

Global Sanskrit Literature Series in English - 3

# SVAPNA-VASAVADATTAM

*(The Dream of Vasavadatta)*

By

Bhasa

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(The Dream of Vasavadatta)



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## PREFACE

In 1912 Pandit Ganapati Shastri edited and published a collection of thirteen plays which he claimed he had 'unearthed' at Trivandrum and whose authorship he attributed to Bhasa. There was nothing in the manuscripts to indicate at first glance that they were Bhasa's, so Pandit Shastri launched on an elaborately argued *tika* to prove their authorship; the incredible thoroughness and close attention to textual (specially grammatical) detail with which genuine Sanskrit pandits are admirably armed led him, via a maze of complex argument, to posit the existence of two Bhasas in Sanskrit drama—a Dhavaka-Bhasa, of the seventh century A.D., probably the author of *Nagananda* and *Ratnavali* (both attributed to Harsha), and the real Bhasa (fourth century B.C.), who wrote the thirteen newly discovered plays.

This conclusion is arrived at through a wealth of analysis involving the difference between the benedictory verse as spoken by the Stage Manager in Bhasa's thirteen plays and as it is spoken in the plays of Kalidasa and other dramatists. (Basically it boils down to the fact that in Bhasa the Stage Manager speaks the lines, while in Kalidasa and

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the other dramatists no explicit stage direction is given.) Much attention, however, is devoted to the actual words of the verse: "May His majesty rule over this kingdom which extends from sea to sea and which has the Himalayas and the Vindhya range [in central India] as her earrings." That is all the verse says, but the pandits argue that since earrings hang parallel to the female body, the Vindhya and Himalaya ranges must run parallel to the kingdom mentioned by Bhasa. And since these mountains stretch from East to West, Bhasa's 'kingdom' must also be East to West. Be it noted also that since one earring is worn on the right ear and one on the left, the kingdom in question can only be in Northern India. The manuscripts were discovered in the South, but Bhasa was very likely born in the North some time between the fourth century B.C. and the first century A.D. Pandit Shastri suggests that Bhasa could not have lived very much earlier than the fourth century B.C., since Chanakya's *Artha-Shastra* quotes a verse from a Bhasa play called *Pratijnana-nataka*. If it were the other way around, Bhasa quoting from Chanakya (it does not appear so), we would be back again to the unsatisfactory chronology we began with.

Who is Bhasa, who is he that all the bards commend him? There is the famous passage in

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Kalidasa's *Malavika and Agnimitra*: "No, no! When plays by such an eminent poet as Bhasa are available, why bother to produce plays by living poets?" That is high praise, but it brings us to the problem of "dating" Kalidasa. A medallion discovered during the recent excavations at Bhita conducted by the Indian Archaeological Survey Department suggests that Kalidasa was born considerably before Christ. Dr. Keith puts him in the fourth century B.C., and K.M. Panikkar makes him a contemporary of King Agnimitra in the second century B.C. The chronology game goes on, but this much seems certain: Bhasa is the oldest Sanskrit dramatist we have; the thirteen plays are the work of one hand; they were written before the birth of Christ, but not earlier than 500 B.C.; and of these the finest is *The Dream of Vasavadatta*.

There is a triple pun in the title—it is dreaming of Vasavadatta in the Ocean Room in Act IV which shocks the king into realising that the queen may still be living; but it is, after all, a *dream*, unreal ('You are right,' he tells the jester, "I have been dreaming.... Let me dream forever, if it is a dream; let it stay with me forever"); and, finally, it is the dream, the wild hope, of Vasavadatta to be reunited with the king. Bhasa brings this out very well by compounding *svapna* (dream) and

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*Vasavadattam*, so that in Sanskrit the sense would roughly be “The Dream and Vasavadatta,” and that would contain all the interpretations I have given to the title.

Bhasa is not without faults—he tends to repeat incidents, his lyricism can become sirupy (though never embarrassingly so, as in the case of Bhavabhuti), his characters are never entirely human beings, his stage directions create awkward situations. One annotator (S. Ray)—the *Dream* is a favourite textbook for Indian undergraduates doing Sanskrit; the *Gita* and Kalidasa take over for graduate studies—sweetly explains that “from this drama we learn that political and social interests were at that time given preference over self-interest. Hence for the sake of Udayana’s kingdom Vasavadatta sacrificed her personal interest and happiness.” This is true, but think of what it does to the characters of both Vasavadatta and Udayana. Far from being Sitaesque, Vasavadatta is merely wooden in her passive suffering and melodramatic in her fits of anger and jealousy, while Udayana is wooden in his unbending majesty and pathetic in his protestations of love for both Vasavadatta and Padmavati. All this has to be so because of the plot. Nor is the scene at the end very expertly handled. “The stage directions assume that the

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queen appears on the stage with Vasavadatta as her attendant, but that the king either does not see, or does not recognise the latter, both obviously very improbable suggestions; possibly it is assumed that the presence of Vasavadatta, though obvious to the audience, is concealed from the king in some manner by the use of the curtain, but this is left to be imagined, and it would have been much simpler to invent some ground for securing the entry of Vasavadatta by herself later on." (Keith)

None the less, the *Dream* tells a pretty little story, which Bhasa picked up from the *Ramayana* legends current at the time. That he did not take it from the first century *Brihat-katha-sarit-sagara* (*Great Ocean of Rivery Stories*) seems certain; the Vasavadatta of Valmiki and the Vasavadatta of Bhasa have a self-sacrificing quality in common, which separates them sharply from the Vasavadatta of the *Ocean of Stories*. The legend, as modified by Bhasa, has a quaintly romantic never-never flavour. The Raja of Vatsa, Udayana, and the Raja of Magadha are neighbours and, as a result of royal proximity, enemies. Udayana's queen is Vasavadatta; he is ambitious (this is brought out very indirectly in Bhasa's play, and even more circuitously in Harsha's *Ratnavali*), and his minister Yaugandharayana employs hidden

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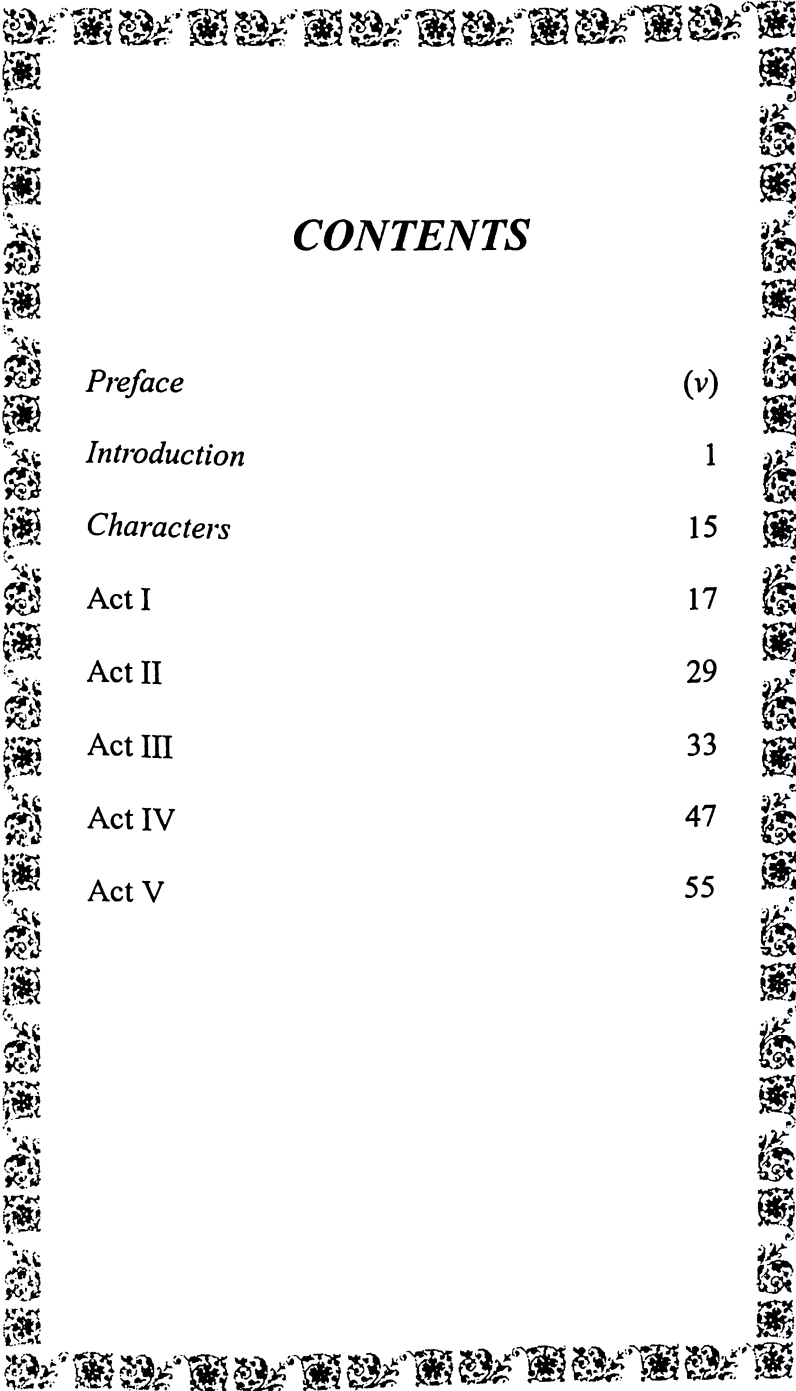
persuaders to win over the Raja of Magadha as an ally of Vatsa. He has a prophecy from the holy men to give him moral support: the prophecy says that Padmavati, daughter of the Raja of Magadha, will be Udayana's queen. Yaugandharayana informs Vasavadatta—without telling her that the plan entails marrying Padmavati to Udayana—that her disappearance from the capital is temporarily required for the sake of her husband's glory. The plan takes shape. Udayana's royal camp at Lavanaka, a village near Magadha, is set on fire by agents of Yaugandharayana while the king is out hunting, and rumours are spread that Vasavadatta perished in the fire, along with Yaugandharayana who was trying to rescue her. The king's general, Rumanvat, is instructed to take care of Udayana. In the meantime Yaugandharayana, disguised as a Brahmin, succeeds in getting Padmavati's promise to look after Vasavadatta (disguised as his sister) while he pretends to go away to search for her 'lost' husband. Vasavadatta sees Padmavati married to her husband, Udayana. From Ujjain (Avanti), the nurse of Vasavadatta and the chamberlain of Pradyota, her father, arrive with a portrait of Vasavadatta sent by her mother to solace Udayana in his 'bereavement.' Padmavati recognises the painting as a portrait of the Brahmin girl left in her care. There is reunion and rejoicing; Udayana,

