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Rama’s Last Act is one of the earliest theatrical adaptations of Valmiki’s epic masterpiece, and the most confident. Bhava-bhuti makes great claims for poetic prowess in general and for his own rights to Valmiki’s fame. Pity is here the dominant emotional state engendered in the reader, together with delight at savoring the author’s brilliance.

Rama’s Last Act

by Bhava-bhuti

Translated by Sheldon Pollock

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library edition and translation of Bhava-bhuti’s Rama’s Last Act. The play is counted among the greatest Sanskrit dramas. Rama’s Last Act at once dramatizes Valmiki’s troubling Ramayana and revises its most intractable episode, the hero’s rejection of his beloved wife. Human agency in the face of destiny, the power of love, and the capacity of art to make sense of such mysteries are the themes explored in this singular literary achievement of the Indian stage.

Bhava-bhuti transfigured epic models that are history for traditional readers. He may have been the first not only to produce a reworking intended for theatrical performance, but more important, to attempt to tackle the most critical problem of the story, the abandonment of Sita, the moral valence of the act, and the precise degree of Rama’s personal responsibility.

Bhava-bhuti’s dominant concern is the reflexive appreciation of dramatic art itself and the place of art in making sense of lived experience. His literary practice of self-awareness perhaps constitutes the supreme achievement of Rama’s Last Act.
RĀMA'S LAST ACT
BY BHAVABHŪTI

TRANSLATED BY
SHELDON POLLOCK

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
JJC FOUNDATION
2007
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ACT III
THE SHADOW
nepathye: pramādaḥ! pramādaḥ!

tataḥ praviśati pusp'āvacaḥ vyagṛaḥ, saśārṇa'|autsukyam
ākarnayanti sitā.

sitā: 'ammahe, jānāmi piajāhi me Vāsanti vāharaṇaḥ

nepathye:

3.25 sitā|devyā svākara|kalitaḥ
śallal|pallav'|āgraīr
агрел лола|кери|карабхако
yah purā poṣito bhūt, [6ab]

sitā: 'kim tassaḥ

punar nepathye:

vadhva śārdhaṃ payasi viharan
so 'yam anyena darpād
uddāmena dviradalpatinā
sannipat'ābhīyuktah. [6cd]

sitā: (sa|sambhramaṃ kati cit padāni dadbati) ājja|utta,
parittāhai, parittāhai mama taṃ puttaṃ! (smṛtim abhī-
niya, sa|vaiklavyam) haddhi, haddhi! taim jeyva cira|
paricidāiṃ akharāiṃ Pañcavadi|daṃśaṇaṇa maṃ ma-
da|bhāniṃ anubandhanti. āha ājja|utta, [mūrchati]

tamasā: (praviśya) vatse, samāśvasihi samāśvasihi.

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OFFSTAGE: Danger! Danger!

Enter sita engrossed in picking flowers and listening with growing pity and anxiety.

sita: What, is it the voice of my beloved friend Vasánti that I'm hearing?

STILL OFFSTAGE:

The elephant that long ago
Queen Sita raised as a calf
on shállaki leaf tips picked by hand—
and how impatient it stood before her—

sita: What about him?

STILL OFFSTAGE:

was busy playing with his mate
in the river when an elephant,
a wild bull, fell upon him
in the most brazen attack.

sita: (in alarm taking a few steps forward) Husband, save my little son, save him! (miming the return of her memory; crestfallen) Oh dear god, the sight of Pancha-vatí has brought back to me, cursed as I am, those words familiar from long ago. Oh my husband! (falls faint)

Enter támasa: My child, compose yourself, I beg you.
3.30 NEPATHYE: vimâna-râja, atr’áiva sthîyatâm.

sîtâ: (āśvasya, sa/sâdhvam’/ôllasam) ’ammahe, jala-bharida/meha/manthara/tthaṇida/gambhira/maṃsalo kudo ṇu eso bhâradi/nigghoso bharanto kaṇṭa/vivaraṇ maṃ pi mandaḥ/bhaṇinî jharti uddhâsarei?

