

SANSKRIT POETRY

from Vidyākara's "Treasury"

TRANSLATED BY

DANIEL H. H. INGALLS

THE BELKNAP PRESS OF
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, Massachusetts

1968

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

India has preserved from the past a vast literature of classical Sanskrit poetry. While this fact has been long known in the West, most of the few Westerners who have studied Sanskrit have set the classical literature to one side, concentrating their attention on India's older or less literary texts. The notable accomplishments of our professional Sanskritists have been in Vedic studies, in history, in linguistics, in the comparative study of religions. And so it comes about that our translations of classical Sanskrit poetry into English for the most part have been made by English-speakers who were strangers to poetry or by Indians who were strangers to English. From them one may see that Sanskrit poets were interested in sex, mythology, and puzzles, but one will scarcely guess that they possessed a true sense of poetry. The classical literature of India has remained to the English reader like *Sleeping Beauty* of the fairy tale, hidden behind a hedge of thorns.

This sleeping princess can be awakened only by letting her speak. If we lend her English words that are truly consistent with her intentions they should please the reader. If they displease or bore him no amount of historical or critical comment will save the day. Being aware of this, I would have the translations which follow stand on what merit they possess without further comment. It is only for the reader who may come to like them that I add here some words of introduction. Sanskrit poetry differs from English poetry in techniques and purpose and in the attitude which its authors take to beauty and to life. Some readers may wish to know why this is so. Again, Vidyākara's collection, from which I have here translated, is a special collection which should be distinguished from Sanskrit poetry as a whole. Finally, while the reader should make his own judgment of this poetry, it can do no harm to warn him against some false judgments that have been made in the past. These three considerations have given rise to the three parts of the introduction.

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1. Sanskrit Poetry and Sanskrit Poetics

The word Sanskrit originally meant 'refined' or 'perfected.' The Sanskrit language, to use the term precisely, is that language which was refined or regularized, from the spoken language of North India of about 500 B.C., by the great grammarians, especially by Pāṇini (fourth century B.C.?) and by Patañjali (second century B.C.). Westerners sometimes give this language the name of Classical Sanskrit, a term which is really redundant, to distinguish it on the one hand from older (Vedic and Epic) and on the other hand from more popular and less regularized varieties of the same tongue. Sanskrit proper or Classical Sanskrit was firmly established by Patañjali's time, nor has its grammar been changed by an iota since then; only in vocabulary and style did Sanskrit continue to grow with the passing of the centuries. It is in this language of rigid grammar but flexible style that are written most of the texts preserved to us from ancient and medieval India. Since Sanskrit continues to be written, although in decreasing volume, its literary tradition may be said to extend for two and a half thousand years. Within this span the great period of Sanskrit poetry falls from about A.D. 300 to 1200.

In speaking here of "poetry" I shall refer to what the Indians call *kāvya*. There is much verse that is not poetry in this sense. Much Sanskrit verse is didactic, dealing with ritual and philosophy and even with such subjects as astronomy and medicine. Much is narrative and only a small portion of this narrative verse is *kāvya*. When it is the plot of the narrative that holds our interest and furnishes our delight rather than a mood or suggestion induced by poetic means, we are not dealing with *kāvya*.

However one defines poetry, its bones are the words of which it is composed. The sort of poetry that a poet writes cannot fail to be influenced by the sort of language he speaks. Now Sanskrit as a language has many peculiar traits and several unique ones. The influence of each of these can be observed in Sanskrit poetry.

To begin with, Sanskrit is an inflected language, more elaborately inflected than Latin or Greek. For example, it has eight cases of noun inflection, and both substantives and verbs are inflected differently not only for singular and plural but for dual.

One effect which this inflection has on poetry is that it makes possible infinite variations of word order.

The king with arm throbbing approached Śakuntalā.

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In English we cannot put the heroine first in the sentence. "Śakuntalā with arm throbbing approached the king"—the meaning has changed. In Sanskrit any word of this sentence may stand first. The final "m" of the accusative marks the heroine's relation to the hero wherever we put her name.

Again, in English we must reserve space in our verses for many functional words that are unaccented and unmusical: "the," "a," "with," "at"—words whose meanings in Sanskrit are indicated, if they are indicated at all, by a change in the inflectional vowel or syllable.

The tightness of construction which proceeds from the inflected nature of Sanskrit may be increased rather than lessened by the compounding of words. Sanskrit has this ability to a quite unnatural degree. We are aware of the trait in German and even to some extent in English, where it usually produces a humorous or barbarous effect. But within a natural spoken language such compounding is fairly limited. In Sanskrit written according to the laws of the grammarians there is scarcely any limit set to the process. Frequently in Sanskrit compounding is employed to avoid clausal construction. The sentence then becomes monolithic. Take, for example, the following sentence:

Although she was embarrassed by the earnest glance of the king, still out of curiosity it was slowly that she walked away from him, looking backward as she walked.

Sanskrit, if it finds it useful to do so, may put this sentence into three words. The first word will be in the genitive feminine: "of the earnest-looking-glance-embarrassed one." The second word may run as follows: "curiosity-born-backward-glance-accompanied-away-walking." The last word will be simply "slow." The copula may be omitted.

It may be well before going further to give some examples of how such linguistic traits can be used to effect in Sanskrit poetry.

I shall give a literal translation of three verses of Kālidāsa in order to show the construction of the originals. All three verses are from the eighth canto of the *Birth of the Prince*, the canto which describes the pleasures of the God Śiva with his bride Umā, the beautiful mother-goddess, the daughter of the Himālaya mountains. In the first verse the divine husband is describing the sunset to his new bride:

The sun, his horses with bent necks,
with plumes striking on their eyes,
goes home, yoke riding high upon their manes,
setting the day to rest in ocean. (Kumārasambhava 8.42)

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Here the sun is imagined driving his car down into the ocean. The verse is built up by miniature brush strokes: the horses bending their necks as they go downhill, the plumes falling forward, and the yoke riding high from the steep descent. The miniature strokes are fitted like gems into a neat grammatical frame: "The sun . . . goes home . . . setting the day to rest in ocean." The neatness is increased by the formality of the metrical scheme and by the vowel harmony. This last is an optional ornament, but it is here used so effectively that I might quote the original. Each line ends with a high diphthong until the last, where the sun sinks in the ocean with a deep "au":

So 'yam ānata-śirodharair hayaiḥ
karṇa-cāmara-vighaṭṭitekṣanaiḥ
astam eti yuga-bhugna-kesaraiḥ
saṃnidhāya divasaṃ mahodadhāu.

In the second verse which I have chosen, the divine couple are looking at a lily pond surrounded by trees when the moon breaks through the clouds and Śiva says:

You could pick up the drops of moonlight shaken off by the leaves and scattered like flowers on the ground beneath the branches, and deck your hair with them. (*Kumārasambhava* 8.72)

Here again is a miniature in motion. As the leaves shake, the drops of moonlight fall through them onto the ground where they shine like small flowers. The syllables of the poetry imitate the gentle fall of the moon drops: "*patita-puṣpa-peśalaiḥ*." Here again the whole verse is syntactically bound together. I can show this only by a second translation, so literal that it is almost unintelligible:

It is possible, if by your fingers plucked, with these soft under-the-branches-fallen-flowers, these leaf-shaken moonbeam drops, to deck your hair.

The impersonal verb with which the verse begins demands completion by the infinitive and object which come only at the end. The form is like a well-cut diamond. Not a single word can be omitted from the verse without rendering the whole unintelligible.

One more example. Śiva and Umā are playing by a pool:

A golden lotus flower she threw
and shut her eyes at the water he splashed;
Umā dived into the waves,
duplicating the minnows with her golden girdle.

