



Makers of Indian Literature

BANABHATTA

K. Krishnamoorthy



Banabhatta: A 7th-century Sanskrit prose writer and poet of India, Banabhatta is the celebrated author of *Kadambari* and *Harshacharita*, masterpieces in Sanskrit literature. Though his supremacy as a grand stylist, as a master of the elaborate phrase and poetic imagery, has never been questioned, his habitual sublimity of style, his very forte, has been an impediment to a just appreciation of his works.

This monograph is a modest attempt to remove hindrances to the enjoyment of a great epic stylist, a sublime poet in prose, a visionary ranging his eyes across the lives, and a humanist with a profound message to mankind. Though the book is mainly designed for the general reader, scholars also may find it of refreshing interest.

Keralapura Krishnamoorthy (1923-1997) had a brilliant academic career at the University of Mysore and served as Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit in the Karnataka University, *Dharwad* from 1959 to 1984. His well-known publications include *Dhvanyaloka* text critically edited (1982), *Vakroktijivita* text critically edited (1977), monograph on *Kālidāsa* (1972) and independent works like *Essays in Sanskrit Criticism* (1974), *Studies in Indian Aesthetics and Criticism* (1979) and critical edition of Bharata's *Natyasastra* with *Abhinavabharati*. A recognised authority on Indian poetics, Krishnamoorthy has won several research prizes and awards including the President's Certificate of Honour in 1978.

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BANABHATTA

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A. D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi

Makers of Indian Literature
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SAHITYA AKADEMI

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Preface

This monograph is designed to provide the student of literature and the general reader with a brief introduction to Banabhatta, a towering figure in classical Sanskrit literature. His influence on later writers not only in Sanskrit but in Prakrit and other Indian languages also has been remarkable and his genius as a prose-writer is comparable to that of Kalidasa as a dramatist and poet.

A short account of Bana's life and works is provided here through a series of chosen extracts in English translation illustrating the major aspects of the author's art. An analysis and criticism of each of Bana's works has been attempted. An estimate of Bana's great contribution to our classical literature has been provided against a background of Indian literary theory. The extent of his influence on the development of literary forms in Indian languages is also indicated. Original Sanskrit passages have been eschewed, and in their place English renderings, sometimes adopted from the standard 19th century translations by Mrs. C.M. Ridding in the case of *Kadambari* (1896) and by E. W. Cowell and F.W. Thomas in respect of *Harshacharita* (1897), have been offered. But the shorter translations, and all the metrical renderings are my own.

Preface

A short bibliography has been provided at the end to help further reading.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Sahitya Akademi for giving me this opportunity of writing on one of our foremost classical writers.

My warm thanks are due to Dr. R.A. Malagi of the English Department for his help in going through the proofs.

—**K. KRISHNAMOORTHY**

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
1. Bana: His Life and Works	1
2. Bana on the Literary Art	11
3. Hymn to the Mother-Goddess	19
4. Harshacharita	24
5. Kadambari	51
6. Bana's Style	80
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	91

Bana: His Life and Works

Today the novel is a dominant literary form and the serious novelist is automatically regarded as being a conscientious artist. Biography and autobiography too have their place secure in *belles lettres*. But in classical Sanskrit literature, the history of which is at least two thousand years old, these genres were almost unknown and unrecognised until Bana appeared on the scene and wrote his two immortal works in ornate prose which were at once hailed as works of genius, worthy of imitation by succeeding poets. Bana stands out like a Himalayan peak in giving a new literary dimension to Sanskrit prose and his singular success has been the despair of the numerous imitators that followed. Bana's *Kadambari* is not only the most celebrated prose romance in Sanskrit, it is also the best and its appeal has been universal down the centuries. Similarly, Bana's *Harshacharita* is the first work of its kind now extant, at once a biography of his great patron, viz. Emperor Harshavardhana, and an autobiography of the author. It is not only the first attempt in Indian literature at historiography but also authentic as far as it goes.

No wonder Bana came to be looked upon as an embodiment of the Goddess of Learning by succeeding generations of admirers. They were never tired of heaping upon him epithets of superlative

Banabhatta

praise. Some said that in the realm of letters, Bana was the sovereign; others regarded the world as exhausted by his descriptive genius, with nothing more than a few crumbs left for others after his rich repast. Even very great poets complimented Bana on his mastery of form, richness of content and depth of insight into the human heart. Thus, Bana soon became a legend by the sheer brilliance of his achievement. The generous gifts he received from the king became proverbial and even religious poets held him in high esteem as a hymnodist of the first rank who wrote a century of verses in praise of the Mother Goddess, viz., Chandi.

It is the usual practice of Sanskrit poets to maintain complete silence about themselves and their times. Even Kalidasa does not mention anything about himself or his patron king. And this silence has led to endless controversies among modern scholars. But we must thank Bana for being an exception to this general rule of reticence. He provides us with a detailed picture of himself, his family and his life and times, besides a glowing account of his patron, viz. Emperor Harsha. Bana is thus the first poet-historian and the first autobiographer in ancient India; and his account is refreshingly rich in throwing light on the high culture which flourished at royal courts in his times.

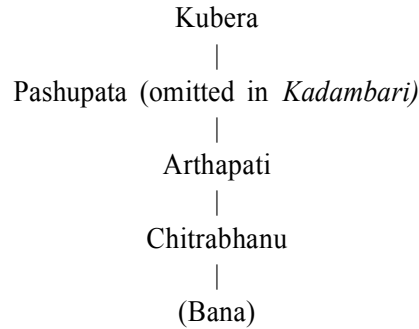
Bana, we know, enjoyed the unique privilege of a poet at Harsha's court, Harsha himself being the great *chakravartin* or Emperor in Hindu India, comparable to Chandragupta Vikramaditya in the extent of his empire, in his patronage of arts and letters, and in his own poetic gifts. We know from history that the period of his rule extended for no less than forty years (606 A D. to 647 AD.) and the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited India during his reign, and left us a memorable record of his travels in India. Another Chinese pilgrim I-tsing (who studied at Nalanda from 671 to 681 A D.) narrates how Emperor Harsha wrote the play *Nagananda* on Bodhi-sattva Jimutavahana and got it staged. We have also two

Bana: His Life and Works

more romantic comedies from the pen of Emperor Harsha, *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarshika*, whose literary excellence has been highly acclaimed by literary theorists of ancient India.

We might now summarise the details supplied by Bana himself regarding his genealogy and life in his two major works. In the pure *Purana* tradition Bana gives a legendary account of his lineage starting from the Creator Brahma himself and glorifying the progenitor of his gotra, viz., Vatsa. Bana was born in the village Pritikuta on the river Shona in the region of Kanyakubja.

The story only illustrates the regard Bana had for his hoary and celebrated ancestry. His immediately preceding ancestors were :



The village Pritikuta was a settlement of Brahmins celebrated for their learning and virtuous life. Bana's mother Rajadevi, passed away when he was very young and he was brought up by his father. But Bana was unlucky to lose his father also at the age of fourteen. This untimely demise of his father threw Bana into a deep distress; and he took to a wandering life to forget the sorrow. Chandrasena and Matsena were his half-brothers and Ganapati, Adhipati, Tarapati and Shyamala, his paternal cousins.

Indeed, Bana was born in affluent circumstances and had also received an all-round education in sacred and secular lores. We are told that his teacher was the great Bharchu who was adored by the

Banabhatta

Maukhari Emperors in whose domain the village Pritikuta was located. Bana's retinue during his tour was not less than that of a prince. It included his two half-brothers and a good many companions. But what surprises one is that it also included such varied and sundry members as a snake-doctor and a goldsmith, a painter and a singer, a dancing girl and a gambler. We have in all a list of forty-four members in Bana's cortege, each one with a special attainment in the arts and crafts of the time. Some of them were poets in various languages, a few were philosophers and quite a few were artists. There were personal attendants to look to the betel-chewing of the party, jugglers to amuse them and musicians to provide them music. There were gamesters and dice-players, actors and scribes, Buddhist monks and nuns, jewellers and physicians, ascetics of different denominations and story tellers, potters and shampooers. To afford such a medley of varied talents, drawn from different strata of society, during a long tour, Bana must have been extremely rich indeed; rich in mind as well as in money. Engaged in their company, Bana must have led a care-free and jovial life giving himself up to the best delights in life, visiting holy places, royal courts and educational centres and meeting poets and scholars. This gave him a first-hand insight into life and nature and filled him with a many-sided and all-round experience of men and manners. In short, his travels contributed as much as his learning to shape his innate genius. At long last, he got weary of his wanderlust and returned to his sweet home in Pritikuta. He was warmly welcomed by his mates and relatives there and his stay there was indeed very pleasant.

Bana's restful life in his home-village was, however, of short duration. On a summer evening, when Bana was resting after his mid-day meals, a courier called Mekhalaka despatched by Emperor Harsha's half-brother Krishna, was ushered into his presence. The letter brought by the courier contained an urgent summons to him

to call on Emperor Harsha without loss of time in His Majesty's camp at Manitora on the river Ajiravati. It was a journey of two days from Bana's hometown to the Emperor's camp. It appeared from the oral message conveyed by Mekhalaka that Krishna, the official at the Royal Court, was doing his best to assuage the ill-will of the Emperor directed against Bana and caused by some slander-mongering courtiers, jealous of Bana's wealth and learning. Though Krishna knew that the character of Bana was unsullied and his talents deserved royal recognition, he opined that Emperor Harsha could be convinced only by a proper personal explanation by Bana himself. None else could be of help because the Emperor had come to believe in the exaggerated accounts of Bana's unbridled life brought to him by the denigrators.

Bana was touched to the quick by the machinations of courtiers against him and he lost no time in paying a personal visit to the Emperor Harsha for vindicating his moral purity and impeccable character. Resting at night in way-side villages as a guest of friends and passing through thick forests, Bana reached Manitora on the third day. He was not without misgivings on the interview ahead with the Emperor Harsha. Bana knew that service entailed worries and the Emperor might have his own royal whims. Except his own resources, he had no influential dignitary or friend at Harsha's court to help him in this hour of need. Yet his mind was made up to face the situation manfully. He had offered prayers to the gods and taken the blessings of his elders; and this brought him some confidence. He leisurely walked into the camp surveying the royal stables of horses and elephants, the liveried guards and servants, and the throng of feudatory princes who had gathered from far-off places to pay their respectful tributes to the Emperor.

Thanks to Krishna's help at court, Bana got an early audience with the King, who treated him with scant respect at first, calling him a 'great libertine'. To this Bana's reaction was so sincere and

Banabhatta

spirited that the King soon changed his mind in his favour. In a ringing and eloquent speech Bana cleared himself of the unmerited charge:

O King, why do you say so, as if you do not know the truth, as if you are prone to doubting, as if you could be nose-led by others, as if you don't know the ways of the world? The nature of people is proverbially capricious and strange; they spread scandals as they please. But the great should investigate the truth by themselves. You should not misjudge me as if I am an ignoble commoner.

I come from a holy family of Brahmins well-known for their Soma sacrifices. I have received my complete education in the scriptures and I am living with my wed-ded wife. Where is the scope for my being a libertine? I might have been a little wayward in my younger years. But I have never transgressed law or religion. And I am now repentant myself even of that youthful waywardness of mine !

Within a few days of his stay at the court, Harsha was so much impressed by Bana's genius that Bana became his trusted friend. The Emperor heaped royal honours upon him. If we are to believe in anonymous quatrains extolling these, King Harsha presented to Bana herds of elephants, each one of them loaded with tons of gold ! No wonder, then, that Bana did his best to recompense the patron properly by writing the first ever biography of a historical king in the most gorgeous Sanskrit style of a prose-chronicle (*akhyayika*), viz. the 'Life of Harsha'. We learn that it was first recited in his hometown to delight his relatives and friends, who hailed it as a glorious and sanctifying composition even like the celebrated *Vayupurana* which they held in high regard.

If the 'Life of Harsha' brought the author immediate recognition, worldly wealth and royal favour, his other composition 'Kadambari',

a gem of a prose-romance named after the heroine, enshrined him in the hearts of posterity as the uncrowned king of Sanskrit prose, though the story was left half-finished, to be completed only by his son, variously called Bhushana or Pulinda. Some scholars have thought that even the 'Life of Harsha' is incomplete in as much as it leaves out many of the glorious achievements in the annals of the King's eventful career and stops with the recovery of Rajyashri and Harsha's rulership of Kanouj besides Sthaneshvar, which, in fact, is but the beginning of his glorious reign as Emperor of India.

We know, indeed, but little about the other details of Bana's family life. His wife's name is unknown and his son's name dubious. We also do not know how many children he had, what their attainments were, and so on.

In the tradition of later Shaiva poets and Jaina chroniclers, Bana is found invariably associated with Mayura and Matanga Divakara. Bana is invariably praised as a great devotee of Shiva and his invocatory verse to Shiva in the 'Life of Harsha' is invariably cited at the beginning of numerous epigraphs, even in the distant South. There is also a hymn on Shiva in rhythmic prose called *Banagadya*.

Of these contemporary poets, Mayura's 'Hymn to the Sun-God' consisting of a hundred ornate stanzas has come down to us, besides a love-lyric of eight sensual verses. Legends have grown that Mayura was the father-in-law or brother-in-law of Bana and that both wrote their devotional hymns in competition with each other and secured freedom from disease and crippled limbs respectively, by divine grace. Mayura is said to have contracted a disease by the curse of his own daughter or sister at his interrupting her privacy with a sensual line of verse, while Bana is said to have maimed his own limbs to demonstrate that he could regain them

Banabhatta

by the depth of his devotional poetry. But these legends may be dismissed as creations of the fancy of latter-day poets. But the verse around which this legend is woven is itself interesting:

Bana :

The night flees and droops the wan moon;
The lamp reels as if asleep so soon!
Pride should end with bowing they say,
But you do not give up your anger's sway.

Mayura :

O my love, your heart has hard become
By its closeness to your breast buxom!

Though, as seen above, Bana was a devoted Shaiva, he was not a bigot in religion. His works bear ample testimony to his tolerant outlook and contain high praises of not only all the gods of the Hindu Vedic and Puranic religion but also the Jaina and Buddhist faiths. Like his patron Harsha, Bana too was a great admirer of the Buddha and the Buddhist way of life. This is evidenced by his long and detailed description of the Buddhist teacher Divakaramitra, who succoured Rajyashri in the 'Life of Harsha', and whose hermitage gave asylum to adherents of various religions.

The rich qualities of Bana's head and heart are evident in almost every page of his writings. What strikes us most is the perfection of style which every verse or sentence of Bana reveals. This must have been the result of his wide learning, especially in the literary art, though he wears the mantle of scholarship very lightly. He liberally praises the master-poets of old, epic as well as classical, in Sanskrit and Prakrit—Vyasa, Satavahana, Bhasa, Kalidasa, Gunadhya and others. But unfortunately, the works of some of those earlier writers have not come down to us. He shows an intimate knowledge not only of the historical tradition in

ancient India but also of the mythological tradition embodied in epics and puranas. His mastery of literary theory is complete, extending to the most difficult figures of speech like paradox (*Virodhabhasa*) and paronomasia (*slesa*), alliteration (*anuprasa*) and twinning (*yamaka*), hyperbole (*atisayokti*) and poetic fancy (*utpreksa*). This would ordinarily be deemed equipment enough for one having literary ambitions. But Bana was well-read equally in all the schools of philosophy and in all the miscellaneous arts and sciences of the time. Grammar, prosody, sexology, the six systems of philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism—all these formed part of his equipment. His poetic sensibilities were thus fortified by sound learning and this rare combination has made his place secure in the realm of Sanskrit literature for thirteen centuries.

Judging by the affluent circumstances in which Bana was born and the royal patronage he was fortunate to secure, we feel that his literary output is rather scanty. As already indicated it appears as if he died prematurely; otherwise he would not have left his *magnum opus* half-done.

Apart from the works mentioned above, Bana is sometimes credited with the authorship of two plays, one extant and the other lost. The lost play is called 'Crowned Head Kicked' (*Mukataditaka*) and is known only from quotations given by later writers. One of them shows that it centres round the theme of Bhima's revenge upon the Kaurava King Duryodhana:

Like quarters shorn of their supporting elephants,
Like lions destroyed in their haunts,
Like boats with their massive wood cut down
Like the earth whence mountains big are blown
The warriors of the Kuru King into grief are thrown
As at deluge spelling ruin to one and all
And empty, alas, is His Majesty's Court-hall!