TAMASĀ: (sa/smit’/âśram) ayi, vate,

alparisphuñ/âنيवâне
kutastye ’pi tvam īdṛśi
stanayitnor mayûr” iva
cakiṭ’ôkaṇṭhitam sthitâ? [7]

sîtâ: ’bhaavadi, kiṃ bhaṇāsi, ”’alparipphuḍaṃ” ti? mae unā sarâṣ/Jjoṇa paccabhiṇidāṃ ajjala/utto jjeva vâharadi

3.35 TAMASĀ: śrûyate: “tapasyataḥ śudrasya daṇḍaḥ/daḥraṇ’/ær-tham Aikṣvâko râjâ Janâsthânam âgataḥ” iti.

sîtâ: ’ôdiṭṭhâ alpariṇāḥ/rajà/daḥmmo kkhu so râa

NEPATHYE:

yatra drumā api mṛgā api bandhavo me
yâni priyâ/saha/ciraś ciraṃ adhyavâtsam,
etâni tâni bahu-niljharâl/kandarâṇi
Godâvari/parisarsasya gires taṭâni. [8]

1 An ancestor of Râma; the name is also used for Râma’s dynasty.

176
OFFSTAGE: King of chariots, station yourself right here.

Sītā: (regaining her composure; with a flash of panic) Why, how is it that this sound of human speech, rich and deep as the low rumble of a water-laden cloud, should fill my ears and all of a sudden unsettle me, cursed as I am?

Tāmāsa: (smiling and crying at once) Ah my child,

How can someone like you become so uneasy and wistful at a sound so indistinct and uncertain, like a peahen at distant thunder?

Sītā: Blessed one, why do you say “indistinct”? It can only be my husband speaking. I recognize the sound of his voice.

Tāmāsa: I’ve heard that an Ikshvāku king has come to Jana-sthan to punish a Shudra for practicing austerities.

Sītā: How fortunate the king has not renounced the practice of kingly dharma.

OFFSTAGE:

A place where the trees and beasts themselves were kinsmen, where I sojourned so long with my beloved… there are the mountain slopes by Godāvari studded with caves, crisscrossed by rushing streams.
RAMA’S LAST ACT

sītā: (drītvā) ¹ hā kadhaṁ, pabhāda|canda|maṇḍal’|āvaṇ- 
duṇa|parikkhāma|dubba|ṇa aareṇa aam ṇia|somma|ga-
mbhir’|aṇubhāva|metta|paccabhiṣaññio ajja|utto jeeva.
tā maṃ dhārehi, (tamasām āliyā mūrchati)

tamasā: (dhārayanti) vatse, samāśvāsihi, samāśvāsihi.

3.40 NEPATHYE: anena Pañcavaṭṭī|darśanena

antar|linasya duḥkh’|āgher
ady’ oddāmaṃ jvalisyaṭaḥ
utpida iva dhūmasya
mohāḥ prāg āvṛṇoti mām. [9]

hā, priye Jānaki!

TAMASĀ: (svāgatam) idaṃ tad āśāṅkitaṃ gurujjanen’ āpi.

sītā: (samāśvasya) ² hā, kadhaṁ edaṁ?

3.45 NEPATHYE: hā devi Daṇḍak’|āranyā|vāsa|priya|sakhi. hā Vi-
deharājā|putri.

sītā: ³ haddhi, hadhhi maṃ mandabhaiṇīṃ vāharia āmila-
nta|ūnta|gāl|uppalo mucchido jeeva. hā kadhaṁ dhara-
ṃī|vaṭṭhe nirussāha|nisahām vipalhatṭho? bhaavadi Tā-
mase, parittāḥi, parittāḥi. jivāvehi ajja|uttam, (pāda-
yoh patati)

¹ The Gaṅgā.

178

uttararamacaritaR 178 (178, 0)
ACT III: THE SHADOW

SITA: (observing) Oh, what in the world... a form pale, wasted, and weak as the disk of the moon at dawn but with a gentle yet profound bearing all its own—the only thing that enables me to recognize... yes, it must be my husband. Take hold of me. (*falls faint in TÁMASA’s embrace*)

TÁMASA: (holding her) My child, compose yourself, I beg you.

OFFSTAGE: The sight of Pancha-vati

Rekindles now the fire of sorrow that had long been dormant in my heart but first, like a dense pall of smoke, a delirium envelops me.

Oh my beloved Jánaki!

TÁMASA: (aside) This is exactly what my guru feared.

SITA: (regaining her composure) Oh, how is this possible?

