

THE APPLICATION OF A FEW CANONS
OF TEXTUAL AND HIGHER CRITICISM TO
KĀLIDĀSA'S ŚĀKUNTALA

by

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Kālidāsa's Śākuntala has had the rare good fortune of being praised very lavishly and at once elevated to the rank of the World's Classic even before it was made available in a fairly critical edition, and even before its real charm and meaning was even half understood. It was much later that scholars came to realise that there was a very complicated problem connected with the varying recensions of the play: the shorter or the Devanāgarī as current in Western and Southern India, the longer as current in Bengal, and the Kashmirian, which is based upon the unique birchbark Ms. discovered by Bühler in 1875. Now, rather than endeavouring to resolve the problem by the application of the generally recognised principles of criticism, Pischel and others took sides; and we know what to expect when party-considerations invade the domains of scholarship. A prolonged study of the Śākuntala has convinced me that it is possible to rise above the recensions and construct a text of the play that would satisfy all the tests of lower and higher criticism. I propose to illustrate this by considering a few typical cases.

I begin with that exquisite song of the Naṭī in the Prologue, which the Devanāgarī text reads thus—

*Īsī cumbiāt bhamarekṃ suumārakesarasihāt |
avadaṃsaanti daamānā pamadāo sīrisakusumāt ||*

Monier Williams thus renders it—"Loving [amorous] fair-ones make ear-rings of the Śīriśha-blossoms that-are-very-gently-kissed by bees (and) the points-of-whose-filaments-are-very-delicate."—The first criticism of this text is that it gives two forms for the nom.

pl., *daamānā* and *pamadāo* (or in some Mss. *pamadā* and *daamānāo*), the conjunction of which is improbable in one and the same line. Cappeller avoids the awkwardness by reading *daamānā pamadā*, which violates the metre of the second line. This is a grammatical difficulty.—Secondly, the metre of the first line is not correct. It is a stanza in Kālidāsa's favourite Āryā metre. It should normally consist of 12+18+12+18 mātrās, but in the above text the second quarter gives two extra mātrās. Was Kālidāsa, like Homer, nodding? None of the variants preserved in Mss. of the shorter recension helps us out of this metrical difficulty.—The third is a difficulty of interpretation. Why are the ladies *daamānā* (which means not amorous but compassionate)? Some explain that they feel compassion because the bees kiss the blossoms: but surely that is the life-purpose of the blossoms. The ladies might envy their lot, not grieve for it. Others answer that the sympathy is for the pain caused in the act of plucking; for, the ladies, like the Heroine, love the tender creepers. But then they, like the Heroine, should not have plucked the blossom. And in any case what is the propriety on that supposition of introducing the bees at all? None of the explanations in the field quite meet the case.

Turn we next to Pischel's reading of the verse—

Khanacumbiāi bhamarehī uaha suumārakesarasihāi |
avaamsaanti sadaamī sīrisakusumāi pamadāo ||

Our first or grammatical difficulty does not arise here; but the metrical difficulty remains, as the second quarter now gives 19 mātrās. For the word *uaha* the variants are: *uha* (= *ūha* = *tarkayata*, where the uncompensated shortening of the long *ū* is against philology); *suhāa* (= *subhaga*, the reading of the Kashmir Ms., which is tautologous with the following word *suumāra* = *sukumāra*); *uaa* in Sir William Jones' Ms.; and *uba* in a Bengali Ms. reported by Folkes. Pischel renders *uaha* by *paśyata*.

As none of the extant readings is quite satisfactory here is a good case for conjectural emendation, provided it is an emendation. Now, I propose changing *uaha* to *ua*, making the word two-syllabic, as it is in fact preserved by two sets of Mss. Otherwise I accept the reading of Pischel. *Ua* is a Deśī word for *paśya*, and many a scribe or student must have stumbled upon the unfamiliar word. The suggested emendation has much transcriptional probability. Assuming a Śāradā

original for the archetype, we know that in that script ऋ (a) and ः (ha) are occasionally liable to be confused. *Uha* suggests the Sanskrit *ūha* as given by the commentator Śaikhara. A second line of Ms. tradition probably started with some scribe mishearing *uva* for the reader's *ua*. This gives the *uba* of one set of Mss. A third line of mistaken readings, I believe, started with an accidental dittography of *uaa* for the original *ua*. The unintelligible *uaa*, becoming *naha*, got changed next, perhaps under the influence of the word *subhaga* of the immediately preceding verse, into *suhāa*. This occasioned the tautology of *subhaga* and *sukumāra*, both meaning delicate. The next inevitable and more deliberate step was to drop the inconvenient *suhāamī* and make metrical compensation for it by altering *khāya* to the synonymous *īstī*, thereby restoring the lacking three mātrās. The metre, however, did not become quite regular; but as it was a Prākṛit verse, and as the pernicious habit of ignoring and even murdering the Prākṛit of the original had long prevailed, nobody bothered himself about it, although, we are told, that the exquisite song as it was sung by the Naṭī sent the Sūtradhāra himself and the whole audience into a self-forgetting ecstasy over the melodies of the music!—We thus see that the emended reading can adequately explain the genesis of all the existing variants—and this is the least that a proposed emendation ought to effect.

Next as to the intrinsic value of the proposed emendation: for, there lies the whole crux. This is how I understand the passage. The ladies feel sympathy for the lot of the Śiṅṣa-blossoms not because the bees kiss them, but because they kiss them just for a moment (*khāya*) and then flit on to another flower. There is no constancy in their love. The motive for compassion thus becomes evident. Now this bee-motif is introduced in our play more than once. It is a bee arising from the basin of the newly watered Navamālikā creeper that frightens Śakuntalā and gives the Hero the opportunity to reveal himself; Duṣyanta envies the lot of this very bee hovering around the Heroine's face; in Act 6 the penitent King paints this same bee episode and has a beautiful stanza to describe it; in the earlier Act, in the well-known Prākṛit song sung by a lady of the harem, but there is conveyed the delicate inevitable suggestion that Duṣyanta has played the bee to some earlier love: everywhere then Duṣyanta = the bee. Can the motive for introducing the bee

in the song of the Naṭī continue to be any longer doubted? Duṣyanta is the bee, Śakuntalā the Śirīṣa blossom, and, and the compassionate ladies the heavenly Apsarasas who come to the rescue of the forlorn and helpless Śakuntalā in the days of her sore need. The Prologue is intended to convey all this delicate suggestion, and more: The Sūtradhāra who, in consequence of the rapturous music, forgets his own earlier words typifies Duṣyanta, with whom in fact the poet actually compares the Sūtradhāra in the last verse of the Prologue. The whole Prologue, thus viewed, gains a new significance. Its rich suggestiveness is altogether in the happiest vein of the poet; and we cannot afford to lose it for the sake of a little conservative nervousness in adopting an emendation that does the very least violence to the traditional text and that in fact enables us to transcend the recensions and reach what might reasonably claim to be an archetypal reading.

