Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library edition and translation of Three Satires, by three Indian poets.

Written over a period of eight hundred years, these works represent alternative approaches to satire. Bhállata sought vengeance on his boorish new king by producing vicious sarcastic verse, “The Hundred Allegories.” The disgruntled ninth-century CE court poet speaks of a setting sun, his former king and patron Avánti·varman, being replaced by a flickering firefly, the new king Shánkara·varman, who did not continue his predecessor’s patronage.

The artistry that captivates the Kashmirian Ksheméndra in the eleventh century in “The Grace of Guile” is as varied as human nature and just as fallible. He presents himself as a social reformer out to shame the complacent into compliance with Vedic morality.

In the seventeenth century CE, Nila·kantha gets straight to the point in his “Mockery of the Kali Era”: little can redeem the fallen characters he portrays, so his duty is simply to warn about the corruption of academics, sorcerers, astrologers, physicians, poets, relatives, and others.

Three Indian satirists with three different strategies: Bhállata attacks his philistine king; Ksheméndra hopes to convert his society to morality; and Nila·kantha warns of the tricks of every social type.

Somadeva Vasudeva translates and edits Sanskrit literature full time for the JJC Foundation, co-publishers (with NYU Press) of the Clay Sanskrit Library.

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THREE SATIRES
Nīlakaṇṭha, Kṣemendra
& Bhallaṭa

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
SOMADEVA VASUDEVA

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
JJC FOUNDATION
2005
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NILA-KANtha: MOCKERY OF THE KALI ERA
Pāṇḍitāḥ

Na bhetavyaṁ na boddhavyaṁ
na śrāvyam vādino vācaḥ
jhāṭiti prativaktavyaṁ sabhāsu vijīṣṭubhiḥ!
Aṣṭāṃbhramo, vilajatvam, avajña prativādini,
hāso, rājñāḥ stavaś c ātri paṇc’ āte jayaḥhetavaḥ.

Uccair udghosya jetaṁyaḥ madhyasthāḥ ced apanḍitāḥ
panḍito yadi tat’ āiva pakṣapāto ‘dhiropyatāṁ.
Lobho hetur dhanaṁ sādhyam dṛṣṭāntas tu purohitāḥ
ātm’ ‘tātkarṣo nigamanam anumāney ayaṁ vidhiḥ.

Abhyāṣyaṁ lajjamāneṇa tattvaṁ jīnāsūnā cīram
jigīṣūnā hriyaṁ tyaktvā kāryaḥ kolāhala mahāṁ.
Pāṭhānair granthāṁ nirmāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhā tāvad āpyate
evaṁ ca tathāvyyutpattir āyuṣo ‘nte bhaveṇ na vā?

Stotāraḥ ke bhavisyaṁ mūrkhasya jagatītale?
nā staṭi cet svayaṁ ca svāṁ kāda tasya ‘stu nīrṛṭīḥ?
«Vacyatāṁ! samayo ‘tīṭaḥ. spaṣṭaṁ āgre bhavisyaṇi.»
itī pāṭhāyatāṁ granthe kāṭhinyaṁ kutra vartate?
Agatītāṁ atiśuddha jānāṁ ābhāṣena ṭṛpṭā
trayaḥ śīṣyāgūṇā ḫy ete mūrkh’ācāryasya bhāgyaṁāḥ.

Māṇtriṅkāḥ

Yadi na kv’ āpi vidyāyāṁ sarvathā kramate matiḥ
māṇtriṅkās tu bhaviṣyāmo yogino yatayo ’pi vā.
Avilambena saṁsiddhau māṇtriṅkaṁ āpyate yaśaḥ
vilambe karmabāhulyaṁ vikhyāpy’ āvāpyate dhanam.

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If you want to triumph in a meeting, do not be afraid, do not pay attention, do not listen to the opponent’s arguments,—just immediately contradict them! Unflappability, shamelessness, contempt for the adversary, derision, and praise of the king: these five are the grounds of victory.

If the arbitrator is not learned, one wins by shouting. If he is learned one has only to insinuate bias: “Greed” is the premise, “money” is the probandum, “the priest” is the example, “personal advance” is the result: such is the correct syllogistic procedure.*

The humble seeker after wisdom must ponder the truth for a long time; the careerist has to set aside modesty and cause a great commotion. A reputation is above all won by composing works and by teaching; and might perhaps even true erudition be achieved in this manner before the end of life, or not?

