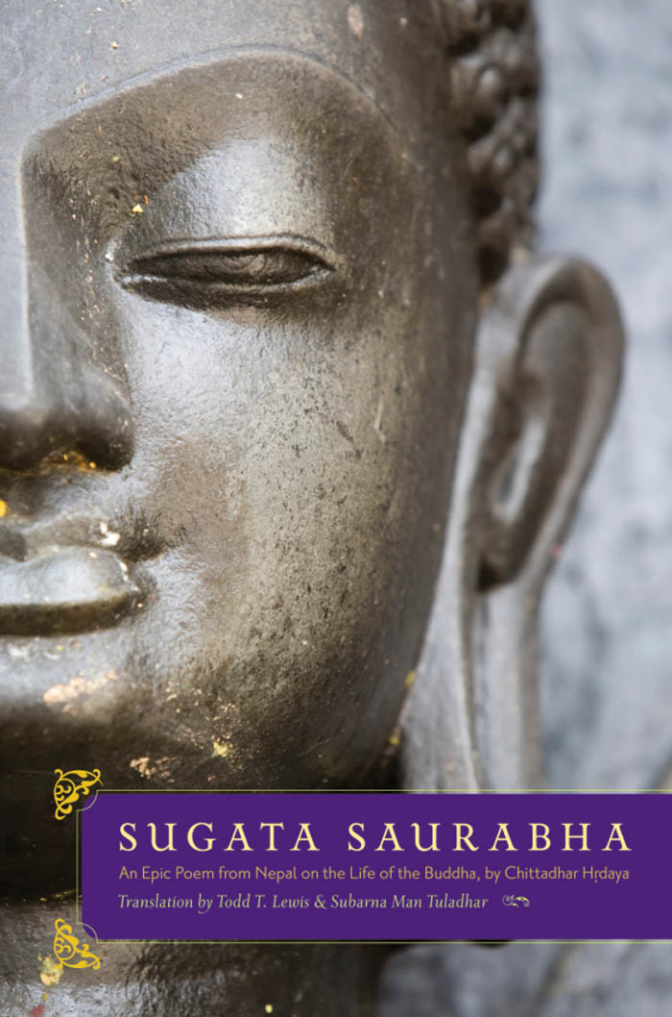

SUGATA SAURABHA

An Epic Poem from Nepal on the Life of the Buddha, by Chittadhar Hṛdaya

Translation by Todd T. Lewis & Subarna Man Tuladhar

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Todd T. Lewis

Subarna Man Tuladhar

Introduction and Part II by

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Preface

Sugata Saurabha by Chittadhar Hṛdaya is a poetic rendering of the Buddha's life, a modern work in a tradition of devotional composition that began two thousand years ago in India with Sanskrit narratives inscribed by monks on palm leaf pages. Composed in Nepal in the mid-1940s and spanning 355 pages in its published form, *Sugata Saurabha* is an epic poem extraordinary in its aesthetic artistry, creative in its rendering of biographical narrative, and scholarly in its doctrinal exposition. It is grounded in Buddhist thought, yet crafted masterfully to please the ear in rhyming couplets and precise rhythmic patterns. This volume is the first full English translation of this great work, the title of which can be rendered in English as "The Sweet Fragrance of the Buddha."[1]

This volume begins with a short introduction to this work in translation, including a brief overview of the author's background, his context, the epic's poetics, and the poem's historical-cultural context, to aid in appreciating this work. The translated text follows in part I. Part II consists of eight concise thematic chapters designed to give a deeper appreciation of *Sugata Saurabha* as the major literary work of Nepal's greatest twentieth-century poet, conjoining Indic poetic tradition and Western conventions. These chapters also situate *Sugata Saurabha* in the long series of Buddha biographies and contextualize the text as a work engaged with Newar cultural restoration, supporting Buddhist modernism and projecting an idealistic vision of Himalayan traditions.

The decision to present the text in translation without extensive scholarly prefacing for the English reader is based on our last meeting with the poet in 1982, when we agreed to begin this project. The interview took place just a few weeks before he died unexpectedly. He expressed his hope that our translation be faithful to the spirit of the original; that we should render his epic dignified in treating the Buddha and his teachings; and that we be careful in conveying the details of the scenes drawn from Newar life. The poet's final wish was that *Sugata Saurabha* read well in English so that the reader can understand the beauty he sought in the original. We have done our best to live up to his requests and feel that his great poem (*mahākāvya*) can stand alone and alongside earlier

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[1] The first publication of our translation of this text appeared in 2007 in a dual-language, facing-page edition as volume 67 in the Harvard Oriental Series: *Sugata Saurabha: An Epic Poem from Nepal on the Life of the Buddha by Chittadhar Hṛdaya* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press). The technical translation in this first volume has been revised for the more general reader of this volume; the discussion of aspects of the text and its cultural context has likewise been edited for a more general audience. Full treatment of technical philological matters and more detailed ethnographic issues may be found in the Harvard volume. Special acknowledgment goes to Professor Michael Witzel, editor of the Harvard Oriental Series, for making this publication arrangement possible.

classics recounting the great sage's life. We feel that readers interested in reading the text can do so without any background; readers wishing to go deeper into this extraordinary poem can find the many layers that exist in this work.[2]

We would like to thank many individuals who helped see this project through to its long-overdue conclusion. Professor Nirmal Tuladhar of the Center of Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University supplied useful background information from the outset, and was a faithful supporter. Theodore Riccardi, Jr., has been a kind, perspicacious mentor to us in this and other scholarly projects. David Gellner, Alexander von Rosspatt, John Holt, John Strong, and Rich Matlak read through the manuscript and provided valuable corrections and encouraging comments. Michael Witzel and Leonard van der Kuijp, editors of the Harvard Oriental Series, were supporters of this project and generous in agreeing to a dual publication of our translation in their series. We likewise express our gratitude to Cynthia Read, who guided this manuscript to Oxford University Press, and Martha Ramsey and Christine Dahlin, who saw it through to publication there.

We also acknowledge institutional support in Nepal from the U.S. Educational Foundation and the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies at Tribhuvan University. We most gratefully acknowledge U.S. funding support from the Fulbright Senior Research Program, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the College of the Holy Cross.

It is our mutual hope that this publication resulting from our collaboration will have success not only in offering an extraordinary virtuoso poet's account of the Buddha's life but also in opening a vista on the richness of Newar literature and civilization.

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[2] Todd T. Lewis is the primary author of the introduction and part II; Subarna Man Tuladhar read through and commented on these chapters, and collaborated with Lewis for more than twenty-five years to render the final translation of part I. For an extended account of this collaboration, and the authors' interactions with Hṛdaya, see pages i–v of the preface to the Harvard Oriental Series edition.

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Introduction

The drama of the prince Siddhārtha renouncing palace and family life to pursue his path to *nirvāṇa* has been the central and foundational spiritual narrative of Buddhist tradition. Inspiring countless disciples from India to Japan to revere and follow his example, biographies of the Buddha have informed devotees about the central tenets of the Dharma, Buddhist doctrine. Since the origin of Buddhism, devout disciples have told this great story: a man blessed with worldly wealth who renounced everything and underwent penances and arduous solitary searching reached a profound awakening called enlightenment. Calling himself a Buddha, he became an itinerant spiritual leader, who wandered for nearly forty-five years in the forests and city lanes of ancient northeast India, founded an ascetic community (*sangha*), and taught them and others out of his compassion for humanity.

The Buddha's life became a paradigm for his followers. His discourses were first memorized, as were numerous details of his life. Eventually these recalled accounts were written down, either in Sanskrit or related Indic languages. Five hundred years after his death, collections of these literary strands were woven together and incorporated into the canons being assembled by the various monastic schools that had formed and spread across India. A few early biographies were also composed.