The next passage I choose occurs in Act 2 in that much discussed description of the hunting attire of the King as put into the mouth of the Vidūṣaka. Monier Williams thus gives the passage—

Eso bānāsanahatthāhi vanapupphamālādhārīṇi Javanīhi parivudo ido evva ācchadi piavaasso.

Cappeller, however, reads it as follows—

Eso bānāsanahattho vanapupphamālādhārī ido jjevva ācchadi piavaasso.

And observes in his German Notes to the passage: „Das aus griechischen Mädchen bestehende Jagdfolge des Königs ist ein später Zusatz, wie Pischel (Diss. 45) namentlich unter Heranziehung von Raghu IX. 50ff. überzeugend dargetan hat.“ Pischel, nevertheless, gives the text thus—

Eso bānāsanahattho hīvanīhitapiaṇo vanapupphamālādhārī ido jjevva ācchadi piavaasso.

Cappeller in his textual reconstruction has omitted the adjective *hīvanīhitapiaṇo* (literally, having the loved person placed within his heart) for what I believe to be merely subjective reasons: the epithet was felt to be out of taste especially in Vidūṣaka's present description of the King. Pischel retains the epithet without making any comment; but in his Dissertation he justifies the omission of the Ionian slaves, and the consequent wearing of both the bow and the garland of wild

flowers by the King himself, by citing Raghu ix. 50ff. where Daśaratha, starting upon a hunting expedition, is described as "*vipulakauṭhanīśaktaśarāsanāḥ*" and "*vanamālaya grathitamauliḥ*". As there are many similarities of ideas and expressions in the two descriptions of the same theme by the same poet, it seems, prima facie, that we must let the Ionian maidens go, although of course there is no anachronism involved in retaining them, seeing that they are admitted by Cappeller as well as Pischel in Act 7 of this very play in spite of the fact that a variant (*Pratīhārī* for *Yavanī*) was available. But there are two weak points in Cappeller's procedure. He has not explained how the epithet *hīvanīhitapiaṇo* got in. It is easy enough to put it down to the credit of some silly third-rate interpolator and omit it. It is easy: but more honest is Pischel's retention of it on the evidence of his Mss. Secondly, what could have been the object in introducing the Ionian attendants in the hunting paraphernalia of the King? Was the interpolator a Greek citizen or a devoted admirer of the Greeks who was run mad with Ionian notions and who would not rest in peace unless he saw his own country-women in the Royal equipage? Except on such fanciful supposition it becomes hard to understand the psychology of the interpolation. For, it must never be forgotten that every rejected reading leaves a ghost of it behind, which continues to oppress the mind of the editor and refuses to be laid at rest unless some very simple and straightforward apology is offered on its behalf.

I believe that it is the text preserved by the birch-bark Ms. that contains the key to the right solution of the problem. Here the reading stands thus—

Eso rāa bānāsanahatthāhi Javanīhi parivudo vanapupphamālādhārī ido yjevāgacchadi.

Here the King wears the garland, but his Ionian attendants the bow. Monier William's reading gives both the bow and the garland to the Ionian attendants, and it might be called the reading with the garland misplaced. Cappeller's reading gives both the bow and the garland to the King, and it might be called the reading with the bow misplaced. I prefer the Kashmirian reading not merely because it makes an equitable distribution of the property, but because with a reading allied to it in the archetype I am able to explain how the

character. Ignoring these and ignoring also Cappeller's restoration of the metrical form to the speech of Śakuntalā (so that each speech now ends with a Prākṛit verse), it seems to me that a recension giving all the three speeches satisfies completely all our critical and aesthetic requirements. The point of the incident might be thus explained. As the three friends are seated together under the shade, making best of what each one of them felt to be her very last opportunity of being amidst the companions of her childhood, Anasūyā finds a possible relief to her own feelings by remarking that all the animate creation in that hermitage feels what she herself feels, and points to the Cakravāka who is so much weighed down by grief that he is oblivious to the wailings of his mate. Śakuntalā is, however, forcibly and sympathetically arrested by the lamentations of the female Cakravākī. She calls and wails but her mate heeds her not. Supposing she (Śakuntalā) were to call and wail and Duṣyanta were not to heed her! The very thought was insupportable. But this was exactly the fate in store for her, and this incident is a premonition of it, again couched in the best vein of Kālidāsa—did we but have his unmutilated text before us. The Cakravāka does not of course purposely slight his mate: He turns a deaf ear to his mate's cry because his mind is otherwise preoccupied. He thus properly symbolises Duṣyanta whom Durvāsas' curse makes forget his plighted love. Priyamvadā (to whom rather than to Anasūyā the last speech belongs) perceives what is passing through Śakuntalā's mind. She perhaps felt sadder than Śakuntalā herself, because she knew of the curse, the knowledge of which was withheld from her friend. She however tries to suppress her own feelings and turns the thoughts of Śakuntalā in a more hopeful direction. "You are making rather too much of the present momentary sufferings of this Cakravākī. The Cakravākī knows how to endure even a longer suffering, yea, to endure it with patience and with hope; for, she knows that day must follow the night." Does not the incident so understood now gain a new significance and make out of what was at best an imperfectly understood Prākṛit jargon a delicately worded suggestive poetry such as Kālidāsa always loved to write? The accidental omission of a part of the conversation in both the recensions of the text might have been due to the archetype having been injured in that part by breakage or peeling, to which birch-bark Mss. are peculiarly liable, or to a later scribe's having

failed to supply an omission written in the margin of his exemplar, or to some other assignable cause. As both the so-called shorter and the longer recensions of the play have gone wrong, it is obvious that any a priori procedure on the assumption that the one or the other of these recensions is or can alone be reliable cannot by any means take us even a whit nearer to the text as Kālidāsa might have written it.

I shall resist the temptation of citing a few more examples, and particularly of giving a long bit of continuous text, to show what large dramatic values we are compelled to lose because our editors and critics have thought it fit to take sides rather than solve the problem of Śakuntala recensions in a critical, straightforward manner. But this accusation would be absurd and ungrateful, if Kālidāsa himself were a careless artist who did not deliberately intend even half the nice things that some hypersensitive critics claim to see in his writings. How can we prove that Kālidāsa was a conscious artist who weighed his words and who intended that his every stroke should count? Might it not have been the case, at the most, that Nature merely took the pen from his hand and wrote his works for him? A positive Nay to this charge is furnished I think by the other (and presumably earlier—but that is not essential for the argument) plays of Kālidāsa. A critical comparison of the poet's Mālavikāgnimitra and Vikramorvaṣīya with the present masterpiece reveals in my opinion a progressive deepening of the ethical motive, which reaches its highest watermark in the Śakuntala as much by what the poet gives us in it as by what he refrains from giving. I shall cite a few concrete cases.

