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Women's Town—Ghost Town[1] A Picture of a Dying City in the *Raghuvaṃśa*

SUMMARY: The following article analyses the passage of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* 16.4–24. The focus is on the image of a dying city—how it is portrayed and what makes Kālidāsa's depiction so distinctive. The author's main interest is in the role of the female characters in the description: who they are, why they and their activities are chosen to serve as a mirror reflecting the city condition. The importance of *Śrī* and her connection to female citizens and the city itself is analysed. Also the relation of "masculinity" and "femininity" and the role it plays in the process of deconstructing/reconstructing the city and the reality is analysed. Next, the article briefly deals with the relation between the real and unreal in the text, how they interplay and what the role of narrating the story and retelling the reality for the above-mentioned process of city deconstruction/reconstruction is. The Sanskrit text translation is given in the appendix.

KEYWORDS: *Raghuvaṃśa*, *kāvya*, female protagonist, *Śrī*, *Ayodhyā*.

The *passus* of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*[2] (*Raghu*. 16.4–24) we will deal with in this paper has a simple and clearly delineated structure.

[1] The author would like to thank the reviewers and the editor of the CIS for their insightful remarks and constructive criticism, which helped him a lot while writing the paper. Any mistakes are the author's alone.

[2] Sanskrit words will be given in their original form in IAST.

Verses 16.4 to 8 are plot exposition,[3] *śloka*s 16.9–21—containing the actual description of Ayodhyā's agony—form the main part of the work, while *śloka*s 16.22–23, being a mirror-like reflection of the initial lines, form the plot resolution. *Raghu.* 16.24 concludes the story. The first verses throw us immediately *in medias res*—we find ourselves in Rāghava's bedroom, with the young king lying awake among the sleeping servants (*Raghu*. 16.4). His sleepless vigil is interrupted by an unknown young lady appearing in his bedroom. She looked like the one whose husband is on a long journey[4] and at the same time like a "frozen lotus flower."[5] This description instantly refers us to a stereotypical image of *virahiṇī* or *proṣitabhartṛkā.* According to *nayikābheda*—female character typology, first mentioned in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra,* it would be one of eight types of heroine (*aṣṭanayikā*) associated with *vipralambha*—full of suffering love in separation from the object of her desire, namely, it is a woman who stops caring for her beauty and looks while her husband is abroad. She sees no reason to dress carefully, nor to seek beautiful clothes or precious jewellery, since they are not going to be admired by her beloved. This practice of deliberate abnegation, allegedly very common among Indian women of that time, was probably rooted in a presumption that a good wife should reserve her beauty only for her *deva* on earth—i.e. her husband. In the *Raghuvaṃśa* passage in question, the term "abroad" is to be taken in the extreme sense—Kuśa's father, who, in a way, was the woman's husband, has died and gone to heaven.[6]

This image—a woman referred to as a flower—although stereotypical and common in *kāvya* literature is nonetheless a vivid and realistic

[3] The events described in the *passus* take place after Rāma died and all of his subjects abandoned Ayodhyā. Afterwards his sons held the new capitals and Kuśa was made a *primus inter pares* as suggested by previous verses *Raghu.* 16.1–3.

[4] *Raghu*. 16.7: *pravāsasthakalatraveṣām* [...] *vanitām*.

[5] *Raghu.* 16.7: *mṛṇālinī haimam ivoparāgam*.

[6] Compare *Raghu.* 16.23.

enough depiction of a suffering woman. It is contrasted with the next verse: "she was like a shadow reflecting in the mirror."[7] We might be tempted to think it is not actually a contrast but a continuation of the previous statements and should be read as "she is as a shadow of a woman she used to be while her husband was present". But as Rāghava states, she actually is a shadow which entered the house "despite its barred door"[8]—this *dictum* effectively deprives our stranger of any substantial form and of any real existence. Of course, we are dealing here with switching from and to "*kāvya* realism"—the one constructed with archetypical as well as stereotypical[9] and very specific imagery, but still, as far as our text is concerned, remembering the specificity of *kāvya* style, we may regard it as at least some sort of realism.[10] We should observe this method of constructing descriptions—by means of contrasts and oppositions—with caution, since it is a basic trick used by Kālidāsa both to convey the meaning and build up the atmosphere of the text. We will discuss this matter in a detailed way later. Confused by her presence, Rāghava asks the woman who her husband is and what the reason is for which she dares to enter his bedroom.[11] He issues a warning that under no circumstances is he going to have an affair with her. The latter might seem quite surprising, considering the lack of any advances on her part at the moment—in fact she has had no time to say a word or make a move yet. Do we observe the young man's excessive ego in action here? It does not really seem to be the case. First of all, the very presence

[7] *Raghu*. 16.6: *chāyām ivādarśatalaṃ*.

[8] *Raghu.*16.7: *sāvaraṇe 'pi gehe*.

[9] For the discussion on this topic see: Kaul 2010, 130.

[10] It might not be true in terms of historical details, but it conveys some kind of "transhistorical" (Kaul's term) truth about the self-perception of the urban culture which, as we will see, is represented by the mysterious woman. It may not be an exact picture of any given city, nonetheless, it is an exact reflection of the meaning of any city (compare Kaul 2010, 16, 31–38).

[11] *Raghu*. 16.8: *kā tvaṃ śubhe kasya parigraho vā kiṃ vā madabhyāgamakāraṇaṃ te*.

of a woman, clearly longing for a man's company, in his bedroom could be considered by the righteous man and king as a kind of challenge to which he needs immediately and conclusively to respond. This sense of moral duty and obedience to law or moral precepts is shown by the fact that Kuśa is saying that a man of Rāghava family is not attracted to a woman of another man.[12] The situation would in that case function simply as a conventional display of Rāghavas' righteousness and high sense of moral duty[13]—the traits every king is supposed to possess. We should think of yet another possibility—it might be a kind of game played by the author with the reader. Most probably Kālidāsa is aware of the readers' expectations regarding the plot—when we see a beautiful lonely woman in the bedroom of a half-naked, young man, there must be an affair in store. But Kālidāsa, in my opinion, deliberately contradicts our hopes, totally rejecting such a possibility and surprises us with an unexpected turn of events—another frequently used technique in his repertoire. Let us go back to the young king's bedroom, where the interviewed woman reveals her identity. Rāghava, very soberly for a man taken by surprise in the middle of a night, concludes that she exhibits some unusual abilities—she managed to sneak somehow into his chamber, despite its door being locked, although she does not look to him like a yoga practitioner who possesses some kind of *sidhi* power.[14] As already mentioned, he properly identifies her as a kind of supernatural being or phantom ("shadow"). Properly, because eventually she turns out to be a *devī*[15]—the goddess or the guardian deity of the capital city abandoned by our protagonist's father. What we should carefully observe here is the twisted way in which reality and illusion are

[12] *Raghu.* 16.8: *vaśināṃ raghūṇāṃ manaḥ parastrīvimukhapravṛtti*.