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lucky king, now has two lovely queens instead of one and, what is more important, has Padmavati's father as an ally at last to help him defend his capital Kausambi (by making Magadha a valuable buffer state).

Some readers may well wonder why all this heartache over mistaken and disguised identity was required at all, since the marriage of Padmavati to Udayana had been foretold and would take place in any case. Why is there such need to rush matters when the alliance would come about in any event? Such questioning is irrelevant to an appreciation of the play's *rasa*. It is futile to regret one's dream when one awakens; since we are the music while the music lasts, we do not ask why it is or what it is. [This drama has been translated by A.C. Woolner & L. Sarup and edited by S.N. Tiwari].

INCHES

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## INTRODUCTION

*Svapna-vāsavadattām* (Dream of *Vāsavadattā*), is a drama in six Acts by Bhāsa, based on the *Bṛihatakathā* of Guṇāḍhya and is referred to in the *Mahābhārata*. The drama is in continuation of the *Pratijñā-yaugandha rāyaṇa*. Bhāsa stands pre-eminent for the boldness of his conception, insight into character and homely sparkling style. He has written about thirteen plays of which the *Svapna-vāsavadattā* is reckoned a masterpiece both in ancient Indian and modern criticism. Based on the well-known love-tale of Udayana and *Vāsavadattā*, Bhāsa's play abounds in dramatic excitement, suspense, surprise and humour.

Udayana, after his marriage with *Vāsavadattā*, is deprived of a greater part of his kingdom by a certain rebel Āruṇi as the king always remains in the company of his bride and neglects the State affairs. His minister, Yaugandharāyaṇa, devises a plan to get back the lost territories to his king; he wants Udayana to wed Padmāvatī, the daughter of the king of Magadha, but Udayana refuses as he is unwilling to leave his beloved *Vāsavadattā*. The minister induces *Vāsavadattā* to aid in his

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scheme; one day, when the king is out a hunting from his camp, the minister spreads a false rumour that the queen has perished in a wild conflagration which spread to the camp. Yaugandharāyaṇa entrusts the queen to the care of Padmāvati, giving out that she is his sister and that he is searching her absconding husband.

Udayana feels very sad for his beloved's demise and agrees, even against his will, to marry Padmāvati. The marriage is over but learning that the king has never ceased to cherish the memory of Vāsavadattā, Padmāvati is seized by a severe head-ache. The king comes to comfort her but not finding her, lies down, sleep overcoming him. Vāsavadattā arrives at the same spot to nurse Padmāvati and sits down by the side of the sleeping person, considering the person to be Padmāvati. But as he begins to speak in his sleep about Vāsavadattā, she rises and leaves him as the king should identify her but not before he has caught a glimpse of her, in a dream (*svapna*) as he thinks.

With the help of his new father-in-law, the king of Magadha, Udayana wins back his lost kingdom. A messenger comes from Ujjayinī bearing the picture of nuptial of Udayana and Vāsavadattā; Padmāvati sees the picture and recognises that Yaugandharāyaṇa's sister, entrusted to her care,

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is really Vāsavadattā. The minister arrives to explain to the satisfaction of all the plan he has devised to secure Udayana's lost kingdom. Thus the play ends happily with the king's re-union with his first queen.

This play is the best among Bhāsa's plays and has been enjoying unique fame: contrary to convention, this portrays on the stage the king's sleep. His style throughout the play is elegant, transparent and flowing. He uses figurative expressions with graceful ease, whether it be prose or verse. In fact he is considered by some scholars as a forerunner and a master in the field of dramatic literature.

There is no doubt that his *Svapna-vasavadattam* is brimming with action and *rasa*. The love in union and separation as depicted in the play has few equals. In the second and third acts Vasavadatta has to undergo in disguise the agony of being close to Padmavati who is to marry Udayana and has also to string her marital garland. Even in this moving situation Bhasa makes Vasavadatta only simple and cryptic but very effective statements. The crucial fifth act in which Udayana meeting Vasavadatta in Padmavathi's chamber, and considering it only as a dream, is skilfully conceived and developed.

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Udayana is more appealing in this play than in others like the *Ratnavali* of Harsha where also he figures as a hero. The two heroines, Padmavati and Vasavadatta are cleverly discriminated. The special feature of the play is the dramatic skill and delicacy with which the feelings of Vasavadatta are depicted. It is a drama of fine sentiments; the movement is smooth, measured and dignified, without any tinge of melodrama.

Ironically the bridal garland is to be fashioned by Vāsavadattā herself and she has to assist in the honeymoon of the newly weds. The deep psychological insight of Bhāsa is evidenced in his devising of the motif of the dream talk of Udaya. All the time the king is persuaded to remarry with the plea that Vāsavadattā is dead and gone, burnt down as she was in an accidental fire at the Lavaṇaka camp. But his love for her is so deep and fervent that even after many months, it comes out in a dream.

Bhāsa is such a skilful dramatist that he makes capital use of this motif to ensure the re-union of Vāsavadatta and Udayana later on by re-assuring the lady of the king's attachment to her even during her absence. The whole play is significantly named after this very dramatic fifth Act.

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About the Dramatist : Bhasa, the celebrated dramatist, was assigned different dates by different scholars. He may be taken to have lived towards the close of the centuries before Christ or in the beginning of the Christian Era. Kalidasa's reference to him is the earliest. Kalidasa speaks of Bhasa's fame. According to Bana, Bhasa's plays had three characteristics. The text of these plays does not offer any direct evidence to settle the problem of their authorship but most of the scholars assign them to Bhāsa. Again, the question of the date of Bhāsa has also been a matter of prolonged controversy. He has been dated variously in 2nd or 3rd century A.D. and in 5th or 4th century B.C.

Many others, besides Bana had also referred to Bhasa. And his verses were quoted in anthologies. But plays themselves had disappeared till their manuscripts were discovered in 1909 in a Kerala Brahmin home named Manalikkara Matham near Trivandrum in Kerala by the late T. Ganapati Shastri, then Curator of the Maharaja's Palace Library.