Banabhatta

The pathos of the original is indeed deep and cannot be brought out fully in any translation.

Two more verses from this lost play recently brought to light as citations in Bhoja's *Shrangara Prakasha* are:

Destroyed are the sons of Dhrtarashtra
—the vermin, one and all;
Drunk is the sweet blood of Duhshasana,
Fulfilled is my vow to braid up again
The dishevelled hair of Queen Draupadi.
Only one thing execution awaits:
That is the breaking of Kaurava's thighs.
If with my mace I can't break his thighs
And crush his gemmy crown under my foot,
I will offer my body as sacrifice
To fire, thick with smoke and glowing flames!

These verses show how Bana's lost play was also concerned with the fulfilment of Bhima's vows like *Venisamhara* of Bhatta Narayana¹.

The other play is entitled 'Parvati's Wedding' (*Parvati-parinaya*) which is a dramatic version of Kalidasa's *Kumara-sambhava*. Really, it is written by a very late Southerner, Vamana Bhatta Bana in the 15th century. It need not detain us longer here.

¹ For the original Sanskrit verses, see *Dr. V. Raghavan, Shrangara-Prakasha*, Madras, 1963, p.886.

Bana on the Literary Art

Modern scholars have shown by patient research how in Sanskrit the tradition of romantic fiction as well as heroic biography is at least as old as Patanjali (2nd century B.C.) who names some of them incidentally in his *Mahabhashya*. The ornate classical prose style also appears in epigraphs dating as far back as 150 A.D. and 335 A.D. But as none of them have come down to us, Bana has to be regarded as the first poet who achieved distinction in these literary forms. No meaningful study of his highly original works would be possible without a clear idea of the literary ideals envisaged by Bana himself, it would not do if we read the *Kadambari* as a romantic novel of today. If our judgments are to be of any worth, they should be based on the classical precepts not only current in Bana's times but also followed by him. Hence a few words on these precepts, in Bana's words as far as possible, would not be out of place.

We are forced to adopt this course of hunting up ideas on the literary art from Bana himself because no work of literary theory has come down to us which is positively prior to Bana in chronology; and the earliest work of the literary theorists that we now have—viz. of Bhamaha and Dandin—seem to frame their

rules about prose literature and its divisions after seeing Bana's two masterpieces. Bharata's great text-book, though more ancient, is solely concerned with dance-drama and ignores the prose forms. Hence we have to form our ideas by the observations of Bana himself, though, as we already saw, several works he mentions have been lost beyond recovery now. And fortunately, Bana has been quite liberal in giving expression to his ideas on literature in general and the prose genres in particular at the very beginning of his two great works. These ideas are found embodied in memorable verses. In the course of his compositions also, he goes sometimes out of the way to allude to literary pursuits at the courts of kings.

As an example of the last feature, we may take up the sights that catch the eye of Prince Chandrapida as he steps inside the royal palace after completing his education¹. The sculptured panels and paintings, the officers in uniform, the servants, the keepers of royal steeds and elephants are all naturally described here. But what is very interesting is an account of the literary pastimes going on in a well-furnished hall there:

The feudatory princes lounging there indulged in various pastimes as these. Some were conducting poetry discourses. Some were engaged in witty repartees. Some were solving metrical puzzles and poetic riddles. Others were reciting poems composed by the King himself. A few were acting in pantomime shows and operas. Still others were praising the excellences of poets . . .

The palace was full of newly acquired rich treasure piled up colourfully tier upon tier; *even like the prose work of a masterpoet wherein ever-new significances are revealed by a well-arranged series of syllables.*²

1. See *Kadambari*, Peterson's edition, Part-I, Bombay, J 900, pp. 88-90.

2. In the Sanskrit original the simile is based on a verbal pun (through commonly applicable epithets) which is lost inevitably in any rendering.

That gives us a very general idea of how a great prose writer's work was appreciated. Style was everything. Each syllable had to be richly embroidered in well-measured rhythmical units to startle the listener at every step with new and unexpected meanings! Such lavish ivory-work in language is unheard of in any other prose literature of the world. For this entails not only the unflinching use of compounds and alliterative effects, of pun and paradox, of hyperbole and metaphor, but also of rich associative shades of poetic significance contributing to the general sentiment of wonder and romance. The Sanskrit language possesses such a rich vocabulary of synonyms and homonyms and a syntax permitting compounds running on to two or three lines on a page; and this unique genius of the language has been so well and so artistically exploited by Bana that his achievement has perhaps never again been equalled in the history of Sanskrit literature. The royal courts provided an ideal opportunity for the cultivation of the poetic art along with wit and wordplay. Bana was a keen participant in such poets' congregations and a master of the verbal art as evidenced in his works. It must not be forgotten that it was a pastime of the *elite* only, as practised in the palace parties. There is thus no gainsaying the fact that Bana looked upon ornate literary prose as an aristocratic art requiring deep culture and refinement. It was not meant for the small fry. Another writer of a Sanskrit prose-romance—a compeer of Bana, if not a predecessor— Subandhu, boasts of his title that he is a 'punster on each and every syllable', a dexterity unknown in any other writer of antiquity in such profusion. These very virtues of those times have become vices as it were today because of the changing values in literary taste. But classical taste applauded pomposity as a great excellence by the name of 'brilliance' and called it the 'life' of prose. The acme of its praise took the form — "The touchstone of great poets is elevated prose", a dictum

which was well established in Indian criticism by the 8th century A.D.¹

The next important point which deserves to be noted is that Bana declares the 'Life of Harsha' as a 'historical chronicle' (*akhyayika*) in contradistinction to *Kadambari* which is designated a 'tale' (*katha*) though both come under *gadyakavya*. The former is an old word occurring in Vedic and epic literature alongside of 'story' (*akhyana*) as also in Kautilya² and Patanjali.³ In all these it has some association with the historical tradition as understood in India. That is to say, its kernel is a historical episode, however, encrusted with legendary motifs. It also has room for didactic maxims and often the hero narrates his adventures in the first person. The chapter divisions are called 'breathing pauses' (*ucchvasa*) and pithy sayings are in verses of set metres (*vaktra* etc.). Practically this is all that Bana states explicitly about the memoir or chronicle. But he is a little more detailed in his characterisation of the 'romantic tale'. He says:

Like a new bride come to the lover's bed
Eagerly on her own feet sped,
With murmurs sweet and graces bright,
The tale doth the people delight.

New tales told with figures bright
Implied similes, puns of art;
Nature's truths at their height
Like flowers fresh, win our heart!⁴

1. See Vamana's work on poetics, I, iii. 21f.

2. 1.5.

3. IV. 2.60.

4. *Kadambari*, I. 8-9. This translation is by the present author. By a pun Bana also suggests that the tale must be brimming with *rasa* or sentiment.

These ideas are also echoed by the first rhetorician, Bhamaha (6th century A.D.) though his immediate successor, Dandin, feels that the distinction between the two types of prose compositions is pointless. According to him, both contain the same elements—viz. sentiments like the heroic, the erotic, and the wondrous as also the stylistic excellence of brilliance and the figures of speech in a greater or lesser proportion. In the one the historical is blended with the supernatural, while in the other the supernatural is treated as if it were natural. Hence, some of the commentators on Dandin (c. 700 A.D.) have designated the tale of Kadambari too as a ‘chronicle’ only¹ like the ‘Life of Harsha’.

Apart from this, Bana has also given us *in extenso* his general idea of literature which is universally applicable and which is uniformly accepted by the rhetoricians. This we find in his introductory verses in the ‘Life of Harsha’:

1. Writers are many, but a real genius is rare:

Countless, like dogs, poets abound
Feeding on trash, in every house;
But few can leap above the ground
Like the nimble *sarabha* renowned.²

2. There are four styles, each one of them eccentric in its own way:

The Northern style is full of puns,
The Western favours only sense;
The Southern with wild fancy reeks,
While the Eastern bombast seeks!³

1. Cf. M. Krishnamachariar, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Madras, 1937, p. 457.

2. *Harshacharita*, I. 5.

3. *Ibid.*, I. 7.

3. The fundamental requisites of a great work are three, but they rarely co-exist:

A subject new, natural expression not trite,
Easy puns and rasas patent;
Striking syllables polished bright
Rarely will any work present.¹

4. A well-written chronicle soothes and refreshes the reader; it also delights and instructs him:

Like a bedstead it makes for easy rise,
And is with golden thoughts enshrined;
The chosen words are footrests otherwise,
The reader is by the; Life refined.²

It will be observed that these prose genres also had the same dual goal of the epic form, viz. delight and instruction. Their descriptive machinery was similar as also their thematic content. The difference was only in respect of style. Perhaps no other literature gave such an elevated literary place to the prose writer, on par with the highest epic poet. But this was no accident or aberration. It was well earned by the prose writer by perfecting his style with an abundance of ornament to make it highly distinctive. The *elite* were forced to concede that as stylists the good prose-writers were far more striking than the great epic masters themselves. It is a highly polished, rococo art in words comparable only to similar trends in the sister art of sculpture in India. If an epic writer uses figures of speech like simile and metaphor sparingly and almost ignores the difficult tropes like paronomasia and paradox, a prose-poet like Bana exults in the dexterous use of

1. Ibid., I. 8.

2. Ibid., I. 20.

only the latter. The danger in this rococo art is the inevitable loss to the expression of meaning and the communication of emotions and sentiments. Bana's compeer, Subandhu, has erred miserably on both these counts despite his word-mastery and scholarship. And Bana too falls a victim sometimes. But it is to his singular credit and glory that, by and large, he can not only maintain the smooth flow of the narrative but also portray successfully the countless shades of feeling that animate his characters.

Bana holds among his predecessors, Vyasa, Pravarasena, Bhasa and Kalidasa in high regard, because they were the best bards of heroic poetry in India. He has a special word of praise for the 'Great Tale' by Gunadhya because it was an entirely new trail that it blazed, viz. romantic tale—full of wonder and romance. The purpose of the romance is primarily to entertain. It deals with kings and queens of a remote past. It transports the reader into an imaginary world, which oversteps the limits by which life is normally bounded. It is not a complete world in itself. 'It intensifies and exaggerates certain traits in human behaviour and recreates human figures out of this exaggeration. It excludes some reaches of experience in order to concentrate intently upon certain themes until they take fire and seem to be the flame of life itself.'¹ Though in a sense it is the precursor of the modern novel, it differs from the latter distinctly by the absence of any verisimilitude to life as actually lived in any society. The word 'romance' is usually restricted to the life of legendary gods, kings and queens; and in this sense both the works of Bana are highly wrought prose romances only, though we get an occasional glimpse into the personal lives of the royal attendants in a realistic way in the two works, and more so in the 'Life of Harsha'.

1. See Gillian Beer, *The Romance*, Methuen, London, 1970, p.3.

The source for Bana's *Kadambari* must have been there already in the original *Brhat-katha*, judging by its later metrical versions in Sanskrit. But the story there was simple enough and there was no attempt at elaboration. Bana took this slender theme and worked up on it like a master-craftsman in words adding a number of conventional, lengthy descriptions in the manner of court-epics and embroidering them with the rich brocade of striking figures of speech. It is only when the modern reader becomes imaginatively attuned to this old-world atmosphere of romance and chiaroscuro of style that he can really respond to the beauties of *Kadambari*. The leisured class in ancient India could achieve it for several centuries as testified by their full-throated words of praise. To them appreciation of Bana and literary sensibility were synonymous. With a little more effort and perseverance, it is not impossible even today to the general Sanskrit reader in India, to appreciate him though it should be accepted that Bana is an anathema to the Western sensibility. The floridness of romance is sure to offend the taste of the votaries of realism.

But in the West too, literary conceits have had a long and glorious history. It is now being admitted by critics that metaphors are not just ornamental appendages but vehicles of insight. Even paradoxes which involve imaginative leaps among incompatibles are coming to be realised as pointing to some poetic truth rather than mere virtuosity in a writer. Even Shakespeare talks of 'sermons in stones and books in the running brooks'. There may thus be a wholly new and poetic way of viewing our world whose natural language is metaphor and paradox. The material world may be seen as a token of the spiritual or the aesthetic. Especially in India, the poets have always revelled in a mythopoeic imagination, and they have developed a unique repertoire of *Kavi-samayas* or poetic conceits.

Hymn to the Mother-Goddess

Chandisataka is a hymn of 100 verses in the stately twentyone syllabled measure, *sragdhara*, each containing a prayer addressed to the goddess in a characteristic manner. The prayer is for general weal and welfare and it is also a common sentiment expressed in varied forms in each of these verses. But each verse is a vignette or a highly-wrought word-picture presenting the glorious fight of the goddess with the demon in a he-buffalo's form, emphasizing one or the other pose of the great goddess during the fight, as if it were a snapshot taken from a different part of the battle-field, when the duel was in progress. The onlookers are the various gods in heaven, worsted earlier by the demon's might.

This century of devotional verses has been scantily noticed by scholars, possibly because of its manifestly religious character and also perhaps by the absence of any indication, in the course of the verses themselves, of Bana's authorship. But the evidence of the preserved manuscripts of this work as well as the numerous citations from it found in early writers on literary theory is quite conclusive; and we may be sure that Bana wrote the hundred verses in question.

That Bana was well-versed in all the Puranas or mythological lores is more than established by the wide range of his references

to myths and legends. One important section in the miscellaneous material of any Purana is hymnology. We must not grudge to admit that most of the Puranas we have now were already there in Bana's days presumably in a truncated form. The hymnology in the Puranas, addressed to the gods of the Hindu pantheon like Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Ganapati and the goddess Durga, were traditionally invested with a sanctity no less than that of the Vedic hymns themselves. While the latter were beyond the ken of the many because of their archaisms, the former were easily intelligible even to the masses. The Vedic hymns were connected with elaborate sacrifices, which could be performed only by the affluent; but the epic and Puranic hymns could be used in the daily worship of the personal gods either in one's own home or a public place of worship. That is why they soon became very popular.

The poetic quality of the Puranic hymns is however, very poor. Their popularity was based on their religious value and the masses did not care much for their poetic appeal. But Kalidasa and others before Bana had opened a new vista in poetic themes when they successfully couched the religious emotion in a refined literary style and setting. The invocatory verses of all our plays reveal a god as an individual involved in a concrete situation or action almost like a sitter for a portrait by the artist. This graphic and vivid word-portrait arrests our attention and communicates the feeling more effectively.

In a country like India where even mechanical recitation or repetition of religious prayers was regarded as contributing to merit, it is no wonder that those who composed prayers with feeling and fervour were thought to be recipients of special divine favours even in this world. In Sanskrit literature there is no writer who is out and out secular. He is bound to leave a trace of

Hymn to the Mother-Goddess

religious devotion directly or indirectly in his work. Perhaps this was necessary to ensure public regard.

But in the hands of the poet, even religious sentiment undergoes a metamorphosis. The sentiment is not limited to mere prayer; but the whole situation in which the god is conceived is calculated to give a human colouring and aesthetic appeal. There is one emotional centre, love or heroism or wonder, from which the attendant feelings and actions radiate or towards which they converge. Usually, we have one or two such elaborately worked-out vignettes in verse at the beginning of Sanskrit plays. Bana seems to have attempted writing a century of them in order to display his powers as it were.

