Vikramorvasie

or

The Hero and the Nymph
Characters

PURURAVAS, son of Budha and Ila, grandson of the Moon, King of the world, reigning at Pratisthana.
MANAVAKA, a Brahmin, the King’s jester and companion.
LATAVYA, Chamberlain of the King’s seraglio.
CHITRARATH, King of the Gandharvas, musicians of Heaven.
GALAVA and PELAVA, disciples of Bharat, Preceptor of the Arts in Heaven.
AYUS, son of Pururavas.
CHARIOTEER of Pururavas.

THE QUEEN AUSHINARIE, wife of Pururavas and daughter of the King of Kashi.
URVASIE, an Apsara or Nymph of Heaven, born from the thigh of Narayan.
NIPUNIKA, the Queen’s handmaid.

CHITRALEKHA
SAHAJANYA
RAMBHA
MENAKA

Nymphs of Heaven, companions of Urvasie.

SATYAVATIE, a hermitess.

A HUNTRESS.

GIRLS, attendant on the King; AMAZONS.
Act I

INVOCATION

He in Vedanta by the Wise pronounced
Sole Being, who the upper and under world
Pervading overpasses, whom alone
The name of God describes, here applicable
And pregnant — crippled else of force, to others
Perverted — and the Yogins who aspire
To rise above the human death, break in
Breath, soul and senses passionately seeking
The Immutable, and in their own hearts find, —
He, easily by work and faith and love
Attainable, ordain your heavenly weal.

After the invocation the Actor-Manager speaks.

MANAGER
No need of many words.

He speaks into the greenroom.
Hitherto, good friend.

The Assistant-Manager enters.

ASSISTANT
Behold me.

MANAGER
Often has the audience seen
Old dramas by our earlier poets staged;
Therefore today a piece as yet unknown
I will present them, Vikram and the Nymph.
Remind our actors then most heedfully
To con their parts, as if on each success
Depended.
ASSISTANT
I shall do so.

He goes.

MANAGER
And now to you,
O noble audience, I bow down and pray,
If not from kindliness to us your friends
And caterers, yet from pride in the high name
That graces this our plot, heedful attention,
Gentles, to Vikramorvasie, the work
Of Kalidasa.

VOICES
Help! O help, help, help!
Whoever is on the side of Heaven, whoever
Has passage through the paths of level air.

MANAGER
What cry is this that breaks upon our prologue
From upper worlds, most like the wail distressed
Of ospreys, sad but sweet as moan of bees
Drunken with honey in deep summer bloom,
Or the low cry of distant cuckoo? or hear I
Women who move on Heaven’s azure stage
Splendid with rows of seated Gods, and chant
In airy syllables a liquid sweetness?

(after some thought)
Ah, now I have it. She who from the thigh
Of the great tempted sage Narayan sprang
Radiant, Heaven’s nymph, divinest Urvasie,
In middle air from great Coilsa’s lord
Returning, to the enemies of Heaven
Is prisoner; therefore the sweet multitude
Of Apsaras send forth melodious cry
Of pathos and complaint.

He goes.
The Nymphs of Heaven enter, Rambha, Menaka, Sahajanya and many others.

**NYMPHS**

Help, help, O help!
Whoever is on the side of Heaven, whoever
Has passage through the paths of level air.

_Pururavas enters suddenly and with speed
in a chariot with his charioteer._

**PURURAVAS**

Enough of lamentation! I am here,
Ilian Pururavas, from grandiose worship
In Surya’s brilliant house returned. To me,
O women! say ’gainst what ye cry for rescue.

**RAMBHA**

Rescue from Titan violence, O King.

**PURURAVAS**

And what has Titan violence to you
Immortal done of fault, O Heaven’s women?

**MENAKA**

King, hear us.

**PURURAVAS**

Speak.

**MENAKA**

Our sister, our dear sister!
The ornament of Eden and its joy!
Whom Indra by asceticism alarmed
Made use of like a lovely sword to kill
Spiritual longings, the eternal refutation
Of Luxmie’s pride of beauty, Urvasie!
Returning from Cuvera’s halls, O she
Was met, was taken. Cayshy, that dire Titan,  
Who in Hiranyapoor exalts his house,  
Beheld her and in great captivating hands  
Ravished, Chitralekha and Urvasie.  
We saw them captive haled.

**PURURAVAS**  
Say, if you know,  
What region of the air received that traitor?

**SAHAJANYA**  
North-east he fled.

**PURURAVAS**  
Therefore expel dismay.  
I go to bring you back your loved one, if  
Attempt can do it.

**RAMBHA**  
O worthy this of thee!  
O from the Lunar splendour truly sprung!

**PURURAVAS**  
Where will you wait my advent, nymphs of Heaven?

**NYMPHS**  
Upon this summit called the Peak of Gold,  
O King, we shall expect thee.

**PURURAVAS**  
Charioteer,  
Urge on my horses to the far north-east;  
Gallop through Heaven like the wind.

**CHARIOTEER**  
'Tis done.
PURURAVAS
O nobly driven! With speed like this I could
O'ertake Heaven's eagle though he fled before me
With tempest in his vans. How much more then
This proud transgressor against Heaven's King!
Look, charioteer, beneath my sudden car
The crumbling thunder-clouds fly up like dust,
And the wheel's desperate rotation seems
To make another set of whirling spokes.
The plumes upon the horses' heads rise tall,
Motionless like a picture, and the wind
Of our tremendous speed has made the flag
From staff to airborne end straight as if pointing.

They go out in their chariot.

RAMBHĀ
Sisters, the King is gone. Direct we then
Our steps to the appointed summit.

MENAKĀ
Hasten,
O hasten.

ALL
Hasten, O hasten, come, come, come.

They ascend the hill.

RAMBHĀ
And O, will he indeed avail to draw
This stab out of our hearts?

MENAKĀ
Doubt it not, Rambha.

RAMBHĀ
No, Menaka, for not so easily
Are Titans overthrown, my sister.
MENAKA

Rambha,
Remember this is he whom Heaven’s King,
When battle raised its dreadful face, has called
With honour from the middle world of men,
Set in his armèd van, and conquered.

RAMBHA

Here too
I hope that he will conquer.

SAHAJANYA

Joy, sisters, joy!
Look where the chariot of the moon appears,
The Ilian’s great deer-banner rushing up
From the horizon. He would not return
With empty hands, sisters. We can rejoice.

All gaze upwards. Pururavas enters in his chariot
with his charioteer; Urvasie, her eyes closed in terror,
supported on the right arm of Chitralekha.

CHITRALEKHA

Courage, sweet sister, courage.

PURURAVAS

O thou too lovely!
Recall thy soul. The enemies of Heaven
Can injure thee no more; that danger’s over.
The Thunderer’s puissance still pervades the worlds.
O then uplift these long and lustrous eyes
Like sapphire lilies in a pool when dawn
Comes smiling.

CHITRALEKHA

Why does she not yet, alas!
Recover her sweet reason? Only her sighs
Remind us she is living.
PURURAVAS

Too rudely, lady,
Has thy sweet sister been alarmed. For look!
What tremblings of the heart are here revealed.
Watch the quick rise and fall incessantly
That lift between these large magnificent breasts
The flowers of Eden.

CHITRALEKHA

Sister, O put by
This panic. Fie! thou art no Apsara.

PURURAVAS

Terror will not give up his envied seat
On her luxurious bosom soft as flowers;
The tremors in her raiment's edge and little
Heavings and flutterings between her two breasts
Confess him.

Urvasie begins to recover.

(with joy)
Thou art fortunate, Chitralekha!
Thy sister to her own bright nature comes
Once more. So have I seen a glorious night
Delivered out of darkness by the moon,
Nocturnal fire break through with crests of brightness
Its prison of dim smoke. Her beauty, waking
From swoon and almost rescued, to my thoughts
Brings Ganges as I saw her once o'erwhelmed
With roar and ruin of her banks, race wild,
Thickening, then gradually from that turmoil
Grow clear, emerging into golden calm.

CHITRALEKHA

Be glad, my sister, O my Urvasie.
For vanquished are the accursèd Titans, foes
Of the Divine, antagonists of Heaven.
URVASIE (opening her eyes)
Vanquished? By Indra then whose soul can see
Across the world.

CHITRALEKHA
Not Indra, but this King
Whose puissance equals Indra.

URVASIE (looking at Pururavas)
O Titans,
You did me kindness!

PURURAVAS (gazing at Urvasie)
And reason if the nymphs
Tempting Narayan Sage drew back ashamed
When they beheld this wonder from his thigh
Starting. And yet I cannot think of her
Created by a withered hermit cold:
But rather in the process beautiful
Of her creation Heaven’s enchanting moon
Took the Creator’s place, or very Love
Grown all one amorousness, or else the month
Of honey and its days deep-mined with bloom.
How could an aged anchoret, dull and stale
With poring over Scripture and oblivious
To all this rapture of the senses, build
A thing so lovely?

URVASIE
O my Chitralekha,
Our sisters?

CHITRALEKHA
This great prince who slew our fear
Can tell us.
Pururavas
Sad of heart they wait, O beauty!
For with thy sweet ineffugable eyes
Who only once was blessed, even he without thee
Cannot abstain from pining. How then these
Original affections sister-sweet
Rooted in thee?

Urvasie
How courteous is his tongue
And full of noble kindness! Yet what wonder?
Nectar is natural to the moon. O prince,
My heart’s in haste to see once more my loved ones.

Pururavas
Lo, where upon the Peak of Gold they stand
Gazing towards thy face, and with such eyes
Of rapture as when men behold the moon
Emerging from eclipse.

Chitralekha
O sister, see!

Urvasie (looking longingly at the King)
I do and drink in with my eyes my partner
Of grief and pleasure.

Chitralekha (with a smile; significantly)
Sister, who is he?

Urvasie
He? Oh! Rambha I meant and all our friends.

Rambha
He comes with victory. Urvasie’s beside him
And Chitralekha. Now indeed this King
Looks glorious like the moon, when near the twin
Bright asterisms that frame best his light.

MENAKA
In both ways are we blest, our lost dear one
Brought back to us, this noble King returned
Unwounded.

SAHAJANYA
Sister, true. Not easily
Are Titans conquered.

PURURAVAS
Charioteer, descend.
We have arrived the summit.

CHARIOOTEER
As the King
Commands.

PURURAVAS
O I am blest in this descent
Upon unevenness. O happy shock
That threw her great hips towards me. All her sweet shoulder
Pressed mine that thrilled and passioned to the touch.

URVASIE (abashed)
Move yet a little farther to your side,
Sister.

CHITRALEKHA (smiling)
I cannot; there's no room.

RAMBHA
Sisters,
This prince has helped us all. 'Twere only grateful
Should we descend and greet him.
ALL

Let us do it.

_They all approach._

PURURAVAS
Stay, charioteer, the rush of hooves that she
Marrying her sweet-browed eagerness with these
May, mingling with their passionate bosoms, clasp
Her dearest, like the glory and bloom of spring
Hastening into the open arms of trees.

NYMPHS
Hail to the King felicitous who comes
With conquest in his wheels.

PURURAVAS
To you, O nymphs,
As fortunate in your sister’s rescued arms.

_Urvasie descends from the chariot supported on Chitralekha’s arm._

URVASIE
O sisters, sisters, take me to your bosoms.

_All rush upon her and embrace her._
Closer, O closer! hurt me with your breasts!
I never hoped to see again your sweet
Familiar faces.

RAMBHA
Protect a million ages,
Monarch, all continents and every sea!

_Noise within._

CHARIOTEER
My lord, I hear a rumour in the east
And mighty speed of chariots. Lo, one bright
With golden armlet, looming down from Heaven
Like a huge cloud with lightning on its wrist,
Streams towards us.

NYMPHS
Chitrarath! 'tis Chitrarath.

CHITRARATH (approaches the King with great respect)
Hail to the Indra-helper! Fortunate
Pururavas, whose prowess is so ample,
Heaven’s King has grown its debtor.

PURURAVAS
The Gandharva!
Welcome, my bosom’s friend.
They clasp each other’s hands.
What happy cause
Of coming?