(*Kumārasambhava* 8.26)

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Here a harmony of visual imagery accompanies the harmony of metrical form. The verse begins with gold, the golden flower, and ends with gold, the golden girdle. Between these limits water is splashed at Umā and Umā splashes into the water. It is what in a painting one would call harmony of color and harmony of line.

Several of the effects which I have here illustrated are common to highly inflected languages. One could illustrate them from classical Latin or Greek as well as from Sanskrit.¹ Indeed, they seemed so natural to Sanskrit writers of the older period that the writers on poetics have comparatively little to say of tightness and neatness of construction. On the other hand, modern Sanskrit shows a noticeable decay in this respect. The modern poetry, except in the hands of a few geniuses like Jagannātha, tends to be loose and inchoate. The reason is clear. The natural languages of the later poets, modern Bengali or Hindi or Tamil, are analytical languages like English or French. And it takes genius actually to think in Sanskrit instead of simply translating from one's own into the older tongue.

The comparison with classical Latin or Greek, however, must not be carried too far. Sanskrit differs from those languages, and from most other languages also, in one very important respect—its artificiality. But I must qualify the term. I do not mean that Sanskrit was a dead language. It was often spoken at court and in religious institutions. It was the regular language of conversation between educated men of different provinces. For a long period it was the chief written language of North India. But it was artificial, as medieval Latin was artificial, in that it was learned according to rule after some other language had been learned by simple conditioning. Every Indian, one may suppose, grew up learning in a natural way the language of his mother and his playmates. Only after this and if he belonged to the priesthood or the nobility or to such a professional caste as that of the clerks, the

¹ Sanskrit and Latin, for example, are specially fond of inflectional binders in verse. Thus, the third line of the last verse quoted above runs in one version of the original *sā vyagāhata taraṅgiṇīm Umā*, where *sā* and *Umā*, being inflectionally identical and belonging together in sense ('that Uma,' Latin, *illa Uma*) serve to bind the line in a sort of vise. For the same technique almost any ode of Horace will furnish examples. The poet Bhāravi uses interlocking binders just as Horace does, for example, in *Nullus argento color est avaris abdito terris* where words 1 and 3, 2 and 6, 5 and 7 go together. Sanskrit departs from Latin and Greek, however, in its tightening of a verse by recourse to compound construction.

physicians, or the astrologers would he learn Sanskrit.² The women of his family, although they might understand some Sanskrit, could seldom speak or read it, at least in North India. South India forms a partial exception to this statement and the use there of Sanskrit in postclassical times by ladies of the nobility, had an interesting effect on the literature of that period. But I must hold to the main points and overlook exceptions. As a general rule Sanskrit was not a language of the family. It furnished no subconscious symbols for the impressions which we receive in childhood nor for the emotions which form our character in early adolescence. Sanskrit was therefore divorced from an area of life whence the poetry of what I would call the natural languages derives much of its strength.

One effect of this artificiality on Sanskrit literature is clear and relatively simple to describe. Sanskrit not only has an enormous vocabulary; it has also a larger choice of synonyms than any other language I know. In a natural language there are probably no synonyms. Of course, one can go to a thesaurus and find what are called synonyms. For the English word 'house' one may find 'dwelling,' 'residence,' 'tenement,' 'abode,' and so on. But these are not true synonyms, as one can see the moment one tries to interchange them. One cannot say of the Vanderbilts that they lived in a large tenement in Newport, Rhode Island. Each word in English has connotations that it cannot shed and that permit it to be used only in an appropriate social and emotional setting. There is even a genre of English humor, perhaps best exemplified by S. J. Perelman, which gains its effect by dropping words into a setting which cries out, so to speak, against their connotations. This form of humor was never developed beyond a rudimentary stage in Sanskrit, for while Sanskrit distinguishes, it is true,

² The merchant castes seem always to have preferred the natural languages both for business and for literature. Merchant accounts in the time of the Maratha confederacy were written in Marathi. The lost *Bṛhatkathā*, a vast collection of tales which one might call the merchants' epic, was written in Paisāci Prakrit. Those few peasants who learned to write probably also used the spoken tongue. This seems to be indicated by the Sahajīya literature in Proto-Bengali and by the peasant religious poetry of the early modern period. But there must always have been some exceptions. The name Kālidāsa implies that at least one of the great masters of Sanskrit was born a peasant, for the suffix *-dāsa* in ancient India was used only in Śūdra names (a usage which has changed in modern Bengal).

between poetic words and matter-of-fact words,³ it achieves within each of these categories an extraordinary degree of synonymity. The poetic words for house in Sanskrit—and Sanskrit has far more words for this object than English—differ chiefly in sound and etymology. They are not bound to a particular social or emotional situation. Thus, *vesman* is literally the place where one enters, *sadman* the place where one sits down, *vastya* the place where one dwells, *nilaya* and *ālaya* the place where one alights or comes to rest. These words are far more interchangeable than the English ones. *Nilaya* will do for the dwelling of a king or a farmer or a crow. The learnedness of the language has divorced its words from the emotional responses of everyday life.

As a result, Sanskrit is lacking in what is perhaps the chief force of English poetry: its kinesthetic effect. What I mean can be shown by an old ballad:

Martiumas wind, when wilt thou blow
and shake the green leaves off the tree . . .

One can feel the leaves shaking, and one shivers in the next stanza to the "frost that freezes fell" and "blowing snow's inclemency." One can find verses that produce this muscular effect in Bengali, and although I cannot speak at first hand of other modern Indian literatures, I imagine that one can find the effect in them as well. But it is only rarely that one finds it in Sanskrit.⁴ The powers of Sanskrit are of a different order.

There exist handbooks of a fairly late date listing Sanskrit synonyms

³ Thus in *kāvya* one seldom finds the simple words *strī* and *nārī*, 'woman.' Women are there transformed into charmers, damsels, and gazelle-eyed beauties (*vilāsini*, *yoṣit*, *mṛgākṣī*, and so on). So also the everyday words for beauty and beautiful fail to appear; see Ingalls, "Words for Beauty," p. 90. Sanskrit critics were aware of the humorous effect of juggling words of the two categories. In their textbooks they furnish examples of the effect under the heading *grāmyatā* (vulgarity).

⁴ Sanskrit is so vast a literature that one can make few statements concerning it that are without exception. It should be clear from what precedes that I do not mean my remarks to apply to the epic, which is older than Sanskrit proper. But even within Sanskrit proper there is a school of what I have called the poetry of village and field (see Intr. to Section 85) which is comparable in several respects to the poetry of the natural languages. And there are verses by the southern poetesses Vidyā and Śilabhaṭṭārikā, like the latter's famous *Yaḥ kavmāraharāḥ* (815), which form exceptions to the general rule.

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in metrical patterns. Presumably there were older books of this sort which are now lost. Thus for the word 'king' we find:

two short syllables	nrpa
three shorts	nrpati
trochee	bhūbhṛt
iamb	ksitís
spondee	rājā
dactyl	pārthiva

and so on. For common words like 'king' or 'rain-cloud' or 'mistress' two or three hundred synonyms will be listed, and these are all interchangeable. What I say is by no means exaggerated, for the synonyms can be increased by permutation. For example, 'earth-ruler' and 'world-protector' may be used for the word 'king.' There may be seven or eight basic words for 'earth' and ten or fifteen for 'protector,' 'ruler,' 'master,' and so on. This already gives seventy to one hundred twenty synonyms. But one can go on—'foe-queller,' 'white-parasol-possessor,' and so on, beyond one's ability to count.