Who, on this earth, will praise a fool? Were he not to praise his own work, could he ever be happy? “Read on! We are behind time. It will become clear further on,”—with such a method of teaching, what could prove difficult in a text? Resourcelessness, excessive faith, satisfaction with the appearance of knowledge—these three qualities in a student are a blessing for a dimwitted teacher.

sorcerers*

Should our intellect absolutely fail to penetrate any science at all, then we can always become mantra-sorcerers, yogins, or ascetics. When success is immediate, mantra-
Sukhaṁ sukhiśu duḥkhaṁ ca jīvanam duḥkhāśāliśu
anugrahāyate yēṣāṁ te dhanyāḥ khalu māṁtrikāḥ.
Yāvad ajñānato maunam ācāro va vilakṣaṇaḥ
tāvan māhātmyaśrūpeṇa paryavasyati māṁtrike.

JVAUTIŚIKĀH

Cārān vicārya daiva jñānair vaktavyam bhūbhujāṁ phalam
grahajānaparijñānāṁ teṣām āvaśyakaṁ yataḥ.

«Putra ity» eva pitari «kanyak” ēty» eva mātari
garbhaśraṇeṣu kathayān daiva jñāno vijayī bhavet.
Āyuhpraśne dirgham āyur vacyam māhuṛtktkār janaḥ
jīvanto bahu|manyante mṛtāḥ prakṣyanti kaṇ punah?
Sarvaṁ koṭidvay’ōpetāṁ sarvaṁ kāladvay’āvadhī
sarvaṁ vyāmiśram iva ca vaktavyam daiva-cintakahāṁ.
Nirdhananāṁ dhan’āvāptiṇī dhanināṁ adhikaṁ dhanam
bruvaṇaḥ sarvāhā grahyā lokār jyautiśikā janaḥ.
Śatasya lābe tāmbulaṁ sahasraya tu bhojanam
daivajñānāṁ upālambho nityaḥ kāryaśvaprayaye.

Api sāgarajāpiyantā vicetavyā vasunḍharā
deśo hy aratnīṣmatre ‘pi n’ āsti daiva jñānāvarjitaḥ.
Vārān ke cid graham ke cit ke cid ṛkṣāṁ jānante
tritayaṁ ye vijānanti te vācaśpatayah svayam.

THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA
sorcerers become celebrities; when there is a delay, exorbitant rituals are prognosticated and they make money. 

Blessed indeed are mantra-sorcerers, whose livelihood benefits from both the happiness of the well-off and the misery of the wretched. Provided the sorcerer keeps quiet in his ignorance or adopts bizarre behavior, his greatness is ensured.

ASTROLOGERS

Because insight gained from the movements (cāra) of the planets is indispensable for them, astrologers announce a prediction to the king after consulting spies (cāra).

When asked about a pregnancy, the astrologer wins if he tells the father: "A son!" and the mother: "A daughter!" When asked about the length of life, the astrologer predicts a long life. Those who survive will be in awe of him. Who will the dead call to account?

Astrologers should say that everything has two sides, everything happens within two time-limits, and everything appears to be in flux. The people will always welcome astrologers who predict a gain of wealth to the impoverished, and even more wealth to the wealthy. For a predicted gain of a hundred, an astrologer earns some betelnut, for a predicted gain of a thousand a meal, and for a predicted fiasco eternal censure.

One may scour the earth up to the edge of the sea, but nowhere is there even a single ell of land free from astrologers. Some know the days, some the planets, some the constellations,—those who know all three are veritable Vachas-patis.* Fortune-tellers, interpreters of dreams, and
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

Naimittikāḥ svapnajñō devat”ōpsakaḥ iti
nisargajñatravah śṛṣṭā daivajñānām amī trayāḥ.

BHAṬAJAṆ

Svasthār asādhyaṭrōgāś ca jantubhir n’ āstī kiṃ cana
kātārā dirghaṛogāś ca bhīṣajāṃ bhāgyahetavaḥ.
N’ ātīdhāryaṃ pradātyayaṃ n’ ātibhītiś ca rogiṇī
naiścintyān n’ ādime dānaṃ nairāṣyād eva n’ āntime.