The glorious victory of the Devi over the Buffalo-demon is the main theme of the *Devi-mahatmya*, in the *Markandeya-Purana*. But Bana is not indebted to this source except for the bare incidents recorded. Bana is a creative artist and he recreates only the climax of the battle by visualising the scene vividly in his own way. The Devi is herself the heroine in the play she chooses to enact, with the demon as the villain of the piece. The demon has physically conquered all the gods individually and collectively before the Devi comes on the scene. After many skirmishes with him, the Devi sportively kicks him on the head with her left foot and the demon is dead. The world is freed from fear and danger. It is this final act which has caught the imagination of Bana and all the hundred verses may be deemed as so many variations on the same theme. How he successfully varies his diction, his figures of speech and his narration is what we have to appreciate here. Viewed in this light, the long stately metre chosen here will also appear appropriate. It would be well nigh impossible to translate these unique graces of Bana's Sanskrit Muse into any other medium. Only three select verses are rendered below in prose:

Banabhatta

1. O glory to the goddess! When Her trident pierced the body of the demon, three jets of blood streamed forth. Seeing them so suddenly, the gods began to wonder thus: 'Are they the three tongues stretched out by Death to devour avidly all the three worlds at one gulp? Or else, are they the triple streams of the river Ganga rushing forth so red by the reflection in them of the colour of Vishnu's lotus-like foot? Or else, are they the three twilight-deities come in person to receive the worshipful offerings from Shiva? (May that goddess protect all!)¹.
2. When the troop of Rudras fled for life, when the Sun was shivering in fear, when the thunder-bolt slipped from Indra's hand and fell down, when the Moon was in fright, when the Wind-god stood still, when Kubera's spirit ebbed away, when Vishnu's discus was foiled so, the demon Mahisha was waxing strong and growing wild. But how playfully he was killed down by the Devi without a help! May that glorious goddess destroy our sins!²
3. Vishnu's discus clanged at the touch of his body-hair as if it had struck a rock. Shiva's arrow rebounded at the touch of his hard hide as if it had hit a breast-plate. Laughing at these two gods and their vain weapons as it were, the Devi kicked the demon with her foot and sent him to death at once. May that goddess preserve all!³

When we look at the limited field chosen by the poet for the exercise of his powers and also the limited flights of his fancy

1. *Chandishataka*, Kavyamala edition, Bombay, 1899, verse 4.

2. *Ibid*, verse 66.

3. *Ibid*, verse 73.

Hymn to the Mother-Goddess

might be the first or a juvenile work of Bana, when he was still evident throughout this work, we feel like concluding that this practising his art inch by inch and had still a long way to go to reach the height of his powers. The ideas as well as the conceits are more conventional than spontaneous and we do not find the flashes of his soaring imagination in any considerable number as yet. Thus, though its poetry is far from perfect, its sustained majesty and devotion are remarkable and as an experiment in poetic hymnology, it has its place secure. It does not suffer in comparison with the other centuries of contemporary and later writers in this genre. Both Mayura's century (*shataka*) to the Sun-god and Anandavardhana's similar century to the Devi, to take only two instances, are more pedantic and prone to verbal acrostics and less successful in the poetic vein. We cannot but feel that though a juvenile work, it is the juvenile work of a budding genius and not an insipid exercise of a mediocre poet. And in religious circles, this century at once secured for Bana an abiding name and fame. Almost every other old Kannada poet pays homage to Bana as a great religious Shaiva poet. This may in part be due to the *stotra* called *Banagadya* already referred to.

4

Harshacharita

Henry Fielding, one of the early English novelists who is read even today, makes a classical statement¹ regarding ‘comic romance’, or ‘comic epic in prose’, a term he coined to suit the aristocratic romances which had become very fashionable in neoclassical French literature. They had already become objects of criticism in the 18th century England for their interminable length and their remoteness from real life. Fielding’s remarks deserve to be quoted here since they are more or less applicable to the literary form adopted by Bana for his account of Harsha:

Epic poetry...may be likewise either in verse or prose: for though it wants one particular, which the critic² enu-merates in the constituent parts of an epic poem, namely metre; yet, when any kind of writing contains all its other parts, such as fable, action, characters, sentiments and diction, and is deficient in metre only, it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic.

1. The Preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Methuen, London, 1965, pp. 1-2.

2. i.e. Aristotle.

Harshacharita

Thus the *Telemachus* of the Archbishop of Cambay appears to me of the epic kind, as well as the *Odyssey* of Homer; indeed, it is much fairer and more reasonable to give it a name common with that species from which it differs only in a single instance, than to confound it with those which it resembles in no other.

Now, a comic romance is a comic epic-poem in prose; differing from comedy as the serious epic from tragedy, its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger scale of incidents and introducing a great variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action.

Without stretching the comparison too far, we could safely hold that if this Aristotelian terminology is to be applied at all to the Sanskrit literary scene, we might characterise *Harshacharita* as an epic romance and the *Kadambari* as a wondrous romantic tale. Though the hero of *Harshacharita* is his contemporary patron-monarch, Bana's treatment throughout is that of an epic bard. King Harsha is raised here to the stature of epic heroes. The style is elevated and serious throughout, with little room for the comic or the ridiculous. In Indian terminology, it is an *akhyayika* and nothing more. It carries a thread of history and hard fact, but these are dressed up by the poet's art which freely utilizes the supernatural and epic machinery whenever desired. If the 'comic' is what realistically deals with real life, neither the *Harshacharita* nor the *Kadambari* are 'comic' since each portrays high life in its own way. Even the description of the *Harshacharita* as 'historical' is hardly accurate, since the few historical facts contained therein are almost idealised by the literary conventions of the courtier-poet. The incidents selected are primarily from the literary and aesthetic standpoints with an eye *on rasas*, viz. the heroic, the furious, the

pathetic and the wonderful. In what follows, therefore, an attempt is made to give an inside analytic picture of the contents with requisite critical remarks, mainly from the point of view of a literary student. Observations on Bana's style are reserved for treatment in the last section of this monograph.

Raining affection on the land
 With many a mate benign,
Season-like do kings arise
 As a people's fortune-sign.
Who isn't eager to assist the good
 Or to meet the wealth-goddess?
Or to fly in the sky's vastness,
 Or to listen to a hero's deeds?

The above may be taken as the basic maxims that underlie the whole vision and design of the *Harshacharita*. These are found at the head of the third chapter where the narrative of Harsha's great lineage begins. The earlier two chapters are devoted to a detailed account of the family-history of Bana himself; and we have already summarised its salient features in an earlier section. Here we are concerned with a study of the remaining six chapters (III-VIII) only.

After staying in the King's court for some time, Bana decided to visit his home-town one autumn. He enjoyed the beauties of the season—the clear sky, the bright sun, the lovely lotus, the cool night and the ripening corn. He was given a very warm and cordial welcome by the kinsmen. After the initial greetings and courteous enquiries he rested and in the afternoon, the people assembled to listen to a recitation of the holy *Vayu-purana*. The accomplished reader was one Sudrshti. During the recitation, a minstrel came forward to sing a verse equating the great purana as a replica of king Harsha's glorious deeds:

Harshacharita

Sung by sages and wide-spread.
World-extensive and sacred,
This Purana differs not, I find,
From Harsha's deeds in our mind!
Like Harsha's realm this chant is full
Of royal line without discord
Over Bharat it extends its pull
Producing a very sweet chord!

This at once raised the curiosity of the cousins of Bana to know more about the epic feats of the great emperor Harsha. They say that even the legendary kings of yore like Nala, Nahusa and Nrga were not blameless. But Harsha was spotless and thus superior to them. Many marvels about him were being reported daily. 'Like Indra, he has set at rest the moving kings. Like Brahma, he has laid the earth secure with his forbearance. Like Vishnu, he has destroyed the king of Sindh. Like Bali he has rescued a king from the trunk of an elephant. Here he has crowned a prince. Here he has killed the enemy at a single stroke. Like Narasimha, he has cut down the enemy with his own hand. Here the lord has taken tribute from the king of Himalaya like Shiva taking the hand of Durga. Now the supreme one has apportioned duties to rulers in all the quarters and distributed fabulous treasures among the holy Brahmins. These and other mighty deeds remind us of the Golden Age. Hence we are so eager to know them in detail from you. As the magnet attracts even the hard and sapless iron, so do the qualities of the great attract even ordinary minds. They attract the minds of the sensitive ones much more. Who could be without curiosity regarding Harsha's story, which is a second Mahabharata itself? Pray, deign to relate it to us. Let our Bhrgu race be made holier by listening to the heroic deeds of the royal sage.'

This is Bana's own prologue as it were to his *Harshacharita* and it is self-explanatory. It is a declaration in no uncertain terms of the method of his biography. It is not the realistic method of today. It is the age-old method of the Indian epic tradition. Bana is not a historian in our modern sense. He is an epic panegyrist. His is an imagination which is essentially mythopoetic. He as well as his listeners view Harsha not only as a semi-divine personage equal to epic characters but as a whit superior to all the characters in the epics and Puranas. To every legendary exploit of the different gods found in the ancient myths, they can cite a parallel from the career of Harsha himself. So Harsha represents as it were the combined greatness of all the ancient gods and ancient kings in one. This cult of the worship of the king was a part of the repertoire of court bards, an institution as old as the epics themselves. Bana must be regarded as a representative of this bardic tradition of eulogy which has been identified by modern research scholars like V.S. Sukhtankar as the Bhargava tradition which lies at the root of almost all our epics and Puranas. Hence there is no wonder that having first designated *Harshacarita* as *Vayu Purana*, Bana goes on to praise it as another *Mahabharata* itself.¹

Bana adds his own hyperboles to those already supplied by his kinsmen regarding Harsha:

Beyond the ken of the omniscient, beyond the reach of the goddess of speech, beyond the strength of the goddess of eloquence, is Harsha. How much more beyond a humble person like myself! What man could possibly, even in a hundred lives, depict his story in full? If, however you care for a mere part, I

1. For a fuller study of this phenomenon, see V.S. Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, a study in historical biographies, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, pp. 30-55.

Harshacharita

am ready. Today the day is near its close. Tomorrow I shall start my narration.

The next day Bana starts his narration to an audience intent to listen. And he begins from the beginning. That is to say, not with Harsha, but with Harsha's legendary forefather, Pushpabhuti. In the manner of a true medieval romance, Bana finds occasion to serve us with the sumptuous fare of a bizarre and macabre exploit of this progenitor which resulted in a divine boon. Though incredibly supernatural, its melodramatic narration keeps the listener in a breathless suspense, and to the people of those times the worship of vampires and the ghastly Tantric practices were very real and credible, though we might dismiss them as superstitious yarn.

The province of Srikantha is first described as the heaven on earth with all the mythical beauties the epic imagination can seize. Its birds and animals, flowers and fruits, crops and trees, men and women are all described in a hyperbolic fashion. Here is a sample of its heavenly glory:

There did false doctrines fade away, as if washed out by the rain of tears due to the smoke from the holy fires. Demerit was scotched as if cleft by the axes which fashioned sacrificial posts. Caste confusion ceased, as if cleansed by a rain from the smoke clouds of oblation fires. Sin fled, as if gored by the horns of the many thousands of gift-cows. Disasters were cut away, as if excised by numerous axes chiselling stone for temples. Disease was dissipated, as if consumed by myriad blazing sacrificial kitchens. . .

The poet implies that men were leading holy religious lives in peace without disease or pestilence. But his poetic conceits become tiring when they exceed their limit.

Banabhatta

Sthanvishvara, the capital city abounded in wealth, contented citizens and lovely women. Its ruler was Pushpabhuti who was a devotee of Siva. He heard that a great Shaiva *guru*, Bhairavacharya, had come on a visit to his city from the South and at once longed to meet him. One day this guru was ushered into his presence. He was an ascetic, weirdly dressed in all the paraphernalia of the Pasupata order. Received by the King warmly, the ascetic said that he lived on the outskirts of the town on the bank of the river Sarasvati and blessed him with a present of five jewelled, silver lotuses. The king was very much impressed and promised to call on him the next day at his residence.

When the king visited him, he was well received by the ascetic and was offered a tiger-skin to sit upon. But the king politely declined and expressed his desire to be his disciple. The ascetic seemed pleased and one visit led to another. Each time the ascetic called on the King, he would present him five silver lotuses. One day, he brought a magic sword in addition as a present to the King. He said:

One of my disciples, Patalasvamin, has secured this magic sword called *Attahasa* from the hands of a goblin. And it merits to be in your hand.

The King was mightily pleased by this new present. Some days later the ascetic made a secret petition to the King:

I have carried out all the difficult rites connected with a secret cult of worship in the cemetery. One last item remains and that is the slaying of the goblin. And none but you can achieve it. If you agree, you will have the assistance of three more disciples of mine. You will have to come there alone on a dark night to be specified, sword in hand.

Harshacharita

The King was glad at this opportunity of helping his *guru*. Accordingly, at the dead of night on the appointed day, he went alone to the cemetery, and waited till the goblin appeared and pushed down the three associates in no time. The ascetic was engaged in his worship and the King bravely faced the goblin and humbled it in a duel by the sheer might of his arms. He let it go without killing it as he saw on its shoulder the sacred thread.

Suddenly, he beheld a radiant form appearing out of his sword. She was Lakshmi herself, the goddess of victory who had come to bless him, pleased by his bravery. When pressed to demand a boon, he wished that the ascetic may be allowed his heart's craving for becoming a *vidyadhara*. This was granted readily and the goddess was even more pleased by his selflessness. Of her own accord, she gave the following blessing:

O Pushpabhuti, because of this magnanimity of thine and because of thy superlative devotion to Lord Siva, thou like a third added to the Sun and the Moon, shalt be the founder of a mighty line of kings, matchless in greatness, purity, fortune and fortitude. In your line shall arise an emperor named Harsha, who will rule over all the continents like Harishchandra, who will conquer the world like Mandhatr and whose chowrie will be held high by me personally.

Bhairavacharya took leave of King Pushpabhuti and attained divinity and the king returned to his palace. (Chapter III).

These adventures remind us of the stories of King Arthur and his Knights in English romantic legends. Bana has fabricated this feat of supernatural wonder and heroism on the part of Pushpabhuti and Lakshmi's boon to him in order to raise the stature of his hero to a mythical height. But the historical truth as gleaned from the epigraphs is that if there were a ruler of the name of Pushpabhuti

Banabhatta

in the ancestral line of Harsha, he was no more than a petty chief of a small principality. But Bana's imagination is too fertile to admit this.

Bana, however, slurs over the other names of Kings in that line and takes up Prabhakaravardhana, the father of Harsha for detailed consideration:

His title was *Pratapashila*. He was a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of Sindh, a troubler of the sleep of Gujarat chief, a plague to the elephant-like lord of Gandhara, a looter of the lawless Latas and an axe to the creeper of Malwa's glory.

His successful military expeditions are hinted at in these and other titles set forth by Bana. His rule is described as one of dharma reminding one of the Golden Age.

His queen was Yashomati, a paragon of virtue. The King was a great devotee of the Sun-god. One night, the queen woke up with a start from a wonderful dream. When consoled, she told the king:

My lord, I saw in a dream two shining youths issue from the Sun's orb. filling the sky with morning glow and turning the whole world as it were into lightning. They wore crowns, earrings, armlets etc, swords were in their hands. All the world bowed before them with upturned faces and folded hands. Accompanied by a maid like a moon incarnate, they lighted upon the earth, cut open my womb and tried to enter. My heart quaked and I awoke with a cry.

Soon the day dawned and there were good omens all around. The King assured his queen that the dream forboded the birth of three noble children to them, two princes and one princess. Rajyavardhana was the first-born son and there were rejoicings in

Harshacharita

the palace. But when the Queen conceived again, there were supernatural auguries. She had conceived Harsha who was like Krishna in the womb of Devaki. She longed to bathe in the waters of the four great oceans when she was pregnant. At last the great Harsha was born on a most auspicious day. A great Maga astrologer came and gave this forecast about the child's future:

It was on a day like this, free from all evil conjunctions and evil aspects of planets, when all the planets were in their exaltation that Mandhatr came to birth. Since then, in all the intervening milleniums no second has in the whole world been born at a conjunction so fit for a universal emperor's birth. This son of yours will be an equal of the legendary seven emperors, will bear the seven imperial insignia and will possess all the great jewels. He will be lord of the seven Seas, and performer of the seven Great Sacrifices.

We may see how Bana has deliberately played down the birth of the eldest son, and played up the birth of Harsha, bringing in the forecast of an expert astrologer, because Harsha is designed as the hero of the piece. All this must be treated as part of the poet's fancy and not as hard fact.

There was festal jubilation all over the land. People sang and danced for sheer joy. The king gave away generous presents. Harsha was five years younger than Rajyavardhana, When the latter was seven years old, the queen gave birth to a daughter who was named Rajyashri. At this time, the Queen's brother presented his son Bhandi to be brought up with these children in the palace. They all grew up under the loving care of the parents.

