

*MEGHASANDEŚĀ*

of

Mahākavi Kālidāsa

An English Rendering

of the

Preface, Tamil Translation and Notes

by

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## Preface

This work is called ‘*Meghasandēśa*’ or ‘*Meghadūta*’, as its central theme is that of a cloud being sent as messenger. Though small in size, this exquisite Sanskrit poem is regarded as a ‘crest jewel’ among the poems of Mahākavi Kālidāsa due to its elegant sentences, profound meanings and rich sentiments. While this composition does not boast of an elaborate or well known storyline as such, it has the enchanting sentiment of ‘*vipralambha-śṛṅgāra*’<sup>1</sup> (‘agony of separation of lovers’) as its main topic. The brief episode of the cloud-messenger, which makes for an immensely enjoyable reading from start to finish, garners the admiration of scholars and reveals the high intellect and poetic skills of Mahākavi Kālidāsa.

Just as the noble sage Vālmīki, by composing *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa*, instructed great poets in the art of writing poetry (he is revered as the ‘*Ādikavi*’ or ‘first poet’ and his work as the ‘*Ādikāvya*’ or ‘first poem’ in Sanskrit), Kālidāsa, the ‘jewel among poets’, is the first person who paved the way for writing ‘*Sandēśakāvya*’. Therefore, the credit goes to this illustrious poet for showing that it was possible to gather all instances of messaging found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and other epics and collate and present them as an independent literary work. Even though many *Sandēśakāvya*s were composed subsequently, none of them can match the *Meghasandēśa* in terms of appeal, in being the first of its kind or in the pre-eminence of the poet. The poet, having experienced that most people in this world are wont to assume that others also think and feel the same way as they do, appropriately communicates the acute pain of separation of the Yakṣa and, through him, describes the various rivers, etc. that form the cloud-messenger’s route. These picturesque descriptions accord eminence to this work which seeks to portray the intense despondence of a loving couple separated from each other.

A careful reading of this work and other similar works composed subsequently will reveal to the reader that, except for one or two, none of the other *Sandēśakāvya*s can compare with this poem in several essential aspects. Even though there seems to be no Sanskrit work that serves as a guide for composing message-poem, like those on dramaturgy, the *Meghasandēśa* may be regarded first as a literary work and then as a sort of guideline to others on how to write messages in verse. Indeed, most of the later composers of *Sandēśakāvya*s have used the same Mandākrāntā metre, the same theme of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra*, the same methods of description and the same number of verses as in the *Meghasandēśa*. The slight increase in the number of verses in recent compositions seems to be due to the intermittent interpolations in the *Meghasandēśa* by later poets, thus augmenting the number of verses. These additional

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<sup>1</sup> The sentiment of *śṛṅgāra* or romantic love is of two kinds – ‘*vipralambha*’ and ‘*sambhoga*’. Works that describe the sad state of the separated couple are called ‘*vipralambha*’ while those that speak of their delightful togetherness are called ‘*sambhoga*’.

verses have been attributed to Kālidāsa himself, thus giving the impression that he too composed many verses.

Although some (Devanāgarī) editions of the *Meghasandēśa* do not have sections such as ‘*sarga*’, etc., a few Telugu editions have divisions like ‘First *Sarga*’, ‘Second *Sarga*’, etc., while some other editions in Devanāgarī refer to the sections as ‘*Pūrvamegham*’ and ‘*Uttaramegham*’. In the commentary (called ‘*Vidyullatā*’) written by Pūrṇasarasvatī, the divisions are mentioned as ‘First *Āśvāsa*’, ‘Second *Āśvāsa*’, etc.

Considering this great poet’s boundless reverence for the words of Vālmīki, which is well known to all scholars, it is possible that he could have decided to compose a unique story keeping in mind the distinguished life of a noble person and so must have written the *Meghasandēśa* based on the episode of Śrī Rāma sending Āñjaneya as an emissary to Sītādevi. This is the opinion of Paṇḍit R V Krishnamachariar, who presents the following evidences that few will fail to accept.

This first word of this poem, viz. ‘*kaścit*’, which refers to the lovelorn Yakṣa, implies that the poet has chosen an extraordinarily illustrious person as the hero of this work. Seeing that he has used phrases such as ‘*janakatanayāsnānapuṇyodakeṣu*’ (verse 1.1: ‘in the waters made holy by the ablutions of Janaka’s daughter’), ‘*rāmagiryāśrameṣu*’ (*Ibid*: ‘among the hermitages on the Rāmagiri’), ‘*raghupatipadairankitam*’ (1.12: ‘bearing the footprints of Śrī Rāma’), ‘*daśamukhabhujocchvāsita prasthasandheḥ*’ (1.58: ‘the joints of the base of whose peaks were loosened by Rāvaṇa’s arms’) and ‘*ityākhyāte pavanatanayam maithilīvonmukhī sā*’ (2.33: ‘As soon as this was said..... just as Maithilī gazed at the son of Vāyu’) at several places, it will be appropriate to conclude that Kālidāsa had the *Rāmāyaṇa* in mind when he composed the *Meghasandēśa*.

Additionally, (i) comparing the Kuñjara Mountain – which was likened to Hanuman in the *Rāmāyaṇa* – to the cloud in this work, (ii) describing the cloud as capable of assuming any form, just like Hanuman could, (iii) the Yakṣa instructing the cloud regarding the path to be taken, similar to the advice given by Sugrīva to the army of monkeys, (iv) mentioning the city of Aḷakāpuri as situated at the top of the Kailāsa Mountain, just like the city of Lankā was on the Suvela Mountain, (v) requesting the cloud to enter the city of Aḷakāpuri at dusk, like Hanuman set foot in Lankā at sunset, (vi) suggesting ways to the cloud for decreasing its size before conveying the message, just as Hanuman contracted his body before conveying Rāma’s message to Sītā at night, (vii) describing the piteous state of the Yakṣa’s consort, which is variously similar to Vālmīki’s portrayal of the wretchedness of Sītā, Who was held captive in the Aśoka grove – these and many such instances are obvious proofs that Kālidāsa penned the *Meghasandēśa* along the lines of the *Hanumat-sandēśa* in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Among the later *Sandeśakāvya*s, the most important is the *Haṁsasandeśa*, written by Śrīman Nigamāntadeśika, who is famously known as ‘Kavitārkikasimha’ and ‘Sarvatantra-svatantra’. With regard to the number of verses, the link between the sections, the style of the lines and the ideas expressed, the *Haṁsasandeśa* is fully on par with the *Meghasandeśa*. In fact, the *Haṁsasandeśa* must be deemed to even outshine the *Meghasandeśa* in some aspects and at some places. The reason is that, in the *Haṁsasandeśa*, Śrī Rāma and Sītā are depicted as the Hero and Heroine, with the royal swan, considered the best among birds, as the messenger; the first verse of the work reads ‘Having taken birth in the noble lineage of the Sun-god to honour the human race, the Consort of Śrī.....’<sup>2</sup>, thus revealing the Hero’s exalted ancestry and His supreme position as the God of gods. It will not be an exaggeration to say that, by composing such a majestic and exquisite work, Vedāntadeśika has eclipsed Kālidāsa, whose composition has a Yakṣa – considered inferior among the celestials – as the hero, a cloud, which is ever-changing, impermanent and so the lowest among non-sentient entities, as the messenger, and where the hero is a nameless, anonymous person without any information about his lineage.

Besides, though the regions in the path of the cloud have been very beautifully described by the poet (Kālidāsa), there are very few sacred spots among them; in the *Haṁsasandeśa*, the areas along the route communicated to the royal swan-messenger are not only depicted appealingly to suit the romantic theme, but are also holy places that delight even those who have mastered equanimity. Such a portrayal is as pleasing as a gold flower endowed with fragrance. An ardent and thorough reading of the *Meghasandeśa* and the *Haṁsasandeśa* by an impartial scholar will clearly reveal that, although Śrī Vedāntadeśika adopted the *Meghasandeśa* as a model for his *Sandeśakāvya*m and subtly and felicitously followed the concepts of Kālidāsa at several places, he either improved upon or changed some ideas of Kālidāsa, besides including the most delightful sentiments, thus creating a poetic work that is superior to the *Meghasandeśa*.

Hence it would be appropriate to say that the credit of composing the first *Sandeśakāvya*m goes to Śrī Kālidāsa and that of penning a *Sandeśakāvya*m with refinements and all the exemplary traits goes to Śrī Kavitārkikasimha.

Since an explanation of the common points and special differences between these two works will become too elaborate and since such an analysis may not be necessary to those Tamilians who do not know Sanskrit, I do not wish to include them here.

The other *Sandeśakāvya*s are: the *Kokilasandeśa* by Uddaṇḍaśāstri, the *Śukasandeśa* by Lakṣmīdāsa, the *Haṁsadūta* by Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmi, the *Padānkadūta* by Kṛṣṇasārvabhauma

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<sup>2</sup> *Haṁsasandeśa* (1.1): ‘vaṁśe jātassavituranaghe mānayan mānuṣatvaṁ devaḥ śrīmān’

and the most recent *Manodūta* by Tailangavrajanātha, etc.; among these, a few works are hidden even from the eyes of scholars; their value is also unknown. I believe that not many would have heard the names of a few other *Sandeśakāvya*s, such as the *Uddhavasandeśa*. The *Sandeśakāvya*m called ‘*Pavanadūta*’ of Dhoyīka is considered to be very old<sup>3</sup>. There is another *Pavanadūta*, written by Vādicandra<sup>4</sup>. The poet Vikrama has composed a poem titled ‘*Nemidūta*’ on Arihant Neminātha (the 22<sup>nd</sup> *Tīrthankara*). He has elegantly used the last line of each verse of the *Meghasandeśa* as the fourth line of each stanza of his poem. Similarly, another poet, named Jinasenācārya, has included one or two lines from every verse of the *Meghasandeśa* in each stanza of his work, the *Pārśvābhyudaya*, thus incorporating the entire *Meghasandeśa* in his poem. These two poets may have felt that, by using some parts of Kālidāsa’s poem in their works, they and their works too would have gained eminence.

The *Meghasandeśa*, which is small in size but rich in sentiment, has several commentaries written by Mallinātha, Vallabhadeva, Pūrṇasarasvatī, Kalyāṇamalla, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Rāmanātha Tarkālankāra, Haragovinda Vācaspati, etc. Among these, the one by Mallinātha Mahopādhyāya is well known throughout the world and has made him famous as an eloquent commentator. Most of our scholars, reluctant to analyse the similarities and differences between Mallinātha’s commentary and those of the others, revere him like a teacher and are fiercely loyal to him. Despite knowing well that neither I nor anyone else can shake their faith, I venture to state that, as far as I know, the commentaries of Pūrṇasarasvatī and a few others are much superior due to their extensive and special analysis and appealing style that elicits total acceptance by both past and present scholars, despite the mean tactics of Mallinātha. The commentary of Vallabhadeva, besides being concise and free from long-winded explanations, is known to be the first among all the commentaries of *Meghasandeśa*<sup>5</sup>.

It should be stated that the renown of Kālidāsa as one who is inordinately fond of depicting romantic sentiments and as an expert in portraying the agony of separated lovers may be attributed primarily to the *Meghasandeśa*. Even though this poet has dealt with the sentiment of *vipralambha-śṛṅgāra* in the *Vikramorvaśīyam*, *Śākuntalam*, etc., it is confined to only a few sections of those works. It will, therefore, not be an exaggeration to say that these poems will not be on par with the *Meghasandeśa*, which amazes scholars by its in-depth and extensive analysis of the feeling of *vipralambha* throughout the poem. It is the opinion of the

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<sup>3</sup> The *Pavanadūta* of Dhoyīka occupies pages 41 to 71 of Volume I of the New Series of the Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1905, and was published by Monmohan Chakravarti.

<sup>4</sup> This work is found in the compilation volume XIII of *Kāvyaṃālā*, published in 1916 by the Nirṇaya-sagar Press, Mumbai.

<sup>5</sup> The *Meghasandeśa*, together with the commentary of Vallabhadeva, in Devanāgarī script, has been scrutinised by E Hultsch and published by the Royal Asiatic Society, London.

scholarly connoisseurs that the delightful descriptions of the pleasures enjoyed by lovers in each other's company cannot be complete without portraying the various sentiments of ardour and longing when away from each other. Among all the poets who have adopted this concept, it is Kālidāsa who stands first with his work.

Although this work is rich in sentiments, some individuals may reject it believing that it deals only with the theme of passion. However, that is not the case; indeed, the acutely insightful poet was aware that basing this work on the life of Śrī Rāma would have greatly pleased only the lofty-minded scholars; the normal public would not be interested in reading it. Presenting a seemingly new topic, he has linked an anonymous Yakṣa couple with a cloud and woven a story, thereby kindling the interest of the worldly aesthete. As mentioned earlier, he has included the episode of Śrī Rāma sending Hanuman as a messenger to the acutely despondent Sītā and added a few essential descriptions here and there to please the avid reader. By this approach, he has made this work very interesting even for the noble intellectuals, who are immensely enthralled by the implied meaning itself. Hence it is baseless to claim that this work will not hold the attention of genteel people.

