Aśmaka, the king is not willing to give her in marriage to that prince, because the latter is a bad character and drunkard. Hence the ministers decide upon King Udayana as the suitable bridegroom, and they set up a conspiracy to capture the Vatsa King. The story goes upto the success of the plot by Bharatarohaka and Śālamkāyana, the ministers of Ujjayini. The Vatsaraja's minister, Yaugandharāyana is getting ready to get his king released, when the play ends abruptly. The text does not present any female character so far. But it is possible to see from the anxiety of the king for his daughter Vāsavadatta, that the girls were as dear as sons to their fathers, if not more. It is also quite clear that marriage was considered a necessity for girls and the fathers were always anxious to get the best possible husbands for their daughters. The custom of giving riches to the bridegroom seems to be current from the statement of Bharatarohaka, who says that by giving Vāsavadatta in marriage to the Aśmaka prince, the treasury will be depleted, for he would have to give the Prince twice or thrice the amount of the
The attitude of the ministers that the girl may be carried away by Udayana and that would save their face with the Aśmaka prince, suggests the custom of the Kṣatriya marriages by Rākṣasa Vidhi, i.e., bridegroom carrying away the bride perforce. These are a few points that are clear from the incomplete play.

Another drama, published from Madras, is the Nalacaritra Nāṭakam, written by Nilakanṭha Dīkṣita. As suggested by the name itself, the play depicts the story of Nala. The date of this author is accepted as the 17th century by learned scholars. This play also is incomplete ending abruptly in the middle of the sixth act. The King of Niṣadha is described as love-sick due to his seeing Damayanti in a dream. Even this dream is caused by goddess Saraswati, who works for the sake of Bhīma, the father of Damayanti, and a devotee of the goddess. Quite a number of changes are made in the body-plot of the play from the story as found in the Mahābhārata, and also the few other sources that we have got. This is the only place in which Nala is shown to have had a wife already, while he was attracted by the beauty of Damayanti.

Goddess Saraswati, Damayanti, Sāvitri, Anangalekhā and Sārangikā are the female characters represented in this play. Instead of the four Devas, here, only Indra is in love

1. भरत—यथा प्रतिभादाने नये दीया: ।
2. राजा—कै ते ?
3. भरत—षम्भोरिमिराय व्यतिकर:, कोष्कय:, राजपुष्या: दु:खभागिता च ।
4. राजा—कथं कोष्कय ?:
5. भरत—शुल्कात् तिहिगुएं तिहिगुएं वा ननु तस्म देयस ।

V. V. I. p. 8 & 9.
with Damayanti. The Swayamvara is stopped and by the interference of Saraswati, matters are made easy for Damayanti and Nala. They are virtually married to each other by the Goddess, even before Indra gets a chance to request Nala to become his messenger. Nala is helped out of the difficult situation of taking the message of Indra to Damayanti by Sāvitri, who persuades him to stay back by giving him the reply of Damayanti that she would rather die than marry any one else, but Nala. Indra is offended and goes away threatening Nala with dire consequences of disregarding the god of gods. Nala and Damayanti are happily married and they have two children, till which time the goddess Saraswati stays with them in order to make Damayanti happy. All this is told to us in the beginning of the fifth act through the conversation of the hero and the heroine. It is also indicated that Indra is seeking friendship with Puṣkara to take revenge upon Nala. By a clever device, the future incidents of leaving the country, the children and also the separation of Nala are indicated through a bad dream of Damayanti in the fifth act itself. The play ends abruptly in the middle of the sixth act and so we are able to know nothing more.

Damayanti is depicted here more or less on the same lines as Mālatī in the Prakarana of Bhavabhūti. There are quite a number of female characters, all of them, friends and helpers of Damayanti. The heroine is a love-sick, frail young girl who depends upon others to do everything for her. All the girls are the kinds of friends who help her in attaining her wishes and are the same stereotyped maids-in-attendance of the palaces whom we have already seen in the plays of Śrī Harṣa and also in other plays depicting similar themes. These characters do not in any way create in our minds the impression of reality. They pass before our eyes just as the characters in an imaginary situation giving some enjoyment for the moment, but they leave no lasting impres-
sion, nor create any emotion which could revolutionize the patternized life of the happy-go-lucky people.

Another play that attracts our attention is the Ratnesvaraprasādanam by Guru Rama Kavi. It seems that the 16th and the 17th centuries are marked with a revival of Sanskrit learning in South India. The Cera, Cola and Pāndya kings were vying with each other not only for territorial supremacy, but also in encouraging the progress of culture by patronizing literature and fine arts. Scholars and poets were given very high positions in the South Indian courts, as could be gathered from historical records, inscriptions and other documents which are being brought to light continuously. The kings and chieftains not only supported bands of erudite scholars in their respective courts, but also received and honoured people of established reputation in the various fields of knowledge. Guru Rāma Kavi, the author of the play under review, belonged to the North Arcot district and was a younger contemporary of the famous South Indian poet and rhetorician, Appayya Dīkṣita. His works, as related in the introduction, are: Hariścandra-carita, Subhadrādhananjaya, Madanagopālavilāsa, Vibhāgaratnamalika and Ratnesvaraprasādanam. As the very names suggest, the first three have their sources in the Mahābhārata and the Harivamśa. The last two are imaginary themes, while all, except the first play, deal with love and marriage of their respective heroes and heroines. Since all the women characters are more or less stereotyped, it is enough to take up one of the plays and see what the characters can tell us.

The Ratnesvaraprasādanam is easily seen as the best among the author's works from the point of view of literary merit, as stated by the editor of the work in his introduction. Ratnāvali, the daughter of the Gandharva king, is the heroine and Candracūda's son, Ratnacūda is the hero. All the women characters are divine or semi-divine beings
and, naturally enough, Māyā, Indrajīla and superhuman powers are at work in the development of the plot. Ratnāvalī is the darling of goddess Saraswati and by her blessings she is well-versed in fine arts, such as, music and painting. She is blessed by Lord Maheśvara to get Ratnacūda, the son of Candracūda, as her husband. Ratnāvalī sees him in her dream and he sees her in the temple of Ratneśvara. The course of love is obstructed by the interference of Subāhu, instigated by Nārada who wished to enjoy the fun of a fight. But finally the intruder is defeated by the hero and every thing ends well, the princess being given in marriage to Ratnacūda by her father, Vasubhūti.

The girls are beautiful and well-versed in fine arts, as all the heroines and their friends are expected to be. Ratnāvalī in a shy, modest and accomplished girl. Her friends are loving and ready to help her in all conditions. Every thing works on the expected pattern and so there is nothing more to be said about the character or characteristics of any of the dramatic personnel.

Balamartandaavijaya is another play written during this period. The poet is the famous Devarāja Kavi, who lived at the time of the heroic king, Mārtanda varmā of Travancore. The king himself is credited with the conquest of the various small states of the vicinity, their consolidation into one country, which was later dedicated to Lord Padmanābha and ruled by the king as His representative. Ever since then, the Kings of Travancore had the title of 'Śrī Padmanābha-dāsa' added to their names, the end of this custom coming only with the abolition of monarchy and the merger of the state into the Republic of India.

The drama is based on authentic history and almost all the incidents described are, by and large, historical. No female characters are depicted except two maids-in-attendance—Śarikā and Marālika—introduced perhaps for a change. They hardly serve any purpose, except to relate
some incidents in the play to the audience, for they appear in the interlude before the fourth act. We have references to the queen mother and also the princesses who are happy at the victory of the king and are waiting to welcome his return to the palace.

The *Rājavijaya Nāṭaka* is a drama describing contemporary history by way of a discussion about the eligibility of the Ambaṣṭas or the Vaiśyas to wear sacred thread and perform the Vedic sacrifices. The author's name is not available, nor is the play complete. Mahārāja Rājavallabha is the hero of the play, and the theme is the performance of a sacrifice which is said to be very difficult to perform in the Kali age. It gives much information about the various rituals in the course of the sacrifice. But there is no mention of any female character as far as the available portion of the play goes. It ends abruptly while the city of Vikramapura and Mahārāja Rājavallabha are being praised highly.

It may not be out of place here to say a few words about the hero of the play, who is an historical figure. Mahārāja Rājavallabha was a leading political figure in Bengal in the middle of the eighteenth century. He was born in about 1707 A. D. in a village called Beel-Daonia, which was later adorned by him with fine buildings and temples and renamed as Rājanagara. He was a keen social reformer, much ahead of his age. He tried to introduce widow-remarriage, though in the long run he failed. However, it is interesting to note that his activities were recalled and his verses quoted as authority a century later, when the great Iśvaracandra Vidyāsāgara made a more successful attempt in the same direction. R. C. Majumār and K. G. Goswāmī are of the opinion that “This drama may almost be said to be the last literary work composed in Sanskrit in Bengal in the pre-British period.”

Now we pass on to the type of plays called *Naṭikas*,

1. The Preface to the *Rājavijaya Nāṭaka*. 
which we find in abundance during this period. The reason of partiality to this type may be the very nature of *Naṭikās*. As we have already noticed, while dealing with the first of the kind, the Priyadarśīkā of Śrī Harśa, this type has its own peculiarities which attract the common man more easily. This type of play is more gay, attractive and enjoyable. Fun and frolic can find an easy way into such a type and, being light-hearted, can be easily passed on to the audience without dire consequences. We shall take up a few of these plays only for study, because they are more or less stereotyped, as we shall presently see.

The *Pārijātamanjarī* is a *Naṭikā* in two parts inscribed on two stones. Only one of the stones is found till now, hence only the first two acts of the play are available to us for study. The story is more or less the same as that of the *Karnasundari* referred to in the previous chapter. It deals with the love-affair of a contemporary king. The women characters presented, as usual, are: the chief queen, the heroine *Pārijātamanjarī*, her friends and the maids-in-attendance on the queen. The only speciality here is the peculiar way in which the heroine is brought into existence. When the king is entering the palace a garland of *Pārijāta* flowers falls on his breast and turns into a maiden. This girl is *Pārijātamanjarī* or *Vijayaśrī*. The king falls in love with her, after which the usual course of such plays follows.

The *Kamaliniṅkalahāṃsa* is another play of the same type. The story follows the pattern, the only difference being that the maiden is discovered in a magic lotus given to the chief queen. The rest of the incidents follow closely the *Viddhasālabhanjikā*, studied in the previous chapter.

The *Mrgāṅkalekha* is a court-comedy, written in the later half of the 16th century by poet Viśvanātha. *Mrgāṅkalekha* is the daughter of the king of Kāmarūpa. Karpūratilaka, the king of Kalinga, is the hero of the play. The minister, Ratnacūda, hearing of the prophecy that Mrgāṅka-
lekhā's husband would become the ruler of the whole world and tries his best to get her married to his own master. Siddhāyoginī, a nun, brings the girl into the harem of the Kalinga king and puts her in the protection of the chief queen. The usual things follow until the girl is recognized as a princess and is given in marriage to the king by the queen herself. The incident of a demon, Saṃkhapāla, taking away the girl, and the king saving her, is added perhaps in imitation of the Kāpālika episode in the Mālatīmadhava.

Mrgāṅkalekhā, the heroine, Vilāsavatī, the chief queen, the siddhayoginī, the maids-in-attendance—Kalahaṃsikā, Navamālikā, Lavangalatā, and Lambastani, the wife of Kundarudhira: these are the female characters depicted in the play. All of them are quite familiar to us, as far as their nature and behaviour go. Their manners, actions and reactions seem to be the same, as we have noticed in their predecessors in the earlier plays of the same type. The worst thing is that these characters do not exhibit any real life in them. They seem to be moving rather mechanically and automatically. As they have no individuality of their own there hardly exists any scope or necessity of separate or individual study of these characters.

There are numerous Nāṭikas based on the story of Kṛṣṇa's life in Gokula. Of these, the earliest available is the Kuvalayavatī, which is also called the Ratnapāṇīcalika, written by Singa Bhūpāla, whose time is decided by scholars as the 14th century. At the instance of Brahmā, Bhūmi assumes the form of a maiden and Nārada takes her to Dwārakā and leaves her under the protection of Rukmini. He gives the girl a magic ring which, when she wears, makes her appear to males as a doll of precious stones—a Ratnapāṇīcalīka—and saves her from the unwanted attention of men. A chance visit of the girl to the palace-garden brings about a meeting with Kṛṣṇa and mutual love is the result. The first meeting becomes the forerunner to many more, and
Satyabhāmā drops in at one of these, even as Irāvatī in the Mālavikāgnimitra. Rukmīni, the chief among Kṛṣṇa's queens, imprisons Kuvalayāvatī to please Satyabhāmā. The brother of Kālyavāna, the Rākṣasa, tries to kidnap her. The timely realisation of the danger by Rukmīni makes it possible for Kṛṣṇa to interfere and the girl is rescued by the hero. In the meantime, Nārada returns and informs the chief queen that Kuvalayāvatī is none other than Bhūmi herself, and Rukmīni, with the permission of all the co-queens led by Satyabhāmā, offers the girl to her husband.

As can be easily seen, the story follows the works of Bhäsa and Kālidāsa with similar themes, even to the extent of similarity in expressions. The characters depicted also resemble the parallel characters in the respective works. Kuvalayāvatī, Rukmīni and Satyabhāmā are the chief women characters, while the others are the friends of the heroine or the maids-in-attendance at the harem. Kuvalayāvatī is a beautiful girl with all the good qualities expected in a girl of a good family. And she behaves exactly to pattern. She is humble, timid and bashful, gets frightened at the slightest opportunity and falls readily in love with the hero, as soon as she meets him. Rukmīni and Satyabhāmā, the queens of Kṛṣṇa, are brought to the ordinary level of jealous wives by the poet, though he tries to keep up the status of Rukmīni by making her behave more like queen Dhārini, as depicted by Kālidāsa, than by bringing her to the level of Vāsavadattā, as portrayed by Śrī Harṣa. Satyabhāmā seems to be the mild prototype of Irāvatī or Queen Auśinari, portrayed by Kālidāsa.

A close study of these prominent female characters tells us that though the conception of women has undergone a change for the worse and though they have come to be considered as only the objects of enjoyment by men, the ideals held up by the earlier poets, such as Kālidāsa and Bhāsa, still held the attention of the thinking minds. To bring down
those ideals still lower would have been against the very fundamentals of all that Bhāratavarṣa stood for; because from the very earliest times men and women were always considered as supplements and complements to each other. However much the interested people tried to reduce the women to the status of dust, the heart of Bhārata was against such an injustice. So the literature, which is the reflection of the mind and moods of society, could not stoop to that level. These Nāṭikās which took their themes from all sorts of places did not hesitate to bring down Kṛṣṇa and even the ideal king, Rāma, to the level of the ordinary pleasure-loving men, yet they could not paint women in a demeaning way. The worst they could do was to portray them as love-sick and ready to commit suicide if their desires were unattainable. The young girls—the friends and attendants—such as Candralekhā, Candrikā, Kastūrikā, Ghanasūrikā and others are, one and all, the ideal friends and servants who have only the welfare of their own respective mistresses at heart. They are very devoted and loyal and would go to any extent to do a good turn to the latter. None of them seem to have any individual existence of their own apart from that of the one they seek to serve.

The Vṛṣabhānuja is another Nāṭikā based on the story of Kṛṣṇa. The love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is the main theme, and this being a Nāṭikā, the hero has to belong to the Dhīralalita type. Rādhā, the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu, her friends and a Parivrājikā, called Vrindā, are the female characters depicted. The story develops in a very stereotyped way. All the girls are maidens and seem to be well-versed in fine arts, such as, drawing, painting, singing and making garlands of beautiful designs. Not few of them have taste for literature also. On many occasions we hear Candrakalā, Nāgarikā and some other friends of Rādhā changing over to Sanskritit. They are able to talk in verses also. This may be an indication of the poet’s difficulty in composing verses in
Prākṛt or it may be that the people were not so very strict as to make women talk only in Prākṛt. However that may be, the fact remains that in the later dramas we have more of Sanskrit and less of Prākṛt spoken by all characters. In this play, we see Rādhā and Campakalatā composing verses in Sanskrit. We have seen that Sakuntalā was able to write a love-letter in verse to Duṣyanta. But that was in Prākṛt. Here, Rādhā and Campakalatā are writing verses in Sanskrit.

The period, in which these and other plays, based on the life of Kṛṣṇa were written, is accepted to be the 16th and 17th centuries of the Christian era when the Vaiṣṇava cult, specially the devotion to Kṛṣṇa, was in full swing all over India. All these plays describe Kṛṣṇa as a boy or youth in Gokula, with the clear indication of his being the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. Also in the Nāṭikā under study, we have the indications of this conception. But the main theme is the love of two beautiful young people and their marriage according to Gāndharva Vidhi. The expression of erotic sentiment and description of the pangs of separation, favourite with the poets, are allowed full play. This is more poetry than drama, as most of the plays written during this period happen to be. No useful purpose, therefore, can be served from the standpoint of our study in looking into the character delineation or development of the plot here. Of course, here, once again, we are told by the Sūtradhāra in very clear terms that the female roles are to be played by males1.

1. Brahma Sūtrā: —प्रायः किमकर्म कालात्तिपतेन। नवेशः विरूचिकर्त्तवेषः। समागत एव ममात्तेवासी मधुरप्रियो श्रीहीततसहस्त्रीवर्ण-रक्षिकामूलिकमकः स्वस्तो भर्गमज्जलः। V. Bh. 1
Brahma Nāt: —सौगतजगद्धर्मजीवकायः कामन्दकयस्तु प्राप्तमान्मूलिका भाव एक एवाहीते। तद्रूचिकामस्तहस्तवलोकिताय:।
Sūtrā: —वाक्मू। एयोसिस्म कामन्दकी संबूतः।
Nāt: —प्रहस्तप्पवलोकिता। M. M. I. p. 16-18
which reminds us of the similar passages in the Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti.

The Kāmsavadha by Śrī Śeṣakṛṣṇa deals with the incidents of the life of Kṛṣṇa at Gokula till the killing of Kāmsa. Women characters are few. Viḷāsavatī, the messenger from Rādhā to Kṛṣṇa, Kubjā, Yaśodā and Devakī are the ones that are depicted. When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are starting off to Mathurā in the company of Akrūra, we see Yaśodā and Nandagopa following them to some distance. Both of them are stricken with sorrow due to the separation of their beloved sons. But it is Yaśodā who makes a heroic effort to control her feelings and to console others. Though the separation of the children, the very life of their lives, is breaking her heart, Yaśodā remembers that their sorrow would affect the departing boys adversely. We see Nanda becoming unconscious again and again, but Yaśodā takes courage due to her extreme love which makes her forget the self for the sake of the beloveds. She remembers the harm that can come to the children who are going to the enemy's camp, and realises that prayer and good wishes alone can help them. So, she says: “Let us control ourselves and strengthen them by our blessings. Let us please the family deities and propitiate the Brāhmanas who will do the svastika vacana for their sake. Let us give presents to married women. They will ensure the children's welfare. So, hurry, and let us go home, soon.”

And again, when they approach the vicinity of Gokula and see the deserted appearance of the place, with men and

1. यशोदा—प्रार्यं, समाध्विसिंहि, समाध्विसिंहि | प्रभुकृतमिदानीं शोचितुम् | प्रभुकृतम् शल्वेतुद् प्रवसितानाम् | तद्वपृयथ्यव शुभाशीर्भि: | मानवस्व कुल देवता: | प्रर्यंतां स्वस्वितावचिनका ब्रह्मणा: | दीयान्तां वायनानि सोभाययवतीनाम् | यथा वत्सानां कल्याणामप्रतिह्वतं भवति | तद्विल्लायो लघु लघु शुभांसिवेशाम् |

K. V. IV. p. 39
women weeping and wailing, animals and birds dejected, it is she who rises to the occasion and realising the duty as the mother of Kṛṣṇa and the mistress of Gokula, decides to make an effort to control emotions in order to console the dependents. The sense of responsibility and propriety shown by Yaśodā, as also her presence of mind, are quite remarkable. Devaki, Kṛṣṇa's mother, is a parallel character with the same traits of grace, dignity, nobility and selfless love for children, as seen in this play. She feels sad that she had no opportunity of taking care of and petting her sons in their boyhood and had to spend her days as a barren woman, though she had two sons alive. And she hastens to satisfy her son who apologises for killing her brother. Kṛṣṇa was afraid that his mother may curse him for killing her brother. But Devaki with great magnanimity and power of under-

1. यशोदा—प्रायः कुश्मार्यः खल्वेय घोरतरो धोपप्रदेशः। तथा हि—

   नायोऽवर्तति न स्वर्तति पतंगसंबा
   गावस्तुपानिन न चरलति न वांलि वाताः।
   श्रुत्जा: पिरलति न मष्टुः हरो धयाते
   निरजीविता इव दिश: प्रतिभानि शून्या।

   तद्यद वत्सप्रवासीकाधिविविकलवार्त्तामातमातमनवावर्त्त्वम्य व्रज
   वासिनो लोकानिरान्त्व्यायः।

   K. V. IV. p. 40

2. देवकी—नोतस्मः परिशाविती न च करारुङ्गापि संचारा:ती

   न स्तवंपरिपायिती न मदुरेत्वाति संलालिताः।
   सस्तें न निरोक्षितो वर्लिता वाचापि नोज्ञापिती
   वन्याया इव वासरा मम गता लख्वा भवस्ती मुही।

   K. V. VII. 8

3. कुभा:—(समयः ग्राङ्गलि बद्वा)

   मात्रतेन निष्णूः भ्राता दुरारम्य कुलदृष्टिः।
   मन्युःमेन न भे मन्युः परं तु कुलिणःहिः।

   K. V. VII. 10

4. कुभा:—(सान्नद्वयः) उज्जीवितोस्मीदा शापशुक्ष्यात्रसुसंपत्ताः।

   K. V. VII. p. 88
standing pardons him.¹ All her words are indicative of very laudable qualities. Both these mothers of Kṛṣṇa, as depicted here, are adorable ideals of Indian womanhood which has been always kept unstained by all poets, inspite of the deterioration in the condition of women in general in the later periods.

Vilāsavatī and Kubjā are the two young women presented in the play. Of these, one is the childhood friend of Kṛṣṇa and the other a servant in the enemy camp. Both are equally devoted to Kṛṣṇa. Vilāsavatī appears as a messenger between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, but Kubjā's devotion is more remarkable, because inspite of being in the service of Kaṁsa she adores Kṛṣṇa and considers it to be her great good fortune to be able to give him the Angarāga. She actually forces Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to accept the fragrant decorations prepared by her. When her hunch is referred to, very contentedly she says: “The curves on my body are given to me by my God. How could I help it?”¹² Though a simple and unassuming servant woman, she shows an integrity and individuality of her own. Her words and actions impress us in such a way that, when Kṛṣṇa removes her disfigurement, we feel it was only as it should be. She deserved all that and much more from him.

Another noteworthy play is the Manonuranjanam by Anantadeva. It deals with the Govardhana episode, described in the Bhāgavata, and also Rāsalīlā. The first four acts deal with the story of putting an end to the pride of Indra, as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.³ In the fifth act the

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1. देवकी—वर्त, मैथं वादीः।
उपमुक्ते निजं कर्म शुभं वा यदि वाणुभम्।
इश्वर्यम् च सवोधिप न तत्रात्योपराधयति॥ K. V. VII. 11

2. कुञ्जा—देवतृतं ममाहतेवर्कल्यम्। तत्र मया किं कर्तुं शक्यम्॥
K. V. V. p. 65

3. Bhāgavata Purāṇa. X. 24-27
Rāsalīlā is dramatised. Women characters are brought in only towards the end of the fourth act and throughout the fifth. In the fourth act, while Kṛṣṇa was standing for seven days with the Govardhana mountain held high over the whole of Vraja in order to save the people and all beings there from the heavy rain and thunder storm caused by Indra in his anger, Kāmadhenu comes to worship him, and then follow the gods and the goddesses. In the fifth act, the Gopikās go for their bath in the Yamunā and there, Kṛṣṇa takes away all their clothes and hangs them on a tree nearby. The Vraṭahrāraṇalīlā and the Rāsalīlā are described in the fifth act exactly as described in the Bhāgavata. Hence there is no scope of a critical study of any character.

The Vidagdhamādhamavām by Rūpagoswāmin is based on Kṛṣṇa’s love-affairs in Gokula with Rādhā as the main heroine. This play is supposed to be written to please the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who had assembled in the vicinity of Keśitīrtha. The main plot is the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Paurnamāśi is the Parivṛājika who helps Rādhā here, instead of Vrindā in the Vṛṣabhbānuja. The theme is developed on the lines of the Mālatimādhamava in the beginning and the earlier authors are imitated in the depiction of one incident after another. Paurnamāśi reminds us of Kāmandakī with her retinue. We have the general outline of the whole story in the stanza recited by the Sūtradhāra, as he describes the season. In this, perhaps, he is taking

1. Bhāgavata. X. 33

2. सूताचार:—भारिण, पश्य पश्य ।

सोविं वसन्तसमयः समयाय यस्मि—
 नूरणः तमिल्लरमपोदन्दवानुरागम् ।

शुद्धश्रास्त्रं शविरया सह राधवसोः
रुखाय संगमिता निन्दिता पोर्यामासी ॥

V. M. I. 10
example from the *Venīsaṃhāra,* which we have already studied. The conversation between Paurṇamāsī and her disciple, Nāndimukhī, is an imitation of the conversation between Kāmandakī and Avalokitā in the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti.

The main peculiarity of all these plays with Kṛṣṇa as the hero is that all these accept Him as the incarnation of the Supreme Being and everything done to please Kṛṣṇa in any way is justified, because devotion to the Lord is shown as the underlying and prompting cause.

There is a very noticeable difference in this play from all the others, we have hitherto studied. All the heroines we have seen uptill now were loyal and devoted to their respective husbands or lovers, as the case may be. But in the *Vidagdhamādhava* for the first time we have a woman married to one man, depicted as falling in love with another. Rādhā here, is the wife of Abhimanu, and she is deliberately brought into contact with Kṛṣṇa by her friends and also by Parivrājikā, Paurṇamāsī. In the Bhāgavata, it is stated that all the women in Gokula ran to him in the night, hearing the flute, and they would not stop even when prevented by their husbands, brothers and fathers. There, the verses are pregnant with meanings of a spiritual nature. The idea there, is much beyond what the words convey. But in this play the physical side is more emphasised and Rādhā, the wife of Abhimanu, is portrayed as suffering from the pangs of separation from another man, though he is Kṛṣṇa himself. There is no attempt on the part of anybody to explain this

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1. सूत्रवार: —तथा हास्यं श्रद्धा—
   सत्यत्वात्मवर्गितं प्रसाधितात्मा सदादृकतारम्भाः।
   निपत्तिति धातराश्च: कालवशामेदिनीपुक्तं॥ V. S. I. 6

2. V. M. I. p. 10-17
4. ता वार्त्तमाला: पतिभि: पितृभावातुपन्हि:।
   गोविन्दायनुभोत्तमानो न न्यवर्तन्त मौहिला:॥ Bh. P. X. 29-8
as a spiritual union of the Jivātma and Paramātma. Rādhā is again and again blaming herself for being thus attracted towards another man, which act is not at all suitable to a virtuous woman. This propagation of immorality in the name of Bhakti cult seems rather strange.

Another peculiarity in this play is that, though the hero is really head over ears in love with the heroine, he is all the time pretending to be a staunch celibate. He states clearly, "I do not think of touching women even in dreams." The whole play is an imitation of Jayadevas Gitā-Govinda to a great extent. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the center of attraction for all women in Gokula. Candrāvali is another Gopikā who is portrayed here as the rival of Rādhā. Jaṭilā and Karāla, the respective mothers-in-law of Rādhā and Candrāvali, are very anxious to keep the girls away from Kṛṣṇa. But the Parivṛṣṭikā, Paurnamāsī, the Vanadevatā, Vrindā and the respective friends of the two are vying with each other in uniting their respective favourites with the all-pervading Lover of Gokula.

The play is swarming with women, while Subalā, Śrīdāma or Sudāma, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Abhimanyu are the only male characters presented. This seems to be more an opera than a drama. There is actually no development of character nor any reflection of reality. The erotic sentiment predominates and the general atmosphere is of gaiety and hilarious enjoyment. The girls depicted are all well-versed in fine arts, even as seen in the Naṭikā, Vṛṣabhanujā. They can sing, dance, paint and make beautiful designs of garlands. They are very clever at disguising men as women, as is witnessed from the disguise of Subalā and Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā and Goddess Gaurī respectively. They are experts in making garlands of various designs and also in decorating the body with flowers and leaves. Here, in this play, we have one

1. कृष्णः—स्तवे, जानतापि भवता कविदमन्याययमुपयत्स्तम्। न लघु स्तवनेषुपि मया कामिनीस्पर्शः स्मरयते। V. M. II. p. 68
more example of men disguising as women, which we see, off and on, ever since Bhavabhūti's time.

As for the character, manners and customs of the women or, for that matter, any personae of this drama, it is hardly useful to discuss. The whole plot is based on the Purānic story, about the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and takes us far away from the reality, giving no true picture of the society of the times, except that it indicates the trend of the Bhakti cult. It is only the dramatisation of a story to eulogise and propagate Kṛṣṇa Bhakti which is sought to be done by the easy means of giving enjoyment to the ordinary minds, who would not dive deep into anything.

The Rukmiṇiparīṇāya by Prince Rāmavarmā of Travancore deals with the story of the marriage of Rukmini with Kṛṣṇa. The poet is said to have lived in the 18th century, A. D.

Rukmini and her two friends, Navamālikā and Anangasena, are the only female characters depicted in this play. The theme is the well-known story of Rukmini being taken away by Kṛṣṇa at her request, as is found in the Bhāgavata.1 Rukmini is a princess—beautiful, intelligent, obedient to her elders, loving to her friends and very considerate and kind to her servants and dependents. But when it comes to her marriage, she is courageous enough to take the law into her own hands. The author has made a few changes in portraying the characters. In the original story, Rukmini sends a Brāhmaṇa to Kṛṣṇa with the message and request that he should come and take her away by the Rākṣasa Vidhi of marriage.2 But in this play it is Uddhava who sends the letter to Kṛṣṇa at the instigation of Navamālikā, the friend of Rukmini. Even that letter is within the limits of propriety, because Uddhava only informs Kṛṣṇa about the

1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X. 52-53
2. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X. 52. 26-44
intention of Rukmi, the brother of Rukmini, to give his sister in marriage to Sisupala; and he requests Krsna to be present in Vidarbha at the time of the intended marriage. The consent of Rukmini is only suggested by the meaningful words, "by the friends of the maiden" in the message, when enumerating the people who wished to see Rukmini married to Krsna.

The modesty and dignity required in the behaviour of a maiden is kept up in all the words and deeds of Rukmini even though she is depicted as suffering the pangs of separation and is in constant fear of being married to Sisupala. As all the princesses shown in the later Sanskrit plays, she is also well-versed in all fine arts, and she is able to draw a picture of Krsna as she saw him after she was saved from the Salva king, who tried to take her away.

Navamalika, the friend and attendant of Rukmini, is a courageous and resourceful girl. Every time the Princess loses heart, it is she who cheers her up and strengthens her hopes with the promise that she herself would try and fulfil the desires of Rukmini at any cost. And true to her words, she achieves ultimately, what formerly seemed to be impossible, by the bold step of disguising Anangasena as Rukmini and taking her back to the palace to be married to Sisupala, after handing over the real princess to Vasubhadra in the temple. Navamalika, as seen in this play, is not only a real friend and a loyal servant, but also very unique in her skill.

Anangasena also shows more or less the same characteristics. Of course she does not appear on the stage much, but her readiness to replace Rukmini in order to defeat the

1. "कन्यकालीजना: " R. P. I. p. 4
2. नवमालिका—मा विषाद कुरु। विग्रहीय शुभारम्भि प्रताधि तत्वाभिमानित सम्पादयामि। R. P. III. p. 31
   नवमालिका—मा उत्ताधि सर्थिया तत्वाभिमानित सम्पादयामि। R. P. III. p. 32
plans of Rukmi is indeed praiseworthy. Both these girls seem to be of noble birth and well-bred, with strong and laudable characters. The pictures of these three women, as seen in this play, tell us a different story from what we had been hearing hitherto. They do not impress us as mere companions in pleasure alone, able to weep, wail or swoon when some little mishap comes to them, but have courage, resourcefulness and presence of mind when necessary, though generally they prefer to remain in the background and allow things to take their own course.

In this connection it would, perhaps, not be out of place to point out that the poets of Kerala were always a little partial to the episodes connected with Rukmini, Subhadra, Satyabhama etc. The hows and whys of this are not far to seek. This remote corner in the south of India has always been the sanctuary for freedom, heroism and dignity of women. Never in the history of this country, women were subjected to seclusion or servility. Matriarchal system being the prevalent custom, women always enjoyed comparative freedom. This must account for the more healthy and daring pictures of women in the literature of this part. The characters of Rukmini, Subhadra, Draupadi, Damayanti and similar other bold women seem to have attracted the Southern stage more than that of the North. Rukmini parinaya and Subhadraharana are familiar themes for the performances in the temple-yards, namely, Kuthu, Kutiyattam, Kathakam and Tullal.

Incidentally, in the above-mentioned play we get a glimpse of the marriage custom of the South also. Worshipping the family-deity by the girl is really a page taken from the Epics. But this is a widely observed custom in Kerala, and in the erstwhile royal families of the state also. Rukmini’s visit to the temple of Gauri is described in the Bhagavata and the message of Rukmini brought by the Brähmana clearly inspires Kṛṣṇa to make use of this opportunity to
carry her away. But the procession described in this play reminds one of the royal processions prevalent in the various South Indian states, specially Travancore state of old. While decorating the bride in the temple, Navamālikā says to Rukmini, “These are the ornaments sent by your maternal uncle’s wife; wear them and give away your old ornaments to the faithful Anangasena.” This statement here seems to suggest two purposes: firstly, the impending guise of Rukmini to get away from the undesirable marriage and secondly, evidence of the custom of the maternal uncle and his wife giving necessary ornaments to the bride at the time of the marriage. It is to be remembered here that in Kerala, till recent years the mother’s brother was equally responsible for the welfare of the niece, along with her father.

There are many more plays with the story of Kṛṣṇa as the central theme. But as has already been noticed, they exhibit a slavish conformity to the rules and regulations laid down by the dramaturgists, and have nothing much to add to the information we have already gathered.

Apart from the three main types, the Nataka, the Prakaraṇa and the Natika, there are many more types of plays ordained by the law-givers of the dramatic arena. And all these types find their examples in form also. But it is not necessary to take up all these types for our study here, as, many of them do not present women characters, and those that do call for the depiction of them, do not show varieties useful enough for critical study. The few that permit of such a study are taken up here one by one.

The Adbhutadarpāna is a play which shows many peculiarities, attracting our attention to a certain extent. The theme centers round the incidents described in the Yuddha-

1. नवमालिका—एतान्यन्तरं भूपस्पाति तव मालायाय श्रेष्ठितानि।
एतस्तस्तं नैपथ्यं करोभि। तवाय भरणायन्तः सेनाया भवस्य।
R. P. IV. p. 43
kānda of the Rāmāyaṇa, especially the battle of Lanka and Rāma's return to Ayodhyā. Śītā, Saramā, Trijātī, Śūrpa-νakhā, Lanka, and Nikumbhīla are the female characters presented on the stage. Lanka, being the scene of action, it is but natural that most of the characters belong to it. Saramā and Trijātī are shown as the two real friends of Śītā who is a prisoner in the Aśokavātīkā of Rāvana. She is surrounded by Rākṣasa women who are trying to make her accept Rāvana out of fear or by love. All the incidents on the battle-field are shown to Śītā by Trijātī and Saramā, while Rāvana, his friend Mahodara, Rāma and Laksmana are hidden witnesses to the whole performance. There is a free play of the Rākṣasi Māya in the Nāṭaka, which describes the incidents of the Yuddhakānda in the long course of ten acts. Though it is called a Nāṭaka by the author, its nature prompts us to suggest another classification, the propriety of which we may be able to discuss better at a later stage. The characters have their own reflections acting in front of them, either by Māya or through the reflection in the magic-mirror. Much confusion is caused by the use of this wonder-mirror, and many confusing situations are cleared also. This 'Adbhutadarpanā' serves to save the greatest of women, whose character was suspected, perhaps due to circumstances or to the changing times.

Śītā, the ideal of Indian womanhood, is portrayed here in the same way as in the Adi Kāvyā, the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa. Her gentleness, grace, loving nature and kindness are boundless. Her purity, chastity and dignity are unparalleled and her courage is undaunted, as it should be. Rāma and Rāma alone rules in her heart; her thoughts, words and deeds all center round him. He is made an eye-witness to all she had to undergo in the captivity of Rāvana. There we get a glimpse of the society, because even while he is an eye-witness to the happenings in the Aśokavātīkā, he has the forebodings about the possible scandals as a result of the period which Śītā has to spend in this place. He says: "I knew
Sitā well enough even before. But I am worried as to what will be in the minds of the people." Every time there is a fresh proof of Sitā’s unblemished chastity, Lakṣmaṇa draws Rāma’s attention to it; but the answer is always the same: “The people are to be convinced.” Or, that “the Ikṣvāku kings accept only that which is accepted by their people willingly.” This feeling in the mind of Rāma finally reaches its climax and causes the harsh words of abandonment to Sitā, which make her enter the fire. The episode of the fire-ordeal is described here as in the Rāmāyaṇa and Rāma accepts her back only after her purity is proclaimed by the Fire-god.
and an order is given by his father Daśaratha. Thus we see that the ideals upheld are the same, as also the incidents described. The picture of Śitā is glorious and ennobling, as ever. But the way in which all this is expressed and portrayed has its own story to tell about the society and the people who witnessed the play.