Subsequently, the canonical texts and biographical compositions were translated into the spoken vernacular languages wherever Buddhism spread across Asia. In them, local literati had the chance for interpretative redactions, both stylistic and doctrinal.[1] Such rerenderings from these early, foundational textual sources into vernacular languages provide important insights into the cultural adaptations characteristic of the different communities where Buddhism spread. *Sugata Saurabha* in modern Nepal provides one such case study and is one of Asia's few modern examples of this phenomenon. It was not, however, produced by a monk hagiographer in a scholastic setting, but was, as we will see, crafted by a Buddhist householder who wrote surreptitiously while imprisoned in his native land, Nepal.

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[1] Lewis 1993, 2000.

The Author

Chittadhar Hṛdaya (1906–1982) was one of twentieth-century Nepal's most eminent writers. He wrote in the Tibeto-Burman language Nepāl Bhāsā (also called "Newari" in Western sources).[2] He was born in a family residing in Naradevi Tol in Kathmandu, and into the Tulādhar caste, an influential subgroup in the larger Urāy caste of merchants and artisans long known for its Buddhist identity.

A childless man who devoted his life to writing in Nepāl Bhāsā, Chittadhar participated in the vigorous intellectual life that evolved in post-Rana Nepal (1950–). A formative experience in his life occurred in 1940, during the last years of Rana rule, when he was arrested for publishing a poem regarded as subversive by agents of the government. During his five-year imprisonment for this act, he wrote the great epic translated here. After his release, and with greater freedom of publication after the fall of the Ranas in 1951, he became a leading author and a renowned cultural figure in Newar society.

Chittadhar Hṛdaya, sketched in prison, c. 1944, when he wrote *Sugata Saurabha*.

[2] We use these two names to refer to the language interchangeably. While "Nepāl Bhāṣā" is an emic term used by the native speakers, for the purpose of communicating with non-Nepalese readers the use of Nepāl Bhāṣā is also problematic, in that it suggests that it is the language of the modern state, Nepal, which is not the case. (Its origins stem from the pre-modern state era, when "Nepal" meant the Kathmandu Valley only.) "Newari" is not a pejorative, though it is a Western neologism, one that was accepted by Newar linguists who first worked on their native language. "Newari" is shorthand, in the same way that the colloquial term Newars use, "Newā: bhāy," is. In recent years, cultural nationalists have proposed "Newār Bhāṣā."

The Context of the Author's Life: Nepal and Newar Civilization

An ethnic group unique for its urban culture and a remarkable level of artistic achievement, the Newars have been the majority population that has shaped life in the Kathmandu Valley for the last fifteen hundred years. Protected by the lowland malarial zone from colonization by states to the south (Indic, Muslim, British) and by the high Himalayan range from Tibet and China to the north, the Newars created their own civilization, adapted predominantly from the cultures of North India. Living traditions of art, architecture, texts, rituals, and festival celebration that originated in ancient and medieval India endure in great multiplicity in Nepal. In a valley roughly sixty square miles in extent, Buddhism is perhaps the most notable Indic cultural survival, as it has remained a separate tradition followed by distinct Newar castes, primarily in the largest cities and towns.[3] Newar Buddhists have long lived alongside Newars and migrants practicing other Indic religious traditions, ranging from those derived from very ancient Vedic practices[4] to those associated with modern Hindu teachers. Devotional practices focused on the great gods extolled in the *purānas* (Shiva, Vishnu and his incarnations, the goddesses), and many traditions of tantra (Hindu, Buddhist, mixed) have also long been established, dating back to the ancient period.

Once the Newar kings were deposed in 1769 by the Shah dynasty of Gorkha, a new elite emerged: Pahari Brahmins (Nep. Bahun) and Kṣatriyas (Nep. Chettri) who spoke Indo-European languages. Other (mostly Hinduized) peoples from the Himalayan midhills subsequently migrated into the capital precincts in the Kathmandu Valley, where they worked as laborers, acquired estates, started businesses, or took posts in the new government administration. Today more than half of the Valley's population is non-Newar, and royal rule by the Shah family ended only in 2008. The Newars, though amounting to about 4 percent of Nepal's population, also came to occupy a prominent and influential place in modern Nepal, given their wealth, education, and cultural accomplishments, as well as the proximity of their homeland to the nation's capital.

From its inception, the modern state has been staunchly Hindu and dominated by high-caste elites. Since 1770, its rulers have sought to unify the many non-Indic peoples across the modern state by promoting Nepali as the national language, implementing a legal system based on ancient Hindu law codes (the Dharmasastra), and maintaining the Hindu customs of Kṣatriya royalty.

With their home territory conquered and occupied by the new royal court, Kathmandu Newars responded variously to the new state's formation and development since 1770. A minority became involved as officials and businessmen in alliance with the Shahs in the unification process.[5] Other Newars, however, lost positions of influence and had their lands confiscated. The great majority of

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[3] Gellner 1992; Toffin 1984; Hutt 1994.

[4] Witzel 1976 and 1992.

[5] English 1985; Lewis and Shakya 1988.

Newar Buddhists suffered under the new state: land grants to their monasteries and temples were undermined, while Hindus were favored at court and their temples to Hindu gods won new patronage.

In the later years of the Rana rule (1847–1950)—an era in which one family usurped power, rendering the Shah kings mere figureheads—Nepal stagnated. The Ranas treated the country as their private estate and were concerned primarily with extracting wealth from it and staying in power rather than developing the country's economy or infrastructure. This ultimately led to dissent, mainly in the capital. In an attempt to stifle this and weaken any of the communities strong enough to oppose them, the Ranas instituted coercive measures against the Newars and other ethnic groups—actions that led to increasing resistance.

Writing the Great Poem

Sugata Saurabha would probably never have even been imagined if Chittadhar had not in 1940, at the age of thirty-five, published a poem in Newari entitled "Mother" and signed it with the pen name "Hṛdaya, Motherless Child." This was interpreted as a criminal act in Rana Nepal, where seven years earlier the prime minister, Juddha Shamshere, had assembled all persons writing in Newari and warned them not to publish anything more in their native language.[6] Eventually, the government arrested Chittadhar and other major literary figures, confiscating their poems. So the government prosecutors brought Chittadhar to trial for treason on the basis of a poem. In a 1982 interview, he told the story with characteristic humor:

> I was sent to prison. What for? I must make it clear that I am still ignorant of even the ABCs of politics. It is no concern of mine. But the Newari language is something I could not give up. I started to write in it. Then one day my mother expired. Throughout the thirteen-day mourning period I had to remain indoors. It was then that I composed the poem I called "Mother." As I could not make it anonymous, I called myself by the pen name of "Hṛdaya" and supplemented it with the qualifying phrase "a motherless child."
>
> The police put numerous questions to me, but I denied all knowledge of what they wanted to know. I was not trying to be cunning; it was the simple truth that I just did not know. After some time they asked, while pointing to a copy of my poem "Mother," "Who wrote this poem?" I frankly replied that I had. "What does a motherless child suggest?" they asked. "I was grief-stricken because my mother had died. It was just then that I wrote the poem. That is why I called myself a motherless child," I said. They refused to believe this. "Does not your being motherless mean that the Newars have been deprived

[6] Whelpton 2005, 85; Lall 2006.

> of their mother tongue?" one of them asked. One then got angry and cursed me.
>
> Next it was my turn to lose my temper. "If that is what you think it means . . . well, I should be quite happy if it makes the point you have derived from it!" After a few days, the political prisoners were harshly sentenced: some were ordered to a term of twelve years' imprisonment, others to life imprisonment, and still others to capital punishment. When my turn came, I received a six-year jail term.[7]

At first, he was depressed at his sentencing and the prospect of six long and unpleasant years behind bars. The prison he was sent to, the Bhadragol Jail, was run under very harsh rules. One day after his first months behind bars, his mentor, Yogavir Simha, sent Hṛdaya a message urging him "not to be cowed down . . . [and] on the contrary [to] work for the language with redoubled vigor within the prison walls."[8] It was a great blow to Chittadhar when Yogavir Simha died soon after in 1941. But the poet in mourning also made a fateful vow in the form of a poem that ended thus:

> Denied the chance of seeing him again,
> I pledge myself to fulfill his wishes.[9]

Chittadhar, whose pen name[10] can be translated as "the man with heart" had set his heart on writing this epic poem and dedicating it to his teacher.

