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Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of two plays by Harsha, The Lady of the Jewel Necklace and The Lady who Shows her Love.

King Harsha reigned over Kanauj (near modern Kanpur) from 606 to 647 CE. He composed two plays about the mythical figures of King Udayana, his queen, Vasavada, and two of his co-wives. The plays abound in mistaken identities, both political and erotic. Characters masquerade as one another and as themselves, and each play refers simultaneously to itself and to the other.

Here language is not merely to look through to get to the story but to look at. Mistaken identities are mirrored in the rich use of puns and extended double entendre, and these verbal tricks are part of what happened, theatrical events like putting on a mask or telling a lie.

Mirroring the doubling of the characters, the plays too are doubled. Many stanzas and elements of plot appear in both, but key differences skew the mirror images.

One could imagine a performance of both dramas in one evening, or of both played simultaneously. How very modern these plays are.
“THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE”
AND
“THE LADY WHO SHOWS HER LOVE”
BY HARṢA
TRANSLATED BY
WENDY DONIGER

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
JJ C FOUNDATION
2006
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ACT III
THE RENDEZVOUS
3.20 tataḥ praviṣati madanvaśvasthāṃ nāṣayaṇaṁ upaviṣto rājā.

rājā: (nīḥsvasya)

saṃtāpo, hṛdaya, Smarānalakṣṭaḥ
saṃpratya āyaṁ sahyatāṃ!
naṁ āṣṭya eva' āpaśamo 'ṣya, tāṃ prati punaḥ
kiṃ tvam mudhā tāmyasi?
yan mūḍhena mayā tadā katham api
prāpto gṛhitvā ciram
vinyastas tvayaṁ sāndra-candana-rasa
sparśo na tasyāṁ karaḥ. [1]

aho, mahad āścaryam!

manaś caḷaṁ praṅkṛtya' ṛiva,
durlakṣyaṁ ca. tathā āpi me
Kāmēṅ āitata kathāṁ viddhaṁ
samaṁ sarvaiḥ śīlīmukhāḥ? [2]

3.25 (urdhvam avalokya) Kusumaṇḍhanvan,

bāṇāḥ paṅca manośbhavasya, nīyatās
teṣāṁ aṣaṃkhyo janaḥ
prāyo śmadvidha eva lakṣya iti yal
loke prasidhitam gatam.
deṣṭāṃ tat tvayaṁ vipratīpaṁ adhunā
yasmād aṣaṃkhyair āyaṁ
viddhāḥ kāmijanaḥ śarair aṣaṇo
nītau tvayaṁ paṅcatām. [3]
Enter the king, seated, miming love-sickness.

KING: (sighing)

Endure now, my heart, this fever kindled by the
fire of Memory.
There is absolutely no way to put it out.
Then why are you suffocating on her account,
all in vain?
What a fool I was, when I managed somehow
to grasp her hand,
whose touch was like rich sandalwood salve,
not to hold it to you for a long, long time.

And this is most amazing:

The heart is by nature a moving target, hard to hit.
And yet
Kama managed somehow to hit mine
with all of his stone-tipped arrows, all at once.

(looking up) O God whose bow is made of flowers,

The arrows of the god born in the heart are fixed
in number—five—
though countless people, most of them precisely
my type,
have been their targets. All of this has become
a popular cliché.
But now your ratio appears to be just the opposite,
for you pierced this helpless tribe of lovers with
innumerable arrows
and reduced them to the five elements.*
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

(\textit{vicintya}) na tath" āham evaṁ|vidh' āvastham ātmānam anucintayāmi yath" āntar|nigūḍha|kopa|saṇḍrambhāyā devyā locana|gocara|gatām tapasviniṁ Sāgarikām. tathā hi:

hriyā sarvasy' āsau 
haratī «vidit" āsm' iti» vadanāṁ.
dvayar dṛṣṭv" alapam 
kalayati kathām ātmā|viṣayām.
sakhiṣu|smerāsu 
prakaṭa|ya|tī vailakṣyam adhiṇaṁ.
prīyā prāyen' āste 
hṛdayāniḥit'|ātaṅka|vidhurā. [4]

tadvāṛt"ānveṣanāya gataḥ kathāṃ cirayati Vasantakāḥ?