Trījātī and Saramā behave as true friends of Śitā, and their happiness and sorrow follow the feelings of their prisoner. They are appointed to look after Śitā as the agents of Rāvana, but they use their good services to keep Śitā alive and console her. This actually brings forth Rāvana’s displeasure on them, but they still persist in the cause they espoused of their own accord. With the use of the ‘Adbhuta-darpana’, or the Wonder-Mirror, which was to be used to convince Śitā of Rāvana’s invincibility, they show to Śitā the whole truth and thus prevent her from ending her life and keep up her spirit till Rama’s arrival.

Nikumbhilā and Lankā are the city deities personified, as Alakā and Lankā in the Mahāvīrācarita, the Anargha-rāghava and similar works. They do not show any special characteristics. They are sad due to the death of Indrajit and Rāvana, but finally accept the inevitable and decide to go in attendance on Śitā and finally join in the celebrations of Vibhiṣana’s coronation.

Śūrpaṇakhā is also brought here, though none of the earlier works present her in this context. After the carrying away of Śitā, Śūrpaṇakhā is not seen either in the Rāmāyanā or even in the Aścaryacudāmani, where Śūrpaṇakhā is shown

### Tātakta

पुरूषान्तर्वन्यविश्रिति पुरूषान्तर्वन्याजम-  
प्यायेयरूपान्तर्वन्यप्रतिभुजि गुणाश्राद्य भवा दीयते ।

A. D. X. 12

1. (नेपधे)

क्रिपदेवगरणुमोदितां गिरमानेरविश्रितः कुरुः ।

भवतामनवा समं भवानिभवेकोत्सवस्मदीर्दितम् ।

A. D. X. 17
at her worst. But in this play, Sūrpanākhā is the cause of all troubles that come upon Sītā. This sister of Rāvana takes to Sītā the head and bow of Rāma, created by Maya, and tells her that Rāma is killed in the battle. She never fails to pain Sītā, whenever she gets an opportunity. She seems to be a personification of jealousy, hatred and cruelty. When Sītā falls unconscious at the sight of the head of Rāma, shown to her at the instigation of Vidvijīhva, all the Rākṣasa women take her to be dead and they are afraid. But Sūrpanākhā is happy and says: “Why are you bothered? We have got nice human flesh to eat!”1 Only the timely reminder by the other Rākṣasa women, that if Rāvana came to know that Sītā died in this way he would throw them all alive to dogs believing that they killed her to eat, stopped Sūrpanākhā from eating her up.2

She is ready to carry out any evil deed and is disliked even by her own people, as is clear from their words from time to time. The Rākṣasa women call her the cause of trouble—Anarthakārīni. Maya thinks, if not for Sūrpanākhā’s unfulfilled desire for Rāma, Lankā and the King of Lankā would not have come to grief.3 Even after the death of Rāvana, Sūrpanākhā is not prepared to fall back. As Maya says,4 she is still anxious for revenge.

1. शूर्पणाखा—किनिमितो विचारो युथानकम् | नन्द शोभन उपलब्धोक्तमांक | मानुस्यं मानसाहारः || A. D. V. p. 59
2. राक्षस्य:—श्रव्य द्वृज्येन श्रव्यकारिणी शूर्पणाखे, भक्ष्यं निनिमतं युथानन्दं | मारिता जानकीति परिकुप्तिः मर्त्यं जीवनीरेवास्मान्नन्दकुराणाः भक्ष्यं कारणं कार्यरितं | तत्समस्माधातर्य मर्त्यं पुरुषोऽथ जानकीकृतान्तं निवेदयामः || A. D. V. p. 59
3. मयं:—रामो वा तवं ब्रह्मस्यन्तां लक्षणमी पि भजेत चेतु। न सीतापद्धतुभ्यं स्थानं च स्थानं च बच: || A. D. X. 6
4. मयं:—श्रीस्वभावसरिवाप्रयो जातिका जातिगतिनी। सेवयं प्रतिक्ष्यावेशपिष्याचप्रहमोहिता || A. D. X. 2
She decides to try her utmost to stop the re-union of Rāma and Sitā, and she instigates Mandodari's father Maya, to disguise as Rāma and make Sitā enter the fire by telling her that she could in no way be accepted by him. Of course, they need not pursue their plan, for their intentions are fulfilled by real Rāma himself. Śūraphakā is happy beyond bounds, to hear the news of Sitā's falling into the fire, but that happiness is short-lived, because Sitā is brought back to Rāma by the Fire-god and declared to be pure and un-blemished. Only when all doors are closed, she resigns to the fate and follows Maya to submit to the service of Vibhiṣāna.

Thus we see that though the marvellous and miraculous elements are introduced to create the sense of wonder in the minds of the audience, the traditional characteristics of the main characters are maintained. Still, it is not the same atmosphere and same conditions of society that we witness in these later plays. For example, though Sitā is the same noble and divine ideal, always above suspicion, still, at every step, we hear of the doubts as to what people will say.

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān and Vibhiṣāna, are all anxious that proof should be obtained as to the purity of the one who is purer than the fire and the air. At every step fresh proofs are searched to support the self-evident fact. On occasions, frequently repeated, we hear Rāma saying, "but I wonder what people would say!" Herein lies the anomaly—the helplessness of woman. The weak and un-protected woman has to suffer, while man sits in judgement. It is this particular aspect of womanhood that is seen clearly in the Adhbutadarpana.

We have seen a similar situation in the Āscaryacūdamani. But there the Rākṣasi Maya is detected by the help of the magic ring and the magic crest-jewel. There,
we saw how the *Angarāga*, given by Anasuyā to Sītā, which was intended as a blessing itself turned into a thing of curse at the end, when Sītā was seen by Rāma immediately after Rāvana was killed. In none of the earlier plays do we hear the harsh, unbecoming words of Rāma to Sītā. It is for the first time in this play, written in the later centuries, that we hear such an elaborate description of this and also of the consequent fire-ordeal. It is significant to note that even in the *Āscaryacudāmani*, it was the beautiful and adorned appearance of Sītā that created the desire in Rāma’s heart, for asking Sītā to undergo the fire-ordeal. But, coming down to the time of the *Abhutadarpana*, we find that the very incident of Sītā having been in the captivity of Rāvana is enough to make her the target of suspicion and scandal.

In this incident, we have the seeds of the future happenings that are described in the Uttarākanda of the Rāmāyana. It is interesting to note the trends of thought that grew in connection with these incidents. By the 15th century we have quite a number of versions of this scandal about Sītā and her banishment. There is the usual story of the Dhobi and his wife wherein the Dhobi is made to say that he was not Rāma to accept back the wife who stayed in another man’s house even for a day. The expression at once reminds us of a similar statement found in the Rāmāyana, “What the king does has to be followed by the people. In this case, we may also have to bear with our wives when they go astray.” In later periods the story becomes more colourful. Sītā is asked to draw the picture of Rāvana by her mother-in-law in one place, by her sister-in-law in another place, by her co-wives in a third place. This picture is brought to the notice of Rāma, and Sītā is banished. No, not only that. Lakṣmaṇa is asked to cut her head off and show

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1. प्रस्मारकमिति दारेयुः सहनीयं भविष्यति ।

यथा हि कुश्ते राजा प्रजास्तदुनवत्तते ॥

V. R. VII. 43. 19
to Rāma the blood on the sword. But all these stories came into existence only very late—later than the 15th century.\footnote{1} In any case, there is nothing wrong in concluding that this is another evidence of the deterioration in the condition of women.

Now, going back to Adbhutadarpana, there is another peculiarity to be noted. Every where we see shadows or reflections. In the course of our studies, we have come across a term, Chhāya Nāṭaka, which literally would mean “Shadow Play.” Different commentators explain this term in different ways. Abhinavaguptācārya, explaining the 368th verse in the 4th chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra, gives a detailed explanation.\footnote{2} Śrī Nilakanṭha Caturdhara says that, this Chhāya Nāṭaka is not included in the Rūpakas accepted by the rhetoricians. His opinion is that this term can apply only to those plays wherein images or puppets are used in place of actors. Wilson’s “Theatre” also explains this name and indicates, that in such plays, puppets are generally used. However it may be, we have to accept some kind of performance which went in the form and name of Chhāya Nāṭaka, or Shadow Play, because, we have at least four of this type namely, Subhāta’s Dūtāngada and Vyāsa Ramadeva’s Subhadraparinaya, Pāṇḍavaśhyudaya and Ramābhhyudaya.

Here we are confronted with a very interesting question. If we are to accept the literal meaning of the Shadow

\footnote{1}{Camil Bulke: Rāmakathā, p. 467}
\footnote{2}{्छायानाटकं तावशास्त्रकण्यायात्मनाः परिकल्पितं काण्यलिखितं धृत्यस्वप्नार्थं उपचर्च्ये, “छायानाटकं तावशास्त्रकण्यायात्मनाः स्वप्नार्थं उपचर्च्ये” इति प्रतिपादितम्।}

N. S. IV. 368 (Commentary)
Play or Chhaya Naṭaka, that name can be well given to the Adbhutadarpana, because wherever there is the original, we have the play of the shadows too. Rāma, Sītā, Lakṣmana, Rāvana, Indrajit—all are duplicated, either by the wonder-mirror or by the illusion created by the Rākṣasas. Thus, being full of shadows or reflections, this Naṭaka could rightly be given this name. But we see no indication of such a name having been given. On the other hand, the plays mentioned above, which also take their themes from the Epics, are called Chhaya Naṭaka by the respective Sūtradhāaras, which name does not suit any of them whatever the explanation given to this word may be. There is nothing to indicate the existence of puppets or shadows, in those plays.

Anantarāma Śāstri in his introduction to the Dūtāṅgada says, that, Chhaya Naṭaka has neither been described nor stated as such any where. But in the early times, we hear, such plays were staged in the islands of Jávā and Bālī. Holding a curtain at the front and presenting characters on the stage, so as to reflect the shadows on the curtain with accompanying songs and dialogues etc., seems to have been a popular practice. The actions of the characters reflected on the curtain in the form of shadows, presenting the story as a continuous series of pictures, therefore, must have been the form of the Chhaya Naṭaka. Perhaps, these are the arts which finally developed into the movies and talkies of the

1. झायानादकस्वरूपं च किमपि कुत्रापि न प्रपञ्चितमः । शून्यते प्राचीनकाले
यव (जावा) द्वीपे नाटकानीहान्यभिनीयतेऽस्म । तत किल रक्षसवते
पालाणि प्रवेशमप्रदयं नेरव्यामयन्तर एव जवनिकासामीपेदवस्थितानि
tेनां वाचिकाक्षमिनयविषयः प्रकल्पमानाः श्रूतस्तथा प्रदीप्रकाशः प्रमावेण
बहः परोपरि प्रतितिबित्वा सति सामाजिकानं गुरुः स्पष्टुर्गुणोपस्थापने।
tददानी परस्परसांवदसङ्कीर्तविच्छविन्योपिर नेरव्यामयुर्वा
सामाजिकैः शून्यते । झायालमना पद्ये प्रतितिबिन्दुतिक्षणयोगभिनय एव
झायानादकस्वरूपं स्वरूपं व्यपद्यते।

D. A. Introduction, p. 4
present day. Be that as it may, the plays available to us, do not present any distinct characteristics to differentiate them from other kinds of dramas. The only peculiarity that is specially noticeable in these plays is that no division of acts and scenes is made. The presentation of the play goes on with the characters making their entrance and exit as the occasion demands. It is possible to treat them as something akin to the Shadow Plays of the West or the Puppet Plays existing all over India even to this day. But the stage direction found in these so-called Chhâya Nâtakas, such as, Pra-viśya Paṭīkṣepeṇa, Swagatam, Parikramaṇya avalokya cha, etc., present difficulties. How can these stage directions be useful in a Chhâya Nâtaka, where only reflections of actors are seen on the curtain and words heard from within the curtain? Then there is the stage direction, Nepathyu (within the green-room). How does this fit in when everything is heard from within the green-room or Nepathyu alone? Considering all these points, the only conclusion one can possibly arrive at, is that, there must have existed some theatrical performances in those days which were developed as the talkie cinemas of the present day and called Chhâya Nâtakas—a perfectly suitable name. There is no doubt that this calls for a careful research in the field of Sanskrit dramas.

Coming back to the main subject of our study, we will take these plays one by one. The Dûtângada by Subhaṭa is the first of its type that attracts our attention. All the characters are as normal and common as in all other plays, generally known as Nâtakas or Rûpakas.

The Dûtângada, which is specifically called a Chhâya Nâtaka deals with the incidents described in the Yuddha-kânda of the Râmâyana. Angada is sent as a messenger by Râma to Râvana and he is received by the king of Lankâ in the presence of Vibhûṣana, Mâlyavân and others. Man-dodarî, Mâyâsîtâ and a Râkṣasa woman are the only female characters presented.
Mandodari is presented as a devoted wife and a sensible woman. She tries to convince her husband about the futility of his attempts to tempt Sītā and also of the dangerous consequences possible. She pleads with Rāvana tha the should return Sītā to Rāma. But Rāvana dismisses her summarily and she leaves the stage weeping.¹

_Maya Maithili_, the illusionary Sītā, is brought on the stage to make Angada believe that Sītā has already accepted Rāvana’s overtures. The extra-ordinarily open and shameless behaviour of that illusionary figure is enough to warn Angada of the deception, but to add to it, a Rākṣasi enters the scene and informs Rāvana that Sītā has decided to commit suicide, because she has lost all hope of meeting Rāma again. This puts the final seal on Angada’s conviction that what he sees is but the Rākṣasi Maya.

All these female characters are on the stage only for a few seconds. Mandodari seems to be the helpless wife who is very devoted to her husband and who is, for the very fact of her love and devotion, suffering ever and anon. Māyā Maithili is just an illusion, a deceptive figure, which once again shows forth a low character of woman, with nothing ennobling about her. The Rākṣasi is only a messenger, who delivers her message and disappears. In representing these characters, the intention of the poet does not seem to be to depict the female character in any detail, but only to introduce them to suit the main theme—the characterisation of Angada and Rāvana. He is more keen on showing how Vibhīṣana was justified in leaving his brother to take refuge with Rāma. Mālyavān and Prahasta also attract his attention by their position as ministers. But Mandodari, though the queen, seems to be only a figure that rose in his memory because of her constant association with the great king of Lankā and is disposed off easily. The only weapon she possesses to save herself and others from the impending calamity

¹ मन्दोदरी वाण्य विसूजती निप्प्रान्ता |
is her tears, and even the tears are of no avail when Rāvana does not wish to take notice of them.

The presentation of Māyā Maithillī shows another aspect of woman as a source of temptation. The real Sitā could not show this aspect, and so she is not brought on the stage at all. The illusionary Sitā shows the lower nature of woman trying, by her speech, actions and gestures, to arouse the erotic sentiment in man—to tempt, to seduce. All this leads further to the belief that the female characters presented in this play are not the deliberate creations of the poet, but only the casual reflections of his mental attitude towards womanhood as a whole. He seems to be only following up the story according to his own conceptions and those women characters, who helped the natural development of the course of action, as he wished to depict it, have been portrayed as they came up before his mind's eye. The general trend of thought about women during this period was disparaging, hence there is nothing surprising here if only the tempting or the weeping and wailing side of the woman's nature is portrayed elaborately.

But, there is a silver lining to the clouds too, in that Mándodarī and Sitā both tell us indirectly that they still held their own as women inspite of their fallen condition. Māyā Maithillī can be created by Prahasta and can also be displayed as a tempter before the people; but it can only be an illusion and illusion will have to give way before the truth sooner or later. So, before long, the Rākṣasī enters and announces the determination of the real Sitā to commit suicide rather than to stand insults or continue to suffer the separation from her husband. Similarly, Mándodarī may be helpless to mend the ways of Rāvana, as she should have been able to do as his better-half; but, then, she will not be a party to anything wrong that he does. Whether he likes it or not, she will tell him what is good for him and will accept the consequences, even if that means her dismissal.
from his presence. Thus, both these queens, even in the worst conditions, are capable of showing the courage of their own convictions, and are firm enough to be always on the right path. It is easy to read these ideas between the lines, whether put in by the poet intentionally or otherwise.

The Subhadra-praripanya is another play, called by the same name—Chhaya Naṭaka, but which is also an ordinary play in two acts. It presents Subhadra and her friends, Devaki and a few maids-in-attendance.

Subhadra, the sister of Kṛṣṇa, is in love with Arjuna, who also begins to love her from the moment he sets his eyes on her. The love-sick condition of both is described by their respective friends. Finally, Arjuna decides to carry her away according to the Kṣatriya custom. The Yādavas first try to put up a fight, but are subsequently pacified by Kṛṣṇa and everything ends well in the union of Subhadra with Arjuna. It is an entertaining play with interesting characterisation. The women characters presented are mere beautiful decorations to the homely set-up, without much energy or life to display. They live and move on the pattern of maidsens belonging to noble families. They sing, enjoy the beautiful scenes in the garden, pick flowers and make garlands; they talk about the little happenings of daily life, do Anangapuja, fall in love with the first handsome or heroic man they meet with, and weep or wail if their desires are unattainable; they always look to their friends or dependents to find ways and means for the desired union and finally become happy when by the interference of a kind Providence everything happens just as they wished. Subhadra, and all her friends behave quite true to this entertaining, yet monotonous pattern. Devaki and Revati are a bit different, but even they do not arouse much interest. They remind us of the ordinary mother and sister-in-law, we meet with, in our everyday life.

We come across another set of plays in this period.
These may well be classified as the "Allegorical Plays." The first and foremost among them is the Prabodhacandraodaya by Kṛṣṇadatta Maithila, popularly known as Kṛṣṇa Miṣra. His other play is the Puranjanacarita. Many more of the same type came to be written later, some being: the Sankalpasūryodaya, the Bhāvanāpuruṣottama, the Moharājaparājaya, the Vidyāparīñayanam, the Amṛtodaya, the Jivananda nam etc., by various authors. Kṛṣṇa Miṣra is believed to have lived in the 18th century and all critics are unanimous in declaring his work, the Prabodhacandraodaya, to be the best among its kind.

Though the main subject of this study is limited to the women characters of the Sanskrit stage, it is not possible to review them alone and leave the rest of the set behind. So, we have been all along following the method of studying the whole in general, with particular attention to women characters whenever it was necessary to keep their relative utility in view. This alone seemed to be a sound method of conducting a critical study of this nature. We shall follow the same method here also, though the female characters as such cannot play any important part in the body-plot of the play, inspire of their consistent and constant presence.

For the convenience of study, we would take up the Puranjanacarita first, though the Prabodhacandraodaya is decidedly the best.

The Puranjanacarita dramatises the story of Puranjanana, as found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Any one, going into a critical study of our ancient books, should be aware that they are more full of significant and meaningful parables than of clear and plain statements. Every sacred truth of philosophy, really difficult for the ordinary intellect to understand, is made more simple and easy of comprehension through parables, fables and examples from ordinary everyday life. Hence, the Epics have become the store-houses of

all kinds of possible and impossible stories, verging sometimes on the ridiculous from the standpoint of the critical and unbelieving minds. Thus, the ‘Puranjanopakhyana’ in the Bhagavata is an allegorical story, which tells about the travel of the Jivatman in quest of a place to live in, its experiences and the final reunion with the Paramatman. Krishna Misra has taken up this story and cleverly enough turned it into a means of combining instruction with enjoyment, thus opening one more way to the propagation of the Bhakti and Vairagya cults. The galaxy of Sanskrit dramas found one more added to its numerous types of the Rupakas and Uparupakas. Very soon, there were quite a number of similar plays written by various authors, with the same or similar themes, with all kinds of good and bad qualities personified, making love the main sentiment and marriage or the birth of a son, the final denouement. Here is a very interesting paradox, as is stated by the Sutradhara in the Vidyaparniayam by Anandaraya Makhi. He says—the sentiment is erotic, the theme is philosophical and the intended result is undivided devotion to God. Even a casual reading of these plays would show how true the statement is. Only the form of the play is there, confirming fully to the rules and regulations of dramaturgy; the hero, the heroine, the other helping characters, the five Sandhis, the five Arthaprakritis and all other details are present, just as they should be, according to the dramaturgists. But the spirit, is something very much different from what one expects. All the characters are the personifications of the various abstract qualities or senses i. e., Love, Devotion, Discretion, Greed, Anger etc., or Mind, Intellect, Power of thought, Power of understanding and such other things.

We find any number of female characters portrayed in every one of these plays. In the Puranjanacarita, Puran-

1. सूत्रधार:—प्रहृदं वस्तु, श्रुप्राणं रस: परामर्शित फलमिति संविदिदात्स्थुसः
   हस्यते।

V. P. I. p. 4.
jani is the heroine, who is the princess of a city surrendered to Puranjana along with herself. She and her friends are depicted just as any other heroine or princess and retinue of a Nāṭaka. The words and sentiments used are similar to those used in any other play with the erotic sentiment predominant. Still, it is impossible to miss the serious and philosophical import of the whole theme and also the characterisation. The female characters are depicted very much as the real human characters, bubbling with human emotions and feelings. All the same, contempt and aversion seem to surround the very name Woman in these plays. No opportunity seems to have been lost for holding up the women to ridicule and for criticising them in general. Though there always have been, and still are, numerous examples of queens ruling their kingdoms with greater skill and efficiency, yet statements like this are not wanting: "It is not possible for women who are naturally weak to rule the kingdom."

King Puranjana, who accepts his wife as his only friend, is still diffident and in despair, because he feels sure that she, being a woman, is "weak and cowardly."

Talking about wives, the explanation given for the word Darah is very significant. It is a pointer to the general attitude towards women. It is said, women are called Darah—those who break, because they are very clever in breaking up friendships and are skilful in separating the inseparable friends who love each other more than even their own lives.

Thus, there are numerous examples in this single work which show what position women were holding in the minds

1. न खलु राज्य विरागविद्युं शक्यकः वीरिङ्कामिभिरवलं : P. Ch. I. p. 6.
2. राजा—कस्त्ताहसं तुद-यो मामुक्तरेद् तुदेका प्राणप्रिया, सा च स्वभावान्वित भीमत्वम्। विषयपत्तच विन्ताश्वला। P. Ch. III. p. 2.
3. प्राणमूलापि प्रियतमाद् दारहलिन्तु मूहद्वपनाद्।
   यत्स्ततात् धारहलिन्ता दारहवेदः स्त्रिय:। P. Ch. III. p. 7.
of men during this period. Nobody seems to hesitate in throwing stones at women at the first available opportunity, and the society does not seem to resent it either. Whether people in general appreciated it or not is beside the point altogether; here it is enough to note that such statements were allowed to go unchallenged and the same trends of thought continued, as can be seen from the various other plays belonging to the same category.

The Prabodhacandrodayam, as has already been stated, is the best among all the allegorical plays written up till now. And, perhaps, this is the one play, wherein one does not find many disparaging statements about women. There are quite a number of women characters presented. Of course, all of them are the personifications of various abstract qualities and naturally show the characteristics akin to those qualities. It is, therefore, futile to search for human nature and behaviour in these characters. Enough to say, they are generally sweet-tempered, timid, bashful and soft, as women are expected to be. Since they are all brought on the stage with a special purpose—that of propagating a particular system of philosophy or a particular cult of devotion—it is more or less possible for us to know and understand the very peculiar attitudes and characteristics, each of them represents. There is nothing very spontaneous or natural in any of these characters to call for a special study of women in Sanskrit drama. Every one of them is a link in the patterned chain.

The same is true with the various female characters of the Sankalpasuryodaya, the Bhavanapurusottama or any other play, named at the beginning of this section. But the deprecating statements about, and the despising attitude towards women are more clearly expressed in certain plays. For example, in the Amritodaya it is said: "My boy, there is nothing more despicable than woman in this world."

1. श्रद्धा—वल्ल ! न तथा किमपीतरंबल्यंगोचरं यथा भ्रियो नाम।

Am. III. p. 31
And the answer to this only confirms it.1 Considering these point-blank abuses showered upon women off and on, it may not be out of place here to tarry a little and ponder over the reason why. It is a well-known fact that women always held a position of respect among the Indians. The Vedas, the Upaniṣads and Purāṇas—all bear testimony to this. Wherever a brother and a sister or wife and husband are presented together, the superiority of the sister and wife in character and conduct is made quite obvious. Maināka and Pārvati, Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Draupadi, Kāmsa and Devaki, Sītā and Rāma, Damayantī and Nala, Śīlavatī and Ugratapah, Sāvitṛi and Satyavān etc.—all have the same story to tell, i. e., the women held sway as far as character and conduct, love and sacrifice were concerned. They were always the objects of reverence in India, among the Indian people. Mother was, and is, always the supreme being for every one. Then, what brought about this degeneration later? One reason suggests itself. It is the very nature of woman that makes for her strength as well as weakness. She is attractive. She lives a settled life. She is the mother by nature. She is the centre of the family. She creates the desire in man to have a family and settled life. That desire leads on to all the trials and tribulations in life. A family life, which is the nucleus of society-life, is the root of the cycle of the universe—the cycle of births and deaths. If there is no woman, there can be no family, no desires, no business, no ties, no botherations. This idea has been put forward by Rāma to Vasiṣṭha in the Yogavāsiṣṭha

1. निर्वेदः —शान्तम्। विविधयो विदुष्यामिलावस्य मातुपरणः। विशेषतः——
brasuṣcitapunyaṃ madhyamadhyamataṃ: kṣriyat
kvarcīditī n hi śrotē karmadhūrībhāvante।
vigalasūja: pūrvaṁtyavrddhuddhādeva
śrīpadaṃvyo nityyo yaśaṃ gāyakṛṣṇaṃ॥

Am. III. pp. 31-32
when he expresses his desire to renounce the worldly life.¹

Whenever women are denounced, it is significant to note the epithets used are the “tempting devils”, “doors to hell”, “objects of pleasure” and similar others. When we think over these epithets given to women and also remember that it is the men who give these epithets, it seems rather funny. The reason is simple. It is always easy to blame everybody else except one’s own self, for one’s own failures. If man cannot resist temptation, if he cannot subdue the sexual desire, if he cannot practise strict self-control, how much more easy it is to blame the woman, who is blessed by God with beauty and is made more attractive by her being more soft and less hardy and is also yielding and accommodating by nature. This can easily be the main reason for woman getting her bad name, and gaining it more and more, as man got his ascendency through the force of varied and strong circumstances. However that may be, the fact remains that by the time the plays, we are examining, were written, women had reached that point in the scale from where no more downfall was possible. The plays, we are about to examine, also show the same deterioration in the position of women in general.

The Caitanyakacandrodaya by Kavi Karnapūra is a play that can be classified as something between an allegorical play and a drama. It describes some incidents in the life-story of Śrī Caitanya, the great saint, who is considered as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by his followers. There are numerous female characters in this play. Real human characters, such as the mother of Śrī Caitanya and his wife, Viṣṇupriyā; personified abstract qualities, such as, Viṣṇubhakti, Śivabhakti, Premabhakti, Maitri, the characters such as Rādha, her mother-in-law—Jaratī and others; all are depicted as rep-

¹. यस्य स्त्री तत्स्य भोगे भाव भोगमृ:।
   सिर्वो त्यक्तवा जगर्यता जगर्यक्तवा मुखी भवेत्॥

Yog. V. I. 21. 35
roduced in the *Vṛndāvana-līlā*. But the whole play being charged with the one object of promoting Kṛṣṇabhakti, there is not much scope for a critical study of the same, as a literary product or an artistic piece. All the characters are created with the sole aim of eulogising the life and teachings of Sri Kṛṣṇacaitanya. So they are more artificial than natural in their speech and behaviour. The same is true about the female characters also. Sacidevi, the mother of the saint, is brought on the stage twice, only to bear witness to the greatness and godliness of her son, Gauranga, who had left her, as also all other relations, behind, when he took to asceticism. Reading the play throughout, it can be safely deduced that the women characters portrayed in it give no information about the condition of women in general.

We find quite a number of plays belonging to the different smaller types of Rūpakas, such as, the Saṭṭaka, Praha-sana, Samavakāra, Vyāyoga, Bhāna etc. We come across even still smaller types belonging to the group, called *Upa-rūpakas*. And, if we take up a critical study of the characters in them, that by itself would form a vast subject. But most of them do not fall within the scope of our present study, because of the absence of female characters in them. We shall take up only a few, representative of these types, showing some peculiarities either in the plot or character-development or in the depiction of the characters.

Of the ten Rūpakas enumerated in the Nātyaśāstra, none, apart from the *Nāṭaka* and the *Prakarana* found much favour with the earlier poets, except Bhāsa. That, atleast, is the conclusion we arrive at, because till the 12th or the 13th century, we do not come across any other type. But in the later centuries numerous shorter plays falling within the categories of Rūpakas and *Upa-rūpakas* are found. Of these, the type called Bhāna seems to be most common, perhaps due to its very nature. It is more or less a monodramatic play, though all sorts of common and funny characters
contribute towards the development of the plot. Since it is particularly jocular in nature and treats mostly of sensual pleasures without any characters except a Viṣa or Vidūṣaka or some-one like that, presented on the stage, the like of it do not fall within the scope of our study.

The Dhananjayavijaya, the Saugandhikāharana and the Subhadrāharana are three small one-act plays, based on the various incidents described in the Mahābhārata.

Of these, the Dhananjayavijaya by Kāncanācarya treats of the victory of Arjuna over the Kauravas at Virātnagarī and has no female character in it. The Saugandhikāharana by Viśvanātha Kavi brings Draupadi on the stage along with Yudhiṣṭhira for a few seconds towards the end of the play. She is there as the queen and beloved wife of Bhīmasena, who is ready to take any risks for her. Nothing much is there to show any trait of her character, one way or the other.

The Subhadrāharana is called by the author, Madhavabhaṭṭa, himself as Śrigaditam, a type belonging to that of the Uparupakas. The main characteristics of this type are that, it should have a famous plot with a famous hero; it should have only three Sandhis, leaving out the Garbha and Vimarsa; Bharati Vṛtti should be predominant; there should be the Śṛi added; and it should have only one act.¹

The play dramatises the marriage of Subhadrā and Arjuna, as described in the Mahābhārata. Subhadrā falls in love with Arjuna on hearing about his heroic deeds and in turn is loved by Arjuna. During his wanderings in disguise as an ascetic, Arjuna reaches Dwārakā and carries away Subhadrā with the connivance and indirect help of Śṛi

1. प्रस्थायतुत्तमकाव्यं प्रस्थायतोदातनायकम् ।
   प्रतिनिधिविनिमयस्य विविधतमम् ॥
   भारतीप्रत्यदवहलं श्रीतिशाब्देन संकुलम् ।
   मतं श्रीगदितो नाम विद्वषद्वृःस्पृपकम् ॥
   Sa. D. VI. 293-294
Kṛṣṇa himself, who finally pacifies all concerned by saying that the Ṛakṣasī type of marriage is the best for the Kṣatriyas and that Arjuna is the best husband Subhadra can get. The story moves on smoothly and naturally from action to action. Subhadra, Sumati and Revati are the only women characters depicted.

All of them are attractive, dignified and showing the characteristics natural to girls of noble and aristocratic families. They are simple and innocent, and at the same time adorable. Subhadra reminds us of Śakuntala in the third act of the 'Abhijñānaśākuntala'. She is bold enough to join in the plot of her own abduction, and is skilful to avoid others knowing her real feelings. Revati, the wife of Bālabhadra, speaks, moves and behaves in a way befitting a queen and the elder sister-in-law that she is. She is loving, thoughtful, kind and understanding towards her husband’s sister and also towards the servants and other dependents.

There are two plays based on the story of Rāma and Sītā with the same name, though the themes are different. The Unmattarāgghava by Virūpākṣadeva is a one-act play, belonging to the type of Prekṣaṇaka, described by dramaturges as one of the Uparupakas. It deals with the incidents in the Rāmāyaṇa from the appearance of the Golden Deer to the killing of Rāvana and the return of Sītā. But there is a remarkable change made in the plot. While Rāma

1. ॥ प्रेक्षणकलक्षणं वेत्तमापवर्णितम् ॥ यथा | श्रुत्वार्प्रकाशे—
   रथ्यास्मातं जन्तवरसुरालयावेत्रं प्रविष्टे बहुभि: ॥
   पार्वर्तिविप्रवयास्तु प्रेक्षणकं कामदहानादि ॥

   Un. Rā. Introduction, p. 7

   ॥ श्र. गर्भविवर्तितेऽहितं प्रेक्षणं हीननायकम् ॥
   प्रमुन्दारसमेकम्भुमिक्कभप्रवेशकम् ॥
   नियुक्तस्वप्तोर्तुत सवंदृश्यितसमाधिनाम् ॥
   तेषांशेषे गोयते नान्दी तथा तत्र प्ररोचना ॥

   Sa. D. VI. 286-287
is in the condition of madness due to the separation of Sītā, who was carried away by Rāvana in the absence of both the brothers, Laksmana goes in search of Sītā. It is he alone who goes to Lankā working on the suggestion of Jaṭāyu and achieves the recovery of Sītā, killing Bāli, gaining friendship of Sugriva and finally killing Rāvana also with the help of Vibhīṣana. Nowhere else we find this version of the story in which Rāma is so mad with sorrow that he becomes inactive, while Laksmana achieves everything single-handed.

Sītā is the only female character depicted in this play. It is very refreshing to note that the picture of Sītā, here, is soft, sweet and adorable. No bad words or unbecoming behaviour is attributed to her. Even where she asks Laksmana to go to the help of his brother, she is pictured true to her noble character, unlike the 'Aścaryacūdāmanī', or even the Rāmayana itself. The very little that we see of this noble queen is the best that one can expect from a really noble lady.

The other play with the same name—the Unmattarāghava—is also a Prekṣanaka, written by Bhaṭskarkavi, who is said to have lived in the 14th century. The story depicted here is unique, completely evolved from the imagination of the poet. Sītā and her friend, Madhukarikā, are the only female characters. While Rāma and Laksmana are out to hunt the Golden Deer, Sītā is picking flowers in the forest with her friend. By mistake she enters the forsaken hermitage of Sage Durvāsā, which was overladen with a curse from him. Due to the curse, Sītā is turned into a deer and when the brothers return, they find only Madhukarikā with the news that Sītā is mysteriously missing. Rāma becomes mad due to the pangs of separation from his beloved wife and Laksmana is out of his wits trying to console him. In the meantime, Sage Agastya happens to see the deer wandering about in the hermitage, realises who she is and turns her back to her own form by his yogic powers and brings her to Rāma. Both the women depicted here are simple, innocent
and straightforward girls, belonging to the peaceful atmosphere of the hermitage. They are very much different from the ones we have hitherto witnessed during this period. This is indeed refreshing.

The *Lilāvatī* is a one-act play, belonging to the type called *Vīthī*. The author is Rāmapānivāda, who wrote somewhere in the sixteenth century and was a great scholar belonging to Kerala. He has written another one-act play of the same type called, *Candrīka*. *Vīthī* is described by Dhananjaya as a play similar to *Bhāna*, but with two characters present on the stage, with only two *Sandhis* and full of *Ākāśabhāṣītās.*

The story treats with the love affair of Lilāvatī, the Princess of Karnaṭa and King Vīrapāla of Kuntala. The only female characters referred to and heard from within are the Princess herself, Kalāvatī, the chief queen of Vīrapāla, the ascetic woman, Siddhimātī and Kelimālā, the maid-in-attendance of Kalāvatī. As *Vīthī* allows only two characters on the stage, the hero and his friend Vaihāsika alone are seen, while all the female characters are only heard through the words from the sky—*Ākāśabhāṣīta*. This is a court comedy, invented and developed on the same pattern as the earlier *Naṭikas*. Vaihāsika, the court-jester, is the chief promoter of the action here and reminds us of Maitreya, the friend of Agnimitra, in the ‘Mālavikāgnimitra’ of Kālidāsa.

Lilāvatī is a timid maiden dependent on the queen and has neither the energy nor the will-power to do anything for herself. Kalāvatī is a jealous wife, but not jealous enough to forget her duty towards her husband. She seems to be

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1. भ. बीथी तु कैशिकीबृत्ति सच्चा ज्ञानेन भागवन्
   रस: सूच्यमस भृजकार: स्त्रृषेद्यि रसान्तरम्

D. R. III. 68-69

भ. बीथामके भवेदस्य: कूष्ठे देवश्रेष्ठ कत्याते
श्राकाशमाधिवेश्तिः श्रीन्त्रुपतिमाधिति: Sa. D. VI. 253
easily trusting and forgiving. The magic of Siddhimaññi and the deception practised by Vaiññika claim her as an easy victim. She is a straight-forward and ordinary woman, who is always solicitous of the welfare of her husband. Siddhimaññi, who helped the couple to unite, is a combination of Kāmandakī in the ‘Mālatīmādhava’ and Vinayandharā of the ‘Kaumudimahotsava’. The only remarkable difference is that this ascetic woman has no special interest in either of the couple, but she uses her powers to help them, just because she was approached for help by Vaiññika. It is these magic powers that make the desired end possible. Though none of these women are presented on the stage, the working of their minds is easily understandable. All of them are the ordinary types of women with their natural likes and dislikes, love, jealousy, hatred and anger.