25 Bhaiṣajyāṃ tu yathākāmaṃ pathyāṃ tu kāthinaṃ vadet
ārogyāṃ vaidyajñāhāṃtmyād anyathāvam apathyataḥ.

Nidānaṃ rogajñāmānī sātmyāḤsāṃyā cikṣitaṃ
sarvam apy upadeśyanti rogiṇāḥ sadane striyaḥ.

28 Jrmbhāmāṇeṣu rogeṣu miyāṃṣeṣu jantuṣu
rogaṭattvēṣu śanakair vyutpadyante cikṣitakāḥ.

Pravartan’ārtham ārambhe madhye tv aŭṣadhaḥhetave
bahuṃ’ārtham ante ca jihīṃṣanti cikṣitisah.

Lipsmaṇeṣu vaidyeṣu cirā ṛṣad yāginām
dāyādāḥ samprarohanti daivajñā māṇtriḥ api.

30 Rogaṣyā’ḥopakrame sāntvāṃ
madhye kiṃcidḥanajvyayāḥ
śanair anādaraḥ śaṅtāu
snāto vaidyaṃ na paśyati.

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priests;* these three natural enemies have been created for astrologers.

PHYSICIANS

The healthy and the terminally ill are of no interest, doctors thrive on hypochondriacs and those suffering from chronic diseases. The patient must neither be given too much hope nor too much fear. In the first case he will not pay up because he has no worry, in the second because he has no hope. .

A doctor prescribes medicine ad libitum, but insists on a difficult, meager diet. If health is restored it is by the greatness of the physician, if not, the dietary regimen was not followed.

Pathology, diagnostic, what is agreeable and disagreeable, treatment,—the women in the patient’s house will instruct him in all.* As epidemics spread, as people succumb, doctors learn, eventually, about the nature of diseases.*

Initially to make a housecall, in the interim for medicine, at the end out of gratitude,—physicians demand payment. When doctors, greedy for money, have at last secured a patient, two co-inheritors pop up: the astrologer and the mantra-sorcerer.*

At the onset of the disease the patient shows him kindness, in the middle stage he parts with some money, as health returns he looses interest in him, after the bath of convalescence the physician has become a persona non grata.
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

KAVAYAH

Daiva jñatvam māṃtrikatā bhāṣajyam cātuṣkauśalam
ek’āikam arthaḻabhāya dvīṭriyogas tu durlabhaḥ.

Anṛtaṃ cātuṣvādaś ca dhanaṣyogam mahān ayam
satyaṃ vaidusyam ity esa yogo dāridryaṅkāraḥ.

Kātaryaṃ durvinīṭatvaṃ kārṇyam avivekatām
sarvaṃ māṛjanti kavayaḥ sālīnāṃ muṣṭikīṃkarāḥ.

Na kāraṇam apekṣante kavayaḥ stotum udyatāḥ
kim cīd astuvatām teśāṃ jihvā phurphurāyate.

35 Stutam stuvanti kavayo na svato gunādarśīnāḥ
kītaḥ kaś cīd «aliḥ» nāma—kiyat tatra vartanaḥ?

Ek’ āiva kavitā puṃṣaṁ grāmāḥ āśvāya hastine
antato ‘nnāya vastrāya tāmbūlāya ca kalpate.

Śabdākhyam aparāṇa Brahma saṃdarbhena pariṣkṛtām
vikriyate katipayair vṛtḥ” anyair viniyujyate.

Varnayanti nar’ābhāsān Vāṇīṃ labdhv” āpi ye janāḥ
labdhv” āpi kāmādhenum te lāṅgale viniyuñjate.

Praṣaṃsanto nar’ ābhāsān pralapanto ‘nyath” anyathā
kathaṃ tarantu kavayaḥ kāmaṇāryaṃvādinaḥ?.