Further, by commencing the poem with a mention of the hermitages at Rāmagiri - where lived Śrī Rāma, the incarnation of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa – and concluding it with a reference to the city of Aḷakāpuri on the Kailāsa Mountain, which is famous as the actual residence of Lord Śiva, this astute poet has declared that he does not support the dissension between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas and appears to suggest that others should also set aside their religious and ideological differences and lovingly accept this work. Moreover, this book, which mentions the yearlong separation of the Yakṣa and his wife from each other, narrates the acute distress of the couple who had never experienced the agony of separation and describes their utter loyalty to each other even during this period, should be regarded as an indispensable text that not only depicts the sentiment of love, but also explains the ways in which a noble couple can love and support each other and lead a pious life. Upon reading how the poet, through the Yakṣa's words to the cloud, lucidly describes the cities, rivers, forests and mountains along the route from Rāmagiri to Aḷakāpuri, it is clear that, unlike some present day scholars who neither know about the regions near and around them nor are interested in learning about these places – and hence fit to be termed 'ignorant' – the poet had, even in those ancient times, acquired abundant knowledge about distant places which did not boast of any transport facility. The description of King Raghu's march to battle in the *Raghuvamśa* reveals that the poet was thoroughly familiar with not just the areas between Rāmagiri and Kailāsa Mountain, but also the geography of the entire Bharatakhaṇḍa.

Aware that there is no exclusive *Sandేశakāvya*m in Tamil and desirous of enabling Tamilians also to enjoy the ambrosial compositions of Kālidāsa, the greatest among poets, who lived thousands of years ago and whose unique Sanskrit works, replete with the choicest words and

profound meanings, reveal the delightful mindset of the poet as well as his peers, I have attempted a Tamil translation of the *Meghasandēśa*, which is the foremost *Sandēśakāvya*, not only chronologically but also in richness of expressions and several other aspects.

Conscious of the multi-faceted eminence of the *Meghasandēśa*, scholars have studied it several times and then composed many more *Sandēśakāvya*s, sequentially inserted one or two lines from each stanza of this work into the verses of their poems, written different commentaries and translated this work into languages such as English, German, Tibetan. Besides attaining fame for their efforts, these scholars have also revealed their great respect for this admirable work. Dr. Horace Hayman Wilson has written and published an English metrical translation of the *Meghasandēśa* in 1813 CE. At that time, he was the Assistant Surgeon of the East India Company in Bengal. This publication of the Sanskrit text and its English translation was well received by, and dedicated to, the then Governor General of India, Rt. Hon. Lord Minto, which shows the greatness of the *Meghasandēśa*. The style of this publication mostly follows that of the *Nemidūta*, with the number of verses also being the same. A hundred years have passed since this book was published; while it has received a few honours, the fact that it is found to have been interpolated with a few verses and different renditions which are known to be not those of Kālidāsa and which have also been faithfully translated exposes, in my opinion, the inadequate research done on this work at that time.

This Tamil translation contains only those verses and readings that have been established as Kālidāsa's. Though I have mostly followed Mallinātha's version, the verses that are believed to have not been written by Kālidāsa have been removed from the set and their translations have been included as an Appendix at the end of this work. The only two commentators who have discarded the verses not attributed to Kālidāsa are Vallabhadeva and Pūrṇasarasvatī; however, Vallabhadeva feels that the additional verse beginning with 'gatyutkampāt', which comes after the sixth verse of the second *Āśvāsa*, was penned by Kālidāsa. Hence, according to Vallabhadeva, the *Meghasandēśa* has 111 verses. However, since there are only 110 verses in the *Hamśasandēśa* of Śrīman Nigamāntadeśika who, 640 years ago, mirrored his composition on the *Meghasandēśa* in all aspects, since the *Hamśasandēśa* is divided into two '*Āśvāsas*' and since there is a clear consistency in each *Āśvāsa* with regard to the narration, pattern of words and description of sentiments, I concluded that the number of verses and sections in the *Meghasandēśa* too must have been the same (as the *Hamśasandēśa*) and, accordingly, maintained the number of verses and division of the text.

Despite believing that it is very difficult, my earlier attempt to deliver a precise translation of Sanskrit novels like the *Kādambarī*, etc. into Tamil was happily received by the discerning scholars. Enthused by their response and knowing that it is possible to translate this work – which is neither a novel nor based on any special story, but only packed with sentiment – without reducing its appeal, I have now attempted the translation.

Poetic works such as the *Meghasandēśa*, which gladdens the hearts of scholarly aesthetes, have been chosen by some philistines, glorified as ‘scholars’ by the ignorant, to introduce Sanskrit to youngsters who are utterly unfamiliar with the ways of the world and incapable of understanding the nuances of emotions. In their endeavour to teach the language to the children, these bogus scholars mangle the verses and disregard their true import, thereby needlessly complicating a lucid and delightful text and reducing it to a vulgar narration. Unable to bear such desecration, I wrote this translation to convey the meaning and significance of the verses, while retaining the same delightful sentiments as found in the original text, and with a desire to devise a flawless method of teaching Sanskrit to students.

To explain, as required and at various places, the differences in opinion of the Sanskrit commentators in conveying the meanings and import of the words, to reveal the special significance of the sentences and to properly relate the historical episodes and other incidents, I have included comments in the footnotes. Considering the fact that the places mentioned by Kālidāsa several hundred years ago in this work – from Rāmagiri to Aḷakāpuri – could have undergone many changes in both names and shapes, an Appendix has been added at the end of the translation, clearly giving the current information of those areas. Hence I hope that this translation will delight those who have learnt Sanskrit as well as the Tamilians who do not know Sanskrit. However, since it is natural even for an exceptional scholar to lack confidence in himself, I do not think that this translation, written by a simpleton like me, is good enough to be approved and commented upon by erudite pundits.

Madras  
1.5.1913

Ayurvedabhushana  
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## Āśvāsa I

A Yakṣa<sup>1</sup>, failing in his duty and unable to bear the yearlong curse of his master Kubera which separated him from his comely wife<sup>2</sup> and deprived him of his glory, took up residence among the hermitages of Rāmagiri<sup>3</sup>, whose waters were rendered exceptionally pure by Jānaki's ablutions and which were full of lush and shade-giving trees. (1)

After spending some months on that hill, the despondent lover – who was separated from his beloved and whose forearm was, therefore, bare due to the slipping away of the golden bracelet<sup>4</sup> – saw, on the first day of the month of Āṣāḍha<sup>5</sup>, a dark cloud, as beautiful as an elephant, hugging the slope and appearing to be playfully giving a side-blow to the versant with its tusks. (2)

Standing sorrowfully in front of the raincloud, which caused the Ketaka flowers (fragrant Screw Pine, *Pandanus Odoratissimus*) to bloom in profusion, the Yakṣa, who was a servant of Kubera, controlled his tears with great difficulty and was immersed in thought for a long time; even the mind of a carefree, joyful person will undergo a transformation and become sombre on espying a dark cloud; what can be said when one's beloved, who rejoices in a close embrace, is far away? (3)

At the approach of the Śrāvaṇa month, the Yakṣa, desiring to convey through the cloud the news of his wellbeing to his dear wife so that she would remain alive, lovingly welcomed the cloud and reverentially offered it newly blossomed Jasmine flowers. Since it is natural for those afflicted by love to lament about their pitiful state to sentient as well as non-sentient entities, the Yakṣa, impelled by deep desire and (hence) unable to distinguish between the

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<sup>1</sup> Yakṣas are a group of celestial beings.

<sup>2</sup> Instead of describing the curse as 'unbearable as it caused separation', Pūrṇasarasvatī takes the phrase '*kāntāviraḥaguruṇā*' to denote a 'preceptor' which imparts to the Yakṣa the painful experience of being separated from his wife. (Since it is the curse that taught the Yakṣa – who had never been away from his beloved even in his dream – what it feels like to be separated from his wife, it should be seen as a mentor which teaches him about the agony of separation.)

<sup>3</sup> Some refer to it as the Citrakūṭa Mountain.

<sup>4</sup> It is customary for those who are separated from their beloved to wear a bangle on only one wrist. (The implication here is that the bangle had slipped and fallen down from the wrist of the Yakṣa, who had become emaciated due to the sadness of separation.)

<sup>5</sup> Vallabhadeva mentions the day as the 'last day of Āṣāḍha' ('*āṣāḍhasya praśamadivase*').

cloud – which is made of smoke, light, water and air – and living creatures – which are endowed with keen faculties – began to entreat the cloud as follows. (4, 5)

My dear! I am aware that you belong to the illustrious family of Puṣkalāvarta clouds, that you are the chief officer of Indra and capable of changing your shape according to his will. Hence, knowing that a prayer to a well-known person, though unfulfilled, is better than one to a lowly person, though granted, I, having been taken far away from my lover through the machinations of destiny, appeal to you for help. O water-showering cloud! As you are the refuge of all the distressed, please take this news to my beloved who is suffering the separation caused by the wrath of Dhanapati<sup>6</sup>. Your destination is the abode of the king of Yakṣas, the famous city of Aḷakāpuri, whose flawless mansions are polished by the light from the moon on the head of Lord Śiva, who resides in the grove Śingāraṇam<sup>7</sup> outside the city. While you travel on your aerial path, you will see the ladies – whose husbands had gone to foreign lands – comforted by the thought of their quick return<sup>8</sup>, push their curls upwards and gaze at you. For, unlike me, will any man who is not subservient to others, neglect his wife who is deeply distressed by separation, when you are ready in the sky (to help by conveying assuring messages)? (6 – 8)

While the favourable wind very gently propels you on the path to be taken<sup>9</sup> and the proud Cātaka bird (Pied Crested Cuckoo) sings sweetly to your left<sup>10</sup>, the herons<sup>11</sup> – flying in an attractive row – will surely approach you, as they know by experience that your presence

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Dhanapati’ (which means ‘Lord of wealth’) is another name for Kubera.

<sup>7</sup> Pūrṇasarasvatī says that the grove Gandhamādāna, which is situated on southern side of the Gandhamādāna Hill, a part of the Kailāsa Mountain range, is known as the Śingāraṇam here.

<sup>8</sup> On seeing the water-laden clouds during monsoon, lonesome and lovesick husbands will not agree to be away from their wives.

<sup>9</sup> The wind seems to be urging the cloud to embark on its journey, confident of its success. (It is said in the scriptures that the wind blowing in the same direction as that chosen by a person starting his travel indicates the success of his mission. *Raghuvamśa* 1.42: ‘pavanasyānukūlatvāt prārthanāsiddhiśamsinah’ – ‘As the favourableness of the wind augured the fulfilment of their wish...’)

<sup>10</sup> Varāhamihira says that the cooing of the Cātaka bird from the left is an omen that signifies victory.

<sup>11</sup> Poets describe that herons and cranes generally fly in monsoon and conceive during that time. *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇa* (*Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* 28.23) also has this description: ‘meghābhikāmā parisampatantī sammoditā bhāti balākapanktiḥ’ – ‘The row of herons, longing to meet the clouds and joyfully flying towards them appears...’

signals the happy time of conception<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, departing from here, with your route unimpeded, you will definitely see your brother's<sup>13</sup> beloved, who will be safe, alive, occupied in counting the passing days and practising chastity. The hearts of women, very tender like flowers, though susceptible to danger at once, will be protected by the tie of love when separated from their husbands. On hearing your thunder, which is capable of covering the earth with mushrooms – thus making it fertile – and which is soothing to the ears, the royal swans, very eager to go to the Mānasa lake, carrying tender Lotus-roots as food for their journey, will serve as your companions<sup>14</sup> in the sky until the Kailāsa Mountain. Please embrace and take leave of this noble mountain, a rare friend which enjoys your proximity during the entire rainy season and shows its love<sup>15</sup> for you by shedding hot tears caused by long, arid period of separation and which bears on its base the footprints of Śrī Rāma, Who is worthy of worship by all. (9 – 12)

O water-laden cloud! Please first listen to my description of the entire route through which you can easily travel, occasionally resting on mountains when tired and frequently drinking the pure water of the rivers when thirsty; after that, you shall hear from me the delightful messages for my wife<sup>16</sup>. (13)

Departing from this place – which is filled with lush rattan creepers – you shall fly northwards, your enthusiastic pace causing the good-natured wives of the *Siddhas* to gaze upwards anxiously and wonder if the wind is dragging the mountain-peak. On the way, avoid the blows from the heavy trunks of the elephants that support the quarters. (14)

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<sup>12</sup> The Yakṣa praises the cloud in the hope that it will be enthused by his words and begin its travel. He surmises that his work will also then be done.

<sup>13</sup> As the cloud is extremely affectionate and benevolent, the Yakṣa considers it to be his brother.

<sup>14</sup> As the scriptures state that it is improper to travel alone, it is mentioned here that swans will also serve as fellow travellers, in tune with the auspicious omens (sighted earlier). (Poets usually say that, during monsoon, swans fly to the divine lake Mānasa near the Kailāsa Mountain.)

<sup>15</sup> The term '*sneha*' means 'lustre' as well as 'love'. (Just as the meeting of two close friends after several days results in their tears, which shows their mutual affection, when the mountain reunites with his friend, the cloud, after a very long time, the 'tears' of the latter fall on the former, making it 'glisten' with love, as it were.)

<sup>16</sup> The first *Āśvāsa* contains the routes and the second one contains the messages.