The first discovery was of ten plays of Bhasa and a fragment written in Malayalam on 105 palm leaves. Subsequently Shastri discovered two more plays and the thirteen plays of Bhasa ended their undetected existence. Almost simultaneously one

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of these plays was discovered in Mysore by R. Narasimhachar, Head of the Archaeology department there. The thirteen plays of Bhasa are:

- (1) *Dutavakyam* (The Words' of the Ambassador);
- (2) *Kamabharam* (Kama's Duty);
- (3) *Dutaghatotkacham* (The Embassy of Ghatotkacha);
- (4) *Urubhangam* (The Breaking of the Thighs);
- (5) *Madhyamavyayogam* (A Play on Madhyma);
- (6) *Pancharatram* (The Five Nights);
- (7) *Abhishekanatakam* (A Play on the Coronation);
- (8) *Balacharitam* (The Story of the Boy);
- (9) *Avimarakam* (Avimaraka);
- (10) *Pratimanatakam* (The House of Statues)
- (11) *Pratijnayaugandharayanam* (The Vows of Yaugandharayana);
- (12) *Svapnavasavadattam* (Vasavadatta in a Dream);
- (13) *Charudattam* (Chrarudatta).

The first six are based on episodes in the *Mahabharata*, 7 and 10 are *Ramayana* plays, 11 and 12 are based on legends, 9 and 13 are social romances. The plays were most probably composed in the order in which they are given above judging from internal evidence. These plays vary in structure. The first five are one-Acts. The *Pancharatram* has three Acts. It belongs to the

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class of dramas called a *samavakara*, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 are *natakas*, 11 and 13 are *prakaranas*.

In the *Dutavakyam* Krishna pleads the Pandava case fruitlessly before the Kauravas. Kama's reputed generosity is tested in *Kamabharam*. He gives away his magic earstuds and armour to Indra well knowing that parting with them would make him vulnerable in war. In *Dutaghatotkacham*, Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima, pleads to the Kauravas to be generous to the Pandavas; but in vain.

In *Urubhangam*, Bhima breaks Duryodhana's thighs and kills him. Madhyama, the middle one is both Bhima and the second of a Brahmin's three sons in *Madhyamavy ayoga*. The boy was to be offered as the fast breaking meal of a demoness by name Hidimbi. The one to take him to her was Ghatotkacha, her son. At this stage Bhima intervenes and offers to go with Ghatotkacha. And what was Hidimbi's embarrassed surprise when she found that the man who had come with her son to be her meal was her own former husband and her son's father. *Pancharatram* is the story of an encounter between the Kauravas and the allies of the Pandavas in the country of the Viratas.

In the *Abhishekanatakam* Rama's coronation is dramatised. *Balacharitam* is the story of Krishna

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killing the demons. *Avimarakam* is the story of the love between princess Kurangi and Avimaraka altered as a Pariah due to a curse which happily is lifted at the end leading to the marriage of the lovers. *Pratimanatakam* is the early story of the *Ramayana*. There is a House of Statues in the play. *Pratijnayaugandharayana* and *Svapnavasavadattam* are plays on the fortunes of King Udayana of Vatsa and his love for his queen Vasavadatta. Yaugandharayana, Udayana's shrewd minister is a key figure. *Charudattam* is a social play on the love of the honest and impoverished merchant Charudatta and the opulent and good-hearted courtesan Vasantasena.

Bhasa is a playwright with considerable originality. While borrowing themes from the epics he makes variations in order to make them dramatically suitable. He also invents episodes like one of the statue house in the *Ramayana* play. Epics, mythology, legends, history and social life were all adopted by him for his work. No other playwright in Sanskrit has written so many plays on so wide a range of subjects. His play on the impoverished trader Charudatta and the high-minded courtesan Vasantasena is reputedly the first play on social life in Sanskrit. The other play, *Mrichchhakatika* (The Clay Cart) by Shudraka on the same theme is acceptedly influenced by the earlier Bhasa work.

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The Bhasa plays are noted for their speedy action and movement. Many of the characters, themselves, are heroes of action. Such are the legendary heroes like Arjuna, Bhima, Rama and so on. He shows originality in endowing even the traditionally wicked heroes like Duryodhana and Ravana with redeeming qualities. But most of these acts are dispensed with the benedictory verse on the stage. The *Sutradhara* or the stage-manager enters as the first happening on the stage, and at the end of the *nandi* (perhaps carried out in the green room). Secondly these plays had several characters. Thirdly there were many episodes in these plays.

Mention has been made earlier of the technical originality in the Bhasa plays. Of even greater importance is his nonconformism in the concept of the play. Bhasa allows on the stage several actions and events which traditional dramaturgy bars from there. One such is death. We have in plays like *Balacharita* and *Urubhanga* characters dying on the stage. Indeed *Urubhanga* is singular in that where the play ends with the death of its chief character Duryodhana. This play thus sets aside the Indian dramatic rule that a play shall not end in a tragedy.

The action-orientation of the Bhasa plays also precludes too long and imaginatively enriched

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versification. Consequently the verses in these plays show not so much poetic imagination as a grasp on and expression of realism and a concern for the wisdom and morality of life. Concerned with action and movement in his plays the playwright is pithy, realistic, precise and moralistic in his verses. Indeed in his later plays the proportion of verses to dialogue goes down. We find also the peculiar feature of the dramatist breaking up verses and making these parts dialogue-pieces in the mouths of characters in a scene.

It was inevitable that an early dramatist with such massive talent, dramatic insight, range of themes and moral concern exercised much influence on his successors. His powerful and realistic portrayal of character, pithy and meaningful dialogue, delineation of sentiment as a structural and evocative unit, importing of essential nature in image-rich language, moral passion, and richness in episodes have enriched the world of later dramatists. Not even Kalidasa was free from this influence, not to speak of Bhavabhuti, Shri Harsha and of course Shudraka.

Very little is known about the personal history of Bhasa. The extant manuscripts of the plays do not even mention his name and what little we can reconstruct on his life and personality has to be done on the basis of his plays and references

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to him in works by others. The surmise that he belonged to a late B.C. or early A.D. period may be accepted, though as mentioned earlier other views have also been expressed on the subject. Pusalkar is of the view that the King Rajasimha mentioned in the epilogues of the plays was a ruler who belonged to the pre-Mauryan Nanda dynasty or Chandragupta Maurya himself.

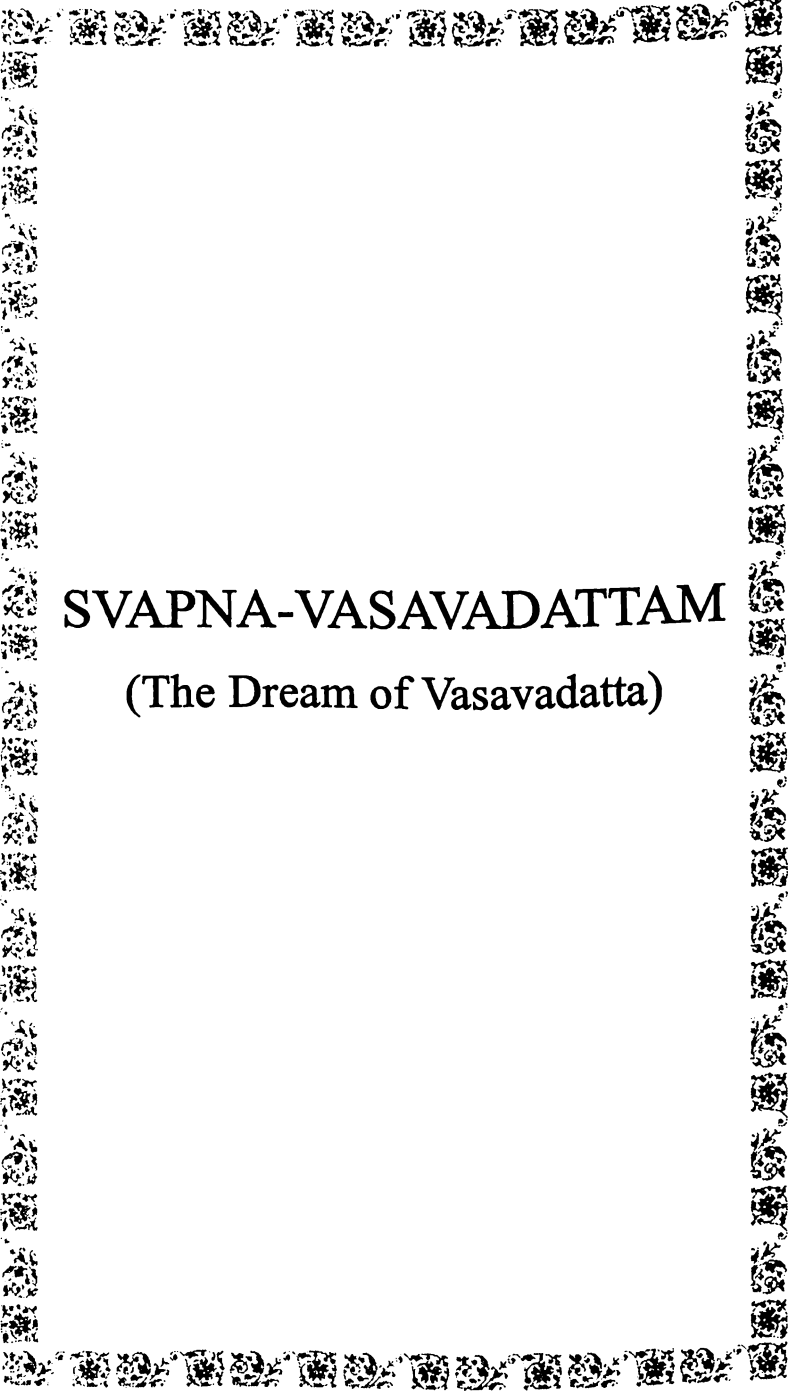
Bhasa was probably a court-poet of a king who used to be present at the staging of the plays. The dramatist was a devotee of Vishnu as can be gathered in his constant references to Him in the prologue verses and the obvious worshipful tone of his references. He had accepted the Hindu view of life though he perhaps mentally protested against the caste restrictions and sometimes chose to place merit above caste. He believed in the duty of wives to be devoted to their husbands. To him the intactness of family affection was sacred and was achieved by respect for the elders. Buddhist mendicants or Shramanakas were around when he lived.