OFFSTAGE: Oh my queen, beloved companion in my sojourn in Dándaka wilderness. Oh princess of Vidéha.

SITA: Dear god, with my name on his lips—the name of cursed me—his dark blue lotus eyes rolled back and he fainted dead away. How can we leave him lying sprawled upon the naked ground, friendless and helpless? Save him, Támasa, save him. Bring my husband back to life. (*falls at her feet*)
RAMA’S LAST ACT

TAMASĀ:

tvam eva nanu kalyāṇī
sañjivaya jagat|patim.
priyajparśo hi pāṇis te
tatr āiva niyato bharaḥ. [10]

sītā: 5jaṃ bhodu tāṃ bhodu. jadhā bhaavadi āñavedi, (sa|sambhramam niśkrāntā)
tataḥ praviśati bhūmāu nipaṭītaḥ s’āsrayā sītāṁ śprīyamānapāḥ śāblād’ācchvāsō RĀMAḥ.

3.50 sītā: (kiṃ cit saḥbaraṃ) 5jāne puṇo vi paccāgādam vi jīvi-
daṃ telloassā,

RĀMAḥ: hanta, bhoh, kim etat?

praścyotanāṃ nu hari|candana|pallavānāṃ?
nispiḍit’|endu|kara|kandalaljo nu sekaḥ?
ātapatjīvita|punah|paritarpano me
sañjivan’|auṣhadhi|raso nu ṛdi prasiktaḥ? [1 1]

180

uttararamacaritaR 180 (180, 0)
ACT III: THE SHADOW

TÂMASA:

But surely only you, my lovely child,  
can bring the lord of the world back to life.  
Beloved is the touch of your hand  
and on it alone the entire burden rests.*

SITÄ: Whatever will be will be. As the blessed one wishes.  
(exit in alarm)

The scene opens on RAMA, collapsed on the ground, being stroked  
by the weeping SITÄ, and recovering with an expression of  
bliss.

SITÄ: (with muted joy) I feel as if the life of the entire uni-  
verse has returned.

RAMA: But, what is happening here?  
Is this some kind of distillation  
of heavenly sandalwood leaves,  
or are these droplets come from stalks  
of moonbeams squeezed in a press?  
Or is someone dripping on my heart,  
to soothe again a life once burned,  
the extract of the magic herb  
that brings the dead back to life?
RA MA'S LAST ACT

sparśaḥ purā paricitō niyataṁ sa eṣa
saṅjīvanaś ca manasaḥ parimohanaś ca,
santāpajām sapadi yah pratihātya mūrchatāṁ
ānandena jaḍatāṁ punar ātannoti. [12]

SĪṬĀ: (sa|śādhis]a|karaṇam apaśṛtya) ēttakaṁ jeyva dāniṁ
me bahudaraṁ,

3.55 RĀMAḤ: (upaviṣṭa) na khalu vatsalāyā devy” ābhupapanno
’smi?

SĪṬĀ: “haddhi, haddhi. kiṃ ti ajja|utto maṁ bhāṇisadi’,

RĀMAḤ: bhavatu, paśyāmi.

SĪṬĀ: “bhaavadya Tamase, osaramha! jadi dāva maṁ pekkhi-

3.60 SĪṬĀ: “aṁ. athi edaṁ,

RĀMAḤ: priye Jānaki! nanu priye Jānaki…

SĪṬĀ: (sa|manyu|gadgadam) ēajja|utta, a|sarisaṁ khu edaṁ
imassa vuttantassa, (s’|āsram) ēaha vā kiṃ ti vajjamaṁ
jammantare vi puṇo a|sambhāvida|laddha|dāmsaṇassā

182

uttararamacaritaR 182 (183, 0)
Surely I am familiar with this
from long ago, this touch
that both restores my consciousness
and induces a deep delirium:
no sooner does it dispel the faintness
arising from my anguish
than it produces the stupefaction
of an absolute bliss.

sita: (withdrawing in apprehension and pity) This is as far as
I should go for now.

rama: (taking his seat) Surely it cannot be that the queen in
her affection for me has come to my aid?

sita: Oh dear, why should my husband be talking* about
me now?

rama: Well, let me just look around.

sita: Tāmasa, we must leave! If the king sees me he'll be
furious I am here without his permission.