[13] This feature is considered so important that it is present in the descriptions of almost all Rāghavas, *vide* for example *Raghu.* I, 3 the description of Dilipa, or *Raghu.* 9.7 that of Daśaratha.

[14] *Raghu.* 16.7: *yogaprabhāvo na ca lakṣyate te*.

[15] *Raghu.* 16.8: *tasyāḥ* [...] *jānīhi* [...] *adhidevatāṃ mām*, where *tasyāḥ* refers to Ayodhyā.

intermingled. First, we cannot be absolutely sure if the scene is at all happening in reality[16]—it is night, the time of ghosts, Kuśa wakes from his sleep but strangely enough nobody else does, there is no witness to the conversation. It might be as well Rāghava's imagination—is he really fully awake or are we on the verge of his dream and reality? The text seems to be absolutely positive about that—what it describes is the real world. If it is true, the reality Rāghava is awakened to on closer inspection turns out to be a very strange one. What appears most realistic and probable is not necessarily real. For instance, contrary to our expectations, the realistically depicted woman seems to be only a "shadow in the mirror" cast by an immaterial entity. The "logical" and "rational", at least in terms of Indian mentality, explanation that she might be a yoga practitioner is rejected by the Rāghava himself at first glance—our protagonist is also surprisingly prone to accept the fantastic explanation and discard the realistic one without any hesitation. We should remember well this way of description—where the real is only an illusion while the unreal forms the backbone of reality—it will become the key concept for understanding the text in this paper.

Going back to Ayodhyā deprived of her legitimate king—as a consequence of this abandonment,[17] the unruled capital experiences a period of total decline.[18] As we will see in a while, Kālidāsa is not simply describing a ruined city which is plundered by enemies or destroyed by civil disorder.[19] Ayodhyā from his poem will not have the privilege

[16] For example, *vide* Kale (1922, xxiii), who writes: "[...] Kuśa [...] is visited in a dream by the guardian deity (*adhidevatā*) of the city of Ayodhya".

[17] It is not stated *expressis verbis* anywhere, but it can be deduced from *Raghu.* 16.9–10. It is also a recurrent concept in the *kāvya*, for example *Buddhacarita* states openly that the city becomes a forest without prince Gautama, and the forest becomes a city in his presence. (*Buddhacarita* 8.6). See also for example *Raghu*. 15.29.

[18] *Raghu.*16.10: *sā* [...] *prapannā karuṇām avasthām*.

[19] Although *kāvya* literature is full of descriptions of abandoned cities, as far as the author is aware, all of them are results of a catastrophe or war, e.g. Vākpatirāja's *Gauḍavadha* 659cff. This one itself is a direct allusion

of quick death by sword and fire—instead, it is subject to some sort of terrible transformation. The process is described in subsequent *śloka*s, which are a kind of goddess's lamentation about the condition which has befallen her city. As such, it perfectly conforms to the standard behaviour of *proṣitabhartṛkā*, who expresses her anxiety by way of constantly deploring her misery and her lost lover.

The *passus* in question has a frame easy to define—it consists of ten distichs sharing the very similar structure, which conforms to the aforementioned method of joining two contrasting images into one couplet. Generally, the first verse recalls the image of Ayodhyā's glorious past, while the other depicts her present, impoverished and distorted form. We watch something resembling a slide-show consisting of several postcards from a dying city, each of them composed with care and utmost mastery.

Before analysing those images in full detail, let us take a look at yet another of Kālidāsa's brilliant tricks—the movie-like way in which he sequences the postcards of this "slide-show". At first, he lets us admire from a distant point in space and time a bird's eye view of the metropolis, the city once pulsating with life and joy (*Raghu.* 16.10). Immediately after that, a rapid "camera-like" movement brings us over jagged walls and ramparts (*Raghu.* 16.11), so that we find ourselves on the king's road (*Raghu*. 16.12), which leads us to the palace and the gardens (*Raghu.* 16.13–15). The next—so to say—"frames" show us the palace indoors—we run through the chambers decorated with paintings and through the galleries full of statues (*Raghu.* 16.16, 17). Eventually, we break free from the building and cast a farewell look to the palace (*Raghu*. 16.18), the gardens and the Sarayu river (*Raghu*. 16.19, 20) and we end our little odyssey in Rāghava's bedroom (*Raghu.* 16.21). The mastery in switching perspectives, zooming in and out between general and detailed views, contributes to a very dynamic

to Kālidāsa's work (cf. Warder 1974). Any description of abandoning a city in *kāvya* is different from the one in *Ragh.* in the sense that it is driven by war, all of them are also later than Kālidāsa's one.

and vivid image. It is worth mentioning that those verses match precisely the list of elements of the ideal city description in *kāvya* literature (compare Kaul 2010, 51–58). The city of Ayodhyā in Kālidāsa's description is located on the river bank. It is encompassed by an outer wall (usually called *prākāra*), and guarded by watchtowers (*aṭṭāla*), with palaces and decorated high mansions. The other common city features such as gardens (*udyāna*), ponds (*sarasa*) and tanks (*vāpi*) are also present in the text. We can safely presuppose that we are not presented with a series of casual images, but with a carefully selected composition of frames or slides, which form a consistent narrative on Ayodhyā's agony. This thesis will be hopefully proven true in the next few paragraphs.

The overwhelming majority of *śloka*s in this passage have a structure analogous to that in the initial description of the *devī*. We have here a juxtaposition of two images—the first is a typical, even stereotypical, conventional picture of everyday life in a city, sometimes a realistic one as we can suppose. The best way to define the other is to call it a distorted and degenerated reflection of reality, often coming close to a grotesque or horror-like description. Not only each and every single *śloka* is organized according to this pattern—the whole passage (*Raghu.* 16.11–21) is in a subtle way set off against the description of Rāghava and his bed-chamber (*Raghu*. 16.4–8), the latter—the author would like to prove it in the following paragraph—sharing some characteristics with the standard *kāvya* depiction of an ideal city. First of all, let us notice that according to Kālidāsa's verses Rāghava is the only one "awake while the servants are sleeping."[20] We could expect a totally different image, that of a prince sleeping safely while his people guard his chamber. Here it can be deduced that, on the contrary, he is the one to guard the safe sleep of his *jana.* Comparing it to the beginning of the description of Ayodhyā in "the first *kāvya*" we may notice a similar image of Daśaratha who protected the city "as Maghavan protects