Here, in front of you, appears the tip of a rainbow from the top of the anthill<sup>17</sup>, looking like a cluster of rays from gems! Proximity with this rainbow will impart a blue colour to your entire form, causing it to resemble the Form of Bhagavān Who incarnated as a Cowherd and sported a scintillating peacock feather. (15)

Aware that the success of agriculture depends on you, the women of those places, untutored in the wily movements of eyebrows, will gaze at you with cool glances steeped in love. You will then mount the freshly ploughed, fragrant<sup>18</sup> and elevated region called 'Mālam', slightly turn to the left, hasten<sup>19</sup> and then turn northwards again. (16)

A mountain called 'Āmrakūṭam'<sup>20</sup> will gladly bear you on its head when you are exhausted by the journey, since you helped the forest by putting out the fire with your showers; for, even a lowly person will not refuse help when approached by a friend, remembering the favours he had received earlier (from the latter). So is it surprising that such a lofty<sup>21</sup> mountain should be courteous to you, since you have helped it? Its sides covered by mango trees heavy with ripe, golden fruits, and you, resembling a blue, coiled braid, seated atop its peak, the mountain, appearing like the breast of Mother Earth with its centre dark in colour and wide outer area white, will surely attain the worthy state of being gazed at with delight by the celestial couples. After resting for a short while on the mountain – in whose arbours the wives of the foresters played joyfully – and discharging water in that area, thereby lightening your body, you may cross the path beyond at a faster pace; you will then espy the river called 'Narmadā', with its numerous streams gushing across the jagged rocks of the Vindhya Mountain, appearing like stripes of sacred ash on the body of an elephant<sup>22</sup>. (17 – 19)

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<sup>17</sup> The scriptures state that if a rainbow appears on water, it portends drought, its appearance on the earth foretells destruction of crops, upon a tree augurs disease in humans; if a rainbow is seen at night, the minister will face death and if it emerges from an anthill, there will be danger from weapons. Considering this, the poet has described the rainbow as appearing from an anthill. (Learned people say that sighting a rainbow predicts a successful journey.)

<sup>18</sup> It is natural for a field, parched by the summer sun and ploughed after a few showers of rain, to emit an aroma. (This peculiar smell is called 'petrichor'.)

<sup>19</sup> As there are no suitable mountains in that area for the cloud to rest, it is necessary that it should cross that area quickly.

<sup>20</sup> As the top of the hill contains mainly mango trees, the hill is called 'Āmrakūṭam'.

<sup>21</sup> Here, the word 'lofty' means 'tall' as well as 'noble'.

<sup>22</sup> The Vindhya Mountain is portrayed as an elephant and the branches of the river are the lines of sacred ash on the elephant's body.

O cloud! After showering your rain, you should drink the waters of the Narmadā, which is made fragrant<sup>23</sup> with the aromatic<sup>24</sup> ichor of the wild elephants and whose flow is controlled by the clusters of the Jambū tree (Java Plum or *Syzygium Cumini*). If you do that, the wind will be incapable of shaking and dispersing you when you are full of substance<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, emptiness causes lightness<sup>26</sup>, while fullness contributes to heaviness<sup>27</sup>. There, the roaming deer, nibbling at the Kaḍamba flowers (Burflower or *Neolamarckia Cadamba*), which appear yellowish brown due to their slightly grown, protruding filaments, biting into the plantain trees, with their fresh, tender shoots, and inhaling the redolence spreading profusely from the soil in the jungle seared by heat, will, by their actions, announce that you had travelled on that path and showered drops of water along the whole way. Dear friend! Even though you may wish to hasten for the sake of my love, I think your passage will be delayed through each mountain perfumed by the flowers of the Arjuna tree (*Terminalia Arjuna*); even otherwise, when the peacocks of the forest, with their eyes full of tears (of joy), greet you with their cries of welcome and come to honour you, how can you try to move fast? (20 – 22)

Thereafter, after you somehow leave the place and are in the vicinity of the country of Daśārṇa, its gardens will have white hedges due to the partially blossomed Ketaka flowers with their slender tips, the Peepal (Sacred Fig, *Ficus Religiosa*) and other sacred local trees will reverberate with the cacophony of the crows and other native birds trying to nest, the land will appear beautiful with dark Jamun trees (Black Plum, *Syzygium Cumini*) full of ripe, black fruits and the region will look inviting to the swans for a short stay<sup>28</sup>. The capital of the country is called Vidiśā, which is renowned in all quarters; upon reaching there, you are at once going to attain the exceptional fruit of your desire; for you will drink the very sweet water of the river Vetravatī – made attractive by the sound of water crashing along its banks

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<sup>23</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*vāsitaṃ*’ means ‘imbued with fragrance’. (The process of steeping solid objects in liquids, which causes the former to absorb the medicinal qualities of the latter, is called ‘*bhāvanā*’.)

<sup>24</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*tikta*’ means ‘aromatic’ as well as ‘bitter’.

<sup>25</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*antaḥsāram*’ means ‘filled with water’ and ‘powerful’. [The inner meaning is: If a person (here, the cloud), with his innards purified after expelling excess phlegm (discharging its water as rain), imbibes the infusion prepared by mixing bitter medicines (ichor) with liquid (water of the river) which is light on the stomach, he will acquire great strength and will not be affected by inflammatory disorders.]

<sup>26</sup> Here, the Sanskrit word ‘*laghu*’ means ‘lightweight’ as well as ‘insignificant’.

<sup>27</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*gaurava*’ means ‘heaviness’ as well as ‘eminence’.

<sup>28</sup> During monsoon, it is natural for the Screw Pine flowers to blossom, the birds to build nests, the Black Plum trees to bear fruits and the swans to fly to the Mānasa Lake.

and rippling gently due to the waves – like kissing the face of a charming woman who is knitting her eyebrows<sup>29</sup>; you may stop to rest at the top of the mountain called Nīcai; the flowers of the Kaḍamba trees, fully blossomed due to your presence<sup>30</sup>, will make the mountain seem as if it has goosebumps. The mountain, with its cave-houses emitting the fragrances of the perfumes used by harlots during their sports, reveals the amatory activities natural to the unrestrained youthfulness of the city's residents. Having rested thus, you may provide shade to the faces of the girls who, while plucking flowers, wipe the perspiration off their cheeks with their arms, in the process bruising the Water-lilies (*Nymphaea Nouchali*) that adorn their ears. After acquainting yourself with those faces for a few moments, you may saunter further, sprinkling fresh water on the Jasmine buds (*Jasminum Auriculatum*) in the gardens on the banks of the forest streams. (23 – 26)

Then, while travelling northwards, the route may be a little circuitous for you<sup>31</sup>; you should not turn away from enjoying the multi-storeyed buildings of the city of Ujjayinī; if you do not enjoy the tremulous and frightened sidelong glances of the city's women, caused by the dazzling streaks of your lightning, you will be let down<sup>32</sup>. On the way to Ujjayinī, you shall come into contact with and imbibe the sweet water of the sinuous river Nirvindhya<sup>33</sup>, whose waist-band is a row of birds<sup>34</sup> screeching due to the assailment of the turbulent waves, whose navel is the eddy in the water and who skips along gracefully like a woman. For, it is through gestures like walking and dressing up that women<sup>35</sup> essentially convey their love for their beloveds. (27 – 28)

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<sup>29</sup> The river is likened to a woman, the sounds of water dashing against the banks are her amorous cries, the waves are her undulating eyebrows and the water is her face. The cloud, which is portrayed here as a 'lover', is described as 'kissing' the face of the woman, viz. drinking water from the river.

<sup>30</sup> The commentator Pūrṇasarasvatī uses the term '*apraudhapuṣpaiḥ*', i.e. 'by flowers that have not yet blossomed', for he feels that such a description correctly depicts the state of horripilation.

<sup>31</sup> The city of Ujjayinī is situated slightly east to the river Nirvindhya, which runs north of the city; the cloud's route is somewhat to the west. Hence it is described as 'indirect'.

<sup>32</sup> The implication is that, having gone to Ujjayinī, if one fails to see the city's beautiful ladies, the purpose of having sight and of existence would be fruitless.

<sup>33</sup> The hidden meaning is that the cloud will delight in the river's company.

<sup>34</sup> The warbling of the row of water-birds is like the tinkle of bells on a gold chain around the waist.

<sup>35</sup> Rivers are generally described as female.

O bewitching cloud! After crossing the river, you will meet the river Sindhu; through its pathetic state caused by your absence – such as its extremely thin stream that resembles a braid<sup>36</sup> and its pallor due to the presence of yellow leaves that have fallen on the water from the trees on its banks – the river will indicate your extraordinarily good fortune<sup>37</sup>. Hence you are the only one who can perform the action needed to remove the river's emaciation and restore its health<sup>38</sup>. (29)

Later, after reaching the region of Avantī, the old men of whose villages are adept in narrating the story of the King Udayana<sup>39</sup>, you will, therefrom, approach the city of Ujjayinī, which is also known as 'Viśālā', whose opulence has already been mentioned earlier. It will appear like a part of the resplendent celestial world, created by the result of the remaining good deeds of the heavenly beings who, after enjoying the effects of some of their meritorious acts in the supernal worlds, have descended to the earth when the fruits of their virtuous deeds decreased, a little of it still left over<sup>40</sup>. In that city, the breeze that emerges at dawn from the river Śīprā – carrying with it the sweet, clear notes of the intoxicated cranes and the fragrance of the slightly blossomed Lotuses – caresses the limbs of the women like the gentle, coaxing words of ardent lovers, and removes the languor brought on by their love-play with their husbands. As you would be diminished after a long travel, you may augment your form with the fragrant fumes<sup>41</sup> which emanate from the latticed windows and are used to perfume the tresses of the ladies. Then, after accepting the friendship of the peacocks which

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<sup>36</sup> In summer, most of the water of the river would have evaporated, thus making it narrow; besides, the water will be clear and dark blue; hence the river is compared to a braid.

<sup>37</sup> Here 'good fortune' refers to the beauty and attractiveness of the cloud.

<sup>38</sup> Just as a lady pining for her lover is wont to braid her hair into a single plait, lose weight due to a distaste for food and become pale because of her longing, this river too manifests all these symptoms. It is only the cloud that can ameliorate the river's pitiable condition by showering water on it.

<sup>39</sup> Udayana, also known as Vatsarāja, the king of Kauśāmbī, was trapped by the sorcery of Mahāsena, the king of Avantī, who took Udayana back to his country and imprisoned him there. After being rescued due to the great effort of his prime minister, Saugandharāyaṇa, Udayana defeated Mahāsena, married a beautiful girl named Vāsavadattā, returned to his country and became an illustrious ruler. This is the gist of the story of Udayana.

<sup>40</sup> The meaning is that a part of the celestial world itself seems to have become the city of Ujjayinī, to enable the celestials to enjoy the after-effects of their remaining good deeds.

<sup>41</sup> As mentioned earlier, since smoke is also a constituent of clouds, absorbing smoke will build up the cloud's body.

celebrate your visit and express their love for you by dancing<sup>42</sup>, you may rest awhile on the lofty ramparts of the city, which bear the attractive marks of the red lac used to dye the feet of the delicate women and which are wrapped in the perfume of flowers. Thereafter, you shall reach the highly sacred shrine of Caṇḍikāpati, the Lord of the three worlds, while the attendants of Paramaśiva gaze at you with respect and wonder, taking you to be the dark-hued splendour of their Master's neck. The temple is surrounded by flower-gardens that are fanned by the breeze from the river Gandhavaṭī, whose waters are redolent with the perfumes used by the frolicking damsels and the scent of the pollen of water-lilies. O water-filled cloud! If you reach the region called Mahākāla some other time too, wait until sunset<sup>43</sup> and, by your thunderclaps, reverentially perform the noble duty of playing the drum during the evening worship of Lord Śiva, you will have received unsurpassed benefits for your majestic sounds. There, the dancing girls – with the bells of their waist-bands jingling in rhythm to their footsteps and their arms tired due to waving the whisk that has gem-encrusted handles – will, upon receiving the first drops of your rain that is very soothing to the bruises caused by their lovers' nails, bestow on you their sidelong glances from eyes that are as long as rows of bees<sup>44</sup>. Then, with a reddish lustre at twilight, like a newly blossomed Hibiscus flower<sup>45</sup>, you should fearlessly go behind Naṭarāja just as he prepares to dance, move around his massive shoulders<sup>46</sup> that resemble a forest of imposing trees and, with Pārvaṭī watching your devoted service with unblinking eyes, dispel that God's desire to wear the blood-soaked skin of the elephant. When the main road of Ujjayinī is invisible due to the dense darkness<sup>47</sup>, you should, with slender streaks of lightning like gold filaments, illuminate the path of the women who are on their way to their lovers' abodes; since they are very timid by nature, you should not shower rains and roar with thunder. Since your wife, the lightning<sup>48</sup>, would be tired after prolonged shimmering, you should rest with her in one of the cornices where the doves roost,

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<sup>42</sup> The cloud is generally described as a friend of the peacocks, as its presence causes the latter to spread their tail-feathers and dance joyfully.

<sup>43</sup> The idea is that the cloud should go there earlier during the day and wait (until the sun sets).