Just as there exist a vast number of synonyms for almost any word the poet may wish to use, so also there exist synonymous constructions. On examinations for elementary Sanskrit I used to ask students to express in Sanskrit the sentence "You must fetch the horse" in ten different ways. Actually, one can do it in fifteen ways or so by using active or passive constructions, imperative or optative, an auxiliary verb, or any of the three gerundive forms, each of which, by the way, gives a different metrical pattern. What I would emphasize is that, while these constructions differ formally, emotionally they are identical and completely interchangeable. In a natural language that would be quite impossible.

Accordingly, Sanskrit verse from the earliest times was able to accept a set of very rigid and complicated forms. Each stanza must be only four lines long and must fall into one or another of about fifty recognized metrical patterns.⁵ These patterns are of great complexity. In most of them each syllable is regulated in length and some patterns require as many as twenty-three syllables in a line. Many verses also employ elaborate schemes of alliteration and syllabic repetition. Such

⁵ The textbooks on metrics list many more meters than this, but fifty is as many as are generally met with. A single poet remains usually within a repertory of half that number except in passages intended to establish his reputation as a virtuoso.

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forms are practicable only by means of the enormous vocabulary of synonyms and choice of constructions which Sanskrit affords. In view of these aids I have never been dazzled by Sanskrit metrical ingenuity although I admit that I find it delightful. I am happy to find that the best Indian critics are of the same view. Skill in meter and alliteration they regard as a virtue (*guṇa*) in poetry, as the skillful use of figures of speech is considered an ornament (*alamkāra*). But neither of these is the soul of poetry.

In the analysis of poetic figures of speech (*alamkāra*) the Sanskrit critics surpass the Greeks and Romans. They surpass them not only in subtlety but also, as it seems to me, in understanding, for the Sanskrit analysis is based directly on poetry whereas the Greco-Roman analysis was based in the first instance on oratory. Our Western rhetoric centers its attention on the manner of presentation: on word order, connection of parts, emphasis, and emotional effect. The science of *alamkāra* is concerned rather with image-building, with shades of similarity, and with the techniques of overtone or suggestion. Rather than attempt a catalogue of the hundred or so tropes of Sanskrit⁶ I shall better serve my purpose if I furnish two or three examples to show the manner in which the Sanskrit critic goes about his work.

Like our classical critics the Indians distinguish simile from metaphor. "Her face was like the moon" is *upamā*, or simile. "She turned toward me her bright moon face" is metaphor. But how about this:

As I came, she presented me from afar with a smile. In the gambling match we then played, the stake was a close embrace,⁷

This, we are told, is neither simile nor metaphor. It is *pariṇāma*, which one might translate "evolution." In metaphor the poetic comparison (the moon in the phrase "her bright moon face") is static; it undergoes no development or evolution. In *pariṇāma* the case is different. In the verse above, the girl's smile is identified with a welcoming present; it then evolves by being actually presented. The embrace of the lovers is then identified with the stake of a gambling match; it evolves by their gambling for it and by the lover's winning it.

⁶ In the introductions to the separate sections of the anthology I have given explanations of a few of the common tropes. The reader who wishes to study the subject systematically may consult the works of Joh. Nobel and P. V. Kane listed in the References.

⁷ Anonymous, quoted in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* on 10.34.

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Or consider another distinction which is made. On the one hand we may have a figure of speech which gives rise to a suggestion, as in the following verse from Māgha:

Vala, his prowess roused, glared like a lion at Veṇudāri who set upon him like an elephant.⁸

The figure of speech is the double simile: Vala courageous as a lion and Veṇudāri mad as an elephant. The suggestion is something else, something which derives from these similes. The suggestion is that Vala will shortly kill Veṇudāri, for when lions fight elephants, it is the elephants who get killed.

On the other hand, a suggestion may give rise to a trope, as in the following from Kālidāsa:

In the southland the glory even of the sun grows dim. In that very land the Pāṇḍyas could not bear the glory of Raghu.⁹

When the sun travels south in the winter, his brightness and heat seem to decrease. But the military power of King Raghu in his southern campaign against the Pāṇḍyas remained bright. No figure of speech is actually used, but the contiguity of the two ideas produces a suggestion which gives rise to the trope of hyperbole in one's mind.

It would be possible to give many beautiful examples of the subtle use of figured speech in Sanskrit poetry. But I wish instead to give a rather frigid one. I do this partly because the example affords a convenient comparison with a bit of English verse, but more because I wish to finish with what might be called the limitations of Sanskrit poetry before proceeding to an account of its capabilities. The verse is number 257 of our anthology. It is by Yogeśvara, an excellent poet who is capable of better things. In it he uses a strikingly elaborate metaphor:

Now the great cloud cat,
darting out his lightning tongue,
licks the creamy moonlight
from the saucepan of the sky.

The effect here is gained by intellectual, entirely rational means. The metaphor is complete in every detail: cat, tongue, cream, and saucepan—cloud, moonlight, lightning, and sky. It is almost like an exer-

⁸ *Śiśupālavadha* 19.2. This verse together with the *Raghuvaṃśa* verse which follows is quoted in illustration of the aforementioned distinction by Viśvanātha, *Sāhityadarpaṇa* on 4.9.

⁹ *Raghuvaṃśa* 4.49.

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cise from a manual of logic under the chapter "Analogy." Compare the verse with a well-known passage of T. S. Eliot, which uses several similar ideas, but uses them very differently:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains . . .¹⁰

This from one who is often called an intellectual poet. And yet Eliot gets his effect in every line from the irrational, the strong but imprecise memory we have of fog and cats, the childhood associations of certain words and idioms. Consider the line: "Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening." It brings to sudden flower certain homely and completely natural phrases: "licks his tongue around the bowl," or "licks his tongue into the corner of the dish." The idiom is suddenly transfigured by bringing it into juxtaposition with the last three words, "of the evening." This transfiguration of language becomes impossible without a natural-language basis.

I think one will find the verse of Yogeśvara cold and stiff when placed beside Eliot's. And if so, I have completed what an Indian critic would call my *purvapakṣa*, the preliminary argument against my own view. It now remains for me to show that Sanskrit verse despite this limitation, or perhaps because of it, contains great beauty of its own.

Let me begin with what is relatively easy, with what I might call the mood pieces, using this word 'mood' to translate the Sanskrit *rasa*. The Indian critics are divided as to whether mood or suggestion is the soul of poetry. I shall come to suggestion later, for it is more difficult to explain. Mood, while the Indians analyze it more elaborately than we do—they speak of nine basic moods, which in turn have infinite ramifications—is still nothing foreign to our own poetry. I shall give first two verses ascribed to Bhartṛhari, which I have put into rhyme. They are simple enough to need no comment. The first is in the erotic mood, and although I like it I will not claim much more than elegance for it:

Now come the hours of gallant words,
The girl close by, now lazy from the sport,
The warbling of the koil birds
And all about the newly blossomed court.

¹⁰ From T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, quoted by permission of the publishers, Faber and Faber Ltd. and Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc.

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At night the moon gives cool resort
To conversation with a few good wits,
While some choose garlands now that Spring permits
A choice from scent and flower of every sort.¹¹

The second is in the mood of peace, and the original, at least, is truly great:

My father wind and you my mother earth,
Fire, my friend, water, my near relation,
And you my brother sky; in this last breath
Of mortal life I send you salutation.
From living ever with you comes this birth
Of uncontaminated wisdom with increase
Of goodness that all darkness and all folly cease
As now I live in brahma in my death.

