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Ṭṛtīyakah phenakah

SREERAMULA RAJESWARA SARMA

1. For the Nāgaraka, the fashionable man about town, the *Kāmasūtra* (= KS) prescribes a busy time-table of personal hygiene: a bath (*snāna*) every day, a massage (*utsādana*) every second day, *phenaka* every third day (*ṭṛtīyakah phenakah*), a shave (*āyusya*) every fourth day, and removal of pubic hair (*pratyāyusya*) every fifth or tenth day.¹ While the other operations are easy to understand, the task set for every third day perplexed commentators and translators alike. In the introduction to his edition of the *Śṛṅgāramañjarī*, V. Raghavan examined the problem thoroughly but stopped short of what may possibly be the correct solution.² Hence this exercise.

Since the word *phena* means 'foam' or 'froth', many an interpreter took *phenaka* to be some foam-producing substance like soap-nut (*Sapindus trifoliatus* Linn., or *S. mukorossi* Gaertn.).³ Others opined that the word *phenaka*, like all other nouns in this *sūtra* (viz. *snāna*, *utsādana*, *āyusya*, *pratyāyusya*), should denote an act, viz. of applying some foam-producing substance.⁴

2. The commentary *Jayamañgalā* (= JM) by Yaśodhara Indrapāda, often the only means for understanding the abstruse *sūtras* of Vātsyāyana, however, adds as a proviso, that the *phenaka* is to be applied (*deya*) every third day not to the whole body but only to the shanks (*jaṅghā*); otherwise they will become coarse.⁵ *Phenaka* then is not the name of an act but that of a substance the regular application of which ensures the smoothness of the shanks.⁶

3. Though the JM restricts the application of the *phenaka* to the shanks only, another authority recommends it for the thighs. Speaking of body care, Suśruta declares that scrubbing (*udgharṣaṇa*) with *phenaka* produces firmness and lightness of the thighs,

¹ KS 1.4.17: *nīyaṇ snānaṇ dvitīyakam utsādanaṇ ṭṛtīyakah phenakaś caturthakam āyusyaṇ pañcamakaṇ ḍaśamaṇ vā pratyāyusyaṇ ity ahinam.*

² *The Śṛṅgāra Mañjarī of Saint Akbar Shah*, ed. V. Raghavan, Hyderabad 1951, Introduction, pp.49-51.

³ Cf. P.K. Gode, 'Some Notes on the History of Soap-Nuts, Soap and Washermen in India — Between B.C. 300 and A.D. 1900,' reprinted in: P. K. Gode, *Studies in Indian Cultural History*, Vol.III, Poona 1969, Part 1, pp.150-167, esp. pp.155f.

⁴ Cf. Raghavan, op.cit., p.51n.

⁵ *ṭṛtīyaka iti — ṭṛtīye 'hni jaṅghayoḥ phenako deyaḥ syād, dvidināntaritam ity arthah, anyathordhvaṇ jaṅghe karkaṣe syātām.*

⁶ Many modern writers render the Sanskrit word *jaṅghā* with its NIA meaning 'thigh'. In Sanskrit *jaṅghā* 'shank' is clearly distinguished from *ūru* 'thigh', as can be seen from the works on the Sāmudrikaśāstra. On the shift of the meaning of *jaṅghā* from 'shank' in OIA to 'thigh' in NIA, see the examples in R.L. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, London ²1973, s.v.

besides removing various kinds of dermatological ailments.⁷ Suśruta thus indirectly supports the interpretation of the JM in so far as he suggests that the *phenaka* is not something to be applied to the whole body like the foam of the soap-nut, but that it is some special object with which certain limbs are scrubbed, be it thighs, shanks, or both.