[20] *Raghu.* 16.4: [...] *suptajane prabuddhaḥ* [...] *kuśaḥ.*

Amarāvatī" (Ramanujan 2004: 60).[21] It may be realized from this verse that Rāghava is not simply suffering from sleeplessness—he is not only awake, but above all he is vigilant, acting as a guardian and thus fulfilling his royal duty of *bhūpālana.* One of the most important traits of any city is the fact that it can provide its citizens with relative safety. In terms of poetic city images this property is being expressed by the presence of city lights (Ramanujan 2004: 54). The cities are much more luminous[22]—both literally and metaphorically—than villages and, of course, than the wilderness. As Ramanujan states in his essay *Towards an Anthology of City Images*, particularly the "glaring, uncertain and uneven lighting of village streets is set off against the steady lamp lights of the city. The difference in the lights also symbolically refers to the state of a civilisation, one uncertain and hand-to-mouth, the other regulated and reliable" (Ramanujan 2004: 54). The very epithet "steady" (*stimita*) is chosen by Kālidāsa to describe the lamp lights in Rāghava's bedroom. It is worth noticing that lamps, along with barred doors, are the only pieces of furniture in the young prince's bedchamber described in the poem, although other locations—for example, the devastated Ayodhyā—are described almost in full detail. This scarcity of elements—in author's opinion—is not a coincidence. By keeping the number of elements low, Kālidāsa makes every single one of them more meaningful and functionally important. In the same manner as Kuśa's vigil is a handy representation of his devotion to *bhūpālana*, the steadiness of lamplight is a metaphor of safety which results from

[21] He most probably means *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.006.005: [...] *pālitā sā purī śreṣṭhendreṇa ivāmarāvatī* [...]. It is a standard comparison, vide: Sudyka 2010: 99.

[22] From the point of view of the contemporary reader the difference may be less obvious. According to our standards cities at that time were still very dangerous places, especially at night. But it is all about a relative level of safety—they were noticeably more civilised and safe (or at least more "lawful") than outdoors or even villages.

his uninterrupted vigil.[23] Also the description of sleeping—therefore not expecting any danger—servants seems to confirm this conjecture. All of this is summarized in the fact that the door to the bedchamber is barred, i.e. the "city walls" or the "frontiers" of the Rāghava-protected area are safe and well-guarded. All factors necessary to model the city in its rudimentary form are present: the ruler, the subjects and the bounded territory controlled by them. As can be easily seen from this *passus,* which the author proposes to interpret as a sketchy description of "the ideal city in a miniature", all the prosperity has its source in the presence of the righteous ruler—*conditio, sine qua* every city would likely share the miserable fate of Ayodhyā.

If we contrast the description of the ruined city with that of the Rāghava's bedroom, we will see that they are, to a great extent, focused on common elements: the necessity of a proper leader as a guarantee for the well-being of a town and its citizens (*Raghu*. 16.4; 16.9–10; 16.11), light as a metaphor for safety (*Raghu*. 16.4[24]) or high-culture and, what follows, the lack of it as a symptom of city decline (*Raghu*. 16.18; 16.20). It also refers to a king's *tejas,* which can be understood almost literally as radiance or light of a king's *sacra,* enlightening and safeguarding all the city. Also the concept of the well-guarded boundary (*Raghu*. 16.7, 8) finds its counterpart in the city walls description contained in *Raghu*. 16.11 and, at least partially, in the description of the Sarayu river (*Raghu*. 16.21).[25]

As we gradually walk through the city from the ruined walls through king's palace, we dive deeper and deeper into the darkness. We start from

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[23] The light, that of the Sun and the Moon, is connected with good sovereignty in *Raghu.* 4.12.: "As the moon by its power to delight is rightly called Chandra; and as the sun by its diffusing heat is correctly named Tapana; so he, by pleasing his subjects, was justly styled *rāja.*" (Transl. Kale 1922 : 27).

[24] *Vide* footnote 8.

[25] "Complain till you reach the king, run till you reach the river"—is a proverb quoted by Ramanujan to indicate that every city has its "two dimensions the physical and the social. [...] The king is the ultimate authority, the river is the last boundary." (Ramanujan 2004: 53).

the sunset (*Raghu.* 16.11) and end up in the night impenetrable even for the brightest moon-light (*Raghu.* 16.18). As far as the text is concerned, the limits of Ayodhyā are her brightest part while the centre is the darkest one. Remembering about the equality between the light and the safety, approaching the king's palace we enter the danger zone. It is a sharp contrast to Rāghava's bedroom, where the centre is the most safe zone, while outdoors it is dark and potentially dangerous. It is also the total negation of the standard *kāvya* description, where the city is characterized after all by its brightness and white colour, which corresponds to the king's splendour and fame. Let us take a closer look at the text. *Śloka* 12 depicts young women adorned with shining and jingling anklets, who hurry to see their lovers. We can easily identify this verse as a description of *abhisārikā*s or women hurrying to meet their lovers, which is one of the most common and over-exploited *topoi* of *kāvya* literature. This mundane element is contrasted with a nightmare-like image in which the place of young lovers has been taken by blood-thirsty, growling female jackals, emitting flames from their muzzles.[26] We should observe how these apparently contradictory images are joined together in a thoughtful manner. Each and every element of one verse has its correlative in the other. *Abhisārikā*s are of course the female jackals' counterparts. Females, both human and jackal, are walking through the city led by a sort of carnal desire: *abhisārikā*s long for their lovers' bodies, jackals crave raw flesh. The description of light sparks and pleasant sounds emitted by the girls' anklets has its distorted counterpart in flames and growling emitted from jackals' muzzles. Last but not least, the general feel and atmosphere of the verses can be compared in the same way. The first two *pada*s are the epitome of life (or love at least), while the other two are that of death—especially considering

[26] *Raghu.* 16.12: *nadanmukholkāvicitāmiṣābhiḥ* [...] *śivābhiḥ*. An animal possessing supernatural abilities is a quite common *kāvya* image (e.g. *cakora* bird). Although emitting fire by jackals is a *topos*, it still is a "fantastic" element of the description. The behaviour of the jackal was well known among the people of India, and jackals spitting fire, although common in literature

all the associations with jackals present in Indian culture, namely their adherence to the god Śiva and their habit of feeding on dead corpses on funeral sites or battlefields. It should be stated here that this *śloka* has some relationship to *Raghu.* 16.4, where the *devī* is described as a woman whose husband is gone. However, judging by her appearance she is *proṣitabhartṛkā*, her behaviour is that of *abhisārikā.*[27] She comes at night to the young prince to persuade him that he should become her husband, the way his father was before. Kuśa, warning her not to try to seduce him, a few moments after noticing that she is a woman abandoned by her husband, also seems to realize the internal dichotomy of this character.

It seems that the lack of female citizens behaving like *abhisārikās* is connected with the fact that *devī* took over and started seeking a lover on her own. Why this metaphor of love encounters is important for the situation in Ayodhyā will be the subject of a later paragraph. *Śloka* 15 is almost identical in structure to *Raghu.* 16.13. In the manner similar as before, the wild beasts are being substituted for women. Young girls' painted feet are reflected like in a false mirror by the blood-stained paws of tigers from the second verse of the stanza. The comparison in *śloka* 13 is technically similar, although much less shocking. The young women playing in water-pools have disappeared, their place taken by wild buffaloes, and the water itself cries pierced by their horns,[28] instead of making a deep, drum-like sound while being clasped by girls' hands.[29] This image is of course a reverse of the standard *topos*, that can be found, for

(e.g. Vidyākara's description of a cremation ground in Ingalls 1965: 400) would still be, in the authors opinion, regarded as fantastic creatures.

