



MUSIC & DANCE
IN KALIDASA

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I

MUSIC

My first duty is to thank Mr. K. Balasubrahmanya Iyer, Mr. K. Chandrasekharan and Dr. V. Raghavan for their kindness in giving me this opportunity to talk to you on Kalidasa today. Secondly, I have to request your indulgence and patience for my shortcomings, due to which, intending a sonnet, I happen to give you instead, an ode. You are all familiar with the poetic and dramatic genius of Kalidasa. Today I wish to stress his mastery of Music and Dance and the excellent use he finds for this knowledge, though we have all but lost the rich music that went into the making of his plays and have to build up his dance medium tardily from sources like the Natya Sastra and the oversea traditions of the art. We know that music, dance and other fine arts reached undreamt of heights of achievement in ancient India, but do not know how exactly they had worked themselves into life at courts and palaces, what birds and animals the members of that sophisticated society, petted, what costume and jewelry they wore and what

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sports and pastimes they favoured. But when the Hindus colonised countries like Java, Siam and Cambodia, they carried many of their art traditions and customs overseas; and these afford invaluable sidelight into the social history of our remote past, which I have utilised here and there, getting my data from friends like Dr. J. Kunst.

In his description of Narada's descent, Magha has the following verse:

रणद्विराघट्टनया नभस्वतः पृथग्विभिन्नश्रुतिमण्डलैः स्वरैः ।
स्फुटीभवद्ग्रामविशेषमूर्च्छनामत्रेक्षमाणं महतीं मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

When thus Magha described Narada's harp, the Mahati, breaking into the soprano music of the Gandhara Grama at the touch of breeze, he did not indulge in poetic exaggeration, but described with cold precision, the Aeolian harp—an instrument in common use in ancient India, China and Greece. In this harp, wires of varying thicknesses were stretched over bridges at varying tensions, within a box frame oblong or triangular; in a current of air, the strings vibrating variously according to their thickness and tension, generated a variety of high fluty tones of a mysterious timbre and beauty known as 'harmonics', which modified themselves in a variety of shades, according to the force of the draught, producing an ethereal and elusive melody. Kalidasa refers to the Aeolian harp in his description of Narada; there the gust of wind that awoke the trembling strings of the harp, detached also the celes-

tial flowers on its scroll, at sight of which Indumati closed her eyes in eternal sleep, even as she lay on the lap of Aja. Ancient musical theory grouped Ragas into three Gramas according to their pitch level: the Ragas of the Shadja Grama had the range of the deep bass and baritone; those of the Madhyama Grama that of the heroic tenor; and those of the Gandhara Grama that of the lyric soprano. This high pitched Ga Grama was probably assigned on the stage to the Gods and heavenly beings, the Kinnaras and Gandharvas, and characters like Narada and Urvasi—a circumstance that would explain the association of this Grama with heaven, in later musical literature. The Aeolian harp was perhaps tuned to the Ga Grama even as the drums and flutes were, by human hands, but played upon by the invisible hands of Wind when installed in a breezy niche of the palace or temple.

Then there was the Aeolian flute referred to thus by Kalidasa:

यः पूर्यन्कीचकरन्ध्रभागान्दरीमुखोत्थेन समीरणेन ।

उद्गास्यतामिच्छति किन्नराणां तानप्रदायित्वमिवोपगन्तुम् ॥

K.S. I. 8

“As though desirous of accompanying the soprano music of the Kinnaras, Himalaya blowing from a cave mouth filled the holes of the dry bamboo”. According to the commentator this meant that either the bamboo provided the characteristic Amsa Svara or phrase (Tana) or that the bamboo accompanied the singing of the Kinnaras; I prefer the latter interpretation, which

suggests a fitful kind of accompaniment, now anticipating, now following—a felicitous touch as the playing was dependant on wayward gusts of wind. Nor should we lose sight of the subtle suggestion as to how much more beautiful the harmonics of the Kinnaras' high-pitched vocal singing were.

स कीचकैर्मारुतपूर्णरन्ध्रैः कूजद्विरापादितवंशकृत्यम् ।

शुश्राव कुञ्जेषु यशः स्वमुच्चैरुद्गीयमानं वनदेवताभिः ॥

RV. II. 12.

“Dilipa heard the sylvan deities intone his fame from within the bowers at a high pitch, to the warbling accompaniment of the Aeolian flutes, (when he entered the forest).”

शब्दायन्ते मधुरमनिलैः कीचकाः पूर्यमाणाः

संरक्ताभिस्त्रिपुरविजयो गीयते किन्नरीभिः ।

निर्हादस्ते मुरज इव चेत्कन्दरेषु ध्वनिः स्यात्

संगीतार्थो ननु पशुपतेस्तत्र भावी समग्रः ॥

MS. 1. 57.

“As the Kinnari women sing Hara's victory melodiously, the Aeolian bamboos resonate delicious music; and if friend Cloud, you resound in the caves like a Muraja, then Siva's concert would be complete”.

