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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
Washington Square
New York, NY 10003
www.nyupress.org

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The Clay Sanskrit Library edition and translation of The Quartet of Causeries, by Shyámilaka, Vara-ruchi, Shúdraka, and Íshvara-datta

The Quartet of Causeries dates probably to fifth-century India, the Gupta era, the time of Kali-dasa, but nothing certain is known about their four authors. “The Kick,” “The Mutual Elopement,” “The Lotus Gift,” and “Rogue and Pimp Confer,” are traditionally transmitted together in a group as the prime examples of a comical dramatic sub-genre, the causerie, where a single actor speaks all of the parts. Though stylistically divergent, they share a common plot: the hero is an inept, bungling procurer, who mismanages his client’s love-affairs to an unexpectedly successful completion. A wide and comic spectrum of India’s urban society is here scandalized.

In the first three we meet all kinds of characters, from a grammarian to a flirtatious philosopher girl to a transvestite called Ms. Delicate. Finally, “Rogue and Pimp Confer” is an Indian counterpart to the Platonic dialogue on love, the Symposium, discussing topics such as the superiority of kindliness to beauty and of immediate earthly love to uncertain heavenly pleasures.

In each causerie all the many parts are spoken by a single player, namely a pimp.

The Quartet of Causeries offers a colorful panorama of life in two ancient Indian capital cities, Patáli-putra and Ujjain, and a vivid cross section of Indian urban society around 300–500 CE, particularly the underbelly. In each causerie all the many parts are spoken by a single player, namely a pimp.

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THE QUARTET OF CAUSERIES

SHYÁMILAKA,
VARA-RCCHI,
SHÚDRAKA,
& ÍSHVARA-DATTA

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

CSABA DEZSO & SOMADEVA VASUDEVA

THE QUARTET OF CAUSERIES

by Shyámilaka, Vara-ruchi, Shúdraka, & Íshvara-datta
THE QUARTET OF CAUSERIES

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E D I T E D  A N D  T R A N S L A T E D  B Y

Csaba Dezső & Somadeva Vasudeva

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

JJC FOUNDATION

2009
## CONTENTS

CSL Conventions .................................................. vii
Introduction ......................................................... xv

THE QUARTET OF CAUSERIES

- The Kick ................................................................. 3
- The Mutual Elopement ............................................ 163
- The Lotus Gift ...................................................... 217
- Rogue and Pimp Confer .......................................... 307

Notes ....................................................................... 417
Notes to the Edition .................................................. 449
UBHAYĀBHISĀRIKĀ
THE MUTUAL ELOPEMENT
Sūtra|Dhāraḥ:
«ko ’si tvaṁ me kā v” āhaṁ te?
visīja śatḥa mama nivasanaṁ.
mukhaṁ kim apekṣase?
na vyagṛ” āhaṁ! jāne hī hī
tava subhaga daśana|vasanaṁ
priyā|daśan'|āṅkitam.
yā te ruṣṭā sā te n’ āhaṁ.
vraja capala hṛdaya|nilayāṁ
prasādaya kāminīṁ.»
itv evaṁ vaḥ kandarp’ārtāḥ
praṇaya|kṛta|kalaha|kupitā
vadantu vara|striyaḥ.

evat ārya|miśrān vijnāpayāmi... aye, kiṁ nu khalu? mayi
vijnāpana|vyagre śabda iva śrūyate. aṅga paśyāmi...

Nepathyē:
vasanta|pramukhe kāle
lodhra|vrkṣo gata|prabhaḥ
mitra|kāryeṇa sambhrānto
dīno viṭa iva sthitāḥ.

2.1 nāndy|ante tataḥ praviṣati Sūtra|Dhāraḥ

2.5 nīkrāntah.
Then, at the end of the benediction, enter the director.

Director:

“What are you to me, or rather, what am I to you?
Let go of my dress, villain!
Why are you gawking at my face?
Not that I care! Ah me, I know very well,
you flirt, that your lips are scarred
by the teeth of your lover.
It is not I who is that lady who is angry at you.
Begone, you cheat, and make up
with that passionate woman who dwells
in your heart.”
Thus may exquisite women
tormented by Love, incensed by love-quarrels,
accost you!

Esteemed audience, let me announce to you... What on earth! A disturbance as I am trying to make an announcement. Let me see what it is...