In the second year of Chittadhar's imprisonment, a new cell block was built; he and other political prisoners were sent there and separated from the other criminals. He explained how being in this new cell brought more favorable circumstances:

> Sometime later, prisoners' families were allowed to bring religious books into the jail on the grounds that we needed them for prayers. I begged for the holy *Dhammapada*. My sister helped by fetching a copy of it for me. Soon after receiving it, I felt restless to write. I could not suppress this new desire. But there was no stationery paper to write on! In fact we were not allowed any. If a visitor brought us a packet of sweets, even the paper in which they were wrapped would be removed, and the contents only were handed to us by the wardens. So I will relate what

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[7] Interview with Hṛdaya, in Naradevi Tol, Kathmandu, May 12, 1982.

[8] Quoted in Hṛdaya 1976, xii.

[9] Translated in Lall 2006, 12.

[10] "Hṛdaya" is the name the poet chose, based on the Sanskrit word for heart; *hṛda* is extended to mean "the one with heart." His given personal name, Chittadhar, coined by his parents, is close to an attested Sanskrit compound word meaning "flowing [-*dhār*] with *citta* ["mind, thought, imagination"]. The poet's full adopted name, then, conveys the artistic sense that he is a man whose heart is flowing with imagination.

> I did. I tore out all the plain pages of my prayer book and on these torn scraps I happened to compose the first canto of my epic.[11]

While a few religious books were allowed in prison, writing materials were still outlawed. Yet such was Chittadhar's determination that he found a way to write.

> I managed to complete the first canto on the frayed and torn loose bits of paper I hid. If I tell you where I hid them, it may indeed sound terrible. Time and again the hard-hearted prison inspectors would come and search our personal belongings. They used to look everywhere, even inside our books. They left nothing unturned. However, we had tin boxes, and on the inner part of the lid was a plate of zinc fixed in it horizontally to give [it] strength…I managed to make a small hole in mine and stuffed the written sheets inside until it could take no more. I then asked for another box and sent this one home. First the guards checked the box and its contents thoroughly, but they did not find the hidden papers. After this, I hid my bits of paper elsewhere. I managed to divulge my secret about the bits of paper hidden in the tin box to my sister Moti Lakṣmi. I told her to take out the bits of paper and if she could read my handwriting, to make a clear copy. She did as I had asked.[12]

So the work progressed, faster in the final years, when note paper was allowed.[13] When Chittadhar was released, after serving five years, he had twenty or twenty-five stanzas of the final two chapters to complete. In his partial, unpublished autobiography, he reports that he worked on revising the manuscript from the summer of his release in 1946 until the spring of 1947.[14] In 1948, he took the text to Calcutta for publication; it was bound and released late that year, embellished with the paintings of his fellow inmate Chandra Man Maskey.[15]

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[11] Interview with Hṛdaya, in Naradevi Tol, Kathmandu, May 12, 1982.

[12] Interview with Hṛdaya, in Naradevi Tol, Kathmandu, May 12, 1982.

[13] Using only the roughest estimates from the end-of-chapter notations, we can ascertain that Chittadhar averaged composing roughly seven pages (seventy stanzas) of *Sugata Saurabha* each month during his incarceration.

[14] A few excerpts are published in Lall 2006, including this note on *Sugata Saurabha*, p. 12.

[15] The original press edition of *Sugata Saurabha* included a series of paintings that also had a prison genesis. Chandra Man Maskey, a Newar from a middle-caste Hindu family of Kathmandu, was a well-known painter recognized from his youth as an artist of great talent. He chose an academic career and became a teacher of painting in Nepal's first public school, the Durbar School, during the Rana regime. But having also run afoul of the government, he was also sent to the prison at the same time as Chittadhar, in 1940. Since he could not sit idle in his cell, he started painting an image of the god Hanuman using colors made from ritual powders and a brush improvised from scraps of paper. When the prison guards saw his talent, they procured proper supplies and had Maskey paint their portraits. He also drew the portraits of some prisoners, including an image of the bearded young Chittadhar wrapped in a shawl that appeared in the first edition of *Sugata Saurabha* and is reproduced here. Chittadhar also asked Maskey to paint some images to illustrate his epic, and by the time they both were released from prison in 1945, Chittadhar had seven other paintings by Maskey, which he carried with him to the press in Calcutta.

The poet in 1982, showing the tin box and secret panel in which he smuggled out the scraps of his manuscript.

After the Ranas were deposed in 1951, the freedom to publish in Newari was granted, and this led to a vast outpouring of literature. At the hub of this revival was the Nepal Bhāsā Parishad and at its center was its founder, Chittadhar, who edited its bimonthly journal, *Nepal*, and oversaw every part of the work of publication. When funds ran short, he even mortgaged his own lands and property to shore up the Parishad's finances. Such was his energy and commitment that Newars fondly recall that Chittadhar offered *tana, mana, dhana* (body, mind, wealth) in the service of his native language and literature. Besides his poetry, Chittadhar published essays, plays, and collections of short stories; he was also a significant scholar, authoring articles and books on a variety of historical subjects. In his latter years, he became an especially beloved public figure. His prolific literary career continued until his death in 1982. A local newspaper eulogized him in these terms:

> [Chittadhar] consecrated all his life without frustration to the cause he was committed to. He even gave all his material possessions for the promotion of literature . . . and accepted the hardship a writer is supposed to face in a poor and undeveloped country. The life he lived should continue to be a source of inspiration to those who have taken to writing as a serious pursuit.[16]

His funeral was a major public event, eliciting an outpouring of grief. It attracted the attendance of the country's king and prime minister; a crowd of thousands

[16] "The Late Hridaya," in Motherland *Daily*, June 15, 1982.

accompanied his body to the cremation ground, and Newars published several memorial volumes paying tribute to Chittadhar's great life and life work.[17] He remains an icon of Newar cultural revival, and since his death, all his major works have been reissued.

Ancient and Modern Buddhist Sources for Sugata Saurabha

Any modern author has three main sources to draw on to compose a new redaction of the Buddha's life story. The first is found in portions of the various Vinayas, the canonical division in the earliest scriptures that define monastic rules, including their arising in incidents from the Buddha's life. The second source is the most poetic and popular of the postcanonical biographies, the *Buddhacarita* (Acts of the Buddha), which was composed in Sanskrit around 200 CE by the Brahmin convert and gifted lay poet Ashvaghosa.[18] It is a very down-to-earth, humanistic narrative. The third is another Sanskrit biography, the *Lalitavistara* (Living out the Game), which presents the Buddha's life from a Mahāyāna perspective, with a strong overlay of magic and divinity in its recounting of the Buddha. These latter biographical texts, as well as another important Sanskrit source, the *Mahāvastu* (great story) that is part of the Vinaya of the Lokottaravādin school, have long been found in the vast Buddhist archives in Nepal. Chittadhar read the *Lalitavistara* as a youth, as it was the first book translated into Newari that was published early in the twentieth century.

Other major sources of information for the poet on the Buddha's life were writings in Hindi by the Indian scholar Rahul Sankrityayana (1893–1963). "Mr. Rahul" (as Chittadhar referred to him) had special connections to Nepal through meeting Newar Lhasa traders in Tibet. One of his more than 150 books had a special place in the formulation of *Sugata Saurabha*: a copy of an anthology of Hindi translations from the Pali sources on the Buddha's life and many sermons, a large book entitled *Buddhacaryyā: Bhagavān Buddhakījīvanī aura Upadesha* (1931).