One day the father summoned the princes and said: "My dear sons, it is difficult to secure good servants, the first essential of

Banabhatta

sovereignty. So I have appointed to wait upon your highnesses the brothers Kumaragupta and Madhavagupta, sons of the Malwa King, who is my fast friend. They are men of tried integrity and character. You should also treat them properly.”

Both these Gupta princes had an amiable and impressive personality. They served as loyal companions and bodyguards to Rajya and Harsha.

Meanwhile, Rajyashri attained marriageable age and the king conferred with the queen regarding a suitable match for her. The best bridegroom he could think of was Grahavarman, the eldest son of the great Maukhari, King Avantivarman, of Kanouj. This was universally approved as the best choice and the marriage was celebrated with great pomp amidst universal rejoicings. The newly-weds were sent to Kanouj.

Bana devotes the rest of the chapter only to a detailed description of the arrangements for the nuptials. The elaborate preparations and busily moving women-folk during the rituals are very realistically described. We find from this picture of a royal wedding as described by Bana that almost the same conditions have remained up to our own times. Social and religious life in India today is very much like the life portrayed by Bana because they rest on certain basic sentiments which do not change fast. (Chapter IV).

From the standpoint of the story, though there is no progress, this description of child-birth, seasons, longings of pregnant women, marriage festivities etc. has its own interest from the point of view of literary conventions. It is well known that a court epic was expected to contain set descriptions of eighteen such items. The poetic value of the work is increased by a judicious incorporation of these as done by Bana in this chapter. They appear integral to his theme and not as external appendages. What is still more

Harshacharita

interesting in this chapter is a list of legendary kings—as many as fifteen who came to grief by one or more faults. The order of these kings—Moon, Pururavas, Nahusha, Yayati, Sudyumna, Somaka, Purukutsa, Kunalayashva, Nrga, Nala, Samvarana, Dasharatha, Kartavirya, Shantanu and Yudhishtira—and their specific misconduct is exactly the same as found in Sub-andhu's *Vasavadatta*, which is a purely romantic tale. Even the wordings of the two authors are identical, pointing to plagiarism either on the part of Bana or Subandhu. Scholars are unable to decide as yet who the borrower is. In view of the fact that Bana has given an out-and-out condemnation of plagiarists at the beginning of this work, it is very unlikely that he would permit himself any such bare-faced plagiarism.¹

To resume the story, one day Rajyavardhana was summoned by King Prabhakaravardhana and commissioned to undertake a military expedition to the north to wipe out the menace of the Huns. For several stages of the army's march Harsha too accompanied his brother, and on the outskirts of the Himalayas, he enjoyed hunting wild beasts. But one of these nights, he dreamed a very bad dream. He saw a lion burning in a forest fire. He saw also the lioness hurling herself into the fire, leaving her cubs behind. This portended something ominous and Harsha was filled with apprehension.

Presently, a courier arrived at the camp from the capital. He presented a haggard expression and the letter he brought added to Harsha's worry. It appeared that the King had taken ill suddenly. Without losing any time, Harsha turned back homeward. On his

1. See 'A Poet-thief is condemned as unfit to be counted in the company of good men' I. 6.

For a detailed discussion of this question, see R.D. Karmarkar, *Bana*, Karnatak University, Dharwar, 1964, pp. 36-38.

Banabhatta

way back there were several bad omens. Without food or rest, he rode on his horse through the fastnesses of the jungle until the next day, he reached the capital.

The capital was plunged in sorrow and gloom. There was no sign of festivity or joy. He made a bee-line to the palace which presented a very desolate look. At the closed gate he saw Sushena, the physician with a disconsolate mien. His father's condition was very bad indeed. People were praying fervently for his life everywhere. The servants inside were all busy attending to preparations of herbal medicines and medicinal diet for the dying king. Walking past these, he entered the bed-chamber of the sick king, who, though nursed by many, was almost dizzy with pain. It was clear that he was dying.

All over him there were symptoms of death. Against him disease had concentrated its powers; emaciation let fly all her darts. Helplessness had taken him in its grip; pain had made him its province, wasting its domain, lassitude its lair. Stung was he by dejection, appropriated by self-abandonment, enslaved by sickness, dandled by death... He was broken in utterance, unhinged in mind, tortured in body, waning in life, in the bondage of wracking pains.

And by his side sat the hapless queen, shocked by grief and fearing the worst. Harsha almost fainted at the sight.

In the whole range of Sanskrit literature, such tender and delicate description of death is perhaps not to be found. By a poetic convention, the poets and playwrights alike avoided direct portrayal of death. They would only report it indirectly. But Bana has shown how pathos and tragedy can be successfully delineated in this chapter, not only in the very detailed description of Prabhakaravardhana's death but also of the *sati* of the heroic

Harshacharita

Queen who was eager to precede her lord by voluntary death. Bana has broken new ground in the depiction of these tender and touching scenes. His diction too sheds its usual flamboyance here and runs like a murmuring brook with simple, but sweet rhythms. It is in such passages that the masterly genius of Bana captivates even the modern reader.

Harsha had not eaten or slept for three days. The loving father, though now in the throes of death, was glad to see him and spoke to him tenderly:

Consumed as I am by the fever's fierce heat, I am still more so by your distress. Your leanness cuts me like a sharp knife. Upon you my happiness, my sovereignty, my succession, and my life are set, and as mine, so those of all my people. Your sorrow will be sorrow to all people on earth. . . You bear marks declaring the sovereignty of the four oceans. By your mere birth my end is attained; I am free from the wish to live. . . In their subjects, not in their kin, are kings rich in relatives. Rise therefore and once more attend to all the needs of life.

This is a crucial passage which indicates how Bana subordinates everything to his chosen purpose of depicting Harsha's glory. Even the father is only a means towards that end. His death, though personally a great loss, is inevitable and is no tragedy. It is a necessary step to bring Harsha on to the stage. Not a word is spoken by the King regarding Rajyavardhana though he is the eldest son and naturally to be expected to succeed him to the throne. The King only talks of Harsha as the predestined successor. Bana may be pardoned here for twisting historical facts in his zeal to achieve literary and rhetorical effects.

Banabhatta

Harsha's dejection grew beyond bounds. Hour after hour he was enquiring after his father's condition which showed no improvement. Meanwhile report was brought that the king's loyal physician had burned himself to death. There were comets in the sky and bad omens. The next morning the queen-mother's attendant ran to him crying for help to prevent the further tragedy of her self-immolation. Plunged in distress, Harsha hurried to his mother and expostulated with her but in vain. She stuck to her heroine ideal of *virapatni* to whom death was no fear and to whom heaven was dearer than life. Such heroic voluntary death had religious sanction and hundreds of such great women are worshipped even today in different parts of India. Bana's rhetorical power is seen at its best in her straight and spirited address to her son:

'My dear son, it is not that you are unloved, without noble qualities or deserving to be abandoned. With my very bosom's milk you drank up my heart. If at this hour my regard is not towards you, it is because my lord's great condescension comes between us. I am not fickle, like Lakshmi who keeps on changing her lord. I am the lady of a great house, born of a stainless ancestry, one whose virtue is her dower. Have you forgotten that I am the lioness-mate of a great spirit, who like a lion had his delight in a hundred battles? Daughter of a hero, spouse of a hero, mother of heroes, how else could such a woman as I, whose price was valour, act?... I would die while still unwidowed... Not to die, but to live at such a time would be unfeeling. Compared with the flame of wifely sorrow, whose fuel is imperishable love, fire itself is chilly cold... Therefore dishonour me no more, I beseech you, beloved son, with opposition to my heart's desire'. So saying she fell at his feet.

Harshacharita

The passage is one of the most celebrated in classical Sanskrit. Her fearless and firm resolve alongside of tender affection are wonderfully blended in Bana's description. Though we have gone far from the practice of *sati*, this old-world ideal can perhaps be visualised and admired even today as presented by Bana. Bana himself decries this practice in the *Kadambari* and says that its promised heaven is dubious indeed. But if he still records it so vividly in the *Harshacharita*, the reason must be historical. We cannot dismiss it as another purple patch brought in for the sake of literary effect. If Harsha's mother Yashomati had not committed *sati*, such a vivid account could not have passed muster in the court of King Harsha, since it was an incident in the living memory of one and all there. To render so persuasively the quality of an insight is a special gift of Bana's genius. He plumbs the depths of the inner life of his characters in such portrayals, though his art is often concerned with external trappings. The rhythms of his prose and the lilt of his sentences, with their repetitions and qualifications and subtle fading from direct speech to brooding description and back again, leave the reader bewitched whether he agrees with the musing or not.

Meanwhile the King again exhorted Harsha to succeed to his kingdom and show his bravery before breathing his last. Bana again stresses the point that the king had no doubt about his successor. It was Harsha and Harsha alone.

Bana also elaborately paints a picture of Nature in mourning, participating as it were in the grief of the people. The last rites were performed by Harsha in sorrow on the bank of the Sarasvati river. Many trusted servants of the king too died voluntarily. Urgent summons had been sent to Rajyavardhana and Harsha awaited his arrival (Chapter V).

Destiny conspires in such a way that Harsha alone is left on the stage to achieve his predestined glory. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Rajyavardhana arrived in deep sorrow having heard the news of the father's death. His body bore many a fresh wound he had sustained during his victorious fight with the Huns. He was a picture of misery and grief. Harsha rose to meet him and both were drowned in tears, for 'the sight of a brother is a renewal of sorrow.'

We expect to read in a historical record that since the usual practice in Indian monarchy was the elder's accession to the throne, Harsha might have had his own difficulties with the elder Rajyavardhana before ascending the throne. This natural expectation of ours is belied because of the extraordinarily self-less character of Rajyavardhana as painted by Bana. Possibly, he knew of the father's wish that Harsha was to succeed to the throne and he had no such ambitions at all. He was a Bodhisattva incarnate as it were. The death of his father drove him like the Buddha to turn a recluse. He resolved once and for all to abdicate and seek the solace of the forest. At the very first meeting with his younger brother Harsha he disclosed this resolve of his and argued strongly in favour of Harsha's assuming the reins of the government, and pursue a career of heroism and glory. As a sign of his resolve, he threw away his sword to the ground.

Nor is Harsha eager for the throne. He feels that his brother is punishing him by this offer of the crown. He protests very much. His words deserve quotation as they contain homely maxims which Bana is fond of parading in his work like punctuation marks:

As for this charge of sovereignty, it is like the rain of cinders on a drought-parched wilderness, scorching one already scorched.

Harshacharita

This is unworthy of my lord. Again, although in this world a prince without pride, a Brahman without greed, a saint without anger, an ape without tricks, a poet without envy, a trader without knavery, a fond husband without jealousy, a good man without poverty, a rich man without harshness, a king's son without vice... are all equally hard to find, yet in this you are my instructor.

Bana's love of balanced phrases is evidenced here. We are transported to the world of the *Ramayana* where the brothers Rama and Bharata expostulate with each other for long, not for grabbing, but for forsaking kingship. Rajyavardhana is the Rama of *Harshacharita* and Harsha, Bharata. Harsha was thinking of disobeying his brother in this command of his to assume royalty. Meanwhile, unshaken in his resolve, Rajyavardhana wore the bark-garments of an ascetic. The controversy would have gone on but for an interruption decreed by Fate.

Rajyashri's servant came running to the brothers, full of tears, and reported a tale of woe. On the very day on which the King's death was rumoured, King Grahavarman, the husband of Rajyashri had been treacherously murdered by the lord of Malwa. And Rajyashri was put in chains and thrown into a prison at Kanouj. It was also rumoured that he was invading this country as well.

This unexpected news which came like a bolt from the blue made Rajyavardhana change his mind. An awful paroxysm of wrath seized him and he once again took up his sword. He had to take revenge on the wrong-doer. That was his first and foremost duty, a duty more compelling than donning ascetic robes. Only with Bhandi and ten thousand horse, he at once marched against the enemy, disallowing Harsha to accompany him.

After some days, Harsha had a bad dream. He saw a heaven-kissing pillar of iron broken to pieces. This upset him very much. Presently tidings came that his brother, though he had routed the Malwa army with ease, had been made a victim of a confidence-trick and murdered by the King of Gauda, when he was off his guard in his own camp. These are important historical developments and we look to Bana for details in vain. He does not deign to give us even the names of these enemy kings. Huien Tsang has given the Gauda King's name as Shashanka which has been corroborated by Shankara, an early commentator on the *Harshacharita*. We must turn to modern historians to know that the king of Malwa in question was one Devagupta.¹

Whatever the deficiencies might be in the eyes of the modern historian, to the sensitive student of literature, the classic scheme of values stands out and the direct presentation of powerful feelings and major situations leaves him satisfied. To use the words of Roger Fry, the aesthetic effect arises not from any ulterior purposes or tricks but from the 'creation of structures which have for us a feeling of reality and these structures are self-contained, self-sufficing and not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside.'

The heart-rending news of the murder of his noble brother enrages Harsha very much. This provides an occasion to the commander Simhanada to make a fiery speech counselling war on the miscreants. He wanted Harsha to prove himself another Parashurama or Bhima in destroying the vile enemies.

Harsha at once gives orders to all his forces to get ready for action. Skandagupta, the commandant of the elephant troop reports that all preparations are complete and cautions the King to be wary of unforeseen traps that might be set for him by the enemies. He

1. See C.V. Vaidya, *History of Medieval Hindu India*, Vol. I, pp. 34-39.

Harshacharita

gives from Indian history examples of as many as twentyeight kings who fell easy victims to the machinations of unscrupulous enemies. Here are a few specimens:

1. Nagasena of Padmavati (most probably a contemporary of Samudragupta) was killed due to the secret betrayed by a parrot.
2. Shrutavarman of Shravasti lost his kingdom, again because of a parrot's betrayal.
3. Suvarnachuda of Mrttikavati was killed by giving away his secret while talking in a dream.
4. Yavaneshvara was killed as the result of a secret despatch which was read by his chowrie-bearer when it was reflected in his crest-jewel.

In the whole of Indian literature, there is no other author who has given such an exhaustive enumeration of the kings who died owing to their indiscretion and the conspiracies of their unscrupulous enemies. Quite a few of these incidents have been corroborated by other works like *Vishnupurana*, *Kamandakiya-Nitisara* and authors like Varahamihira and Vishakhadatta, and may be taken as representing the Indian bardic tradition handed down from generation to generation. These are mostly kings of the historical period and not legendary figures. Yet our present-day history is silent over most of these episodes. Historians must be grateful to Bana for having rescued at least these from the limbo of oblivion by giving a place to their list in this *Harshacharita*, though it was not strictly relevant (Chapter VI).

The next chapter (VII) is an account of Harsha's conquest of the quarters. It illustrates the maxim that nothing is impossible for a hero:

To the vowed hero the earth is a courtyard pedestal,
the ocean a dyke,
Hell is dry land and mount Meru an ant-hill!

Banabhatta

Bana's diction echoes even the sound of the marching army:

Straightaway the drums rattled, the horns rang out, the trumpets brayed, the bells hummed and the conches blared. The noise of the camp went on rising to a pitch. The heavens were confounded by the noise of drumsticks added to a rapid tapping of mallets.

The cavalry and elephant force, and the caravan-laden donkeys and carts are all very graphically and colourfully described by Bana. Like the glorious king of Heaven, Harsha moves out in the centre. The brave warriors are talking of their victorious march to the Himalaya and Gandhamadana, Turkey and Persia, Pariyatra and Malaya and Mahendra!

A messenger of the prince of Assam came seeking an interview with Harsha. He reported to him the petition for alliance by his master and presented a gift of a magical white umbrella called Abhoga as a token of his esteem. He described the magic properties of the umbrella, an original gift from god Varuna as follows:

It manifests many miracles. It stores in its ribs the cool rays of the moon and it drips moon-bright water as long as desired. It honours only those destined to be sovereign of the four oceans and none else. Fire does not burn it, nor wind bear it away, nor water wet it, nor dust defile it, nor age corrode it. Let your majesty honour it with a glance.

Besides it, there were other presents also. Harsha welcomed these presents as a fair omen on his first march. Bana devotes enormous space to a description of the great genealogy of the King of Assam and his eagerness for Harsha's alliance, and Harsha's condescension to meet him early.