Behind the Scenes:

In early spring the lodh tree
endures, bereft of elegance,
... like the poor pimp who toils
on his friend’s behalf.*

Exits.
sthāpanā

tataḥ praviṣati viṭāḥ.

viṭāḥ: aho vasanta|samṛddhiḥ! kutāḥ?

parabhṛta|cūt’|āśokā
dolā|vara|vāruṇī|śaś|āṅkaś ca
madhu|guṇa|viracita|śobhā

Madanam api sa|vibhramaṁ kuryuḥ.

2.10 aho paraspara|vyalīkaṁ sahate kāmijjanaḥ! aho apratihata|
śāsano bhramati dūtiḷjanaḥ! aho ṛtu|kāla|prādhānyaṁ
pravāla|muktā|maṇi|raśanā|dukūla|pelav’|āṃśuka|hāra|
hari|candaṇ’|ādīnāṁ vardhate saubhāgyam.

sarva|jana|madana|janane loka|kānte vasanta evaṁ viṣṭ-
bhamāṇe Sāgaradatta|śreṣṭhi|putrasya Kuberadattasya
Nārāyaṇadattāyāś ca kaś cit kalah’|abhinivesaḥ saṃvr̥t-
tah. etat|kāraṇat Kuberadatten’ ātmanaḥ paricārakaḥ Sa-
hakārako nāma māṁ prati preṣitaḥ:

«atha bhagavato Nārāyaṇasya bhavane Madanasenayā sa-
madanayā Madan’| ārādhane saṃgītakā yathā| rasam
abhinīyamāṇe māṁ atītya sā tvayā praśastā iti tat|saṃ-
krānta|madan’|ānurāga|śaṅkayā paripūtā Nārāyaṇa-
dattā caraṇa|patanam apy anavekṣya sva|bhavanam eva
gatā.
THE MUTUAL ELOPEMENT

End of the Prologue

Then enter the Pimp.

Pimp: Ah, the bounty of spring! What do I mean?

Cuckoos, mango and ashoka trees,
swings, exquisite wines, the hare-marked moon
—their beauty arrayed* by the skill of spring,
they could stir up even the god of love himself.

Ah! Lovers are cheating on each other! Oh! Go-between girls rush about with pressing errands! Ah! The intensity of the season increases the sensuality of girdles wrought from corals, pearls and gems, of garments of silk and smooth dukula fabric,* of pearl-necklaces, of pale sandal and the like.

Now that spring, loved by all, is so potent, impassioning everyone, Kubera-datta, the son of guild-master Sagara-datta, and Ms Narayana-datta have fallen out with each other for some reason. That is why Kubera-datta sent to me his servant, Saha-karaka by name, with the following petition:

“In the temple of the Blessed Narayana* the impassioned Ms Madana-sena was performing a recital* in harmony with the aesthetic sentiment, to worship the god of love. Ms Narayana-datta took umbrage: ‘You’ve slighted me and praised her,’ and suspecting that my love had gone over to that girl she went home straight away in a huff, paying no heed even to my falling at her feet.
THE QUARTET OF CAUSERIES

tad|gata|madan’|ânurāga|tapta|hṛdayasya yathā mam’ ēyaṃ rajanī rajanī|saahasraṃ van vyatigacchet tath” āsyā na-
garasya sarva|kāla|vasanta|bhūtena bhāva|Vaisēkācalena kṛtaṃ sandhim icchāmi» iti.

śrutv” āiva tad|vacanam—abhijñātatayā madana|duḥkhasyā āprasahyasyā—pradoṣa ev’ ābhipraṣṭhitah sann, asmad|vayaḥ|pariṇāmam|agāṇayanty” ātma|yauvan’|āvasthāṃ eva cintayanty” āsmad|gehīny” ānyathā|saṅkamāṇayā ni-
vārito ’smi. eṣa īdāniṃ tasyaḥ kopa|vināśane kṛta|pra-
tijño gamisyāmi. athavā kim atra mayā pratiṃnātavyam? kutaḥ?

2.15
madhuraiḥ kokil’|ālāpaiś
cūt’|āṅkura|vibodhitaḥ
vasantaḥ kalah’|āvasthāṃ
kāminim anunesyati.

api ca,

kāntaṃ rūpaṃ yauvanaṃ cāru|śīlam
dānaṃ dākṣīṇyaṃ vāk ca sām’|ōpapannā:
yam prápy’ āte sad|guṇā bhānti sarve
loke kāminyaḥ kena tasya prasādyāḥ?

