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Jain literature is rich in stories but not so rich in their interpretation and presentation. Still for more over a decade Jain writers, both lay and monks, have tried their hands to present them in modern form. For the benefit of our readers we are presenting a few such stories translated at random. We do not claim that these are the representative stories nor we say that we are able to cover the field. Still, an astitute reader will be able to see the trend in which direction modern story literature of the Jains is moving.

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Mrgavati

PURAN CHAND SAMSUKHA

Today all Kausambi is cheerless. King Satanika is laid up with a serious illness. The chief medical men of the kingdom have gathered together to save the king from the attack of a severe diarrhoea, but instead of diminishing, the disease is steadily on the increase. The queen-consort, Mrgavati, is always by the bed-side of her husband, nursing him ; but all is in vain. The dismal shadow of death gradually deepens over the king's face.

One day, all of a sudden, the prime minister comes to the king's sick bed with a gloomy face and a letter in his hand. Pradyota, the king of Ujjain, has sent a letter to the effect that Satanika cannot be a worthy husband of the extraordinarily beautiful Mrgavati, it is Pradyota alone who is worthy of her ; therefore, Mrgavati must be sent to Pradyota immediately on receipt of this letter, otherwise he will invade Kausambi with his army and carry away Mrgavati by force. The prime minister gives the further news that the fiendish Pradyota has already started on the expedition with his army soon after despatching the letter.

At any other time, king Satanika would have certainly prepared for a fight, but for the moment that is impossible. Today he is an invalid. Finding no other way he instructs the prime minister to write to Pradyota that the relation between the two kings has always been friendly and that it is immoral and irreligious to cast an eye of lust on another's wife. He further instructs the minister that he should refer, in his letter, to ethical principles and make an earnest appeal to Pradyota not to embark upon a military expedition at this time. But all of them knew that it was useless to send such a letter to Pradyota, who was hardly likely to desist. It is, indeed, for his lustful desire for other's wives and his habitual excitement over battle that he was known as Pradyota, the Black-hearted.

On receipt of Pradyota's letter the king becomes more worried and despondent. Mrgavati, who has a sharp intelligence, perceives the state of his mind and says to him,

“My lord, do not be worried. I am a ksatriya girl of the Haihaya clan and the queen of a powerful ksatriya like you. If Pradyota at all invades our city, he will have only my corpse ; my soul will go to my lord alone.”

These words from Mrgavati allay much of the anxiety of Satanika's mind.

A few days later, king Satanika dies, and immediately Pradyota's hordes come to the vicinity of Kausambi and pitch their tents there.

To their great surprise, the people of the city see that moats are being dug and ramparts built all around Kausambi. Thousands of labourers have been engaged for this work. New, able-bodied soldiers are being recruited, trained in the use of weapons and fully equipped ; and all this work is being carried on under Pradyota's direct supervision.

Day after day all this work continues unrelaxed. Pradyota, who came to attack, is making no attempt to attack ; rather it is by his efforts that the city is being fortified and protected in all ways. From the prime minister to the common townsman, none knows the reason of it—all look on with astonishment. In course of time the moat and ramparts are ready, and considerable war-materials are collected in the fort of the city. Posted in every watch-cabin in the ramparts, well-trained and well-equipped soldiers guard the city day and night. The treasury is filled with abundant wealth and provisions are stored in piles.

The queen, Mrgavati, summons the prime minister, the commander of the army, and other high officials and distinguished townsmen to a meeting. When all are assembled, she herself begins to speak about the object of the meeting,

“You must be aware that all necessary arrangements have been made for the protection of our city from foreign invasion by digging moats, constructing ramparts, increasing the army, collecting war-materials etc. Even if the town is besieged, we shall not run short of war-materials and provisions. That all this work has been done with the co-operation of the Black-hearted Pradyota, is not unknown to any of you. It is, no doubt, mysterious that Pradyota, who came to attack the city, has, instead of attacking it, rendered it impregnable to the enemy. It was to tell you about it that I called you together today. When the king died, I found myself helpless. There was then no means at our disposal to withstand any attack by Pradyota. Prince Udayana was a minor. In such a condition I took recourse to diplomacy in order to save the prince and the kingdom. In great secrecy I sent word to Pradyota that I was willing to go with him to his kingdom, but the city of Kausambi was lying defenceless and the prince was a minor ; and that if he helped to provide for the defence of the city, I should instal the prince on the

throne and go to him. Pradyota believed in my comforting words, and you all know how he has helped to fortify the city. But now he has become impatient—tomorrow is the last day. Pradyota desires my body ; therefore, tomorrow you will please carry my body to him—my soul shall go to my departed husband.”

Queen Mrgavati’s word astounds and stuns all who are in the court. A murmur of applause begins to be heard. But the proposal of the queen’s suicide dejects and over-whelms all, and they discuss if there was any other means that could be adopted under the circumstances. At this stage, a townsman rises and addresses these words to the queen,

“If, instead of committing the great sin of suicide, the queen seeks initiation into Mahavira’s order of nuns, it will be a double solution.”

The meeting is adjourned for the next day, in order to consider this proposal. Where is Lord Mahavira now, and how one can go to him, becomes also a subject for consideration.

With the break of day, news reaches Mrgavati that Lord Mahavira, is coming towards Kausambi. Extremely delighted at the news, Mrgavati prepares to go to see and make her obeisance to the lord.

To Pradyota’s camp also come two reports together : one, that Lord Mahavira is coming, and the other, that an unfriendly king has started on an invasion of Ujjain. Pradyota makes up his mind to return to Ujjain at once, but on second thought, decides to stay for a day more for the sake of seeing Mahavira and taking away Mrgavati with him.

Lord Mahavira is staying with his disciples in a garden called Candravatarana Caitya on the outskirts of Kausambi. Many men have come from Kausambi and the neighbouring towns and villages to gaze at his serene, graceful figure and drink the nectar of his teachings. Queen Mrgavati and king Pradyota have also come and taken their proper seats there. Mahavira’s tranquil and radiant face, his mellifluous words and uncommon personality have exerted a profound influence on the minds of the assembled people. An atmosphere of peace and purity has been created all around. Gods, men, beasts and birds, all, forgetting their mutual animosities, are drunk with the nectar of Lord Mahavira’s words. He explains in his forceful and moving words the immortality of the soul, the bondage of *karma*, the vanity of the world, the agony of life and death, and the release from this mortal agony by non-violence (*ahimsā*), self-discipline and austerities. The gathering listens, spell-bound. It appears that all lower passions, like attraction and repulsion, have disappeared from the minds of all men and creatures assembled there.

As queen Mrgavati listens to the sermon, an immense change begins to take place in her thoughts and feelings and is reflected in her face. From her matchless, lotus-like countenance gleams out the lustre of the spirit of non-attachment and renunciation. When the sermon is over, she rises and thrice walking round and bowing to Lord Mahavira, says to him with folded hands,

“Lord, I have realised the vanity of the worldly life and my attachment to it is gone. In order to be liberated for ever from the unbearable pain of birth, decrepitude and death, I wish to be initiated and admitted into your order of nuns. May my Lord be compassionate enough to permit me.”

Mahavira replies,

“O beloved to the gods ! Follow the inclination of your heart.”

King Pradyota was regarding Mrgavati with a fixed stare. Mahavira’s personality and his sermon have wrought a great change in his mind also. He thinks in amazement,

“Is this glorious woman the peerless beauty Mrgavati whose portrait has charmed me ? No doubt she is extraordinarily beautiful, but, why, her beauty is causing no infatuation in me ; rather, it is giving rise to a feeling of honour and respect.”

His coming to Kausambi, his intense desire to win Mrgavati and all this long and intent waiting now appear to him as nothing but a colossal error, and an egregious wrong. In the course, of only a few moments by the influence of the great saint, a wonderful change has come over the outlook of even such an unfeeling evil-doer as the Black-hearted Pradyota. Suddenly he rises from his seat, thrice walks round and bows to Mahavira and makes for his camp with unhurried steps.

On the next day Pradyota enters Kausambi, unarmed and with only a few body-guards and himself taking the initiative, gets the coronation of the prince Udayana performed. Making a promise that if ever he is informed that an enemy has attacked Kausambi, he will immediately come with his army and protect it, he sets off for Ujjain.

Mrgavati becomes a nun and before long attains to spiritual liberation by severe self-discipline and austerities.

Five Grains of Rice

JAGADISH CHANDRA JAIN

In Rajagrha there lived a rich, prosperous and wise merchant named Dhanya. He had four daughters-in-law, named Ujjhika, Bhogavati, Raksika and Rohini.

One day Dhanya thought to himself,

“I am the head of the family, no one takes any step without consulting me ; if by chance I am not at home or fall sick or die, what will happen to the family and who will take care of them ?”

So he decided to call all his friends, relatives and colleagues for a grand feast and sent out invitations.

Huge preparations were made to make the feast memorable. Expert cooks were invited and asked to prepare their special dishes. The house was cleaned and decorated with fragrant flowers and beautiful garlands and purified incenses.

All the relatives and friends enjoyed the feast to their heart’s content. After they relaxed, Dhanya called his daughters-in-law. With the intention of finding out their capabilities, he decided to put them to a test.

Dhanya said,

“I am giving each one of you five grains of rice, keep them safely and whenever I ask for them return them to me.”

The daughters-in-law wondered as to why their father-in-law had given them just five grains of rice and told them to safeguard them. But still they did not question him and said,

“As you wish, father.” and retired to their respective rooms.

The eldest, Ujjhika (one who throws) thought,

“My father-in-law has godowns full of grains, why should I bother

to keep these measly five grains ? Whenever he asks for them I will take out from the godown and give him.”

Thinking thus she threw away the five grains of rice and got involved in her regular duties.

The second Bhogavati (one who eats) also thought on the same line, but she peeled and cleaned the grains of rice and ate them up.

The third, Raksika (one who protects) thought,

“My father-in-law assembled all his well-wishers and called us in front of them and gave us these grains of rice, there must be some mystery behind it.”

Thinking in this manner she tied the grains of rice in a clean white cloth and put them in her casket.

The fourth, Rohini (one who grows) was very thoughtful and said to herself,

“Surely there is some purpose behind our father-in-law’s giving us these grains of rice in the presence of his distinguished well-wishers.”

Thinking thus she called out to her servants. She told them,

“Make a nursery and sow these grains of rice. After heavy rainfall transplant them two or three times into beds made in the fields. Leave them in standing water and build a boundary wall around them and safeguard them.”

When the grain ripened and turned yellow the servants cut it with a sharp sickle. They thrashed and winnowed the grain and after cleaning them filled them in large earthen pots. The pots were sealed and stored in a granary. The harvested grain was resown during the next rainy season and was similarly stored.

During the third and fourth year the process was repeated and as a result there were hundreds of pots filled with rice. Rohini felt very satisfied looking at the pots of rice.

After four years had passed, Dhanya once again invited all his

friends, relatives and well-wishers. In the same grand manner food was prepared.

First Ujjhika was called and Dhanya asked her for the grains of rice. She took out five grains of rice from the godown and gave them to her father-in-law.

Dhanya asked,

“Are these the same grains that I gave you ?”