Consider, to begin with, the rôle of the Vidūṣaka in the three plays. In the Mālavikāgnimitra the Buffon takes almost the principal part in securing Mālavikā for the Hero, first by setting the dancing masters by the ear and then by pretending to be bitten by the snake and so securing the cobra-marked signet-ring. In the Vikramorvaṣīya the Vidūṣaka plays a less significant rôle. He is the King's confidant who is tricked out of his secret, who mislays the love-letter, but who nevertheless keeps company with the King in his interviews with Urvaṣī and Citralekhā. In the Śakuntala however the poet has never brought the Vidūṣaka in the same scene with the Heroine. What use the poet makes of him in the conduct of the plot is strictly negative

and subsidiary. In the famous repudiation scene in Act 5, where there was a chance of the two being confronted, the poet has artistically sent him away. Would it be wrong to infer that the poet realised the utter incompatibility of bringing the ethereal character of Śakuntalā—the adopted daughter of Nature—face to face with the grossly vulgar Vidūṣaka who was just a man of the town with no love for Nature and out-door life?—Consider in the second place the rôle assigned in these plays to the Hero's secondary-loves. There are two of them in the Mālavikāgnimitra: Dhāriṇī and Irāvati, the one possessing the dignity and forgiveness and the other the passionate jealousy and virulence that it is usual to assign to co-wives in general. Irāvati is excessively hot-tempered, and Dhāriṇī draws herself discreetly out of the game because she was shrewd enough to realise that her days were over—*na me eso maccharassa kalo*—and that her best chance ultimately lay in playing one new favourite against another. The ethics of the Vikramorvaṣīya is pitched to a slightly higher key. There the queen Kāśirājaputrī becomes at first restless and petulant, but finding that the new love is a heavenly Apsaras, she unreservedly resigns herself to the inevitable. This self-sacrifice has its reward, and we find that Urvaśī throughout pays her the customary respect and precedence. In the Śākuntala although the co-wives Vasumatī and Haṃsapadikā are mentioned more than once, they altogether sink into insignificance. Kālidāsa in fact has never cared to actually introduce any one of them on the stage. What would these myrmidons count in a play where love is intended to be not an affair of mere sensuous gratification or of power-and-pomp, but a true knot of heart-strings, tending with each ripening year to become more and more spiritual? This is to my mind an evidence of the poet's gathering sobriety and seriousness of purpose.—Consider once again the conduct of the Hero to his old and new loves in all these plays. In the Mālavikāgnimitra he falls prostrate at the feet of the irasible Irāvati and is heartily glad of it when she leaves him unpropitiated: *Manye . . . pranipātalaṅghanam sevām*. And the more dignified Dhāriṇī also he treats with equally scant grace. In the Vikramorvaṣīya too we see the Hero prostrating himself before the Queen in Act 2. The Queen departs in anger as usual, and the King is sorry for it, but is anxious to use that as a lever to secure his own purposes: *pranipātalaṅghanād aham asyaṃ dhairyam avalambayiṣye*. The Abhijñānāśākuntala also exhibits

the Hero prostrate at the feet of his Love: but mark the difference. There is no sham or pretence in the thing. The King has suffered, has truly repented. The Lady-love has also suffered, has known how to rise above suffering; and there results a spiritual welding of hearts which for the earlier plays was altogether unthinkable. Finally, consider another small but significant element of comparison and contrast. In all the three plays there is a first meeting of the Hero and the Heroine followed by a period of separation, which ends with the dénouement of the play. The cause of separation in the Mālavikāgnimitra is a jealous fit of Queen Dhāriṇī and it is brought to an end, among other things, by Vidūṣaka's trickery. There is a longer separation in the Vikramorvaṣīya caused by the Heroine's unwitting transgression, and it is brought to an end by a mere concatenation of accidents, there being a very free introduction of the supernatural in the play. As contrasted with what we find in the Vikramorvaṣīya, the suffering of the Hero in the Śākuntala is far more human, far more genuine. The suffering of the Heroine in the Mālavikāgnimitra debases her mind, as we find her content even to accept the rôle of the King's mistress, although fully aware of her own Royal parentage. The suffering of the Heroine in the Śākuntala chastens her mind and transforms her into an ideal of Āryan womanhood. Is it not pertinent to ask whether all these elements of contrast in the successive works of one and the same writer can be merely fortuitous and absolutely undesigned?

Assuming then that Kālidāsa has been a conscious and deliberate artist and that his ethical outlook on life was becoming progressively deeper and more spiritual, what should be our view as to the inner spring and the ultimate purpose of the plot-movement in the Śākuntala? It is necessary to go into the question in details, citing at each step passages in support, which would enable the impartial reader to arrive at an independent conclusion of his own.—To begin with, in the Prologue the Naṭī is to sing a song. Almost any song would have served the purpose, but she wants to know what the theme of the song should be and the Sūtradhāra answers that it should be the Vernal Season: *acirapravṛttam upabhogakṣamam grīṣmartum adhikṛtya*. The word *upabhogakṣamam* (fit for merry enjoyment) deserves to be particularly noted. The penance-grove described in the first Act testifies to the workings of the same season. For, there there are

mangos in blossom, flowering Bakulas, and fragrant bowers of Nava-mālikā. And it cannot also have been an accident that Śakuntalā's mother whose story is narrated in the same Act seduced the sage Viśvāmitra also at the advent of the Spring (*vasantodārasamae*).

The sentiments that occupy the minds of the Hero and the Heroine are conformable to this prevailing sensuous atmosphere. Duśyanta is full of the pride of youth and power, a slave of impulses and habituated to receive unquestioning obedience. He claims that his wishes should be a law even to Nature. Mark his confident self-assurance at the throbbing of his arm as he enters the enclosures of the hermitage (*athavā bhavitavyānām dvārāni bhavanti sarvatra*); his egoistic logic which demands that whatever he wishes must be right, because he wishes it (*Satām hi sanudehapadesu vastuṣu pramānam antahkaranapravṛttayah*); and his envy for the lot of the bee, the irresponsibly flirting bee of the Prologue. In the first three Acts of the play everything happens just as Duśyanta wants it: Śakuntalā turns out to be a Kṣatriya girl; his love is requited; he unexpectedly gets the pretext for staying at the hermitage for a number of days; and Śakuntalā's friends consent and even conspire to bring about the match. Duśyanta is a King and it looked as if everything in the world was meant for his *upabhoga*.