<sup>44</sup> It is implied that, as a result of worshipping and serving Paramaśiva, the cloud was immediately rewarded with the glances of noble ladies.

<sup>45</sup> Due to its red colour, the cloud is compared to the blood-stained skin of the elephant.

<sup>46</sup> Śiva is famous for his tumultuous dance in the twilight, waving his numerous arms that reach up to the sky.

<sup>47</sup> Stricken by the arrows of Manmatha (the god of love), the dazed women would naturally be oblivious even to the utter darkness while going to their lovers.

<sup>48</sup> The lightning is generally considered as female and described as the wife of the cloud.



spend the night there and wait for the sunrise before continuing your journey. Indeed, those who have undertaken to complete a task will not become disheartened halfway. (30 – 38)

Since the tears of neglected women<sup>49</sup> have to be wiped away by their lovers in the morning, you should quickly move away from the path of the sun; for, when he too returns in order to wipe away the ‘tears’, viz. the dewdrops, flowing from the face of his lover, viz. the Lotus, he will be very jealous if you are on the way, obstructing his hands<sup>50</sup>. (39)

Later, your form, naturally very beautiful, will be reflected in the pure heart, i.e. the limpid waters of the Gambhīrā River; hence it will be improper for you to callously ignore and render futile the river’s glances, made up of the gambolling and gleaming little fishes that are white due to the water-lilies in the river<sup>51</sup>. O friend, after tasting the river’s dark waters, which are like her garments, which move away from the two banks – as if they have slipped from her hips – and which appear to be held together by the arm-like vines of the water-willow, it will be very difficult for you, nestling against the river, to depart from that place. (40 – 41)

As you set off towards Devagiri, you will be caressed by the cool breeze, which is perfumed by the fragrance of the earth that has soaked up your rain-showers, which is inhaled by the elephants, causing them to emit sweet sounds through the orifices of their trunks<sup>52</sup>, and which ripens the figs in the forest. Transforming into a flower-showering cloud<sup>53</sup>, you should tenderly sprinkle the scented blossoms, drenched by the waters of the celestial river Gangā, on the Six-faced God (Skanda), who resides permanently on that hill; the effulgence of Lord

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<sup>49</sup> A woman who is heartbroken because her husband loves another woman is called ‘*khaṇḍitā*’.

<sup>50</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*kara*’ has two meanings – ‘arm’ and ‘ray’. [The drying of the dew drops when touched by the sun’s rays is compared to the tears being wiped away by the (sun’s) hands. The Lotus is generally considered female by poets; since it blossoms, as though with joy, upon seeing the sun, it is described as the wife of the sun.]

<sup>51</sup> The cloud being reflected in the clear water is akin to the river, described as a girl, meditating upon her lover, the cloud; with her eyes, which are the frolicking fish, she darts sideways glances at the cloud that has neared her. It would be considered rude on the cloud’s part if it disregards such a river and continues on its way.

<sup>52</sup> Some elephants are wont to breath in the cool air to reduce the bodily heat during the rutting season.

<sup>53</sup> As seen earlier in verse 6, the cloud, which is mentioned as possessing the ability to change its form at will, is requested to become one that rains flowers. [The *Raghuvamśa* (16.87) also describes the cloud as showering flowers – ‘*gandhodagraṃ tadānu vavrṣuḥ puṣpamāścaryameghāḥ*’ – ‘Then, wonderful clouds showered richly perfumed flowers’.]

Śiva, who bears the crescent moon on his head, was presented to Agni (the deity of fire), whence arose that god (Skanda), with a radiance surpassing that of the sun<sup>54</sup>. Then you should encourage Skanda's peacock – the corners of whose eyes are lustrous due to the rays of the moon on Maheśvara's crown – to dance to the sound of your rumblings, which are amplified by the echoes from the hill. Out of love for her son (Skanda), Bhavānī (Pārvatī) would replace the water-lily that she was earlier wearing above her ear with a feather which has fallen from the tail of his peacock and which gleams with a circular design. (42 – 44)

The *Siddha* couples, afraid that the water-droplets from you will fall on their lutes and damage the sweet tones of the instruments<sup>55</sup>, will move out of your way as you continue your journey after thus worshipping the god Śaravaṇabhava<sup>56</sup> or Ṣaṇmukha. After going a short distance, you should descend to honour the river Carmaṇvatī, which was created by the streams of blood from the thousands of cows – who were the daughters of the brown cow Surabhi<sup>57</sup> and who were slaughtered in sacrifice – and which seemed to be the flowing fame, as it were, of the pious king Rantideva<sup>58</sup>. As you, looking as though you have 'stolen' the colour of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, lean down to drink water from the river which, being quite far away, will seem very narrow despite its width, the celestials travelling in their aerial cars, upon seeing

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<sup>54</sup> When the celestials, unable to bear the evil deeds of Tārakāsura, prayed to Lord Śiva, the latter instructed Agni to carry his (Śiva's) radiance – which was in Agni's possession – to Gangā who, incapable of holding it, deposited it in a forest of reeds. The radiance took the form of Subrahmaṇya, who was then made the general of the celestial army. This is the brief story.

<sup>55</sup> When the *Siddhas* or demigods arrive with their wives to worship Lord Subrahmaṇya by playing on their lutes, the cloud would be showering flowers, wet with pure drops of water. If these drops fall on the instruments, it will damage them and prevent the *Siddhas* from performing their divine service. Hence they would be afraid of the cloud (and move out of its path).

<sup>56</sup> 'Śaravaṇabhava' means 'one who was born in the forest of reeds'.

<sup>57</sup> The *Viṣṇupurāṇa* states that, long ago, when the celestials and demons churned the Milky Ocean, there emerged from it the brown cow Surabhi, which was capable of producing ghee and other oblations required for sacrifices and which was, therefore, worshipped by the celestials.

<sup>58</sup> Long ago, when some cows in the country of the illustrious ruler Rantideva were grazing in the forests, they saw some other cows which had radiantly golden bodies. The first group of cows asked the second group, "Respected ladies, how did you get these beautiful forms and the blinding brilliance?" to which the divine cows replied, "We acquired these due to the merits of having been ritually killed in the sacrifices conducted by the pious". Hearing this, the former set of cows went to the king and prayed that they too should be slaughtered in sacrifices. The king acceded to their wishes and the blood that flowed from their bodies became a river, which was later called 'Carmaṇvatī'. Together with the cows, the king also reached a higher world. This story is found in the *Mahābhārata*.

the river, will surely believe it to be a single strand of pearl with a big, sapphire pendant, worn by Mother Earth<sup>59</sup>. (45 – 46)

After crossing over that river also, you shall proceed further, making your form the object of delight for the eyes of the ladies of Daśapuram, who are adept in the numerous adroit movements of their slender eyebrows<sup>60</sup> and whose eyelids, being wide open, cause their eyes to have dark and light tints and hence make them rival the bees that fly in pursuit of the Kunda flowers (*Jasminum Pubescens*) tossed into the sky<sup>61</sup>. (47)

Afterwards, following your shadow on the ground, you should brush past the region of Brahmāvarta and reach the famed city of Kurukṣetra which contains the signs of battles fought by several kings; just as you pelt the Lotuses with continuous showers, Arjuna too, the wielder of the bow Gāṇḍīva, shot extremely sharp arrows at kings. O noble cloud! After imbibing the water of the river Sarasvatī which Balabhadra drank out of love for his relatives, forsaking the wine that he had (earlier) enjoyed and that reflected the eyes of Revatī<sup>62</sup>, your heart will become white, though your external form will be black<sup>63</sup>. (48 – 49)

From there, you should go towards the river Gangā, which has descended from the Himalayas near the hill Kanakhala, which was the flight of stairs for the sons of Sagara to ascend to the celestial world and which is regarded as the daughter of Sage Jahnū. On seeing the knit eyebrows on Gaurī's (Pārvatī's) face, Gangā seemed to laugh, as it were, by way of her foam

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<sup>59</sup> To those who see from far above, the pellucid river would look like a pearl necklace worn by Mother Earth and the cloud, which has come down to drink water from the river, would appear like a sapphire pendant of the necklace.

<sup>60</sup> This is the speciality of these urban ladies, who are different from those described in verse 16 as 'untutored in the wily movements of eyebrows'.

<sup>61</sup> Since the pupils of the eyes are black and the remaining portions white, when the women raise their eyes to the sky to look at the cloud, the movements of their eyes resemble appear as if black bees are flying up to reach the white Kunda flowers thrown in the sky.

<sup>62</sup> When Balarāma, in the company of (his wife) Revatī, drank wine from a gem-encrusted vessel, the reflection of her lovely eyes in the wine added extra flavour to its natural palatability. That Balarāma was inordinately fond of wine is well known.

<sup>63</sup> Drinking the water of the river Sarasvatī naturally purifies the mind; the cloud acquires a dark hue when it absorbs water. Though Balarāma had a very fair complexion, he had to atone for killing (Romahaṣaṇa) Sūta and so gave up wine and, instead, chose to drink the water of the river Sarasvatī.

and, placing her hand-like waves on the moon on Lord Śiva's head, grasped his matted hair<sup>64</sup>. Should you, slightly leaning backwards to face the sky and suspended obliquely across the river, like an elephant that support the quarters, think of drinking the pure, crystal clear water of the river, your dark shadow spreading on the rushing waters will, at that moment, make the river seem as if it is meeting the Yamunā at another place<sup>65</sup>. After reaching the Himālaya, whose peaks are fragrant due to their proximity to the musk from the navels of deer resting there, which is white with a thick covering of snow and which is the birth-place of the river, when you are comfortably seated on its peak to get rid of the travel fatigue, you will acquire the colour similar to the mud that was dug up by and resting on the tip of the horn of the three-eyed God's white bull. If the sparks of a forest fire, caused by the rubbing of the cedar trees against one another due to the very powerful winds, sears the thick hair of the mountain-deer's tails and scorches the mountain, you should shower copious amounts of rain and completely extinguish the fire. For, are not the assets of the noble intended only to alleviate the sufferings of those in distress? Besides, when the dangerous Śarabhas impetuously leap up and angrily pounce on you – despite you avoiding their path – only to shatter their own bodies<sup>66</sup>, you should dispel them by a fierce discharge of hailstones. Can anyone who

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<sup>64</sup> When Sagara, a king of the Solar dynasty, let loose the horse intended for the *Aśvamedha-yāga*, Indra captured the animal and tied it somewhere in Pātāḷaloka (the nether world). The 60,000 sons of Sagara dug up the earth in their search for the horse (the areas that were dug by the sons of Sagara became deep oceans; hence seas and oceans are called 'sāgara') and reached Pātāḷaloka, where they found that the horse was tied near Sage Kapila, who was deep in meditation. Mistaking the sage to be the thief, the princes attempted to manhandle him. The enraged sage cursed them to be reduced to ashes. Bhagīratha, one of the descendants of the princes, took the monumental effort to wipe out the sins of his ancestors so that they can reach heaven. In the process, he brought the river Gangā from the celestial world to the earth. The river, on its way down, was first borne by Śiva on his head, who then let it flow on the earth. While flowing down, the river destroyed the sacrificial site of Sage Jahnu, who became angry and drank up all the water of the river. In response to Bhagīratha's prayer, the sage allowed the river to flow out from of his ear (hence the river is referred to as Sage Jahnu's daughter). The river then flowed to Pātāḷaloka and doused the ashes of the princes, upon which they came back to life and attained heaven. This is a summary of the story. Since the river has the power to remove sins and since it flowed from the celestial world, first onto the head of Śiva, then to the earth and finally to Pātāḷaloka, it is described as a flight of stairs for the Sagara princes to ascend from the nether world to heaven; Gangādevī is also said to be Śiva's wife. (The meaning of the verse is that Pārvatī, upon seeing Gangā on her husband's head, was consumed with jealousy. This caused the Gangā to become even more proud and mock Pārvatī by showing off her privilege.)

<sup>65</sup> As there is already a confluence of the Gangā and the Yamunā at Prayāg, this meeting is described as another one. The river Gangā is white in colour, while Yamunā is dark.

<sup>66</sup> Since the cloud is at a great height, the Śarabhas that leap at the cloud will only end up smashing their bodies. (The Śarabha is a fierce beast with eight legs, which is capable of killing an elephant.)

attempts to do useless tasks escape humiliation at the end? You should respectfully pay your homage and circumambulate the footprints of Candraśekhara (Lord Śiva, who bears the moon on his head), which are clearly etched on those rocks and which are worshipped by the *Siddhas*; the devout who behold them will be cleansed of all their sins and, upon shedding their mortal coils, will be eligible for the eternal position as the attendants (of Lord Śiva)<sup>67</sup>. As the bamboos on the mountain, their holes filled with wind, produce sweet musical notes and as the Kinnara<sup>68</sup> ladies extol Lord Śiva's victory of Tripura in song<sup>69</sup>, if the regal rolls of your thunder reverberate among the caves like the cadence of a drum, the musical offering to Parameśvara would be considered well executed and complete in all aspects. (50 – 56)

As you proceed further, admiring the unique scenes on the slopes of the Himālaya on the way, you should stretch yourself sideways, like the long, blue-hued Foot of Śrī Mahāviṣṇu<sup>70</sup> when He attempted to overpower the emperor Bali, and emerge through the tunnel in the Krauñca Mountain<sup>71</sup> – which is the route to spread the fame of Paraśurāma and the perfect entrance for the swans – before travelling northwards. (57)

After crossing the Krauñca tunnel, you should soar up in the sky and become the guest of the Kailāsa Mountain, the joints of the base of whose peaks were loosened by Rāvaṇa's arms<sup>72</sup> and which serves as a mirror to the celestial ladies; with its extremely tall peaks that are white

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<sup>67</sup> The *Śambhuraḥasya* says that Śiva deliberately left his hallowed footprints on the rocks in the Himālayas to enable the fruition of all acts (of devotion) directed towards him and that those desiring emancipation worship them and acquire an effulgent form that is capable of travelling to any world.