[27] It might be also interpreted as behaviour characteristic of *Śrī* cf. for example, Hara (1996: 35): "[...] it is *Śrī* herself who chooses the king."

[28] *Raghu.* 16.13: *vanyair idānīṃ mahiṣais tad ambhaḥ śṛṅgāhataṃ krośati dīrghikāṇām*.

[29] *Raghu.* 16.14: *āsphālitaṃ yat pramadākarāgrair mṛdaṅgadhīradhvanim anvagacchat*.

example, in *Raghu*. 16.57, where the king Kuśa is observing a group of bathing young women from his boat:

> *parasparābhyukṣaṇatatparāṇāṃ tāsāṃ nṛpo majjanarāgadarśī /*
> *nausaṃśrayaḥ pārśvagatāṃ kirātīm upāttavālavyajanāṃ babhāṣe // Ragh.* 16.57 //
>
> The king, sitting on his boat, eager to look at the women swimming in the water, dedicated to the sport of splashing water against one another,spoke to the Kirāti, who stood by his side with a fly flap in her hand.[30]

Analogically, in stanza 16.19 young women picking flowers are substituted by a flock of beast-like Pulindas destroying garden trees, who are described as if they were wild monkeys,[31] not humans. Also *śloka* 20 confronts us with horrible images—house windows, no longer adorned by lamplight or girls' faces, are now blinded by hives of insects (or larvae), forming a dark, smoke-like veil wrapped around the deserted buildings. This stanza might be compared to the standard *kāvya* description, for example, that from *Raghu.* 7.5–11. The prince Aja, while walking the city streets to the house of his relative, attracts attention of the city women, who set aside their occupations, and walk to the windows to take a look at him. Eventually the windows, filled up with their faces, seem to be adorned with lotus flowers:

> *āsāṃ mukhair āsavagandhagarbhair vyāptāntarāḥ sāndrakutūhalānām /*
> *vilolanetrabhramarair gavākṣāḥ sahasrapattrābharaṇā ivāsan // Ragh* 7.11 //
>
> The windows, having their holes filled up with the faces of those ladies full of intense curiosity, having the smell of wine within and the rolling eyes for black bees hovering about, seemed to be decorated with so many lotuses (Kale 1922: 53).

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[30] All translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

[31] *Raghu.* 16.19: *vanyaiḥ pulindair iva vānarais* [...]. It is indeed possible that Kālidāsa revokes here *Rāmāyaṇa* V, 41, 10–21, where Hanuman destroys the gardens of Lanka. The circumstances are quite different, however, Hanuman is on the warpath, using a "forth strategy" (*Ram.* V, 41, 2), i.e. launching a frontal assault to drive demons mad and diminish their ranks before the final battle.

As we can see, the first verse of stanza 16.20 is constructed according to a well-known *kāvya* stereotype, while another one is the exact opposition of the *topos*. It might be also interesting to underline the fact that the passage from *canto* 7 precedes the wedding ceremony (*Raghu.* 7.18–28). It would be once again a contradiction to the situation depicted in canto 17, which *de facto* describes the mourning city/goddess. Aesthetically similar to 16.20 is stanza 16.17—female statues inside the palace are cloaked with dry skins shed by serpents wrapped around their breasts. Snakes slithering around caused the wall paintings to fade away—somehow similar is the scene (*śloka* 16.16) with lions tearing the elephant paintings off the walls. This depiction is related to the fact that the elephants are an almost necessary element of the ideal *kāvya* city, crowded with people, elephants and horses, as well as mansions with wall paintings and white *portici* (Sudyka 2010: 99, 101). The image of "blackened" or "faded away"[32] colours may be seen in connection to the general phenomenon of lack of light in the destroyed city of Ayodhyā. As was mentioned before, light can be taken metaphorically as a sign of safety and prosperity of the city. We see it depicted directly in stanza 16.20[33] as a lack of lamplight. In *Raghu.* 16.18 Kālidāsa describes the buildings in Ayodhyā as so dark that even the moon-rays, white as pearl strings, are unable to lighten them.[34] It seems that from *Raghu.* 16.11 on we are gradually sinking into the ever deeper darkness, as Ayodhyā more and more resembles the sun which sets behind the black clouds.[35] This is perfect opposition to the description of Kuśa's bedchamber with its steadily burning lamps and indicates a total decline and collapse of the city on a social and cultural level as well.

[32] *Raghu.* 16.17: [...] *utkrāntavarṇakramadhūsarāṇām*.

[33] *Raghu.* 16.20: *ratrau anāviṣkṛtadīpabhāsaḥ* [...].

[34] *Raghu.* 16.18: [...] *ta eva muktāguṇaśuddhayo 'pi harmyeṣu mūrchanti na candrapādāḥ*.

[35] *Raghu.* 16.11: [...] *viḍambayaty astanimagnasūryaṃ dināntam ugrānilabhinnamegham*.

Images composed in the way we have seen above might seem strange for several reasons. *Primo*, Kālidāsa is supposed to describe here the city plunging into anarchy, or—to be more precise—going through a period of *interregnum,* after being abandoned by its legitimate ruler. We would rather expect to read descriptions of a fratricidal slaughter or plundering by enemies, of famine and death—not complaints about lovers not having their *tête-à-tête*, or peacocks not dancing any more. When we actually encounter the incidental mention of ruined walls or untended buildings, we are not informed what caused it—we do not really know whether that damage is inflicted by an enemy or the city is merely declining with the course of time. What is equally important and amazing, the author does not report any changes in the political and social structure of Ayodhyā, although it had to be the very first thing to happen after the city lost the king. The absence of any mentions about politics, bureaucracy or military is accompanied by men being almost totally eradicated from the excerpt in question.[36] The only direct reference to them is an image of the Pulindas, but as we have already resolved they do not even seem to behave like humans. Of course, we may simply state it as a *kāvya* style feature—after all, the *kavi*s were very fond of describing women—but still it will remain, in my opinion, a problem from the reader's perspective. In ancient and medieval India, and not only there, people had considerable personal acquaintance with the horrors of war and anarchy, and the way they perceived the realism or coherence of literary description had to be affected by that fact.