There are many controversies on Bhasa, his time and place and personality. Some scholars say that Bhasa was a Keralite. Agreement in technique with other known Kerala Sanskrit plays and other factors have led to the Kerala thesis. The Chakyars of Kerala have for a long time enacted parts of

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these plays. Besides, the plays were discovered in Kerala. The Kerala thesis is opposed by other scholars equally strongly. Are the plays now discovered adaptations or compilations? Some say, yes; others say, no, they are genuine Bhasa plays. In the meanwhile the plays and their author continue to occupy a unique place in the history of Sanskrit drama. More than eighty editions—some presenting individual plays, others collections—have appeared since 1909. Numerous monographs and articles have also appeared.

Bhasa recreates his themes from a common source in his unique way to suggest a new dimension of human greatness. The plays are truly national in outlook and very touching and moving on the stage.

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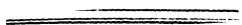
# SVAPNA-VASAVADATTAM

(The Dream of Vasavadatta)

1

## *CHARACTERS*

|                           |                    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Stage Manager             | Nurse              |
| Two Guards                | Jester (Vasantaka) |
| Yaugandharayana           | King Udayana       |
| Vasavadatta (as Avantika) | Padminika          |
| Padmavati                 | Madhukarika        |
| Maid to Padmavati         | Female Guard       |
| Hermit Woman              | Chamberlain of     |
| Chamberlain               | Raivya clan        |
| Hermit                    | Vasundhara         |



## ACT I

*As the curtain rises the Stage Manager enters.*

Stage Manager: This is bad. The servants of the king turning out the people of the ashrama—I know their duty is to protect the princess, but—

*Two Guards, entering, interrupt him.* Make way, you. Make way.

Yaugandharayana (*enters*): *With him is Vasavadatta dressed as an Avanti lady.*

Yaugandharayana (*listening*): Here too people are being driven out! Why should these peaceful vegetarians be dispossessed? Why should there be panic among them? Who is this pride-bloated ruler who makes a market place out of a holy ashrama?

Vasavadatta: Who is this highhanded man, sir?

Yaugandharayana: A man without grace.

Vasavadatta: Will he drive me out too?

Yaugandharayana: He does not look like a respecter of anybody.

Vasavadatta: The pain of his insult strikes deeper than the pain of a long and tiring journey on foot.

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Yaugandharayana: You should not worry. You had power at one time to turn out people with a single word. And you gave it up. But you shall have it again when your husband is victorious. The world's a merry-go-round...fate turns like the spokes of a wheel.

Chamberlain (*entering*): Hey, Sambhasaka! What's going on here? Stop it! Can't you see it shames our king? Leave these ashrama people alone—poor folk, they've come to the forest to be away from the worries of the world.

Yaugandharayana: He sounds sensible. *He calls out.* Sir!... Sir, why are the ashrama inmates ordered like this?

Chamberlain: Because, holy Father—

Yaugandharayana (*aside*): 'Holy Father'—that's good, very good. But I'm far from being holy!

Chamberlain (*continuing*): Well, it's a simple matter really, holy Father. King Darsaka's sister, Princess Padmavati, is paying a visit to her mother, and she will spend the night here. She is very religious, and will interfere with nobody. But I suggest you tell the people to have wood, flowers, water, and sacred kusha grass ready... for she means to be religious.

*Act I*

Yaugandharayana (*aside*): I see. Magadha's princess, Padmavati. She's the one whom the astrologers predict as Udayana's future wife. That is good: it increases my regard for her.

Padmavati, *enters with a Maid and other followers.*

Maid: This way, princess. This is the ashrama. A Hermit Woman *of the ashrama enters and welcomes Padmavati.*

Vasavadatta (*aside*): Every inch a princess!

Padmavati: Thank you.

Hermit Woman: Enter, my child. Guests are very welcome here.

Padmavati: I know. And your sweet words make the place even more pleasant.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): Not only beautiful. Gracious.

Hermit Woman: I am told there are arrangements for—

Maid: There are. The king of Ujjain wishes her to be united in marriage with his son.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): The king of Ujjain is my father. I shall have a pretty sister-in-law.

Hermit Woman: I am so happy. The two best families in the land!

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Padmavati: Sir, is there any ascetic here who is in need of anything? Please make the announcement.

Chamberlain: To all the holy people of the ashrama, this message from the princess. Listen! The princess is religious and seeks the favours of your prayers, for which she humbly offers presents. Who needs a pitcher? A monk's robe? What young disciple needs something to give to his teacher? The princess requires your prayers, and she will grant presents to all today.

Yaugandharayana (*aside*): Just what I wanted!  
*Aloud*. I! I!

Hermit Woman: He must be an outsider. All the hermits here are satisfied with what they have.

Chamberlain: What do you want, sir?

Yaugandharayana: This is my sister. Her husband has gone abroad, and I want Princess Padmavati to look after her in the meantime. I have no money, no means—this monk's robe doesn't bring me much worldly profit. I know the princess is wise and virtuous, and I know my sister could not be in better hands.

Act I

Vasavadatta (*aside*): So! He wants to leave me here. But he must have good reason.

Chamberlain: It is difficult to give what you ask. Money, penance, even life itself may be given—and gladly. But to look after a trust...well—

Padmavati: In that case you should have limited your announcement.

Chamberlain: I am sorry.

Hermit Woman: You speak very nobly, my princess.

Chamberlain: Sir, the princess accepts charge of your sister.

Yaugandharayana: I am deeply grateful to her. Vasavadatta, go to her.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): If you say so, I will. But I hope everything turns out all right.

Padmavati: Now you are one of the family.

Hermit Woman: You speak very nobly, my princess.

Maid: Yes, she must have seen happier times.

Yaugandharayana (*aside*): Good. That's half the work done—exactly the way I had planned it! When my king, Udāyana, is restored to his kingdom, he will know Vasavadatta was

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

in safe hands. Besides, haven't the astrologers said that Padmavati will be Udayana's queen? What could be better? Fate has an answer to everything.

*A young Hermit enters the fore-stage; he looks up toward the sky and then speaks.* Noon. Am I tired!... But this looks like an ashrama. The deer wander about freely, breathing the harmless air. No cultivated fields nearby. The fat brown cows, the trees thick with fruit and flower, and of course the thin smoke from the huts climbing up into the sky. *He enters the ashrama.* A chamberlain. And ladies too! Have I come to the wrong place?

Chamberlain: Come in, sir. The ashrama is for everyone.

Vasavadatta, *turns aside and veils her face.*

Padmavati: Such modesty! I'll really have to look after her well.

Chamberlain: We were here first. So you are our guest. *He gives the young Hermit a glass of water.*

Hermit (*sipping*): Your kindness makes me forget my fatigue.