tāmasa: But dear child, the grace of Bhagirathi has made
you invisible, even to gods.

sita: Ah yes, you are right.

rama: Beloved Jánaki! Surely, beloved Jánaki…

sita: (her voice breaking with anger) My husband, really,
this is hardly in keeping with all that has happened.
(tearfully) But then why should I be so hard-hearted and
pitiless toward my husband when it is me, cursed me,
he’s affectionately addressing and when I never thought

---

uttaramaracaritaR 183 (184, 0)
Rama’s Last Act

Maṃ jevva mandaḥ bhāṇīṁ uddisā vaṃchalassa evvaṁ
vādiṅo ajjaḥ uttassa uvari ṇiṃraṇukkosā bhavissam? aham
edassa hiaṃ jāṇami, mama eso ttiyu

Rāmaḥ: (sarvato ‘valokya, sa/nirvedam) hā, na kaś cid atra.

Sītā: ‘bhaavadi Tamase, tadhaḥ ṇikkāraṇaḥ pariccāino vi eda-
ssa evvaṁ|vidheṇa daṃsaṇeṇa kilisio via me hīaṁ|āvatthā
tti ṇa ṇaṇāmiyu

3.65 Tamasaḥ: jāṇami vatse, jāṇami.

tāṭaṣṭhāṃ nairāśyād,
api ca kaluṣaṁ vipriyaḥvaśād,
vīyoge dirgeḥ ‘smiṁ
jhaṭiti ghaṭanāt stambhitam iva,
prasannāṁ saujaṇyād,
dayitaḥkaruṇair gāḍhaḥkaruṇaṁ,
draviḥbhūtaṁ premaṁ
tava hṛdayam asmin kṣana iva. [13]

Rāmaḥ: devī,

prasāda iva mūrtas te
sparśaḥ sneh’ārdrajśītalah
ady’ āpy ānandayarī mām.
tvaṁ punaḥ kv’ āsi, nandini? [14]

184

Uttararamacaritaḥ 184 (184, 0)
for a moment that I would see him again,* not even in a future life? I know his heart—as he knows mine.

**rama:** *(looking all around; despondently)* No, no one is there.

**sita:** O Támasa, though he disowned me like that so groundlessly, when I see him in this state my heart reacts in ways I cannot understand.

**támasa:** I know, my child, I know.

Cold because of your despair, bitter because of his unkindness, in a state of near paralysis at meeting after long separation; forgiving because of your goodness, with deep sympathy for all your husband’s pathos, melted by love—such is your heart and all, it seems, in a single moment.

**rama:** O my queen,

Your touch is like forgiveness incarnate, cool as it is and moist with love. It is there to delight me in spite of all—but where are you, my heart’s delight?
RAMA'S LAST ACT

Sītā: "ede kkhu de a|gāḍha|daṃsida|siṇeḥa|saḥā āṇanda|
    niṣandiṇo Sītāma āja|uttassa ullāvā jānaṃ paccaena ni-
kkāraṇa|pariccā|sallido vi bahu|mado me jammaḷāho."

3.70 Rāmaḥ: atha vā kutaḥ priyatamā? nūnaṃ saṅkalp'[ābhyāsa|
pāṭaṭv'āpādāna eṣa Rāmasya bhramah.

Nepathye: pramādaḥ! pramādaḥ!

   Sītā|devyā svākara|kalitaḥ
   śallakilpallav'|āgrair
   agre lolaḥ kariṇkalabhako
   yaḥ purā poṣito 'bhūt, [15ab]

Rāmaḥ: (sa|karuṇ javutsukya) kim tasya?

Punar Nepathye:

   vadhvā sārdhaṃ payasi viharan
   so 'yam anyena darpād
   uddāmena dviradalpatinā
   sannipat' ābhīyuktah. [15cd]

3.75 Sītā: "ko dāṇḍaṃ abhiuṣjissadi?"

Rāmaḥ: kv' āsau, kv' āsau durātmā yaḥ priyāyāḥ putrakaṃ
   vadhū|$dviyām abhibhavati? (utthiṣhati)

Vāsanti: (praviṣṭa, sambhrantā) kathaṃ, devo Raghu|nan-
danah?