Apart from that short mention, the tragedy of Ayodhyā is depicted as female-only phenomenon—presented by a woman, from perspective of women, and as afflicting only women-dominated spheres of activity. How deeply it distorts the realism in our story can be easily spotted if we recollect any modern documentary on anarchy-affected regions—the most prominent and omnipresent image will always be that of hordes of young men wandering around, armed to teeth—an element

[36] Compare the city description in Ramanujan 2004: 60–61, which emphasizes the role of men and only mentions females as their wives.

of depiction avoided by Kālidāsa very carefully. It is improbable that this shift of balance in description is a consequence of an inclination towards some kind of *decorum*, which is intended to spare the audience. The poet does not really hesitate to show us scenes full of aggression or grotesque monstrosity, almost every stanza is peppered with words like "blood", "claws", "pain", "cry" etc., and depicts violent behaviour of wild beasts. The text is soaked with such images, which—when juxtaposed with descriptions of young females—become even more shocking than those of bloody fights and violence alone could possibly be. So what, if not mercy for the reader's sensitivity, are Kālidāsa's reasons to create such an unexpected composition? The text is clearly signaling that the tragedy which struck the city is not of a political or social nature. The decline of the city is not about the shift from the state of political order to that of civil disorder or anarchy. Despite what we may tend to think after a superficial analysis of the *passus*, it is also not about transgressing from the state of being civilised and cultural into that of being wild and natural. Or more precisely, the collapse of culture and civilisation is only a superficial effect of a much deeper destructive process which affected the reality of our text. We are not seeing here the image of a ruined city claimed by a jungle, which would be a typical and "natural" occurrence in the Indian environment. We should observe that although civilisation is about to lose the battle of Ayodhyā, it is not, however, being overwhelmed by nature. All elements which substitute for the previous city culture are of an unnatural, sometimes monstrous character. Even if they seem to be part of nature—like wild beasts for example—there is always something unnatural about them, mostly their inexplicable aggressiveness or even fantastic features, such as fire emitted from their muzzles. This atmosphere of darkness and fear is gradually but consistently introduced by Kālidāsa from the very beginning of the story. We should not forget that the story itself, taking place at midnight (*ardharātrau*), is a dialogue between the young king and the spectre lamenting over the destruction of his father's city. What we see there is a rather creepy image—a supernatural being is relating to the young

king the story about his father being dead and his home being turned into hell, a situation which we should expect in any horror story.

The very first image to which the present Ayodhyā is compared also resembles the setting for a horror movie—the sun is setting behind mountain peaks in the sky covered with dark, wind-jagged clouds. The next one—deserted and half-ruined city walls and turrets match and amplify the atmosphere perfectly. The flame-casting female jackals are, to the same extent, extraneous to both civilisation and nature—they are a negation or distortion of both. In a similar manner, there is not a whit of naturality in the description of water crying while pierced by wild buffalo horns. Moreover, the peacocks cease dancing after the city declines—these verses are totally unintelligible if we insist on explaining them by means of "back-to-nature" theory. The peacock's dance is not a trained trick—quite the opposite, it is instinctive behaviour for the bird. Why should it be abandoned once the peacocks are set loose? It looks more like nature (peacocks and water in this case) itself was in mourning over the disaster which affected the city. There is also something unnatural about the descriptions of predators[37]—they are focused on small gory details and are in fact limited to images of blood-stained paws[38] and a few remarks about the unleashed aggressiveness of tigers and lions, about whom, as we should observe, there is absolutely no other mention—they are all claws and blood-lust. Even members of the forest tribes which ravage palace gardens do not, for example, plunder or rob anything[39]—which would be the expected behaviour of

[37] Of course, predatory beasts are themselves a part of nature and especially we have to consider its dangerous (*araṇya*) and not always benign *(vana)* aspect. (Author thanks one of the reviewers for bringing his attention to these two categories). As a part of everyday life in India, their customs and behaviour were well known and recognized by the common man. The afore-mentioned verses depict predators during the activities which probably could not be considered natural by a reader at that time (and in fact they were not).

[38] *Raghu*. 16.15: [...] *asradigdham padam* [...].

[39] Of course, arguably the city is abandoned so there is nobody to plunder,

the barbaric but still human aggressors. Instead, they indulge in inexplicable, pointless and childish acts of violence destroying the garden creepers, which for Kālidāsa makes them more like monkeys than human beings. Other stanzas also portray a ghost town with heaps of snakes and worms, deserted homes and streets. To recap: Ayodhyā is not regressing from civilisation to nature, the new world order arisen after the loss of the legitimate king is deplored by nature itself. The city's agony is of a much more serious nature than the crumbling of a political system or the death of a civilisation. Along with the city, reality itself is disfigured and deformed, and becomes the subject of a terrible transformation—the fantastic and impossible penetrates into reality. To use a well known Greek terms: *cosmos* is being deconstructed into *chaos*.

As should be clear by now, the above-mentioned *śloka*s are on a regular basis juxtaposing two images: one portraying Indian reality, again, it is in fact *kāvya* "reality" but not devoid of elements of truth—the construction of the city or, better to say, ideal city, the portraits of an ideal king and other members of society and their roles, etc.; the other image is purely fantastic. What we ought to add now is that they also contrast the two temporal planes, that of the past with this of the present. And once again Kālidāsa is using the literary technique which provokes a reader's cognitive dissonance—the frame of the text's reality differs from what we expect. The image of the present Ayodhyā, existing in reality, is totally unrealistic. The city is claimed by packs of jackal-like fantastic beasts. These descriptions of mutilated and distorted reality are consistently interlaced by verses depicting the bygone splendour of the same city. The latter realistic images are—paradoxically enough—referring to the non-existent state of reality which—(pun intended)—is no longer real. It can reappear for a moment only because *devī* is recalling its representation in her narrative. In the twisted game with the reader or listener, Kālidāsa confronts us with the panorama of the city of monsters haunted

but in this case for what reason are barbarians riding in the city? One way or another, their behaviour remains unintelligible.

by human ghosts—i.e the perfect opposite of what we could expect. This is the same "game of reality" we met in the opening stanzas of the passage, where a realistically depicted young woman turned out to be only "a shadow in the mirror." Her existence was justified only by the fact that she was a shadow cast by a spiritual being. Her reality was based on the fact that she was… not real, otherwise her description would be incoherent and self-contradictory. The text is full of such twists and turns. But are they random text features or is there a meaning to them?

We should observe that switching between the real and the unreal is done by means of telling a story. Contrary to our naive belief, realistic is what is retold as a story and not what is present as a fact of the external world. When *devī* enters Kuśa's bedchamber she exhibits unrealistic traits, which become justified, and henceforth realistic, only then does she say who she is. In the same way, the physically existing Ayodhyā is phantasmagorical and can be brought back to reality only by retelling the city's past. Also all the events are only referred to in the form of a story—we do not actually see the young woman sneaking into Rāghava's room, we only hear him presupposing this. Nor are we witnesses to the old king's ascendency—we are told about it instead. Even the events which become facts in the next few verses—Kuśa's march to Ayodhyā for example—are first prototyped by *devī*; she is telling Rāghava what he should do and how. It seems to be the prominent feature of the *passus* in question that it values the story as more realistic than the—deformed and distorted—reality itself. The story about the past shape of the world seems to be immune to such deformations and serves as a point of reference and a way to come back to the normal world order. This way back is both metaphorical (or symbolical)—by the creation of images in our minds, as well as factual—by the word of *devī* the young king goes to Ayodhyā and reality regains its shape once again. What was real was first recollected, then prototyped and finally restored by means of telling a story.

Continuing this thought, let us take another look at the temporal structure of the text and more specifically at the regularity with which the past and present—so to say—appear and disappear before our eyes.