In all these verses the Kichaka—dry bamboo—is said to play the role of the flute with this difference, that while the flute was played by the human breath, the bamboo was played by the breeze. Instead of taking

the passages to mean that the wind whistled through the bamboo, even as it rustled through the leaves, I prefer to take the bamboo as the Aeolian flute—a wind instrument, fashioned by human hands, but played upon by the breeze. According to Dr. Kunst, it consisted of a length of bamboo usually placed high on a tree, having holes bored between its various knots. The wind playing through the holes, produced a very melodious sound that could be heard from a great distance. Dr. Kunst adds that this was illustrated in the 9th century sculptures of Barabadur adorning the Kalpaka trees; and alluded to in the 11th century poem ‘Arjuna Vivaha’ where it accompanies the blandishments of the celestial damsels when Arjuna is in meditation. The Aeolian flute has survived in Java to this day and is known as Sundari. It may be recalled that the magic harp Ghoshavati tempts a Gandharva to Udayana’s service (in the guise of an elephant) and when Udayana loses the harp to a bamboo, the Aeolian harp and bamboo make a symphony of string and wind in high air, leading eventually to the discovery of the harp. What could be more appropriate than the elusive beauty of the ‘harmonics’ fashioned into a gossamer mantle for fairy spirits floating down the air in graceful undulations, in the first act of Vikramorvasiya? Not only has Kalidasa given us fairies, but also a fairy music in which to clothe and present them on the stage, made up of misty tone-colours that melt and dissolve in the air. Kalidasa has, therefore, made music itself more musical in introducing heavenly beings. Tones of such extraordinary delicacy, shaded by more delicate over-

tones, are yet to be met with in the bamboo chime: accompanying the Balinese shadow play, retaining at least in part the magic of the Aeolian tones.

Then came the Tympani—the drums that articulated a whole series of sounds—the pianissimo patter of raindrops on water, the melodious bubbling as water enters a narrow pot, the lapping sound of wavelets and the deep rumble of clouds. The name Pushkaram meant, air, water, cloud as well as a drum; and the early drums, were all pot drums. The term *Marjana* frequently used by Kalidasa, referred to the tuning of the drums according to the Grama. The *Mayuri* which to the peacocks sounded even as the rumble of clouds, had according to one commentator the right surface as Sa, the left as Ga and the top as Ma, with Ma as the chief note, which in the love context of Malavika's dance, was most appropriate there. From the definition it is inferable that the drums had three surfaces. The *Panchamukha*, which I equate with the *Bhandavadya* which Bharata prescribes for the *Angaharas* of Siva, had its five surfaces tuned to the five notes of the Raga *Nata*, so that on this drum as on the *Dhakka*, there was an interplay of two impulses—the melodic represented by the notes and the rhythmic by the syllables modelled on air-water-cloud effects. The sound of drums had as unique a fascination for Kalidasa as that of clouds and they seem to him to be interchangeable.

Kalidasa describes another kind of water-music in canto 16 of *Raghuvamsa*. The Goddess of Ayodhya laments:

आस्फालितं यत्प्रमदाकराग्रैर्मृदङ्गधीरध्वनिमन्वगच्छत् ।

वन्यैरिदानीं महिषैस्तदम्भः शृङ्गाहतं क्रोशति दीर्घिकाणाम् ॥

“When formerly struck by the palms of sportive women, the pleasure ponds emitted deep resonant drum tones, now emit a melancholy sound when struck by wild buffaloes.”

And when Kusa re-establishes Ayodhya as his capital and re-initiates the water sports:

तं रस्थलीवर्हिभिरुत्कलापैः प्रस्निग्धकैरभिनन्द्यमानम् ।

श्रोत्रेषु संमूर्च्छति रक्तमासां गीतानुगं वारिमृदङ्गवाद्यम् ॥

“The enchanting sound fills the ears; the sound of women singing and the water-mridanga accompanying, which the peacocks on the banks hail with their outspread plumage”.

Here is an extract from Dr. Kunst: “Chiblon is the rhythmic beating with the hand in different ways, either with the crooked or flat of hand on and in the water, producing in this way a surprisingly good ensemble effect. The Chiblon has also given its name to a certain way of drum playing; thus the Chiblon afterwards became the name of one of the drum forms themselves.”

The name Pushkara denoted the aquatic birds also; and to them were assigned the role of the Ghana vadya—the interpunctuating bells and jingles of the girdle and anklet. Travellers were said to mistake the sounds of the infatuated swans for the jingling golden girdle of their beloved; and in the cold season, it was

said, the swan's music resided in the anklets of women. And in the pretty fable of the Rishi Mandakarni, Kalidasa following Valmiki combines all these various musical sounds—Aeolian flute, harp, wavelets, birds—in a convincing symphony in the pleasure pond named Panchapsaras, where continual strains of instrumental music and drum notes blended with the tinkling sound of ornaments, though there was no human agency at the place. And in a dramatic moment in the Sakuntala, Kalidasa makes the cuckoo the mouthpiece of the sylvan deities, when Kanva seeks their permission for the heroine's departure. Kalidasa is partial to this feathered warbler, through whose blithe notes Spring mocks woman's sweet words and whose measured notes at the season's beginning resemble the Mugdha's shy words. The background of nature in Kalidasa would provide material for a separate thesis.

