Chapter V

KĀLIDĀSA'S 'SĀKUNTALA'
essay on the work in his 'Prācīn Sāhitya', to quote the same and to explain it in his inimitable words. Unfortunately, this glowing and spontaneous eulogy of one of the greatest poets of the world has been underrated by scholars like Keith, Dr. S.N. Dasgupta, etc., according to whom this is an obvious poetical exaggeration and need not be taken very seriously. As against this we have Tagore's afore-mentioned essay wherein he has sought to unfold the full significance of Goethe's words. As we have submitted in chapter II, we put more value on Tagore's estimate than on the observations of such scholar critics as mentioned above.

Let us turn to the eulogy itself, which runs — in the English translation of Eastwick, which, incidentally, is the best English translation — as follows: 'Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline, And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed, Wouldst thou the earth, and heaven itself in one sole name combine? I name thee, O S'akuntala! and all at once is said.' Tagore's Bengali rendering of the couplet is well-known and is also noteworthy in this connection. There are also Sanskrit renderings of which we may be permitted to give our own for a somewhat searching study of the couplet:

Ekatra cedicchasi puśpamārtavam pākābhīrān[o]cch phalam śucisīryaḥ / sammohanam hādāmayaṁ sacetasāṁ santarpaṇam syādupadeṣṭr caiva yat// dyāvāprthīvyorathavalkasamśrayaṁ Sākuntale sarvamavāpsyasi dhruvan //

Let us see what this high praise really means. According
to Goethe, if one seeks the tender blossom of the spring as well as the mellow fruit of maturaing year in one and if one seeks all in one by which the soul is charmed and exhilarated as well as enlivened and filled and if one seeks the earth and heaven itself commingled in one, one can surely find all this in the 'Sākuntala'. This does not merely mean that one can find, in fine, all the good and great things of the world and of life represented in the great 'Sākuntala' but that there is a kind of totality of all these good and great things beginning from their first green flush culminating in their consummate perfection. Yes, perfection -- that is the word. This presupposes that these good and great things are not static or absolute, but dynamic and relative, that is to say, they have, as Aristotle would say and as our Sanskrit critics also would, in effect, say that they have a beginning, a middle and an end. This inevitable movement -- this evolution from their inception to their fulfilment along with the highest and the best things themselves that the world can offer and life can hold are together represented in this unique creation called the 'Sākuntala'. So, it is a two-dimensional entity -- the thing itself with the being and becoming knit in one (like Einstein's space-time, a composite and relative-dynamic entity.)

Let us try to be more concrete. Certainly, of all things dearly cherished by man and his life, love is supreme. This many-splendoured thing called love, which embodies in itself all the
other worthiest things of life, has been sanctified by all poets, philosophers and saints alike. Now, this love and that which is noblest and highest and at its very best — has been portrayed by Kālidāsa in his 'Sākuntala' with its natural growth, development and final consummation. And this portrayal is an extremely beautiful piece of creation by the poet — its style, treatment and achievement, besides the great theme itself, all being grandly magnificent. Kālidāsa has always adopted the most universal and the most fundamental thing or aspect of a thing as material with which and out of which to create his immortal poetry. Our poet has been derided, as we have seen earlier, as a mere poet of erotics, and in particular, as a mere poet of court-poetry of love-intrigue. This is not true, as we have already indicated. If love is the supreme thing and theme of life, our poet has justly dealt with it as such in his poetry. And, of this love, that which is the greatest, highest and noblest is his aim in his poetry, which aim, after having dealt with it variously in various works, he has at last completely and unerringly achieved in his great 'Sākuntala'. This love, too, may not be, at first, completely free from its natural earthly dross and human frailty ('svādhikārapramāda' or simply 'pramāda'), but ultimately through the inevitable sufferings of love-agonised souls, as through penance, the love is made pure and holy and the lovers are united in the perpetual bliss of heaven. We shall not here attempt to elaborate this idea further as Tagore has almost exhaustively dealt with it in his splendid essay on the 'Sākuntala' referred
to earlier.

In this connection, we may also refer to the title of the drama itself,— which has been interpreted rather superficially by all we know. Besides the apparently simple interpretation that where Sakuntalā was recognised by the 'abhijñāna anguriya' or signet ring, it has a far deeper meaning which seems to have escaped the notice of the critics of the 'Sākuntala'. It is this: as Vālmīki has sung in the 'Rāmāyaṇa' in connection with the love of Rāma and Śītā, 'Hṛdayam tveva jānāti prītyoyagam parasparam' — it is the heart, the soul alone that knoweth the bond of love, each to each, so the true Abhijñāna by which Sakuntalā was recognised was the love, rather the loving heart of Duśyanta, the external aid of a signet ring was merely to evoke that love, or the prompting of that loving heart, which lay deeply buried in his mind, now clouded by the sudden loss of memory of his dearest bride. More of this when we shall discuss the significance of the curse of sage Durvāsas. We may only add for the present that as, in the way Tagore has shown, the curse was not really external but something which was well within the soul of Duśyanta himself or in the nature of the first flush of his love, so also the curse could not completely obliterate the last trace of memory of his beloved, it lay deep in his soul — in his sub-conscious or unconscious mind, as we say it now — though not in his conscious memory. The great piece of poetry 'Rāmyāṇi vīkṣya....' etc. by the poet himself is in direct evidence of this, which we shall elaborate later.
Now let us see how far the grand theme has been treated by the poet with grand magnificence. In this we shall try to follow the matter in the way of our celebrated Sanskrit critics i.e., with an eye to each of 'vastu', 'neti' and 'rasa'. Western critics, particularly the critics of Shakespeare, have laid most emphasis on characterization than on the other two aspects of drama or literature i.e., the theme (or the treatment of the theme) and the resulting emotional effect. We have already indicated this earlier. We should remember, in this connection, that these three are related to one another, as always, than to be taken rather in isolation.

