

THE KADAMBARI OF BANA

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The Kadambari of bana by C. M. Ridding

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C. M. RIDDING

**THE KADAMBARI
OF BANA**

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THE
KĀDAMBARĪ OF BĀṆA.

Translated, with Occasional Omissions,
AND ACCOMPANIED BY A FULL ABSTRACT OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE
ROMANCE BY THE AUTHOR'S SON BHŪSHANĀBHATTA.

BY

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To
MRS. COWELL,
WHO FIRST TOLD ME
THE STORY OF KĀDAMBARĪ,
THIS TRANSLATION
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

* Anēkūnāṇḍīṣṭhīkṛīṭavātsalyena caritena kasya na
bandhutvam adhyāropayasi.

INTRODUCTION.¹

THE story of Kādambarī is interesting for several reasons. It is a standard example of classical prose; it has enjoyed a long popularity as a romance; and it is one of the comparatively few Sanskrit works which can be assigned to a certain date, and so it can serve as a landmark in the history of Indian literature and Indian thought.

Bāṇabhaṭṭa, its author, lived in the reign of Harshavardhana of Thāṇḍar, the great king mentioned in many inscriptions,² who extended his rule over the whole of Northern India, and from whose reign (A.D. 606) dates the Harsha era, used in Nepal. Bāṇa, as he tells us, both in the 'Harsha-Carita' and in the introductory verses of 'Kādambarī,' was a Vātsyāyana Brahman. His mother died while he was yet young, and his father's tender care of him, recorded in the 'Harsha-Carita,'³ was doubtless in his memory as he recorded the unselfish love of Vaiçampāyana's father in 'Kādambarī'

¹ It is needless to give here more than the few facts essential for the understanding of 'Kādambarī,' for the life and times of Bāṇa will probably be treated of in the translation of the 'Harsha-Carita' by Professor Cowell and Mr. Thomas in this series; and Professor Peterson's Introduction to his edition of 'Kādambarī' (Bombay Sanskrit Series, 1889) deals fully with Bāṇa's place in literature. The facts here given are, for the most part, taken from the latter work.

² *E.g.*, the Madhuban grant of Śaśi 25, E. I. i., 67 ff. For this and other chronological references I am indebted to Miss C. M. Duff, who has let me use the MS. of her 'Chronology of India.'

³ For Bāṇa's early life, V. 'Harsha-Carita,' chs. i., ii. I have to thank Mr. F. W. Thomas for allowing me to see the proof-sheets of his translation.

(p. 22). In his youth he travelled much, and for a time 'came into reproach,' by reason of his unsettled life; but the experience gained in foreign lands turned his thoughts homewards, and he returned to his kin, and lived a life of quiet study in their midst. From this he was summoned to the court of King Harsha, who at first received him coldly, but afterwards attached him to his service; and Bāṇa in the 'Harsha-Carita' relates his own life as a prelude to that of his master.

The other works attributed to him are the 'Caṇḍikā-cataka,'¹ or verses in honour of Caṇḍikā; a drama, 'The Pārvatīpariṇaya'; and another, called 'Mukutaṭāḍitaka,' the existence of which is inferred from Guṇavinayagaṇi's commentary on the 'Nalacampū.' Professor Peterson also mentions that a verse of Bāṇa's ('Subhāshitāvali,' 1087) is quoted by Kshemendra in his 'Aucityavicāracareṇ,' with a statement that it is part of a description of Kādambarī's sorrow in the absence of Candrāpīḍa, whence, he adds, 'it would seem that Bāṇa wrote the story of Kādambarī in verse as well as in prose,' and he gives some verses which may have come from such a work.

Bāṇa himself died, leaving 'Kādambarī' unfinished, and his son Bhūshaṇabhaṭṭa took it up in the midst of a speech in which Kādambarī's sorrows are told, and continued the speech without a break, save for a few introductory verses in honour of his father, and in apology for his having undertaken the task, 'as its unfinished state was a grief to the good.' He continued the story on the same plan, and with careful, and, indeed, exaggerated, imitation of his father's style.

The story of 'Kādambarī' is a very complex one, dealing THE PLOT OF as it does with the lives of two heroes, each KĀDAMBARĪ. of whom is reborn twice on earth.

(1-47) A learned parrot, named Vaiṣampāyana, was brought by a Caṇḍāla maiden to King Čūdraka, and told him how it was carried from its birthplace in the Vindhya

¹ Peterson, 'Kādambarī,' pp. 96-98; and 'The Subhāshitāvali,' edited by Peterson (Bombay Sanskrit Series, 1886), pp. 62-66.

Forest to the hermitage of the sage Jābāli, from whom it learnt the story of its former life.

