

the world of COURTESANS

MOTI CHANDRA



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THE WORLD OF COURTESANS

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Preface

THE institution of courtesans in ancient India in its social setting has not yet received as much attention from scholars as it deserves. Courtesans in ancient India did not merely serve the baser needs of society but were also a symbol of culture and *ars amoris*. Around them moved interesting characters such as rich merchants, bankers and the *vitās* (rakes). In this way a courtesan became an important part of the Indian society. So far as literature is concerned, courtesans, in spite of their perfidies, were considered an urban institution which gave an impetus to arts and the life of luxury. Special officers were appointed by the state to look after their welfare. Courtesans were not only invited by the king, high officers of the state, and rich men for dancing, music, and dramatic performances, but they also accompanied their lovers to pleasure parties, gambling houses, and drinking booths. Such convivial parties were known as *goshtis*.

The institution of courtesans is a distinguished feature of developed urban society and, therefore, in Vedic and post-Vedic literature though the courtesans are mentioned casually, we hardly know much about their life and accomplishments. In Buddhist literature, however, we are face to face with the highly developed institution of courtesans and there are many stories in the *Jatakas* which throw light on their artistic achievements and the modes they employed in enticing their lovers. In Jain literature as well, courtesans have received attention and their achievements have been noted. We are also informed about certain features of *goshtis*, their organization, the qualifications of their participants and the important role played in *goshtis* and gatherings by courtesans. In the Mauryan period, how-

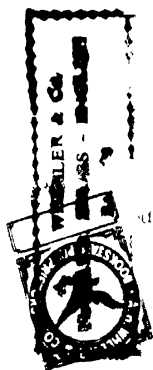
ever, the organization of courtesans became highly complex and the state devised a set of rules which governed their conduct. As a matter of fact in this period they became an important source of revenue to the state.

However, the best account of courtesans is obtained in the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana which goes into great details in drawing a very correct picture of the institution of courtesans, the clients who visited them, the low characters who either helped the courtesans and their clients and hangers on, their lovers, periodic festivals in which they participated, their acts of piety and their virtues and vices.

In the Gupta period, which is rightly regarded as the golden age of Indian culture, courtesans received great attention. From the dramatic literature of the period we get living pictures of their quarters, the luxury in which they lived, the clients who visited them, their attainments in various arts, the regions of the country and outside from where they came, and the patronage which they received from the state and the people.

In mediaeval India the institution of courtesans continued, but in common with other social institutions the institution of courtesans was definitely on the decline. In the vignettes of courtesans which we get from mediaeval literature we find that they came more for money than for arts and the low characters visiting them were reduced to mere pimps and abject flatterers.

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The World of Courtesans is an exciting study of women professionally engaged in the game of love. These delightful women, well-versed in music and the arts, looked after the extra-marital needs of the over-sexed. Around them moved adventurous characters such as the nobles of the royalty, merchants, and often the vagabonds and the rakes. In spite of their demeaning vocation courtesans were considered an urban institution necessary for a satisfying and sophisticated life.

Dr. Moti Chandra, Ph.D. (London), former Director of Prince of Wales Museum, and a renowned historian, has combed through evidence in Buddhist and Jain literatures, the literatures of Mauryan and Gupta periods of ancient India and the *Kamasutra*, to draw a complete picture of the exotic and exciting institution of the courtesans and their romantic life style.

1

Courtesans in Vedic, Pauranic and Smriti Literatures

THE HISTORY OF the courtesan in ancient India has not yet received due attention. Archaeological findings have shed a great deal of light on the highly urbanized culture of the Indus Valley people, but there is hardly any material that can definitely confirm or refute the existence of sacred prostitution in that culture. There is some likelihood that the bronze figure of the dancing girl from Mohenjodaro represents a sacred prostitute carrying out her duties within the precincts of the temple of some mother goddess and we know that this cult was quite well established in the Indus Valley culture. But again, there is hardly any actual evidence to support the view that the figurine is a sacred prostitute.

However, the Indus Valley culture is noted for its economic prosperity and for its wealthy merchant guilds, and it is possible that rich merchants, in this as in other periods of Indian history, could afford to spend lavishly on wine and women. The luxuriant tropical atmosphere of the Indus Valley culture, its orchards, gardens, lakes, pools and canals must have provided delightful spots for lovers to meet and must also have attracted courtesans practising their seductive charms. However, it is not known whether any particular quarter was reserved in the architectural layout of the Indus Valley cities for courtesans as was the case in later times.

Vedic culture, though based on high moral values and metaphysical speculations, did not turn its back on the pleasures of life. In the normal course of things, sound

moral conduct based on chastity and the homely virtues was prescribed for women, but there is evidence to show that Vedic Indians were fond of wine and women.

In spite of the rural bias of Vedic culture there is evidence which clearly points to the fact that prostitution existed in Rig Vedic times. The extent and form in which it was practised are disputed. It is related that girls without brothers were frequently reduced to prostitution. *Pumshchali* and *mahanagni* were probably harlots. *Kumari-putra* or the son of an unmarried woman, and *agru*, the son of an unmarried girl, are exposed and attacked by animals. These instances indicate loose morals, but offer no convincing proof of the existence of prostitution. The *Vaj. Sam.** recognizes prostitution as a profession by the use of such terms as *atishkadvari*, *apaskadvari*, *atitvari*, *vijarjara*. Pischel sees many references to *hetairai* in the *Rig Veda*, but his opinion has been questioned by some scholars.

The *Rig Veda*, however, refers clearly to a dancing girl. For instance Ushas is likened to a dancing girl wearing embroidered garments (*adhipesamsi*) and baring her bosom. In the opinion of Pischel and Geldner, in other passages of the *Rig Veda*, especially those in which Ushas is mentioned, she possesses the character of a *hetaira*.

There are certain significant words in Vedic literature which throw light on the character and function of courtesans. In the *Rig Veda* the Maruts are said to have become associated with the young lightning in the way a man becomes associated with a young courtesan (*sadharani*). *Rama* and *hasra* indicate a courtesan. *Ayogu* found in the list of victims in the *Vaj. Sam.* XXX, 5, is rendered by Weber as an unchaste woman, but according to Zimmer she is perhaps a courtesan. The *Vaj. Sam.* XXIII, 30, 31 and *Tai. Sam.* † VII, 4, 19, 23 refer to the illicit unions of Shudra and Arya, both male and female. Besides this, when they list the victims at the Purushamedha they mention victims whose designations mean courtesans (*atitvari*, *atishkadvari*). The female dyer, *rajayitri* (*Vaj. Sam.* XXX, 12 and *Tai. Bra.* ** III, 4, 7, 1) is said to have been dedicated to sensuality.

* *Vajasaneya Samhita* † *Taittiriya Samhita* ** *Taittiriya Brahmana*

Pumshchali was a whore who enticed men. In this connection the opinion of J. W. Hauer is worth noting. The central point of his thesis is that in the conception of the *Vratyas* in A.V. XV, the ascetic element of Yoga is emphasized. He maintains that they were not outcastes or one of the robber tribes. A *Vratya* was connected in ancient lists with *pumshchali* and *magadha*. *Pumshchali* according to Hauer is not an ordinary whore but a sacred prostitute. In the *Vratya* ceremony, music played an important part and, therefore, *magadha* would stand for a holy wandering musician and *pumshchali* is the forerunner of the later *devadasi*. The obscure dialogue in the *Mahavrata* ceremony between a prostitute and a Brahmacharin shows a religio-mythical tendency. The *Jaimini Brahmana* II, 404, ff., speaks of the pairing of a *magadha* and *pumshchali*.

Sarkar understands by the term *Gandharvagrihita* (i.e., possessed by a Gandharva) the beginning of the later practice of a formal or nominal marriage of a courtesan to some deity or woodland spirit. As a matter of fact, in the *Atharva Veda* women are believed to have been possessed or enjoyed by the Gandharvas apparently in the course of village dances and music. According to Sarkar these were the *Gandharvagrihitas*, and they probably anticipate the *apsaras* of Vedic and Pauranic tradition and the *ganikas* of later times. *Dasi*, though ordinarily a female slave, also served as a prostitute. *Dasa* in the *Rig Veda* is primarily an enemy and secondarily a slave, but *dasi* is a slave girl from the *Atharva Veda* onwards. This might indicate that the first conquered slaves were *dasa* women. In the later *Samhitas* she is a *Shudra*, which is probably an ethnological term. The early *Brahmanas* associate *dasis* and *Shudras* with the *rishis*, and *dasi*putras or sons of slave women were often assigned the same position as other *rishis* or teachers.

That a certain ritual significance was attached to courtesans is evident from the elaborate ritual described in the *Sankhayana Aranyaka*. In the ceremony of *Mahavrata* which marked the commencement of the year in the winter solstice, the *hotri* was provided with a swing with two forked poles, a cross-bar and a strong cord of *munja* grass. The

udgatri sat on a seat of *munja* grass and the *adhvaryu* stood on a *munja* bundle. The other priests sat on small mats. There was a lute and a variety of other musical instruments, including drums, and the maidens who were to dance were provided with water jugs. A horn and a chariot were kept ready and a bow and three arrows were reserved for use by a king or a distinguished archer. The target was a round skin. Behind the *agnidhra* was a hole covered with the skin of the sacrificial animal and it was beaten with the tail of the sacrificial animal. After due ceremony the swing was erected and the *hotri* mounted it.

Then with the chanting of the *Mahavrata Saman*, there began the playing of instruments, the beating of drums and the uttering of loud cries. Maidens with water pitchers danced and sang joyfully. From the chariot the king shot the three arrows at the hide. At the end the drums were split up. The maidens put down the jars on the altar and the ceremony came to an end. Keith has analyzed the symbolism of the *Mahavrata*. The ceremony according to him is a solar symbol and this premise is supported by the sun-bird-shaped altar and the chariot, both signifying the sun. The drums, the other musical instruments, and the dance express the popular nature of the ritual. The performance was accompanied by a running commentary of praise and criticism by two persons selected for that purpose. This was probably a priestly refinement as all the versions call it a dialogue between a Brahmacharin and a prostitute. This was calculated to promote the fertility of beings and the earth and is referred to in the *Aitareya Aranyaka* as the sexual union of beings (*bhutanam cha maithunam*). The presence of the horn also supports this view. The women dancing and then pouring water into the fire perform a rite which is essentially a rain-spell, and the king shooting arrows at the dried skin symbolizes the piercing of the sky to bring down rain. Sarkar suggests that the *Mahavrata* may have been the prototype of the *hallisaka* and *latarasaka* which were suited for courtship in polite circles, and of the more vulgar *Holi* and *Rasa*. But he thinks that the inclusion of martial features of the *Mahavrata* and the sort of drumming and dancing des-

cribed point to some Dravido-Kolarian affinities to seasonal orgies and licentiousness.

The *Rig Veda* mentions the present of slave girls to *rishis* by kings. *Trasadasyu* is said to have given to *Sobhari-Kanva* fifty such brides. Along with the gift of cattle, *vadhu* (bride) slaves were included, while chariots are described as full of slave girls. Their number did not decrease in the *Brahmana* and *Upanishadic* periods, for the *Shatapatha Brahmana* speaks of 400 maids (*anuchari*) and in the *Upanishads* the king is said to have been attended by five hundred women carrying perfumed powder, etc.

It is not definitely stated in Vedic literature whether slave women were classed with prostitutes as such, but there are instances where slave girls were forced to lead a life of shame and did not mind offering love in exchange for money. In a sense, some of them could be classed as *demimonde*. In later literature, the term *dasī* came to indicate a low class of prostitutes.

In the sexual life of the Vedic people certain institutions seem to have played an important part, the *samana* being one such institution where free love seems to have been encouraged. In the *samana* which was held during tournaments, women were present and they seemed specially attracted to chariot-racing. They spent whole nights wooing their lovers and dispersed at dawn. Mothers also attended the *samana* to help the lovers adorn themselves and *Sarkar* suggests that *Indrani* was worshipped there. The *samana* was, as a matter of fact, a convivial gathering of young boys and girls. Here they met, played and made love, perhaps as a preliminary to marriage. One is constrained to agree with *Pischel* that the *samana* was "a general popular festivity to which women went to enjoy themselves—young women and elderly women sought there to find a husband, and courtesans to make profit of the occasion".

The *goshti* is another well known institution of ancient India in which highly cultured members of society met and discussed questions relating to the various arts. They listened to music and enjoyed the company of courtesans. In Vedic literature, however, a *goshta* denotes a spacious

cowstall where a whole clan kept their cattle. The *goshtha* of the Bharata clan conveys a similar meaning. Geldner interprets it as a grazing ground, but Whitney and Bloomfield's interpretation of *goshtha* as a stall or stable is more appropriate. In the *Aitareya Brahmana* the cattle of the Bharatas are said to have been in the *goshtha* in the evening, and this could only mean a stall which was the common property of the whole clan. As observed by Sarkar, "It is thus very probable that the gradually more and more specialized social association and unit of the 'gosthi', often mentioned later, in Buddhist and classical literature, grew out of the merry clan-gatherings at the 'gostha' in the evening after the day's toil and adventures in the fields and pastures."

The Vedic *sabha* usually connotes an assembly as well as the hall where it met, and though there seem to have been several types of *sabha*, it is possible that the same *sabha* served multiple functions. It is also reasonable to suppose that with the increasing complexity of functions, the *sabha* divided itself into several correlated institutions also called *sabhas*. For instance, gambling from the very beginning was closely associated with the *sabha*. This might perhaps have meant the growth of a spacious gambling hall and it would have left other members free to perform more serious duties. In some passages in the later *Samhitas*, the *sabha* evidently refers to a sort of drawing room of a private house. One might read in *sabhavati yosha* of the *Rig Veda*, a reference in this particular context to women visiting a *sabha* hall. If this interpretation is correct, *sabhavati yosha* may have meant a courtesan. Bearing in mind the pejorative sense of the word *sabha* as a place where gamblers gathered, the presence of courtesans there is probable for in later times gambling, drinking and prostitution went hand in hand.

Sarkar observes:

The 'sabha' in its wider sense must have been a large edifice with some pretensions to architecture; apart from the altar and pillars, there must have been more or less suitable structural arrangements for the transaction of

judicial, commercial and political business, and reception of courtly, well-born, wealthy persons and kings; and the complexity of the structure must have been greater where the same building was used for the other 'sabha'-ic functions,—gambling, merriment, social intercourse, debates and contests. Probably when the social and festive branch of the 'sabha' became separated it merged with the natural clan-gatherings at the 'gostha,' and led to the formation of the later 'gosthi,' whose functions were pre-eminently social and pleasurable.

From the above references, which at times are difficult to interpret, it is clear that even in Vedic times there were courtesans tempting their lovers, perhaps depriving the rich Aryans of a part of their possession in cattle and gold. One would have liked to know more about the venue of their profession, and the nature of their clientele. The coquettishness of the courtesans is referred to, but nothing is known of their subtle technique of extorting money from their lovers and of their proficiency in arts other than music and dance. Vedic courtesans must have frequented festivals and other convivial gatherings as courtesans did in later historical periods and there is evidence to show that perhaps they visited the *samana*. There also seem to be references to some sort of sacred prostitution, but it is not known how far it was practised.

In the epics and *Puranas*, the institution of the courtesan is described as having a legal status and many a story is told of its origin. It is related in the *Shambhava Upapurana* of the *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* that the blind seer Dirghatamas, a passionate lover, made love to his wife in any manner he chose. The other sages were incensed by his behaviour. As Dirghatamas's wife wanted to leave him, he laid down the following law about the relationship between man and woman. "From this day on, the course of law in the world is laid down by me. One husband is for the woman the first thing and the last (*parayana*) as long as she lives. Whether he be dead or alive, she shall have no other man. But if a wife goes to another man, then unfailingly she sinks out of her caste. And for unwedded

women, too, it is from today a crime leading to loss of caste. But if copulation does come about, then all men must give money; the women withal are not to have any profit from the pleasure, but it shall ever be dishonour and shame for them."

The *Matsya Purana* is, however, more explicit about the origin and conduct of courtesans. It is related that once Brahma asked Shiva whether he had any knowledge of the rules prescribed for the conduct of prostitutes (*panyastri*). In this connection Shiva related to Brahma the story of Krishna and his sixteen thousand *gopis*. Once it so happened that in the spring, amidst the songs of *koels* and the humming of black bees, the wives of Krishna sat on the bank of a lotus-pond enjoying a wine party (*apana-goshthi*). There they became enamoured of *Shamba* who happened to be passing by, and for their waywardness Krishna cursed them with rape by robbers, and a state of slavery from which they would only be released by the *rishi* Dalbhya. Later, when Krishna was killed by the Abhira robbers, his sixteen thousand wives were carried away by them and forced to lead a life of shame. When they encountered the sage Dalbhya, they said "Sir, we have been forcibly raped by the robbers and have lost our virtue. Please tell us why we have been reduced to lead a life of shame." When they asked him what the rightful conduct for courtesans was, Dalbhya replied with another story

Once while the daughters of Hutasana were playing in the Manasa lake, Narada came there by accident. The girls, without even a polite salutation, asked him how they could win Narayana as their husband. Narada, as the spokesman of the Brahmans, replied that they could obtain their heart's desire by giving away a couple of beds with gold furnishings on the twelfth day of the second half of the two spring months. But in revenge for their discourtesy, he placed a curse upon them that they would be raped and forced to take to prostitution. Krishna's wives were Hutasana's daughters in their former birth.

Dalbhya apparently enjoyed storytelling for he narrated yet another story about the origin and functions of prostitutes. According to him, in the war between the *Devas* and

Asuras innumerable demons lost their lives, and their women-folk were raped and married to robbers. Indra then advised the fallen women to work as prostitutes in the king's palace or in the service of temples (*devakula*) so that the kings and princes would become their patrons. Those who visited them with fees (*shulka*) would alone receive their attention. The girls were advised to offer to the Brahmans cattle, grain and gold on auspicious days. On the Sundays falling on the *Hasta*, *Pushya* or *Punarvasu nakshtras*, they were expected to bathe themselves with perfumed water and worship Kama touching various parts of the body including the organs of sex. After that the Brahmans were to be offered perfumes and even the enjoyment of their bodies. This was to continue for thirteen months and in the last month they were expected to offer the Brahmans furnished beds, costly clothes and ornaments, flowers and perfumes etc. The gifts were to be accompanied by chanting the following *mantra*: "O Vishnu ! I do not see any difference between Kama and Kesava, as you never allow Kamala to leave you, likewise O Chief of the Gods, accept my body!" Golden images of Kama were then offered to the Brahmans. From that day onwards any Brahman visiting courtesans on a Sunday was expected to be admitted free.

In the Gupta period still more fanciful origins of prostitution were suggested. The *Brihatkatha Sloka Samgraha* relates that the universal monarch Bharata took away forcibly the daughters of the Ocean with a view to marrying them all, but later he decided to take for himself only one wife. Therefore, he divided the rest into eight *ganas* and for each *gana* he appointed a head and he bestowed on her the prerogative of using an umbrella, *chauri* and seat (*asana*), and she was called a *mahaganika*. In the hierarchy of courtesans the *kumbhadasi* occupied the lowest place and the *ganika* the highest.

The *Vasudeva Hindi* records another version of the same legend. It is said that in former times Mandalapati Bharata decided to have for himself another woman besides his wife. The feudatories, therefore, sent their daughters to him for selection, but as ill-luck would have it, all the girls

came to him at the same time. The queen, seated in the palace with the king, asked him who they were. On being told the truth, the wily queen thought out a plan for warding off this calamity. She was certain that the king was bound to select one or two of them, so she threatened to leave the palace. It was then agreed that those women could serve the king in the outer court (*bahyopasthana*). From that day they waited upon him, holding his umbrellas and the *chauris*. Later they were handed over to the *ganas* and thus the institution of *ganikas* came into being.

The Pauranic view of the origin of prostitution requires further examination (*Br.* 212; *M.B.* XVI.5,135,144; 7.223-70). One view asserts that after the death of Krishna his sixteen thousand women were carried off by the Abhiras. They are stated to have been subsequently compelled to take to prostitution and in the profession they were instructed by Dalbhya Chaikitaneya. Two reasons are advanced for this state of affairs, namely, Krishna cursing his wives for their infidelity and their subsequent rape by the Abhiras, and Ashtavakra's cursing a host of Apsaras (Krishna's wives) and forcing them to become courtesans. Several probabilities are suggested by these statements: Firstly, that "organized" prostitution (under royal patronage) may have arisen as early as at the time of the Aila kings, under conditions associated with conquests and subjection. Secondly, that the destructive Yadava wars of the epic age produced a repetition of similar conditions and results on a large scale. Thirdly, that there existed an intimate contact between the harems and the courtesans with the result that royal polygamy often implied patronage of prostitution. Fourthly, the Brahmins were chiefly instrumental in fostering and sanctioning the profession, as is shown by the prominent part played in its development by Dalbhya Chaikitaneya and Ashtavakra, nephew of the notorious Shvetaketu who was connected with Brahmanical laxity, and was a teacher of erotics (inclusive of prostitution). All these Brahmins were, remarkably enough, Kurupanchala Brahmins together with the two Panchala Babhravyas similarly associated in tradition.

A suggestion has been made by Sarkar that prostitution

in India originated and developed in the Kuru-Panchala region (eastern Punjab and western U.P.). There is, however, a possibility that the Punjab and the Sindh (inhabited by the Madras and Sindhusauvirakas in the post-Vedic period) very possibly contributed to the institution of free love, including prostitution. In this connection the invective of Karna against the Madras (in the *Mahabharata*), though perhaps prejudiced, is a pointer to the actual state of affairs. Karna describes Shalya, the ruler of the Madras (who inhabited Sialkot, now in West Pakistan) as born of an evil country. A Brahman had informed Karna in the presence of Dhritarashtra that in the country of the Madras close relatives, friends, guests, slaves, both male and female were promiscuous and the women mixed freely with friends and strangers. Parched barley meal-gruel (*saktumantha*), strong drinks (*sidhu*) and beef formed a part of the diet of the Madras, and their meals were followed by sexual orgies. Men and women talked to each other loudly and drunken women threw off their clothes and paired without restraint like animals (*M.B.* VIII 27).

The Madras had once settled in Bahlika, though later they migrated to Sialkot. They were a pleasure loving people who drank beer, rum, and grape wine and ate beef spiced with garlic, cakes (*apupa*) and kababs (*mansavati*). They danced and sang with abandon in their city halls (*nagaragaravapreshu*), decked themselves with garlands, and were heavily perfumed. Their music resembled the "braying of asses and the grunting of camels". The women without husbands (*svamibhartrihata*) were known as *hahate*. According to Dr. V.S. Agrawala this word conceals the Greek word *hetara* which stands for courtesan.

The yearnings of a Bahlika chief (living in Kurujangala) for the woman he had left in his country are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. She is described as very fair and clad in a long, fine, woollen garment. He longed to return to his land and see women with high cheek-bones, who had the corners of their eyes lengthened with realgar and their eyes stained with collyrium. Clad in deerskins these beautiful girls leapt in dancing, and ate balls of parched barley meal with butter milk (*M.B.* VIII, 30.1-24).

The overall picture of the moral failings of the Madras is further enlarged by another Brahman from the Kurujangala country. He describes the orgies of the Madras of Shakala. On every fourteenth of the dark half of the month, drums were struck and symposial hymns (*ghoshikagatha*) sung. The participants ate pork, beef, mutton, fowl, and even the flesh of a donkey or a camel. They drank grape wine in the company of fair women wearing woollen wrappers, and throwing off their clothes they danced (M.B. VII. 30, 27-33).

The *Mahabharata*, VIII. 30, 57-59 also records an interesting tradition about prostitution or slavery (*bandhaki*) in Bahlika. It is said that once a virtuous woman was raped by the Aratta robbers, and she, therefore, pronounced a curse that every Aratta family would have a prostitute. Dr. Agrawala is of the opinion that the Madras represent the Indo-Greeks whose manners and customs were repugnant to the Aryans of the Kuru-Panchala country.

The pattern of society revealed in the epics shows that while in the forests the hermits were engaged in expounding the deep mysteries of life, the towns had another culture pattern in which courtesans played no insignificant part. They enticed men of virtue, accompanied armies on the march, served the king and by their training in the arts and crafts gained for themselves an important place in society. The institution of the courtesan is taken for granted in the epics, though their accomplishments are not praised sky-high as in the *Kavya* and prose literature of later days. The "public woman, open to the visits of all" (*nari-prakasha sarvagamya*) wore a red garment, a red wreath and red gold. This, according to Meyer, recalled the god of death. They were never considered inauspicious, though of course they occupied a low rung in the social order.

Vesya in the *Mahabharata* is considered an important adjunct of urban culture. On the eve of the Great War when both sides were ready for battle, Yudhishtira sent his greetings to these granters of delight: "My dear friend, ask after the welfare of the fair-decked, fair-clad, scented, pleasing, happy, pleasure-fraught women of the houses of joy (*veshastriyah*) whose glance and speech glide so easily

and sweetly along (M.B. V. 30.33)," The grim and severe life of the camp was made bearable to a certain extent by the presence of the women of pleasure, and soldiers were less solitary and more gay. The army of the Pandavas, while marching to the battlefield of Kurukshetra, apparently included wagons carrying the women who offered their bodies for sale—*Shakatahpatanveshashcha yanayugam cha sarvashah* (M.B. V. 151, 51-58).

The prostitutes took their place in the rear of the baggage train. It is mentioned that Duryodhana's forces were accompanied not only by craftsmen, professional singers, spies, but also by courtesans (M.B. V. 195, 18-19). As a matter of fact, courtesans marching with the army seems to have been a common spectacle in the India of the epics. In the *Ramayana* (Ram. ii. 36,3) Dasharatha, when he equipped a strong army for Rama, saw to it that women who lived by their beauty also followed in its train. This practice was even adopted on more sombre occasions. For instance, when the Pandavas set out with Draupadi and the citizens meet their royal mother who had retired to the forest, the splendid royal household included in its retinue "chariots, traders' goods and brothels" (M.B. XV. 22, 21).

This practice continued from epic times to the medieval period. The king and princes who led hunting expeditions to the forests also visited pleasure gardens. When Duryodhana went out on a hunting and branding expedition to ranches situated deep in the forest, his entourage included the wives of the Kshatriyas, a number of burghers (along with their wives) and a lot of singers, huntsmen, and courtesans (M.B. III. 238 ff.).

But courtesans were not only camp followers. They formed an important adjunct of urban life. It is said that Virata, after gaining a victory on the battlefield with the help of the Pandavas, asked his messenger to proclaim that young girls should come out of the city bedecking themselves. Courtesans playing musical instruments were also invited to participate in the victory celebrations (M.B. IV. 34, 17, 18). After his son's victory Virata made similar arrangements for his reception by the young men and

courtesans of the city (*M.B.* IV. 64, 24, 26, 29). At the consecration ceremony of Rama (*Ram.* II. 3, 17-18) the royal paraphernalia included a band of courtesans gathered within the second enclosure of the royal palace, and when Rama returned from his long exile, the crowd that welcomed him included courtesans (*Ram.* VI. 127, 1 ff.).

King Kushika on his return to his capital after undergoing a heavy trial of patience was received by the army and the people, including courtesans (*M.B.* XIII. 53, 65-66). Shuka, when he came to the court of the great philosopher Janaka Videha, was taken by a minister to the third walled court of the royal chamber and there left in a pleasure grove. "To him came running up quite fifty pleasure-girls, splendidly dressed, fair-hipped, young and tender, sweet to gaze on, wearing thin red garments, decked with gleaming gold, well versed in speech and honeyed words, skilled in dance and song, smiling, gifted with the knowledge of the heart's stirrings." They washed his feet and marked him for the highest honour. They served him good food and after he had finished, they showed him the enchanting pleasure-wood. They played and they laughed and offered him a couch, but the young sage was not moved (*M.B.* XII. 325, 33 ff.).

The tempting of innocent sages by young temptresses is almost a motif in the epics. It is said that the king of Anga in consultation with his ministers called the noted courtesan of the city to tempt Rishyashringa. The courtesan and her party proceeded in a well decorated boat to Vibhandaka's hermitage. When the old courtesan's daughter approached Rishyashringa, the poor recluse, not knowing who she was, offered her the comforts of the hermitage. She, however, was determined to do her worst. She gave him food, drink, flowers, and coloured garments and his passions were aroused. Then at the critical moment she left him, and he was disconsolate. In the end the courtesan led him to Lomapada.

When Krishna visited Duryodhana on a peace mission, Duryodhana had rest houses with women prepared for him and Dhritarashtra also gave orders that along with his sons fair harlots, decked beautifully should go to meet the mighty

Kesava (M.B. V. 86, 15-16).

From the above references it is clear that as far as the epics are concerned, no stigma was attached to the association with courtesans. But the didactic part of the *Mahabharata* is full of invective against them. In the sphere of wickedness the courtesan is considered only some degrees lower than a king (M.B. XIII. 125, 9). The ruler is reminded that drinking halls and strumpets, gamblers, traders and mimes were to be held in check as they were harmful to the kingdom (M.B. XII 88, 14, 15)

The condemnation of courtesans on moral grounds is, however, a common feature of the *Smritis* and certain *Puranas*. The *Agni Purana* (168.3), holds the eating of food offered by the *ganas* and courtesans (*ganika*) a great sin and a moral lapse. Cohabitation with mistresses (*avaruddha*), slave girls (*dasi*) and prostitutes (*bhujishya*) was punished by fines (A.P. 258.12). The *Garuda Purana* has nothing but condemnation for courtesans.

A courtesan is a dependent even in respect of her sleep, the sole aim of her life being to regale the hearts of her visitors as long as they can decently bear their wine. She is a sort of perpetual smiling machine, being obliged to hammer out a horse-laugh, even with the weight of a life-long grief, misery and futility lying heavy on her heart. Her person is sold to others for money, while she often meets a violent death.

The *Smritis* make thieves and other criminals the constant companions of public women. *Yajnavalkya* ii. 266 enumerates as one of the four tokens by which the police could trace a criminal, that of living in a house of ill fame (*ashuddha vasaka*). In the list of tricksters a harlot is placed in the company of such low characters as gamblers and other goondas (*Narada* and *Parashara Smritis* 2 and 3: *Manu*. X. 256 ff.). *Brih.* XXII. 9 enjoins swift punishment to gamblers and harlots. *Gautama*. XXII. 27 is stern enough to lay down the rule that the slaying of a woman belonging to all merits no punishment. *Manu*. IV. 209 says that the Brahmans must not accept food offered by a prostitute,

and he also stipulates that a deceitful harlot is to be punished with death (*Manu*, IX, 259).

But the lawgivers did not all denounce the courtesans and prostitutes. They had to recognize their social status and provide them a certain degree of security. *Yaj.* II, 290 classifies concubines into two categories—*avaruddha* (one who is kept in the house and forbidden to have intercourse with any other male) and *bhujishya* (one who is not kept in the house but elsewhere and is in the special keeping of a person). If any other person had intercourse with them, he was to be fined fifty *panas*.

Narada, XVIII, 10 expresses a more sympathetic attitude towards prostitutes. Their ornaments, being the tools of their profession, could not be confiscated. Since a prostitute's rights were protected, she was also expected to act honourably towards her clients. *Narada*, 18 states that if a public woman after receiving her fees, refused to grant favours to her client, she was liable to pay thrice the amount she had received (*Yaj.* II, 292; *Narada*, 18; *Matsya*, 227, 144-45). According to the *Agni Purana*, 227, 44-45, in addition to the above mentioned damages, she was forced to pay a fine to the royal treasury as well. If, however, a dispute arose between courtesans and their lovers it was settled by joint parleys between the head courtesan and the lovers. Since concubinage was a recognized social institution, the *Smritis* provided for the maintenance of mistresses and concubines. If the property of a dead patron was escheated to the king, the state was expected to provide for the maintenance of concubines, slaves and for the performance of the *shraddhas* of the deceased. This rule held good only in the case of *avaruddha* (mistresses).

Narada, 78-79 provides us with further details regarding prostitution and free love. Intercourse was permitted with wanton women (*svairini*) who were not Brahman by caste, with prostitutes, or with female slaves or with women who were not restrained by their masters, provided they belonged to a caste lower than one's own. Intercourse with women of a superior caste was forbidden. "But when these women are kept mistresses (of a person), intercourse with them by a stranger is as much a crime as intercourse with

another's wife. Such women must not be approached, though intercourse with them is not forbidden (on the ground of caste etc.), since they belong to another person." In *Gaut.* XXII. 27 it is said that for killing a woman who is a Brahman by birth only and who subsists by harlotry, no *prayashchitta* is necessary but eight handfuls of corn may be gifted.

It is evident from the *Puranas* and *Smritis* that prostitutes constituted themselves later into a separate caste. The *Mitakshara* commentary on *Yaj.* II. 290 quotes the *Skanda Purana* as saying that prostitutes constitute a separate caste springing from the nymph Panchachuda and as such they did not commit any sin and did not merit punishment if they had intercourse with men of the same caste or of a superior caste, and men approaching them did not incur any penalty if they did not happen to be concubines. Men, however, who visited the latter committed sin and the *prajapatya* penance was prescribed for them.

In India, women and religion are inseparable and taking advantage of this, prostitutes began playing an important part in the esoteric rites of the Tantras. They began frequenting the *tirthas* not with a view to gaining salvation for their lost souls but to ensnare rich merchants and bankers. At Devachakra in a kind of Mandala connected with the worship of a god (as enjoined by the Tantras), the part of *Sakti* or embodiment of the active power of the divinity, is played by five well-known prostitutes: *raja-veshya* (the king's courtesan), *nagari* (a courtesan living with accomplished citizens), *gupta-veshya* (one who followed the profession secretly), *deva-veshya* (temple dancer) and *brahma-veshya* or *tirthaga* who visited holy places. That *tirthagas* actually carried out their profession in holy places is further supported by the *Brahma Purana*, XL. 30-35. While describing the Ekamra Tirtha it is said that important courtesans (*varamukhyah*) endowed with beauty and charm lived there, and were skilled in the arts of dance and music. It is said that the holy influence of the *tirtha* had caused them to give up jealousy, which however, seems doubtful.

The Vedic, epic and Smritic evidences about courtesans

are terse and to the point. The heroic nature of the *Mahabharata* could hardly be reconciled with the softer aspects of love, and in the moral atmosphere of the *Ramayana* courtesans and prostitutes are dismissed as mere appendages to royal pomp and show. Similarly the *Smritis* are more concerned with the social and legal position of prostitutes rather than their way of life. One is, therefore, pleasantly surprised to find in the *Harivamsa Purana* (a compendium of the *Mahabharata*) some interesting information about courtesans, *goshtis*, *yatras* and the *samaja*, with which some of the leading characters were closely associated.

Samaja in the *Mahabharata*, I, 134 etc. means a sort of tournament. Dhritarashtra with the concurrence of Drona announced a *samaja* for which the ground was cleared, a *bali* offered and a theatre (*prekshagara*) raised by the royal architects. The people provided for their own galleries and pavilions. Dhritarashtra attended the show accompanied by men and women. There was *bali* and music before the tournament began. A *samaja* was also arranged at the time of Draupadi's *svayamvara*. The *samaja* ground itself was a colourful affair, with walls, moats, doors and arched gateways. There were actors, dancers and musical instruments and the place was perfumed. The princes occupied *manchas*. The *samaja* is said to have continued for sixteen days.

Samaja elsewhere (H.V. II, 85, 71-72) indicates a grand feast accompanied by wrestling matches. Thus Krishna held a *samaja* in honour of Bilvakeshvara in which meat, savouries and sweets were served, and after the feast there was a wrestling match. In Buddhist literature it is mentioned that *samajas* were held on the top of a mountain. Animal sacrifice, partaking of food and drink and a great deal of merry-making were prominent features of the *samaja*. In the H.V. II, 17, 10 Krishna in order to celebrate the Giryajna, asked the *gopas* to prepare food and drink and arrange for large pots of meat and sweets. A three-day holiday was declared and the cattle to be slaughtered were brought forward. The *gopas* and *gopis*, in a spirit of merry-making, consumed large quantities of food

and then worshipped the mountain with perfumes, flowers and incense.

Samaja indicated a social gathering in which music, dance, dramatic shows or tournaments played an important part. Here members of different social orders, guilds etc., participated. Courtesans played an important part both as participants in the show, and also as spectators. The *H.V.* II 30 has drawn a convincing picture of Kamsa's *samaj-vata*. Kamsa summoned the assembly to witness a fight between Krishna and his favourite elephant Kuvalayapida. Right from the morning crowds of citizens proceeded to the stadium. Its galleries (*manchagara*) were painted and provided with octagonal legs; they had doors with bolts and pins. There were many railings (*sargaladvaravedikah*), semicircular windows and well decorated comfortable seats which were provided with curtains made of fine material and decorated with flower garlands. Some of the galleries were occupied by the guilds and *ganas* flying their own colours and adorned by the distinguishing symbols of their professions. Naturally, the galleries (*prekshagara*) occupied by the inmates of the harem were a much more elaborate affair. They were gilded, inlaid with jewels and decorated with flags. There one could hear the babble of tongues and the tinkling of ornaments. The courtesans (*ganika*) occupied separate galleries covered with counterpanes. There sat the chief courtesans (*varamukhyah*). The galleries occupied by them were provided with luxurious seats, golden sofas, colourful carpets and flower bouquets. They were also provided with golden pitchers containing wine (*panakumbhah*). There were drinking booths (*panabhumi*) and *pan* baskets. Then there were hundreds of galleries furnished with costly carpets and provided with latticed windows to seat the queens. The *prekshagara* of Kamsa was altogether a splendid affair.

In the ancient *yatras* and *goshthis* which attracted citizens, courtesans played an important part. The *Harivamsa*, II, 88 gives an uninhibited picture of *vatra*. It is said that once the Yadavas of Dvarika decided to pay a visit to Pindaraka Tirtha situated on the seashore. In the party Krishna had his own separate retinue and each prince was

accompanied by his own followers. These parties had with them thousands of courtesans whom the Yadavas had settled in Dvarika. They were just ordinary prostitutes (*samanya*) fit only to be played with (*kridanaryah*) but by their accomplishments they had attained the status of courtesans (*veshajyoshitah*) fit for kings. (H. V. II. 88, 7-9). As a matter of fact, it is asserted that the availability of women had created such a spirit of rivalry in the crowd that there was a possibility of the Yadavas fighting among themselves to gain their favours.

When the watersport started, Balarama, intoxicated with wine, sported in the ocean with his wife Revati. Krishna, however, had his traditional sixteen thousand women. Some of them simply floated holding on to the boats while others imitated birds and aquatic animals. Apart from the more important of the Yadavas, the *goshtis* of the princes had a wonderful time with the courtesans who sang and danced for their amusement.

While this was going on, Krishna, perhaps in order to show his superiority, summoned heavenly nymphs such as Panchachuda and the nymphs of Kubera and Indra and ordered them to usher in the courtesans (*kridayuvatyah*), and entertain the Yadavas with dance, with vocal and instrumental music and with dramatic performances. Their perfumed garlands, fine garments, their coquettishness and smiles enchanted the Yadavas who began sporting with them in the sea. Large boats with cabins manned by expert pilots, and small sail-boats were used by the Yadavas for their sports and love games.

Soon the orgies of the Yadavas redoubled (H.V. II. 89). Balarama, besmeared with sandal paste and wearing blue garments and earrings, reeled under the influence of drink and was supported in the water by his wife Revati. To please him the heavenly nymphs gave a performance. Then the courtesans wearing their costumes performed a *Rasa*, singing about the life of Krishna in the local dialect. Balarama was quite drunk and he and his wife also joined the dance. This encouraged Krishna and the other Yadavas to join the orgy with renewed vigour. After the dance was over the Yadavas returned to their watersport.

Pitchers of wines called *maireya*, *madhvisura* and *asava* were allowed to float in the water. The distance that was normally maintained between the elders and youth was completely forgotten in this orgy.

The intoxicated Yadavas wearing fanciful costumes and ornaments and adorning their bodies with flowers, sang and struck the water with their hands. The courtesans fully participated in the revelry. At the order of Krishna they imitated the croaking of frogs and turned their clasped hands into waterspouts.

Seeing that the game had gone too far, the revellers left the water. They applied unguent to their bodies and at the behest of Krishna proceeded to the drinking booths. Then they ate excellent food and drank to their heart's content. Meat cooked in acid fruit and pomegranate, *sikh kabab* roasted on spits, roasted buffalo, overflowing with hot ghee and seasoned with spices, lemon and salt was the excellent fare they enjoyed. Fat wild animals cooked according to the recipes of the *Paurogava shastra* delighted their palates. Strips of meat fried in ghee and seasoned with sea salt formed a side dish. Radishes seasoned with pomegranate and lime, basil leaves, asafoetida, ginger and fragrant grass served to season with the drinks. Birds roasted on spit with *ghi* and oil and seasoned with salt and tamarind were served with the drinks. Then there were dishes seasoned with saffron and cumin seed and salt. The sweets were cooked in ghee and moistened with buffalo milk. At the sight of all this food, the drinking stopped and the revellers fell voraciously on the vegetables, on the soups, *conjee*, *dahi*, hot milk and fruits.

After the dinner the Yadava chiefs witnessed the dance and the musical performance of the courtesans, and then the party returned to Dvarika.

2

Courtesans in Buddhist Literature

VEDIC LITERATURE DOES not offer us abundant source material for a reconstruction of the social history of India. Extracting information from mere words is an arduous etymological exercise, and besides, interpretations often lack general acceptance. On the contrary, Buddhist literature, though verbose and repetitious, yields valuable data about the social institutions of ancient India. The virtues and failings of people are recorded in stories and parables which form an integral part of Indian literature. The picture which they paint of the urban culture, of the flourishing cities, of the time peopled by men of all castes and professions, merchants, shopkeepers, rulers and their officers is both real and convincing.

In Buddhist literature women receive full attention. The general concept of the housewife is that she should be blessed with an equable, obedient temperament. She was expected to be sweet of speech, fair and renowned, capable of bearing a huge family, and of course, subservient to the wishes of her lord. We read, however, that for rich men a woman was nothing more than an instrument of pleasure and for an average householder she was merely the producer of a large family.

The *Jatakas* condemn women and their wickedness. A woman approves of her husband's absence from home and is not pleased at his return. She speaks ill of him, and is silent when he is praised. She neglects his interests and performs acts that are not at all to his liking. She sleeps by his side fully clothed, with her face averted; she changes her sides frequently, frets, sighs and tries to leave

the bed. She listens to perverse advice and does not mind squandering her husband's wealth to gain a new lover. She builds intimate ties with her neighbour, walks along the streets, exposing herself to the glances of passers by and stands at the door looking aimlessly at the scene on the street. She insults her husband. As a matter of fact the characteristics of a wicked woman mentioned in the *Jatakas* are the same as those indicated in the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana. According to the *Jatakas* there are eight reasons why a woman despises her husband: poverty, sickness, old age, habitual drunkenness, recklessness, dullness, overwork and the lack of a sense of obligation. A wife is to be condemned if she frequents parks, gardens and river banks, and pays frequent visits to the houses of relatives or strangers, if she wears a smart vest-cloth, if she is addicted to strong drinks and if she stares vacantly at the scene outside the house, standing at her own door.

The bodily movements and behaviour of a woman in love have not escaped the attention of the *Jatakas*. In the spirit of the *Kamasutra* they describe how a wicked woman draws herself, bends down, tries to appear coy and presses her fingertips. She plants one foot over the other and scratches the ground with a stick. Her son is also made to play a part in this unholy game of love. She swings him up and down, plays with him, kisses him, feeds herself and him. She gives or begs, mimicks others and speaks in either a high or a low tone. She draws the attention of her lover with dance, song and music, tears and blandishments. But if these soft avowals of love fail to evoke any response she shows her fury. She laughs at him, derides him, she shakes her dress or shifts the folds of her sari, exposes or covers up her legs, displays her armpits and navel. She closes her eyes, knits her eyebrows, tightly presses her lips, she pulls out her tongue, loosens or tightens her dress and headgear.

Apart from the employment of courtesans by kings, their chief patrons seem to have been rich merchants and bankers who had amassed wealth and could afford the luxury of accomplished courtesans. The harem (*antahpura*, *orodha*) or inner apartment of the palace was a well-built structure,

painted and plastered inside and provided with all kinds of luxuries. It is said to have employed the conventional number of sixteen thousand dancing girls (*natakittthiyo*). These courtesans were always at the disposal of the king forming an integral part of the seragho, and they were often handed down from father to son. They attended and accompanied them to the royal garden. It is related in the *Khantivadi Jataka* that once king Kalabu was drunk and he came into the park in great pomp surrounded by a group of dancing girls. There he had a couch spread on the royal seat of stone and lay with his head on the lap of his favourite; the other dancing girls, skilled in vocal and instrumental music and in dancing gave a musical performance.

In order to understand the position of those courtesans who practised their profession independently of the royal court the references in the *Jatakas* to their mode of life are of some interest. In the *Muhasara Jataka* the chief musician is supposed to have received a stolen necklace from the royal chaplain and handed it over to a courtesan as a present.

In the *Vattaka Jataka*, the function of a courtesan as a temptress is stressed. At the time of the Kattika festival, the friends of the son of an Over-Treasurer decided to employ a courtesan to divert him from the path of righteousness and self-abnegation. They did not keep their plan secret but informed their friend that they were planning to get a sweetheart for him. They picked up a charming girl and asked her to proceed to his chamber. She did so, but failed to evoke any response from him. Piqued at this slight she uses all her blandishments, smiling and flashing her lovely white teeth. Unmoved, he gave her money and asked her to leave him. As she was leaving his house, she met a nobleman in the street who asked her to accompany him and offered her money. This almost resulted in a debacle, for the courtesan's mother, finding that her daughter had not returned home after the festival, filed a complaint against the Over-Treasurer's son. The king, after hearing the case, ordered his execution, unless he was able to produce the girl. As the Over-

Treasurer's son was being led to the execution ground, the girl heard the commotion and saw him being led to death. She rushed out, revealed her identity to the officers and thus saved his life.

In the *Gamani Chanda Jataka*, it is related that in the course of his adventures Gamani Chanda reached a village where a courtesan (*ganika*) lived. When she found out that he intended to visit the king, she requested him to carry her message to him. "I used to make great gains before; now I don't get the worth of a betel-nut, and nobody courts me." He was requested to obtain an answer to this query. After Gamani met the king he conveyed to him the courtesan's message and received the following answer. "The woman used formerly to take a price from the hand of one, and not to go with another until she was off with him, and that is how she used to receive much. Now she has changed her manner, and without leave of the first she goes with the last, so that she receives nothing, and none seek after her. If she keeps to her old custom, it will be as it was before."

In another *Jataka*, a courtesan (*vannadasi*) is said to have received a thousand pieces from a youth who only visited her once and then disappeared. She, for honour's sake, did not accept new clients and gradually became poor. Unable to bear her poverty any longer, she went to the Chief Justice to seek his advice and was told to return to her former profession.

The *Indriya Jataka*, mentions of courtesans sitting along the banks of a river in which many men bathed. The *Atthana Jataka* relates how a courtesan charged a thousand pieces a day from a merchant. One day he forgot to bring her fees and was driven away by her maids. Shocked at this kind of treatment from her, he turned an ascetic. When the king learnt this, he ordered her to bring him back. She entreated him but he refused to return.

A curious story of the cupidity of courtesans is related in the *Mahavastu* iii. 35-38. The chief courtesan (*agraganika*) of a city used to invite a clever, handsome person to sleep with her. She did this after oiling his body, applying perfumed powder and unguents to it and draping it with

fine garments made in Kasi. Once a banker's son was seen quarreling with her. He had offered her a hundred thousand pieces for spending a night with her, but she had refused the offer on the plea that she had already received her fees from somebody else. The poor lover told her the next day that he had passed the night dreaming that they were united in love. She at once demanded her fees (*bhatakam*) from him. The poor man was thunderstruck and refused to pay but she stuck to her demand. Other people tried to intervene and stop the quarrel but it was of no avail. Thereupon the members of the *negama* of Kampilla asked one Prajnavanta to adjudge the claim of the contestants. The resourceful man ordered a mirror and a hundred thousand pieces to be brought into the room. He asked the banker's son to hold the basket with the money against the mirror and he told the courtesan to receive the reflection.

In the *Kanavera Jataka*, the love of a courtesan for a robber is recounted. It is said that once there lived a mighty robber in the city of Banaras. Enraged at his doings, the king ordered him to be seized and executed. He was arrested by the city governor, and while being led to the execution ground, Sama, a famous courtesan of Banaras saw him. Her price as usual was a thousand pieces a day. She was also the king's favourite and served by five hundred female slaves (*vannadasiyo*). The robber was handsome and she fell in love with him at first sight. In order to secure his release she sent a thousand pieces to the governor who was prepared to release him provided somebody else could be substituted for him. Sama persuaded one of her lovers to go to the governor with the bribe for the release of her so-called brother. The governor took the hint and after sending the robber in a closed carriage to Sama, he had the lover quietly executed.

Sama passed her time joyfully in the company of the robber but he always suspected her and thought that she might get him murdered if she found another lover. Therefore, he decided to leave her after robbing her ornaments. One day he suggested to her that they spend the day in a garden, and in order to please him she

prepared every kind of delicacy, and adorning herself with ornaments, accompanied him to the garden. There the robber made a show of violent affection for her, and as she lay unconscious, he bolted with her ornaments.

Unmindful of his perfidy, Sama waited for his return. She discarded her costly garments, scents and garlands. She sent a band of actors to search for him. In the city where the robber lived, the actors sang a song expressing the yearnings of Sama. The robber who chanced to be in the crowd heard the song but refused to return. Full of regrets Sama reverted to her old coarse of life.

The *Sulasa Jataka*, recounts the infatuation of a courtesan for a robber. Sulasa, a renowned courtesan of Banaras, lived with five hundred slave girls in her train. She charged a thousand pieces per night from her customers. Her story is practically the same as that of Sama. But unlike Sama, Sulasa was a woman of wisdom and courage. Her robber lover, after living happily with her for a few months, decided to steal her ornaments and leave her. One day, under the pretext of offering a sacrifice to a tree deity, he persuaded Sulasa to deck herself with ornaments and to come with him. When they reached the top of a mountain where the tree was situated, he threatened to kill and rob her. Fearing for her life, she reminded him of the good she had done him and promised to give him all her ornaments if he spared her life. But the robber was determined to carry out his nefarious design. Sulasa was very resourceful. Under the pretext of a last embrace she pushed him down to his death from the hill top and then returned to the city.

The *Takkariya Jataka* throws some interesting light on the life of a courtesan. Kali, a famous courtesan (*nagara-shobhani*) of Banaras earned a thousand pieces a day, which her brother Tundila, a debauchee, a drunkard, and a gambler, took from her and wasted. She could not restrain him or make him give up his habits. One day her brother lost all his clothes in a gambling match. Wrapping himself in a tattered loin cloth, Tundila went to his sister's house, but ordered by her, the serving maids threw him out. As he lay in the street bemoaning his fate, one of the

customers of Kali saw him and taking pity on him promised to plead for him with his sister. He kept his promise, but Kali refused to give anything to her profligate brother and told her lover that he was at liberty to give him whatever he liked

In that house of ill-fame (*ganikaghara*), the custom was that of every one thousand received, four hundred went to the courtesan and five hundred was spent on clothes, perfumes and garlands. It was also the custom that the clients who visited that house received garments to wear (when they stayed the night there) which they took off when they left. Kali's lover, out of sheer generosity, put on the clothes received from the house and gave away his own to Tundila. Kali felt insulted. The next day when her lover asked for his clothes, Kali ordered her servants to eject him from the house and he had to return to his home naked and humiliated.

But in spite of being secretly appreciated, courtesans were called harlots, wenches, street walkers and even murderesses. Enumerating their wicked acts a story-teller describes them in verse.

*Like poisoned draught or robber fell, crooked as horn
of stag,
Like serpent evil-tongued are they, as merchant
apt to brag,
Murderous as covered pit, like Hell's insatiate maw
are they,
As goblin greedy or like Death that carries all away.
Devouring like a flame are they, mighty as wind or flood,
Like Neru's golden peak that aye confuses bad and good,
Pernicious as a poison-tree they fivefold ruin bring,
On household gear, wasters of wealth and every
precious thing*

The above stories supplemented by other stray references in the *Jatakas* give a convincing picture of the life and doings of courtesans. Apparently they were held in great favour by kings and merchants. A king could depose a *ganika* and then restore her to position. They contracted

a relationship with court musicians and lived in great style. Apparently no stigma was attached to consorting with courtesans. Expressions like a "vile trade" (*nichakamma*), "a house of ill-fame" (*ganikaghara*), "this bad life of mine" (*kilittha*), and a "low woman" (*duritthi kumbhadasi*) show that the moral aspect of the profession was not lost sight of.

Whether she evoked pity or whether she was condemned, the courtesan flourished and no stigma seems to have been attached to the profession. The flourishing conditions of courtesans cannot be ascribed to the unhappy domestic lives of householders but to the growth of luxury due to the accumulation of capital. There was a decided preference for physical charms, for a luxurious way of living, unfettered by the annoying restrictions of life at home and above all there was admiration for accomplishment in the various arts (arts which busy housewives were hardly expected to acquire). We hear:

*With wives chaste, faithful and of high degree,
A man may circumspect and prudent be,
May curb his passions well in such a case,
Yet in some harlot his whole trust may place.*

The wide prevalence of prostitution may be seen from the use in Buddhist literature of a large number of synonyms indicating prostitutes and courtesans. Mehta has culled the following words from the *Jalakas*—*vesi*, *nariyo*, *gamaniyo*, *ganika*, *nagarashobhani*, *vannadasi* and *kumbhadasi*.

Devraj Chanana while discussing the meaning of some of these terms, says for instance that if a dispute arose in an oligarchy for the hand of a beautiful girl, the elders asked her to become a *ganika* so as to make her accessible to all (*sabbesamvoharika*). The oligarchy paid her some money to establish herself in the profession. She received a stipulated fee from the clients who visited her. Salavati of Rajagriha was elected a *ganik-thana* and she was counted among the important citizens. The *ganika* had an important position in the king's court. She was also called

vannadasi or *nagarashobhani*. In some texts, however, *nagarashobhani* stands for a common harlot, while in other instances she is equated with a *ganika*. *Ganikas* abandoned their male children, but brought up their daughters with great care in the hope that in due course they would take to their own profession. Such women employed a large number of slaves.

Chanana is of the view that *vannadasi* was a slave in the establishment of a *ganika*, but in certain cases the word stood for a common prostitute. In the *Jatakas* her personal status was not always the same. Some *ganikas* were rich, others poor. Perhaps the *vannadasi*, as a slave woman in the establishment of a *ganika*, received less affluent visitors and thus earned money for her mistress. It is also possible that a *vannadasi* could attain to the position of a *ganika*. The professional musicians who accompanied these women were known as *gandhabbas*. As a matter of fact a class of prostitutes in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar claims to belong to the *gandharab* caste.

Though the institution of *ganikas* was started by the *ganas*, the case of Salavati who is called the *ganika* of Rajagriha (which was under a monarchy) shows that the word had lost its specific meaning and implied a rich courtesan. It is possible that the community of rich merchants who were growing ever richer under the monarchies, wanted the best of everything in their towns, and, therefore, they borrowed the institution of *ganikas* from the oligarchies. Later, with the decay of the oligarchies, the word *ganika* lost its original significance.

Vesiya seems to have been different from *ganika* as is evident from such references as *vesi cha ganikayo cha*. One gets the impression from Pali literature that the *vesiya* plied her trade alone and lived by selling her charms. As a matter of fact Buddhaghosa equates *vesiya* with *rupajina* i.e., a seller of charm. She did not possess the artistic talents of the *ganika*. She pandered to the common people and, at times, even stooped to steal. She was no doubt a much poorer creature, who, it is mentioned, was forced because of her poverty to proceed to the river for her bath and could not afford servants to fetch water for her toilet.

Itthi in some *Jatakas* also denotes a prostitute (*J.* i. 43) and at the time of a festival an *itthi* was hired by the sons of a *setthi*. She was supposed to be a mistress as opposed to a lawful wife. A girl of pleasure engaged for a short duration is called *muhuttika* (*Vin.* III. 138). The fees of prostitutes are known as *bhati* and *paribbayam*. It is not known how they were established in business, but it is possible to suggest from a reference (*Vin.* II. 267) that houses of ill-fame were run by some people to make profits. It is said that six degenerate nuns ran a brothel. The word *kumbhadasi* while standing for a slave woman, also indicated a woman with loose morals. She was an expert in dance and music.

Reference has already been made to courtesans such as Sama, Sulasa and Kali who commanded a high position in society. There were, however, other courtesans who were renowned in Buddhist literature and who made handsome contributions to the early Buddhist church. Ambapali, a courtesan, is said (according to the Pali version of the story) to have emerged spontaneously in the gardens of the king at Vesali. Since she was picked up at the foot of a mango tree she was named after the mango (*amba*). The gardener brought her to the city, and in course of time her beauty attracted many young men who vied with one another for the honour of her hand. According to the prevailing custom the *gana*, in order to stop the rivalry among eligible young men, appointed her a *ganika*. It is observed in the *Mahavagga*, VIII. 1.1. that at Vesali "there was also the courtesan Ambapali, who was beautiful, pleasant, gifted with the highest beauty of complexion, well versed in dancing, singing and lute-playing and visited by men who desired her. She asked for fifty *kahapanas* for one night. Through her Vesali flourished." It is further suggested that she was indirectly instrumental in establishing the institution of *ganikas* in Rajagriha (*Mahavagga*, VIII. 1, 2). A merchant from Rajagriha went to Vesali on business and found it to be a populous city with abundant food, and tall buildings. After his business was over, the merchant returned to Rajagriha and met the Magadha king Seniya Bimbisara and requested him to install a courtesan at

Rajagriha as well, in order to increase its prosperity.

Ambapali's devotion to Buddha has been emphasized in Pali literature. It is stated in the *Mahavagga*, VI, 18,30 that when Ambapali heard of the arrival of the Buddha at Kotigama she mounted a magnificent vehicle and, accompanied by a large retinue, proceeded to meet the Blessed One. The carriage could only pass where the ground was level, so she got down and walked the rest of the distance on foot to see the Buddha. After saluting him she sat down close to him. She was impressed by his sermon, and asked the Buddha and the fraternity of *bhikkhus* to dine at her house and he accepted her invitation.

Now the Lichchavis of Vesali, hearing of the arrival of the Buddha, also proceeded to meet him. They were in colourful garments and wore costly ornaments. While returning from her visit to the Buddha, Ambapali was so elated at the idea of having the Buddha to a meal the next day, that she refused to make way for the Lichchavi princes, who were on their way to see the Buddha. She refused to give up her invitation for anything in the world.

In the *Vinayavastu* of *Mulasarvastivada*, however, the story of Ambapali has received greater attention. It is related that in Vesali the Lichchavi Mahanama had a mango grove. There suddenly sprang up a plantain tree which blossomed in course of time. A soothsayer informed Mahanama that on the seventh day the flowers would bring forth a girl. Mahanama marvelled at the prophecy and placed guards round the tree. On the seventh day the garden was swept, sprinkled with sandal water and decorated with incense burners, real silk and flowers, and it resounded with the sound of music. Mahanama entered the grove with his wives and his relatives, and amidst the rejoicing the plantain tree burst open and there emerged a very beautiful girl, who was handed over to the chief wife of Mahanama. She was named Amrapali as she had come forth from a mango grove (*amravana*). Then Amrapali was taken to Mahanama's house where in course of time she grew up to be a very beautiful young woman. Not only the Kraunchas, the Sakyas and princes from different lands, but also the sons of ministers, wealthy men, bankers and

merchants came to seek her hand in marriage. Seeing the crowd, Mahanama was perplexed and feared the wrath of those who were likely to be disappointed. Even the *Gana* had as yet not made any rules to deal with such a situation and, therefore, he decided to approach the *Gana* for help.

The *Gana* was summoned and Mahanama addressed it thus: "Hear me you Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, in my garden was born a girl, she was adopted and nurtured by me. Now I am in search of a suitable match from a good family for her." The *Gana* informed him that according to the rules framed by them an independent (*anirvaha*) beautiful girl (*striratnam*) was for the pleasure of the entire *Gana*. Mahanama was then asked by the *Gana* to produce Amrapali before the *Gana* and he did so. Her beauty dazzled all the members of the *Gana* and they proclaimed unanimously that she was the preserve of the entire *Gana* and therefore, the question of marrying her to any one person did not arise.

Mahanama was very dejected when he heard the decision of the *Gana*. Amrapali also learnt the outcome of the meeting of the *Gana*, and agreed to become a *ganabhogyā* if the *Gana* was ready to accept five conditions that she made. These were: (1) The allocation of a residence in the first division of the city. (2) If one client was with her, the entry of a second client was strictly prohibited. (3) The client had to pay her five hundred *karshapanas* as her fees. (4) If there was a search ordered by the *Gana* her house could be searched only on the seventh day after the warrant had been issued. (5) The entry and exit to her house were not to be watched.

Mahanama conveyed her conditions to the *Gana* and they readily accepted them on the plea that a courtesan, in keeping with her position, was entitled to stay in the first division of the city. The second stipulation was agreed upon for it meant less quarreling between clients. As regards the third condition, the fees of five hundred a day was agreed upon for it covered the expenses for clothes and ornaments. Regarding the search of her house, the time factor, according to the *Gana*, did not matter. The last stipulation was also accepted on the plea that if the

entry and exit to her house were to be watched, nobody would care to visit her for fear of exposure.

After the acceptance of her terms by the *Gana*, Amrapali became a courtesan and began receiving the Lichchhavi clients. Some of them were such wretches that to see or touch them was obnoxious to her. She found that some of her clients were impotent. She, however, seems to have been a psychologist of some sort, for to assess her clients she hit upon a clever device. She invited painters from all over the country and asked them to paint realistic portraits of kings, ministers, bankers, merchants etc., on the walls of the picture gallery of her mansion. After the portraits were completed she inspected them and on this basis chose her clients. She was impressed by king Bimbisara of Magadha. She thought he was a man fit to consort with her.

It so happened that one day Bimbisara was seated on the palace terrace talking to his ministers. In the course of their conversation he asked them to describe the courtesans they had seen. One of the ministers praised the beauty and youth of Amrapali and her accomplishment in the sixty-four arts. Bimbisara was warned that he would incur the hostility of the Lichchhavis if he cast his eyes on her. But he proceeded with his minister to Vesali. The minister stayed in the garden, but Bimbisara entered the mansion of Amrapali. Suddenly he heard a bell pealing. This was a warning to the citizens that an enemy was present in their midst. When she was questioned about this commotion, Amrapali informed him that they were bound to search her home and look for him. He said he wanted to leave but she asked him to stay on, for according to the agreement between her and the *Gana* they could search her house only after a week. The Lichchhavis, however, learnt of his presence and decided to leave the question of settling a score with Bimbisara to the future generation.