CHITRARATH
Indra had heard from Narad's lips
Of Urvasie by Titan Cayshy haled.
He bade us to her rescue. We midway
Heard heavenly bards chanting thy victory,
And hitherward have turned our march. On, friend,
With us to Maghavan and bear before thee
This lovely offering. Great thy service done
To Heaven’s high King; for she who was of old
Narayan’s chief munificence to Indra,
Is now thy gift, Pururavas. Thy arm
Has torn her from a Titan’s grasp.

PURURAVAS
Comrade,
Never repeat it; for if we who are
On Heaven’s side, o’erpower the foes of Heaven,
'Tis Indra’s puissance, not our own. Does not
The echo of the lion’s dangerous roar
Reverberating through the mountain glens
Scatter with sound the elephants? We, O friend,
Are even such echoes.

CHITRARATH
This fits with thy great nature,
For modesty was ever valour’s crown.

PURURAVAS
Not now nor hence is’t seasonable for me,
Comrade, to meet the King of Sacrifice.
Thou, therefore, to the mighty presence lead
This beauty.

CHITRARATH
As thou wilt. With me to Heaven!

URVASIE (aside to Chitralekha)
I have no courage to address my saviour.
Sister, wilt be my voice to him?

CHITRALEKHA (approaching Pururavas)
My lord,
Urvasie thus petitions —

PURURAVAS
What commands
The lady?

CHITRALEKHA
She would have thy gracious leave
To bear into her far immortal heavens
The glory of the great Pururavas
And dwell with it as with a sister.

PURURAVAS (sorrowfully)
Go then;
But go for longer meeting.  

_The Gandharvas and Nymphs_  
_soar up into the sky._

**URVASIE**  
Sister, stay!  
My chain is in this creeper caught. Release it.

**CHITRALEKHA (looking at the King with a smile)**  
Oh, yes, indeed, a sad entanglement!  
I fear you will not easily be loosed.

**URVASIE**  
Do not mock me, sister. Pray you, untwine it.

**CHITRALEKHA**  
Come, let me try. I'll do my possible  
To help you.  

_She busies herself with the chain._

**URVASIE (smiling)**  
Sister, think what thou hast promised  
Even afterwards.

**PURURAVAS (aside)**  
Creeper, thou dost me friendship;  
Thou for one moment holdest from the skies  
Her feet desirable. O lids of beauty!  
O vision of her half-averted face!  

_Urvasie, released, looks at the King, then with a sigh_  
_at her sisters soaring up into the sky._

**CHARIOTEEER**  
O King, thy shaft with the wild voice of storm  
Has hurled the Titans in the salt far sea,  
Avenging injured Heaven, and now creeps back  
Into the quiver, like a mighty snake
Seeking its lair.

Pururavas

Therefore bring near the chariot,
While I ascend.

Charioteer

'Tis done.

The King mounts the chariot.

Pururavas

Shake loose the reins.

Urvasie (gazing at the King, with a sigh, aside)
My benefactor! my deliverer!
Shall I not see thee more?

She goes out with Chitralekha.

Pururavas (looking after Urvasie)

O Love! O Love!
Thou mak’st men hot for things impossible
And mad for dreams. She soars up to the heavens,
Her father’s middle stride, and draws my heart
By force out of my bosom. It goes with her,
Bleeding, as when a wild swan through the sky
Wings far her flight, there dangles in her beak
A dripping fibre from the lotus torn.

They go.
Act II

Scene. — Park of the King’s palace in Pratisthana. — In the background the wings of a great building, near it the gates of the park, near the bounds of the park an arbour and a small artificial hill to the side.

Manavaka enters.

MANAVAKA
Houp! Houp! I feel like a Brahmin who has had an invitation to dinner; he thinks dinner, talks dinner, looks dinner, his very sneeze has the music of the dinner-bell in it. I am simply bursting with the King’s secret. I shall never manage to hold my tongue in that crowd. Solitude’s my only safety. So until my friend gets up from the session of affairs, I will wait for him in this precinct of the House of Terraces.

Nipunika enters.

NIPUNIKA
I am bidden by my lady the King’s daughter of Kashi, “Nipunika, since my lord came back from doing homage to the Sun, he has had no heart for anything. So just go and learn from his dear friend, the noble Manavaka, what is disturbing his mind.” Well and good! but how shall I overreach that rogue, — a Brahmin he calls himself, with the murrain to him! But there! thank Heaven, he can’t keep a secret long; ’tis like a dewdrop on a rare blade of grass. Well, I must hunt him out. O! there stands the noble Manavaka, silent and sad like a monkey in a picture. I will accost him. (approaching) Salutation to the noble Manavaka!

MANAVAKA
Blessing to your ladyship! (aside) Ugh, the very sight of this little
rogue of a tiring-woman makes the secret jump at my throat. I shall burst! I shall split! Nipunika, why have you left the singing lesson and where are you off to?

**NIPUNIKA**
To see my lord the King, by my lady’s orders.

**MANAVAKA**
What are her orders?

**NIPUNIKA**
Noble sir, this is the Queen’s message. “My lord has always been kind and indulgent to me, so that I have become a stranger to grief. He never before disregarded my sorrow” —

**MANAVAKA**
How? how? has my friend offended her in any way?

**NIPUNIKA**
Offended? Why, he addressed my lady by the name of a girl for whom he is pining.

**MANAVAKA (aside)**
What, he has let out his own secret? Then why am I agonizing here in vain? *(aloud)* He called her Urvasie?

**NIPUNIKA**
Yes. Noble Manavaka, who is that Urvasie?

**MANAVAKA**
Urvasie is the name of a certain Apsara. The sight of her has sent the King mad. He is not only tormenting the life out of my lady, but out of me too with his aversion to everything but moaning.

**NIPUNIKA (aside)**
So! I have stormed the citadel of my master’s secret. *(aloud)* What am I to say to the Queen?
MANAVAKA
Nipunika, tell my lady with my humble regards that I am en-
deavouring my best to divert my friend from this mirage and I
will not see her ladyship till it is done.

NIPUNIKA
As your honour commands.

BARDS (within)
Victory, victory to the King!
The Sun in Heaven for ever labours; wide
His beams dispel the darkness to the verge
Of all this brilliant world. The King too toils,
Rescuing from night and misery and crime
His people. Equal power to these is given
And labour, the King on earth, the Sun in Heaven.

The brilliant Sun in Heaven rests not from toil;
Only at high noon in the middle cusp
And azure vault the great wheels slacken speed
A moment, then resume their way; thou too
In the mid-moment of daylight lay down
Thy care, put by the burden of a crown.

MANAVAKA
Here’s my dear friend risen from the session. I will join him.
He goes out, then re-enters with Pururavas.

PURURAVAS (sighing)
No sooner seen than in my heart she leaped.
O easy entrance! since the banded Love
With his unerring shaft had made the breach
Where she came burning in.
MANAVAKA (aside) Alas the poor
King’s daughter of Kashi!

PURURAVAS (looking steadfastly at him) Hast thou kept thy trust, —
My secret?

MANAVAKA (depressed)
Ah! that daughter of a slave
Has overreached me. Else he would not ask
In just that manner.

PURURAVAS (alarmed)
What now? Silence?

MANAVAKA Why, sir,
It’s this, I’ve padlocked so my tongue that even
To you I could not give a sudden answer.

PURURAVAS ’Tis well. O how shall I beguile desire?

MANAVAKA Let’s to the kitchen.

PURURAVAS Why, what’s there?

MANAVAKA What’s there?
The question! From all quarters gathered in
Succulent sweets and fivefold eatableness,
Music from saucepan and from frying-pan,
The beauty of dinner getting ready. There’s
A sweet beguiler to your emptiness!
PURURAVAS (smiling)
For you whose heart is in your stomach. I
Am not so readily eased who fixed my soul
Upon what I shall hardly win.

MANAVAKA
Not win?
Why, tell me, came you not within her sight?

PURURAVAS
What comfort is in that?

MANAVAKA
When she has seen you,
How is she hard to win?

PURURAVAS
O your affection
Utters mere partiality.

MANAVAKA
You make me
Desperate to see her. Why, sir, she must be
A nonpareil of grace. Like me perhaps?

PURURAVAS
Who could with words describe each perfect limb
Of that celestial whole? Take her in brief,
O friend, for she is ornament’s ornament,
And jewels cannot make her beautiful.
They from her body get their grace. And when
You search the universe for similes,
Her greater beauty drives you to express
Fair things by her, not her by lesser fairness:
So she’s perfection’s model.
Kalidasa: Vikramorvasie – Act II

MANAVAKA
No wonder then,
With such a shower of beauty, that you play
The rainbird open-mouthed to let drops glide
Graciously down his own particular gullet.
But whither now?

PURURAVAS
When love grows large with yearning,
He has no sanctuary but solitude.
I pray you, go before me to the park.

MANAVAKA (aside)
Oh God, my dinner! There’s no help. (aloud) This way.
Lo, here the park’s green limit. See, my lord,
How this fair garden sends his wooing breeze
To meet his royal guest.

PURURAVAS
O epithet
Most apt. Indeed this zephyr in fond arms
Impregnating with honey spring-creeper
And flattering with his kiss the white May-bloom,
Seems to me like a lover girl-divided
Between affection smooth and eager passion.

MANAVAKA
May like division bless your yearning, sir.
We reach the garden’s gate. Enter, my lord.

PURURAVAS
Enter thou first. O! I was blindly sanguine,
By refuge in this flowery solitude
Who thought to heal my pain. As well might swimmer
Hurled onward in a river’s violent hands
Oppose that roaring tide, as I make speed
Hither for my relief.
MANAVAKA
And wherefore so?

PURURAVAS
Was passion not enough to torture me,
Still racking the resistless mind with thoughts
Of unattainable delight? But I
Must add the mango-trees' soft opening buds,
And hurt myself with pallid drifting leaves,
And with the busy zephyr wound my soul.

MANAVAKA
Be not so full of grief. For Love himself
Will help you soon to your extreme desire.

PURURAVAS
I seize upon thy word,—the Brahmin's speech
That never can be false!

MANAVAKA
See what a floral
Green loveliness expresses the descent
And rosy incarnation of the spring.
Do you not find it lovely?

PURURAVAS
Friend, I do.
I study it tree by tree and leaf by leaf.
This courbouc's like a woman’s rosy nail,
But darkens to the edge; heavy with crimson,
Yon red asoka breaking out of bud
Seems all on fire; and here the cary mounting
Slight dust of pollen on his stamen-ends
Clusters with young sweet bloom. Methinks I see
The infant honeyed soul of spring, half-woman,
Grow warm with bud of youth.
MANAVAKA

This arbour, green,
With blossoms loosened by the shock of bees
Upon a slab of costly stone prepares
With its own hands your cushioned honours. Take
The courtesy.

PURURAVAS

As you will.

MANAVAKA

Here sit at ease.
The sensitive beauty of the creepers lax
Shall glide into your soul and gently steal
The thought of Urvasie.

PURURAVAS

O no, mine eyes
Are spoilt by being indulged in her sweet looks,
And petulantly they reject all feebler
Enchantings, even the lovely embowering bloom
Of these grace-haunted creepers bending down
To draw me with their hands. I am sick for her.
Rather invent some way to my desire.

MANAVAKA

Oh rare! when Indra for Ahalya pined
A cheapjack was his counsellor; you as lucky
Have me for your ally. Mad all! mad all!

PURURAVAS

Not so! affection edging native wit,
Some help it’s sure to find for one it loves.

MANAVAKA

Good, I will cogitate. Disturb me not
With your love-moanings.
PURURAVAS (*his right arm throbbing; aside*)

Her face of perfect moonlight
Is all too heavenly for my lips. How canst thou then
Throb expectation in my arm, O Love?
Yet all my heart is suddenly grown glad
As if it had heard the feet of my desire.

*He waits hopefully. There enter in the sky
Urvasie and Chitralekha.*

CHITRALEKHA

Will you not even tell me where we go?

URVASIE

Sister, when I upon the Peak of Gold
Was stayed from Heaven by the creeper’s hands,
You mocked me then. And have you now to ask
Whither it is I go?

CHITRALEKHA

To seek the side
Of King Pururavas you journey then?

URVASIE

Even so shameless is your sister’s mind.

CHITRALEKHA

Whom did you send before, what messenger
To him you love?

URVASIE

My heart.

CHITRALEKHA

O yet think well,
Sister; do not be rash.
URVASIE

Love sends me, Love
Compels me. How can I then think?