After this, one day Harsha learnt from a courier that Bhandi had arrived with the defeated Malwa king's whole force, conquered

Harshacharita

by the might of Rajyavardhana and that he was camping nearby. At this news the fire of brotherly grief awoke again. His courage gave way and he silently awaited Bhandi's arrival. Soon he arrived, all wounded and soiled.

Like a sinner, a criminal, a malignant he seemed; like a man plundered and deluded.

He wept long and piteously. After the fury of his grief, he said that Rajyashri, it was reported, had broken out from her imprisonment at Kanouj and with her train entered the Vindhya forest. But up to that day none of the messengers sent to find her whereabouts had returned.

At once, Harsha resolved that his personal, first duty was to rescue her at all costs. He asked Bhandi to take charge of the expedition against the Gauda King in the meantime till his return. The next day Harsha inspected the vast booty collected by Rajyavardhana from the Malwa king including costly gems and treasure-chests and immediately set out on his horse in search of his lost sister. In a few days Harsha reached the Vindhya forest.

This is elaborately described in the manner of a classical *kavya* by Bana. (Chapter VII).

Now we come to the last or concluding chapter, where the historian feels that nothing is concluded; but the poetic close is, however, unmistakable. There is a scene of breathless suspense, full of pity and fear, before the tragedy is averted by the grace of gods; and everything ends happily, with the recovery of Rajyashri. If we remember the fondness of Bana for puns, we might regard that 'Rajyashri' also is symbolically used to signify the goddess of royal wealth, And it was as her protector even in the literal sense that Harsha assumed rulership of the entire Maukhari realm from its capital at Kanouj. The chain of wonderful incidents that follow one upon another in this chapter is tinged with personal emotion

and holds the reader's attention. Its structure and constructive skill remind us of the plots in plays like the *Ratnavali* by Harsha himself where after a sudden turn of misfortune, things start brightening up at the close and everything ends happily.

Harsha roamed about in the forest for several days. One day a tribal chief brought with him a young hunter and introduced him as the son of a hunter-chieftain in the Vindhya region. The name of this youth was Nirghata and he knew the whole forest out and out. He thought that he might be of help in his search for Rajyashri. Harsha enquired of the youth whether he had come across any beautiful woman in the forest; he replied that he had not seen any yet; but he promised to do his best in arranging for an intensive search. In the meanwhile, there was a possibility of Divakaramitra, a Buddhist monk who dwelt close by, having some information about her.

Harsha had heard about this monk and wanted to meet him at once. The hunter youth led the way. The hermitage Harsha visited was at once holy and peaceful:

Then in the middle of the trees, while he was yet at a distance, the holy man's presence was suddenly announced by the king's seeing various Buddhists from various provinces seated in different situations—perched on pillars, or seated on the rocks or dwelling in bowers of creepers or lying on thickets or in the shadow of the branches or squatting on the roots of trees, devotees dead to all passion, Jainas in white robes, white mendicants, followers of Krishna, religious students, ascetics who pulled out their hair, followers of Kapila, Jainas, Lokayatas, followers of Kanada, followers of the Upanishads, believers in God as a Creator, students of legal studies and Puranas, adepts in sacrifices, grammar, followers of the Pancharatra and others—all diligently

Harshacharita

following their own tenets, pondering, urging objections, raising doubts, resolving them, giving etymologies, disputing, studying and explaining, and all gathered here as disciples.

This is a very realistic picture of the ancient forest university or gurukula in India. It was truly cosmopolitan and drew students interested in various religious and secular studies. Especially, the sympathetic picture of Buddhism portrayed by Bana is unrivalled in Indian literature. It was Buddhism which encouraged a rationalistic approach on the one hand and preached ethical values on the other. We might also say that Buddhism laid the foundation for free thought and higher education in India. It received royal patronage as well as popular admiration in the times of Bana. It is also a growing tribute to the catholic outlook of Bana himself.

The saint Divakaramitra received Harsha with great respect. Harsha paid homage to the sage and inquired about the whereabouts of his sister Rajyashri. The saint replied in the negative.

At the same moment a monk brought the news that a young lady was about to commit suicide by fire. Harsha, Divakaramitra and others hastened to the spot and rescued Rajyashri in the nick of time. Brother and sister met in a poignant scene. Harsha learnt from Rajyashri the ordeals she was exposed to after the murder of Rajyavardhana, her starvation and wandering in the wilderness before the final attempt at self-immolation. She sought Harsha's permission to become a nun. Harsha proposed that for the time being, while he completed his vow of uprooting enemies and taking revenge upon the ghastly murderers of Rajyavardhana, Rajashri should remain with him under the benign tutelage of Divakaramitra. His task done, Harsha himself would take orders along with Rajyashri. Divakaramitra and Rajyashri agreed to

Banabhatta

accompany Harsha. The sun set and the moon arose. Here is the epilogue:

At the close of the evening, the moon was brought to the king as a respectful offering by the Night, as if it were the incarnate glory of his race bringing him a cup from the Pearl Mountain, to slake his boundless thirst for fame, — or the embodied glory of the kingdom bringing him the stamp of the First King on the silver patent of his sovereignty, to encourage him in his resolve to bring back the Golden Age,—or the Goddess of the Future conducting a messenger from the White Continent to animate him to the conquest of all the seven continents.

True, it is not the close of a historical chronicle in any sense; but it may be a fitting epilogue to a poetic prose *kavya*. Bana, as a romantic poet, might well end his account with a suggestion of the reappearance of the Golden Age on the earth once again by the might and heroic stature of the god-like Harsha. The hard historical incidents of his patron's career of conquest may not be more important to Bana than showing how his hero combined in himself all the personal virtues of legendary kings and how Fortune showered her blessings on him and assisted him to usher in the legendary Golden Age once again on earth. Bana's attempt throughout has been to weave a halo of epic grandeur around the birth and achievements of his hero and in this he has been successful to a large extent. Or else, we have to regard this work also as being left incomplete by the author.

The example set by Bana of writing on historical patrons in the epic manner was blindly followed by almost all writers of the historical *kavya* in later times. Vakpatiraja and Bilhana wrote similar accounts of their patrons Yashovarman and Vikramaditya

Harshacharita

VI. The only difference is that they wrote in verse while Bana wrote in poetic prose. The credit for starting this new literary convention should obviously go to Bana. It is the reverse side of Kalidasa's poetic device. Kalidasa wrote of the legendary heroes in such a way that the description could symbolically redound to the glory of his contemporary patronking. But Bana wrote of the patron-king himself, investing him with all the glory and grandeur of epic kings. And as observed by the critics,— “the great merit of the *Harshacharita* consists in the fact that it is a very early attempt at a historical romance.’¹

Bana's characterization of the leading figures in the narrative shows his deep understanding of human nature and his insight into character and motive. He revels in depicting various emotions and giving vivid portraits of persons with individual traits.

Bana's *Harshacharita* is of fundamental interest to the student of social history also. If we discount the epic effusions in the literary convention developed by Bana, a full and graphic picture emerges of the contemporary society. We can get an intimate and reliable picture of the people, their occupations and denominations, their habits and customs, their dresses and ornaments, their beliefs, ideals and superstitions, their emotions and amusements. We get vivid accounts of life in the army camp, life in the hermitages, courtly life in the city and the calm and sequestered life of the village on the river-bank. Women occupied a respectable position in society and they were given education in music, dancing and other arts. People as a rule were more religious and the life in the palace was indeed very luxurious with its troops of liveried servants. People celebrated all religious ceremonies and festivals rigorously and they enjoyed life in peace and prosperity. They

1. E.W. Cowell and F.W. Thomas, *The Harshacharita of Bana*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1961, p. viii.

Banabhatta

were, on the whole, god-fearing and virtuous, content with their simple vocations. Every trade and profession was equally respected and they plied their hereditary professions with love and zest, uncomplainingly. There was a free intercommunication between all the provinces of India and all the people felt that they formed a single nation, inheriting a common culture, in spite of a hundred differences in outward practices. The arts and the sciences had reached a high level of perfection, and achievements in the realm of thought were especially in the fields of medicine and astrology. It was the very apogee of Indian civilization which gets clearly reflected in Bana's stately style. No one can escape a nostalgic mood while pondering over the bygone glory of an ancient land as graphically presented by a bard like Bana.

Kadambari

If *Harshacharita* is a heroic and romantic epic in prose, Bana's other work *Kadambari* is an out-and-out prose romance. It is one of those abiding classics in Sanskrit which age cannot wither nor custom stale. Its celebrity is due to more than one reason. It combines within itself the excellences of the epic as well as the drama and deals with the universal emotion of love in its various phases, without any intrusions of the hard world of reality. The romance finds a form as it were for the deep desires of a whole civilization, nay, the universal man in its dream-like presentation of the marvellous. As the first Englishman who edited this original text, Peter Peterson, observes¹ :

Kadambari has its place in the world's literature as one more aspiration out of the very heart of genius after that story, which, from the beginning of time mortal ears have yearned to hear, but which mortal lips have never spoken.

That was in the year 1883 when the spell of Sanskrit was still fresh on the minds of the European scholars as a new 'discovery'.

1. P. Peterson, *Kadambari*, Bombay, 1883, Introduction, p.43

But Indian judgement for over ten centuries has been uniform in giving a pride of place to the *Kadambari* as the best work of its kind. It gives a story of human sorrow and divine consolation, of death and passionate longing for a union after death. It is a dream or wish of humanity which finds fulfilment in the reality of higher fiction.

Such a kind of romance is something typical of the Indian genius and Indian culture. Western romances also deal with the heroic, the pastoral, the exotic, the mysterious, the dream-motif and total, passionate love; but their sphere is limited by death; they do not cross that barrier and go beyond to anything like an after-life. A romance too is cast in the exact mould of the sensibility of an Age. And Indian sensibility has the means to transcend the limitations of even one or more lives in the fulfilment of profound love. The Western romances lost readers as soon as the modern novel arose, because they were limited by changing forms of sensibility peculiar to the ages in which they were produced. On the other hand the appeal of the *Kadambari* to even modern readers remains unchanged because of its concern with basic human impulses and a style which is as fresh as nature's flowers, despite the stilted nature of the tricks of pun and paradox which no longer are in fashion. Only the finest works of art can survive the shifting needs of readers and this is peculiarly so in the case of the romance. Either a reader totally succumbs to its spell or gets bored in no time. It does not permit of partial admiration as in the case of the realistic novel.

Admittedly, the world of romance is the world of a fairy land and the reader deliberately seeks it when he wants to forget the humdrum reality which bores him. Though it is out and out improbable and untrue, it soothes his imagination and perhaps

Kadambari

appeals to deeper layers in his personality in a Jungian sense. This is what Rene Wellek means when he says:¹

The only general attribute of projected romance that I can see... is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals—experience liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it.

This comes very near to the Indian idea of *rasa* or aesthetic emotion rendered delectable by the literary medium. Bana sings of the kind of love upon the altar of which ‘the gods themselves throw incense’. What makes *Kadambari* so unique is the blend of ascetic purity and romantic passion, the best on earth and the best in heaven. In this he is a true compeer of Kalidasa, who also essays a similar theme in his masterpiece, *Shakuntala*. These half-human, half-divine characters instruct us imperceptibly in our own world even while they allow us to escape from it. That is the conserving and crystallizing magic of romance which is beyond logic. Romance re-makes the world in the image of desire and has an element of prophecy about it which is ever alluring to our imagination.

Bana’s masterpiece, *Kadambari* is indebted to a tale in the *Brhatkatha* of Gunadhya for its essential framework. It is the story of King Sumanas which we find related in the Sanskrit ‘Ocean of Story’ (*Kathasaritsagara*) written by Somadeva (11th century A.D.). One day, he was accosted by a tribal maiden Muktalata carrying a caged parrot, called the ‘Scholar’. The parrot displayed its great learning and poetic gift. So the ministers and the king

1. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *The Theory of Literature*, London, 1949, p. 223.

who were dismayed requested the parrot to tell how it got this proficiency.

The parrot related its story: I was born on a tree on the Himalayan slopes. I lost my mother at birth and my father brought me up. One day some hunters came there, pulling down our nests and killing many of our kin. I lurked in the folds of my father's plumes. My father was also killed and thrown down by the hunter. But I made my escape by concealing myself under the leaves. Next morning, when I was slowly making my way to the lake to quench my thirst, a sage called Marichi pitied me and giving me water, took me to his hermitage. There the sage Pulastya smiled when he saw me and being asked the reason for his smile, he gave the inmates the story of my past life, thus:

(Pulastya's narrative) There was a king called Jyotish-prabha in the city of Ratnakara. Harshavati was his queen. They had a son called Somaprabha. When the prince grew up, he was made heir-apparent and he was given as his companion the minister's son Priyankara. Just then Indra from heaven sent Somaprabha a horse as a present, because he was a god born as a human. At once the prince set out on his military expedition. Conquering many kings, he reached the Himalayan range, where he amused himself with hunting. Seeing a *kinnara*, he gave him chase, but he eluded him and the sun set when he was far away from his camp. On his way back to the camp, he came to a lake where he decided to spend the night. He was resting on the banks of the lake, when he heard sweet strains of music. Going in quest of it, he saw a divine maiden singing before Shiva's image. She welcomed him as a guest and the prince introduced himself and asked about her. The maiden, Manorathaprabha, then gave her story.

Manorathaprabha's story: On the Himalayan range, there is a city called Kanchanabha. The king of Vidyadharas lives there. His

name is Padmakuta and I am his daughter. My mother's name is Hemaprabha. One day, during my walk in the company of my lady-friend, I saw an ascetic youth with a companion. We loved each other at first sight. My friend sought to know who he was, from the companion.

The companion of the ascetic youth said: In a nearby hermitage there lives the sage Didhiti. One day, when he came to bathe in this lake, the goddess Laksmi saw him and fell in love with him. Even without physical union, she gave birth to a son and the sage brought him up as his own son named Rashmiman. This ascetic youth is he.

Just then I was called away to the palace for dinner. By the time I had dined, the companion of my beloved youth turned up there to tell me that his friend might die by the pangs of love if I did not rush to revive his spirits. But by the time I went to meet him, I found that Rashmiman had already died at moonrise. I wanted to burn myself on his pyre. But a divine being came there from heaven and took his corpse away. A divine voice asked me not to burn myself because I would again be united to him. And so, here I am, worshipping Shiva and awaiting reunion with my lover. I do not know where his companion went away in the meanwhile.

Having listened to this story, Somaprabha asked where her lady-friend was. To this she replied: 'There is a Vidyadhara King called Simhavikrama. His daughter Makarandika is a close friend of mine. She is very grieved on account of misfortune and has refused to marry anyone. She had sent a messenger to enquire about me; and hence to comfort her I have sent today my lady-friend to her with that messenger. So I am alone at the moment.'

Presently, Manorathaprabha's lady-friend arrived. The next day a vidyadhara messenger arrived requesting her to go with him and to persuade Makarandika to marry. When Manorathaprabha

got ready, Somaprabha also expressed his desire to visit the vidyadhara city. She gladly took him along with her. Somaprabha and Makarandika fell in love with each other and Manorathaprabha settled their marriage, persuading Makarandika to give up her useless resolve.

Somaprabha wanted some time, however, to visit his camp and comfort his men who might be growing anxious by his sudden disappearance. He agreed to come back there to marry Makarandika. He accordingly returned to his camp and told Priyamkara all that had transpired. Just then a messenger came from Somaprabha's father calling him back. He left for home saying that he would return soon. This news was taken to Makarandika but she was getting disconsolate by the pangs of separation. Exasperated by this, her father cursed her to be born in the tribal community on earth. But he relented and died of grief along with his queen. He first became a sage and then a parrot; and his queen became a wild boar. This parrot remembered all his learning in the previous life.

Sage Pulastya recounted this story and added that when the parrot narrated it in the royal court, it would be freed from this birth. And Somaprabha and Makarandika, now a tribal maiden, would unite and so would Manorathaprabha and Rashmiman, now re-born as a king.

'As soon as I heard this story from the sage,' says the parrot, 'I remembered the previous life of mine. Sage Marichi brought me up. As soon as I grew my wings, I was flying freely until I was caught by tribesmen, and was brought to your presence.' On hearing this, Sumanas also was overjoyed. Shiva who was pleased with Somaprabha by his worship directed him to go to the court of Sumanas where he would meet his beloved as a tribeswoman called Muktalata with her father as a parrot in the cage. They would soon, however, regain their previous status. Similarly, Shiva directed Manorathaprabha to go to the court of Sumanas who was

Kadambari

himself Rashmiman in the previous birth. They also would reunite in their original form. Thus all ended happily for one and all.