The afore-mentioned regular interlacing of verses describing the past and present, the non-existent and real, causes (save some kind of "visual interference") the plot—and our awareness at the same time—to continuously drift between the past and present, not giving us any chance to focus on either of them. This constant shift between temporal planes or, alternatively, the limbo in-between them, is the final important element which helps to explain the nature of the destructive process affecting the city.

Śloka 16.11 seems to highlight the fact that we are not dealing here with one event which has destroyed the city, but rather with a slow but unstoppable process—compared in our text to the sunset.[40] The above-mentioned way of constructing the city description in stanzas 11–23 indicates clearly that each and every element of reality is not annihilated and then substituted with something different, it is more like transformed and disfigured into its own antithesis. Once again, *kosmos* disassembles into *chaos*. Finally, the way of manipulating temporal perspectives indicates the oscillatory character of the degenerative process—the city is balanced on the verge of destruction, the reality is—at least symbolically—still struggling to regain its proper shape. To cut a long story short, we have got the liminal state here.

The "liminality" is considered here in the fundamental sense of van Gennep's theory, as a temporary state of marginalisation, of being on the verge, in-between. The liminality of the text reality is highlighted many times. All the time descriptions—*ardharātrau* in 16.4., the boundary between the day and night in 16.11—as well as the fact that *devī* is half-real and half-spiritual/fantastic are referring us, each in its own way, to the idea of the liminal state. The *interregnum* in which the city has fallen is also a kind of intermediary period of *chaos*, between pre- and post-liminal *cosmos*, i.e. the state when a king is present and ruling—hence providing basic order in society and reality. To fully understand the nature of the text liminality we need to examine carefully verses 16.10. and 16.21. Those form the brackets which enclose

[40] *Raghu.* 16.11: *viḍambayaty astanimagnasūryaṃ dināntam*.

and encompass the city description, revealing the basics of its character. Stanza 16.10. informs us that the most important manifestations of the town's prosperity were continuous religious festivals and rituals, which were making Ayodhyā even greater than Kubera's own city.[41] Couplet 16.21, on the other hand, describes the river bank with simple huts scattered around, where working women used to take shelter. The coastal sand does not "bear any marks of rituals"[42] performed here—this inconspicuous statement is probably one of the most important sentences in terms of text understanding. The picture we see here is at most sad or nostalgic, it has nothing of the shocking imagery of previous stanzas to it. But still, the mention of citizens ceasing to perform rituals is the only information which provokes any emotional reaction of *devī*—much more vivid than the description of the city's destruction. In the whole excerpt in question this is the only place where the goddess is referring to herself, saying "*dūye*"—"I suffer". Only in this moment does she seem to show real pain. If we observe this passage carefully, we will see that this is the key statement which allows us to put all the puzzles in order. *Raghu.* 16.35 states:

> *ity adhvanaḥ kaiścid ahobhir ante kūlaṃ samāsādya kuśaḥ sarayvāḥ /*
> *vedipratiṣṭhān vitatādhvarāṇāṃ yūpān apaśyac chataśo raghūṇām // Ragh* 16.35 //
>
> And after a few days, when the march was over, Kusha, having reached the Sarayu banks,
> Saw hundreds of sacrificial poles, fixed to square bases, which belonged to Rāghavas, who were performing those sacrifices.

It is the first city quarter to be seen by Kuśa, and his first action will be restoring the city or even more "making her regain the state of the newness"[43] so that he might perform sacrifices (*Raghu.* 16.39).

[41] *Raghu.* 16.10: *vasaukasārām abhibhūya sāhaṃ saurājyabaddhotsavayā vibhūtyā* [...].

[42] *Raghu.* 16.21: *balikriyāvarjitasaikatāni snānīyasaṃsargam anāpnuvanti*.

[43] *Raghu.* 16.38: [...] *puraṃ navīcakrur* [...].

It might be inferred that this uninterrupted cycle of ritual regeneration is the necessary element "powering" the well-being and existence of Ayodhyā. Ayodhyā depicted in these terms by Kālidāsa is, to use Redfield's and Singer's nomenclature, a purely orthogenetic city. Her prosperity depends greatly on her government and society being structured according to the set of traditional rules, values and customs.[44] It is the kind of city culture "looking into the past" and searching here for the cure for her illnesses. This is the deeper meaning of *devī*'s compulsive need to repeat the cycle (*Raghu.* 16.22) and to bring Rāghava to her throne once again.

If we agree to adopt for a while this—let us name it "ritual"—perspective, we will be able to easily answer why the loss of the king gives this destructive impulse which destroys not only the heart of the state—its capital—but deconstructs all reality into *chaos*; we will be able as well to answer the question why the process is described using only examples of women-dominated activities. The theory of ritual is widely accepted as the way of revitalising and reordering reality, which falls into disorder spontaneously, with the course of time or as a result of a catastrophe—the latter being our case. The *Raghuvaṃśa* text is all about restoring the past *status quo*. We can see it even in its structure. It has a kind of circular plot. It begins with Kuśa's coronation, which, given the circumstances, is nothing but an empty gesture. To give it any effectiveness the young king needs to restore his royal power by regaining his capital and its *Śrī.* The process launches when *devī* appears, asks Rāghava for help and tells the story about the death of the city. Then, what is a mirror-like reflection of the plot exposition, she repeats her request and disappears. On a lower level it is repeated by a circular-like route we go through the city while reading the sequence of *śloka*s, the route which ends at the starting point, namely Rāghava's bedroom. And the *devī's* request itself is all about restoring the bygone state with a Rāghava on the throne in Ayodhyā.[45]

[44] Compare for example *Raghu*. 16.35.

[45] Compare: *Raghu.* 16.22.

Additionally, as we know from Indian theory of kingship, there are three main kingly tasks: *bhūbhojana*, *bhūpālana* and most important for us *bhūbharaṇa*—"supporting of the earth". From the ritual perspective this duty can be interpreted as the necessity to periodically reset and revitalise reality, nature and the kingship, on which they depend by means of rituals performed by the king. We may insist that when he disappeared from Ayodhyā, at the same instant the city was condemned to fall into chaos. Not having any possibility to reorganize and reset itself *cosmos* does not need any external help—wars or whatever else—to decompose. Consistently, to reverse the degenerative process nothing special, but a new king, is needed. The text seems to support this statement—a few *śloka*s later Rāghava comes back and takes over ruling the city. He needs only to establish proper order and social structure by simply assigning houses to everyone according to their position.[46] The city seems to regain its former splendour almost by itself, in an instant he rides into it as if were "entering the heart of his beloved".[47] This metaphor, which in various forms is repeated in the following *śloka*s, sheds some light on the question of the "feminisation" of the text reality. In Indian texts referring to kingship, comparing a city or kingdom to a woman (*śrī/bhū*)[48] and an act of assuming rule to a marriage or sexual intercourse is not uncommon. It stands to reason that the city in our text is a little more than *devī*'s emanation. Also the description of the city destruction—abandoned houses, ruined walls, empty streets,

[46] *Raghu.* 16.40: *yathārham anyair anujīvilokaṃ saṃbhāvayām āsa gṛhais tadīyaiḥ.*

[47] *Raghu.* 16.40: *tasyāḥ sa rājopapadaṃ niśāntaṃ kāmīva kāntāhṛdayaṃ praviśya.*

[48] Our *devī* seems to be a mix of both of them (e.g *śrī/bhū*), compare the definition of both types in Hara (Hara 1997). She is an active woman (agency and anthropomorphization being the traits of *Śrī* Hara 1997: 35, 38) who decides her own destiny (chooses a husband, Hara 1997: 35), but on the other hand, she is a city who needs her "sire" to rule over her (*māhi/bhū*-like traits). The identification of both aspects can be seen for example in *Raghu.* 16.9, 21.

moss-covered terraces and unkempt gardens—is a mere extrapolation of her own untidy and impoverished look. This may also be the reason why we see so many symbols connected to femininity, female-dominated activities, and last but not least, so many women. The city, being the emanation of *devī*,[49] needs to be a woman itself, and women's activities are the most substantial and important for its existence.