Ujjhika replied,

“No father, I threw them away on that very day.”

Dhanya was furious.

“You are fit only to perform menial tasks.”

He assigned her the work of cleaning and washing.

Next Bhogavati was called. Dhanya asked,

“Where are the grains of rice ?”

Bhogavati replied,

“I peeled them and ate them up.”

Dhanya was annoyed. He entrusted her with the work of the kitchen.

Raksika came next. Dhanya asked her to bring the grains of rice.

She went back to her room and took out the grains of rice from the casket. She gave them to her father-in-law who asked her,

“Are these the same grains I gave you ?”

“Yes, father,” replied Raksika, “I stored them in my casket and looked after them day and night.”

Dhanya was pleased. He said,

“You are the storekeeper and treasurer of the family henceforth.”

Last came Rohini.

On being asked about the grains of rice she replied,

“Father, you will have to call for carts and wagons. I had sown and reaped and harvested the grains of rice year after year and stored them in numerous earthen pots.”

The carts and wagons were despatched and they returned full of rice.

On seeing such a large quantity of rice grown out of five grains Dhanya’s happiness knew no bounds. He blessed Rohini and said,

“Your efforts combined with sincerity and perseverance has indeed enhanced our family’s welfare. So, henceforth, you will solely be responsible for the affairs of the family.”

Rohini was applauded by all those present and even the citizens of the town came forward to congratulate her and offer their best wishes.

Anjana

MUNI MAHENDRAKUMAR 'Pratham'

The great lady Anjana was born of the first queen Hrdayasundari, wife of king Mahendrasena. She was the only sister of a hundred brothers. So her parents and brothers, all loved her very much. By her habits, too, she was sweet and charming. And so she was loved by all in the royal household. She impressed anyone at first sight.

To find a suitable groom for such a worthy girl, King Mahendrasena sent many envoys to lands far and near but without any success. Many royal families were contacted but it was no easy job to find a suitable groom for her. One day, as the king was discussing it with the minister, the latter said,

“Your Majesty ! To the best of my knowledge, there are two princes who would make excellent grooms for our princess, one prince Vidyutprabha, son of king Hiranyabha, and the other Pavananjaya, son of king Prahlada. Between the two, Vidyutprabha is superior, but the astrologers' reading is that he would pass away to be liberated at the age of eighteen. Pavananjaya presents no such problem and is believed to have a long life. So the princess may be married with him.”

After some time, king Mahendra and king Prahlada met by chance at the Nandisvara island, and interestingly enough, the proposal came from king Prahlada. King Mahendra readily accepted it. It was decided to complete the marriage ceremony on the third day from then on the bank of the lake Manasa.

When a evil thing is to come up in life, even a normal desire may turn into a curse. There was only three days left for the marriage when Pavananjaya said to his friend Prahasit,

“Friend ! I have heard people extol the skill and beauty of Anjana. Although marriage is now a decided thing, I feel like seeing her once before marriage. This must be done.”

“If that be your desire, then go ahead. I am well acquainted with all the roads in Mahendrapur. I can easily guide you upto her apartment.”

The two friends set out at once. They entered into the lady's apartment unnoticed and incognito, and listened to what was going on between the lady and her attendant maids.

Vasantatilaka—"Dear Anjana ! You are lucky that you will have Pavananjaya as your life's companion."

Misrakesi—"But, my dear friend, Pavananjaya is not as charming, vigorous and refined as Vidyutprabha. But unfortunately Vidyutprabha has a short span of life on this earth."

Anjana was no active participant in the discussion. She silently listened, and she did not protest when Vidyutprabha was praised. This enraged Pavananjaya. He said to his friend Prahāsīt,

"Did you hear ? What shall I do with such a wayward and unfaithful woman ?"

So saying, he took out his sword to teach her a lesson. But he was prevented by his friend, who said,

"Don't be silly and impatient. Impatience spoils everything. A ksatriya touches not a woman even though he is abused by her. Anjana didn't speak ill of you. Let us go out from here."

The two slipped out unnoticed and returned to the palace. Pavananjaya said,

"I am determined not to marry with this woman. So I must quit at once without telling any body. Let us go out from Ratnapuri. I can think of no other way of saving myself."

Prahāsīt tried to argue with him and show him the way of reason, but Pavananjaya was adamant. Prahāsīt made a last effort,

"It is the height of impertinence for a devoted son to disappear like this. It will cause your parents the greatest pain. And not to marry when everything is finalised is indecent too on your part."

Pavananjaya yielded and the ceremony passed off without any trouble. Anjana was the happiest during the ceremony, but Pavananjaya had no joy. He played his role with the greatest reluctance, King Mahendra bestowed a great dowry on his dear daughter. King Prahāda's

joy knew no bounds to acquire such a qualified lady for his royal household. He heartily blessed the couple.

It was the first night after the marriage, and Anjana was awake for Pavananjaya's arrival. A quarter of the night passed, but Pavananjaya did not come. Anjana's expectation now gave way to anxiety. She had in her mind a nice picture of her future life, but that had started fading out. She had never dreamt that even such a calamity might fall on her. The night thus passed and the sun was up. There was joy everywhere except in Anjana's apartment. Her only companion was Vasantatilaka and none else to whom she could narrate the sorrow of her heart.

Thus days passed.

Anjana tried to improve her relations with Pavananjaya by sending him food or gift parcels received from her parents but he never accepted them, only threw them out in a very discourteous manner.

Anjana scanned her own conduct, and in it she found nothing that could be offensive in any way.

By nature, Anjana was serious and grave. She told her friend at last,

“At this moment, it seems, bad time is upon me, and anything I may do now will go against me. So I must wait for this phase to pass out.”

In this manner, long twelve years passed and there was no understanding between the two, nor did the two ever meet.

Once a special emissary from king Ravana of Lanka came to Ratnapuri with the following urgent message for king Prahlada,

“King Varuna has refused to accept the overlordship of king Ravana because of which the latter has declared a war against him. King Varuna's son is very powerful. He has already taken some of Ravana's best generals and war-lords into captivity. So Ravana desires all his friendly kings to come to his assistance at once.”

The emissary was cordially received. The king assured him all possible help to such a great friend and agreed to despatch a strong contingent of army at once. King Prahlada himself prepared to go at the head of the army, but Pavananjaya prevailed upon him with a request to let him go

at the head of the army and thus get a chance to prove his worth. The king gladly agreed.

The news soon spread through the town and the decision was hailed. Anjana too heard about it and she was happy. Now on an appropriate day, Pavananjaya started with the blessing of his parents and with the good-wishes of all his friends. But even at such a moment, he did not call on Anjana.

People had thronged in thousands at the city gate to see the prince off. In one corner, Anjana too stood wishing him victory. Suddenly the eyes of the prince fell on her and he was charmed with her beauty. But he did not know whether it was a carefully carved image or a real thing in flesh and blood. So he turned to his friend and said,

“Who may be that great artist that has created such a charming thing ?”

Said Prahasit,

“This is no image, but a human being in flesh and blood. She is your own wife, princess Anjana. You have neglected her all these years, but in response to the call of her duty, she has come and stands aside to wish you well from a distance.”

Pavananjaya at once lost control on himself. With bloodshot eyes, he said,

“What ! She is still after me ? Even at this exceptional moment in my life, she has taken courage to appear like an evil star ?”

Pavananjaya made his way through the crowd and stood right in front of Anjana. He rebuked her and kicked her publicly. She fell down in a swoon.

Vasantatilaka who saw this from a little way off at once rushed in, Anjana was carried to her apartment. When she was restored to her senses, she said,

“May my husband win the laurels of victory !”

Pavananjaya was now far away from his city, marching at the head of the army. In the evening, they were on the bank of the lake Manasa

where tents were pitched for the night. The moon came up. In the moonlight, Pavananjaya loved to see a pair of skylarks enjoying each other's company. He could not turn away his eyes. After some time, the male partner flew away, and the female bird was in the greatest distress and agony. This made a deep impression on Pavananjaya who had a great compassion for the female bird. He turned to his friend and said,

“These birds live together throughout the day and then separate in the night. And still the female partner feels so much distress and agony !”

Prahasit said,

“Well, the depth of distress like this can be known only by one who has experienced it. A night is too long. Even an hour's separation may become unbearable.”

This opened Pavananjaya's eyes and he thought of Anjana and all that he had done to her. He said,

“How heavy must time be hanging on her ! How deep must be her distress ! She has been living like this, neglected, unhappy, discarded, forlorn, for long twelve years. And all this is my own doing !”

“You are right,” replied Prahasit, “princess Anjana is really unfortunate. I am unable to measure the depth of her wound. She is gentle, noble and calm. She bears everything with patience and without uttering a single word. You have given her up, but, you do not know, she is devoted to you. You abused her, kicked her, insulted her in public, but the worthy lady bears no malice against you. A rare piece of magnanimity, really worthy of adoration !”

“But then why didn't she protest when Vidyutprabha was extolled in most superlative terms ?” said Pavananjaya.

“That was a mere episode not to be taken very seriously. That really meant nothing, nor does it establish that she was either unfaithful or inconsistent. And then, tell me, why did she come to see you off from a distance. She wishes you victory and glory with all her heart.”

“And I added to her distress by kicking at her. She was perhaps living on a streak of hope, but that day, it must have become a total darkness for her.”

“This is very likely. She was already in the deepest of distress and agony, which must have increased a thousandfold by your impolite behaviour. It was really unbecoming of you.”

“But now till I come back, it is quite likely that she may not be alive.”

“On this point, nothing can be emphatically said. When misery takes possession of the mind, it must find an outlet in some direction.”

Pavananjaya was restless.

“Then think of a way out. I don’t want to leave her in distress for many years now. When she is in distress, how can I be successful in my mission ? It has been a great folly on my part. I must go back at once and repair her wound. It is midnight and all the men are fast asleep. I want to go at once and return before dawn. Please do the needful.”

When the two friends returned to the capital, the city was dead in slumber. Anjana alone kept a vigil blaming her ill-luck. As Pavananjaya stood at a little distance, Prahasit carried the good news about the arrival of his friend. Hearing a very familiar voice, Vasantatilaka opened the door and received him.

“Where is princess Anjana ?”

“Sir, excuse my ignorance. But I don’t understand how you are here at this hour. If I am correct, you went out with the prince.”

“Correct. But meanwhile the prince has changed his mind towards his wife and he has returned. Please carry this good news to your great lady.”

As Anjana heard some people talking at the apartment door, she raised an alarm from her own room. She had no doubt that this must be some miscreants. Prahasit announced in a loud voice that they were friends and not foes.

As Prahasit announced the arrival of his friend this was a pleasant surprise for the lady who was least expecting such a thing. She forgot in a moment all the misery she had suffered for long twelve years and came forward to receive her husband.

It was a happy union. But time has wings, and the moments of happiness are perhaps the shortest. The last two quarters of the night passed away like a minute. It was near dawn, time for Pavananjaya to depart. But before he left, he gave a ring with his name carved on it to Anjana as a proof of his having spent a night in her apartment.