By substituting proper names in this as shown below, we get the main outline of Bana's romance :

<i>Source</i>	<i>Bana's romance</i>
1. Kanchanapuri	Vidisha
2. Sumanas (hero)	Shudraka (Chandrapida)
3. Muktalata	Chandala-kanya
4. Shastraganja (Parrot)	Vaishampayana (Pundarika)
5. Marichi (sage)	Harita
6. Paulastya	Jabali
7. Ratnakarapura	Ujjayini
8. Jyotishprabha	Tarapida
9. Harshavati	Vilasavati
10. Somaprabha	Chandrapida
11. Prabhakara	Shukanasa
12. Priyamkara	Vaishampayana
13. Ashushravas (horse)	Indrayudha
14. Padmakuta	Hamsa
15. Hemaprabha	Gauri
16. Manorathaprabha	Mahashveta
17. Didhitimat	Shvetaketu
18. Rashmivat	Pundarika
19. Simhavikrama	Chitraratha
20. Makarandika	Kadambari
21. Devajaya	Keyuraka

It must be remembered that Bana died before completing the romance. He left it unfinished at the point where Patralekha, the lady-friend of Chandrapida, is describing how Kadambari unburdened her love-sick hear to her and entreats permission to be allowed to go and fetch Chandrapida. In Bana's own handling of

the story there is very little departure from the source except for the changes in the proper names of persons and places. The threads of the story are still loose and one cannot figure out exactly how he intended to gather them to a close. We owe to Bana's son the present completion which may or may not represent his father's desing and which makes some radical departures from the original source. In the source the chandala-maiden Muktalata is the heroine herself and Shuka is her father. But according to Bana's son, she is Lakshmi, the mother of Pundarika now transformed into a parrot. While Kadambari and Mahashveta retain their original form throughout, Kapinjala is transformed in the romance into the horse Indrayudha, Rohini, the wife of the moon comes down to the earth as Patrakekha and Lakshmi (Pundarika's mother) becomes the chandala maiden. Many of the supernatural anecdotes in the source have been avoided to give a more natural colouring to the romance.

The romance is named after Kadambari, who ultimately marries Chandrapida after many trials and tribulations out of pure love. It is closely linked with the parallel love-story of Mahashveta and Pundarika. The story of the romance is made of the lives and loves of two heroes, each of whom is re-born twice:

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| (1) The Moon | — | First birth: Chandrapida
Second birth: Shudraka |
| (2) Pundarika | — | First birth: Vaishampayna
Second birth: The Parrot. |

One important characteristic of the art of story-telling in India is what is called 'emboxing of a tale within a tale'. This is well known in the *Panchatantra* where we have the method of A's account of B's report of C's recounting of D's relating of what E said, and so forth, until at last we have the disentangling of the intricate chain by being brought back to the main story with which

Kadambari

we started, which we would perhaps have all but forgotten by that time. This form has its own advantage in a mechanical conjunction of really disconnected tales where they are narrated generally by the characters of the frame story or of the inset stories, the only binding thread in them being some moral maxim of which the stories are illustrations. But Bana and his source adopted an ingenious innovation in this age-old practice by introducing a kind of inner organic unity, inasmuch as the heroes of the frame story and the inset stories were identical as re-born incarnations. This is just what makes the story complicated and confusing to the unwary reader. The tale of king Shudraka introduces a parrot which narrates its own story up to a point; it is then continued by Sage Jabali who starts a new tale of Chandrapida and Vaishampayana and their adventures, leading on to the love of Mahashveta and Pundarika as also Chandrapida and Kadambari and the obstacles strewn by Fate in the consummation of their loves. Though the story left by Bana thus breaks off abruptly in the middle, its real beauty which lies in the delineation of the parallel loves is enough to captivate the reader. The completed story by the son will satisfy readers who are interested in the tale as such. But to a modern reader it is not the fanciful tale which has much interest, but the delineation of the *grande passion* against a highly imaginative backdrop of Nature, clothed in the 'rainbow raiment of romance'. Mahashveta and Kadambari will remain unforgettable characters, evergreen in our memory by their purity as well as suffering in love and their endurance in the face of death itself.

Divested of the complication created by the emboxing of tale within a tale, the simple story in the *Kadambari* might be summarised as follows:

Shvetaketu was a great divine sage living in the heavenly regions. His son was Pundarika, born of Lakshmi. He had a friend named Kapinjala. Both were well-educated and masters of learning,

and were leading holy and ascetic lives. One day they visited a holy lake called 'Clear-Water' (Acchoda).

Gandharvas are demi-gods tracing their descent from the moon-rays. There were two families of these demi-gods. One of them was that of King Chitraratha, who had a daughter, Kadambari. Another was that of King Hamsa, whose daughter was Mahashveta. Kadambari's mother was Gouri.

Mahashveta happened to visit the Clear-Water lake with her mother on the same day when Pundarika and his friend went to that spot. The object was to worship Shiva there in the temple nearby. Pundarika and Mahashveta fell in love with each other at first sight. But Mahashveta had to return abruptly, since her mother was returning after the worship. Kapinjala, the companion of Pundarika did his utmost to dissuade his friend from falling a victim to the darts of the love-god; but all was in vain. He was so infatuated with love that his life was in danger. He was raving like a mad man.

So Kapinjala who had ascertained the dwelling-place of Mahashveta from her companion, went over to Hemakuta to report this sad state of his friend to her and to pray to her to come and save his friend's life with her love. Mahashveta too was suffering the anguish of love deeply and she decided to go and meet Pundarika. But by the time she reached the place, Pundarika was already dead. Even as she was lamenting, she saw a supernatural being carrying away Pundarika's body. At once Kapinjala followed him in pursuit.

Pundarika, in his ravings before death, had cursed the newly risen moon to be born on earth to suffer the pangs of unrealised love in birth after birth. The moon in his turn cursed Pundarika that he too might suffer in the same way in birth after birth, though he regretted it later because Mahashveta was a descendent of the Moon and it was on account of her that Pundarika had reached that

state of frenzy. So the moon wanted to preserve the body of Pundarika from decay. He himself had come down to take away the body for preserving it intact in his region. He assured Mahashveta that she would be reunited with Pundarika later and that she should not commit suicide in despair. Hence Mahashveta took to the life of a hermit of the Pashupata order and made a nearby cave her residence in the lovely garden beside the lake.

Having come to know of all these details from the Moon, Kapinjala was moving about in the aerial regions aimlessly, distraught by grief, when he crossed unawares the path of a celestial being. The latter cursed him that as he crossed his path like an unbridled horse, he would be born as a horse on the earth. As a result of the curse, he fell down into the ocean, out of which he rose up as a miraculous horse and got himself picked by the King of Persia.

The moon was born on the earth as Chandrapida, son of Tarapida, the king of Ujjayini. Tarapida's minister was the learned Shukanasa. Pundarika was born as the son of the latter and was named Vaishampayana. The horse mentioned above (i. e. Kapinjala), now named Indrayudha, was presented by the King of Persia to King Tarapida. Seeing that the moon was born on the earth as a man, his favourite queen Rohini came to be born also on earth as the daughter of the Kuluta King and got herself the name of Patralekha.

As soon as the education of prince Chandrapida and Vaishampayana was completed, King Tarapida nominated Chandrapida as his heir-apparent and gave him the horse Indrayudha. Meanwhile Patralekha had come as a present to Tarapida's queen from the Kuluta King. The queenmother deputed her to be his lady-in-attendance.

Soon, Chandrapida set out on a career of conquest, subjugating all the kings and establishing his suzerainty as emperor.

At the end of the expedition, he camped at Suvarnapura with Vaishampayana and Patralekha. As a diversion, Chandrapida went out hunting all alone on his horse Indrayudha far into the forest. There he met a pair of demi-gods whose body was half-human and half-horse. He was overcome by curiosity at their appearance and wanted to catch hold of them. So he went in pursuit of them quite far, when they escaped on a mountain-top. Chandrapida was all alone and was not in a position to find his way back to the camp, to join his companions. He was also very thirsty, and going in quest of drinking water, he came to the Clear-Water lake. Here he met Mahashveta doing penance and was given hospitality by her as an honoured guest. At his request, Mahashveta told him the circumstances in which she took to a life of penance even at a tender age.

Seeing Mahashveta in this ascetic life, the other Gandharva girl, Kadambari also resolved to remain unmarried until her friend Mahashveta was reunited with her beloved. But the parents of Kadambari did not like this at all and they wanted Mahashveta to dissuade her from her vow of celibacy. So Mahashveta was about to proceed to Hemakuta herself in order to talk things over with Kadambari. She invited Chandrapida also to come along with her and allay his curiosity for sightseeing. Accordingly, the two went to Hemakuta and when he met Kadambari, it was again an instance of love at first sight between them. After a short stay, Chandrapida left for his camp, and his companions also had come tracing his track up to the Clear-Water lake.

Since the time of his departure, the love-lorn condition of Kadambari had become very serious. So a Gandharva named Keyuraka was despatched by her parents to Chandrapida requesting his immediate visit once again to Hemakuta. This time Chandrapida went to Hemakuta in the company of Patralekha. After a few days' stay, when Chandrapida was preparing to return, Kadambari

Kadambari

requested him to leave Patralekha behind. To this Chandrapida agreed and went back to the lake.

Meanwhile Chandrapida received a message from his father that he should return to the capital immediately. So he hastened to Ujjayini. He left word with the army-commander to escort Patralekha later and left the entire camp in the charge of Vaishampayana.

Chandrapida joined his parents at Ujjayini and found that they were thinking of arranging his marriage. Meanwhile, Patralekha returned, escorted by the army-commander, and reported that the suffering of Kadambari was acute after parting from Chandrapida.

Here ends abruptly the romance written by Bana. The rest of the story is by his son, Bhushana or Pulinda.

Later, Keyuraka also was despatched to Ujjayini reporting the worsening condition of Kadambari. But Chandrapida could not visit Hemakuta at once since his army had not yet returned to the capital. Meanwhile reports of the returning army reached him. Chandrapida eagerly went out to receive Vaishampayana and the army. But alas! There was no Vaishampayana. The army had a very tragic tale to recount.

Just before starting homeward, the army had been instructed by Vaishampayana to bathe in the lake and offer worship to Shiva. But as soon as he reached the lake, he became almost mad. He seemed to remember something lost. He refused to leave the place, No entreaty would he heed. The army was forced to return without him, leaving a few attendants to look after him.

Vaishampayana went to the hermitage of Mahashveta. He remembered his love for her in his previous birth as Pundarika and made approaches to her. Mahashveta became angry as she could not remember his previous birth and he too was very hazy about it all. When he would not stop his advances, she cursed him to become a parrot. At once Vaishampayana fell dead.

Chandrapida set out immediately to the lake to personally reason with Vaishampayana and bring him back. But when he went there, Vaishampayana was nowhere to be found. He went to Mahashveta hoping to get some news about him. When he saw her, she told him of the whole tragic tale of Vaishampayana. The terrible news made Chandrapida die of heart-break. Mahashveta was very much perturbed by this second tragedy. The men who accompanied Chandrapida were also in deep sorrow.

Meanwhile Kadambari had received the report from Patralekha that Chandrapida was expected soon and so she started to meet him half-way at the lake itself. But she could only see the dead body of Chandrapida. This time also there was a celestial voice which said that Chandrapida's body should be preserved and that it would come back to life a little later and that Kadambari would be united with him. Like Mahashveta, she too decided to lead an ascetic's life and lived near the lake, taking care of Chandrapida's body,

At Ujjayini, Tarapida grew anxious that Chandrapida did not return though so many days passed and set out himself in quest of the son. The queen and the minister too accompanied him. When they reached the lake, they came to know of the whole tale of woe and the divine promise of hope after some time. So he too resided in a hermitage near by the lake itself awaiting better times.

Seeing Chandrapida dead, Patralekha who had come there with Kadambari jumped into the lake along with the horse Indrayudha. Kapinjala then came out and narrated the story of the curse of the moon, and the counter-curse and also another curse which had made him the horse Indrayudha. Then he went to the heavenly regions to report everything to Shvetaketu, Pundarika's father.

This same Chandrapida was reborn as King Shudraka at Vidisha. Vaishampayana was reborn as a parrot in the Vindhya

Kadambari

forest near the hermitage of sage Jabali. The parrot lost its parents and was looked after by the sage. Then one day it was caught by a hunter and was kept in a cage till the period of the curse expired. The hunter's daughter suddenly became Lakshmi, mother of Pundarika. She had taken care of him till the curse period was over in this disguise and then brought it to King Shudraka. Then Lakshmi addressed Shudraka as the Moon himself who had loved Kadambari, and went to her heavenly region.

The King also remembered his love for Kadambari. Vaisampayana was still in the parrot's body and remembered now all the past births. Smitten by the pangs of these memories of love, both Shudraka and the parrot died. At once the body of Chandrapida near the lake came back to life and the body of Pundarika was revived in the region of the Moon. Soon Kapinjala and Pundarika went to the lake and joined Chandrapida. Tarapida and others came to shower blessings upon their coming back to life. The parents of Mahashveta and Kadambari too came there in joy. All trials over, Chandrapida married Kadambari and Pundarika married Mahashveta. Chandrapida became the king of Ujjayini and Pundarika became his minister. Chandrapida spent his time in Ujjayini as well as Hemakuta and the Moon region at his will. Thus all of them were reunited and lived happily ever after. Kadambari was able to meet Patralekha as Rohini in the region of the Moon.

Such is the bare outline of the plot of the prose romance which has enthralled Indian readers down the centuries. The story as handled by Bana is much more human and much more imbued with sentiment than its crude form in the sourcebook. Virtually, all the motifs of the popular folk-tale have been incorporated into the plot-structure. The characters include divine, semi-divine and human types as also sages with divine powers. There is a constant inter-communication between the human and semi-divine regions. The action takes place as much on the earth as in the heavenly region

of Kadambari and the Clear-Water lake which lies midway between the two regions with a free access from both.

The plot is centred round the motif of reincarnation and remembrance in the lovers of the past births. This was a central tenet of the Hindu epic lore and it has been very cleverly utilized for the development of the plot, for bringing about the climax and a happy *denouement*.

The device of emboxing tale within tale naturally works for sustaining the reader's suspense at top gear, since the intended conclusion is kept far from his expectation at every point in the romance.

As in folk-literature, birds and beasts are made here to play human roles. The parrots talk and relate stories. Even Nature is imbued with life and human emotion. Plants and creepers, the moon, the wind and the stars become animate participants in the unfolding of the human or semi-divine romance.

Further, we come across sages who are omniscient, who can see straight into the past, present and future of those that come to them; but who do not share their foreknowledge. only as a matter of self-discipline.

The motivation for rebirth is provided in the unfailing efficacy of a sage's curse. The curse-motif is the most common and recurring motif in all Indian fables and folk-tales. In the *Kadambari*, the curse provides the lever for all the turns in the fortunes of the major characters. The reverse side of the curse is the boon conveyed by divine voices. If the tragedy of self-immolation by fire on the part of Mahashveta and Kadambari are averted, it is because of this device only.

In short, the world of the romance is a self-contained imaginative world having its own laws. It excludes some common reaches of experience in order to concentrate intently upon certain deep layers of experience and exaggerates them and recreates

Kadambari

human figures bathed in this new glow. The normal distinctions of the possible and the impossible undergo a sea-change of transformation here. The romance requires of the reader a sense of involvement and participation in the dream-reality. Life here takes on a new dimension as it were, and the experience on which these magic casements open out is a multiple one of endlessly interpenetrating stories, very unlike the humdrum procession of banal happenings in a daily routine. This interlacing of story with story contributes to what may be called a polyphonic and symphonic effect. And the device of first-hand narration contributes in some small measure to our sense of personal participation in the wonder-world of romance.