4. *Phena* is mentioned once more in the KS in connection with the Pīṭhamarda, a hanger-on of the Nāgaraka. The Pīṭhamarda, explains the KS, owns nothing save his body; his sole possessions comprise *mallikā*, *phena* and *kaṣāya*; he is a migrant from a sophisticated part of the country and knowledgeable about the arts; he ekes out a living by giving advice on the arts in the assemblies of the Nāgarakas or in the company of the courtesans or Gaṇikās.⁸

The Pīṭhamarda thus practises a profession in which *mallikā*, *phena* and *kaṣāya* are essential requisites. In addition, he displays his knowledge of the arts and gives informed advice on these and allied matters to Nāgarakas and Gaṇikās.⁹

He is also mentioned in some late manuals on dramaturgy. Some texts see him as an advisor of the protagonist, others like the *Daśarūpaka* make him the protagonist of the sub-plot (*patākānāyaka*).¹⁰ But no extant dramatic composition contains a character clearly designated as Pīṭhamarda, which may throw light on the nature of his profession and on the three substances which appear to characterise this profession.

5. The JM, once again, seems to come to our rescue, for it attempts to explain the name of the profession as well as the three substances. The Pīṭhamarda, says the commentary, is called so because, while delivering learned discourses on the arts to the Nāgarakas and Gaṇikās, he keeps rubbing his seat or chair (*pīṭham mṛdnāntī*) (in a fidgety sort of gesture!). This very seat is called *mallikā* derived from the root *mal* or *mall* 'to hold'. Though he is an Ācārya authorised to give instruction, his social position is such that nobody offers him a seat (*āsanaṃ tu nārhati*); so he carries his own chair on his back. In order to explain *mallikā*, a *hapax legomenon*, the JM employs another, viz. *daṇḍāsanikā*, which seems to be a small chair attached to a staff, probably held across the shoulder so that the chair can be carried on one's back. What does he do with the

⁷ *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, ed. Vaidya Priyavrat Singh, Varanasi 1960, *Cikitsāsthāna* 24.55:

*ūrvoḥ sañjanayaty āśu phenakāḥ sthāiryālāghave
kaṇḍūkoṭhānilastambhānarogāpahaś ca saḥ.*

The next verse discusses the scrubbing of the body with a piece of brick (*iṣṭikayodgharṣaṇam*), a practice that is still quite common.

⁸ KS 1.4.44: *avibhavas tu śariramātro mallikāphenakaṣāyamātraparicchadaḥ pūjyād deśād āgataḥ kalāsu vicakṣaṇas tadupadeśena goṣṭhyāṃ veśocite vṛtte sādḥayed ātmānam iti pīṭhamardaḥ.*

⁹ In KS 1.4.44 the word *upadeśa* should probably be so understood and not as regular instruction as the JM would have it.

¹⁰ *Daśarūpaka* 2.8:

*patākānāyakas tv anyāḥ pīṭhamardo vicakṣaṇaḥ
tasyaivānucaro bhaktāḥ kiñcid ūnaś ca tadgurāḥ.*

The commentary cites Makaranda in the *Mālatīmādhava* and Sugrīva in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as examples, but they were not so designated in either work. For the views of other texts, see Rāghavan, op.cit.

other two things? The JM avers that, though poor, his carnal desires have not subsided and hence (*pravṛttaviśayecchatvāt*) he rubs his shanks with *phena* and *kaṣāya*.¹¹

With this facile interpretation, the JM created the myth of the Pīṭhamarda who carries his own chair and rubs his shanks with *phena* and *kaṣāya* on the off chance that one of his Gaṇikā pupils, impressed no doubt by his well polished shanks, waives her customary fees. More surprising still is that almost all modern writers accepted this ridiculous concept of the JM and perpetuated the myth.¹²

But there is little in this interpretation that would bear close scrutiny. First of all, the commentary was written about a thousand years after the KS, in the thirteenth century, probably during the reign of Visaladeva (1243-1261) in Gujarat.¹³ Yaśodhara may have had the help of older commentaries in many instances, but his words cannot be taken to represent the unbroken tradition in all cases. The forced interpretation of the words *pīṭhamarda* and *mallikā* through their etymological meaning betrays that Yaśodhara was as ignorant about their true nature as we are today.

