THE PLAYS ASCRIBED TO BHĀSA AND THE
MATTA-VILĀSA

The group of plays published by Pandit Ganapati Sastri in Nos. 15-17, 20-2, 26, 39, and 42 of the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series is now doubtless familiar to most Sanskritists; but few, I suspect, will agree with the learned editor's ascription of them to Bhāsa, for which he adduces no evidence of the least cogency. I venture, however, to call attention to another work which throws some light on the subject, and for the publication of which we again have to thank the Pandit. This is the *Matta-vilāsa*, issued as No. 55 of the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series. The *Matta-vilāsa* is an amusing little farce, which in its prelude tells us that its author was the Pallava king Mahēndra-vikrama-varman. As the Pandit points out in his introduction, this king may be identified almost certainly with Mahēndra-vikrama-varman I, who bears on inscriptions the titles *Avanibhājana*, *Guṇa-bhara*, *Matta-vilāsa*, and *Śatru-malla*, and is known from the same source to have composed a farce called *Matta-vilāsa* (*E.I.* iv, p. 152; *S.I.I.* i, p. 29 f.; *Dir. Gen. Ann. Report of Arch. Survey*, 1903-4, p. 270 f.; G. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *The Pallavas*, pp. 38 ff.): and assurance is made doubly sure by the fact that the present play refers to the first three of his titles on p. 1 and to the last in its concluding verse. Now this *Matta-vilāsa* shows the same technical features as the thirteen plays which the Pandit ascribes to Bhāsa; and we may therefore with some confidence attribute the latter, not to Bhāsa, but to an anonymous poet living in the same part of India and in about the same period as Mahēndra-vikrama-varman. Furthermore, six out of these thirteen plays end with a verse invoking a blessing on a king *Rājasimha*; and it seems therefore reasonable to conjecture that by the latter is meant the Pāṇḍya Tēr-Māran Rājasimha I, who flourished about

675 A.D. Hence I infer that the plays of "Bhāsa" were composed in the second half of the seventh century, and have no connexion whatever with Bhāsa.

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THE DATE OF THE BOOK OF JOB

This has always been a crux. In the able article on the Book of Job in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* it is stated, p. 426, that the book has no direct reference to historical events, and that its age can be fixed only approximately.

I do not know if it has been suggested before that some light on the date may be found in chap. xix, v. 24 of the book, and it seems to me that we have a reference there to the great inscription at Bī-sitūn¹ of Darius Hystaspes. The verse (R.V.) says: "(Oh) that with an iron pen and lead they (Job's words) were graven in the rock for ever!" Sir Henry Rawlinson tells us that "when the unsoundness of the surface-stone of the rock made it difficult to give the necessary polish, another piece of stone was inserted, and fixed by being embedded in molten lead".

I am not aware whether it has been found that lead was used in other ancient rock-inscriptions. If not, is there not a probability that the verse has a reference to the great and world-famous inscription of Darius? That inscription was made in the sixth century B.C., and if my suggestion be correct, Job cannot have been written earlier than that date.

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¹ It has been said that Bī-sitūn is a corruption of the "Bāghistān" of Diodorus Siculus, but is it not more likely to be a synonym thereof? For Bāghistān can mean Heaven, and this is the meaning of Bī-sitūn also, without pillars, the firmament, Heaven. Orientals regard it as one of the marvels of creation that the sky does not fall, though destitute of pillars, and we find the same idea in a letter of Martin Luther's where he says (Köstlin's *Life*, ii, 234) that he has lately seen two marvels, one of them being that Heaven has no pillars, yet does not fall down.