<sup>68</sup> The Kinnaras are a kind of celestial beings. (They are said to be divine musicians.)

<sup>69</sup> The ladies were singing songs that they had composed in praise of the exploits of Maheśvara who, for the welfare of the three worlds, burnt down, with the flame from his third eye, the three cities that were made of gold, silver and copper, together with the *asuras* residing there.

<sup>70</sup> Just as Bhagavān Viṣṇu, in His incarnation as Trivikrama, greatly extended His Foot to measure the three worlds long ago, the cloud is requested to elongate its shape so that it can enter the tunnel of the Krauñca Mountain and exit from the other side before regaining its original form.

<sup>71</sup> It is said that, while learning archery earlier from Paramaśiva, Paraśurāma discharged his arrows during a major competition with Subrahmaṇya (Śiva's son) and created a large tunnel in the Krauñca Mountain, which is the route for the swans travelling between the Mānasa Lake and Bhārata (India).

<sup>72</sup> The *Purāṇas* say that once, Rāvaṇa, proud of his strength, uprooted the Kailāsa Mountain with his arms; seeing Pārvatī and others frightened by the swaying of the mountain, Śiva pressed on the mountain with the big toe of his foot, which began to crush all the arms of Rāvaṇa. After crying and praying for several days, Rāvaṇa was released by Śiva, who was pleased with the former's prayers.

like the Lotuses, the mountain reaches for the sky like the ever-growing heaps of the peals of the three-eyed God's boisterous laughter<sup>73</sup>. I expect that when you, with a dark blue hue like the inside of a copper sulphate rock, lean against the mountain slope, which is white like a freshly cut tip of an elephant's tusk, the mountain, wearing, as it were, a blue cloth on its shoulder, will acquire the eminence equal to that of Balarāma<sup>74</sup> and attract the gazes of wonderstruck, unblinking eyes. If Pārvaṭī should take a walk on her playground, *viz.* the Kailāsa Mountain, with a helping hand from Lord Śiva after he removes the snake-bracelets from his arm<sup>75</sup>, you should precede her and, holding the water droplets tight and motionless inside your body<sup>76</sup>, arrange your limbs into a series of steps suitable for her to ascend the bejewelled slopes. As you will cause a heavy downpour when attacked by the celestial women with the sharp edges of the diamonds set in their bangles, they will definitely use you as a showerhead in their baths. My friend! If you are unable to escape from the clutches of the women who are depressed due to the sun's heat<sup>77</sup>, you should chase them away, naturally playful as they are, with your raucous claps of thunder that are extremely painful to the ears. My dear friend! On the mountain, you may enjoy yourself to your heart's content by drinking from the Mānasa Lake, whose waters produce the golden Lotuses, by becoming, for a moment, the scarf covering the face of the elephant Airāvata, by shaking the new, silky shoots of the Kalpaka tree with your breeze created by you and by other various pleasurable activities. (58 – 62)

Upon beholding the city which is situated on the mountain-top that is akin to a lover's lap, which is surrounded by the Gangā River whose lustre resembles that of a slightly askew garment of white silk and which can be considered the beloved of the mountain, you, who

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<sup>73</sup> Śiva is famous for his dance and uproarious laughter during the great deluge and other (similar) events. Poets generally describe laughter as white.

<sup>74</sup> Balarāma is said to be wearing a blue garment.

<sup>75</sup> Śiva takes off the snake-bracelets so that Pārvaṭī may not be afraid. (It is well known that Śiva wears snakes as ornaments.)

<sup>76</sup> The cloud is asked to securely bind the water droplets so that the water does not flow out when the cloud is stepped upon. (According to Vallabhadeva, the cloud is requested to make its body soft like a mattress and form a flight of stairs so that Pārvaṭī can comfortably step on it and easily climb up.)

<sup>77</sup> The commentator Pūrṇasarasvatī says that, as there is no need for those who experience the pleasures of the celestial world to suffer discomforts like heat, etc., it would be improper to use the phrase 'heat of summer' here. Instead, the term 'lovelorn' may be the correct translation.

possess the ability to travel anywhere you like, will not be unaware that it is Aḷakāpuri<sup>78</sup>. As the city, during monsoon, bears the rain-clouds upon its towering seven-storied mansions – which are like its head – it resembles a lady who has adorned the front part of her tresses with strings of pearls<sup>79</sup>. (63)

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<sup>78</sup> The import of this verse is that, as said in verse 6, since the cloud is the chief officer of Indra and is capable of changing its shape and travelling everywhere, it would be well familiar with Aḷakāpuri even before this occasion.

<sup>79</sup> Since the full route has been covered as per the earlier statement, “Please first listen to my description of the entire route” (verse 13), this verse signifies the end of the first *Āśvāsa*. By describing the city of Aḷakāpuri as appearing ‘like a bedecked beloved in the lap of her lord’, the great poet Kāḷidāsa hints at an auspicious conclusion, *viz.*, a happy union of the Yakṣa with his wife.

## Āśvāsa II

The mansions in the city can be compared to you in that they are inhabited by extremely beautiful ladies, they are decorated with pictures, they reverberate with the sound of drums played in musical concerts, their floors are inlaid with gems and their domes touch the sky, while you hold shafts of lightning, you are adorned by the rainbow, you have a majestic rumble that is pleasant to the ears, you hold sparkling water inside your body and you are stationed at a great height<sup>80</sup>. The women of Aḷakāpuri will always be seen with a rare Lotus in their hand, Kunda flower on their forelocks, the white pollen of the Lodhra flowers (*Symplocos Racemosa*) on their charming faces, the impeccable Henna flowers (*Lawsonia Inermis*) in their chignon, the flowers of the Siris tree (*Albizia Lebbeck*) in their ears and the Kaḍamba flowers, that have blossomed on your arrival, on the parting of their hair<sup>81</sup>. There, the Yakṣas, together with the ladies, repair to the terraces which are paved with crystals and decorated by the flower-like reflections of the stars<sup>82</sup> and, to the accompaniment of the deep sounds of the drums that resemble the impressive rolls of your thunder, partake of the wine<sup>83</sup>, which is obtained from the Kalpaka trees and which provides immense pleasure. Becoming overcome with shyness when their saris are tugged at by the trembling hands of their amorous husbands – which causes the pleats of the garments to loosen at the waist – the women of the city, whose lips are red like the ripe Bimba fruits (Ivy Gourd, *Coccinia Grandis*) are wont to scatter handfuls of scented powder, in vain, on the brilliant lights of the

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<sup>80</sup> The ladies are likened to the streaks of lightning, the pictures to the rainbow, the sounds of the drum to the rolls of thunder, the floor inset with gems to the shimmering water and the loftiness of the towers to the altitude of the cloud.

<sup>81</sup> The Lotuses blossom in autumn, the Kunda flowers in the winter, the Lodhra flowers in pre-vernal season, the Henna flowers in the spring, the Siris flowers in the summer and the Kaḍamba flowers in the rainy season. Since Aḷakāpuri is a celestial city, all the flowers unfailingly bloom in every season.

<sup>82</sup> It is to be understood from these descriptions that the palaces are tall enough to touch the stars and that their upper floors, which are inlaid with crystals, are utterly blemishless. It is natural for nearby objects to seem close while reflected and, similarly, distant objects to appear far away in their reflection. Since the stars are very near, their reflections are seen in the crystal floors, giving the impression that flowers are strewn on the floors.

<sup>83</sup> This may be interpreted as ‘the wine which is made from the flowers of the Kalpaka tree and which gives great delight’. [Taking as authority the line from the *Viṣṇupurāṇam*, which states that the wine called ‘Vāruṇī’ is found in the hollows of the Kalpaka tree found in the garden called ‘Bṛndāvanam’, the above interpretation is the correct one for the phrase ‘*madhu kalpavṛkṣaprasūtam*’.] Mallinātha says that the wine mentioned here is the ‘Ratiphala’, which inflames one’s ardour. The *Madirārṇava* describes this wine as being processed from the sap of the palm tree, sugar, gooseberries, sugarcane juice and the resin from the Sal tree (*Shorea Robusta*).



gem-lamps in front, to extinguish them<sup>84</sup>. Propelled by the wind, the rain clouds that belong to your species bespatter, with their fresh drops of water, the drawings in the terraces of the seven-storeyed mansions of the city and, as though instantly afraid, emerge in fragments through the latticed windows of the mansions – giving the impression of smoke rising from burning fragrant resin – before wafting away<sup>85</sup>. The moon-stones, suspended by threads in the houses and exposed to the rays of the midnight moon – which, not being hidden by you, appears complete – ooze abundant droplets of water<sup>86</sup> and dispel the early morning’s languor from the limbs of the women who have been embraced by their loving husbands<sup>87</sup>. Knowing that Paramaśiva, the friend of Kubera, actually resides in that city, Kāma, mostly out of fear, does not wield the bow<sup>88</sup> whose bowstring is formed by a row of black bees. Even otherwise, the work of the formless god (Kāma) is accomplished there through the unique charms of the greatly skilled ladies who, with their arrow-like glances from under knitted eyebrows, subtly and unerringly target the amorous men, resulting in a positive outcome. (1 – 7)

In that Aḷakāpuri, to the north of Kubera’s palace, stands my mansion, visible even from a great distance because of its beautiful and high doorway that gleams with many colours, like your rainbow; in the charming garden adjoining the residence is a young Kalpaka tree, which is carefully nurtured by my beloved, which is bent with the weight of abundant flowers that can be plucked easily and which is like our dear son. Near the mansion is also a step-well

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<sup>84</sup> Unlike other flames that are made of fire, these flames are formed by scintillating gems and are not snuffed out even when fragrant powder is thrown on them. Hence the actions of the women, whose increasing bashfulness makes them confused, are described as futile.

<sup>85</sup> The purport is that the action of the clouds here is compared to that of a clandestine lover who, with the help of an accomplice working in the gynaeceum, enters the private quarters of the building, rapes the women there and immediately changes his disguise before nervously sneaking out through secret ways and escaping.

<sup>86</sup> The moon-stone is said to exude water when touched by the moon’s rays.

<sup>87</sup> Just as spraying cold water revives flowers like jasmine that have wilted due to contact with hands, here too, the ladies are rejuvenated by the cool remedy.

<sup>88</sup> Once, when Maheśvara was in meditation on the Himālayas, with Pārvaṭī by his side, attending to him, Manmatha, instigated by Mahendra, aimed the arrow ‘Sammohana’ at Śiva to make him fall in love with Pārvaṭī. When Śiva’s mind was suddenly assailed by lustful thoughts towards Pārvaṭī, he was surprised and opened his eyes to find out the reason for this disturbance. Seeing the bow-wielding Kāma in front, Śiva flew into a rage and opened his third eye, which emitted an intense fire and burnt Kāma to ashes. Later, acceding to the heartrending prayers by Kāma’s wife Rati, Śiva blessed Kāma with another attractive form and changed him into Pradyumna. [Manmatha is said to be holding a bow made of sugarcane, with a chain of bees as its bowstring and five different flowers as the arrows.]

whose steps are inlaid with emeralds and which is filled with the buds of golden Lotuses that have very long stalks of beryl. The swans that dwell peacefully in the water<sup>89</sup> will not think of the Mānasa Lake<sup>90</sup>, though it is very near, even after seeing you. On the bank of the well stands a pleasure-mountain, whose peaks are made of exquisite columns of sapphire and which is surrounded by golden plantain trees that delight the eyes; o friend! When I eagerly and fearfully gaze at you, with your edges are streaked with lightning, I am increasingly reminded of that mountain, which is a favourite of my wife<sup>91</sup>. On that pleasure-mountain, very near the gazebo, which is made of Kunda vines and fenced by Kurabaka plants (*Amaranthus cruentus*, Red Amaranth) are found a red Aśoka tree (*Saraca Asoca*), waving its tender leaves, and a charming Bakula tree (*Mimusops Elengi*, Spanish cherry); of these, the first tree desires, like me, for a touch from the left foot of your friend and the other one for wine from her mouth, under the pretext of *dohada*<sup>92</sup>. Between the two trees is a crystal perch atop a golden pole that rests on a platform embedded with emeralds gleaming like the tender shoots of bamboo; your friend, the peacock, that rests on it at dusk, is made to dance by the claps of my beloved that cause her bangles to jingle melodiously. O noble cloud! Keeping all these details in mind and seeing the figures of the conch (*śankha*) and the Lotus (*padma*)<sup>93</sup> drawn on either side of the entrance, you would know that that is our dwelling; I am sure that, due to my separation (absence), it will appear gloomy and dilapidated; verily, the Lotus does not display its natural splendour when the sun disappears. (8 – 13)

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<sup>89</sup> Instead of the phrase ‘in the water’, the correct reading should be ‘on its bank’, which is as per Pūrṇasarasvatī’s version.