It is well-known how the simple, crude story of the 'Mahābhārata' has been transmuted by our poet into the flawlessly charming and significant theme of the drama. We shall merely touch upon the more essential innovations of our poet ('kavipratibhottita vastu'). Of all innovations certainly the curse of sage Durvāsas is the most important. It has lent life and movement to the whole drama, ennobled the character of the king as well as of his queen and enhanced the moral and spiritual significance of the entire creation. Indeed, as Tagore has indicated, the curse may be said to be the pivot of the whole drama and its axis and the turning point where the poetry has truly begun to take the character of a drama. This magnificent innovation of the poet has been criticised by Western critics, as mentioned earlier, as a mere external and supernatural device and not within the drama proper.
objected to the poet's description of the love-sports of their adorable deities in the 8th canto of the 'Kumārasambhava'. Indumati does not even deserve to be mentioned in this context — Indumati, who was merely a lovely creation of the creator, chose her bridegroom, was happily wedded to Aja and died to fulfil a curse of heaven to which she really belonged and for whom her dear love Aja mourned with pathetic beauty. The yakṣa's lone bride, love-lorn, yet charming, is a demi-goddess and is mainly in the background, to whom the God-sent cloud-angel is sent aloft high heaven to carry forth the electrifying message of her banished lord. Mālavikā is somewhat like a puppet than a living woman, more an object of love than perhaps positively loving, but wishing merely to be happy with the love of and marriage with the lover king. Urvesī, however, is a grandly divine lover, exotic in her charms and exotic in her love—passionate, heedless and extravagant and, therefore, somewhat selfish in her love and exacting. She is provocative with her abandon as with her physical charms and everlasting youth. She is a class by herself; her appeal is literally maddening, and even her great earthly lover could hardly cope with her love. Her flaming beauty and fierce soul are too much for a man's love and she has something of the infinite in her as the great Cleopatra in Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra' has. Kālidāsa, however, has ultimately softened her and made her more like an earthly woman, wife and mother than her erstwhile irresistibly divine self.
But what is Sakuntalā? To some Urvasī has been a more charming woman than Sakuntalā. Let us see. Sakuntalā is also half-divine, half-human (divyamānuṣā) like Urvasī and Purūravas in one, so to say. She is the sweet daughter of the celestial maiden Menakā and earthly ascetic Viśvāmitra. From this follows about ninety per cent of her character and disposition. But she is also nursed by her foster-father, the great affectionate ascetic Kāṇva in his hermitage. So, the presiding deity of the penance-grove, rather Nature herself, is her foster-mother. She is a Nature's child and Nature's darling, as Kāṇva's foster child and Kāṇva's darling. It may be noted here that her creator himself is also a Nature's child and Nature's darling, like Shakespeare—but in a different sense. However, her birth and rearing all point to her uniqueness which has been faithfully carried by the poet all throughout. So, it may be said, following Shakespeare, that the elements have so mixed in her that all nature could stand and say to all the world, 'she is a woman'. In fact, Nature did all this and more. She piteously mourned her sudden departure to her lord's abode leaving all behind her and leaving loving Nature all to herself. Now, what are these elements that have mixed in her to make of her an unique woman that she is? She has the lightning flash of her beauty ('... prabhātaralā vidyut...'), enchantment and the ardour of her love contributed by her celestial mother, the no less earthly impetuosity and the rigours of her penance inherited from her ascetic father and the lovely grace and tender charm from the presiding deity of the penance-grove or Nature herself, her foster-
mother. It will be seen, therefore, that she has a double set of parents, each contributing liberally to the making of her person and character. The divine and the earthly, the ascetic and the sagely, man and Nature -- all conspired to make Śakuntalā unique in every respect. In fact, Kālidāsa's own conception of making the finest woman in the Kumārasambhava 'Sā nirmitā viśvāsrjā prayatnādekașthasauṇḍaryaddhikṣayeva' has been fulfilled in Śakuntalā not only in a physical sense but also in a spiritual sense. The poet's own description of her through Duṣyanta in two glowing verses ('Citre nivesāya ...', 'Anāgrātām puṣpam...') may be noted. The first verse refers to her flawlessly perfect physical beauty and nothing more. But something more has to be there and so the second verse refers to her spiritual beauty in her lovely tender physical frame. While the one is concrete, the other is abstract in the concrete; and the two make the picture complete. Once we have got our Śakuntalā in her true self, the rest of her life follows as a matter of course. Her first flush of love on seeing the greatest king on earth, handsome though past the prime of his youth, come to the hermitage in the midst of blooming and loving nature, her infatuation and the sickness of her soul for the desired union with him, her heedless union according to the Gandharva rite, the neglect of her duties due to unmindfulness caused by the sudden separation in love and apprehension as to her future and the curse, her bidding tender farewell to the hermitage, the consequent repudiation of her by her dear husband, her remorse and the ardour of her penance for re-union,
itself after her love has been shorn of its dross and made purified, in the sacred hermitage of sage Mārīca in heaven, etc. are all understood, and we need not elaborate upon them. Even Shakespeare has not a single woman who can come near Sakuntalā in these respects. For lack of any such character, Tagore had to take Miranda from 'The Tempest' for the purpose of a comparative study. But as Tagore himself said, it is a futile comparison and she only partially resembles Sakuntalā. Besides, it is a physical comparison; there is hardly any spiritual affinity between the two. Moreover, as Tagore had not said, 'The Tempest' has mainly an allegorical significance and its principal characters are Prospero, Ariel and Caliban and not Miranda or Ferdinand. The romantic episode has but a minor significance there and is not all-engrossing as in the 'Sākuntalā' or as in 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Antony and Cleopatra', etc. In terms of Sanskrit criticism Śrṅgāra is the 'aṅgarasa' there and not 'ahgī rasa'. However, Miranda is the only feeble approach to Sakuntalā in all Shakespeare, and their difference is the measure of the greatness of the creation of Sakuntalā - the unique maiden of sweet loveliness, exotic charm, tender freshness as well as spiritual beauty, ardour and serenity — all in one.