CHITRALEKHA

To that
I have no answer.

URVASIE

Then take me to him soon.
Only let not our way be such as lies
Within the let of hindrance.

CHITRALEKHA

Fear not that.
Has not the great Preceptor of the Gods
Taught us to wear the crest invincible?
While that is bound, not any he shall dare
Of all the Heaven-opposing faction stretch
An arm of outrage.

URVASIE (abashed)

Oh true! my heart forgot.

CHITRALEKHA

Look, sister! For in Ganges’ gliding waves
Holier by influx of blue Yamuna,
The palace of the great Pururavas,
Crowning the city with its domes, looks down
As in a glass at its own mighty image.

URVASIE

All Eden to an earthly spot is bound.
But where is he who surely will commiserate
A pining heart?
CHITRALEKHA
This park which seems one country
With Heaven, let us question. See, the King
Expects thee, like the pale new-risen moon
Waiting for moonlight.

URVASIE
How beautiful he is, —
Fairer than when I saw him first!

CHITRALEKHA
'Tis true.
Come, we will go to him.

URVASIE
I will not yet.
Screened in with close invisibility,
I will stand near him, learn what here he talks
Sole with his friend.

CHITRALEKHA
You’ll do your will always.

MANAVAKA
Courage! your difficult mistress may be caught,
Two ways.

URVASIE (jealously)
O who is she, that happy she,
Being wooed by such a lover, preens herself
And is proud?

CHITRALEKHA
Why do you mock the ways of men
And are a Goddess?
URVASIE
I dare not, sweet, I fear
To learn too suddenly my own misfortune,
If I use heavenly eyes.

MANAVAKA
Listen, you dreamer!
Are you deaf? I tell you I have found a way:

PURURAVAS
Speak on.

MANAVAKA
Woo sleep that marries men with dreams,
Or on a canvas paint in Urvasie
And gaze on her for ever.

URVASIE (aside)
O sinking coward heart, now, now revive.

PURURAVAS
And either is impossible. For look!
How can I, with this rankling wound of love,
Call to me sleep who marries men with dreams?
And if I paint the sweetness of her face,
Will not the tears, before it is half done,
Blurring my gaze with mist, blot the dear vision?

CHITRALEKHA
Heardst thou?

URVASIE
I have heard all. It was too little
For my vast greed of love.

MANAVAKA
Well, that’s my stock
Of counsel.

PURURAVAS (sighing)
Oh me! she knows not my heart’s pain,
Or knowing it, with those her heavenly eyes
Scorns my poor passion. Only the arrowed Love
Is gratified tormenting with her bosom
My sad, unsatisfied and pale desire.

CHITRALEKHA
Heardst thou, sister?

URVASIE
He must not think so of me!
I would make answer, sister, but to his face
I have not hardihood. Suffer me then,
To trust to faery birch-leaf mind-created
My longing.

CHITRALEKHA
It is well. Create and write.

Urvasie writes in a passion of timidity and excitement, then throws the leaf between Pururavas and Manavaka.

MANAVAKA
Murder! murder! I’m killed! I’m dead! help! help!
(looking)
What’s this? a serpent’s skin come down to eat me?

PURURAVAS (looks closely and laughs)
No serpent’s slough, my friend, only a leaf
Of birch-tree with a scroll of writing traced on it.

MANAVAKA
Perhaps the invisible fair Urvasie
Heard you complain and answers.
PURURAVAS
Nothing can seem impossible.

He takes the leaf and reads it to himself, then with joy,
O friend,
How happy was your guess!

MANAVAKA
I told you so.
The Brahmin’s speech! Read, read! aloud, if it please you.

URVASIE (aside)
The Brahmin has his own urbanity!

PURURAVAS
Listen.

MANAVAKA
I am all ears.

PURURAVAS (reading aloud)
“My master and my King!
Were I what thy heart thinks and knows me not,
Scorning thy love, would then the soft-winged breeze
Of deathless gardens and the unfading flowers
That strew the beds of Paradise, to me
Feel fire!”

URVASIE
What will he say now?

CHITRALEKHA
What each limb,
That is a drooping lotus-stalk with love,
Has said already.
MANAVAKA
You’re consoled, I hope?
Don’t tell me what you feel. I’ve felt the same
When I’ve been hungry and one popped in on me
With sweetmeats in a tray.

PURURAVAS
Consoled! a word
How weak! I con this speaking of my sweet,
This dear small sentence full of beautiful meaning,
This gospel of her answering love, and feel
Her mouth upon my mouth and her soft eyes
Swimming and large gaze down into my own,
And touch my lifted lids with hers.

URVASIE
O even
Such sweetness feels thy lover.

PURURAVAS
Friend, my finger
Moistening might blot the lines. Do thou then hold
This sweet handwriting of my love.

He gives the leaf to Manavaka.

MANAVAKA
But tell me.
Why does your mistress, having brought to bloom
Your young desire, deny its perfect fruit?

URVASIE
O sister, my heart flutters at the thought
Of going to my lord. While I cajole
And strengthen the poor coward, show yourself,
Go to him, tell him all that I may speak.
CHITRALEKHA
I will.

_She becomes visible and approaches the King._
Hail, lord our King.

PURURAVAS (joyfully)
O welcome, welcome!

_He looks around for Urvasie._

Yet, fair one, as the Yamuna not mixed
With Ganges, to the eye that saw their beauty
Of wedded waters, seems not all so fair,
So thou without thy sister givest not
That double delight.

CHITRALEKHA
First is the cloud’s dim legion
Seen in the heavens; afterwards comes the lightning.

MANAVAKA (aside)
What! this is not the very Urvasie?
Only the favourite sister of that miracle?

PURURAVAS
Here sit down, fairest.

CHITRALEKHA
Let me first discharge
My duty. Urvasie by me bows down
Her face thus to her monarch’s feet, imploring—

PURURAVAS
Rather commanding.

CHITRALEKHA
She whom in Titan hands
Afflicted thou didst pity, thou didst rescue,
Now needs much more thy pity, not by hands
Titan, but crueler violence of love
Oppressed,—the sight of thee her sudden cause.

PURURAVAS
O Chitralekha, her thou tellst me of
Passionate for me. Hast thou not eyes to know
Pururavas in anguish for her sake?
One prayer both pray to Kama, “Iron with iron
Melts in fierce heat; why not my love with me?”

CHITRALEKHA (returning to Urvasie)
Come, sister, to your lord. So much his need
Surpasses yours, I am his ambassador.

URVASIE (becoming visible)
How unexpectedly hast thou with ease
Forsook me!

CHITRALEKHA (with a smile)
In a moment I shall know
Who forsakes whom, sister. But come away
And give due greeting.

Urvasie approaches the King fearfully and
bows down, then low and bashfully.

URVASIE
Conquest to the King!

PURURAVAS
I conquer, love, indeed, when thy dear lips
Give greeting to me, vouchsafed to no mortal
But Indra only.

He takes her by both hands and makes her sit down.

MANAVAKA
I am a mighty Brahmin and the friend
Of all earth’s lord. O’erlook me not entirely.
Urvasie smiles and bows to him.

Peace follow you and keep you.

MESSENGER OF THE GODS (cries from within)
Chiṭralekha, urge haste on Urvasie.
This day the wardens of the ancient worlds
And the great King of Heaven himself will witness
That piece where all the passions live and move,
Quickened to gracious gesture in the action
Deposed in you by Bharat Sage, O sisters.

All listen, Urvasie sorrowfully.

CHITRALEKHA
Thou hearst the Messenger of Heaven? Take leave,
Sweet, of the King.

URVASIE
I cannot speak!

CHITRALEKHA
My liege,
My sister not being lady of herself
Beseeches your indulgence. She would be
Without a fault before the Gods.

PURURAVAS (articulating with difficulty)
Alas!
I must not wish to hinder you when Heaven
Expects your service. Only do not forget
Pururavas.

Urvasie goes with her sister, still looking
backwards towards the King.

O she is gone! my eyes
Have now no cause for sight: they are worthless balls
Without an object.
MANAVAKA
Why, not utterly.
He is about to give the birch-leaf.

There’s — Heavens! 'tis gone! it must have drifted down,
While I, being all amazed with Urvasie,
Noticed nothing.

PURURAVAS
What is it thou wouldst say?
There is — ?

MANAVAKA
No need to droop your limbs and pine.
Your Urvasie has to your breast been plucked
With cords of passion, knots that will not slacken
Strive as she may.

PURURAVAS
My soul tells me like comfort.
For as she went, not lady of her limbs
To yield their sweets to me for ever, yet
Her heart, which was her own, in one great sob
From twixt two trembling breasts shaken with sighs
Came panting out. I hear it throb within me.

MANAVAKA (aside)
Well, my heart’s all a-twitter too. Each moment
I think he is going to mention the damned birch-leaf.

PURURAVAS
With what shall I persuade mine eyes to comfort?
The letter!

MANAVAKA (searching)
What! Hullo! It's gone! Come now,
It was no earthly leaf; it must have gone
Flying behind the skirts of Urvasie.
PURURAVAS *(bitterly, in vexation)*
Will you then never leave your idiot trick
Of carelessness? Search for it.

MANAVAKA *(getting up)*
Oh, well! well!
It can’t be far. Why, here it is — or here — or here.
*While they search, the Queen enters, with her attendants and Nipunika.*

AUSHINARIE
Now, maiden, is’t true thou tellst me? Sawst thou really
My lord and Manavaka approach the arbour?

NIPUNIKA
I have not told my lady falsehood ever
That she should doubt me.

AUSHINARIE
Well, I will lurk thick-screened
With hanging creepers and surprise what he
Disburdens from his heart in his security.
So I shall know the truth.

NIPUNIKA *(sulkily)*
Well, as you please. *They advance.*

AUSHINARIE *(looking ahead)*
What’s yonder like a faded rag that lightly
The southern wind guides towards us?

NIPUNIKA
It is a birch-leaf.
There’s writing on it; the letters, as it rolls,
Half show their dinted outlines. Look, it has caught
Just on your anklet’s spike. I’ll lift and read.
She disengages the leaf.

AUSHINARIE
Silently first peruse it; if 'tis nothing
Unfit for me to know, then I will hear.

NIPUNIKA
It is, oh, it must be that very scandal.
Verses they seem and penned by Urvasie,
And to my master. Manavaka’s neglect
Has thrown it in our hands.

Laughs.

AUSHINARIE
Tell me the purport.

NIPUNIKA
I’ll read the whole. “My master and my King!
Were I what thy heart thinks and knows me not,
Scorning thy love, would then the soft-winged breeze
Of deathless gardens and unfading flowers
That strew the beds of Paradise, to me
Feel fire!”

AUSHINARIE
So! by this dainty love-letter,
He is enamoured then, and of the nymph.

NIPUNIKA
It’s plain enough.

They enter the arbour.

MANAVAKA
What’s yonder to the wind
Enslaved, that flutters on the parkside rockery?
PURURAVAS (rising)  
Wind of the south, thou darling of the Spring,  
Seize rather on the flowery pollen stored  
By months of fragrance, that gold dust of trees.  
With this thou mightest perfume all thy wings.  
How wilt thou profit, snatching from me, O wind,  
My darling’s dear handwriting, like a kiss  
All love? When thou didst woo thine Anjana,  
Surely thou knewest lovers’ dying hearts  
Are by a hundred little trifles kept,  
All slight as this!

NIPUNIKA  
See, mistress, see! A search  
In progress for the leaf.

AUSHINARIE  
Be still.

MANAVAKA  
Alas!  
I was misled with but a peacock’s feather,  
Faded, a saffron splendour of decay.

PURURAVAS  
In every way I am undone.

AUSHINARIE (approaching suddenly)  
My lord,  
Be not so passionate; here is your dear letter.

PURURAVAS (confused)  
The Queen! O welcome!

MANAVAKA (aside)  
Ill come, if ’twere convenient  
To tell the truth.
PURURAVAS (aside)  
What shall I do now, friend,  
Or say?

MANAVAKA (aside)  
Much you will say! A thief red-handed  
Caught with his swag!

PURURAVAS (aside)  
Is this a time for jesting?  
(aloud)  
Madam, it was not this I sought but other,  
A record of state, a paper that I dropped.