But the play, Madanaketuvijaya by the same author strikes quite a different note as far as the women characters are concerned. It is a full-fledged play with five acts, treating of the incidents in the court of Madanaketu, the king of Sinhala. The heroine is Anangalekha, a courtesan, who is deeply in love with the king, and with whom the king also is infatuated. The plot deals with the love of the king for the courtesan, which makes him forgetful of the kingly duties and the girl, herself realising the fact, helps the well-wishers of the king in saving him from himself. Anangalekha purposely behaves in such a way as to excite disgust in her lover towards herself, as also towards ordinary worldly pleasures. Finally, the king is rid of his infatuation and he accepts the path of duty and Vairāgya.

In this play, the author has shown how a woman can rise to that height of self-sacrifice in which everything except the welfare of the beloved is forgotten. Among the many dramas we have scrutinised uptill now, this stands out as an ideal in the characterisation of women. Though the physical above and sensual pleasures are held up to ridicule in almost
every word and action of the various characters, careful
delineation of Anangalekhā vindicates the honour and pres-
tige of woman as such. In her, we have an ideal of a real
woman with love, self-sacrifice and singleness of purpose
combined, though she is a born courtesan. After Vasanta-
 senā, presented by Śudraka, it is here that we find another
woman of the same calibre, but commanding more admira-
tion and honour by the self-sacrificing devotion she actually
shows for the welfare of her lover.

Prahasanas are the type of plays which give free hand
to the dramatists to openly indulge in the description of
sensual pleasures and to depict women in their worst possi-
ble aspect. There are quite a number of these among the
plays available in Sanskrit literature, published or unpubli-
shed. The earliest of these available to us is the Mattavilāsa
Prahasana by Mahendra. The drunken revelry of a Kāpa-
likā with his beloved, Devasomā, a courtesan, his quarrels
with the Śākyabhikṣu due to the misunderstanding that the
latter had taken away his Kapāla, which was actually taken
away by a dog, and finally the recovery of the Kapāla from
a mad man, are the incidents described. The date of this
author is accepted by scholars as the 7th century A. D. The
only woman depicted is Devasomā, and the natural charac-
teristics of such a woman are well-portrayed.

Many other Prahasanas followed, the Hasyārṇava
Prahasana, perhaps, crowning them all by the most vulgar
depiction of the behaviour of courtesans. Since the very
nature of the type demands the depiction of the worst side
of human character and since all of them conform more or
less to the same pattern, there is hardly a necessity of taking
the individual female characters depicted in this type of
plays, which are not inconsiderable in number.

There is another type of plays which should attract
our attention, because of the possibility of numerous female
characters in it. It is the Saṭṭaka, really a Naṭika written
in Prākṛt, as described by the later dramaturgists. This type is not described in the Nāṭyaśāstra, but Abhinavagupta, Sāradātanaśastra, and Sāgaraśāstra mention and describe it and compare it with the Natīkā. We have already studied the Karpūramaṇjari by Rājaśekhara in a previous chapter. The Candralekha by Rudradāsa is another Saṭṭaka, which was written in the middle of the 17th century. The main female characters presented are—the queen of Mānaveda, Candralekha, the heroine, the presiding deity of the Cintāmani and a few maids-in-attendance. The main theme is the love of the hero, Mānaveda, for a beautiful girl brought to his vision by the power of the Cintāmani, and the final union of the couple with the permission of the queen. There are many similarities between the Karpūramaṇjari and the play under study. But this may be true of all the Saṭṭakas because of the patternization of the theme and characterisation. If there is anything worth noticing as a difference, it is this, that, the amorous sentiment is characterised by a subdued spirit and is presented with moderation.

The Anandasundari by Ghanaśyāma is another Saṭṭaka written during the latter part of the 18th century. The king Śikhanḍacandra falls in love with Anandadasundari, the daughter of king Candavega and after the usual obstacles they are married to each other with the consent of the chief queen, and also a son is born to them. While all such plays generally end with the happy union of the hero and the heroine, here, the birth of the son seems to be the final aim. The king’s desire to marry the daughter of Candavega seems to have more justification, because it is not the infatuation of the king for the girl that is shown as the main reason for the marriage, but the desire to have a son to continue the dynasty. The father of the girl himself sends the princess in the guise of a boy with the name, Pingalaka, to the court of Śikhanḍacandra, so that she may win the affection of the king and, at the same time, avoid raising any suspicion
in the mind of the chief queen. A play within the play is introduced to show how this is achieved. Then, as usual, the king and the princess are introduced to each other, the chief queen gets scent of the matter and tries to interfere, but is finally pacified by the pleadings of the king, gives the girl in marriage to him. Even after this end is achieved, the newly wed princess is not sure of the king's constancy and the king has to assure her again and again. A son is born to her. And, at the same time, the minister, Dindiraka, who was sent to subdue Vibadaka of Sindhudurga, also returns victorious. Here comes another play, the Garbha Nāṭaka, showing the incidents that lead to the victory of Dindiraka, at the end of which the chief queen enters with Anandasundarī and her son to congratulate the king, with which the play comes to a happy end.

Anandasundarī, her friend Caturikā, her nurse Bhānu-mati, the queen and her maid-in-attendance, Hemavati, are the female characters presented. The main theme, as we have seen, is on the same pattern as the many court comedies we have already studied. It is only the love-story of King Śikhanḍacandra and Princess Anandasundarī. Still, we cannot help noticing the many differences that exist in the action and also the denouement. As a court comedy, with the most funny character in the form of Vidūṣaka, it is only natural that there is abundance of humorous incidents and enough opportunities for open laughter. The interest in the play is sustained to a very great extent by light humour, constituted by pun on words, prickly remarks, foolish words and actions of the various light characters, caricatures of holy things, exaggeration and shy jokes. These are all, perhaps, as they should be, because of the very nature of the theme and the type of the play, for, after all, a Saṭṭaka is really a Nāṭika written all in Prākrit.

But, when we come to the women characters, we find a little difference in the traits and characteristics noticeable here. Ever since the time of the earlier Nāṭikas, drawn on
the pattern of the story in the 'Mālavikāgnimitra' Nātaka of Kālidāsa, we have always found the heroine to be a weeping, wailing, frail creature, who has no strength of her own and who is always looking to others to get all that she wants to be achieved. Of course, we have some plays like the Vidhāsālabhanjikā, Pārijātamanjarī, Ratnapāścalikā etc., where the heroines are in disguise as boys or turned into statues of some kind to escape the eyes of the chief queen. But here, the whole situation is presented in a different way. The first and foremost thing is the fact that something more reasonable and tangible, than the mere infatuation for each other, is given as the reason for the second marriage of the king. The father of Princess Anandasundarī himself sends her in disguise so that she may find favour in the eyes of her future husband and the reason of this desire is the necessity of having a son, to continue the dynasty.

Anandasundarī is well-versed in fine arts and shows refinement, as natural to the girls of the royal families. Though she is disguised as a boy, her natural bashfulness and timidity are obvious. There is nothing very special or particular to be noticed in this character. The queen is loving and obedient to her husband. Though she is jealous of the possible new rivals, the moment she realises the possibility of a son being born to the king by a second marriage, she is only too willing to pocket her pride and allow her husband to have his own way. And having once accepted the girl as a co-wife, she treats her with real affection. The way she brings in the baby born to her co-wife and congratulates the king, is very touching. All together, the depiction of the main female characters is well worth noticing, for the good qualities of women are not missed by this poet. Though much light talk is going on among all the characters, the respect and consideration, due to women, seem to have been kept in view all the time. Even the foolish jokes of the Vidūṣaka seem to have a restraint in the presence of the ladies. The
maids-in-attendance and the friends of the heroine and the queen, all maintain full decorum and decency. To sum up, the portrayal of women in this play shows a change for the better.

Thus, we have almost come to the end of our study of women characters, as depicted in the Sanskrit plays, written up to the end of the 18th century. This last period has been rather a Slough of Despond, slowly growing deeper and deeper ever since Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti wrote. But, at the same time, we have to remember certain facts connected with the real condition of women in society during this period. Turning over the pages of the Indian history of this period, i.e., from the 10th to the 19th centuries, we do not always meet with women who are subdued and held down in the scale of society. On the other hand, the strong, courageous Rajput women, led by Padmini, Samyogita, Durgavati and others; the brave, wise and resourceful Mahārāṣṭra women led by Lākṣmībāī of Jhānsī and Ahilyābāī of Indore; the undaunted women of Malabar in the South, led by Umammā Rānī and Sitālakṣmī, Cānda Bibi and Raziā Begama and scores of others stand up in an array and seem to challenge the correctness of our conclusion that the position of women during this period was low and pitiable. The question naturally arises, how to account for this contrast between the society and the literature? Drama is supposed to be an imitation of the world. It has been accepted as such by all. Then why this discrepancy? What is the reason of showing women as weeping, feeble creatures who are only able to enjoy life within the four-walls of the house or the harem? These are the questions which would bear a little investigation by scholars of Sociology, who can probe deep with interest and careful observation.

There cannot be any doubt as to the heroic nature, efficiency and capacity of the celebrated Indian women about whom we have always heard. It is the training given by
mothers that has always created the greatest of our people—scientists, philosophers, politicians, social reformers, heroes and patriots. But looking at the Sanskrit stage, we cannot say with equal correctness that we find the imitation of the contemporary society in any true and correct form. It has to be admitted that the Sanskrit plays of these later centuries never rose to that height of real dramas. They are more important as literary pieces than artistic representations on the stage. We cannot but agree with those who say that the writers of these centuries were more anxious to please the kings and nobles who patronised them and they were more interested in the exhibition of literary merits and scholarliness than anything practical. This attitude of the writers and the patrons together must have caused the patternisation of themes which are peculiar to this period.

Another point which, perhaps, may be relevant to remember here is that, though special courage, bravery, self-respect and concern about their own purity and honour characterised the womenfolk belonging to the different parts of India, the names thus eulogised are from the Royal families. The general tone common to the ordinary women belonging to the whole of Aryavarta was rather one of despondency and dejection. The general conditions were all against the freedom of the so-called weaker sex, and education in the real sense was being denied to them. The political and social conditions were such as made women shrink back more and more into the four-walls of the home and the least said about them came to be considered the best for them. There is recorded history to tell us now what was happening in the growth of humanity and social life during this period.

Though Sanskrit plays continued to be written, there was not much life in the characters. The traditions had so much hold on the writers that they dared not bring any idea of their own to the forefront. Injunctions increased on the laws and regulations coming from the social law-givers and
demanded, though indirectly, a complete patternisation of the conduct of all sections of people. Freedom of life and behaviour gradually disappeared. Though it was only natural that there were violations when the bondage of rules grew tight to extremes, the poet could hardly utilise such incidents for the development of his art, because that would shock the sense of decorum and religious taste of the people. Social customs became more and more puritanic, and the current of social life became more and more stagnant. As a result of this stagnation in social life, the plots of the later writers became artificial. These tendencies are noticeable even after Bhavabhūti and by the time of Jayadeva, the flow seems to have come to a complete standstill. And it took centuries of suffering and despair to shake the society out of the slumber and lethargy which had engulfed it.

It required another Kurukṣetra to redeem the society which was trying to feel its course through a chaotic conflict of different types of ideas and customs, of different cultures and ideals which were trying to drown the individuality of man engrossed in the fierce struggle for existence in a world, where all were running in frantic haste to a destination which nobody knew. This requirement was fulfilled by the advent of the various religious, social and political reformers in the 19th century. Along with the beginning of this renaissance, the one important factor that was kept down by the innumerable laws of the Śāstras, namely, the position of women, began to attract the broad-minded and more prudent thinkers. These thinkers realised that one of the main causes of the stagnation of the society was the pitiable and disgraceful condition in which one-half of humanity was plunged. The double-wheeled carriage of society with men and women as its two wheels was being dragged back and forth simultaneously—one wheel strong and oiled and on smooth ground, able to run at full speed, the other unkempt, unoiled and heavy with mud, stuck in the gutter, unable to
move. Though this conflict between the two had begun centuries ago and the carriage had come to a stand-still, the realisation of the fact and attempts to rectify the wrong done in the past, came quite late and very slowly. But once it came, things began to move, and move fast. Political, religious and social reforms came crowding one after another, sudden and drastic changes overtook the society and men and women changed beyond recognition. Literature, the mirror of society reflected these changes. Modern literature is a proof of this new life and the forward movement of the Indian society as a whole. It is only natural that dramatic literature should reflect this renaissance in a pronounced way.
CHAPTER VII

WOMEN IN THE MODERN SANSKRIT PLAYS

The eighteenth century was showing a different trend in the thoughts of people in general. Times were slowly changing and consequently literature also. The revival of Sanskrit plays has been seen by us in the previous chapter. Many old themes had begun to be treated in a new way. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries show that the change continued with greater vigour. A good number of plays came to be written in Sanskrit during this period.

Along with the advent of the freedom movement in India, the value of women as helpers inside and outside the house came to be realised more and more. They, by their own efforts and with the help of the broad-minded and thinking people of the generation, began to come forward in the social and political arena. The difficult and pitiable state into which the women had fallen, and also the brave and laudable efforts they themselves were making to come forward in order to help the progress of the nation, were perforce brought to the fore-front. This caused a revision of attitude towards women among the general public. It was only natural that these truths find reflection in the literature of this period. Along with the strong wave of patriotism that came over the whole country, the love of Sanskrit language and literature and the desire to explore its possibilities thoroughly, also increased. The scholars who specialised in the language and literature felt it their duty to take up the cause of the ancient language and enrich it in a proper way. Many poems and plays began to be written in this era. Though a
number of them have not yet seen the light of the day, there are a good number which were published and also acted on various occasions. Śrī Hariharopādhyāya, Śrī Mathurāprasadā Dīkṣīta, Śrī Kālipāda Tarkācarya, Śrī Ambikādatta Vyāsa, Śrī Tādāpātrikara, Śrī Haridāsa Siddhāṃtavāgliṣa, Śrī Kapiladeva Dvivedī and such others have made commendable attempts in this direction. The plays written during this period seem to have more life in them. The writers have out-grown the tendency to follow slavishly the rules and regulations laid down centuries before. The modern writers follow the natural development of human character, emotions and feelings. Though the necessary poetic imagination has its full play in the modern plays, the natural course of development is not sacrificed for the sake of keeping within the rigid rules and regulations.

According to the central themes, the modern Sanskrit plays fall into three main categories: those based on mythology, those based on historical incidents, and those that have social and imaginary themes. The modern tendency is to present real portraits before the audience and to represent on the stage, the happenings of the world correctly. Women have found their right place in these dramas to a great extent. They are no more neglected or treated as possessions of men meant only for enjoyment. A close examination of some of these plays may enable us to see the real conception of women during this period.

Taking up the plays with mythological themes, The Sāmavatam, a play in six acts attracts our attention first. It deals with the story of the Brāhmin boy Sāmavān, who became changed to a woman by the power of meditation practised by the queen Simantini, a great devotee of Goddess Pārvatī and Bhagavān Śaṅkara. This story is found in the Skandapurāṇa and Śivapurāṇa as an example of the power of faith and devotion. The author, in his introduction says, "In the 'Somavrata prakaraṇa' of the Skandapurāṇa, there is a story describing how Sāmavān was turned into a woman,
because he was accepted as the wife of the brähmin by Queen Simantini and was worshipped by her as such.¹

But, many changes, in fact very drastic changes, have been effected by the author in this play. His intention is obviously to impart instruction along with enjoyment. He says in the introduction, "Though there is the erotic sentiment depicted in this play, the heroine does not belong to the Parakīyā or Saṁānya type; nor the Gāndharva type of marriage has been shown here for, young people are easily attracted towards sexual pleasures, and by witnessing such affairs on the stage, there is a possibility of their becoming desirous to indulge in them and of even crossing the limits of morality and good conduct. Hence, care has been taken not to present such incidents that would create or encourage any undesirable emotions."²

The story in the Purāṇa is as follows. Two brähmin boys, Sumedha and Saṁavān, after completing their education, were in search of some means to earn their livelihood, and thus remove the poverty of their parents. Incidentally, they heard that, Queen Simantini of Niṣadha was worshipping Brähmin couples every Monday evenings and then

1. सक्मपुराणोक्तक्रवंतक्षणे सोमम्ब्रह्मकर्षो ‘सीमलिन्यः परवंताधिवा पूजित: पुष्पोपि सामवांस्क्राक्तिमहिम्ना छोलं लेमे’। इति संक्षिप्तसाहस्यांश्यायिका।

Sā. Introduction. p. 8

2. यद्यप्यवा श्रवणरो रत:; तत्परिवन्ध दलिता परक्रयां समाम्यान्याविका वा समवलम्ब्य प्रक्तो न वा गान्धरवाविवाहाविव, न नायक वेयावर्धाकित-मर्यादाविवाहासङ्गमन्दसवधववताविल, न वा ताइशात्वेष्पित विच्छन्न-विच्छिन्नतिरिविषत।—सम्प्रति हि स्वभावत एव वियलोचनेततो भविष्यति नवयुक्तः। ते च यथा काब्येशु परक्रयाधायकमेय्यक्रमूर्तं परिकल्प्य न भवेयतिकल्यमनसो न वा विषयवेयुपायमयात्रामात्, तथा विच्छिन्नाधिनू सबरितानुष्ठानमेवाशास्यत इति स्वयमेव विभाषिकायिन्ति भावका:।

Sā. Introduction. p. 9
giving them untold wealth at the conclusion of her Monday fasts. They decided to take advantage of the situation by going to the queen in disguise as husband and wife, making Sāmavān disguise as the wife. The queen never doubting the integrity of the couple, worshipped them as man and wife, seeing them as Śiva and Pārvatī, and gave them much more than what they could ever dream of. But, when they came out of the palace, to their utter dismay, they realised that there was no Sāmavān any more because the disguise had only become too effective¹.

This story is retold by Śrī Ambikādatta Vyāsa in his play with many changes. The boys are completely absolved of all blame in cheating the queen. Instead, the curse of Durvāśa and the mischievous plan of King Dharmasindhu to play a practical joke on his sister-in-law are introduced to account for the incidents. The main female characters are Queen Simantī and Sāmavatī, the female guise of Sāmavān, both of whom we see in the epics. The nymphs, Madālāsā and Induvadanā, the dancing-girl Bhāvakalāvati, the maid-servants in the king's harem named Mālatikā and Madhuravacanā, are all the poet's own inventions.

In the first act, we are introduced to the two boys, Sumedha and Sāmvān, who are being sent to King Dharmasindhu of Vidarbha in order to acquire enough money for their marriage. The two nymphs are introduced here by the author as enjoying a joy-ride in the terrestrial world. Sāmavān, attracted by the sweet music and the super-human beauty of these girls, forgets himself and his surroundings so much that he falls a victim to the curse of the angry sage Durvāśa, like Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā, though with lesser justification. The curse went thus—"Since you were so engrossed in admiring women, as to disregard me, you become a woman yourself."²

2. दुर्वासा: —सिर्यं विलीकवन्य यद्व त्वं मायवज्जज्वारतवामि।
श्रीसुप्रभा:चरादेव तस्मातु त्वं कलिप्यधि॥ Sa. I. 64
These two women do not have any other purpose to serve in this play except to create a cause for Durvāsa’s curse, which becomes the ultimate cause of Sāmanvān’s change of sex. Bhāvakalāvati is the dancing girl, who is introduced in the court of King Dharmasindhu only to add to the revelry already existing there. Her presence there, goes to prove the condition of the royal assemblies where luxury and amour were the ruling elements. Certain remarks of the wise Āmaṭya of the king, make it clear that though the king’s amorous nature allows the presence of the courtesans, such women were not at all accepted as good company by any respectable man. All assembled were enjoying the dance and the music along with the king. But the Āmaṭya is unhappy about the low atmosphere there and thinks to himself, “When the dance is going on in the amorous assembly, the Mydanga tells on their face ‘fie! fie unto them!’; repeatedly, and the tāla asks ‘whom? whom?’ the answer to which is given by the jingling ornaments and the actions of the dancer herself pointing by the bent brows ‘these people here.’”

The feeling of the Āmaṭya is confined to himself only, because, even he does not dare to speak out against the wishes of the king, who seems to be submerged in sensual pleasures and surrounded by a court where sensual enjoyment and amorous jokes were ruling. This scene and specially Bhāvakalāvati, go a long way to prove to the people, how disgusting and dangerous such a life is. It also helps us to understand the atmosphere. Having watched this scene, and observed the words and deeds of the king’s favourite, Vasantaka, one is not very much surprised at the indulgence of

1. Bṛhamā: -(स्वगतम्) ब्रह्मं तु तत्कथयामि यद्—
   भ्रार्थेन नूत्यहेतुः हरिगुरणरहितं लम्प्तिताः समाजे,
   धिक्कः ताँच धिक्क ताथृ मृदुजः कषयति सुतरं सम्मुखं शाविन्त्वा ।
   काव्य काव्य कांश्र तात्: प्रतिरणितिरामजहरार्ज्ज्बलाः
   सच्चम जश्रूरपाः: प्रवद्धति सकं नूनमेतातृष समेतात्र ॥ Sa. II. 31
the king in submitting himself so complacently to the wicked plans of that unscrupulous fellow.

The leading female character in this play is Sāmavatī, the female guise of the boy Sāmavān. Enough indications are there in the very beginning of the play, as to the coming calamity. Still, the change that has come over the simple and good boy after his metamorphosis, is rather surprising, to say the least. He seems to have completely forgotten all his learning, experience and wisdom, he possessed before this change. After the miraculous incident, there is no existence of Sāmavān, the boy. There is only a very unrefined love-stricken girl. By presenting her this way, perhaps, the author is expressing his own views about women, that they care for nothing else in this world except sensual pleasures. After observing the unbelievable change in Sāmavān, in form as well as character, we feel that the Brāhmin Sāraswata is well justified in his wailing—"I had only one son to continue my family and by the company of this so-called king, even he has been turned into a woman who possesses no acara."

The injunction of Manu, that women have no right to perform any religious rites and her God should be her husband seem to have a firm hold on the author. Śrī Ambikādatta Vyāsa wrote in the 19th century and it was a time of confusion as far as Indian women were concerned. Though women had reached the lowest step in degradation, there was a very remote light seen at a distance even as the advent of dawn. Though the women's cause was being taken up by great minds and some women themselves were trying to clutch on to the least support to raise themselves up, still, the majority were in the darkest and deepest slough of despond. Almost every reference to woman is pregnant with contempt and distrust. In the picture of Sāmavatī, as port-

1. सारस्वत्: — (सन्तोषशोकम्) भ्रा! एक एव तु मम कुलाधरः पुत्रः,
सोपेलयू सौतिकिनो राजस्वयः संसर्गदाचारशून्य
स्त्रीत्वमात:।
Sa. V. p. 185
rayed in this play is taken as a typical example of womanhood, one can only bow one’s head in shame at the shamelessness, wickedness, and irrepressible amorous desires, attributed to women.

But, it is rather difficult to accept the picture of woman as drawn by this poet to be the representative one. Because this era was the time of the great and good women such as Rāni Ahalyābāī, Rāni Lakṣmībāī of Jhānsī, Rāni Durgāvatī, Chānd Bībī, Razīā Begām and many others. Under these circumstances, the only conclusion that we can draw is that every one sees things and people as he or she wishes to see. In the course of the conversation, Sumedha himself feels the same thing—“Every one sees according to his own desires and feelings, from the same Guru, Kapila, both the theism and atheism came to existence.”

Here, there is something worthy of our notice. We have heard the author’s claim that no obscene or improper scenes and actions are brought on the stage because he knew of the possible adverse effects of such things on the younger minds. But the latter portion of the play, the scenes between Sāma-vatī and Sumedha, as a whole, is a proof to the contrary. The open requests of Sāmavatī to Sumedha to save her from the attack of Cupid is unworthy of even a courtesan. These are indications enough to prove that the author does not have much regard for women in general. Every woman, introduced in this play, is rather of a low standard, as far as conduct and character are concerned. Of course, Queen Simantini is praised to the utmost; but she is a character taken from the pages of the epics, and one whose status is held sacred from ages past. And further, she never, even once, is seen on the stage.

1. युमेशा — (स्वगतम्)  
याहीं भावना यस्य सोचन्य एवहाति ताहाम् ।
वेवर्न निरीखं च मर्त द्विवास्नूबुद निर्पिलाभतः ॥
Sa. IV. 46
The curse of Durvasas that Sāmavān should become a woman is also a pointer towards the mentality of the author. The worst thing that can happen to any human being is to be born as a woman. We are here reminded of the wailing of Sītā in the Kundamala, “Enough with this life as a woman.” The poet depicts two places mainly, the hermitage and the royal court. In the hermitage, there is no place for a woman, for, being a temptor, she is a person to be avoided and treated with contempt. In the court, she is the object of sensual enjoyment. The only thing that is praise-worthy in her is her physical beauty. Even Queen Sīmantini, held in reverence by every one far and near, is subject to the waywardness and unscrupulous behaviour of King Dharmabandhu. The justification, he finds for his action is that he being like a brother to King Candraṅgada, has every right to play jokes on his wife, who is the sister-in-law. Though, thus teasing the sister-in-law is a common custom in North India, it does not beehave a powerful king to stoop to this practical joke and force two simple straight-forward and helpless boys to deceive the queen, who is a real devotee of God. In forcing the boys to follow his will, he is even quoting scriptures to prove that the king’s order should be always obeyed. While reading through this context, one is reminded of the

1. Sītā—सब्बैथा श्रलमहिलाप्रेतेन । Ku. mā. I. p. 21
2. राजा—(स्तवगम्) ग्रस्ति महाराजचन्द्राङ्गदेन सह सम भ्रातुभावः इति
   तत्पत्ति तत्मभवति सीमांतिनी मे ह्रास्यपात्रम् । (हस्तत्व) रस्तु, तया
   सह हयमेव वसन्तक्रीडा स्यातु । Sā. III. p. 117
3. श्र. राजा—तरिक, नैतु प्रसिद्धम् ? यतः,
   देवताया गुरोऽपिनौत्सवया राजकुलस्य च ।
   भ्राज्ञामुख्यभवते योजी सचो नद्यति सान्तयः ॥ Sā. III. 33
4. श्र. राजा—नीतितत्त्वमेवतु स्पर्शीयम्—
   यदाक्षतुं तु भूपालेर्गुर्गिर्जंकेन वा ।
   प्रविचारयायौ तत्कुर्मात्र प्रयथ्या तु भयं भवेतु ॥ Sā. III. 36
saying—"the devil quoting the scripture."

The theme and its treatment are very refreshing in so far that hitherto, the plays, we came across, were mostly stereotyped love-stories with nothing elevating or ennobling in them. The pleasure-loving court and the light-hearted treatment of women are seen in this play also. Marriage seems to be still the only way of life for the women. Sāraswata tells Sāmavati, who is feeling sad to leave the parental home to go to her husband's house, "My daughter, don't be sad! All girls stay with their parents, please them with sweet words and then go to their husbands' houses just as you do now. There is nothing new in this." Education in the sense of learning and wisdom does not seem to be possible for girls. Sāmavān, the boy, was well versed in all the Vedas and the Śāstras, but the moment he became a woman, all that knowledge seems to have disappeared as if by magic. The character, behaviour, mode of talk, everything seems to have undergone a change for the worse. Sāmavān was a poetic-minded, simple, and straight-forward boy who found great pleasure in observing everything beautiful in nature, human-beings, situations etc. But, when the change came, the new creature as a woman, had nothing else but love and love alone to talk about. Sāmavati seems to be a tempter and an unrefined soul, quite contrary to the character that was in the form of the man. This character, as presented by Vyāsa, is no credit to any society whatever, and much less so to the Indian womanhood.

The same story has served as the theme for another modern Sanskrit play called Puruṣarāmanīyam written by Śri Śrījivanyāyatirtha Bhattachārya. The author himself gives the date as 1923 A. D. It is a small play in two acts,

1. सारस्वतः —पुनः श्रमोन्मनस्येन सर्वा श्रीपि स्त्रियां एवमेव कियत्कालं
कोमलभापोभोमालं तथिमोहः परतः पलिणेहि सनाथयति
तन्मात्र कौशिपि नवीनो व्यापारः।
Sa. VI. p. 220
the name being justified by the fact that a man is changed to a woman in the course of the story. This author has also taken the liberty to change the original story to suit the proper development and one cannot help feeling that the changes made here, are better designed than in the other play. The main purpose of this play appears to be just to eulogise the power of undivided devotion to Lord Śiva.

As in the original, the two Brāhmin boys are friends and class-mates, and also the only sons of their respective fathers. The names are Subandhu and Somadutta. The boys, after finishing their education, are going in search of some means to earn money, and are confronted with dacoits on the way. After this incident, Subandhu himself tries to loot people, and once, as fate would have it, they both try to loot a Brāhmin couple, who were returning from Queen Śimantinī and the lady advises the boys to go to Śimantinī and she would give them whatever they want. The plan appeals to the manly Subandhu and he persuades Somadutta to dress up like a woman. They both enter the presence of the queen, and as usual, she worships them as man and wife, in the form of Śiva and Pārvatī. They are sent off with great wealth and many valuable presents. Once they are out of the palace and are about to go their way, they both realise that the farce has turned into a grim reality and that they are facing the difficult situation of the metamorphosis, Somadatta had undergone. Then they please Lord Śiva by prayers, who appears before them and advises them to take things easy and make the best of an inevitable situation by marrying each other. Thus they take to Gra-hasthāśrama and live happily ever after.

The Brāhmin lady and Somadatta are the female characters depicted in this play, but both are good and noble with the proper actions and reactions worthy of their family and position. The first one, an old lady who accompanied her husband to receive the pujā and offerings from Śimantinī
is the type we see in ordinary life. She is a good woman who desires happiness and prosperity in life. She is timid and god-fearing. It is she who advises Subandhu to go to the queen as a married Brähmin with Somadatta as his wife. At the very sight of the thief, she faints with fright. In her, we are able to see the reflection of the ordinary Brähmin women seen everywhere.

Somadatta is the boy turned into a female due to the power of Simantini’s faith. Even when he was a boy, he shows traits of feminine nature in so far that he is more soft, charming and timid than his friend Subandhu. He had kept his hair long of his own accord. Because of all these prominent characteristics, it was that when the question of disguise came, they both decided upon Somadatta to take the woman’s garb. These characteristics were, perhaps, the reminiscents of his previous birth, as revealed by Lord Śiva later on.¹

In the second scene, when the change was already effected, Somadatta is blissfully ignorant of it, and Subandhu had to try his very best to convince him of the fact. Even then, he is very reluctant to believe it.² There is a great difference noticeable between the reactions of Sāmavān and Somadatta under the same circumstances. One has to admit that the thoughts, words and deeds of Somadatta are more proper, suitable and natural to the persons, time and situation. Unlike Sāmavāti, who had forgotten all her antecedents and was behaving like an ordinary amorous woman,

¹ Puṇya—सोमदत्त ! प्रयोगेते जम्मान्तरीयोपि पतिरासीत, कर्मविपाकेन कियतिथिं मुहुर्ताविक वर्तयन्ताविषयंभो पतिपल्लावेनासुना गुहस्थ-धर्ममाचरत्ती श्रुण्यमपाकुस्तम्। Pu. Ra. II. p. 21

² सोमदत्त—सखे ! मा तावद्व तासय मा। कथय किमुपलमये?

Suvṛtu—किं स्वयंवेद नाववृध्व लव्वे। कथय किमुपलमये?

Sōmdatt—कथविदाकावःवर्तसम्मुहुखायामयं संस्कारोपवलाभावायामसम्यक्। Pu. Ra. II. p. 17
Somadattā is feeling ashamed of what has happened. She is very much upset at the very thought of her parents who would be extremely sad about the change. In this play, both the friends are behaving in an exemplary way, unlike Sumedha who had to struggle against temptation all the time, and the love-stricken tempter Sāmavati of the other play. Though only two women are depicted here, and the author calls it a Prahasana, this play seems to achieve the real aim of dramatic art, i.e., to impart instruction and provide enjoyment through imitative representation.

Mathurā Prasāda Dīkṣita is another modern author who has enriched the Sanskrit dramatic literature. He has written two plays with mythological and religious themes, one Bhaktasudarśanam and the other Śankaravijayam. Bhaktasudarśanam deals with the story of King Sudarśana of Ayodhya, as found in the Devibhāgavata. It is a story that illustrates the result of the staunch devotion to Mother Durgā. The young prince Sudarśana left helpless by the untimely death of his father, is shown to be attaining victory over his enemies, winning the hand of the princess of Kāśi and also getting back his kingdom, by the grace of Mother Durgā, whom he worshipped in all faith.

The theme is political as well as religious. The whole story revolves round the clash between the two step-brothers, Śatrujit and Sudarśana. Though the former is a younger son, his grand-father, being a stronger man, insists on this boy’s succeeding to the throne and this unjust claim on the part of a mighty man, causes the strife. Thus, it being a battle that is dramatised and heroic sentiment being the main one, there is naturally little scope for portraying female characters. Still, two important women, the respective mothers of the two princes with their maids-in-attendance, are presented in this play.

In the course of the play, we see that these two women

are in no way less important than the male characters. Manoramā, the elder queen, is a devoted wife, a loving mother and a heroic woman with self-respect and dignity. We see her after the sudden demise of her husband, in the midst of the trouble and turmoil of the fight between her father and the father of Lilāvatī, her co-wife, for the sake of the respective grandsons. It is difficult to see whether Lilāvatī had any hand in kindling, or at least in fanning the fire of family strife. But, it is quite clear that Manoramā kept completely out of the whole affair until the strife actually broke. Till the death of the king, there seems to be no ill feelings between the two queens. It is rather the ambition of Yuddhājit for the sake of his grandson that starts the trouble. Manoramā’s anxiety is only for the safety of her little son, and her own father. But, when her father is killed, the battle lost, and everything at a stand-still, she is not the person to sit down and weep.

As a true Kṣatriya woman, her first impulse is to take up the sword and fight the enemy for the sake of her son. At the same time she would not act thoughtlessly and on impulse. She realises the strength of her opponents only too well, and also her own weakness. She shows the common-sense to understand that tolerance is the best part of valour and so, willingly accepts the tactful suggestions of the minister Vidalla. Her faith and devotion, her courage and wisdom, and her unlimited love for her son, are well proved in this play.

As the mother and guardian of the young prince, she is participating in all discussions about the future plans. When Sudarśana is advised by his well-wishers to go to the Swayamvara of Śaśikalā, the queen offers to accompany him.

2. मनोरमा—किः कुर्यां कथमेव मेस्ति तनयो रक्षयो रिपोः क्रौयेतः।
शौर्य वा विद्यायीय बीरवनिता बीरार्णिम सुक्षणिया।।
Bh. Su. I. 12
When Bhāradvāja points out that she is only a weak woman, her spirited answer is, "I am a Kṣatriya woman, and if nothing else, I can at least avenge the death of my father." She is not unaware of her own weakness or the superior strength of her opponents. In the end, she is able to persuade her friends to allow her to accompany the prince to Banaras. Throughout, she is keeping by the side of Sudarśana, protecting him in every way by heroism, wisdom and also her all-pervading motherly love. She commands respect and devotion, all around her, by her noble nature, broad-mindedness and courage.

Lilāvatī, the other queen, is seen only once on the stage, when the war was over and her own son was defeated and killed; Sudarśana goes to her to apologise for being the cause of killing his step-brother, her son. She appears to be a quiet, submissive and loving woman. Having lost all she had in this world, she is a helpless destitute at this stage. Still, she is not bitter towards anyone. She is reasonable enough to understand the real situation, and also the unjust actions of her father. When Sudarśana went to her with his newly wedded wife to get her blessings, with exemplary simplicity and soft-heartedness, she says, "I am so pleased with this behaviour of yours. Knowing my father's unspeakable desires about you, I have been worshipping the Lord and praying that He may save and protect you. It is His unlimited grace that has enabled me to see you unhurt today. May you live long and rule the kingdom happily." These words

1. मार्दाजः —त्वं तु प्रबलाजाति:। पुत्रि ! त्वं किं त्रै विलम्बस्यति ?
   मनोरमा—महाराज ! प्रहृ मुलायियालिम | पितुबरं शोघुयियालिम |
   युधाजितं रघौ यातु कुटिलं बीरमानिनम् |
   निष्क्रात्मपितुबं शोघुयियवे हुदि स्पष्टतम् ||
   Bh. Su. III. p. 51

2. लीलावती—(जिरिस स्तुत्रान्ति) तबैतदाचरणेन प्रहमतिप्रस्पातिम |
   त्विथि स्वपितुरनिवर्णनीयामिष्ठामगलय भगवास्तव रश्यायः
prove her goodwill and also her forgiving nature. We cannot forget that it was due to Sudarśana that her own son was dead. She reminds us of the famous idealism of Mother Gāndhāri who would not say anything else to her son except remind him that, "where there is virtue, there is victory," even when the latter came to her for her blessings for the last time.