Soon after this Amrapali gave birth to a son. He was Bimbisara's child. He grew up to be a handsome boy, but the Lichchhavi boys with whom he played called him a bastard and the boy wept. His mother, however, informed him that he was the son of Bimbisara. Later on the boy

met his father. The boy was named Abhaya and the appellation of prince was employed for him.

The lot of the *Janapada-kalyanis*, however, was not so enviable. It is mentioned that the beautiful daughter of a Brahman from Champa was appointed a *Janapada-kalyani* and got employment with Bimbisara. The inmates of the harem of Bimbisara, out of sheer jealousy, forced her to do the work of a barber. She had to take care of the beard and the hair of the king.

A beautiful but tragic story of the courtesan Vasavadatta (of Mathura) is related in the *Divyavadana*. Once her servant went to Upagupta (who owned a perfume shop) in order to buy perfumes for her mistress. When she came home, her mistress told her that she had been cheated by the perfumer and that she should have got more perfume for the money she had paid. The maid praised the beauty and the upright conduct of Upagupta. The courtesan was attracted towards him and sent a message asking him to meet her. There would be love-making and no charge. His reply was that the proper time had not yet come for him to meet her, and there the matter ended.

In the meanwhile, there came a horse merchant from Uttarapatha to Mathura. And when he heard that Vasavadatta was the chief courtesan of the city, he sent five hundred *Purana* coins to her to enable him enjoy her company. Unable to check her greed, she met her lover and murdered him and threw his body in the lavatory. The relatives of the murdered man found the body. When the king heard of this nefarious crime he ordered the mutilation of her hands, feet and nose, and she was abandoned near the burning grounds. When Upagupta heard about this he came to the conclusion that this was the time for him to meet her. He proceeded to the burning grounds and when he met her, he told her why he had not come earlier, it was not her beauty that attracted him but the ultimate results of passion.

Salavati (*M.V.* VIII, 1, 3-4), a beautiful girl of Rajagriha was also installed as a courtesan. She received training in dancing, singing and lute-playing and her fees were fixed at a hundred *karshapanas* a night. Once when Salavati

was with a child, to safeguard her position she gave out that she was ill. Nobody was allowed to see her. She gave birth to a boy and she asked her maid to abandon him on a dust heap. He was found and reared by Abhaya and later grew up to be the famous physician Jivaka Kumarabhritiya.

Sirima, daughter of Salavati, and a devoted Buddhist, was a beauty who maintained an establishment of five hundred *ganikas* to entertain the friends of her lovers (*Dhammapada Comm.* iii 303-9). It is said that attracted by her beauty, a Buddhist monk went to dine at her house. She was ill and was brought to the dining hall to pay her respects to the monk. The same day she died. Vimala, another courtesan, born in a public brothel of Rajagriha, was a capricious woman choosing rich or poor lovers at her will. She tried to make love to Mahamoggallana but was repulsed. Later on she joined the Buddhist church.

Banaras was famous for its courtesans and trollops. A courtesan whose father was a distinguished citizen of Banaras, brought up his daughter very well and taught her all the arts. She charged a prohibitive fee calculated at half the day's revenue of Banaras. But the clients who came to her were so few in number that she was forced to reduce her fees to half. Therefore she came to be known as a *Ardha Kasi* (half Kasi). She was later attracted to the Buddhist church.

In Buddhist literature courtesans are very closely associated with dancing, singing, drinking and other forms of amusements. As is shown by the epics and the *Jatakas*, wherever people gathered for pleasure, courtesans and trollops followed. The *Brahmajala Sutra* gives the following list of shows which the *bhikkhus* were not allowed to attend since these were bound to divert their attention: dancing (*naccham*), singing (*gitam*), instrumental music (*vaditam*), dramatic shows at the fairs (*pekkham*), ballad recitations (*akkhanam*), hand music or playing of cymbals (*panisaram*), chanting of poetry (*vetalam*), playing on earthen pots as a drum (*kumbhathunam*), fairy scenes (*sobhanagarakam*), acrobatic feats by the Chandalas (*chandala-vamsadhapanam*), combat of elephants, buffaloes, bulls, goats, rams, cocks and quails, bouts at quarter staff (*danda-*

yuddham), boxing and wrestling, sham fights (*uyyodhikam*), roll calls (*balaggam*), manoeuvres (*sena-byuham*) and reviews (*anikadasanam*).

In the terms mentioned above, *pekkham* is equated by Buddhaghosa with *natasamajio*. The *Sigalovada Sutta*, p. 300, says that the six dangers accompanying the *samajjas* are dancing, singing, music, recitation, conjuring tricks and acrobatic shows. We further learn from the *Vinaya*, ii. 107; iv. 267 that in the *samajja* not only amusements but also food was provided. Special seats were reserved for high officials and the *samajja* was held on the top of a hill. The last detail probably suggests that the festival was held at the time of *girimaha* or the worship of the mountains.

As a matter of fact, *samajja* in Buddhist literature connotes not just a particular type of show, but a show in general, consisting of dancing and music, acrobatic performances, bird and animal fights, wrestling etc. and occasionally, eats were distributed. The *Jatakas*, as a matter of fact, give a fairly clear picture of the *samajja*. Parents sent messages to their sons studying in the university towns of Banaras and Takshasila to come home to attend such gatherings which were generally held in the palace court, and the king himself issued a proclamation by the beat of drums inviting people to come and attend the performance. A pavilion (*mandapam*) was set up and a throne (*pallanka*) was set apart for the king. Slaves, women of the harem, courtiers, Brahmans and citizens sat around him. In the courtyard the seats were arranged in circles (*chakkatichakke*) and the benches in rising tiers (*manchatimanche*). Wrestling, archery, ram and elephant fights, and acrobatic feats (*natakam*) formed a part of such gatherings.

As regards the *natakam*, it is mentioned that five hundred acrobats organized a half-yearly *samajja* in the presence of the king of Rajagriha. The show lasted a week. The main feat shown was a damsel walking, dancing and singing on a horizontal bar.

In the *Guttala Jataka*, *samajja* takes the form of a musical competition between two masters before a huge gathering in the palace courtyard. Master Guttala of Banaras, who was an expert in his art was renowned all over India. At

that time certain merchants from Banaras had been to Ujjain on a business trip. When a holiday was proclaimed in Ujjain they all clubbed together, procured scents, perfumes and ointments and all kinds of food and meats. After they had their fill, Musila, the chief musician of Ujjain was brought in, but his lute-playing failed to impress the assembly as it could not compete with the lute-playing of Guttila. When Musila heard Guttila being praised, he asked the merchants to take him to Banaras. There he managed to learn all the intricacies of music from Guttila. Musila wanted to serve the king of Banaras with the help of his teacher, but he was offered only half the salary of his teacher unless he could defeat his teacher in a musical competition. The *samajja* was held, and with the miraculous help of Sakka, Guttila scored a victory over his rival.

The life depicted in the *Jatakas* is one of a healthy people singularly free from moral inhibitions. The gaiety of *samajjas* was increased by pleasure trips to gardens provided with ponds, trees and flowering plants where men and women enjoyed themselves to their heart's content. Music, dancing, drinking and watersports (in which courtesans participated freely) were an important part of such convivial gatherings.

Frequent holidays also gave an opportunity to the people to enjoy life without restraint. The musicians naturally played an important part in such festivals. Even the poor folk donned new garments. Men went to the fairs accompanied by their wives. They brought flowers, perfumes and drinks. The Kartika festival was held on the full moon day of the Kartika month when the king went round the city in a procession. On these occasions and specially during the drinking festivals (*suranakkhattam surachhano*) people enjoyed their drinks and ate good food. Besides the taverns (*surapana*) special drinking booths (*mandapam*) were erected. In all these revelries the courtesans and prostitutes played an important part.

Goshthi (or a gathering held to promote the arts, literature and music and one in which courtesans participated freely) was a recognized institution in ancient India, though not as popular in Buddhist India as it was later on. There is

not much information about *goshthis* in Pali literature, but there are some interesting references to it in Buddhist-Sanskrit literature. Artists frequently united to form *goshthis*. The *Avadanashataka* mentions that in Shravasti five hundred *gandharvikas* lived in a *goshthi*. There is an incident about a famous musician called Supriya, who could play with great mastery the seven notes and twenty-one *murchhanas* on his single-stringed lute (*ekatantri vina*). In six cities he proclaimed his mastery of music with the beat of the drum and nobody could rival him. He reached Shravasti where he challenged the *goshthi* of musicians and approached the ruler Prasenajit for this purpose. The clever ruler took him straight to the Buddha who was staying at Jetavana, and Supriya played an intricate piece on his *vina*, but was humbled by the Buddha who played more sweetly on an invisible *vina*.

The *goshthikas'* love of fine garments, music and their revelry is emphasized in another place in the *Avadanashataka*. It is said that a crowd of revellers (*goshthikas*) who were intoxicated kept on singing and dancing to the accompaniment of musical instruments. While they were going out of Shravasti they met the Buddha. Their association with prostitutes is not mentioned here, but according to the *Mahavastu* iii. 35-38 a banker's son (who was probably a *goshthika*) used to live in the company of prostitutes.

3

Courtesans in Jain Literature

IN JAIN PRAKRIT literature the pattern of life and the behaviour of courtesans are depicted in almost the same manner as in Buddhist literature, except that in later Jain literature we get more detailed information about courtesans than in Buddhist literature. One might question why Jain literature—terse, dry-as-dust, ascetic and ethical in tone—preserved such information. The answer is difficult to find. One reason for this may be the Jain writers' love for detail. This interest in detail relates not only to the way of life they themselves followed or wanted others to follow but also to the life of the people around them. In this category came not only the kings and their nobles, but also the merchant community whose piety was the mainstay of Jainism as well as of Buddhism.

The life of princes and noblemen and merchants because of their wealth was exceedingly luxurious and thus courtesans naturally played an important part. Consciously or unconsciously the life of its patrons left a deep impression on Jain canonical literature. Moreover, though prostitution was looked down upon by Jainism (as it was by Buddhism and Hinduism), no social stigma seems to have been attached to it, and therefore, Jainism dealt with the problem in a matter-of-fact and candid way. Some of the stories and descriptions of courtesans in the Jain canon make this point amply clear.

The *Jnatadharma Katha* I lists the attainments of a highly accomplished courtesan of Champa. Her body was faultless (*ahina*), imbued with auspicious signs (*lakshana*), and marked with black painted *tilakas*. She had the right

height, girth and weight. She was proficient in the seventy-two traditional arts, and was endowed with the sixty-four qualities necessary for a courtesan. Here "sixty-four" might mean the sixty-four arts such as music, dancing etc., or sixty-four kinds of sexual and erotic poses and embraces. She had also an expert knowledge of the twenty-nine special qualities, the thirty-one kinds of *ratigunas* (sexual poses) and the thirty-two ways of treating men (*purushopachara*). She aroused slumbering passions by her youthful beauty. She was also a linguist, conversant with eighteen regional languages. She was fond of music and an expert dancer. She was graceful, witty and sweet in her conversation and a strict observer of etiquette. Her lovely breasts, her body, hands and legs were all seductive. Her fees were a thousand a day. The king granted her the special privilege of using the umbrella (*chhatra*), *chauri* and fan, and she always travelled in a covered wagon (*karniratha*). She commanded and patronized a thousand courtesans. According to the *Sutrakritanga churni* courtesans were well-versed in *Vaisika* (a section of the science of erotics) which is exclusively devoted to the problems of courtesans. The commentary mentions that when Dattaka was cheated by a courtesan, he refused to make love to another courtesan in spite of all the blandishments sanctioned by the science of erotics.

The *Brihatkalpa Sutra Bha*, refers to a picture gallery run by a courtesan. This reminds us of a similar gallery started by Amrapali. Here the story is about a courtesan well-versed in the sixty-four arts, who once commissioned the portraits of all kinds of men of different trades and professions as well as the methods of assuaging their fury when they were angry. Whosoever visited her was taken to the gallery and was given a sort of psychological test before she agreed to consort with him.

Elsewhere in the *Jnatadharma* (III, 51-52) it is mentioned that the courtesan Devadatta of Champa used to go on picnics with her rich clients. With flowers and perfumes and exotic food they proceeded to the Nanda lake and set up a temporary camp (*thunamandavam*) not far from the lake. Mounting the chariot with the courtesan Devadatta,

they proceeded to the garden and sported in the lake, enjoyed the food and perfumes they had brought with them and slept with her, and in the afternoon they walked arm in arm with Devadatta and enjoyed the beauty of the garden.

In Jain literature we often meet with courtesans of a lofty character who belie the usual notions about the lust and greed of ordinary prostitutes. Kosa, a famous courtesan of Pataliputra loved Sthulabhadra, and after his retirement from worldly life she refused to consort with anybody. When Sthulabhadra (as a monk) returned to Pataliputra, she listened to his sermons and became a *shravika*. She, however, took the rather curious vow that she would not grant her favours to anyone except when forced to do so by the king. Similarly, Devadatta, a renowned courtesan of Ujjain, spurned the love of Achala, a rich merchant of the town because of her great love for the adventurous Muladeva. The protests of her mother were of no avail. She requested the king not to force anyone on her as she was determined to live with Muladeva alone. A *ganika's* position was respected by the king to such an extent that she was considered a jewel of his capital, and almost all big towns had a chief courtesan.

According to Jain sources prostitution was so rampant in the country that Jain nuns were cautioned against it. *Apanagrihas* (drinking houses) and houses with markets in lanes on one or both of their sides were considered dangerous because from these houses the nuns could see the prostitutes who carried on their profession in the adjacent houses. But the greatest danger was from the young voluptuaries who visited the prostitutes. Resplendent in colourful flowers, ornaments and perfumes, they joked and laughed and manifested sexual desire in their movements. They were thus a menace to the locality. From their quarters, the nuns could see prostitutes engaged in their toilet and surrounded by unchaste women and swindlers. Their show of haughty indifference and their lascivious embraces roused the dormant passion in the nuns. Wedding *pandals* richly decorated, and crowds of relatives and guests also reminded them of their past. Similarly the royal

procession with its pomp and show, the royal insignia and the umbrella, the *chauri* and other auspicious symbols and the king's army also had an emotional impact on the nuns.

The Jain nuns had to be careful in their choice of lodging during their religious tours. Among the prohibited places were guest houses (*agamanagriha*), where travellers who could find no accommodation elsewhere sought shelter. There were all kinds of riff-raff including prostitutes and pimps whose behaviour was bound to affect the morals of the nuns.

The Jain monks had their own tale of woe as far as prostitutes were concerned. When the monks saw lascivious men and women embracing one another, and heard the sounds they made as they continued their love-play, their ascetic resolve tended to weaken. These poor monks were after all human beings and though they had given up worldly pleasures, they were tempted to listen to lascivious songs or peep surreptitiously through holes to find out what was happening inside a closed room. The monks had to fight against another potent menace. Prostitutes sometimes entered their monastery and asked permission to stay there overnight. If this was allowed, they made overtures to the monks, putting them in a very difficult position. The monks at first tactfully persuaded the uninvited guests to leave, but if they failed they thought the wiser thing to do was to make a hasty retreat and quit the building.

At times more drastic measures had to be adopted. When they were absolutely at the end of their tether because of the importunities of the prostitutes, the monks tied them up for the night and released them in the morning. But the matter did not end there. If a prostitute sued the monks before the king, they had to appear before him personally and answer the charges. The position was further complicated by the fact that there was no dearth of men and women of doubtful character who pretended that they were closely related to each other and sought shelter in the Jain monasteries. A general rule was framed that if a man was accompanied by a woman he was to be refused admission. But at times the man claimed that the woman was his sister, and if he was allowed to stay overnight, he

had his pleasure with her. If his conduct was detected he was severely reprimanded and turned out. When this happened he threatened the monks with reprisals.

In keeping with the stern ascetic principles of Jainism, the Jain canonical works warned the monks at every step to keep away from women. But as in other religions, so in Jainism, principle and practice as regards women differed considerably. The Jain *Chhedasutras* carefully analyzed the sexual aberrations of Jain monks and laid down rules to help them avoid pitfalls. But while the majority of monks were celibates there were quite a few black sheep who did not hesitate to drink and dally with women frequently.

The *Sutrakritanga*, I. 4, 2 etc., gives a rather humorous picture of an infatuated monk in the clutches of a woman of ill repute. Taking advantage of the situation she scolded him and struck his head with her lifted foot. She teased him saying, "O, monk, if you do not want me to retain my hair, I shall get them plucked, but please do not leave me." After getting him in her clutches, she sent him on all kinds of petty errands. "Look for the bodkin to carve the bottle gourd, fetch some delicious fruit for me. Bring me wood to cook these vegetables and to light the fire at night. Paint my feet; come and rub my back; look at my clothes; bring me food and drink. Get me some perfume and a broom. Bring me a barber (to shave my head). Give me the collyrium, my ornaments, the *lodhra* powder (for dyeing), the lutes, and bring me the pill (to restore my youth) Bring to me *utpalakushtha* (*costus speciosus*), *tagara* powder (*tabernaemontana coronaria*) and aloes powdered with fragrant *ushira* (*andropogon muricatus*), oil for anointing and bamboo baskets to put my things in. Reach me the lip solve (*nandichunnugam*). Fetch the umbrella and slippers, the knife to cut the thread, get my robes dyed blue. Give me the pot to cook the vegetables in and another to bring water in. Give me the stick with which I paint the mark on the forehead (*tilaka-karanimanjana salagam*), the pin to apply collyrium to the eyes and the fan that I use when it is hot. Fetch me the pincers (*samdasagam*) to pick the hair in my nose. Get me a comb and a ribbon to

bind the hair. Reach me the looking glass; put the tooth-brush near me. Fetch me the arecanut and betel, my needle and some thread, the winnowing basket and the pot for liquefying natron. Give me the vessel (for worshipping the gods) and the other water-pots. Friend, dig a privy. Buy a beaker, a drum and a ball of cloth (*chelagolam*) for the boy to play with. Shramana, the rainy season is at hand, look after the house and stores. Fetch the chair with woven twine (*asandiyam*) and wooden shoes to walk in."

The miserable plight of a renegade monk can well be imagined from these commands of a courtesan or a mistress. There was no household object which he was not expected to get for her immediately. He was allowed no respite and was expected to carry out such mean jobs as digging a privy, looking after house and stores and providing play-things for the children.

The necessary corollaries of prostitution in ancient India were musical soirees, clubs and pleasure trips or even religious festivals in which prostitutes and other malefactors formed a part of the crowd. One such important occasion was *samkhadi*, which is equivalent to the *samajjas* of Buddhist literature. It is mentioned in one of the *sutras* of B.K.S.B., which shows that it was a fairly ancient institution. The word is derived from *sam*, "in large groups", and *khada*, "killing", i.e. the festival in which animals were slaughtered in large numbers. The *samkhadi* was held in the early part of the day or after sunset. It is said that a *samkhadi* was held near the tank Rishi Tadaga situated at Tosali (Orissa). During a pilgrimage to Kundalamentha (situated in a deep forest) the people living in the neighbourhood of Bharukachchha performed a *samkhadi*, and it formed a part of the ceremonies of the pilgrimage to Arbuda (Abu) or Prabhasa. The people of the Anandapura performed *samkhadi* every winter at a spot called Prachinavaha where the direction of the river Saraswati changed to the east. The *samkhadi* was not confined to only a particular religion or sect since the Buddhist, Shaiva and Bhagavata monks are said to have also participated in it and held regular disputations.

But such *samkhadis*, full of fun for ordinary men and

women, spelt difficulties for the Jain monks. While they camped under the trees, stray dogs stole away their unguarded pots, thieves had a good time and robbers infested the jungle, killing and plundering the people. Drunken voluptuaries in a state of sexual excitement assembled there and crowds of elephants, horses, as well as litters and palanquins which served them as means of conveyance were a constant source of distraction to the monks. Even the monks who camped outside the village in order to keep away from the maddening crowd could not escape the attention of the dogs and thieves.

But the greatest sources of distraction and annoyance were the village gardens, where drunk voluptuaries dressed in fantastic garments gesticulated freely and sang erotic songs. Men and women, whether drunk or sober, decked themselves in fine clothes and amused themselves there. In those gardens assembled the sons of rich merchants, and bankers came there riding horses and in chariots drawn by bullocks. They rode in many decorated vehicles to amuse themselves in the company of their friends. The grand display of clothes, ornaments and vehicles distracted the minds of the monks. Moreover, the village was so crowded with men and women that it became almost impossible for them to move about.

Jain canonical literature makes occasional references to *goshthi*. The members of the *goshthi* were connoisseurs of music and the arts and closely associated with courtesans. The *Nishithasutra* gives us some valuable information about the organization of the *goshthus*—information that is not found anywhere else. *Ghada*, the *ghata* of the *Kamasutra*, is equated here with *goshthi*. It was apparently managed by the following officers: *mahattara*, *anumahattara*, *lalitasana*, *kaduga* and *dandapati*. Apparently the *mahattara* was the most respectable member of the *goshthi* and in modern terms could be described as the president of the club. When the *goshthi* met, his seat was placed at the head of the assembly (*jetthamasana dhure*). The *anumahattara*, as his name indicates, was a sort of a vice-president acting as president during his absence. It is specifically mentioned that one of his duties was to answer

questions put to him on the arts and on literature. In this respect he acted as the spokesman of the *goshthi*. The *lalitasamya* made arrangements for the right kind of food and saw to it that it was served properly, and he was also in charge of the seating arrangements which were in order of precedence for the members of the *goshthi*. The *goshthikas* naturally committed many acts of omission and commission and due notice seems to have been taken of these acts by the authorities. In order to enforce discipline in the organization two officers were employed: the *kaduga* determined the punishment to be meted out to a *goshthika* and the *dandapati* executed it. Unfortunately the *Nisliitha* does not specify the nature of the crimes and the punishment that was meted out, and is silent on the functions of the *goshthi*. But apparently, such acts of omission and commission must have been judged in the light of the proper conduct of the *goshthis* known as *gotthudhamma*.

The cultural aspect of *goshthi* is emphasized in literature, and certain vignettes reveal the reverse side of the medal as well. The patronage of art and culture was no doubt an important function of the *goshthis*, but they also became notorious for their hard drinking, their revels, their encouragement of prostitution and also their brawls. The story of Kamalata, mentions twenty members of a *goshthi* who had their fill of meat and drink and with minds fixed on Kamalata wandered about in a garden at Shravasti. They believed that a Jain monk was likely to be an impediment in the way of enjoyment and they rushed to kill him, but they fell into a blind well and died.

From another reference it is clear that the *goshthis* employed a number of ordinary prostitutes who satisfied the lust of its members. Unoccupied houses were used as meeting places by such voluptuaries. It is said that Mahavira in the course of his wanderings with Goshala happened to stay in an empty house. Simha, the son of the village headman, also chanced to come there with a slave girl in the employment of a *goshthi* (*goshthidasi*). He announced that if any traveller, Brahman or monk happened to be staying there, he should proceed to some other place. As he received no response from anyone, he made love to the

prostitute there and then, but while leaving the place her body came in contact with that of Goshala. An alarm was raised and poor Goshala received a beating from Simha.

In addition to gardens which were frequently visited by the *goshthikas* and voluptuaries, river banks also served as favourite meeting places. Some bathed there splashing the water noisily, some rowed in boats (*konchavirasga* or circular boat), some, after bathing, anointed their bodies, arranged their coiffures and wore rich garments, ornaments and garlands. On festival days (such as the spring festival) women sported in the water and naturally the presence of the kill-joy monks was very much resented.

Music and dancing (the special preserve of dancing girls) were favourite forms of amusement in ancient India. For that purpose and also for dramatic shows and other forms of amusement, a theatre (*pichchhagharmandavam*) was sometimes erected within the palace compound. It was provided with high columns and *vedika*, and the hall was domed and decorated with flags and bells. It was plastered smoothly both inside and outside; the gates were decorated with *kalushas* and the ceiling with lotus creepers. It was also provided with an arena (*akkhadaga*) in the middle of which was raised a platform. Seats on the eastern side of the arena were provided for the women members of the palace, for the members of the executive on the south-east side, for the members of the middle assembly in the south and for the semi-private advisers on the south-west. Seven seats in a row on the western side were provided for the army commanders, and there were also seats for the guards on all sides.

It is a fact worth noting that the highly luxurious society of the Gupta period which tolerated a refined sensuality was a society in which dancers, both male and female, covered their bodies. This observation is supported by the portrayal of modestly dressed figures in the Ajanta and Bagh paintings. The Jain literature also supports this view. The *BKSB.*, IV, 4127 mentions that the danseuse (*nartaki*) was so decorously dressed that she had no occasion to feel embarrassed when she lifted her legs in the dance. Even the acrobatic danseuse (*lankhika*), as she

tumbled in the arena, did not feel any kind of embarrassment for she was always quite adequately dressed. The *Rayapaseṇya Sūtra*, pp. 123-124 furnishes a very interesting description of the male and female dancers who danced at the behest of Suryabhadeva during the staging of thirty-two kinds of dances before Mahavira. The young and handsome male dancers emerged from one end of the stage wearing *uttariyas*, fluttering on either side tight waistbands (*parikara*) made of variegated stuff, tunics and other multicoloured garments. They wore simple one-stringed necklaces and other ornaments. From the other end of the stage emerged an equal number of female dancers wearing *tilaka*, ornaments and chaplets wreathed round their coiffures and torques, and their breasts were covered with breast bands.

It has been pointed out earlier that courtesans referred to in Jain literature were supposed to have acquired a knowledge of the seventy-two traditional arts. Naturally the list contains a large number of items which must have been learnt by men alone and it enumerates some highly specialized crafts which must have been the prerogative of artisans working in their own fields. The only purpose served by such a comprehensive list was to remind society that a cultured man or woman was expected to know as many of these arts as possible. This list contains many of the items of the sixty-four arts mentioned in the *Kamasūtra*. The following arts are mentioned:

Leham The art of writing is divided into two subdivisions—writing of various regional scripts and writing on materials such as bark, wood, ivory, metal plates which demanded a different technique. It also includes the mode of composing letters to the master, the subordinate, the father, the son, the teacher, the disciple, the wife, the husband, the friend or the enemy. A knowledge of the defects of transcription (e.g. the undue thinness or thickness of the letters, the absence of uniformity in their sizes, the bent line and the lack of punctuation etc.) is also included in this art

Ganita : Accounting and arithmetic and all its branches

Ruvam : The term includes all figural arts using the

medium of terracotta, stone, gold, semi-precious stones, cloth, paint etc.

Nattam (*nṛṭyam*): A generic term for dancing with or without gestures equated with *landava* by the commentator.

Gayam (*gītam*): It includes all techniques of singing.

Baiyam (*vaditam*): Instrumental music, including instruments of percussion and wind instruments, etc.

Saragayam (*svaragatam*): The knowledge of musical scales.

Pukkharagayam: The knowledge of playing on various kinds of drums. According to the commentator it had been included as an art distinct from *vaditam*, as the art of playing the drum was an important branch of the science of music.

Samatalam: The art of keeping perfect time in music.

Juyam: Apparently the term included all kinds of gambling or games of skill played for stakes.

Janavayam (*janavadam*): Apparently the art of popular conversation or ingenuity in gossiping is intended here.

Pasayam (*pasakam*): The game of dice. Apparently the art included all kinds of gambling tricks.

Atthavayam: The game of eight square boards which may be the same as chess.

Porakaccham (*purakṛṭyam*): It has been explained as the art of versifying at a moment's notice, known as *shighra* or *ashu-kavitva*.

Dagamattiyam (*udakamṛittika*): Apparently it was the art of mixing water with earth in proper proportion before the mixture was used as a medium for making different articles.

Annavihim (*annavidhim*): The art of cooking which included the preparation of sweet and savoury dishes.

Panavihim (*panavidhim*): The rules for preparing wines and liquors. The commentator, however, explains it as the process for cleaning water of mud. It could also mean the proper and improper use of water as laid down in the *Ayurveda*.

Vathavihi: This included the modes of wearing garments and also determining new fashions in textiles and

the place of their origin.

Savanavim (*shayanavidhim*): The rules regarding cots and beds. For instance, such rules determined the sizes and the materials used for the beds of kings, princes, ministers, etc.

Vilevanavim (*vilepnavidhim*). The art of making perfumes, ointments etc. It was considered a great accomplishment to study *Gandhayukti*, which gave the formulae for perfume-making.

Ajjam (*aryam*): That art of composing Arya metres.

Paheliyam: The knowledge of riddles. New riddles could also be composed.

Magahiyam: The knowledge of composing verses in the Magadhi metre

Gaham: Prakrit and Apabhramsa composition

Silagam: Composing *shlokas* in *Anushtupa* metre.

Gitika: Knowledge of metre.

Hiranya-yuktim and *Suvanna-yuktim*: The employment of wrought and unwrought gold in their proper places

Churna-yukti: The process of making powders of *costus* speciosus and mixing other articles with them.

Abharanavim: Rules regarding the making and wearing of ornaments.

Tarunipadhikamma: The ways of the allurements of womenfolk.

Itthilakkhana, purisa: The good and bad marks on men and women as laid down in the *samudrika shastra*.

Hayalakkhana, qaya, gona, kukkuda, minaha: The science of determining the qualities of horses, elephants, bullocks, cocks and rams

Chatta lakkhana, danda, asi:

The quality of the royal umbrella.

The *danda* is used here in the sense of the handle of the umbrella, the goad, the bow, the standard etc.

The *asilakkhana* included the proper measurement of swords in order to ensure favourable results.

Manilakkhana: This art included the expert knowledge of precious and semi-precious stones, their merits and flaws, prices, origin, etc.

Kagani lakkhana: It was a special jewel of the *chakra*-

varin (the universal emperor) and supposed to be an antidote against poisons.

Vatthuvijja: The science of architecture which included the selection of the suitable sites and materials, lists of different types of temples, civic architecture and various branches of architecture were also included

Khandhavaramanam. The measurement of camp sites. The science might also have included the proper division of the army. For instance, in a well-balanced force the ratio was one chariot to one elephant, three horsemen and five men of the infantry.

Nagaramanam: Town planning which included laying down the proper area of a city and determining its length, breadth and division into various blocks, the layout of its roads, the site for the palace, defence walls and gates etc

Charam, prati: Espionage and counter-espionage. The terms have also been explained as favourable and unfavourable planetary movements.

Vyuham and *prati*. The formation of columns and counter columns.

Chakravvyuham: The formation of a military column in the form of a wheel.

Garuda vyuham: The formation of a military column in the form of an eagle.

Shakata vyuham: The formation of a column in the form of a wagon.

Yuddham: A general term for fighting. The commentary, however, interprets it to mean fights of cocks and horned animals.

Niyuddham: Heavy fighting or wrestling

Yuddhatiyuddham: Fighting at close quarters.

Drishti yuddham: Fixing one's gaze on the enemy

Mushti yuddham: Boxing

Bahu yuddham: A fight in which the arms of both the hands were used.

Lata yuddham: Explained in the commentary thus. "as a creeper entwines the tree, in like manner a warrior entwines his opponent in war".

Ishu Shastram: The science of making arrows and certain legendary missiles.

Tsarupravadam: The art in which the use of the sword handle figures prominently. Apparently fencing is meant here.

Dhanurvedam: The science of archery

Hiranyapaka, Suvarna: Wrought and unwrought gold

Sutra Khelam: Playing with threads, clothes (*vatta*), and lotus stalks (*nali*).

Pattrachehhediyam: The art of cutting designs from leaves.

Katachchhediyam: The art of making straw mats.

Sajivam-nirjivam: The art of giving and taking away life.

Sakunarutam: Prognostication based on the cries of birds.

A study of this list of seventy-two arts leaves one wondering whether the courtesans could ever master these arts and in particular those with which they had nothing to do and which came strictly within the purview of masculine skills. The proficiency of the courtesans in seventy-two arts is, therefore, a mere convention and is merely intended to indicate that they were highly cultured. Of the seventy-two arts, only writing or painting, sculpture, dancing and singing, playing on various kinds of musical instruments, gambling of several kinds, cooking and brewing drinks, proficiency in certain forms of literary composition, knowledge of men and women, making of ornaments and cutting designs from leaves and perhaps a few more could have been studied by the courtesans to increase their professional prestige.

4

Courtesans in the Mauryan Period

THE MAURYAN PERIOD of Indian history is noted for the amalgamation of smaller states in a well-knit empire which was governed and controlled from the centre with a strictness and sagacity that required both administrative experience and organizing capacity. The sources for the religious, political, social and economic history of the Mauryan period are twofold: the inscriptions of Asoka lay stress on nobility of character and piety and condemn gross and superstitious practices. These are supplemented by meagre Greek accounts and Kautilya's *Arthashastra* which describes in detail various facets of the Mauryan administration. The primary aim of the *Arthashastra* is naturally to describe the manifold activities of the state and the checks and counter-checks needed to ensure the smooth working of the administrative machinery. The *Arthashastra*, while it deals in the main with dry rules and regulations, also provides us with interesting details about the social life of the people. The material, however, has to be properly sifted and interpreted before the entire picture can become clear.

The emphasis in the *Arthashastra* is mainly on an urban culture with the king as the pivot round which the wheels of the state moved. He organized his administrative departments in a manner so as to ensure the smooth working of the socio-economic life of the people. Kautilya was a stark realist as far as administration was concerned and no ethical concept deterred him from the path which he considered right for the safe conduct of the affairs of the state. To strengthen the state's finances he even advocat-

ed morally dubious means of earning revenues. One such source of revenue—reprehensible from the ethical viewpoint—was the organization of courtesans and prostitutes under the watchful eyes of a superintendent. This was arranged with a view to receiving a fixed percentage of the fees and gifts which the courtesans received from their clients. These women of ill-fame formed a class of their own, apart from the courtesans who were exclusively in the service of the king. According to Curtius, when Indian rulers went on a hunt, the courtesans bowed to them, and to the accompaniment of their songs the kings hunted. Curtius seems to be extremely prejudiced against the extravagance of the royal procession, which used to be accompanied by courtesans. To quote him, "That no form of shameless profligacy may be wanting, he is accompanied by a long train of courtesans carried in golden palanquins, and this troop holds a separate place in the procession from the queen's retinue, and is as sumptuously appointed. His food is prepared by women who also serve him with wine which is much used by all the Indians. When the king falls into a drunken sleep, his courtesans carry him away to his bedchamber, invoking the gods of the night in their native hymns."

The information about the royal courtesans that is given by Curtius agrees with the accounts in the *Arthashastra*. The *Arthashastra* mentions that the prostitute (*dasyah*) in the royal service performed the duty of bathroom attendants (*snapakā*), shampooers (*samvāhaka*), bedroom attendants (*astaraka*), washer women and florists. While presenting water, scents, fragrant powders, clothes and garlands to the king, the royal servants, along with the courtesans, first touched these things reverently with their eyes, arms and breasts before offering them to him.

As has already been pointed out, the information gleaned from the *Arthashastra* shows us the different roles played by courtesans to help the state revenue. Different grades of courtesans and prostitutes paid money to the state by way of taxes. Since their profession was an important source of revenue to the state, their rights and privileges were naturally recognized.

The principle of providing some sort of old age pension to the old and infirm prostitutes shows the benevolent attitude of the state towards them. Their profession gave them an opportunity to meet all sorts of people, both native and foreign and taking full advantage of this, the state employed them as spies. They reported the suspicious movements of the enemy and of disreputable characters to the proper authorities. About their attainments and the wiles they practised to extract money from their clients, the *Arthashastra* gives very meagre information.

Kautilya uses the words *ganika*, *pratiganika*, *rupajiva*, *veshya*, *dasi*, *devadasi*, *pumshchali*, *shilpakarika*, *kaushikastri*, and *rupadasi* for courtesans and prostitutes; perhaps the words *adasi*, *avaruddha*, *kritavarodha*, *duhitrika* and *kumari* are also used in the same sense.

Ganika in the *Arthashastra* is, however, not the wealthy courtesan of Buddhist literature, leading a glamorous life and charging exorbitant fees from her clients, but a government servant whose rights and responsibilities are clearly defined by the state. For ordinary prostitutes, Kautilya uses the term *rupajiva* or a woman who lived on the proceeds of her beauty. The *ganika* of the *Arthashastra* received a monthly salary from the king's treasury in lieu of the services she rendered to the state. She worked under the direction of the Superintendent of Prostitutes (*veshyadhyaksha*), and if she had a daughter (*ganikaduhitri*, *kumari*), she was also destined to join government service.

A *pratiganika* was a substitute prostitute employed on a short-term contract during the absence of a *ganika* but she could become a full fledged *ganika* in the future. But as long as she remained a mere substitute, she received only half of the salary of the *ganika* whom she substituted. The very appointment of a *pratiganika* shows the inexorable ways of the state so far as the revenue-making machinery was concerned. As the state-employed courtesans paid a respectable amount in the form of revenue, the machinery organized for the work of such a profession had always to be kept in proper order.

According to Kautilya a *rupajiva* who lived on the pro-

fits of her beauty was not a state employee. She, however, had to pay a monthly tax to the government amounting to two days' earnings. In the case of financial stringency, however, she had to pay half of her earnings to the state. Emergency taxes were not levied on the *ganika* as she was a whole time government employee on a monthly salary. As the *ganika* was a source of revenue to the state the *ganikadhyaksha* kept a constant vigil on her activities, tried to determine her earnings accurately, and kept a check on her extravagance.

Rupajiva was a prostitute whose status was next in rank to that of the *ganika*. Her relatively superior position is proved by the fact that she was allowed to have her quarters to the south of the fort, and also had access to the royal harem, entry to which was prohibited to ordinary prostitutes (*dasi*). *Veshya* in the *Arthashastra* is a generic term for all kinds of prostitutes. Not being directly employed by the state, their activities were controlled by the fort authorities and they were placed along with spies, artisans, singers etc., to keep watch on the conduct of military personnel. *Pumshchali* in the *Arthashastra* is only a very low-grade prostitute, perhaps in the category of a whore who surrendered her person for money. Persons seen in her company became suspects. She was at times used as a spy as well. The word *dasi* seems to have been used by Kautilya in a double sense—for a slave girl closely associated with palace activities and for a common prostitute who was not allowed to enter the royal palace. She also acted as a spy.

The *devadasi* was a temple prostitute, a dancing girl, who when she retired was re-employed by the state for work such as spinning wool, cotton and flax. The existence of *devadasis* in the third century B.C. or a little later is supported by the Jogimara cave inscription. It has been translated by M. Boyer as "Sutanuka by name, Devadasi. The excellent among young men loved her, Devadinna by name, skilled in sculpture." T. Bloch, however, translated it in a different way: "Sutanuka by name, a Devadasi made this resting place for girls. Devadinna by name, skilled in painting." It is clear from the inscription that

the institution of *devadasis* was in a flourishing state and the *devadasi* Sutanuka was prosperous enough to build a resting place for actresses or dancing girls.

Shilpakarika or an artisan's wife, and *kaushikastrī* were in the category of *demi-monde*. The position of a *dasi* was midway between a prostitute and a mistress, *Kritavarodha* and *avaruddha* were professional prostitutes who lived as mistresses under the protection of one master.

According to Kautilya any woman who was beautiful and had acquired knowledge of the prescribed arts could take up the profession of a *ganika*. The *Arthashastra* has classified the *ganika* into the first, the middle and the highest rank, depending on the beauty and the jewelry they possessed, and in some cases the king allowed some of them the privilege of waiting upon him. They held the royal umbrella, the golden pitcher and the fan when he was seated in the royal litter, the throne and chariot.

Apparently only a few outsiders chose the profession of a *ganika*, even though superficially it appeared a glamorous one. Therefore, the vast majority of them must have come up from the profession itself. According to the *Arthashastra* they were either born in the family of *ganikas* or were selected by the *ganikadhyaksha*. Then there must also have been people who were apparently attracted by the lucrativeness of the job, and offered their daughters to the Superintendent of Prostitutes for employment. After gaining employment, the *ganika* of the first rank received a salary of 1,000 *panas* per annum; the *ganika* of middle rank 2,000 per annum and the *ganika* of the highest rank 3,000 per annum.

The fees which a *ganika* charged from her clients was called *bhoga*, the *bhati* of later times. The amount was fixed by the Superintendent who was the direct recipient of such fees and he also determined the amount of the gifts (*daya*), the gross receipts (*aya*), the gross expenditure (*vyaya*), the net income and the profit. As her income was supposed to belong to the state, the Superintendent had full control over her financial affairs and prevented her from being extravagant. The courtesans only received their salaries. They handed over to the Superintendent

their fees and other receipts which were deposited in the treasury. It is, however, probable that they kept the gifts for themselves.

The courtesans, since they were an important source of revenue, were provided with all the instruments of their trade, such as fine clothes. They had no authority to set free their slaves on payment of stipulated sums. We do not know how much the state spent on their large establishments (which in certain cases in later times were as big as palaces). According to the *Arthashastra*, however, the Superintendent did not allow them to buy jewelry, as that would have meant an irregular use of state funds. As the vice of prostitution yielded a considerable revenue to the state, Kautilya with his shrewd economic sense advised state-controlled prostitution. He thought that it was bound to yield the state a higher revenue than the collection of taxes from individual prostitutes.

As the degree of beauty and artistic accomplishment governed the income of the *ganikas*, the state made arrangements for their instruction in the various arts: *Ganikas*, *dasis*, and actresses were taught singing, instrumental music, recitation, dancing, acting, writing, painting, playing on the *vina*, the pipe, and the drum, thought-reading, manufacture of scents and garlands, shampooing, and skills in the arts of prostitutes. The list of the arts in which the courtesans were trained by state-employed teachers crystallized at a later period into the sixty-four arts, and proficiency in these was considered desirable.

Kautilya fully recognized the value of some kind of pension for *ganikas* and other kinds of prostitutes who in their younger days had brought considerable sums of money to the royal coffers. The condition laid down for such a pension was that it was made available to *ganikas*, *devadasis* and *rupajivas* if they had lost their beauty, or became old and incapable of earning money for the state. To ensure this advantage for themselves, the *ganikas* were naturally compelled to yield their person to everybody in order to earn profits for the state and in this respect they lacked the independence of private prostitutes.

In keeping with the strict rules governing the conduct

of courtesans in the employment of the state, the *Arthashastra* ordained that a *ganika* could not become a mistress (*avaruddha*), an *avaruddha* was prohibited by her master from intercourse with other men. In ancient India (except in the period described in the *Arthashastra*) there was no interdiction against *ganika* becoming a mistress. According to the *Arthashastra*, the *ganika* was an important source of income to the state and so she was forbidden to seek the protection of any single person. There was this qualification though: if a man took a *ganika* to his home for himself, he had to pay 1-1/4 *pana* as well as the monthly salary she received from the Superintendent. This was because she had failed to be productive to the state during the period of her absence with her protector.

The *Smriti* literature also gives us some information about the position of mistresses who, according to the *Yaj.* ii 290, could be divided into two classes, *avaruddha* and *bhujishya*. The former was kept in the house and forbidden to have intercourse with others, while the latter was not kept inside the house but elsewhere. The *Arthashastra* has also discussed the legal position of courtesans, their rights, obligations, inheritance etc. A *ganika* did not enjoy full property rights since she was not a free agent. The state allowed her daughter to succeed her but the son became an actor (*kushilava*). A *ganika* could regain her freedom after paying back redemption money which was fixed at 24,000 *panas*, but when we consider that her salary was 1,000 to 3,000 *panas* per annum the price for redemption seems to have been very high.

The children of a *ganika*, though they had the freedom to marry and beget children, were not free persons. The daughters were to act as *ganikas* in case their mother died or went away, but all the daughters could not do so. Whether a girl became a *ganika* depended on her beauty and proficiency in the arts which appealed to her prospective clients. Kautilya does not tell us clearly the fate of the *ganikas* who had plain looks, though it is quite possible that they were employed in the royal stores and kitchens or served as ordinary maids.

The sons of *ganikas* were also not free agents. By the

order of the king, when they were mere children of eight, they began their training as musicians and actors (*kushilava*). They were coached by state-employed teachers and in course of time they became expert actors (*rangopajivin*) and dancers (*talavachara*). Their salary, however, was much lower than that of the *ganikas*, for they received a mere pittance of 150 per annum. Besides, the sum of 12,000 *panas* fixed for their redemption was a very exorbitant sum when we consider their meagre income.

It is significant that though the *ganikas* were not free persons legally, they had full authority over their assets which consisted of jewelry, income from salary and the gifts received from their lovers. Jewelry was considered one of the tools of their profession, and its possession added much to their prestige, for even the king could not confiscate it. This inviolability of private property, however, runs contrary to the translation of a passage from the *Arthashastra* by Shamasastri which reads that a *ganika* was punished with a fine of 50-1/4 *panas* if she sold or mortgaged her property. Sternbach, however, gets over the difficulty by translating the word *svapateya* as "wealth, riches" and not "property", as Shamasastri does. In the opinion of the former the word *svapateya* means the wealth or riches given to *ganikas* by the Superintendent on a usufructual basis so that they could live in grand style and discharge better their duties as government servants. As a matter of fact, high living was a characteristic feature of a courtesan's life, and was not calculated merely to satisfy their personal vanity, but was a trade trick to attract wealthy merchants and officers. In the free institution of *ganika*, the courtesans, or at least the leading ones, earned a great deal of money and could live in luxury. But since prostitution was a state-managed institution there is every likelihood that their palatial establishments and gardens were state property with life interest. Sternbach places the same interpretation on the mention of a fine of 4-1/4 *panas* on a *ganika* if she entrusted her jewelry to a person other than her mother. It seems possible that though she had a right over her own jewelry, the jewelry received from the Superintendent on a usufructual

basis could not be entrusted to anybody except the bawd who looked after her welfare. Kautilya also throws some light on the laws of inheritance among the *ganikas*. After the death of a *ganika* her daughter, or in her absence her sister, inherited her personal household effects, but in the absence of these relations, her personal property went to the state. The mother of a *ganika* could also give it to a substitute (*pratiganika*) as well, though in any case the inheritance was in the maternal line.

Kautilya in his usual business-like way deals with the fees received by the *ganikas* from their lovers. As soon as a client paid the prescribed fees to a *ganika*, the contract between the client and the *ganika* was concluded, and if she refused to carry it out, she was liable to pay a fine amounting to twice the sum of the fees (*bhoga*) received. Denying sexual intercourse after receiving the fees entailed a fine eight times the amount received by her. J. J. Meyer, commenting on the terms *dvishatya* and *bhogupahara* of Kautilya, says that the first word refers to the deprivation of sexual intercourse in case an agreement was concluded for one night, and the second word carries the idea that it was concluded for a longer time. The contract, according to Kautilya, was not valid if the *ganika* was ill.

The *Arthashastra* has also prescribed a set of rules governing the conduct and relationship of *ganikas* among themselves. For defamation the fine was 24 *panas*, for assault 48 *panas*, for cutting ears 51-3/4 *panas*, and for forced confinement, abduction and disfigurement 1,000 *panas*. According to J. J. Meyer the above mentioned acts refer to criminal injuries to the character and person of a *ganika*, while others take them to mean acts carried out by a *ganika*. Sternbach, however, is right when he holds that defamation, assault, cutting of ears etc., refer not to *ganikas* but to their clients. Apparently the rules were framed to ensure the safety of the people who visited the courtesans. The law, however, was not one-sided. While ensuring the safety of the clients who visited the courtesans, Kautilya prescribed a set of rules which also gave the courtesans a greater amount of protection against the

misdeeds of their paramours. Offences committed against a *ganika* were very severely punished because they flagrantly violated the king's interests. If a *ganika* was put under forced confinement, the perpetrator of the crime was fined 1,000 *panas*. However, in case she was a willing party, the fine amounted to her monthly pay in addition to a fine of 1-1/4 *panas*. If she was forcibly abducted, the offender had to pay a fine of 1,000 *panas*. The amount of the fine for violating a *ganika* has not been mentioned, but for violating a *rupajiva* the fine was 12 *panas*. In the case of the violation of a sexually immature daughter of a *ganika*, the highest amercement was inflicted on the offender; but if she was sexually mature and willing the fine was reduced.

To ensure the safety of the person of a *ganika*, the penalty ranged between 1,000 to 48,000 *panas* depending on the nature and condition of the crimes and the status of the *ganika* who had been injured. The penalty was fixed in a sliding scale, i.e. it was higher or lower depending on whether the *ganika* belonged to the first, second or the highest rank. In case of an offence committed by a *ganika* against another member of her profession, the amount of the penalty was twice, thrice, four or more times of the basic penalty if the offence was committed more than once.

The *Smritis* had a poor opinion of *ganikas* and the hatred of certain law-givers against them rose to such a height that even killing a prostitute was not counted a sin (*Gautama*, XXII. 27). This hatred and suspicion of the prostitutes seems to have been due to their role as corrupters of morals and also due to the belief that they were thieves and swindlers (*Manu*, IX. 259). They were considered thorns strewn in the path of the people (*Manu*, IX. 259-60). To expiate the sin of intercourse with a prostitute a man had to perform the Prajapatya sacrifice. Prostitutes were supposed to be unclean persons and food offered by them was forbidden to Brahmins.

Kautilya was a great realist and a shrewd administrator. He did not suffer from any qualms of conscience. To him the prostitutes were state property and any injury to them

meant a loss to the state. He, therefore, prescribed a deterrent fine of 72,000 *panas* for killing a *ganika* proceeding to her favourite haunt—the amount supposed to be commensurate with the losses suffered by the king. For killing the bawd, the *ganika's* daughter, and the *rupadasi*, the offender was punished with the highest amercement. The comparatively lighter sentence in such cases shows that in awarding it the economic motive was uppermost in the mind of Kautilya the sanctity of human life hardly played any part in determining the severity of the punishment.

While the killer of a *ganika* escaped with a heavy, almost crippling fine, the opposite was the case if it was a *ganika* who killed her lover. For this heinous offence capital sentence was meted out to her; she was burnt at the stake or thrown into the water and forcibly drowned. This heavy sentence was fixed with a view to assuring the clients that their lives were safe.

The clients who visited the *ganikas* were not always models of good behaviour. They had amassed wealth and they wanted to get rid of it as quickly as possible. Disguised as rich merchants many impostors gained access to the establishments of *ganikas* and tried to cheat them of their fees or even went to the extent of stealing their ornaments. For such impostors the *Arthashastra* provides adequate punishment. For stealing a *ganika's* money or ornaments and for not paying her stipulated fees, the penalty fixed was eight times the sum involved. If a client agreed to pay the stipulated amount of fees of a *ganika* and after making love to her declined to meet his obligation, he was forced to pay eight times the agreed *bhoga*. But the law ensured the rights and privileges of genuine clients against the waywardness of the *ganikas*. For instance, if after receiving her dues, a *ganika* showed any hatred towards a client, she was forced to pay him twice the amount she had received. The fine rose to eight times the amount of *bhoga* if she declined to sleep with him.

The *Arthashastra* is quite clear on the point, that in spite of a certain degree of legal protection, a *ganika* was not a free agent. She was not only expected to inform the

Superintendent about the payment and other sums she had received, but also about the conduct and character of the persons who visited her. This was done in order to enable the state to keep track of dangerous and undesirable persons.

In order to ensure the smooth working of the work of the prostitutes the Superintendent (*ganikadhyaksha*) enjoyed full power over the *ganikas*. He employed and classified them, paid them their salaries, supplied them with the necessary articles which enabled them to discharge their duties satisfactorily, fixed the amount of their fees, determined their gross income and expenditure from all sources, checked their extravagances, prepared statements from the information received from them, and kept an account of all receipts, fines and redemption money. He looked after their welfare when they had lost their beauty and employment. He was responsible for the entire system of state prostitution and public houses and he was invested with the same rights and responsibilities as the Superintendent of other state departments.

Rupajiva in the *Arthashastra* is a generic term for all kinds of prostitutes who literally lived on the proceeds of their beauty. The *rupajiva*'s rank came next to that of the *ganika*. While a *dasī* or a low grade prostitute from outside was forbidden entrance to the palace, the *rupajiva* was allowed to enter it after she had thoroughly cleansed herself, rubbed her body and put on new ornaments and jewelry. The mothers (*matrika*) of *rupajivas* and the temple dancers who had retired were employed by the Superintendent of Spinning (*sutradhyaksha*). Rules about *rupajivas* are not specific. Kautilya gives us some information about them casually. This information relates to the location of their quarters, their lovers, the taxes levied on them, the means suggested to safeguard them against the perfidy of their lovers, their position in the palaces, their role as spies and their fate in their old age.

According to Kautilya *rupajivas* lived in the southern quarter of the fortified town along with actors, wine-sellers, traders in cooked rice, meat-sellers and Vaishyas. The last formed a rich clientele. Certain other items of

information about them are available. For instance, for going to bed with a *rupajiva*, who lived as a mistress, a fine of 48 *panas* was realized from her second lover while she herself escaped scot-free. If the fellow used force on her, the fine was 12 *panas*. If many tried to violate her, each of them was fined 24 *panas*. A special rule was prescribed to protect prostitutes against the overtures of the night watchmen of the town. They were not only fined (the amount depending on the seriousness of the guilt) but also sentenced to death for violation of this rule. Such drastic punishment was necessary as prostitutes generally used roads and streets during the night and safeguards had to be provided against such villains like night watchmen who were in actual fact expected to look after their safety.

Daughters of prostitutes (*duhitrika*, *kumari*), maids employed by the *ganikas* for making garlands, scents etc., and bawds (*matrika*) were under state protection. Heavy fines were imposed upon those who molested them.

Kautilya seems to have been well aware of the sexual aberrations prevalent among those who visited public houses for he has provided punishment for such offences. For extra-vaginal intercourse the offender was fined. The basis of the rules framed by Kautilya in connection with sexual aberrations seems to be that a prostitute after accepting payment from a client was expected to surrender her body to him, but any improper demand or misbehaviour rendered the contract null and void.

Unlike the *ganika*, who in lieu of salary and certain other considerations surrendered her income to the state, the *rupajiva* escaped only with certain taxes. The state realized from her a general tax amounting to twice her fee for one night. In case of financial stringency however, actors and *rupajivas* were charged a super-tax amounting to half of their salaries. *Rupajivas* in this context were perhaps mistresses, as the word *vetana* is not *bhoga* or fees, but salary or wages.

The prostitutes in the Mauryan period were not only employed as a tax-gathering machine, but for other purposes as well. As prostitutes had access almost everywhere

and did not arouse any suspicion, they were employed as spies. *Ganikas*, however, did not act as spies as they were entrusted with the duty of earning an income for the state in lieu of the salary they received. As a safety measure they were expected to inform the Superintendent about the clients who visited them.

A *dasī* or a low-grade prostitute was employed for regular spying, while whores (*pumshchali*) spied on thieves. According to Kautilya different kinds of pimps and procurers (*bandhaki-poshaka*) employed young and beautiful girls as spies. These women managed to gain the confidence of the enemy's army chiefs, excited jealousy and suspicion among them and led them to their destruction. The procurer secured young and beautiful maids of the king for the same purpose.

According to Kautilya dancing girls and strumpets acted as spies and led the enemies of the state to their destruction by using various stratagems. The prostitutes, specially employed for this purpose, lured the marked characters to secret houses where they were either killed or put in chains.

Prostitutes were also employed to kidnap the military personnel and princes. *Rupajivas* were brought to the cities to act as spies under the Superintendent of the city (*nagaraka-pranidhi*). They were entitled to receive those whom they knew and only if they were certain of the places from where they came. Besides mentioning the *ganikas*, *rupajivas*, *veshyas* etc., who were professional prostitutes, Kautilya also mentions wives of actors (*nata*) dancers (*nartaka*), singers, instrumentalists, buffoons, bards, rope dancers (*plavaka*), jugglers (*shaubhika*), wandering bards, pimps etc., who lived on the income of a sort of demi-monde.

As we have pointed out in earlier Chapters, the institution of *samaja* and *vihara yatras* was closely connected with the courtesans and their activities. According to Kautilya even the rulers seem to have been regular visitors to the *yatra* (pleasure trips), *samaja* (festivals with animal sacrifice), *utsava* (feast) and *pravahanas* (processions). They used to be heavily guarded by selected soldiers. That the

samaja was an important part of the Mauryan social life is proved by a reference on Rock Edict I of Asoka. As has been pointed out by M. M. Bose, the commentators have mostly discussed what is meant by *samaja*, the nature of the *samajas* disapproved by the king and those approved by him. The word *samaja* in Rock Edict I particularly refers to a sort of festive gathering usually held in connection with an animal sacrifice, the same as the *sankhadi* of the Jain literature. The aim of Asoka was to prohibit any gathering of this kind and he found many shortcomings in it (*bahukam hi dosam samajahmi pasati*). There was, however, a kind of *samaja* of Priyadarshin which is considered excellent (*asti pi chu ekatiya samaja sadhumata devanam priyasa*).

In Rock Edicts VIII, IX and XI the word *vihalayatam* in the sentence *atikamtam amtalam lazane vihalayatam nama nukhamisu* has been usually translated as "pleasure tours" or "tours of pleasure". This *viharayatra* was not a tour but a trip to a fixed place with the purpose of hunting and enjoying other pleasures of life such as drinking, strolling in the forests in the company of courtesans, gambling and other sports. In *viharayatra* (which is equivalent to the modern *saila*, *jata* and *gotha*) the element of fun, frolic and sport is always predominant; the idea of a journey is simply incidental. This aim of the *viharayatra* is emphasized in the inscription itself—*eta magavya anani cha etarisani abhiramakani ahumsu* (here hunting and other such pleasures were enjoyed). As opposed to this, the *dhammayata* (usually translated as "a religious tour") is nothing more than a socio-religious festival held in accordance with the order of Asoka for the propagation of Dharma. As a matter of fact, the *dhammayatra* of Asoka constituted the following elements: (1) an interview with the Sramanas and Brahmins and old men, (2) an interview with the people of the country with a view to instruct them and question them about *dharma*, (3) the proper treatment of slaves and servants, (4) obedience to parents and giving presents to friends and relatives, and (5) insistence on the non-slaughter of animals. But besides these ethical principles and abstract virtues the *dhammayatra* arranged for the

edification of common folk. There was a spectacle of aerial chariots, elephants, masses of fire and other divine representations.

In ancient India, drinking, gambling and prostitution went hand in hand. The Mauryan period was no exception to this general rule. No doubt drinking is condemned by Buddhism, but the *Arthashastra* completely disregards this ethical code and treats wine trade as an important source of state revenue.

The Superintendent of wine and liquor was not only in charge of their manufacture but also employed experienced men to look after the liquor traffic in the forts, the countryside and the military camps.

The wines generally in demand were *medaka* (made of rice), *prasanna* (made of flour, nutmeg and other spices), *asava* (made of the elephant-apple called *kapittha* and sugar) which was of superior and inferior kind, medicinal wines (*arishta*), *maireya* (made of jaggery and spices), grape wines (*madhu*) like *kapisayan* imported from Kapisa (the modern Begram, near Kabul) and *harahuraka* imported from Herat. Other small items of information are also given. For instance, we are told about the methods of preparing the fermenting material, spices, grape juice and honey which were added to *medaka* and *prasanna* to give them their peculiar flavour, the colouring materials of *prasanna*, the formula for making *asava* and white wine (*shvetasura*). Mango wine was made from mango juice and spices. A list is given of the costly spices added to the pots of wine to be presented to the king.

Manufacture of wine and liquors was the prerogative of the state. However, citizens on special occasions were allowed to manufacture white (*shvetasura*), medicinal wines etc. for their private use.

The fairs and festivals were occasions when large quantities of wine were consumed. During the feasts (*utsava*), on the occasion of animal sacrifices (*samaja*), and on picnics or excursions (*yatra*) people were allowed to distil their own liquors for a period of four days. But this freedom was subject to the condition that they paid to the Superintendent licensing fees which amounted to five per cent

ad valorem.

Rules were also laid down with regard to the manufacture and sale of *sura*, *medaka*, *arishta*, *madhu*, acid fruit juices (*phalamla*) and a sort of rum (*amlasidhu*) the amount of excise duty or compensation was computed taking into consideration the day's sale, the difference between the royal and public measures and the excess amount realized by the seller. This amount was realized by the Superintendent from the local and foreign merchants in lieu of the loss incurred by the state in liquor traffic owing to their tricks of trade.

The Superintendent of the wine trade also dealt with various problems connected with it. For instance, keeping in view the demand and supply position, he controlled or decontrolled the sale of wine and liquors. He imposed a fine of six hundred *panas* on offenders, other than those who were manufacturers, purchasers and sellers in liquor trade. Apparently this rule was laid down to guard against the unauthorized traffic in liquors. Another rule prohibited men from taking the wine manufactured in villages to the cities. This was apparently done with a view to prevent smuggling on a large scale and ensured that the governmental machinery for the control of the wine trade was not put out of gear. It was also the duty of the Superintendent to see that wine shops were not situated close to one another. This rule was made with a view to avoiding drunken brawls.

Kautilya, however, was well aware of the fact that the indiscriminate sale of wine resulted in workmen neglecting the work in hand, noble persons divesting themselves of virtue and decency, and in fire brands committing indiscreet acts. At least in theory, liquor was to be sold in small quantities to gentlemen, and to ensure that the wine did not go into undesirable hands, only men with character were allowed to take it out of the bar.

The rule was that the clients should drink inside the bar and that they should not all leave together. This was done in order to keep a check on the articles which they might have acquired by foul means. If some of them were found possessing gold and other articles not rightfully be-

longing to them, they were arrested outside the bar by the order of the Superintendent. Likewise those persons who appeared too extravagant and who seemed to be spending beyond their means were arrested under suspicion.

It was also one of the duties of the Superintendent to see that only the right kind of wines and liquors were served in the bars at fixed prices. These prices could be reduced if the quality had deteriorated. The wines of inferior quality could be sold outside the bars, or given away to slaves or workmen in lieu of wages, or as a last resort, even thrown to the cattle.

The Government managed saloons and private bars (*panagara*) were tastefully decorated. The idea behind this measure was to offer a certain degree of comfort to customers and to provide appropriate surroundings in which they could enjoy their drinks. The bars were divided into many cabins which were provided with beds and seats, flower garlands, water and other articles appropriate to the varying seasons were made available to the customers.

But in spite of all the comforts provided in the bars, trouble was always expected from bad characters who managed to visit them under false pretences. In order to protect the customers against these elements, detectives were employed to keep an eye on their expenditure and to check whether they were regular visitors or strangers to the place. These shrewd detectives ascertained the value of the dress, ornaments and gold of the customers when they lay senseless on the floor after heavy bouts of drinking. If they had lost anything while they lay thus inebriated, the bar-tender was not only forced to make good the loss, but also made to pay a fine equivalent to the value of the article they had lost.

