

PREFACE

Vikramorvaśīyam is the second play of Kālidāsa which commands a good number of ancient and modern commentaries. The plot of this play is derived from the well-known popular tale of the love-affair of Urvaśī and Pururavas which dates back from the *Rgveda*. We find some beautiful romantic dialogues in the *Rgveda* (X.95). We also find this very romance of Pururavas and Urvaśī narrated with some variation in details in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (V.1-2), in *Brhaddevatā* (VII. 140-7), Saunaka's *Sarvānukramaṇī*, *Harivaṁśa* (X.26), *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (IV.6), *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (IX.14), *Matsya-purāṇa* (XX.14), *Kathāsaritsāgara* (III.3) etc. The play is some times called *Trotaka*, because it contains the love-affair between a human and a celestial person and the Viduṣaka is present in majority of Acts. Again the fourth Act of the play is unique in its great emotional and melodramatic poetic qualities. That is why, there is also an extended version of this Act with 31 extra musical Prakrit verses. Therefore, the play is very interesting for us as well as for some commentators who try to explain highlight these peculiar characteristics of the play so unique in the whole range of Sanskrit literature. The romanticism of the play has a peculiar shade because the heroine is a celestial nymph. Outwardly she has supernatural power of creating *tiraskariṇī* charm to make herself invisible, to create birch-barch at will, to conceal the signs of pregnancy, to create an aeroplane of clouds etc. But inwardly she has a deep womanly love which ties the hero Pururavas to her life-long.

The main feature of the present study is to make a study of the commentaries on *Vikramorvaśīyam*. I have tried to find all the commentaries but all the ancient commentaries are not available because of ravages of time. I have tried to secure as many ancient commentaries as possible even by personally going to the various libraries and MSS-collections or by writing to them. I have gone myself to the following Libraries: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library & Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai; Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Deccan College Library and Jaikar Central Library, Pune; Calcutta University library and Benaras Hindu University Library. But unfortunately no other ancient commentaries than the printed three could be found. I hope that my present study fulfils a long-standing need in the Kālidāsa studies since no consistent study of all the available commentaries on *Vikramorvaśīyam* has been made so far. I also hope that it will prepare ground for further detailed and comparative studies of individual commentators studied here rather briefly.