Śaśikālā, the princess of Vārāṇasi, is a young girl of marriageable age, and so, the king arranges for her swayamvara. In the meantime, Goddess Durgā, the Mother of the Universe, showed Sudarśana as her future husband in her dream. The faith and devotion of the princess was so firm and her sense of morality so high, that she refused to go to the assembly of the kings, who had come there to woo her on her father's invitation. She argues correctly that a woman chooses only once, and having done that with the help of the Goddess herself, it is not proper for her to enter the assembly and look at other kings with the same intention.1 When her mother forces her at the instigation of the king, her father, she falls at her feet and pleads, "How can I disgrace our noble family by going to choose a husband once again, after the Mother of the Universe herself has joined my hands with those of Sudarśana? How can I become a blemish to our family?"2 Her faith in the dream and devotion to the Goddess are so great, that she dares send a messenger to the prince a

1. शशिकला—स्तव्ये सुदर्षनो बुत एवेति नाहं पुनर्वर्णणययम्य निरीक्षिये।
   Bh. Su. VI. p. 49

2. शशिकला—निलोकजननी स्तव्य समेत्य मम सलिबी
   सुदर्षनकरेन मे करं सममेलयतु।
   पुनः पुनर्हो कवम क्रियेत तव कल्यया
   पतिग्रहणामायक कुले नहि कल्पक्षपताम।
   Bh. Su. IV. 3. 14
love-letter. We are reminded of Princess Rukmini who wrote a similar letter to Krsna in the ancient days. Sashikali is, in short, a self-confident, idealistic girl, who is an asset to any family or nation.

Priyaamvadā and Sulochanā are the two maids-in-attendance at the court of Subahu. They are very loyal and dutiful servants. They make it a point to know every happening at the court, in order to save their mistress and her son who are surrounded by enemies. Though women, they show extraordinary capacity to manage things in the right way, and also unflinching loyalty at all times. There is one other maid, present in the play. She is the devoted friend of Sashikali. She is clever and resourceful enough to help the princess in her plight. All these women characters in this play are not just lifeless creatures, but there in order to humour the audience, nor are they treated as mere objects of enjoyment for men. After a long period of slumber, woman seems to have come forward to take her rightful place in society. A change of attitude on the part of writers is indicated for the first time in this play. Though this play has its source in the epics, the development of the plot and the characterisation show definite refinement and good taste. The female characters depicted here definitely show the dawn of a new era.

Śāṅkaravijayam is a play in which the victory of the great religious teacher Śāṅkarācārya is depicted. There is only one female character presented. She is the maid-servant of Bhārati, the wife of Mańdanamiśra, the famous opponent, and later, the disciple of Śāṅkara. Though a servant, she is shown as learned and capable of composing poems. This, once more, goes to prove the attitude of the author towards women in general. The same attitude is seen in his historical and social plays, which shall be dealt with later on.

Durgabhhyudayam is another drama with a religious theme. Pandit Chhajjurāma Śāstri has taken the story of Mother Durgā coming to kill the terrible Asura called
Mahiśa, as found in the Devi-Māhātmya. The story has been faithfully followed by the author, as found in the Purāṇa. The Goddess, who was created by the energy, lustre and strength of all the gods put together, is the only female character depicted in this play. The Divine Mother as Śakti—Power—to protect and save all good people is the personification of love and kindness towards those in trouble, while hard and firm in her treatment of the evil forces. Thus, depicting the Divine Mother in her true colours, the author has succeeded in holding up the ideal of motherhood once more. It also rouses the finer feelings in the minds of all and makes them worship the all-powerful and all-pervading Śakti as the supreme deity.

Dharmabhāgyudaya by Śrī Meghaprabhācārya is an original play based on the glory of the Jaina Dharma. There are three female characters presented, Śachi, the wife of Indra, Rati and Priti, the wives of Kamadeva. All three are divine-beings, and are brought on the stage as counter-parts of their husbands. The theme is philosophical and the depiction of characters are only as personifications of abstract qualities as in allegorical plays. So, there is not much to comment on. The existence of women characters add to the beauty of the play and its effect on the stage. Perhaps, that is the main intention of the Ācārya in introducing them.

Bhartṛhari-Nirveda of Śrī Hariharapādhyāya, describing the how and why of the sudden turn of mind to asceticism of King Bhartṛhari, has its theme based on legendary history. The only female character is Bānumatī, the queen of Bhartṛhari. The purity and brilliance of her character leave the readers with their heads bent in adoration. Her love for her husband is such that the separation, even for a minute, is unbearable to her. When the king once praises the courage of those women who enter the funeral pyre of their husbands in order to save themselves from the grief of separation, Bānumatī, in a matter of fact manner, replies, "This is not
very much laudable that they need the funeral pyre to burn them, as if the terrible fire of separation is not enough to strike them down." This sounds rather a challenge to women as a whole, though perhaps the queen did not mean it as such. Bhartrhari could take it only as a presumptuous statement, because he could not believe in the existence of such love. The result is his disastrous decision to test his chaste and devoted wife. He goes to the forest on a hunting expedition, and sends word that he is dead. The result was a foregone conclusion, though completely unexpected by the king, who could not believe in the sincerity of his noble wife. Bhānumatī, the devoted wife, fell dead, the moment she heard about her husband's demise. The noblest ideal of conjugal love is thus depicted in this play.

The king is stricken with sorrow and repentance. When all attempts fail to console him, his Guru, Gorakhanātha comes on the scene with a broken plate, and proves by a practical and ridiculous example, the transient nature of the material things. The king becomes a changed man, and renounces the world. This is not what the ministers and people wanted. So, by yogic powers of the Guru, Bhānumatī is brought back to life with the hope that her love and devotion may make the king turn towards the worldly life once more. Nothing avails, because, now, the king was firm in his convictions about the illusionary world. Neither wife, nor son could attract him any more. He tells the pleading Bhānumatī, "When I die, then you will die once again. So, now I wish to attain a state which is beyond old age and death by the power of yoga."

1. भानुमती—प्रायरुद्रा, एतद्वेषाताः व्यवसितसंसारभागवत प्रणवस्य यज्ञविति
   प्रज्वलिता विरहानलं परिकृत् चितानलमपेक्षात् ।
   Bh. H. N. I. p. 9

2. राजा—मित्रधराराजाय भवति प्रायोऽन्न वियक्त्वते नियत्मेव ।
   प्रतिकारमित्र योगाद्वरामर्माभमहमेहे ॥ Bh. H. N. V. p. 29
Bhartrhari crowns his little son as the king and leaves for the forest. The only consolation Bhānumati gets, is the parting words of the preceptor, "Devi, You will still meet with your husband at the time of eternal salvation."1

The theme is a new one altogether, and the treatment of the plot, both from the literary as well as the dramatic points of view is excellent. Bhānumati, as seen from this play, is a loving and tender-hearted wife, firm as a rock as far as her devotion to her husband and chastity are concerned. She represents a type which goes to prove the real integrity of Indian womanhood, as understood by the ancient seers, and seems to be a pointer towards the new era in the lives of women in modern India. But, as a play propagating detachment and asceticism, even such a woman is finally left to wait for the fulfilment of her rights, till the time of Amṛti-karna. This only shows the peculiarity of human nature, which would always serve ego first, and consider everything else secondary.

The next play with its source in the Purāṇas, is the Naladumayantiya by Śri Kālipāda Tarkacārya. Damayanti has been brought on the stage in the middle ages by Rāmacandrakavi and also Nilakantha Dikṣitar. This heroine began to attract attention, only in the last century. The author follows the story of the Mahābhārata faithfully. Of the female characters, only the two friends of Damayanti are the inventions of the poet. So also is the Vidyāsaka among the male characters. The allegorical touch is found here in so far as that Kali, Moha and Viveka are as persons brought on the stage.

The author seems to have a high regard for women in general, because, Damayanti is made to play a very prominent part throughout in the course of the action. Woman is no more an object of pleasure and a thing of beauty to be

1. गोरखः—देवि, प्रसिद्ध ते पूज्य: स्वामिनोऽभृत्तीकरणसमये समागमः।

Bh. H. N. V. p. 37
enjoyed at the sweet will and pleasure of man. Damayanti, here, is a living, moving, intelligent and praise-worthy individual, full of common-sense, understanding, love, kindness, self-confidence and self-respect. She is not a fickle-minded and frail being to be tossed here and there by fate. In her maiden days alone, she shows the courage of her convictions. Of course, we have to remember that in the original story itself, Damayanti was portrayed thus. But we also remember that no heroine, who showed any individuality or heroic traits was accepted by the authors of the middle ages or even of older times, as a pivot for dramatic plots. Only the later part of the eighteenth century could find authors, courageous enough to give the women their due share of independence. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, Damayanti had been introduced to the people to a certain extent. But the depiction here, is very different even from the works of those authors.

In the Mahābhārata, it is the divine interference and supernatural powers that helped Damayanti, many times, to keep herself chaste and pure. In the marriage-assembly itself, it was only due to the kind consideration of the gods that she could choose the right Nala. In the wilderness, while attacked by the Kirātarāja, it is once again the lustre of her chastity that burnt the villain to ashes. But the author who belongs to the present age of science, keeps close to nature and shows only the plausible happenings, at all points. Here the ordinary Kiratas try to molest the helpless woman in the forest, when the head of the tribe, the Kirātarāja, enters the scene and saves her by his own authority. Damayanti’s courage and generosity are clearly brought out in this episode. The place of women in society seems to have been accepted as one of equality at least in theory.

In this play, while the Prākṛt is used for inferior characters, Damayanti speaks Sanskrit. Only the Kiratas and the menial servants take to Prākṛt. Perhaps, it is spoken by
those, who were illiterate in general. The woman is held in high regard, as can be seen by the blessing and praise bestowed upon Damayantī by Yamadharma himself. He says to the father, “Because of this daughter of yours, who possesses all good qualities, your very dynasty is purified.”

For the first time in the arena of the Sanskrit literature, after the time of Kālidāsa, we are seeing man and woman on an equal status. Here, in this play, Damayantī is as important as Nala himself. At no time is she out of our minds while we are seeing or reading the play. It is, as suggested by the name of the play itself, the story of Damayantī and Nala. Once more, we are able to see woman as a supplement and complement to man. The author seems to have read into the spirit of the story as found in the Mahābhārata, and to have brought out clearly, the message contained therein, namely, man is never complete without his complementary counterpart—the woman. The idea of Kali trying to separate Damayantī from Nala has its own significance in the Mahābhārata. It actually indicates that, Man without his Woman, or Puruṣa, without his Śakti, is easily accessible to the attacks of all evil powers. This idea is brought out clearly in this play. It is only after achieving this end, that Kali could harm Nala. Nala regains normality only after he gets the shock of his life by hearing the made up story of Damayantī’s re-marriage. The significance of these episodes as depicted by the Acārya is noteworthy and very valuable as an eye-opener to the poet’s attitude towards women. All the qualities that the author of the Mahābhārata wished to uphold to posterity as ideals, are brought to the limelight for the first time in the dramatic arena, in this play. Of all the plays that trace their sources to the legends or myths of the Purāṇas, Bhānumatī of Śrī Hariharopādhyāya, and Damayantī of Śrī Kālipāda Tar-

1. सम्ब:—महाराज भीम, प्रसामान्यमुणाय दुहितु: समुपस्या पवित्र: सबे एवान्वजायस्ते ।

Na. Da. VII. p. 145
kācārya lead the way once more towards the position of women as it should be in society.

Prasāntaratnakara is another play by the same author with another Pauranic theme. The outline of the story is more or less as found in the Vālmiki Ramāyaṇa, but according to the foreword of the play, the author has taken the same from the Sanskrit Adhyatma Ramāyaṇa and the Bengali Kṛittivāsa Ramāyaṇa. The name Ratnakara for the Brāhmin who fell into temptation and then got redeemed by the timely intervention of fate in one disguise or the other, is the poet’s imaginative contribution.

The main female character herein is Leelāvatī, a Brāhmin widow who is fancied and won by King Kāmesvara. Her life is depicted here as an example of the results of one’s own actions. The poet takes pains to uphold the fact that, all women are good by nature. Leelāvatī, forced by circumstances, deviates from the righteous path. As a result, she ends up in an untimely and infamous death. The disgracefully amorous conditions in the court of King Kāmesvara seem to reflect ordinary aristocratic life of the day. But the poet leaves no stone unturned to show that, woman and woman alone can be the redeeming factor for man. He puts forward the general idea prevalent in society about women and then forcibly repudiates it in more than one place. The conversation between Vasamata, the friend of the king and the Brāhmin is an example.¹ In this context, we are actually reminded of the ordinance of Manu, “Where

1. वसन्तः —पतिव्रतेति वाह्मात्रमेवतः।

ब्राह्मणः —कथमिव।

वसन्तकः —स्त्रीणां पतिव्रत्यं व्ययकराणां चौविवमुखता च इहैतुभय-मेव नौ समं प्रतिमाति।

ब्राह्मणः —चिक्र प्रहसनमु ! मूढ ! ब्राह्मणः ! स्त्रीणां गोरवं न वेदिष्ट ?

येनेवं परिहासकृते महापालकं पतन्त्रात्मां न हुएल्लो। मूढः!
the women are worshipped, the Gods live there," which was forgotten during the past many centuries. The modern writers as a whole, and Sanskrit dramatists in general, seem to be trying to bring back the ancient culture, in which woman was the pillar of the society.

Śrī Kālipāda Tarkācārya seems to have a special tendency towards allegory. Kumati and Sumati, the two female characters, who try to attract Ratneśwara are examples of the same. Actually, these two are the bad instinct and the good instinct personified. Similarly, we see many characters, such as Moha, Dharma, Adharma and others. The aim is to turn the materialistically inclined minds towards spiritual achievements which is the only way to eternal bliss. Hence, it is only natural that these various opposites predominating man's nature should be portrayed. This play, as all the other plays of this author, has many a lesson for the immature souls of this era; and many high ideals, forgotten throughout the ages, are upheld in an attractive way. A new idea, a fresh outlook on life, a new attitude towards society and also its best counterpart,—woman—is put forward by this author. Though he is fully conscious of the old dictum of Bhavabhuti, that people become bad while testing the women and the speech, he is out to prove that it is the people that are to be blamed for this injustice and not their victims.

There are also quite a number of small plays in this era based on the various stories told in the Mahābhārata. One such is Savitri-Nāṭakam written by Śrī Kṛṣṇamani Tripathi. The theme is the story of Savitri and Satyavān as

[Scriptural quotations and verses are listed here.]

Pr. Ra. II. p. 39
Manu. III. 56
U. R. Ch. I. p. 4
the title suggests. This is the first play on this theme. Though, the epics have always been the source-books for all Sanskrit plays, never for once has this heroic princess, who was so firm in her devotion even before the actual marriage and so courageous as to follow the God of Death Himself, has ever been portrayed. Of course, it did not serve the purpose of the earlier law-givers and their followers to reveal the real greatness of women, because, that would have automatically proved their own unjust attitude. This would have been detrimental to their propagation of renunciation as the eternal goal. But with changes in times and ideas, these really idealistic women naturally had to come on the stage to stop the fast deteriorating sisters and show them the old and refreshing path, which is ever new. The result is seen in the many Sanskrit dramas with Sā vitrī, Damayanti, Śaibyā, and such others in the leading role.

This is a one-act play with only four characters—Sā vitrī, Satyavān, Yamadharma and Sage Nārada. The only female character depicted is Sāvitri herself. The incidents of the one day, on which Satyavān was destined to die, are treated in three scenes. Sā vitrī is the ideal for all women in humility, purity, chastity and selfless devotion to her husband. All these qualities in her are brought forth in such a clear and simple style that any one can easily follow the whole course of incidents without any difficulty. The significance of portraying Sā vitrī as the heroine of the play, is made clear through the words of Satyavān at the end thus—“My lady, you are indeed great. Bhārata can hold her head high on account of such wives as you, who are idealistic and pure. The honour of Hindu society is safe because of women such as you. The enthusiasm of devoted and loyal wives are kept alive by women such as you. I am indeed happy with you.”1 It is quite obvious that the intention

1. सत्यवानु—देवी! त्वमर्थावस्मिन्। त्वाक्‌व्यया भारद्भूतया पतित्रत्वया
भार्यया भारतस्य मस्तकं उपरं भवति। हिन्दुस्माजस्य गोरवं
of the author is to bring out the importance of women in the society, and also to show what the real ideal of Indian womanhood was and ought to be.

The works of Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti have given a new idea to a modern poet. The abandonment of Śākuntalā by Duṣyanta, and the banishment of Sītā by Rāma are two incidents in the ancient epics which are parallels. The main difference lies in this, that while, Śākuntalā was accepted back by the king in due course, the separation was eternal in the case of the other couple. The Uttararāmacarita of Bhavabhūti, and specially the third and fourth acts therein tickled the fertile imagination of the modern poet, Shri J. T. Parikh, who tried to portray the meeting of Śākuntalā and Duṣyanta in the hermitage of Kaṇva once again, as a shadow of the said acts of Bhavabhūti’s play.

Just as Rāma entered Janasthāna after killing Śambūka, in this play, Duṣyanta is shown to be coming to the hermitage of Kaṇva, where Anasuyā and Priyamvadā meet him. The old memories wake vibrant while Śākuntalā accompanied by Śānumatī, just as Sītā with Tamasā, witnesses and even participates in the agony of the king. In the introduction, Śānumatī enters in the form of a hermit-woman and meets the deity of the hermitage like Atreyī met Vāsantī in the older play. The only difference here is that the conversation of Tamasā and Muralā, and also that between Vāsantī and Atreyī are more or less reflected in this one scene, in so far as this introduction tells us about the incidents in the interim period between the abandonment of Śākuntalā, and the present unexpected meeting. It is made clear to the audience that now Śākuntalā is the mother of a son, who was born in the hermitage of Mārīca, and is five years old.\(^1\)

\[\text{मुर्लितं तिह्वति} \mid \text{पतिभत्वतां चोलाह्वे वर्धते} \mid \text{त्वविं ब्रह्म:} \*
\text{प्रज्ञ:} \mid \text{ब्रह्म} \]

\[\text{Sa. N. p. 15}\]

1. यदा शाकुन्तला राज्या न परियुष्टायपरिगीतपूवः समयेति, तदा प्रस्थितेऽप
The advent of King Duśyanta in the Āśrama also is told, along with the fact that Śakuntalā herself is present in the vicinity, hidden though she is by tiraskarani.¹

In the main act, Śakuntalā is presented as looking around her old home and feels sad because, she has been the cause of sorrow even for animals, while her attention is suddenly attracted by the familiar voice of Duśyanta, just as Sītā was attracted by the words of Rāma in the Uttararāma-carita. The king sees the familiar places, remembers the past happy days in the company of Śakuntalā, faints more than once, like Rāma in the earlier play, and is again brought back to consciousness by the touch of Śakuntalā who is hidden by tiraskarani. Anasūyā enters the scene and leads him on into the hermitage where Śakuntalā and Sānumatī follow them. Many incidents such as the story of the deer Dīrghāpāṅga, are remembered, almost in the same words as found in the fifth act of the Abhijñānaśākuntala.² Duśyanta remembers these incidents and regrets his forgetfulness.³

¹ 2.3 4.5 6.7 8.9 10.11 12.13 14.15 16.17 18.19 20.21 22.23 24.25 26.27 28.29 30.31 32.33 34.35 36.37 38.39 40.41 42.43 44.45 46.47 48.49 50.51 52.53 54.55 56.57 58.59 60.61
After some time, Priyamvada also joins the king and Anasuya, and in the course of the conversation, she reveals the curse of Durvasa, which according to this play, is known only to Priyamvada,\(^1\) contradictory to the information we have in the Abhijñånaśakuntala. In fact this ring-episode and the curse of Durvasa are the inventions of the master-poet, as we have already seen in a previous chapter. The question of Anasuya, "Why did you not tell this even to me?"\(^2\) and its answer, are meant in this play to show that the curse was known only to Priyamvada, and that she kept it to herself. To say the least, this seems to be very unnatural, considering the love, the three girls had for each other and the oneness of heart Anasuya and Priyamvada exhibit on all occasions in the first play, where they are brought before us. No useful purpose seems to have been served by this deviation. The final remark of Anasuya, "Oh! Śakuntala, these sorrows are brought upon you by yourself!"\(^3\) is unlike the kind, understanding and considerate hermit-girl introduced to us by Kālidāsa.

Reading through the play, one is reminded of almost the very words of the Abhijñånaśakuntala and also Uttararāma-carita, in parallel circumstances.\(^4\) Examples are found almost

1. प्रियम्बदा—मया च स भृत्तान्तोज्जाबवि न कस्यचिदिधि कथित: ||
   Chh. Śā. p. 29

2. ध. भ्रन्सूया—महामपि न कथितः त्ययः ?
   धा. प्रियम्बदा—शोकंनिबर्तनयेतादाचरितम् ||
   Chh. Śā. p. 21

3. भ्रन्सूया—हा! सकि! शक्तुलेः! प्रात्महक्तान्येतानि तद्परिपीडनानि ||
   Chh. Śā. p. 21

4. ध. भ्रन्स्यचित्तेन विचित्रयती यमच्छ वस्यसवतिव्यति न मां यत् ।
    श्रृष्टु स्वचर्मचरस्यप्रमत्तां स्मरित्यति त्वाः न तत: स राजा ||
    Chh. Śā. 42

   धा. धा: भ्रातिष्परिभाविनी ।
   विचित्रयती यमन्यमानसा तपोवनं बेल्सं न मायुपस्वितम् ।
   स्मरित्यति त्वां न स बोधितोडूपि सन्नवां प्रमत्त: ||
   Ah. S. IV. 1
at every step.

One interesting characteristic of this play is that all characters except Duṣyanta, are female. All of them are only shadows of the same characters presented in the Abhijñānaśākuntala, now presented in a different setting. Still, there are differences noticeable between the original Śākuntalā, and the Chhāyā Śākuntalā of the present play. This one seems to be more conscious of her own rights and also the wrongs done to her by Duṣyanta. Only after she hears of the curse from Priyāśvadā, does she feel a little sympathetic towards the king. Perhaps the explanation of this difference may be found in the time element, that is to say, the different times in which this latter work has been written. There are some traits in all the women characters in this play, which go a long way to show the change that has come over women in general.

_Udgatṛ Daśānana_ by Śrī Mahāliṅgāśāstri, is the latest play written on the basis of the _Ramāyana_. The theme is the raising of _Kailāśa Parvata_ by Rāvana, as told in the _Ramāyana_. Of course, the imagination of the poet has enhanced the skeleton, and many characters are invented. The nurses of Skanda and Gaṇeśa, namely Pradoṣa Saṅdhya and Śivarātri are the only two female characters present on the stage while Goddess Pārvatī is referred to, along with her friend.

This poet has written six Sanskrit plays, namely—_Laundinyā Prahasana_, _Prati-Rājasūyam_, _Markatamardalikā_, _Ṣṛṅgara-Naradiyam_, _Udbhayarūpam_, _Kaliśūrdurbhāvam_, and _Ādikāvyodaya_, besides the play in question. The names are not suggestive enough to tell us all about the stories of these various plays, nor are they available to the student for perusal. So, a detailed study of all these plays could not be made here. Still, this one play, _Udgatṛ Daśānana_, in itself, is enough to prove the extraordinary poetic talent and imagination of the author.
The predominant sentiment is heroic, having a lively atmosphere with much humour sprinkled all over. The story, in a nutshell, goes thus. While Lord Śiva was relating the story of some past ages to Goddess Pārvatī, her friend, Vijayā, listened at the keyhole, and was detected by a sudden exclamation the latter made, at some wonderful thing that she happened to hear in the course of the story. The enraged Śiva cursed her to wander about as a Piśācī. This caused a disruption between Śiva and Pārvatī, and as a result, Śiva entered into a long Samadhi, while Pārvatī went to the surrounding Saravana. Meanwhile, Rāvana, very proud and self-confident, attacks and conquers his own stepbrother Kubera. In that hour of triumph, he thinks himself to be the highest and mightiest of all, and decides to attack Lord Śiva. While approaching the abode of the Lord, his Puṣpaka is stopped by an unknown hand, and he himself is thrown down to the earth by Nandi. Though thus baffled, the aggressive Rāvana tries to raise the Mountain Kailāsa itself with his twenty hands. The mountain begins to shake and the frightened Pārvatī runs to Lord Śiva for protection and embraces Him.\(^1\) He, seeing the chaos caused by Rāvana, bends His toe, and thus fixes Kailāsa in its original position crushing the twenty hands of the trouble-maker in the process. The shrieks of pain from the demon-king fills the whole world. In the end, by the advice of Sumali, Rāvana begins to sing the praise of Lord Śiva, which pleases Him and the imprisoned hands below the mountain are released. Pleased by the songs of praise and also the power of endurance shown by Rāvana, Lord Śiva gives him the sword called Candraghāsa and also many boons which made up for all the tribula-

\(^1\) कैलासाध्रेष्टोत्तरं तावत्वस्ता

\(\text{तेनेन्द्रस्मिन स्थवर्यं प्रतुभेदत्} \)

\(\text{वर्त्त्वा देवी मानमुखः कष्टः} \)

\(\text{जप्राहेति स्वागुरन्त: समोद:} \)

\(\text{Ud. D. VII. 111}\)
tions, he had undergone.

In the first act of this play, we have Sandhya and Rātri, the two maid-servants, who come with the story of Kubera's defeat. In the third act, Cancalā, the friend of Rambhā, Kubera's daughter-in-law tells us about the latter going to keep an appointment with her lover. An unknown voice is heard warning Cancalā that, if she does not hurry to take her friend immediately to the protection of Goddess Gauri, there is every possibility of her falling a prey to the lust of Rāvana. Cancalā saves her friend with the help of the clouds.

As we have seen from the summary, this story deals with the celestial beings, and has hardly any relation to this world of ordinary human-beings. The sentiments depicted are Vīra and Adbhuta, and only a small episode in the life of the demon-king is treated here. But from what we read, some ideas can be gathered about the women characters as conceived by this author. The nature of women, according to him is to be talkative and be able to exaggerate things, and this has been clearly illustrated by the examples of the two maids-in-attendance. The easily annoyed temperament attributed to women is depicted in showing the anger of the Mother of the Universe at the just punishment given to her friend. Introducing the episode of Rambhā, the amorous desires of women and their resourcefulness are shown. Studying all the female characters portrayed in the play in person or by reference, the woman that emerges, is fickle, shallow and of light nature. There are no noble traits or commendable characteristics shown by a single one among them.

We have studied a few of the Sanskrit plays based on themes belonging to the mythological and epic sources. The

1. भ्रम्न कृष्णवयस्को! जनस्य प्रसन्नवादाय! चन्द्रेष्ठ एताध्याये ते सन्ततिमहिमावर्णी सन्ति भविष्यति दशकम्बरपरिभाविता, यथपापसंपक्षसंभाबनं कैलासशारवर्णे गौरीपादमुण्डेन्द्र न सब: प्राप्तिक्षयित। Ud. D. III. p. 25
same writers have been very enterprising and have also taken themes from the pages of history. M. M. Yajñika, Pancānana Tarkaratna Bhaṭṭācārya, Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa, Śrījivannyaśyatīrtha, Mathurā Prasūda Dikṣita, are a few, whose works are taken for study here.

Mūlaśankara Mānikalāla Yajñika has written three plays, the Saṃyogīṭa-Swayamvaram, the Chhatrapati-Samrajyam and the Pratāpa-Vijayam. The names are indicative of their respective themes. They deal with the incidents during the period of Muslim supremacy. It is well-known in history that Jayacandra of Kannouj was responsible for helping the Muslim kings to enter the country. The struggle of Pratāpa Simha, the hero of Rajasthan, to keep his own against Emperor Akbar, also is an important landmark in Indian history. The next phase in which Indians once more realised their power was at the time of Śivājī. These three main landmarks are chosen as themes by Yajñika for his plays, at the time when India had realised her plight, and was struggling to regain all that she had lost in the previous centuries.

The Saṃyogīṭa-Swayamvaram is the story of the union of Princess Saṃyogīṭā with Emperor Prthvīrāja Chauhāna, who was then ruling at Delhi. The play is based on the striking events of a period when feuds between the Hindu kings gave opportunities for foreigners to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. Dr. Yajñika is not taking up any controversial points. He actually deals with only the love of Saṃyogīṭā for King Prthvīrāja, and the happy union of the two with the blessings of Jayacandra.

The Nāti is the companion of the Śūtradhāra. The women characters depicted other than the Nāti, are Princess Saṃyogīṭā, her mother, her friends, the wife of Prthvīrāja and the Princess of Karnaṭaka in the guise of an attendant in the palace of Jayacandra. Prthvīrāja is considered as an upstart and enemy by Jayacandra, while his daughter is deeply in love with Prthvīrāja. In the beginning of
the play, Sāmyogitā is sad because of her father's decision to marry her off according to Swayamvara rites. King Jayacandra, not knowing the reasons of her sadness, asks his wife to find out. The mother, though in her daughter's confidence, knowing Jayacandra well enough, tries to dissuade the princess. But the Rajput girl is firm in her choice and decides to face the consequences of her father's rage than be fickle in her love. Jayacandra, in his anger, sends her away to a distant fortress. Sāmyogitā sends a message to her lover from that exile just as the ancient heroine Rukmini did, and requests him to come and rescue her. By the efforts of Karnātaki, and the influence of the queen, Prthvirāja succeeds in carrying away the princess. In the end, Jayacandra is pacified and he goes to Delhi in order to perform the marriage of his daughter according to her own desire, and gives her his blessings.

There are enough evidences throughout the play to show the changing ideals of society. According to history, Sāmyogitā is courageous enough to cast the Varamālā on the statue of King Prthvirāja, in the open assembly and defy her own father. In this play also, the girl does not lack in courage to follow her heart's dictates. But, at the same time, she shows due obedience to her parents, and also consideration for her family prestige. What she could not achieve, openly, she tries and achieves by tact. Sāmyogitā as portrayed by Dr. Yajñika combines in her all the fine qualities inherent in a girl of noble lineage.

The queen mother is an ideal mother as well as an ideal wife. She understands her husband and her daughter equally well, and is loving, patient and tactful enough to manage everything smoothly. Madanikā, and the other friends of Sāmyogitā also show the same refinement and culture that characterises the princess and the queen. Karnātaki is a type by herself. She appears on the stage in the guise of a dancing-girl though her character and behaviour belies the appea-
rance. In the course of the play, her identity is revealed and the revelation only ennobles her all the more. She is really the Princess of Karnaṭaka, who is in love with Prthvirāja and takes the guise of a dancing-girl in so that she may be of service to the man whom she loved. When the message of Saṁyogitā is received by Prthvirāja, she is sent to Jayacandra’s court in order to find out the real situation and also to find ways and means to carry the princess away according to the request of the latter. Throughout, this maiden impresses us as the highest ideal of selfless love and sacrifice.

Ichhīnī Kumārī, the wife of Prthvirāja is another female character in this play. Her husband is faithful and loving to her. His affection for her is not fickle. It is more due to chivalry than anything else that Prthvirāja accepts the plea of Princess Saṁyogitā. He has full confidence in his wife, unlike the heroes of our ancient plays, who made their wives a possession to be enjoyed. Prthvirāja actually shares all his responsibilities with her. When he was called upon to leave the kingdom for a while, he puts all responsibility on her.¹

Dr. Yājñika shows the veil to be a sign of respect to elders and those whom one respects. This idea is made clear by the statement of Karnaṭaki in the court of Jayacandra, where, she puts on her veil, as soon as she recognises the disguised Prthvirāja. When she was questioned as to the reason why she, a courtesan, should cover her face in the presence of anyone, she answers, “Seeing the friend of my previous master, I covered my face to show respect to him (the master). That king is the only man before whom I feel bashful, even as the night before the sun.”²

¹. पृथ्वीराजः —तद्राजकायाणि निबंहलति परिवाल्य ताबद्धरम।

². कर्णात्की—मित्रं विलोकय पुरतो मम पूर्वमर्तु—
स्तस्यापदरासपदि संब्रूतमानन मे।

Sa. Sw. III. p. 45
By her soliloquy, the audience is informed of her real feelings for King Prthvirāja. It was because of her love and respect for him that she was able to recognise his identity even in disguise, and the natural feeling made her automatically cover her head when suddenly she was brought face to face with him. After the first moment of surprise was over, she realised her duty, that, she has to save him from being recognised by his enemies, amongst whom he had come for the sake of Saṇyogita. We are aware of the custom prevalent in North India, even today, of women covering their heads before their elders, and all those to whom they have to show respect. Thus, covering the head is a token of respect, and the words of Karnāṭakī go to prove this.

The behaviour, conversation and manners of all the women characters in this play give evidence enough to prove the comparative freedom enjoyed by women in that era. The intelligence, cleverness and fine sense of dignity shown by the various women throughout the play are proofs for the good opinion the author has about women in general, in contrast to the poets of the previous centuries. Although, this too is a love-story, like the Rukmiṇīparinaya or the Subhadrāharana, the difference in the behaviour-pattern of the heroines there, and in this later play, has its own story to tell. It plainly indicates the renaissance in the position of women during the present century.

The Pratāpavijayam is another drama by the same author, dealing with the story of the struggle between Rana Pratap of Chittore and Emperor Akbar. The only women characters presented herein are the sister of Bhagwānadāsa, the sister of Prthvirāja Rāthore, a courtier in Akbar's court. Both these ladies seem to be introduced to show the heroism,
self-respect and self-confidence evinced by Rajput women when occasion arose. The story has more to do with battles, struggles and diplomacy, than normal life.

The Chhatrapati-Sāmrājyam, which treats the third phase of the Muslim rule in India, tells us about the glorious incidents during the ascent of Śivaji, the Maharāstra-Chief to the throne. Sakhībāi, his wife, and Jījābāi, his mother, are the important female characters depicted. Both are shown as lending a helping hand to the chief in all matters concerning the kingdom as well as ordinary life. His words to his wife are proof enough to show what the woman's position was in his experience. He says in one place, "Encouraging me when I am off to the battle-field, taking care of me when I come back tired, pacifying me when I am agitated, and humouring me when I am tired and worn out, you are the real giver of happiness at all times." Her answer is quite natural, though very significant. She says, "My Lord, it is only the duty of the real Kṣatriya wife, who is the companion in all dharmas—Śahadharmacārini."

The position of woman as the supplement and complement of man seems to be emphasised by the author again and again.

1. शिवाजी—प्रोत्साहने समराध्येतात्तरस्य
   प्रत्यागतस्य च पराक्रमणानुयोगः ।
   उव्रेणवितस्य नयमांकाविकल्पनेन ।
   श्यान्तरस्य नर्मवचसा तत्तुपे मुखे मे ॥
   Chh. Sa. III. 16

2. सक्षीवाई—प्रवर्तनु । चर्म एवं नाहर्मचारिणीं क्षत्राध्यनावाम् ।
   निसर्गते एव ।
   तत्र ब्रजे मे हृदयं प्रतिष्ठितं
   मनं च मे त्वमनसकतां गतं ।
   त्वम् यथे भवति यथे प्रसन्नं
   समाकुलं चाकुलिते त्वम् प्रियं ॥
   Chh. Sa. III. p. 17
again in this and similar statements. The mother, as the most honoured soul in Indian life, is seen in the reverence that Śivājī shows to his mother. Throughout the play, we find that Śivājī is depending on the blessings of his own mother, and the helps of Divine Mother Bhavānī Who alone has a place in his reverence equalling to that for his mother. The greatness of women, and their value as wives and mothers in the lives of human-beings are very much emphasised by this author almost at every step in all his three plays. Still, women are not shown as coming out in the open very freely. We have already seen the use of veil as a token of respect to the elders in the earliest plays. In this one, the stage-direction is found saying, “enter the queen and the queen-mother within the inner apartment.”

While the serious matters of the court or the kingdom are discussed, the women are participating, but not sitting along with the men. They have special seats within hearing, arranged in the inner apartments. We are reminded of the practice of women belonging to the big Zamindar families managing the affairs from behind the curtains, which was prevalent in Bengal and other North Indian provinces, till very late in the present century itself. The manager of the estate or other responsible employee used to be called to the inner apartments, and the mistress used to speak to him and give him the necessary instructions from behind the curtain. This was really the transition period, when women were beginning to come out and take their own place in all things that mattered. After the stern and strict seclusion of women for many centuries, the dawn was in sight for women once more. Dr. Yājñika is witnessing and reproducing this renaissance in his plays.

The Mahārāṣṭrian women were always bold and heroic as the Rajput women and the women of Kerala in the

1. ततः प्रविणस्यतं तैवाद्विष्ट्यता राजमाता राजी च।

Chh. Śa. III. p. 40
South. Unlike in the North, women in the South were never in seclusion. The influence of Jijābāli and Sakhībāli over the Mahārāstra Chief is a well-known historical fact. Dr. Vājñika chose these facts and dramatised them, at a time when example and precept, both were needed to encourage heroism and patriotism in the country, specially among the women who were the mothers of the nation.