Turn we next to Śakuntalā, the deserted daughter of the Apsaras. She inherits from her mother her beauty and her frolicsome mood (evidenced by her repartees with Priyaṃvadā). Like the Spring, her youth too was in blossom (*paoharavitthārāittaam jovanam*); and at the very moment that Duśyanta learns how the *ummādāittaam rūvam* (the intoxicating beauty) of Śakuntalā's mother had achieved its conquest over even the austere Viśvāmitra, Duśyanta had seen and experienced enough of the maddening power of a fair form to make him conclude that this daughter of the Apsaras was, for her own part, bent—*vasantodārasamae*—upon making her own conquests. But what now was Śakuntalā's goal of married life? Kālidāsa has taken particular care to tell us of it. Says the Heroine: *Hala, ramaṇie kkhū kāle imassa pādavanikhunassa vadiaro sanvutto: iam navakusumajovvanā (vava-josinū) aam pi buddhaphuladāe nabhoakkhamo sakaāro*. Here again we meet with the word *upabhogakṣama* to indicate the pervading spirit of the season. That pleasure is not the sole aim and purpose of marriage; that marriage has its own duties and responsibilities; that

properly understood marriage is the most agreeable way of teaching and learning the lesson of sacrifice, of serviceableness: this is an idea that never crosses the mind of this daughter of the Nymph. With her all is a matter of heedless and headlong love-at-first-sight between persons who seem to have been designed for each other and for whom love is an end in itself, being synonymous with pleasure. But, of course, a person who is entering upon life with no ideal higher than pleasure is running great risks. He intends to extract the very best from life, and he must be prepared if, in a capricious mood, the world gives him only thorns and brambles. If with ideals such as these people emerge unscathed from the battle of life and even win the laurels of it, they have every reason to thank their stars; but they ought to be prepared for being at any moment assailed by darkest distress and meet the most irrationally tragic ending. Their pleasures were unearned and undeserved; their sorrows would be equally unprovoked and undeserved. Sage Kaṇva, the foster-father of Śakuntalā, must have been fully aware of the deficiency in the psychological inheritance of his adopted daughter, and so prescribes for her the stern and disciplinary life of the hermitage. But that was found inadequate, and we see the Sage, at the opening of the play, undertaking a pilgrimage—*darvam asyāḥ pratikulam samayitum*—with a view to secure her spiritual welfare by vicarious penance. But that avails not; for, it is by one's own efforts that one must secure the uplift of one's self—*uddhared ātmanā 'tmānam*—as the Gītā puts it. Śakuntalā consequently has to pass through an ordeal of purification by suffering far more intense than any that the other Heroines of Kālidāsa had to undergo; and she emerges triumphant from them all because she was also the daughter of sage Viśvāmitra, whose austerities are proverbial for their fierceness and endurance.

While it is the Heroine's natural heritage from the father's side coupled with the far-seeing assiduousness of sage Kaṇva as also the curse of that disguised benefactor of humanity—the fierce Durvāsas—that collectively conspire to crown the sufferings of Śakuntalā with the happiness that was her due, in the case of the Hero, king Duśyanta, —actuated though he was from the very first by motives frankly sensuous—there are present in him all along certain relieving traits of character which the poet has taken sufficient care to duly emphasise. He is brave; but retains sufficient self-control not to be led away by

the excitement of the sport into forgetting what he owed to sages and inmates of the hermitage: Compare sentiments like—*esa prati-samhṛtaḥ; vinitaveśeṣa praveśavyāni tapovanāni nāma; Gūḍhaṇi hi dāhātmakam asti tejaḥ; Tapahṣatbhāgam akṣayyam;* etc. He is ravished by love but retains sufficient sense of the responsibilities of his station to at least wish that the object of his love were *Kṣatra-parigrahakṣamā*, though in his mind he has already made her so because he wants her to be so. Finally, the poet has endowed our Hero with a presence that can inspire love in ladies, but that can also inspire an instinctive feeling of confidence even in the ascetics (*aho diptimato 'pi viśvasanīyata 'sya vapuṣaḥ*): and in the discharge of his royal duties he is creditably unsparing of himself while, in the midst of courtly surroundings, he possesses a scrupulous rectitude of character: compare, *Soasukhanirabhilāṣaḥ khidyase lokahetoḥ; anirvarnanīyam parakalatram;* etc. Thus we see that Duṣyanta, although seeking pleasure in the earlier part of the play, really deserves happiness and eventually wins it for himself.

But as long as the Hero and the Heroine are under the spell of their earlier ideal, notice how, in their heedless pursuit after pleasure, they are inevitably led to swerve from the path of absolute righteousness and truth. For instance, in the garden-scene in the opening Act, Duṣyanta has no justification for playing the ungentlemanly eaves-dropper (*bhavatu, pādapāntarīta eva viśvastabhāvām eṇām paśyāmi*); and his subsequent attempt to conceal his identity as a king, probably with the sinister purpose of finding out if Śakuntalā would have him for himself, leads him most pathetically from one lie to another: compare, *Yah Pauraveṇa rājñā dharmādlikāre niyuktah;* or, *Rājñah parigraho 'yam;* etc. And he tells another unblushing lie to Viduṣaka at the end of Act 2—*Parihāsavikalpitaṇi sakhe,* etc.—There are similar lies and subterfuges on the part also of Śakuntalā and her friends. In Act 1 Śakuntalā can probably be charged with nothing worse than a woman's coquetry, although her ruse at parting (subsequently described by Duṣyanta in the stanza—*Darbhāṅkureṇa caranaḥ kṣata ity akāṇḍe,* etc.) was a little too clever to be quite guileless. But later, even her two friends conspire to keep the affair secret and Priyaṃvadā even goes to the length of conceiving the bold trick of the love-letter. All is fair in love, says the proverb; but not every love-affair can be trusted to reach a fair end; and the well-intentioned misjudgment of

the two friends—with a view to save Śakuntalā some present pain—to withhold from her all knowledge of the curse was absolutely unjustified, although equally inevitable from their own particular ethical standpoint. Gautami has then full reason when she complains that the King did not await the return of Kaṇva, and Śakuntalā did not consult the responsible elders who always meant well by her—*Nāvek-khito guruṇo tae, imāe na pucchido bandhu.* But a sterner rebuke comes from Śārṅgarava—*Ittham ātmakṛtaṇi cāpalam dahati:* thus must one atone for one's own heedlessness!