Then too, neither the KS nor any other text suggests that the Pīṭhamarda carries a chair on his back. If his social position is too low for him to be offered a seat, then he would offend his social superiors if he brought a chair with him and sat on it in their presence. Nor is the reason for his carrying *phena* and *kaṣāya*, as emblems of his pathetic lecherousness, really convincing.

A Pīṭhamarda does appear briefly in Śūdraka's farce *Padmaprabhṛtaka*. The Viṭa encounters a Pīṭhamarda (by name Darduraka 'The Frog') but he lets him off quite easily after a brief exchange.¹⁴ Had the Pīṭhamarda been really carrying the professorial

¹¹ *mallikā daṇḍāsanikā, śarīradhāraṇāt pūrvanāgarakācāryaiḥ saṅketitū 'mala malla dharaṇe' itī dhātupaṭhāt sū tasya pṛṣṭhata evāsanārthaṃ bhṛāmyate, pravṛttaviśayecchatvāc ca jaṅghāgharṣanārthaṃ phenakaṣāyāv itī tanmātraṃ paricchado vibhavo yasyeti, pīṭhikādhyāsanaṃ tu nārhati ... sa pīṭhamarda upa-
deśadāne 'dhikṛtatvān mallikākhyaṃ pīṭhaṃ mṛdnāitī kṛtvā, etenācāryavṛttam asya vṛttam.*

¹² It is neither necessary nor possible to quote all the views inspired by the JM, but two typical examples may be given here. H.C. Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India: A Study in Vatsyayana's Kamasutra*, Calcutta 1954, 104: 'Even if a man had no fortune of his own he might enjoy the pleasures of life as Pithamarda; he might acquire skill in the arts and go about as an itinerant professor of these at the clubs of citizens and the abodes of the Ganikas; such a man was marked by his peculiar seat (Mallika) which he hung on his back, by his dyed clothes [kaṣāya] and by some kind of soap (Phenaka) which he always carried about in order to keep himself clean.' A.K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, Vol.I, Delhi 1972, 14: 'His name derives from a peculiar kind of portable stool *pīṭha* on a stick which he traditionally carried everywhere with him, as if it were a portable professorial chair, which he kept well polished *marda*.' Some late Sanskrit works also attempt to define the function of the Pīṭhamarda through the etymology of the word. Thus, e.g. the *Bhāvaprakāśa* of Śaradātanaya, ed. Yadugiri Yatiraja Swami of Melkot and K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, Baroda 1930 (GOS 45), 94:

*pīṭham adhyāśya purataḥ prayoktū nāyakādiṣu
sa pīṭhamardo viśvāśyaḥ kupītastrīprasādakah.*

Note how this stanza was transformed in the *Śivatattvaratnākara* of Basavarāja of Kejādi, Vol.II, ed. K. Rama Sastry, Mysore 1969, 312, vv.18cd-19ab:

*pīṭham adhyāśya surataprayoktū nāyakādiṣu
pīṭhamardah sa viśvāśyaḥ kupītastrīprasādakah.*

¹³ M. Winternitz, *Geschichte der indischen Literatur*, Vol.III, Leipzig 1920, 540n.

¹⁴ *Caturbhāṇī*, ed. and tr. Moti Chandra and Vasudeva Saran Agrawala, Bombay 1959, 11f.

chair and the supposedly aphrodisiacal *phena* and *kaṣāya* with him, what great occasion that would have given to the Viṭa for poking fun at him!

6. Therefore, it will be prudent to abandon the wrong lead given by the JM and return to the original text. As we have seen already, the wording of the KS suggests that the Piṭhamarda's is a special profession and that *mallikā*, *phena* and *kaṣāya* constitute his professional equipment which — it needs to be emphasised — he uses for the clients and not for himself. It is also obvious that the *phena* here is not unconnected with the *phenaka* in 1.4.17. The JM lays stress on his professorship (*ācāryavṛtta*) and interprets *mallikā* as a chair essential for his teaching career. If that were so, the other two items should also have some connection with this profession.