40 Yat sandarbhe yad ulekhe yad vyāṅge nibhṛtaṃ manah
samādher api taj jyāyāḥ Śaṅkaro yadi varṇyate.

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Mockery of the Kali Era

Poets

Astrology, sorcery, medicine, skill in flattery: each on its own is profitable, but it is rare to find two or three together. Dishonesty and flattery are a great conjunction auguring wealth; the conjunction of honesty and erudition leads to poverty. Cowardice, barbarity, avarice, and lack of judgment, poets can expunge it all, hirelings for a handful of rice. Poets, poised to praise, require no reason: when they are not praising something their tongues vibrate. Poets praise what is already praised, they are not in fact appreciative of virtues: there is a gnat called “bee,” —and what poetic labor is wasted in its portrayal?

“Unique” is the poetry which men compose in return for a village, for a horse, an elephant, when it comes to it for a meal, for clothing, for some betel. The second Brahman called “Speech,” arranged beautifully in poetic composition, is peddled by some, is squandered in vain by others. These wretches who, attaining the Goddess “Speech,” abuse her to eulogise would-be heroes, they might even yoke a wish-granting cow to the plow!

Praising reprobates, twisting everything with their prattle, how can poets find salvation, professing that desire is supreme?* Captive attention on whatever composition, on whatever description, on whatever suggestion, is superior to meditative trance, if Shiva is the topic.
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

BANDHAVĀH

Grhiṇī bhaginī tasyaḥ śvaśūrau śyāla ity api praśnānām kalinā srṣṭāḥ paṇca praśnā ime `pare.

Jāmātaro bhāgineyā mātula dāraḥbandhavāḥ ajñāta eva grhiṇāṁ bhakṣayanty akhujvad grhe.

Mātulasya balaṁ mātā jāmātūru duhitā balaṁ śvaśurasya balaṁ bhāryā śvaśam ev' ātither balaṁ.

Jāmātūr vakratā vāvad yāvac chālasya bālātā prabudhyamāne sārāyaṁ prabuddhe `smin palāyanam.

 Bhāryā jyeṣṭhā śiṣuḥ śyālaḥ śvaśṛūḥ svātantryavartinī śvaśuras tu pravās" iti jāmātūr bhāgyādhorāṇī `.

Bhūṣaṇair vāsanaṁ pātraṁ putraṁ apalālanaṁ sakṛd āgatya gacchanti kanyā nirmāṛṣṭī mandīram.

Grhiṇī svajanaṁ vakti śusk'ahāram mit`ātanaṁ patiṣpaksyān tu bahvāśān kṣīrapāṁs taskarān api.

Bhārye dve putraśālīnyau bhaginī pātiṣvarjitā aśrāntakalāho nāma yogō `yam grhaṁmedhinām.

Bhārye dve bahavaḥ putrā dāridryāṁ rogaśambhavāḥ jīrṇau ca mātāpitaraṁ ek`ā.ukaṁ naraṁ jādhi.kam.

uttamaṁrṇāḥ

Śmṛte sidanti gātṛaṇī, dṛṣṭe praṇīṁ viṇaśyati aho! mahād idaṁ bhūtam uttamaṁrṇaṁ`abhiśābditam.

Antako `pi hi jantūnām antākālam apecṣate na kālaṁiyamaḥ kaś cid uttamaṁrṇasya vidyate.

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MOCKERY OF THE KALI ERA

RELATIVES

A wife, her sister, her parents, and the brother-in-law: these five additional vital breaths Kali has created for men. Sons-in-law, nephews, maternal uncles, the in-laws, feed in the house-holder’s home like rats without his knowledge. The mother is the power behind the maternal uncle, the daughter is the power behind the sons-in-law, the wife is the power behind the father-in-law, the guest is his own power. While the son-in-law is young—the brother-in-law is deceitful; when he begins to understand—he is forthright; when he has grown to understand—he takes flight.

A wife who is the eldest daughter, a brother-in-law who is a child, a wilful mother-in-law, a father-in-law abroad, this is an easy ride for the son-in-law. In just one visit, a daughter departs with jewellery, garments, vessels, and children’s toys,—pillaging the home.

A wife claims that her parents eat dry scraps, sparingly, but that her husband’s parents are gluttons, drink milk, or may even be thieves. Two wives blessed with many children, and a sister without husband: this is a conjunction called “incessant quarrel” for the house-holder. Two wives, many children, poverty, disease, an aged father and mother, each one is worse than hell.