AUSHINARIE  
Oh, you do well to hide your happiness.

MANAVAKA  
My lady, hurry on His Majesty’s dinner.  
When bile accumulates, dinner does the trick.

AUSHINARIE  
A noble consolation for his friend  
The Brahmin finds! Heardst thou, Nipunika?

MANAVAKA  
Why, madam, even a goblin is appeased  
By dinner.

PURURAVAS  
Fool! by force you’d prove me guilty.

AUSHINARIE  
Not yours the guilt, my lord! I am in fault  
Who force my hated and unwelcome face  
Upon you. But I go. Nipunika,  
Attend me.
She is departing in wrath.

PURURAVAS (following her)
Guilty I am. O pardon, pardon!
O look on me more kindly. How can a slave
Be innocent, when whom he should please is angry?

He falls at her feet.

AUSHINARIE (aside)
I am not so weak-minded as to value
Such hollow penitence. And yet the terror
Of that remorse I know that I shall feel
If I spurn his kindness, frightens me — but no!

She goes out with Nipunika and attendants.

MANAVAKA
She has rushed off like a torrent full of wrath.
Rise, rise! she’s gone.

PURURAVAS (rising)
O she did right to spurn me.
Most dulcet words of lovers, sweetest flatteries,
When passion is not there, can find no entrance
To woman’s heart; for she knows well the voice
Of real love, but these are stones false-coloured
Rejected by the jeweller’s practised eye.

MANAVAKA
This is what you should wish! The eye affected
Brooks not the flaming of a lamp too near.

PURURAVAS
You much misjudge me. Though my heart’s gone out
To Urvasie, affection deep I owe
My Queen. But since she scorned my prostrate wooing,
I will have patience till her heart repent.
MANAVAKA
Oh, hang your patience! keep it for home consumption.
Mine’s at an end. Have some faint mercy instead
And save a poor starved Brahmin’s life. It’s time
For bath and dinner! dinner!!

PURURAVAS (looking upward)
’Tis noon. The tired
And heated peacock sinks to chill delight
Of water in the tree-encircling channel,
The bee divides a crimson bud and creeps
Into its womb; there merged and safe from fire,
He’s lurking. The duck too leaves her blazing pool
And shelters in cold lilies on the bank,
And in yon summer-house weary of heat
The parrot from his cage for water cries.

They go.
Act III

Scene I. — Hermitage of the Saint Bharat in Heaven.  
Galava and Pelava.

GALAVA
Pelava, thee the Sage admitted, happier  
Chosen, to that great audience in the house  
Of highest Indra, — I meanwhile must watch  
The sacred flame; inform my absence. Was  
The divine session with the acting pleased?

PELAVA
Of pleased I know not; this I well could see  
They sat all lost in that poetic piece  
Of Saraswatie, “Luxmie’s Choice”, — breathlessly  
Identified themselves with every mood.  
But —

GALAVA
Ah, that but! It opens doors to censure.

PELAVA
Yes, Urvasie was heedless, missed her word.

GALAVA
How? how?

PELAVA
She acted Luxmie; Menaka  
Was Varunie; who asking, “Sister, see,  
The noble and the beautiful of Heaven,  
And Vishnu and the guardians of the worlds.
To whom does thy heart go mid all these glories?” —
Urvasie should have answered “Purushottam”,
But from her lips “Pururavas” leaped forth.

GALAVA
Our organs are the slaves of fate and doom!
Was not the great Preceptor angry?

PELAVA
Yes;
He cursed her, but high Indra blessed.

GALAVA
What blessing?

PELAVA
“Since thou hast wronged my teaching and my fame,
For thee no place in Heaven”, — so frowned the Sage.
Heaven’s monarch marked her when the piece was ended,
Drooping, her sweet face bowed with shame, and said,
With gracious brows, “Since thou hast fixed thy heart
Upon my friend and strong ally in war,
I will do both a kindness. Go to him
And love and serve him as thy lord until
A child is got in thee and he behold
His offspring’s face.”

GALAVA
O nobly this became
Indra; he knows to value mighty hearts.

PELAVA (looking at the Sun)
Look, in our talk if we have not transgressed
Our teacher’s hour for bathing. Galava,
We should be at his side.
GALAVA

Let us make haste.

They go out.
Scene II. — Outside the palace of Pururavas, beneath the House of Gems. The terrace of the House of Gems with a great staircase leading up to it.

The Chamberlain Latavya enters.

LATAVYA (sighing)
All other men when life is green and strong
Marry and toil and get them wealth, then, aging,
Their sons assume the burden, they towards rest
Their laboured faces turn. But us for ever
Service, a keyless dungeon still renewed,
Wears down; and hard that service is which keeps
O’er women ward and on their errands runs.
Now Kashi’s daughter, careful of her vow,
Commands me, “I have put from me, Latavya,
The obstinacy of offended love
And wooed my husband through Nipunika.
Thou too entreat him.” Therefore I linger here
Waiting till the King’s greatness swiftly come,
His vespers worship done. It dims apace.
How beautifully twilight sits and dreams
Upon these palace walls! The peacocks now
Sit on their perches, drowsed with sleep and night,
Like figures hewn in stone. And on the roof
The fluttering pigeons with their pallid wings
Mislead the eye, disguised as rings of smoke
That from the window-ways have floated out
Into the evening. In places flower-bestrwn
The elders of the high seraglio, gentle souls
Of holy manners, set the evening lamps,
Dividing darkness; flames of auspice burn.
The King! I hear the sound of many feet,
Ringed round with torches he appears, his girls
Hold up with young fair arms. O form august
Like Mainak, when as yet the hills had wings,
Moving, and the slim trees along its ridge
Flickered with vermeil shaken blooms. Just here
I’ll wait him, in the pathway of his glance.

Enter Pururavas, surrounded by girl attendants
carrying torches; with him Manavaka.

PURURAVAS (aside)
Day passes with some pale attempt at calm,
For then work walls the mind from the fierce siege
Of ever-present passion. But how shall I
Add movement to the tardy-footed night,
The long void hours by no distraction winged?

LATAVYA (approaching)
Long live the King! My lady says, “The moon
Tonight in splendour on the House of Jewels
Rises like a bright face. On the clear terrace,
My husband by my side, I would await
With Rohinie, his heavenly fair delight,
The God’s embracings.”

PURURAVAS
What the Queen wills, was ever
My law, Latavya.

LATAVYA
So I’ll tell my lady.

He goes.

PURURAVAS
Think you in very truth for her vow’s sake
My lady makes this motion?

MANAVAKA
Rather I deem
’Tis her remorse she cloaks with holy vows,
Atoning thus for a prostration scorned.
PURURAVAS
O true! the proud and loving hearts of women,
Who have their prostrate dear ones spurned, repenting
Are plagued with sweet accusing memories
Of eyes that ask forgiveness, outstretched hands,
Half-spoken words and touches on their feet
That travel to the heart. Precede me then
To the appointed terrace.

MANAVAKA
Look, my lord,
The crystal stairs roll upward like bright waves
On moonlit Ganges; yonder the terrace sleeps
Wide-bosomed to the cold and lovely eve.

PURURAVAS
Precede me; we'll ascend.

They ascend to the terrace.

MANAVAKA
The moon is surely
Upon the verge of rise; swiftly the east
Empties of darkness, and the horizon seems
All beautiful and brightening like a face.

PURURAVAS
O aptly said! Behind the peak of rise
The hidden moon, pushing black night aside,
Precedes himself with herald lustres. See!
The daughter of the imperial East puts back
The blinding tresses from her eyes, and smiles,
And takes with undimmed face my soul.

MANAVAKA
Hurrah!
The king of the twice-born has risen all white
And round and luscious like a ball of sugar.
PURURAVAS (smiling)
A glutton’s eloquence is ever haunted
With images of the kitchen.

(bowing with folded hands)
Hail, God that rulest
The inactive night! O settler with the sun
For ritual holy, O giver to the Gods
And blessed fathers dead of nectarous wine,
O slayer of the vasty glooms of night,
Whose soul of brightness crowns the Almighty’s head,
O moon, all hail! accept thy offspring’s prayer.

MANAVAKA
Well now, your grandpapa has heard your vows;
You’ll take it from a Brahmin’s mouth, through whom
Even he may telepath his message. So,
That’s finished. Now sit down and give me a chance
Of being comfortable.

PURURAVAS (sitting down, then looking at his attendants)
The moon is risen;
These torches are a vain reiteration
Of brightness. Ladies, rest.

ALL
Our lord commands us.

They go.

PURURAVAS
It is not long before my lady comes.
So, let me, while we yet are lonely here,
Unburden me of my love-ravaged thoughts.

MANAVAKA
They are visible to the blind. Take hope and courage
By thinking of her equal love.
PURURAVAS
I do;
And yet the pain within my heart is great.
For as a mighty river whose vast speed
Stumbles within a narrow pass of huge
And rugged boulders, chides his uncouth bed,
Increasing at each check, even so does love,
His joy of union stinted or deferred,
Rebel and wax a hundredfold in fire.

MANAVAKA
So your love-wasted limbs increase their beauty,
They are a sign you soon will clasp your love.

PURURAVAS
O friend, as you my longing heaviness
Comfort with hopeful words, my arm too speaks
In quick auspicious throbs.

He looks with hope up to the sky.

MANAVAKA
A Brahmin’s word!
There enters in the air Chitralekha
with Urvasie in trysting-dress.

URVASIE (looking at herself)
Sister, do you not think my trysting-dress,
The dark-blue silk and the few ornaments,
Becomes me vastly? Do you not approve it?

CHITRALEKHA
O inexpressibly! I have no words
To praise it. This I’ll say; it makes me wish
I were Pururavas.

URVASIE
Since Love himself
Inspires you, bring me quickly to the dwelling
Of that high beautiful face.

CHITRALEKHA

Look, we draw near.
Your lover’s house lifts in stupendous mass,
As it were mountain Coilas, to the clouds.

URVASIE

Look, sister, with the eye of Gods and know
Where is that robber of my heart and what
His occupation?

CHITRALEKHA (aside, with a smile)

I will jest with her.

(aloud)
I see him. He, in a sweet region made
For love and joy, possesses with desire
The body and the bosom of his love.

URVASIE (despairingly)
Happy that woman, whoso’er she be!

CHITRALEKHA

Why, sweet faint-hearted fool, in whom but thee
Should his thoughts joy?

URVASIE (with a sigh of relief)

Alas, my heart perverse
Will doubt.

CHITRALEKHA

Here on the terraced House of Gems
The King is with his friend sole-sitting. Then,
We may approach.

They descend.
PURURAVAS
O friend, the widening night
And pangs of love keep pace in their increase.

URVASIE
Sister, my heart is torn with apprehension
Of what his words might mean. Let us, ourselves
Invisible, hear their unfettered converse.
My fears might then have rest.

CHITRALEKHA
Good.

MANAVAKA
Take the moonbeams
Whose pregnant nectar comforts burning limbs.

PURURAVAS
But my affliction’s not remediable
With such faint medicines. Neither smoothest flowers,
Moonlight nor sandal visiting every limb,
Nor necklaces of cool delightful pearl,
Only Heaven’s nymph can perfectly expel
With bliss, or else —

URVASIE (clutching at her bosom with her hand)
O me! who else? who else?

PURURAVAS
Speech secret full of her unedge my pangs.

URVASIE
Heart that left me to flutter in his hands,
Now art thou for that rashness recompensed!

MANAVAKA
Yes, I too when I cannot get sweet venison
And hunger for it, often beguile my belly
With celebrating all its savoury joys.

PURURAVAS
Your belly-loves, good friend, are always with you
And ready to your gulp.

MANAVAKA
You too shall soon
Possess your love.

PURURAVAS
My friend, I have strange feeling.

CHITRALEKHA
Hearken, insatiable, exacting, hearken,
And be convinced!

MANAVAKA
What feeling?

PURURAVAS
This I feel,
As if this shoulder by her shoulder pressed
In the car’s shock bore all my sum of being,
And all this frame besides were only weight
Cumbering the impatient earth.

CHITRALEKHA
Yet you delay!

URVASIE (suddenly approaching Pururavas)
O me! sister!

CHITRALEKHA
What is it now?
URVASIE

I am
Before him, and he does not care!