There is little doubt that these luxurious bars of the Mauryan period must have been the happy hunting-ground of prostitutes, but unfortunately the matter-of-fact, administrative tone of the *Arthashastra* eschews all poetical details. The only information about the presence of prostitutes in the bars is of a laconic nature. The wine merchant or barmen (in addition to carrying out their

duties) kept a watch on the activities of their customers from their half-closed rooms. These customers, both local and foreign, pretending to be gentlemen, lay down in their rooms with their very beautiful (*peshatarupabhih*) mistresses (*dasibhih*)

Courtesans in the Kamasutra and the Natyashastra

THE EARLY CENTURIES of the Christian era witnessed an unprecedented economic prosperity for India. In exchange for spices, aromatics, precious and semi-precious stones, silk and muslins of the finest quality and other luxury goods, Roman gold poured into this country. This surplus capital in its turn created an unprecedented internal demand for luxury goods and this is reflected in the art and culture of that period. Naturally, most of this gold came into the possession of the merchant princes who spent their millions in maintaining their splendid establishments, in making religious endowments and spending lavishly on public works. They also spent a part of it in patronizing courtesans who were known for their proficiency in the arts and were a very important factor in contemporary social life. The Kushana sculptures from Mathura and the Satavahana bas-reliefs from Andhra Pradesh perpetuate under the garb of *Mithuna* and *Yakshi* figures the memory of these licentious beauties. They reveal undreamt of pleasures of the flesh. They depict them inviting and soliciting men or engaged in their toilet or enjoying the pleasures of drinking and dancing, singing and roaming in gardens in the company of their lovers. The courtesans of the time lived in capitals and large commercial centres such as Bharukachchha, Ujjain, Mathura, Kausambi, Varanasi, Pataliputra and Vaisali, where there lived rich merchants who could afford to patronize them.

Apart from the literary evidences which support the view that the *Vaishika* culture flourishing in the great

Indian cities was a wealthy and prosperous one, an inscription of the second century from Mathura shows that *ganikas* had considerable influence there. It is inscribed on a tablet of honour (*ayagapata*) carved with a complete *stupa*, surmounted by a railing and approached by means of a flight of steps and an ornamental gateway. It may be translated as follows:

Adoration to the Arhat Vardhamana. The daughter of the matron (*araye*) courtesan Lonashobhika (Lavanasobhika), the disciple of the Jain ascetics, the opulent (*vasuye*) Nanda has erected a shrine of the Arhat, a hall of homage (*ayagasabha*), a cistern and a stone slab at the sanctuary of the Nigrantha Arhats, together with her mother, her daughter, her son and her whole household in honour of the Arhats.

The inscription is of great importance for the history of the institution of *ganikas*. It shows that no stigma was attached to the profession and even such stern moralizers as the Jain ascetics felt no scruples in accepting them as disciples. They allowed them to contribute to their pious foundations.

The *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana (written probably in the early centuries of the Christian era) is the most important source of information about courtesans and prostitutes in ancient India. Vatsyayana, who is modest enough not to claim any originality for himself, apparently systematized a considerable amount of floating material about courtesans, their education in arts and crafts, their artificial love, extortionate ways and the techniques employed by them to seduce their lovers, etc. According to Vatsyayana, the first compiler of information about prostitutes was Babhravya from Panchala (Bareilly District, U.P.). The *Vaishika* part of his book was covered by six of the seven chapters. They embrace almost all branches of *ars amoris*. Realizing the importance of *Vaishika*, Dattaka, at the instance of the courtesans of Pataliputra, wrote his *Vaishikamadhikaranam*. This, however, seems to have been a ponderous and specialized work. Vatsyayana, therefore, in

order to emphasize its importance compressed Dattaka's work and incorporated the information and Dattaka's conclusions in a separate chapter in the *Kamasutra*.

The *Jayamangala* commentary on the *Kamasutra* relates an interesting story about how Dattaka wrote his work on *Vaishika*. According to this legend, a Brahman from Mathura made Pataliputra his home. Here a son was born to him in his old age. The mother died as soon as the child was born. His father allowed someone else to adopt the child and in course of time the father also died. The boy was lovingly called Dattaka (the adopted one) by his adopted mother. He was a brilliant child and in course of time he became adept as a teacher in the traditional arts and sciences and was known as Acharya Dattaka. This great teacher, with a view to studying certain aspects of human behaviour which could only be learnt in the proximity of courtesans, approached them for enlightenment. Later on, at their request he wrote *Vaishikamadhikaranam*, which dealt with the artifices adopted by the courtesans to please and entice their clients.

In defining the goal of life, Vatsyayana follows the usual dictum: in childhood the pursuit of knowledge leading to the acquisition of wealth; in youth the pursuit of love and in old age *dharma* and final emancipation. For the fulfilment of the amorous desires of youth, money was a necessity. Vatsyayana advises people to earn money by all rightful means. Acquisition of knowledge, of fields for agriculture, of gold, cattle, grain and household effects such as utensils, furniture etc., of friends, and in addition to this the increase of capital through investments constituted wealth. *Kama* has been divided into two categories—*samanya* and *vishesha*. The *samanya* is born of sympathetic feeling and understanding, and the *vishesha* type, where sensory organs are concerned, consists of sexual embraces, kissing and other forms of love-making.

But in spite of the high place which *Kama* occupied in the Hindu scheme of life, the elaborate directions given in the *Kamasutra* for its fulfilment were clearly out of bounds for the ordinary people and it became the privilege of a select body of citizens (*nagarakas*) who were rich enough

to indulge in the luxuries afforded by arts and in the pleasures of sex. Naturally, for courtesans the arts of love were purely for money-making purposes. It is asserted that they even forced a Brahman in love to part with his money. But the art of love had to be taught. Courtesans and prostitutes, the high priestesses of the temple of love, and also young girls of respectable families, received training in the art of love from experienced nurses, confidantes, old maids, nuns and even maternal aunts of their own age. *Angavidyas* describe the virtues which had to be cultivated and the behaviour of the body under the stress and strain of love. They are named and grouped by Yashodhara, the commentator of the *Kamasutra* as follows

Twenty-four arts based on profession: vocal music, instrumental music, dancing, proficiency in scripts, sympathetic speech, painting, stucco work (*pustakarma*), cutting stencils from leaves (*patrachchhedyam*), garland making, flavouring according to *gandhayukti*, testing of precious stones, sewing (*sivanam*), knowledge of colours (*rangaparijnanam*), furniture making (*upakarmakriya*), weight and measure (*manavidhih*), earning one's livelihood, treatment of animals, knowledge of false religious practices, skill in sports and amusements, knowledge of the people (*lokajnanam*), skilfulness, shampooing, toilet (*sarira samskara*), and specialized skills.

Twenty kinds of art based on speculation of which fifteen are *nirjiva*, namely: attainment of longevity, proper use of dice, knowledge of coins and figures, investigation of certain processes, knowledge of primary causes, diplomacy, the scribe's receipt (*karanadana*), simple and devious processes (*chitrachchitavidhih*), secret treasure (*gudharashihi*), equality in contest (*tulyabhihara*), quick understanding, remembering the contents of a letter received a long time ago, the path of fire, mesmerism (*chhalvyamohanam*) and difference between the collection and deposit (*grahadana*).

The *sajiva* speculations number five: the arts of gain, access, noise, the past and dramatic dancing.

There are sixteen appurtenances of the bedroom: gauging the feelings of the lover, expression of one's love, offering the limbs in embrace, application of nail scratches and

biting in dalliance, untying the *sari* knot before sexual union, touching and patting the sex organs, the show of magnanimity, the art of thrilling with joy or desire, mutual understanding and satiation, encouragement, show of mild anger, sudden withdrawal of anger, appeasing the angry lover, leaving the sleeping lover, simulating a long sleep and the art of hiding the sexual organs of the body.

There are four arts that can be practised after the sexual union is over: weeping and cursing the lover, taking an oath in his name, following the lover who is ready to leave, looking again and again at the lover.

As a matter of fact in these sixty-four arts only the first list, that includes music and dancing, painting and sculpture, making of garlands, cutting of stencils, preparing articles of toilet etc., comes within the category of arts. The twenty other arts are merely arts of speculation, which show the highly intelligent nature of the heroine. The final list of twenty arts merely enumerates the way the heroine acts in the presence of her lover in the bedroom in order to retain his love.

The regular list of the sixty-four arts given by Vatsyayana is of significance for it includes broadly speaking all the items which could claim inclusion within the term *art*. The acquisition of these arts by men and women of culture was considered highly desirable. Naturally it was impossible to acquire even a partial knowledge of all these arts even though their acquisition was considered the highest goal in a cultured society. Ordinary men and women engrossed in the drudgery of everyday life could hardly be expected to gain even a passing acquaintance with these highly specialized arts whose acquisition required time, money and a certain social status. But as these arts were supposed to be the props of Indian culture, their cultivation was entrusted to a body of men and women who were by nature and circumstances placed in a position which gave them ample time to study them.

Naturally the exacting profession of a courtesan demanded the knowledge of certain arts. They had to acquire them in order to keep themselves in trim; these arts were matter-of-fact instruments of their profession. There are

numerous references to the fact that senior government officers, rich merchants and bankers regularly visited courtesans not only for the satisfaction of their sex impulses but to enjoy their cultured and pleasant company, since this was denied to them at home. Instruction in some of the arts mentioned by Vatsyayana also formed a part of the liberal education of princes and princesses, merchants and bankers, but their intensive cultivation was left to *goshthikas* and courtesans. The attempt of the Jains to swell the number of these arts to seventy-two was in keeping with the mediaeval tendency towards senseless exaggeration.

The *kalas* mentioned by Vatsyayana are as follows:

Gitam (vocal music): The commentary classifies it into four classes depending on notes (*svaraga*), on the composition (*padaga*), on proper tuning (*layaga*) and on emotion (*chetovardhanaga*).

Vadyam: The whole range of musical instruments has been divided into four classes: metallic instruments of percussion (*ghana*), stringed instruments such as the lute (*vitata*), *tata* (any musical instrument), and wind instruments (*sushira*).

Nrityam: The art of dancing consists of postures (*karanani*), gestures (*angaharani*), emotions (*bhava*), causes of emotions (*vibhava*), external signs of the effects of emotions (*anubhava*), and finally aesthetic satisfaction (*rasa*). *Nritya* is further divided into *natya* and *anatya* forms. *Natya* is defined as an imitation of the actions of the denizens of heaven, the nether world and the earth. On the other hand the *anatya* form is not enforced by tradition but depends on the whims of a dancer.

Alekhyam: Yashodhara describes the six basic principles underlying the composition of a good painting: forms (*rupabhedah*), proper measurements (*pramanani*), emotions (*bhava*), integrating the concept of beauty (*lavanyayojanam*), realism (*sadrishyam*) and proper application of colours (*varnikabhanga*). These constituents of a good painting were framed to attract and instruct them or even to divert oneself.

Visheshakachchhedyam: It is defined as a *tilaka* on the

forehead obtained in several patterns by stencilling the birch bark, and other leaves. Such patterns come within the category of *patrachchhedyam* and were favoured by courtesans.

Tandula-kusumavalivikarah : According to the commentary multi-coloured grains of rice were used to draw up patterns on the mosaic floors of the temples of Sarasvati and Kama. Similarly, flowers of different colours were wreathed artistically during the worship of Siva and other gods. Both the art forms still flourish though in a decadent state.

Pushpastarana (Flower-bed) : Multi-coloured flowers were wreathed with a needle or woven and spread in a temple or audience hall. It is the same as the *phul-sej* of today in which the bed in the bridal chamber is covered with a net of flowers.

Dashanavasananagaragah : This item includes the application of saffron paste and other fragrant materials to the body and the clothes, staining the teeth etc. These practices, favoured by the courtesans still survive in *aipan* (*alimpana*) and *missi* (black dented stain) used sometimes by old-fashioned women.

Manibhumika-karma The art of making mosaic floors in summer. On such a cool floor people could either sleep comfortably or enjoy their drinks.

Sayana-rachanam : The art of making a bed so as to indicate the state of mind of a woman, whether she was in love, angry or indifferent.

Udaka-vadyam : Playing with water after the manner of a drum. It seems to have been some kind of musical instrument; something like the *jalataranga* (a set of attuned porcelain cups which are filled with water and on which music is produced by striking them with a stick in either hand).

Udakaghatah : In watersport even today, water is released with a certain force by pressing the palms together and these sprays are used in striking one another in play.

Chitraschayogah : The term includes all kinds of wonder-working formulas such as removing bodily defects, dyeing the hair, and magical practices to subdue one's rivals.

Malyagrathanavikalpah : It teaches how to wreath flowers as offerings to the gods or for decorating one's own person.

Shekharakapidayojanam : *Shekharaka* and *apida* are two types of chaplets. In the former, the chapter covered the head while in the latter multi-coloured flowers were wreathed into a circular pith-frame which was then worn on the head.

Nepathyaprayogah : This is the artistic mode of wearing one's garlands and ornaments according to the prevailing fashions and the customs of the land.

Karnapatrabhangah : Earrings were the favourite ornaments of the womenfolk. The *karnapatrabhangah* type of earrings, according to the commentary, were made of conchshells or ivory. In the Gupta period such earrings are frequently mentioned in literature.

Gandhayuktiḥ : According to Yashodhara it means the preparation of perfumes according to well tried out recipes, but the *Gandhayukti* seems to have been a book on perfumery which is unfortunately lost.

Bhushanayojanam : The inborn love of the Indians for ornaments, the making and wearing of which were given the status of an art. According to the commentary the ornaments are of two types, namely, *samyojya* and *asamyojya*. The *samyojya* type was set with precious stones, pearls, coral etc., while the *asamyojya* type included plain bracelets, earrings etc.

Andrajalah (illusionists). Formulae which, by conjuring up armies, temples, etc., destroyed egoistic tendencies.

Kauchumaraschayogah : This contains formulae for certain love potions and medicines compiled by one Kuchumara.

Hastalaghavam (deftness of hands) : It meant the sleight of hand in gambling, show of skill or the creation of a sense of wonder.

Vichitrashakayushabhakshyavikarakriya : This means the preparation of delectable vegetable dishes, soups and other eatables. Apparently proficiency in cooking received due recognition in the ensemble of arts and crafts.

Panakarasaragasavayojanam : In an atmosphere of luxury

and sensuousness, the preparation of all kinds of foods and drinks was regarded as an accomplishment. Food is divided into four categories. *Bhojya* is the cooking of rice dishes, sweets and savouries. As the cooking of sweets is a difficult matter, the cooking of vegetable dishes which is easier, is given precedence over the preparation of more intricate dishes. Among vegetables are included roots, leaves, sprouts, tender shoots, fruits, stalks, barks, flowers and even thorny vegetables. *Peya* has been divided into two classes: one in which fire was used (*agninishpadya*) such as meat and lentil soup, and one in which fire was not used. In *sandhanakrit*, a sub-variety of this type, *guda* was fermented in water; in another type yeast or some herb was used to secure the fermentation and this wine was also known as *rasa*. In making *asava* the quantity of yeast varied with the soft, middle and strong quality of the concoction. The *raga* apparently made of intoxicants was in the form of paste, powder and liquid, and was saltish or acrid, and slightly sweet in taste.

Suchivanakarman : Apparently the techniques of sewing and weaving are intended here. The *suchivana* is divided into three processes, namely, swing (*svanam*), darning (*utanam*) and stitching (*virachanam*). The first was used in making shirts (*kanchuka*) etc., the second in mending torn clothes and the third in quilting.

Sutrakrida : Multi-coloured thread was passed through a tube but it changed colours when it was taken out. In another variation of the trick the thread was cut to pieces and burnt but with a sleight of hand the ashes were converted again into whole thread.

Vina-damarukavadyani : Proficiency in playing on the lute and *damaru* (a hand drum).

Prahelika : Riddles for amusement and discussion

Pratimala : In this amusing competition one of the competitors recited a verse. Taking its last letter as a clue, a competitor from the rival party recited another verse beginning with the same letter, and this went on for a long time till one of the parties was defeated. *Pratimala* is still continued in the form of *antakshari*.

Durvachakayogah : Tongue-twisters and verses whose

meanings were almost incomprehensible.

Pustakavachanam: Literally, stylistic recitals from books. According to the commentary, however, it refers to the reading of Bharata's *Natyashastra* and *Kavyas* with a view to evoking erotic sentiments or simply as a source of amusement. As the arts mentioned by the *Kamasutra* were cultivated mostly by the courtesans and their lovers, the latter explanation is more acceptable.

Natakakhyayikavarnanam: Discussion on dramatic compositions and stories.

Kavyasamasyapuranam: A form of literary amusement in which an unfinished verse had to be completed. In its modern form only some words from the end of a verse are given, and the competitors are expected to complete it.

Pattika-vetra-vana-vikalpah Weaving a mat or bed with cane was supposed to be an artistic accomplishment, and it is still considered so in some parts of the country.

Tarku-karmani: It is, apparently, spinning (*tarku* i.e. spindle) and the various processes involved in it, though according to the commentary the various processes involved in calendering (*kundakarmani*) are meant here.

Takshanam: Carpentry, which involved the making of artistic beds and furniture.

Vastuvidya: The science of architecture. Apparently in the early centuries of the Christian era the science of architecture was recognized as an independent branch of knowledge.

Rupya-ratna-pariksha: Scientific examination of coins such as dinars, precious stones, etc., according to their qualities, defects, values etc.

Dhatuvadah: *Dhatuvada* usually stands for alchemy, but according to the commentary, it stands for mining and metallurgy. It includes the knowledge of pulverizing, smelting and mixing the earth, stones and boulders for getting pure metals.

Maniragakarajnanam: It included the knowledge of the colouring of crystals of semi-precious stones for making ornaments and the knowledge of ruby mines etc.

Vrikshayurvedam: Arboriculture which includes the

planting of trees for medicinal purposes and also ornamental trees for house gardens.

Meshakukkutalavakayuddhavidhih: Knowledge of ram, cock and partridge fighting.

Animal fights were popular among the people and favoured by the royal court. Aelian writing in the second century A.D. observes: "The great King of the Indians appoints a day every year for fighting between men, as I have mentioned elsewhere, and also even between brute animals that are horned. These butt each other, and with a natural ferocity that excites astonishment, strive for victory, just like athletes straining every nerve, whether for the highest prize or for proud distinction, or for fair renown. Now these combatants are brute animals—wild bulls, tame rams, those called *mesoi*, unicorn asses, and hyaenas, an animal said to be smaller than the antelope, much bolder than the stag, and to butt furiously with its horns. Before the close of the spectacle, elephants come forward to fight, and with their tusks inflict death-wounds on each other. One not unfrequently proves the stronger, and it not unfrequently happens that both are killed."

Aelian has also left some interesting information about chariot racing, a very ancient sport of the Indians. "The Indians make much ado also about the oxen that run fast; and both the king himself and many of the greatest nobles take contending views of their swiftness and make bets in gold and silver, and think it no disgrace to stake their money on these animals. They yoke them in chariots, and incur hazard on the chance of victory. The horses that are yoked to the car run in the middle with an ox on each side, and one of these wheels sharp round the turning-post and must run thirty stadia. The oxen run at a pace equal to that of the horses, and you could not decide which was the fleetest, the ox or the horse. And if the king has laid a wager on his own oxen with anyone, he becomes so excited over the contest that he follows in his chariot to instigate the driver to speed faster. The driver again pricks the horses with the goad till the blood streams, but he keeps his hand off the oxen, for they run without needing the goad. And to such a pitch does the emulation in the

match between the oxen rise, that not only do the rich and the owners of the oxen lay heavy bets upon them, but even the spectators."

Shukasarikapralapa: Teaching human speech to parrots and mynas; this was a common form of amusement in ancient India. Aelian, writing about parrots says: "There are, I am told, three kinds of them. All of them, however, if taught like children, become like them able to talk and utter words of human speech."

Utsadane samvahane keshamardane cha kaushalm: Dexterity in massaging, shampooing and applying oil to the hair. According to the commentary in *utsadana* feet were employed, and in the hair massage the hands. *Samavahana* is a general term for shampooing other parts of the body.

Aksharamushtika or cipher language: This is divided into two classes, visible (*sabhasa*) and invisible (*nirabhasa*). The first was also known as *aksharamudra*. It was used in conveying secret messages. *Nirabhasa*, also known as *bhutamudra*, was a sort of sign language through which different mudras conveyed their own meanings and it was used in secret counsel.

Mlechchhitavikalpah: It was also a code language in which the transposition of letters in a simple word made it difficult for the listener to find out the true word.

Deshabhashavijnanam: The knowledge of the vernaculars. The commentary explains that regional languages were used to express some secret message or desire.

Pushpashakatika (flower cart): It was made of flowers; like the *phulmandalis* of recent days in which wooden frames are used to obtain the shapes of houses, carriages, animals and birds profusely decorated with flowers.

Nimittajnanam: The art of prognostication which was held in great esteem in ancient India and played a decisive role in moulding the ways of life.

Yantramatrika: This art included formulae from some treatise of Visvakarma for constructing war-machines, sea-going vessels and Persian wheels, etc.

Dharanamatrika: The art of committing to memory related facts and figures pertaining to articles, treasures, wealth, symbols and causes.

Sampathyam : The term connotes congregational recitation either for amusement or dispute. In such a gathering one of the members of the party read from a prescribed book and a second followed him though he had not heard him before.

Manasi-avyakriya (thoughtful expression) : It is divided into two classes, visible and invisible. In the first category come meaningless couplets full of consonants composed in the *padmabandha* style. As opposed to this, in the second category the opposite party after hearing wrong verses corrected them and recited them again. These arts were for amusement or disputation.

Abhidhanakosha : Knowledge of the lexicons and synonyms.

Chhandojnanam : A good knowledge of prosody was considered necessary for a poet.

Kriyakalpa : Knowledge of the conventions of writing poetry.

Chhalitaka-yogah : It is described as disguises to dupe others.

Vastragopanam : The art of covering the unexposed part of the body so that the cover is not easily blown by the wind; to wear a torn garment in such a way that it looks whole; to hide the defects of oversized garments by tightening the knots.

Dyutavisheshah : A sort of gambling such as speculation about the nature and the number of articles held in a closed fist etc.

Akarshakrida : Playing at dice was supposed to be a specialized kind of gambling which required a deft hand.

Balakridanakani : Knowledge of the manufacture of all kinds of toys for boys such as toy-houses, balls, dolls etc.

Vainayiki : The art of self-discipline and controlling others; it also included the training of elephants.

Vaijayiki : Knowledge of the art of warfare, weapons, etc., to ensure one's own victory.

Vyayamiki : It included the knowledge of all kinds of physical exercises including hunting etc.

The knowledge of the arts enumerated above naturally added much to the fame of a cultured person, though it is

problematic whether a person, howsoever resourceful he might have been, could acquire even a part of this vast store of different arts. However, some of these arts served as a kind of stock-in-trade of the courtesan. In the words of Vatsyayana:

The courtesan (*veshya*), her fame enhanced by the acquisition of these arts imbued with politeness, beauty and virtues, gained for the word *ganika* an honourable mention in the assembly of the people. For ever honoured by the king, praised by the connoisseurs of arts her company much sought after, she became the focus of attention of all.

These arts were not confined to courtesans alone, but they formed an integral part of a liberal education. Thus it is said that a musician, a princess or a daughter of a minister could, with the knowledge of these arts, control her husband in spite of hundreds of rivals in the harem. Even if a woman was separated from her husband, even if he died or proceeded on a long journey outside the country, if she was accomplished in these arts, she could spend her days in comfort. A man well-versed in the arts, a good conversationalist and one proficient in the art of flattery could easily win the favours of a woman even if he did not know her. According to Vatsyayana the knowledge of arts and crafts meant the dawn of good fortune but their practice depended upon the factors of time and place.

In Part I, Chapter 4 of the *Kamasutra*, Vatsyayana throws considerable light on the *goshthi* and its members who were known in ancient India as *nagarakas*. The members of *goshthi* were not mere voluptuaries but were also men of refinement and good taste. Everybody could not aspire to lead the life of a *nagaraka* as such a life required certain attainments which had to be cultivated. Vatsyayana is of the opinion that the life of a *nagaraka* should be adopted after receiving a liberal education. Before joining the fraternity of the *nagarakas*, if he was a Brahman, he was expected to acquire sufficient wealth by receiving gifts. If he was a Kshatriya he could accumulate wealth by the

prowess of his arms. If he was a Vaishya, trade and commerce added to his resources. If he was a Shudra, practising of crafts brought him money. Of course a legacy from the paternal or maternal side was also a welcome addition. Another condition imposed upon one who intended to adopt a *nagaraka's* life was that he should have enjoyed family life for some time, perhaps to give himself an idea of its limitations and the unbounded joy of the life of a voluptuary.

A person who aspired to live like a *nagaraka* at first established himself as a gentleman in a city, in a business centre or in a small town. His activities could also be carried on while he was on tour. The house in which a *nagaraka* lived was situated in the vicinity of a river or a tank to ensure cleanliness and the possibilities of water-sport. Adjoining the river or the tank there was a garden and a workshop. The living house itself was divided into two apartments, an outer and an inner one: the former serving as a sitting room and the latter occupied by women. The outer room was provided with a bed furnished with soft perfumed mattresses, pillows near the head and at the feet, and a clean white counterpane. Nearby was laid a smaller bed which came in handy during love play. At the head of the bed lay a broom which was considered an auspicious symbol. Built against the wall and reaching to the height of the bed was a platform on which were placed the unguents, the garlands, a beeswax box, a packet of perfumed powder for removing the odour of perspiration, lemon peelings and betel leaves for perfuming the mouth; on the floor lay a spittoon. From the peg hung a covered *vina* on which he played, a wooden panel on which he painted and a box of painting brushes, the palm-leaf manuscript of his favourite poem and a *kurantaka* garland which did not fade. Not far from the bed was spread a round carpet. The gambling board rested against the wall. Outside the living apartments and in the covered veranda were hung the cages of birds. In an obscure corner the *nagaraka* could busy himself with spinning and carpentry which apparently contributed to creative joy. In the garden there was a swing

under shady trees and a mosaic platform covered with flowers; this could be used as a drinking booth.

This completes the pen picture of the residence of the *nagaraka*. It was simply decorated and was provided with all the necessities of his vocation. The flower garden and the river, the swing and the drinking booth naturally gave the place a feeling of opulence and provided an appropriate background for the drama of love.

Vatsyayana also gives interesting details about the daily routine of the *nagaraka*. He got up early in the morning, washed, brushed his teeth with a twig, had his bath and finally performed his religious rites. After applying perfumes lightly to his body and fumigating himself with *agara* wood etc., he put a garland on his topknot, and applied lacdye to his lips, fixing it with wax. Then he looked at his face in the mirror and after eating betel leaves and perfumed pills started on his daily round of work.

In order to keep himself fit and to ensure physical well-being the *nagaraka* never missed his bath. To keep the blood circulating freely and to harden the muscles, his body was shampooed on every alternate day and every third day he had his body massaged with wooden rollers (*phenaka*). He was not very particular about shaving, and shaved every fourth day, with the firm belief that this contributed to longevity. His head was shaved on every fifth day and the superfluous hair was pulled out on every tenth day. In order to avoid perspiring profusely in the armpits, he left them uncovered.

Bearing in mind the strains to which his body was subjected, the *nagaraka* had to be very careful about his diet and he followed the *shastric* injunctions which laid down that meals were to be eaten in the forenoon and at sunset. Vatsyayana, however, quotes another opinion on the subject. According to Charayana the night meal was preferable. After the forenoon meal the *nagaraka* lazed about, enjoying the prattling of his pet parrot and myna or he witnessed the fights of partridges, cocks and rams and spent his time settling the affairs of the *pithamarda*, the rake and the buffoon, who were apparently his boon

companions. And then he enjoyed his midday siesta.

The evening was a very important part of the day for the *nagaraka* as it was after nightfall that he could give full vent to his artistic proclivities and amatory ventures. In the afternoon all the routine business ceased and the *nagaraka* joined the deliberations of the *goshthi* or the assembly of the *nagarakas* who were well-versed in the arts. In the musical soiree that followed, a programme of vocal and instrumental music and dancing (*sangitaka*) was arranged, and after this was over, the outer apartment was thoroughly swept and the floor strewn with flowers. Incense smoke filled the room and the bed was made in order to receive visitors. The *nagaraka* waited with his companions to meet the *abhisarika* at the appointed time and despatched a female go-between to bring her to him. In case this approach did not succeed, he proceeded to his lady love in person. In order to prove his concern for her the *nagaraka* arranged for the girl whose clothes had been splashed in the rain to change them and to set her coiffure right again; at times his friend deputized for him. The servants fanned them and performed other duties.

In addition to this daily routine the *nagaraka* was expected to participate in the following functions and festivals.

Ghatanibandhanam : The commentary defines *ghata* as a festival held in honour of the gods, and it is further added that its administration was organized on the lines of *gana*; this is supported by the *Nishitha Churni*.

Goshthivihara : *Goshthi* was the assembly of the *nagarakas* who discussed there the problems of arts and poetry. Such a meeting, the *goshthivihara*, was a specialized *goshthi* different from the daily *goshthi* held for mere entertainment.

Samapanakam : Drinking in the company of friends and courtesans was one of the most important aspects of the social life of the *nagarakas*. In the *samapanaka* function after the members of the *goshthi* had assembled, there was a great deal of revelry. Besides such functions the *nagaraka* enjoyed his drinks daily in the company of his beloved.

Udyanagamanam : The *nagaraka* enjoyed garden picnics, which were in addition to his routine visits to his own garden house.

Samasyah : In *samasya* the *nagarakas* assembled to enjoy sports and amusements. This entertainment is divided into two categories *mahimanya* or distinguished, and *deshya* or the folk type.

The *Kamasutra* and its commentary *Jayamangala* give further information about the feasts and festivals with which the *nagarakas* were closely associated.

For instance, *ghata* was arranged every fortnight or every month or on a well-known festival day in the temple of Sarasvati, the patron goddess of learning and of all the arts. The commentary says it was held on the Vasanta Panchami day. On this festival day the *niyuktas* (who are defined as those *nagarakas* and dancers who were appointed by the *nayaka* to dance in the temple and worship the goddess every month or every fortnight) participated in the festival. Because of their profession or the vow they had undertaken, the professionals and amateurs met together and joined by the *nagarakas*, they all became members of the *samaja* which was also visited by dancers and actors hailing from distant places. They were invited to perform on important festival days or other days. The *niyuktas* or persons appointed for specific performances, however, preferred to perform on festival days alone for they received a stipulated fees then.

There seems to have been other kinds of dancers employed by the temple, who, in spite of their indifferent performance, carried on with the routine drudgery of this work. The visiting performers received gifts on the second day, because as pointed out by the commentary, on the first day the people were too busy with the performance and on the third day their pockets tended to be empty. The *niyuktas* and *pujopacharakas* received their ordinary emoluments but the visiting performers received the fees already fixed for the occasion. Even in the rush and confusion of the first day's performance they received garments as gifts from the *nagarakas* for their fine performance of the stage. In the end if the audience so

desired, then the performance was repeated. Otherwise the party was dismissed with sweet words. There was perfect accord between the visiting performers and those in the temple service. If anyone from the visiting party fell ill, or if a calamity befell him, or if he was otherwise engaged attending a marriage party or a festival, a *niyukta* at once deputized for him and came to the help of the performers. The visiting party also did a similar good turn if a *niyukta* found himself in a similar position.

Certain standards of social etiquette were also expected from those who were appointed to the position of *nagarakas*. It was their duty to honour those who came to the *ghata* with gifts, flowers, scents and unguents. Making the acquaintance of those who were not *nagarakas* was considered to be an advantage. The relationship between the visitors, the performers and the *nagarakas* participating in the *ghata* was governed by the *gana* rules. Apparently these rules were the same as those followed by the *ganas* in the conduct of meetings. On the lines of the institution of *ghata* in the temple of Sarasvati, similar *ghatas* were organized in honour of other gods, bearing in mind the situation, the time and the country.

It was, however, in the periodical meetings of the *goshtu* that the *nagarakas* found full satisfaction for their proclivities and amatory experiences. The *goshtu* met in the house of a courtesan, in the pavilion of a gambling house or in the house of one of the *nagarakas*. It was attended by the *nagarakas* who shared the same level of education, intelligence, social standing, wealth and age. They were naturally accompanied by the courtesans in their company and they discussed topics befitting the occasion. In such a *goshtu* the *nagarakas* occupied the seats assigned to them (*asanabandha*), the order of the seats depending on the merits and attainments of the members. The gathering discussed the problems of literature which included composing verses on a fixed topic, and also the problems of art which included the theory of dancing as propounded by Bharata. At the close of the discussion, in order to foster friendship, the members exchanged gifts in honour of the artistic attainments of the members; the function was

called *kalapuja*. The gifts brought in by servants were artistic and suggestive of the love and esteem felt by the members for each other and included garments etc.

Drinking formed a part of the *goshthi* and no pains were spared to make drinking parties a success. To enjoy their drinks in exciting company, the *nagarakas* met at each other's home every fortnight, every month, or on festival days, and courtesans naturally formed an essential part of such gatherings. They themselves drank and served others drinks such as *madhu*, *maireya* and *asava* accompanied by fruits, green vegetables and other savouries.

Udyanayanam or a picnic naturally included the enjoyment of outdoor life. Drinking and other pleasures were important features of the *nagaraka's* life. To proceed to a garden party in the afternoon the *nagarakas* put on new garments and jewelry befitting the occasion. Then mounting their horses, followed and preceded by attendants and accompanied by courtesans they proceeded to the garden where they passed the whole day joyfully staking large sums of money in cock-fights. There was music and dancing and love play. In the afternoon they were fully satiated and later, bearing the signs of dalliance on their bodies, they returned to their respective homes.

In the same way the *nagarakas* enjoyed water-sports in tanks in the summer months.

The *nagarakas* also participated in festivals both traditional and of a folk variety.

Yaksharatih : The modern Diwali or the festival of lights, which in ancient times (as its name indicates) was held in honour of Yakshas. On that day people usually gambled.

Kaumudijagara : The festival was held on the full-moon day of the month of Kartika. In this festival gambling and swinging were two main forms of amusement. It was a favourite festival of the people in the Gupta period.

Suvasantaka : It was also known as *Kamotsava*. Music, dancing and merry-making were special features of the festival.

There were also a large number of games and amuse-

ments of a folk variety in which the *nagarakas* participated.

Abhyushakhadika : In this form of amusement green grams etc., were roasted and eaten. Even now it is a common form of amusement in many parts of India.

Sahakarabhanjika : In this sport mango fruits were picked from trees and eaten. This took place in summer.

Bisakhadika : Lotus roots (apparently roasted) were eaten by the participants of this game.

Navapatrika : After the first rains the trees were clothed with new leaves, and then people, particularly those living near the forest, made it an occasion for rejoicing and merry-making

Udakakshvedika . According to the commentary this form of amusement was a favourite with the people of Madhyadesha. Water syringes were used to drench one another and it was somewhat like the modern Holi.

Panchalanayanam : Apparently a game where mimicry was a special feature. The commentary observes that it was a favourite form of amusement in Mithila

Ekashalmali . In Vidarbha people assembled under a huge flowering silk-cotton tree and amused themselves by making flower ornaments.

Yavachaturthi . It was a favourite festival in Western India. It was held on the fourth day of the bright half of the month of Vaishakha when the *nagarakas* threw perfumed barley powder on each other.

Alalachaturthi : Swinging is a popular form of amusement. On the third day of the bright half of the month of Shravana, this game is played and even now women participate eagerly in it.

Madanotsava . The worship of Kama's image. The *Matsya Purana*, Ch. 70 gives a detailed description of Kama-worship.

Damanabhanjika : In this form of entertainment people decorated one another with the crest ornaments made of *damanaka* flowers.

Holaka or the famous Holi festival is celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Phalguna when people spray each other with coloured water obtained by boiling

palasha flowers.

Ashokottamshika : On this festival day the flowers of the *Ashoka* were picked up and head crests made out of them.

Pushpavachayika : A large number of women used to be engaged in this pastime of picking up flowers. The *pushplavis* have been referred to in the *Meghaduta*, I. 26.

Chutalatika : In this game the participants amused themselves by making crest ornaments of lotus flowers.

Ikshubhanjika : This game entailed decorating oneself with small pieces of sugarcane.

Kadambayuddha : Here the participants divided themselves into two groups and pelted one another with *kadamba* flowers.

The pastimes mentioned above could be enjoyed by the *nagaraka* in the company of a single courtesan or a group of courtesans, accompanied by their attendants and their mothers. All this depended on his financial resources. It is evident from the *Kamasutra* that the *nagarakas* were proficient in the arts and their financial resources enabled them to lead a life of luxury. They came to occupy an important place in the social and cultural life of the city. But there were less important people called *upa-nagarakas*, who also tried to imitate the *nagarakas* and their way of life, and were unable to keep up the show because of financial and other limitations.

Pithamarda (a friend of the *nagaraka*) was so poor that he could hardly play the role of the *nagaraka*. He was lonely and childless and roamed from one place to another in search of some means of livelihood. He carried a crook (*mallikāsana*) on his back to serve him as a seat, a wood roller (*phenaka*), unguent for shampooing his thighs, and made it a point to approach the rich and receive money from them. His strong point, however, was his ready wit, and relying on his advice, his *nagaraka* friends acquitted themselves very well in the *goshtis* and in matters relating to courtesans.

The *vita* was another companion of the *nagaraka*. He was noted for his knowledge of the arts, his wit and camaraderie. Apparently the *vita* was born in a rich household but had lost his fortune by adopting the life of a *nagaraka*.

Though the memory of his past life hardly mattered, he was strongly attracted to the fair sex. He managed to hold his own in the *goshthis* and *vesha* and the source of his livelihood were *goshthis* and courtesans. A *vidushaka* or *vaihasika* was not merely a jester or a buffoon but a skilled musician, a playful and pleasant character and above all a trustworthy fellow. The characters mentioned above served as counsellors to the *nagaraka* and acted as advisers during the quarrels and the reconciliation which he frequently had with the courtesans. The *nagaraka* in his love intrigues sought the help of Buddhist nuns (*bhikhshuki*), widow (*munda*), strumpets (*vrishali*) and old courtesans who were all adept in the arts.

The institution of *nagarakas* and *goshthis*, though predominantly an urban institution, exercised a certain influence in the rural areas as well. As a first step the *nagaraka* living in a village encouraged the cleverer and keener members of his own caste to join the institution, recounted to them the charms of a *nagaraka's* life and thus gained their confidence and respect. To strengthen the newly founded institution, the leader arranged meetings of the *goshthi*, took their help in arranging feasts and outdoor picnics and encouraged them to help one another.

The *Kamasutra* also gives some important directions for the proper conduct of the meetings of the *goshthi*. It is ordained that a proper balance must be maintained between the languages used in the *goshthis*—Sanskrit and Prakrits were given equal preference in the discussions on literary topics. In the opinion of Vatsyayana the functions of a *goshthi* were literary and conducive to joy and any deviation from its avowed aims was considered to be boorish. A *goshthi* which was hated by the people or one that was indisciplined or one that cheated others was to be strictly avoided. On the other hand, Vatsyayana advises people to join a *goshthi* which pleased the people and which concentrated on amusements alone.

Although the association with courtesans was condemned by the *sastras*, Vatsyayana states that society attached little stigma to it. A *veshya* was recognized as a kind of *nayika* or heroine. According to one of the early authorities

Ghotakamukha, a separate Chapter was composed on the daughters of courtesans and unmarried maid-servants, though Vatsyayana includes them all in the *veshya* class.

The *nayaka* was the pivot round which the wheel of the *goshthi* moved. He was, however, expected to observe a certain propriety in his sex relations. For instance, union with the following was totally forbidden: with a leper, a maniac, with a morally depraved person, a divulger of secrets, a flirt, a middle aged person, a very dark or a very fair or a foul smelling woman, a near relative, a friend, with the wife of a friend or of a Brahman or with a queen. Of course to gain his heart's desires the *nayaka* or *nagaraka* had to depend on his friends including childhood friends, school fellows, and he had often to seek the help of a nurse. True friendship was based on instinct and depended upon a congenial temperament, respect for truth, obedience, constancy, open-heartedness, firmness and respect for the secrets of friends.

The friends of a *nagaraka* included such curious people as barbers, washermen, perfumers, florists, wine merchants, mendicants, cowherds, betel-leaf sellers, *pithamarda*, *vita*, jesters and their wives. These low characters naturally rendered him all kinds of service, carrying messages to the women of his choice. Messengers and go-betweens played an important part in the love affairs of the *nagaraka*, and they were clever, audacious, masters of sign languages, trustworthy and alert.

The *Kamasutra* describes in detail the different kinds of kisses, embraces, nail-scratchings, cooing etc., which was all a part of the paraphernalia of love-making. These arts were mastered by the *nagarakas*. Vatsyayana has given us a vivid picture of the beginning and the end of love-making. The *nagaraka* with his friends and attendants exchanged floral gifts and entered the well adorned bedroom that was perfumed with incense. There he met his beloved who had just bathed and finished her toilet. She was slightly intoxicated. At first he talked to her sweetly about her welfare and then encouraged her to have more drinks. He made her sit on his right and caressed her with the left hand. He touched her hair locks, the hem of her garments,

and the knot of her *sari* with his right hand, and the left hand was absorbed in caressing her. He reminded her of their previous dalliance and spoke suggestively to her of love. To enflame their love desires musical performances with or without dancing were arranged and the various arts were discussed, and she was encouraged to accept more drinks. When she was fully prepared for the act of love the others who were present were given flowers, unguents and *pan* and dismissed, and the lovers then embraced each other and the dalliance began.

When their love-making was over, the *nayaka* and his beloved simulated shyness. They did not look at each other squarely in the face and both proceeded to the toilet room. When they returned to the bedroom, they still simulated shyness and took their seats a little away from the bed. The *nayaka* offered her *pan* and applied sandal-paste and unguents to her body, caressed her with the left hand, and held the wine cup in the right. He spoke to her in a sweet voice. They had a lavish dinner, sipped water, ate sweets and other food which suited their taste. Lying in the lap of her lover the *nayika* gazed at the moon and he in turn explained to her the movements of the planets. He pointed out Arundhati, the star Alcon. The belief was that the failure to see this planet presaged death within six months. The lover showed her Dhruva, the Polar star. If one sighted it, the sin committed during the day was washed away. He also made her watch the group of Saptarshi.

According to Vatsyayana the offering of flowers and drinks in the beginning and at the end of sexual intercourse and the intimate conversation accompanying it enhanced passion. The female partner in the game of love adopted various artifices such as endearing caresses, turning away in the bed, or a momentary show of anger followed by meaningful glances. The performance of *Hallisaka* (in which women danced in a circle around a leader, and which was accompanied by music, drama and *rasa*), rolling and moist eyes, moon-gazing, talk of the satiation of desire after the first meeting, description of the pangs of separation followed by kisses and embraces were other arts which helped towards an enduring love.

In keeping with the spirit of the subject, Vatsyayana describes various types of love and love-making. *Ragavat* is defined as the act of love which follows a meeting arranged by a go-between or which takes place when the lover returns from a journey or when lovers are reconciled after a quarrel or separation. For such a love impediments hardly mattered. In *aharyaraga*, love was born of sight and not concerned with the heart, but in course of time this superficial love could turn into deep love. *Kritrimaraga* is defined as love aroused by caressing and other expedients, in which money and chance played an equal part. In spite of mutual attraction, if the union was brought by forcible means it was regarded as an artificial kind of love. In *vyavahitaraga* a man while loving the woman of his heart outwardly showed his love for another as an expedient. *Potarata* is described as making love to a low prostitute or a maid servant. This was singularly devoid of all the finer points of love such as caressing etc. *Khala-rata* is defined as the sex relations of the courtesan and the village yokel. The commentary explains that a courtesan unable to satisfy her sexual craving and unmindful of the implications of her action gave herself up to a robust farmer. Within this category also come the village maidens, the herds-woman and frontier woman with whom the *nagaraka* had sex relations. *Aniyantrita rata* is described as the unhampered union of men and women.

But in spite of deep and abiding love frequent quarrels arose between the lovers. Vatsyayana, however, is of the opinion that in order to avoid friction and to be able to lead a placid and joyous life, the female partner should never lose her temper; she ought to remain calm even if her lover mentioned the names of his other wives, praised their virtues and addressed her out of sheer forgetfulness by the name of another whom he loved. She ought to remain calm and collected even if he spoke lies.

Vatsyayana also describes a love quarrel. Smarting under the deception practised by the hero or as a consequence of his reckless behaviour, the irate heroine fought with him, wept bitterly, tore her hair, beat her head and flung herself on the floor from the bed or seat; she threw

off her garlands and ornaments and slept on the ground. There was no alternative left for the lover but to pacify her with sweet words or by falling at her feet. When her anger was assuaged, she was requested to proceed to the bed, but that was not an easy task. She flared up as he uttered his flattering words. Catching him by the hair, she showered blows on him with her feet and then proceeded to the door, where she sat and wept piteously. (Here Dattaka, the predecessor of Vatsyayana, strikes a note of warning. In his opinion, no matter how angry she was, the heroine ought never to step out of the threshold of the room, for such an act was bound to be misunderstood). The poor hero tried to gain her favour by beseeching her, and though she was pleased at heart, she continued to be haughty and kept taunting him. Then as a matter of favour she allowed herself to be embraced as a preliminary to love-making.

The approach of the courtesan and a *parakiya* towards her lover was expressed by knitting the eyebrows, casting angry glances etc. if she had had a quarrel with him in her own house. After her anger was pacified through the mediation of the *pithamarda*, the *mta*, and the jester, she was led by them to the lover's house and she spent the night there.

Further, Vatsyayana is of the opinion that if the *naagaraka* who is well-versed in the sixty-four arts propounded by Babhravya, applies them to win the favour of an accomplished woman, he is bound to be successful. He may be conversant with the other *shastras* but without the knowledge of the arts he is not respected in the assembly of learned men and women. These arts were revered by the learned and the wicked and also by the guild of the courtesans.

Chapter III, 3 of the *Kamasutra* deals strictly speaking with the wooing of young girls for marriage. But the means adopted for the purpose are so similar to those adopted for wooing young courtesans, that a reference to that chapter will not be out of place here.

In order to woo the girl the prospective suitor spent his time with her picking flowers for garland-making. He

helped her to build toy houses (*grahakam*), arranged for her doll-play (*duhitrika krida*), the dolls being made of rags and wood etc. He cooked food in her company. This was all done taking into consideration the age of the girl. Girls usually played such games as throwing dice (*akarsha krida*), knitting borders (*pattika krida*), or games where one had to guess the identity of things held in closed fists (*mushti dyuta*), or point out correctly the middle finger held in a changed position etc. in the closed fist (*madhyama-anguli-grahanam*). They liked the game of six pebbles (*shatpashanaka*) in which the pebbles were thrown up from the lap and received on the reverse of the hand, etc. The youthful lover tried to gain her confidence and joined the group of players.

The following pastimes were also favoured—blind man's bluff, in which one girl was blindfolded and the other remained hidden and whoever she caught had to undergo the same trial. In *Arabdhika* one girl ran after the others slapping their backs and they in their turn did the same to another. *Lavanavithika* was played by a group which divided itself into two parties and fought for the possession of a lump of salt placed in the centre. *Anilataditika* involved girls moving in a fan-like formation. *Godhumapunjika* was played by throwing a coin in a rice-heap or a wheat heap and the participants in the game searched for the coin. If one side was unable to find it the heap was passed to another. In playing *Angultaditika*, one of the participants closed her eyes while others struck her on the temple with one of the fingers asking her who had done it. When the striker was recognized she had to undergo the same test. The commentary adds frog-leap (*mandukapada*) to the list. These were strenuous games which gave the participants a lot of exercise.

The lover having gained the confidence of the young girl went a little further to sound her mind. He wanted to test her love for him. But this could not be done by him alone. In order to gain his end he made the acquaintance of the daughter of her nurse, who usually had the heroine's welfare at heart. Convinced of the genuineness of his love, she arranged their meetings.

In order to gain his end the suitor tried to find out what objects the girl delighted in and then did his best to satisfy her wants. He gifted her with dolls and toys of original designs which other girls could not hope to obtain, gave her play balls, and painted patterns drawn within a short time (*bhaktichitra*). He gave her dolls (*duhitrika*) made of cotton yarn, horn, ivory, wax, paste and clay. He visited the kitchen and showed her ways of cooking rice. To attract her further he showed and presented to her, openly or privately, carved figures of men and women in wood, male and female figures of rams, goats and sheep, miniature temples and houses made of clay and bamboo, cages of curious shapes, made of various materials containing birds such as parrots, koels, *madana-sarika*, *lavaka*, cocks and partridges etc.; waterpots made of clay stone, wood, conchshell, shells, mechanical toys, small *vinas*, doll houses (*pindolika*), and toilet boxes (*patolika*) containing lac dyes, manganese powder, orpiment, cinnabar, black paint, betel nuts and betel leaves, sandalwood, saffron etc.

After presenting these objects to her, the lover watched her reactions. The presents were given in secret in order to avoid the displeasure of her guardian, and this secrecy excited the jealousy and curiosity of other girls. After gaining her love and confidence he recounted to her interesting love stories, and astounded her with tricks of legerdemain display his talent. If she loved music, he charmed her with pleasing songs. On the eighth day of Margasirsha (*Ashtami-Chandrika*) during the Kaumudi-mahotsava or during other festivals or on eclipse days when the girl of his choice visited his house he gave to her different kinds of chaplets, earrings (*karnapatrabhagah*) clothes, rings and ornaments.

The nurse's daughter, convinced of the superior skill of the suitor, first learnt the sixty-four arts of love from him and then passed on this knowledge to her friend. Thus, indirectly the hero was in a position to convey his accomplishments in *ars amoris* to the girl of his choice. To attract her attention further he met her frequently and clothed himself well and conveyed his feelings for her

through gestures. All this was done bearing in mind the principle that usually women fell in love with a person whom they saw often and who made efforts to strike an acquaintance with them. But left to themselves they did not make any efforts to gain union with their lovers.

After these preliminaries were over the girl's reactions were judged by the following signs. She did not look the lover straight in the face; if he gazed at her she betrayed her bashfulness. She exposed her breasts and arms coquettishly in order to attract the lover or gazed at him from some hidden place. If the hero happened to talk to her, she inclined her head downwards and smilingly answered him in inaudible words. At this stage she always desired to be close to him. If she saw her lover looking at her from a distance, she kept talking to her attendant, she went on gesticulating and knitting her eyebrows and refused to leave the place. She laughed without any reason and encouraged her confidantes to speak about her lover. She kissed a child held in her lap and in the presence of the lover drew a *tilaka* on the forehead of her attendant. She sported with her and arranged her hair, moved her limbs and yawned. She confided fully in her lover's friends and listened to their advice. Going a step further, she spoke sweetly to his attendants and engaged them to perform their respective duties as though she were their mistress. Finally encouraged by the nurse's daughter she entered her lover's house and played or conversed with him. Henceforward she never appeared in his presence without adorning herself with ornaments. If she desired earrings, rings or garlands from him, she got them through her confidante. Such was her love for him that if her family spoke of other suitors, she felt dejected and refused to share their company.

Such preliminaries helped to unite the hearts of lovers. But further manipulations on the part of the hero were required before she could be won over completely. In Chapter III. 4 of the *Kamasutra* such means are described at length. When the lover, reading the meaning of her gestures and behaviour, found out that she was deeply in love with him, he engaged her in some game that required

skill and then slyly touched her hand and even stole a passing embrace. As he was adept in the game of love, he, in the process of cutting a decorative design, improvised a pair of geese or some such other design to symbolize his desire to unite with her. During watersport he dived away from her and swimming under the water came near her and touched her body. In *Navapatrika* and other festivals of the same nature he expressed his feeling for her by cutting out appropriate designs. He further related to her calamities which befell him and told her his dreams. To show the intensity of his desire for her he persisted in following her. During music performances (*prekshanaka*) and *goshthis* he managed to sit near her and touched her feet, and when she responded he was emboldened to touch her fingers and rub her toes. When she washed her feet, he pressed her toes; when he offered her betel and arecanut, his fingers brushed against her and he splashed water on her with his palms after meals. In the darkness of the night seated on the same bed, he carefully watched her reactions.

But that was not the end of the lover's persistence. To gain the knowledge of the intensity of her love, he feigned illness and thus brought her to his house. As soon as she arrived, he took her hand, placed it on his forehead and eyes and implored her to prepare the medicine. He flattered her and said that she alone was capable of doing it properly. He asked her to visit him again. He kept up the pretence for three days. On those days he discussed love and the arts with her.

In the fourth section of the *Kamasutra* Vatsyayana deals with the duties of a housewife. In a broad sense this term also includes widows and courtesans, who were often married. Following the Hindu tradition she regarded her husband or master as a god and carried out the household duties with his permission. She swept the house and arranged flowers in a particularly well swept corner. She placed offerings thrice a day in another corner and worshipped the household deity in her private chapel. She respected her elders, relatives and servants. Being a clever housewife, she grew leafy vegetables, flowers and plants

etc., in her gardens. She provided the garden with a well or a tank placed in its centre.

The good housewife was expected to avoid the company of Buddhist and Jain nuns, unchaste women, magicians, astrologers and suppliers of charms (*mulakarika*). She was very particular about the food that she served her husband. As she heard his voice outside, she came running to the courtyard to serve him. She brushed aside the maid and she herself washed his feet and did not appear in his presence without finishing her toilet. If he was lavish in his expenditure, she advised him in private to desist from such profligacy. She was very careful to avoid any suspicion. So she never attended weddings of relatives nor did she visit the homes of either the bride or the bridegroom without her husband's consent. She avoided meetings with her friends at the temple. She retired to bed after her husband had gone to sleep and she got up before him. She kept the kitchen clean and well lit and did not allow outsiders to enter it. Even if her lord committed an act of indiscretion she did not revile him. She was very polite when he sat in the company of his friends. She avoided sulking or giving unwise counsel. She avoided talking to him with her face averted or standing at the door of the house or conversing with somebody in the garden or staying alone to some obscure corner of the house.

She was always careful to keep her body clean and healthy. She was aware that perspiration and unclean teeth were detrimental to the growth of love. At the time of love-making ornaments, flowers, unguents and paints were all desirable. During sports or festivals at fairs, she wore garments made of thin and soft materials, light and selective ornaments and she used light perfume and adorned herself with white flowers.

Since her bent of mind was religious she observed fasts and vows, even those that her husband ought to have observed himself. She did not give up these fasts even if her husband asked her to do so. She was a clever housewife and chose carefully earthen pots, boxes, furniture and utensils made of cane, wood, leather and metals, all those

objects that were handy for use. She also bought with care salt, *ghee*, oil, materials for making perfume, bitter gourd and drugs difficult to obtain. She grew different kinds of seasonal vegetables.

She was not only a skilful house manager but also kept an eye on the finances of her lord. She expressed her love for him by her good cooking, her skill in the various arts and by her care for him and service. She prepared the annual household budget and spent the money on different items according to allotments.

In running her household she avoided all kinds of waste. She prepared *ghee* from the unused milk, pressed oil from oil seeds, made *guda* from the sugarcane juice, spun and wove cotton yarn, collected cords, ropes, nets, bark etc. and supervised the pounding of grain and rice. In keeping with her parsimonious habits she made use of *conjee* for servants, of husks for the preparation of wall plaster, of broken rice for feeding the poultry and of rice dust for cows and buffaloes. She looked after the coal needed for the kitchen, supervised the payment of salaries and allowances to servants. She looked after agricultural operations. She attended to the domestic cattle and the means of conveyance. Her little zoo included rams, cocks and partridges for fighting, and pets such as myna, *koels*, peacocks, monkeys etc. She also kept accounts and adjusted the daily income and expenditure.

Like a good housewife she used all the means at her command to economize. She collected the old and tattered clothes of the hero. She dyed them and distributed them among the servants. She also brewed wine, supervised its use and sale. She honoured the *nayaka's* friends, showed reverence to his parents and relatives, talked to them slowly and smilingly and always respected their likes and dislikes.

If her husband proceeded on a journey, then in his absence she wore only auspicious ornaments, observed fasts in honour of the gods and looked after his business affairs. As a matter of precaution she slept near her elders and worked according to their wishes. She earned money in the way prescribed by the *nayaka* and spent it for her

daily expenses and for special occasions. She strove hard to see the successful completion of the work started by her lord. In his absence she did not visit her parents except to attend the birth and death ceremonies in their home in the company of her husband's people. She consulted her servants in business transactions. In this way she increased the family income and cut down the expenditure.

After the return of the *nayaka* she presented herself to him in very ordinary clothes so that he knew how she had dressed during his absence. Then she paid a visit to the temples and distributed gifts. This kind of virtuous conduct was not just confined to the married woman. That it was prescribed for a remarried widow and even for a courtesan is supported by Vatsyayana. All these categories of women behaved in an exemplary way when they loved the man of their desire.

Women of all categories flocked to the royal harem and Vatsyayana has laid down very elaborate rules regarding their relations with each other and their attitude towards their lord. Heroes are divided into two classes—*raja* or king and *janapada* or ordinary people. The harem administration (*antahpurikam*) dealt with all categories of women such as lawfully wedded wives, remarried widows, concubines, courtesans etc. In the daily routine of the palace the chamberlain or the head woman of the palace (*mahattarika*) presented to the king garlands, unguents and clothes sent to him by the queens. Accepting the gifts the king sent them in return presents of garlands which had adorned his body. In the afternoon decked in royal splendour he called on his wives who had assembled to meet him. He honoured them according to the occasion and their status and exchanged pleasantries with them.

After meeting his wives, the king next visited the widows whom he had married and treated them in the same way as his queens. In the end he granted interviews to courtesans, concubines (*abhyantarikah*) and actresses (*natakiyah*). The apartments of all the inmates of the harem were arranged in order of precedence. According to the commentary the royal ladies occupied the apartments in the centre of the palace; beyond came the apart-

ments of remarried widows and finally came the quarters of the courtesans and actresses.

After the king got up from his midday siesta, he had to decide with which inmate of the harem he was going to spend his evening. It was the duty of the chamber maids (*vasakapali*) to tell him whose turn was over and whose turn it was to be with him. The chamber maids accompanied by the attendant of the chosen one approached the king with the signet ring, the unguents and clothes as a mark of his decision that it was her turn to sleep with him. If the king accepted the gifts it served to seal his decision to pass the night with her.

In order to maintain a close relationship with the inmates of the harem, the king on festive occasions, honoured them according to their status and drank spirits in their company. Steps were taken to ensure the safety of the harem. For that purpose the exit of the female members of the royal household and the entry of outsiders were both strictly regulated.

In this prelude to the topic discussing the courtesan, Vatsyayana describes the circumstances and principles governing clandestine love for the wives of other men. Before resorting to this kind of risk he is advised to ascertain accurately the dangers of this course and the advantages the woman was likely to bring him. He is asked to estimate how this love would affect his own livelihood. He is advised to resort to another man's wife only if his love for her could no longer be restrained. The task of winning her is not regarded as an easy task. At times there was bound to be no response from this woman for she wanted to refrain from taking such a risky and immoral step. Regard for her family, fear of a public scandal and other factors including religious considerations also stood in her way.

The *Kamasutra* also defines the categories of men who succeeded in gaining the love of wives of other men. Naturally this sort of man had to be an expert in arts and crafts, an impressive conversationalist, an enterprising and likeable personality. It has also a detailed list of the kinds of women who could easily be won over. Such wanton

women waited at the door and peeped from the windows, attended *goshthi* at the houses of young neighbours and hated their husbands. Actresses, widows and women who had lost the love of their husbands travelled a lot. Wives of the so-called pious Vaishnavas (*choksha*) or those suffering from bodily imperfections were also easily won over by other men.

In Chapter V, Section 2, the *Kamasutra* stresses the means employed by men to entice the wives of other men. In this connection, contradicting his earlier views, Vatsyayana emphatically states that in all cases it is one's own efforts that matter, and if they failed, the help of a *duti* could lead to the fulfilment of desire. If the *parakiya* responded to his overtures then nothing else mattered, but if the lover failed to evoke response from her, then the *duti's* help had to be sought. As a preliminary step in this game of love, he made the acquaintance of the woman he loved. After their friendship developed, they met at the house of a friend or of a state minister or of a physician. They encountered each other at weddings or sacrifices, festivals, or calamities, or at garden parties. The lover observed the movements of her body and tried to express his love for her through gestures or facial expressions; he displayed his liberality and made indirect proposals. Professing to love her child he came in direct contact with her and thus gained her confidence. In order to put her under obligation to him, he advanced her short and long term loans and arranged *goshthis* where she mingled with his own womenfolk. In order to arrange to meet her as often as possible he scrutinized her orders to her goldsmith, jeweller and dyer. He showed great resourcefulness in fulfilling all her requirements.

After this preliminary wooing he gained her confidence and then the hero presented to her costly perfumes, *uttariya*, flowers and his own ring and in return he received *pan* prepared by her. As their clandestine love proceeded gifts were exchanged and bodily contact established.

In Chapter V, Section 3 Vatsyayana describes the functions of a *duti* in clandestine love affairs. She acted as an

intermediary between the *nayaka* and *nayika*, and carried his love messages to her and if she showed her reluctance the *duti* kept persisting till she gained her end. She attracted the *nayika* towards her lover with paintings, stories, poems and recipes for beauty. She talked ill of her husband and lauded the superiority of her lover in every respect. After the *duti* had gained her confidence, she suggested to her that the hero was dying for her and to strengthen her exhortation she related to her stories of clandestine love from the *Puranas*. In the end the present of betel leaves, unguents, garlands, ring etc., from the *nayaka* to *nayika* indicated the former's passion for the latter. Psychology and symbolism also played their part in this clandestine love. The garment sent to the heroine by the hero bore his palm impression in saffron, the *duti* showed to her ornamental figures and patterns cut in leaves (*patrachhedya*) symbolizing his moods in love. She carried his letters concealed in chaplets and earrings. Their meetings were arranged at festivals, musical performances etc.

The *dutis* are divided into several categories: (1) *Nishritarthas* understood the purpose of the *nayika* and her paramour and arranged their union by their own skill. (2) *Paramitarthas* carried out only a particular mission entrusted to them. (3) *Patrahari* carried letters and arranged meetings. (4) *Svayamduti*—the *nayika* herself acted as *duti* and told her lover of their meeting in a dream, condemned his wife if he named her, showed him the marks of scratching and biting made in love-making. She brought him gifts and claimed to be more beautiful than his wife. (5) *Mudhaduti*—she approached the *nayaka's* wife and after gaining her confidence, found out from her how her husband behaved towards her and taught her the art of securing his favour. (6) *Bharyaduti*—messages of love were carried to the *nayika* by the *nayaka's* own wife. (7) *Mukaduti* was an innocent girl or attendant who acted as a *duti*. She carried love messages hidden in a garland or earring. (8) *Vataduti*—she revealed the desire of the *nayaka* in ordinary or secret speech to the *nayika* and returned with her message. Besides the categories mentioned above, widows,

fortune tellers, serving maids, women beggars and artisan women also acted as *dutis*. The chief duty of the *duti* was to divert the *nayika* from her husband by describing the prowess of the paramour. The *duti* extolled his skill in the art of love, spoke of the desire of other women and even hinted at the threat of death, if she did not agree to his proposal. If her speech produced any adverse effect on the *nayika*, she managed to remove the impression by skilful speech.

