ABSTRACT OF A PAPER ON KALIDASA

BHAU DAJI.

1860.

ABSTRACT OF A PAPER ON KALIDASA

BHAU DAJI.

1860.

Abstract of a paper on Kálidása read before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on the 11th October 1860, by Bháu Dáji Esquire.

Kálidása is justly regarded as the greatest of Hindu Poets and Dramatists; and the title of Indian Shakspeare has been assigned to him, on the authority of that Prince of Critics, Sir William Jones. In the case of both Kálidása and Shakspeare, it may justly be observed, that "their lives remain almost a blank and their very name a subject of contention."—

The object of the essay is, to prove that the author of the S'akuntalá and Raghu Vans'a, flourished in the 6th Century of the Christian era, and was patronized by Harsha Vicramáditya, King of Ujjayini (Oujein in Malwa) and Pravarasena, King of Kashmere; that he is the same as the Poet Mátrigupta noticed in terms of commendation in the third book of the Rája Tarangini or History of Kashmere, in the Sanskrit language; and that he was appointed by Hársha Vicramáditya, Governor of Kashmere over which the Poet ruled for four years, nine months and one day.

All that is generally known of Kálidása may be stated in a few words. He lived in Ujjayini or Oujein and was the noblest of the nine men of Genius who graced the Court of Vicramáditya.— A memorial verse gives the names of the nine Gems as follows:—

"Dhanwantari, Ks'apanaka, Amara singha, S'anku, Vetalabhatta Ghatakhurpara, Kálidása, the renowned Varáha Mihira and Vararuchi, are the nine gems of Vicrama."

Of these the most celebrated were the physician Dhanwantari; Amara Singha, the lexicographer; Vararuchi, the poet and linguist: and Kálidása, the poet and dramatist, the brightest gem of all.

Vicramáditya, the patron of these learned men, is generally believed to be the King, who after defeating the S'akas or Scythians established the Samvat era, which commences 57 years before Christ.—Accordingly, Sir William Jones placed Kálidása in the 1st century before Christ, and in this he has been followed by almost all Orientalists.—Mr. Bentley placed Vicrama in the 11th century of the Christian era. Mr. Colebrooke is inclined to consider that Amara Singha flourished at least 900 years ago. Col. Wilford and Mr. James Prinsep place Kálidása in the 5th century, and Mountstuart Elphinstone adopts this date in his admirable History of India. In Gujarat, Malwa, and the Dekhan, Kálidása is believed, chiefly on the authority of the Bhoja-prabandha, to have flourished at the Court of Bhoja, the nephew of Munja, at Ujjayini, in the 11th century of the Christian era.—There have been several Bhojas as well as Vicramas at Ujjaini, the last Bhoja having flourished in the 11th century of the Christian era, and to reconcile the two suppositions it is necessary to suppose that the Vicrama at whose Court, the learned men flourished was also styled Bhoja.

Colonel Tod in the annals of Rájasthan vol. 1. p. 92, observes, "while Hindoo literature survives, the name of Bhoja Pramára and the "nine gems" of his Court, cannot perish; though it is difficult to say which of the three princes of his name is particularly alluded to, as they all appear to have been patrons of Science." In a note, the learned Colonel gives Samvat 631 (A. D. 575), Samvat 721 (A. D. 665), and Samvat 1100 (A. D. 1044) for the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Bhojas respectively.

There are good reasons for accepting the above dates as correct. A Vriddha or old Bhoja is described in several Jain works as having had for his spiritual adviser, Mánatunga Súri about the 2nd or 3rd century of the Christian era, calculating from the lists of Jain hierarchs; but there is evidently some mistake here. Mánatunga was, according to some Jain authorities, a contemporary of the poets Bána and Mayúra, but these two last undoubtedly lived at the beginning of the 7th century, as Bána, in one of his rare productions in Sánskrit, called the Harsha Charitra, describes his visit to Siláditya, king of Kanoge. There is abundant evidence to prove that this Siláditya is identical with the one, who honored the celebrated Chinese Buddhist traveller, Hiouen-Thsang. Indeed, the Indian Poet and the Chinese

traveller relate the history of the king with so much similarity, that one would be disposed to believe that Báńa wrote the Harsha Charitra after reading the historical notes of the Chinese traveller; and there is a singular passage in the work which would give a coloring to this supposition, in which Báńa speaks of the yavana-prayukta puráńa.