Then there were the songs that awakened the sleepers:

उषसि स गजयूथकर्णतलैः पटुपटहृध्वनिभिर्विनीतनिद्रः ।

अरमत मधुराणि तत्र शृण्वन्विहगविकूजितवन्दिमङ्गलानि ॥

In the forest Dasaratha was awakened by the drum-like flapping of the elephant's ears and the warbling of the birds. The Kalinga prince was awakened every morning by the deep baritone of the sea. But the Kinnaras awaken Siva on his nuptial morning by a Raga called Kaisika. The ragas named Kaisikas were among the most beautiful and were specially set apart for the Ramayana, the musical

exponents being known as Kaisikacharyas. The raga Mangalakaisika was possibly one of the ancient Kaisikas. But I am disposed to think that the Kaisika that awoke Siva early in the morning was of the type of Bauli. At the birth of Skanda, the celestial dancers interpret certain songs, which the lutes followed in the beautiful Mandra register¹; may I suggest that the Ragas in question were of the Shadja Grama group with predominant Mandra Sanchara like Kuranji and Navaroz? Nor does Kalidasa forget the folksongs of the field-women, watching the Sali corn under shadow of sugarcanes recounting the deeds of Raghu from his youth²; nor the continuous fanfare of the instruments and drums during coronations; nor the victorious conch privileged to share Aja's lips with Indumati.

In early sculpture the bow-shaped harp and the lute shaped like the Sarode are the most common. The lute on lap is a favourite idea of Kalidasa: thus Indumati lay like a stringless lute on Aja's lap; Agnivarna's lap was never empty—it had either a lute or a sweetheart (वल्लकी च हृदयंगमस्वना वल्गुवागपि च वामलोचना); and his lute player though hurt in the thigh, continued to play as though unhurt. The term 'Ankyalingyor-

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1. ध्वनस्तु तूर्येषु सुमन्द्रमङ्कयालिङ्गयोर्ध्वकेष्वप्सरसो रसेन ।
सुसंधिबन्धं ननृतुः सुवृत्तगीतानुगं भावरसानुविद्धम् ॥
 2. इक्षुच्छायनिषादिन्यस्तस्य गोप्तुर्गुणोदयम् ।
आकुमारकथोद्धातं शालिगोष्यो जगुर्गशः ॥

'dhvaka' in the verse referred to above has been taken by the lexicons to refer to three kinds of drums; but may I hazard the view that it was a lute of the Sarode type installed on the thigh and held upwards and the playing hand held as though embracing it and its scroll reaching up to the shoulder region? The Yaksha's wife was so overwrought, that she was hardly able to tune the Murchana and when she did, found it hopelessly out of tune; this was also perhaps a kind of Sarode in which the substrings constituted the Murchana and had to be tuned afresh to suit the raga. Songs with Kakali are said to awaken Cupid and lovers even if asleep; the Kakali of Kambhoji does it even now. Prof. Ranade reads a pun in the raga name Sarang in the Nati's song; if it was a Sarang, it could well have been Gauda Sarang. If Kalidasa meant a similar pun, he must have been familiar with Lalit which concludes the second canto of *Ritusamhara*. Among the raga names of the songs of Vikramorvasiya mentioned by the commentator, Gunakari is our *Suddha Saveri* employing *Suddha Dha* and *Suddha Ri* as in the gita of Purandara; and *Patamanjari* is a raga resembling our *Ritigaula*.

Then there was a convention that divided ragas into masculine and feminine groups. Thus *Madhyamavati* was forceful, energetic; *Sri* dainty, feminine and graceful; *Kedaragaula* manly; *Surati* feminine; *Kedara* masculine; *Kuranji* feminine, etc. The Hindustani ragas also divide themselves into these basic types—masculine and feminine. For *raudra*, *veera* and *adbhuta* rasas, the manly ragas were considered

appropriate; and for sringara, hasya and karuna rasas, the feminine ragas. For the entrance songs and exit songs of the male and female characters also these ragas would be found appropriate. Then there were ragas relating to the morning, midday, evening and night; and also those appropriate for the various seasons, spring, summer, etc. With all this rich material we could inform the drama with a new musical life in terms of the character, hour, season and rasa; and recapture the languid dawn in a Bauli; make bright morning music with Bilahari; project a starry night in the solemn nocturne of Malkaus; serenade a golden evening with Gaulipantu; and recapture fun and frolic with Hindolavasanta; and vernal splendour and the nuances of sringara with Vasanta. In the Sanskrit drama we have a type of play that lends itself to musical treatment; and in our music, whether Hindustani or Carnatic, we have an art that could give the verse a new expression, atmosphere and life or if so intended, to merely follow the inflections of the poetic text and translate it into a new medium. But for such a consummation—the marriage of poetry with music—the foremost impediment is our ignorance of that music brought about by concepts like the Melakarta and the superstitions—theoretical and practical—we labour under today. We should visualise and understand our Ragas as living entities with anatomies and souls of their own before we restore them to the drama. Till such a time, we have to put up with the anaemic and impoverished thing that passes for music and leave Kalidasa alone.