In Chapter V, Section 5 of the *Kamasutra*, it is ordained that kings and ministers should refrain from illicit love since their conduct was observed and imitated by other people. But human nature being what it is, illicit love was a common affair. Such lovers are divided into two categories. In the first category are included petty officers (*ayukta*), the village headman and the son of one who received the ploughshare from the village. Village women of loose morals fell prey to them easily. Such women were engaged on wages for pounding, grinding and cooking, looking after the granaries, cleaning the house, tilling the fields, spinning and weaving, and selling and buying grain. Similarly the superintendent of cattle managed to gain the love of the women employed in cowpens, the superintendent of yarn-spinning gained the love of widows, orphans and nuns. The superintendent of markets had easy access to the women who came to the market to make their purchases and sell their products.

On the festival days such as Ashtami, Kāumudī Jagarā and Shrivasantakā it was customary for the women of the city and the districts to assemble at the houses of officers to pass their time in the company of the women of their household. The city women, after enjoying their drinks, proceeded to the apartments of their friends, exchanged gossip, received presents and thus passed their afternoon pleasantly. In this gathering the palace maid met the woman marked out by the king and tempted her by pointing to the splendid apartments of the palace. These apartments were provided with mosaic floorings, gardens with vine creepers, fountains (*dharagrihas*) with water gushing out of the walls, mechanical animal toys, and a miniature

zoo with caged birds, lions and tigers. She told her in private of her master's love for her, his skill in *ars amoris* and made her promise not to let out this secret. After she had agreed to the proposal, the king invited her and her husband to the palace. There his womenfolk made friends with her and the maid acted as a go-between. If the woman felt diffident, the maid was employed to approach her. The maid assured her that she had the confidence of the inmates of the harem. Thus she was cajoled into agreeing to visit the king. Vatsyayana very clearly states that a king should never visit the house of the woman of his choice as there was every likelihood of his being murdered there.

While discussing the question of illicit love Vatsyayana mentions certain customs which prevailed in different parts of the country. Thus the custom in Andhradesha was that a courtesan (*janapada-kanya*) entered the palace with presents and after enjoying the company of the king, was released from there on the tenth day. In the country of Vatsagulma (modern Vashim) the wives of the ministers paid visits to the palace to keep their tryst with the king. In Vidarbha, beautiful women spent a month in the palace under the pretext of being friends of the inmates of the harem. In the Aparanta (Konkan) a minister sent his beautiful wife as a present to the king. In Saurashtra the women of the cities and districts assembled in the palace to serve the king's pleasure.

In Chapter V. 6, Vatsyayana gives further details about the love intrigues of the palace women. The harem was strictly guarded and it was difficult for the women there to establish contact with other men. But, for the fulfilment of their unsatisfied desires and to establish contact with their lovers, they employed the services of a nurse's daughter, a confidante or a servant girl. These go-betweens carried fruits and tubers to the lovers as symbols of their sexual desire. The lovers disguised themselves as females and entered the palace with the help of the maid. They were already informed about the various ways of entering and leaving the palace, and were acquainted with the spaciousness of the royal establishment, the slackness of

the guards etc. These palace maids acted as regular *dutis* and were adept in the art of conveying their intention through meaningful glances and signs. The guards were also in league with them. The lovers entered the palace covered in sheets but other subterfuges were also ready at hand. At the time of the Kaumudi festival the lover dressed in female attire joined the maids holding lamps. The lover with a sense of adventure entered the palace through an underground passage or hid himself in waggons carrying wood etc. He also joined the drinking parties of the palace though he was not invited to these parties. He kept close to the maid-servants who carried out their duties in a hurry. The knowledge of the palace plan was helpful to him. After entering the palace he slipped into an apartment whose doors the guards had left open. He also took advantage of the all-round slackness that prevailed in the palace administration when the king was away on a long expedition. In such clandestine love affairs it was necessary for the inmates of the harem to share their secrets with each other.

These love intrigues in the palace took different forms in different regions of India. The women of Aparanta took advantage of the slackness of the palace guards and managed to get their lovers inside the palace by helping them to disguise themselves as women. The Abhira women took the help of the Kshatriya palace guards to get their lovers admitted inside. The women of Vatsagulma made their lovers dress exactly like their maids. That made it easy for them to slip inside undetected. In Vidarbha the male children born and brought up in the palace often made love to the women there. The morals of Gauda women were lower still and they had love affairs with Brahmans, friends, servants and slaves. In Sindhu the inmates of the harem had clandestine affairs with the chamberlain and other officers who had free access to the harem. In the Haimavata country, adventurers, after bribing the palace guards, entered the harem. In Anga, Vanga and Kalinga, the Brahmans of the city were allowed to enter the palace with the permission of the king in order to offer flowers to the inmates. There they got an opportunity to talk to

the women behind the screen. This often resulted in intimacy.

To safeguard the morals of the inmates of the harem some precautions had to be taken. Those in authority studied the failings of the inmates, and appointed sentries to guard their apartments. These guards had to be fearless and free from carnal desire and avarice. One school of thought recommended the employment of women spies to keep a further check on the womenfolk of the palace. Vatsyayana, however, is of the opinion that wicked persons were successful with women and men ought not to expose their wives to the company of deceitful women.

The sixth chapter of the *Kamasutra* deals exclusively with courtesans. In the very beginning Vatsyayana asserts that the love of a courtesan was based on physical attraction and basically it was intended to earn her a livelihood. Her love, therefore, was natural as well as artificial. In the first case it was instinctive but in the latter case it was for monetary gain. But even in this second situation her love was natural. She naturally reposed confidence in the men whom she pretended to love, but the courtesan's show of liberality was a pose. The courtesan had to remind herself that if she wanted to maintain her hold on her lover, the process of extracting money had of necessity to be slow and clever. In keeping with the needs of her profession, a courtesan dressed well and adorned herself with a lot of ornaments. She sat at the window of her house looking at the people passing on the highway and yet she remained partially hidden from view. She briefed the pimps to bring young men to her. The procurer was adept in this task and could bring about a separation between a man and a woman. He could protect the courtesan from harm and assist her in her mission. In case she was overpowered by those who approached her, he was able to rescue her from their clutches. She is advised by Vatsyayana to follow the right means to gain her end.

The courtesan usually had dealings with police officers (*arakshakah*), judges etc. (*dharmadhikaranastha*), fortune tellers (*davajna*), desperados, instructors in arts, *mithamardas*, rakes (*vitas*), buffoons (*vidushakas*), florists, perfumers,

wine-sellers, washermen, barbers and beggars.

A courtesan normally preferred the love of a young and wealthy man with a secure livelihood. She also liked to consort with a government officer or a person who held a place of authority under the king or a liberal person such as a customs officer. She had to consort with persons who considered themselves handsome or with eunuchs who were anxious to pass themselves off as men or with persons who wanted to spread the news of their sexual power. She naturally preferred a client who competed with rivals of the same age, with the same sort of family background and with the same kind of accomplishment in order to gain her favour. She curried favour with a bountiful person or with a favourite of the king or his minister or with a man who believed that the loss of wealth was due more to bad luck than to squandering. She also curried favour with a spendthrift or a person who had escaped the strict control of his elders. She sought the company of a father's favourite or of the only son of a father. She also enticed those who were troubled by cravings and brave men who did not care for money. She tried to attract physicians, for though they were not munificent in gifts, they could be called upon to look after her in illness.

Vatsyayana, however, states that money ought not to be the only guiding principle of her actions. While searching for rich clients, a courtesan is advised to win over lovers known for their virtues and accomplishments. This should be done for the sake of fame and material prosperity. Scions of an illustrious family, learned men well-versed in the rituals of many faiths, poets, eloquent story-tellers, good speakers, energetic men skilled in arts and crafts, respecters of old people, resolute, devoted, liberal, friendly men fond of *ghata*, *samaja*, *prekshanaka* and *goshthi*, are the type of men a courtesan should pursue. Such men had to be healthy, powerful, compassionate, true lovers of women but not subservient to them, possessed of independent means of livelihood, free of envy and fear.

All courtesans could not attract youthful clients. Courtesans themselves had to be endowed with beauty and sweet speech. They had to learn to appraise the beauty of a client

and had themselves to be versed in the arts and varieties of love-making. They had to learn to be successful participants in *goshthi*. Physical defects, such as suffering from a wasting disease, were considered shortcomings in a lover. A lover who was attached to his own wife, cruel, sly and miserly in his conduct, or a lover who was a thief and fond of seducing others etc., was regarded with suspicion by courtesans.

The courtesan had to be very careful in the choice of her lover and adopt a cautious policy in accepting him. Men disliked women who accepted their love readily. As a preliminary step it was advisable for her to employ sham-pooers, musicians, jesters and *pithamardas* to the feelings of her future lovers. Then the *vita* helped her to carry out the offensive. In her lover's company she witnessed cock-fights, quail-fights and ram-fights. She heard the prattle of talking birds and attended musical performances and dramatic shows with him. She made token presents to him and discussed topics relating to the arts with him. All throughout she conversed pleasantly with him. She also visited him in the company of the *pithamarda*. Whenever he came to her house, she offered him betel leaves, perfumes and flower garlands and then discussed with him problems relating to poetry and the arts.

After gaining the confidence of the lover the courtesan behaved like a chaste woman. She not only granted him sexual liberties but showed that she owed complete obedience to him. She retained in her company her mother or in her absence a foster mother who looked after her business interests. Such was the force of the command of this person that she could separate the woman from her lover whenever she liked. The courtesan was unhappy but dared not disobey her orders. If she wanted to transfer her love to a new client, the courtesan pretended illness and did not meet her lover. But she kept up the show of love for him by sending her maid to him to bring back the flower garlands used by him and the *pan* that had remained uneaten by him.

When the courtesan took a lover, she praised him for his virtues and showed him her readiness to learn the sixty-

four erotic postures from him. She concealed her bodily defects, allowed him to fondle her and to steal a kiss when she was asleep. When their intimacy grew, she herself embraced him. There were other means by which she showed her love for him. She looked at him when he was engrossed in thought, she peeped at him from her house as he passed along the main road and when this was detected, she made a display of bashfulness. She tried to identify herself with his likes and dislikes. But her temper was roused if she found out that he was in love with some other woman. She expressed her love for him through gestures, and also praised him for his pious deeds.

This flattery of her lover did not stop here. She heard attentively whatever he said, praised him after understanding the purport of his remarks. She even dared to counter him by showing her knowledge of the matters under discussion and tried to reply to his question intelligently. She heard patiently his long stories and showed her concern if he showed any signs of fatigue. She wished him long life whenever he sneezed. If she was ever in a dejected mood, she retired after feigning illness.

She was clever enough not to praise the virtues of other men. She never censured her lover's faults and accepted whatever he gave her with a show of cheerfulness. She showed her distress when her lover suffered a calamity by giving up wearing ornaments and refusing to eat. Even in adversity she showed her willingness to accompany him. If she was retained by the king, she showed her willingness to be redeemed.

Her whole attention was concentrated on the problem of pleasing her lover. Whenever he recovered from an illness or if his cherished desire was realized or if his good luck resulted in an increase of wealth, she made offerings to the gods in fulfilment of some previous vows. Her adoration of the lover did not cease here. She ate in moderation to please him. While singing she recited the name of her lover and of his family. When he showed signs of fatigue, she placed his hand on her forehead and bosom to let him experience the soothing effects of this touch. She tried to get him to sleep but if sleep did not come easily, she

herself sat drowsily on his lap attending to him.

She expressed her desire to have a child by him. She also declared that she did not desire a long life. She was also careful to divulge to him secrets confided to her by others. Her show of concern for her lover extended to the field of religion. She took upon herself the duty of observing fasts and religious vows. She dissuaded other contestants from involving her lover in quarrels. She managed carefully her lover's property and refused to attend *goshthi* without him. She expressed her love for him by using flower garlands previously worn by him and she took pride in eating food that he had left uneaten.

Naturally, to gain his confidence she praised his family, his good nature, his artistic attainments, his noble birth, his deep knowledge, and his fair complexion. She extolled his wealth, his country, his friends, his age and his sweet temper. She exhorted him to add more to his knowledge of music. Unmindful of the vagaries of the weather and indifferent to dangers, she made it a point to meet him regularly. She expressed a wish to have him as a lover in her next life. Not content with these outward expressions of love, she adapted her disposition to suit his tastes.

To gain the full confidence of her lover she fought with her mother, proclaiming her loyalty to him and threatening to kill herself if she was forced to unite with another person. She also managed to send a message to her lover through her secret helpers. She conveyed to him the message that for no fault of her own she was being forced by her mother to unite with another person.

Again, in order to impress upon her lover the fact that she was loyal to him, she criticized her own profession. But as far as money matters were concerned she did nothing without her mother's consent. Thus the game of love continued. When the lover set out on a journey, she made him promise to return quickly.

When her lover was away, the courtesan refused to wear ornaments except the *mangala* ornaments and conch-shell bracelets. She visited astrologers, observed good planetary omens to ascertain the day of his return, and interpreted good dreams as portents of an immediate union with her

level. If the dream was inauspicious she performed rites to propitiate the deities and to pray for his safe return. After his safe return, she worshipped Kama and other gods and carried home the vessels of plenty (*purnapatra*) in the company of her confidantes. The feeding of the crows was carried out after this.

But in spite of all these acts which the courtesans performed in order to simulate a housewife's devotion to her husband it is clear that the chief motive behind most of these acts was to extort money from their lovers. They adopted both natural or lawful means and deliberate artifices to gain their ends. There were many points of views expressed about this. One viewpoint was that a courtesan ought to be satisfied when she had received a little over her stipulated fees, but Vatsyayana was of the view that a lover, if properly tackled, was bound to give double the amount of the stipulated fees.

The artifices that the courtesans used for extorting money from their lovers consisted of the following. As a first step, in order to show the lover how she spent her own money on ornaments, perfumes, articles of food etc., she settled the accounts of dealers in her lover's presence. After praising his riches she said that she wanted money to perform religious ceremonies to plant trees or groves, or for building temples and tanks, for organizing garden festivals (*udyanotsava*) and for buying gifts for her friends. She also complained that she was robbed of her ornaments and these had to be replaced and for this purpose money was, of course, required. The other excuses which she put forward to get money from her lover were: the loss of her house and damage to property caused by fire, theft, and her mother's neglect of her needs etc. She further conveyed to the lover through her agents that her friends wanted to get back their ornaments deposited with her. She also managed to get the lover's ornaments deposited with her, saying she needed money for the settlement of debts incurred for his sake. Her quarrel with her mother on that account was yet another excuse for loosening his purse-string.

She also refused to go to feasts arranged by friends on

the plea that she had no money to buy presents for them. She pretended that she had herself often received gifts from her friends. She demanded more money from her lover to order artistic objects, to oblige doctors and ministers, to assist friends who were ill or unfortunate, and to renovate the house. She wanted money for festivals and auspicious occasions. Then, in the presence of her lover she pretended to dispose of her ornaments and utensils on the plea that she required better ornaments and utensils than those possessed by her friends. In order to fleece him further, she praised his past gifts and loans to her and hinted to him that several other courtesans had received very large amounts from him. In order to get money from him she cited to the other courtesans, in the presence of her lover, examples of generosity and kindness. To kindle his liberality, she even praised the liberal outlook of his rivals.

The courtesan was also a bit of a psychologist for she had to keep track of her lover's state of mind and become acquainted with his disposition and fleeting moods. His indifferent attitude was expressed through his insistence on paying her only the contracted amount, or through his inciting others against her, or through the lame excuses that he gave when he withheld her daily allowances, or by forgetting his promises to her or by sleeping in her presence elsewhere, or by talking in private to the servants of his former mistress.

But the courtesan was too clever to give up her prey so easily. She made a show of returning the ornaments he had given her and also a part of the money received by her. While she kept up this show, she contrived to get in a supposed creditor to take away the money in satisfaction of some debt. If the lover disputed his claim, she dragged him to court. She maintained good relations with the lover who had paid her generously in the past, even if later he had become an impoverished person. But she did not hesitate to get rid of the lover who had shown indifference to her after getting himself a new mistress. To get rid of him she did just the things that he did not like; she stamped her feet to sneer at him and spoke about things he did not understand; she hurt his pride by abusive remarks and

carried on with her new lover openly. She refused his amorous advances, yelled at him, laughed even when the subject under discussion was a serious one. She showed open disapproval of his vices, divulged his secrets and accused him of carrying on with the maid-servants. Finally she got rid of him.

But the courtesan was always ready to be reconciled to her former lover, i.e., if he had not become attached to another courtesan and if he showed a genuine inclination to be reconciled to her again, and if his finances were sound enough to warrant this reconciliation. But even if he carried on with another courtesan, she took care to make inquiries and make sure that he was not an absolutely impossible case. If she found out that the man had already abandoned two courtesans before, she regarded him as a fickle-minded person and did not seek any reconciliation with him. But if a man had been abandoned by other courtesans and if his mind was steady and his finances sound, the courtesan was ready for a reconciliation. If a man had been discarded by the second courtesan and he promised to pay the first one extra money in advance then he was accepted by her. She even accepted all over again a lover who, while consorting with another, continued his correspondence with her and impressed her with his feelings for her. But she had to be careful about the ulterior motives of such a lover. A vacillating lover had to be approached carefully and his income had to be borne in mind. The courtesan also took pleasure in making him swallow his pride. The other factors that allowed a courtesan to reconsider accepting a lover again were the improvement in his social status, the death of his wife, and his independence or separation from his parents. Sometimes the whole purpose behind the reconsideration was to humiliate a lover in his wife's eyes and also make him appear fickle in every way.

The reconciliation, however, required delicate negotiations and for this purpose *pithamardas* and other messengers were employed. The courtesan explained to the lover that separation from him was due to the different temperaments of the courtesan and her mother. She inform-

ed him that she was forced to consort with another lover against her will. It was also impressed upon him that she did not like the new lover. She considered him a worthless fellow. She refurbished his memory and reminded him of the pleasures they had shared.

But some courtesans were difficult to placate and their avarice knew no bounds. They attached themselves to several lovers at one time and this brought them a lot of money. Such a woman fixed her rate for every night, taking into consideration the place, the time and her own good looks. She got her client by sending messages to him through his friends. As soon as he was in her clutches she began extracting money from him.

The courtesan with many lovers enjoyed the advantage of spurring them on into a kind of competition. In order of precedence, the gifts she received were gold, silver, copperware, bronze, iron, blankets, silk, perfumes, sandalwood, black pepper, furniture, *ghee*, oil, corn and cattle. The amount of the fees being fixed, she preferred to consort with clients from her own town; second preference was given to a person recommended by her friends. The older view was that a generous client was to be preferred to the one who was attached to her. But according to Vatsyayana generosity followed attachment. The older view was that if a choice had to be made between the lover who was ready to do any service for the courtesan and one who was generous, the former was to be accepted. But Vatsyayana argues that generosity was a virtue which ignored past gifts. The dignified lover from whom future benefits were expected was preferable. Between the lover recommended by a friend and a lover offering monetary gains, the older opinion gave preference to the latter. Vatsyayana preferred the former. His plea that it was true money did not materialize immediately from a friend. But if his wish was not complied with, he was likely to be hurt. In any case money could be obtained later from the client. The older opinion was that financial advantage was preferable to the possibility of warding off danger. Vatsyayana, however, preferred security to wealth.

The courtesans, however, were not just money-grabbing

machines. When they grew rich, they often set up works of public utility such as wells. They built temples, tanks, gardens, groves, bridges, constructed *chaityas* and provided them with perfumes and rice. They gave away cows to the Brahmans and made arrangements for the worship of the deities and collected funds for the maintenance of the temples.

The writers before Vatsyayana maintained that prostitutes were divided into three classes viz., *ganuka*, *rupajiva* and *kumbhadasi* on the basis of their incomes. But Vatsyayana was of the opinion that a prostitute's wealth did not depend on her status, but on various factors such as the place where she lived, the financial resources of the lover, her own skill and the position of the clients visiting her. There were many clever courtesans who did not mind making smaller profits. This was not due to any large-heartedness on their part but because of other considerations. Sometimes this was done to prevent a lover from going to another courtesan; it was done to snatch another courtesan's lover and above all it was done to deprive a rival of financial advantage. The courtesan was clever enough to weigh the position both from a financial and physical point of view before deciding to attach herself to a particular lover.

Though a courtesan gave certain concessions to her lover as regards her fees, she was clever enough to realize her full dues when she decided to leave him or when the lover decided to get married, when he squandered away his wealth and had to depend on his father for support, when there was a likelihood of his losing his high position in society or when he turned fickle-minded.

The courtesan was a shrewd person and knew fully well how to take advantage of a favourable situation. She conducted herself like a wife when she knew that her lover was about to gain the favour of the king or if there was any likelihood of his becoming a highly placed officer. The opportune moment for her to act as a housewife was when her lover counted his high profits, or when his cartloads of grain and other goods began arriving or when the harvest was good. She acted as a loving wife when she

was certain that her feigned love would not go unrewarded.

Though a courtesan sought eagerly for financial gain, the process of winning it was not easy. Difficulties arose because of her own want of discretion, her excessive passion, her vanity, her hypocrisy, her haughtiness, her over-confidence, her ill-temper etc. Naturally her wayward and petulant temper resulted in expenditure on unnecessary things, on loss of prestige and good sources of income. The matter did not end there, for her ill-temper resulted in physical injury or even in death. Slighted lovers cut off her hair locks, inflicted severe punishment on her after tying her up with ropes and they even cut off her limbs. Therefore a courtesan had to choose her company with great care.

But all said and done she earned large amounts by courting men of the higher classes. This increased her social prestige. Here she had to be careful and make sure that the money she received from her lover was not obtained by fraudulent means, because that meant not only the loss of his position, but since the courtesan herself was forced to part with the fees received from him, her own property could also be forfeited. The choice of a lover from a low caste or of an unpopular person meant loss of dignity for her—a stain on her own good name. But the involvement with undesirable men had sometimes its own advantages. If she courted a brave man, a minister, or even a miser and received no recompense, this association with them sometimes helped her to avoid trouble.

Though the courtesan naturally preferred to live with one lover, she was sometimes employed by a *goshthi* of the *vitās* and there she was known as *goshthiparigrihita*. This courtesan, who was employed by a number of persons (who observed no established rules) aroused a spirit of rivalry between them and this enabled her to extract money from each of them. She sent a message through her mother to a particular lover informing him that she would meet him on the day of the spring festival and thus kept him pleased.

In the closing section of his remarks on courtesans and prostitutes Vatsyayana classifies and evaluates them:

Kumbhadasi: "Carrier of pots and pans." She naturally belonged to the lowest stratum of prostitutes and was apparently engaged in menial work.

Paricharika: She acted as attendant to the master or mistress and looked after their comfort.

Kulata: An unchaste woman was also called a prostitute. She kept assignments with her lover in somebody else's house and could not meet her lover openly for fear of her husband.

Svairini: She is described as one who out of sheer disgust with her husband sought union with a lover either in her own house or in some other person's house.

Nati: She was an actress who regularly took part in dramatic performances.

Silpakarika: She was the wife of an artisan, such as a dyer or a weaver. How the artisan's wife joined the profession is not stated clearly. It is possible that these women were inspired to adopt a life of ease encouraged by the examples of courtesans whom they might have visited in their professional capacities.

Prakasavinashita: She was a woman who lost her virtue while her husband was alive or after his death and left her family to lavish her charms freely.

Rupajiva: She was apparently a common prostitute who lived by her physical charm only. She spent most of her income on jewelry and finery, on decorating and furnishing her house, equipping it with costly utensils, and on maintaining a large retinue of servants to attract clients.

Ganika: She was the highest in the rank of prostitutes and was well known for her good manners and deportment.

Bharata's *Natyashastra* besides being a compendium for dancers and actors provides us with important data on the customs and manners of the time and tells us about men and women who mattered in the world of art, literature, and luxurious living. To a certain extent it supplements the information on courtesans supplied by Vatsyayana. Bharata divides women into several categories.

Devata: This type had delicate limbs, steady and tremulous glances and a body shining with health. She

hardly ever perspired. She was munificent, truthful, ate with moderation and was restrained in her sex desires. She loved sweet scents and perfumes and her strong point was vccal and instrumental music.

Asura: As the name implies, this type was short-tempered, cruel, proud, fickle-minded, jealous, harsh, covetous and by no means a constant lover. She transgressed laws and had a treacherous disposition. She was quarrelsome, and she loved wine and meat.

Gandharva: A woman of this type was stern and had a slow gait. She spoke with a smile and possessed beautiful nails and teeth, soft skin, glossy hair and charming eyes. She was fond of roaming in the gardens and loved sexual pleasures and was always happy listening to music or witnessing the movements of the dance.

Rakshasa: She was a broad-limbed, red-eyed, loud-voiced, ill-tempered, jealous and quarrelsome woman who could use her nail and teeth with telling effect. She slept during the day and roamed about during the night.

Naga: She had a slender body, reddish eyes, a pointed nose, sharp teeth and the complexion of a blue lotus. She was ill-tempered and she walked in an oblique fashion. She loved to sleep. She was fond of mild perfumes, flower garlands etc.

Patatri (bird): She was a large mouthed, energetic woman, who was fickle-minded and talkative. She breathed heavily and had a large family. She loved streams, gardens and forests. She drank wine and milk and was fond of fruits.

Pishacha: She was hirsute and spoke in a loud voice. She was treacherous and her talk was full of ambiguous expressions. She had either more or less than the usual number of fingers. She was a highly-sexed creature and was often violent and perverse in her sexual behaviour. She liked to roam in the gardens and forests and preferred strong drink.

Yaksha: She was an intelligent and fearless woman, fond of fine clothes, perfumes and meat. She loved to rest in a bed or on a seat. She was always delighted when she met her lover after a long absence and was grateful to him

when he came to her and could not sleep for a long time because of the excitement.

Vyala : She had a rough skin, a harsh voice, curly hair and tawny eyes and was indifferent to honour or dishonour. She was full of falsehood and was haughty in her speech.

Nara : She had regular features (*vibhaktangi*). She was upright, clever and virtuous, careful in the observance of her duties and also cared for material gains. She was modest and grateful to her benefactors and was fond of friends. She honoured the gods and her elders.

Vanara : She had a small compact body and tawny hair. She was impudent, talkative, energetic, fickle-minded. She liked to force the sexual act. She was grateful for even a small kindly act and she preferred to roam in groves, gardens, and forests. She liked to eat all kinds of fruits.

Hasti : She had a hairy body. She was bulky and yet quite energetic. She was quick-tempered and fond of scents, garlands, wines and sweets. She preferred an outdoor life and was fond of rivers and lakes. She loved watersports, and the environment of gardens and forests.

Mriga : She had a small abdomen, a flat nose, thin shanks, large red eyes and a quick gait. She was fickle-minded, quick-tempered, unsteady, and timid. She was fond of music.

Mina : She had long, large, and high breasts, a steadfast gaze, and was fickle-minded. She had a large family and employed a number of servants. She was fond of watersports.

Ushtra : She had protruding hips, a slender abdomen, a high and rough neck, and loosely bound waist and sides. She perspired profusely, had an awkward gait and spoke harshly. She loved flowers and fruits as well as salty, sour and pungent things.

Makara : This woman had a large head, a steady neck, a wide open mouth and a very loud voice.

Gardabha : She had a thick tongue and lips, rough skin and slow gait. She was impudent, clever, quick-tempered, highly-sexed and violent. She was fond of nail scratches and liked to bite the lover during the sex act. She was

jealous of her co-wives and had a large family.

Sukara: She had a large back and belly and huge thighs. She had a big mouth, a strong hairy body, a narrow forehead, black teeth, an ugly face and thick hair. Her habits were mean. She had a large family.

Vaji: Her body had symmetrical sides, thighs, and a well-proportioned neck. She had straight thick hair. Her movements were quick and brisk. She was faithful, charming, munificent, but often fickle-minded and sharp-tongued. She was quick-tempered and passionate during the sex act.

Mahisha: She was broad-boned. She had rough hair, a slightly broad mouth, large forehead and wide lips. She is described as faithless, turbulent and fond of roaming in the forest and of water-sports

Aja: The goat-type of woman. She had small arms, hands, breasts and feet. She had a steadfast gaze. She was timid, foolish, restless, moved swiftly and was fond of roaming in the forest. She had many children

Gava: The cow-type had large, plump and high hips, thin legs, and short hands and feet. She was clever, respectful to the elders, faithful and patient. She was kind to her friends and loving to her children. She worshipped the gods and her ancestors regularly.

This division of women (whether it applied to housewives or to courtesans) is mostly based on the characteristics of animals and is quite unique. However, Bharata makes the emphatic statement that a woman should be approached only after one has ascertained her nature. Small courtesies based on a knowledge of their nature pleased women. But many great and kindly acts which ignored their real needs failed to satisfy them. True love and understanding could be attained when women were courted in a proper manner.

Naturally the women with whom Bharata deals are not ordinary women but women connected with the royal court. They are divided into three classes, namely, the homely type (*abhyantara*), the public women (*bahya*), and the mixed type (*bahyabhyantara*). The homely woman belonged to a good family, and the public woman was a prostitute. The girls from good families were well-versed

in court etiquette, while public women were not usually favoured by the king and they did not receive his attention.

According to Bharata a king ought to enter into a love relationship with only the first type of woman. A commoner was at liberty to consort with a public woman. But in spite of this rule the king was at liberty to marry a courtesan. In love affairs, women in high positions as well as courtesans played an important part.

Bharata, like Vatsyayana, has explored many aspects of love. He gives his own estimate of how love arose in the superior, the middle and the inferior kind of women. Love grew through the hearing of kind words, through blandishments and through accomplishments in various arts and crafts. The signs of love manifested themselves in tearful eyes, coquettish glances, passionate speech. The face was dotted with beads of perspiration and the hair on the body stood on end.

The courtesan expressed her love and desires by casting side glances, by touching her ornaments, by scratching the ground with her toes, by exposing her breasts and the navel and by cleaning her nails and by smoothening her hair. All this was done in order to attract her lover. There seems to have been some kind of obstacle in the way of the king's meeting a courtesan during the day, but he could meet her secretly at night.

Some interesting details are given by Bharata about the movements of courtesans, of women in high positions and of maid-servants. The courtesan decorating herself with ornaments and accompanied by her attendants proceeded to meet her lover. Her handmaid, who was usually a prostitute of a low class, affected greater coquettishness. Her eyes were lighted with the joyous expectation of love and she prattled in an intoxicated manner. Contrary to the behaviour of these women, a highly placed lady walked in the streets covering herself with a veil. She walked timidly, her limbs were withdrawn and very often she turned her face away and looked back.

The attitude displayed by women in different walks of life towards their sleeping lovers varied considerably. A lady in a high position awakened him by the sweet tinkling

of her ornaments but the courtesans used sweet perfumes for this purpose. The maid-servant (*preshta*), however, fanned him and this was accompanied by sweet words, punctuated with sighs. Naturally, in the meeting of lovers, gifts of ornaments, garments, perfumes and garlands played an important part.

Bharata prohibits bedroom and bathroom scenes on the stage. The application of cosmetics, the painting of the body, the coy handling of breasts and the combing of hair by the women of the upper and middle classes was not to be depicted on the stage. They were expected to dress properly and not in a single-pieced garment (*ekavastra*). They were also not allowed to paint their lips. This was done to distinguish them from the courtesans who, with a view to exposing their charms, dressed scantily and took pleasure in using cosmetics. But to uphold public morality and propriety, at times they too were prohibited from doing so.

Expectancy also played an important part in the meeting of the lovers. The heroine, when she was a lady of position as a courtesan, waited for her lover listening to the ringing of the bell as the hours slipped by. The bell struck the hour when he was expected and she rushed to the gate, her body trembling with anxiety. Holding on to the door-frame with the left hand and the door-leaf with the right, she waited for the arrival of her lover. During her waiting moments she showed signs of emotional stress. She sighed, dropped down on a seat and wondered whether some unforeseen calamity had befallen him or whether his official duties, his friends or some other women had prevented him from keeping his appointment with her.

She also pondered over personal omens and began to prognosticate; she kept wondering whether her lover was coming or not. She waited anxiously with her hand on the cheek, sobbing quietly. But as soon as the lover arrived, she received him with great joy. But if he showed signs of having consorted with some other woman, she expressed her feelings through vehement reproaches, jealous and angry words, insults, and fainting. Her jealousy was caused by a mood of depression. This was the

result of the drowsiness and lassitude of the lover, and she rebuked him strongly. If the lover stayed on after this outburst, she continued railing him, and gesticulated in an angry manner. If at this juncture he professed his love for her, she showed signs of disgust. Later on, if he sent a *duti* with the intention of effecting reconciliation, she gave a cold shoulder to the messenger. She refused to acknowledge her lover's letters and if he met her and asked her questions, she showed her disapproval by merely shaking her head. If he kept boasting about his love escapades, she threw away her bracelets, bangles and started weeping.

If the lover still persisted, she rebuked him, but avoided cruel words. She asked him to be quiet, told him not to touch her and taunted him, asking him to go to his beloved. But in this love-quarrel, patience usually won the day. If the lover, in spite of all this manifestation of anger, persisted in his importunities by touching her garment, her hand or the hair, she was placated. After making him fall at her feet, she was finally appeased and a reconciliation took place.

Bharata gives further details about courtesans and those who courted them. For instance, we are told that a courtesan was to be addressed by her attendants as *ajjuka*. The names of the courtesans usually ended in *datta*, *mitra*, and *sena*. *Vaishuka* or gallant is defined as one excelling (*visheshayit*) in all the arts (*kala*) and also one known for his expert dealings with courtesans (*veshyopachara*). The gallant was also skilled in various crafts and specialized in the art of love. His qualities are classified under three categories, namely, physical, extraneous (*aharya*) and psychological (*sahaja*). He was well-versed in the *shastras*, skilled in the arts and crafts, well-built, handsome, and strong. He possessed self-control; he was young and well-dressed. He came from a good family and was friendly and sweet tempered. He was modest, fearless, sweet of speech, clever, prosperous, clean in his habits, and expert in love practices, honest, and ready to act in accordance with appropriate needs of time and place. He did not cringe. He remained smiling, was eloquent, careful, of firm

resolve, magnanimous, faithful and friendly. He did not trust easily accessible women (*gamyā*).

In love affairs with a courtesan, the go-between (*duti*) played an important part. She was not just a professional woman. She could belong to any walk of life. An actress, a female ascetic, a neighbour, a friend, a maid-servant, an unmarried girl, a craftswoman, a foster mother, a nun, or a female fortune-teller, could be employed as a messenger. In the choice of a *duti*, intelligence was the first consideration. She had to be plain-looking and able-bodied, but she had to study the ways of the lover. She had to be poor, honest, sweet of speech, quick to take decisions and capable of keeping secrets.

The go-between acquainted the heroine with the various ways of meeting the lover. She told her how he suffered when he could not meet her. She also gave her an idealized picture of his noble birth and his great wealth. She arranged the first meeting of the lovers on a festival day, or at night, or in a park, or in the house of a relative, or a step-mother, or at a dinner party, or in a vacant house.

A woman who was smitten with love and who did not conceal her feelings when she met her lover, was described as "overcome with love" (*madanatūri*). She praised her lover's accomplishments, gave him her own money, honoured his friends and hated his enemies and showed her pleasure in meeting him or hearing any mention of his name. She slept after he had retired to bed and got up before him. She loved him in adversity and suffered for his sake. On the other hand a hostile courtesan in order to show her contempt for the lover, wiped her mouth after he had kissed her. She spoke angrily and unpleasantly to him. She hated his friends; she praised his enemies. She slept with her face turned away from the lover, never sympathized with him when he faced difficulties; she lost her temper without any provocation and refused to greet him or look at him.

Bharata also gives the reader some important hints about the love of a courtesan. Her love demanded constant effort, display of wealth and the goodwill of the lover. It

depended on the money she received from him or on the pretences he made of giving her up and of transferring his affections elsewhere.

The actual hostility towards the lover was sometimes caused by his illness, his poverty, his harshness to her, his want of learning and the journeys which took him away from her. The hostility could be the result of offended self-esteem, excessive greed, transgression of good conduct or his delay in coming to see her or recourse to some undesirable practices.

Bharata has again suggested the ways and means that could be employed to satisfy different types of courtesans. For instance, a covetous woman yielded easily to gifts of money, an educated woman was attracted by a man well-versed in the arts, and a clever woman admired a sportive person. A sensitive woman wanted her will to be respected. A girl of sixteen was pleased with gifts of play things. A timid woman needed cheering up when she was afraid, and getting attendants etc. pleased others.

Women, or more properly, courtesans, were divided into superior, middle and low types. The woman of the superior class remained unperturbed even when she was offended and refused to speak harshly. She lost her temper only for a short while. She loved men who were accomplished in various arts and crafts or wealthy men of aristocratic birth or those who were adept in love play. She was full of physical charm, sweet-tempered, never spoke ill of others, and acted in an appropriate manner at the right time. The woman of the middle type desired men and was in turn desired by them. She was experienced in *ars amoris*. But she was jealous and proud. Her anger was shortlived and she could be pacified in a moment. A woman of the low class was peevish, ill-natured, proud, fickle-minded and harsh.

Bharata divides a woman's life into four stages: in the first stage her hips and thighs are plump and the breasts firm. In the second stage the limbs are rounded, the breasts become full and plump and the waist remains slender. In the third stage the beauty assumes a mellowed richness and she gains knowledge of sexual practices. The

fourth stage is characterized by a reduction in physical charm and lack of enthusiasm for the sex act. In the primary stage the woman accepts a person with equanimity. In the second stage she considers an offence a light matter. She is not easily provoked and refuses to be malicious. When she is angry, she remains silent. In the third stage she is an expert in sexual practices, bears no malice to her rivals, knows how to use her charms and capture men. She usually prefers to remain united with her lover.

The men, who visited courtesans, are divided into five classes: namely, those who are excellent (*chatura*), those who are superior (*uttama*), those who are average, those who are inferior and those who are novices. The excellent man is honest, sympathetic, able to endure hardship, skilled in pacifying anger and an expert in the art of love. The superior man is exalted, dignified and a psychologist. He is sweet of speech, well mannered, magnanimous and not over-sexed. But he gets disgusted when he is insulted. The average man understands well the emotional state of a woman, is disgusted when he discovers her faults. He offers her gifts at the right moment, and does not lose his temper even when he is insulted. The man of the low type approaches a woman even against the advice of a friend. Insults and deceit do not matter, for he is devoid of fear or anger and is always inclined towards women. He is obdurate and shameless. This makes him a toy in the hands of women.

Bharata also gives a word of advice to those who wish to contract a liaison with courtesans. The psychology of women is to be studied before they are approached. Knowledge of *ars amoris* (*kamatantra*) is likely to help them to understand this. In dealing with prostitutes, the methods of conciliation and dissension need to be employed. They were to be presented with gifts. Chastisement and indifference had also to be used. All this was to be worked out in accordance with the exigencies of the moment. While conciliating a woman such phrases as "I am yours," "you are mine" etc. were to be used. Gifts had to be given depending on the resources of the individual. Dissension meant pointing to the faults of the other by some

device and chastisement meant restraining her movements or beating her.

An indifferent woman was reconciled by conciliation, a covetous one by gifts and a woman attached to another lover by the creation of dissension. If she behaved wickedly she had to be punished. Indifference was resorted to when other means had failed. A woman's love was to be judged from her facial expressions and from the movements of her limbs.

Bharata tells us that courtesans, except when they belonged to gods or kings were available to men who offered them money. This was so, whether the man was dear to a woman or not. Money made courtesans change their attitude to men. Bharata observes wisely: "Money makes a dear person even dearer, even his wickedness is exalted as good behaviour; he is supposed to be the repository of all virtues even if he has none. On seeing such a person, their eyes dance with joy, and that simulated joy spreads a flush on their faces. It is, therefore, necessary to understand their psychology properly before acting."

In addition to carrying out their professions as mistresses, courtesans had to be expert singers and accomplished dancers and actresses. It is also stated that the quality of the artistic achievement of actors and actresses was assessed by a body of assessors (*prashnika*). The board of assessors consisted of an officiating priest (*yajnavit*), an actor, a prosodist, a grammarian, a ruler, an expert archer, a painter, a courtesan, a musician and a king's officer. They formed themselves into a board and judged performances.

Their verdict was based on their own specialized knowledge. For instance, the courtesan judged the roles that depicted the behaviour of the inmates of the harem and the ruler judged the actor playing the part of a king; the archer judged the correctness of the postures of archers. The painter observed the movements of actors and passed judgement on their costume and make up. The courtesans observed the portrayal of coquettishness on the stage; and the musicians concentrated their attention on musical notes and drumming. The state official took into consideration

the manner in which the courtesies were observed. After judging the performance, the assessors had to pronounce on both the faults and merits of the performance. Whenever a controversy arose about the interpretations of the *shastras*, a decision had to be taken. The testimony of the technical texts was the last word. Such controversies arose when actors and actresses, at the instance of their teachers, contested for cash prizes or for banners as awards. They tried to ensure that the judgement was impartial and that the banner was awarded in accordance with the stipulated conditions.

The assessors took the help of reckoners who pointed to them the blemishes of the show. The assessors sat at a distance of six yards from the stage and observed minutely the merits and blemishes of the representation. Accidental faults were ignored. After judging the performances and taking into consideration the faults and the achievements of the actors, the board of assessors made their recommendations to the king. If two performers were thought of as possessing equal merit, the king had to decide to whom the banner ought to be awarded. If he thought that two performers were of equal merit, he awarded the banner to both the competitors. In a successful production, co-ordination, the beauty of limbs, the successful portrayal of character, the accurate representation of sentiments, the charm of the songs and of instrumental music, the attractiveness of the costumes and the make-up had each an equally important role to play.

6

Courtesans in the Gupta Period

IN KEEPING WITH the growth of luxury and wealth in the Gupta period the institution of the courtesan became fully evolved and played a very important part in the social and cultural life of the people. The *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana and the *Natyashastra* of Bharata have collected all the relevant information about courtesans and their clients. One is not surprised to read stories of courtesans which describe the methods adopted by them to loot their lovers, and which speak of their accomplishments in the field of fine arts including music, dancing and acting and of the part they played in the royal harem and the court. In the city, the courtesans and the prostitutes had separate quarters assigned to them. There one could meet the cultured and the boorish, the rogues, the rakes and even pundits and philosophers. However, this part of the city was the chosen hunting ground of wealthy bankers and caravan leaders. Gambling and drinking were the necessary adjuncts of prostitution and, therefore, the quarters of the courtesans also became a centre of these vices. And though the *Smritis* condemned these vices and threatened eternal hell to those who indulged in them the life of the people who enjoyed these pleasures rolled on easily and pleasantly.

Kalidasa, the greatest poet of India, has given us tantalizing glimpses of the social life of his times. To him Indian culture was whole and indivisible. Philosophy and religion helped one to understand the higher goals of life. The fulfilment of worldly desires was possible through the acquisition of wealth and through leading a life of luxury.

This kind of life went hand in hand with wine and women, dancing and music and the cultivation of the arts. Both these aspects of life appealed to Kalidasa. The men and women who flit through his poems and dramas are not merely puppets moved by a string behind the curtain; they are animated by the joy of living

The poet admires the peaceful hermitages in which the *rishis* discussed the mysteries of life, and also the laughing and playful men and women singing in the courts and in the royal processions, participating in festivals, going to music and dancing parties. He depicts men visiting courtesans and escorting them to gardens and forests to enjoy the pleasanter side of life. He was keenly alive to the beauty of the female form, and though he had no time to dwell on elaborate descriptions of women in all fields of life, like a great artist, he draws enduring images of them in the *Ritusamhara*, in the *Meghaduta* where women from various walks of life are described with an intensely poetic flavour. The poet gives us fleeting glimpses of the courtesans rambling among mountains, picking up jasmine flowers, perhaps to adorn themselves and their lovers. We have a glimpse of them dancing in the great temple of Mahakala at Ujjain. The poet addresses the cloud and asks it to stop close to Vidisha. He advises it to rest on Vichais Hill which is laden with blossoming *kadambas*, and gladdened as it were by the cloud's soft touch. The stones of the hill proclaim youth's joyous abandon and send forth fragrance gathered in the love sports of the courtesans. The poet again exhorts the cloud: "You rest for a while and then proceed to the garden that is full of jasmine groves and situated on the newly formed bank of the river. Spray them with fresh drops. There you could grant your cool shade to the lively faces of the flower pickers (*pushpalavi*) whose lotus earrings crumple as they wipe the beads of perspiration on their cheeks. For a brief instant you will be able to touch them. You will have to deviate from the straight road to the north, if you do not wish to miss the sights in the town of Ujjain, lovely women seated in the open terraces, their tremulous eyes dazzled by flashes of lightning."

"And there you will find fragrant smoke come wafting from the latticed windows and dancing peacocks will receive you. The place will be full of the fragrance of sweet-smelling flowers and the lac-dyed footprints of lively women." But his close observation about the temple dancers in the temple of Mahakala at Ujjain deserves our attention. "The cloud will catch a glimpse of the temple of Mahakala, of the temple dancers and their elaborate foot work. The cloud will be able to gaze at the *chauri*-bearers carrying *chauris* with jewelled handles. These dancing girls wait expectantly for rain drops to come and soothe their aching feet. The glances they cast on the cloud are as bright as the black bees "

In the *Ritusamhara* Kalidasa draws a picture of a joyous state of existence. He depicts the moods of the varying seasons and the costumes, ornaments and cosmetics used by women in different seasons. The women of the *Ritusamhara* are not ordinary housewives weighed down under the care of household duties, they are coquettish courtesans who earn huge incomes, are able to afford undreamed of luxuries and enjoy them in the company of their lovers.

In the first canto of the *Ritusamhara* the poet draws a convincing picture of the smothering heat of the Indian summer. He speaks with awe of the havoc wrought by the sun during the day and describes the sweetness of the moonlit nights. The hot dusty wind, the scorching earth devoid of vegetation, the thirsty antelopes looking expectantly at the gloomy sky, the serpents sliding away from the hot and dusty paths recall the terrors of the Indian summer. In the forest a thirsty lion rolls his tongue but refuses to attack the elephant, his natural prey. In the dried up tank the fish and *saras* birds are tormented by terrible heat. The buffaloes wallow in the shallow pools, the birds perched on withered trees fear for their lives, and the monkeys seek shelter in the hilly groves. Herds of gazelle roam about in the forest in search of water. The forest fire is fanned by a strong wind and destroys the bamboo groves completely.

The Indian summer affects the birds and animals, and

makes them restless. But the lovers and the courtesans find their pleasure even on the hottest days. The moonlit nights are created to assuage the heat of the day. Summer houses, jewels cold to the touch and sandalwood help to lessen the rigour of the heat. The clean floors of houses are perfumed, and cold drinks are served all the time. There is music at night and it is a solace to the tired body. But in the stifling heat it is the courtesans who matter most.

They are clad in transparent muslin. It drapes their bodies revealing the lines of their orbéd hips. On their breasts smeared with sandal-paste lie jewelled necklaces. Their hair, the sweet fragrance of the bath powder, and their feet painted with lac-dye shine with a tempting glow. They perspire in the armpits and throw aside their heavy wrappings and cover their bosoms with muslin *cholis*. They ply fans moistened in sandal water, and flower garlands encircle their breasts. Musical soirees are arranged to amuse them. The courtesans with their covert glances and coquetry try to attract the way-farers. The sole comfort in the summer is watersport in a lotus lake in which a large number of girls participate.

The second canto describes the great joy that the rains bring to earth. The dark overcast sky is heavy with moisture, flashes of lightning and the sweet patter of rain are accompanied by the rumbling of thunder. When the heavy downpour descends, the earth is covered with green vegetation and the dancing peacocks symbolize the season. The surging muddy rivers uproot the trees on their banks, the Vindhya forest is draped with a green mantle and the antelopes wandering in search of fields enhance the beauty of the season. The grasshoppers chirp, the black bees hum, the peacocks dance on the hills and the blossoming *kadamba* and *ketaki* trees catch the raindrops. The rainy season provides the appropriate background for the lovers. Frightened by the roll of thunder, the courtesans lock their lovers in tight embraces.

The women whose lovers are away remain without perfumes, garlands and jewelry. The girls adorn their long hair with flower ornaments; necklaces dangle on their

bosoms; their faces are flushed by the impact of the wind, and this sight attracts their lovers. Chaplets of fresh *kadamba*, *bakula* and *ketaki* flowers encircle their heads. Earrings fashioned from the buds of the *arjuna* perfume their tresses. They anoint their bodies with black *agaru* and sandal paste. The necklaces dangle fully on their pointed breasts and the transparent muslin draping them reveals the firmness of their limbs.

In the third canto Kalidasa sings the glories of the Indian autumn. The *kusha* grass, the lotuses in bloom, the cackling geese, and the ripening paddy impart a unique charm to this season. The forest carried the fragrance of jasmine flowers and the rivers teemed with fish. The white and silvery autumnal sky is radiantly lit on a full-moon night, the trees are laden with flowers and moved by a gentle breeze and the dancing peacocks attract everybody's attention. The women decorate their tresses with sweet-smelling jasmine and blue lotuses. Their breasts are smeared with sandal paste, and they wear tinkling anklets and chaplets.

In the fourth canto of the *Ritusamhara*, the pleasures of winter are described. The trees are covered with fresh leaves, the paddy is ready for harvesting, the lotuses have disappeared and the days are now frosty. The black antelopes roam freely, the *krauncha* birds screech and the water is cold and limpid. The courtesans at this time of the year anoint their breasts with saffron paste, wear pearl necklaces, discard their garments and gold jewelry. They anoint their bodies with *agaru* paste, paint designs on their faces and fumigate their hair with *agallochum*. It is naturally the season for love-making. Lovers sleep locked in a deep and tight embrace, their breathing carries the fragrance of sweet smelling flowers. Some hold mirrors in their hands and watch the scratches made on their bodies by their lovers during the ardour of love-making; others are worn out by this love-play and fall into a deep slumber. Their lovely locks fall on their shoulders. Other women, their bodies bent under the weight of heavy bosoms cast away the wreaths from their hair and rearrange their hair. They look at themselves and see the scratches on their

lips and their limbs and find the marks of the lover's teeth. Their eyes are slightly closed and their hair hangs loose. There are others who are tired and massage their bodies.

In the fifth canto the pleasures of *shishira*, late winter, are described. In this season the windows are shuttered, the people love fire and sunshine, warm garments and young courtesans. Sandal paste, open terraces and cool breezes have lost their appeal. The nights are colder on account of the frost and the clear moonlight is of no use to the lovers. Accepting betel, perfumes and garlands, their mouths emitting the sweet aroma of wine, courtesans now enter bedrooms fumigated by *agallochum*. In this season courtesans forget all the faults of their lovers and consort with them. They wear charming *cholis* made of coloured silk. They wear flowers in their hair. Lovers drink together at night. The nights are fragrant with the scent of lotuses. In the morning they fumigate their hair with fragrant *agaru*-wood and wear garlands that tend to slip from their hair.

In the sixth canto the comforts of the spring are described. In this season the trees are laden with flowers, the lotus plants grow again, the sweet breeze blows and the days are pleasant. The mango and *ashoka* trees blossom forth, the cuckoo sings and the black bee begins to hum.

In the spring the women wear saffron-coloured garments. The earrings are of fresh *karnikara* flowers, *ashoka* and jasmine flowers are intertwined in their hair. On their bosoms dangle pearl necklaces besmeared with sandal and they wear bracelets and armlets. Painted designs appear on their faces. Their eyes are red; their bodies are languid; their tongues lisp, their languorous glances betray ardent desires. They paint their breasts with the paste of *priyangu*, *agaru*, saffron, musk and sandal. They discard their heavy garments and wear lac-dyed clothes, fumigated with black *agaru*.

The picture of courtesans, *goshthis* and other institutions as painted in the romantic literature of this period is clear and interesting. The *Vasudeva Hindi* and the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha* give us an insight into the life

of the courtesans. They depict the wiles that the courtesans practised on their lovers, the quarters in which they lived, and the luxury that surrounded them.

Chapter 10 of the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha* of Budhasvamin gives an account of the quarter of ill-fame. It describes how Gomukha emerging from the Sujamuna palace (situated at Kaushambi) after his meeting with Padmavati, saw a fine chariot decorated with *chauris*. To this chariot were yoked fine Persian horses. The coachman, after saluting him, informed him that he himself came from a family whose profession was chariot-driving. He had orders from the king to try out these horses. He had obeyed the king's orders but he wanted Gomukha to repeat the experiment. Gomukha hesitated for a while, but Lambakarna, the scribe, turned to him and said, "The king has entrusted me with the task of making lists of all the sensible and all the stupid persons in town. I have yet to meet a single soul who is sensible!" Holding up the record, he showed it to Gomukha and said that if he kept on debating in his mind about this offer of a lovely drive, he proposed to put his name at the head of the list of stupid persons. Gomukha, in order to prove that he was a man of sense, jumped into the chariot.

Gomukha drove the chariot swiftly till he came to a spot where he saw an elephant ambling in a leisurely fashion. Stopping the chariot, he asked the *mahout* not to obstruct his path. The *mahout* told him finally that what he was doing was right. The elephant was resting and if he tried to disturb him, he would never forgive him. Gomukha had no other choice except to ask the driver to turn the chariot and follow another road. The charioteer led him to the "Palace of Wit" (*chetasyavasa*).

Here the road was paved with stones, and the shops lining it displayed garlands, ornaments, incense and perfumes. Gomukha went on further and saw a row of palatial garden houses. There he saw a group of intoxicated men and women behaving in a shameless way. A man who was following a young girl was reproached in strong yet tender words, "You boor, why do you touch me, the unfortunate one? Go and caress your village love, who has already been

handled by many yokels." He saw courtesans strumming the *vipanchi* lyre and at other places their plectrums strummed the lute. The chariot moved slowly. Gomukha found some girls studying sheets from a manuscript. The manuscript turned out to be *Vitashastra* or the "Breviary of Rakes". Even in their sleep they refused to part with this manuscript. It was at this point that Gomukha discovered that the driver had, under false pretences, led him to the quarters where the courtesans lived. Gomukha was full of remorse and shame. He wanted to turn back, but the driver insisted on proceeding further. He stopped in front of a splendid mansion which was humming with activity. He saw beautiful women and polite men. Splendidly attired girls came out and surrounded the chariot and a middle-aged woman approached them with folded hands. She wanted to find out the purpose of their visit. Gomukha saw a beautiful girl engaged in her toilet. She sat at the window and was trying to find out from her maids who Gomukha was. The driver knew that Gomukha's heart was drawn to the palace and he asked him to enter it.

As soon as Gomukha entered the palace, he found in the first apartment a girl reciting lessons in politeness and courtesy. In the second quadrangle he found curtained bullock carts and litters for women. In the third quadrangle were tethered horses that had been brought from various foreign countries. In the fourth quadrangle there were peacocks, parrots and mynas, their cages were made of gold and copper and fashioned by expert artisans. In the next quadrangle he found perfumers sitting with containers, and saw different kinds of cloth, and watched jewellers. At the entrance of the house he was received by the courtesans who again wanted to know the purpose of his visit. They described the Palace of Wits as an old palace, beautifully decorated, and not easy to find. In quality it was like the Wishing jewel. It was sanctified by his arrival. Finally he entered the palace and met the woman in charge. Inside the palace Gomukha enjoyed every manner of comfort. The woman in charge urged a girl named Padmadevika to serve him. The girl shampooed his body, and his fatigue seemed to

disappear. After shampooing his limbs, she wanted to employ her breasts to shampoo his arms and chest.

Drinking was frowned upon by the *Dharmashastras*. Yet it was a common enough vice, and drinking booths and halls were provided in the *Vesa*. According to the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*, II. 21-33, drinking was an important part of the daily routine of a king. He woke up early in the morning and the bards started their music. Then he adorned himself with splendid clothes, ornaments and garlands. He then proceeded to the audience hall (*asthana sthanam*). There he granted interviews to important people, distributed awards according to their ranks, and ordered his ministers to arrange for the erection of a drinking booth (*apanabhumi*) in the garden. When the booth was ready, people flocked there and were honoured with gifts of clothes, ornaments, and garlands. The king and his companions drank wine out of ruby cups (*padmaragsukti*). Outside the drinking booths lutes were strummed, there was dance and music. In the evening the king returned to his palace and almost regularly attended musical performances and dramatic shows in which women alone participated.

The adventures of Sanudasa give clear proof that drinking was a common vice in the Gupta period. The merchant Sanudasa had a friend named Dhruva, who told him that a group of friends had decided to enjoy good food and drinks and watersport in a garden. Dhruva asked him to join them and bring a partner. Sanudasa at first refused the invitation. His plea was that bringing a partner would result in a drunken brawl. But later on he was persuaded to join the party. Dhruva made fun of him and said that if he did not want to drink himself, he could at least watch his friends and their partners enjoy their drinks. So both of them came to the garden and met the revellers who sported flowers and ornaments. A seat of tender mango leaves was offered to him in a bower. There he found his friends drinking in the company of their partners. Some of them sang the song of spring to the accompaniment of the *vina*. Then there appeared a man whose body was covered with moss and mud and who

filled up a folded lotus leaf with wine, praised it and assured him that it did not taste at all like wine. The fool Sanudasa while drinking it remarked that it did have a very different taste and everybody laughed.

This potent stuff went to his head and in that drunken stupor he heard the voice of a woman and followed the voice to a bower. The woman told him that she was Yakshini Gangadatta and if he refused to accept her, that would be his end. He accompanied Gangadatta to her home. She was in fact a courtesan. There he was welcomed by another woman who gave him lotus wine (*pushkara-madhu*). In a drunken state he returned to his friends with Gangadatta and they all laughed at him.

According to the *Vasudeva Hindi*, taverns and gambling halls were the chief resorts of the anti-social elements and the gambling house was a noisy affair. It was frequented by the rich and entrance to it was strictly regulated. The stakes were high. It is mentioned that when Vinadatta won on the basis of the advice of his friend, he challenged the other party to gamble with him if they dared. Vinadatta's friend Amsumana accepted the challenge and staked his ornaments and won.

In another place the *Vasudeva Hindi* refers to gambling for very high stakes. In the gambling hall rich men, ministers, caravan masters, superintendents of police and army officers assembled to gamble. Vasudeva staked his ring valued at a hundred thousand. The stakes varied from a hundred thousand to a crore, but five hundred was the lowest stake. The gamblers doubled or trebled the stake after losing. In the end an account was drawn up and the gains and losses of the gamblers were calculated.

In cockfighting the bets were very high. It is mentioned in the *Vasudeva Hindi* that Vinadatta once went to the market-place of *Shravasti* in the company of his friend Gangarakshita, the doorkeeper. There he was told by Rangapataka's maid that there was to be a fight between the cocks of the courtesans Ratisena and Rangapataka and that he was to act as a referee for Rangapataka. After some hesitation, the friends proceeded to the house of Rangapataka and received a warm welcome there. The cockfight

... and the wage was a lakh. Vinadatta backed the cock of Rangapataka and it won. Later on the stake was raised to a million and Ratisena's cock was backed by Gangarakhshita and it won.

At another point it is mentioned that a courtesan approached a king and challenged him to a cockfight, staking a hundred thousand.

The *Kamasutra* has described *yatra* as one of the forms of amusements that the members of *goshthis* favoured. The *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*, VIII. 1-53 has left us an elaborate description of such a *yatra*. It is said that the ruler of Kaushambi advised Naravahanadatta and his friends to go out and see for themselves the arrangement that was being made for a pleasure trip to Nagavana which was not far off from Kaushambi. They saw huge crowds pouring out of the city gate. They saw horses, elephants and litters (*sibika*). They saw Rumanvasuta mounted on an elephant and the queens Vasavadatta and Padmavati surrounded by chambermaids and palace attendants. There were also courtesans carrying *makarayoshtri* and red flags. Apparently those were symbols of their profession. Naturally their coquetry attracted the crowd.

In order to join the *yatra* Naravahanadatta mounted a chariot which brought him to the city gate. The way was cleared by an attendant (*anujnabhūmaya*). The party wanted another view of the crowd so they proceeded to the temple. There they saw a carriage (*pravahana*) which was covered with white cloth and to which were yoked eight bullocks decorated with palm impressions dipped in saffron paste. In the carriage there were many courtesans. One of them held two fingers on her forehead and her other hand was folded with a lotus bud. Poor Naravahanadatta who was ignorant of the art of love could not interpret the meaning of the gesture. His artful companion watched Naravahanadatta's confusion and told him to take off his crown and return the girl's salute. This gave rise to a lot of merriment among the girls for they thought he lacked manners.

After seeing the amusement park (*kridasthanani*) the party reached the Yamuna river and crossed it in boats.

They passed the night in the play house (*kridagriha*) and reached Nagavana the next day. There he found crowds of people enjoying themselves. Naravahanadatta's party was led to the rich houses (*yatragriha*). They passed the time in amusement, bathing and eating. The next day the prince's party decided to go on a hunt. They were accompanied by the young Pulindas who were presented with indigo, turmeric, oil pots and yellow garments.

Another description of a garden party (*udyana yatra*) also appears in the *Vasudeva Hindi*. Dharmika heard that the prince had gone to the garden with the members of the *goshti*. He was a friend of the prince so he got into the *goshtis*, and decked himself with clothes and ornaments. He was accompanied by two courtesans; he drove his chariot to the pleasure garden. There the servant fixed the silken tents and pavilions, and furnished them with beds. A large tent serving as a dining hall was pitched at a pleasant spot. Flowers were spread on the floor and the flower seats were arranged according to their position they occupied in society and this was all sanctioned by the king. They occupied their seats. They were clad in fine clothes and ornaments and entered after they had perfumed their bodies. When the dinner was over the inebriated courtesans sang and danced.

One of the pastimes which the members of a *goshti* favoured was cutting different kinds of patterns on the leaves. It is related in the *Vasudeva Hindi* that Dhammilla, in the course of his adventures rested for some time on the banks of the river Chandra near Champa. He cut out many designs on lotus leaves and placed them in a boat which reached the Ganga. While he sat there cutting out these designs two persons approached him and they wanted him to attend the *lalita goshti* of the prince of Champa which was being held in the Ganga and the party was extremely impressed by his designs.

The *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*, IX. 1-7 repeats this story in another form. It attributes proficiency in cutting the designs to Gomukha, a bosom friend of Naravahanadatta. The story runs that Gomukha thought of a way of amusing his friend by cutting designs out of lotus petals. These

blended properly with the cheeks of the women. To satisfy their friends' curiosity Gomukha described in detail the designs employed in *patrachchedya*. The designs were of four kinds—triangular (*tryasra*), rectangular (*chaturasra*), long (*dirgha*) and circular (*vritta*). The triangular pattern was used for cutting the figures of cattle, birds, houses and so on. The rectangular design was employed for cutting the patterns of the city, of men etc. The long pattern was employed for representing lakes, rivers, pathways, canopies (*pratana*), etc., and the circular designs for spaces in a necklace (*bhushanasamyoga*).