MONEY-LENDEERS

When he is remembered, the limbs hang loose, when he is seen, the spirit perishes. Lo! Mighty is the wraith called “money-lender.” Even Death awaits the last days of creatures, but a money-lender is not bound by time. We cannot detect a fang in his mouth, nor a noose in his fist, never-
Na paśyāmo mukhe daṃṭrāṃ na pāṣāṃ va karʿāṇjale uttamaṃrṇam avengey āṣa tathā āpy udvejite manaḥ.

Dāridryam

Śatrau sāṃtvam praṭikāraḥ sarvajrogesu bheṣajam mṛtyau Mṛtyuṇjayaḍhyānāṃ dāridrye tu na kim caṇa. Śaktīṃ karoti saṃcāre śīṭṭ̄ōṣṇe maṃṣāty api dipayaty udare vahṇiṃ dāridryam paramāuṣadham.

Girāṃ skhalantīṃ milāntīṃ dṛṣṭiṃ pādau viṣaṃsthulau protsāhayati yaṁnāyath rājājī ṣeva daridrāta.

Jiryanti rājāvidveṣa jiryanty avihitāy api ākiṃcanyābal'ādhyānāṃ antato 'śim' āpi jiryati.

N' asya corā na pīṣunā na dāyāda na pārthivāḥ dainyam rājyād api jāyoyo yadi tattvam prabudhyate.

Dhanīṇaḥ

Prakāśayaty ahaṃkāraṃ pravartayati taskarāṇ protsāhayati dāyādāl laṃkṣīṃ kīṃcīd'upasthitā.

Vidambhayanti ye nityaṃ vidagdhan dhanino janaḥ ta eva tu viḍambhyante śrīyā kīṃcīd'upekṣitāḥ.

Prāmāṇya'buddhīḥ stotreṣu devatā'buddhir ātmanī kīṭa'buddhir manusyeṣu nūtanāyāḥ śrīyāḥ phalam.

Śṛṇyanta eva prccchanti paśyanto 'pi na jānate viḍambanāni dhanīkaḥ stotreṇ' ity eva manvate.

Āvṛttā śṛṃmadēṃ āṇdhān anyo 'nāyakṛṣṭaṃśāṃvidāḥ svairāṃ hasantī pārśvaśthā bāl'ōṇmattrapīṣācayat.
theless, as soon as the money-lender is spotted the heart
convulses.

POVERTY

Against an enemy peace-negotiations are the remedy,
there is a medicine for every disease, to ward off death there
is the Mrityunjaya mantra, but against poverty there is
nothing. It gives one the strength to make one's rounds,
even makes heat and cold bearable, kindles the digestive
fire,—poverty is the ultimate medicament.

Stammering words, lowered eyes, tottering feet,—poverty
spurs one on to beg as does a royal condemnation. Those
abounding in utter destitution can digest the contempt of
the king, they can digest what is beyond the pale, and in
the end they can even digest stones. For him there are no
thieves, no denouncers, no inheritors, no kings,—poverty
is superior to kingship if seen for what it is.

THE RICH

A slight increase in prosperity heightens egoism, encour-
gages thieves, and emboldens inheritors. But the rich who
always belittle the learned, are themselves derided when for-
tune no longer smiles upon them. Believing flattery to be
fact, considering oneself divine, thinking common people
to be worms,—such is the result of new money.

Though they can hear they moot the question, though
they see they do not understand, the rich take even mock-
erly to be praise. Hangers-on, colluding with each other in
secret, laugh freely at those blind with the intoxication of
wealth, as if they were children, deranged or demonically
possessed.*
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

Stotavyaiḥ stūyate nityaṃ sevanīyaś ca sevyate
na bibheti na jihreti tath" āpi dhaniko janaḥ.
Kṣaṇa|mātraṃ graha|vēso yāma|mātraṃ surā|madaḥ
lakṣmī|madas tu mūrkhānaṃ aśdehaṃ anuvartate.

65 Śrīr māsam ardha|māsaṃ vē ceṣṭīvā vinivartate
vikāras tu tad|ārābdho nityo laśuna|gandha|var.