We may be able to explain it in more detail if we remember that *devī* is the one to ask Rāghava, invoking his status as heir to the throne, that he should remove her troubles by *de facto* becoming, in a way, her husband. That the previous king was in some way her husband we may deduce from her initial description as *virahiṇī*. Why should she want this so desperately? Her reasons might be deduced from the following passage in *canto* 3:

> *narendramūlāyatanād anantaraṃ ghanavyapāyena gabhastimān iva /*
> *agacchad aṃśena guṇābhilāṣiṇī navāvatāraṃ kamalād ivotpalam // Ragh* 3.36 //
>
> Śrī (the goddess of royal fortune) who always loves merits, went over partially from her original seat, the old king, to the new resting place called 'the young king', just as the goddess of beauty passes from a lotus to a fresh blown one. (Kale 1922: 22)

Here we see the pattern which is probably the foundation of Ayodhyā's prosperity and even her very existence—the union of *Śrī* with an always new, young king, who is able to replace the old or deceased one and become her husband.[50]

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[49] For an interesting counterpart of the city being the emanation of the goddess *vide,* for example, *Raghu.* 8.74. The king, after his wife's funeral, walks the streets crying and sees "the outflow of his suffering in the tears on the faces of female citizens"—it might be a trace of a similar relationship between the king and his subjects, but to discuss this is far beyond the scope of this paper.

[50] This being *conditio sine qua non* for his prosperity; compare Hara (1997: 37): "[...] He who has been chosen (*vṛta)* by *Śrī* will certinaly prosper

From this perspective, we may define more precisely the inner nature of the danger threatening Ayodhyā —it is the lack of the basic union of "masculinity" and "femininity". Now we can explain why initially Kālidāsa feels that it is necessary to inform us, as soon as possible, about *abhisārikā*s not going to see their lovers any more. This image is not accidental, it reflects perfectly the reason for the city's decline—*devī* cannot join her king; the active creative power is no longer regulated by performed rituals and gradually it becomes more and more distorted, giving birth to chimeric creatures. What was once reality decomposes into a nightmare.

The final question would be: "Who is the representative of 'femininity' in the text?". There seems to be a plethora of them. Women are mentioned in almost every verse—obviously, they are to be counted in this group. But they are depicted as a part of the city, or, more precisely, they are described not simply as females but as female citizens during their social activities. As was stated before, this way all the city gives the impression of being female or, at least feminine. All of the women described are of course only emanations of *devī*. When later she is—so to say—separated from the city after losing her "husband", they vanish and their place is taken by the beasts of various kinds. As strange as it may seem, at least monstrous female-jackals are different representatives of "femininty" in the text—it is its deformed and abnormal version. They show the other face of *devī*'s power—what it becomes without being directed and restrained by its male counterpart.

To recapitulate: *Raghuvaṃśa*'s passage, 16.4–23, provides a very interesting portrayal of a dying city, using images stereotypical and characteristic of *kāvya* literature but putting them into an unusual context, combining them in unusual ways, by contrasting them with phantasmagoric counterparts and by skilfully manipulating temporal perspectives. This way the meaning and the boundaries of what is real and fantastic, material and spiritual are shifted, creating a totally new frame. It is not

(samṛdhārtha) and those who were forsaken (*hīna*) by her are destined to decline (*asamṛddha*)."

beyond the bounds of possibility that we behold here the glimpse of how people of that time perceived their reality and its connection to myth and ritual; we behold how the world of *profanum* is rooted into *sacrum*. Hence we may start to put aside our preconditioned definition of *kāvya* imagery as "artificial" or "idealized" and start to see its truth and reality, which lays in it being able to render psychological and social reality. It may be deceptive if one wants to know what the physical reality and the form of a city was (although compare Sudyka 2010: 99), but it is a valid and maybe the only source to answer the question of what it meant for Indians of that time. And, as the author hopefully was able to—at least partially—prove, the way urban life was rendered in stories and poetry was, and still is, a way to fully understand what the city was, how to be a part of it, and how to preserve its existence and meaning.

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Appendix
Raghuvaṃśa 16.4–23

athārdharātre stimitapradīpe śayyāgṛhe suptajane prabuddhaḥ /
kuśaḥ pravāsasthakalatraveṣām adṛṣṭapūrvāṃ vanitām apaśyat // Ragh. 16.4 //

Once at midnight Kuśa, who was wide awake in his bedchamber, among sleeping servants and lamps steadily burning, beheld a woman he had not seen before, dressed as one whose husband was away.

sā sādhusādhāraṇapārthivarddheḥ sthitvā purastāt puruhūtabhāsaḥ /
jetuḥ pareṣāṃ jayaśabdapūrvaṃ tasyāñjaliṃ bandhumato babandha // Ragh. 16.5 //

She stood before him—whose royal traits were similar to those common to good people, whose splendour was comparable to that of Indra, who was the defeater of enemies and who had good brothers/relatives—and folded her palms in the *añjali* gesture, greeting him with an exclamation beginning with "may you be victorious".

athānupoḍhārgalam apy agāraṃ chāyām ivādarśatalaṃ praviṣṭām /
savismayo dāśarathes tanūjaḥ provāca pūrvārdhaviṣṛtatalpaḥ // Ragh. 16.6 //

Descendant of Daśaratha, astonished, raised the upper half of his body from the bed and said to her who like a shadow on a surface of a mirror entered the building, despite the fact that its doors were barred.

labhdāntarā sāvaraṇe 'pi gehe yogaprabhāvo na ca lakṣyate te /
bibharṣi cākāram anirvṛtānāṃ mṛṇālinī haimam ivoparāgam // Ragh. 16.7 //

You gained access to the palace although its doors were barred and yet there is no trace of yoga powers in you. You look like a troubled person, similar to the lotus affected by cold.

kā tvaṃ śubhe kasya parigraho vā kiṃ vā madabhyāgamakāraṇaṃ te /
ācakṣva matvā vaśināṃ raghūṇāṃ manaḥ parastrīvimukhapravṛtti // Ragh. 16.8 //