186
sītā: My husband’s protestations over Sita are filled with a deep affection and overflow with love’s bliss. To believe them is to make me think that being born was worth it—however sharp the arrow of having been groundlessly disowned.*

rāma: But then, what would my beloved be doing here? This is a pure delusion on Rama’s part, brought on by his long-honed skill in wishful thinking.

offstage: Danger! Danger!

The elephant that long ago Queen Sita raised as a calf on shāllaki leaf tips picked by hand—and how impatient it stood before her—

rāma: (with growing pity and anxiety) What about him?

still offstage:

was busy playing with his mate in the river when an elephant, a wild bull, fell upon him in the most brazen attack.

sītā: Who can come to the rescue now?

rāma: Where’s the wretch that dares assault my beloved’s little son and his mate? (stands up)

Enter vasāntī in alarm Can it be king Raghu-nāndana?

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RAMA’S LAST ACT

sītā: "kahaṁ, piaśahī me Vāsanti,

vāsanti: jayatu devaḥ.

3.80 RĀMAH: (nirūpya) kathaṁ, devyāḥ priyaśakhi Vāsanti.

vāsanti: deva, tvaryatāṁ, tvaryatāṁ. ito Jatāyu|śikharasya
dakṣiṇena Sītā|tīrthena Godāvarīṁ avatīrya sambhāva-
yatu devyāḥ putrakaṁ devaḥ.

sītā: "hā tāda Jaḍāo. suṇṇaṁ tue viṇā Janaṭṭhāṇam,

rāmaḥ: ahaha, hṛdaya|marmā|chidāḥ khalv ami kath’|ōd-
ghātāḥ.

vāsanti: ita ito devaḥ.

3.85 sītā: "bhaavādi, saccakaṁ jevva vaṇa|devadā vi maṁ na pe-
kkhandi.

tamasā: ayi vate, sarva|devatābhyaḥ prakṛtām aiśvaryaṁ
Mandākini|devyāḥ. tat kim ity āśāṅkase?

sītā: "tado aṅusaramha,

parikrāmatāḥ.

rāmaḥ: bhagavati Godāvari, namas te.

1 The Gaṅgā.

188
ACT III: THE SHADOW

SITA: Why, it’s my beloved friend Vasánti.

VASÁNTI: Long live the king.

RAMA: (looking) Why, it’s the queen’s beloved friend Vasánti.

VASÁNTI: Hurry, my lord, hurry. If you head out from here and go down to the Godávari by Sita’s Ford to the south of Jatáyus’ Peak you will see the queen’s little son.

SITA: Oh father Jatáyus. Without you Jana-sthana is empty.

RAMA: Ah, allusions that tear at my heart’s soft core.

VASÁNTI: This way, my lord, this way.

SITA: Blessed one, it’s really true, even the forest deities can’t see me.

TÁMASA: Dear child, Mandákini’s power far surpasses that of all other deities. There’s no need to worry.

SITA: So let’s follow behind.

The two walk about.

RAMA: Blessed Godávari, homage to you.

189
VÄSANTI: (nirūpya) deva, modasva vijayinā vadhūkdvitiyena
devyāḥ putrakena.

RĀMAṆ: vijayatām āyuḥmān.

SĪṬĀ: "ammahe, idiso so samyutto, ₁
devi, diṣṭyā vardhase.

yen' ōdgacchad[biṣakīsalya] ₁
snigdha[dant'aṅkurenā
vyākṛṭas te, sultānu, lavalī]
pallavāḥ karna|mūlāt
so 'yaṃ putras tava madamucāṃ
vāraṇāṃ vijetā
yat kalyāṇaṃ vayasi tarune
bhājaṇaṃ tasya jātaḥ. [16]

SĪṬĀ: "a|viutto dāṇiṃ dih′āu imāe somma|damśaṅae bho-
du, ₂

RĀMAṆ: sakhi Vāsanti, paśya paśya. kānt"|ānuvṛtti|cātur-
yam apy ardhāṃ śikṣitaṃ vatsena:

lil′ōtkhāta|mṇālā[kāṇḍal][kavala] ₂
chedeṣu sampāditāḥ
pusyat[puṣkarā|vāsītya payaso
ganḍūṣa|sakkrāntayaḥ
sekha śikarīṅa kareṇa vihitāḥ
kāmaṃ virāme punar
na snehād anlarāla|nāla|nalini| ₃
patr′atapaṛaṃ dhṛtam. [17]
ACT III: THE SHADOW

vasānti: (looking) My lord, rejoice that the queen's little son along with his mate has won the day.

rama: Victory and long life to him.

sītā: My, how big he's grown.

rama: My queen, how fortunate you are.