Bhartṛhari tends to be frivolous in his love poetry, but this is not true of all Sanskrit writers on that favorite subject. I shall quote two more verses in the erotic mood, which require some explaining. The first belongs to the variety of the mood known as love-in-separation, and the stimulants of the mood (*uddīpana-vibhāvāḥ*), to translate another technical term, are the phenomena of the monsoon storms. As the monsoon gathered it was usual for civil and military officials to return to their residence at court. Travel and warfare were impossible during the rains and these three months were given over to family reunions and public festivals. The sight of gathering clouds immediately suggests to the Sanskrit poet these days of sexual satisfaction and domestic happiness. And if a wanderer is left in a foreign land or a captain delayed on the frontier at this season, his case strikes the poet as doubly sad. There are thousands of verses playing on these associations. Yogeśvara in verse 220 of our anthology writes as follows:

After the rain a gentle breeze springs up
while the sky is overlaid with clouds;
one sees the horizon suddenly in a flash of lightning;
moon and stars and planets are asleep;

¹¹ This and the translation which follows were first printed in my review of D. D. Kosambi, *The Epigrams Attributed to Bhartṛhari*, in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 13 (1950), 257-258. The originals are numbered 198 and 301 respectively in Kosambi's text, a numeration which shows that the ascription of the first verse is certain, of the second verse doubtful.

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a heady scent is borne from *kadambas* wet with rain
and the sound of frogs spreads out in utter darkness.
How can the lonely lover spend these nights?

My next selection, number 646 of our anthology, is an example of a turnabout verse, that is, a verse where the conclusion comes as a surprise. One may remark of poetry in all languages that the turnabout can be achieved only in verses of strictly conventional form, for it is only such verses that so fix our expectation that it may be shocked by a departure from the expected. The best examples that I recall in Western poetry are from Byron and Heine, both very strict poets in regard to the formalities of verse. Sanskrit with its rigidity of form and convention is peculiarly adapted to the turnabout. It seeks, for reasons which I hope to make clear, for pure effects by this means: the effect should be either tragic or comic, but not both.¹²

The verse which I choose is by a woman, Bhāvakadevī, and has won its way into most Sanskrit anthologies. It begins in accordance with the convention which calls for the erotic mood to be revealed by successive aspects of love-in-enjoyment (*sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*) and love-in-separation (*vipralamba-śṛṅgāra*). A perfect love, once united, is continued by two lovers though apart. But the poetess follows this by what is unexpected and because it is unexpected the bitterness of the sudden turn is impressive. The lovers marry.

At first our bodies knew a perfect oneness;
but then grew two:
the lover, you,
and I, unhappy I, the loved.
Now you are husband, I the wife.
What else should come of this my life,
a tree too hard to break,
if not such bitter fruit?

The critics spent much effort in analyzing what I have called mood. The theory was applied originally to the theater and came only later

¹² For Sanskrit turnabouts with tragic or bitter effect, beside the example given in the text above, see verses 1405, 1441, 1615 of the anthology. Of the comic turnabout one type became conventionalized as the trope *apahnuti*; see Intr. to Section 24. The coalescence of the two types, which Sanskrit convention prohibits, is characteristic of the Western poet Heine; cf. his "Ich glaub' nicht an den Himmel." In Byron's turnabouts the immediate effect—this is no place to discuss his final aims—is regularly comic; cf. the delightful verses of *Don Juan I*, 123-125.

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to be applied to all forms of literature. It begins by classifying the human emotions (*bhāva*) into eight, or according to some critics nine, basic or stable (*sthāyin*) types: sexual excitement, laughter, grief, anger, energy, fear, loathing, and wonder, to which some add, as ninth, peace. These emotions are stable only in relation to some thirty-three transitory experiences, such as embarrassment, reminiscence, worry, and so forth. The effort of the dramatist or poet is to transmit a sort of decoction of these stable emotions to his audience. He does so by employing certain means: the characters of his play or poem, the stimulants, such as rain clouds or sandalwood or bees when the mood is erotic, victories and triumphs when the mood is heroic; and so on. The decoction which the audience receives is what I have called mood. A more literal translation of the Sanskrit *rasa* would be flavor or taste.¹³ The moods bear names corresponding, with some small but interesting differences, to the names of the basic emotions from which they are derived. They are the erotic, the comic, the compassionate, the cruel, the heroic, the terrifying, the horrid (or loathsome), the marvelous, and the peaceful. The mood is not the original emotion itself or we should not enjoy hearing sad poetry like the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Emotion (*bhāva*) and mood (*rasa*) differ in several respects. An emotion is seldom pure or sustained and the emotions which contaminate it, since they depend on circumstances beyond our control, are seldom aesthetically harmonious. Our bursts of energy are mixed with anger and fear; our sexual excitement is interrupted, frustrated, forgotten, and then resumed. A mood, on the other hand, since it is created by an artist, may be purified and sustained and can be combined with other moods in an artistic fashion. Again, the emotion is personal whereas the mood is universal. When Rāma loses Sitā in real life his emotion is one of personal loss. But when this happens in Vālmiki's poem or Bhavabhūti's play, the mood embraces all men and nature as well.

The doctrine of the moods is elaborated by conventions regarding their permissible combinations, by the analysis of each mood in itself,

¹³ The word *rasa* possesses an ambiguity of denotation, which I have remarked on elsewhere in some detail ("Words for Beauty," p. 98). A particular *rasa* is said to lie in a given literary work as a sweet taste or a bitter taste may lie in a given food or drink. The connoisseur of poetry is also said to have a *rasa* (a taste) for the poetry he enjoys, much as a wine taster has a taste for wine. The Sanskrit word for a literary connoisseur is *rasika*.

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and by teachings concerning the appropriateness to each mood of the various types of dramatis personae, stimulants, and subsidiary emotions.

The erotic mood combines most perfectly with the comic, for there are passages where one may not be able to say which mood predominates. In the combination of the erotic with the compassionate, on the other hand, one mood is always basic and the other secondary. It is expressly forbidden to combine the erotic with the horrid, but this rule has been broken. Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* combines sex and horror in a fashion that was later never imitated, it is true, but neither was it forgotten. A curious convention is that while the erotic may combine on equal terms with the comic and on unequal terms with the compassionate, the comic and the compassionate may combine on no terms with each other. Thus, the clown does not appear in the fourth act of the *Śakuntala*, for grief is a subsidiary emotion underlying the act. Only rarely, as by Yogesvara, is this convention set aside. It explains the seeking for pure effects in the turnabout verses which I discussed above. One may point out incidentally that the combination which Sanskrit so studiously avoids characterizes much of what is best in modern Western literature.

The erotic and the compassionate moods taken by themselves may need some further explanation.

The erotic mood has two major aspects: love-in-enjoyment (*sambhoga-śṛṅgāra*), which portrays love unmixed, and love-in-separation (*vipralamba-śṛṅgāra*), which portrays love tinged with grief. The separation of lovers is further analyzed according to the place it occupies in an ideal romance and according to the cause of separation: love after first sight but before full enjoyment, love hindered by parents or frustrated by exile, love restrained by wounded pride or jealousy. Each of these subtypes has developed its own conventions of portrayal.

A convention that sets Sanskrit at odds with European literature is that within the mood of love jealousy may be expressed by a woman but not by a man. The convention is not a falsification of life but a regulation of sensibility. A man may express jealousy, but by doing so he shifts the mood to the comic. Doubtless the reason for this convention is that in a polygamous society the code of love cannot demand a strict fidelity from the lover. His infidelity may cause his mistress or wife to be jealous but does not necessarily lower the

nobility (*udāratā*) of his sentiment. His act of infidelity may have been required by social duty or by common civility. On the other hand, if the mistress were to be unfaithful to her lover, she would cease to be a noble mistress. The lover in turn would be demeaned if he expressed emotional concern over the loss of what had thus already lost its value. Accordingly, a heroine when wronged has recourse in Sanskrit literature only to tears, silence, or bitter words, never to retaliation in kind. Women who distribute their favors are wantons (*asatyah*) and, though looked on kindly by the poets (see Section 24), are subjects of laughter as much as are jealous husbands.