CHITRALEKHA (smiling)

O thou,
All passionate unreasoning haste! Thou hast not
Put off as yet invisibility.

VOICE (within)

This way, my lady.
All listen, Urvasie and Chitralekha are despondent.

MANAVAKA (in dismay)

Hey? The Queen is here?
Keep watch upon your tongue.

PURURAVAS

You first discharge
Your face of conscious guilt.

URVASIE

Sister, what now?

CHITRALEKHA

Be calm. We are unseen. This princess looks
As for a vow arrayed, nor long, if so,
Will tarry.

As she speaks, the Queen and Nipunika enter
with attendants carrying offerings.

AUSHINARIE

How does yonder spotted moon
Flush with new beauty, O Nipunika,
At Rohinie’s embraces.
NIPUNIKA
So too with you,
Lady, my lord looks fairer than himself.

MANAVAKA
The Queen, my lord, looks very sweet and gracious,
Either because I know she’ll give me sweetmeats
Or ’tis a sign of anger quite renounced,
And from your memory to exile her harshness
She makes her vow an instrument.

PURURAVAS
Good reasons both;

(smiling)
Yet to my humble judgment the poor second
Has likelier hue. For she in gracious white
Is clad and sylvanly adorned with flowers,
Her raven tresses spangled with young green
Of sacred grass. All her fair body looks
Gentle and kind, its pomp and pride renounced
For lovely meekness to her lord.

AUSHINARIE (approaching)
My husband!

ATTENDANT
Hail to our master!

MANAVAKA
Peace attend my lady.

PURURAVAS
Welcome.

He takes her hand and draws her down on a seat.

URVASIE
By right this lady bears the style
Of Goddess and of Empress, since no whit
Her noble majesty of fairness yields
To Heaven’s Queen.

CHITRALEKHA
O bravely said, my sister!
'Twas worthy of a soul where jealous baseness
Ought never harbour.

AUSHINARIE
I have a vow, my lord,
Which at my husband’s feet must be absolved.
Bear with me that I trouble you one moment.

PURURAVAS
No, no, it is not trouble, but a kindness.

MANAVAKA
The good trouble that brings me sweetmeats! often,
O often may such trouble vex my belly.

PURURAVAS
What vow is this you would absolve, my own?

Aushinarie looks at Nipunika.

NIPUNIKA
'Tis that women perform to win back kindness
In eyes of one held dear.

PURURAVAS
If this be so,
Vainly hast thou these tender flower-soft limbs
Afflicted with a vow’s austerities,
Beloved. Thou suest for favour to thy servant,
Propitiateth who for thy propitiated
All-loving glance is hungry.
URVASIE
Greatly he loves her!

CHITRALEKHA
Why, silly one, whose heart is gone astraying,
Redoubles words of kindness to his wife.
Do you not know so much?

AUSHINARIE (smiling)
Not vain my vow,
That to such words of love has moved already
My husband.

MANAVAKA
Stop, my lord, a word well spoken
Is spoilt by any answer.

AUSHINARIE
Girls, the offering
With which I must adore this gentle moonlight
That dreams upon our terrace!

NIPUNIKA
Here, my lady,
Are flowers, here costly scents, all needed things.

AUSHINARIE
Give them to me.

_She worships the moonbeams with flowers and perfumes._

Nipunika, present
The sweetmeats of the offering to the Brahmin.

NIPUNIKA
I will, my lady. Noble Manavaka,
Here is for you.
MANAVAKA
Blessings attend thee. May
Thy vow bear fruit nor end.

AUSHINARIE
Now, dear my lord,
Pray you, draw nearer to me.

PURURAVAS
Behold me, love!
What must I do?
Aushinarie worships the King, then bowing
down with folded hands,

AUSHINARIE
I, Aushinarie, call
The divine wife and husband, Rohinie
And Mrigalanchhan named the spotted moon,
To witness here my vowed obedient love
To my dear lord. Henceforth whatever woman
My lord shall love and she desire him too,
I will embrace her and as a sister love,
Nor think of jealousy.

URVASIE
I know not wholly
Her drift, and yet her words have made me feel
All pure and full of noble trust.

CHITRALEKHA
Be confident,
Your love will prove all bliss; surely it must
When blessed and sanctioned by this pure, devoted
And noble nature.

MANAVAKA (aside)
When from twixt his hands
Fish leaps, cries me the disappointed fisher,
“Go, trout, I spare you. This will be put down
To my account in Heaven.”
(aloud)                   No more but this
You love my friend, your husband, lady?

AUSHINARIE                   Dull fool!
I with the death of my own happiness
Would give my husband ease. From this consider
How dearly I love him.

PURURAVAS                   Since thou hast power on me
To give me to another or to keep
Thy slave, I have no right to plead. And yet
I am not as thou thinkest me, all lost,
O thou too jealous, to thy love.

AUSHINARIE                   My lord,
We will not talk of that. I have fulfilled
My rite, and with observance earned your kindness.
Girls, let us go.

PURURAVAS                   Is thus my kindness earned?
I am not kind, not pleased, if now, beloved,
Thou shun and leave me.

AUSHINARIE                   Pardon, my lord. I never
Have yet transgressed the rigour of a vow.

_Exeunt Queen, Nipunika and attendants._
URVASIE
Wife-lover, uxorious is this King, and yet
I cannot lure my heart away from him.

CHITRALEKHA
Why, what new trick of wilful passion’s this?

PURURAVAS (sitting down)
The Queen is not far off.

MANAVAKA
Never heed that,
Speak boldly. She has given you up as hopeless.
So doctors leave a patient, when disease
Defies all remedy, to his own sweet guidance.

PURURAVAS
O that my Urvasie —

URVASIE
Today might win
Her one dear wish.

PURURAVAS
From her invisible feet
The lovely sound of anklets on my ear
Would tinkle, or coming stealing from behind
Blind both my eyes with her soft little hands
Like two cool lotuses upon them fallen:
Or, oh, most sweet! descending on this roof
Shaken with dear delicious terrors, lingering
And hanging back, be by her sister drawn
With tender violence, faltering step by step,
Till she lay panting on my knees.

CHITRALEKHA
Go, sister,
And satisfy his wish.

URVASIE

Must I? well then,
I'll pluck up heart and play with him a little.

She becomes visible, steals behind the King and covers
his eyes with her hands. Chitralekha puts off her veil of
invisibility and makes a sign to Manavaka.

MANAVAKA

Now say, friend, who is this?

PURURAVAS

The hands of beauty.
'Tis that Narayan-born whose limbs are sweetness.

MANAVAKA

How can you guess?

PURURAVAS

What is there here to guess?
My heart tells me. The lily of the night
Needs not to guess it is the moon's cool touch.
She starts not to the sunbeam. 'Tis so with me.
No other woman could but she alone
Heal with her little hands all my sick pining.

Urvasie removes her hands and rises to her feet;
then moves a step or two away.

URVASIE

Conquest attend my lord!

PURURAVAS

Welcome, O beauty.

He draws her down beside him.
CHITRALEKHA
Happiness to my brother!

PURURAVAS
Here it sits
Beside me.

URVASIE
Because the Queen has given you to me,
Therefore I dare to take into my arms
Your body like a lover. You shall not think me
Forward.

MANAVAKA
What, set the sun to you on this terrace?

PURURAVAS
O love, if thou my body dost embrace
As seizable, a largess from my Queen,
But whose permission didst thou ask, when thou
Stolest my heart away?

CHITRALEKHA
Brother, she is
Abashed and has no answer. Therefore a moment
Turn to me, grant me one entreaty.

PURURAVAS
Speak.

CHITRALEKHA
When spring is vanished and the torrid heat
Thickens, I must attend the glorious Sun.
Do thou so act that this my Urvasie
Left lonely with thee, shall not miss her Heaven.
MANAVAKA
Why, what is there in Heaven to pine for? There
You do not eat, you do not drink, only
Stare like so many fishes in a row
With wide unblinking eyes.

PURURAVAS
The joys of Heaven
No thought can even outline. Who then shall make
The soul forget which thence has fallen? Of this
Be sure, fair girl, Pururavas is only
Thy sister’s slave: no other woman shares
That rule nor can share.

CHITRALEKHA
Brother, this is kind.
Be brave, my Urvasie, and let me go.

URVASIE (embracing Chitralekha, pathetically)
Chitralekha, my sister, do not forget me!

CHITRALEKHA (with a smile)
Of thee I should entreat that mercy, who
Hast got thy love’s embrace.

She bows down to the King and goes.

MANAVAKA
Now nobly, sir,
Are you increased with bliss and your desire’s
Accrual.

PURURAVAS
You say well. This is my increase;
Who felt not half so blest when I acquired
The universal sceptre of the world
And sovran footstool touched by jewelled heads
Of tributary monarchs, as today
I feel most happy who have won the right
To touch two little feet and am allowed
To be thy slave and do thy lovely bidding.

URVASIE
I have not words to make a sweeter answer.

PURURAVAS
How does the winning of one loved augment
Sweet contradictions! These are the very rays
Of moonlight burned me late, and now they soothe;
Love’s wounding shafts caress the heart like flowers,
Thou being with me; all natural sights and sounds,
Once rude and hurtful, now caressing come
Softly, because of thee in my embrace.

URVASIE
I am to blame that I deprived my lord
So long.

PURURAVAS
Beloved and beautiful, not so!
For happiness arising after pain
Tastes therefore sweeter, as the shady tree
To one perplexed with heat and dust affords
A keener taste of Paradise.

MANAVAKA
We have courted
For a long hour the whole delightfulness
Of moonlight in the evening. It is time
To seek repose.

PURURAVAS
Guide therefore this fair friend
The way her feet must henceforth tread.
MANAVAKA

This way.

PURURAVAS
O love, I have but one wish left.

URVASIE
What wish, my lord?

PURURAVAS
When I had not embraced thee, my desire,
One night in passing seemed a hundred nights;
O now if darkness would extend my joys
To equal length of real hours with this
Sweet face upon my bosom, I were blest.

They go.
Act IV

Scene I. — *The sky near the doors of the sunrise; clouds everywhere. Chitralekha and Sahajanya.*

SAHAJANYA
Dear Chitralekha, like a fading flower
The beauty of thy face all marred reveals
Sorrow of heart. Tell me thy melancholy;
I would be sad with thee.

CHITRALEKHA (*sorrowfully*)
O Sahajanya!
Sister, by rule of our vicissitude,
I serving at the feet of the great Sun
Was troubled at heart for want of Urvasie.

SAHAJANYA
I know your mutual passion of sisterliness.
What after?

CHITRALEKHA
I had heard no news of her
So many days. Then I collected vision
Divine into myself to know of her.
O miserable knowledge!

SAHAJANYA
Sister, sister!
What knowledge of sorrow?

CHITRALEKHA (*still sorrowfully*)
I saw that Urvasie
Taking with her Pururavas and love—
For he had on his ministers imposed
His heavy yoke of kingship—went to sport
Amorously in Gandhamadan green.

_SAHAJANYA (proudly)_
O love is joy indeed, when in such spots
Tasted. And there?

_CHITRALEKHA_
And there upon the strands
Of heavenly Ganges, one, a lovely child
Of spirits musical, Udayavatie,
Was playing, making little forts of sand;
On her with all his soul the monarch gazed.
This angered Urvasie.

_SAHAJANYA_
O natural!
Deep passion always is intolerant.
Afterwards?

_CHITRALEKHA_
She pushed aside her pleading husband,
Perplexed by the Preceptor's curse forgot
The War-God's vow and entered in that grove
Avoidable of women; but no sooner
Had trod its green, most suddenly she was
A creeper rooted to that fatal verge.

_SAHAJANYA (in a voice of grief)_
Now do I know that Fate's indeed a thing
Inexorable, spares no one, when such love
Has such an ending; O all too suddenly!
How must it be then with Pururavas?
CHITRALEKHA
All day and night he passions in that grove
Seeking her. And this cool advent of cloud
That turns even happy hearts to yearning pain,
Will surely kill him.

SAHAJANYA
Sister, not long can grief
Have privilege over such beautiful beings.
Some God will surely pity them, some cause
Unite once more.

(looking towards the east)
Come, sister. Our lord the Sun
Is rising in the east. Quick, to our service.

They go.
Scene II. — Pururavas enters disordered, his eyes fixed on the sky.