If on voices the ragas became impassioned with human emotion, on instruments they developed a new impersonal ethos that varied with the timbre and idiom of each instrument and voiced unearthly sorrows. If voice music was lyric poetry, vadya music was a kind of dramatic poetry that was set apart for the great divisions of the play—the Sandhis—in an art practice as old as Bharata by which a few select ragas adumbrated the mood of a whole act through poignant instrumentation, that stirred the listener to the depths of his being. It was some of these that the Pallava king Mahendravarma tried to perpetuate in the Swara notation of Kudumiyamalai. If a mutilated inscription could be relied upon, he probably staged Vikramorvasiya and was so impressed by the Sandhi instrumentation of Rudracharya that he had them etched on stone. To attempt to identify some of those ragas would be beyond the scope of this talk; but without doing so, may I point out, how expressive the departure of Sakuntala would be if Suddha Saveri (Gunakari) was played by instruments, giving vent to a cosmic pathos through swaras, even as the Greek chorus attempted to do through words. Tranquillity, solemnity, majesty, tenderness, joy, beauty and every mood of nature could be recaptured on instruments and made to background the interplay of human emotions. How appropriate would Vasanta be for the prelude and Mangalakaisika for the beatific reunion of Sakuntala, on instruments? But all these are mere dreams of beauty and difficult of realisation under present day conditions.

DANCE

If there is an unconscious obtrusion of the sensuous and voluptuous in Kalidasa's delineations of women, it is the result of a spiritual—aesthetic intention, that had to express itself through the medium of the body, even as sense has to seek expression in sound. An ardent woman-worshipper, Kalidasa, never tires of posing women singly or in groups and in all their beauty and grace and in the exquisite attitudes and movements of Dance, not as creatures of the earth, but as the manifestations of a divine power. While Kalidasa's heroes are all human beings—Pururavas, Agnimitra, Dushyanta—his heroines are mostly celestial beings—Urvashi, Sakuntala, Indumati. The human heroes long for superhuman partners and having obtained them, invariably lose them as though they were too good for them and do not regain them till after a long travail or not at all. Though Malavika was a human princess, her beauty and gifts were, Kalidasa suggests, superhuman. If Lasya emanated from the limbs of Parvati, new poetic graces came into play, when Malavika repeated a prosaic dance lesson of her teacher, who felt abashed that his gifted pupil had reversed the role of the teacher and the taught. What an idyll the poet fashions round Malavika's shapely foot, from the point of view of the decorator and the decoration and the silent watcher, the king, at a touch of which the Asoka tree that had resisted the blandishments of Spring, thrilled into flowers. The queen with her

auspicious decorations accompanied by the Parivrajika, appears to the king as though she were the three Vedas incarnate accompanied by Atmavidya. Sakuntala's beauty was neither of the earth nor of the human kind :

मानुषीषु कथं वा स्यादस्य रूपस्य सम्भवः ।

न प्रभातरलं ज्योतिः उदेति वसुधातलात् ॥

“How could any woman give birth to such a superb form? The tremulous beam of the lightning does not arise from the earth's surface”. Again, when Sakuntala is afraid that the king may not reciprocate her love, the king exclaims,

लभेत वा प्रार्थयिता न वा श्रियम्

श्रिया दुरापः कथमीप्सितो भवेत् ।

“He who seeks may or may not find Sree; but could Sree seeking, fail to find?” The words Prarthana, Prarthayita, Aradhayita etc., deliberately employed by the poet are ensouled with an ecstasy and adoration that break into the spiritual overtones of an erotic mysticism, culminating in the penitent ritual of prostration. Inferring from his name, one may deduce that though his devotion was shared by Siva and Vishnu, Kalidasa's intimate personal devotion was claimed by Sakti, the principle and embodiment of all beauty and mercy, reflected in his women characters, more seraphic than human and who therefore represented a higher and more refined type than man. Neither the courtly elegances of a sophisticated society nor the literary

convention that exalted separation in love, would explain this personal creed of the poet. And the marriage finds fulfilment in the heroic and semi-divine children on whom Kalidasa loves to pause, little Bharata pouting at the lioness, little Ayus bending the victorious bow, the six-year-old Sudarsana dangling his little foot from a throne much too large for him, the boy Vasumitra smashing the Huns and the little girls of Alaka at the usual sand-games, to gain whose hands the very gods lay in ambush (अमरप्रार्थिता यत्र कन्याः) ; something of the divinity of the child Krishna and Skanda cling to these children and bits of heaven do seem to lie about them.

Urvasi and Malavika were dancers and Sakuntala born of a dancer. In Vikramorvasiya, the poet portrays the origin of dance in heaven under the guidance of the sage Bharata and the descent of the art to the earth through Urvasi. Though we do not see the dances of Urvasi, we are allowed to see distorted reflections of them in the fourth act when the king addresses swan and stream, reproducing in his pathetic hallucination, the postures and movements of Urvasi's dance, the Nandyavarta, Ardhmattalli etc., which could all be reconstructed. But it is in Malavikagnimitra that dance provides the *motif* for bringing together the hero and heroine under the pretext of a contest between two rival teachers, when Malavika delivers a covert love message, singing and interpreting through dance, a little masterpiece of a song and in a costume that more revealed than hid the shapeliness of her

beauty and the lovely attitude of dance called Ayata¹, one hand on hip and the other relaxed creeperwise and chest raised gracefully. (See illustration 1).

दुर्लभः प्रियस्तस्मिन् भव हृदय निराशं
 अहह अपाङ्गको मे स्फुरति किमपि वामकः ।
 एष स चिरदृष्टः कथं पुनर्द्रष्टव्यो
 नाथ मां पराधीनां त्वयि गणय सतृष्णाम् ॥

“ Your lover is difficult to obtain; so, oh heart! give up all hopes of him. Lo! my left eye throbs for some reason! This lover was seen by you long ago. But how to see him again? Lord! consider me a helpless dependant, drawn towards you by love”.