Not only were designs cut from lotus flowers but picking the lotus flowers was a favourite form of amusement of the women of eastern India and was known as *padma-bhaniaka*. It appears that the fountains in the public gardens of Kaushambi were especially equipped for that kind of game. In one place, the *Vasudeva Hindi* (tr. p. 45) paints a fine picture of the *ashoka bhanjika*. The adventurer Agadadatta saw a red *asnoka* tree in a garden which was laden with red flowers. Swarms of black bees were humming close to it. Under the tree appeared a girl holding a branch with the right hand and her one leg rested on the tree trunk.

The *Vasudeva Hindi* is full of stories and incidents which throw considerable light on the courtesan and her way of life. One story takes place in a particular town where there lived a beautiful and qualified courtesan who was visited by the king, his ministers, and other rich clients. When they left her house they gave her ornaments as a token of the memory of their visit. Once a clever son of a banker visited her house and saw a footstool inlaid with five porcelain gems. He asked the courtesan to give it to him as a memento and she gave it to him.

A second episode relates the story of Kuberadatta, a renowned courtesan of Mathura. She was pregnant and it was obvious that she was going to give birth to twins. This was regarded as an inauspicious event. She was advised by her mother to place the twins when they were born, into a bowl and to set it afloat in a river. Her mother's advice was based more than anything else on the

calculation that this would preserve her daughter's charm. In course of time a son and a daughter were born to the courtesan. She named them Kuberadatta and Kuberadatta respectively. She put a signet ring on the fingers of each of the twins and placed them in a boat filled with gold and precious stones. She allowed the boat to slide away in the waters of the Jamuna. Fortunately two women espied the boats and each woman adopted one baby. When they grew up, it was arranged that the boy should marry the girl. During the wedding festivities the women arranged a gambling match between the bride and the bridegroom and made them exchange their rings. The secret was out and the match was broken.

The story of Vasantatilaka and Dhammilla throws an interesting sidelight on the profession of a courtesan. Dhammilla, a foolish young man, was the son of a rich caravan leader. His wife's desire remained unsatisfied. His mother learnt of this state of affairs and she gave her son some advice. She said, "What is the use of all your learning? Try to enjoy the pleasures of life. Gather some experience in the arts of love." To furnish him with this experience she got him admitted to the *lalitagoshthi*, and she did this in spite of her husband's protestations. Then he and the members of the club (*gotthiyajana*) roamed the gardens and forests of the area and visited a gambling house (*sabha*). They wanted to get used to a luxurious mode of living.

One day the king decided to witness the debut (*padhamanatta vihidamsanam*) of Vasantasena's daughter. He sent for the head of the *goshthi* and asked him to invite assessors (*pasaniye*) to judge this dance recital. The head invited Dhammilla to act as one of the assessors. When everybody, including the king, had occupied their seats, the dance began. The stage (*bhumibhae*) was well decorated and designed for a dance performance. The dancer was endowed with beauty and vigour. The choreography, the change in *varnas*, the gestures simulating the movements of black bees, the expression in the eyes expressing haughty indifference, and the gestures of the hands, all followed the principle laid down in the *Natyashastra*. The dance was

accompanied by the strains of a *vina*, and by drums and vocal music.

The performance drew a prolonged applause from the audience. The only comment that the assessor Dhammilla made was that Vasantatilaka danced like a nymph. The king was pleased and honoured her with a court award. Dhammilla now began visiting Vasantatilaka's house regularly, listened to music and improved his acquaintance with other arts. To meet his expenses his parents sent to the mother of the courtesan a sum of five hundred *karshapanas* daily. This proved to be a heavy drain on their family's resources and soon they were reduced to penury. Even Dhammilla's wife had to send her own ornaments to help continue this liaison.

One day, however, Vasantatilaka's mother told the infatuated lover that since he was now a pauper, the time had come for him to quit. But Vasantatilaka loved Dhammilla intensely and she frankly told her mother that she would not bear any separation from him. The mother pretended to accede to her daughter's wishes. But she actually worked out a plan to get rid of him. To gain her end, she decided to hold a festival in honour of the local deity (*kabbadadevata*) and invited her relatives and other courtesans to be present at the festival. After the worship of the deity, Dhammilla ate and drank in the company of Vasantatilaka and her friends. Soon he was in an absolutely drunken state and Vasantatilaka's mother got him removed to a place outside the city. When he gained consciousness, Dhammilla bemoaned his fate and cursed the perfidy of the courtesan. But there was nothing left for him to do but proceed to his own home. There he found that his parents had died. He was disgusted with his life and retreated to a forest.

In the meanwhile, Vasantatilaka rose from the state of torpor and asked everybody where her lover was. She learned about the mean trick played upon her lover. She tied up her hair in a single braid and took a vow that she would not untie it till her lover returned.

Sometimes courtesans married their lovers. This is evident from Charusami's adventures with a courtesan. The adven-

ture began when he saw a woman resting against an *ashoka* tree. She wore costly jewelry, and her body was draped in fine linen. He asked her who she was. She said that she was a nymph who had been sent to attend on him. He was convinced that she was a nymph. He asked his servant to serve dinner and invited the stranger to join him. When he was under the influence of drink he heard a voice say, "This man is under my control." Later on the woman drove him to her house. When the effect of drinks had worn off, Charusami found himself in the house of the courtesan Vasantatilaka. There she revealed to him her true identity and explained to him that she loved him deeply. She said that the subterfuge has been the work of her friends. He was extremely gratified when he heard her words and married her.

Music and dancing formed an integral part of the *goshthi* culture. Accomplishment in dancing and music was an essential qualification for any courtesan. Frequently competitions were held to judge the merit of the dancers. Music was regarded as a heavenly gift. It is said that owing to the practice of magic taught by a Vidyadhara two *chetis*—Babbari and a Kirati—learnt music and dance. Their voices became melodious. Such was their absorption in dance that they were indifferent to worldly things.

It is mentioned that when the time came for a prince to depart in order to protect a hermitage, four courtesans named Chitrasena, Kalingasena, Anangasena and Kamapataka, participated in a dance competition. One of the slaves of Kamapataka arranged the "needle dance" (*suinat-tam*). The dancer took a vow to worship the Jina if she won the first place in the competition. The prince was pleased by her skill and honoured her with a gift of ornaments, an umbrella and a *chauri*.

Another kind of dance is mentioned where they kept time with water clocks and in which a prince acted as an assessor. It is said that two dancing girls Hiranna and Suvanna gave a dance recital in which Samba acted as an assessor. He came to the garden and sat before the performers. Then Hiranna danced keeping time with the water clock (*nalikagalaya*). When this "water test" (*udaka-*

parikkha) was over, Suvanna performed thirty-two kinds of dances. In the end the winner was bathed in the water that still remained in the mechanism of the water clock.

In the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*, XI, the dance of Madanamanchuka reveals how such performances used to be arranged. The dance was arranged on the orders of Udayana. Naravahanadatta went to the venue of the performance accompanied by his friends and *nagarakas*. They entered the king's palace and after saluting him, sought to occupy their allotted seats round the throne. They saw the venue of the performance (*rangangana*) crowded with an appreciative audience (*kushalaprekshakulam*). The two dance-teachers saluted the king and informed him that the dancers were ready and awaited his permission to begin the dance. The king left the selection of the first entry to Gomukha, whose choice fell on Suyamunadatta. As soon as she came on the stage the clamour of the crowd subsided. Her dance received tremendous applause though the competition was actually won by Madanamanchuka.

Two versions of a musical competition shed interesting light on the manner in which competitions were held. The *Vasudeva Hindi* relates that Vasudeva while entering Champa saw a crowd of young men carrying *vinas*. Wagon loads of *vinas* were surrounded by prospective buyers. When Vasudeva made enquiries and tried to find out why these people acted in this strange fashion, he was told that Gandharvadatta, the daughter of the merchant Charudatta, was a great exponent of the *vina* and her father had announced that he would bestow her on the man who could defeat her in a music competition. Vasudeva's curiosity was roused and he asked for the addresses of some music teachers. He was directed to two music teachers, Sugriva and Jayagriva. He approached Sugriva and feigning ignorance of music, requested him to give him lessons in music. At first the teacher refused to teach him but the gift of a jewelled bracelet to his wife softened his attitude. Homage was paid to Narada and Tumburu and then the teacher asked Vasudeva to play on the *vina* with a sandalwood bow. In the very first lesson he broke the strings which were replaced by stronger ones and the

lessons continued. The day of the competition approached and Vasudeva wanted to participate in the competition but the teacher refused him permission. The gift of yet another bracelet did the trick and he was allowed to attend the competition.

In the *sabha* arranged for the competition Vasudeva saw the experts occupying raised seats while other people sat on the floor. Charudatta offered the king a raised seat. Gandharvadatta sat behind a curtain and the competition began. Nobody dared to challenge her. Vasudeva asked for a *vina* but rejected it on the plea that the gourd-resonator was not properly charged. He rejected the second *vina* on the plea that it was made of water-soaked wood and this resulted in false notes. Then they brought a sandalwood *vina* decorated with fragrant flowers. Then Gandharvadatta and he played the *vina* and sang the *Vishnugitaka*, which was applauded by the gathering.

A very elaborate version of this story also appears in the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*, XVI-XVII. The story relates that Naravahanadatta was dropped by Vidyadhara Amitagati into an unknown country. A dense forest surrounded the place. After crossing the forest, he came to a garden and asked the gardener the name of its owner. The poor man was nonplussed when this question was put to him. He was sure that the questioner was joking. Naravahanadatta was disappointed. He came to a second garden provided with a huge gateway (*torana*). In this country-house he found a man seated on a slab of stone provided with a pillow. The man was strumming a *vina*. This *nagaraka* was so absorbed in music that he did not at first see Naravahanadatta approaching him, but when Naravahanadatta addressed him he got up and welcomed the stranger. He offered him a seat by his side. Naravahanadatta asked him the name of the country and the man said that he must have fallen from heaven to ask such a question, or perhaps he was trying to deceive him!

Naravahanadatta invented a story about himself. He told the man that he was a Brahman who lived in Vatsa and that he had allowed himself to be carried away by a *Yakshi* who had fallen in love with him. But after a love-

quarrel she had carried him through the air and had left him in this unknown spot. The man told him that this was the country of Anga and that he was in the city of Champa. His own name was Dattaka, though his friends, out of affection for him, called him Vinadattaka because of his proficiency in playing the *vina* . After revealing his identity, he ordered an attendant to bring his conveyance. Mounting the carriage they drove to Champa.

As they entered the city, people wondered why the foremost citizen of Champa had accorded a seat in his chariot to an unknown guest. Naravahanadatta also observed that even the tillers of the soil and the herdsmen were engaged in playing the *vinas* . Near the city gate he found wagons carrying parts of *vinas* . These were all for sale. Soon they reached the market road and Naravahanadatta found to his surprise that carpenters, potters and cane-workers were all playing the *vina* . At last Naravahanadatta reached the city house of Vinadattaka.

There Vinadattaka asked his servant to treat Naravahanadatta with respect as he would his own master. Since Naravahana had said that he was a Brahman, Vinadattaka ordered thick rice pudding (*payasam*) for him. Thereafter his body was shampooed and oiled by an expert (*mardana-shastrajnah*). Then he bathed his body and wore costly garments. After doing obeisance before the household deities, he went with Vinadattaka to the dining hall (*bhojanamandapam*). Vinadattaka took his seat among his close relatives. Naravahanadatta had said that he was a Brahman so he was provided with a separate seat. The cook served him rice pudding in a golden cup and the *ghee* and honey in an amethyst bowl. When he saw the tasty food and drinks served to others, Naravahanadatta found it difficult to sustain the part of a Brahman. He pretended that his tongue had been scalded by the hot pudding and made out that he was trying to cool it with water.

The trick was detected by Vinadattaka and he was offered fragrant water which he accepted very readily. He also enjoyed meat cooked with condiments (*adhishtana samkulan*). After dinner, a bed was prepared for him in the same hall and he was offered perfumed pills (*mukha-*

gandharaga) and betel leaves. He lay down in comfort and asked Vinadattaka why the entire city's life revolved round *vina*-playing. He was told that Gandharvadatta, the beautiful daughter of the merchant prince Sanudasa, was to be given in marriage to a man who could accompany her on the *vina* as she sang an unfamiliar song. Every six months she performed before a group of sixty-four *nagarakas*, but so far nobody had succeeded in winning her. Towards the end of this conversation two cane-bearers sent by Sanudasa came to tell Vinadattaka that a meeting of friends was to be arranged and they were to participate in the show (*samasya*).

Naravahanadatta heard the news. He pretended that he knew no music but was anxious to learn. At his request Vinadattaka found him a teacher. This teacher who had a harsh voice and who was unfamiliar with the *Shrutis* and musical notes claimed that he was a great exponent of the *Naradiya* system of music. Naravahanadatta enraged at the tall claims of the teacher felt that to lose a kingdom was better than accepting such a person as a tutor. But this teacher was welcomed by Vinadattaka and his party and ignoring the presence of Naravahanadatta he took his seat. Vinadattaka then requested him to give Naravahanadatta lessons in Narada's musical system. The pompous Guru turned down the suggestion. He said this future disciple of his would not be able to pay him even a dime (*kakini*) for his troubles. He said knowledge from a teacher could be obtained either by serving him or by paying him money. Naravahanadatta could do neither of these two things.

When he heard these uncalled for remarks, Vinadattaka mildly rebuked the teacher and gave him hundred gold coins. After paying homage to Narada and Sarasvati, the teacher handed over to Naravahanadatta a *vina* that had been very badly strung. When he took it in the lap, this teacher rebuked him and said that a person who could not even hold a *vina* properly hardly deserved to receive lessons in music. The teacher then began his lessons using the *nishada* note in the place of *shadaja*. Angered at this ignorance, Naravahanadatta snapped four or five strings of the *vina* for which he was mildly rebuked by Vinadattaka.

Touched to the quick and forgetting for a moment the role he had decided to assume, he took the broken *vina* in his hands and played a tune which demonstrated an intimate knowledge of music. Everybody applauded him but the teacher said it was mere chance that he had managed to play so well. He pocketed his fees and left.

After the night meal Naravahanadatta entered a sleeping room that had been perfumed with flower garlands and incense smoke. Two beautiful girls (*rupajiva*) appeared and they tried to entertain him with soft, endearing speeches and with music. In order to save himself from their music which sounded to him like the braying of an ass, he feigned sleep. This forced them to leave.

Naravahanadatta got up in the middle of the night and saw the *vina* of Vinadattaka in the room. It was wrapped in figured silk (*chitrapatta*) and hanging on a peg. He wanted to practise a little on it, since this was something he had not been able to do for a long time. He took down the *vina*. Slowly with the upward and downward movement and without touching it with his fingers, he tuned it. The soft melodious music created a stir among the sleeping inmates of the house. They thought it was the goddess Sarasvatī playing the *vina*. If the beginning was so beautiful, the end was bound to be absolutely wonderful. Naravahanadatta heard their voices and quickly kept the *vina* where it was before and went to sleep. When the crowd entered his room, they found nothing out of the ordinary. They consoled themselves with the belief that the goddess Sarasvatī could not reveal herself to such petty fellows like themselves!

In the morning Naravahanadatta received the news that he was invited to the music competition (*gandharva-samasya*) of Sanudasa and that he should drive to this party with other invitees. Naravahanadatta told his friend Vinadattaka that he and his friends could drive to the residence of Sanudasa but that he himself preferred to walk. Vinadattaka welcomed the idea and placed him at the tail end of the party. They all walked to the venue of the competition. This did not please the *nagarakas* who blamed him for leaving the conveyance behind and decid-

ing to cover the long distance on foot.

By the roadside Naravahanadatta saw a big palace. Women had congregated there to see Naravahanadatta the beloved of a *Yakshi*. Walking slowly, the party reached the house of Sanudasa. There he saw in the first apartment (*kaksha*) sixty-four seats draped with costly silk covers. The guests were welcomed by the master of the house who led them to their seats. When he saw Naravahanadatta, he expressed his regret for not providing him with a seat. Vinadattaka at once offered him his own seat. But as long as he stood, the others were forced to stand as a matter of courtesy. A suitable seat was offered to Naravahanadatta and then they all sat down. Three hundred courtesans entered and washed the feet of the guests. They poured out water from ewers. When one of them reached Naravahanadatta the ewer slipped from her hands. She became bashful and confused. Such was his grace that all the women hoped that he would marry Gandharvadatta.

After the ceremony was over, the *nagarakas* were led to a big hall (*sabha*). The chamberlain announced that Gandharvadatta was ready to begin the performance. This announcement confused the *nagarakas*, who were well aware of their own limitations. Naravahanadatta alone maintained his composure. Others thought he was only putting up a bold front and was actually a very stupid person.

At this juncture the curtain was pulled aside and accompanied by the chamberlain and her attendants, Gandharvadatta entered the hall. Her beauty overpowered the assembly (*goshti*). Then the chamberlain invited those who wanted to accompany her to come and play. The *nagarakas* pressed Vinadattaka to go ahead and play but he did not dare to move from his place. As soon as she started singing Naravahanadatta knew that it was the song of Narayana (*Narayani-gita*). He had learnt it from Udayana and it was known to gods and heroes only. Naravahanadatta stood up to accept the challenge. This surprised Vinadattaka and the others. They strongly disapproved of his childishness, but he refused to be browbeaten. He went and sat by the side of Gandharvadatta. A *vina* was brought to him but

he rejected it saying that its resonator was full of cobwebs which deadened the sound. The *nagarakas*, scandalized by his behaviour called him a shameless man who was out to court notoriety. They said it was not possible for a Brahman well-versed in the *Vedas* to play the *vina*. But when the cobweb was found in the resonator, everybody was surprised. A second *vina* was also rejected because its strings were not good enough. Finally Sanudasa brought in a *vina* whose resonator was shaped like a tortoise. It was decorated with fragrant flowers. Naravahanadatta after washing his feet and circumambulating the *vina* took his seat on the platform which was covered with silk. He fingered the instrument and set it in tune and then began playing on the *gandharva* scale. He now invited Gandharvadatta to begin her song. His perfect accompaniment to her song won him the hand of Gandharvadatta. Then the chamberlain asked the *nagarakas* to leave.

The *nagarakas* usually enjoyed pleasant company. But from time to time they had to face scoundrels lurking in wine shops, in gambling dens, in sweetmeat shops, in the convents of the yellow and red-robed monks or in the houses of low-class prostitutes, in gardens and in deserted temples etc.

In the story of Dhanasiri and Vinīyoga the dangers from a *dindi*, a class of worthless loafers and toughs are emphasized. This story is about a woman who was sitting with her lover on a terrace and enjoying herself. A *dindi* dressed in fashionable attire was passing by the house and the woman happened to spit out her *pan* which fell on the fellow. He looked up, saw the lady, fell in love with her, and decided to win her through her lover. For that purpose he called him to his house and gave him money and asked him to help him in the venture. Then the woman and her lover decided to have their revenge. The *dindi* was asked to wait in the *ashoka* grove (*ashoka vanika*) in the evening. There they met him and plied him with drinks and chopped off his head.

In the post-Gupta period the pattern of life continued as in the previous centuries—only in a more elaborate form. As a matter of fact, the literature of the time reveals a

luxurious mode of existence. This was reflected in the highly decorated palaces which housed a multitude of attendants, courtesans and harem inmates. The king led a life of comfort and he showed the same interest in festivals, music, dancing and *goshthi* that he had displayed in the Gupta period. The *goshthi*, with its well organized membership, continued to exist. Gambling, drinking and prostitution were widely prevalent and in spite of the *shastric* injunctions against these vices, human nature seemed to have found delight in all of them.

It is evident from the *Harshacharita* of Bana that in the seventh century the functions of a *goshthi* had become extremely diversified. For instance, in *vidyagoshti* the citizens who were bound together by ties of education, wealth, culture and who belonged to the same age-group assembled at an appointed place to discuss the arts or literature. In a good and serious *goshthi* people gathered to hear stories, historical episodes and recitations from the *Puranas*. In *viragoshti*, the stories of heroic deeds were narrated. There was hardly any blame attached to keeping low company which often included dancers and musicians. As a matter of fact Bana's friends included a drummer, a piper, a *ghata-vadya* player, singer, a danseuse and an actor.

Ujjain in that period was a great centre of learning where all kinds of sciences and arts were taught. One of the sciences which received attention was called *gandharvakala* (var. *Gandharvashastra*). It was placed immediately after the art of gambling. Dr. Agrawala's suggestion that this art also included all kinds of information on courtesans appears to be correct because in this period the quarters where the courtesans lived had their own importance. The intimate contact between the dancing girls and temples and the courts gave rise to different sorts of rules and regulations which governed and regulated their relationship with these institutions. As a matter of fact the rich men of Ujjain had by this time become great worshippers at the temple of Kama with which courtesans were intimately connected. This is supported by Bana's observation that the rich and licentious men of Ujjain worshipped Kama.

They even decorated the temple of Kama with red *makara* standards, with red *chauris*, corals and tinklers. Courtesans, as in other periods of Indian history, played an important part in the royal seraglio and in the King's court. They participated in almost all court functions and festivals. Bana has given us a very convincing picture of the dancing girls participating in a festival held to celebrate a birth ceremony. They sang songs and their vocal music was accompanied by the music of drums, pipes, cymbals and the *vinas*. They wore chaplets and tender shoots in their ears. Their foreheads were smeared with sandal. They raised their arms adorned with bracelets and their anklets tinkled as they danced.

Courtesans also waited upon the king while he held court. Bana again describes the pretty courtesans waiting upon Harsha in his court. They wore *agaru tilakas* on their foreheads and they arched their eyebrows coquettishly. They demonstrated the fatigue they experienced after the dance by breathing heavily. Their heads were encircled with chaplets and the jewels on the centre of their necklaces moved all the time. To conceal their yawns they at times covered their mouths with their palms and their eyes flickered as the pollen of the flower-ornaments fell on them. Sometimes they looked around or simply smiled and at times they danced with their hands interlocked over their heads. Sometimes they cracked their knuckles and moving around in a circle they performed a dance.

Prostitutes and bawds also accompanied an army on the march. There is a description of the march of Harsha's army. The slow and awkward movements of the fat bawds slowed down the progress of the army and the women had to be forcibly dragged forward.

Courtesans in the employment of the king served as bath attendants. According to Bana the courtesans attending on king Sudraka began their work by applying myrobalan to his head. Then they tightened their muslin breast-bands, and removed their bracelets and earrings and started bathing the king. He descended into a tank and took his seat on a stool. Here the courtesans used gold and silver pitchers containing sandal water and saffron which they poured

over his head and body

There are scant references to courtesans, to *goshthis* and to other vices such as gambling or drinking in the works of Bana. But Dandin's romance *Dashakumaracharita* reveals a pattern of Indian life in which adventurers, gamblers and *goshthis* play an important part. In the history of Apaharavarman's adventures the story of Kamamanjari sheds interesting light on the life of the courtesans and the means they employed to extort money from their victims. Kamamanjari was lauded as the brightest jewel of Champa. Once her mother followed her and saw her worshipping the sage Marichi. The mother prostrated herself before him. When Marichi asked Kamamanjari the cause of her mother's distress she told him that he alone could help in her predicament. At this point the mother lifted her hands and entreated his favour and asked him to listen to the wrong done to her. She was being accused of some wrongdoing.

She said, "This wrong doing of mine lay in the performance of my obvious duty. For obvious duty is as follows for the mother of a *fille de joie*: care of her daughter's person from the hour of birth; nourishment by a diet so regulated as to develop stateliness, vigour, complexion, intelligence....; not permitting her to see too much even of her father after the fifth year, festive ritual on birthdays and holy days; instruction in the arts of flirtation both major and minor; thorough training in dance, song, instrumental music, acting, painting, also judgement of foods, perfumes, flowers, not forgetting writing and graceful speech; a conversational acquaintance with grammar, with logical inference and conclusion; profound skill in money-making, sport, and betting on cockfights or chess; assiduous use of go-betweens in the passages of coquetry; display of numerous well-dressed attendants at religious or secular celebrations; careful selection of teachers to insure success at unpremeditated vocal and other exhibitions; advertising on a national scale by a staff of trained specialists; publicity for beauty-marks through astrologers and such; eulogistic mention in gatherings of men about town of her beauty, character, accomplishments, charm, and sweetness by

hangers-on, gay dogs, buffoons, female religionists and others, raising her price considerably when she has become an object of desire to young gentlemen; surrender to a lover of independent fortune, a philogynist or one intoxicated by seeing her charms, a gentleman eminent for rank, figure, youth, money, vigour, purity, generosity, cleverness, gallantry, art, character, and sweetness of disposition; delivery, with gracious exaggeration of value received, to one less affluent, but highly virtuous and cultivated (the alternative is levying on his natural guardians, after informal union with such a gentleman); collection of bad debts by vamping judge and jury, mothering a lover's daughter; abstraction by ingenious tricks of money left in an admirer's possession after payment for periodical pleasures, steady quarrelling with a defaulter or miser; stimulation of the spirit of generosity in an over-thrifty adorer by the incentive of jealousy, repulse of the impecunious by biting speeches, by public taunts . . . by simple contempt; continued clinging to the open-handed, the chivalrous, the blameless, the wealthy, with full consideration of the inter-related chances of money and misery."

After describing the training scheme for courtesans which closely follows the precepts laid down by Vatsyayana, the bawd complained to Marichi that her daughter completely disregarded the rules of her profession. The girl "has spent a whole month of amusement—at her own expense!—with a Brahman youth, a fellow from nowhere whose face is his fortune. Her snappiness has offended several perfectly solvent admirers and has pauperized her own family."

The hermit Marichi tried to dissuade Kamamanjari from embracing a life of retirement in the woods. He told her to go back to her profession. She refused to do this. The hermit then advised her relatives to leave her with him till the return of normalcy. Her relatives listened to his advice and withdrew.

Kamamanjari became engrossed in the service of Marichi. She gave up her costly garments and preferred a temple costume. She worshipped Siva and danced and sang before him. This show of piety gained the admiration of the hermit

who in his innocence requested her to discuss with him the doctrine of virtue, money and love. Kamamanjari was determined to mislead him and told him that agriculture, cattle-raising, trade and commerce reaped money, and its reward was charity to the deserving. True love depended on sense experience and self-communicated bliss. For love's sake men suffered martyrdom and faced fearful dangers.

The poor hermit, overpowered by her smartness, yielded to her. She put the booby into her carriage and drove him to her home in the city.

The next day was the festival of Kama. The sage was bathed and anointed and was led by Kamamanjari through the main street to a holiday crowd that had gathered in a wooded garden. The king sat there among hundreds of young girls. And when the king called her and said, "My dear, be seated with His Holiness" she made a fluttering curtsy, smiled, and sat down.

Thereupon a most beautiful woman rose, lifted her joined hands, and curtsied to the king saying: "Your Majesty, she has won the bet. From this day I am her slave." Then the crowd raised a racket rooted in wonder and delight. The king was delighted and dismissed the courtesan with gracious gifts of precious stones in settings and a great train of attendants, while the most eminent ladies of her profession and the most prominent citizens gave her a great ovation.

Before going home she asked the sage to resume his vocation. "My darling," he cried, pricked by love as by a knife-point, "What does it mean? How can you be so cynical? What has become of your superlative fondness for me?" "Holy Sir," she replied with a smile, "you saw the girl who just confessed defeat before the royal retinue. She and I once had a tiff, and she said with a sneer, 'You boast as if you had seduced Marichi.' So I wagered my freedom and went into the business. And I won. Thank you so much." The sage returned to the forest.

The adventures of Kamamanjari do not end here. Apaharavarma in the course of his visit to Champa met a Jain monk who was in a miserable state. He said that Kamamanjari was the cause of his ruination. He was the eldest

son of a prosperous merchant of Champa and was nicknamed "Ugly" because of his appearance. There was another man in the town named "Handsome" who was not rich. A city scoundrel (*pauradhurta*) who made a living by fomenting quarrels, created dissension between these two. Once in a festive gathering (*utsavasamaja*), Ugly and Handsome started a quarrel. In this quarrel the scoundrel tried to appease them and laid down the principle that neither good looks nor cash mattered; the best man was one whose youthfulness attracted the gayest girls. He also suggested that it was Kamamanjari who was in a position to decide the issue. Ugly, with all his money managed to gain her favour to the embarrassment of his rival. But she fleeced him completely and left him a beggar.

Apaharavarman, moved by the story of the destitute lover, promised to persuade Kamamanjari to make voluntary restitution of his possessions. Apaharavarman entered the city of Champa and soon found out from the street gossip that the city was full of skinflints and capitalists. These men were not likely to understand the perishable nature of their riches. So Apaharavarman decided to take to the path of scientific thievery. He decided to join the professionals and found endless joy in observing their skill in all the twenty-four branches of the art of gambling. These consisted of sleight of hand over the dice board. He listened to their accompanying sneers and jeers, their death-defying truculence. He observed their methods of gaining the confidence of the gamblers, their flattery of the strong and their threats to the weak, their cleverness in picking up partners, the varied wagers proposed, their magnanimous way of dividing the cash, and their intermittent buzz of talk, largely obscene.

Apaharavarman's talks with gamblers have been faithfully reported in the *Dashakumaracharita* this way:

"Now when a player made a careless throw, I laughed a little. But his opponent seemed to flare up, looking at me with an eye red with wrath, and shouting: 'Man, you tell him how to play when you laugh. Let this uneducated duffer go. I'll just play with you—you seem a smart one.' The proprietor offered no objection: he clinched with me.

and I won sixteen thousand dinar. Half I gave to the proprietor and his staff; half I pocketed. Then I rose, and with me rose delighted congratulations from the company. I humoured the proprietor's invitation and shared a most noble banquet in his establishment. But he who had occasioned my gambling incarnation, became a friend, trustworthy as a second heart. His name was Vimardaka."

From Vimardaka Apaharavarman learnt everything worth knowing about all the wealthy citizens of the city. Then one black night he concealed himself in a black cloak, and girded with a sharp sword, he provided himself with a varied kit containing a trowel, scissors, tweezers, dummy, magic powder, trick lamp, measuring-tape, hook, cord, a dark lantern, a bee-basket and other tools. His first victim was a miserly capitalist whom he robbed by the simple method of breaking the wall of his house. While returning from his mission he met in the dark street a young girl wearing gleaming gems. He discovered that she was the daughter of the merchant Kuberadatta. This man refused to give his daughter in marriage to a certain Dhanamitra, a wealthy youth, who had been reduced to poverty because of his kind gifts to others. The father wanted the girl to marry one Arthapati that very morning. She went on relating her story and suddenly they were set upon by a party of policemen. He pretended that he had been bitten by a cobra and they both escaped. Apaharavarman then conducted her to her lover Dhanamitra and advised him not to flee the city with his beloved but to remain there.

Then Apaharavarman arranged to destroy the house of Arthapati with the help of a tusked elephant. When he had achieved his purpose he went home to rest. The next morning the marriage was postponed. Apaharavarman advised Dhanamitra to approach the king of Anga and tell him that a hermit had given him (Dhanamitra) a magic wallet containing a hundred thousand. It was said to work only for merchants and courtesans, the condition being that anything sinfully stolen had to be returned to its lawful owners and anything honestly earned had also to be given to gods and Brahmans. The king gave Dhanamitra

permission to enjoy the fruit of the wallet. Dhanamitra acted according to the advice of Apaharavarman. Dhanamitra's renown spread and greedy Kuberadatta turned his back on Arthapati, his prospective son-in-law and offered his daughter to Dhanamitra.

At this hour it was announced that Kamamanjari's younger sister Ragamanjari intended to give a musical performance in the assembly hall of the *Panchayat* (*panchaviragoshthi*), and the elite of the town (*nagarakaganah*) assembled there in a mood of tense anticipation. Such was the beauty of the girl and her accomplishment that Apaharavarman fell in love with her. His friend Dhanamitra told him that Ragamanjari too returned his love. She had declared, "My price is virtue, not cash. Hereafter no man may hold my hand except in matrimony." Her sister Kamamanjari tried to dissuade her from such a stupid course and her mother submitted a petition to the king praying for his intervention. However, Ragamanjari's relatives would not consent to a marriage without money and she was not ready to favour a man who offered money. There the matter stood. Apaharavarman was confident that he would seduce her with his virtue and secretly satisfy her relatives with money.

Apaharavarman won the good will of a certain Buddhist nun who was employed by Kamamanjari. He bought her services with bribes and through her mediation struck a bargain with the relatives. He would steal from Dhanamitra the miraculous wallet in return of Ragamanjari. His condition was acceptable to them.

A conspiracy was then hatched and they got rid of Arthapati. Vimardaka, a friend of Apaharavarman who had joined the service of Arthapati thoroughly duped him, and the king, angered by the charges brought against Arthapati, locked him up.

Almost at this time just when Arthapati was out of the way Kamamanjari met Dhanamitra and restored to him his fortune. She did this in order to get the magic wallet; so she gave away all her possessions in charity. In the meanwhile, on the advice of Apaharavarman, Dhanamitra informed the king that this entire show of charity by

Kamamanjari was because of the magic wallet. Apaharavarman took advantage of the situation and informed Kamamanjari that if they accused her of stealing the wallet, that would mean his own end and also a disaster for Ragamanjari. She loved him dearly and instigated by him she and her mother decided to make a statement to the king that the wallet had been given to them by Arthapati. This was done. The result was a foregone conclusion. Arthapati was reduced to penury; Dhanamitra married the girl of his choice and Apaharavarman won his beloved Ragamanjari.

One day Apaharavarman boasted to his beloved that in a single night he could steal all the money of the city. To prove his point, out of sheer bravado, he came out in the street and picket up a quarrel with the police. He killed a few people but was finally put into fetters. This incident opened his eyes to the true state of affairs. He was afraid that they would arrest Ragamanjari and his friend Dhanamitra. At this critical moment he cursed the nurse of Ragamanjari who had accompanied him on this venture. She maintained her presence of mind and was able to assuage the feelings of the police. Then as arranged previously, he abused Ragamanjari and confessed that he had stolen the magic wallet of Dhanamitra. In the meanwhile under the pretence of taking leave of his beloved, he whispered into the nurse's ears and told her what his plan was. After that he was marched to the jail by the police.

The jailer was a pompous and vain fool. He imagined himself a lady-killer; he threatened torture and advised him to return the magic wallet and all his ill-gotten gains. But Apaharavarman refused to do this. Soon the nurse came to see him and they carried out their plan. She said that she had informed Dhanamitra that his friend was in jail for drunkenness. She had also instructed him to inform the king that the magic purse had been stolen by the husband of Ragamanjari and that he had been caught by the police during a thieving expedition. The king was told that he was ready to surrender the wallet if the royal pardon was granted to him.

Dhanamitra followed her instructions. The nurse

strengthened her cause by winning over the nurse of the princess to her own side through bribes and presents. She managed to meet the princess on the palace balcony and dropped a lotus fallen from her ear on Kantaka, the police officer, who happened to be there. She gave him the impression that she was in love with him.

The next day the nurse took some presents to Kantaka. They bore the royal seal and she informed him that he had captured the princess's heart. She went further and told him that a fortune teller had told her that since the king had no son, Kantaka was destined to succeed him. She advised him to get a thief to dig a tunnel leading to the princess's chamber. She proposed the name of Apaharavarman. So Apaharavarman was released and started digging the tunnel, but as soon as he was released he chopped off the jailer's head.

After this Apaharavarman entered the princess's chamber through the tunnel. He saw her asleep in her chamber and fell in love with the sleeping beauty, but he did not want to scare her out of her sleep. Therefore he wrote a quatrain and also outlined on the plaster of the wall a pair of loving sheldrake birds. Then he effected an exchange of rings and left the place.

While he was walking in the street with the nurse, he met a police party. She managed to make her escape on the plea that Apaharavarman was a lunatic. Later on he met Ragamanjari and Marichi. Through his friend the new jailer he again entered the chamber of the princess who received him pleasantly.

The story of Apaharavarman includes many adventures such as stealing, fights with the police, knavish tricks, and affairs with women. Yet the whole story is intimately connected with courtesans and their doings. It is also evident from the story of Ragamanjari that an accomplished courtesan was at full liberty to marry a man of her choice.

Cockfights were a favourite form of sport. This sport also embraced gambling. A graphic account of this is given in Pramati's adventures. Pramati in the course of his adventures happened to reach a large market town where he found the bankers making a din. A cockfight was on.

Pramati naturally joined the crowd and when he laughed, a gay Brahman who was seated near him asked him the cause of his merriment. Pramati said, "How can men be such fatheads as to match Crane, that cock in the western pen, against Cocoanut, the rooster in the eastern pen?" The Brahman, who also happened to be an expert asked him to be quiet. The nitwits around hardly deserved a tip. There he offered him a *pan* and entertained him with spicy anecdotes. "Then the two birds went at each other full tilt stab and counter stab, with wing-flapping and defiant cock-a-doodling." The poor cock in the western pen was beaten.

Courtesans and Goshti in Sanskrit Drama

SANSKRIT PLAYS FOLLOW a stereotyped and rigid conventional pattern, and hardly provide vignettes of contemporary manners and customs. Their heroes and heroines wilt under the pangs of separation; sometimes they are the victims of palace intrigues. Usually they are served by a host of attendants, including the court buffoons, rakes, and other low characters. This might perhaps have pleased the jaded taste of the rulers, but they hardly offer any data about contemporary society. It is, therefore, pleasant to find that even in those days there existed some dramatists who diverged completely from the beaten path and presented to us a true picture of the contemporary morals. In these ancient plays we meet the so-called low characters in society—prostitutes, pimps, rakes, gamblers and tipsters. Their very vices and their trivial and vulgar conversations engage our attention. Their humour is, in its own way, unparalleled in Sanskrit literature. In this category of full-length dramas and one-act plays, the names of the play *Mrichchhakatika* by Shudraka and the *Chaturbhani*, a collection of four burlesques by different authors, stand out prominently.

We are not concerned here with the controversy about the date and the authorship of the *Mrichchhakatika*. Internal evidence places the play in the fifth century A.D. and its author seems to have been the person who wrote *Padmaprabhrita*, one of the burlesques in the *Chaturbhani*. The hero of Shudraka's *Mrichchhakatika* is Charudatta, a Brahman merchant of Ujjayini. A stroke of misfortune had impoverished him. In the first act he is shown bemoaning

his fate and opening his heart to his friend Maitreya who tries to console him. The dialogue proceeds and soon it is night. Maitreya observes: "At this hour of the evening people are abroad upon the King's highway—courtesans, courtiers, servants and royal favourites. They will take me now for fair prey."

The scene suddenly changes. On the road there appears the great courtesan, Vasantasena, followed by a courtier, Samsthanaka (Shakara), and by a servant. The courtier asks her to stop and to shed her fears, Shakara repeats the request "My tortured heart is burning, as on a heap of coals a piece of meat." The servant follows suit and says that she is fleeing from him "as a summer peahen" and adds, "but my lord and master struts fast and faster, like a woodcock in the wood" The courtier gives a charming description of Vasantasena:

*Why should you tremble, should you flee,
A-quiver like the plantain tree?
Your garment's border, red and fair,
Is all a-shiver in the air;
Now and again, a lotus-bud
Falls to the ground, as red as blood.*

(Ryder, I. 20)

Shakara is apparently a boor. He keeps asking Vasantasena to stop. He mixes up his references from mythology and calls her an eater of fishes and a destroyer of her kin. He describes her as snub-nosed, stubborn, a love-box, a courtesan, a wanton creature and a maid of sin. (Ryder, I, 23).

The servant is a low-born character. He seeks to tempt her, describing his master as a royal protege, who can provide her "with good flesh and fish to eat". (Ryder, I. 26). The Vita draws a picture of Vasantasena fleeing from them, her girdle drooping low upon her hip, and the red realgar dripping from her cheeks and lips. (Ryder, I, 27).

Surrounded by these scoundrels Vasantasena calls for her attendant Madhavika. But Shakara threatens to kill her. The frightened Vasantasena offers him her ornaments but

he persists in his ardent protestations of love. The Vita understands her aversion for his master but when he speaks aloud he says, "Vasantasena, your words have no place in the dwelling of a courtesan." He adds:

*Which, as you know, is friend to every youth;
Remember, you are common as the flower
That grows beside the road; in bitter truth,
Your body has its price; your beauty's dower
Is his, who pays the market's current rate:
Then serve the man you love, and him you hate.*
(Ryder, I. 31.)

He continues:

*The wisest Brahman and the meanest fool
Bathe in the selfsame pool;
Beneath the peacock, flowering plants bend low,
No less beneath the crow;
The Brahman, warrior, merchant, sail along
With all the vulgar throng.
You are the pool, the flowering plant, the boat;
And on your beauty every man may dote.*
(Ryder, I. 32.)

At this juncture Shakara reminds her of how she fell in love with Charudatta in the garden of Kamadeva's temple and points out Charudatta's house which was to their left. He asks his followers to stop her from entering it. Vasantasena makes the best possible use of the darkness of the night; she removes her anklets and garland to avoid detection through sound or smell and she finds her way to Charudatta's house. There she finds the door shut.

Meanwhile Charudatta has prevailed upon his friend Maitreya to go out with his maid Radanika and offer *bali* to the Mothers. As Maitreya opens the door to go out, Vasantasena quietly slips into the house, after putting out the candle. Later on Shakara enters the house with his followers. He is reprimanded by Maitreya and there is an exchange of angry words. Shakara asks Maitreya to convey

to Charudatta the information that he and his followers had tried to win Vasantasena by force. He asks him to restore her to them at once and then he will be his friend forever. But if Charudatta refused to do so, there would be a fight to death. After saying all this, Shakara departs. Charudatta speaks to Vasantasena in the dark. He issues orders to her for he is under the impression that she was Radanika. Soon the mistake is found out; Vasantasena leaves her ornaments with Charudatta for safety and is escorted to her house by Maitreya.

When the Second Act begins, Vasantasena is seated in her room. She is painting a picture. She refuses the ceremonial bath and shows signs of deep distress. Her attendant feels that her condition bespeaks her love for Charudatta. She informs her that she has deliberately left her jewels with him in order to find some excuse to visit his house again.

Then follows an interesting interlude in which the vicissitudes in the lives of gamblers are described. Mathura, the keeper of a gambling house, is shown shouting aloud, asking people to hold a shampooer who owed him ten gold coins. He and another gambler follow the shampooer to an empty temple. But not finding anybody there, they spend their time gambling. The shampooer hides himself and stands still like a stone image. He sees his pursuers gambling and is unable to check his interest in the game. He is caught by Mathura and given a sound beating. He is reminded of the fact that he was bound by the conventions of the fraternity of gamblers. They force him to give a surety for half the sum that he owed them. As soon as he is ready to leave, Mathura goes back on his own promise and wants full payment. The wrangling starts all over again. At this juncture Darduraka enters and utters stanzas in praise of gambling. He intervenes to stop this quarrel and suggests a novel method of settling the dispute. He advises Mathura to advance the shampooer ten more coins to enable him to gamble again. If he won naturally he would be able to pay his debts but if he lost then Mathura would have to bear the loss. Mathura is enraged by this plan and during the wordy exchange that

follows the shampooer makes his escape.

The shampooer then enters the house of Vasantasena and tells her that he used to be in the service of Charudatta. Then misfortune befalls Charudatta and the shampooer took to gambling. Vasantasena wants to save him and sends her own bracelet to Mathura.

In the Third Act, Charudatta and Maitreya discuss Rebhila's music on the way home. When they reach Charudatta's house, Maitreya washes his feet and he is given the golden casket containing Vasantasena's jewelry. He is asked to keep it in safe custody, and then both he and Charudatta retire for the night. Now enters Sharvilaka, the thief, one of the most interesting characters in the play. He had reached the house after breaking the orchard wall and was ready to force his way into the inner court as well. He welcomes the night. He speaks of his trade: "The trade that thrives while sleeps the sleepy-head." Then he selects a soft place in the wall weakened by constant sunlight and eaten by saltpetre rot. He then cites the four varieties of breaching that are prescribed by Skanda, the patron saint of thieves: "If the bricks are baked, pull them out; if they are unbaked, cut them; if they are made of earth, wet them; if they are made of wood, split them. Here we have baked bricks; ergo, pull out the bricks." He defines the shapes that the breaching can take and quotes again the treatises on thieving. They mention seven shapes—a "lotus," a "cistern," a "crescent moon," a "sun," an "oblong," a "cross" (*svastika*), and a "full vessel" (*puṇakumbham*). He wonders which one he should use to excite the wonder of the men the next morning. He finally chooses the shape of the "full vessel" and offers prayers to Skanda and then to the teacher of magic who gave him a magic salve. The salve had made his body invisible to the eyes of watchers and impervious to wounds made by sharp-edged swords. He applies the magic salve to his body and breaks the wall. He then enters the courtyard. From the sleeping Maitreya's hands he gently takes the golden casket belonging to Vasantasena. He confesses that this has been done to redeem his beloved Madanika's slavery. Soon the theft

is discovered and Charudatta's wife sends her own necklace to Vasantasena as compensation for the loss she has suffered.

In the Fourth Act Vasantasena is shown rejecting a gift sent by Shakara. In the meanwhile Sharvilaka the thief visits Vasantasena and meets his beloved Madanika, her slave girl. Vasantasena finds them engaged in intimate talk and does not wish to disturb them. The conversation centres round the redemption of Madanika from slavery and Sharvilaka offers to pay Vasantasena a handsome sum to free Madanika. In the course of the conversation Madanika discovers that he has stolen the ornaments from Charudatta's house. She rebukes Sharvilaka and he bursts forth into a severe condemnation of all courtesans. "A courtesan will laugh and cry for gold, she trusts you not... A woman takes your gold, then leaves you free; you're worthless, like cosmetics, when you're dry. One man perhaps may hold her heart in trust. She lures another with coquettish eyes, sports with another in unseemly lust, another yet her body satisfies". (Ryder, IV. 14, 15, 16)

He soon learns that the jewels belong to Vasantasena. Madanika advises him to return the jewelry to Charudatta or to Vasantasena. Vasantasena had already overheard this conversation. The jewelry is restored to Vasantasena. Madanika is free and she and her lover leave the house in a bullock cart. Sharvilaka hears of the imprisonment of his friend Aryaka by the king Palaka, who believing the words of a soothsayer was convinced that Aryaka was destined to depose him. Sharvilaka decides to rescue his friend.

In the meanwhile Vasantasena is told that Charudatta's friend, Maitreya, had come to see her. Maitreya's description of the quarters of Vasantasena pictures the grandeur in which some courtesans of the Gupta period lived. The stock description seems to have been borrowed from some common source as another version also appears in the *Brihatkathashlokasamgraha*. The maid points out to him the gateway (*gehadvaram*). Maitreya watches with admiration the lofty gateway which had just been sprayed and had just received a coat of green. On the threshold are heaped offerings of all sorts of fragrant flowers. The gate-

way is adorned with strings of jasmine garlands. It has a high ivory portal and is decorated with red holiday banners waving in the air. On both sides there are auspicious water pitchers decorated with green mango twigs, and set on the railings of the pillars that sustained the portal. He notices that the doors are of gold, studded with diamonds.

When he enters the first court, Maitreya sees a row of balconies whitened with handfuls of powder strewn on them. They have golden stairways inlaid with gems, and crystal windows decorated with strings of pearls. There he sees a porter snoozing comfortably.

In the second court Maitreya sees cart-bullocks, grown fat on mouthfuls of grass and pulse stalks. Their horns are smeared with oil. He sees a snorting buffalo and a ram having his neck rubbed like a prize-fighter after the fight. Naturally the buffalo and the ram are reared for fights. Then he sees horses, their manes being put in shape and a monkey tied securely in a stall. An elephant is eating a cake of rice, drippings and oil.

In the third court Maitreya sees the seats prepared for young men. A half-read book is lying on the gaming table which is provided with dice made out of gems. There he also sees courtesans and elderly libertines, past masters in the war and peace of love. He sees them wandering about holding pictures painted in many colours.

In the fourth court Maitreya finds maidens beating drums. The cymbals clash and the pipe discourses sweet music. There he also sees someone holding a lute delicately in his lap and stroking it with his fingers. He also meets singing girls who are made to dance and recite a drama with love as its main theme. There he also sees water coolers (*salilagaggario*) which are kept hanging in the window so as to catch the breeze.

In the fifth court are located the kitchens. Maitreya's nose catches the overpowering smell of asafoetida and oil and this makes his mouth water. The kitchen is warm and meat is being baked. The courtesans and bastard pages (*bandhulah*) had adorned themselves with jewels. When Maitreya asks them who they are, they answer him thus:

*Petted in a stranger's court,
 Fed on strangers' food,
 Strangers' money makes us sport—
 Not so very good.
 Stranger women gave us birth,
 Stranger men begot;
 Baby elephants in mirth,
 We're a bastard lot.*

(Ryder, IV. 28.)

In the sixth court Maitreya finds artisans working in gold and jewels in their workrooms (*karma-toranani*). The workers were listing pearls, corals, topazes, sapphires, cat's-eyes, emeralds, and all other kinds of gems. Rubies were being set in gold, and gold ornaments were being fashioned. Pearls were being strung on a red cord. Pieces of beryl were polished and shells were being cut. Coral was being ground on whetting wheels. Layers of sandal paste were being dried and musk was being moistened. Sandal-wood was ground to make sandal water. Perfumes were being compounded. Betel leaves and camphor were being offered by courtesans to their lovers. In this gathering he sees their coquettish glances, hears the sounds of laughter and sees wine being drunk. He noticed the atmosphere of glee. There were male servants and maid-servants and men who had lost everything and forsaken their families. All were assembled there. When the courtesans drank from the liquor-jars and handed the jars to them, they drank what was left.

The seventh court serves as an aviary. Here the doves sat snugly in their dovecotes. There is a parrot, a thrush and a cuckoo fed on fruit syrups. Rows of cages hang from pegs. Quails are being egged on to fight and a partridge is being made to walk. Caged pigeons are being provoked and teased and a peacock is dancing in all its glory. Flamingoes wander about gracefully. Maitreya also finds out from the maid the name of the man who is wearing a silk cloak and has adorned himself with ornaments. He is wandering about, stumbling and stretching his limbs. He turns out to be Vasantasena's brother. There

is a woman dressed in the most expensive garments. She wears shoes on her greasy feet. She turns out to be Vasantasena's mother. Maitreya makes an uncharitable remark: "Lord! what an extensive belly the dirty old witch has got! I suppose they couldn't put that superb portal on the house till after they had brought the idol in." The maid reprimands him, but the irrepressible Maitreya continues in the same vein:

*Drinking brandy, rum and wine,
Mother fell extremely ill.
If mother now should peak and pine,
A jackal-pack would have its fill.*

(Ryder, IV. 30.)

Then Maitreya enters the orchard, sees beautiful flowering trees and silken swings under huge trees. The swings are just large enough for a girl to sit on. In the pond grow lilies and lotuses. He meets Vasantasena and hands her over the pearl necklace pretending all the time that it is in exchange for the jewelry which Charudatta has gambled away. But Vasantasena is fully aware of what had happened. She takes the necklace and asks her maid to lay it away. She says she intends to pay Charudatta a visit that evening.

In the Fifth Act, Maitreya meets Charudatta and curses Vasantasena for accepting so readily the necklace. He observes, "A courtesan is like a pebble in your shoe. It hurts before you get rid of it. And one thing more, my friend. A courtesan, an elephant, a scribe, a mendicant friar, a swindler, and an ass—where these dwell, not even rogues are born." In the meanwhile Vasantasena braves the rain and storm and comes there to restore to Charudatta the stolen gold casket and then the lovers embrace.

In the Sixth Act there is an interlude when Vasantasena offers Rohasena, the son of Charudatta, her own ornaments so that he could have a golden toy-cart made. This is a token of her love but he refuses to accept it. The conversation between Vasantasena and Rohasena is interrupted and she is informed that a covered cart (*sajjam*

pravahanam) is waiting for her at the side door. The driver is asked to wait until Vasantasena is ready to go out. The driver remembers that he had forgotten the cushion and goes to bring it back. He thinks it is better to take the cart back with him and fetch it, for the bullocks were likely to be restive.

At this very juncture the servant of Shakara is ordered to take the bullock-cart to a garden named Pushpakarandaka. The road is blocked with traffic and he threatens the driver who is blocking his way. He finds that the wheel of the cart is stuck and the driver asks his help. He leaves his own cart near the side door of Charudatta's orchard and goes to help the driver who is in difficulty. In the meanwhile Vasantasena comes out of the orchard and mistaking Shakara's bullock-cart for her own cart enters it. She is driven away. While he is driving the cart, the driver hears the announcement that a prisoner has escaped from the prison. He is no other than Aryaka and Sharvilaka has helped him to escape. He is in search of shelter and he reaches Charudatta's orchard. He sees a bullock-cart coming. He observes:

*If this should prove to be a picnic rig (goshtthyanam),
Its occupants not peevishly inclined;
Some noble lady's waiting carriage trig;
Or rich man's coach, that leaves the town behind—
And if it empty be, fate proving kind,
'T would seem a godsend to my anxious mind.*

(Ryder, VI. 4.)

Aryaka gathers from the conversation of the maid and the driver that it is Vasantasena's cart. He enters it surreptitiously imitating Vasantasena's movements. The searchers for Aryaka overtake this cart. They come to know that it is Charudatta's cart proceeding to the Pushpakarandaka garden and carrying Vasantasena. A soldier inspects the cart and finds Aryaka there, but he lets him go.

In the Seventh Act, Charudatta discovers who Aryaka is. He removes his fetters and allows him to continue his

journey in the cart.

In the Eighth Act, a Buddhist monk is shown washing his clothes in a pond in the Pushpakarandaka garden. Shakara rebukes him and strikes him and then lets him go. He sits in the garden and tells his friend that he cannot get Vasantasena out of his mind. After some time his bullock-cart driver arrives with Vasantasena inside. The Vita finds this out and is surprised to see her. Vasantasena tells him what has happened. They try to hoodwink Shakara. Shakara sees her. He is infuriated and remembers the occasion when she escaped from his clutches. He orders his friend to kill her. The friend refuses; a similar order to the driver meets with the same fate. Shakara begins professing his love for her. Naturally she spurns his advances. Enraged by her refusal, he tries to strangle her, and she falls down on the ground unconscious. The Vita and the driver soon discover the crime. The Vita is afraid and knows that it is folly to stay there, so he leaves the place. The driver is ordered by Shakara to wait for him in the tower of his palace.

Shakara then hits upon the plan of lodging a complaint against Charudatta; he wants to accuse him of the murder of Vasantasena and to prove that he did it for money. While Shakara is contriving this nefarious scheme, the Buddhist monk who is no other than the ex-shampooer enters. Shakara thinks his presence there an ill omen and leaves in disgust. The ex-shampooer remembers with gratitude the good turn that Vasantasena had done him, the freedom that she guaranteed him by saving him from the clutches of the gamblers. He sees some movement among the fallen leaves and discovers that Vasantasena, whom Shakara had abandoned as dead, is now regaining consciousness. She asks for water. He at once brings her water and learns what has happened. He leads her to a Buddhist monastery and leaves her in charge of a nun.

The Ninth Act centres round a court room scene. The beadle is shown putting the court room in order. He is trying to avoid Shakara who is bragging of his good looks and amours. The beadle stands waiting for the magistrate to come. The case, after some hesitation on the part of the

magistrate, is taken up. Evidence is piled against Charudatta and the magistrate pronounces the death sentence.

In the Tenth Act, Charudatta is being led to the place of execution. Even the hangmen pity his plight. At this most crucial moment Shakara's driver, throwing himself from the palace tower where he had been confined by his master, comes and tells the hangmen what has actually happened. Shakara appears and accuses the driver of theft and is believed by the police. Things really look black for Charudatta and the executioner is ready to perform his duty. Suddenly Vasantasena appears and the truth is out. At this very moment they hear that a revolution has been proclaimed. Sharvilaka kills Palaka and puts Aryaka on the throne. The drama ends with the reunion of Charudatta and Vasantasena.

The *Mrichchhakatika* has great dramatic power. In addition to this it sheds interesting light on the low characters in the society of that period. Shakara is a miserable person, self-indulgent and engrossed in wine and women. His only qualification is that he happens to be the brother-in-law of the king. His utterly ridiculous references to Pauranic episodes display his ignorance. His behaviour towards Vasantasena, his attempt to kill her and foist the blame on Charudatta show the utter depravity of his character.

His friend the Vita acts as a courtier. At times he applauds the stupidity of his friend yet he is an upright man who tries to help Vasantasena when she is in distress. The quarrels of the gamblers for a petty sum and their eagerness to gamble at all hours is emphasized. The thief Sharvilaka is no mean fellow. He had studied the art of making breaches thoroughly and is well acquainted with all the implements employed by the thieves. Vasantasena is no low character. She is well educated. She is a beautiful courtesan who runs a splendid establishment. In the play we meet all kinds of courtesans and prostitutes and their lovers, and bastards brought up in the establishment. We have a glimpse of the fat, ungainly bawd and of her son who poses as a dandy. It is also evident from the drama that though generally the courtesan is supposed to be an

exacting person, she is also capable of true love and could marry a man of her choice.

The *Mrichchhakatika* is only concerned with the life of a noble courtesan and some of the low people who visited the quarters of ill-fame. But the *Chaturbhani*, a collection of four *bhanas* or burlesques by different authors all belonging to the early fifth century A.D., deals almost exclusively with life in the quarters of ill-fame. Courtesans and their hangers-on, and the different types of clients who visited them, are all described. Their conversation is in a pointed kind of language which Thomas calls the "very ambrosia of Sanskrit language." Their talks dealt with sports and amusements, drinking, gambling and other vices. Members attended *goshtis* with their women friends and apart from their interest in love-making, drinking, and gambling, these members also discussed topics relating to the art of love. They also enjoyed music, dancing and dramatic shows. Picnics and garden parties were also a necessary part of their culture. It is also evident from the burlesques that hardly any stigma was attached to visiting these quarters of ill-fame. Merchants, government officials, military officers, *pundits* and even Buddhist monks visited these quarters.

The authorship of the *Padmaprabhritakam* is ascribed to Shudraka and hardly anything more is said about him. But there are reasons which lead one to believe that this is the same Shudraka who wrote the *Mrichchhakatika*. The subject of the *Padmaprabhritakam* is the love of Muladeva, the famous rue of the literature of the Gupta period, and of Devasena, a celebrated courtesan of Pataliputra.

The one-act burlesque begins with salutation to Siva followed by the praise of spring. Spring is accompanied by the flowering *kurabaka* and *ashoka* trees, by a breeze laden with the fragrance of mango flowers, by the twittering of birds, by the cooing of cuckoos and by flowers shooting from almost everywhere in the trees.

The Vita or the rake constitutes the sole character in these burlesques. He himself reports the speeches of other characters. He appears on the stage and informs the audience that Karnisuta Muladeva, learned in many arts

and sciences, was in love with Devasena, the famous courtesan of Pataliputra. She was struck by the fever of love. Devadatta, the sister of Devasena, who was kept by Muladeva informs him that she could not meet him for some days because her sister is ill. She says that she intended to see him later. When he receives this message, Muladeva requests his friend Shasha to find out what had happened to Devasena.

The Vita (Shasha) is now on his way to Devasena's house and on the road bursts forth into a poem of praise for Ujjayini—

"Look at the incomparable charm of Ujjayini, overflowing with all kinds of good—verily the cheek-painting of the bride, Earth"

"Here one listens to exercises in the recitation of the Vedas; one hears the din of elephants, of chariots and horses, the twang of the bows, learned discussions on drama and poetry. There is the buying and selling of goods brought from across the four oceans. One listens to songs, to musical instruments and to pleasantries. There is gambling; at certain places one hears the gossip of the rakes. The rows of houses resound to the chirpings of birds that are reared as pets and to the tinklings of girdles and bracelets."

While he is soliloquizing thus, he suddenly comes across a minor poet named Sarasvatabhadra. He had fixed a steadfast gaze on the heavens and the pose suggested that he was trying to derive inspiration from there for his poetry. The Vita addresses him, "Friend Katyayana! What kind of cud are you chewing? What did you say?—that the ghost of poetry has possessed you and is driving you on? You cobbler! stitching together pieces of old poems! Why you are like a herdsman in search of his dispersed herd; are you searching for new poems?"

The subject of the poem was, of course, spring. After exchanging a few pleasantries with him the Vita proceeds further and meets a *pithamarda* who makes fun of the poet. He says any effort to please the poet with words was like trying to spray the ocean with water.

The Vita goes on and meets a friend of a courtesan

named Vipula; the friend criticizes Muladeva's attitude to Devadatta. The Vita's rejoinder is that while Muladeva wanted reconciliation with her, she refused to be reconciled.

After dismissing Vipula's friend the Vita meets a grammarian on his way to the quarters of ill-fame. The Vita blurts out, "Woe unto me! Here comes another obstacle in my way. Dattakalashi, son of Dandashuka, a grammarian of the Panini school stares me right in the face. Now it is difficult to escape from the network of his words. His mind appears to be troubled. Yes, he seems to have been rubbed the wrong way in some discussion. Even otherwise his tongue always itches for a fight; at the slightest touch it tolls away like a temple bell. This good fellow is fond of courtesans. He calls his beloved by the name Rasanavati. She is the daughter of Nupurasena. Honestly I pity Rasanavati, tied like a lyre to a camel's neck. He has raised his hand and is addressing me."

"What did you ask me? Whether I had slept well?"

"Now there is no way out, I cannot escape him. I shall now welcome him. Welcome to you, O granary of letters! Friend Dattakalashi, you appear to be disturbed! I hope you are well."

"What were your words? Like the scavenger crows the followers of the Katantra school have swooped down on me. Alas! The crows and owls have started the fray. Let me congratulate you, my friend! I have found you with your feathers intact. What did you say?—that you care a tuppence for these wretched followers of Katantra! Stay as you are! Now I propose to leave."

"What did you say? Where is the hurry? Why accelerate? Please, pardon me. Do not pound me with such hard words, cruel as a staff's blows. Please talk to me in the common language of the people. Spare me from the chattering of the grammarians; it is as ugly as the gruntings of a camel and it pierces my ears like poison darts."

"What did you ask me? How can I abandon my style born of the babble of dialecticians. It savours of bullfights. It has been moulded by hundreds of verb roots that rattle like a ballista. How am I to give this the feel of the delicate

curves of a woman? No wonder then that you are an orphan!"

"Jaw-breaking words have as much in common with the prattle as welcoming a woman and a friend with court complaints or proverbs or as much common as thorns and chaplets of flowers."

"What did you say? Without doubt she is unchaste. She is estranged even by my honeyed words."

"Who is that harlot?"

"How am I to call her my beloved?" He meditates. "Now I know. Rasanavati deserves this, because there is no sight as disastrous as a *koel* used to wandering at will in a mango grove and now forced to perch on the thorny *Ber-tree*. Ah, but there is an element of fun in this pain! Let me enjoy it!"

"Friend, Dattakalashi, how was this woman estranged from a sweet-spoken person like you? I am very anxious to hear all about it. Unbosom yourself. Tell me everything."

"What did you say? She is definitely a whore. Yesterday, a holiday, that coquette forced her way into the outer veranda of the house and took her seat by my side. Her manner was caressing while I was engaged in performing a *yajna*. I reprimanded her. I said, 'Stop touching me, I am performing *yajna*' Alas! Making a girl one's own is a delicate business."