Professor Lassen assumes Kálidása to have flourished in the second half of the 2nd Century after Christ, at the Court of Samudragupta, chiefly on account of the designation "friend of Poets" applied to that king in inscriptions.

Monsr. Hippolyte Fauche who, it appears from the Saturday Review of January 1860, has published a French translation of the complete works of Kálidása, supposes the Poet to have lived at the time of the posthumous child, who is said at the end of the last canto of the Raghu Vans'a, to have succeeded to the throne.

This would place Kálidása at the latest in the Eighth Century before Christ. Monsr. Fauche thinks there is nothing so perfect in the elegiac literature of Europe as the Megha Duta of Kálidása.

In looking carefully over the various legends regarding Vicrama, as given in the Vikrama Charitra,–in the Sinhásana dwátrins'ati,–the Vetála panchavins'ati,–an essay on Vicrama and Kálidása by Merutunga, in the Prabandha Chintámani, as well as another called Chaturvins'ati Prabandha by Rájasekhara,–it appears tolerably clear that the Vikramáditya, who founded the Samvat Era, or from whom it has its origin, was a just, brave, liberal and ambitious prince; but that he was the patron of arts and sciences is no where clearly stated or implied. Jain records mention Sidhasena Súri, a learned Jain priest, as the spiritual adviser of this Vikramáditya. The only work which pretends to notice the contemporaneous existence of the nine gems, at the court of Vikrama, in the 1st Century before Christ, is the Jyotirvidábharańa, a Sanskrit work on astrology ascribed to Kálidása, but, from a careful examintion of its style and from other internal evidence, it does not appear to be the production of the Great Kálidása. In furnishing a rule for finding out Ayanáns'a (the arc between the vernal Equinoctial point and the beginning of the fixed Zodiac or first point of Aries) we are told in the work that from the number of Years after Saka (i.e. the era of S'ali-

váhana, 78 A. D.) 445 Years should be subtracted and the remainder divided by 60. This alone proves that the treatise was written at least six Centuries after the Vicrama Samvat and there is abundant evidence to prove that the real author was a Jain. And the inference is further cönfirmed by a notice of Brahmagupta who wrote the Brahmagupta Siddhánta in Saka 550 or A. D. 628. And as Jishnu the father of Brahmagupta is stated to have graced the Court of Vicramáditya in adition to the nine gems, it is clear that the author of the Jyotirvidábharana is sufficiently modern to have confounded, Harsha Vicramáditya with the founder of the Samvat era. Another astrologer assuming the name of Kálidása and author of S'atruparábhava grantha, tells us that he was the son of Bhánubhatta, of the Kásyapa gotra, on the banks of the Jumna. He invokes Vishnu.—The Kálidása of the last Bhoja was in all likelihood a poet of the name of Dhanapála, best known to the Jainas. The author of the Nalodaya is not the great Kálidása but a comparatively modern poet at the Court of Ráma Rájá.

Colonel Wilford's speculations on Vicramáditya and S'áliváhana were examined, and his ciations from the Sâtrunjaya Mahâtmya were shown to refer to the Founder of the Samvat era and not to a Vicrama of the 5th Century, as asserted by the learned Colonel. They were shewn to have been incorrectly translated.—Still Colonel Wilford is the writer that makes the nearest guess regarding the real time of that Vicramáditya, who was the patron of the great Kálidása and other learned men. As before stated, the Rája Tarangini describes a Vicramáditya of Ujjayani, whose proper name was Harsha, who "brought the empire of India under one umbrella" and at whose Court a great Poet named Mátrigupta flourished. In verse 129 of the 3rd book, it is said, "The Poet Mátrigupta went to see the Lord of the world (Harsha Vicramáditya,) whose fame had extended over distant countries, and who was accessible to talented men, who formed a large assembly around him." There is no known Sanskrit work which has a Mátrigupta for its author; and it is not likely that the Poet who has elicited the praises, of the learned author of the Rája Tarangini, has left no traces of his works. The Raja Tarangini does not omit to notice the great Sanskrit poets in their respective historical periods. But there is no notice of Kálidása,—an omission,

which can only be explained by his identity with Mátrigupta, to whom the Historian of Kashmere awards the *highest* meed of praise.