That son of yours, my lovely wife, who once would pluck the lāvālī leaf from behind your ear with his budding sprout of a tusk glossy as a lotus petal has now won a victory over rutting bull elephants—clearly he continues to enjoy the good fortune* of his childhood.

sītā: Long may he live and from this day on may he never be separated from his kindly mate.

rama: Look, friend Vasānti, look: The child has almost learned the art of deferring to his beloved.

In the intervals between her chewing morsels of lily stalks dug up in play, he offers her mouthfuls of water scented with just-blooming lotuses, spraying water from his drop-filled trunk. And yet at rest he fails to show the proper concern by shading her with the leaf of a straight-stemmed lotus.*
RAMA'S LAST ACT

sītā: "bhaavadi Tamase, aamu dāva īdīso jādo. te unā na ānāmi Kusā/Lavā ettikena kāle na kīdīsā via honti,

TAMASĀ: yādṛśo 'yaṃ tādṛśau tāv api.

3.100 sītā: "īdisī ahaṃ manda|bhāṇī jāe na kevalaṃ niṃrantaro ajja|utta|viraho putta|viraho vi,

TAMASĀ: bhavitavyat' ēyam idṛśī.

sītā: "kiṃ vā maē pasūdāe jena tiṃsāṃ pi mama puttakāṇaṃ isījkalida|virala|komala|dhavala|dasaṃ|ujjala|kavolaṃ anubaddha|muddha|kāali|vihasidam nibaddha|kāa|sihaṇḍaām amala|muha|puṇḍarī|jualaṃ na paricuma|bīmād aja|utta,na,

TAMASĀ: astu devatā|prasādāt.

sītā: "bhaavadi Tamase, ediṇa avacca|sambharaṇeṇa ussasi|daṇḍhuda|thāṇi tānaṃ ca piduṇo saṃnīdhaṇeṇa khaṇa|mettam saṃsāriṇi mhi saṃvutā,

3.105 TAMASĀ: kim atr'ācyate? prasavaḥ khalu prakarṣa|paryantah snehasya, param ca ātad anyonya|sămłeṣanam pi-

antah|karaṇa|tatṛvasya
dampatyoḥ sneha|samśrayat
ānandagranthir ekō 'yaṃ
aparyam iti badhyate. [18]
ACT III: THE SHADOW

SITA: Tāmasa, when I see how much he has grown I think about Kusha and Lava and what they might look like after all this time.

TĀMASA: They are just like him.*

SITA: How cursed can I be to have been so cruelly separated not only from my husband but from my sons as well.

TĀMASA: So was it meant to be.

SITA: What good was having children if my husband will never be able to kiss the faces of his sons—faces like two fresh lotuses, shining with the glow of a few delicate bright white teeth just appearing,* the innocent laughs and lisps and tufted hair of childhood?

TĀMASA: May the deities show their grace.

SITA: Tāmasa, at the mere memory of my children my breasts swell with milk, and the presence of their father makes me feel, for a moment, as if I were back among the living.*

TĀMASA: What is there to say? A child marks the highest degree of love, and the source of the parents’ ultimate bonding.

Because it is the common object of a couple’s love* a child is a knot of bliss that ties their hearts together.
Sheldon Pollock is William B. Ransford Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Columbia University. He has also translated Books Two and Three of the Ramayana, “Ayodhya” and “The Forest,” and is the author of The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India and editor of Cosmopolitanism and Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia.

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Rama’s Last Act
by Bhava·bhuti

Translated by SHELDON POLLOCK

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS & JJC FOUNDATION

Here is a new CLAY SANSKRIT LIBRARY edition and translation of Bhava·bhuti’s Rama’s Last Act. The play is counted among the greatest Sanskrit dramas. Rama’s Last Act at once dramatizes Valmíki’s troubling Ramayana and revises its most intractable episode, the hero’s rejection of his beloved wife. Human agency in the face of destiny, the power of love, and the capacity of art to make sense of such mysteries are the themes explored in this singular literary achievement of the Indian stage.

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