Amaramangalam, by Pañcānana Tarkaratnācārya is another play tracing its source to the history of the Rajput kingdom of Mewar. The theme of this play is the re-capture of Chittore from the Mughal Emperor. Many drastic changes have been made in the body-plot of the play, the most important being, the introduction of the queen—the wife of Amarasiṃha—who is actually shown as wholly responsible for the victory of Amarasiṃha. Thus, it is the nobility and strength of woman that is upheld, though indirectly, in this play. In the introduction of the book, it is clearly said, that all the women characters here are inventions of the author.1 Needless to say that the invention must have been made with some particular purpose in view.

Even as Kālidāsa raised Dusyanta to the height of an ideal hero, full of noble qualities, so also Śrī Tarkācārya has made out Amarasiṃha, the dissipated son of the noble Rana Pratap, to be a really heroic and patriotic king, worthy of his ancestors. The conquest of Chittore by Amarasiṃha with the clever and timely help of his wife, and the consequent disgrace of Mānasimha in the Moghul court, form the main story of this play. The dissipated life of Amarasiṃha, is represented as a means, the king used to deceive his opponents. This is a masterly touch of the poet to add to the glory of his hero, which moulded the infamous story of Amarasiṃha, as found in history, into such a noble form. The madness of Mānasimha and the suicide of his simple and innocent wife, Vanalatā, also are invented by the Acārya.

1. क्रिपात्राणि च कलिततानि ।

A. M. I. p. 4
The queen, her friend Subala, Virā, the courtesan, her old mother Jarati, the Princess of Kooch Bihar namely Vanalata, and the Bhairavi from Orissa, are the female characters, portrayed herein. The queen is a noble and heroic woman, quite a worthy successor to Padmini and Karmavati. She is adorned with all the qualities required by the dramaturgist for a Mahādevī, and belongs to the type called Svādhīnapatika by them. She represents a harmonious combination of Dhārini and Sītā as portrayed by Kālidāsa, and also of Śakuntalā as seen in the Mahābhārata. The love and broad-mindedness of Dhārini, the self-confidence and anxiety for the fame and welfare of her husband shown by Sītā, and the courage and self-dependence of Śakuntalā, of the Mahābhārata, are manifest together in this queen. Her eagerness to console even Virā, whom she knows to be a rival in her love, is indeed extraordinary. Her nobility and generosity are such that the courtesan who came with the intention of destroying the dynasty as a whole, herself gets converted into a devoted follower and well-wisher. It is true that her love for the king was a strong element that contributed towards this conversion. But, her final submission has its root cause, in the noble character of the queen herself as is readily accepted by Virā.¹

Amarasimha is always careful to seek the opinion and advices of his wise queen. While serious political questions are discussed, the king specially informs the queen and asks her to be at hand to get first-hand knowledge of the whole situation.² Evidences of her active participation in politics

1. नारायणः—देवदेवोऽनन्तराढ्यवन्दे सरस्वतीवर्षस्त्रारि चित्रशुद्धिममभवत।
   A. M. III. p. 50

2. प्रतिहा—देवी विज्ञाप्यति—प्रभुयार्जनस्वामपत्ये चित्तबाक्कमात्मन्नस्ति
   भवति। भव्यप्रत्ययाय अन्तःपूर्वमवस्तितया योत्यमेतदः।
   A. M. II. p. 35
are many.¹ Her advice to teach the parrots to repeat the insulting words used by Pratāpa Simha at an earlier time and to leave them near the palace is a proof of her cleverness and knowledge of psychology.² The king himself recognises the wisdom of his wife without any hesitation.³ The courage and wisdom of the queen as praised by the Kancuki gives us an idea as to all the activities of the queen which ensure success for the king and his army.⁴ The quick resourcefulness of the queen is shown in the episode of her acting as the Goddess of Chittore. When the soldiers were losing heart, and almost running away, she climbs up the Nyagrodha tree near by, and speaks the words of blessings, which acted as magic on the failing spirit of the army. Her words put new life into the disheartened Rajputs and the result was undoubted victory. The king is aware of the greatness of his wife, and is also willing to accept it openly. He unreservedly accepts, "You are my teacher in politics; you are the persevering disciple to me in the science of war; in all dangers, you are the strong-hearted minister, and you are also

1. नारायणः—मानसिहोवेजनाय देवीनिवेदनं च उपलम्य महानं परितोषणमुभवति गुरुदेवः।
   A. M. III. p. 50
2. नारायणः—मानसिहं प्रति सुगृहितनामः प्रतायसिहस्य समुचिताधिकृष्णी—
   बाचमगुणान्ती शिक्षिता शुकावली राजावस्थसमीपे विसर्जनीया।
   A. M. IV. p. 52
3. राजा—प्रति यन्त्रम् कांशितं तदिदानि पतिहितरताया: ते प्रवतनेने भ्रात्सनिष्ठम्।
   A. M. IV. p. 69
4. कण्याकूटी—समरसिहस्तिष्ठतुद्वद्यम् देवी समरसिहस्तिष्ठतेयमर्मथवायिः देवं
   धनुर्वर्तपेयं यदुनुसारं, यद्य गहनाबुद्धाब वीरादुसरणपरार्ये
   दस्युप्रिनां जवनानु श्रवणयशरसमपातने निष्कामान, न तत्केवलं
   मुबला जानायं च जानानि। देवरथ वर्षितवय्यापि वासनानुमतिधार्यस्य
   साम्प्रदेशित्विदित्वतंत्रात्मायै। यदद्व च ह्यारोहितवेष्प्रतिष्ठ्ययान
   तथविष्णुसुवालासहितादेवी देवमुससारं, तन्मे वीरायाम्ब्र केवलं परिषारं।
   A. M. V. p. 88
the real friend and wife who is the same in weal or woe.

We hear an echo of the words of Aja in the *Raghuvaṃśa*, though in different circumstances.

All this being thus, still, this noble woman never even once forgets her womanhood, or the fact that her place is within the house in normal conditions. She says, "The enthusiasm and energetic action of women exists only when the husband is present, not otherwise." When everything is said and done, and the final end is achieved, the queen decides to go back to her rightful place. She accepts that she acted on her husband's advice when she took the guise of a soldier and entered the battlefield to help him. In so many words, she makes it clear that she feels shy about the whole thing when she remembers it in ordinary times. She hastens to return to the inner apartments of the palace. Though all this is true, the queen, who ought to be beside the king at the time of the celebration of victory, is absent. The complete omission of her at that glorious moment sets one still

1. राजा—त्वं राजनीतिनिमो मम विश्विथि

विश्वाससि मे रणकलामु कृत्यमा ल्वं।

सवापदि स्वरसित: सचिबोाथसि मे ल्वे

ल्वं गेहिनी सहसुःक्षुवा सती च॥ A. M. V. p. 99

2. गुहिष्णैसविवचः सति मिरः प्रियाशिष्या ललिते कलाविची।

कलाविचिमुबेन मृत्युः हर्तां ल्वां वद कि न मे हृत्यु॥

R. V. VI. 67

3. देवी—प्रहो पुरत एव भर्तुः द्रोणामुक्ताहः सुख्य भवित। न पुनरस्या।

A. M. IV. p. 71

4. देवी—प्रायः पुनः ! यथपि प्रायः धेवः इति ल्याया उपविष्टवेव मया

गन्तःपुरिकाविरूङ्ग यत्र किमयमुख्यते, तथापि तयः स्वरत्वः पावातः

लज्जा भवित। न A. M. V. p. 100

5. देवी—प्रय जातासिद्धः। इदानीः प्रायःकालाग्रंचरणः प्रारोपण

इति प्रायःपुनःनिर्देशः स्वरत्तै निवेदयामि प्रायःरोपणप्रतिरूपः

इदानीमेव नगरं गन्तुम। A. M. V. p. 100
thinking—why. Why has the author left her out? Is it because he wishes to show that the woman prefers to be always in the background as the guardian angel and to avoid the limelight? Or does he still think that the control of the back-door is the best suited job for the really strong and noble woman? The answer has yet to be sought. Perhaps, the author thought that though the worth of woman is proved, the time is not ripe enough for her to come out to accept publicly the glory that she so well deserves.

Subalā is the trusted friend of the queen. She is a devoted friend, trusted companion, constant well-wisher and most obedient attendant of the queen. Her courage is proved by her following the king as a body-guard in the guise of a man. The king is only reflecting the general feeling when he says, "Subalā! It is indeed the greatness of our motherland Mewar, that even noble women like you accept the guise of a man, leaving the soft qualities common to women, to act as heroic and hard as hundred heroes put together." In every thing that the queen does, Subalā has a hand, and we see that she is almost the counterpart of the heroic saviour of Chittore.

Vira is a type by herself. She is a courtesan by birth, and is sent by Manasimha to Chittore to deceive Amarasilimha. She enters the court of the Rajput king in the guise of a princess in distress with her attendant, who is none other than her old mother Jarati in the guise of a servant. The idea is to seduce Amara, and finally to entrap him. The old woman is always nagging her daughter for not doing what she has come to achieve. But, the girl's own innate goodness is awakened by the noble qualities of the king and the queen. She finds herself helpless because of

1. राजा—सुबल ? महिमाय भेवारसुधराया: यज्ञ स्वादीकुलाज्ञानापि पुरुषवेशपरिश्रेणाज्ञनाजनसुलभ मार्देवमपहाय शतबीरसमान- पीठवा समरलीलामिनयति। A. M. V. p. 98
her love and admiration for the king. After entering the palace of the Rajput king, Vīrā becomes a changed person. She begins to get disgusted with her own profession and conduct. Her noble nature rebels against the way she has to treat her own mother, though it was at the instigation of the latter herself. This is only one of the many small instances which go to prove her real nature. Finally she is convinced of her mistake in trying to deceive the good king and queen and firmly refuses to continue on the same lines. It is then that old Jarāti decides to do herself what her daughter refused to do. The conversation between Vīrā and her mother in the second act of the play, is an eye-opener to the characters of both.

Jarāti is a typical courtesan with all the convictions and beliefs that such women generally have. It is she who manages the whole show of the plot hatched by Mānasisimha against the king of Mewar, making her daughter only the bait. She was sure of the implicit obedience of her daughter till they entered the presence of King Amarāsimha and his noble queen. But, once there, the whole situation changed. The magnetism of the good people was irresistible to the simple girl who was herself good and noble by nature. The old woman tries her level best to corrupt the girl. Her idea about women is that they should be just as flowers are to bees as far as men are concerned and should always try to intoxicate men by throwing different baits to attract them. When she found that she has no influence over her daughter any more, she felt sure that the king and queen are very bad because they have led her daughter the wrong way.

1. युवति—मातरं हृद्धेति भक्षामि। का गति: ? A. M. I. p. 14
2. जरती—जा? यथा एवा पुरुषोधानमुर्मिमभुकरेश्वास्यं, तथा वाराज्ञानां: पुरुषवशस्वायम्। केवलं सीरभमिकोद्राने भोहनीपापी वाराज्ञानभिसिद्धांतं:। A. M. II. p. 26
3. जरती—(पारमगतम्) ताम्यामु हाम्यामू में ?छुडुका हुषिता मोहिला। A. M. II. p. 26
After this, she herself decides to destroy the enemies. But unfortunately, for herself, and her benefactor Mānasimha, she is detected and defeated in her purpose by faithful followers of the king and queen.

There are two more female characters in this play, Vanalata, the wife of Mānasimha and a Bhairavi, who is very devoted to the simple and innocent Vanalata. Vanalata is the princess of Kooch Bihar, married to Mānasimha for political ends. The girl herself is a loving and a devoted wife to this servant of the Mughal Emperor, but her love and devotion is not at all reciprocated. Mānasimha is a politician, pure and simple, and he has no time for any humane considerations. This poor girl is lonely and sad, with the only support of the Bhairavi, who is sent to her by the queen mother of Kooch Bihar to look after the interests of her daughter, whose plight, the mother understood with her natural insight. Vanalata, being a foreigner, does not know Sanskrit and so Bhairavi is forced to talk in Prākrit.²

The little that we see of Vanalata is enough to tell us that she is really a Vanalata—a creeper of the wilderness, a child of Mother Nature—as innocent as a deer, who is feeling uncomfortable and unhappy in the new surroundings of her husband’s palace. She is living in hopes which are never fulfilled because of the soldierly nature of Mānasimha whose one end and aim in life is to destroy Mewar. When he completely fails in this mission of his, he loses favour with the emperor whom he served all his life, and that is the end of all his lifework also. Naturally, he goes mad, and in his madness treats his wife in such a way, that

1. भैरवी—राजभावान्निभ्जा राजमहिपी कीचराजसुहिता वनसता सततं रक्षणया। तस्या: खलु परिरक्षणयु परिसरास्त्राय च काम-रूपादुपाम-व्य सविनयभविता ब्रह्मनुप्रेपिता कीचराजमात्रा।
   A. M. VI. p. 109

2. भैरवी—न खलु देवीं वाचमियं सम्यग्यु कुष्यते, तत्प्राकृतमाथ्यायम।
   A. M. VI. p. 109
the disappointed girl commits suicide to relieve herself of her agony.

Reading through the whole play, we find, we are carried on to a high moral plane, where women with their love, spirit of sacrifice, heroism and simplicity, have created a new world. Though good and evil are shown in their respective capacities, the net result is an elevation of the moral standard, where the brilliant, but cool lustre of women is predominant. Though there are many other Sanskrit plays written in the present century on similar themes, none of them has reached this height in depicting women with so much natural glory, and innocent yet elevating simplicity.

M. M. Haridāsa Siddhāntavāgīśa is another writer, who took up the incidents of this period for dramatisation. This name is not in any way unknown to the scholars of the present century. His tremendous achievement in the Sanskrit world, the edition of the Mahābharata, with the Sanskrit commentary and the Bengali translation, a book constituting of 159 parts and 50,000 pages, is now before the public as a monument to his love of Sanskrit and his own scholarship. This great soul has found time to play with the ordinary type of people also, and has condescended to enrich the dramatic literature and fulfil the aim of true poetry. The result we find in three dramas, the Vangīyapratapatam, the Mewārapratapam and the Śivājivijayam, all published in the last one decade.

The first play deals with the incidents in Bengal when Sherkhan was the ruler there, and Akbar was ruling over India. There are three women characters and a few dancing-girls presented on the stage. The conditions described in the play remind us of a time when the conquerors were suppressing the conquered, and the life, property, honour and religion of the Hindus were at stake. Śaṅkara, one of the
main characters, describes the situation clearly enough.  

Śaṅkaracakravartī, a Bengali Brahmin, persecuted by Nawab Sherkhan, leaves his wife, home and relations and takes refuge with King Pratāpaditya, son of Vikramāditya of Yashore. Pratāpa, though heir to the throne, is not very much liked by his father because of a prophecy that he would become the murderer of his father. The play relates how he was sent to the court of Akbar on the pretext of seeing the world and acquiring more experience, how he rose in favour with the Emperor, and how finally he conquered the Nawab and established his own rule over Bengal. It is really the description of a series of battles between the Yavanas and the army of Bengal led by Pratāpaditya and his two trusted friends.

The heroic sentiment is predominant. Still, there are two female characters: one, Kalyāṇī, the wife of Śaṅkara, and the other, Padmā, the wife of Pratāpaditya. We hear about Kalyāṇī in the first act itself, when Śaṅkara says, that he had to leave his beloved wife to her fate, because he himself was persecuted by the Nawab for no rhyme or reason. He is also anxious about her, because he knows, she may be tortured by the enemies. It is in the third act that we come face to face with her. Though left alone with only a maid-in-attendance, Kalyāṇī shows full self-confidence and courage. Her honour is valuable to her, and she has no intention of surrendering herself to any one. The little we see of her on the stage, is enough to convince us of the heroic nature and noble character of the women as seen by the present author. It is not the fickle-minded, frail and

1. श्ृः —नवनिनिमात्रण गणयति विलासोपकरणं
   प्रजानां सर्वस्वं करगतिनिष्कर्षं मयुः
   तुण्डस्ये ददवै प्रणयति पराग्रहमहर्षं
   निरीड्दां भेलाकूटकमयुमिः पूर्यति च ॥

V. P. I. 19
pleasure-loving creature that is conceived by him when he thinks of a woman. Kalyāṇī stands against the Yavanás as much as she can, and then she is saved by the timely arrival of her husband with Pratāpadeitya, and is sent to the protection of the Prince's wife, who is also a very devoted and obedient woman as could be seen from the glimpse that we get of her in the sixth act of the play.

Vāmā, the maid-servant of Kalyāṇī, is a courageous and generous character, staking her all in the service of her mistress. Though a poor servant-woman, she shows the innate goodness and reliability of women, in contrast with the frailty of women as propagated in the earlier days.

There are a few dancing-girls brought before the Nawab for his enjoyment. Some of them are willing slaves to the pleasure-seeking Nawab, while the others are captives of war, who are compelled by every method to surrender themselves to the lust of the man. The fifth act well serves its purpose of exposing the cruel and villainous ways of the Muslim ruler towards his Hindu subjects.

Of all the female characters depicted in the play, Kalyāṇī is the ideal that the poet wishes to hold up to the people for emulation and admiration. It is only proper that a play, written at the time of the renaissance in the social life of India, upholds the heroic sentiment and courage in woman as the redeeming features that would help her to come back to her own, in every walk of life.

The pages of Rajput history are full of the sacrifices and heroic deeds of their women, who considered their honour more valuable than life itself. The next play of the same author deals with the same period of Rajput history as treated by Yājñika. Rana Pratap is the hero of the play, and it deals with the incidents that happened during his struggle with Emperor Akbar. Kamalā, the wife of Prthvīrāja, Gaurī, the wife of Rana Pratap; Indirā, the daughter of the Rana, the door-keeper, the maids-in-waiting, and a
few dancing-girls are presented in this play.

Each of these characters has a story to tell in her own way and a little lesson to teach to posterity. Kamalā, the wife of Prthvirāja Rāthore is forced to go to the Meena Bazar, which is presented in the second act of the play as Mahilāmela. The lady finds out, accidentally, the implications of attending this mela, and tries successfully to escape from attending it. Though we meet with her only in this connection, we know her character fully well within those few minutes. She is a chip from the old block, a spark from the fiery Rajput women, who taught their children by example and precept, that honour and character are the most precious jewels of womanhood. The way in which she manages to escape from the Mahilāmela, is in itself a pointer towards her self-dependence, determination, presence of mind and courage.

Gaurī, the wife of Rana Pratap is another type. She shows us another aspect of the Rajput women—the soft, loving, suffering and patient wife and mother. She is brave and understanding enough to follow the Rana in his hardships, which he voluntarily accepted for the sake of the honour of his motherland. Her life is an example of the homely type of the Rajput woman, who is loyal and devoted to her husband in weal or woe.

Indirā is only a child. But, in her shines the spark of future glory, which unfortunately is put out by the unbearable sufferings she had to undergo due to the exile, her father was taking upon himself for the sake of his country. The dancing-girls and the door-keeper are true to the nature of the general characters they are expected to represent as seen in the world.

The third play by the same author, treats with the incidents of later history, where the Mahārāṣṭra-Chief Śivāji rose to power, at a time when the people of India were descending the steps of cultural and social glory. It is stated in
the introduction that the idea of staging such a play is to encourage the spirit of self-respect and freedom.¹

The play begins with the student-life of Śivānanda, and ends with his becoming the Chhatrapati, the emperor of the Mahāraṣṭra. According to the acclaimed aim, the play is bound to be predominated by heroic sentiment, but that does not necessarily keep women characters out of the modern plays, as we have already had opportunities to observe. Jayantī Devī, the mother of Śivāji, Muktaśeśī, the Bhairavi who is the friend and helper of the former, are the main female characters. Apart from these, there is the queen, the wife of Śivāji, and also the Brahmīni, the wife of Maheśwaraśāstri.

Jayantī Devī, the mother of Śivāji, is first presented in the fourth act of the play. She appears to be discontented, at the very outset, because of her being a woman.² The conversation between Bhairavī and Jayantī Devī reflects the conflicting ideas about the position of women in society at the time of the dawn of freedom. The first part of this act is a discussion between the two friends, in which the queen-mother is finally convinced of the greatness of women and also the justice in restricting women by rules and not men.³ The whole system of the Hindu law concerning women’s conduct is explained here in a very interesting and convincing way. The greatness of women, the necessity of her being devoted to one man only, the rules against widow-remarriage, and such other things are discussed clearly for the first time in detail.

We find a definite contrast between the mother and father of Śivānanda. While the woman is rightly angry

¹. सूत्रवार: —तैन हि साम्प्रतं सर्वे एवेव स्वाधीनतां कामयते वर्य च तथूद्धीपन- 

  मेव कश्चित् प्रवधभड्डितेनुभ्रिग्रूः।

  Ś. Ch. I. p. 3

². जयंतीदेवी—देवी । परं निधिभविष्म योविद्वन्न।

  Ś. Ch. IV. p. 38-41

³. Ś. Ch. IV. p. 38
at the unjust actions of the Muslim ruler against Sāhanātha
he himself, the man, who actually should have been disgus-
ted, is treating the whole thing as a matter of course. It
is the woman who is roused at the injustice and disgrace
heaped upon the people by the ruler.¹

Muktakesi clearly states that Śivājī is, what he is,
only due to the teachings, guidance and influence of his
mother.² In the sixth act, once more, we have proofs of the
queen Mother’s heroism and clear insight into situations.
While Śivājī is fighting at Bijapur and Shaistakhan takes
the opportunity to attack Poona, it is the skill and courage
of Jayantī Devī that saves the situation and makes it
possible for everyone to take shelter in the strong fort at
Parnaśāla.³ Again, when everything seems to be lost, and
all men seem to be devoid of life and strength, it is she who
comes forward with courage and self-confidence and de-
cides to take the law into her own hands. She is not aware
of the difficult conditions of the day. She regrets that the

1. जयंति-(सामर्यक्षोभम्) ब्राह्मणं किमयं कियाणन्यायं: । यदसंति दोषेप्रधान-
purushaśvēva kāraṇīkṣep: ।
इयंता तृत्रमयती नीतिः—
सदौप्रपि वा मुन्मेडिस्थसपन्तु न दश्येत् ।
सेववेयेश्वाणि वि रघुं न सुर्वजयांमोपण्यम् ॥

Ś. Ch. IV. 16

2. भैरवी-विविध परमपि देवं कौण्डे वेच लोकं
गतवति तु जयंतीशास्त्रे नानावृते बलसं: ।
प्रभुमत निजतेजः सूर्यावर्षयानातु
प्रजनिः पुत्रं महं सबवंति: स्वेदेषे ॥

Ś. Ch. IV. 18

3. बलदेवः—ततापि जयंतीदेव्या महत्भक्षण्या नत्वया । येन बलवीषी दिनी-
सेनाया: गुण्यपत्तनाक्रमेमांकश्चौः सहस्राश्रावं समस्तधनजन-
मादाय निरतरायमेवाश्ययदि पर्वशालाऴुण्यम् ।

Ś. Ch. VI. p. 56
Brahmins, the Kṣatriyas and the Vaiśyas have become equally weak and useless. Still, she will not lose hopes. “I shall take the lead if not the men, and put back the society in its place,” she says confidently. She is angry and ashamed that even Śivājī, who has been trained in the traditions of the great heroes of the ancient days, is failing in his duty and is behaving like a coward. When she was told that he is not a coward, but is only awaiting the opportunity, she loses all patience and says, “Let these wretched men wait for loopholes to get at the enemy; I shall in the meantime, organise a women’s army and cross over the vast ocean of these enemies.”

1. जयती—निवारितानिसामास्तपीवररिहता नित्येजसो ब्राह्मणा:
   निवारियाँ इव निविया विपघरा: कायितमा: शत्रियाँ:।
   बैद्या वित्तविविनितात्र धर्षसा शून्यास्तमागा इव
   भावः कालशाहिलुतविमावा हुनाधुना हिद्व:।।
   Ś. Ch. VI. 4

2. जयती—प्रास्तां ताबतु। तथापि अविकुले श्रोतसि निपुलो नाथविको
   नोकामिव समाजसंहती वयास्थानं स्याप्यामिः।
   प्रवद्यमेवाहं तत्र प्रभवामिः।
   Ś. Ch. VI. p. 58

3. जयती—रामायुंतप्रभुतिषिष्ठितरिवजातम्
   उक्ष्यय वालसमयात्स समसिंहां यम्।
   सौडायत्र न भुपत एव पलायनमः।
   कि भायंते सहकरोज्य समानवृत्ति:।।
   Ś. Ch. VI. 7

4. जयती—तत् कापुरुपाधिकरवात्सचनिविध्यतु वैरिवग्यम्।
   बयस्तु श्रोवाहिनं योधयामः। येन हि निहिते फिल निर्जरङ्गः—
   चण्डी चण्डं प्रचण्डं प्रववनगवजटाटोपमापाठुनती
   मुखश्रोताण्वः रणविरसि पुरा खण्डवण्डं व्यवहत।
   तदावर्ष हि योपवलमधिकवर्तं ब्राह्मं योजयती
   सौनापत्यं शुक्रीवा यवनजलनिधि सम्पतति तरामि।।
   Ś. Ch. VI. 9
whether she actually entered the battle-field or not, because we hear of Śivājī in the meantime winning back his capital. The next we hear of Jayantī Devī, is from Maheśwara, who gives news to Bhāskara, about the parents of Śivājī. Though Sāhanātha is dead, broken-hearted due to the imprisonment of Śivājī, the queen-mother has decided not to burn herself with her husband, but to live and see the victory of her son. Of course, history tells us that Sati was not compulsory among the Mahārāṣṭrians, though that was a custom which was honoured by all the North-Indian people. It is the reality that the poet is representing; but the very fact, that the poet is willing to leave the traditional ideals and show factual history, is an indication of the change of times and also the taste of the audience. Lastly, we meet with this noble queen, at the height of her glory, when she witnesses the coronation of her son, and decorates him with sandal-wood and gives him her blessings to rule as the protector and preserver of the cow and the Brahmans, like the ancient kings, Rāma, Yudhiṣṭhira and Nala.

Throughout the play, the queen-mother seems to be leading the course of action. It is her teachings, her training, her chidings and blessings, that led the young boy, Śivānanda,

1. महेश्वर: —साहनाय: परलोक गत:।
    भास्कर: —इत्य! भूत्वामी तत्र भवावं साहनाय:।
    महेश्वर: —प्रथ किमू? एकतो वर्षयानु द्वितीयतःक भुतापत्यकारावातो
    नितरामाविना व्याृिविना च चूळो जीवनं जही।
    भास्कर: —प्रथ पतिब्रता जयती—
    महेश्वर: —त नर्हुट्ता। यादवी विवशु सा यदुवंशोप्यकारावाती यवनयं
    तन्यराज्यबाण्डाप्तिकामा ब्रह्मचारिण्याते।

Ś. Ch. IX, p. 109

2. जयंतीदेवी—(चन्दनपानिको) प्राप्ताधिक!।
    ग्रोदायं श्रीरं वामवेदं नलरामनिष्ठरामव।।
    प्रणुगच्छ चिरं सव्यस्तिकारिन्ततनितिक:।।

Ś. Ch. X. 3
from victory to victory, inspite of the difficulties and defeats that he had to face at every step. Though this life-history of the Mahārāṣṭra Chief has been dramatised more than once in the present period itself, in no other work do we find the facts of history so prominently displayed about the part Šivājī's mother played in his life. Even in the three plays of the same author, women do not seem to have got this prominence as in this character particularly. Here, for the first time, a woman is portrayed with all the qualities required to stem the tide of deterioration that was overwhelming the society. Šrī Sidhāntavāgīśa has done a great service to the society and the humanity as a whole, in thus depicting women in their true perspective. Kalyāṇi in the Vangīyapratāpam and Kamalā in the Mewārapratāpam, are only showing the first sparks of the torch, namely the real Indian womanhood which flames out in the character of Jayantī Devī, in his last play. Those two are courageous, self-confident and also careful to keep their purity at any cost. But, in this third ideal, we have the real Šakti, the power that is capable of leading mankind to eternal victory. For, when the eventful play is finished, the climax of victory attained, and Šivananda is crowned as the all-powerful king, we are able to see a divine image, the protecting and saving deity, a calm cool, and dignified mother, with eyes full of happy tears at the victory of her son, standing in the shade far behind and looking into the distant future, uttering a blessing to posterity. This portrait of the mother is a special gift to India as a whole and particularly to the Indian womanhood, from the revered preceptor.

The wife of Šivājī is seen only in the last act where she is participating as the Ardhangīṇī—the better-half—of the king. The other female characters are just brought in to continue the course of action; and they do not show any special characteristics. The wife of Maheśvara portrays the typical Brahmin wife who is concerned only with her house-
hold affairs and nothing else in this world. Muktakesī is a mendicant woman, a real friend and helper of Jayantī Devī, and one who helps not only her friend but the audience also, to understand things in their proper perspective. She is a contrast to many mendicant women, we have hitherto met in the Sanskrit dramatic arena. Of course, there is some resemblance between this Bhairavi and the Bhairavi whom we saw at the court of Mānasimha as the companion and protector of Vanalatā. But, Muktakesī here is a real mendicant who combines in herself learning and worldly wisdom for the sake of the good of humanity. The element of personal interest, the Parivrājikā shows in the Malavikāgni-mitra, seems to have taken a wide latitude now, as shown in this Bhairavi, who, though the friend of the queen, even as the former, is still making all her efforts towards the welfare of not one individual, but of the nation as a whole. There is much in common between the two, the Parivrājikā portrayed by Kālidāsa hundreds of years before and the Bhairavi painted by Śrī Sidhāntavāgīśa in the present era.

All the historical plays that we dealt with hitherto, concern themselves with the incidents of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Those were troublous times, when constant feuds between Kṣatriya princes and Muslim kings were going on. Most of the incidents shown in the plays are not in any way fictitious. But, the Sanskrit plays written during those times, do not tell us about these heroic women who considered their honour more valuable than their lives and preferred to die honourably than live in shame. It is very significant that these stories were never taken as themes for plays, as we have already noticed. On the other hand, the plays written then, were only apologies to real dramas and the themes were either allegorical or drawn from the remote past of the Paurāṇika days. The general trend of those plays clearly shows the deterioration of women in all walks of life. On the other hand, the women, taken from
those days, but portrayed in the twentieth century, show a very different state of affairs. The queen, the courtesan, the servant and sage, all show a noble height of character and conduct, that any nation can feel proud of.

This discrepancy in facts and presentation, calls for an explanation. We do not have to go far to see the cause. The heroism, courage, self-respect and self-sacrificing spirit of the Rajput women were bywords, even in the mediaeval days. Still, neither those women nor their stories were brought forward and made immortal by the dramatists of the day. Even the characters such as Draupadi, Damayanti and Sāvitrī were either ignored or shown as lifeless, stereotyped and love-stricken. The idea of any goodness in women had become something impossible in those days and the poets did not care to bring before the prejudiced audience anything that would offend their convictions. After Jayadeva, the plays seem to have deteriorated to mere toys meant to please the ordinary child-like minds of the general public. But, the latter half of the 18th century, showed a fast changing outlook on life as we have already seen. The twentieth century has seen many changes in the life of the people in general. One of the most important change is the awakening among the women. The battle for freedom in full swing forced the women also to the fore-front and gave them the much needed inspiration and initiative. "Man and woman are equal in status, but, not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another; each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived; and therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that any thing that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both."1 These words of Mahātmā Gándhi seem to have been understood by the nation, and that led to a revival in the position of women. The realisation of the power of women as strength, mental

and spiritual, is what is seen in these plays that we have studied. Apart from the characters from the Purāṇas who are depicted in quite a different style in the modern plays, new types of plays, with more genuine characters are presented now. This, of course, is the reflection of the change in times and the mentality of the people in general. We see that more and more such plays are coming to be written and staged not only in Sanskrit, but in all the modern Indian languages also, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Another interesting historical play written during this period is a farce called Canda-Tandava, based on some facts of the last World War. The author says in his foreword, "This little work represents an imaginary picture of horrors sketched on the basis of the information regarding the last World War. It also portrays the reverse side of the picture with reference to India which is thought to be an abode of peace."1

It is a play of serio-comic nature, and was performed at the historic yajña that was conducted in Delhi, in 1944. This play consists of two acts. The first act is led by a Russian leader, and all the Western Powers are shown as fighting with each other. Greed and anger personified are indicated as the source of this violent dance of the various nations. Towards the end of the first act, these evil personalities are shown as approaching India. The second act shows the approach of Himśā, the beloved of the three, namely Krodha, Lobha and Pāpa-Puruṣa as going on to Bhārata, but she is frightened of Ahimśā, who is ruling there.2 The others drag her on. Then a man carrying things for worship enters the scene, and is attacked by the three evil personalities. Faith incarnate enters in time and at his very appearance,

2. मा खलु, मा खलु, भ्रह्मसादेवीलालस्यानं खलु भरतम्। यदि सा हस्यते?
   Ch. Ta. II. p. 16
the evil personifications disappear and the man goes forward to join the yajña.

This play is more or less in the strain of the allegorical plays of the earlier centuries. The abstract qualities are brought forward, such as anger, greed, violence, etc., and then the historical facts also are presented as cause and effect in a nut-shell. This can be taken as a historical play in so far as that it depicts some incidents of the last World War at random. The women characters are only Himsa and Ahimsa, both abstract qualities personified.

Bharata-Vijayam and Gandhi-Vijayam are two other most modern Sanskrit plays based on history, though they are actually very topical, in so far that they both are dramatising contemporary history, almost true to the letter. Mathura Prasad Dikshit, whose social plays and two religious plays, we have already studied, is the author of these two also. They deal with the incidents connected with the enslavement and independence of India. In the first play, the happenings of the one hundred and fifty years of British rule over India, are dramatised, and it ends with the achievement of Independence. The second is a play in two acts, tracing the career of Mahātmā Gāndhī. The first act deals with the incidents in South Africa, and the second, those in India, up till the Independence. As both these are dealing with contemporary history, there is very little scope for the play of imagination and poetic licence. The audience will be actually experiencing once more, the same things, that many of them had undergone on various occasions. The pictures of those incidents which are very near to our hearts are pictured in such forceful words, that we seem to be living in those days once again. One peculiarity in the Bhārata-vijayam is that most of the characters are representative in nature, and so do not serve us for any critical study of personalities.

Bhāratamātā, her friend, and the Rani of Jhansi are
the only female characters presented. Mother India, in her simplicity, trustfulness, love and compassion, seems to be a personification of the image described in the *Ananda-Maṭham* of the great Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra. Later on, when the real character of the British traders, who changed colours and became rulers, is revealed, we get a glimpse of the other aspect of Mother India, the ‘Simhavāhini’. The exalting picture of the Mother is painted in such a way, that comments become impossible. It is the Divine Mother that is depicted and that completes, all that could be said. The friend of the Mother is there only as an eye-witness to all happenings. The Rani of Jhansi also is only a photo from real life as history shows her.

In *Gāndhivijayam* too, the only female characters are, Mother India, her friend Saraswati and Kasturabā, the wife of Mahātma Gāndhi. So, only general comments are possible in connection with this play. One feature noticeable in these two plays is the Prākṛt used. In the dramas of olden days, women, menials, children, and people of lower status were made to speak Prākṛt. The principle, suggested by that practice seems to have been accepted by this author. But, at the same time he adjusts the idea to his own purpose. The Prākṛt used in the first play, is very much akin to Gujarati and Marathi languages. In the second one, he has reduced it to simple Hindi alone. Perhaps, the author accepted this method, in order to make it more realistic and suitable to the times. Thus we have come to the last available historical plays of this era.

Coming to the third set of plays, according to our division, we find that the language, the topic and the treatment take us much nearer to the everyday-life of the common man. We are no more in the classical age or in the

1. चुम्बन्दयोज्योत्स्नामपुनरंकित्यायामिनीः पुलक्कुमुखुमतरंमदवस्वीद्विनीः।
   सुहासिनी सुमृगुरभाविणी शुभद्रा वरदा मातर ॥—बद्रि मातरम्।

    Anadamaṇṭham
atmosphere of the legendary world. Quite a number of plays have come into existence in the Sanskrit language itself. We are not able to make an exhaustive study of all these, because all are not yet available in print. Many of those that are printed, are available only in magazines.

Quite a number of plays were written and published by the late Kṣamā Rao. Most of them are based upon topics touching the problems concerning women in the modern days. Bālavidihavā, is one of these. It is a play in three scenes, describing the plight of a girl who was married to an old man when she was a child of seven and consequently became a widow in the same tender age and is doomed to untold misery for the rest of her life. All her plays deal with the evils in society, such as child-marriage, dowry-system and other evils which persist in society to a large extent, even to this day.

All these plays depict the terrible conditions in which Indian women are living and the unbearable experiences they have to undergo in peculiar circumstances. The plays bring forth quite clearly, how the laws which were meant for protection, have turned to be the most destructive weapons for the women. Fortunately for us, this is a dark past, over which a curtain can be easily drawn, though they have their own lessons to teach to posterity. These plays, though short, are still landmarks in the history of the long and strenuous journey of the Indian womanhood, from the most ancient, ennobling days, through the down hill march, to the next ascent which has just begun.