The Rája Tarangini proceeds to describe Harsha Vicramáditya in terms which would become the hero of "the wonderful throne," and the learning, the talents, the grave and exemplary conduct of Mátrigupta, and the style of the verses attributed to him, are such as would be worthy of the author of S'akuntalá. This cannot be said of the verses and character attributed to a Kálidása, in the Bhoja prabandha. The word Mátrigupta has the same import as Kálidása. The Rája Tarangiini also notices the contemporaneous existence of the Poets Bhartribhatta and Vetálabhatta; and these, it is well known, are commonly referred to the age of Kálidása. They are also styled Bhartrimentha and Vetála Mentha and Mátrigupta also was, in all likelihood, called Mátrigupta mentha. In some Jain works, *mentha* is written *mendhra* which in Sanskrit, according to the Visva Kos'a, means *great*. The word *mendhra* is, however, so like the prákrit *mendhá*, (sheep) that to this similarity is, no doubt, to be attributed the childish yet popular tale of Kálidása having been born a shepherd till blessed with poetical genius by Káli, whom he propitiated by penance according to some and by accident according to other versions of the story.

The Goddess Káli or Durgá plays even a more important part in the legendary history of Kashmere than in that of Ujjayini and some of the stories now current regarding Kálidása, in connection with the Goddess Káli, had, in all likelihood, their origin in the former region, justly styled the region of fiction.

Bhartribhatta is related, in the Rája Taringini, to have caused his dramatic production, called Hayagríva-vadha Nátaka, to be represented before Mátrigupta in Kashmere. The discovery of this Drama, which is believed to be extant though very rare, would throw considerable light on the subject. The 181st verse in the 3rd book of the Rája Tarangiini which is said to have been recited by Mátrigupta in communicating his sufferings to Vicrama, is put into the mouth of "a learned poet" at the Court of a Bhoja, in the Prabandha Chintámani of Merutungáchárya, a Jain writer of the 15th Century, who relates the story only a shade differently.

The 255th Verse of the 3rd book of the Rája Tarangiini, (Calcutta Edn.) Verse (252. Troyer's Edn.) there attributed to Mátrigupta,

contains exactly the same ideas and is repeated nearly in the same words, as the 113th verse of the Megha Duta of Kálidása (ed. Wilson).

There is a tradition that Vicramáditya was so pleased with Kálidása that he bestowed on the poet half of his territories. In keeping with this tradition, the Rája Tarangini tells us, that Mátrigupta was appointed, by Harsha Vikramaditya, Governor of Kashmere during an interregnum, and that he ruled there for four years, nine months and one day. Vikramáditya died shortly afterwards, and the rightful heir Pravarasena, who was away from Kashmere, having appeared in the field, Mátrigupta wisely resigned his post and secured a generous friend in Pravarasena. The Rája Tarangiñi informs us that the poet became a yati, retired to Benares and died ten years afterwards. In Verse 323, Book 3rd of the Rája Tarangiñi, it is said "The History of the three kings (Vicramáditya, Mátrigupta and Pravarasena who resembling each other in their dispositions for virtue, honored each other, resembles the water of Ganga, which flows in three Channels."

There are traditions of Kálidása having lived amongst the learned pundits of Benares.

Mátrigupta whilst ruler of Kashmere is stated, in the Rája Tarangiñi, to have erected a temple to Vishnu or Madhumathana, also called Mátrigupta Swámi.

A poem in the Mágadhi language called the Setu Kávya and attributed by the commentator to Kálidása, commences with an invocation to Madhu-sùdana. The Commentator more-over states, and there is abundance of evidence in the first portion of the poem which the writer possesses, to shew, that the Setu Kávya was written at the request of Pravarasena, king of Kashmere, after the construction of a bridge accross the Vetasta. The Rája Tarangiñi also relates the construction of the bridge by Pravarasena. Pravarasena is stated to have reigned for 60 Years, and there is reason to believe that, he was the king of Kashmere, when Hiouen-thsang visited the province. It is pleasing to find the Historian of Kashmere and Hiouen-thsang confirming one another. From the French history of the life of Hiouen-Thsang, by the eminent Chinese Scholar, Stanislas Julien, we learn (p. 92) that the Chinese traveller, whilst at Kashmere, put up in a building called the Jayendra vehára, which was constructed by the father-in-law

of the king. The Rája Taraṅgiṇi states also, that the Buddhist edifice, known by the name of Vehára of Srijayendra, was built by the maternal uncle of Pravarasena. Now a maternal uncle, according to Hindu customs, is generally the father-in-law also.