Another possibility is to take the three items as perfumery articles and the Piṭhamarda as a perfumer. The fact that *mallikā* is also the name of a fragrant flower and that one of the many meanings of *kaṣāya* is 'fragrance' may lend support to this view, but then how to explain *trṭiyakaḥ phenakaḥ* without resorting to unsubstantiated speculations?

A better approach is to read the two *sūtras* 1.4.17 and 44 together. The former, it may be recalled, enjoins that the Nāgaraka should have *phenaka* every third day; the other *sūtra* says that the *phena(ka)* is part of the Piṭhamarda's equipment. It does not then require great flights of imagination to see that it is the Piṭhamarda's business to apply *phena(ka)* to the fashionable man every third day, just as it is the job of the masseur to give him a massage every second day and that of the barber to shave him every fourth day. Thus the Piṭhamarda's primary function is to visit the houses of the Nāgarakas regularly and apply *phena(ka)*.

7. If *phenaka* were just the soap-nut or its foam, applying the foam to the body would be part of the bath and not constitute a separate act, nor would it require the professional attention of a Piṭhamarda. *Phenaka*, therefore, must be understood here as the shortened form of *samudraphena(ka)* or *abdhiphena(ka)*, the Sanskrit names for the cuttlefish bone, which is actually the internal shell of a mollusc called sepia or cuttlefish. Raghavan¹⁵ and Kane¹⁶, in fact, accepted this meaning but did not bother to enquire what this thing looked like; so they unnecessarily assumed that this bone is powdered and applied to the shanks or thighs.

The shell is a very light ovoid piece, its upper side formed by a thin convex shell and the underside by layers of flaky chalk-like substance. It is called *samudraphena*¹⁷ (lit. 'sea-foam') because it is white and very light like foam and is in fact washed up by

¹⁵ Op.cit., p.51n: 'From all this it appears reasonable to suppose that Phenaka is Samudraphenaka and its powder with which the shanks or thighs were rubbed to ensure their strength and lightness, and the rubbing itself thereby came to be called Phenaka. Kaṣāya, occurring along with it, in the same act, is evidently another powder ...'

¹⁶ See n.30 below.

¹⁷ The word survives in this form in Bengali and Hindi. The Tamil *kaṭal-nurai* also means literally 'sea foam'. In Oriyā, however, the shell is conceived of as the 'tongue of the sea' (*samudrajibha*), while the Telugus call it 'fish excrement' (*cepa-pṭya*).

the waves and deposited on the beach along with the foam. Aside from its supposed medicinal properties, it is used for polishing mirrors or cleaning glass panes.¹⁸

Considering that it is a very light and flaky object, application of its very fine powder could not have served any physical purpose. But applying the bone itself, or more precisely, rubbing the shanks or thighs with the soft underside of the shell will achieve something that was thought desirable in ancient India, viz. the removal of excess hair. In short, the cuttlefish bone was used like the pumice stone today.¹⁹ The rubbing has to be done rather frequently so that the hair does not grow again; hence the stipulation of every third day. Of course, because the underside of the shell is soft, repeated scrubbing with it will not cause pain.

8. But why at all should one take this trouble and have the shanks or thighs rubbed every third day with a cuttlefish bone by a Pīṭhamarda? Unlike the manly ideal of hairy chest and legs today, in ancient India apparently it was considered auspicious and fashionable to have hairless and smooth shanks. Thus Varāhamihira states that a man with sparse and thin hair on his shanks is destined to become a king. Other texts on the Sāmudrikaśāstra praise hairless shanks and censure hirsute ones.²⁰ This then is the justification for a profession whose plier was called Pīṭhamarda.