3.30 \textit{tataḥ pravilati hṛṣṭo vasantakaḥ.}

\textit{vidūṣakaḥ}: (\textit{sa|paritosam}) 'hi hi, bho! Kausambi|rajja|lā- 
hen' āvi ṇa tādiso pia|vaassassa paritoso āsi, jādiso ajja 
maḥ saasādo pia|vaṇaṇaṁ suṇja bhavissadi tti takke-
mi. tā jāva gadua pia|vaassassa ṇivedaīssam, \textit{(parikrama| 
āvalokya ca)} kadhaṁ, eso pia|vaasso imaṇaṁ jjeva disaṇ 
avaloka|anto ciṛt̐ha|di, tahā takkemi maṇa eva paḍivaledi 
tti. tā uvasappāmi naṁ, \textit{(upaśratya)} jaadu, jaadu pia|vaas-
sso! bho vaassa, diṭṭhiā vaḍḍhasi samihid'|abbhadhikāe 
kajja|siddhiḥ, 2

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(thinking) I’m not worried so much about myself, though I’ve been reduced to this sorry state, as about poor Ságarihka, if she comes within the queen’s range of vision, for the queen is possessed by a rage that she has hidden deep inside her. Indeed:

She turns her face away from everyone, embarrassed by the thought, “They know about me.” When she sees two people talking together, she reckons that they’re talking about her. And when her women friends smile, she becomes even more uncomfortable.

My dear one suffers most of the time from a heart oppressed by apprehension.*

I sent Vasántaka to get some news about her; why is he taking so long?

Enter vasántaka, rejoicing.

jester: (with satisfaction) Hurrah! Not even his acquisition of the kingdom of Kaushambi gave my dear friend such satisfaction as I bet he’ll have today when he hears the delightful news that I bring him. I’ll go to my dear friend and report it to him. (walking around and looking around) Why, here is my dear friend looking in this very direction. I bet he’s waiting just for me. I’ll go up to him. (approaching) Victory, victory to my dear friend. Good fortune smiles on you, my friend, with this success in your undertaking, far beyond your expectations.
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

RÂJÂ: (sa/harjam) vayasya, api kuśalaṃ priyāyah?

VIDŪŚAKHÂ: (sa/garvam) bho, acireṇa saam jjeva pekkha jāṇissasi,

RÂJÂ: (sa/paritojam) vayasya, darśanam api bhaviṣyatī pri-
yāyah?

3.35 VIDŪŚAKHÂ: (ś/ābhamkāram) bho, kīsa ṇa bhavissadī jassa de uvahasida/Viḥappadiḥuddhiḥiḥavo ahaṃ amacco,

RÂJÂ: (śibaya) na khalu citram. kiṃ na saṃbhāvyate tvayī?
tat kathaya. vistarataḥ śrotum icchāmi.

VIDŪŚAKHÂ: (karne) evaṃ evaṃ,

RÂJÂ: (sa/harjam) sādhu, vayasya, sādhu! idaṃ te pāritoṣi-

kam. (iti hastād apanīya kāṭakaṃ dadāti.)

VIDŪŚAKHÂ: (kāṭakaṃ paridhāy ātmānaṃ nirvṛnyya) bho, imaṃ tāva suddha/suvaṇṇa/kaḍādaṁ/maṇḍaṁ/hatthaṁ atta-

no bamaṇie gadua daṃsīśsam,

3.40 RÂJÂ: (haste ghrītvā nivāraya) sakhe, paścād darśayāysi. jīnayatam tävat kim avaśīṣam ahna iti.

VIDŪŚAKHÂ: (viṇokyā) bho, pekkha pekkha! eso kkhu guruḥ/ āṇuraḥ/okkhiṭṭhaḥ/mahā samiṃjhaḥ/avadhū ḍīṇṇaḥ/saṃkṛdo via arthagīrisiḥ-hara-kānaṃ anusarādi bhaavam sahaṣa/ra-

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ACT III: RENDEZVOUS

KING: (with joy) My friend, is my dear one doing well?

JESTER: (with pride) Before long, you yourself can determine that, because you’ll see her.

KING: (with satisfaction) My friend, will I actually get to see my dear one?

JESTER: (with egotistical pride) Why not? Since you have me as your prime minister, and I make a laughing-stock of Brihas-pati’s brain-power.*

KING: (laughing) I’m not at all surprised. Is there nothing you can’t do? Now, tell me. I want to hear all the details.