The Poet Báṇa, a contemporary of Harshavardhana or Siláditya of Kanoge, and therefore of Hiouen-Thsang, in the Harsha Charitra, (which the writer of the essay possesses, and an abstract of which is published by Professor E. Hall in his learned preface to the Vásavadattá in the Bibliotheca Indica,) praises the beautiful diction of Kálidása and the glory of Pravarasena, diffused by the Setu-Kávya. It is clear, therefore, that Kálidása preceded Bána and Hiouen-thsang by a period of only 60 or 70 years. Hiouen thsang thus speaks of Malwa,—(p. 204.)

"The Inhabitants (of Malwa) are of a meek and polished character; they love and esteem the culture of literature. In the five parts of India, Malapo (Malwa) to the South west and Mokeeto, (Magadha) to the Northwest, are the only two kingdoms in which the inhabitants distinguish themselves by their love for study, their esteem for virtue, by the facility of their pronunciation and by the harmony of language. * * * * *

"According to tradition, the throne was occupied sixty years ago by a king of the name of Kiajee (Siladitya) (Vicramaditya?) He was endowod with great talents and possessed of great knowledge. He was full of respect for the *three precious ones*. From his accession to the throne till the moment of his death, not a single unbecoming word escaped from his mouth and anger never reddened his face.

During the fifty years reign he never interrupted his meritorious works for a single moment. The whole nation conceived, on account of this, a lively affection for him, which is not yet extinguished."

This account evidently refers to the age of Kálidása and Vicrama; and Siláditya of Malwa, who must not be confounded with his namesake of Kanoge 60 years later, is either Harsha-Vicramáditya himself or his son, who according to the Rája Taraṅgiṇi was styled Siláditya or Pratápasíla. Vicrámaditya is more likely indicated, because the last authority tells us, Pratápasíla was restored by Pravarasena to the empire of his father from which he had been

driven by his enemies, and from whom Pratápsíla brought back "The marvellous throne," belonging to his family.—Neither in Kálidása nor Hiouen Thsang's time, does paper appear to have been used for writing in India. It was no doubt introduced by the mahomedans. Brahmins and Budhists wrote on the rind of the Birch and on Palm leaves. There is a singular passage in Hiouen Thsang's memoirs p. 260 that Siladitya wrote letters on pieces of white cotton cloth.

Mallináth, in commenting on the 14th verse of the Megha Duta, incidentally notices that Dingnágáchárya and Nichula were contemporaries of Kálidása, the former his adversary and the latter a fellow student and bosom friend.—As Dingnágáchárya's Gotama-sútra vritti is extant, Professor E. Hall, who alludes to the work in his learned notes to the Vásavadattá, may be able to throw some light on the subject.

Kálidása is usually believed to have been a Sárasvata Bráhmana. These to the present day use animal food. Kálidása is an admirer of field sports and describes their beneficial effects on the human constitution with the accuracy of a careful observer—His Máthavya, the Bráhmana buffoon has no objection to roasted meat. He was a devoted worshipper of S'iva and Párvati, the latter appearing frequently under the form of Káli, Durgá, Umá and Bhávání. As ruler of Kashmere, however, he appears from the Rája Tarangini to have conciliated the Buddhists and Jains by prohibiting the destruction of living beings. He also pleased the Vaishnavas by constructing a temple to Vishnu.—The deities invoked in the Setu Kávya are first Vishnu and then Síva.

Kálidása, although a resident of Ujjayini, which he notices in his works with evident predilection, was in all likelihood a Native of Kashmere or of a conterminous province.