Especially in the Nāgaraka milieu, hairless and smooth shanks seem to have been regarded as fashionable. Since the application of the *phenaka* is rather an intimate act and since it had to be performed so frequently, it is no wonder that the Pīṭhamarda is

¹⁸ On the medicinal properties of the *samudraphena*, see Bhāvamiśra, *Bhāvaprakāśa*, commented and annotated by Brahmaśankara Śāstri and Rūpalālaji Vaiśya, Varanasi ⁴1960, *Mītraprakaraṇa* (= *Nighaṇṭu(-bhāga)* in other editions), Harīṭakyādi-varga, 118f. (p.217f.). Calcium carbonate constitutes 80 to 85 per cent of the *samudraphena*. Therefore, it is given to cage birds to peck at; in this process the birds get some calcium into their system. The *Arthaśāstra* recommends its employment in one of the magical practices meant to cause wonder and awe in the heart of the enemy. Cf. *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, ed. and tr. R.P. Kangle, Bombay ²1969-72, 14.2.36: *samudraphenas tailayukto 'mbhasi plavamāno jvalati*. Kangle's translation 'sea-foam, soaked in oil, burns floating in water' makes it difficult to understand the process. What is meant is actually this: impregnate the soft part of the cuttlefish bone with oil, light it and set it afloat on water; it will continue to burn and look like a flame floating on water. It is obvious that Kauṭīliya himself never resorted to this stratagem to frighten the enemy. I tried to perform this 'magic', but in vain. The soft part absorbs oil of all kinds, yet it does not catch fire.

¹⁹ Dr G. Jan Meulenbeld kindly drew my attention to Maria Christopher Byrski, 'Is there a Sanskrit Word for Pumice', *Indologia Taurinensia*, 8-9, 1980-81, 67-70. Byrski deserves credit for recognising the pumice-like function of *phenaka*, but he still believes that the Pīṭhamarda applied it to his own thighs.

²⁰ *Bṛhasamhitā*, ed. Avadha Vihāri Tripāṭhi, Varanasi 1968, ch.67 (Puruṣalakṣaṇādhyāya), 4 (= vol.II, pp.738f.):

*praviralatanuromavṛtājāṅghā dvīradakarapratimair varonubhiś ca
upacitasamañānavaś ca bhūpā dhanarahitāḥ śvaśgālatulyajāṅghāḥ.*

In his commentary on the next verse, Utpala cites this anonymous line:

romaśabhiś tu jāṅghābhir duḥkhadāriḍryabhāgināḥ.

This attitude prevails throughout in the literature on *Śrīpuruṣalakṣaṇa*, cf. *Vīramitrodaya* — *Lakṣaṇaprakāśa* by Mītra Mīśra, ed. Vishnu Prasad, Benares 1916, 48f. The *Śivatattvaratnākara* (op.cit.), chronologically the last of our sources, states succinctly (vol.II, 410):

kramād vṛtte praśasyete jāṅghē snigdhe tv aromake.

regarded as the confidant of the Nāgaraka in matters amorous. That he combines his profession with some dabbling in arts is also then understandable.²¹

9. Now *kaṣāya* and *mallikā* must also be some objects or substances needed in the Pīṭhamarda's profession. In the case of the former, there is clear evidence that it was a powder or paste of fragrant medicinal substances with which the limbs were massaged. In the *Mahābhārata*, we hear of Yudhiṣṭhira being 'massaged with *kaṣāya*' (*utsādītaḥ kaṣāyena*).²²

It will be recalled that the KS prescribes massage (*utsādana*) every second day. Now *kaṣāya* is the substance with which this massage is done; it is also one of the three items in the Pīṭhamarda's professional equipment. This would suggest that the Pīṭhamarda also performed the task of massage or that at least he applied the *kaṣāya* paste to the Nāgaraka's shanks after having depilated them by means of the *phenaka*.