Heedless we all certainly are. With what assured confidence do we often march upto the very brink of the precipice, oblivious of the fact that the very next step is to hurl us from the top-most pinnacle of hope down into the bottomless abyss of distress and degradation! Śakuntalā's first conquest in love was all plain sailing, and after securing her father's ratification for the marriage already consummated, she takes the blessings of the Tāpasis in Act 4 as hers by the very right. Priyaṃvadā's subsequent remark at the news of the *vanaspatisevā* in the form of the marriage-presents (*imāe abbhuvavattie sūdā de bhattuṇo gehe anuhodavva rāalacchi*) fans her ambitious hopes all the more. There was, to be sure, the Cakravāki incident coming in as a voice from afar to warn her of the dangers overhead, as also the throbbing of her right eye as she was ushered into the Royal presence; but Śakuntalā was incapable of realising the gravity and imminence of the dangers ahead, or else she would not have let the ring slip off her finger the careless way it did happen. Śakuntalā, right upto the very moment immediately preceding the outburst of the storm, consoles her heart with the hopeful reflection—*Ajjauttassā bhūvatthi-tiṃ sumaria dhiraṇi dāva hohi.* The blow that shatters not only her long-cherished hopes but even her very character, and reduces her in the eyes of the broad world—and (Oh, the pity of it!) in the eyes of her own kinsmen—to a mere fallen woman of the street, was the most unkindest because it was the least anticipated. From that moment onwards she is marked down for a life of continuous and unmitigated suffering until she reduces and fully atones for all that was ethically lower in her nature and that she may be presumed to have inherited from her Apsaras mother.

The suffering of the Hero, though briefer than that of the Heroine, was, be it noted, no less intense and poignant. When,—after what

appears to the undiscerning eye as a series of sheerest accidents, but the ethical ground for which in an ultimate Providential dispensation of things was already prepared by Kaṇva's pilgrimage to Somatīrtha and by the mitigation of the curse pronounced by Durvāsas at the time of his visit to the hermitage during the absence of the Kulapati,—the King recovers the ring, what grief, what remorse, what searching self-accusation does he not exhibit towards the end of the sixth Act! It is true that he does not know how he was led to repudiate his sworn love; but he does nevertheless painfully realise that he has been the evil genius of Śakuntalā; the baneful comet that flit across her horizon and dragged her helpless out of her serene sylvan surroundings into a world of storm and struggle, of fraud and flattery, of slander and self-seeking,—there to be engulfed by it and perish utterly. Her resigned and reproachful form haunts him and leaves him no peace of mind: compare, *Itaḥ pratyādeśāt svajanam anugantum* etc., and again, *Mohān mayā sutanu pūrvam upekṣito yah*, etc. And his suffering is all the more poignant because he has to swallow it all and brace himself up for a punctilious discharge of the onerous duties of the State. The poet has purposely allowed us glimpses of the low atmosphere of the Court, where we meet with figures like the cringing General (*Ahaṃ tāvat svāminah cittaṅgṛtīm anuvartisyē*); the drinking and soul-less Śyāla (*Dhīvara, mahattaro tumam piavaasso danim me samvutto . . . tā sōdītapānam evva gacchanha*); the blustering Kañcukin whose motto is *video meliora, deteriora sequor: Jānāmi śreyo na tu tat karomi*, as the Mahābhārata puts it; the stupid Vidūṣaka of whom the less said the better; and the lascivious Pratihārī (*Īdīsam nāma suhovanadam rūvaṃ dekkhia ko aṅṅo viāredi*). What a contrast all this to the peaceful inmates of the hermitage!—including the timid yet trustful Dirghāpaṅga, the fondly-cherished Vanajyotsnā whose marriage with the Mango has been such an event in the Āśrama, the loving and helpful forest-trees who must needs send their marriage gifts to Śakuntalā, and finally, the sprightly and sharp-witted Priyamvadā and the simple and self-less Anasūyā who both of them vie with each other in loving Śakuntalā and whose love for Śakuntalā can be compared only with Śakuntalā's own love for them,—and, behind and above them all, the saintly figure of father Kaṇva whose penance was incapable of killing his natural emotions, but who could nevertheless control them all with the practised ease of an ascetic;—

whose love for the whole animate and inanimate creation was equalled only by his anxiety to let each one work out the evolution of his own past Karma, himself stepping in only at the right moment to lend just the helping hand necessary for the individual's being able to help himself out thereafter;—and who, in full possession of the Seer's prevision of all that was in store for Śakuntalā (*tapahprabhāvat pratyakṣam sarvam etat tatra-bhavataḥ Kaṇvasya*), could nevertheless find it in him to express, as his sole message to his Royal son-in-law, a desire to secure for his dear daughter, not any special concessions—for, these, howsoever tempting at first, would, he knew, ultimately lead to a man's spiritual deterioration—but an equality of opportunities, and then he could trust her to work out her own destiny unaided:

*Sāmānyapratipattipūrvakam iyaṃ dāreṣu dr̥ṣyā tvayā
Bhāgyāyattam atah paraṃ na khalu tad vacyaṃ vadhūbandhubhiḥ.*

—could anything be more sublime? Can the contrast between the home that Śakuntalā was leaving and the home to which she was going be any more pronounced? In the hermitage, for aught that Duṣyanta knew, Śakuntalā might have passed all her remaining days in peace—*ātmasadyṣekṣanavallabhābhiḥ hariṅāṅganābhiḥ samaṃ*; but Duṣyanta succeeds in dragging her out of the sanctity of the hermitage into the world such as we have seen it—*cui bono*? He only succeeds in reducing Śakuntalā, on the very day of her appearance into this new world, to the level of the merest scum of the society who, like a turbid swelling flood, drags others also in their fall (*Kūlanpakeṣevu sindhuḥ prasannam ambhas tatataroṃ ca*). The mad infuriated elephant in Act I whom the hunting army of Duṣyanta startles out of his mountain-recess, and who dashes hither and thither crushing helpless creepers under his feet, and whom the poet himself describes as—*mūrto vighnas tapasa iva nah*, symbolises Duṣyanta's own impetuous sensuality that blasted Śakuntalā's life so disastrously. Was not here motive enough for the King's mournful self-accusation?