News soon reached the palace that Anjana was carrying a child. There started a gossip all over the city. One day, queen Ketumati, Anjana's mother-in-law, came to her apartment to verify the facts herself. Anjana received her with due respect, but Ketumati burst out in great anger,

“Ye harlot ! What’s this ? You have stained the family’s reputation. What have you done when your husband is out of this city ? I must report it to the king at once and get you removed from the palace right now.”

Anjana tried her best to defend herself, but the lady would listen nothing nor look at the ring which belonged to her son. The ring only added to her fury.

“Get out of my sight, ye harlot, get out at once. Ye must have stolen it or picked it up somehow and now ye produce this as a proof of your chastity ! Do I not know what the attitude of my son has been towards you all these years ? And how did he behave towards you on the day of his departure ? And now do you mean to tell me that he loves you and he came to your apartment ? I don’t want you to stay here even for a moment. You get out at once.”

All the entreaties and requests were curtly turned down and the queen only repeated,

“You get out at once. You talk of permitting you to stay at the palace, but I won’t permit you to stay within the boundary of my kingdom even. I must now arrange for your expulsion.”

The queen went straight to the king and reported, adding

“I wish, Your Majesty, Anjana be deported at once, in a black veil and on a black chariot and dropped in some dense forest near her parents’ home.”

The king agreed. He did not think it necessary even once to look into the matter himself before passing such a cruel order.

When Anjana came to know of the further worsening of her luck she nearly broke down. She had suffered misery for long twelve years when she was neglected by her husband ; but she never could guess that half-a-night's meeting with him could be so very pernicious for her. She felt most miserable but she must get ready to face the situation, however bad. She gathered courage, covered herself with a black veil and sat on a black chariot.

She was taken to a dense forest and asked to alight. It was no easy job even for the charioteer to check his tears. But he was a slave unto the king's order. He expressed his sense of horror and regret, but at the same time he confessed his utter helplessness.

Anjana calmly alighted from the chariot and thanked the man for his kind words. She asked him to entertain no fear or anxiety on her own score. For, she would henceforth be under the protection of the Five Great Divinities.

“Noble lady!”, said the charioteer. “This road leads straight to Mahendrapur. You may like to take this road.”

The charioteer went away. Anjana and Vasantatilaka spent the night in the forest, and in the morning, they took the road leading to Mahendrapur. But when a woman has been turned out from her own home, she rarely gets a shelter in her parental home. When king Mahendra heard the full story, he became extremely angry.

“She has stained her own family line and now she comes to seek shelter with me ! She should have been ashamed even to think of coming here.”

Her own brother Prasannakirti went a step further,

“A finger bitten by the snake must be amputated at once. It deserves no protection.”

But the minister tried to argue,

“Your Majesty ! A girl who is turned out from her father-in-law's house normally expects shelter with her own parents. In my humble

opinion, Anjana should be received and sheltered, at least till the prince comes back. Queen Ketumati is well-known at mischief-making and should not be taken very seriously. Considering the girl's future, I urge, you change your mind."

But the king's mind was a closed chapter and the minister's words made no impression on him. Justifying his stand, he said,

"Queen Ketumati could have told a lie. After all, it touched her own family. But it is well-known that Pavananjaya had no relation with Anjana. He never came to her even once during long twelve years. And at the time of his going out, he insulted her in public. How can it be that all on a sudden, he changed his mind and came to her apartment ? I am, therefore, not prepared to listen to any argument on this point. I cannot shelter a sinful creature. She may be turned out from where she is. I do not want to see her face."

When one's evil stars are up, everyone turns his back on him or her. This happened to Anjana. Her parents did not receive her ; her brothers and their wives turned their back on her and did not as much care as to look at her. So the two ladies once again returned to the forest and took shelter there.

Days passed in this way. One day, they met a great monk and Anjana expressed a curiosity to know about her past. Revealing this, the monk said,

"Kanakaratha was the king at Kanakapuri. He had two queens named Kanakodari and Laksmivati. Kanakodari gave birth to a son, but somehow Laksmivati stole the new-born child and kept it in hiding. Kanakodari was very much in distress at the loss. Now, a pious neighbour reasoned with Laksmivati that she had done a very wrong thing in hiding the child from the mother. And after twelve hours, she returned the child in an angry mood. But Laksmivati was not inherently bad. She propitiated the gods, preceptor and religion, and so after death she was born in Saudharma-kalpa. Having exhausted her life-span in that celestial abode, she is born now as Anjana. But the *karma* of her previous birth was affixed on her soul. It has now attained maturity, and so twelve hours have become twelve years."

Turning to Vasantatilaka, he added,

“You were her sister at that time, and you had approved of her misdeed. Your *karma* has also come up, and so you too are suffering with her. But the hardest part of your time is nearing its end, and it will gradually improve hereafter. Then the great lady’s chastity and firmness will shine in full brilliance. The lady’s maternal uncle will soon come here and will take you both to his palace where you will spend some time. Then you will meet Pavananjaya.”

Anjana and her friend continued to live in that forest waiting for the time when fortune might take a turn for the better. In the same cave, a son was born unto Anjana, and the lady had more sorrow than joy. No ceremony could be organised in that forest to receive the new child. It was about this time that her maternal uncle Vidyadhara Pratisurya saw the ladies from the air and thought that they might be in some difficulty. So he descended to help them out.

Vasantatilaka looked at him and made sure that this was no villain. As he heard the lady’s account from her friend, he said,

“My daughter ! I happen to be your maternal uncle. I cannot leave you here like this. The world has turned itself against you. This has been the greatest wrong. But I cannot leave you in this wilderness. You must come with me, I invite you and welcome you.”

Anjana was overwhelmed at the warmth of his feeling and she accepted the invitation. This was also predicted by the monk. They were now on the chariot which moved through the air. As the chariot moved, its bells tinkled, and attracted by their sound, the boy gave a jump to get them. But he slipped from there and fell straight on a mountain. Anjana was alarmed that the child must have been smashed to death. But when Pratisurya came down, he found to his greatest surprise that there had been no fracture even and the child was heartily smiling taking credit for the high jump. A few slabs of stone were, however, crushed under the child’s weight. The uncle predicted a great future for the boy, declaring him to be a prodigee.

Back to his own city, Hanupur, Pratisurya celebrated the child’s birth with greatest pomp. As the mountain had been crushed under his weight, the boy was named Silacur. As per the name of the city, however, he was named Hanuman. Pratisurya held a very high opinion about Anjana, she was revered in the whole city. Anjana’s hard days were at last over.

She was living comfortably at her maternal uncle's palace, waiting for the arrival of her own husband.

Elsewhere, Pavananjaya fought against Varuna and showed his great skill. He was given the supreme command and inflicted the severest defeat on the adversary. Ravana's generals who had been held captive were now released. Ravana was delighted and charmed with his valour and showered on him the highest panegyric. He took him to Lanka to spend a few days with him as his guest and thereafter, crowned with many laurels, he came back to his own city.

On Pavananjaya's return, there was a great rejoicing in the city. His parents, the king and the queen, received him and blessed him. But when he made enquiries about Anjana, they started looking at each other's face. Pavananjaya could easily guess that there had been something wrong about her during his absence, and he had a feeling that he might never meet her again.

The king had now no alternative but to apprise him all about her. The moment he heard the word 'exile', a pang of sorrow overtook him, in which faded away his joy of victory. Pavananjaya rushed to Mahendrapur but even here the same story was repeated.

In the greatest despair, Pavananjaya moved out on an uncertain search of his dear wife. He searched all the forests he passed through, he searched even the smallest of caves he came across. Now, he was physically exhausted and mentally worn. He had only one resolve—to find out Anjana, or to lay down his life in her quest.

Acute love is the obverse of acute hatred. Once Pavananjaya had the acutest hatred for Anjana ; but now he had the highest love for her. Without her, life had no meaning for him.

When the news of Pavananjaya's resolve reached the ears of his parents, they came all the way to dissuade him somehow from this resolve. They promised him an all-out search for the lady if Pavananjaya would give but a month's time. The prince gave a smile of despair and said,

“Do you think I haven't done my best to find her ? Had she been alive, I would surely have met her. Then why do I make myself more miserable by waiting for a month ?”

The king said, "Surely you have done your best ; but since I am involved too, I must be given a chance to do what I can for tracing Anjana out. Wise people never do a thing in a hurry. Sometimes a goal is attained after many failures."

Pavananjaya could not disoblige his parents. He agreed. Now, both king Prahlada and king Mahendra sent hundreds of emissaries all over the world in search of the great lady. In this manner, twenty-nine days passed, and there was no ray of hope from any quarter to save Pavananjaya. It was now the thirtieth day. Pavananjaya stood firm to enter into a blazing pyre the moment the day was out. There was deep despair on everybody's face.

Just then an air-chariot appeared in sight. It so happened that an emissary had gone to Hanupur, and finding Anjana there, he communicated the need of urgency of their return lest Pavananjaya should end his life on the expiry of the thirtieth day. Hence the whole party hurried at once and reached the spot in time.

Anjana's parents and parents-in-law shed tears, but these were tears of regret. Anjana consoled them saying that all this was the outcome of *karma*, in which they were merely instrumental. There was for them really no reason to repent.

And between Anjana and Pavananjaya, this was a supreme moment, a great reunion. They could hardly open their lips. At last Pavananjaya broke the silence.

"I made you miserable for long twelve years."

"But now you were about to sacrifice your life for my sake." Anjana retorted.

Now, as the person who had given shelter to Anjana and her child, and saved the life of Pavananjaya, Vidyadhara Pratisurya had the greatest claim on Pavananjaya. He invited him with his wife and son, his own parents and his wife's parents to be first his guests of honour at Hanupur. The invitation was accepted.

Now, it was time for Mahendra to lay down the reins of office in favour of his very capable and worthy son. Pavananjaya had a very glorious

regime, towards the close of which he too renounced the world to devote the remaining portion of his life in spiritual activities. The great lady Anjana practised severe penances and at last courted death in the prescribed Jaina way through a long fast.

Among traditional Indian womanhood, with Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Anjana's too is a great name, and she is remembered to this day with the greatest respect and admiration.

translated by K.C. Lalwani

Threads of Affection

UPADHYAYA AMAR MUNI

Ardrakakumar was the prince of an island named Ardraka. His father was a close friend of Srenika, the king of Magadha. From time to time, the king of Magadha used to send many a beautiful and precious presents to his friend with the merchants who used to visit the Ardraka island for purposes of trade and commerce. The father of Ardraka too, used to send novelties produced in his island to his friend, the king of Magadha, in India.

On one such occasion, king Srenika sent some rare and costly items to his friend in Ardraka island. Prince Ardraka was very much pleased. When he heard of Abhayakumar, son of king Srenika, who was also the prime minister of the country, he wanted to make friendship with him. With this end in view Ardraka sent some very beautiful presents to Abhayakumar through his trusted messenger together with a letter written by his own hand.

On reading the emotional letter of Ardraka, the heart of Abhayakumar became full. A great ocean of love surged within him for his friend whom he was yet to see. But the great responsibility of being the prime minister of Magadha, the knotty problems of politics, the non-ending sequence of war and peace—how all these stood in the way of his visiting the island of Ardraka and meeting his friend ! But he thought of a plan to send some special gift to his distant friend.