JESTER: (in his ear) Like this, like that...

KING: (with joy) Bravo, my friend, bravo! Here’s a reward for you. (He takes a gold bracelet from his hand and gives it to him.)

JESTER: (putting on the bracelet and admiring himself) I’ll go and show the Brahmin lady, my wife, how my hand looks with this pure gold bracelet adorning it.

KING: (holding him back by the hand) You’ll show it to her later, my friend. For now, find out how much remains of the day.

JESTER: (observing) Look, look! The Lord of a Thousand Rays is slipping away to the woods on the peak of the mountain where he goes home, as if he were keeping a rendezvous with his bride the sunset, with a heart carried away by heavy love for her.
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

RAJA: (vilokya, sa/harṣam) sakhe, samyag upalakṣitam! par-yavasitam ahaḥ. tatha hi:

«adhvānaṁ n’ āikaçakraḥ prabhavati bhuvanaḥ
bhṛnti:dirghaṁ vilanḥya
prāṭaḥ prāptum ratho me punaḥ iti» manasi
nyastacint”ātiḥbhāraḥ
sandhya’jamṛṣṭaḥ-aśvaśṭāsa/kara[parikara]a
spaṣṭaḥem’āraṇaṅkti
vyākṣṛyā avasthito’staṣṭiḥibhṛti naya’ iv’
āiṣa dīkṣaṇkram arkaḥ. [5]

api ca,

3.45 «yāto ‘smi, padmaṁnayane, samayo mam’ āiṣa,
upta may” āva bhavati pratibodhaniya.”
pratyāyanām ayaṁ it’ iva saro/ruhīnyāh
sūryo ‘sta/mastakāṇviṣṭa[∥]kaṭaḥ karoti. [6]

tad uttiṣṭha, madhavīlata’māṇḍarpaṇaḥ gatvā priyatamāsaṁ-
keṭāvāsaraṁ pratipālayāvaḥ.

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: bho, sohaṇaṁ bhaṇidam, (ity uttiṣṭhataḥ.)

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KING: (observing, with joy) Rightly observed, my friend. The day has wound down. For:

The sun bears a heavy load of anxiety in his mind, thinking,
“My one-wheeled chariot will not be able to rise again, tomorrow morning,
after it has traversed the long road of wandering over the whole earth.”

And so, as he settles down on the mountain where he goes home,
and the sunset wipes out his rays,
a cluster of those that remain form a wheel in the sky, with clearly outlined spokes of golden rays,
and he seems to pull that down and lead it away.*

And

“I’ve gone, Lotus-eyes; my time: rendezvous has come.
You’re asleep, and I’ll wake you.”

The sun: a lover says this to reassure the day-lotus: woman holding a lotus,
placing his rays: hands on the top of the home mountain: her lowered head.*

So, stand up. Let’s go to the pavilion of mādhavi vines and wait for the moment of my rendezvous with my dearest.

JESTER: How beautifully said. (They stand up.)
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

VIDŪŠKĀH: (vilokya) bho vaassa, pekkha pekkha. eso kkhu
bahaḷi|kida|virala|vana|rāi|saṃniveso gahiḍa|ghaṇa|pa-
ṅka|pivara|vana|varāha|mahisa|kisīṇa|ccavī pasaradi
puvādīsaṃ pacchādaanto timirasaṃghāto,

RĀJĀ: (samanād vilokya) sakhe, sādhū drṣṭam. tathā hi:

3.50 puraḥ pūrṇam eva
sthagayati, tato 'nyām api diśaṃ.
kramāt krāmān adṛṣṭ
drumapuravibhāgaṃs tirayati.
upetaḥ pīṇatvam
 tadānu bhuvanany ekṣaṇa|phalaṃ
tamaḥsamghāto 'yāṃ
harati Harākaṇṭha|dyutī|haraḥ. [7]

tad ādeśaya mārgaṃ.