Viśvamohanam is a play written by Tādpatrikara, who has adapted the first part of the famous play of the German author Goethe, namely De Faust. Goethe's Faust is based on the legend of one Dr. Faust who is believed to have been a historical person in the middle ages. He once made a contract with the devil who helped him to get all worldly pleasures, but after the given time was over, claimed him as his victim. He is supposed to have died a broken-hearted
man in the year 1540. Goethe wrote his drama in two parts and the first part formed the basis for the Sanskrit play under study. It is a love episode in which Faust, the scholar, falls in love with Margaret. It is a tragedy. The main characters in this love-story—Faust, Margaret, Martha, Valentine, and the spirit Mephistophelis—are replaced by Prabhākara, Harinī, Rādhā, Tāraka and Mohana respectively. Though the German play served as the basis for this Sanskrit one, there is a vast difference between the treatment of the plots and the atmosphere in both.

The Sanskrit play is not a tragedy as its original. Prabhākara, a great scholar and a pure soul, is led into temptation by Mohana, an ordinary evil man. Harinī is also led into the wrong path by the influence of Rādhā, an old courtesan, who is working at the instigation of Mohana. When finally this undesirable intimacy leads them into trouble, Prabhākara leaves her to her fate and disappears. When both outlive the storm and tempest of passions, they turn into good and God-fearing souls. Of course, Harinī tries to commit suicide when she finds herself deserted and disgraced, but, is saved from the tank by a disciple of saint Viveka. Prabhākara also, repentant, is flying from places and people, to no avail, and finally gets rest in the hermitage of Viveka as chance would have it. After coming to recognise each other here, under the guidance of Viveka, every thing ends well.

Mohana is really the personification of illusion. He, along with Rādhā, who was playing as a puppet in his hands, goes to the abode of Yama, to live there for some time, before resuming their work of havoc once more on the Earth. Thus ends the play.

Harinī, the heroine, her old mother and Rādhā are the three female characters in this play. Harinī is a good and simple girl. She knows her real position, and is very careful not to cross the limits of propriety. Even when persuaded
by Prabhākara, who is highly educated and cultured, she firmly answers that she is not an equal match for him, and so she cannot be a party to do anything wrong.¹ Neither is she prepared to overstep the respect and obedience due to her elders. Actually, she goes away. It is because of the constant and clever efforts of Rādhā at the instigation of Mohana, that she, in her simplicity, falls a victim to temptation. But, she being innately good, the fall could not be eternal. The saint Viveka comes to her help.

The life of Harini is a good example for the maxim that no good person can come to a bad end. Even if such a person falls into the clutches of temptation and illusion, it cannot last long. Mohana himself expounds the ways of the world thus—“In this world, everyone enjoys the result of his or her own actions, but blames me for everything.”²

The mother of Harini is a poor and ignorant woman who has a deep love for her children and tries her level best to keep them in the right path. She has implicit faith in all, and would not doubt anything or anybody; so much so, that even the terribly deceptive Rādhā is trustworthy in her eyes. It is this ignorance of the old woman, that gives a loophole for the illusion to work, which along with the youthful desires of Harini, paves the way for the downfall of the latter. The result is that the poor woman herself dies broken-hearted at the disgraceful disappearance of her beloved daughter.

Rādhā, the personification of temptation, is in her full strength working for the downfall of her trusting friend,

¹ हृरिणी—सम्म न वित्रं न कुलं न वा श्रृंगं यवावष्यः प्रेम कर्म मथेतो। समेतु मेत्री विषमेतु नो कदाच्यानितिक्षः त्वतीमुक्त्वर हि ने।।
   V. Mo. III. p. 17

² मोहन: —मथयंकेतुःकर्माक्तुः सुकासुकामुखुभवति जनासु मामेतु सर्वस्य कार्यं मल्ला यथा कामं प्रार्थयिति दृष्यति स।।
   V. Mo. p. 34
Harini. Though she is shown here as the personification of an abstract quality, there is no lack of such women in society, and it is a known fact that the story of Harini and Radha is no rare incident in the modern society. In the present days, when the girls are not fully educated, they are victims to the evils of little knowledge. Their lack of correct understanding and right perception, and also their lack of trust in their own elders and well-wishers, lead them into many pitfalls, which their inexperienced eyes are not able to see before hand. The simple and trusting ones are always led easily by the clever, tempting, glamorous society women, who make it a point to enjoy life as much as they can, and like the fox who cuts his tail, wish to cause the fall of the innocent ones also. Our poet here, is actually holding up the evils of society, which are spreading rapidly due to the western influence, though completely alien to our soil, in order to sound a warning note to those who would care to listen. "As you sow, so you reap", is the maxim that he wishes to nail down into the growing hearts of the young generation through the examples of Prabhakara and Harini. Harini's life and experience can be examples to the present society, specially to the women who are misled unknowingly or deliberately as the case may be. The author does not leave anything for conjecture. He clearly makes the statement to support the saying, "Character is destiny." He says through Yama, "The one who does not fall a victim to either temptation or desire, alone is to be congratulated." Discretion is the final refuge for all, man or woman, learned or ignorant.

This play can be easily taken to be an allegorical one, but, it is not so. Though abstract qualities such as Moha

1. यमः —कलानाः बलत्वं सतां चापि सतवं दरीद्रतये वेन लोके प्रभृतम् ।
रुक्मान्यामामाकुष्टे चेता: स्वतन्त्रो निजानन्दशाङ्कि लभेतैव धनयः ॥
V. Ma. VII. p. 35
and *Lobha* are personified, it reflects many social truths. The dialogues throw light on true social pictures, showing clearly what is happening in society during this period of social, political and religious upheaval.

*Parivartanam* by Kapiladeva Dvivedi, is another modern play in which the evils of society are shown up and also some remedies suggested. The intention of the author is clearly stated at the very outset by the Sûtradâra, who says, "We have to act the play called *Parivartanam* which reflects the times." śântâ and Snehalatâ are the only female characters. śântâ is the wife and Snehalatâ is the daughter of the man Šânkara. It mirrors the plight of a father who has a daughter to be given in marriage and who is not wealthy enough to pay the bridegroom, even in these so called civilized days. The miseries caused by the dowry-system are clearly shown here.

Snehalatâ is a good looking and well-educated girl, with all good qualities. She is well trained in the household duties also. Still, the father has to sell his house to pay the young man, who will marry his daughter only if a few thousands are given to him to buy a car. The worst part of the matter is that the boy himself is putting forward the condition, though of course the father is standing by. When Šânkara's friend Mâdhavya asks, "What right have you to demand money from the bride's father, when your own father cannot afford it?" the so-called educated young man shamelessly says, "It is a condition, even as the condition put forward by Janaka to break the bow."

The ridiculousness of the whole situation is brought out by the author, who makes the boy talk of conditions for

1. समयतिविवि परिवर्तनेन नाम नाटकमभिनेतवथः ।

2. नास्ति कश्चन भ्राचिकारः । किन्तु पण एप मम यथा जनकस्य पणः चनुभः ॥
> Pa. Va. I. p. 8
his own marriage and compare it with the condition put forward by the great King Janaka for the marriage of his daughter. There, the man had to prove his worth, while here the girl’s father has to prove his wealth. The condition of society, even at a time when education and culture is supposed to be in the ascendance, in which the value of the girl is measured by her father’s wealth, is pictured in all its monstrosity here. Things seem to have come to that stage, when wealth and wealth alone could matter anywhere and under all circumstances. The most shocking fact is that those who do these things do it in the name of freedom. When the father is asked by Madhavya, what kind of marriage this was, he answers, “It is the time of freedom.”! Needless to say that this is a very sad commentary on the modern youth in general, because, the truth, as we know, is often stranger than fiction.

The father, forced by circumstances, sells his house and completes the marriage ceremony. Now, comes another phase of the modern society; the honesty of the officers who are supposed to be the public servants. A slight change in the sale-deed effected by the writer for the sake of the bribe that he got, makes the wife of Šaṅkara a destitute, while Šaṅkara himself is away in search of better fortune. When he comes back and finds out what had happened, nothing can be done to redress his grievance, because, there was no witness or proofs to show that Šaṅkara was cheated by the Šreṣṭhi. Due to lack of proof, he cannot get justice. Here, the author comes out with his suggestion of bringing back the Panchayat. When everything seems to be lost, there comes a call from the heavens that the evils that India had been suffering for thousands of years, have to be removed. Accordingly, the President

1. Madhavya: —यज्ञदत्त ! छट्टी विवाहः मनुष्य निदिष्टः। कौम्य विवाहस्ते पुनर्या गठ्यवीम् ग्रस्तायम्:। किमं बध्येयं: मुद्राविवाहः।।

यज्ञदत्त: —पुरुषमेव मयोदत्तं स्वतन्त्रतासमय एवः।। Pa. Va. I. p. 8
announces the abolishment of the existing courts and re-establishment of the Panchayats, where Śaṅkara gets justice in full. The wise head Panch goes to the root of the case, and finds that the Śreṣṭhi had bribed the writer to change Rahita into Sahita and thus taken away even the yard and well that were left out in the sale of the house. It is this change in the method of giving justice, that gave the play its name.

Though a small play, the whole story has a natural appeal, because it is dealing with true and topical problems that worry the common man. It brings before us the result of dowry-system which originally was meant to be a security measure for the woman. It has now become a scourge for the girl and her father. Another point, the author makes clear, is the heartlessness of the money-lender, who is swooping as an eagle to take the fullest advantage of a man who, unfortunately, is forced to borrow from him. The final catastrophe is avoided only by the timely interference of the Father of the Nation, through the words from the air, which gives a touch of superhuman element towards the end of the play. Does the poet mean to show that God and God alone can save the misled people? If so, one has to admit, that he is more than successful in his attempts. But, one cannot help feeling that it would have been better, if the change in the administration of justice was effected in a more natural way. Though, the play ends well, we are left with a feeling of sorrow and depression at the plight of the better-half of the world inspite of the achievements in the modern era. This play can well be taken as an attempt to bring home to the youth, who are still closing their eyes, the reality of the situation specially, that of women.

Apart from the above mentioned plays, there are smaller ones—one-act plays, dialogues and such others in Sanskrit. Radio-plays, and adaptations of bigger plays also are many which have come into existence to suit the times.
As everybody knows, this is the atomic age, and everyone seems to be wanting every thing to be atomic, that is to say, every one wants every thing to be done in atomic haste with atomic power and perhaps in atomic shape also. All seem to be flying forward with neck-breaking hurry to some unknown destination. The events some times, seem to remind one of the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavadgita, where all beings are seen going post-haste to enter into the mouth of the Lord in the Visvarupa.1 In this flight, nobody seems to have time enough to stop and think for a moment. So, even art and literature have to be flying in order to cope with the madly flying world. The short stories, short poems, sonnets and short plays are all proofs of such demands in all places and all languages. It is gratifying to see that the Sanskrit authors have risen to the occasion, as could be seen from the Radio-play called Kr̥ṣakānam Nagpāsa, the farce called Vidhīviparyāsa, and the collection of Thirteen dialogues and other works.

The Vidhīviparyāsa, a social play by Śrī Jivannyaya Tirtha Bhattācārya, is a farce in which the Hindu Code Bill is held up to ridicule. The author says in his preface, “The present Hindu Code Bill is an abuse of Hindu ideology and is divorced from the natural course of Hindu culture and civilization, which always aim at purity of blood and formation of man in the real sense of the term. If the so-called progress or modernism is dragged further, what absurd and ridiculous state of things would appear in the eye of poetic imagination has been depicted in this farce.”2

The story is imaginary and deals with the changing of sex by operation and also the fight for equality between man

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1. यथा प्रदीप्तं ज्वलनं पतंगः: विशाल्निन् नाशाय समुद्रेवागः |
   तर्पैव नाशाय विशाल्नि लोकास्तवापि वर्षाशानि समुद्रेवागः: II

Bh. G. XI. 29

2. विचिरिपर्यासम् I  Preface, p. 2
and woman. The main woman character is Jambalajini Rambab Saraswati, a prominent social worker who propagates the changing of woman to man. Many ridiculous situations are conceived and the height of nonsense is pictured, resulting in impossible conditions. The play is meant to show that man and woman have their own respective places in society, and it is ridiculous and disastrous to try to go against nature. Some questions raised here are, why should woman conceive children? Why not man do it? Further, why should either take this responsibility? Why not science invent some other means to create babies? A suggestion is given that all the women should join together and refuse to conceive children. Then the Creator will have to find some way to continue the universe going.\(^1\) Another suggestion is to make eunuchs fertile. With the successful attempt for this, the play comes to an end.

As a farce, it is very interesting. Putting up a show of foolish revelry, the author is trying to inject some wisdom into the body of the fast deteriorating society which is really suffering from infection from the undigested western ideas that had been blindly swallowed. The funny situations visualized by the author, are eye-openers to the chaotic conditions that are existent in the present age. True, this cannot be helped in a transition period, but at the same time, such timely warnings, as those sounded in this play and also the one that we studied just before, are extremely useful as guides and helpers to those who are groping in the dark and believe themselves to be fully in the daylight.

The Krṣakāṇāṃ Nāgappāśa is another social play dealing with the miseries of the Zamindari system and the

\[1. \text{विनोदमुद्र:—कि सुष्टिरक्षायां प्रतिमुर्तियों कारीशाति: ? नारीशान्तु भवतु} \]
\[\text{ततो मुक्ति}; \text{तसामैकमश्वेत सन्नवेत्य} \text{हुते गमरूर्ये विघतुरासनं} \]
\[\text{लयितिः। विधिनेव सुष्टिलोकसंयुच विज्ञानविद्यां मनसि किमपि कौशल} \]
\[\text{प्रेयविष्यते।} \]  
\[\text{Vi. Vi. p. 14} \]
relief the farmers got by the abolition of the same.

This is the story of Rāmū Chaudhari, a farmer. Due to the natural and climatic conditions beyond human control the crops were ruined and the farmers lost all they had. But, the servants of the landlord demanded the usual taxes and other dues. The typical example of this general fate is shown in the experiences of Rāmū Chaudhari who is rendered homeless and penniless. His only son dies of starvation. The farmers join together and go to Mahātmā Gandhī to tell him their plight. Their grievances are redressed by the skilful management of the Home Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel, and all ends well. This has only one female character, the wife of Rāmū Chaudhari and even she plays no important part in the development of the plot. Lālmanī is the wife of the leading character of the play and the mother of Hariā who dies of starvation. The few sentences that she speaks at the very beginning of the play, when she hears about the miseries they have to face, are typical of the Indian woman in her natural simplicity. She says, “What has to be, shall be. No misery is lessened by worrying about it. So, get up, and come. Wash your hands and feet and take a little butter-milk.” That is her philosophy. Whether literate or illiterate, rich or poor, this attitude of reconciliation to fate and implicit faith in God had been the guiding star for the real Indian woman, all through the ages, through thick and thin, weal or woe. Lālmanī, though seen only for a few seconds, shows herself to be the one support of her husband in the worst of times.

All times—at the height of her glory in the Vedic times, down through the epic ages, till the last phase of the worst period, in the 17th and 18th centuries, woman has been

1. लालमणी—यथृ किष्टिवं ललाटपद्धे लिखितमिति तत्तु महाध्ययायेव।
   चिल्लया हुःख स्नायूर भविष्यति नाम। चलु उत्सहनु।
   हस्तपार्द्ध प्रकाशम् हुम्भिलितां तस्मिन् गलादयः प्रवतार्कसः।

Kr. N. P. I. p. 2
clinging on to the same philosophy of life. She could take the ups and downs of life with the same contentment and fill the life of not only her man, but the whole nation with hope in despair, and teach sacrifice in egoism. But, ever since she came into contact with the West, and saw individualism in full play with the glamour of the materialistic pleasures, a change began to set in. The result, as we experience, is not very encouraging.

The natural phenomena of mother-hood gives the woman the top-most position in the social ladder, whether she or anybody else wants it or not. Hence, it is obvious that by necessity, woman has to be above all petty feelings, lower emotions and demeaning actions. The height of self-sacrifice, unfailing love, constant alertness to give help when needed, a firm belief in the might of right and unflinching courage of her convictions are the qualities that are indispensible in the woman who is the mother of the future nation. The plays we studied hitherto, have shown us that inspite of adverse circumstances, Indian woman was able to hold her own till late in the present century. Social history with all its woeful tales about woman, still would corroborate the above conclusion. But, today, when woman thinks that she is getting better treatment and is coming back to her own, the situation seems to be a bit disturbing. The proof to support this statement can perhaps be found in the book, Samvadamala, written by Shri Ratna Pārīkhi.

The Samvadamala is a collection of thirteen dialogues in Sanskrit. These cannot be counted as plays, though they can go on the stage as interesting items of dramatic representations for fun. There are some dramatic situations occuring in a few of these conversations. As is stated in the blessings by Śri Hazari Prasad Dvivedi, it is very useful for the students to practice Sanskrit conversation.¹ These

¹ संस्कृत, विचारियों के वार्तालाप के लिए तो बहुत उपयोगी है।

Sa. M. Intro.
dialogues are interesting as well as instructive. They are all humorous and represent some side of the everyday life of the people in general. The very first dialogue is a page from the daily life of Jayadeva and Padmāvatī, a couple belonging to the Indian middle class. The ordinary happenings in life such as buying bread and butter, reading the newspaper, going to the office, and listening to the Radio, are represented in this. Reading through the conversations, one seems to be going through or witnessing the daily routine of life only. Apart from the fact that many new Sanskrit equivalents to English words in daily use are available in these,\(^1\) we get pictures of many interesting little episodes also. The way in which Jayadeva convinces his wife Padmāvatī that the song from the *Gitagovinda* of the ancient poet Jayadeva is written by himself\(^2\) is interesting. Though Padmāvatī is supposed to be an educated girl, and has heard about Manu in her own way, she still does not know anything about Jayadeva kavi. Her husband, taking advantage of her ignorance, is making capital out of it.

The second dialogue is the picture of another type of family-life, where the husband is mad after music while the wife's interest is only in the kitchen. She is concerned only with the daily routine, and takes pride in her skill in household matters. It is still an example of the happy life resulting from mutual adjustments. There are a few others also, which represent the happenings in the ordinary modern Indian families, thus proving that the true portraits are much more interesting than imaginary ones. But, in the same collection, there are some other dialogues which may or may not be true to life, but definitely unsuitable to be put into the

\(^1\) प्रज्ञारशकटी—ग्रंथी ठॉरे। चीनमृदुलिका—चीनी तस्तरी। कामसुखिका कथायः—चाय। कथायथानी—चायदानी। पुरोहिता—पावरोटी। करपतिता—कटे इत्यादेः।

\(^2\) Sa. M. I. p. 8

hands of the students as the author desires to do. For example, the twelfth and thirteenth dialogues would have been better avoided than included in this collection, which would certainly find its way into the hands of adolescent youngsters. It is true, facts have to be faced and evils can be avoided only by exposing them. But, the depiction of such incidents on the stage, definitely have two sides, and one has to remember that self-indulgence is more alluring and easy than self-control. The character of Mandāramālā as portrayed in the last dialogue finds no justification except as a picture of happenings in the present society which attracted the author adversely. The part Samavartikā, the wife, plays in encouraging this undesirable love, between her husband and another married woman, the music teacher of her own children, is unnatural, to say the least.

At a time when the country is struggling to steer ahead, while purity of heart and firmness of character are the utmost necessities to lead it on to its destiny, and when character and behaviour of women are at stake due to the peculiar conditions of our society, all literary and artistic attempts should be beyond the possibility of criticism or shadow of corruption. One has always to remember that these have greater appeal to the hearts of people in general. Sanskrit literature, which has a firm hold on the hearts of all Indians, even those who do not have much knowledge of the language, cannot afford to stoop to depict the wrong side of life however much that may be the reflection of the reality. This language has its higher status and noble position that the authors can never be too careful about what they give to the people. They have a greater responsibility as the custodians of the ancient culture, and to represent the baser side of woman does not behave well on their part. The dire need of the day being women, pure, firm and self-controlled as Sītā, Damayantī and Draupadī, it does not become the Sanskrit dramatists to depict such incidents even with the idea
of holding them up to ridicule.

There are a few dialogues in the same collection which represent the conditions of the government-offices, exposing the many shortcomings, and others that invite readers to share the many humorous and tragi-comic situations arising in the ordinary course of events. But as women characters do not find a place here, these dialogues do not call for much of our attention.

Thus, we have come to the last Sanskrit play known to us. But attempts on this side are continuing. Considering the influence of Sanskrit language and literature on the various modern Indian languages, it may not be out of place here if we try to have a bird’s eye view of that influence, if any, on the female characters in dramas written in those languages.
CHAPTER VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF SANSKRIT DRAMAS OVER THE WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMAS OF THE MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES

In the course of our study hitherto, we have seen that from the beginning the women were playing a losing game and it was really the story of the slow but steady deterioration in their condition that has been portrayed, bit by bit, in almost all the dramas up till the modern age—the latter half of the nineteenth century, to be precise. This deterioration has been more marked from the time of Bhavabhūti, and by the time of Jayadeva, the whole arena seems to have become stagnant. From about this time, a kind of lifelessness seems to have set in.

The plays themselves seem to have deteriorated into mere toys to please childish minds, and they ceased to attract much attention, as stage achievements. Allegorical and devotional dramas seem to have become the fashion of the day, and in those, the women characters are as lifeless as any other. Thus, we come down to the latter half of the nineteenth century. And here, we have noticed a change in the depiction of characters. Once more the value of women as the companion and helper seems to have been felt by the people. The works of Yājñika, Kālipāda Tarkācārya, Pāncānana Tarkaratnācārya and others began to bring up the individuality of women to the forefront. The new wave of awakening, in the social and political field that engulfed the length and breadth of India, gave a fresh and redeeming
outlook on life for the poets. We have seen how this affected the depiction of women characters in the Sanskrit plays written during this period. Samyogita of the Samyogita-Parinaya, the queen and her friend Subala in Amaraman-galam, are refreshing deviations from the old portrayals of women as the objects of sensual pleasures or decorated puppets who are put in the show-case to be admired, flattered and forgotten. These later characters seem to have life in them, which radiates light and life into the characters surrounding them also. Once again, we seem to be breathing fresh air which gives life and strength to humanity.

As we have already noticed, from the latter half of the eighteenth century, the outlook of life was fast changing. This being recent history, the social, religious and political condition of the people is well-known to us. The advent of foreigners into the country, the western education and the close contact with the western literature, began to show the way of new possibilities for Indian writers. Since Sanskrit had ceased to be the spoken language, the various modern Indian languages were fast developing. At the same time, the re-discovery of Sanskrit language and literature by the western scholars and the recognition of its superiority by them, opened another chapter in the history of Sanskrit dramas also. As a result, many Sanskrit plays depicting contemporary life and incidents came to be written, some of which we have already studied. But, it was not possible to satisfy the demand of the ordinary level of people by these, for the very fact that Sanskrit ceased to be understood by the people in general. The various dialects were fast developing into full-fledged languages, throughout the length and breadth of the country, and so also was their literature. In this development Sanskrit played an important part. Since the detailed examination of the dramas in the various Indian languages, does not lie within the scope of our study here, the intention is only to have a bird's eye view of some
languages as far as possible. Since the north and south of India have a few differences to show, it is proposed here to take up Malayalam, one of the four main south Indian languages, and Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati and Marathi, the four of the main north-Indian languages, which have been very greatly influenced by the Sanskrit literature as a whole.

Kerala, the small province in the south-west corner of India, whose language is Malayalam, has been the seat of Sanskrit learning from very early days. There was a time in the history of the Malayalam literature when Sanskrit formed the life, flesh and blood and even its bones. The more Sanskritised his works were the better the poet was considered, even though the ordinary spoken language had not anything much to do with Sanskrit. Although the drama, as it is, came into existence in Malayalam only in the nineteenth century, the dramatic art was there in the various theatrical performances which were prevalent in Kerala in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. The Paṭhakam, Cākyār Kūttu, and the Kathakali are such performances which show the influence of Sanskrit dramas over them to a very great extent. The Paṭhakam and Kūttu are very much similar to the epic recitations of the earliest days, and these were always attached to the temples. As the Sūta is the person who is responsible for narrating the story of the epics to the sages who are anxious to hear, the particular community called the Cākyārs were responsible for these epic recitations in the Kerala temples. While the Paṭhakam was more or less in the form of mono acting, with recitation and explanation done by the Cākyār alone, the Kūttu and Kuṭiyāttam which are the more interesting varieties of the theatricals existent at that time, allowed the entrance of two more characters—one a female, and the other, the Vidūṣaka, a male. The main elements of the dramatic art, as described in the Naṭyāsāstra namely, song, dance, conversation and mimicry are all present in these perfor-
manances. The more interesting point to note here is that many of the Sanskrit dramas, such as Abhisekanataka, Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Āscaryacūdamani and others were taken up to be used for such performances by the Cakyaars.

While discussing the authenticity of the thirteen plays attributed to Bhāsa, we have already noticed that, the six plays based on the story of the Mahābhārata looked more like different scenes separated from a whole, and adjusted with a beginning and an end to suit the requirements of a shorter period. The practice of taking up one play and extending it into many days, act by act, is a practice which is existent up to this day, in Kerala, where the Kūtiyāttam is still performed. And, for this purpose, only Sanskrit dramas were used. Even later on, when people began to be partial to the vernacular, it is the translations of those very dramas that came to be acted. Thus we see that the influence of the Sanskrit drama as a whole over these kinds of performances can never be over estimated. At the same time, one has to remember, it is the language and not so much the characterisation or the development of the story that was influenced. This is so with the female characters because, the main personages on the stage used to be only the hero and his friend, and only very seldom, the occasion for the heroine to be present arose. Thus, in the earlier days, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, the dramas as such did not find a place in the Malayalam literature.

But, due to the new contacts with the foreign countries, even as all other Indian languages, Malayalam also had its own development on the literary side. For the first time, in the history of this literature, in the nineteenth century, a full fledged Sanskrit drama was translated into Malayalam and that was Kālidāsa’s Abhijñānaśākuntalam. After this, one by one, all the famous Sanskrit plays were translated into Malayalam. On the model of these works original plays also began to be written. The nearest contact to the Tamil
literature had also its influence on the Malayalam theatre. Coming into existence of musical dramas in the Tamil style was the result. But, all these remained only as literary riches and could not have any other interest for society in general. The growing contact with the English language and literature, widened the outlook of the authors and their imagination soared high. They saw the possibilities of the realistic pictures depicting the contemporary life and society in comparison with the depiction of the characters who belonged to the far off past. So, when the talents developed and originality began to have its full play, the plays that came into existence in the Malayalam literature were far different from the earlier ones which actually led the way to the new era.

Though in the beginning Malayalam had drawn on Sanskrit and Tamil dramas for translation and imitation, it grew out of their control very soon and cut out a new path for its own progress. Neither the artificial characterization nor the mixed-up prose, verse and musical conversations seemed to be in place, where the natural course of events expressed by simple, apt and significant expressions and actions should hold the interest and attention of the audience. So, these elements, obviously superfluous as they were, were easily left behind, and prose dramas—Gadya Natakas—came to be the order of the day.

The vast differences between the ideas and ideals that ruled the people of Kerala and those swaying over the rest of India, must have been the main reason for this obvious difference. The first original play written in Malayalam had the fast changing conditions of the society as its theme. The matriarchal system, with all its good and evil points as existed in Kerala, had given a peculiar position to women there, though they were not completely untouched by the prevailing conditions in the other parts of the country. The women there, except the Nambudiri caste, had never known
seclusion or undue restrictions, though the reasonable social laws and rules were observed. Hence, in the new era, when English education and western ideas began to have their undue and undesirable influences on the people in general, the women also fell open preys to them. This, and the other changing conditions of the society gave inspiration to many young writers who found a new scope in the newly found arena of dramas. These plays, written with a particular purpose by the authors had the terribly pathetic truths of life pictured in them. These writers did not cater to the pleasure-seeking patrons, as their fore-runners did, but were bent upon exposing the evils of society, that were eating up its body and soul incessantly. The rules and regulations of Dramaturgy could not control them, nor did they follow any trodden path. Realism and natural character development with the essential emotional appeal, guided these authors. The women characters held their ground in good and evil equally. Thus, the female characters as found in the Sanskrit plays, seem to have had actually no influence on those depicted in the modern Malayalam plays, who are mostly drawn from the contemporary realistic life. The environments, manners and customs, ideas and ideals, being so much different, these dramas, though giving instruction combined with enjoyment, while representing the contemporary life, some times even in its naked reality, fulfils the requirements of the Fifth Veda as described by Bharata in his Nāṭyaśāstra. But, they are very different from the Rūpakas and Uparūpakas, we have studied on the Sanskrit stage. It is specially to be noticed here, that the difference in the depiction of the female characters in these dramas is very marked. We find in these plays no influence whatever of the women characters, we have hitherto studied in the various Sanskrit plays from the earliest times up to this day.

But, this same thing cannot be said about the dramas
written in the languages belonging to the north of the Vindhyas. It is a well-known fact that the general development on the social, political and religious sides has been almost simultaneous in the various provinces of India, in spite of the geographical and consequently natural differences of the people and their character. The advent of the Western powers into our country, and the contact with their culture and literature, created a new era in which most of the modern Indian languages began their growth in all their various branches. But, everyone of the northern languages had its basic development from the same basis, the unfailling fountain of the Sanskrit language and literature, drawing its food and nourishment mostly from the epics.

One of the languages which took lead in its literary growth is the Bengali, which by its natural artistic and emotional gifts, soon acquired its rightful place in the forefront. The Bengali stage soon came into prominence with the help of the great talented dramatists such as Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dvijendralal Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and others. Of course, the beginning was the Sanskrit dramas translated into Bengali. But it is the original works, that really showed the changing times. The original genius sought their scope in the depiction of the same characters of the ancient literature, in their own way to suit the ideas and ideals of their own age. As our subject here calls for only the female characters of the Sanskrit plays, it is neither necessary nor possible to deal with all the plays or playwrights of any modern Indian language as a whole. Enough to say that though the sources are the same, and the characters also are the same, comparisons and contrasts are equally present in almost every step. For example, we will here take up only one of the plays of Dvijendralal Roy, which depicts the self same character, which we have met with in quite a number of Sanskrit plays, from the times of the earliest poet Bhāsa,
The *Rāmāyāna* of Vālmīki has served as a source-book for most of the dramatists in Sanskrit. Sītā has been a favourite heroine with them, and we have met her as a bride, as a wife and also as an unfortunate exile in the wilderness. It is significant to note, that in the later period, specially in the modern age, it is this last phase of her life that has attracted the attention and encouraged the imagination of the dramatists. The influence of the earlier writers Bhavabhūti and Diṅgāṅga, whose works we have already studied, and also that of Vālmīki, is well traceable in the work of the modern Bengali Dramatist. The same simple, noble-hearted, chaste, loving and obedient Sītā, who holds the name and fame of her husband most dear to her heart, is pictured by Dvijendralal Roy in his drama called *Sītā*. When we read through this play, we find, that it is the same ideal-couple "Rāma and Sītā", portrayed by Bhāsa, who are really one soul in two bodies, that present themselves before our minds, eyes. In the *Uttara Kānda* of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyana*, Sītā is banished under the pretext of fulfilling her desire to see hermitages once again. The same idea is kept up by almost all the later writers, poets as well as dramatists. But, our modern author, does not seem to be able to reconcile with the idea of this deceit on the part of the ideal king and ideal man, Rāma. He could not, perhaps, bear to have such falsehood come between the two incorruptable and identical hearts. It was neither possible nor probable that even for the sake of the performance of duty, falsehood should help.

Another point, this modern genius could not tolerate, was the calm and cool acceptance of that unjust verdict of Rāma by everyone else in the family. Every one of the Sanskrit writers except Bhavabhūti, could visualize the silent obedience of everyone without even a word of protest. Even Bhavabhūti, who saw and dared to openly declare the injustice of King Rāma by trying to rectify the same by the attempted reunion of the two, makes the mothers of Rāma
and Arundhati show their protest by keeping away from Ayodhya, and meet Rama only at the last moment to make him accept his mistake by duly taking back Sita. But, our present author is not satisfied with this passive and negative protest. Neither could he see the possibility of a reunion of the couple, after such a separation. The denouement shown by Valmiki and accepted by Kalidasa, alone seems to be the correct and probable thing under the circumstances. Hence, the whole story had to be re-cast while the main incidents remained the same. The whole picture, from beginning to end had to be different, if it has to be true to the real character of Rama as well as Sita. The question asked by Sita1 when she heard about her banishment and the whole trend of thought expressed by Kalidasa and earlier by Valmiki find their echo in this work of the modern age. Rama himself cannot listen to the reports brought by Durmukha, with equanimity. He is shaken to the roots of his tranquillity and courage. He is angry that Durmukha could dare to repeat such a thing about Sita. He begs the messenger to tell him that it was all a mistake. Only when he is reminded by Durmukha himself that he had said only what he was forced to say, that Rama realizes the situation. It needs all the power of Guru Vasiṣṭha to make him decide on the banishment of Sita. But that is not all. Bharata, the most beloved brother and devoted follower of Rama readily leaves Ayodhya and Rama for ever. He would rather go away himself than stand by and see such an injustice done. Sānta, the sister, and Mother Kaushalya would not allow Rama to do such a thing at any cost. Rama, finally had to yield to the supplication of his mother and decide to withdraw the order of banishment he pronounced on his own second self.

1. वाच्यस्वयं मदननास्ति राजा वद्हि विनियुदामपि तत्समकम् ।
      मां लोकबादलवाएदहस्तः श्रमयं रक्तरहस्यं कुलस्य ॥

R. V. XIV. 61
Here is a struggle, a struggle between truth and duty. Rāma could not choose. The Indian womanhood is shown here as rising up to the occasion. When everything seemed to be darkness for Rāma, when all seemed to be deserting him and condemning him, there comes the divinity to redeem him, to lead him from Untruth to Truth, from Darkness to Light, from Death of Infamy to the Immortality of Glory! Sītā had heard everything, and she steps forward to save the prestige of the family, the purity of the kinglly fame and the truthfulness of Rāma's words. "Be happy, my Lord", she says, "You should not be sad or sorry because of me. I shall spread my heart on your path for you to tread on, so that your feet may be saved from thorns. I leave the palace of my own free will. Only one request to you—Smile once; let me see a smile on your face before I go!" She left the palace, and Rāma's duty as a king was fulfilled. The idea suggested in the Vālmiki Rāmāyana in the message for Rāma sent through Lāksmanā at the banishment seems to have been followed up and made clearer by this author in this act of Sītā.

It is sixteen or seventeen years after this incident that we meet Sītā next. Then she is the mother of the twin boys. As the mother, she is very proud of her sons. Still, a great

1. "तुम अपने मन से सब जिन्ता दूर करो; मैं स्वयं यह प्रयोग्यापुरी छोड़ कर वन को जाऊँगी।"...उठो नाथ, मेरे मन में अगर कोई प्रभिलापा है तो यही िि कुम्भरे मूल में मनोहर हृदी की रेखा देख कर जाऊँ..."

Sītā by D. L. Roy, Act II. Hindi Translation, p. 39

2. प्रहु स्याता च ते तीर प्रयशोधीहणा वने।
    यषि ते वचनीय यत्ववादः समुपित: ॥
    मया च परिहत्तिव्य त्वं हि मे परमातित: ॥
    वक्तव्यवत्व नूपितिधर्ममेण सुवाहित: ॥
    यथा भ्रान्तुष्व वत्त्वत्वस्वा पोंरेषु निष्ठवा ॥
    परमोहृष्ट धर्मस्वते तस्मात्कृतिर्नित्तमा ॥ V. R. VII. 48. 13-15
change has come over her. The halo of self-sacrifice and self-abandonment which she felt surrounding her, as described in the previous scene of the play, is seen no more. She feels ashamed to reveal her identity to her own children. She considers herself the most unfortunate woman in the world. Lava, the younger of the twins, challenges the right of Rāma to consider himself the greatest of all Kśatriyas and, in the battle, he defeats and wounds Śatrughna. Only then, forced by circumstances, Sitā tells the children the truth of their relationship to the great king.

By slight touches here and there, the author has shown a marked difference in the character of these two boys. We have hitherto seen these two brothers very much alike and devoted to each other wherever we have met them, whether portrayed by Vālmiki, Bhavabhūti or Diṅgāga. This is the first time that a difference in character, conduct and mood is made noticeable between the two. And, there seems to be a purpose contemplated by the author in this. Kuśa seems to be caring more for the worldly glory, status and position. Lava, on the other hand, is more heroic, idealistic, innocent, simple and straight-forward. Kuśa seems to be always playing for safety, while Lava prefers to be in the open and always on the offensive. The real difference is seen more plainly in the way, the two boys react to the news about their parentage. Kuśa is ashamed to know that Sitā is the banished wife of Rāma, and he is only too glad to accept, and be accepted by his father. But Lava is more proud of his mother, and the father who would not do his duty to his devoted wife, is in his eyes, despicable. Even at the order of his Guru, the holy Vālmiki, he would not bow down before such a man. When Sitā is miserable at the attitude of Kuśa towards her, Lava takes the dust of her feet and, realising her greatness, proclaims to the world thus—"My mother, why don't you speak to me? I am not ashamed of you! Till now your place was in my heart, but
from now onwards, it is even over my head. You are my venerable, worthy of worship divine mother." His devotion and loyalty to his mother is such that, when the great king of Ayodhya comes to take them back, Lava does not hesitate to tell him in plain words what he really thinks of him and his action. And Rama openly admits that of his two sons Lava is greater and nobler. Through these two, the author seems to be bringing before the audience the two trends of thought that would always exist in this world about the whole episode and, specially, the banishment of Sita by Rama.