Finally, consider rather attentively the way in which both the Hero and the Heroine emerge from their ordeal of suffering. The poet has taken particular care to afford us the needed elements of contrast in their mood and behaviour before and after the ordeal. Duṣyanta has, for one thing, now lost his proud self-assurance in his own infallibility. Instead of words like: *Satōṃ hi saṃdehapadeṣu*

vastuṣu etc., or like, *Na parihārye vastuni Pauravānām manah pravartate*, or, *Prathitam Duṣyantacaritam: tathāpidaṃ na lakṣyate*, we meet now with sentiments like: *Ahanyahany atmana eva tāvaj jñātum pramādashkalitaṃ na śakyam*. And the same Duṣyanta who declared in open court—*Vinipātaḥ Pauravaḥ prārthyata ity asraddheyam etat*, feels now constrained to admit that through his own and nobody else's fault it is that—*Duṣyantasya saṃśayam arūdhāḥ piṇḍabhājah*, or *Mamāpyante Puruvaṃśasriya eṣa eva vṛttāntah*. His early hopeful outlook on life has all disappeared. His right arm throbbed as he entered the hermitage in Act 1: He could not divine the cause, but observes nevertheless in confident hopefulness—*Athavā bhavitavyānām dvārāni bhavanti sarvatra*. His right arm once more throbs as he enters Marīca's hermitage in Act 7: Not a ray of hope remains with him: he simply ejaculates—*Manorathāya nāsanise kim bāho spandase vṛthā*. In Act 1 he wanted to ascertain the parentage of Śakuntalā, and on the strength of a flimsy argument he jumps to the conclusion that she must be *Kṣatrapariagrahakṣamā* because, for sooth, he wants her to be so. In Act 7 once more he wants to ascertain the parentage of the boy Sarvadamana. Proofs such as could easily pass muster in a court of law come in pouring one after another: but he refuses to draw the inevitable conclusion: compare, *Athavā anyāyāḥ paradārayavahārah*; or, *Api nāma nāyam ante mṛgatṛṣṇikeva prastāvo me viṣādāya kalpeta*; or again, in order not to leave even one adverse chance on the other side, his subsequent incredulous question—*Bhavattibhyām kadācid ayaḥ pratyakṣīkṛtā vikṛtiḥ*. We often see the whole man in his slightest and the most involuntary movements and expressions. Of Duṣyanta's humility and sincere penitence no more proof is now called for. His wan and wasted form comes in only as a super-numerary evidence.

Turn we now to the Heroine. The buoyancy of spirit and the seductive charms which she had inherited from her mother, coupled with her own instinctive shrewdness enabled her to win Duṣyanta even as her mother had won Viśvāmītra. But her maternal inheritance did not suffice to keep the lover, once won, all to herself. The veiled and insulting allusion to her mother which Duṣyanta never intends but which nevertheless, in consequence of the double entente of the underlined words Śakuntalā fancies she detects in Duṣyanta's verse—

Striṇām asikṣitapatutvam amānuṣṣu¹
Samdṛśyate kim uta yāḥ pratibodhavyaḥ |
Prāg antarikṣagamanāt² svam apatyajātam
Anyair dvijaiḥ³ parabhrtaḥ⁴ kila poṣayanti ||

arouses in her all the fiery spirit of her father Viśvāmītra. She openly tells the King what she now thinks of his base conduct—*Anajja, attano hiaānumāneva pekkhasi. Ko dānim aṇṇo dhammakañcuappavesiṇo tinacchamakuṇovomassa tava auukidim paḍivajjissadi*. And to Duṣyanta's further assurance as to his own righteousness which all the world admits and admires she flings back another stinging reply which no editor has noticed but which is certainly worthy of the Heroine's newly awakened spirit—

Tunhe yyeva pamānam jānatha dhammatthiṃ ca loassa |
Lajjāvinijjidaḥ jāvanti hu kim na mahilao ||

Could a modern champion of the rights of women have desired anything better? But her struggle is in vain. It is like the forlorn flapping of the dove caught in the storm to which, under a somewhat similar situation, Mrs. Jameson compares the Ophelia in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Śakuntalā finds the forces arrayed against her much too powerful for continuing the wordy-warfare, or for any other warfare with physical force; she determines to make it thereafter a war of spirit. Even her father Viśvāmītra, in that classical quarrel with Vasiṣṭha, had to bend his proud and unsubmitting spirit and acknowledge the superiority of patient and forgiving virtue; and it is just this very lesson that it now falls to sage Viśvāmītra's daughter to learn through a long ordeal of suffering. And she does learn it, and with that win back her husband and real happiness. In Act 3 she won over Duṣyanta by that inborn shrewdness that would not consent until there was given the promise—*Samudravasanā corvī sakhi ca yuvayor iyam*. The winning back of the same Duṣyanta in Act 7 is not at all contingent upon any explanations or apologies. As a truly Āryan wife she refuses to tempt her Fate any more by playing the jurist and demanding reparations. Confident in her own virtue and her own power of

¹ *amānuṣṣi* = not-human = birds, as well as nymphs;

² *antarikṣa* = air where the birds fly, also heaven;

³ *dvija* = birds, as well as Brahmins like Kaṇva;

⁴ *parabhrta* = the cuckoo, also a courtesan who feeds on another, such as Meukā might be supposed to have been.

endurance she resigns herself to Fate in patient and absolute self-surrender. She merely solaces herself with the words—*Nūnam me suariappadibandhaam purākidam tesu diasesu parimāmahimuham asi, jena sanukkosō vi ajjantto mai tadhavidho samvutto*. The real explanation, of course, does come in the end, but she does not wait for it: She rather now pins her faith upon patient suffering, coming eventually to realise that deserving success was incomparably superior to actually getting it by, may be, lies and subterfuges, and more often without than with desert. Pleasure or upabhoga is no longer her goal in life as it once was; for, she was now passing her days amongst persons and amidst surroundings where, Kālidāsa particularly tells us, *Yat kāṅkṣanti tapobhir anyanunayas tasminis tapasyanty amī*. In fact Kālidāsa, it seems to me, has here purposely created a contrast between the backgrounds of the opening and the closing Acts of the play. If the infuriated elephant we have already described typifies the spirit of the first Act, in the last it is the tame and forgiving lioness that allows her suckling cub to be maltreated by a mere boy that does so. I have always felt that the artistic instinct that led Kālidāsa to differentiate between the back-grounds of the first and of the final union of the Hero and the Heroine of this play was a veritable masterstroke highly creditable to the dramatist. The reunion of the two is now perfect because both have been chastened by suffering and so rendered more truly worthy of each other. Like the Śacī and Indra of popular mythology (with which Mārica in fact compares them) they could hereafter be cited as ideals of Hindu married life.