VIDŪŠKĀH: "edu, edu pia|vaasso,
aparikrāmataḥ,

VIDŪŠKĀH: (nirūpya) bho vaassa, edaṃ kkhu samāsaṇaṃ
saṃsatta|bahala|patta|pāda|va|ladāhīṃ pīṇḍī|kid’|ān-
dha|āraṃ via Maaraṇḍ’|ujjānāṃ. tā kahāṃ ertha maggo
lakkhiḍā?,

3.55 RĀJĀ: (gandham āgṛṅa) vayasya, gacch’ āgrataḥ. nanu su|
pariṇāṇa ev’ ātra mārgaḥ. tathā hi:

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JESTER: (looking around) Look, my friend, look. The mass of darkness is black as the hide of fat forest boars and buffalo covered with thick mud. As it moves on, covering the eastern quarter, it makes the spacing of the sparse rows of forest trees become dense.*

KING: (looking all around) Well observed, my friend. For:

The mass of darkness obscures first the east and then the other quarters, and then, moving on by gradual degrees, hides the distinctions between hills, trees and town buildings. It steals the color of Shiva’s neck and then, becoming swollen, steals the very faculty of sight of all the world.*

So, show me the path.

JESTER: Come, dear friend, come.

They walk around.

JESTER: (observing closely) My friend, we’re near the Garden of Nectar, whose trees and vines with their entwined thick foliage seem to have rolled the darkness up into a ball. How can we spot the path here?

KING: (smelling the perfume) You go in front, my friend. The path here is actually quite easy to make out. For
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

pañ" ıkam campakānām niyatam, ayam asau
sundaraḥ sinduvāraḥ.
sandra viṁhi tath" ıkam bakula/viṭapinām,
pāṭalapāṇktir ıkam.
āghrayā 'āghrayā gandham vividham adhigataḥ
pāda/pair evam asmin
vyaktīṁ panthāḥ prayāti dvīguṇataraśtaṁ|
nihnuṭo 'py esa cihnaṁ. [8]

iti parikrāmaṁataḥ.

VIDOŚAKAḥ: 'bho, edam kkhu ṇivaśanta/mattamahu/araṁ
kusumā/āmoda/vāśida/dasa/disam masiṇa/maraadā/manī|
silākuṭṭima/suhāanta/calaṇa/sanctā/sūcidām taṁ evva
mahāvīlada/manḍapaṁ sampatta mha. tā iha jeyva ci-
tṭhadu bhavam, jāva ahaṁ devāvijesādhāriṇam Sāāriṁ
gēnhiṁ lahuṁ āacchāṁ,

RĀJĀ: vayasya, tena hi tvayatam tvayatam.

3.60 VIDOŚAKAḥ: 'bho, mā uttamma. esa āgaṁ mhi, (iti niśkṛ-

RĀJĀ: yāvad aham apy asyāṁ marakata/silāvedikāyāṁ upa-
viśya priyāṁ samketa/samayaṁ pratipālayāṁ. (upavi-
śya sa/cintam) aho, ko 'pi kāmilanasya svaiṁghiniṁ/samā-
gama/paribhāvino janam abhinavaṁ prati pāṣaś+pātāḥ.
tathā hi:

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This is certainly the row of chāmpaka trees, and
that is the beautiful sinduvāra.
And this is the dense avenue of bākula trees,
and that the row of trumpet flowers.
Even though the path is veiled by twice as much
darkness in this garden,
you can clearly discern it by the signs of
the trees that you can identify
simply by smelling and smelling
each different perfume.

They walk around.

JESTER: Now we’ve reached the pavilion of mādhavi vines.
I can tell, because intoxicated bees swarm around it, the
fragrance of its flowers perfumes the air in all the quarters
of the sky, and its stone floors paved with smooth emer-
allds feel so good when my feet walk on them. So wait
here, please, sir, while I get Sāgarika, who’ll be wearing
the queen’s clothes, and come back right away.

KING: Hurry, please, my friend, hurry.

JESTER: Oh don’t be so impatient! I’ll be back. (Exit.) 3.60

KING: Meanwhile, I’ll sit on this altar made of stone in-
laid with emeralds and wait for the moment of the ren-
dezvous with my dear one. (sitting down and thinking)
Strange that a lover, scorning the embrace of his own
wife, should be so partial to a new person. For:
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

praṇayajviśadāṁ

dṛṣṭim vaktre dadāti na śaṅkitā.

ghaṭayati ghanāṁ

kaṁṭhāśleṣe rasāṁ na payojharau.

vadati bahuśo

«gacchāṁ iti» prayatnaḍhṛt” āpy, aho,

ramayatitarāṁ

saṁketaṣṭhā tath” āpi hi kāminī. [9]

aye, katham cirayati Vasantakah? tat kiṁ nu khalu viditaḥ

syād ayaṁ vṛttānto devyā?

tataḥ praviśati vāsavadattā Kāṅcanamālā ca.

