

**RECOURSE TO BUDDHIST TEXTS FOR  
REPRESENTATION OF MODERNITY : A STUDY OF  
MOHAN RAKESH'S *LEHRON KE RAJHANS***

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**Abstract**

Eminent Hindi playwright Mohan Rakesh's (1925-72) second amateur play for the stage *Lehron Ke Rajhans* ("The Great Swans of the Waves"; Hindi: 1963) is based on Buddha's half-brother Nanda's conflict described in *Saundarānanda*, a Buddhist narrative poem composed by Ashvaghosha in the first century CE. Nanda in *Saundarānanda* is torn between the allure of his beautiful consort Sundari and the attraction that he feels for Buddha's preaching of renunciation. The present paper basically investigates why Rakesh, a modern writer not interested in Buddhism per se but in representation of the nuances of modernity has chosen Nanda's story from the Buddhist text and how he treats the Buddhist text to suit his needs. While doing so, the paper has maintained the requirements for a scientific research and has adopted the analytical method of research as a general rule, but has employed the comparative method also as and when necessary.

"I've had this image in mind for a long time. Two lampstands. One tall, with a figure of a man on top of it— arms spread and eyes raised to heaven. The other short, with a woman's figure on it— arms folded and eyes dropped to the ground,"<sup>1</sup>— commented eminent Hindi playwright Mohan Rakesh (1925-72) on the mental image that motivated him for years to write his famous amateur play *Lehron Ke Rajhans* ("The Great Swans of the Waves"; written in

Hindi; published in 1963). The image came to his mind “perhaps[s]... from reading Ashvaghosh’s *Saundaranand*”<sup>2</sup>, though “[i]t’s impossible to say why and how”<sup>3</sup>, for the “lampstands... do not figure in *Saundaranand*.”<sup>4</sup> It was brighter and more attractive to him than the central image of the poem, which “is of swans sailing on the waves, or of a foot uncertainly stopped in midstep.”<sup>5</sup> However, the brightness of the image of the lampstands in Rakesh’s mind was not constant— it repeatedly flickered, and “[e]ach time the sight gave the impression of newness”<sup>6</sup>, which compelled him to revise the play again and again without paying any heed to its original form, unlike in the cases with *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (“One Day in Ashadha” or “One Day in the Rainy Season”; Hindi; 1958) and *Adhe-Adhure* (“Half-Way” or “Half-Way House”; Hindi; 1969), his first and third amateur plays for the stage.

A close reading of Ashvaghosh’s *Saundarānanda* (“The Handsome Nanda”), a famous Buddhist narrative poem in eighteen cantos in the Sanskrit language from about the first century CE<sup>7</sup>, however, implies that the image of the lampstands came to Rakesh’s mind, surely and not “perhaps[s]”<sup>8</sup>, from that very poem itself. The poet’s earlier work *Buddhacarita* (“The Life of Buddha”), a biography of Buddha in narrative poetry in Sanskrit, has only casual allusions to Buddha’s half-brother Nanda, for example when in Book XVII, Verse 27 it talks about Buddha’s early attempts at constructing a community after his Enlightenment: “[H]e received into the community some members of his own family, headed by Sundarānanda, and one hundred and seven citizens.”<sup>9</sup> It says nothing about Nanda’s mind oscillating between the worldly desires aroused by the allure of his beautiful consort Sundari and the Buddhist idea of renunciation. Why did he omit this conflict, which according to Linda Covill, “was part of the Buddhist cultural environment from early times”<sup>10</sup>. The “environment” had surely made the conflict popular among the common people, otherwise Ashvaghosh’s ingenious invention of it could not have so promptly propagated to a number of

contemporary sculptures<sup>11</sup>. Still the poet ignored this part of the Nanda story in *Buddhacarita* probably because he had to adhere to Buddha's life there, or because he had kept Nanda's carnal attraction to Sundari as the subject-matter of a future poem, for he had expertise of giving sexual descriptions where necessary<sup>12</sup>.