Yaugandharayana: Where do you come from, sir? Where are you going?

*Act I*

Hermit: I came from Rajgriha. I had come to the village of Lavanaka to study the sacred books.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): Lavanaka! My grief comes to me again.

Yaugandharayana: Are your studies over?

Hermit: No, sir.

Yaugandharayana: Yet you are here.

Hermit: It's a sad story, sir.

Yaugandharayana: I see....

Hermit: King Udayana lives in Lavanaka.

Yaugandharayana: I have heard of him. A good king.

Hermit: His queen is Vasavadatta— daughter of the king of Ujjain.

Yaugandharayana: I see.... Well?

Hermit: He was out hunting one day, and in his absence—so the people say—the queen perished in a terrible fire that swept the village.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): But I am alive, more's the pity.

Yaugandharayana: Well, what happened then?

Hermit: They say his chief minister, Yaugandharayana, jumped in to save her—

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Yaugandharayana: Did he? Brave man! And then?

Hermit: And perished too. The king on his return went mad with grief, and wanted to jump into the fire too and kill himself—but the ministers held him back.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): I know how much he loves me.

Yaugandharayana: Carry on—what happened next?

Hermit: But the king wouldn't listen and pressed her burning jewels to his heart again and again... and fell to the ground unconscious.

All: Oh!

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): I hope Yaugandharayana doesn't make a mistake now.

Maid: She is crying, my princess.

Padmavati (*looking at Vasavadatta*): She has a gentle heart.

Yaugandharayana: Yes, my sister is very gentle indeed. Well, go on.

Hermit: But the king recovered his senses—

Padmavati: I'm glad to hear that. My heart went numb for a second.

Hermit, *continuing*: and his body all brown with the dust, he suddenly stood up, and would

Act I

not stop crying, and mumbled to himself:  
“O Vasavadatta, my queen, my wife! O  
Vasavadatta, my beloved!”...What more can  
I say? I’m told the birds called *chakravakas*  
cry when separated from their mates—but  
not as he cried. A woman is lucky to have  
such a husband. She died in the fire, but  
lives forever in her husband’s love.

Yaugandharayana: And you say there was no  
minister near him to give him consolation?

Hermit: There was. Especially Rumanvat, who will  
not eat if the king doesn’t and whose face is  
a valley of tears. He looks after the king day  
and night. If Udayana dies, he will die.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): That at least is good  
news.

Yaugandharayana (*to himself*): Rumanvat is a  
good man with a great burden. All depends  
on him, because the king depends on him.  
*Aloud.* Tell me, how is the king now?

Hermit: I do not know. But I know he keeps on  
crying. “Here I joked with her. Here we  
passed the night together. Here we quarreled,  
here we slept. O Vasavadatta, my wife!”  
Then the ministers at last coaxed him to  
leave the village and go elsewhere. When  
he left the stars and moon left too. The

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

village lay in darkness. I could not stay on there.

Hermit Woman: He must be a wonderful king to receive such praise from a stranger.

Maid: Will he let anyone become his new queen?

Padmavati (*to herself*): I wonder.

Hermit: Please, sir, may I have your permission to leave now?

Yaugandharayana: Our blessings go with you.

Hermit: Thank you. *He departs.*

Yaugandharayana: If I could leave too, for my work is over... ?

Chamberlain: The holy Father wishes permission to leave.

Padmavati: Sir, your sister will miss you terribly.

Yaugandharayana: She is in safe hands. She will not miss me long. *He prepares to leave.*

Chamberlain: Please visit us whenever you can.

Yaugandharayana: I will. *He departs.*

Chamberlain: Let us go in.

Padmavati, *to the Hermit Woman*... I am so grateful to you.

*Act I*

Hermit Woman: My blessings on you, child. May you get the husband you deserve so well.

Vasavadatta: I am grateful to you, Mother.

Hermit Woman: Child, may you see your husband soon.

Vasavadatta: Thank you.

Chamberlain: Let us go. This way, please. The birds are now in their nests, the hermits have gone to the pool. How brilliantly the sacred fire gleams! The wayworn sun turns his chariot into the mountain cave.

*All depart.*

CURTAIN



## ACT II

*A Maid enters, and peers offstage.*

Maid: Kunjarika! Kunjarika! Where is princess Padmavati? She appears to listen. What's that? She's in the garden, playing with a ball? Thank you. I'll go to her. She circles the stage. There she is, looking tired and perspiring, playing with her ball. How graceful she looks. She goes out.

Padmavati (*enters, with her attendants*): She throws a ball to Vasavadatta, who is still dressed as a lady of Avanti.

Vasavadatta, *catching the ball*: Your throw, my princess.

Padmavati: No, thank you. We have played long enough today.

Vasavadatta: But you were just beginning to enjoy the game.

Maid: Oh, do let us play. We're only young once.

Padmavati, *to Vasavadatta*: What do you mean?

Vasavadatta: Just that you looked so charming when you were playing that we thought.

Padmavati: Oh, come now.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Vasavadatta: I'm sorry. But you did look charming enough to be Pradyota's daughter-in-law.

Padmavati: And who, may I ask, is Pradyota?

Vasavadatta: Pradyota is the king of Ujjain.

Maid: You don't know, Vasavadatta. The princess has a different desire. Have another guess.

Vasavadatta: I don't know. You tell me.

Maid: The princess is in love with Udayana, king of Vatsa.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): In love with my husband.  
*Aloud*. I see. And is there a special reason for loving him?

Maid: No, nothing special, except that he is a gentle man.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): She tells me my husband is gentle. As if I did not know.

Maid: I don't know if he is good-looking, though.

Vasavadatta: Of course, he's good-looking.

Padmavati: How do you know?

Vasavadatta (*aside*): There I go again. *Aloud*. Well, that's what I am told the citizens of Ujjain say.

*Act II*

Padmavati: They should know. Good looks don't go unnoticed.

*A Nurse enters and addresses herself immediately to Padmavati:* I bring happy news, princess. Your engagement has been announced.

Vasavadatta: To whom?

Nurse: Udayana— king of Vatsa.

Vasavadatta (*starting but checking herself*): Is he well then?

Nurse: He has arrived here safely, and agreed to marry our princes:

Vasavadatta: Oh, how terrible!

Nurse: Why, what's terrible about it?

Vasavadatta: I only meant that he was so sad a few days ago over the death of his wife.

Nurse: Great men don't stay sad too long. They are always thinking of greater and better opportunities.

Vasavadatta: Did he propose himself?

Nurse: Oh, no. He came here on some royal business, and our king, impressed by his breeding and good looks, suggested the engagement.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): I knew he wasn't to blame.

*A Maid enters and speaks excitedly:* Hurry, hurry—the queen says today is an excellently auspicious day for the marriage ceremony.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): She hurries to her marriage, and darkness descends on my heart.

Maid: This way, princess.

CURTAIN

## ACT III

*Vasavadatta enters, deep in thought.*

Vasavadatta: This garden's the best place for me. The other ladies are busy with the marriage preparations in the inner palace rooms. *She walks about the stage disconsolately.* My husband is now another's. *She sits down on a bench.* Such is my fate. But I will live, I will cling to sad life, in the hope that I can see my husband again.

*A Maid enters, carrying a basket of flowers.*

Maid: Where is the lady of Avanti? *She notices Vasavadatta.* Ah, under the creeper, sitting on a bench. So sweet and graceful. *To Vasavadatta.* I have been looking for you everywhere. The princess Padmavati says, "The lady of Avanti is highborn, loving, and intelligent. Let her make a marriage garland."

Vasavadatta: For whom?

Maid: For the princess Padmavati, of course.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): The gods are cruel, making this a part of my duties.

Maid: The garland is needed soon. The king is getting ready for the ceremony.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Vasavadatta: Have you seen him?

Maid: Yes. I was curious. I had a glimpse of him.

Vasavadatta: How did he look?

Maid: Oh, words cannot describe him.

Vasavadatta: But tell me, is he handsome?

Maid: He is the god of love in person—without the bow and arrows. Vasavadatta *looks displeased*. Why, have I said anything wrong?

Vasavadatta: It's not proper to discuss someone else's husband. Give me the flowers. I'll do the garland. *She empties the basket and examines the flowers one by one*. What is this one called?

Maid: That's *avidhava-karana*, the flower that prevents widowhood.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): I shall put many of these in the garland, for her sake as well as mine. *Aloud*. And this?

Maid: That stops the arrival of another wife.

Vasavadatta: None of this kind.