3.65 vāsavadattā: “haṁje Kaṅcanamāle, saccam jjevva maha ve-

sam kadua Saarī aijauttaṁ ahisariṣadi?

Kāṅcanamālā: “kahāṁ anādāṁ bhaṭṭiṣṭe nivediadi? adha

va citta|śāla|duare tthido Vasanta jjevva de paccaṁ

uppadāissadi,”

vāsavadattā: “teṇa hi tahim jjevva gacchamha,”

Kāṅcanamālā: “edu, edu bhaṭṭini, (abhe parikrāmataḥ.)

tataḥ praviśati kṛṣ’āsvagunṭhano vasantakah.

3.70 vasantakah: (karnam dattu) „adha citta|śāla|duare pada|

saddo sūñjadi, tadhā takkemi āgadā Saarī tti,”

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She is too nervous to cast a cheerful, loving glance upon his face.
When she embraces him with her arms around his neck,
she doesn't press her breasts hard against him in passion.
She keeps saying, “I must go,” even though he holds onto her with great effort.
And yet a lover at a rendezvous gives him the most intense pleasure.

Oh, why is Vasántaka taking so long? Could the queen have gotten wind of this affair?

Enter vása-vāda-tta, with kānchana-mala.

vása-vāda-tta: Kānchana-mala, is it true that Sāgarika is going to keep a tryst with my husband wearing my clothes?
kānchana-mala: How could your highness have been given a report of things other than they are? But Vasántaka himself, standing at the door of the picture gallery, will convince you.

vása-vāda-tta: Then let’s go there.
kānchana-mala: Come, please, ma’am, come. (They walk around.)

Enter vasántaka, veiled.

vasántaka: (cocking an ear) Since I heard the sound of footsteps at the door of the picture gallery, I think Sāgarika has arrived.
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

KĀṆCANAMĀLĀ: ṇhaṭṭini, ivaṁ sa cittaśāliā. tā jáva Vasan-
taassa saṇḍaññ karemi₃ (iti choṭikāṁ dadāti.)

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: (sa/haṛsam upaśrya, saśmitam) Šūsamgade, suṭṭhu kkhū kido tuc eso Kaścanamālāe veso. adha Śārīa dāṁiṁ kahim?₃

KĀṆCANAMĀLĀ: (āṅgulyā darīayanti) ṇanm ēsa₃

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: (deṣṭvā, sa/vimayam) ēsa phuḍāṁ evva devī Vāsavadattā₇;

3.75 VĀSAVADATTĀ: (iāśaṅkam, ōtma/gatam) ṇadhaṁ, jāṇida mhi₄

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: (choṭikāṁ dadāti) ṇhodī Śāarie, īdo āaccha₄ (VĀSAVADATTĀ vibhaya KĀṆCANAMĀLĀM avulokayati.)

KĀṆCANAMĀLĀ: (apavāryā āṅgulyā tarjayaṇti) ṇhā āsa, su-
marissasi edaṁ attāno vaṇam₄

VIDŪṢAKAḤ: turaadu, turaadu Śārīesi. eso kkhū puvaḍḍisā-
do uggacchadi bhaavaṁ mialaṇčano₄ (parikrāmai.)

RĀJĀ: aye! upasṭhitaaśriyāśimāgamasyā āpi kim idam atyaḥ-
tham uttāmyati me cetāḥ? atha vā:

3.80 tīvraḥ Śmarāśaṁtāpo
na tathā ādau bādhate, yathā āsanne.
tapati prāvṛṣi nitarāṁ
abhyarṇajalāgamo divasaḥ. [10]

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KÁNCHANAMA-LA: Your highness, here is the picture gallery. I’ll just give Vasántaka a signal. (She snaps her fingers.)

JESTER: (approaching with joy, and smiling) Susángata, you’ve done a great job of disguising yourself as Káanchana-mala. But where’s Ságarika?

KÁNCHANAMA-LA: (pointing with her finger) There she is.

JESTER: (looking, with astonishment) This really is Queen Vásava-datta!

VÁSAVA-DATTA: (worried, to herself) Why, he’s recognized me!

JESTER: (snapping his fingers) My lady Ságarika, come this way. (VÁSAVA-DATTA smiles and gives KÁNCHANAMA-LA a look.)