The fact cannot be forgotten that the romance as a literary form is outmoded today. Yet Bana commands our attention for his profound insight into the currents of youthful passion and virgin modesty, in their fleeting impulses of joy and grief, hope and despair, and this forms the very essence of the work as a whole, Bana indeed has achieved a large measure of success in the characterisation of his two heroines, Kadambari and Mahashveta. "The maidenly love of Kadambari with its timid balancing of the new-born longing and cherished filial duty, is finely set off by the pathetic fidelity of the love-lorn Mahashveta, awaiting her lover for long years on the shores of Acchoda lake. If they are over-dressed children of his poetic imagination, his romantic ideas of love find in them a vivid and effective embodiment; they are no less brilliant types, but they are at the same time individualised by the sharpness of the impression."¹

Peterson's tribute to Bana for the characterization of Kadambari, the heroine, is worth quoting:

1. S.K. De, 'The Prose Kavyas', *Kane Festschrift*, Poaoa, p.139.

Banabhatta

On his representation of Kadambari in particular, Bana has spent all his wealth of observation, fullness of imagery, keenness of sympathy. From the moment when for the first time her eye falls and rests on Chandrapida, this image of a maiden heart, torn by the conflicting emotions of love and virgin shame, of hope and despondency, of cherished filial duty and a new-born longing, of fear of the world's scorn and the knowledge that a world given in exchange for this will be a world well lost, takes full possession of the reader.—“Being drunk by the heady wine of Kadambari. the reader loses count of himself and all”.—It is a fault of arrangement in the book that Kadambari's entrance is so long delayed. But henceforth, whether off or on the shifting stage of the story, she keeps the pre-eminent place assigned and foreshadowed for her.

But a few critics might feel like giving the palm to the depiction of Mahashveta rather than Kadambari. She seems to compete with Kadambari for the claim of the first place. Her brightness and purity are so vividly described by Bana that the impression she leaves on us is most indelible and long-lasting. All holy and spotless objects in nature are brought in as similes of her bright body and brighter character. The crowning epithet in the long description being the *ne plus ultra* of brightness! Her life of austerity and her poignant grief at the death of Pundarika are painted with the most touching and delicate strokes by Bana.

Kadarabari and Mahashveta thus represent two immortal characters that Sanskrit literature has bequeathed to us. Their constancy in love, enduring a span of three rebirths of their lovers, is something unique in the history of world literature. Their love is as pure as it is profound, as holy as it is intense. It is a love which the gods bless and the sages approve. It is a love which takes away the sting of even the mighty death! It is enlivening and

Kadambari

ennobling. Such an ideal creation of Bana's fancy bespeaks his boundless genius.

The male characters are also ideal. Chandrapida is an ideal prince, mighty in war and superb in love. His companion Vaishampayana represents the frenzy of love and the disasters it might spell for want of discretion. Pundarika's mate Kapinjala is again an ideal friend, ready for any sacrifice for the sake of his friendly attachment. Shukanasa is an ideal minister. In short, there are no characters, male or female, in this pure romance who have any trace of evil or meanness in them. They all live for affection and love and suffer for the attainment of their ideals. That such ideal values are worth struggling for is the indirect lesson that humanity can derive by reading their romance.

More than the story, more than the characters, the chief merit of Bana is his masterly poetry evidenced throughout the work. Bana knows the main springs of the human heart and can lay them bare in the most fascinating form imaginatively. It is not the ordinary love we are used to in the novels or plays, not even in Sanskrit epics. It is a love that transcends not only time and space but also the bar of death. The tenderness of human love in all its delicacy and intensity, in all its fleeting moods and nuances, is chastened and sublimated by parting, sorrow and death, and is enlivened by abiding hope and faith, and heightened by the touch of an unshaken idealism. For such a transcendental love, the luxuriant diction and embroidered style of Bana become fitting vehicles indeed.

Anandavardhana, the doyen of Sanskrit literary theorists, cites Bana's description of Chandrapida's love at the sight of Kadambari as the best and foremost example of successful translation:

Now on beholding the moonlike beauty of Kadambari's face, the prince's heart was stirred like the ocean-tide. 'Why', thought he, did not the Creator make all my senses into sight, or what noble

Banabhatta

deed has my eye done that it may look on her unchecked? Surely, it is a wonder! The Creator has here made a home for every charm! Whence have the parts of this exceeding beauty been gathered? Surely, from the tears that fell from the Creator's eyes in the labour of thought, as he gently moulded her with his hands, all the lotuses in the world have their birth...Confused by the sight of Kadambari yet illumined by the brightness of her gaze, he stood for a moment like a rock, while at the sight of him a thrill rose in Kadambari, her jewels clashed, and she half rose. Then love caused a glow, but the excuse was the effort of hastily rising; trembling hindered her steps—the swans around, drawn by the sound of anklets, got the blame; the heaving of a sigh stirred her robe, it was thought due to the wind of chowries; her hand fell on her heart, as if to touch Chandrapida's image that had entered in—it pretended to cover her bosom.

The figure of speech 'Disguise' (*Apahnuti*) is used in a chain so effectively to depict the rising symptoms of new maidenly love. Bana's prose lulls us like some haunting melody with its measured phrases and musical harmony in tune with the sentiment set forth.

Apart from aesthetic delight, instruction in worldly ways as well as conferment of religious merit were envisaged as the purposes served by literature. The *Kadambari* conforms to these conditions admirably. We have almost in every other paragraph one maxim or another which serves as an epigrammatic apophthegm or choice saying. A number of such maxims taken together help us in arriving at the author's own philosophy of life, stated in general terms. Here are a few of them taken at random:

Harshacharita

1. Separation from intimate friends, dreadful like the wood-cleaving saw, leaves a fissure in the heart.

Kadambari

2. Inexhaustible is the treasure of courtesy in the great.
3. The all-powerful sense of renunciation allays all the maladies of the mind.
4. The minds of fools are averse to facing truth.
5. The river of transitoriness flows very fast.
6. An angry man is blind though he has eyes.
7. Even a slight hurt injures a delicate heart very much.
8. The minds of the small fry cannot have far-sight,
9. Courtesy is a fetter, not of iron, which binds the hearts of the good.
10. Humility is truly the ornament of the strong, gems and the like are but deadweights.
11. Affection does not calculate utility.
12. Forgiveness is at the root of all austerities.
13. There is nothing which a loyal one will not hazard to achieve.
14. Fate favours first and then strikes; even like the lightning flash which leads on to thunder.
15. Stronger than iron bonds are the bonds of friendship.
16. Self-respecting men are averse to slavery.
17. Heroes reckon only fame as their real enduring body.
18. Sweet speech is a hereditary trait of the virtuous.
19. Grief is only another name for a ghost.
20. The great will not speak twice.

Kadambari

1. The influence of great men is beyond our imagination.
2. Who will doubt what he has himself experienced ?
3. As the sun's rays are reflected in pure crystal, so the words of the wise find a ready entry in pure minds.
4. Devotion to saints cannot go unrewarded.
5. One must reap the rewards of one's own deeds.
6. Will not fire burn, even if it be born out of sandal-wood?

Banabhatta

7. Fate is fickle.
8. Company of the good will comfort even the sorrow-stricken.
9. Only the brave will overcome difficulties.
10. Even the greatest man cannot change the decree of fate.
11. Prosperity dances attendance on the good.
12. All-powerful is fate!
13. A friend's life must be saved even by sacrificing one's own.
14. Cupid first burns bashfulness and then the heart.
15. Diverse are the ways of the world.
16. The world will not believe in one who talks too much.
17. Death is preferable to a shameful life.
18. Fortunes and misfortunes come in a train.
19. Unsullied youth is rarely found.
20. Even a short meeting might result in intimacy.

Torn out of the context, these may appear like so many copybook maxims without any profound significance. But when they are read in their context, they certainly acquire great strikingness and become meaningful. As an example of Bana's eloquent moralising, we might quote an extract from the celebrated advice of minister Shukanasa to the young graduate Chandrapida:

Truly, the darkness arising from youth is by nature very thick, nor can it be pierced by the sun, nor cleft by the radiance of jewels, nor dispelled by the brightness of lamps. The intoxication of sovereignty is terrible and does not cease even in old age. There is, too, another blindness of power, not to be cured by any salve. The fever of pride runs very high, and no cooling remedy can allay it. The madness that arises from tasting the poison of the senses is violent, and not to be counteracted by roots or charms....But the words of a *guru* are a bathing without water, able to cleanse all the stains of man; they are a maturity that

Kadambari

changes not the locks into gray; they add weight without increasing bulk; though not wrought of gold they are an ear-jewel of no common order; without light they shine; without startling, they awaken. They are specially needed for kings, for the admonishers of kings are few.

Bana is as felicitous in the depiction of tender sentiments as in describing the different moods of Nature. Except perhaps Kalidasa, there is no other poet in classical Sanskrit that can come anywhere near Bana in elaborate and sublime descriptions of forests and trees, rivers and lakes, morning and evening glory, the sun and the moon and the stars, hills and vales, hermitages and cities, armies and animals, birds and beasts, gods and fairies. The description of these had become trite and mechanical conventions with some scholarly poets. But Bana reveals in every description of his, a very fresh poetic imagination. What Kalidasa can compress into a phrase or clause, Bana can extend to a page, but never making us feel that he is indulging in any laborious brain-work, or intellectual exercise. There is not a tree or bird or animal whose subtle behaviour is not within the perception of the poet Bana.

Here is a specimen of his introducing the Clear-Water (Acchoda) lake:

Constantly turning his eyes on every side for water, Chandrapida wandered till at length he saw a track wet with masses of mud raised by the feet of a large herd of mountain-elephants which had lately come up from bathing in a lotus-pool. Inferring thence that there was water near, he went straight on along the slope of Kailasa, the trees of which, closely crowded as they were, seemed, from their lack of boughs, to be far apart, for they were mostly pines, sal, and gum trees and were lofty, and like a circle of umbrellas, to be gazed at with upraised head. There was thick

Banabhatta

yellow sand, and by reason of stony soil, the grass and shrubs were but scanty. At length he beheld, on the north-east of Kailasa, a very lofty clump of trees, rising like a mass of cloud, heavy with its weight of rain, and massed as if with the darkness of a night in the dark fortnight. The wind from the waves, soft as sandal, dewy, cool from passing over the water, aromatic with flowers, met him, and seemed to woo him; and the cries of swans drunk with lotushoney, charming his ear, summoned him to enter. So he went into that clump, and in its midst beheld the Acchoda lake, as if it were the mirror of Lakshmi of the three worlds, the crystal-chamber of the goddess of earth, the path by which the waters of ocean escape, the oozing of the quarters, the *avatar* of part of the sky, Kailasa taught to flow, Himavat liquified, moonlight melted, Siva's smile turned to water, the merit of the three worlds abiding in the shape of a lake. It seemed to be fashioned of the hearts of ascetics, the virtues of good men, the bright eyes of deer, or the rays of pearls.

Here is a specimen of Bana's genius flying from earth to heaven in a fine frenzy. His powers of minute observation and subtle portraiture are almost unrivalled in the history of Sanskrit prose. These high-soaring poetic fancies may not be exactly what our taste admires. But Bana's age revelled in it and the very touchstone of originality in a poet was deemed to be in his capacity for such flights of fancy or phantasy as we might choose to call it.

Like Western classical critics, Indian literary critics too gave a very high place to what they called pictorial imagination or portrait-like and colourful description. This is the same as *poesis et pictura* so highly commended by Ben Jonson in England— "It was excellently said of Plutarch, poetry was a speaking picture, and picture a mute poesy. For they both invent, feign, and devise

Kadambari

many things, and accomodate all they invent to the use and service of Nature. Yet of the two the pen is more noble than the pencil; for that can speak to the understanding, the other but to the sense.”¹ This is very much true of Bana’s literary art. This colourful and pictorial quality of his art has won high encomiums in modern times from Rabindranath Tagore who has likened the several pen-pictures in the *Kadambari* to a picture-gallery.² We may liken it to a multi-storied mansion or many-sided museum. With invariable master touches, Bana’s descriptions gain in sharpness of outline and animating grace. One last example and we have done. And it is from the opening lines of *Kadambari* where the parrot Vaishampayana describes the forest in which he took birth:

There is a forest, by name Vindhya, that embraces the shores of the Eastern and Western ocean, and decks the central region as though it were the earth’s zone. It is beauteous with trees watered with the ichor of wild elephants, bearing on their crests masses of white blossom that rise to the sky and vie with the stars; in it the pepper-trees, bitten by ospreys in their spring gladness, spread their boughs, branches of the *tamala* tree trampled by young elephants fill it with fragrance, shoots in hue like the wine-flushed cheeks of Kerala damsels, as though roseate with lac from the feet of wandering wood-nymphs, over-shadow it. Bowers there are, too, wet with drippings from parrot-pierced pomegranates; bowers in which the ground is covered with torn fruit and leaves shaken sprinkled with pollen from ever-falling blossoms, or strewn with couches of clove-branches by travellers,

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1. G. Saintsbury, *Loci Critici*, Ginn and Company, Boston, 1903, p. 114.
 2. In one of his essays included in *Prachina-Sahitya*.

Banabhatta

or hemmed in by fine coconut, *ketakis*, *kariras* and *bakulas*; bowers so fair that with their areca trees girt about with betel vines, they make a fitting home for a woodland Lakshmi.

This is rich royal fare for those who have a taste and leisure for such repast. Bana's eye for colour and smell and other sensations is so keen and refreshing that he can communicate the very quality of the experience to us in its entirety.

This is how Bana typically describes a sunset. This most ordinary phenomenon becomes in his hands an extraordinary thing of beauty and a joy forever. Such is his colourful imagination:

The sun in the sky seemed to bear upwards before our eyes the offering cast on the ground, with its unguent of red sandal-wood. Then his glow faded and vanished; the effluence of his glory was drunk by the practitioners of penance with faces raised and eyes fixed on his orb as if they were ascetics; and he glided from the sky pink as a dove's foot, drawing in his rays as though to avoid touching the seven sages forming The Great Bear as they rose. His orb, with its network of crimson rays reflected on the Western Ocean, was like the lotus of Vishnu on his couch of waters pouring forth nectar; his beams, forsaking the sky and deserting the lotus-groves, lingered at eve like birds on the crest of hill and tree; the splashes of crimson light seemed for a moment to deck the trees with the red bark garments hung up by the ascetics. And when the thousand-rayed sun had gone to rest, twilight sprang up like rosy coral from the Western Ocean.

The sun we greet here is the divine Sun-god in all his grandeur and glory turning west for his hard-earned rest and the crimson glow painting the whole world of plants and animals with a new enchanting beauty. But Bana's language is essentially untranslatable.

Kadambari

It has a music and a majesty which no rendering can represent. That is because the Sanskrit language can literally use a thousand synonyms to denote the Sun-god. Every adjective of his can be turned into a possessive compound, e.g. 'the lover-of-the-lotus', 'the thousand-rayed', 'the maker-of-days', etc. And Bana has the supreme gift of selecting the most appropriate synonym with full awareness of its sound-effect on the ear. The one word which aptly characterises the literary art of Bana in its varied aspects is 'sublimity' in the sense used by Longinus: "Sublimity is a certain consummateness and pre-eminence of phrase and the greatest writers gained the first rank and grasped an eternity of fame, by no other means than this." Bana is the unrivalled master of the sublime prose in Sanskrit.

Professor Vasudeva Sharan Aggarwal has attempted a metaphysical and mystic exposition of the symbolic and eternal truths underlying the outward romantic tale in the *Kadambari*, in his Hindi work on the subject. Shudraka represents the ignorant man who has forgotten his spiritual heritage or reality. Pundarika represents the level of consciousness in the thousand-petalled lotus or brain which falls from its high pedestal due to passion as Vaishampayana, while Mahashveta is a pure embodiment of redeeming consciousness; Kadambari is the embodiment of the principle of passion which can blind when one is gone astray and redeems when it is canalised. He sees the symbolism of the Mother-principle of creation in Apsaras, and of the creation-process in the Gandharvas. He quotes several scriptures, Vedic and Buddhist, to endorse these ideas and builds an elaborate edifice of metaphysical interpretation which is alluring at first sight but difficult to carry conviction. If Bana had any such mystical intentions, he has not left a single clue in his own work as Dante

had done in the case of *The Divine Comedy*. The metaphysical interpretation therefore appears largely an ingenious scholarly attempt at reconciling the irreconcilable mystic ideas of Buddhism and Upanishadic lore without a real textual authority and hence it may be left undiscussed. Spiritual symbolism can be read into any work dealing with ideal love and *Kadambari* is not unique in this respect.