Next comes the incomparable consort of Sakuntalā, the mighty and righteous king Dusyanta; but though mighty and righteous he has been shown essentially as a lover. His physical charm is not much less than that of Sakuntalā, though he is now
past the prime of his youth his gallantry and poise considerably compensate for it. Although he has a number of wives in his royal harem, according to the custom of those times, he still remains a lover provided there is sufficient ground to provoke his love. Indeed, it may be said without derogating his unimpeachable dignity of character, that, by his nature, he loves to love provided, of course, the object of such love is worthy of it. And Śākuntalā is such an unique objective of love. He sets out on a hunting expedition which has been tabooed in the Śāstras as a vice (vyasana). Though he is a worthy king of the Puru race and is perhaps the greatest king born in it, he, in his passion, thus swerves from the path of dharma and becomes 'svādhikārupramatta' (this being the famous term from the 'Meghadūta', the term used in the 'Śākuntalā' is simply 'pramatta' and though simple it is a pregnant and mellow term). Then it is very natural for him, as for any man, to fall in love with the wonderful girl Śakuntalā and even to marry her according to the Gandharva rite sanctioned in the Śāstras. Here he does not expressly transgress any rule of dharma as enjoined in the Śāstras. But Kālidāsa goes further and indicates that viewed from a higher spiritual plane both Dusyanta and Śākuntalā ought to have waited for Kanva's return and permission to their marriage. So, this act also has been a clear case of 'svādhikārupramāda' on their part viewed from a higher plane of dharma, the sanction of the Śāstras merely to be taken as a permissive custom but not necessarily a spiritually sound act. It may be noted here with interest that while the
poet has differed through the general (senāpati) who is in earnest, himself apparently in jest, from Manu who condemned hunting as a vice (vyasana), he has, again, suggested, this time in earnest, that the Gandharva rite, at least in the case of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā is not justified from the spiritual plane i.e. from the standpoint of true 'dharma' and noble love. Here we may remember that the theme of our poet in the 'Śākuntala' is noble love and just not a love-intrigue of the court type as somewhat prejudiced Western critics seem to emphasise again and again with regard to the treatment of love by our poet. This is the theme, more or less, in almost all his works, but it has been grandly portrayed in the 'Śākuntala' as in no other except in the 'Kumārasambhava', with full magnificence. Of the two, again, Duṣyanta is certainly more at fault than Śakuntalā who has been mainly passive by her modest feminine nature. It is Duṣyanta who is aggressive and has taken the leading part in the love-play, or rather, love-offensive. However, for this initial and natural fault on their part they have invited, as we have seen earlier, the crucial curse of the ascetic and venerable sage Durvāsas. In the court scene, Duṣyanta acts as a noble king and also as an unfortunate lover who is a victim of a strange oblivion. His nobility has not been demonstrated earlier so vividly and conclusively, though in the hermitage, besides being a lover, he has also been a protector from evils to its holy inhabitants. As they have been equally faulty, so they have suffered equally. And theirs long and
heart-rending sufferings have been commensurate with the initial and natural nevertheless positive fault on their part. The poet has vividly described the love-pangs of Dusyanta, but he has with his consummate art, kept Sakuntalā in the background only to show her in the light at the time of re-union. The love-pangs of Dusyanta have been aroused by the sudden onset of his memory of his legally wedded and pregnant wife, now lost to him, on the signet ring being recovered, and now his pangs are made grave with remorse for his own act of senseless repudiation of her. His manly self recovered by the wise device of Mātali, he goes straight to heaven in aid of his great friend, the lord of gods himself and having achieved a glorious victory against the demons, he, through the beneficent and graceful agency of Indra, meets his holy wife (dharmaḍa) and his great son - the son first and next his wife - in the holy hermitage of Mārīca situated neither on earth nor in Amrāvati but in high heaven (antarikṣa). Thus a noble lover, purged of his inevitable initial dross and his love made pure through the penance of sufferings, attains perfection in his love and then is united with his holy wife and the fruit of their wedding, their son, in the spiritual bliss of heaven.