If we ask what sources the poet possessed over the five years that he composed *Sugata Saurabha* in prison, the answer would be, initially, none. The harsh sentence received allowed nothing for the prisoners. As the poet recalled,

> Sometime later, everyone had some religious books brought into the jail for them after we made a plea that we needed them for prayer. My sister first brought the *Dhammapada* for me, and this inspired me to start my own poem, a wish I could not suppress . . . Later on, the *Buddhacarrya* by Mr. Rahul [Sanskrityayana] also came in as a prayer book. When this book came in, it helped me a lot. Or else I would have had

[17] For example, Shrestha 1983.

[18] Johnston 1972 (1936); Thomas 1949; Cowell 1969.

been dependent on what I had studied in my childhood from the *Lalitavistara* by Shri Nishtānanda.[19]

Among this long lineage of Buddha biographies, then, we can place Chittadhar Hṛdaya's *Sugata Saurabha*. He, too, draws on classical sources, though mediated through translations from Sanskrit via two vernacular languages of South Asia, Newari and Hindi. Although all the major Sanskrit sources of the Buddha's biography have been found in the Nepalese monastic archives, there is no evidence that Chittadhar read from them. Instead, the Newari-language *Lalitavistara* and, most important, Rahul Sankrityayana's Hindi anthology of texts from the Pali Canon informed Chittadhar's composition.

Sugata Saurabha: A Newari Poem in the Indic Tradition

Sanskrit and Kāvya

Reading through this book-length work, there is no doubt that Chittadhar as a young man acquired a strong familiarity with Sanskrit and Sanskrit poetry. This can be made especially clear by simply noting that the poet deployed from memory thousands of Sanskrit words in *Sugata Saurabha*. Facility in Sanskrit and learning Sanskrit terms has for centuries been the mark of a scholar in Nepal, as both Newari and Nepali native speakers can express themselves more eruditely by using words imported from the classical lexicon.

Chittadhar's consistent referential choices in content and style show that he was also writing consciously in the *kāvya* aesthetic tradition. This tradition of poetic composition dates back to the India's classical Gupta era (320–550 CE), when literati utilized the rich and nuanced world of Sanskrit vocabulary and ornate expression to explore the subtleties of human experience, and created a vibrant literary tradition that continued into the modern era. This aesthetic of poetic composition has been succinctly summarized by Edwin Gerow: "The *kāvya* is most successful as a genre for the way it elaborately interweaves the strands of many semantic lines and stuffs the verse as it were with layers of meaning. The whole is incandescent through compaction and tightly recurrent associations."[20]

Chittadhar's greatest gift as a poet in the *kāvya* style may well be in his writing about nature. *Sugata Saurabha* begins with a long chapter of mostly naturalistic descriptions centered in the Lumbinī garden, where the future Buddha was born; and shorter sections are found at other key moments in the story, for example during Siddhārtha's Great Renunciation (chapter 8) and in

[19] Interview with Hṛdaya in Naradevi Tol, Kathmandu, May 12, 1982.

[20] Edwin Gerow, "Grammar as a Structure for Indian Aesthetics," in *Systems of Communication and Interaction in South Asia*, ed. Peter Gaeffke and Susan Oleksiw (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania South Asia Series, 1981), 22.

Yashodharā's lament (chapter 9). Chittadhar often incorporates couplets on nature, using them to convey his feelings about the human events transpiring around the actors.

Rasa

This poem must be read in terms of the goals of traditional Indian *kāvya* poetry, in which the poet through its many conventions seeks to evoke various *rasas:* ideal aesthetic moods. The medieval Sanskrit treatises highlight ten *rasas:* erotic love (*sringāra*), heroism (*vīra*), disgust (*bībhatsa*), anger or fury (*raudr*a), mirth (*hāsya*), terror (*bhayānaka*), compassion (*karuna*), wonder (*adbhuta*), peace (*shantí*), and paternal fondness (*vātsalya*). It is certain that *rasa* theory was explicit in Chittadhar's mind as he composed his epic poem, and we can see in the text how he utilized all the *rasas* in telling the story of the Buddha's life.

Classical Sanskrit Literary Culture

Sugata Saurabha extensively references classical Indic culture, indicating the author's vast knowledge, which includes classical Indian music, *ayurveda* medicine, the *Rāmayana*, the *Mahābhārata*, guides to political rule such as the *Arthashastra*, folktales of worldly wisdom such as *Kathāsaritsāgara*. Even as he composed the epic in Newari language, it is clear from the text that the tradition of *kāvya* was foremost in his mind.

Thus, we see in this great modern poem a confluence of personal aesthetic intentions, religious aspirations, and cultural ambitions, making it—as was the *Mahābhārata* for Hindus in ancient India—at once "doubtless an epic . . . a work of art in poetry (*kāvya*), but at the same time . . . also a textbook of morals (*shāstra*), of law and philosophy based on ancient tradition (*smṛtí*) that . . . [can] serve as much for entertainment as for instruction and sublime edification."[21]

Language Usage and a Confluence of Poetics

It is clear that the prime motivation for Hṛdaya to compose this great poem was religious, as he was raised in a caste and community known for its strong adherence to and patronage of Buddhism. To highlight and celebrate the Buddha's life, present his teachings, and recount the formation of the early *sangha* is to do the meritorious deed of honoring the *Tri-ratna*, "Three Jewels": the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.[22] But there is no doubt that the poet used the canvas of his religious composition to demonstrate his commanding skills as a poet and scholar. Since he was confined to prison for

[21] Winternitz 1981, 1:300.

[22] The teacher, his teachings, and the community of ascetic monks and nuns, respectively. Buddhists take refuge in the three refuges at the start of any ritual. To become a Buddhist requires only repeating "I go for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha" three times.

a long period, he had an extended period of time to shape the many expressions of his poetic talent.

The impressive display of the author's erudition also includes the very broad range of subject matter treated. The list is truly immense here as well: the technical terms for architectural components of temples and houses; an inventory of musical instruments and a survey of the classical tradition's musical compositions; awareness of details concerning herbs and the practices of *ayurvedic* medicine; many examples of persons, and of course philosophical themes, drawn from Sanskrit literature, from the Vedic hymns, the Dharmashastra, *purāna* stories of the gods and their acts on earth, *śastra* treatises and commentaries; to the doctrinal terms from the literature of Buddhism, including classical biographies of the Buddha. For the Kathmandu reader, then, *Sugata Saurabha* in many places reads like James Joyce's *Ulysses*, linguistically and with wide-ranging shorthand references to Hindu, Buddhist, Indic aesthetic traditions all in play. The whole reveals, as does no other modern Newar work, how alive the Indic cultural world still was for the traditional Newar elite in 1940.

Yet two other features of *Sugata Saurabha* are departures from the traditional Indic world of poetry: the use of end rhymes in couplets throughout, and the adoption of some forms of Western punctuation.

Rhyme and Meter

Throughout *Sugata Saurabha*, Chittadhar follows the Western poetic tradition of ending each couplet with rhyming suffixes, while varying the number of syllables placed in each line according to classical Sanskrit metrical formulae.

The commonality of Newari (and Sanskrit) nouns and verb forms ending in vowels would have facilitated the rhyming task. However, this fact should not obscure the great skill and originality of the rhyming that pervades this work. Since attempting to imitate this pattern would make the English translation sound forced and trite, we have not rendered this aspect of *Sugata Saurabha* for each and every line in our translation. The following samples of rhythm and rhyme attempt, however imperfectly, to convey some sense of the sorts of rhyming conventions and inventions that appear in the original.

> Hesitant to alight on false flowers, in smells lacking,
> Black bees clustered nearby, hovering and humming.
>
> Some who noticed the passing wind's scornful laughter
> Retreated in shame, embarrassed by their error.
>
> Surrounded by maids attending, the palanquin's decor could not be seen.
> But the situation was clear: inside must be the queen.[23]

[23] Chapter 1.