The poignant longing of a woman separated from her lover, clothes itself in the first foot of the song in a variety of shades of despondency ; and then brightens into moods of pleased surprise and joy-tinted hope in the second foot ; and is followed by pensive recollection and doubt; and ends with the despair of the pathetic appeal. Malavika exteriorises this inner agitation by a wan face and listless head lowered to side, lips contracted in pain and a variety of glances tender and pathetic, pupils languid, lids weary and drooping, punctuated by sighs and tears, followed by slow play of

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1. वामस्तालान्तरस्यश्रो दक्षिणश्चरणः समः ।
 प्रसन्नं वदनं वक्षः समुन्नतमनुन्नता ॥
 कटीनितम्बगो हस्तो दक्षिणोऽन्यो लताकरः ।
 यत्रायतं तदाख्यातं कमला चात्र देवता ॥



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eyebrows and the flicker of a smile and opening eyes of wonder and sweet breath encouraged by the throbbing eye, passing on to the distant eyes of reverie and vacant ones of perplexity, ending in the unmitigated despair of the final appeal, gliding from one exquisite posture to another, feet stepping gently, wrists curling and uncurling like flowers as she gestures, all which complex ensemble of movements was called *Abhinaya*. When *Malavika* has finished and sets about departing, she is stopped by the clown; and as she stops in the attitude of dance, *Ayata*, eyes downcast, toe playing on ground, in semi or three-fourth profile, she presents an exquisite half vision of herself, which the king finds irresistibly beautiful, even as the digit of the moon is more captivating than the full moon.

Another subtle suggestion is that the king who is as intensely agitated as *Malavika*, covers it up in the presence of the queen, who half suspects his infatuation, by pretending to be a disinterested connoisseur of the sculpturesque in dance, as though the direct love message did not touch him. To relieve the immobility of the statuesque posture of *Malavika*, the clown cracks a joke at which *Malavika's* lips part in a fleeting smile, for the exclusive delight of the king. In her comment on the dance,

अङ्गैरन्तर्निहितवचनैः सूचितः सम्यगर्थः

पादन्यासो लयमनुगतः तन्मयत्वं रसेषु ।

शाखायोनिः मृदुरभिनयस्तद्विकल्पानुवृत्तौ

भावो भावं नुदति विषयाद्रागबन्धः स एव ॥

the Parivrajika hit off all great art when she said that Malavika replaced her own personality with that of Sarmistha as though she was possessed by her and was therefore able to infect the audience with her feelings. She also employs two technical terms, Sakha and Soochi. Sakha was a school of dance that employed certain stylised whole arm movements, as in the traditions of Indonesia. The Soochi was the expressive foreshadowing of unuttered thoughts by an expert dancer, through mere posture and expression, a suggestive fragment that hinted at the whole, a single mango blossom lurking in a corner of the landscape holding the promise of a whole season. The Parivrajika's statement,

अङ्गैरन्तर्निहितवचनैः सूचितः सम्यगर्थः

is just the definition of Soochi. If the same technique is employed in recollecting or narrating events that had happened previously in an allusive manner or the whole episode portrayed through Abhinaya, it was called Ankura. Kalidasa is fond of word-play on these dance terms—Soochi, Ankura and Sakha—which we meet again in Sakuntalam, when Sakuntala pauses to beckon Anasuya—

अनसूये, अभिनवकुशसूच्या परिक्षतं मे चरणम् । कुरवक-
शाखापरिलम्बं च वल्कलम् ।

and bends down with a lovely turn and Soochi hands darting down as though to extract the thorn from a Soochi foot and stretches herself with a toss of arms as though to disentangle her garment from imaginary

branches—the whole movement is a delicious bit of Soochi abhinaya eloquent of the state of her feelings to her lover, the king, through the whole arm movements of Sakha. This very Soochi becomes Ankura when the King recapitulates it :

दर्भाङ्कुणेण चरणः क्षत इत्यकाण्डे
 तन्वी स्थिता कतिचिदेव पदानि गत्वा ।
 आसीद्विवृत्तवदना च विमोचयन्ती
 शाखासु बल्कलमसक्तमपि द्रुमागाम् ॥

Kalidasa was thus not only a great poet, but also a great master of Dance and his plays are a floreation of the triple arts of Music, Dance and Poetry in dramatic form.

In understanding his mastery of the dance medium, we are fortunate in having the notes of Raghavabhata—a scholar well versed in the intricacies of dance; the notes though all too few, are exceedingly valuable for staging the great play. According to Raghavabhata 'Prayoga' meant the fourfold abhinaya known as Angika, Vachika, Aharya and Sattvika, the interaction of which was Natya through which the poem was made visible. Of these the abhinaya of speech and delivery—Vachika—involving the rise and fall of voice, high-pitched and tremulous or deep and low with appropriate inflections to suit the characters and a variety of rhythmic pauses, has survived in Bali and Java to a great extent, though forgotten here. How tellingly the toss of the curtain seconds Anasuya's impetuous words in Act IV that the king had let Sakuntala down

shamefully (Pravisya apatikshepena). But for data about the curtain, parasol, costume, masks and make-up, we have to resort to the oversea traditions mostly. Sattvika abhinaya referred to certain emotional tensions manifested through change of hue, change of tone, impediment in speech,—tears, horripilation, etc., utilised for portraying frustrated love either actually or through angikabhinaya. For the present we shall visualise certain actions of the play through the resources of Angikabhinaya, under the guidance of Raghavabhatta.