His illustrations are derived chiefly from the Naturál History and physical geography of Northern India. The "towery summits" of the Himálaya decked with "diadems of snow;" the peak of Kailás "reflected in the waters of the dark Yamuna;" the "rippling Ganga laving the mountain pine" "the musky breezes throwing their balmy odours o'er eternal snow;" the "wilds where eager hunters roam, tracking the lion to his dreary home;" the "peaks, where "sunshine ever reigns," where "birch trees wave," the "bleeding pines their odorous

gums distil;" and the Musk Deer spring frequent from their caves;" "the magic herbs that pour their streamy light from mossy Caverns, through the darksome night;" the wild kine" with "her bushy streaming hair;" the fierce elephant; the startled deer; the lotuses that "lave their beauties in the heavenly Ganga's wave;" the mountain lake; "the clefts from which dark bitumen flowed;" the melting snow; the cool gale; the "rude mantles of the birchtrees rind;"these and other allusions indicate extensive observation, familiarity with the gorgeous scenery of the Himálaya mountains, and an ardent love of nature. Kálidása is the only great poet who, so far as the writer is aware, describes a living saffron flower. The plant, we know, grows in Cashmere and the regions west of it. He never compares any thing to the pomegranate or to the rose, which are frequent subjects of allusion and comparison in almost all modern oriental poetry. The lips of Kálidása's young maidens are of coral hue, red as the petals of the Nelumbeum or as the ripe Bimba, (momordica Dioica), or as the pátala flower (Bignonia Suaveolens)—or as the budding leaves. Their teeth are "white as pearls" or as the kunda (Jasmine). "Their eyes are "bright like wine" "and beautiful as the lotus,—they write their love letters on the rind of the birch with mineral dyes or on leaves with their nails. He speaks of "the sentimental compositions of former poets." His language is simple and his similitudes are copious and unrivalled for their elegance. The Vocabulary of Amara Singha is sufficient for explaining almost all the words in Kalidása's works—whilst to understand the poems of Mágha, a contemporary of the Bhoja of the 11th century, the assistance of a number of Vocabularies is required. The metres are more varied and the grammatical constructions long and difficult. Kálidása's metres and grammatical constructions are plain and generally known. Yet the effect is great. He is justly praised for his happy choice of subjects, his complete attainment of his poetical intentions, for the beauty of his representations, the tenderness of his feeling, and the richness of his imagination. He shews an acquaintance with Chinese pottery and silks,—with the magnet,–in one instance the true cause of eclipses, the influence of the moon on the tides and with ships. His kings are attended by Yavana women (Greek or Bactrian) with bows in their hand. He has minute acquaintance with Court life. The various beasts birds, trees, flowers fishes, and insects alluded to by Kálidása, are

common to nearly the whole of India, and, therefore do not assist in discovering the poet's birth-place, or his favourite places of residence. He had undoubtedly travelled a great deal.

Like many congenial spirits, he had no doubt suffered from the pangs of poverty and neglect. He devoutly prays that "for the common welfare of the good, the mutual rivals Fortune and Eloquence may at last be wedded in that union which now seems so hard to be attained"

What is the argument of the Megha Duta but a faithful picture of his feelings caused by separation from his dear wife and home! —a fact related also of Mátrigupta in the Rája Taraṅgiṇi. Kálidása, under the disguise of a Yaksha or Demigod, seated on the mountain Rámagiri in Central India, addresses one of the heavy clouds gathering in the South, and proceeding in a northerly course towards the Himálaya mountains, and "the fictitious position of the residence of the Yakshas." He desires the cloud "to waft his sorrows to a beloved and regretted wife" The places are correctly conceived. A straight line from Oujein to the north, the course assigned to the cloud messenger, passes through the valley of Kashmere.

In Kashmere or its neighbourhood, as the writer believes, the birth-place of Kálidása ultimately will be found. The name of his wife was in all likelihood Kamalá. The stories of the Bhoja Prabandha are rejected, as relating to some modern rhymester and libertine of Dhárá,–a name never noticed in any of the great Kálidása's genuine works—It is clear, the simple loves of Urvas'í and S'akuntalá could not have found favour at the Court of the Bhoja of the 11th Century.

It was lastly observed, that if the identity of Mátrigupta and Kálidása be established, the exact age of the great Sanskrit poet, who is now emerging into universal celebrity, would be fixed in the middle of the 6th century of the Christian era; and the fact would be of no less importance to the history of Sanscrit literature than to the credit of humanity, inasmuch as the prince of India's poets would be proved to have been distinguished for fine feeling and purity of conduct, as well as for the highest learning and poetical talent.

BOMBAY:
PRINTED AT THE UNION PRESS.
2nd April 1861