Ashvaghosha's later poem *Saundarānanda* has beautifully depicted Nanda's conflict. While doing so, it "shares... the principal elements"<sup>13</sup> of "several other versions of the Nanda story."<sup>14</sup> However, the poet was selective:

"While it is fair to say that Aśvaghōṣa makes no radical departure from the traditional plot, he is unfamiliar with the extended narrative found in the later Tibetan and Chinese versions.... Aśvaghōṣa has no use for the story of Nanda's past life attached to the *Dhammapada* commentary's version of events, and the *Jāṭaka* story of Nanda's past life."<sup>15</sup>

Ashvaghosha had to explore the widespread appeal of the Nanda story as a poet. Moreover, as a Buddhist poet, he had at first to highlight it as it represented the common conflict that people in general had undergone before embracing the new religion, and then to undermine it to underscore the importance of Buddhism. He had, therefore, to synthesize everything, and that is what he precisely did by showing that the conflict ultimately subsided and Nanda finally submitted himself fully to Buddhism. Be it in accordance with the traditional story or an innovative idea, the end of the poem remains important for both Nanda and Ashvaghosha's unwavering shelter in Buddhism.

Rakesh, who read *Saundarānanda* as a young man in an age of conflict<sup>16</sup>, and became mesmerized by its depiction of Nanda's conflict. For him, Nanda remained a symbol of "the uncertain human mind, torn between two values."<sup>17</sup> What exactly is this conflict about? The playwright himself explains:

"People get attracted by all those things which they consider as sources of pleasure. At the same time, they are equally

attracted by those things which are inexplicable with definite symbols but full of a compelling power to lead to a conflicting situation. We call it their 'quest'. In today's world, we are being more and more divided within ourselves, because each person, somehow or the other, is going to be a Buddha.... On the other hand, there is the power which compels us to have as much material happiness as possible. It is a conflicting situation and to this all of us are tied to.... In my second play [*Lehron Ke Rajhans*] I wanted to depict this conflict of people." (Translated from Hindi by the present author)<sup>18</sup>

However, unlike Nanda, Rakesh was worldly and practical. For such a man, not Nanda but Sundari provided the solution of sticking to the firsthand world:

"I love life as a physical reality. This does not mean loving just the pleasures of life, but life as a force. Sundari in the play is a symbolic representation of this force.... I am both my body as well as my mind; minus my body, I am some other being in whom I can hardly be interested."<sup>19</sup>

It is this understanding of the opposing characters of Nanda and Sundari on the part of Rakesh is what is reflected in his conception of the images of the lampstands, one with a man staring at the heaven, like Nanda, and the other with a woman looking down to the worldly affairs, like Sundari. Interestingly, though Rakesh has not stated anywhere, the image reminds one of a Renaissance fresco by the Italian painter and architect Raphael (1483-1520). In this fresco called 'The School of Athens'<sup>20</sup> (1509) a group of philosophers are seen, and in its centre stand Plato (429-347 BCE) and his disciple Aristotle (384-322 BCE), the greatest philosophers of Hellenic philosophy. The figures of these two philosophers in the fresco are statements on their respective attitudes in thinking: Plato the idealist is seen as pointing to the heaven and Aristotle the practical philosopher to the ground. This is a philosophical polarity, which Raphael had highlighted. Nanda and Sundari's characters in *Saundarānanda* also highlights a similar polarity, for that polarity is also about idealism and practicality.

This polarity of Nanda and Sundari's attitudes to life was what the image of the lampstands in the mind of Rakesh signified.

Rakesh read *Saundarānanda* for the first time as a young man in the middle of the fifth decade in the twentieth century CE. Since then, he was busy in projecting the image of the lampstands and his perception of what a modern individual should do in a conflicting situation. Known basically as a short story writer in his youth, he first attempted to write a story by using the image in 1946-47, but the story remained "half-baked"<sup>21</sup> and the characters remained unwantedly "historical"<sup>22</sup>, for which he "never sent it for publication"<sup>23</sup>. Then, when he was associated with the Bombay (presently Mumbai) centre of All India Radio as a playwright between 1947 and 1949, he wrote a radio play titled *Sundari* out of the story. The play did not satisfy him for its excessive use of "sound effects"<sup>24</sup>. Seven or eight years later, while staying in Jullundhur (presently Jalandhar), he re-wrote the play as *Raat Beetne Tak* ("Till the Night is Past") basically for the stage, but with provisions of adaptation for the radio. Broadcasts of it by the Jullundhur and Ranchi centres of All India Radio were successful, but the playwright remained unsatisfied, for the play lacked rounded characters, precise dialogues, the effect of a good play, and a satisfactory ending. These inadequacies led him to write the play again, but it simply refused to take a definite shape<sup>25</sup>.

*Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (1958), Rakesh's first amateur play to be completed, was written at this point. In this play, Kalidasa undergoes a situation full of conflict between the appeals of his former free creative self in his homeland Kashmir and the harsh reality of his shackled creative self as the poet laureate patronized by the king in the state's capital Ujjain. The reason behind why Rakesh could easily deal with this kind of conflict in the play was that, to him, its characters were "clear"<sup>26</sup>. This hints that not only the thematic aspects but also the characters of the play that he was trying to write using the Nanda story were bewildering for him.

Re-attempts at writing *Lehron Ke Rajhans* followed between 1958 and 1963, and ultimately the play came to be written down for *Sarika*, a Hindi magazine that he himself edited during 1961-63, in eleven days in April 1963, when he was living in Kufri near Shimla<sup>27</sup>. Then, when Shyamanand Jalan (1934-2010) was all set to direct the play for his theatre group 'Anamika' on stage in July 1966, Rakesh re-wrote the third Act in June, as he found that the hasty completion of the play in 1963 fell short of answering a few philosophical queries that he wanted to address<sup>28</sup>. In September that year, he revised the ending again, to suit it to his perception about the ultimate feeling that one can have about relationships. This revised version of September 1966 was used in eminent director Om Shivpuri's (1937-90) production of the play for National School of Drama in January and February 1967. It is the last available version of the play, which Rakesh preferred not to call the final version, for he believed that further versions of it were always possible<sup>29</sup>.

The history of the making of *Lehron Ke Rajhans*, which has been detailed above, remains important for several reasons. Why do the titles change from *Sundari* to *Raat Beetne Tak* and then to *Lehron Ke Rajhans*? What was the major change that Rakesh brought in while developing *Raat Beetne Tak* as *Lehron Ke Rajhans*? What was the major change that he did while re-writing Act III of *Lehron Ke Rajhans* in 1966? How far does the final version of the play maintain fidelity to and come away from Ashvaghosha's *Saundarānanda*? And what significance has it achieved with its reconstruction of the Nanda story? The remaining part of the present discussion attempts at finding answers to these questions.

*Sundari*, the title of the first radio play mentioned above, is a straightforward attestation of the already indicated point that *Sundari* provides the answer for someone who fluctuates between the appeals of idealism and the practicality of being grounded to reality. It was an answer that Rakesh had in mind since the conception of the image of the lampstand. He provided the answer

clearly in the play and in its title. However, he was a modern man, writing under at least some of the residual influences of the Realist tradition of drama set after the fashion of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). This tradition held that the social realities should be examined from various perspectives of the characters and to abstain from taking any side or giving any solution to the problems, only to compel the readers or the audience to find the solutions themselves<sup>30</sup>. Rakesh could not shed the residual influence of the Realist tradition altogether. He has displayed this by not providing the answer that he was clear about<sup>31</sup>, while re-writing the play for the first time for the stage and calling it *Raat Beetne Tak*.

Rakesh's display of influences of the Realist tradition, however, does not undermine his stance for a new theatre. He was one of the members of the new 'Nayi Kahani' ("New Story") tradition which in the aftermath of India's achievement of independence reacted first against the traditional ways of writing short stories and then against that of criticism and drama<sup>32</sup>. His advocacy for a new theatre is evident in his preface to *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, the first of his plays for the stage:

"We have the examples of the Western stage in front of us. But neither our life demands those examples nor it is possibly such that we should firmly establish those ideals of performance.... Hindi theatre will have to represent the cultural nuances and expectations of the Hindi speaking states. Its components will have to express our conscience." (Translated from Hindi by the present author)<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly, this vision of Rakesh occurred at a time when Indian drama was heading towards having a new idiom. Bijon Bhattacharyya's (1915-78) *Nabanna* (Bengali; 1943; directed by Shombhu Mitra for the Indian Theatre People's Association, IPTA in 1944) had already reacted against the colonial notion of theatre by projecting a story of the economically exploited people, and