Abhayakumar thought, “Gold and precious stones are in abundance even in that island. So let me send something which is not available there and on receiving which, not only his affection but also his soul will be enkindled. A real friend is one who enlightens the life of his friend. Give and take of worldly things is only the outer aspect of friendship. But my friendship should not only be an outward feeling but should touch the heart. So thinking, in a golden casket, he placed a special symbol of religious import which would effectively bring about a feeling of detachment. This he sent with a special messenger to Ardrakakumar, requesting him to open it when he is alone.

The messenger reached the island of Ardraka. On meeting Ardrakakumar, the messenger presented him the golden casket and the personal letter of Abhayakumar. Ardraka was very much happy to receive the

letter of his friend. He embraced the letter as if it was his friend in person. He received the messenger very cordially. Then on retreating to the privacy of his bed-room he opened the casket. To his utter surprise, instead of sparkling pearls and diamonds, he found something new, the meaning of which was not very much comprehensible to him. He began to think. "What is this? Why has he sent it? I have never seen such an object!"

His thoughts became deeper and deeper and suddenly, as in a flash, his soul was enlightened and the memory of his past life dawned in his mind. He remembered that in his past life he too had gone through some such spiritual practice as depicted on the gift.

From now on Ardrakakumar became very restless. He was impatient somehow to meet Abhayakumar. But how to travel such a long distance? When he approached his father, he did not agree to send his only son to a distant land. He became very sad. All his joys were gone. He always desired of going to India and to go through the religious practice as he had done in his previous life. When his father saw him utterly depressed, he became apprehensive of his flight. So he arranged a unit of five hundred guards to keep constant watch on him. They used to accompany him wherever he went.

One day Ardrakakumar on the pretext of making a trip to the forest went into its depth. After a lot of fun and merrymaking the guards became tired and fell asleep. Taking this opportunity Ardrakakumar selected a horse, fast as air, and covered a long distance in no time by a secret route. After travelling for some time, he reached the shore. There he abandoned the horse and boarded a ship which was bound for India.

On reaching India, on the basis of his memory, he took the vows of a monk. Then in a monk's robe he proceeded to Rajagrha to meet Abhayakumar. On his way was the city called Vasantapur. He halted there in a temple and stood in a corner in meditation.

It was dusk. Light was fading out. Some young girls were playing in the courtyard of the temple. Somehow the idea of selecting their husbands entered into their heads. The girls started running with their eyes closed and caught hold of the pillars. Assuming the pillars as their husbands they began to tease each other thus: "Look this is my husband. This is my husband!" In this way each girl started showing her husband. Among these girls was one, beautiful of all, named Srimati, daughter of a merchant. Srimati caught hold of Ardrakakumar. Her friends, when

they saw Ardrakakumar, began to shout, "Oh, what a handsome husband you have got !"

When Srimati opened her eyes she remained looking at the countenance of the monk in wonder. A strange beauty was there on his face. His personality, grace and flower like tenderness all made him so attractive that Srimati could not but drink this nectar by her eyes.

"What are you looking at ? You have got a very beautiful husband. Oh, your fortune has taken a very bright turn !" exclaimed her friends.

The eyes of Srimati dropped down in shyness. But in her mind she accepted the monk as her husband. She bowed down at his feet. Her heart was full of love. So were her eyes.

The monk found himself in a very embarrassing situation. But he kept quiet and left the place as soon as the girls went home.

When Srimati reached the age of marriage, her parents began to look for a suitable groom. For some time she remained silent but at last she opened her heart to her mother. Her parents and relatives were taken aback at her decision. "Marriage with a monk ? What a folly ! Are you mad ? And marriage with one whose whereabouts we do not know ! Who knows where he is now ?" Such and other arguments were presented before her. Innumerable paintings of desirable grooms were shown to her. But she remained firm in her decision. "If I marry I will marry him only, none else. Otherwise I will remain a spinster."

Time passed by. Months and years elapsed. Father of Srimati made enquiries about the monk but he could not trace him out. One by one almost all her friends got married but she remained unmarried as per her own decision. She kept waiting for that unknown monk. Sitting at her window from dawn to dusk she used to look eagerly at the passers by, but he was not to be found. After sometime her father opened an alms-house hoping that if he ever comes that way he may visit the place. Hundreds of monks and travellers used to come there for food and shelter every day and Srimati sitting at the door kept watch for her monk.

A few years passed away more. But one day did monk Ardraka come that way. As soon as he entered the alms-house, Srimati recognised him. She fell at his feet. All her emotion, as if found its outlet through the torrential flow of tears from her eyes. "Oh my beloved, don't discard me. Accept me and give me a new life." Monk's feet as if in mud got

stuck in her tears. Meanwhile Srimati's parents also came running and pleaded with him, "O revered one ! If you do not accept her as your wife she will take her own life. Without you her life is barren and it has been so since the day of that fateful game which she and her friends had played."

Monk's heart melted at the knowledge of Srimati's love for him. Ardrakakumar agreed to marry Srimati. Thus he started for one destination, but reached another. It may be that they were in love in their previous life which was casting its shadow in this life.

Very soon Srimati was blessed with the birth of a son. His sweet laughter now began to resound in the house. Time went by. The child was now five years old. Ardrakakumar was again in deep thought. He was almost repentant on moving away from the path of *sāadhanā* and getting entangled in the bondage of mundane love and affection. Simultaneously he remembered the boundless love and affection of his parents which he had willingly spurned for the goal which he had yet to achieve. He had left a home only to have another ! After crossing the ocean he was drowned in a pond. He told his wife of his decision of renouncing the world.

When Srimati heard of it she was in tears. But nothing, not even her love could now change his decision. He remained firm on his resolve.

Srimati was at her spinning wheel. Seeing his mother spinning thread, the child asked, "Mother, what are ye doing ?"

"My son", she replied, "I am spinning the threads. Your father has decided to renounce the world. So some work has to be found for our maintenance. And what else could I do but spin the threads." Srimati began to sob.

The child was bewildered. So he asked again, "Mother, why is father leaving us ? Is he angry with us ?"

"No, my son, he is not angry. But he wants to be a monk. He will beg for his food and do his *sāadhanā*."

"But mother, never shall I let my father go like this leaving us behind. I will go and bind him up. How will he go then?"

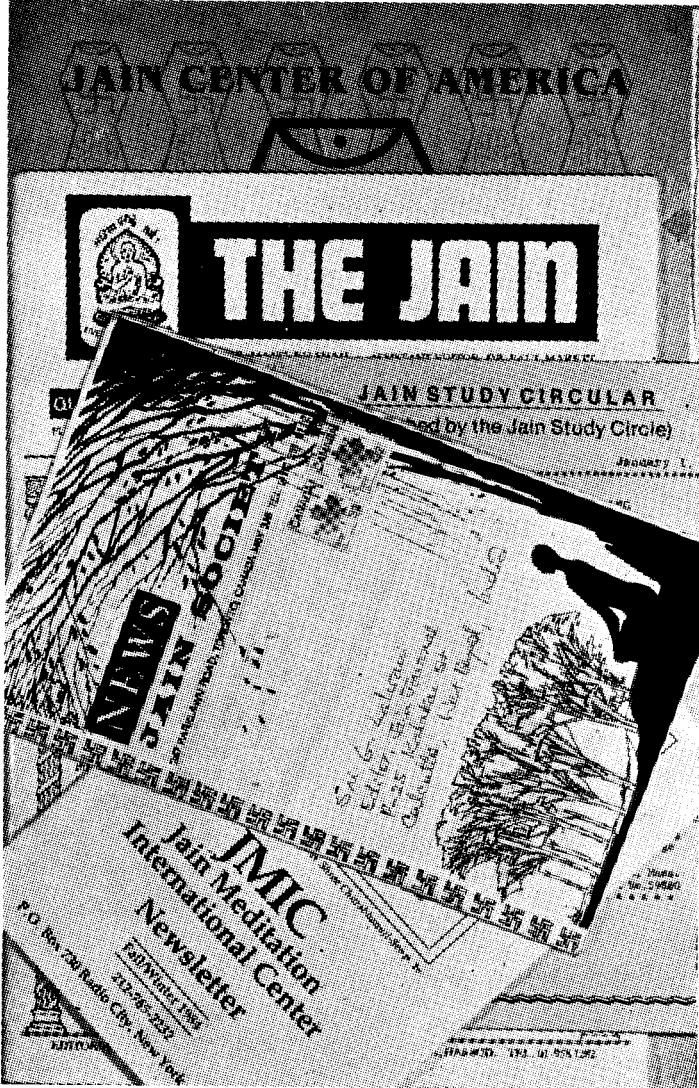
So saying the innocent child took the thread and went to his father and bound his legs with that thread. Then he came running to his mother and said, "Mother, now that I have bound my father very tightly he won't be able to move."

The mother embraced the child and kissed him on his forehead.

Ardrakakumar who was lying half awake in his bed heard the conversation of the mother and son. His heart again melted when he saw the endeavour of the little child to bind him with those weak threads. The innocent affection of the child touched his heart ! He felt as if these weak threads of affection were really more strong than the heavy iron chains.

The child had rounded the thread twelve times on his feet. So Ardrakakumar decided not to leave his home for another twelve years and arrange for his son's education and wellbeing. After twelve years Ardrakakumar left his home and went to Bhagavan Mahavira. Once again he took initiation from him and plunged into his *sādhanā*.

translated by Gita Mukherjee



Journals published from abroad

Sajan the Governor

MUNI BHADRAGUPTA VIJAY

Sajan, the Governor of Saurashtra, was on a pilgrimage to holy Mt. Girnara. His eyes were full of joy when he saw the image of Lord Neminatha, but he felt remorse at the same time when he saw the dilapidated condition of the temple. He felt as if the time-worn building of the temple was rebuking him in a silent voice,

“Sajan, being infatuated by your position as governor of Siddharaja, you have forgotten the Lord. The voice of your heart remains ever ignored. You are forgetting something.”

“Yes I am forgetting something. I am the governor of Saurashtra and still the temple of the Lord is in such a wretched condition !”

The sun was in the middle of the sky. And the governor was about to descend the mountain. But he was thinking all the time of the renovation of the temple. He must do it. But how ? The entire work could not be completed by his own wealth. He had not amassed so much wealth. But some one whispered—“Why not spend the 12500 crores of gold coins collected as revenue of the State ? Let the wealth of Saurashtra be spent for the beautification of its Lord’s temple.”

But another voice cautioned him. “Siddharaja, not you, is the king of the state. You are answerable to him. His wrath may make you a pauper.”

The first voice again whispered, “Don’t forget your sacred duty. What to speak of Siddharaja, even the world’s most despotic power cannot harm a devotee of Lord Neminatha. Give concrete form to your desire of the renovation of the temple.”

So Sajan decided to spend all that 12500 crores of gold coins for the renovation and the work proceeded with great speed in the hands of the expert workers and artists.

Word spread as if on wings. The story of the renovation of Girnar temple was on the lips of all the people in Saurashtra.