Maid: Why?

Vasavadatta: His first wife is dead.

*Act III*

*Another Maid enters.*

Second Maid: Hurry, hurry! The king is in the inner palace room, led by the maids of the princess.

Vasavadatta, *hands her the finished garland. Both Maids leave. Vasavadatta follows, sorrowfully.*

*The Jester enters, chuckling:* What fun to be alive at wedding time! Who would have thought we'd survive the great calamity of the queen's death? But here I am, bathing in the pools of the harem, and gulping down sweets whose nature is goluptious. *Sadly.* So goluptious that my belly protests; the pangs of indigestion overpower me. Too much sweetness is a jaundice in the blood. What good are big fat sweets without fine fit flesh?

A Maid (*enters*): Vasantaka, where have you been hiding?

Jester: Sweet girl, why have you been searching?

Maid: The princess Padmavati wishes to know if His Majesty has finished the ritual bath.

Jester: The answer to that shall be given if the reason for the question be known.

Maid: So that flowers and scents may be brought before His Majesty.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Jester: In that case he has bathed. Bring the goodies, my good girl—but, I beg of you, do not bring food.

Maid: What's wrong with food?

Jester: Nothing's wrong with food. Everything is wrong with my stomach. My bowels whirl round and round like the eyes of a cuckoo.

*Both leave.*

Padmavati and Vasavadatta enter, escorted by the Maid: Vasavadatta is still dressed as a lady of Avanti.

Maid: What a pleasure garden, my princess?

Padmavati: To see the *sefhalika* flowers in bloom.

Maid: They *are in bloom*, so red that they bring out the green of the other plants.

Padmavati: Let's sit here. Shall we sit, Vasavadatta?

Maid: I'll get some flowers. *She steps offstage and returns with flowers.* Look at these! My hands are full of their passionate colour.

Padmavati (*looking at the flowers*): How lovely! Aren't they lovely, Vasavadatta?

Vasavadatta: Very lovely.

Maid: Shall I get more?

*Act III*

Padmavati: No, no more now.

Vasavadatta: Why not let her?

Padmavati: I want my husband to see their beauty  
on the trees. I'll be so proud.

Vasavadatta: You love your husband so much?

Padmavati: Oh, I don't know. But I miss him  
terribly if he's not with me.

Maid: What a noble way of saying, "I love my  
husband!"

Padmavati: With one small misgiving that worries  
me all the time.

Vasavadatta: What?

Padmavati: Did Vasavadatta love him as much as  
I do?

Vasavadatta: She loved him more.

Padmavati: How do you know?

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): There goes my tongue  
again! *Aloud*. She wouldn't have left her  
family the way she did if her love had been  
ordinary.

Padmavati: Yes.

Maid: He loves the flute. I am learning to play it.

Padmavati: I've already told him you are.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Vasavadatta: Did he say anything?

Padmavati: He heaved a deep sigh, and kept silent.

Vasavadatta: That's strange.

Padmavati: I think he remembered Vasavadatta's charms, but didn't dare say so openly. He wants to show he loves all his wives equally. He's so well-mannered.

Vasavadatta (*to herself*): I am a lucky woman.

*The King and the Jester enter.*

Jester: Bravo! Soft breezes in the garden, the scent of flowers plucked and strewn on the ground. This way, sir.

King: When I was in Ujjain, my friend, a long time back, on a short visit, the god of love fired all his five arrows at me the moment I saw the beauty of Vasavadatta. Now he shoots at me again. Hasn't he only the five arrows, though? Where does he get the sixth?

Jester: Where is Princess Padmavati? Has she come to the garden house, or the stone bench where *asana* flowers fall, or the grove of the seven-leaved trees? *He looks upward.* Look at the lovely cranes, Sir, up in the autumn sky, flying in formation like the outstretched arms of a man.

Act III

King: They *are* pretty. Now straight, now curving, swinging up and down like a massive constellation. The sky is like the belly of a serpent, and the cranes are the line that runs its length.

Maid: Look at the cranes, princess, like flying lotuses—oh, he's here!

Padmavati: My husband! *To Vasavadatta.* I can't let him see me in these morning clothes. Let's hide behind this jasmine bush. Quick!

*The three women conceal themselves.*

Jester: She must have come and left.

King: How do you know?

Jester: Someone's been plucking from the white *sephalika* there.

King: Aren't they lovely, Vasantaka?

Vasavadatta (*aside*): The way he says Vasantaka reminds me of Ujjain.

King: Let's wait here for Padmavati.

Jester: Yes, sir. *He sits down.* The heat's terrible! Let's go under the jasmine.

King: Good.

*The King and the Jester walk toward the jasmine bush.*

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Padmavati: Vasantaka has to spoil everything!  
What now?

Maid: This creeper will do the trick. I'll shake  
the bees on them.

Padmavati: I hope it works.

*The Maid shakes the creeper:*

Jester (*in consternation*): Wait, sir, wait!

King: What's the matter?

Jester: Those blasted bees!

King: Let them alone. After all, you disturbed  
them first. Let them make love to their honey  
in peace. We'll turn back. *Both return and  
sit on a stone bench.* Someone's been  
trampling on the flowers here. And this  
bench is still warm. Who could have been  
here? They left when they saw us coming.

Maid: We're caught.

Padmavati: I'm glad he's found a place to sit down.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): I'm glad he's looking so well.

Maid: Vasavadatta is crying.

Vasavadatta: No, it's nothing—just the pollen the  
bees flung into my eyes.

Jester: I want to ask you something in private.  
This place looks deserted enough.

*Act III*

King: Fire away.

Jester: Tell me, did you love Vasavadatta more  
than you love Padmavati?

King: What a funny question to ask!

Padmavati: What can he say?

Vasavadatta (*aside*): I feel so lost.

Jester: Frankly, now—no hocus-pocus. One is  
dead, the other's not listening.

King: You are a curious jester. I refuse to answer.

Padmavati: That's a good answer.

Jester: Oh, come, come—I won't tell anyone. My  
word for it!

King: I don't feel like answering stupid questions.

Padmavati: The impudent fool! Doesn't he  
understand he's hurting my husband?

Jester: You're my prisoner, sir. If you don't  
answer, I won't let you budge from here.

King: You mean you won't let me get up?

Jester: Yes.

King: Very well, we'll see.

Jester: I'm sorry, sir, I didn't mean anything. It's  
just that I know you so well.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

King: You are a fool. However, if you must have an answer... I think Padmavati is the finest lady in the world—for her beauty, her character, her grace. But she cannot take my heart away from Vasavadatta.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): I have suffered, but now I suffer no more.

Maid: That's a strange thing to say, princess.

Padmavati: No, it's noble of him to remember Vasavadatta.

Vasavadatta: And it's noble of you to say so.

King: Does *that* satisfy you? Now, my friend, you must answer my question. Whom do *you* like better, Vasavadatta or Padmavati?

Padmavati: My husband turns the tables!

Jester: Oh—ah—hmmm... Well, I like them both. Quite a lot!

King: Shut up! I answered frankly, why don't you?

Jester: You'll force me to answer?

King: Indeed I will.

Jester: Then you'll get nothing...

King: O Brahmin! O Fool! please, please... tell me what you like—I won't force you.

*Act III*

Jester: That's better. Listen. I was very fond of Queen Vasavadatta. But Princess Padmavati is young, smiling, gracious, kind—and beautiful! Besides, she has a special quality that I don't easily forget. She serves me the tastiest dishes of the palace, saying, "Where is Vasantaka? Where is Vasantaka?"

Vasavadatta (*aside*): Just like you—you ingrate!

King: I'll tell Vasavadatta this.

Jester: Vasavadatta!... Where is Vasavadatta? She is dead.

King (*sorrowfully*): Yes, she is dead. The words slipped out of my mouth. Vasavadatta is here no more....

Padmavati: The fool!—he has spoiled the pretty talk.

Vasavadatta (*aside*): How nice to hear sweet words unobserved!

Jester: That's all right, sir. What can we do? Our fate plays tricks on us.

King: You cannot understand, Vasantaka. Even if my grief departs, my love remains rooted in her. And so my memory brings back my grief.... This is the way with ordinary people: they get relief by shedding tears.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Jester: I'll get you water to wash your face. *He departs.*

Padmavati: He is crying. Let us go to him.

Vasavadatta: No, you go—he is disturbed.

Padmavati: Shall I go to him?

Vasavadatta: You must.

Padmavati *approaches the King.*

*The Jester enters, carrying water in a lotus leaf.*

Princess Padmavati is here.