began the tradition of what is now called the postcolonial drama tradition of India<sup>34</sup>. The tradition was continued by Habib Tanvir's (1923-2009) *Agra Bazar* ("The Market at Agra"; Urdu; 1954), which went back to an eighteenth century history to represent the post-1947 era and highlighted the importance of dialects, by and Dharamvir Bharti's (1926-97) *Andha Yug* ("The Blind Age"; Hindi; 1954), a play that went back to a myth from the *Mahabharata* to explore its parallelism with the features of the times after the World War II. Rakesh's *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* and *Lehron Ke Rajhans* also go back to olden days, the first deals with Kalidasa and the second with Nanda. However, it is not history but the relevance of it for explanations of the contemporary situations that he was interested in: "He turned to history as to a laboratory for his experiments to evolve an adequate and live theatre language."<sup>35</sup> Rakesh has categorically remarked on this at various places:

"I didn't write *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* and *Lehron Ke Rajhans* as plays dealing with historical characters or situations as such. I chose those characters and situations to convey a contemporary meaning."<sup>36</sup>

"About myself, I can tell this with conviction that I have not written even a single word which is not related to the contemporary situation... In my consideration, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* is not about Kalidasa.... The play is about the contemporary mindset.... This is true in case of my second play [*Lehron Ke Rajhans*] also. I have used this historical story because a special kind of interpretation could be possible through it." (Translated from Hindi by the present author)<sup>37</sup>

Regarding use of the theatrical devices also, Rakesh is a revivalist in line with the contemporary postcolonial Indian playwrights, such as Dharamvir Bharti. Like Bharti, Rakesh has also been inspired by the native drama traditions. For example, the *Sutradhara* ("thread-bearer") of Sanskrit drama, a chorus like character that "prompted the theatremen in the medieval ages to [have] various *sutradharas* [in] the regional *natyas*"<sup>38</sup>, influenced



him to such a degree that he used a chorus with resemblance to the *Sutradhara* in *Lehron Ke Rajhans*.

Even then, Rakesh chose to abstain from providing the answer to the question whether Nanda or Sundari was the model for modern people, an answer that he was clear about while writing the short story on Nanda's conflict or the radio play *Sundari*, at the end of *Raat Beetne Tak*. However, the title *Raat Beetne Tak* hints that the problem will not linger perpetually.

The title of *Raat Beetne Tak* reminds one of three important later works in Hindi— *Andhere Band Kamre* ("Rooms, Closed in Darkness"; 1961) and *Na Ane Wala Kal* ("Tomorrow That Won't Arrive"; 1968), two novels by Rakesh himself, and *Surya Ki Antim Kiran Se Surya Ki Pehli Kiran Tak* ("From the Last Ray of the Sun till the First of It", meaning "From Sunset to Sunrise"; 1972), a play by Surendra Verma (born 1941). In the novels, "darkness"— which metaphorically means the lack of hope— lingers for the characters who are in dysfunctional relationships in cities, and in Verma's play, it subsides with sunrise, which suggests a pro-feminist hope for women's freedom in deciding for child-birth and for choosing the partners for themselves. The works are clear about whether darkness will linger or subside, in the same way as *Raat Beetne Tak* is about the hope that darkness will wane. This suggests that Rakesh was somewhat hopeful about relationships at the time of writing *Raat Beetne Tak*.

The years that followed *Raat Beetne Tak* were gloomy for Rakesh. He is a growing pessimist after *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*. In *Andhere Band Kamre*, *Na Ane Wala Kal*, *Lehron Ke Rajhans* and *Adhe-Adhure*, all written in the seventh decade of the bygone century, Rakesh is unequivocal about the inevitability of mind-numbing continuations of dysfunctional relationships. The clear-cut ending of *Raat Beetne Tak*, in which a positive solution was provided to Nanda's doubts by showing him ultimately taking resolute refuse in Buddhism, therefore could not satisfy Rakesh after *Ashadh Ka Ek*

*Din*. The subject of the play that he had been trying to write by using the Nanda story for some twenty years was human indecisiveness in conflicting situations, for the proper treatment of which the play had to remain open-ended, i.e., with no suggestion of any solution. Therefore, *Lehron Ke Rajhans* came into existence, with its emphasis on and depiction of the *continuation* of Nanda's conflict.