A play or a great kāvya in the erotic mood must reveal both major aspects of love. There exist so-called fragmentary kāvyas (*khaṇḍa-kāvya*) where an intense lyricism concentrates on one aspect and even one subtype of love alone. But such a concentration is essentially impossible in the theater, for the whole moving force of a Sanskrit play is the development of the mood; the action, the plot, serve solely as a vehicle for that development. Clearly a mood cannot be fully developed if a part of it is hidden or overlooked.

The mood derived from grief may never so dominate a poem or play that the audience is left under its spell at the conclusion. A Sanskrit literary work must always have a happy ending. The explanation which is offered for this limitation runs somewhat as follows. Grief is an emotion which all men seek to avoid. Its derivative will therefore be employed only if some benefit can be decocted from so unpromising a source. The Sanskrit poet could see that the derivative of grief was useful for describing the world as it is and also for teaching kindness. The latter purpose appears clearly from the name of the derivative, which is called the mood of compassion. But to emphasize the sorrows of noble characters above their joys, so Sanskrit authors supposed, could serve no purpose other than to drive men from the world, an effort appropriate to some forms of religion but not to kāvya. Thus they used the compassionate mood, which in some instances we may call tragic, but they wrote no tragedy in a Greek or Elizabethan sense. This is a limitation of Sanskrit literature for which the serious student will seek a deeper cause than is furnished by the answer just given.

One may begin by remarking that Greek and Elizabethan tragedy demand the portrayal of a chain of choice, action, and result. The absence of such tragedy, as opposed to the occasional use of the mood of compassion, is characteristic of Sanskrit, not of all literatures of

India. The hero Karna of the *Mahābhārata* is tragic quite in the Western sense, and many of the Rajput ballads are tragedies in the same vein. Thus the *bon mot* is disproved that India knew no tragedy until the coming of the British. It also follows that the peculiarity of Sanskrit in this respect cannot be wholly ascribed to the doctrine of karma, for that doctrine characterizes the whole of Indian thought. The doctrine of karma holds that men get precisely what they deserve and that if they suffer injustice in this life it is because they acted wrongly in past lives. It may well be that the doctrine has made tragedy a less appealing form of art in India than in Europe, for it stretches out the chain of choice, action, and result over a span of time so vast that the tragic process becomes less manageable. Less manageable, but it has been managed. The anonymous author of the Rajput *Āh-khaṇḍ* doubtless believed in the governance of karma, but when he sang the death of the warriors of Mahobā he gave his audience tragedy on the grand scale as we have known it in the West. No, the absence of such tragedy in Sanskrit must be ascribed mainly to factors that are peculiar to the Sanskrit tradition and not peculiar to India. One cannot have tragedy in the Greek or Shakespearean sense without individuals who are called upon to make choices. Now there are no individuals in Sanskrit literature, there are only types. Types do not create themselves by a process of choice: they are already made; they are eternal.

Why Sanskrit literature should be a literature of types is a question that I shall postpone. For the present I would pursue the nature of tragedy a step further. In the *Rāmāyana*, which sets the pattern for much in Sanskrit literature, we witness the making of decisions, but there is never any doubt what the decisions will be. Rāma could not disobey his father without ceasing to be the Rāma he has been from the moment we first see him in childhood. Nor can one imagine a Sitā who would not join Rāma in his banishment. How different are Rāma and Sitā from the characters that set the patterns of European literature! An Antigone only comes to be Antigone by the tragic choice that we see her make. And yet, the predestination of action in the Indian poem does not produce a mechanical effect. The characters have a certain freedom of sentiment as opposed to a freedom of action. What they will do is not in doubt, but they may do it with compassion or stoicism, with laughter or eagerness or fear, sentiments which seem to arise from within as much as to be occasioned from without.

As the characters of a Sanskrit poem have a liberty of sentiment in place of a liberty of action, we might speak of Sanskrit literature as having a tragedy of sentiment in place of a tragedy of action. One will find in Vidyākara a type of verse where on a miniature scale the mood of compassion is so intense that we may well call it tragic, specifying that we mean by the word an impersonal though intense effect, achieved by universalizing a mood rather than by exhibiting an act. It is not tragedy in the Greek or Elizabethan sense, but tragedy such as Samuel Beckett might achieve. Such are the verses of the present anthology on poverty (for example, 1306, 1307, 1320), on deserted villages (1175), on the hopelessness of life (1321, 1461), or on the catastrophes of love (653, 697). The scenes of these miniatures are natural; the language, especially of the tragic love-verses, is simple and consciously stripped of ornament. The reader is not here purged by the tragic nor ennobled through observing a hero's fate, for such verses have no heroes. It is not the fate of an individual but the condition of man that arrests the reader's attention and for a brief moment overwhelms him.¹⁴

It is a basic canon of Sanskrit poetry that no matter how long the poem, each stanza must in itself evoke the requisite mood. Now, it is difficult to evoke mood by four lines of not over twenty-three syllables each. No simple enumeration of erotic or heroic subjects will accomplish the task. Sanskrit poets were aware of this difficulty and discovered the magical means of evocation centuries before Sanskrit critics and philosophers analyzed the means that were used. The word by which the critics refer to this technique is *dhvani*, which I shall call "suggestion," although the word "overtone" as a technical term of music would perhaps be closer to the Sanskrit in meaning. To explain suggestion I shall resort to some very ancient and pedestrian examples.¹⁵

Most literary critics of Sanskrit supposed that every word has three sorts of power. First, the word has the power of direct designation. Thus, the word Ganges designates directly a great and holy river of

¹⁴ One of the mysteries of Sanskrit literature is where such verses come from. At present they are found only in anthologies and we know nothing of the works in which they originally stood. Until we learn more, we must suppose that those lost works also followed the overriding convention of using the tragic only as an occasional, not a prevailing, mood.

¹⁵ Taken from *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, book II.

India. Every word has also a secondary power, a power of indication, which is indirect. That is, a word may refer indirectly to a great number of things that are peripheral to its main object. It is only context that tells us when this secondary power is being employed. "A village on the Ganges"—here we cannot take 'Ganges' in its primary sense. If the village were actually *on* the river its inhabitants would drown. What is meant is a village on the bank of the Ganges. The secondary power of 'Ganges,' its power to indicate indirectly a peripheral object, has come into play.

Now let us come to the tertiary power of a word, its power of suggestion. What is the difference between saying "a village on the Ganges" and "a village on the bank of the Ganges"? The Sanskrit pandit tells us that the first sentence, although it is shorter, conveys a larger meaning. By associating the village thus directly with the river we suggest its coolness and holiness. Or, to take another example, "The spears entered the city." This turn of phrase suggests the great number of entering warriors and their compact formation in a way that would not appear if we said "The spearmen entered the city." The appearance of these suggestions is likened to the resonance of a bell after it is struck. First comes the stroke by which the primary or secondary power of the word enters the mind. Then the mind is suddenly aware of something related to but distinct from these—an overtone, a suggestion. Sanskrit critics and commentators are wonderfully acute at catching and rendering precise these subtleties.¹⁶

The power of suggestion is not only a tertiary power of words. It is a power which sometimes resides in a figure of speech, or it may reside in a whole sentence. By a skillful use of suggestion one may put into a verse as much meaning as might be contained in a whole book of prose.

¹⁶ To show the method of analysis one may manufacture a pandit's comment for a word of English verse.