Strings of pearls dangled as if pulsing from their necks
To the heartbeats of love throbbing in their breasts.

The stars they saw here and there one after another sparkled *phili phili*
As the ladies raised their arms to count them, gold bangles jingled *chili chili*.[24]

How the whisks fastened at the corners flicked briskly in the air, see,
Strings of flowers and puffed rice were hung to make a canopy, see.[25]

Instructed in Ayurvedic medicine and the physiology of the human
He was taught sexology to enlighten him on the ways of man with a woman.[26]

Above it all were shining jeweled ornaments worn by charioteers that dazzled the sight,
So flocks of birds flew skyward hither and yon due to their great fright.

The infantry of powerful, valiant soldiers marched in rows through the streets
Stamping their feet in unison in tune with the battle drumbeats.

Warriors from both sides eagerly awaited the chance to display their valor
And turned to await the signal to commence from their commander.

Because those who are vanquished with weapons may rise up yet again
Better to win them by peaceful means so they'll ever be truly beneficent friends.[27]

In spite of his best efforts, not one useless grass did he find anywhere,
As a mystic sees supreme spirit pervading all, he saw medicinal herbs everywhere—[28]

While rhyming the end syllables of each line, the poet *also* made the lines' stresses conform to more than twenty-five different classical meters that are actually marked in the text itself. The traditional masters of Sanskrit poetry have identified over fifty recognized metrical schemes employed by poets working in the *kāvya* tradition. Chittadhar explicitly identifies by name the specific metrical forms he uses in parentheses at the end of almost every

[24] Chapter 2.
[25] Chapter 4.
[26] Chapter 6.
[27] Chapter 16.
[28] Chapter 18.

passage, revealing not only his command of them but also a bit of his pedantic nature.

In its composition, then, *Sugata Saurabha* represents a confluence of poetics: metrical forms from the Indic tradition and rhyming couplets from the West. To the latter we must also add the introduction of punctuation.

Punctuation

Sugata Saurabha has Western punctuation and indentation to mark quotations and the ends of couplets. The author uses commas, colons, dashes in places, single and double quotation marks, and, most rarely, a semicolon. Yet for the full stop of a sentence, he retains the traditional *daṇḍa* (stick) (|) from the *devanāgari* alphabet. Chittadhar must have seen advantages in using this English scheme to guide the reading of the verses. The disadvantage for the translator and reader is that the deployment of these punctuation marks is not consistent and so introduces confusion in dozens of lines. In the most common problematic passages, the exclamation point and question mark are used interchangeably, quotations are not marked exactly, and in places the English rules are not correctly implemented. Examples of this last point are questions that are sometimes left unmarked and shifts in indentation for quotations that are printed inconsistently. In our translation we decided to follow the author's usage, except where there is an obvious mistake that would inevitably confuse the reader of the translation.

The Intended Audience

The primary audience for *Sugata Saurabha* was the Newar community's literate elite. After 1951 brought a new era of press freedoms, Newar literary life blossomed, as professional and amateur writers created a vibrant Nepal Bhāsā publishing and reading community in the Kathmandu Valley, one that endures to the present day.[29] And because of Chittadhar's stature, many Newars bought this book. Though they came to regard it as their community's great modern indigenous Buddhist literary work, many have had trouble actually reading through it.

The predominant language of this work, as already noted, is Nepal Bhāsā, the mother tongue of the poet. But *Sugata Saurabha* is a very difficult read for the average literate reader of this language, for several reasons. The author utilizes in many lines words from old Newari that are no longer in common parlance. More challenging is the great number of Sanskrit nouns incorporated. So many such terms are used that only a very erudite person would not stumble on at least a word or two in nearly every line. So

[29] In doing so, the Newars were late in joining this mode of expression of modern life—popular magazines, pamphlets, poetry books, local scholarship—introduced decades earlier in British India.

thoroughgoing is this Sanskritization of the work that the typical modern Newar reader of *Sugata Saurabha* has a strong sense that the author in places is intent on exhibiting his immense vocabulary of Sanskrit words. Testing the reader's erudition further, there is also a smattering of terms from Hindi, Nepali, and Tibetan, and many technical terms from Buddhist philosophy. In the author's defense, given the utterly faithful adherence to meter and rhyme schemes throughout the nineteen chapters, a vast palette of words was necessary to keep the poetic pattern of the work intact and usages fresh. Nonetheless, the poet's commitment to high scholarly expression inherently undermined his ambition to have the content of *Sugata Saurabha* reach a large audience.

To read *Sugata Saurabha* means taking up the challenges it presents, and most who have persevered in the effort to grasp its artistry doubtless have had to master the *kāvya* formatting,[30] while also keeping a Sanskrit dictionary close at hand.

The Domestication of Newar Civilization into the Buddha's Life

Yet another remarkable feature in *Sugata Saurabha's* treatment of Shākyamuni's life is Chittadhar's consistent insertion of details of traditional Kathmandu Newar life into the biographical framework of the story.[31] This practice of inserting local traditions where the sources are silent about the cultural context—Shākyamuni's youth, his home country and capital, domestic traditions, and his marriage—gives the epic a strong, confident air. Such "making the story one's own," or domestication, was commonplace in the redaction of Newar Buddhist narrative texts.[32]

In *Sugata Saurabha*, this is done consistently throughout the narrative. Chittadhar's bold use of this "poetic license" was in fact a subject of much discussion in intellectual circles after the publication of the book. Chittadhar defended his narrative treatment by stating that where the classical sources are silent, he felt free to fill in the details, this being a legitimate expression of artistry that served to make the Buddha's life more understandable to his own native audience. This practice of "vernacular literary domestication" may also have seemed justifiable to the author given the close proximity of the Kath-

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[30] As Michael Hahn (1993) and Sheldon Pollack (2003) have made clear, very ornate Sanskrit *kāvya* in its classical expressions was and remains very difficult to understand, since it was written and developed to show off erudition and impress the authors' few literati colleagues who could even hope to follow the text. In this sense, Chittadhar was also a traditionalist in making the text so difficult to decode. It is precisely here where analysis of the text reveals a contradiction in the poet himself: the master scholar-poet versus the cultural revitalizer.

[31] A large gallery of photographs of Newar traditional practices mentioned in *Sugata Saurabha* found in contemporary usage is available at http://college.holycross.edu/faculty/tlewis/PublicationPageMaster.htm.

[32] This process in the Kathmandu Valley is the subject of Lewis 2000.

mandu Valley to the centers of the Buddha's life and the Newar community's imagined historical connections with the Buddha's own ethnic nationality, the Shākyas.

So extensive and nuanced is this domestication that *Sugata Saurabha* contains what amounts to a vast cultural encyclopedia of Newar life. From musical scales to the component parts of ornate wooden windows, from the details of myriad ritual offerings to the precise renditions of temple iconography, *Sugata Saurabha* expresses Hṛdaya's encyclopedic command of his own richly elaborate culture. But the poem goes far beyond inventory: many verses reveal that the poet not only knows even the small details of the cultural performances but also has experienced them; he has looked long and hard at Newar houses and has closely observed how Newars truly live their urban lifestyle from birth to death, in happiness and mourning. All told, the depth of Chittadhar's commitment to humanizing the Buddha's life is indicated by how thoroughly he lovingly weaves the textures of his own society's urban life into this story.

An Idealistic Vision of Modernity

Any reader of *Sugata Saurabha* who is not well acquainted with Buddhism should know that the author in some areas departs dramatically from his classical sources. While we have pointed out that he was extremely well versed in ancient Indic traditions, from devotional literature to poetry, it is also important to note that he was also a modernist, open not only to Western punctuation but also to the Western tradition of scientific thought. There is clear evidence that Chittadhar was strongly influenced by religious modernism in *Sugata Saurabha*, reflecting as well the anticolonial Buddhist revitalization movements that were in circulation among Asian literati in early twentieth-century Asia. This perspective can be summarized in three key standpoints Chittadhar takes in the text: Buddhism is about social reform, intended to uplift the entire society; Buddhism is compatible with rationality, that is, behind historical legends lies a demythologized empirical truth; and meditation is at the center of Buddhist spirituality and is for everyone.