It has been pointed out that Ashvaghosha being a Buddhist poet had to glorify Buddha's impact on Nanda. Two important observations by Linda Covill are mentionable here:

"The *Saundarānanda* portrays Nanda's evolution from libertine to liberated man as dependent on the assistance of an external agent of change—the Buddha. Aśvaghōṣa gives us a hero who is brought to liberation by the Buddha because he would have been unable to attain it on his own."<sup>39</sup>

"[I]n the metaphor of a journey, the Buddha appears as a guide who indicates the direction of travel, while in the medical metaphor he is cast as the physician who heals the sick."<sup>40</sup>

For Rakesh, not this journey of Nanda but his conflict was the most important point, and therefore he has begun *Lehron Ke Rajhans* precisely at that very point. Ashvaghosha's poem being narrative by nature gives leisurely descriptions of Kapilavastu the locale, Suddhodana the king and Buddha the saviour (Cantos I-III), Nanda's love for and rejection of Sundari under the Buddhist influence and his subsequent conflict (Cantos IV-XI), and his installation of confidence in the Buddhist faith (Cantos XI-XVIII). The central image of the swans that the poem evokes occurs in Canto IV, Verse 42: "taṃ gauravaṃ Buddhagataṃ cakarṣa/ bhāryānurāgaḥ punarācaṃkarṣa./ so' niścayān nāpi yayau na tasthau/ turamaṃ taramgeṣv iva rājahamaṣaḥ"<sup>41</sup>. Rakesh quotes this as the epigram of Act I, and thereby begins the play *in medias res* but with a conviction and a pace. Here he shows technical brilliance: dealing with a genre which is not descriptive but demonstrative by

nature<sup>42</sup> and being limited by the time of performance<sup>43</sup>, he has no other way than to come directly to demonstrate only those events which are significant for him. This is true of all good plays and screenplays that venture to work on a well-constructed plot, i.e., on a logical arrangement of the story being dealt with.

In Act I, which takes place slightly before it is night, the atmosphere that causes Nanda's uncertainty is hurriedly explained through the Buddhist plainchant of "Dhammam sharanam gachchhami"<sup>44</sup> in the background and Shwetang the steward's declaration of Sundari's arrangement for that day's *Kamotsava* ("Feast of the God of Love") programme in the very first dialogue. This is another technical brilliance exhibited by Rakesh: the mood of the play is set with one single stroke with the setting of its setting. As the act progresses, Sundari dominates the whole atmosphere: firstly, by revealing the spiritual background to the audience through her discussions with Shyamang the retainer and Alka the maid on Buddha's influence on his mother Queen Yashodhara, his creation of complications in the worldly affairs, and her irritation at him, and secondly, by exposing the onset of real complications through her discussions with Nanda on his libertine attitude by nature and his slowly developing fascination for Buddha's ideal of renunciation. Throughout the act, the appeal of the Buddhist teachings gradually grow. This is implied through the discussions on the swans swimming in the nearby lake and through the sound-symbols of their calls, flapping of the wings, and commotion at the water being waved with someone's flinging of a stone. These symbols signify that conflicting situation is getting tougher than before.

In Act II, set towards the end of that night, Sundari continues to be firm in her attitude towards the worldly affairs. This is symbolized by her attempt to sleep. In contrast, Nanda is torn between celebration and renunciation, implied by his lack of sleep and continuous pacing till the dawn. Till then Shyamang mutters a delirium as he sees a strange shadow. This is a kind of objective

correlative which stands for Nanda's feeling of disturbance under the influence of Buddha:

"Shyamang is a symbolic character. In a way he is a graphic description of the overactive mind that Nand has. His madness is really the mental imbalance created by too much thinking."<sup>45</sup>