"This touch-me-not attitude is the root of all quarrels. Fool, you have done a great wrong by spurning a woman in love. Your speech has been toughened by harsh words. It is filled with the spark of grammar. It frightened the girl. Have you not heard this, 'He who touches with deafening words a passionate and soft hearted woman desirous of kind and endearing language is actually trying to strum a *vina* with a burning faggot'."

After leaving the grammarian the Vita meets another interesting character named Pavitraka, a Vaishnava, by faith. "Here is Pavitraka, the son of Dharmasanika. He hides his licentiousness. He professes the Vaishnava (Chauksha) faith yet he is impure of heart. He avoids the touch of strangers, holds his moist clothes close to his

body, and contracts his limbs. He closes his nostrils with his fingers and stands at the crossroads leaning against the pedestal of a Shiva-linga. The fellow deserves to be ridiculed. It is rumoured that he is in love with Varunika, the daughter of Mattakashini, a slave girl (*bandhaki*). Why is he agitated thus? Now let me bring to light the book of his vagabondage. Well Pavitraka, why are you standing there? You resemble a sunning tortoise putting out and withdrawing its neck."

"What did you say? I am trying to avoid being defiled. Men inevitably brush against me as they throng this royal road."

"Well, you fidget trying to avoid the stray touch of strangers, but I suppose Varunika's private organ is as pure as the holy bank of the Ganga?"

"What was that you said? No, it is not so? Then are you trying to sell buttermilk to cowherds? Hoping to hoodwink the shrewd and the clever? Do you think you can outwit the wicked?"

"What did you say?"

"You are a smart one for detecting things!"

"What kind of detection? There is no question of detection!"

"The sun does not need to penetrate the darkness with the aid of a lamp. I am thousand-eyed in such matters. Throw away your cloak of wickedness. You feign a gentle appearance. You pretend to be a friend of the gentle but you are actually a slave of the rake! This panic and fear of being defiled and prostitution cannot go hand in hand. You are fettered by this pretence of fearing defilement. So you seek to pick jasmine flowers with a pincer!"

"What did you say? I have now given up my vagrant ways."

"Who will believe you? This is like observing a fast after a meal of rice pudding. What was your reply?"

"Be kind enough to accept me as a disciple."

"Well done! Now, you have come round adopting a right attitude. If you have decided to adopt the ways of a Vita, then throw away this role of hypocrisy, for the love of a courtesan is like a nailed staff. Proclaim yourself a

tough. What did you say?"

"I am at your service."

After taking leave of Pavitraka, the Vita enters the Flower Lane (*pushpavithi*). The blue lotus, the red flowers of the *ashoka*, garlands and chaplets of all kinds are on sale here. There he meets an old man who had acted the role of a Vita in plays. "Here is another emporium of ridicule! This is Mridangavasulaka, who played a Vita in an old play. The courtesans have nick-named him Bhavajardgava—Dear old Bull! He is emerging from the house of the tender musician Arya Nagadatta. He dyes his hair blue. He bathes and anoints his body. He is trying to hide his age. This good fellow is a friendly sort. I cannot go away without talking to him. Well, Old Bull! Even old age is a good time for you!"

"What did you say? Like an old snake I am shedding my slough for you no longer care for me!"

"It seems you are rejuvenating yourself at the cost of your life itself. And you look so young! You are an expert. You know the art of restoring youth with beauty aids. Round your head is a line of dyed hair. It speaks of artificial restored youth and the grey hairs in your whiskers have been pulled out by a tweezer; you have shaved off your beard. Your limbs, decorated and anointed, support your assumed youth like the careful repairs to a dilapidated house that help to keep it standing. What did you say? Old wine is a stronger intoxicant."

The Vita moves on and meets Shaishulaka. He ridicules him, reminds him of how he raped a Buddhist nun who had been sent to him as a love-messenger by the daughter of a florist.

The Vita meets some more people and finally reaches the quarters of ill-fame (*vesha*). He describes the district as a seat of passion, a place for wickedness and deception. It is open to everybody except the poor. There he sees a Buddhist monk and observes: "Ah, who is this hurrying out from a courtesan's court? He is contracting his body. He has covered it with a dirty scarf. But I can see the ends of the ochre garment. They seem to be falling down because he is flurried. I get it. He is that wicked Buddhist

monk, Sanghilaka. He is an inmate of Dharmaranya monastery. Oh, how holy is Buddhism! It continues to be respected day after day in spite of the repeated blows inflicted on it by wicked monks whose heads have been shaved for no rhyme or reason. But the sacred Ganga does not cease to be holy because crows come and defile it! He is trying to hide himself. He wants to get away. Right, if the arrows of my words touch him, he will not be able to escape unhurt. I shall certainly meet and talk to him. He beckons. 'Hey! You are the ghost that inhabits a monastery. Your movements are like that of an owl's in day-light. You are walking about filled with fear? What did you say?'"

"I have just come from the monastery."

"I know the real story of your monastic discipline you scoundrel; you have come out of the pond of *vesha*, like a frightened crane. Where are you going?"

"What did you say? Sanghadasika's beloved is distressed by her mother's death and I have come to console her with the words of the Buddha."

"The Buddha's words in your mouth are like a mouthful of consecrated water in place of wine."

"Alas—if through some stupid mistake or if by chance a Buddhist monk enters the courtesan's courtyard, he is entitled to as much respect as the sacred Omkara in the book on the *ars erotica* by Dattaka. What did you say?"

"We ought to be compassionate towards all creatures."

"Right, ever joyous (*nityaprasanna*)."

"You will attain *nirvana* by annihilating desire."

"You will quench your thirst by constantly drinking Prasanna wine."

"What did you say?—It is a good thing that I will attain salvation."

"Right, do not strive hard. It is without avail. Salvation is impossible for you."

"What did you say? I must leave you to avoid dining outside the prescribed hours!"

"Bravo, you have observed all the rules of the order. The only thing left for this monk who sticks to Panchashila is to observe the prescribed hours for dinner and see that

on no account he misses his meal. Well, get going. Are you ashamed of the ringworm marks that your shaved head exposes? Leave the place, you dunce."

After indulging in this banter with the Buddhist monk, the Vita meets a beautiful courtesan named Vanarajika. He observes: "Well, here comes an object on which the eyes of the toughs can feast. This Vanarajika, daughter of Vasantavati, is as beautiful as a flowering forest. The throng of flowers on her person is, as it were, slipping down from the temple of Kama. She has decorated her body very carefully with flower ornaments. It seems that she is on her way to meet her lover. I shall speak to her sweetly. You have accepted the gifts of the first flowers of the spring and have you not forgotten your guest? Welcome, please accept my salutations. The spring which is newly arrived has entered your body. What did you say?—'In what way?,' Then listen to me. Your hair is decked with *vasanti*, *kunda* and *kuravaka* flowers; *ashoka* flowers are attached to the ends of your braid; on your breasts are *sinduvata* flowers; mango blossoms wave delicately round your ears. O! beautiful one, holding flowers in your hands and standing thus you appear the very embodiment of the spring. What did you say?—This is a gift for you."

After meeting Vanarajika, the Vita reaches the house of the courtesan Tambulasena and calls out to her. Her behaviour indicates that she is not too happy to see him and wants to be rid of him. She had been in the company of her lover Irima and her countenance bore the marks of recent love-making. He teases her and her lover Irima and then proceeds further to meet the courtesan Kumudvati, the daughter of Bhandirasena. He sees her offering a sacrifice to the gods. She is near the outer gate feeding the crows. She is emaciated and looks tired. Her body is unadorned. Her conduct is like that of a wife praying for the safe return of her husband. He recollects that her lover has been sent out on a punitive expedition to suppress the revolt of some feudal chiefs. The Vita admires her devotion. He leaves without disturbing her.

Next the Vita comes to a garden. He hears the sound of jingling ornaments and enters it to find a young and

beautiful courtesan named Priyanguyashtika playing with a red ball. She is surrounded by her maids. They measure the upward throw of the ball while she lays her wager. It is no ordinary game but a dance in which the player moves her body up and down, then turns round, leaps, glides backwards and runs. He sees her garments fluttering in the breeze. Her earrings swing fast as she plays with the ball and flowers drop down from her locks. After counting a hundred she wins the wager and receives the congratulations of her maids.

The next objective of the Vita is Shonadasī, the mistress of Chandradhara. She is seated on the threshold of the outer gate of the house. She has wrapped herself in a soiled garment and smeared red sandal on the forehead. Her hair is tied with a ribbon. She is strumming the *vina* and singing softly. The Vita has heard of her quarrel with her lover and of their estrangement. He advises her to seek reconciliation with her lover. He quotes an example. Does not the Ganga go out to meet the sea?

The next person whom the Vita meets is Magadhasundari. When he describes her beauty he goes into raptures. She is singing softly as she waits for her lover to come. Then the Vita reaches Devadatta's house and finds that she has gone to meet Muladeva. During her absence he meets the love-sick Devasena in the garden. One of her friends promises to arrange matters in such a way that Devadatta herself will take the lovelorn girl to Muladeva. The Vita takes leave of Devasena and receives from her a faded lotus. It is a momento for Muladeva.

The setting for the *Dhurta-vita-samvada* by Isvaradatta is a pleasant rainy day. There is thunder and lightning. Clouds pour down the showers and a cool breeze blows. It is a day for love-making and reconciliation. The sun is dimmed by the overhanging clouds. The moist earth, the black bees hovering over the flowering plants, the dancing peacocks, the lush fields and the muddy rivers difficult to ford—all receive the attention of the Vita. But though the weather is pleasant, he is disturbed because he cannot go out. He seeks pleasure in the soft songs sung by his wife.

Suddenly the rain stops. Troubled by constant rain, the

house-peacocks begin dancing with glee on the palace top. The damp *vina* whose strings had snapped is now exposed to sunlight. The gargoyles are flushing out crystal-clear water. Women are now busy wiping the misty mirrors. They were confined to their rooms. Now they peep out through the windows. Their golden zones with their hard and damp knots are being re-tied. The gallants have begun taking courtesans out to the gardens. Women are now busy applying lac-dye to their feet. They are preparing to walk out in the meadows.

The Vita proposes to proceed either to the gambling den or to the quarters of ill-fame (*vesha*). He hesitates to go to the den for fear of losing everything. He, therefore, decides to visit the *vesha*. In his opinion the half-closed eyes, the sweet banter of the courtesans, the sharing of soft seats with plump girls and the gestures so common in the *vesha* could all be enjoyed by a man familiar with the pleasant ways adopted there. And he could enjoy all this without allowing himself to be snared by the courtesans. The Vita decides to leave for the *vesha* and on the way he sings the praises of the city of Pataliputra. It is a famous city known throughout the world. When men use the mere word *nagara*, this city is what they have in mind. It has lofty houses and its markets are thronged with crowds buying various kinds of goods in plenty. Its citizens are charitable and respect the arts. They are polite, straight-forward and cultured.

"Here comes the banker's son Krishnalaka. Because of his connections with the *vesha* he has obtained the fruit of his youth and has become dear to people like us. Though he is strictly guarded by his father who fears the destruction of his family, this young man somehow manages to visit the *vesha*. His body bears the marks of the pleasures of love. He is coming here. Let me approach him. Krishnalaka! Always enjoy your youth in this way. You have just come from Madhavasena's house?"

"How did you guess?"

"What is there to guess in this? The god Kama thinks it fit to invite pairs of a similar kind. Well, I am not so divorced from work that is similar to yours! Where are

you off to, leaving behind your passionate beloved?"

"What did you say?"

"How did I come to know of all this? There is nothing very complicated in all this. You wiped her face and your hand is smeared with collyrium; you fell at her feet and your hair is far from immaculately arranged. It seems that you have left your heart behind with her and have brought your body here. You wend your way with great difficulty like a ship tossed about by a heavy wind."

"What did you say? Now if I happen to meet my father and he sees me in this state he will want to give up his life."

"How hard he tried to separate you from that girl who is now thirsting for love. A father is a veritable headache for a young fellow. A man saddled with a father is not allowed even a glimpse of the gambling den. When one is gambling, one's skill leads one to higher bets. Here abuses are exchanged freely and a man of courage is often put to test. He is denied this pleasure and cannot enjoy even the fragrance of wine poured in cups shaped like dancing peacocks, and ruffled slightly by the breathing of the beloved, wine spotted by mango oil and perfumed by lotus petals."

"In bird-fights the *goshthi* divides itself into two parties and each forms itself one circle. Then the courtesans take their seats by the side of their lovers, and in their company no one minds increasing the bets. At such a time a young man with a father hardly has the freedom to lay a bet, then why speak of his acting as a juror (*prashnika*)? He cannot pursue an elephant and win the admiration of girls watching him from windows and gesticulating wildly as he displays his prowess. He is not destined to force his way on the royal road on a night made yellow by burning torches, and armed with a sword, rescue with courage his imprisoned friend. It is not possible for him to give up everything for the sake of a friend, yet all this can be borne. But these bastard fathers act as though they themselves had never tasted the pleasures of youth, and try to save their wealth by keeping their sons away from courtesans. I am tempted to make the world a place without fathers and act like Parashurama who armed himself

with an axe to exterminate the Kshatriyas. Perhaps these old duffers remained unsatiated even in their youth. Poor idiots! They do not know that fragrant as the lotus-perfumed water and as delicious as ambrosia is the taste of the courtesan's mouth. It is even capable of restoring the dead to life. Uncovered thighs, confident kisses, heaving breasts, oblique glances accompanying knitted eyebrows, a display of anger at certain intervals—all this goes with the love of a courtesan. Who is stupid enough to forget this?"

The Vita ridicules Krishnalaka when he tells him that his father wanted to get him married. "This is a matter for sorrow, for you will abandon the broad road of the courtesan in favour of the narrow lane of a wife."

The Vita now meets the crowds of Pataliputra. They are on the road. Out of courtesy they make way for him; nobody tries to detain him any longer than for the minimum time needed to exchange courtesies. He sees the lane leading to the *vesha*. The Vita suddenly remembers his own exploits in days gone by. Here he had fought with others and forcibly taken away a courtesan; here he had bolted away out of fear.

He enters the *vesha*. The air is laden with the fragrance of flowers and wines. The houses are tall with open windows on which are seated the courtesans. Incense and *agaru* smoke fill the houses and the thresholds of the side gates are heaped with flowers. One can constantly hear the tinklings of the zones and other ornaments worn by women. The Vita humorously calls the *vesha* "the head office of Kama". He calls the young maids of the courtesans "the standards of the victory of Kama". Their teeth flash and their faces are always smiling. They embellish their conversation with the knitting of eyebrows, their eyes express wonder and their gait is slow.

The *vesha* resounds with the echoes of drums. Crowds of artists walk around and heaps of flowers have been thrown by the servants at the entrances of houses. Perfumed oil is being prepared for massaging the body after the dalliance of love is over and unguent is being ground to be applied to the breasts. Delicate garlands are exchanged everywhere. *Vinas* are strummed and wine is

served.

Then the Vita meets the servant of Madanasena, and she smiles provocatively. She is wearing transparent clothes. She takes down an ear ornament and touches the lotus in the other ear. He does not allow her to pass without asking her rather embarrassing questions.

Then the Vita meets a courtesan named Bandhumatika on the doorstep of her house. She is mending her broken zone and conversing with her friend Chaturika. The Vita makes fun of her and goes his way.

Next the Vita meets a courtesan named Ramadasi who had quarrelled with her lover. He finds out the reasons for their estrangement and advises her to proceed to her lover, uninvited. She agrees to act according to his proposal.

The Vita then meets Ratusena. She is perspiring and rolling her half-closed eyes. Stray locks of hair play on her cheeks. She has just got up from her sleep. He makes fun of her, but she closes the window and dismisses him.

The Vita now meets Pradyumnadasi. Her faded cheeks, dishevelled hair, displaced *tīlaka* indicate all the signs of love-making. He describes the bites and scratchings on her body and wounds inflicted in the war of love. She was trying unnecessarily to hide them. She informs him that she is on her way back from her lover's house.

The Vita's walk ends in a visit to the house of the rogue (*dhurta*) Vishvalaka and his beloved Sunanda. They are usually behind closed doors. Vishvalaka had lost everything. He was like a naked *Digambara*. He had only his body. Though penniless, he refused to leave Sunanda. He was like a crow who refuses to cross the village boundary. With the passing away of her youth, she seems like an unwanted dry forest river. She follows Vishvalaka everywhere. It is not right to leave this pair without chatting with them. "I must shout. Who lives here? Well, I hear wooden sandals tapping the floor. They sound like the clatter of a galloping horse. This must be Vishvalaka. Yes, there is a response! Well, what did you say?"

"Who is that braying like a donkey?"

"Well, I am the messenger of death come to take away

your Sunanda."

After these preliminaries are over Vishvalaka welcomes the Vita to his house. There he talks about a *goshthi* arranged by Ramilaka. There some members raised doubts about certain problems relating to the art of love and Vishvalaka was anxious to hear the Vita's opinion on the question.

The first question was that if a courtesan's love is mercenary then how is it that courtesans were divided into three grades: the first, the middle and the third? The answer was that the courtesans of the third grade appreciated gifts and even loved without cause; the courtesans of the middle grade were pleased by the beauty of youth or gifts and courtesans of the first grade loved magnanimous and fashionable young lovers.

He is asked how one could recognize that a courtesan was excited and ready for love. The Vita recounts the following manifestations: half closed eyes, sensitive brows, words accompanied by gestures and occasional clapping, a quickly vanishing smile, the exposure of the navel and heavy and quick breathing.

When he is asked how one could distinguish a courtesan's true love and the false manifestations of love displayed by her, the Vita replies that free and true desire is accompanied by beautiful sighs and loving glances. There is a show of courtesy even after the lover has lost his money.

He is asked about restraint that is usually observed in the art of love, particularly when the partners are thus engaged for the first time. His answer is that it is due to lack of conversation and mutual distrust. In the presence of kings and wise men and during one's first contact with a young woman, the heart is afraid and one's speech is confused. And yet, the removal of these obstacles does not ensure the love of the courtesan.

When the Vita is asked why a worthless courtesan is loved and when questioned about the methods of dealing with a quarrelsome woman, his answer is that the best and wise course of action is to give the second category a wide berth.

He is asked another question. If a woman loved a man but he in his turn does not care for her, should the woman be given up? The reply is that while respecting the love of other women he should not neglect his former love.

He is asked about the ways of propitiating an offended woman; the Vita says, "The young men of our time regard touching her feet as a sure remedy. But I do not think much of this cure. In a way it is customary to touch the feet of those learned in the *Vedas*. Those are hard and wrinkled feet, shaped like an old crab and smelling of the massage of old *ghee*. Then what is so wonderful in falling at the tender sprout-like feet of girls?" The Vita elaborates further. Falling at the feet of the beloved gives rise to tears and they are the enemy of love. Nobody believes in the vows of a lover. A wife gives no credence to it let alone a courtesan. The Vita does not agree with the view that the beloved should be made to smile. The anger of the beloved has its own charm. An angry woman is pleased when the lover places her left foot on his head. In the opinion of the Vita this is a sure remedy and can assuage her anger.

The Vita is asked how one is to reconcile with a woman who is estranged because the name of another woman has been uttered in her presence. The Vita suggests lying, praising, joking and changing the topic as methods of effecting a reconciliation. In his opinion scratching and biting act as stimulants in the act of love. They are like a whip that the charioteer uses to goad on his horses.

Asked how one finds out whether a woman is in love or not, the Vita replies that a woman who is not in love laughs without cause, disengages herself from tight embraces and does not encourage love-making.

When he is asked whether there is any remedy for frigidity, the Vita replies by dividing love into two categories—love that is aroused by some cause and love that is aroused without any cause. Promiscuity, indifference, constant companionship, dexterity in conversation, praise of the beloved's relations, adventures entailing risk and danger to life and gifts revive fading love. The love of a

young girl is won through simplicity; the love of a greedy woman through money; the love of a wise woman through wisdom and the love of an angry woman through appeasement.

The Vita is asked how one can bring under control a woman who betrays all the signs of desire, yet refuses to yield herself. The Vita says that this depends on the nature of the woman. It is a strange enough fact that some women do enjoy perverse treatment.

Vishvilaka then asks the Vita which of the four kinds of love-making he himself prefers—the act of love after the abatement of anger, the act of love just after the first meeting, making love before starting on a journey or after returning from a long journey. The Vita is of the opinion that making love just after the first meeting is not a pleasant act. The couple is not intimately acquainted. Making love at the time of one's departure is not to his taste, since as a rule a woman weeps at that time. The act of love just after the return of the lover from a long journey is usually lacking in warmth. Making love after flattering women was in his opinion the most satisfactory of all. He is asked how one can avoid getting cheated by a courtesan; the Vita asserts that the best way to avoid such an experience is not to go near her. However, it is not an important matter for men of the Vita's class.

"I did not put my faith in whores whose youth has faded. I consorted even with young girls after testing them thoroughly. I kept severely aloof from girls controlled by the bawds, as far away as one stays from a river infested with alligators. I never lost my temper when I was insulted, nor did I feel elated when there was any show of respect. I have grown old in these quarters of ill-fame, but I have not squandered my wealth away."

He is asked, "If the old and new mistresses came face to face, what is to be done?" The Vita says that both should be mollified. He is asked how one can discern a woman in love even as she walks. The Vita replies that the eyes express the intensity of passion. The woman who turns her face away is difficult to win. The woman who pouts her lips, scratches her body, places her left hand on the hips

while the right hand is hanging freely is easy to win. But her pride has to be reckoned with. A woman who covers her breasts with the end of a scarf, places one foot on the threshold of the house, hides behind the door is not a woman but a veritable snare. A woman who holds on to the shutters of the door, and has the knot of her *sari* loosened is easily available. A woman who has red hands and fingers, and manicured nails, who places her hands on the cheeks and walks with a slow gait, a woman who smiles coquettishly, whose face is calm and whose *sari*-knot is below the navel is a net to snare everybody. She spearheads the attack in the war of love.

The Vita is asked whether hidden desire or openly expressed desire is to be preferred. He says that openly expressed desires lodge in a courtesan alone, but hidden desires are common to both, a courtesan and a housewife. Unlike a housewife, the courtesan is selective in her love. Some men say that since a courtesan is free to make love as she chooses, she is not required to hide her sex urges. The Vita, however, asserts that against her wishes she is forced to yield to an old acquaintance, to the king's brother-in-law and to those who flatter the bawd. It is a rare thing for a courtesan to love truly with her heart, to approach a lover personally, to suffer in his absence, to refuse to wear ornaments and manifest all the signs of love when she is reunited with him. When this happens the pleasure that follows is indescribable.

He is asked, "Between an obedient and a beautiful woman, where should the choice lie?" The Vita answers that though both are equally desirable, he personally preferred a faithful woman. A beautiful woman suffers from senseless pride. Devotion is the root cause of love.

The Vita is told that some men believe that because of their artificial manners, courtesans do not deserve to meet gentlemen. The Vita says that artificial manners are natural to a courtesan and can at times be quite pleasing.

Vishvalaka asks the Vita if he thinks that the money given to a courtesan is a total loss. His reply is that one of the purposes of wealth is the attainment of maximum joy, and that is amply provided by a courtesan. She offers

her body with blandishments not found elsewhere. Drinking, condemned by the moralist, is really enjoyable in the company of courtesans. Frothy wine poured in a cup, wine that settles below or is rinsed, wine when it is drunk serves as a relish to the lips and he who drinks such wine really enjoys the *vesha*. He who has seen her half-open eyes, her throbbing lips, her knitted eyebrows, and moist cheeks has really enjoyed life. One who has smelt her fragrant hair after the bath, her elaborate coiffure decorated with flowers, her discarded clothes, her red lips perfumed by her sweet breath, her face flushed with drinks and her body moistened with sandal-paste has been excited by love and passion. Therefore, he has to pay the courtesan for the pleasure enjoyed.

The Vita is asked if there is any stigma attached to prostitution. The Vita says that there is none. Frequent visits to the *vesha* give a man confidence, make him an expert in quick repartee and encourage him to learn the arts.

The Vita is touched to the quick when he is asked whether he considers it a sin to consort with women. He quotes certain Pauranic episodes and asserts that sexual enjoyment is better than *dharma* and *artha*.

The Vita goes into ecstasies over a girl who is on her way to a tryst. It is a dark, cold and rainy night and her movements are impeded. At that time her tinkling anklets indicate her movement. The Vita says he prefers suffering in hell for aeons, if he is wakened by the sweet sound of the tinklers, if he is given a chance to kiss her face. The rain has effaced the *tilaka* mark on her forehead and washed away the collyrium from her eyes. Her full lips throb and the mouth carries the sweet aroma of wine. A lover has no need for paradise when he can, on a clear moonlit winter night, sport in a lotus lake with a bevy of young girls whose foreheads are marked with red *tilakas*. There is unparalleled joy in a cold, fragrant winter night when a lover kisses his beloved's lips that have cracked by the vigour of the cold. One can imagine nothing more pleasant than the close embrace of the beloved in a luxurious bed and the restful sleep that follows love-

making.

"What pleasure is there in paradise which is devoid of sleep! One cannot aspire for better pleasures than the spring days when the perspiration wipes away the *tilakas*, when the *koels* begin swarming the garden, when women begin wreathing their zones, when the mango trees begin blossoming and the breeze is full of fragrance, when a woman gives up her pride and approaches the lover seeking reconciliation. The lover then finds the fulfilment of his youth. He is pressed to stay near his beloved. Her cheeks are darkened by the shadow of earrings of the *sirisa* flowers. Water pitchers, pearl necklaces, sandalwood and *khas*-fans all contribute to their pleasure. When the sun gets hotter in summer the beloved lies on a flower bed, and places her hand on her coiffure decorated with fresh jasmine flowers, her breasts smeared with moist sandal paste. Her lover passes the hot summer afternoon comfortably. He is indeed lucky who is not allowed to leave these airy rooms sprinkled with scented water and by his beloved decorated with *maulasiri*, jasmine and blue lotus flowers."

"These poor fellows follow one another like a swarm of ants on the path of death, and falsely assert the existence of the chimera of heaven, without having ever seen it. They try to grasp it by resorting to false practices such as subsisting on air alone or throwing themselves from the mountain top, or burning themselves on a funeral pyre, or counting the beads of the rosary or performing *yajna*, or by starving themselves or observing the ordained rules. They do all this to attain heaven. They do not even want to test out the truth. It is said that there are women waiting in heaven: each ordained for each entrant. If that is so, what charm is there in meeting a nymph, so different from him? What pleasure can a nymph give? Living in the company of one man forever and with no prospect of a separation? When there is no close acquaintance, the pleasures that love-making gives can never be found in the company of those women."

"It is said that there are trees and houses of gold in heaven. The gods must have accumulated this capital by habitual miserliness. If there are houses and trees of gold

in heaven, then how do the women there embellish themselves? What is so special in all this? Will the grace of the women be enhanced by a part broken off from the gold that has gone into building a house there? The pleasures which the women derive from young trees, reared and treasured like their own sons, and yielding flowers for their coiffure, can such pleasures be ever obtained from hard lifeless golden trees?" This ecstatic outburst of the Vita impresses Vishvalaka and his mistress Sunanda and they honour him in their house.

The *Ubhayabhisarika* by Vararuchi is the third burlesque in the *Chaturbham*. The stage manager recites a few love lyrics and leaves the stage. The Vita enters the stage and describes some of the beauties of spring, the *koels*, the blossoming mango, the *ashoka* trees, good wine, and clear moonlight. He conveys the information that relations between the merchant prince Kuberadatta and the courtesan Narayanadatta are strained. She is angry with him because during the musical concert (*sangitaka*) arranged by Madanasena, he discarded her and praised the other woman's performance. Kuberadatta wants to be reconciled with her and seeks the help of the Vita. At her request the Vita sets out on his mission and on his way describes the beauty of the city of Pataliputra. Its shops are well stocked with all kinds of goods and crowded with customers. Music and Vedic chants are to be heard. Heads peep out of the windows and the roads are crowded with elephants, horses, and chariots conveying high officers of the State. Young coquettish maids walk the roads, stealing the hearts of spectators.

The Vita meets in the way the courtesan Anangadatta. The signs of love-making are manifested on her body. He knows that she loves the minister's son. He is now impoverished but she continues to meet him against the wishes of her mother. She is transgressing the rules of the *vesha*. He congratulates her and Anangadatta leaves.

The Vita's next meeting is with another courtesan Madhavasena. She is walking fast and seems to be afraid of something. She is being forced by her mother to consort with a rich man whom she does not like, but the Vita

promises to set the matter right.

The Vita then meets a beautiful Hindu nun. In the ensuing dialogue terms from the Vaisheshika school of philosophy are used in a two-fold sense. There is the technical import, which has also a sexual connotation. The nun has the better of the Vita in the war of words.

The Vita takes leave of the nun and meets another interesting character, Ramasena. She is quite old. But she still resorts to coquetry and tries to imitate the ways of a young girl. She has robbed her lover of his wealth and is the cause of rivalry and enmity between young men. She is on her way to extort money from her daughter's lover. The Vita addresses her, "Ramasena! After passing on your youth and fortune to your daughter, whose house are you now trying to uproot?" Well! Oaths are her only reply!

"What did you say? My daughter Charanadasī has gone to see her lover. I am going to bring her back from there on the pretext of a musical concert! That just shows the carelessness of Charanadasī."

Then he meets a courtesan named Sukumalika. He wants to escape but she follows him and tells him that her lover, the brother-in-law of the king, had fallen in love with a coquettish servant girl. When Sukumalika objected to this he promptly fell at her feet. But true to his nature he has left her and gone to the servant girl. He now refuses to leave her. She requests the Vita to effect a reconciliation. A little later the Vita meets Dhanamitra, a merchant. Seeing him frightened and in dirty clothes, the Vita asks him whether he has been robbed of all the family wealth with which he has purchased goods for sale outside the kingdom or whether his wealth has been confiscated by the king or whether he has lost everything in gambling.

Dhanamitra tells him that his surmises were not at all correct. He fell in love with a courtesan named Ratisena. But her mother's greed stood in the way of their mutual love. He gave away almost all his money to her mother. After some time Ratisena took him to the *ashoka* garden and left him there. He was rescued from there by the guards after the garden was closed. Dhanamitra asserts that though Ratisena loved him, her mother stood in their

way. The Vita laughs at his stupidity. Wicked kings pass on the responsibility of their evil deeds to the shoulders of ministers and crafty courtesans on to the shoulders of their mothers.

After dismissing Dhanamitra, the Vita meets the courtesan Priyanguśena and goes into raptures as he extols her beauty. She informs him that a musical play named *Purandaraviṇaya* is to be enacted in the royal palace at Pataliputra and that she was invited with Devadatta to participate in it. She was obliged to the Vita for his recommendation.

Finally, the Vita meets Narayanadatta, a young maid-servant who tells him that while her mistress was in an angry mood and seated in the *ashoka* garden, surrounded by friends trying to console her, a man passed by singing a song. Narayanadatta was so pleased with the song that she promised to meet her lover. As chance would have it, her lover was on his way to propitiate her anger and met her at the door step of the *vina*-player, Viśhvavasudatta. They are reconciled and both of them express their gratitude to the Vita.

The most interesting of the four burlesques is *Padataditakam* by Shyamilaka. It is noted for its sparkling humour, repartees and its intimate glimpses of the *vesha* and of the people who visited it.

The stage manager in the beginning recites two invocatory verses to Shiva and Kama. Then he bows to the audience and praises Shyamilaka for the pains he has taken in composing the burlesque. He announces with firmness: "Away with ministers and saints stealthy as a cat or a crane! Let loafers (*dīndika*), jesters and rakes (*vita*) remain; may the assemblies of sharpers (*dhurta*) ever thirst for drinks! Hermits do not attain heaven by their loud wails; if one is destined to attain heaven, then laughter and mirth will not be an impediment! Therefore, let intelligent men forsake their sour looks and laugh wholeheartedly."

The stage manager suddenly hears a noise coming from the assembly of the rakes. It is Shyamilaka announcing on the beat of drum a victory for "the feet of the beloved."

At this point the Vita enters the stage. He is met by Madhava who informs him that Madhavasena, the chief of the courtesans from Saurashtra, has honoured the revered Taundikoki Vishnunaga by touching his head with her feet. The Vita is pleased when he hears the news. He learns further from Madhava that Vishnunaga is unable to appreciate the action of his beloved. He regards this as an insult. He loses his temper and roars with vehemence, "Fie upon you, whore! You put your feet on my head in a haughty manner without a thought for its honour. The expert hands of my mother have braided the hair on this head. When I bowed my head before my father, he exclaimed, 'What a simple boy!' He smelt my hair and the Brahman placed flowers on it, sprinkling it with the sacred water." Vishnunaga lost his temper, and Madanasena's playfulness and haughtiness disappeared. She turned pale and the flowers dropped down from her dishevelled hair. She fell at his feet and promised never to repeat the wanton act. Vishnunaga refused to accept her apology.

After listening to what had happened the Vita expresses his surprise and wonders how Madanasena could bring herself to love such a boor. But then he knows that she cared for Vishnunaga because he was the son of a minister and a high state official. She expects a substantial reward for her attention. She is a good conversationalist, but she is afraid of losing her livelihood and seems "like a royal gander, frightened by a sudden clap of thunder".

Then Madhava says that he rebuked Vishnunaga thus: "You wretched grammarian! Do not pound flowers with a pestle, do not play the *vina* with a log and do not slash with razor-like words an impassioned girl." When he hears the reprimands he leaves at once for the house of Jimuta, the chief of rakes.

"She placed her delicate hands on her cheeks and mouth and began crying. I raised her up and said: 'My beauty, a monkey does not deserve a turban, and an ass is never yoked to a good conveyance. Stop crying! The fellow is a ridiculous man. His head did not deserve such an honour'."

Hearing these words of encouragement from Madhava Madanasena smilingly retired to her bed. In the morning

Madhava reached the council of the Brahmins (*Brahmanapithika*) and found Vishnunaga already there beseeching the council to prescribe an expiation for him whose head had been touched by a courtesan's feet. The Brahmins, though highly learned in the scriptures, were unable to prescribe any expiatory rite for such a sin. Then Vishnunaga cried out and beseeched them to help him. He belonged to a good family, he was a pandit, a high official and certainly not an untouchable, and had to be saved.

The pandits remained unmoved and thought Vishnunaga was a lunatic. Some of them blamed the girl for consorting with such a fool. In that council there was a humorous young pandit who suggested a way out to help Vishnunaga tide over his difficulties. He pronounced that in cases where the law books did not prescribe any specific law, the rule of custom prevailed. Therefore, he advised Vishnunaga to seek the opinion of the assembly of the *vitas*. This solution was unanimously acclaimed and Vishnunaga left the assembly after thanking the Brahmins.

Madhava informs the *Vita* that he (the *Vita*) has been selected to invite members of the *vita*-assembly. When Madhava asks the names of the leading *vitas*, he begins by naming Madhava himself as the leading one: "You cross swords the whole day with creditors, you eat your meals at a friend's house in the evening, you dally with a courtesan at night or wield weapons, you do not have even water in your house and yet you go on with your boasts."

Madhava then asks him to define a *vita* and the *Vita* answers:

"The real *vita* is one who is unmindful of his own life; he protects his friends and enemies alike when they are in trouble. In danger, with a drawn sword he becomes his own protector. He is always in demand among the lascivious prostitutes and he distributes gifts to those in need."

Madhava then names certain prominent people among whom appear Daseraka Rudravarman, the doctor Harisnchandra, Indravarman, the ruler of the Konkan and others. When he asked whether Dayitavishnu, a poet and one of the generals of the king, came in the category of *vitas*, the *Vita* answers in affirmative. But Madhava questions him,

"How could a man who feels uncomfortable when the king favours him, who is equally pleased while he is wide awake or asleep, he whose clothes are automatically fumigated with incense while he is worshipping God and whose temples and knees are hardened with triple scars be called a *vita*?"

"He goes back and forth from the temple to the court and he spends all his time in the service of both."

"How could he be a *vita* then? He lost his fingers in brawls in the *veshas* of eastern Avanti. In Padampura his enemies planted arrows in his thigh bone. In Vidisha, an arrow shot from a mechanical bow lopped off his arm and even now he pays enormous sums to doctors for aphrodisiacs."

"He pays large amounts to courtesans and though he is almost impotent he still enjoys spicy talk about sex. Because of these things I place him at the top among the master *vitās*. It is the interest in sex that matters and not the potency."

After taking leave of Madhava, the *Vita* proceeds on his mission to invite the *vitās* to meet Vishnunaga. He takes a stroll in the markets of Ujjayini which he calls Sarvabhau-managara or an "International City". He extols its lofty buildings, resonant with music and the voices of caged birds. In its markets pour in goods from far off islands and deserts; one can meet there Scythians, Greeks, Tukharas from Badakshan, Persians, Kiratas (Tibeto-Burman) and people from different parts of India.

There the *Vita* meets the judge Vishnudasa who is an interesting character. He is being carried on a litter, draped with a white cover. He is a staunch Vaishnava; he has provided himself with a cane and a mortar. He is a judge and yet pretends to devote most of his time to meditation and religious practices. He thus neglects his official duties. In the court his fellow judge frequently nudges him to help him keep awake. The court officers standing in front cry halt and pull his leg, but he keeps on dozing like a "market-bull".

When he sees the *Vita*, Vishnudasa gets down from the litter and they talk about his mistress and how he makes

love to her. The Vita then enters Ujjayini's market. He hears the din in the metal workshops and the sounds of artisans at work. Flowers and garlands are on sale and wine is sold in the inns. Some gamblers are carrying to the *vesha* wine and meat bought from their small winnings. The Vita avoids the crowded market street, and enters the Flower Street (*pushpavithi*), leaving the drinking booths to the right, and passing the Purnabhadra crossing (*sringa taka*). Then he enters the *vesha* street and meets his friends. There he turns and exclaims:

"Who is that man accompanied by drummers, pipers and cymbalists of Yaudheya (eastern Punjab), wearing a chaplet made of *kurantaka* flowers, gathering the ends of the *chadar* and trying to stop it from slipping from the right shoulder during the dance? He twists his hips frequently and lifts the wine cup in his left hand. He makes the revellers burst into laughter. He recognizes him as Bashpa, the son of Bahlika. He is always in a drunken state. He forces his way into the pubs and begs for money from the revellers."

Proceeding a little further the Vita meets Saranigupta, an old courtesan. She was arranging the strands of her white hair and wearing freshly washed clothes. She was pulling back the *uttariya* slipping off her shoulders. Circumambulating the Makarayasthi (column) at Kama's temple, the Vita exchanges a few words with her.

The Vita then reaches the *vesha* and describes its elaborate buildings which were painted, plastered and decorated with carved surfaces. They were provided with rooms, courtyards, gardens with lotus pools, rockeries etc. Outside the *vesha* stood small carved chariots drawn by bullocks. He sees guards from Avanti dozing here and the place was guarded by Kiratas in uniform. There were also Persian horses which indicate that their owners had entered the *vesha*.

There are other scenes which the Vita witnesses. He sees tearful farewells, the fulsome flattery of the rich and the unceremonial dismissal of the poor. At one place he sees the lovers reconciled and at another place he hears sad strains on the *vina*. At one place he sees the lover help-

ing his beloved with her toilet, another lover is arranging the braid of his beloved; and a third is coaching a pet myna to imitate human speech. The Vita also sees a courtesan playing with a ball, another one throwing the dice and a third is busy painting.

He goes a little further and meets Harishchandra, a famous physician, in love with the younger sister of his mistress. When he tells the Vita that he is on his way back after treating the headache from which his beloved was suffering, the Vita makes fun of him.

The Vita then meets the overdressed Bhattimaghavarman, who resembled a well-caparisoned pony heading a marriage procession. He was the son of a commander and hailed from northern Gujarat. He had ordered the arrest of vagabonds (*dindis*) from Gujarat. They keep on pleading their innocence. When he sees the Vita, Maghavarman calls out to him: "Friend, I am waited upon by a host of chamberlains—do you regard me as a king even now? Please stop for a moment. I am coming. Look, here comes Bhatti!" He is like a ponderous bull and takes measured steps on the sand. He is an old hand. The *vesha* is a place for fun and therefore his make-up is right for the occasion."

"His hands dangle as he walks, his chest and shoulders are raised and well developed, he knits his eyebrows. This is a part of his blandishments and there he casts side glances around him. If one enters the palace casually one thinks that a *bhana* being enacted without the *vina* and a drum."

"Let me talk to him. Well Bhattimaghavarman! After enjoying yourself for a long time here, why are you making your friends anxious by leaving the *vesha*? Even a glimpse of you is welcome. The fellow laughs, his scarf flutters on his right shoulder. With breathless words and folded hands he welcomes me. He tells me that his mistress Pushpadaśī has her monthly cycle. He cannot make love to her. But these loafers from Lata (Gujarat) are no better than demons. The man from Lata disrobes himself, bathes and squeezes his own wet clothes in public. He wrings his long hair, goes to bed with unwashed feet, eats

what he likes and is not ashamed of wearing tattered clothes."

Maghavarman gives a rather unpleasant picture of his amours, and the Vita affirms that the fellow is a true vagabond, and bids him goodbye. Proceeding a little further, the Vita sees a courtesan from Kashi at her window:

"Well, who is that at the window engaged in her toilet? She seems like a nymph on an aerial car! She is Parakramika, the chief courtesan of Banaras. She is playing a *pinchhola* (mouth organ) and her spirited beauty satisfies our eyes. It is surprising—

"Tightening her breasts with a golden *vaikakshyaka*, wearing a brief garment which brings the orb'd buttocks into prominence, she agitates the hearts of her lovers and walks with a swing like a furtive shoot of the *vesha's* creeper. The Vita meets Indrasvami's man coming out of her house."

He addresses him: "O, Hiranyagarbhaka, why are you trying to destroy the temple of *vesha* with the demons of the Konkan? What do you say?"

"My master is fond of foreign goods, and therefore I have been entrusted with this work. Before this she was ready to accept five hundred gold pieces, but now she can hardly be won with a fee of a thousand and flattery to boot. Now, you help me to arrange matters."

The Vita then makes fun of Indrasvami's relationship with a flywhisk-bearer and says that Parakramika was estranged from him because of this act. A little later the Vita meets another interesting character in the person of General Bhadrayudha. The Vita observes: "He has tied his hair into a bun and wears big earrings made of white wood. He talks to his friends; his speech is amply full of *ja-ja*; he is trying to imitate the Gujaratis."

"Why is he so kind to the Gujaratis? That fellow from Gujarat wraps a scarf on both arms, girding the waist with a twisted *patka*, utters '*sh-sh*' as he comes stumbling on his feet like a hunchback."

Bhadrayudha was not an ordinary man, but a great general who had subdued the rulers of Konkan, the *Shakas* and Malawa and then returned to Bihar, establishing the

glory of the Guptas. Such was his renown that the women of Aparanta sang songs of his valourous deeds even on the far off sea coast lashed by the waves. The burden of the song was that he was great both as a fighter and a humanist.

The Vita then says, "There is a fellow painting the standard of Kama's temple. Surely, it is the work of some vagabonds (*dindis*). These scamps are in no way less than monkeys. Well, what is special about this painting that these scamps like it so much?"

"These scamps smear the finished painting and completely ruin the white wall of a house with smudges of black. With a sharp chisel they scratch out palace storeys."

He finds out that the painter is Nirapeksha, a Buddhist. He uses the technical words of Buddhist terminology and twisting the original sense he makes fun of him and asks him to get reconciled with his beloved Radhika.

He proceeds a little further and meets a man who is in tattered clothes. He resembles a ghost. He is no other than a pimp whom the Vita had seen in the house of his friends. The man says: "Gupta has ordered me to proceed on a private errand. He is ready to pay five *panas* but it is doubtful whether a courtesan will be satisfied with such a paltry advance. If I could find out a courtesan in the lane I shall certainly hand over the advance money to her. But at this time courtesans are so fully engaged that they behave like housewives and refuse even to talk of love. If I convey this unpleasant news to my master he will instantly punish me. Every rich man bears the same kind of character."

After dismissing him, the Vita meets the beautiful courtesan Surasundari. He describes her: "The hand that holds the umbrella handle is as tender as a shoot. The other hand holds on to the end of her *sari*-knot which is held fast by a zone made of glittering jewels. She tries to pull back in place the slipping silken garment. Her body is resplendent with glittering jewels, and she walks with a smile. She appears like the presiding deity of the night, graced by the moon, the stars and the twittering of birds." She at once takes her seat by his side and begins talking about

the affairs of his friend Kusumavatika and his friend, the master painter Shivasvami, who is impotent. He tries to explain away his physical defect by asserting that a preparation of *agallochum* which he took in order to reduce his fat had rendered him impotent. After the exchange of some more pleasantries with her the Vita proceeds further.

He happens to meet a group of young courtesans. With upraised heads and wavering glances, with their hands on their chests they beckoned to each other. They were returning after finishing their game of ball. Their musical instrument, the *pinchhola*, was in the shade of the houses. Suddenly the Vita bursts out in exclamation :

"Here comes a big jar rolling across or is it somebody dragging a skin bag or has some headless body stood up or are these two grain pots on their legs—what is this strange object? Now I understand—this is the wriggling body of Upagupta."

He is called the purloiner of state property, a bison and an inflated skin bag. The fellow had seduced the mistress of the reader (*pustakavachaka*). She used to serve as a *chamara*-holder to the image of Ganga and Yamuna. But the matter did not end here. The mother of the woman dragged him to the court. When he is asked by the Vita whether he had won the case Upagupta says: "The situation in the court is that the judge Vishnudasa sits and meditates; his brother Kanka accuses me of bribery and he has just punished me with a beating. On the other hand Vishnudasa scolds me and dozes in the court. There the officers, the record keeper and clerks all demand money. Even the pious who have been asking for money for some time now have just caught me."

"There I learnt this—if one has to choose between paying a Kayastha and a courtesan, it is clear that it is better to give money to a courtesan because that is bound to yield some pleasure at least."

After this encounter, the Vita meets another character named Taundikoki Suryanaga who tries to avoid him. This is because only three days ago the strumpets (*pataka-veshya*) living in thatched huts outside the city had filed a

complaint against him, and he was arrested and dragged to the court. An army officer made out a plea that he was a relative of a military officer and got him released with great difficulty. The Vita, however, refuses to let go such a wonderful opportunity and makes fun of him. When he confronts him he pretends that he had come there to enquire after the health of the former mistress of his uncle. But the Vita is not to be deceived. He knows his secret. Suryanaga in order to propitiate him falls at his feet and requests him not to broadcast the news of his visit to the quarter of ill-fame. "Well, friend, who can make the moonlight bloom? Since your falling in love with that dwarfish maid-servant of Rupadasī, your fame in the region has spread like a drop of oil in water." They continue for some time in a bantering vein and then part company.

The Vita then moves on and sees a person coming from the house of Simhalika Mayurasena (a courtesan from Ceylon). The man's shoulders are covered with an *uttariya* and he is surrounded by bodyguards from the south. They are armed with naked swords. The *uttariya* is made of printed muslin and his arrows had been fashioned in Andhradesha. His body is smeared with saffron and he holds a *pan*. When he comes closer the Vita recognizes him. He is Harishudra, a highly placed police officer and an inhabitant of Vidarbha. He has fallen in love with Kaverika and his mistress Mayurasena threatens to leave him. He tells the Vita that he has managed to placate her.

He adds: "Three days ago I was invited to a music party (*preksha*) arranged at the house of Draunalika, the Superintendent of the Courtesans (*Veshyadhyaksha*). It seems that quite deliberately Mayurasena's dance was arranged there. After the instrumental music a song was sung in praise of God. With the presentation of music, the drama began. But in the very first act blemishes were found out in Mayurasena's dance. It is impossible to find fault with Mayurasena's dancing. Who committed a mistake? Naturally, it was wine which caused the master-dancer Upachandra to make a wrong decision. Wine is always available in the chamberlain's house, but who was

intoxicated? He is accustomed to such things, but he is an expert in his subject. The entire gathering was on his side, but I took the side of Mayurasena."

"Bravo friend, you acted well. What happened after that?"

"I could not defeat them in argument. But even though the ministers did not agree with my comments on the opinion of the referees *prashnika* my support was regarded as perfectly justified and based on the teachings of scientific treatises."

"Congratulations! You bought her favours at a very unusual price."

"What did you say?"

"When Mayurasena received the prize in the presence of all the courtesans, she showered her smiles on me and with a wayward glance she gladdened my heart. Trembling with envy Kaveri made a wry face and taunted me. After these manifestations of her anger and envy, I felt like one who had missed the bank of a river and was tossed in the current of suspicion. I tidied over my difficulties and reached my house. There I began swinging on the plank of doubt wondering what either of them would do. After that my darling came and closed my eyes. Then I laughed and said, "You thief! You are an adept in closing eyes. What is the use of laughing while you keep on hiding? This unique touch of your hands tells me who you are."

"She heard me say this and exhaled a fragrant breath. She uttered the words—"Tell me, who am I?"

He then describes the thrill of joy that her touch sends through his body. She kisses him and tries to leave. He holds her: "Where are you going after stealing my heart with this kiss? You thief, I place your feet on my head, stay with me at all cost." He continues, "When I said this she sat down on the bed. I myself washed her feet." She said: "You have drunk the water of my feet, now get away. Really, you are a rogue!" After this she bequeathed her smile on me. It was like the cluster of white *malati* buds. She held with one hand her slipping zone and her *sari* and she turned her body and limbs on the bed. The lascivious girl seemed as handsome as Kama's wife. He

describes the shoulders, the knitting of eyebrows and her glances that seemed as if to scatter blue lotuses on water. She told him: "Do as it pleases you to do."

"After that I brought down from the window sill the paint pots and some fragrant earth. I was ready to paint her feet. Friend, my eyes were rapt. I was busy applying lac-dye; she raised her ankles. I had a glimpse of her thighs as charming as the lip of an elephant between the tusks and white like the pith of a plantain tree. She doubted my glance and said: 'You have not learnt to restrain your sight at such a critical moment.' Uttering these words she struck me on the chest with her foot. I was thrilled with joy. 'It is not right for you to quit before I have completed the painting of your foot.' She replied, 'Then close your eyes and finish the work of painting.' After closing my eyes I began painting her foot with lac-dye. She pulled me by the hair and imprinted a kiss on my lips. Then finding me intoxicated with joy she said: 'Like an *ashoka* tree you blossom when struck with a foot. I accept that I am defeated by your rascally ways.' She embraced me and we retired to bed and you can imagine what followed."

The Vita moves on. Then follows a picturesque description of an evening in the *vesha*. The Vita observes: "Look, the sun is about to set. The closing lotuses are looking up anxiously at the sun and bidding him farewell. The evening darkness reaches up to the top of the houses and expels the light. The sun touches with his rays the branches in the garden and hides among them. The pigeons sit on the house-tops and watch the sun trying to absorb his red light into their eyes."

And also at this time—

"The shrill twitterings of the birds betoken the cat's presence. It jumps from the window to the wall of the palace. The peacock is about to leave the palace and go to its usual roosting perch. The drowsy antelope is ready to go to sleep and has left untouched the eventide offerings of flowers on the platform. The goose emerges from the water and then takes shelter on the platform near the house tank."

"The dense smoke that comes out of the windows and fills the upper room appears like crystal dust. Black bees hum on the fragrant bathing water overflowing in the lanes."

"The main road of the *vesha* has assumed a special beauty of its own. Its big courtyard, outside the gate has been swept clean and sprinkled with water. It is decorated with heaps of flowers. The attendants are engaged in various operations. The courtesans are busy with their toilet. It is suited to their country, their ages and their wealth. The messengers of love are seen frisking away. They add charm to the place. The drunken Vitas seem to be enjoying their banter. After their bath, young men apply perfume to their bodies, enjoy their drinks and throng the crossways."

"The female elephant bends down to take up her mount. She trumpets slowly. A woman is entering the palanquin at the door. The horse is pressed by the load of the full buttocks of a courtesan. Her movements resound with the tinklings of the zone, the anklets and earrings; it is trotting forth slowly."

And also here—

"Some of the walls of the mansions are radiant and glittering with window lamps, and darkness, as deep blue as the throat of a peacock, surrounds other walls. Newly washed walls appear very elegant and white and the impression is that creepers have been painted on them with *tamala* leaves and orpiment"

"How splendid is this eventide festival held with the rising of the moon! Now the moon rises, pouring cool nectar in everybody's eyes and bringing a smile, as it were, on the faces of the lotus."

"With your reflection in the wine cup, do you want to kiss me through the round lotus leaves! Tell me, does beloved Rohini not see all this? Stop your virtuous tremblings! It seems that the moon has risen to listen to the prattle of women assembled at a drinking party and its light is reflected in the tips of their earnings."

"At one place someone is in the company of his beloved

and singing sweetly, at another place the *vina* is being strummed, and at yet another place wine is being drunk at a party."

Then follows a poetic description of the moonlight building a bridge across the waters. There is the impression of pillars in plantain groves; it seems to bleach further the white coloured mansions. It drips like wine from the tendrils. The moonbeams on the water seem like the waves of the milky ocean. Young people are mounting their horses, elephants, bullock-carts and palanquins. They sit embracing their mistresses and proceed on to the main road. The Vita sees a drunken youth riding a horse, A courtesan, riding behind him presses her breasts to his body; he turns his head and kisses her. The horse knows his way and is least disturbed by the movement of the riders.

The Vita sees one Shaka Jayanta from Saurashtra. He is in love with a prostitute from Barbara (East Africa). She is like the queen of darkness and has shining white teeth. The Vita finds it hard to believe that a man could love such a girl who has hardly any of the graces of a courtesan. "A man who hails from Saurashtra, a Barbara, and a monkey are all of the same species." He goes down the lane and sees a courtesan named Raka embracing the lover Mayurakumara. He is the brother-in-law of the ruler. She is fair and plump, while her lover is dark and thin. She wears the palmyra-earrings. The ends of her plaited hair are tied with a bouquet of gold jewels and pearls which cover the breasts and arms and come down almost to the navel.

A little further he happens to see the Grecian courtesan Karpuraturistha. She is the mistress of one Varahadasa. She has the wine cup in her three fingers and raises it to the sky; with the other hand she touches her crescent-shaped earring which casts its reflection on the cheek. That girl with the red hair and light eyes watches her reflections in the wine cup and seeks to wipe away the red of her wine-flushed cheeks believing it to be lac-dye. The Vita's opinion is that a Yavani and a courtesan, a female monkey

and a danseuse, a man from Malwa and a libertine, a musician and an ass are all of one tribe. This woman is known to the Vita, but he does not wish to talk to her for her language was full of unknown and whistling consonants. She talks like a monkey and gesticulates all the time

A little later the Vita sees a wealthy person mounted on a female elephant and accompanied by his beloved. Her scarf is fluttering against the air. The man is a well-known figure and known to all the libertines. The Vita at long last reaches the house of Bhattijimuta, head of the assembly of the *vitas*. Outside his house are assembled the conveyances of the *vitas* invited to decide on the expiation of Vishnunaga. Attendants with silver pitchers are ready to wash the feet of the invitees.

Inside the house, flowers of different hues are strewn on the floor, wreathed garlands are hung everywhere; the censers burn the incense, wine is being served and the lamps lighted. The guests are welcomed and everybody seems to be busy. Then there is music. People converse sweetly. The invitees take their seats in an elegant manner. The *vitas* are keen on joking and the courtesans are quick with their retorts. The dwarfs serving in the palace find it difficult to walk about through the flowers which lie thick. The young courtesans roll their eyes and pretend that they are hurt even by the tender petals of the *ketaki*. The rich *vitas* share their seats with their mistresses and continue their harmless banter. Hundreds of courtesans and young men walk on the mosaic floor of the assembly hall.

The Vita then explains to the assembly that they have to prescribe some expiation for Vishnunaga. This announcement gives rise to a titter among the women of pleasure. Then the Vita begins his speech:

"This Vishnunaga is like a serpent, shuddering on this earth. He beseeches us to find a formula for expiation. It is only proper that you should save his life."

"What is that you want to know? His sin? Well then listen to me: She pushes away a hair lock falling on the eyes, knits her eyebrows in anger, bites the lip, gnashes her teeth and then this proud woman, with her jingling

anklets and a red garment that is slipping down puts her foot, decorated with an anklet, on his head."

"What did you say? Name that ignorant courtesan who cannot distinguish different types of men and whose carelessness has resulted in this scandal. Well, she is Madanika from Saurashtra. It is a good thing that there is nobody else. The attitude of these *vitas* shows that they are a little confused."

"They gesticulate, they try to hide their smiles, they pretend to condemn the act. They simulate gravity. These clever rascals make out that they are compassionate, and watch others' faces. They are immersed in thought."

"Bhattijumuta, head of the *vitas*, seated here is agitated and full of compassion. "What a pity! What a pity!" He utters thus and sighs like a tired elephant. Like a cloud he begins to shed tears"

"He is calling out to me. Here I am. What is Bhatti's order? I have heard it before and now you repeat it again. For this kind of expiation one should approach the Brahmins. I am sitting here for that purpose. You get the *vitas* ready after administering the oath. Bhatti, I accept your command. Well, you people should listen—"

"He who speaks ineptly in this assembly, may he never win a wager while gambling! May he obey his mother and touch his father's feet reverently! May he live just on boiled milk and be stupid enough to be satisfied with sweetmeats for ever! And may he live content with just his own wife!"

"May he serve a teacher and quit the assembly of the rakes! Though young, may he act like a subdued old man! And in old age let him turn calm and quiet! May this fate befall the man who utters inappropriate words in this assembly!"

Well the bore Dhavaki suddenly gets up and speaks. "What did you say—" She is ignorant of the ways of love. She is to be blamed and not Taundikoki, "Please hear me." "With the touch of this foot the *ashoka* blossoms out of season, Kama aiming his arrow resides here; if such a foot has been placed by mistake by the girl on the head of the beast then that wayward girl should be asked to

expiate her sin."

You have spoken well.

"She played the lyre before that donkey; she recited a panegyric in verse in front of that monkey and she poured mango-juice in thickly boiled buffalo milk."

"But there are expiations to console the unhappy! This fellow has come here in distress. Therefore, take pity on him. Who is that grandson of a tired bull, holding his shaking head with one hand and wiping with his forefinger the drops of perspiration spreading on his temple?" He is calling out to me. "Prescribe some expiation for him! These *vidas* are scolding him."

"Who is this sour-faced fellow who has nothing of a rake in him and who poses to be the leader of the *vidas* and is busy prescribing expiation in this assembly? Well, you Mallasvami, have you heard what they are saying? What did you say? Why don't you tell them—"

"Just five days after the death of my father when his friends were in sorrow and his relatives wept and moaned I pushed aside my weeping son and enjoyed drinks with a prostitute."

"How am I not a *vita*? If that is so, then you are the head of the *vidas* by unanimous consent. Now sit down—What did you say?—That Madanasena should be made to expiate? Well I shall announce it. Why does this poet from the Shibi country breathe so hard and call to me?—Well, this is not the right kind of expiation. This fellow is a real *vita* because he visits the Vedic scholars and sells his poems for a cup of wine; the fellow was born in the Shibi country and grew old in Multan."

"If poets are selling their poems thus, then poems must have been composed with cups of wine. And this is the state of affairs in Kashi, Kosala, Bharga and Nishada."

"Let me go near him. Friend, here I am. What did you say?—"

"Like a black bee in a closed lotus, the wine gathers in the cheeks of damsel. It spurts out to make the *bakula* blossom. The wine fills the eyes with coquetry and fresh mango juice is added to it. Such wine does not deserve to be sprinkled over the head of that brute, Vishnunaga."

Here is Bhavakirti who with folded hands calls out to me and asks me to prescribe a formula for expiation. This Brahman boy is a real rake—

"This rascal threw on the ground an old shaven Buddhist nun who was clad in dirty ochre-dyed rags and who came without any apprehension in her mind to his house for food. He forced himself on her. She was frightened and tried to escape."

"Let me go to him. What did you say? This is his expiation. She should pull his hair and tie him with her zone. When she is lying down, he should be made to shampoo her feet"

"But this expiation is not quite adequate for him. This upstart Gandharvasevaka whose name is on the lips of every lowly servitor beckons me. His fingers run swiftly in manifold ways on three kinds of musical instruments. Like the shower of lotus petals his red fingers seem to be at once everywhere on their strings. When he plays the *vina* he sits by the side of the damsels in the palaces of the rich and placing the instrument on their laps he enjoys making love to them."

"Like the resonant *vina* which encourages the dalliance of lovers in the zone of the courtesans! How far removed it is from the feet of this stinking ass!"

"Now this poet Aryaka who hails from the south is prescribing an expiation for him—What did you say? That amorous woman with her playful mischievous glances ought repeatedly to strike his head with the lotus earrings."

"Hastimurkha who hails from Gandhara surpasses Aryaka in his sarcasm—What did you say?—The lotus, carved out of ivory, has been worn by her, and made even more beautiful by her glance. If the head of that brute is touched by it then the expiation will hardly serve its purpose; on the contrary he will be purified by the fragrant powder filling it!"

The cunning head of the *vitās* agrees with this. These two are calling me—"The two friends Gupta and Mahes-varadatta shine forth after their study of the poetic genius of Vararuchi."

"So let me go to them. You hairless tout Gupta! What

did you say?"

"His hair should be washed with the washing of her feet" Mahadevadatta, who is loved by his friends, gives his opinion. "He does not even deserve to drink the water that has washed her feet."

"Here is my old *vita* friend. He is from Sauvira. His words are lighted by a natural smile. He is calling me. What did you say?"

"When she removes her ornaments, her body assumes a natural grace and after her bath her damp hair hangs on her body. I can bring her here in that condition. Then this fellow should stand with a mirror and kiss the part that is touched by her glances as she arranges her hair."

But the poet Rudravarman from Dashapura opposes this. "What did you say?"—"This pandit was born in the high Koki family and is the king's minister. He should not retain hair defiled by the dust fallen from the touch of a courtesan's feet. Therefore, get his hair shaved."

"You are so kind to me." Saying this Vishnunaga begins to implore them. "Before shaving the hair on my head, I would rather cut off the head that has been insulted by the kick of that whore." The head of the *vitās*, Bhattijimuta, replies, "As hands that resound to the tinklings of the slipping bracelets, hands whose light is radiated by the nails, hands where the fingers are adorned with the beauty of rings, hands delicate as tendrils, with hands such as these no girl should touch his hair and it should be left as dishevelled as before."

And now hear the expiation prescribed for Madanasenika. "Rolling her eyes in drunken stupor, she should place one of her hands on the thigh and holding on to her zone she should favour me by placing on my head her foot decorated with lac-dye and tinklers and Vishnunaga should be a patient onlooker."

"This is the right expiation." All the *vitās* acclaim the suggestion of Bhattijimuta. "Now everybody has obliged me," says Taundikoki Vishnunaga and leaves the assembly. "The head of the *vitās* now calls me. Here I come. What did you say?—Now this is all over. What can I do for you all? Well, listen to me—"

"May the bawds clever in repartees live happily; may the income of crooks remain steady; let there always be in this city the gatherings of rakes and may there exist forever the live sports of the courtesans at eventide."