Anasūya and Priyāmvaḍā have been already touched upon and so has been vidūṣaka, the jester. Of the other characters Kanve is certainly the most noteworthy. He, as the foster-father of Sakuntalā, has, in fact, been more than a father. Though the presiding deity of the penance-grove or Nature herself has been
called by us as the foster-mother of Śākuntalā, Kanva seems to have served, sometimes, also as her human foster-mother. His affection and pity for this orphan girl have been so great that he reminds us of the famous Jāda Bharata as he also has his share of 'svādhyārapremāda', so to say. Though his religious rites have not been seriously interfered with, all his heart and mind seem to have been possessed by the sole thought of his beloved daughter. She has, in fact, been his very soul, as the poet himself has said of her. All this is vividly and poignantly expressed in the great farewell scene. Indeed, the drama of love started between the hero and the heroine only in the absence of Kanva on his holy mission of pilgrimage undertaken with the special purpose of mitigating the impending misfortune of his dear daughter. The irony of the situation notwithstanding, Kanva's great concern for his foster-daughter is touching. Maybe, the great power of penance possessed by Kanva, to some extent, sustained Śākuntalā through all her travails and sufferings and lent an invisible edge to her fortitude. Kanva's great mourning for the impending separation with his darling daughter, very much like any ordinary father, and his great message to the king as well as his great counsel to his 'own' daughter preparing her for the impending tragedy are well known. Indeed, Kanva in his venerable, wise and kindly person seems to have personified the spirit of the poet himself, and as Shakespeare played the ghost in 'Hamlet', so Kālidāsa could, if he liked, play the role of his Kanva in the Śākuntala.
characters such as Vasumati, Gautami, Sârîgarava, Sâradâvata, Sûmumati, Mâtali, Mârita, etc. are no less interesting. They are all distinct individuals and true to life. In particular, the fisherman and the two police men and their chief have been portrayed down to life. The portrayal of common man by our poet with appropriate humour and insight into their lives is reminiscent of similar portrayals by Shakespeare himself. We are not, however, going into the details of these minor characters, as this is not essential for an understanding of the spirit of the drama, which is our chief aim.

Let us now take the ‘rasa’ element or the emotional effect or whatever else it is in the ‘Sâkuntala’. According to Sanskrit critical literature it is rather easy to find the ‘ahârî rasa’ or the principal aesthetic sentiment and the various ‘ahâga rasaas or the sub-ordinate aesthetic sentiments in it. Śôyâgra of the erotic sentiment is obviously the principal sentiment. This Śôyâgra, again, is somewhere ‘sâmbhoga’ or love in union and somewhere ‘Viprâ-laśmha’ or love in separation. The subordinate sentiments are somewhere ‘bhayânaka’ or terrible, somewhere ‘hâsya’ or comic, somewhere ‘karuṇa’ or pathos, somewhere ‘vîrâ’ or heroic, somewhere ‘adbhuta’ or wonderful, somewhere ‘sânta’ or quietistic, etc. All this is too obvious and has been made clear in the commentaries according to the principle of Sanskrit critical literature. There is no much point in further elaborating them. Rather, what we should consider is the suggestion of these various aesthetic
sentiments, principal or subordinate, to be critically viewed in the light of the modern principles of literary criticism. For example, in the beginning of the work there is an example of 'bhayānaka' or terrible in the description of the antelope fleeing for fear of life from the onslaught of the king. Is it really terrible? Or, if so, how far terrible? When we read those lines or see the particular action howsoever represented in the drama, does it not appear to be rather terribly beautiful than just terrible? Yes, according to the interpretation of 'rasa,' every particular 'rasa' is made beautiful and joyous whatever the original emotion of feeling might be. That is well understood. But there is a charge against our poet that his 'karuṇa' or 'bhayānaka' or 'vīra' is not 'karuṇa,' 'bhayānaka' or 'vīra' of other poets, say, of Bhavebhūti, in particular. In Kālidāsa, all 'rasaś' are soaked in extraordinary sweetness (mādhurya) and appear somewhat like 'śṛṅgāra' than anything else. They appear to be more beautiful and joyous than they properly ought to have been. This charge directly follows from the principal charge against our poet that he is a happy singer of 'śṛṅgāra' alone and not of other 'rasaś.' But if 'kāvyā' is 'navarasarucīra' (the word 'nava' being taken in both the senses), how then can Kālidāsa be recognised as the greatest poet in Sanskrit literature? So critics say Bhavebhūti not only excels (even relative to Kālidāsa) in 'karuṇa' but 'vīra' and 'ādbhuta' etc., and so when grandeur and sublimity are concerned, Bhavebhūti is a more successful delineator than our poet. If this point of
view is accepted, how then to justify the extraordinary appeal of Kalidāsa's poetry which abounds in 'śringāra'? We shall discuss this point in our concluding chapter. For the present we would only say that 'bhayānaka', 'vīra', 'karuṇa' or 'adhbhuta' have all been delineated by our poet in his characteristic way. This characteristic style of Kalidāsa has lent an extraordinary beauty and inexplicable charm to his poetry which has attained immortality brushing aside the limited success of Bhavabhūti and his kind. This may be seen in other examples of the subordinate 'rasā' in the 'Śākuntala'.

It may also be said that the 'hāsyā' or the comic element in the 'Śākuntala', whether it is in the jester or it is in the fisherman episode, is rather feeble and, in particular, the former does not carry much conviction or is more amusing than comic proper. But this criticism is born of a certain misconception that the comic element in Shakespeare is the only or ideal element and that whatever does not conform to it is not of great value and hence the jester in Sanskrit drama including Kālidāsa's is but a poor character and such comic effect is but a poor effect after all. In such connection, the basic difference between a Shakespearian comedy (including all its various manifestations) and Kālidāsa's dramas has to be understood. If drama is the representation of life Kālidāsa delineated the life that he saw and which is, therefore, true to life, so far as he is concerned. Besides, the type of drama that he wrote and
the total emotional effect which he intended to evoke have fully justified his comic effects or comic interludes in his dramas, in particular, in his 'Sākuntala'. In this respect, the range of Kālidāsa, relative to Shakespeare, may be limited, but within that range his comic effect is true-to-life and true to his principal sentiment or 'rasa'. So far as the fisherman episode is concerned, it is unquestionably a brilliant and revealing interlude which has provided us with a vivid and true-to-life portrayal of the common man of the time of our poet interspersed with appropriate slices of humour. In this connection, we may remind ourselves of another general change against Sanskrit literature not excluding Kālidāsa that it lacks humour. Here we are concerned with Kālidāsa and his 'Sākuntala', in particular, so we shall confine our observations to our particular object of study. Kālidāsa does not certainly lack humour or he would not be a great poet at all. The 'Sākuntala' is the best example of humour. Incidentally, humour as understood in the West or in Shakespeare is not exactly identical with the 'hāsya' of Sanskrit literature. Rather, it appears to be a specific and particular kind thereof. It is interesting to study Shakespeare's humour in its various ramifications as Dowden and others have done. Kālidāsa's humour is rather of a different kind, in so far as, the basic concept being one, within the comparatively limited range of his dramas Kālidāsa's humour could not find any great scope of development as Shakespeare's has done. Remembering the basic difference in the kinds of their dramas as well as the
difference in their range it is only too obvious. It is, therefore, useless to bemoan the lack of such character as Falstaff in Kālidāsa. We are content with the element of humour provided in the 'Sākuntala' in so far as it is quite commensurate with the overall purpose, tone and object of this particular drama. His 'hasya' in the 'Sākuntala' is quite appropriate to his 'aṅgī rasa' which is 'śṛṅgāra' and is its most beautiful and noblest kind.