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

"'Alien' in Latin and English denotes 'belonging to another, foreign,' a meaning which is possible but insufficient in Keats' line. By indication the word has come, in English, to mean 'belonging to another land, a stranger, an enemy.' The suggestion generated by using 'alien' with its indicative sense rather than a single-valued adjective like 'foreign' is that the whole land was turned against Ruth, even the grain that she gleaned. The suggestion intensifies the mood of compassion."

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This desire to increase the meaning of the verse explains much in Sanskrit poetry that would otherwise be mysterious. It explains the love of puns. Puns are very common in Sanskrit verse, and those Western critics who have objected to them simply show their lack of taste for Sanskrit. The pun is one of the techniques by which Sanskrit poets seek to achieve suggestion, to force a larger content into their miniature mold. For example our verse 362¹⁷ describes a young girl as she is just growing conscious of her beauty. The verse does not state explicitly that the girl is conscious of this any more than the girl herself would make an explicit statement to that effect. Rather, the verse is strewn with suggestive puns. The noun *prayāṇa* (departure) in the phrase 'departure of childhood' happens to be also a technical term for the setting out of an army of conquest. The compound *vigrahabharah* (the weight or growth of her body) can also mean 'preparation for war'; and so on. To analyze the verse technically one would say that its primary designation is a girl coming into womanhood, its indication is of preparations for conquest, its suggestion is of a latent, shy, but irresistible power. Or take our verse 1387, where the social orders under the poet's patron king are described in words that pun on the technicalities of grammar. The flattering suggestion is that society is as precisely and wisely regulated by the king as is the Sanskrit language by Pāṇini. Occasionally Sanskrit poets use puns playfully (verse 1418 contains a very pretty example) or obscenely as we commonly use them in English, but the true province of the Sanskrit pun is suggestion. The only modern English author who approaches the Sanskrit poets in this effort is James Joyce. But Joyce had to work with no tradition behind him. He had no well-cut and tempered tools but had to forge his own, and his audience was not trained as a Sanskrit audience was to receive such a poet's message.

The nature of the Sanskrit language is peculiarly well adapted to punning. Its words, as in every language with a long literary tradition, have each accumulated numerous meanings the choice of which is normally determined with reasonable ease by context. But words like *guṇin*: 'man of virtue,' 'gem'; *kara*: 'hand,' 'ray,' 'tax'; *hara*: 'lion,' 'ape,' 'Indra,' 'Śiva,' offer constant temptations to crowd double and triple meanings into a verse. The complete freedom of word order which Sanskrit enjoys and its freedom to form compounds are aids not

¹⁷ The translation of the verse and of the other punning verses referred to in this paragraph will be found in the Appendix.

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only to punning but to suggestions of all types. One can arrange words always in the most suggestive relation of contiguity or separation.

The varieties and uses of suggestion in Sanskrit are so numerous that large volumes have been composed to describe and analyze them. As in treating other elements of poetics I shall give only a few examples.

The most obvious examples can be found in plays, and it is in the theater that Indian critics first became aware of *dhvani* and attempted to analyze its functions. Suggestions may arise by means of a hint used to convey meaning to one character while leaving another in the dark. Thus Śakuntalā's friend calls out "Little *cakravāka*, bid your mate farewell, for night is coming." *Cakravāka* birds, it is true, separate at night and by their pining furnish a stock metaphor for parted lovers. But the night that is approaching, as Śakuntalā is quick to understand, is the mother superior of the hermitage and the suggestion is that Śakuntalā will be wise to leave her lover before that kindly but straitlaced old lady finds her. This variety of suggestion, used for gnomic rather than theatrical purposes, becomes the allegorical epigram (*anyokti*) of which Vidyākara furnishes many examples. Thus, his verse 1033 runs:

Here you have come, O goldsmith,
to sell jewelry worthy of an ear.

Have you not heard that in this village
the chieftain's ears have not been pierced?

where 'goldsmith' and 'chieftain' to one acquainted with the conventions indicate respectively a poet and his patron. The poet chooses thus to suggest his situation rather than describe it outright. A bald description would be personal and so would be in bad taste.

Hints are commonly used in the theater to set the stage for matter to come. All entrances of characters are theatrically prepared in this way. Similarly, a play's opening stanza of benediction often hints at the nature of the work to follow. When skillfully drawn, the hints of the benediction may suggest notions of great depth and beauty (see Intr. to Section 4, last paragraph). Or suggestion may be used to reveal the essential meaning of what would otherwise be an inconsequential description. For example, in the *Tāpasavatsarāja* (verse 868 of our anthology) the coming of night is described as follows:

Moths begin their fatal flight
into the slender flame;
bees, made blind by perfume,

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wait in the closing bud.
The dancing-girls are putting on their paint
as one may guess from here
by the jingling of their bracelets
as they bend their graceful arms.

The burning of the moth and the imprisoning of the bee suggest the purpose of the dancing-girls' preparations. By this revelation of underlying purpose or essential meaning the mood is established. Indeed, one could define mood as the revelation of the essential meanings of things, specifying only that those meanings must fit with pre-established conventions.

As with all conventions, those of Sanskrit can be overworked. An insensitive poet will find it only too easy to sort his material into the approved modal patterns by means of suggestions that have been used a hundred times before. He will say of night, when the mood is to be erotic, that it is black as a cuckoo's throat; when heroic, that it is dark as a king's swordblade; when horrid, that it is as impenetrable as smoke from a funeral pyre. When a tradition is worked on for two thousand years it accumulates a dangerous stock of easy beauty. But no poetry would fare well if we were to judge its conventions by the use to which tired hands may put them. In the hands of a true poet Sanskrit suggestion can achieve effects of tremendous power. I shall comment on a single example.

The women of the Triple City wept from lotus eyes
as Śambhu's arrow-flame embraced them;
but still, though shaken off, the fire caught their hands,
though struck, did pluck their garments' hem,
denied, it seized their hair, and scorned
like lover who has lately loved another, lay before their feet.
May this same fire burn away your sins.

The verse, which is probably by Bāṇa (verse 49 of our anthology) but which is commonly ascribed to Amaru, in whose famous collection it occurs as the second benedictory verse, contains a series of images followed by an explicit simile and prayer. The images paint the scene of Śambhu (Śiva), that is to say, God, shooting his flames at the triple citadel of the demons. The women of the citadel weep tears from their beautiful eyes and tremble as the flames engulf them. This is a designated image. It and each image that follows produce a double, an image that is not designated but suggested. The first is of a woman

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whose pride has been hurt by her believing her lover to be faithless. She trembles as he embraces her, and weeps, not daring to look at him. In the next designated image the flames cling to the hands of the women although they try to shake them off, suggesting the lover who urges profuse apologies upon his mistress. And so in what follows, where we have the hair caressed and the hem of the garment plucked, either by the flames of God in the designated mythological incident or by the consoling lover in the suggested image. That the images are to be combined in this way is indicated by the briefly stated simile: "like lover who has lately loved another." Finally comes the prayer: "May this same fire burn away your sins."

The imagery of all but the last line of the verse conduces to the erotic mood. In erotic verse the woman who trembles and refuses a glance to the lover at her feet is never truly averse to his attentions but jealous at their being shared. Modal convention leads one to attribute to her not so much pain as passion, in which both pain and joy are mixed. Notice how the suggestion of pain in the verse is succeeded by suggestions of pleasure; weeping is followed by embraces and caresses. Thus, the suggestion of the initial images of the poem is that Śiva's act of destruction is an act of love, of his love of the demon women or, by suggestion, since God brings us all to death, of all mankind, and of their passionate response to his love. But the greatness of the verse lies in its conclusion. The benediction shifts the mood to peace. To ask that God "burn away your sins" by that same fire is to ask what? If the fire is the fire of man's joy and grief, the prayer would seem to ask that our joys and griefs so burn out our karma that we may return purified and in peace to the source from which the flame arose. In four lines of verse the poet moves by means of suggestion from the specific to the universal and from a mood of excitement to a mood of rest. The reader may feel that he has dived from a high springboard into a calm, cool pool.