Kaṇṭhe madaḥ krodava|jho ṣṛdi tāmbu|a|jo madaḥ
lakṣmī|madas tu sarv|āṅge putrā|dāra|mukhe|yi āpi.
Yatṛ āṣīd asti vē laśmis tatṛ ēṃmadaḥ pravarta|tām
kule ṭpy avatara|ty eṣa kuṣṭḥ|āpasmāra|vat katham?
Adhyāpayanti sāstrāṇi tṛṇi|kurvanti paṇḍitān
vismārayanti jātiṁ svāṁ varā|ṭha paṇça|śa kare

Bibhartu bhṛtyān dhaniko dattāṁ vē deyam arthisu
yāvad yācakasa|dharma|yaṃ tāval loko na mṛṣyati.

piśuṇāḥ

70 Dhanaḥbhāro hi lokasya piśuṇair eva dhāryate
katham te tāṃ laghū|kartuṇ| yatante ṭparatha svataḥ?
Śram|ānurūpaḥ piśune kim upakriyate nṛpaḥ?
dvi|guṇaḥ triguṇaḥ v" āpi Kṛt|ānto lālayisyati.

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He is ever lauded by those he ought to praise, he is served by those deserving his service, despite this the wealthy man knows no fear and no shame. Possession by an astrological demon lasts but a moment, drunkenness lasts for a watch, but the foolish are intoxicated with wealth for as long as the body endures. The goddess of wealth lends a helping hand for a month or perhaps for half a month and then withdraws, but the change she brings to pass lasts for ever, like the stench of garlic.

The inflammation wrought by ditch millet* numbs the throat, betel-nut stuns the heart, but the stupor caused by wealth affects the whole body, even the faces of wives and children. It makes sense that delirium afflicts someone who once was or still is wealthy, but how can it spread in a family, like leprosy or epilepsy? Five or six small coins in the hand give licence to lecture on science, consider the learned as chaff, let one forget one’s caste.

The wealthy man may support his dependents, may give charity to beggars, but as soon as he looks like he might ask for a favor, nobody will suffer his presence.

Surely, the world’s burden of wealth is borne by informers alone; otherwise why are they striving all by themselves to lighten it? Does the king compensate the informer with a reward appropriate to his effort? Twice, and even three times more, Death will care for him.
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

Goñkarne Bhadrañkarne ca japo duśkarmañāsanañh
rājñkarne japañ sadyañ sarvañkarmañvināsanañh.
Na sv’ārthañ kiññ cid icchanti na pretyante ca kena cit
par’ārtheṣu pravartante śaṭhañ santañ ca tulyaṅvat.
Kāḷ’āntare hy anarthañy grdhro geṭ’ōpari sthitañh
khalo grhañamipaṣṭhañ sadyo ’narthañy dehinām.

LOBHINAḤ

75 Śuṣk’ōpavāso dharmeṣu bhaiṣajyeṣu ca laṅghanam
japañyaīñañh ca yajñeṣu rocate lobhaṣālinām.
«Kiññ vaksya’t’īt?» dhanikād yāvad udvijate ’dhanañh
«kiññ praksya’t’īt?» lubdhō ’pi tāvad udvijate tatañh.
Śarvam ārthyaśaṣṭr’ārthañ śaṅkṣār kurvanti lobhinañh
bhikaṣākavalam ek’āikaṃ ye hi paśyanti Meruvat.
Dhanañpalañ pītaco hi datte svāminy upasthite
dhanañlubdhañ pīsācas tu na kasmai cana ditsate.
Dātāro ’ṛthibhir arthyante dāṛbhiñ punar arthinañh
kartṛkarma/yatāḥrād aho nimñ’ōnnaññ kiyat!

80 «Śvasminn asati n’ ārthasya rakṣakañ saṁbhaved iti»
iṣicity’ āivaṃ svayam api bhunkte lubdhañ kathaṃ cana.
Prsthāṣyaṁaññh praviṣet pratiṣṭheta dine dine
vicitrān uiliṅhed viṅgānams tiṣṭhāṣur arithiṣi cīram.

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Murmuring mantras at the sacred fords called “Cow-ear” and “Lucky-ear” annihilates past misdeeds. Murmuring into the king’s ear at once annihilates all deeds. They have no interest in their own affairs, they cannot be guided by anyone, they meddle in other people’s business, the wicked as well as the good, who for themselves want nothing, are not goaded by anyone else, and act from the highest motives. It seems a vulture perched on the house is an omen for some future disaster, but a villain loitering near the house heralds immediate doom.