<sup>90</sup> The swans, which prefer pellucid water, become afraid on seeing the cloud, as they think that it will cause rains, which would muddy the water. So they fly away to the unfathomable and divine Mānasa Lake, which cannot be disturbed by the clouds. Since the step-well referred here is deep and free from mire, the swans, confident that its water will not become turbid, do not evince any interest in going to the Mānasa Lake.

<sup>91</sup> The dark blue mountain, with its base of golden plantain-trees, resembles the dark cloud laced by lightning. Since the mountain is much loved by his wife, the sight of the cloud, which is very similar to the mountain, causes fear and worry in the Yakṣa’s mind. [The *Rasākara* says that, when seeing, hearing about or speaking of things that are identical to familiar objects, it is natural that, along with happiness, fear also arises in one’s mind.]

<sup>92</sup> ‘*Dohada*’ is a ceremony performed to make trees bloom and bear fruits either outside their seasons or in abundance during their respective seasons. [It is said that the Aśoka trees blossom when touched by the left foot of young women and Bakula trees when sprayed with wine from their mouths.]

<sup>93</sup> ‘Wearing the conch and the Lotus on the crown’ – this (‘*śankhapadmau*’) can refer to the drawings of either the presiding deities of the treasures of conch and Lotus, or the objects themselves. (**Note:** The *śankha* and the *padma* are said to be two of the nine treasures of Kubera.)

My dear! Contracting your body to the size of an elephant-calf – to enable a quick descent – and resting on the beautiful peak of the aforesaid pleasure-mountain, you should, with your eyes in the form of very mild slivers of lightning<sup>94</sup> that resemble a row of fireflies, direct your glances into the interior of the house. (14)

You will then find an exceptionally attractive lady inside the house; she will have a slender frame, slightly dark complexion and pointed, even teeth; her lips will be like a ripe Bimba fruit; she will have a slim-waist and deep navel; her bewitching eyes will be like those of a frightened doe; her gait will be slow due to the weight of her hips; her form will be slightly bent due to her heavy breasts; in short, she deserves to be regarded as the first woman created by the four-headed God. You should know that the lady, now sad and sparing in speech, is my second life; since I, her inseparable lover, am very far away, she is now alone, like a female Cakravāka bird without her mate. As the seemingly interminable days of separation pass by, I feel that the young lady, due to an ever-increasing desire, will resemble a distressed Lotus pond in the grip of winter<sup>95</sup>. With her eyes swollen due to excessive weeping and the colour of her lips changed due to the heat of her sighs<sup>96</sup>, her face, partly covered by the swaying forelocks and resting on her hand, will be dull like the moon whose light is slightly obscured by you and will definitely evoke pity<sup>97</sup>. (15 – 17)

O noble friend! When you see my beloved there, she will either be deeply engaged in devout worship of the deities or in painting my image after imagining my extreme gauntness due to separation or looking at the caged female parrot, which is capable of speaking sweetly, and asking it, “My dear bird! You were dear to my beloved’s heart; do you at least think of him?” or, desirous of singing a song that contains my name and is composed of several verses, she would, with great effort, wipe the strings of the tear-stained lute placed on her lap clad in an unkempt garment and become sad, often forgetting the melody that she attempts. Or, by placing the flowers at the entrance in a row on the ground, she would be counting the

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<sup>94</sup> If the lightning is too dazzling, the Yakṣa’s wife may avert her eyes in discomfort and be unable to even see the cloud.

<sup>95</sup> The poet has respectfully followed the description in *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam* (*Sundarakāṇḍam* 16.30: ‘*himahatanaḷinīva naṣṭaśobhā vyanaparamparayā nipīḍyamānā | sahararahiteva cakravākī janakasutā kṛpaṇām daśām prapannā ||*’) – ‘Beset by several worries, Jānakī appeared haggard like a Lotus pond destroyed by frost, like a female Cakravāka bird (Ruddy Shelduck, *Tadorna Ferruginea*) distraught due to separation from her mate and in an acutely pitiable condition’.

<sup>96</sup> Due to intense sorrow, the warmth of her sighs would have caused her lips to change colour.

<sup>97</sup> Here, the forelocks are compared to the cloud and the partially concealed face to the moon, which is partly hidden by the clouds.

remaining months that would signify the end of the days of our separation or she would be cheering herself up by trying to visualise the pleasure of our union<sup>98</sup>, as these are the usual pastimes of those women who are separated from their beloveds. It is my presumption that this agony of separation will not torment your friend so much during the day – she being engaged in various activities mentioned earlier – as it would at night when, having nothing to divert her, she would be acutely unhappy. Hence you should position yourself on one of the windows of the mansion at midnight, which is the proper time for you to convey my message that would delight her, and behold the virtuous lady<sup>99</sup> lying on the ground, unable to sleep. Moreover, curled up on her side in solitude, as is wont, wasted away due to sadness and looking like a single digit of the moon that has risen from the east<sup>100</sup>, she would be spending the night shedding hot tears and feeling that the same night, which had earlier passed by in a moment, when she enjoyed pleasures with me, has become very long now due to my separation. With her forelocks dry because of plain bath (without the application of scented oils) and ruffled by the deep sigh that affects her tender lips, I am sure that she would be longing for sleep, despite being constantly disturbed by her incessant tears, hoping to meet me at least in her dreams. She would be filled with yearning and, with her hand whose nails are untrimmed and hence long, repeatedly push away from her cheek the strands of her hair that was divested of flowers and sorrowfully knotted on the first day of our separation, that would now be twisted into a single braid which, being tangled and dishevelled, would hurt while being groomed and which will be untied by me, relieved from sadness, at the end of the curse<sup>101</sup>. Nevertheless, she would happily look at the cool rays of the moon streaming through the windows like flowing nectar due to the love she felt for them before our separation and then, at once, disconsolately avert her eyes<sup>102</sup> and cover them with her tear-laden eyelashes. Unable to sleep or remain awake, she would be stuck midway in a desolate

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<sup>98</sup> The lady who grieves when her husband is sad, who delights when he is happy, who wears rumpled clothes and becomes emaciated when he is away on his travels and who gives up her life when he dies – in short, she who always follows her husband in all situations is regarded as a chaste wife. The descriptions in the verse are given accordingly.

<sup>99</sup> Since his wife is extremely faithful to him and since the cloud is his friend, the Yakṣa feels that there is nothing wrong with the cloud seeing her at midnight. Hence he describes her as ‘*sādhvī*’, which means ‘chaste’.

<sup>100</sup> Her gauntness and the fact that she is lying on her side on the solitary bed causes her to resemble the new moon lurking in a corner of the eastern horizon.

<sup>101</sup> In olden days, virtuous women would tie their hair into a single braid when their husbands were on a journey; the braid would be untied either by the women or their husbands upon the latter’s return.

<sup>102</sup> It is natural that the sight of the moon is a source of delight when couples are together and is a cause for great sadness when they are separated.

state, like a half-closed Lotus on an overcast day. Frequently resting her beautiful body – which would be bereft of ornaments and in acute agony – on the bed<sup>103</sup> and supporting it with great effort, the sight of the frail and miserable lady will surely cause even you to shed fresh tears. Generally, all kind-hearted people<sup>104</sup> are invariably filled with sympathy. (18 – 26)

I know that your dear friend’s heart is filled with love for me; hence I surmise that she will be in this state during our first separation; do not think that I consider myself very handsome and hence utter these words; my dear! All that I have said will soon be quite apparent to you. (27)

With her sidelong glances obstructed by her uncombed forelocks, her eyes unadorned by collyrium and her eyebrows devoid of the playful movements due to abstaining from wine, the doe-like eye<sup>105</sup> fluttering upwards upon your approach will, I think, cause it to acquire the beauty of a blue Lotus agitated by the frisky movement of the fish<sup>106</sup>. The nail-marks that I had made on it having faded, her left thigh, which is white like the pith of a healthy banana tree and which would be bare of the strands of pearl<sup>107</sup> that had adorned it for several days and that has now been kept aside owing to destiny will also throb. (28 – 29)

O cloud! If she is enjoying a peaceful sleep when you reach there, I request you to refrain from rumbling and to wait for a quarter; I, her beloved, may have somehow appeared in her dream and she may be tightly hugging me, so your thunders should not, at that very moment, cause her to slacken her tender arms from around my neck. (30)

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<sup>103</sup> Her mind beset with worries, she does not know what to do and hence alternates between lying down and getting up, which is natural in such situations.

<sup>104</sup> The term ‘*ārdraṅtarātmā*’ literally means ‘moist soul’ and refers to compassionate people. It can also indicate the cloud which, having imbibed water, has a ‘moist soul’.

<sup>105</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*mṛgākṣī*’ means ‘she whose eyes are large and beautiful like those of a deer’. [The unkempt hair, unmade-up eyes and refusal to drink wine are because of the agony of separation.]

<sup>106</sup> The *Nimittanidānam*, a book on omens, states that an upward throbbing of the eye foretells positive results. Here, the cloud’s arrival with the glad tidings from the husband is the favourable outcome. [Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam – Sundarakāṇḍam 29.2: ‘*prāspandataikam nayanam sukeśyā mīnāhatam padmamivābhītāmram* |’ – ‘The eye of the curly-haired Sītā twitched like a Lotus that quivers when hit by a fish’ – Vālmīki’s description of the events when Hanuman reached the place where Sītā was held captive is apt here and has been followed by this poet (Kālidāsa) also.]

<sup>107</sup> Women in the north often wear girdles having strings of pearl that extend up to their thighs.

Then, after you softly wake her up with a breeze made cool by your water-drops and cause the fresh jasmine buds as well as her heart to blossom together<sup>108</sup>, when she steadfastly gazes at the window on which you lean, you, holding your lightning within you<sup>109</sup>, should convey the following message in the majestic voice of your thunder. (31)

“O lady with a long-living husband<sup>110</sup>! Know me as the water-laden cloud which, with a pleasant-sounding and majestic thunder, has the power to make groups of wearied travellers eager to unravel the braids of their wives<sup>111</sup> in their residences and to cause them to hasten home and as your husband’s dear friend, who has come to you carrying his messages”. (32)

O noble cloud! As soon as you say this, she would be immensely delighted and comforted, like Sītādevī beholding Āñjaneya and, looking up at you, would honour you appropriately and then listen to all the news from you; since, for noble ladies of illustrious families, the arrival of a friend of their dear husbands is only slightly short of meeting their husbands. (33)

O long-lived friend! Upon my prayer and to fulfil your helping nature, please tell her the following: “O tender one! Your husband, who was never away from you, is now well and safe in a hermitage in Rāmagiri; as you are separated from him, he also has enquired about your wellbeing”. My dear, this is the first crucial point to be conveyed to the timid ones. (34)

You should further say this: “With his body extremely emaciated, afflicted by love, shedding tears, wandering about due to acute desire and continually and deeply sighing, your husband, who is hindered by the hostile destiny and unable to come here now is, from afar, meditating upon you who is also gaunt, distressed, shedding tears, relentlessly tormented by longing and drawing hot sighs!<sup>112</sup> Your lord who, ardently desirous of caressing your face with his, whispered in your ear words that could be said even in the presence of your female friends, is

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<sup>108</sup> It is well known that the touch of the soothing wind, cooled by raindrops, makes flowers bloom and relieves fever of other beings.

<sup>109</sup> As the glare of lightning will cause her to look away, the Yakṣa requests the cloud to hold its lightning inside.

<sup>110</sup> The cloud uses this address to convey to the lady that her husband is safe and alive, so that she would be comforted and free from worry.

<sup>111</sup> Women are referred to as ‘*abalās*’ as they naturally have less strength; this word is used here to indicate that they have become even more thin due to the sadness caused by the separation from their cherished husbands.

<sup>112</sup> The Yakṣa guesses that his wife would also be in a similar condition as him and so uses the same adjectives – from extreme emaciation to deep sighs – to correspondingly describe her condition.

now afar and alone, beyond your sight and hearing, and has, out of increasing love, uttered these words to you through me”. (35 – 36)

“My darling! I see your beautiful limbs in the Priyangu creeper (*Callicarpa Macrophylla*), your demure glances in the eyes of a frightened deer, your radiant form in the sun, your cascading tresses in the train of the peacock, the alluring movements of your eyebrows in the small waves of the rivers<sup>113</sup>, but O hard-hearted one<sup>114</sup>, I am unable to find a single object that possesses all your qualities! After drawing, on a rock using red chalk, a picture of you pretending to be angry<sup>115</sup>, when I attempt to draw myself as having fallen at your feet, my eyes are blurred by the constant tears<sup>116</sup>! This cruel fate cannot bear our union even in that way! When the forest deities see me stretching my arms vainly towards the sky to embrace you who have, somehow<sup>117</sup>, appeared in my dreams<sup>118</sup>, they shed pearl-like tears, which do not fail to fall on the tender shoots of the jungle trees<sup>119</sup>. O repository of virtues! I lovingly embrace the southbound breeze which, having snapped off the shoots of the Devadāru trees (Himalayan Cedar, *Cedrus Deodara*), carries the fragrance of the sap oozing from them, thinking that it would have caressed your limbs first”<sup>120</sup>. (37 – 40)

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<sup>113</sup> When intensely loving couples suffer the agony of separation, they tend to see each other in various objects, to draw those objects, to desire seeing their mates in their dreams and to see or touch the objects handled by them, as these are the methods by which they console themselves. Of these, the first one, *viz.* seeing their mates in different objects, is mentioned here.