(47-95) Jābāli's story was as follows : Tārāpīḍa, King of Ujjayinī, won by penance a son, Candrāpīḍa, who was brought up with Vaiçampāyana, son of his minister, Çukanāsa. In due time Candrāpīḍa was anointed as Crown Prince, and started on an expedition of world-conquest. At the end of it he reached Kailāsa, and, while resting there, was led one day in a vain chase of a pair of kinnaras to the shores of the Acchoda Lake. (95-141) There he beheld a young ascetic maiden, Mahāçvetā, who told him how she, being a Gandharva princess, had seen and loved a young Brahman Puṇḍarīka; how he, returning her feeling, had died from the torments of a love at variance with his vow; how a divine being had carried his body to the sky, and bidden her not to die, for she should be reunited with him; and how she awaited that time in a life of penance. (141-188) But her friend Kādambarī, another Gandharva princess, had vowed not to marry while Mahāçvetā was in sorrow, and Mahāçvetā invited the prince to come to help her in dissuading Kādambarī from the rash vow. Love sprang up between the prince and Kādambarī at first sight; but a sudden summons from his father took him to Ujjayinī without farewell, while Kādambarī, thinking herself deserted, almost died of grief.

(188-195) Meanwhile news came that his friend Vaiçampāyana, whom he had left in command of the army, had been strangely affected by the sight of the Acchoda Lake, and refused to leave it. The prince set out to find him, but in vain; and proceeding to the hermitage of Mahāçvetā, he found her in despair, because, in invoking on a young Brahman, who had rashly approached her, a curse to the effect that he should become a parrot, she learnt that she had slain Vaiçampāyana. At her words the prince fell dead from grief, and at that moment Kādambarī came to the hermitage.

(195-202) Her resolve to follow him in death was broken by the promise of a voice from the sky that she and

Mahāçvetā should both be reunited with their lovers, and she stayed to tend the prince's body, from which a divine radiance proceeded; while King Tārāpāḍa gave up his kingdom, and lived as a hermit near his son.

(202 to end) Such was Jābālī's tale; and the parrot went on to say how, hearing it, the memory of its former love for Mahāçvetā was reawakened, and, though bidden to stay in the hermitage, it flew away, only to be caught and taken to the Caṇḍāla princess. It was now brought by her to King Çūdraka, but knew no more. The Caṇḍāla maiden thereupon declared to Çūdraka that she was the goddess Lakshmi, mother of Puṇḍarīka or Vaiçampāyana, and announced that the curse for him and Çūdraka was now over. Then Çūdraka suddenly remembered his love for Kādambarī, and wasted away in longing for her, while a sudden touch of Kādambarī restored to life the Moon concealed in the body of Candrāpāḍa, the form that he still kept, because in it he had won her love. Now the Moon, as Candrāpāḍa and Çūdraka, and Puṇḍarīka, in the human and parrot shape of Vaiçampāyana, having both fulfilled the curse of an unsuccessful love in two births on earth, were at last set free, and, receiving respectively the hands of Kādambarī and Mahāçvetā, lived happily over afterwards.

The plot is involved, and consists of stories within each other after the fashion long familiar to Europeans in the 'Arabian Nights'; but the author's skill in construction is shown by the fact that each of the minor stories is essential to the development of the plot, and it is not till quite the end that we see that Çūdraka himself, the hearer of the story, is really the hero, and that his hearing the story is necessary to reawaken his love for Kādambarī, and so at the same time fulfil the terms of the curse that he should love in vain during two lives, and bring the second life to an end by his longing for reunion. It may help to make the plot clear if the threads of it are disentangled. The author in person tells all that happens to Çūdraka (pp. 3-16 and pp. 205 to end). The parrot's tale (pp. 16-

205) includes that of Jābāli (pp. 47-202) concerning Candrāpīḍa, and Vaiçampāyana the Brahman, with the story told by Mahāçvetā (pp. 101-136) of her love for Puṇḍarīka.

The story as told in the Kathā-Sarīt-Sāgara of Somadeva¹ differs in some respects from this. There a Nishāda princess brought to King Sumanas a learned parrot, which told its life in the forest, ended by a hunt in which its father was killed, and the story of its past life narrated

by the hermit Agastya. In this story a prince, Somaprabha, after an early life resembling that of Candrāpīḍa, was led in his pursuit of kinnaras to an ascetic maiden, Manorathaprabhā, whose story is that of Mahāçvetā, and she took him, at his own request, to see the maiden Makarandikā, who had vowed not to marry while her friend was unwed. He was borne through the air by a Vidyādharā, and beheld Makarandikā. They loved each other, and a marriage was arranged between them. The prince, however, was suddenly recalled by his father, and Makarandikā's wild grief brought on her from her parents a curse that she should be born as a Nishāda. Too late they repented, and died of grief; and her father became a parrot, keeping from a former birth as a sage his memory of the Çāstras, while her mother became a sow. Pulastya added that the curse would be over when the story was told in a king's court.

The parrot's tale reminded King Sumanas of his former birth, and on the arrival of the ascetic maiden, sent by Çiva, 'who is merciful to all his worshippers,' he again became the young hermit she had loved. Somaprabha, too, at Çiva's bidding, went to the king's court, and at the sight of him the Nishāda regained the shape of Makarandikā, and became his wife; while the parrot 'left the body of a bird, and went to the home earned by his asceticism.' 'Thus,' the story ends, 'the appointed union of human

¹ Translated by Mr. C. Tawney (Calcutta, 1884), vol. ii., pp. 17-26. Somadeva's date is about A.D. 1063.