O beautiful one! Who are you, what is your family? What is the reason of your coming to me? Speak out, but be aware of the fact that the mind of Raghu's descendants is turned away from other men's wives.

tam abravīt sā guruṇānavadyā yā nītapaurā svapadonmukhena /
tasyāḥ puraḥ saṃprati vītanāthāṃ jānīhi rājann adhidevatāṃ mām // Ragh. 16.9 //

She said to him: O king! Know me—now lordless—to be the presiding deity of a once faultless city which was abandoned by its citizens taken away by my guru, who grown anxious to return to his place.

vasvaukasārām abhibhūya sāhaṃ saurājyabaddhotsavayā vibhūtyā /
samagraśaktau tvayi sūryavaṃśye sati prapannā karuṇām avasthām // Ragh. 16.10 //

Here I am, having surpassed Vasvaukasārā, by the abundance of festivals which were the consequence of a good rule, (now) fallen into a pitiful condition, although you, the scion of solar race, possess all the power.

viśīrṇatalpāṭṭaśato niveśaḥ paryastaśālaḥ prabhuṇā vinā me /
viḍambayaty astanimagnasūryaṃ dināntam ugrānilabhinnamegham // Ragh. 16.11 //

With no ruler, my abode, with hundreds of shattered turrets and watch-towers, and ruined mansions, resembles the end of a day, with the sun setting behind clouds jagged by strong winds.

niśāsu bhāsvatkalanūpurāṇāṃ yaḥ saṃcaro 'bhūd abhisārikāṇām /
nadanmukholkāvicitāmiṣābhiḥ sa vāhyate rājapathaḥ śivābhiḥ // Ragh. 16.12 //

The king's road, which used to be a path for women who adorned with glittering and softly jingling anklets were going to see their lovers, is now traversed by prey-tracking she-jackals, which emit sparkles of fire from their growling muzzles.

āsphālitaṃ yat pramadākarāgrair mṛdaṅgadhīradhvanim anvagacchat /
vanyair idānīṃ mahiṣais tad ambhaḥ śṛṅgāhataṃ krośati dīrghikāṇām //Ragh. 16.13 //

The water in the cisterns which, [while] tapped by the palms of the hands of playing women, made a deep drum-like sound, now laments, pierced by the horns of wild buffaloes.

vṛkṣeśayā yaṣṭinivāsabhaṅganmṛdaṅgaśabdāpagamāt alāsyāḥ
prāptā davolkāhataśeṣabarhāḥ krīḍamayūrā vanabahirṇatvaṃ // Ragh. 16.14 //

The peacocks retained for entertainment, with the plumage destroyed by flames of the forest fire which also destroyed the perches, fallen into the state of wild peacocks, became the tree-dwellers, having ceased to dance in consequence of drum-sound disappearing

sopānamārgeṣu ca yeṣu rāmā nikṣiptavatyaś ćaraṇān sarāgān
sadyo hatanyaṅkubhir asradigdhaṃ vyāghraiḥ padaṃ teṣu nidhīyate me // Ragh. 16.15 //

On my steps where beautiful women used to place their feet dyed with lac, now tigers place their paws smeared with the blood of a dead antelope.

citradvipāḥ padmavanāvatīrṇāḥ kareṇubhir dattamṛṇālabhaṅgāḥ /
nakhāṅkuśāghātavibhinnakumbhāḥ saṃrabdhasiṃhaprahṛtaṃ vahanti // Ragh. 16.16 //

The elephants shown in the paintings as entering into the lotus beds and as being presented with lotus stalks by the female elephants, and with their temples being pierced and cut by the goad claw, have now to bear the striking of the paws of enraged lions

stambheṣu yoṣitpratiyātanānām utkrāntavarṇakramadhūsarāṇām /
stanottarīyāṇi bhavanti saṅgān nirmokapaṭṭāḥ phaṇibhir vimuktāḥ // Ragh. 16.17 //

The sloughs, cast by the serpents, clinging to the pillars become upper garments covering the busts of the women sculptures, which was rendered grayish by paint gradually fading away.

kālāntaraśyāmasudheṣu naktam itastato rūḍhatṛṇāṅkureṣu /
ta eva muktāguṇaśuddhayo 'pi harmyeṣu mūrchanti na candrapādāḥ // Ragh. 16.18 //

Although moon-rays are white like strings of pearls, they are unable to brighten at night the palaces on which the blades of grass grown here and there and plaster of which gradually have become dark.

āvarjya śākhāḥ sadayaṃ ca yāsāṃ puṣpāṇy upāttāni vilāsinībhiḥ /
vanyaiḥ pulindair iva vānarais tāḥ kliśyanta udyānalatā madīyāḥ // Ragh. 16.19 //

My garden-creepers, from which playful women picked the flowers after tenderly bending them down, are now being destroyed by wild Pulindas, behaving like monkeys.

rātrāv anāviṣkṛtadīpabhāsaḥ kāntāmukhaśrīviyutā divāpi /
tiraskriyante kṛmitantujālair vicchinnadhūmaprasarā gavākṣāḥ // Ragh. 16.20 //

The windows, not sending out any lamp-light in the night-time, and deprived of the beauty of young women's faces in the day-time, are covered by cob-webs instead of smoke, which does not emerge from them anymore.

balikriyāvarjitasaikatāni snānīyasaṃsargam anāpnuvanti /
upāntavānīragṛhāṇi dṛṣṭvā śūnyāni dūye sarayūjalāni // Ragh. 16.21 //

I suffer seeing the Sarayu river waters without any contact with bath-materials, having its sands without any ritual offerings performed on them, and having the cane-huts on the banks deserted.

tad arhasīmāṃ vasatiṃ visṛjya mām abhyupaituṃ kularājadhānīm /
hitvā tanuṃ kāraṇamānuṣīṃ tāṃ yathā gurus te paramātmamūrtim // Ragh. 16.22 //

Therefore, you should leave this abode and return to me the seat of the royal authority, exactly like your father, who abandoned the human form, which he assumed

to achieve a specific goal[51], and returned to the form of Highest Being.

tatheti tasyāḥ praṇayaṃ pratītaḥ pratyagrahīt prāgraharo raghūṇām /
pūr apy abhivyaktamukhaprasādā śarīrabandhena tirobabhūva // Ragh. 16.23 //

Being pleased with her, the first among Raghus accepted her request, saying:"let it be," after which the bodily form of the city disappeared with a beaming countenance.

tad adbhutaṃ saṃsadi rātrivṛttaṃ prātar dvijebhyo nṛpatiḥ śaśaṃsa /
śrutvā ta enaṃ kularājadhānyā sākṣāt patitve vṛtam abhyanandan // Ragh. 16.24 //

The next morning, while in the main-hall the ruler related the amazing events of the previous night to the brahmins, they congratulated him, hearing that he had been chosen for a husband by the deity of the capital city herself.

[51] *kāraṇa*—it may be "reason" but also "killing", both referring to killing the Rāvaṇa as the purpose for which Viṣṇu has assumed a human form.