When in this act Sundari tries to allure Nanda sexually by asking him to do her grooming, there are the sounds of the Chorus chanting the Buddhist hymns. Nanda gets disturbed at hearing the chanting, breaks the mirror by dropping it, and begs for her permission to visit Buddha. Her grooming remains unfinished, which is a visual symbol for their difference becoming wider. Making it even so, Nanda goes to meet Buddha in between Act II and Act III<sup>46</sup>, is ordained but subsequently tormented between the allure of carnal desires and the appeal of renunciation. The torment deepens gradually. Expressions of this torment occur in Act III, the time of which is the next night. Act III is full of sound and visual symbols that suggest the deepening torment. In the second part of Act II and in the whole of Act III, Nanda's conflict is the focus of attention. Nevertheless, Sundari's unwavering stance, despite her screams in fury and weeping in distress, remains a clear contrast to his indecision in these acts. A few dialogues in these acts are very telling in this regard. Sundari's mockery of Nanda ("What an extraordinary form it was! The head of a monk, and the rest of the body..."<sup>47</sup>) and one of Nanda's confessions ("When I was with him, my mind yearned for this place. And now I am with you, the yearning is for somewhere else."<sup>48</sup>) remain notable here.

Towards the end of Act III, Nanda's inconsistency grows to such a level that he says: "I am nothing. My inner needs are also illusive."<sup>49</sup> At this Sundari tries to teach him what reality is, but he argues with her, and being annoyed she asks him to leave in search for "words"<sup>50</sup>. Nanda "*with bowed head, toward upstage door, and exit without looking back. After a while Sundari gets up and goes to the door*

*right looking neither to left nor right.*" (Italics Rakesh's)<sup>51</sup> And then she exists, and there the play ends.

The discussion of the play made above underscores in the point that Rakesh has dealt with the theme of people's conflict quite logically and calculatedly. As he was interested in depicting Nanda's conflict for an exploration of modern people's inner conflict in discordant situations ("I wanted to depict this conflict of people"<sup>52</sup>; "In fact, [the] inner conflict was what I intended to depict"<sup>53</sup>— translated from Hindi by the present author), he has precisely done this without resorting to other points. The Theme of conflict is thus isolated: Rakesh has begun the play exactly where Nanda's conflict starts and has finished it exactly where the conflict subsides. The pinpointed objective of dealing with only the conflict in Nanda has led the playwright to disregard the initial three cantos of Ashvaghosha's *Saundarānanda*, where the background of Buddha has been described<sup>54</sup>, and also the last seven cantos, where after Buddha's influence, Nanda has been depicted as becoming self-reliant to unwaveringly live for salvation<sup>55</sup>. Rakesh was not interested in Buddhism *per se*, he was interested in the parallelism that *Saundarānanda*'s Nanda and modern people in discordant situations bear, and therefore he took up only the relevant part of the Buddhist text to deal with the theme of modern people's conflict in *Lehron Ke Rajhans*.

It is mentionable here that the literary environment in or just before the period in which Rakesh finally wrote *Lehron Ke Rajhans* (1963) was marked by modernist searches for expression of life after the World War II. Existential, especially Absurd works were significantly produced in France, England and America, and their influences began to stir the Indian intelligentsia. In the early years of the seventh decade, there was a disjointed but pan-Indian expression of tendencies towards existential or Absurd literature. Arun Sarma (1931-2017), the doyen of the modern Assamese playwrights, wrote *Shri Nibaran Bhattacharyya* (Assamese; 1961) with Absurdist influences; and Badal Sircar (1925-2011), the

eminent experimental playwright known later for his concept of the 'Third Theatre', came to write his most famous Absurd play *Evam Indrajit* ("And Indrajit"; Bengali; 1963) exactly in the year in which *Lehron Ke Rajhans* was written. Rakesh also imbibed the essence of the age: his works of this period— *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, *Andhere Band Kamre*, *Na Ane Wala Kal*, *Lehron Ke Rajhans* and *Adhe Adhure*— became replete with feelings of existential anguish amid dysfunctional relationships. However, he was not interested in the Western Absurdist way of writing plays ("Five years ago, I liked plays like *Waiting for Godot*. It appeared to me as something different, excellent, and progressive. But today, reading that play feels like as if I have taken up something written in a formula. I mean, I have known Beckett thoroughly. I now know how he thinks and how he develops a play."<sup>56</sup>— translated from Hindi by the present author), and therefore he had to find a more suitable way for expression of his themes of conflict. This is why *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* and *Lehron Ke Rajhans* have become allegorical: they depict some historical situations, but unlike historical plays, present good analyses of contemporary situations. *Lehron Ke Rajhans* has done this beautifully by stopping exactly when Nanda leaves Sundari for a Buddhist life. His final decision is only hinted at, and what is made more effective is Sundari's cries in utter distress. Her agony has been beautifully presented in a performance of the play in Jaipur in 2018<sup>57</sup>. The agony finally underscores the point that people like Nanda in conflicting situations in the modern times make relationships with their near and dear ones like Sundari dysfunctional, and thereby make modern like tragic in effect.