10. There now remains the third item *mallikā*. It is, of course, conceivable that the Pīṭhamarda carried on his back a chair, strung to a pole held across his shoulder, not for himself to sit and dilate on the finer points of erotics as the late *Śivatattvaratnākara* avers,²³ but for the Nāgaraka-client to sit upon while he himself squatted on the floor and rubbed the client's shanks with the cuttlefish bone.²⁴ If that was the case, there is no evidence to show that the chair was indeed called *mallikā*, except for the dubious statement of the JM.

Therefore, we must seek the meaning of *mallikā* elsewhere. The masculine form *mallaka* occurs in the *Cullavagga* in connection with the monk's ablutions, where it is said that one bathes with *mallaka* (*mallakena nahāyanti*). Buddhaghoṣa explains in his commentary that this is a kind of brush made of roots, crocodile teeth and the like for scrubbing the body — an explanation which is not wholly convincing.²⁵ According to lexica, on the other hand, *mallaka* (m) as well as *mallikā* (f) denote a small earthenware

²¹ Likewise the barber's role is also extended as confidant, go-between, match-maker and, in south Indian temples, drummer.

²² *Mahābhārata*, Critical edition, 7.58.10 (= Chitrashala Press, Poona ed. 7.82.10):
utsādītaḥ kaṣāyena balavadbhīḥ suśikītaḥ
āphutaḥ sādhipāsena jalena ca sugandhinā.

The crucial words are explained in the commentaries thus: *utsādīta uāvartītaḥ kaṣāyādīnā loḍhrādīnā* (Devabodha); *kaṣāyēnety atra kaṣāyo nāma nānausadhīrasaiḥ parimalaiś ca sahitaṃ snāniyacūmaṇḥ kaṣāya ity ucyate* (Vādirājatīrtha); *kaṣāyena sarvausadhyādikalkena* (Nīlakaṇṭha Caturdhara). The above stanza and the commentaries were cited by P. K. Gode, 'History of the Practice of Massage in Ancient and Medieval India — Between c. B.C. 1000 and A.D. 1000', reprinted in op.cit. (in n.3) pp.114-138, esp. p.128.

²³ See n. 12 above.

²⁴ For this function also, an etymology can be manufactured thus: *pīṭhasyopari sthāpīyivā nāgarakaṃ jaṅghe tasya mṛdānīti pīṭhamardaḥ*. But there is also the possibility that the word is a MIA form of *piṣṭamarda*, 'one who massages with paste'.

²⁵ See *Cullavagga* 5.1.1f.; SBE Vol. XX, p.68; T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, London 1921-1925, s.v. *mallaka*; see also Gode, 'History of Massage...', p.126.

vessel with a narrow mouth in which is kept the oil for bath or massage.²⁶ If this was indeed the meaning intended by the author of the KS, *mallikā* then may not have been any random pot, but one having a distinctive shape, in order to be associated with the Pīṭhamarda's profession. Happily enough, such a vessel is still in use; not only is it used for a similar purpose, even its name is derived from the word *mallikā*.

In eastern Uttar Pradesh, *maliyā* (MIA/NIA from *mallikā*) is the name of a special type of container, which consists of two boat-shaped bowls hinged together. When closed, these form a hollow casket. There is a ring at one end to suspend the casket. This *maliyā* casket contains mustard paste with which children are massaged daily in order to remove superfluous hair from their limbs.²⁷ Can there be anything better suited to the professional needs of the Pīṭhamarda? Therefore, it is entirely possible that the Pīṭhamarda of the KS carried the *kaṣṭhā* paste in such a *mallikā* container, probably suspended from his waist together with a cuttlefish bone (*phenaka*), as he went about his daily rounds.