Padmavati: Vasantaka, what's the matter?

Jester: Er—I mean—it's—

Padmavati: Come to the point, sir. What's the matter?

Jester: Dust got into his eyes; this water is for him to wash them with.

Padmavati (*aside*): A neat reply. *Aloud to the King.* My lord, here is water for your eyes.

King: Padmavati! *Aside.* Vasantaka, what's the meaning of this? *The Jester whispers in his ear.* Good. *Aloud.* Sit down, Padmavati. *She sits, as he lightly washes his eyes with the water and continues speaking.* You see, it's dusty here, the pollen got into my eyes. *Aside.* No point in telling her the truth—she'll just be upset.

*Act III*

Jester: This afternoon will be a busy one for you, sir, what with all the interviews that have been arranged. We should get ready.

King: A good idea. *He rises.* It's a pleasure to meet men of quality, there are so few of them.

CURTAIN

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## ACT IV

*Padminika enters hurriedly in front of the curtain.  
She is shouting.*

**Padminika:** Madhukarika! Madhukarika! Quick!  
Come here!

**Madhukarika** (*entering*): What's wrong? Here I  
am.

**Padminika:** Don't you know Princess Padmavati  
has a splitting headache?

**Madhukarika:** I didn't know.

**Padminika:** Well, hurry. Tell Lady Avantika.

**Madhukarika:** What can she do?

**Padminika:** Her pleasant stories will help to soothe  
our princess.

**Madhukarika:** Where is Princess Padmavati?

**Padminika:** In the Ocean Room. Hurry, go. I'll  
try to find Vasantaka too, so that he can tell  
the king. Go now. *Madhukarika leaves.* Now  
where can Vasantaka be?

**Jester** (*entering and speaking to himself*): Even  
on his marriage day the king cannot forget  
Vasavadatta. Such is love! *He sees*  
*Padminika.* Padminika, what news?

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Padminika: Don't you know, Vasantaka, that Princess Padmavati has an awful, awful headache?

Jester: Don't you know, Padminika, that I don't?

Padminika: Hurry, go tell the king. In the meantime I'll get the medicine.

Jester: Where is she?

Padminika: In the Ocean Room—that way. *She points offstage.*

Jester: It's done. In a jiffy. The king shall know of it.

*Padminika and the Jester depart: As the curtain rises, the King enters the main stage, speaking to himself.*

King: She lives in my memory—the tall and graceful daughter of the king of Ujjain, my wife whom the flames killed as frost kills the lotus. I am married again, but she lives in my memory.

Jester (*dashing in, shouting*): Hurry, sir! Princess Padmavati is in bed with an awful headache.

King: Who told you?

Jester: Padminika.

King: Bad news. Where is she?

Act IV

Jester: Padminika said in the Ocean Room.

King: Take me there.

Jester: This way, sir. (*They both walk a short distance.*) This is the Ocean Room, sir.

King: You go in first.

Jester (*entering the room*): Sir, stay back!

King: What's the matter?

Jester: A snake, sir—rolling on the ground. I see him in the light of the lamp.

*The King enters and looks around.* No wonder they call you fool. It's a garland someone dropped, Vasantaka, quivering in the breeze. Can't you see?

Jester (*shamefacedly*): Sir, it's not a snake. But there's no one here. Princess Padmavati seems to have gone away.

King: Gone? She hasn't even come here yet. The bed sheets aren't rumpled. The pillow isn't soiled with the headache ointment. A sick person doesn't just get up and walk away. You know that.

Jester: We could wait here for her.

King: Now you're being sensible. *He sits on the bed.* I'm tired, Vasantaka. Tell me a story.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Jester: You'll have a story. You "hmm" along with me. Like this—'hmm, hmm.'

King: We'll see.

Jester: Well, once upon a time, in a city by the pleasant name of Ujjain, the finest swimming pools belonged to a man called—

King: What!—Ujjain!

Jester: If you don't like Ujjain, we'll tell you another story.

King: No, I love Ujjain. But the memories, Vasantaka! The daughter of the king of Ujjain! When she left her father to be my wife, her tears fell burning on my breast. Such memories, Vasantaka...of her at her music lesson, her fingers suddenly limp, strumming the soundless air....

Jester: We'll change the story. The city is Brahmadatta, where rules a king named Kampilya—

King: What?

Jester: The city is Brahmadatta, where rules a king named Kampilya—

King: You mean the king is Brahmadatta, the city is Kampilya.

Act IV

Jester: The king is Brahmadatta, the city is Kampilya?

King: That's right.

Jester: Wait. I must memorise that. The king is Brahmadatta, the city is Kampilya. *He repeats it over and over again. The king has lain down on the bed.* That's it. Now we can start the story—but he has sound asleep! Whew, it's cold...cold. I'll go get my shawl. *He departs.*

Vasavadatta *enters, dressed as a lady of Avanti. With her is a maid.*

Maid: Hurry. She has a splitting headache.

Vasavadatta: Where is she?

Maid: In the Ocean Room. Come with me. I'll take you there.... Here it is. I'll be back with the medicine shortly. *She leaves.*

Vasavadatta: Fate couldn't be more unkind. Padmavati is now ill—and she the only person who could help my husband to forget his sorrow. *She enters the Ocean Room and looks around.* How careless these girls are! Padmavati is sleeping, with no one to look after her but this lonely lamp. I'll sit by her side in the dark. *She does so.* The breathing is slow and easy. She must be feeling better

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

now. Did she beckon me? I'll lie by her side: it will soothe her. *She lies down beside the king.*

King (*dreaming*): Vasavadatta!

Vasavadatta (*springing up*): Not Padmavati! My husband...has he recognised me? What will happen to Yaugandharayana's plans?

King (*still dreaming*): Vasavadatta...daughter of the king of Avanti.

Vasavadatta: He's talking in his sleep. How sweet to listen to him!

King: My dearest, speak to me.

Vasavadatta: I will, I will.

King: Dearest, are you angry?

Vasavadatta: No, not angry. Unhappy.

King: Come to me, dearest. *He stretches out his arms.*

Vasavadatta: I have stayed here too long. Someone might see me. But before I go...*She lifts his arm, which is hanging partly over the edge of the bed, and places it by his side. Then she leaves.*

King (*wakening suddenly*): Vasavadatta, wait! Did I dream? Was she real?

*Act IV*

Jester (*entering*): You're awake.

King: I have good news for you, Vasantaka.  
Vasavadatta is alive.

Jester: Vasavadatta! She is dead.

King: That's what everyone thinks. But she was here just now. She touched me, she woke me up—then she ran out. Rumanvat must not have known the whole truth when he told me she had been burned in the flames.

Jester: What nonsense! You have been dreaming.  
And my story about the swimming pools of Ujjain has fired your imagination.

King: You are right. I have been dreaming.... Let me dream forever, if it is a dream; let it stay with me forever.

Jester: There's a nymph in the city called Avantika. You must have seen her.

King: No, I saw Vasavadatta's face, her long hair, her dark eyes—I saw the lady of chastity. She touched me here: my arm still trembles with love of her.

Jester: This is all very silly. Let's go in.

Chamberlain (*entering*): Great news, sir! King Darsaka sends you the message that your general, Rumanvat, has arrived with

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

elephants, horses, chariots, and a vast army of soldiers to crush the enemy, Aruni. All preparations for the battle have been made. Only your presence now is needed. We are lucky. The enemy is a divided camp. The Ganga has already been crossed, and our forces are in sight of the kingdom of Vatsa.

**King:** Brilliant. Aruni's end is near. Our arrows shall fall like waves on his ranks, and the elephants and horses shall march triumphantly on the ocean of his sins.

*They all depart.*

CURTAIN

## ACT V

*The Chamberlain enters as the curtain rises, and addresses a Female Guard.*

Chamberlain: Who's on duty here at the golden gate?

Female Guard: I, Sir. Vijaya.

Chamberlain: Listen carefully, Vijaya. Tell King Udayana, who has now won back his lost kingdom, that the chamberlain of the Raivya clan is at the gate and wishes to have audience with him. With the chamberlain is Vasundhara, the nurse of Vasavadatta, who also seeks audience.

Female Guard: This is not the time nor the place for such a message.

Chamberlain: Why, what's wrong?