I shall now leave the techniques of Sanskrit poetry to consider a matter which has arisen intermittently throughout the preceding description. I refer to the impersonality of Sanskrit verse, to its lack of reference to specific individuals. It is strange that the standard accounts of Sanskrit literature have so little to say of the matter, for it is here even more than in techniques that Sanskrit poetry proves alien to the prevailing spirit of Western and especially of English verse.

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Western poetry, ancient and modern, has associated intense emotion with specificity of the individual. The association springs to notice in our use of names. The anguish of David would never strike us so forcibly but for that terrible repetition of Absalom's name and of the relation which bound him so exclusively to David.

O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom!
Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son.

It is not any father grieving for any son that we hear. It is one specific father of a certain time and place grieving for his very own son, whom he names. If David and Absalom were typified we should feel that the grief was diffused and so less intense. So when Catullus cries out,

Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,
illa Lesbia quam Catullus unam
plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,
nunc in quadriuis et angiportis
glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes,

the shame is not that a noblewoman should play the whore in the alleyways of Rome but that that woman should be "my Lesbia, that Lesbia, that very Lesbia whom I loved more than myself and all that is mine."

These names, which make such a show in passages of emotional intensity, are only a symptom of a trend that runs through most Western poetry and that is particularly strong in Hebrew and English. In these languages even the elegy, where emotion has been cooled by reflection, finds it difficult to break away from the specific. Lycidas may be considerably conventionalized from Edward King but Adonais is clearly John Keats. We aim at impersonality in the sciences and pretend to it in the social sciences, but in poetry for the most part we consciously avoid it.

There are of course exceptions. The poetry of types has occurred in the West, especially in court literature. Virgil's Corydon and Alexis, like the Celias and Dorindas of seventeenth-century court verse, are no more individuals than the *nāyakas* and *nāyikās* of Sanskrit. But England has never taken wholeheartedly nor for very long to such figures and America outside the schoolroom has scarcely made their acquaintance.

To the English tradition Sanskrit presents a sharp contrast. In the five hundred or so verses that deal with love in Vidyākara's anthology

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one will not find the name of a single lover. In Vidyākara's section on villains one finds no villain's name; in the section on good men not one individual good man is so identified that we could know him from other good men. The very idiosyncrasies of the Sanskrit language are utilized by the poets in the service of this anonymity. Time and again by the use of a passive or impersonal construction or by using the plural pronoun in place of the singular the poet makes it impossible for his readers to say with certainty whether he is speaking of himself or of a third person, whether of himself or of men in general.¹⁸ We know nothing of the personal lives of Sanskrit poets, just as they tell us nothing of the personal lives of their patrons. The persons here have melted into the types of poet and king.

The contrast between the impersonality of Sanskrit and the pre-vaillingly personal poetry of the West, and especially of English, sets the mind to inquiry along two paths. How did the divergence come about? And how can one achieve great poetry in the absence of one factor that is common to nearly all the great poetry of our own tongue? I am more diffident of my answer to the first question than to the second, for the first involves questions that lie beyond literature.

One may remark that impersonality appears in its extreme form in India only in Sanskrit. The Pāli sermons of the Buddha, what may be inferred of the Prakrit *Bṛhatkathā*, the vernacular lives of saints and warriors, all show a concern for the individual person and for specific places and incidents, such as we find to prevail in the literatures of Europe. Impersonality was therefore an ideal peculiar to those who spoke or read Sanskrit, that is, to the upper and professional classes, especially to those who passed down the intellectual traditions of India from generation to generation. In those classes one may find a number of parallel phenomena.

Until recent times it has been characteristic of Indian society that the exercise of personal initiative and judgment was low as social status was high and high as social status was low. The joint family with its lack of individual freedom and its imposition of myriad social duties and responsibilities has always been characteristic of the upper

¹⁸ Examples of the former type of ambiguity are 1469, 1478; of the latter type, 1470. In translating such verses I have generally been forced to make a choice, since not to do so would be to write barbarous English. While it is usually clear from context or analogy whether the personal or impersonal is predominant, the definiteness of English narrows the full scope of the original.

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classes. Granted that the Indian nobility produced its share of tyrants, as a class it was characterized by cooperative thought and action. It maintained its wealth not by sending forth individual vikings and corsairs but by sending forth military clans. Similarly, the brahmins and scribes transmitted the knowledge of the past through learned families rather than merely through learned individuals.¹⁹ Furthermore, it was only the upper classes who lived by the book, so to speak, that is, who regarded the Vedas and Dharmaśāstras as criteria of right and wrong to which personal judgment should defer. Again, one may remark that the same environment which produced classical Sanskrit poetry also produced classical Vedānta philosophy, first in its *bhedābheda* form, but by the ninth century in its form of absolute monism where even the personality of God was denied as being an illusion. Finally, the Indian nobility and priesthood, like those of other lands, were conservative. Where a literature is largely limited to such classes it will naturally be slow to break with an ideal that has once been formed. The ideal of impersonality came into Indian literature some time between the composition of the *Mahābhārata* epic and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In Sanskrit it was never to leave.

By all this I do not mean to say that Indian noblemen and men of learning differed in nature from modern writers of the West. Human nature is marvelously constant. But their environment hushed certain traits of character that with us are allowed free speech and at the same time made other traits eloquent that with us are silent. Literature reflects rather the ideals of men than men themselves. At its best it does not distort, but even at its best it selects.

As to how poetry could exist in the absence of individualism the answer is easier. It existed, just as Indian religion existed under the same circumstances, by making a virtue of its lack. To the Vedāntin the advantage of stripping off the personality was that only thus could he arrive at what he considered to be real, at something permanent, unchangeable, and unitary. To the Sanskrit poet the advantage of

¹⁹ Where we have the particulars of a Sanskrit author's life we almost always find that he came from a family of authors. This holds true of poets such as Rājasekhara just as it does of critics (e.g., Abhinavagupta), grammarians (e.g., Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita), and philosophers (e.g., Vidyāraṇya). One infers that it was rare for a man from an unlearned family to move into the charmed circle of literature. The legends of sudden divine inspiration, which are told, for example, of Kālidāsa and Mūcakavi, may well have been invented to explain the rare exceptions.

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abandoning personal idiosyncrasy and adventure was that the resultant character by being typical came closer to being universal. To write of one's patron, say, as Rāmapāla who has ruled for a few years one of the many regions of India is to make him out a small thing, a human, no more than he might be without the aid of Sanskrit verse. So to select among his qualities and among the vicissitudes of his life as to suggest his identity with Karna or Arjuna or Rāma son of Daśaratha is to magnify him and give him permanence.²⁰ In similar fashion, the poet's mistress or wife was thought to be glorified by joining her to the appropriate traditional type of heroine. In that guise she became eternal. Everything about her became lovable, not just this trait or that.

From the standpoint of our very different ideals it is easy to make fun of this process of magnification. Macdonell laughed at the Sanskrit excesses of lovelorn damsels and Kosambi heaps scorn on the hyperboles of Sanskrit panegyrics. But one may ask what the Sanskrit critics would have said of Albertine or of Molly Bloom. It is well that we can laugh at each other in this vale of tears, but it would be sad indeed should we stop at no more than that.