PURURAVAS (angrily)
Halt, ruffian, halt! Thou in thy giant arms
Bearest away my Urvasie! He has
Soared up from a great crag into the sky
And wars me, hurling downward bitter rain
Of arrows. With this thunderbolt I smite thee.

He lifts up a clod and runs as to hurl it;
then pauses and looks upwards.

(pathetically)
Oh me, I am deceived! This was a cloud
Equipped for rain, no proud and lustful fiend,
The rainbow, not a weapon drawn to kill,
Quick-driving showers are these, not sleety rain
Of arrows; and that brilliant line like streak
Of gold upon a touchstone, cloud-inarmed,
I saw, was lightning, not my Urvasie.

(sorrowfully)
Where shall I find her now? Where clasp those thighs
Swelling and smooth and white? Perhaps she stands
Invisible to me by heavenly power,
All sullen? But her anger was ever swift
And ended soon. Perhaps into her heavens
She has soared? O no! her heart was soft with love,
And love of me. Nor any fiend adverse
To Heaven had so much strength as to hale her hence
While I looked on. Yet is she gone from me
Invisible, swiftly invisible,—
Whither? O bitter miracle! and yet —

He scans each horizon, then pauses and sighs.

Alas! when fortune turns against a man,
Then sorrow treads on sorrow. There was already
This separation from my love, and hard
Enough to bear; and now the pleasant days,
Guiltless of heat, with advent cool of rain
Must help to slay me.

*(laughing)*

Why do I so tamely
Accept addition to my pangs? For even
The saints confess, “The king controls the seasons”;
If it be so, I will command the thunder
Back to his stable.

*(pausing to think)*

No, I must permit
The season unabridged of pomp; the signs
Of storm are now my only majesty;
This sky with lightning girt and laced becomes
My canopy of splendour, and the trees
Of rain-time waving wide their lavish bloom
Fan me; the sapphire-throated peacocks, voiced
Sweeter for that divorce from heat, are grown
My poets; the mountains are my citizens,
They pour out all their streams to swell my greatness.
But I waste time in idly boasting vain
Glories and lose my love. To my task, to my task!
This grove, this grove should find her.

*He moves onward.*

And here, O here

Is something to enrage my resolution.
Red-tinged, expanding, wet and full of rain,
These blossom-cups recall to me her eyes
Brimming with angry tears. How shall I trace her,
Or what thing tell me “Here and here she wandered”?
If she had touched with her beloved feet
The rain-drenched forest-sands, there were a line
Of little gracious footprints seen, with lac
Envermeilled, sinking deeper towards the heel
Because o’erburdened by her hips’ large glories.

*He moves onward.*

*(exultantly)*

Oh joy! I see a hint of her. This way
Then went her angry beauty! Lo, her bodice
Bright green as is a parrot’s belly, smitten
With crimson drops. It once veiled in her bosom
And paused to show her navel deep as love.
These are her tears that from those angry eyes
Went trickling, stealing scarlet from her lips
To spangle all this green. Doubtless her heaving
Tumult of breasts broke its dear hold and, she
Stumbling in anger, from my heaven it drifted.
I’ll gather it to my kisses.

He stoops to it, then sorrowfully,
O my heart!

Only green grass with dragon-wings enamelled!
From whom shall I in all the desolate forest
Have tidings of her, or what creature help me?
Lo, in yon waste of crags the peacock! he
Upon a cool moist rock that breathes of rain
Exults, aspires, his gorgeous mass of plumes
Seized, blown and scattered by the roaring gusts.
Pregnant of shrillness is his outstretched throat,
His look is with the clouds. Him I will question:
Have the bright corners of thine eyes beheld,
O sapphire-throated bird, her, my delight,
My wife, my passion, my sweet grief? Yielding
No answer, he begins his gorgeous dance.
Why should he be so glad of my heart’s woe?
I know thee, peacock. Since my cruel loss
Thy plumes that stream in splendour on the wind,
Have not one rival left. For when her heavy
Dark wave of tresses over all the bed
In softness wide magnificently collapsed
On her smooth shoulders massing purple glory
And bright with flowers, she passioning in my arms,
Who then was ravished with thy brilliant plumes,
Vain bird? I question thee not, heartless thing,
That joyest in others’ pain.

(turning away)

Lo, where, new-fired
With sweet bird-passion by the season cool,
A cuckoo on the plum-tree sits. This race
Is wisest of the families of birds
And learned in love. I’ll greet him like himself.
O cuckoo, thou art called the bird of love,
His sweet ambassador, O cuckoo. Thou
Criest and thy delightful voice within
The hearts of lovers like an arrow comes,
Seeks out the anger there and softly kills.
Me also, cuckoo, to my darling bring
Or her to me. What saidst thou? “How could she
Desert thee loving?” Cuckoo, I will tell thee.
Yes, she was angry. Yet I know I never
Gave her least cause. But, cuckoo, dost thou know not
That women love to feel their sovereignty
Over their lovers, nor transgression need
To be angry? How! Dost thou break off, O bird,
Our converse thus abruptly and turn away
To thine own tasks? Alas, ’twas wisely said
That men bear easily the bitter griefs
Which others feel. For all my misery
This bird, my orison disregarding, turns
To attack the plum-tree’s ripening fruit as one
Drunken with love his darling’s mouth. And yet
I cannot be angry with him. Has he not
The voice of Urvasie? Abide, O bird,
In bliss, though I unhappy hence depart.

He walks on, then stops short and listens.

O Heaven? what do I hear? the anklets’ cry
That tell the musical footing of my love?
To right of this long grove ’twas heard. Oh, I
Will run to her.

(hurrying forward)

Me miserable! This was
No anklets’ cry embraceable with hands,
But moan of swans who seeing the grey wet sky
Grow passionate for Himaloy’s distant tarns.
Well, be it so. But ere in far desire
They leap up from this pool, I well might learn
Tidings from them of Urvasie.

(approaching)

Listen,
O king of all white fowl that waters breed.
Afterwards to Himaloy wing thy way,
But now the lotus fibres in thy beak
Gathered by thee for provender resign;
Ere long thou shalt resume them. Me, ah, first
From anguish rescue, O majestic swan,
With tidings of my sweet; always high souls
 Prefer another’s good to selfish aims.
Thou lookest upward to the heavens and sayest,
“I was absorbed with thoughts of Himaloy;
Her have I not observed.” O swan, thou liest,
For if she never trod upon thy lake’s
Embarkment, nor thou sawest her archèd brows,
How couldst thou copy then so perfectly
Her footing full of amorous delight,
Or whence didst steal it? Give me back my love,
Thou robber! Thou hast got her gait and this
Is law that he with whom a part is found
Must to the claimant realise the whole.

(laughing)
O yes, thou flyest up, clanging alarm,
“This is the king whose duty is to punish
All thieves like me!” Go then, but I will plunge
Into new hopeful places, seeking love.
Lo, wild-drake with his mate, famed chocrobacque,
Him let me question. O thou wondrous creature,
All saffron and vermillion! Wilt thou then
Not tell me of my love? Oh, sawest thou not
My Goddess laughing like a lovely child
In the bright house of spring? For, wild-drake, thou
Who gettest from the chariot’s orb thy name,
I who deprived am of her orbèd hips,
The chariot-warrior great Pururavas,
Encompassed with a thousand armed desires,
Question thee. How! “Who? Who?” thou sayest to me!
This is too much. It is not possible
He should not know me! Bird, I am a king
Of kings, and grandson to the Sun and Moon,
And earth has chosen me for her master. This
Were little. I am the loved of Urvasie!
Still art thou silent? I will taunt him, then
Perhaps he’ll speak. Thou, wild-drake, when thy love,
Her body hidden by a lotus-leaf,
Lurks near thee in the pool, dearest her far
And wailest musically to the flowers
A wild deep dirge. Such is thy conjugal
Yearning, thy terror such of even a little
Division from her nearness. Me afflicted,
Me so forlorn thou art averse to bless
With just a little tidings of my love!
Alas, my miserable lot has made
All creatures adverse to me. Let me plunge
Into the deeper wood. Oh no, not yet!
This lotus with the honey-bees inside
Making melodious murmur, keeps me. I
Remember her soft mouth when I have kissed it
Too cruelly, sobbing exquisite complaint.
These too I will implore. Alas, what use?
They will despise me like the others. Yet,
Lest I repent hereafter of my silence,
I’ll speak to him. O lotus-wooing bee,
Tell me some rumour of those eyes like wine.
But no, thou hast not seen that wonder. Else
Wouldst thou, O bee, affect the lotus’ bloom,
If thou hadst caught the sweetness from her lips
Breathing, whose scent intoxicates the breeze?
I’ll leave him. Lo! with his mate an elephant.
His trunk surrounds a nym-tree to uproot.
To him will I, he may some rumour have
Or whisper of my love. But softly! Haste
Will ruin me. Oh, this is not the time!
Now his beloved mate has in her trunk
Just found him broken branches odorous
And sweet as wine with the fresh leaves not long
In bud, new-honied. These let him enjoy.
His meal is over now. I may approach
And ask him. O rut-dripping elephant,
Sole monarch of the herd, has not that moon
With jasmines all a glory in her hair
And limbs of fadeless beauty, carrying
Youth like a banner, whom to see is bliss,
Is madness, fallen in thy far ken, O king?
Oh joy! he trumpets loud and soft as who
Would tell me he has seen indeed my love.
Oh, I am gladdened! More to thee I stand
Attracted, elephant, as like with like.
Sovereign of sovereigns is my title, thou
Art monarch of the kingly elephants,
And this wide freedom of thy fragrant rut
Interminable imitates my own
Vast liberality to suppliant men,
Regally; thou hast in all the herd this mate,
I among loveliest women Urvasie.
In all things art thou like me; only I pray,
O friend, that thou mayst never know the pang,
The loss. Be fortunate, king, farewell! Oh see,
The mountain of the Fragrant Glens appears,
Fair as a dream, with his great plateaus trod
By heavenly feet of women. May it not be,
To this wide vale she too has with her sisters
Brought here her beautiful body full of spring?
Darkness! I cannot see her. Yet by these gleams
Of lightning I may study, I may find.
Ah God! the fruit of guilt is bounded not
With the doer’s anguish; this stupendous cloud
Is widowed of the lightning through my sin.
Yet I will leave thee not, O thou huge pile
Of scaling crags, unquestioned. Hear me, answer me!
O mountain, has she entered then the woods,
Love's green estate, — ah, she too utter love!
Her breasts were large like thine, with small sweet space
Between them, and like thine her glorious hips
And smooth fair joints a rapture. Dumb? No answer?
I am too far away, he has not heard me.
Let me draw nearer. Mountain, seen was she,
A woman all bereaved, her every limb
A loveliness, in these delightful woods?

**ECHO**

Nearer, O nearer! Mountain-seen was she,
A woman all bereaved, her every limb
A loveliness, in these delightful woods.

**PURURAVAS**

He has answered, answered! O my heart, I draw
Nearer to her! In my own words the hill
Answers thee, O my heart. As joyous tidings
Mayst thou too hear, mountain. She then was seen,
My Urvasie in thy delightful woods?

**ECHO**

Mountain! mountain! mountain! She then was seen,
My Urvasie in thy delightful woods,
In thy delightful woods, delightful woods.