Female Guard: Nothing's wrong, sir. But this morning when a man was playing the lute, our king heard him and said, "That's Ghoshavati, isn't it?" And the king went up to him and asked where the man had found the lute. "Near the banks of the river Narmada. Take it, sir, if you like it," said the man. The king took it, put it in his lap—

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

and fainted! When he recovered, his face was in tears. "So you have come home, Ghoshavati, at last!" he cried. "But *she* hasn't." So you see, sir, I can't give him a message—in the condition he is in.

Chamberlain: I think you can. Our business has a lot to do with the story you have told us.

Female Guard: I can see him coming down from Princess Padmavati's palace. I shall give him the message.

*The Chamberlain and the Female Guard leave.  
The King enters, carrying a lute and accompanied by the Jester.*

King (*addressing the lute*): Once you rested in the arms of my queen, Vasavadatta—how did you find your way into the lonely and musty forest? Ghoshavati, you are ungrateful. You don't remember the love she showered on you, how she embraced you when we were together, smiled at you and stroked you softly....

Jester: It is not good to be so sad, sir.

King: I know. But this lute kindles my love again. Ghoshavati is here, but *she* is not here. Look. Take this and have it repaired as soon as you can. And bring it back to me.

*Act V*

Jester: Yes, sir. *He takes the lute and departs.*

Female Guard (*entering*): Sir, a chamberlain of the Raivya clan and Vasavadatta's nurse Vasundhara wish to see you. They have been sent by Angaravati. They are waiting at the gate.

King: Ask Padmavati to come here.

*The Female Guard leaves.*

News travels fast!

Padmavati *enters, accompanied by the Female Guard.*

Padmavati: My lord.

King: Padmavati, the guard tells me that a chamberlain of the Raivya clan of Pradyota, together with Vasavadatta's nurse Vasundhara, has come to see me.

Padmavati: It is good news to hear from one's relatives.

King: I am glad you say that. Sit down, Padmavati. It is good of you to treat Vasavadatta's relatives as your own.

Padmavati: You do not mind my sitting next to you when you speak to them?

King: No. Why should I mind?

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Padmavati: I am your second wife, my lord. It may look awkward.

King: It looks more than awkward not to treat one's wife as one's own, especially in front of others.

Padmavati (*sitting down*): I wonder who sends the message, father or mother?

King: I don't know, Padmavati. But my heart is full of apprehension. What will they say? After all, I eloped with her. And I couldn't even give her the protection she needed. I feel like a guilty son in front of a father. *To the FEMALE GUARD.* Show them in.

*The Female Guard goes out and returns with the Chamberlain and Vasundhara.*

Chamberlain: There is no greater joy than visiting an ally, but the death of Princess Vasavadatta hangs like a shadow over our happiness. I bring greetings from King Pradyota, sir.

King: You are welcome here. How is he?

Chamberlain: In excellent health, sir, and hopes you are too.

King (*rising*): What is his wish? His least desire is a command.

Chamberlain: Nobly spoken, sir. King Pradyota says he is happy that you have regained your

*Act V*

lost kingdom. He says fortune was always on the side of the courageous and never smiles on the weak and the hesitant.

King (*sitting down again*): He is kind to me. I remember he brought me up as his own son. Then I eloped with his daughter, and could not look after her well, as you know. Yet he has the same affection for me. Please take my gratitude back to him.

Chamberlain: This lady brings the message of our queen.

King: How is she? I remember she wept when I left : how can I forget?

Vasundhara: She is all right, sir, and hopes all are well here.

King: All well! All well! Well...

Chamberlain: The lady Vasavadatta can never die, sir, if you remember her so lovingly. Death comes to all, sir. The rope snaps, the pitcher falls. Trees, men—they rise and decay. Nothing detains death.

King: You make a mistake, sir. She was my queen. I taught her to play the lute. She lives in me forever.

Vasundhara: My queen sends this message:  
"Vasavadatta is dead, but you are our son-

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

in-law, as dear to us as our sons Gopalaka and Palaka. We wanted you to marry her. That is why we asked you to teach her to play the lute. But you were rash and ran away with her. In your absence we drew your portrait and hers on a plate and performed the wedding ceremony. This is the plate; it is yours now, and it carries our love for you with it."

**King:** A hundred kingdoms couldn't give me the happiness I now feel. I was guilty—yet I am loved.

**Padmavati:** This is the plate?

**Vasundhara:** Yes. *She hands the plate to Padmavati.*

**Padmavati** (*looking at the portraits and speaking to herself*): The face is the face of the lady of Avanti. *Aloud.* Is this a good likeness, my lord?

**King:** Better than a likeness, it is she herself. But where is she now?

**Padmavati:** And this is my husband's portrait?

**Vasundhara:** This one here.

**Padmavati:** What a marvellous resemblance! It must be she.

**King:** You look worried. Is anything wrong?

Act V

Padmavati: There's a lady in the palace who is the exact double of this portrait.

King: You mean this? Vasavadatta's portrait?

Padmavati: Yes, my lord.

King: Send for her—immediately!

Padmavati: She was put in my trust by a Brahmin, who said she was his sister. Her husband has gone abroad, and she avoids strangers. We could let Vasundhara judge if there is a likeness or not.

King: If she is the Brahmin's sister, then she can't be Vasavadatta. Many people look alike. It's quite common.

Female Guard (*entering*): A Brahmin from Ujjain waits at the gate. He has come to take back his sister, whom he placed in Princess Padmavati's charge.

King: Send him in. And, Padmavati, bring the lady here too.

Padmavati *and the Female Guard leave*:  
Yaugandharayana, *disguised as a Brahmin*  
*and accompanied by the Female Guard,*  
*enters.*

Yaugandharayana (*to himself*): I did what I thought was best. I don't know how he will take it.

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Female Guard: This way, sir. The king will see you here.

Yaugandharayana: My blessings, sir.

King: The voice sounds familiar. You say you placed your sister in my wife's charge?

Yaugandharayana: Yes, sir.

King (*to the Female Guard*): Bring his sister here.

*The Female Guard goes out, and in a moment returns, bringing Padmavati and Vasavadatta, who is veiled, with her.*

Padmavati: I have good news for you.

Vasavadatta: What is it?

Padmavati: Your brother has come to take you back.

King: Return her, Padmavati. In front of these witnesses, the noble chamberlain and the respected Vasundhara.

Padmavati: Here is your sister, sir.

Vasundhara (*looking closely at Vasavadatta*): But this is Vasavadatta!

King: What! *Quickly*. Padmavati, take her in.

Yaugandharayana: She is my sister.

King: Sir, do you deny that she is Vasavadatta, the daughter of King Pradyota?

Act V

Yaugandharayana: You are wise and noble, sir. It does not suit your character to take my sister away from me by force.

King: Remove the veil.

Yaugandharayana: My king!

Vasavadatta: My husband!

King: So it's Yaugandharayana. And you are Vasavadatta! Am I dreaming still? I saw you, but you were a dream then....

Yaugandharayana (*falling at the King's feet*): Sir, it is all my fault. Forgive me.

King: You are a shrewd man, Yaugandharayana. Rise. I am grateful to you. Your ruses have pulled us through many difficulties.

Yaugandharayana: I have always done what I thought would be best for you.

Padmavati: I treated you so carelessly, Vasavadatta! *She falls at Vasavadatta's feet.* I did not know.

Vasavadatta (*lifting her*): Please... you embarrass me. It's perfectly all right.

Padmavati: I am grateful to you.

King: And why did you do all this, Yaugandharayana?

*Svapna-vasavadattam*

Yaugandharayana: It was the best way of defending the kingdom of Kausambi—through the marriage alliance with Padmavati's father.

King: Why did you leave her in Padmavati's hands?

Yaugandharayana: Astrologers had predicted Padmavati would be your queen one day.

King: Did Rumanvat know of this?

Yaugandharayana: Sir, it was common knowledge.

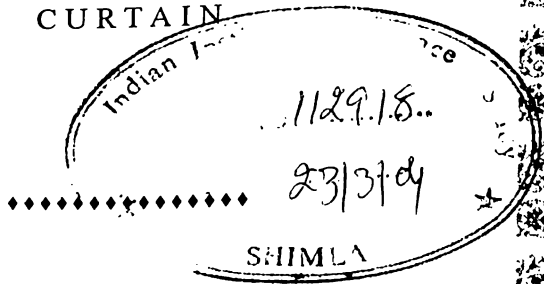
King: The rascal! He tricked me!

Yaugandharayana: Sir, let the Chamberlain and Vasundhara take the good news to King Pradyota.

King: No. We'll all go together. Padmavati will come with us.

*All go out together.*

CURTAIN



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