Sajan, as governor, was most prominent in Gujarat at that time. His fame was the highest for his valour, nobility, sobriety and many other virtues. But there were no dearth of evil men also at any time who were jealous of such a man of virtue.

A group of such jealous men reached the king's court at Patan. Bowing low they said, "If Your Majesty permits..."

"What you want to say," asked Siddharaja. He was surprised to see so many officers from Saurashtra.

"Your Majesty, you may not believe our words at first, you may be even angry with us. But we cannot see somebody doing you harm."

"What harm?" Siddharaja was even bewildered.

"Whatever may befall on us, but today we will say nothing but truth."

"Of course." replied Siddharaja with his usual simplicity. "Come out with your truth. You have no fear from my side."

"Has the revenue from Saurashtra reached your Majesty's treasury?"

"No." replied Siddharaja. But at the same time the noble face of Sajan crossed his mind.

"Your Majesty, you are here. It is not possible for you to know what Sajan has done with that 12500 crores of gold coins collected as revenue."

"What you want to say?"

"Only this that for his own fame the governor has spent all that money?"

"You are mistaken."

Siddharaja was aghast with the allegation, because he had full confidence in the truthfulness and honesty of Sajan.

"We knew it, Your Majesty, that you will not believe what we say, but kindly despatch a man on camel asking the governor to come immediately with the revenue."

“Sending just now.” replied Siddharaja more to quash off the allegation against his dear governor.

At Girnar the renovation work was progressing steadily. Governor Sajan’s heart was full of heavenly joy. But at the same time he knew that he had to face Siddharaja on this point. So he was thinking for that also.

“When Siddharaja will ask for that 12500 crores of gold coins, put the amount before him.” He said to himself. But the question was from where he would get that money? One by one the prosperous cities of Saurashtra passed before his eyes. When Banthali was before him, his eyes flashed. Instantly he made ready his fast moving horse and in a few hours he was in Banthali at the crossing of the roads.

Sudden arrival of the governor became the cause of concern for the wealthy merchants of Banthali. But they received him very cordially and asked him to take bath, food and rest in their apartment.

“But I have come on an urgent business.” Replied the governor, “All other things will be done after that.”

The merchants were still more surprised at these words of the governor.

“Your Excellency! Please speak out. We will do whatever you command at the best of our ability.”

All the respectable citizens of Banthali assembled there in no time. Before this assembly, governor Sajan opened his heart. Starting from his journey to Girnar, dilapidated condition of the temple, his desire for renovation, spending of 12500 crores of gold coins of the treasury and in the end he stated the need for that amount to replenish the treasury.

They began to look at each others face. All were silent when the merchant Sakaria rose and said with folded hands,

“All who are assembled here have lots of public service to their credit. I pray, please allow me to have this single piece of benefit for benevolent work.”

All the people assembled there were overwhelmed. They accepted the proposal of Sakaria. The governor accompanied him to his house. When they sat together after lunch, the merchant said,

“Your Excellency ! Shall I present the amount in pearls, diamonds or in gold or in coins ?”

Sajan was stunned at the affluence and wealth of Sakaria.

Sakaria heaped the precious stones before the governor. With folded hands he said,

“Please accept the perishable wealth and use it in the renovation of the temple.”

“Oh merchant !” replied the governor, “Now I have no fear. I shall take it when I need it, not before that.”

Sajan rode back to Girnar.

One evening, after a day or two, the messenger from Patan arrived. He went straight to the residence of the governor. After saluting him he gave him the king’s letter. When the governor opened and read the letter he understood everything. He replied to the messenger, “Please convey this to His Majesty, that I am unable just now to go to Patan. If His Majesty requires the amount immediately please request him to come to this place.”

The messenger was dumb-found on hearing this reply. His heart trembled to imagine the repercussion of this statement on the king.

The jealous courtiers were happy at the prospect of their plan being fulfilled. Even Siddharaja decided to punish Sajan for his audacity. He reached Saurashtra with his army.

When Siddharaja arrived at the valley of Girnar, Sajan rushed down to receive him. But Siddharaja had not come there for his hospitality but to take the revenue. He thundered,

“Sajan, I have come here to collect the revenue of Saurashtra. Produce it without further delay.”

“Your Majesty!” replied Sajan still more politely, “Please be assured of that. But when you have taken the trouble of coming to this holy place, please be good enough to have the *darśan* of the deity.”

Siddharaja could not refuge the polite but dignified words of Sajan.

Taking his hand Sajan led Siddharaja on the holy mountain. Even from a distance the picturesque temple of Neminatha made of white marble was visible. The king remained awe struck.

Slowly they reached the temple. Siddharaja offered his prayers and performed the *pūjā*. He was immensely happy now. He saw with his own eyes the renovation work on which crores of gold coins had been spent. He cried out in ecstasy :

“Blessed is the man who had made this renovation.”

Replied Sajan instantly,

“Blessed is the king and his noble mother who have made this renovation work possible.”

“You mean I ? But how ? Oh no...”

“Yes, Your Majesty ! This renovation was possible with the 12500 crores of gold coins which was the revenue from Saurashtra for the royal treasury. If you want the benefit of this renovation as virtue and fame it is yours. Otherwise 12500 crores of gold coins are also ready.” replied Sajan.

The noble feelings hidden in the innermost depth of Siddharaja suddenly came up. His ill-feeling totally vanished. With tears rolling down his cheeks Siddharaja held the hands of Sajan and said,

“Sajan, you are my best friend. God grant that you be my friend, life after life. I have no need of the gold coins. I want the eternal benefit.”

Siddharaja went back to his capital with a light heart.

In the meanwhile the merchant Sakaria came to Girnar and heaped the precious stones before the governor.

“I have no need of this amount anymore, Oh merchant ! By the grace of god everything went right.”

“Your Excellency ! What you are saying ?” replied Sakaria in distress. “I have kept this separately for religious purpose. I cannot take it back. It belongs to you.”

“Sajan shall not accept wealth.”

“Sakaria shall not take back the wealth once given.”

At last a way was found. A beautiful garland was made of those precious stones and was placed on the neck of Lord Neminatha.

translated by Gita Mukherjee

Lord of Self : Lord of All

VIRENDRA KUMAR JAIN

Srenika Bimbisara, emperor of Magadha, was standing on the topmost balcony of his palace called Mahanila. On the onset of dusk the full moon of Caitra Purnima was visible in the horizon. The moonlight was playing on the white marble of the railings of the balcony and blue floor of the roof. The mild breeze was carrying the sweet fragrance of mango blossoms of the garden below.

Standing on the balcony the emperor was looking far beyond the limit which mortal eyes could reach. He did not know even, where he was, what he was looking at and what he was looking for.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a faint tinkling of anklets. A fragrance, special to Vaisali came and recalled the emperor's mind from roaming in the unknown.

“My lord, it's only me, none else...”

“Welcome Celana, my dear. What can be the cause of hesitation on the part of the empress of Magadha ?”

“I have disturbed you, my lord, in your reverie.”

“The empress has full authority over my whole being.”

“But to my regret I find, that I have lost it of late.”

“Celana dearest, you are where you were, probably I have moved away from thence. Are you surprised, my dear ?”

“Where are you moving about, my lord ?”

“In the deer forest of your eyes.”

“What will you get there, my love, except mirage like hallucination? What really are you looking for ?”

“The navel of the deer...”

“Has my love, got it ?”

“The empress has numerous layers of her garment and the navel lotus is unfathomable. I have got tired of measuring it.”

“Even then deer-navel could not be got hold of.”

“The empress seems to have moved away from her mind, I know not where ? At present, I am searching for her.”

“I am where I was.....at the feet of my lord, I always am. But the feet seem to have moved away.”

“Where moved away, my dear ?”

“In the depth of myself, I know not where they have disappeared.”

“Look at the rising moon at the top of Mount Bipula, dear Celana. May be you find them there.”

“I am looking at them. Those lotus feet are moving further away, beyond the eye sight.”

“Are the lotus stem like arms of Celana unable to hold and bring them back ?”

“Probably they have fallen short, my lord. The lotus seems to have drifted away from its stem.”

“Leave them aside Celana let them go wherever they want. Why are you becoming uncomfortable ?”

“Not for myself my lord, but for them. Let them come back, not in me, but where they were ! I am always there.”

“You are at your own place, where are you there ?”

“True, I am at my own place, still I am everywhere, yet no where !”

“Then how can I get you ?”

“In your soul...”

“If only I could be there.”

“What does the emperor of Magadha really want ?”

“Only you, my dear.”

“Why are you putting your Celana to shame ? I haven’t gone any where.”

“You know best, my love.”

“Leave me alone. Be satisfied with the glory of the great Magadha empire won with your own valour. The mercandise of Rajagrha is only comparable with the precious stones of Svayambhuraman Samudra. Gods and goddesses come down in the exquisite gardens of Magadha to enjoy themselves in the moonlit night. On the height of Mount Bipula *samavasaraṇa* of Mahavira are held. On its roads moves the wheel of religion. Srenika Bimbisara is empror of such a land ! What else he can want ?”

“You, Celana, who have exiled herself from this land.”

“For once go inside yourself, my lord, there I am waiting for you from eternity.”

“Please take me there, my heart, I have lost control of everything.”

“Let us go tomorrow morning. It’s a long time since we have visited the Samyak garden. I want to enjoy with yourself in the cool water of Antarmani lake. There on the pollen bed of spring deer couples can be seen in close embrace.”

“I have not heard of any garden or lake of that name in my empire.”

“But I have heard. Tomorrow I shall take you there in my Sahasrar chariot. Won’t you go with me ?”

“Shall I get deer-navel there ?”

“If you go to the deepest depth, surely you will.”

“Where will the pitch-dark depths of your eyes take me to night, my love ?”

“Bed room doors of Celana will remain open throughout the night expecting the arrival of her lord.”

The empress Celana slowly retraced her steps leaving behind ripples in the ocean of moonlight by the tinkling of her diamond anklets.

The emperor in his delight got hold of the moon of the sky and holding it like mirror began to look at his face. And suddenly he was in love with himself.

The huge moon looking like a miniature earth was moving hastily to set in *nirvāna*. In the faint moonlight as soft as the silk of her dress, empress Celana was driving her own chariot Sahasrar for taking the emperor to Samyak garden. The mild fragrance of Parijat flowers brought by the cool morning breeze were opening unknown depths.

A solitary ray of a blue star was dancing in the depths of the Tamala grove of the Samyak garden. That too was lost in the thick hair of Celana, the beautiful damsel of Vaisali. Lost in the deepest blue of fragrant darkness for some time Srenika raised his head from her bosom.

She asked, “Got the deer-navel?”

“For a moment but then it became a deer again. You are unfathomable, Celana. You are beyond my reach. Even after enjoying you, you remained as remote. Dew drops do not stay on the petals. High waves have to recede after embracing the sandy beach.”

“Come then, my lord, let us enjoy ourselves in the cool waters of the Antarmani lake.”

The moon had slipped down the horizon. The darkness of the night still lingered in the foliage of Mandara tree surrounding the lake. The sun which was ready for dawn hid itself in the inner garments of the princess of Videha.