Though the ideal upheld by the ancient traditions is saturated in the character of Sita, the author does not seem to see the possibility of a reunion between Rama and Sita. The last vow which she took to prove her unblemished purity was the only one that any woman could possibly take under those intriguing circumstances. Valmiki had made it very clear, and Kalidasa followed very closely in the same foot-steps. We have already seen the attempts made by the later writers such as, Bhavabhuti and Dignaga, to show the possibility of a reunion; and also how unconvincing those attempts were. Now, Dwijendralal Roy sounds a different note. He neither makes it necessary for Sita to take any vow to prove her purity, nor makes Rama directly responsible for her banishment. Still, he knows only too well that, as long as the cause of Sita's banishment was the fickle public opinion, a reunion without the possibility of a repetition of the scandals was impossible. He also realizes the significance of the last vow of Sita. At the same time,
the ideal of womanhood he visualises is the height of self-abnegation, which does not allow any room for thoughts of the self. All the women characters depicted by this author, in this very play or others, show more or less the same selfless and dedicated way of life. The way in which Śītā accepted the verdict of her Lord at the beginning is just the thing one expects from such a woman. Rāma is absolved of all responsibilities for that happening. And finally, when Guru Vasiṣṭha is convinced by the arguments of sage Vālmiki and Rāma is free to accept Śītā back, it is naturally expected that every thing would end well in a happy reunion. But, considering every thing, this could not happen. If we remember the exclamation of Bharata which he gave vent to before leaving Rāma, we are able to know what the opinion of the author is. Bharata says—"If this is what you are going to do to Śītā, then who will show respect to pure and good women? If you are going to treat your wife who is goodness and purity personified, thus; then the hearts of innocent women will become the toys of heartless men. The misery of the heart of women will become a thing to be scorned at by men. Throughout the land, the husband will feel no responsibility towards the wife." This would be the consequence if the woman swallowed the insults, forgot and forgave all the wrongs done to her. Still, it is the nature of woman. But, the nature, who gave this unfathomable love and patience to woman, cannot stand by and see her submitted to such a terrible fate. The meeting of Rāma and Śītā was achieved. Mother Earth, at

1. महाराज, धनरति सति सावधी ख्री के साथ भाय ऐसा व्यवहार करेगे तो फिर नारी का सम्मान कौन करेगा? दुर्बल सहनशील रामणी का हृदय तो फिर जगत में घर-घर पुरुष की क्रोड़ा की सामग्री समभा जाएगा। ख्री के हृदय की पीड़ा पति के उपहास की चीज़ बन जायेगी। भारत के, हर देश के हर घर में ग्राम्य के प्रति पति का कर्तव्य सिद्ध हो जायेगा।

Śītā by D. L. Roy, Act II. Hindi Translation, p. 33
the opportune moment, opened her bosom and received her daughter who had endured misery all her life. The ideal of womanhood remained true to her character, and the respect and honour due to her was vindicated fully and safe-guarded by Mother Earth. This is what was intended by the author in thus changing the course of incidents, though keeping the ideals of the ancients true to the spirit.

The other female characters in this drama are—Kauśalyā, Māṇḍavi, Urmilā, Śrutakirtī and also Vāsanti, the friend of Sītā in the hermitage of Vālmiki. Enough to say that the same soft, sweet, loving, understanding disposition of women is kept up by the author in keeping with the age, experience and position of the various characters. The influence of the ideals held up by the ancient sages and poets in the Epics as well as in the earlier plays are clearly visible in a modified form, to suit the revival of humanity, in all these characters.

Dwijendralal Roy has dealt with many other themes in his various dramas—themes both from the Epics and from the pages of the mediaeval history. Of the characters that are taken from the Epics, the influence of authors like Vālmiki and Kālidāsa is markedly noticeable. In the other plays which portray characters from more recent history, the ideals are adorable and more idealistic than realistic.

The Marathi stage also has quite a good and enviable literature to its credit, which grew up in the same period and more or less in the same way. Balwant Panduranga Kirloskar is regarded as "the father of Marathi drama." In the seventies and eighties of the last century, he translated the Abhijñānaśākuntalam into Marathi, which was very much acclaimed during his life-time, as a very sweet and faithful work. But his second play, the Saubhadra, dealing with the Mahābhārata story of carrying, away of Subhadrā by Arjuna and their marriage, is considered to be his best. The Subhadrā seen in this play seems to possess
all the daring qualities of the Maratha women of mediaeval history. When Rukmini tries to dissuade her from rushing headlong towards Arjuna, the girl retorts, "My sister-in-law, your brother had planned to give you in marriage to Śiśupāla. Was he wanting in good looks, valour or wealth that you surreptitiously sent a letter through a Brāhmaṇa and managed to marry Krṣṇa?"¹ In his Rāmarājya-viṣṇu, he seems to have brought down Kaikeyi to the level of a low woman, who calls her husband, "weakling, impotent and bully;" whereas Manthara is portrayed as all-powerful and Vasiṣṭha is made to say of her to Sumanta, "Well, it is truly said that God is the enemy of the weak. I tell you, if she takes upon her mind, she will force you also to confine yourself to your house."²

With very powerful dramas—mythological as well as historical and social—Marathi had a very well developed stage also, which existed much before Kirloskar wrote his Saubhadra. The drama, therefore, soon took a leap into the modern requirements of the society, of which women formed a very important part. Naturally, then, women were depicted in the Marathi dramas more in keeping with the modern psychology than in the pure idealistic or mythological way. The Maharāṣṭriya touch of dash and daring among the women characters is nowhere missed. Among the playwrights who have depicted their women characters most remarkably, are—Ram Ganesh Cadkari, Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar and Bhargavaram Vithal (Mama) Varerkar. It is clear from their dramas that though historical and social

¹. बहिनी, तुस्था मावानें तुला विलुप्तार राजा ला देऊँ केली होती, तो काय स्वभावं, पराक्रमानें किवा ऐश्वर्यां ने कामी होता, महानां तु चौरून ब्राह्मणां बरीहर पक्ष पाठवून कृष्णाला वर्लेस ?

². प्रहो, "देवो दुर्वज जाटः" हि महान ज्योतर ग्राह्ये, तुम्हाला संगूं देवनो निर्विवेकते, तिनें जर मनात ग्राहिणें तर तुम्हाला देखल तीं घरी बसायला लाविल।

A. M. V. S. p. 71
A. M. V. S. p. 74
themes are appealing to the masses and the classes alike, the stories from the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata have not forfeited their interest at all. An example is found in the story of Sītā dramatised by Mama Varerkar under the title, Bhumikanya Sītā. His depiction of Kṛṣṇa’s marriage with Rukmini under the title, Dvāraka cha rājā, is also popular.

In the Bhumikanya Sītā, which is one of the most modern plays of the Indian languages, the women characters depicted are Sītā and Urmilā, the main characters, and Kuśikā and Vāsantī, the two servant-women of the palace. The story of the Uttarakanda of the Rāmāyana is the theme. The main incidents described are the same. The characterisation shows a definite departure from all other plays, we have hitherto studied—whether Sanskrit or of the modern Indian languages. We have seen Urmilā in some of the Sanskrit plays, but nowhere we have met with such a plain-spoken and courageous Urmilā, as in this creation of Mama Varerkar. The same is true with the Sītā found here. The very introduction of Urmilā in this part of the story is something new. Up till now, we have found her mentioned only at the time of marriage in Mithilā. Of course, she was introduced in the later part of the story by Dvijendralal Roy for the first time, but that was just once in the beginning of the play, immediately after the coronation of Rāma at Ayodhyā. In this connection, it is well to remember that no mention of Urmilā is found anywhere in the Valmiki Rāmāyana, except in the Balakanda, which Camil Bulke regards as a later interpolation.¹ In support of this, there is a mention of Lakṣmana in the Aranyakanda where he is said to be unmarried.² Rāma tells Surpanakhā that a man needed a woman companion and he had got Sītā, but he was looking for some one to keep company with Lakṣmana, and fortunately she

¹ C. Bulke: Rāma-Kathā, Pp. 120-123
² V. R. III. 18. 3
had come. This also leads to the conclusion that Urmilā is a later invention in the *Valmiki Ramayana* itself. After Dwijendralal Roy, who practically re-discovered Urmilā, there have of course been some poets, mainly Maithilisharan Gupta and Balkrishna Sharma ‘Navin’, who have sung of Urmilā in their great poems—the *Saketa* and the *Urmila* respectively. But, the Urmilā pictured before us by Mama Varerkar is a completely new character. This Urmilā is a courageous, reasoning type of woman, who knows to listen and also to ask questions intelligently. Apart from the name there seems to be nothing in her which we can possibly trace to the ancient literature or even to Sanskrit dramas.

As for Sītā, the idea of self-respect is at least referred to in the Bengali play, we have studied. But this Sītā of Mama Varerkar is so very different from the soft and mild Sītā of D. L. Roy. We find in the Sītā and Urmilā of the Marathi play, a peculiar tendency “to have it out” with anybody who would dare to challenge them. Mama has completely changed the tone of the story we have been hearing. Nowhere in this play do we find the partially apologetic tone with which a woman is accompanied elsewhere. Śambūka episode also has been made a point at issue between Rāma and Sītā. It is brought to the notice of Sītā that she is the daughter of Mother Earth and Śambūka, being a Śūdra, is also the son of Mother Earth; and hence her brother. This conviction along with the feeling that injustice is being done to him makes Sītā plead with vehemence for his sake. She reminds Rāma that the latter is a disciple of Viśvāmitra, the

1. कृत्वारोजितम् भवति भाववें दिविता मम।
   वदिशानां तु नारीयां मुख्या समपलता॥
   प्रनुस्स्वेय भया भ्राता शीलवानिप्रयदर्शीनः।
   श्रीमानकृत्वारकश्च तस्मानो नाम वैयवानु॥
   प्रपुर्वी भावया चार्धी तथा: प्रवदर्शीनः।
   प्रनुस्स्वेय ते भर्तो रूपस्याय भविष्यति॥

V. R. III. 18. 2-4
supporter of the low and the outcaste, and is also the husband of Śītā, the daughter of Mother Earth.¹ She tells finally that injustice should not be done to Śambūka. Only when Rāma asks, "Is this your order?" she remembers the unusually strong way in which she was talking to her husband, and humbly adds—"This is my appeal to you. To order I have no right."²

The way in which the scandal about Śītā spread in the kingdom and is brought to the notice of Rāma, and the part Vasiṣṭha is made to play in the banishment of Śītā are very significant. This is nothing newly invented. The idea exists in the Rāmāyana. Rāma is told by his spies that the people were saying—"The king's acceptance of Śītā makes matters difficult for us in the future. We may have to bear such conduct on the part of our wives also."³ This idea is made clearer by the scene of Vijaya and Vasanti, the Dhobi and his wife. And Rāma is made to declare in plain words that he is only the servant of the Brāhmaṇas and the sages and he could only do what they ask him to do. The influence of the family preceptor, Vasiṣṭha, is shown throughout the play. Though Rāma wishes to banish Śītā, he has not the courage to tell her so, and hence he decides to send her away on the pretext of fulfilling her own wishes. Everybody who knows about it objects, except Laksmana, the one staunch follower of Rāma. Urmila is bitter—bitter against

1. Rāma—श्राहुत्वन्ता चा श्राताधारक सेवक श्राहे हा राम।
   Śītā—विश्वासित्राचा शिष्य श्राहे राम। भूरिमकन्येचा पती श्राहे हा राम।
   Bh. K. S. II. p. 33

2. Rāma—ही श्राता श्राहे का सुभी? 
   Śītā—हे मागणं श्राहे मांश। श्राता करावचा मला श्रविकार नाहीं।
   Bh. K. S. II. p. 33

3. प्रस्माक्रमिपि दारेषु सहनिव भविष्यति।
   Yṣa हि कुस्ते रज्जा प्रजास्तमुवत्तेन।
   V. R. VII. 43.19
Rāma, against the people of Ayodhya, against the whole set-up of the society. She could never forget the fact that she was not even once remembered by any body after she was left by Lakṣmana, who followed Rāma forgetting every thing and everybody for the sake of that beloved and worshipped elder brother. She had been left to suffering of separation all her life.

Rāma follows Vasiṣṭha and Lakṣmana obeys Rāma. No body else counted anywhere. This social set-up and the evils that were fast engulfing the society are seen clearly by those who suffered from them—the women and the low class people. Both are shown by Mama as standing up against them, though in vain. Urmila pleads with Lakṣmana not to do the cruel act, which he is forced to do in order to obey his elder brother. She pleads with the king, Rāma, not to force his devoted brother to do it, because he would never disobey the orders. She does not do this for her sake. Her words here are very significant. She says—"I have kept my mouth shut all my life. But today I am allowing myself to speak. I know I am guilty of arguing with elders and thus insulting them. But I am doing this for the welfare of the whole womankind. Any man who wishes to abandon his wife for fear of public scandals, will quote Rāma of the Raghu-dynasty and will abandon his innocent wife tomorrow. That is why I have to become so shameless."1

But these pleadings, arguments and open accusations

1. जयमंगल तोऽऽ वन्द वहन राहिलेली मी, ग्राज तीऽऽ उघडत माभां। वहि-लांचा अपमान केला हा अपराध होती ग्राही माभां, हूँ मला कलरूँ, पण छो जातीच्या कल्याणावर तहे ठेवून भी हा अपराध करते ग्राहीं।

लोकापवादासाठी निर्दऽऽ दीवा त्याग करणारा प्रथेक पुरुष उदया रत्तुकूळवर सोमांचे नाव सागिल यष्ट अपवाय निर्दऽऽ दीवा त्याग करील, भयून ग्राज मला ग्रास निर्जय अहांव लागते।

Bh. K. S. II. p. 51
could not have any effect then, because it was a society where the Brāhmaṇas, the elders and the husbands were the rulers and, good or bad, their word had to be the law. Lakṣmana, the husband, who has never—even for once—been known to have remembered his duty towards his wife, orders Urmilā to stay where she is and to keep quiet till he left the palace with Sītā, and demands obedience on the right of being her husband! He is satisfied by just apologising to her laconically that it was not his lot ever to make her happy.

Urmilā seems to be stronger and more courageous, perhaps because she has nothing to gain personally. It is she who arranges that Vāsanti, the Dhobi woman, become the companion and helper of Sītā in the wilderness.

In the last scene, when Sītā is brought to the sacrificial hall and Rāma insists that she should once more give proof of her purity, we see in her a strange combination of love and obedience to her husband and the eagerness to keep up the self-respect and dignity of womanhood. The arguments put up by Sītā and Urmilā there represent quite a new trend of thought which was never heard of before. The idea suggested by Bharata in the play of D. L. Roy is brought forth more clearly and in more powerful words by Urmilā and Sītā at every stage in this drama of Mama Varerkar.

In Kundamala, we see Rāma insisting on the people to be satisfied about the purity of Sītā. This is mentioned by Vālmiki\(^1\) as well as Kālidāsa\(^2\) in their respective works. And

1. यदि शुद्ध समाचारा यदि वा बीतकल्पपा।
   करोतिवहालमनः शुद्धिमुनायत् महामुनिम्।\(\) II
   शुद्धायं जगतो मध्ये बैदेहां श्रीतिरस्तु मे।\(\) II
   सीतासाप्यसम्भ्रास्ताः सर्वं एव समागतः।\(\) II
   V. R. VII. 95. 4

2. तत शुद्धा समवं न: स्तुपा वे जातवेदसि।
   दीरात्म्याविर्यसस्तवः तु नात्तया: भव्यः प्रजा।।
   V. R. VII. 97. 10

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both have shown Sītā entering the Yajñāsāla with the dignity of a Yogini, and taking the vow that left everyone, who dared to suspect her, astonished and bitten by repentance and sorrow. This incident has been taken up by this author and the full significance of the same is brought out clearly in the last scene of the play. In the Kundamala of Diṅgāga, we have seen how Rāma was not willing to take Vālmiki at his word for the purity of Sītā, but wanted her to undergo another ordeal. He was ready to allow Vālmiki to go away in anger. The same attitude is seen here also, which is stranger and worse. Inspite of Vālmiki's explanations and assurances and the arguments of Sītā and Urmilā, Rāma does not have the courage to do what he knows to be right. The one sentence he is repeating as an excuse for all that he does is: "For the sake of pleasing the people." And he even stoops so low as to ask: "Is Sītā pure by herself, or she has become absolved of all stains due to her living in your Aśrama?" This question is the last limit!—this adding of insult to injury by Rāma!! Only Urmilā, the woman who had suffering and suffering alone to her share all her life,

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1. श्रापायपरिवीतेन स्वपदाभिरव्युष्यात रा. र. व. अ. 72-73
    प्रव्रोमहदेव शुद्धित शास्त्रोन वपुपैव सा।

2. राम—लोकाराधनेताह! दया, माया, शीतल्, शांतीची मला पर्यं वाटत नाहीं हा लोकाराधनेपुढे, तिंच सीताची काय कथा?
    Bh. K. S. II. p. 50

3. राम—पण श्रापी लोकांच समाधान भालं पाहिजे! सीता स्वतः सिद्ध शुद्ध श्रापी न महसूले? की प्राप्त्या पवित्र भाष्मांत वास्तव्या केल्याकृत मुं मीनिर्देशाची श्रापी श्रापी?
    Bh. K. IV. p. 87
could stand up and take Rāma to task for this, as he deserved! But all in vain! Rāma is only a party to the strict rules laid down by his preceptor, who is a representative of the law-givers. He insists, even as a helpless child, that Sītā should avow to the purity of her character. Then Sītā takes the vow—that vow which takes her beyond the reach of everything and everybody. That famous vow of Sītā, taken thousands of years ago, still echoes and re-echoes from the Yajñāśāla of Ayodhya as the bugle of victory of the chaste and pure woman.

The vow is the same as found in the Rāmāyaṇa, and then in the Raghuvamśa of Kalidāsa. But Sītā here does not just take the vow and disappear. She makes it quite clear why she takes the vow. She tells plainly that this world has failed to appreciate righteousness and purity and that she cannot live and submit to mere man’s rule. She does not approve of the Rāma-Rājya. Good and prosperity can come only when it is the rule of Sītā and Rāma, as it was in the forest during the period of their exile. At last, Mother

1. यथाहृ राजवादन्य मनसापि न चित्तये।
   तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमहृति॥
   मनसा कर्मेषा बाचा यथा रामं समथये॥
   तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमहृति॥
   यथैतत्सत्यमुत्ते मे वेदिं रामालपरं न च॥
   तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमहृति॥
   व. र. व. VII. 79. 14-16

2. वाक्मनं कर्मेषु श्रद्धां व्यभिचारो यथा न मे॥
   तथा विरतभरे देवी मामन्तरथातुमहृति॥
   र. ए. X. 81

3. सीता—रामराज्याची प्रतिष्ठा! रामराज्याच्या प्रतिष्ठेसाठी होजातीची प्रतिष्ठा ध्रुविक महत्वाची बाटले मला! रामराज्य कसं भरे हें रामराज्य! रामराज्य होतं तं त्या वनवासांत वैभवाची भवती प्रतिष्ठा नहुंती त्या वेळी प्रभिकाराचा बिधावर नहुंतं त्या वनवासांत तें युतं रामराज्य नहुंतं, तें सीतारामांच राज्यं

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Earth obeyed her noble and majestic daughter and took her away beyond the reach of insults and praises.

Certain aspects of Sītā's character in this play are very much indicative of the trends of the times. She espouses the cause of Śambuka, a Śūdra, calling him her brother, because he was a tiller, a son of the Mother Earth, who also was the mother of Sītā. Men and women are known in history and literature to have been kind and fair to the low and down-trodden, but here in Mama's play, Sītā's treatment of

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
the Śūdra is, apart from its great human values, full of social sagacity in terms of the age. The author, perhaps, thought it fit to give the solution of the Harijan problem of our day a religio-political touch and, in doing so, not only tried to facilitate the solution, but also added another feather to the crown of the ideal woman, Sitā. The problem assumes much greater proportions when viewed from the angle of Brāhmaṇa supremacy and its heritage (also, by the way, the burning problems in Mahārāṣṭra, as also in some other parts of the country), both symbolised in Vasiṣṭha in this play. And no less a personality than Sitā was needed to fight the tyrannical aspect of it, as she did. Vāsantī, the Dhobi woman, who was evidently wronged by her husband, is chosen by prudent Urmilā to bear company to Sitā in her exile, showing thereby not only her solicitudes for all the oppressed, but also a great sense of judgement with regard to giving a true and loyal company to Sitā. Who but an oppressed woman in a scandal-mongering society could be trusted to be faithful to one who was similarly oppressed?

The tyrannical aspect of the Brāhmaṇa supremacy is also brought out by making Vālmīki remember and remark that he was born a Śūdra.

All these taken together, point to the fact of the Brāhmaṇa supremacy, tyrannical on one hand, and the sense of social revolt surging through the minds of the oppressed and the down-trodden on the other. And Sitā, herself the oppressed, is made to espouse the cause of the oppressed, which she does in all the dignity of a great woman; and thus gives support to the resurgent psychology of Liberty, Equality

1. लक्षण—पार उल्लम्ब भाले शाला प्रसं सं कर, उमलेन तुला पाठवले प्रसं श्रांवरी संगू नकोस। Bh. K. S. III. p. 55

2. वाल्मीकि—सारे कण्ठीमुनी मला दस्यू म्हणतात विद्वानिवेश मनोरंग शत मोहीं श्रावत, प्रसारीविवा पाठाराला म्हाले, म्हणून मलाच श्राणां म्हणू लागले सारे लोक—दस्यू म्हणू लागले। Bh. K. S. III. p. 71
and Fraternity in the sense India has understood them through her philosophy. It is an ennobling experience to realize in this play that Sītā, fighting against the tyranny of many kinds, is yet the same sweet, noble, ideal woman in whom we find a combination of virtues, rare but true.

Thus, we see Mama Varerkar, though writing in the 20th century, is really following closely the story as found in the Rāmāyaṇa, the first poem ever written in Sanskrit. It is the same ideas and ideals as upheld first by Vālmiki and then by Kālidāsa that he tries to elaborate upon and explain. Actually, the depiction of Sītā by the various authors from time to time has quite a lot to enlighten the student about the march of Indian womanhood through the ages. The same story has been retold again and again and the same character has been drawn in various ways to suit the times, convictions and beliefs and the tastes of the probable audience. We have been noticing this throughout, at every step, and at this landmark we have come to a point where the very significant words of Vālmiki are plainly explained, without reserve. Neither Vālmiki nor Kālidāsa could visualize Sītā taking a vow of her own purity for a second time. For the later authors, this was not quite impossible. But, obviously, that was a time when woman had to submit and then to succumb to the tyranny of man, his selfishness, and also to that of the religious preceptors. When the days changed, the picture of Sītā also began to change. Gradual change was already coming over the portrayal of this character during the very short interval between the creation of D. L. Roy and that by Mama Varerkar. The idea that woman was being treated with injustice was slowly gaining ground then, but woman herself was not yet willing to challenge it.

Now the time seems to have come when Sītā and Urmilā both find it necessary to stand up against any injustice and expose the guilty, however, great and mighty they may be. Dwijendralal Roy made Bharata and Lava condemn
Rāma’s treatment of Sītā, while Sītā herself accepted the will of her beloved husband without question. Mama, a few years later, saw that the conditions are such when women themselves can defend their rights. At the same time, it is well to remember that the ideas expressed by Bharata and Lava in the earlier play and by Urmilā and Sītā in the later one, are not new. These existed in the works of the earlier poets, as we have already seen. Thus, the influence of the earlier authors is traceable over the characters in the modern plays to a great extent. If we examine the other plays in Marathi, written during this period, we will be able to see this truth more and more.

In Gujarati, the Sarvilaka is a recent drama, written by Shri Rasiklal Parikh. In it the story of Myrhhakatikā is recast to suit the modern age. Instead of Cārudatta, the leader of action, here is Sarvilaka, thus rendering the political revolution the main theme, while the love affair of Vasantasenā and Cārudatta is pushed to the background. The women characters portrayed are the same. Vasantasenā, Madanikā, Dhūtā and Radanikā are all there. Śvetapadmā, the wife of king Pālaka and Kāmalatā, another courtesan are the new characters introduced by the author.

A close study of this play reveals that keeping the characteristics as found in the original play, the author has changed the nature of the whole story to suit the particular purpose with which he was writing. While India was fighting for her independence and every Indian was filled with the fiery spirit, freedom it was only natural that the creative genius found outlet to suit the demands of the times. The literature that grew up during the past half century, in all the languages of India, shows the same common characteristics combined with the revolutionary ideas that swept throughout the country, both in the political and social fields. The swelling waves of freedom in all spheres necessitated reforms and the literature began to reflect these
aspirations of the people in one way or the other. The Sarvilaka is a good example of the old stories remodelled on the new pattern. It is to be remembered that this is a time that has brought women to the fore-front in all spheres of life, at home and in the world outside. The various problems facing the society in connection with women, who were leaving behind the old traditions and were hastening forward to take their proper place by the side of men, supplied the dramatists enough material to work upon. In the Mychhakatika of Śūdraka, Vasantasenā had nothing to do with the political issues. She was there only as the beloved of Cārudatta. Madanikā and the episode of stealing the ornaments by Sarvilaka were also introduced there only to enhance the character of the hero and the heroine by showing the honesty of one and the generosity and the sense of humour of the other. But here, not only Vasantasenā and Madanikā but another courtesan, Kāmalatā, are all used as helpers in achieving the success of the contemplated revolution. Sarvilaka says plainly at one place that courtesans are of great help in conducting revolutions.¹

Every one of these characters has a peculiarity of her own. But in general they all show a kind of re-awakening to their duties as well as to their rights. The women, whether they belong to noble families, to the ordinary ones or to the courtesan class, seem to have a dignity and self-respect, which are not very common in the Sanskrit plays of the preceding age.

Gujarati literature is not known for its dramas. After the well-known dramatist Chandravadan Mehta wrote his Akho, Aggāri, Narmad, Nāga Bābā etc., which were very popular on the stage, no playwright worth the name has risen in Gujarat. But some progress has been seen in the field of one-act plays. Munshi, Batubhai Umarwadia and Jayanti

¹ 'विश्व वारंभाणा वारंगणा बहु उपकारका'।

S. I. 3. p. 50
Dalal are known for their one-act plays.

Not much information is added to what we know from the study of the Gujarati dramas that are available.

Hindi stage was never much developed in the known history. Apart from the cinema, which seems to have given the final blow to the prospects of developing the Hindi stage, the Rāmalīlā, the Kṛṣṇalīlā and the Nautankī are still the most popular plays in the rural, Hindi speaking North. Theatre halls were not wanting in the cities and towns of the Hindi speaking regions, as elsewhere all over India, but they were mostly monopolised by Parsi Theatre Companies or by amateurs. The plays written for them had no literary merits and they either catered to the lower instincts of the drama-loving people or indulged in effectless sermonising on moral or religious planes.

But Hindi literature is not entirely devoid of its dramatic constituent. The dramatic literature, as usual, began with the translations of Sanskrit plays, and the first play so translated is known to be the Prabodha-candrodaya rendered into Hindi (Brajbhasha) by Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jaipur around 1760 A. D. Similarly, the first original play is said to be the Ānanda Raghunandana written by the Maharaja of Rewa some time about 1800 A. D. But among the earliest plays available to us, the most important from the literary point of view is the translation of the Abhijñāna-śakuntalam by Raja Laksmana Singh around 1860. But this play, though highly appreciated for its literary merits, has nothing to offer so far as our present studies are concerned. Bharatendu Harishchandra’s Satya Hariścandra is the next. This is an adaptation of the Candakauśikam of Kshemiśvara and has nothing new in it. He also translated half-a-dozen other Sanskrit plays, the most important among them being the translation of the Ratnāvali, which we have already studied. Many other authors followed suit and wrote original plays also, but none of them commanded uni-
universal respect until Jayashankar Prasad came on the field in our own times and gave high class plays of the most refined taste.

Govind Vallabh Pant, Harikrishna Premi, Lakshmi Narayan Mishra, Udaya Shankar Bhatt, Seth Govinddas, Upendranath Ashk, Prithwinath Sharma and Vrindavan Lal Varma are the other main playwrights of Hindi who have written during and after the twenties of this century. Their plays include all kinds—historical, social, political, purely psychological and mythological. But the influence of the Sanskrit dramas does not seem to be marked on their characters. While some of these plays like the Varamala of Govind Vallabh Pant are known for their cultural and aesthetic values, most of them are influenced by the political and national trends of the times.

As already indicated, some stories belonging to the Epics have been chosen for dramatisation by the modern Hindi authors also. But the female characters depicted herein do not seem to have any thing much in common with the same characters described in the ancient books or the Sanskrit dramas. These women generally show either the most idealistic nature, presenting before the readers a superhuman level, or they behave in such a way as to be realistic enough to remind us of the virtues and vices of our contemporary society and life.

The truth of the statements, Change is life and Life is change, is being proved in our country in this century more than at any other time. The poetic imagination and dramatic genius find their scope at almost every turn and they do not have far to seek an example for almost any type. Hence the present writers can easily afford to forget the lifeless, patternised, artificial characters of the Sanskrit dramas of the recent centuries. The ancient writers like Kālidāsa and Bhāsa do catch their eyes for a flash, but the variety of real life that they see before them allows no time
for them to stop and look behind the curtains of the past. That is why we find almost everywhere the haste to catch up with the present atmosphere.

The atomic age has only increased the pace of life. Everybody seems to be running to make up for the lost time. Hence, even literature has to be spicy and condensed, so as to fit in with the general haste. This necessity itself may be one reason for the changed nature of the characters we see on the modern Indian stage, irrespective of province or language. This applies specially to the women characters presented in every one of the modern Indian language also.
CHAPTER IX

MARCH OF WOMEN THROUGH AGES

In the foregoing pages we have attempted a study of the women characters depicted in the Sanskrit dramas available to us from the earliest times to the present day. In the course of that study, we have met with celestial and terrestrial women, divine and semi-divine damsels, princesses and hermit-girls, women of noble descent and also courtesans. We were able to examine the conception of women in their various capacities as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers by the different poets. We have met with women of the same or different status depicted by the same poet, and also the same character depicted by the different poets belonging to different periods. Thus, we have had an opportunity of studying the women characters according to the various poets and also the conditions and times in which they wrote.

Though this treatise can in no way claim to be an exhaustive study of all the Sanskrit plays, it is fairly representative as far as the women characters are concerned. In the course of study, we were also able to see incidentally the growth, decay and revival of the Sanskrit drama itself. Along with this, we have seen the slow deterioration of women, till it reached the lowest ebb, stagnation for a period and then the renaissance in the present times.

It is an accepted fact that, "Drama is not the mere representation of life, but the presentation of an outlook on
life, the presentation of life in the light of that outlook."¹ According to known facts, the evolutionary, revolutionary and political changes that overtook Indian society had been very varied and remarkably interesting. Actually, the history of social life, from the earliest days known to men, should have been the background of our study. As Carlyle says, "In any measure, to understand poetry, to estimate its worth and historical meaning, we ask as quite a fundamental enquiry, what the situation was. Thus the history of a nation's poetry is the essence of its history—political, economic, scientific and religious."² But, as we do not possess that in any authoritative form about the earlier periods, the only way left to us, was to reconstruct such a history from such literary material, as best as we could, and then study those very literary models in the light of the history thus reconstructed. We have done this with regard to the earliest available Sanskrit dramas up to the time-such recorded history was available, from where onwards we were on surer grounds. Having thus reached the present day, it may not be out of place now to take a bird's eye view of the march of women through the ages, as far as it could be possibly traced. This can be done more easily, if we are able to see the depiction of the self-same character by the different representative poets belonging to the various ages from the earliest times, up to date. Such a character is available to us in the personality of Sītā, the highest ideal of Indian womanhood, accepted universally and unanimously.

From the very early days, we have seen that the Epics, specially the Ramāyana, have been the source of inspiration to many Sanskrit dramatists. From the time of Bhāsa, up to the modern playwrights, it is mainly the Ramāyana that had provided the themes for them. And so, Sītā, the heroine

2. Carlyle: Miscellaneous, Pp. 292-293
of the Rāmāyana, around whom the story revolves, is portrayed again and again by all these dramatists according to their own vision and also the outlook of life in their times. Bhāsa depicted Sītā in two of his plays, the Abhiseka and the Pratimā. Kālidāsa has portrayed Sītā according to his own vision in his poem Raghuvamśa. Bhavabhūti presented before his audience, two types of women in the two different plays he wrote, based on the Epic. While Bhāsa confined himself to the original story up to the destruction of Rāvana, Bhavabhūti covered even the last portion of the Rāma-story found in the Uttarkāṇḍa. Bhāsa was satisfied with dramatising the story as he found in the Epic, but Bhavabhūti did not hesitate to make many drastic changes in the body-plot of the play. The reason for this deliberate deviation from the trodden path must have its own story to tell, as we have already noticed.¹

The Pratimā and the Abhiseka, attributed to Bhāsa, seem to represent women who are breathing in a natural, free and healthy atmosphere. The relationship between man and woman at that time appears to be one of mutual trust and confidence, love and respect. This characteristic of his plays in general seems to be most pronounced in the depiction of Sītā and Rāma. As we have already pointed out,² man and woman seem to enjoy equal status in society, and also have mutual respect and understanding, based on true love. The position of woman in society appears to have been high. But there are indications to show that the duties of the wife were more emphasised than her rights. The position of Sītā, as the eldest sister-in-law to the younger brothers of Rāma, is on a par with the loving mother.³

1. Chapter IV, PP. 198-203; 231-236
2. Chapter II. PP. 29-32
3. रामः—इव्य स्वर्ग गच्छतु मान्येतौतिव भावं तन्यं निवेद्य ।
   तुधारपूर्णोपलघनेत्र यव्यस्वार्थार्मिवोत्तली ॥

Pr. Nā, IV. 13
out, she is portrayed as a noble, straight-forward and kind counter-part of the ideal man, Rāma. She is humble and respectful towards her elders, kind and generous towards her dependants, devoted to her husband to the extent of sharing with him even his innermost feelings, firm and courageous in danger—a true and noble woman in every respect. The veil, which later on became the sign of seclusion, seems to have been a token of noble descent when Bhāsa wrote. There seems to be nothing wrong in concluding that women enjoyed a high status in the society during his times.

The next poet who brought Sītā on the stage, is Bhavabhūti. He, within the compass of his Mahāvīrācarita and Uttararāmācarita, narrates the life-story of the noble queen from the time of her marriage up to the last phase. Though a great admirer of his predecessors—Vālmīki, Bhāsa and Kalidāsa, he did not hesitate to introduce changes in the course of action, and even to interpret incidents in his own way, disregarding the Epic-traditions as well as the poetic traditions. He went to the extent of making the drastic change, in the story of the Uttarakānda of the Rāmāyaṇa, by affecting the reunion of Rāma and Sītā, even after the banishment. The Sītā portrayed by him is very different from the pictures drawn by his predecessors. Besides, it is impossible to miss the difference between the Sītā in the Mahāvīrācarita and the same character in the latter play by the same author. We have dealt with this difference in detail earlier.¹ Suffice to say here that the heroine of the first play of Bhavabhūti is no credit to any society or nation. The Sītā of the Uttararāmācarita on the other hand, is the ideal that the poet wishes to hold up to the society which was obviously fast forgetting the respect and honour due to women, who are the real assets of the nation.

Studying both these plays in comparison with each

¹ Chapter VI. Pp. 196-199, 215-218
other, and also trying to gather some facts from the social and political history of the times, the only conclusion one can arrive at is that the condition of women in North India, then, was fast deteriorating, and they had lost their individuality considerably. Presenting women on the stage itself seems to be questionable. The first two plays show women of Āryan descent as true examples to the rule of Manu, namely, "Woman do not deserve any freedom." True, there are women like Śūrpanakhā, Lankā, Alakā etc., and also Kāmandakī and her disciples. The possible deductions have been presented at the relevant places.