But in the 'Sākuntala' it is the 'karuṇa' in the great 4th Act accompanied by its superb poetic beauty that has been upheld as the greatest achievement of the poet in his greatest masterpiece according to the Indian tradition as the oft-quoted verse 'Kālidāsasya sarvesvamabhijñāmaśākuntalam...' states. At the outset, it would appear rather surprising that the greatest poet of love (or 'śṛṅgāra') should excel in 'karuṇa', contrary to his essential nature, whereas Bhavabhūti has been praised for his unrivalled supremacy in 'karuṇa' in the 'Uttara Rāmacarita', as the saying 'Uttare rāmacarite bhavabhūtir viśiṣyate' would show. In fact, however, this high praise of Bhavabhūti appears to be an individual piece of appreciation of the masterpiece of Bhavabhūti — and this is so in a double sense. First, it should certainly refer to the works of Bhavabhūti alone without reference to Kālidāsa, for Kālidāsa, in truth, does not fall behind Bhavabhūti in the delineation of 'karuṇa' as the great 4th Act of the 'Sākuntala' clearly shows; but, we believe, we, by far, excels it. If it is said, this praise of Bhavabhūti apparently refers to 'karuṇa' between the heroine who are normally meant for
'srngāra' and not between father and daughter, even then it has no truth init, relative to Kālidāsa, for the great 14th canto of the 'Raghuvaṃśa' has not been surpassed in Sanskrit literature. If, again, it is said that this praise apparently refers to dramatic poetry or 'drṣya kāvya' and not epic or lyric poetry or 'ūravya kāvya', even then we shall point to the great 4th Act of Kālidāsa's 'Vikramorvaśīya' where the pathetically enchanting description of Purūravas searching for his celestial bride, Urvaśī, has no parallel in Sanskrit literature, either. Though the 4th Act of the 'Vikramorvaśīya' is not known, in Sanskrit critical literature, to delineate Karuṇa but Vipralambhasṛṅgāra, in particular, in its 'uṃmāda dáśa' or 'love in madness, it may be said to possess a pathetic effect almost equal to 'karuṇa'. However, the moot point in this regard to be remembered is that the essential difference between Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti lies in the well-known fact that while Bhavabhūti revels in 'vāsya cematkāra' or beauty of expression, Kālidāsa revels in 'vyangya cematkāra' or beauty of suggestion. The 'karuṇa' of Bhavabhūti like his 'śṛṅgāra', 'adbhuta', 'sānta', etc., in- deed, like his whole poetry, is rather too expressive and hence has a certain emotional and impassioned appeal to a certain class of readers who are easily moved by it. But those who have an eye for dignified beauty and noble magnificence in poetry are exceedingly charmed by Kālidāsa's delineation of 'karuṇa', 'adbhuta', 'sānta', etc. as of his too famous 'śṛṅgāra'. In such matters the dictum 'vinnarucirhi lokaḥ' i.e. people are of various tastes, is the truest guide. But if dignity, elegance,
nobility, are to be sought in preference to emotionalism or sentimentalism in poetry and if suggestion is the soul of poetry, if, at least, suggestion is infinitely superior to expression in poetry or art, then Kālidāsa is certainly superior to Bhavabhūti whether it is karuṇa or adbhuta or sānta or vīra, etc. as sṛṅgāra and the world has long accepted this simple and true proposition.