THE AварIOUS

The avaricious favor the meager fast among religious observances, starving the system among medical cures, murmured prayers among sacrifices. Just as the pauper dreads the rich: “What will he say?” so the avaricious dreads the pauper: “What will he ask for?” The avaricious directly perceive the scriptural teaching* concerning hospitality, for they perceive each mouthful of almsfood to be like Mt. Meru.

The demon “treasurer” gives when his lord arrives, the demon “miser” wants to give to nobody whomsoever. The charitable are implored by the needy, then the needy by the charitable. Lo! in this reversal of subject and object,—what ups and downs!

Reasoning in this way: “If I were no longer alive, there would be no guardian for my wealth,” the miser somehow forces himself to eat. Day by day, on the verge of departing,* he comes back in and stays put, pointing out all manner of impediments,—he is a guest eager to draw out his visit.
Pradāyate vidusy ekāṃ, kavau daṣa, naṭe śatam sahasrāṃ dāmhiike loke śrotriye tu na kiṣa cana.

Ghaṭakaṃ samyaṅ aṛāḍhya vairāgyaṃ paramaṇaḥ vahet tāvad arthaḥ prasiddhyanti yāvac cāpalam āvṛtam.

«Ekataḥ sarvaśastraṇi tulasikāṣṭham ekataḥ» vaktavyaṃ kiṣṇa ity uktam vastutas tulasī parā.

Vismṛtaṃ Vāhaṭen’ ēdaṃ tulasīyāḥ paṭhaṭā guṇān viśvaśaṃmohini vittaḍāyin’ iti guṇādvayaṃ.

Kaupīnaṃ bhasit’ālepo darbhā rudr’āksaṃmālikā maunam ek’āsikā c’ ēti mūrkhāśaṃjivanāni śaṭ.

Vāsāḥ puṇyeṣu tūrtheṣu prasiddhaḥ ca mṛto gurūḥ adhyāpaṇāṃ āvṛttayaṣ ca kīrtanīyaḥ dhan’ārthibhiḥ.

Mantraḥbraṃṣe sampradāyaḥ prayaṅgaḥ cyutaśaṃkṛtau deśaḍharmas tv anācāre prcchatāṃ siddham uttaram.

Yathā jānanti bahavo yathā vaksyaṃti dātari tathā dharmaṃ caret sarvaṃ na vṛtha kiṣṇa cid ācareṇ.

Saddā japaṇapo haste madhye madhye ‘kṣīmilaṇam «sarvaṃ Brahm’ ēti» vādaś ca sadyāḥpratyayahetavāḥ.

Aḥmadhy’āḥnaṃ nadiḥvāsaḥ samāje devat”ārcanaṃ santataṃ śuciveṣaḥ c’ ēty etad aṃbhasya jīvitam.

Tāvad dīrghaṃ nityākarma yāvat syād draṣṭāmelanam tāvat saṃkṣipyate sarvaṃ yāvad draṣṭā na vidyate.
THE PIous

One gives one to the learned, ten to the poet, a hundred to the actor, a thousand to the horde of sanctimonious hypocrites, but nothing to the orthodox brahmin.* After petitioning the pimp,* one should show off extreme austerity. Fortunes are gained, as long as the duplicity remains concealed.

"On the one hand there are all the scriptures, on the other there is the wood of the holy basil."* This is just a figure of speech: in reality holy basil is supreme. Vāhata,* enumerating the properties of the holy basil, had forgotten this pair of properties: the power of universal delusion and the ability to provide wealth. A loin-cloth, a dusting of ash, sacred darbha-grass, a rosary of rudrāksa beads, a vow of silence, and sitting in solitude,*—six are the livelihoods of the fool.

Lodging at sacred fords, a famous but dead guru, repeated cycles of teaching, these are valued among people on the make. When the mantra is wrong, it is "a tradition," when there are lapses in the rites, it is "an applied procedure," when the comportment is improper, it is "a local custom"—this is the effective answer to those who protest. All religion should be practised so that many know of it, so that they report it to a donor; do nothing pointlessly. The rosary-veil ever in hand, closing the eyes from time to time, prattling that "everything is Brahman," these are the causes for instant confidence.* Loitering by the river until midday, worshipping the gods in public gatherings, always wearing a religious costume, this is the life of hypocrisy.
THREE SATIRES: NILA-KANTHA

Ānandaḥbāṣpatiromāṇcāu yasya svecchā/vaṣaṁ/vadau
kim tasya sādhanair anyaḥ—kimkarāḥ sarvaḥ/pārthivāḥ.