Such I conceive to be the inner meaning of the play before us; and if the words of the dramatist that I have been particularly anxious to quote at each stage of my argument are not quite fortuitous, such seems to have been the poet's own ethical purpose. Let me hasten to add that this moral purpose is never pressed home upon us with undue insistence. The poet has, as we have seen, left indications enough to those that have eyes to see and are willing to take the trouble to see and to interrogate; but, like the true artist, he has not only concealed his art but suppressed his self also. Hence the need of the interpreter which—alas!—far too often degenerates into the trade of the interpreter. In spite of this danger and in spite of the length to which this paper has already reached, I must here

advert to one other point of higher criticism without a due appraisal of which a true understanding of the play and even a final fixing of its text is to my mind altogether impossible: I mean the philosophy of Nature which forms the ground-work of the play.

In the terms of the popular philosophy of India to a knowledge of which Kālidāsa's works bear abundant testimony, there is one and the same Spirit underlying things animate and inanimate. This Spirit guides and controls all the movements of the universe from the slightest rustle in the leaves or the chance cooing of a bird to the most terrific convulsions and tremendous outbursts in Nature involving the lives of thousands. Every tree, every bird, every brook is an embodiment of a spark from that same Eternal Spirit which dwells within each individual man and regulates his destiny in accordance with the inexorable law of Karma. Consequently, between man and Nature there can subsist the same intimate and responsive tie that obtains between man and man; and as it is possible for a man, by properly regulating his own relations to his fellows, to make them either his friends or enemies, even so can a man, if he chooses, live in friendly communion with Nature or in an unending warfare with it. There are natural sympathies, apathies, and antipathies not only between men and men and animals and animals and plants and plants, but also between members of one kingdom and those of another. The whole creation in fact is instinct with life and feeling, and moves in a continuous mutual intercourse. Thus the theory. How does Kālidāsa work it out in practice?

First and foremost, consider Śakuntalā, who is truly a child of Nature in every sense of the term. Deserted by her "amānuṣṭ" mother it is the birds of the sky that take pity upon her and feed her until another "dviḥ" takes her up under his fostering care. Sage Kaṇva, her foster-father, does not however take the place of Nature. He practised "maitri" which is one of the technical virtues of the perfect sage. Consequently he loves her with the same love—neither more but neither also less—than what he conceived for all the plants and animals of the hermitage: Compare—*Tuatto vi assamarukkhāḥ piatāretti takkemi*, or, *Asyām ahaṇi tvayi ca samprati vitācintāḥ*. Accordingly, from the first awakenings of consciousness in her, Śakuntalā finds herself thrown in the midst of friendly Nature, willing

to help and be helped. Her daily occupation it was, in the company of her two friends, to tend the trees and watch them grow and bloom; and it was an occasion of great festivity when they for the first time burst into blossoms and bore flowers and fruits. Every morning she would water the trees and creepers, would water them not in the hope of a return, but merely for the pleasure of doing disinterested service. Compare the well-known stanza—*Pātum na prathamam* etc. As Nature helped Śakuntalā when orphaned of her mother, Śakuntalā, we see, requites the debt by tending the orphaned deer Dirghāpaṅga: Compare, *Acirappasudāe jamaṅte viṇā vaddhito*, or, *Yasya tvayā vranaviropanam* etc. Like a loving mother, Śakuntalā would not only rear up her pets and plants, but, at the proper season, would contrive to bring about their wedding with appropriate consorts, or would at least offer her felicitations if the parties in question, without waiting for the consent of their foster-parents, made it a marriage by choice or svayamvara, as was done by the creeper Vanajyotsnā and the blossoming Mango.—It was of course inevitable that Nature should requite all this love and sympathy with the same responsive tenderness. Hence we find trees sending their marriage-gifts, sylvan deities showering their blessings, and even the cuckoos cooing aloud their sanction and gratification. It goes without saying that the whole Āśrama grieves at the prospect of her impending separation. We see how the deer drop their mouthfuls, the peahens cease their dancing, and the creepers shed their leafy tears. Truly does Anasūyā remark: *Sahi na so assamapade atthi ko vi chittavānto jo tae virahijjanto ajja na ussuo kado*.

But this is not all. The intimate and responsive intercourse between Nature and Śakuntalā described above does by no means take us to the inmost core of Kālidāsa's philosophy of Nature. There are bonds much subtler that knit man and Nature together. As we are often able to almost instinctively and instantaneously divine the thoughts and feelings of our intimate friends and acquaintances, and devise where necessary proper anticipatory measures, even so, Kālidāsa tells us, there can be a subtle communication of impulses between man and Nature, provided there is an intensively alert and sensitive mind that can comprehend these impulses and control them and answer them in a suitable manner. Unless we are ready to admit this it would be impossible to raise issues like: 1. Why does the Kesara tree in the garden-scene

appear to Śakuntalā to be beckoning her up to his side?—Or, 2. why does the bee start only from the basin of the Vanajyotsnā creeper and not from the basin of any other of the countless trees and creepers that the friends must have watered that morning?—Or, 3. why in Act 4 does her pet Dirghāpaṅga come up to accost Śakuntalā just at a particular point of her departure, and not slightly before or after it? These are not silly or fanciful or frivolous questions: upon a proper answering of them hang many questions of the specific form, order, and authenticity of several speeches in the current text of the play. We cannot allude to all these questions here, but can only set forth a general key to their solution such as we have understood it to be.

The garden-scene in Act 1 from the entrance of the King to the emergence of the bee contains three principal moments: *valkalaśithi-līkarana* or the loosening of the tight bark-garment, *kesarasamīpagaṃana* or approaching the Kesara tree, and the *navamālikāsīncana* or watering the navamālikā creeper called Vanajyotsnā. All the editors of the play give these three moments in the order in which we have enumerated them. I believe that this order is wrong and that the proper order is that preserved by the unique birch-bark Ms., where the Heroine's tight garment is loosened after she has gone up to the Kesara tree in answer to the latter's beckoning her by moving its leafy fingers. A remarkable stage-direction preserved in that Ms. makes it clear that Duṣyanta had concealed himself behind this very Kesara tree. Now if it be true that not a blade of grass can move except as directed by Providence in fulfilment of His own hidden purposes, is it too much to imagine that the Kesara tree (in which of course dwelt a portion of the same all-pervading Spirit) got utterly confused at the presence of a stranger by its side and so hastily called upon Śakuntalā to come and see what the matter was? The Heroine thereupon, says our stage-direction, *rājñah saṃnikarṣam āgacchati*, and thereby gives the Hero an opportunity to obtain a nearer view of her. The unloosening of the garment that oppressed her bosom when effected at this point has a singular appropriateness, as also the ensuing remark of Priyamvadā: *ladāsāñho via Kesararukkhaḥ paḍibhādi*. The whole garden-scene affords much scope for a critical reconstruction on the basis of accepted canons of textual and higher criticism. Coming to the theme before us it is clear that Śakuntalā,