But what it is that has made the 4th Act of the 'Śākuntālā' famous and of enduring appeal to all alike including the Westerners who are, however, more fond of action than pure emotion and who, therefore, like the 5th Act more than the 4th Act? It has been already observed that the prevailing 'rasa' of the 4th Act is karuṇa or pathos and it is a magnificent delineation of pathos, no doubt. But if it were merely this, certainly it would not have its present appeal. As it is obvious to any reader or spectator, it is Kālidāsa's treatment of nature in this Act which holds him spell-bound and leaves on him a lasting impression of peace, harmony and universal fellow-feeling and, above all, a complete and perfect union of man and nature that have been laid in the background of the holy penance-grove charged with the stirring sentiment of pathos. As we have observed earlier that, as in a sense, every poet is a poet of nature, a poet may be known by his characteristic way of treatment of nature. Speaking generally, there is a gulf of difference in this respect among the poets of the East and the West following from their general outlook on life and nature and
their philosophy of poetry, if it may be so called. The same thing may be said to be more or less true among the poets of the East or of the West themselves. From this follows the difference in the treatment of nature in the poetry of, say, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, etc., who are all great poets of nature. The same principle operates in the case of Kālidāsa and Shakespeare resulting in the difference in their respective treatment of nature. But what is the characteristic way of treatment of nature in Sanskrit poetry generally and in the poetry of Kālidāsa in particular? Being influenced by the basic philosophy of the 'Upaniṣad' the Sanskrit poets, indeed, the Indian mind generally, have looked upon Nature as a companion -- rather as a mother companion -- quite instinct with life, and quite capable of having communion with man and looking after him. Kālidāsa, of all, has perfected this spiritual vision of the distinct personality and individuality of Nature having power to communicate with man and possessing the beneficent ardour to do good to him. This vision does not flow from any morality as in Wordsworth or an abstract idealism as in Shelley or a sensuous feeling as in Keats. If it is also a sensuous feeling, it may be said it is spiritually sensuous thus combining, to a certain extent, the visions of both Wordsworth and Keats accompanied by the image-forming power of Shelley. But it is much more. Nay, it is a vision altogether of a different kind. To Kālidāsa, in particular, in the 4th Act of the 'Śākuntala', Nature is a living and loving entity, a personality and an individual
by her own right like any other, holding secret and overt commu-
nication with man and his soul, soothing him, enlivening him,
ennobling him, loving him and wishing and doing him good. The
imagery of the presiding deity of the penance-grove 'vanadevata'
is no ordinary or convenient imagery meant for a rhetorical
figure. It is a total conception, an unique vision made magni-
ficent by superb poetry in the 'Śākuntala'. In fact, here the
penance-grove ('tapovanam) is not a mere 'uddāpana vibhāva'of the
Sanskrit critical literature, it has risen to the dignity and
majesty of an 'ālambana vibhāva', so to say, and has become a drama-
tic character. Kālidāsa's vision of Nature and her consequent
treatment in his poetry, possessing the same general charac-
teristics in all his works, have thus attained their mutual con-
summation and perfection in this great 4th Act of the 'Śākuntala'
which is, therefore, dear to the hearts of his countrymen, in
particular, and to all men anywhere in general.

Inspite of such superb poetical and lyrical beauty in
the context of both man and nature held closely together by the
secret bond of love charged with the sentiment of profound pathos,
the 4th Act of the 'Śākuntala' is not the most favourite act of
the Westerners. They obviously prefer the 5th Act to the 4th
for the splendid action in the former. As discussed earlier in
the 2nd chapter, while the Sanskrit critics hold 'rasa' or senti-
ment as the soul of poetry including dramatic poetry, Western
critics, in general, consider plot resolved into action and
conflict as the soul of drama, though Shakespearian critics emphasise characterization as the chief characteristic of his dramas. Thus the 5th Act of the 'Śākuntala' — which possesses all these elements in abundance,— action and conflict, and in course of action and conflict, characterization, in so far as the characters are involved including the principal ones are revealed with striking vividness—is most favoured by the Western critics. Indeed, the significant curse of the sage Durvāsas has now become effective and the crisis has at last been reached which has attained its climax toward the end of the Act. Precisely for this dramatic effect, issuing in action and conflict accompanied by characterization, the curse has been essential.

The calm pathos and tender poetry of the 4th Act have suddenly given rise to the unexpectedly sudden movement and strong conflict and all this directly flows from the curse. If the original sin of the king and his consort i.e. their 'svādhikāra-pramāda' or simply 'pramāda' or the initial flaw in their love, rather, the flaw together with that love, has been the seed and if the curse has been the heavenly blast, then the events of the 5th Act characterize the gathering storm which has held them in its grip and has swept them away. The coarseness, so to say, in their love, the curse and the conflict leading to the cruel tragedy of the 5th Act have been set in a casual chain. Only the essentially noble ardor of their love which is laid too deep even for the blast of the sage's curse will ultimately prevail through all travels and sufferings, grave with anguish.
and remorse, and will re-unite the two souls made purified by such penance. The 4th and the 5th Acts are thus a fruitful study in striking contrast proving, once and for all, the equally great poetical as well as dramatic power of the poet. If the 4th Act is poetically great, the 5th is dramatically splendid and the transition from the one to the other is no less interesting. It may be noticed the superb poetry of the 4th Act holds an underlying irony in it as the tender dreams of Sakuntalā blessed by all would so soon prove to be a mirage in the wilderness. These two acts show our poet at his contrasted best, easily rank with Shakespeare's best anywhere in his numerous dramas and are two examples of the finest dramatic poetry of the world. Besides, the 4th Act is not merely poetical it is also 'dramatic', its deep action residing in the hearts or souls of man as well as of Nature, while the emotions are also highly charged in the 'dramatic' 5th Act. It should be remembered that the prevailing 'rasa' in the 5th Act is also 'karuṇā', as in the 4th. Thus a preference for the one or the other seems to be rather a prejudice than proper judgement, both having an equal prominence in the whole scheme of the dramatic poet. In both, the poet and the dramatist are perfectly at one and they both form veritable masterpieces within the masterpiece which the drama is.