(parikramya) aho Kusumapura|rāja|mārgasya parā śrīḥ! iha
hi su|sikta|saṅmṛṣṭ’|ōcc’|āvaca|kusum’|ōpahāra anya|gr-
hāṇaṃ vāsa|gṛhāyante rathyāḥ. nānā|vidhānāṃ pañya|
samudāyānāṃ kraya|vikraya|vyāpṛta|janena śobhante

168
I am longing for a reconciliation, to be arranged by the honorable Vaishikáchala,* the everlasting spring of this city, so that I may not spend this night like a thousand nights, my heart tormented with maddening love* for her.”

Upon hearing his words, I, being familiar with the pain caused by love—which can be unbearable—, was about to set out that very evening, but my wife, who did not take into account my declining years and was only aware of her own youth, held me back, suspecting something else. I will go now, determined to bring an end to that girl’s pique. Or rather, why need I even make a resolve in this matter? For—

With its sweet cooing of cuckoos,  
elicited by mango-shoots,  
spring will mollify  
the sulking woman.

Anyway,

A fine figure, youth, charm,  
generosity, courtesy, and conciliatory words:  
if all these virtues become a man’s ornaments  
why need anyone reconcile him  
with enamored women?

(walks about) Oh! How exquisitely beautiful is the high street of Pátali·putra! For here, with their gaudy flower-decorations, the washed and swept roadways are veritable bed-chambers compared to other rooms. The gateways to the central market are graced with people busily buying and selling a surfeit of goods. A file of palaces
’ntarāpaṇa|mukhāni. brahm’|ōdāharaṇa|saṃgīta|dhanur|jyā|ghoṣair anyonyam abhivyāharant’ īva Daśa|mukha|vadanān’ īva prāsāda|paṅktayaḥ.

kva cid udghāṭita|gavākṣeṣu rucira|prāsāda|megheṣu rathy’ | āvalokana|kutūhalāḥ śobhante pramadā|vidyutaḥ Kailāsa|parvat’|āntara|gatā iv’ āpsarasah. āpi ca pravara|haya|gaja|ratha|gatā itas tataḥ paricalantaḥ śobhante mahā|mātra|mukhyāḥ. taruṇa|jana|nayana|mano|haraṇa|sa-marthās cāru|lilāḥ sthāna|vinyasta|bhūṣaṇāḥ Sura|vara|nagara|yuvati|śriyam× apahasantyaḥ paricaranti preṣya|yuvatayaḥ. sarva|jana|nayana|bhramarair āpiyamāna|mukha|kamala|śobhā rathy’|ānugrah’|ārtham īva pāda|pracāra|lilām anubhavanti gaṇikā|dārikāḥ. kim bahunā?

sarvair vīta|bhayaiḥ prahṛṣṭa|vadanair
nity’|ōtsava|vyāpṛtaiḥ
śrīmad|ratna|vibhūsan’|āṅga|racanaiḥ
srag|gandha|vastr’|ōjjvalaiḥ
krīḍā|saukhyā|parāyaṇair viracita|
prakhyāta|nānā|guṇaiḥ
bhūmiḥ Pātaliputra|cāru|tilaka
svargāyate sāṃpratam.
seems to chat with one another with Veda-recitation, music, and twanging bow-strings—as if they were the mouths of Ravana, the ten-faced demon.

Here and there gleam flashes of women-lightning in the open circular windows of the magnificent palace-clouds, eager to cast glimpses on the highway,* like ápsaras on Mount Kailása. What’s more, senior high dignitaries parade up and down majestically on exquisite horses, elephants, and in carriages. Go-between girls, fit to captivate the eyes and hearts of young men, do their rounds, and with graceful coquetry and neatly arranged ornaments they mock the charms of the girls in Indra’s heaven. Young hetaeras luxuriate in sauntering about, as if to favor the roadway, while their beautiful lotus-faces are being drunk in by the eye-bees of all onlookers. Enough said!

The earth, adorned with Pátilí·putra as its beautiful head-ornament, is like heaven—* everyone enjoys security; with delighted faces they are engaged in ceaseless festivities; they wear precious gems, jewelry, and ornaments, are resplendent with garlands and perfumes, and haute couture; they abandon themselves to pleasant recreations, and they are endowed with all esteemed refinements.*
(parikramya) aye! iyaṃ khalu Cāraṇa|dāsyā duhit” Ānaṅga| dattā nāma surata|pariśrama|khed’|ālasā catura|mṛdu| pada|vinyāsā nayan’|āṃrāyamāna|rūp” ēta ev’ ābhivartate. avaśyam anayā priya|jana|nirdy’|ōpabhuktayā bhavitavyam! kutaḥ?

daśana|pada|cihnit’|oṣṭhaṃ
 nidr”|ālasa|lola|locanam vadanam,
jaghanaṃ ca surata|vibhrama|
 vilulita|raśanā|guna|parītam.

bhoḥ! asyā darśana|mātram eva ca naḥ kārya|siddhi|nimit-
tam. aye mām anaveksy’ āiva gatā. abhibhāṣisye tāvad
enām. hanta svayam eva pratinivṛttā.