In a rhetorical strategy common to cultural activists, then, *Sugata Saurabha's* poet shapes the narrative to imply that revitalizing his own community is not a modern innovation but actually can be done by rediscovering the Buddha's true teaching and his own community's ancient precedents among the Shākyas.[33] Recalling the prison genesis of the poem and the highly primitive conditions of his incarceration, the consistency and strength of the poet's positive, optimistic

[33] At other points in the epic, however—in chapters 12 and 16—the author maintains his historical objectivity to point out some of the known "character weaknesses" of the Shākyas: pride, selfishness, caste superiority feelings among the aristocracy, ill-temperedness, and boastfulness. He even has the early Shākya kinsmen of the Buddha point out several of their own flaws at the end of chapter 12.

ethos in *Sugata Saurabha* attests to the vitality of his love for humanity and his personal loving-kindness. That a highly educated man suffering incarceration for a "literary crime" would turn his thoughts toward defending his own culture and imagining a better nation is not surprising. That he would do so with a biography of the Buddha, balancing ancient poetic traditions with modernist sentiments, is what makes *Sugata Saurabha* a work of genius.

The Work of the Reader

A final note seems in order, though its content will not be completely unexpected to the reader who has followed the discussion of the aesthetic tradition in which Chittadhar Hṛdaya was working. To get the most out of this extraordinary work by this virtuoso poet, the reader needs to approach this text in the spirit of the traditional Indian *rasika*—a lover of *kāvya* poetry—and to tune one's mind to the subtleties of all the human emotions (*rasa*). One must slow down to enter fully into the world created by the text, with time for "seeing" in one's mind's eye and feeling fully the world offered from the author's imagination.

Every human emotion is found in *Sugata Saurabha*, as Chittadhar weaves into one of the world's great spiritual biographies a vast cast of characters and the sociocultural setting of Newar civilization. Unfortunately, the softness and cleverness of rhyming Newari words and lines, and the pleasures of endlessly skillful metrical symmetries, are opaque to the reader of the English translation. This mode of pleasure the reader of the original finds abiding in every line, suffusing the appreciation of content, is inevitably absent here, as it is in any translation of poetry.

Thus, the challenge for the English reader—and opportunity—is to seek the sort of transformative reading experience that was imagined by the aesthetes of ancient Indian *kāvya* poetry, the highest effect that a poet in this tradition sought to foster: a transcendent experience brought about by the union of noble story and refined expressions of lyrical artistry.

The reader mindful of this tradition should understand that one is expected not to be passive but to do the work of the traditional *kāvya* reader: slow down, enter into the scenes, pay attention to the atmospheres painted in the imagined world, reread for colors and textures, and identify with the characters whose story is being told. Chittadhar expressed confidence, at our last meeting with him, that his five years of work presenting the Buddha's life would offer the reader an ennobling story even in its English rendering. And it is our overriding wish that our long collaboration, now completed, will open the way for the reader to enter into the Buddha's biography and savor the many sweet and subtle resonances of Chittadhar Hṛdaya's epic poem.

I

Sugata Saurabha, by Chittadhar Hṛdaya

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I

Lumbinī

Resplendent was lustrous Lumbinī, fragrant from its exotic flowers, for
It was here that our poet and the King of Seasons made their first
acquaintance.

Holy is the grove between Kapilavastu and Devadaha,
Because just there was Lord Buddha born.

The great raiment of the sky above seemed to encompass it on all sides,
So verdant was grove beyond adorned with creepers, like a young
lotus-eyed farm girl

Youthful, smiling, with her hair bedecked in flowers
She displayed her tender nature.

Trembling like a young girl at the touch of her lover,
The new buds and blossoms of the trees rustled with the passing breezes.

Like youthful maidens laden with carnal desire
The trees bent down, heavy with fruit.

In one place, the cuckoos cooed; in another, birds chirped "*chilichili*"
In the flowering grove, the multicolored butterflies flitted.

As peacocks danced nimbly among the cockscomb flowers,
Fawns scampered there to see this sight.

Parrots were chattering in the branches overhead,
But it was the trees abloom with buds and blossoms that seemed to sing.

The black bees humming in the lush grove also pleased the ear,
While their honey-drunken *bhunu-bhunu* buzzing stirred the mind.

Only from their fragrance could one know the yellow jasmine had
bloomed,
Or else one would think them to be golden flower earrings.

The entire forest was beautiful with the flowers of its fruit trees,
As the sight of all the colorful blossoms dazzled the eyes.

A blooming honeysuckle smiled, showing its flowers like "teeth,"
Its fragrance was like the breath of the flowering lotus.

A flock of swallows flew together in the autumn sky,
Like wedded daughters returning to their parents' home.

Graceful rabbits were there, too, fidgeting:
Or were they crystals fallen from the glittering moon?

A monkey troupe jumped from branch to branch,
Personified restlessness in material form.

In one place, the female monkeys scurried as their young ones clung tight,
In another, other monkeys swung around on creeper vines.

As the wind then swept noisily through the freshly sprouted bamboo grove,
Their stalks swayed sounding "*phiri-phiri*" in grand welcome.

The cool, clear waters flowing in the crystal stream sounded beautiful,
To make a song pleasing to its sweetheart;

The willows along its banks seemed to bend down as if to kiss it
But retreated a bit, chastened by the gentle breeze.

Wet were the stream banks, drenched by moisture,
And far in the distance, wind-blown reeds also looked like a flowing river.

The force of the breeze could be read in the *pipal* leaves[1]
Rustling like a beauty's basil leaf—shaped earrings.

In one corner stood a graceful banana tree, still and upright like a pillar,
Its buds shaped like palms joined together in worship.

In the forest, nectar-bearing *kokā* flowers bloomed,
As if lovely maidens had appeared with saffron *tikas*[2] on their foreheads.

---

[1] Bo tree, *ficus religiosa*, the tree under which the Buddha was enlightened.

[2] A mark placed on the forehead to mark the completion of a ritual; it is also a mark of beauty applied by women.

The stags there were proud of their beautiful branching antlers,
Gently expressing their joy with smiling eyes.

Everywhere in the forest were crystal cool pools with tasty water
That looked clear and broad like the moon freed from a cloud-filled sky,

As a youthful elephant in the water courted his beloved
Humming black bees gathered around his honey-redolent forehead.

Geese pairs were seen playing, tugging at lotus flower stalks
White herons were there, too, hunting fish on both sides of the stream.

Not knowing their deceit, the fish sped through the water among
The crabs, so innumerable! The frogs, how they jumped to and fro[3]

In the bright reflected sunlight, the lotus blossoms seemed clad in red;
Water lilies hid, blushing from their beloved and bending in shyness.

Geese playing in the pond caused rippling waves
That in turn mirrored the dramatic scene of birds on the wing as

The play of sunlight made the pond like a painted canvas
Attracting innumerable wild animals to come there for a look.

As if to advertise its beauty publicly there
The pond sent forth lotus pollen—borne breezes.

Their buzz reverberating through earth and water
Pairs of bees hurried to alight on the lotus blossoms.

The *sinhāymā*[4] tree weighed down with fruit sheltered alighting doves
That from their branch perches cooed overhead.

The sparrows twittered "*tyū-tyū*" after eating the mustard seeds in
the field,
The chattering song of crickets "*piu-piu*"[5] also echoed through the reed
grove.

There were aloe trees and not red but only yellow sandalwood trees
Growing there, filling the forest with their own fragrances.

---

[3] "*Lucu-lucu.*"

[4] *Buddleia Asiatica.*

[5] We insert this second set of single quotation marks to be consistent and to highlight the internal rhyme.