The 7th Act delineates mainly 'vīra', 'sānta', 'adbhuta', etc. While the 'vīra' has been kept in the background, the reference to
the king's destroying the host of demons in the speech of Mātali pointedly describes, in a flashback, his heroic exploits in heaven. The 'adbhuta' is an essential element in the closing stages of a drama according to the Sanskrit critics who say, 'kāryam nirvahane'adbhutam'. The significance of this principle and is easily understandable. If 'rase sāraścamatāraḥ' is a fact and if the total effect or the 'anigī rasa' is to take its final consummation in the closing stages of a drama, then it is perhaps natural that this overall 'camatkāra' or wonder should be further enhanced by this particular sentiment of wonder or 'adbhuta'. The description of the holy hermitage of Mārīca and its inhabitants vividly evokes the sentiment of 'sānta'. This 'sānta' is not isolated from its context and main theme but is very much a part of the final ennobled love or 'sāntaprāya śṛṅgāra' and therein lies its sublime, serene beauty and profound spiritual significance. The question may naturally arise why the re-union of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā has been shown in the hermitage of Mārīca situated neither on earth nor in heaven but in a place between earth and heaven ('antarīkṣa) and not elsewhere. It might be imagined that their re-union could as well be shown in the hermitage of Kaṇva or in the court of Hastināpura or perhaps still better, in heaven itself. The Tagore has touched upon this essential point and has given us his unerring judgement in the matter as in almost all other essential matters regarding the great 'Śakuntala'. As he has explained, Śakuntalā after her tragic repudiation by her
husband is no longer the Sakuntalā we have known in the hermitage of Kapva. A great change has now come over her. The loving, tender hermit girl is now transformed through shock, suffering and the rigours of penance into a hermit woman who still cherishes her love in her heart made pure by such experience. So, it is unthinkable that she should now be re-united with her husband in the same hermitage where they have made their first green love. Similarly, it is not proper to think that they should be re-united in Hastināpura where the tragic repudiation has come, so far as she is concerned, like a bolt from the blue. All this follows from the simple principle that the surrounding and setting should be appropriate to the event or incident and more to the feelings and mood of the persons concerned. In the words of Sanskrit critics, the 'uddāpana vibhāba' should be appropriate or 'anuguna' to the sentiment. But why not in heaven? Heaven would be a very elevated place where gods are masters of all kinds of pleasures and apparently masters of their own destiny. The answer has been given by the poet himself. The hermitage of sage Marīca is a far, far better place where all the pleasures of heaven abound but nobody cares for them, where the hermits are immersed in the meditation of the Absolute and where absolute peace and tranquility and contentment reign. The gods are greedy and jealous and have no peace of mind. It is not an Antony's new heaven, new earth, but a new haven between earth and heaven. It is here alone where the ennobled lovers could finally unite and be blessed for ever.
So far we have discussed, in brief, the significance of Goethe's high eulogy and some essential matters relating to the theme (vastu), characterization (netā) and emotional effect (rasa) of the 'Śākuntala'. But something yet remains to be said. The well-known verse 'Upamā Kālidāsāsya...' mentions 'upemā' or simile as the forte of Kālidāsa, 'artha-gaurava' or which may be rendered as profundity of meaning as the forte of Bhāravi, etc. Apparently, this is not a correct judgement or proper assessment of the value of poetry of Kālidāsa, if not of others as well. Artha-gaurava is no less an essential quality of Kālidāsa's poetry than 'upamā' and, what is no less important, Kālidāsa's 'artha­gaurava' is not less excellent than that of Bhāravi whose poetry has undoubtedly the characteristic excellence of that particular quality than any other. It may, however, be questioned here what is exactly meant by 'artha-gaurava'. If it were identical with 'dhvani' (or suggestion) then the profundity of meaning which is expressed (vāsyā) or indicated (lakṣyā) would be excluded. Besides, mere suggestion may not always be regarded as profound. It appears 'artha-vāsyā' should mean a particular quality of meaning whether expressed, indicated or suggested, which points to some universal or fundamental and, therefore, profound truth. We have touched upon this matter here because the question of the four memorable or great verses of the 'Śākuntala' is linked with it, the verses being judged certainly from the view point of 'artha-gaurava' or profundity of meaning. But the four great verses in the 4th Act (usually six verses are cited of which some
select these four and some the other four, two being common to them) are not considered by us to be the best in the whole drama. Without citing the whole verses, which are too well-known, we submit that there are other two verses, one in the 5th and the other in the 6th Act, which we consider to possess a far greater significance, beauty and profundity than probably any other verse in the whole drama and in the whole works of Kālidāsa. We refer to 'Rāmyāṇi vīkṣya madhurāsmōca niśāmya sābādān...' and 'svapno nu māyā nu matibhramāpūnu...'. Of these two verses again, the first appears to be still profounder than the second. Mahāmohopādhyāya Gopināth Kavirāja, in his 'Sāhajāvatāvrtti', has interpreted the first of these wonderful verses in his inimitable way. He has found out its spiritual context where the particular context has been completely universalised and where Dūṣyanta has become a symbol of any man, Sakuntalā the symbol of the divine being, and man's oblivion of his divine self and yet his passionate yearnings for it are all well symbolised. Surely, there cannot be a higher content or meaning in any poetry made by man. This is the highest theme of man's life and his poetry or art and this is his highest achievement and destiny. Tagore has a similar interpretation of the 'Meghadūta'. This reminds us of Wordsworth's famous 'Intimation of Immortality'. But Kālidāsa's achievement seems to be more consummate, mellow and pregnant. The second verse elaborates the concept of oblivion indicated in the first verse with a magnificent imagery and thus stands by itself. These two appear to be
the two greatest verses ever written by our poet and they have clearly the sublimity and grandeur of an 'aupaniṣadic' vision of man and his destiny. At last the poet has transcended the limits of his 'śṛṅgāra' and has arrived at 'śānta' where his love has become noble and his poetry one with nature and one with the infinite.