8

Courtesans in Mediaeval Kashmir

FROM THE LITERARY evidences available to us mediaeval Kashmir seems to have been a land of pleasure where courtesans plied their trade freely. It appears that the rulers of Kashmir were far from unwilling to enjoy their company. It is mentioned in the *Rajatarangini*, that king Jayapida (751-782 A.D.) in the course of his expeditions visited Pundravardhana where he went to the temple of Kartikeya to witness the dance of Kamala who performed it after the manner prescribed by Bharata. While he was seated at the temple gate, the dancing girl Kamala saw him and offered him betel leaves and persuaded him to go to her house.

Lahtapida, the son and successor of Jayapida was, according to the *Rajatarangini*, a slave to his passions; he did not attend to his royal duties. He enjoyed the company of courtesans, and squandered away riches on buffoons and parasites (*vitās*) who gained a foothold in the royal palace through their close contacts with courtesans (*bandhaki-bandhubhavana*). They initiated the king in the arts of whoredom. Whoever was well-versed in stories of courtesans and clever at jesting became his friend, but he never sought the friendship of a valiant man or a scholar. The parasites, who hurt modest old men by their jests and thus kept them away, earned his affection and received presents from him. "Clever, like a market-slave, at open mockery, he, with his company of courtesans, made the old among the councillors feel ashamed in his audience hall. He in his wickedness made councillors who were worthy of respect, dress themselves in pretty cloaks and

other garments which bore the footprints of courtesans."

Morality in eleventh century Kashmir was no better and rulers like Kalasha (1063-1089) spent their time in the company of immoral men and women. According to the *Rajatarangini* Kalasha after the death of his revered *guru* Amarakantha became the pupil of his son Pramadakantha. This new teacher instructed him in wicked practices, and made him ignore the distinction between women who were approachable and those who were not. Kalasha also made fearless and honourable pandits fall at the feet of a merchant who posed as a physician and a teacher of dyers and other craftsmen. These *gurus* and worthless characters taught Kalasha to lead a life of evil and ill-doing. There was a strolling flute-player named Chamaka who was a persistent corrupter of women. At night he was employed along with musicians who kept late hours, enjoyed sumptuous dinners and always exhaled fetid odours. They vomited undigested food. In a drunken state, one Kanaka had him bound to a post and had his nose cut off by his servants. This parasite gradually acquired the new king's attachment by acting as a procurer.

There was a stupid astrologer who lived by begging for rice. He roamed about at night and secured the help of the *Kshetrapala* of the village and became well-known in guessing the things hidden in people's fists. As a *guru*, procurer and astrologer he was most dear to the dissolute king.

King Kalasha reached a mature age and still he refused to give up this wicked mode of life taught to him by foreigners. The Takka Vulliya bought slave girls from the distant parts of Turushka. They swelled the ranks of his own wives and mistresses. He led a dissolute life and yet managed to preserve his strength by partaking of fish broth and other aphrodisiacs. He also participated eagerly in Tantric rites (*Mahasamaya*) in which he drank a great deal in the company of his *gurus*. But in this age of degeneration at a time when parasites and prostitutes held their sway, the character of Sahaja, the concubine of Utkarsha, draws our admiration. She had been attached to a temple as a dancing girl. Utkarsha had watched her dance. He admired her talents and took her to the royal

seraglio. When Utkarsha committed suicide, she entered the pyre and chose death.

Harsha (1089-1101 A.D.), another ruler of Kashmir, was a curious mixture of good and evil. He held a lovely court at night. Its splendour was increased by canopies and golden sticks. The court was attended by courtesans and ministers. It was a gathering of learned men. There was music and dancing too.

Wine and women formed an essential part of Harsha's court. Besides, he was extremely fond of splendid costumes and rich ornaments. According to the *Rajatarangini*, nobody in Harsha's court was seen without a brilliant dress and gold ornaments. In the king's palace councillors, chamberlains and other attendants moved about adorned with golden chains and bracelets.

The king introduced into his land exotic fashions of all kinds. Before his time with the single exception of the king, men kept their hair loose. They wore no head-dress or ear ornaments. If anybody transgressed the custom, he incurred the displeasure of the king. But when some of Harsha's ministers clothed themselves in brilliant garments he felt so pleased that he asked his female attendants to swing lights around them.

He also introduced the South Indian (*Dakshinatya*) fashions from Karnataka. People gathered in his assembly hall waving palm leaves. Their foreheads were adorned with big marks of sandalwood paste and they carried long daggers.

The courtesans (*vilasinyah*) in the employment of Harsha wore long garlands formed by their hair-braids into which were woven golden *ketaki* leaf ornaments; the pendants worn over their head-marks made them unsteady; they joined the corners of their eyes to the tops of their ears with a line drawn with collyrium; to the ends of their uncoiled locks were twined golden strings; with the low train of their garments they kissed the ground; breasts were covered with jackets covering the half length of their arms. They dressed themselves in male attire and resembled the God of Love.

The *Kuttanimatam* by Damodara Gupta, the chief minis-

ter of Jayapīḍa (751-782 A.D.) of Kashmir is an ambitious work. It throws light on the life of the courtesans in Kashmir and northern India. The locale of this story is Varanasi which was inhabited by metaphysicists and the worshippers of Shiva. There also lived courtesans (*varastriyah*) who were surrounded by their lovers (*bhujangah*). The flag fluttered from the high pinnacles of the temples. There were schools in the city as well as lofty houses provided with balconies. The city was populated with *sadhus* and musicians (*gandharvah*). People practised Yoga and learnt their grammar and prosody. They were exempt from the burden of heavy taxation and passed their time in the company of well-educated and soft-spoken women.

In the city of Varanasi there lived an accomplished courtesan named Malatī. She aroused the jealousy of another courtesan for she always attracted rich clients and was always at the head of courtesans (*shulah*). One day as she stood on the terrace of her house, she heard a verse which contained a warning to the courtesans. The lines told them not to be proud of their beauty but to acquire knowledge of the ways of attracting their lovers.

Malatī was impressed by this advice and at once decided to consult the bawd Vikarala who was always besieged by voluptuaries. Malatī came down from the roof of the house and accompanied by her attendant went to Vikarala's place.

Vikarala had very large teeth, a low chin and flat nose. Her breasts were shrunken, her skin had shrivelled up. She had solemn red eyes and the lobes of her ears hung down in a loose manner. There were traces of grey in her hair and her veins were quite prominent and she always craned her neck. Normally she wore washed clothes, a necklace made of herbs and of precious stones hung round her neck and a ring on her finger. When Malatī entered her room she saw her looking covetously at the presents brought by the lovers. She was seated on a chair and surrounded by courtesans. Malatī bowed to her and then took a seat at her behest.

When she found the right opportunity Malatī addressed

Vikarala thus, "Using your wits, you are able to rob Hari of his precious jewels, the Sun god of his seven horses and Kubera of his riches. The maxim 'Intelligence is wealth' is amply proved by the state of that poor lover Dhana-varma who is now clad in rags. He has his meals in free kitchens, he shuns all work. He has lost everything and is reduced to the position of a ring on the foot of Narmada. The polite Nagadatta, the younger son of Sagardatta, has left his home and is trying to win over Madanasena. Manjari playfully extends her feet towards the warrior Narasimha who massages them lightly and feels highly pleased (he has lost all his wealth). Subhadeva, son of Dikshita Bhavadeva, does not leave Kesarasena's doors even though she spurns him. Adhering to your wise precepts, even common prostitutes can manage their victims and reduce them to a state where they have to part with their clothes. Making a show of love, I have tried to lure the decrepit, the sick, the worthless and the ugly. Mother! How can I face this misfortune?—Even after selling my body, I am unable to get a lover who is desirable. Mother! take pity on me and show me creatures with whom I could make merry and teach me the ways of enslaving them."

Vikarala heard Malati's lament and then she patted her and said, "O my beauty, your hair simulates the line of smoke of burning Kama and can reduce lovers to slavery. Your slow moving eyebrows are the very basis of your coquettishness and your glances render even prettier your sweet smile. They can deprive the patient of their poise. Even a mere description of your face agitates the minds of voluptuaries. Then imagine what is likely to happen when they actually see you. Your flashing white teeth produce burning desires. Your voice surpasses the *koel's* cooings and is like a wish-fulfilling charm that attracts lovers. Your large and attractive breasts are the seats of Kamadeva. You do not need other ruses. Your braceleted arms, soft as lotus roots, arouse desire in everybody. Your waist is ready to carry out the behests of desire. It is slender and yet it reduces to nought even the big-bodied. Your hairline simulating the string of Kama's bow shoots

young men. Your perfect limbs can control your lovers and disturb the meditation of hermits. Who does not like your loins that are as smooth as plantain-trunks and can assuage all the heat of love's desire! Your supple thighs are like the golden creeper of the wish-granting tree. Who will not be pleased when he sees your feet that surpass the red of the pomegranate and the beauty of the lily! When you walk, you surpass the gait of the elephants, and you seem to mock the step of the goose and you agitate the hearts of young men. Even so, if you are keen to learn, listen to me with attention. I shall explain things to you to the best of my intelligence."

Vikarala relates to her the strategem that need to be employed to captivate a lover. She advises her first to turn her attention to Chintamani. She tells her he was a government servant and a man of independent means. Then she goes on to describe the general appearance of Chintamani. He wore a thick topknot and his falling hair measured five *angulas*. He wore *kankatika* in his earlobes, rings on his fingers and a gold chain. His clothes were pale yellow—the result of saffron applied to his body. He wore a heavy garland and necklaces. His footwear was shod with horseshoes and smeared with bees-wax and olibanum. His hair net was made of multi-coloured lace. In one of his ears he wore a heart-shaped earring (*dalavitakam*) and in the other a leaf-shaped one (*shisapatrakam*). He wore a brocaded *dhoti* coloured yellow with saffron. As he walked he was followed by a betel-tray bearer who carried a conch and a drum and whose nails were dyed red.

He sat on the stage erected by the Superintendent of Courtesans (*shuladhyaksha*) He was surrounded by bankers, merchants, rakes and four or five bodyguards equipped with swords. Chintamani sat reclining against a pillow, and his cheeks were full of *pan* juice. He cupped them in his palms. He read out senseless verses torn from their context. Not satisfied with this, he interrupted the recitations of others and expressed his approval or disapproval by patting those seated next to him. In private he told his courtiers that the Raja and his father were on terms of great intimacy. He proudly carried a pair of

scissors for he wanted to show that he could cut out stencils. Actually he had no knowledge of that art.

His servants followed him, telling him that in music he excelled Narada himself, that he had no equal in the art of war, that he could even equal Vatsyayana in knowledge of *ars amoris*. They added that hunting or hitting a target were just simple and ordinary acts for him. He was immensely pleased with these flatterers but outwardly he disclaimed their praise and told them that they were making fun of him.

Not satisfied with this flattery, Chintamani tried to parade his knowledge by asking the dance masters stupid questions about the technical aspects of dancing. At the wrong moment he removed a garland from his neck and presented it to a dancer, praising all the time the perfect technique of her dancing.

Then Vikarala groomed Malati and taught her how to entice that fool. She was at first to send to him a go-between who would describe to him Malati's lovesickness and her knowledge of all the arts including *ars amoris*.

After this cajolery was over, Chintamani was certain to visit Malati's house. She was advised to expose her body and use all the forms of coquetry. He was to be led to a well-decorated bedroom; there he was to be welcomed by the bawd. After that her relatives should quickly leave the room. Then Malati ought to converse sweetly with him and then unite in sexual intercourse. Her task was again to flatter him and tell him that there were courtesans who could not bear separation from their lovers. In that connection she was to tell him the story of Haralata who gave up her life because she could not bear any separation from her lover. The story of Haralata was then related.

In the beautiful and rich city of Pataliputra, the home of lovely courtesans and their lovers, there lived a learned Brahman Purandara. He had a son named Sundarasena who was very learned and handsome. He had a friend named Gunapalita. One day Sundarasena heard somebody recite a verse which said that not to travel to other countries and study the costumes, languages and characteristics of other peoples was verily to lead the lives of hornless

bulls. Taking a cue from the verse he at once decided to set out on a journey. His friend Gunapalita tried to dissuade him by pointing out to him the difficulties in his path but Sundarasena was very firm in his resolve and finally Gunapalita himself agreed to accompany him on his travels.

After visiting the whole world, they began their return journey. On his way to his home town Sundarasena reached Mt. Abu and was charmed with its scenery, the temples, the tanks, the gardens and the rivers. There he happened to see a beautiful girl. She was surrounded by her friends. He fell in love with her and she returned his love. When he saw Sundarasena's lovelorn condition, his friend said to the girl, "Haralata, stop this manifestation of love, for true love is not for courtesans. Do not care for this wretch, honour the rich, you simpleton! Other courtesans will laugh at you, for you seem to be unmindful of the gains and attracted by beauty alone."

He failed to convince her, and could not shake her resolve. Haralata's friend approached Sundarasena and told him of her friend's infatuation for him. Sundarasena had been warned by his friend Gunapalita of the consequences that normally followed any entanglement with a courtesan. Courtesans loved money and money alone; their show of modesty was intended to fan the flames of desire; their non-vegetarian diet and their addiction to drinks fortified them and helped them to recover from the strain imposed on them by their profession; they accepted everybody, irrespective of age or profession etc. They attracted men the way a magnet attracted iron and their toilet was a bait intended to entice their lovers.

But Sundarasena was unmoved by his friend's advice. He went to Haralata's house which was located in the quarters of ill-repute. Here follows a very realistic description of that quarter.

Here in these quarters of ill-fame a courtesan stood watching a man who had lost all his wealth. He was now entering a house and she stopped him pretending to be envious. In the morning a bundle of rags was presented by a visitor and a prostitute began to lament. A courtesan caught the glimpse of a rake who had not paid her fees.

In full fury she rushed out to catch him. A lover was seated inside the house with a bawd. The bawd, seeing a beggar at the door, asked the girl in waiting to give him some clothes. A prostitute showed the bites and scratches on her body to her friend and boasted of her love-making. A prostitute anxious to raise her fees took advantage of the rivalry between clients and vaunted her good fortune before a friend. A bawd saw a group of clients who loved the same prostitute unsheathe their swords and she looked perturbed. She rushed out and stopped their fight. A prostitute with flattering words tried to control a rich client. A frolicsome rake sang an Arya verse. A poverty-stricken lover placed his beloved in the service of a wealthy man and managed to enjoy her company in the bargain. A client unable to continue his previous relationship with a courtesan complained to her, "I fell in love with you, I left my house but you are now a stranger to me." A prostitute lodged a complaint against a lover before the assembly of old rakes for recovery of fees from a client.

Damodara Gupta also records an interesting conversation that took place between the rakes.

"Visheshaka, did you see the peacock-bracelets on the arms of Sarika? Give me a quick answer. I had given them to her." Another rake observed, "I had presented to her garments of Chinese silk and yet Vilasa speaks harshly to me. Madanika, tell me what am I to do?"

"O Kalahamsaka, Keli loves me but her ghoulish and sinful mother cannot be subdued even in a hundred years."

"O Kinjalkaka, arrange the flowers and the saffron clothes. What is on your mind? Today is the day when your beloved will dance."

"I swear that because of your money she has begun to express her love for you these last five days, but she is not really in love with you; then why do you, Kandarpaka, boast of her feelings for you?"

"O Vilasaka, if you want to survive, leave her alone, for the son of Vyaprita has his eyes on her."

"O Chandrodaya, look how haughty Kamijala is. She is using as a scarf the saffron cloth that she received as a gift in a festival and is walking with her head erect."

"I want to pass the first night with Madanasena but her mother makes exorbitant demands."

"You Vibhrama, you are drinking the wine left in the glass by the intoxicated Madanasena."

Another rake said, "Well Lilodaya, what is the matter? Whose penance has yielded you this fruit that you are enjoying now? Why have you left going to Kuvalayamala's house?" The answer was, "How could I stay at that strumpet's house without paying her fees?"

"Night, which steals the bloom of the lotus is about to fall. Manjarika, be ready to massage the legs of Tilakamanjari."

The rakes, the bawds, the maid-servants, the courtesans are all engrossed in their talk. An old bawd addresses a voluptuary and speaks to him about her daughter. "Well Makarandaka, that girl is not yet mature enough. She looks down upon other women."

A bawd tells her maid, "Kubja, go to that dance-master. Ask him what is the point in your exercising Haralata so strenuously?"

A bawd addresses her daughter, "Suratdevi, you are engrossed in teaching the young parrot human speech while your lover is waiting for you outside."

A bawd tells her maid, "Smarahila has been playing the lyre. She has tired herself and she is lying down. Go and ask Smarahila to get up. Tell her that her lover Matta has come."

A bawd addresses her daughter within earshot of the lover, "Madhavi, in spite of repeated requests you refuse to wear the jewellery presented by Vighararaja's son; what kind of waywardness is this?"

A clever maid wishes to get ornaments from the hero and addresses the bawd while he is still within earshot. "Mother, what am I to do about the careless Indralakshmi. During her drinking bout she did not realize that she has lost her earring."

A maid-servant addresses the bawd but wants the hero to hear what she had to say. "She is annoyed that her peacock has not been fed with milk and so this ill-tempered Kamasena refuses to touch any food in spite of me."

repeated entreaties."

A bawd in the absence of her daughter utters the words which are for the lover's ears. "Mukula has forsaken her leisure and rest. She is busy night and day looking after her ram. She wants it to defeat the ram reared by Shribala's son."

A bawd addresses her daughter who is engrossed in her game of ball. "Lalita, your palms are red and swollen. Please do not begin playing the game again soon."

During the first night of love-making a bawd speaks to a voluptuary: "Well Abhirama, she is getting her fees in gold for the first time; you will become the master of her life when her love is won."

A bawd addresses a new arrival: "If you like Chandralakha, then give me money in advance at once; when your desire is fulfilled then give her what you want."

A maid lodges a complaint to the bawd against a voluptuary: "Mother! the son of Vasudeva Bhatta is a mean wretch. That shameless man forcibly pulls the garments of Suratasena, and all in spite of our repeated warnings."

"The ram does not yield a strand of wool but feeds voraciously on cotton seed."

A prostitute speaks in bitter tones to her friend about her lover. "The son of Pataraja does not leave the house for a moment and, therefore, does not give any opportunity to others."

After hearing the conversation of the *vitas* and prostitutes, Sundarasena entered the house of Haralata where he received a warm welcome and both of them passed the night pleasantly.

In the morning when Sundarasena strolled about in the quarters of the courtesans he saw a few prostitutes chatting among themselves.

One prostitute, frustrated because of the lack of virility in her lover, said, "I agreed to sleep with him since I was acquainted with him. We spent the night drinking and sleeping, but there was very little love-making."

Another prostitute is fatigued by the demands of an oversexed, stupid and rough Brahman whose body was hardened by work, and perhaps no woman was available for him.

"His pretence of love-making almost killed me."

A prostitute's desires remained unsatisfied after a night spent with an old man.

"His desire hardly abates—it does not flag even for a moment; but he is weak and incapable of making love. That old man troubled me today without any rhyme or reason."

A prostitute has had a quiet sleep. "My drunkard lover lay like a corpse; he turned to the other side of the bed and spent the night in comfort quite undisturbed."

Sexual intercourse with an expert partner had left a prostitute pleased and contented. "I found my handsome lover adept in the milder ways of love-making. He was soft-spoken and witty."

A prostitute ridicules a clumsy lover. "He sat in the bed drinking and turning his face away. He kept on breathing slowly and sweating profusely. His love-play was vigorous, yet he was fully awake after the satiation of his desire. I waited for the dawn trying to cope with that rustic and confused lover."

A prostitute tells her friend, "Please listen to me. I will tell you how this yokel of a lover behaved today. As he made love to me I closed my eyes in ecstasy and the fool thought I was dead and so he bolted."

A prostitute says, "Unaware of the customs of the country, and full of wickedness some Rajput troubled us."

Disgraced by a public scandal a prostitute complains that the mayor forcibly dragged her before the city council and though it realized fees from her, it failed to administer justice.

A confidante watches a prostitute from Kerala drawing together her thighs. Her body bore the marks of nail scratches. Obviously some man from the south had just slept with her.

Sundarasena listened to the chatter of the courtesans. He made up his mind to live with Haralata. One day, however, when he was walking in the garden, he received a letter from his father. The father took him to task for this un-Brahman-like action of living with a courtesan. He asked him to come back home at once. His friend Guna-

palita also advised him to return to Pataliputra. Sundarasena decides to obey his father's command but fears that Haralata might die in his absence. At the time of departure Sundarasena and Haralata bid each other farewell in a most loving manner. She accompanies him to a banyan tree and says goodbye to him. A traveller coming from Abu overtakes them on the way and informs him that Haralata lay dead under the banyan tree. Sundarasena swoons when he hears this. When he regains consciousness he and his friend Gunapalita return to the spot where Haralata lay dead. Sundarasena and his friend perform the funeral rites and then return to the forest to lead a life of celibacy and penance.

After recounting the story of Haralata, Vikarala delivers a lecture on the selfishness and perfidy of courtesans. She describes the means they should adopt to seduce lovers.

A courtesan should simulate fatigue in the morning and praise the passion of her lover. She must entreat him to number her as his maid. After gaining the confidence of the servants of her lover, she should accuse him of trying to woo other girls, of speaking in a whisper to one or allowing his eyes to rest on the body of a third, or pulling the borders of the garment from the body of a fourth, or of using a bye-lane to meet a fifth. The courtesan should seek the help of her mother to extort money from the lover. In his hearing the bawd should reprimand her daughter for leaving the son of Bhatta Ananda who was very generous with his money, or for insulting the stupid but munificent Keshavaswami. She should scold the daughter for not heeding the attention of the Superintendent of Customs who enjoyed a steady income. Why did she throw out Prabhurata, the only son of an aged, rich and sick father? Vasudeva gave all his wealth to her and she treated him with disdain. She had kept at a distance the great painter Sarva. Did she not feel any sense of shame when she sees Chandravati wearing an ornament presented to her by the son of Madhusudana?

The house of Manmathasena flourished because of the favour of Simharaja who had looted a whole village for her. Nandasena, son of the chief of Bhattis, robbed every-

body and handed over the loot to Shivadevi. The Pasupata teacher Bhavashuddha had built a palace for her beloved Anangadevi. The king can hardly manage to get a paltry one-fourth of the tax on merchandize because Narmada, the mistress of Ramasena, the Superintendent of Markets grabs most of it. The bawd admonishes her for making fun of the impotent Prabhusvami. Ravideva accepted him for he was a favourite of the king. The bawd deliberately mentions the lover who is in the room. "How has this worthless fellow managed to get a hold on you?" She asks her, "Has he employed a charm? Is he a sorcerer?" She advises her, "A prostitute is unfit for sex life in childhood and in old age, and if she goes and falls in love when she is still young she is bound to end up begging."

The girl puts on an act for the benefit of her client. She vows that her love is so deep that she has no use for money and throwing away her ornaments she runs away. This show of love and these references to the sacrifices made by her for the sake of her lover raises the courtesan in his esteem. He remembers a courtesan who gave up her life when her lover died on the battlefield. He recalls another who committed suicide after her lover's death; a third burnt herself to death after the death of her lover, a fourth threw herself in the fire when her lover turned a monk.

He recalls the actions of many courtesans who were loyal to their lovers and who sacrificed their own wealth to save them. He decides to place his wealth at the service of Malati.

Malati in order to win the favours of a lover must tell him what a wonderful lover he is. She must try to estrange him from his wife and relatives. But if all these stratagems fail she was to instigate her supplier to come out in the presence of the lover and demand from her the money she owed him. But if even this ruse fails to move the lover, then she must ask him for money to fulfil a religious vow. She must say that she wanted to worship at a temple as thanksgiving to the goddess who has secured her lover. If all this failed she was to empty her house of all her belongings, burn them and then proclaim that she had lost everything.

The lover must be completely deprived of all he had and then Malatī must get rid of him by insulting him in the presence of servants by not allowing him to sit by her side, by making fun of him and showing her displeasure during love-making.

But even after getting rid of him she is expected to win back his favour if he managed to regain his lost fortune. In order to win his favour she was to remind him of the days he passed with her in the garden, the watersport she enjoyed with him. She must relate to him how she was forcibly separated from him. The procedure must follow the ordained rule. And it must be with a view to extorting more money from him and then throwing him out again. In this context Vikarala relates to her the story of Manjarī—a story which throws interesting light on several aspects of a courtesan's life.

The story begins with the son of a ruler named Sīmna-bhata. He is visiting the temple of Shiva at Varanasi accompanied by some friends and attendants. A silken strip covers one-third of his forehead and fixes his hair in place. His body is smeared with saffron paste. On his forehead there is an irregular *tilaka* of mustard seed; he munches betel leaves and wears earrings and a necklace; on his arm is tied a talisman set in lac and gold and on his wrist he wears a bracelet of coral and gold. He holds a cane and round his waist there is a sword and a knife. His body is draped in a soft cotton garment and his shoes crack as he walks.

An interesting conversation between the courtesans and their associates in the Gambhīreshvara temple at Varanasi is reported here. A rake is addressing a courtesan. "Is your brave friend in love with the temple dancer (*devadāsī*) attached to Gambhīreshvara temple? Well, he is bound to face frustration within three years!"

A courtesan is complaining about the talkativeness of a rake, "Suradevi, Chandravarma with his tall talks gets things done and draws the moon into his palm."

A courtesan watches a rake as he follows a prostitute and observes, "Kurangika, I see Vasusena following you, but you will learn in due course of time of his poisonous

but sweet professions "

Seeing a thug in the clutches of a prostitute, her confidante observes, "Harini, this thug Hara is proud of his roguish ways and robs everybody. He who is in the habit of writing one hundred and ten for one hundred finds himself submerged in Taralika's eddy."

A courtesan watches the behaviour of a Dandi hermit and plans to get her desire fulfilled through him. "Well, this Kushakarma holds a cushion and a staff and is draped in an ochre garment. He looks sideways for he is afraid of touching others. He is asking people to get out of his way, keeping the vow of silence, seeking the refuge of Vishnu for the sake of salvation; under the pretext of watching Shiva, he gazes at women "

A courtesan remarks on the stupidity of an amorous lover, "He steals glances; if he is found out he at once diverts his gaze. He utters some purposeful words, but when he is questioned he stammers. He does not want to leave his side, but he does not dare to be seen near her. In such a man desires preponderate, but there is hardly any brilliance."

Watching a courtesan's passion for a wealthy person, her erstwhile lover addresses her in a fit of jealousy, "Those days are gone when I enjoyed your company. Now by your relations with the Pashupata teacher, you have turned a real mistress."

A courtesan seeks out a rake. He is talking to a bevy of young girls. "Lolikadasa, until Naradevi returns from the well go on with your pleasantries in the company of these girls and keep on pulling at their garments."

After worshipping Shiva, Samarabhata takes a seat which had been arranged by his attendants. Seated before him are musicians and dancing girls and bankers. The place is full of soldiers. After he had inquired about the welfare of the merchants and bankers, a bard sings a song in his honour. The prince acknowledges this tribute and then asks the dance master why the performance had not started. His reply throws some interesting light on the life of the dancers and actors of that period. He states that one could hardly expect a good dance drama when the actress

spends her time with her lovers in drinking parties or else in expecting a new client. While she is in a theatre, an actress learns that her lover is waiting for her at home. She at once leaves the place under some pretext and goes home. Actresses are fond of meat and drink and men. They have hardly any enthusiasm for anything else. They have no interest in their art. But in spite of all this a dance master has to take the party round to earn his livelihood. Then he gives an account of actors and actresses who are to participate in the dance drama of *Ratnavali*. Manjari was to play the part of Ratnavali.

The dance drama is over and it is evident that the prince is in love with Manjari. Naturally, the messenger-girl plays her part and brings about a meeting of the lovers. But as is to be expected she robs him of his wealth.

Kshemendra (c. 900-1065) is one of the most versatile writers of Kashmir. He belonged to a very affluent family and spent large sums on religious endowments. He was a gifted poet and a literateur. He cherished the company of cultured people and was fond of music, dancing and drama. Kshemendra is chiefly remembered for his satires which are a direct criticism of the contemporary society. He ridicules the religious teachers and the popular religious cults of his time. Government officers, prostitutes and their clients, rakes and other low characters also come in for their share of criticism. In depicting prostitutes, rakes and *goshtis*, Kshemendra follows the pattern set by Damodaragupta in the *Kuttanamatam*. The only difference is that the picture presented in his works is fuller. It is evident from his descriptions that the well recognized institutions of ancient India had already deteriorated in mediaeval times. The most humorous of Kshemendra's satires is *Samayamatrika* (the Breviary of a Bawd). It deals with the life and adventures of a prostitute.

The story begins with a salutation to Kama and Kali. The purpose of the work is to offer some counsel to the courtesans and prostitutes. In the great city of Pravara-pura which was the only home of Cupid, there lived a prostitute named Kalavati. Her firm breasts, the curve of her eyebrows and the black shade of her eyes proclaimed her pro-

lesson. One day she chanced to see from her house-top a fat and sleek barber. He was bald and had glossy eyes, he cast glances around himself and was careful to avoid the betel that the courtesans spat out.

Kalavati at once signalled to him to come up. He did so. He found her in a dejected mood, her head was resting on her palm, her hair was dishevelled, her eyes were without collyrium and her lips throbbed all the time. The barber asked her why her joyful zone had ceased tingling and why no sandal paste and sandal powder decorated her body. Had her rival betrayed her to the police prefect as a receiver of stolen goods? Had her lover married someone else and deserted her? Or perhaps having once presented clothes and ornaments to her, her lover had now taken them back? Or was it possible that like some Yaksha or a knave (*tikshna*) he had begun tormenting her? Or had some cheat left her a beggar or bound her to his wishes by throwing a *Vasikarana* magic powder on her hair? Is it possible that out of sheer enmity somebody had betrayed her hidden treasure?

Kalavati replied, "Kanka, listen to my troubles. My mother Karbhagriva, the keeper of my house and my wealth, was murdered by a wretched physician who administered mercury to her. She gulped it all. But even in her last delirious moments she dreamt of gold everywhere and kept asking me to pick it up. After her death powerful yet penniless lovers haunt my house and refuse to leave it. I am unable to cope with this state of affairs. I intend to go away."

When he saw her shedding tears, the old barber said to her by way of encouragement, "Through sheer avarice you admitted to your house the physician, who spells the very death of prostitutes. When he goes out, he is like a hunter in search of prey; the rakes of their tribe salute him as the Lord of Death. Give up your sorrows and adopt a new mother for your house. A bawd in a house is like a tigress thirsting for the blood of her prey. These jackal-like lovers give her a wide berth. Not for a moment can a sharper then settle in your house and stay there like a tame cat on the hearth in winter. When you are unpro-

tected, rakes enter your house without any fear. This is the time for you to earn money because your youth once gone will not return. I advise you to adopt Kankali who knows how to bring all types of undisciplined men under her control!"

In the Second Chapter of this *Samayamatrika*, Kshemen-dra describes the life history of the bawd Kankali. She was an inn-keeper's daughter. She was born at Parihasapura (now Paraspor). She was worshipped on festival days by citizens but she repaid them for the respect they showed her by stealing their ceremonial utensils. When she was barely seven she was sold as a slave at the market place (*hattatorane*). She wore conchshell bracelets and provided herself with false breasts (*sakuta-kucha-kanchuka*) and she carried on her profession. By her blandishments she ensnared a rich merchant who dealt in saffron. Once while he was in a drunken state, she robbed him of his gold earrings. She then raised a false alarm and declared that she had been robbed. The lover was afraid of a scandal. He covered his head and fled from there.

After that she equipped herself with rich clothes and ornaments. Kankali went to live at Shankarapura (now Patan). She carried on her profession there. Her house was always crowded with clients and she usually met people in gardens, in the houses, in forests or in inns. But she was afraid of the vengeance of slighted lovers and was obliged to seek shelter in private houses. One day she kept an assignment with a lover in a temple and when he fell asleep she stole the ornaments of the goddess Gauri and disappeared.

After this incident, Kankali settled at Pratapapura (now Tapar) as the mistress of a feudal chief. She began to thrive on meat and rich foods. She assumed control of his wealth and instigated her lover to fight with his relatives. When the lover was found dead in his father's grounds, she became the mistress (*avarodhita*) of his brother. Her beauty was on the wane and she took recourse to magic and sorcery to bind her lover under her spell. By a diet of fish soup, *ghee*, and onions she

reawakened his sex appetite. When the lover incurred the displeasure of the king she left his house.

She pretended to be a widow. She clad herself in white garments and reached Sureshvari (near Isabar) and there offered oblation to the gods. But she was always on the lookout for a victim. She soon managed to capture a rich cavalier. After some time her lover died. She threatened to enter the flames of the funeral pyre. She desisted from doing so when the king promised to make her the sole owner of the dead man's property. Because of her newly acquired wealth the officers of the state began to solicit her. She chose a clerk of the royal stables and helped him to fleece the master. He robbed people the whole day, then spent the evening enjoying good food and drinks. He slept heavily and in the morning took a bath in order to overcome the night's fatigue. Taking advantage of this state of affairs she began selling his property. After his death his sons tried to dissuade her from selling the house where they had lived but she went to the court. She bribed the pleader and managed to get a decree in her own favour. Fearing the vengeance of the sons she sold the house and left the place.

Kankali's next area of operations was a Shakta monastery. She dyed her hair black and pretended that she was the wife of a merchant. She did this to raise her market value. She was arrested for receiving stolen goods. She was put into prison. But she lost no time in making friends with the jailor and ate good food like fish and cakes and drank wine in his company. One night while the jailor was asleep she set about the task of freeing herself from the prison. She bit the jailor's tongue with her teeth. The man could not cry out and he swooned. Breaking her fetters she escaped from the prison and that very same night she managed to reach Vijayeshvara (Vijbror).

At Vijayeshvara another chapter in her life opened. There she gave out that she was the daughter of a minister. Her dissipated life had aged her, but she wanted to appear young. To gain her end, she raised her flat breasts, applied thick collyrium to her eyes, tied a silken scarf to her hair and veiled her face. Those were the expedients she used to

attract clients. But one man curious to see her undressed just once, did see her and then refused to come back to her again. She now fell on evil days. She closed her house and she began soliciting men on the streets. She could no longer gain her livelihood and she joined hands with a Shaiva mendicant. They agreed to share the alms they received. In order to pass off as a female Shaiva mendicant, she smeared her body with ashes, applied collyrium to her eyes, wore a crystal and *rudraksha* necklaces round her neck and went on her begging rounds. But during a famine when the alms were scarce, she robbed her partner of some ceremonial implements and fled to Kritiyashrama.

At Kritiyashrama (now Kitshom) Vihara she posed as a Buddhist nun. She donned saffron robes, carried a begging bowl and had her hair shaved. She gave all kinds of evil counsel to housewives. She tutored prostitutes, teaching them how to ensnare their lovers. She suggested to them formulae and quick ways of reaping gains from merchants. She imparted lessons in charms for the benefit of the foolish. She was carrying on in this fashion and became pregnant. When the child was born she did not hesitate to abandon it and go away.

All these adventures in rural areas did not satisfy her. She decided to shift to the city again. As luck would have it she was employed as a wet-nurse for a minister's child. She put on a coral necklace and gold earrings and bracelets and used a shawl to drape her body. With good food her body regained its freshness. Once it so happened that as a result of her rich diet the child fell ill. The doctor prescribed light food for her and he gave her myrobalan juice. She continued to eat fish and paid no heed to the doctor's advice. She gave no thought to the welfare of the child and one night she stole its gold chain and fled.

After this she started a goat-breeding ranch in a remote district and soon became very prosperous. But heavy rains caused the destruction of the flock and she was forced to abandon the ranch and go to Avantipura. She had with her just one rough blanket. Finding herself in greatly reduced circumstances, she began to think of ways of making a living. She began buying up cakes offered to

Ganesha. She warmed them and sold them in the streets. She bought paddy from housewives tempting them with very high profits. They soon discovered that even their capital was lost. She also begged for money from house to house. Her plea was that she wanted to marry off her daughter. She used to sit outside gambling halls and sell false dice to the gamblers. She posed as a florist and received advance payments from temple clerks. Then she disappeared from the spot that very night. In the village festivals she did the work of distributing water and usually stole the bracelets of those who came to witness the theatrical performances. She pretended that she was an astrologer who could arrange marriages and detect thieves. She put on an act and people thought she was possessed by a goddess. She would forecast nothing but that did not prevent her from asking for gifts. She showed herself naked in the streets and dogs came and surrounded her. She pretended to be mad and called herself Kumbhadevi.

She began to receive offerings. A minister who believed in prophecies put his faith in her. She decamped with his silver utensils. In the festival of Takshaka she sold wine. She ran away with the silver bells of an intoxicated anchorite. After poisoning the wayfarers with *dhatūra* mixed with honey she fled to Sinhapura (Hurapur).

Now Kankali was almost on the last lap of her adventures. She married a labourer of Lavanasaranī or the Salt Path. While he slept she sought the company of others. One morning, she girdled her waist with a scarf and left the house. She carried a heavy load on her head. Then she crossed difficult paths in the mountains and snow-covered tracks. Posing as a respectable woman she arrived in the evening in a monastery situated in the Pir Pantsal Range. It was winter and she wrapped herself in a heavy blanket and soon left the place.

Kankali was an irrepressible woman. She said she was a Brahman, an expert in Vedānta, and that she had roamed all over the earth. At one place she claimed to be an adept in Yoga. In another place she gave out that she had fasted for a month and at a third place she stated that she was on a pilgrimage. She gained the confidence of fools by

saying that she was possessed by the spirit of a God by employing magical incense. She gained access to the royal palace and won the confidence of the king. She assured him that she could stupefy an army by her knowledge of magic. However, she took to her heels on the eve of the battle.

In the course of her adventures Kankali received money from many merchants. She spoke of a pilgrimage to Kedara, Gaya and Varanasi on their behalf. She pledged to them all the merit accruing from such visits. She sold at cost price to her disciples ordinary beads from China and made out that they were real *rudraksha* beads. She also said that she had the power to enter the nether world. She received money from credulous fools, and threw them into blind wells. She pretended to be a doctor with a knowledge of poisons and their action. She tied necklaces of smooth beozar stones around the necks of her patients. At all the custom-houses she managed to give officers the slip by offering them a flower which deadened their senses.

As the days rolled by Kankali made taller and taller claims. She announced to the people that she was more than a thousand years old and that she was an expert conversationalist and her knowledge of life was unique. By such claims she reduced a Thakur to the position of a dog licking her feet. Stories of her adventures spread to the lands of the Kambojas, the Turks, the Chinese, the Turgarttas and to Bengal. She won acclaim everywhere.

After roaming all over the world she decided to return to her own country out of sheer love for the place. There instead of revealing her identity, she posed as the daughter of a deposed king. She said she was an accomplished linguist and well-acquainted with the customs of the people. But the barber recognized her because of her maimed fingers and the blue mole on her forehead. He advised Kalayati to adopt her as her mother.

The Third Chapter begins with the description of the quarters of the courtesans. It was just after sunset. The smoke of frankincense and *agallochum* rose from the houses and lamps were lit everywhere. As soon as the

moon rose, a festive spirit prevailed in the whole quarter. The *vitas* hoping to get free drinks began assembling in the lanes where the houses of the courtesans were situated. The bawds stood at the doors of their houses to receive advance money (*grahana*) from clients and even the slightest sound made them alert. The bedrooms of the prostitutes were being cleaned. The courtesans were sweeping the litter left by the day clients. They were getting the rooms ready for the others. The courtesans talked among themselves, "How can you charge a second client for the whole night? The first one has already paid you."

The foreign *goondas* folding up the garments on their abdomens started to quarrel among themselves. A bawd had already received advance fees from two clients and made herself scarce when a third one approached her. Some courtesans bemoaned their fate. Their regular customers had not yet come and they had to refuse new clients. Some others flattered the lovers who had been fleeced earlier but had now become affluent again. They slandered their bawds and held them responsible for what had happened. Some other bawds were engaged in an uproarious quarrel with clients. Strumpets (*kshudra*) finding their own houses occupied by drunken clients were now on their way to the houses of their friends in the company of their lovers. Some under the pretext of calling out to the kittens were trying hard to attract their clients by their coquetry.

A strumpet was telling her mother that one of her lovers was inside the house, the second waited outside and the third had just arrived. She wanted to know what she ought to do in such a case. The night was long, and the lusty young men visiting her were quite new to the game. What was she to do? A girl unable to find a client was ashamed of herself and told the rest that she did not accept fees (*bhati*) for fear of the Muslim singers (*Mlechchha gayanah*) who wandered the streets. Some of the women feigned headache and stomachache to avoid the lovers they did not want to meet. Bawds sang the praises of those generous clients from whom they expected permanent benefit, so the clients had to increase their

gifts tenfold to match the wealth of new visitors.

Some clever bawd said that her daughter was the mistress of an officer's son who had gone out of the city and in this way she realized thrice the normal fees from some credulous fool. Another bawd observed, "My daughter is too young for you, this is not the right time, I have not seen you before." Even these words did not stop her from dragging a *vita* inside the curtain and settling the fees. Another prostitute told her friend, "The Takka (Punjabi) does not want to pay but refuses to quit. The army chief will turn against us if he does not get his chance. How is it possible to draw an allowance from the temple if the temple clerk is not allowed to visit my house?" One kept harping on her own innocence and the perfidy of others. All these protestations made the *vitās* laugh. Another prostitute in order to hurt the pride of her friends asserted that no man was admitted to her place unless he was a cultured prince.

The Fourth Chapter comprises the lessons given to Kalavati by Kankali. The Chapter opens with the description of Kankali herself. She was a skeleton, a bag of bones, ever ready to rob others. She was the perfect guardian for courtesans. Kalavati as soon as she saw her, offered her own seat, and praised her intelligence. Kankali gave her a long lecture. She rated intelligence above high birth, good looks and culture. She had no patience with stupid persons. In her speech she cited many examples of the stupidities of men and gods. According to her only intelligence and money mattered. Courtesans had to earn money in their youth. She dwelt on ways and means of earning money.

Kankali here propounded her theory of love. She at first graded love in terms of colours. "Kusumbha love" (*Kasumbha raga*) if it is cared for, stays, but vanishes if it is neglected. "Red sulphide love" (*Sindura raga*) is rough by nature and is sustained by love alone. "Saffron love" (*Kumkuma raga*) if it is light, is pleasing, but is ugly if it tends to be heavy. "Lac-dye love" (*Laksha raga*) catches when it is hot and "Magenta love" (*Manjistha raga*) remains the same whether hot or cold. "Ochre love"

(*Kashaya raga*) is stable if it is rough, but too much of love spoils it. "Turmeric love" is entirely fugitive, while "Indigo love" (*Nili raga*) is permanent.

The second category is based on metals and hard materials. "Brass love" (*Riti raga*) becomes dull with oil (*sneha*), while "Copper love" (*Tamra raga*) only shines when it is burnished. "Gold love" (*Suvarna raga*) shines when it is heated. "Iron love" is strong, hard and unbending. "Jewel love" is juiceless and transparent. "Glass love" is fragile by nature and quick at detecting deceit, while "Stone love" is ponderous and heartless.

The third category of love is based on natural phenomena. "Eventide love" is common and liable to changes; "Moon love" is likely to increase and decrease, "Rainbow love" is multi-coloured, crooked and ephemeral and "Lightning love" is wayward, dazzling and harmful to friends.

The fourth division of love is based on the senses. "Ear love" is delighted when it hears the virtues of the lover. "Eye love" desires to see beauty alone. "Tongue love" is fond of food and drinks and "Skin love" cares only for caresses. "Nose love" cares for flowers and perfumes and "Desire love" only for the satisfaction of desires. "Intellectual love" loves the virtues of the beloved and "Proud love" cares for partners of equal status.

The fifth division of love is based on animals. "Bull love" is proud in youth and "Horse love" remains content with the momentary satisfaction of sexual urges. "Chameleon love" is agitated at the sight of a woman and "Ram love" is indifferent to the pleasures of sex. "Dog love" becomes indifferent once the sexual act is over and divulges the secrets of love. "Ass love" is gross and heavy and "Cat love" is rosy and comfortable. "Elephant love" is unmindful of distress and bondage.

In the sixth division love is based on the characteristics of birds. "Parrot love" signifies love that is not deep though there is always enough pleasure in its beak. "Goose love" discriminates between the good and the bad. "Pigeon love" believes in pleasant sexual relations and "Peacock love" dances proud of its own beauty. "Sparrow love" means

quick satisfaction of sex desires and "Cock love" implies sharing the sorrows of the beloved "Cuckoo love" prattles sweetly and "Pheasant love" is intent on kissing

The seventh division of love is based on the parts of the body. "Bony love" penetrates the marrow and "Hair love" is like hair dye lasting only for a week. "Nail love" lasts only for a month and then passes off. "Tooth love" is like the redness of *pan* chewing and "Foot love" believes only in bowing down, for its concern is only with the feet.

The eighth category is based on certain decorative elements "Tilaka love" is indicative of a man of high status associated with a low class woman and "Earring love" on account of its crookedness believes in whispers

The ninth class of love is based on astrological beliefs, demonology and diseases. "Inauspicious-planet love" follows an unlucky fellow everywhere and "Ghost love" stupefies and confuses him "Epilepsy love" is cruel all the time and "*Graha* (planetary) love" seizes one in lonely streets "Yaksha love" though it is dispossessed refuses to leave

The tenth class of love is based on flowers, fruit, wine, insects, diseases etc "Flower love" is momentary and bright, *Kumbha* or "Pitcher love" wants to be joined with the lover. "Orange love" is sweet within but bitter without and "Pomegranate love" is diversified in its kind. "Wine love" is intoxicating while "Leper love" is disgusting. "Funeral pyre love" burns ceaselessly. "Black bee love" is inquisitive, while "Moth love" hovers round the lamp of a woman's love "Scorpion love" is troublesome while "Fever love" leads to fasting.

The eleventh class of love is based on certain psychological factors. "Puzzling love" is agitated, "Remembrance love" thinks of love all the time and dreams of sex. "Blood love" glows red on fights.

After describing all these classes of love, the bawd passed on a few hints to Kalavati. She told her how to extort money from clients. Naturally, she was advised to cultivate the friendship of rich men. She was to seek the company of an only son or a fatherless youth; she must concentrate on a king's clerk, a merchant, a fellow flouting his vigour,

the son of a famous doctor, a man who liked dissolute company, a simpleton, an astrologer, or a rich man proud of his learning.

At first the courtesan should act like a wife and pretend that he had a magical control over her. She should always be ready to attract him by her coquetry. She must profess a desire to have a son by him. And this show of love ought to last till the lover had been completely ruined. Then she should begin insulting him in various ways and finally get rid of him.

In the Sixth Chapter, Kshemendra describes the house of Kalavati. The time was early morning, Kalavati wore pearl ornaments with a garland attached to her top-knot. She held some *pan* in one hand and a mirror in the other. She stood on the balcony with the barber and the bawd. She was expecting clients. Kanka the barber, began describing the gestures and the movements of prostitutes as they rose from sleep. "Look at the Shaiva anchorite Lilashiva. He was suddenly awakened by the crowing of the cock. He is leaving the house of Nalini. He avoids the king's way and goes to his cloister through a side lane."

"The rakes who have passed the night pleasantly in the house of Bhadra are dividing among themselves the money left by the son of Nigrahabhata. They will buy good food and expensive things. Vasantasena sees the great rake Anangasena and goes out to meet him at the threshold. She boasts to him of the pleasant night that she had spent, though the truth is she has been all alone and unhappy."

"Raina is weeping in the presence of her mother. She is trying to hide her shame for a misfortune that had befallen her. Her armlets and earrings were broken by the *ganapala* Matanga."

"While the village officer was going out the bawd called him back and delivered a secret message to him."

"Anangalekha has gone out with Madhava. She is going to extort money from him. In front of her is a man carrying a wine pitcher; he is dragging a ram."

"Mallika had arranged to go to the garden with her lover Arjuna, but as he has failed to bring her a present, the Chinese silk robe she wanted, there is a quarrel."

"A bawd has eaten ram's meat for a long time. It used to be given to her by the Brahman Indravasu. She is now suffering from cholera and is crying for a doctor. This is all to the great delight of the rakes."

"Here is doctor Mandalagulma. During his morning round he has received areca nuts; he is ready to give a handful to Kurangaka."

"A night singer has broken the pots and pans in the house of his beloved. He is now at her feet, offering her fine muslin as compensation."

"The merchant Sambhu came here last night. It was his turn to sleep with Nanda. She has come back from the house of another lover and is now deceiving him."

"Mrinali is hiding her lover Madana. He has stolen some ornaments from his father's house. She tries to deceive those who have come to search for him and tells them that the house is empty."

"Patalika is giving a handful of grain to the fasting Brahman Atiratra and tells him when he should perform the ceremonies for the manes."

"The greedy mother stole some food from Padma, last night. She is eating it this morning because she is no longer afraid."

"The courtesan Ramani fainted when there was a hot exchange of words. Her confidantes are asking her lover Malay to give her some ornaments at once to assuage her grief."

"This *guru* is named Shambarasara. His old age is manifest in the dyed hair and the wrinkles on his face. He is driving to the house of Yoga hoping to find the ecstasy of union."

"Here goes the court officer. His clothes are dishevelled. He is a very Ketu for the populace and is known for his cruelty."

"The officer Kamala is riding a horse. His eyes are fixed on the terrace. He is looking at you."

"Kalavati stares intently at the envoy of the Malava ruler. He wears a jasmine garland and his cut and patched nose proclaim his dissolute life. The bawd Kankali spies Ranka, the son of a rich merchant. He has been brought

here by some of his good-for-nothing neighbours. The bawd asserts that a merchant's son, whose face is covered with the stains of *pan*, whose glance moves uncertainly here and there and whose red shoes creak while he walks, such a simpleton is the right sort of prey for prostitutes.' At once Kankali asks the barber to invite him to Kalavati's house

The Seventh Chapter opens with a description of spring with its flowering trees and breezes. In this pleasant season Kanka, the barber, fixed a meeting of Panka and Kalavati. Kalavati decorated her cheeks with a creeper design drawn with musk; on her forehead there appeared a *tilaka*, pearls enriched her hair, her body shone brightly and was gilded with saffron paint. She was anxious to receive her new lover Panka. All kinds of rogues watched the meeting. Panka wore a ring studded with pearls, heavy gold earrings, a talismanic necklace and silver anklets studded with lapis lazuli. His mother had placed mustard seeds in his hair. They were a kind of protective charm. His *dhوتي* had broad borders and his lips savoured of lime and betel. To Panka were presented seven *vitas*, a loafer, a clerk, a dance teacher, a weigher, an accountant and the son of a doctor.

Panka who had learnt the lessons of *ars amoris*, behaved like a grown up man. He entered the room and sat by the side of Kalavati and mechanically began telling her his jokes. Then following a previous arrangement a band of people entered and began praising Panka. Kankali introduced the members of the assembly to him. Each of them was given *pan* after the introduction was over. Among the friends and relatives of Kalavati appeared the barber, a conch-blower, a Shakta priest, the son of a revenue officer, a bar-tender, a drummer, a nurse, a gardener, a florist, a cobbler and so on. After they had munched *pan* leaves, drinks were brought in and the revels began. The *vitas* boasted among themselves, "I am the right hand of the king in the battlefield; the state is at my beck and call." "Dramaturgy owes its existence to me." "I am the issuer of wealth." "I have calculated the circumference of the earth." "I am the doctor of Bhoja (the ruler of Malava) and I have pleased the king with my verses." After the

group was dismissed Panka retired with Kalavati to the bedroom.

In the Eighth Chapter, Kalavati informed the bawd that her lover proved a very strong partner. Kankali told her that all that strength was a consequence of his wealth. However, in order to get a firm hold on him, she planned a clever ruse. In a cunning manner, she got the client to part with the ornaments he had brought with him. He left the house, taking a hidden path which she pointed to him. In order to get rid of the *vitas* accompanying him, she informed all of them that they had brought in a robber in the guise of a merchant. She said that this robber had bolted with Kalavati's ornaments. She told them that he could as well have murdered her. In the course of mutual recriminations there was such an outcry from her that the *vitas* thought it best to clear off at once.

But the bawd was not satisfied with this success. She decided to cheat Panka's father Shankha. She went to the market and saw his father there. He was troubled by the absence of his son. He was seated on a high cushion and was wearing a dirty cap, torn socks and frayed clothes. She went up to him and told him that in order to rescue his son from the clutches of scoundrels she had given him shelter in her house. There he had married her daughter. After this happy event she had decided to proceed on a pilgrimage. She wanted to deposit with him a sealed casket which contained her ornaments. To gain his trust she fell at his feet. The greedy shopkeeper thought that this was a chance to make easy money. He agreed to defray Kankali's daily expenses and accepted a dinner invitation to her house. The condition was that she should take a rupee and half as the cost of the dinner. This was because he had made a vow never to eat food paid for by others. Of course this did not stop him from enjoying a very satisfying dinner at the place of his supposed relative.

The next day when Kankali's maid went to the shopkeeper to draw the daily allowance, she was given some oil, some salt and two *cowries* for vegetables. The bawd was determined to have her revenge. She got two similar boxes made and kept stones in one, and ornaments in the

other. Taking them to the merchant she showed him first the jewel box and got money from him. But by a sleight of hand she substituted in its place the box containing those stones.

Now came the turn of Panka, Kalavati's lover. Kankali painted before him a grim picture of her daughter's future. She persuaded him to marry her and renounce all his property in her favour. When this was done she started telling him that there were many others who were eager to seek her favour. In spite of all kinds of insults Panka refused to leave the girl. So the bawd worked out a stratagem to get rid of him. One day she approached him in a great flurry and informed him that there had been a murder and that the police were after him. It was better for him to quit immediately. He did as he was told.

In the Third Chapter of the *Deshopadesha*, Kshemendra gives a true picture of a mediaeval courtesan. She is a robber of independent will, bereft of love and has desire for sex. She cares only for her own interest. She enjoys the wealth of the lowly and consorts with everybody. Greed never leaves her even when she is old. She is not interested in love. A boy, an old man and a hermit are all the same to her. She robs her clients and forfeits everybody's goodwill. Her home is a focal point for lovers; clients are coming in or going out or waiting. At her own sweet will she assumes the form of a young girl, a middle-aged matron and an old woman. She can transform a *pandit* into a fool, a rich man into a beggar and a pious man into a thief. The sex act is for money alone. She spends most of her time with an ignorant fellow drinking, relating stories or feigning sleep. She dyes her hair in old age and tries to restore her youth by eating milk products and meat. Even in old age she dresses very fashionably; covers skillfully her flat breasts, and arranges her wimple coyly. When she is ill she approaches the *gurus* for a cure and uses a talisman. She hardly believes in the sanctity of *tirthas*, she carries on her profession clad in white garments. For the sake of money she worships the gods and consults the astrologers.

In the Fourth Chapter of the *Deshopadesha*, bawds are

the targets of Kshemendra's attack. A bawd keeps guard over the treasures of her daughters, extorts money from her lovers and leads good men astray. She is indispensable to a courtesan and to earn money she calls even an old man a son. Even if she is restored to health by her relatives, she accuses them of larceny. She is quarrelsome and adept in driving away clients who have no money.

In the Fifth Chapter of the *Deshopadesha*, it is the *vita* who faces the full blast of Kshemendra's devastating wit. The *vita* is poor and worthless. Yet he is a connoisseur of the arts, sex, anger; fights and consorting with other people's wives are his chief virtues. The courtesan frowns on him; he is prone to chop off the nose of the bawd. He is not tired of wandering all over the city and though he is often ridiculed, he refuses to leave the courtesan's house. Though he often goes without a meal he poses to be rich. He wears winter clothes in summer and *vice versa*. He arranges his head cover in the shape of a serpent hood, his beard flutters in the air and while eating his *pan* he abuses people. Though he lives in a mean hut of Khasas he affects the fashion of a man from Karnataka. The old and superstitious *vita* is poor and forlorn. He wanders about in tattered clothes.

Kshemendra in his *Narmamala* (III. 54-58) describes the superstitious fears of a courtesan of his time. She invited a Kaula teacher to consecrate the *paravaghat* in her house. She was obliged to him for a magic powder which was supposed to bring lovers under her control. In the *Deshopadesha*, III. 39-49, the superstitious fears of a courtesan are emphasized. This woman was suffering from anemia because of repeated child births, but she thought she was possessed by a spirit and requested the *guru* to give her a protective charm. As a matter of fact her head, neck and arms were loaded with charms. On a sacred day she established herself at a *tirtha*. She was clad in white garments and sold her body without any compunction. She worshipped gods, listened to the interpretation of dreams and consulted astrologers. She wanted to go to Varanasi for the expiation of her sins but could not do so as the eating of onion was prohibited there. She also

believed in ghosts and alchemy.

The Second Chapter of the *Narmamala* describes how certain *vitas* conspired to win the love of other people's wives. Some of them saw the Kayastha's wife engaged in her toilet. They decided to gain her favour. They assembled in a temple to discuss ways and means of achieving their end. One of them thought that since her husband was old, it would be easy to gain her favour. A second *vita* suggested that a discussion on *ars amoris* might give them access to her place. But a third was more realistic. He observed that the Kayastha, her husband, had destroyed many ruffians and so they could not hope to face him. He told the others that his friendship with the king's brother-in-law might help them. They decided to send a Buddhist nun well-versed in magical practices to the woman. She was to act as a go-between. It was through her efforts that they could gain access to her.

The Fourth Chapter of the *Kalavilasa* (iv. 1-40) describes the arts of the courtesans in detail. It embraces sixty-four categories including proper manners in *vesha*, music and dancing, casting side glances, a deep knowledge of sex, of the wiles that can ensure a lover; the knack of double crossing a friend, drinking, love-making, embracing, kissing, shamelessness, flurry, confusion, jealousy, weeping, giving up sulking, simulating death, sweating, agitation, trembling, closing one's eyes, ceasing all movement, separation, show of unbearable affection, giving up of anger, show of a quarrel with the bawd, waiting to go to a prosperous house, scratching, stealing, talking of one's own deficiencies, simulating pain, anointing the body, simulating the menstruation cycle, coarseness, flattery of a lover who had once been thrown out but has again earned money, trips to gardens and the *tirthas*, management of the household, horticulture, hair-dyeing, devotion to monks and hermits, trips to other districts, foreign lands, harlotry etc.

It is apparent from the above list that most of the so-called "arts" delineate the psychology of a courtesan and are contrivances to entice lovers etc. It is also apparent from the list that the courtesans not only visited gardens, temples and *tirthas* in their professional capacity but even

journeyed to foreign lands to earn their livelihood.

According to the *Kalavilasa*, a courtesan offered her body to anybody irrespective of caste or creed. The only consideration was a good fee. But Kshemendra relates a story illustrating the unpredictable ways of courtesans. Once upon a time a king named Vikrama Simha was defeated by his enemies and fled with his ministers to Vidarbha. There he met a renowned courtesan of the town called Vilasavati and out of love and respect for him she placed all her riches at his disposal. The Raja praised her, but his minister recounted to him the evils of the courtesans. Vikrama Simha in order to test her loyalty feigned death and asked his "corpse" to be put on the funeral pyre. When she saw his body on the pyre, Vilasavati was ready to commit *sati*, but the Raja got up, praised her and censured the minister who had doubted her integrity.

Later on with the help of Vilasavati, the king mounted an expedition against his enemies and regained his lost kingdom. After the victory Vikrama Simha was ready to give Vilasavati whatever she wanted, but her only request was the release of her lover who was in jail for stealing. When he heard her words the king remembered the advice of the minister, but still he at once ordered the release of the thief.

A survey of prostitution in Kashmir from the eighth to the eleventh century shows that though the pattern is maintained there is greater emphasis on the sex aspects of the profession and on its perfidies. They had to practise certain arts as a professional accomplishment, but the dignity attained by the courtesans of the Gupta period was lost. Even the *vistas* who were generally accomplished in the arts and full of good humour and wit lost their former zest. They now acted as pimps and hangers-on. As a matter of fact the *vesha* culture suffered a definite decline in Kashmir during this period, and conditions were no better in northern India as the next Chapter will show.

Courtesans in Mediaeval Times in Other Parts of India

THE PATTERN OF life and of the professional conduct of the courtesans and the *vitas* was the same in the rest of India as in Kashmir. The activities of the *goshthis* went on as before. The number of prostitutes and courtesans had risen considerably and the rakes continued to act as they did in former times. Mediaeval Sanskrit literature provides us with a great deal of material on the general characteristics of the courtesans, their greed for money, their habit of exploiting their clients and the ruses employed to cheat them. We are told of their youth and beauty, their unstable character, and the risk involved in consorting with them. We are told of the ways of procuresses, pimps, barbers and of the *vitas* employed by them.

In keeping with the growth in prostitution, the number of synonyms for prostitutes also grew. Hemachandra in the *Abhidhanachintamani*, III. 532-34 gives the following names for a prostitute. The exact differences in the status of each type is not defined. They are *sadharanastri* (a strumpet), *ganika* (a courtesan), *panapanyangana* (a woman who could be enjoyed for a *pana*), *bhujishya* (a mistress), *lanjika rupajiva* (one who lived on her beauty, a demimonde), *varavadhu*, *varamukhya* (a chief courtesan), *kuttani* (a bawd) and *sambhali* (a prostitute). The quarters in which the prostitutes lived was the *Veshyashraya*, *pura* and *vesha*. The officer in their charge was known as *Veshyacharya*.

Drinking was a necessary adjunct of the *vesha* culture and, therefore, mediaeval Sanskrit dictionaries contain the names of wines, the methods of fermentation, the ingredients used etc. There were regular inns and taverns known as *shunda*, *madhuvara* and *madhukrama* and people met there to drink (*sapiti*, *sahapana*, *apana*, *panagoshtika*) in cups (*galvarka*, *chashaka*, *anuvashana*). The delicacies were *upadamsa*, *avadamsa*, *chakshana*, *madyapasana*.

A fair picture of the courtesans of this period and of the environment in which they worked is to be found in several story books, such as the *Kuvalayamala* written in 779 A.D. by Udyotanasuri at Jalod in Rajasthan; *Shringaramanjari Katha* of Bhojadeva, the famous ruler of Malwa (c. 1010-1054 A.D.), the *Nammayasundari Kaha* of Mahendra Suri and the *Manasollasa* of Somesvara written in 1131 A.D.

The courtesans and the women of the town congregating to see the royal processions, chatting among themselves and discussing the chief figure became almost a motif in literature. Such a scene is described in the *Kuvalayamala* several times. For instance, when the Prince Kuvalaya-chandra's procession reached the square situated in the middle of the town, the courtesans (*nagarakula-balika*) thronged to see him. One with heavy haunches was unable to reach the door and was angry with her friends who had already reached the spot. Others with full bosoms rushed about in a flurry. A shy girl came to the door under the pretence of watching the movements of the crowd. Some were stirred by the desire to leave the company of their elders. They were stupefied when they were asked questions. One gazed at the road and turned her eyes as though they were sewn together and at that moment her pearl necklace snapped strewing the pearls on the floor. The jewelled zone of another tinkled and another's was displaced in the rush.