Mahamahopadhyaya P.V. Kane's summing up of Bana's literary estimate is at once balanced and judicious:

Bana shows great skill and discrimination in characterization. All the characters in the *Kadambari* are life-like and consistent. The gentle and youthful Harita; the generous and loving king Tarapida; the trusted minister Shukanasa whose first thought was always for the king; the tender queen Vilasavati; the devoted Patralekha, who followed the prince Chandrapida like his shadow; the affectionate yet stern Kapinjala, Mahashveta, holy in mind as she was fair in body, who serves as the foil for the heroine; these are characters that are bound to make a deep impression on the heart of the reader. Bana, however, lavished all his skill in depicting the hero and the heroine of his romance. We think that Bana, as has been remarked in the case of Shakespeare, was more successful in delineating his heroine than his hero.¹

Bana's elaborate descriptions, sometimes out of all proportion to the main theme on hand, have come in for adverse comment from some scholars. But the criticism springs from the fault of judging *Kadambari* from standards which are applicable only to the modern novel. If modern fiction aims deliberately at realism

1. P.V. Kane, *The Harshacharita*, Bombay, 1918, Introduction, p. xxiii.

Kadambari

and verisimilitude, in Bana's times it was a conscious avoidance of realism which was thought to be the hall-mark of the art of fiction. The several elements that go to form the literary art had been scientifically studied and great poets strove hard to incorporate as many of them into their work as possible. Long descriptions thus serve to emphasize the artistic aspect of the romance, language itself receiving an extra aesthetic treatment. As Prof. C. Kunhan Raja observes :

Such descriptions are introduced only as ornamentations of the romance. They come into the romance only on proper occasions, in proper proportions. They do not shut out the story in the romance from the view of the reader. They give a beauty to the story that is always kept before the reader. It also comes as a change in the otherwise possible monotony of the narration. The narration provides the movement and the description slows down the movement so that the reader gets time and leisure to have a full view of the events in the story. There is neither a rush nor a stagnation. There is a slow, rhythmic movement.¹

1. *Kadambari*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963, Introduction, p. 21.

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Bana's Style

Bana was indeed a master of what might be regarded as the 'grand style' in Sanskrit prose. Such has been the consistent judgement of Indian connoisseurs and literary critics, down to Rabindranath Tagore.

But the first impression produced by the *Kadambari* on the average Western scholar was one of repulsive opulence. Even a very sympathetic admirer as Peterson observes:

The book bristles with passages which would be cumbrous and tedious if the words were to be taken in their apparent sense, instead of bearing as they do, a hidden meaning, to find out which is the reader's painful task. The conscious search for *double entendres*, that, to please, should wear at least the appearance of having come unsought, must always be fatal to literary excellence. Like his predecessors and imitators in this unhappy walk of literature, Bana is led to cultivate the bye-ways of the vocabulary of the language he uses. The result is that in great passages of the book, 'the sense faints following him'. It is hard to win the natural sense of the words; and in the absence of a commentary, no ordinary reader could hope to find the second intention.

Bana's Style

Peterson goes on to quote at length, the adverse remarks made by Weber against Bana in a review of the *Kadambari* he wrote for the *Journal of the German Oriental Society* in 1853:

Kadambari compares most unfavourably with *Dashakumaracharita* by a subtlety and tautology which are almost repugnant, by an outrageous overloading of single words with epithets; the narrative proceeds in a strain of bombastic nonsense, amidst which it and if not it, then the patience of the reader threatens to perish altogether: a mannerism, already apparent in the *Dashakumaracharita*, is here carried to excess: the verb is kept back to the second, third, fourth, nay, once to the sixth page, and all the interval is filled with epithets and epithets to these epithets: moreover these epithets frequently consist of compounds extending over more than one line; in short, Bana's prose is an Indian wood, where all progress is rendered impossible by the undergrowth until the traveller cuts out a path for himself, and where, even then, he has to reckon with malicious wild beasts in the shape of unknown words that affright him.

Peterson remarks that this vigorous description may be perhaps a little over-coloured, but in the main it is true and further adds that an apologist for Bana would be unwise if he claimed these as his author's special merits and as 'ornaments' because they are no more than 'ugly blots on a fair face, excrescences that disfigure'.

It is all a matter of one's taste and one's standing in the language, one's sensibility and one's total ability. There is no doubt at all that generations of students in Indian universities, who were forced to read the works of Bana as text-books for their degree examinations in the past hundred years, must have felt on similar lines when faced with the task of translating Bana's

Banabhatta

passages into English in the examination hall. They might have cursed Bana in worse language too.

All this is indeed very wide of the mark. We should remind ourselves again of Pope's *dictum*:

In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share;
Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write!
A little learning is a dangerous thing:
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring...
A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ.
Survey the *whole*, nor seek slight faults to find
Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind.

Neither Professor Weber nor our degree student has had the patience to take a survey of the whole with a sympathy that a classical author demands, a survey undertaken with the sole object of deriving aesthetic pleasure without any distracting personal considerations of a work-a-day world. Even Western scholars who have had the requisite patience and absence of prejudice have openly admitted the unique power and genius of Bana. Thus the French critic Lacote observes:

*Le charme de cette oeuvre tout impregnee de tendresse,
de melancholie et d'esperance au une seconde vie.*

The charm of this work overflows with tenderness,
with melancholy and with the hope in the second life¹.

Winternitz in his famous *A History of Indian Literature* tones down Weber's tirade thus:

1. Quoted by H.R. Karnik and V.D. Gangal, *Kadambari*, Bombay, 1939, Introduction, p.xxix.

Bana's Style

It must be remarked that the monsters in the form of words and the frightful passages are regularly and repeatedly intercepted by quite brief passages in easy and unaffected style. Though the reading of fiction may be tedious to us, it must indeed be granted that for the Indian reader, presuming that he is well-acquainted with Sanskrit, the work has its charms.¹

This balanced judgment deserves to be illustrated. First we shall take a specimen of Bana's unaffected and moving style and thereafter give a long extract from Rabindranath Tagore's remarks on Bana's style.

Bana's straightforward and direct style can be instanced from the love message of Kadambari to Chandrapida:

I am aware indeed of your intense love for me. But how can there be such proficiency in women as to devise a proper message? Their hearts are indeed fragile as the soft *sirish* flowers and their nature guileless like that of children. Daring indeed are women who deign to send a message on their own!

I feel ashamed to send any message on my own. For that matter, what message could I send? Were I to say, 'you are exceedingly dear to me,' it would be redundant. Were I to ask you, 'Am I dear to you?', it would be a foolish question. Were I to observe, 'I have intense love for you,' it smacks of a courtesan's speech. Were I to add, 'I cannot live without you,' it would be a self-contradiction (inasmuch as I live while uttering the words). To say that Cupid is tormenting me is a self-exposure of one's weakness. 'Cupid has presented me to you' would be a way of self-reproach. 'You are drawn to me by force' would be a harlot's assertion. 'You should come perforce to me' would

1, Loc, cit.

Banabhatta

mean over-confidence in any good fortune. 'I shall myself meet you' would indicate my feminine fickleness. 'This slave of thine is not devoted to anyone else' is but self-declaration. 'I won't send a message lest it be turned down' is in a way giving you a hint for rejection. 'I suffer hell with your parting' is self-glorification of a sort. 'You will realise my affection by my death' is a little beyond the limits of possibility!

Such simple, direct and straight expression of subtle emotional shades cannot but win the hearts of people with a literary sensibility in any age. This may be taken as the best example of what Addison calls, 'the fairy way of writing' in one of his celebrated essays. Its chief characteristics noted by him deserve our attention in properly appreciating Bana's style whose first impression is one of cumbersomeness: 'There is a kind of writing, wherein the poet quite loses sight of Nature, and entertains his reader's imagination with the characters and actions of such persons as have many of them no existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are fairies, witches, magicians, demons, and departed spirits. This "fairy way of writing" is indeed more difficult than any other that depends on the poet's fancy, because he has no pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own invention. There is a very odd turn of thought required for this sort of writing, and it is impossible for a poet to succeed in it, who has not a particular cast of fancy, and an imagination naturally fruitful and superstitious. Besides this he ought to be very well-versed in legends and fables, antiquated romances and the traditions of nurses and old women, that he may fall in with our natural prejudices, and humour those notions which we have imbibed in our fancy...These descriptions amuse the reader's imagination with the strangeness and novelty of the

Bana's Style

persons who are presented in them. They bring up into our memory the stories we have heard in our childhood. We are pleased with surveying the different habits and behaviours of foreign countries; how much more must we be delighted and surprised when we are led, as it were, into a new creation, and see the persons and manners of another species? Men of cold fancies, and philosophical dispositions object to the imagination.... Thus we see in how many ways poetry addresses itself to the Imagination, as it has not only the whole circle of Nature for its province, but makes new worlds of its own, shows us persons who are not to be found in being, and represents even the faculties of the soul, with her several virtues and vices, in a sensible shape and character.'

These observations will appear to the Indian reader as a page from his own literary critics, say Anandavardhana or Kuntaka. What Addison calls an 'odd turn of thought' is an exact equivalent of Kuntaka's aesthetic category called "vakrokit" and Anandavardhana's nomenclature of the same is 'dhvani'. Both the Indian critics agree that the 'content' (*artha*) ornamented is *rasa* or *svabhava*, i.e. human nature or nature and the poetic 'form' (*shabda*) itself is ornament (*alankara*). The harmonious wedlock of the two alone is the hallmark of genius and of this Bana is a perfect exemplar.

We might also refer to Rabindranath Tagore's admiration for Bana and his manner as representative of a sensitive and imaginative Indian's reaction in modern times. My summary of Tagore's views is based on the Kannada rendering of his essay on Bana by the late Prof. T.S. Venkanniah in the collection entitled—*Prachīna Sahitya* (Mysore, 1927).

The Sanskrit language has a polyphonic cadence, a harmoniously blended melody of sounds, and an inherent attraction unknown elsewhere. In an artistic handling of it there is such a magic and

Banabhatta

in its hidden cadence such a profound indescribable charm that no scholar-poet can resist the temptation of enchanting the learned audience with his clever manipulation of the divine language. Hence even in place where progress of action demands a concise and running style, the temptation for exploiting the artistry of language becomes hard to repress. Hence it may stand in its way attracting attention towards itself. And in this it succeeds also. True, fans fashioned out of peacock's plumes do not provide a lot of breeze. But they are used in royal courts more for their show-value. Having them is only an excuse as it were. The Sanskrit poetic works meant for royal courts are also similarly constructed. Their main concern is not the fast recounting of a story, but a conspicuous display of rich vocabulary, arresting simile and descriptive skill fascinating the learned assembly. Among the two or three specimens of its kind in Sanskrit, the *Kadambari* is by far the best. It is not only a work of beauty but also a richly embellished piece of writing. Usually prose is a means of daily discourse, normally employed for argument and historical narration: hence its ornaments are but few. Its limbs do not display ornaments generally. But unfortunately, Sanskrit prose was not always directed towards its natural uses. That is why it is sometimes so gaudily embellished. Like a fat courtesan, it is puffed with compounds and shows itself unfit for normal walking. Great scholarly commentators have to carry her in a palanquin on their shoulders if she has to move at all. It does not matter if movement is not there. It is enough if it shines with all the dazzling ornaments!

That is why, even if Bana had any idea of narrating a tale, he has never allowed it to move fast, thereby degrading the royal

Bana's Style

grandeur of the great Sanskrit language; he has taken it in a slow procession like a sovereign emperor with all his entourage. So much so that the story becomes inconspicuous and only treks behind the emperor like his umbrella-bearer. The royal grandeur of the language gains to some extent by the story; that is why it has received even that little scope. But no one turns to it mainly!

This poetic picture provided by Tagore is certainly unprejudiced, though it reflects the changed modern taste, a taste no longer of the antiquarian pandit. But though Tagore has his reservations regarding the over-all estimate of *Kadambari* as a tale, he shows acute and keen sensitivity to the finished beauty of individual descriptions in the work and his over-all estimate must be supplemented by these appreciations of the wonderful small units with which Bana's work is studded throughout. One or two examples should suffice from Tagore regarding this aspect which is usually ignored by the Western approach:

The greatness of *Kadambari* lies in the fact that the individual pictures are suffused with a life of their own. All are not like coins from the same mould. There is an admirable variety in them. A description of sunset begins as follows: 'The ray-garlanded Sun-god had not yet gone far up in the horizon. The Sun's red glow at the time was like the red *patali* flower just then opening out its petals.' The purpose of the description is only to bring before the reader's mind a lovely painted picture as it were and then make him feel the cool scented breeze in the morning sun. Then the description goes on to say—'Once when the ray-adorned Sun-god had arisen opening out the petals of fresh lotuses not far apart and had lost his redness slightly ...' What an enchanting string of words! If we start translating, we can

Banabhatta

only say the sun's colour was slightly reddish. But in the original, the magic of the sweet Sans-krit epithets has woven an atmosphere of beautiful colour, scent and cool touch in the morning air which fills our heart instantaneously!

What is expected of the reader of Bana is an imaginative sensitivity and a lot of leisure to go slow, enjoying every delight on the way, without being too much encumbered by the progress of the incidents in the story. And the present writer cannot bring out the music and cadence of the original without quoting profusely from Sanskrit with which the general reader may not be conversant and hence which has to be avoided here in this monograph. The reader knowing Sanskrit would discover beauties for himself in Bana without much comment, if he follows the guidelines of Rabindranath Tagore.

The influence of Bana in the development of Sanskrit literature has been unique and phenomenal, not only in the form of prose romance (as instanced in Dandin) but also in the genres of *champu* or epic in mixed prose and verse. In classical drama, Bhatta Narayana might have been influenced by Bana's *Mukutataditaka*. It became a craze with later writers to imitate the graces of Bana's majestic style whether they were writing *champus* or historical epics. Playwrights like Bhavabhuti and Bhatta Narayana, historical *kavya* writers like Bilhana and Someshvara, and *champu* writers like Somadeva and Bhoja bear ample testimony to this irresistible tendency. What is still more striking is the influence Bana wielded on classical Prakrit poets like Vakpatiraja who wrote a *kavya* on king Yashovarman's victory over the Gauda king and on even poets in distant languages like Kannada and Telugu. The first Kannada major poet Pampa has many a purple patch reminiscent

Bana's Style

of Bana and it became a tradition with all old Kannada poets to begin with a homage to Bana along with Kalidasa, a tradition which started with the first literary theorist, King Nrpatunga-Amoghavarsha who wrote the *Kavirajamarga*. In India the greatest tribute that could be paid to a master classical poet has been always this. That very soon Bana became a 'poet's poet' all over India, and that no imitator could rise beyond him speaks of the spotless genius of the great poet Bana. He soon became the subject of many a legend and his name and fame are reflected in a hundred compliments paid to his greatness in effusive terms. We might close with some samples:

Three alone are the masters of the 'oblique' style
in Sanskrit—Subandhu, Bana and Kaviraja—
a fourth may never be found!

Kaviraja, *Raghavapandaviya*, 1.14.

A few can tread the path of puns;
A few in verbal art excel.
Others pursue the road of *rasa*
And still others of *alankara*.

But only Bana moves all round
Like a lion on his own ground
And breaks the pride of poets, one and all
Posing big like elephants tall!

(ascribed to Chandradeva in anthologies.)

In Bana we can glimpse even today an integrated vision, which unifies the fairy-tale and classical perfection, a vision in which man's deepest emotions and aspirations are not yet polarised by his worldly pursuits. We feel as though his mind, heart and spirit, all worked together until the ideal became fused with the

Banabhatta

real to form one lasting design. In Bana, as in the other masters of Sanskrit literature, we have a singular blend of the sacred and the literary. We get an insight into Man not yet alienated from tradition or Nature. This unified motive explains the presence of such symbols of nature, the sun, the stars and the heavens, which are majestically re-created. If the modern age wishes to recapture this integral insight into the universal Man, without any split or dichotomy between *psyche* and *techne*, science and art, myth and history, it can certainly turn to the works of Bana.

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