with her mind delicately attuned to Nature, reads signs where they do not appear to the undiscerning eye, and proceeds to answer them.—To pass on to our second question, it is obvious that as Duṣyanta equals the bee so Śakuntalā equals the Vanajyotsnā. She calls the creeper her “*śadabahiniā*” and the marriage of the elder sister is ever an occasion of particular joy to the younger sister who now feels that it is going to be her turn next. Priyaṃvadā had gaged her friend’s thoughts quite correctly: *Jalā vanajjosini anurūveṇa pāveṇa saṃgadā avi nāma evaam ahaṃ vi attano anurūvaṃ varaṃ laheṃ ti*. But was not the Vanajyotsnā herself capable of evincing in return the same solicitude for Śakuntalā’s marriage? Of course she was. And so, when Śakuntalā waters her basin, up springs the bee that is to eventually usher in Śakuntalā’s future lover. To minds steeped in the peculiarly Indian view of the presence of an indwelling soul in all things—and Kālidāsa was an Indian—there should appear nothing strange in all this Nature-philosophy that I am expounding here.

The famous parting-scene in Act 4—already so lavishly praised by critics of all lands—contains one of the best examples I know as to the way in which between man and Nature there can subsist subtle ties of affection and inward communion. I will ignore the obvious facts already recounted a few paragraphs above. I particularly desire to draw attention here to the various objects and inmates of the Āśrama that successively present themselves before Śakuntalā for their final leave-taking. They are a reflex and a continuous record in terms of outward nature of the vicissitudes of psychological and emotional experiences through which she has been passing all that morning. As we have already seen, she leaves the Āśrama in a mood of confident hopefulness. She feels sorry to go, but must nevertheless go, where a higher call bids her. Compare: *ayyauttadamsauussuāe vi assaṃpadam pariccaantie dukkhadukkheṇa me calaṇā purado vaṭṭanti*, or, *Vibhavagurubhiḥ kṛtyais tasya pratikṣaṇam ākula*. She promises however, with perhaps an unconscious condescension, not to forget the dear friends of her early years. In this mood she meets her creeper-sister Vanajyotsnā whom she advises to do what she thinks herself sure of doing, namely, keeping a soft corner for earlier friends even though she be now joined to others newer and possibly more endearing: compare—*Cudasamgadāvi paccālinga mam idogadāhī sahābahāhī*.—

Śakuntalā proceeds on the journey and continues the mental picture about her life in her husband’s house, and the presence of a third party on the canvas comes insistently to the fore, viz. her own child. The outer reflex of this phase of her thought is the *uḍaapajjantacāriṇī gabbhamaṅṅharā miavahū*.—The picture continues: “How will I treat my child? Surely not like my own heartless mother, Menakā, who cast me away and whose very face I have never seen.” Śakuntalā thus mentally accuses her mother, forgetting that she herself was already a mother to a son who had even a better right to accuse her, and who actually comes up now to do it: viz. her foster-child, the deer Dīrghāpāṅga. He pulls her by the garment: “Never mind what you propose doing by your son that is to be: how are you treating now the son that there is to you already? Worse I think than what your own mother did to you; for, you at least have not, like me, any fond memories of the mother.” Abashed, Śakuntalā has to confess her guilt of “*sahavāsaparityāga*.” . . . And so on and on through the rest of this exquisite scene.

The relations with Nature of the other characters in the play need not occupy us very long. We have already spoken of sage Kaṇva. There is one point however that deserves to be here emphasised, because it shows the subtle reaction of man upon Nature and of Nature upon man. Kaṇva knows that Śakuntalā has a terrific ordeal to face ere long. He is anxious about her, internally grieves for her; but his lofty message to his Royal son-in-law contains no hint of all this inward struggle. He suppresses his grief and rises triumphant over it. But it seems to me that the grief to which Kaṇva refused to find an opening is taken up from him by the Cakravāka, who, in a sort of a spiritual telepathy, seems to give Śakuntalā a warning of the danger that threatened her. We have already explained how (see page 8 above). But it was in vain. Destiny must run its course out. To attempt to forestall it by rendering help too early and before the party helped is in a position to help itself is like an enforced hot-house cultivation of plants that makes them unfit to weather out the storms of life. They can then be aptly compared to a *Malaṅgaṭṭamūlida candanāladā*, and that was just the fate that Kaṇva was anxious that Śakuntalā, the daughter of the austere Viśvāmitra, be spared if possible.

The hunter Duṣyanta could never be on intimate terms with Nature at any time. Dīrghāpāṅga always entertained a suspicion about

him. Even the King's well-intentioned advances as when he offers him water to quench his thirst he repudiates, teaching thereby a lesson to his foster-mother, which unhappily Śakuntalā was too slow to learn. When Śakuntalā recounts this episode to the King in the Repudiation-scene—although the choice of this particular episode was primarily suggested by the fact that it took place immediately before the granting of the ring, and would hence put the King in mind of the ring—may we not likewise think that it was also an expression of Śakuntalā's belated remorse for not having listened to the plain warning of her faithful foster-son?

I have done: We can approach a great literary masterpiece like Kālidāsa's Śākuntala from all conceivable points of view. Only a few of them are here put together. In reality it baffles all one's attempts to dive to the very bottom of it. Like a perfect work of art it reveals newer and newer charms each time one sits down to read it: *Kṣaue kṣaue yan navatām upaiti tad eva rūpaṃ ramanīyatāyāḥ*. But an arm-chair reading is never the best way to appreciate a play. We must see it on the stage and under conditions as much as possible approximating those of that memorable première given at Ujjain in the presence of Kālidāsa's Royal patron Vikramāditya, when «La cour de Vikramāditya frémit d'une émotion sereine et profonde: un chef-d'œuvre nouveau vient d'entrer dans l'immortalité». The plaudits that greeted the birth of Śākuntalā at Ujjain are, through incoming years and centuries, being repeated from one end of the world to the other; and my only anxiety—and my only motive in putting together on this occasion a few detached observations on the play—has been to bring home the fact that, while entertaining a pardonable pride for possessing a work like the Abhijñānaśākuntala amongst our national literary heritage, we should not, like some poor hirelings at the theatre, kick up a deafening applause without adequately understanding just what it is that we do admire in the play and that deserves to be so admired in it. And the very first condition of such an intelligent admiring of the play is, of course, the possession of a really critical and reliable edition of it, which, it would seem, is far from being yet in sight.