While bathing in the waters of the Antarmani lake garments got more and more thin being wet and when they slipped off their bodies they knew not.

The emperor Srenika seeking refuge in the arms of his beloved fell asleep like a child. The sun released from the garments of the empress began to spread its pink in the eastern sky. And when he awoke the

emperor found his head resting upon his own hand. He felt a deep pang in his heart.

The empress standing on the bank was calling,

“It’s dawn now, my lord. Let us go for a stroll in the temple garden.”

In a strange mental distraction, the emperor began to follow the empress. It was neither day nor night. Some another kind of time was to break out from within. They were walking together in absolute silence. The outside garden is of golden hue but the eyes of the emperor were fathoming inside he knew not what for.

Walking slowly the royal couple reached the temple called Mandita Kuksi. The emperor’s eyes suddenly turned outwards. Under the shade of a tree he saw a young and handsome monk fully engrossed in meditation. Seeing him he felt a pang. He stopped and began to stare at him.

“Who is this scion of gods who have come down to this earth to practise such austerities leaving behind the bed of Mandara flowers ? What happiness was lacking for him in the heaven ? Have not the polen soft arms of his goddess given him the happiness that he wanted ? I would like to know what pang what pain is hidden in his heart that he is squandering his youth in this way ?”

The young monk opened his eyes when his meditation was over. His eyes fell on the royal couple standing before him. But he looked at them with equanimity.

Walking round the monk thrice and bowing down at his feet the emperor asked,

“Arya, why have you adopted a life of such hardship at this young age ? You who are in possession of such a refreshing youth, should have enjoyed it on the bed of roses instead of wasting it on the thorns of the forest.”

“Because I was unprotected, Oh king ! I had no relations, no friends. No one of my own. Nowhere I got complete affection or sympathy. That was why I renounced this world.”

The emperor became grave at this answer. Such a bright and handsome youth and yet nobody made him his own ! None loved him or gave

him protection ! It's difficult to understand. The emperor's heart was full of compassion.

“Oh monk!” he said, “Its hard to believe that no one made such a handsome youth his own. But in the kingdom of Srenika you would not remain unprotected, without a lover or a friend. I will protect you. Please come with me. The grandeur of my palace is waiting for you. And the beauty goddess of the land Celana will solace you.”

“Oh king ! Yourself, your queen and your wealth everything is unprotected. And how can he who himself is unprotected protect another ?”

Till this day none had dared to speak to the emperor in this vein. He was stunned.

“Hear ye monk! The gods of heaven even are jealous of my splendour. Heavenly damsels even long to stay at my palace. And yet you call me unprotected. Strange !”

“Oh king ! If you knew the meaning of protection! It has to be realised.”

“Oh monk! If you have no objection I want to know about your realisation.”

“Oh king ! You must have heard the name of the famous city of Kausambi. King Dhanasancaya was ruling there. I was his son. Once at the onset of my youth, I had developed a great pain in my eyes. As a result I got high fever. My entire body was burning like fire. I felt as if my enemy's sharp weapons were piercing me all over my body. Indra's thunder as if was pounding my back, head and heart. My relatives dared not to look at me in my pain.

“All the best doctors, surgeons, tantrics, mantrics were called for my cure but they failed to relieve me of my pain. Not even the cool water of Candrakanta stone could diminish the burning sensation.

“My father's boundless affection and wealth failed to give me any solace.

“My mother's love and affection even failed to diminish my pain.

“My brothers and sisters standing nearby could not give me any comfort.

“I had a beautiful wife. I was to her like god. Her love and devotion for me were boundless. She used to look after me day and night. It seemed as if we were one soul. She was my better half in the true sense of the term. Without caring for food, clothing, sleep, perfumes or jewellery, she constantly remained near my bed. Her stem like arms always used to encircle me, her petal like fingers always used to caress me. Her fawn like eyes were always fixed on my face. Her thick black tresses always shadowed over me. And my heart was always soaked by her tears of true love.

“But O king! Even my wife could not share my suffering. And then I realised that the deepest of worldly affection and love could not give protection which is needed in life. Every object, every person in this world is unprotected. No one can give support to the other.

“One night my pain became so acute that I almost saw my death gripping my body. The last drop of tear of my beloved wife fell on my lip and dried by the heat. At that moment I felt trully unprotected in the true sense of the term. The dark night of final separation decended inside. And at that very moment something awoke within my self.

“Then I took a vow silently, if at the end of the night my pain abates I will renounce the world.

“Oh beloved of the gods! Almost instantaneously with the vow my pain began to subside like the abating water of the tide. And at the break of dawn I felt that my pain has totally gone...I have become completely cured...And with the first rays of the sun I left the palace turning a deaf ear to the wailing of my beloved and my relatives.”

For a few moments there was complete silence. After that Srenika asked,

“Oh monk! Have you got protection after that ? Are you now completely protected ?”

“I gave myself totally at the feet of Sramana Bhagavan Mahavira. The mirror of *Kevala* was in front of me. I saw my trueself in it for the first time. I knew myself. I am now protected.”

“At the feet of Nirgrantha Jnataputra?”

“No, it was within me, in my true self.”

“And what happened after that?”

“I have become Lord of my self and by becoming Lord of my self have become the Lord of the universe.”

“How was it, oh wise?”

“Because the entire universe is now within me and I in the universe. Nothing is left out, there is no separation.”

“Now I am convinced, oh muni ! Victory be thine !” replied Srenika.

And the queen so long waiting in silence silently burst forth,

“Hail the young yogi of the land!”

The royal couple bowed down together at the yogi’s feet. When they raised their heads after a few moments, the yogi was not there. Only a divine light was moving further away through the rows of groves of the temple garden.

The golden moon was again up in the evening on the balcony of queen Celana.

“Dear Celana, today I have known you for the first time.”

“Today for the first time I have known you my lord, in your entirety.”

“Take me in, my darling !”

“Come with me, my lord, eternal resting bed is awaiting for us on the summit of Vipulacala.”

A sweet fragrance was blowing in the cool evening air.

translated by Gita Mukherjee

Kalaldevi

MISRILAL JAIN

In the 10th century A.D, the name of Siddhanta Cakravarti Acarya Nemicandra commanded tremendous respect in the holy land of India. Whatever he said was scripture, whatever he wished was order.

The valiant Camundarai was a great disciple of Acarya Nemicandra. He was also the commander-in-chief of king Raimalla of the Ganga dynasty. The name of Camundarai was a terror even to many a brave heart. He was an epitome of honesty and duty. He had the greatest faith in the teachings of the Jinas. He even did not touch his food without seeing the image of the Lord. He was so kind that even he was ready to rescue small insects carried away in the flow of the water. But when it was a question of duty, he was as hard as stone and the valiant Camundarai did not hesitate for a second to cut off the heads of his enemies. Highly impressed by his bravery, the rulers of the Ganga dynasty honoured him with such titles as 'Vira-martanda', 'Ranarangasimha' 'Bhuja-vikrama' etc. At the same time, his religious feelings also knew no bounds. Hence the common people used to call him 'Samyakraatnakar' In fact, Camundarai had the dual personality of valour and non-violence. It was only at his request that Acarya Nemicandra wrote his great work on Jainism. His deep love for literature prompted him to patronise the great Kannada poet of the kingdom. The Jain literary world will ever remain grateful to Camundarai for his untiring effort in this direction.

It was past noontime. The heat of the sun was declining and he was gradually moving towards the west. It was time for Acarya Nemicandra to come to a Jain temple of South India to deliver his sermon there. The great Sramana entered the temple. The people assembled gave him a great ovation. The king Raimalla, General Camundarai, merchants, noble men and commoners all came forward to bow down at his feet. The Acarya solemnly gave his blessings, 'Have unfaltering faith in the teachings of the Jinas' and took his seat. The audience once again burst out in applause. The Acarya raised his hand. The audience became silent. Then the Acarya began to speak :

“Thousands of years ago this earth was blessed by the holy presence of the very first Tirthankara Lord Rsabhadeva. His world famous sons Cakravarti Bharata and Bahubali followed the footsteps of their father

as a king and as an ascetic. Bahubali entered into *nirvāṇa* on Mount Kailasa even before his father Rsabhadeva. He was the first Siddha. When one remembers his life one cannot but feel a divine sanctity in his heart. His long austerities had no parallel in history. For years together he remained deep in meditation. Creepers grew all along his body, snakes made their pits below his feet and began to live there in great comfort. He never cared for summer and winter. Cakravarti Bharata had got erected during his life time a beautiful and lifelike image of Bahubali in *kāyotsarga* pose somewhere in Podanapura which must be there even now. A long period had elapsed since then but it must be lying hidden somewhere—who knows ?”

After this the Acarya changed his topic and the audience remained spell bound hearing his nectar-like sermon.

The valiant Camundarai was seated on his bed in deep thought. On the walls of his bedroom were mural paintings of natural scenery. Small lamps were burning here and there. Moonlight was peeping through the windows and ventilators. The light of the lamps and that of the moon gave a different kinds of hue to the interior of his room. Near his bed there was a golden throne. On that throne was seated Ajitadevi, the beautiful and soft spoken wife of Camundarai. The chain of Camundarai’s thoughts was broken by Ajitadevi,

“My lord ! Mother seems to be in distress after coming from the sermon.”

Camundarai replied casually,

“My dear, what co-relation could there be between today’s sermon and my mother’s distress ? Come, let us now rest. Tomorrow morning I will go to see her and have her blessings.”

Next day Camundarai went to his mother. She was still more grave and distressed. Camundarai bowed at her feet. She gave her blessings and said,

“My son, I feel a keen desire to visit Podanapura and look at the image of Lord Gommatesvara. The Acarya in his evening sermon referred to this image. Life will remain barren unless I see the image.”

Camundarai replied very politely,

“Mother, we only know that there is an image of Gommatesvara at Podanapura but no one knows which way leads to that place. The entire region is full of dense forest, high mountains and ferocious animals. To find out the image is therefore practically impossible. Mother, please reconsider your decision. And if you so desire we may visit Candragupta Vasati and see the image of Lord Parsvanatha there.”

Mother Kalaldevi replied,

“If you have fallen in love of this material world then let us not go at all. Today I am hearing of something unheard of. My son valiant Camundarai is afraid of difficulties.”

On hearing these words Camundarai whispered to himself in choked voice “I in love with this material world, I am afraid of difficulties ; Oh God !” And then composing himself he said to his mother,

“Mother, please get ready for the journey.”

Then began the search for that oldest image. Valiant Camundarai was out in search of something unknown and unheard of. There were difficulties at every step. For the safety of the journey a large contingent of army, sufficient food and water, horses and chariots were arranged. The principal persons of this party were valiant Camundarai, his mother Kalaldevi, Acarya Sri Nemicandra and another great Jain ascetic Acarya Ajitasena. Besides, there were some adventurous young men and a few other men and women. The party started. But as there was no definite route and hardship on the way many pilgrims began to return. Camundarai and his close associates only moved forward undauntly. After a hazardous journey the party reached Candragupta Vasati. There they worshipped the feet of twentythird Tirthankara Parsvanatha and heard the sermons of monk Bhadrabahu who was residing there at that time.

