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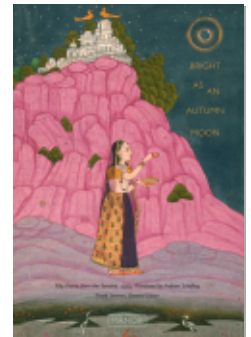
## Through the Whole Night

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## BHAVABHŪTI



किमपि किमपि मन्दं मन्दमासत्तियोगाद्  
अविचलितकपोलं जल्पतोश्च क्रमेण ।  
अशिथिलपरिरम्भव्यापृतैकैकदोष्णोर्  
अविदितगतयामा रात्रिरेव व्यरसीत् ॥  
[SR 598]

kimapi kimapi mandam mandam āsattiyogād  
avicalitakapolam jalpatos ca krameṇa  
asīthilaparirambhavyāpṛtaikaika doṣṇor  
aviditagatayāmā rātrir eva vyaramsīt

*kimapi kimapi.* this thing, that thing  
*mandam mandam.* softly softly  
*āsatti.* tight, fast  
*yogād.* embrace  
*avicalita.* intimate union, tightly  
together  
*kapolaṃ.* cheek  
*jalpatoh.* talking, whispering  
*ca.* and  
*krameṇa.* in the course of time  
*asīthila-parirambha-vyāpṛta-eka-eka-*  
*doṣṇoh.* (bv. cmpd.) while the two  
(of us) were wrapped tightly in one  
another's arms, engaged in lovemaking

*asīthila.* tight, close  
*parirambha.* embrace, lovemaking  
*vyāpṛta.* engaged, occupied  
*eka eka.* one-in-one  
*doṣṇoh.* arms  
*avidita.* not known  
*gata-yāmā.* vanishing, fleeing  
*rātriḥ.* night  
*eva.* indeed  
*vyaramsīt.* (root: *vi-ram*, to stop) came  
to an end

Through the whole night we slowly  
made love,  
body pressed against body,  
cheek against cheek.  
We spoke every thought that came into mind.  
Lost in each other's arms  
lost in words, we never noticed  
dawn had come  
the night flown.



This dawn song—or *alba* as troubadours of Provence called such songs—gives voice to the hour when daylight comes and the lovers must separate. Bhavabhūti's poem opens with soft *m* sounds: *kimapi kimapi mandam mandam*. *Kimapi* is an indefinite: something, anything, whatever. Doubling it gives the sense of everything, anything at all. *Mandam mandam* . . . *jalpatoh*: us talking softly, softly.

The poem comes from the drama *Uttararāmacarita*. As with so many of the best poems, it appears in two variations, the slight difference being only grammatical, nothing to do with meaning. It has been called the finest poem in Sanskrit by a number of critics.

In *The Peacock's Egg*, Jeffrey Masson recounts a story. When Bhavabhūti had finished writing his play, he excitedly approached his colleague, the dramatist and poet Kālidāsa, who was absorbed in a chess game. Bhavabhūti read the whole play aloud. Kālidāsa never looked up from the chessboard. When the reading was finished, Kālidāsa lifted his hand, checkmated his opponent, turned to his playwright friend, and declared the drama perfect—except for one superfluous *m*. Bhavabhūti removed an *m* from this verse. It changed the second-to-last word from *evam* to *eva*. *Evam* means “thus,” lending a rather heavy emphasis. The more understated *eva* is a filler word, a nearly unnoticeable tiny gesture—something that in our own poetry we might do with a line break.

“Poetry presents the thing in order to convey the feeling. It should be precise about the thing and reticent about the feeling,” wrote Chinese poet Wei T'ai in the eleventh century. It is Bhavabhūti's reticence that lets the poem's feeling “linger as an aftertaste.”