<sup>114</sup> Unable to find an entity that wholly resembles his wife, the dejected Yakṣa feigns anger and chides his wife as ‘hard-hearted’.

<sup>115</sup> The word ‘*praṇayakopa*’ refers to the pretended anger of couples with each other due to their mutual love. (In other words, it refers to a lover’s quarrel.)

<sup>116</sup> By this, the second method of drawing a picture of the loved one is indicated. (Footnote 113)

<sup>117</sup> The term ‘somehow’ is used because sleeping is very difficult for one who is sad due to separation.

<sup>118</sup> The third means of consolation, *viz.* seeing his beloved in dream is denoted here.

<sup>119</sup> The scriptures say that if the tears of celestials and other great souls fall on the ground, the person for whom the tears are shed will either undergo suffering or die. So, to indicate that the Yakṣa was not in any such danger, the tears are mentioned as falling on the new leaves.

<sup>120</sup> This describes a person’s love for an object that has come into contact with his wife’s body. [The great poet has emulated this verse from *Śrīmad Rāmāyaṇam – Yuddhakāṇḍa* 5.6: ‘*vāhi vāta yataḥ kāntā tām sprṣtvā māmapi sprśa* |’ – ‘O wind, flow from the side of my beloved. Touch her and then touch me too’.]

“O tremulous-eyed one! How can the nights, with its long quarters<sup>121</sup>, be shortened into a moment? How can the heat of the day be mitigated in all seasons? My mind, indulging in such vain hopes, is rendered helpless by the intense pangs of separation from you. O lady of auspicious form<sup>122</sup>! Thinking variously about several things, I take care of myself to ensure that no harm befalls me. So please do not worry much about this situation; verily, has anyone in this world experienced unlimited and uninterrupted pleasure or pain? Do not those situations naturally go up and down like the felly of a wheel? My curse will be lifted when Śrīman Nārāyaṇa, the Holder of the bow Śārṅga, gets up from the snake-couch<sup>123</sup>. So please pass the remaining four months with your eyes closed; later, during the autumnal nights rendered sublime by the flawless rays of the full moon, we will delightfully fulfil all our desires that have intensified during separation”. (41 – 43)

Lady, he has further said this to instil faith in you: “Some time ago, you once fell asleep clinging to my neck and then suddenly woke up with a cry; when I repeatedly asked you (the reason), did you not smilingly reply, ‘You cheat! I dreamt that you were cavorting with some other woman’? O lady with the eyes like the blue water lily (*Nymphaea Violacea*)! After realising, from these clear indications, that I am alive, do not allow the petty words of people to make you doubt my existence; even though they may carelessly say that love between two people gradually disappears when they are separated, the truth is that, unexpressed love for the desired object only increases and becomes a heap of yearning”. (44 – 45)

O benevolent cloud<sup>124</sup>! Have you resolved to do for me this great help, which is essentially done by dear ones? Your response is not necessary for me to infer that you are generous<sup>125</sup>;

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<sup>121</sup> It is natural that the quarters of the night would seem to be lengthening for one who is suffering due to separation.

<sup>122</sup> Since his wife is endowed with all auspicious physical traits, her husband, the Yakṣa addresses her thus to imply that he will not come to any harm.

<sup>123</sup> The scriptures state that, on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight (*Śukla-pakṣa Ekādaśī*) in the month of Āṣāḍh, Śrīman Nārāyaṇa begins His meditation-sleep on the snake-bed in the Milky Ocean and wakes up on the eleventh day (of the bright fortnight) in the month of Kārttikā. [Hence it should be understood that the curse laid on the Yakṣa took effect at the beginning of autumn, was in force for a year, as mentioned earlier, and was lifted at the end of the monsoon or the beginning of the autumn.]

<sup>124</sup> The cloud is described as ‘benevolent’ as it absorbs cool water, which implies that it will not be hardhearted and refuse to accede to the Yakṣa’s request.

<sup>125</sup> Pūrṇasarasvatī explains this line thus: “I do not think that you have the audacity to mercilessly reject my prayer”.



since, do you not silently provide water to the Cātaka birds when they entreat you<sup>126</sup>? Is it not through their helpful actions that noble people respond to their loved ones<sup>127</sup>? My dear cloud<sup>128</sup>! Having completed this task which is desirable to me, though beneath you<sup>129</sup> – either due to your love for or sympathy towards me for being separated from my beloved wife – may you abundantly enjoy the splendour of monsoon<sup>130</sup> and travel to all regions that you desire! May you not, even for an instant, be separated from lightning<sup>131</sup> the way I am suffering from being away from my wife<sup>132</sup>. (46 – 47)

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<sup>126</sup> Poets say that Cātaka birds drink rain-water even as it falls from the sky; they do not drink water that has fallen on the ground.

<sup>127</sup> There is an appropriate verse in the *Subhāṣitasudhānidhi – Sankīrṇapaddhati* 33: ‘*garjati śaradi na varṣati varṣati varṣāsu niḥsvano meghaḥ | nīco vadati na kurute na vadati sujanaḥ karotyeva ||*’ – ‘The autumnal clouds emit loud thunder but do not shower water; the monsoon clouds shower copious rain without a sound; similarly, lowly people loudly brag about their exploits, but do not help; noble people wordlessly perform great service’.

<sup>128</sup> The Sanskrit word ‘*jalada*’ means ‘that which provides water’ and denotes the cloud. It is implied here that, since the cloud has the ability to shower water and mitigate the distress of those suffering from heat (refer *Āśvāsa* 1, verse 7), it can also remove the anguish of the Yakṣa, who is afflicted by the ‘heat’ of separation.

<sup>129</sup> Since it is not proper to ask the illustrious cloud – which belongs to the famed Puṣkalāvarta lineage, which is the chief officer of Indra and which can take several forms at will – to take on the menial role of a messenger, the Yakṣa appeases it by saying, “...due to your love for me...”.

<sup>130</sup> These include: happily approached by the herons (*Āśvāsa* 1, verse 9), adorned by the rainbow (*Āśvāsa* 1, verse 15), enjoying the joyful dance of the peacocks (*Āśvāsa* 1, verse 22), accompanied by the royal swans (*Āśvāsa* 1, verse 11) and illuminated by lightning.

<sup>131</sup> It has already been said earlier that poets describe lightning as the wife of the cloud.

<sup>132</sup> Through his words addressed to the cloud, the noble poet conveys his blessings at the end of this work to those who read it.

## Appendix I

[The following are the translations of the verses which have been excluded by Vallabhadeva and Pūrṇasarasvatī as not being a part of the (original) *Meghasandēśa*, but which have been commented upon by Mallinātha despite being interpolations, and which find a place in the *Nemidūtakāvyam*.]

### *Āśvāsa* I

(This verse should be studied between verses 18 and 19.)

\* O water-laden cloud! As you, exhausted by the journey, appear in front of the Āmrakūṭam Mountain, it will extol you and bear you on its head; you should also shower your rain in the forest to dissipate the heat caused by the summer; for, the help rendered with good intentions to noble people will immediately give positive results<sup>1</sup>.

(This verse is between verses 21 and 22.)

\*‡ While observing the Cātaka birds that are adept in drinking rainwater even as it falls from the sky, and counting and watching the number of cranes that fly past in rows, the group of Siddhas will laud you even while enjoying the unexpected embraces of their beloved who are frightened by your sudden and loud thunder.

(These three verses appear between verses 31 and 32.)

\*‡ On seeing the town's stalls containing numerous necklaces with big gems as their pendants, pearl oysters, superior conches and emeralds whose lustrous rays are as green as tender grass, it may seem that all the oceans have only water left in them<sup>2</sup>.

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\* This symbol refers to the verses taken from the *Nemidūtakāvyam* and the sign ‡ denotes the verses commented upon by Mallinātha.

<sup>1</sup> The Sanskrit verse for this translation can be found in the footnotes on page 15 of the *Meghasandesa* published by the Nirṇaya Sagar Press. [The interpolated verses that have been commented upon by Mallinātha are found in the Nirṇaya Sagar publication as well as in many other texts in the Telugu and other scripts.]

<sup>2</sup> The ocean is called 'Ratnākara' since pearls and other gems are found in it. The sight of heaps of gems in the market place may give the impression that the ocean, now divested of all its pearls and precious stones, is filled only with water.

\*‡ The people, conversant with the unique history of the place, regale their relatives – who visit them from other regions – with these statements: “It is here that Vatsarāja abducted the beloved daughter of Pradyota; here was the king’s golden palm grove; the elephant Naḷagiri, being in rut, uprooted a huge pillar and ran amok here”.

\*‡ The steeds of that region, leaf-green in colour, vie with the sun’s horses and are capable of surpassing the latter; the rutting elephants, as tall as mountains, discharge their ichor just as you shower rain; the warriors, flaunting their battle-scars caused by swords and spurning the glittering jewels, are valorous enough to face even Rāvaṇa on the battlefield.

### *Āśvāsa II*

(These two verses find a place between verses 2 and 3.)

\*‡ In that Aḷakāpuri, the trees are forever laden with flowers and besieged by intoxicated, humming bees; Lotus ponds are always filled with Lotuses and encircled by rows of swans; the domestic peacocks, with their ever-luxuriant trains, are keen to raise their voice in song; the evening twilights are made radiant by the moonlight, which stops the spread of darkness.

\*‡ There, the tears of the wealthy Yakṣas are only those of joy, not because of any other reason; their only pain is the one caused by Manmatha, which can be assuaged by the company of their beloved wives or husbands; no separation occurs between the couples other than those resulting from mock quarrel due to intense love; there is no age other than youth.

(This verse is between verses 3 and 4.)

\*‡ In that place, with the breeze – cooled by the waters of the Gangā – gently caressing their bodies, and the shade of the Kalpaka tree on the banks of the river providing them relief from the heat, the comely maidens, who are desirable to the celestials, would be playing by hiding gems in the golden sand and searching for them<sup>3</sup>.

(The following three verses appear between verses 6 and 7.)

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<sup>3</sup> Even today, children of villages can be seen playing by hiding sticks in sand and searching for them; this game, called ‘*guptamaṇi*’ (hiding a gem and searching for it), is also similar.

\*‡ In that Aḷakāpuri, amorous women, with everlasting wealth in their houses, gleefully disport in the outside garden called ‘Vaibhrājam’<sup>4</sup>, accompanied by the Apsaras or celestial courtesans and joined by the Kinnaras, who sing the glory of Kubera, the god of wealth, in their sweetly resonant voices.

\*‡ In that town, the path taken by lustful women to visit their beloved is revealed at sunrise by the Mandāra flowers (white orchids) that had fallen due to the slight vibrations of the women’s bodies as they walked, by the Lotuses and the fragment of petals that had slipped from their ears and by the strewn pearls that had broken from the necklaces near their breasts<sup>5</sup>.

\*‡ There, the many hued garments, the wine that has the ability to educate the eyes in the adroit movements of the eyebrows, the beautiful flowers and shoots, the several varieties of ornaments and the red dye suitable to be applied to the Lotus-like feet – all these articles of women’s adornment are provided by the Kalpaka tree alone.

(This verse is between verses 38 and 39.)

\* O youthful and beautiful beloved! Emaciated that I am, being far away and unable to behold your face – which is as fragrant as the earth moistened by a mild shower – I am further tormented by Manmatha! Besides, how will I pass these days of monsoon, with the rays of the sun hidden behind dark clouds that spread densely in all directions<sup>6</sup>?

(This verse should be read between verses 45 and 46.)

\*‡ My dear! After thus consoling your friend who is acutely suffering due to her first separation, you should return from the mountain, the summit of which was uprooted by the bull of the three-eyed God, and, by her messages of welfare and tokens of recognition, sustain me too, whose life is as fragile as the Kunda flower that blooms in the morning.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Śambhūrahasya* says that the garden protected by Vibhrāja, a commander in Śiva’s army, is called ‘Vaibhrājam’.

<sup>5</sup> The verse for this translation has been commented upon by Vallabhadeva also.

<sup>6</sup> The Sanskrit verse that forms the basis for this translation can be seen on page 79 of the Nirnaya Sagar publication of the *Meghasandēśa*.

(The following three verses appear at the end, after the 47<sup>th</sup> verse<sup>7</sup>.)

\* The cloud, capable of taking any form at will, then sped from Rāmagiri and reached Aḷakāpuri and, upon finding the Yakṣa's mansion mostly devoid of splendour – contrary to his (earlier) descriptions – sought to convey to his wife all the loving messages that he had so painstakingly uttered.

\* In an effort to save the life of the Yakṣa's wife, the benevolent and exceedingly noble cloud communicated everything to her in divine terms that were appropriate for celestials. She too was delighted after receiving the glad tidings about her husband. Will the request made to a noble person ever fail to yield the desired result?