It is worth remembering that dance constitutes a spiritual world of its own, governed by laws of its own in contrast to the world of actuality; and is therefore able to retrieve idealistic plays like Kalidasa's from theatricality on the one hand and stage realism on the other. The illusion that dance creates is dependant on the aesthetic factors—rhythm and an elaborate dance language and the imaginative response of the audience who could follow both; and not because the representation was based on and resembled the actual. In the restricted floorspace of the stage, the dancer had to establish a palace or court or forest or fire sanctuary; and this he did by a convention called Kakshyavibhaga suggested in the first instance by the words or verse, supplemented by appropriate actions and glances and deviations on the ground through dance. For example the progress of Dushyanta's pursuit of the deer are suggested by the charioteer's verse 'Krishnasare' (कृष्णसरि) and the King's 'Grivabhangabhiramam' (ग्रीवाभङ्गाभिरामं) accompanied by their eyeing the deer a

great way off; then the car movement is impeded by the uneven ground suggested again by the Suta's word 'Ayushman, Udghatini Bhumiriti etc.,' (आयुष्मन्, उद्घातिनी भूमिरिति) indicated by tightening of reins and slowing of movement through dance, when the deer escapes again, followed by the glances of the hunters, then follow quicker movements suggested again by the verse 'Mukteshu rasmishu' (मुक्तेषु रश्मिषु) of the Suta and 'Yadaloke Sukshmam' (यदालोके सूक्ष्मं) of the king, in a mad pursuit till finally is produced the illusion of arriving at a point within shot of the prey, when the king aims an arrow in the Alidha posture and appropriate arm movement. The deer would be represented not by an actual deer but by a dancer wearing a deer mask, furtively peering and frisking and gambolling in fright, in terms of the Harinapluta movement. A pair of Katakamuka hands crossed at wrist, relaxed or taut would indicate speed or slow motion of chariot; and if horse and chariot were not among the stage properties, they could well be portrayed by appropriate dance movements. A reference to the scene would reveal the minute data for abhinaya provided by the poet for the transition from the chase to the precincts of the Asrama—the last indicated by verse 'Nivarah Sukagarbhakotara'—(नीवाराः शुक्रगर्भकोटरमुख) all of which deserve the most careful study. The Oordhvajanu movement would suggest a hill or flight of stairs; by gazing into the air, could be suggested a Vimana or celestial being according to context. For

these conventions also, the oversea traditions have plenty to teach us.

Contexts in Sakuntalam for which Raghavabhattacharya has given Natya directions.

Act I. (i) *Vrikshasechanam roopayati*—portrays watering of plants: Do the *Nalinipadmakosa* hands, take them to the shoulder region, do the *avadhuta* head, bending body gracefully a little, bring down the hands and release. That is, do a pair of *Sukatunda* hands, keep them crossed at wrist, fingers and palms facing down; lower them, body bending to suit and by a turn of the wrists, make them into a pair of upfacing *Padmakosa* hands; take them across breast to shoulder region, lowering head to side, and flexing body, bring the hands to knee region when releasing. (See illustrations 2—6).

(ii) *Bhramarabadham roopayati*—portrays annoyance by bee: by the *vidhuta* head and tremulous lips and quickly moving *Pataka* hands facing outward. That is, the head is turned quickly across in fright, lips quivering, and the *Pataka* gesture facing outward moving quickly hither and thither protecting the face and impeding the bee.

(iii) *Sringaralajjam roopayati*—portrays bashful love confusion: by the *Paravritta* head and *Lajjita* glance *i.e.*, face averted and turned back, eyelids lowered and pupils looking down and, I would add, an eyebrow raised. (This access of modesty occurs when Anasuya exclaims ‘So we do have a protector’).



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Act III. (i) The King's love distraction: by *Lolita* head, *Dola* hands and *Soonya* glance *i.e.*, by an agitated restless movement of head aimlessly shifting position, eyes vacantly staring, shoulders drooping, arms relaxed and dangling, the fingers of *Pataka* relaxed and loose. Another suggestion is the chin resting on back-hand of a pair of interlocked *Karkataka* hands, for the melancholy reverie.

(ii) The king attempts to raise the face of Sakuntala which she evades. The king's action is portrayed by means of the *Tripataka* gesture upfacing, brought under the chin, especially the forefinger and its neighbour; and Sakuntala's by averting head and face and folding lower lip in mouth.

Act IV. Decoration of Sakuntala: The ring-finger of *Tripataka* is employed to portray tears when kept near eye, to mark *tilaka* on forehead; and *Sandamsa* and *Bhramara* hands for decorating with garland and ear ornaments; and *Katakamukha* and *Hamsasya* for lac painting.

Act IV. (i) A little doe clings to Sakuntala's garment, impeding her movement. This was to be portrayed by the *Ooroodvritta* movement: the foot with heel raised is planted behind the other foot, the body turning with flexion; this is only a semi-turn. When Sakuntala turns back to see, it is in terms of the *Apakranta* movement in which the feet cross each other as she pirouettes in a full turn and lifts foot and releases herself from position. (See illustrations 7—9).

(ii) *Arala* and *Hamsasya* hands for plucking and gathering flowers.