There are places where Sanskrit impersonality is poetically effective even to a Western taste.

They lay upon the bed each turned aside
and suffering in silence;
though love still dwelt within their hearts
each feared a loss of pride.
But then from out the corner of their eyes
the sidelong glances met
and the quarrel broke in laughter as they turned
and clasped each other's neck. (Verse 667)

Half the charm of the verse lies in the anonymity of the lovers. So left, they express an eternal moment of young love. To specify that they are Jack and Joan or that they are Lionel and Blancheffleur would be to destroy the universality by the intrusion of social particulars.

And more than this. The finest effects of suggestion are possible only when applied to types, not to individuals. By a long process of typifying, each variety of love, each scene of nature, each function of

²⁰ For a more detailed characterization of the Sanskrit panegyric one may turn to the Introductions to Sections 32 and 41.

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the gods received a conventional manner of presentation. By a single brushstroke, a single word taken from one of these conventional portrayals or descriptions, the whole scene is evoked. It thus becomes far easier than it is under the modern Western ideal of individualism to move back and forth among the fields of nature, humanity, and the gods, and by suggestion to reveal a given mood as embracing the universe. Thus, in Kālidāsa's play, Śakuntalā by becoming the very type of heroine-in-separation comes naturally into comparison with the *mādhavī* vine of her hermitage. As the vine is dried by the noonday wind so is she burned by love. And the king, breaking in on her loneliness, comes as the freshening rain.

Since the Romantic period we have grown used to criticizing convention for its making poetry stale. But the Sanskrit conventions give constantly new and fresh effects. An anonymous poet writes,

The splendor of the moonlight has lost its charm . . .
its darling moonstone, overlaid by frost,
no longer sweats with yearning. (Verse 310)

The description is of winter, when moonlight loses its autumnal brilliance. The poet plays on two conventions: that the moonstone emits water when struck by the rays of the moon, and that the first symptom of a lover's emotion, and one which the Indian poet finds charming because it is involuntary, is the sweat which breaks forth on meeting with the beloved. By suggestion working on conventions and types, the mood of love in two or three words may thus gather planets and minerals into its embrace. What stands between man and nature is removed if we take from him his personality. To the Sanskrit poet the removal of the person was felt not as a limitation of art but as a chance for freedom, an opportunity for suggestion to bring the reader to a sudden view of the universe within the minute compass of a verse.

It may be well here to furnish a single example of how the salient characteristics of Sanskrit poetry, as I have described them, may combine: mood, suggestion, impersonality, and the sudden revelation of universal truth. The example which I take is from the fifth canto of Kālidāsa's *Birth of the Prince*. While I despair of translating the effect of the original I may perhaps be able to explain it.

A word of preface—the fifth canto of *The Birth of the Prince* tells how Umā, the daughter of Himālaya, practises penance in order to

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win the love of Śiva. She has previously tried the aid of Kāma, that is to say, love or lust, but Śiva reduced Kāma to ashes simply by a glance of his consuming eye. Nothing is left to Umā but self-restraint, patience, discipline. Umā sets about her task in the typical manner of Indian ascetics. She, the fair princess, puts off her jewelry, assumes a hermit garb, and sits cross-legged in meditation within her hermitage. The seasons come and go but she sits unmoving. As other Indian ascetics have done, she adds to the mortification of her flesh by having fires built on each side of her rigid body. Even in the scorching summer she refuses to shield her head from the sun.

Still sat Umā though scorched by various flame
Of solar fire and fires of kindled birth,
Until at summer's end the waters came.
Steam rose from her body as it rose from earth.

With momentary pause the first drops rest
Upon her lash then strike her nether lip,
Fracture upon the highland of her breast,
Across the ladder of her waist then trip
And slowly at her navel come to rest.

The beauty of the verses in the original derives from the association through suggestion of numerous harmonious ideas.²¹ In the first place we have a princess beautiful by the strict conventions of Indian art, meditating in the rain. Her eyelashes must be long and curling up at the tips in order to hold the drops of rain for a moment before they fall. Her nether lip must be pouting like a *bimba* fruit to catch the drops from her lashes. Her breasts must be large, so large as to touch one another; otherwise the rain from her lip would fall between them. And they are high and hard, for the raindrops fracture upon them. In order for the drops to trip across the ladder of her waist it must have the three small folds that are so admired by the erotic poets. And her navel must be deep.

Next, the verses inform us that this is no ordinary princess. She is the perfect *yoginī*. The *Bhagavadgītā* informs us that the yogi must be beyond the duality of pleasure and pain (2.38, 2.56, 5.20), of heat and

²¹ *Kumārasambhava* 5.23-24. In interpreting the suggestions I have taken several ideas from the opening passage of Appaya Dikṣita's *Cītramīmāṃsā*, *Kāvya-mālā* Series 38 (Bombay, 1893), pp. 1-2. Appaya uses the second of the verses here translated as a touchstone for his definition of *dhvani*.

General Introduction

cold (6.7). Our princess remains motionless throughout the passage. She is unaffected by the heat of summer or the delicious coolness of the rain. The *Gītā* also tells us that when in meditation the yogi must hold his head, neck, and torso in a perfect line (6.13). The geography of the falling raindrops informs us that this must here be the case.

A princess who is the perfect *yoginī*. But she is more. The "highland of her breast" hints at the fact that she is a power of nature. She is the daughter of Himālaya not only in name. Or is she more than that? In the popular religion, Umā is the mother-goddess. The very word Umā, despite the fanciful etymology that Kālidāsa gives it, is simply an ancient word for mother. She is the goddess of earth and fertility. And so her appearance is described as a sort of double, an anthropomorph, of the earth. The steam rises from her silent body just as it rises from the parched earth when the monsoon breaks. The rain courses down her just as it courses over the face of the earth we walk on, softening it and making it able to bear our crops.

The poet offers us these suggestions, facilitating our comprehension by words and phrases that one might call signposts. The association or sorting of the suggestions he leaves to our fancy, but we can gain indications of his intention from the context.

Only six verses farther on in the poem Umā is suddenly visited by what appears to be a brahmin ascetic. It is actually the god Śiva who has appeared in disguise to make a final trial of the woman of his choice before revealing himself. Surely the hints of earthly fertility in these verses refer forward to the coming marriage of the earth-goddess to the father-god and to the birth of the prince which gives the title to the whole work. Beauty is naturally to be associated with fertility. And in the mind of Kālidāsa self-restraint is associated also—discipline even to the point of mortification. Umā is purified for her marriage by the practice of yoga just as another heroine of Kālidāsa, the nymph's daughter Śakuntalā, is purified by sorrow. The pillars of suggestion on which these verses are built are three: beauty, self-restraint, and fertility. What is new in the verses is the association of the three suggestions so as to form the pillars of a single house.

One may argue today, as the Sanskrit critics argued in the past, the relative importance of the various factors of Sanskrit verse which I have discussed. Vocabulary, grammar, meter: these are all necessary. Figures of speech, both verbal and intellectual, furnish delight. Mood is what is sought, though the grand successes of Sanskrit I would say

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go beyond mood to a sort of universal revelation, to what James Joyce, drawing on the vocabulary of religion, called an epiphany. To achieve this success impersonality is a prerequisite and suggestion is the chief instrument. If I were to single out for admiration one factor above the others in this complex it would be suggestion, not because it is unknown in other languages but because the Sanskrit poets use it with such brilliance and because it seems to me the most intimately connected of all the factors with the excitement, the sudden rushing of the mind into a delightful, calm expansion, that one occasionally derives from Sanskrit poetry and that brings one who has once known it constantly back for further draughts.