KÁNCHANAMA-LA: (aside, threatening with her finger) You damn fool, you’ll have cause to remember these words of yours.*

JESTER: Hurry up, Ságarika, please, ma’am, hurry up. Look, the moon, the god with the mark of a hare, is rising in the east. (He walks around.)

KING: What is this extreme longing that my mind feels even now that the meeting with my dear one is so close? Or is it that:

The sharp heat of Memory is not so oppressive in the beginning as when it draws near. The days are hottest when the downpour is about to come, in the monsoon.*
THE LADY OF THE JEWEL NECKLACE

vidūṣakāḥ: (karnaṁ dattva)ḥ bhodi Śārīre, eso khu piaiva-sso tumaṁ jjeva uddisia ukkaṇṭhaṁībhbhaṁ mantedi. 

tā ṇivedemi se tuh’ āgamaṇaṁ.

vāsavadattāḥ: (śūrahāsmaṇīṁ dadāti.)

vidūṣakāḥ: (rājānām upasṛtya)ḥ bho vaassa, diṭṭhiṁ vaḍḍa-sil esākkhu mae ānida Śārīrā,  waćja: (saṁhāraṁ, sahaṁ ᾃṭṭhāya) vaya, kvi ᾃsaù?

3.85 vidūṣakāḥ: "ḥam esa,  waćja: (upasṛtya) priye Śāgarike,  

śiś’āṁśur mukham, uppale tava ḍṭa, 
padm’ānukārau karau, 
rambhāgarbhāṁībham tathār ṥoruyugalaṁ, 
bāḥu maṇīḥāpamau 
ity, āhlādakar’ākhil’āṅgi, rabhasān 
nihśaṅkam ālingya mām 
aṅgāni tvaṃ Anaṅgaṁpāvīdhuṁány 
ehy, chi, nirvāpaya! [11]

vāsavadattāḥ: (saṁśiṣaṁ, apavārya)ḥ Kaṇcanaṁāle, evvaṁ pi mantia ajjaṁutru puṇo vi maṁ ālavissadi ṭti, aho, aca-cairam!

kāṅcanāmāḷāḥ: (apavārya)ḥ bhaṭṭiṁ, evvaṁ ṣṭedam. kiṁ uṣa sahasānaṁ puruṣaṇaṁ na sambhāviṃdi?

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ACT III: RENDEZVOUS

JESTER: (cocking an ear) My lady Ságarika, here is my dear friend speaking words laden with longing, and all about you. I'll tell him that you have arrived.

VÁSAVA-DATTA: (gives a sign of assent by nodding her head.)

JESTER: (approaching the king) Good fortune smiles on you, my friend! I've brought Ságarika here.

KING: (suddenly standing up, with joy) My friend, where is she, where is she?

JESTER: Here she is.

KING: (approaching) My dear Ságarika,

Your face is the moon with its cool rays,
your eyes two blue lotuses,
your hands are like day-lotuses, your two thighs
like the inner surface of plantains,
and your arms are like lotus filaments.
All of your limbs are a source of delight.
But my limbs are wasting away in the fever
of the god who has no limbs.
So come, come, embrace me fiercely,
without hesitation, and soothe them.*

VÁSAVA-DATTA: (in tears, aside) Káňchana-mala, how amazing it is, that after talking like this, my husband will speak intimately with me again.

KÁŇCHANA-MALA: (aside) Exactly so, your highness. Indeed, rash, violent men are capable of anything.
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Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library translation of two plays by Harsha, The Lady of the Jewel Necklace and The Lady who Shows her Love.

King Harsha reigned over Kanauj (near modern Kanpur) from 606 to 647 CE. He composed two plays about the mythical figures of King Udayana, his queen, Vasavada, and two of his co-wives. The plays abound in mistaken identities, both political and erotic. Characters masquerade as one another and as themselves, and each play refers simultaneously to itself and to the other.

Here language is not merely to look through to get to the story but to look at. Mistaken identities are mirrored in the rich use of puns and extended double entendre, and these verbal tricks are part of what happened, theatrical events like putting on a mask or telling a lie.

Mirroring the doubling of the characters, the plays too are doubled. Many stanzas and elements of plot appear in both, but key differences skew the mirror images.

One could imagine a performance of both dramas in one evening, or of both played simultaneously. How very modern these plays are.