**PURURAVAS**

Alas! 'tis Echo mocks me with my voice
Rolling amid the crags and mountain glens.
Out on thee, Echo! Thou hast killed my heart.
O Urvasie! Urvasie! Urvasie!  
*He falls down and swoons.*

*(recovering)*

I am all weary and sad. Oh, let me rest
Beside this mountain river for a moment
And woo the breeze that dances on the waves.
All turbid is this stream with violent rain,
And yet I thrill to see it. For, O, it seems
Just like my angry darling when she went
Frowning — as this does with its little waves, —
A wrathful music in her girdle, — and see!
This string of birds with frightened clangour rise;
She trailed her raiment as the river its foam,
For it loosened with her passion as she moved
With devious feet, all angry, blind with tears,
And often stopped to brood upon her wrongs:
But soon indignantly her stormy speed
Resumed, so tripping, winding goes the stream,
As she did. O most certainly ’tis she,
My sweet quick-tempered darling, suddenly changed
Into a river’s form. I will beseech her
And soothe her wounded spirit. Urvasie?
Did I not love thee perfectly? Did not
My speech grow sweetness when I spoke to thee?
And when did my heart anything but hate
To false our love? O what was the slight fault
Thou foundest in thy servant that thou couldst
Desert him, Urvasie, O Urvasie!
She answers not! It is not she, merely
A river. Urvasie would not have left
Pururavas to tryst with Ocean. And now
Since only by refusal to despair
Can bliss at last be won, I will return
Where first she fled from my pursuing eyes.
This couching stag shall give me tidings of her,
Who looks as if he were a splendid glance
Some dark-eyed Dryad had let fall to admire
This budding foliage and this young green beauty
Of grass. But why averts he then his head
As though in loathing? I perceive his reason.
Lo, his fair hind is hasting towards him, stayed
By their young deerling plucking at her teats.
With her his eyes are solely, her with bent
Lithe neck he watches. Ho, thou lord of hind!
Sawst thou not her I love? O stag, I'll tell thee
How thou shouldst know her. Like thine own dear hind
She had large eyes and loving, and like hers
That gaze was beauty. Why does he neglect
My words and only gaze towards his love?
All prosperous creatures slight the unfortunate!
'Tis natural. Then elsewhere let me seek.
I have found her, I have found her! O a hint
And token of her way! This one red drop
Of summer's blood the very codome was,
Though rough with faulty stamens, yet thought worthy
To crown her hair. And thou, asoka red,
Didst watch my slender-waisted when she gave
So cruelly a loving heart to pain.
Why dost thou lie and shake thy windy head?
How couldst thou by her soft foot being untouched
Break out into such bloom of petals stung
And torn by jostling crowds of bees, who swarm
All wild to have thy honey? Ever be blest,
Thou noble trunk. What should this be, bright red,
That blazes in a crevice of the rocks?
For if it were a piece of antelope's flesh
Torn by a lion, 'twould not have this blaze,
This lustre haloing it; nor can it be
A spark pregnant of fire; for all the wood
Is drowned in rain. No, 'tis a gem, a miracle
Of crimson, like the red felicitous flower,
And with one radiant finger of the sun
Laid on it like a claim. Yet I will take it,
For it compels my soul with scarlet longing.
Wherefore? She on whose head it should have burned,
Whose hair all fragrant with the coral-bloom
I loved like Heaven, is lost to me, beyond
Recovery lost to me. Why should I take it
To mar it with my tears?

A VOICE

Reject it not,
My son; this is the jewel Union born
From the red lac that on the marvellous feet
Was brilliant of Himaloy’s child, and, soon,
Who bears it is united with his love.

PURURAVAS

Who speaks to me? It is a saint who dwells
In forest like the deer. He first of creatures
Has pitied me. O my lord anchoret,
I thank thee. Thou, O Union, if thou end
My separation, if with that small-waisted
Thou shouldst indeed be proved my Union,
Jewel, I'll use thee for my crown, as Shiva
Upon his forehead wears the crescent moon.
This flowerless creeper! Wherefore do mine eyes
Dwell with its barren grace and my heart yearn
Towards it? And yet, O, not without a cause
Has she enchanted me. There standst thou, creeper,
All slender, thy poor sad leaves are moist with rain,
Thou silent, with no voice of honey-bees
Upon thy drooping boughs; as from thy lord
The season separated, leaving off
Thy habit of bloom. Why, I might think I saw
My passionate darling sitting penitent
With tear-stained face and body unadorned,
Thinking in silence how she spurned my love.
I will embrace thee, creeper, for thou art
Too like my love. Urvasie! all my body
Is thrilled and satisfied of Urvasie!
I feel, I feel her living limbs.

(despairingly)

But how
Should I believe it? Everything I deem
A somewhat of my love, next moment turns
To other. Therefore since by touch at least
I find my dear one, I will not separate
Too suddenly mine eyes from sleep.
(opening his eyes slowly) O love,
'Tis thou!

Urvasie
Upraise thy heart, my King, my liege!

Pururavas
Dearest, at last I live! O thou hadst plunged me
Into a dark abyss of separation,
And fortunately art thou returned to me,
Like consciousness given back to one long dead.

Urvasie
With inward senses I have watched and felt
Thy whole long agony.

Pururavas
With inward senses?
I understand thee not.

Urvasie
I will tell all.
But let my lord excuse my grievous fault,
Who, wretch enslaved by anger, brought to this
My sovereign! Smile on me and pardon me!

Pururavas
Never speak of it. Thy clasp is thy forgiveness.
For all my outward senses and my soul
Leap laughing towards thy bosom. Only convince me
How thou couldst live without me such an age.
URVASIE
Hearken. The War-God Skanda, from of old
Virginity eternal vowing, came
To Gandhamadan’s bank men call the pure,
And made a law.

PURURAVAS
What law, beloved?

URVASIE
This
That any woman entering these precincts
Becomes at once a creeper. And for limit
Of the great curse, “Without the jewel born
From crimson of my mother’s feet can she
Never be woman more.” Now I, my lord,
My heart perplexed by the Preceptor’s curse,
Forgot the War-God’s oath and entered here,
Rejecting thy entreaties, to the wood
Avoidable of women: at the first step,
All suddenly my form was changed. I was
A creeper growing at the wood’s wild end.

PURURAVAS
Oh, now intelligible! When from thy breasts
Loosening the whole embrace, the long delight,
I sank back languid, thou wouldst moan for me
Like one divided far. How is it then
Possible that thou shouldst bear patiently
Real distance between us? Lo, this jewel,
As in thy story, gave thee to my arms.
Admonished by a hermit sage I kept it.

URVASIE
The jewel Union! Therefore at thy embrace
I was restored.

She places the jewel gratefully upon her head.
PURURAVAS

Thus stand a while. O fairest,
Thy face, suffused with crimson from this gem
Above thee pouring wide its fire and splendour,
Has all the beauty of a lotus reddening
In early sunlight.

URVASIE

O sweet of speech! remember
That thy high capital awaits thee long.
It may be that the people blame me. Let us,
My own dear lord, return.

PURURAVAS

Let us return.

URVASIE

What wafture will my sovereign choose?

PURURAVAS

O waft me
Nearer the sun and make a cloud our chariot,
While lightning like a streaming banner floats
Now seen, now lost to vision, and the rainbow
With freshness of its glory iridescent
Edges us. In thine arms uplift and waft me,
Beloved, through the wide and liquid air.

They go.
Scene. — Outside the King’s tents near Pratishhana. In the background the confluence of the rivers Ganges and Yamuna. Manavaka alone.

MANAVAKA
After long pleasuring with Urvasie
In Nandan and all woodlands of the Gods,
Our King’s at last returned, and he has entered
His city, by the jubilant people met
With splendid greetings, and resumed his toils.
Ah, were he but a father, nothing now
Were wanting to his fullness. This high day
At confluence of great Ganges with the stream
Dark Yamuna, he and his Queen have bathed.
Just now he passed into his tent, and surely
His girls adorn him. I will go exact
My first share of the ointments and the flowers.

MAID (within lamenting)
O me unfortunate! the jewel is lost
Accustomed to the noble head of her
Most intimate with the bosom of the King,
His loveliest playmate. I was carrying it
In palm-leaf basket on white cloth of silk;
A vulture doubting this some piece of flesh
Swoops down and soars away with it.

MANAVAKA
Unfortunate!
This was the Union, the crest-jewel, dear
O'er all things to the King. Look where he comes,
His dress half-worn just as he started up
On hearing of his loss. I'll go to him.

Then Pururavas enters with his Amazons of the Bactrian
Guard and other attendants in great excitement.

PURURAVAS
Huntress! huntress! Where is that robber bird
That snatches his own death? He practises
His first bold pillage in the watchman's house.

HUNTRESS
Yonder, the golden thread within his beak!
Trailing the jewel how he wheels in air
Describing scarlet lines upon the sky!

PURURAVAS
I see him, dangling down the thread of gold
He wheels and dips in rapid circles vast.
The jewel like a whirling firebrand red
Goes round and round and with vermilion rings
Incarnadines the air. What shall we do
To rescue it?

MANAVAKA (coming up)
Why do you hesitate to slay him?
He is marked out for death, a criminal.

PURURAVAS
My bow! my bow!

AN AMAZON
I run to bring it!

She goes out.
PURURAVAS
Friend,
I cannot see the bird. Where has it fled?

MANAVAKA
Look! to the southern far horizon wings
The carrion-eating robber.

PURURAVAS (turns and looks)
Yes, I see him.
He speeds with the red jewel every way
Branching and shooting light, as ’twere a cluster
Of crimson roses in the southern sky
Or ruby pendant from the lobe of Heaven.

Enter Amazon with the bow.

AMAZON
Sire, I have brought the bow and leathern guard.

PURURAVAS
Too late you bring it. Yon eater of raw flesh
Goes winging far beyond an arrow’s range,
And the bright jewel with the distant bird
Blazes like Mars the planet glaring red
Against a wild torn piece of cloud. Who’s there?
Noble Latavya!

LATAVYA
Highness?

PURURAVAS
From me command
The chief of the police, at evening, when
Yon wingèd outlaw seeks his homing tree,
That he be hunted out.
LATAVYA
It shall be done.

MANAVAKA
Sit down and rest. What place in all broad earth
This jewel-thief can hide in, shall elude
Your world-wide jurisdiction?

PURURAVAS (sitting down with Manavaka)
It was not as a gem
Of lustre that I treasured yonder stone,
Now lost in the bird’s beak, but ’twas my Union
And it united me with my dear love.

MANAVAKA
I know it, from your own lips heard the tale.
Chamberlain enters with the jewel and an arrow.

LATAVYA
Behold shot through that robber! Though he fled,
Thy anger darting in pursuit has slain him.
Plumb down he fell with fluttering wings from Heaven
And dropped the jewel bright.

All look at it in surprise.
Ill fate o’ertaking
Much worse offence! My lord, shall not this gem
Be washed in water pure and given — to whom?

PURURAVAS
Huntress, go, see it purified in fire,
Then to its case restore it.

HUNTRESS
As the King wills.
She goes out with the jewel.
PURURAVAS
Noble Latavya, came you not to know
The owner of this arrow?

LATAVYA
Letters there are
Carved on the steel; my eyes grow old and feeble,
I could not read them.

PURURAVAS
Therefore give me the arrow.
I will spell out the writing.
*The Chamberlain gives him the arrow and he reads.*

LATAVYA
And I will fill my office.
*He goes out.*

MANAVAKA (seeing the King lost in thought)
What do you read there?

PURURAVAS
Hear, Manavaka, hear
The letters of this bowman’s name.

MANAVAKA
I’m all
Attention; read.

PURURAVAS
O hearken then and wonder.
*reading*
“Ayus, the smiter of his foeman’s lives,
The warrior Ilian’s son by Urvasie,
This arrow loosed.”
MANAVAKA (with satisfaction)
Hail, King! now dost thou prosper,
Who hast a son.

PURURAVAS
How should this be? Except
By the great ritual once, never was I
Parted from that beloved; nor have I witnessed
One sign of pregnancy. How could my Goddess
Have borne a son? True, I remember once
For certain days her paps were dark and stained,
And all her fair complexion to the hue
Of that wan creeper paled, and languid-large
Her eyes were. Nothing more.

MANAVAKA
Do not affect
With mortal attributes the living Gods.
For holiness is as a veil to them
Concealing their affections.

PURURAVAS
This is true.
But why should she conceal her motherhood?

MANAVAKA
Plainly, she thought, “If the King sees me old
And matron, he’ll be off with some young hussy.”

PURURAVAS
No mockery, think it over.

MANAVAKA
Who shall guess
The riddles of the Gods?

Enter Latavya.
LATAVYA
Hail to the King!
A holy dame from Chyavan’s hermitage
Leading a boy would see my lord.

PURURAVAS
Latavya,
Admit them instantly.

LATAVYA
As the King wills.
He goes out, then re-enters with Ayus
bow in hand and a hermitess.

Come, holy lady, to the King.

MANAVAKA
How say you,
Should not this noble boy be very he,
The young and high-born archer with whose name
Was lettered yon half-moon of steel that pierced
The vulture? His features imitate my lord’s.