Act VII. Sanumati ascends by the *Bahya bhramari* and descends by the *Gangavatarana*. The first is a gyrating movement; there are three views as to how the second could be rendered: one was the curling of the leg behind like a scorpion's sting and *Tripataka* hands held down, breast protruding and head lowered; the other was the *Vishnukranta Karana* and *Tripataka* held over the uplifted foot to denote Ganga flowing; the third was the acrobatic *Karana Gangavatarana* in the Chidambaram sculpture.

It is possible that in depicting aerial movements, devices of magical illusion were resorted to, also invisible pedestals, or steps, dim lighting etc.

But the most consummate application of Kalidasa's knowledge of dance is in Act I in portraying the blossoming of love in Sakuntala attended by the interplay of all her natural and spontaneous graces—*Bhava*, *Hava* etc.,—which dance had converted into its own special resource in *Sattvabhinaya*; an excess of these graces constituted *Abhinaya*'s supreme merit and their absence made *Abhinaya* empty. Needless to state that all modern attempts at *Abhinaya* belong to the latter kind. It was with this *Sattvabhinaya* that Agnivarna was able to contest with and score over the dance-masters.¹ Centuries of rough and indiscriminate usage

1. अङ्गसत्त्ववचनाश्रयं मिथः स्त्रीषु नृत्यमुपधाय दर्शयन् ।
स प्रयोगनिपुणैः प्रयोक्तृभिः संजघर्ष सह मित्रसंनिधौ ॥

has emptied these beautiful terms of their rich and varied content and made them hackneyed and stale; and they are to-day, thought of either as a vague amorous or amatory gesture or an indefinite label for an indefinite inventory and schedule of woman's charms. In reality they were the ripples and eddies awakened by the love emotion in the depths of a girl's consciousness, revealing themselves through ripples and eddies of eyebrows and eyes, and subtle changes of facial expression and movement, in a natural and spontaneous manner. As Kalidasa said elsewhere 'Strinamadyam pranayavachanam vibhramo hi priyeshu', (स्त्रीणामाद्यं प्रणयवचनं विभ्रमो हि प्रियेषु), these were the primary expressions of a woman's soul. It was these that were thematically worked into a Lasya sequence to form a panorama of graces; it was these that Bharata seized as the supreme resources of *Abhinaya* and like a master jeweller fashioned the peerless crown for the dance art called *Sattvabhinaya* inlaying it as though with the glowing fire of the ruby, the shifting lustre of the diamond, the pearl's mellow sheen and the sapphire's sombre mystery. But not all the gems which Ujjain dispossessed the sea of, could match one of these natural graces of women.

Let us remember that Sakuntala was a woman of extraordinary beauty; and therefore every little action of hers from a frown or knitted brow to a finger lifted in warning and contrary shake of head, would be pervaded by her beauty. Sakuntala is presented to us first as an innocent maiden—*Mugdha*—on the verge

of youth, giving herself up to vague romantic yearnings and delicious reveries, as she gazes at the Vana-jyotsna clinging to the Sahakara, every fibre of her body tingling at the magic of touch of Spring—it is the picture of a wistful, preoccupied, girlish beauty we see first. From this she is rudely disturbed by the pursuing bee and the emotion of fear throws her beauty into an entirely new focus, lips quivering, eyelids lowered, face averted and hands hastily impeding, picturing the grace *Chakitam* which forms the theme of the verse '*Chalapangam*' (चलापाङ्गम). This is the second vision of her beauty. Then when the king intervenes, she is speechless with bashfulness and if she could talk at all, it could only have been some sweet incoherence; this is a composite picture in which up to a point her childlike artlessness is presented under an urge of modesty, suddenly giving way to an adult bashfulness—*Vihrita*—which remodels her posture and expression into one of sculpturesque immobility; but this very reticence adumbrates her inner love, whose arrival is quite near. Then as the king and the girls seat themselves and Sakuntala asks herself "How is it that at the sight of this person, I feel an emotion scarcely consistent with a grove devoted to piety?", we have the bodily manifestation of *Bhava*—just a faint suggestion of the intangible emotional disturbance, not clear, just arisen, like the sky brightening as the moon is about to rise; indicated by a puzzled facial expression of pleasure, with just a touch of a fleeting doubt. Under the influence of this newborn emotion—*Bhava*—her beauty appears to us in

quite a new irradiation and setting. Then when Anasuya is curious as to who the stranger was and Sakuntala tells herself 'This Anasuya speaks your very thoughts, Oh Mind! be not uneasy', there is a slight revelation of the love emotion like the silver rim of the emerging moon and indicated by slow graceful modulations of eyebrows and furtive glances and turns of head and neck and mild horripillation; this *Hava* presents Sakuntala's beauty in a yet newer facet. And when Anasuya says 'We have indeed found a protector' the love emotion of Sakuntala is fully manifested by quicker rippling movements of the eyelashes and a variety of love glances and play of head and neck, it is the grace *Hela* which contradicts her child nature and finds consummation in the *Sringaralajja*, bashful confusion of love, to portray which Raghavabhatta gave us a few tips. As these natural graces are called into play on the lineaments of Sakuntala aglow with love, she develops a new sheen (*kanti*) and lustre (*dipti*) and her natural movements develop new poetic graces, all without any conscious effort on her part and marvellously transfused by proximity to lover, articulating the soul's most intimate message, through the body's most exquisite language, for the lover's sole delight. And when she pretends to be angry and knits her brow and lifts a warning finger at Anasuya and would fain go away, yet tarries, it is an exquisite endearment in the guise of a slight, comprehended by the grace *Bibvoka* under the twin urges of *Vibhrama* and beauty-consciousness and revealing new facets of *Vilasa* as she steps and turns and moves.