Thus acquiring further inspiration the party started again. But they got stuck between the hill range of Candragiri and Indragiri. The road beyond was blocked. A high mountain, dense forest, hissing cobras and wild animals made the journey forward almost impossible. A step forward was to invite sure death. But it was also impossible to return without seeing the image of Lord Gommatesvara. So the party encamped on the bank of Lake Kalyan situated in the valley lying between the two mountains. In this critical hour Camundarai sought the advice of the Acarya Nemicandra.

It was past first quarter of the night. All the pilgrims were asleep in their camps. Only the Acarya was out side seated in deep meditation on a white stone slab. At midnight he ended the meditation when he heard some one speaking to him,

“Drop the idea of proceeding any further. Lord Gommatesvara is highly pleased with the devotion of the pilgrims. Let the valiant Camundarai throw a golden arrow from the mountain Candragiri on Indragiri. The image of the Lord will be visible where the arrow will hit the mountain.”

The Acarya narrated what he had heard to Camundarai. Camundarai then bowing his head at the feet of Bahubali threw the golden arrow. The arrow struck a huge slab of stone. As it struck, the large chunk of the slab fell with a thunderous sound and the head of the image of Lord Gommatesvara became visible. All pilgrims began to shout, “Hail Bahubali ! Hail Gommatesvara !” The news spread like wild fire that the image of Gommatesvara had come up in the Vasati of Sravana Belgola. Visitors started to pour in. Camundarai engaged his men and soliders to cut the stone and level the ground. Messengers were despatched to king Raimalla informing him of this wonderful event. He was also requested to send famous sculptors for the work.

It appeared as if there had started a great work of construction at Sravana Belgola. Many workers were engaged in cutting and levelling the ground. Master sculptors came and chiseled out the image from the frame. But Camundarai and his mother Kalaldevi were not satisfied. They offered gold equal to the weight of the stone to the sculptors who would make it still more beautiful. They began to work again with a new zeal. They removed more stone from the creeper, stone lying in between hands and feet and got their reward. Still Camundarai was not satisfied. He again offered, this time not gold, but diamonds equal to the stone chiseled out from the image to make it still more attractive. They again started work but their chisels failed to move. So they laid down their chisels and accepted defeat. They reported it to Camundarai and said,

“We mortals cannot lay our hands on the image made by the gods themselves. We have not made this image we have only cleaned it of the extra stone attached to it. No mortal can ever make such an image.”

Camundarai accepted their verdict and gave them whatever they wanted. The 57 feet high image of Lord Gommatesvara was before them in its full glory. A glowing halo was visible around the image. Whoever looked at it felt immense joy and happiness. The changing hue of morning

and evening sun gave it such a divine glow that whoever looked at it remained awe struck.

Arrangements were made for the holy anointment of the image of Lord Gommatesvara. Coconuts were heaped all around. On the day of anointment the people thronged, as far as the image was visible. The ceremony started. Milk was poured from hundreds of vessels but it did not come down the waist level of the image. After milk water was poured from hundreds of jars but that too did not come down the waist level. The devotees were surprised and distressed. It meant that the Lord had not accepted their anointment. But it had not escaped the eyes of the Acarya that an old lady with a little pot of milk was trying to come forward but could not do so due to heavy rush of the crowd. The Acarya instantaneously realised that unless she could come and offer her pot of milk the ceremony would not be completed. Arrangements were made to take her to the rostrum and when she poured her small quantity of milk it reached the feet of the Lord. After that whatever was offered milk or water, reached the Lord's feet. The ceremony of the anointment was completed smoothly without any trouble. The old lady could, however, not be found anywhere after the ceremony. Camundarai raised her image and till now one can see the image of Mother Gulai near the image of the Lord refreshing our memory of the first anointment.

translated by Gita Mukherjee

Sthulabhadra

GANESH LALWANI

Before going for *cāturmāsya* (four month's retreat during the rains) the young monks came to take leave of the Acarya.

Said one, "Master, I shall utter the *mantra* sitting on a wooden plank of the dead well."

Said another, "Master, I shall meditate in *kāyotsarga* pose at the dark entrance of the lion's den."

Said the third, "Master, I shall do penance near a pit of the hillock where a cobra resides."

Sthulabhadra was the youngest of all. Pondering for a moment in his mind he said, "I shall live this *cāturmāsya* in the dancing hall of Kosa."

On hearing this a sarcastic laugh spread on all the faces. It was this Kosa with whom Sthulabhadra had lived long twelve years! He was not able to forget her even now. How shameless was he!

But the Acarya said, "All right. You may go." There was no sign of any consternation on his face.

Sthulabhadra was at the door of Kosa's house.

Seeing him a maid swiftly came near him. She thought the monk had probably lost his way. So bowing a little, she said, "Master, this house belongs to a courtesan."

Sthulabhadra replied, "I know."

This was something exceptional. She was almost at her wit's end. She simply asked, "What's your name?"

"Name? There's nothing special regarding a monk's name."

Blushing, the maid ran inside to give the message to her mistress.

Kosa was just arising from her seat after knotting her disheveled hair into an improvised coif when seeing the monk coming she remained where she was. Strange! How he had known the way to her apartment ? Then she faintly remembered she had seen this man somewhere though she could not exactly remember where. How could she ? The eyes which were once wild with love had now acquired the distant sublimity of stars. So she failed to recognise him.

Said Sthulabhadra, “Kosa, I have come here to fulfil the vow of this *cāturmāsya* by living in your house.”

“Kosa !” On hearing her name uttered in that familiar voice after years, her forgotten feelings of love and tears like strings of a *vīṇā* all played at once. The man whom she had loved; he who called her by this name day and night, how could she forget him ?

She said, “Are ye Sthulabhadra ?”

“Yes, I am. Have you forgotten me, Kosa ?”

The earth began to slip from under her feet. A mass of darkness descended before her eyes. Could she forget Sthulabhadra ? How many days and nights she had passed without a wink in waiting for him ! And for this day what she had not thought. Her colourful imagination were almost wild. Then suddenly tears rolled down her cheeks. Then she fell on the earth and fainted.

When she recovered she began to think, probably all these were in a dream. She had created this mirage out of incessant love of him.

Said Sthulabhadra, “Permit me Kosa, then...”

Kosa turned her face to look at the sky. Clouds of many a shape and size were drifting and constantly changing. She was looking but her mind was somewhere else. Today he had returned but though near, he was far away. The biting of that pain had almost eaten her up.

“Kosa !”

Kosa looked at him and said, “Look, don’t bother me. When you have come to live here will you live in the dancing hall ?”

Said Sthulabhadra, "I have no objection, but what about your costly utensils..."

"Fear not. I will see to them."

"What fear? If there were any fear I wouldn't have come here. Still, we have to submit to some rules of conduct..."

But before he could complete his sentence burst out Kosa, "Where were your rules for those twelve years?" It was not a query, but an insinuation. "I am not going to take lesson on rules of conduct from you. I know you thoroughly, Sir."

Said Sthulabhadra, "I was then in dark. Due to attachment like fish in water I was deep in your love. I had forgotten who I was? From where I had come?"

"Then after receiving this wonderful knowledge why have you come into this house of ignorance? Or is there any desire still lurking in any corner of your heart? My love will not shower white roses but will greet you with their thorns. Why haven't you thought of that?"

"No, Kosa. I have known the truth. I have come here to take you on that path."

Kosa turned her face away. She said, "Let us see."

A soft smile spread on the lips of Sthulabhadra.

Kosa herself took his meal to him in a golden dish. The dancing hall began to vibrate with the sweet tinkling of her bangles and her anklets. The wind became heavy with the dreamy fragrance of her scented hair.

Placing the dish before him she said, "O ye deep in meditation, your food has been brought by your maid."

When Sthulabhadra opened his eyes he saw Kosa in her most beautiful attirement. There was a pink dot of *kumkum* on her smooth white forehead, fine lines of black stibium in her lotus-like eyes. On her breast was streaming down beads of moon-beam, a costly necklace of pearls once given by him. Her ear-rings were of fiery rubies. The golden fringe of her red bodice was scintillating as if with unquenchable passion.

“I have brought you this humble food. But what are you looking at ? Quickly take a few morsels. Your time for meditation is passing away.”

Kosa uttered many a sentences like that at a time. But these made no impact on Sthulabhadra’s mind. He said slowly, “All these for me ? But Kosa, all your labour have gone in vain.”

“Why?” she said, “You loved these things once.”

Sthulabhadra began to smile. Said he, “I am a monk. I cannot take food prepared for me. I shall collect my food from here and there.”

Tears began to flow from Kosa’s eyes. She said, “Why are you tormenting me ? Will you beg ?”

“Don’t be disheartened. This is a monk’s life.”

Kosa left the place. The food remained untouched.

It was raining outside. Everywhere was the darkness of the night. The air was thick with the scent of wild Mallika. Reclining in her bed Kosa was reflecting the sweet episodes of the past. She recollected those days when youth gave her a special charm. The talk of her infatuating beauty was on the lips of every youngmen of Pataliputra. Probably there was none who could resist her temptation. Every youngmen’s heart was burning with a desire for her. It was in those days prime minister’s son Sthulabhadra came to her house. How beautiful were his eyes ! She knew not when he entered into her heart. So her fans were not able to reach her. Kosa who was desired by all became of one. Her door was closed for all except Sthulabhadra.

At last that evil day also came when receiving king’s message he left for the court. The prime minister’s post was vacant and the king offered it to Sthulabhadra. But not accepting it he left the court and went away no one knew where. Still Kosa was confident that he would return. Because he was her’s only. It was for this she gave no indulgence to her new lovers and she bore the pangs of separation like one whose lover is abroad. And today when clouds had thickened in the sky as also in her mind, Sthulabhadra was aloof.

But no she would not acknowledge defeat. At midnight when the wind was howling Kosa decorated her hair with scented flowers. Then she appeared before Sthulabhadra.

Said Kosa, "When the darkness of the bamboo forest was astire with the humming of the crickets and when the light of my apartment was out I could not restrain myself. Sthulabhadrā, my love, drown this eternal pain of separation by your sweet embrace."

But Kosa could not rouse him from his meditation.

It was full-moon night. Her mind and body was as if in an ecstasy. From the evening she was sitting before Sthulabhadrā lost in thoughts. She had drawn with rice-paste a thousand-petalled lotus on the ground, and had it coloured. Then she began to dance on it singing that created a rhyme and melody as resonant as the tuneful verse of a gifted poet smitten with love. All the atmosphere was vibrating with her light foot-falls, wild gestures.

But Sthulabhadrā remained motionless.

Kosa was in her seductive fineries. All the instruments were responding automatically. A drunkenness was everywhere—on the earth, in the sky. If it were somebody else his blood would have boiled in his veins. He would have either succumbed or said, "Leave me alone I can't stand it. Go for heaven's sake."

When all the shafts of her quiver of womanly charm were spent she thought in her mind : "Vain is this beauty ! Vain is her art ! What she would do with that beauty, with that art by which she could not win even her lover. But whom she could not win outwardly, she would win in her heart."