Some of the girls stood facing the street, some congregated near the doors and some even came out of the doors. Some of them stood on the different storeys of the houses, others gathered in the courtyards and still others stood in the squares. As a matter of fact they occupied every position of vantage. One could almost hear their prattle.

One said, "You hussy, why do you push me around with your big breasts?" "My friend, leave my hair hanging behind like peacock feathers." "You occupying the vantage point! Push away your big golden bottom. Make room for me. You are not the only one here interested in seeing what is happening." "You slut, do not pull hard, the golden plaques of the necklace might break." "My friend, leave me alone, my earrings are broken" "You slut, victory for the prince!" "You shameless one, put back in its place the garment which has slipped from your bosom."

The prince attracted by these women observed the state to which they had been reduced. The arduous love-life and their sleepiness was reflected in their flushed appearance. Some were so intoxicated by the drinks offered by their lovers that they looked crestfallen. The condition of some was pitiable. The lovers had not kept the assignation.

One said, "Friend, the prince is like Kamadeva." The second retorted, "You fool, don't talk nonsense. Kama only troubles poor women, but the prince uproots the tusks of the enemy's elephants." Another girl said, "Friend, watch the broad chest of the prince. He appears to be Narayana himself," but yet another shouted: "If he were Narayana, he would have been dark, but his body shines like molten gold." The third said, "His beauty makes him appear like the full moon." Quick came the retort. "The moon has blemishes, but the prince has none." The fourth said: "He is Indra himself." And the other answered: "If he were Indra, his body would have been marked with a thousand eyes, but the body of the prince is flawless."

The fifth said: "He seems like Shiva." And the answer was: "Half of Shiva's body is that of a woman, the prince's body is whole and blameless." The sixth compared him to the sun and the rejoinder was, "The sun troubles the world with this heat, the Prince pleases everybody." The seventh compared him to Skanda. Quick came the retort: "Skanda's body is made of many parts, but the gods and goddesses must have fashioned the prince slowly and with great care."

The effect of the prince's beauty on the courtesans and on other women was instantaneous. Some of the women

began playing musical instruments, others recited *gathas*, some spoke out loudly and others began imitating the cries of the *koels*.

The courtesans stretched their bodies, sighed deeply and affected a kind of modesty. They laughed, they pressed their lips with their teeth; they exposed their thighs. They trembled, they scratched their ears and embraced their friends. They exposed their navels and entered their bedrooms

The *Kuvalayamala* also gives a realistic description of the conversation of the courtesans in their houses: "Hullo Pallanika, get the bedroom ready, wipe and clean the painted walls (*chittablutti*). Put camphor in the wine, decorate the flower house (*kusumamalaghara*), draw a creeper pattern (*pattalaya*) on the mosaic floor, arrange a layer of flowers on the bed, blow the incense pot, confront the songsters, prepare the *pan*, put the camphor crystals in a casket. Bring the *kakkola* pills, make ready the bed near the window, give me a waternut, bring me the necklace and the garlands, light the lamp Bring the wine in. Your hair will be immersed in the wine pot; ask for the wine pitchers to be brought, hand over the wine cups and place near the bed all kinds of foods and drinks."

The *Kuvalayamala* further notes the behaviour of the courtesans (*nayarakula-sattha*).

"Friend! My lover is expected any moment, therefore, adorn me well Leave it all alone I do not want to increase the weight of my body."

"O friend! While leaving me my lover scratched a *tilaka* on my forehead" Hearing this, her friend laughed.

Pleased at the prospect of dalliance with the lover, she grew excited and in a hurry placed the zone on the neck and her necklace round her haunches. Another courtesan whose heart was much pleased was wholly preoccupied with the thought of love. She began to apply a saffron *tilaka* on the forehead with the help of a mirror. One courtesan did not speak about her love but expressed it through meaningful glances. Another having sent a *duti* to her lover, forgot to proceed in that direction and entered her own house instead. Expecting her lover to take that

path a courtesan meditated in the darkness like a *yogi*.

Her friend observed, "You say that you are proceeding to meet your lover this day, but you do meet him every day."

"I have to go to my lover's house for the first time today." She cogitated in this fashion. Then she became more and more frightened and sorrowful.

The street was covered by a veil of darkness. She was quite flurried and the pleasure of meeting the beloved abated.

"Love is like a shield, and her faultless overtures are like a sword." Saying this one of them proceeded to the lover's house.

"The young fellow talks much about middle-aged women and is quite educated. But today I shall get him." One courtesan said this as she was about to leave the place.

"Look! The prince's necklace about which women speak so much, is round my neck." Saying these words another woman left the place.

A woman dressed in black silk stood under the full light of the lamp in the middle of the street. She seemed like a snake running away after biting a victim. Someone else full of fear seemed to be worshipping the street goddess with her blue and lotus-like glances.

To another, her confidante said: "Decorating yourself, go to your lover's room." While she was proceeding to the lover's house she met her lover on the way. She was proud of herself and returned to the house.

Somebody else found her lover sleeping soundly with another woman. She began to weep profusely and then blackening her white garment with collyrium, she left the place by a side lane.

Another courtesan was waiting for her lover. He had fixed a meeting at a particular place, but in the meanwhile some other girl posing as an old acquaintance snatched him away.

Purandaradatta, the king of Kaushambi, in order to find out for himself how prostitutes and their clients lived, walked unrecognized on the king's way and met a couple of young girls. He was curious to find out what they said

to each other. He stopped and heard their conversation. One of them said: "Why was she shaking and perspiring." The reply was that it was due to an incident described by her friend. When the lover came, all the assembled courtesans drank together and were engaged in unrestrained love-making. It so happened that the lover who had too much to drink uttered the name of another woman. At this his beloved lost her temper and there was total confusion. The lover tried to assuage her sorrow but he did not succeed and she began to weep. The lover fell at her feet but she refused to accept his apologies. After some time her friend asked the lover to hide himself under the bed. When he had done what he was told to do, her friend told the mistress that he had left her. She told her that she and the other friend were also leaving for their homes. When the girl realized that everybody had left her, she was so unhappy that she wanted to hang herself, but at the last moment the lover appeared and there was a touching reunion.

Courtesans also acted as attendants to kings. They massaged their bodies with oil, applied unguents, gave them their bath and served them their meals. In the morning auspicious chants were recited by the bawds. Then the courtesans approached the king. After the usual salutation they offered him water to rinse the mouth, twigs to clean the teeth and held the mirror in front of him. They sang auspicious songs, applied *gorochana*-yellow and mustard *tilaka* on his forehead.

Dancing girls also worked vigorously to prepare the bath of a prince. When they heard from the chamberlain the news of the birth of prince Kuvalayachandra the courtesans went to the palace dressed in their finery. The music made a huge din; coloured powders were thrown and the courtesans danced with great abandon.

The *Shringaramanjari Katha* by Bhoja (c 1010-1054) is remarkable inasmuch as the entire work is devoted to stories of courtesans. Unfortunately they are written in a very cramped literary style and the action is slow. The work is a *katha* which was supposed to have been related in the Dharagriha or the Fountain House at the request of

his friend and at a time when spring was almost over. Then follows a description of the beauty of Shringaramanjari, the favourite courtesan of Bhoja. Her hair was braided; her curved temple was smeared with sandal paste. The nose ridge was long and the tip a little raised; the large dark eyes were elongated at the corners; the eyebrows were dark and arched; the lips were red like the *bimba* fruit. The conch-like neck had a triple-line, the arms were slender like creepers and the hands like red lotuses. The breasts were plump and well-formed, the abdomen embellished by a delicate line of hair; the thighs appeared like plantain trees and her feet were like lotuses. She wore emerald earrings and a necklace, her cheeks were painted with a creeper design (*patralata*). She wore beautiful clothes, she knew the local dialects. She was skilled in the sixty-four arts and mainly in the art of love. She was bold in repartee and good at solving riddles. She was a poet, a musician, a composer of essays. She was fond of amusements and she was also a psychologist. She drank very moderately. As a matter of fact she was endowed with every quality that was desirable in a courtesan.

The bawd Vishamashila—Shringaramanjari's mother—was a courtesan (*varavanita*) in the king's service. Her body was worn out, her hair was grey, the face wrinkled, the eyes sunken. Her nose was flat and thick, the cheeks flabby, the teeth broken and protruding. She had a thick broad neck with swollen veins. Her arms hung loosely by her side and her hands were rough. Her breasts sagged. She was an expert in capturing men and in fleecing and destroying them. She enjoyed the company of drunkards. She was proficient in the arts. She could understand the psychology of men and was an expert in *ars amoris*. She could subdue an arrogant paramour and was herself very clever at deception. She understood the psychology of harlots and could effect reconciliations. She showed everything but gave nothing. Even the rakes and rogues could not manage to cheat her. Flattery, fraud and falsehood were virtues to her. She knew how to scold and instruct her daughter. She only cared for the rich and drove away

the poor. Since she was quite flabby, she could not walk much. She was proud of her wit. As a matter of fact she was very much like the bawd Kankali in the *Samayamatrika*.

One day she gave some advice to Shringaramanjari, "Child, do not be proud of your beauty. Mind the rogues. Be careful and cultivate your mind and take care of your wealth. Also learn the art of driving away certain lovers, and also effecting a reconciliation with them. Learn how to defeat these two kinds. Curious is the behaviour of the mind! The timid shows valour, the greedy becomes charitable, the miser becomes generous, the merchant acts like a *vita* and vice-versa. The working of the mind has to be analyzed dispassionately before you can deprive the client of his wealth. Listen to me. The following twelve *ragas* have to be considered dispassionately. Indigo love (*nili raga*), brass love (*riti*), sober love (*akshiba*) form one group; magenta love (*manjishtha raga*), ochre love (*kashaya*) and terracotta love (*sakala*) form the second; saffron love (*kusumbha*), lac-love (*laksha*) and mud love (*kardama*) come under the third; and turmeric love (*haribara*), yellow love (*rochana*) and *kampilya* love come under the fourth group. In the first group the *akshiba* and *riti* are subservient to *nili*; in the second group *kashaya* and *sakala* are less steady, in the third group *rochana* and *kampilya* in the fourth are less steady. The *nili* and *manjishtha* are steadfast love, saffron love does not tolerate any flattery and remains constant, while turmeric love is liable to stray."

As a matter of fact this division of love is almost the same as in the *Samayamatrika*, except that in that work the classification is even more elaborate. To illustrate each kind of love enumerated by her she narrated a number of stories, each story emphasizing the kind of love a courtesan showed.

In the story of Ravidatta the nature of indigo love (*nili raga*) is illustrated. Ravidatta was born in a Brahman family and by the age of sixteen had acquired knowledge of many arts including the art of love. One day his father advised him not to go near harlots and rogues, to eschew

music and merry-making, pleasure gardens and gambling houses. However, after the death of his parents a company of *vitas* pressed Ravidatta to go and watch the festive procession of Kama. There in a garden named Kusumakara in the temple of Kama he saw a beautiful girl and at once fell in love with her and then returned to her house. She happened to be the courtesan Vinayavati, who sent the message of love to Ravidatta through her friend Sangamika. The young man fell a victim to the allurements. He began presenting to her costly gifts and large amounts of money and completely disregarded the warning of his elders. Vinayavati took him to fairs (*yatra*) and picnics. She divested him of his wealth and rendered him a pauper. Then through Sangamika she sent him a message that merchants from the Suvarnadvipa wanted to purchase her love for a large amount of money and she asked him not to come to her place. The lover was disconsolate, but his love proved too strong and after some days he decided to visit her place. There he was insulted. He requested Sangamika to intercede on his behalf but Vinayavati refused to recognize him. In spite of all this his love persisted and he passed the rest of his days trying to get occasional glimpses of his beloved.

The second story illustrates "Magenta love". It is said that Vikramsimha a prince of Tamralipti fell in love with a beautiful courtesan named Malatika, daughter of Ekadamshttra. She was at that time the mistress of a merchant. The prince sent to her his friend with a message of love, but Malatika promised to meet him later on as she could not break the contract with the merchant. Later on the meeting took place and she received a lot of gifts from him but as she gave him offence, his love for her waned gradually.

The third story illustrates "Saffron love" (*Kusumbha raga*). It is said that in Vidisha there lived a beautiful courtesan named Kuvalayavali, daughter of Bhujangavagura. Madhava, a Brahman, who had amassed wealth from trade with Ceylon spent some days with her. That short period sufficed for her. She drained away his wealth from him. Madhava realizing that his dismissal from the

courtesan's favour was imminent, expressed a desire to proceed to Malaya in search of wealth. Kuvalayavali pretended to raise a hue and cry. The clever bawd wanted some token of remembrance from him. Madhava enraged at this show of wickedness promised to give her his only garment. He took her to lonely spot. There he cut off her nose and ears. It is said in the end that the men afflicted with "Saffron love" could be revengeful and, therefore, should be given no cause for offence.

In the fourth story "Turmeric love" is illustrated. It is related that a poor Brahman named Suradharman troubled by his poverty, reached the ocean and clad in a leather jacket (*charma chandataka*) worshipped it daily. As a result of this devotion he received the gift of an invaluable jewel from the ocean. Feigning madness, he hid the jewel carefully and reached Ujjayini where Devadatta, the beautiful courtesan of Vikramarka lived. Once while she was in search of a rich client she chanced to see the man and at once guessed that he possessed some invaluable treasure. She asked him from where he had come, the answer was that it was only known to his mother. Devadatta, however, brought him to her home, fed and clothed him and lived with him for six months. Realizing that she had guessed his secret, he decided to leave her. In spite of all kinds of entreaties from her and protestations of her deep love, he left her.

However, when he started on his journey, Devadatta asked two of her girls to follow him and meet him in a village. She told them to show him no signs of recognition. They did as they were instructed and in the hearing of Suradharman said that Devadatta had died pining for him. Realizing that he had committed a sin he returned to her house and saw her coffin. Her mother, Makaradamshtra, reviled him for his heartlessness. Thereupon, ready to give up his life he handed over the jewel to her. Seeing that the ruse was successful, Devadatta got up and welcomed the hero but after some days drove him out of the house.

In the fifth story the story of Devadatta of Ujjayini is related. Once king Vikramarka asked her how a courtesan could win a person with sweet speech and show of love.

At first she showed her unwillingness to answer the question, but when she was pressed to reply she related a recent experience. The other day a magic horse had carried her to a mansion where she was asked to act as a go-between. When she refused to do this sort of work, she was given a beating, but when she cited the name of Vikramaditya as her protector, the miscreants were frightened. They threw her from an aerial car on the parade ground and disappeared. This story naturally pleased Vikramarka who gave her rich presents.

The seventh story deals with the cheating of a bawd. It is related that once during the summer two sons of a Brahman proceeded from their home to another country. In the course of their journey they reached the Vindhya forest where their hunger pangs were allayed by two pigeons who voluntarily fell into the fire. The younger brother who ate the flesh of the pigeon was miraculously blessed and found that five hundred gold pieces were placed every day into his bag. Somehow, the brothers got separated and it so happened that the elder brother became the ruler of Magadha and the younger one happened to go to Kanchi where his lavishness attracted the attention of a greedy bawd, Makaradamshtira. She was the mother of the courtesan Karpurika. He spent many days with her daughter and she, at the instance of her mother, wormed out from him the secret of his lavish gift. She wanted to grab the entire treasure all at once, so she made the lover vomit out the female pigeon, the cause of the magical gift, and she ate up the pigeon herself.

But now the magical force had departed, and soon the lover was driven away. Then with the help of his brother, the ruler of Magadha, he returned to Kanchi to avenge himself. He entered into a liaison with the neighbouring courtesan of Karpurika and began to spend money on her. When he was asked how he had become so rich, he told her that it was due to the Siddhi magic which he had obtained at Shripurvata. Karpurika wanted to get hold of his fresh gains. She proposed an exchange between the dead body of the female pigeon and his Siddhi. He readily agreed to the proposal. He gave her the faked Siddhi. He

himself swallowed the dead pigeon and with his magical power restored it and then returned to his brother.

The eighth story deals with the adventures of the merchant Ratnadatta of Pundravardhana. He had received training in many arts and crafts. He secured the permission of his father to go abroad and earn his own living by joining the service of king Pratapamukuta. He took some money with him and a servant accompanied him. When the servant asked him how he hoped to live on such a small income, he told him that for the expenses on the journey he would depend on his skill in gambling and live on the money of the courtesans.

In the course of the journey the party reached Vidisha. There in the township of Bhailasvamidevapura lived a courtesan named Lavanyasundari. She had come to dance in the temple. She caught a glimpse of Ratnadatta there and at once fell in love with him and swooned. Her companion, Bakulika explained to the dance teacher that her friend had swooned because of a headache and Bakulika herself agreed to dance instead. When she learnt of Lavanyasundari's love for Ratnadatta, Bakulika looked everywhere for him and found him sleeping in a lonely temple.

She made out that he resembled her lost brother and invited him to go to her house. But on the way she suddenly told him that she had changed her mind and had decided to take him to her friend's house. There they passed the night making love. In the morning, however, Ratnadatta put 500 gold coins in the coverlet and left for the gambling house. In her presence he won 50,000 *dramma* and ordered the keeper of the house to present 4,000 and 16,000 to Bakulika and Lavanyasundari respectively. Thereafter distributing 10,000 in charity, he proceeded to the house of his beloved. There he announced that he was proceeding to king Pratapamukuta to serve under him. Lavanyasundari could not bear to be separated from him and decided to go with him.

The bawd watched her daughter's infatuation for Ratnadatta and she worked out a stratagem to separate the lovers. She approached the king and complained that her

daughter was being forcibly carried away by a *thug*. The king at once ordered the arrest of Ratnadatta. A police officer proceeded to Ratnadatta's place but all he saw was a handsome young youth sleeping in the lap of his beloved. The thought struck him that the bawd was perhaps a liar. He waited for Ratnadatta to get up. Impatient at the officer's delay the king sent his slaves to bring back Ratnadatta but they too waited with the officer. His patience exhausted, the king himself visited him and was thoroughly impressed by Ratnadatta. He offered him a large number of villages as a gift but the young man refused the offer and decided to proceed onwards accompanied by Lavanyasundari.

In course of time Ratnadatta reached Manyakheta and he and Lavanyasundari resided in the house of a courtesan named Chitralekha. One day while he was away hunting for a job, the king of Manyakheta happened to notice Lavanyasundari and fell in love with her. He sent a messenger to her house and asked him to bring her to him. He was told that if he failed in the task he would lose his nose and ears and even his life. Lavanyasundari heard the threat and went to the king of her own accord. The king enjoyed her company and sent her on the next day with a hundred thousand coins. She accepted the gift on one condition that she should be allowed to leave at her own will. The king accepted the condition.

On the day of Ratnadatta's return Lavanyasundari was expected to dance before the king. She asked her maid to wait near the elephant post and to show her necklace as soon as she saw Ratnadatta arrive. The maid obeyed her order and Lavanyasundari learning of Ratnadatta's arrival took advantage of the promise that the king had made to her and took leave of him.

The king was intrigued by the behaviour of Lavanyasundari. He looked out and found her ready to wash the feet of Ratnadatta. Ratnadatta had learnt from his servants all that had happened. So he stopped her from washing his feet and addressed her as mother. The king, pleased by his gallant behaviour, employed him.

The ninth story deals with the love of a courtesan for

Chaddalaka. It is related that once king Samarasimha invited her to perform the famous sword dance in the presence of his feudatories. Dressed in her best she proceeded to the court and began dancing, but when she saw that her lover was not there her steps became more and more unsteady. The dance master was worried and felt that she would fall down on the sword. So he requested the king to stop the dance. The king did so. When the girl was questioned she boldly confessed her love for Chaddalaka. She was forbidden to meet him. But she persisted in doing so

In order to drive a wedge between her and Chaddalaka, the king sent her to another youth named Sundaraka, and she fell in love with him. He wrote about all that had happened in a note book. The next morning Ashokavati was sorry for what she had done. The king showed Sundaraka's note book to Chaddalaka and he knew that the king wanted Ashokavati for himself. However, in order to test her love he asked his friend to go to her in the garb of a Pashupata saint and inform her that Chaddalaka was dead. When she heard the shocking news, she fell down dead and the lover soon died.

The tenth story describes a Brahman named Vinayadhara of Kaushambi who while on a visit to the temple of Kalapriya Deva met a courtesan named Anangavati and fell in love with her. He began to frequent her house. When he had exhausted his money, he was driven out by the bawd. Undaunted by this action he tried to get in there again and again, but with no success. In order to punish the bawd, Vinayadhara picked up a dead snake one day. Then he borrowed some money and came to Anangavati's house. Finding everybody asleep, he dropped the dead snake on the bawd's body and punched her nose and lips just to show that the serpent had bitten her. When she saw the dead snake near her the bawd shrieked and Vinayadhara ran in with a stick and struck the dead snake. He also asked the servants to rub off the holes and get rid of the poison but the bawd fearing for her life, asked them to cut off her nose and lips. For this good deed he earned the thanks of Anangavati in the morning. She was grateful

to him for saving the life of her mother

The eleventh story deals with Pratapsimha, a feudatory of Mahendrapala of Kanauj and his courtesan. Pratapsimha who had a very ugly face once spent a night with the courtesan Malayasundari. He found a child asleep in the bed and Pratapsimha wanted to know whose child it was. Though the child was her niece, she out of fear told him it was her own. When he heard this, the lover became furious and scratched her body. The bawd brought the matter to the king's notice. The king called both the parties. Pratapsimha admitted to the king that he had scratched her and complained that she had teased him. The matter was dropped.

The *Nammayasundari Kaha* by Mahendra Suri written in 1130 A.D. also throws some interesting light on the life of prostitutes in mediaeval India. It is related that in the city of Vardhamanapura there lived a rich merchant named Rishabhadata. He had a virtuous wife Viramati, and two sons, Sahadeva and Viradasa and a beautiful daughter called Rishidatta. In course of time the daughter grew up into a charming maiden. Attracted by her youth and beauty, many young men approached her father for her hand. He, however, preferred to wait till he could secure a really suitable match for her.

It so happened that at that time Rudradatta, a Shaiva merchant from the city of Kupachandra, came to Vardhamanapura carrying a lot of merchandise and stayed at the shop (*bhandagarashala*) of his friend Kuberadatta. During his stay in the city Rudradatta witnessed a great sacrificial festival (*mahamaha*). People wore fine costumes, adorned themselves with ornaments and wandered about in the city. Attracted by the hustle and bustle of the crowd, the friends went out and found the youths (*nayarajana*) enjoying themselves. The actors (*nata*) performed plays and the *rasa* dancers jumped while the *chacchari* dancers gesticulated. The people watched the show (*pikkhana*) with rapt attention.

While the show was on Rishidatta, who was splendidly decked and surrounded by friends, climbed on to the roof of the market and watched the performance. Attracted by

her presence Rudradatta asked his friends who she was. They told him her name. Rudradatta knew that he had fallen in love with her and decided to seek the permission of her father to marry her. He was told that her father had decided to give her in marriage to a Jain. Such was the power of his love for her that he changed his religion for her sake. Some of his friends doubted the sincerity of his love. As soon as the marriage was performed Rudradatta returned to his city and Rishidatta was forced to change her religion to Shaivism.

Meanwhile Rishabhadatta's daughter-in-law who was expecting a child expressed a longing to go and see the river Narmada. She visited it with her father-in-law and her husband. They built there a city called Narmadapura. After some time a daughter was born to her and was named Narmadasundari.

Meanwhile a son named Maheshvaradatta was born to Rishidatta. The years passed and Narmadasundari grew up to be an accomplished beauty. When Rishidatta learnt about her beauty and accomplishments she at once conceived the idea of marrying her son to this lovely girl though the family stood in the way. In any case a message was sent to Narmadapura and the proposal was rejected. Rishidatta was disconsolate but her son Maheshvaradatta asked her not to be so dejected and to take the rejection to heart. He said he would contrive to win Narmadasundari as a bride.

In order to gain this end Maheshvaradatta took all kinds of merchandise and proceeded to Narmadapura. He persuaded his grandfather to grant him an audience. He was welcomed by his uncle and brought to the house. When he was staying at the house of his grandfather, Maheshvaradatta managed to meet Narmadasundari in *upashraya* and expressed a desire to become a Jain. Though Rishabhadatta doubted Maheshvaradatta's profession, he still gave her away in marriage to him.

After the marriage Maheshvaradatta and his wife returned to their home town. Soon he was tired of a life of ease and comfort. So he decided to proceed to Yavanadvipa with his friend and with a lot of merchandise. When the

ship was ready to sail, Narmadasundari said that she wanted to accompany the party. She stuck to her decision in spite of the protestations of her husband. When they were on the high seas, she felt quite frightened.

One day it so happened that Narmadasundari heard somebody singing, and through listening to the sound of his voice, she managed to describe to her husband the singer and also some very intimate details connected with him. The husband, hearing her description, suspected her fidelity; he became jealous of the singer and began to think of ways of getting rid of his wife.

One day the captain of the ship announced that the ship had reached an uninhabited island which had a deep pool of sweet water. He ordered the voyagers to proceed there and bring back fresh water. Here Maheshvaradatta saw a chance of getting rid of Narmadasundari. He took his wife with him and asked her to rest in the forest till he returned. After reaching the ship he told his friends that some demon had devoured her. The ship sailed from the island and his evil design was fulfilled. Narmadasundari after many adventures managed to meet her father who brought her back home.

The descriptions of Narmadasundari's wanderings throw very interesting light on the life of a prostitute. It is said that her voyage included a trip to Babbar Kula. She was received well there. The goods were taken down from the ship; the servants put up a tent and made a bed for her to rest on. The story goes on to state that the chief source of income of the ruler of Babbar came from merchants who visited houses of ill-fame. These were situated on the outskirts of the port town (*poayathana puranam anto*).

There lived in this area a famous courtesan named Harini, who was appointed by the king to be the head of all prostitutes. She received their earnings and she paid one-third or one-fourth of these earnings to the king.

When she learnt of the arrival of the merchant Viradasa, she sent him, through her maids, a present of clothes. The maids invited him to visit their mistress as a guest. Viradasa, however, courteously declined the offer but in return sent her eight hundred silver *drammas*. Harini felt insulted

and returned the money. She insisted that she did not care for money but desired him. But when he again refused her invitation, she sent some strumpets (*bhujja*) and some clever maids to lure him. At Viradasa's place they happened to see Narmadasundari and were struck by her beauty. The maids again begged Viradasa to visit their mistress. The advice of his friends was that there could be no harm in visiting her merely for amusement. So he sent her a letter accepting her invitation.

In the meanwhile, the maids returned to their mistress Harini and told her of the beauty of Narmadasundari. Harini decided to abduct her and confine her in an underground cellar. Having made the decision, Harini made preparations to receive Viradasa. She anointed her body with perfumed oil, and got it massaged by her maids. She bathed and dressed herself in costly garments. She wore garlands and finally applied scent to her body. After meeting him and gaining his confidence, she persuaded him to give her his signet ring. The maids of Harini took this ring to Narmadasundari and asked her to go in haste to visit Harini's house, where Viradasa lay desperately ill. They said that he had sent her this signet ring to convince her of the truthfulness of their statement. At first she hesitated but finally agreed to go. They put their plan into action and locked her up in an underground cellar. She lay there weeping and bemoaning her fate.

When Viradasa returned to the tent where his wife Narmadasundari was staying, he did not find her there. He made inquiries about her, but they were all to no purpose. He approached the king but there again he found no help.

Harini continued with her intrigue. She told Narmadasundari that Viradasa had not paid what he owed her. As soon as the money was paid off, she would release her. Narmadasundari was disconsolate. She refused to touch any food but later on was persuaded to eat. Some time later Harini told Narmadasundari that as the dues were not settled, she had to remain in captivity. Harini proposed to her that she should lead the life of a courtesan. Seeing that there was no other alternative before her, Narmadasundari made an outward show of agreeing to the proposal.

Harini made a long speech eulogizing the profession of a courtesan. According to her it gave freedom, wine flowed towards her, people danced to her commands and it brought money and precious gifts. All that she had to do was to pass on half of her income to the chief courtesan, out of which again she paid one fourth as taxes to the king.

Naturally, Narmadasundari refused to accept her offer and the enraged Harini decided to torment her. Besides inflicting bodily punishments on her, she even went to the extent of asking one of her clients to rape her. When Narmadasundari was tortured thus, a kind-hearted prostitute came to her rescue.

At this critical juncture, it so happened that Harini died suddenly. The ruler was informed of this. At his order the *panchayat* was summoned and was asked to select a beautiful and charming woman to serve as the head of the courtesans. All the courtesans attended dressed in their best, but the members of the *panchayat* took no notice of them. They, however, looked at Narmadasundari and at once appointed her the chief courtesan. She, however, maintained the purity of her character and in the end she became a Jain nun.

In addition to describing the usual features of a courtesan's life, the story of Narmadasundari lays stress on two important points. Firstly, prostitution was a recognized profession, approved by the state which itself received from prostitutes about twenty-five to thirty-three per cent of their income in the form of taxes. Secondly, the post of the chief courtesan was an elective one and the *panchayat* at the behest of the king conducted the election.

The remarks of Alberuni (about 1030 A.D.) and Edrisi on the subject of prostitution in mediaeval India are interesting. Alberuni observes :

In reality, the matter is not as people think, but it is rather this, that the Hindus are not very severe in punishing whoredom. The fault, however, in this lies with the kings, not with the nation. But for this, no Brahman or priest would suffer in their idol-temples the

women who sing, dance, and play. The kings make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects, for no other but financial reasons. By the revenues which they derive from the business both as fines and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army.

The famous Arab geographer Edrisi observes that the king of Serendeb bought the wine of Iraq and Fars which he sold in his state for he liked to drink wine and he prohibited prostitution. He adds that the kings of India prohibited the use of liquor but permitted prostitution. The king of Khor, however, permitted both.

Abu Zayd and others clearly state that the earnings of the courtesans who were attached to the temples were surrendered to the priests or to the other authorities of the temples for defraying the expenses of worship. Professor Sastri does not agree with this statement. Whatever may be said about the priests receiving money from the *devadasis*, the king (as was mentioned in the *Nammaya-sundari Kaha*) definitely received his share from the courtesans.

The *Hudud Alam*, however, does not speak of the courtesans parting with any part of their income and giving it to the priests or to the king. He only mentions that outside the gate of Ramayan, a dependency of Multan, there stood a temple with a copper idol inlaid with gold and held in great reverence. Every day thirty dancing girls went round the idol with drums and tambourines and danced.

The Vijayanagar empire, as late as the fifteenth century, organized prostitution for the benefit of the state. Abdur Razzak visiting Vijayanagar in 1442 A.D. observes:

"Opposite the *darab-Khanch* (the mint) is the house of the Governor, where are stationed twelve thousand soldiers as a guard, who receive every day a payment of twelve thousand *fanom*, live on the receipts of the houses of prostitution. The magnificence of the palaces of this king, the beauty of the young girls collected therein, their allurements, and their coquetry surpass all description. I will

confine myself to the description of some particulars. Behind the *darab-Khaneh* is a sort of bazar, which is more than three hundred *gaz* in length and more than twenty in breadth. On the two sides are ranged chambers and *estrades*; in front of these are erected in the form of thrones several platforms constructed in beautiful stones. On the two sides of the avenue formed by the chambers are represented figures of lions, panthers, tigers, and other animals. All are so well drawn, and their movements have so natural an appearance, that you would think that these animals were alive. Immediately after the midday prayer they place before the doors of the chambers, which are decorated with extreme magnificence, thrones and chairs on which the courtesans seat themselves. Each of these women is bedecked with pearls and gems of great value, and is dressed in costly raiments. They are all extremely young and of perfect beauty. Each of them has by her side two young slaves, who give the signal of pleasure, and have the charge of attending to everything which can contribute to amusements. Any man may enter their locality, and select any girl that pleases him, and take his pleasure with her. Anything that he carries with him is delivered into the keeping of those engaged in the service of the houses of prostitution, and if anything is lost, these latter are responsible for it."

"On the seventh day of the Mahanavami festival, some young girls with cheeks as full as the moon, and faces more lovely than the spring, clothed in magnificent dresses, and showing features like the freshest rose, charmed every heart, were placed behind a curtain opposite the king. On a sudden the curtain was raised and again fell, and the damsels arranged themselves for the dance with a grace calculated to seduce every sense and captivate every mind."

Paes mentions the Vijayanagar courtesans on specific occasions. While describing the Mahanavami festival he observes:

"And the king withdraws to the interior of his palace by that gate which I have already mentioned—that which stands between the two buildings that are in the arena

(*terreyro*); the courtesans and bayaderes (i.e., the dancing girls of the temple and palace) remain dancing in front of the temple and idol for a long time."

According to Paes, dancing girls were also summoned during the feasts. "For these feasts are summoned all the dancing-women of the kingdom, in order that they should be present; and also the captains and kings and great lords with all their retinues. ." During these festivals they were allowed the rare privilege of eating betel in the presence of the king.

The so-called sacred prostitution in the institution of *devadasi* has been referred to by Alberuni. It was a very ancient Indian institution and has been referred to in the previous Chapters. Mediaeval Indian literature, both Sanskrit and Prakrit, refers to the institution of *devadasi*, but these sources scarcely attach any sacred character to the *devadasi* system. It is mentioned in the *Kuvalayamala* that to the temples of Avanti were attached courtesans (*vilasini*) who gave musical concerts and plied *morchhals* and held umbrellas. In another place, it is said that at eventide the temples resounded to the sound of music of beautiful girls accompanied by drums beaten. A third interesting reference to temple dancers is found in a passage describing the congregation in heaven, based on the crowd in a contemporary temple. The passage is translated below:

"Some sang sweetly, some played instruments while some others danced. A group of girls prayed, 'Follow the prescribed moral character and conquer with the supreme will the invincible.' Some attendant gods with folded hands placed on their foreheads prayed, 'Success to you! May you be blessed! May you fare well! Our Lord, success to you.' Some other goddesses held pitchers, fans, white *chauri* and white umbrellas in their hands, while others held mirrors. A group of *apsaras* holding *vinas* and *mridangas* in their bejewelled hands waited for the order of the chief god. The courtesans with unheard and unexcelled beauty moved languorously and danced."

It is mentioned in the *Kuttanimatam*, 563 that the *devadasis* earned their livelihood from the temple (*tradashalayajivikam*) and that the profession and the in-

fession after being heavily bejewelled was presented to a temple by kings and noblemen.

(7) *Rudra-ganika* or *Gopika*: One who received regular wages from a temple which employed her to sing and dance at regular hours.

A vivid though rather misleading feature of the *devadasi* system in thirteenth century Malabar is given by Marco Polo. He observes, "They have certain abbeys in which are gods and goddesses to whom many young girls are consecrated; their fathers and mothers presenting them to that idol for which they entertain the greatest devotion. And when the [monks] of a convent desire to make a feast to their god, they send for all those consecrated damsels and make them sing and dance before the idol with great festivity. They also bring meats to feed their idol withal; that is to say, the damsels prepare dishes of meat and other good things and put the food before the idol, and leave it there a good while, and then the damsels all go to their dancing and singing and festivity for about as long as a great Baron might require to eat his dinner. By that time they say the spirit of the idols has consumed the substance of the food so they remove the viands to be eaten by themselves with great jollity. This is performed by these damsels several times every year until they are married."

"The reason assigned for summoning the damsels to these feasts is, as the monks say, that the god is vexed and angry with the goddess, and will hold no communication with her; and they say that if peace be not established between them then things will go from bad to worse, and they never will bestow their grace and benediction. So they make those girls come in the way described, to dance and sing, all but naked, before the god and the goddess. And those people believe that the god often solaces himself with the society of the goddess."

However, there is no indigenous authority to support the statement that the temple dancers were employed for the *bhoga* ceremony or that they danced naked before the god. In Gujarat these girls are said to have been employed by the *jogis* to test the continence of the novice. The girls tried to tempt him with their blandishments. If he remain-

ed indifferent, the *jogis* retained him, but if he showed any emotion, they expelled him from the society.

In Karnataka the institution of public women had become common even before the establishment of the Vijayanagar empire, and continued later on the earlier pattern. Mahadeva, the general of the western Chalukyan king Vikramaditya VII in 1112 A.D. raised the temple of god Chandaleshvara at Ittagi, constructed a suburb and brought beautiful women to the spot and established them there.

In Orissa as well, the institution of temple dancers was a recognized one. In the Megheshvara inscription of Ananga Bhimadeva (1190-1198 A.D.) the *devadasis* are mentioned. Dancing girls were appointed in the Brahmeshvara temple by the builder Kolavati. The author of the inscription, Uday, describes in a poetic vein the beauty of these dancing girls:

"By him were offered to Shiva beautiful damsels (*devadasis*) like the fairies from heaven in whose lips there was nectar, in the ends of whose eyes dwelt Kama, in whose mouth and waist and other parts of the body lived *stambhana* and *mohana* charms and whose bodies were embellished with beauty."

10

Courtesans in South India

COURTESANS IN SOUTH India had almost the same kind of life as the courtesans in northern India. They were expert dancers and singers. They were proficient in several arts and attracted customers with all the charm at their command. They were also employed by the kings for certain kinds of services and were engaged as temple dancers. This is indicated in Chapter X of the *Shilappadikaram*, dated between the second and the fifth century A.D. The work contains a convincing account of the life of a courtesan who lived in the great city of Puhar.

The story runs thus. There lived two merchants. One had a son named Kovalan, and the other a daughter named Kannaki. They were married when they were sixteen and provided with a separate establishment. They led a happy life for some time. One day when Kovalan was passing through the busy street of Puhar, he happened to see Madavi, a charming courtesan of the city. She had just won acclaim from the king. Madavi is described as a beautiful girl with broad shoulders and beautiful tresses which scattered the pollen of flowers decorating her hair. She had been trained in dance and music for seven years and demonstrated her proficiency in these arts before the king. The stage on which the performance took place had two doors and on each door were placed pictures of the *bhutam*s. A graceful lamp illuminated the stage. It was so placed that the pillars did not cast shadows. The screen and curtains were manipulated with ropes. From the painted canopy hung garlands of pearls.

There was a staff of an umbrella covered with gold

which represented Indra's son. On the auspicious day it was used by Madavi. She bathed and then garlanded it. Then she placed the staff on a decorated elephant. To the accompaniment of music, the king and his advisers circumambulated the elephant and then he handed over the staff to the musicians and poets. Then the party went round the town in a procession and finally entered the theatre when the staff was placed in its appointed place. After that Madavi gave a dance recital.

When she went back home, Madavi sent out a hunch-backed attendant with a garland. She told him to stand in the street which was frequented by the rich citizens of the city and announce that the garland was for sale for 1008 *katanjus* of gold and that whoever was prepared to offer the price would have her. Kovalan purchased the garland and accompanied by the hunchback entered Madavi's bed chamber. The bed was strewn with fragrant flowers. Her clothing on the waist had slipped and consequently the coral girdle had become displaced. They went to the moonlit terrace and made love there.

Besides Madavi there were other girls in the establishment. They were sleeping blissfully, their heads resting on the chests of their lovers. Their rooms were fumigated with the smoke of black *agaru*. The girls painted their bodies with sandal paste and wore green *patala* garlands interspersed with segments of tender lotus flowers and pearl necklaces.

One day during Indra's festival Madavi decked herself with fragrant flowers and sought to sport in a garden. Kovalan went about accompanied by minstrels singing the *kural* tune. His city companions who were skilled in the arts of love talked about their amours and went with him.

On this occasion there was a lover's quarrel between Kovalan and Madavi. To please him she bathed her fragrant black hair in perfumed oil, fumigated it, and perfumed it with the paste of musk. She dyed her feet with lac dye, and wore ornaments on her feet. She encircled her waist with a girdle of thirty-two strands. She had wound her blue piece of cloth embroidered with flowers. She also wore armlets, and bracelets with costly gems, and bangles

made of conch shell and coral. She wore necklaces and earrings. Thus Madavi offered Kovalan the happiness of union.

It was a full-moon day and Madavi saw people in search of amusement. They were hurrying to the beach and she was eager to follow them. Kovalan mounted his mule and Madavi got into her chariot. They passed through the bazar street. The shops displayed goods. Lamps were lit everywhere and courtesans scattered flowers, tender grass and paddy.

Then they entered the central highway of the city. They saw goods brought into the city by foreign merchants, florists, goldsmiths, and vendors of different articles of food had their shops here. The beach glittered. Madavi came there with her playmates. She saw on the beach princes and their confidantes. She saw other groups of maidens who were also skilled in dance and music. They were in curtained enclosures.

Courtesans who lived in Madurai are also described at some length. Kovalan on his visit to the city saw courtesans lost to all sense of shame and chastity. They accompanied their rich lovers to the pleasure garden situated on the banks of Vaigai. He also found them engaged in water sport. They sat in boats with high cabins and in canoes. They were busy swimming and holding on to the rafts. Kovalan also saw courtesans putting fragrant flowers in their hair and anointing their bodies with sandal paste.

At nightfall the courtesans lay on their flower-strewn beds on the moonlit terraces, their lovers assuaged their fatigue by recalling their experiences during the different seasons of the year. In the rainy season the courtesans of Madurai, wound round their waist red silk with a design of flower. They adorned their hair with flowers and wild olives. They painted their breasts with red sandal-paste and further decked them with garlands of coral and flowers.

In the cold season, modest courtesans and their lovers painted their chests with fragrant pastes, fumigated themselves with incense smoke and closed the latticed windows of their lofty houses. In the season of early dew the lovers sat on terraces to receive the warmth of the rising sun.

In Phalgun or the month of "late dew" they talked about the king's participation in Kama's festival and about a fleet of high, broad ships carrying different kinds of incense, silks, sandals, scents and camphor. Spring united joyful lovers. Cool breeze began to blow and the season brought forth fragrant flowers.

The summer season was hot and the wind scorching. In this season the courtesans who were loyal to the king received from him a present of covered carts, palanquins, and sleeping cots with jewelled legs. They found happiness in the pleasure gardens and received *chauris* made of yak-hair, golden betel boxes, and sharp swords. These courtesans drank wine from goblets held by their maid-servants. They were soon quite drunk. When they tried to sing the words refused to come, their red eyes indicated their anger; perspiration gathered on their foreheads marked with the *tilakas* and the eyebrows pointed downward.

Kovalan passed through the *vesha* quarters. He saw lofty buildings. Crowned kings frequented this area secretly. The courtesans here were proficient in music and dance. Young men who were living with those courtesans, and new initiates both refused to leave those mansions without listening to their music and to the interesting conversation of these women skilled in the sixty-four arts.

The *Manasollau* of Someshvara, though composed as late as 1131 A.D., yet gives us interesting details about courtesans and *vidyas*. It mentions that courtesans were closely connected with the palace. There they served the king. In summer they sat in a pavilion where the floor was covered with sand and provided with *khas*-grass. The curtains were sprinkled with perfumed water. The courtesans fanned the king at midday when the heat was intolerable. At night the courtesans gave musical performance on the palace terrace which were decorated with fragrant flowers. Jesters amused the king and literateurs, poets and story tellers engaged his interest till midnight when he retired with his women.

Courtesans had their work to do in the ceremony of the king's bath. The bath was an elaborate affair. It was provided with golden columns, crystal railings, and tiled floors.

Its walls were painted with minium and it was provided with a canopy made of Chinese silk. After the king entered the bathroom, his body was massaged by expert masseurs. They used fragrant medicated oils. Afterwards the oiliness of the body was removed with perfumed unguents. Finally perfumed water was poured over the head of the king out of gold and silver pitchers. These pitchers were held aloft by beautiful dancing girls who moved gracefully and exposed their charms to him. They applied the myrobalan paste to his hair and then bathed him with tepid water.

Courtesans also helped the king to get into his clothes. They decked him with flowers, scents, and ornaments. The cool and comfortable audience hall had golden columns, painted walls and canopies of different colours. Near the lion throne stood courtesans carrying flywhisks and fans of different types.

Women attendants and courtesans from the palace played an important part in the court ceremonies. The queens were brought there in silk-draped litters attended by the umbrella-bearers, *chauri*-bearers and the mace-bearers who kept asking people to make the passage clear for them. The queens naturally wore the choicest jewellery, inlaid with precious stones, and silk and fine cotton garments. Flower garlands and scents enhanced their charm. Their bodies were lightly smeared with sandal and saffron paste, and floral patterns on cheeks and breasts were drawn with musk paste. Their foreheads were marked with the *tilakas* of different kinds and in many colours.

After descending from their litters they were conducted to the seats reserved for them. They were followed by a retinue of women attendants and courtesans, who employed horses and mules to transport them or came there on foot. They wore ornaments made of gold and conch shells, red, green and blue garments, garlands of lotuses and other fragrant flowers. The women from the Tamil country exposed their breasts, and the women from Maharashtra had smeared their foreheads with cinnabar. The women from Karnataka wore their *uttariya* on the left and the Gujarati girls wore full-sleeved bodices. They took their seats on both sides of the throne and behind the king.

The king had a large number of mistresses (*avarodhavadhu*) who were not only accomplished dancers, and musicians but also knew the mind of their master. The courtesans employed by the king had to be young, beautiful and coquettish. They were properly rewarded by the king. They received gifts of precious jewellery, clothes, garlands, unguents, conveyances, seats, houses and so on. They amused their masters with their coquetry, jokes, sports, pleasantries. The courtesan, when she invited him to dally with her, spoke to him sweetly. Courtesans were also employed to serve food. They worked as bathroom attendants, applied unguents, and prepared scents. They were sham-pooers and hair dressers. They could sing and dance well and joined the king in water sport.

The *Manasollasa* also mentions the participation of the courtesan in a cockfight. The Chapter deals at length with the various species of cocks, their feeding habits, the rules of the fight and the basis of giving a verdict of victory and defeat. After describing their various species and the sort of food that they needed, the *Manasollasa* reveals how cocks should be exercised in sand-pits and then locked in different coops.

When everything was ready the king challenged his queen to match her cock with his cock on a Saturday night. The ground was cleaned and the cockpit made according to the prescribed rules. Different parts of the pit were assigned to gods and goddesses. Sharp knives were tied to the legs of the cocks. Thereafter their movements were watched and victory or defeat could be predicted.

In the morning of the cockfight, dancers, musicians, the participants in the sport, the referees and the contestants all assembled at this spot. The king took his seat in a specially prepared pavilion and the queen sat on the opposite side. Finally spurs were tied to the legs of the cocks and the fight started. The final victory was celebrated with great applause. The victorious side mounted the shoulders of the vanquished party, made fun of them and forcibly snatched their party flag. The victorious cock was mounted on an elephant and taken round the city in a procession which was accompanied by dancers and musicians. It is

significant that a water clock was provided to mark the time of the fight. Courtesans also participated in the ram fights. The author defines the different species of rams used in the fight. Betting was usually very heavy.

Dance and music was the natural field of the courtesans. The king who presided over a musical soiree (*gitavrinda*) was considered to be a pleasant person, a well-educated person, magnanimous, and partial to virtue and well-versed in the intricacies of music. The members of the assembly were good linguists and had a keen aesthetic sense. The king when he was present at the musical soirees was accompanied by jesters and courtesans who sat by his side and behind him.

The hill sports (*bhudharakrida*) were held in the forest planted by the king in which he had built an artificial hill complete with peaks and covered with all kinds of trees. It was provided with an artificial lake and a sandy beach. The king accompanied by his palace women, his courtiers and courtesans entered the forest and climbed the hill. It was a kind of picnic party. The women laughed and played and the king sat under a picturesque tree and gave away gifts to the attendants. Then under the shade of a tree or on the bank of a river he dallied with the women. He personally picked up flowers and offered them to the women who sang and danced to please him. Finally he mounted an elephant and returned to the city.

In spring when the mango and other trees blossomed and the waters of the lakes, rivers and pools were cold and limpid, the king went with the inmates of the harem and his courtesans to the forest for a picnic. They diverted themselves by picking up flowers and fruits. They penetrated deep in the forest, the women running helter-skelter and the king following them. After this game the party rested under a tree, drank wine, chewed betel leaves etc. The king himself tied *venis* to their hair and everybody was given bouquets. This picnic is technically known as *vana-krida*.

In spring a colourful swing decorated with floral, bird, and animal motifs was furnished with soft cushions. On full moon day the king accompanied by his courtesans and attendants raising the slogan "Victory" ascended the swing.

Bards kept reciting passages and courtesans exposed their body and sat by the king's side. This was known as *ando-lana-krida*.

The "sprinkling sport" (*lechana-krida*) was held in spring during marriage festivals and during victory celebrations. After bathing in a river the king invited the members of his family, officers, musicians, poets, jesters and others. The distinguishing feature of this festival was that the courtesans had all to dress in white garments, wear gold ornaments and garlands. They bore a sandalwood *tilaka* on their foreheads. The inmates of the harem also participated in the festival. A tank within the palace was filled with water mixed with saffron, sandalwood, musk, camphor, *agallochum* and sweet smelling flowers. The women sat round the tank. They held pitchers and syringes in their hands. At a given signal they drenched the king with coloured water and he in his turn pelted them with silk balls. They threw coloured water upon him and sported with him in other ways. The festival lasted till the evening.

Water sport (*sahla-krida*) was very popular in summer. Then the trees were denuded of leaves, the water had dried up and both men and women suffered terribly on account of the heat. The king chose a *vapi* separated on the water front of a river or a bank. The *vapi* was square in form and provided with steps, an enclosure with a white painted house, canvas screens or simply rows of trees. It was filled with water lifted by the Persian wheel or by manual labour. It was provided also with fish and aquatic birds. Accompanied by his harem women and by courtesans clad in white garments, the king entered the *vapi*. He dallied with them for some time and threw gold coins and precious stones in the *vapi* to encourage his women to dive and claim them. After the water-sport was over the king and others changed their clothes. The king made them presents of pieces of Chinese silk, flowers, scents and jewelry.

The *shadvala* or the "green sport" was arranged in a meadow in the rainy season. Then the clouds rambled, the flowers spread their fragrance and the ground was covered with soft green grass. This green plot was screened. After performing his daily ablutions the king ordered the women

of his harem and courtesans to assemble at one place. While the members of the palace rode on elephants, the courtesans and musicians rode horses. The king then ordered the courtesans to occupy the bamboo huts and to enjoy the food and drinks provided for them. After the king had dined with his sons and friends, he applied sandal and scents to his body and put on jewelled silk and jewelry, and the women donned their finery. The folk singers and other women sang for a while and were suitably rewarded.

The "sand sport" (*valuka-krida*) took place in winter when the sky was clear, and the water of the river and tank had settled down. The sport was held on sparkling sand and the area was screened. Bamboo huts and tents were set up on the occasion. The women, including the courtesans, sat around the king and dug holes in the sand. When the oozing water had become clear they put lotuses and other fragrant substances in it. Then they built temples of sand provided with tanks. They threw sand-balls at each other, arranged sham fights of cocks fashioned with sand. Those which disintegrated first were considered defeated. The victorious girl rode on the back of the vanquished and when both tumbled on the sand, it excited the mirth of the king. After it was all over the party returned to the palace.

The *jjyotsna-krida* or "moonlight sport" was held in the months of Ashvina and Kartika or sometimes even in winter and summer on moonlit nights. It was held in a spacious courtyard. The king wore a short, tight loin cloth with a flowered belt, jewelry, and the top-knot was covered with a scarf. The participants in the game were divided into parties of five to ten members. They were young and almost of the same age. The game they played was somewhat like the present day *kabbaḍi* (i.e. the "touch and go" game).

In the *madhupana-krida* sport a drinking party was held in a forest, in a sward, on a river bank, in a garden or even in a well furnished house. In this festival all kinds of drinks and delicacies were provided. There were various kinds of meat, rice with *dahi*, ginger and lime juice, parched grains, radishes etc. The cups, bowls and trays were made of glass of various colours. They enhanced the gla-

mour of the place Naturally, charming girls formed an indispensable part of the gathering. They sat on the grass, in bamboo groves and under the trees, hidden by a screen. Before them were leaf platters, bowls and cups made of gold and glass which were filled with *madya*, *sura* and *asava* and well-cooked relishes were served. The women decorated themselves with lotus and jasmine flowers.

Then the drinking party began and white, yellow, black, bitter wines and liquors were served Strong grape wine was drunk only after they had taken some *ghee*, for it was supposed to lessen its potency Now and then the participants bit their teeth into pieces of green ginger and munched meat or parched grains They talked among themselves, spoke of the excellence of the drinks and the food. In drunken torpor some saw the reflection of their eyes in a mirror; some of them ran hither and thither for fear of black bees, while some others kissed the face of his beloved reflected in the wine cup An inebriated girl kissed the lover who had filled her with drinks. Another in her drunken state quarrelled with her lover. The cheeks of men and women soon became flushed, the eyes reddened, their spirit broke and their bodies were no longer taut and firm They fought among themselves, abused each other and laughed.

Some dragged their feet, some dragged themselves as they danced and some girls simply stamped their feet on the ground. Some girls yawned, some of them recited obscene verses. A girl wept, feeling that some dire calamity had overtaken her, while another slept on the floor. Some girls fell down unconscious. Their hair was in a dishevelled state and their garments hung loose on their bodies. A girl losing control over herself showered abuses upon the king, another tried to embrace him while another openly invited him to unite with her in sexual embrace. Some girls hung on his neck and kissed him. Some girls were in such a drunken state that they threw away their clothes.

Nisha-krida (nocturnal sport) was held in a cellar or an inner apartment. All the windows and holes of the apartment were closed to prevent the sunlight from entering. The doors were firmly closed. The dark chamber was then

fumigated with incense and all impediments were removed so as to prevent the participants from stumbling. The king then asked his women to discard their shyness. He ordered some girls to enter the room unseen, approach the other women stealthily and pull their hair or their ears, to strike some on their backs, or scratch their bodies. The girls struck the other with their feet, or talked to the others lovingly. They used flattering language and squeezed the breasts of other girls. These preliminaries made the girls bolder and they were ready to participate in the orgy that was to follow.

Some girls barked like dogs while others struck one another. They could not recognize those who struck them on account of the darkness. They exchanged filthy abuses, all of which amused the king. This led to further incidents. Some men and women pulled each other's hair, while some ran helter-skelter or slipped and fell. They did not hesitate to abuse the king.

The king also participated in the game; he pulled the braids of girls, squeezed their breasts and pulled their cheeks. He touched a girl's zone, the navel, the lips and the necklaces. When his passion was aroused he dragged the others. He struck one girl with his foot; another girl embraced him; with difficulty he managed to get rid of yet another who was trying to hold him in a tight embrace. When she tried to run away with his garments he held her on the floor. Two girls fought among themselves. In this way the orgy continued till everybody was completely tired out.

The king generally decided to visit the *vesha* on the pretext of taking a round of the city. He mounted an elephant and was followed by a host of attendants, some of whom were armed. They cleared the way for the royal procession. Some of his trusted servants kept advising him to hold on to the seat when the road became rough. A din was created by the king's guards, by the tinkling of the elephant's bells, by the beats of the drivers and the blowing of the conch-shells. The beautiful girls of the *vesha* decked their bodies with flowers and came out to receive the king. Some of them had a crescent *tilaka* mark on their

foreheads, the golden *nupuras* shone on their feet. Some held their braids in their left hands and a flower garland in the right. Some held mirrors; their toilet was only half finished. Some in a hurry loosened the ends of their *saris* and gazed at the king. They were all young and beautiful. After watching all of them the king sent his Superintendent of Pastimes (*narmasachiva*) to select a suitable girl for him. Then the king returned to the palace.

When night fell he washed his body with perfumed water and enjoyed a good meal of vegetables, meat and some milk preparations. After cleaning his teeth and rinsing his mouth, he applied sandalwood to his body. The Superintendent of Pastimes came with the message that he had selected a beautiful girl who had fallen in love with the king. She was getting ready to receive him. Pleased at the news, the king called his chamberlains to help him with his toilet and dress. He applied to his body a perfume made of musk; drew a *tilaka* on his forehead and wore costly garments. The attendants carried with them *pan-leaves*, camphor, garlands of fragrant flowers, clothes, ornaments and gold in sufficient quantity. Trustworthy guards and personal servants accompanied him. To ensure the king's safety royal guards were posted on the main road under patrol leaders.

When all the arrangements had been completed the king accompanied by the Superintendent of Pastimes started for the *vesha*. The area was provided with palaces, *gopuras*, gardens etc. The king moved slowly, listened to the delightful music of *chandaia* girls in one house; in one courtyard a girl was seen dancing to the accompaniment of music. In a second courtyard a musical concert was in progress. At one spot a girl was seated on an ivory chair. She had a jasmine chaplet in her hair. In a third courtyard a girl was looking into a mirror intently and was drawing a *tilaka* on the forehead. At the door of a house a girl was waiting to look at the king. One of the girls sang a song in which the king's name appeared again and again.

Slowly the king proceeded to the main quarter of the *vesha*. On both sides stood rows of double storeyed and whitewashed houses. They were decorated with various

patterns and provided with balconies. On these gates fresh *toranas* were tied and the floors inside were red and caged parrots prattled away gaily. The doors inside were curtained.

There the king met the keepers of prostitutes (*bhujangas*) and rakes from different parts of the country. They wore the distinctive costumes of their lands. One class wore white earrings and creased white garments (*tungabhanji samanaitam*). To their white tunics (*angika*) were attached knives. Some wore chaplets and held daggers in their hands and were clad in strange costumes. Their foreheads were marked with a conch-shaped *tilaka*. Some wore doublets (*varahana*) and held knife-shaped sticks. Some were equipped with swords and shields and guarded the houses of the courtesans. One of them wore a green jacket (*kurpasaka*). He had covered his hair with a green scarf and was wielding a knife. A young man in white wore ornaments. He was followed by swordsmen. A *vita* wearing a saffron tunic (*angika*) and equipped with a knife walked with a following of swaggering companions. Another man came there mounted on a horse. He wore a tunic and a chaplet in his top-knot. He was decked in ornaments and was accompanied by seven or eight attendants. These well dressed *vitās* from Karnataka walked haughtily with upraised heads.

The *vita* from Andhra walked with his face slightly turned away. He had wrapped himself with a saffron *chadar* with a border and his hair was tied in a top-knot. He had even and gleaming teeth. His earrings were made of palmyra frond and on his forehead appeared a sandal *tilaka*. On his chest was the impression of a palm and he wore figured muslin from Avanti.

The *vita* from Tamil Nadu had applied turmeric paste to his body. He wore white garments, a tight tunic (*virakanchuka*) and pearl earrings. He bore the sandal *tilaka* on his forehead. The *vita* from Lata wore magenta coloured garments. There was a *tilaka* on his forehead and his entire body was covered with sandal paste. The *vita* from Gujarat had anointed his body with sandal paste, wore a jacket (*angika*), a magenta-coloured *dhōti* and

dupatta. He had applied musk *ulaka* on his forehead. He carried a sword. The *vita* from Maharashtra wore a dull-coloured tunic reaching to the knees, coiled golden earrings and bangles, and his tiger tail shaped top-knot was circled by a chaplet. He was followed by three or four attendants with drawn swords.

Visitors to the *vesha* also included renegade monks of different sects. A Jain monk still had his *kurcha* and staff. He had put aside his begging bowl and now wore a *topi* using its ends to hide his face. A piece of coloured cloth covered his body and thus camouflaged, he wandered in the *vesha*. The Saiva monk had lowered his *jata* and covered his head. He moved secretly and was led by his servants. The Sanyasi visitor wore new saffron cloth, but carried a knife in place of the staff. His shaved head was covered with a *topi* and he wore a chain necklace, bracelets and finger rings. He chewed *pan* and was followed by a boy. The Brahman *vita* had covered his head with a silken scarf. He wore a green tunic to which was attached a knife. He had hidden his sacred thread and *pavitrakas*.

One *vita* waited near the threshold of a courtesan's house. A second one hearing the endearing words of his beloved, felt elated and ceased to care for others; one *vita* was forbidden further entry into the house. He left the courtyard in a dejected state. A *vita* was seen presenting perfumes, garlands and *pan* to a girl. Another was trying to propitiate his beloved with folded hands. Some irate *vita* was pushing out the husband of a prostitute and trying to gain entry to her house. Another *vita* unmindful of the reproaches of the bawd, persisted in his mission. Another shameless *vita* fought with the bawd. Some rascal saw a *vita* entering the bedroom. He hid himself under the bed to save his life. One *vita* gave away clothes to the attendants. Another sat on the bed with his beloved on his lap.

One irate lover held his beloved's hair and struck her with his fist. A lover's eyes fell on his rival; he followed him with an open knife till darkness swallowed them both. Another lover felt pleased when his beloved struck him with her foot. One lover held a wine cup to the lips of

his beloved. An expert in wreathing flowers was arranging a jasmine chaplet on the top-knot of his beloved. A rake was engrossed in food and drinks. He was in the company of his beloved. Another was painting a *tilaka* mark on the forehead of his beloved.

The king saw a large number of courtesans engaged in different occupations. One of them had drawn her *tilaka* and was waiting for a client; another stood between the door. Her breasts were tied securely, and her presence there was indicated by her bracelets. A prostitute with slightly sagging breasts was standing in the house. Only her beautiful face was visible. A middle-aged woman was hiding herself. She indicated her presence by her bracelets and her hands adorned with rings. Another girl had her face averted. She was arranging her black hair with her nails. One of the girls had exposed her breasts and her earrings moved playfully. Another had pulled up the parrot cage and stood exposing her abdomen. Yet another had loosened her *chadar* and began to expose her breasts. One girl had deliberately allowed flowers to fall from her hands. One of the girls tried to expose her thighs and attract customers. One girl exposed her scratched breasts as she pretended to apply sandal paste to them. One of the girls sang a beautifully composed song, another had her firm breasts dressed in fine muslin and as she walked her toe-rings tinkled sweetly.

On the orders of the king the servants gave advance money to the courtesan who had already been selected for him. On the threshold of the house stood the grey haired and red eyed bawd; her body still bore the signs of old wounds. She wore earrings (*pavitraka*), a coin necklace and bracelets. She was deceitful and greedy. She cared only for those customers who had plenty of money. She told the king's messenger that a customer had just presented clothes and money to the girl and therefore she was not prepared to leave the place. She was ready to return the advance money. The king's messenger was aware of the bawd's deceitful ways. He promised to pay a bigger sum. The bawd could not resist the new offer and at once started flattering the new customer, saying that her daughter had waited

for him all the time.

The king was told about this arrangement made by his servant. He decided to enter the house of the courtesan. He sent her *pan* and flowers. He proceeded slowly and entered the house. Its door was decorated with a *torana* and it had latticed windows. There was a balcony and a beautiful garden and there the king sat on a bed inlaid with ivory. Then the courtesan came in. She washed his feet and simulating shyness took her seat by his side. She cast side glances. The king offered her *pan* perfumed with camphor and other ingredients. Then they talked for a while till their passion was aroused. After the visit was over, the king offered ornaments, clothes and money to the bawd





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