The trees bearing milk-filled coconuts looked like
Statuesque sweethearts with firm love-filled breasts.

Like the great twang of a bow string fully drawn by a gallant warrior of noble birth
A lion roared, sounding like rumbling thunder from a rain cloud.

Like lightning, the striking horns of fighting buffaloes clashed
As a herd of bears, like a black cloud above, darkened the ground

Cows with full udders caused their milk to flow down
Giving all these signs, the spring season burst forth like the monsoon.

Thorns drowned among the new sprouting shoots
But spring seemed to reign in the forest, overcoming all obstacles.

The grove abloom with peach blossoms seemed like one clad in a colorful silken sari,
The mango trees laden with flowering buds seemed wrapped up as if in a soft shawl.

Indian cranes[6] were seen flying up on a skyward path.
Pied cuckoos, though thirsty, cared naught for the lakes but looked skyward.[7]

The clever parrots capable of speaking in human tongues
Were nowhere caged as talk masters.

In their multicolored clothes of soft gorgeous plumes
Finches sat in pairs, like fully bloomed flowers perched on branches.

At the sight of the warbler's soft and tender crest
The thrush lifted its tail to see if it too had such decoration.

Like gold, *bel* fruits[8] of tempting smell were there growing,
So it was impossible for cawing crows in those trees to seem other than fools.

Papaya trees stood there, trunks topped with ripe sweet fruit, and half-hidden from view
One would easily have mistaken them for mangos in spring had they been with leaves.

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[6] *Kvaṁla:khā*, also called "birds of passage."
[7] They are thought capable of only drinking falling rainwater.
[8] *Aegle narmelos*.

See the climbing vines courting and holding each other in tight embrace
This the tall palm espied, craning its head high.

The rays of sunshine played hide-and-seek with the *sal* branches[9] and leaves
Producing sun-embroidered designs on the ground below

Perched on the velvety green ground cover
The forest pigeons also beckoned "Come-Come."[10]

Petals of the ground-dwelling lotus opened, their white umbrellas unfolded by spring
Seemed to pervade the air with their drifting fragrance.

See how the jasmine smiled, showing its teeth
To cordially greet in welcome its visitor, Spring.

Grown flowers blew in the brisk breezes and the fruits swayed sideways
Making many scenic spots among the shimmering trees and vines.

Abundant there, too, were groups of animals unidentified,
With the cuckoos cooing to prove themselves the most melodious of songsters.

Spring, lover of all nature, gave the grove its adornment of exotic flowers
Its green costumes sprawling and sprouting its shoots in all directions.

See how embellished nature looked: with all the spring flowers ornamented
It seemed, by their jewels, those countless colored butterflies and bees.

The gurgling water of the stream tinkled like ankle ornaments
Due, no doubt, to the same natural rhythms.

Like a lady immersing her heart in the love-pool of her beloved
Nature seemed as if smiling proudly, all in spontaneous joy.

The beauty there was displayed, all as if it were nature's shop front,
Songbirds flew as if hurrying to buy, their sweet notes the payment.

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[9] A tree, *Shorea Robusta*.
[10] "*Vā-Vā*."

But nature also was heard to say, "No selling on credit,"
Yet the cuckoo tried unceasingly, with a call reverberating in every heart.

The deep forest is not only nature's much-beloved playground
And so it was bedecked in manmade things, too.

Flags and banners white, red, blue, green and yellow fluttered smartly
Fastened on bamboo poles stuck firmly in the ground.

On the wooden flowerpots, with their borders of green-leaf cloth
Exotically shaped paper flowers "bloomed" in them so colorfully.

Hesitating to alight on the false flowers that lacked in smell
Black bees clustered, hovering and humming.

Near the fully bloomed wax flowers that were filled with fragrance
The already-drunken black bees came for nectar but were wronged again

And some of them who noticed the passing wind's scornful laughter
Retreated in shame, embarrassed by their error.

Seeing one faux bird swinging on a sliced bamboo stalk among the paper flowers
A real sparrow alighted, displaying signs of courtship.

Five-color cotton balls were garlanded there
Like delicate flower stalks shaking in the breeze.

As the road was cleaned and no pebbles were scattered,
Perfumed water was sprayed there to keep the dust at bay.

Gold jars were set up too, filled with scented waters,
Their fragrance wafted in the air by waving whisks.

The whole setting had many ponds and was adorned with splashing fountains
Six-petal red lotuses were there lingering with other flowers.

Swans were displayed along with colored fish,
Artificial lotuses, swans, and fish set among the placement of a blue lotus in bloom.

Appearance of Queen Māyā's Entourage

Then, from the far side, an entourage of ladies approached,
See the swirl of their wind-blown saris.

They are surely women, as one can now hear their sweet voices
Interspersed by the clip-clap of shoes and their tinkling gold anklets.

Guarding them was an escort of armed men,
But their quivers full of arrows and their bows were of no use.

So naturally endowed were the maidens with eyebrows like drawn bows, like
Cupid's arrows, their eyes could pierce any susceptible young man's heart.

In one place banana stalks with blossoms were erected like pillars
That were embellished by many-stranded puffed rice garlands,[11]

In another place the ladies arrived with their twin breasts firm and full
Their nipples swaying like pearl necklaces.

As their full moon–like faces came fully into view
The enraptured *cakora* birds[12] were moved to share their carnal pleasures.

Strings of *bālācī* seed[13] garlands on one side swayed briskly,
As the shawl-ends on the other side were pulled along by the wind.

Like mica grains glistening in the shining sunlight
So did the women's shawls sparkle, studded with spangles.

Smelling the scent of ambrosia there, on lower lips that seemed like
sensuous fruit
Scent-seeking thirsty bees, also drawn by their lotus eyes,

Came close to see and alight but started up, finding only
Their plaited hair embellished with jeweled flowers.

Graceful as agile elephants, having waists slim like lions and soft skin like
hares
Their shoulders were shapely like elephant tusks, their eyes like those of
curious deer.

With faces having lips like coral, showing pearl-like teeth between them
Like lotuses they pushed through the retinue, looking behind.

---

[11] A Newar method of decoration for special occasions, an old custom similar to popcorn strung on Christmas trees.

[12] *Cakora* birds in Indic mythology were thought to live by drinking only moonbeams.

[13] *Croxylum indicum*.

Since it was hot, they came holding aloft their gold-tipped umbrellas
With golden fringes that stirred because the wind could not stand the heat.

Beads of perspiration formed on their cheeks, like water drops on red pearls
Their clothes seemed yellow in the twilight's glow!

On their shapely fingers shined rings set with sapphires,
Girdles of bells worn around their waists jingled, as did the anklets on their feet.

On both their wrists were gold bracelets set with emeralds
Hanging from their ears were diamond-set earrings.

In their right hands were gold-plated jeweled yak tail fans
That moved the air and stirred the hearts.

Cradling with their left hands golden water pitchers that rested on their sides
More lovely ladies came, also weighed down by their youthful modesty.

Peacock feather fans decorated the right hands of some,
And on other outstretched palms there rested golden trays loaded with juicy fruits.

Fingers tender and soft like green sprouts carried beautiful garlands
Surely such a sight captivated both mortals and the gods.

The amorous wind snuck in slowly, hoping to be selected for a suitable match,
"Oh foolish wind, don't blow at the shawls! They are not your kind."[14]

In the "pool" of youth are growing such lotus-like faces
With their cheek "petals" blushing crimson.

Novel feelings buzzed in their clouded hearts like the bees' *bhunu-bhunu*,
How else to explain their eyes fixed with a constant gaze *tunu-tunu*!

On the "trees" of their bodies, their blushing blossoms
Seemed to bloom into "fruits" as shapely breasts!

---

[14] The next eight lines are also addressed to spring personified.

The garden of their hearts throbbed with lustful desires like cuckoo songs.
O Spring! You have no more work here so please return to where you are needed.