(upagamya) vāsu, kathaṃ n’ ābhivādayasi?

2.25 kiṃ bravīṣi? «cireṇa vijñāt” āsmi bhavantam. abhivādayā-
mi» iti.

śrūyatām iyam āśīḥ:

prathama|vayaśam sva|tantraṃ
dātāraṃ cāru|rūpam arth’|āḍhyam
bhadre labhasva bhadraṃ
dusalaṃ kāntaṃ ratiparaṇ ca.

vāsu, sarvaṃ tāvat tiṣṭhatu.

vidheyo manmathas tasya,
saphalāṃ tasya jīvitaṃ
veśa|lakṣmyā tvaya sārdhaṃ
yasy’ ēyaṇa kajana gatā.
(walks about) Well well! Here comes Anánga·datta,* the daughter of Chárana·dasi. Languid by the fatigue caused by sexual gymnastics, she approaches with deft and gentle steps—her figure is nectar to the eye. She must have been mercilessly enjoyed by her lover! Why?

Her lips are scarred by tooth-marks
her eyes are languid and unsteady with drowsiness,
and her hips are girt with girdle-strings
    disordered by vehement love-making.

Ah! The mere sight of this woman is a good omen that foretells the success of my business. Ay! She has gone without even looking at me. Let me address her. Oh! She has turned back by herself.

(approaches) Darling, why don’t you say hello?

What are you saying? “It took me a while to recognize you.*
Good morning.”

Listen to this blessing:

My dear girl, may you obtain a kind lover
who is in the prime of his youth,
who is independent, generous, handsome,
a man of substance, skilled,
and always ready to make love.

But never mind all that, darling.

Kama obeys him, his life is fruitful
he who spent this night with you,
the glory of the courtesans’ quarter.*
kiṃ bravīṣi? «mahā|mātra|putrasya Nā gadattasy’ ōdavasitād āgacchāmi» iti.

bhadre, bhūta|pūrva|vibhavaḥ khalv eṣaḥ. vyaktaṃ tvayā mātur aprīyaṃ utpāditam. katham? vrīḍ”|āvanata|va-
danay” ānayā hasitam. hanta saphalo naḥ pratarkaḥ. su-
dari, mā m” āivam. kutaḥ?

mātur lobham apāsyā yad rati|sukheṣv ā sakta|cittā satī
tyaktvā vaiśika|śasanam bahu|phalaṃ vesy”|ānganā|dustyajam
gatvā kānta|niveśanam bahu|rasyaṃ prāpta” āsi kām’|ōtsavam
ten’ āyaṃ gaṇikā|janas tava guṇair
nikṣipta|pādaḥ kṛtaḥ.

aho sthāne khalu te vrīḍā. kiṃ śapathena? grham” āgaty’
ānuneyāmi te mātaram. tvayā tu vesy”|ōpacāra|vīru-
dhaṃ kṛtam. gacchatu bhavati.

kiṃ bravīṣi? «abhivādayāmi» iti.

2.35 subhage, śṛuṣatāṃ iyam āśīḥ.

sva|guṇāḥ sad|guṇāḥ sarve
na stotavyāḥ sthitāṃ tvayi.
loka|locana|kāntaṃ te
sthirī|bhavatu yauvanam.
What are you saying? “I am coming from the house of Naga-datta, the son of a high dignitary.”

My dear girl, his fortune is surely a thing of the past. What you have done is clearly not to your mother’s liking. What? She bashfully lowers her head and smiles. Oh, I’ve guessed right! Pretty girl, this is no good. For,

Spurning the greed of your mother, your heart addicted to the pleasures of love, renouncing the principles of harlotry which yield a good profit and cannot be forgone by courtesans, you have gone to the house of your lover and enjoyed a delicious love-festival—thus the hetaeras have been trampled on by your virtues.*

Ah, your bashfulness is indeed appropriate. Must I swear an oath? I shall come to your house and set your mother’s heart at rest. But you have infringed the mores of the courtesans. You may go, my lady.

What are you saying? “Goodbye!”

Lovely woman, listen to this blessing:

All your qualities are good qualities, I need not praise them as long as you have them.* May your youth which delights people’s eyes be everlasting.
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