The Sita depicted by Bhavabhūti, in the Uttararāmacarita is the ideal that he could conceive, under the circumstances in which he found the society striving. In depicting the heroine of his last and best dramatic work, Bhavabhūti showed all his skill and his creative genius. As a true poet, he took lessons from all his predecessors, but at the same time followed up his own imagination in creating the ideal that would perhaps catch the attention of the audience for which he wrote. Only such a woman as the simple, loving and trusting Sītā, who is the real 'Grhalakṣmi' (goddess of the hearth) while in the company of her husband, but the personification of agony while separated from him, could command the respect of the society in which Bhavabhūti was living. He was witnessing the downward march of women, which was being encouraged and even organised by the social law-givers. By the bitter statements such as: "In treating of women, even as in treating of the good qualities of literature, people are always evil-minded", the portrayal of Rāma and Sītā in the way we have seen in that play, by the

1. न च्छी स्वातन्त्रमहर्ति। Manu. IX. 3
2. Chapter IV, Pp. 198-203
3. यथा चौरां तथा वाचां सामृत्ये हुर्जनोंजना। U. R. Ch. I. 5
open declaration made through Rāma\(^1\) about the marvellous power of the real love of a wife, in fact by the whole story of the play as he recast it, the poet is actually showing the greatness of women to a society which was causing them to fall to the condition of Sitā and Urmila as seen in the *Mahāvīracakara*, and also of those ascetic women, found in the *Mālatimādhava*. Reading between the lines and reconstructing the social conditions as could be seen from the development of the plot and the dialogues, we may correctly conclude that the position of women had already reached a very regrettable stage. The less a woman was seen outside her home, the more she was considered to be good. The veil had already become the necessary equipment, specially for a married woman. It seems to have become the tendency of man to use woman as an object of enjoyment and pleasure. Woman’s duty was to look upon him as the meaning and justification of her existence. The well-known saying, “He for God only and she for God in him”, seems to have become the rule of the day. The peculiarity of the oriental woman is the special tendency manifested in her nature which makes her always give but never take. She always dared to suffer where men would shrink. These characteristics of women were being used to make her more and more submissive and dependent. We have seen in an earlier chapter, how even at the time of Kālidāsa, this tendency was gathering power, as could be proved by statements made by the various characters at various contexts such as, “*Upapannā hi dāreṣu prabhūta sarvatomukhi.*”\(^2\) (The husband has all-extending authority over his wives). But, at that time, the men seem

\(^1\) चरित्रं शुल्कुः:कायेरुन्यं सर्वस्ववस्थामु यदृ
 विभाम्रो हृदयस्य यत्र जरसा वस्मिष्ठायाय रसः।
 कालेनावरणास्त्यव्याल्पिते यत्त्वेहसारे स्थितं
 भर्त्र तद्य सुमानुस्यथ कथमपेक्ष हि तद्यप्यते।।

U. R. Ch. I. 39

\(^2\) Ab. Ś. V. 26
to have possessed the sense to see that the power thus sanctioned by the society could be maintained only if they ruled over the heart. Even then, we have seen how the Masterpoet did not like those tendencies which were definitely heading the society as a whole towards moral deterioration, and how he painted the ideals of men and women, as he would have them to be—the supplements and complements of each other. He sounded the warning note, but the tide neither turned nor stopped.

This condition of women in society is once more proved in the contrast noticeable in the portrait of Vāsavadattā in the works of Śrī Harṣa and also in the works of the earlier poet Bhāsa. It is so very obvious that no comments are needed as we have already seen in one of the previous chapters. The next notable author who took to portray Sītā, is Śaktibhadra, the author of the Aścaryacudamani. In this play, Sītā is shown as the personification of modesty, simplicity, humility, and also of self-confidence, courage and firmness. But she seems to be showing the base side of human character also on certain occasions. Though following up the story as found in the Valmiki Ramayana closely, Śaktibhadra seems to have been influenced by the society of his times. For, in his attempts to picture the ideal wife Mandodari, whose one aim is to please her husband inspite of all his evil ways, and through the treatment meted out to Sītā in the last act, he seems to be bringing to the forefront the real condition of women in society, without saying anything in so many plain words. The nature and character of woman is denounced wherever the least opportunity arose. The reactionary attitude of Lakṣmaṇa to the circumstances that led to the fire-ordeal of Sītā in this play, in comparison with his attitude as portrayed by all the previous poets, is itself an eye-opener to the pitiable and deteriorated condition of women in society.

1. Chapter IV, p. 188
women in the latter age when Saktibhadra wrote. The feminine character (Strisvabhāva) is denounced at every opportunity, as something despicable.

Though innumerable plays were written on the basis of the story of Rāma and Sītā, the women characters portrayed in them are few, and also stereotyped, as we have already noticed in the foregoing pages. Between Bhāsa and Bhavabhūti on the one hand and the later writers of Rāma-plays on the other, the difference we find is exactly the deterioration of the dramatic art in Sanskrit literature, and also the deterioration of the condition of women in society. For, these later writers have only narrated the story in a flourishing poetic style, intermingled with scatterings of equally poetic prose conversations. The development of characters and plots does not seem to have attracted their attention very much. And the female characters are either non-existent or if existent, are put there only as puppets to please the eyes of the audience by their appearance. Of the various plays, we have taken the works of Diṅgnāga, Murāri, Rājaśekhara and Jayadeva, as the important representative works of their respective times. Of these, Diṅgnāga alone seems to have taken a fancy to the deplorable fate of Sītā in the last phase of her life. His Kundamāla is, to a very great extent, an imitation of the work of Bhavabhūti, less the beautiful combination of the idealistic idealism and realistic realism which the earlier poet alone was capable of. The repetition of the ideas expressed in all the earlier works are found in this play abundantly. But, as we have already seen, the dignity and high status of woman evinced in the characterization of Sītā by the earlier authors are not found in this play. Diṅgnāga, like Bhavabhūti, shows the re-union of Sītā with Rāma even after the undeserved banishment she had to suffer at the hands of her husband. Of course,

1. Chapter V. Pp. 297-299
2. Chapter V. Pp. 300-310
Bhavabhūti showed clearly the anxiety of king Rāma to please his people. But, at the same time, he was careful enough to bring forth the mental condition of the husband, who was being tortured in burning repentance about his own action, the terrible injustice done by himself, towards his wife, whom he worshipped for her purity and nobility. Thus, he contrived the natural denouement, namely the glorious victory of true love, with the help of the divine mothers of the universe—Gaṅgā, Prthivi and Arundhatī, who made the fickle-minded people realise their mistakes and repent. The picture of Rāma and Sitā, as drawn by Bhavabhūti in his Uttararāmacarita with the emotional background so vividly pictured, and, also, the exquisite psychological harmony created, may help one to get reconciled to the idea of the reunification thus effected, for a moment. The scene in the Janasthāna, in the company of Bhavabhūti, keeps us spell-bound, and makes us agree that, that was the only possible denouement. But, once we come down to the normal worldly atmosphere, there seems to be something wrong somewhere. A question mark remains in our hearts. These people, whose opinions seem to be immensely valuable to king Rāma; these people, who bent their heads down in shame due to the scathing remarks and questions of Arundhatī, Mother Prthivi and Devī Gaṅgā; are they really convinced of their mistake once and forever? Are they going to keep their respectful, nay, worshipful attitude towards the noblest of women, forever and anon? We are not sure! The poet himself has reminded us in the beginning of the play that the public is always evil-minded as far as the Sadhuta of women as well as literature is concerned. The Later poet Dīṅgnāga, is still more unconvincing, though he has tried to follow closely the footsteps of the predecessor he admired. The Sitā who weeps and wails pitiably, when left to her fate, who gets frightened at the footsteps of a stranger, and who

1. यथा श्रीणां तथावाचां साधुते दुर्जनो जनः।

U. R. Ch. I. p. 5
without a word, is prepared to take the vow to please the fickle-minded people, seems to be a stranger to us. She does not seem to have anything in common with the noble princess whom we met before, in Mithilā, in Ayodhyā, in the Panchavatī, in Lankā, and in the hermitage of Vālmiki at any time. We are left wondering at the re-union of these two new characters which was achieved in such conditions through such ways and means. The acceptance of the banished Sītā, thus forced upon the king Rāma, does not seem to satisfy either of them or anybody else. It seems to be the utter defeat and destruction of the nobility of womanhood. The play that seems to sound a note of happiness, is really putting to shame, Indian womanhood and all that stands for it.

Perhaps, these truths were realized by the later dramatists who took-up the same theme for then works. But, before coming to that, we have to turn to some other poets who portrayed Sītā in their dramas. We have already examined the Anargharāghava of Murāri, the Balarāmāyana of Rājaśekhara and also the Prasannarāghava of Jayadeva. All these three poets, seem to be following the footsteps of Bhavabhūti’s Mahāvīracarita to a great extent. In the Anargharāghava, only Śurpaṇakhā and Śramaṇā seem to take any active part. Sītā is brought on the stage only in the last act where she is rescued from captivity and taken back to Ayodhyā by Rāma. Of course, the purification by fire-ordeal is plainly made known to the audience, lest they should forget the stigma that could so easily be put on the character of a woman. There is actually nothing to tell us about the real condition of women at the time. Rāma is shown to be very lovingly describing the sights on the way, to Sītā, while they are travelling to Ayodhyā in the Puṣpaka. But this does not mean anything, for it looks more like the means used by the poet to show off his own scholarship and

1. Chapter V. Pp. 287-300
command of language, than anything else.

Rājaśekhara, in his Balarāmayana, tries to reconstruct the whole story in his own clever way. He accepts the various recensions of the story as told by all his predecessors and combines them to suit his own purpose of raising the hero and all connected with him, to a divine level. Here, in this play, there are quite a number of women characters, all good, quiet, submissive and obedient to their husbands. Similarly, the picture of Śūrpaṅakhā is also a combination of the pictures painted by Vālmīki and Bhavabhūti. She is an intelligent and efficient officer in the diplomatic corps of Lanka, and works faithfully for the welfare of her country. But, she is also an ordinary woman with likes and dislikes, ruling passions, and enough unscrupulousness when her own desires are thwarted.

Jayadeva in his Prasannarāghava once more tells the story in a dramatic form. All these poets seem to have a pattern in treating the various characters, much more so in the case of the women characters. In the Mahāvīrācarita of Bhavabhūti, we noticed for the first time, the clear contrast between the women of Āryāvarta, and those belonging to the Dravidian families. All the later writers who treated the main part of the story of Rāmāyana seem to have kept up this difference. The Sītā portrayed by all these writers shows the same traits. She is simple, obedient, soft-hearted, weak and completely dependent on her husband. The end and aim of the women of her class seem to live like a creeper clinging to the tree, just a shadow without any life of their own. But, the characters belonging to the Dravidian races—Śūrpaṅakhā, Śramaṇā and others—are of a different category altogether. These women have their family-life, emotional-life, and also different individualities of their own, as has been already noticed. That is to say, the trend first brought to light by Bhavabhūti in his first play, and perhaps disliked strongly by his audience, was followed up by the later
writers. It would be interesting to know the reason if we possibly can. Perhaps it may not be very wrong to conclude that, while in the North, which was the birth-place of the Dharmasūtras, the Sūtras etc., the women were being pushed down, the South which was kept safely apart from those influences due to geographical, historical and political reasons, had its women continuing more or less in the same old way, enjoying equal rights with the men. It may not be too much to assume that the dramatists, who were catering to the Sanskrit speaking audience, were anxious not to shock the orthodox society of the Aryans by showing their women in a different way from what they wished them to be. But, they did not care if the true condition of the Dravidian women, who never came under the veil, and did not have to suffer seclusion or oppression very much, was shown on the stage; for, that would actually help them to be dumped as Rākṣasīs—unrefined, uncultured and unscrupulous. The fact that none of these poets ever hesitated to denounce their character and behaviour, only supports our conclusions.

After this period, as we have noticed, a lull seems to have come over the creative genius in dramatic literature. Though plays continued to be written, the characters, specially the women characters, appear to have lost all life and individuality. The play having fallen to the types of lyric poems, it seems futile to look for living characters in them. Only late in the 19th century when things began to change in society, the stage seems to be catching the eye of the people, and consequently encouraging the creative genius of the poets also. But along with the change of times, the poets too seem to have changed their outlook on life. The modern Sanskrit poets, as we have noticed in the foregoing pages, instead of going to Vālmiki or Vyāsa for their themes,

1. Chapter VII.
turned their attention to the pages of history and even to the contemporary happenings in society. In this period, we are forced to approach the modern Indian languages to see the portrait of Sītā according to the present age. But, before actually embarking upon the conclusion of this topic it will be useful to recapitulate the influences which made the modern dramas what they are.

Literature in the modern Indian languages as well as in Sanskrit was greatly influenced by political and social reformers from the later half of the 19th century up till the attainment of independence. After this a new trend seems to be developing. Right from Swami Dayananda and Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lokamanya Tilak, Shri Arbindo, Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore, Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa and last, but not the least, Mahatma Gandhi—all have influenced it, the modern Indian dramas being no exception. Gandhiji's impress on literature, as on the life as a whole, being the latest, most powerful and universal, deserves to be recalled with special respect. His was the cause of the Truth, hence it naturally touched all aspects of life, which included, as a major contribution, the regeneration of woman. He said: "Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things, and not a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of vicious custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over woman which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair being complementary to one another, each helps the other, so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows as a necessary
corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of both."\(^1\) And further, "It (the female sex) is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith and knowledge. A woman’s intuition has often proved truer than Man’s arrogant assumption of superior knowledge. There is method in putting Sītā before Rāma, and Rādhā before Kṛṣṇa."\(^2\)

These outpourings of the heart of ‘the greatest man of our times’ are not isolated in time and space. They have always existed in the minds of the noble and the great. But, Mahatma Gandhi followed these up with ceaseless action and inspired many a man to do likewise. The poets and the playwrights were not behind in their response. The result was a new light, a new movement, and a new trend also in literature—to make a special mention of the dramas with which we are here immediately concerned—of the modern Indian languages.

In the modern age, when woman is once more coming to her own, not by oppressive or aggressive means, but through the soft, sure and noble way of love and sacrifice, Sītā, the ideal of Indian womanhood is brought again to the people to be visualised in a new light and to be understood in the correct way. The Sītā, by Dvijendralal Roy in Bengali and the Bhūmikānyā Sītā by Mama Varerkar in Marathi, are the two plays that give us the opportunity to do this. As has been already noticed,\(^3\) the pictures we see in these two plays are very very different from any of the earlier ones we have seen, even as they are different from each other. This may be due to the varying environments in which the poets found themselves, for, while we cannot miss the soft, sweet

1. From a speech at the meeting of Bombay Bhagini Samaj, Feb., 20, 1918
2. The Young India, 15-9-1921
self-abnegating Bengali mother in the Sītā, it is impossible not to notice the courageous, self-confident and plainspoken Mahārāṣṭrian heroine in the Bhāmīkanyā. It is very significant, that exile of Sītā by Rāma, and not the earlier portion, attracted both these writers. The note struck by the master-poet, Kālidāsa about the injustice of Rāma evidenced in the exclamation of Vālmīki: "I am indeed angry with the elder brother of Bharata because of this wrong action towards you," perhaps, re-echoed from those far off centuries into the seeing brains and feeling hearts of the modern poets, who were witnessing the same injustice of man towards woman in every sphere of life. At the same time, the love, sacrifice, patience and forbearance of the woman in her everyday life which they were experiencing, struck another note in the imagination of the emotional Bengali poet. He visualised the Sītā who, in spite of every injustice, she suffered, could say, "May you be my husband in all coming rebirths, and may there not be this separation." He also remembered those mothers-in-law, whom Sītā remembered first, in her utmost agony, and indirectly requested for moral support. The results are, the Sītā, who voluntarily came forward to choose exile for herself to relieve her husband from a difficult situation, and also the Kauśalyā who came to king Rāma and begged on her bended knees to stop him from the cruel action he was about to take against his innocent wife.

The whole play—Sītā by Dvijendralal Roy—in fact, is an exposition of the bygone Brāhmaṇa supremacy which held

1. त्वां प्रत्यक्समालकुप्रवृत्तावस्तयेव मन्युर्म्यंताप्रेये मे ।

R. V. XIV. 73

2. मूयो यथा में जननास्तरेदापि स्वेतम्ब भत्ति न च विप्रयोगः ।

R. V. XIV. 66

3. क्षणुजनं सर्वंतनुमनेऽविशाप्य प्रापितम्यस्नामः ।

R. V. XIV. 60

प्रजानिमेयं मयं वर्तमानं सूनोरश्रुव्यायत चेतसेति ॥
every thing under its thumb. The scene being Ayodhyā and the times represented those of implicit obedience to the social law-givers, the heart was to be crushed for the so-called duty to rule supreme. Woman the wife, woman the sister, and woman the friend had to bow down to the stern demands of the kingly duty, namely, the dumb obedience to the Brāhmaṇa preceptor. Every time, when a question of right or wrong arose, the only answer that King Rāma could give was, “It is the order of our preceptor, Vasiṣṭha”, as though that was the final word that could convert even the wrong actions into right ones. Only at last, when sage Vālmiki himself stood up for the sake of pure love above every thing, and challenged Vasiṣṭha in clear words, that the latter accepted defeat and allowed the unfortunate King to follow his heart’s injunctions. Even then, Sītā is not strong enough to stand up for her rights. This Sītā is simple and loving. She is self-sacrifice personified, the very image of love for her children and devotion to her husband. She knows and feels the injustice. But, the self-effacing forbearance is personified in this Sītā, who is portrayed by the masterhand at the beginning of the new awakening of Indian woman. She is the ideal woman of the age which pronounces that “the woman has only one right, one duty—self-sacrifice; self-effacement.” And this acceptance raises her above all creation. The misery of such a woman, the poet shows, will arouse even the forces of nature. For, the moment Sītā was accepted back by Rāma, there was an earthquake, and she was engulfed in a divine lustre and was removed beyond the reach of any human hand, thus taken away from all possible insults for ever after. The story told by Vālmiki was retold once more; but in a different manner, with a different emphasis and a different significance.

Closely following the same trend, but in a more

1. ‘स्त्री का एक ही अधिकार है, एक ही धर्मः प्रातमसम्पर्ण”—“Didi”
pronounced way, the same story is retold by Mama Varerkar. Sita is once more brought before us, this time not alone but with her sister Urmilā, a much more wronged woman than herself. The theme and the trends of thoughts expressed are the same, and cover almost the same period. But, this poet does not agree with Bhavabhūti and Diṅgaṇga, who could envisage the idea of Sītā's re-union with Rāma once again. He saw the impossibility and futility of such a step, considering all the circumstances in which the exile was ordered and also the wisdom of the earlier poets, Vālmiki and Kālidāsa, in leaving it at that. In this play, Sītā and Urmilā show a higher standard of wisdom, self-confidence and also self-respect. Though the incidents and the characters are the same, the results and reactions are not what we have been seeing all through, ever since Kuśa and Lava are supposed to have sung the Rāmāyana for the first time. It is only in this drama that the idea, conceived by the first poet in the last vow of Sītā, i.e. the significance of the final proof she gave of her unblemished character, was finally and fully explained by herself and also by Urmilā. This marks the milestone in the upward climb of woman in her march through the ages. From the height at the vedic times, she was slowly climbing down till she reached the lowest level, where the probable fall was arrested, with a jerk.

These two plays, though coming from the master-minds of two important modern Indian languages, are really the landmarks in the destiny of Indian womanhood as a whole.

The various other Sanskrit plays and also the plays written in the modern Indian languages during this period clearly support the conclusions we have arrived at. It is often said that the oriental woman is a slave. This remark only shows the ignorance of the speaker. The fact is only this, that self-assertion is not her quality. A selfish world, taking advantage of this characteristic, paved the way for
her downfall to a great extent. Though the law-givers paid
the highest tributes to women as mothers, they restricted
women as such, by innumerable rules and laws. The out-
ward conditions also helped in this by making it necessary
to protect women who were really the pillars of society.
These laws which were meant for protection, themselves
narrowed the scope of the development of women, thus de-
feating the very purpose for which they were created.

These truths about women did not find their way into
the dramas, except through casual references and some deli-
berate statements. There are evidences within the plays to
show that generally the education of girls was confined to
music, dance and other fine arts, and those who belonged
to rich and noble families were no exceptions to this rule.
By the time of Bhavabhūti, we see that veil had become the
necessary equipment of a married woman. The Sati system
also seems to have come into vogue as has been already noti-
ced.

We also find that in the later dramas, the women
characters presented are lesser in number and so is the case
of dramatic effect. The dramas seem to be mere narratives
in prose and verse, a kind of long descriptions without any
real dramas. Perhaps, the reason is not far to seek. While
studying about the origin and development of Sanskrit
drama, we have noticed that there were clear proofs to show
that women participated freely in the acting and that, with-
out accomplished women, success in the staging of plays was
considered impossible, as could be conjectured from the
story of the creation of the apsaras for representing the
Kaiśikī Vritti. In those earlier days, we have also referen-
ces to dramatic companies of women. Later on, in Bhava-
bhūti’s plays for the first time, we come across the statement
about men acting the roles of women, thus indicating the
absence of women on the stage in general. This naturally
should have become a handicap to the successful depiction of
feminine characters and soft sentiments on the stage. Having to resort to the second best choice, of taking a man with the nearest possible feminine characteristics, should have spoilt the fervour and enthusiasm of the audience as well as the performers. Thus, music and dance which added to the beauty of the ancient performances also slowly died out. It is only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that these characteristics of the Sanskrit theatre, as ordained by Bharata, seem to be coming back once again. This may be considered as the revival of the theatre and plays to a certain extent.

The last half of the 19th century was a time of renaissance in many ways, and it was the era of the beginning of heroism and patriotism in India. The need of these ideals was felt by scholars in all literature. The result of this was shown in Sanskrit language, by scholars like Pancaratna Tarkācārya, Yājñika and others, whom we have already referred to in the previous chapter. Plays began to be written with themes hitherto untouched. Sāvitri, Damayanti and such other bold women from the epics attracted the attention of the new artists, and they dared to present the heroines in a better light than the weak, and frail puppets that were portrayed in the medieval days.

Slowly, with the growing patriotic spirit and desire for freedom among the people, the value and importance of women in society began to be realised also. Padminī of Chittore, Rani Durgāvatī of Indore, Lakṣmībāi of Jhānsi and such others gave inspiration to the poets. The political and social conditions gave opportunities for such poets who wrote the Samyogītaparinayam, Amaramangalam and other similar plays in Sanskrit. True, that these Sanskrit plays are not as popular as they deserve to be. But the reason for this is the rapid development of the various regional languages and also the displacement of Sanskrit as a spoken language by these. Still, we are able to see that, there is a definite change of
mind and attitude on the part of the scholars of Sanskrit also. From here onwards we see that the women characters portrayed are individuals with life and character, real human-beings with the strength and weaknesses. These new characteristics are more and more pronounced in the plays written in the various modern Indian languages.

The women characters taken even from the traditional lines, seem to have regained their status and position in the society, irrespective of the fact whether the plays are written in Sanskrit or in one of the spoken languages, as is proved by the various plays we have studied in the previous chapter. Though the character and characteristics are the same, we find in them a more pronounced individuality, courage and self-respect, which was hitherto unknown in the women represented on the Sanskrit stage. The weeping, whining weak creature seem to have been replaced by soft but firm, gentle but dignified, loving and living characters, ennobled by self-confidence, and a charming and self-reliant disposition. The Sītā of Mama Varerkar, the queen of Chittore, the Sāvitrī, the Sītālakṣāmī, and the Umminitankā of the different Malayalam plays we have examined, prove this irrefutably. The potentialities of woman as the nation-builder came to be more and more emphasized in the modern Indian plays, whereas the earliest writers had depicted her as the supplement and complement of man.

While examining the Sanskrit plays, with special reference to the women characters, we have had an opportunity to study the difference or otherwise between the theory as laid down by the law-givers and the actual practice as could be verified from the plays themselves. The Nātyaśāstra of Bharata lays down rules for all possible and probable contingencies on the theatre and also for the staging of the dramas. In this connection, details as to the use of music and dance in the play are given with great care. Then the warning note also is sounded that these are to be introduced
within the play always keeping in mind the propriety of occasion, person, place and other things.\textsuperscript{1} Though this is so, we do not have much music or dance in any plays available to us before Kālidāsa. The performance of the Purva-rānga allows the elaborate use of music and dance, but the Mālavikāgnimitra is the only play available to us in which the dance and music help towards the development of the plot.\textsuperscript{2} In the Vikramorvaśīya, we have a slight indication of dance and music in the fourth act where the king is wandering from place to place, in search of Urvaśī, his beloved. In the Abhijñānaśākuntala also we have music within the bodyplot of the play, where Hāṃsapadikā is heard singing in the interlude before the fifth act of the play.\textsuperscript{3} Similarly, in the interlude after the sixth act, the maids-in-waiting at the palace are singing and dancing to celebrate the spring festival when they are chided by the gardener.\textsuperscript{4} In the Mrčha kaṭika of Sudraka, mention is made of a music performance, but it is not actually presented on the stage. Here, we also hear the poet ridiculing the man who sings, even as the woman who repeats the Vedic mantras.\textsuperscript{5} All these are proofs to show that dance and music were part and parcel of dramatic performances, and mostly they were the monopoly of women, though men also had their own place in the dance, the Tāndava type specially being meant for them. Still, we do not find any other Sanskrit plays having actually included

1. Nātyaśāstra : Chapter 34
2. Mālavikāgnimitra : Act II.
3. Ab. Ś. V. p. 101
4. Ab. Ś. VI. p. 132
5. विषयकः—मम तावद्विवामामेव हास्यं जायते। इत्यादि संस्कृतं पदन्त्या मनुष्योपेः च काकली गायता। स्त्रीद्व तावद्विस्तरं पदन्ति दत्तन	
   वनस्येवश्चति: भृंगीक तुसूजन्तः करोति। तत्र श्रवणीय फकाकली गायने शुक्लैयोगदामस्येस्ति बुधुपरोमोति हव मन्त्रं जपनु हृद
   ने न रोचते। Mrčha. III. Pp. 81-82
song and dance within the body-plot. There are stage directions indicating the permissibility of songs and dance where some celebration or enjoyment is indicated. But, generally speaking, after Kālidāsa, we do not have any author including these within the play, till the modern age. One may say that, there are verses sprinkled all over the play which can be sung; but this does not at all seem to be real music in any case. And, even these are lesser in number in the really good specimens of the Sanskrit plays. It was only later on when dramas lost their dramatic qualities and became stereotyped lyrical narrations, that the verse found greater importance, as in the case of the works of Murāri and Rājaśekhara. How far these devices were useful on the stage to interest the audience, is a doubtful point. Judging from our own experience, we will have to accept that song or dance or anything, for that matter, cannot be enjoyable or even useful if sense of propriety is not observed. Experience on the modern theatre, where particular preference is given to songs, has proved the undesirability of interrupting the smooth course of the development and action of the plot, in any way. Even if the music is exquisite, if it is brought in the midst of a period of tension, it will only sound a jarring note. These considerations, and also the disappearance of women from the stage in the later centuries, must have caused the complete absence of these elements on the Sanskrit stage.

But, with the revival of the dramas in the modern Indian languages, specially in Tamil, Bengali and Marathi, songs began to play an important part and this some times went to such an extent that the theme, plot and characterisation began to be sacrificed for the sake of songs and music. Extremes always lead to disgust and music was no exception to the rule. The later half of the 19th century and the beginning of the present century saw the renaissance, not only in social life, but in art and literature also, as we have
already noticed. The refined taste of the general public began to demand realistic idealism once more in the plays they liked to witness. The indiscriminate use of music within the course of action had to be stopped. At the same time, the writers also realised the effect of songs intelligently used in the proper place, and they took advantage of this to create more interest in this way. Sanskrit playwrights began to use songs within the play once more. The *Samyogita-parinaya* is one such play where both dance and music are used successfully for the first time in the modern age. The songs here are not used as part of the conversation, but only as means leading on to the development of the plot. Another point to be noticed here is that all these songs were to be sung by one or the other of the women characters of the play.

The vernacular plays, which had more advantages, because of the languages being in use, finally, fixed the place of music within the play, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The plays like the *Rakṣabandhan* (Hindi) of Harikrishna Premi, and similar plays have proved the effect of music on the aesthetic and psychological planes also. Along with the change that came over the social order, the patternisation of the dramas gave way to variety and realism. There is nothing that stays permanent in this world. Change being the spice of life, every art and science that contributes towards the progress of humanity, have to be themselves moving to keep pace with the same. We have noticed, in the very beginning that there was nothing that could help us to trace the evolution of the Sanskrit drama with any great certainty. We met with a full developed stage and we were forced to draw our own conclusions as best as we could. There were rules and regulations on the theoretical side which also have their own story to tell. But the discrepancy between the theory and the practice we visualised in the later age, also sets us thinking. Still, when
we come down to the present age and examine the plays in
the various Indian languages and also Sanskrit, we are able
to find how the rules and regulations laid down in the
Nāṭyaśāstra are finding their fulfilment in these works.
Now, we have plays with all sentiments depicted in them
with a real reflection of the human life that is expected to be
copied with ingenuity. The requirement of Bharata, to
combine instruction with enjoyment seems to be now rea-
ching its fulfilment. There seems to be nothing wrong in
concluding that the dramatic art which was at its height of
glory in the most ancient days and became lost or declined,
has now once again found its way upwards to help humanity
on its onward march.

As we have tried to show in the previous pages, the
women characters of the Sanskrit plays have their own
story to tell. They told us about the warlike Kṣatriyas and
spiritually advanced Brāhmaṇas whose supplements and
complements they themselves were; they told us also about
how they, by their own nature, had to suffer the disadvan-
tage of being considered as rivals by the religious teachers,
and how consequently they had to climb down to the lowest
point in the social scale; they also told us how the Kṣatriyas
held out to a certain extent, keeping their own counsel and
thus saved their own selves and also the whole woman kind;
they told all this and much more. Later on we saw how the
revival of the status of women came through these specks
of light kept up by the princesses of the old, fanned by the
advent of new ideas and ideals in the modern age. Though
secluded within the four-walls of the home, they had kept
the torch burning, to be unveiled at a time when darkness
engulfed the whole nation in the form of slavish mentality
which came as a result of ignorance. When the time came,
they heeded the call and came forward with undaunted
spirit, indomitable self-respect and un-relenting self-sacri-
cifice, to stand beside the man for the sake of universal pros-
perity and peace of humanity. "India in every generation has produced millions of women who never found fame but whose daily existence has helped to civilize the race and whose warmth of heart, self-sacrificing zeal, unassuming loyalty and strength in suffering when subjected to trials of extreme severity, are among the glories of this ancient race.¹

This is the story of Indian woman from ages gone by, up to date, and the glimpses of this we were able to see on the pages of the Sanskrit dramatic literature, and also later on in dramas of the modern languages which owe much to the former. The Sītā of Kālidāsa had given life to the Sītā of Dvijendralal Roy and Mama Varerkar, as we have already seen. The process has not stopped; it is still continuing, opening the way for better and greater women to be seen, understood and followed.

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¹ Dr. Radhakrishnan: Religion and Society. Pp. 197-98
APPENDIX

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ICONOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

It is said, "Nature is the art of God. The human art is but its imitation". As about every other science, there are minute details given about the arts, for example, painting, drawing and sculpture, in the ancient Indian literature. According to an admired connoisseur of arts, the very ancient paintings constituted "a kind of writing intelligible to all in those days. When all could not read, this was the way open to instruct people in past history, purāṇas, legends etc. The caves at Verul and Ajantā are books on history of those times, and these places are, as it were, libraries or reading-rooms and universities giving religious instructions of which all can take advantage". This is true also about other relics and artistic remains available to us today through the efforts of the archaeological excavators and surveyors. The ruins of buildings, the pictures carved or drawn on the walls, stūpas, etc. and the decorations on doors, arches, walls and ceilings of buildings speak of the people and their culture of the contemporary times. Basing on this assumption, we are justified in trying to look for evidences in the archaeological and iconographical works to corroborate our findings in the course of the study recorded in the previous pages.

As we examine the art-works found in various places, two schools of artists, representing two different cultures

1. स्तुपि: देवशिल्पम्। तस्या: प्रतिकुलति: मानुषं विल्पम्।
seem to us to have been at work—the caves of Ajantā and Verul representing one school, and the stūpas etc. of Sānci and Bharhut representing the other. It has not been possible to get all the material to illustrate the findings to the full. There are enough evidences that illustrate the verbal portraits drawn by the various authors up to the 17th century. There are others which show a previous knowledge of such descriptions; or, in other words, the pictures and sculptures that seem to be inspired by the earlier authors. An attempt is made in the following pages to describe and illustrate a few of such sculptures and paintings.
Ardhanārīśvara: Cave I, Bādāmi, Western Cāḷukya, 6th century A.D.

Here Śiva is visualized as half female, with Pārvatī and Yāti forms also shown separately as art symbols.

एकैशिर्यं स्वततोशि प्रणतवहुकले व: स्वयं कृतिवास:।
कान्तासंविश्वेदोष्ट्विधियमनसं व: परस्ताबलीनाम।।
प्रमोदिनेयं कुलसं जगदिपि ततुभिक्षतो नामिनान:।
समाप्यालोकयां व्यपनयतु स वर्तामसी कृतिमीश:।।

—Mālavikāgnimitra
The following plates (Nos. II, III, & IV) representing the sculpture and painting of a thousand years from the 1st or 2nd century B.C. to the 8th century A.D. show that women during this period did not use the veil. Headwear is seen in plates II and III which, in all likelihood, must have been the fashion among the higher classes.

Women are watching the procession from balconies without the veils but they are using headwears.

PLATE II

A royal procession: Northern Gateway, Sānci, 1st or 2nd century B.C.
Worship of the Bodhi Tree: Western Gateway, Sāñchi, 1st or 2nd century B.C.

Women are offering worship in a mixed throng without the veil, but they have headwears.
Rājā in procession: Ajantā Frescoes from wall-paintings. Cave I.
Vākaṭaka, 6th century A. D.

The chhatra shows the lady on horseback in front of the king to be the Rāṇi, which, if correct, indicates the royal custom of the time. All women are without the veil and even without headwears. One of the women is holding a sword and another a staff or a javelin.
A scene from the Rāmāyanā, a terracotta plaque from Nandor, district Birbhum. Folk art. 17th century A.D.

(a) Left: Sītā reproving Laksṇāna for his delay in succouring Rāma in his hunt for the deer (Māyāmpga). The noble warrior recoils against Sītā's anger and reluctantly leaves her in fateful isolation.

वीता—श्रुणु लक्ष्मण ! कि न लर्से। ग्रन्ततरग्रामिनीं क्रोण्यं लक्ष्मीं। न लर्सयम्। एकं तेषां।
लक्ष्मणं—(कणो विधाय) शान्तं पापं शान्तं पापम।
श्रीं मां विजलसिं गमीरविचारं
प्रथमं सती यदविचारं चला।
लक्ष्मणं तव विपणयं तव 
परिवतं प्रकुरतारपदं हि॥
—द्वारयादिकमानि

(b) Right: Sītā in the Asokavānīka.
Amazon Palace Guard: Mathurā Museum, Kus-
han, 2nd cen-
tury A. D.

Yavani or Kirāṭī is men-
tioned by Kāli-
dāsa as the
keepers of wea-
poms.
One of the chief means of sporting was the swing which still continues to command the same popularity.

(Malavikagnimitra)

PLATE VII

Krishna is born and Devaki is handing him over to Vasudeva to take him to Gokula.

(Bhilsa)

PLATE VII

Devaśī and Yasodā: Devagārha, 5th century A.D.
Woman under the Raktāsoka tree: From a railing pillar, Kuśana, 2nd century A.D.

According to the beliefs of the times Raktāsoka tree could blossom by the touch of the foot of a pure girl of noble family. Kālidāsa refers to this in his poems and dramas.
The picture shows the left end of a king carrying away a princess on an elephant. A similar situation is described in the Purāṇa: yoga-dhārayya, where īdāya carries away Vāsavadatta.
A medallion showing subjugation of Nalagiri: Amaravati, 1st or 2nd century A.D.

—Pratijñāyaugandhārayaṇa
Musicians: Wall-painting from Cave 17, Ajantā, Vākaṭaka, 6th century A. D.

The young girls of royal or noble families were expected to learn dancing, music and painting. The earlier Sanskrit plays make particular reference to their necessity. Almost all the heroines of the Nāṭakas, like Vāsavadatta of Bhāsa, Mālavikā and Iravati of Kālidāsa, are examples. In the Rāmāyaṇa there is a reference to a women’s dramatic troupe. The various carvings and paintings in the caves of Ajantā and other places corroborate such statements.
Women's Orchestra : Cave 7, Aurangabad. Vākaṭaka, 5th century A. D.

This seems to be a representation of a dance and drama troupe, as referred to in the Rāmāyaṇa.

—Vālmiki-Rāmāyaṇa
PLATE XIV

A bracket figure: Lakṣmana Temple, Khajuraho, 10th century A.D.

The picture seems to represent the Hermitage—“Parṇakuṭī”, prepared by Lakṣmana, as in the Āscaryacūḍāmaṇī. The leafy decorations and door-like arch are additional similarities.

लक्ष्मण—

व्याघ्रोपेता निराकारोभ्यवदान पुण्डरिकाजो मृगावः
परेः सच्च समाप्वामि शवयं ब्रह्माती गुप्पुप्पस्वर्गः त
ब्राह्मणमुपपादायां वल्येरायां विष्टरं
सिब्रामिभावं जित्याद्रिपक्करस्वरोविकृद्दपं रेयूहि: ॥

—Āscaryacūḍāmaṇī
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