O fellow men! Let us look at the "forest" in our midst,
Let no jeering remarks pass from our lips, lest the brain be choked with thorns,

Observe decency, politeness, courtesy
Our duty is to honor the soft and fairer sex.

Decorated with golden ornaments studded with jewels, long pearl necklaces, and flowers
That perfumed the forest with flowing fragrance and

Supported fast by many bearers' shoulders, a palanquin arrived there
Its twin pole ends ornate with silver lion masks.

Clothed in silver-gold brocade, silk turbans, having both ears adorned with gold earrings
And resting the palanquin poles on their shoulders

The bearers arrived and stooped down, shy like new brides
Not allowed to look inside, they concerned themselves with the poles alone.

Surrounded by maids attending, the palanquin's decor could not be seen
But the situation was clear: inside must be the queen.

Whoever it may be, since we certainly cannot yet know what has just happened
We need now take a moment's rest, for the stomach is empty and we are tired.

Poet's Self-Introduction

We will all go together to look for her in the next cantos
So let us dive deep in our full effort, however long it takes.

By looking at her lotus feet, we'll recognize whose wife she is
To have the full truth revealed is but the duty of any great-sentimental heart.[15]

[15] This final phrase bears the double meaning of "sentimental heart," as well as the author's pen name, Chittadhar Hřdaya, whose second word means "heart."

2

Family Tree

Irrigated by the clear rivers flowing from the snow-crested Himalayas
Northern India seemed to be an entrance to a golden celestial land.

There were altogether eleven states, all republics, celebrated as civilized and cultured,
The Shākyas were one of these world-renowned nations.

In the Himalayan foothills, rich in mineral deposits and myriad precious stones
Ancient Ancestry of the Buddha's Family In the line of the sun, that thousand-armed one

Many warrior caste men were born
Who had their fragrant fame wafted.

The world-renowned Manu, author of the *Manusmŕti*,[1] was born here,
Dedicated to administering justice, he propounded the norms of jurisprudence.

This vigorous man's son named Ikṣvāku[2] was the first king in this patriline
Who called it "The Dynasty of Ikṣvāku."

When one pigeon pursued by a hawk took refuge in him
King Sibi[3] had a pound of flesh severed from his body to ransom this pigeon's life.

Such were the kings who, protecting the poor, were born in this line
By such kings having been crowned here, this land was blessed.

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[1] The Laws of Manu, a Hindu law code attributed to the first human, Manu.

[2] Son of Manu, founder of the solar dynasty. Buddhists in some texts identify him as the first *cakravartin* king.

[3] King who is said to have saved the god of fire, in the form of a dove, from Indra, in the form of a hawk, by offering an equal quantity of his own flesh weighted in a balance scale. Also told in a Buddhist *jātaka* tale with the bodhisattva as the royal hero.

Sagara, whose descendants by hewing deep holes in this earth
Brought into existence the vast watery expanse called ocean,

Who rose to fame as the mightiest, also was born into this dynasty,
The great in this world have firm foundations.

Aṁshumān[4] tried to lead into India the river Jānhavī[5]
But he died unsuccessful at hewing the earth for its course.

The descendants of Aṁshumān followed their glorious master
In dedicating their lives to releasing the Gangā

Completing the glorious work left undone by their forefathers, a duty of all good descendants,
How could Bhagīratha, too, fail to be a brilliant light in his dynasty.

Engaging his great army of elephants and horses to hew the earth with stupendous effort
He came driving a chariot with the Bhāgīrathī River flowing along behind.

The truthful Harishcandra[6] sold himself off and
Giving up his son, wife, and kingdom, became a slave to a lowly untouchable[7]

With the sparkling jewel of his glory gleaming in crystal-clear splendor
He kept the family chronicle of his solar race burnished and bright for all eternity.

The King Nahuṣa,[8] who vanquished even Indra and was renowned for his morality
Was also a direct descendant in this patriline.

Bhārata, rich in humanity, resources, and money
Had its origins from the name of the king also named Bharata

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[4] Also called Aṁshumat in other sources.

[5] Another name for the Gangā, a river in Indic mythology that is brought down from the gods in heaven through the penances of the sage next referred to, Bhāgīratha.

[6] The twenty-eighth king in the solar dynasty, whose story is recounted in the *Mahābhārata* and *Padma Purāna*.

[7] *Cāṅḍāla*.

[8] Legendary king who has various identities in the ancient Indic texts. In the *Viṣṇu Purāna* he is called the ancestor of Kṛṣṇa and the Kauravas; in the *Mahābhārata*, he is said to have attained the rank of Indra.

Who was also born into this solar race. It was Yayāti[9]
Born to this dynasty who basked in glory, having renounced his kingdom as alms.

When King Dilip[10] while tending a cow belonging to his teacher Vasiṣṭha
Roamed over the forest with his dear wife

A ferocious lion came to pounce on the cow and
The lion could not be enticed to spare it

Until the king himself prepared to give his own body in ransom,
This kind King Dilīp also took birth in this proud dynasty.

When Raghu was born, there was not a single prisoner
To be found in prison left to be set free,

Having vanquished all the world's countries, he was a *cakravartin*,[11] gem of the solar race
But he renounced all possessions that he had gathered, counting them as blunders

Running short of money to give in charity, he fought a battle
With Kubera to win all his property across north India.

Bīra Raghu, whose name blazes in the world's records, was also born of this dynasty,
And from his name, it ever since has been renowned as the "Raghu Dynasty."

The very one who had beautiful and beloved Indumatī as his great queen[12]
Whom he loved so deeply that they seemed as two joined in one mind and body,

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[9] The Ṛg Veda refers to him as Nahuṣa's son, and later texts such as the *Viṣṇu Purāna* recount his exploits as a powerful king.

[10] Father of Raghu mentioned below. The cow referenced may be Surabhi, the divine "Cow of Plenty," or Nandini, its calf. In the *Viṣṣu Purāna*, Dilīp and his wife must tend the latter as penance to win the boon of having a son born to them.

[11] Universal monarch.

[12] The following fourteen couplets allude to the *Rāmāyana*. They begin with four lines devoted to Aja, father of Rāma's father.

Became the forebear of Dasharatha[13] and so of Rāma, and this very
Aja remained a reigning monarch who treated his subjects as his own children.

Dasharatha, son of Aja and father of Rāghava, had a household ever tranquil and serene
And his conjugal love shone like a broad flaming beacon

Such that his queens Kausalyā, Sumitrā, and young Kekai
Bore him four sons, Rāma, Bhārata, Lakṣman, and Satrughna

This King Dashāratha, a direct descendant of this solar dynasty,
Exhibited love for his son and died from the shock of his son's forest banishment.

Rāma, the mere saying of whose unforgettable name fills our hearts with reverence,
Was the light of Avadhpura, the place where he spent his pleasant childhood,

The one who did string the tremendous bow and win Sītā's hand in marriage,
Also crushed the pride of Bṛgu and returned safely home.

In compliance with his father's command, he gave up his kingdom
Retreating into exile with Jānakī[14] and Lakṣman to dwell in the Daṇḍaka forest.

Chaste Sītā was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa and
It was impossible to win her release in negotiation

After winning Vibhīṣana over to his side and finding his enemy's locale,
He vanquished Dashānana and had Vibhīṣana crowned as Lanka's ruler.

After returning with his wife in their celestial chariot
Back home, having heard Sītā's chastity questioned by a washerman,

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[13] King of Ayodhya, who was extremely fond of his sons, but Rāma was his greatest favorite. When Kekai, at the instigation of Manthara, demanded the fulfillment of the two boons he had previously promised to her, the king tried to dissuade her from her wicked resolve by threats. But Kekai remained inexorable, and the monarch was obliged to send his beloved son Rāma into exile. He soon afterward died of a broken heart.

[14] Another name for Sītā.