There are also two similar passages in prose in the 'Śākuntalam' which must be considered as having a profound significance, and value not only for the particular dramatic context but for the whole life of man. The first of these two is from the great 4th Act and runs as follows - 'Dukkaraṁ ahaṁ karomi' (Duṣkaram-ahām karomi) - being the utterance of Śākuntalā to her companion at the juncture of her departure for her husband's abode while Kanva meditates on the message to be delivered to the king. This utterance is not only a cry of Śākuntalā's soul regarding what she has done and what is to befall her when her destiny is so uncertain and yet she has to pursue it as best as she possibly can, but it is also an outcry of the human soul in general which, therefore, has an everlasting appeal for all mankind. The irony of the situation and the cruel predicament have been beautifully suggested by the natural scene itself which has provoked this cry of lament from Śākuntalā's soul that has been heavy with the consciousness of guilt and apprehension as to the future. The other such utterance belonging to Śākuntalā again, occurs in the great 5th Act and runs as follows - 'Āttā dānīṁ me sohanī-yotti vyavasidam edam' (Ātmedānīṁ me ādhanīya iti vyavasitam etat) - we ignore the reading 'śočanīyaḥ'; which is less apt and
less significant. It means, in the particular context, that
+Sakuntalā has now to clear her soul (of the blame of guilt),
that is, she has now to rectify or redeem herself. While Cordelia
had to redeem her poor father, and indeed all mankind, by the
power of her love, Sakuntalā has to redeem her love by the power
of her penance. Obviously, this is, again, a profound utterance
from the depth of her agonised soul, which is the inevitable
cry of any man almost anywhere in his life. These two great
utterances of Sakuntalā in prose and the other two great utter-
ances of Duṣyanta in verse taken together constitute what may be
called the four ‘mahāvākyas’ of Kālidāsa, the seer poet, as we
have the famous four ‘mahāvākyas’ of the ‘Upaniṣadas’. Socrates,
Shakespeare, etc. are also famous for their great utterances.
There are some other great utterances in our poet – we do not
mean here ‘subhāśītas’ or mere good sayings which are too many;
but we think the four mentioned above are most probably his
greatest. Incidentally, those who seek ‘arthagaurava’ in Śāreva
but do not find it in Kālidāsa must be blind or simply too carried
away by the extraordinary music of his poetry to find anything
else in it. These four great utterances may be summarised, in
modern terms, again, as follows: – While Duṣyanta says (1) As I
experience the beauties of the world, my soul throbs and cries
for love unknown and yet which resides therein and (2) my love
has passed as in a dream, illusion or reverie; my soul is lost
never to come again; and Sakuntalā says (3) I am stuck and know
not what I am doing (cf. Chaplin’s great film ‘Limelight’ – 'I
Now, we turn to another important question regarding the 'Sākuntala' or, for that matter, regarding the dramas of Kālidāsa or Sanskrit dramas in general. There is a grave charge against Sanskrit dramas or even the dramas of Kālidāsa that there is not a single specimen of tragedy, which has been regarded as the highest form of drama by the West as enunciated by Aristotle and as exemplified by Greek and, in particular, Shakespearian dramas. What we have got in Sanskrit dramas are mere comedies and then even mainly comedies of a lighter kind, in particular, of court-poetry of love-intrigue. Even Kālidāsa is no exception to this general rule. For this the Westerners have held responsible the peculiarity of the Indian mind and the influence of its spiritual philosophy together with the peculiar circumstances of the Indian courts. All this is well known, and even many Indian scholars and critics have seriously held this view and consequently have lamented this lack of tragedy in Sanskrit literature. We have already touched upon this point in our earlier chapter. Both the Western as well as some Indian scholars, have hinted that the 'Sākuntala' could be a tragedy if it were to end with the 5th Act, as referred to by Tagore in his essay on the 'Sākuntala'. A similar argument has been more pronounced in the case of the
'Vikramorvâsîya' which they think, could very well end with the 4th Act with some alteration so as to convert it into a veritable tragedy. They are, however, consistent with their original proposition that tragedy is the highest form of drama, and that every dramatic endeavour should invariably conform to that model. But does not the proposition itself sound incongruous? The proposition has two parts and so far as the first part is concerned, many, even almost all, may be found to agree with the veracity of the statement. We may, however, submit that the statement may not be absolute. But what about the second part? Is it not apparently absurd to suggest that there should not be manifold varieties of literary composition but that every piece of literary composition should be a drama and a tragedy of that kind because tragedy happens to be the highest kind thereof. If it were so, then even Shakespeare's great comedies would have to be converted into tragedies. This is a kind of argument - though in the opposite direction - which once really converted 'King Lear' into a comedy and represented it on the stage on the plea that 'King Lear' as a tragedy is too unbearable and unplayable on the stage. But history has proved otherwise. If 'King Lear' is too unbearable and unplayable, it only shows that it transcends the limits of drama and has become a dramatic epic of an unique kind. However, for our present purpose, we submit that such logic is too peurile and such criticism is but fanaticism. Once more Tagore has unerringly indicated that such poor imaginings have no real understanding. In fact, he has expressly mentioned that if the drama
were to end with the 5th Act then it would become a tragedy of
the Western kind and not the drama that Kālidāsa had in mind.

Tagore has amply shown and we have also referred to it and touched
upon it before and as Goethe has beautifully suggested in his great couplet, the noble love that Kālidāsa has proposed to depict in the
'Sākuntala' from its first inception together with the tragic flaw,
its natural development into a tragedy in the middle and then its
final consummation in transcending that tragedy into a bliss of
heaven through severe penance and through the soulful ardour of
that noble love has naturally taken its inevitable shape into the
present drama and no other. It is, therefore, more a tragi-comedy
than a comedy, loosely so-called, as it includes both tragedy and
comedy in one. As Tagore has aptly said, the 'Śākuntala' may be
called a kind of 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' in one.
It is not merely the one half or the other. It is a total unity
which comprises both. Therein lies its uniqueness and ever-
lasting appeal and therein precisely lies the significance of
Goethe's great criticism — it is the bud and the fruit in one,
it is earth and heaven in one, It is both and all in one.