PURURAVAS
It must be so. The moment that I saw him,
My eyes became a mist of tears, my spirit
Lightened with joy, and surely ’twas a father
That stirred within my bosom. O Heaven! I lose
Religious calm; shudderings surprise me; I long
To feel him with my limbs, pressed with my love.

LATAVYA (to the hermitess)
Here deign to stand.

PURURAVAS
Mother, I bow to thee.
SATYAVATIE
High-natured! may thy line by thee increase!
(aside)
Lo, all untold this father knows his son.
(aloud)
Bow down to thy begetter.
   *Ayus bows down, folding his hands over his bow.*

PURURAVAS
Live long, dear son.

AYUS (aside)
O how must children on their father's knees
Grown great be melted with a filial sweetness,
When only hearing that this is my father
I feel I love him!

PURURAVAS
Vouchsafe me, reverend lady,
Thy need of coming.

SATYAVATIE
Listen then, O King;
This Ayus at his birth was in my hand
By Urvasie, I know not why, delivered,
A dear deposit. Every perfect rite
And holiness unmaimed that princely boys
Must grow through, Chyavan's self, the mighty Sage,
Performed, and taught him letters, Scripture, arts,—
Last, every warlike science.

PURURAVAS
O fortunate
In such a teacher!
SATYAVATIE
The children fared afield
Today for flowers, dry fuel, sacred grass,
And Ayus faring with them violated
The morals of the hermitage.

PURURAVAS (in alarm)
O how?

SATYAVATIE
A vulture with a jag of flesh was merging
Into a tree-top when the boy levelled
His arrow at the bird.

PURURAVAS (anxiously)
And then?

SATYAVATIE
And then
The holy Sage, instructed of that slaughter,
Called me and bade, “Give back thy youthful trust
Into his mother’s keeping.” Therefore, sir,
Let me have audience with the lady.

PURURAVAS
Mother,
Deign to sit down one moment.
*The hermitess takes the seat brought for her.*
Noble Latavya,
Let Urvasie be summoned.

LATAVYA
It is done.
*He goes out.*

PURURAVAS
Child of thy mother, come, O come to me!
Let me feel my son! The touch of his own child,
They say, thrills all the father; let me know it.
Gladden me as the moonbeam melts the moonstone.

SATYAVATIE
Go, child, and gratify thy father’s heart.

\textit{Ayus goes to the King and clasps his feet.}

PURURAVAS (\textit{embracing the boy and seating him on his footstool})
This Brahmin is thy father’s friend. Salute him,
And have no fear.

MANAVAKA
Why should he fear? I think
He grew up in the woods and must have seen
A mort of monkeys in the trees.

AYUS (\textit{smiling})
Hail, father.

MANAVAKA
Peace and prosperity walk with thee ever.

\textit{Latavya returns with Urvasie.}

LATAVYA
This way, my lady.

URVASIE
Who is this quivered youth
Set on the footstool of the King? Himself
My monarch binds his curls into a crest!
Who should this be so highly favoured?
(\textit{seeing Satyavatie})

Ah!
Satyavatie beside him tells me; it is
My Ayus. How he has grown!
PURURAVAS (seeing Urvasie)  
O child, look up.
Lo, she who bore thee, with her whole rapt gaze
Grown mother, her veiled bosom heaving towards thee
And wet with sacred milk!

SATYAVATIE  
Rise, son, and greet
Thy parent.  
She goes with the boy to Urvasie.

URVASIE  
I touch thy feet.

SATYAVATIE  
Ever be near
Thy husband’s heart.

AYUS  
Mother, I bow to thee.

URVASIE  
Child, be thy sire’s delight. My lord and husband!

PURURAVAS  
O welcome to the mother! sit thee here.
He makes her sit beside him.

SATYAVATIE  
My daughter, lo, thine Ayus. He has learned
All lore, heroic armour now can wear.
I yield thee back before thy husband's eyes
Thy sacred trust. Discharge me. Each idle moment
Is a religious duty left undone.

URVASIE  
It is so long since I beheld you, mother,
I have not satisfied my thirst of you,
And cannot let you go. And yet 'twere wrong
To keep you. Therefore go for further meeting.

PURURAVAS
Say to the Sage, I fall down at his feet.

SATYAVATIE
'Tis well.

AYUS
Are you going to the forest, mother?
Will you not take me with you?

PURURAVAS
Over, son,
Thy studies in the woods. Thou must be now
A man, know the great world.

SATYAVATIE
Child, hear thy father.

AYUS
Then, mother, let me have when he has got
His plumes, my little peacock, Jewel-crest,
Who'ld sleep upon my lap and let me stroke
His crest and pet him.

SATYAVATIE
Surely, I will send him.

URVASIE
Mother, I touch thy feet.

PURURAVAS
I bow to thee,
Mother.
SATYAVATIE
Peace be upon you both, my children.

She goes.

PURURAVAS
O blessed lady! Now am I grown through thee
A glorious father in this boy, our son;
Not Indra, hurler down of cities, more
In his Jayanta of Paulomie born.

Urvasie weeps.

MANAVAKA
Why is my lady suddenly all tears?

PURURAVAS
My own beloved! How art thou full of tears
While I am swayed with the great joy of princes
Who see their line secured? Why do these drops
On these high peaks of beauty raining down,
O sad sweet prodigal, turn thy bright necklace
To repetition vain of costlier pearls?

He wipes the tears from her eyes.

URVASIE
Alas, my lord! I had forgot my doom
In a mother’s joy. But now thy utterance
Of that great name of Indra brings to me
Cruel remembrance torturing the heart
Of my sad limit.

PURURAVAS
Tell me, my love, what limit.

URVASIE
O King, my heart held captive in thy hands,
I stood bewildered by the curse; then Indra
Uttered his high command: “When my great soldier,
Earth’s monarch, sees the face that keeps his line
Made in thy womb, to Eden thou returnest.”
So when I knew my issue, sick with the terror
Of being torn from thee, all hidden haste,
I gave to noble Satyavatie the child,
In Chyavan’s forest to be trained. Today
This my beloved son returns to me;
No doubt she thought that he was grown and able
To gratify his father’s heart. This then
Is the last hour of that sweet life with thee,
Which goes not farther.

_Pururavas swoons._

**MANAVAKA**  
Help, help!

**URVASIE**  
Return to me, my King!

**PURURAVAS** _reviving_
O love, how jealous are the Gods in Heaven
Of human gladness! I was comforted
With getting of a son,—at once this blow!
O small sweet waist, I am divorced from thee!
So has a poplar from one equal cloud
Received the shower that cooled and fire of Heaven
That kills it.

**MANAVAKA**
O sudden evil out of good!
For I suppose you now will don the bark
And live with hermit trees.

**URVASIE**
I too unhappy!
For now my King who sees that I no sooner
Behold my son reared up than to my heavens
I soar, will think that I have all my need
And go with glad heart from his side.

PURURAVAS

Beloved,
Do not believe it. How can one be free
To do his will who’s subject to a master?
He when he’s bid, must cast his heart aside
And dwell in exile from the face he loves.
Therefore obey King Indra. On this thy son
I too my kingdom will repose and dwell
In forests where the antlered peoples roam.

AYUS

My father should not on an untrained steer
Impose the yoke that asks a neck of iron.

PURURAVAS

Child, say not so! The ichorous elephant
Not yet full-grown tames all the trumpetings
Of older rivals; and the young snake’s tooth
With energy of virulent poison stored
 Strikes deadly. So is it with the ruler born:
His boyish hand inarms the sceptred world.
The force that rises with its task springs not
From years, but is a self and inborn greatness.
Therefore, Latavya!

LATAVYA

Let my lord command me.

PURURAVAS

Direct from me the council to make ready
The coronation of my son.

LATAVYA (sorrowfully)

It is
Your will, sire.

*He goes out. Suddenly all act as if dazzled.*

**PURURAVAS**

What lightning leaps from cloudless heavens?

**URVASIE** (*gazing up*)

'Tis the Lord Narad.

**PURURAVAS**

Narad? Yes, 'tis he.

His hair is matted all a tawny yellow
Like ochre-streaks, his holy thread is white
And brilliant like a digit of the moon.
He looks as if the faery-tree of Heaven
Came moving, shooting twigs all gold, and twinkling
Pearl splendours for its leaves, its tendrils pearl.
Guest-offering for the Sage!

*Narad enters: all rise to greet him.*

**URVASIE**

Here is guest-offering.

**NARAD**

Hail, the great guardian of the middle world!

**PURURAVAS**

Greeting, Lord Narad.

**URVASIE**

Lord, I bow to thee.

**NARAD**

Unsundered live in sweetness conjugal.

**PURURAVAS** (*aside*)

O that it might be so!
(aloud to Ayus)

Child, greet the Sage.

AYUS
Urvaseian Ayus bows down to thee.

NARAD
Live long, be prosperous.

PURURAVAS
Deign to take this seat.

Narad sits, after which all take their seats.

What brings the holy Narad?

NARAD
Hear the message
Of mighty Indra.

PURURAVAS
I listen.

NARAD
Maghavan,
Whose soul can see across the world, to thee
Intending loneliness in woods —

PURURAVAS
Command me.

NARAD
The seers to whom the present, past and future
Are three wide-open pictures, these divulge
Advent of battle and the near uprise
Of Titans warring against Gods. Heaven needs
Thee, her great soldier; thou shouldst not lay down
Thy warlike arms. All thy allotted days
This Urvasie is given thee for wife
And lovely helpmeet.

**URVASIE**

Oh, a sword is taken
Out of my heart.

**PURURAVAS**

In all I am Indra’s servant.

**NARAD**

’Tis fitting. Thou for Indra, he for thee,
With interchange of lordly offices.
So sun illumes the fire, fire the great sun
Ekes out with heat and puissance.

_He looks up into the sky._

Rambha, descend
And with thee bring the high investiture
Heaven’s King has furnished to crown Ayus, heir
Of great Pururavas.

_Apsaras enter with the articles of investiture._

**NYMPHS**

Lo! Holiness,
That store!

**NARAD**

Set down the boy upon the chair
Of the anointing.

**RAMBHA**

Come to me, my child.

_She seats the boy._

**NARAD (pouring the cruse of holy oil on the boy’s head)**

Complete the ritual.
RAMBHA (*after so doing*)

Bow before the Sage,
My child, and touch thy parents’ feet.

*Ayus obeys.*

NARAD

Be happy.

PURURAVAS

Son, be a hero and thy line’s upholder.

URVASIE

Son, please thy father.

BARDS (*within*)

Victory to Empire’s heir.

*Strophe*

First the immortal seer of Brahma’s kind
And had the soul of Brahma; Atri’s then
The Moon his child; and from the Moon again
Sprang Budha-Hermes, moonlike was his mind.
Pururavas was Budha’s son and had
Like starry brightness. Be in thee displayed
Thy father’s kindly gifts. All things that bless
Mortals, descend in thy surpassing race.

*Antistrophe*

Thy father like Himaloy highest stands
Of all the high, but thou all steadfast be,
Unchangeable and grandiose like the sea,
Fearless, surrounding Earth with godlike hands.
Let Empire by division brighter shine;
For so the sacred Ganges snow and pine
Favours, yet the same waters she divides
To Ocean and his vast and heaving tides.
NYMPHS (approaching Urvasie)
O thou art blest, our sister, in thy son
Crowned heir to Empire, in thy husband blest
From whom thou shalt not part.

URVASIE
My happiness
Is common to you all, sweet sisters: such
Our love was always.

She takes Ayus by the hand.
Come with me, dear child,
To fall down at thy elder mother’s feet.

PURURAVAS
Stay yet; we all attend you to the Queen.

NARAD
Thy son’s great coronation mindeth me
Of yet another proud investiture, —
Kartikeya crowned by Maghavan, to lead
Heaven’s armies.

PURURAVAS
Highly has the King of Heaven
Favoured him, Narad; how should he not be
Most great and fortunate?

NARAD
What more shall Indra do
For King Pururavas?

PURURAVAS
Heaven’s King being pleased,
What further can I need? Yet this I’ll ask.

He comes forward and speaks towards the audience.
Learning and Fortune, Goddesses that stand
In endless opposition, dwellers rare
Under one roof, in kindly union join
To bless for glory and for ease the good.
This too; may every man find his own good,
And every man be merry of his mind,
And all men in all lands taste all desire.