\* Kubera too, upon hearing the message conveyed by the cloud, promptly let go of his anger and ended the curse out of sympathy, thus enabling the Yakṣa couple to remain inseparable, happy and free from sorrow and to enjoy limitless pleasures to their hearts' content.

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<sup>7</sup> These three verses are given as footnotes on page 87 of the Nirnaya Sagar publication.

## Appendix II

### **Details about the hills, rivers and towns on the path described by the Yakṣa to the cloud**

[As the names and boundaries of most of the ancient regions, given below, have undergone many changes, it is very difficult to specify which place Kālidāsa mentioned. Despite this, information about these areas is given in the following paragraphs, after extensive research.]

**Avantī:** This region is situated to the north of the river Narmadā and to the south of the Aravallī Mountain (some call it ‘Trikuṭa’); its capital was Ujjayinī, also known as Avantīpurī or Viśālā. The river Śīprā runs near this area. During the time of Mahābhārata, this state extended southward till the banks of Narmadā and westward till the shores of the river Mahi. On careful scrutiny, this area can be recognised as the western part of the Malwa Plateau.

**Aḷakāpurī:** This city is described in *kāvya*s and *purāṇa*s as the capital of Kubera, the king of Yakṣas, and as situated on the Kailāsa Mountain. Today, there is a small river which starts from the place known as Kailāsa in the Himālayas and merges with the Gangā as its first tributary; this river is called ‘Aḷakanandā’. The place of origin of the river or the area near by must have been Aḷakāpurī. One can say that, being a place inhabited by celestials, Aḷakāpurī is invisible to us.

**Āmrakūṭam:** Due to a dense growth of mango trees, this mountain was called ‘Āmrakūṭam’. Today, this hill, situated near the Narmadā, goes by the ordinary name of ‘Amarkaṇṭak’. The famous river Mahānadī emerges from a high ground located at the south of this hill.

**Himālaya:** Forming the northern border of this country of Bhārata, this majestic mountain, which reaches for the sky, is an abode of snow and is renowned as the tallest of all mountains in the world.

**Rāmagiri:** This name may be given to any mountain where Śrī Rāma stayed during His exile. But the Citrakūta Mountain alone is the most famous among them, as it was at Citrakūṭa that He first resided after reaching the forest. Currently, Citrakūṭa is said to be the place Comptah, situated in Bundelkhund in Central India. Even today, it is considered a holy place. Analysing the places mentioned in subsequent routes, one cannot assume that it was Citrakūṭa that was known as Rāmagiri here; a few locations described later are located to the south of Citrakūṭa (Comptah). Hence the Ramtek Hill, which is a part of the Kaimur Range near Nagpur, should be taken as Rāmagiri. This place is slightly to the north of Nagpur. Claiming that Śrī Rāma, while proceeding southward with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, stayed for a short while on the Ramtek Hill, the residents of that place conduct celebrations even today to commemorate the event.

**Ujjayinī:** This is known by another name, ‘Viśālā’. From ancient time till today, this city is eminently famous as a sacred place. Despite being known as an important town in Avantī, it is also said to have been the capital of the state of Mālava. This is because the region of Mālava was considerably widespread and surrounded the state of Avantī three-fourths, thus perhaps gaining pre-eminence and eclipsing the name of Avantī, which may have resulted in Ujjayinī being regarded as its capital. Earlier, it was ruled by Vikramāditya and others. Situated to the north of Indore, the capital town of Mahārājā Holkār, it is even today known by the same name, viz. Ujjayinī.

**Gangā River:** Originating from the Gangādvāram or the Gangotri Glacier in the Gharwal Range, the Gangā emerges from the southern side of the Himālaya, joins first with the tributary Aḷakanandā, then flows southwards through Haridvār onto the very fertile plains, whence it slowly heads east, flowing around the Rajmahal Hills and reaching Prayag (Allahabad), where it acquires the Yamunā and the Śoṇa rivers as tributaries, before joining the great river Brahmaputrā and finally merging with the waters of the Bay of Bengal. This river is celebrated as the most sacred river in our country.

**Gandhavatī:** This is a jungle stream near Ujjayinī. It may be assumed to refer either to the Kuno, which flows to the east of the river Pārvatī, or to the Kalisindhu, which flows to its west, or any nearby rivulet.

**Gambhīrā:** This appears to refer to the river ‘Ken’, as it is known today, which starts from the northern part of the Vindhyā Mountain, flows northwards and then joins the Yamunā.

**Kanakhala:** Located at the spot where the river Gangā descends from the Himālaya, this place is situated to the north of Haridvār. A river in that area is also called ‘Kanakhala’. There is a village to the south of the Sevālikā Mountains by the same name. The *Gangādvāramāhātmyam* states that this place was named ‘Kanakhala’ by the great sages, since ‘it confers liberation on even a wicked man who has a dip in it’ (*‘khalah ko nāma muktin vai bhajate nātra majjanāt | atah kanakhalam tīrtham nāmnā cakrurmunīśvarāḥ’*).

**Krauñcaparvata:** This must refer to the Kanchanjanga Mountain, a part of the mountainous region of Sikkim, which is situated between the two countries of Nepal and Bhutan (an independent country like Nepal but smaller in size). Lying slightly to the east of Mt. Everest, the tallest peak of the Himālaya, this mountain is somewhat shorter than the Everest, but has a very wide and majestic summit. By crossing the Himālaya through a pass in this region, people travel to Tibet for trade. The *Mrgendrasamhitā* says that since Subrahmaṇya killed the demon Krauñca at this place, the mountain is also called ‘Krauñca’.

**Kurukṣetram:** As this sacred place was ruled by a king called ‘Kuru’ who belonged to the Lunar Dynasty and who had performed severe austerities, it is known as ‘Kurukṣetram’. It is here that Paraśurāma is said to have annihilated 21 generations of Kṣatriyas with his axe and created five pools, called ‘Samantapañcaka’, with their blood and so this place is also said to be called ‘Samantapañcakam’. It is believed that Kṣatriyas who die in battle at this place gain liberation. It is for this reason that the Kurus and the Pāṇḍavas fought their war here. Located slightly to the south-east of Thanesar, a town near Delhi, this place still goes by the same name. Revered as a very holy spot by the people of this country, it is famous even today.

**Mount Kailāsa:** This begins from the northern shore of the Sindhu River – which originates from the rear side of the Himālaya – and extends diagonally across Kashmir, from the north-west to the south-east. The people of our country hold that this mountain is important for Kubera and is the main residence of Lord Śiva. The great river Brahmaputrā originates from the slope of this mountain. It is even now called ‘Kailāsa’ or ‘Kangri Mountains’.

**Carmaṇvatī River:** This river begins from the northern slope of the Vindhyā Mountain, turns due northward and then slightly north-eastward on the Malwa Plateau and flows along the eastern edge of the Rājaputana region (Rajasthan) and the western border of Central India, before joining the Yamunā as the latter’s tributary, a little northwest of Kanpur. Several streams such as the Śīprā, the Pārvatī and the Kalisindhu form the tributaries of the Carmaṇvatī. Now, this river is known as ‘Chambal River’.

**Śīprā River:** This is a small river; starting from the northern slope of the Vindhyā Mountain, slightly to the east of the place where the river Carmaṇvatī begins, this river runs northward and merges with the Carmaṇvatī. The town of Ujjayinī is situated on the bank of this river.

**Daśapuram:** This is known to have been situated to the north of the Maḷava region, due east of the country of Rājaputana, on the bank of the Carmaṇvatī River, at the place where it flows away from Rājaputana; today, the place called ‘Dholpur’, which is the main city of the Jat State, is believed to be Daśapuram. Previously, Daśapuram was the capital city of Rantideva. So, the city of Ratanpur, as it is known today, may have been Daśapuram, says Lord Wilson.

**Daśārṇa:** Earlier, this was the name of a country. This place is known to have been to the east of the Māḷava province. Currently, this could be the flat terrains of Chhatisgarh in the Central Provinces. Previously, its capital city was Vidiśā. The *Bṛhatsamhitā* says that this country is situated slightly to the east of the Vindhyā Mountain. There is a river, also called ‘Daśārṇa’, in the western part of this region. It seems that the river Dasan, which is a tributary of the Yamunā today, is the river Daśārṇa.



**Devagiri:** This hill is situated at the centre of the Mālava province and to the south of the Carmaṇvatī River; now, it seems to be known by the name of ‘Dewagar’. There is a temple dedicated to Subrahmanya here, which is said to be quite famous even today.

**Narmadā River:** Originating from the slope of the Āmrakūṭam (Amarkaṇṭak Range) close to the Vindhyā Mountain, this river flows westwards into the wide basin between the Vindhyā Mountain and the Satpura Hills before joining the Arabian Sea. It is very famous throughout this country as a sacred river. Rivers like this that flow from east to west are called ‘nada’. Another name of this river is ‘Revā’. Even today, a district by this name (‘Rewah’) exists to the north of this river’s birthplace.

**Nirvindhya River:** This is a stream that starts from the Vindhyā Mountain. This could have been a small river between the rivers Śīprā and Pārvatī, the tributaries of Carmaṇvatī.

**Nīcairgiri:** The word ‘Nīcairgiri’ means ‘a small mountain’. This may have been a short hill near the town of Vidiśā. [The forest streams mentioned later, in verse 26, seem to be the many rills that flow from the Vindhyā Mountain, between the Śīprā and the Daśārṇa Rivers; among them, Pārvatī, Kalisindhu, Kaliparvan, Vidiśā (Beas River), etc. are important.]

**Brahmāvarta:** This region lies between the rivers Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī (these two are invisible rivers – please see the details about Sarasvatī River) which form the lower boundary of the Āryāvarta territory (situated between the Vindhyā and Himālaya mountains). Even Manu states that this area is very sacred, that its citizens are well versed in their ancestral customs and that the provinces of Kuru, Matsya and Pāñcāla, etc. are situated further north (*Manusmṛti* 2.17-19). In other words, this could be the Sandy Desert of the Rājaputana. There is no water or shade on that plain. Since that area does not have any river or hill, the Yakṣa advises the cloud not to descend there and to proceed towards Kurukṣetra. Some believe that a part of this region was earlier known as ‘Naimiśāraṇyam’.

**Mahākālakṣetram:** This place is very close to Ujjayinī and a well known sacred place dedicated to Lord Śīva. As he is known as ‘Mahākāla’ there, the temple and the place also came to be called ‘Mahākāla’. Near this place flows a river named Gandhavatī (this could mostly be one of the small streams that are today known as ‘Kalisindhu’ or ‘Ken’).

**Mālam:** This is a mountainous region. Analysing the advice given to the cloud to go a little westward, immediately turn towards north and thereafter proceed to Āmrakūṭam, this place seems to be a hilly area which belongs to and which is slightly in the northern part of Ratanpur which, in turn, is located a little south of Māldā District. Any elevated region or a plateau is said to be named ‘Mālam’.

**Mānasasaras:** This is situated near Tibet, on one of the mountains in the Himālayan Range. Even today, it is known by the name ‘Manasarovar’. A river, also called ‘Mānasa’, flows from this lake. The great river Brahmaputrā has its origin very near Mānasasaras. Close to this lake is a famous region called ‘Hāṭaka’ (now it is said to be known as ‘Ladakh’).

**Vidiśā:** This city, which was earlier the capital of the region named ‘Daśārṇa’, is believed to be known presently as ‘Bhilsa’, in Central India. This city lies on the bank of the Vetravatī River. Several temples and Buddhist monasteries are well known today. (Among them, the monastery called ‘Sanchi Stupa’ is quite renowned.)

**Vindhyā Mountain:** Currently forming the approximate southern boundary of Central India and the northern boundary of the Deccan or Dakṣiṇa (southern) region, this famed mountain extends in the east-west direction.

**Vetravatī River:** Springing from the northern part of the Vindhyā Range, this river runs for 340 miles in a north-easterly direction, cuts across the Māḷava province as well as the south-western part of Allahabad and flows into the Yamunā near the town of Kalpi. Today, it is known by the name ‘Betwa River’.

**Sarasvatī River:** Flowing to the east of the Śatadrū (Sutlej), which is the most important among the tributaries of the acclaimed river Sindhu (Indus River), this river originates from the southern slope of the Himālaya, flows southwards along the south-west of Kurukṣetra and ends on the sandy plains of the Rājaputana country; except during the monsoon, there is no water in this river. There is another river called ‘Ghaggar’ to the west of Yamunā; this must have been called ‘Dṛṣadvatī’ earlier; just like the Sarasvatī, this river too disappears in the sandy land. The Sarasvatī is now described as an ‘Antarvāhinī’.

**Sindhu River:** Starting from the southern slope of the Vindhyā Mountain, between the Vetravatī and Pārvatī Rivers, this river crosses the Gwalior province, joins the forest-stream called ‘Kuwari’ and merges with the Yamunā to the east of the Carmaṇvatī (Chambal River). The Sindhu River referred to here is not the famous Indus River that flows at the north-western border of India; that renowned river is in the country Sind; this Sindhu River, which is near Ujjayinī, is very small. The great distance between Ujjayinī and Sind should also be taken into account (to conclude that the Sindhu River mentioned here is not the same as the Indus River).