11. Thus the Pīṭhamarda appears to be the male counterpart of the Sairandhrī, an independent female who visited the houses of wealthy women and helped them with their make-up. The texts describe her as an expert in coiffure.²⁸ But strangely enough, both the professions did not enjoy wide prevalence and appear to have ceased quite early. Probably such a specialisation in profession was not in demand, housemaids doing the task of the Sairandhrī and the barber the job of the Pīṭhamarda. That is why the real function of the Pīṭhamarda was soon forgotten and only his designation lingered on in the manuals of dramaturgy.²⁹

²⁶ Cf. *Medinikosa*, Varanasi 1968, p.13, v.138: *mallikā tṛṇasūnye 'pi minarṣṭpārabhedayoh*; Hemacandra, *Deśināmamālā* 6.145: *mallaṃ apūvabhee sarāvakoṣumbhacasaesu*; *Hindī Śābdasāgara*, s.v. *maliyā*; George A. Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life, being a Discursive Catalogue of the Surroundings of the People of that Province*, reprint Delhi 1975, §§ 663, 701, 713.

²⁷ I am highly obliged to Shri Jang Bahadur Singh of my Department for this information.

²⁸ Cf. *Amarakoṣa* 2.6.18: *sairandhrī paraveśmsthā svavaśā śilpakārikā*. The *Rāmāstraṇī* commentary on this quotes the following from Kātyā:

catuṣṣaṣṭīkalābhijñā śilarūpādisevini
prasādhanopacārajñā sairandhrī parikīrtitā.

Arriving as a Sairandhrī at Virāṭa's court, Draupadī says what all she can do, in *Mahābhārata*, Critical edition, 4.8.16:

keśāñ jñāmy ahañ kartuṃ piñse sādhu vilepanam
grathayīye vicirāś ca srajāḥ paramasobhanāḥ.

²⁹ *Pīṭhamaddī*, the feminine form of Pīṭhamarda, is to be met with in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Act I, 13f. Seeing the queen enter the audience chamber in the company of the female ascetic Pañḍitakaṣṭhī, the Vidūṣaka exclaims: *ayī avatīhidā devī pīṭhamaddīṃ pañḍīkaṣṭhīm purokaria tattabhodī dhārīṇī*. This, however, does not mean that there existed female Pīṭhamardas but, as Raghavan rightly observes (op.cit., p.50n), the Vidūṣaka is attributing, in jest, the qualities of the Pīṭhamarda to the lady ascetic. Raghavan quotes Kāṭyayama's commentary on this passage, which states: *atra vidūṣakah parihāsenā parivrajikāyāṃ tad-dharmam āropayati mantayam*.

12. But *phenaka* was applied as a depilatory as late as the seventh century. Describing King Harṣavardhana when he first met him, Bāṇa says in his *Harṣacarita* that the king's thighs shone with extra lustre brought about by the cuttlefish bone.³⁰

³⁰ *The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa*, ed. P.V. Kane, Delhi 1965, 33: *phenāhitasobhābhyām ... ūrudanḍābhyām*. In his notes, p.144, Kane renders the passage thus: 'his thighs that were charming looked more beautiful by being rubbed over with the polishing powder of white cuttle-fish bone (*phenah*): Śaṅkara in his commentary (*Harṣacarita* with the commentary of Śaṅkara and Hindi translation by Jagannātha Pāṭhaka, Benares 1958, 117) explains *phena* as *pheno rasasarūṭāṇāḥ*. The *Marmāvabodhini* of Raṅganātha (*Harṣa Carita* of Bāṇabhaṭṭa with the commentary *Marmāvabodhini*, ed. Śūranāḍ Kuñjan Pillai, Trivandrum 1958, p.105) reads *phenakāhūta*^o and avers that *phenakam virūṇām ālepanaviśeṣaḥ, sarirūṇām śobhādhānūrthaṃ mardanavilepanādāyāḥ. utkīṃbinauducitraṃ vastram iti kecit*. The Ms ka used for this edition has a gloss in Tamil, which explains *phenaka* as *paṇaiṅkaḷ* 'palm toddy' which, of course, has a lot of froth. Rubbing with toddy is said to remove arthritic pain from the joints but that surely is not the purport of the statements of the KS and of Bāṇabhaṭṭa.