The constellation of Saptarsi (Ursa Major) was scintillating like diamonds in the blue sky. Kosa was looking at that and was thinking of eternal universe, eternal time. She knew not when her soft fingers stopped playing on the *vinā*. But the atmosphere created by Megha Mallar had its lingering appeal. Just then came Sthulabhadrā. Kosa wore no ornaments, her dress was also simple. She was looking like a lotus dried, her face bore signs of pain.

Said Sthulabhadrā, "What's wrong with you, Kosa ?"

Dejected look of Kosa as if said in reply, "What more do you want from me ?"

Said Sthulabhadrā, "Why are ye so restless, Kosa ?"

Said Kosa, "Does my pain affect you ?"

"Yes, Kosa. Just remember, one day I came to you being in love giving up everything. I was happy but that was not unobstructed bliss. Kosa, was there no dissatisfaction ? No pain ? Pleasures after enjoying which there is no weariness, no pain, no dissatisfaction is bliss. Full bliss."

The light radiating from the eyes of the monk drove away the darkness of Kosa's mind like the rays of the Sun. She said, "Master, I am fallen. May I be initiated in that truth."

"Why not ?" said Sthulabhadra.

After the end of the *cāturmāsya* all the monks returned except Sthulabhadra. They thought Sthulabhadra would not come. Seeing the tears of a courtesan if one could remain restrained ! It was hoping against hope.

But Sthulabhadra did return. His face was aglow with penance. He bowed to the Acarya. The Acarya made him sit beside him by holding his hands.

Seeing this all the monks were astounded. It was sheer injustice, undue favour. The honour which was not given to those who observed this vow with rigour was given to Sthulabhadra who lived in the house of a courtesan ! Who knew how ? But none dared to say it openly.

Again came the *cāturmāsya*. All the monks went away. But not he who observed this vow last year near the den of the lion. He said, "Master, I shall observe this vow in the house of Kosa this year."

The Acarya replied, "It is most difficult. Will you be able to do it ? You will repent if you go there being envious."

"Master, permit me. I have made up my mind."

The Acarya replied, "Then I have nothing to say."

When the monk said to Kosa that he had come to observe the vow of *cāturmāsya* in her house, Kosa remembered the day Sthulabhadra came to her house with the same purpose. She said, "In this fortunate am I."

The monk was thinking : “Is this Kosa ! There is no passion in her eyes, no fascinating smile on her lips.” What impression he had of the coquetry of the courtesans, Kosa was just opposite of that. He thought Sthulabhadra had not done a difficult task. Much more difficult was his. Still he would show the achievement of his austere discipline by comparison after accomplishing it. Then the Acarya would know his mistake.

The young monk had thought that he had known his own mind, but far from it. There were in it embers of hidden desires. That was why he could not understand what was attracting him towards her. So gradually he became unmindful regarding his observances.

Kosa rarely visited the monk. Still when the monk would see her he used to feel a pang. Kosa knew this. So she stopped to visit him at all.

But the result was just the opposite. His eyes were constantly waiting to have a glimpse of her, his ears to hear her footfalls. Every particle of his body chanted the name of Kosa.

One night when Kosa was going to retire she saw the monk before her. Startled she said, “Master, you ?”

The monk remained looking at her face as if he was saying, “Don’t you understand, Kosa ?”

Even if he had to look at this beautiful face for millions of years still it would not satisfy him. Tonight his eyes were sleepless.

Kosa came near him and repeated, “Master, you? At this hour ?”

“Yes I am. I have lost today everything but you. I have come here to have you. How beautiful and lovely you are !”

Tears came almost in her eyes. Had the evil destiny have a look at the time of birth of a girl.

Taking it at ease Kosa replied, “You will be my guest it is my luck. But what present you will bring me in exchange ?”

“I am a monk. What can I give you ?”

Pondering a little she said, "Yes, there is a way out. But can you do that ? The king of Nepal in Himavan gives jeweled blankets to monks. Can you bring such one for me ?"

"Why not ? If your favourable gesture remains before my eyes I can enter the portals of death."

After a long time the monk returned undergoing enormous hardships. Putting the blanket in her hands he said, "Kosa, take it."

Kosa first looked at the blanket then tearing it threw it away.

A deep sigh came out of the monk's heart. Said he, "I knew not that you are so foolish. You could not have torn it away if you had only known what hardships I had to bear for bringing it here."

Kosa said with a laugh, "When have I known the character which one earns by giving up life can so easily be thrown away."

In a moment the black cover of desire that obstructed his spiritual vision was gone. He could now see himself. Strange ! He had come here to give the test of his character but he was going to give it up altogether. Of whatever value it may be character cannot be tested near the den of a lion. It had to be tested in the house of Kosa. And there he has failed.

With his folded hands he asked her forgiveness, in his heart he prayed for the grace of the Acarya. Then bowing to Sthulabhadra, the winner of desire, he left the place.

Nandisen

GANESH LALWANI

Nandisen had no near and dear one. After giving him birth his mother died and after a few days his father also expired. So he was brought up in his maternal uncle's home.

But in that home also Nandisen did not receive love and affection from any body. All day long he had to work hard. And in addition he had to bear abuses, beatings, etc.

But for this his maternal uncle or aunt were not at fault. Because Nandisen himself was dull and without intellect. He could not do anything rightly. His maternal uncle sent him to a school. But after a few days he left the school for good.

Nandisen became proof to all kinds of reproaches. What he could do otherwise ? But when his maternal sisters abused him saying 'ugly' his grief knew no bound. In reality, he was ugly. As he was dull so he was without beauty.

One day after a day's hard labour he was taking a nap under the shade of a tree in the inner courtyard. But suddenly he was roused from his sleep by a loud laughter. One of his maternal sisters was saying, "Who will marry that ugly boar ?"

Like an arrow it pierced his heart. 'An ugly boar !' But was that his fault ?

Nandisen felt as if a massive darkness had engulfed him. No, not a ray of light had remained in his life.

Nandisen could not remain at home any more. He left the home and took to the path. And when night fell he slept in the open under the shade of a tree. No, he would not return to that home. He had no home. He had no near and dear ones.

While sleeping Nandisen saw a dream. He saw a sun rising. All the world was gay with the bursting rays of the rising sun. It was waiting as if for some divine appearance.

Virtue of previous life of Nandisen had not totally exhausted. So he dreamt like that. He rose in a hurry. The night was at its end. The morning star was glowing in the eastern sky.

But as he was roused from his sleep his pain also returned. So he did not retrace his steps but moved forward as if possessed. He even forgot his dream.

He knew not how many days and nights elapsed in the woods. Moving from one wood to another he entered at last into a dense forest.

While moving in the dense forest Nandisen suddenly heard a voice which was sweet and nectarlike, "Nandisen, what do you want?"

Astounded he remained fixed at that very place. Who could call him in that dense forest? Whoever he might be, his single call had roused him like a lotus blossom at the first touch of the rising sun.

Nandisen raised his eyes to see. He saw a blue cloud. But no...at the very next moment he saw the very sun of his dream rising over the mist. He saw a monk standing there drenching his whole frame by mercy which was flowing from his eyes.

Nandisen fell at his feet. He said, "Lord, I am ugly and without intellect. Nor do I know anything. I had no place in this universe. I seek your mercy. Please give me protection."

A mild smile spread over the divine face of the monk. He said, in that nectarlike voice, "Child! Who says you are dull, without intellect and ugly? Your intellect is like that of Brhaspati, your genius like that of Sukra and you are as beautiful as Vaisramana. The universe requires your service. I am giving you protection. Have no fear."

Nandisen's throat was choked with emotion. He could not utter more. So he said, "I seek your protection! I seek your protection!"

Again that voice sweet as nectar was heard, "The work which I am giving to you fulfil by three ways. Therein lies your welfare."

On hearing these words Nandisen fell at his feet. He repeated, "I seek your protection! I seek your protection!"

When Nandisen rose there was no monk. But the mercy and calm that emanated from his eyes were still there, they enveloped the whole earth and the sky.

Nandisen moved to that place where the monk was standing. He resolved in his mind he would fulfil the task which was allotted to him by three ways.

After crossing the forest Nandisen came to a village. At the end of that village there was a hermitage. He sought shelter there and it was given to him.

Nandisen served not only the monks of that place, he also served those who halted there on their way. Besides he used to serve even the inhabitants of that village. So his name spread all over the area. But Nandisen whose fame was spreading, was immune from the desire of fame. He could remain above all praise and curse devoted to his service. While serving he used to forget himself.

In a few days Nandisen became dear to every one. Every body was pleased with his service.

After a long time cholera broke out in the village as epidemic. Now Nandisen had not a moment for rest. When people began to flee from the village leaving victims to their fate Nandisen would sit near their beds with his eyes full of love and mercy. Days would pass before he could take food. Nights elapsed before he could avail a moment of rest. Still his face bore no sign of anger nor his eyes of tiredness. He was making true his vow—this much was his joy, his fulfilment.

One day getting a little time he sat for meal when some one informed him that a monk was lying on the roadside struck with cholera for the last few days. He needed immediate attention. Nandisen left his meal and was before him very soon.

When Nandisen was there he found him in such a condition that what to speak of attending to him he could not even stand there for a moment. But Nandisen took it with equanimity. In an instant he washed his body. Then he said slowly, "If you can move to the hermitage leaning over me..."

Nandisen could not finish his words, before that in a voice choked with pain he burst aloud, "Where is that wretched Nandisen whose fame I have heard. For days I am lying here but he is nowhere to be seen."

Hearing these words Nandisen bent his head in shame. Then he said, "I know not of his fame but that wretched being am I."

"You ! You ! Whatever I have heard were all lies. You are a scoundrel."

Even hearing these words, Nandisen did not loose his temper. He fell at his feet and then cried,

"You are speaking the truth. I am a scoundrel, otherwise, I wouldn't have asked you to walk. If you kindly permit I shall carry you to the hermitage."

"Carry me then." Shouted the monk in anger.

Carefully holding the monk in his arms Nandisen proceeded towards the hermitage. The way was not very long, but still it appeared to him that it was non-ending. Darkness began to gather before his eyes. Hands were failing to carry the weight. He could not pull his legs together. Who knew that there was so much weight in the dry bones of the monk !

All the way he trudged with his heavy load. The monk was crying aloud abusing him and taunting him, asking him, "How far it was ? How far ?"

The dirt which Nandisen washed from his body came anew even soiling his body. But no, nothing could ruffle his mind now. He was carrying him with a placid mind.

"How far it is now ?"

"No, not very far. The hermitage is now visible."

Nandisen still picked his way with all his strength.

But, what is this ? From where was wafting that beautiful scent ! The smell of his ward that was unbearable uptil now had gone. Astonished Nandisen raised his eyes when he saw that sun of his dream

was rising. That monk was drenching him with the flow of mercy from his eyes.

Then he heard a nectarlike voice coming from a far like the lilt of a sweet music.

“Nandisen, I am pleased with your service. Your vow has been fulfilled. You have achieved what is to be achieved.”

The voice was not heard any more nor was seen that divine light. There was no trace of the monk whom he had carried in his arms. He was in front of the hermitage.

Nandisen fell on the ground uttering, “I seek your protection ! I seek your protection !”

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