When she directs her ears to what Dushyanta says, in intense absorption and surrender, it was still another grace, *Mottayitam*; it was a continuation of this mood that earned her a dreamy ecstasy and Durvasa's curse. And the affected, agitated repulsion of a caress at the end of Act III was yet another delicate grace—*Kuttamitam* (sweet reluctance) with an added touch of flurry. All these lead to the consummate pretence of removing the thorn followed by a meaningful turn and sidelong glance, referred to as *Soochi* earlier. And in the king's retrospect of Sakuntala, (*Ankura*), he recalls her soft glances, leisurely movements, feigned angers, delicious evasions, fine reticences and fugitive smiles and like a miser at his hoard, lingers lovingly over every vision of her that his memory conjures up, with the interplay of all her airs and graces and unconscious glows and sheens and nuances of facial expression, the mere recollection of which throws him into an ecstatic absorption.

The supreme merit of Kalidasa is that he has caught and fixed for ever, these fleeting and intangible graces as evanescent as a ripple, and fugitive as twilight tints as a great love budded and blossomed on the lineaments of Sakuntala; and has made us watch their interplay in flurry and shyness and agitation as her love unfolds and blossoms, against a background of peerless feminine beauty. In *Sakuntalam* Kalidasa has immortalised the feminine graces; and if he had not been the master of dance that he was, he could not have spoken in the intimate accents of the soul's own language.

From these we pass on to the emotional prostration of Sakuntala relieved by the timely arrival of the king. In passing I would refer to an extra passage quoted by the *Sahitya Darpana* as an example of love banter Sringarahasa (or *Narma*) not found in other texts of the play:

स शृङ्गारहास्येन यथा शाकुन्तले राजानं प्रति शकुन्तला—
असन्तुष्टः (मधुकरः) पुनः किं करिष्यति । राजा—इदं । (कमलं)
इति व्यवसितः (कृत्ननिश्चयः) शकुन्तलावक्त्रं दौकते । (प्रविशति)

When the king likened himself to a bee and attempted to raise the face of Sakuntala, we saw that she repelled it. This would make us think that she was seriously angry and would have avoided the king if she could. But the passage quoted above is one of delicious playfulness. Sakuntala wants to know what the disappointed bee did; and the bee *i.e.* the king, makes one more attempt to approach the lotus *i.e.* Sakuntala's face. It was at this point presumably that Anasuya and Priyamvada gave timely warning to the lovers about the approach of Gautami.

We may now glance back to the Nati's song about the youth-intoxicated maidens with Sirisha blossoms on their ears, at the beginning of the play. Kalidasa was probably alluding to the *Lasya* sequence¹ I had mentioned, in which the feminine grace *Hava* had been thematically worked in, in addition to the Sirisha

I. कर्णव्योर्हावबहुलं लसल्लोलवतंसयोः ।

विलम्बेनाविलम्बेन सूकं तल्लयचालनम् ॥

flowers on ears. Installed at the beginning of the play, it was perhaps meant to indicate the importance of the beauty factors—Women, Music, Dance and the atmosphere of love, the so-called *Kaisiki Vritti* pervading this great play.

In discussing the dance-lore of Kalidasa, may be mentioned verse 38¹ of *Megha Sandesa* in which he refers to the tired temple-dancers of Mahakala's shrine gracefully waving chamaras whose gemset handles scintillated and whose girdles jingled as they stepped in dance. In these ritual temple-dances the various *Upacharas* had been worked in. Similar dances were being rehearsed in most of our temples within living memory. These were also known as Desi dances and had motives like the sword, lamp, garland, vina, fan, parasol, etc. (See illustrations 10—13). Indonesia yet remembers whole groups of these.

Before concluding may I refer to the doctrine of reminiscence which Kalidasa is never tired of proclaiming, especially in the verse 'ramyani' even as Wordsworth said :

Oft over my brain does that strong fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past.....
We lived ere yet this robe of flesh we wore.

Out of his spiritual intuition Kalidasa has flashed a beam from the realms of the sub-conscious to illumine

1. पादन्यासैः काणितरशनास्तत्र लीलावधूतै
रत्नच्छायाखचितवलिभिश्चामरैः क्लान्तहस्ताः ।



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those of the super-real. A poet of the senses that he is said to be, he has so intensified and refined the sensibilities of the senses, that we could now perceive and comprehend the ultimate through these finite media; and like his Pururavas and Dushyanta enter heaven with this very body, unlike Yayati and Trisanku who tumbled down for want of such a guide. For has he not pierced the veil with his flashes of music and poetry and dance, bringing within reach of mortal eyes and ears and minds, a beauty that is immortal?

And when he sees the lovely form of Krishna in a dusky cloud bejewelled with rainbow and Vishnu's spanning foot in an oblique streak of it and his illimitable form in the vast expanse of the ocean, he speaks not a local language but an universal one, at least to those familiar with the symbols of his faith.



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