### Notes and References :

1. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag (no pagination).
2. Ibid, n. pag.
3. Ibid, n. pag.

4. Ibid, n. pag.
5. Ibid, n. pag.
6. Ibid, n. pag.
7. Venkatadriagaram Varadachari, *A History of the Saṃskṛta Literature*, p. 76; Also Simona Sawhney, *The Modernity of Sanskrit*, p. 28.
8. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag.
9. *The Buddha Karita of Asvaghosha*, p. 11.
10. Linda Covill, *A Metaphorical Study of Saundarānanda*, p. 64.
11. Prithvi K. Agarwala, "The Motive of Lover's Apology...", p. 652 ; Also Hilde Bache, *Indian Love Paintings*, p. 16.
12. For example, in *Buddhacarita's* Book VIII, Verses 21-30. *The Buddha Karita of Asvaghosha*, Pp. 82-83.
13. Linda Covill, *A Metaphorical Study of Saundarānanda*, p. 64.
14. *Ibid*, p. 64.
15. *Ibid*, p. 64.
16. Mohan Rakesh read Ashvaghosha's *Saundarānanda* in about 1946-47 (to be discussed later). This was an age of the atrocities of World War II and of Mahatma Gandhi's preaching of non-violence. The age was replete with influences of these opposing ideologies.
17. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag.
18. Mohan Rakesh, "Mein Aur Mera Rang-Paridrishya", pp. 52-53.
19. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag.
20. Images of the fresco are available in many websites on the internet.
21. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag.
22. *Ibid*, n. pag.
23. *Ibid*, n. pag.
24. *Ibid*, n. pag.
25. *Ibid*, n. pag.
26. *Ibid*, n. pag.
27. *Ibid*, n. pag.
28. *Ibid*, n. pag.
29. *Ibid*, n. pag.

30. Julia A. Walker, "Naturalism and Expressionism in American Drama", p. 264.
31. It has already been mentioned that Sundari provided Rakesh with the answer.
32. R. C. Prasad, "Hindi", p. 164.
33. Mohan Rakesh, "Do Shabd" ("Two Words"), in *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, n. pag.
34. Dharwadker, *Theatres of Independence*, Pp. 31-33.
35. R. L. Nigam, "Mohan Rakesh", p. 66.
36. Mohan Rakesh, "Mohan Rakesh Interviewed", n. pag.
37. Mohan Rakesh, "Mein Aur Mera Rang-Paridrishya", pp. 51-54.
38. Nemichandra Jain, *Indian Theatre*, p. 90.
39. Linda Covill, *A Metaphorical Study of Saundarānanda*, p. 7.
40. *Ibid*, p. 7.
41. *The Saundarānanda of Āśvaghōṣa*, p. 31.
42. *The Poetics of Aristotle*, Pp. 21-23
43. The play takes roughly one and a half hours to be performed. A performance of it in Jaipur in 2018 and another of an adapted version of it in Guwahati in 2017 took approximately 1:32 and 1:42 hours respectively. See 'Bibliography' for details.
44. Mohan Rakesh, "The Great Swans of the Waves", p. 1.
45. Mohan Rakesh, "Lehron Ke Rajhans: Preface...", n. pag.
46. Buddha never appears in the play. He is only talked about there. The meeting between Buddha and Nanda is only reported in Act III.
47. Mohan Rakesh, "The Great Swans of the Waves", p. 14.
48. *Ibid*, p. 15.
49. *Ibid*, p. 16.
50. *Ibid*, p. 16.
51. *Ibid*, p. 16.
52. Mohan Rakesh, "Mein Aur Mera Rang-Paridrishya", p. 53.
53. *Ibid*, p. 54.
54. The point has been elaborated above.



55. Discussed above.

56. Mohan Rakesh, "Mein Aur Mera Rang-Paridrishya", p. 48

57. The performance was under the direction of Sufian Khan. See 'Bibliography' for details.

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