DURJANĀH
Daṅḍyamānā vikurvanti lālyamānās tatas tarām.
durjanānam ato nyāyyaṃ dūrād eva visarjanam.

Adānām īśadānāṃ ca kim/cit/kopaya durdhiyām
sāmpūrṇādānāṃ prakṛtīr virāmo vairākāraṇām.

Jyāyān asaṁstavo duṣṭaṅ īśyaṅai samstavaḥ punaḥ
apatyasaṁbandhaḥ/vidhiḥ sv’ānarthāyā’ āiva kevalam.

Jñātēyaṃ jñāna/hinatvaṃ piṣunatvaṃ daridrataṁ
milanti yati catvāri tad dīse ’pi namo namaḥ.

Paračhidreṣu hṛdayaṃ para/vārttāsu ca śravaḥ
para/marmasvā ca khalanām aśrjad vidhiḥ.

Viṣeṇa puccchaṅagnena vṛcīcaḥ prāṇānām iva
Kalinā daśam’āṃśena sarvaḥ Kālo ’pi dāruṇaḥ.

Yatra bhārāṅgiryo Vedaḥ yatra dharmo ’ṛtha/sādhanam
yatra svajratiḥbē mānaṁ tasmai śrī/Kalaye namaḥ!

Kamam astu jagat sarvaḥ Kālasvā ‘asya Vaśaṁ/vadam
Kāla/kalāṃ prapannāṃ Kālaḥ kim naḥ kariṣyati?
Kavīṇa Nilakaṁṭheṇa Kaler etad viḍambanam
racitaṁ viduṣaṁ pritiyai rājāsthān’ānumodanam.

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Long-winded daily ritual while there is a crowd of onlookers—when nobody is watching all is abbreviated. For one who can shed tears of bliss and whose hair stands on end at will, what need is there for other practices,—all kings are his lackeys.

THE WICKED

Punishment makes them worse, kindness even more so. Therefore, for the wicked the rule is distant exile. Giving nothing and giving little provokes the anger of the evil-minded just somewhat. They take giving to satiety for granted, a cessation of gifts turns them rabid. Better no dealings with the wicked, familiarity engenders their jealousy. A marital alliance with their offspring leads only to ruin.

Family, ignorance, slander, poverty, if these four meet in the same person, then "Hail to the horizon."*

The creator fashioned the heart of the wicked for the bodily openings: failings of others, their ear for the rumors of others, and their voice for the vulnerable points of others.

Just as the whole scorpion terrifies living beings with the poison lodged in its tail, so the whole of Time terrifies living beings with its tenth part, the Kali era. Hail to the glorious Kali era, where the words of the wife are the Veda, where religion is a means to making money, where one's own fantasy is the law!

Granted, the world may be under the sway of this era, but what can Time do to us who are sheltered by the Slayer of Time, Shiva? The poet Nila-kantha composed this Mockery of Kali for the delight of the learned and the pleasure of royal court.

*
Here is a new Clay Sanskrit Library edition and translation of Three Satires, by three Indian poets.

Written over a period of eight hundred years, these works represent alternative approaches to satire.

Bhállata sought vengeance on his boorish new king by producing vicious sarcastic verse, “The Hundred Allegories.” The disgruntled ninth-century CE court poet speaks of a setting sun, his former king and patron Avánti·varman, being replaced by a flickering firefly, the new king Shánkara·varman, who did not continue his predecessor’s patronage.

The artistry that captivates the Kashmirian Ksheméndra in the eleventh century in “The Grace of Guile” is as varied as human nature and just as fallible. He presents himself as a social reformer out to shame the complacent into compliance with Vedic morality.

In the seventeenth century CE, Nila·kantha gets straight to the point in his “Mockery of the Kali Era”: little can redeem the fallen characters he portrays, so his duty is simply to warn about the corruption of academics, sorcerers, astrologers, physicians, poets, relatives, and others.

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